

---

# UNIT 7 CELEBRITIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

---

## *Structure*

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Learning Outcomes
- 7.2 Evolution of Celebrity
- 7.3 Micro-Celebrities
- 7.4 Public vs. Private Life
- 7.5 Fan Culture
- 7.6 Celebrity Activism
- 7.7 Commercialisation of Fame
- 7.8 Let us Sum Up
- 7.9 Further Readings
- 7.10 Check Your Progress: Possible Answers

---

## **7.0 INTRODUCTION**

---

Social media has become more popular and powerful in recent years. The major motto of social media is revolutionising communication, connecting, and content consumption. A few decades ago, Internet users were more likely to communicate and access information using Internet technologies like websites, blogs, and search engines. Still, in today's era, the Internet and social media create celebrities who are common people more visible and have direct access to their audience, making them more valuable as influencers. These celebrities tie up with brands and turn social media popularity into economic capital. As of 2021, major brands pay Rs.850 (\$10) per thousand subscribers for an Instagram post that endorses a particular brand. These brands also benefit from celebrities' popularity through their subscribers buying the endorsed product. Social media popularity paved the way for influencers to embrace celebrity culture and traditional celebrities (from film, sports and media). This shift has led brands to adapt their advertising policies, focusing on Social media influencers and traditional celebrities. Tanya Khanijow (Travel), Savi Vid Couple (Travel), Manav Chhabra (Fashion and Lifestyle), Kritika Khurana (Fashion), and Kusha Kapila (Comic) are the most popular social media influencers in India as of 2023. According to researchers, influencers hold firm control over audiences' (Followers) decisions when choosing brands with intimacy and authenticity. They can craft their narratives, share behind-the-scenes glimpses of their lives, and showcase their talents without the filter of traditional media. The global reach of social media has amplified the influence of influencers, allowing them to connect with global audiences, spread messages, and mobilise support for causes and charity. The pandemic has accelerated this

trend as social media users grew, as influencers' audiences opened potential personal marketing for brands and celebrities. During the pandemic, people witnessed celebrities inside their homes, seeing their pets, home decor, and pyjamas, which is unlikely for them and created a personal connection between the celebrities, influencers and audiences.

---

## 7.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

---

After learning this unit, you will be able to;

- Trace the evolution of celebrity culture from traditional to digital platforms;
- Discuss the concept of micro-celebrities and their influence;
- Analyse the complexities of public versus private life in the digital age;
- Explore fan culture and its implications on celebrity dynamics; and
- Evaluate the role of celebrities in activism and commercialisation;

---

## 7.2 EVOLUTION OF CELEBRITY

---

The word 'Fame' originated from the Latin 'fama', which means rumour. Fame and celebrity are related, as no one can be a celebrity without fame. There are arguments on the origin of celebrity culture; in Europe, the earliest celebrities were Athenian celebrities, politicians, playwrights, and philosophers like Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and Leonidas of Rhodes, an Olympic runner between 164 BC and 152 BC. The remembrance sought the fame of celebrities after their death. During the 1500s and 1600s, the most celebrated people were actors and playwrights; with the invention of the printing press, those celebrities earned loyal fans. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, London newspapers published gossip sheets containing exclusive information on celebrities, exposing their private lives. Celebrity worship began in the late nineteenth century in the United States, with the nouveaux riches seeking personal publicity in society columns and magazines. It has evolved with radio and television programs broadcasting celebrities to reach wider audiences and raise their fame. Over time, newspapers also changed the nature of celebrity culture by offering lower prices to reach the common audience.

Thomas Edison used photography and the press to promote himself. Similarly, Hollywood stars like Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, and Paul Newman set the stage for celebrity culture, as they were controlled by studios when crafting their lives and images. Marketing departments and executives tutored celebrities on how to dress and appear, and helped them earn large followings with the help of the media. Technologies like flashing cameras and box cameras bought by paparazzi make celebrity life spicier and more accessible to the public.

