

A Study on Effects of Social Media Influence to Bring Customer Value in E-Commerce

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Abstract- Rapid digitalisation has repositioned social media from a space for interpersonal exchange into a decisive arena where commercial transactions are negotiated, product reputations are built or destroyed, and consumer judgements are formed — often within seconds of encountering curated content. This article reports findings from a questionnaire-based empirical inquiry involving two hundred participants drawn from the population of digitally active online shoppers. The study probes the mechanisms through which platform-mediated signals influencer endorsements, peer ratings, algorithmic personalisation, and authenticity guarantees — translate into perceived customer worth across four evaluative dimensions: utility, affect, social esteem, and knowledge. Quantitative findings disclose several tensions that define today's digital marketplace. Although a substantial cohort of respondents describe themselves as alert to the prevalence of counterfeit merchandise, more than half concede vulnerability to cleverly staged false promotions, exposing a critical gap between declarative awareness and actual behavioural immunity. Simultaneously, seven in ten respondents hold brands directly culpable whenever an influencer they partner with engages in deceptive conduct — a 'relational liability' that transforms individual creator misconduct into an enterprise-level reputational risk. The study concludes that genuine, long-lasting value delivery in digital retail demands far more than persuasive content; it requires an enforceable ecosystem of ethical creator standards, platform verification infrastructure, and regulatory vigilance.

Keywords: Digital Consumer Behaviour, Influencer Accountability, E-Commerce Trust, Perceived Product Value, Social Proof, Counterfeit Detection, Online Purchase Intention, Transparency Regulation, User-Generated Content

I. INTRODUCTION

Few transformations in modern commerce have been as swift or as structurally significant as the colonisation of consumer decision-making by social media. What began as networks designed primarily for peer socialisation have matured into layered commercial ecosystems in which brand narratives, product discovery, price comparison, peer testimony, and — crucially — influencer advocacy converge into a single, algorithmically orchestrated experience. The upshot is a marketplace characterised by extraordinary information richness alongside extraordinary information risk.

At the heart of this transformation lies a reconceptualization of how value is perceived and assigned by buyers. Classical economic models treated value as an objective ratio of quality to price. Contemporary marketing scholarship, however, recognises that the worth a consumer attaches to a product or service is a multidimensional, socially mediated, and often emotionally inflected construction. When this construction occurs predominantly through social media touchpoints, it becomes vulnerable to forces that prioritise spectacle over substance: fabricated popularity metrics, undisclosed sponsored content, and the viral spread of misleading product claims.

The catalyst for this investigation is the observable expansion of two parallel phenomena: the demonstrable commercial power of creator-led marketing, and the equally demonstrable growth of fraud, counterfeiting, and consumer harm facilitated by precisely those same channels. Understanding how these opposing forces interact — and what

moderates consumer resilience against the latter — carries immediate relevance for practitioners, platform architects, policymakers, and end consumers alike. This article is organised to move from foundational conceptual grounding, through methodological transparency, to empirical findings, and finally toward a synthesised set of conclusions with practical resonance.

1.1 Research Objectives

The inquiry is structured around the following investigative aims:

- Evaluate how exposure to social media content modifies the perceived worth consumers derive from digital retail interactions.
- Determine the extent to which creator credibility, disclosure conduct, and content authenticity predict levels of consumer confidence.
- Quantify the behavioural consequence of deceptive promotional content on brand-level trust.
- Map the relationship between self-reported counterfeit awareness and actual self-reported susceptibility to fake promotions.
- Establish consumer appetite for institutional safeguards such as verified seller programmes and regulatory frameworks governing influencer advertising.

II. STUDY AREA

The terrain examined here sits at the junction of three expanding fields: digital marketing, consumer psychology, and platform governance. Geographically, the investigation is anchored in the Indian digital economy — an environment where the convergence of mass smartphone adoption, subsidised mobile data, and a predominantly youthful internet population has produced one of the world's most dynamic arenas for influencer-led commerce. India's e-commerce sector has experienced compound growth over successive years, with social media functioning both as a primary product discovery channel and as the principal medium through which seller credibility is tested.

The conceptual scaffolding of the study draws on Perceived Value Theory, which establishes that

buyers weigh anticipated gains against anticipated sacrifices — and that this calculation is not performed in a social vacuum but is actively shaped by reference groups, media narratives, and opinion leaders. Layered upon this foundation is the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, which reframes value not as something embedded in a product by its manufacturer but as something co-generated through the ongoing interaction between producers, intermediaries, and consumers. In the social media context, this co-generation involves brands, creators, platform algorithms, and the aggregated voice of peer reviewers simultaneously.

