



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

Level 2, 97 Northbourne Avenue, Turner ACT 2612
Ph (02) 6173 1500 | Fax (02) 6262 9833
www.adstandards.com.au
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0150/14
2	Advertiser	Valvoline (Aust) Pty Ltd
3	Product	Automotive
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	14/05/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Motor vehicle related

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement is for Valvoline SynPower Engine Oil and features men who look primal men/Neanderthal driving motor vehicles and doing burnouts but then transforming into humans when they step out of the car.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Hoon driving is a serious community problem and this ad promotes hook driving. This is very irresponsible and not acceptable considering the road trauma which results from hook driving. I'm aware car companies can't use high speed driving to promote vehicles and this should be considered the same.

The driving seen is unacceptable and encourages reckless driving. I noticed this advertisement a lot over the Easter break and feel it is unacceptable given the risk of the driving shown on tv, encouraging hoons to be like real men.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We refer to your letter dated 20 April 2014 regarding the complaints received concerning the advertisement relating to section 2.6 of the AANA Code of Ethics. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the issues raised in the complaints.

The drivers of the vehicles are clearly depicted as primal men/Neanderthals in a fantasy scenario. This is evidenced by their extreme all over body hair & Neanderthal-like expressions. They are not intended, nor are they portrayed, to be human characters in a realistic setting. It is also clear from the end of the advertisement that a human did not drive the car, when upon exiting the vehicle, the primal man/Neanderthal transforms into a clean-cut human male.

We deny that the advertisement encourages reckless driving or dangerous behaviour in breach of general community standards on health and safety. Nowhere in the advertisement are these drivers glorified or applauded; rather this driving is clearly in the context of a fantasy situation and the portrayal of the drivers as wild creatures clearly implies their behaviour is not sophisticated or desirable and definitely not to be copied.

In any event, we confirm that none of the stunt style driving takes place on any public road or in any public area and were performed by professional stunt drivers. Where the driving takes place in public roads there is no “stunt” driving taking place, only standard driving within the traffic regulations.

On the basis of the above, while we welcome and support the right of individuals to raise concerns about advertising through the ASB, we respectfully submit that the complaints should be dismissed on the basis that the advertisement is clearly fantasy and the driving depicted occurs in the context of that fantasy.

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 glorifies reckless driving which is against prevailing community standards and encourages hoon like driving behaviour.

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

The Board 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 advertisement depicts characters driving various vehicles repeatedly doing ‘burnouts’ including in front of a group. The advertisement ends with the text “advanced engineering for a primal need, man like horsepower.” The final scene shows the Valvoline logo.

The Board noted that the advertisement is intended to make the main characters appear primal or Neanderthal in nature. The Board noted that the distinction between the characters not being ‘real’ or being non-human is not clear. The Board noted that the end shot of the advertisement does show the Neanderthal man getting out of the car and he is clean cut and well groomed, however it is not apparent that the character is no longer going to drive in a manner that is primal or reckless.

The Board noted that the advertisement was a television advertisement with a PG rating, designed to reach the target market of young males aged 18-24 who would relate to the scenarios presented in the advertisement. The Board considered that the message that was being delivered was not clearly about choosing the right oil for your car and was more strongly suggestive of the types of ways a car could be driven.

The Board considered that the advertisement depicts scenes that young adults would relate to and that the approach did undermine the importance of driving carefully and within the law.

The Board considered that the advertisement does encourage the unsafe practice of burnouts or drifting and that this is material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards regarding responsible driving.

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

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

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

Valvoline is disappointed with the Board's decision and will be seeking an independent review. In the meantime, out of respect for the Board's determination, the advertisement will be modified.