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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Agency Refuses to Register Vodka Brand on 'Immorality' Grounds

By The Moscow Times

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The Russian Patent Agency has refused to register a new vodka brand for apparent references to slang words suggesting heavy drinking, a news report said Monday.

Patent office officials refused to register the “Vyp (Buhalo)” brand, created by the marketing director of Zolotaya Manufaktura, Oleg Glazunov. In their opinion, the use of slang words in the brand name "contravenes public interest and moral principles," RBC reported.

"Vyp" in colloquial slurred Russian sounds like an inviting "Bottoms up!" although the label depicts a bittern, whose name is pronounced similarly. "Buhalo" is written below in Latin letters, apparently to conceal its close resemblance to the Russian word meaning "booze."

The manufacturer says bitterns, the marsh-dwelling birds, were called "bukhalo" in Old Russian, explaining the unusual name. They do not deny, however, that the play on words in the name was intentional.

The agency said that, while nobody remembers and uses the old word for the wading bird, the meaning of the slang verb "bukhat" (drink) is well-known in modern Russia.

The owner of the new brand, Rusinvest, said it would appeal Rospatent's decision in court and that the patent agency’s decision does not affect its plan to develop the brand.

In the last 18 months, the Russian alcohol market has seen the departure of hit vodka-brand creators Stanislav Kaufman, who designed Putinka, and Vadim Kasyanov, who created Zelyonaya Marka and Zhuravli.

Their resignation created an opportunity for the 43-year-old marketing director of Zolotaya Manufaktura, Oleg Glazunov, who had worked for almost two decades in the alcohol beverages market before his recent time in the spotlight.

Success came to Glazunov with the introduction of the brand name "Belochka. Ya prishla,” in which the Russian word for squirrel is used in its colloquial meaning “delirium tremens.” The provocative brand was further popularized by the stance of the Russian Patent Agency, which refused to register it for two years. But the agency's obstinacy backfired when media attention made the product more popular, and it won the Brand of the Year award in May.

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