

Consumers complain that Dotsure ad will scare kids, regulator agrees

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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The Advertising Regulatory Board (ARB) has received a complaint against a television advertisement by Dotsure pet insurance. The ad, narrating a home invasion incident involving a heroic dog, has sparked controversy over its content and potential impact, prompting the regulator to request for its removal.



Source: www.unsplash.com

The ad opens with home video footage of children, accompanied by a voiceover emphasising the protective instincts that come with having a family. The narrative takes a dark turn as the scene transitions to a night time home invasion, complete with alarming sound effects and a detailed account of the family dog's heroic intervention.

Triggering

The complaint, lodged by individuals who found the ad disturbing, primarily centered around its potentially harmful effects on children. The complainants argued that the commercial played on fears associated with crime, using triggering sound effects and graphic descriptions that were deemed inappropriate for a family audience.

One of the complainants said: "Scare tactics by Dotsure to promote pet insurance. Not suitable for family viewing as very unsettling for families in crime ridden South Africa. Exploitation of South African fears of crime and home invasion. Children will be fearful that their pet will be attacked during crime wave."

No contravention

Dotsure responded by denying any contravention of the Code of Practice, asserting that the ad celebrated a heroic animal with a positive outcome. They argued that the narrative was based on true events widely covered in the news, with no intention to promote animal abuse or instill fear.

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"We further deny that the impact of the advertisement viewed as a whole will have an impact on those who are likely to see or hear it in the manner as alleged. We deny that this will affect the general public given the context of the advertisement, the medium, likely audience, product or service, standards, degree of social concern and public interest. Any perceived severity is further mitigated by the positive outcome highlighted in the advertisement," said the respondent.

However, the ARB, in its assessment, found the advertisement in violation of Clause 14 of Section II, which addresses advertising's impact on children. The regulatory body expressed concern over the detailed and triggering content, stating that it could potentially cause emotional harm to children.

Moreover, the ARB upheld the complaint under Clause 3.1 of Section II, emphasising that the commercial unduly exploited fears associated with crime in South Africa. The detailed reenactment, along with graphic descriptions and sound effects, was deemed to play on the fears of the general public.

As a result, Dotsure has been instructed by the ARB to either withdraw or amend the television commercial promptly.

Read more: [Dotsure exec defends ad: 'Most South Africans love Kei's story'](#)

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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