



HALF-YEARLY COMPLAINTS REPORT

2024-25

ABOUT THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS COUNCIL OF INDIA

Established in 1985, The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is the self-regulatory body of the Indian advertising industry. ASCI resolves issues around

- Dishonest or misleading ads
- Indecent or offensive ads
- Harmful ads
- Ads that are unfair in competition.

ASCI looks at advertisements across all media types and formats such as TV, print, digital, outdoor, radio, point of sale, claims made on packaging and so on.

ASCI works closely with different stakeholders in the matter of consumer protection. ASCI's code is part of The Advertising Code enshrined within the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1994, providing it with a legal backstop.

Complaints management

ASCI's speedy, independent and low-cost complaint management approach ensures that both consumers and industry have the opportunity for a fair resolution.

All stakeholders can register their complaints at no cost via www.ascionline.in

ASCI's independent jury (The Consumer Complaints Council or CCC) comprises 40 eminent professionals, both from the industry as well as from civil society, who review complaints on a weekly basis and provide their recommendations



Three retired high court judges hear appeals from complainants or advertisers who may wish to contest a CCC recommendation



Eminent technical experts from over 20 fields support the CCC and the Review Panel



ASCI Academy

With a view to supporting the industry get it right, the ASCI Academy is ASCI's flagship program to build the capacity of all stakeholders in creating responsible and progressive advertising. The academy offers an array of services to raise standards of advertising through training, education, outreach, and thought leadership on the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

- **E-learning Certification:** Our short and snappy e-learning courses help advertisers stay abreast of the changing regulatory/self-regulatory landscape.
 - The ASCI Guide to Responsible Advertising designed for the brand, marketing, regulatory compliance and creative teams
 - The ASCI Responsible Influencing Playbook specifically tailored for influencers
- Masterclass, an on-campus or hybrid immersive workshop with in-depth case studies, group working sessions, role plays, quizzes and much more.
- The Advisory Services: Get your storyboards/scripts assessed by an expert panel so you get your ad right rather than make expensive changes later.
- Endorser Due Diligence service to help endorsers meet their obligations not to make misleading claims and potentially violate the law.
- Thought Leadership reports and White Papers on topics impacting advertising and consumer protection to drive meaningful dialogue and provide actionable insights to industry stakeholders.

To know more about ASCI Academy please visit: www.ascionline.in/academy/

Leveraging tech for effective monitoring: ASCI focus on sectors with higher consumer impact

ASCI reflected on a pivotal question - what could be done to enhance the protection of vulnerable consumers in an increasingly dynamic digital ad environment? With the rapid evolution and complexity of online advertising, the task of monitoring and regulating this vast space presented unique challenges. ASCI has now a focused approach on advertisements with the potential to cause greater harm or lead to widespread disappointment among consumers, and take swifter action against irresponsible ads.

- Focused sector deep dives
 - Real estate, restricted categories i.e. online illegal betting and advertising of products making green claims were key sector focuses for ASCI
- Achieving a highly efficient turn-around time (TAT) - 18 days on an average complaint resolution.
- Driving quick resolutions - 53% of ads picked up by ASCI were not contested and promptly withdrawn or modified.

The increase in advertisers voluntarily complying without contesting ASCI's request, has improved speed and efficiency while enabling more effective use of resources for formally investigated and complex cases.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS: APRIL - SEPTEMBER 2024



4016 complaints looked into by ASCI.



3031 ads were scrutinised for potential violation of the ASCI Code.



98% of the overall advertisements processed required some modification



53% of the ads processed were not contested and promptly withdrawn or modified.



90% of the overall cases processed during this period resulted from ASCI's proactive monitoring.



