



CODE OF STANDARDS

FOR CONSUMERS

GUIDE. GOVERN. GROW.
MAY 2025



Objective

The Indian Influencer Governing Council (IIGC) Code of Standards for Consumers establishes a guided framework to empower individuals with the knowledge and awareness needed to navigate influencer marketing responsibly.

As digital influence shapes purchasing decisions, it is essential for consumers to differentiate between genuine recommendations and paid promotions, recognize manipulative marketing tactics, and engage ethically in online interactions. This document establishes guidelines for transparency, integrity, and accountability while protecting consumers from misleading endorsements, scams, and data privacy risks.

By promoting informed decision-making and ethical engagement, these standards ensure that influencer marketing remains fair, honest, and consumer-centric.

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Section 1 | Consumer Education

1.1. Purpose

Consumers can play a key role in responsible influencer marketing by understanding content, distinguishing promotions from organic endorsements, and making informed decisions to navigate social media confidently.

1.2. Understanding Influencer Marketing

Consumers must recognize that not all influencer content is purely personal opinion. Many endorsements involve financial transactions or brand partnerships.

Key factors to consider:

- **Influencers Have Commercial Interests:** Many influencers earn money by promoting brands. Not all recommendations are purely personal.
- **Advertisements Are Not Always Obvious:** Some promotional content is subtly integrated, making it difficult to distinguish from organic endorsements.
- **Not Every Endorsement is Authentic:** Some influencers promote products they haven't used, making critical evaluation necessary.
- **Consumers Have the Right to Transparency:** Influencers must disclose paid partnerships, and consumers should demand honesty in advertising.

Section 1 | Consumer Education

1.3. Recognizing Ethical & Unethical Practices

Ethical influencer marketing fosters trust, while unethical practices mislead and manipulate consumers. Consumers should be aware of:

Ethical Practices:

- Clear disclosure of paid promotions using labels like #Ad, #Sponsored, #PaidPartnership.
- Honest reviews based on actual product use.
- Transparent engagement without manipulative sales tactics.
- Inclusive and respectful content that does not exploit or mislead.

Unethical Practices:

- Hidden sponsorships without proper disclosure.
- False claims about product effectiveness or benefits.
- Fake engagement (e.g., buying followers, likes, or reviews).
- Aggressive pressure to buy through false urgency or fear tactics.

Section 1 | Consumer Education

1.4. Consumer Responsibility in Influencer Marketing

Consumers should actively engage with influencer content with a critical mindset. Instead of taking every recommendation at face value, they should:

- **Do Research:** Look beyond influencer claims. Check product reviews, brand history, and third-party ratings before purchasing.
- **Recognize Bias:** Understand that paid promotions influence an influencer's opinion. Even authentic influencers may have contractual obligations to brands.
- **Avoid Impulse Buying:** Many marketing tactics create artificial urgency (e.g., "Only 3 left!", "Flash sale ends in 2 hours!"). Evaluate if the product is genuinely needed.
- **Report Misleading Content:** Consumers have the right to report unethical influencer practices, false advertisements, and harmful content to platforms or governing bodies.

By staying informed and responsible, consumers can make empowered choices while holding influencers and brands accountable.

Section 1 | Consumer Education

1.5. Commitment to Consumer Education

Education is the foundation of ethical digital engagement. Consumers are encouraged to:

- **Stay informed about influencer marketing trends.**
- **Demand transparency from influencers and brands.**
- **Engage responsibly and avoid supporting misleading content.**
- **Exercise their rights in reporting deceptive marketing tactics.**

By prioritizing knowledge and awareness, consumers contribute to an ethical and transparent digital marketplace.

Section 2 | Understanding Influencer Types

2.1. Purpose

Influencers vary in their level of influence, content style, and audience reach. Understanding different types of influencers helps consumers assess the credibility and intent behind their endorsements. Recognizing these distinctions allows consumers to make informed choices about whom to trust and follow.

2.2. Influencer Categories

Mega-Influencers

- Typically celebrities or public figures with over one million followers.
- Have broad reach but may have lower engagement rates due to a diverse audience.
- Often collaborate with luxury brands or large corporations.
- Endorsements are usually transactional and less personal.

Macro-Influencers

- Have between 100,000 and one million followers.
- Balance wide reach with engagement, making them popular choices for brand collaborations.
- Often create content around specific industries such as fashion, fitness, or technology.
- Partnerships may include both personal endorsements and corporate sponsorships.

Section 2 | Understanding Influencer Types

Micro-Influencers

- Have between 10,000 and 100,000 followers.
- Usually niche-focused, catering to a highly engaged audience.
- Perceived as more authentic and trustworthy due to their closer interaction with followers.
- Endorsements are often based on genuine product use and personal experiences.

Nano-Influencers

- Have fewer than 10,000 followers.
- Engage closely with a tight-knit community, often seen as highly credible.
- Tend to promote products they use in their daily lives.
- Frequently engage in unpaid brand advocacy due to personal admiration rather than sponsorship.

AI Influencers

- Digital avatars or computer-generated characters designed to represent brands.
- Often used for futuristic campaigns, tech-related endorsements, or automated brand partnerships.
- Lack real human experiences, making authenticity and transparency a concern.
- Consumers should verify disclosures when interacting with AI-generated influencers.

Section 2 | Understanding Influencer Types

2.3. Influencer Genres

Beyond their follower count, influencers also belong to specific content genres that define the nature of their endorsements. Understanding these categories helps consumers assess credibility based on the type of content shared.

Fashion & Beauty Influencers

- Specialize in style trends, clothing, skincare, and cosmetics.
- Collaborate with fashion brands, designers, and beauty companies.
- Often share product reviews, tutorials, and brand-sponsored promotions.

Fitness & Wellness Influencers

- Focus on health, exercise, nutrition, and mental well-being.
- May endorse workout programs, fitness gear, supplements, and self-care brands.
- Should provide well-researched and responsible health advice.

Technology & Gaming Influencers

- Cover gadgets, software, gaming consoles, and tech innovations.
- Often conduct product unboxings, reviews, and live demonstrations.
- Consumers should verify whether their opinions are unbiased or brand-influenced.

Section 2 | Understanding Influencer Types

Finance & Business Influencers

- Provide insights on investments, personal finance, entrepreneurship, and economic trends.
- May promote financial products like stocks, cryptocurrencies, and banking services.
- Consumers should ensure these influencers have verified expertise before following their advice.

