

ASCI updates code, media companies must label paid posts on social handles

Mumbai, August 13, 2025: The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) has introduced a new clause to its Code for Self-Regulation in Advertising, requiring media companies to clearly identify paid content on their social media handles. The move aims to stop advertisements or promotions from being perceived as editorial content, a growing concern in India's fast-changing digital ecosystem.

Under the new Clause 1.8, part of Chapter 1 - Truthful and Honest Representation, any paid or sponsored post by a media company must carry a clear disclosure right at the start, so audiences know up front that it is promotional in nature. Acceptable labels include "Advertisement," "Partnership," "Ad," "Free Gift," "Sponsored," "Platform disclosure tags" and "Collaboration." The Norms of Journalists Conduct also require newspapers to clearly distinguish advertisements from content.

The change follows observations consumer complaints about misleading or undisclosed promotions, on platforms where editorial credibility is high. With digital media often serving as a primary news and information source, ASCI says transparency is essential to protect both audiences and media brands.

Manisha Kapoor, CEO and Secretary General of ASCI, said: "Labelling sponsored content is crucial for several reasons. It builds trust and transparency with the audience, which appreciates knowing whether it's an endorsement or recommending something in exchange for compensation. Second, it helps to comply with the laws and guidelines, which may require one to disclose any material connection or relationship you have with a brand or product. Finally, it helps avoid potential penalties, fines or legal actions from regulators, who may accuse you of deceptive or unfair marketing practices. ASCI monitors such content closely to avoid any brand influence of misleading content by brands."

"Several media outlets regularly post editorial content on their social media handles. Increasingly, we see that advertisements with no or poorly visible disclosures are making their way to such posts. To maintain the integrity and trust of media news and features, it is important that sponsored or promoted content is distinguished by means of upfront disclosures. This prevents such advertisements from misleading consumers about their true nature. Consumers have a right to know if they are dealing with sponsored or editorial content right at the beginning."

Read the updated code here: https://www.ascionline.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/ASCI-Codes-Guidelines_July_2025.pdf.pdf

About the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI):

The ASCI, established in 1985, is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising, ensuring the protection of consumer interests. ASCI seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest, and truthful and not

hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition. ASCI looks into complaints across all media, such as print, TV, radio, hoardings, SMS, emails, the internet/website, product packaging, brochures, promotional material, point-of-sale material, etc. ASCI has collaboratively worked with various government bodies, including the Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the Ministry of AYUSH, and the Ministry of Information and PRESS RELEASE Broadcasting (MIB). In August 2023, the ASCI Academy, a flagship program of ASCI, was launched to build the capacity of all stakeholders to create responsible and progressive advertising. ASCI Academy aims to raise standards of advertising content through training, education, outreach, and research on the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

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