

Advertisement:

Pinnacle Vodka Facebook and Twitter pages and video advertisement “How to Speak French to a Playmate Brought to You by Pinnacle Vodka” on YouTube



Advertiser:

White Rock Distilleries, Inc.
(Non-DISCUS member)

Complainant:

Industry member

Complaint Summary:

The complainant states that with regard to the Pinnacle Vodka YouTube video advertisement “How to Speak French to a Playmate Brought to You by Pinnacle Vodka,” “[t]his video shows a Playboy playmate doing various things to demonstrate certain French phrases. Many of these images are suggestive, salacious, and borderline obscene. The viewer sees the model unzipping her dress down her back, revealing the top of her naked backside. A separate scene shows her standing with her underwear pulled down her legs. This is followed by a shot of her unclasping her bra and starting to show her naked breasts. This is followed by a shot of the model in her underwear facing the camera with her rear raised in a suggestive manner. Finally, the ad concludes with a shot of the woman lying naked on the screen.”



The complainant believes that this video runs afoul of Responsible Content Provision Nos. 23, 24, 25, and 27, which provide, respectively, that beverage alcohol advertising and marketing materials “should reflect generally accepted contemporary standards of good taste,” “should not degrade the image, form, or status of women,” “should not contain any lewd or indecent images or language,” and “should not rely upon sexual prowess or sexual success as a selling point for the brand...or depict graphic or



gratuitous nudity.” Regarding the Pinnacle Vodka’s Facebook and Twitter pages with a “consumer tweet stating ‘[t]hank U 4 ensuring perpetual drunkenness. Is ths yr plan 2 take ovr the world?,’ which Pinnacle picked up and posted on their Facebook page,” the complainant states that “[e]xtolling ‘perpetual drunkenness,’ as actively placing such a Tweet on Pinnacle’s Facebook page does, clearly violates the Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15.”

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...or in any way suggest that intoxication is socially acceptable conduct.”

Code Review Board Decision:

In responding to the portion of the complaint regarding the ‘How to Speak French’ video, the advertiser stated that “this video was produced and used in conjunction with programs running in Playboy Magazine, on Playboy.com and other social media sites. We feel the video is appropriate for the medium” and that they have “no intention of misleading consumers and we are willing to make changes to advertising materials if it deems necessary and appropriate.”

After careful consideration of the complaint and the advertiser’s response, the Code Review Board found the Pinnacle Vodka video in violation of the Code. The Board concluded that this advertising execution, a video of a model frame-by-frame undressing before the camera, ran afoul of Responsible Content Provision Nos. 23, 24, 25, and 27. In the Board’s view, the video does not reflect generally accepted contemporary standards of good taste, degrades women, contains lewd and indecent images, and depicts gratuitous nudity in violation of these Responsible Content Provisions.

In arriving at its decision, the Board specifically noted the frames of the video where the model is unzipping her dress and sliding it down to her backside; is depicted with her underwear positioned around one ankle and her other calf between her two bare, spread legs; is unclasping her bra exposing nearly bare breasts and then pushing them together; and then is lying prone and completely nude.

The Board can appreciate the point raised by the advertiser regarding the Pinnacle Vodka video; i.e., that the “video was produced and used in conjunction with the programs running in Playboy Magazine, on Playboy.com and other social media sites. We feel the video is appropriate for the medium it was used for...” The content provisions of the Code, however, operate independently and separately from its placement provisions.

Consequently, the content of an advertisement is evaluated in light of the Code's Responsible Content provisions regardless of the medium where the advertisement was placed, be it on Playboy.com or otherwise.

Regarding the Pinnacle Vodka Twitter and Facebook posting that was the subject of the complaint, the advertiser followed up regarding the Board's query as to whether that posting was done by the advertiser and responded that Pinnacle Vodka's Twitter page automatically links and posts to the brand's Facebook page. In response to the complaint, the advertiser was able to access and remove the Pinnacle re-tweet from the brand's Facebook page reflecting a "consumer tweet stating '[t]hank U 4 ensuring perpetual drunkenness. Is ths yr plan 2 take ovr the world?'"

In the Board's view, the content of this posting promotes excessive and irresponsible consumption and suggests that intoxication is socially acceptable conduct, and ran afoul of Responsible Content Provision Nos. 14 and 15.

The advertiser notes that they "spend a lot of time monitoring our social media websites making sure what is posted is appropriate." When there is an automatic link as is the case of postings from Pinnacle Vodka's Twitter page to Facebook, the Board notes that extra vigilance in monitoring and moderating user-generated content is required.

DISCUS issued social media marketing guidelines that apply to all branded digital marketing communications, including social networking sites, websites, blogs, mobile communications, and other applications. One of the basic principles of those guidelines is that user-generated content on a site or web page controlled by the brand advertiser must be monitored and moderated on a regular basis. In that regard, this principle is implemented by the standard that user-generated content should be monitored each business day or, at a minimum, every five business days. When content is determined to be inappropriate, this material should be removed promptly.

Action by Advertiser:

In response to the Code Review Board's decision, the advertiser removed the "How to Speak French" video from YouTube and other locations where it was posted.

Regarding the Pinnacle Vodka Twitter and Facebook posting that was the subject of the complaint, the advertiser removed the Pinnacle re-tweet of the above-referenced post.

Status:

Resolved. Responsive action taken.