



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 205/08 |
| 2. Advertiser | Motorola |
| 3. Product | Mobile Phone/ SMS |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Violence Other – section 2.2
Health and safety – section 2.6 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 18 June 2008 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement opens on a scene in a subway. A light, jazzy song plays throughout the advertisement.

A man disembarks a train as a woman hops on. As the man moves past the woman he flips open his mobile phone and the top edge of the phone cuts her dress. She realizes what has happened, turns and looks in his direction. We see a close up of him holding the phone. A disclaimer is printed at the bottom of the screen: 'Network and subscription dependent feature, not available in all areas.'

The woman drops her jacket and stretches out her arm with her mobile phone in hand. On her wrist the mark of Zorro is visible. At this point the woman lunges at the man and cuts the back of his jacket from top to bottom. With a shocked expression on his face he turns and his jacket falls to the ground in two pieces. The woman waves her phone in an 'on-guard' like gesture, challenging the man to a duel.

The couple engage in a highly choreographed dance/sword fight with their phones, ripping pieces of clothing as they go. Several close ups of the phones are interspersed with the footage of the dual. Finally the girl runs back to the train carriage, as it is about to leave the station. She faces the camera waiting for the next move. The man now has two phones and throws one like a knife in the girl's direction. Just as the train doors are closing the phone flies through the doors and embeds in the wall of the train carriage.

Cut to graphic of side view of phone and text: SUPER-FAST MOBILE BROADBAND. Graphic moves to front view of phone and text: HUGE EXTERNAL TOUCH SCREEN.

A female voice over states: 'Upgrade to the sharper than ever MOTORAZR2 V9.'

Cut to graphic: RAZR SHARPER THAN EVER and Zoro symbol. Motorola logo, text 'hellomoto.com.au' and voice over concludes: 'Hello Moto'

THE COMPLAINT

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

Promotes violence and a dangerous disregard for how it could be regarded as normal social behaviour. Frightening and a shock to see without warning. Absolutely the most disgraceful advertisement that we as a family have seen, specifically on a program that would have been watched by all age groups. Should be withdrawn from all visual media.

I and my 2 children were quite shocked by the actions in the advert. The lunging, slashing, and throwing of the phone all seemingly portraying using the phone in a fight as a simulated knife, I am sure it could only encourage some sections of our society to take on the undesirable message from the implied message, let alone being frightening to younger children.

I don't think it is giving a very good image of the safety of public transport, if I wanted to see or hear about someone being attacked at a railway station all I need do is read the Sunday

newspaper or watch the news.

Given recent high profile media and police warnings to parents and young people in respect to the carrying of knives (and the ramifications of doing so) - even from a member of the British constabulary who was visiting in a consulting capacity I find this advertisement particularly inappropriate and cannot understand why it would be screened anywhere anytime.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In general the complaints appear to have been made based on an interpretation that the advertising image is offensive and irresponsible, because the complainants personally believed the ad promoted violence,. Whilst we are naturally concerned that any offence may have been caused to the complainants, we do not believe that the images are likely to cause serious or widespread offence to the general public, nor is the theme of the advertising irresponsible, as explained more fully as follows:

1. Advertisement

Although the description of the advert in question which is contained in the complaint notification is broadly accurate, we believe its creativity has been misinterpreted.

The adverts are part of a broader RAZR2 campaign featuring highly stylized fantasy characters. The creative approach is that these fantasy characters are engaged in energized, fluid dance movements, rather than confrontation. This concept was heavily inspired by the Brazilian art form, game, and martial art known as Capoeira which is marked by fluid acrobatic play, feints, subterfuge, and extensive use of groundwork. The highly stylised images are designed not to be realistic or indeed to present the characters as in any way aspirational. The art direction and abstract backgrounds clearly present the characters as existing within a fantasy environment, almost cartoon-like or reminiscent of characters such as Xena: Warrior Princess.

The campaign also re-establishes a three year long visual metaphor used in relation to Motorola's iconic RAZR phone in order to highlight and reinforce marketing messages relating to the "razor" thinness of the phone and the fact that the phone represents a device that is on the cutting edge of technology. For RAZR2 in particular its tagline of "sharper than ever" is utilised to denote its improved technological features over the original phone.

2. "RAZOR" related violence

We note that the complainants considered that the advert is offensive and frightening because they say it condones violence using a "cut throat razor" and shows disregard for how it could be interpreted as normal behaviour. We do not believe this is the case. The advert makes no reference to knives or violence, and the campaign is certainly not about depicting or encouraging physical harm – something that would be entirely contrary to Motorola brand values. In any event, the fantasy characters are clearly holding mobile phone handsets, not razors. We do not believe it is possible that anybody viewing these adverts will believe that the characters are holding knives or any other form of weapon.

The campaign is wholly about a fantasy metaphor for how the RAZR2, as a part of your day everyday communication and entertainment needs, is sharper than ever, because of its improvements over the original, and what this now allows you to do.

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 and reviewed the advertisement under Section 2.2 of the Code which deals with violence.

The Board viewed the television advertisement and noted that it was highly stylised.

The Board further noted that the fantasy element of duelling with mobile phones was introduced straight after the opening sequence of the advertisement.

The Board considered that the advertisement was very similar to a dance video and that it was not a realistic portrayal of a knife fight or acts of violence generally.

The Board further considered that although the 'moves' in the advertisement looked 'cool' they were not violent but in the tradition of Capoeira as outlined by the advertiser's response to the complaint.

The Board discussed the advertisement in context of the community's sensitivity to portrayals of violence and the rise of violence involving knives. But did not consider that the advertisement was reminiscent of such attacks.

The Board also considered that the initial cut by the phone was an accident and could not be considered a violent act.

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