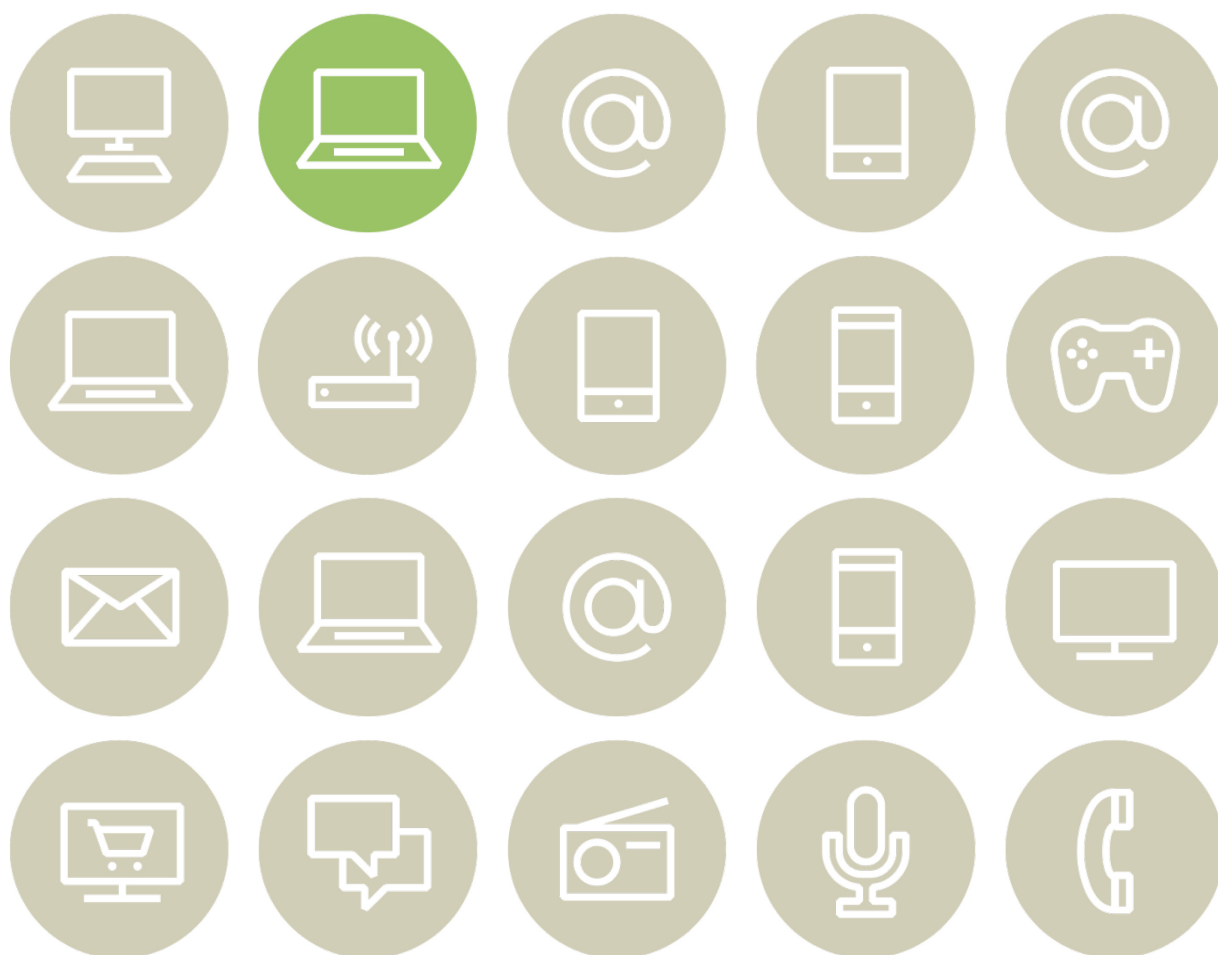


# Children and advertising on social media websites

ASA compliance survey, July 2013



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## 1. Foreword

Should we be concerned if an 11 year-old girl registers her age on a social media site as 88? Or if a 15 year-old boy pretends to be 25? Does it come as a surprise to anyone that a significant proportion of people under 16 register under false ages online?

Part of our commitment to protecting young people is ensuring we better understand how they use social media. As part of that, we commissioned a survey to find out what ads young people see and engage with online and whether those ads stick to the UK advertising rules.

This report provides a fascinating, and in some respects disconcerting, glimpse into the media consumption habits of children. It reveals that ten participants (42% of all children in our study) falsely registered themselves as aged 18 or over. As a result, they were presented with ads for age-restricted products including for gambling, alcohol, slimming aids and overtly sexual dating services – all categories that are subject to strict rules designed to prevent them from being directly targeted at children and young people.

We place a particular emphasis on making sure ads that children see aren't inappropriate or harmful, so our findings give us pause for thought. What do we do when advertisers are sticking to the rules, but children aren't?

Of course, without downplaying their importance, the findings should be put into context. The fact is that children will see ads for age-restricted products and services in other media. That's why we have rules that govern the content of ads: to make sure that when they are seen by children and young people, they don't appeal to them. Encouragingly, very few of the ads seen by the young people in our survey contained problematic content.

Our report also sits against a backdrop of wider societal concern about how to keep young people safe in an online environment when it comes to harmful sites and adult content. As part of that, the Government has brought together online companies, internet providers and search engines and tasked them with creating better online filters to help parents reduce the risk of their children accessing potentially harmful material.

