

DECISION

FIRST INSTANCE JURY

Our Reference	EASA CBC Case 6936
Complaint by	Consumer
EASA Cross Border Complaints System	Forwarded to CARO by the UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)
Advertiser	Panimpex Ltd / HE 435789
Decision issued	Thursday 11 April 2024

Issue / Complaint CBC 6936

"The website <https://www.stylus.chat/> offers to produce academic papers that use real scientific papers as references. After buying a subscription, i found that all the references that the bot was generating were fake, as were the "facts" it discussed in the paper. I was also told via their live chat function, that the bot tool was in "beta" which was not mentioned anywhere on their website, nor in their terms and conditions. Using fake references would amount to academic fraud. They are blatantly selling a product that does not do what is say it will do, and the consequence for someone who believed this claim, could be severe and potentially life altering. When discussed over their online Chat help option, i was told it was glitchy, it was in beta, it was finding papers behind paywalls and those not available online. For clarity even (real) papers that are behind paywalls will be searchable online, even if you cannot read the full paper - the abstract is always findable. And if not available online, how on earth was the bot finding them - basically they lied to cover the failure of their product and the false claim on their website. The service they claim to provide would be immensely helpful and save enormous amounts of time for students wanting to write academic papers, and is thus very attractive. One very time-consuming aspect of writing an academic paper, is finding relevant papers to base the writing on, which is why i bought their product. However, had i not checked the reference list in an attempt to read the papers, i would not have discovered their fraud, and could have potentially faced very serious consequences."

Advertiser's Response

The first reply received by the company was on 1.2.2024.

Subsequently, CARO replied with email dated 20.2.2024.

On **1.3.2024**, the following email was received:

"We had a close look at the below information.

Thank you for the detailed clarifications with the examples of generated works.

We recognize that the service has its drawbacks.

Taking that into account, we've excluded the provided misrepresentation from the description of the service on the website <https://www.stylus.chat/>.

If we may be of further assistance, please inform us accordingly."

After the case discussion, CARO received the following information on **9.4.2024**:

"1. The website Stylus.chat is no longer being indexed, starting from 04/04/2024.

2. There were XXX [number shared with jury] requests for a refund, and all of them were resolved positively, the customers were fully refunded. Please inform us what kind of confirmation do you need to be provided?

We possibly can send you some data from our database, but it will be anonymized.

3. The website was fully reworked - please check it via direct link stylus.chat. Direct link is still working, and the website is not down yet, so users can use the refund option.

4. Total quantity of users is XXXX [number shared with jury].

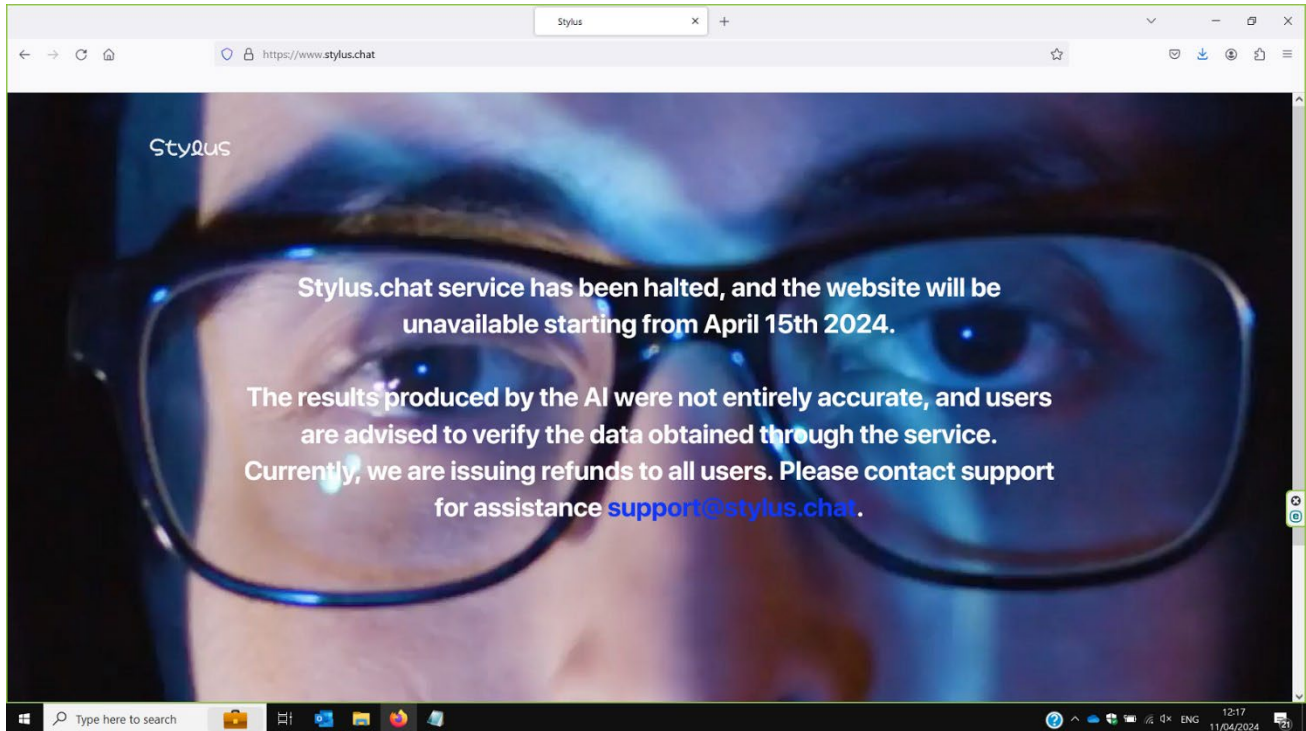
5. As I've informed you before, we've used AI that just collects information from open sources - namely, we've used GPT-3.5 Turbo technology from Open.AI (please visit <https://openai.com/> for more details). Hence, the AI can't "steal" information, it rather uses "fair use" principles while generating new content.