Food & Travel Influencers

- Share culinary experiences, restaurant reviews, travel destinations, and cultural explorations.
- Often receive brand-sponsored trips, free meals, and tourism partnerships.
- Consumers should differentiate between genuine recommendations and paid promotions.

Parenting & Lifestyle Influencers

- Focus on family life, home improvement, parenting tips, and daily routines.
- Often collaborate with baby care brands, household products, and wellness companies.
- Consumers should be cautious of exaggerated claims in product endorsements.

Entertainment & Pop Culture Influencers

- Engage audiences with humor, commentary, celebrity news, or personal vlogs.
- May collaborate with streaming platforms, music labels, or film studios.
- Often use opinion-based content rather than product endorsements.

Section 2 | Understanding Influencer Types

2.4. Effects of Influencer Type on Credibility

Consumers should consider how the type of influencer affects the trustworthiness of their recommendations.

- **Mega and macro-influencers** often promote mainstream brands but may have less personal experience with the products they endorse.
- **Micro and nano-influencers** typically provide more relatable and experience-driven recommendations.
- **AI influencers** cannot personally use or review products, so their endorsements should be approached with caution.
- **Genre-specific influencers** should have proven expertise in their niche rather than just promotional intent.

A larger following does not always indicate reliability. Consumers should evaluate whether an influencer aligns with their values, expertise, and transparency before making purchasing decisions.

Section 2 | Understanding Influencer Types

2.5. Identifying the Right Influencers to Follow

To ensure that influencer recommendations are trustworthy, consumers should:

- **Evaluate the influencer's expertise** in the product or industry they promote.
- **Check for transparent disclosures** indicating whether the content is sponsored or independent.
- **Assess engagement levels** rather than just follower count, as meaningful interaction is a sign of authenticity.
- **Look at past content** to identify patterns of excessive brand partnerships or shifting loyalties.

2.6. Commitment to Understanding Influencer Types

Being aware of influencer categories allows consumers to make better decisions about whom to trust. Consumers should:

- Recognize that different influencer types serve different marketing purposes.
- Be cautious of influencers who promote too many brands or products without consistency.
- Seek influencers whose content is informative, experience-based, and transparent.

Section 3 | Sponsored Content vs. Non-Sponsored Content

3.1. Purpose

Understanding the distinction between sponsored and non-sponsored content is essential for consumers to make informed decisions. Influencers engage in both types of content.

Some posts are paid collaborations with brands, while others are independent recommendations based on personal preference.

3.2. Sponsored Content

Sponsored content refers to any content where an influencer receives compensation, whether in the form of money, free products, or exclusive experiences—in exchange for promoting a brand.

This includes:

- Paid promotions where influencers receive financial compensation.
- Gifted products or experiences given to influencers with an expectation of promotion.
- Affiliate marketing where influencers earn a commission on sales through referral links or discount codes.
- Brand ambassadorships involving long-term relationships between influencers and companies.

Section 3 | Sponsored Content vs. Non-Sponsored Content

3.3. Indicators of Sponsored Content

- Presence of hashtags like #Ad, #Sponsored, #PaidPartnership or platform disclosure tools.
- Direct mentions of promotional discounts, referral links, or special codes.
- Content focused on selling a product rather than personal storytelling.
- Consistent brand partnerships with repeated endorsements.

3.4. Non-Sponsored Content

Non-sponsored content consists of genuine recommendations that influencers share based on personal experience, without receiving compensation.

This content reflects an influencer's true opinions and preferences rather than brand agreements.

To maintain transparency, the Indian Influencer Governing Council (IIGC) encourages influencers to use **#Admiration** when posting non-sponsored endorsements.

Section 3 | Sponsored Content vs. Non-Sponsored Content

3.5. Indicators of Non-Sponsored Content

- The influencer explicitly states that they purchased the product independently.
- Use of #Admiration to clarify that there is no financial incentive.
- A mix of positive and negative feedback based on personal experience.
- Spontaneous and organic mentions rather than structured promotional messaging.

3.6. Importance of Disclosure for Consumers

Consumers should expect and demand clear disclosure from influencers to ensure:

- **Transparency:** Influencers must be upfront about paid promotions to avoid misleading audiences.
- **Authenticity:** Knowing whether a recommendation is genuine or incentivized helps consumers make informed choices.
- **Consumer Protection:** Hidden advertisements can create unrealistic expectations, leading to dissatisfaction or financial loss.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Advertising laws require clear disclosure, and consumers should hold influencers accountable to these standards.

Section 3 | Sponsored Content vs. Non-Sponsored Content

3.7. Consumer Checklist

Before making a purchasing decision based on influencer recommendations, consumers should:

- **Check for disclosure:** Look for hashtags like #Ad, #Sponsored, #PaidPartnership or mentions of free products.
- **Analyze the influencer's language:** If the content feels overly promotional or sales-driven, it is likely sponsored.
- **Look at past endorsements:** If an influencer frequently switches brands in the same category, their loyalty may be financially motivated.
- **Evaluate the review depth:** Non-sponsored content tends to provide a balanced perspective, while sponsored content often lacks criticism.
- **Research the product independently:** Rely on multiple sources rather than a single influencer's opinion.

3.8. Commitment to Ethical Content Consumption

Consumers play a crucial role in promoting ethical influencer marketing by:

- Supporting influencers who are transparent about paid promotions.
- Holding influencers accountable when they fail to disclose sponsorships.
- Encouraging honest conversations around product quality and performance.
- Avoiding blind trust in endorsements without verifying authenticity.

Section 4 | Authenticity Evaluation

4.1. Purpose

As influencer marketing continues to shape consumer decisions, it is essential for consumers to assess the authenticity of influencer content.

Not all recommendations are based on genuine experiences, and some influencers may prioritize brand deals over honest reviews.

4.2. Signs of Authentic Influencer Content

Authentic influencers maintain credibility by being transparent, honest, and consistent. Consumers should look for:

Personal Experience with the Product

- The influencer provides first-hand insights rather than generic promotional messaging.
- Content includes a real demonstration, testing, or review of the product in use.
- Both strengths and weaknesses of the product are highlighted.

Section 4 | Authenticity Evaluation

Clear and Honest Disclosure

- Sponsored content is explicitly labeled with #Ad, #Sponsored, or #PaidPartnership.
- Non-sponsored endorsements include #Admiration for transparency.
- The influencer explains their relationship with the brand and whether they received compensation.

