

Amstel Lite packaging ruled 'too similar' to Castle Lite

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12 Feb 2015

Castle Lite remains the heavyweight in the "lite" beer market after a competitor was last week ordered to change the appearance of its beer cans and six-pack wrapping.



South African Breweries (SAB), manufacturer of Castle Lite, had complained to the Advertising Standards of Authority of SA (ASA) that the silver and green that Brandhouse Beverages, local manufacturers of Amstel Lager, used for its Amstel Lite cans was "almost identical to the signature combination in the Castle Lite packaging".

The mainly silver and green plastic shrink wrap of the can and bottle six-packs was also nearly identical, SAB said.

The brewery further complained about the use of the word "lite" on the new Amstel low-calorie beer that was launched in August last year.

All this served to "render the products indistinguishable in trade", SAB said. In the US and Europe, Amstel's light beer is branded "Amstel Light" and packaged in brown, red and gold.

The ASA last week ruled in SAB's favour and ordered Brandhouse to withdraw the offending packaging of Amstel Lite within three months, and not to use it in future.

Brandhouse Beverages had said that SAB was not the only company that used a combination of green and silver to package its light beer.

Citing examples internationally such as Coors Light, Heineken Light, Becks Blue, Miller Light, Keystone Light, Corona Light,

Windhoek Light, Bud Light and Bavaria Light, Brandhouse said SAB could not claim exclusive rights to use the colours in combination.

The ASA pointed out that the colour combination was not used internationally as commonly as Brandhouse made it seem. "The only light beer that uses a colour combination of silver and green is Heineken Light, which is sold in a silver and green can," the advertising watchdog said in its ruling.

The ASA said Castle Lite had "exclusively" used its colours as well as the word "Lite" for more than 20 years, and that "the use of similar elements by Amstel Lite has effectively done away with the uniqueness of these features on the Castle Lite packaging".

SAB had asked the ASA to order Brandhouse Beverages to withdraw the current Amstel Lite packaging within a week, but the ASA said this was not practically possible and gave Brandhouse one week less than three months.

Brandhouse's corporate relations director Michael Mabasa said: "We are disappointed by the ruling. We are, however, still considering the ASA ruling and our options. We will issue a comprehensive statement in due course."

The head of media and communications at SAB, Robyn Chalmers, said that she could not provide detailed comment on the matter until Brandhouse had confirmed whether it would appeal against the ASA's ruling.

The mainly silver and green plastic shrink wrap of the Amstel Lite can and bottle six-packs is nearly identical to Castle Lite

Source: Business Day

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