

Regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the Hungarian Competition Authority (GVH) draws the attention of consumers, advertisers and the publishers of advertisements to the following

Be careful if:

- individuals or companies self-proclaiming to be doctors, health professionals or official institutions are promoting products and services that promise effective action and protection against the virus;
- consumer recommendations or opinions make assertions about the effectiveness of a product or service in helping to protect against the virus;
- the effectiveness of a product or a service against the virus is promoted under the name or with the use of a photo of a well-known person;
- completely unknown, miraculous products offer accelerated recovery from the virus;
- product or service recommendations urge you to make a purchase decision;
- you are required to click on unknown pages or provide personal information for no reasonable reason in order to obtain information about a product or purchase;
- products that are particularly interesting to consumers given the current virus outbreak are promoted at a reduced price.

The GVH encourages consumers to follow the official information.

When formulating a commercial practice

- do not unduly attribute protective, preventive or curative effects to your product;
- keep in mind that it is prohibited to attribute medicinal effects to products that can be marketed as food;
- be aware that it is not only prohibited to attribute medicinal effects to a product marketed as food if the advertisement claims are directly connected to the product itself, but also if the advertisement claims refer to the healing effects of certain active ingredient or ingredients contained in the product, so that the overall message of the advertisement is that the product itself has medicinal effects;
- ensure compliance with the specific advertising guidelines for the product category in question, avoid claims that suggest an unfounded protective, preventive or curative effect;
- particular attention should be paid to the fact that, in the case of products that have a beneficial effect on various decisions and that are positively influenced by medicinal claims, the potential consumers form a vulnerable, above-average consumer group, in which case the expected impact outweighs all other factors.

This consumer group is more vulnerable than average, therefore objective information that does not contain exaggerations is of particular importance in this area.

Consideration of the above information may be difficult for consumers without expert knowledge, and risk assessment prior to making a decision is fundamentally complicated by the fact that the features relevant to the decision (such as the various actual effects) are not known prior to purchase or use.

- Do not give the product the unfounded appearance of being marketed with the approval of an official organisation;
- do not give the impression that the efficacy of the product is certified by an official body or certificate;
- if you promote your product or service with opinion leaders, make sure that they are aware of the above when designing their communications;
- pay attention to the amount of inventory available for the product, avoid advertising a product that is subject to an extremely high level of demand and in relation to which there is not expected to be sufficient stock, or which is not expected to be restocked in the future;
- do not give the impression that the product is available at a discounted price.

The publishers of advertisements are advised to consider stopping posting advertisements, if

- they become aware that they are promoting products or services on their selling channels in a manner which is inconsistent with the above.

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