

ASA Ruling on Profit Accumulator Ltd t/a Bonus Accumulator

Upheld | Social media (paid ad) | 14 October 2020

Background

Summary of Council decision:

Three issues were investigated, all of which were Upheld.

Ad description

A paid-for Facebook post and a website for casino bonus hunting service Bonus Accumulator:

- a. The paid-for Facebook post, seen on 9 June 2020, featured a video explaining how Bonus Accumulator's service worked. In one section of the video, a voiceover read through a number of testimonials from consumers, including one that stated "This is my 45th day of isolation ... this money is so welcome as I haven't earned anything in six weeks ...". At the end of the video the voiceover stated, "It is almost statistically certain that you will make a profit if you do enough offers".
- b. The website www.bonusaccumulator.com, seen on 14 June 2020, featured text that stated "Unlock the profits of Casino offers. Learn how some members make thousands a month from Casino offers". Alongside that was a video with an individual who stated, "...you may know how much money it's possible to make through matched betting, but

you might not know that it's possible to make even more using casino bonuses ... no matter who you are, whether you're completely new to casino offers, whether you're a casino pro, this site has been designed to transform your profits ... casino bonuses are not gambling because just like matched betting, we give you an edge that allows you to beat the bookies...".

Issue

The complainant challenged whether the claims:

1. "This is my 45th day of isolation ... this money is so welcome as I haven't earned anything in six weeks ..." in ad (a) was socially irresponsible because it suggested that casino bonus hunting could be a way to achieve financial security;
2. "It is almost statistically certain that you will make a profit if you do enough offers" in ad (a) and "casino bonuses are not gambling because just like matched betting, we give you an edge that allows you to beat the bookies..." in ad (b) were socially irresponsible; and
3. "It is almost statistically certain that you will make a profit" in ad (a) was misleading and could be substantiated.

Response

1. Profit Accumulator Ltd t/a Bonus Accumulator explained that "casino bonus hunting" was a system by which consumers could exploit casino bonuses where there was a statistical edge; the purpose of their service was to assist members in taking advantage of those free online casino bonuses and promotions. They said the statement "This is my 45th day of isolation ... this money is so welcome as I haven't earned anything in six weeks", which had been presented in ad (a) as a Facebook comment left by one of Profit Accumulator's consumers, was immaterial and not a key part of the ad.

They said that taken in the context of earlier statements in the ad, such as "I cannot promise you that you will make money", the statement was not irresponsible or materially significant. They said the ad presented casino bonus hunting as a way of earning extra money, and did not implore consumers to leave their jobs to take up bonus hunting as a source of income.

2. Bonus Accumulator said there was no chance of consumers who used the “risk free” section of their service losing money. They used the example of an online casino that offered 30 free slots spins for new customers. The bonus had no wagering requirement and any winnings could be withdrawn as cash, with no conditions attached. They highlighted that ad (a) stated winning was “almost” certain and that the full claim had included the preface “I cannot promise you that you will make money”. They said their “Bonus Accumulator” product was only marketed towards current and former consumers, so some level of knowledge among their target audience was assumed, and that their home page headline was “Take the next step”, which they said indicated the ad was directed towards consumers familiar with their offering.

3. Bonus Accumulator said that as a matter of mathematical fact, consumers who made enough bets using casino bonuses would have an “edge” over the relevant casino, guaranteeing a profit.

Assessment

1. & 2. Upheld

The CAP Code stated that advertisers must not suggest that gambling could be a solution to financial concerns, an alternative to employment or a way to achieve financial security. While we acknowledged that Bonus Accumulator’s service was not itself gambling, we considered that the purpose of the service was to facilitate gambling and we therefore assessed the ad with that in mind.

The ad was seen in the context of widespread news coverage of a developing major outbreak of novel coronavirus 2019-nCov, or COVID-19 (coronavirus). In that context, we considered that the statement “This is my 45th day of isolation ... this money is so welcome as I haven’t earned anything in six weeks ...” would have been interpreted by consumers to mean that the gambling system offered by the advertiser could be used as an alternative to employment and a way to achieve financial security for those who had lost earnings as a result of the coronavirus.

The CAP Code also stated that marketing communications must be prepared with a sense of responsibility to consumers and to society. We considered that the statement “It is almost statistically certain that you will make a profit if you do enough offers” in ad (a) could have the effect of encouraging consumers to start a long string of bets or similar gambling activities with online casinos, which could carry the risk of losing money beyond the bonus offered by those casinos.

We considered that while consumers could use the “risk free” section of Bonus Accumulator’s service, there was nothing to stop them from using higher risk sections. We also considered the statement “casino bonuses are not gambling because just like matched betting, we give you an edge that allows you to beat the bookies...” downplayed the risk involved in consumers gambling their own money once the initial bonus had been staked. We therefore concluded that ads (a) and (b) were socially irresponsible.

On those points ads (a) and (b) breached CAP Code (Edition 12) rule **1.3** (Social responsibility).

3. Upheld

We understood “casino bonus hunting” involved betting using promotional bonuses from online casinos, so that no loss was incurred; a profit could be made because the consumer did not have to pay for the stake. We noted that Bonus Accumulator’s service provided consumers with information on promotional offers, as well as directing them to particular bets and allowing them to calculate how much needed to be wagered.

Although we acknowledged that some of Bonus Accumulator’s customers would have previously been exposed to gambling services, Bonus Accumulator’s service was not itself a form of gambling or a licensed gambling operator. However, we considered that the purpose of the service was to facilitate gambling and we therefore assessed the ads with that in mind. Given that the product involved using a betting service, we considered that the claim that there was no risk involved was likely to be particularly enticing.

We understood that casino bonus hunting involved taking advantage of promotional ‘free’ bets and other, similar bonuses offered by online casino operators. Where casinos generally had an “edge” over consumers, where promotional bonuses were used, a profit could be made because the customer did not have to pay for their stake, and any edge was effectively cancelled out over the number of stakes made using the bonus. We noted that, theoretically, the system eliminated the chance of losing money, and acknowledged that if used correctly that would be the case with the advertiser’s service. However, we noted that the process was potentially long-winded and open to human error. We also considered that although the bonuses in and of themselves were free, there was nothing to stop consumers continuing to gamble their own money once they had gambled with the initial bonus. Those who gambled their own money were then open to any risk inherent in online casino gambling.

Additionally, we had not seen any evidence to demonstrate that any users of the system had been successful and achieved profits as a result of using the system. We therefore concluded that the system's success and profitability had not been substantiated, and so the claim "It is almost statistically certain that you will make a profit" was likely to mislead.

On that point ads (a) and (b) breached CAP Code (Edition 12) rule [3.1](#) (Misleading advertising), and [3.7](#) (Substantiation).

Action

The ads must not appear again in the form complained about. We told Profit Accumulator Ltd t/a Bonus Accumulator to ensure that future marketing communications did not present gambling as an alternative to employment or a way to achieve financial security, and to ensure future marketing communications did not irresponsibly downplay the risk involved in gambling. We also told Bonus Accumulator to ensure their marketing communications did not claim consumers were certain to make a profit.

CAP Code (Edition 12)

[1.3](#) [3.1](#) [3.7](#)

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