**Women doing their makeup on the train are ‘ugly,’ says Japanese commercial**

By [Anna Fifield](http://www.washingtonpost.com/people/anna-fifield) October 28 at 4:59 AM

TOKYO – You’d think that with the whole push to get women into the workplace and let them “shine,” as the government likes to say, Japanese companies might refrain from shaming women who try to have it all.

Think again.

In the latest display of entrenched sexism in Japan, Tokyu Corporation, a private railway company, has produced an ad suggesting it is not proper etiquette to apply make-up on the train. It is not unusual to see women commuters involved in elaborate grooming while on the subway, including doing things that require a steady hand, like applying liquid eye-liner and penciling in their eyebrows.

In the ad, two young women are applying lipstick and mascara in a relatively empty train car. Then a bare-faced actress, Sawa Nimura, mutters: “Women in the big city are all beautiful. But they can be ugly sometimes.”

Nimura, who has apparently just come from the countryside, jumps up in front of the women and begins dancing in a confrontational way. “Why can’t you do it before you get on the train?” she sings. “Your eyebrows restored and eyelashes multiplied, your transformation is witnessed.”

The 30-second ad concludes with a message that says: “Please do not put on makeup on the train.”

While Japan has all sorts of guidelines dictating considerate train behavior, from not wearing your backpack on your back to not talking on your cellphone or eating on the train, this latest directive is a bridge too far.

“I can understand it if Tokyu’s ad asks me to stop putting makeup on because makeup powder might spill over or its smell bothers others,” [wrote one Twitter user, @ryudokaoruko,](https://twitter.com/ryudokaoruko/status/790767002981847040) according to The Japan Times. “But a railway company has no right to tell me whether I look beautiful or ugly.”

It has since been retweeted more than 5,800 times.

“If the firm wants to clamp down on people who make others uncomfortable, it should create a commercial targeting people with body odors, or people who smell of alcohol or vomit,” [wrote @tinasuke.](https://twitter.com/tinasuke/status/790838382645481473)

Kyodo News Agency reported another user as saying: “There are passengers who are a much bigger nuisance, such as drunks and gropers.”

The video is one of four made by Tokyu as part of an awareness campaign on passenger etiquette launched this fall, [Japan Today](https://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/controversial-video-criticizes-women-putting-on-makeup-in-trains)said. The others are aimed at discouraging people from using their smartphones while walking along the platform and jumping the line to board a train.

Despite the reaction, the railway company is not backing down and has no plans to withdraw the ad. “We have actually received more positive feedback than negative,” Masayuki Yanagisawa, a Tokyu spokesman, said, The [Japan Times reported](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/10/27/national/tokyu-corp-gets-backlash-no-makeup-video/#.WBLVO-F968U).

The ad frowning on women — many of whom are presumably on their way to work — comes at a time when the Abe government is trying to break down gender barriers encourage more women into the workplace.

But ads like this and court decisions [like the recent ruling](http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201610120063.html) that married women can not use their maiden names, even at work, show just how far Japan has to go.

Despite the government campaign to “let women shine,” Japan is going backwards in the rankings. The latest [Global Gender Gap Report](http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/economies/#economy=JPN) from the World Economic Forum put Japan at 111th of 144 countries, 10 places lower than last year.

"Japan records a significant widening of the gender gap for professional and technical workers, adversely affecting its ranking despite further progress in reducing the gender gap in tertiary education enrollment and women’s representation among legislators, senior officials and managers, and in improving wage equality for similar work," the report said.