



# Case Report

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|---|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Case Number                   | 0063/16              |
| 2 | Advertiser                    | Radio Rentals Group  |
| 3 | Product                       | House Goods Services |
| 4 | Type of Advertisement / media | TV - Free to air     |
| 5 | Date of Determination         | 24/02/2016           |
| 6 | DETERMINATION                 | Dismissed            |

## ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Race

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement in question for Radio Rentals, features a cartoon Karate Master who as different products appear in the screen frame is visually using a karate chop action to chop down on the sale prices of the featured products. The audio that accompanies the visual is that of an accentuated karate master who is reading the features, description and prices of the products featured. This advertisement was used to promote the price value of these selected products.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*I found the advertisement to be highly offensive and racist. It characterises Asian people in a way that is demeaning. I am not Asian.*

*There is a cartoon sumo wrestler making chopping motions and using an accent I find offensive and annoying. It is an inappropriate racial stereotype that is not at all suitable for this or any product.*

*That ad campaign featuring the cartoon of an Asian character is racist in its depiction of the stereotype Asian that was prevalent in cartoons etc thirty years and more ago. The snub nose, slanted eyes, buck teeth and the appalling accent accompanied with the cleaver going 'chop-chop'...appalling and ignorant. It has no relevance to the product advertised or the company*

*it's supposed to be endorsing. Radio Rentals is a giant company and surely it could be expected to do better.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*With regard to the above mentioned complaints, we'd like to note that the advertisement is comparable to the campaign we ran in December 2012 where we received similar complaints (complaint reference number 0003/13). The board determined that the material did not discriminate against or vilify any person or section of the community on account of race and did not breach Section 2.1 of the code, and the complaints dismissed.*

*We'd like to submit the following response regarding our "Price Chop" television Advertisement:*

- It is intended to be light hearted and humorous.*
- It is intended to portray a "karate master" character conveying the benefits of prices being chopped i.e. great savings. A Japanese karate master was chosen for the cartoon as Karate originated in Japan and martial arts experts are generally considered to be highly proficient at traditional karate 'punches and strikes' (including "Karate Chops") and we use these as a device to highlight that prices have been cut. We do not believe that this portrayal is racist. As the communication is intended to communicate a large sale where prices have been heavily cut, or "chopped", the association with a Karate Master was a natural choice.*
- It is animated and as such has the characteristics of many animated pieces (including children's cartoons) whereby physical features are exaggerated. Cartoon characterisation almost always accentuates various physical features and has been an accepted form of art for many years. As with any cartoon image, it has been drawn to give the character personality and memorability, nothing more.*
- It has gone through an extensive internal and external approval process, including CAD approval, prior to airing.*

*The complainants seem to focus its concern under 'racism' which may fall under Section 2.1 of the Code.*

*The issue raised by the complainants is that the Advertisement depicts "Asian people" in a deliberate negative and racist manner. We believe most ordinary, reasonable viewers would not draw this conclusion and instead perceive exactly what is intended by the Advertisement, that the character shown is a Japanese karate expert. The leap from a light hearted martial arts character to deliberate racial stereotyping to us seems unreasonable. Our view is therefore that there are no grounds for the complainants' allegations of discrimination or vilification.*

*The other comment raised under the "Ad Description" is that the character depicted has exaggerated facial features, including teeth that have been accentuated, and is dressed in a*

*martial arts uniform. The animated character is just that, a drawn animation and as such is open to some artistic license. As with almost all cartoons (still or animated), many characterisations have exaggerated physical features and voices in order to give them a larger than life personality, warmth and impact. Most ordinary, reasonable people are exposed to cartoons and animations on a daily basis and would not see exaggerated physical features of the character(s) portrayed as anything outside of the accepted norm. Our view is the character depiction does not discriminate against or vilify any person or group.*

*For the above reasons we strongly believe the Advertisement does not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.*

*We would welcome the opportunity to provide any further information or clarification you may require in relation to this matter.*

## **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 depicts an offensive stereotype of an Asian man which is racist and unnecessary.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the Code which requires that 'advertisements shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.'

The Board noted this television advertisement features a cartoon Karate Master demonstrating sale prices using a Karate chop action and the words, “price chop”.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed similar complaints about an advertisement for the same advertiser in case 0003/13 where:

“The Board noted that the advertisement features a cartoon depiction of a Japanese karate master promoting a ‘big price chop’ sale for Radio Rentals/RT Edwards.

The Board noted that the cartoon features of the Japanese character have been exaggerated and considered that this is not inappropriate in a cartoon. The Board considered that the cartoon depiction does not of itself amount to a depiction which would be considered demeaning by most reasonable members of the community.

The Board noted that the character speaks in a strong Asian accent and considered that this is in keeping with his Japanese appearance and again does not amount to a depiction which would be considered demeaning by most reasonable members of the community.

The Board noted that the advertisement is a stereotypical depiction of a Japanese karate master but considered that there is nothing in the depiction which is demeaning or negative and that the overall tone of the advertisement is light-hearted.

The Board considered that the advertisement does not depict an Asian person in a manner which would be considered racist by most reasonable members of the community.”

The Board noted that the current advertisement is almost identical to the advertisement considered in case 0003/13. The Board noted the language used by the cartoon character and considered that whilst he is presented as a caricature of a Karate master the language he uses is clever and he is not presented in a manner which suggests he is idiotic or simple. The Board considered that consistent with its previous determination the cartoon depiction of an identifiable Japanese character in the current advertisement behaving in a manner consistent with his Karate master character traits is not a demeaning or negative depiction.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of their race or nationality.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

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