

TELEVISION AND RADIO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP CODE

PREAMBLE

1. The Info-communications Media Development Authority (“the IMDA”) is empowered to issue, and from time to time, review codes of practice relating to the standards of programmes and advertisements. Television and radio programmes and advertisements, especially local productions, can exert a significant influence on the community. This Television and Radio Advertising and Sponsorship Code (“the Code”) seeks to ensure that advertisements and sponsored programmes offered on applicable services by service providers licensed under the Broadcasting Act 1994 are not against public interest or order, or national harmony, or offend good taste and decency. The IMDA is also empowered under the Broadcasting Act 1994 to impose sanctions, including the imposition of financial penalties, on any service provider who contravenes the Code.

2. The Code¹ outlines the general standards to be observed by licensed service providers offering advertisements and sponsored programmes in the Republic of Singapore on the following applicable services:

- (a) Free-To-Air Television (“FTA TV”) and Radio Services (“FTA Radio”); and
- (b) Linear Channels of Nationwide Internet Protocol Subscription Television Services (“Subscription TV”).

3. The provisions set out in this Code must be applied in spirit and read in conjunction with other relevant legislation, regulations, codes and/or licence conditions. The IMDA may require service providers to withdraw advertisements and sponsored programmes that do not comply with this Code.

4. The Code deals in general principles and does not seek to address each and every possible case or scenario that could arise. Service providers may face cases or scenarios which are not specifically referred to or directly addressed in this Code. Examples included in the Code are not exhaustive. However, the principles and provisions in the following sections should make clear what the Code is designed to achieve and help service providers make the necessary judgments.

¹ This Code does not apply to Over-the-Top and Video-on-Demand services.

PART 1: DEFINITIONS

1. For the purpose of this Code:

(a) “advertisement” refers to the following:

(i) Any material designed to advance the sale of any particular product or service, or to promote the interest of any organisation, commercial concern or individual in return for payment or other reward or consideration to the service provider. Examples of such materials are as follows:

(A) words, sound effects (including music), and/or visual presentation;

(B) direct announcements, slogans, descriptions, crawlers or otherwise;

(C) "live" reads (scripted advertisements read out "live" by presenters);

(D) open talks or ad-libs (unscripted presentations);

(E) roving reports (coverage of "live" events by presenters);

(F) tag-ons (promotional messages for advertisers tagged on to sponsorship credit mentions); and

(G) advertorials, i.e. advertisements which are presented in the form of editorial content.

(ii) Infomercials, which are long-form advertisements of varying duration designed to sell products or services in an informative manner;

(iii) In-house programme publicity trailers and station identification;

(iv) Announcements made in the public interest; and

(v) Trailers connected to registered charities and appeals for which the service provider does not receive payment in cash or kind.

(vi) Any superimpositions² designed to promote the interest of any organisation, individual or group of individuals without payment or any form of consideration to the service provider.

(b) “programme sponsorship” refers to the payment, or other reward or consideration, tangible or intangible, by a sponsor to a service provider for any part of the costs of

² Superimpositions may appear in the form of a logo, tagline/ slogan, product shot, copy-line, QR code, corner bug or crawler. This is a non-exhaustive list.

production, acquisition or transmission of a programme, with the objective of promoting the sponsor's name, image, products, activities or services.³

- (c) "children" are defined as persons below the age of 14 years.
- (d) "premium rate service" refers to any value-added service provided over a public telecommunications network which consists of:
 - (i) the provision of content to any person including but not limited to content such as information, news, updates, data, quizzes, jokes, greeting messages, ringtones, wallpapers, logos and games for which charges are imposed over and above the standard network charges of the relevant network operator;
 - (ii) the provision of a facility to any person including but not limited to facilities for chat services, contest participation, charitable fundraising and votelines for which charges are imposed over and above the standard network charges of the relevant network operator; or
 - (iii) a combination of (i) and (ii),but shall not include value-added services provided by network operators such as auto redial, back-up SIM card, call barring, call directory, call divert, call transfer, call waiting, caller ID, caller number non-display, conference call, favourite numbers, IDD, missed call alert, multi-SIM card, number retention, number porting, mobile voice and message roaming, speed dial, voicemail or video call services.
- (e) "public telecommunications network" refers to any fixed or mobile telecommunications network in Singapore.

