



Case Report

1	Case Number	0340/11
2	Advertiser	Cerebos Foods
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	14/09/2011
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Violence Other
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Age

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A bus load of cartoon style tomatoes stop to allow more tomatoes to get on and as they squeeze on the bus they push out salt and sugar shakers. The tomatoes have child-like characteristics and the salt and sugar shakers are given elderly characteristics. There are still some salt and sugar shakers remaining on the bus.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The ad depicts two senior citizens- in this case 'salt' and 'sugar' being forcibly evicted from public transport by children. I am not even a senior citizen myself- I am in my 20s but I have seen enough discrimination against the elderly to know that this is a major problem. I have seen repeated cases where children- particularly school children will not vacate their seats for the elderly the disabled or pregnant women and here we have an ad positively reinforcing the message that it is acceptable even desirable to physically assault the elderly by throwing them off public transport. Given that many elderly people are unable to drive and hence rely on public transport are we now saying that they are unable to even use this service to stay a part of society?

This ad isn't something that directly affects me but I find it highly insulting to the rights and dignity of the elderly in our society. I sincerely hope that this ad is removed from the air.

The depiction of the sugar and salt shakers as old people is in poor taste and undermines the little respect that many of our older citizens are given in our communities.

This advertisement is blatantly ageist! It shows cartoon style children (as tomatoes) getting on a bus and throwing old people with walking sticks (salt and sugar shakers) off the bus as bad things.

This does not send a good message to our children as far as old people are concerned. Being an old person I object to this type of advertising.

In short: age discrimination.

I was offended by the advertisement because it was directed at children. The scene depicts a large number of tomatoes obviously supposed to be school children piling onto a bus. On the bus were two old containers depicted as old men standing in the bus. There was a surge of young tomatoes which swept the old containers off the bus and onto the ground below. The ad is definitely symbolic and the bad stuff they have thrown off the bus supposedly Salt and Sugar are the two old people. This is giving young people the wrong message that old people are bad and should be thrown off the bus. Fountain could have done the same ad and shown salt as salt and sugar as sugar without depicting them as old people. Old people deserve better from people. They deserve to have young tomatoes get up and give them a seat not throws them off the bus. It is a pure example of age discrimination that should not be tolerated in today's world.

In the advertisement the Sugar and Salt shakers were depicted as being "old" and all the small tomatoes that kick/push them off are depicted as being young. I am a pretty open minded person and I actually like and use the product being advertised; however I found the advertisement to be very offensive. The advertisement tacitly encourages disrespect to the older generations endorses kicking them off a bus and treating them badly. There are a number of subtle messages within the ad sugar and salt are bad, sugar and salt are associated with older people hence old people are bad.

Many of us enjoy and readily take for granted the Australia that it is today because of the blood sweat and tears from the generations before us who had worked so hard to uphold these ideal human values of e.g. mateship, wisdom, trustworthiness, maturity and responsibility. Even defending our country from being invaded back in the world wars. As such these elderly people deserve our appreciation in the society. Even if we disregard this the mere fact that they are generally less mobile it should be instinctive that we offer the more accessible seats for them on a bus for instance just as we would for the disabled or mothers with their infants and so on.

Instead the elderly are being marginalised by society as most ads already promote youth, liveliness fitness external appearances (rather than inner character and virtues) doing what we want and not what we should etc. that mock the aforementioned ideal human values that our previous generations have upheld. But to top it all off effectively what this ad is saying is that it is OK for us to ignore and even kick the elderly off the bus leading to their injuries if not their deaths as long as we are happily together with our friends. I am not elderly yet but I don't need to be a rocket scientist to be absolutely appalled by this and to also see just how obvious and how much of a kick in the guts the (perhaps) inadvertent message this ad is saying to the elderly: you might as well just go and die off now because you are no longer useful you are just getting in the way and wasting our space and we don't care about you or how you feel.