Consistency in Brand Partnerships

- The influencer does not frequently switch between competing brands in the same category.
- They only endorse products that align with their niche and personal values.
- Long-term brand collaborations suggest genuine brand affinity.

Audience Engagement and Responsiveness

- The influencer interacts with followers and addresses product-related questions.
- They are open to constructive criticism and do not delete or ignore negative feedback.
- Their followers engage in meaningful discussions rather than posting generic or bot-generated comments.

Section 4 | Authenticity Evaluation

Balanced and Realistic Claims

- The influencer does not overpromise unrealistic results.
- Product benefits are backed by facts, not exaggerated statements.
- They use disclaimers when promoting health, finance, or beauty-related content.

4.3. Red Flags: Identifying Inauthentic Influencer Content

Consumers should be cautious of influencers who:

- **Post excessively positive reviews** without acknowledging potential downsides.
- **Use scripted or repetitive language** that mirrors a brand's official marketing materials.
- **Avoid transparency** by failing to disclose sponsorships or falsely claiming organic endorsements.
- **Promote too many products in a short period**, making it difficult to trust their sincerity.
- **Delete negative comments** or reviews instead of addressing concerns openly.
- **Overuse urgency tactics** such as “limited time only” or “you need this now” without valid reasoning.
- **Have inconsistent brand loyalty**, promoting a competitor's product shortly after endorsing another.

Section 4 | Authenticity Evaluation

4.5. Verifying Authenticity

To ensure they are making well-informed decisions, consumers should:

- **Compare multiple reviews:** Look at different influencers, review websites, and customer testimonials.
- **Check for undisclosed brand affiliations:** Investigate whether the influencer has a history of working with the brand.
- **Look beyond aesthetics:** High-quality visuals do not always indicate credibility. Assess the depth and honesty of the review.
- **Examine past content:** Determine if the influencer has changed opinions suddenly due to a new sponsorship.
- **Cross-check claims:** If an influencer makes health, finance, or technology-related claims, verify them through reputable sources.

Section 4 | Authenticity Evaluation

4.6. Consumer Rights: Holding Influencers Accountable

Consumers have the right to question, challenge, and report misleading influencer content. If an influencer is engaging in deceptive practices, consumers should:

- **Report misleading advertisements** to the platform and relevant consumer protection authorities.
- **Call out undisclosed sponsorships** by commenting or engaging with the influencer for transparency.
- **Avoid supporting influencers** who engage in unethical practices or frequently promote inauthentic content.
- **Engage in responsible discussions** to raise awareness about unethical influencer marketing.

Section 5 | Respectful Engagement

5.1. Purpose

The digital space thrives on interaction, and respectful engagement between consumers and influencers is essential for a healthy online environment.

Consumers have the right to express their opinions, provide feedback, and engage with influencer content, but this should be done in a way that fosters constructive discussions rather than hostility.

5.2. Principles of Ethical Consumer Engagement

Consumers play an active role in shaping the online discourse around influencer content. Ethical engagement involves:

- **Constructive Criticism Over Personal Attacks:** Consumers should critique content, not attack individuals.
- **Fact-Based Discussions:** Disagreements should be based on credible information rather than assumptions or misinformation.
- **Acknowledging Different Perspectives:** Recognizing that opinions, preferences, and experiences may vary.
- **Avoiding Hate Speech and Discrimination:** Comments should not target individuals or groups based on gender, race, religion, or other identities.
- **Focusing on Content, Not Appearance:** Feedback should be directed at the message, not personal characteristics or physical attributes.

Section 5 | Respectful Engagement

5.3. Responsible Commenting and Feedback

Consumers should engage in a way that is fair, informed, and respectful. This includes:

- **Providing Thoughtful Feedback:** Constructive comments help improve content quality and encourage genuine discussions.
- **Respecting Boundaries:** Influencers have the right to privacy and should not be subjected to intrusive or inappropriate comments.
- **Avoiding Spam and Excessive Negativity:** Repeatedly posting negative comments, trolling, or inciting others to attack an influencer is unethical.
- **Recognizing the Difference Between Opinion and Fact:** Consumers should not spread false information under the guise of personal opinion.
- **Avoiding Provocative or Manipulative Language:** Engaging in baiting, antagonizing, or deliberately provoking an influencer leads to unnecessary hostility.

Section 5 | Respectful Engagement

5.4. Respecting Influencer Autonomy and Content Choices

Influencers have creative freedom in their content, and while consumers have the right to voice their opinions, they should respect:

- **The Influencer's Right to Personal Opinions:** Influencers are entitled to their perspectives, just as consumers are.
- **Content Boundaries:** Demanding that influencers change their content to fit personal preferences is unreasonable.
- **The Right to Monetize Their Platform:** Consumers should not shame influencers for engaging in paid partnerships, provided they disclose them transparently.
- **Personal and Professional Separation:** An influencer's personal life should not be unfairly scrutinized beyond their professional work.

Section 5 | Respectful Engagement

5.5. Supporting a Positive Digital Culture

Consumers are not only passive viewers but also active participants in shaping the tone of online discussions. They can contribute positively by:

- **Encouraging Ethical Influencer Practices:** Supporting influencers who engage in transparency, responsible advertising, and inclusivity.
- **Calling Out Harmful Behavior Respectfully:** Addressing misleading content or unethical behavior without resorting to personal attacks.
- **Reporting Online Harassment:** Taking a stand against cyberbullying and toxic behavior in comment sections.
- **Promoting Meaningful Conversations:** Engaging in discussions that add value rather than negativity to the platform.
- **Being Open to Learning:** Accepting new perspectives and constructive feedback from others in digital spaces.

Section 5 | Respectful Engagement

5.6. Consumer Rights and Responsibilities in Online Interactions

While consumers have the right to voice their opinions, they also have a responsibility to:

- Engage in a manner that is fair, respectful, and free from personal bias.
- Recognize that influencers are human and subject to mistakes, learning, and growth.
- Avoid participating in or amplifying online hate campaigns or harassment.
- Support content creators who contribute positively to digital spaces.
- Hold influencers accountable for misinformation or unethical behavior through appropriate channels rather than online aggression.

5.6. Commitment to Respectful Online Behavior

Consumers play a key role in fostering an ethical and positive digital environment. This requires:

- Practicing responsible and respectful engagement.
- Recognizing the boundaries of criticism and personal attacks.
- Upholding online integrity by avoiding harassment, discrimination, and misinformation.
- Encouraging influencers to be accountable while engaging in ethical criticism.