From the field of social psychology, the study draws on Social Proof Theory, which explains why aggregate approval signals — view counts, follower tallies, comment volumes — carry persuasive weight disproportionate to their informational content. The Elaboration Likelihood Model further illuminates why peripheral cues (an influencer's charisma, visual production quality, platform prestige) frequently bypass the deliberative evaluation processes that consumers would ordinarily apply to high-stakes purchasing decisions.

Six distinct value dimensions organise the analytical lens through which survey data is interpreted. Utility value encompasses the tangible functional performance a buyer anticipates from a product. Affective value captures the emotional landscape generated by the purchase experience — trust, excitement, reassurance, or disappointment. Social value reflects the identity-reinforcing dimension of consumption, wherein owning or using a product signals membership in desirable communities. Informational value arises when the content encountered genuinely equips the consumer to make a well-calibrated choice. Economic value relates to perceived financial advantage. Finally, experiential value maps the holistic quality of the end-to-end digital shopping journey. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive vocabulary for diagnosing where social media succeeds — and where it fails — as an instrument of consumer value creation.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Study Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional quantitative design was adopted. This framework is epistemologically appropriate when the research goal is to characterise the distribution of attitudes and behaviours across a defined population at a particular moment, without manipulating variables or tracking change over time. The approach generates statistically summarisable, comparable data while maintaining the scalability required to reach a population as geographically dispersed as digitally active Indian consumers.

3.2 Instrument and Data Gathering

The primary measurement tool was a structured questionnaire hosted on Google Forms. Items employed five-point Likert rating scales, ranked-frequency options, and binary response formats. The questionnaire was designed to capture five thematic clusters: social media usage patterns prior to online purchases; influencer trust, authenticity perceptions, and disclosure awareness; experiences with counterfeit or substandard goods; evaluations of platform verification mechanisms; and perceived dimensions of product value derived from digital channels. Before deployment, the instrument underwent a pre-testing phase to identify ambiguous wording and to verify that response time was within an acceptable range for voluntary participation.

Secondary material — encompassing peer-reviewed articles, conference proceedings, marketing industry reports, and e-commerce white papers sourced through academic databases — supplied the theoretical grounding and contextual backdrop against which primary findings are interpreted.

3.3 Participants and Sampling

Two hundred individuals completed the survey. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling conducted via digital channels, targeting persons who self-identified as regular social media users who had completed at least one online purchase within the preceding six months. The sample is composed predominantly of respondents below the age of twenty-five (73.5%), with the majority being economically inactive students (55.5%). Male respondents outnumber female respondents at a ratio

of approximately 72:28. These demographic features reflect the profile of the most intensive social media and e-commerce user segments in India but simultaneously constrain the direct transferability of findings to older or economically active cohorts. All limitations arising from this sampling strategy are acknowledged in the concluding section.

3.4 Analytical Approach

Frequency distribution and percentage analysis were the primary statistical techniques applied. These methods convert raw response tallies into proportional representations that permit direct comparison across question items and demographic subgroups. The interpretive layer moves beyond mechanical description by situating proportional findings within the theoretical frameworks outlined in the preceding section, enabling inferences about underlying attitudinal and behavioural dynamics rather than merely cataloguing response frequencies.

IV. RESULTS: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Analysis I — The Awareness-Susceptibility Paradox in Counterfeit Detection

A recurring theme in digital consumer research is the assumption that greater knowledge about online fraud translates directly into superior self-protection. The present data complicates this assumption through a revealing internal contradiction. When queried about their self-rated familiarity with the existence of counterfeit merchandise circulating online, respondents distributed across awareness levels as follows:

Table 4.1: Self-Reported Awareness Level of Counterfeit Products Online (n = 200)

Awareness Category	Respondents (n)	Share (%)
Very Low	20	10.0
Low	28	14.0
Moderate	57	28.5

High	51	25.5
Very High	44	22.0
Total	200	100.0

personas. These mechanisms operate below the threshold of conscious scepticism, bypassing the very cognitive vigilance that consumers believe they possess. The practical implication is significant — literacy campaigns that stop at informing consumers about the existence of counterfeits are insufficient. Effective intervention must target the specific psychological levers that fake promotions exploit, equipping individuals not merely with knowledge but with habitual verification behaviours.

