



**2024 - 2025**

# **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT**



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## ABOUT THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA

Established in 1985, The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is the self-regulatory body of the Indian advertising industry. ASCI resolves issues around

- Dishonest or misleading ads
- Indecent or offensive ads
- Harmful ads
- Ads that are unfair in competition.

ASCI looks at advertisements across all media types and formats such as TV, print, digital, outdoor, radio, point of sale, claims made on packaging and so on.

ASCI works closely with different stakeholders in the matter of consumer protection. ASCI's code is part of The Advertising Code enshrined within the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1994, providing it with a legal backstop.

### Complaints management

ASCI's speedy, independent and low-cost complaint management approach ensures that both consumers and industry have the opportunity for a fair resolution.

All stakeholders can register their complaints at no cost via [www.ascionline.in](http://www.ascionline.in)

ASCI's independent jury (The Consumer Complaints Council or CCC) comprises 40 eminent professionals, both from the industry as well as from civil society, who review complaints on a weekly basis and provide their recommendations.



Three retired high court judges hear appeals from complainants or advertisers who may wish to contest a CCC recommendation.



Eminent technical experts from over 20 fields support the CCC and the Review Panel.



### ASCI Academy

To support the industry get it right, the ASCI Academy builds the capacity of all stakeholders in creating responsible and progressive advertising. The Academy offers an array of services to raise standards of advertising through training, education, outreach, and thought leadership on the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

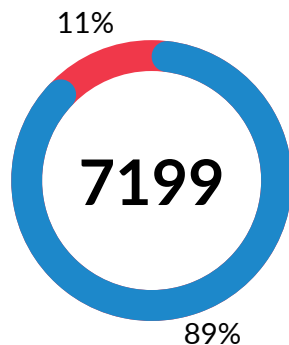
- **E-learning Certification:** Get certified with our snappy e-learning courses that helps the industry stay abreast of the changing regulatory/self-regulatory landscape.
  - The ASCI Guide to Responsible Advertising is designed for the brand, marketing, regulatory compliance and creative teams
  - The ASCI Responsible Influencing Playbook is specifically tailored for influencers
- **ASCI Masterclass**, an on-campus or hybrid immersive workshop with in-depth case studies, group working sessions, role plays, quizzes and much more.
- **ASCI Advisory Service** Get your storyboards/scripts assessed by an expert panel so you get your ad right rather than make expensive changes later.
- **Endorser Due Diligence** service to help endorsers meet their obligations not to make misleading claims and potentially violate the law.
- **Thought Leadership reports and White Papers** on topics impacting advertising and consumer protection to drive meaningful dialogue and provide actionable insights to industry stakeholders.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS APRIL 2024-MARCH 2025



**9599**

complaints looked into by ASCI.



**7199**

ads scrutinised for potential violation by ASCI.

**89%** of these came from our proactive work, much of it enabled through our internal digital ad monitoring system; **11%** related to complaints received from external sources.



**98%**

of the overall ads scrutinised required some modification.

**59%**

of the ads that were investigated were not contested and promptly withdrawn or modified by the advertiser.



6827 digital ads

**94.8%**

Ads scrutinised for potential violation appeared on the digital medium.

**68%**

of the ads on digital medium were sponsored ads on social media platforms.

**32%**

of the digital ads relate to claims on companies' own websites and social media accounts.

## GREATEST NUMBER OF VIOLATIONS WERE FROM MISLEADING ADS AND ADS OF HARMFUL CATEGORIES



**56%**

ads were found to be misleading consumers due to a lack of **Honest Representations**



**47.5%**

ads promoted harmful products or depicted dangerous situations, failing to adhere to the code **Against Harmful Products/Situations**



