



Case Report

1	Case Number	0566/17
2	Advertiser	Stan
3	Product	Media
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Billboard
5	Date of Determination	19/12/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

A Billboard advertisement of a New Television series airing on STAN called SMILF

THE COMPLAINT

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

*SMILF stands for 'single mother I'd like to f***'. To have this on a billboard that is next to a childcare centre and within a few hundred metres of numerous schools is offensive. The acronym reduces a woman, a mother, down to her sexual attractiveness alone. She has no other attributes apparently. I think Stan should be ashamed of themselves for trying to get peoples' attention in such a base way.*

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We refer to your letter dated 1 December 2017, regarding the complaint in respect of one of Stan's advertisements ("Advertisement").

1. *Facts relating to the Advertisement*
- 2.

- *The Advertisement is located on bus stop street furniture at the corner of Miller Stand Carlow St, Sydney NSW.*
- *The Advertisement is designed to inform viewers of, and to showcase, the program SMILF. AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics (Code)*

4.

We have reviewed the relevant sections of the Code and the information and guidance provided on adstandards.com.au in relation to responding to complaints.

In our view, the Advertisement complies in all relevant respects with the AANA Code of Ethics ("Code"), and is in step with Prevailing Community Standards.

We address each element of section 2 of the Code below:

- *Discrimination or vilification {s2.1)*

The Advertisement does not discriminate against or vilify a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual preference, religion, disability, mental illness or political belief.

The complaint did not raise this.

- *Sexual appeal {s2.2)*

The complaint alleges that including the word "SMILF" on the Advertisement uses sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of mothers.

However, use of the word "SMILF" in the context of the Advertisement accurately reflects the program's light hearted and humorous approach to dating and sex, rather than employing a tone of overt sexuality or degradation of women. The image (which forms the focal point of the Advertisement) is of a loving mother/son and is accompanied by the words "Single, Smart, Strong" which makes it clear that the Advertisement is not intended to debase mothers or objectify women but rather to celebrate single mothers.

"SMILF" is also the title of the program being advertised and therefore its inclusion in the Advertisement is unavoidable.

Further, the word "SMILF" is slang terminology widely understood and used in Australia and its use is consistent with prevailing community standards.

Based on the foregoing and taking into account the AANA Code of Ethics- Practice Note we are strongly of the view that the language included in the Advertisement was consistent with prevailing community standards, was not degrading and when considered in context was used in a light-hearted and non-exploitative manner.

The Advertisement does not use sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.

- *Violence {s2.3)*

The Advertisement does not present or portray violence.

The complaint did not raise this.

- *Sex, sexuality and nudity {s2.4}*

*The Advertisement did not contain any sex, sexuality or nudity.
The complaint did not raise this.*

- *Inappropriate language {s2.5}*

*The Advertisement did not contain any inappropriate language.
The complaint did not raise this.*

- *Health and Safety {s2.6}*

*The Advertisement does not contain any material which, in our view, is contrary to
Prevailing Community
Standards on health and safety (including as detailed in AANA Code of Ethics Practice Note),
nor does the Advertisement depict any dangerous behaviour which is likely to be imitated by
children.*

The complaint did not raise this.

- *Distinguishable as advertising (s2.7)*

The Advertisement contains:

- *the Stan-branded graphic which reads "Only on Stan"; and*
- *the graphic which reads "New series" and "November 13";*

*Which clearly distinguishes the Advertisement as an advertisement. The complaint also notes
that it is an advertisement.*

3. Stan comments in relation to the complaint

*For the reasons set out above, we strongly believe the Advertisement complies in all relevant
respects with the Code.*

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (the "Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainant's concerns that the advertisement uses an acronym that is offensive and not appropriate for children.

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

The Board 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 (including appropriate for the relevant audience and medium). Strong or obscene language shall be avoided".

The Board noted that the Billboard advertisement is for a television program being aired on STAN and includes an image in the centre of the advertisement of the female actress of the series carrying a young child on her shoulders. Under the image is the text “Single. Smart. Strong” followed by the acronym “SMILF” in large font and the text “New Series” under the acronym.

The Board noted that the advertising material appears on a Billboard at bus shelters and is visible to a broad audience that would include children.

The Board noted that it has previously considered advertisements which have used acronyms to appeal to a younger adult market (0331/11, 0566/09 and 0533/09).

Consistent with previous decisions the Board considered that the use of the acronym 'SMILF' was not of itself strong or obscene language and could mean a variety of things.

The Board considered that the use of SMILF may be understood as an acronym for a phrase including strong language by some members of the community, but that this is not widely understood and the use of the term ‘SMILF’ was, of itself, not a word that is strong or obscene, or inappropriate in the circumstances where it was clearly associated with the promoted television series.

The Board considered it unlikely that that very young children would understand the acronym as having any meaning and that older children and adults may notice the advertisement on the basis of the acronym but that in conjunction with the image of the lead actress and the text “single, smart, strong” it is reasonable that the community would identify “SMILF” as consistent with the promoted television series.

The Board noted that the advertisement could be seen by children but considered that most members of the community would consider that the language in the advertisement was not inappropriate and was not strong or obscene.

The Board considered that the use of the acronym was not, in the context of this advertisement, inappropriate.

The Board considered that the advertisement did not use strong, obscene or inappropriate language and determined that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.5 of the Code.

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

