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A Critical Analysis of Celebrity Endorsements and Consumer Protection

Garvita Mishra

India International University of Legal Education and Research, Goa

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ABSTRACT

Celebrity and influencer endorsements play a significant huge role in what consumers choose to purchase in India. This paper analyses how the Consumer Protection Act of 2019, the Central Consumer Protection Authority guidelines from 2022 and the Advertising Standards Council of India's influencer code are enforced to regulate hoax endorsements. The paper uses the doctrinal method to study the laws, regulatory guidance and key judicial decisions. These include cases from cosmetic, health and food sectors and online betting apps and websites. The study finds that there is a duty to be obeyed by the celebrities and influencers who indulge in endorsements. If they do not, strict provisions under the rules and procedure can be invoked. However, the study also finds the rules are not clear on social media disclosures and are enforced weakly mostly relying on complaints. The paper concludes by suggesting three broad policy reforms that are needed. There should be rules about disclosing adequate information and a system where those who promote high-risk products are held more accountable.

KEYWORDS

Celebrity Endorsements; Misleading Advertisements; Consumer Protection Act 2019; Endorsers' liability; Social media influencers.

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, celebrities and influencers flood social media with marketing and overwhelming advertising. They promote brands that get views, and this significantly impacts how consumers choose a product. Today, most people see their social symbol as a celebrity, whom they trust and try to copy, and they try to copy the highly popularised and widely circulated products. Brands use this manipulation to generate revenue and sales; however, sometimes these advertisements are misleading, creating insecurities. Fairness cream advertisements, such as those for Fair & Handsome by Emami, have been criticised for promoting colourism and unrealistic beauty standards. Similarly, Patanjali has faced legal scrutiny for making exaggerated health claims in its advertisements and online promotions. This takes us to our study of how celebrity endorsements can be, and how they affect us, i.e., consumers. And how, as consumers, we have rights and privileges to safeguard us. We buy things we don't need, and the regulation of advertising is important. In this paper, focus is on the Indian legal framework on misleading advertisements, particularly under the Consumer Protection Act 2019 and related guidelines, with a focus on celebrity and influencer endorsements. It also examines the liabilities and penalties faced by endorsers and highlights key case law to illustrate how the law is applied in practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Statutory and Regulatory Framework on Misleading Advertisements

Celebrity endorsement is a million-dollar industry today. To gain the attention of consumers, brands get on board with celebrities using their charismatic personalities and public display of trustworthiness which eventually gets them brand exposure. By using celebrity endorsements as a marketing communication tool, their products lack certainty and quality and can sometimes mislead consumers. According to Section 2(28) of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, a "misleading advertisement" means any advertisement which falsely describes the product or service, gives a false guarantee, is likely to mislead consumers regarding its nature, substance, quantity or quality, conveys a representation that would amount to an unfair trade practice, or deliberately conceals important information. When celebrities promote products that fall within this definition, their endorsements can contribute to misleading advertisements and potential consumer harm.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 paved the way for better legal regulation by creating the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA). CCPA has the power to act against misleading advertisements and endorsements by implementing penalties and obligations under Section 21. CCPA Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022 places particular emphasis on due diligence, obligating endorsers to substantiate claims and refrain from making unverified assertions.[1] It also requires the endorsers to be adequately informed about the product they are promoting. Subsequently, the requirement for clear disclosure of material connection by using certain labels i.e., (#ad, #sponsored).

However, the actual gap between the reality of social media advertising and law on paper has been highlighted in recent judicial matters and scholarly commentaries.

2. Judicial and Quasi-Judicial Responses to Misleading Endorsements

Consumers have been taking companies to court to hold them liable because of ads for things like fairness creams, food and health products. For example, in *Francis Vadakkan v. A-One Medicals and Ors.* a hair growth cream said it would make your hair grow three times in six weeks. The ad featured actor Anoop Menon, and what was claimed by him made the petitioner want to buy the cream. The Kerala District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission decided that the company that made the cream, the actor who endorsed it and the store that sold it were all responsible for the ad. Merely by putting a disclaimer in tiny print was not enough because it still confused the consumers.