**0.5%**

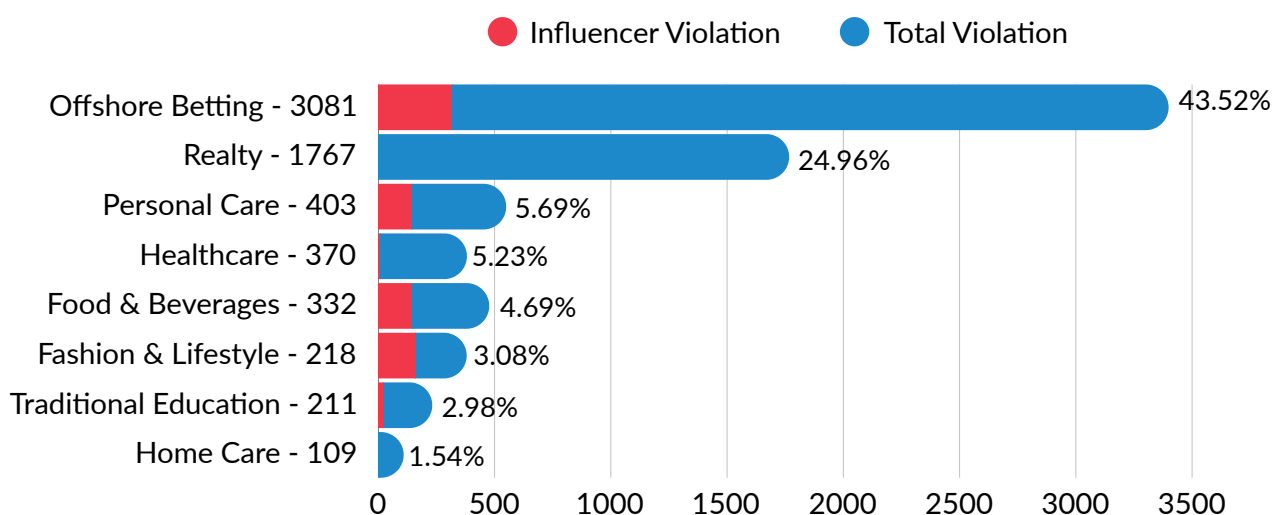
ads featured objectionable content, and fell short on being **Non-Offensive to Public**



**0.2%**

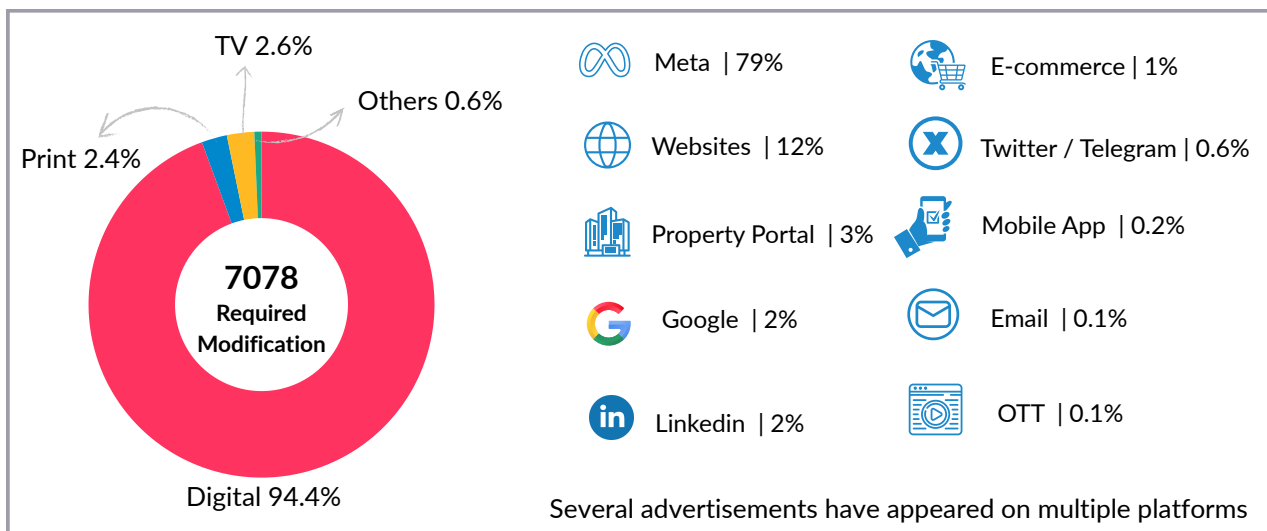
ads missed the mark on being **Fair in Competition**

