

US, EU alcohol marketers adopt new code of conduct

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The Facebook website is displayed on a laptop computer. Leading distillers in the United States and Europe on Friday will enact new social media marketing guidelines they said would promote responsible drinking.

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The guidelines, developed by the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States (DISCUS) and the European Forum for [Responsible Drinking](#), limit marketing to websites in which "at least 71.6% of the audience is reasonably expected to be of the legal purchase age," which in the United States is 21.

That would include Facebook, where the estimated over-21 audience is

82.22 percent, [Twitter](#), where it is 86.86 percent, and [YouTube](#), with 80.96 percent, DISCUS said in a statement, citing Nielsen ratings from August.

The new guidelines include a revised privacy policy, a commitment to root out inappropriate user-generated material from websites and instructions urging users to forward downloadable [digital content](#) only to adults 21 and up.

"Social media has become an increasingly important marketing channel to reach adult consumers of legal purchase age," DISCUS president Peter Cressy said in a statement.

"These new digital guidelines reflect our companies' strong commitment to extend their responsible marketing practices to these emerging media platforms."

The two spirits groups include US brands Bacardi and Beam, Britain's Diageo -- maker of Guinness, Johnnie Walker and Smirnoff -- and France's Pernod Ricard, Moet Hennessy and Remy Cointreau.

Alcohol Justice, a San Francisco-based group that aims to curtail alcohol promotion, slammed the new guidelines, which research director Sarah Mart called "a new low point in Big Alcohol self-regulation."

"Big Alcohol is spending more than ever before to exploit users, particularly young people, by digitally befriending them and seamlessly integrating alcohol brands into their online lives," Mart said in a statement.

"Meanwhile, the industry front group keeps spinning the same old self-regulation rhetoric for members to hide behind."

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