Level of awareness regarding counterfeit or fake products online.
 200 responses

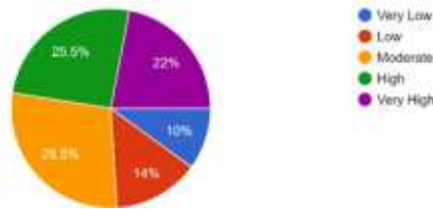


Fig:4.1.1

Cumulatively, almost half the cohort — 47.5% — characterises its counterfeit awareness as either high or very high. A further 28.5% occupies a moderate band, leaving only 24% at the low or very low end of the scale. Taken in isolation, these figures might suggest a well-equipped consumer base capable of navigating a market riddled with deceptive offerings.

The picture fractures, however, when these figures are read alongside the respondents' answers to a separate item inquiring about susceptibility to fake promotional content. On that item, 51.5% acknowledged that deceptive marketing campaigns are likely or highly likely to sway their purchase choices — a proportion that substantially exceeds the 24% who reported low counterfeit awareness. In other words, the majority of those who regard themselves as knowledgeable are simultaneously confirming behavioural vulnerability. This divergence between professed alertness and reported susceptibility constitutes what might be termed an awareness-susceptibility paradox.

The explanation likely lies in the mechanics of persuasion architecture deployed by sophisticated fake promotions: curated aesthetics, artificially amplified engagement metrics, time-pressure offers, and the emotional credibility lent by familiar creator

Table 4.2: Awareness of Verified Seller Badge Checking as a Pre-Purchase Measure (n = 200)

Awareness Category	Respondents (n)	Share (%)
Very Low	24	12.0
Low	26	13.0
Moderate	61	30.5
High	43	21.5
Very High	46	23.0
Total	200	100.0

Rate how much transparent product details affect your trust in online sellers.
 200 responses

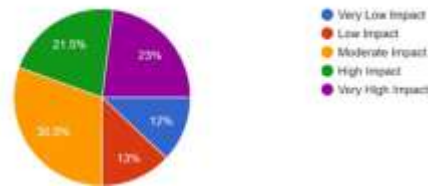


Fig:4.2.1

Complementing the above, Table 5.2 tracks how actively respondents engage with platform-level credentialing tools — specifically, the practice of verifying whether a seller carries an official badge of authentication before proceeding with a transaction. Here, 44.5% of participants report high or very high engagement with this practice, and an additional 30.5% do so with moderate regularity. Nearly 47.5%,

however, remain inconsistent or largely unaware of this safeguard.

These two data sets together frame a dual deficit: consumers may recognise that counterfeits exist but have not uniformly translated that recognition into systematic use of available protective tools.

The verified badge — an institutional solution designed precisely to close this gap — is still not reaching approximately half the market in a meaningful way. This finding argues for platforms to redesign the prominence and accessibility of verification signals rather than treating them as supplementary features buried within product listing pages.

4.2 Analysis II — Influencer Power and the Architecture of Brand Trust Erosion

The second strand of analysis addresses the dual nature of influencer marketing — its capacity to amplify consumer confidence when exercised ethically, and its capacity to inflict structural damage on brand equity when it is not. Two tables illuminate this duality from opposite angles.

Table 4.3: Perceived Extent of Influencer Impact on Individual Buying Decisions (n = 200)

Response Scale	Respondents (n)	Share (%)
Strongly Disagree — No Impact (1)	9	4.5
Disagree — Minimal Impact (2)	18	9.0
Neutral — Moderate Impact (3)	47	23.5
Agree — Considerable Impact (4)	53	26.5
Agree — Very High Impact (5)	73	36.5
Total	200	100.0



Fig:4.3.1

The numbers in Table 5.3 confirm the continued dominance of creator-led content as a behavioural lever. Aggregating the two highest ratings on the five-point scale yields 63% of respondents who regard influencer recommendations as carrying considerable to very high weight in their purchase deliberations. Adding those positioned at the midpoint produces an aggregate of 86.5% for whom creator content exerts at least some measurable pull — a penetration figure that most conventional advertising channels would struggle to approach.

Why does influencer content exercise such disproportionate influence? The literature on parasocial interaction offers a compelling account: regular, intimate-feeling exposure to a creator generates a sense of familiarity and personal connection that primes audiences to assign the creator the trust ordinarily reserved for real-life acquaintances. Recommendations delivered within this relational frame are processed not as commercial propositions but as personal advice, bypassing the scepticism that listeners routinely apply to branded messaging. For marketers, this represents a formidable asset. It also represents a formidable ethical responsibility.

