

Reels, Recommendations and Retail: Influencer and Affiliate Marketing through Short-Form Videos

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Abstract—The rapid proliferation of Short-Form Video platforms has reshaped how brands engage with consumers in the digital marketing landscape. This chapter explores how the convergence of short-form video marketing, influencers and affiliate marketing has fostered a digital ecosystem enabling the seamless integration of the consumer journey from content discovery to product purchase. In addition to discussing the key drivers that shape consumer behaviour, such as Perceived Authenticity and Trust, Parasocial Relationships, Immersive Entertainment and Flow Experience, AI-driven Content Recommendations, and Seamless Purchase Journey, the chapter also addresses tactics and approaches that brands can leverage including Strategic Influencer Selection, Effective Affiliate Marketing Strategies, Collaborative Content Creation, AI-enabled Campaign Optimization, and Building Digital Brand Communities. The chapter concludes by discussing the various ethical considerations associated with short-form video based influencer marketing relating to transparency and data privacy issues, responsible AI use and authentic digital marketing practices. Overall, the paper provides a comprehensive perspective on the opportunities and strategic implications of short-form video based influencer and affiliate marketing in the dynamic digital marketplace.

Index Terms—Short- Form Video Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Affiliate Marketing, Consumer Behaviour, Artificial Intelligence, E-Commerce and Social Media Platforms

I. SHORT-FORM VIDEO MARKETING

The Contemporary Digital Economy driven by increasing adoption of smartphones, high-speed internet, digital payments, e-commerce and social networking platforms have together fundamentally transformed how consumers discover, evaluate, and purchase products thereby prompting marketers and businesses to move from conventional marketing approaches to technology-enabled highly interactive marketing strategies. One among these developments are the Short-Form Videos – brief videos in social media platforms lasting from few seconds to a minute such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts (Luo et al., 2025).

Short Form Video has emerged as a powerful marketing tool by capturing consumer attention through creative and concise storytelling with audiovisual effects and creator generated product demonstrations. This interactive promotional technique has shifted marketing into an experiential process, providing viewers with information, entertainment and emotional value (Bikowski, 2026). These immersive viewing experiences further stimulate electronic word of mouth and purchase intention among viewers within the digital shopping environments (Xiao et al., 2023). By converging social interaction, entertainment and commerce into the same platform short form videos have evolved social media platforms into integrated consumer engagement ecosystems influencing every phase of consumer purchase journey. (Ghenie et al., 2026).

II. INFLUENCER AND AFFILIATE MARKETING

Influencer Marketing and Affiliate Marketing constitute the corner stones of successful short-form video marketing strategies. Influencers are individuals who through consistent and authentic content creation involving personal storytelling and shared experiences establish long-term relationships with their audience and followers. These one-sided parasocial relationships develop psychologically strong connections between the audience and the creators strengthened by the trust, emotional attachment, familiarity and perceived closeness, in turn making influencer recommendations appear more credible than conventional persuasive messages directly from brands and organizations (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). In short-form videos, creators frequently come up with audio visual contents where they share product demonstrations and their everyday consumption experiences with reviews and recommendations about the product's usage, usefulness, benefits and criticisms fundamentally altering how consumers evaluate commercial information. Influencer marketing in short-form videos has become a critical determinant of consumer engagement and purchase intention.

Recently, Influencer marketing has expanded to include affiliate marketing, where influencers enter into affiliate programs with e-commerce platforms or brands, where the creators provide direct purchasing links for the recommended products in their videos, allowing the consumers to access them with just a click. The influencers in turn generate commission-based income from e-commerce platforms and brands for every successful purchase made through their affiliate links (Fabilia & Aprianingsih, 2024). Though affiliate marketing initially appeared to be predominantly commercial in nature to consumers, raising concerns about persuasive intent of influencers it gradually evolved into a marketing space where consumers preferred affiliate recommendations when they perceived it to be consistent and genuine with the creator's product experiences, identity, content quality, recommendation relevance and transparency, thereby underscoring trust as the central mechanism through which influencer marketing shapes consumer behaviour and purchase decision in the digital era (Evans et al., 2017; Hovland & Weiss, 1951; Luo et al., 2025).

