

ASCI The Advertising Standards Council of India

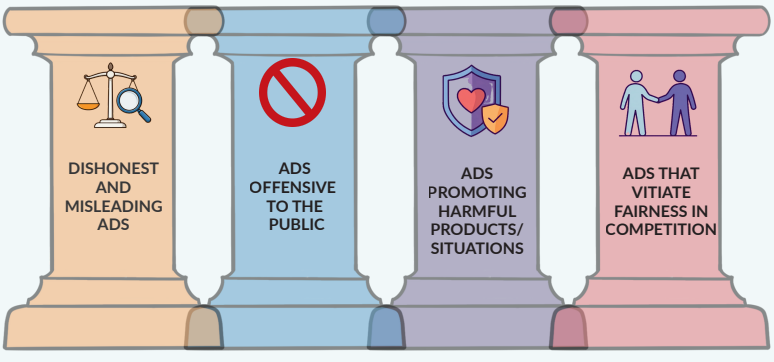
HALF-YEARLY COMPLAINTS REPORT

April - September 2026

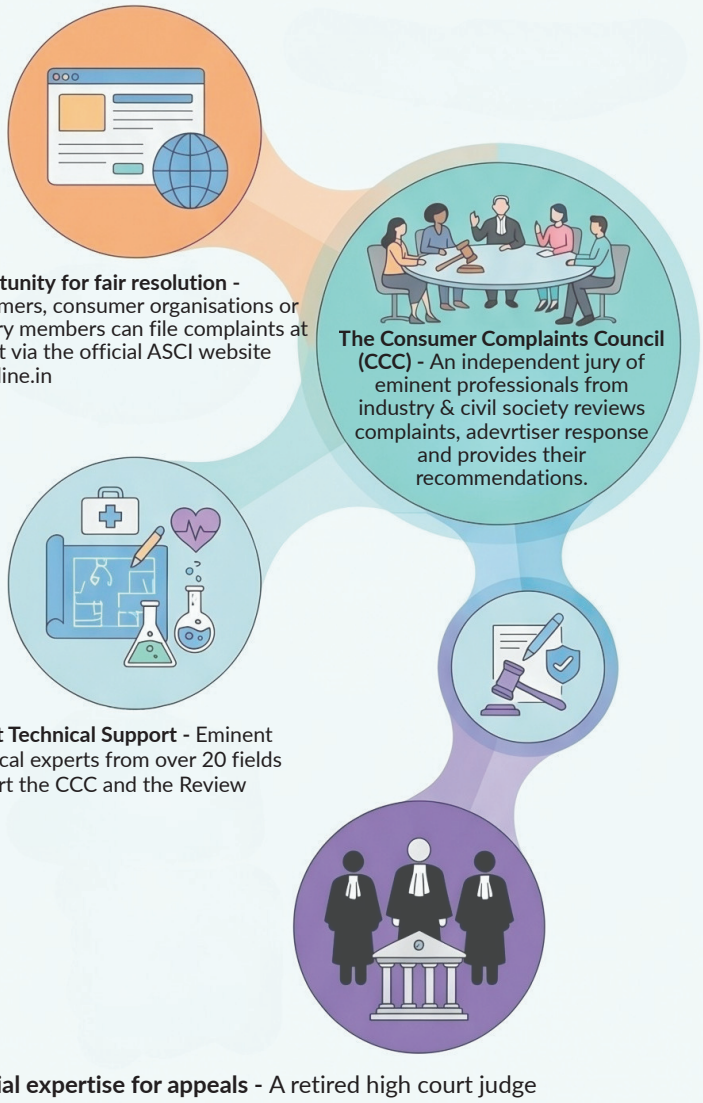
PROTECTING THE PULSE OF ADVERTISING: A GUIDE TO THE ASCI FRAMEWORK

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, among others.

THE 4 PILLARS OF THE ASCI CODE RESOLVE ISSUES AROUND



COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT



Opportunity for fair resolution - Consumers, consumer organisations or industry members can file complaints at no cost via the official ASCI website ascionline.in

The Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) - An independent jury of eminent professionals from industry & civil society reviews complaints, adevrtiser response and provides their recommendations.

Expert Technical Support - Eminent technical experts from over 20 fields support the CCC and the Review Panel.

Judicial expertise for appeals - A retired high court judge hears appeals from complainants or advertisers who may wish to contest a CCC recommendation.

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.



