

ASCI sets new standards for itself, pushes for prevention and for helping industry “get it right” under new chairman NS Rajan

Mumbai, September 29, 2022: At the board meeting following the 36th annual general meeting of the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) today, NS Rajan, Director, August One Partners LLP, was unanimously elected as Chairman of the Board of Governors of the industry's self-regulator. NS Rajan is a public relations (PR) veteran with a demonstrated history of setting up and managing firms in the PR industry. He was earlier the Founder and Managing Director of Ketchum Sampark, an Omnicom Group Company.

Saugata Gupta, Managing Director & CEO, Marico Limited, was elected Vice-Chairman, while Shashidhar Sinha, Chief Executive Officer at IPG Mediabrands India, was appointed Honorary Treasurer. Subhash Kamath, the outgoing chairman, will now be a part of the Consultative Committee of the board, which, among other activities, mentors the new initiatives of the organisation. Virat Tandon, Group CEO of Lintas India, and Arun Srinivas, Director, GMS India (Meta), were newly inducted onto the board at the same meeting.

Talking about his new role as the ASCI Chairman, NS Rajan said, *“It is indeed a privilege to take up the role of ASCI Chairman. Our thought leadership initiatives, industry reports and ASCI Academy are important pillars of taking ASCI ahead into the future. I am looking forward to advancing the agenda of the Council to rapidly increase ASCI awareness among consumers so that they engage more readily and in greater numbers, voicing their concerns, anxieties, and questions about what they experience in the form of thousands of ads per day. That number, on average, in India is anywhere between 7000-10000 ads per day!*

I would also focus on ASCI's efforts more towards prevention, in addition to the robust corrective mechanisms we have built over the decades. This we would do by using the several initiatives already in play – whether advice, guidance, training, or self-regulation.

The third pillar would be to keep ahead of the fast-expanding and fractionalising digital domain to ensure that responsible advertising principles are followed equally across all media and consumer engagements by advertising in every form. A lot has been done by ASCI over the last several years, and I am committed to seeing that the momentum generated by all past efforts is kept alive or even pushed forward with greater speed.”

A key initiative announced at the AGM by the outgoing Chairman, Subhash Kamath was the soon-to-be-launched ASCI Academy. ASCI Academy is set to move ASCI in the direction of training and awareness creation, and deep engagement with various stakeholders in the prevention of objectionable ads. This underlines ASCI's move to create impact at the point of creation, and not merely the point of publication. A more detailed agenda for ASCI Academy will be unveiled over the next few weeks and months.

Speaking about his two-term tenure as ASCI Chairman, Subhash Kamath said: *“The past two years have been truly transformational for ASCI. Our vision of making ASCI more future-ready by taking on the challenges of a digital world and a fast-changing communication landscape, and by adding value to the industry through more agility, responsiveness, services, and thought leadership, has started showing results. I’m sure ASCI will continue to grow from strength to strength in the coming years. It’s been a privilege to serve as its chairman and I thank the board, the CCC members and the wonderful secretariat team for making it possible.”*

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 consumer interests. 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 recognised the self-regulatory mechanism as an effective pre-emptive step to statutory provisions in the sphere of advertising content regulation for television 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. On the international front, in 2021, ASCI CEO and 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-moto monitoring through the 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.

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