

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS IN E-COMMERCE GROWTH : AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

Social media has revolutionized communication and consumer engagement, evolving from early digital platforms to today's dynamic networks such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. Its impact extends beyond social interaction, significantly shaping consumer behaviour and fueling the rapid growth of e-commerce. This paper explores the role of social media influencers in bridging the link between brands and consumers by fostering authenticity, credibility, and relatability. Analyzing the importance of influencer marketing in India's expanding e-commerce sector, projected to surpass \$300 billion by 2030. Influencers not only enhance customer trust and engagement but also serve as long-term strategic partners for businesses. Emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, and Augmented Reality are set to further personalize influencer-driven strategies, making them critical to the future of digital marketing and sustainable e-commerce growth.

Key words: Social Media, Social Media Influencers, E-Commerce, Consumers

Introduction:

Social media is a web-based technology that enables individuals to communicate, share ideas, and build communities through virtual networks. Its roots trace back to 1971 with the first email, followed by early systems like PLATO, ARPANET, and Usenet, which introduced forums, chat rooms, and large-scale online discussions. The 1990s saw the rise of instant messaging platforms such as ICQ and AOL Messenger, while Six Degrees (1997) emerged as the first true social networking site. Advances in digital imaging and internet technology paved the way for modern platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

Today, social media has transformed communication and consumer behavior, shifting attention from traditional media to digital platforms that influence purchasing decisions. Influencer marketing has become central to brand strategies, with influencers shaping consumer trust and engagement. Emerging trends—such as nano-influencers, Artificial Intelligence, and immersive technologies like Virtual and Augmented Reality are expected to further personalize and redefine digital marketing and e-commerce strategies.

Review of Literature:

Dr. P. Prasanthi., et al., (2024), explains as position influencer marketing as an extension of word-of-mouth and celebrity endorsement, amplified by social media's reach and interactivity. Research highlights how influencers bridge brands and consumers by creating relatable content that increases brand awareness and affects purchase intentions, particularly among younger demographics.

Dr.G.Suguna Valli (2025), found on their study , that integration of digital marketing and social media platforms has transformed the way businesses engage with consumers. A growing body of literature emphasizes the critical role of influencer marketing in shaping purchasing behavior and driving online sales.

Ritika Chaudhary and Dr. Geeta Rani (2024), convey in their study how social media and influencer marketing shape consumer behavior and drive e-commerce promotions. Influencers build trust and leverage FOMO to influence purchasing decisions, particularly for discounts and limited-time offers. Ms. Deepthi J.R., et al., explores in their studies e-commerce has transformed global trade by enabling seamless online transactions across B2C, B2B, C2C, and C2B models. Powered by technology, mobile commerce, and digital tools, it offers convenience, personalization, and worldwide access.

Objectives:

1. To study the importance of social media in the growth of e-commerce.
2. To analyse the role of social media influencers in attracting customers attention.
3. To examine customers behaviour towards social media influencers in e-commerce.

Research Methodology :

The present study is descriptive in nature. To gain a clear understanding of the concept, secondary sources of data have been utilized. The necessary information has been gathered from journals, books, research papers, and websites.

Overview of Social Media Influencers:

An influencer is someone who can shape the decisions of their followers through trust, expertise, and connection in areas such as fashion, travel, or technology. With their large and engaged audiences, influencers hold the power to persuade purchasing choices, making them a valuable channel for brands. Today, many companies collaborate with influencers to promote their products, with some influencers earning high money per post. This growing demand has encouraged many people to pursue careers as influencers.

Characteristics of Social Media Influencers:

- **Authenticity:** Influencers are often perceived as real people sharing their genuine opinions and personal experiences, rather than as scripted brand ambassadors. Their content typically reflects their own lifestyle, preferences, and personality, which makes followers feel they are receiving honest recommendations. This perceived independence gives their endorsements greater emotional impact compared to traditional advertising.
- **Credibility:** Because followers already trust influencers for their consistent content and transparency, their product suggestions are considered more dependable. Many influencers maintain credibility by clearly labeling sponsored posts, reviewing products honestly, and engaging directly with their audience to answer questions. This open communication reinforces the belief that their opinions are unbiased and not solely driven by brand partnerships.
- **Expertise:** Influencers often build their reputation through years of experience, experimentation, and deep interest in a particular niche—such as fashion, fitness, technology, or travel. Their knowledge can come from self-learning, personal practice, or professional background. For example, tech reviewers may stay updated on the latest gadgets, while food bloggers share tried-and-tested recipes. Their hands-on approach often resonates more with audiences than formal credentials alone.
- **Relatability:** Followers connect with influencers because they share everyday stories, struggles, and achievements that feel familiar. Even celebrities with millions of followers use casual posts, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive features (like polls or Q&A sessions) to create a sense of closeness. This human touch helps audiences see them as approachable friends or role models rather than distant public figures.

