COMPARATIVE STUDY

Social media marketing and influencer marketing in digital age – A comparative study

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Social media platforms have revolutionized marketing strategies, providing businesses with unprecedented opportunities to reach and engage with their target audiences. Two prominent marketing techniques that have gained significant popularity are social media marketing and influencer marketing. This comparative study aims to analyze and evaluate the effectiveness, benefits, challenges, and customers associated with these two approaches in the context of the digital age. This comparative study looks at social media marketing on consumer behavior in comparison with influencer marketing. In this study, we came to know that both marketing is preferable because the respondents are using social media marketing, and sometimes their product choice is based on the advertisement. Influencer marketing is also affecting consumer behavior. It is observed that the majority of respondents use digital marketing platforms frequently. Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Snapchat are actively using social media channels and have a powerful impact on people, especially on the young generation.

Keywords: digital marketing, social media, influencer marketing, strategies, respondents

Introduction

Digital media marketing is the strategic use of digital channels to promote products and services to consumers. With the rise of the internet and mobile technology, businesses leverage websites, mobile devices, applications, and search engines to reach their target audiences effectively. This approach enables companies to interact with consumers in real time, offering personalized experiences that drive brand loyalty and sales growth. One of the most significant components of digital marketing is social media marketing, which utilizes platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and TikTok to engage with audiences. While traditional terms such as e-marketing and digital marketing remain dominant in academic circles, social media marketing has gained widespread recognition among industry professionals and researchers. Most social media platforms provide built-in analytics tools, allowing companies to

monitor their ad campaigns, measure engagement, and assess overall effectiveness. Businesses use social media marketing to connect with various stakeholders, including potential customers, employees, journalists, bloggers, and the general public. At a strategic level, this form of marketing involves managing campaigns, governance, defining the marketing scope, and establishing a company's social media presence and tone.

Influencer marketing, a subset of social media marketing, has emerged as a powerful tool for increasing brand visibility and engagement. By collaborating with social media influencers, brands can shape consumer trends and preferences. Influencers hold strong credibility within their niche audiences, making their endorsements highly valuable. This strategy enhances brand awareness, improves customer trust, and generates new leads. Advertising across multiple social media platforms enables businesses to expand their reach, target specific demographics, and build stronger relationships with potential buyers.

Digital media marketing has a significant impact worldwide, with major countries leading the way in innovative marketing strategies. The United States, the United Kingdom, China, India, Germany, and Australia are among the top nations where digital marketing plays a crucial role in business growth. The United States and China are at the forefront of digital advertising and influencer marketing, with companies investing heavily in online promotions. Meanwhile, emerging markets like India and Southeast Asia are rapidly adopting digital marketing strategies due to increasing internet penetration and smartphone usage. As digital media marketing continues to evolve, businesses must stay updated on trends, leverage data-driven insights, and adapt to changing consumer behaviors to maintain a competitive edge in the global market.

Literature review

Krishna Veni and R. Venkatesh (1) carried out a research work, "A Study of the Impact of Social Media Marketing on Consumer Behavior in India." It contains social networking, a medium that not only links people around the world but also serves the best for online marketing as well. The unwavering increase in demand and supply is increasing due to the rapid evolution of technology. Due to the evolution of technology, the unremitting increase in supply & demand is growing. With the growth of the internet and an increase in the utilization of smartphones, the time has come to change the conventional way of marketing.

Dhun and Hamendra Kumar Dangi (2) carried out a research work "A study on Influencer marketing: Role of influencer credibility and congruence on brand attitude and e WOM." The paper indicates that expertise, similarity, and congruence have a positive relationship with brand attitude. While expertise, trustworthiness, and similarity

have a positive relationship with users' intention to engage in eWOM. The current study also offers theoretical and managerial implications.

Saravanan Ravi and Sundara Rajan Cholapandiyapuram Rajasekaran (3) carried out a research work, "A study on Perspective of Digital Marketing in Rural Areas: A Literature Review." This study aims to find users who are willing to use digital marketing over traditional marketing. The article is portrays various research, which includes quantitative and qualitative analyses and case studies available in various databases like the Web of Science and Scopus to illustrate for a better understanding of the topic.

Arijit Bhattacharya (4) carried out a research work, "A study on Parasocial Interaction in Social Media Influencer-Based Marketing: An SEM Approach." This study aims to hypothesize and empirically test a conceptual model of parasocial interaction (PSI) with antecedents, outcomes, and the moderating role of gender using a structural modeling approach. The findings of the study, in general, support the extant literature; however, the role of gender produces a contrary result. The research contributes to knowledge creation in PSI in the social media domain. Research implications for both academicians and managers, along with limitations and future directions, are discussed.

