

Victorian Plumbing loses challenge over 'UK's largest online-only bathroom retailer' claim

Victorian Plumbing has lost its challenge over a rival's claim to be the "UK's largest online-only bathroom retailer".

The Skelmersdale-headquartered company took issue text posted on Victoria Plum's website in January 2022 and contacted the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

However, the watchdog has not upheld the challenge, ruling that it considered consumers would understand from the claim that "Victoria Plum had the largest market share in terms of sales when compared with other bathroom retailers that traded online exclusively".

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It added that consumers would interpret 'online-only' to mean that an online retailer did not have any physical stores where they could undertake a financial transaction.

The ASA said: "The complainant contended that they were themselves the largest online bathroom retailer, and on that basis they believed it was misleading for the ad to claim that the advertiser was the 'UK's largest online only bathroom retailer'.

"However we noted that the complainant did have a showroom where consumers could browse, obtain advice, and purchase products.

"We considered, therefore, that they were not directly

comparable in terms of being exclusively 'online-only' as it would be understood by consumers, and that their claim to be the largest online bathroom retailer did not undermine the claim in the ad.

"The advertiser was nevertheless required to substantiate the claim, and we expected to see evidence to demonstrate that they were the UK's largest online-only bathroom retailer.

"We assessed the Mintel report 'Bathrooms and Bathroom Accessories UK 2022' and acknowledged that the complainant did have a larger market share than Victoria Plum, and that both retailers had been categorised similarly as 'internet-based'.

"As above, however, the complainant had a physical store, and while it was categorised as internet-based, it was therefore not 'online-only'.

"Victoria Plum held the biggest market share of the remaining retailers in that category, and given that 'internet-based' would include online-only retailers, we considered the report showed that they were the largest online-only bathroom retailer.

"We therefore concluded that Victoria Plum's claim to be 'the UK's largest online-only bathroom retailer' had been substantiated and was unlikely to mislead."

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