



**ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BOARD**

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0247/17
2	Advertiser	Fonterra Brands (Australia) Pty Ltd
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	07/06/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

Food and Beverage Code 2.1 (a) - Misleading / deceptive

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Nationality

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement opens with a woman making pizza with generic tasty cheddar cheese. A voice over then asks why she is using that cheese. An elderly Italian Australian woman then suggests the use of a Perfect Italiano cheese blend of mozzarella, parmesan and cheddar instead. The original woman makes the pizza with the Perfect Italiano cheese blend to approval from her family, save for her son who states he wanted pineapple on the pizza. The elderly woman's voice is heard humorously commenting that his mother wanted a daughter, such that they are both disappointed.

THE COMPLAINT

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

2 reasons.

1) The the offensive racist mature Italian female stereotype portrayed.

2) The claim that the product is authentic Italian when cheddar is not a cheese readily available, let alone used on pizza, in Italy.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

A. *The Ad portrays an offensive racist mature Italian female stereotype.*

The advertiser does not agree that the Ad portrays mature Italian females in an offensive way for the following reasons:

(a) *The advertiser acknowledges and respects that contemporary Australia is a multi-cultural nation constituted of people from a variety of backgrounds and ethnicities. An Italian accent is not uncommon in mature age persons who may have emigrated from Italy, and is representative of diverse Australian culture. Suppressing a natural accent would be discriminatory and offensive.*

(b) *The person playing the mature Italian role in the Ad is not a professional actress. She is an authentic Italian Australian grandmother and she speaks in her natural accent.*

(c) *Her lines were written by an Italian Australian who based his script on, among others, his own cultural experience. This was necessary to ensure authenticity and in order for the script to resonate with the audience.*

(d) *The script or portrayal does not depict mature Italian women in a derogatory manner. Instead, it is contended that the portrayal is one of an experienced, wise and commanding figure with great culinary knowledge and ability, superior to that of the other woman shown in the Ad. This is consistent with the script writer's experience of his own Italian heritage wherein the matriarch is responsible for handing down culinary tradition.*

(e) *It appears that the current complaint is the only negative feedback received by the Advertiser.*

B. *The claim that the product is authentic Italian when cheddar is not a cheese readily available, let alone used on pizza in Italy.*

(a) *The Ad does not claim that Perfect Italiano is from Italy. Perfect Italiano is named after an Italian Australian, Italian immigrant Natale Italiano who arrived in Australia In 1922 and brought his recipes here.*

(b) *The fact that cheddar may not be used in Italy is irrelevant since cheddar is used in Australia, and the Ad is targeted to Australians in Australia. Further, the cheese shown, Perfect Pizza is clearly a cheese blend incorporating mozzarella and parmesan, which are Italian varieties.*

(c) *Perfect Pizza is a mix of both Italian and Australian influences, catered for the Australian palate.*

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (the “Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches the AANA Food and Beverages Advertising and Marketing Communications Code (the “Food Code”) or Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement is misleading referring to cheddar being authentic Italian and offensive and stereotypical in its portrayal of Italian women.

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

The Board noted that the product advertised is food and that therefore the provisions of the Food Code apply. In particular, the Board considered section 2.1 of the Food Code which states:

'Advertising or marketing communications for food ...shall be truthful and honest, shall not be or be designed to be misleading or deceptive or otherwise contravene prevailing community standards, and shall be communicated in a manner appropriate to the level of understanding of the target audience of the Advertising or Marketing Communication with an accurate presentation of all information including any references to nutritional values or health benefits.'

The Board noted that the advertisement depicts a Mother in a kitchen preparing a meal. The woman lifts up a block of cheese and the advertisement then shows another older woman (her own mother) talking about the cheese she should be using. The older woman refers to the Perfect Italiano brand.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that cheddar is not a cheese readily available or used on pizza in Italy.

The Board noted that the voiceover state that “it is easy to make authentic meals when you think Italiano.” The Board noted that the reference to authentic meals is a reference to the pizza and to Italian meals in general and not a direct reference to the cheese itself. The Board noted that the advertisement does not state that the cheese is an authentic Italian cheese and the pack states it is a cheese mix. The Board considered that the overall impression is that the combined cheese product will enhance the meal.

The Board considered that the target audience for this product is the main grocery buyer. The Board considered that the target audience of adults will understand the message in the advertisement regarding the cheese product and the enhancement of the pizza meal.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics 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 complainant’s concern that the advertisement is offensive and racist with a mature Italian female stereotype portrayed.

The Board noted the advertisement features a woman thinking of her own mother and the advice she would be giving about the meal preparation.

The Board noted the Practice note to the Code that states that “Advertisements can suggest stereotypical aspects of an ethnic group or gender with humour provided the overall impression of the advertisements is not a negative impression of people of that ethnicity or gender.”

The Board noted that the woman is seen remembering her own mother and that the result of this memory is an ostensibly better choice in cheese. The Board considered that the portrayal of the older Italian woman is not a negative one and she is not portrayed in a way that is offensive or degrading. The Board considered that the daughter looks a bit surprised about the thoughts she is having but she reminisces fondly about her mother and takes her advice about the product choice.

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

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Food Code or the Code of Ethics, the Board dismissed the complaint.