



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0084/19
2	Advertiser	iSelect Pty Ltd
3	Product	Insurance
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV - Free to air
5	Date of Determination	20/03/2019
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.3 - Violence Violence
- 2.3 - Violence Weapons
- 2.6 - Health and Safety Unsafe behaviour

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A couple is at home, looking at their health insurance bill and clearly concerned that the average cost of premiums are going up. A talking dove interrupts them and adds that premiums have risen by an average of 26% over the last 5 years. Suddenly there's an explosion of orange smoke and the dove transforms into iSelect's "Billusionist". He plucks the bill from the woman's hand and magically turns it into an origami paper star bill while continuing to create more from thin air. He throws the origami paper star bills at a spinning board, avoiding the man who's strapped to the board. One origami paper star bill lands in an apple above the man's head as the woman looks on in amazement. The Billusionist asks if that's their bill and she tells him the bill is smaller.

THE COMPLAINT

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



The ad includes a man tied to a spinning wheel with someone throwing Chinese/Ninja stars at the spinning board. I thought these were prohibited items and I think it is a dangerous practice to depict particularly when children could see the ad and then go and try it. I believe it's irresponsible of the advertiser to use such dangerous items in an advertising campaign.

I think it unnecessarily violent just to advertise a price comparison service. I believe that the star shaped throwing devices depicted are a banned, illegal weapon so why should it be depicted in advertising. If by any chance this advertisement is viewed by young impressionable people or children it could be very harmful. NOTE this ad does tun during children's viewing times that is before (and after) 7 pm.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Description of ad

- *A couple is at home, looking at their health insurance bill and clearly concerned that the average cost of premiums are going up again on April 1st.*
- *A talking dove interrupts them and adds that premiums have risen by an average of 26% over the last 5 years (Note onscreen disclaimer - Source: health.gov.au – average premium increases by insurer by year (1 April 2014 to 1 April 2019 inclusive))*
- *The couple are stunned and decide they need iSelect.*
- *Suddenly there's an explosion of orange smoke and the dove transforms into iSelect's "Billusionist".*
- *He plucks the bill from the woman's hand and magically turns it into an origami paper star bill while remarkably continuing to create more from thin air.*
- *With skill and precision, he throws the origami paper star bills at a spinning board, avoiding the man who's strapped to the board.*
- *One origami paper star bill lands in an apple above the man's head as the woman looks on in amazement.*
- *She retrieves the bill while the Billusionist smugly asks if that's their bill.*
- *Astonished, she tells him the bill is smaller!*
- *Pleased with his work, the Billusionist exits in a cloud of glitter.*
- *A voiceover comes on, supported by an end frame featuring iSelect's phone and website details and iSelect's range of product icons.*
- *The ad ends with the man excitedly wanting to sort out their other needs (Electricity and Internet or Car and Life Insurance).*

Response

iSelect's brand re-positioning in September 2018 saw the introduction of a new hero



character, the Billusionist - an illusionist but with bills whose primary mission is to help shrink customers' utility bills. This character was deliberately designed to be distinctively flamboyant, irreverent and entertaining to enable our advertising to stand out from our competitors.

Our Billusionist seeks to solve bill-related dilemmas in imaginative and theatrical ways, captivating the viewers with magic and tricks. This campaign execution is one such example of engaging viewers to solve a genuine widespread feeling of frustration around health insurance premium increases.

We are confident that there is nothing about the advertisements that contravenes anything of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics, particularly in relation to sections 2.3 relating to Violence or 2.6 relating to Health & Safety.

2.3 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised.

2.6 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety.

The campaign in its entirety is predicated on magic and illusions - elements that children in particular, are familiar with and love. From a talking dove which transforms in a puff of smoke into the Billusionist, to bills transforming into origami paper star bills, to a man bizarrely strapped to a spinning board in his own home and finally, to a bill that magically shrinks to a smaller amount.

What has been alleged by the complainants as violence is actually the intended drama as the Billusionist once again weaves his magic to create a smaller bill - what he does best for customers. This over-exaggerated scenario is highly unrealistic of reality and unlikely to influence any copy-cat action.

It is important to note that the stars thrown by the Billusionist are actually origami paper star bills. They should not be considered a violent weapon nor should they contravene any community standards on health or safety.

iSelect has a longstanding tradition of humorous and irreverent advertising – a trait that is widely known and loved by many Australian consumers. In keeping with the tradition, this advertisement is intentionally far-fetched and continues with what's expected and accepted of iSelect advertising and is in no way designed to be irresponsible, inappropriate or dangerous.

CAD Rating

These advertisements received a CAD rating of G without warning or restrictions



enforced for media placements, therefore, we maintain that they are entirely appropriate for their intended audience.

In summary, iSelect submits that the advertisements in question do not breach any part of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics. Specifically, iSelect submits that these advertisements do not breach the AANA's code in relation to sections 2.3 and 2.6.

We thank the ASB Board for consideration of iSelect's response to these complaints, and trust the information provided satisfies the ASB's request in full.

If the ASB Board has any further questions, please contact me directly and I will be pleased to assist.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the Panel) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the Code).

The Panel noted the complainants' concern that the advertisement is violent and demonstrates unsafe behaviour.

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

The Panel noted that this television advertisement features a 'billusionist' character throwing folded up bills in the shape of ninja stars at a spinning board which has a man strapped to it.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement breached Section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not present or portray violence unless it is justifiable in the context of the product or service advertised".

The Panel noted the complainants' concern that the advertisement depicts illegal weapons, and is violent.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the advertisement highly unrealistic and features origami throwing stars not real weapons.

The Panel considered that the advertisement was clearly fantastical and over the top, and the action of throwing the origami stars was consistent with 'illusionist' style magic.



The Panel considered that the act of throwing the stars was dramatic and fantastical, rather than violent or realistic.

The Panel considered that the advertisement was resolved with the customers happy their bill was smaller and that there was no threat or menace in the advertisement.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not contain violence and did not breach Section 2.3 of the Code.

The Panel considered Section 2.6 of the Code. Section 2.6 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety”.

The Panel noted the complainants’ concern that the advertisement depicts a dangerous behaviour which would be unsafe for children to copy.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that the over-exaggerated scenario is highly unrealistic of reality and unlikely to influence copy-cat behaviour.

The Panel considered that the advertisement included a number of fantastical elements, such as the talking dove, the billusionist appearing and disappearing and the man suddenly appearing on the spinning board, and considered that such scenes added to the unrealistic nature of the advertisement.

The Panel noted that it had previously considered the issue of exaggerated behaviour in case 0239/17 which featured a woman dancing with a trolley, in which:

“The majority of the Board however, considered that the exaggerated nature of the advertisement and the overall look and tone was clearly one of fantasy and was not considered to be realistic in any way. The Board noted that the woman was not shown to be thrilled or excited by her own actions but rather in a trance like state which lessened the impact of the stunts she was performing.

The Board acknowledged the safety concerns about riding on trolleys but considered in this instance, the advertisement was highly stylised and was not encouraging or condoning this behaviour and did not depict material contrary to Prevailing Community Standards on health and safety and did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.”

In the current case, the Panel considered that the fantasy nature of the advertisement and the unrealistic scenario meant that this advertisement was unlikely to lead to copy-cat behaviour by children.

In the Panel’s view the depiction of the billusionist character folding bills into ninja



stars and throwing them was not a depiction that would be contrary to prevailing community standards on health and safety. The Panel determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.6 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Panel dismissed the complaints.

