



Case Report

1	Case Number	0497/10
2	Advertiser	Drug and Alcohol Office Western Australia
3	Product	Community Awareness
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	08/12/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.6 - Health and Safety within prevailing Community Standards
- 2.2 - Violence Community service advertising

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A glass of red wine is shown being spilt on to a white tablecloth. The wine shows the spread of alcohol through the body, forming bodily organs to eventually form a human body. The voiceover describes alcohol as a carcinogen, the parts of the body where alcohol causes cancer and then provides a recommendation on how to stay at low risk of alcohol caused cancer and other diseases.

THE COMPLAINT

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

My child is not allowed to play video games with content LESS graphic than this. He has struggled to sleep in his room since his first viewing (prior to this date). The ad is great as far as fear tactics go but please make a standard to reserve this level of disgusting graphics to adult only viewing times. If this were a film it would most assuredly have MA 15+ rating so why doesn't the same apply to advertising supported by the government? Please fix this.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

2.2 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

2.6 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The advertisers do not believe that this advertisement depicts material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety, nor does it portray interpersonal or intrapersonal violence. Furthermore, research shows that the general community accept the need for social marketing advertisements to use imagery that will resonate with the target audience.

Van Putten and Jones (2007) conducted research on community attitudes towards graphic images in social marketing advertisements. It was found that the positive social value of the advertisement (for the whole community) outweighs the possible negative effects (on some members of the community). Furthermore, the community has a higher level of acceptance of using graphic images in social marketing advertisements due to the highly valued messages that they contain.

Background

The Alcohol.Think Again Campaign is the community education and marketing component of the Western Australian effort to reduce the impact that alcohol use has on the community.

The Campaign works alongside a range of other strategies such as early intervention, policy, education, legislation, community action and treatment. The Alcohol.Think Again Campaign aims to decrease alcohol-related harm by reducing short-term and long-term harmful drinking.

To begin this change, the Alcohol.Think Again Campaign focuses on two main themes:

a) Raising awareness about the problems related to the binge drinking culture, and to raise awareness about what causes these problems at a systems or community level.

b) Raising awareness of alcohol-caused health problems (such as alcohol-caused cancer) and how to stay at low-risk in accordance with the Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol.

The Alcohol and Cancer Campaign is one strategy under the broader Alcohol.Think Again Campaign and aims to raise awareness of the link between drinking alcohol and a range of different cancers. The Alcohol and Cancer Campaign also aims to communicate how to stay at a low-risk of alcohol caused cancer and other diseases. The Alcohol and Cancer Campaign was developed by the Drug and Alcohol Office, Western Australia, in partnership with the Cancer Council Western Australia.

The Alcohol and Cancer Campaign was first launched on 16 May 2010 and ran until 10 July 2010 and featured two television advertisements 'Spread' (the advertisement referred to by the complainant) and 'Stains' (which does not feature the image referred to by the complainant). A second phase of the Alcohol and Cancer Campaign ran from 17 October 2010 – 6 November 2010 and only featured the 'Spread' advertisement.

Campaign rationale

The International Agency for Research in Cancer has recognised alcohol as a Group 1 Carcinogen (the highest carcinogen rating) since 1988 . The World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) has concluded that there is convincing evidence that alcohol is a cause of cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, colorectum (in men) and breast, and probable evidence that alcohol increases the risk of colorectal cancer (in women) and liver cancer . In

Australia it is estimated that, 2997 new cases of cancer and 1376 deaths are directly caused by alcohol consumption each year.

Formative research with the target group before the advertisement went to air (conducted by TNS Social Research) demonstrated that one third (34 per cent) of Western Australians were not aware of the link between drinking alcohol and cancer.

The advertisement works to educate both adults and young people on the dangers that harmful alcohol use poses to the consumer, which is consistent with the Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol. It is believed that this is the first campaign worldwide to specifically address the issue of alcohol-caused cancer. As with previous public health messages communicating the link between smoking and cancer, the Alcohol and Cancer Campaign and associated television advertisements are needed to inform the community of the harm that can occur from drinking too much alcohol over a lifetime and how to stay at low risk of such harm.

Target Group

The primary target group for the second phase of the Alcohol and Cancer Campaign was males and females 25 to 54 years of age in Western Australia.

Development and execution of the advertisement

Before the television advertisement went to air in May 2010, it was tested with members of the Western Australian community (n=200) by TNS Social Research. When asked, 'What thoughts, feelings, images or memories came to mind while you were watching this ad?', there was no indication by the community that the advertisement contained imagery that portrays violence or that would be disturbing to children.