Section 6 | Toxic & Harmful Behavior

6.1. Purpose

While constructive criticism and healthy discussions are encouraged, toxic and harmful behavior has no place in online communities.

Consumers must recognize the impact of their words and actions, ensuring that their engagement does not contribute to cyberbullying, harassment, or harm.

6.2. Types of Toxic & Harmful Behavior

Toxic behavior can take many forms and often leads to emotional distress, misinformation, and reputational harm. The following actions are strictly discouraged in digital engagement:

Cyberbullying & Harassment

- Repeatedly attacking, insulting, or degrading an influencer or fellow consumer.
- Engaging in coordinated hate campaigns against an individual.
- Threatening or encouraging harm, whether physical, emotional, or financial.

Hate Speech & Discrimination

- Using racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise discriminatory language.
- Engaging in discussions that incite violence, exclusion, or hostility against specific communities.
- Promoting stereotypes or misrepresenting marginalized groups.

Section 6 | Toxic & Harmful Behavior

Doxxing & Privacy Violations

- Sharing personal information such as addresses, phone numbers, or private conversations without consent.
- Encouraging others to harass, stalk, or intimidate an influencer or fellow consumer.
- Exploiting private data for malicious intent.

Misinformation & Manipulation

- Spreading false narratives or misrepresenting an influencer's words or actions.
- Creating misleading edits, screenshots, or fake posts to damage someone's credibility.
- Inciting outrage through exaggerated or unverified claims.

Engaging in Unethical Call-Out Culture

- Publicly shaming individuals without proper evidence or room for discussion.
- Encouraging mass reporting of an influencer's content purely for personal disagreements.
- Manipulating audiences into boycotting influencers without justified reasons.

Section 6 | Toxic & Harmful Behavior

6.3. Recognizing the Impact of Online Toxicity

The consequences of online toxicity can be severe, affecting influencers, brands, and consumers alike. Some of the major risks include:

- **Mental Health Damage:** Online harassment can lead to anxiety, depression, and emotional distress.
- **Reputational Harm:** False accusations, public shaming, and misinformation can permanently damage a person's credibility.
- **Loss of Opportunities:** Toxic digital behavior can lead to professional consequences for both influencers and consumers.
- **Erosion of Trust:** The spread of hate speech and misinformation reduces the credibility of online communities.

Section 6 | Toxic & Harmful Behavior

6.4. Preventing Toxic Behavior

Consumers have the power to shape online interactions positively. To prevent contributing to a toxic digital culture, consumers should:

- **Think Before Commenting:** Ask whether the comment is constructive, necessary, and respectful.
- **Verify Before Sharing:** Cross-check facts before amplifying accusations, claims, or negative narratives.
- **Avoid Personal Attacks:** Criticize content, not individuals. Separate personal disagreements from ethical discussions.
- **Discourage Hate Campaigns:** Do not engage in mass reporting, boycotting, or attacking influencers without justifiable reasons.
- **Report Instead of Attack:** If an influencer engages in unethical behavior, report them through proper channels rather than resorting to online aggression.

Section 6 | Toxic & Harmful Behavior

6.5. Reporting Toxic & Harmful Behavior

If consumers witness toxic behavior, they have the responsibility to report it through appropriate platforms and governing bodies. Steps include:

- **Report to the Social Media Platform:** Most platforms allow reporting of harassment, hate speech, or misinformation.
- **Report to Industry Authorities:** Complaints about misleading content or unethical influencer practices can be directed to regulatory organizations.
- **Support the Victim:** Encourage ethical discourse and report instances where influencers or fellow consumers are targeted unfairly.
- **Avoid Amplifying Toxicity:** Do not engage in harmful discussions or spread misinformation.

6.6. Creating a Safe Digital Environment

Consumers play a crucial role in shaping digital spaces. Ethical engagement involves:

- Being mindful of how online interactions affect others.
- Holding influencers accountable through responsible and respectful means.
- Encouraging fact-based discussions rather than engaging in misinformation.
- Standing against harassment, bullying, and discriminatory behavior.
- Contributing positively to digital discourse by promoting inclusivity and ethical engagement.

Section 7 | Transparency & Integrity

7.1. Purpose

Consumers must expect and demand honesty from influencers while also engaging with content responsibly. The absence of transparency can lead to misinformation, misleading promotions, and unethical advertising practices.

7.2. Recognizing Transparent & Ethical Influencer Practices

Influencers who uphold transparency and integrity typically engage in the following best practices:

Clear Disclosure of Sponsored Content

- Use of proper labels such as #Ad, #Sponsored, #PaidPartnership to indicate collaborations.
- Openly stating when content has been gifted, paid for, or part of a brand deal.
- Differentiating between organic opinions and paid promotions.

Honest Product Endorsements

- Reviewing products based on personal experience rather than exaggerated claims.
- Acknowledging both positive and negative aspects of a product.
- Avoiding misleading guarantees about product effectiveness or benefits.

Section 7 | Transparency & Integrity

Fair & Ethical Marketing Practices

- Avoiding manipulative sales tactics such as false urgency (“Only 1 left!”) or misleading discounts.
- Ensuring that financial, health, and wellness claims are backed by credible data.
- Not engaging in deceptive advertising that hides essential product information.

7.3. Identifying Lack of Transparency & Integrity

Consumers should be wary of influencers who:

- Do not disclose sponsored content or misrepresent paid promotions as personal opinions.
- Make exaggerated or unrealistic claims about a product’s effectiveness.
- Delete negative feedback instead of addressing consumer concerns.
- Regularly switch brand endorsements in the same category, indicating promotional bias.
- Encourage impulsive purchasing through psychological sales tactics without factual backing.
- Engage in clickbait tactics to drive engagement rather than provide valuable content.

Section 7 | Transparency & Integrity

7.4. Consumer Role in Promoting Transparency & Integrity

Consumers should take an active role in ensuring ethical influencer marketing by:

- **Calling out undisclosed sponsorships** and reporting non-compliant influencers.
- **Avoiding impulse purchases** based on overly promotional or exaggerated endorsements.
- **Cross-checking influencer claims** with other consumer reviews and third-party sources.
- **Holding influencers accountable** by demanding transparency and responsible marketing.
- **Engaging in informed discussions** rather than blindly trusting influencer recommendations.