Daniel Bootstin and Rojek defined celebrities as individuals who are known for their fame or influence on society. According to Rojek (2011), Celebrities

are categorised into three types: attributed, achieved and ascribed. Ascribed celebrities are celebrities by bloodline or biological descendants; normal people cannot achieve this status, e.g. Prince William, son of King Charles; Brooklyn Beckham, Son of David Beckham; Ivanka Trump, daughter of Donald Trump; Shweta Bachchan, daughter of Amitabh Bachchan. These individuals are famous because they inherited fame from their families, not because they possess talent; their lives are often scrutinised from a young age due to their family. Achieved celebrities have special talents, extraordinary skills, and their efforts and accomplishments. Lionel Messi, Oprah Winfrey, Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, etc, are good examples. Their success stories often inspire audiences, exhibiting the importance of hard work and perseverance. Attributed celebrities are famous through mass media promotions, coverage, publicity, or public relations rather than a specific talent or achievement. Kim Kardashian and their family, Bruce Jenner, are perfect examples of celebrities celebrated for their extravagant lifestyle, special appearances in shows and charisma. They sustain fame by maintaining constant media and social media visibility, regular appearances at public events and shows, and leveraging controversies and trending topics. They earn a large sum of revenue from fashion lines, endorsements and brands.

In recent years, reality TV stars took the concept of celebrity a step further, emphasising entertainment value as a key part of celebrity culture. Kardashians from America, Lilly Singh (Canada), Varun Sood, Rannvijay Singha, and Tina Datta from India cashed their Television fame into Capital. Social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram allow celebrities to market themselves online and directly interact with their fans. Microcelebrities are another term for people famous on YouTube with 10,000 to 100K followers, but unknown to the world, they have a moderately high reach and close connection with their audiences. Nano celebrities are individuals with 1000 to 10,000 followers with a very tight relationship between them, whose recommendations are taken seriously by their audiences. Mega celebrities or influencers have more than 1 million followers and are great choices for campaigns by multi-level brands to reach a large audience. Unlike traditional celebrities, these Internet celebrities wield influence over a niche or a specific audience on social media platforms, with an intense connection with their audience and expertise in a particular niche.

**Check Your Progress: 1**

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. Define a Social media influencer. How has the pandemic accelerated this trend?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

2. Discuss the evolution of celebrity culture.

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

---

### 7.3 MICRO-CELEBRITIES

---

Micro-celebrities, Internet celebrities, or micro-influencers, have gained fame on social media. Theresa Sneft and P developed the concept of micro-celebrity—a Poitier in 2008. Micro-celebrities are present on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, which rely on user-generated content. The contents include lifestyle, fashion, Film criticism, and other genres. Brands use these micro-celebrities as marketing persons to advertise their products to their followers. They are famous among a niche group of users on social media platforms. They often present themselves as public figures linked to their audience, expecting authenticity and transparency. The Internet has allowed the masses to create micro-celebrities with the click of a mouse, and social media has become a major participatory platform for individuals to express themselves through content. The attention economy has brought attention to building and maintaining relationships among social media users, and understanding this phenomenon has become increasingly important. The proliferation of user-generated content and applications has created an opportunity for ordinary people to achieve fame among a group of users. Social media has become a significant platform for micro-celebrities to express themselves and maintain relationships with followers through the content they create and collaborate on. These individuals use social media to build and maintain relationships, interact with new people, and improve their online status and popularity. They construct and manage their self-image and identity strategically by projecting highly desirable social traits to enhance their visibility and influence among the public. Providing user-generated content has led to the rise of micro-celebrities, as they are not famous in the offline world but are famous on social media. They appeal to their audience, which is their followers and individuals who view the content and command a fan base. Social media helps these celebrities bypass the traditional gatekeepers like editors and producers and provides whatever they like. YouTube has become a significant platform for launching micro-celebrities with creators like Pewdiepie and Chiara Ferragni, who generate large sums of revenue every month from video views and popularity. As of 2023, 27 million people were paid content creators in the US and 3 million from India, with an average monthly revenue of Rs. 25,000.

