

Advertisement:

50 Bleu Vodka advertisements

Advertiser:

EF Vodka Company, LLC

Complainant:

Industry member

Complaint Summary:

A complaint was lodged regarding five 50 Bleu Vodka advertising postings. Regarding the first advertising execution, the complainant believes this posting violates Responsible Content Provisions Nos. 15 and 23 because the advertisement “suggest[s] that it is socially acceptable and indeed ‘elegant’ to consume alcohol to excess to the point where one can no longer stand.” In that regard, the complainant points to both the image and text of the advertisement, which “shows a young woman physically unable to stand, presumably from the effects of alcohol....[with] the caption ‘Elegantly Wasted in Every Way’ and the statement ‘How we plan to spend our Friday. #Drink50.’”

Responsible Content Provision No. 15 provides that “[b]everage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should not depict situations where beverage alcohol is being consumed excessively or in an irresponsible manner” and that “[t]hese materials should not portray persons in a state of intoxication or in any way suggest that intoxication is socially acceptable conduct, and they should not promote the intoxicating effects of beverage alcohol consumption.” Responsible Content Provision No. 23 provides that “[b]everage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should reflect generally accepted contemporary standards of good taste.”

Regarding the second advertisement (with the tagline “Roses are red, violets are blue...vodka is cheaper than dinner for 2. Skip dinner, #Drink50. #50Bleu”), the complainant believes that this execution violates Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15 because the “advertisement states that one should ‘skip dinner’ and drink vodka instead” and “further suggests that one should skip dinner and drink vodka because ‘vodka is cheaper than dinner for two.’” The complainant notes that “[r]eplacing a meal with vodka is not responsible” and “the ad suggests a situation where vodka is consumed in an irresponsible manner.” Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15 provide, respectively, that beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials “should portray beverage alcohol products and drinkers in a responsible manner” and “should not depict situations where beverage alcohol is being consumed excessively or in an irresponsible manner.”

Regarding the third advertisement (with the tagline “Is a caption really necessary.... #Drink50 #Miami”), the complainant believes this execution violates Responsible Content Provision Nos. 23 and 27 because of its “close up image of a woman’s practically bare behind (both cheeks are exposed) with a man’s hand directly in



Advertisement No. 1



Advertisement No. 2



Advertisement No. 3

front holding a bottle of 50 Bleu vodka.” The complainant states that the advertisement not only does not reflect standards of good taste, but also is lewd, noting that the “Merriam Webster dictionary defines lewd as ‘sexual in an offensive or rude way.’” Responsible Content Provision Nos. 23 and 27 provide, respectively, that beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials “should reflect generally accepted contemporary standards of good taste” and “should not contain or depict...sexually lewd or indecent images or language.”

The complainant believes that the fourth advertisement (with the tagline “Not all offices are created equally...#StayHydrated #Drink50”) violates Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15 because of its portrayal “of an office worker about to consume a full glass of vodka rather than water at work...where a bottle of 50 Bleu vodka has replaced the water in the office water cooler.” The complainant states that it is irresponsible to depict an office worker next to a water container full of vodka and about to drink “a full glass of vodka rather than water at work,” running afoul of these two Code provisions that provide, respectively, that beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials “should portray beverage alcohol products and drinkers in a responsible manner” and “should not depict situations where beverage alcohol is being consumed excessively or in an irresponsible manner.”

Regarding the fifth advertisement (with the tagline “Whoever told you summer was over, was clearly misinformed. Nothing but Bleu skies over here. #Drink50”), the complainant believes that this execution violates Responsible Content Provision Nos. 27 and 23 because of its image “of a topless woman with two bottles of 50 Bleu vodka in front of her breasts,” with the image “cropped from the shoulders to the crotch.” In that regard, the complainant states that this advertising execution is “lewd,” “contains gratuitous nudity” and “is in poor taste.” Consequently, the advertisement abridges Responsible Content Provision Nos. 27 and 23 providing, respectively, that beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials “should not contain or depict...graphic or gratuitous nudity...or sexually lewd or indecent images or language” and “should reflect generally accepted contemporary standards of good taste.”



