

COMPLAINT NUMBER	19/312
COMPLAINANT	A Whittle
ADVERTISER	Volkswagen NZ
ADVERTISEMENT	Volkswagen NZ, Television
DATE OF MEETING	7 October 2019
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The television advertisement for Volkswagen follows two siblings growing up together. The younger sibling is seen to get second best compared to his older brother; the last of the empty milk carton, the smaller Christmas present and the “hand-me-down” bicycle. The older sibling is seen leaving home. He tosses the younger brother the keys to a Volkswagen car and says, “it’s all yours’ bro, perks of being the youngest aye” The advertisement ends with the text “Some things are just worth it.”

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

Complainant, A Whittle, said: This advertisement depicts bullying by one brother to another in that the elder gets the best of everything. At the end of the advertisement the older brother smirks as he flips the car keys to the younger brother as the older one is leaving home and is now prepared to share.

It also depicts bad parenting in that the parents show favouritism to the elder brother by giving him a much better Christmas present and the older brother does not share.

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 1, Rule 1(f);

Principle 1: Social Responsibility: Advertisements must be prepared and placed with a due sense of social responsibility to consumers and to society.

Rule 1 (f) Violence and anti-social behaviour: Advertisements must not, unless justifiable on educational or social grounds, contain anything that condones, or is likely to show, violent or anti-social behaviour or damage to property.

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concern the advertisement depicts bullying and bad parenting practices.

In considering the complaint, the Chair referred to precedent Decision 16/089 which was Not Upheld by the Complaints Board.

The advertisement for Coca-Cola showed two brothers in a range of scenarios where the older brother was depicted teasing his younger brother. The younger brother is then pictured on a park bench where a group of boys steal his bottle of Coke Zero and hold it over his head. The older brother appears and scares the group of boys away before giving the bottle of Coke Zero back to his brother. As the younger brother drinks from it, the older brother taps the bottom of it so some of the drink is spilt.

That decision said in part:

“The Complaints Board said, overall, the advertisement was a light-hearted and stereotypical portrayal of a sibling relationship where the older brother eventually saves the younger brother and redeems himself. The Complaints Board said the actions of the older brother and the group of boys towards the younger brother did not reach the threshold to be considered to encourage or lend support to violent or bullying behaviour.”

Turning to the complaint before her, the Chair said the precedent was directly relevant and the Volkswagen advertisement used the well-known scenario of younger siblings being in the shadow of older children in the family. The Chair said the older child redeemed himself when he handed over the keys to the car as a ‘reward’ for putting up with the older/younger child dynamic. The Chair did not consider the parents in the advertisement were portrayed as being complicit in this sibling rivalry.

While acknowledging the genuine concern of the Complainant, the Chair said the advertisement did not meet the threshold to breach Principle 1 or Rule 1(f) of the Advertising Standards Code.

The Chair ruled 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.