## OFFSHORE BETTING AND REALTY SECTORS MOST VIOLATIVE



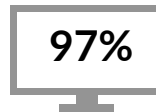
Base: 7078 ads that required modification

## 94% OF VIOLATIONS WERE FOUND ON DIGITAL MEDIA



## 83% OVERALL VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE

### Higher compliance recorded on Print and TV



Compliance with ASCI recommendations demonstrates a strong industry commitment to self-regulation, with traditional media like TV and print showing near-perfect adherence at 98%.

## 100% ADS PICKED UP WITH GREEN CLAIMS LACKED NECESSARY EVIDENCE

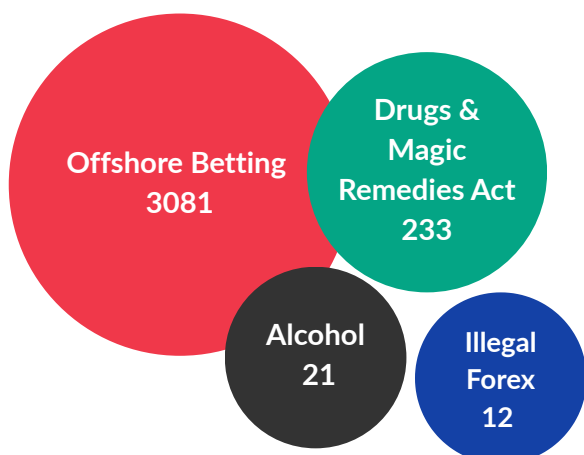
ASCI investigated **211 advertisements** for potentially making false or exaggerated environmental claims, compared to 34 such ads the year before owing to our proactive monitoring efforts. **100% of these ads required modification** as they lacked the evidence to back up their green claims.

**98 ads** came from **home care**, particularly cleaning products, followed by **34 ads** from **fashion & lifestyle** and **19 ads** from **personal care** categories, making them the top 3 violative categories making green claims. Many brands claimed their products were "**eco-friendly**" or "**environmentally safe**" without showing adequate proof. Other common claims included "**sustainable**," "**biodegradable**," "**plastic-free**" etc. terms that weren't either fully explained or supported by facts.

**45% of the ads that were flagged were uncontested** by the brands. **14% of the cases were escalated** to the regulator for non-compliance with ASCI Code, as well as in potential violation of the CCPA Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Greenwashing.

As more people care about sustainability, brands must stay honest and clear about what their products actually do for the environment so consumers can make informed choices.

## HIGH PREVALENCE OF ADS PROHIBITED BY LAW - 3347 ADS REPORTED TO GOVERNMENT REGULATORS



ASCI has been escalating advertisements that are prohibited by law to appropriate regulators for appropriate action. The number of such ads **increased from 2,707 in 2023-24 to 3,347 in 2024-25**. These ads pertain to laws prohibiting advertising of harmful products like betting/gambling, drugs claiming magic health remedies, alcohol, and tobacco. These ads are rampant online.

### OFFSHORE BETTING & GAMBLING ADS

A huge surge in reporting of offshore betting and gambling ads was seen, from 1,311 the previous year to **3,081 cases this year**. A partnership between ASCI and the online gaming federations starting January 2025 established a special monitoring unit, which helped in greater scrutiny of such ads.

The special monitoring unit identified many illegal betting platforms being promoted through disguised ads on community and fan pages, including brand tickers and influencer bios. **318 influencers were identified, promoting offshore gambling ads on social media.**

Many **community pages** also showcased individuals claiming exaggerated gains from placing minimal bets, with embedded links to the betting platforms, often generating high viewer engagement.