Internet celebrities can also influence fans by creating parasocial relationships with their audiences. For example, Kim Kardashian often creates the appearance of authenticity by harnessing her audience’s emotions. This has led to a growing interest in the Internet and its potential impact on the lives of Internet celebrities.

**Self-made Fame**

Self-made fame is when individuals exhibit their talents, ideas, and creativity on social media platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, etc. These self-made celebrities specialise in unique or specific talents, attracting niche audiences. Consistent content creation and direct engagement with audiences increase their authenticity and help build a personal brand. These celebrities have creative freedom and monetising opportunities, fuelling the creator economy.

**Niche Marketing**

A minimum of 1000 followers is expected from micro-celebrities to initiate brand partnering with them. These audiences can be gathered on one platform or across multiple platforms. Audiences often view these celebrities as their peers, friends, or relatable experts, fostering a deeper sense of connection, trust, close-knit relationships and a community-like atmosphere. Their content builds a following around niche interests and personal experiences as stories and product reviews. They increase their audiences organically, drawing loyal followers who trust and value the opinions and content shared by them. They also share intimate aspects of their lives, involving audiences in their personal lives. A recent study by Expertcity found that 82% of their consumers follow recommendations by micro-celebrities.

Micro-celebrities' marketing is cost-effective with lower collaboration and the ability to scale campaigns across different niches. This helps brands to reach diverse audience segments and maximise their return on investment. By partnering with Micro-celebrities whose followers closely match the brand's target market, companies can ensure their message reaches the right people, leading to higher conversion rates and better ROI than broader marketing tactics.

**Relatability**

Trust and relatability are the standout attributes of micro-celebrities, making their endorsements more relatable and credible to audiences. They have a personal connection that fosters higher engagement and influences purchasing decisions more effectively. They offer stronger, cost-effective, affordable, and viable partnerships for smaller, growing brands. They can reach specific audiences like local farming communities or global gamers, ensuring the ad message reaches a target audience. Authentic content creation from micro-influencers allows brands to stand out from overpriced corporate campaigns and embrace a more relatable, human-centric ad approach.

**Interactive**

Interactive relationships are two-way connections between content creators and audiences through direct communication, engagement, and mutual understanding. Key features of interactive relationships include direct communication, accessibility, personalisation, community building, and feedback loops. Mutual engagement is a defining feature of digital platforms like Instagram and YouTube. They include enhanced engagement, trust, loyalty, authenticity and influence over audiences. The interactive practices

of micro-celebrities include live streaming, content collaboration, Q&A sessions, responding to comments and direct messages from audiences. The interactivity of these celebrities blurs the lines between them and their fans, reshaping traditional hierarchies of fame and influence.

### **Personal Branding**

Personal branding involves showcasing skills, values, personality and expertise to exhibit talent and gain a memorable presence among audiences. It includes a unique identity, a target audience, consistent messaging, visual identity, content strategy, and engagement. Celebrities use a cross-platform strategy to represent strong identities and achieve deeper and more active interaction with audiences, allowing them to work on their 360-degree persona with their followers. Revealing personal lives has more power to resonate with audiences than traditional celebrities. Personal branding or self-branding is key to helping aspiring professionals to sell themselves in this competitive world. Social media technologies, like algorithms, can significantly boost the development of the attention economy, enabling ordinary individuals to gain fame and celebrity status. Branding in the affective economy benefits from emotional engagement, and personal branding is a new social arrangement that relies on different strategies, such as progressive ideals like capability, creativity, and empowerment.

---

## **7.4 PUBLIC VS. PRIVATE LIFE**

---

The lives of celebrities can be explained in two ways: the private self and the public self. The private self is the original life of the celebrity without any intervention from the media and social media. The public self or life involves a series of staged activities curated by a public relations team or experts who help the celebrity build their image. The relationship between audiences and celebrities is built by the public self/life, creating a space between the private and public self. Celebrities can remain in the limelight only if they focus on positive media promotion tactics. There is a debate on the privacy expectations of celebrities and their family members on topics such as celebrity privacy, as controlled privacy and intrusion of paparazzi or fans, as well as the privacy of the children of celebrities. Jens Heffman argues that celebrities may lose legal protections if they sacrifice their privacy for publicity. Paparazzi, or freelance photographers, take celebrities' pictures for financial purposes, using techniques like stalking that can cause turbulence and harm. Elizabeth Hindman claims that selling exaggerated content without context has decreased credibility in the news industry.

