



ASCI

# ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT

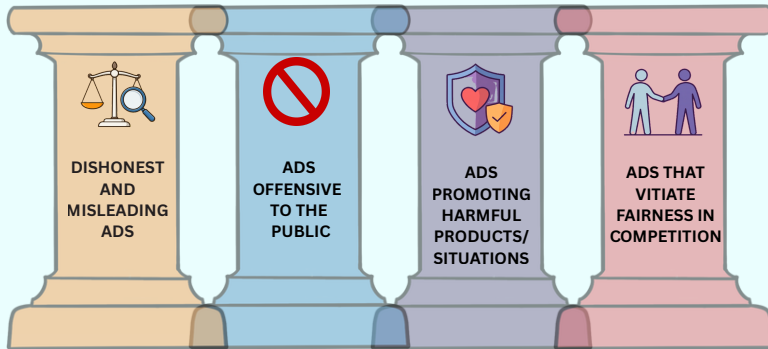
APRIL 2025-MARCH 2026

# PROTECTING THE PULSE OF ADVERTISING: A GUIDE TO THE ASCI FRAMEWORK

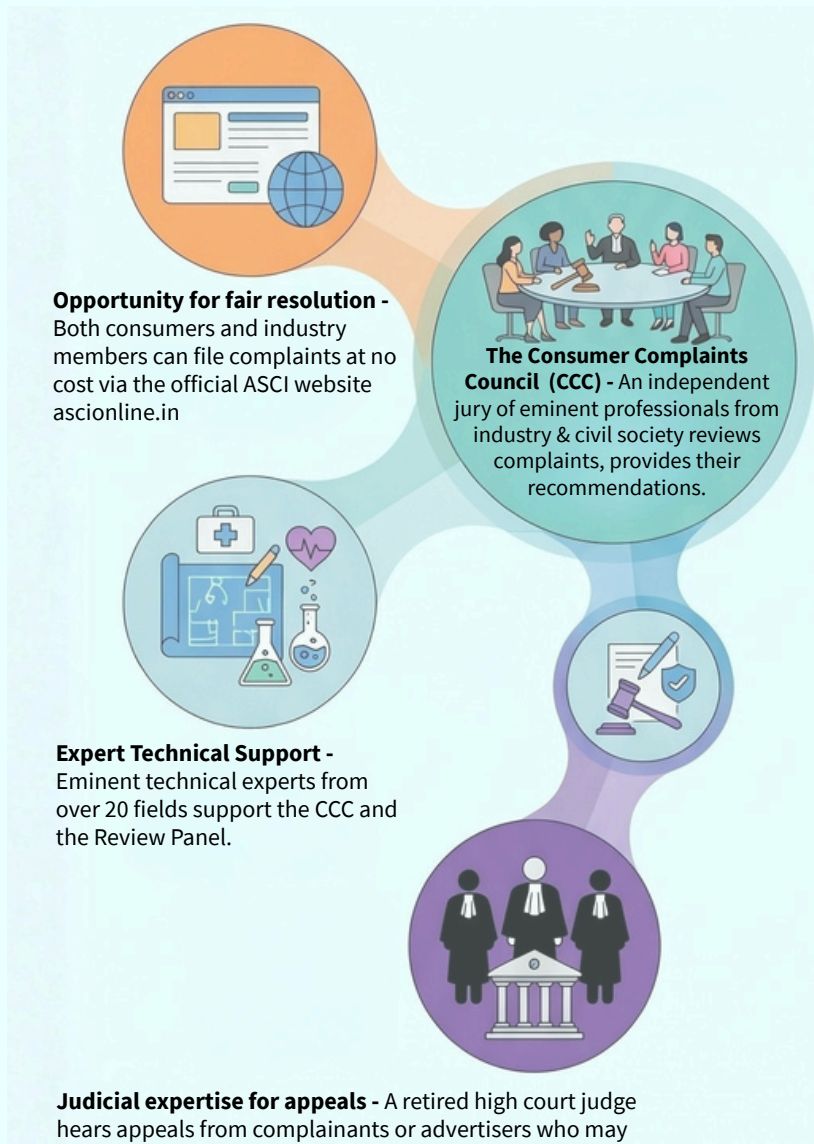
Established in 1985, The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is the self-regulatory body of the Indian advertising industry. ASCI reviews advertisements across all media and formats, including TV, print, digital, outdoor, radio, point-of-sale, and packaging claims. ASCI works closely with stakeholders on consumer protection, with its Code legally backed under the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1994.

## THE 4 PILLARS OF THE ASCI CODE

Focused on resolving issues around



## COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT



## ABOUT ASCI ACADEMY

The ASCI Academy helps build industry capacity for responsible advertising through training, education, outreach, and thought leadership focused on preventive aspects of self-regulation.



**ASCI Masterclass -** An on-campus or hybrid immersive workshop with in-depth case studies, group working sessions, role plays, quizzes & much more.



**Professional e-Learning Certifications -** Our snappy e-learning courses that help the industry stay abreast of the regulatory and self-regulatory landscape.



**Advisory Service** to get storyboards and scripts reviewed by experts to avoid costly changes later.



**Endorser Due Diligence** service to help endorsers meet their legal obligations to not make misleading claims.



**Thought Leadership Reports** on key advertising and consumer protection issues to drive industry dialogue and actionable insights.

