

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

1 March 2022

ASAS received 304 pieces of feedback on advertisements in 2021; F&B, Electrical & Electronics top categories of feedback

The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore received **304** pieces of feedback in 2021, inclusive of advertising advice (4) and consumer-to-business complaints (277), businesses-to-business (17) and feedback from government agencies (6). This represents a drop in complaints from 2020 (428) but a return to the levels that ASAS saw pre-2020.

Among the most-complained industries in 2021, we noted an increase in the proportion of feedback on food and beverage and restaurant advertisements. There were fewer instances of feedback on advertisements for health products and services partly due to a drop in Covid-19 related claims. ASAS also received four advertising advice requests in 2021, versus only two in 2020. As with past years, most of the feedback ASAS handled were consumer-to-business complaints at 277. See **Annex A** for the 2021 feedback statistics.

ASAS sees steady progression in proportion of feedback on food and beverage, restaurant ads

ASAS noted a trend where food and beverage advertisements had been creeping up the list of industries with the most feedback. In the last year, ASAS received 26 pieces of feedback on food and beverage advertisements, making it the joint-most complained about industry, with restaurants not far behind on 23 pieces of feedback. When combined, feedback on restaurants, food and beverages formed a combined 16.1% of all the feedback compared to 2020 and 2019, when the proportion was 15.9% and 14.1% respectively.

The most complained about advertiser of 2021 was a snack and food kiosk company, for which ASAS received eight complaints about its sexually suggestive marketing materials on the stall's social media platform. Following ASAS's engagement, the advertiser agreed to remove the original social media posts in question.

Electrical & Electronics advertising feedback tied with F&B ads in 2021

Feedback on advertisements for electrical and electronics products was the other joint-highest category in 2021, with 26 pieces received. ASAS saw an increase in feedback on direct-to-consumer (D2C) brands that contributed to this industry's prominence. Such advertisers, who have an online-only presence and sell electrical and electronics (e.g. projectors, monitors, air and water purifiers) to consumers for lower prices direct from the manufacturers, were the subject of eight pieces of feedback, compared to three in 2020 and none in 2019.

A recurring issue ASAS noted in feedback on advertisements for D2C products was on the pricing promotions, particularly with the nature of the savings that the advertisers claimed they could enjoy. Unqualified headlines such as "60% off", or slashed-through prices next to the selling price (e.g. "~~\$1599~~ \$899") gave consumers the impression that the products were being discounted, when in reality, they were not sold at the higher prices. When ASAS contacted the advertisers for their explanation, they clarified that the higher prices were what consumers would have paid for the products if they had purchased through regular retail channels, such as from department stores. ASAS informed these advertisers to amend their marketing statements and make this information clearer, e.g. "save 60% vs retail shops", so that consumers are not misled. Refer to **Annex B** for an example of such an updated advertisement.

Other concerns with such electrical & electronic product advertisements involved claims about the availability, quality, effectiveness and popularity of the products. Said Prof Ang Peng Hwa, Chairman of ASAS, "We want to remind these advertisers that they have an obligation to comply with the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice (SCAP), like everyone else. ASAS will monitor the feedback we receive on advertisements and will not hesitate to refer recalcitrant offenders to the relevant authorities for the appropriate action under the law."

Fewer health advertising feedback in 2021

On the back of the pandemic that emerged in 2020, ASAS had issued a statement in April 2020 to inform advertisers to be mindful about advertising ethically and against making unnecessary reference to COVID-19 or 'the virus' in their advertisements.

"ASAS's proactive advisory to the industry and swift follow-ups on feedback on advertising of products that touted COVID-19 claims helped in no small part to protect consumers from overzealous brands and retailers," said Prof. Ang.

Thus, only four such feedback on COVID-19 claims was received in 2021, compared with 37 in 2020. The 25 health-related feedback ASAS received in 2021 concerned product health benefit claims, promotional discounts and product packaging or brochure claims (e.g. for body wash related products).

Ensuring effective advertising self-regulation

To ensure effective self-regulation, ASAS will continue our publicity efforts to raise awareness and encourage more members of the public to report and provide copies of advertisements they come across that are not legal, decent, honest or truthful. Members of the public can lodge their feedback on the ASAS website (www.asas.org.sg/onlinecomplaint) with:

- A *clear copy* of the full advertisement
- The URL where it can be accessed, or else where they accessed or received it offline
- Their reasons for their objections to the advertisement, with supporting evidence if applicable

“We also encourage advertisers, media owners and agencies *to take up* paid copy advice from ASAS if they are unsure whether their advertisement complies with the SCAP. This supports an effective system of self-regulation,” said Prof. Ang.

The advertising copy should be submitted early to give the ASAS Council enough time to review it. More details on the fees and turnaround time required are available on the ASAS website at <https://asas.org.sg/advertising-advice>.

Prof. Ang Peng Hwa
Chairman
Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS)

For media queries, please contact:

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The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS):

The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) is an Advisory Council to the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE). It was set up in 1976 to promote ethical advertising in Singapore and is the self-regulatory body of the advertising industry. The ASAS Council comprises representatives from advertisers, advertising agencies, government agencies, media owners and other supporting organisations. CASE provides secretarial support for ASAS.

For more information on ASAS, please visit: www.asas.org.sg.

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE)

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation that is committed to protecting consumers' interest through information and education, and promoting an environment of fair and ethical trade practices. One of their key achievements is in lobbying for Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act (CPFTA), which came into effect on March 1, 2004.

For more information, please visit the CASE website at www.case.org.sg or follow us on:

Facebook: www.facebook.com/casesg

Twitter: www.twitter.com/casesg

Annex A: Feedback received in 2021

The feedback includes requests for advertising advice and complaints that are either consumer-to-business or business-to-business in nature.

Year	Total Feedback Received
2021	304

Top 5 industries for feedback in 2021. The feedback includes requests for advertising advice and complaints that are consumer-to-business, government-to-business or business-to-business in nature.


No.	Industry	Feedback	% of Total Feedback
1	Electrical and Electronics	26	8.55%
2	Food & Beverage	26	8.55%
3	Health	25	8.22%
4	Beauty (includes hair and slimming)	24	7.89%
5	Restaurants	23	7.56%

Annex B: Amended Direct-to-Consumer advertisement

Save up to 67% vs retail shops

TECH SPECS BUY NOW

Get Notifications



\$599 ~~\$999~~
40% OFF! Save \$400 ⁽⁷⁾

As a direct-to consumer brand, we convert any costs that would have gone to a middleman into savings for you! Save up to 67% off as compared to retail stores when you buy directly.