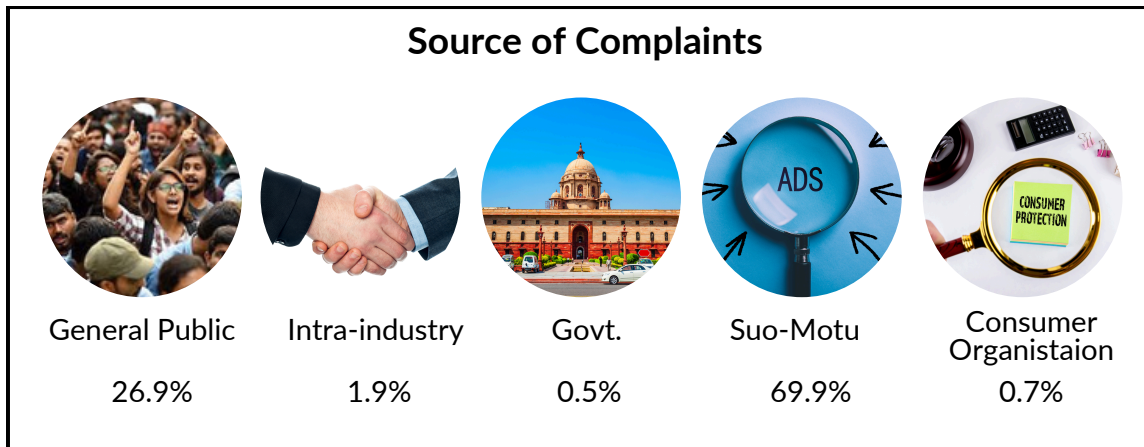
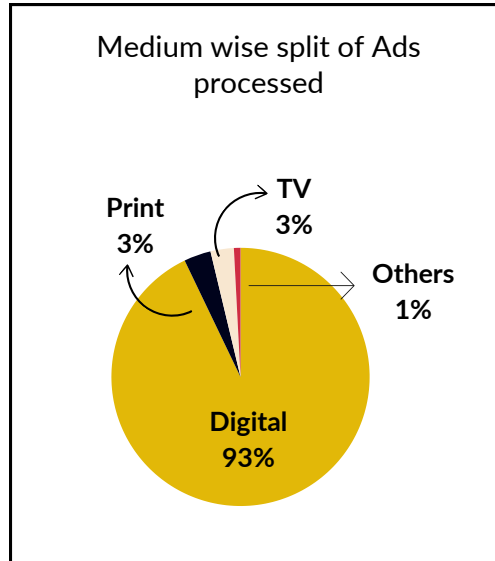
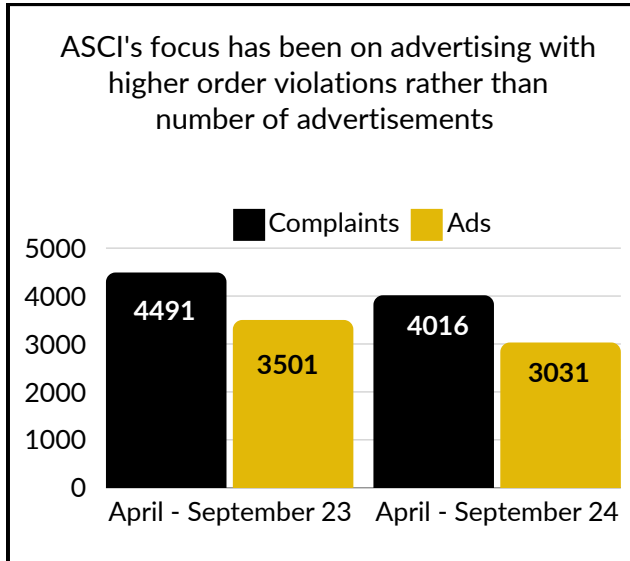
18 days on an average to resolve investigated cases.



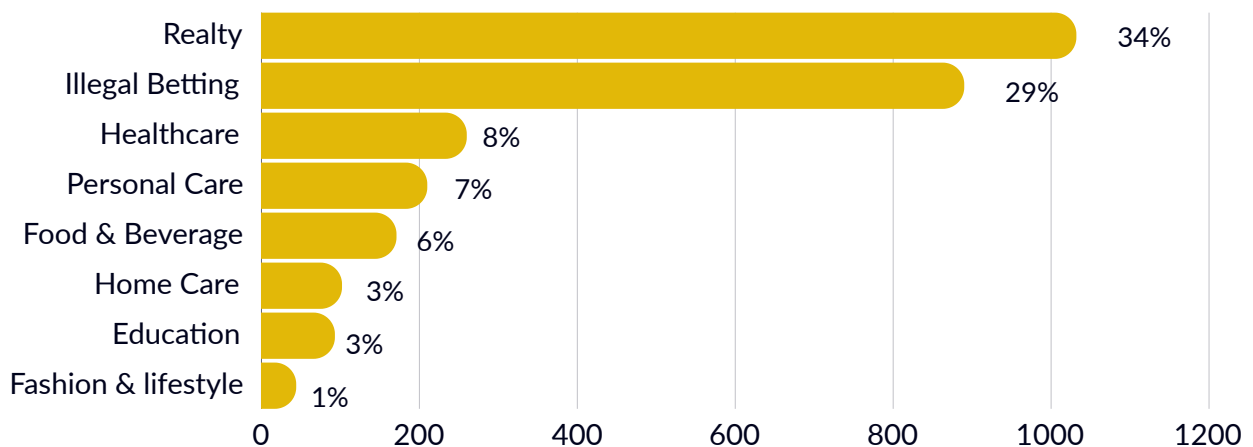
2087 ads on digital media were reported as direct violation of Law.