For centuries, celebrities focused on portraying a positive public and private self before their audiences and kept their private lives private while discussing them before the public. To protect their personal reputation, maintain their personal boundaries, and preserve a positive public image by preserving their privacy. However, in today's social media world, most celebrities take control of the narrative surrounding their personal lives. Public display of affection (PDA) has generated significant media coverage,

helping celebrities to stay in the spotlight and gain more opportunities. Revealing their private life is seen as more authentic and humanising to gain fan loyalty through social media posts and paparazzi. Social media engagement of traditional celebrities helps internet celebrities get content on fashion reviews, gossip columns, lifestyle updates, replicas, etc. Similarly, the rise of social media has resulted in a new generation of celebrities attempting to control their image themselves, using managed exposure for various benefits and authenticity. According to Lomanowska and Guitton (2016), authenticity can be explained as the inner and outer selves. The inner self refers to the space of the self, creativity, and spirituality, while the outer self is about a performance or expression. Goffman introduces the term *belief* to explain these performances, stating that performers are sincerely convinced that their impression of reality is the real reality. This type of performance aims to achieve private gain by meeting audiences' demands.

Social media celebrities blur the lines between public and private life by creating a sense of intimacy with their audiences and followers. There is severe backlash in social media content, such as misinformation, hate speech, and privacy challenges. However, the platform's openness attracted millions of individuals to be content creators and audiences. Social media celebrities like Emma Chamberlain, Lilly Singh, and Huda Kattan faced many challenges managing their public and private lives. Selective sharing of content, balancing authenticity, and maintaining boundaries between personal and public life can help celebrities sustain a safe, private life despite being in the limelight. Indian micro-celebrities face challenges on the grounds of cultural expectations, trolls and cyberbullying, and fans' expectations of accessing their private life and relationships. Audiences and the public expect open statements on relationship status, separations, break-ups, engagements, and family dramas in events like weddings. Many micro-celebrities have faced burnout and overexposure due to the constant updating of their private lives, and they were forced to take breaks from social media after cyberbullying.

Some celebrities choose to shield their children from social media to protect their privacy. By balancing public engagement with privacy, celebrities can create a sense of intimacy and authenticity while addressing the risks of overexposure and mental health challenges.

**Check Your Progress: 2**

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. How do micro-celebrities use social media platforms to cultivate their personal brand and audience?

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
 .....

2. What strategies do influencers use to establish boundaries between their personal and professional lives?

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 7.5 FAN CULTURE

---

Fandoms or Fan culture gained significant public attention in recent years after the rise of social media, enabling the audience and fans to interact with their idols and plan various activities. This culture has opened doors for a variety of activities and the economy. Chinese scholar Li believed that fan culture would eventually become a kind of consumer culture. Fans and audiences fund their idols and purchase products endorsed by celebrities, which is called the fan economy. Fans also take on the role of producers, with many fan productions emerging on social media platforms. This shift has led to the development of a participatory culture, where fans form alternative media interpretations through productions. Before 2010, mainstream media traditionally limited fandoms and fan culture; after the widespread use of social media, fan culture evolved with platforms like Tieba, Wemedia, and Weibo, creating alternative spaces for fan culture and participatory culture.