III. WHAT DRIVES CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN SHORT FORM VIDEO BASED INFLUENCER AND AFFILIATE MARKETING?

- **Perceived Trust and Authenticity:** The hall mark of influencer marketing through short-form videos is that it embeds promotional messages and product demonstrations in experiential advices through personal experiences and lifestyle content rather than persuasive and commercial advertising thus reducing consumer skepticism. In accordance with the Source Credibility Theory, consumers accept and trust suggestions from sources that they consider to be trustworthy, knowledgeable, and attractive (Hovland & Weiss, 1951). Influencer recommendations in short-form video ecosystems leverage consistent and frequent creator interactions and visual demonstrations through regular content uploads to develop perceived trust and credibility.

Moreover, when influencers are transparent about the commission-based income that they generate through the affiliated links their credibility doesn't diminish immediately, rather this enhances the authenticity and transparency of the influencer. In addition, when the products promoted align with the content identity, expertise, and personal experiences of the influencer, these strategies have an evident impact on consumer purchasing behaviour (Luo et al., 2025).

For example, a fitness influencer who regularly posts short-form videos relating to workout routines and nutritional food suggestions would gain more consumer trust when recommending protein supplements in comparison to a travel influencer.

- **Parasocial Relationships:** It is very common and natural for audience to create parasocial relationships with their favourite celebrities and media personalities. Social Interaction Theory explains how audience or viewers create one-sided relationships with media personalities and influencers perceiving them to be familiar acquaintances when they actually haven't had any interpersonal relationships or interactions with them in real life (Hartmann & Goldhoorn, 2011; Horton & Richard Wohl, 1956). By consistently sharing their daily routines and personal experiences while also interacting with the audience by replying to comments, influencers cultivate a sense of emotional closeness and familiarity with their viewers. Consumers experience self-congruence with creators when they perceive their personalities and values to align with their own self concept thereby reducing the perceived risk leading to heightened confidence in their product recommendations (Shen & Wang, 2024).

Further, the followers of influencers tend to act like digital communities where a trend created by an influencer is replicated by other followers driving this into a community-driven conversation and electronic word of mouth further amplifying the product visibility.

For example, A fashion influencer can encourage her followers to recreate her styling techniques and outfits, thereby transforming her product recommendations into social trends leading to enhanced consumer engagement.

- **Immersion and Flow Experience:** In the context of short-form videos, consumers primarily engage with these platforms not with aim of seeking product information, but for relaxation, enjoyment, and social connections (Xiao et al., 2023). Marketing messages embedded within such experiential entertaining content are processed more favourably by consumers as they tend to perceive these messages as a part of the content rather than overt advertisements. In accordance with the flow theory, viewers experience flow in short-form video platforms because of the autoplay functionality, continuous scrolling, dynamic storytelling, and interactive features.

These immersive experiences also foster consumers to act beyond passive consumption by engaging in actions such as commenting, liking, saving, or sharing the videos subsequently leading to electronic word of mouth and enhanced purchase intention within digital environments (Ghenie et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2025).

For example, if a food influencer regularly uses branded kitchen appliances for preparing meals, which she showcases to the audience through storytelling, appealing editing and music, the repeated exposure creates a sense of familiarity among the consumers with the featured brand thereby facilitating subsequent purchase intention.

- **AI Driven Content Recommendations:** While Influencer and Affiliate marketing are the visible foundational elements of social media commerce, Artificial Intelligence acts as the unsung hero driving the effectiveness of these digital marketing strategies. Random encounter of relevant promotional content by consumers happens rarely. Instead, it is the AI algorithms that leverage the users' search histories, viewing duration and behaviour, demographics, device usage and engagement patterns to curate personalized content in their feeds (Nguyen et al., 2025).

The presence of artificial intelligence ensures that targeted and personalized content reaches the relevant audience at the optimal time, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of influencer and affiliate marketing. When catered with repeated personalized content recommendations, consumers perceive familiarity, self-congruence, and engagement with the influencer-generated content thus reinforcing purchase considerations and decisions (Shen & Wang, 2024). By leveraging AI, businesses can create more meaningful creator-led customer experiences.

