

Dear Truworths, this is what mothers really want



By Louise Marsland

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A controversial Mother's Day ad has moms defining 'motherhood' for the advertising industry and telling us what they really want... Apart from wanting the tired old stereotypes of womanhood and motherhood to disappear, what mothers don't want is sexy black lace lingerie.



Truworths Mothers Day advert - Image via Truworths

So sorry for you, Truworths, you got it badly wrong this time round. The controversial Truworths Mother's Day ad which has been panned by the majority of women and many men, features a very young-looking model who clearly still has her hips in the right place (i.e., hasn't given birth to a family yet), in transparent lace underwear, with a smouldering look that would be wasted on most parents, moms or dads, because... careers... busy lifestyles... kids activities... barely enough time to shop...!

Strongly voiced opinion slamming the campaign across social media this week was also picked up by mainstream media, leading to another debate about stereotypes and advertisers and brands which are out of touch with modern women and mothers. Women24 quoted the post by mom Lauren Kreuger which went viral this week: "What does a teenager in her bra possibly have to do with Mother's Day? Heaven forbid we mothers actually looked older than 20. Heaven forbid we have a less than perfect stomach. When I'm looking after my toddlers I basically just swan around in my fancy undies too."

Social media support grew from there:

“ Just saw this story that's been making waves. Really [#truworths](#) - Mother's Day?? I had to laugh and only dream pic.twitter.com/vtyseIEqMb— Leanne Manas (@LeanneManas) [May 6, 2016](#) ”

“ Is [#Truworths](#) encouraging [#teenagepregnancy](#) or buying your mom underwear? [#MothersDay](#) pic.twitter.com/rjNsQBSBEE— Earl September (@earlseptember) [May 6, 2016](#) ”

“ [#Truworths](#) response to its [#MothersDay](#) FAIL is priceless. Aspirational - really? What market research was this based on?— Safarigirl (@Safarigirl) [May 5, 2016](#) ”

“ [#truworths pic.twitter.com/TzSawODEQD](#)— Ayanda Seboni (@Ayanda19) [May 5, 2016](#) ”

You would think that with buzzwords like “authenticity” and “authentic narrative” being bandied about *ad nauseam* in marketing-speak these days, that marketers would actually Google the words to see what they mean, not just how to spell them. What is wrong with REAL moms? Yes we can be sexy, but on a day which is about the celebration of Motherhood, why does it have to be about our bodies again?

There’s nothing wrong with advertising sexy lingerie in the right context on an age-appropriate model, but motherhood is about so much more than how we look or perform. It’s a hard enough battle to love our stretched and battered bodies after having children and to find the time to care for ourselves when our children are our priority. Motherhood – and parenthood – is such an incredible life-changing experience, why can’t Mother’s Day advertising be about family, our children, joy, love and all the other indescribable emotions that becoming a parent is all about?

In this instance, the old adage that “sex sells” is way off the mark, so Truworths needs to update its marketing manual. This was clearly aimed only at men, without a thought as to what women really want.

“ After this response from [#truworths @Women24](#) I sincerely hope they will also showsome hot dads given the same logic [pic.twitter.com/LsnljyOzE7](#)— Hein Scholtz (@heinscholtz) [May 5, 2016](#) ”

The internet obliged of course with a prepubescent boy stereotype on a beach:

“ [#Truworths pic.twitter.com/NBOT8Au4CI](#)— Deidre Donnelly (@DeidreDonnelly) [May 6, 2016](#) ”

So on behalf of Truworths, I asked the mothers I know on the wonderful and vocal mom’s community that I belong to, which has 4000 plus members in my geographical community in Cape Town, what they wanted for Mother’s Day.

Across the board, moms want to be spoiled with flowers, pamper sessions, breakfast in bed, brunch somewhere nice, handmade gifts from their children, family time and “me time” and time off from the usual daily parenting routine. Here’s a snapshot of the comments made by over 100 moms on Facebook this morning:

Chantal: “Breakfast in bed, a wonderful card made by my son and just a day of relaxing (no cooking, no screaming at children, no washing). I dont need expensive flowers, 5 star restaurant food, thousands of rands on underwear (because let’s face it, it costs that much). I just need quality time with my family.”

Adi: “Massage and SLEEP!!!!”

Renee: “Home cooked meal made by someone else & family time”

Wynnertu: “I sent my mom a Pamper box, choco block full of face goodies, hair masque, luxury cream, chockies, magazine etc. A spoil-yourself-kit.”

Kelly: “Fluffy gown. slippers. spa treatments. CHOCOLATE.”

Amanda: “Ok... seeing that it is an ad for Mother's day for Truworths.. anything in their store would have been great but ummmm not lacy black underwear. .. a nice jersey or pair of jeans or shoes or a scarf... anything. .. but lacy underwear...”

Brenda: “Me-time: to bath, read or watch a DVD undisturbed for at least 4 hours!”

Lisa: “A spa voucher.. or new pj's and winter socks... shower gel that sort of thing.. things we don't buy for ourselves.”

Sherryll: “It's hilarious Truworths would advertise a sexy young woman in lacy underwear for Mother's Day. So unreal! It's special when your family appreciates you, not what they buy you I think! But I get it if they must advertise, why not advertise for discounts on selected items to spoil your mom?”

Michelle: “Sexy undies are for him...the last thing I would want is to celebrate being a mother by prancing around in sexy underwear. All I need is my mother and my kids with me and I'm happy....a day off would also be nice.”

Gillian: “Flowers always go down a treat but for me, Mother's Day is about your family showing appreciation for what you do every other day of the year. So anything that required a bit of thought and effort - from breakfast in bed to a homemade card. And of course, being given the 'day off.’”

The Truworths statement was even worse: defensive, unapologetic and trying to pull the aspirational card “Truworths aims to put forward a fashionable and aspirational campaign for all... the model (actually she is in her mid-twenties) was selected for her glamorous appearance rather than as a representation of all customers who are mothers.” You know what, most women, not just moms, would love to be glamorous, but Truworths' definition is very different from mine. You know what I aspire to? To give my daughter a more positive body image that I grew up with, in an advertising environment that will hopefully be more sensitised to the damage sexist advertising does to youngsters. To realise that true beauty really does come from within.

I've learnt finally, in my 40s, to love my bod after decades of dieting, through the eyes of my toddler, who loves her “squishy, comfy-wumfy mummy” unconditionally. That is what gives me my “glamour” not the cut of my knickers or a flat stomach I will never have again because I grew a 3.5kg baby in it!

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