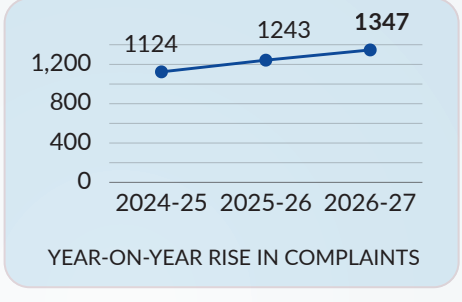
Consumer education programs.

INTRODUCTION

ASCI's monitoring approach in 2026-27 began with a focused effort to identify and address high-risk advertising violations that could potentially harm consumers. This led to targeted monitoring initiatives and the development of two key reports earlier this year – the "The Heat is On", an analysis of summer ad claims and "A Pill for Thought", a report on Nutraceutical advertising. Both provided valuable insights into advertising practices within these sectors, highlighting emerging trends, potential consumer risks and how unsubstantiated claims could mislead consumers.

Besides strengthening its monitoring efforts, ASCI also prioritised operational efficiency, recognising the fast-paced nature of digital advertising and the need for timely interventions. Through streamlined processes and a sharper focus on expediting complaint resolution, ASCI achieved an average turnaround time of 15 days for formally investigated complaints, improving upon the 17-day average recorded in FY 2025-26.

These efforts were complemented by growing public participation in ASCI's self-regulatory mechanism. We have seen a rise in the number of complaints from the general public since FY 2024–25 to date, indicating growing consumer awareness and willingness to raise concerns about advertising.



YEAR-ON-YEAR RISE IN COMPLAINTS

Further, 84% of complaints received during the current reporting period were submitted through the TARA platform, reflecting increasing consumer adoption of ASCI's digital grievance redressal channel.



KEY HIGHLIGHTS APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2026

3,951
complaints looked into by ASCI

2,308
ads scrutinised for potential violations of the ASCI Code

94%
of ads processed required some form of modification

71%
cases were not contested by advertisers

85%
of violations identified through proactive monitoring

15 days
average complaint resolution time

98%
of identified violations originated on digital media

72%*
of ads misled consumers through dishonest claims.

30%*
of ads promoted harmful products or unsafe situations

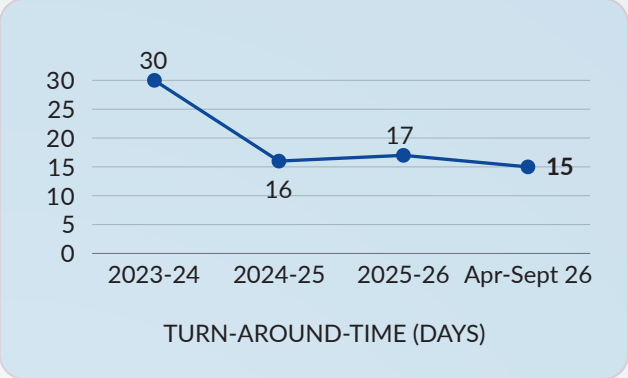
*The same ad may violate multiple ASCI Codes

DRIVING EFFICIENCIES IN COMPLAINTS RESOLUTION

SPEEDY REDRESSALS

Recognising the fast-paced advertising environment with short campaign durations, ASCI has consistently focused on improving the efficiency of its complaint resolution process.

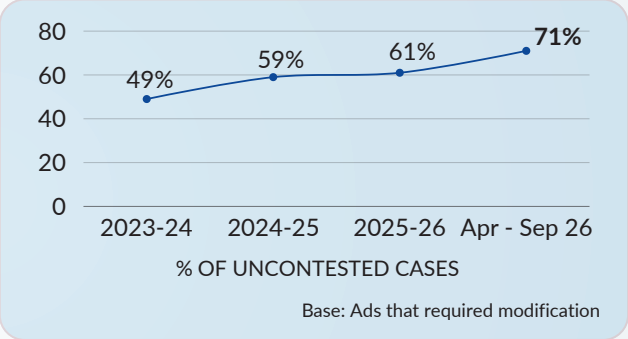
The year-on-year trend reflects a consistent improvement in turnaround time (TAT), declining from 30 days in FY 2023–24 to 16 days in FY 2024–25, then marginally increasing to 17 days in FY 2025–26 due to significant number of cases requiring technical review.



During the first half of FY 2026–27 (April-September 2026), the TAT improved to 15 days. This directly benefits consumers as problematic advertising is quickly pulled off rather than continuing to be in the public domain.