There's no escaping that we live in a 24 hour, instant access, media world that has created a host of new innovative advertising techniques and opportunities. A recent report by Ofcom highlighted that almost two-thirds (62%) of 12-15 year olds now own smartphone devices – up from 41% from 2011. That is significantly higher than the UK average for adults of 50%.

In a world where young people are arguably more media savvy than adults, and with many enjoying unfettered access to the internet, they're increasingly likely to see material that should be off limits. How then do we as regulators, or indeed advertisers, parents and society, respond?

It's not straightforward. Our report shows that advertisers had acted in good faith by taking account of the registered age of social media account holders in their delivery of ads. In light of that, it doesn't seem fair to reprimand them for exposing children to their ads. But this isn't the first report that strongly suggests that a significant proportion of children are registering false details online. We need to reflect carefully on an appropriate response.

So, to start with, we'll be presenting these findings to our Council, the body that decides whether or not ads have breached the Codes, with a view to exploring whether we need to take a tighter line on age-restricted ads in social media or if further research in this area would be helpful. We're also drawing them to the attention of the Code writing body, the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), and asking whether new guidance for advertisers on targeting ads online is needed.

While we won't shy away from the regulatory challenges this report raises, there are clearly questions here for advertisers, agencies and social media owners. Collectively, they need to address whether enough is being done to prevent children, by virtue of registering false details, from having access to age-restricted content on social media sites. They need to ask themselves whether they really are doing all they reasonably can not to target children with ads for age-restricted products or services when they know that a significant chunk of the child population is exposed to those ads.

Finally, it's not just about what regulators and industry can do. As a society, we all need to consider whether we could or should be doing more to help set the boundaries in which our children will naturally explore the world around them. Parents are used to setting those boundaries in the real world, but for whatever reason, many feel unable to do so in the online world. There's clearly a conversation to be had.

**Guy Parker**

**Chief Executive**

## 2. Executive summary

**In the context of children's increasing and more developed use of the internet and persistent concerns about the commercialisation and 'adultification' of childhood, the ASA has undertaken a survey to ascertain the compliance rate for ads appearing on social media pages viewed by children.**

These ads must comply with the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (the CAP Code), which sets standards to prevent misleading, harmful and offensive advertising, and includes supplementary rules to ensure advertisers do not exploit children's vulnerabilities.

Our survey involved 24 children aged between 11 and 15, who were invited to use internet enabled tablets and laptops fitted with image-capturing, data-recording software. As a result of their social media activity, the children were presented with a total of 427 ads.

Of the 427 ads, 420, or 98.4%, complied with the CAP Code, and seven ads (1.6%) contained an obvious breach of the Code, which indicates a high rate of overall compliance.

Under the CAP Code ads for gambling, alcohol and slimming products "must not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media or the context in which they appear." In media where a marketer can accurately identify the age of the recipient of the ad, we require accurate targeting of their ads (e.g. direct mail). In media where it's not possible to identify the age of every viewer of the ad, a medium shouldn't be used if more than 25% of the viewers are under the age of 18 (e.g. magazines).

Our assessment of the ads in the survey revealed that advertisers had taken account of the *registered age* of social media account holders in their delivery of ads.

However, we discovered that all but four children involved in our survey had registered on a social media site using a false age; ten children (42%) had falsely registered as being aged 18 or over.

This meant that one or more age-restricted ads were presented to the ten children (42% of all children in our study) who were falsely registered as 18 or over. These children received at least one ad for a gambling, alcohol or slimming product to their personal social media accounts.

In line with the Code, none of those ads used creative content that appealed particularly to people aged 17 or below. In other words, the ads did not include content that, in our view, set out to engage children or resulted in the children being engaged with the advertised product.

The CAP Code states, "in assessing compliance with the Code, the ASA may take account of honest market practices and the general principle of good faith in the traders' field of activity", which means that although the ads were served to individuals under the age of 18, the advertisers had acted in good faith and not in breach of the Code.

The knowledge that many children's registered age on social media sites is higher than their actual age presents real challenges for advertisers, their agencies, social media platforms, parents, guardians, and regulators.

## 3. Background

### 3.1 Introduction

Over the past few years, advertising has become more personalised, particularly online. This makes sense: one of the main reasons people think that an advertisement is annoying or disruptive is when they think it's irrelevant. So advertisers and media have spent a significant amount of time making sure that they understand the particular people who read specific magazines, newspapers, websites or who watch particular films at the cinema.

However, the highly individualised experience of an online user poses a challenge to the regulator: how do we replicate the experience of others?

This is particularly challenging when it comes to protecting children. Even as adults, we can easily replicate a child's experience of reading a magazine and the ads they see in it: we simply buy the magazine. But how do we replicate a child's experience of social networking sites? Even if it were appropriate to set up a fake child profile, befriending other children would be completely unethical.

Met with this challenge, we decided that the best approach would be to commission a research company to recruit a cohort of children who were willing to have their social media activity recorded. The research agency then provided us with a profile of each child and recordings of their social networking activity, with personal information redacted. This allowed us to see what advertising and marketing they saw and assess whether it was compliant with the advertising rules.

### 3.2 About us

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) is the UK's independent regulator of advertising across all media. We apply the UK Advertising Codes, written by the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP), to ensure that advertising is legal, decent, honest and truthful. Our work includes looking into complaints about advertising from members of the public and from industry, and proactively monitoring compliance with the Codes.

