

ASA Adjudication on B&Q plc

Date:

16 February 2011

Media:

National press

Sector:

Retail

Number of complaints:

2

Complaint Ref:

140440

Ad

An ad, for loft insulation, was headlined "Insulate your loft for only £25*" and featured a picture of a roll of loft insulation. Text printed on the side of the roll stated "A fully insulated loft could save you around £150 a year". Text next to the roll stated "Everyday Eco Loft Insulation Roll covers 5.5m² at 170mm thick. Cross lay on top of existing insulation and joists to improve the thermal efficiency of your home". Small print at the bottom of the ad stated "*Based on topping up existing insulation by 170mm in a typical 44m² 3 bed semi-detached home".

Issue

1. One complainant challenged whether the claim "Insulate your loft for only £25*" misleadingly implied that consumers could insulate their loft from scratch for £25, whereas he understood that the advertised price could only be achieved when the product was used to top up existing insulation.
2. A second complainant challenged whether the claim "A fully insulated loft could save you around £150 a year" was misleading and could be substantiated, because they understood that that saving would only be experienced by consumers insulating an uninsulated loft to the government recommended standard of 270 mm and not by those using the top-up insulation featured in the ad.

CAP Code (Edition 12)

3.1

3.3

3.7

3.9

3.17

Response

1. B&Q plc (B&Q) said there was no intention on their part to mislead consumers. They said the majority of residences in the UK already had 100 mm of insulation in place and the intention of the ad was to raise awareness amongst consumers that the Government-advised level of insulation was 270 mm. They said the advertised product, when added to existing insulation, would fully insulate a loft for £25. They believed that the inclusion of qualifying small print at the bottom of the ad linked to the headline claim, as well as the several references in the ad to the thickness of the product, avoided any ambiguity.

B&Q said, notwithstanding that, they had now amended the ad to state "top up your insulation for £25" in order to avoid any confusion.

2. B&Q said that, because the claim "A fully insulated loft could save you around £150 a year" featured on a product pictured in the ad, it had been included in error. They said the claim that loft insulation could save people £150 was accurate and provided a link to a page on the website of the Energy Saving Trust which they said supported the claim.

They said, however, in order to avoid any chance of misleading readers, they had now removed the claim from the pack-shot featured in the ad.

Assessment

1. Upheld

The ASA considered that readers would interpret the headline claim "Insulate your loft for £25" to mean that they could fully insulate their loft with the advertised product for £25.

While we noted that small print at the bottom of the ad explained that the headline claim referred to topping-up consumers existing insulation, we considered that that was significant information likely to affect readers understanding of the headline claim and should therefore have been made clear in the body of the ad. Because it was not, we concluded that the claim was misleading.

2. Upheld

We considered that readers would understand the claim "A fully insulated loft could save you around £150 a year", which appeared on the side of a roll of top-up insulation pictured in the ad, to mean that they would be able to make that saving using the advertised product.

We noted, from reference to the Energy Saving Trust (EST) website cited by B&Q, that a fully insulated loft could result in savings of £145 per year, and that the £145 saving was calculated on the basis of insulating an uninsulated loft to the government recommended depth of 270 mm. We understood, again with reference to the EST website, that using top-up insulation, as featured in the ad, alongside existing insulation typically resulted in a much lower saving of only £40 per year.

Notwithstanding that, because we also considered that the ad did not make clear that the headline claim related to top-up insulation only, we were concerned that, in that context, the savings claim was ambiguous and could lead readers to assume that a one-off investment of £25 could result in a saving of £150 a year.

While we welcomed B&Q's assurance that they had now amended the ad, because we understood that the stated saving was not achievable using the advertised product alone, we concluded that the claim was misleading.

The ad breached CAP Code (Edition 12) rules 3.1, 3.3 (Misleading advertising), 3.7 (Substantiation), 3.9 (Qualification) and 3.17 (Prices).

Action

The ad must not appear again in its current form.