18

Alcohol

Principle

Marketing communications for alcoholic drinks should not be targeted at people under 18 and should not imply, condone or encourage immoderate, irresponsible or anti-social drinking.

The spirit as well as the letter of the rules applies.

Definition

The rules in this section apply to marketing communications for alcoholic drinks and marketing communications that feature or refer to alcoholic drinks. Alcoholic drinks are defined as drinks containing at least 0.5% alcohol; for the purposes of this Code low-alcohol drinks are defined as drinks containing between 0.5% and 1.2% alcohol.

Where stated, exceptions are made for low-alcohol drinks. But, if a marketing communication for a low-alcohol drink could be considered to promote a stronger alcoholic drink or if the drink's low-alcohol content is not stated clearly in the marketing communications, all the rules in this section apply.

If a soft drink is promoted as a mixer, the rules in this section apply in full.

These rules are not intended to inhibit responsible marketing communications that are intended to counter problem drinking or tell consumers about alcohol-related health or safety themes. Those marketing communications should not be likely to promote an alcohol product or brand.

Rules

18.1 Marketing communications must be socially responsible and must contain nothing that is likely to lead people to adopt styles of drinking that are unwise. For example, they should not encourage excessive drinking. Care should be taken not to exploit the young, the immature or those who are mentally or socially vulnerable.

18.2 Marketing communications must not claim or imply that alcohol can enhance confidence or popularity.

18.3 Marketing communications must not imply that drinking alcohol is a key component of the success of a personal relationship or social event. The consumption of alcohol may be portrayed as sociable or thirst-quenching.

18.4 Drinking alcohol must not be portrayed as a challenge. Marketing communications must neither show, imply, encourage or refer to aggression or unruly, irresponsible or anti-social behaviour nor link alcohol with brave, tough or daring people or behaviour.

18.5 Marketing communications must neither link alcohol with seduction, sexual activity or sexual success nor imply that alcohol can enhance attractiveness.

18.6 Marketing communications must not imply that alcohol might be indispensable or take priority in life or that drinking alcohol can overcome boredom, loneliness or other problems.

18.7 Marketing communications must not imply that alcohol has therapeutic qualities. Alcohol must not be portrayed as capable of changing mood, physical condition or behaviour or as a source of nourishment. Marketing communications must not imply that alcohol can enhance mental or physical capabilities; for example, by contributing to professional or sporting achievements.

18.8 Marketing communications must not link alcohol to illicit drugs.

18.9 Marketing communications may give factual information about the alcoholic strength of a drink. They may also make a factual alcohol strength comparison with another product, but only when the comparison is with a higher strength product of a similar beverage.

Marketing communications must not imply that a drink may be preferred because of its alcohol content or intoxicating effect. There is an exception for low-alcohol drinks, which may be presented as preferable because of their low alcoholic strength.

In the case of a drink with relatively high alcoholic strength in relation to its category, the factual information should not be given undue emphasis.

18.10 Marketing communications that include a sales promotion must not imply, condone or encourage excessive consumption of alcohol.

18.11 Marketing communications must not feature alcohol being handled or served irresponsibly.

18.12 Marketing communications must not link alcohol with activities or locations in which drinking would be unsafe or unwise.

Marketing communications must not link alcohol with the use of potentially dangerous machinery or driving. Marketing communications may feature sporting and other physical activities (subject to other rules in this section; for example, appeal to under-18s or link with daring or aggression) but must not imply that those activities have been undertaken after the consumption of alcohol.

18.13 Only in exceptional circumstances may marketing communications feature alcohol being drunk by anyone in their working environment.

18.14 Marketing communications must not be likely to appeal particularly to people under 18, especially by reflecting or being associated with youth culture. They should not feature or portray real or fictitious characters who are likely to appeal particularly to people under 18 in a way that might encourage the young to drink. People shown drinking or playing a significant role (see rule 18.16) should not be shown behaving in an adolescent or juvenile manner.

18.15 Marketing communications must not be directed at people under 18 through the selection of media or the context in which they appear. No medium should be used to advertise alcoholic drinks if more than 25% of its audience is under 18 years of age.

18.16 People shown drinking or playing a significant role must neither be nor seem to be under 25. People under 25 may be shown in marketing communications, for example, in the context of family celebrations, but must be obviously not drinking.

18.17 Marketing communications may give factual information about product contents, including comparisons, but must not make any health, fitness or weight-control claims.

The only permitted nutrition claims are “low-alcohol”, “reduced alcohol” and “reduced energy” and any claim likely to have the same meaning for the consumer.