

Case Study

The Complete Guide to Influencer Marketing

By Alexandra Mondalek

As the creator space has matured, brands must be thoughtful about crafting a strategy that leverages influencer marketing's full power, considering everything from talent scouting to the effectiveness of metrics.



Executive Summary

More than a decade after the launch of Instagram, influencer marketing has evolved from a cottage industry into a global juggernaut. In a sense, fashion and beauty brands are just beginning to understand how best to use creators to sell their products. Spending on influencer marketing is expected to top \$4 billion in 2022 in the US alone, according to eMarketer. The explosive growth of this market isn't without its growing pains, which include costlier endeavours and moving goalposts.

The question is no longer about whether a brand should get into influencer marketing. Rather, it's how to most effectively reach their target audience with influencer marketing.

As the space has matured, some challenges, such as finding the right influencers to pair with the right brand, have receded. Others, such as inaccurate performance metrics, have stubbornly persisted. At the same time, the landscape has changed dramatically, with a constantly shifting array of talent and the rise of TikTok as arguably the first true challenger to Instagram for fashion's marketing dollars. Meanwhile, changes to privacy regulation and norms will impact marketers' ability to track consumers effectively.

This case study seeks to educate readers on topics ranging from platform usage, talent scouting and relationship building, contract negotiations, content strategy, campaign execution and measurement. The guidance focuses on influencer marketing in the US and Europe, as well as in China, where differing cultural norms impact the way talent and brands work together. BoF spoke with experts from influencer marketing agencies, talent firms, fashion and beauty brands, creators and platforms to understand the challenges they are facing and how they are innovating for the future.



Influencer marketing has exploded globally, so much so that everyday social media users can become overnight influencers with millions of followers. This case study explores how best to work with talent and more. Coco Bassey.

Have you been forwarded this Case Study? Read more deep-dive analysis by exploring a [BoF Professional](#) membership at businessoffashion.com/memberships or contact professional@businessoffashion.com

Picking the Right Platform

While most every fashion and beauty brand has a presence and relationships with influencers on Instagram, brands should also be thinking about other platforms, even if the presence of a target audience isn't obvious.

From there, determining which key performance indicators a brand is interested in achieving will inform its strategy. Instagram, long the de-facto platform for influencer marketing, can drive both top and bottom-funnel marketing goals, from achieving brand awareness to generating sales. YouTube, too, can help expand brand awareness and refine storytelling. Pinterest can help promote traffic to a brand's website. Snapchat is emerging as a testing ground for social commerce, while other platforms, like Reddit, can help brands reach niche but highly engaged audiences.

But the biggest change to the influencer landscape is the rise of TikTok. In 2020, Bytedance-owned TikTok took off as the go-to digital destination for teens, making it the first new social media platform to demonstrate any real staying power in the last decade. TikTok has a grip on Gen-Z's attention, wielding a gravitational pull for brands eager to tap young consumers. Its short-form videos and addictive, highly-targeted algorithm attract one billion monthly users.

Even still, the platform is so new and its format so unique that brands are still figuring out how best to leverage it. TikTok influencers can help higher-

priced or luxury brands drive awareness and reach future customers given their reach, but are also useful for driving conversions, particularly for more attainable products at lower price points, like drugstore beauty products.

Given the way the TikTok algorithm works, users do not have to follow an influencer to see their content in their main feed (the "For You Page" or FYP). Factors such as user activity, location and language determine which content is delivered on the FYP. Other platforms have broadened the content they deliver to users in their main feeds, instead of only displaying content from followed accounts.

TikTok users, perhaps more frequently than those on other platforms, have found themselves becoming influencers overnight after a video stumbles upon virality. Dallas-based influencer Carla Rockmore's TikTok styling videos have earned her over one million followers on the platform, despite only beginning to post to TikTok during the pandemic. She now has representation from influencer marketing firm Socialyte and has signed deals with retailers and brand names like Bloomingdale's and The Editorialist.

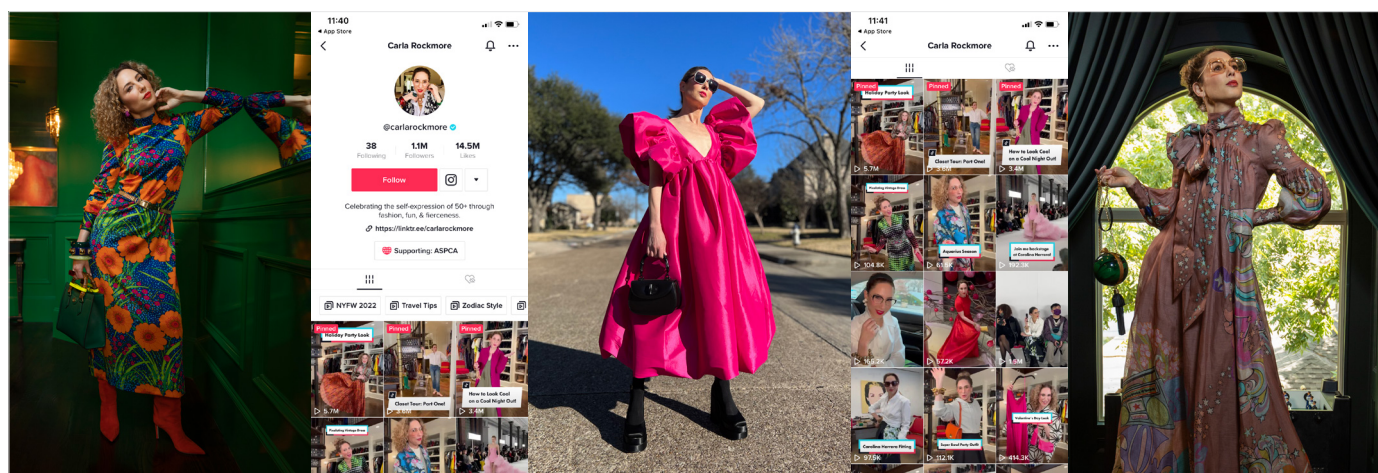
Although TikTok influencers can reach audiences beyond those who follow them, going viral once does not guarantee it will happen again, said Thomas Repelski, founder of influencer marketing firm Lefty, which is owned by The Independents Group.

For example, Christine Le, an influencer who has more than 350,000 followers on TikTok (at the time of writing) posts videos with view counts ranging from 3,000 to three million.

"Achieving the max [reach] is the holy grail, as it means that the content over-performed versus what brands would typically expect when they start [a] partnership" with an influencer, Repelski said, given that contract terms and fees are often determined according to the talent's previous content performance.

Despite TikTok's rise, Instagram still remains at the centre of the influencer marketing space. Instagram's longevity is a major part of its appeal; it can demonstrate to brands and influencers a track record of withstanding new competition while offering new ways to reach audiences and monetise the platform.

