



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Ad Standards Limited
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Case Report

1. Case Number :	0257-21
2. Advertiser :	SocietyOne
3. Product :	Finance/Investment
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	Internet
5. Date of Determination	22-Sep-2021
6. DETERMINATION :	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.7 Distinguishable advertising

DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

The advertisement in question is a news article written by the NewsCorp Australia editorial team. The 'Foot in the Door' editorial campaign included the following:

- branded integration placements within the pages on which the story was published.
- There were branded interactive tools (e.g. poll, fact box, slideshow or quiz) on the page

THE COMPLAINT

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

'Advertorials' should be identified by such terms as "advertisement", "advertising feature", "special feature", "sponsored feature" and the like so that readers are not led to believe that their content is based on editorial news values free of commercial influences.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE



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

1. A description of the advertisement

The advertisement in question is 1 of 4 editorial pieces written by the NewsCorp Australia editorial team. The 'Foot in the Door' editorial campaign consists of the following:

- 4 x editorial pieces published in a campaign period written at the relevant News Corp Australia editor's discretion. Note that SocietyOne had no say or involvement in the selection of content topics, did not write the stories or propose the copy for the stories or edit the stories. SocietyOne had no review rights prior to publication.*
- SocietyOne has branded integration placements within the pages on which those stories were published.*
- There were branded interactive tools (e.g. poll, fact box, slideshow or quiz) within the pages on which those stories were published.*
- There was branded dinkus (this is a branded image to promote the editorial series) within the pages on which those stories were published.*
- Section sponsorship, consisting of digital banners placed across the relevant section of the news.com.au website (real estate in this case)*

SocietyOne sponsored this editorial series to promote its Credit Score product and was not involved in the development of the editorial text.

2. Your comprehensive comments in relation to the complaint (taking into account the need to address all aspects of the advertising codes)

The story in question is editorial content and not an advertorial as suggested in the complaint. It is part of a 4-part editorial series called 'Foot in the Door', with stories relevant to new home buyers who visit the Finance/Real estate/Buyers section of the news.com.au website.

The story content is controlled by the NewsCorp Australia editorial team and SocietyOne has simply sponsored the series, this is different to an advertorial piece which is collaborated on with a shared intention for the content to promote a brand/product and for which the advertiser pays an additional sum.

SocietyOne sponsored the 'Foot in the door' editorial campaign to promote its credit score product.

As the advertiser, SocietyOne had no say in the story, no editing rights and no input into what was written. This was a simple sponsorship where it was agreed we would provide certain advertising inventory and exposure in connection with the 4 stories published by NewsCorp.

It is therefore incorrect to say that the stories ought to have been labelled as advertorials.



View on the preparation of the advertising material, the placement and the duration of the advertisement.

The sponsorship duration is 4 weeks, from 20 August 2021. After this time, NewsCorp may choose to continue to host the editorial piece, however the SocietyOne sponsorship elements will not continue.

SocietyOne agreed to the sponsor the editorial campaign, however, it did not have any right or opportunity to review or edit the editorial content.

3. In addition to the above information, SocietyOne was requested to address of all parts of Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics:

2.1 – Discrimination or vilification:

The sponsored editorial did not include any discriminatory or vilifying material.

2.2 – Exploitative or degrading:

The sponsored editorial did not include exploitative or degrading material.

2.3 – Violence:

There was no material or content displaying or portraying any violence.

2.4 – Sex, sexuality and nudity:

The content did not include in sex, nudity, or references to sex.

2.5 – Language:

The sponsored editorial did not include any offensive or derogatory language.

2.6 – Health and Safety:

There was no content that creates or infers any health or safety advice or recommendations.

2.7 – Distinguishable as advertising:

The material displayed by SocietyOne was sponsored advertisements placed in a location within the editorial article which is clearly delineated as an advertisement.

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 complainant's concern that the news article was an advertorial and that this was not clearly identified.

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



Section 2.7: Advertising or Marketing Communication shall be clearly distinguishable as such.

Is the material advertising?

The Panel noted that it must consider two matters:

- Does the material constitute an ‘advertising or marketing communication’, and if so
- Is the advertising material clearly distinguishable as such?

Does the material constitute an ‘advertising or marketing communication’?

The Panel noted the definition of advertising in the Code. Advertising means: “any advertising, marketing communication or material which is published or broadcast using any Medium or any activity which is undertaken by, or on behalf of an advertiser or marketer,

- over which the advertiser or marketer has a reasonable degree of control, and
- that draws the attention of the public in a manner calculated to promote or oppose directly or indirectly a product, service, person, organisation or line of conduct”.

The Panel noted the advertiser’s response that while it had sponsored the series of articles, the content of the news article itself was not advertising but rather purely editorial. The Panel noted that the news article did not mention the advertiser at any point during the article content.

The Panel further noted the advertiser’s response that advertisement for the brand were placed at certain points during the news article and that this was advertising in control of the brand.

The Panel considered that the content of the news article was not an advertisement within the control of the advertiser, however considered that the block placements within the news article that reference the advertiser were advertisements.

Is the material clearly distinguishable as such?

The Panel considered that the block placements within the advertisement were clearly separated from the content of the news article by being in a box and with various colours used. The Panel noted that both block placements used the text “Brought to you by Society One”.

The Panel considered that most people viewing the advertiser would recognize that the block placements within the news article were advertisements.

2.7 conclusion



In the Panel's view the advertisement was clearly distinguishable as such and did not breach Section 2.7 of the Code.

Conclusion

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code, the Panel dismissed the complaint.