### 3.3 What are the rules?

Advertising and marketing communications that appear in social media must comply with the UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (the CAP Code). This includes ads that appear both in paid for and non-paid for space.

The CAP Code sets standards to prevent misleading, harmful and offensive advertising, and requires advertisers to be socially responsible. In particular, there are also specific Code sections that cover products like alcohol and gambling that contain strict responsibility rules for advertising those products, including by making sure they do not target children by either their content or targeting (e.g. by not using child friendly themes and by ensuring such ads aren't placed in children's media).

There is also a dedicated children's section in the Code that contains rules to protect children. In particular, the Code includes rules to make sure advertisers do not exploit children's vulnerabilities. For example, ads must not encourage harmful emulation or

unsafe practices; make children feel unpopular or inferior; exhort children to buy or exhort them to ask parents to buy.

### 3.4 Proactive monitoring

The ASA conducts proactive surveys to identify breaches of the Advertising Codes and other trends or issues that might not be drawn to our attention by public or industry complaints.

Our surveys usually focus on a particular advertising sector. This survey is slightly different in that it focuses on a category of media (social media sites) and a category of audience (children aged between 11 and 15), rather than an advertising sector, but the objectives of the survey remain the same.

When reading this survey, it's important to note that although we produce an overall compliance rate (a percentage of ads assessed in the survey that comply with the Advertising Codes), this relates to obvious Code breaches only. It would be impractical to enter into hundreds of investigations to determine every possible breach of the Codes, but the overall intelligence we gain from conducting the survey helps to inform and target other regulatory action. For example, a low rate of compliance or a particular trend could indicate a problem that might need to be addressed by producing guidance or reconsidering rules.

### 3.5 Summary of methodology

The survey involved 24 children aged between 11 and 15 whose online activity was recorded for a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 45 minutes. The children were not directed to use particular social media sites.

The study was conducted in a “café” environment with parents present but not monitoring the children’s usage. 12 children used laptops and 12 used tablets.

Once we received the data from the researchers, for each ad we recorded the brand, advertiser, sector, product category, the site on which the ad appeared, the type of ad, the device/platform on which it was viewed, the age and gender of the participants that viewed it, the age at which the participant had registered on that specific social media site. We then judged whether the ad had obviously breached the CAP Code and, if we thought that it had, we recorded what Code rule the ad was considered to have broken.

Full details of the methodology can be found in section 6.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Overview

The primary purpose of the survey was to identify the compliance rate for all ads appearing on social media pages viewed by the children who took part in our study.

In total, the children viewed 427 ads on social media pages. 20 of the 24 participants used Facebook, which accounted for 90% of the ads assessed in our survey.

In total, they accessed five different social media websites: Facebook, Twitter, Spotify, Stardoll and YouTube.

98.4% of the 427 ads complied with the CAP Code. Although, all breaches of the Advertising Codes are unacceptable, overall this represents a high rate of compliance.

Seven ads (1.6%) breached the CAP Code (see section 4.3 below). Notably, there were no obvious breaches of the rules in the Children's section of the Code, which prevents advertisers from exploiting children's vulnerabilities.

### 4.2 Findings: age registration

Of the 24 children in our study, 20 were registered as being older than they were on at least one social media website. We were unable to verify the registered age of two of the children.

Nine children (38% of all children in our study) were, in fact, below the age at which they were permitted to register on at least one or more of the social media sites.

Ten children (42% of all children in our study) were falsely registered as being 18 or older. Of the 218 ads served to them, 24 (11%) were for products that "must not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media or the context in which they appear."

The ten children registered as being 18 or older viewed 17 ads between them for gambling products and two ads for alcohol products. Both product categories must not be advertised directly at people under the age of 18 through the selection of media. In addition, one of the two children for whom we were unable to obtain certified data about their registered age, viewed one gambling ad and one alcohol ad. Based on the other ads that child saw, it is likely he/she was registered as being over 18. None of the ads that the children viewed were in breach of any Code rules, the copy and the imagery was appropriate for the registered age of the children.

Children registered as being 18 or older viewed two ads between them for overtly sexual dating or introduction services, and children registered as being 16 or 17 viewed five of these ads. The CAP Code implicitly prohibits ads for these products to be directed at people below 16 years of age or, depending on the nature of the product, below 18 years of age. The sexually suggestive nature of both the copy and the imagery was inappropriate for the actual age of children in our survey, but suitable for their registered age.

Two children registered as being 16 and 25 respectively each viewed an ad for a slimming product, which "must neither be directed at nor contain anything that is likely to

appeal particularly to people who are under 18". This means that when it was served to a 16 year old it was in breach of the Code, but was acceptable when presented to a 25 year old.

Finally, children registered as being 18 or older viewed two ads for console games, which were clearly stipulated as being for over-18s only. The ads included violent imagery, similar to the type labelled 'minor peril' in film classification.

#### 4.3 Findings primarily relating to categories of products, including Code breaches

There were seven ads that obviously breached the CAP Code and these appeared in the following sectors: computers and telecommunications; health and beauty; holidays and travel and motoring.

##### **Charity advertising**

The ASA's Harm and Offence in Advertising research (2012) identified concern about the shocking and emotive nature of some charity ads, however none of the five charity ads identified in this survey breached the CAP Code.

##### **Computers and telecommunications**

There were 122 ads for products in this sector, making it the most prevalent sector in the survey. 90% were ads for mobile phones, games and other software, like apps. This included ads for aspirational brands of mobile phone (e.g. iPhone, Blackberry, Samsung Galaxy), which accounted for 13% of the total for the sector.

