



CASE REPORT

1. Complaint reference number	67/10
2. Advertiser	Coca-Cola South Pacific
3. Product	Food & Beverages
4. Type of advertisement	TV
5. Nature of complaint	Violence Hooliganism/vandalism/graffiti – section 2.2
6. Date of determination	Wednesday, 24 February 2010
7. DETERMINATION	Dismissed

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This television advertisement depicts two male groups, one of the young men is drinking Sprite. The two groups are implying that they will challenge each other on (evoking Westside Story). One of the guys from each group, runs very fast towards the other in a threatening manner. As they men are about to run into each other, they disappear and there appears a big burst of Sprite exploding into the air. This scene is replicated with bikes and the caption is Freedom from thirst.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Violent altercations between strangers in public places (mostly between young men, although increasingly young women) does not need encouragement. The media is full of the increasingly devastating results of thuggery and extreme aggression in our cities and school playgrounds. I object to the casualizing attitude towards street violence that this Advertisement is perpetuating.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The Sprite TVC has been developed to appeal to a youth audience, who are active and interested in sports such as skateboarding and bmx (as shown in the advertisement). The advertisement aims to communicate quenching attributes of the drink in a way that will appeal to this target audience. With regards to the complaint that this ad depicts and encourages violence, our intention was not for this to be perceived as aggressive or violent in any way. The intention with the eye contact referenced, was to depict 'anticipation' and it was an invitation to a playful challenge, as opposed to provoking a fight. What results is 'burst of liquid refreshment' and a celebration which clearly shows no harm to the participants.

We respectfully disagree that the advertisement is violent or encourages violent behaviors, and submit that it does not violate the code.

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 was normalising violence between young men, who form disparate groups.

The Board noted the advertiser's response and considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states:

"Advertising or marketing communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised."

The Board noted that the advertisement depicted a scenario that anticipated violence, however, no actual violence was portrayed. The Board noted that the advertisement might be construed as normalising the formation of tribes whereby men come together to challenge others in a negative manner but considered that most people in the community would not take this interpretation. The Board determined that the advertisement did not depict violence and was not strongly suggestive of violence and did not therefore breach of section 2.2 of the Code.

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