



Case Report

1	Case Number	0196/16
2	Advertiser	Vodka Plus
3	Product	Alcohol
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet-Social-FB
5	Date of Determination	11/05/2016
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This Facebook advertisement features an image of a man in a blue suit embracing a woman wearing lacy lingerie and high heeled shoes. The text to the right reads, "We tick all the boxes. No carbs. No sugars. Triple distilled. Ready to drink. Infused electrolyte blend".

THE COMPLAINT

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

The Vodka Plus advertisements imply that consumption of the product will result in social and sexual success. The advertisements contain images of scantily clad women, conveying the message that Vodka Plus is healthier and low in calories. The implication is that consumption of the product will result in slim attractive bodies that will attract an ideal man. In one advertisement the man is fully clothed but the woman is in a bikini and high heels, which objectifies women and infers that a woman's beauty is her greatest commodity.

By claiming that Vodka Plus is healthy and reduces or does not cause hangovers, they are potentially making false health claims. Furthermore, people may be encouraged to drink more because of supposed health benefits/lack of hangover/low calories.

One of the ads refers to promotions such as free delivery and "heavily discounting 4 pack purchases". The promotion of multi packs may also encourage excessive consumption.

One ad refers to Big Brother contestant and Fitness professional Matt Filippi enjoying a Vodka Plus "hand in hand with a game of golf". This implies a connection between consumption of the product and sporting success.

Finally, it is unclear whether appropriate age-gating is in place for the ads. Nonetheless, some young people will lie about their age on social media, therefore gaining them access to these ads.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

No comments, we don't believe it breaches advertising codes as it doesn't have a sexual feel to it at all, so we are just waiting to hear the board's interpretation of it and the other 3 images of interest so we have clarity.

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 an image of a scantily clad woman which is objectifying and is not appropriate for young people to view, implies that Vodka Plus is healthier and low in calories, and that it is misleading in its suggestion that it does not cause hangovers, promotes the purchase of multi-packs and suggests that the product will lead to social, sexual and sporting success.

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement is misleading. The Board noted that although the issue of misleading advertising for a food or beverage product is covered by the AANA Food and Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code (Food Code), alcohol is an excluded product therefore this complaint cannot be considered under the Food Code. The Board noted that the issue of misleading advertising falls under Section 1 of the AANA Code of Ethics and therefore cannot be considered by the Board.

The Board noted that the complaint about this advertisement would also be considered by the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Adjudication Panel against the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) that contains alcohol specific advertising standards and that this Code considers some of the issues raised by the complainant, specifically the issue of social and sexual success, the promotion of multi-packs, and associations with sporting success.

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 that this advertisement is on the advertiser's Facebook page and features an image of a man in a blue suit embracing a woman who is wearing black lingerie and high heeled shoes. The Board noted the complaint that 'the man is fully clothed but the woman is in a bikini and high heels which objectifies women and implies that a woman's body is her greatest commodity'.

The Board noted the image depicts a man in a doorway dressed in a suit embracing a woman dressed in lingerie. The Board noted that some members of the community could find it sexist to use a woman in lingerie next to a fully clothed man. The Board considered that the impression of the advertisement is of a man arriving home from work being greeted by his partner and that there is no suggestion either positive or negative about the value or worth of the woman. The Board noted that the use of a woman in lingerie is not relevant to the product, however the Board noted that 'the Code does not require that images of women are only used in relation to relevant products' (0331/13) and considered that the use of an attractive woman does not of itself amount to discrimination or vilification. In the Board's view the advertisement is targeting a specific market of adult vodka drinkers and the overall image is artistic and sophisticated rather than suggestive of an inequality of the genders.

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 gender.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states: "Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people."

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the woman is presented as a sexual object and noted that in order to be in breach of this Section of the Code the manner in which the woman is presented needs to be both exploitative and degrading.

The Board considered that the advertisement does employ sexual appeal in its use of a woman wearing lingerie next to a fully dressed man. The Board noted the AANA Practice Note which defines both exploitative and degrading as follows:

- 'exploitative' means clearly appearing to purposefully debase or abuse a person or group of person, for the enjoyment of others, and lacking moral artistic or other values.
- 'degrading' means lowering in character or quality a person or group of persons.

The Board considered that while some members of the community would find the use of a woman in the manner presented in this advertisement as sexualised and inappropriate, in the Board's view the advertisement presents the woman as an equal partner to the man in this very stylised scene and is not debasing of women and does not lower women in character.

The Board considered that the advertisement does employ sexual appeal however it does not do so in a manner which is exploitative and degrading.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience".

The Board noted the advertisement depicts a man and a woman embracing. The Board noted the woman is wearing lingerie and considered that her private areas are covered and the level of nudity is mild.

The Board noted the pose of the couple and considered that while the woman's lingerie does give the image a sexualised tone in the Board's view the actual pose is not sexualised.

The Board noted that the advertisement is on the advertiser's Facebook page and considered that in the context of an alcohol product aimed at adults and shown on a social media site which is itself aimed at persons aged 13 and over, the advertisement is clearly targeting an adult audience. The Board acknowledged the complainant's concerns that children can lie about their ages and access Facebook pages for alcohol products but considered that even if children were to see the advertisement in the Board's view the content of the advertisement does not so sexualised as to be inappropriate.

The Board considered that the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant viewing audience.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

The Board noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement suggests that Vodka Plus is healthier and low in calories. The Board noted it had previously dismissed a similar complaint about claims made in an advertisement for beer in case 0165/16 where:

"The Board noted that the information provided in the advertisement is that the beers in the campaign are on average 99.9% sugar free and preservative free. The Board noted that the advertisement makes no health claims and considered that most reasonable members of the community would recognise that beer, as an alcoholic beverage, is never likely to be classed as a healthy choice. The Board acknowledged that although the beers may be sugar and preservative free they will still have other nutritional components which may be less positive but considered that the information presented in the advertisement does not make claims regarding any other components of the beer or of beer overall."

In the current advertisement the Board noted the claims made by the advertiser that the product has no sugars or carbs and that it has been infused with electrolytes. Consistent with

its determination in case 0165/16, the Board considered that the advertisement makes no claims (positive or negative) regarding other components of the product. The Board considered that the advertiser is presenting the product as being a lower carbohydrate product but that this information is presented in an informative manner and there is no suggestion that the product should be drunk instead of a non-alcoholic beverage or that the product should be drunk to excess.

Overall the Board considered that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on responsible alcohol consumption.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

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