PART 2: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 All advertisements and sponsored programmes on the applicable services must comply with the relevant Content Code for Nationwide Managed Transmission Linear Television Services or Content Code for Radio Services.
- 2.2 Service providers must maintain their editorial and programming control over advertisements and sponsored programmes.
- 2.3 All advertisements on the applicable services should also be guided by the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice (SCAP) issued by the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS).

³ Mere references to commercial names in programmes do not necessarily constitute programme sponsorship, especially if they are inherent in programmes acquired by a broadcaster.

- 2.4 With regard to sponsorship, the Code is applicable to local programmes, locally packaged channels, or any other programmes where sponsorship deals are made locally and/or the service provider has control over the sponsor's presence.
- 2.5 Advertisements and sponsored programmes must be decent and tasteful in terms of content and presentation, and should not cause offence to the community.
- 2.6 Advertisements should avoid stereotyping which is demeaning or offensive, or using footages, caricatures, depictions and references that are denigrating of specific individuals or certain segments of the community, e.g. negative stereotyping or caricatures in relation to race, religion, gender, age and disability.
- 2.7 Advertisements should not contain scenes that are titillating or sexually exploitative, gory or horrifying, or excessively violent, such as close-up shots of infliction of injury and bloody wounds. Coarse language and offensive gestures should not be featured.
- 2.8 Any advertisement or sponsored programme that has the effect of directly or indirectly publicising any unacceptable product or service should not be allowed (see Part 12 for details).
- 2.9 Advertisements and sponsored programmes must be clearly identified, distinguishable and recognisable to viewers and listeners.
- 2.10 If there is a direct link between a sponsor's commercial activities and the sponsored programme, service providers must make the sponsor's involvement transparent and evident to viewers and listeners, and maintain the programme's editorial integrity.
- 2.11 Service providers should consult the IMDA if they are unsure whether a proposed advertisement, sponsored programme or sponsorship arrangement would be permissible under the Code.

National and Public Interest

- 2.12 Advertisements and sponsored programmes must:
 - (a) comply with the prevailing laws of Singapore;
 - (b) not undermine national interest, national security, public interest, public security or public order;
 - (c) not be detrimental to Singapore's relationship with other countries; and
 - (d) not contain extremist or anarchic messages, such as advocating or promoting the use of violence.

Racial and Religious Harmony

2.13 For the purposes of this Code, race includes dialect groups and ethnic groups.

2.14 Advertisements and sponsored programmes must:

- (a) be kept secular and not be of a proselytic nature;
- (b) present references to race and religion accurately and in a dignified and sensitive manner;
- (c) not denigrate or be likely to offend the sensitivities of any racial or religious group;
- (d) not incite or be likely to incite racial and/or religious intolerance or misunderstanding;
- (e) not make use of the beliefs or practices of any religion to sell any products or services; and
- (f) not promote or propagate any religious cause, event, or product.

Social Norms and Values

2.15 Advertisements should not:

- (a) undermine the importance of the family as the basic unit of society;
- (b) make any references to any class or group of persons as being innately or inherently inferior;
- (c) encourage or in any way lead to discrimination against any section of the community on account of race, religion, gender, age, occupational status or disability;
- (d) promote, justify or glamourise lifestyles and behaviours contrary to prevailing social norms, or portray these lifestyles or behaviours as mainstream; and
- (e) contain sexual innuendoes, sexually suggestive scenes, sexually explicit dialogue, and sexually suggestive words or sounds.

PART 3: ADVERTISING TIME LIMITS AND SCHEDULING

Scheduling of Advertisements and Trailers

3.1 Service providers should exercise discretion when scheduling advertisements and trailers, such that they are appropriate to the target audience, and take into account the racial, religious, cultural and social sensitivities in Singapore.

PART 4: ADVERTISING FORMAT

Infomercials

- 4.1 Infomercials must not be aired immediately before, immediately after, or during children's programmes.

PART 5: ADVERTISING STANDARDS

Use of Language

- 5.1 All advertisements should maintain a good standard of language in the four official languages of Singapore. Singlish and ungrammatical English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil should not be used.
- 5.2 Service providers must exercise care to ensure that the languages used in advertisements are appropriate for their target audiences.
- 5.3 Advertisements may contain dialect terms, such as "ang ku kueh" and "kopi gao", where the Mandarin equivalents may not be easily understood or commonly used. Advertisements containing other dialect terms are not allowed unless approved by the IMDA.

