



Case Report

1	Case Number	0125/13
2	Advertiser	All Interactive Entertainment
3	Product	Toys and Games
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Pay TV
5	Date of Determination	01/05/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Graphic Depictions
- 2.6 - Health and Safety Within prevailing Community Standards

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Opening shot of young couple embracing and gazing sorrowfully into each others' eyes, panning to a lighter in his hand as they both look down, closing their hands together over the lighter as he moves to strike the flint. Pans away from to a pile of gas cylinders, and around to zombies pounding on the window of the room. A zombie smashes the window, the shot moves outside and pulls back, revealing the hull of a yacht beached in a street after a disaster which has torn down surrounding trees and destroyed cars, and surrounded by attacking zombies. An explosion tears from the boat and fills the frame. New pan from a cloudy sky swings around a palm frond and pulls back, revealing the palm as part of the game title logo hanging above a beach, then the game packshots and information swing into view. The title logo consists of a silhouetted palm tree, signifying the island, a silhouetted zombie hanging by the neck from the palm tree, signifying the dead. The title "Dead Island Riptide" is to the right, written in dark red and dripping 'blood' onto the exposed debris of the exposed beach below signifying the riptide.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I think that the ad is too graphic in terms of its depiction of suicide, particularly the final image of the man hanging from a tree. I think that this could be very traumatic for people who have experienced the suicide of a family member by hanging (or any other means).

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 AANA Code of Ethics Section 2, I believe that sections 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, & 2.5 are not at issue as the ad contains no discriminatory or sexual material, and contains no verbal language.

With regard to section 2.1 "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised."; I acknowledge that a degree of violence is portrayed in the advertisement in that a zombie is shown smashing a window in an attempt to enter the boat, more zombies are shown moving towards the boat in an aggressive fashion, and the implied death of the two central characters is violent, notwithstanding that it is less violent than the potential alternative. However, the limited depiction of violence in the advertisement is reflective of the theme of the game advertised, and contextually relevant. All violent themes are presented in the readily identifiable fantasy context of a zombie attack in an animated video game scene. The video game being advertised, Dead Island Riptide, is a combat based video game for adults, where the protagonists are placed on an island to fight hordes of bloodthirsty zombies with little hope of survival except through increasingly violent combat episodes. The cinematic implication of violence in the advertisement is intended to convey the desolate terror afflicting the game characters, and I believe is contextually relevant to the product being advertised, as it conveys the hopelessness of the games' characters as they are faced with the overwhelming horror and violence of vast numbers of zombies hunting them, without actually depicting the violence of zombie vs character interaction in the game.

The final scene of the advertisement shows the logo of the game, which consists of a silhouetted palm tree, signifying the island in the game title, a silhouetted zombie hanging by the neck from the palm tree, signifying the dead in the game title, placed to the left of the title "Dead Island Riptide" which is written in dark dripping red to appear bloody. I have attached a copy of the logo by itself, for your inspection. Whilst no violence is being done in the logo, there is a speculative implication of violence in how the zombie may have come to be hanging from the tree, which I believe is justifiable in the context of a game centred around killing zombies.

The complaint received shows that the complainant thinks the ad is too graphic in its' depiction of suicide. Whilst the AANA Code of Ethics Section 2 does not address the depiction of suicide, I understand that a depiction of suicide may be considered violent in and of itself. The first scene of the advertisement does imply the suicide of the protagonists; however this is implied rather than explicit, and is presented in a context readily recognisable as a fantasy i.e. an overwhelming zombie invasion. The scene does not imply that suicide is a viable option in a real world situation. I believe it is substantially dissociative and is unlikely to draw any parallels in the mind of anyone who has had the deep misfortune to have been affected by the suicide of a family member or friend.

The second scene which is primarily the logo of the game does not imply or portray suicide in any fashion. The silhouette of the zombie hanging from the tree is presented without any explanation or back-story, and no connection to the preceding scene is offered; certainly it could not be extrapolated that the implied suicide by explosion of the couple might lead to either of them being hung by the neck from a tree.

I acknowledge the possibility that any portrayal of a body (even a silhouette) hanging by the neck may be unpleasant for a person who has recently experienced the suicide of a family

member or friend, and am of course sympathetic to anyone who has been affected by suicide, but believe that the silhouette image does not represent violence out of context, or otherwise offend prevailing community standards.

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 complainant’s concerns that the advertisement depicts scenes of suicide which are not appropriate for viewing by anyone.

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 the advertisement is for a computer game called “Dead Island Riptide” and features animated imagery including explosions and fighting scenes.

The Board noted that the advertisement is presented in the context of a computer game and considered that most members of the community would recognise that the animated scenes are from the game.

The Board noted that the advertisement was viewed on Pay TV during ‘UFC Unleashed’ and considered that the advertisement is aimed at a mature audience and the content is not inappropriate for an audience of ‘UFC Unleashed’ which would be unlikely to include young children.

The Board noted that imagery in the advertisement includes a male and female character deliberately causing an explosion which appears to lead to their deaths and that the final scene shows the logo of the game which features a figure hanging by a noose from a palm tree. The Board noted the Advertiser had responded to say that whilst they were sympathetic to members of the community who had been affected by suicide, the depictions in the advertisement were intended to be viewed in the context of the game advertised. The Board noted the fantasy content and the stylised nature of the advertisement and considered that the issue of suicide is a depiction of violence which is not justifiable even in the context of an advertisement for a computer game aimed at adults.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Board then considered Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing

Community Standards on health and safety”.

The Board noted that the issue of suicide is a very significant community concern and considered that the use of images which are strongly suggestive of suicide is not appropriate in the context of a television advertisement for a computer game.

The Board considered that by presenting images which suggest suicide the advertisement does depict material which is contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement breached Sections 2.3 and 2.6 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaint.

ADVERTISER RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

AIE are disappointed that the Board has determined that a depiction of suicide in an overtly fantastical setting is an unjustifiable depiction of violence. Whilst real life suicide is of course a matter of grave concern in our communities we feel this ought not to bar the subject from portrayal in a fantasy setting.

AIE have since replaced the advertisement with a new creative.