



Case Report

1	Case Number	0478/12
2	Advertiser	Breast.com
3	Product	Health Products
4	Type of Advertisement / media	TV
5	Date of Determination	12/12/2012
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

These television spots use a soft, painterly animated background and bras which appear to be floating are talking to one another. One of the ads is set in the change room of a fashion boutique; another is set in a park and a third observes four women catching up for coffee and a chat at a café. In each advertisement the women are not visible: just the bras.

The final shot is of a bra and the words, "breast.com.au 1800 32 34 36".

THE COMPLAINT

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

I object to the advertisement because it infers, by reducing women to floating bras, that a woman is only as important as her bra size. I object to the ad at any time, but feel it is more offensive given my daughters were in the room at the time.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

In considering the best way to talk about breast surgery to Australian women (35-54), the advertising agency was briefed thoroughly by one of Australia's most eminent plastic surgeons who was able to describe both the physical and psychological needs of patients considering breast surgery.

Many women who have had children, or who have lost weight find the changes in their breasts undesirable – and choose surgery to restore their confidence in how they look. Some young women have breasts they consider too large, which gives them both physical and emotional pain. Some women have breasts that are of significant different sizes. All of these issues can be treated in Australia by some of the world's best plastic surgeons.

The procedures these women are researching include breast reduction, breast reconstruction, breast augmentation or a breast lift.

Given the varied needs of this diverse group, the TV concepts were devised to address women's concerns without being specific.

As we have mentioned, the conversations between the women are ambiguous. None of the ads is specifically about 'breast enlargement' as is claimed in this complaint in fact they are as relevant to someone thinking about breast reduction as they are breast augmentation. None of the ads describe or suggest anything sexual or demeaning to women. And none of the scenes suggests anything other than a familiar location women find themselves

We featured animated bras to ensure we could discuss this particular part of the female anatomy in a way that was unaffected, specific, and yet non sexual.

As a group, we considered illustration was the most appropriate way to discuss the topic of breast surgery.

The bras were carefully illustrated to be conservative in shape, attractive in design and lacking any sexual connotation. They are merely symbols of an area of a woman's body. These are no more revealing or sexual than press ads for underwear in the daily paper. The personality of the women is conveyed by the voices, the topic of the ad is conveyed by the illustrated bras and the settings give context to the very brief conversations we hear – under 15 seconds.

In no way are we suggesting that a 'woman is only as important as her bra size'. The confident, enjoyable conversations the women are having do not suggest this; neither does the copy allude to such a thought.

Focus Group research conducted by Jeanne Strachan confirmed that while the voice over copy was ambiguous, it was clearly understood by women considering breast surgery. It was confirmed by the women in the groups that they were considering a breast procedure for their own personal sense of self. Many times they repeated – The key driver is to feel better about myself, it has absolutely nothing to do with searching for or keeping a man and any suggestion that the driver was to keep a man was strongly rejected – "This is about me not him".

These women also stated that the invisible women were perfect in that it enabled each woman to visualise herself without feeling intimidated by a supermodel, or someone from a different age or stage of life. There was no sexual innuendo and it didn't trivialise a subject, which is to these women very serious. The commercial was talking to them and clearly understood how they felt.

We tested alternative creative ideas for this campaign. We believe that the use of female dialogue with the characters represented by illustrated bras is one of the least offensive approaches one could take to advertise a service that helps women to make informed decisions about breast surgery.

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 reduces woman to the size of their breasts.

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

The Board 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 and degrading of any individual or group of people.”

The Board noted that the advertisement has three different versions, each of which depict two bras apparently talking to one another about how happy they are with their new breasts.

The Board noted that plastic surgery is a product which is allowed to be advertised and considered that this advertisement treats the topic of breast surgery in a non-sexualised manner. The Board noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement suggests that a woman’s worth is measured by her breast size and, while some may consider this is a complaint against surgical breast augmentation itself (i.e. the product), the Board considered that it is an interpretation of the advertisement which would be unlikely to be shared by the broad community. In the Board’s view most members of the community would consider that the advertisement is offering a solution to women who are considering breast surgery for a variety of reasons and that the advertisement does this in a manner which treats the subject sensitively and in a non-sexualised manner.

The Board determined that the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading to women and that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

Further finding that the advertisement did not breach the Code on any grounds, the Board dismissed the complaint.