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Advertising expectations and experience: Australians have their say

New national research conducted by Roy Morgan for Ad Standards, Australia's advertising regulator, reveals a gap between what Australians expect from advertising and what they currently experience – particularly online.

The community sentiment tracking study, conducted by Roy Morgan, found that 88% of Australians believe advertising should reflect community standards and values, yet only 37% say the advertising they encounter meets those expectations. The research highlights the high expectations Australians have of advertising and the importance of aligning with community standards to maintain trust.

When it comes to platforms, social media attracts the highest levels of concern (62%), with YouTube close behind, especially among Australians with children in the household.

The expectations gap presents a clear commercial risk for brands, with two-thirds (67%) of Australians saying they avoid brands that use inappropriate or offensive advertising, increasing to 83% among Australians aged 65 and older.

Ad Standards Executive Director, Greg Wallace, said the findings demonstrate that Australians are paying attention and expect responsible conduct across all advertising platforms.

“Australians are clear about the advertising they want to see – advertising that’s honest, responsible and considerate of its audience. With so much content appearing online and on social media, it’s critical that brands understand and meet community standards, wherever their ads appear.”

The study also identifies key areas driving concern. Gambling advertising ranks as the leading issue for Australians, with misleading or deceptive content and children’s exposure to inappropriate ads also flagged as key concerns.

Australians are also increasingly alert to ‘greenwashing’, with more than half (58%) of Australians aware of the term and two thirds (69%) concerned about misleading environmental claims in advertising, particularly in the energy and mining sectors.

Despite mixed sentiment and trust levels in advertising overall, the findings reveal a clear opportunity for brands that follow Australia’s advertising industry codes, set by the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) and underpinning responsible advertising. Australians who agree that advertising is in line with community standards were more than twice as likely to trust advertising.

“Aligning campaigns with the advertising rules and community expectations builds trust, strengthens engagement and reduces reputational risk,” Greg Wallace said.

“Ad Standards is here to support responsible advertising by helping advertisers understand and follow the rules. But when ads cross the line, on any platform, we listen and respond through a transparent, independent complaints process – assessing ads against the rules and requiring removal where standards are breached.”

Roy Morgan CEO Michele Levine commented: *“We know from our ongoing trust and distrust research that Australians are more distrusting than trusting. The advertising industry is no exception to this rule, but this research shows how brands can really foster trust and mitigate distrust - by aligning with community standards. Alignment with community standards doesn’t just soften distrust, it changes the trust equation.”*

The Ad Standards-Roy Morgan Community Sentiment Tracker Survey was conducted online with a cross-section of 1,024 Australians aged 18+ between 17-28 November 2025.

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About Roy Morgan

Roy Morgan is Australia's largest independent Australian research company, with offices in each state, as well as in the U.S. and U.K. A full-service research organisation, Roy Morgan has over 80 years' experience collecting objective, independent information on consumers.

About Ad Standards:

Ad Standards is Australia's advertising regulator. They give a voice to community concerns and promote responsible advertising. Ad Standards manages the independent complaints handling process for advertising in Australia, ensuring that advertising and marketing communications comply with the AANA Codes and the FCAI Code.