An advert for e-cigarettes has been banned because it was considered to promote tobacco. A "glamorous" television ad for electronic cigarettes has been banned for creating a strong association with traditional tobacco smoking.

The ad for Mirage Cigarettes showed a man and woman using e-cigarettes amid clouds of vapour, while on-screen text read "choice", "flavour" and "freedom".

Five viewers complained that the depiction of the couple glamorised smoking tobacco products, and challenged whether the ad promoted the use of tobacco.
Mirage Cigarettes said the ad did not show or make any reference to tobacco products, and pointed out that the products shown in the ad were larger than traditional cigarettes, as well as being metal.

Ad clearance agency Clearcast said it considered the ad to be acceptable because the imagery and language used was restrained and the products did not resemble traditional tobacco products.

However the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) said the general impression of the ad was of “sultry glamour and intimacy”, and the shots of heavy vapour had the appearance of tobacco smoke.

The ASA ruled that ad must not be broadcast again in its current form

It said: “We considered the prominence of the heavy vapour throughout the ad, in conjunction with the music, the shots of the couple, and the softly spoken voice-over, which contributed to the ad’s sultry and glamorous tone, created a strong association with traditional tobacco smoking.

"While it was clear that the products shown were electronic cigarettes, because the ad created a strong association with traditional tobacco smoking and presented it as the central focus in a sultry and glamorous, and therefore in a positive way, we concluded that it indirectly promoted the use of tobacco products."

The ASA ruled that ad must not be broadcast again in its current form, adding: “We told Mirage Cigarettes to ensure their future advertising did not promote the use of tobacco products.”
New rules published by the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP), which came into effect late last year, allow e-cigarettes to be shown in ads across UK media, but campaigns are banned from attempting to tap into youth culture or promote any link with tobacco products.

Ads must not encourage non-smokers to use e-cigarettes, must make clear that the product is an e-cigarette and not a tobacco product and must not contain anything that could be associated in the audience’s mind with a tobacco brand.