

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

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ASAS sees jump in feedback on food & beverage, restaurant ads in 2022

With the easing of pandemic restrictions last year, feedback received by the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) on advertisements by the food and beverage and restaurant sectors increased in tandem with patronage and reservations, forming a combined 23.4% of the feedback ASAS received in 2022 – or more than one in every five instances. ASAS received 36 pieces of feedback on food and beverage advertisements, making it the most complained about industry in 2022, with restaurants not far behind with 35 pieces of feedback.

A breakdown of the 303 feedback that ASAS received in 2022

ASAS received **303** pieces of feedback in 2022, compared with 304 in 2021. Among the most-complained industries in 2022, we noted a jump in the proportion of feedback on food and beverage and restaurant advertisements. There were fewer instances of feedback on advertisements for beauty establishments claims, with a 33.3% decrease in feedback as compared with 2021. As with past years, the majority of feedback ASAS handled were consumer-to-business complaints. Please see **Annex A** for the 2022 feedback statistics.

Bread and butter issues

With inflation on the rise in the last two years, complaints about the cost of food and shrinking portions have made frequent appearances in online news and social media. Of the feedback that ASAS received, 24 pieces of feedback concerned promotions that the complainants said were not honoured when they sought to purchase. 20 concerned food items that did not match the advertisements or menus in appearance, price, quantity or size.

In one example, a roast meat chain stated on the storefront signage at one of its outlets that their platters included rice when they no longer did so. The complainant was informed by the staff that the menu was wrong. The business acknowledged that they missed out on changing

the signage when they amended the menus and instructed their staff to black out the words “with rice” when ASAS wrote to them.

“Menus often influence a consumer’s decision to purchase food and beverages. Rising costs are not an excuse for businesses to not update their advertisements and point-of-sale materials in a timely fashion and thus misleading consumers. Relying solely on employees to communicate changes in availability and prices is not consistent, reliable or acceptable,” ASAS Chairman Prof. Ang Peng Hwa said. “ASAS will not hesitate to place strict deadlines on businesses that breach the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice (SCAP) to replace their marketing communications.”

Meanwhile, consumers who find themselves in this situation should take clear photographs of the advertisement, their receipt, and the food they receive before consumption so that ASAS has sufficient information to follow up on the matter.

Advertisements for discounts and rebates

ASAS noted an increase in feedback on advertisements where the complainants said the advertised percentage of a discount or rebate was unachievable due to the conditions imposed on the promotion.

There were 13 pieces of such feedback in 2022 involving banks, departmental stores and restaurants. For instance, on Black Friday, a departmental store’s banners on the homepage of their website stated that consumers could enjoy a 50% discount on purchases above \$799 when using a promotional code. However, multiple complainants pointed out that the terms and conditions capped the discount at \$125, far less than the \$399.50 discount they expected for meeting the minimum spending requirement. The advertiser explained that it imposed the condition to ensure the promotion was sustainable, a reason that the ASAS Council found inadequate. ASAS issued a caution to them to ensure that their advertised discounts in future advertisements are truthful and capable of substantiation.

In view of the current economic climate where consumers would be more attentive to promotions offering large discounts or rebates, Prof. Ang said, “ASAS’s positions for such advertisements are that (1) the headline figure of the promotion should be achievable by a meaningful number of people, and (2) the advertiser should be prepared to substantiate the claimed discount or rebate with examples or records when ASAS requests it.”

Ensuring effective advertising self-regulation

Online advertisements are increasingly targeted to individual consumers based on their demographic, so the feedback of members of the public is even more important and valuable in the regulation of the advertising industry. They can lodge their feedback on the ASAS website (www.asas.org.sg/onlinecomplaint) and provide the following information for ASAS’s follow-up:

- A clear copy of the full advertisement;
- The URL where it can be accessed, or else the details of where they accessed or received it offline; and
- Their reasons for their objections to the advertisement, with supporting examples (screenshots or recordings) to illustrate why it would be objectionable.

“We also encourage advertisers, media owners and agencies to consider approaching ASAS for copy advice 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 2022

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

Year	Total Feedback Received
2022	303

Top 5 industries for feedback in 2022. 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	Food & Beverage	36	11.8%
2	Restaurants	35	11.5%
3	Electrical and Electronics	25	8.2%
4	Health	21	6.9%
5	Entertainment	18	5.9%