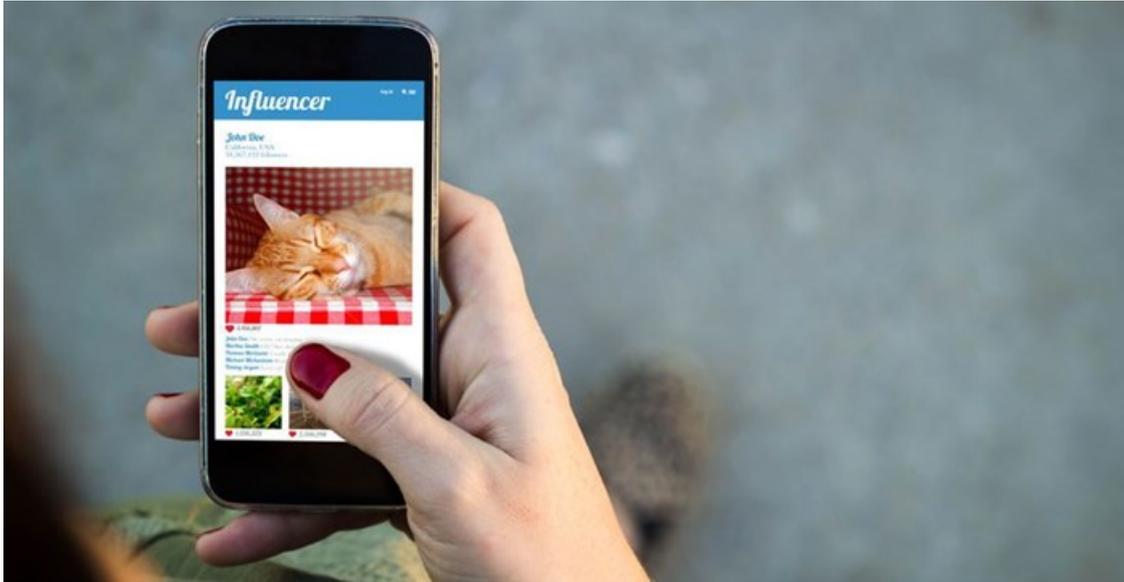


More than just another #trend: Influencer marketing

 By [Pierre Cassuto](#)

14 Dec 2023

To bolster South African marketers' confidence in influencer marketing, the IAB South Africa's Influencer Marketing Committee has taken the first steps towards best practices, standards and benchmarks for influencer marketing with the release of a Definitions Document (2021) and a white paper titled *Best Practices for Influencer Marketing in South Africa* that outlines best practices for the current local influencer marketing landscape.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Pierre Cassuto, head of IAB South Africa influencer marketing committee and chief marketing officer at Humanz embraces the power of influencer marketing

As influencer marketing in South Africa continues to grow, marketers and brands must continue to stay updated on changes in the industry and adjust their marketing intentions accordingly.

The influencer marketing industry has grown to \$21.1bn, says Influencer Marketing Hub, while influencer advertising spend in South Africa is estimated to increase by 11.6% annually (Statista).

A few months ago, the discourse around the downfall of influencers and the rise of de-influencing proliferated across global mainstream media and, ironically, on social media platforms.

However, the trend rapidly pivoted to a more enterprising solution for influencers to persuade their audiences to purchase alternative products to the ones they don't believe are worth the money.

This shift, along with indications that consumers trust influencers over brands and social media over mainstream media, only signifies the exponential growth of the industry.

This is further expounded by the increase of influencers in niche topics — everything from mental health and literature to corporate life and political activism.

What does this mean for the South African digital media and marketing industry?

Authentic, relatable content

It's an opportunity to redefine the relationship between influencers and brands and their agencies and tap into new audiences.

To do so, marketers must keep abreast of the evolving influencer landscape to achieve the best results for their brands and clients.

Over the last few years, a key change across social media marketing specifically is a gravitation from traditional professionally created content towards authentic, relatable content that resonates with audiences.

Yet, influencers say that unclear or incomplete briefs provided by brands and agencies and a lack of communication are key challenges to creating content that maintains a balance between influencers' authenticity and the brands' messaging.



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Bridging the gap

For marketers who exclusively manage relationships with influencers, bridging the gap between the brand's expectations of the influencer and that influencer's knowledge of the brand and its expectations or key performance indicators (KPIs) is vital — and needs to be communicated throughout the engagement process with the influencer.

Both marketers and influencers agree that the campaign objectives are what drive the requirements of the KPIs, which can range from reach and awareness to engagement and conversion to sales.

During a recent IAB South Africa Insights webinar on the future of influencer marketing, Casey Mantle, head of department: chatterbox (influencers & communities) at 8909, highlighted the importance of a phased approach to influencer marketing that begins with awareness, builds love and engagement and eventually drives sales conversions.

Deep-branded engagement

As with regular marketing efforts, it takes time to build a brand presence with an influencer's audience.

A big misconception about influencer marketing is that one influencer post can lead to an instant sale; another is the time it takes for influencers to create content for a campaign or brand partnership.

Deep-branded engagement is also the purview of micro- and nano-influencers, who tend to be more authentic in their delivery of messages.

Whereas the majority of brands generally opt for celebrity influencers, agencies well-versed in influencer marketing

recommend influencers in niche areas of interest that may have smaller followings.

What all stakeholders can agree on, though, is that the purpose of influencer marketing is to connect to audiences in a way that is relatable and authentic.



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Brands need more guidance

Agencies and brands would do well to recognise that influencer marketing is a marketing channel that creates conversations and provides insights that traditional marketing may not provide.

And, as with traditional marketing, marketers should do their research into the influencers that best align with their brand.

Not only will this achieve a more organic, authentic message but a higher return on investment as the chosen influencer's audiences will be more attuned to receiving information about the brand from a source they trust.

That said, brands need more guidance when it comes to influencer marketing.

This is where agencies that specialise in influencer marketing campaigns can be beneficial.

Very often, brands do not have the time or resources to source, vet and manage influencers; agencies can expedite this process, assisting with contract negotiations, influencer vetting, compiling of briefs, and data and analytics.

It's clear that it has become increasingly important for marketers to pay attention to influencer marketing and how it fits into their overall marketing mix.

Additionally, influencer marketing must be perceived from the point of view of the consumer, with attention paid to content created by the influencer and not the brand itself, as these are the campaigns that achieve the best results.

ABOUT PIERRE CASSUTO

Humanz is one of the world's fastest growing AI companies focused on empowering valuable creators and the marketers that work with them. Each day, Humanz analyzes hundreds of millions of social media profiles and content pieces as well as transaction data from online merchants, to generate better benchmarks and predictions for social commerce ROI, while also improving transparency, motivation and access for creators and marketers.

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