Additionally, several **digital posts impersonating actors, news anchors, and other well-known personalities**, showcasing how they profited from these platforms, were flagged for urgent attention to government regulators.

These ads were all in violation of Chapter 3 of the ASCI Code, which prohibits the promotion of products or services banned under the law.

In light of the significant risks such offshore betting advertisements pose to consumer safety, ASCI's special monitoring unit has intensified its surveillance efforts and will continue to bring these to the attention of the regulators for necessary action. It may be noted that most of these companies do not have an Indian presence, even though they actively target Indian consumers.

### OTHER SECTORS POTENTIALLY VIOLATING THE LAW

**233 ads** were reported to the Ministry of AYUSH for **potential violation of the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act, 1954 (DMR)**.

**21 ads directly promoting alcohol beverages** on social media were reported to Ministry of Information & Broadcasting.

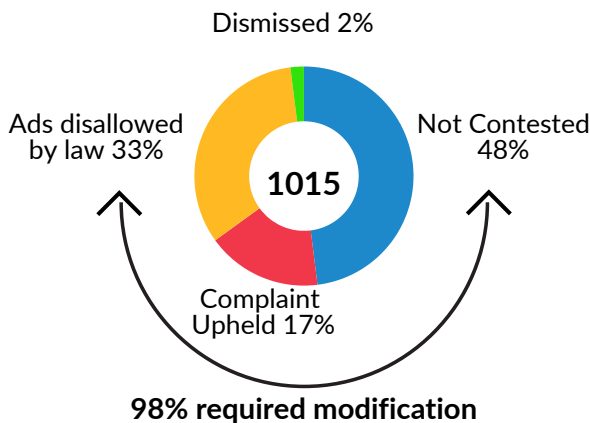
**12 ads promoting unauthorised forex trading apps** were reported to RBI. The RBI Alert List flags entities and platforms not authorised to deal in forex or operate electronic trading platforms under FEMA or the 2018 RBI directions.



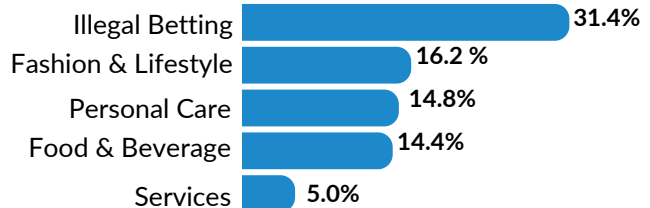
### 1755 ADS REPORTED TO MAHARERA UNDER THE ASCI-MAHARERA MOU

**1755 ads** in the real estate sector in Maharashtra were found in **potential contravention of regulatory requirements under the applicable MahaRERA Act**. These ads were reported for non-compliance for the **absence of mandatory requirements** of including the **project registration numbers, QR codes with details of the project**, and other essential information. Based on ASCI's work, the regulator imposed fines on builders.

## 1015 INFLUENCER ADS INVESTIGATED



### Influencer Violations - Top 5 Categories



Base: 995 Ads found in violation

Out of the 1015 advertisements processed for influencers violations, 98% required modification. While 48% promptly made corrections to their posts, one third were found to be promoting products that are disallowed by law. On average, 75% of the non-contested ads were modified within 5 business days. 83% (as on May 14, 2025) influencers have complied.

### ASCI'S DIPSTICK STUDY SEPT-NOV 2024, REVEALED MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF INDIA'S TOP DIGITAL STARTS VIOLATED DISCLOSURE GUIDELINES

Out of 100 influencer posts reviewed, only 29% had proper disclosures, while 2% cases were dismissed due to evidence of no material connection. Alarming, 69% violated disclosure norms, with 56.8% lacking disclosure labels entirely and 43.2% having disclosures improperly placed within hashtags. 59 non-compliant influencers readily agreed to corrections, 5 did so after jury recommendations, and 5 (7%) were escalated to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting for continued non-compliance. The Fashion & Lifestyle (27.5%), Telecom Products (21.7%), and Personal Care (13%) sectors were the primary offenders, accounting for 62% of all violations.

