



Case Report

1	Case Number	0288/17
2	Advertiser	MG Motor Australia
3	Product	Vehicle
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	12/07/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Violence

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement opens with the 1940s motorsport days of MG racing, showing two mechanics working on an MG. Once the car takes off, the mechanics celebrate by clapping, cheering and a playful tap on the behind.

This then transitions to the free-spirited 1970s MG B, with a man honking the horn and his girlfriend excitedly greeting him with a hug. The male opens the door of the MG B and flirtatiously taps her on the behind, a gesture delivered as a cheeky nod to the mischievous mentality of the 1970s. They happily drive off in the convertible.

We then move to the modern-day evolution of MG with the new MG GS SUV parked at the beach. A woman honks the horn on the car while her husband exits the water. She copies the flirtatious look the male did in the earlier 1970s scene and throws her husband a towel before tapping him on the behind, showing the empowerment of the woman in this modern age. He reacts by laughing before getting in the car with his family and driving off.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am offended that the advertiser believes that smacking another person is acceptable. I believe this trivialises violence towards others and suggests that is it normal and OK to hit

people, and gives the impression that it is just a bit of harmless fun. It is in contradiction to domestic violence campaigns that are trying to dispel this notion. It is never OK to hit people. Further, the advertisement is shown during young people's viewing time and may influence poor attitudes to violence.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Thank you for bringing to our attention the complaints you received regarding our MG GS advertising. MG Motor Australia is committed to responsible advertising and we have carefully reviewed the complaint concerning the TVC, including all components of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

In direct response to the complaint - the TVC was created to be a light-hearted representation of the MG brand through time. The gesture in question is a playful tap between friends and spouses that can be seen in different scenarios throughout the story of the TVC.

Under no circumstances does MG Motor condone violence of any kind.

There is a humorous context surrounding the gesture in each scenario, with the gesture a tap between adults that does not harm (and is not intended to harm) the other person - this is portrayed by the smiling and laughing reactions captured. The gentle tap is also accompanied by comical sound effects, accentuating the light-hearted nature of the gesture. We drew inspiration from comic books, kids' cartoons and slapstick style TV shows which use similar sound techniques to portray humour and playfulness.

The ad was tested against a panel of 100 men and women of various ages and backgrounds, and was approved by our legal team. The ad was also aired more than 7,000 times on television.

Further, the ad has been viewed by more than 100,000 people on our Facebook page, with not a single complaint posted to the page

We are confident that this TVC does not breach any part of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics, as detailed below:

2.1: Discrimination or vilification: The content of the TVC does not discriminate or vilify against any person or section of the community.

2.2: Exploitative & degrading: The content of the TVC does not contain any sexual, exploitative or degrading material.

2.3: Violence: The content of the TVC does not portray violence. The gesture in question is a playful tap in a light-hearted context that is in no way designed to be offensive or violent.

2.4: Sex, sexuality & nudity: The content of the TVC does not contain any sex, sexuality or nudity.

2.5: Language: The content of the TVC does not contain any inappropriate, strong or obscene language.

2.6: Health & safety: The content of the TVC does not show any material contradicting prevailing standards of health or safety.

2.7: Distinguishable Advertising or Marketing Communications: The TVC was aired during evening programs on television in Brisbane.

MG has always embraced an element of tongue-in-cheek humour within its advertisements. We designed this TVC to be in the same vein, and in no way was the TVC designed to be offensive or violent.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response.

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 people smacking other people on their bottoms which trivialises violence and contradicts current domestic violence campaigns.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Board noted that this television advertisement features different people driving MG cars over the years, from the 1940s days of motorsport to modern day usage.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern over the depiction of people smacking the bottoms of other people.

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that the advertisement was intended to be a light-hearted representation of the MG brand and the depiction of people ‘smacking bottoms’ was intended to be a playful tap between friends and spouses.

The Board noted that each time we see a bottom being tapped a sound effect accompanies the visuals. A minority of the Board noted that there is no need to show bottoms being smacked to promote a motor vehicle and considered that the accompanying sound effects highlight the smacks so that they stand out, which in the Board’s view is inappropriate and not justifiable in the context of the advertised product.

The majority of the Board however considered that the sound effect accompanying the taps on the bottoms is comedic and the overall suggestion is playful and slapstick rather than violent. The Board noted that there are three scenes in total where someone taps another person's bottom: a man taps another man, a man taps a woman, and a woman taps a man. The Board considered that there is no suggestion that the advertisement is condoning violence or suggesting that either gender should or would behave in this manner, and in the Board's view the taps are not sexualised or suggestive of sexual violence.

The majority of the Board acknowledged that violence, in particular domestic violence, is of serious community concern but considered that in this instance the advertisement does not depict, encourage or condone violence of any form and overall the advertisement does not contradict current domestic violence campaigns.

The Board determined that the advertisement did breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

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