



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 254/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | Pfizer |
| 3. Product | Health Products |
| 4. Type of advertisement | TV |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Health and safety – section 2.6
Other - Causes alarm and distress |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 24 June 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This Television Commercial opens on a shot of a man in the background with his back to Camera. In the foreground is the brightly glowing bell jar containing a packet of cigarettes. This is “the master”, the voice of nicotine addiction, who taunts the man trying to quit smoking.

Master V/O 'So, you want to quit smoking? That's nice'. The man turns to face The Master as their conversation continues

Man I'm serious

Master V/O Yes, just like last time

Cut to a close up of the man and Master

Man I saw my doctor

Master V/O Gee, should I be nervous?

Their conversation continues as the man begins to smile with greater confidence

Man Yeah, you should

Close up of the man before cutting to black screen, and the supers appear and voiceover continues:

Super and V/O Break the hold of nicotine addiction

Super and V/O See your doctor about treatments or visit outsmartcigarettes.com.au

Pfizer Australia logo

THE COMPLAINT

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

This advertisement portrays cigarettes in an appealing and seductive manner, making them appeal 'cool' and encouraging people to smoke. The cigarette packet is given a strong commanding voice. The packet is also featured inside an 'electricity ball' with green electricity flowing out of the cigarette packet into the ball. Together these act to promote cigarettes and make them appealing to the audience, which includes children and teenagers. The advertising of cigarettes is illegal; while this is Pfizer advertising, the effect is clearly to make cigarettes more appealing and increase their sales.

One may speculate that Pfizer is well aware of the impact of this advertisement, and plays it to not only promote its products, but to cause more people to start smoking - so that these people then want to quit smoking and use Pfizers products to help them do so. You can only quit smoking if you start smoking in the first place. However, their motive is irrelevant, this ad clearly promotes cigarettes, whether intentionally or not. It should not be allowed.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

included the following:

Pfizer welcomes the opportunity to comment on the complaint received in relation to its smoking cessation broadcast, and asserts that the intent of the broadcast is to advise smokers to consult their doctors about treatments to help them overcome nicotine addiction. The first part of the broadcast, depicting a conversation between a smoker motivated to quit and nicotine (the voice that comes from the cigarette package), illustrates the difficulty that smokers face when trying to give up cigarettes, because of the highly addictive nature of nicotine. Contrary to the complainant's assertion that the broadcast glamorises cigarettes, Pfizer contends that nicotine is presented as a manipulative entity that tries to keep its hold over the smoker who is trying to quit, that is why it is called "The Master". There is a clear antagonism between the smoker and the voice of nicotine. The smoker is in an empowered position and challenges the hold that nicotine has over him, with the help of his doctor, which is highlighted by the phrase "I saw my doctor".

The conversation ends when the smoker confirms that the nicotine voice "should be nervous", because he is getting help from his doctor to quit smoking. Finally, the call to action which is clearly visible on screen, urges smokers to: "Break the hold of nicotine addiction. See your doctor about treatments" or to visit Pfizer's website "outsmartcigarettes.com.au":

This website is unbranded and provides information about smoking, why quitting is hard, the benefits of smoking cessation, and basic information about all the treatments available in Australia for smoking cessation. The website encourages smokers to seek help from their doctors or pharmacists to quit smoking.

Pfizer's aim when designing the broadcast was to transmit a message that would encourage smokers to stop their habit. Pfizer took into account the fact that there is already a very effective campaign run by the Government that clearly describes the dangers associated with smoking in an attempt to prompt smoking cessation attempts. About 70% of smokers state that they want to quit however only 3-5% are successful in the long term at doing so unaided. Furthermore most people make between 5-7 quit attempts before they finally succeed. There is therefore clearly a place for educational messages which direct smokers to seek medical help to treat their addiction to nicotine - hence the rationale behind Pfizer's initiative. Before its distribution this broadcast went thorough a comprehensive internal medical and legal review process, as well as external consumer review. The participants in the consumer review were of the view that the message was a positive one to give smokers. Since the launch of the 'Master' broadcast campaign on 1 May 2008, there have been over 185,000 visitors to the smoking cessation website, highlighting the enhanced interest in smoking cessation prompted by it. Pfizer considers this a valuable indicator as to the efficacy of our message. Pfizer has not seen any evidence that our campaign has attracted people to smoking. In fact all data point towards an enhanced interest in smoking cessation and increased usage of available treatments in line with our original intent. Based on all the above, Pfizer remains confident of the value and execution of this particular broadcast, and firmly disagrees with the complainant's unique interpretation of it.

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 concern that the advertisement glamorised smoking and makes it appear attractive.

The Board viewed the advertisement. It considered that the depiction of nicotine as the Master and in the jar was a clear depiction of nicotine as evil but strong. The Board considered that this depiction was not inappropriate as people recognise that the hold that nicotine has is very strong but that the product is not attractive or healthy. The Board considered that the depiction of nicotine in this manner was clearly depicting it as an unattractive addiction that should be quit and was not presented in a glamorised or attractive manner at all.

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