



Deepfakes, voice clones: Celebrities fight AI threat

Experts say India's legal framework is inadequate to stop the complexity of AI infringements

Lata Jha
lata.j@livemint.com
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While the likes of Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan and Karan Johar move court to protect their personality rights—including their name, image and signature—experts say artificial intelligence (AI) is making it increasingly difficult to detect and prevent such violations.

AI tools can generate highly convincing deepfake videos and voice clones, making it difficult to trace and remove them, especially across multiple platforms. Personality rights violations hurt celebrities not just financially but also in terms of brand equity. Fake endorsements and unauthorized merchandise can wipe out licensing fees and royalties worth crores. The counterfeit goods market is estimated to be ₹40,000 crore.

The reputational damage can be even more severe. Pornographic deepfakes or morphed content inflict irreparable harm, erode brand exclusivity and can slash future endorsement fees by 20-30%. Top Bollywood actors charge anywhere from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore per endorsement.

"The recent legal actions instituted by Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Abhishek Bachchan and Karan Johar signal a growing imperative to safeguard personality rights in India, particularly in light of the rapid proliferation of generative AI technologies," said C.A. Brijesh, partner, IPR law firm Remfry & Sagar. "The violations in question extend far beyond traditional unauthorized image use. We are now witnessing a more complex landscape involving algorithmic replication of a celebrity's voice, likeness, expressions and persona, assets that are intrinsically tied to



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their commercial and reputational value," he added.

The legal recourse for such violations spans multiple remedies, including those related to unfair competition, performers' rights, copyright and the con-

by anonymous actors outside Indian jurisdiction, said Gaurav Sahay, founding partner, law firm Arthashastra Legal.

Rahul Hingmire, managing partner at law firm Vis Legis Law Practice, pointed out that celebrities are litigating against

content that appears authentic but is unauthorized, he added.

Similar concerns have surfaced abroad, with Scarlett Johansson objecting to AI voice cloning and Cristiano Ronaldo challenging unauthorized NFTs (non-fungible tokens)—underscoring the global nature of the problem. Personality rights violations can have a significant and multifaceted impact on a celebrity's brand and monetary value, according to entertainment industry experts.

"Unauthorized use of their likeness can create public confusion, falsely implying a celebrity's endorsement of a product or service, which can dilute the value of their legitimate brand partnerships. This directly impacts their earning potential from official endorsements and licensing deals," said Anupam Shukla, partner, law firm Pioneer Legal.

"Beyond financial loss, deepfakes and manipulated content can also cause irreparable damage to a celebrity's reputation, goodwill and personal dignity, particularly when the content is defamatory, obscene, or misleading," he added. The loss of control over their own public image is a major blow to their brand's integrity and long-term viability, Shukla said.

Even scams, impersonator accounts and fake agencies divert millions of followers, weakening trust and audience engagement, highlighted Namrata Pahwa, an advocate at the Delhi High Court.

Brands are quick to pull back if a star's image is linked to disreputable content, even falsely. Additionally, celebrities have to spend crores on legal teams, monitoring and public relations to combat misuse. Each violation chips away at the credibility and commercial worth of a celebrity's persona, she added.

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REPUTATION AT RISK

PERSONALITY rights violations hurt celebrities financially and damage brand equity

PORNOGRAPHIC deepfakes or morphed content inflict irreparable harm

AI now replicates celebrity voices, likeness and personas, creating a complex landscape

SUCH content are hard to detect, as they're widely replicated, often anonymously made

stitutional rights to privacy and dignity. Though the courts have recognized these harms as both commercial loss and reputational injury, the enforcement is complex because it is difficult to detect such content—replicated endlessly across platforms and often created

unauthorized exploitation of their persona—fake websites claiming official status, sale of merchandise bearing their images, false endorsements and, recently, AI-driven misuse.

Deepfakes, cloned voices and chatbots add a new dimension—creating