



ICC Toolkit: Marketing and Advertising to Children

For 80 years, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) Commission on Marketing and Advertising has worked tirelessly to promote its core mission: advancing principles of responsible commercial communication through effective self-regulation. Advertising is the vehicle through which consumers become informed of goods and services that are of interest to them, so is central to economic growth. It is also the engine that powers free content around the world. That is why the ICC Code of Marketing and Advertising Communications (ICC Marketing Code) has served as a “gold standard” for responsible commercial communications throughout the world, with translations available in 11 languages. An overarching principle of the ICC Code is that marketing communications must be legal, decent, honest and truthful, considering how the communication is likely to be interpreted by the primary target audience. With respect to those audiences, advertisers not only should adhere to general standards designed to promote truthful and fair advertising, but also have special responsibilities when marketing to children and teens.

Drawing from almost 100 years of child development research, ICC recognizes that children and teens are distinct groups. ICC considers “children” to be 12 and younger, while “teens” or “young people” are individuals 13 – 18 (age 18 is generally considered the age of majority in many jurisdictions). The ICC Code and various guidance documents reflect common sense principles in marketing to individuals who are not yet adults.

ICC’s approach to responsible marketing to children and teens is based on five core principles. First and foremost, ICC supports the principle of freedom of commercial communications, and opposes blanket bans on advertising to children and teens. Second, products that are unsuitable for purchase, use or consumption by children or teens in the jurisdiction where the marketing communication is directed should not be advertised in media targeted to them. This includes products intended only for adults, like prescription drugs and alcohol, or gambling services. Third, special care is needed when certain advertising techniques are used in marketing to children, who are still developing their understanding of commercial communications. Fourth, it means that added privacy precautions may be appropriate when collecting information from children, meriting parental consent in some instances, but that teens have their own developing sphere of privacy. Fifth, general principles of the ICC Code may be amplified by sector-specific guidelines and principles.

ICC’s rich history of support for freedom of commercial communications, responsible marketing communications, and guidance on responsible marketing to children and teens is reflected a variety of useful reference documents. This Toolkit incorporates relevant ICC materials demonstrating the global advertising industry’s commitment to strong, effective self-regulation of marketing and advertising communications to strengthen confidence in markets and help power economic growth.

ICC Reference Materials

While a complete compilation of ICC codes, policy statements, guidelines and discussion materials is available at the ICC website, <https://iccwbo.org>, the following documents are most relevant to those interested in responsible advertising and marketing to children and teens.

1. ICC Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications Practice:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/advertising-and-marketing-communication-practice-consolidated-icc-code/>
2. ICC Policy Statement on Freedom of Commercial Communications:
<https://cdn.iccwbo.org/content/uploads/sites/3/2015/11/ICC-Policy-Statement-on-Freedom-of-Commercial-Communications.pdf>
3. ICC Statement of Code Interpretation and Reference Guide to Advertising to Children:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/statement-code-interpretation-reference-guide-advertising-children/>
4. Implementation Guide for the ICC Marketing Codes:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/implementation-guide-for-the-icc-marketing-codes/>
5. ICC Guidance on Native Advertising:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/icc-guidance-on-native-advertising/>
6. ICC Paper on Code Drafting: maintaining the effectiveness of self-regulation in marketing communications:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/icc-paper-on-code-drafting-maintaining-the-effectiveness-of-self-regulation-in-marketing-communications/>
7. ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market Research and Social Opinion and Data Analytics:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/icesomar-international-code-market-opinion-social-research-data-analytics/>
8. ICC discussion paper on labelling and packaging measures impacting brand assets:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/icc-discussion-paper-labelling-packaging-measures-impacting-brand-assets/>
9. Framework for Responsible Food and Beverage Marketing Communications 2012:
<https://iccwbo.org/publication/framework-for-responsible-food-and-beverage-marketing-communications-2012/>
10. ICC Framework for Responsible Marketing Communications of Alcohol:
http://www.codescentre.com/media/12670/icc-alcohol-framework_final_march2014.pdf
11. Consolidated ICC Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications Practice (available translations):
<http://www.codescentre.com/downloads.aspx>