

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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High-profile ad complaints contribute to rise in 2019 feedback

The Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore (ASAS) received a total of 359 instances of feedback in 2019. While the number is much higher than the 218 received in 2018, the rise is partly attributable to an increase in advertisement feedback from the finance, restaurant and beauty sectors. The increase may also be due to public awareness outreach efforts by ASAS.

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

Highest amount of feedback was on finance category

ASAS received 31 instances of feedback on advertisements under the finance¹ category in 2019. It was the most complained-about sector. The feedback on finance industry advertisements involved remittance services and companies that offer investment opportunities. In one case, a consumer questioned a remittance business's claims to have "no sneaky charges" after SWIFT fees were deducted from their transaction. The advertiser said that as the transaction involved US dollars in a country where it is not the local currency, the local banks would implement SWIFT fees that were outside of the remittance business's control. The advertiser complied with ASAS's advice to include a warning to consumers to check with recipients if their banks charged additional fees during the remittance process.

There were also many who gave feedback (14) concerning the use of "brownface" in a NETS E-Pay advertisement. The advertisement was taken down and the Info-communications Media Development Authority (IMDA) issued a warning to the parties involved. Advertisers were

¹ Feedback on advertisements from banks and insurance firms form separate categories and is not included in this number.

reminded to be mindful of racial sensitivities and not cause offence to ethnic groups when conducting their advertising campaigns.

Advertisements for restaurants

ASAS received 30 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 apps.

Across-the-board increases in feedback

For 2019, ASAS noted that there were increases in feedback across most categories, including feedback on advertisements by mobile phone companies. Of the feedback that were investigated and resolved by the end of 2019, 69 were found to have breached the SCAP. It is a lower proportion compared with previous years. That is, the proportion of ads that are in breach of the SCAP is falling continues a downward trend observed over the last two years.

ASAS regards it as an encouraging sign that consumers, through our outreach efforts and the high-profile advertising incidents in 2019, are increasingly aware that a channel exists for both consumers and advertisers to provide feedback and work together to ensure ethical advertising.

What consumers and advertisers can do

ASAS encourages consumers to continue to write in if they encounter advertisements that are not legal, decent, honest or truthful. 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.

ASAS would remind advertisers not to overstate the benefits or returns that consumers could expect from using their services, and to ensure that they are capable of substantiation. Advertisers, media owners and agencies are encouraged to 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 2019

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
2019	359

Top 5 industries for feedback in 2019. 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	Finance	31	8.6%
2	Restaurants	30	8.3%
3	Beauty (Includes Hair & Slimming)	24	6.7%
4	Telecommunications	22	6.1%
5	Food & Beverage	21	5.8%