

What will shape influencer marketing post Covid-19?



By [Karl Haechler](#)

12 Jan 2022

The pandemic has changed the way we live, the way we work and the way we socialise. The huge increase in smartphone usage and the change in content consumption behaviour has important implications for brands trying to build lasting relationships with consumers.



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As we enter this new world, influencer marketing is giving brands a vital way of reaching audiences in meaningful and relevant ways. At a time when brand building and audience engagement is key, here are the key trends shaping influencer marketing post-Covid-19:

1. E-commerce will play a considerable part in the future as brands look for greater returns on their investment

Consumer experiences are being amplified with the introduction of social commerce, as purchasing a product directly from social media is an increasingly frictionless experience.

Soon we will see more consumers prefer social-driven purchases because the platforms will be more engaging than traditional shopping experiences. And innovative technologies like VR, AR, and AI-powered chatbots have pushed visual retail to the forefront. These new technologies will not only enhance the shopping experience but also make the process more authentic, trustworthy, convenient and positive.

2. Video is the future of influencer marketing

It goes without saying that digital video is vital for brands to inspire, engage and interact with their consumers. There has been a massive increase in the popularity of short-form videos. TikTok led to an explosion in the popularity of bite-sized video content, and now other social platforms are refining their video offerings such as Instagram Reels and YouTube Shorts.



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Video content will continue to grow after the pandemic, as the rise of social platforms like TikTok demonstrates today's ever-growing thirst for video content. They inspire users to not only watch, like, and comment on videos but also create them – giving brands an entirely new approach to getting their products seen through user-generated content.

The competition for people's attention has never been tougher. Brands that want to capitalise on the popularity of video should be developing short-form video strategies to stay in the mix.

3. Live content is beginning to emerge in the mainstream

Live streaming allows viewers to engage with popular influencers on a whole new level.

Interactive streaming removes the barrier between audience and brand which provides a deeper level of immediate engagement. Your viewers are more than just viewers — they're a community. This means it's important to truly understand what your audience wants to see from the branded content.

For example, for a sustainable automotive car company that wants to promote carbon footprint reduction, could partner with an ethical living influencer who can produce live streamed video in the factory, showcasing the 'making' of it as behind-the-scenes videos.

When it comes to sustainability, consumers want to know where products are being sourced, who made them, and what their environmental impact is. Live content provides this kind of authentic engagement audiences crave.

4. Virtual influencers have gained greater attention

With innovations in facial rendering software, collaboration tools and virtual reality, fully realised digital twins are fast becoming a reality and could be a solution to the global disconnect.

An emerging trend is the application of 'virtual avatars' to the online creator space. These virtual influencers are designed to engage with real people online and sometimes even offline at events. Developers choose the way they look, dress and act. A lot of these virtual influencers start to appear on social media particularly on Instagram and start to build up their profile creating engaging and impactful content.

We are entering an era where more and more brands are encouraged to embrace new, immersive technologies in ways that can enhance their storytelling. In the future, these changes are slowly becoming more mainstream – the lines between

what is real and what is unreal are already blurred. Our role now is to support brands in driving innovation and revolutionising the relationships audiences have with these brands.

5. Establishing long-term relationships with influencers

Influencer marketing started with brands dipping their toes into the water and testing them out, so a lot of campaigns are run on a pay-per-play model, which is very transactional. However, we are starting to see the nature of brand-influencer relationships changing.

Many consumers are becoming savvier at spotting paid influencer campaigns and have no issue with ignoring a brand or influencer that proves to be inauthentic. To be able to maintain genuine influencer partnerships, many brands are now switching from one-off campaigns to ambassador programs.

Now is the time to turn the influencer relationships you grew during lockdown into long-term partnerships – turning those influencers who already love your company's product or service into brand ambassadors, to ultimately deliver better results that drives long-term success for both parties.

ABOUT KARL HAECHLER

Karl Haechler is the co-market leader and managing director of BCW Africa, an award-winning African public relations network which covers over 50 African countries.
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