



**ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU**

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0396/13
2	Advertiser	Ford Motor Co of Aust Ltd
3	Product	Vehicle
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Transport
5	Date of Determination	27/11/2013
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.6 - Health and Safety Bullying (non violent)

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This complaint refers to a creative which depicts a cartoon exaggeration of a man asking the question "Be my Facebook friend?". This man could be a number of people in the community such as a father, grandfather, uncle, neighbor or work colleague. The cartoon character is designed to be an exaggerated figure representing someone who is new to and unfamiliar with social media etiquette and protocol. To our target audience this cartoon figure is intended to represent someone who they might be close to, even fond of, but do not particularly want to be friends with on social media.

THE COMPLAINT

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

As a teacher of teenagers, I am dismayed by the pressures that the inescapable media places on them. The pressure to be popular is now 24 hours a day thanks to the Internet and sites such as Facebook. This advert ridicules a spotty 'unattractive' man reading a book 'friendship 101' and glorifies the possibility of being 'cool' and escaping him in a fast car. Many young people are driven to attempted suicide due to poor self-esteem and fear of not being popular. This sort of image should not be on a bus or public place at all.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

At the outset, I would like to emphasise that Ford Australia takes seriously its commitment to the AANA Code of Ethics (AANA Code) and the FCAI Voluntary Code of Practice for Motor Vehicle Advertising (FCAI Code) and we are aware of the potential impact that our advertising may have on members of the public.

All of our advertising, including the Fiesta Ad, is carefully reviewed in that context and is approved by legal counsel. In this instance, we firmly believe that the scenario depicted in the Fiesta Ad does not breach the AANA Code or the FCAI Code.

The complaint referred to in your letter dated 6 November 2013 alleges that the Fiesta Ad should not be on a bus or public place as it raises issues under Section 2.6 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics.

Section 2.6 states that "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety". The complaint expresses concern that the message portrayed by the Fiesta Ad is contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety, specifically bullying. The complaint alleges that the character in the Fiesta Ad is a "spotty 'unattractive' man" and that the Fiesta Ad "glorifies the possibility of being 'cool' and escaping him in a fast car".

You have indicated that the Board will review the Fiesta Ad against section 2 of the AANA Code and section 2 of the Advertising or Marketing Communications to Children Code and that our response should address any issues within the advertisement that fall broadly within these two sections.

Ford Australia strongly disagrees with any allegation that the Fiesta Ad contravenes section 2 of the AANA Code and in particular section 2.6 - Health and Safety Bullying (non violent).

It is not Ford's intention to poke fun at or stereotype any particular group in the community. This particular scenario uses an image of a character, an older man, that is not intended to be anyone in particular and the cartoon style illustration was chosen for this reason to ensure it was fictional and removed from real life. It is fictional in the sense that the

character has been overtly exaggerated to represent someone who is new to and unfamiliar with the social media etiquette of friend requests. The illustration has also been drawn in a fantasy cartoon style to further remove the situation from something somebody could personally relate to. We do not believe anyone seeing this advertisement would put themselves in this character's position but instead see the humour intended.

Similarly we do not believe that this piece of advertisement glorifies bullying, but rather, is presenting in a dramatized, cartoon depiction, a situation which is quite common amongst younger and older generations with social media accounts where the member of the older generation asks the member of the younger generation to be Facebook friends. The humour within this piece is directed at the awkward situation that may occur when the recipient of the friend request does not want to accept it.

Section 2 of the AANA Code generally

In addition to the comments above regarding section 2.6, Ford Australia submits that no issues arise under the other provisions in section 2 of the AANA Code. The Fiesta Ad:

- does 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 (Section 2.1 of the AANA Code);*
- does not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people (Section 2.2 of the AANA Code);*
- does not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised (Section 2.3 of the AANA Code);*
- does treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience (Section 2.4 of the AANA Code); and*
- does only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium) (Section 2.5 of the AANA Code).*

FCAI Voluntary Code of Practice for Motor Vehicle Advertising

Ford Australia also submits that no issues arise under the FCAI Code. The Fiesta Ad does not depict:

- unsafe driving, including reckless and menacing driving that would breach any Commonwealth law or the law of any State or Territory in the relevant jurisdiction in which the advertisement is published or broadcast dealing with road safety or traffic regulation, if such driving were to occur on a road or road-related area, regardless of where the driving is depicted in the advertisement;*
- people driving at speeds in excess of speed limits in the relevant jurisdiction in Australia in which the advertisement is published or broadcast;*
- driving practices or other actions which would, if they were to take place on a road or road-related area, breach any Commonwealth law or the law of any State or Territory in the relevant jurisdiction in which the advertisement is published or broadcast directly dealing with road safety or traffic regulation;*
- people driving while being apparently fatigued, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol to the extent that such driving practices breach any Commonwealth law or the law of any State or Territory in the relevant jurisdiction in which the advertisement is published or broadcast dealing directly with road safety or traffic regulation; or*
- deliberate and significant environmental damage.*

AANA Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications to Children

Ford Australia submits that the AANA Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications to Children does not apply to the Fiesta Ad on the basis that the Fiesta Ad is not Advertising or Marketing Communications to Children as defined in that Code. The Fiesta Ad is not directed primarily to children having regard to the theme, visuals and language used and it is not advertising a product that is targeted towards or has principal appeal to children.

If the ASB considers that any other issues arise under any of the abovementioned codes, Ford Australia requests the opportunity to be informed of the ASB's views in that regard so that an appropriate response can be made.

Ford Australia strongly believes that the Fiesta Facebook advertisement does not breach the AANA Code. I trust that this correspondence adequately addresses the concerns raised in the complaint.

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 encourages bullying behaviour towards people who are not cool or popular.

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

The Board considered Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety".

The Board noted the advertisement features a cartoon image of a man wearing glasses and holding a book entitled, "Friends 101" and the speech bubble reads, "Be my Facebook friend?"

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the depiction of a Ford Fiesta and the text, "Get the Fiesta out of there" is suggestive of escaping someone who is not cool and that this behaviour can have devastating consequences on the recipient.

The Board acknowledged the community concerns surrounding bullying, including the use of social media sites such as Facebook to bully people. The Board noted it had previously upheld an advertisement which featured cyber bullying (0334/11) where "The Board noted that the concept of bullying generally requires three elements: an imbalance of power, an intention to harm and repetition of the behaviour or act."

The Board noted that in the current advertisement the cartoon depiction is of an older man and considered that the most likely interpretation is that the man is unfamiliar with social media and is asking members of a younger generation if he can be friends with them on Facebook when he clearly doesn't understand how social media works.

The Board noted that we do not see who is driving the Fiesta or making the statement, "Get

the Fiesta out of there” and considered that whilst avoiding friendship can be a bullying issue amongst children, in this instance the person who is being avoided is not a clear representation of any particular type or group of people and therefore it is unclear whether there is an imbalance of power between peers.

The Board noted the cartoon style and lack of context for who he is trying to connect with on Facebook and considered that this lessens the impact of the avoidance behaviour and is suggestive of avoidance rather than an intention to harm.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict or encourage bullying behaviour and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

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