



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0083/18
2	Advertiser	Honey Birdette
3	Product	Lingerie
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	07/03/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women

2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

There are two posters in this advertisement. The first shows a woman in a red lace bra and high-waisted briefs leaning forward and eating a strawberry with the caption 'do not disturb MIMI'. The second features a woman in red lacy underwear reclining on a bed with roses, the caption reads 'do not disturb VALENTINA'.

THE COMPLAINT

A sample of comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

These images are harmful and dangerous to women and children, let alone denigrating, diminishing, and debasing of women, and, quite frankly, just plain tacky. This advertising is harmful and dangerous to women and girls and promotes acceptance of violence towards women in society more generally. The research report Media and Sexualization: State of Empirical Research, 1995–2015 by L. Monique Ward reports that, "everyday exposure to this content [is] directly associated with a range of consequences, including higher levels of body dissatisfaction, greater self-



objectification, greater support of sexist beliefs and of adversarial sexual beliefs, and greater tolerance of sexual violence toward women. Moreover, experimental exposure to this content leads both women and men to have a diminished view of women's competence, morality, and humanity" (1).

These are facts, not opinions. This kind of advertising promotes and enables male violence towards women; it is actually and provably harmful to women as a class, and not just 'offensive' to individuals. This kind of advertising has real-life, social consequences; it does not occur in an individualist, 'choice' vacuum: women get raped and abused because they are women and due to the tolerance that such images generate.

Please note, also, that the images you display are in an environment in which children are present, and the images do not present women as equal to men, which is a major cause of violence towards women. As the 'Our Watch' website states, "Violence against women is serious and prevalent. It is primarily driven by gender inequality, and reinforced or exacerbated by a number of other factors. Gender inequality is a situation in which women and men do not have equal power, resources or opportunities, and that their voices, ideas and work are not valued equally by society. Gender inequality provides the underlying social conditions for violence against women. It operates at many levels – from social and cultural norms (the dominant ideas about men and women in a society), to economic structures (such as the pay gap between men and women), to organisational, community, family and relationship practices" (2).

I draw your attention to the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Code of Ethics, section 2.4 states that "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience." The AANA on its website states that it take a "broad view of 'audience'" and that the AANA Board "will not just have regard to whom the advertisement is targeted (the relevant audience) but also looks at who can see it and will take that into consideration in determining their view". The specified advertising does not account for the fact that mall advertising can be seen by children. This would appear to be in breach of the AANA Code, and so I am lodging a complaint with you.

These images objectify women, promote greater tolerance of violence towards women, lead to body dysmorphia amongst women and girls, cause women and girls to self-objectify and internalise misogyny, and that fundamentally diminishes women's personhood and basic right to being treated as whole human persons.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE



Comments which the advertiser made in response to the complainant/s regarding this advertisement include the following:

Advertiser did not provide a response.

THE DETERMINATION

The Ad Standards Community Panel (the “Panel”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Panel noted the complainants’ concern that the advertisement is overly sexualised and inappropriate for a broad audience.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response.

The Panel noted that the complaint was received before 1 March 2018 and therefore the complaint was considered under the version of Section 2.2 of the Code which states: “Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal: (a) where images of Minors, or people who appear to be Minors, are used; or (b) in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people.”

The Panel noted the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of the terms exploitative and degrading:

“Exploitative - means clearly appearing to purposefully debase or abuse a person, or group of persons, for the enjoyment of others, and lacking moral, artistic or other values.

Degrading – lowering in character or quality a person or group of people.”

The Panel noted that in order to breach this Section of the Code the advertisement would need to be using sexual appeal in a manner that is considered both exploitative and degrading.

The Panel noted that this advertisement featured two separate poster advertisements, Mimi and Valentina.

The Panel considered that the posters are advertising lingerie and it was reasonable for an advertiser to depict the product being sold in their advertising.

The Panel first considered the Mimi poster, and noted the poster featured a woman in red lingerie holding a strawberry to her lips.

The Panel considered the pose of the woman was slightly sexualised as the woman



was shown wearing lingerie, leaning slightly forward and with her mouth open to eat a strawberry, and therefore considered that the image did contain sexual appeal.

The Panel considered the woman's clothing was related to the advertised product and that it had consistently determined that the depiction of a woman in lingerie, for a lingerie advertisement, is not of itself exploitative.

The Panel considered that the woman's pose was confident and in control, and that she did not appear to be debased or lowered in character by her appearance in the advertisement and that this poster image did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Panel then considered the Valentina Poster. The Panel noted the poster featured a woman in red lingerie reclining on a bed next to roses.

The Panel considered that the depiction of a woman reclining on a bed while wearing lingerie did contain sexual appeal, however the Panel considered that the woman was shown relaxed and in control, and was not depicted in a manner that could be considered degrading.

The Panel considered that the second image did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 of the Code states: "Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience".

The Panel considered that this advertisement was in the window of a store in a shopping centre and noted that the relevant audience would be broad.

The Panel first considered the Mimi poster. The Panel considered that the lingerie the woman was wearing covered her breasts and pubic area and the level of nudity in the poster was mild.

The Panel considered that there is some sexual suggestion in the woman's pose and the way she is eating the strawberry, however considered that the level of sexual suggestion in the advertisement is mild and would not be inappropriate for a broad audience which would include children.

The Panel then considered the second Valentina poster. The Panel considered that the lingerie the woman was wearing covered her breasts and pubic area and the level of nudity in the poster was mild.

The Panel considered that the woman reclining in bed is not in itself overly sexualised, and considered that there was nothing in the woman's pose or the accompanying wording which would be strongly sexually suggestive or inappropriate to be seen by a



broad audience which would include children.

The Panel considered that overall the level of nudity in the advertisement was mild, and that the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience and did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

Finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on other grounds, the Panel dismissed the complaints.