

Overview:

The advertising standards authority's (ASA) prime function is to self-regulate advertising in New Zealand. Members of the public can send in complaints about advertisements they feel have breached the Codes of Practice (COP) and Advertising Rules set by the ASA. The complaints are heard by the Advertising Standards Complaints Board (ASCB) who has the right to contact the Advertisings Standards Complaints Appeal Board (ASCAB) on any complaint that is being upheld and may end up withdrawing the advertisement that has received the complaint. A complaint is sent in by the public to the Chairman. If the advertisement is found offending it will be removed or modified. If the advertisement is taken to the ASCB it will then be reviewed in full detail and the ASCB will make a decision on what to do from there. e.g. remove the advertisement or release a formal decision to the media regarding the offensiveness of the advertisement. ①

③ The codes breached by the Rebel Sport advertisement were: Codes of Ethics (CoE) Basic principle 4: "All advertisements should be prepared with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and to society." In other words: All advertisements needs to be appropriate for anyone who is watching This code is here to make sure the advertising agencies are socially responsible when they make advertisements. It stops the advertisings agencies showing inappropriate images, ideas or themes on Television.

③ CoE Rule 4: Decency- "Advertisements should not contain anything which is clearly offends against generally prevailing community standards taking into account the context, medium, audience and product (including services)" In other words: Advertisements should not show offending or inappropriate messages, images or themes on television which prevails against community standards. This rule exists to make sure the advertisements shown at an appropriate time of day. For example a CIS: MIAMI advertisement played before 3.30 pm when Sponge Bob Square Pants is on TV with little children watching is absolutely not decent. ④

CoE Rule 7: Violence- "advertisements should not contain anything which lends supports to unacceptable violent behaviour." In other words: Advertisements should not show or contain violence or violent messages, images and themes. This rule exists to make sure that advertisements do not promote violence or physical conflict on television. The advertisement should not influence people to be angry or violent towards others. ③

③ CoE Rule 12: Safety- "Advertisements should not, unless justifiable on educational or social grounds, contain any visual presentation or any description of dangerous or illegal practices or situations which encourage a disregard for safety." In other words: All advertisements should not contain dangerous actions that could threaten the safety of others either in the advertisement or in real life. Unless the advertisement is about "How to not be safe" and it shows some examples of what not to do in a fire or accident, advertisements should encourage safety. This rule exists to make sure the Advertising Agencies follow all the health and safety regulations involved with making an advertisement. ④

The effect on the advertising practice:

The Code of Ethics effect on the advertising agencies is that it stops the agencies from making inappropriate advertisements and it also stops the agencies from making advertisements that lie to their customers by giving them deals that do not exist or are faulty e.g. "Buy 1 get 1 half price" but once the customer buys the product they find out they only get a quarter of the price as a discount.

④ The code makes the advertisement influence people to stay safe and behave properly and responsibly and not show or contain anything inappropriate. The Code of Ethics is the most common code to be broken involving television advertisements.

Discussion: An advertisement was put on television by Rebel Sport. The advertisement showed people in summer having fun by the beach. One man picked up a wet towel and stated flicking another man with the towel while they packed up their belongings they had used. By the end of the advertisement both men were flicking each other with towels. (2) The person who filed the complaint about the Rebel Sport advertisement said "Wet towel flicking can be dangerous and painful. It is closely related to bullying at schools and in changing rooms. Eyesight can be easily damaged." The person who complained also said it was clear that light the towel flicking conveys the wrong message.

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The Rebel Sport advertisement breached the Code of Ethics Principle 4 by containing violence and threatening safety when the two men flicked towels at each other. Flicking the towels was not responsible and shouldn't have been shown on television as it is inappropriate behaviour. The advertisement was not socially responsible because it contained violence that could easily result in injury.

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CoE Rule 4 was breached when the towel flicking started because hitting someone isn't decent. It is violent and unnecessary. It is not decent to promote violence or ways to hurt others using everyday items and turning them into weapons.

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CoE Rule 7 was breached when the two men started fighting and using physical violence against each other with the towels. Violence is not something most people tolerate and should not be shown on television during children's programs.

CoE Rule 12 was breached when the towel flicking had the possibility to injure someone's eyes and it could also cause serious whip burn. Once again the advertisement should not have shown the towel flicking on television.

The Chairman's Decision: The chairman saw the point of view the complaint was coming from but noted that the towel flicking was seen "in a light hearted manner". The chairman also noted that the towels were only aimed for the other man's legs and not the face or upper body. While the action could be potentially dangerous no one ended up hurt. (4) The chairman's ruling: No grounds to proceed.

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I personally find this advertisement non-offensive as the towel flicking is clearly a joke among the people in the advertisement. They are smiling and laughing and it is something people do when they come back from a swim and have a semi-wet towel and in a sportsman like manner have a pretend dual with friends. I can see where the complainer was coming from as he is concerned for the safety of other and thinks the men in the advertisement are not being good role models for younger children who may take the action to far and end up hitting the face or eyes of others. Looking from the point of view that the complaint is in, I can see the reasons why the advertisement is inappropriate. The advertisement still could have shown the summer spirit without containing the towel fight. Although the advertisement did breach some of the CoE rules I do not find it offending as the advertisements violence was not extreme and you could tell the men with the towels were joking because they were both laughing and having fun. I agree with the chairman's ruling.

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