Many of Instagram's innovations mimic upstart competitors. Instagram Stories launched after Snapchat gained popularity with its disappearing photos, while [Reels is a TikTok clone](#). What matters for brands and influencers is not whether these features are original, but that they engage large audiences. Instagram has begun to more explicitly monetise its various formats and has given influencers permission to use product tags (linking directly to a product) in their content. Instagram is also testing an affiliate programme in the US.



Carla Rockmore is a Dallas, Texas-based influencer who began using TikTok during the pandemic. She has since shared her popular styling videos with millions of viewers. Courtesy.

Exhibit 1: Platform Playbook

While Instagram dominated the influencer marketing space in the 2010s, a new decade ushered in alternatives.

Platform	Active users per month	Year founded	Key attributes for influencer marketing	User behaviour
Instagram	2 billion, as of Dec. 2021	2010	A de-facto market standard for many brands and influencers. Diverse features and robust analytics tools.	Users visit for discovery and to interact with friends, family and influencers. Intent to shop is nascent, though developing with new tools like influencer product tags.
YouTube	2 billion, as of Feb. 2022	2005	Home for long-form video content; testing short-form video content. Talent native to YouTube command high rates.	Highly engaged users interested in entertainment and learning. Intent to shop is nascent, though the platform is testing livestream shopping tools with creators and brands.
TikTok	1 billion, as of Sept. 2021	2016	Experienced a flood of engaged new users, particularly from Gen-Z. Brand awareness can be engineered; virality cannot.	Users visit for entertainment and discovery. Intent to shop is nascent, though users in China do shop on China’s version of TikTok (Douyin).
Snapchat	500 million, as of Oct. 2021	2011	Emerging creator and content partner tools. Creator marketplace in beta, while creator-led programming available for syndication or brand partnerships.	Users engage with local creators, communities and friends. Intent to shop is nascent, though Snapchat is testing augmented reality tools to encourage social commerce.
Pinterest	431 million, as of Feb. 2022	2009	Emerging creator and content partner tools. Influencer monetisation emerging through shoppable “pins.”	Users visit for discovery and shopping.

Source: BoF reporting

YouTube, home to some of the industry’s biggest – and most expensive – talent, continues to experiment with its approach to influencer content. In January 2022, it ended its YouTube Originals programming, which sought to create original content, and is pivoting to support content from creators in its Black Voices Fund and YouTube Kids Fund. YouTube says it has over two million creators in its Partner Programme and has paid out \$30 billion to influencers, artists and media companies since 2019. YouTube has also rolled out shorter-form video formats and can host livestream content as well.

“I’m always impressed when you have someone that’s subscribing to you and watching you on YouTube; some of those people are dedicating 15 to 20 minutes

out of their day just to watch you,” said Coco Bassey, an influencer based in New York. “That’s something that YouTube offers that not a lot of other social media platforms offer.”

Fashion and beauty communities have also emerged on fringe platforms like Discord (where live text, audio and video connect users on a shared “server”) and Twitch (which hosts livestreamers and gamers). Twitter and LinkedIn typically do not attract influencers whose content depends on photos or videos, although they can be used to drive conversations with highly engaged communities. Snapchat, which marketers say is a place for small communities, has launched its own user-generated content platform, Spotlight. Spotlight offers millions of dollars each month

to incentivise influencers to post to the platform. Pinterest introduced Shoppable Pins in July 2021, enabling creators to earn money through affiliate links and sponsored posts with brands, and pledged to invest \$20 million towards its creator monetisation programme, called Creator Rewards.

Of course, good, old-fashioned internet blogs still serve a purpose today. Bassey, who began publishing fashion and beauty content on her website in 2013, said that’s where most of her conversions still happen.

How Rimowa Succeeded by Relinquishing Creative Control



Rather than try to figure out what appeals to Gen-Z on TikTok, Rimowa left it to experts like influencer Morgann Franklin, AKA “Barbie Doll Babe.” @barbiedollbabe.

When Rimowa launched its TikTok account in March 2021, it realised its content differed greatly from the usual kinds of videos that went viral on the platform. Tapping influencer partners — who understood the platform’s nuances — would be their next step in establishing a broader presence on the platform.

For the launch of a collection of translucent neon hard suitcases and accessories in July 2021, the LVMH-owned luxury luggage brand gave seven creators from five different countries “full creative control” to create TikTok videos for the campaign, which lived on the influencers’ profiles, said Julia Serafin, Rimowa digital marketing and media manager.

The resulting videos were stylistically different from what Rimowa would have produced itself, littered with stop-motion, quick-panning camera shots and Gen-Z’s unique brand of zaniness. Twin Korean fashion influencers Qjin and Qwon (174,000 TikTok followers) spliced together a fast-paced video showing them packing clothes into and rolling around neon green and highlighter pink luggage. TikToker Lola Clark AKA “Scoobie Zoobie” — whose aesthetic is similar to e-girls, an internet subculture that is an amalgamation of the emo, anime and Tumblr communities — toted her Rimowa luggage around London for her 4.7 million TikTok followers. “Barbie Doll Babe” Morgann Franklin lent her Clueless-like, pink-soaked aesthetic.

“It was definitely something different that we wouldn’t have produced on our site, but ... to live on their social channels, it made perfect sense,” said Serafin.

The goal was to build brand awareness with Gen-Z, who might not be able to afford Rimowa’s \$1,200 hard-shell luggage now — but can aspire to do so in the future. Working with influencer marketing agency Social Studies, Rimowa looked at video views, impressions, comments, shares and social sentiment to measure the project’s success. Rimowa has achieved 55.7 million impressions on TikTok from the campaign to date, which Serafin said is 13.4 times what the brand expected.

“We were so Instagram-focused over the past few years because it’s one of our largest platforms, but now we’re really trying to build a strategy that adapts native content to each platform,” said Kristen Hansen, Rimowa senior digital and media marketing manager. “So, we have to bring influencers into our world as the experts and content creators that do what they do best.”

Plucking From the Talent Pipeline



Zalando works with influencers who attend international fashion weeks like those in Milan and Copenhagen. Zalando.

Influencer marketing services often claim to have tens of millions of creators on their platforms, making the process of whittling down with whom to work a daunting prospect, even with AI-powered algorithms helping to guide the way.

In the earliest days of influencer marketing, brands' decisions about who to work with depended largely on the size of an influencer's following. That is no longer the case. Instead, it is helpful to first think about which platforms a brand would like to leverage to reach a target audience.

Each platform has "native" talent — influencers who create content specifically for a platform where their audiences are most engaged. Brands can of course commission influencers to post across platforms, but their content will more than likely resonate best on the talent's "native" platform. (Beauty influencer Meredith Duxbury, for example, has nearly 15 million followers on TikTok, compared to just under one million on Instagram, where she typically reposts TikTok content.)

The next consideration in talent scouting is budget. Macro influencers — with more than 500,000 followers across platforms — fetch the highest rates. Those rates generally decrease as an influencer's following shrinks. (This can vary depending on whether the influencer has a management team helping them negotiate rates or whether they are in high demand.)

