

## **RADIO ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP CODE**

### **PREAMBLE**

1. Radio exerts a strong influence on the community as it is easily accessible and can reach everyone. As such, advertisements and sponsored programmes on radio should be produced with a sense of responsibility to listeners and their social impact should be given due consideration.
2. It is the broadcaster's responsibility to ensure that all radio advertisements and sponsored programmes comply with the spirit and letter of the guidelines under this Code,
3. The general principles and guidelines drawn up in this Code apply to analogue and digital radio, Free-To-Air and Subscription radio environment(s), including local programmes, locally packaged channels or any other programmes where sponsorship deals are made locally and the broadcaster has control over the sponsor's presence.
4. Broadcasters are invited to consult MDA in cases where they are unsure whether a proposed advertisement or programme sponsorship would breach the guidelines.
5. In view of the rapid development of technology in communications and broadcasting, the guidelines in this Code will be reviewed regularly to safeguard the interest of listeners and ensure their relevance to broadcasters.

### **DEFINITIONS**

6. For the purpose of this Code, the term 'advertisement' refers to the following:
  - (a) 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 broadcaster, which can include:

- (i) Pre-recorded advertisements

- (ii) “Live” reads (Scripted advertisements read out “live” by presenters)
- (iii) Open talks or Ad-libs (Unscripted presentations)
- (iv) Roving reports (Coverage of “live” events by presenters)
- (v) Tag-ons (Promotional messages for advertisers tagged on to credit mentions for sponsors)
- (vi) Endorsement of an advertiser’s or sponsor’s products/services
- (vii) Any other promotional reference to a product or service during a programme.

(b) Informercials, which are long form advertisements of varying duration designed to sell products or services in an informative manner.

7 This Code is also applicable to:

- (a) In-house programme publicity trailers and station identification;
- (b) Announcements made in the public interest; and
- (c) Trailers connected to government approved charities and appeals for which the broadcaster does not receive payment in cash or kind.

8. With regard to Programme Sponsorship, a programme is deemed sponsored if any part of its cost of production, acquisition or transmission is met in return for payment, or other reward or consideration, tangible or intangible, to the broadcaster, with the objective of promoting the sponsor’s name, image, product, activities or services.

9. Broadcasters should recognise that there is a distinction between programme sponsorship and advertising. Through the sponsorship of a programme, an organisation gains public exposure, prestige and favourable association. Sponsorship does not equate with advertisements or infomercials (long-form advertisements), where there is a direct appeal to the public to purchase a specific product or use a particular service.

10. All items described in Clauses 6 to 9 should satisfy the requirements in the Radio Programme Code issued by the Media Development Authority. The broadcasters should also be guided by the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice issued by the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES

11. Advertisements and sponsored programmes should be clearly identified and recognisable to listeners, in particular:

(a) Advertisements that sound like programmes or which use the same presenters, must be differentiated in such a way that the listener is able to distinguish between a radio programme and an advertisement. For example, broadcasters should identify such advertisements at the beginning and at the end.

(b) Sponsored programmes or programme segments should be clearly identified at the beginning and at the end of the programme or programme segment. They should also be clearly identified before and after commercial breaks. If the sponsored programme is of a longer duration, sponsor acknowledgements should be inserted at appropriate intervals to inform listeners. Trailers for sponsored programmes can also carry sponsor acknowledgement at their beginning or end.

(c) For sponsored programmes, a direct link between the sponsor's commercial activities and the programme is acceptable, for example: a bank sponsoring a financial programme. This is provided the sponsor's involvement is transparent and made evident to listeners, and in particular, for Current Affairs, Info-ed and Children's Programmes, the sponsor should not influence the programme's editorial integrity.

12. Broadcasters should also ensure that radio stations are not over-commercialized such that listeners are inundated with sponsorship messages. Regardless of whether a programme is sponsored or not, programme presenters or commentators should not highlight or endorse any product or services that are linked with their sponsors, beyond the guidelines in this Code.

