

***ASCI, FSSAI join hands to curb misleading claims in F&B advertisements***

**Mumbai, 5<sup>th</sup> July 2021:** The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has signed an agreement with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to safeguard consumers against misleading claims in food and beverage (F&B) advertisements. The agreement was signed in the presence of Arun Singhal, CEO, FSSAI, and Professor Bejon Misra, Adviser, Public Affairs, ASCI, on July 1st. As per the agreement, ASCI will identify advertisements which prima facie violate provisions of Food Safety And Standards (Advertising And Claims) Regulations, 2018, and FSSAI would further investigate these. Under the agreement, ASCI will set up a three-member expert panel to evaluate F&B advertising identified by the ASCI monitoring team .

There has been a marked increase in the number of complaints against F&B ads during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last financial year (FY) ASCI has processed a total number of 284 complaints compared to 175 in FY 2019-20. So, claims by F&B brands, particularly those related to health and nutrition, are under great scrutiny. Food and health continue to be important focus areas for ASCI.

With this association, ASCI further strengthens its 360-degree approach of protecting consumers as well as guiding brands, agencies, s and influencers towards greater responsibility. As per a report published by media agency Zenith, India will be the fastest-growing market for FMCG brands' F&B advertising over the next three years with spending rising 14% a year. With the rise in digital consumption, it is expected that FMCG brands' digital ad spends will increase from \$12.3 billion in 2020 to \$14.9 billion in 2023. This further necessitates the monitoring of F&B advertisements.

Manisha Kapoor, Secretary-General, ASCI, said: "With this agreement, ASCI will intensify its scrutiny of the F&B sector. We will tap our National Advertising Monitoring Service, which monitors over 900 TV channels and publications, and over 3,000 websites. Besides national brands, we will examine regional and local ones. Our experts, with decades of experience in the F&B sector, will shortlist those advertisements that require further scrutiny by FSSAI."

Subhash Kamath, Chairman, ASCI, added: "This is a significant collaboration. The common goal of consumer protection drives us all to share skills, expertise and resources in the most effective way to curb the menace of misleading advertising."

**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 the interest of consumers. 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 recognized the self-regulatory mechanism as an effective pre-emptive step to statutory provisions in the sphere of advertising content regulation for TV and Radio in India. ASCI's role has been acclaimed by various Government bodies including The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), 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 grievance against objectionable advertisements. ASCI is a part of 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 “ASCIonline ” (2016). As well as a 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). The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) also recently won two International Council for Advertising Self-Regulation (ICAS) awards, one each for the ‘Best Awareness Raising Initiative’ and in the ‘Special Category’. Also got a special mention in the ‘Best Sectoral Initiative’ category.

**For further information, please contact:**

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