“

*This year's complaints data is a reflection of an advertising ecosystem that is being reshaped by intense competition, speed and digital amplification. Across categories, we are seeing a growing tendency toward exaggerated claims, manufactured scientific credibility, influencer-led amplification and the normalisation of non-compliance as a post-publication correction exercise.*

*These patterns are not isolated violations, but structural signals of how advertising is evolving in a high-velocity digital environment. Whether it is impossible efficacy claims or disease-reversal promises or the aggressive proliferation of offshore betting promotions, the risks to consumer trust and safety are becoming more complex and widespread.*

*At ASCI, we believe the role of self-regulation is not merely to process complaints but to generate intelligence that helps industry, platforms, policymakers and consumers respond to emerging risks effectively. This is why the ASCI Academy supports the industry in getting advertising right at the start through training, capacity building, pre-publication guidance and responsible advertising education across brands, agencies, influencers and platforms.*

*The report's findings underline the urgent need for stronger accountability, better substantiation standards, responsible influencer practices and more preventive approaches to governance in digital advertising.*

*Responsible advertising is ultimately not only about compliance with a code, but also about sustaining consumer trust, the most valuable currency any brand or ecosystem can possess.*

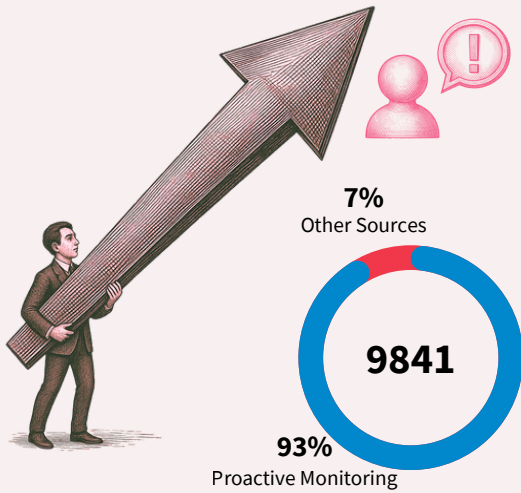
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## **Sudhanshu Vats**

Chairman, The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)  
Managing Director, Pidilite Industries Ltd.



## KEY HIGHLIGHTS APRIL 2025-MARCH 2026



**11,581**

cases looked into by ASCI. 21% increase from previous year.

**9841**

ads scrutinised for potential violation by ASCI. 37% increase from the year before.

**93%** of these came from our **proactive work**, much of it enabled through our internal digital ad monitoring system; 7% related to complaints received from consumers and other complainants.

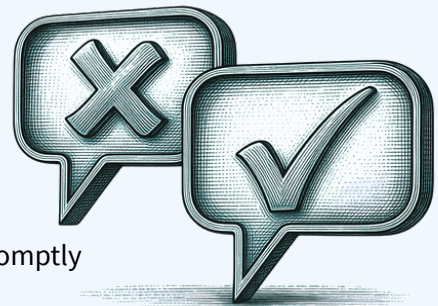
*The significant surge in the number of cases looked into and ads scrutinised are due to ASCI's proactive monitoring and flagging of the Offshore Betting and Gambling ads. Such ads are disallowed under the law and are in violation of Chapter III of the ASCI Code - Against Harmful Products and Situations. All such ads were flagged off to The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) and Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).*

**98%**

of the ads scrutinised **required some modification**.

**61%**

of the ads that were **formally reviewed were not contested** and promptly withdrawn or modified by the advertiser.



**9357**  
digital ads

**97.3%**

Ads scrutinised for potential violations appeared on the digital medium.