Wikipedia (5) provides a foundational overview of *marketing* as a discipline. It explains marketing as a process of creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers, emphasizing not only selling but also relationship management and societal value. This broad definition establishes the context in which both *traditional marketing* and *social media marketing* operate, highlighting how marketing has evolved from a one-way communication tool into a two-way interactive system.

Ocoya (6) contrasts *social media marketing* and *traditional marketing*, underscoring key differences in cost, reach, engagement, and measurement. According to their analysis, traditional marketing—via TV, radio, and print—offers wide audience exposure and credibility but lacks personalization and direct feedback. Social media, on the other hand, is more cost-efficient, allows precise targeting, and enables real-time engagement with consumers. The article stresses that while both methods have strengths, integrating them often yields better results. It also notes the increasing role of digital innovations such as AI and analytics in shaping marketing effectiveness.

Maryville University (7) also compares *social media marketing* with *traditional marketing*, presenting a more educational and student-oriented perspective. It emphasizes that traditional marketing is usually one-directional, focused on broad audiences, and effective for brand awareness, while social media marketing is interactive, personalized, and measurable. Importantly, it highlights that both strategies serve similar end goals—customer engagement and brand growth—but differ in approach, speed of feedback, and

adaptability. Maryville also positions social media as especially relevant to younger, tech-savvy audiences.

Objectives

- To know the perception of respondents towards influencer marketing.
- To find the opinion of consumers towards social media marketing.
- To know the challenges of influencer and social media marketing.
- To compare the opinion towards influencer and social media marketing.

Hypotheses

H_1: Personal profile of the respondents is independent of their opinion on social media marketing.

H_2: There is no relationship between the personal profile and perception of influencer marketing.

H_3: There is no relationship between the perception of consumers towards social media and influencer marketing.

Research methodology

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Secondary data was collected from various websites and journals, while primary data was gathered through a well-structured questionnaire using Google Forms. The sample size consists of 100 respondents from Belthangady Taluk. For data analysis, we employed percentage mode, chi-square test, and t-test. The results are presented in the form of tables for clarity.

Data interpretation and analysis

In this part of the study, the data collected through primary sources is analyzed and interpreted.

The **Table 1** depicts that 68% of respondents are female and the remaining 32% are male. Among them, 9% of respondents are pursuing their re-University courses, 36% of respondents are pursuing undergraduation, and 50% are post-graduates, majority city. 65% of the respondents family income is below ₹1,00,000, 21% is between ₹1,00,000–₹2,50,000 and the remaining falls under more than ₹2,50,000.

Table 2 exhibits that most of the respondents (35%) are frequently using digital market platforms, and 32% are using several times a week, and 12% are using once a month; the remaining are using rarely.

It is a fact from the **Table 3** that 88% of the respondents made purchases based on the influence from advisement. 12% of respondents are not influenced while purchasing.

TABLE 1 | Personal profile of the respondents.

Variable	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	68	68
	Male	32	32
	Total	**100**	**100**
Age	Below 18	3	3
	18–24	78	78
	24–30	13	13
	Above 30	6	6
	Total	**100**	**100**
Education qualification	Pre-University Course (PUC)	9	9
	Under graduation	36	36
	Postgraduation	50	50
	Other	5	5
	Total	**100**	**100**
Family income	Less than 1,00,000	65	65
	1,00,000–2,50,000	21	21
	More than 2,50,000	14	14
	Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data.

TABLE 2 | Usage frequency of digital marketing platforms.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Frequently	35	35
Several times a week	32	32
Once a month	12	12
Rarely	21	21
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data.

TABLE 3 | Do social conversation influence your product choice?

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	88	88
No	12	12
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data.

From the **Table 4**, it is observed that 78% of respondents are actively using Instagram, followed by WhatsApp (77%) and Snapchat (32%).

From **Table 5** it is clear that 43% of respondents opined that social media marketing and 14% are purchasing product by influencer and 43% of respondents stated that social media and influencer marketing are both equally effective.

Along with several advantages, we can also see the drawbacks of social media marketing. It is observed that a trust issue (45%) is one of the major issues of social media marketing. Information overload (28%) and privacy

TABLE 4 | Actively using social media channel.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Instagram	78	78
Facebook	20	20
Pinterest	11	11
LinkedIn	15	15
Snapchat	32	32
WhatsApp	77	77

Source: Primary data.

TABLE 5 | Preferable marketing channel.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social media marketing	43	43
Influencer marketing	14	14
Both are equally preferable	43	43
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data.

