

You're not buying my opinion

 By [Samantha Wright](#)

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Influencer marketing is new, it's different and with anything new and unknown, we need to box it in with our programmed thoughts and ideas.

Traditional public relations involved pitching interesting and unique stories to individual media houses that suited their audience in the hope that they'd want to run with it. PR agents would give the media access to the tools they needed to craft the piece and we'd be "A for away".

As the online space took over we saw the introduction of influencers: Individuals who utilised social networks and sharing platforms to garner a following. Their following is niche. It is made up of a group of like-minded individuals who think similarly to said influencer, agree with his or her thoughts (or respect them enough to listen to them) and genuinely identify with the influencer.

The influencer is creating unique stories that are relevant for the audience. He or she is either sharing an interest or understands how to address said audience. The content created is not "news" in the traditional sense or "advertorial". It's a whole new world of original content that needs to be redefined.



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Remember that box I mentioned earlier? Here we are again. We desperately want to apply the thought patterns regarding traditional media to influencers. Stop.

In recent times, influencers have begun to realise that they should be paid for the content they produce. Many influencers

spend a considerable amount of time crafting the content they create and their audience identifies with it. Whether it be a 140-character tweet, a photo or a YouTube video.

The problem that occurs is when an influencer asks a brand to pay for coverage, the knee-jerk reaction is that we do not want advertorial or "we do not pay for opinions."

Here is where we are getting it wrong.

1. Influencers are not producing advertorial. If they are, they're bad at what they do and probably aren't too influential to begin with. Stop using them.
2. You are not paying or buying an opinion.

Case study:

Meet TomSka, British YouTuber with a strong like of guns, blood and gore. He also has more than a million subscribers on YouTube. His audience love his strange sense of humour and identify with it.

Watch this video:

Where in the video did Tom tell us that he loves Oreos so much and only eats Oreos? Where did he tell us they were the most delicious cookies he has ever eaten? Did he, at any time, provide a positive opinion towards Oreos? No.

Was this an advertorial for Oreo? Well unless the kid friendly cookie brand is aiming to now encourage violence towards police officers, killing your friends (or eating them) and wants their signature cookie to be identified with destroying the world... I'd say no.

What this was was a piece of content created by an influencer who has a very specific audience in mind. Oreo had just launched their "Play With Oreo" campaign and this video targeted a market that was likely pressing skip on their annoying (and far more kid-friendly) YouTube advert. They didn't pay for Tom's opinion. They didn't pay for an advertorial. What they paid for was an individual to produce a tailor-made piece of content that spoke to his niche audience in a specific tone they could relate to and garnered the brand exposure.

That is what influencer marketing is. You are paying an individual for their time and creative brain to create content that is relevant to their audience and that the audience will consume. Locally, I have seen some incredibly strong influencer marketing campaigns take shape. I've also been on the receiving end of many a brand or marketing agency too terrified to take the risk or unable to move away from the traditional media values they want to prescribe to the digital landscape.

Loyal audience

Good influencers have spent years building an audience. Their audience is one they are loyal to. The most successful influencers (locally and internationally) disclose when they have been paid or content has been "sponsored" and this does not alter the consumption of said content in any way. Recent studies have found that good sponsored content is shared and consumed just as much as organic content. Case in point: the TomSka video you saw earlier.

If the influencer is transparent and the brand is brave, utilising influencer marketing is an ideal tool to increase brand awareness, improve SEO or launch a campaign. A platform like Webfluential allows you to search for influencers based on their reach and their specific topics of interest. A good PR agency will be aware of influencers suited to your brand and also be able to advise you accordingly.

Do you have any good examples of where influencer marketing was a success and met the campaign goals?

ABOUT SAMANTHA WRIGHT

SamWright is a full-time content creator at techgirl.co.za - she is a gaming and technology blogger and YouTuber, as well as an Esports MC and broadcaster who went on to host some of South Africa's first million-rand competitions before heading overseas, where she has hosted at Gamescom (Europe's biggest gaming expo) and in China (for a \$850,000 tournament). She currently consults to brands on how to reach a switched-on generation...

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