One ad for broadband was recorded as a breach for using the word 'free' when the element of the service should have been described as 'inclusive'.

##### **Dating and introduction services**

Ads for these products were viewed only by those children who were registered as being 16 or older. No ads breached the Code.

##### **Financial**

There were just ten ads for financial products. None related to debt management and only one related to credit, which was viewed by a child who was registered as being older than 18. No ads breached the Codes.

##### **Food**

Of the 42 ads for food, 13 were for food products that would be commonly understood to be high in fat, salt or sugar (HFSS)<sup>1</sup>. None of the ads were clearly targeted at children through the content of the ad and none breached the Code.

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<sup>1</sup> We did not assess the advertised products against the FSA's Nutrient Profiling Model, which is used to determine whether a food product is HFSS for the purpose of regulating television advertising.

## **Gambling and alcohol**

Ads for these products were viewed only by children in our survey who were registered as being 18 or older. None breached the Code.

## **Health and beauty, and retail**

The children viewed 35 ads for health and beauty products and services and 50 ads for retail.

We recorded four breaches from the 35 ads for health and beauty products. Two related to ads for slimming products: one unacceptably specified an amount of weight loss (e.g. 'lose 10kgs') and the other specifying a rate of weight loss that exceeded the maximum deemed acceptable for good medical and dietary practice (e.g. 'lose 5kgs / week'). One of these ads referred to a pop singer but was unlikely to appeal particularly to people aged below 18 (which would have been a breach of the Code).

Of the two other breaches, one included misleading product information and the other included unsubstantiated efficacy claims for a health aid.

Cosmetics and clothing advertising have historically been associated with sexualised, idealised or aspirational images of both men and women, and we paid close attention to the content of these ads on that basis. There were few examples that depicted sexualised or idealised images of people and none strong enough to breach the Code. Indeed, there were few ads that featured people at all, most favoured picturing simply the product. It's likely that the medium doesn't lend itself well to the detailed imagery often required for "glossy" or stylised advertisements, because most of the ad space comprises small boxes.

## **Holidays and travel**

One of the five ads that appeared for the holidays and travel sector breached the Code. A holiday ad omitted to mention that significant conditions were attached to a promotion and that extra charges would apply in order to obtain the holiday offered in the headline claim.

## **Leisure**

Ads for products falling within this sector were the next most prevalent, with 93 ads. These largely comprised ads for films, music artists, television programmes, sport and books.

There were two ads for 'over-18s only' console games stipulated as being for 'over-18s only' were targeted at children who were registered as being older than 18. No breaches were recorded in this category.

## **Motoring**

One of the eight ads for the motoring sector breached the Code. It omitted mentioning a significant financial commitment that would be required in order to obtain the advertised product.

## 5. Children's registered vs actual age: regulatory implications

### 5.1 Compliance with the CAP Code

The CAP Code states, "in assessing compliance with the Code, the ASA may take account of honest market practices and the general principle of good faith in the traders' field of activity".

Our assessment of the ads in the survey revealed that advertisers had obviously and honestly, in our view, taken account of the registered age of social media account holders (and perhaps other information that identified the likely age of an account holder) in their delivery of age-sensitive ads.

For example, ads for gambling, alcohol and slimming products must not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media, were targeted at participants who were registered as 18 or older in all but one case (for a slimming product or service).

Despite the ads largely being targeted in compliance with the Advertising Code, in actual fact, one or more of these ads were presented to the ten children who were falsely registered as 18 or over. These children each received at least one ad for a gambling, alcohol or slimming product to their personal social media accounts.

It is worth noting that none of the ads included creative content that appealed particularly to people aged under 18 and none featured anyone who was, or appeared to be, under 25. In other words, the ads did not include content that, in our view, set out to engage children or resulted in the children being engaged with the advertised product.

Had we added the 24 age-sensitive ads to the total number of ads that breached the Codes, the compliance rate would have been only 92.7%.

### 5.2 Regulatory implications

A consequence of the variance in actual and registered age is that before they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, a significant number of children will be presented with ads for products that must not be advertised directly at people under the age of 18 on their personal social media accounts.

Our survey suggests that children are commonly registered on social media sites as being older than they are, although more research is needed to ascertain the average variance between children's actual and registered ages. Knowing the extent of that variance might, for example, inform and influence a marketer's social media targeting strategy, inform the ASA's interpretation of the Code or CAP's setting of standards or guidance.

The knowledge that many children's registered age on social media sites is higher than their actual age presents real challenges for advertisers, their agencies, social media platforms, parents, guardians, CAP and the ASA. There are lots of discussions on-going about how to ensure that children are adequately protected online, mostly in the context of adult material. More effective age-verification and age-gating are often put forward as the answer to these concerns.

For example, Reg Bailey's report into the commercialisation and sexualisation of childhood, *Letting Children be Children*, stated, "current online age-verification methods offer scant control or protection ... those providing content which is age restricted, whether by law or company policy, should seek robust means of age-verification as well as making it easy for parents to block underage access". The UK Council for Child Internet Safety responded by saying it would "investigate how a person's age can be verified effectively in order to limit children's access to harmful content."

It seems reasonable that providers should put in place, as necessary, age-verification and age-gating systems that take particular account of the content that is being made available and the potential for harm arising from that content. For example, access to uniquely and overtly sexual material might, to many, warrant a comparatively strict form of age verification, which might not be proportionate or appropriate for, say, social media websites.

