

**A REVIEW ON SOCIAL MEDIA
INFLUENCERS AS ENDORSERS
AND IMPACT ON CONSUMER'S
PURCHASE INTENT**

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ABSTRACT

Social media is used as a medium to make people aware of the brands. Taking this as an opportunity, companies are continuously sticking to new marketing strategies through social media influencers. This article aims at three domains, “social media influencers as an endorser, impact of social media influencers, and to identify different types of influencers based on their activities. The main purpose of this article is to offer insight into marketing literature and assist marketers in choosing the appropriate influencers to promote the brands while focusing on consumers. The present research is done by collecting information from various journal articles published and that were available in google scholar. After reviewing the existing literature on SMIs marketing, the result shows that marketing and advertising through SMIs were successful. However, when choosing an influencer, companies must target the right influencers to advertise the product that has the highest engagement level with customers.

Keywords: social media, influencers, endorsement, purchase intention

1. INTRODUCTION TO GLOBALIZATION

With a swap from the traditional to the automated era, human behaviour has drastically changed resulting a change in marketing operations as well. The emergence of different social media platforms has created room for Social Media Influencers. Thus, allowing them to showcase their daily activities. As per the report in (Statista) 2023, presently there are 5.18 billion internet users worldwide amounting to 64.6 percent of the total worldwide population. Out of this 59.9 percent are social media users. Therefore, the increasing number of social media users has instigated companies to shift their marketing and advertising approach from traditional to digital. People want everything at their doorstep right away due to the change in lifestyle. From placing online grocery orders to using smartphones to access information and updates from every nook and corner of the world. Consumers now expect everything to be available at the click of a button. Online marketing thus plays a significant role in conveniently satisfying and meeting customers' demands. Today's consumer has a presence in both the online and offline worlds. Thus, as a result of the extensive dissemination of social media, the strategy of influencer marketing through Social Media Influencers has evolved gradually.

Influencer Marketing (IM) has become one of the most well-known areas of digital marketing, and incorporating it into marketing promotion and advertisement appears to be a successful strategy for attracting customers. The popularity of SMIs is growing in advertising and marketing research as a result of two theoretically related concepts—opinion leadership and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). This kind of marketing strategy relies on influencers to help consumers become aware of brands and make decisions about what to buy that is posted by them (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

The rapid growth of vloggers on YouTube and fashion influencer on Instagram have uncovered

the concept of SMIs. Consumers now follow influencers, brand-new sources who connect with millions of people on social media sites like Instagram and YouTube (Chae, 2021). According to (Singh & Diamond, 2012), Influencers collaborate with the brand to generate content through different social media sites to attract vast audiences to achieve the marketing goal of the company or brand. A high-impact influencer encourages audiences to visit the brand's website while also raising awareness of the product and enabling devoted followers to use and even recommend it to their networks (J. A. Lee & Eastin, 2020).

This article aims at providing narrative literature review of the existing literature on Social Media Influencers research.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To study the types of Social Media Influencers and their characteristics.
- To study the impact of Social Media Influencers.
- To identify the theories related to Influencer Marketing research.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article is a literature review that aims to provide a base for understanding social media influencers, their characteristics, and their impact. The descriptive research method is used in this study. The present research is done by collecting information from various journal articles published and that were available in google scholar. The study's main goal is to shed light on social media

4. DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS (SMIS)

Freberg et al., (2011) defined SMIs as “independent third-party endorsers who influence social media users using blogs, tweets, and other social media.”

Ouvrein et al., (2021) defined SMIs as “average people who, consciously or unconsciously, inspire and influence others through online works that are regarded as authentic by a small audience.”

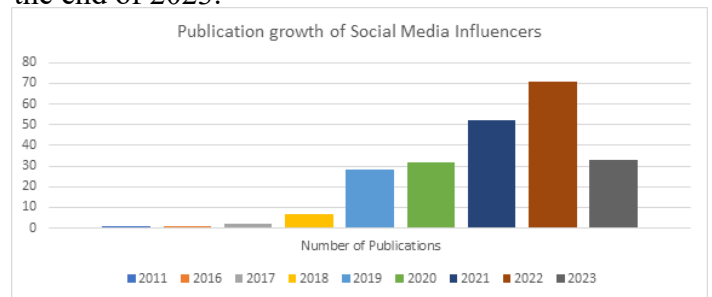
Campbell & Farrell, (2020) defined SMIs as “someone who posts to social media in exchange for compensation.”

