

24/05/2016

YOUR COMPLAINT - British Telecommunications plc (ASA Complaint Ref: A16-34025)

Thank you for contacting the Advertising Standards Authority. I'm sorry to learn that this matter has caused you concern.

Our role as an organisation is to help ensure that advertising is responsible, by that we mean legal, decent, honest and truthful. We can intervene if an ad appears likely to be in breach of the UK Codes of Advertising by, for example, being likely to cause serious or widespread offence, being materially misleading or risking causing significant harm.

In this case, we decided to put your concerns, along with the others we received, to the independent [ASA Council](#) for consideration; the ASA Council is the jury that decides whether advertisements have breached the Advertising Codes. They have now carefully considered the ad and the issues raised, but have concluded that there are insufficient grounds for further ASA intervention on this occasion.

Council considered whether the ad was offensive, because it portrayed an act of violence in a light-hearted manner, and trivialised and/or condoned domestic violence. Many of the complaints we received highlighted the complainants view that the ad would not have been tolerated if the genders had been reversed, and Council therefore considered whether it was sexist and implied that violence committed by women against men was socially acceptable; some of the complainants specifically highlighted that men can also be victims of domestic abuse, and The ManKind Initiative objected that the ad was irresponsible, because it may have prevented male victims of domestic abuse from seeking help.

In this case, Council considered that viewers would be likely to have understood the ad to be highlighting the speed of the advertiser's broadband services by using a fantastical scenario in which Mr Reynolds dived out of a moving car and smashed through a glass door, amongst other things, illustrating his hectic lifestyle and thus his need for fast broadband. Council regarded that viewers would be likely to recognise the ad to be in keeping with this advertiser's recent "Behind the Scenes" ad campaign, featuring other famous actors, in which they parody the making of ads.

Council considered that viewers would be likely to have understood the ad to be an attempt at humour, and whilst they acknowledged that some viewers would find any depiction of violence in a light-hearted manner to be in poor taste, Council regarded that the scene in question was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence to viewers in general. Council did not think that viewers would be likely to interpret the ad as condoning or trivialising domestic violence, to suggest that men are not able to be victims of abuse, or to have otherwise implied that acts of violence perpetrated by women against men in real life were not serious and thoroughly unacceptable.

Council considered the ad did not suggest that the woman's behaviour was positive, or otherwise encouraged viewers to emulate her actions. Furthermore, they noted that the ad had been given a restriction by Clearcast, the body which pre-clears television advertising in the UK, preventing it from being shown immediately before, during and immediately after children's programming, which they considered was appropriate and proportionate to the content of the ad. Council therefore concluded that the ad had not been irresponsibly scheduled and was unlikely to cause harm through emulation.

They therefore concluded that there was no breach of the Code, and on that basis, we will not be taking any further action on this occasion

I appreciate that this may not be the outcome you'd hoped for, but we've passed on your comments to the advertiser (without revealing your identity) so that they're aware of your views. We will also continue to monitor the response to this ad.

Yours sincerely,

Joanne Middlewick
Complaints Executive
Direct line 020 7492 2163

Advertising Standards Authority
Mid City Place, 71 High Holborn
London WC1V 6QT
Telephone 020 7492 2222
www.asa.org.uk

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The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and the Advertising Standards Authority (Broadcast) Ltd will use the information you have given us to deal with your complaint. If your complaint falls under the remit of a different regulatory body, we will normally pass it on to that body. If