[IE] Advertising Authority rejects complaints over “offensive and sexist” motoring advert

IRIS 2016-8:1/22

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The Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland (ASAI) has rejected a number of complaints over a television car advert by Opel Ireland that was considered by complainants to be “offensive and sexist towards women”.

The advertisement features a couple travelling in a car with the woman driving. The couple stop at a pedestrian crossing and the woman turns to her male passenger and poses the question “Do you wanna feel? It’s nice and warm”. The male passenger appears perplexed and replies “okay”, and reaches over to touch the woman’s breast. The female driver subsequently takes the man’s hand and places it on the steering wheel of the car. The man says “Oh”. This scene is accompanied by a male voiceover that states: “The new Oh by Opel. The Corsa with heated steering wheel”.

All complainants considered the advert to be “offensive and sexist towards women”. Two complainants were of the view that the “language used contained sexual innuendo”, while one complainant believed that the advert was ”not suitable for children and considered it inappropriate that it could be viewed at any time during the day on RTE/TV3 player”.

The ASAI assessed the complaint under various sections of the ASAI Code (see IRIS 2016-5/21), including section 2.15, which provides that “A marketing communication should contain nothing that is likely to cause grave or widespread offence”. The Authority also considered the complaints under section 2.19 of the Code, which states that “[A]dvertisers should take account of public sensitivities in the preparation and publication of marketing communications and avoid the exploitation of sexuality and the use of coarseness and undesirable innuendo. They should not use offensive or provocative copy or images merely to attract attention”.

Opel Ireland stated that the advert was “meant to be light-hearted” and that it never intended to be “demeaning to women”. The advertisers contended that the female driver portrayed “was in control at all times” and when the male passenger misunderstood her question, “she clearly pointed out quickly that he was wrong and corrected him”. Opel Ireland did agree, however, that the advert should not have been available on the Player before 9pm and stated that they

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“would put procedures in place to ensure that this did not happen again”.

The ASAI Complaints Committee, in reaching their decision, noted the “light-hearted tone of the advert and that the woman did not appear at any stage to be unduly upset by the man’s misinterpretation of her query”. The Committee concluded that “the advertisement had not breached the requirements of the Code” and accordingly did not uphold the complaints.

Advertising Standards Authority of Ireland, Complaints Bulletin 16/4, Complaint Reference 25923, 19 July 2016

http://www.asai.ie/complaint/motoring-14/

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