

How marketers should measure social media creator campaign performance

Article

Measuring creator marketing is tough. Affiliate links provide direct attribution, but many sales occur after consumers see creator content. Even MrBeast, the biggest individual creator on

YouTube, sells his Feastables bars at retailers like **Walmart**. So how can advertisers using **creator marketing** measure the efficacy of creator campaigns?

“Upper-funnel marketing used to be fluffy brand equity that really didn't drive purchase intent at all, and lower-funnel marketing—performance marketing—used to be horrible for brand equity,” said Keith Bendes, vice president of strategy and partnerships at Linqia. “Influencer and creator [marketing] is this really nice middle ground where it's good for brand equity. It brings people further along in the journey without feeling gross and salesy.”

But different kinds of creator campaigns serve different purposes. Affiliate marketing is a strong lower-funnel tactic, per Bendes. Organic posts help with upper-funnel marketing. And creator content boosted by brand dollars in the form of paid social exists in that middle ground, making measurement difficult.

Paid social media metrics shouldn't differ much from other ad channels, said Bendes. Creator campaigns aren't necessarily directly tied to immediate purchases, so KPIs like return on ad spend (ROAS) and brand lift are still relevant for these campaigns.

Don't evaluate creator-led social ads in a vacuum. Marketers need to assess how changing paid social spend compares to other ad channels (**connected TV**, digital out-of-home, paid search, etc.) on existing KPIs. That means the social media marketing team can't be siloed from the performance or brand marketing teams.

For affiliate marketing, direct attribution is easy—with some big caveats. Affiliate links and promo codes provide brands clear evidence of where a sale came from. But it's more difficult to evaluate brand lift from these campaigns. If a **TikTok** user sees a creator applying lipstick and buys that same product in Target a week later, it's impossible for the brand to know that content influenced the sale.

Bendes encouraged a “set it and forget it” strategy to affiliate marketing. Brands should have programs where creators can sign up, get links, post, and get paid for conversions without too much investment on the brand side. “Turn on the tap in an automated way and let the pennies come,” said Bendes.

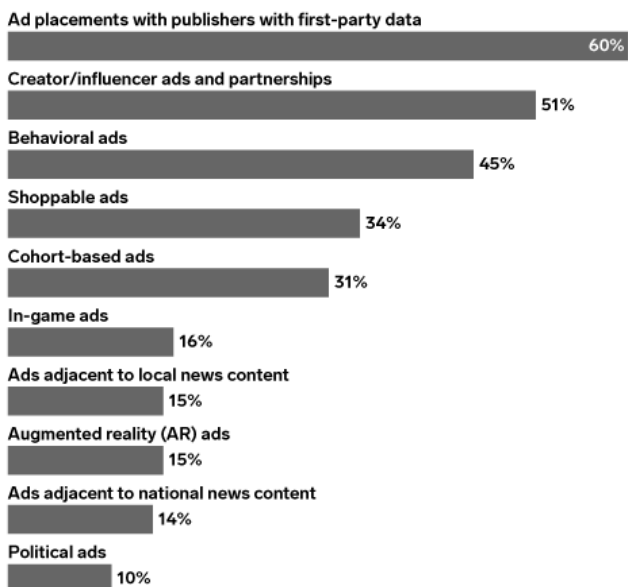
Organic social should be looked at in terms of brand equity. How much people are posting about a brand on social media compared to its competitors is a solid metric for this, as are awareness and brand lift studies.

What's at stake? US influencer marketing spend will reach \$8.14 billion this year, an increase of 16.0% YoY, per our March 2024 forecast.

- More than half of US brands and agencies (51%) are more focused on creator and influencer ads than they were in 2024, according to the Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB).
- Almost all US advertisers (96%) are increasing or keeping the same investments in creator content this year as compared to 2023, per the IAB.

Ad Types US Brand and Agencies Will Be Significantly/Somewhat More Focused in 2024, Nov 2023

% of respondents



Note: n=203

Source: Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB), "2024 Outlook: A Snapshot into Ad Spend, Opportunities, and Strategies for Growth," Nov 30, 2023

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