



SELF REGULATION GETS LEGAL RECOGNITION

ASCI CODE MADE COMPULSORY FOR TV ADS.

Self Regulation in advertising as practised and duly recognized in many countries including USA, UK, Australia, Japan, China and Brazil etc., has been pursued and monitored in India in an inexpensive and expeditious manner for the last 20 years by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), a voluntary and non-profit organization set up by a group of advertisers, advertising agencies, media etc., way back in 1985, with the objective of ensuring that all advertising should be legal, decent, honest and truthful along with a sense of social responsibility to the consumer and to the rules of fair competition.

ASCI's role has been acclaimed by various agencies including the Government. However, it lacked the force of legal recognition. The Government of India has at last, taken note of this and by one stroke on 2nd August 2006 vide a notification in The Gazette of India: Extraordinary {Part II –sec. 3(i)}, made sure that at least as far as TV Commercials go, they abide by the ASCI code. The amendment made in Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2006 now states:

"(9) No advertisement which violates the Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising, as adopted by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), Mumbai for public exhibition in India, from time to time, shall be carried in the cable service".

In the words of Mr Ram Poddar, Chairman of ASCI, "This has been a long standing request of ASCI and I would like to place on record our grateful thanks and appreciation to the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting, of the Government of India, for helping to make the Advertising Self-Regulatory Movement in India stronger and more effective."

ASCI encourages the public to complain against advertisements which they consider to be false, misleading, offensive or unfair. All complaints are evaluated by an independent Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) which has 21 members - 12 from civil society and 9 from advertising practitioners. The CCC has been able to decide upon the complaints within a period of 4 to 6 weeks. Recent statistics suggest that in as many as 85% of the complaints upheld against TV advertisements, the advertisers/channels have confirmed in writing to have forthwith complied with the decisions of CCC, either by withdrawing or modifying appropriately the subject advertisements. ASCI has now sought the support of the concerned associations such as Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF) to persuade the TV channels to adhere to ASCI's Code as well as implement the decisions of its CCC in this regard

ASCI's service is free of cost to the public. A visit to its website www.ascionline.org will facilitate the process. Its Secretariat can also be contacted at:

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On behalf of the Board of ASCI.