Table 4.4: Whether Deceptive Influencer Content Damages Associated Brand Reputation (n = 200)

Consumer Position	Respondents (n)	Share (%)
Yes — Trust in Brand Is Reduced	152	76.0
Brand Trust Remains Unaffected	48	24.0
Total	200	100.0

Misleading influencer promotions reduce my trust in brands.
200 responses

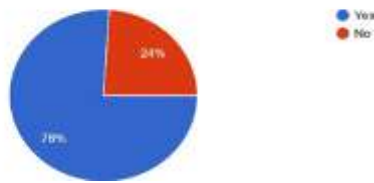


Fig:4.4.1

Table 5.4 discloses the severity of the downside risk that brands absorb when their creator partners act irresponsibly. Three-quarters of respondents — 76% — confirm that encountering deceptive content from an influencer translates directly into diminished trust toward the brand being promoted. The causal mechanism at work here is one of moral contagion: when an influencer deceives, the brand that hired and directed the promotional arrangement is held co-responsible. Consumers appear unwilling to partition the relationship into 'creator misconduct' and 'brand innocence'; instead, they apply a unified accountability framework in which the decision to partner with a particular creator is itself a reputational statement.

This finding redefines the risk calculus of influencer marketing. The conventional view treats influencer selection primarily as an audience-matching exercise — identifying creators whose followers align with the target demographic. The present data argues that selection must be equally rigorous as an ethical due-diligence exercise. A creator's history of transparency, disclosure habits, and past promotional conduct carry reputational stakes for the partnering brand that rival any considerations of reach or engagement rate. One compromised campaign, the data suggests, is sufficient to trigger trust withdrawal that extends well beyond the immediate transaction.

Further strengthening the case for oversight, a separate survey item revealed that 68.5% of respondents actively support the introduction of stricter regulatory controls on influencer advertising — one of the strongest consensual positions recorded across the entire questionnaire. This level of public endorsement for institutional intervention signals that the era of self-regulatory sufficiency in creator marketing is drawing to a close, and that formal

accountability structures are not merely desirable but expected by the very consumers these markets serve.

Findings and Suggestions

The survey of 200 digitally active online shoppers in India produced four key findings directly tied to the study's objectives. First, an awareness-susceptibility paradox was identified: 47.5% of respondents rated their counterfeit awareness as high or very high (Table 5.1), yet 51.5% simultaneously acknowledged susceptibility to deceptive promotional content. This contradiction reveals that knowing counterfeits exist does not protect consumers from falling victim to them, as sophisticated fake promotions exploit psychological mechanisms — curated aesthetics, inflated engagement metrics, and time-pressure tactics — that operate beneath the level of conscious scepticism. Second, platform verification tools are significantly underutilised: nearly 47.5% of respondents showed inconsistent or minimal use of verified seller badges (Table 5.2), indicating that institutional safeguards built into e-commerce platforms have not been adopted as routine pre-purchase behaviour by a substantial portion of the consumer base. Third, influencer content exerts commanding influence over purchase decisions, with 63% of respondents assigning creator recommendations considerable to very high weight (Table 5.3), a finding consistent with parasocial interaction theory whereby audiences process endorsements as trusted personal advice rather than commercial messaging. Fourth, brand equity is directly exposed to influencer misconduct: 76% of respondents confirmed reduced brand trust after encountering deceptive influencer content (Table 5.4), demonstrating that consumers hold brands morally co-responsible for their creator partners' conduct.

Based on these findings, four suggestions are advanced. For consumers, digital literacy programmes must move beyond awareness campaigns and actively cultivate habitual verification behaviours — including cross-platform review consultation, seller credential checking, and scrutiny of anomalous pricing — since knowledge alone demonstrably fails to close the susceptibility gap. For platform operators, verified seller badges and authentication signals must be repositioned as

prominent, default elements of the purchase journey rather than optional features buried in product listings; the nearly 47.5% who currently overlook these tools represent a preventable vulnerability. For brands and creators, influencer selection must be conducted as a rigorous ethical due-diligence process, not merely an audience-matching exercise; the 76% brand liability finding confirms that one compromised creator partnership is sufficient to erode trust accumulated over numerous campaigns. For regulatory bodies, the 68.5% consumer endorsement for stricter regulatory controls on influencer advertising — the strongest consensual position in the entire questionnaire — signals a clear mandate for formalised disclosure standards, enforceable penalties for non-compliance, and algorithmic accountability measures targeting deceptive listings on major platforms.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study engage directly with the theoretical frameworks established in the Study Area and carry substantive implications across consumer behaviour, brand management, platform design, and regulatory policy. The awareness-susceptibility paradox resonates strongly with the Elaboration Likelihood Model, which explains how peripheral cues — an influencer's visual production quality, platform prestige, and follower volume — systematically bypass the deliberative evaluation processes that consumers would ordinarily apply to high-stakes purchase decisions. When Social Proof Theory is layered on top of this, the amplifying effect of artificially inflated engagement metrics becomes clear: consumers interpret mass approval as a reliable quality signal, even when that approval has been manufactured. Together, these mechanisms explain why awareness-level knowledge fails to translate into behavioural protection, and why deceptive promotions retain potency among an audience that intellectually knows better.

