

## ASCI's updated advertising guidelines for the education sector focus on students' mental health and physical well-being.

- *The updated guidelines highlight the need for ads to refrain from messaging that can cause physical or mental harm to school students and exploit their vulnerability*
- *Guidelines are formalised after being placed for consultation with the public and various stakeholders*

Mumbai, May 30, 2023: The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) updated its guidelines for advertising educational institutions, programmes, and platforms after rigorous rounds of public consultation. The exercise was undertaken with the aim of establishing a set of just and equitable principles that concern a critical industry in the country: education. Public consultation for the guidelines started on March 14, 2023, and was concluded on April 15, 2023.

Education has been among the top violative sectors for the past few years when it comes to advertising. In its Annual Complaints Report 2022–23, classical education ranked second among the top violative categories with 13.8% of total ads that did not adhere to ASCI's guidelines.

While ASCI's existing education guidelines require educational entities to substantiate any claims they make in their advertisements with relevant evidence, this latest update ensures that the advertisers are also mindful that their ads consider the students' mental and physical well-being. The amendments state that ads by educational institutions, including universities, colleges and schools, coaching classes, EdTech platforms and others that offer education and training programmes should not stereotype students based on their gender, or appearance, nor portray those who score low as unsuccessful or failures.

Further to complying with the general rules of ASCI's Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising, and the existing education sector guidelines, the advertisements of educational institutions, programmes and platforms will now have to comply with the following additional guidelines:

- An advertisement may not show school students compromising on sleep or meals to study as this normalises unhealthy habits which are detrimental to student health.
- While an advertisement may show disappointment with low scores, it must not portray an average or poor scorer as an unsuccessful student or a failure, or show him/ her/ them as demotivated, depressed or unhappy, or receiving less love or appreciation from parents, teachers or peers.

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- An advertisement must not create a false sense of urgency or fear of missing out that could accentuate anxieties amongst school students, or their parents.
- While an advertisement may feature students of any gender, the advertisement must not suggest that certain subjects are associated with particular genders alone. Advertisements must also not suggest that students with high scores are always associated with stereotypical characteristics such as wearing thick glasses. This does not prevent advertisements from depicting such students so long as they do not suggest that only these students are successful.

Responding to the new guidelines, **Shri Rohit Kumar Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Consumer Affairs** said, "Education advertising touches almost every citizen in the country. Ensuring the sanctity of advertising in this sector is an important task. The ASCI guidelines address the various issues that plague the sector and we hope that the industry will follow these in letter and spirit. I would like to reiterate that misleading ads are also a violation of the Consumer Protection Act and all necessary steps will be taken to keep our citizens safe".

Talking about the amendment to education guidelines, **Manisha Kapoor, CEO and Secretary General, ASCI**, said: "In addition to ads not being misleading, the updated guidelines also provide for the physical and mental well-being of students, particularly school students. While fierce pressure in education is a reality, advertising must not perpetuate this problem. normalise it or exploit student and parental vulnerability. Based on our Ed-Next study, such issues were identified, and post extensive consultation with different stakeholders, we are now issuing the updated guidelines. ASCI remains deeply committed to consumer protection, and we will continue to update our Code to reflect contemporary and emerging concerns in advertising content".

For the updated guidelines, please visit the link: [bit.ly/43eVLFo](https://bit.ly/43eVLFo)

### **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

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(DoCA), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the 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 grievances against objectionable advertisements. On the international front, in 2023, ASCI CEO and Secretary General, Ms Manisha Kapoor was re-elected as one of the four Vice-Presidents 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 "ASCI online" (2016), 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. ASCI received the ICAS Global "Inspiration Award" in April 2023 for successfully promoting ASCI as a thought leader and developing impactful engagement with various stakeholders.

For further information, please contact:

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