This case shows that even before the law changed with the Consumer Protection Act in 2019 courts knew that famous people appearing in ads could be very influential. They understood that these celebrities could mislead people into buying things. Hence, they were willing to hold these

[1] Vignesh Kumar M., Renganathan V. & Krishnamoorthi A.S., *Misleading Advertisements and Celebrity Endorsements: Legal Gaps and Reforms*, 6(1) Int'l J. Advanced Legal Res. (2025).

celebrities responsible along with the people who made and sold the products, for any claims made in the advertisements.

The Supreme Court of India has also looked into unreliable advertisements especially when it comes to health products and medical claims. The most prominent case was against *Patanjali Ayurved* when the Indian Medical Association went to the Supreme Court and claimed that Patanjali and its owners were circulating misinformation about modern medicine and making false claims that Ayurvedic products can cure serious diseases.[2] The Supreme Court stressed that advertisements about health that are not truthful take away the basic right to health that consumers have and consumers have the right to information about the products they consume.

Apart from health and cosmetic products celebrity endorsements of betting and gaming apps are also facing legal and regulatory issues. A recent PIL, Dr. *K.A. Paul v/s the Union of India* has approached the Supreme Court seeking a ban on betting apps and celebrity endorsements of them. The PIL alleges these endorsements mislead people about the risks and legality of gambling. In India, courts and regulators are starting to take celebrity endorsements in misleading ads seriously.[3]

3. Scholarly Commentary on Misleading Endorsements and Legal Gaps

Scholars in the Journal of Intellectual Property Rights mention that the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 makes celebrities responsible for misleading ads and connects this to their right to fame. It notes that Section 21 gives the Central Consumer Protection Authority the power to fine and temporarily ban endorsers who make misleading claims and put consumers at risk.[4]

Subsequently, academic and student journals have analyzed Section 21 and its impact on endorsers. RGNUL Student Research Review noted that Section 21 holds celebrities and influencers accountable. However, the proper definition of "due diligence" has not been defined

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[2] SCC Online, [Patanjali Misleading Ads Case] Supreme Court Drops Contempt of Court Charges Against Baba Ramdev and Acharya Balkrishna, SCC Online Blog, https://www.scconline.com/blog/post/2024/08/13/patanjali-misleading-adscase-supreme-court-drops-contempt-of-court-charges-against-baba-ramdev-acharya-balkrishna/ (last visited May 14, 2026).

[3] LiveLaw, Supreme Court Issues Notice to States, ED & TRAI on Plea to Ban Betting Apps and Celebrity Endorsements, LiveLaw, https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-hearing-pil-ban-on-betting-apps-and-celebrity-endorsements-299631 (last visited May 14, 2026).

[4] Diksha Arora, Celebrity Endorsements – The Interplay Between Intellectual Property Law and the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, 25 J. Intell. Prop. Rts. 173 (2020).

yet. The unclear definition might stop endorsers from promoting unreliable products or let them escape liability by using disclaimers.[5]

Moreover, studies have shown branding in India which entraps the young consumers, especially Gen Z are heavily influenced by celebrity posts and often do not know when content is sponsored. The Consumer Protection Act of 2019 and other related guidelines have made the legal framework solid. However, these studies also suggest that there are still gaps in defining due diligence, ensuring effective enforcement and regulating influencer advertising on platforms like Instagram.[6] [7]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper has adopted a doctrinal method of legal research. Relying on texts to analyse how Indian law regulates misleading advertisements and celebrity endorsements and how these rules have changed over time. The study focuses on the Consumer Protection Act, 2019— Sections 2(28) and 21—the Central Consumer Protection Authority's Guidelines on misleading advertisements and endorsements and the self-regulatory framework created by the Advertising Standards Council of India.[8]

The main primary sources used are the statute itself, the 2022 CCPA Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Necessary Due Diligence for Endorsement of Advertisements and the ASCI Code and influencer guidelines on digital platforms.[9] [10] Judicial and quasi-judicial decisions are also included in the research. These include consumer-forum decisions on misleading health claims and recent public interest litigations and investigations.

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[5] RGNUL Student Research Review, Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and Endorsers, RSRR, https://www.rsrr.in/post/consumer-protection-act-2019-and-endorsers (last visited May 14, 2026).

[6] Consumer Protection Against Misleading Advertisements and Deceptive Branding: Interplay Between Consumer Law and Intellectual Property Rights in India, 5 Advances Consumer Res. 106 (2025).

