

RETAIL

Selfridges campaign gets green light after ASA investigation

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Selfridges' Oxford Street flagship

By STAFF REPORTS

British department store chain Selfridges is the latest brand to face a consumer complaint about a model's weight.

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Britain's Advertising Standards Authority, which acts as an independent judge of the responsibility of marketing in the U.K., was asked to investigate a newsletter campaign sent by Selfridges in January. While the single complainant believed the model pictured within the email to be too thin, the ASA sided with Selfridges.

Weighing the issue

Selfridges' email campaign from Jan. 12 was focused on labels it had just begun to carry. Central to the message is the image of a model wearing a dress designed by New York-based brand Prabal Gurung.

The complaint questioned whether the ad was "socially responsible." Selfridges countered, saying that the style the model was wearing was loose and she was not posed in a way to make her appear thinner.



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Making its case further, Selfridges also argued that the concept of "unhealthily thin" is subjective, with each person establishing their own view on weight.

The ASA said that while the model's clothing and pose did showcase her small frame, the model was in proportion. It also ruled that viewers would likely look more at the dress' cut than the model's thinness.

Other brands have been challenged with similar consumer complaints, with some receiving different outcomes.

Italian fashion label Gucci also received a consumer complaint about a placement of its cruise 2016 campaign on The Times' Web site on Dec. 15, 2015, which featured a dance party video, saying that individual models pictured at the end of the film looked too thin. In its ruling published April 6, 2016 the ASA noted that one model was gaunt, deeming the advertising irresponsible ([see story](#)).