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Committee of Advertising Practice (Non-broadcast)

Help Note on Travel Marketing

CAP Help Notes offer guidance for non-broadcast marketing communications under the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotions and Direct Marketing (the CAP Code). For advice on the rules for TV or radio commercials, contact Clearcast www.clearcast.co.uk for TV ads or the RACC www.racc.co.uk for radio ads.

Background

These guidelines, drawn up by the Copy Advice team, are intended to help marketers, agencies and media interpret the rules in the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing as far as they relate to the subject discussed. They are based on ASA adjudications and neither constitute new rules nor bind the ASA Council in the event of a complaint about a marketing communication that follows them.

Airport Names

The ASA has upheld complaints against advertisements for flights that specified departure or destination cities but omitted the name of the airports; because those cities were served (as recognised by IATA) by more than one airport, the ASA ruled that the advertisements could mislead consumers.

The following points apply to marketing communications for flights bought directly from airline companies if a departure city or destination city is specified. They apply whether a price is given for the advertised flight or not. They do not apply to marketing communications by agents if those communications give contact details for enquiries, because consumers are unlikely to expect all the information to be included in those communications.

1. Marketing communications that state a departure city that is served by more than one airport should state the departure airport name. For example, flights from London should be qualified to refer to Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton or City;
2. Marketing communications that state a destination city that is served by more than one airport should state the destination airport name. For example, flights to Paris should be qualified to refer to Charles de Gaulle, Orly, Cergy Pontoise or Beauvais;
3. If the departure or destination city is served by only one airport and that airport is in or close to the city, qualification is unnecessary;
4. If the departure cities or destination cities are served by more than one airport but consumers are given a same-price choice between all those airports, qualification is unnecessary;
5. The name of the airport may be stated alongside the headline claim or in body copy. If it is stated in a footnote, the footnote should be asterisked to the headline claim and be visible to a normally-sighted person reading the marketing communication at a normal speed.

Fares

The ASA has received complaints against marketers who excluded taxes that were paid at the point of purchase, for example Air Passenger Duty, from advertised prices. The ASA's ruling that those taxes, whether levied in the UK or abroad, should be incorporated into an all-inclusive price brought advertised flight and cruise prices into line with other advertised prices, which already incorporated taxes in all-inclusive prices (e.g. products subject to VAT).

1. Marketing communications that quote fares should include in prices all taxes and other charges paid at the point of purchase of the ticket, whether they are levied in the UK or abroad (e.g. Air Passenger Duty and many airport or port taxes levied by foreign countries);

2. Marketers should state clearly in a footnote whether any other taxes (or other charges), levied abroad but not paid at the point of purchase, are payable. They need not state the amount;
3. If fares are subject to foreign-levied taxes (or other charges) payable at the point of purchase, marketers who are not prepared to absorb the profit or loss that might result from changes in the level of taxes, or changes in relevant exchange rates between the time of advertising and the time of purchase, should state clearly in a footnote that taxes, and applicable exchange rates, were correct at the time the marketing communications appeared but may vary;
4. Marketers wanting to quote a fare-only price as well as an all-inclusive price should give more prominence to the all-inclusive price;
5. Marketing communications that quote one-way fares should state prominently, not in small print, that fares are one-way.

“Free” Flights, Reduced-price Offers and Flight Promotions

1. An advertised price should be the price paid by the buyer.
2. If the buyer has to pay taxes or charges, marketers may not state that flights are “free” or, for example, available for only “£1”. Similarly, marketers may not imply the flights are free by, for example, claiming a “flights giveaway”.
3. If payment of taxes and charges is required for flights offered in flight promotions, marketers may not describe offers as “Buy one Get one Free” or “Two for the Price of One”.

Availability of Flights

These points on the availability of flights at advertised prices were developed in consultation with ABTA and IATA:

1. Quoted fares should be available in sufficient quantities to ensure a reasonable prospect of obtaining a flight at the advertised price. Marketers should state clearly in a footnote any restrictions that apply and their nature (e.g. "selected flights only", "limited seats available" and "weekend flights only");
2. Travel agents that advertise flights that, by the time an advertisement appears, might be extremely limited, if available at all, should state that offers could be extremely limited, for example "When its gone, it's gone" or "Offers may be withdrawn without notice".
3. If not all flights are available at the quoted fare, marketing communications should state prominently that prices are "from ...";
4. Unless otherwise stated, quoted fares should apply to flights departing between one week after the marketing communication appeared and six weeks later, irrespective of the destination. If flights are not available during that time, the marketing communication should state either the date for which the fare is applicable or another qualification (e.g. "flights available immediately" or "Christmas flights");
5. Block bookings that do not allow for an amendment to the marketing communication should not be arranged if there is a strong possibility that by the time the later insertions appear the marketing communication will have become misleading for the reasons outlined in 1, 2, 3 or 4.

Advice on specific marketing communications is available from the Copy Advice team by telephone on 020 7492 2100, by fax on 020 7404 3404 or by e-mail on copyadvice@cap.org.uk. The CAP website at www.cap.org.uk contains a full list of Help Notes as well as access to the AdviceOnline database, which has links to relevant Code rules and ASA adjudications.

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