



Ad Standards Community Panel
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AdStandards.com.au

Advertising Standards Bureau Limited
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Case Report

1	Case Number	0177/18
2	Advertiser	Bras n' Things
3	Product	Lingerie
4	Type of Advertisement / media	Poster
5	Date of Determination	24/04/2018
6	DETERMINATION	Dismissed

ISSUES RAISED

- 2.2 - Objectification Degrading - women
- 2.2 - Objectification Exploitative - women

DESCRIPTION OF THE ADVERTISEMENT

This poster advertisement features a black and white image of a woman from behind, wearing lace underwear. The words "The take it all off sale" is written in red over the top of the woman.

THE COMPLAINT

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

I register this complaint under sections 2.2 and 2.4 of the AANA Code of Ethics.

This advertisement degrades women as a group by telling females to "Take it all off" — a clear double entendre that isn't even accurate in terms of the 50% sale it is advertising. The inaccuracy of the slogan reinforces the intention of the retailer to sexualise women. The advertisement appears in full view of children (the 'relevant audience') walking through the mall. The slogan is short enough and simple enough to be read by children and its meaning interpreted by girls who already receive a



constant bombardment of advertising messages about how their worth as humans is measured by their sexuality.

This slogan is directed at a general representation of women that exploits women sexually for the sexual aggrandisement of men, and degrades women by reducing them to objects to be consumed. It should be noted that men are not similarly sexually objectified and commodified by such types of advertising slogans.

Presumably, BNT couldn't run with the more accurate 'Take it half off' — it was a 50% sale — because it would be rather too close to the common 'Take your top off' mantra recited by packs of young males at events such as schoolies week. The message is clearly sexual in nature and exists within the context of a rape culture in which young women are accosted by males who shout at these women things such as, 'take your top off', 'get your tits out', and 'get it off'. If you're not sure what rape culture is, or don't believe it exists, then I invite you to watch

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=18&v=H2c5exzRyhE. I would then invite you to explore some of the extensive literature on how the sexualisation of women by advertisers and marketers contributes to the legitimisation of male violence towards women and girls. A sample of this academic, evidence-based literature can be found at

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1fygmHsggCw2_07LwZaB53YYJKSFN664Tv1125XtGVUI/edit?usp=sharing. If the Community Panel considers that the sexual appeal is only 'mild' — even if you consider there to be any sexual appeal at all — then the above reading list will show that 'mild', individual instances of sexually objectifying advertising of women all add up to the dehumanisation of women as a social class.

Please note that I am not making a complaint about nudity, how relaxed or in control of her situation the model might appear, the fact that the retailer has a right to advertise what they sell, taste, offence, choice, individualism, the personal history or consciousness of the model, the empty concept of 'empowerment' as it is used in relation to women's choices. Of course there is nothing inherently degrading about a woman in underwear — but a sexualised woman being told and/or telling others to take all that underwear off degrades and exploits all women.

THE ADVERTISER'S RESPONSE

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

Please see below for our response, this is a tough one to respond to as a lot of it is based on the consumers thoughts of what happens at Schoolies weeks and then loosely ties it back to us. I will also steer clear of any links to rape as I strongly disagree with this.



Bras N Things does not feel that it has breached any advertising standards.

The window display for the mentioned campaign in the attached documents started 26 March and ran until 25 April (across all stores). The content was one image, with the remaining poster images being all text based (attached for your reference). In no way does this images degrade or exploit women.

Please see below our response to Section 2 of the Advertiser Code of Ethics:

2.2 Objectification Degrading, objectification exploitative - women

At Bras N Things we are passionate about empowering all women to feel beautiful from the inside and out and as such, we endeavour to provide women with a range of lingerie and sleepwear products that appeal to many different women's tastes and style preferences.

Bras N Things does not feel that it has breached any advertising standards with this campaign. There is no nudity and there is only one imaged used with the remainder of the campaign images being all text. There is a play on words yes, it is linked to the campaign being 50% off and off course the fact we are a lingerie company and the lingerie is worn underneath clothes. Our products are designed by women for women, to satisfy women when they wear it. It's designed with the intention to make a women feel great in her own skin and satisfy her.

There is nothing degrading about a gorgeous set of lingerie.

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 degrades and exploits women and in the context of research into literature on the sexualisation of women this advertisement was inappropriate to be seen by an audience which would include children.

The Panel noted that their role is to consider the content of an individual advertisement and whether it was in line with prevailing community standards and the AANA Code of Ethics, and that it was not the Panel's role to set community standards.

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 considered the image on the poster advertisement shows a black and white image of a woman from behind wearing lacy underwear. Over the top of the poster are the words ‘the take it all off sale’.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concerns that the advertisement degrades women as a group by telling females to take it all off which is suggesting that a woman’s worth is measured by their sexuality, and this reduces them to objects to be consumed.

The Panel noted that there was a reference to ‘taking it all off’ and this was a double entendre intended to refer to the percentage-off sale and the fact that the woman in the poster had taken her clothing off to reveal her underwear.

The Panel considered the woman in the poster was smiling and confident, and there was no suggestion that she was telling other people to take their clothes off, rather that she was referencing the sale and modelling the product that was being sold.

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 poster itself which would be considered degrading to women in general by most members of the community.

The Panel noted the complainant’s concern that the slogan exploits women sexually for the sexual aggrandisement of men by being similar to the ‘take your top off’ slogan commonly directed to women by men.

The Panel noted that the wording of the poster, ‘the take it all off sale’, was not directed to the woman or women in general and was rather a reference to the



percentage-off sale. The Panel considered that while the words 'take it all off' may also refer to the woman being in her underwear this is a light-hearted reference to people needing to remove clothes for underwear to be visible.

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.

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 the window of the store in a shopping centre and would be visible to a broad audience, which would include children.

The Panel considered that the complainant's concern that the advertisement was in full view of children and that the slogan would add to a constant bombardment of advertising messages that girl's worth as humans is measured by their sexuality.

The Panel noted that they can only consider the content of the current advertisement and the level of sex, sexuality and nudity within that advertisement.

The Panel noted the advertiser's response that the 'take it all off' slogan is a play on words linked to the 50% off sale and the fact that lingerie is worn underneath clothes.

The Panel considered the wording of the Poster was mildly sexual but was clearly referencing the sale. The Panel considered that the relevant audience for the advertisement, including children, would understand that the slogan was a reference to the sale and to the fact that lingerie is worn underneath clothing.

The Panel considered that the woman in the advertisement was appropriately covered by the lingerie and that her nipples and genitals were covered. The Panel noted that the level of nudity in the advertisement was mild and treated with sensitivity to a broad audience which would include children.

The Panel considered that the level of sexuality in the advertisement was mild, and 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.

