

COMPLAINT NUMBER	20/033
ADVERTISER	Shen Yun
ADVERTISEMENT	Shen Yu, YouTube
DATE OF MEETING	23 March 2020
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The YouTube video advertisement for the Shen Yun production of traditional Chinese dancing shows various clips of dancers performing. The voiceover says in part: “This season take an incredible journey through 5000 years of culture.”

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

Complaint: I bought tickets for the Shen Yun show at Auckland on the grounds of the advertisement represented by the screenshot attached. The advertisement repeatedly appeared before YouTube clips. It advertised a cultural evening of traditional Chinese dancing and colourful entertainment.

The show turned out to promote the ideas of Falun (Gong)/Dafa, complete with waiving of a yellow [rather than red (Mao) or green (Gaddafi)] book, mini "life plays" contained anti Communist China propaganda, and 2 songs performed by 2 individual artists and transcribed on the back-drop screen denounced atheism and evolution.

While these are valid views, I consider the advertisement for the show as misleading. I and my friends had not purchased tickets to be subjected to any political/religious propaganda but for the pure pleasure of experiencing a dance show.

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 2, Rule 2(b);

Principle 2: Truthful Presentation: Advertisements must be truthful, balanced and not misleading.

Rule 2(b) Truthful Presentation: Advertisements must not mislead or be likely to mislead, deceive or confuse consumers, abuse their trust or exploit their lack of knowledge. This includes by implication, inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, unrealistic claim, omission, false representation or otherwise. Obvious hyperbole identifiable as such is not considered to be misleading.

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concern the advertisement was misleading by not disclosing in advance the show was advocating a particular political/religious ideology.

The Chair said many consumers with an interest in Chinese culture would not be surprised that a Shen Yun production would be promoting the Falun Gong philosophy.

The Chair said the advertisement was promoting a Chinese cultural show, which happened to come from a particular perspective. The Chair agreed that perspective is not obvious in the advertisement, however she said that did not necessarily make it misleading. The Chair said most consumers booking to see the show would be likely to do some research into what they were attending and would find the association between Shen Yun and the Falun Gong philosophy was very apparent on most internet searches.

The Chair said the advertisement had not met the threshold to breach Principle 2 or Rule 2(b) 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 calendar days of receipt of this decision.