



Case Report

1	Case Number	123/10
2	Advertiser	Red Bull Aust Pty Ltd
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	24/03/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

2.4 - Advertising to Children Code Sexualisation

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement is animated. It depicts a boy feeding Red Bull to his pigs. The boy is then seen with his mother in the kitchen. He asks his mother if he can go to a strip club. The Mother replies 'when pigs fly' and looks out the window to see that the product has given the pigs wings and they are flying. The mother drops her plate in horror. The final scene depicts the boy at a strip club. Strip style music is playing. The boy is at the stage looking up at the stripper. The strippers legs are visible, wearing stockings, she removes a boa and throws it to the boy.

THE COMPLAINT

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

This is the most disgusting use of children in an advertisement I've ever seen. It is seriously suggestive to children promotes sexism and demeans women.

Children are not permitted to enter adult venues because the themes are beyond their understanding. For a company to promote illegal activities involving minors is reprehensible. Due to the depicted age of the boy in the advertisement and showing him being in a strip club at that age is inappropriate. With the legal age for someone to go into a strip club being at least 18 years old they shouldnt be portraying someone under age discussing wanting to go a strip club especially when the rating of the show was M which is 15 plus. Regardless of parents having to control what their children watch I think this ad has inappropriate content and should be removed from being aired on tv at any timeslot on any channel

I do not appreciate the fact that Red Bull have targeted children in this ad and have portrayed a strip club as a place that is apparently ok to go to!! Regardless that the mother objects to this inappropriate suggestion it is offensive to the last degree that they then show this child enjoying what should be adult entertainment! I am offended that this ad uses the supposedly innocent humor of children in a vulgar way to advertise a beverage that could be marketed in a less cheaper way. This ad would not nearly be so bad even if it did not show the child at the strip club at the end. To air this at only 9pm when many children are still up and watching television is unforgivable. Please do something about it!

The ad portrays a child who is clearly under the age of legal consent engaging in sexual conduct through voyeurism with someone who is clearly adult and over the age of legal consent.

Portrayal of sexuality: Implication of a stripper though cartooned

Social Values: A child being taken to a strip club

Issues of undermining the authority of parents or carers: Due to use of the product the child is able to manipulate his mother's decision and ergo undermine her authority.

False or misleading impressions of the products: Red Bull does in reality NOT give you wings. A child unable to separate television from reality may believe this possibly resulting in confusion and misunderstanding or future issues.

I think the inclusion of a child wanting to go to a strip club and ultimately manipulating the situation to convince his mother to allow him to go to the club is completely inappropriate and offensive.

This is obscene and disgusting that a young boy (and he is a young boy because the voice of the boy has not cracked yet from memory) is asking his mother to go to a strip club. And to have a parent allow for the child to attend a strip club sets a horrible example to children. We have a legal age for sex and this young lad in the advertisement is definitely not above or of the legal age. I am not suggesting that young people do not have sex but in my eyes this was a boy of what seem to be 10 yrs of age being allowed to partake in a sexualised/sexual activity attending a strip club. Not at all appropriate. The advertisement is all the more appealing to a young child as it is in cartoon form and was shown in an early time slot. However such an advertisement should not be shown at all regardless of the time slot as it does not build or strengthen family values. Rather it portrays the adult/parental figure the mother in the advertisement as irresponsible. Please take this advertisement off the air and suggest red bull come up with more appropriate material and pass on to them how disgusting it is to be subjected to such material. I will never drink red bull and I will ensure everyone I know is aware of how desperate their advertising measures are.

This is an insulting ad for a number of reasons partly for the mother's acceptance of granting the son's quite inappropriate request to go to a strip club. He is clearly only a boy; what children actually want to go to strip clubs anyway?? What mother would let her underage son go even if she slips up by using a cliché expression such as "when pigs fly". I realize this ad is shown in the adults only time slot but the overall message it sends is insulting.

I object to this ad because it depicts a child in a sexual situation. I believe it is inappropriate to depict children in such a manner.

This is highly inappropriate because not only does it strongly imply that a young person is consuming adult content but also because the boy is clearly young (and seemingly not even a teenager) it depicts such young persons as sexualised through a depicted desire to consume erotic content. Worse this ad implicitly condones this behaviour (through the narrative of a

character being clever overcoming an obstacle and getting what they wants) which sends the message that this sort of thing might be acceptable in contrast to laws which restrict adult content and stand against the sexualisation of young people.

The reasons why I believe the male character shown in the ad is a young person (as defined under NSW child protection laws) is because he is short and slight of build compared to adult characters he is wearing stereotypically childish clothes such as a backwards cap (like Bart Simpson - famously a 10 year old) and he has a high voice. If the boy were a teenager and possibly of a legal age to consume adult content or be more physically mature one would expect he would be larger and have a deeper (or breaking) voice.

