



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number 217/08
2. Advertiser Ateco Automotive Pty Ltd
3. Product Vehicles
4. Type of advertisement Outdoor
5. Nature of complaint Portrayal of sex/sexuality/nudity – section 2.3
Language – use of language – section 2.5
6. Date of determination Wednesday, 9 July 2008
7. DETERMINATION Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The print advertisement features an image of a Fiat on a pale blue background. The top half of the advertisement states: You'd look great inside me. The words 'inside me' are in red. The car is featured in the centre of the ad. Beneath the car are the words: Introducing the sexy new Fiat 500. The number 500 is also in red print. In much smaller print is a paragraph of text: Being a small car hasn't stopped me receiving big accolades. Like winning 'European Car of the Year' and being the smallest car ever to earn a five star Euro3NCAP Safety Rating. But perhaps the biggest news is my 1.3L JTD diesel model is the most economical car in Australia - even more than those petrol/ electric thingys. But that's enough about me. Go to our website or visit your nearest dealer for a big test drive. At the bottom of the ad the Prize logos and Fiat logo are featured along with the website address www.fiat500.com.au.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The series of advertisements were 'pick up' lines. Some were inoffensive including "Call me for a Good Time", but one said "You'd look good in me". When seen together with the other inoffensive advertisements (which I did) the sexual connotation in the "You'd look good in me" poster is overt and revolting. There is no excuse for an automotive manufacturer to use such degrading advertising for a cheap laugh at half the population's expense.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

I am writing in reference to a complaint made on a Fiat Street Poster with the headline "You'd look great inside me". I think it is important firstly to see the full context of the recent campaign. The execution was one of eight cheeky irreverent headline driven ads where the Fiat 500 car "speaks for itself":

*"I'm big in Europe" An ad about the Fiat 500 winning European Car of the Year
"You're not so bad yourself" An ad about the gorgeous European styling
"Does my butt look big in this ad?" An ad about the roomy interior
"I may be small but I've got big airbags" An ad about the 5 Star NCAP safety rating/ 7 airbags
"I'm free when you are" An ad asking people to take a test drive
"Call me for a good time" An ad also asking people to take a test drive
"I run on the smell of a short black" An ad about the fuel economy of the Fiat 500
& "You'd look great inside me" An ad about the interior appointments of the Fiat 500*

The campaign was based on the key insight that people are likely to “humanise” this cute little car - just like they would a member of the family. It is a car that doesn’t take itself too seriously and is all about fun, which is the tone of the advertising campaign we have developed.

We are astounded that anyone could find this campaign distasteful. It is simply a car (not a person) “speaking” to its audience in a cheeky irreverent manner.

The headline “You’d look great inside me” is simply the car flattering the consumer to say that he/she would look great sitting inside the interior of the sexy new Fiat 500 (NB The original Fiat 500 was recently voted the Sexiest car in the World).

Keep in mind only a car is depicted in all creative executions (street posters and other) so there should no mistake that the car (not a person) talking. If a car could talk, I would feel, and would defend accordingly, its right to indicate how wonderfully comfortable one would be inside it. However I fear I am now being far too surreal in the defence of this campaign...

The copy for the first line of the magazine ad that ran this headline reads “You will feel good too, and not just because of my gorgeous, comfortable interior. My optional 1.3 JTD diesel engine is more fuel efficient.....etc”. Clearly, the campaign is written in the voice of the car.

The poster in question was distributed with five other executions (all poster sites ran all executions) so there was no opportunity for the poster to be taken out of context of the entire campaign.

Fiat Australia would never set out to produce an advertisement to “degrade half the population, as this would prove futile to the business. Please note all advertising was based by many of our female employees prior to implementing and all of them were extremely positive about the cheeky (not distasteful) tonality. Please note also, the advertising and media selection is has been skewed specifically towards a female target audience who currently account for approximately 60% of total Fiat 500 sales.

I hope that the Advertising Standards Council can see the humour of the campaign and appreciate the intent of the campaign – to humanise the car and build a bond between car and consumer.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) was required to determine whether the material before it was in breach of the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries’ Advertising for Motor Vehicles

Voluntary Code of Practice (the “FCAI Code”). The Board determined that the material before it was an “advertisement for a motor vehicle” and therefore that the FCAI Code applied.

The Board then went on to consider the substantive provisions of the FCAI Code. The Board found that the advertisement complied with all provisions of the FCAI Code.

The Board then considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainants concern and reviewed the advertisement under Section 2.3 of the Code which deals with sex, sexuality and nudity.

The Board considered that the advertisement contained very mild double entendre and that most community members reading the advertisement would struggle to find a sexual link using the words “inside me” as it obviously was the car speaking and in this “inside me” clearly meant inside the vehicle.

The Board further considered that the series of advertisements were cheeky and in good humour and served to highlight the points of difference in this motor vehicle without overtly using sex or inappropriate language.

The Board viewed the series of print advertisements and noted the one in particular that concerned the complainant.