

Case Report

1. Case Number :	0100-25
2. Advertiser :	DiDi
3. Product :	Travel
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	Email
5. Date of Decision:	7-May-2025
6. Decision:	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.1 Discrimination or Vilification
AANA Code of Ethics\2.6 Health and Safety

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This email advertisement features an image of a dishevelled man with the words "Forgive us Father, for we have walked through the valley of vodka sodas. Look at you, modern day messiah. Crucified by \$6 basics buried in bed for two days, and now you've risen...just in time for a family lunch you don't even remember RSVPing to. Your disciples have vanished. Judas bailed with your vape. And your last supper? A 20-pack of nuggets, eaten in silence. But salvation is here. Use the code below in the DiDi app to unlock 2 x 15% off vouchers for your Easter long weekend rides. Promo Code: Risen".



THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

Aquatinting crucifixion with excessive alcohol consumption. Inappropriate identification with religious ideals.

This ad mocks central events that Christians hold dear, namely the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. As a devoted Christian, I am offended by this ad, as I feel like the advertiser lacks respect for religious sensibilities and shows that they think Christianity is 'fair game' to be played with for commercial reasons. I am disgusted and feel that Christians who might use their services are 'less than'. This ad is particularly disgusting to release during Holy Week, when these sacred events are commemorated.

I was offended with the ad's context, which is aligning it to the crucifying of Jesus Christ. I find this totally offensive, especially in the most holiest of weeks, the Easter

Holy Week. It is very blasphemous, especially for me, and others who have faith in Christianity.

Offensive, disrespectful , insensitive use of Easter to the Christian and Catholic communities

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

The complaint made against us refers to an email sent out to DiDi riders in the week prior to the Easter long weekend where we offered riders 2 x 15% off vouchers for use over the long weekend nationally.

The complaints primary concern is that we have acquainted crucifixion with excessive alcohol consumption, and inappropriately identified with religious ideals. The case team identified AANA Code of Ethics 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification of Religion and 2.6 Health and Safety - Depiction of smoking /drinking /gambling / drug use.

We would like to highlight at the outset the advertisement was a seasonal promotion specific to the Easter long weekend, it has ended and it is no longer promoted or available.

If the findings were to be upheld (a finding which DiDi strenuously opposes) the complaint process provides that either the ad be changed or removed. As the advertisement has already been taken down, we believe there is no further action required by DiDi following the decision.

In response to this complaint, we would firstly like to put on record that the communication was not intended to offend or upset any person or community. The intention was to use a playful and irreverent tone that many Australian brands use in their marketing communication in order to provide more context to our communications across a long weekend, including two national Public Holidays, that are recognised and observed by all Australians regardless of religious belief.

The complaint is that the ad is:

- 1. Aquatinting [sic] crucifixion with excessive alcohol consumption [we are assuming this should be "acquainting"]; and*
- 2. Inappropriate identification with religious ideals.*

Respectfully these complaints are somewhat hard to decipher and, on our review, relate solely to the language used (not images). However, our response below also considers the broader concerns you raised in your letter.

Section 2.1 Discrimination or vilification – Religion

The wording of the email uses the widely-known and acknowledged context of the Easter long weekend and utilises a play on words to equate that with the behaviour of many Australians during this period. That is to make social plans and meet up with and enjoy the company of their friends and families.

The complainant's interpretation of the term 'crucified' is very literal, whereas we feel it is clear that we are using word play and double-meaning of words used throughout the entirety of the communication. In specific regard to the use of 'crucified' in the communication, we are using the term as a verb to describe a punishment or unfair treatment, as is stated as a definition in the dictionary and is often used as a turn of phrase in society - "I'm going to get crucified for this..."

We also contest the allegation that we have inappropriately identified with religious ideals. The Easter long weekend is a national Public Holiday observed by all, and the tone and attempt at humour in the advertisement is not inappropriate in the sense that it does not discriminate or treat unfairly, nor incite hatred or contempt, or use language that is abusive or derogatory to any one person or group of people.

We feel like this is further validated by the fact that the code itself was one of our most redeemed codes this year, despite the fact we stopped distributing the email prior to the long weekend upon receiving the complaint.

