



Case Report

1	Case Number	0291/15
2	Advertiser	SCA Hygiene Australasia
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	22/07/2015
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language Inappropriate language

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This ad shows various people, in various situations within their homes, suddenly faced with an unexpected spill.

It starts in a kitchen with a man collecting ingredients from a refrigerator and his mother sitting at the kitchen bench opposite him.

The man spills a jar of anchovies onto the floor and reacts by saying “Sheet” as he looks to his mother to hand him a sheet of paper towel.

We then see further scenes of various people reacting to a spill in their homes by saying the word “sheet” and immediately reaching for a paper towel.

The final end frame has Handee Ultra pack shot and super “This is the Good sheet.”

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

I'm writing to make a complaint regarding the Handee paper towel 'sheet' campaign. It is the sort of thing I normally would expect to see in a later night time slot. I find it offensive and I think it is inappropriate especially in the family TV viewing time. My kids like the House Rules program and I'm not happy that it has been run by you guys in this time slot. Please take it off at this time spot and choose to not allow 'shock' attention grabbing ads in the family viewing time.

The ad makes the word 'sheet' deliberately sound like a swear word. My children assume they are swearing in the ad. At about 7.00pm, I do not expect my kids to have to listen to swearing in an ad.

The "HANDEE ULTRA" commercial constantly used the slogan "SHEET" with very little other dialogue and was obviously using a play on words intending to gain the audience's attention as if they were swearing using the word "SHIT".

This is trying to be a smutty play on words or something, given the similarity of sheet and shit. REALLY - not good and we deserve better advertising standards than this.

I did not appreciate the content of the Handee Ultra "This is good sheet" TV advert this evening where the communication used the expression "sheet" in a way that was intended to be a homonym for an explicit word. This was shown during family watching time between the news telecast and was found to be high inappropriate by my elderly father.

Played during family TV time, the ad repeatedly used the word 'sheet' with direct innuendo to the swear word 'shit'. Children were listening to the news with us one dinner.

Play on words asking for "sheet" which is made to sound inappropriate. We have young children watching TV and when listening the wording comes across inappropriate. Please note, the time advised above is approximate however have seen the advertisement numerous times now.

This ad repeatedly says sheet instead of saying shit my young kids looked at me thinking they were swearing.

The word 'sheet' was used as an obvious replacement of 'shit'. We are watching The Voice with my 3 young children (10, 8 & 5) & I was horrified that they were exposed to this. You only work out they are saying 'sheet' at the end of the commercial. Not cool at all!

The advertisement is attempting - very badly - to use the word 'sheet' but make it sound like an expletive ' oh....sh@t.....!!!!

I am a mum of small children, happily enjoying a family TV program - and this vulgar ad came on in the middle of it. My youngest immediately said 'They just swore!!!!'

It is offensive, not in the least bit funny - and definitely not suitable for viewing at a time when families with small kids are watching TV.

They are substituting sheet instead of shit...they even have a New Zealander to make it sound worse. I think this is unacceptable in this time slot as our young children are watching.

Whilst we were watching the news with our 2 sons this advertisement was shown and the word "Sheet" was used numerous times & our 6 year old said "They're saying the "S" word". This advertisement is using the word "Sheet" in the same context as the word "Shit". To show this advertisement during a time slot when children are watching is inappropriate and does not present a good message for young viewers. My husband and I were not very impressed with the advertisement and feel it should either be shown at a later time slot or changed so that young children cannot misinterpret the language used in the ad.

Played at 7:00pm during a cartoon my kids were watching I don't think it's suitable for the

time slot.

The word sheet was obviously used in replacement of a swear word (s%\$@), but the word sheet is so close to the original it's offensive, and could be encouraging to audiences to swear, to make it seem that profane words are funny. It is trivialising profanity.

I was offended by this ad because the word "sheet" which is used repeatedly in the ad is being made to sound like an expletive. It is not the kind of language I would want my children or anyone for that matter, hearing or seen modelling.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

This ad is intended to capture the emotion that one feels and the behavior that one exhibits when an accidental spill occurs in the home. The ad leverages the insight that when a spill happens we all respond with an emotional outburst in some form or another and paper towel is a natural go to solution in these moments.

In this ad, instead of using a harsh word or an expletive after a spill, the characters say "Sheet".

Asaleo Care acknowledges that some viewers may anticipate the characters are about to say a commonly used expletive but they are in fact clearly saying "Sheet" which is a call for a sheet of Handee Ultra paper towel. To re-enforce this storyline, in all of the scenes after the word "Sheet" is said, a sheet of paper towel is used to clean up the spill.

"Sheet" is the common term for a single piece of paper towel and "sheet" is how the product is described on the front of pack (60 sheets per roll).

The characters in each scene of the ad are relaxed and enjoying themselves. The ad was deliberately written this way so that when each character experiences their spill the word "Sheet" is said in a calm and controlled manner. Scenes where the characters' reactions to spills were frustrated were avoided to ensure the delivery of the line "Sheet" was not aggressive in tone like an expletive.

Humor is injected into the whole idea by using a play on words in the end line "This is the good sheet".