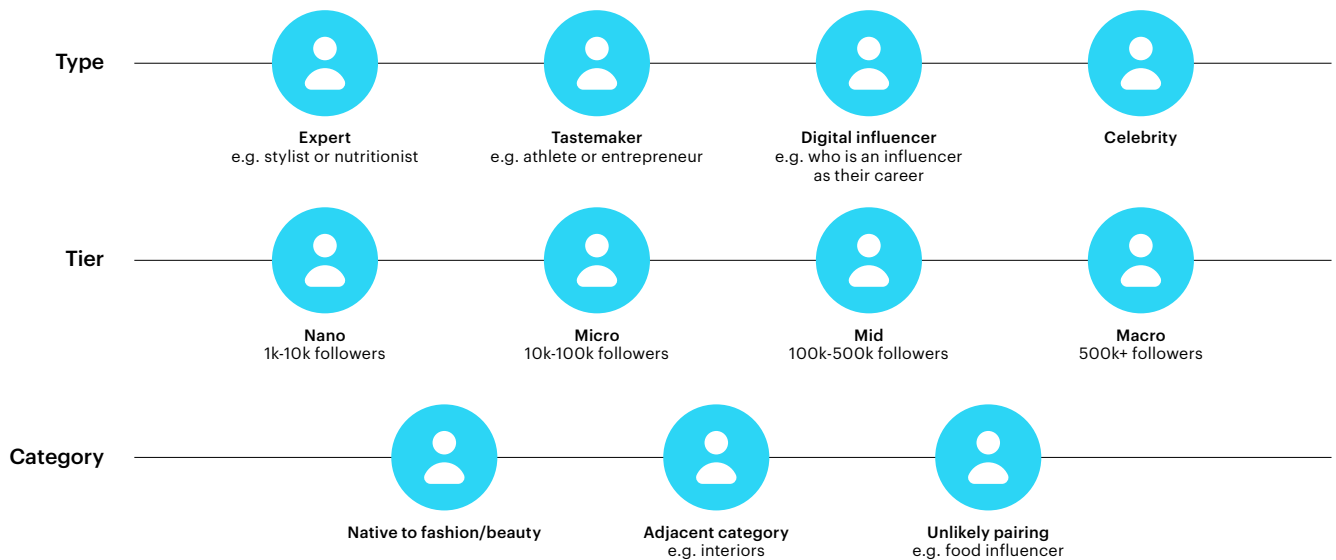
"CMOs always want to think, 'who is the biggest person we can get?' But ... you have to work with what you got," said Brandon Perlman, founder of the influencer marketing firm Social Studies. "I would much rather work with lots of small people to bet on and test different styles. Test for content, creator and channel diversity, then really measure what works."

Once a budget is decided, brands can begin to think about the talent with whom they want to work according to three criteria: type, tier and category, said Julianne Fraser, president and chief executive of digital marketing firm Dialogue.

Exhibit 2: A Framework for Finding Talent

After a brand has determined its budget, a roster of influencer talent can be built according to type, tier and category.

Influencer selection criteria



Source: BoF reporting

“CMOs always want to think, ‘who is the biggest person we can get?’ But ... you have to work with what you got.”

— Brandon Perlman

Over the last several years, software as a service (SaaS) and other influencer marketing platforms have emerged to automate the way that brands connect with talent. Communications firms, talent agencies and brands supplement a data-led approach with [their own human touch, evaluating the finer, qualitative points about an influencer’s profile](#) and following.

An “influencer” can fit one of many prototypes. They may be full-time content creators who rely on brand partnerships for their primary source of income. They may be “tastemakers” who have large and engaged followings as a result of their careers, such as entrepreneurs or athletes, meaning that managing social media partnerships is not their full-time job. Then there are “experts” — like doctors, nutritionists or stylists — who serve a niche audience specific to their expertise.

For example, Fraser’s Dialogue team crafted an influencer strategy for the brand ATP Atelier, enlisting Linh Niller (full-time influencer); Olivia Perez (a tastemaker who runs a non-profit and

hosts a podcast); and Eva Chen (the expert former magazine editor-turned-Instagram executive).

The traditional tier structure of influencers according to audience size — macro, mid, micro and nano — still applies, with each tier offering brands the opportunity to achieve specific KPIs (micro-influencers are adept at driving local engagement, for example).

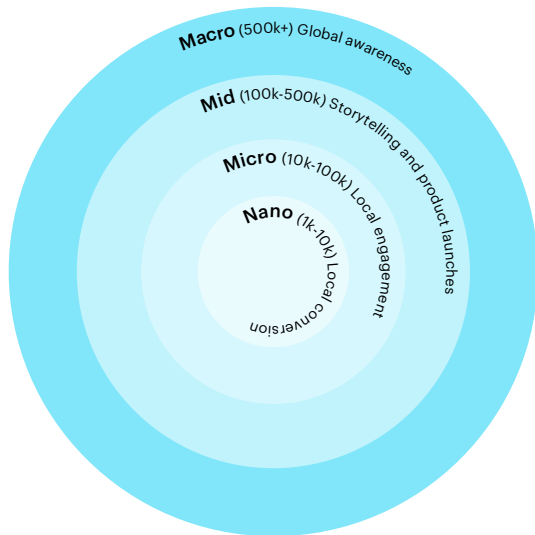
Organising influencers according to categories is also helpful: Talent may focus the bulk of their content on fashion, beauty or health and wellness, for example, with other categories appearing periodically. It can be effective to match brands with influencers outside their category because it diverts from the norm, forcing a pause in the infinite thumb scroll, as long as there is some crossover appeal.

“We’re making sure we’re diversifying across categories so that if we work with a beauty brand, we shouldn’t only work with beauty influencers,” Fraser said. “There’s a lot of lifestyle or fashion or health and wellness influencers that can bring [the brand] to life.”

Exhibit 3: Targeting Talent by Tier

Brands should take an “always-on” approach across all tiers of influencers to simultaneously achieve different goals.

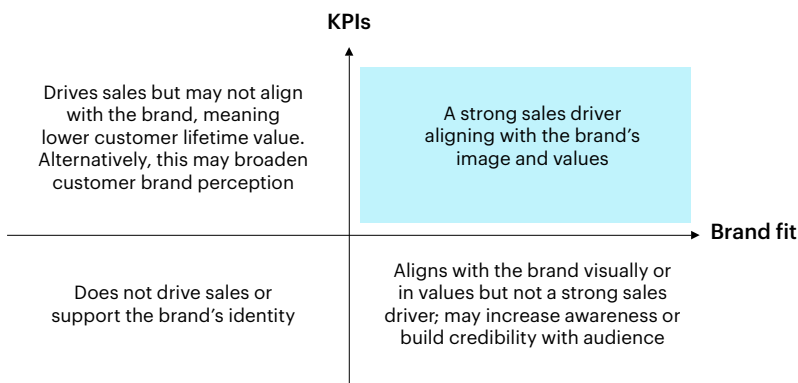
Influencer tiers by follower count and sample marketing objective



Source: Social Studies and BoF

Exhibit 4: Fit Versus Function

An ideal influencer delivers key performance indicators while also reflecting the brand’s values and aesthetics.