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Social Media and the rise of SMIs.

Social media is playing a crucial role in providing online information to the user. Before purchasing anything, people now look forward to others’ reviews and recommendations about the product or services. Social media has become an important medium for advertisers and marketers to reach their audience. Businesses are using social media for marketing purposes such as boosting brand awareness, attracting customers, changing consumer attitudes, and boosting Purchase Intention (Ananda et al., 2016). Highlighting the generation of advertising, a traditional form of advertising was done through public figures during the pre-digital era. Later, the emergence of the Web. 2.0 and the formation of different social media platforms, have enabled internet users to share maximum content on their social media and fundamentally changed marketing practices (Vidani & Das, 2021). Thus, giving rise to social media influencers. IM has been around for a while, and until recently it involved hiring people who had a big social impact to promote products in a genuine way. Modern IM relies on SMIs, a social media phenomenon that reflects endorsement practices by individuals with a significant social media audience, with the goal of increasing online

engagement for the endorsed product or service. SMIs are frequently recognized as having some expertise in particular fields, such as healthy living, travel, food, lifestyle, beauty, or fashion (Lou & Yuan, 2019a). The Fig.1 below highlights the evolution of Social Media Influencers research from 2011 till date. However, it is expected that research on this topic is increasing and will cross the highest level by the end of 2023.



5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS.

We observed that it is not SMIs fame alone that can influence consumers, but influencers’ overall characteristics also matter when a consumer encounters them. Therefore, in this section, we discussed different characteristics of SMIs-influencer credibility, psychological influencing factor, and content credibility and its impact according to the existing literature.

5.2.1 Source Credibility.

The first and most prevalent research topic in the existing literature is concerned with the characteristics of SMIs and how they influence behavioural outcomes. Many academics believe that the high perceived credibility of influencers in social media settings has contributed to its success (Al-Emadi & Ben Yahia, 2020; Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Researchers (Djafarova & Trofimenko, 2019; Schouten et al., 2020) used the (Ohanian, 1990) model of source credibility that consists of trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise. However, (Xiao et al., 2018) took their investigation a step further by focusing on SMI-specific aspects of source credibility.

They discovered that the most important elements in determining credibility are trustworthiness, argument quality, social influence, and relevance. A study by Torres et al., (2019) claims that consumers' responses, including their attitude toward the endorsement and brand, as well as their intention to make a purchase, are significantly influenced by the influencer's attractiveness, which is not just related to her/his physical attributes but also encompasses familiarity and likeability. Few other authors also supported their portrayal of SMIs as someone who is very visible, attention seeker, and has a high social position (Cho et al., 2012; Kapitan & Silvera, 2016). As per an empirical study on the Indian consumer perspective, the trustworthiness of influencers has a strong impact on followers' behavioural intentions (Suresh et al., 2021). Related studies on SMIs endorsing brands impact consumer purchase intent mainly for influencer's trustworthiness because SMIs personally try the product (Uzunoglu & Misci Kip, 2014).

5.2.2 Psychological Influential Factor.

Ki et al., (2020) showed that the persuasive power of SMIs derives from the emotional attachment they establish with their followers. Prior research indicates that the emotional attachment of a beauty vlogger through three dimensions of homophily (attitude, values, and appearance) seems to influence the perceived popularity of the vlogger, which has a significant impact on the purchase of the recommended product (Ladhari et al., 2020). Although Sokolova & Kefi, (2020) suggested a negative relationship, it is noteworthy to note that several researchers have revealed that the social interaction of an influencer is also based on physical attractiveness (J. E. Lee & Watkins, 2016). The previous study highlights various psychological factor that impacts consumer purchase intent- para-social interaction (Jin et al., 2019), inspiration (Ki et al., 2020), enjoyability (Magno & Cassia, 2018), sense of friendship (Kim & Kim, 2021), homophily and similarity (Ki et al., 2020), wishful identification (Hu et al., 2019).