The ad is meant to convey that Handee Ultra is a high quality paper towel due to its interlock weave which provides strength and absorbency. The ad conveys this by using a 2 step structure: a.) a call for a sheet b.) a single sheet being provided as the solution. The end line "Ultra strong, ultra absorbent with interlock weave – Handee Ultra – this is the good sheet" is foremost a reference back to the high quality product that is Handee and a colloquial expression using a play on words for humor and memorability.

Handee Ultra as a brand has a history of celebrating the lighter side of life through its advertising and this advert continues along this vein by featuring characters in positive moments, connecting with others and enjoying the lighter side of life.

During production of the advert, care was taken to ensure the actors clearly pronounced the line as "Sheet" and that the word could clearly be heard as "Sheet". This line is not intended to sound like "Sh##t" or a hybrid of "Sh##t" and "Sheet".

Care was taken to cast actors that look and indeed are over the age of 14 years old. This and the direction to ensure that the characters are clearly saying "Sheet" is in line with CAD feedback sought during the pre-production process. Feedback and advice was sought from

CAD at multiple stages through the production process from scripting, talent selection and first edit.

The advert is classified 'W' – a general classification. Under this classification the ad may be broadcast at any time except during P and C programs or adjacent to P or C periods. With this classification care should be exercised when placing in a cartoon and other programs promoted to children or likely to attract a substantial child audience.

After receiving this classification and prior to the advert going to air, Asaleo Care's media Buyer, OMD Melbourne, clearly communicated this guideline to the networks. Unfortunately the Channel Nine Traffic Department erred and placed the advert within G rated children's programming. This was 'bonus' placement and not part of Asaleo Care / OMD's media buy. Children's programming is not part of Asaleo Care's media buy for this advert. As soon as Asaleo Care became aware of the error on the part of Channel 9, OMD immediately re-communicated the classification's guidelines and added a blanket NO CHILDRENS programming for any bonus activity and billboards.

In specific reference to complaints about this ad being shown during the program The Voice, it is noted that The Voice is rated PG and that the expletive "Sh#t" has been used more than once during recent episodes of this show.

In specific reference to the complaint that the ad features a New Zealander, it is confirmed that no New Zealander or New Zealand accent appears in this advertisement.

In closing, this ad does not use profanity. Instead it has characters calling for a "sheet" of Handee Ultra Paper Towel immediately after experiencing a minor spill. The ad builds on the "human truth" of how people genuinely react when they experience a spill. In this case the characters' response is the word "sheet", followed by a swift grab for a handy and effective solution – paper towel. During pre-production CAD was consulted and production followed CADs advice around clear enunciation of the word "sheet". The ad is classified W and these programming guidelines have and will continue to be adhered to. Channel 9 erred in its placement of bonus and this error has been highlighted to the network and a blanket NO CHILDRENS programming label added to any bonus and billboard placements going forward.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board ("Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement features language which infers swearing and is not appropriate in advertising which can be viewed by children.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser's response.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.5 of the Code. Section 2.5 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided".

The Board noted that this print advertisement features people, in various situations within their homes, faced with unexpected spills. Toward the end of the advertisement there is a close up of the paper towel with orange liquid absorbing into it. The voiceover states "Ultra strong, ultra absorbent, with interlock weave. Handee Ultra, this is the good sheet." The final image is of a packet of the product and the super "This is the Good sheet."

The Board noted that the advertisement is for a paper towel product and that the product is generally used by tearing off enough sheets of the paper to wipe up spills or liquids from a surface such as a bench top or floor.

The Board noted that the advertisement is intended to show situations that happen within the

homes of all viewers and considered that the use of “sheet” as an exclamation in this advertisement is intended to imply “shit” and that most viewers would recognise and relate to the use of an exclamation such as “shit” as a sign of frustration or annoyance when things are spilled.

The Board noted that whilst there a suggestion of “shit” the actual word used is “sheet” and is clearly heard as such throughout the advertisement. The Board noted that after the exclamation is used, the word is contextualised immediately by onscreen imagery of the product being used to wipe up the particular mess.

The Board noted that it had recently upheld a television advertisement for a hair product that used the phrase ‘F’n’L’ (0261/15). In that case the Board considered that “there is a strong similarity between the phrase ‘F ‘n’ L’ and the phrase ‘effing hell.’”

The majority of the Board considered that the manner in which the phrase ‘F ‘n’ L’ is spoken in the ‘PG’ rated advertisements and the context of this exclamation following sighting of a woman walking past, is more suggestive of the phrase ‘effing hell’. The Board acknowledged the link between the phrase, ‘F ‘n’ L’ and the product’s name but considered that overall the use of the phrase, ‘F ‘n’ L’ in the ‘PG’ rated advertisements, more clearly comes across as ‘effing hell’ and considered that most people would consider this strong language and not appropriate in an advertisement for hair product.”

In contrast to the above case, the Board considered that in the current advertisement the use of the implied word “shit” is not as strong as the implied “fucking hell” used above. The Board also considered that the exclamation in this advertisement is used in a way that most people would use the word and it is not directed at any particular person and is not aggressive. The Board considered that in the context of an advertisement for paper towel, the implication of a mild swear word is not inappropriate and would not be considered strong or obscene language by most members of the community.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code. Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.