13. Sponsorship of a radio station is not allowed, as it will affect the identity, branding and editorial integrity of the station.

14. Advertisements should be truthful and lawful, in particular –

(a) They should not expressly or by implication, through their description, claims or illustrations mislead about the product or service advertised or about its suitability for the purpose recommended.

(b) They should comply with the prevailing laws of Singapore.

(c) Irrelevant data and scientific jargon must not be used to support claims that do not have a scientific basis.

15. There should be no more than 14 minutes of advertisements and trailers in each clock hour.

16. Sponsor credit mentions before and after a programme will not be included in the 14 minute advertising allowance, but a description of the sponsor's products or services that is tagged on to the sponsor's name will be included.

17. Advertisements and sponsored programmes should be decent and tasteful in their content and presentation, and should not cause offence to public feeling and morals.

18. Advertisements and sponsored programmes should take care to avoid stereotyping which could offend listeners; for example stereotyping in relation to race, religion, gender, the elderly and the disabled.

19. News, Current Affairs and Info-Educational programmes that report on businesses, products or services, including light informational programmes that regularly highlight commercial establishment or products, may highlight specific products or services as part of the programme but treatment should be balanced and factual.

20. Any advertisement or sponsored programme that has the effect of indirectly publicising any product or service disallowed under this Code should not be accepted for broadcast.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES**

### **National Policies**

21 (a) Advertisements should not contain messages that constitute a breach of applicable laws, nor should they appear to condone any illegal activity.

(b) Advertisements should not, directly or otherwise, attempt to disrupt the harmony or stability of the country.

(c) Any advertisement that could be regarded as detrimental to Singapore's relationship with other countries should not be broadcast.

### **Race and Religion**

22 (a) Advertisements should not contain statements or suggestions that may offend the sensitivities of any racial or religious group, and should not depict any race or religion in a flippant, frivolous or inaccurate manner.

- (b) Advertisements should not directly or indirectly promote or proselytise the views of any race or religion. Claims to the effect that a particular religion is the 'only' or 'true' faith are not acceptable.
- (c) Advertisements for religious products and services are not acceptable.
- (d) Advertisements should not make use of the beliefs or practices of any religion to sell products or services. This includes prayer excerpts and religious messages.
- (e) Advertisements by any religious groups are not allowed.
- (f) Advertisements aimed at promoting or propagating any religious cause or event are not acceptable.

**Moral Standards/Social Behaviour**

- 23
- (a) Advertisements should not promote, justify or glamourise lifestyles and behaviours such as homosexuality, promiscuity, juvenile delinquency and drug abuse. Advertisements should also not portray these lifestyles or behaviours as normal or mainstream.
  - (b) Advertisements should not undermine the importance of the family as the basic unit of society. In this respect, any references to lifestyles that undermine family life and values, such as co-habitation, should not be condoned nor presented in a positive light.
  - (c) Advertisements containing sexually explicit dialogue, sexually suggestive words and sounds and sexual innuendoes should not be broadcast.
  - (d) Advertisements on condoms and other forms of contraception are not acceptable for broadcast as radio reaches out to all audiences, including children.
  - (e) Advertisements for all tobacco products and advertisements which make references to smoking should not be broadcast unless they are public service messages by the relevant government agencies. Brand names of tobacco companies in association with other products are not allowed in advertisements unless prior approval is sought from the relevant government authorities. Please refer to Clause 43 on Legislation Affecting Advertising.
  - (f) Advertisements which promote gambling should not be broadcast, However, public service messages on or related to gambling can be allowed.

## **Children's Programmes, News, Current Affairs and Info- Educational Programmes**

24 For the purpose of this Code, children are defined as those aged 14 years and below. The guidelines take into account the fact that children's ability to distinguish between fact and fiction will vary according to their age and that children in general tend to be imitative by nature:

(a) Advertisements should not promote unwholesome values and anti-social behaviour to children, for example, delinquent behaviour and disrespect to parents and elders.