## 121 LINKEDIN VIOLATIONS PROCESSED

Unlike mainstream social media platforms where paid promotions are now routine, brand collaborations on LinkedIn are still relatively new. Although LinkedIn introduced its "Brand Partnership" label about two years ago, limited usage and poor visibility mean many remain unaware of it. LinkedIn has seen professionals posting favourable views about products, services, or ad campaigns without disclosing their material connections.

This lack of transparency is misleading. When influencers fail to declare material connections—using simple labels like "Ad" or "Partnership" which are prominent and unmissable, audiences may mistake sponsored content for independent opinion. The onus is on the influencer to ensure clarity and to uphold trust on a platform built to promote professional credibility.

Since January 2025, ASCI has investigated 121 LinkedIn influencer posts flagged by users for failing to disclose material connections. These influencers—often senior professionals, consultants, and business leaders—are expected to be more informed than typical social media creators. In light of this, ASCI issued an advisory urging all LinkedIn influencers to comply with the ASCI Guidelines for Influencers in Digital Media and the CCPA regulations under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Failure to comply doesn't just risk personal credibility—it could also harm the reputation of the organisations such influencers represent.



## REDUCING TURNAROUND TIME FOR COMPLAINT RESOLUTION BY 46%

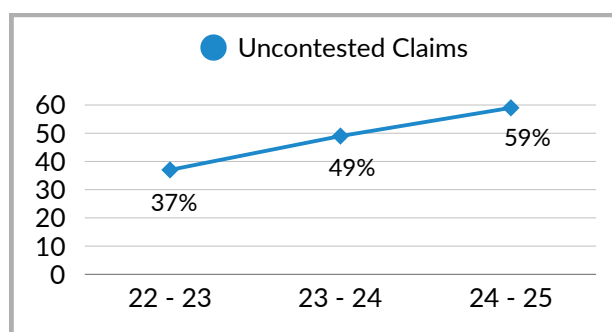


Recognising the need for quicker outcomes in an environment where advertising campaigns are short-lived, ASCI took steps to bring about a **remarkable 46% reduction in complaint turnaround time (TAT)**. The average TAT now stands at 16 days from the time a complaint is lodged to its resolution.

This was achieved due to a combination of factors such as an increase in uncontested claims, and more efficient processing of contested claims. This will continue to remain a focus area.

### DRIVING QUICK RESOLUTIONS VIA UNCONTESTED CLAIMS

Almost 90% of the advertisers we process complaints against are digital brands, often lacking specialised legal or marketing teams. Efforts were made by case officers to proactively engage with such advertisers and explain why we considered their ads to be in potential violation of our code. In many cases, this resulted in the advertiser agreeing to modify or withdraw the ad. In technical cases, where data was prima facie insufficient or unavailable, the case officer would recommend possible corrective actions addressing the potential violations.



Year on year rise in cases with uncontested claims

As a result, 59% of ads picked up by ASCI in the year 2024-25 were resolved without the advertisers contesting them vs. 49% in the year 2023-24, and 37% in the year 2022-23. These cases are considered resolved once the advertiser confirms a no-contest and does not proceed to the jury. This helps to drive down the average turnaround time significantly.

Meeting consumer and stakeholder expectations around speedy resolutions demonstrates the tremendous value of self-regulation. Our constant improvements on resolution time and processes address consumers' need for agile and effective action via a robust, fair process. Together, these efforts have led to faster, more efficient processes that align with both consumer expectations and organisational goals.