**82%**

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

**18%**

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

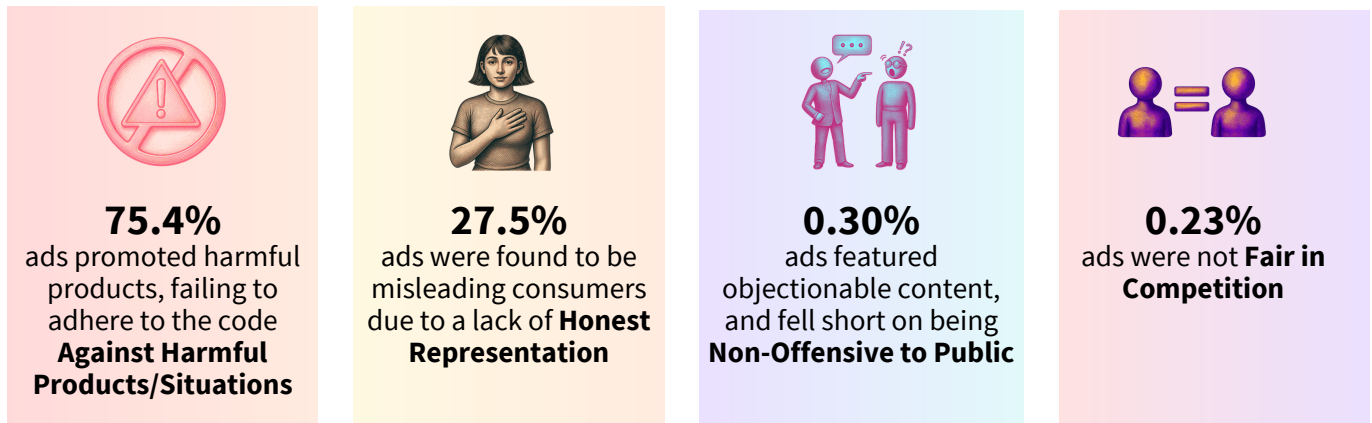


**86%**

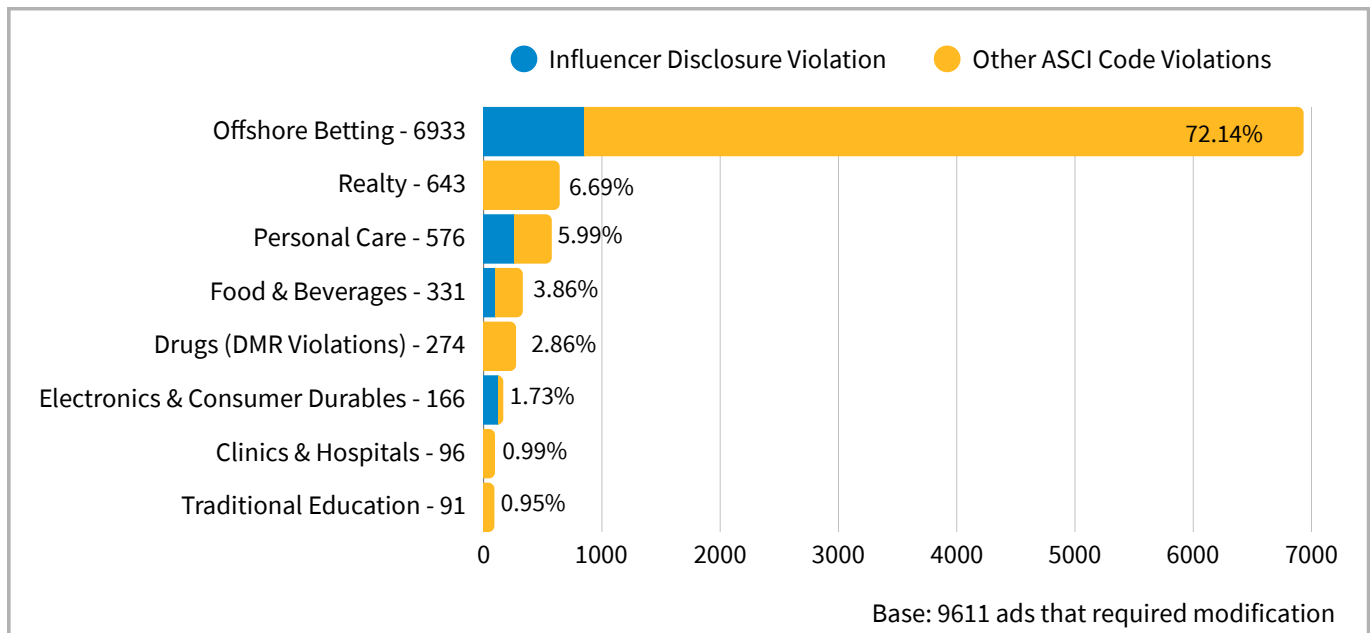
Overall voluntary compliance. Compliance on TV and Print continue to be high at **97%**. Increase in compliance rates on digital medium signal brand responsibility and willingness to self-regulate.



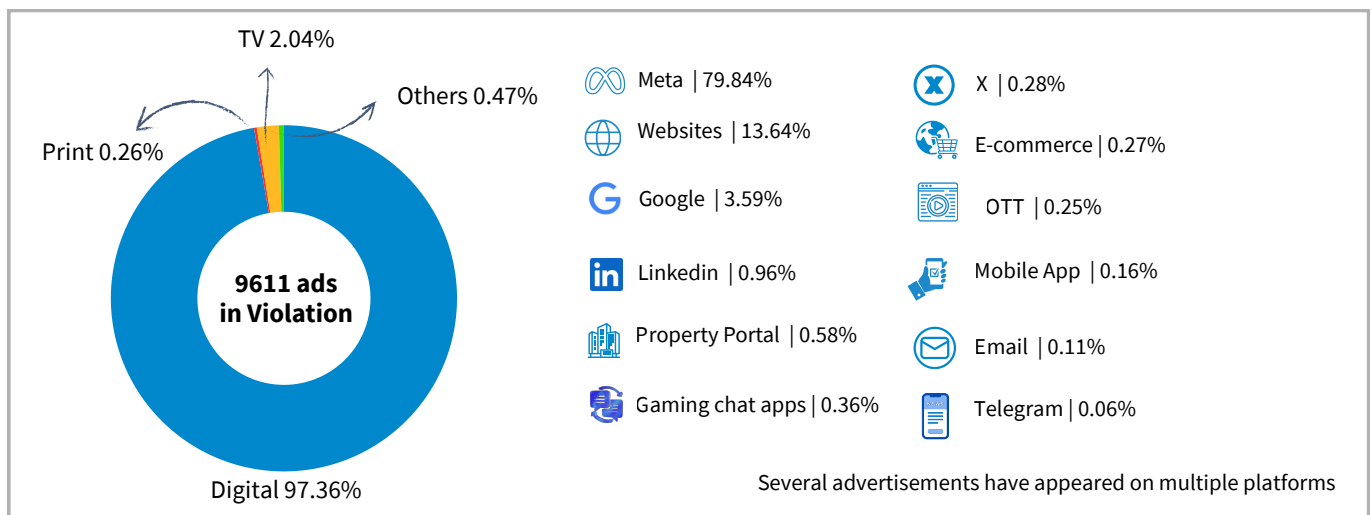
## HIGHEST NUMBER OF VIOLATIVE ADS WERE IN CONTRAVENTION OF ASCI'S CHAPTER III ON HARMFUL ADS



