

ASA monthly insights June 2025: Four rulings you need to know about

30 June 2025  Katharine Mason

Our [advertising and marketing](#) team read the Advertising Standard Authority's (ASA) rulings every week and each month select the ones we think you need to know about and of course, one for fun.

If there's a theme running through these four rulings it's a reminder to take a step back and consider the wider picture: What other rules might apply, if alternative interpretations of a claim or approach might be taken and whether you're prepared to defend them.

Sector specific rules are also sector neutral

The UK Code of Non-broadcast Advertising and Direct & Promotional Marketing (CAP Code) and The UK Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code) both include sector specific rules which must be complied with, regardless of what product the ad is promoting (the classic example is breaching the alcohol rules in an ad for something else entirely).

A broadcast TV and video-on-demand ad for [Twix was ruled to breach the Ad Codes](#), not because of anything about the Twix itself, but because it condoned or encouraged irresponsible driving.

The ad had one man apparently driving two cars, and while the ASA accepted there were clearly some fantastical elements, such as one car driving with another car on top of it, it considered other elements were realistic, including a car chase and apparent handbrake turn. These elements would be dangerous if emulated in real life and would breach the Highway Code so were not compliant with the motoring sections of the Ad Codes.

The intended interpretation isn't the only interpretation

Gambling ads cannot be directly targeted at people under 18. If the medium used cannot fully exclude under 18s other content rules need to be applied. Specifically, the content of gambling ads cannot be of strong appeal to under 18s. In this case the advertisements were shown on broadcast television which meant that under 18s could potentially see the ads and therefore the rule against strong appeal to under 18s would apply.

The advertiser relied on the fact that its rewards programme "Ladbucks" tokens could only be redeemed by logged-in, verified over-18 consumers and explained its position that the depiction of tokens and their name would not have strong appeal to under 18s.

The ASA took into account CAP guidance that marketers should exercise particular caution when depicting product features similar to recognisable video games, online games popular among under-18s, or common features of such games in general.

The guidance also notes that content linked to activities that are very popular or common among younger people (in terms of their direct participation and viewing) is at risk of being of strong appeal to under-18s.

The [ASA did a detailed investigation](#) of the advertiser's "Ladbucks" tokens, including:

- cross-referencing with video games (Roblox and Fortnite, and their in-game currencies Robux and V-bucks);
- gathering data from the statutory regulator Ofcom on media use and attitudes, and;
- information from the Academy of Animated Arts which broke down the age ranges of active users.

Taking everything all into account, the ASA concluded the name “Ladbucks”, when considered alongside the imagery and the application of the coin in the ads, was depicted in a manner which was similar to features in video games popular with children. The term was likely to be of strong appeal to under-18s and breached the code.

Edgy approaches can go too far

A Japanese footwear brand which intended to reference Japanese subcultures, biotech aesthetics, and video game references, using surreal and tongue-in-cheek references to pills and syringes to symbolise transformation and synthetic enhancement, was ruled to breach the CAP Code.

The ASA considered that the subject line of an email ad stating, “take two and call us in the morning”, which included pill emojis, referenced medical dosage instructions, and the visuals and copy within the email linked the products to drug culture and use.

It ruled that the ad trivialised drug use and glamorised the idea of addictive behaviour as an appealing or stylish trait, and condoning drug use was irresponsible and likely cause serious and widespread offence.

Position taken on “nutraceutical”

Although ASA rulings tend to be against the advertiser not the influencer, this ruling highlights the need for influencers to look into claims a company makes before entering into a commercial relationship with them.

Health claims can only be made for a food supplement if they are listed as authorised on the Great Britain nutrition and health claims register, and food supplements cannot make claims that they will prevent, treat or cure human disease.

It's worth noting that 'disease' has a much wider meaning in law than day to day parlance. Medicinal claims whether direct, implied or by presentation can only be made for licensed medicines.

After investigating various claims for a saffron food supplement, the ASA ruled that social media ads breached the CAP Code by making implied claims that saffron supplements could treat ADHD, unauthorised health claims in relation to a food (“helping you stay strong [...] and energised every day”).

Interestingly, the ASA also considered the use of “nutraceutical”, which is not a legally defined term. The ASA ruled that a discussion in one of the ads about the use of “nutraceuticals” instead of, or alongside, pharmaceutical medications would be understood by viewers to relate to “nutraceuticals” use as a treatment for conditions including ADHD. Context is always key but this ruling shows that the term “nutraceutical” carries risk.

Lastly, the ASA ruled that this irresponsibly encouraged consumers to stop taking medically-prescribed treatments for ADHD. It was particularly concerned that the ad appeared to target parents whose children were taking medically-prescribed treatment.

And finally, one ruling for fun: A case of word play

A complaint was made to the ASA about The Guardian's use of the phrase “For facts' sake” in a banner ad on its website explaining the importance of fact-checked journalism. The complainant was concerned the ad was offensive because it alluded to an expletive, which could be seen by children.

The ASA considered data from The Guardian that the vast majority of Guardian readers were adults (96.7%) and noted that, while free, the website had to be actively sought out. The ASA also took into account the fact that the newspaper's editorial policy was not to use asterisks or to obscure expletives in other ways.

The ad featuring “For facts' sake” had run since 2021 and in the same period the full expletive had been in editorial copy 2,815 times. The ASA did not uphold the complaint and ruled that the ad was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence and had not been irresponsibly targeted. Please be aware that the ASA ruling itself includes the relevant expletive without redaction.

Contact



Katharine Mason
Principal Associate

katharine.mason@brownejacobson.com

+44 (0)330 045 1382

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