



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	137/09
2. Advertiser	Coca Cola South Pacific
3. Product	Coke Zero (TV)
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Portrayal of sex/sexuality/nudity – section 2.3
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 22 April 2009
7. DETERMINATION	Upheld – discontinued or modified

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This Coca Cola Coke Zero television advertisement, commences with a car pulling in to a roadside diner. The title is “The Break-up”. The advertisement shows a man and woman sitting in a booth. The waitress serves the man a bottle of coke zero and then opens the bottle. Woman asks “What’s wrong?”. Title on screen introduces the man as “Starring Our Hero”. Man says “I don’t know how to put this, but..” Man takes a drink and screen flashes with a number of images.

Title on screen reads “Coca cola zero pictures PRESENTS”. Voice over says “From the makers of Coca Cola comes Break-Up as it should be.” Screen title reads “BREAK UP AS IT SHOULD BE” with flames in background.

Images of women in bikini and cowboy hats shown, followed by images of woman with panthers each side of her. Next scene shows the diner where poles are now visible. A number of scantily clad women slide down the poles around the man.

Woman says “So you want to break up?”. Girls in various costumes dance up to and around man. Woman says “You don’t want to be with one woman”, whilst one girl rubs her hands over mans chest and shoulders. Woman says “so many women out there”, as scene shows four girls dancing seductively around the man. Woman says “Just call me when you want to have fun”. Man has grin on his face.

Next scene shows man putting motor bike helmet on his head and then riding a motor bike out of the doors of the diner with explosion occurring in the background. Final scene shows the motor bike performing a rear wheel stand with five women appearing to “ski” behind the motor bike.

Voice over and image says “a taste of life as it should be” with an image of two women sliding down a bottle of coke with two other women swinging on disco/mirror balls.

THE COMPLAINT

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

It degrades women. Its offensive. It sends the message that if you drink Coke Zero women will take their clothes off and dance with poles. And its slutty and promotes casual sex for men. While making it sound like the girl will wait around for his phone call at 2 in the morning so he can have a good time.

It degrades women by saying it is okay to sleep around, okay to be a stripper, that it is fine for men to treat woman in this way. I believe it is showing teenage boys to act this way, where has morals and decent behaviour gone? That woman are just play things, that this is the only way a woman can get a man? It's total disgrace by coke. I should not have to let my nephews see this and them think I can treat a woman this way. My bf and lots of other males I have spoken to think this ad is

totally degrading also. I can understand diet coke is advertised for woman, well why not do something to do with sport for coke zero for men? Or is this all people in advertising thinks works... sex?

My main objection is the manner in which young women are depicted in this advertisement. It implies that women are disposable sexual objects for men. It also implies that healthy, attractive young men should be fantasising over the sexual exploitation of women. It seems to conflict with previous Coca Cola messages such as "Were all in this together" when it promotes a self driven and selfish pursuit of sexual domination over the opposite sex. Coca Cola Zero must stand for Zero self respect or appreciation for oneself or another....I'm a 23 year old single male, and to be honest im not easily offended but this ad really pushed my buttons.

This advertisement is sexist, and purpotrates an outdated chauvenist fantasy land where it is ok for men to date as many women as they want to, and women should not complain. It sets poor moral standards for teenage men, particularly in this day and age, where people consider that moral standards have already slipped. As a young woman, this ad offends me, and I feel that it is completely inappropriate.

The ad is demeaning and portrays highly sexualised images in an unnecessary and misogynist manner. I found the ad so disgusting and offensive (to both men and women)that I felt compelled to complain, despite having never complained about an ad before in my life. I would have been appalled if my children had seen that ad and I disagree with portraying the idea of multiple partners and women being sexual objects for men as a socially acceptable and sexually promiscuous ideal. Overall I found the ad appalling.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complaint/s regarding this advertisement included the following:

The concept behind our "Taste of life as it should be" ad was to take an exaggerated look at a very common fantasy: having the ability to "re-write" an unfortunate episode in your life in a way that produces a much more satisfying (if unrealistic) outcome. Clearly, the ad was designed to appeal to young males, the core target for our brand. At the same time, it was intended to be portrayed as tongue-in-cheek, light-hearted and - as you can see from the liberal use of special effects, pyrotechnics, etc. - extremely "over the top."

