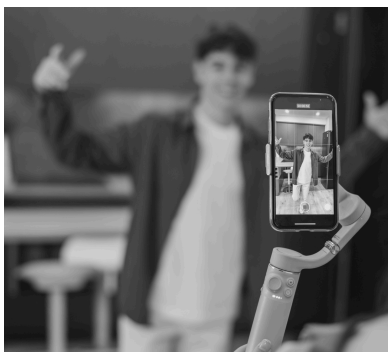


TOP INFLUENCER COMPLIANCE SCORECARD

Compliance Review of Forbes Top 100 Digital Stars in India



Introduction

The influencer marketing industry in India is booming, estimated at **₹ 55 billion** in 2024, according to Statista. Digital stars are being celebrated for their ability to engage with consumers in ways that traditional advertising cannot. But even as influencer advertising gets more mainstream, the question is whether it is compliant with the standards that advertising is held to?

ASCI introduced “Guidelines for Influencer Advertising in Digital Media” in May 2021, requiring influencers to use clear labels like #ad, #collaboration or platform-specific tools (e.g., Instagram’s “Paid Partnership” tag) to signal any material connection they may have with the brands. The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) also followed in January 2023 with similar requirements, making disclosures a legal requirement when influencers promote brands.

To understand whether influencers are abiding by ASCI’s guidelines and the law, ASCI conducted a dipstick study of brand promotions done by Forbes’ India’s Top 100 Digital Stars 2024. These influencers have massive reach, with over 110 million followers combined. They are role models to other influencers. The study results reveal that advertisers, digital agencies and influencers have a long way to go and that in most cases, they are in violation of both the self-regulatory and the legal guidelines.

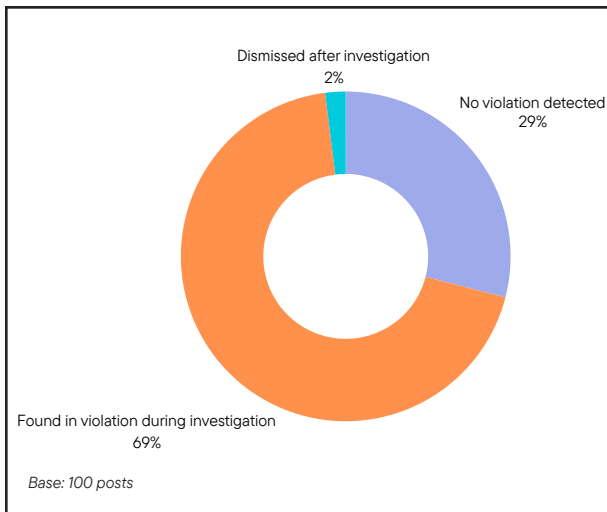
This study aims to highlight the compliance gaps which ultimately harm consumer interests. Lack of such transparency makes it difficult for consumers to trust online marketplaces. It is essential for all stakeholders including platforms to come together to drive better compliance on this issue.

Methodology

The selection of influencers was based on the Forbes’ India’s Top 100 Digital Stars 2024. This exercise was undertaken for posts that appeared to promote brands, published by these 100 digital stars during the period September 2024 to November 2024. The platforms screened were Instagram & YouTube.

Based on the findings, one post per non-compliant influencer was processed by ASCI for violation of its guidelines.

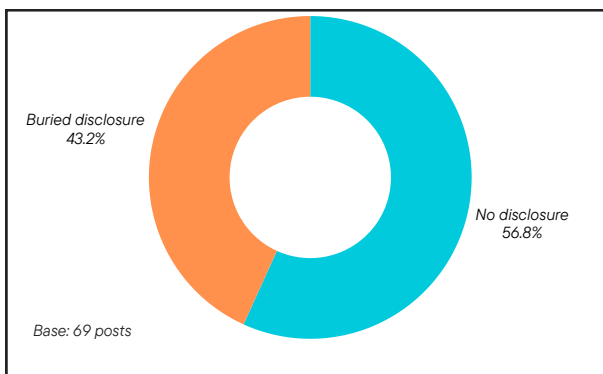
69% OF THE TOP 100 DIGITAL STARS FAILED TO MEET DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS



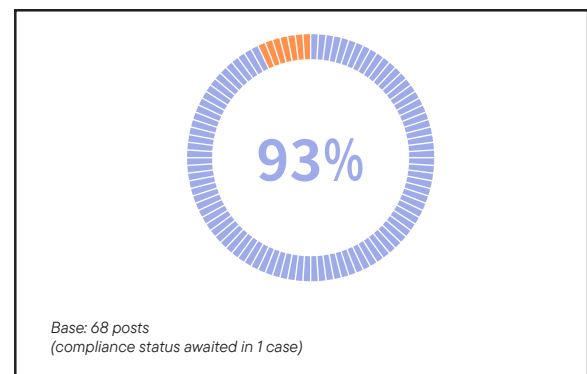
Of the 100 posts that appeared to promote brands, 29 were found to have the appropriate disclosures. 71 cases were further investigated, of which 2 were dismissed as influencers were able to provide evidence that there existed no material connection. 69 cases were found in violation of the ASCI Code and potentially the CCPA guidelines.

Of the 69 cases that needed modification, 59 cases (85%) agreed to put the disclosure labels without contest. 4 cases changed the label after ASCI's jury recommendation and 5 cases (7%) were escalated to Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (MIB) for non-compliance as they have jurisdiction over digital advertising. One case is currently in progress and awaiting compliance.

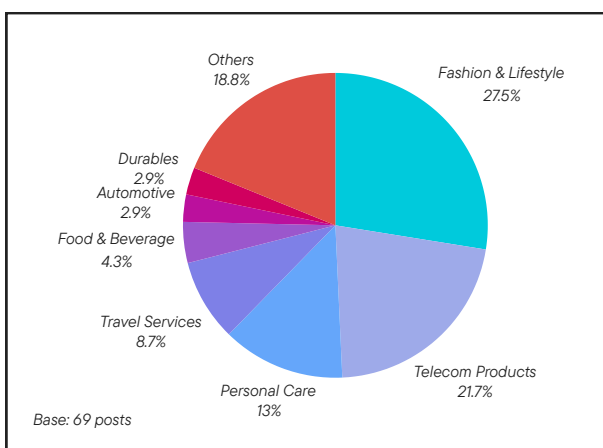
TYPE OF VIOLATION



COMPLIANCE STATUS AS OF FEBRUARY 5, 2025- 93%



CATEGORY-WISE BREAKUP



Fashion & Lifestyle, Telecom Products and Personal Care were the top 3 violators, contributing to 62% cases.



IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR INFLUENCERS



ASCI'S GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS
<https://www.ascionline.in/social/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/ASCI-Guide-For-Influencers-1.pdf>



DISCLOSURE TOOL FOR INFLUENCERS AND BRANDS
Easy to use tool to know when and how to disclose promotions
<https://www.ascionline.in/social/tools/>



DO'S & DON'TS FOR INFLUENCERS AND BRANDS
<https://www.ascionline.in/social/dos-dont/>



CCPA GUIDELINES: ENDORSEMENT KNOW-HOWS
<https://www.ascionline.in/social/dos-dont/>

OUR E-LEARNING CERTIFICATION COURSE

THE ASCI RESPONSIBLE INFLUENCING PLAYBOOK

- Learn how to safeguard yourself and the brands you work with
- Remember influencers and endorsers can be held liable under the law
- Grow audience trust and build transparency



ABOUT ASCI

Established in 1985, The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is the self-regulatory body of the Indian advertising industry. ASCI resolves issues around

- Dishonest or misleading ads
- Indecent or offensive ads
- Harmful ads
- Ads that are unfair in competition.

ASCI looks at advertisements across all media types and formats such as TV, print, digital, outdoor, radio, point of sale, claims made on packaging and so on.

ASCI works closely with different stakeholders in the matter of consumer protection. ASCI's code is part of The Advertising Code enshrined within the Cable TV Networks (Regulation) Act, 1994, providing it with a legal backstop.

Since introducing its Influencer Advertising Guidelines in May 2021, ASCI has processed 6,124 complaints against influencers as of 31st January 2025, for violations of its 'Guidelines of Influencers Advertising in Digital Media' these include inadequate or non- disclosures (e.g., missing #ad tags).

Influencer Guideline violations besides being a violation of the ASCI guidelines, risk legal repercussions under the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) guidelines, which also mandates transparency in brand-influencer partnerships.

Through its active suo moto surveillance across social media platforms, and acting on complaints; ASCI continues to drive a culture of responsibility, ensuring influencers and brands prioritize transparency and consumer trust.



ASCI

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