



Ad Standards Community Panel
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Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
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Case Report

1	Case Number	0385/18
2	Advertiser	Honey Birdette
3	Product	Lingerie
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	12/09/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Not Modified or Discontinued

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Objectification Degrading - women
- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative - women
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - general

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

There are two versions of this poster advertisement which feature two women in black lingerie with red flowers. Both images contain the words 'Let the feast begin CHELSEA'.

In the first image one woman is sitting on a dining table, and the second woman is sitting on a chair positioned between her legs. She is positioned with her arm on the first woman's leg and her other hand on the chair between her own legs.

In the second image the two women are embracing each other as though they are about to kiss. One woman is sitting on a dining table and the other is standing in front of her.

THE COMPLAINT

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





included the following:

The ads are very sexually explicit which I completely understand for the type of shop it is. I was however upset that the ads are at the front of the shop and my children saw them and asked about them. "Girl on Girl" for the sake of marketing goes against any education I've shared with my kids about loving relationships between any gender. Exposing an 11 and 7 year old to overtly sexual imagining while innocently shopping on a Friday night was disappointing.

This was displayed in a shopping centre shop window in full view of passing children. It was sexually explicit and is not appropriate for children to see this material. It objectifies women as sexual objects and is offensive. This advertisement would never be considered appropriate during a children's TV program or magazine so why it is able to be displayed in a public place.

The images were quite offensive to my family and I. We have 3 young children that have been continually exposed to these images which I feel are practically pornographic and have no place in a public shopping centre where families and young persons frequent.

Honey Birdette has a long history of using highly sexualised imagery to sell their products under the guise of empowering women. They are not like other retail brands such as swimwear or Bonds shops as in these cases, the models are not showing nipples or positioned in highly sexualised poses, and therefore cannot be compared as such. Whilst showing nipples and breast outline is inappropriate within shopping centres, it is also the posing of Honey Birdette's models using sexual body language – red, moistened lips, touching of hair, opened legs, etc. A cheap and nasty way to sell a product and reflects that this company is nothing more than a sex shop (see website for confirmation). And let's be clear on their use of the term empowerment – female empowerment is about pushing boundaries and moving society forward, breaking the glass ceiling, narrowing the gender pay gap, etc, etc, - it is not and never will be about wearing a dated concept of female sexuality and what women should wear to feel "sexy" as the embodiment of male fantasy.

As it is in a shopping centre, this hyper-sexualised fantasy image is on constant display to children. The question should always be asked that could a similar TVC be played during "Play School" and the answer is obviously no, therefore such a poster should be not displayed to children close to where there are play activities in shopping malls. This poster offends and should be removed. It is not suitable for public sites where it perpetuates the stereotyped sexual availability of women to both adult and children.

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 was overly sexualised and inappropriate for a broad audience which would include children.

The Panel viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser had not provided a response.

The Panel noted that this advertisement featured two separate images. Both images featured two women in black lingerie with red flowers. Both images contained the words 'Let the feast begin'.

Image one depicts one of the women sitting on a dining table with the second woman sitting on a chair positioned between the first woman's legs.

Image two depicts the two women embracing each other as though they are about to kiss. One woman is sitting on a dining table and the other is standing in front of her.

The Panel considered whether the advertisement was in breach of Section 2.2 of the Code. Section 2.2 of the Code states: "Advertising or marketing communications should not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative or 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 - (a) taking advantage of the sexual appeal of a person, or group of people, by depicting them as objects or commodities; or (b) focussing on their body parts where this bears no direct relevance to the product or service being advertised. Degrading – lowering in character or quality a person or group of people."

The Panel first considered whether the advertisement contained sexual appeal.

The Panel considered that both images feature women posing in highly sexualised lingerie. The Panel considered that image two featured the women about to kiss and



considered that both of these images did contain sexual appeal.

The Panel then considered whether the advertisement employed sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative of any individual or group of people.

The Panel considered that the product being advertised was lingerie and it was appropriate for an advertiser to feature women wearing the lingerie in advertising.

The Panel considered the phrase 'let the feast begin' which was featured on both images. The Panel considered that one interpretation of this phrase would be that the women are food and are to be consumed. However the Panel considered the more likely interpretation is that the woman are about to eat a feast, not that they are the feast.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative of the women.

The Panel then considered if the advertisement employed sexual appeal in a manner which is degrading to women.

The Panel considered that in both images the women were depicted as confident and happy, and in a consensual relationship. The Panel considered that there was nothing in the advertisement which would lower the women in character or quality.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is degrading of the women.

The Panel determined that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative or degrading of an individual or group of people, and did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

The Panel then 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 noted that the advertisement was in the window of shopping centres and considered that the relevant audience for this advertisement would be broad, and include children.

The Panel considered that in image one the women were not posed in an overly sexualised manner and that the lingerie covered their nipples and genitals.

The Panel considered that the first image did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience.



The Panel then considered the second image. The Panel considered that the poses of the women in this advertisement were more sexualised, with the women holding each other as though they are about to kiss.

The Panel noted that the bottom of the body suite worn by the woman who was standing was extremely high-cut and exposed a large amount of the woman's groin area. The Panel considered that this in combination with the sexualised pose of the women was a highly-sexualised image which did not treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience and that the advertisement did breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

Finding that the second image in the advertisement did breach Section 2.4 of the Code the Panel upheld the complaints.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION

The advertiser has not provided a response to the Panel's determination. Ad Standards will continue to work with the advertiser and other industry bodies regarding this issue of non-compliance.