[7] Misleading Fashion Celebrity Advertising in Social Media Marketing and Its Impact on Gen Z, Rayat Bahra Univ. J. (2025), https://publications.rayatbahrauniversity.edu.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/RB241214.pdf (last visited May 14, 2026).

[8] *The Consumer Protection Act*, No. 35 of 2019, §§ 2(28) & 21 (India).

[9] Press Information Bureau, Centre Issues 'Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022', PIB, c (last visited May 14, 2026).

[10] Press Information Bureau, CCPA Issues Notices to Celebrities, Influencers and Virtual Influencers for Failure to Disclose Material Connection While Endorsing Products and Services, PIB, https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1945167 (last visited May 14, 2026).

The research also has a comparative element. It compares approaches taken by adjudicatory bodies—consumer fora, High Courts and the Supreme Court—across sectors such as health, cosmetics and online betting. The study is based on library and desk research and does not include field surveys or interviews. Its focus is confined to the Indian context with particular attention to celebrity and influencer endorsements.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS IN INDIA

Consumer Protection Act, 2019

The legal regulation of celebrity endorsements in India is set on a number of procedures, guidelines and self-regulation. The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and the guidelines issued by the CCPA in 2022 specify what is allowed and what is not when it comes to advertisements that are misleading and what happens to the celebrity who endorses them. The ASCI Code also has its set of standards for advertising, including the things celebrities post on social media. Celebrity endorsements have to follow these rules and guidelines to avoid liabilities.

The Consumer Protection Act, 2019 was enacted to replace the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. With this act, CPA, 2019 widened the scope of meaning of "consumer" and introduced the definition of "misleading ads". Under its provisions a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has been established w.e.f 24.07.2020 to regulate matters in the interests of public good.[11][12]

The definition of "Misleading Advertisements" under Section 2(28) is drafted broadly and covers all forms of advertising. Whether it is voiced by a brand owner, a niche model, or a well-known celebrity or influencer. Therefore, when a celebrity repeats or endorses a false guarantee or an

[11] Press Information Bureau, Centre Issues 'Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022' (June 9, 2022), https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1832906.

[12] Khaitan Legal Associates, Legal Implications of Social Media Influencers: Endorsements and Disclosures in India, Khaitan Legal, https://khaitanlegal.com/legal-implications-of-social-media-influencers-endorsements-and-disclosures-in-india/ (last visited May 14, 2026).

exaggerated claim, their endorsement forms part of the misleading advertisement for the purposes of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.[13]

CCPA Guidelines 2022

Once an ad has been labeled 'misleading' the CCPA takes necessary action under Section 21 of the Act. Required modification and Discontinuance may be directed to the concerned marketers of the ad. The authority can also fine the trader, manufacturer or endorser who is associated with the ad. Further, under Section 21, if endorsers keep endorsing themselves the CCPA can restrict them from making any future endorsements, for a certain period. This is, however, subject to the due diligence defense in the provision.[14] [15]

The Act has given the idea of basic definitions and enforcement powers. The CCPA issued Guidelines on Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Necessary Due Diligence for Endorsement of Advertisements in 2022.[16] These Guidelines explain how the rules about endorsements actually work in reality.

Celebrities, while endorsing, must be transparent and ensure they are not saying things that are deceptive. They must have knowledge and proper information about the product or service and only endorse it if they really think it is accurate and believable. The person endorsing and the company they are endorsing for must be specified if they are getting monetary or other benefits when they are advertising on the internet or media.[17]

ASCI Code and Influencer Guidelines

Advertising in India is governed by the code for Self-Regulation in Advertising adopted by Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI). Under **Rule 7(9) of the Cable Television**

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[13] Press Information Bureau, CCPA Releases Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements in Healthcare Sector, 2022, PIB, https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1904528 (last visited May 14, 2026).

[14] The Law Institute, Offences and Penalties Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019: Ensuring Compliance and Protecting Consumer Rights, The Law Institute, https://thelaw.institute/consumer-protection-issues/consumer-protection-act-2019-offences-penalties-compliance/ (last visited May 14, 2026).

[15] Consumer Protection Act, 2019, No. 35 of 2019, §§ 2(7), 2(28) & 10 (India).

[16] Press Information Bureau, supra note 10.

[17] AZB & Partners, Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements for Misleading Advertisements, 2022, AZB & Partners, https://www.azbpartners.com/bank/guidelines-for-prevention-of-misleading-advertisements-and-endorsements-for-misleading-advertisements-2022/ (last visited May 14, 2026).

