

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

30 April 2019

Misleading advertisements for beauty, restaurants most complained about in 2018

The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) received a total of 218 instances of feedback in 2018. It received the most feedback on beauty-related advertisements. It also observed an increase in feedback about restaurant advertisements, the next highest category. The majority of the complaints concerned advertisements that were perceived as misleading.

Please view the total feedback that ASAS received and the top five most-complained industries in **Annex A**.

Highest amount of feedback was on beauty advertisements

ASAS received 19 instances of feedback on advertisements by the beauty industry (including advertisers of hair and slimming treatments) in 2018. It was the most-complained about sector.

The highest amount of feedback (five) for this sector concerned claims about hair loss treatments, which the complainants felt were misleading. The advertisements also lacked the following mandatory disclaimer found in Appendix I (*Hair and Scalp Products*) of the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice (SCAP):

There is no scientific proof that any product (except certain registered medicinal products) or service can retard hair loss or promote hair growth.

ASAS followed up with the advertisers involved to ensure that their advertisements included the above disclaimer.

Three instances of feedback involved promotions that the complainants said were not honoured due to terms and conditions that were referred to but not written in the advertisement. While these promotions had ended when they were reported, ASAS advised the relevant businesses

that future promotions should comply with the SCAP. Advertisers are reminded that promotional information must be truthful, and all pertinent terms and conditions must be clearly stated. If an advertisement does not include the terms and conditions, it should make it easy for the consumer to find them.

Advertisements for restaurants

ASAS received 18 instances of feedback on this sector. The issues involved matters such as price and discount discrepancies in advertisements, or a lack of clarity in the description of food and beverage items on menus and in promotional materials. Feedback to ASAS was not limited to advertisements placed by restaurants; it included advertisements through food delivery and restaurant reservation apps.

In one instance, a fast food establishment's counter displayed a promotion with the statement "upsized your side and drink for \$1." The accompanying image featured orange juice and a side order. However, consumers who ordered the upsized with orange juice were charged \$2 instead. ASAS wrote to the establishment and they clarified that the \$1 promotion applied only to soft drinks. They informed that they would change the promotional image to use a soft drink to avoid future misunderstandings. Advertisers should ensure the information on their promotional materials is clear, accurate and up-to-date, and this extends to prices and terms and conditions.

In another instance, one complainant said they were charged GST on top of a restaurant's listed prices when it was not indicated in the promotional materials. The establishment subsequently complied with ASAS's advice to indicate the prices, terms and conditions for their promotions clearly and prominently. The SCAP guidelines direct advertisers to publish prices in accordance with national legislation, and the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore (IRAS) has published guidelines on how to do so.

What consumers and advertisers can do

If consumers encounter advertisements that are not legal, decent, honest or truthful, they are encouraged to write to ASAS. They can fill out their feedback on the ASAS website (www.asas.org.sg/onlinecomplaint) with a clear copy of the advertisement and details on where they accessed or received it.

Advertisers, media owners and agencies may consider ASAS's paid copy advice if they are unsure whether their advertisement complies with the SCAP. 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>.

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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 2018

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
2018	218

Top 5 industries for feedback in 2018. The feedback includes requests for advertising advice and complaints that are either consumer-to-business or business-to-business in nature.

No.	Industry	Feedback	% of Total Feedback
1	Beauty (Includes Hair & Slimming)	19	8.7%
2	Restaurants	18	8.2%
3	Food & Beverage	15	6.8%
4	Electrical & Electronics	14	6.4%
5	Telecommunications	14	6.4%