



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0219/14
2	Advertiser	Mars Confectionery
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	25/06/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Religion

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement shows a group of Monks bellringing. They take a break to eat a Mars Bar then we see them bellringing with such enthusiasm that they are carried up towards the bell by the ropes. We then see a Mars Bar on screen and the words, "Work rest play".

THE COMPLAINT

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

I request this ad to be removed asap

I feel that this advertisement objectifies one group of people (monks) and is disrespectful and insulting to the legacy of monastic philosophy which continues to inform current thought in modern society in the fields of medicine, education, and social welfare. Secondly, the advertisement is insulting to the Western cultural tradition in that it is a monk (The Venerable Bede) who gave us the Historian ecclesiastical genetic Anglo rum, a work of utmost significance which is considered to be one of the most important original references on Anglo-Saxon history.

Further, I consider the advertisement contravenes 2.1 of the AANA which states that "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not portray people 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" in that the advertisement "discriminates against", the cultural and religious practice of bell-ringing and a section of society that carries out bell-ringing (monks). Secondly, it shows the monk bell-ringers in a degrading and ridiculing light in that they are shown eating chocolate confectionery which is not compatible with the objectives of a monastic life, and may be considered the sin of gluttony.

Finally, the advertisement contains no information whatsoever about the product being advertised (a Mars Bar), although it is not clear from the Code of Ethics whether the advertisement does actually have to contain such information.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In terms of the AANA Code of Ethics, we contend that the advertisement does not promote discrimination against, or vilification of, people on the basis of their religion (as referred to in the AANA Code of Ethics Practice Note). Nor does it attract sections 2.2 – 2.6 of the Code of Ethics.

In relation to section 2.1 of the Code, there is no discrimination against people based on their religion as the advertisement does not advocate or promote unfair or less favourable treatment of bell ringers or monks of any denomination. Further, we submit that there is no vilification in that the subjects of the advertisement are not subjected to intimidation, hatred or contempt. We would also contend that there is no humiliation or ridicule involved as the group of monks is depicted in a positive way, enjoying their task and the company of their colleagues. Although they are then depicted enjoying a MARS® Bar, we submit that no gluttony is suggested, as they only take a bite. It is acknowledged that the effect is exaggerated, but this is shown in a humorous and good-natured fashion. The monks are not depicted as behaving negatively, but rather as enjoying their task in a heightened way.

The general premise behind the broader campaign for the product "MARS® Bar®" is that people could do with a lift when completing everyday activities, referring to the tagline "Work, Rest, Play". This broader campaign has depicted a range of people acting out various activities such as building a cubby house (Canada), watching a soccer match (UK), riding a train (Australia) and working on a construction site (Australia). In each case, they have a rest and are then able to complete their activities with light-hearted exaggeration.

The intention of this particular advertisement was to demonstrate, in an entertaining way, that working, and then resting, can lead to play, consistent with the tagline for the campaign “Work, Rest, Play”.

We submit that almost all viewers would see the advertisement in the context of the broader campaign and would realise that it was not aimed at promoting a negative impression about monks or other religious observers, or even secular bell ringers.

We believe that no other sections of the Code have any application.

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 complainants’ concerns that the advertisement is insulting to Christians in its disrespectful portrayal of Monks bellringing to rap music.

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 the advertisement features Monks bellringing and that after eating Mars Bars they ring the bells with such enthusiasm that they are lifted high off the ground.

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that the Monks are portrayed in a disrespectful manner. The Board noted that the Monks appear to have more energy after eating the Mars Bars and considered that the advertisement depicts the Monks in a positive manner as they are clearly enjoying the bellringing.

The Board noted that Monks are not exclusive to Christianity as they can also be found in other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Taoism. The Board noted that the depiction of Monks in the advertisement was intended to be a light-hearted portrayal. The

Board noted it had recently dismissed complaints about the portrayal of elderly people in a Specsavers advertisement (0172/14) where:

“The Board considered that while the suggestion that older people like Bingo is a stereotype the advertisement portrays a positive depiction of people doing Zumba which is empowering and not demeaning.”

In the current advertisement the Board considered the depiction of the Monks enthusiastically embracing the bellringing to be a positive depiction. The Board noted that Monks traditionally follow a life which is devoted to prayer, reflection and work and considered that whilst Mars Bars would not generally be considered as a normal food for Monks to consume in the Board’s view the depiction of the Monks eating Mars Bars does not amount to a depiction which most members of the community would find demeaning, discriminatory or vilifying on account of a vocation in a religious order.

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

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