Networks Rules, 1994 gives the code an indirect statutory backing for broadcast media.[18] The code applies to all entities and individuals who are in the advertising business, including the endorsers.[19] ASCI issued guidelines for influencer advertising, applicable to posts made by influencers on or after 14 June 2021.[20]

Core Requirements for Influencers and Celebrities

All ads posted by media influencers on their accounts must have a clear and visible disclosure of labels. This can be labelled as "Ad" "Sponsored" or "Collaboration". It should be upfront and not hidden so it can be seen without clicking "more".[21]

The guidelines define "material connection" which is 'any connection between an advertiser and influencer that may affect the weight or credibility of the representation made by the influencer. Material connection could include, but is not limited to benefits and incentives, such as monetary or other compensation, free products with or without any conditions attached including those received unsolicited, discounts, gifts, contest and sweepstakes entries, trips or hotel stays, media barters, coverage, awards, or any family or employment relationship, etc.' Influencers must disclose any such connections if they are not obvious to the average consumer.

Influencers must do their research before promoting anything via their account. They should make sure that advertisers can prove the claims that were made in the ad. The content should also fall under the guidelines of ASCI Code.

[18] "No advertisement which violates the provisions of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 (68 of 1986), including advertisements that are deceptive, unfair, misleading, or likely to mislead consumers, shall be carried in the cable service." *The Cable Television Networks Rules*, 1994, r. 7(9), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, § 3(ii), No. 729, dated Sept. 29, 1994 (India).

[19] Advertising Standards Council of India, ASCI Issues Final Guidelines for Influencer Advertising on Digital Media, Launches ASCI.Social Platform, ASCI, https://ascionline.in/index.php/asci-issues-final-guidelines-for-influencer-advertising-on-digital-media-launches-asci-social-platform.html (last visited May 14, 2026).

[20] Advertising Standards Council of India, *Guidelines for Influencer Advertising in Digital Media*, https://www.ascionline.in/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/GUIDELINES-FOR-INFLUENCER-ADVERTISING-IN-DIGITAL-MEDIA.pdf (last visited May 14, 2026).

[21] Press Information Bureau, CCPA Releases Guidelines for Prevention of Misleading Advertisements and Endorsements in Healthcare Sector, 2022, PIB, https://www.pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1904528&reg=3&lang=2 (last visited May 14, 2026).

Non-compliance of the Code

The ASCI 2025, in "Top Influencer Compliance Scorecard" discovered that a large number of India's digital influencers and content creators, 69% did not follow the rules. During the scrutiny of posts, it was found that only 29% of the posts had clear disclosure about the promotion. The information was either missing or was hidden in hashtags.[22] [23]

This shows that, even though ASCI's influencer guidelines and the CCPA's rules require clear disclosure of paid endorsements, a large proportion of celebrity and influencer content on platforms like Instagram still fails to comply in practice.

CASE LAW ANALYSIS ON MISLEADING CELEBRITY ENDORSEMENTS

Francis Vadakkan v. A-One Medicals & Ors. (Dhathri Hair Cream – Anoop Menon)[24]

Consumer forum case held on 22nd January 2021. In this case, before the Kerala District Commission, the defendant is a manufacturer of a hair growth cream that had published an advertisement claiming that with the use of their hair cream, the hair will grow 3 folds in 6 weeks. The complainant before the commission said that he was influenced by such advertisements and purchased the cream twice from A-one Medicals. He used it for 7 weeks, but his hair didn't grow. So, he approached the district Commission claiming Rs. 500,000 for loss, injury and mental agony.

Held: Commission found that the complainant was influenced by the advertisement to purchase the cream and used it according to the directions shown in the advertisement, but didn't get the

[22] Manifest Media, 69% of India's Top 100 Influencers in Violation of Disclosure Guidelines, Manifest Media, https://www.manifest-media.in/advertising/060225/69-of-indias-top-100-influencers-in-violation-of-disclosure-guidel.html (last visited May 14, 2026).
[23] Campaign India, 69% of India's Top Influencers Violate Disclosure Guidelines: ASCI, Campaign India, https://www.campaignindia.in/article/69-of-indias-top-influencers-violate-disclosure-guidelines-asci/40945kd965aj9zcfgwzb9nxenj (last visited May 14, 2026).
[24] Francis Vadakkan v. A-One Medicals & Ors., Consumer Complaint No. 345 of 2012 (Dist. Consumer Disputes Redressal Comm'n, Thrissur, Kerala 2020).

outcome which was guaranteed through advertisement.[25] "The complainant here did not question the effectiveness of ayurvedic medicines, but the question is whether he got the required result as promised through the attractive advertisements," stated the forum. Therefore, The Commission found a deficiency in the service and directed the defendant to compensate the complainant.