UNCONTESTED CASES AT AN ALL TIME HIGH

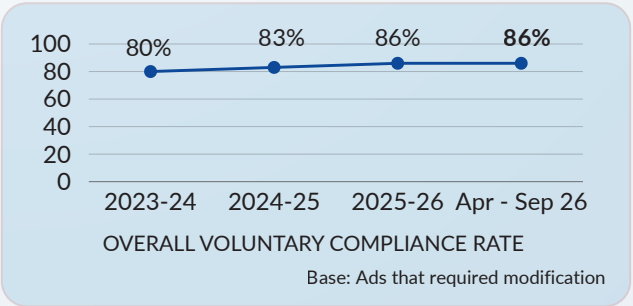
ASCI case workers engaged deeply with advertisers, particularly with smaller and digitally native ones, explaining potential violations in their advertising. Such advertisers often lack dedicated marketing or legal teams. Advertisers have responded positively by acknowledging these issues, and voluntarily modified or withdrawn their advertisements without contesting.



This approach has contributed to a steady rise in uncontested cases, from 49% in FY 2023–24 to 71% during April–September 2026. Such cases have an average closure time of 8 days. Besides reducing the overall resolution time, this approach enables the Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) to focus on the evidence in the contested cases.

STEADY RISE IN VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE & THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SELF-REGULATION

There is a steady rise in voluntary compliance following ASCI's intervention, increasing from 80% in FY 2023–24 to 83% in FY 2024–25 and 86% in FY 2025–26, continuing into April–September 2026. This is particularly significant given that many advertisers are younger D2C brands that are not formally part of the self-regulatory system.



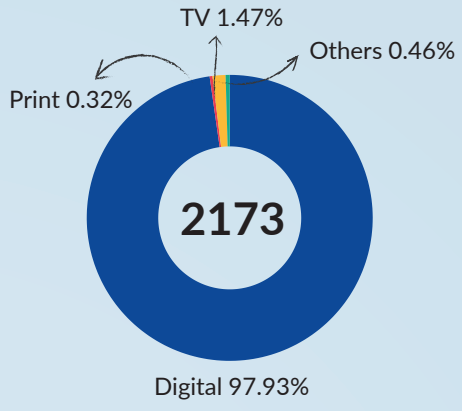
Their willingness to voluntarily comply with ASCI's recommendations and take corrective action reflects growing recognition of and confidence in self-regulation. It is also reassuring for consumers, reinforcing trust in advertising and the credibility of ASCI's role in promoting responsible advertising practices. Non-compliant cases are escalated to the appropriate government regulators.

DIGITAL PLATFORMS ACCOUNT FOR 98% OF ADVERTISING VIOLATIONS

META PLATFORMS HOST 73.4% OF DIGITAL MEDIA VIOLATIONS

Between April and September 2026, 1563 META ads were found in violation of the ASCI Code. 90% of these were revenue generating sponsored ads rather than brand handles. 41% of these sponsored ads promoted prohibited categories like offshore/illegal betting. Such ads were reported to the relevant regulator and also flagged to META for action.

Despite the introduction of the Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025, which prohibits online money games, ASCI's monitoring indicates that sponsored advertisements promoting offshore and illegal betting continue to remain accessible to Indian consumers across digital platforms. This highlights the need for digital platforms to adopt more stringent and proactive measures to identify, restrict and prevent the dissemination of such advertisements, ensuring that regulatory prohibitions translate into effective enforcement.



Meta |73.4%	E-commerce| 1.3%
Websites |14.3%	Linkedin |0.6%
Property Portals |6.5%	OTT |0.1%
Google |4.3%	Mobile App |0.05%

Several advertisements have appeared on multiple platforms

1102 ADS REFERRED TO REGULATORS

633 ads were referred to the government, for categories where advertising is expressly disallowed under the law.

- **590 betting/gambling** ads referred to the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB).
- **28 ayurvedic product** ads referred to the Ministry of AYUSH for Drugs and Magic Remedies Act violations.
- **6 alcohol** ads referred to State Excise authorities.
- **4 hospital/clinic** ads referred to the National Medical Council for guideline violations.
- **5 ads** referred under other categories.