Working out a suitable solution for protecting children from inappropriately targeted ads for gambling or alcohol products, for example, is likely to warrant a bespoke solution. The level of protection must proportionate and take into account:

- the evidence of the type and level of harm to children
- the benefits of social media that enable and enhance the free-exchange of communication between different parties, including children and young people
- the economic benefits and interests of social media companies
- the privacy concerns of those who champion for less and not more information being made available to social media platforms

The ideal level of protection is likely to result from a combination of different factors, such as effective age-verification, ad-targeting criteria imposed by social media websites and marketers, and the oversight of and restrictions imposed by parents, guardians and regulators.

### 5.3 Next steps

We'll put our findings to ASA Council, the jury who adjudicate on complaints, with a view to exploring whether we need to re-evaluate the line we take on age-restricted ads in social media.

We'll also present the report to CAP for their response and asking whether, in its view, new guidance for advertisers on targeting ads online is needed.

As well as this, we're going to send our findings to, and start a conversation with, social media companies to ask what they think and how they might better tackle the problem of children registering under false ages on social media sites.

We will consider whether any solutions that have been mooted for other forms of online protection for children might be appropriate in an advertising regulatory context.

Lastly, we'll consider conducting further research into the extent to which children are registering false details online, particularly in relation to the average variance between children's actual and registered ages.

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Background

For this survey, it was clear that we needed to involve children in order to know what ads were being served to them on social media sites. This is because online advertising is increasingly tailored to and targeted at individuals' particular interests, which are determined largely through their online activities and submission of personal data online. Creating our own child profiles on social media sites, as well as being unethical, would have been unlikely to provide a sample of ads that children would normally see.

'Children', for the purposes of the CAP Code, are defined as below 16 years of age and it is widely reported that social media usage below the age of 11 is less common. So, we decided that the research should consider ads on social media sites seen by children aged between 11 and 15;

We contracted Actual Consumer Behaviour (ACB), a market research company to undertake the research.

### 6.2 Children taking part in the project

ACB arranged for 24 children to take part in the project, with the required parental input and consent.

We asked ACB to identify, where possible, the registered ages of the children on the social media websites they used. We sought this information because some ads were unsuitable for 11-15 year olds and more suitable for an older, even adult audience.

Of the 24 children, we learnt that nine were aged below the permitted age of registration on at least one social media site; six were falsely registered as being 16 or 17 and ten were falsely registered as being 18 or over.

With a relatively small sample size of children, we considered there was little to be gained by breaking down the 24 child participants using demographic or ethnographic information; age and gender was sufficient.

### 6.3 Platforms and devices used

We took advice from ACB as to what platforms and devices the children should use. We determined that one mobile platform (a tablet) and one static device (a laptop or desktop) would be most appropriate.

For the mobile platform, we decided not to use smartphones because advertising on social media sites, which have been adapted for smartphones, is nascent and comparatively less prolific and varied than on tablets. The tablet offered some of the maturity seen in desktop platforms' advertising models but also reflected how children are increasingly using that platform.

For the static device we used laptops, largely because advertising models rarely differ significantly, if at all, between laptop and desktop.

12 children used laptops and 12 used tablets. All 12 children in the laptop half of the survey and six from the tablet half of the survey used their own devices.

#### 6.4 Data recording

ACB installed recording software on the children's devices (and uninstalled it immediately after the research period).

For the six children who did not have their own device, ACB provided tablets with a clean internet history. The devices were issued two weeks before data collection to help the children familiarise themselves with the device and to build up an internet history and cookie usage. The two week usage helped ensure ads served using Online Behavioural Advertising (OBA) models, for example, would be likely to reflect the child's website usage accurately.

Although the participant sample size was relatively small, we considered that around 30 minutes usage from each child would generate enough ads for the survey. We had expected to record around 200 ads but we eventually recorded 427, which was more than enough for our purposes.

The study was conducted in a "café" environment with parents present but not monitoring the children's usage. The children were asked to use social media as they normally would and that activity was recorded using non-intrusive screen recording software to ensure the usage was as normal and private as possible.

Children over the age of 13 were asked specifically to use the social media websites with which they were already registered and used actively.

For children aged 11 or 12, of which there were nine, it was suggested they use the internet as they normally would, rather than specifically use social media websites, because both we and ACB were sensitive to the fact that some social media websites required a minimum registration age of 13. The children's usage was recorded for a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of 45 minutes.

#### 6.5 Processing the data

When the recording was complete, ACB redacted all personal data visible on screen to protect anonymity and passed the footage to us in the form of 24 individual files each annotated with simple information noting the gender and age of the children.

Then, for all 24 files, we individually assessed all of the ads. For each ad we recorded the brand, advertiser, sector, product category, the site on which the ad appeared, the type of ad, the device/platform on which it was viewed, the age and gender of the participants that viewed it, the age at which the participant had registered on that specific social media site, whether the ad obviously breached the CAP Code and, if it had, what Code rule the ad was deemed to have broken.

Obvious breaches are those that clearly breach a CAP Code rule. We did not embark on investigatory activity to discover other unapparent breaches of the Code. Instead, ads with no obvious breaches were recorded as compliant for the purposes of the survey. The findings of the survey should be interpreted in that context.

When we identified a breach of the CAP Code, we told the advertiser of its obligation to comply with the CAP Code and sought an assurance of future compliance. We also advised them to consult the CAP Copy Advice team for guidance on future marketing communications.

