

# Online crashes out of line?

**Videos of accidents posted on website of in-car camera brand. It says it's raising awareness, but others disagree**

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**T**HE video showed an accident which was, in the words of a marketing professor, "gruesome".

Yet it was featured on the Singapore Facebook site of Blackvue, an in-car camera brand, prompting questions of whether it is ethical to use such videos in advertising.

Based on the footage, the taxi which had the camera installed was travelling at 76-77 kmh down a straight road.

From the right, a motorcyclist then cut across, attempting to turn into a petrol station on the cabby's left.

But he did not make it, and instead collided with the taxi and landed on the car's windscreen as the taxi mounted the kerb.

Police said the motorcyclist was taken conscious to Tan Tock Seng Hospital, with investigations ongoing.

Footage from the Feb 7, 7am accident along Paya Lebar Road was uploaded on Feb 18 with the title: "Wah! Jia Lat like that, die already??" "How to avoid such accident?"

As of Thursday evening, the footage received 431 shares. Dr Seshan Ramaswami, Associate Professor of Marketing Education at the Singapore Management University, pointed out that, unlike the biker, the camera owner was not even in the video.

He said he did not think it was ethical to use such footage in-car camera promotion, not without the consent of all parties filmed.

"Even if the speed (of the car) was within the limit, and this would make a good evidentiary case of innocence for the car driver, I still think it not appropriate to use these videos without the consent of all parties shown in the video," he said.

Other videos on the site and its affiliated YouTube account include crashes at junctions and head-on collisions, with such titles as "Ooi...ooi and crashed!"

Mr Gary Chia, product manager of Wow! Gadgets, the sole distributor of Blackvue cameras here, said captions used were actual words spoken by people in the videos.

Indeed, the cabby in the Feb 7 case is heard uttering the words used in the video title.

Mr Chia said the videos were for people to be aware that these accidents happen, and for people to drive safely.

"If the video can show mistakes people make while driving, they can be more vigilant," he said.

The videos were also for marketing purposes, as people may compare the clarity of their products to others', he said.

Mr Chia said he receives about 10 to 20 videos monthly either directly, or from his roughly 20 dealers, who in turn get it from their customers.

One such dealer, Mr Charles Tan, 30, said he didn't think the posting of these videos was unethical. "(The videos) are usually to tell road users to be careful, not so much for marketing," said the assistant manager of NightzConcepts, whose firm receives two or three videos from its customers monthly.

Mr Chia said he or his staff members also contact posters in other forums to get their videos.

While some videos come with "no strings attached", Mr Chia said he's compensated some with as much as the value of their camera purchases,



**VIEW TO A SPILL:** A Blackvue high-definition in-car camera (above). The camera brand's Facebook site has been featuring accident footage sent in by its customers. PICTURE: WOW! GADGETS

which could be between \$200 and \$500. He's done so for fewer than 10 customers so far, over the past six months.

"We don't publicly advertise this practice, it's by word of mouth. It's a win-win situation," said Mr Chia.

He emphasised that apart from worded slides or putting the video in slow motion, nothing is added to them.

"The videos are for sharing and debating. We cover up details like car registration numbers," he said.

## Spreading awareness?

A commenter on the Feb 18 post said he did not find the post unethical. The video wasn't primarily used to advertise the device, but to spread awareness on how dangerous roads could be, he said.

"While the product's model was added in the top right corner, there was no effort made to showcase the superior recording ability of the camera."

But another netizen, who has been using Blackvue for a year and had "liked" the post, said he thought the captions could have been more appropriate. "In some of the videos, the victim may have been killed. Such comments are not nice when these videos can go viral," said the user, who declined to be named.

On the hand, a taxi driver who wanted to be known as Mr Hirwan, 40, said he found such videos "totally crude".

