

Horny oakes' weed?

By [Dr Kay Brügge](#)

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The "Herbology" billboards that have a guy peeking into his underpants are funny mostly because of the Libido Tonic's main ingredient, "Horny Goat Weed". Being a billboard, other details (notably of the 'guy') remain blurry. However, the printed version of the ad affords one a more extended scrutiny.

The guy in the ad turns out to have fairly unflattering physical features and, to crown it all wears "Jockey Y-fronts".

Stereotypically speaking, the combination of flat-chested male + "Y-fronts" typically equals 'WIMP'. This is not consistent with the narrative, which is at pains to contextualise the libido-related impact of stress as afflicting all and being gender non-specific (the label reads "Libido Tonic for Men & *Women*").

The wedding ring (a nice subliminal touch) further refines the ad, from a target-group perspective, as being focused on couples, as do the guy's strands of grey hair, which further focus the ad on a certain demographic band.

This is all in stark contrast to the picture, which seems to convey the subconscious message that libido problems are the preserve of flat-chested, "Y-front" wearing, late-thirties, married male wimps, which are not considered the epitome of sexual 'va-va-voom'. In this sense then, the ad may alienate them, as there exists little by means of aspirational 'pull'.

Perhaps the ad attempts to appeal to those 'non-wimps' suffering from libido problems by *default* - that is to say by focusing on (and embarrassing) the 'wimps', it shields the egos of the non-wimps and 'allows' them to discreetly 'fix' their problem. In this sense then the ad may succeed not by what it depicts, but what it doesn't, i.e, tacitly appealing to the more 'macho' guys by sparing them embarrassment.

If indeed the 'appealing by default' idea holds water, the company may be gaining on the 'swings' what it is loosing on the 'roundabouts'. Yet, it does little to appeal to the female target group: women (both married and single), whom I have shown the ad to, feel that a more muscular guy would have been more applicable and appealing in view of the nature of the product being advertised.

ABOUT DR KAY BRÜGGE

Dr Kay Brügge is a life- design practitioner with post-graduate qualifications in psychology and neuro-psychology, specialising in qualitative research and project management, driving market and social research projects, including methodology development and focus group facilitation. With a PhD in neuro-psychology and special interest in Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP), he is interested in the analysis of subliminal messages in advertising and the subconscious influences of the retail environment on the consumer. He can be reached on email: lifecoach@polka.co.za.

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