Alcohol Advertising: 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:

a) Present a mature, balanced and responsible approach to the consumption of alcohol beverages and, accordingly:
   
i. must not encourage excessive consumption or abuse of alcohol;
ii. must not encourage under-age drinking;
iii. must not promote offensive behaviour, or the excessive consumption, misuse or abuse of alcohol beverages;
iv. must only depict the responsible and moderate consumption of alcohol beverages;

b) Not have a strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents and, accordingly:
   
v. adults appearing in advertisements must be over 25 years of age and be clearly depicted as adults;
vi. children and adolescents may only appear in advertisements in natural situations (eg family barbecue, licensed family restaurant) and where there is no implication that the depicted children and adolescents will consume or serve alcohol beverages; 

vii. adults under the age of 25 years may only appear as part of a natural crowd or background scene;

c) Not suggest that the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages may create or contribute to a significant change in mood or environment and, accordingly:
   
i. must not depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or contributing to the achievement of personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success;
ii. if alcohol beverages are depicted as part of a celebration, must not imply or suggest that the beverage was a cause of or contributed to success or achievement; and
iii. must not suggest that the consumption of alcohol beverages offers any therapeutic benefit or is a necessary aid to relaxation;

d) Not depict any direct association between the consumption of alcohol beverages, other than low alcohol beverages, and the operation of a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft or the engagement in any sport (including swimming and water sports) or potentially hazardous activity and, accordingly:
   
i. any depiction of the consumption of alcohol beverages in connection with the above activities must not be represented as having taken place before or during engagement of the activity in question and must in all cases portray safe practices; and

ii. any claim concerning safe consumption of low alcohol beverages must be demonstrably accurate;

e) Not challenge or dare people to drink or sample a particular alcohol beverage, other than low alcohol beverages, and must not contain any inducement to prefer an alcohol beverage because of its higher alcohol content;

f) Comply with the Advertiser Code of Ethics adopted by the Australian Association of National Advertisers;

g) Not encourage consumption that is in excess of, or inconsistent with the Australian Alcohol Guidelines issued by the NHMRC; and

h) Not refer to the ABAC Scheme, in whole or in part, in a manner which may bring the scheme into disrepute.

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?
- ADV3: Alcohol Advertising: What is the code?
- ADV5 (Part A & Part B): Alcohol Advertising: How do I complain?
- ADV6: Alcohol Advertising: The AANA Advertiser Code of Ethics
- ADV8: Alcohol Advertising: Further Reading