



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

1. Case Number :	0363-20
2. Advertiser :	Ford Australia
3. Product :	Automotive
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	Internet
5. Date of Determination	16-Dec-2020
6. DETERMINATION :	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This internet advertisement depicts a man and woman in the city at the back of the Ford Puma after a shopping trip. They are with their dog which is being walked by the man. The woman uses her foot to open the boot of the vehicle. As she closes the boot the background flickers off to show viewers that the couple are actually not in the city at all but in a studio with a green screen behind them. The dog is shown to not be a real dog but, actually, played by an actor wearing a green screen suit. The actor playing the lead male pats the actor playing the part of the green screen hound on the head before they all walk off screen as the action for the scene has stopped.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Because it portrays a white man as being so inferior he can be put on a chain and collar and treated like a dog by a man who is not white and his white female partner. If the situation was reversed the ad would never have been approved let alone aired on YouTube. I object to the disgustingly blatant racism it communicates and the appalling message it sends to the community at large that white men are somehow inferior to females and men of non-white ethnicity.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE



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

The complaint alleges that the man playing the dog is perceived to be inferior because he is wearing a chain and collar and being treated like a dog. The whole scenario depicted is fictional and these are paid actors playing character roles with a view to conveying to the audience that this fuss is not required because the car looks so good on its own. It is expected that the viewing audience would understand this and realise that the first section of the Advert is a depiction of a typical acting scene once the second half flips to a typical commercial shoot, as viewers then see the green screen and the “trickery” is unveiled.

This Advert was not intended to be in any way ‘offensive, racist or appalling’ as the complainant alleges. Neither ethnicity nor skin colour was relevant to the characters being played by these actors, and no person depicted or involved in this Advert is, or was made to feel, inferior to any other. Such a misguided interpretation of this Advert is disappointing.

Section 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics states that Advertising or Marketing Communication 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.

When casting we saw a wide variety of actors from different backgrounds and our selection process focused on choosing actors that were best suited to the roles based on their casting video performances. This is clear throughout our campaign for Puma, where we have used a variety of actors of different ethnicities and genders. The actor playing the Afghan Hound in the green screen suit also plays a role in one of our Escape TVCs as a lead actor due to his versatility and sound acting skills.

As you may know, Ford is a global organisation which has a diverse workforce and prides itself on its strong culture of diversity, equity and inclusion. As part of this culture, Ford has many initiatives which promote diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the organisation between people of different backgrounds, genders, ethnicities and sexual orientation. To suggest that our Advert discriminates or communicates blatant racism or implies that any person is inferior to another is against all of these initiatives and actions and is a misrepresentation of what’s depicted in the Advert.

Based on the above we do not believe that there is anything that depicts discrimination or vilification of any person or section of the community in this Advert or in any of the assets used in this campaign.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).



The Panel noted the complainant's concerns that it portrays a white male as being inferior to a darker-skinned male and a female.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

Section 2.1: Advertising or Marketing Communication 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.

The Panel noted the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of:

- Discrimination - unfair or less favourable treatment
- Vilification - humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule
- Gender - male, female or trans-gender characteristics.
- Race - viewed broadly this term includes colour, descent or ancestry, ethnicity, nationality, and includes, for example, ideas of ethnicity covering people of Jewish or Muslim origin

Does the advertisement portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person on account of gender?

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that there is nothing which depicts discrimination or vilification of any section of the community in the advertisement.

The Panel noted that it had recently considered a similar issue in case 0357-20, in which:

"The Panel noted that the situation is humorous as the man is depicted as a person who is not an athletic person, in that he is not especially trim or muscled. The Panel considered that the comment made by the woman in the advertisement was in relation to the particular character and that the advertisement does not refer to the man's gender or suggest that the comment is related to his gender or to all men."

Similarly, in the current advertisement the Panel considered that the character's gender was not referred to in the advertisement and there was no suggestion that he had been chosen to act as the dog because of his gender. The Panel considered that there are no existing stereotypes in the community relating to men being inferior or that they should be treated as though they are dogs.

Further, the Panel considered that the advertisement also featured a man holding the lead of the dog character and that there was no power imbalance depicted between genders.



The Panel considered that overall the advertisement did not portray the man in a negative light.

The Panel considered that the man was not seen to receive unfair or less favourable treatment because of his gender. The Panel considered that the man was not depicted in a manner which ridiculed or humiliated him on account of his gender.

Does the advertisement portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person on account of race?

Similar to the discussion in relation to the man's gender, the Panel considered that the character's race was not referred to in the advertisement and there was no suggestion that the actor had been chosen to act as the dog because of his race. The Panel considered that there are no existing stereotypes in the community relevant or historical context relating to white people being inferior or that they should be treated as though they are dogs.

Further, the Panel considered that the advertisement also featured a white woman and that there was no power imbalance depicted between different races.

The Panel considered that overall the advertisement did not portray the man in a negative light. In particular the Panel considered that the man was shown to get up and stretch at the end of the advertisement and did not act as though he had been treated in an unfair or less favourable manner because of his race.

The Panel considered that the man's race and skin tone was not directly referred to in the advertisement and the man's actions were not related to his race. Overall, the Panel considered that the man was not seen to receive unfair or less favourable treatment because of his race. The Panel considered that the man was not depicted in a manner which ridiculed or humiliated him on account of his race.

Section 2.1 conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not portray material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of gender or race, the Panel determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code, the Panel dismissed the complaint.