



CASE REPORT

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| 1. Complaint reference number | 383/09 |
| 2. Advertiser | STA Travel |
| 3. Product | Leisure & Sport |
| 4. Type of advertisement | Internet |
| 5. Nature of complaint | Discrimination or vilification Gender - section 2.1
Portrayal of sex/sexuality/nudity – section 2.3 |
| 6. Date of determination | Wednesday, 9 September 2009 |
| 7. DETERMINATION | Dismissed |

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Internet advertisement promoting cheap ass flights. The advertisement shows a line-up of women wearing bikinis lying face down as if sunbathing at the beach. The caption "cheap-ass flights".

THE COMPLAINT

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

We all know that sex sells. But this ad is (to use its own terminology) a cheap trick. Note the way "cheap-ass" is used relating to women's bodies. I don't see any male bodies in the ad. Are these advertisers trying to attract only male customers and to offend any potential female customers in the process? It defies logic. Using the word "cheap" or "cheap-ass" in relation to a woman is deeply offensive and implies all kinds of outdated notions about sexual availability. What century are these ad execs living in? If you really think about it, there's another association between "cheap ass" and Asia that any travel company would not want to be associated with - for example, Thailand and prostitution. Sta Travel really didn't think this one through, did they? This advertiser obviously couldn't be bothered - or simply didn't have the brains and talent - to try to come up with a creative campaign. I have seen many ad campaigns that use sexiness in a creative or subtle way and they work because they are clever or original. Sta Travel's ad is certainly not among them. It's just cheap and tacky.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Cheap Ass Prices ad creative was never meant to offend and we apologise if this has been the case. It was intended to be a humorous, tongue-in-cheek way of communicating cheap prices at a time of financial uncertainty, in a way that was eye-catching and on-brand. In no way were we intending to offend our female audience – the tag line was used to send-up the image, it was merely a creative play between image and text.

STA Travel has a strong brand identity that is primarily cheeky and fun. Our personality is what makes us who we are and we are passionate about remaining true to it. Given this brand personality our creative can be quite edgy at times and there are some individuals who may not agree with this which is always a challenge. We offer our sincerest apologies if we have offended anyone and will take this into consideration for all future campaigns.

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 was offensive and denigrating towards women.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 and 2.3 of the Code.

Section 2.1 of the Code relates to discrimination or vilification of a section of the community in relation to gender and section 2.3 relates to the portrayal of nudity, sex and sexuality in advertising or marketing communications.

The Board agreed that the reference to "cheap-ass" in the tag line was used as a send-up of those people who were looking for the cheapest travel deal available. The depiction of the women in bikini's was intended to be a humorous, tongue-in-cheek way of communicating cheap prices and not directly or indirectly aimed or portrayed in a way which would discriminate against the female gender in Australia or overseas.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.3 of the Code. The Board noted that the women were suitably clothed and that they were lying face down and therefore there was no nudity and the women were portrayed as if they were sunbathing at the beach and not portrayed in a sexualised manner.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach section 2.1 or 2.3 of the Code or on any other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.