# Advertising Standards Authority rules misleading claims in Viagogo ad featuring Osborne and Balls



A recent ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) has deemed an advertisement featuring George Osborne and Ed Balls as misleading. The advertisement, which was broadcast during a podcast episode in April 2022, promoted the controversial ticket resale website Viagogo. Following scrutiny, the ASA concluded that the claims made during the promotion failed to provide an accurate representation of the ticket market.

Osborne, a former Chancellor of the Exchequer for the Conservative Party, and Balls, who served as the Labour Party's shadow chancellor, departed from their historical political rivalry to launch their podcast, “Political Currency,” in 2023. During the episode in question, Balls stated, “over half the events listed on Viagogo had tickets selling below face value,” while Osborne expressed enthusiasm about potentially utilising Viagogo for cheaper tickets to popular shows.

Viagogo, along with its competitors like StubHub, allows professional ticket traders—defined as those who sell more than 100 tickets annually—to purchase large quantities of tickets to popular events and resell them at significantly higher prices. This practice, often labelled as ticket touting, has come under increasing scrutiny from both the public and regulatory authorities, with allegations that fans are being exploited for profit.

The ASA's ruling specifically addressed Viagogo's claims regarding the percentage of events where tickets were available below face value. According to the ASA, the advertisement was based on Viagogo’s internal assessment that 53% of concert listings on the site included at least one ticket priced below face value. However, the ASA concluded that this claim was misleading, as consumers would interpret it to mean that multiple lower-priced tickets were available for those events. The authority found that the availability of just one ticket below face value per event did not constitute a reasonable opportunity for consumers, rendering the advertising claim unsubstantiated.

Further complicating the matter, the ASA challenged Viagogo's interpretation of “face value,” indicating that the addition of 20% extra fees significantly distorted the commonly understood price. This discrepancy was especially pertinent since it contradicted the definition used on Viagogo’s own website.

The complaint leading to the ASA ruling was submitted by the music industry advocacy group FanFair Alliance, which campaigns against for-profit resale and ticket touting. A spokesperson for FanFair dismissed Viagogo's claims as “laughable,” citing a 2019 report from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) that indicated between 80% and 100% of tickets sold through Viagogo were priced more than 20% above their face value.

In response to the ASA ruling, a spokesperson for Viagogo stated that the disputed advertisement from last year had been discontinued and was no longer airing. Furthermore, the spokesperson insisted that Viagogo remains "fully compliant in the UK."

Acast, the podcasting firm responsible for advertisements on the “Political Currency” show, is also part of this narrative, with additional questions raised about its role in managing the content of the podcast. The Guardian has sought comments from Acast regarding this matter.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.asa.org.uk/> - This website could provide information or cases regarding the Advertising Standards Authority's rulings on misleading advertisements, including potentially those involving Viagogo.
* <https://www.viagogo.com/> - Viagogo's official site would list tickets and provide terms related to their sales practices, potentially shedding light on how they define 'face value' and the fees they add.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/competition-and-markets-authority> - The Competition and Markets Authority's official website might contain reports or investigations related to Viagogo and similar ticket resale platforms, which would corroborate the CMA's findings from 2019.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/> - The Guardian often covers stories on consumer rights and advertising standards, potentially including articles about Viagogo and the ASA's ruling.
* <https://www.acast.com/> - Acast's website would provide information on their role in podcast advertising and content management, which could address concerns raised about their involvement in the 'Political Currency' podcast.