

COMPLAINT NUMBER	18/274
COMPLAINANT	R McDonald
ADVERTISER	Specsavers NZ
ADVERTISEMENT	Specsavers Television
DATE OF MEETING	17 September 2018
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Specsavers shows a number of different interviewees reacting when they are asked “How much would you sell your eyes for?” The following text appears on screen: “To show people the true value of their eyes we created a fake medical research company and asked people a shocking question...”

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Complainant, R McDonald, said: I found the Specsaver advertisement unethical. The company set up a fake medical centre and then asked the questions, "How much would you sell you eyes for?" The people in the advert were unaware that the discussion was for the purposes of an advert and were mislead, with several of them becoming clearly distressed when faced with the question about what price they would put on 'each eye'. I find this line of questioning immoral. Most people would naturally say that their eyesight is too valuable to put a price on; this is clearly the answer that the advertisers were looking for. However, with the participants obviously unaware that this was an advert in the making, how desperate would someone be to actually put a price on their eyesight. I believe that to film participants who were obviously unaware that they were taking part in an advert, possibly were even unaware that they were being recorded and to ask such a distressing and unpleasant question is unethical, indecent and offensive. The whole premise of the advert plays on peoples fundamental fear of losing one of their most basic senses but in a very misleading and dishonest way. Several of the participants were clearly anxious and distressed when faced with the questions and showed relief when the interviewer explained that they were actually from Specsaver and that they weren't really trying to buy their eyes. I feel that the advert mislead the participants, plays on consumer fear and is basically unethical.

The relevant provisions were Code of Ethics - Basic Principle 4, Rule 2, Rule 5 and Rule 6.

The Chair noted the Complainant's concerns the advertisement was unethical because the people were unaware that the discussion was for the purposes of an advertisement, and this was misleading and played on consumers fear.

The Chair noted the advertisement was made using the style of a fake interview for a medical research company and the shocking nature of the questions provoked strong reactions from the interviewees.

The Chair said although it appears the interviewees didn't realise at the time of filming that the interviews were fake, the viewer does know this, as it has been clearly spelt out. This means that the viewer (the consumer) is not the one being mislead by the advertisement.

Therefore, while she noted the concerns of the Complainant, she said the advertisement did not reach the threshold to be considered offensive or misleading or to play on fear, taking into account the context, medium, audience and product.

In light of the above, the Chair said there was no apparent breach of the Code of Ethics.

Accordingly, the Chair ruled that there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Chair's Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**

APPEAL INFORMATION

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 days of receipt of this decision.