5.2.3 Content Credibility.

According to (Ki & Kim, 2019) consumers have positive attitudes toward SMIs when they post visually appealing, prestigious, expertly crafted content that is regarded as informative and interactive. As a result of their desire to replicate the influencer, they also exhibit positive behavioural outcomes. According to Casaló et al., (2020), consumers are more likely to interact with influencers, follow their recommendations, and encourage others to do the same when they perceive the content to be original and unique. When the recommended product is expected goods and brand awareness is high the attitude toward the sponsored recommendation post tends to be positive, increasing consumers' willingness to purchase the product (Lu et al., 2014). The previous study highlights that informative content impacts consumer purchase intent (Ki et al., 2020). The table no.1 below shows the various studies by researcher on the characteristics of SMIs.

Table No 1. Table showing previous studies on	
Author	Characteristics of SMIs
(Magno & Cassia, 2018)	Information Quality, Bloggers Trustworthiness.
(NUGRAHA & SETYANTO, 2018)	Celebrity Credibility, Celebrity Attractiveness, Celebrity Expertise.
(Lou & Yuan, 2019)	Informative value, Entertainment value, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and Similarity.
(Breves et al., 2019)	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Physical attraction.
(Gayathri & Anwar, 2019)	Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness.
(Saima & Khan, 2020)	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Likability, Information Quality, and Entertainment value.
(Suresh et al., 2021)	Trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, informativeness and Entertainment value.
(Es-Safi & Sağlam, 2021)	Communication skill, Influence, Authenticity, Expertise.
(Özbölük & Akdogan, 2022)	Attractive, Trustworthiness, competence, online self-presentation, and Influencer identification.
(Al-Sous et al., 2023)	Information Quality and trustworthiness.

5.3 ARE ALL INFLUENCERS THE SAME?

An influencer is someone who posts on social media in exchange for remuneration (Campbell & Grimm, 2019). Influencers are different with respect to the platform they are present in, the category they belong to, and the aspects they are experts in. We see different researchers using different terms to present influencers that perfectly fit into. However, influencers can also be classified based on the followers counts. They are- (a) Nano influencers (1k-10k followers), (b) Micro-influencers (10k- 100k followers), (c) Macro influencers (100k- 1M followers), (d) Mega and celebrity influencers (1M+ followers) which deal with the promotion and advertisement of the products in the social media platforms (Campbell & Farrell, 2020). Classification of influencers is important because it helps brands or companies in identification of the right influencers. Classification of influencers may vary from country to country and platform to platform (Ouvrein et al., 2021). Besides classification of influencers based on their followers count, influencers can also be classified based on the activities they are into.

a. GREENFLUENCER

With the rapid increase in global warming and climate change, people are more concerned about climate sustainability and responsibility to save the earth. The number of green influencers, also known as "greenfluencers" has been steadily increasing in response to growing concerns about sustainability in general and the climate crisis (Knupfer et al., 2023). Influencers can act as an endorser on behalf of the policymakers in creating awareness concerning sustainable policies and sustainable consumption pattern (Yıldırım, 2021). The promotion of sustainable consumption patterns, which will likely

b.FASHION INFLUENCERS

With the change in lifestyle and living standard of people, the demand for fashionable and attractive products and services is also increasing. Customers have become more fashion-conscious as a result of the growing

fashion industry demand, and fashion influencers have a significant impact on their purchasing decisions. Fashion influencers are individuals who have a sizable following on social media, produce fashion content, and can sway followers' opinions and purchasing decisions (Chetioui et al., 2020). The fashion Industry is highly engaged in influencer marketing.

c. POLITICAL INFLUENCERS

Social media has not only made it possible for politicians to engage with potential voters by taking advantage of the opportunities for reciprocal exchange, but it has also given ordinary people and celebrities the chance to express their political opinions and grievances. Political influencers are regular people who have grown their followings on social media and occasionally talk about politics with their audiences (Harff & Schmuck, 2023).