This is completely inappropriate especially on broadcast free to air TV. This is not an issue of the rating of content or of the time slot it is shown in but one of something being depicted which is just wrong.

It implies that kids can get away with activities that are restricted to adults if they use this product.

It pushes the boundaries too far in terms of societal values for sexualisation at a young age.

There is already too much of that and this ad is a bad example.

It also implies that kids can undermine the authority of parents by using this product.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Red Bull Energy Drink television advertisements demonstrate the energising effects of Red Bull on body and mind in a spirited, fresh and cheeky way via cartoons portraying witty stories that are targeted towards an adult audience. The stories are imaginary and are not intended to be taken literally or too seriously. The writers have used their creative licence to produce a story that represents the brand's humorous character.

All of our advertisements are reviewed by Commercials Advice (CAD) a division of the industry body, Free TV which represents all of Australia's Commercial Free-To-Air Television licences. The advertisements are placed during appropriate television programs - not those targeted towards children.

'Red Bull Gives You Wiings' is a light-hearted advertising slogan (not a claim made by Red Bull Energy Drink) used in our advertising campaigns and refers to the energetic 'lift' that Red Bull gives the consumer.

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 demeaned women, undermined parental authority and sexualised children.

The Board noted that the advertisement depicts cartoon characters, and that sexually suggestive material can be more mild in impact when in a cartoon context. The Board considered that the cartoon characters depicted are a boy and a mother.

The Board noted that the advertisement is shown after 8.30 at night and is therefore targeted to a more mature audience and not to children.

The Board noted the advertiser's response and considered that some members of the community would find the advertisement humorous, and slightly risqué as with many of the Red Bull advertisements but not inappropriate for the relevant timezone.

However, the Board expressed concern about the theme of the advertisement. In the Board's view most of the community would consider linking a child with a wish to see sexual material inappropriate. The Board considered that the initial part of the advertisement where the child is seen asking his mother to go to the strip club was likely to be offensive to some members of the community but acknowledged that the depiction was unrealistic and, for a mature audience, likely to be seen as a child not really knowing what it is asking for and therefore possibly humorous.

However the Board considered that the final scene of the advertisement which shows that the parent has allowed the child to go to a strip club rendered the advertisement unacceptable. The Board considered that this last scene was problematic on two elements:

- depicting a child at a strip club, even if in an advertisement likely to be seen only by a mature audience, inappropriately linked a child with sex. The Board considered that this was inappropriate, even if viewed only by adults, as it normalises sexualising children.

- depicting the child at the strip club indicated that the mother had permitted the child to go to the venue. The Board considered that, although intended to be amusing, this normalised inappropriate and illegal behaviour.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict sex or sexuality in a manner that is sensitive to the relevant audience and timezone and determined that the advertisement breached section 2.3 of the Code.

The Board noted complainant concerns that the depiction of the mother permitting a son to go to a strip club discriminated against women and promotes undermining of parents. The Board considered that the depiction did not suggest that women or mothers would really behave in this manner and determined that the depiction of the woman did not breach section 2.1 of the Code. The Board also considered that the advertisement did not condone or promote undermining parental authority.

The Board considered that there was no suggestion that consuming the product would actually give people or animals wings and that the advertisement was not misleading.

The Board considered that the depiction of feeding the product to cartoon pigs did not promote feeding animals inappropriately.

Finding that the advertisement breached the Code, the Board upheld the complaints.

ADVERTISER RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

Following a review of the ASB Board's draft Case Report, we wish to advise that Red Bull Australia has decided to discontinue the Red Bull 'Flying Pigs' television commercial on Australian television networks as of 30th March 2010. It should be noted however, that Section 2.3 of the AANA Code of Ethics states "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and, where appropriate, the relevant programme time zone." The Red Bull Flying Pigs TVC is a play on the well-known saying "pigs might fly", highlighting that the story is not just larger than life, it is also totally fictitious. "Flying Pigs" represents the 20 year old Red Bull cartoon advertising style that takes well-known topics or stories and gives them an unexpected, surprising, and often supernatural twist. The Red Bull Energy Drink television advertisements demonstrate the energising effects of Red Bull on body and mind in a spirited, fresh and cheeky way via cartoons portraying witty stories that are targeted towards an adult audience. The stories are imaginary and are not intended to be taken literally or too seriously. We are disappointed that the Advertising Standards Bureau does not see the copy in this light. Whilst we acknowledge that some members of the public may be offended by the humour portrayed in this TVC, it is Red Bull Australia's opinion that as the Flying Pigs TVC was placed during adult programming only, the TVC was not insensitive towards the majority of the intended adult audience and we are therefore disappointed with the Board's findings.

