

COMPLAINT NUMBER	21/001
ADVERTISER	Natvia
ADVERTISEMENT	Natvia Digital Marketing
DATE OF MEETING	26 January 2021
OUTCOME	Settled

Advertisement: The Natvia New Zealand Facebook advertisement promotes their Monk Fruit all natural sweetener. The advertisement shows the product being picked from a supermarket shelf with the accompanying text: "Sweet like sugar except that it's WAY healthier".

The Chair ruled the complaint was Settled.

Complaint: This product makes the claim that it is "WAY healthier" than sugar, but appears to be nothing but chemically extracted sweetener. I have not heard of any health benefits of stevia, beyond those that come with reducing sugar intake beneath excessive levels. If it has no truly positive affects which sugar does not have, then it is implying that any amount of sugar is unhealthy. This is simply not true; glucose is the main source of energy for humans and it is created inside our own bodies by digestion of starch. It is fundamental to human existence. Excess consumption can be unhealthy, as with anything (drinking too much water can kill, but we do not call it unhealthy) but sugar, and water, are not unhealthy on their own. I'd be willing to wager that excess stevia consumption is just as bad, if not worse, than excess sugar consumption, due to the connection between stevia and kidney damage, lowered blood pressure, and disruption of intestinal flora which is not associated with sugar. "One 2010 study of 19 healthy, lean participants and 12 obese participants found that stevia significantly lowered insulin and glucose levels"

<https://www.healthline.com/health/foodnutrition/stevia-side-effects#benefits>

This is often (but not always) a positive for obese people, but that is also a bad thing for a healthy and lean person. When insulin and glucose levels get low enough the human brain shuts down and dies.

"Evidence from RCTs does not clearly support the intended benefits of nonnutritive sweeteners for weight management, and observational data suggest that routine intake of nonnutritive sweeteners may be associated with increased BMI and cardiometabolic risk."

"In the cohort studies, consumption of nonnutritive sweeteners was associated with increases in weight and waist circumference, and higher incidence of obesity, hypertension, metabolic syndrome, type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular events"

<https://www.cmaj.ca/content/189/28/E929.full>

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 1, Principle 2, Rule 1(h), Rule 2(b);

The Chair noted the Complainant's concerns the advertisement made claims that were not substantiated and appeared to be misleading.

The Chair acknowledged the Advertiser had removed the advertisement after receiving the complaint and it will not be used again.

Given the Advertiser's co-operative engagement with the process and the self-regulatory action taken in removing the advertisement, the Chair said it would serve no further purpose to place the matter before the Complaints Board.

The Chair ruled the matter was Settled.

Chair's Ruling: Complaint **Settled**

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.