

# Influencer Marketing Trends 2018

INSIGHT MEDIA SOCIAL MEDIA

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## Influencers' influence growing

Consumers' engagement with digital channels is growing, at the expense of traditional media. In this brave new digital world, 'influencers' are becoming the mouthpiece rather than reporters and news names. For brands, influencers can act as effective 'word of mouth channels', adding credibility to their offering, helping to cut through competitive clutter and bypass ad blockers. 75% of marketers allocated budget to influencer marketing in 2017, and over 40% will increase their spend in 2018<sup>1</sup>. Those already incorporating influencers into their customers' journeys will invest more in influencer activity beyond just marketing – in areas such as customer service, direct sales, etc.

## Delivering results

Influencer marketing is working, across a range of sectors. Marketers like L’Oreal (‘Beauty Squad’), Mango (#MangoGirls) and Matches Fashion (‘Shop With’) have been enjoying great success using influencers to promote their garments. Travel business Contiki has used influencer marketing for five years through its #RoadTrip series. From one Asia campaign alone, Contiki saw 175% increase in owned YouTube audience and 25% increase in online traffic<sup>2</sup>. MediaCom is active in influencer marketing, and we’ve used it for a number of clients. For example, to help Fanta connect with teens, we enlisted established YouTube influencer Joe Tasker and guests to host a weekly show streamed live on Facebook. The show delivered 4.2M+ views, 50k+ social engagements, 3.7M display impressions and 11.9M impressions on the promotion’s Twitter hashtag<sup>3</sup>. To connect PlayStation with young gamers, we created branded GIFs and promoted them in a dedicated video featuring some of the UK’s best-known YouTube gamers. These influencers helped drive over 35,000 users to the promotional Giphy page.

### Measurement techniques changing

As influencer marketing budgets grow we’re seeing a move towards more strategic and holistic approaches, instead of a focus on short-term transactional engagements. Measuring ROI and the effectiveness of individual influencers in purely monetary terms is challenging, especially without knowing how much of your influencer investment is going in agents’ fees. As a result, campaigns are being assessed on a wider range of metrics – for example, number of views, engagements, sentiment, average view duration etc.

### Credibility taking focus

Many consumers now consider influencers to be the ‘new celebrities’. But fame comes with high expectations – and often, at a cost. Last year a number of high profile influencers were scrutinised for questionable opinions (some dug up in past posts, some very current) and perceptions they were exploiting their fans (especially with sales of over-priced but low-quality products, for example). Expect to see greater emphasis on influencer credibility in 2018.

New visual technologies supporting influencer activity.

Consumers increasingly expect to talk to influencers directly and get to know them better. That's something today's vast array of new visual technologies will facilitate in 2018 and beyond.

For example, using Augmented Reality, influencers will be able to deliver 'personal' experiences without having to be physically present.

Expect to see more live experiences such as meet-ups, talk shows, staged events and personalised campaigns where influencers can interact with their followers in new ways.

### **Driving improved content quality**

As social media algorithms create new challenges, and video and podcasts become dominant information channels, it will become increasingly important to produce high-quality content. Brands will need to find ways to set aside their struggles with a lack of creative control and take collaborative working to a whole new level to deliver exciting, content-led campaigns.

### **The rise of 'micro influencers'**

2017 saw a big shift towards so-called micro-influencers, a trend that will almost certainly continue this year. Microinfluencers (smaller scale influencers, generally those with less than 100k followers) offer brands opportunities to dip their toe into influencer marketing, and to spread the perceived risk of doing so. They also offer ways to create simple, often highly cost-effective social content. 2018 will see a growth in the many micro-influencer platforms such as Whalar, Takumi, Tribe and Buzzoole. How will influencer marketing evolve and how quickly can brands keep up? That will remain the biggest question for 2018. One thing is certain – as influencers increase fees and brands increase their budgets, there will be a greater need for a data-driven approach from agencies, as well as more detailed results-driven accountability from influencers.