

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

18 March 2024

Food & Beverage advertisements tops ASAS feedback for second straight year

Advertisements by the food and beverage (F&B) and restaurant sectors continued to top the list of most-complained about industries in 2023. The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) received 40 pieces of feedback on F&B advertisements, the most of any industry in 2023, with restaurants advertisements accounting for the second highest number of feedback with 33 pieces of feedback.

A breakdown of the 309 feedback that ASAS received in 2023

ASAS received **309** pieces of feedback in 2023, a marginal increase from the 303 received in 2022. About one in four feedback received in 2023 came from F&B and restaurant advertisements, which is similar to 2022. Feedback on electrical and electronics, beauty and health advertisements rounded up the top five most-complained-about industries. Please see **Annex A** for the 2023 feedback statistics.

Increase in feedback on advertising of HFSS foods

In 2023, there was a 50% increase in complainants expressing concerns about the advertising of products that were high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS), with 15 such cases compared with 10 in 2022 and four in 2021. This is a sharp shift from previous years when feedback on F&B advertisements primarily involved unfulfilled promotions and discrepancies in actual items. The steady increase in feedback suggests an increased awareness about food advertising.

One such feedback pertained to an advertisement depicting children consuming festive snacks in an excessive manner and playfully fighting over them, which the complainant felt endorsed such behaviour and consumption. Under the [Children's Code for Advertising Food and Beverage](#)

Products, only products that meet their respective common nutrition criteria (CNC)¹ may be marketed to children. In the cases where ASAS found that products that did not meet the CNC were being marketed to children, the advertisers were reminded of the guidelines and informed to amend or cease their advertisements.

“Advertising plays a critical role in the marketing and sale of food and so such advertisements should be prepared with a sense of responsibility to consumer and society,” Prof. Ang Peng Hwa, Chairman of ASAS said. “Through education, awareness, and responsible messaging, advertising can make a meaningful difference to improve public health outcomes.”

To address the phenomenon and ensure that the Children’s Code for Advertising Food and Beverage Products is being adhered to, ASAS will also continue to conduct active post-market monitoring of advertising for HFSS food and beverages to children and keep up its outreach efforts to the industry and the public.

Advertisers who wish to know about the guidelines may register for ASAS’s training webinar that will take place on Friday 22 March 2024. They may register their interest at <https://connectvision.live/asas-220324/>.

Concerns about “last call messaging”

ASAS received six pieces of feedback in 2023 across several industries (department stores, ecommerce, electrical and electronics and education) involving the use of "last call messaging", where some consumers reported seeing advertisements suggesting a recurrent launch, closing sale or rapidly depleting inventory. They felt the claims were not true because they noticed that these advertisements were run on social media platforms for several months without any changes or end-dates. ASAS had received only two such feedback in 2022 and notes a shift of such advertisements from physical media such as banners to social media platforms.

ASAS’s position is that “last call messaging” is acceptable under specific conditions: either if there are limited places available or if the registration deadline is imminent. ASAS has been engaging these advertisers to inform them of the changes that they should make to their advertisements.

Advertisers should not imply that promotional offers are time-limited and instil a false sense of urgency in consumers if it is not the case. They must show that the price offered to consumer will revert to the original price when the promotion concludes. To avoid misleading consumers, it is essential that such advertisement is accompanied by a clear deadline or supply constraint.

¹ The Common Nutrition Criteria (CNC) prescribe limits on the amount of energy, saturated fat, sugar and salt for 10 categories of food and beverages that may be marketed to children. They also prescribe the categories of food and beverage that may not be marketed to children (“exclusions”).

Public consultation on SCAP review

In response to evolving consumer expectations and advancements in advertising platforms, ASAS is conducting a review of the Singapore Code of Advertising Practice (SCAP) to ensure its relevance. With changing public sensitivities towards issues such as sustainability, transparency and responsible advertising, ASAS aims to update SCAP to reflect these evolving concerns and address the demands of new technologies. This process includes consultations with advertisers and key stakeholders to identify emerging trends, address industry shifts, and align with international best practices since the 2008 edition.

The proposed updates are intended to provide clearer guidance on the types of advertising that is within the scope of the SCAP, the requirements for warnings and disclosures for financial and health products and sponsored social media posts, and environmental claims, among others.

Interested parties may refer to the public consultation documents and provide their views on the amendments via the form at <https://forms.gle/FCwyVW1TKBmNdG578>. The consultation closes at the end of business on 19 April 2024.

Ensuring effective advertising self-regulation

“The public consultation on SCAP updates reflects our commitment to ensure advertising self-regulation remains effective and relevant,” Prof. Ang said. “We encourage all stakeholders to take part as your input will help shape the future of advertising standards. Together, we can uphold integrity and transparency in advertising practices, ultimately benefiting consumers and society at large.”

Members of the public who encounter advertisements with unsubstantiated claims and other unethical content 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.

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 or follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/asasorgsg.

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

Annex A: Feedback received in 2023

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
2023	309

Top 5 industries for feedback in 2023. 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	2022 Feedback	% of 2022 Feedback	2023 Feedback	% of 2023 Feedback
1	Food & Beverage	36	11.8%	40	12.9%
2	Restaurants	35	11.5%	33	10.6%
3	Electrical & Electronics	25	8.2%	22	7.1%
4	Beauty	16	5.3%	19	6.1%
5	Health	21	6.9%	18	5.8%