Source: BoF reporting

In 2021, a new category of influencers became available to brands for partnerships. Until 2021, it was illegal in the US for student-athletes — many of whom have amassed sizeable social media followings and are tapped into highly engaged campus communities — to profit off of their name and likeness. That changed in July when a handful of states began passing laws to allow tens of thousands of college athletes to accept sponsorships and collaborations, offering brands a unique opportunity to reach Gen-Z directly.

StockX, for example, inked a multi-year deal in November 2021 with University of Connecticut women’s basketball player Paige Bueckers, who has 947,000 followers on Instagram and 345,000 on TikTok.

The most important criteria in selecting any influencer — regardless of how popular they appear to be — is whether the talent actually likes your brand. If the influencer isn’t yet aware of the brand, marketers should introduce them to a brand’s founder, story and products. Conversely, if there is an influencer who seems to be critical of the brand, offering to start a dialogue explaining the brand’s position may be better than ignoring them.

“The absolute number one selection criteria we recommend is: Is this person actively showing you love?” said Conor Begley, co-founder of influencer marketing firm Tribe Dynamics. “If they are, this is who you should invest in, because of all of [the] secondary effects [they can have.]”

Contracts and Terms

Nailing the Deal-Making Details

Influencer marketing contracts have evolved to encompass more sophisticated deals. And where creators and brands might in the early days have hashed out an agreement themselves, today a deal will likely be shepherded by talent management firms or automated by software platforms.

As the space has matured and as influencers have become savvier about how their content is repurposed, new terms — like those that protect influencers' work — have emerged in contracts. The result of those additions is higher costs for brands to work with talent, regardless of tier. Brands put themselves at risk by lowballing influencers, who are quick to share dissatisfying experiences about pay or partnerships on social media.

On the whole, the length of influencer partnerships has increased: Brands may contract an influencer for at least one quarter, often for six months, to determine whether the partnership has potential for success. Brands are looking to extract the most value out of talent,

while influencers favour fewer, better deals over one-off assignments. These partnerships may outline deliverables around a specific activation or campaign or be more loosely structured. For example, the edict may be that an influencer posts a certain number of times during a period mentioning a brand, but there is no strict guidance around when or how they do so.

Top tier talent has begun to expect more from the brands with whom they partner, as paid content deals have become table stakes.

“A lot of our clients have outgrown the traditional brand relationship,” said Vanessa Flaherty, partner and executive vice president at Digital Brand Architects (DBA), whose roster of clients include macro-influencers like Camila Coelho and Mikayla Nogueira.

Influencers interested in building a new skill set or padding their resume have been eager to claim “creative director” titles (like Kendall Jenner did with e-commerce fashion retailer FWRD),

flex their “consulting” skills and even invest in brands in exchange for equity. In May 2021, beauty influencer Nyma Tang evolved her existing paid campaign work with the drugstore retailer CVS to become its first “beauty inclusivity consultant.”

Rockmore, the fashion influencer, said she's interested in co-designing products with fashion brands (she's a designer with her own jewellery line in the works). But she also expects control over designing the products to which she's lending her name.

“If they're interested in a basic T-shirt [collaboration] with a little logo, my eyes are gonna roll back in my head,” Rockmore said.

Aimee Song, another DBA client who exploded with the first crop of Instagram influencers in the 2010s, invested in the plant-based protein company Human Improvement after she had posted about the brand and Human Improvement reached out with the investment opportunity. Song has created branded content for Human Improvement to share



FWRD hired Kendall Jenner as its “creative director,” highlighting a shift in how brands work with talent to deepen relationships and build more substantive deals. Glen Luchford for FWRD.

with her own audience and has seeded product to her creator friends, Flaherty said. Song has more than six million Instagram followers, while Human Improvement has about 10,000.

A wave of influencers has also worked to make the influencer marketing industry more equitable for all. After the police killing of George Floyd sparked a racial reckoning, individual influencers and groups of talent banded together to advocate for fairness and equity in the influencer marketing space. Since, influencers have been more willing to share rates among their peers, which leaves brands or influencer agencies that do not pay consistent rates at risk of backlash. Diversity riders (contractual clauses that require brands to include a given number of people of colour in their campaigns) were another influencer-led initiative borne out of frustration with the lack of representation, though they have largely fallen out of focus since 2020 while disparity has persisted, according to those who help ink contracts for influencers and brands.

Still, issues remain, as evidenced by Old Navy's fumbled Juneteenth campaign in May 2021. The American basics brand began preparations for a Juneteenth campaign — to commemorate the federal holiday in the US marking the anniversary of the emancipation of slaves — to launch in June 2021. Working through an influencer marketing agency, Old Navy asked influencers to apply to be part of the campaign, purchase the T-shirt that they would be required to wear in any campaign assets and offered a flat, low rate of \$425 for one in-feed Instagram post and three Instagram stories, regardless of the influencer's follower count or engagement rate. Talent shared their dissatisfaction at the attempt to capitalise on the holiday online and the [Gap-owned retailer quickly announced it would pull the campaign](#).

Of course, influencers present risks to brands with their own behaviour as well, particularly when it surrounds a polarising or political issue. Although it is beneficial for brands to work with talent who express themselves honestly with their audience, partnering with an influencer whose behaviour runs contrary to a brand's values puts the brand itself at risk. As governments began distributing vaccines against Covid-19 and encouraging citizens to be inoculated, for example, some influencers spread vaccine misinformation on their social media platforms or ignored public health guidelines, leaving brands with whom they are associated at risk of backlash.

Adopting a force majeure clause (defined as the unexpected circumstances that

allow for a contract to be terminated) or a morals clause (which prohibits behaviour seen as obscene or offensive) into a contract provides flexibility should things get dicey.

Content licensing terms have emerged to become a hotly contested part of influencer contract negotiations. At the beginning of the pandemic, brands were largely unable to stage their own shoots, making influencer content — and ownership over it — more important than ever. Owning the rights to an influencer's content allows brands to repurpose it across marketing channels and platforms beyond social media.

There is an inherent tug-of-war between brands and influencers on this point.

“Having a brand in a specific category leveraging your client's content over and over again may ultimately restrict them from working with a competitor in that same category three, four or five months down the line because they're seeing the brand repost or putting them in ads consistently,” Flaherty said.

