



## Case Report

1	Case Number	0514/17
2	Advertiser	Honey Birdette
3	Product	Lingerie
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	22/11/2017
6	DETERMINATION	Upheld - Modified or Discontinued

### ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative and degrading - women
- 2.3 - Violence Violence
- 2.4 - Sex/sexuality/nudity S/S/N - nudity

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

The women are posed in their lingerie with men around them fully in their suits. The posters included the names TYLA, NATALIE and CHLOE and the words "office party."

### THE COMPLAINT

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

*There are limits on pornography. The images that Honey Burdette uses for their outdoor advertising are pornographic. I believe that in this instance the use is not appropriate and brings offense to innocent members of the community particularly minors who are unwittingly exposed to the material as passers by. Aside from this I do not believe the overt objectification of women as sexual fetish objects in public for commercial gain is morally appropriate.*

*I was offended by the image of women in see through lace lingerie dancing with sexual expressions on their faces surrounded by fully clothed men leering at them, putting the women in vulnerable position juxtaposed by the men in powerful ones. I was deeply disturbed to see this particularly in a month of news reports of the sexual harassment of women at work.*

*However, my most serious objection is to the placement of these advertisements on large screens in the shop window that are impossible to ignore or shield my two little boys from without avoiding the entire aisle of stores.*

*The format of the advertising is offensive. Whilst I understand that a large scale picture is attention grabbing, which is the point of advertising, the Honey Birdette photos deliberately portray women as sex objects. This is completely offensive to all family values. There is much research to show that young children seeing these images are getting the message that women in such images are nothing more than objects of sexual gratification. The size of the images means that young children seeing these images cannot miss them, therefore the message is reinforced. Honey Birdette claim their advertising is designed to empower women, however their advertising is doing the complete opposite. I will speak to any young person about why I think this is wrong and the brand should not be supported. It is a disgrace that Westfield has this company in its malls - and especially when in Belconnen, ACT, the ToysRUs store is literally around the corner from the HOney Birdette store, there are going to be quite a number of children being exposed to these images. Honey Birdette needs not only to remove the images but be banned from family friendly places such as Westfield Malls.*

*This advertising was extremely sexual in nature. If a male colleague put up a poster of this nature at work it would be sexual harassment. I dislike being similarly sexually harassed while I am shopping.*

*This campaign said to 'empower' women by the owner of the company in fact does the opposite. If the women were empowered the men would not be standing around in their suits, they also would be in their underwear. Underwear is not generally worn in any kind of corporate environment. This advertisement therefore relates to the sex industry - not suitable as a campaign in a mall which is full of families and children. It would not be allowed to be shown on television before a certain time of day - why should a brand be entitled to show it to families who cannot ignore it? The current environment of sexual harassment and abuse shows very clearly that advertising standards is partly responsible for allowing men to believe they can take whatever liberties they choose at work - this advertisement rubber stamps that assumption - it should be pulled.*

*It is not just one single advertisement. The posters at this stores shop-front constantly change but they are always hyper-sexualised near-naked women with (often) bondage-style lingerie. No problem with these stores existing and catering to a customer demand, but the advertisements should be less overtly sexual/offensive/obvious and in less prominent places than the high-traffic, family-frequented location at Macquarie centre. They are essentially pornography.*

*Over sexualised advertising in public locations. Shopping centres that the window displays cannot be avoided and it's not appropriate definitely not PG. Adult themes.*

*This ad is extremely problematic because it is sexualising women. It gives the message that a woman's body is only there for a man to do whatever he wants with. I feel very offended and horrified by this ad.*

*Firstly the lingerie goes beyond normal sexy to what would be seen in an adult shop.*

*Secondly it is in a family shopping centre where young children should not be exposed to this hypersexualised image.*

*Thirdly these women are cavorting at an office party with fully dressed men. This would breach the work place guidelines. With all the stories in the media at the moment in regards to sexual violence against women Honey Birdette have put out an ad that suggests that this sort of attention is what women want at office parties. There is an online video that goes with it that has the women cavorting with the fully dressed men and the girls fawning over each other in front of the men.*

*This is totally inappropriate to have in a shopping centre. It is totally inappropriate in this day to still be suggesting that the work office party is a place where men get to ogle scantily clad women, whilst they themselves are fully dressed. Honey Birdette is a repeat offender in this sort of hypersexualised, pornified objectifying advertising. They just get away with it time after time.*

*The advertisements are openly and unashamedly sexual in nature. The suggestive and often explicit poses of the models are inappropriate for a shopping centre crowd. Young children, elderly people and culturally-diverse shoppers are often shocked to see the confronting life-size images as they walk past the shop windows. It is an ongoing issue. The models change, but the deeply sexual context remains. It is not 'female empowerment' as the store maintains, nor could the ads be considered 'cheeky and fun'. There is a deliberate pornographic edge to the advertising and responsibility lies with the rational members of society to protect impressionable children from these images and subtexts. It degrades women, normalises pornography, titillates teenage boys and husbands, and embarrasses hundreds of families and regular people as they walk past. No place for this in a shopping centre.*

*Here we are again complaining about the over-sexualised shop fronts of Honey Bridette. This company goes out of its way to flaunt previous ASB rulings by firstly not taking down offending images, and now putting up more sexualised almost nude pornographic images in shopping centres frequented by children. This new campaign called Office Party would not be out of place in a porn video depicting an office party where near nude women make themselves sexually available to the ogling men.*

