



# Gender Neutral Marketing Guidance Note:

Children's Toys [2015]



## Background

Although gender equality is an issue commonly raised in the public discourse, calls for the adoption of gender neutral advertising and marketing standards, particularly with respect to children's toys, have received considerable media and social activist attention, both locally and abroad, in recent times. This note documents Massmart's position regarding gender neutral marketing and advertising in our digital/print media and stores.

## Context

The categorisation of children's toys on the basis of gender, represents a common and long running practice that has been employed by retailers and toy manufactures since as far back as the early 1950's. However, with the passage of time the extent to which toys have been differentiated on the basis of perceived gender appeal has become increasingly pronounced. In recent times, this has led to concerns regarding the potential negative consequences posed by this form of product differentiation, particularly the role that it plays in reinforcing largely invalid gender stereotypes and unnecessarily restricting the types of play activities in which children of different sexes can engage. A number of organisations including the UK based NGO, Let Toys be Toys have initiated gender neutral advocacy campaigns which have, to a large extent, targeted retailers in an effort to promote the adoption of more gender neutral marketing strategies. In response to this pressure, retailers including among others Target, Marks and Spencer's and Tesco have made commitments to adopt marketing policies which reflect a more gender neutral approach to the sale of children's toys.

## Walmart Position

Although Walmart has not publically communicated its position on gender neutral marketing and children's toys, they typically do not use a gender focused marketing strategy-opting instead to emphasise a category specific approach.

## Massmart's position

Massmart is committed to marketing children's products in a fully inclusive manner that reinforces gender equality and equal access. In so doing, Massmart will avoid using gender as the basis for differentiating children's toys and associated merchandise.

## Guidelines

To give effect to Massmart position on gender neutral marketing, Massmart will, subject to any additional input from divisional Marketing Directors, implement the following guidelines:

1. Restrict the application of gender descriptors to instances that are consistent with customer shopping behaviour, specifically for web usage and store directional signage;
2. Optimise the use of age descriptors in place of gender descriptors where feasible in toy advertising, promotional and point of sale materials;



3. Remove gender based descriptors, specifically reference to “Boys Toys” and “Girls Toys” from advertising promotional and point of sale materials; and
4. Avoid the use of gender based imagery and designs on primary packaging in Massmart’s private label toy ranges, particularly the use of images showing children of different sexes playing with particular toys
5. Discontinue the use of gender-stereotypical background colours, specifically pink and blue, on toy advertising, promotional and point of sale spreads.

## Roles and Responsibilities

Person	Responsibility
Divisional Marketing Directors	Responsible for overseeing the adoption of the marketing guidelines contained in the Guidance Note
Private Label Buyers and Packaging designers	Responsible for specifying gender neutral primary packaging imagery and designs