

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 140 325

CS 203 461

TITLE Children's Advertising Guidelines.
INSTITUTION Council of Better Business Bureaus, Inc., New York, N.Y.
PUB DATE 76
NOTE 7p.
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.83 HC-\$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Advocacy; Childhood Attitudes; Childhood Needs; Children; *Childrens Television; Guidelines; Mass Media; Moral Values; Publicize; Social Values; *Television Commercials
IDENTIFIERS Advertising; *Childrens Advertising

ABSTRACT

These guidelines have been developed for the use of advertisers and advertising agencies and for the self-regulatory mechanism which these groups have established, the National Advertising Division, to help ensure that advertising directed to children is truthful, accurate, and fair to children's perceptions. Preliminary sections set forth basic principles which underlie the guidelines and discuss interpretation of the guidelines and their scope. The guidelines deal with eight aspects of advertising: social and moral values portrayed; type of presentation; promotion by program character, editorial character, or personal endorsement; comparative product claims; pressure to purchase; ways in which products are shown being used; claim substantiation; and the use of premiums in advertising. (GW)

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children's advertising guidelines

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CHILDREN'S ADVERTISING GUIDELINES

Preamble

These Guidelines have been developed for the use of advertisers and advertising agencies and for the self-regulatory mechanism which they have established, the National Advertising Division, to help ensure that advertising directed to children is truthful, accurate and fair to children's perceptions.

Because trends in advertising are continually changing and because research and study are constantly shedding new light on children's development and understanding of advertising, these Guidelines will continue to be revised and modified on an on-going basis, as circumstances dictate.

Principles

Five basic Principles underlie these Guidelines for advertising directed to children.

- I Advertisers should always take into account the level of knowledge, sophistication and maturity of the audience to which the message is primarily directed. Since younger children have a limited capability for discerning the credibility of what they watch, they place a special responsibility upon advertisers to protect them from their own susceptibilities.
- II Realizing that children are imaginative and that make-believe play constitutes an important part of the growing up process, advertisers should exercise care not to exploit that imaginative quality of children. Unreasonable expectations of product quality or performance should not be stimulated either directly or indirectly by advertising.
- III Recognizing that advertising may play an important part in educating the child, information should be communicated in a truthful and accurate manner, with full recognition on the part of the advertiser that the child may learn practices from advertising which can affect his or her health and well-being.
- IV Advertisers are urged to capitalize on the potential of advertising to influence social behavior by developing advertising that, whenever possible, addresses itself to social standards generally regarded as positive and beneficial, such as friendship, kindness, honesty, justice, generosity and respect for others.

V Although many influences affect a child's personal and social development, it remains the prime responsibility of the parents to provide guidance for children, and to exert necessary and proper influences in children's exposure to the world. Advertisers should contribute to this parent-child relationship in a constructive manner.

A. Interpretation

Advertisers are reminded that the interpretation of these Guidelines should conform to and implement the Principles stated above. The intent in all cases should be to deal fairly and honestly with children, fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the Guidelines. Each individual commercial or advertisement should be considered in that context. Differences in the nature of broadcast media and print media should be taken into account. The Guidelines should not be regarded as prescribing rigid or inflexible rules which may deprive children and advertisers of the benefits of innovations and new approaches.

B. Scope

The clauses in these Guidelines embrace advertising designed to appeal to children eleven years of age and under. This includes children's advertising which is broadcast in children's programs and programs in which audience patterns typically contain more than 50% children. Commercials appearing in shows in which children are a substantial audience segment, but less than 50%, will be regarded as subject to these Guidelines only when they are clearly addressed to children eleven and under. Print advertising is subject to these Guidelines when it is primarily directed to or primarily read by children.

C. Social Values

Advertising should emphasize positive social and moral values and enrich the dignity of human life, as opposed to portrayals of violence, appeals to fear, or prejudice of any kind. To this end:

1. Advertisements should never portray as desirable any practices which are generally considered unacceptable from the standpoint of social, legal, moral, institutional or family values. Social stereotyping which is demeaning or derogatory to any group should be avoided.
2. Advertisements should not reflect disdain for parents or parental judgment, nor reflect unfavorably on other generally recognized sources of child guidance.
3. Advertisements should never portray undesirable living habits. Advertising should convey respect for others and