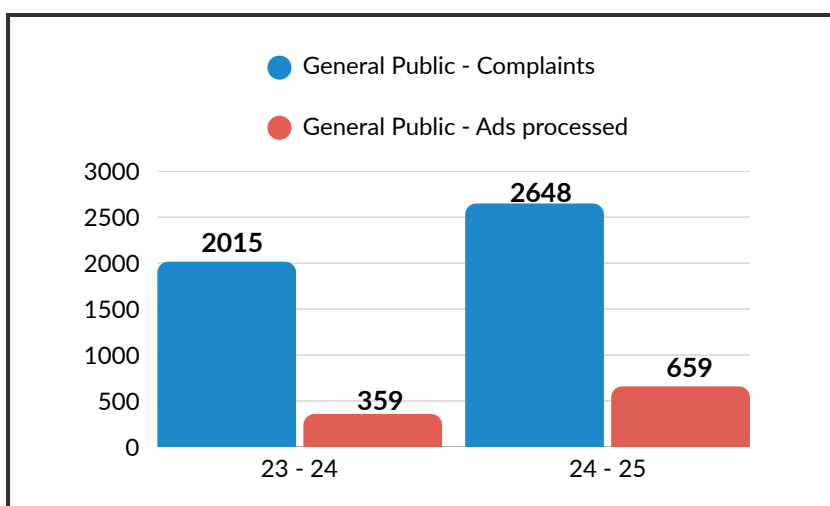
## 83.5% INCREASE IN ADS PROCESSED FROM GENERAL PUBLIC COMPLAINTS

During the year, ASCI processed complaints against a total of 659 advertisements, that came from members of the general public; a marked increase from 359 in 2023-2024. 105 such cases were referred via social media tags. 90% of the social media tags were processed for violations, primarily involving LinkedIn influencers for failing to disclose material connections.

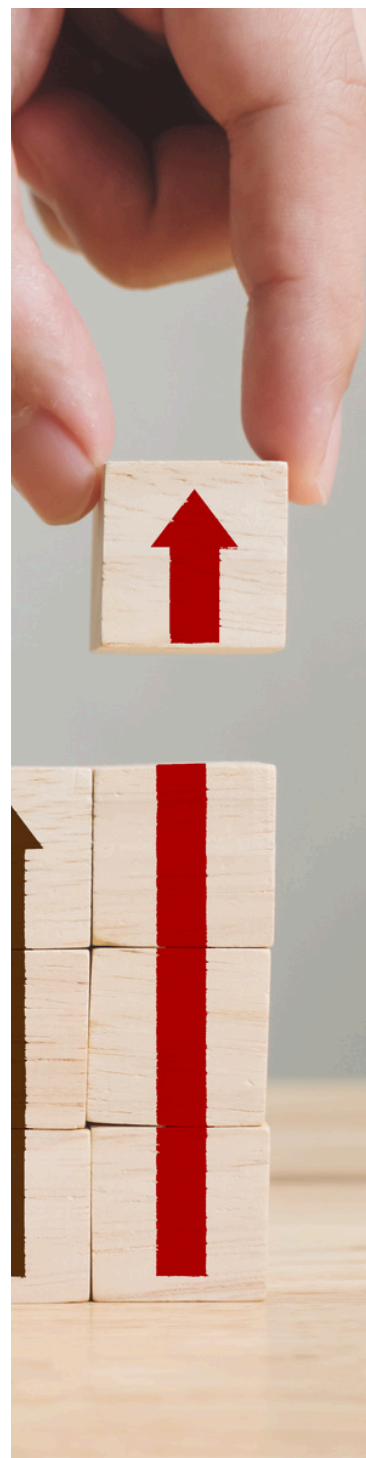
The ASCI team actively monitors social media tags to identify potential violations brought to its attention. This allows for speedy processing, giving consumers an easy way to share their concerns with ASCI.

Besides the significant rise in ads processed from consumer complaints, there has been a rise in overall number of complaints from the general public. While some of these complaints raise issues beyond ASCI's purview, this increase reflects a growing public awareness of ASCI and a strengthened trust in its redressal mechanisms. For complaints that lie outside the purview of ASCI, we ensure that consumers are redirected to the relevant authorities for appropriate resolution.

This reaffirms ASCI's continued commitment to safeguarding consumer interests from misleading and harmful advertising content.



