



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0007/14
2	Advertiser	Rugs a Million
3	Product	House Goods Services
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	15/01/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

These TV advertisements for rug sales feature a female presenter talking about how "size really does matter" and stating that they are 'dropping their pants' whilst a man drops his pants behind her. The presenter also refers to the sale prices of the rugs.

THE COMPLAINT

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

These ads are shown early in the evening and may well be seen by young children. I find it very offensive when I see a female surreptitiously comparing the size of a mans genitalia to the size of the product they are selling when she specifically uses the words "size really does matter"

The advertisement has advanced a strong sexual message in its sales pitch. It begins with a man who has his pants at his ankles and the voiceover says something along the lines of 'we're dropping our pants on prices'. The advert continues with an over-emphasis on 'shaggy' and 'large' rugs. A clear sexual undertone that I do not appreciate. I have also watched their other advert in which the voiceover was promoting 60% off rugs, however, she was saying 'sxy' rather than 'sixty' repeatedly. It is obvious that these advertisements by rugs-a-million are using sex to sell a product. It is distasteful and grossly unpleasant to watch a retailer promote a product through the use of explicit sexual references.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The opening statement in this commercial “we’re dropping our pants” is a very commonly used expression which underscores that someone has gone as low as they possibly can on price. Our offer of Rugs at a quarter of the price is in context with that statement, we can’t drop them any lower.

It certainly wasn’t the intention of the commercials to offend and the inclusion of an inoffensive piece of background vision of the salesman doing a jig and his pants inadvertently falling was included to put the statement in a humorous context. This commercial appeared in prime time and late night. The complainants other concerns are dealt with in 0006/14.

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 complainants’ concerns that the advertisements feature inappropriate sexual references to size, a man dropping his pants and sexualised language.

The Board reviewed the advertisements and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience”.

The Board noted that there are different versions of the advertisement and that each one features a female presenter promoting a rug sale.

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns over the use of the word ‘sixty’ as well as the phrase, ‘size matters’ and the depiction of a man dropping his pants.

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns over the way the female presenter pronounces the word, ‘sixty’ and considered that that when she says the word, ‘sixty’ the number also appears on screen. The Board noted that the presenter’s accent does make the word sound similar to ‘sixty’ however the Board considered that it does not appear to be the intent of the advertisement to use the word ‘sixty’ and that in the context of a promotion for rugs costing \$60 the language is not sexualised or inappropriate.

The Board noted that the female presenter states that size does matter and then goes on to describe the size of the rugs available in the sale. The Board noted that the advertisement does not make any sexual suggestions or comments and considered that in the context of a promotion of large rugs the comment, ‘size matters’ is not inappropriate. The Board noted that the sexual innuendo is relatively mild and would be unlikely to be understood by children.

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns about a man dropping his pants and that this is part of a ‘strong, sexual message’. The Board noted that when the man drops his pants he is wearing loose undies and a shirt and jacket. The Board considered that there is no

inappropriate nudity as only his legs are visible and that in the context of a rug promotion this image is not sexualised or inappropriate.

The Board considered that the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

The Board 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 and strong or obscene language shall be avoided”.

The Board noted the complainants’ concerns over the pronunciation of the word ‘sixty’. As noted above, the Board considered that the presenter’s accent means that the word ‘sixty’ could be interpreted as ‘sixty’ however in the Board’s view this is not intentional and the language used in the advertisement is not inappropriate, strong or obscene.

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 complaints.