In the developing of the advertisement, care was taken in the creation of the animation of the woman (her heartbeat continues and the wine continues to flow) to ensure she did not appear dead. The red wine is used as an indication of wine spreading through the body, rather than specifically representing blood.

Advertisement scheduling

The Commercials Advice rating received for this advertisement was a 'W' (general / warning) rating. The spots in which the advertisement was placed comply with these guidelines and were scheduled at key viewing times for our target audience (males and females aged 25 to 54 years of age).

Children are exposed to a range of graphic imagery (during and outside of children's viewing times) which includes cartoons, news imagery, medical shows that depict surgery being conducted, reality programs showing real-life animal rescues and many other social marketing campaigns such as smoking advertising that shows similar imagery. Moreover, this advertisement is stylized and does not show a real person or imagery (as compared to many of the above mentioned examples).

Furthermore, post-campaign evaluation from the National Illicit Drugs Campaign showed that more parents had discussed illicit drug use with their children as a result of viewing the campaign. It is anticipated that this campaign would also provide an opportunity for parents and children to discuss the consequences of harmful alcohol use and therefore it is important that the advertisement is shown during a range of viewing times.

Post-Campaign Evaluation

At the conclusion of the first phase of the Alcohol and Cancer Campaign, research was conducted among 400 members of the Western Australian community (n=400). The results of the post-campaign evaluation showed that:

- *The percentage of the population who were not aware of the link between drinking alcohol and cancer decreased from 34 per cent (pre-campaign) to 23 per cent (post-campaign);*

- *When prompted, 90 per cent of respondents were able to correctly identify the message that alcohol causes cancer;*
- *Fifty five per cent of respondents agreed that ‘it (the campaign) made me consider the health effects of regularly having more than two drinks’;*
- *Fifty seven per cent of respondents agreed that ‘it (the campaign) made me concerned that alcohol can cause some types of cancer’ and;*
- *Forty per cent of respondents agreed that ‘it (the campaign) made me want to drink no more than two standard drinks on a regular basis’.*

The results of the post-campaign evaluation demonstrate the positive impact that this campaign has had on members of the Western Australian community and intentions to change behaviour around regular alcohol consumption. Furthermore, there was not any comments in the post-campaign evaluation by parents that the advertisement was distressing to children or that the advertisement portrayed violence.

Conclusion

The advertisers (the Drug and Alcohol Office and the Cancer Council Western Australia) strongly believe that this advertisement does not portray violence, nor does it breach prevailing community standards on health. Previous determinations by the Advertising Standards Board (in relation to complaints against similar public health campaigns) have recognised the value and importance of such messages to the community.

As outlined previously, the advertisement targets people aged 25 to 54 years, not children and therefore the advertisement was scheduled at times where the target audience was most likely to be watching, increasing the maximum exposure. This advertisement conveys an important message which is in the interest of the broader general public, particularly the target group who consume alcohol on a regular basis. Furthermore, the post-campaign evaluation among members of the target group demonstrates an increased awareness of the link between alcohol and cancer and also strong intentions among the target group to change their drinking behaviour.

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 inappropriately graphic and is not suitable for screening during family viewing times.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with section 2.2 of the Code which requires that advertisements ‘shall not present violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.’

The Board noted the advertiser’s response that this advertisement is aimed at raising awareness on the potential harm caused by binge drinking and reducing the impact alcohol can have on the community.

The Board noted that this advertisement has been classified W by CAD and is only shown in allowable timezones and programmes.

The Board considered that the content of the advertisement was relevant to the message and that consistent with previous discussions about public health and safety advertisements, although some members of the public could find the images to be graphic, a higher degree of graphic detail is appropriate given the important message of this advertisement.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of 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 that the advertisement states that alcohol is a carcinogen and that every drink increases the risk of damage to your internal organs. The Board noted that the advertisement then goes on to suggest limiting alcohol intake to two per day. The Board noted that this advertisement is, according to the advertiser, the first government advertisement to link alcohol with cancer.

The Board considered that some members of the community could find these messages (alcohol cause cancer, and limit consumption to two drinks per day) to be contradictory and confusing, and considered that whilst the public health message is important, the advertiser needs to take care in making sure that advertisements about public health do not give contradictory information.

Based on the above, the Board determined that the advertisement did not depict material contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety and 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.