Social Behaviour

- 5.4 Advertisements on FTA TV channels, and Subscription TV channels targeting children must not feature skimpily clad men or women from 6am to 10pm.
- 5.5 Advertisements that feature or make references to condoms and other forms of contraception are not allowed for broadcast, unless specifically approved by the IMDA for the purpose of public health-related messaging.
- 5.6 Advertisements that make references to smoking, vaping and drug use are not allowed, unless they are public service messages by the relevant government agencies. References to brand names of tobacco and/or electronic vapouriser companies in association with other products are not allowed in advertisements, unless prior approval is sought from the relevant government authorities.
- 5.7 Advertisements that promote gambling must not be broadcast. Advertisements on or related to gambling are not allowed, unless they are public service messages.

Fortune Telling and Superstitious Beliefs

- 5.8 Advertisements that promote directly or indirectly fortune-telling, geomancy, occult practices and other superstitious beliefs; or their related products and services, should not be broadcast.
- 5.9 Advertisements should not play on fear and superstition without justifiable reason.

Death-Related and Undertaker Services

5.10 On FTA and Subscription TV, advertisements for death-related and undertaker services may be broadcast between 11pm and 6 am, or as otherwise approved by the IMDA on a case-by-case basis, subject to the following criteria:

- (a) The treatment of the advertisements is subtle, tasteful and does not offend viewers or have explicit references to morbid details;
- (b) The scheduling and frequency of the advertisements should be carefully considered, ensuring that they are spaced apart and not concentrated in a single time block;
- (c) The advertisements should target appropriate audiences;
- (d) The advertisements are not aired during festive seasons and public holidays; and
- (e) The advertisements offered by religiously affiliated organisations, such as Christian and Buddhist columbaria, should avoid religious overtones, e.g. use of imagery and music with religious connotations.

5.11 On FTA radio, advertisements for death-related and undertaker services are not allowed.

Alcoholic Drinks

5.12 Advertisements for alcoholic drinks should not target audiences under the age of 18.

Dubious Establishments and Services

5.13 Advertisements promoting establishments or services of dubious propriety are not allowed.

Chatline and Dating Services

5.14 Advertisements for chatline services and non-accredited dating services are not allowed.

TV Programmes, Movies, Video Content and Arts Entertainment

5.15 Advertisements (including paid advertisements and in-house trailers) for movies or any video content rated Restricted 21 (R21) and arts entertainment rated Restricted 18 (R18) are not allowed on FTA TV, Subscription TV and FTA Radio.

5.16 On FTA TV, advertisements for TV programmes, movies and video content rated M18 can only be broadcast between 10pm and 6 am.

- 5.17 On FTA and Subscription TV, all advertisements for TV programmes, movies and video content rated PG13, NC16, and M18 must (a) be suitably edited according to the Content Code for Nationwide Managed Transmission Linear Television Services to reflect the respective classification rating of the content they promote, (b) prominently display their classification rating within the visuals, and (c) not be aired during timeslots containing children's programmes. Notwithstanding (c) above, advertisements for TV programmes, movies, and video content rated PG13 can be shown during timeslots containing children's programmes if they have been suitably edited to meet the standards of a G or PG rating in accordance with the Content Code for Nationwide Managed Transmission Linear Television Services.
- 5.18 On FTA radio, advertisements for TV programmes, movies and video content rated PG13, NC16 and M18 must comply with the Content Code for Radio Services, highlight their classification rating, and should not be targeted at children.

Advertisements Resembling News

- 5.19 Particular care should be exercised when using expressions and sound effects associated with or resemble those used in news bulletins, weather reports and important announcements. Viewers and listeners must be able to recognise the message as an advertisement. Expressions such as "*News Flash*" and phrases like "*We interrupt this programme...*" are reserved for important news and public service announcements and must not be used in advertisements.
- 5.20 As long-form advertisements that publicise events or public functions may be mistaken for news or information items, they should be identified as advertisements at the beginning and at the end.

Premium Rate Services

- 5.21 Advertisements that invite viewers or listeners to use a premium rate service to download content into their mobile devices, register opinions, obtain free trials, or take part in competitions or lucky draws, and are scheduled in time belts or alongside programmes that primarily target children, must present information on the cost of the service and charging mechanisms in a form that children can understand. Such advertisements must also make it clear to children that they should obtain their parents' permission to sign up for and use such services.

Sound Effects, Noise, Stridency and Subliminal Advertising

- 5.22 Advertisements should not include sounds likely to cause alarm or create a safety hazard. Distracting or potentially alarming sound effects (e.g. sirens, screeching tyres, vehicle collisions and explosions) must be treated cautiously as they may cause concern and endanger audiences.

