[GB] Television Alcohol Advertising Rules Changed

IRIS 2005-1:1/23

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Following a consultation initiated in July 2004, The UK Office of Communications (OFCOM) has announced amendments to Section 11 (8) of the Broadcast Television Advertising Standards Code. This sub-section deals with advertising of alcoholic beverages. Section 11 in general deals with "rules for a range of categories which can have implications for individuals or for society as a whole."The changes are justified as strengthening protection for under-18 year olds, i.e.," ...reducing the appeal of alcohol advertising to children and young teenagers." The new rules restrict adverts which connect alcohol to "youth culture" in general and to sexual activity, or success, in particular. Also, adverts should not imply that alcohol can "enhance attractiveness". On the other hand, in the view of OFCOM, there is "little potential for social harm in alcohol advertising being linked, in a grown-up way, to romance." The issue is reducing the "sexual content of some recent advertising" whilst still permitting "responsible treatments involving flirtation and romance between over-25s". Other behavioural traits which alcohol adverts should not "show, imply or refer to" include "daring, toughness, aggression or unruly, irresponsible or anti-social behaviour". Finally, alcoholic drinks must be shown as being "handled and served responsibly". The publication of the changes coincides with the introduction of the new system whereby the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) becomes the coregulator for broadcast advertising (the so-called "one-stop shop" arrangement, see IRIS 2004-7: 12). Interpretative guidance for the new rules will be "promptly redrafted" by the Broadcast Committee of Advertising Practice (BCAP), ASA's Code-making division. First, though, BCAP will publicly consult on draft guidance notes. However, in keeping with the system of co-regulation, OFCOM "will retain the right to final approval in order to ensure that the objectives of the revised rules will be achieved." The new rules will come into force on 1 January 2005. They will apply to all advertising campaigns "conceived" after that date. However, OFCOM has offered a "grace period" until 30 September 2005, understanding that some campaigns for summer 2005 are already being shot and may not fully comply with the changes.

ASA - The TV Code

http://www.asab.org.uk/asa/codes/tv_code/tv_codes/

Consultation for Alcohol Advertising on Television

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http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/past/AlcAds/?a=87101

Ofcom's decisions on revising alcohol advertising rules

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/past/AlcAds/decision/?a=87101

Final revised alcohol advertising rules

http://www.ofcom.org.uk/consultations/past/AlcAds/decision/rules.pdf?a=87101

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