



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
ACN 084 452 666

Case Report

1	Case Number	0521/18
2	Advertiser	Cotton On
3	Product	Clothing
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	28/11/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

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

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster advertisement is an image of female models, two facing forward wearing a pink bra and underwear set and one standing and one facing backwards looking over her shoulder wearing a pink bra and underwear set.

THE COMPLAINT

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

Degrading images of woman offensive to women- men should have eyes for their wives only. In public street - children can view easily

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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





Re: Complaint reference number: 0521/18– Cotton On

We refer to the complaint lodged with the Advertising Standards Bureau on 22 November 2018 regarding our Cotton On Body advertisement at our store in Pakenham, Victoria (“the Advertisement”).

The Advertisement is a poster image of female models, two facing forward wearing a pink bra and underwear set and one standing and looking over her shoulder wearing a pink bra and underwear set. See attached copy of image.

The Advertisement is alleged to be in breach of Section 2.2 of the Code citing Objectification/Degrading women. Section 2.2 requires that advertising or marketing shall not employ sexual appeal in relation to images of minors or in a manner which is exploitive or degrading to any individual or group.

The image does not include minors, nor does it exploit or degrade women. Cotton On Body sells female intimate apparel, so advertising the product on a woman is a necessity and in no way degrading or exploitive.

The Advertisement is also alleged to be in breach of Section 2.4 of the Code which requires advertising to treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.

The Advertisement is targeted to women who may be interested in purchasing our lingerie available for sale in our Cotton On Body stores. Such a purpose would be difficult to achieve without having the lingerie displayed on an adult model.

The level of nudity is relevant to the specific lingerie which is being advertised. The lingerie displayed does not result in excessive or inappropriate exposure. We also consider the pose of the model to be sensitive to the relative audience and not inappropriate, offensive, exploitative, degrading, sexualised or suggestive.

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 complainant’s concern that the advertisement is degrading to women and inappropriate for a poster which children would see.

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

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 noted the image on the poster advertisement shows 3 images of a woman in a pink bra and underwear set.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement is degrading to women.

The Panel considered the woman in the poster was smiling and relaxed, and that her facial expression is happy and not sexualised and her pose was not sexually suggestive or sexualised.

The Panel noted the product for sale was underwear and that it was reasonable for the advertiser to depict their product being worn, and there was nothing in the advertisement which suggested that the woman in the advertisement was an object available for sale.

The Panel considered that the advertisement did not lower the woman in character or quality and there was nothing in the images forming the advertisement which would be considered degrading to women in general by most members of the community.

The Panel considered that while the advertisement did contain sexual appeal the woman was not depicted as an object and there was no focus on her body which was not directly relevant to the product being sold.

In the Panel’s view, the advertisement did not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is exploitative or degrading of any 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 a store window situated above street



level and would be able to be seen by broad audience which would include children.

The Panel considered that the complainant's concern that the advertisement was inappropriate to be seen by children.

The Panel considered that the woman in the advertisement was appropriately covered by the underwear that she is wearing. The Panel noted that the level of nudity in the advertisement was mild in the context of a promotion of underwear products.

The Panel considered that the woman's pose and facial expression was not sexualised, and considered that the level of sexuality in the advertisement was mild.

The Panel determined that the advertisement did treat the issue of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad 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 complaint.