From our side there were some managers who checked the overall consistency of the results for the requests/prompts initiated by the users."

Jury Assessment:

1. The jury carefully considered all the information presented to them. As always, the jury starts from the premise that information presented should be factually true and clear to the average consumer.
2. The jury notes the admission that it was a mistake for the site to have been advertised as a credible source of real, reputable and reliable academic sources and references, claims that are in breach of articles **1, 3 and 5(a) and (b)(i)** of the Cyprus Advertising Code, given the functioning of the website.

3. It further notes the removal of the site from search engines, the refund of subscriptions -to date approximately 10% of the subscriber base-, and the fact that the information on the home page of the site is currently as follows:



4. Given the above, the Jury strongly recommends that the advertiser continue to engage with users until all interested parties are refunded.

Appeal to the Review Jury is provided for in the Regulations of the latter (Article 1). A review request is made in writing with reference to the initial complaint and the decision of the First Instance Jury, within 15 working days from the dispatch of the decision of the First Instance Jury to the parties involved.

Please note that filing an appeal does not suspend the decision of the First Instance Jury; the Review Jury will not discuss cases if there has been no compliance with the decision of the First Instance Jury by the party filing the appeal.

01 February 2024

Cyprus Advertising Regulation Organization

Panteli Katelari 21, Libra House, 6th floor,
1097, Nicosia, Cyprus
+357 99 198954; info@fed.org.cy

Dear Sirs,

Explanation to the complaint

Panimpex Ltd (hereinafter – the “Company”, “we”, “us” etc.) received CARO’s request for the views on the issue regarding the violation of the articles 1, 3, 5 and 8 of the Cyprus Advertising Code.

As we understood from the information provided in the email dated 24th January 2024, the case is that a certain statement posted on the website <https://www.stylus.chat/chat> is allegedly not true and misleads users regarding the properties of the platform (this conclusion follows from the screenshot attached to the email).

According to information on the CARO’s official website, CARO is a non-profit company whose main objective is to control the content of advertisements displayed in Cyprus to ensure that they are legal, decent, honest and that they tell the truth¹.

Taking this into account, it seems necessary to investigate whether the information posted on the official website of the platform (<https://www.stylus.chat/chat>) is advertising or not.

The statement on the website shall not be qualified as an “advertisement”

According to the Cyprus Advertising Code, “Advertising” includes any form of advertising and communication for all kinds of products and services. The word “advertising” is taken in its broadest sense and includes advertisements transmitted/published by the Mass Media, as well as commercial and advertising promotion, presentation and promotion actions for products and services, and all forms of commercial and social communication regardless of the medium used, implemented directly by the advertiser or on his behalf and at his behest and aimed at promoting products and the influencing consumer behavior.

Indicatively, this includes: advertisements on television and radio stations, on the internet, in newspapers and magazines, in any kind of external advertising media such as posters, billboards, electronic displays, etc., leaflets, catalogues, postal letters with advertising messages and presentations, advertising messages and promotional material sent by fax, e-mail or through any other electronic and/or printed means of information, advertising messages on product packaging, labels and point-of-sale material, cinema advertisements, etc.

In case there is a dispute about the application of the code to a form of communication, the criteria for whether this form of communication constitutes advertising communication are the following:

- a) the communication is carried out directly by the advertiser or on his behalf and at his behest;
- b) it is located in a place freely accessible to consumers, under the control of the advertiser;

¹ <http://www.fed.org.cy/fed/>

- [REDACTED]
- c) it aims to promote specific products or a company
 - (d) the communication and/or the claims in question have appeared in the same or similar manner in other advertisements;
 - (e) the communication has indirectly, by acts or omissions, been accepted by the advertiser.

According to our point of view, the information posted on the official website of the Company (<https://www.stylus.chat/chat>) is not advertising, since the said website is simply the ultimate distribution point for a digital product called “Stylus”. The website is used for purchasing licenses for “Stylus” by consumers who are already interested in the product. Given this, we suppose that information posted on the Company’s website should not be considered as advertising, otherwise it would be contradictory to the essence of advertising.