Indian Medical Association v. Union of India[26]

A plea was filed by the Indian Medical Association in 2022 against misleading ads by Patanjali Ayurved Ltd. The IMA's plea alleges a smear campaign by Patanjali and yoga guru Ramdev against the Covid vaccination drive and modern medical systems.[27] The bench observed that "Endorsements by celebrities, influencers and public figures go a long way in promoting products and it is imperative for them to act with responsibility while endorsing any product in the course of advertisement and taking responsibility for the same,".

Betting-Apps cluster

Courts and enforcement agencies have also been asked to address celebrity endorsements in the context of online betting and gaming platforms. Public Interest Litigation filed to seek ban on betting-apps and to stop celebrity endorsements from promoting them, arguing about user safety, legality and risks encountered when gambling. The Court has issued legal notices to states the Enforcement Directorate, TRAI, Directorate of Enforcement, Google India, Apple India and other platforms from where these apps can be accessed.[28]

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[25] BnB Legal, No Hair Growth as Promised – Consumer Court Penalizes Brand Ambassador for False Claims in Advertisement, BnB Legal, https://bnblegal.com/news/no-hair-growth-as-promised-consumer-court-penalizes-brand-ambassador-for-false-claims-in-advertisement/ (last visited May 14, 2026).
[26] Indian Med. Ass'n v. Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 645 of 2022 (India).
[27] India Today, Patanjali Misleading Ads Case: Supreme Court Says Celebrities Must Be Responsible While Endorsing Products, India Today, https://www.indiatoday.in/law/story/patanjali-misleading-ads-case-supreme-court-says-celebrities-must-be-responsible-while-endorsing-products-2536341-2024-05-07 (last visited May 14, 2026).
[28] LiveLaw, supra note 4.

Another PIL before the Punjab and Haryana High Court against Advertising Standards Council of India and multiple celebrities engaged in endorsing allegedly illegal betting apps and websites. Moreover, FIRs have been registered in Telangana by the Cyber Hyderabad police and an Enforcement Directorate case against 29 A-list film actors and public figures who have been allegedly getting money from betting-apps by endorsing them falsely as safe and lawful. The actors and media influencers as well as the organizers were charged under Sections 318(4) and 112, read with Section 49 of the Bharat Nyay Sanhita, Section 4 of the Telangana State Gaming Act (TSGA), and Section 66-D of the Information Technology Act.[29]

These matters show that endorsements in high-risk sectors like online betting are increasingly being treated as a consumer-protection and regulatory concern, and not only as a moral or criminal law issue. [30]

DISCUSSION

The Consumer Protection Act has significantly evolved from 1986 to 2019. The new CPA 2019 and the CCPA's guidelines on misleading ads and endorsements display a major shift towards treating celebrity endorsements as a responsibility, not just a multi-media marketing strategy to influence consumers to generate revenue. Section 21(5) of the CPA 2019 enforces CCPA to discontinue misleading deceptive ads, hold endorsers liable monetarily and even ban them from promoting ads for up to a year (three years for repeat contraventions).[31] This legal framework, at least in ink, strengthens consumer protection by making endorsers do their research and putting them under the legal duty of due diligence and making it clear that being in a higher social

[29] *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita*, No. 45 of 2023, §§ 318(4), 112 read with § 49, India Code (2023); *Telangana State Gaming Act*, § 4 (Telangana); *Information Technology Act*, No. 21 of 2000, § 66-D, India Code (2000).

[30] India Today, ED Files Case Against Vijay Deverakonda, Prakash Raj, Rana Daggubati, Other Celebrities in a Betting App Scam, India Today, https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/ed-files-case-against-vijay-deverakonda-prakash-raj-rana-daggubati-other-celebrities-in-a-betting-app-scam-2753564-2025-07-10 (last visited May 14, 2026).

