

Influencer marketing dynamics are shifting

By [Tendai Rukwava](#)

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Ogilvy UK recently put out an announcement that they will no longer work with influencers who edit their bodies or faces for ads as part of their pilot programme to combat the systemic mental health harms of social media. The changes will affect all the agency's UK clients, including Vodafone, IBM, Coca Cola and Dove. Their move came almost three months after the UK government began discussing new regulations that would require influencers to publicly disclaim any images that are edited.



Source: www.pexels.com

The Digitally Altered Body Image Bill aims at helping “to foster more honest and realistic representations of the way we look,” according to Conservative MP for Bosworth, Dr Luke Evans, who introduced the bill in Parliament.

“Edited images do not represent reality, and are helping to perpetuate a warped sense of how we appear, with real consequences for people suffering with body confidence issues, which I’ve seen first-hand in my role as a GP,” the MP wrote on Twitter.

“ *These edited images do not represent reality, and are helping to perpetuate a warped sense of how we appear, with real consequences for people suffering with body confidence issues, which I've seen first-hand in my role as a GP. (3/4)* pic.twitter.com/dE9OjGZJQs— Dr Luke Evans MP (@drlukeevans) [January 12, 2022](#) ”

Dr Evans told the House of Commons: “If someone has been paid to post a picture on social media which they have edited, or advertisers, broadcasters or publishers are making money from an edited photograph, they should be honest and upfront about it.”

Influencer marketing has evolved over the years, and with governments now joining in on the conversations around social media brand and influencer collaborations, brands now need to shift from using influencer marketing strategies for clout and “going viral”, and now look to use influencer marketing as a public relations tool to connect at a deeper level with their target audiences by giving them valuable content through influencers which shows more than just a product or service, but what the brand stands for and their values.



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Dove is one of the brands that has done this well for almost two decades through their campaigns which focus on “real beauty”, stressing “authenticity” as a key tenant of their brand. If more brands adopt similar strategies in their campaigns, they will see a greater ROI. Authentic content doesn’t mean poor quality or ugly content. It just means that audiences want real, realistic, naked, unfiltered, relatable content.

We have also seen that audiences are also a lot wiser, and prefer more aligned and authentic content when brands and influencers collaborate, vs seeing any brand that has the budget appearing on their favourite influencer’s timeline. Brands need to remember that audiences have the option to ignore and keep scrolling if they are not seeing content which is authentic and relevant to them.

Keeping it real

Authentic, in that the content doesn’t oversell a product or brand which they know the influencer wouldn’t actually buy or use in real life, or showing results which actually cannot be achieved by using that product. Audiences would actually prefer a cool and creative content with the influencer just having fun with the brand, over fake “before & after” content.

“Real” content = increased ROI because it resonates more with the influencer’s audience. Because of this, brands will need to give for more creative control to influencers. Allowing influencers to have more creative control helps to make the content more authentic, and in the influencer’s “voice”, not the brand’s, making it more effective.

Brands need to allow the influencer to tell the brand’s story but in their voice. And if the brand is working with an influencer whose personal brand and values align with those of the brand, brand managers will not need to worry about the content not aligning, forcing them to retain creative control.

A lot of marketers mistake the number of followers for the level of influence when identifying influencers to work with on their campaigns, and when measuring ROI. There is very little to no value for the brand if they work with influencers who have no influence over their audience or have an excellent relationship with their audiences, but the wrong audience for the brand.

We have also found that younger audiences relate more to influencers/content creators than they do to traditional celebrities. The current generation has grown up with the internet, and the internet is where they find their celebrities.

Marketers need to also be aware of these differences in generations because selecting the wrong influencer or someone

who has a large following but no influence over your target audience or the wrong audience will be a waste of resources for your brand, and potentially be received negatively by your target audience because they will feel that the brand is either not for them, or does not care about them.

Connecting with the right audience

Audiences want to feel that brands care about them and add value to their lives, and not just through their product or service but at every touch point, including the brand's marketing and communications.



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Brands also need to also make the effort to stay up to date with who is relevant to their audiences and what their audiences have to say about these individuals. Influencer marketing is dynamic and fickle. Today's influencer can quickly turn into tomorrow's has-been, or be perceived as "public enemy number one" overnight to your target audience.

If brands are out of touch with this, this can lead to aligning with the wrong influencer, and wasted resources. And as we know, the internet doesn't forget, and can also be very unforgiving, so brands need to do better and put more thought and heart into their influencer strategies.

Studies have found that as an Instagram Influencer's following increases, their engagement rate from followers decreases. User accounts with less than 1,000 followers generally have an engagement rate of 3.6%, whilst user accounts with more than a million followers have engagement rates of around 0.76%.

Influencers in the 10k-100k follower range (mid-tier influencers) now provide better ROI for influencer campaigns, not celebrities with huge followings but low engagement. This is another reason why brands will need to focus less on number of followers, and more on alignment and impact.

Brands and influencers need to also look to build long-term relationships and avoid influencer/brand hopping where possible. If an influencer and a brand have a long term working relationship where the influencer is perceived as a true brand advocate, the audiences are more likely to find authenticity in the content and conversations the influencer has about the brand, and trust their opinion.

Research shows that influencers who are passionate about what they are recommending have significantly more buying conversations, and consumers are more likely to act on their recommendations.

This will also serve as a win for the influencer, as their audiences will not see them as someone who will post anything and everything on their profiles and channels as long as they get paid for it.

The bottom line is, influencer marketing has evolved, and brands need to stay up to date with this evolution in order to build effective influencer campaigns, maximize ROI, and connect more meaningfully and intentionally with their audiences.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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