

Censoring kids' advertising

By [Vivian Warby](#)

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Retailers, manufacturers and fast food outlets will, by mid next month, have a self regulatory policy in place when it comes to advertising their products to children.

As the number of obese and hyperactive kids grows, parents are looking to retailers, manufacturers and fast food outlets to help them steer their children towards healthier lifestyles.

A self regulatory policy that would lead to responsible advertising to children would be retailers, manufacturers and fast food outlets attempt at being responsible for what it sells to its consumers.

Nick Tselentis, legal and regulatory affairs manager of the Consumer Goods Council of South Africa, said that a special interest group consisting of up to 45 top players, ranging from retailers, to fast food outlets and local and international manufacturers and importers, had been looking at this specific issue for over a year.

The group was also in close consultation with government, who themselves have not put any such policy into place as yet.

Tselentis said that the industry did not have anything on paper to give guidelines as to what stakeholders could do in the field at the moment, and only some players were self-regulating. "We're looking at having a code of practice in place that will guide the industry when it comes to the issue of advertising to children. We're hoping that by mid-August we'll have prepared a suitable amendment to the current code, for the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) to adopt."

Recently, Kellogg's, the world's largest cereal maker agreed to raise the nutritional value of cereals and snacks it markets to children. Kellogg Company avoided a lawsuit threatened by parents and nutrition advocacy groups in America who were worried about increasing child obesity. A US study found that half the US ads for junk food, sugary cereals and soft drinks were on children's programmes - double the percentage 30 years ago.

The changes that are set to take place in the US, with regards to Kellogg's products, will also be on a global level. The Kellogg's Global Nutrient Criteria (KGNC) has now been set out with the view to address increasing concerns about marketing to children, said Sue Cloran, spokesperson for Kellogg's.

"Kellogg's is changing what and how they market to children under 12. Kellogg's will apply the KGNC to all products currently marketed to children around the world.

"Kellogg's South Africa is no different; however we have to keep in mind that local legislation (not yet in place) will

supersede these guidelines, from country to country,” said Cloran.

Kellogg International said it will not promote foods in TV, radio, print or website ads that reach audiences at least half of whom are under age 12 unless a single serving (30g) of the product meets these standards:

- No more than 200 Calories
- No more than 2g fat
- No added hydrogenated vegetable oils
- No more than 230mg sodium
- No more than 12g sugar

Worth noting is that all Kellogg's SA kids cereals, like Coco Pops, Froot Loops and Frosties, currently fall within the KGNC so Kellogg South Africa will not need to reformulate cereals or change its advertising strategy.

“As all Kellogg's kids range in South Africa currently fall within these guidelines, the criteria will only be important for Kellogg South Africa in future when it comes to any innovation – the new food will need to meet these standards,” Cloran said.

Globally, 50% of Kellogg products do not fall within these guidelines, and are under pressure to reformulate their cereals – a process that is likely to cost huge amounts of money, although no figure has been released.

Cloran said nutrition has always been a top priority for Kellogg's. “Kellogg's has proactively been practising responsible advertising for a number of years. Kellogg's is also committed to help drive transparency and consumer education on packs through the use of Guideline Daily Amounts (GDA's).”

Cloran said locally Kellogg's was continuously involved in the industry and was also involved in the Consumer Goods Council's Special Interest Group that was looking at advertising products to children.

Tony Human, Marketing Director of Bokomo, said Bokomo - who is also a big role player in the Consumer Goods Council's special interest group - has always been well aware that when it comes to marketing to children, particularly those under 12, it needed to be responsible.

“We are careful how we communicate with children, even with the healthier brands like Pronutro. For instance, we have a chocolate bar which we do not actively market to children.

“We're also part of the team drawing up a policy document with the Consumer Goods Council on this specific issue. We won't market something that will cause hyperactivity or obesity in kids,” said Human.

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