

## Case Report

1. Case Number :	0288-24
2. Advertiser :	Honey Birdette
3. Product :	Lingerie
4. Type of Advertisement/Media :	Store Window
5. Date of Decision:	20-Nov-2024
6. Decision:	Dismissed

### ISSUES RAISED

AANA Code of Ethics\2.2 Exploitative or Degrading  
AANA Code of Ethics\2.4 Sex/sexuality/nudity

### DESCRIPTION OF ADVERTISEMENT

This store window advertisement features a woman in lingerie with both her arms raised up above her head. The image also features the text "Boobs. Touch yourself. Spoil yourself and support. Donate \$20 today" and "Proudly supporting breast cancer awareness. For every lingerie piece purchased from the summer collection between 24/10/2024 to 24/11/2024, we will donate \$20 to the national breast cancer foundation. Join us in our mission to raise \$50 000 for this important cause." The image also features the breast cancer ribbon symbol and the words "National Breast Cancer Foundation." This image was seen at Lakeside shopping centre in Joondalup WA.



## **THE COMPLAINT**

Comments which the complainant/s made regarding this advertisement included the following:

*The image, showing a woman in sheer lingerie and posed decoratively sexually objectifies women. The slogan "BOOBS. TOUCH YOURSELF." also objectifies the woman by reducing her to a set of breasts. The ad sexualises breast cancer detection as a porn fantasy and in doing so, exploits a deadly disease and is deeply offensive to sufferers and survivors of breast cancer, as well as those who love them. Women with breast cancer are not just "boobs", they are human beings who may have to lose their breasts in order to stay alive. Porn-inspired and pinkwashed sales campaigns are a slap in the face to these women.*

## **THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE**

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

*Honey Birdette's 'Boobs Touch Yourself' campaign is an initiative designed to address a critical health issue—breast cancer awareness and the importance of self-checks—in a way that resonates with our audience. Research shows that when sensitive topics are approached with humor, they often have a higher impact and reach. In fact, campaigns with a light-hearted approach have been found to increase engagement and, more importantly, inspire action among women who may otherwise shy away from self-examinations.*

*Breast cancer affects 1 in 8 women, and early detection through self-checks can save lives. Our campaign (featuring model Jocelyn Binder, two-time Stage 4 breast cancer survivor) uses cheeky, memorable language to break down the stigma surrounding self-exams and encourages women to prioritize their health in a way that feels approachable rather than clinical or intimidating.*

*We believe that supporting a campaign like this shows respect for the women in our community and a commitment to addressing vital health issues. We hope you'll join us in supporting this important initiative.*

## **THE DECISION**

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 objectifies women and sexualises breast cancer.

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

**Section 2.2: Advertising shall 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 Practice Note to Section 2.2 states:

*“For material to breach this section of the Code, it must contain sexual appeal. Models in underwear or lingerie surrounded by or next to fully clothed models may suggest a power imbalance and be found to be exploitative or degrading. Material can be found to be exploitative or degrading even where the model is looking confident where the model is being depicted as a product or commodity or the focus on body parts is not relevant to the product or service being advertised. Advertising which used sexual appeal and suggests that a person is a product, or that they exist only for the enjoyment of others has been found to breach this section of the Code. Likewise, advertising which uses attractive models in revealing clothing, where the use of the model is not relevant to the product, has been found to be exploitative.”*

Does the advertisement use sexual appeal?

The Panel noted that the advertisement depicts a woman in sexualised lingerie with the words “touch yourself”. The Panel considered that this image did contain sexual appeal.

Does the advertisement use sexual appeal in a manner that is exploitative?

The Panel noted the complainant's concern that the advertisement objectifies and sexualises women with breast cancer by reducing them to a body part and sexualises the practice of breast examination.

The Panel considered that the use of the word “boobs”, and the directive to “touch yourself” combined to form a focus on the woman's breasts. However, the Panel considered that this focus was relevant to the promotion of lingerie, as well as the messaging of the advertisement to raise awareness of, and money for, breast cancer.

The Panel considered that the woman was depicted in a strong and powerful pose, that her name was featured in the advertisement, and she was not depicted in a manner which suggests that she is an object or commodity.

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

Does the advertisement use sexual appeal in a manner that is degrading?

The Panel considered that the woman was posed in sexualised lingerie and the advertisement uses sexually suggestive language, but that this was relevant to the product being promoted and was not a depiction which lowered her in character or quality.

The Panel considered that the advertisement does not employ sexual appeal in a manner which is degrading to the woman.

### **Section 2.2 conclusion**

The Panel concluded that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.2 of the Code.

### **Section 2.4: Advertising shall treat sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant audience.**

The Panel noted the Practice Note for the Code states:

*“Overtly sexual images are not appropriate in outdoor advertising or shop front windows.*

*Although not exhaustive, the following may be considered to be overtly sexual:*

- *People depicted in sheer lingerie or clothing where a large amount of buttocks, female breasts, pubic mound or genital regions can be seen; The use of paraphernalia such as whips and handcuffs, particularly in combination with images of people in lingerie, undressed or in poses suggestive of sexual position.”*

Does the advertisement contain sex?

The Panel considered whether the advertisement contained a depiction of sex. The Panel noted the definition of sex in the Practice Note is “sexual intercourse; person or persons engaged in sexually stimulating behaviour”.

The Panel noted that the advertisement featured the words “touch yourself” which could be interpreted as referring to a sexually stimulating behaviour.

The Panel considered the advertisement contained a suggestion of sex.

Does the advertisement contain sexuality?

The Panel noted the definition of sexuality in the Practice Note is “the capacity to experience and express sexual desire; the recognition or emphasis of sexual matters”.

The Panel considered that the woman is wearing sexualised lingerie and the advertisement uses sexualised wording and that the advertisement did contain sexuality.

Does the advertisement contain nudity?

The Panel noted that the definition of nudity in the Practice Note is “the depiction of a person without clothing or covering; partial or suggested nudity may also be considered nudity”.

The Panel noted that the advertisement depicted the woman in lingerie and that this was a depiction of partial nudity.

Are the issues of sex, sexuality, and nudity treated with sensitivity to the relevant audience?

The Panel noted that the definition of sensitivity in the Practice Note is “understanding and awareness to the needs and emotions of others”.

The Panel noted that assessing whether sexual suggestion is ‘sensitive to the relevant audience’ requires consideration of who the relevant audience is and how they are likely to react to or feel about the advertisement.

The Panel noted that this image appears in store windows and considered that the relevant audience includes retail workers, people shopping in the Honey Birdette store and people who are not shopping at Honey Birdette but who are walking past the store, and that this last group would include children.

The Panel considered that the depiction of a woman in sexualised lingerie with the words “touch yourself” contain a suggestion that the woman suggesting the viewer touch themselves for sexual pleasure. However, the Panel considered that in the context of the full advertisement which provided information around the support of the Breast Cancer Foundation, the message was more likely to be interpreted as a

reminder to people viewing the advertisement to examine their breasts for any changes.

The Panel considered that in the context of an advertisement promoting lingerie and breast cancer awareness, the depiction of the woman in lingerie and the wording of the advertisement was not inappropriate for a broad audience that would include children. The Panel considered that the advertisement was not overtly sexual and did treat the issues of sex, sexuality and nudity with sensitivity to the relevant broad audience.

#### **Section 2.4 Conclusion**

The Panel found that the advertisement did not breach Section 2.4 of the Code.

#### **Conclusion**

Finding that the advertisement did not breach any other section of the Code the Panel dismissed the complaint.