7.5. Reporting Non-Transparent or Misleading Practices

If consumers encounter influencers engaging in deceptive or unethical marketing, they should:

- **Report the influencer's content** through the social media platform's complaint system.
- **Submit a complaint to regulatory authorities** overseeing advertising and consumer protection.
- **Hold brands accountable** by questioning their partnership choices and promotional tactics.
- **Warn fellow consumers** through ethical discussions and awareness campaigns.
- **Encourage responsible advertising** by supporting influencers who disclose paid partnerships and provide honest reviews.

Section 8 | Accountability – All the Right to Report

8.1. Purpose

Consumers have the right to expect ethical behavior from influencers and the brands they collaborate with. When influencers engage in misleading promotions, deceptive advertising, or unethical conduct, consumers must have the power to report them through appropriate channels.

8.2. Knowing when to report Influencers

Consumers should report influencers if they engage in:

Misleading or Deceptive Advertising

- Failure to disclose #Ad, #Sponsored, #PaidPartnership when promoting a paid collaboration.
- Exaggerated claims about a product's effectiveness without factual backing.
- Fake testimonials, doctored results, or staged demonstrations.

Harmful or Dangerous Content

- Encouraging unsafe challenges, extreme diets, or misleading health claims.
- Spreading false information about financial investments or products.
- Promoting illegal or unethical activities such as gambling, scams, or counterfeit goods.

Section 8 | Accountability – All the Right to Report

Hate Speech, Discrimination, or Harassment

- Engaging in racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise harmful content.
- Encouraging or participating in targeted harassment or cyberbullying.
- Misusing their influence to manipulate, threaten, or exploit audiences.

Data Privacy Violations

- Sharing consumer data without consent.
- Engaging in unethical data collection practices.
- Promoting services that misuse or exploit user information.

8.3. Reporting Influencer Misconduct

Consumers can take multiple steps to report unethical influencer behavior through the appropriate channels:

Report to the Social Media Platform

- Most platforms have reporting mechanisms for misleading ads, harmful content, and unethical behavior.
- Consumers should provide evidence, such as screenshots, timestamps, or links.

Section 8 | Accountability – All the Right to Report

File Complaints with Industry Regulators

- Organizations like the Indian Influencer Governing Council (IIGC) or national advertising regulators oversee influencer marketing.
- Consumers can submit complaints regarding false advertising, undisclosed sponsorships, or misleading endorsements.

Raise Awareness Ethically

- Consumers can create discussions around unethical influencer practices without engaging in online hate or harassment.
- Ethical consumer advocacy ensures transparency without resorting to toxicity.

Hold Brands Accountable

- Consumers should also report unethical brand partnerships, as brands play a role in enabling misleading influencer marketing.
- Direct feedback to brands can influence their future collaborations.

Section 8 | Accountability – All the Right to Report

8.4. The Impact of Consumer Reporting

When consumers actively report unethical influencer behavior, they contribute to:

- **Better Advertising Standards:** Encouraging influencers to comply with legal and ethical advertising practices.
- **Consumer Protection:** Preventing financial loss or harm due to deceptive marketing.
- **Influencer Accountability:** Discouraging unethical behavior and fostering responsible content creation.
- **Stronger Regulations:** Helping shape the influencer industry by enforcing compliance and transparency.

8.5. Consumer Responsibilities

While reporting unethical influencers is essential, it must be done responsibly. Consumers should:

- **Verify Information Before Reporting:** Ensure claims are based on factual evidence rather than speculation.
- **Avoid False Accusations:** Reporting should be done in good faith to prevent harm to innocent influencers.
- **Provide Clear Evidence:** Screenshots, links, and timestamps help support claims.
- **Respect Due Process:** Allow influencers the opportunity to clarify or correct mistakes before escalating complaints.
- **Refrain from Online Harassment:** Consumers should not engage in hate campaigns, cyberbullying, or false reporting.

Section 9 | Policy Against Trolling

9.1. Purpose

While criticism and healthy debate are encouraged, targeted harassment, hate speech, and disruptive behavior are unacceptable. Consumers must engage responsibly and discourage toxic behavior that contributes to an unsafe online environment.

9.2. What is Trolling?

Targeted Harassment

- Repeatedly attacking or mocking an influencer, brand, or fellow consumer.
- Organizing mass-reporting campaigns or inciting others to harass someone.
- Posting derogatory comments with the intent to insult or degrade.

Spreading Misinformation

- Deliberately sharing false or manipulated content to harm an influencer's reputation.
- Misrepresenting statements or actions to fuel online outrage.
- Creating fake accounts to spread misleading information.

Section 9 | Policy Against Trolling

Hate Speech & Discrimination

- Using racist, sexist, homophobic, or other discriminatory language.
- Encouraging exclusion or violence against specific groups.
- Making personal attacks based on appearance, background, or personal choices.

Disrupting Discussions with Bad-Faith Arguments

- Deliberately instigating arguments or inflaming controversies for personal amusement.
- Using sarcasm, mockery, or hostility to derail conversations.
- Commenting in bad faith with the goal of exhausting or frustrating others.

9.3. Impact of Trolling

Trolling and online harassment have serious consequences, including:

- **Mental & Emotional Harm:** Influencers and fellow consumers can experience stress, anxiety, and depression due to targeted attacks.
- **Damaged Reputations:** False accusations and viral misinformation can permanently harm careers and credibility.
- **Toxic Digital Spaces:** The presence of trolls discourages genuine discussions and constructive criticism.
- **Legal & Platform Consequences:** Engaging in harassment can lead to account suspensions, bans, or even legal repercussions.

Section 9 | Policy Against Trolling

9.4. Prevent & Combat Trolling

To maintain a respectful digital environment, consumers should:

- **Avoid Engaging with Trolls:** Trolls thrive on attention. Ignoring or blocking them prevents their influence from spreading.
- **Report Harmful Behavior:** Use platform reporting tools to flag harassment, hate speech, or misinformation.
- **Encourage Constructive Discussions:** Promote meaningful conversations instead of fueling outrage or controversy.
- **Fact-Check Before Sharing:** Ensure claims about influencers or brands are accurate before spreading information.
- **Support Ethical Influencers & Communities:** Engage with content creators who promote positive, inclusive discussions.