- 1,027 were found in violation of the MahaRERA Act
- 890 were promoting illegal betting and gambling
- 156 were in violation of the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act

Complaints Snapshot

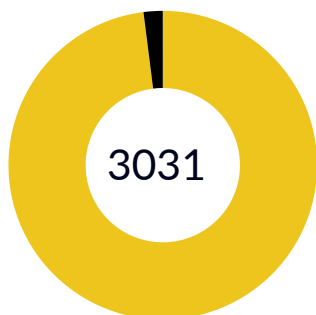


Top 8 Violative Categories



Ads that do not require modifications

2%



Overall voluntary compliance: 80%
Compliance on Print and TV remain high at 95%

Ads that required modification

98%

Ads in Violation of Law - Reported to Relevant Regulators



Type of ASCI Code Violation



Base: 3031 (count of ads may total to higher number because some ads violated multiple provisions of the ASCI Code)

SECTOR DEEP DIVE

1027 ads were shortlisted from 2,115 ads screened in the **REAL ESTATE SECTOR** in Maharashtra for potential violations of regulatory requirements under the applicable MahaRERA Act. These ads were reviewed for compliance with mandatory disclosure norms, including the presence of registration numbers, QR codes, and other essential information. 99% of the ads shortlisted were found to be in violation of the MahaRERA Act.

ASCI received prompt compliance in 59% of the cases, where advertisers either modified their ads to include the missing information or withdrew them entirely to ensure alignment with regulatory standards. Non-compliant ads were flagged off to MahaRERA for further action. Taking action against the violative advertisers, MahaRERA penalised 628 real estate developers, imposing a penalty of Rs. 88.90 Lakhs. ASCI continues to work with MahaRERA to bring greater transparency to the real estate sector.



ILLEGAL BETTING & GAMBLING ADS have proliferated digital media in new formats. In response, ASCI referred 890 such ads to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for further action. Among these, 831 Instagram posts displayed betting tickers, which directed viewers to offshore betting platforms. These tags and tickers appear on fan and community pages on Instagram, with some page owners reportedly earning daily amounts between INR 2,000 and INR 3,000 by featuring these logos. Additionally, 50 websites and social media pages were identified as promoting illegal betting apps and platforms, and nine influencer posts were found endorsing illegal betting services.

This surge highlights the need for continued vigilance and regulatory action to curb illegal gambling promotions on digital platforms. ASCI will work closely with MIB to surface such violations. Through MIB efforts, many of these pages have been taken down.



GREENWASHING CLAIMS IN ADS ASCI reviewed 100 advertisements for potential violations of the ASCI Guidelines for making environmental/green claims versus 34 ads in the previous year (YR23-24). Notably, 99% of these ads were identified through ASCI's proactive monitoring, with 100% ads requiring modifications due to a lack of transparency.

Majority of the violative ads were from the Home Care sector, where products claimed to be eco-friendly/ environment friendly, without adequate support data. 47% of the ads processed were not contested. These are instances where advertisers acknowledge the error made in the ad and promptly modify it or take it down. 28% of these cases were reported to the Government for non-compliance with ASCI Code and Guidelines, as these are also in potential violation of the recently launched Guidelines for Prevention and Regulation of Greenwashing by The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA).



Important Links:



[Click here for half yearly cases handled](#)



[Click here to register a complaint](#)

COMPLAINT FAQs

Who can complain against an advertisement to ASCI?

ASCI accepts complaints from everybody. A complainant can be a member of:

- The General Public
- The Industry
- Consumer Organisations
- Government

What information do I have to provide in order to register a complaint?

In order to successfully register a complaint with ASCI, the following information is required:

- The name of the advertiser or brand
- The time, date and medium in which the ad appeared
- The name of the product or service that was being advertised
- A copy of the ad or a brief description of it
- Your specific objections including any specific claims/visual frames you have an objection to and the reasons
- Your name and contact details (we keep this information confidential if you are a member of the public, and this information is only used for ASCI's communication with you)

How long does it take for a decision on a complaint to be taken?

The increase in advertisers voluntarily complying without contesting has led to average turn-around-time to resolve a complaint come down to 18 days. However, the time taken for a jury decision on a complaint varies depending on the nature of the case. The average lead time for a non-technical case is 15 working days from the date of receipt of a complaint, complete in all respects. Cases that need investigation by technical experts, can take up to 6-8 weeks to decide.

What kind of complaints does ASCI handle?

You can complain to ASCI when you come across an advertisement that is

- Misleading or untruthful
- Indecent or vulgar
- Unsafe or can cause physical or societal harm
- Unfair to other products or brands

What kind of complaints against ads does ASCI NOT handle:?

ASCI self-regulates the CONTENT of advertising for the advertising industry. Even though the following relate to ads, these are NOT covered by the ASCI code and hence we cannot process complaints related to the following:

- Duration/frequency/volume of advertisements
- Product or service deficiency cases
- Fraud cases
- Refund issues
- Counterfeit products
- Issues with content of programme
- Network quality issues
- Political, non-commercial government advertising.
- Violation of law
 - For eg. Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950;
 - Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act
 - Direct liquor/tobacco advertising
 - Violation of code of medical ethics
- Pop-up ads
- Spam emails
- Unsolicited SMS
- Sub-judice cases
- Advertisements not meant for Indian audiences (cross-border complaints)
- Pricing issues
- Public notice, news articles and press releases

Does ASCI publish details of recommendations made by the Consumer Complaints Council (CCC)?

Yes, the independent Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) recommendations are published on our website once the complaint is resolved/ closed.



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