Indians worship actors as demigods and idols, as fan culture in Bollywood is a deeply rooted phenomenon which extends beyond admiration of actors and characters. Fans show intense devotion, collective identity and active participation in shaping actors' narratives and their films. Bollywood stars are often idolised as larger-than-life figures; their birthdays are celebrated with grand festivities, campaigns, etc. Social media celebrities have vibrant fan communities on a small scale. They actively participate in live streams, tournaments, and online discussions and defend their idol/celebrity during controversies. Fan engagement affects content promotion. Both fans and celebrities face mental health concerns like burnout, anxiety, and cyberbullying. Fandom drives brand endorsements, product launches, and content monetisation. The fan economy is a key factor in influencing the stardom of social media celebrities, and many brands and product producers endorse celebrities to boost sales. The purchasing power of fans and their object of admiration creates new productions of music and films. In some cases, social media celebrities have collaborated with mainstream media programmes such as Big Boss, television serials, and small roles in films. The advent of social media has also enabled fans to voice their opinions unimpeded, breaking the mould of society and questioning traditional media values.

---

## 7.6 CELEBRITY ACTIVISM

---

Celebrities have been involved in politics since the 1920s. Al Jolson, the actor and singer, was the first celebrity to publicly endorse a presidential campaign in the United States. Since then, celebrity activism and advocacy have happened much more frequently after the 1960s. Celebrities Warren

Beatty and Jane Fonda spoke out against the Vietnam War, earning respect and criticism from political parties. Though they faced backlash and controversies, common people started trusting celebrities, and politicians faced a decline in trust. Today, celebrities increasingly use social media platforms for activism; posts often containing lines on social issues significantly impact the public's perception of celebrities. The growing use of social media has increased the influence of celebrities, paving the way to reach a wider global audience. Shifts in mainstream media content have made celebrities on social media more powerful as contemporary journalism focuses on celebrity news to gain a greater viewership. Over time, public and niche audiences have become increasingly frustrated with traditional news sources and have focused on alternative sources that report more on celebrities. This gives celebrities a spotlight for more audience reach and highlights their causes more widely.

In terms of spotlighting issues and raising money, many celebrities sincerely fight for causes with excellent networking capabilities.

There are a few examples of celebrities fighting for social and environmental causes:

1. Bestselling author Ishmael Beah has worked with the UN and created his own foundation to give children scarred by violence a voice.
2. Somali model Waris Dirie, who is a victim of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), has advocated against FGM and started her foundation to offer treatment and care for victims.
3. Camila Pitanga is a Brazilian actress who has long worked hard to spotlight the fight against climate change, child labour, and slave labour and support Indigenous communities' rights and gender equality.
4. Nigerian musician Femi Kuti has worked with UNICEF to draw attention to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Africa and to support children's rights.
5. Senegalese singer Youssou N'Dour supports microfinance, healthcare, and internet cafes globally.
6. Indian tennis star Sania Mirza fights against female infanticide and supports gender equality in India.
7. Chinese actress Hai Qing promotes gender equality and ends discrimination against women.
8. Indian actor Aamir Khan lobbies the Indian government and European Parliament for climate change and drought management. Khan and his foundation train farmers in Maharashtra, India, using indigenous water management techniques.

Celebrity and brand activism emerged due to societal shifts and distrust in traditional politics. Brand activism involves companies aligning with societal causes to appeal to ethical consumers using social media to foster positive change and maintain credibility. Governments often work with celebrities and brands to involve citizens in supporting the government and effective, consumer-driven initiatives.

Celebrities may bring up issues once and never mention them, or discuss a topic without research. This can damage the cause. In 2020, George Floyd, a 46-year-old black American man, was murdered by Derek Chauvin, a white police officer; the incident stirred global disruption and was called 'Blackout Tuesday'. Many celebrities posted a black square as a virtual protest against racism and police brutality and returned to their normal personal posts/updates immediately. Such a perception of activism is harmful, as it shouldn't end with a single post with ambiguous, sympathetic words without taking a stance.