The ad has run throughout Europe and has run in New Zealand for over a week with no complaints lodged against the advertisement. The ad was also given a G rating from Commercials Advice (CAD). The CAD rating obviously guides our judgement but we do also know from past experience this rating does not outweigh consumer sentiment. Being sensitive to the concerns of the community we have decided to withdraw the advertisement from television. We certainly did not mean to cause any offence.

In line with section 2.3 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics about advertisements being sensitive to the relevant audience and, where appropriate, the relevant programme time zone, we would like to request permission to continue to make the ad available in other environments carefully targeted to mature audiences, including:

Digital - strictly controlled age and environment

Examples:

- Social network sites including Facebook and MySpace
- Highly male-targeted sites including NineMSN Zoo, FHM, Ralph
- Gaming and sports sites including Heavy, Sneaker Freaker, Big Pond Sport

Cinema - only MA and MA15+ rated movies in horror, action thriller and adult comedy categories

Examples:

- 12 Rounds
- The Uninvited
- Observe and Report

We believe this plan will ensure that the material is targeted more appropriately to the intended audience and channel versus our original television media buy.

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 about this advertisement, in particular that the advertisement is degrading to women, sexually objectifies women, is offensive to men, is shown at an inappropriate time and suggests that promiscuity is acceptable.

The Board considered whether the advertisement depicted women in a way which discriminated against or vilified them on account of their sex. The Board noted that the theme of the advertisement is that it would be ideal if a woman did not get upset at breaking up with her boyfriend but rather recognised that the man would like to be with other women and suggested that this is how life should be.

The Board considered that some people in the community would consider that this advertisement is an exaggerated and over-the-top depiction of a male fantasy that is intended to be humorous and is not a serious depiction of the way in which women should be treated. On the other hand, the Board noted the concerns of complainants that the advertisement objectified women and demeaned them by depicting them as sexual objects. The Board considered that the target audience and mature audiences would take this advertisement in the lighthearted fantasy that it was intended to be by the advertiser, but recognised that some members of the community would be upset by the depiction of women as compliant with the man's fantasy. The majority of the Board considered that the advertisement was sufficiently exaggerated not to contravene section 2.1.

The Board also considered the concern that the advertisement vilified men by depicting the man as being unable to be with one woman. The Board considered that the advertisement's depiction of the man was also not intended to be serious or a serious exhortation to promiscuity by all men. The Board determined that although some members of the community would consider that this advertisement vilified men, the majority of the community would consider it lighthearted and humorous.

The Board also considered whether the advertisement treated sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience in accordance with section 2.3 of the Code. The Board noted that the advertisement was televised at various times including around 7pm in the evening. The Board noted that this timezone includes children. The Board considered that the images of the women in the advertisement were not of themselves inappropriately sexual. The Board noted that there was no nudity and that all the women were depicted clothed, albeit some in attire similar to swimwear. The Board noted that the women were dancing around and in the vicinity of the man and that some of these moves were sexually suggestive. Of more concern was the suggestion that men should have multiple partners and that women should make themselves available for sex or 'fun' whenever the man wants. The Board considered that this was a description and depiction of sexuality.

The Board considered that this sexually suggestive dancing, in conjunction with the advertisement's message about sexuality, did present a message that was inappropriately sexual for a timezone that included younger children. The Board noted the advertiser's target audience (young men) but were of the view that free to air television in the early evening timezone means that the advertisement is available to a wide audience. The Board considered that this advertisement did not treat sexuality with sensitivity to the audience and timezone within which it was shown and that it did breach section 2.3 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement breached section 2.3 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaints.

ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the determination regarding this advertisement included the following:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft case report reflecting the Board's determination (your reference 137/09).

I am writing to confirm we have already taken the step to withdraw the Code Zero advertisement titled "Break Up". Although we note the ASB made it clear it upheld the complaint based on the timezone in which the advertisement was placed, not on content, acknowledging the

advertisement's intent to be humorous, exaggerated, over-the-top and not serious.

As noted previously the advertisement received a G rating and the media buy was carefully considered to reach our target and exclude children's programming. however, a proportion of the media buy in the early evening made the advertisement available to a wider audience. This led to comments from our consumers and the community which we take very seriously and consequently we took the step to withdraw the advertising several weeks ago.

One point of clarification I would like to make in relation to our original response is at the time of writing we had received no complaints from the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in New Zealand. Due to the level of complaints in Australia, we contacted the ASA and they informed us they had received a few complaints but as yet, had not processed a case report. For your information, we have also withdrawn this advertisement in New Zealand.