For example, The feed of a consumer highly interested in skincare may be filled with algorithmically curated skin care related content from multiple creators. Repeated exposure to similar or identical skin care products through multiple creators may reinforce product familiarity thus increasing the likelihood of purchase.

- **Seamless Purchase Journey:** The distinctive characteristic driving consumer behaviour in short-form video based affiliate marketing is the ease with which the consumers can transition from product discovery to purchase. This marketing technique eradicates the need for consumers to independently browse for products, compare alternative websites, and navigate through a separate payment process before completing a transaction. Instead, short-form video platforms have smoothened this journey for consumers by integrating affiliate links through which the users are directed to the e-commerce platforms within a single click to complete the purchase (Fabilia & Aprianingsih, 2024). This seamless integration of entertainment, social media, and retail has enabled consumers to go through the entire purchase journey right from watching the creator's recommendations to purchasing the final product without much cognitive and behavioural efforts thereby minimizing friction in the process and reducing purchase abandonments (Ghenie et al., 2026).

For example, a travel influencer could demonstrate how he packed for an international trip using a newly launched travel kit and bag with an integrated affiliate link in the video directing to the e-commerce website or marketer's page for instant purchase.

IV. HOW SHOULD BUSINESSES LEVERAGE SHORT FORM VIDEO BASED INFLUENCER AND AFFILIATE MARKETING?

- **Strategic Influencer Selection:** For their promotional campaigns' brands should aim at demonstrating a strong influencer-brand fit by approaching influencers that possess the required expertise, credibility and audience demographics, rather than prioritizing their popularity and follower count (Nguyen et al., 2025). Customers trust products promoted by knowledgeable and authentic sources, thereby requiring brands to approach creators who can integrate the promoted products organically into their content in place of isolated sponsored campaigns (Luo et al., 2025). They could collaborate with micro-influencers, maintaining stronger relationships with their niche audience communities, thereby fostering stronger brand equity and consumer trust in addition to product visibility.

For example, Headphone brands can collaborate with electronics and technology reviewers on YouTube Shorts as these have access to a targeted audience segment interested in consumer electronics than any general lifestyle influencer.

- **Designing Effective Affiliate Marketing Strategies:** Affiliate marketing is a performance-based marketing technique, where the brand does not incur marketing cost irrespective of the customer responses. Rather, here the influencers earn a commission-based income only on successful consumer clicks, purchases and conversions (Fabilia & Aprianingsih, 2024). Brands and e-commerce websites can design effective affiliate programs with appealing commission-based structures for attracting creator partners. However, brands should not impose very strict and rigid promotional structures, but encourage influencers to produce engaging and experiential product demonstrations within their daily routines and problem-solving scenarios, to ensure natural integration of the recommended products into everyday life (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

For example, under the Amazon Associates Program, while one student creator can make “Top 5 Amazon Hostel Finds” another travel influencer can upload content on “Top 5 Amazon Travel Finds” with embedded purchase links enabling a seamless transition to consumers from content consumption to product purchase.