Advertisement No. 4



Advertisement No. 5

Code Review Board Decision:

In response to the complaint, the advertiser stated with regard to the first advertisement, that “[i]n an attempt to stay relevant in the world of social media, advertisers such as us often try to use humor or edginess to garner attention from a consumer class saturated with advertising and non-commercial social media posts. The post was meant as an attempt at humor...However, after receiving the complaint, and in recognition of Responsible Content Provision 15, we believe it was possible such an image was in poor taste and in an effort to be responsible we have removed it.”

Regarding the second advertisement, the advertiser stated that “this post was an attempt at humor. We believe that it is not in violation of the Code provisions mentioned given that the ordinary consumer would recognize it as humor.”

Regarding the third advertisement, the advertiser stated that “we are not convinced this post necessarily violated the Code, but we have removed it after receipt of the complaint. Good taste and ‘lewd’ as it relates to the partially dressed human body is extremely controversial and a constantly evolving area. These notions have been argued before the U.S. Supreme Court, homes, the art community, and beyond.” The advertiser further stated that “[w]hile as a society, we deem it acceptable for women to wear swimwear as revealing as the woman in our post, since her ‘bare behind’ (as described in the complaint) is exposed, we have deferred to the complaint and removed the post.”

Regarding the fourth advertisement, the advertiser stated that, similar to its response to the first advertisement, “this was an attempt at humor...[and] that the ordinary customer would realize it as such, would think that such an idea is laughable on its face, and that a vodka bottle would not actually fit or function as depicted in the image.”

Regarding the fifth advertisement, the advertiser stated that, similar to its response to the third advertisement, “what is considered lewd is a complicated question.”

After careful deliberation of the complaint and the advertiser’s response, the Code Review Board found that the 50 Bleu Vodka advertisements violated the Responsible Content Provisions of the DISCUS Code described below.

Regarding the first advertisement with the caption “Elegantly Wasted in Every Way” and the statement “How we plan to spend our Friday. #Drink50,” the Board found that this advertisement violated these Code provisions because the visual depicting a woman physically unable to stand and the caption referenced above suggests that it is socially acceptable and “elegant” to consume alcohol excessively to the point where an individual no longer can stand.

Regarding the second advertisement (with the tagline “Roses are red, violets are blue...vodka is cheaper than dinner for 2. Skip dinner, #Drink50. #50Bleu”), the Board concluded this posting violated Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15 because its text suggests that replacing a meal with vodka is consuming in a responsible manner contrary to these Code provisions.

Regarding the third advertisement (with the tagline “Is a caption really necessary.... #Drink50 #Miami”), the Board concluded that the advertisement failed to reflect contemporary standards of good taste and is lewd in violation of Responsible Content Provision Nos. 23 and 27 because of the advertising execution’s close-up image of a woman’s practically bare behind with a man’s hand in front of it holding a bottle of 50 Bleu Vodka.

The Board found the text and visuals in combination in the fourth advertisement (with the tagline “Not all offices are created equally... #StayHydrated #Drink50”) violated Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15 because it is irresponsible to depict an office worker next to a water container full of vodka and about to drink a full glass of vodka rather than water at work.

Regarding the fifth advertisement (with the tagline “Whoever told you summer was over, was clearly misinformed. Nothing but Bleu skies over here. #Drink50”), the Board concluded that the visual in this advertisement of a topless woman, cropped from the shoulders to the crotch, with two bottles of 50 Bleu vodka in front of her bare breasts is lewd, contains gratuitous nudity and is in poor taste in violation of Responsible Content Provision Nos. 27 and 23.

Action by Advertiser:

The advertiser removed all five of the advertising postings.

Status:

Resolved: Responsive action taken