

ADVERTISING

FTC introduces new jewelry marketing guidelines to protect quality

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De Beers' Natural Brilliance campaign

By STAFF REPORTS

Thanks to new guidelines proposed by the Federal Trade Commission, luxury jewelers will now shine a little brighter in their marketing campaigns.

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The new guidelines will not directly affect the campaigns of high-end jewelers, but rather low-market competitors who may skew marketing efforts to make jewelry appear of a higher quality. The FTC is revising the current guidelines to help brand marketers avoid deceptive marketing claims in regard to precious metals, gemstones, diamonds and pearls, and if a disclosure is needed.

The truth is

According to WWD, the FTC's proposed revisions cover "below-threshold alloys, precious metal content of products containing more than one precious metal, surface application of precious metals, lead-glass filled stones, cultured diamonds, pearl treatments, varietals and misuse of the word gem."

The "Guides for Jewelry, Precious Metals and Pewter Industries" revisions were approved in a unanimous vote of four to zero. The FTC is currently seeking comment on the proposed changes through April 4.

Going forward, for "unqualified" gold claims, brands are advised against using silver and platinum terms to describe a product. The guideline states that marketers avoid using these terms to describe "all or part of a coated product unless they adequately qualify the term to indicate the product has only a surface layer of the advertised precious metal."



Cartier advertisement

Marketing for jewelry with more than one metal has also been updated because the prior guidelines allowed products to be misrepresented, thus misleading consumers. For example, an item can no longer be characterized as being "Platinum + Silver," because it can deceive the consumer to think that the weights of the metals are equally used throughout the jewelry.

New metal guidelines also include stating if a piece is rhodium-plated for "white gold" or silver products. Another update includes statements that call out metals that are "materially different" than higher quality metals, as some materials may tarnish if properties are lower.

The FTC is also proposing that marketers avoid terms such as "treated" precious or semi-precious stones, "synthetic" or "laboratory-grown." Instead, marketers are encouraged to use the term "lead-glass-filled" to describe gemstones, a ruby, for instance, that is infused with glass.



Gemfields ruby advertisement

For diamonds, the FTC determined that consumers are not misled if lab-created diamonds are referred to as "cultured," only if the term is followed by "laboratory-created," "laboratory-grown" or synthetic.

Lastly, marketers must disclose the treatments used on pearls and cultured pearls as treatments may "not [be] permanent, [create] special care requirements" or affect the value.

In an industry striving to be more transparent, these guideline updates may help high-end jewelers justify the asking price of luxury jewelry. When luxury advertisements are seen side-by-side with a brand that must share signifying details determined by the FTC, the quality of high-end jewelry will be expressed clearly in marketing campaigns.

The transparency efforts have also extended to environmental and social impacts of mining.

For example, colored-gemstone miner Gemfields has announced its controlling interests in two emerald projects located in Colombia.

Gemfields sources many of the precious gemstones used in high jewelry, with brands such as Graff Diamonds and Bulgari as clients. Recently, due to the environmental impact of and social risks involved in mining, Gemfields has pledged transparency and has consistently used its social media accounts to share brand happenings and projects ([see story](#)).

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