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IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS ON BRAND LOYALTY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The rise of social media has transformed the marketing landscape, positioning social media influencers (SMIs) as powerful mediators between brands and consumers. This paper examines how SMIs affect brand loyalty and consumer purchasing behaviour through the lenses of Source Credibility Theory, Parasocial Relationship Theory, and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). A systematic review of empirical literature and contemporary case evidence reveals that influencer authenticity, credibility, and the strength of parasocial bonds are the primary drivers of brand loyalty. Micro-influencers consistently outperform macro-influencers on engagement and loyalty metrics, while platform type and product category moderate overall effectiveness. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations for brands seeking durable consumer relationships through influencer marketing.

Keywords: *Social Media Influencers, Brand Loyalty, Consumer Behaviour, Influencer Marketing, Authenticity, Parasocial Relationships, Digital Marketing*

Introduction

The rapid growth of digital technologies and social media platforms has significantly transformed the landscape of modern marketing and consumer communication. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok have enabled individuals to create and share content with large audiences, leading to the emergence of social media influencers (SMIs). Social media influencers are individuals who have developed credibility, expertise, and a dedicated following on social media platforms, allowing them to influence the attitudes, opinions, and purchasing decisions of their audiences.In recent years, influencer marketing has become an important strategy for businesses seeking to connect with consumers in a more authentic and engaging manner. Unlike traditional advertising, which often relies on direct promotional messages, influencer marketing works through personal recommendations and relatable content that resonates with followers. As a result, consumers tend to perceive influencer endorsements as more trustworthy and credible compared to conventional marketing methods.

Brand loyalty has become a critical factor for companies operating in highly competitive markets. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, recommend brands to others, and maintain long-term relationships with companies. Social media influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and emotional connections with brands, which ultimately contributes to the development of brand loyalty.Furthermore, influencers

often build strong parasocial relationships with their followers, creating a sense of familiarity and trust. These relationships allow influencers to effectively promote products and services, thereby influencing consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions. Businesses increasingly collaborate with influencers to enhance brand awareness, build customer engagement, and strengthen consumer loyalty in the digital marketplace.

Therefore, understanding the impact of social media influencers on brand loyalty and consumer behaviour has become an important area of research in the fields of marketing, commerce, management, and media studies. This study aims to examine how influencer credibility, authenticity, and communication strategies affect consumer attitudes and brand loyalty in the evolving digital marketing environment.

Literature Review

Joshi et al. (2023) examined the growing importance of social media influencer marketing in the digital marketing environment. The study found that influencer marketing significantly improves brand awareness, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions, making it one of the most effective marketing strategies in the digital era.

Liu and Zheng (2024) analyzed the role of influencer authenticity and credibility in shaping consumer perceptions. Their findings indicated that authentic and trustworthy influencer content positively influences brand credibility and increases consumers' purchase intentions.

Gu and Duan (2024) studied consumer engagement in influencer marketing and concluded that interactive activities such as liking, sharing, and commenting strengthen consumer relationships with brands. Higher engagement levels were found to positively influence consumer attitudes toward brands.

Nabirasool et al. (2024) investigated the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. The study revealed that influencer communication and emotional connections with followers significantly influence consumer purchase behaviour and brand loyalty.

Wang (2025) explored the relationship between influencer authenticity, expertise, and consumer trust. The findings suggested that influencers who demonstrate transparency and product knowledge significantly enhance consumer trust, which ultimately leads to stronger brand loyalty.

Research Gap

1. Most previous studies focus on purchase intention, while limited research examines the long-term impact on brand loyalty.
2. Existing literature mainly studies influencer credibility and engagement separately, but fewer studies analyze their combined impact on consumer behaviour.
3. Many studies are conducted in developed countries, with limited focus on emerging markets like India where influencer marketing is rapidly growing.
4. There is limited research examining the role of consumer engagement with influencer content in building strong brand relationships.
5. The growing influence of micro-influencers and their impact on brand loyalty has not been sufficiently explored in recent studies.

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Research Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. The research is based on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data are collected through a structured questionnaire distributed among social media users who actively follow influencers and are exposed to influencer marketing content. Secondary data are gathered from recent research articles, journals, books, and online academic databases related to influencer marketing and consumer behaviour.

The study uses a convenience sampling technique, and the sample consists of approximately 100–150 respondents who regularly use social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. The collected data are analyzed using statistical tools such as percentage analysis, correlation, and regression analysis with the help of software like SPSS and Microsoft Excel. This methodological approach helps to identify the relationship between influencer credibility, consumer engagement, and brand loyalty

Research Objectives

1. To examine the impact of social media influencer credibility on consumer purchasing behaviour.
2. To analyze the relationship between influencer authenticity and consumer trust toward brands.
3. To study the influence of social media influencers on the development of brand loyalty among consumers.
4. To examine the role of consumer engagement with influencer content in shaping brand perceptions.

Hypotheses

H1: Social media influencer credibility has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention.
H2: Influencer authenticity positively influences consumer trust toward the promoted brand.
H3: Social media influencer marketing has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty.
H4: Consumer engagement with influencer content positively influences brand perception and loyalty.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The present study collected responses from 125 social media users to examine the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. The collected data were analysedusing percentage analysis to understand respondents' opinions regarding influencer credibility, authenticity, engagement, and brand loyalty.

1. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Age Group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18–25 Years	60	48%
26–35 Years	35	28%
36–45 Years	20	16%
Above 45	10	8%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Interpretation
The majority of respondents (48%) belong to the 18–25 age group, indicating that young consumers are the most active users of social media and are more exposed to influencer marketing.

2. Social Media Platform Used by Respondents

Platform	Respondents	Percentage
Instagram	55	44%
YouTube	35	28%
Facebook	20	16%
Others	15	12%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Interpretation
The table shows that Instagram (44%) is the most popular platform for influencer marketing, followed by YouTube (28%).

H1: Social media influencer credibility has a significant positive impact on consumer purchase intention.

Table 3: Influence of Influencer Credibility on Purchase Intention

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	42	33.6%
Agree	40	32%
Neutral	18	14.4%
Disagree	15	12%
Strongly Disagree	10	8%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Interpretation
The table indicates that 65.6% of respondents (Strongly Agree + Agree) believe that the credibility of social media influencers influences their purchase intention. Only 20% of respondents expressed disagreement with this statement. This suggests that influencer credibility plays an important role in shaping consumer purchasing behaviour. Therefore, Hypothesis H1 is accepted.

H2: Influencer authenticity positively influences consumer trust toward the promoted brand.

Table 4: Influence of Influencer Authenticity on Consumer Trust

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	38	30.4%
Agree	45	36%
Neutral	20	16%
Disagree	14	11.2%
Strongly Disagree	8	6.4%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Interpretation
The table shows that 66.4% of respondents agree that influencer authenticity increases their trust toward the promoted brand. Only 17.6% of respondents disagree, while some respondents remain neutral. These results indicate that authenticity and transparency of influencers significantly contribute to building consumer trust. Hence, Hypothesis H2 is accepted.

H3: Social media influencer marketing has a significant positive impact on brand loyalty.

Table 5: Influence of Influencer Marketing on Brand Loyalty

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	40	32%
Agree	44	35.2%
Neutral	22	17.6%
Disagree	12	9.6%
Strongly Disagree	7	5.6%
Total	**125**	**100%**

Interpretation

The table indicates that 67.2% of respondents agree that influencer marketing contributes to the development of brand loyalty. Only 15.2% of respondents disagree, while a small portion remains neutral. This suggests that influencer endorsements and recommendations help consumers develop stronger emotional connections with brands. Therefore, Hypothesis H3 is accepted

Findings & Suggestions-

1. The majority of respondents belong to the 18–25 age group, showing that young consumers are the primary audience for influencer marketing.
2. Instagram and YouTube are the most influential platforms for influencer marketing.
3. Social media influencers significantly affect consumer purchase decisions.
4. Influencer credibility and authenticity increase consumer trust in brands.
5. Influencer marketing plays an important role in building brand loyalty among consumers.

Suggestions of the Study

1. **Brands should collaborate with credible and authentic influencers** who have a strong connection with their followers, as credibility and authenticity significantly influence consumer trust and purchase decisions.
2. **Companies should focus on micro-influencers, as** they often have higher engagement rates and stronger relationships with their audiences compared to celebrity influencers.
3. **Businesses should select influencers whose values and content match the brand image, as** proper influencer–brand alignment increases the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.
4. **Influencers should maintain transparency in sponsored content** to build and maintain consumer trust and credibility.
5. **Organizations should encourage consumer engagement** by creating interactive content such as reviews, tutorials, and live sessions to strengthen the relationship between influencers and consumers.
6. **Future marketing strategies should integrate influencer marketing with other digital marketing tools** such as social media advertising, content marketing, and brand storytelling to maximize marketing effectiveness.
7. **Further research can be conducted with a larger sample size and in different geographical regions** to gain deeper insights into the impact of influencer marketing on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty.

Conclusion

The present study examined the impact of social media influencers on consumer behaviour and brand loyalty. With the

rapid growth of digital platforms, influencer marketing has emerged as an important strategy for businesses to promote their products and build stronger relationships with consumers. The findings of the study indicate that social media influencers play a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions, influencing purchase intentions, and strengthening brand loyalty.

The analysis revealed that a majority of respondents are influenced by social media influencers when making purchase decisions. Influencer credibility, authenticity, and communication style were found to be important factors that affect consumer trust and engagement. When influencers are perceived as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and relatable, consumers are more likely to consider their recommendations and develop positive attitudes toward the brands they promote.

The results also highlight the importance of consumer engagement with influencer content. Interactive activities such as liking, commenting, and sharing posts increase the connection between influencers and their followers, which further strengthens brand perception. This engagement not only encourages consumers to try new products but also helps in developing long-term brand loyalty.

Furthermore, the study suggests that social media platforms such as Instagram and YouTube are highly effective channels for influencer marketing. Businesses can benefit from collaborating with influencers who align with their brand values and target audience. By leveraging influencer credibility and authentic communication, companies can enhance brand visibility, consumer trust, and long-term customer relationships.

In conclusion, influencer marketing has become a powerful tool in the modern marketing environment. Organizations that strategically utilize social media influencers can effectively influence consumer behaviour and build sustainable brand loyalty in the competitive digital marketplace.

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