## 6.6 Social media sites

There are several broad and fluid definitions of what constitutes a social media website. Most state that such a website is a means of interaction between people in an online community, the website facilitating experience, ideas, opinion or information. Some websites, like Facebook and Twitter, fit those definitions more obviously than others.

We determined that participants had to be “signed-in” to websites before they could be classified as social media. Participants using, for example, Google or YouTube without being signed in were deemed to be using them as a search tool rather than as a social media website.

## 6.7 What is an advertisement?

When assessing marketing on companies’ own websites, which includes social media pages over which the companies have control, we paid particular attention to the content and context in which the marketing material appeared.

This was necessary in order to determine if the material was an ad that fell within our remit. If the material was directly connected with the supply or transfer of goods, services, opportunities and gifts, or which consisted of direct solicitations of donations as part of the website owner’s own fund-raising activities, then it was an advertisement for the purposes of the Code.

### **CAP Code Scope**

“Advertisements and other marketing communications by or from companies, organisations or sole traders ... in other non-paid-for space online under their control, that are directly connected with the supply or transfer of goods, services, opportunities and gifts, or which consist of direct solicitations of donations as part of their own fund-raising activities.”

## 7. Data tables

Fig 7.1: Number of ads appearing on each social media site

| Social Media Site | Total Ads  |
|-------------------|------------|
| Facebook          | 385        |
| YouTube           | 20         |
| Stardoll          | 16         |
| Spotify           | 4          |
| Twitter           | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>427</b> |

Fig 7.2: Ads broken down by type and age targeting

| Ad Type            | Total Ads  | Over 18    |
|--------------------|------------|------------|
| Sponsored/Promoted | 373        | 197        |
| Display            | 34         | 6          |
| In-App             | 3          | 3          |
| Wall Post          | 3          | 1          |
| Sponsored App      | 9          | 9          |
| Sponsored Story    | 5          | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>427</b> | <b>218</b> |

Fig 7.3: Ads broken down by sector and age targeting

| Sector                   | Total Ads  | Over 18    |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| Business                 | 6          | 5          |
| Computers & Telecoms     | 122        | 69         |
| Education                | 14         | 11         |
| Financial                | 10         | 8          |
| Food & Drink             | 42         | 21         |
| Health & Beauty          | 35         | 12         |
| Holidays & Travel        | 5          | 4          |
| Household                | 12         | 9          |
| Industrial & Engineering | 2          | 1          |
| Legal                    | 1          | 0          |
| Leisure                  | 93         | 43         |
| Motoring                 | 8          | 6          |
| Non-commercial           | 7          | 6          |
| Property                 | 2          | 1          |
| Publishing               | 1          | 1          |
| Retail                   | 49         | 18         |
| Unknown                  | 17         | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>427</b> | <b>218</b> |

**Fig 7.4: Ads broken down by product and age targeting**

| Product         | Total Ads | Over 18 |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| Accessories     | 3         | 1       |
| Advertising     | 1         | 1       |
| Alcohol         | 3         | 2       |
| Art             | 1         | 1       |
| Baby Foods      | 1         | -       |
| Banking         | 1         | 1       |
| Bicycles        | 1         | 1       |
| Books           | 4         | 2       |
| Broadband       | 4         | 4       |
| Camera          | 2         | 1       |
| Car Maintenance | 2         | 1       |
| Carpets         | 1         | 1       |
| Cars            | 6         | 5       |
| Charity         | 5         | 5       |
| Childcare       | 1         | 1       |
| Clothing        | 9         | 5       |
| Computers       | 6         | 4       |
| Cosmetics       | 15        | 6       |
| Credit Cards    | 4         | 3       |
| Cruises         | 1         | 1       |
| Dancing Tuition | 1         | -       |
| Deodorant       | 2         | 1       |
| Drink (non alc) | 7         | 2       |
| Driving Tuition | 1         | 1       |
| Education       | 14        | 10      |
| Employment      | 1         | -       |
| Entertainment   | 39        | 10      |
| Estate Agents   | 2         | 1       |
| Fencing         | 2         | 1       |
| Finance         | 2         | 1       |
| Food            | 31        | 17      |
| Footwear        | 25        | 4       |
| Fuel            | 1         | 1       |
| Funerals        | 1         | 1       |
| Furniture       | 1         | 1       |
| Gambling        | 18        | 16      |
| Games           | 34        | 23      |
| Garages         | 1         | 1       |
| Gas             | 1         | 1       |
| Hair Care       | 11        | 4       |
| Health          | 3         | 1       |
| Holidays        | 1         | 1       |
| Hotels          | 1         | 1       |
| House Fitting   | 1         | 1       |
| Insurance       | 1         | 1       |
| Investment      | 1         | -       |

|                   |            |            |
|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Kitchen           | 1          | -          |
| Knitting          | 1          | 1          |
| Loans             | 1          | 1          |
| Luggage           | 1          | -          |
| Mobile Phones     | 32         | 17         |
| Net               | 5          | 1          |
| Office Equipment  | 1          | -          |
| Perfume           | 1          | -          |
| Personal Services | 7          | 2          |
| Pest Control      | 2          | -          |
| Pets              | 2          | 2          |
| Photography       | 1          | 1          |
| Property          | 2          | 2          |
| Publications      | 2          | 1          |
| Religion          | 1          | 1          |
| Roofing           | 1          | 1          |
| Sex Aids          | 1          | 0          |
| Shopping          | 1          | 1          |
| Shopping Centres  | 3          | 0          |
| Slimming          | 2          | 1          |
| Software          | 25         | 15         |
| Solicitors        | 1          | -          |
| Sports            | 3          | 2          |
| Sports Equipment  | 2          | 2          |
| Stonemasons       | 1          | 1          |
| Storage           | 2          | 1          |
| Telecoms          | 1          | 0          |
| Tickets           | 3          | 1          |
| Tourist Boards    | 2          | -          |
| Toys              | 1          | 0          |
| Travel            | 1          | 1          |
| TV                | 24         | 11         |
| Waste Disposal    | 1          | -          |
| Windows           | 1          | 1          |
| Unknown           | 18         | 2          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>427</b> | <b>218</b> |

