

How to balls-up a brand with blatant misogyny (Updated)

By [Shae Leigh](#)

6 Jun 2018

If you're someone who loves a bit of stereotypical gender bashing you're in for a real treat. If not, buckle up for this sexist, crass, offensive bottled misogyny featuring Vale Bru - a lekker microbrewery with really kiff okes running rampant while calling themselves brewers.

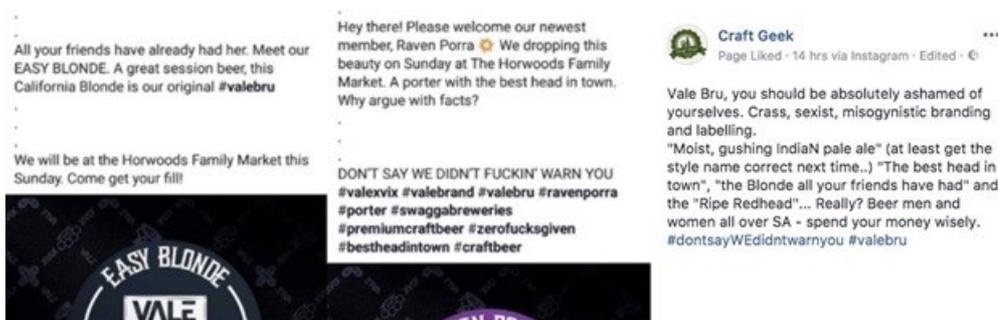
Thandi Guilherme, founder and author of [Craft Geek](#), weighs in: "If you want to be clever, like Nando's, you also have to know where the line is. Normally, you can tell by what the big issues of the day are. #Metoo, Rape culture and Trump's "locker room" misogyny is not funny. These are real problems that society is trying to dealing with. Don't go there.

I'm someone who appreciates a bit of maverick marketing and even the occasional industry toe-stepping without breaking the whole foot. What I'm not a fan of is a perpetuated spin-off of rape culture, sexism and disregard for other humans – usually women – who don't just exist for the base pleasures of men. I think everyone regardless of their respective private bits can agree on that.

Yeasty outbreak

Enter: Vale – a Gauteng contract brewer*. With their Filthy Brunette, Ripe Redhead, Easy Blonde and Raven Porra, they've caused a community froth that can only result from really sour beer. The worst bit is the taglines that come with these poorly named beers. "The best head in town". "Gushing with moist hops" and of course, "A California Blonde all your friends have had". It's like a bunch of 14-year-old boys were tasked with designing a range of beer labels," says Lucy Corne, craft beer aficionado and author, in her article about [sexist beer branding](#) following this yeasty outbreak.

They've single-handedly managed their one-track trip to the bottom of the food chain – their sorry-not-sorry apology was the final de-evolution to dirt worm status. I'm in two craft beer WhatsApp groups with enthusiasts, influencers and gurus across the country and there is unanimous disgust. It's quite obvious why blood is boiling hot and fingers are typing furiously, but let me unpack it for you:



[click to enlarge](#)

Leg-spreading labels

OK, so the branding on the bottles isn't plastered with images reminiscent of pin-up girls or dingy dives for people who have lost the will to live. But. For a company "with our community in mind" there should at least be a warning for inappropriate content.

By inappropriate I mean:

- Sexist/sex-shaming
- Laced with misogyny
- Racist
- Borderline xenophobia
- Vulgar

This is the branding equivalent of “she was asking for it” or “I know you want it”. Well, I don’t want it and no one asked for it. What we’re asking is for *you* to cease and desist.



Wayne Johnson If they are sorry, they should change the branding. Anything less is lip service.

Like · Reply · 4h



[click to enlarge](#)

Bad publicity is not good publicity

For lack of a better expression, there is a virtual shit storm brewing (pun intended) around this brand. A lot of attention has been drawn to this atrocity. Sure, they’re getting publicity but I think it’s more of a public shaming (fingers crossed). The truth is, not all publicity is good publicity.