---

## 7.7 COMMERCIALISATION OF FAME

---

Social media has become a significant tool for businesses to reach target audiences of specific age groups. Social media influencers have gained online fame by building attractive profiles on various platforms. They impact audiences' decision-making by promoting the buying of products and following brands and ideas. Researchers found that brands and small companies allocate more than half of their annual marketing budget to micro-celebrities and social media influencer marketing campaigns. The key avenues of commercialising fame are through

1. Brand Endorsements
2. Content monetisation
3. Subscription costs
4. Appearances in live events
5. Collaborations with brands

Celebrities and social media influencers can monetise their influence through the above-mentioned avenues, such as brand collaborations, sponsored social media posts, celebrity-backed product lines, endorsement deals, event appearances, and speaking engagements. Celebrities can drive sales and increase brand awareness by aligning with brands that resonate with their audience. Sponsored posts promote products or services to followers in exchange for compensation, ensuring transparency for their audience.

Kylie Jenner, Kaby Lane, CarryMinati, Charli D'Amelio, Prajakta Koli, Emma Chamberlain, Riyaz Aly, MrBeast, Komal Pandey, and PewDiePie have all used various strategies to commercialise their brands. Jenner owns Kylie Cosmetics, earning over \$1 million in ad revenue from Instagram posts. Lane collaborated with global companies and participated in events like the Cannes Film Festival. Koli partnered with brands like Amazon and Lenovo for paid promotions. Others have launched lifestyle businesses, music videos, and endorsed fashion brands.

### Check Your Progress: 3

**Note:** 1) Use the space provided below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1. What defines fan culture, and how does it differ from traditional audience engagement?

- .....
- .....
- .....
- .....
2. Discuss the role of celebrity activism in raising awareness about social, political, and environmental issues.

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What are celebrities' key strategies to monetise their fame through endorsements and collaborations?

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## 7.8 LET US SUM UP

---

This unit explores the evolution of celebrity culture in the context of celebrities' public and private lives, fan influence and celebrity activism. Social media has transformed communication and content consumption, allowing ordinary individuals to gain fame as influencers. Influencers like Tanya Khanijow and Kusha Kapila significantly influence audience decisions, leveraging authenticity and global reach. Celebrity culture has evolved from ancient fame linked to achievements to modern fame driven by the media. Micro-celebrities gain fame through user-generated content on platforms like Instagram and YouTube, using self-made fame, niche marketing, relatability, interaction, and personal branding. Celebrities navigate dual personas, the private self and the public self, creating a blend of intimacy and authenticity. This approach humanises celebrities but raises concerns about misinformation, privacy, and hate speech.

---

## 7.9 FURTHER READINGS

---

1. Çoban, B. (Ed.). (2016). *Social media and social movements: The transformation of communication patterns*. Lexington Books.
2. Crick, N. (Ed.). (2021). *The rhetoric of social movements: Networks, power, and new media*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
3. Dijck, J. van. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press.
4. Hinton, S., & Hjorth, L. (2013). *Understanding social media* (First edition). SAGE.

5. Hou, M. (2018). Social media celebrity and the institutionalization of YouTube. *Convergence*, 25(3), 534–553. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856517750368>
6. Jacobsen, L. B. (2018). Vitafiction and virality: Celebrities fictionalizing the self online. *Convergence*, 26(4), 912–926. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856518818081>
7. Kissas, A. (2022). Populist everyday politics in the (mediatized) age of social media: The case of Instagram celebrity advocacy. *New Media & Society*, 26(5), 2766–2785. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221092006>
8. Marwick, A. E. (2023). *The private is political: Networked privacy and social media*. Yale University Press.
9. McNutt, J. G. (Ed.). (2018). *Technology, activism, and social justice in a digital age*. Oxford University Press.
10. Mortensen, M., & McCrow-Young, A. (2022). *Social media images and conflicts* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003176923>
11. Mortensen, M., Neumayer, C., & Poell, T. (Eds.). (2019). *Social media materialities and protest: Critical reflections* (1 Edition). Routledge.
12. Pickard, V. W., & Yang, G. (Eds.). (2017). *Media activism in the digital age*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
13. Rogers, R. (2020). Deplatforming: Following extreme Internet celebrities to Telegram and alternative social media. *European Journal of Communication*, 35(3), 213–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323120922066>
14. Roy, S. D. (n.d.). *Social media and capitalism*.
15. Sadiki, L. (Ed.). (2015). *Routledge handbook of the Arab Spring: Rethinking democratisation*. Routledge.
16. Tse, T., Leung, V., Cheng, K., & Chan, J. (2018). A clown, a political messiah or a punching bag? Rethinking the performative identity construction of celebrity through social media. *Global Media and China*, 3(3), 141–157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2059436418805540>
17. Usher, B. (2020). The celebrified columnist and opinion spectacle: Journalism’s changing place in networked public spheres. *Journalism*, 22(11), 2836–2854. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919897815>
18. Zhang, Y. (2024). Mediated feminism: Exploring the pedagogical impact of the intellectual feminist celebrities in digital China. *Media Asia*, 52(1), 126–133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2024.2312661>