(b) Advertisements targeted primarily at children, or placed in programmes likely to be heard by children, should not contain any sounds, effects or words that might result in harm to them physically, morally or psychologically.

(c) Sponsorship of children's programmes should be treated with caution. Broadcasters 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.

(d) For Current Affairs and Info-educational programmes, broadcasters should consider carefully the appropriateness of any sponsorship of these programmes, as programmes in these genres need to be balanced, factual and objective coverage. It is therefore the responsibility of the broadcaster to maintain the programme's editorial integrity, and sponsors should not influence the content of the sponsored programme.

(e) Presenters' endorsement of sponsors' products or services are not allowed in News, Current Affairs, Info-Educational and Children's programmes.

(f) The sponsor's name should not be integrated into the programme titles of News, Current Affairs, Info-educational and Children's programmes.

## **Use of Language**

25 (a) All advertisements should maintain a good standard of language. For example, the use of standard English is encouraged and Singlish as well as ungrammatical English should not be used.

(b) Advertisements can be in any of the 4 official languages in Singapore – English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil, and care must be exercised to ensure that they are appropriate for their target audience.

(c) Advertisements containing dialect are not to be broadcast unless specially approved by the Authority. However, commonly used terms such as 'Bak Kut Teh' or 'Siew Mai' may still be used as the Mandarin equivalent may not be easily understood.

(d) Advertisements should not use vulgar or crude language in their presentation.

### **Claims & Comparisons**

26 (a) Advertisements should not contain claims or comparisons that are misleading.

(b) All claims and comparisons must be capable of substantiation.

(c) Comparisons with other products/services are acceptable provided they are based on fact and use similar basis of comparison.

27 Advertisements that may lead to the employment of money in products and services where the returns are not guaranteed should contain warnings and/or disclaimers indicating the potential risks involved.

### **Use of Public Figures**

28 Depictions of and references to public figures in advertisements should not be done in a manner that may be denigrating to them.

### **Advertisements of TV Programmes, Movies and Arts/Theatrical Performances**

29 (a) Advertisements for PG-rated TV programmes, NC16 movies and M18 movies are allowed for broadcast. These should comply with the standards of the Radio Programme Code and should not be targeted at under-aged listeners. The appropriate ratings of the programme/movies should be included within the advertisements.

(b) Advertisements for cinematic movies rated R21 (Restricted 21) and Arts/Theatrical performances rated R18 (Restricted 18) should not be broadcast.

### **Advertisements resembling News**

30 (a) Particular care should be exercised when expressions and sound effects are associated with or resemble those used in news bulletins, weather reports and important announcements. 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. Their use in advertisements and programme promotions is not acceptable.

(b) A long form advertisement that publicises an event or a public function, can be mistaken for a news or information item. It should be identified as an advertisement at the beginning and at the end. If scheduled after a news bulletin, there should be a clear separation between the two.

### **Political Advertising**

31 Unless permitted by law, no advertisement may be inserted by or on behalf of any body whose objectives are wholly or mainly of a political nature, and no advertisements may be directed towards any political end.

### **Fortune Telling and Superstitious Beliefs**

32 (a) Advertisements which promote directly or indirectly, fortune-telling, geomancy, occult practices and superstitious beliefs should not be broadcast.

(b) Advertisements for products and services related to fortune-telling, geomancy and the propagation of superstitious beliefs should not be broadcast.

(c) Advertisements must not, without justifiable reason, play on fear and superstition and upset the mental and physical well-being of listeners.

### **Game and Award Shows**

33 For game and award shows or segments in which sponsored prizes, products or services may form an inherent part of the programme, references to the sponsor's provision of the prizes is allowed.

### **Death related services**

34 Advertisements for death related and undertaker services are not to be broadcast.

### **Chatline and Dating services**

35 Advertisements for chatline services and non-accredited dating services are not to be broadcast.



### **Dubious Establishments & Services**

36 Advertisements promoting establishments or services of dubious propriety which may be fronts for socially harmful, undesirable or illegal activities should not be accepted.