Striking a balance between the brand's and the influencer's interests is important to maintain the relationship and foster goodwill. DBA tries to limit a brand's content usage to one month and then negotiate additional usage rights for higher fees. At Social Studies, Perlman pushes for at least six months of usage. Shehzeen Ahmed, Social Studies senior vice president of operations, said that if a professional photographer is required for a campaign shoot, either a brand provides the influencer with a photographer or the influencer hires the photographer and then bills the brand for the costs. In either case, all of the content that is produced is owned by the influencer, she said.

In order to avoid any excessively high usage costs, build language into contracts that allows for the option to add on rights after a campaign's assets have been reviewed, said Danielle McGrory, founder of communications and marketing firm Communite. This allows brands to only pay the additional usage rights for the influencers whose content they want to keep running.

“There's no reason to pay for paid ad usage upfront for 10 creators when we are only going to end up using three of them,” said McGrory.

Crafting the Perfect Campaign



For its “Like a Boss” campaign, Boss enlisted talent ranging from household celebrities like Emma Roberts to internet stars like TikToker Khabyy Lame, pictured above. Boss.

An influencer campaign might have a seemingly perfect roster of talent enlisted to bring a brand to life. But without thoughtful campaign execution, the entire operation can go belly up. That doesn’t mean brands should keep a firm grip over the final product. Instead, brands must engage in a delicate dance between relinquishing and retaining control over the creative direction of a project.

Brands should approach every new influencer deal with the hope that it develops into a long-term, one-year-plus partnership, but begin by testing with shorter-term partnerships (lasting at least one quarter).

Piecemeal brand activations according to calendar events don’t “work as well as when you use the influencer in more of that brand ambassador capacity, where they’re sprinkling in your brand in an evergreen, consistent way,” said Stephanie Sandbo, head of brand partnerships at LTK, a shopping discovery and influencer marketing platform. “It allows for that awareness and then that sales lever to be pulled a little bit later once the audience is familiar with your brand.”

Brands must decide on the approach their campaign will take and whether it will include some combination of product gifting, paid partnerships, affiliate marketing, events, co-branded collaborations or other content. In an ideal world, a brand’s year-round influencer marketing strategy (or at least a specific campaign) will include a mix of those levers. Importantly, influencer marketing activations must also be supported by performance marketing — pushing content out through paid ads — to help amplify the influencer’s content.

“Augmenting your [micro-influencer] strategy with paid to get your creator of 25,000 followers reaching 250,000 people with \$500 in paid media behind it, rather than spending \$10,000 to get one person with 250,000 followers, is how I would encourage anyone starting out to think about this space,” said Social Studies’ Perlman.

Perhaps precipitated by TikTok’s rise, short-form video content typically has higher engagement rates than static image posts, according to Tribe Dynamics. But short-form video content shouldn’t be the only thing an influencer creates for a partnership. At the same

time, brands should not expect a video that is a viral hit on TikTok to necessarily perform in the same way on another platform.

“Each platform has its own community and its own narrative and its own inside jokes,” said Begley. “What resonates on TikTok won’t necessarily resonate on Instagram Reels, even though it is the same content format.”

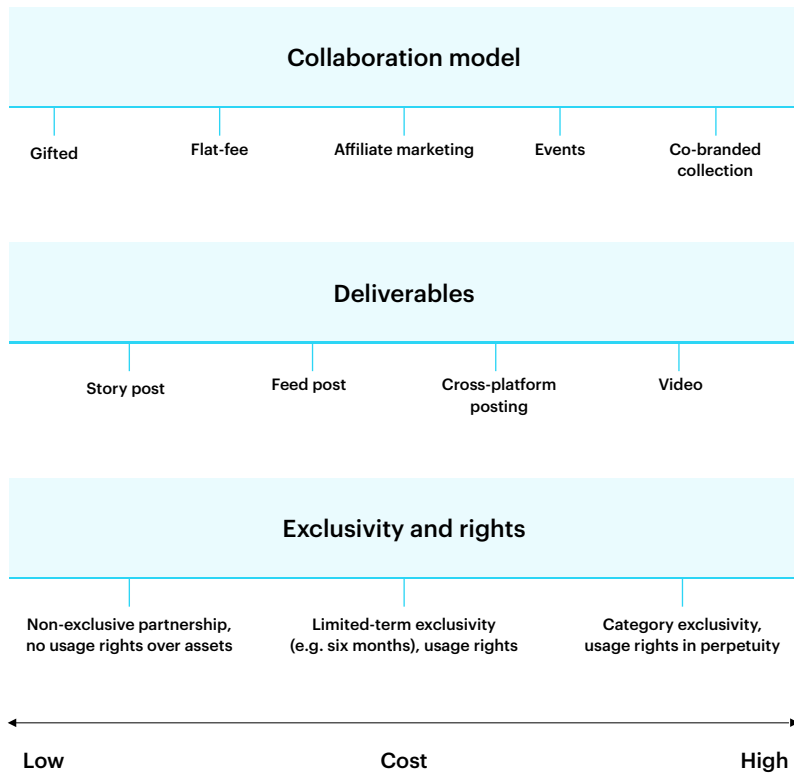
Making the Most of the Marketing Moment

Some brands and retailers have turned the influencer recruitment process into a marketing campaign in itself, borne out of operations that typically happen behind the scenes. Take the Sephora Squad: The beauty retailer launched its ambassador programme in 2019, framing it as a contest to which influencers and aspiring digital beauty talent can apply for a chance at securing a year-long partnership with Sephora that includes free products and mentorship in exchange for content.

Sephora required applicants who qualified for later rounds to ask for testimonials from their followers, giving

Exhibit 5: Pay to Play

Factors like the type of collaboration, breadth of the partnership and exclusivity terms impact the cost of an influencer partnership.



Source: BoF reporting

their audience a vested interest in seeing who makes the cut.

Marquee ambassador programmes like these help brands create a sense of community — any marketer’s dream. But for brands to successfully launch this kind of initiative, they must offer real value to talent.

“[Influencers] are small businesses, so it’s interesting to think about the diverse needs that they have and how we can support them with the resources that we have available as a retailer the size of Sephora,” Abigail Jacobs, senior vice president of integrated marketing and brand at Sephora, told BoF in June 2021.

Communicating Expectations Through the Creative Brief

Crafting the creative brief — the outline and instructions for a campaign — is crucial. The best briefs are thorough but do not dictate rigid scripts. It is important to include, for example, details related to a new product launch so influencers better understand what they’re sharing with their audience. A brand should share its preferences around a campaign’s lighting, props and general tone with all of the talent enlisted so there is consistency across the campaign.

Fraser helps brands craft creative briefs that include questions to help an influencer think about how a product or service fits into and enhances their life.

“Asking all of these questions and really encouraging people to share their stories and come back to us with concepts that we can get approved is a really great way

The ‘Boss’ Method of Influencer Success

For Boss’ rebrand and accompanying influencer marketing initiative in January 2022, the brand enlisted 220 digital influencers and celebrities to promote the campaign, “Like a Boss,” conceived by fashion advertising veteran Trey Laird, who Boss hired to work on the project.

