

ICC Marketing Commission looks at new challenges to ad standards worldwide

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As technology, media and consumer tastes continue to rapidly change and evolve, brand owners, advertisers and regulators are struggling to keep pace.

Some countries are becoming more restrictive in food and beverage marketing, social media and marketing to children, while others are embracing a model of industry-led standards and self-regulation.

Last week, as the advertising world descended on New York for Ad Week, USCIB helped host a timely meeting of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)'s Marketing and Advertising Commission at the headquarters of 21st Century Fox. The commission encompasses experts in advertising standards from around the world and oversees ICC's longstanding Consolidated ICC Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications Practice – the benchmark for responsible marketing practices in numerous countries.

At the annual meeting of the Children's Advertising Review Unit (CARU), which is part of the main US advertising self-regulatory body, the Advertising Self-Regulatory Council and ICC members brought a global perspective to discussions of ad standards, enforcement and changing consumer preferences. Sheila Millar (Keller & Heckman), Vice-Chair of the ICC commission, was joined by Elizabeth Thomas-Raynaud of the ICC secretariat and Manuela Carvalho of Publicis Brazil for a discussion on "Exploring the Global Landscape for Marketing to Children".

Ms Carvalho noted the often vast differences in standards in various Latin American countries when it comes to using children

on television during certain hours, and addressing the role of parents in purchasing decisions. These differences, she said, often preclude marketing and advertising practices that would be deemed acceptable in the United States, such as a TV advertisement by a well-known fried chicken brand that uses child actors to evoke nostalgia for the product among adult consumers.

“Empowered” consumers vs. “insidious” marketers?

At the main meeting of the ICC Commission on Marketing and Advertising, which drew strong US participation along with representatives from several other countries, commission Chair Brent Sanders (Microsoft) led an overview of the latest developments in so-called “native advertising”. This encompasses a variety of practices that embed advertising or sponsored messages in editorial content, such as sponsored posts on a Facebook feed.

“Often the growth in native advertising is negatively depicted solely as a consequence of the rapid decline in effectiveness of traditional banner ads,” observed Chris Payne of the World Federation of Advertisers. “What is often forgotten is that this is itself a consequence of a shift in consumer demand from advertisers, driven by the proliferation of social media and other online platforms. It is this change in demand which the industry is reacting to; in the future minimal disruption and maximum engagement will be key.”

“As such the move to a more harmonized, integrated means of engagement is a positive response to a shifting consumer landscape,” Mr Payne said. “However, we must remain sensitive to the concerns of broader society, especially those concerns that question the integrity of industry and, where possible, we should work to address these concerns.”

Proliferating food labelling proposals

Other issues discussed by the commission included the proliferation of proposals – many considered draconian – to restrict food and beverage marketing in Latin America and other regions. Mary Catherine Toker (General Mills) shared a proposal currently under consideration in Chile that would call for “stop sign” warning labels and advertising bans on most packaged food products sold in Chile. The nutrition standards are inconsistent with internationally accepted science and many trade experts believe that the proposed regulation violates Chile’s international trade obligations.

“We have a serious commitment to providing clear, fact-based nutrition information to consumers,” said Ms Toker. “As members of the International Food and Beverage Alliance, we have made a global commitment to a common, science-based nutrition labelling system – providing information on the seven globally-recognized nutrients on packs, with calories prominently placed on the front of pack – as well as to responsible advertising. We know from our consumers that they are not looking for warning labels and stop signs when making choices about feeding their family. Rather, consumers are seeking factual, science-based and objective

nutrition information that allows them to make decisions based on their individual dietary needs.”

ICC and USCIB have long recognized the importance of responsible advertising as the engine of free content and an important key to making consumers aware of available products and services. New global regulations that threaten to restrict some types of advertising are a reminder to all advertisers of the need to remain actively engaged in promoting responsible self-regulation.

ICC Marketing and Advertising Commission

Download the **[Consolidated ICC Code of Advertising and Marketing Communications Practice](#)**.

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