VALE Like This Page · 11 hrs via Instagram · Edited · €

VALE | IPA

Being offensive is wrong, being sexist is worse. To any ladies out there that we have offended, please accept our humblest apologies.

They say that good judgement comes from experience. And experience..? Well, that comes from poor judgement.

We aim to make our beer fun and we want our loyal followers to engage with us. Our attempt at making you, and ourselves, uncomfortable, worked. However, we never meant to belittle or degrade you. If those keyboard crusaders want to carry on, feel free. If you know our brand, you know how we are, and how you portray us is up to you.

We admit when we are wrong and apologize when lines have been crossed.

So... Beer is moist. Beer has hops. And if you pour it too quick, beer gushes. Meet our Filthy Brunette. An India Pale Ale (thanks beer nerds) from the VALE 🍺

[click to enlarge](#)

Illegal is bad

Here are the facts:

- Vale violates Facebook's "appropriate content" terms
- Vale violates Shutterstock image license terms
- Vale violates CBASA regulations/commercial communication guidelines
- Vale violates ARA regulations
- Vale violates human rights
- Vale violates the craft beer industry's reputation

The image shows a screenshot of a Facebook Boost Post overview on the left and the post content on the right. The overview shows the post was not approved due to profanity. The post content is a video post from the page 'VALE' dated March 10, 2017. The video text discusses age restrictions on Facebook and encourages users to share the video to support the brand.

Boost Post Overview:

- Status: **Not Approved**
- End Date: Sunday at 10:40 AM
- Amount Spent: \$0.00
- Audience: Male/Female, 21-55, 4 locations
- Boosted By: [Redacted]
- Payment Method: [Redacted]

Post Content:

VALE
Like This Page · March 10, 2017 · Edited ·

V A L E | d e N A A l e d

So "big brother" decided that if you are 22 years old and older, you are not allowed to say, or in this case, see whatever you like.

With this in mind, and the true spirit of V A L E , we call on our brothers and sister to share our V A L E | F E S T video post so that we don't have to let them "help us" by boosting our awesome video.

Hey FB, DON'T SAY WE DID'T FUCKIN' WARN YOU 🙄

#valexvix #valetudo — 😊 feeling motivated.

Like Comment Share

6

6 Shares

Write a comment...

[click to enlarge](#)



Fat man eating a hamburger sitting on a chair in the slums

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RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF VISUAL CONTENT

YOU MAY NOT:

Portray any person depicted in Visual Content (a "Model") in a way that a reasonable person would find offensive, including but not limited to depicting a Model: a) in connection with pornography, "adult videos", adult entertainment venues, escort services, dating services, or the like; b) in connection with the advertisement or promotion of tobacco products; c) in a political context, such as the promotion, advertisement or endorsement of any party, candidate, or elected official, or in connection with any political policy or viewpoint; d) as suffering from, or medicating for, a physical or mental ailment; or e) engaging in immoral or criminal activities.

Use any Visual Content in a pornographic, defamatory, or deceptive context, or in a manner that could be considered libelous, obscene, or illegal.

11:15

[click to enlarge](#)

Leave the kids out of it

Phillipa Wood, from Darling Brew, commented: "Honestly can't think of why they think this branding is cool. Do they not have wives, mothers, sisters, girlfriends?" Vale has some branded merchandise for sale, which is common practice with breweries BUT using kids to promote your below-the-belt brand is not on. Are we teaching boys so early on that it's best practice to objectify women and use them any way they want?



[click to enlarge](#)

In (almost) closing: “Their brand is doing exactly what it’s designed to do, offend. They may be idiots but I don’t think they are surprised by the outrage. You can’t come up with those names and not expect to offend someone, I just don’t think they care... Would be interesting if they created this to cause deliberate k@k, make noise... and then had some super-cool on-point plan backed up that just knocked it out the park... but I think that is too hopeful and giving far too much credit,” notes Karl Tessendorf and Greg Gilowey from [Beer Country](#).

