



GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ADVERTISING AND MARKETING PRACTICES FOR ALCOHOL BEVERAGES

Background

FIVS is a world-wide organization designed to represent all sectors of the wine, spirits and beer industries. It includes producers, distributors, importers, exporters, and trade associations, and it interfaces with many international organizations. FIVS was founded in July 1951, and has its headquarters in Paris, France.

In 2004, the members of FIVS adopted a strategic plan for the organization which sets its direction and purpose for the future. The vision of FIVS, set forth in that strategic plan, is as follows:

A successful global beverage alcohol industry, operating on the principles of corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and focus on consumer interests, in an environment free from trade-distorting factors of all kinds.

In keeping with its vision, FIVS has developed a set of guiding principles for the advertising and marketing of alcohol beverages. Many codes have appeared over recent years and in different countries to provide guidance in this area. Some have been produced by individual companies, some by trade associations, and some by other groups.

It is desirable to have the greatest degree of similarity possible between these codes, while acknowledging that national and cultural norms, together with differing national regulatory frameworks, require variances in some areas. In order to promote this goal, FIVS decided to produce a document outlining the major principles that should be considered in producing codes of best practice for the advertising and marketing of alcohol beverages.

The alcohol beverage industry can contribute significantly to the promotion of responsible consumption of alcohol by adhering to codes based on the principles outlined in this document. It is hoped that this document will provide a reference for the revision of existing codes and the development of new ones.

Introduction

The advertising and marketing of virtually any product should be done responsibly. It is helpful to identify fundamental principles that should guide responsible advertising and marketing. These principles are aimed at preventing the portrayal or the promotion of the improper use of alcohol beverages. Of course, those who enjoy alcohol beverages have a responsibility also to consume in a responsible manner.

The following general principles have been identified as fundamental in this area. In some cases, examples are given of how the principles are applied in differing national and/or cultural situations:

1. Consumption should only be represented at an appropriate age.

Explanation of the principle:

The inappropriate consumption of alcohol beverages by minors is of increasing concern around the world. Advertising and marketing that has a particular appeal to children or adolescents can lead to improper use. To this end, advertisements that feature consumption only by individuals who are older than the national legal drinking age help promote responsible consumption of alcohol beverages.

Examples of the scope of the principle and its application in codes of best practice:

Consideration should be given to including provisions such as the following in codes of best practice:

- Adults appearing in advertisements should appear to be four or five years of age above the national legal drinking age.
- No brand identification of alcohol beverages (logos, trademarks, etc.) should be used on items intended for use by minors, such as children's clothing and toys.
- Advertisements should not promote alcohol beverage use for events directed primarily towards children or in which children form a sizeable percentage of the audience.
- Advertisements should only be placed in media where the clear majority of the viewers are expected to be adults of legal drinking age.

Discussion of the application of this principle in different countries and/or cultures

Although there is universal consensus that alcohol beverages should not be marketed to underage persons, specific criteria regarding responsible placement of advertisements will vary from country to country.

By way of example, existing national codes contain stipulations such as the following in respect of advertising and marketing materials:

- They should not contain images of Santa Claus.
- They should not be located outdoors in the vicinity (500 feet) of an elementary/secondary school, except on a licensed premise.
- They should not appear in college/university newspapers, or on college campuses except for licensed establishments on such campuses.
- They should not feature individuals considered “heroes” of the underage.
- Promotional websites should require confirmation that those who use them are over the legal purchase age for alcohol beverages in their country of access.

2. Only responsible and moderate consumption should be represented.

Explanation of the principle:

A small minority of drinkers engage in illegal or even reckless drinking practices. Advertisements and marketing initiatives should never encourage or make light of such behavior. Advertisements and marketing initiatives are most constructive when they feature alcohol consumption in a safe and appropriate manner and setting.

Examples of the scope of the principle and its application in codes of best practice:

Consideration should be given to including provisions such as the following in codes of best practice:

- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not portray excessive consumption or the abuse of alcohol in a positive light.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not depict the consumption of alcohol beverages in association with illegal, violent, or aggressive behavior.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not depict the consumption of alcohol beverages in association with illegal drugs.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not depict any direct association between the consumption of alcohol beverages, and the operation of a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft or engagement in any sport (including swimming and water sports) or any potentially hazardous

activity.