The underutilisation of verified seller badges illuminates a failure in the co-generation of value as described by Service-Dominant Logic. Value in social media-driven commerce is not embedded in a product alone; it is produced through the ongoing interaction of brands, creators, platform algorithms,

and peer reviewers. When platforms deploy verification mechanisms without ensuring their visibility and accessibility within the standard purchase flow, they withdraw from their role as active co-generators of consumer protection. The result — half the market bypassing a readily available safeguard — is not a consumer failure but a design failure, and one that platforms operating in the Indian digital economy must address given the scale and pace of e-commerce growth documented in the Study Area.

The 76% brand liability finding redefines the risk calculus of influencer marketing in a manner that the existing literature has not fully captured. Conventional influencer selection frameworks prioritise audience alignment — matching follower demographics to target consumer profiles. This study argues that such frameworks are incomplete without an equally rigorous ethical audit of the creator's disclosure history, promotional transparency, and past conduct. The mechanism of moral contagion observed here, wherein creator dishonesty contaminates associated brand equity, means that the informational and affective value dimensions that social media is capable of generating are fragile: they can be reversed by a single deceptive campaign. Furthermore, the 68.5% demand for formal regulatory intervention reflects a maturation of consumer expectations in India's digital marketplace — one that surpasses the tolerance for industry self-regulation that has characterised influencer marketing governance to date. This study therefore contributes empirical grounding to the policy case for mandatory disclosure standards, verified creator certification programmes, and platform-level algorithmic accountability, all of which are necessary to restore and sustain the conditions under which digital commerce genuinely delivers value across its utility, affective, social, informational, economic, and experiential dimensions.

VI. CONCLUSION

The empirical portrait that emerges from this investigation is one of productive tension. Social media platforms are genuinely powerful engines of consumer value when the content flowing through them is credible, transparently produced, and

responsibly shared. In such conditions, the multiple dimensions of perceived worth — from practical utility to emotional engagement to the informational quality underpinning rational choice — are meaningfully enhanced, and the resulting trust supports confident purchasing behaviour and durable brand relationships.

Yet that same infrastructure is demonstrably exploitable. The data reveals that fake promotions retain considerable potency even among audiences who describe themselves as alert to the problem, that platforms' own authentication mechanisms are underutilised by nearly half the consumer base, and that a single act of creator dishonesty can contaminate brand equity in the minds of three-quarters of those who encounter it. These findings do not invalidate the commercial utility of social media marketing—they reframe the conditions under which that utility is ethically permissible and commercially sustainable.

Three interconnected imperatives emerge from the data. For individual consumers, the priority is converting abstract awareness of online fraud into concrete, habitual verification practices — cross-platform review consultation, seller credential checking, and interrogation of pricing that defies market norms. For creators and the brands that collaborate with them, the imperative is transparency as a foundational operating principle rather than a compliance afterthought: disclosing commercial relationships fully, restricting promotions to personally evaluated products, and accepting that reputational longevity is incompatible with short-term opportunism. For platform operators and regulatory bodies, the evidence endorses a structural escalation of accountability mechanisms — broader deployment and clearer communication of verification tools, algorithmic penalties for detected deceptive listings, and formalised disclosure standards carrying enforceable consequences.

Certain boundary conditions limit the scope of these conclusions. The sample's concentration among younger, economically inactive, male respondents means that the findings describe a specific — if commercially consequential — segment of the broader consumer population. Cross-sectional data

cannot track how individual trust levels evolve following repeated positive or negative marketplace experiences, nor can it distinguish stated behavioural intentions from actual post-click conduct. Future research would benefit from longitudinal tracking, controlled experimental designs, and deliberate oversampling of underrepresented demographic groups. Qualitative methods capable of surfacing the experiential and emotional dimensions of value perception would further enrich this quantitative baseline.

Notwithstanding these qualifications, the study contributes an empirically grounded case for treating ethical practice not as a peripheral consideration in digital commerce but as its structural foundation.

Platforms that sustain the trust of those who use them will retain those users; platforms that allow trust to erode — however profitably in the short term — will ultimately undermine the conditions that make their own business models viable. The same logic applies, with equal force, to every creator and every brand that chooses to operate within them.

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