d. BEAUTY INFLUENCER

In the era of selfies and social media, content creation by influencers on makeup tutorials have become well desired by the active followers or audience. Mostly influencers endorsing certain beauty brands can be seen in Instagram and YouTube. As per Statista Report 2023, influencers on Instagram are seen creating content on makeup and beauty products, national and international brands. More specifically, the term "beauty influencer" refers to an aesthetic specialist who imparts knowledge on topics related to enhancement of life, health, style, and beautification practises (Tran et al., 2020). A beauty influencer frequently enters into business agreements with beauty brands that pay them to promote their product(s). By the term beauty, we are not to limit our understanding on beauty influencer. A beauty influencer is not only a female and male influencer, but third gender person can also be seen endorsing and creating content on personal care and beauty (Chen & Kanai, 2022).

e. HEALTH INFLUENCERS

Social media influencers who specialise in topics related to health are known as “health influencers” (Zou et al., 2021). They provide health related information to general public online and offline. Health influencers have a special role in health education and communication because they spread health messages, evoke strong emotions, and help people change their behaviour (Albalawi & Sixsmith, 2017). Additionally, this time period is the era of health consumerism, where consumers are primarily responsible for achieving and maintaining personal health. To improve their health, people are investing in related goods and services that ensure them a good health. Combining with health influencers, fitness influencers are also being admired by health-conscious people. Fitness influencers are those who showcase their bodies, feature online exercise, workouts, and healthy tips to their followers (Sokolova & Perez, 2021).

5.4 THEORIES ASSOCIATED FOR INFLUENCER MARKETING.

The theoretical background of IM campaign run by companies through SMIs and their impact on Purchase Intention can be linked to different psychological and marketing theories. Influencer marketing is the practice of using influencers to spread information about a company's products among its audience (Brown & Hayes, 2008). The theories are explain below-

a. Social Exchange Theory:

According to Social exchange theory, human behaviour is the "exchange of activity, tangible or intangible, more or less costly, between at least two people" (Homans, 1958). Therefore, when an influencer uploads useful, entertaining, and appealing content online as part of IM campaigns and as a reward the followers express their gratitude and satisfaction by engaging in actions through liking, sharing, commenting, and subscribing. Thus, when an influencer shares information dominantly, the other partner becomes dependable on the interaction.

b. Source Credibility Theory: The source credibility theory, explains that the acceptance of information by the audience is based on the qualities of a source or communicator such as expertise and trustworthiness (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Thus, communicator's positive credibility can affect the message's acceptance by others (Ohanian, 1990). The source-credibility model examines factors that influence the communicator's perceived credibility. According to Ohanian, (1990), the main factors influencing people's perceptions of source credibility are expertise, trustworthiness, and physical attractiveness. The level of expertise denotes the extent to which the endorser is perceived to be a reliable source of information, whereas trustworthiness denotes the endorser's perceived honesty, credibility, and integrity.

c. Source Attractiveness Theory: Source attractiveness theory, explains that communicator can be judged by audience based on their physical attractiveness they posit during the communication (Mc GUIRE, 1968).

d. Social Learning Theory: The social learning theory conceptualized by (Bandura & Walters, 1977) has been widely applied in communication and advertisement research. This theory serves as a theoretical framework regarding socialization factors that forecast consumption behaviours. According to this theory, individuals receive motivation from a social agent through direct or indirect social communication, which leads to exceptional positive attitudes. This theory is applicable in marketing studies to understand consumers' consumption patterns when they interact with a variety of social agents, such as friends, family members, and celebrities. Since SMIs are the social agents who can influence follower's attitudes and decision-making through social media platforms, the social learning theory provides a basis for understanding the effects of influencers on consumer PI (Zafar et al., 2021).

e. Cognitive Dissonance Theory: Cognitive dissonance theory, explains that people experience mental discomfort if they have two inconsistent beliefs or act in a way that is inconsistent with their beliefs (Festinger, 1962). This unsettling sensation makes people feel under pressure to get out of it, whether by altering one of their dissonant cognitions (beliefs or attitudes) or their behaviours. Thus, when exposed to SMIs, customers experience two cognitions, whether to accept or reject the information. All these theories provide a basis to understand SMIs.