Also, posting of the information on the Company’s website is intended to provide consumers with information about the Company, its products, their properties, terms of use, promotions, etc. The purpose of provision of this data consists in consumer’s familiarization with the details regarding the product and the Company, not in attraction the attention of an indefinite number of persons to the product.

Based on the above, Cyprus Advertising Code shall not apply to the information posted on the <https://www.stylus.chat/chat> and CARO’s has no authority to consider the complaint due to the fact that the information posted on the Company’s website is not an advertising.

The disputed statement posted on the Company’s website is decent, honest and true

Notwithstanding the foregoing, we are willing to provide you with the material obtained with our service, which contains reliable information on a given topic with links to existing scientific literature (Annex 1). We suppose that it may be a relevant confirmation that the information regarding the quality of the service posted on the website is reliable.

However, we do not find materials confirming the discrepancy between the information posted on our official website and quality of services received by the user in the files attached to the email. Therefore, we are unable to verify the user in order to check the accuracy of the materials received through our service.

If we are provided with materials that refute the correct operation of our service, we will bring the information posted on the website into compliance.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of further assistance.

Annexes

1. Academic Paper on the topic “Global Warming and Ecosystems” performed via Stylus.

Best regards,

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: COMPLAINT ABOUT STYLUS CHAT (PANIMPEX LTD, HE 435789) - OUR REF / EASA CBC 6936
Date: 20 February 2024 16:51:00

[REDACTED]

CARO has already ruled in many other cases that website statements, especially statements that induce consumers to interact with a company, buy a product etc., are within our remit.

In terms of the platform delivering what it promises:

I made two queries on the platform and asked university professors to check the results. In both cases, the references were problematic.

Query 1: What is the latest scientific research (e.g. the latest 5 years) on gender bias on traditional and social media.

Reply received:

«The list of references

Based on the given paper description, here is a list of references that can be used:

1. Alper, M., Dill-Shackleford, K. E., & Bryant, L. J. (Eds.). (2017). Digital youth: The role of media in development. Springer.
<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-1-4419-6278-2>, incorrect references to authors and date
2. Dworkin, S. L., & Moore, J. F. (Eds.). (2009). Body panic: Gender, health, and the selling of fitness. NYU Press.
<https://nyupress.org/9780814719688/body-panic/> second author is incorrect
3. Funk, J. B. (Ed.). (2019). Gender and media: Representing, producing, and consuming. Routledge.
<https://www.routledge.com/Gender-and-Media-Representing-Producing-Consuming/Krijnen-Van-Bauwel/p/book/9780367332099>, incorrect references to authors and date
4. Grabe, M. E., & Hyde, J. S. (Eds.). (2016). The Oxford handbook of media psychology. Oxford University Press.
<https://academic.oup.com/edited-volume/28164>, incorrect references to authors and date
5. Kilbourne, J. (2015). Can't buy my love: How advertising changes the way we think and feel. Simon and Schuster.
<https://www.amazon.com/Cant-Buy-My-Love-Advertising/dp/0684866005>, incorrect references to authors and date
6. Kilbourne, J., & Pipher, M. (Eds.). (2012). Can't buy my love: How advertising changes the way we think and feel. Simon and Schuster.
<https://www.amazon.com/Cant-Buy-My-Love-Advertising/dp/0684866005>, incorrect date
7. Ross, K., & Padua, A. P. (Eds.). (2017). Gender and media diversity journal. Ubiquity Press.
The most relevant similar entry I can find is not a book and the data in general is incorrect, see <https://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/media/gender-and-media-diversity-centre-gmdc/journal/>
8. Sternadori, M. (2017). Gender in advertising: Representation, challenges, and strategies. Lexington Books.
Does not exist.
9. Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls. (2018). APA report of the APA task force on the sexualization of girls. American Psychological Association.

Incorrect date, <https://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf>

10. Ward, L. M. (Ed.). (2016). Sexual media and children: A developmental perspective on media literacy. Routledge.

Does not exist.

Please note that this is a general list of references and may not cover the specific articles or studies mentioned in the paper description. Additionally, you may need to consult databases and search engines to find the latest research articles published within the past five years.»

Query 2: Describe how humans process information. How can this knowledge of information processing help PR practitioners?

«References:

1. Smith, J. (2019). Understanding the Human Information Processing System: Implications for Public Relations Practitioners. Journal of Public Relations Research, 45(3), 123-142.

2. Johnson, M. (2018). Cognitive Mechanisms in Information Processing: A Handbook for PR Practitioners. New York, NY: Routledge.

3. Brown, A. (2017). Human Behavior and Communication: Strategies for Effective PR Campaigns. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.

4. Davis, R. (2016). Attention and Perception in Public Relations: Maximizing Message Impact. Public Relations Journal, 28(2), 67-84.

5. Lee, S. (2015). Memory and Information Processing in PR: A Practical Guide. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.»

I was informed that [none of these references exist](#).

Please share your thoughts on the above.

Kind regards,



Cyprus Advertising Regulation Organization
www.fed.org.cy