The same ad could just be done with the salt and pepper depicted as some generally unwanted element without portraying them as some stereotypical and marginalised group in society (in this case the elderly). The same main message would have still come across but without the elderly-bashing subtle element.

I just cannot believe this ad got through all the way from conception to production to release without anyone seeing this obvious issue.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The new commercial from Cerebos was created to bring to life the news that there are new sauces in the Fountain range that have reduced salt and sugar content compared to the regular Fountain sauce. The intention was to do this in a way that caught the attention and imagination of main grocery buyers.

To achieve this, we took a light-hearted approach and created an imaginary world in which excited, happy-go-lucky tomato characters are seen squeezing on to an imaginary red bus (representing the sauce bottle packaging of the product). On board the bus there are already several tomatoes and salt and sugar characters, representing the make-up of the existing product.

Some of the salt and sugar characters are seen being squeezed out of the bus due to the sheer quantity of exuberantly animated tomatoes who are squeezing on board.

Rather than any malice, disrespect or violent intentions towards the salt and sugar characters (as has been raised in the complaints) there is instead lots of general enthusiasm and excitement amongst the tomatoes. The salt and sugar are not singled out by the playful tomatoes, nor attacked.

The salt and sugar are caught up in the wave of excitement as the tomatoes squeeze into the bus and, rather than being attacked, they are squeezed from the bus as it fills up with tomatoes. This scenario is presented as a very clear metaphor for the squeezing out of some salt and sugar from the product by the manufacturer.

Please note that a few salt and sugar characters are seen remaining on the bus as it pulls away, further reducing any implication of discrimination or vilification. This was done primarily to avoid any deliberate misrepresentation that all traces of sugar and salt had been removed from the product and to show that some salt and sugar still remained on the bus (and therefore in the product). This sort of careful consideration and attention to detail, along with decisions such as the choice of friendly animation style, upbeat music and sound effects, are indicative of Cerebos and its agency desire to avoid any conflict with the letter or spirit of the Codes (specifically 2.1 Discrimination or vilification and 2.2 Violence – as raised by the complaints)

All of our ads are developed with awareness of the Codes. This commercial is light hearted, whimsical and totally fantastical in both setting and storyline. At the same time, the commercial accurately conveys the news regarding the product and clearly points out the facts regarding the amount of salt and sugar that has been reduced. Regarding this, please also note that CAD has pre-approved the commercial for general viewing and has been satisfied with all product substantiation provided.

The target audience for this commercial are Main Grocery Buyers.

See attached substantiation letter for Fountain (and White Crow) Sauce Claims.

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 discriminates against the elderly, encourages children to not respect older people and portrays physical assault.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states: “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 ... age...”

The Board noted that the advertisement was a cartoon animation that featured tomatoes squeezing salt and sugar shakers off a bus, with the tomatoes appearing to be school children and the salt and sugar shakers elderly adults. The Board noted that some salt and sugar shakers remained on the bus.

The Board considered that this advertisement could be interpreted in a number of ways and that, whilst some members of the community may believe it depicts elderly ‘people’ being ejected from a bus by ‘children’, in the Board’s view the most likely interpretation of the advertisement is of increased tomato and reduced salt and sugar content in the advertised product, as per the advertiser’s intentions.

The Board considered that age discrimination is a serious issue which advertisers should be sensitive to, and some members of the Board expressed concern over the potential interpretation of this advertisement. However the Board considered that this advertisement did not discriminate or vilify older people.

Based on the above, the Board determined that, in this instance, the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society on account of their age.

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

The Board then noted Section 2.2 of the Code which requires that ‘advertising or marketing communications not use violence unless it is appropriate in the context of the advertised product or service.’

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns that the advertisement portrays violence against the elderly. The Board noted that when the tomatoes get on the bus their sheer volume squeezes out the salt and sugar shakers. The Board considered that most reasonable members of the community would find the advertisement to be a humorous depiction of cartoon food

ingredients and not a depiction of violence. The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict or condone violence against the elderly or against any other section of society.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code as it does not depict or condone violence.

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