



Singapore Penalizes Vogue Magazine for Promoting Non-traditional Families

Singapore authorities have issued a stern warning to fashion magazine *Vogue Singapore* and shortened the magazine's permit after it repeatedly violated content guidelines in the island nation of around 5.5 million residents.

A spokesman for Singapore's Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI) revealed that authorities have effectively revoked *Vogue Singapore's* current one-year permit from Thursday. In response, *Vogue Singapore* reapplied for a permit, with MCI issuing the magazine a six-month permit in response.



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Singapore

A permit is needed to publish and distribute magazines in Singapore.

"MCI has issued *Vogue Singapore* a stern warning and shortened the permit for *Vogue Singapore* from one year to six months, as it had breached the content guidelines for local lifestyle magazines on four occasions within the past two years, for nudity and content that promoted non-traditional families," said the spokesman.

Moreover, the spokesman elaborated that the content guidelines laid out by the Singapore authorities have not changed during the time frame of *Vogue Singapore's* violations. Hence, *Vogue Singapore* has to adhere to these guidelines as part of its permit conditions to operate in Singapore. These conditions include not challenging existing social norms.

The government's action denouncing *Vogue Singapore's* published articles is a result of LGBTQ+ articles published by the magazine in recent months on LGBTQ topics. Furthermore, the magazine featured interviews with prominent Singaporean progressive activists and promoted indecent attire.

The last time authorities shortened a permit was when Singapore arts magazine *Art Republik* gravely violated content guidelines twice by publishing religiously insensitive and denigrating content in 2014, according to the MCI spokesman.

She mentioned two earlier cases of content guidelines violations, that of women's magazine *Cleo* in 2008 and men's magazine Singapore *FHM* in 1998. These magazines were recalcitrant in committing recurring violations of guidelines, by publishing content promoting sex, nudity, promiscuity, and a permissive lifestyle.

Earlier in August 2022, following an announcement by Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on an impending [repeal of Singapore's sodomy law](#), the MCI stated that government policies on media content will remain unchanged. LGBTQ+ media content will continue to necessitate higher age ratings, the ministry added.

MCI stated,



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on October 19, 2022

MCI and the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) regulate media content to protect younger audiences from age-inappropriate content, and at the same time enable mature audiences to make informed choices over a diverse range of content. Media content with higher reach and impact is subject to more stringent requirements. To understand the community's views, IMDA regularly consults its advisory committees, made up of members of the public from all walks of life, on specific titles as well as content guidelines and regulations. Our content regulatory approach has to be sensitive to societal norms and values. We will continue to take reference from prevailing norms. LGBT media content will continue to warrant higher age ratings.

Besides, Lawrence Wong, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP), previously stated,

Well, let me be very clear. The government will continue to uphold our family-centered policies. We are fully committed to that, and we will continue to uphold marriage as defined as between man and woman. The PM himself said this very clearly in his speech — the PAP government will not change the current definition of marriage. So this will not change, this will not happen under the watch of the current prime minister, and it will not happen under my watch — if the PAP were to win the next General Election.

Unveiled two years ago with a website and a monthly print magazine, *Vogue Singapore* presently has a print circulation of 25,000, based on figures from publisher Conde Nast.

A look at the *Vogue Singapore* website reveals the magazine's goal to produce "thought-provoking content to drive change for good."

When contacted by *The Straits Times*, Singapore's national newspaper, *Vogue Singapore* did not instantly reply to a request for comment. The U.S. fashion magazine's Singapore publisher, Media Publishares Pte. Ltd., also failed to respond to requests for comment.

Singapore has a record of disapproving of promiscuous content, on the pretext that such permissive content undermines traditional Asian values of family, morality, and gender. Yet compared to some of its neighboring countries such as Malaysia with a higher conservative Muslim population, Singapore has been relatively open in terms of permitting content that challenges prevailing societal and gender norms.

In June 2022, the Disney-Pixar animated film *Lightyear*, which was prohibited in several countries including Malaysia over a same-sex kiss scene, was [screened in Singapore with an NC16 rating](#). This rating means that viewers must be at least 16 years of age to be eligible to watch the film in the theaters.

Singapore's IMDA had said then that the *Lightyear* film, which portrays a female lead character and her female partner starting a family and sharing a kiss, is the first commercial children's animation to showcase explicit homosexual depictions. The movie thus requires a higher rating, IMDA said.



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