9.5. Ethical Consumer Engagement: The Difference Between Criticism & Trolling

Not all negative feedback is trolling. Consumers have the right to criticize influencers and brands, but ethical engagement requires:

- **Constructive Feedback:** Focusing on content rather than attacking personal characteristics.
- **Respectful Language:** Expressing concerns without insults, profanity, or hostility.
- **Fact-Based Criticism:** Critiquing based on verifiable evidence rather than speculation.
- **Providing Space for Discussion:** Allowing influencers the opportunity to respond or clarify before escalating criticism.

Section 10 | Product Impact (Evaluating Before Purchasing)

10.1. Purpose

Consumers must be mindful of the impact of the products they purchase. Influencer marketing can create significant demand, but it is important for consumers to evaluate whether a product is truly beneficial, ethical, and sustainable before making a purchase.

10.2. Key Factors to Consider Before Purchasing

Before buying a product based on influencer recommendations, consumers should evaluate:

Product Authenticity & Quality

- Check third-party reviews rather than relying solely on influencer endorsements.
- Look for detailed specifications and product testing information.
- Verify whether the product has necessary certifications, warranties, or approvals (especially for health, beauty, and tech products).

Safety & Health Considerations

- Ensure that beauty, wellness, or medical products comply with regulatory health standards.
- Avoid products that make unverified medical or scientific claims.
- Research potential side effects or risks, especially for skincare, supplements, or fitness equipment.

Section 10 | Product Impact (Evaluating Before Purchasing)

Environmental & Ethical Impact

- Check whether the brand follows sustainable practices and responsible sourcing.
- Avoid products linked to animal testing, unethical labor, or excessive waste.
- Consider long-term environmental effects, such as plastic packaging and carbon footprint.

Value for Money & Financial Responsibility

- Compare prices across multiple sources to ensure the best deal.
- Be cautious of overpriced or hyped products promoted primarily by influencers.
- Avoid financial strain by evaluating necessity versus impulse purchasing.

10.3. Identifying Misleading Product Promotions

Consumers must be cautious of:

- **Overhyped “miracle” products:** Items that claim instant results without scientific proof.
- **Fake discounts:** Products marketed as “limited-time offers” when they are always available.
- **Hidden costs:** Products that have additional charges, high shipping fees, or misleading return policies.
- **Unrealistic testimonials:** Influencer claims that seem exaggerated or staged.
- **Poorly reviewed products:** Items with overwhelmingly negative third-party reviews despite influencer endorsements.

Section 10 | Product Impact (Evaluating Before Purchasing)

10.4. Responsible Consumerism: Making Ethical Purchasing Decisions

Consumers can adopt responsible purchasing habits by:

- **Researching before buying:** Cross-checking information from multiple sources.
- **Prioritizing needs over trends:** Distinguishing between essential products and influencer-driven fads.
- **Supporting ethical brands:** Choosing companies that engage in fair labor practices and sustainable production.
- **Being aware of impulse-buying tactics:** Avoiding pressure to buy immediately based on influencer promotions.
- **Holding influencers accountable:** Calling out misleading claims and demanding transparency in advertising.

10.5. Consumer Responsibility in Product Impact

Consumers play an active role in shaping market trends.
Ethical consumption includes:

- **Questioning influencer promotions** before trusting their recommendations.
- **Demanding accountability from brands** regarding quality, sustainability, and fair labor.
- **Spreading awareness** about misleading promotions and unethical marketing.
- **Promoting mindful purchasing** instead of excessive consumerism.
- **Encouraging influencers to be responsible** with their endorsements.

Section 11 | Impulsive Buying

11.1. Purpose

Influencer marketing often creates a sense of urgency that drives consumers to make impulsive purchasing decisions. Limited-time discounts, exclusive deals, and fear of missing out (FOMO) are common tactics used to encourage quick purchases. However, impulsive buying can lead to financial strain, buyer's remorse, and unnecessary consumption.

11.2. Identifying fake urgency

Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)

- Influencers create excitement around trendy products, making consumers feel left out if they don't buy.
- Products are often portrayed as life-changing or must-have items, regardless of actual necessity.
- Consumers should assess whether the product is genuinely useful or just part of a temporary trend.

Social Proof & Peer Influence

- Influencers use testimonials, user-generated content, and follower interactions to convince consumers that a product is in high demand.
- Fake urgency is created through staged "sold-out" messages or selective highlighting of positive reviews.
- Consumers should look for third-party reviews rather than relying solely on influencer testimonials.

Section 11 | Impulsive Buying

One-Time Launches & Pre-Orders

- Some influencers claim that a product is a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity to increase demand.
- Many of these products are restocked regularly, making the urgency misleading.
- Consumers should check whether the product has been sold multiple times before making a rushed decision.

11.3. The Risks of Impulsive Buying

Making purchasing decisions under pressure can lead to:

- **Buyer’s Remorse:** Regretting purchases that were unnecessary or overhyped.
- **Financial Strain:** Spending beyond one’s budget on non-essential items.
- **Product Disappointment:** Realizing that the product does not meet expectations.
- **Accumulation of Clutter:** Buying items that are rarely used or needed.
- **Sustainability Concerns:** Encouraging excessive consumption and waste.

Section 11 | Impulsive Buying

11.4. Avoiding Impulse Buying

To make more intentional purchasing decisions, consumers should:

Pause Before Purchasing

- Wait at least 24 hours before making a non-essential purchase.
- Ask: “Do I really need this, or am I being influenced by urgency?”
- Evaluate if the purchase fits within a planned budget.

Research Before Buying

- Compare prices across different platforms to check for better deals.
- Read unbiased reviews from third-party sources.
- Check if the product has been endorsed by multiple influencers, which may indicate a paid marketing campaign rather than genuine enthusiasm.

Recognize Emotional Triggers

- Identify when FOMO is influencing a purchasing decision.
- Avoid letting social media trends dictate buying choices.
- Distinguish between wants and needs before completing a purchase.

Section 11 | Impulsive Buying

Set Spending Limits

- Establish a monthly budget for discretionary spending.
- Use a wish list instead of buying instantly. Revisit the list after a week to see if the interest remains.
- Be cautious of buy-now-pay-later schemes that encourage excessive spending.

Unfollow or Mute Overly Promotional Influencers

- If an influencer constantly promotes products, their recommendations may be financially motivated rather than authentic.
- Follow influencers who provide balanced reviews rather than pushing constant urgency.