- 5.23 Subliminal advertising, which is the use of images, sounds or any other device or means to convey messages or influence the minds of audiences without their being aware of it, is not allowed.

Interactive Advertising

- 5.24 For digital transmission which covers interactive advertising, viewers should be able to distinguish easily between interactive options that lead to advertising and those that lead to additional programme information.

PART 6: SPONSORSHIP OF TV CHANNELS AND RADIO STATIONS

- 6.1 Sponsorship of FTA TV channels and FTA Radio stations is not allowed.
- 6.2 Sponsorship of Subscription TV channels may be allowed, subject to the IMDA's approval, and including but not limited to the following safeguards and restrictions:
- (a) No sponsorship from foreign individuals, foreign governments, non-governmental organisations, inter-governmental organisations, religious organisations or political parties;
 - (b) No sponsorship of channels carrying news, current affairs, info-educational and children's programmes; and
 - (c) Sponsored channels must be clearly identified as such to viewers, and comply with this Code and the Content Code for Nationwide Managed Transmission Linear Television Services.

Part 7: SPONSORSHIP FORMAT

Title Sponsorship

- 7.1 Unless approved by the IMDA, title sponsorship (i.e. the integration of a sponsor's name into a programme title or programme segment) is not allowed for:
- (a) News, current affairs, info-educational, and children's programmes; and
 - (b) Programme time slots (such as "*Company XXX's Blockbuster Sunday*") dedicated to news, current affairs, info-educational, and children's programmes.

Sponsor's Reference

- 7.2 The sponsor's reference⁴ should not appear within or be superimposed onto any news, current affairs, info-educational, and children's programmes, unless approved by the IMDA or if it appears as part of the landscape, set or backdrop of the programme.

⁴ Sponsor's reference may appear in the form of (non-exhaustive list) a virtual signage (such as the superimposition of logos, slogans and billboards), a "pic-in-pic", squeeze-backs, logo, tagline/ slogan, product

PART 8: ENDORSEMENTS

- 8.1 Endorsement of sponsor's products or services is allowed in programmes, except for news, current affairs, info-educational and children's programmes.
- 8.2 The compere or presenter (including artists or invited guests) may endorse a sponsor and its products or services, if accompanied by full and clear disclosures.
- 8.3 Endorsement of any unacceptable product or service is not allowed (see Part 12 for details).

PART 9: ADVERTISING TO CHILDREN AND CHILDREN'S PROGRAMME SPONSORSHIP

- 9.1 The Code takes into account that children's ability to distinguish between fact and fiction varies according to their age, and that children tend to be imitative by nature in general.
- 9.2 Advertisements that feature children, target children or placed in programmes likely to be seen or heard by children, should not:
 - (a) promote unwholesome values and behaviour to children;
 - (b) contain any visuals, sounds, effects or words that might result in psychological harm to them;
 - (c) contain any portrayals or descriptions of dangerous or harmful behaviour that can be easily imitated by children in a manner that is likely to result in physical or mental harm;
 - (d) contain any portrayals or descriptions of children doing acts which might endanger themselves or others.
- 9.3 Service providers should consider carefully the appropriateness of any sponsorship of children's programmes, as children are more impressionable and less likely to discern fully the relationship between the sponsor's message and programme content.

PART 10: POLITICAL ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

- 10.1 No advertisement or sponsored programme may be inserted by or on behalf of any body whose objectives are wholly or mainly of a political nature.
- 10.2 Advertisements and sponsored programmes must not be directed towards any political end.

shot, copy-line, QR code, corner bug, crawler, or add on message (only congratulatory and/or encouraging/positive).

PART 11: NEWS, CURRENT AFFAIRS AND INFO-EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME SPONSORSHIP

- 11.1 Service providers should consider carefully the appropriateness of any sponsorship of current affairs and info-education programmes, as programmes in these genres serve to inform and educate the public, and should be balanced, factual and objective.
- 11.2 News, current affairs and info-educational programmes that report on businesses, products or services, including informational programmes that feature commercial establishments or products, may highlight specific products or services as part of the programme in a balanced and factual manner.
- 11.3 News programmes, including flashes, bulletins, headlines, top stories, specials and breaking news, must not be sponsored, except under the following circumstances:
- (a) Specialist news reports, which refer to factual data like traffic, weather, stock market indices, foreign exchange rates, and non-sensitive news items like culture, sports and travel may be sponsored; and
 - (b) Such sponsored reports must be separated from the general news programme clearly, for example, by programme end credits or a commercial break, so as not to give the perception that the whole news programme is sponsored.

