ASCI’s WhatsApp number 77100 12345 marks one year of protecting Consumer Rights in the digital age.

Mumbai, March 15, 2017: Empowering consumers to register their grievances against objectionable advertisements through an easy access and effective medium, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) successfully completed a year of its digital initiative – Snap and WhatsApp (+91 77100 12345). In perfect tandem with World Consumer Rights Day themed “Consumer Rights in Digital Age” being celebrated today, ASCI’s WhatsApp number provides an efficient first touch point for consumers to register their complaints with great ease and completely free of cost.

The WhatsApp platform registers 200 Million monthly active users in India. With more and more consumers accessing WhatsApp, ASCI’s WhatsApp number has radically increased its outreach. In one year since launch the WhatsApp number contributes to approximately 15% of the total number of advertisements complained against by consumers.

Commenting on the success of WhatsApp initiative, Mr. Srinivasan K Swamy, Chairman, ASCI, said, “By ensuring that the advertisements are truthful, decent, non-offensive, legal and fair in competition, ASCI is ensuring the protection of the interests of consumers. ASCI has provided Indian consumers a very powerful tool through its WhatsApp number (77100 12345) to take action against objectionable advertisements and thereby protecting consumer rights in this digital age. We are delighted to see that our proactive step of launching this number a year ago has been a success with more and more consumers reaching ASCI using this platform.”

Interestingly, by embracing technology to connect with the consumers, ASCI has expanded its reach to smaller towns and cities in India and received encouraging participation from non-metro cities in registering the complaints on the WhatsApp number. The sectors that received complaints on WhatsApp include FMCG, Healthcare, Telecom, E-commerce, Travel, Durables, Automotive, Food and Beverages and Education which have been seen across medium not restricted to only TV or print but also Website, Radio, SMS, Emailers, Promotional Materials, Product Packaging, Hoardings, etc.

This WhatsApp initiative is part of a more comprehensive system set up by ASCI to get consumers to register complaints on what they consider are offensive. Initially it set up a web-based complaint registration system and later it launched a free mobile app “ASClonline” in July 2015, which was
followed, by the launch of WhatsApp number (7710012345) in March 2016. With these measures, ASCI is able to effectively engage with thousands of consumers who raise objections against misleading or offensive advertisements.

ASCI also has a tie up with Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) through which ASCI monitors nationally (National Advertising Monitoring Service – NAMS) print and TV media for offending advertisements wherein each of the 1600 new TV and 45000 print advertisements are reviewed to weed out potentially misleading advertisements. ASCI tracks 32 national Newspapers (all editions) that contributed to over 80% of national newspaper readership, 50 magazines and 425 TV Channels across the country in 14 languages. NAMS also tracks whether non-compliant advertisements reappeared and results show that most of these advertisements are either withdrawn or modified.

On this occasion of World Consumer Rights Day that celebrates the theme - Consumer Rights in Digital Age, ASCI is truly ensuring that advertisements are legal, decent, honest and truthful so that consumers can trust advertising – which is ASCI’s new consumer focused tagline “so you can trust advertising”.

About Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

The Advertising Standards Council of India is a self-regulatory organization for the advertising industry to promote, maintain, monitor and uphold fair, sound, ethical and healthy principles and practices of advertising for the protection of interest of consumers and the general public. Established in 1985, ASCI’s role has been acclaimed by various Government agencies. The Govt. bodies including The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and Ministry of AYUSH have partnered with ASCI to address all misleading advertisements in their respective sectors. The Supreme Court of India in its recent judgement has also affirmed and recognized the self-regulatory mechanism put in place for advertising content ASCI.

ASCI & its Consumer Complaints Council (CCC) deal with Complaints received from Consumers and Industry against Advertisements which are considered as False, Misleading, Indecent, Illegal, leading to Unsafe practices, or Unfair to competition, and in contravention of the ASCI Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising. Under its National Advertisement Monitoring Service (NAMS), ASCI proactively monitors over 80% of new print and all new TV advertisements released in the country every month, for contravention of Chapter I of the ASCI code. (Source: www.ascionline.org)
For further information, please contact:

The Advertising Standards Council of India
Shweta Purandare, Secretary General, ASCI
Phone: 91 22 2495 5070 / 91 9821162785 | Email: shweta@ascionline.org

Ketchum Sampark Public Relations Pvt. Ltd
Anuradha Roy - 91 7506916497 | Email: anuradha.roy@ketchumsampark.com

Kiwishka Prasad - 91 7506861969 | Email: kiwishka.prasad@ketchumsampark.com