

ASCI's gaming guidelines receive overwhelming response from consumers

80+ complaints processed against potential violators in 7 weeks

Mumbai, 5th February 2020: The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) guidelines related to real-money gaming, which came into effect from 15th December, have received an overwhelming response. Within seven weeks of the release, ASCI has processed complaints against 81 advertisements that were in potential violation of its guidelines. Around 75% of the complaints were from end consumers, while the rest were taken up suo motu by ASCI.

In 15 cases, the advertisements have been voluntarily withdrawn by advertisers after receiving a communication from ASCI. In another 27 cases, the advertiser had removed the advertisements after the complaint was lodged but before they received communication from ASCI. In 2 cases, the advertisers contested the complaint, but these complaints were upheld as the advertisements violated the ASCI code. Complaints against 37 advertisements are under process where ASCI has written to the advertiser for an explanation, and the same is awaited.

In terms of platforms, a majority of the complaints received were from Instagram (39) and YouTube (37). Cricket (55) and rummy (15) scored the most number of complaints in terms of types of games.

The guidelines addressed key concerns around the advertising of online games that involved real money. The guidelines require advertisements to not be aimed at minors, not present gaming as a possibly source of livelihood, or link it to success. In addition, the guidelines require all advertisements to carry a disclaimer regarding the risk of financial loss and the addictive nature of such games. These guidelines were backed by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, which issued an advisory asking that advertisements adhere to the ASCI guidelines.

Manisha Kapoor, Secretary General, ASCI, said: "Different stakeholders have highlighted possible concerns as Online real money gaming becomes a big industry. ASCI introduced the gaming guidelines to protect consumers and address the legitimate concerns of consumers and stakeholders. We are quite happy to note that consumers have come forward to report advertisements that potentially violate the code. We too are keeping a close eye on such advertisements and, through our association with TAM Media Research, we are monitoring the digital space more efficiently. With such steps, we hope to make advertisements for online gaming for real money winnings more transparent and safer for consumers."

The gaming guidelines were issued after consultations with different stakeholders such as Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, the Ministry of

Electronics and Information Technology, industry stakeholders as well as consumer interest groups and individuals.

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 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)

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