Alcohol Advertising: What is the code?

The Advertiser Code of Ethics

Section 2 of the Australian Association of NationalAdvertisers (AANA) Advertiser Code of Ethics, which covers advertising across all product categories, covers issues related to taste and decency. For example, it says that advertisements:

- won’t discriminate against or vilify a person or section of the community on account of race, ethnicity, nationality, sex, age, sexual preference, religion, disability or political belief
- won’t present or portray unnecessary violence
- won’t use offensive levels of sex or nudity
- won’t use strong or obscene language

The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code

The ABAC Code covers alcohol-specific advertising, focusing on issues like encouraging excessive drinking; associating alcohol with sex and with success; and associating alcohol with driving and dangerous activity. The Code states that advertisements for alcohol beverages must not:

- encourage excessive consumption or abuse of alcohol, under-age drinking, or offensive behaviour, or the excessive consumption, misuse or abuse of alcohol beverages
- have a strong appeal to children or adolescents
- suggest that consuming alcohol will lead to personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success
- depict any direct association between the drinking of alcohol (other than low alcohol beverages) and driving a car or other vehicle, playing sport, or engaging in any dangerous activity.

What about different forms of advertising?

Internet advertisements

Both the AANA and the ABAC codes also apply to internet advertising, although they are limited to internet sites produced in Australia and those marketing to people within Australia.

Retail Advertisements

Under the ABAC, advertisements which contain information about the price, brand name, type and location of alcohol offered for sale (but do not contain material relating the attributes of specific beverages) must comply with the spirit and intent of the Code.

Point-of-sale promotions

Neither of these codes apply to point-of-sale promotions (e.g., competitions, prizes, in-store posters). For information on the rules for these materials, see Fact Sheets POS1-POS6.

Key Points

- The Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) Advertiser Code of Ethics says that advertisements won’t use offensive language, violence, offensive levels of sex or nudity, or negative stereotypes
- The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code says that alcohol advertisements won’t encourage excessive drinking, appeal to young people, or suggest that alcohol will lead to social or other success

What Can I Do?

- Lobby for stricter regulations on the advertising of alcohol
- Lobby for a ban on alcohol advertising during televised sports
- Lodge complaints about inappropriate alcohol advertisements with the Advertising Standards Board (see Fact Sheet ADV4)

Other Fact Sheets in this Series

- ADV1: Alcohol Advertising: Alcohol Advertising Summary
- ADV2: Alcohol Advertising: What are the issues?
- ADV3: Alcohol Advertising: What are the rules?
- ADV5 (Part A & B): Alcohol Advertising: How do I complain?
- ADV6: Alcohol Advertising: The AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics
- ADV7: Alcohol Advertising: The Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code
- ADV8: Alcohol Advertising: Further Reading