Importance of Social Media Influencers:

- a. Influencers humanize brand: As we touched on above, social media influencers are relatable. An influencer's success (and often livelihood) depends on connecting with his or her audience. Influencers seek connection and acceptance from their viewers, which is why they frequently emphasize that they are ordinary individuals with similar interests and challenges. True, there are social media influencers who seem more perfect than others, but even these models will put a face to your brand. Whether an influencer is relatable or aspirational, brand will be humanized by the connection with a real person.
- b. People trust peers more than companies: Who is more trustworthy, your neighbor or an ad? Your boss or a commercial? A friendly acquaintance or a stranger? Time and time again, studies have shown that people put more stock in the recommendations of their peers than in a corporate advertisement. In marketing we are know that word-of-mouth is more powerful advertising tool. Experience is the best teacher. Even though followers might not have ever had any personal interactions (i.e., meeting the influencer in person or having an actual conversation with that person directly), they still see an influencer as their peer.
- c. Influencers are better able to reach an audience: Influencers already have a following of their own. Likewise, they are already sharing content that relates to your brand or to your brand's industry. In short, their audiences are already interested in content just like yours! Social media influencers will reach very fastly target audience than traditional advertisements. Additionally, their audiences seek out the influencers content. These followers are actively trying to engage and consume content that will help further your branding and your marketing goals.
- d. Influencers and marketers have long-term relationships: Social media influencers should be part of your longterm strategy, not just one campaign. Influencers will likely stick to the same or similar content and audiences over the course of several years: your brand will be able to grow with them. You can actually build a relationship with an influencer, using that influencer as a resource repeatedly.

Growth of E-Commerce in India:

India's e-commerce market is experiencing rapid growth, expected to reach between \$150-\$160 billion in 2025. From ~\$150-\$160 billion by 2025, the market could grow to somewhere between US\$300 to US\$400 billion by 2030. With annual growth rates remaining above 17%-20% and projections for continued expansion driven by digital adoption, consumer behavior shifts, and strong technology innovation.

Market Size and Growth Rate:

- India's e-commerce market will surpass \$160 billion by 2025, growing at an annual rate of 17%-20%.
- By 2030, forecasts suggest the market could reach \$300-\$400 billion, indicating a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of more than 20%.
- E-commerce currently accounts for about 8% of India's retail market, expected to reach 14% by 2028 as online adoption rises.

Key Growth Drivers of E-Commerce:

- Increased internet penetration and affordable smartphones are making online shopping accessible to hundreds of millions, with over 342 million active e-commerce shoppers as of 2025.
- The rise of digital payments, especially Unified Payments Interface (UPI), is fuelling e-commerce; digital payments are anticipated to make up 75-85% of transactions by 2025.

- Growing demand from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities—about 50–60% of new online shoppers in 2025 will likely come from outside metro areas, with these regions seeing record growth in order volumes (up to 21% year-over-year in 2025).
- Strong competition among global and local platforms like Amazon, Flipkart, and Meesho, along with quick commerce and hyperlocal delivery models, are driving innovation.
- Technological advances such as AI, AR, and chatbots will promote personalization, immersive shopping, and enhanced customer support, with nearly 40% of interactions involving AI by 2025.
- Quick commerce (fast, hyperlocal delivery) and trend-first fashion (frequent launch of trendy collections via social media and tech) are growing rapidly, reflecting local and youth-oriented demand.
- Sustainability and ethical consumerism are growing priorities, influencing brand strategies and operations.
- Cross-border e-commerce and B2B digitization are opening new market opportunities for Indian sellers and MSMEs, expanding international reach.
- For e-commerce leaders, investing in omnichannel strategies, supply chain automation, cybersecurity, and localization are crucial for success in the evolving Indian market.
- Adapting platforms for vernacular languages and local preferences is a notable opportunity, particularly in regional markets.

Conclusion:

Social media influencers have become an integral force in shaping consumer behaviour and driving the rapid expansion of e-commerce. In today's era, increased internet penetration and affordable smartphones have made online shopping accessible to millions of people. The use of digital payments, especially UPI and other cashless methods, has further supported the growth of e-commerce. People of all age groups are continuously using smartphones and spending time on social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. They also follow many influencers on these platforms. This encourages people to buy or sell products through e-commerce, as they are influenced by social media and trust what influencers promote. Thus, social media influencers are not merely trendsetters but strategic partners in ensuring sustainable growth for businesses in the digital marketplace.

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