

Topic: Social Media Influencers: Inspiration or Digital Deception?

Outline

1- Introduction

Thesis Statement: Unfortunately, the social media influencers are using their influence as a digital deception. The rat race for the views, followers, and maximum revenue generation has exchanged the quality content for meaningless content. Thus, lacking the inspirational factor.

2- The Correlation between inspiration and digital deception

3- Social media influencers as agents of digital deception (Thesis)

a) The promotion of fake lifestyle exploits the viewers psychologically.

b) The unabated exhibition of wealth creates the deception of elitism and hooliganism

c) Deception of followers by

creating artificial consumerism !
d) Exploitation of social media
algorithms delude the masses

e) Promotion of "populist culture"
turns people into cult followers

4- Social media influencers as
medium of inspiration (Anti-Thesis)

a) The lavish lifestyle inspires
people "to strive"

b) Exposition of "power structure"
inspires people towards social
change

c) Inspiration for small startups to transform into successful entrepreneurs.

d) Social media influencers as "voice of the voiceless"

e) The pluralist approach upholds democratic norms

5- From deception to the Social evils - social media influencers as digital deceptors (Synthesis)

a) The meaningless content creates "brainrot" community

b) Unequal distribution of wealth
creates social envy

c) Paid shoutouts to sub-standard
products deprives people of their
capitals

d) Distortion of reality ~~makes~~ turns
influencers into agents of fifth
generation warfare

e) Digital deception strengthens

socio-political polarization :

6- Conclusion

During the mid-twentieth century, the **"Limited Paradigm Effect"** of mass media revealed the impact of mass media on the people. The theorists including Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet studied the limited impact of the mass media on the minds of people. The publication entitled **"The People's Voice: How the voter makes up his mind in a presidential campaign"** revealed that the opinion leaders - the people holding influence over the minds of people; have a very limited impact on the decision making power of the people. It was observed that only 5% people changed up their mind after getting influenced by the opinion leaders. But, in the modern world where the inhabitants of the world are connected through internet; the impact of the opinion leaders on people's minds has increased significantly. Now, social media influencers have the a great power to mould the

opinions of the people. Unfortunately, the social media influencers are using their influence as a digital deception. The rat race for the views, followers, and the ^{maximum} revenue generation has exchanged the quality content with for meaningless content. Thus, lacking the inspirational factor. The portrayal of fake lifestyle alongwith wealth exhibition ^{has} created artificial consumerism. The exploitation of ~~any~~ algorithms has created the populist culture. Brain rot, envy, and the exploitation of the naive audiences has made social media influencers as merely predators. They have acted as the agents of political and social polarization. Though, many people argue that the social media influencers inspire people from their rags-to-riches story. They not only expose the power structure of the society and act as a voice of marginalized classes. The upliftment of the democratic norms such as pluralism; makes the influencers a positive inspiration. However, the

deception outweighs the inspiration.

The correlation between the inspiration and digital deception is a complex intermix of personal perception. The new media offers a broad spectrum of choices. The users are independent in ~~determining~~ determining what to watch and where to watch? The vast variety of genres such as beauty, fashion, politics, lifestyle, technology, and entertainment, etc. has changed the dynamics of ~~existing~~ influences holding. Even in ^{the} developed countries like Pakistan about households have the facility of internet with 150 million broadband subscribers. (Source:

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics). It is

a matter of fact that developed countries possess a low literacy rate.

In case of Pakistan, it is about

Thus, the illiterate masses
are ^{more} tend to consume meaningless
content which promotes the digital
deception.

Social media influencers acts as the agents of digital deception due to several reasons. First of all, the promotion of the fake lifestyle exploits the viewers psyche. The ^{frequent} social interactions, fun encounters, and excessive entertainment are forms of deception. As people yearns for entertainment, especially ^{the times of} during economic inflation; the fake lifestyle attracts the masses. This attraction results in self-pity and ~~isolation~~ ^{loneliness}. According to the **Journal of Social and clinical Psychology**; limiting the social media use to thirty minutes daily leads a significant reduction in loneliness and depression. Thus, social media influencers are deceiving people into believing that their lives are unentertaining, promoting psychological strain.

