

Dear Mr Rowe, CEO M&S

Cc Jo Moran Head of Customer Services

Cc Sarah Findlater, Head of Organisational Development & Women's Network

Re: Let us Help You End Your Growing Rep as Unethical and Sexist

We have noticed a number of issues recently that are starting to label Marks and Spencer as a sexist, rather than an ethical, brand – increasingly out of touch with the Times Up movement and, undoubtedly, the majority of your customer base (middle income women).



A somewhat unfortunate shop window display juxtaposing fully clothed male mannequins with underworn female mannequins was seized upon by the media. The optics for this was made even worse by the fact that it coincided with a rape trial where sexy underwear was held up in court to suggest the victim 'was asking for it'. Her rapist was acquitted – no doubt in large part because of this.



This resulted in a storm of media coverage, protest marches and images all over social media of people, *including members of the Irish Parliament*, holding up underwear, very similar to that in M&S windows, with the strapline 'This is Not Consent'. The M&S strapline was 'Must Have Fancy Knickers'.

Obviously no one is saying M&S is promoting rape, but I am sure you can understand how a window display that was already somewhat jarring took on an altogether new meaning.



Now M&S is glamourising the porn industry with 'porn star' cocktails. The inappropriateness of this is surely obvious? Even if mainstream porn were still *merely* objectifying Playboy-style images, this would be unacceptable. But mainstream porn now is filmed sexual abuse – pure and simple. The level of violence in it is absolutely shocking. Over 90% shows women being abused – gagged, choked, urinated on, raped in every orifice by gangs of men while they scream and cry in pain and fear. 'Teen' and 'Incest' are the most popular genres – with millions of views every day globally.

When you sell 'Porn Star' Martini's, *this* is what you are promoting, glamourising and endorsing:



This is just a tiny sample of the video titles on Pornhub, the world's largest porn portal – many of these videos have millions of views. You can find out more about the realities of porn here:

www.pornNO.org.uk

<http://theviolenceofpornography.blogspot.com>

<https://notbuyingit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/documents/Porn-VAWG.pdf>

This is why we are asking you to rebrand these ill-conceived drinks immediately.

Your shop windows and porn cocktails are particularly shocking when M&S had such an ethical reputation, especially when it comes to sexism:

M&S was the only retailer *not* to stock lad's mags – a phenomenal stance when these soft porn publications were sold for pocket-money prices on the bottom shelf, in shop window displays or at the counter in every other retailer – including all your key rivals, such as Waitrose.

M&S also withdrew 'lap dancer lap top' dolls immediately after complaints were received.

M&S has a reputation for being far less sexist than any of its rivals. It has a reputation for ethics. Aren't all your clothes fair trade/fair wear (sweat shops particularly impact women)? If so, *why* isn't this being trumpeted? Why aren't you following the lead of Thornton's Budgens – a local community supermarket that, by using biodegradable substitutes, has gone totally plastic-free? (And if you do, trumpet what this little shop has done, don't compete with it or quash it).

Ethics is surely the key to 'upping' sales and will give you back your USP – particularly to your core market, middle income women. Promoting the porn industry and 'dodgy' window displays most certainly will not.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to elaborate further and help set you back on a win-win path.

We urge you to meet with us as a first step in re-connecting with your customer base and re-finding what has made you a much-loved British institution. Apart from anything else, think what good PR such a meeting would mean– meeting with your critics, who are already in the media eye.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from you

Dr Sasha Rakoff

CEO Not Buying It

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[Resist Porn Culture](#)

[Suzzan Blac](#), porn & prostitution survivor, artist, author and educator