

COMPLAINT NUMBER	21/011
ADVERTISER	Rug Doctor
ADVERTISEMENT	Rug Doctor, Television
DATE OF MEETING	18 January 2021
OUTCOME	No Grounds to Proceed

Advertisement: The Rug Doctor television advertisement begins by asking viewers when the last time they cleaned their carpet was? The advertisement states that Rug Doctor is New Zealand’s most trusted carpet cleaner and ends with the phrase "Rug Doctor, steaming mad at dirt!".

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Complaint: This video TVC infers the Rug Doctor cleans carpet using steam. It doesn't heat water. It doesn't use steam.

The relevant provisions were Advertising Standards Code - Principle 2, Rule 2(b);

Principle 2: Truthful Presentation: Advertisements must be truthful, balanced and not misleading.

Rule 2(b) Truthful Presentation: Advertisements must not mislead or be likely to mislead, deceive or confuse consumers, abuse their trust or exploit their lack of knowledge. This includes by implication, inaccuracy, ambiguity, exaggeration, unrealistic claim, omission, false representation or otherwise. Obvious hyperbole identifiable as such is not considered to be misleading.

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concern the advertisement is misleading to infer the use of steam when steam is not used in the cleaning process.

In considering the complaint, the Chair referred to precedent Decision 09/616 which dealt with the same issue and was not upheld by the Complaints Board.

That decision said in part:

...“Turning to the advertisement, the Complaints Board noted that it contained the statement, in description of the Rug Doctor product, “steaming mad at dirt”. Turning to the response from the Advertiser, the Complaints Board noted where it said “Rug Doctor uses a method called Hot Water Extraction (“the process”)...This produces from hot (though not boiling hot) water a fine spray of water that is used to force dirt out of the carpet”. The Complaints Board also noted where the Advertiser said “...the process used by Rug Doctor is not unique. It is a common industry technique within New Zealand and elsewhere. It is also commonly referred to within the industry as “steam cleaning”...”

The Complaints Board also noted where the Advertiser’s response said “The tagline is a pun on the word ‘steaming’ “. The Complaints Board accepted this response and

commented that “steaming mad” was a well-used colloquial expression to describe someone who was very angry. The Complaints Board also noted that the Rug Doctor product used a process of hot water spray to clean carpet, and that within the industry this process was commonly known as “steam cleaning”. Having made the above observations, the Complaints Board was of the view that the advertisement, where it referred to the Rug Doctor as being “steaming mad with dirt” did not reach the threshold to be said to likely to deceive or mislead consumers.”

Turning to the complaint before her, the Chair said the precedent decision directly addressed the Complainant’s concerns. The Chair said the tagline “steaming mad at dirt” was a pun on the word steaming and the Advertiser had previously explained the industry definition of “steam cleaning” related to its hot water extraction system used by the Rug Doctor product.

The Chair said the advertisement was unlikely to confuse or deceive consumers and was not in breach of Principle 2 or Rule 2(b) of the Advertising Standards Code.

The Chair ruled there were no grounds for the complaint to proceed.

Chair’s Ruling: Complaint **No Grounds to Proceed**

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.