2. The advertisement clearly establishes what is included in the original purchase of the advertised product, employing where necessary positive disclosure on what items are to be purchased separately in a way that will be understood by the child audience to which the advertisement is primarily addressed. All advertising for products sold unassembled should indicate that assembly is required. If any other product is essential in order to use the advertised product—such as batteries—this should be disclosed.
3. A clearly depicted presentation of the complete advertised product is shown in the advertisement. When appropriate in helping to identify the product, the package may also be depicted, provided it does not mislead as to product characteristics, content, or the price range to be expected.
4. Advertising demonstrations showing the use of a product or premium can be readily duplicated by the average child for whom the product is intended.
5. Representations of food products should be made so as to encourage sound usage of the product with a view toward healthy development of the child and the development of good nutritional practices. Advertisements representing mealtime in the home should clearly and adequately depict the role of the product within the framework of a balanced diet. Overconsumption of food products and beverages should be avoided, nor should it be implied that any one food provides all the nutrients contained in a well-designed daily food plan.
6. To ensure accurate and truthful representation of playthings, they should be shown in normal play environments and situations.
7. A fair and equitable number of products should be featured, consistent with the number of children shown in the play setting. Should a whole line of toys or more toys than might be reasonably owned by the average child be featured, limbo settings (which are defined as non-representational settings with a plain background) or in-store settings are suggested, as they might provide a better context for fair demonstration of these products to children.

E. Promotion by Program Character, Editorial Character, or Personal Endorsement

It is recognized that very young children may not fully recognize differences between editorial and program content and advertising content. Hence, endorsement by

characters on the programs or in the editorial content of a publication may confuse children. Therefore:

1. Program personalities or program characters (live or animated) on children's programs should not be used to promote products, premiums or services in or adjacent to any program where the personality or character appears.
2. In print media, characters and personalities associated with the editorial content of a publication should not be used to promote products, premiums or services in the same publication.
3. Subject to paragraph (1) of this section, "product characters" — personalities live or animated who are closely associated with or identified with the product — may be used as presenters for the advertised product or service, provided they do not do or say anything to mislead children as to the product or service concerned.
4. Nationally known persons may not be used to attribute a characteristic or quality to a product (including a premium) unless they are generally recognized as qualified to speak on the subject. All personal endorsements should reflect the real experience and beliefs of the endorser.

F. Comparative Claims

It is recognized that advertising which compares the advertised product to another product may be difficult for children to understand and evaluate and may therefore be misunderstood. Therefore, advertisers are urged to represent products on their merits without reference to competition.

In the event that a true and significant advantage may exist in a product which can be readily understood by children, this advantage should be clearly explained. If advertisers should develop comparative advertising to children this should be done with the following cautions in mind:

1. Comparative statements should be informational and not demeaning to other products or to previous versions of the same product.
2. Comparative statements should not suggest that the advertised product is superior to another in individual attributes or overall characteristics unless such statements can be documented.
3. Comparative statements implying overall superiority should be avoided when such statements are based on attributes in which the advertised product excels, and

trayals that encourage misuse, or dangerous or inappropriate use of the product which is inconsistent with generally accepted standards of safety.

3. Medications, drugs and supplemental vitamins (liquid or pills) should not be advertised to children.

I. Claim Substantiation

In accordance with the basic principle of dealing fairly and honestly with children:

1. Advertising to children should not claim or imply any product or performance characteristics which are not supportable by factual data or research which conforms to sound professional practices.
2. Puffery (defined as "flattering publicity" or "extravagant commendation") is not acceptable support for an objective product claim. Advertising claims which might be construed as literally true must be literally true.

J. Additional Guidelines for Premium Advertising

The use of premiums in advertising has potential to enhance the appeal of a product to a child. Special attention should, therefore, be paid to the use of premiums in advertising. To guard against premiums exploiting the children's immaturity:

1. Care should be taken that the child's attention is focused primarily on the product rather than the premium. Therefore, major emphasis should be given to the product and its benefits. Emphasis on the premium should be clearly secondary.
2. It is recognized that limitation of the time devoted to a premium offer within a commercial may not be sufficient to ensure primary attention to the product offer. Therefore, advertisers are urged to weigh all factors, including time, to ensure that the product message is primary.
3. When a premium offer is used, the conditions of the offer should be stated simply, in terms which a child can understand. Every effort should be made to communicate so-called "mandatory" statements and disclaimers in terms which will be understood by a child audience.



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