PART 12: UNACCEPTABLE ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP

- 12.1 Service providers must not broadcast advertisements of unacceptable products and services, or accept sponsorship from entities offering unacceptable products and services, which include but are not limited to gambling, tobacco or vaping products, obscene materials, social escort services, prostitution, weapons, illegal substances and recreational drugs.
- 12.2 Service providers must exercise due care to ensure that the advertisements, sponsored programmes or sponsorship arrangements do not contravene or in any way violate any applicable legislation, regulations, codes or guidelines of any kind. An indicative, non-exhaustive list of the relevant legislation can be found in Annex A.
- 12.3 Advertisements and sponsorships by any political party or religious group are not allowed.
- 12.4 The following programmes or programme segments must not be sponsored:
- (a) **Parliamentary Programmes** – which include Opening of Parliament, Highlights from Parliament, Select Committee Hearings, Commission of Inquiry, etc.
 - (b) **Elections-related programmes** – which include Campaign Reports and Polling Night Results.

- (c) **Ministerial Speeches, Press Conferences and Special Interviews** – which include the Prime Minister’s National Day Message and National Day Rally, etc.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TELEVISION AND RADIO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP CODE

The Code takes effect from 1 September 2025 and replaces the earlier version of the Television and Radio Advertising and Sponsorship Code that took effect from 1 February 2018.

The IMDA may from time to time revise or update the Code to maintain currency.

ANNEX A: LIST OF LEGISLATION AFFECTING ADVERTISING

This list should not be taken to be an exhaustive list of legislation and statutory instruments relevant to advertising practices. Service providers should exercise due care to ensure that their advertisements do not contravene or in any way violate any applicable legislation, regulations, codes or guidelines of any kind.

1. Accountants Act 2004
2. Architects Act 1991
3. Banking Act 1970
4. Broadcasting Act 1994
5. Building Control Act 1989
6. Casino Control Act 2006
7. Charities Act 1994
8. Chit Funds Act 1971
9. Co-Operative Societies Act 1979
10. Companies Act 1967
11. Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act 2003
12. Consumer Protection (Trade Descriptions and Safety Requirements) Act 1975
13. Copyright Act 2021
14. Currency Act 1967
15. Customs Act 1960
16. Defamation Act 1957
17. Dental Registration Act 1999
18. Electricity Act 2001
19. Employment Agencies Act 1958
20. Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 2006
21. Films Act 1981
22. Finance Companies Act 1967
23. Financial Advisers Act 2001
24. Foreign National Emblems (Control of Display) Act 1949
25. Gas Act 2001
26. Gambling Control Act 2022
27. Goods and Services Tax Act 1993
28. Health Products Act 2007
29. Healthcare Services Act 2020
30. Housing Developers (Control and Licensing) Act 1965
31. Human Organ Transplant Act 1987
32. Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore Act 2016
33. Innkeepers Act 1970
34. Insurance Act 1966
35. Internal Security Act 1960
36. Land Surveyors Act 1991
37. Legal Profession Act 1966
38. Massage Establishments Act 2017
39. Medical Registration Act 1997
40. Medicines (Advertisement and Sale) Act 1955

41. Medicines Act 1975
42. Miscellaneous Offences (Public Order and Nuisance) Act 1906
43. Moneylenders Act 2008
44. National Registration Act 1965
45. National Symbols Act 2022
46. Parliamentary Elections Act 1954
47. Penal Code 1871
48. Pharmacists Registration Act 2007
49. Police Force Act 2004
50. Presidential Elections Act 1991
51. Private Security Industry Act 2007
52. Professional Engineers Act 1991
53. Public Utilities Act 2001
54. Rapid Transit Systems Act 1995
55. Road Traffic Act 1961
56. Sale of Food Act 1973
57. Securities and Futures Act 2001
58. Singapore Totalisator Board Act 1987
59. Street Works Act 1995
60. Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act 1993
61. Telecommunications Act 1999
62. Trade Marks Act 1998
63. Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Act 2000
64. Travel Agents Act 1975
65. Undesirable Publications Act 1967
66. Vandalism Act 1966
67. Weights and Measures Act 1975