

Social media guidelines for wine companies

Introduction

Many wineries are now using social media such as Facebook, Linked In, Twitter and blogs to communicate with their consumers – either to simply provide information or to directly advertise or brand their products.

With increased use, there is a need to establish responsible practices. The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for such practices.

You should also be aware that the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC) applies to advertising and promotional material on social media sites. WFA, and therefore WFA members, are a signatory to ABAC.

WFA has established the following guidelines to remind you of your obligations and encourage socially responsible advertising practices in the wine sector. You should also be aware of general regulations covering publication of material, such as copyright and privacy.

Guidelines

1. Ensure material used for advertising purposes on social networking sites complies with regulations set out in the Alcohol Beverages' Advertising Code.

ABAC states: Advertisements for alcohol beverages must:

- a) Present a mature, balanced and responsible approach to the consumption of alcohol beverages and, accordingly –
 - i) must not encourage excessive consumption or abuse of alcohol;
 - ii) must not encourage under-age drinking;
 - iii) must not promote offensive behaviour, or the excessive consumption, misuse or abuse of alcohol beverages;
 - iv) must only depict the responsible and moderate consumption of alcohol beverages;
- b) not have a strong or evident appeal to children or adolescents and, accordingly-
 - i) adults appearing in advertisements must be over 25 years of age and be clearly depicted as adults;
 - ii) children and adolescents may only appear in advertisements in natural situations (eg family barbecue, licensed family restaurant) and where there is no implication that the depicted children and adolescents will consume or serve alcohol beverages; and
- iii) adults under the age of 25 years may only appear as part of a natural crowd or background scene;
- c) Not suggest that the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages may create or contribute to a significant change in mood or environment and, accordingly –
 - i) must not depict the consumption or presence of alcohol beverages as a cause of or contributing to the achievement of personal, business, social, sporting, sexual or other success;
 - ii) if alcohol beverages are depicted as part of a celebration, must not imply or suggest that the beverage was a cause of or contributed to success or achievement; and
 - iii) must not suggest that the consumption of alcohol beverages offers any therapeutic benefit or is a necessary aid to relaxation;
- d) Not depict any direct association between the consumption of alcohol beverages, other than low alcohol beverages, and the operation of a motor vehicle, boat or aircraft or the engagement in any sport (including swimming and water sports) or potentially hazardous activity and, accordingly –
 - i) any depiction of the consumption of alcohol beverages in connection with the above activities must not be represented as having taken place before or during engagement of the activity in question and must in all cases portray safe practices; and
 - ii) any claim concerning safe consumption of low alcohol beverages must be demonstrably accurate;
- e) Not challenge or dare people to drink or sample a particular alcohol beverage, other than low alcohol beverages, and must not contain any inducement to prefer an alcohol beverage because of its higher alcohol content
- f) Comply with the Advertiser Code of Ethics adopted by the Australian Association of National Advertisers.
- g) Not encourage consumption that is in excess of, or inconsistent with the Australian Alcohol Guidelines issued by the NHMRC.

- h) *Not refer to The ABAC Scheme, in whole or in part, in a manner which may bring the scheme into disrepute.*

The Code can be accessed at <http://www.abac.org.au>

2. Form a trusted and reliable online presence for your company.

Strategies include:

- Appointing a company spokesperson(s) to act on the company's behalf and appear as its virtual face over various forms of social networking sites
- Making sure this person reflects the values, attitudes and conduct expected of an employee of the company and always conducts themselves in a way befitting of the company's image
- Training your spokesperson to fulfil their role effectively and encourage them to engage with consumers on a regular basis
- Ensuring the spokesperson clearly identifies themselves as a legitimate representative of the company
- Providing the company's web address on the social media site to confirm the authenticity of the site
- Ensuring the company spokesperson understands the advertising obligations of the wine company set out in the ABAC and other relevant legislation and privacy standards

There are additional rules imposed by Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/ad_guidelines.php

3. Monitor the conduct of your company and the material provided on social media.

Strategies include:

- Actively monitoring the content that appears on your sites – including Groups, Profiles and Fan Pages – to ensure compliance with the Alcohol Beverages Advertising Code (ABAC)
- Including a disclaimer on the landing page of a social media page/site.
- Such a disclaimer should state the following: *'Views expressed here do not represent the views of [company] and are not endorsed by [company]. You must be of legal drinking age to view this page and participate in the*

social media networking. Any links provided here are for information purposes only.'

- Ensuring that content is not obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing or discriminatory and is respectful of other people and their preferences, choices and beliefs
- Not posting content or material that is sensitive or confidential about the company or its brands
- Considering the content as it may appear in a linked website/article/photo/other destination.
- Discouraging members from posting material that does not comply with the ABAC
- Removing any material that does not comply with the ABAC and any other material – including written posts, photos, videos, games or other media – determined to be offensive

Monitoring unofficial pages for material which encourages or supports "risky" consumption of alcohol. If necessary, complaints can be lodged with the Australian Standards Bureau or with the social networking site's administrator

4. Ensure, to the best of your ability, that your members and fans are of legal drinking age.

Strategies include:

- Eliminating automatic acceptance of members and fans
- Actively checking the birthdates of applicants.

If an applicant's age is below the legal drinking age or can't be determined, where possible deny them access and direct them to a website which promotes alcohol awareness and responsibility.

5. Ensure, as far as is reasonably possible, that you advertise and display your products only to users above the legal drinking age.

Strategies include:

- Limiting the appearance of the product or brand in search listings to members of or above the legal drinking age
- Only permitting advertisement of your products or brands on sites that have a clear majority of users above the legal drinking age or appropriate age-verification procedures in place.