[GB] Simpler And Clearer Approach Announced to TV Sponsorship

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Stefaan Verhulst
PCMLP University of Oxford

A simpler and clearer regulatory approach to sponsor credits is proposed in the Independent Television Commission's (ITC) review of its Sponsorship Code published on the 11th April. The ITC first published a Code of Programme Sponsorship in 1991. This followed the Broadcasting Act 1990, which made reference to sponsorship and provided for sponsored programmes on all ITC licensed services, including ITV and Channel 4. Revised editions of the Code were published in January 1994 and spring 1997. Further changes were made to the current Code (notably the extension of masthead to terrestrial television), and it was re-published in Autumn 1998.

The review tries to address two underlying problems that have arisen. One is that some of the rules the ITC has developed (e.g. on sponsor credits) have enmeshed the ITC in a very fine degree of detail. A second is that, despite the detail in some of its rules, the Code leaves a lot of room for interpretation. These factors lead licensees to seek greater pre-transmission advice than is appropriate for a "light touch" regulator to provide. This situation was unsatisfactory for both the ITC and its staff, as well as licensees, potential sponsors and programme makers. An important aim of the Code review process will therefore be to reduce considerably the extent to which licensees feel they need to seek detailed advice from ITC staff before transmission.

A further aim of the revision will be to simplify and rearrange the Code in a more logical and user-friendly fashion. In particular, it will seek to separate those rules that apply only to sponsored programmes (restricted programmes, sponsor credits etc) (Part A of the Draft Code) from those that are concerned more generally with commercial involvement in programmes (advertiser references in competitions, product placement, coverage of events etc) (Part B of the Draft Code). Although both parts will continue to be published within one document, Part A will be the Code of Programme Sponsorship and Part B the Rules Concerning Advertiser References Within Programmes. The ITC is seeking comments on all aspects of the new draft Code. The current (Autumn 1998) Code remains in force until such time as the ITC publishes a final revised Code.

Sponsorship Code.

http://www.itc.org.uk/divisions/ad_spons/sponsor_rules/index.asp?section=divisions

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