

Advertisement: Big Al's Vodka packaging and marketing materials

Advertiser: Stoller Wholesale Wine & Spirits
(Non-DISCUS member)

Complainant: Industry Member

Complaint Summary: The complainant believes that that the gun-shaped bottle and associated advertising and marketing materials for Big Al's Vodka are inconsistent with Responsible Content Provision Nos. 18, 19 and 21 of the DISCUS Code.



The complainant states that “[g]uns with silencers are used only to commit or to facilitate the commission of abusive and/or violent acts, and to conceal the evidence thereof.” As a consequence, the complainant believes that Responsible Content Provision No. 18, which provides that “[b]everage alcohol products should not be advertised or marketed in any manner associated with...violent...situations,” has been violated.

In addition, the complainant states that “silencers are illegal for private individuals to own in every state, and are commonly used by button or hit men to conceal the evidence of their crimes. The chips and cards may be intended to move it into the ‘James Bond’ category and, as such not illegal per se, but the ratio of legal to illegal silenced weapons must be extremely low.” As a consequence, the complainant believes that Responsible Content Provision No. 19, which provides that “[b]everage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should not imply illegal activity of any kind,” has been violated.

Further, the complainant states that “[s]hooting and/or threatening people (a gun with a silencer has no other purpose) is antisocial and dangerous.” As a consequence, the complainant believes that Responsible Content Provision No. 21, which provides that “beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should not be associated with anti-social or dangerous behavior,” has been violated.

Code Review Board Decision: In responding to the complaint, the advertiser stated that the Big Al's Vodka packaging materials that were the subject of the complaint were intended for poker players, not gun collectors. The packaging sets were produced in China and, while it was the advertiser's intent to have a shot glass in these packaging materials, the advertiser agreed that the shot glass looked like a silencer.

After careful consideration of the complaint and the advertiser's response, the Board found the above-referenced packaging and advertising materials for Big Al's Vodka in violation of Responsible Content Provision Nos. 18, 19 and 21. In the Board's view, the gun-shaped bottle and silencer are associated with violent situations and inconsistent with Responsible Content Provision No. 18.

In addition, the Board believes that the suggested association to Al Capone, a convicted felon, and the fact that silencers are not legal in all states imply illegal activity in violation of Responsible Content Provision No. 19. Further, the Board views the gun-shaped bottle coupled with a silencer implies anti-social and/or dangerous behavior and therefore a violation of Responsible Content Provision No. 21.

Action by Advertiser:

The advertiser stated that they will not order any more of these packaging materials for Big Al's Vodka and therefore will no longer use this packaging.

Status:

Resolved. Responsive action taken.