



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 39/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | Red Bull (4 wise men) |
| 3. Product | Beverage |
| 4. Type of advertisement | Cinema |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Religion – section 2.1 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 11 February 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This cinema advertisement from Red Bull for its energy drink uses cartoon-style figures in an animated scene of Jesus' birth in the manger. The advertisement includes four wise men, the fourth brings the energy drink as a gift. Mary suggests that there are only three wise men in the New Testament, but the four men explain that the fourth brings Red Bull and suggests that is where the angels get their wings. The advertisement ends showing angels flying and singing "Hallelujah".

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

I am a Christian and to me it seemed wrong to depict Jesus birth in such a setting, to promote the sale of a drink. It had nothing whatever to do with the message of the gospel that Jesus came to earth to teach us. I feel it is making fun of Jesus and Christianity.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

The Red Bull cartoon advertisements have been developed to communicate the energizing effects of Red Bull Energy Drink in a lighthearted way and are not designed to be taken literally or to be an education program for the public. As with most cartoons, the drawings and storylines have been developed over many years with the purpose of communicating a humorous, satirical story or message and not a true life scenario. For example The Simpsons is an animated cartoon whereby the characters are created for their humour and yet not taken so literally.

All of our advertisements are approved by FACTS (Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations - the industry body which represents Australia's Commercial Free-To-Air Television stations). The advertisements are placed during appropriate television programs and cinema screenings and not those targeted towards children.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code") and the AANA Food and Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communication Code (the "F&B Code").

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement ridiculed Christianity and considered the application of Section 2.1 of the Code, relating to discrimination and vilification on the basis of religion.

The Board discussed this advertisement and its depiction of a Christian scene which followed the birth of Jesus. The Board recognised that some members of the community would be offended by the depiction and would consider that it mocked the Christian belief and was inappropriate to use a religious concept for commercial purposes and was therefore a form of vilification. The Board considered however that most members of the community would consider the advertisement's use of the Christian scene as light hearted, and the references to four wise men with the fourth bearing Red Bull an irreverent but humorous interpretation of the nativity scene. The Board considered that the depictions in the advertisement did not denigrate the Christian beliefs and that the advertisement did not therefore discriminate or vilify any person on account of their religious beliefs. The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach section 2.1 of the Code.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds.

The Board then considered the provisions of the F & B Code. The Board considered that the advertisement contained no depictions or information that would contravene the F & B Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any of the relevant Codes on any grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.