



Case Report

1	Case Number	0160/10
2	Advertiser	Mars Confectionery
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	28/04/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Violence Other

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Opens with a group of young men playing American football. An elderly woman and man, transformed from two young male players when they are hungry, are tackled and then offered a Snickers to feel better. In the case of the 'Betty White' image, the person was transformed back to a young man after consuming the product. End image 'You are not you when you are hungry. SNICKERS really satisfies'.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I found the violence towards older people and in particular to the older woman very offensive. I believe this is a very bad image that could de-sensitise young people to violence against women. Every time I see the ad I am disgusted and outraged by the violence towards older people.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The nominated advertisement went to air nationally on Sunday, March 14, having aired in the US since February 7.

The nature of the complaint is in reference to section 2.2 of the AANA Code of Ethics which states that the advertising “shall not present or portray violence...”, with the complainant making reference to the tackle in the ad of the lead character, played (in-part) by Betty White.

The storyline of this ad sees a group of young adult males playing a game of (American) football, the tackle being an inherent and key part of the game. Having long positioned the brand as hunger satisfying, this ad dramatizes the idea that you are not yourself when you're hungry, using Betty White as a fantastical metaphor for how a young guy might play football like an old woman when he is hungry. Later in the commercial, we see another of our obviously hungry young guys transform into an old man, Abe Vigoda, who is likewise tackled to the ground as part of the football game.

The ad is clearly in good humoured fun, with the tackling of the older people in reality a tackling of young guys who only appear as older people for the sake of metaphor – which becomes clear when the lead character eats a snickers and transforms back into his younger, male self.

The complainant takes particular issue with the tackle of Betty White arguing that this would de-sensitize young people to violence against women. Aside from this being a pure fantasy element of the advertisement, the older male metaphor played by Abe Vigoda is a participant to an equivalent tackle showing no true gender bias.

It is also worth noting that Mars USA conducted extensive research prior to this ad launching to ensure it portrayed the Snickers brand only in the most positive light.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ('the Board') considered whether the advertisement met the requirements of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Board noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement depicted violence and that the violence particularly towards the older woman was offensive.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser response. The Board considered that the depictions of young men playing football and using contact tackles are a depiction that is not violent - rather a depiction of a game/sport. The Board noted that the images of the tackles of the older woman and man are depictions that are quite startling and, were they real, would really harm the older person. However the Board considered that the advertisement's theme of 'not feeling yourself when you are hungry' and the transformation of 'Betty White' back to her male self made it clear that there was no violence intended to the older people - rather that the image is a metaphor for how you would feel being tackled when you don't have any energy. The Board considered that the advertisement was exaggerated, clearly intended to be humorous and did not breach section 2.2 of the Code.

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