## OFFSHORE BETTING AND REALTY SECTORS MOST VIOLATIVE



## 97% OF VIOLATIONS WERE FOUND ON DIGITAL MEDIA





# OFFSHORE BETTING ADVERTISING IN INDIA: ANALYSIS OF ASCI'S PROACTIVE MONITORING, POST-PROGA TRENDS, RISKS, AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES

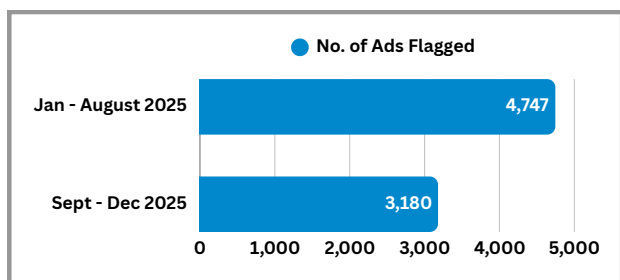
## INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of offshore betting and gambling ads in India remains a major regulatory and consumer protection challenge. Despite measures like the introduction of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act (PROGA) in August 2025, and the Public Gambling (Prohibition) Act, the scale and persistence of such advertising remain stubborn.

ASCI monitored this space from January – December 2025 under an MoU with Real Money Gaming Federations, flagging ads to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) and the Indian Cyber Crime Co-ordination Centre (I4C) for action.

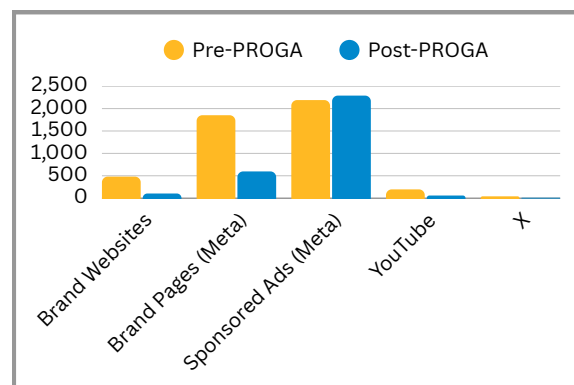
## DATA OVERVIEW AND TREND ANALYSIS

During this period, 7,927 offshore betting ads were identified and escalated, with 6,933 ads monitored between April–December '25, flagged in FY 25-26.



Violative ads pre-PROGA (8 months) averaged 594 ads/month, while post-PROGA (4 months), these rose to 795 ads/month. In spite of a new law, offshore operators continue advertising at scale and target Indian consumers.

While regulators such as the MIB and the I4C have been promptly acting on the take down of such platforms, the scale of violations remains a significant concern. The reported figures likely represent only a fraction of the actual volume of offshore betting advertisements, with the real incidence potentially far higher.



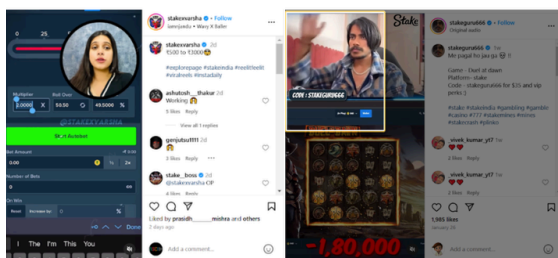
Platform wise split - pre & post PROGA

While on most platforms the post PROGA period revealed a dip in advertisements from this category, sponsored ads on Meta platforms continued to hold volumes.

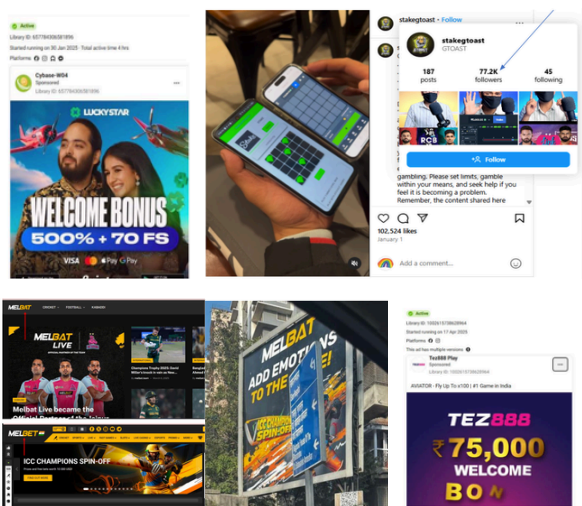
## NATURE OF THE BETTING ADVERTISING ECOSYSTEM AND ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES

The offshore betting ecosystem is marked by high-speed content churn, rapid ad creation, and cross-platform distribution, making detection, monitoring, and enforcement extremely difficult. These ads extend beyond formal ads, spreading widely through influencers, affiliate networks, social media groups, and messaging platforms, further complicating enforcement.

Monitoring revealed concerns like **brands operating across 60+ domains**, with individual takedowns having limited impact. Even after removal, **operators quickly reappear through new accounts, IPs, and minor brand variations**. **Influencer promotion was also widespread**, with 854 influencers reported between April–December 2025, including **accounts entirely dedicated to offshore betting content**.



