



Case Report

1	Case Number	0421/12
2	Advertiser	Bethesda
3	Product	Toys and Games
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Transport
5	Date of Determination	14/11/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.3 - Violence Causes alarm and distress

2.3 - Violence Violence

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Image of a hooded man wearing a mask and holding a blood splattered sword in front of him.

The text reads, "Dishonored. Revenge solves everything. In stores October 11".

THE COMPLAINT

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

I am concerned that the blood-stained sword was featured prominently in the ad. I presume it implies human blood. I notice that the DVD sleeves image had the blood-stained sword omitted, which is more "tasteful" than the ad at the back of the bus. People may choose to watch bloody images at home, but I feel that it is too strong an image to be displayed in a public place. Of course it should be obvious that it would be "fantasy" and not "real life". However I don't expect minors to fully comprehend. I think human life is valuable, and the blood-stained sword in a public place contradicts that value, and is therefore offensive. I found this advertisement to be very graphic, with blood dripping off the sword, and the creature very scary. I have 2 very young children, and luckily they were not with me at the time. If they had of seen this, it would almost certainly have given them nightmares. I am able to protect them from such graphic scary images on the television by not letting them watch adult programs, but I have no control over which buses come driving past as we are walking

on the street, so I believe that there should be a higher standard for advertisements that are in the public space like that.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In response to the complaints received under Complaint Reference Number 0421/12, please be advised that:

The advertisement in question promoted a fantasy video game, Dishonored, which was released on 11 October 2012. The ad campaign was completed on 20 October 2012. This creative treatment will not run again in Australia on outdoor.

The advertisement was approved by APN who are responsible for approving all artwork before it goes up on buses and their procedures are based on the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) guidelines.

The artwork depicts a fantasy game not based on reality and was in no way intended to offend anyone. The correct approval channels were followed and we apologize if the advertisement was found to be offensive in any way.

We will take into account the concerns raised in the complaints in future marketing campaigns and be extra vigilant to any potential offense that our artwork may cause to viewers.

We appreciate your consideration of our response to the complaints and will be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

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 presents graphic violence and is not appropriate for a broad audience.

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 of the Code 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 the advertisement is for a computer game called Dishonored and features a hooded figure with a skull mask holding a blood stained sword and the words "revenge solves everything".

The Board noted that the image used to promote the game is a similar image used on the sleeve of the game covers. The Board noted that it had previously dismissed a similar image for a television show called Dexter (case reference 0457/11). As in the Dexter case, the Board considered that in this advertisement the image is highly stylised and is relevant to the product.

The Board noted that the inclusion of the blood on the knife further enforces the notion of violence however the Board considered that the blood is relatively discreet and it is not clear who the violence is directed at.

The Board noted the use of the phrase “revenge solves everything” and considered that whilst some people might find this offensive the Board recognises that it is made in the context of the game being promoted. The Board noted that the image is on transport and so can be seen by children and considered that most members of the community including children would recognise that it is a game being advertised and that in the context of a computer game the advertisement presents violence in a manner which is justifiable.

The Board determined that the advertisement 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.