Bottom line is, it’s bollocks, and no way to build a brand. I’d love to hear your thoughts – for or against – so comment below (or comment on their page... or report them... or whatever).



Anna Kislingbury Anderson

1 hr · 🌐



The epitome of male privilege in branding. VALE Bru has responded to their 'keyboard crusaders' (mostly us women in beer) by belittling our reactions - even though they say they aren't. In their initial posts they put in all caps - DON'T SAY WE DIDN'T WARN YOU. What does that even mean? We need to be on guard in order to look at your sexist branding? All around gross. Thanks for this commentary, The Brewmistress.

[click to enlarge](#)



Apiwe Nxusani-Mawela shared a photo to the group: #SHELOVESBEER.



4 hrs ·

Ladies, we cannot allow this to happen. We need to do something about this.... #shelovesbeer #NotAFilthyBrunette #NotAnEasyBlonde

Show Attachment



You, Elbie Louw and 3 others



Elizabeth Kalina Gross!! When will they learn?

Like · Reply · 1h



Bronwenn Odendaal And with a culture of abuse so rive in our country, how did they think this was even a little bit funny??? If I was Horwoods FAMILY market I would kick them out. #NotCool #NotAFilthyBrunette #NotAnEasyBlonde

Like · Reply · 3m

[click to enlarge](#)



Megan Gemmell shared a photo.



3 hrs ·

This is horrific. How did this branding even get past the brainstorming stage, let alone printing and marketing?!? "All your friends have already had her, meet our easy blonde", "ripe redhead", "best head in town". Really?! 😞

[click to enlarge](#)

PS - to all stockists and restaurants supporting this travesty, you need to have a word with yourself.

**The only credit they deserve is the fact that they haven't dropped the c-bomb in their marketing efforts... yet. (Though they're probably be calling me that after reading this.)*

Given the right to reply, Vale responded as follows:

Our branding was intended to be provocative – to push the envelope to some extent – and until now, we've received an overwhelmingly positive response from both men and women.

Contrary to how the piece portrays us, we are family men. We are all in happy relationships. Some of us have kids. We care about our community. It was our initiative that revived Horwood's Farm in March. The popularity of the Market has rejuvenated the Farm and we hope to do likewise with the nearby Skate Park.

Vale XVIX is a branding company. Beer is merely a sideline of our business. Our T-shirts and caps are our main focus at the moment and they are separate from our beer brand. None of our merchandise refers to Vale Bru or to our beers. The comment by Phillipa from Darling Brew is therefore misplaced.

Yes, our beer branding is edgy. There will always be some who see it as crass. But there are plenty of others you appreciate the playfulness and the sexual innuendo. We have never used any lewd images, nor is our branding derogatory towards women or any other group. We categorically reject the promotion of misogyny,

