



Case Report

1	Case Number	0441/17
2	Advertiser	Cotton On
3	Product	Clothing
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Internet-Social-FB
5	Date of Determination	11/10/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - sexualisation of children

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

Young models in various poses. One in particular is leaning back, wearing PUMA shoes and a pink cardigan.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Pictures of girls approx 7 years old dressed in teenager/adult clothing with lots of make up and sexualised poses. I haven't complained about an ad before but thus just struck me as over stepping the mark is it just distasteful or is it not ok?

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

We refer to the complaint lodged with the Advertising Standards Bureau regarding a recent Cotton On Kids promotional campaign for our partnership with Puma, and in particular a social media post ("Kids Post").

The Kids Post is alleged to be in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code. Section 2.4 requires

advertising treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Kids Post contained an image of young female sitting back wearing Puma shoes.

The complaint alleges sexualisation of children based on the pose, clothing and purported make-up on the young female model. The young girl is wearing Puma shoes, the subject of the campaign, is fully clothed in long shorts and a long sleeved high neck top and has a side pony tail – all relevant to her age. The stance of the child in sitting back is to highlight the hero product, being the Puma shoes.

Cotton On Kids is a brand that resonates with families around the globe for its fun and inclusive nature. We pride ourselves on offering our littlest customers stylish, affordable, age-appropriate product and would never knowingly compromise this position or put our customers at risk.

Although the campaign was developed with the sincerest of intentions, since receiving this feedback we have reflected on the recent Puma campaign collaboration in its delivery with consideration to environment, angle and audience and decided to remove this image from Facebook and Instagram. Our intention is only ever to produce and share content that is relevant, fun, age-appropriate and engaging.

The image will not be used at all going forward and we have removed it from our suite of assets for Puma.

THE DETERMINATION

The Advertising Standards Board (“Board”) considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics (the “Code”).

The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement depicts pictures of young girls posed in adult type poses and wearing makeup which is inappropriate. The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser’s response. The Board 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 Board noted that this Facebook advertisement features images of young children standing and sitting in order to feature the particular PUMA range of shoes. There are four images including: 1. A girl in black standing or jumping and looking toward the camera 2. A girl sitting semi-reclined and wearing a pink cardigan 3. A boy standing side on to the camera wearing dark clothing; and 4. A girl holding a shoe raised toward the camera. The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the children are depicted as adults in their body position and the use of makeup. The Board noted that there is strong community concern regarding the sexualisation of children. The Board noted the Practice Note to the Code which states: “Advertisements with appeal to younger people which contain sexualised images or poses are to be used with caution. Models which appear to be young should not be used in sexualised poses.” The Board noted that it had previously considered complaints for advertising for Witchery (0136/14 0340/13 0342/12) where images of children were considered to be depicted as being in sexualised poses or made to look like adults. In 0136/14 the Board considered that “...the girl is wearing a short skirt and has her legs apart and considered that this pose is more adult than child-like.”

In particular the Board considered image 2 which included a girl sitting in a semi-reclined position and wearing a pink cardigan. The Board noted that the pose of the girl is not typical of the way that children sit and the position is one that is more commonly seen by adult models, particularly women. The Board noted that the girl is completely covered by her clothing and there is no inappropriate nudity. The Board noted that it is impossible to tell if the girl is wearing make-up and considered that if so, that it is not a very heavy application. The Board noted that her hair style is similar to 'dance troupe' type styling and that the colours and style of her clothes are appropriately childlike. The Board considered that in contrast to the Witchery case, in this advertisement the girl sitting down does not have her legs apart and the camera angle is more suitable so that she does not appear older than her perceived age and is not posing in a sexual manner. The Board noted that advertisers should take particular care when using children to advertise fashion brands and noted the advertiser's response that they had voluntarily removed the images from Facebook and Instagram. The Board regardless of whether or not she is wearing make-up the advertisement is depicting a young girl in a manner which is consistent with a healthy young girl and that she is not presented in a manner which is sexual or sexualised. The Board considered 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 Board dismissed the complaint.