## 8. Relevant Code rules

The ads in the survey were assessed against the general Code rules and the rules that specifically relate to children. The rules relating to children are reproduced below, but the Code can be accessed in full at [www.cap.org.uk](http://www.cap.org.uk).

### Section 4: Harm and offence

**4.5** Marketing communications, especially those addressed to or depicting a child, must not condone or encourage an unsafe practice (see [Section 5: Children](#)).

### Section 5: Children

**5.1** Marketing communications addressed to, targeted directly at or featuring children must contain nothing that is likely to result in their physical, mental or moral harm:

**5.1.1** Children must not be encouraged to enter strange places or talk to strangers

**5.1.2** Children must not be shown in hazardous situations or behaving dangerously except to promote safety. Children must not be shown unattended in street scenes unless they are old enough to take responsibility for their own safety.

**5.1.3** Children must not be shown using or in close proximity to dangerous substances or equipment without direct adult supervision

**5.1.4** Children must not be encouraged to copy practices that might be unsafe for a child

**5.1.5** Distance selling marketers must take care when using youth media not to promote products that are unsuitable for children.

**5.2** Marketing communications addressed to, targeted directly at or featuring children must not exploit their credulity, loyalty, vulnerability or lack of experience:

**5.2.1** Children must not be made to feel inferior or unpopular for not buying the advertised product

**5.2.2** Children must not be made to feel that they are lacking in courage, duty or loyalty if they do not buy or do not encourage others to buy a product

**5.2.3** It must be made easy for children to judge the size, characteristics and performance of advertised products and to distinguish between real-life situations and fantasy

**5.2.4** Adult permission must be obtained before children are committed to buying complex or costly products

**5.3** Marketing communications addressed to or targeted directly at children:

**5.3.1** must not exaggerate what is attainable by an ordinary child using the product being marketed

**5.3.2** must not exploit children's susceptibility to charitable appeals and must explain the extent to which their participation will help in any charity-linked promotions

**5.4** Marketing communications addressed to or targeted directly at children:

**5.4.1** must not actively encourage children to make a nuisance of themselves to parents or others and must not undermine parental authority

**5.4.2** must not include a direct exhortation to children to buy an advertised product or persuade their parents or other adults to buy an advertised product for them.

**5.5** Marketing communications that contain a direct exhortation to buy a product via a direct-response mechanism must not be directly targeted at children. For a definition of "direct-response mechanism", see [Section 9: Distance Selling](#).

**5.6** Promotions addressed to or targeted directly at children:

**5.6.1** must make clear that adult permission is required if a prize or an incentive might cause conflict between a child's desire and a parent's, or other adult's, authority

**5.6.2** must contain a prominent closing date if applicable (see rule 8.17.4)

**5.6.3** must not exaggerate the value of a prize or the chances of winning it.

**5.7** Promotions that require a purchase to participate and include a direct exhortation to make a purchase must not be addressed to or targeted at children. See [Section 8: Sales Promotions](#).

## Section 8: Sales promotions

**8.3** Promoters must do everything reasonable to ensure that their promotions, including product samples, are safe and cause no harm to consumers or their property. Literature accompanying promotional items must give any necessary warnings and safety advice.

**8.4** Alcoholic drinks must not feature in promotions directed at people under 18. Alcohol must not be available on promotion to anyone under 18.

**8.8** Special care must be taken with promotions addressed to children or if products or items intended for adults might fall into the hands of children. (See Section 5: Children)

**8.33.9** Must not directly encourage children to buy, or exhort children to persuade an adult to buy for them, a product that promotes charitable purposes.

## Section 10: Database practice

**10.15** Marketers must not knowingly collect from children under 12 personal information about those children for marketing purposes without first obtaining the consent of the child's parent or guardian.

**10.16** Marketers must not knowingly collect personal information about other people from children under 16 unless that information is the minimum required to make a recommendation for a product, is not used for a significantly different purpose from that originally consented to, and the marketer can demonstrate that the collection of that information was suitable for the age group targeted.

Data about third parties collected from children must not be kept for longer than necessary

### Section 13: Weight control and slimming

**13.3** Marketing communications for any weight-reduction regime or establishment must neither be directed at nor contain anything that is likely to appeal particularly to people who are under 18 or those for whom weight reduction would produce a potentially harmful body weight (BMI of less than 18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). Those marketing communications must not suggest that being underweight is desirable or acceptable.

### Section 15: Food, food supplements and associated health or nutrition claims

**15.11** Marketing communications must not condone or encourage poor nutritional habits or an unhealthy lifestyle in children.

**15.12** Marketing communications must not disparage good dietary practice or the selection of options, such as fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, that accepted dietary opinion recommends should form part of the average diet.