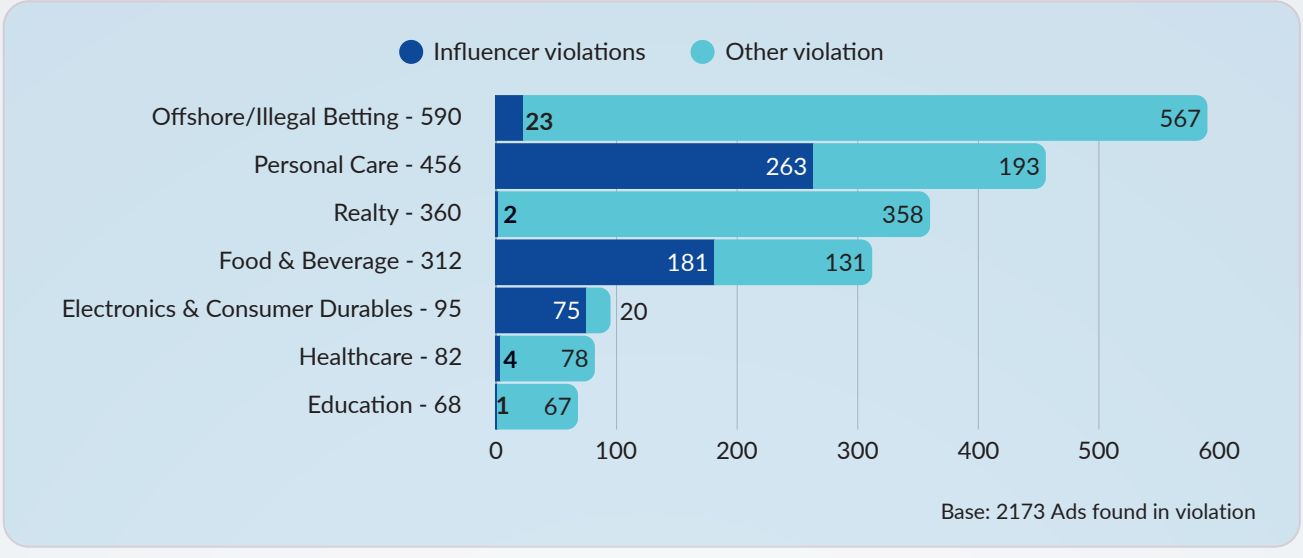
Under an MoU with Telangana RERA, **333 real estate ads** were referred to TGRERA for violations of the RERA Act.

Further, 136 ads that were found to violate the ASCI code and continued to be non-compliant were referred to the concerned regulatory authorities for examination in accordance with their provisions:

- 126 - Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB).
- 126 - Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), Department of Consumer Affairs
- 12 - Food Safety Standards Authority
- 8 - MahaRERA
- 1 - Ministry of AYUSH

Some cases have been flagged to multiple regulators

7 CATEGORIES HAVE DRIVEN 90% OF ADVERTISING VIOLATIONS



Base: 2173 Ads found in violation

OFFSHORE/ILLEGAL BETTING

Offshore/Illegal betting remains the most violative category. Of the **590 cases flagged,** 99% were identified through proactive surveillance, **including 20 influencer promotions.** A high volume of **sponsored ads, accounting for 98% of cases,** prompted ASCI to **report** to I4C and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting to enable swift takedowns and protect consumers.

PERSONAL CARE

The **Personal Care category**, increasingly driven by influencer-led endorsements, **recorded the highest number of influencer violations, as well as the highest number of uncontested cases.**

75% of ads were not contested and promptly modified or withdrawn following ASCI's intimation. 58% of these involved influencer disclosure violations. Other key concerns included unsubstantiated skin and hair transformation claims relating to acne, pigmentation, hairfall and dandruff.

Exaggerated before-and-after visuals and dramatic skin-tone transformation claims raised concerns around misleading representations and the reinforcement of negative beauty stereotypes.

Environmental and product composition claims also emerged as areas of concern in this category. Laboratory findings contradicted sustainability assertions and product claims, highlighting gaps in advertiser accountability.

REALTY

A total of 360 Realty ads were found to violate TGRERA and/or the ASCI Code. Of these, 333 ads were flagged for missing mandatory disclosures, including project registration numbers, website details and approvals from competent authorities under an MoU with the Telangana Real Estate Regulatory Authority. A further 27 ads were found to violate other ASCI Codes.

FOOD & BEVERAGES

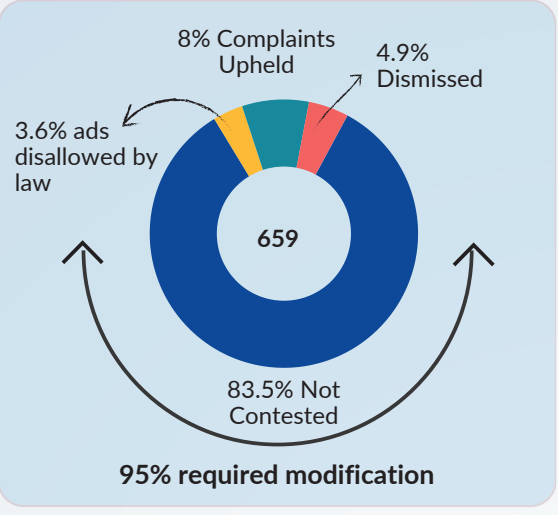
In the **Food & Beverages sector, 79% of 312 ads were not contested** and were withdrawn or modified following ASCI's intimation. 58% of these were flagged for influencers' violation of disclosure guidelines.