Secondly, the unabated exhibition of wealth has promoted the ~~elitism~~ ^{elitism}. The acquisition of expensive cars, branded clothing, latest smartphones, and a battalion of security guards promotes arrogance. According

an eminent muslim philosopher -
AL-Farabi a society where a few
elites overpower the masses; a
base and despicable society comes
into existence. In the case of social
media influencers, elitism accompanies
the hoodiganism. The rising culture of
mutual rivalries among the social
media influencers is affecting the
security of the platform. Thus, making
influencers responsible for the glorification
of hoodiganism.

Thirdly, social media
influencers deceive their larger
audiences with artificial consumerism.
The paid promotions of the products
and services create artificial structure
of demand and supply. Many social
media influencers start their own
business ventures. They use their
platforms for their own promotion.
In other words, they turn their
subscribers into their customers. For

The NW Fashion brand, FOUR Restaurant, and Maryam Parvez

Cosmetics are some of the instances where social media influencers started their own startups. Thus, social media influencers are promoting ^{artificial} consumerism.

Furthermore, the exploitation of social media algorithms delude the masses. Nowadays, popularity of the content is highly dependent on the popular algorithms. There are several websites that tell the social media influencers about the rising trends. The social media influencers create the relevant hashtags to meet the search engine optimization requirements of the content. Sometimes, clickbait is used as a tool to engage larger audiences. The separation of morality from the content creates meaningless content. Thus, results in a digital deception.

In addition to this, promotion of "populist culture" turns people into cult followers. In the age of globalization, populism has emerged as

a new global pandemic. The social media influencers act as the vectors of populist agendas. For instance, in India, Modi's regime has an exclusive team of social media influencers. The main goal of these influencers is to glorify the conducts of Modi government. The populist agendas of such social media influencers deviate the people from reality which is an dishonesty to their followers. So, massive following does not necessarily results in a sense of responsibility among the influencers, as they continue to deceive people.

On the other hand, many people believe that social media influencers are inspiration. ~~for man~~ First of all, the lavish lifestyle of the social media influencers inspire the "common man" to strive. The emergence of social media influencers as wealthy individuals, has caused a great setback to the traditional modes of income. Many people started perceiving the corporate sector as

a modern form of slavery. While, others get inspiration from the social media influencers to achieve their dreams. Especially, in the context of the civil services; a large segment of the youth gets attracted to the lifestyle of the bureaucrats. Thus, in many cases; social media influencers inspire the youth to achieve their goals.

Secondly, social media influencers expose the power-structures within the country which inspires people towards social change. The larger audiences get influenced by the rhetorics of the influencers. The year 2025 proved to be a year of Generation-Z. In many countries such as ⁱⁿ Nepal, and Madagascar; Gen-Z protests toppled the governments. Especially, in case of Nepal; the role of social media influencers is highly commendable. A viral social media post exhibiting the lavish lifestyle of a minister's son elicit a nationwide campaign

against the "elite culture". Thus, resulted in the social change, influenced by the advocacy of various social media influencers.

Thirdly, social media influencers sometimes prove to be an inspiration for youth to transform one's startup into successful enterprise. As, social media influencers are a medium ~~to~~ for digital marketing; they can attract a large segments of the population to in supporting a startup. The significance of the small to medium enterprises in bolstering the economic stability is acknowledge by the international monetary organizations. In developing countries like Pakistan, the economic program "**Uraan Pakistani**"; have aimed to harvest economic stability through small to medium enterprises. Thus, by endorsing a small businesses; social media influencers lay the foundation of microeconomic stability.

Furthermore, social media

influencers provide voice to the voiceless. As Amy Jo Martin says: The social media is an ultimate equaliser; it gives a voice and a platform to anyone willing to engage. Especially, in those societies where minorities tend to get suppressed by the majority; social media influencers prove to be a ray of hope against fascism. The Global Sumud Flotilla - a campaign to provide food and medicine supplies to the victims of Israel's oppression; was an initiative which came into being as a result of global social media campaign. Though proved to be futile in the end, but it was the manifestation of the influencer's positive influence over the society.