The campaign’s primary goal was to build brand awareness for the newly conceived Boss brand (spun off from Hugo Boss to appeal to Millennials, while the Hugo line is separately meant to appeal to Gen-Z) and reach a “combined follower audience” of one billion people. Boss hired celebrities like Emma Roberts and Senegalese TikTok star Khaby Lame as well as lesser-known influencers like Poorna Malavath, the youngest person to climb Mount Everest.

Miah Sullivan, Hugo Boss senior vice president of global marketing and brand communications, said that supplementing the brand’s influencer marketing strategy with paid advertising — on its own channels as well as the creators’ accounts — helped the campaign

explode. The campaign earned \$21.1 million in media impact value (MIV), which measures the value of a brand or influencer’s digital activity, according to Launchmetrics. As a benchmark, GucciFest, another large-scale digital fashion brand activation, earned \$20.9 million in MIV when it launched, indicating the scale and success of Boss’ efforts.

“That is where we really stimulated the algorithm so all of a sudden, things go viral,” Sullivan said. Beyond brand awareness, Sullivan said that the Boss-branded black hooded sweatshirt had one of the brand’s largest unit orders ever placed. Half of the inventory sold out within five days after launch while global e-commerce site traffic doubled immediately following the campaign and continued to increase in the weeks following.

“We’re seeing the highest e-comm traffic that we’ve seen in the history of the brand,” added Sullivan.

Exhibit 6: Influencer Campaign Approach vs. KPIs

When deciding what kind of influencer campaign is appropriate, brands should think about their budget and objectives.

Product gifting (low spend)	→	Brand awareness; relationship building with talent
Paid partnerships (mid-level spend)	→	Variety of KPIs like awareness, conversion or storytelling depending on the talent involved
Affiliate marketing (mid-level spend)	→	Conversions
Co-branded collaborations (mid-level to high spend)	→	Brand awareness, conversions

Source: BoF reporting

to avoid that cookie-cutter approach,” Fraser said. “It’s a lot of work but it is scalable.”

When crafting creative briefs for influencers, brands should first determine the kind of content they need. For example, if a brand has plenty of product and e-commerce shots but lacks lifestyle imagery, it may want to tap influencers who specialise in that content. Similarly, a brand that is still experimenting with TikTok can commission influencers who have mastered the platform.

“Are we approaching [the influencer] to capture amazing content that can be repurposed for email marketing or the website? Then we’re really looking at aesthetics,” said Fraser. “But if the purpose is to build awareness of a product launch or to invite someone to attend a retail opening or an event, certainly the real and raw content performs really well.”

Zalando said it offers “comprehensive guidelines” for content creation, which includes specific deliverables, technical requirements for on-site content and tips for social content based on insights it gathers internally and with platform partners. The brand also provides monthly briefs with specific themes for creators to follow, which includes mood boards for inspiration, said Zalando marketing director Natalie Wills.

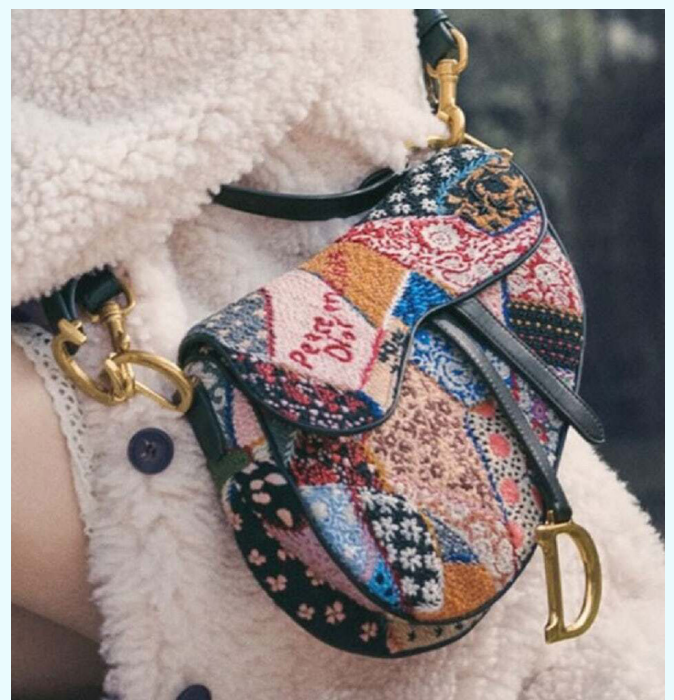
Dior’s Saddle Bag Blitz

A highly choreographed influencer campaign can build brand awareness, but in order for it to not exhaust social media users, influencers must have enough freedom to push products in their own way.

Take Dior. In 2018, the French luxury label reissued its Saddle bag, working with hundreds of global macro-influencers to promote the launch. The campaign rollout had the influencers posting their #SaddleBag content in near unison in an all-out blitz, earning coverage from publications such as Refinery29, Bloomberg and Quartz.

Some criticised the strategy, claiming the approach saturated the market in a way that runs counter to the idea that luxury is exclusive. With a blitz strategy, “[influencers] are all regurgitating the exact same pieces,” Fraser said. “Sure, it’s effective. You’re getting hit with the same messaging, but it’s so obvious that it’s an ad when it’s that repetitive.”

Despite the criticism, a Dior spokesperson told Bloomberg at the time that the launch generated “incredible store traffic and cross-selling opportunities as clients rushed out to buy the bags.”



A Dior Saddle bag. Pamela Hanson for Dior.

China's \$210 Billion Influencer Economy

Even as the country's lucrative influencer — or key opinion leader (KOL) — industry matures, it's not slowing down. From taking a multi-platform approach while driving hyper-localised campaigns to staying abreast of regulatory shifts, global brands need to keep pace with domestic firms.

By Zoe Suen

As the importance of the Chinese market snowballed for brands over the last decade, so too have its influencers, or as they're known locally, key opinion leaders (KOLs).

The indispensability of KOLs — and sub-groups like key opinion customers (KOC), salespeople (KOS) and experts (KOE) — for brand growth in China is hard to overstate. According to the country's National Bureau of Statistics, the size of China's influencer economy doubled in both 2018 and 2019, resulting in a market worth an estimated \$210 billion in 2020. The agency forecasts that this figure will reach \$1.035 trillion by 2025.

Like most features of China's digital ecosystem, the way KOLs work and interact with fashion and beauty brands is changing at a rapid pace — one that is often hard to keep up with for global brands. "It used to be the case that you could make your annual marketing plan and stick to it," says Kim Leitzes, managing director for APAC at technology and data analytics provider Launchmetrics. "But China is changing at least every month."

Apps to Know and Grow

China's top apps and platforms are different from those in the West: Super-app WeChat, Weibo and Alibaba's livestreaming mainstay Taobao, female-focused Xiaohongshu and short-video giant TikTok's local analogue Douyin all reign supreme.

