

## Product censorship and the impact on retail brands

Now more than ever there is a focus on what products and services should and should not be advertised to the masses. On a daily basis we are bombarded by thousands of promotional messages, brand names and strap lines that on a subconscious level can shape our buying patterns and brand associations from birth. The young are a key demographic many advertisers target as they after all will be the future and if a child has a positive brand association at a young age it is likely to remain positive throughout the rest of their lives.

With this in mind, the government have been placing restrictions on the types of advertising that can be seen on TV and in stores that can affect not only the young, but the entire population. For example, in a bid to reduce obesity rates in the country, fast food advertising has been banned from television during prime time hours that would likely be seen by the hundreds of thousands of young children throughout the UK.

However, not only has the fast food industry been hit, but cigarette advertisements in print mediums were banned as long ago as 2005 and with talks of cigarette displays being banned in stores across the country, the tobacco industry has perhaps just received another nail in the coffin - the biggest since the rise in the legal age for smoking back in October 2007.

The alcohol industry has also been hit hard with recent calls for a complete ban on the advertising of alcoholic drinks on the TV in order to help curb the sharp rise in binge drinking. In a bid to remain ethical and become more socially responsible for the products they sell, the UK's leading suppliers of alcoholic drinks have teamed up with the government and the Portman group to promote responsible drinking with a mixture of shocking "don't do drunk" and "drink responsibly" campaigns across the cinema and television mediums.

Although these industries have been hit hard by these regulations, like any good business, they are adapting and changing by using other channels to advertise through. The likes of McDonald's have advertised heavily online within recent years by promoting a healthier menu and their own nutrition drive, which informs customers about the nutritional value of their food; countering the criticism from various obesity groups and one of their biggest opponents, the British Heart Foundation. This drive has proved successful for the fast food chain, as advertising of their healthier snack range on the "Kids Zone" of their website has gone down well with parents and health activists alike.

With tobacco products being placed below the shop counters, the traditional wall mounted [shop fittings](#) behind the kiosks will be no more and a more portable display will need to be introduced that can be brought out from below the counter, allowing staff easy access to the products on sale. Several companies have already addressed the requirement for alternative shop fittings and storage solutions in order to help retailers make the transition. However, although shops have been affected, international online tobacco stores may see a rise in demand as the industry develops more of an online presence to make up for any potential lost sales through retailers.

Although measures have been taken to help promote healthier brand associations for the next generation of spenders, there will always be something out there that needs censorship. Advertisement censorship can dramatically impact on certain industries, but as long as businesses can adapt and be imaginative with their point of sale material and target customers through new and emerging channels, they will be able to combat these challenges.

## About the Author

Daniel Collins writes on a number of topics on behalf of a digital marketing agency and a variety of clients. As such, this article is to be considered a professional piece with business interests in mind.

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