f. Signalling Theory: According to signalling theory, customers can decide whether and how to interpret a signal it receives from another party to learn more about the sender's characteristics that cannot be directly evaluated. Signals are especially important in consumer contexts where consumers are unable to evaluate the quality of a product prior to purchase. In these circumstances, a retailer or brands may give indications to customers to help them feel less uncertain about the quality of the products they are purchasing. The signalling theory is particularly useful for explaining consumer behaviour in online settings.

g. Social Adaptation Theory: According to social adaptation theory, brand endorsers will be seen as reliable sources of new information if their personalities seem to fit the promoted brand image. For example, consumers should be able to find reliable information about products from attractive celebrities because they may think that using the product will make them appear more attractive. The social adaptation theory applies cognitive development concepts like attitude change and the effectiveness of advertising.

h. Attributional Theory: According to attributional theory, when an endorser promotes a suitable brand, consumers may think that the endorser is internally rather than externally motivated. Customers ought to believe that brand-congruent endorsers are promoting the product because they enjoy using it or because they believe in it, not because they are under

contract to do so or because they are paid for doing so.

5.5 IS MARKETING THROUGH SMIs EFFECTIVE?

The rapid growth of technological advancement has resulted in the rise of consumers, who wants higher convenience, value, and options to satisfy their needs. Since the previous five years, the number of social media platforms and users has doubled, and this expansion is posing a new marketing challenge. To meet this new marketing challenge, brands are trying to upgrade their advertisement strategies to reach vast audiences at a low cost. Marketers are focusing on collaborating with SMIs to endorse their products on different social media platforms (like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Twitter). This in return helps a marketer to increase their Return on Investment. This new strategy is helping both brands as well as SMIs. This marketing strategy has proven successful in other regions (Audrezet & Charry, 2019). IM has also improved companies' financial performance (Vrontis et al., 2021). Companies are making \$5.2 ROI for every \$1 spent on IM. Marketers have raised their proportion of the total marketing budget by allocating more funds to social media and digital marketing while decreasing expenditures on traditional forms of advertising such as television and print media.

Influencer marketing is a type of marketing where influential people are used to influence consumers' awareness of a brand and/or their decision to buy. Influencer marketing primarily impresses potential customers. According to the findings of Djafarova & Trofimenko, (2019), original SMIs have a more favourable impact on consumers' purchase intentions than non-original SMIs. Lim et al., (2017) found that consumers' perceptions of brands are negatively affected by influencers who lack expertise to support a given product, which results in less favourable purchase intentions. Influencers in the fields of beauty and fashion are frequently well-known and have a significant impact on consumer attitudes and behaviour (Phua et al., 2017).

Study by (Xu (Rinka) & Pratt, 2018) reveals that SMI who promoted destination positively influenced visit intention of the travellers. (Osei-Frimpong et al., 2019) found that a celebrity endorser who has attributes like attractiveness, trustworthiness and familiarity has positive influence on consumer perception of quality, purchase intention and loyalty towards the endorsed brands. A study by AlFarraj et al., (2021) on dimensions of SMI namely-attractive and expertise positively impact PI of consumer for aesthetic dermatology in Jordan. Wachyuni et al., (2021) found that food blogger acting as influencer influences brand image and purchase decision of a customer. Lokithasan et al., (2019) in their study found that gender of the influencer endorsing the brand also impact purchase behaviour of youths. Thus, empirical studies from various parts of the world reveals the result of influencer marketing effectiveness.