Additionally, the pluralist approach upholds the democratic norms. Pluralism demands the integration of all segments of the society into a unified social system. As world is leaning towards the sham.

democracies; the pluralist approach employed by the social media influencers; revive the trust of the population in the institution of democracy. The famous social media hashtag **# Black lives matter** was an outcome of the journalists and social media influencers Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullers, and Opal Tometi. The hashtag originally created in 2013, but it inspired ^{the} people ~~p~~ worldwide. In 2020, after the ~~to~~ killing of George Floyd; the hashtag inspired the people to challenge racism. So, social media influencers inspire the world towards pluralist approach.

Nevertheless, social media influencers hold the power to inspire people. But majority of the influencers are employing their "soft power" ~~into~~ in the creation of meaningless content. Such content does not participate positively in the daily lives of the followers, instead;

it creates a "brainrot" community. The philosophers like Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer claimed that media holds a great power to mould the minds of the viewers as standardized products. They postulate that media is an active vector in the creation of a passive mind. The new media holds even greater power over the minds of people than that of a traditional media. The family vloggers in Pakistan did nothing great but ^{responsible for} the creation of brainrot content. So, it can be argued that social media influencers are the vectors of digital deception.

Secondly, the unequal distribution of wealth and its subsequent exhibition creates social envy. The continuously growing economic status of the social media influencers create a sense of deprivation in the minds of people. According to the World Bank, the poverty rate in Pakistan stands at 44.7%, as of 2025.

The unemployment rate of the youth is at 12.9%, according to the Labour Force Survey 2024-25. In such cases the unabated exhibition of wealth ^{even} by the illiterate influencers create a deception of failure. It might lead ^{either} towards psychological depression or one might incline towards criminal behaviour. Thus, social media influencers can be regarded as the source of digital deception.

Thirdly, paid shoutouts to sub-standard products or services, deprive people of their precious capital. The greed to earn easy money without accountability inculcates the ~~sense~~ ^{lack} of responsibility in the social media influencers. As, people tend to ~~trust~~ believe in the credibility of the influencers, the chances of the general public to get tricked hold water. For instance, the promotion of the scam trading platforms in Pakistan; cost a large ~~amount~~ number of people

their hard earned money. The scam applications of trading ^{and betting} such as Binomo, OctaFX, 1Xbet, etc caused nothing but a financial dent. Thus, holding a larger audiences without sense of responsibility proves an ultimate disaster.

Furthermore, distortion of reality turns influencers into mere agents of fifth generation warfare. In a digitalized world, it is a great responsibility to hold a larger audiences. The warfare is not limited to the battlefield. It is the responsibility of every citizen in general and social media influencers in specific; to counter check every detail before posting. However, the desire to have more followers and viewers instigate the influencers to prioritize sensationalism over the facts. For instance, in 2024, **Southport riots** were the outcome of the fake news regarding

the killing of two minors. The reposting of the news by several social media influencers without counter-checking; resulted in the violent riots against muslims. Thus, ^{proved how} influencers chose deception over reality for popularity.

Last but not the least, the social media influencers strengthen the socio-political polarization. It is the responsibility of every influencer to utilize its followers for the sake of betterment in the society. However, in case of popular views, many social media influencers choose sensitive topics to elicit favourable response. The trapping of the minority opinion into spiral of silence exacerbate the socio-political divide. The social media influencers like **Major Gaurav Arya** only fuels the flames of differences. The anti-muslim and anti-Pakistan commentary only add insults to the injury and strengthens the

faultline between two civilization-
Hindus and muslims. In short,
social media influencers can strengthen
the agenda of hate through digital
deception.

To sum up, it can be
argued that social media influencers
hold a great power to influence
the minds of their audiences. The
use of favourable language and
integration of audio-visual effects,
even strengthen this power. The
influencers might emerge as the
agents of inspiration or deception. In
many cases, the influencers inspire
a large segment of the
population to strive in the cause
of their goals. The exposition of
the power structures inspire audiences
to call spade a spade. Resultantly,
a sagacious and pluralist society
might come into being. On the
contrary, the social media influencers
might create a society full of
division and prejudice. The psychological
exploitation of the naive audiences

may harbour a culture of elitism and populism. The creation of meaningless content, lacking a sense of responsibility; may foster ignorance. Although, social media influencers hold a great power to inspire others yet due to irresponsible behaviour they are proving to be the vectors of digital deception in most of the cases. Thus, it can be concluded that social media influencers are deceiving the people owing to their ignorance.