

**As a result of an article by Julie Bindel which claimed that there was a year on year increase in sexist images being used by charities, Engender were asked ‘Are charities using too many images of naked women?’. Our ‘yes’ comment below ran alongside a piece from an ad agency which argued ‘no’**

Adverts featuring naked women get attention if getting the viewers attention is all that matters! If you’re in business to make a profit then the adage is that you maximise profit by any means [yet another debate...]. The question here is, do we expect more consciousness from charities whose business is to raise awareness of issues, campaign for social justice and challenge prejudice? Do we expect them to play by different rules? We certainly do.

In the fight for valuable media space it must be very tempting to go with the general flow and exploit women’s bodies. No doubt sex sells, but in catering to the constant ‘male gaze’ we should recognise who it gives power to and who it takes power from, and acknowledge the link between how women are presented in the media and the impact this has on women’s and girls freedom, equality, worth and sense of self.

Let’s take the image of Sophie Ellis-Bextor, apparently naked and ‘submerged’ in sweets, in a Children’s Society campaign about childhood memories. One has to wonder how an organisation whose work involves supporting some of the most vulnerable girls in society sees fit to use images of sexualised naked women at a time when there is genuine unease at the increasing sexualisation of young girls and concerns about their vulnerability to sexual predators. Indeed the image was picked up by a tabloid whose text read ‘sprinkle in her eye...men would say thanks a million’ with no mention of how to contribute to the campaign or to contact the society – A successful outcome for the society or another message to women that their value is their body?

Nudity per se is not the issue here – context matters - it’s sexualised images of women becoming the norm that we must guard against. Sex sells, but the charity sector should resist the implicit sexism in this, be truly inclusive and sell equality for all.