Continuation of Sponsored ads by betting platforms was the single biggest concern, with a rise in such ads recorded post PROGA. Besides these, random pages where ownership is hard to trace, community pages with high followships, **surrogate ads**, as well as **deepfakes** added to the challenges.



## CONSUMER HARM AND RISKS

Offshore betting ads often present platforms as legitimate, using localised messaging and influencer content (“pro tips”, “how to win”) that glamourise participation without disclosing financial or legal risks, creating a false sense of trust.

As unregulated entities, these platforms expose consumers to loss of funds, fraud, and no grievance redressal mechanism. The scale and visibility of such ads increase behavioural risks, driving gambling exposure and potential addiction, especially among vulnerable and young audiences.

## IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGA

Under the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025 (PROGA), all advertising of online money games, including informational or disclaimer based ads is prohibited, reflecting the legislative intent to eliminate their visibility altogether. Following PROGA, domestic Real Money Gaming operators largely ceased advertising, with violations dropping from 34 to zero and some operators scaling down or exiting the Indian market.

## LIMITATIONS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Despite the ban, offshore betting platforms continue to advertise, bypassing existing platform filters. Enforcement at present still needs corrective action, based on observed violations. At the platform level, take downs happen only post regulatory intimation rather than early self-regulatory information, leaving consumers exposed to such advertising for an extended period.

Our monitoring efforts show that sponsored ads on digital platforms remain a significant concern. Stronger platform level action is critical. Stricter onboarding and verification of advertisers, at-scale detection and prevention at the point of publication, and quick action post early self-regulatory information can protect consumers from serious harm.



[Click Here](#) or scan code for list of Offshore Betting ads flagged



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## PERSONAL CARE: SPEED, SCIENCE, AND SUBSTANTIATION GAPS

### INTRODUCTION

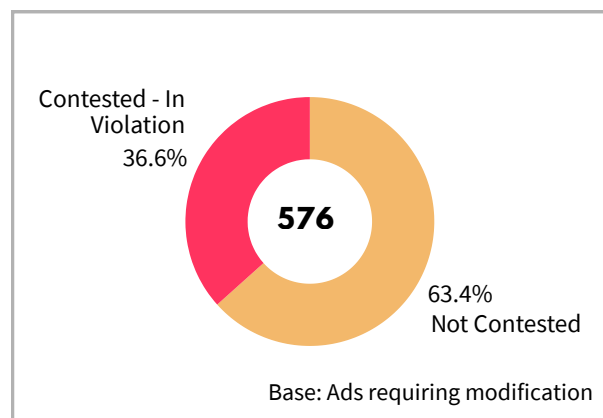
The Beauty & Personal Care sector is witnessing rapid brand proliferation, intense competition, influencer promotions and evolving consumer preferences around efficacy, natural ingredients, and visible results. This increasingly crowded landscape is shaping advertising that is more aggressive, performance-led, and attention-driven.

Advertising in the category increasingly reflects these evolving consumer expectations, with brands positioning products around “natural”, “safe”, while simultaneously promising targeted, visible, and often transformative hair and skin benefits driven by specialised ingredients and formulations.

### DATA OVERVIEW

During the period under review, **ASCI processed 639 cases** in the Beauty & Personal Care category.

- **90% of advertisements required modification**, indicating a high incidence of potential violations.
- **63% of cases that required modification were not contested**, with advertisers promptly modifying or withdrawing ads upon notification.
- **45% of the cases processed involved influencer-led advertising**, underscoring poor management by brands of the risks associated with influencers.



### KEY TRENDS IN VIOLATIONS

Analysis of the cases reveal some recurring patterns in the nature of claims:

1. **Efficacy and Performance Claims** - The most common violations involve claims of visible, rapid, or guaranteed results, such as skin transformation, hair growth, or instant outcomes - usually upheld due to lack of scientific substantiation, especially when results are presented as certain or universal.

a. **Unrealistic timelines and transformative outcomes:**

Advertisements frequently promise dramatic results within implausibly short timelines - **dandruff gone in “1 wash”, acne reversal in “6 hours”, dark circles fading in “7 days”, or skin looking “5 years younger in 5 days”**. These claims create unrealistic expectations and strongly influence consumer decisions, despite lacking adequate qualification or substantiation.



Created using AI

b. **Manufactured scientific precision** is another recurring trend. The use of hyper-specific numerical claims to create an impression of scientific credibility. Statements such as **“hair growth of 23,800 strands”, “11.7x stronger hair”, “220% plaque reduction”, “up to 70% cortisol reduction”, and “163% serotonin boost”**, often rely on weak studies, selective data, or ingredient-level research that does not substantiate the efficacy of the finished product.

2. **Superlative and Exclusivity Claims** - Claims like **“India’s No.1”, “India’s First”, “World’s No.1”, or “Only product in India with...”** are common and imply superiority without a clear basis. Consumers seeing this could assume these to be independently verified claims (e.g., “India’s No.1 Dermatologist Recommended Brand”), but in most cases, such claims are unsubstantiated.

3. **“Natural”, “Herbal” and “Safe” Positioning** - There is a growing use of claims like **“100% natural”, “herbal”, “chemical-free”, and “safe”**, but these are often vague, inadequately substantiated, and misleading without clear qualifiers or evidence, reflecting over-claiming in a high-demand segment.

