



Case Report

1	Case Number	0482/12
2	Advertiser	Kellogg (Aust) Pty Ltd
3	Product	Food and Beverages
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Print
5	Date of Determination	12/12/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Images of the breakfast cereal "be natural" and the tagline "We believe mother nature is like a mother-in-law. Not worth messing with."

THE COMPLAINT

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

I was offended by the advertisement in the Australian Saturday Magazine, 17 November, 2012, re the Breakfast cereal "Be Natural". It was the fact that the ad stereotyped women in general.

I've never heard a joke or a derogatory term about Fathers-in-law!

Ultimately, every mother-in-law is someone's Mother and this statement makes women third-class citizens of the world, and objects of ridicule, as depicted by this ad.

If you agree with this ad, you agree that your mother can be criticised, demeaned, stereotyped and made an object of ridicule.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Substantive Response to Complaint

The advertisement is a print advertisement for the Be Natural range of cereal and snack products. The advertisement features the headline:

We believe mother nature is like a mother-in-law. Not worth messing with.

This is followed by copy which paints a vision for the Be Natural brand to bring the best nature has to offer to people, and declares Be Natural's belief that the closer we are to nature, the better off we will be. The advertisement ends with the words:

And everyone deserves a little more of the good stuff, including our mother-in-laws.

The complaint alleges that the advertisement stereotypes women, and criticises, demeans and makes women objects of ridicule. The complaint therefore raises issues under clause 2.1 of the AANA Code of Ethics which provides:

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 race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.

While Kellogg regrets that the complainant was offended by the advertisement Kellogg does not consider that the advertisement breaches the AANA Code of Ethics.

The advertisement uses light hearted humour to deliver a more serious message around the need for consumers to eat more natural food. Contrary to the assertion in the complaint, Be Natural holds mother-in-laws, and indeed all women, in very high regard. That this is so is demonstrated by the analogy that is drawn between mother-in laws with mother nature. The message of the advertisement is that you shouldn't mess with mother in laws, just as you shouldn't mess with mother nature. That is, the advertisement in fact encourages consumers to respect both nature and mother in laws as they are.

Kellogg acknowledges that the advertisement draws on cultural narratives regarding mother-in-laws, in particular, mother-in-law jokes. In this regard the headline uses light hearted humour to disarm readers when talking about a serious issue – the fact that people's connection to nature and natural food has grown farther and farther apart. However it does not do so in a way that which discriminates against or vilifies women.

The print advertisement is part of a larger campaign "More of the Good Stuff". Advertisements within the campaign depict bold, beautiful shots of the ingredients in Be Natural products – from pink lady apples to honey to cashew nuts. The tone of this advertisement along with all advertisements in the campaign is positive and inspiring, but told in a light hearted manner with a tongue-in-cheek charm. A copy of other advertisements in the campaign is enclosed for your reference.

For the reasons stated above the complaint should be dismissed in its entirety.

Kellogg is pleased to have had the opportunity to respond to this complaint and to confirm its support for the ASB and the codes to which Kellogg is subject.

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 is offensive in its stereotyping of mothers-in-law.

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

The Board first 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 ...gender...”

The Board noted the advertisement contains the phrase, “we believe Mother Nature’s like a Mother-in-Law. Not worth messing with”. The Board noted that the stereotyping of Mother-in-Laws is part of the common cultural narrative in Australia and that whilst this does not of itself make it acceptable the Board considered that in this instance a Mother-in-Law is being likened to Mother Nature and this is not a negative comparison.

The Board noted that the tone of the advertisement is around the positive force of Mother Nature and considered that likening a Mother-in-Law to this positive force amounts to a stereotype which acknowledges the power a mother, and mother-in-law, can have within a family and that that this depiction does not discriminate or vilify women.

The Board determined that the material depicted did not discriminate against or vilify any person or section of the community and did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Further finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.