[FI] Recommendations on Food Advertising

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The Finnish Consumer Agency, the Consumer Ombudsman and the National Public Health Institute have drafted recommendations as a guide for advertisers when marketing foodstuffs to children. Such recommendations are deemed necessary to counter the spread of obesity in children and are based on several reviews which found that the contents and volume of advertising contribute to influencing consumption habits especially where children and adolescents are concerned. Advertising of foodstuffs aimed at children was found to consist mainly of messages associating sugary cereals, soft drinks, sweets, potato crisps and hamburgers with children's heroes and cartoon characters, fun, free gifts of toys and competition.

The recommendations contain a number of suggestions as to what kind of activities and techniques can be considered as good advertising practice, how to advertise without misleading consumers since: "marketing that contains even correct information can be misleading if information that is important from the perspective of the totality is not made available to consumers or is presented unclearly" and the means of marketing. In this last section of concrete guidelines, the importance of recognisability of advertising is stressed and it is suggested internet advertising in particular should be used with caution: children are quite unable to distinguish between marketing and other information and the age at which a child understands advertising to be a selling technique is eight years, so the target group's age will be taken into consideration when assessing recognisability in an individual case.

"Children and Foodstuffs Marketing", Recommendations for advertisers, Finnish Consumer Agency and Consumer Ombudsman together with the National Public Health Institute, 12 October 2005

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