



Case Report

1	Case Number	0362/17
2	Advertiser	Roadshow Film Distributors Pty Ltd
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet
5	Date of Determination	23/08/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

There are two versions of this internet advertisement for the new movie, Annabelle 2. Both open on an image of a large house and they include scenes taken from the movie, including images of a large house and a creepy looking doll. The voiceover describes the movie and information on the release date is provided at the end.

THE COMPLAINT

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

It was only short, but I found the trailer very disturbing and there was no warning that I was about to be exposed to psychologically disturbing material and it was very difficult to avoid the ad. By the time I realised what the ad was about, I had no chance to try and skip the ad, it was already over and the damage was done. I also had no choice but to sit through the ad if I wanted to watch the video. I had earphones in so I couldn't cover my ears and I was trying to find the pause button on my phone screen so I also couldn't avoid watching the content. My advice would be that 18+ rated film trailers should not be allowed as unavoidable, in skip-able pre-video ads on YouTube. I shudder at the idea of 6 year olds trying to watch a video about an Olympic diver (which was the video I was trying to watch at the time) and they're suddenly confronted with a lingering, haunting, disturbing horror movie trailer.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The ads do not contain discriminatory material, exploitative or degrading material, strong or obscene language, nudity, or material contrary to health and safety standards. The ads do however depict violence and contain scary and supernatural themes. This however is relevant to the Film being advertised which is of the horror genre and accordingly unavoidable.

We can confirm that Roadshow Films use the below safety measures when advertising horror films such as ANNABELLE 2 via YouTube :

Trailers only targeted to users over 18 years of age, using Google first party data. No traffic is served to underage users or users of unknown age. This is based on users' login data for any Google account associated with a YouTube account.

Roadshow Films also applies brand safety measures, these includes negative targeting. Negative targeting is where Roadshow exclude content that children consume to avoid these trailers being exposed to children (this includes non-brand safe or kids-safe keywords and placements, content category and contextual exclusions).

It should be noted that anyone regardless of age anyone can access and view content such as these ads if they actively search for the trailers or horror films in general, (and Roadshow cannot control this) but parental control filters should protect underage children from doing so.

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 material from a horror movie which is disturbing and not appropriate for YouTube.

The Board viewed 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 there are two versions of the advertisement, each featuring scenes from the new movie, ‘Annabelle Creation’ which is currently airing in cinemas.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed similar complaints in case 0211/15 where:

“The Board noted there are two television advertisements featured and that they both contain scenes from the movie including supernatural themes and vision of a young girl in one and a

young boy in the other. The details of when the movie is to appear in Cinemas are seen at the end...

...The Board noted that whilst some of the images used in the advertisement do depict supernatural activity, these scenes are relevant to the movie and are clearly presented in the context of excerpts from the movie.

Noting the CAD rating and that the advertisement includes quite stylised and unrealistic images, the Board considered that the advertisement presented violence in a manner which is justifiable in the context of the product advertised and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.”

The Board noted that the current advertisement also contains scenes from the movie being promoted. The Board acknowledged that in order to promote a movie the advertiser needs to show some footage of the that movie and considered in this instance that while the scenes used did create a sense of menace and fear, in the Board’s view the advertisement is suspenseful with the emphasis being on what we don’t actually see.

The Board noted the complainant’s concern that the advertisement was aired on YouTube and they had no choice but to watch it. The Board noted that YouTube has an age-restriction policy which allows certain content to be aired to adults who have signed in using their Google account. The Board noted the advertiser’s response that they had taken care to target users aged over 18 and considered that while the complainant does not like to see horror movie trailers, the advertiser is legally allowed to promote this product and as the complainant has identified that they are an adult, in the Board’s view the advertisement has not been aired inappropriately.

The Board acknowledged that some members of the community would prefer that horror movies not be advertised at all but considered that in this instance the content of both versions of the advertisement is unlikely to cause alarm and distress to most adults who use YouTube. Consistent with previous determinations (0448/14, 0211/15, 0310/16) the Board considered that the images in the advertisement are supernatural rather than violent and are clearly presented in the context of excerpts from a movie.

The Board determined that the advertisement depicted a level of violence that was justifiable in the context of promoting a horror movie and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

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