---

## 7.10 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

---

### Check Your Progress: 1

1. A social media influencer is an individual who has built a dedicated online following by sharing content in a specific niche, often leveraging platforms like Instagram, YouTube, or TikTok to engage audiences

and influence their purchasing decisions. The pandemic accelerated this trend as global lockdowns shifted attention to online platforms. With traditional marketing avenues disrupted, brands increasingly collaborated with influencers to reach digital consumers. Influencers gained visibility as they adapted quickly to the demand for relatable, real-time content, addressing audiences' needs for connection, entertainment, and recommendations during isolation.

2. Celebrity culture has evolved from traditional fame rooted in accomplishments like acting or sports to a multifaceted phenomenon where individuals achieve stardom via reality TV, social media, or viral content. Earlier, celebrities were distant figures admired from afar, while today, fans seek closer interaction through platforms like Instagram or YouTube. Micro-celebrities and influencers have democratised fame, allowing ordinary people to attain recognition. This shift reflects changing media consumption patterns, the influence of digital platforms, and a growing emphasis on personal branding and relatability over traditional talent.

### Check Your Progress: 2

1. Micro-celebrities use social media platforms to build personal brands by consistently sharing niche content that resonates with specific audiences. They engage directly with followers through comments, polls, and Q&A sessions, fostering a sense of intimacy and authenticity. They expand their reach by leveraging trends, hashtags, and collaborations with other creators. Storytelling, transparency about their lives, and alignment with values make their brands relatable. Sponsorships and affiliate marketing further monetise their platforms, blending personal stories with promotional content.
2. Influencers establish boundaries by selectively sharing aspects of their personal lives while maintaining privacy for sensitive matters. Many create separate social media accounts for personal and professional content or curate posts to align with their public persona. Scheduling “offline” time and using tools like content calendars helps manage work-life balance. Setting boundaries with followers regarding invasive questions or oversharing ensures they retain control over their narrative. Legal agreements with brands often outline the scope of sponsored content, reinforcing professional limits.

### Check Your Progress: 3

1. Fan culture is characterised by active participation, emotional investment, and community-building among fans who deeply connect with a celebrity, show, or brand. Unlike traditional audience engagement, which is passive and observational, fan culture involves creating fan art and fanfiction, organising meetups, or engaging in campaigns to support their idol. Social media amplifies this dynamic by enabling fans to interact directly with celebrities and like-minded peers. Fan culture blurs the line between producer and consumer, fostering collaborative engagement.

## Social Media and Society

2. Celebrity activism leverages fame to spotlight societal issues, reaching vast audiences and generating critical discussion. Celebrities use their platforms to endorse causes, participate in campaigns, or collaborate with organisations to drive change. Their influence can amplify movements, attract funding, and mobilise followers to act. For example, figures like Leonardo DiCaprio advocate for environmental conservation. While impactful, critics question the depth of celebrity activism, urging consistency and genuine commitment beyond symbolic gestures.
3. Celebrities monetise fame by partnering with brands for endorsements, leveraging their reach to market products or services. They often co-create products, such as beauty or fashion lines, to align with their brand. Social media plays a significant role; posts, stories, or videos featuring branded content enable targeted marketing. Merchandise, licensing deals, and exclusive collaborations further expand revenue streams. Authenticity is vital; endorsements must resonate with their public persona to maintain audience trust and credibility.



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY