ASCI Academy launches e-learning course on ethical UI/UX to push higher compliance with dark pattern guidelines

Course to help organisations stay compliant with ASCI codes, law

Covers how design can impair decision making, identifies deceptive patterns and offers ethical alternatives

Mumbai, 13 January 2026: ASCI Academy, the training arm of the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), has launched an e-learning course titled 'Ethical UI/UX Designs: Building Consumer Trust' designed for digital marketers, e-commerce companies, product professionals, and designers. The course has been launched in collaboration with Hindustan Unilever Ltd (HUL).

At a time when there is increasing focus on compliance, with the government cracking down on unethical practices like dark patterns, the course is especially significant because it deepens the understanding of how interface design influences user behaviour. It does this while reinforcing ethical standards, transparency and trust in digital experiences, in line with regulatory frameworks and ASCI's codes.

The launch comes at a time when dark patterns have come under increasing regulatory scrutiny globally and in India. An independent survey by LocalCircles found that, of the 26 major digital platforms that had declared that their services were free of dark patterns, 21 were still using one or more prohibited deceptive design tactics, such as hidden fees at checkout (drip pricing), forced action prompts and basket sneaking. This was happening even after self-certification, highlighting the need for a better and more nuanced understanding of dark patterns and ethical alternatives to the same. LocalCircles is a community social media platform connecting citizens with the government.

ASCI's 40-minute e-learning course has three modules. The first introduces UI and UX, explaining how design choices influence user decisions. The second decodes deceptive design patterns. The final module examines the impact of dark patterns on consumer trust and presents ethical alternatives, enabling a compliant approach.

Manisha Kapoor, CEO and Secretary General, ASCI, said: "As Indian advertising's ethical compass, we are strongly focused on compliance training. While we have been working with the authorities to sensitise consumers and the industry about dark patterns, we are now putting words into action with this course. We strongly believe advertisers can make ethical and compliant user interfaces work for them, and the course will demonstrate that. It is geared to help the industry to build consumer trust in these times of dark patterns and support their long-term brand credibility."

Dr Vivek Mittal, Executive Director, Legal and Corporate Affairs, HUL, said: "We welcome the initiatives by the Department of Consumer Affairs to curb dark patterns in e-commerce and reaffirm our commitment to responsible business practices and consumer protection. Consumer trust lies at the core of HUL's philosophy. By investing in capability-building and aligning with regulatory expectations, we aim to set industry benchmarks in ethical design and consumer-centric practices."

Upon successful completion of the course and assessment, participants will receive a certificate of completion, recognising them as professionals equipped to create trustworthy, compliant and consumer-centric digital experiences.

The course can be accessed here: https://www.ascionline.in/academy/product/ethical-ui-ux-designs-building-consumer-trust/

About the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

The 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, point of sale material, etc. ASCI has collaboratively worked with various government bodies, including the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the Ministry of AYUSH, and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). In August 2023, the ASCI Academy, a flagship program of ASCI, was launched to build the capacity of all stakeholders to create responsible and progressive advertising. ASCI Academy aims to raise standards of advertising content through training, education, outreach, and research on the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

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