



Case Report

1	Case Number	0528/10
2	Advertiser	Ticketmaster
3	Product	Entertainment
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet
5	Date of Determination	19/01/2011
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.5 - Language Use appropriate language

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Information about a forthcoming tour by Jennifer Coolidge. She is described as the 'consummate MILF' in the write up, and when members try to buy tickets to see her show, they are asked to enter the word MILF in order to get a discount.

THE COMPLAINT

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

*As this is a special offer, you need to enter a code word into the Ticketmaster booking engine to receive the discount. The code that you are asked to enter is MILF. This seems innocent enough except that MILF is an acronym commonly used in the porn industry for "MOMS I'D LIKE TO F***" This is not a randomly generated word. Jennifer Coolidge is not a porn star. She is the actress who played 'Stifler's mom' in the teen comedy American Pie - that's the film most famous for the guy masturbating using a warm apple pie.*

My objection is about the casual and insidious use of pornography (in this case a term used in pornography) to sell to the general public.

I just think the advertising for Jennifer Coolidge using the descriptor MILF is a little bit over the top and offensive - I mean, do they really know what the term stands for?

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

As stated above, Ticketmaster is a ticketing agent that acts on the behalf of venues and event promoters. For the purposes of promotion and special offers, Images, campaign text and other guidelines and requirements are supplied to Ticketmaster by the relevant venues or event promoters. Ticketmaster then uses this information to create an eDM which is sent to MY Ticketmaster members – in this case, these MY Ticketmaster members were given the opportunity to purchase tickets prior to the release of such tickets for sale to the general public.

The request for use of the password 'MILF' to access the pre-sale came from the promoters of Jennifer Coolidge, Fox in the Snow. The promoter wanted to use the term 'MILF' as it originated from the movie 'American Pie' which featured Jennifer Coolidge and was the catalyst to her mainstream stardom. Therefore, in accordance with the event promoter's request, the term 'MILF' was displayed as the password to be used on the eDM which was sent to MY Ticketmaster members who had selected to receive information regarding comedy related events. The term was also used in the text of the eDM which was taken directly from the worldwide press release issued in relation to Jennifer Coolidge's tour and which was supplied to Ticketmaster by the event promoter.

As a consequence of this widespread and well known use of the term in relation to Ms Coolidge the promoters feel that the term 'MILF' has effectively become a ""trademark"" for Ms Coolidge, and is synonymous with her - an easily identifiable correlation between the actress and the movie. For this reason, it was included in her worldwide media release (supplied to Fox in the Snow and in turn to Ticketmaster and other ticketing agents) to connect the reader to Ms Coolidge's character in the movie.

Whilst Ticketmaster would accept that the original meaning of the acronym ""MILF"" is widely known, it is clear that this term has in itself become widely accepted in common parlance and is not generally regarded as offensive. A simple online search at the widely used ""dictionary.com"" website reiterates this point – the definition (being cited from the Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition, 2009) is ""a sexually attractive middle-aged woman"".

One of the complainants has in fact reiterated the point that the context of this term's use by Ticketmaster is not offensive as the complainant is clearly fully aware of the origin of the term in the context of its use in relation to Ms Coolidge. Whilst this term may have been hijacked by the pornography industry, the use made of it by Ticketmaster, and indeed other ticketing agents and the press in the context complained about does not suggest any link with the pornography industry and is not intended to do so in any way.

The term was used nationwide, in Perth, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne across different ticketing agents.

Whilst Ticketmaster does not believe it has contravened the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics in the use of this the term complained about, Ticketmaster has nevertheless voluntarily taken the decision to remove the term 'MILF' from all digital assets on Ticketmaster's website and its eDMs and other electronic marketing tools. Further promotion of the Jennifer Coolidge event will not include the term.

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 features language associated with the Pornography industry and is offensive.

The Board reviewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Board considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.3 of the Code. Section 2.3 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and, where appropriate, the relevant programme time zone”.

The Board noted the advertisement is for a forthcoming tour by the American actress Jennifer Coolidge and that to get discounted tickets you are asked to enter the word ‘MILF’. The Board noted the advertiser’s response that they have removed all uses of the word ‘MILF’ in their promotions for the Jennifer Coolidge tour.

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the word ‘MILF’ is linked to pornography. The Board noted that the term ‘MILF’ was coined in a film featuring Jennifer Coolidge and that it is an acronym for words meaning a sexually attractive older woman. The Board considered that it is not a term directly related to the pornography industry but to Jennifer Coolidge’s character in the film ‘American Pie’ and has subsequently been used to describe attractive mothers generally.

The Board considered that whilst the word ‘MILF’ did relate to the sexual attractiveness of a woman, you would need to understand the meaning of this acronym in order to understand the sexual reference. The Board considered that in the context of the advertisement for the Jennifer Coolidge tour, this word and implied reference is relevant and unlikely to be viewed or understood by children.

The Board determined that the advertisement did treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and that it did not breach section 2.3 of the Code.

The Board then considered whether the advertisement was in breach of section 2.5 of the Code. Section 2.5 of the Code states: “Advertising or Marketing Communications shall only use language which is appropriate in the circumstances and strong or obscene language shall be avoided.”

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement uses language which is offensive.

The Board noted that in this instance, the word ‘MILF’ is used as a reference word to get discounted tickets to see Jennifer Coolidge. The Board considered that people who wanted to book to see Jennifer Coolidge would most likely be aware of this word and its meaning. The Board considered that whilst some members of the community may not like this word, it has

become part of the common vernacular, is not generally considered offensive, and in this context is not inappropriate.

The Board considered that most people would not consider the word MILF to be strong or obscene, and determined that the advertisement did not breach section 2.5 of the Code.

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