

Advertisement:

Smirnoff Fluffed Marshmallow Flavored Vodka and Smirnoff Whipped Cream Flavored Vodka video advertisement

Advertiser:

Diageo
(DISCUS member)

Complainant:

Member of the public

Complaint Summary:

The complainant states that “I came across this advertisement on YouTube, which is freely available to anybody of any age. The product is therefore not just being marketed to adults.” In addition, the complainant has “concerns that the principles outlined in paragraphs 23, 24 and 25 from the sections headed Good Taste and Sexual Prowess and Sexual Success have not been complied with.”



Responsible Content Provision Nos. 23, 24 and 25 of the DISCUS Code provide, respectively, that “[b]everage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should reflect generally accepted contemporary standards of good taste; [b]everage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should not degrade the image, form, or status of women, men, or of any ethnic, minority, sexually-oriented, religious, or other group; and [b]everage alcohol advertising and marketing materials should not contain any lewd or indecent images or language.”



The complaint also states that “the imagery in the second half of the video is highly sexual in nature. There is a woman lying down on a sofa with cream being sprayed into her mouth and close up shots of cream being licked from fingers and lips, all in the presence of what appears to [be] hedonistic and wild partying. When combined with the use of the names ‘Whipped’ and ‘Fluffed,’ both of which can have alternative sexual meanings, the sexual innuendo is far too obvious. This innuendo is further emphasized by the model saying ‘Vodka never felt this good,’ in a suggestive manner.”



Further, the complainant states that “this advertisement with its blatant sexual innuendo and association of alcohol with sex is in poor taste and allowing this sort of imagery to be freely available on YouTube where minors, including my children, can see it is inappropriate and irresponsible.”

Code Review Board Decision: In responding to the complaint, the advertiser stated that the advertisement on YouTube that was the subject of the complaint was not the final, official version of the advertising for Smirnoff Fluffed Marshmallow Flavored Vodka and Smirnoff Whipped Cream Flavored Vodka and was not placed by the advertiser. Regarding this unauthorized advertisement, the advertiser stated that it came to their attention when reviewing the complaint that an incorrect, unapproved version had been posted on YouTube and the advertiser does not know who posted this unauthorized advertisement. As soon as the advertiser learned about this posting, the advertiser contacted YouTube and took aggressive remedial actions to have the purloined advertisement removed immediately.

The advertiser provided the Board with the authorized advertising for these brands for purposes of the Code Review Board's deliberations. Regarding the concerns raised by the complainant relevant to the authorized advertisement, the advertiser disagreed with the complainant's assessment that the advertisement is sexually provocative or contains sexual innuendo.

The advertiser stated that the intent of the commercial, and the broader campaign, is to amplify the new flavor offerings in a fun and playful manner by highlighting the unique mouth-feel of the confectionary flavors. The advertiser also stated that the use of the tag-line, "Vodka never felt this good," is a reference to the smooth and creamy feel of the liquid in the mouth, and noted that the frames in the advertisement depicting marshmallows and whipped cream being tasted were to introduce these new flavors and to reinforce the emphasis upon the feel of the liquids. The advertiser disagreed that the scene with a woman having whipped cream sprayed into her mouth was sensual, noting that the playful expressions on the models' faces and the distance between the two models are consistent with a party atmosphere.

Given the fact that the advertisement referenced in the complaint was not authorized or placed by the advertiser and, in fact, was misappropriated by a third-party, the Code Review Board determined that it was not appropriate for their review in that the DISCUS Code applies to advertising materials placed by the advertiser.

The Code Review Board, however, did review the authorized advertisement for these brands and evaluated that advertisement in light of the complainant's concerns.

In that regard, the Board did not find the authorized version of this advertisement in violation of the DISCUS Code. In the Board's view, the advertisement does not run afoul of contemporary standards of good taste, is not degrading to women and does not contain lewd or indecent images.

Action by Advertiser:

None required

Status:

Not applicable