*Because it looked like an advert for pornography. Nipples showing, suggestive posing, disrespectful, sleazy, offensive, inappropriate to children & adults. This is sexist & is promoting a rape culture!!!*

*This should not be viewed in a public forum like a Shopping Centre!!!!*

*I object to the Honey Birdette storefront image because it is a highly sexualised image right in the centre of the mall, near Kmart and the post office, where consumers of all ages shop regularly. It is completely in-your-face, and as a mother of four children I am offended that I have my choice taken away when I need to walk past this shop.*

*I object to the Honey Birdette chain being present at family shopping centres, as they sells sex toys and 'bondage' accessories. This is not simply a lingerie shop. It sells products that promote sexual violence.*

*According to your code of ethics consumer complaints section 2.2 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people. And 2.4 Advertising or Marketing Communications shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.*

*I understand that the Australian Standards Bureau exists to keep companies accountable for*

*their inappropriate advertising, and I look forward to action being taken to remove Honey Birdette's explicit images, and if possible, from the family shopping centre all together.*

*Honey Birdette have once again featured a woman in see through lingerie. Her nipples are showing and are clearly visible. My children aged 6, 9, 11 and 13 need to walk past this soft porn image near the Westfield entrance.*

*The ABS Ruling 0442/17 upheld the last complaint about Honey Birdette featuring a woman with nipples visible and ruled that it breached section 2.4 of the Code. This image in the new campaign is similarly explicit and unsuitable in a shopping centre with young children walking past.*

*It objectifies women. It's indecent exposure. I have children and have to avoid walking past this store as the advertising is almost always pornographic and displayed for all to see. I say pornographic because these images are designed to tantalise and should a real live woman walk in public in this she would surely be apprehended.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*The advertiser did not provide a response.*

## **THE DETERMINATION**

The Advertising Standards Board (the "Board") considered whether this advertisement breaches Section 2 of the AANA Code of Ethics (the "Code").

The Board noted the complainants' concerns that the images are over sexualised and exploitative and degrading of women.

The Board viewed the advertisement and noted the advertiser did not provide a 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 the AANA Practice Note which provides guidance on the meaning of the terms exploitative and degrading:

Exploitative - purposefully debase or abuse a person for the enjoyment of others, lacking in moral, artistic or other values

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

The Board noted that in order to breach this Section of the Code the images would need to be

using sexual appeal in a manner that is considered both exploitative and degrading.

The Board noted there are 3 versions of this poster advertisement, each featuring women in lingerie of different styles however the tagline is the same “the office party.”

Image 1 – TYLA has two models in black lingerie and men in business suits are visible in the background.

Image 2 – NATALIE has two models in red lingerie with one model holding a glass of champagne. There are men visible in the background.

Image 3 – CHLOE – has two models in white lingerie with just the arm/cuff of a man visible between the women.

The Board noted that the poses of the models in the advertisements are in keeping with typical lingerie advertising and considered that it is not inappropriate for an advertiser to depict women wearing the advertised product. The Board also considered that in the context of a lingerie advertisement, a depiction of women wearing this lingerie is not of itself a depiction which is exploitative or degrading.

However, the Board noted that the images depict an ‘office party’ and that the women appear in lingerie while the men are in suits. The Board noted that there is a certain sexual connotation inferred in the image that the women are attending the party as entertainment for the men and that there is a strong level of sexual appeal as the women are dressed in lingerie.

The Board noted that it is impossible to tell if the women are intended to be attending the party as colleagues or as strippers but in the Board’s view there was an obvious imbalance between the men and the women.

A minority of the Board felt that the women appeared confident and were not in a position that was in any way inferior to the men.

The majority of the Board however considered that the depiction of an office party was suggestive that the adults in the image did work together and in the Board’s view the depiction of women in lingerie and men in suits at a work party was an imbalance that was a depiction that was lowering in character of the women and did purposefully debase or abuse a person for the enjoyment of others.

The Board considered that the advertisement did employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative and degrading of any individual or group of people and did breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

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 the three versions of the advertisement features women wearing lingerie and that the image of the poster labelled TYLA in particular featured very brief panties that barely covered the pubic region of the women.

The Board noted that the women’s lingerie and the briefs are sheer and very low cut. The Board considered that in this instance the poses of the women with their backs curved and busts thrust forward and the style of lingerie in connection with fully clothed men increased

the sexual nature of the image and was more risqué than the usual style of lingerie advertised in store windows by the same advertiser.

The Board noted that the posters appeared in the shop windows of the stores that are situated in Westfield shopping centres and that this meant that the audience would include children. The Board considered that the depiction of women in lingerie with men fully clothed did not treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience.

Consistent with previous determinations for similar complaints against the same advertiser in cases 0307/17 and 0544/16, the Board considered that the advertisements did not treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience and did breach section 2.4 of the Code.

Finding that the images entitled 'Tyla' 'Natalie' and 'Chloe' did breach Section 2.2 and section 2.4 of the Code, the Board upheld the complaints.

### **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE TO DETERMINATION**

The office party images identified in the case report have been removed and they will not be used again in that form.