

### **ASCI Annual Complaints Report 2021-22: Digital medium in sharp focus as the self-regulatory body sees overall 62% increase in objectionable ads**

- ~ Digital ecosystem takes centre stage with new categories like crypto and gaming in the top 5 violative categories ~
- ~ Education remains the single largest violative sector, followed by health care and personal care ~

**Mumbai, June 28, 2022:** The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) released its annual complaints report for the period April 21 – March 22, during which it processed 5,532 advertisements across mediums including print, digital, and television. With a sharp focus on the digital domain, ASCI saw an overall compliance rate of **94%**.

In 2021-22, ASCI processed a whopping 62% more ads compared to the previous year, and 25% more complaints. While television and print ads remained in focus, ASCI greatly broadened its ambit by proactively monitoring advertising in the digital landscape. Nearly 48% of the ads processed belonged to the digital medium. With the influencer guidelines coming into force last year, complaints against influencers constituted 29% of the total grievances. Complaints regarding misleading claims in ads featuring celebrities saw a 41% increase out of which a staggering 92% were found to be violating ASCI’s guidelines.

ASCI continued its proactive surveillance and 75% of ads processed were picked up suo-motu. This included the AI-based monitoring that ASCI has set up for digital tracking. Complaints from consumers constituted 21% of complaints, followed by intra-industry at 2% and CSO/ Government complaints at 2%. Out of the 5,532 total ads processed, 39% were not contested by the advertiser, 55% of them were found to be objectionable after investigation, and complaints against 4% of ads were dismissed as not violating the ASCI code. 94% of ads that ASCI processed needed changes so as not to violate the ASCI code.

Given its focus on digital monitoring, emerging categories included the relatively new categories of virtual digital assets and online real money gaming, contributing significantly to objectionable ads at 8% each. Education (33%), Healthcare (16%), and Personal Care (11%) were the top 3 violative categories.

ASCI has also upgraded its complaints system “TARA” in order to offer a seamless experience to both consumers and advertisers in the management and resolution of complaints. Features like

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real-time tracking of complaints make the experience similar to what one would expect from any contemporary tech platform.

**Talking about the annual report, Subhash Kamath, Chairman, ASCI shared:** “2021-22 was the year we followed through on our promise of increasingly monitoring the digital media given the way it has been dominating the advertising landscape. We invested heavily in technology and that has worked quite well. We also upgraded our complaints system which has made it very easy for consumers to register their complaints and for advertisers to respond to it. Going ahead, we will continue to be at the forefront in understanding how best to regulate and monitor the digital frontier, even as we keep streamlining our processes to become more responsive, and more proactive.”

**Sharing her thoughts about the annual report, Manisha Kapoor, CEO & Secretary General, ASCI, said:** “The ASCI team, the Consumer Complaints Council, the Honorable ex-high court judges on our review panel, and our domain experts have debated the nuances of advertising and scientific evidence of thousands of ads to ensure that the process and outcomes are fair to both consumers as well as advertisers. Simultaneously, the constant update to our code ensures that we constantly offer guidance and transparency to consumers and advertisers on newer and emerging formats and categories. This helps in keeping self-regulation at the frontier of advertising developments.”

**Read the report here:** <https://ascionline.in/images/pdf/complaint-report-2021-22.pdf>

### **About The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)**

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), established in 1985, is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising ensuring the protection of the interest of consumers. ASCI seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest and truthful and not hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition. ASCI looks into complaints across ALL MEDIA such as Print, TV, Radio, hoardings, SMS, Emailers, Internet / website, product packaging, brochures, promotional material and point of sale material etc. In January 2017, the Supreme Court of India in its judgement affirmed and recognized the self-regulatory mechanism as an effective pre-emptive step to statutory provisions in the sphere of advertising content regulation for TV and Radio in India. ASCI’s role has been acclaimed by various Government bodies including The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Ministry of AYUSH as well as the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). MIB issued an advisory for a scroller providing ASCI’s WhatsApp for Business number 77100 12345, to be carried by all TV broadcasters for consumers to register their grievance against objectionable advertisements. In

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2021, ASCI signed an agreement with FSSAI to track and report potentially misleading advertisements from the food & beverage sector. On the international front, in 2021, ASCI Secretary – General, Ms. Manisha Kapoor was elected as one of the four Vice-President’s on the Executive Committee of the International Council on Ad Self-Regulation (ICAS). Among several awards bestowed by the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), ASCI bagged a Gold Global Best Practice Award for the Mobile App “ASCIonline” (2016), a special recognition for its “Guidelines for Celebrities in Advertising” at the first-ever ‘Global Awards for Effective Advertising Self-Regulation’ hosted by the ICAS (2019). In 2021, ASCI also won two ICAS awards, one for the ASCI scroll telecast across television in the ‘Best Awareness Raising Initiative’ and for its extensive digital suo-motu monitoring through NAMS initiative, in the ‘Special Category’. It also got a special mention in the ‘Best Sectoral Initiative’ category for its efforts and regulatory recognition of its Gaming Guidelines.

**For further information, please contact:**

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