TABLE 6 | Challenges face while using social media marketing.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Trust issues	45	45
Information overload	28	28
Privacy concerns	43	43
Difficulties in measuring effectiveness	31	31

Source: Primary data.

TABLE 7 | Challenges of influencer marketing.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Finding right influencer	27	27
Influencer fraud and fake followers	26	26
Misleading information	36	36
Risk of negative publicity	11	11
Total	**100**	**100**

Source: Primary data.

concerns (43%) also have an impact on social media marketing. It is found that difficulty in measuring the effectiveness and return on investment (31%) is another drawback of social media marketing (**Table 6**).

There are many advantages, but also, we can see some challenges of influencer marketing. It is observed that misleading information (36%) is the major problem. Finding the right influencer (27%) and fraud and fake followers (26%) also have an issue in influencer marketing (**Table 7**).

It is crystal clear from the **Table 8** that 67% of the respondent's positive customer reviews and 31% of the

TABLE 8 | Factors that make social media influencing.

Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Relevant and personalised content	31	31
Positive customer reviews	67	67
Limited-time offers or discounts	25	25
Influencer endorsements	8	8

Source: Primary data.

TABLE 9 | Descriptive statistics of social media marketing opinions.

Questions	Mode	Standard deviation	Standard error
Social media marketing helps build brand awareness and recognition.	4	0.6050	0.0605
Social media marketing positively influences my purchasing decisions.	4	0.6664	0.0666
I find social media content from brands to be engaging and relevant.	4	0.6667	0.0667
Social media marketing helps me discover new products or services.	4	0.7067	0.0707
Social media marketing campaigns have a significant impact on shaping popular trends and preferences.	4	0.6765	0.0677
I enjoy engaging with brand content on social media platforms.	4	0.7688	0.0769
Social media marketing is an essential component of a successful digital marketing strategy.	4	0.6709	0.0671
I feel more connected to a brand when it has an active social media presence.	4	0.6884	0.0688
Social media marketing campaigns are more memorable compared to traditional advertising campaigns.	4	0.7447	0.0745
Social media marketing helps foster customer engagement and interaction.	4	0.6618	0.0662

Source: Primary data.

respondents are relevant and personalized content are factors that make social media influencing.

We have used Liker's five point scale to collect the data about the opinions of the respondents. Five indicate strongly agree, and one indicates strongly disagree. **Table 9** shows that the mode value is 4 for all the statements. Hence, it could be concluded that the respondents have favorable opinions on social media marketing.

We have used Likert's five-point scale was used to collect the data about the opinions of the respondents. Five indicate strongly agree, and one indicates strongly disagree. **Table 10** shows that the mode value is 4 for all the statements. Hence, it could be concluded that the respondents have favorable opinions on influencer marketing.

Table 11 reveals that all of the calculated statistics are lesser than the critical value or insignificant at a 5% level of significance; we have to accept the null hypothesis

TABLE 10 | Descriptive statistics of influencer marketing opinions.

Questions	Mode	Standard deviation	Standard error
Influencer marketing is an effective strategy for increasing brand visibility.	4	0.7749	0.0775
Influencer marketing helps build credibility and trust for a brand.	4	0.7961	0.0796
Influencer marketing positively influences my purchasing decisions.	4	0.7849	0.0785
Influencer marketing has a significant impact on shaping popular trends and preferences.	4	0.8221	0.0822
I enjoy engaging with influencer-sponsored content on social media.	4	0.7720	0.0772
Influencer marketing is a reliable source of product recommendations and reviews.	4	0.8406	0.0841
Influencer marketing campaigns are more memorable compared to traditional advertising campaigns.	4	0.8572	0.0857
I trust influencers to provide honest opinions about products or services.	4	0.8409	0.0841
Influencer marketing has a positive impact on brand loyalty.	4	0.7437	0.0744
Influencer marketing is an effective way to reach niche audiences.	4	0.8278	0.0828

Source: Primary data.

and conclude that the personal profile of the respondents is independent of their opinion and perception of social media marketing.

Table 12 reveals that all of the calculated statistics are less than the critical value or insignificant at a 5% level of significance; we have to accept the null hypothesis and conclude that the personal profile of the respondents is independent of their opinion and perception of influencer marketing.

In Table 13 we applied a t-test to compare the opinion of respondents regarding social media marketing and influencer marketing. Here the P-value is 0.147, which is less than the significance value. So here we accepted the null hypothesis and concluded that there is no relationship between the perception of consumers towards social media marketing.

We applied the correlation technique to find out the correlation between consumers opinions towards social media marketing and influencer marketing. We found that there is a high positive correlation between social media marketing and influencer marketing. So, respondents' preferences towards social media marketing and influencer marketing have a high positive correlation (Table 14).