- Consumption of alcohol beverages in connection with the above activities should not be represented as taking place before or during engagement in the activity in question and should portray safe practices.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not challenge or dare people to drink or sample a particular alcohol beverage and should not contain any inducement to prefer an alcohol beverage because of its higher alcohol content.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not present abstinence or moderation in a negative way.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not depict binge drinking as a normal and acceptable form of behavior.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should avoid inappropriate point of sale promotions.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not depict the consumption of alcohol beverages for the effects their alcohol content may produce.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not feature persons who appear to be drunk or out of control.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not convey the implication that excessive drinking or loss of control is amusing.

3. Consumption should not be represented as linked with therapeutic benefits or personal success.

Explanation of the principle:

A substantial body of scientific data strongly suggests beneficial health effects of moderate consumption of alcohol beverages. However, excessive consumption may result in adverse health and social consequences. Accordingly, advertisements should not appear to link alcohol consumption with therapeutic benefits or to personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success.

Examples of the scope of the principle and its application in codes of best practice:

Consideration should be given to including provisions such as the following in codes of best practice:

- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not suggest that the consumption of alcohol beverages offers any therapeutic benefit or is a necessary aid to relaxation.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not imply that consumption will prevent or cure any illnesses or diseases.

- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or as contributing to the achievement of personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success.
- Advertisements and marketing initiatives should not suggest that alcohol consumption enhances mental ability or physical performance.
- If alcohol beverages are depicted as part of a celebration, advertisements and marketing initiatives should not imply or suggest that the beverage was a cause of or contributed to success or achievement.

4. Consistency with these principles should be ensured by a vetting system

Explanation of the principle:

Self-regulatory mechanisms for advertisements and promotional materials have led to a substantial reduction in inappropriate alcohol advertisements. One effective element of a self-regulatory approach is the establishment of a system by which materials can be reviewed against codes of best practice and other principles and found to be in compliance with them before use.

Examples of the scope of the principle and its application in codes of best practice:

- Codes of best practice for advertising and marketing of alcohol beverages should contain a self-regulatory review system for advertisements and possibly other marketing materials.
- The system should use independent adjudicators to evaluate advertisements and determine if they are in accordance with national codes of best practice.

5. Further Considerations

These guiding principles should also be considered when developing codes of best practice for other aspects of alcohol beverage advertising and promotion.

Promotion of alcohol beverages at events

Alcohol beverage companies and associations play a valuable role in supporting many community events and activities. They are normally able to promote their products at events together with the right to promote their association with the events and event participation.

There are responsibilities that accompany these promotions. It is strongly recommended that codes of best practice include provisions urging alcohol beverage companies to ensure that:

- They do not promote their products at events that are clearly designed to target people under the legal drinking age.
- All promotional advertising in support of events and all promotional materials distributed at them are fully consistent with national codes of best practice based on principles such as those presented in this document.
- Alcohol beverages are served at events in a way that is consistent with national codes of best practice based on principles such as those presented in this document, and where applicable with legal requirements, for responsible serving of alcohol.
- A condition for participation in giveaways promoted by alcohol companies at or in association with events is that participants must be over the legal drinking age.
- Prizes given away in promotions associated with alcohol beverage companies are awarded only to winners who are over the national legal drinking age.
- Promotional staff at events are over the national legal drinking age.

At many events, these promotional commitments are limited to specified activities. In general, national codes of best practice based on principles such as those presented in this document will only apply to such conduct, activities or materials associated with events that are also associated with alcohol beverage companies. Codes of best practice should recommend the use of every reasonable endeavor to ensure that where other parties control and/or undertake events, including activities surrounding those events, they are consistent with national codes of best practice based on principles such as those presented in this document.

Public Education

Codes of best practice based on guiding principles such as those presented in this document should not discourage alcohol beverage companies and associations from being associated with conduct, activity or materials that educate the public, including underage persons, about the consequences of alcohol consumption and the possible consequences of excessive or underage consumption.

For more information

If you are interested in viewing existing codes for advertising and marketing of alcohol beverages, several examples are posted on the WHO Committee Page in the “Marketing Codes for Beverage Alcohol” section.