4. **Influencer amplification of unsubstantiated claims** - This category sees high brand-influencer collaborations, with influencers making first-person claims like **“my acne cleared”, “dandruff didn’t return”, “dark circles reduced in 18 days”**, without disclosing promotions or verifying claims, presenting personal experiences as universal outcomes.

Together, these trends suggest a category that is highly dynamic, competitive, and susceptible to overstatements, particularly in digital environments, but inclined to comply once challenged. This speed-first (of delivery) and compliance-later mindset is a structural problem that results in trust erosion for brands.



[Click Here](#) or scan code for list of Personal Care ads processed

LOSE 5 KILOS  
IN 7 DAYS



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## FOOD & BEVERAGES: RISE IN UNSUBSTANTIATED HEALTH, NUTRITION & WELLBEING CLAIMS

### INTRODUCTION

India's food and beverage landscape is evolving as consumers seek a balance between wellness, taste, indulgence, and value. Classified as a food under the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) regulations, nutraceutical products lead violations in the F&B category. With therapeutic and quasi-medical claims that require strong substantiation and responsible advertising, we are seeing a new era of F&B advertising.

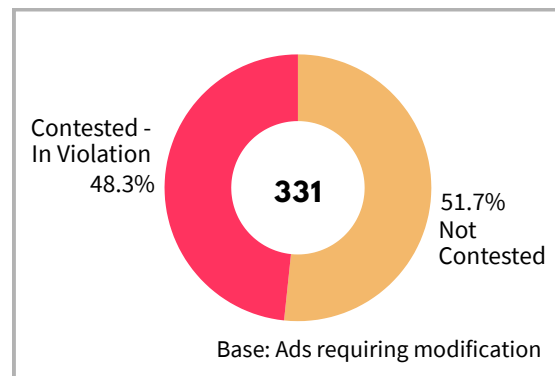
Trends such as gut health, protein-rich diets, and functional beverages reflect the growing infusion of nutrition and wellbeing language into brand communication. The annual complaints data shows how these trends are shaping advertising, while also revealing risks of misleading or unsubstantiated claims around metabolic health, chronic disease, child development, fertility, and organ function for products such as weight-loss supplements, growth formulas, and "drinkable sunscreens".

### DATA OVERVIEW

The Food & Beverage sector was among the top five violative categories, **with 376 cases**.

- **88% of the advertisements processed required modification**, being in violation of the ASCI code.
- **52% of cases were not contested**; where advertisers promptly modified the claims or withdrew the ads post intimation.

- **Nutraceuticals formed the largest sub-category** of cases under this sector with the most violative claims, contributing to **52% of the total cases**. **96% of them required modification**.
- **103 out of the 376 cases were processed for Influencer violations**, for failing to disclose material connection and/or making claims that fail substantiation. **97% of them were found in violation**.



### KEY TRENDS IN F&B VIOLATIONS

#### 1. The Dangerous Illusion of Disease Reversal -

Advertisers are encroaching on clinical territory, **promising to "reverse fatty liver", "cleanse the gut", or "reduce HbA1c" within fixed timelines**, and **claiming to regulate blood sugar or instantly lower glucose**.

These unsubstantiated claims target vulnerable consumers and pose serious risks if they replace or delay medical treatment. The **widespread use of “detox”** is also misleading, ignoring that the body’s liver and kidneys already perform continuous detoxification.

## 2. Extreme Weight Loss and Body Shaming -

The weight loss category sees several egregious claims. Nutraceuticals and supplements often promise **dramatic weight loss (e.g., 10–15 kg in a month) without diet or exercise**, supported by AI-generated before-and-after visuals, outcomes that are physiologically unlikely with medical conditions or without medical interventions. The sector also relies on **body shaming narratives (e.g., “Charbie” to “Barbie”)**, **normalising appearance-based discrimination** while promoting unrealistic results. As consumer focus on health grows, such claims are rising across food categories, including edible oils positioned as **“weight management partners”**, falsely claiming to reduce oil absorption during cooking.



Created using AI

## 3. Exploiting Parental Anxiety and

**Vulnerability** - Some ads exploit parental anxieties with claims that are biologically implausible, such as **increasing a child’s height from 101 cm to 123 cm in 90 days**. Products also promise **“complete brain nutrition”** or improved focus without clinical evidence, misdirecting real nutritional needs.

## 4. New Product Formats - Unsupported Claims, Regulatory Gaps, Real Harm - “Drinkable Sunscreen”

; a novel sub-category claims to **offer “24/7 sun protection”** through oral ingestion, dangerously conflating systemic antioxidant supplementation with topical UV filtration. Consumers substituting topical sunscreen for these drinks are left with zero UV protection and increased UV led disease risks. According to expert reports no oral product can replace broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen, while it may pose as a supplement.

While there are significant instances of uncontested cases indicating a willingness to correct once notified, the concern remains on the extent and nature of the initial violations. The F&B sector, particularly the nutraceutical segment requires immediate, stronger pre-publication guardrails as many claims carry real-world consequences for consumers' physical wellbeing.



[Click Here](#) or scan code for list of Food and Beverages ads processed



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## INFLUENCERS: PERSISTENT ACCOUNTABILITY GAPS, RISING RISKS TO BRAND TRUST, HIGH INCIDENCE OF ILLEGAL ADVERTISING

### INTRODUCTION

Five years since ASCI introduced its Guidelines for Influencer Advertising in Digital Media (May 2021), later reinforced legally by the CCPA in 2023, India's influencer ecosystem has grown rapidly. Estimates place the market anywhere between ₹3,000–4,000 crore by 2026 (EY 2024) and nearly ₹10,000 crore (KlugKlug, 2025), with a significant share of spends occurring directly between brands and influencers remaining largely invisible. It is clear that influencer marketing now plays a central role in shaping consumer discovery and purchase decisions, making transparency and compliance increasingly critical.

