



Case Report

1	Case Number	0063/11
2	Advertiser	Specialty Fashion Group (Katies)
3	Product	Clothing
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	09/03/2011
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Sex

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Image of a man wearing a blue and white striped shirt with his arms in the air. Above him, in large red text, it reads, "Happy Husband Sale. Prices you won't have to lie about".

THE COMPLAINT

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

Inappropriate portrayal of gender in advertising. Values being promoted to a widespread audience including young people which are outside generally accepted modern values.

Specifically my concerns include:

The portrayal of women as inferior or more powerless partners in their marriages, who need to justify their spending on their own clothing to their husbands.

The suggestion that at times other than during the sale women are accustomed to and indeed are required to lie to their husbands about their spending.

The impression that the male is responsible for determining financial decisions within the family and the portrayal of women as being unable to make financial choices or purchases without their husbands' approval.

The implication that not only are women required justify their spending to men but that this is a requirement in order to maintain marital happiness.

The lack of recognition that many customers may be single independent women without husbands.

The values promoted in this campaign are not in line with modern gender roles or with generally accepted family values about honesty.

Of concern is the fact that these advertisements are on large posters in store windows in the retail outlets placed in locations easily seen by children and young adults. Learning about the concept of lying is an important part of child development and teaching values such as honesty is generally considered a requirement of parenting. This advertising campaign clearly implies that lying within the family is often required to maintain happiness.

Whilst probably intended as a joke children and young adults may not be able to appreciate the subtlety of this and the humour is misguided. Even if intended as humorous the underlying message remains offensive and undermines the role of modern women in our society.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The rationale behind the 'Katie's Happy Husband' campaign was to engage with our customers at a humorous level during the Christmas period.

The campaign including the tag line was created by our female creative team.

In response to women 'lying to their husbands' about what they are spending – this was once again intended in a tongue in cheek way. We did not intend to suggest women should lie to their partners – nor encourage the act of lying on any level.

The reason we felt we could use this language is that in this day and age the idea that a woman would have to ask or lie to her husband re purchasing a garment is ridiculous.

As a ladies fashion retailer we are very careful not to offend our customers in any way and our aim is to create advertising that appeals to women.

We actually consulted with our sales team (all of whom are female) prior to the ad going to press and all were positive and felt the ad was 'cheeky' and would appeal to their customers.

We also had positive feedback regarding this sale message from a number of customers who enjoyed the humour of it and who did not take the message literally – as it was intended.

Katie's is a business run by women and our aim is to keep women feeling great and encourage them to have fun - and have a laugh at themselves every now and then. We did not intend for this tag line to offend or vilify women in any way and will be happy to personally apologise to our customer who was upset by the message.

Our Actions:

We have taken this complaint feedback on board across our whole business and have given feedback to our Creative Agency to ensure they are aware of the guidelines we need to ensure we do not cause any further offence.

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 is an inappropriate portrayal of gender in advertising as it implies women have to lie to their husbands about how much they spend.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response that the campaign was to engage with customers at a humorous level during the Christmas period, and the intention was not to suggest women should lie to their partners – nor encourage the act of lying on any level.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.1 of the Code. Section 2.1 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not portray people or depict material in a way which discriminates against or vilifies a person or section of the community on account of ... sex...”

The Board considered that the ad was intended to be a humorous, tongue in cheek way of promoting a particular sale. The Board considered that the advertisement did suggest that women hide their spending from their husbands, however the Board considered that this was presented in a humorous manner and not in a manner that was intended to be or likely to be seen as demeaning to women.

The Board considered that the advertisement’s reference to not telling someone how much something cost was not a realistic encouragement of lying and did not breach the Code.

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 the community on account of their sex. The Board determined 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.