### **Alcoholic Drinks**

37 Advertisements for alcoholic drinks should not be targeted at young people under 18 years of age.

### **Subliminal Advertising**

38 No advertisement may include any device or means by which messages are conveyed to the minds of listeners without their being aware of what has been done.

### **Sound Effects**

39 Advertisements should not include sounds likely to cause alarm or create a safety hazard. Distracting or potentially alarming sound effects such as sirens, screeching tyres, vehicle collisions, explosions and the like must be treated cautiously. They may cause concern and be dangerous to those listening especially whilst driving.

### **Scheduling of Advertisements and Trailers**

40 Broadcasters should exercise discretion when scheduling advertisements so as to ensure their appropriateness to the target listeners and to take into account racial, religious, cultural and social sensitivities that prevail in Singapore society as well as when there is likely to be a large audience of young listeners. For example, liquor advertisements should not be placed within/alongside Malay programmes or Children's/Teen programmes, and trailers of movies with violence, horror or adult themes and their accompanying sound effects should not be placed at times when children can reasonably be expected to be listening.

### **Reference to the Sponsor within a Programme**

41 References to commercial names in acquired programmes, e.g. "XXX Top 20 Countdown" are not considered part of programme sponsorship.

### **Noise and Stridency**

42 Broadcasters should ensure that the broadcast of advertisements is not excessively noisy or strident. The audio level of advertisements must not be higher than that of programmes.

### **Legislation Affecting Radio Advertising**

43 Broadcasters should exercise due care to ensure that their advertisements do not contravene or in anyway violate any applicable laws, regulations, codes or guidelines of any kind including without limitation to the following:

- (a) Medicines Act (Cap 176)
- (b) Medicines (Medical Advertisements) Regulations
- (c) Smoking (Control of Advertisements and Sale of Tobacco) Act (Cap 309)
- (d) Common Gaming Houses Act (Cap 49)
- (e) Betting Act (Cap 21)
- (f) National Emblems (Control of Display ) Act (Cap 196)
- (g) Banking Act (Cap 19)
- (h) Finance Companies Act (Cap 108)
- (i) Securities and Futures Act (Cap 289)
- (j) Insurance Act (Cap 142)
- (k) Casino Control Act (Cap 33A)
- (l) Casino Control (Advertising) Regulations 2010

### **UNACCEPTABLE SPONSORSHIP**

#### **Unacceptable Products and Advertisers**

44 Broadcasters should not accept sponsorship from products, services and establishments that are not acceptable for advertising, e.g. tobacco products, condoms and casinos.

#### **Political and Religious Interests**

45 Sponsorship from political parties and religious groups should not be accepted.

## **Unsponsorable Programmes or Programme Segments**

46 The following programmes must not be sponsored:

- (a) **Parliamentary Programmes**  
Parliamentary programmes would include Opening of Parliament, Highlights from Parliament, Select Committee Hearings, Commission of Inquiry, etc.
- (b) **Programmes related to the elections**  
Election-related programmes include Campaign Reports and Polling Night Results.
- (c) **Ministerial Speeches, Press Conferences and Special Interviews**  
This would include the Prime Minister's National Day Message and National Day Rally, etc.
- (d) **News Programmes including flashes, bulletins, headlines, top stories, specials, and breaking news**  
Specialist news reports may be sponsored. Specialist news reports refer to factual data like traffic, weather, stock market indices, foreign exchange rates, and "softer" news items like culture, sports and travel. Such sponsored reports must be separated from the general news programme clearly, for example by programme lead-out announcements or a commercial break, so as not to give the perception that the whole news programme is sponsored.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RADIO ADVERTISING AND PROGRAMME SPONSORSHIP CODE**

This Code takes effect as from 31 March 2011 and replaces the Radio Advertising Code that took effect from 10 February 2003. MDA may from time to time revise or update the Code to maintain currency. Broadcasters are encouraged to operationalise this Code to facilitate its implementation.

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