



ADVERTISING
STANDARDS
BUREAU

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Case Report

1	Case Number	0048/14
2	Advertiser	Hotels Combined
3	Product	Travel
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	12/02/2014
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Gender
- 2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Mental Illness

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement depicts the frustrations of a man who has spent a sleepless night attempting to view a number of hotel booking websites all at once in order to compare the various prices and deals for a hotel. There are a range of display devices he has assembled, including a desktop computer, laptops and various tablets each with a different hotel booking website displayed.

The man's wife enters the room and sees what is happening. She asks her husband if he has been up all night? The husband is scampering around the room due to lack of sleep. His wife suggests he should have used HotelsCombined.com - a website that that displays the results from a range of hotel booking sites all on one screen for easy comparison.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The implicit message is stigmatising of people with mental illness.

The ad insensitively and comically depicts behaviour associated with the symptoms of mental illness.

The final voice-over - "You'd be crazy not to go to Hotels Combined" - reinforces in the audience's mind that the actions shown are typical of people with a mental illness. This

reinforces community stigmas that exist, suggesting that 'crazy' people - people with a mental illness - are likely to act in this way.

The Macquarie Dictionary describes 'crazy' as "1.demented; mad", of which the definition of 'mad' is stated as "1.disorder in intellect; insane". In this instance with the symptoms displayed, it is fair to say many people would identify with mental illness or 'insanity', rather than "eccentric; bizarre; or unusual".

Overall the ad trivialises the symptoms experienced by people with a mental illness, is insensitive towards people who have experienced these symptoms, and reinforces community misunderstanding as to what it means and is like to live with a mental illness.

The advertisement is horribly sexist. Men are not rambling madmen without any self-control. This misandry is completely unacceptable and I want a serious complaint lodged in relation to this disgusting commercial.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The advertisement is an exaggeration of the frustration consumers feel when juggling multiple hotel booking websites to find the best deal. It is very clear from the TVC execution that this is the cause of the main character's reaction. There is no suggestion or implication that the main character is inferior from his wife with no self-control nor is he suffering an actual pre-existing mental illness of any kind.

With reference to section 2.1 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics, we believe the TVC is well within acceptable community norms. Our monitoring of reaction to the TVC indicates that viewers understand the intent of the TVC and that, aside from a previous complain that has been dismissed, there has been no notable reaction from the general community or Mental Health authorities that indicates this TVC either discriminates against men - or discriminates against people with mental illnesses. Furthermore, the TVC was assessed by CAD and given a "C" classification. This is the most general classification available - meaning the TVC is judged as acceptable for all audiences, including "Children's' TV". Therefore, we respectfully request that this complaint be dismissed.

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 concerns that the advertisement stigmatises those who suffer from a genuine mental illness and is sexist in its depiction of a rambling man without any self-control.

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

The Board considered whether the advertisement complied with Section 2.1 of the Code which requires that 'advertisements shall not portray or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of race,

ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.'

The Board noted the advertisement depicts a man who has spent a sleepless night attempting to view a number of hotel booking websites all at once in order to compare the various prices and deals for a hotel.

The Board noted it had previously dismissed this version of the advertisement on Pay TV in case 0386/13 where:

“The Board noted that as the wife enters the room she sees the behaviour of the man and immediately asks “have you been up all night?” The man responds saying that he has been looking for hotel deals. The Board noted that it is very clear that the strange behaviour displayed by the man is related to his lack of sleep.

The Board noted that the man is behaving in an erratic and peculiar way and he is speaking very quickly. The Board considered that the behaviour the man is showing could be likened to behaviour displayed by people suffering certain types of mental illnesses.

The Board noted that the voiceover at the end of the advertisement suggests that the consumer utilises the services of the hotelscombined.com website to compare hotel prices easily and states “you’d be crazy not to.”

The Board considered that in the context of this service and in combination with the actions of the man, the use of the term “crazy” is a reference to the concept of someone behaving strangely due to sleep deprivation and confusion and frustration at not knowing what the best deal is.

The Board noted that there is a genuine community concern and sensitivity toward people with, and people affected by mental illness. The Board considered that in this case, the advertisement was not being insensitive in the portrayal of a man who was clearly affected by sleep deprivation.”

The Board gave further consideration to the Macquarie Dictionary definition of “crazy:”

1. demented; mad.
2. eccentric; bizarre; unusual.
3. unrealistic; impractical: a crazy scheme.
4. intensely enthusiastic or excited.
5. likely to collapse, fall to pieces, or disintegrate. –noun (plural crazies)
6. Colloquial someone who is considered eccentric or insane.

The Board considered that the definition of “crazy” has a predominance of references to the concept of someone being eccentric and impractical rather than having a mental illness.

The Board considered that the most likely interpretation of “you’d be crazy not to” would be that it would be ‘foolish’ not to utilise the service not a reference to having a mental illness.

Consistent with its previous determinations, the Board considered that in this instance the most likely interpretation of the behaviour displayed by the man in the current advertisement is one of a person who is extremely frustrated and sleep deprived and that the advertisement

does not depict a person with a mental illness or trivialise the serious nature of such conditions.

Based on the above the Board determined that the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society and that that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.1 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.