



Case Report

1	Case Number	0353/10
2	Advertiser	Adam Internet
3	Product	Information Technology
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	25/08/2010
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.1 - Discrimination or Vilification Disability

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The ad in question is one of four in a series that addresses the key problems often experienced by internet users. The 'Internet' is personified with a man wearing a top labelling him 'Internet'. He is sitting with a lady on the couch and initially looks pleased to assist her with her internet activity which she asks him to perform. At which time the 'Internet' man in the t-shirt responds in an unstable manner and appears overwhelmed with the tasks being requested.

It then cuts to voice over and image asking the viewer 'Is your internet unstable?' ... just ask Adam.

THE COMPLAINT

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

The woman asks the "Internet" for something. He starts to pull faces and speak with impairment and twitch and eventually falls behind the couch. The tagline is "Is your Internet unstable?" I felt very uncomfortable about the way the instability was portrayed in speech and action and implied in mental function as well. I am sure there are better ways to demonstrate "instability" without reference to people's mental and physical abilities eg boxes falling over or buildings falling down or flickering lights.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

The instability depicted in the ad refers to the unexpected reaction of the 'Internet' when asked to perform everyday tasks that the Internet would be expected to perform without any hassle. This is an analogy which can be connected to peoples experience of clicking through internet pages and them freezing or not performing as expected. The actor is not mimicking a person who has any mental or physical disability.

As the Internet doesn't talk, our ad shows the 'Internet man's' lack of cooperation through sounds instead of words. Also, as the ad campaign revolves around the 'Internet man', we could not use any other method to portray instability as the Complainant suggested.

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 implies instability using mental function.

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

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 ... disability".

The Board considered the advertiser's response that as the Internet doesn't talk, the advertisement shows the "Internet man's" lack of cooperation through sounds instead of words, and that the actor is not mimicking a person who has any mental or physical disability. The Board noted that the actor is wearing a top with the word Internet written clearly on it, and that the woman addresses him as the Internet.

The Board considered that whilst the mannerisms displayed by the man posing as the Internet could be considered as a reference to a person suffering from a disability, the Board considered that the overall tone of the advertisement was to mock the Internet and its instability and not a person. The Board considered that the actions of the "Internet" when described as 'unstable' were not suggestive of a particular type of disability or mental impairment. The Board considered that the advertisement did not depict or suggest any section of the community and considered that the advertisement does not demean or vilify any section of the community.

For these reasons, the Board considered that most members of the community would consider the actor's portrayal to be that of the Internet and not of a person with unstable mental function.

The Board determined that, in this instance, the advertisement did not depict any material that discriminated against or vilified any person or section of society on account of their disability. 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.