- **Collaborative Content Creation:** Consumers favourably perceive digital content only when it satisfies their informational, entertainment, and social needs (Bikowski, 2026; Katz et al., 1973). While influencers fulfill entertainment and social needs, the fulfillment of informational needs rely on the brands. While influencers decide on the consumption context on how they would like to present the product recommendation, brands should ensure that influencers are provided with a base script on what they should promote in terms of the technical aspects relating to product features and benefits. Brands should focus on partnering with multiple influencers to convey these promotional messages through visually appealing, concise storytelling techniques that resonate with customers' everyday experiences. When consumers come across these product features repeatedly through multiple influencers with different storylines and consumption contexts, they eventually tend to develop higher trust and engagement with the brand (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Luo et al., 2025). For example, brands like Faces Canada and Dyson collaborate with multiple beauty creators to demonstrate step-by-step makeup routine or hairstyling techniques in their daily get ready with me videos, enabling audience to visualize product performance in everyday settings.
- **AI enabled Content Optimization:** While AI already acts as a strategic asset in ensuring personalized content recommendations through algorithmic behavioural pattern analysis, brands can also make use of AI in multiple other facets of campaign optimization (Qiu, 2026). Brands can employ artificial intelligence to analyse and evaluate viewer's engagement patterns across previous influencer campaigns to segment target audience, refine influencer selection, identify high-performing content formats, creative elements and optimal posting schedule before launching a new promotional campaign based on influencer and affiliate marketing (Nguyen et al., 2025). By leveraging AI in forecasting emerging trends and future demands, businesses can efficiently allocate appropriate marketing funds and resources required for the campaign. For example, while deciding to promote a festive sale, online fashion retailers can use artificial intelligence to analyse past influencer content to determine whose audience are most likely to interact with the brand or even make a purchase through the affiliate link and which element of the uploaded content triggered consumer curiosity and eagerness.
- **Building Digital Brand Communities:** Beyond merely generating immediate purchases, brands should view influencer and affiliate marketing in short-form videos as a strategic approach for building long-term relationships with audience and cultivating digital customer communities. Rather than treating influencer collaborations as a one-time campaign, brands should partner with influencers to create content that encourages audience interaction through comments, shares, branded challenges, and other user-generated content, thereby transforming consumers from passive viewers of online content to active participants contributing to ongoing brand conversations (Wang et al., 2025). The relationship marketing theory suggests that enduring customer value is achieved not through isolated transactions but through continuous engagement and relationship building over a time. Accordingly, in addition to promoting products with affiliated links, brands should also employ influencer marketing as a tool to inspire followers to share testimonials and participate in community-driven campaigns (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

For example, Swiggy partnered with numerous social media creators and influencers to promote their Voice of Hunger campaign, in which users submitted audio messages mimicking food items for a chance to win free food. This interactive campaign generated widespread eWOM and USG, thereby strengthening the brand's digital community.

V. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN SHORT FORM VIDEO BASED INFLUENCER AND AFFILIATE MARKETING

- Personalized feeds in short form video platforms through AI-driven recommendation systems relies on collection and storage of consumers' personal data raising **concerns on privacy and data security**. AI-driven **dark patterns and opaque recommendation systems** may further manipulate consumer behaviour and influence consumer autonomy in purchase decisions. Therefore, adopting transparent AI practices with data protection regulations is necessary to safeguard consumer trust (Fabilia & Aprianingsih, 2024).
- Vulnerable consumer groups like children, young adults, and digitally unaware or inexperienced consumers may face **difficulty in distinguishing between authentic product recommendations and persuasive marketing content**, thus requiring brands and influencers to create responsible content with clear promotional disclosures and age-appropriate marketing practices (Boerman & Van Reijmersdal, 2020).
- Recommendation algorithms may prioritize and repeatedly expose consumers to similar products and viewpoints based on their previous interactions, thereby **limiting their ability to make informed choices and purchase decisions** (Qiu, 2026).
- **Fake followers, bot-generated comments and artificial likes** may erode public confidence in influencer marketing as a whole, thereby requiring brands to evaluate influencers based on authentic engagement and credibility (Fabilia & Aprianingsih, 2024).
- Instead of creating immediate purchase pressure among the viewers, influencers should encourage viewers to **evaluate recommended products rationally** based on their needs and **make informed purchase decisions rather than impulsive purchases** (Evans et al., 2017).

VI. CONCLUSION

Short-form video ecosystems have integrated artificial intelligence, influencer and affiliate marketing techniques to transform digital marketing into a seamless consumer engagement platform (Qiu, 2026). By crafting well designed affiliate programs to collaborate with creators in developing engaging short-form video content, brands can elicit consumer behaviour driven by trust, immersive entertainment, parasocial relationships and personalized recommendations. In accordance with the stimulus-organism response framework, creator recommendations, engaging videos, and affiliate links act as external cues that generates internal states in the form of positive emotional responses such as curiosity, enjoyment, and trust. These psychological feelings in turn create behavioural outcomes such as increasing consumer engagement and immediate purchase decisions, especially for low and medium involvement products (Russell & Mehrabian, 1974; Wang et al., 2025). To conclude, in the ever-evolving field of digital commerce, ethical, data driven and consumer centric influencer and affiliate marketing strategies in short-form videos act as a powerful catalyst for building and strengthening long term meaningful customer relationships (Ghenie et al., 2026).

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