**15.13** Marketing communications featuring a promotional offer must be prepared with a due sense of responsibility.

**15.14** Except those for fresh fruit and fresh vegetables, food product advertisements that are targeted through their content directly at pre-school or primary school children must not include a promotional offer.

Additionally, for children under 16:

**15.14.1** Except those for fresh fruit or fresh vegetables, marketing communications must not seem to encourage children to eat or drink a product only to take advantage of a promotional offer: the product should be offered on its merits, with the offer as an added incentive. Marketing communications featuring a promotional offer must ensure a significant presence for the product.

**15.14.2** Marketing communications featuring a promotional offer linked to a food product of interest to children must avoid creating a sense of urgency or encouraging the purchase of an excessive quantity for irresponsible consumption.

**15.14.3** Marketing communications must not encourage children to eat more than they otherwise would.

**15.14.4** Marketing communications for collection-based promotions must not seem to urge children or their parents to buy excessive quantities of food.

**15.15** Licensed characters and celebrities popular with children must be used with a due sense of responsibility. Except those for fresh fruit or fresh vegetables, food

advertisements that are targeted directly at pre-school or primary school children through their content must not include licensed characters or celebrities popular with children.

For the avoidance of doubt, that prohibition applies to food or drink advertisements only. The prohibition does not apply to advertiser-created equity brand characters (puppets, persons or characters), which may be used by advertisers to sell the products they were designed to sell.

Licensed characters and celebrities popular with children may present factual and relevant generic statements about nutrition, safety, education or similar.

**15.16** Although children might be expected to exercise some preference over the food they eat or drink, marketing communications must be prepared with a due sense of responsibility and must not directly advise or ask children to buy or to ask their parents or other adults to make enquiries or purchases for them. (see rule 5.4.2).

**15.16.1** Marketing communications must neither try to sell to children by directly appealing to emotions such as pity, fear or self-confidence nor suggest that having the advertised product somehow confers superiority; for example, making a child more confident, clever, popular or successful.

**15.16.2** Marketing communications addressed to children must not urge children to buy or persuade others to buy and must avoid high-pressure or hard-sell techniques. Nothing must suggest that children could be bullied, cajoled or otherwise put under pressure to acquire the advertised item.

**15.16.3** Products or prices must not be presented in marketing communications in a way that suggests children or their families can easily afford them.

**15.17** Marketing communications must not give a misleading impression of the nutritional or health benefit of the product as a whole. Claims referring to children's development and health are acceptable if authorised by the European Commission.

## Section 16: Gambling

**16.1** Marketing communications for gambling must be socially responsible, with particular regard to the need to protect children, young persons and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited.

**16.3.2** Marketing communications must not exploit the susceptibilities, aspirations, credulity, inexperience or lack of knowledge of children, young persons or other vulnerable persons

**16.3.12** Marketing communications must not be likely to be of particular appeal to children or young persons, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture

**16.3.13** Marketing communications must not be directed at those aged below 18 years (or 16 years for football pools, equal-chance gaming [under a prize gaming permit or at a licensed family entertainment centre], prize gaming (at a non-licensed family entertainment centre or at a travelling fair) or Category D gaming machines) through the selection of media or context in which they appear

**16.3.14** Marketing communications must not include a child or a young person. No-one who is, or seems to be, under 25 years old may be featured gambling or playing a significant role. No-one may behave in an adolescent, juvenile or loutish way

**16.4** Marketing communications for family entertainment centres, travelling fairs, horse racecourses and dog race tracks, and for non-gambling leisure facilities that incidentally refer to separate gambling facilities, for example, as part of a list of facilities on a cruise ship, may include children or young persons provided they are accompanied by an adult and are socialising responsibly in areas that the Gambling Act 2005 does not restrict by age.

## Section 17: Lotteries

**17.12** Marketing communications for lotteries must not exploit the susceptibilities, aspirations, credulity, inexperience or lack of knowledge of children, young persons or other vulnerable persons.

**17.13** Marketing communications for lotteries must not be likely to be of particular appeal to children or young persons, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture.

**17.14** Marketing communications for lotteries should not be directed at those aged under 16 years through the selection of media or context in which they appear.

**17.15** Marketing communications for a lottery product may include children or young persons. No-one who is, or seems to be, under 25 years old may be featured gambling or playing a significant role.

**17.16** Marketing communications that exclusively feature the good causes that benefit from a lottery and include no explicit encouragement to buy a lottery product may include children or young persons in a significant role.

## Section 18: Alcohol

**18.14** Marketing communications must not be likely to appeal particularly to people under 18, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture. They should not feature or portray real or fictitious characters who are likely to appeal particularly to people under 18 in a way that might encourage the young to drink. People shown drinking or playing a significant role (see rule 18.16) should not be shown behaving in an adolescent or juvenile manner.

**18.15** Marketing communications must not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media or the context in which they appear. No medium should be used to advertise alcoholic drinks if more than 25% of its audience is under 18 years of age.

## Section 21: Tobacco, rolling papers and filters

**21.5** Marketing communications for rolling papers or filters must not be targeted at, or be likely to appeal to, people under 18. Anyone depicted in a marketing communication for rolling papers or filters must be, and be seen to be, over 25. No medium may be used to advertise rolling papers or filters if more than 25% of its audience is or is likely to be males under 18 years of age or females under 24 years of age. No direct marketing

communication for rolling papers or filters may be distributed to males under 18 years of age or females under 24 years of age.

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