Section 11 | Impulsive Buying

11.5. Holding Influencers Accountable

Consumers should expect ethical marketing practices from influencers, including:

- **Transparency about urgency:** Influencers should disclose whether a product will be restocked or if the deal is recurring.
- **Honest product recommendations:** Promotions should be genuine rather than driven purely by brand deals.
- **Balanced reviews:** Influencers should provide both positives and negatives rather than exaggerated endorsements.
- **Respecting consumer choice:** Marketing should inform, not manipulate purchasing behavior.

When influencers engage in deceptive urgency tactics, consumers should:

- **Call out misleading promotions** in the comment section.
- **Report influencers who fail to disclose paid promotions** or use manipulative marketing tactics.
- **Choose to engage with influencers who promote ethical consumerism** and mindful shopping habits.

Section 12 | Data Privacy & Responsibility

12.1. Purpose

Influencers, brands, and social media platforms collect and use consumer data for marketing, advertising, and behavioral tracking. While data-driven content can enhance user experiences, it also raises concerns about privacy, security, and ethical data use.

12.2. The Collection of Consumer Data

When engaging with influencer content, consumers may unknowingly share personal data through:

Social Media Engagement

- Liking, commenting, sharing, and following an influencer provides data on consumer interests and behavior.
- Algorithms track engagement to deliver targeted ads and personalized content.

Clicking on Affiliate Links & Discount Codes

- Influencers use trackable links and discount codes that collect data on consumer purchases.
- This data is often shared with brands, advertisers, and third-party marketers.

Section 12 | Data Privacy & Responsibility

Signing Up for Contests & Giveaways

- Giveaways often require email addresses, phone numbers, or personal details.
- This information may be used for marketing purposes, lead generation, or sold to third parties.

Using E-Commerce & Shopping Features on Social Media

- Platforms collect purchase history, preferences, and payment details when consumers buy directly through influencer-recommended links.
- Some platforms share this data with advertisers to create targeted ad campaigns.

12.3. Risks Associated with Data Privacy

Without proper protection, consumer data can be misused, leading to:

- **Targeted Manipulation:** Data is used to create hyper-personalized ads that pressure consumers into unnecessary purchases.
- **Data Breaches & Cyber Threats:** Personal information stored on websites or social platforms can be leaked or hacked.
- **Unethical Selling of Data:** Some companies sell user data to third parties without explicit consumer consent.
- **Identity Theft & Fraud:** Scammers may misuse leaked personal data for fraudulent activities.

Section 12 | Data Privacy & Responsibility

12.4. Protecting Data

To ensure better data privacy, consumers should:

Review Privacy Settings

- Adjust social media settings to limit data sharing with third-party apps and advertisers.
- Enable two-factor authentication for enhanced account security.

Be Cautious with Online Forms & Giveaways

- Avoid signing up for contests that require excessive personal details.
- Read the terms & conditions to see how personal information will be used.

Use Secure Payment Methods

- When shopping through influencer links, use trusted payment gateways rather than saving card details on multiple websites.
- Avoid providing payment details to unverified sellers.

Section 12 | Data Privacy & Responsibility

Limit Third-Party Tracking

- Use ad blockers and privacy-focused browsers to reduce online tracking.
- Opt out of personalized advertising where possible.

Verify Influencer & Brand Credibility

- Ensure that influencers and brands follow ethical data practices before engaging with their promotions.
- If an influencer promotes a scam website or suspicious links, report them immediately.

12.5. Holding Influencers & Brands Accountable

Consumers have the right to expect:

- **Transparency on Data Collection:** Influencers and brands should disclose if user data is collected through giveaways, surveys, or shopping links.
- **Secure & Ethical Use of Consumer Data:** Data should not be misused, sold without consent, or used for deceptive marketing.
- **Respect for Consumer Privacy Choices:** Opt-out options should be clear and accessible.
- **No Forced Data Collection:** Users should not be required to provide unnecessary information to engage with influencer content.

Section 12 | Data Privacy & Responsibility

If influencers or brands violate data privacy rights, consumers should:

- Report misleading data practices to social media platforms and consumer protection authorities.
- Raise awareness about brands that sell or misuse consumer data.
- Encourage influencers to adopt transparent and ethical data collection practices.

Section 13 | AI Influencers

13.1. Purpose

Unlike human influencers, AI influencers are computer-generated personalities that promote brands, products, and services without real-life experiences. While AI influencers can be engaging and innovative, they also raise concerns about authenticity, transparency, and ethical marketing.

13.2. AI Influencers

AI influencers are computer-generated digital personalities designed to interact with audiences and promote products online. These influencers can:

- Appear lifelike with human-like facial expressions, voice, and social interactions.
- Be managed by brands, marketing agencies, or AI developers.
- Have scripted responses and pre-programmed content rather than real-life experiences.
- Engage with followers on social media platforms, livestreams, and brand campaigns.

Section 13 | AI Influencers

13.3. Ethical Concerns with AI Influencers

While AI influencers bring innovation to digital marketing, they also pose serious ethical concerns, including:

Lack of Real-Life Experience

- AI influencers do not use, test, or experience the products they promote.
- Any endorsement made by an AI influencer is purely scripted marketing, not based on real opinions.

Manipulation & Deceptive Marketing

- AI influencers can be programmed to make exaggerated claims about products.
- There is a risk of AI-generated content misleading consumers into thinking recommendations are based on real experiences.

No Accountability

- Human influencers can be held accountable for false claims, but AI influencers do not have personal responsibility.
- If an AI influencer promotes a harmful or misleading product, who is responsible, the brand, the AI developers, or the platform?

Section 13 | AI Influencers

Lack of Transparency

- Some AI influencers are not clearly labeled as artificial, making it difficult for consumers to know whether they are interacting with a real person or a digital creation.
- Consumers may trust AI influencers without realizing their endorsements are entirely scripted and commercialized.

13.4. Identifying AI Influencers

AI influencers can be highly realistic, but there are ways to identify them:

- **Check for Disclosure:** Ethical AI influencers should be clearly labeled as artificial. Look for hashtags such as #AllInfluencer or #VirtualInfluencer.
- **Look for Signs of CGI (Computer-Generated Imagery):** AI influencers often have flawless, highly edited, or unnatural facial features.
- **Analyze Engagement Patterns:** AI influencers may have scripted replies, lack personal storytelling, or avoid real-life experiences in their content.
- **Research Their Background:** If an influencer has no verifiable human history, they may be AI-generated.

Section 13 | AI Influencers

13.5. Demanding AI Transparency

Consumers must expect honesty and ethical use of AI influencers in digital marketing. Ethical AI influencer marketing should:

- Clearly state when an influencer is AI-generated.
- Avoid misleading product claims that suggest real-life experiences.
- Ensure accountability by requiring brands to take responsibility for AI promotions.
- Prevent deepfake or misleading AI-generated endorsements.

If AI influencer marketing is deceptive, consumers should:

- Report AI influencers that are not properly disclosed.
- Call out brands that use AI influencers without transparency.
- Demand ethical AI marketing regulations and industry standards.

Section 14 | Scams

14.1 Purpose

While many influencers use their platforms ethically, some engage in fraudulent, deceptive, or unethical practices to exploit consumers. These scammer influencers misuse their influence to sell fake products, promote financial scams, or mislead audiences with false promises.

14.2. Identifying Scammer Influencers

Scammer influencers use manipulative tactics to exploit their audience for financial gain. Common scam types include:

Fake Product Sales & Drop-Shipping Scams

- Influencers promote cheap, low-quality, or non-existent products at inflated prices.
- Customers never receive their orders or get poor-quality items that do not match the advertised product.
- Often, there are no refunds or customer service support after purchase.

Fraudulent Investment & Financial Schemes

- Influencers encourage followers to invest in get-rich-quick schemes, pyramid schemes, or crypto scams.
- They claim followers can earn fast, guaranteed profits with minimal effort.
- Many of these schemes are Ponzi-like, where early investors profit at the expense of new participants.

Section 14 | Scams

Fake Giveaways & Contests

- Influencers claim to offer cash prizes, luxury gifts, or free trips in exchange for likes, follows, or sharing content.
- In reality, these giveaways are never fulfilled, or the winners are pre-selected fraudulently.
- Some scams collect personal data for misuse.

Misleading Affiliate & Discount Code Scams

- Influencers claim a product is highly exclusive or at a massive discount, when in reality, the deal is fake.
- Some influencers earn commissions from misleading referrals without disclosing their financial incentives.

AI & Deepfake Impersonation Scams

- Scammers create fake influencer profiles using AI-generated deepfake videos or edited images.
- Fake influencer accounts are used to trick followers into sending money, clicking harmful links, or engaging in phishing scams.

Section 14 | Scams

14.3. Warning Signs of Scammer Influencers

Consumers should be cautious if an influencer:

- Heavily promotes unrealistic financial opportunities (e.g., “Make 5 Lakhs in a week!”).
- Sells products without verified customer reviews or a real business presence.
- Avoids transparency about brand partnerships or sponsorships.
- Has suspicious engagement, such as fake comments, sudden follower spikes, or bot-generated likes.
- Uses excessive urgency tactics to pressure consumers into buying immediately.
- Fails to deliver promised giveaways, prizes, or product refunds.
- Promotes new, unknown brands that lack credibility or customer support.

Section 14 | Scams

14.4. Consumer Protection

Consumers should take the following steps to avoid scams:

Research Before Purchasing

- Look for verified customer reviews and independent ratings before buying products from influencer promotions.
- Check whether the brand has legitimate contact information, a secure website, and a clear return policy.

Verify Investment or Financial Claims

- Avoid any scheme that guarantees unrealistic profits. Legitimate investments always involve risk.
- Cross-check financial advice with certified professionals or official financial institutions.

Be Cautious with Giveaways & Contests

- Check for proper disclosure of contest rules, terms, and sponsor details.
- Avoid giving personal data (such as bank details, phone numbers, or home addresses) for giveaway entries.

Section 14 | Scams

14.4. Consumer Protection

Recognize Fake Engagement & Paid Reviews

- Look for authentic comments rather than generic praise (e.g., “This is amazing!” repeated by multiple accounts).
- Use reverse image search to check if product images are stolen or manipulated.

Report Suspicious Influencers

- If an influencer is promoting scams, fake products, or misleading deals, report them to:
 - Social media platforms for deceptive advertising.
 - Consumer protection authorities for financial fraud or false claims.
 - Brands & sponsors if the influencer falsely associates themselves with a company.

Section 14 | Scams

14.5. Holding Influencers Accountable for Scams

Consumers should demand ethical advertising and accountability from influencers by:

- Calling out misleading promotions and unethical marketing practices.
- Encouraging full transparency on paid partnerships and brand sponsorships.
- Pressuring social media platforms to take action against scam influencers.
- Avoiding influencers who frequently promote questionable or low-quality brands.
- Raising awareness about repeat scam influencers to prevent others from falling victim.

Section 15 | Consumer Complaint & Reporting Forum

15.1 Complete Awareness of the Consumer Complaint Forum

Consumers have the right to report any concerns regarding influencer content, whether it pertains to products, services, sponsored or non-sponsored posts, or general misleading information.

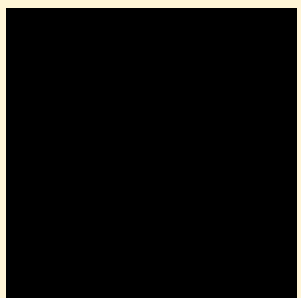
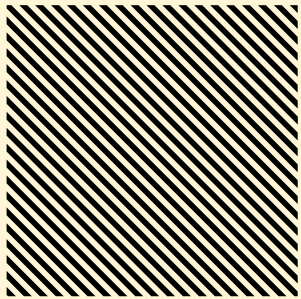
Complaints can be submitted to the **Indian Influencer Governing Council (IIGC)**, which will thoroughly review each case and take appropriate action based on its findings.

To ensure fair practices in influencer marketing, the Code of Standards mandates influencers to maintain transparency, authenticity, and ethical conduct in all their content. If an influencer fails to follow these guidelines, by posting deceptive promotions, hiding sponsorships, or making misleading claims, consumers can hold them accountable by filing a complaint.

By reporting unethical influencer behavior, consumers play a crucial role in fostering a more trustworthy digital space. Strict enforcement of these standards not only protects consumer interests but also strengthens the integrity of influencer marketing.



ABOUT IIGC



The Indian Influencer Governing Council (IIGC) is a self-regulatory organization committed to fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical standards in influencer marketing. By uniting influencers, brands, agencies, and digital platforms across India, we establish guidelines that promote authenticity, responsible content creation, and fair collaborations. Our mission is to ensure a thriving digital ecosystem where audiences are protected, creators are empowered, and businesses engage in ethical and innovative marketing practices.