[31] From Influence to Liability: Deceptive Endorsements and the Duty of Due Diligence Under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, Int'l J. Legal Libr. & Res. (Mar. 30, 2026), https://www.ijllr.com/post/from-influence-to-liability-deceptive-endorsements-and-the-duty-of-due-diligence-under-the-consumer.

celebrity status doesn't exempt you from consumer law. In the Supreme Court's recent observations in the case of Patanjali, it was stated that "celebrities and influencers are equally liable" for hoax and irresponsible brand engagement.[32] However, there are gaps between the law and enforcement.

ASCI's monitoring reports indicate a huge proportion of top digital influencers don't disclose their ties or follow guidelines in sectors like betting, personal care, healthcare and food.[33] Further, the CCPA Guidelines suggest that endorsements should be undertaken after adequate knowledge and experience even though they do not clearly define what "due diligence" stands for. Celebrity and influencer endorsements for high-risk products such as health supplements and skin-lightening creams to betting apps still appear on TV and pop-up advertisements on social media with little to no transparency to consumers. Enforcement is mainly complaint-driven and reactive, promotions as content on social media goes instantly viral even more intensely before any proper regulatory intervention could take place.[34]

These issues raise questions about endorser liability. On one hand, Regulators and courts are holding endorsers accountable for claims. There's a risk that only a few high-profile cases such as the Maggie controversy and the Patanjali matter get attention while bigger issues like product investigation and platform responsibility get ignored. In this context, three policy reforms emerge:

1. Clarify what counts as adequate knowledge and experience for endorsers in high-risk areas like health, finance and online gaming including an updated definition of "due diligence" and when expert opinion and independent investigation are required.

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[32] Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and Endorsers, Jus Corpus L.J. (Sept. 8, 2023), https://www.rsrr.in/post/consumer-protection-act-2019-and-endorsers.

[33] Most of India's Top Influencers Not Disclosing Commercial Tie-Ups: ASCI, Econ. Times (Nov. 11, 2025), https://economictimes.com/industry/services/advertising/most-of-indias-top-influencers-not-disclosing-commercial-tie-ups-asci/ar.

[34] Legal Consequences of Social Media Influencers: Disclosures and Endorsements in India, Vintage Legal (May 4, 2026), https://www.vintagelegalvl.com/post/legal-consequences-of-social-media-influencers-disclosures-and-endorsements-in-india.

2. Tighten disclosure norms for media ads and use AI technology to expose opaque influencers backed by CCPA enforcement.
3. Consider a graded liability model, where repeat offenders and endorsements for products get harsher monetary penalties and larger periods of prohibition.

These reforms would help align India's evolving consumer law on celebrity and influencer endorsements, focusing on harsh marketing realities and consumer protection.

CONCLUSION

Celebrity and influencer endorsements have become a powerful tool in India's consumer marketplace, especially on social media, but they also create serious risks of misleading advertisements that can harm ordinary consumers. This paper set out to examine how the Consumer Protection Act, 2019, the CCPA's Guidelines on misleading advertisements and endorsements, and the ASCI Code regulate such endorsements and allocate responsibility to endorsers. The analysis of statutory provisions, regulatory guidance and case-law ranging from *Francis Vadakkan v. A-One Medicals* to the Patanjali proceedings and betting-app matters shows a clear shift from treating endorsements as mere marketing to recognising them as a distinct site of legal duty and accountability.

At the same time, the study finds that important gaps remain between law on paper and practice. The defence of "due diligence" under Section 21 is conceptually recognised but not clearly defined, leaving endorsers uncertain about how far they must go to verify claims and giving scope for inconsistent enforcement. ASCI reports and recent commentary highlight persistent non-disclosure of paid partnerships, particularly on Instagram and other digital platforms, while complaint-driven mechanisms struggle to keep pace with fast-moving online content.

Going forward, the paper argues that three reforms are crucial: first, clearer and sector-specific guidance on due diligence for endorsers in high-risk domains such as health, finance and online gaming; second, stronger and technology-supported disclosure norms for social-media advertising, backed by coordinated action between CCPA, ASCI and platforms; and third, a graded model of liability that imposes harsher penalties on repeat violators and on endorsements of inherently risky or unlawful products. Ultimately, the effectiveness of India's evolving regime on celebrity and influencer endorsements will be measured not by the severity of penalties alone, but by how well it protects consumers in the digital advertising environment.