TABLE 11 | Chi square values.

Question	Gender	Age	Education qualification	Family income
Social media marketing helps build brand awareness and recognition.	3.936	4.97	10.587	3.657
Social media marketing positively influences my purchasing decisions.	0.454	7.059	5.157	7.847
I find social media content from brands to be engaging and relevant.	1.884	3.55	5.842	3.499
Social media marketing helps me discover new products or services.	6.207	6.076	7.476	11.703
Social media marketing campaigns have a significant impact on shaping popular trends and preferences.	2.664	4.371	1.318	1.542
I enjoy engaging with brand content on social media platforms.	3.683	12.287	6.609	10.919
Social media marketing is an essential component of a successful digital marketing strategy.	3.161	2.343	8.812	5.681
I feel more connected to a brand when it has an active social media presence.	1.606	4.681	5.712	1.656
Social media marketing campaigns are more memorable compared to traditional advertising campaigns.	4.651	10.392	11.76	9.128
Social media marketing helps foster customer engagement and interaction.	5.047	11.751	13.371	6.303

Source: Authorised Compilation. *significant at 5%.

Findings

- It is found that the majority of respondents are female (68%).
- It is clear from the study that 67% of respondents belong to the age group of 18–24, followed by the 24–30 age group.
- Most of the respondents are qualified postgraduation (50%), and 65% of the respondents have a family income of less than 1,00,000
- Among 100 respondents, 88% of respondents are social conversation influence on their product choice.

TABLE 12 | Chi-square values.

Question	Gender	Age	Education qualification	Family income
Influencer marketing is an effective strategy for increasing brand visibility.	5.056	33.196*	24.255*	9.965
Influencer marketing helps build credibility and trust for a brand.	4.85	31.319*	12.917	15.33
Influencer marketing positively influences my purchasing decisions.	4.114	30.998*	18.033	7.061
Influencer marketing has a significant impact on shaping popular trends and preferences.	8.271	24.942*	12.628	9.524
I enjoy engaging with influencer-sponsored content on social media.	5.18	37.636*	18.601	12.828
Influencer marketing is a reliable source of product recommendations and reviews.	8.884	20.259	29.011*	11.68
Influencer marketing campaigns are more memorable compared to traditional advertising campaigns.	2.996	28.872*	9.919	10.195
I trust influencers to provide honest opinions about products or services.	1.483	27.158*	15.45	9.1
Influencer marketing has a positive impact on brand loyalty.	4.54	34.772*	17.193	4.13
Influencer marketing is an effective way to reach niche audiences.	3.736	27.436*	16.455	10.147

Source: Authors Compilation. *significance at 5%.

TABLE 13 | t-test: Paired two samples for means.

Paired differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Mean	Std. deviation	Std. error Mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
			Lower	Upper			
0.0770	0.5263	0.0526	−0.0274	0.1814	1.463	99	0.147

Source: Authors compilation.

TABLE 14 | Correlation between consumers' perception towards social media marketing and influencer marketing.

	Social media marketing	Influencer marketing
Social media marketing	1	
Influencer marketing	0.62664	1

Source: Authors compilation.

- It is observed that the majority of respondents use digital marketing platforms frequently. Instagram, WhatsApp, and Snapchat are actively using social media channels.
- It is found that both marketing strategies are preferable.
- Trust issues and misleading information are major challenges in social media marketing and influencer marketing.
- After applying the chi-square test for the Likert scale question, we came to know that the personal profile of the respondents is independent of their opinion and perception of social media marketing and influencer marketing.
- We found that the effectiveness of hybrid marketing strategies, consumer trust and perception, measuring return on investment (ROI) and campaign performance, niche and micro-influencer marketing, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation in digital marketing, cultural and regional differences, ethical and regulatory challenges, and future social media platforms and marketing trends are key areas of interest. Further research in this field is expected to explore these topics in greater depth.

Conclusion

In conclusion, both social media marketing and influencer marketing are viable and effective strategies for businesses to consider. They have their own unique benefits and can be used in combination to maximize results. The purpose of this study was to the comparison between social media marketing and influencer marketing on consumer behavior. Through various questions, we collected valuable insights from participants about their perceptions. The results suggest that these days people are using more digital marketing, so we come to know that social media marketing and influencer marketing are equally effective on consumer behavior. But there are some challenges like misleading information and trust issues, so businesses should focus on that. Social media marketing allows businesses to reach a wide audience through various platforms. It provides the opportunity to engage with a large number of users and build brand awareness. Influencer marketing, on the other hand, leverages the existing followers and influence of popular individuals to reach a targeted audience, resulting in more personalized and niche exposure.

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