At present, Douyin plays a sizeable role in customer acquisition and awareness, while Xiaohongshu, a go-to for beauty recommendations and in-depth reviews, is pivotal when shoppers are mulling purchases, Leitzes said.

Working with KOLs on platforms such as Douyin and Gen-Z hub Bilibili, rather than setting up their own account, offers brands a means to cultivate a following. "People don't really follow brands on Douyin. That's not what they're there for. They're there to follow creators," she added.

Create a Platform-Specific Brief

In the walled gardens of China's digital ecosystem, where data is siloed between platforms and barriers on third-party linking discourage moving between apps, brands need more touchpoints with customers to

re-target and ultimately convert. This means KOL marketing costs in China are often higher in general than other territories, said Leitzes.

As of 2022, many siloes remain in place. The result is that most KOLs, excluding top names like "Lipstick King" Austin Li, make content for one main platform. With that, campaigns tend to focus on and tailor briefs to one app, even if they're going for a multi-platform approach.

Creating an optimised and specific brief is crucial. Leading beauty brands, said Leitzes, will specify exactly how a lipstick should be demoed. Meticulousness is all the more important in livestreams, where an off-hand comment or mistake can get a brand in hot water. "It has to be scripted by the minute," said Leitzes. While this varies across categories — luxury brands usually control everything from set-up to storytelling — scripting how a product is demonstrated is the bare minimum.

The Regulation Question

In December 2021, Neutrogena and Dove were among those hit by a Xiaohongshu clean-up. The beauty brands were banned for paying KOCs to "spread false marketing content," according to the app, a likely result of tightening advertising and consumer protection regulations. As of the time of writing, both remain blocked.

Though it remains to be seen where this leaves brands in relation to the ways they interact with KOCs, it's clear that brands need to stay abreast of regulatory policies hitting sectors from gaming to animal testing to livestreaming. Overall, many policy changes are looking to rein in dominant platforms and clean up fraud, which could help brands in the long run. But brands need to adapt and diversify their digital channels to be on the winning side.

"You can't go in and only invest in one or two platforms," said Leitzes. "It's unrealistic to be everywhere, but you have to think like that in terms of your strategy."

Gucci: The Year of the Tiger

For Lunar New Year 2022, Gucci launched a capsule collection featuring an archive-inspired tiger print. The luxury brand released a family-themed campaign video spotlighting



Gucci Year of the Tiger campaign. Xiaohongshu.

Chinese ambassadors Chris Lee, Ni Ni, Xiao Zhan and Lu Han in its first piece of New Year. The video made waves online, drawing over 25 million views on Weibo, with 430 million hits on the #GucciTiger hashtag alone.

Crucially, Gucci tapped into KOCs with user-generated content: It encouraged followers to use its tiger filter by posting filtered videos featuring ambassadors. To further drive traffic, virtual prizes were handed out to a winner who made the image their display picture. For major cross-platform campaigns, other brands should take note and target customers through a multi-layered approach to KOLs — celebrities aren't the be-all, end-all.



Florasis' Impressions of Dai campaign. Weibo.

Florasis: Impression of Dai

The C-beauty brand, which bases its marketing and products around traditional Chinese design and aesthetics, launched a collection inspired by China's Dai minority ahead of Singles' Day. The campaign involved over 380 KOL mentions and drew \$2.4 million in media impact value (MIV), with 44 percent contributed by Douyin alone.

A great example of a multi-platform, but platform-specific approach, Florasis linked up Austin Li, renowned director Zhang Yimou and supermodel Du Juan in a high-budget video ad for platforms like Weibo. But it also scored big on recommendations-driven Xiaohongshu by tapping into KOL product demos and tutorials. The app accounted for 69 percent of posts, many of which were by micro-KOLs. Like Florasis, brands should lean into the formats and aesthetic preferences of each platform, while utilising both studio-produced and informal content for a well-rounded campaign.

Making the Most of Metrics



While engagement metrics help brands understand what kind of content consumers gravitate towards, metrics such as share of voice and conversions better indicate the success of an influencer marketing campaign. Shutterstock.

The prevailing wisdom used to be that likes, comments and shares — so-called “vanity metrics” — indicated just how well influencer content performed. While these measures help reflect overall engagement, they’re hardly the only, or even the best, indicators of a successful partnership.

Social Studies director of marketing and strategy Abby Bakersmith said that engagement rate is a “soft metric” for evaluating an influencer’s organic content compared to sponsored content.

“As a first interaction, we use this as a gut check on whether or not the creator’s audience responds to sponsored content. We then cross-reference the creator’s performance in Social Studies’ proprietary software to benchmark performance at a local and categorical level,” she said.

Earned media value (EMV) and media impact value (MIV), metrics created by Tribe Dynamics and Launchmetrics respectively, attempt to measure, in relative terms, the value of a brand

or influencer’s digital activity and engagement. While they should not be used to measure one influencer’s value against another, they are useful as category benchmarks (for example, to compare luxury, apparel, beauty and so on).

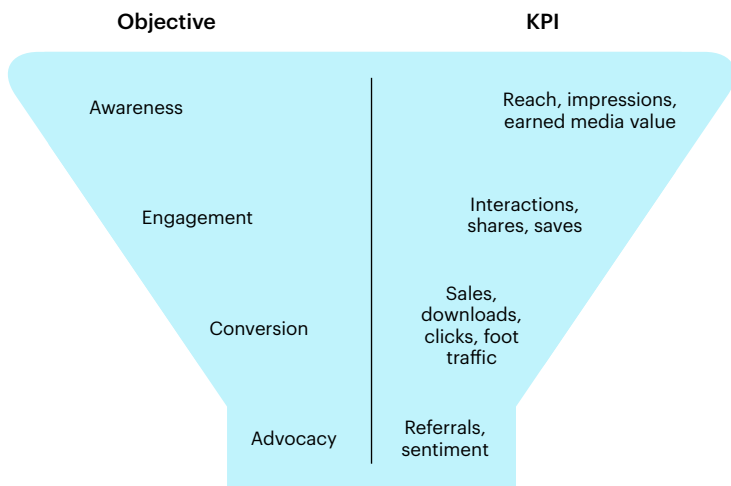
According to Tribe Dynamics, “a single post from an influencer with a large audience will generate more EMV than a post from a smaller-scale influencer, but if that smaller-scale influencer posts about you consistently, they’re far more valuable to your brand in the long run.” And although EMV may seem like a neat metric around which to craft an influencer marketing strategy, it should never be the singular metric driving a brand’s decision making. Instead, it should be considered alongside “more foundational metrics.”

Of course, marketers have become fixated on going viral, particularly on TikTok. It’s important for brands to remember that if an influencer’s content featuring their product does go viral, “this is awesome, but this is not typical,” said Perlman.

Exhibit 7: Flowing Through the Funnel

The effectiveness of a brand’s campaign can be measured by the key performance indicators corresponding to its objectives throughout the marketing funnel.

