

ASA Adjudication on Scottish Safety Camera Programme Office

Scottish Safety Camera Programme Office

8th Floor, Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 0HF

Date:

12 June 2013

Media:

Internet (on own site)

Sector:

Non-commercial

Number of complaints:

1

Complaint Ref:

A13-219175

Ad

Claims on the home page of www.scottishsafetycameras.com stated "CAMERAS SAVE LIVES. View our recent research to find out why". Claims on the "Research" page of the website were headlined "Key Scottish safety camera statistics 2011 published 31/07/12". Text included a link to a press release by the Scottish Government and stated "Scotland's Chief Statistician today announced the release of Key Scottish Safety Camera Statistics 2011. This publication reports statistics relating to traffic casualties and offences at safety camera sites (speed cameras and red-light cameras) in Scotland.

The main findings are: The number of people killed or injured at safety camera sites each year is around 68% lower following a period of camera enforcement than in the period prior to safety camera enforcement ...".

Issue

Dorset Speed, an anti-speed camera group, challenged whether the claim "The number of people killed or injured at safety camera sites each year is around 68% lower following a period of camera enforcement than in the period prior to safety camera enforcement" was misleading and could be substantiated.

Response

Scottish Safety Camera Programme Office (SSCPO) said the claim was a direct quote from the most recent official Scottish Government statistical bulletin "Key Scottish Safety Camera Programme Statistics, 2011" (the Bulletin). The figures were a matter of fact and reflected accident numbers at the camera sites included in the report, before and after the cameras were enforced. They said the report was compiled from information gathered at Scottish Programme sites and made no claims about any causation factors attributed to either baseline or subsequent data or that reductions in casualties could be specifically attributed to safety cameras. They believed the Bulletin's conclusions were a statistical account of changes recorded at camera sites.

SSCPO believed that previous ASA adjudications accepted there was empirical evidence to support the claim "CAMERAS SAVE LIVES" where that claim appeared in the context of a website dedicated to providing information about safety cameras. They drew our attention to the conclusions of a four-year evaluation report, dated 2005, into the original safety camera project which was published by the Department for Transport. They said the claim had been in use on the website since 2007 and there were no plans to remove it.

Assessment

Not upheld

Dorset Speed believed the claim "SAFETY CAMERAS SAVE LIVES" together with the research implied the enforcement of safety cameras was the sole reason for the reduction of deaths, whereas they understood a reduction in speed was just one of a number of contributing factors. The ASA noted the text "This publication reports statistics relating to traffic casualties and offences at safety camera sites (speed cameras and red-light cameras) in Scotland. The main findings are ..." appeared before the "68% reduction" claim. Therefore, we considered that claim was likely to be understood by consumers as one which factually reported the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) at camera sites.

We understood from the Bulletin that safety camera partnerships had been required to collect data on road casualties at proposed camera sites for a period of three years prior to the start of camera enforcement (baseline figures). We understood from the Bulletin that due to the different enforcement periods of cameras throughout Scotland, the baseline data for all cameras did not come from the same period. For the purposes of the claim in the ad, the baseline averages referred to the baseline data collected for each camera and not to a fixed period in time. The sum of all relevant baseline data was divided by three (which was the number of years covered by the data) which then gave an estimate of the mean annual accident/injury numbers across all safety camera sites.

The data showed that in the three-year baseline period, the average number KSIs per year was 377 compared to an average of 108 KSIs per year in the three-year period following enforcement. The Bulletin stated "The number of people killed or seriously injured at safety camera sites is 68% lower after camera enforcement".

We considered it was clear from the Bulletin that its conclusions were based on data for the number of KSIs at camera sites before and after a period of enforcement. The home page of the website stated "CAMERAS SAVE LIVES. Visit our recent research to find out why". We considered the link to the research qualified the claim and consumers were likely to interpret it to mean the number of KSIs at camera sites had reduced since cameras were enforced. Because the data supported the claim there had been a 68% reduction in KSIs at camera sites, as claimed on the website, we concluded the claim had been substantiated and was not misleading.

We investigated the claim under CAP Code (Edition 12) rules 3.1 (Misleading advertising) and 3.7 (Substantiation) but did not find it in breach.

Action

No further action necessary.