



Ad Standards Community Panel  
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Advertising Standards Bureau Limited  
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# Case Report

1	Case Number	0104/18
2	Advertiser	General Mills Australia Pty Ltd
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	07/03/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

## ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The television advertisement features women being tempted by unhealthy foods before discovering Fibre One Brownies.

## THE COMPLAINT

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

*It is sexually biased, discriminatory, derogatory & insulting to women as it implies that ONLY women have food/snack cravings. NO men are featured in the ad as having cravings. If it was meant to be "amusing" there should be men & women in the ad. If there were only men in the ad I'd find that equally unacceptable. The aim seems to be simply to belittle women. As a nation we say it's not acceptable to treat women in a demeaning manner so why is an ad like this acceptable.*

## THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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



## *Vilification*

*The complaint notified to us contends that the advertisement is, 'sexually biased, discriminatory, derogatory & insulting to women'.*

*General Mills disagrees that the Advertisement can reasonably be interpreted as having that effect.*

*The Advertisement can be roughly divided into two parts. The first part establishes the conflict experienced by many women – the struggle to maintain a healthy diet in the face of temptation. The second part puts forward Fibre Onetm brownies as a means of managing that struggle.*

*The Advertisement is presented in a light-hearted tone – the characters' reactions to their temptation is presented humorously and the advertisement as a whole is set to the tune of Bonnie Tyler's power ballad, 'Total eclipse of the heart'. The high emotion of the original song is humorously undercut by the reworked lyrics which describe small daily annoyances (for example, 'I get a little bit hungry...' or 'I get a little bit tiered of craving/something that I can't have'). The Advertisement is therefore framed as a humorous portrayal of feelings commonly experienced by women of the target age group.*

*The premise of the complaint is that by portraying women as having cravings, the Advertisement suggests that only women have those cravings and therefore seeks to 'belittle' them for it.*

*General Mills considers that premise to be entirely flawed because it mistakes a light-hearted portrayal of a common experience among women as a mockery of women for having that experience. To the contrary, the Advertisement recognizes a real issue experienced by many women and is sympathetic to, and supportive of, women who experience it.*

*The tone of the Advertisement underscores its fundamentally sympathetic message – it acknowledges a real issue and offers a way to help make managing the issue "a little bit" easier. This is a key reason for choosing the light-hearted tone – by making light of the problem, the difficulty of managing the problem is diminished.*

*The complaint is also based on the premise that a focus on women necessarily excludes men.*

*General Mills does not agree with that premise. While General Mills acknowledges that the advertisement focusses on the experiences of women who are a particular target market for this product, however, merely marketing to one segment of the*



*community does not diminish another part of the community. No part of the advertisement suggests that men do not experience cravings or suggests that men could not or should not consume the product.*

*Finally, to the extent that General Mills' subjective intentions are relevant, the Advertisement is specifically intended to appeal to women who experience cravings and it would be counterproductive and inconsistent with that intention to mock, belittle or vilify women. General Mills believes the advertisement clearly does not do so/*

#### *Exploitative and degrading use of sexual appeal*

*The advertisement does not contain any sexual elements. We consider that the Advertisement complies with the Ethics Code's provisions relating to the depiction of sexual appeal in advertising.*

#### *Violence*

*The Advertisement does not contain and violent elements. We consider that the Advertisement complies with the Ethics Code's provisions relating to the depiction of violence in advertising.*

#### *Sex, sexuality and nudity*

*The advertisement does not contain and sexual elements. We consider that the Advertisement complies with the Ethics Code's provisions relating to the depiction of sex, sexuality and nudity.*

#### *Language*

*The advertisement's use of language is restricted to lyrics to the song played during the duration of the advertisement and written descriptions of the product.*

*The lyrics describe the feeling at the heart of the Advertisement, being the struggle to find light but delicious snacking options, and the feeling that comes from finding an enjoyable way to satisfy one's cravings. Similarly, the written text used in the advertisement is also descriptive.*

*We consider that the language used throughout the Advertisement is appropriate to convey the messages of the Advertisement. Further, none of the language used in the Advertisement is strong, suggestive, obscene or otherwise offensive.*

*Therefore, we consider that the Advertisement complies with the Ethics Code's provisions relating to the use of language.*



### *Health and safety*

*We consider that the Advertisement does not portray any material that is contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.*

### *Clearly distinguishable*

*The Advertisement is clearly and advertisement and is shown during designated advertising slots on television.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the “Panel”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Panel noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement discriminates against women.

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

The Panel 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 Panel noted this television advertisement features women being tempted by unhealthy foods before discovering Fibre One Brownies.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement is sexist because by only featuring women in the advertisement it implies that women are the only ones who have snack cravings and this portrayal demeans women.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the advertisement was specifically made to represent the issue of cravings which many women face, and that by doing this the advertisement is in no way suggesting that men do not also have cravings.

The Panel considered that the fact that women can crave certain foods is a stereotype, but it is not depicted as a negative one and considered that in this advertisement the stereotype was presented in a humorous and light-hearted way.

The Panel considered the advertisement did not portray any of the women in the



advertisement in a negative way, and would not lead most reasonable members of the community to think less of the women in the ad or women in general.

The Panel considered the advertisement did not portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person on the basis of gender.

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