Sample objectives and associated key performance indicators



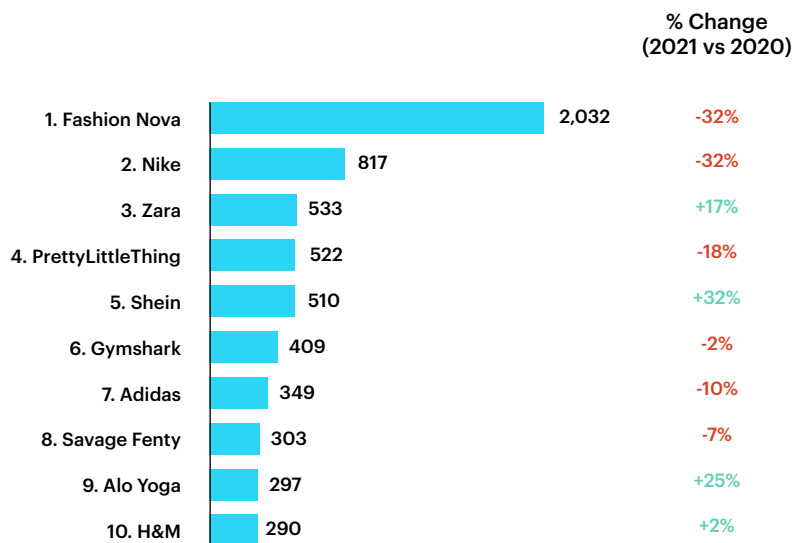
Source: Social Studies and BoF

Exhibit 8: A Changing of the Guard

Brands like Fashion Nova have driven high earned media value with an aggressive approach to influencer marketing. But as other apparel brands ramp up their influencer strategies, they’re also gaining attention online.

Top 10 US apparel brands by earned media value (2021)

USD (Millions)



Source: Tribe Dynamics

Earned media value measures the value of a brand’s social media content that is created by a third party.

Instead, one of the most important measures for marketers to consider is conversion, often thought of as a completed purchase. Measuring conversions has become more difficult, however, as changes to privacy regulation and software tracking (like through Apple’s iOS software) eliminate the available ways marketers can track customer behaviour. Some platforms, like LTK, create links for influencers to use that track how a creator shares content around a product or retailer, Sandbo said. Integrating these links through the LTK product feed or on another platform can drive conversions, she said.

The share of voice a brand occupies compared to its competitors is another important metric because it often reflects market share, said Begley. Share of voice is not something that brands or influencers can measure themselves, as it requires aggregate data from across the internet. Rather, data platforms like those at Tribe Dynamics track this across social media platforms.

“What [share of voice] encapsulates is: How are your products resonating? How good are you doing at relationship building? And then what is the effect of the campaigns you’re running on the broader conversation?” Begley said.

Third-party measurement firms — CreatorIQ, Captiv8, Whalar, influencer.com, FohrCard, Tribe Dynamics, Launchmetrics, and GRIN among them — have emerged to address the difficulty in relying on social media platforms for performance data and analytics. Some of those firms now work as official partners of social media platforms like TikTok to receive first-party data that they then share with the brands that use them.

But social media platforms themselves are also attempting to do more to share insights with brand and influencer partners. Instagram, for example, now provides insights to influencers related to how tagged posts perform. If an influencer uses an affiliate link on Instagram, the platform shares metrics like products sold, total sales, commissions earned and lifetime sales.

Measuring the success of an influencer campaign not only helps to streamline what works, but also makes the case for future partnerships.

Looking Ahead

As the market for influencer marketing continues to mature, brands and talent will come to expect more from one another. Relationship building will always be at the centre of influencer marketing, regardless of the data-backed platforms that match talent with brands and automate other parts of dealmaking.

Meanwhile, changes to privacy rules that make it more difficult to track consumers through the marketing funnel will make targeted influencer marketing more important. Luckily, social media platforms will continue to introduce creator tools and commerce capabilities that allow influencers to monetise their followings and help drive conversions for brands.

In order for brands and influencers to realise their mutually assured success, they must continue to build trust with partners and offer greater value to each other, collaborate to create innovative content and share data and insights.

Key Insights

01 – Platforms

Determining which platforms are best suited to a brand's influencer marketing strategy starts by asking where its customers are.

02 – Talent Scouting

Organising talent according to type, tier and category will help a brand determine who is best suited to help it meet its goals. Choosing the right talent is equal parts data-backed and human-led.

03 – Campaign Execution

The most effective influencer campaigns balance a brand's message with the influencer's own creative flair. Long-term partnerships offer the most value to both parties involved.

04 – Contracts

As influencer marketing becomes more expensive, brands must be smart about the costs they're willing to incur without underpaying or undercutting talent.

05 – Measurement

Metrics related to engagement should inform but not wholly determine whether an influencer campaign was successful. Instead, brands must focus on how influencers impact their share of voice and conversions.



As the influencer marketing industry continues to mature, new platforms, talent and regulation will continue to challenge marketers and brands eager to reach consumers. Zalando.

Glossary

- **Active user:** An individual who accesses an app or website for a given period of time.
- **Conversion:** A desired action or response, such as a sale or download.
- **Engagement:** Interactions such as likes, comments and shares.
- **Impressions:** The actual number of times a post is viewed by users.
- **Lifetime value:** The estimated average revenue that a customer will generate throughout their lifetime with the brand. Often referred to as LTV.
- **Reach:** The potential audience size of a post, based on the audience size of the influencer on the platform that the post was published.
- **Share of voice:** Brand visibility compared to competitors.

Further Reading

- The Business of Fashion, [The Marketing Metrics That Matter in 2022](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [The New Allure of Overseas China Influencers](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [How to Build an Influencer Marketing Team](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [Meet the Next Generation of Fashion Week Influencers](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [Brands Can Now Work With College Athletes. What Are The Rules?](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [The Secret to Sephora's Influencer Marketing Success](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [Influencer Beauty Brands Are Trending in China](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [What Makes the Perfect Influencer Collaboration?](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [Fashion Media's Missed Influencer Opportunity](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [How to Work With TikTok Talent](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [How Influencers Are Protecting Themselves Against Misbehaving Brands](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [Fixing the Whitewashed Influencer Economy](#)
- The Business of Fashion, [The Great Influencer Shakeout](#)

Copyright © 2022, The Business of Fashion Ltd. All rights reserved

All information contained herein is the sole property of The Business of Fashion Limited. The Business of Fashion Limited reserves all rights regarding the use of this information. Any unauthorised use, such as distributing, copying, modifying, or reprinting, is not permitted. Please contact professional@businessoffashion.com for more copies.

Design by Amy Vien
Edited by Diana Pearl, Brian Baskin and Hannah Crump

Front cover image: Getty Images

Discover our complete online courses and learning resources at: businessoffashion.com/education

info@businessoffashion.com

businessoffashion.com