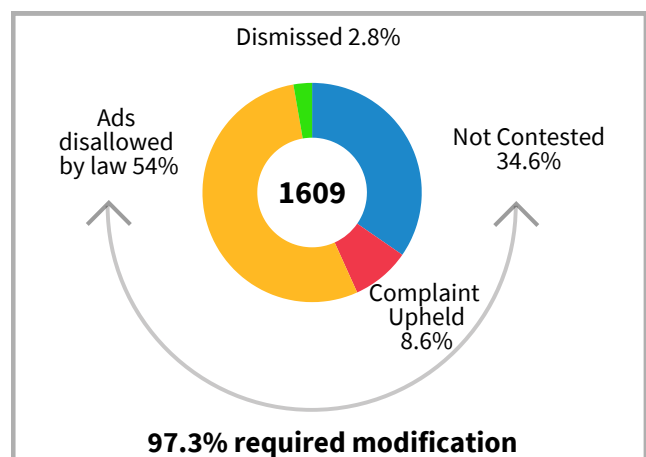
Recognising the growing impact of influencer marketing and the need to promote responsible advertising, ASCI launched **The Responsible Influencing Playbook**. This e-learning course helps influencers, agencies, and brands understand and comply with regulatory and self-regulatory requirements, safeguard reputations, and build consumer trust.

However, the complaints data indicates a persistent and worsening compliance gap. Poor compliance by lead influencers, promotions of product categories in violation of law, lack of due diligence on claims, pose a serious risk to consumer trust and damage to brand reputations.

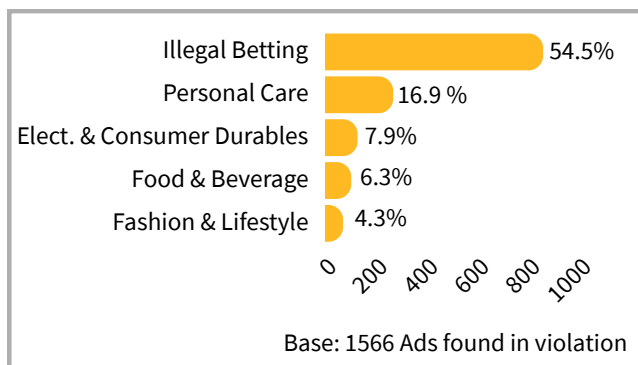
A comparison of compliance rates of the latest Forbes India Top 100 Digital Stars (2024), shows that violations among leading influencers have **increased**, with 76% in contravention in 2025 compared to 69% in 2024. Brands face serious compliance and reputational risk, working with such content creators.

In FY 25-26, ASCI processed 1609 advertisements for influencer violations.

- **97.3% required modification.**
- **34.6% promptly made corrections** to their posts.
- **54% promoted categories where advertising is disallowed by law**, eg. betting, alcohol.
- On an average, **76% cases resolved in 8 days.**
- **88%** Influencers have **complied.**



## Influencer Violations - Top 5 Categories



ASCI's periodic deep-dives further reinforce this trend. There is a clear pattern of non-disclosure at the point of publishing, followed by prompt correction once flagged. For instance:

- *During the iPhone 17 launch, 21 influencer posts reviewed were non-compliant, with 95% corrected after notification*
- *During Black Friday sales (Nov–Dec 2025), 90% of 31 cases were in violation, with 57% modified without contest.*

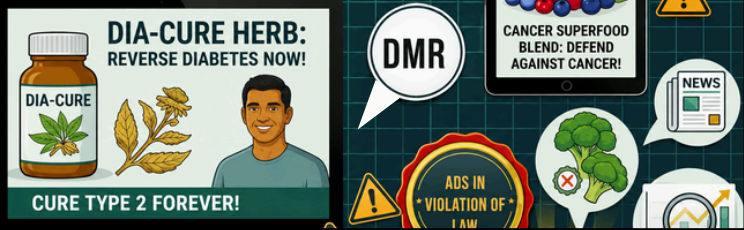


[Click Here or scan code for list of Influencer Violations](#)

Disclosure is not the only concern in this space. A significant **869 influencers were found promoting ads prohibited by law**, including offshore betting and alcohol, with some profiles entirely dedicated to such content. While many posts were taken down after intimation, the scale of such promotions raises serious concerns around ethics, consumer safety, and the normalisation of promotion of harmful or illegal products.

For brands, influencer violations create significant reputational and regulatory risk. As influencer marketing becomes central to brand communication, associations with undisclosed promotions, illegal advertising, or misleading claims can erode consumer trust, damage brand credibility, and expose both advertisers and influencers to greater public and regulatory backlash.

The creator ecosystem today reflects high influence but uneven responsibility. Despite awareness of regulations, the intent, incentives, and enforcement to comply remain misaligned. As this channel grows rapidly, professionalisation and training of the creator economy is the need of the hour. Brands need to ensure that they partner with content creators who are trained and have demonstrated their intent to be honest and transparent, or risk reputation damage at the hands of non-compliant influencers.



