



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

ASAS sees a drop in total feedback received

SINGAPORE, 7 May 2015 – There was a decline in the total feedback received over the three-year period from 2012 to 2014 by the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS), an advisory council to the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE). The feedback includes advertising advice, queries and complaints that are either consumer-to-business or business-to-business in nature.

This decline may be a result of consumers being better educated and more prudent in their spending. With the easy accessibility of the various platforms of information such as the Internet and social media, consumers are more willing to carry out their research before spending on something that they require and is available. With this knowledge, consumers are empowered to make an informed decision before purchasing a product or service. Consumers, being better informed these days, are questioning what is being marketed to them and they will seek redress if they are not delivered the promised results.

Year	Total Feedback Received
2012	375
2013	307
2014	273

Table 1: No. of feedback for 2012 to 2014

It is interesting to see that despite a decrease in the total feedback received in 2014, the volume feedback on the beauty industry has gone up. Not only has the number increased, it topped the 2014 list with the highest percentage of feedback. This constituted 42.8% of the total feedback received in 2014 as compared to 10.7% and 25.4% in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

The advertising of beauty products and services remains a concern. Businesses have been aggressive in their advertising, often using claims that could be misleading, unclear or lacking substantiation, in a bid to lure consumers from other competitors. Consumers are now more willing to come forward to complain to the ASAS about such advertisements.

The breakdown of the top five industries (2012 – 2014) with the most feedback can be viewed in the table below.

No.	2012	Feedback	% of Total Feedback	2013	Feedback	% of Total Feedback	2014	Feedback	% of Total Feedback
1	Beauty (Includes Hair & Slimming)	40	10.7%	Beauty (Includes Hair & Slimming)	78	25.4%	Beauty (Includes Hair & Slimming)	117	42.8%
2	Travel	27	7.2%	Food & Beverage	22	7.2%	Food & Beverage	21	7.6%
3	Telecommunications	26	6.9%	Travel	19	6.2%	Finance	21	7.6%
4	Food & Beverage	25	6.7%	Telecommunications	12	3.9%	Health	17	6.2%
5	Clothing	20	5.3%	Electrical & Electronics	12	3.9%	Electrical & Electronics	11	4%

Table 2: Comparison of feedback received from 2012 - 2014

Of the 273 feedback received in 2014, 15 were of a business-to-business nature. The breakdown according to industry can be viewed below.

No.	Industry	Feedback
1	Beauty (Includes Hair & Slimming)	6
2	Electrical and electronics	2
=	Telecommunications	2
3	Entertainment	1
=	Food & Beverage	1
=	Health	1
=	Insurance	1
=	Medical	1

Table 3: Breakdown of business-to-business feedback received in 2014 according to industry.

Beauty Industry

Advertising by the beauty industry consistently ranked first on the feedback list from 2012 to 2014. ASAS saw an increase in total feedback on advertising by the beauty industry in 2014; feedback was received 117 times as compared to 40 and 78 times in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The feedback usually pertained to misleading advertisements as well as claims which consumers felt were inaccurate and required further clarification.

From 2012 to 2014, the increase in the feedback on advertising by the beauty industry might be a result of increasing consumer demand for beauty services and products. In addition, ASAS has seen an increasing number of companies advertising new types of technology which could not be scientifically substantiated to be effective. Some businesses had to withdraw their claims when probed by ASAS as they were misleading or unsupported by scientific evidence.

Over the course of reviewing the companies' substantiations for claims in their advertisements, ASAS realised that a significant number of the companies needed to improve their submission process. This is a worrying sign which would have an impact on the beauty and wellness sector.

ASAS sees the need to address this concern and has approached the Cosmetic, Toiletry & Fragrance Association (CTFAS), Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) and Spa & Wellness Association Singapore (SWAS) for a collaborative effort. A joint seminar will be held on 7 May 2015 to engage regulators and practitioners with a view to possibly develop a framework. The seminar aims to educate stakeholders on responsible advertising as well as learning and training opportunities, which will raise the standard of business. It will also be a session for industry players to share their issues and concerns.

Food and Beverage Industry

An important milestone for the ASAS was the completion of the code for food advertising to children at the end of September 2014, following a collaborative effort with the Ministry of Health (MOH), Health Promotion Board (HPB), Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) and Food Industry Asia (FIA).

Advertisers or companies who wish to advertise food and beverage products to children aged 12 and below must ensure that the advertised products meet the Common Nutrition Criteria (CNC). This would limit the amount of unhealthy ingredients and encourage healthy components in food products that are advertised to children at the same time. Advertisers and companies must also complete a Nutrition Criteria Compliance Certificate (NCCC) and submit it to the media owners before their advertisements can be broadcast or published on media platforms that target children. If a food product does not meet the CNC, it could still be advertised outside of the children-dedicated media depending on the marketing techniques used.

The guidelines took effect officially from 1 January 2015. A three-month grace period from 1 October to 31 December 2014 was given to businesses to familiarise themselves with the code. The fee for advertising advice related to the code was waived for 2015. This was to encourage advertisers to submit their advertising copies and consult the ASAS on areas that they are unsure of.

To facilitate common understanding and interpretation of the guidelines and processes, ASAS has been holding training workshops for the industry. Two workshops were held on 25 and 26 November 2014 at the Singapore Manufacturing Federation (SMF) and attended by a total of 95 participants from local and multinational F&B companies, creative agencies and media owners. A third workshop was held on 30 January 2015 at SMF and attended by 25 participants.

ASAS will continue to conduct workshops on a regular basis. An annual compliance report will be prepared, starting end 2015.

Moving Forward

ASAS will continue to engage the various industries, advertisers and media owners to educate them on the self-regulatory framework and the advertising code. In the process, advertisers and companies can share with ASAS their issues and concerns that they face in the current business landscape in Singapore. With the views obtained from the various stakeholders, ASAS hopes to raise the level of play in the various sectors and encourage responsible advertising for the benefit of the consumers.

Despite the drop in the total feedback received in 2014, ASAS would continue to advise consumers to exercise prudence and discretion while purchasing products and services. It would be good for consumers to purchase products and services from companies that provide accurate and truthful information. However, the onus is on consumers to carry out prior research with regard to any claims made in advertisements to avoid being misled.

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