Table No 2. Review of Literature

Author	Country	Objectives	SMIs characteristics	Major Findings
(Magno & Cassia, 2018)	Italy	To examine impact of SMIs as blogger on behavioural intention of tourism.	Information Quality, Bloggers Trustworthiness.	Finding reveals that follower's intention to travel suggestions depends on bloggers trustworthiness and information.
(NUGRAHA & SETYANTO, 2018)	Indonesia	To examine the effect of vlogger credibility YouTube on brand awareness to purchase intention.	Celebrity Credibility, Celebrity Attractiveness, Celebrity Expertise.	Celebrity credibility, attractiveness, expertise positively impacts purchase intention through Brand Awareness.
(Lou & Yuan, 2019)	United States	To understand the mechanism by which influencer marketing affects consumer purchase intention.	Informative value, Entertainment value, Expertise, Trustworthiness, Attractiveness, and Similarity.	Finding reveals that Informative value, trustworthiness, attractiveness, and similarity positively effect brand awareness and Purchase intention.
(Gayathri & Anwar, 2019)	India	To examine consumers' perception of the credibility of SMIs influencers and their impact on PI.	Expertise, Trustworthiness, and Attractiveness.	The credibility factors (expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness) of the influencer positively impact consumer PI.
(Saima & Khan, 2020)	India	To identify the effect of various attributes of SMIs on purchase intention.	Expertise, Trustworthiness, Likability, Information Quality, and Entertainment value.	Trustworthiness, information quality, and entertainment value have significant direct effects on the credibility of influencers as well as significant indirect effects on the PI.
(Suresh et al., 2021)	India	To examine the impact of credibility social media influencers on the behavioural response of the followers.	Trustworthiness, attractiveness, expertise, informativeness, and Entertainment value.	The results identify trustworthiness to be the most important credibility factor for the influencer that influence their behavioural intention.
(Kim & Kim, 2021)	United States	To examine source credibility and attractiveness on PI through trust	Expertise, authenticity, physical attraction and homophily	There is no significant relation between source attractiveness and PI mediating through consumer trust.
(Es-Safi & Sağlam, 2021)	Morocco & Turkey	To determine the predictive effects between influencer characteristics, brand equity, and purchase intention. A	Communication skills, Influence, Authenticity, Expertise.	Only authenticity and communication skill positively effect Brand Equity and PI.
(Özbölük & Akdogan, 2022)	Turkey	To investigate the effect of online source credibility and influencer identification on the consumer purchase decision.	Attractive, Trustworthiness, competence, online self-presentation, and Influencer identification.	The trustworthiness of the influencer affected consumer purchase decisions. However, The attractiveness, competence, and self-presentation of consumers did not affect the purchase decision.
(Al-Sous et al., 2023)	Jordan	To examine the impact of SMIs on consumers' purchasing decisions	Information Quality and trustworthiness.	There is a significant impact of information quality and trustworthiness towards brand attitude and consequently on the Purchase decisions.

6. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study will help brands and organisation identify the right influencers that fits their need. This study provides a variety of practical advice and implications for marketing practitioners. All these proposals have one thing in common: these practitioners need to rethink how they engage in brand interactions with their customers. First, social media has established an environment that allows for more engaging and direct engagement with customers, resulting in a more creative, informal interaction. Thus, it is marketing through SMIs who has direct engagement with niche audience will help brands or organisation to reach its target audience.

Second, brands and organisation should keep in mind while collaborating with influencers who is not a natural fit for the company, and this may result in untrustworthy messages since followers may think the collaboration is solely for business purpose. Influencer should represent his or her credibility to its audience and disclose sponsored partnership.

Third, influencer with different capability and work activities may differ from every influencer. Therefore, the companies must be quite clear about the main goal of their endorsement. For instance, it would be unethical and wrong to ask health influencers to promote fashion products because their actions will not fit.

Fourth, there are numbers of marketing theories to understand consumer behaviour and influencers characteristics. These theories provide the basis for influencer marketing in digital era.

Fifth, influencer marketing campaign through social media influencers has proven successful in other developed nations. Thus, brands and companies in developing countries must adopt the strategy that has already been successful in other nations.

7. CONCLUSION

The use of Social Media Influencers in Influencer Marketing campaign has become crucial in digital era where consumers spend more time in screening. India is witnessing a rise in the popularity of SMI marketing. SMIs have the potential to be used as a marketing strategy in today's era. Thus, brands and companies must adopt or collaborate with influencers that perfectly fit in endorsement activities. The study on this area can be seen increasing because of researcher and academicians started focusing on this topic as well with its demand in market. However, because it is a new concept, the information available is limited. As a result, there is more room for research in this area, such as investigating consumer perceptions of influencer marketing and determining whether right influencer can help or harm consumers' perceptions of a brand in a positive or negative way can also be further examined.

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