## DRUGS AND MAGIC REMEDIES VIOLATIONS: MIS-SELLING HOPE

### INTRODUCTION

The Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act (DMR Act), 1954, seeks to protect consumers by prohibiting advertisements claiming magical cures or guaranteed remedies for specified diseases and medical conditions, as treatment for these need to be evaluated and prescribed by health professionals.

However, our monitoring revealed several instances of advertising of such products on digital media. All such ads were flagged off to the Ministry of AYUSH.

### DATA OVERVIEW

- A total of **274 advertisements** were **flagged**.
- Claims related to **sexual performance, stamina, virility, and sexual enhancement** accounted for nearly **64% of violations**.
- Other recurring violations included claims on **breast form and structure, height increase, diabetes cure, and kidney stone treatment**.



Despite regulatory prohibitions, advertising of these products continues to target vulnerable consumers, exploiting limited awareness and exposing them to potential harm.



[Click here](#) OR SCAN CODE for list of DMR Violations

## REAL ESTATE: TRANSPARENCY FAILURES AND MISLEADING PROMOTIONS

### INTRODUCTION

State Real Estate Regulatory Authorities mandate disclosures such as project registration numbers, website details, and statutory approvals in real estate ads. Failure to provide these can mislead consumers and violate real estate laws. ASCI has been working with RERA authorities like MahaRERA in the past, and TGRERA at present, to flag off such violations.

Beyond this, real estate ads also carry misleading claims that can create false expectations, exposing consumers to financial and emotional harm.

### DATA OVERVIEW

- A total of **643 cases** were found to be in **violation of TGRERA and/or the ASCI Code**.
- Under a current MoU with **TGRERA**, **629 real estate ads** from Telangana have been flagged to the authority between November 2025 and March 2026. These ads were reported for non-compliance due to the **absence of mandatory requirements**, including the **project registration number, website address, permission issued by competent authorities**, etc. and therefore, in potential contravention of regulatory requirements under the applicable TGRERA Act.
- Apart from these **14 ads** were found to be in violation of the ASCI Code.
  - **13 making misleading claims** like **exaggerated or inaccurate leadership, trust, assured rental return, and green claims**, risking consumer deception and disappointment.
  - 1 ad was in violation of Influencer disclosure guidelines.



[Click here](#) OR SCAN CODE for list of TGRERA Violations

## CONCLUSION

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The 2025–26 data reveals a digital advertising ecosystem being driven by a dangerous “speed-first, compliance-later” culture. With 97.3% of scrutinised ads appearing online and 98% requiring modification, the scale of violations is a cause for concern. The sharp rise in scrutinised ads, coupled with the aggressive proliferation of offshore betting advertising, underscores how rapidly harmful content can scale in digital environments.

From impossible transformation claims to dangerous disease-reversal promises, consumers are being exposed to serious physical, financial, and behavioural risks.

The influencer ecosystem further amplifies these concerns, with 54% of recorded influencer violations linked to the promotion of prohibited products, contributing to the normalisation of illegal or harmful advertising while eroding consumer trust and brand credibility.

The findings point to the urgent need for a systemic shift from reactive correction to preventive governance. Stronger pre-publication guardrails, platform engagement with self-regulation, robust advertiser onboarding and verification systems, and scalable detection mechanisms are critical to building a more responsible advertising ecosystem and reducing consumer harm.

## QUICK LINKS:

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[Click Here](#) OR SCAN CODE FOR LIST OF ALL CASES HANDLED



[Click here](#) OR SCAN CODE FOR COMPLAINTS FAQ



[Click here](#) OR SCAN CODE TO REGISTER COMPLAINTS



*As the advertising ecosystem evolves rapidly in scale, speed and complexity, responsible advertising can only be achieved through collective action. It is what is driving our close working relationships with industry, platforms, regulators and civil society.*

*The objective is to strengthen accountability and build a more transparent and trustworthy advertising environment for consumers. Our efforts across areas such as AI-generated content labelling, offshore betting, influencer advertising, and digital claims reflect the importance of sustained multi-stakeholder engagement in strengthening self-regulation for a trust advertising ecosystem.*

— **Manisha Kapoor,**  
CEO & Secretary General, ASCI



FOR ADVERTISING THAT BUILDS CREDIBLE BRANDS, EXPLORE



The graphic is divided into three main sections, each with a title and an illustration:

- ASCI MASTERCLASS:** Shows a man in a suit presenting to a group of people seated in a lecture hall. A screen behind him displays 'MASTERCLASS: Advanced Media Strategy' with charts. Below the illustration is the text: 'Intensive, interactive curated half day sessions'.
- AD ADVISORY:** Shows a group of people in business attire gathered around a table, reviewing documents and a tablet. A whiteboard in the background has diagrams labeled 'Advertising', 'Notes', 'Detailed Content', 'Claims', 'Regulatory', and 'Regulatory Check'. Below the illustration is the text: 'Pre-production expert review of Ad scripts, storyboards & claims'.
- E-LEARNING COURSES:** Shows a man in a blue shirt holding a 'CERTIFIED PROFESSIONAL' certificate. In the background, a computer monitor displays a 'PERSONALIZED LEARNING PORTAL' with 'Modules & Certifications'. Below the illustration is the text: 'Online Certification Program'.

Decorative elements include a large blue arrow pointing up and right, a gear icon, and a brain icon in a circle at the bottom right.

For more information write to [academy@ascionline.in](mailto:academy@ascionline.in)



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