

Lessons from e.l.f. Beauty and creator Chris Olsen on authentic creator marketing

Article

E.l.f. Beauty's "Make up over Makeup" campaign, which launched in May, was a departure from what many think of as creator marketing. The campaign brought creators Chris Olsen,

who boasts **12.1 million followers on TikTok**, and Ian Paget, who has **2.5 million followers on TikTok**, together after their **high-profile breakup** for a conversation and makeover.

The video focuses less on the products and more on uncomfortable conversations between exes.

- The ad emphasizes what e.l.f. Beauty does well by **featuring viral products, empowering its creators**, and **innovating in unexpected ways**.
- It also leverages influencer marketing, which has been **more resilient in growth than social ad spend**, according to our forecast.

Here are four lessons from Olsen and e.l.f. Beauty chief brand officer Laurie Lam, who both spoke at Advertising Week New York last week, on building innovative creator campaigns.

1. Campaign goals should extend beyond conversion

Sales are obviously the ultimate goal, but creator content also helps with brand recognition, customer acquisition, and building trust.

- Nearly 80% of Gen Z women and 61% of millennial women ranked creators as their **most trusted source for beauty recommendations**, according to LTK.
- Content that focuses too much on conversion can come across as inauthentic, warned Olsen.
- Creator content also has the goal of going viral, which means it needs to entertain.

“If you lead with your heart and your purpose first, you don’t have to sell a product,” said Lam.

2. Pay attention to the creator’s brand

Brands should think of creator and influencer content as co-creation. Effective social content should feel like a natural extension of both the creator’s and the brand’s content.

This attention to the creator is important because watchtime and engagement are vital metrics for virality on algorithmic social media platforms, especially TikTok. Branded content that leverages a big creator may not get as many views if it’s too much of a departure from a creator’s typical content, Olsen said.

For e.l.f. Beauty, this meant featuring an organic, honest conversation between Olsen and Paget, which was in line with Olsen's brand of raw and vulnerable content.

3. Make campaigns work with social, not against it

Social media isn't exclusively a dedicated advertising space, as much as some marketers may think of it that way, said Olsen. A good creator campaign is made for social platforms, not placed on top of it.

For TikTok, this means avoiding overproduction, encouraging sharing and interaction, and finding ways to work brand opportunities into regular content "so it works with the algorithm, not against it," said Olsen.

4. Be a content consumer

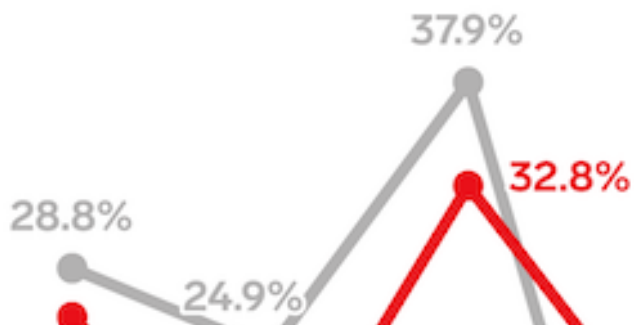
Social media culture moves incredibly fast, said Olsen. Creators rise to prominence and disappear. Trends often saturate social feeds and become irrelevant faster than brands can jump on them.

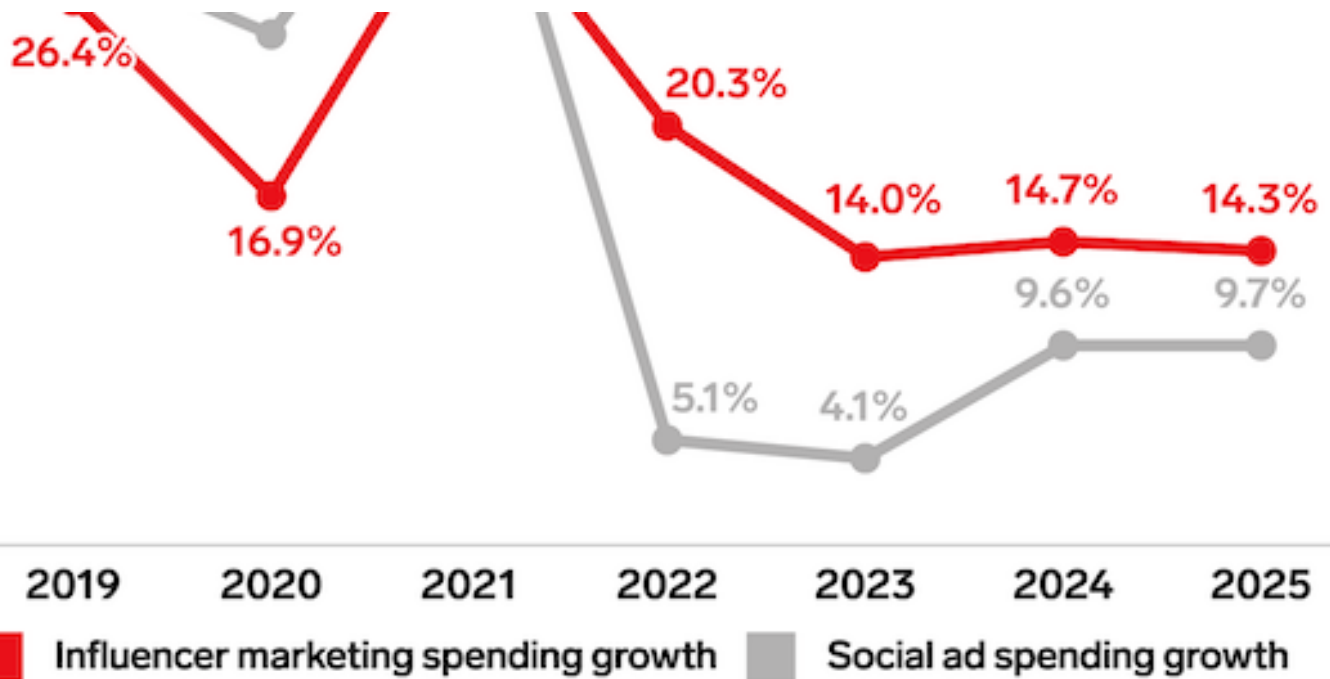
For example, the TikTok trend of **men being obsessed with the Roman Empire** blew up in September, but a brand jumping on that trend now might look out of touch.

Stay connected to what's relevant. "Being a little bit of a consumer is extremely helpful in order to be a producer," said Olsen.

Influencer Marketing Has Been More Resilient Than Social Ad Spending

% change





Note: social ad spending growth is the combined figure for US social network ad spending and YouTube gross ad revenues; social network ad spending includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones, tablets, and other internet-connected devices, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms, such as branded content amplified as paid advertising; includes advertising that appears on desktop and laptop computers as well as mobile phones, tablets, and other internet-connected devices, and includes all the various formats of advertising on those platforms, such as branded content amplified as paid ads; influencer marketing includes payments made to influencers or their representatives to promote products and services primarily on social media and other platforms featuring user-generated content; excludes noncash payments, such as free products or trips, and branded content amplified as paid advertising
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