Total number of general public complaints received and ads processed vs. previous year



### IMPORTANT LINKS:



[Click here for Cases Handled](#)



[Click here to register a complaint](#)

*In the digital era, ASCI has constantly pushed the boundaries to deliver on the most important areas of consumer protection. Our focused efforts on betting and gambling, working together with the government, are a good example of all stakeholders being committed to making a difference. We will continue to focus on areas of high impact and build our expertise in monitoring the advertising landscape.*



## MASTER COMPLIANCE WITH ASCI ACADEMY

### AD ADVICE



ASCI's Advertising Advice Service helps advertisers proactively identify potential violations of the ASCI code before investing in campaign production and media. It offers pre-publication guidance at any stage of your communication or campaign development process. Often, advertising claims lack the necessary evidence ASCI requires, leading to campaign disruptions if complaints are upheld. This service helps avoid such risks by assisting advertisers in finding solutions that ensure their advertising remains honest, truthful, non-offensive, fair, and free from harmful portrayals. [Click to know more.](#)

### MASTERCLASS



The ASCI Masterclass is a half-day, on-site or hybrid workshop for your marketing, creative, and regulatory teams. It explains ASCI code nuances and ad ethics via cases, showing Consumer Complaints Council operations and ASCI processes. Customised by industry, it helps your team ensure ASCI and consumer law compliant campaigns. Praised by top firms, this series greatly improves ad campaign development.

### E-LEARNING CERTIFICATION COURSES



Avoid campaign disruptions caused by unintentional errors! This certification program provides the groundwork for ethical advertising that builds strong consumer relationships. [The ASCI Guide to Responsible Advertising](#) helps you: ensure compliance from the outset, enhance your brand's reputation, demonstrate commitment to ethical standards, stay within regulatory boundaries, and boost your career with responsible, impactful ads.

Navigating brand-influence collaborations can lead to unintentional ethical oversights. [The ASCI Responsible Influencing Playbook](#) is a user-friendly course that empowers influencers and influencer management teams to maintain responsible influence. You'll learn to: distinguish between legal and authentic endorsements to prevent unintentional violations; share genuine recommendations that resonate with your audience; understand your legal responsibilities to safeguard yourself; and strengthen your ethical endorsement and disclosure skills, fostering a trustworthy and credible influencer community.

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## COMPLAINT FAQs

### Who can complain against an advertisement to ASCI?

ASCI accepts complaints from everybody. A complainant can be a member of:

- The General Public
- The Industry
- Consumer Organisations
- Government

### What information do I have to provide in order to register a complaint?

In order to successfully register a complaint with ASCI, the following information is required:

- The name of the advertiser or brand
- The time, date and medium in which the ad appeared
- The name of the product or service that was being advertised
- A copy of the ad or a brief description of it
- Your specific objections including any specific claims/visual frames you have an objection to and the reasons
- Your name and contact details (we keep this information confidential if you are a member of the public, and this information is only used for ASCI's communication with you)

### Does ASCI publish details of recommendations made by the Consumer Complaints Council (CCC)?

Yes, the independent Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) recommendations are published on our website once the complaint is resolved/ closed.

### What kind of complaints does ASCI handle?

You can complain to ASCI when you come across an advertisement that is

- Misleading or untruthful
- Indecent or vulgar
- Unsafe or can cause physical or societal harm
- Unfair to other products or brands

### What kind of complaints against ads does ASCI NOT handle:?

ASCI self-regulates the CONTENT of advertising for the advertising industry. Even though the following relate to ads, these are NOT covered by the ASCI code and hence we cannot process complaints related to the following:

- Duration/frequency/volume of advertisements
- Product or service deficiency cases
- Fraud cases
- Refund issues
- Counterfeit products
- Issues with content of programme
- Network quality issues
- Political, non-commercial government advertising.
- Violation of law
  - For eg. Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950;
  - Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act
  - Direct liquor/tobacco advertising
  - Violation of code of medical ethics
- Pop-up ads
- Spam emails
- Unsolicited SMS
- Sub-judice cases
- Advertisements not meant for Indian audiences (cross-border complaints)
- Pricing issues
- Public notice, news articles and press releases



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