

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

6 April 2020

ASAS Issues Reminder to Businesses to Advertise Ethically During COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended lives across the world in an unprecedented manner. It will take a sustained collaboration among the public, industry and governments worldwide to bring the disease under control. With that comes changes in lifestyles, personal habits and the way businesses work, which all represent opportunities for marketers.

The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) is aware that local consumer-facing businesses have been aggressively advertising various products that are intended for personal health and protection, promotions on food and beverage, and services that facilitate telecommuting and make physical isolation bearable, among others, during this trying period.

The ASAS commends the vast majority of businesses, who are responsible advertisers. However, a small number have unfortunately used the crisis to traffic in misinformation. They claim that their products and services offer meaningful protection against viruses or “the virus” during this period, based on weak evidence or misinterpreted research. Such tactics may give anxious consumers a false sense of security, bait the consumer into making purchases out of fear and undermine efforts to contain the spread of the disease.

Such advertisements have been reported to the ASAS in February and March 2020. We informed the advertisers to cease the misleading statements, and we will continue to do so. The ASAS will also share the feedback with the relevant authorities for further action under the law if warranted.

The ASAS would like to remind all businesses of their responsibility to support the advertising self-regulatory system by **advertising responsibly** and **acting ethically** regardless of their size. Here are key points advertisers should remember when they advertise at this time:

- Put out messages that contribute positively to the Singapore Government’s management of the crisis.
- Ensure that the terms and conditions of promotions are indicated in the advertisement in an upfront and transparent manner.

- Use only honest and truthful claims about products and services that are capable of robust substantiation.
- Avoid spreading misinformation that originates from sources that are not reliable.
- Check and comply with the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice (SCAP), the ASAS's advisories and all relevant national legislation.
- Finally, you may write to ASAS for copy advice and answers to your queries.

We would also highlight the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)'s Advisory on products claiming to prevent or treat COVID-19, for advertisers to take note of when engaging in marketing communication. More information can be found at: [https://www.hsa.gov.sg/consumer-safety/articles/advisory-on-products-claiming-to-prevent-or-treat-covid-19-\(coronavirus-disease-2019\)](https://www.hsa.gov.sg/consumer-safety/articles/advisory-on-products-claiming-to-prevent-or-treat-covid-19-(coronavirus-disease-2019))

When members of the public encounter advertisements for products and services that appear to be misleading, they should write to ASAS with a clear copy or image of the advertisement, its location and/or the URL where it may be accessed. They may do so on the ASAS website at <https://asas.org.sg/onlinecomplaint> or write to asas@case.org.sg.

Prof. Ang Peng Hwa
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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

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