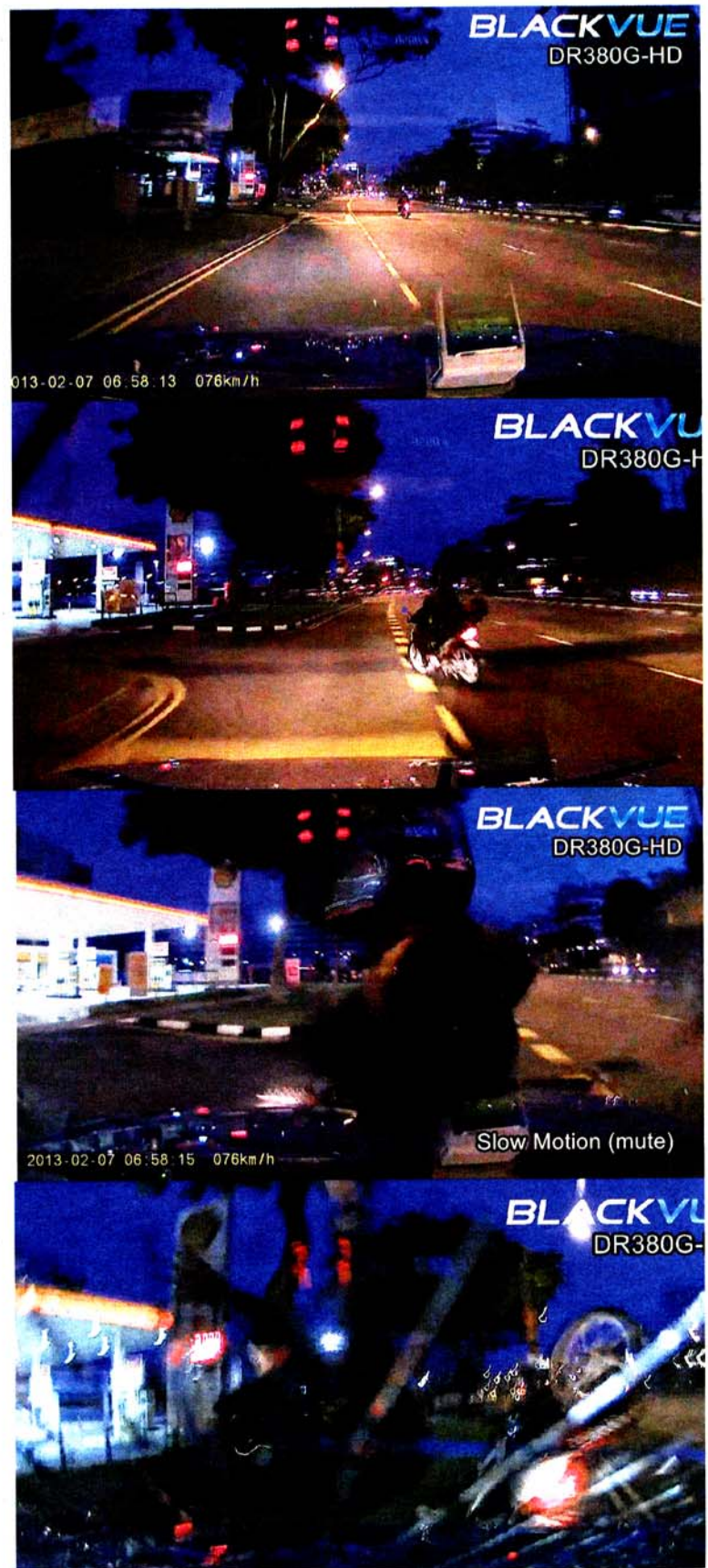
"It's fine if drivers want to use these cameras to safeguard themselves.

"But drivers who put the footage online are just being 'kaypoh' (busybody in Hokkien)," he said.

"It's wrong to capitalise on other people getting hurt."

An Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore spokesman said the Singapore Code of Advertising (SCAP) did not have guidelines for the use of videos of real-life examples in advertising.

Even so, advertisers may need to consider privacy issues arising from such videos and their suitability for general viewing, he said, adding that ASAS and the Consumers Association of Singapore have not censured any companies for using such videos.



"Advertising in Singapore is self-regulatory. The essence of SCAP is that advertisements must be legal, truthful, honest and decent," said the spokesman.

Associate Professor Ang Swee Hoon of the National University of Singapore's Business School agreed that advertisers must be mindful not to cross the civic boundary.

"The boundary becomes less clear given the virtual environment, where almost anything is posted on YouTube and Facebook. Smaller personal space becomes the norm.

"Hence, what is considered as being stepping out of line becomes more acceptable," she said.

**CAPTURED:** Screen grabs of an accident video taken from Blackvue's Facebook page.