

RESPONSE FROM CAMELOT GROUP PLC TO THE DCMS CONSULTATION ON PRODUCT PLACEMENT

Introduction

- Camelot welcomes the opportunity to respond to the DCMS consultation on Product Placement on Television.
- Our response is specific to The National Lottery, and recommends a flexible approach for its treatment – in line with the status recognised by Ofcom in the current Broadcast Code – if Product Placement were to go ahead.
- We are replying by way of this statement of points rather than responding to the detailed consultation questionnaire.

Commercial advantages

- Whilst there may be perceived benefits for broadcasters and production companies from product placement income - and we are not entering into estimating the commercial impact - there has to be measurable value for the advertiser, given that free or less than full cost prop placement already generates some value.

Prop placement

- In any case, prop placement as currently allowed and practised should remain without any disadvantage, including frequency and existing levels of placements, and visibility in line with undue prominence rules.

Undue prominence

- The national and statutory status of The National Lottery recognised by Ofcom and reflected in the Broadcast Code should remain, as stated in the Guidance Notes on Section 10: Commercial References, Rule 10.4 No Undue Prominence:

The National Lottery

- **Ofcom recognises the national and statutory status of The National Lottery and will apply an *appropriate degree* of flexibility in interpreting and applying this Rule in the context of references to the National Lottery in programming.**
- This flexibility should apply not only to prop placement but also to product placement, if it is to go ahead.

Soft vs. hard gambling

- We would agree with the distinction between soft and hard gambling, allowing the former, with safeguards, and banning the latter from product placement.

- Furthermore, we would ask for a distinction between The National Lottery and any form of soft gambling, recognising the unique role of The National Lottery – as established in public policy – in raising money for The National Lottery Good Causes. To date, in excess of £23 billion has been raised benefiting over 330,000 projects.

Editorial Independence

- Paid for product placement, if it were to go ahead, should allow enhanced exposure and value for The National Lottery brand (over and above what is already achieved by prop placement) – with editorial justification – in terms of verbal, visual and thematic placements, including for example references to buying a draw ticket or to the jackpot for a particular week.
- The National Lottery would want to ensure enhancement and protection of its brand and products in paid for placements, so discussions and agreement with the production company and/or broadcaster about the nature of portrayal in editorial content would be crucial. This is more important as the advertising and promotion of The National Lottery is already governed by its own regulator and any existing or amended guidelines relating to advertising by way of placement would need to be adhered to. We would not want negative storylines or inappropriate juxtapositions for example. We are not talking about agreeing every camera angle or blanket influence, but rather agreeing the best 'natural way' of including The National Lottery brand and products within the editorial context with justification.
- There should be flexibility in discussions about paid for placements, allowing them as part of the negotiation rather than banning them outright by interpreting them as commercial influence over editorial content.
- A bombardment of advertising messages that impairs enjoyment of a programme for viewers is to no-one's advantage. Paid for placement if it goes ahead will soon find its acceptable level.

Signalling product placement to viewers

- The nature and mechanics of appropriate signalling of product placement to viewers is perhaps best left to the ensuing Ofcom consultation for the Broadcast Code if product placement is permitted.

Children

- The National Lottery products are aimed at the 16 + age group. We would expect paid for placement in programmes to fall in line with time slots in which The National Lottery is currently allowed to advertise.

Programme genres

- As to programme genres in which product placement should be allowed - for The National Lottery we would ask that all permitted genres, ie

cinematographic works, films and series made for the audio visual media services, all sports and light entertainment programmes, are open to product placement, if it goes ahead. We see no conflict for appropriate National Lottery placement within the whole range of programming, fiction or factual, that fall in these genres. Where the nature of news, current affairs, consumer and religious programmes allow them to fall into the permitted categories, then again we see no direct conflict for appropriate National Lottery placement.

Monitoring

- We would not advocate a charge for the assessment and monitoring of product placement for at least an initial period. If significant concerns surface, then Ofcom should open a review consultation to determine an appropriate way forward.

Summary

- In summary, if product placement were to go ahead - and we see cases for benefits to broadcasters, production companies and The National Lottery, including benefits to Good Causes - it would serve all parties for the flexibility granted to The National Lottery on undue prominence in the current Ofcom Broadcast Code to be appropriately extended to product placement regulations, as recommended in this response.

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