We also note the Community Panel has previously considered that irreverent, light-hearted use of religious concepts is generally not in breach of the Code - even though (in those) the Panel accepted that some members of the public were likely to be offended by such use. Rather the Panel has generally found humorous representations of Christian beliefs will not ipso facto breach Section 2.1.

We note in the Accompanying Practice Note, that a breach of section 2.1 will be found when humour is used where "a negative impression is created by the imagery and language used in the advertisement of a person or group of people on the basis of a defined attribute listed above." That has not happened here, the humour is drawn from the double meaning of the words used.

Put at its simplest the ad does not equate the crucifixion with drinking, it draws humour from the availability of a common language.

For these reasons, DiDi maintains that it has not contravened Section 2.1.

Section 2.6 Health and Safety - Depiction of smoking/drinking/gambling/ drug use

We contest that our advertisement has contravened section 2.6 as it does not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The advertisement does not depict drinking at all, although obviously depicts someone who may, when read in conjunction with the words, be feeling the effects of a big night out or otherwise hungover. Something one might see in any hangover cure ad. It in no way depicts drinking that is excessive or unsafe.

Indeed, we contend the ad has the opposite effect, as it encourages and provides a safe alternative to drivers who may still be unsafe to drive or under the influence of alcohol, to seek our rideshare services.

We believe this message aligns with the Prevailing Community Standards by encouraging a “plan b” such as a rideshare service to get them safely to and from a location.

We note that the Accompanying Practice Note states:

“Unsafe Practices

This Rule is not intended to prevent advertisers from depicting unsafe behaviour as a means to demonstrate potential negative effects, such as an advertisement for road safety depicting someone driving in a car after drinking alcohol.”

Even if the Community Panel were to conclude that the advertisement was a depiction of unsafe practices (which we deny), we believe that this use demonstrated the potential ‘negative effects of drinking alcohol,’ and encourage our customers to seek a safe and alternative option through our rideshare services, which clearly align with community standards around road safety.

Conclusion

For these reasons, DiDi maintains the advertisement complained of was not a breach of any relevant code. In any event the advertisement was for a promotion run in the lead up to the Easter long weekend, has ceased and therefore is no longer available and the advertisement has been taken down. We respectfully ask the Panel to make a finding the ad did not offend any standard.

THE DECISION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainants' concerns that the advertisement is offensive towards the Christian community and promotes excessive consumption of alcohol.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

Section 2.1: Advertising shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 provides the following definitions:

- *Discrimination – unfair or less favourable treatment.*
- *Vilification – humiliates, intimidates, incites hatred, contempt or ridicule.*

The Panel noted the Practice Note to Section 2.1 states:

A negative depiction of a group of people in society may be found to breach Section 2.1, even if humour is used. The depiction will be regarded as a breach if a negative impression is created by the imagery and language used in the advertisement of a person or group of people on the basis of a defined attribute listed above. Advertisements can humorously or satirically suggest stereotypical aspects of a group of people in society provided the overall impression of the advertisement does not convey a negative impression of people of that group on the basis of one or more of the attributes listed above."

The Panel noted that the advertisement was an extended metaphor comparing the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ to drinking too much over the long weekend. The Panel noted that it has determined other cases which make irreverent, light-hearted use of religious concepts not in breach of section 2.1 of the Code (see [0084-23](#), [0012-20](#), [0138-19](#)).

The Panel noted that advertisers should take care when using religion as the basis of a joke as such references are usually considered in poor taste and may offend sections of the community. However, consistent with previous decisions, the Panel considered that the DiDi advertisement did not rise to a level which would incite hatred, contempt, or ridicule of Christians, or which depicted them as deserving unfair or less favourable treatment. The Panel considered that the advertisement did not discriminate against or vilify a group of people on the basis of religion.

Section 2.1 conclusion

The Panel found that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Section 2.6: Advertising shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The Panel noted that the advertisement contains references to drinking, including “we have walked through the valley of vodka sodas”, and “crucified by \$6 basics”.

However, the Panel considered that the advertisement was a humorous reference to people who require the use of a rideshare service over holiday periods, and was not a depiction which encouraged or condoned excessive drinking.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not depict material which would be against Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

Section 2.6 conclusion

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaints.