



Case Report

1	Case Number	0022/12
2	Advertiser	Ripley's Odditorium
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	08/02/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress to children
- 2.3 - Violence Graphic Depictions

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows scenes from the venue with people of various ages looking at the exhibits and participating in the interactive parts of the venue also. There are very brief visuals of the shrunken heads mentioned and the voiceover describes these as well.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I'm an avid 'GO' watcher and frequently have the cartoons on in the morning and afternoons. However an ad is currently on air fo 'Ripley's Believe It or Not Odditorium ' which is too frightening for ANYONE at that time of day much less young children! It contains a full sized close up picture of a shrunken head - and it looks very much like a child's head!!! AAARRRGGGHHH! I can't watch it myself let alone the kids! And because it's holiday season it's being played on a pretty high rotation at the moment so it's almost impossible to avoid.

I'd respectfully ask that you either reschedule the showing of the advertisement for a more appropriate time slot - after children are in bed - or remove it altogether.

The advertisement really is appalling and entirely inappropriate for viewing during G or PG rated programming. I urge you to consider whether the airing of a graphic close-up picture of a (child's?) shrunken head is suitable - in anyone's consideration.

In addition to the graphic and grizzly nature of the content the entire concept of this 'House of Horrors' is culturally offensive as it relies largely on artefacts from different and ancient cultures. I'm surprised that such an exhibition can be on display much less advertised in our age of (relative) enlightenment. It certainly sends an inappropriate message to children too; that 'other' is to be mocked or ridiculed. It's nauseating and xenophobic. Thanks for your time and I look forward to hearing back from you on the outcome of this matter.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

Believe it or Not! Odditorium displays both Modern and Historical Exhibits both here in Surfers Paradise and 10 other countries around the world. We display tastefully exhibits that Educate and Entertain Patrons and at all times follow the Advertising Standards and Rules with our 30 second Advertisements. The Shrunken Head mentioned in the complaint is one that is neither Racially or Culturally Offensive as they are from a cross section of our collection that give all people an idea of traditions that have been practised in centuries gone to understand the History of the World better. No one could know that it is a BOY from the Ad as they are all similar in size that is why they are Shrunken Heads. You would have to visit Ripley's to know that it is a Boy. The less than 2 seconds that it appears on the Ad would not Nauseate anyone and is a total over reaction in every way. To say that we/they Mock, Ridicule or are Xenophobic in any way is ridiculous! I believe that understanding the Past is Enlightening and Relative to our Future not the opposite. Our Exhibits like the one shown in the Advert are both Actual and Factual which challenge people worldwide to "Believe It or Not!" The Advertisement shows some of our Fun Highlights, not what could be deemed a "House of Horrors." Finally, we on an ongoing basis host School Groups of children aged 5 – 17 and we have never had complaints from either Teachers or Students in 20 years. The TV advertising schedule is completed for this season by the way.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement is frightening and inappropriate for viewing by children.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Board noted that the advertisement is for Ripley's Odditorium, a museum for modern and historical artifacts and that it features images of exhibits contained within the Odditorium.

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement is xenophobic and features an image of a shrunken head which is frightening. The Board noted that xenophobic means the fear of strangers or foreign people and considered that it is reasonable for a museum to show its exhibits in an advertisement and that this does not of itself amount to xenophobia. The Board noted that the shrunken head only appears briefly on screen and considered that it is not an image which is too frightening or which is inappropriate to be seen by a broad audience including children.

In the Board's view the advertisement presents violence in a manner that is justifiable in the context of the product being advertised.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.