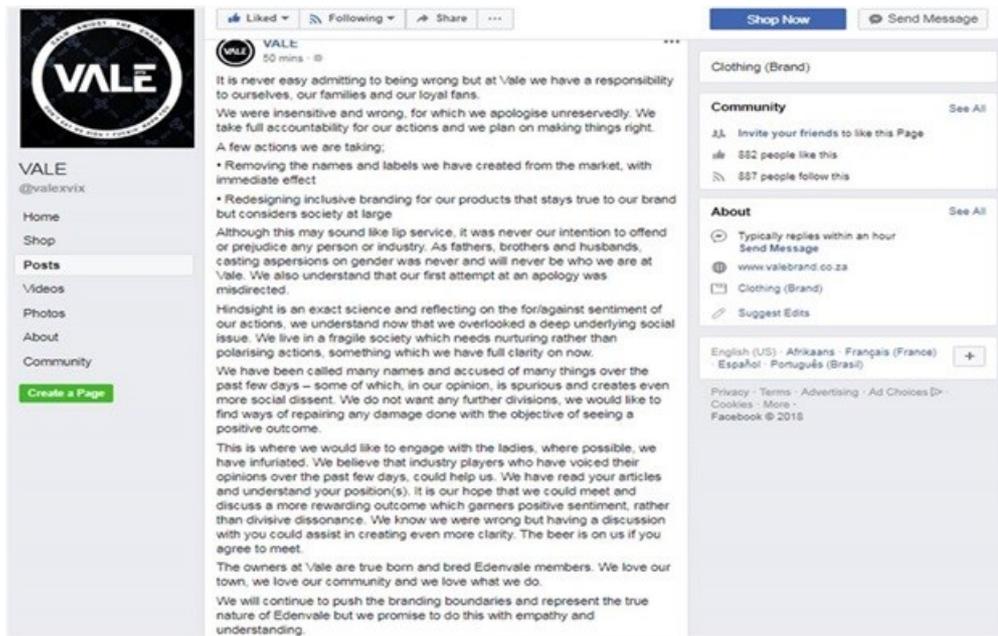
sexism, racism and rape culture. In our view, the article is deliberately sensationalist and inflammatory.

However, we're not turning a blind eye to the criticism. We acknowledge that we erred by assigning a gender to some of our beers in certain Facebook posts and for this, we have already apologised. We'll re-consider our beer descriptions. But we intend to retain our beer names. An easy blonde can be a man or a woman. So can a filthy brunette.

Thank you to all loyal Vale supporters and customers. To them we say, rest assured, we won't be deterred from developing our brand and from continuing to make a contribution to the Vale community.

Update

After this article was published, Vale released a new apology on its [Facebook page](#):



The screenshot shows the Vale Facebook page. The main post is an apology from Vale, dated 50 minutes ago. The text of the post reads: "It is never easy admitting to being wrong but at Vale we have a responsibility to ourselves, our families and our loyal fans. We were insensitive and wrong, for which we apologise unreservedly. We take full accountability for our actions and we plan on making things right. A few actions we are taking: • Removing the names and labels we have created from the market, with immediate effect • Redesigning inclusive branding for our products that stays true to our brand but considers society at large Although this may sound like lip service, it was never our intention to offend or prejudice any person or industry. As fathers, brothers and husbands, casting aspersions on gender was never and will never be who we are at Vale. We also understand that our first attempt at an apology was misdirected. Hindsight is an exact science and reflecting on the forlorn sentiment of our actions, we understand now that we overlooked a deep underlying social issue. We live in a fragile society which needs nurturing rather than polarising actions, something which we have full clarity on now. We have been called many names and accused of many things over the past few days – some of which, in our opinion, is spurious and creates even more social dissent. We do not want any further divisions, we would like to find ways of repairing any damage done with the objective of seeing a positive outcome. This is where we would like to engage with the ladies, where possible, we have infuriated. We believe that industry players who have voiced their opinions over the past few days, could help us. We have read your articles and understand your position(s). It is our hope that we could meet and discuss a more rewarding outcome which garners positive sentiment, rather than divisive dissonance. We know we were wrong but having a discussion with you could assist in creating even more clarity. The beer is on us if you agree to meet. The owners at Vale are true born and bred Edenvale members. We love our town, we love our community and we love what we do. We will continue to push the branding boundaries and represent the true nature of Edenvale but we promise to do this with empathy and understanding."

[click to enlarge](#)

Also, see my response:



The screenshot shows a Facebook comment from Shae Leigh. The text of the comment reads: "Thank you for this. As someone who voiced a strong stance on the whole situation, I would love to talk going forward. I'm in Cape Town so I'll get my beer and you get yours. I hope this turns into something that other brands across the country can learn from to nurture that fragility just as you set out to do too. It doesn't change the past and doesn't right the wrongs, but it is the right thing going forward. Peace. 🙏"

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