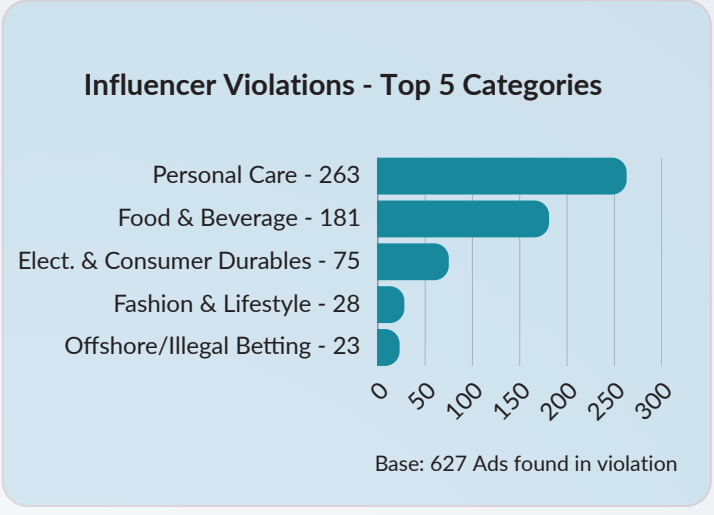
74% of ads were for nutraceutical products, of which 82% did not contest the complaint. Advertisers frequently made therapeutic claims for health products relating to disease risk reduction or cures, health improvements, rapid weight loss and product superiority without adequate scientific substantiation. Misleading claims around health, wellness and nutritional superiority remain a key area of concern.

ELECTRONICS & CONSUMER DURABLES

In the **Electronics & Consumer Durables sector, 79% of the 95 ads were flagged for influencer disclosure violations,** driven by promotional campaigns accompanying the launch of new electronic products, particularly mobile phones.

95% COMPLIANCE ACHIEVED AMONG INFLUENCER ADS REQUIRING MODIFICATION





Of the 659 advertisements processed for influencer-related violations, 95% required modification, highlighting the extent of non-compliance with ASCI's influencer advertising guidelines at the time of publication. 83.5% of influencers corrected their posts without contest, and modified them within an average of six business days.

The overall compliance rate among influencers stood at 95% as of November 17, 2026, compared to 88% in the previous year. However, 3.6% of the advertisements involved the promotion of products prohibited or restricted by law. Additionally, 12 cases were investigated for both inadequate disclosure of material connections and misleading claims.

CONCLUSION

The findings point to a digital advertising ecosystem where speed continues to take precedence over compliance. From misleading transformation claims and dangerous disease-reversal promises to illegal betting promotions, consumers remain exposed to significant risks. A shift from reactive corrections to preventive compliance is essential. Through stronger monitoring, faster interventions and improved operational efficiency, ASCI continues to drive advertiser accountability and strengthen trust in advertising.

IMPORTANT LINKS:

Scan the QR Code **OR**

Click here for Alphabetic list of cases handled - April - September 2026

ASCI continues to build its capability to monitor advertising, particularly in the digital space, and to report its findings and cases transparently. Self-regulation provides a strong frontline consumer protection mechanism, with speedy and robust case resolutions, at no cost to the tax-payer. By escalating non-compliant cases and repeat offenders to various regulatory authorities, ASCI complements the regulatory mechanism.

Newer categories and formats require an agile mechanism for resolutions, and our investments in tech infrastructure have helped us reduce our turn-around-time to 15 days. Simultaneously, the efforts by our case officers in creating an outreach with smaller advertisers are commendable. ASCI actively supports advertiser capability building through training and dialogues, helping advertisers "get it right". The value of self-regulation to the ecosystem is enormous and we hope that more and more advertisers embrace and support self-regulation in the interest of building consumer trust."



QUICK LINKS

COMPLAINTS FAQ

REGISTER A COMPLAINT

MASTER COMPLIANCE WITH ASCI ACADEMY

AD ADVICE

Pre-Publication Guidance

E-LEARNING CERTIFICATION

Self-Learning Courses to Master Responsible Advertising

MASTERCLASS

Bespoke Corporate Workshops

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