

COMPLAINT NUMBER	20/064
ADVERTISER	The Book Depository
ADVERTISEMENT	The Book Depository, Radio
DATE OF MEETING	6 March 2020
OUTCOME	Settled-advertisement removed

Advertisement: The radio advertisement for The Book Depository depicts a couple getting ready for bed when the female voice asks what handcuff size their male partner is. He replies confused and unsure about what is going on. After being whipped by the female, the male voice complains that it hurt and is told by the female to "take it" before she whips him again. The voiceover states that the book 50 Shades of Grey is an available title from The Book Depository.

The Complainant was disturbed by the lack of consent and mentioned that the situation would be much more severe if the roles were reversed.

The Chair ruled the complaint was Settled.

Complaint: This ad has the voice of a woman and male who appear to be getting ready for bed. The female voice asks the male voice what size his handcuffs are and there is a reference to her hanging chains in their bedroom. The male appears confused as to what is going on and what the female's intentions are. At the end, you can hear the sound of a whip and the male voice saying "ouch" or something similar. followed by a voice saying the Book depository has something that will interest everyone. The reason I am complaining about this ad is due to the lack of apparent consent between the female and male within the advertisement. All forms of sexual activity, from what is considered heteronormative sex to all types of BDSM need consent from the adults who are participating, The male in this scenario appears to have no idea of what is going on and what the female's intentions are. I feel that this ad sends the message that you do not have to have consent for the sexual activity because you read a book you liked and it is "just fun". I have also thought about how this ad would sound if the voices were reversed, and with a male, in the female role, I believe that fewer people would find it funny. I believe this advertisement essentially promotes sexual violence due to the lack of consent from the male person. If the male person appeared to understand what was happening and was keen I would have no issue with the advertisement.

The Agency on behalf of the Advertiser said in part: "...The Book Depository client is located in the UK so we will represent them on their behalf. This was a 2 week campaign running from Monday 10-2 through Sunday 23-2 and therefore is no longer live, and we specifically avoided playing this particular ad on family stations. Given the nature of the complaint we will ensure this creative is never used again."

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 1, Rule 1(c);

The Chair noted the Complainant's concerns the radio advertisement depicted sexual activity without apparent consent from both parties.

The Chair acknowledged the Advertiser had removed the advertisement, after receiving the complaint, and confirmed it would not run again in its current form.

Given the Advertiser's co-operative engagement with the process and the self-regulatory action taken in removing the advertisement, the Chair said that it would serve no further purpose to place the matter before the Complaints Board.

The Chair ruled that the matter was Settled.

Chair's Ruling: Complaint **Settled – advertisement removed**

APPEAL INFORMATION

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.