

Creator Connections

Leveraging creator marketing
to build your brand

This guide covers...

- What creator marketing is
- The key terms you need to know
- How to activate creator marketing campaigns
- Why creator marketing is effective for brands

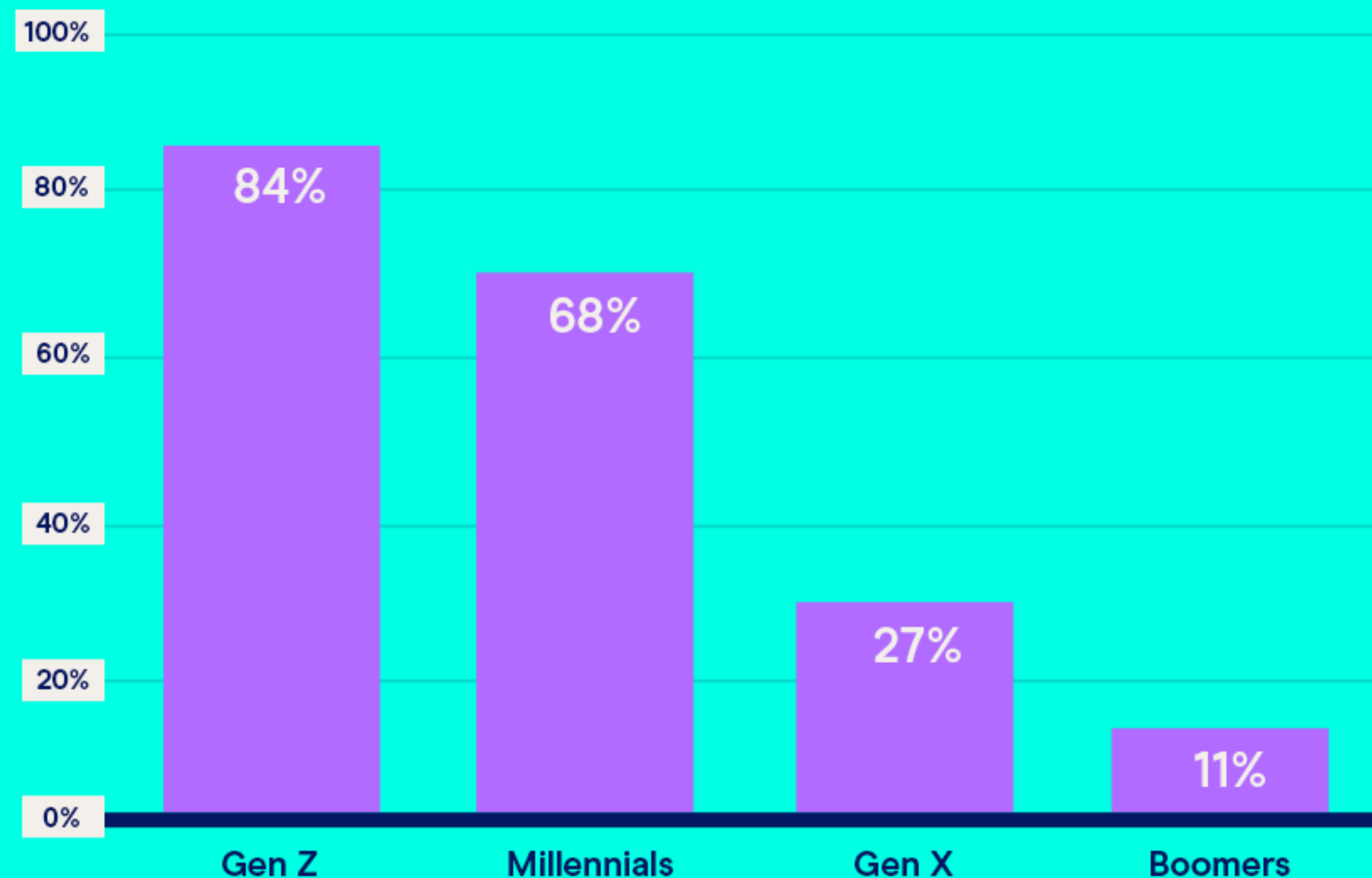
We're living in an age of content creators. Go to any social media feed and you'll find individuals who have carved out distinct identities, created a wealth of relatable content and built up communities of loyal followers.

Widely referred to as influencers, these creators act as tastemakers, influencing customer preferences and steering purchase decisions through their curated content. They know how to genuinely connect with their audiences - particularly among Millennials and Gen Z - and are valuable partners for brands, with creator marketing an established part of many media plans.

However, executing a successful creator marketing strategy is not as simple as hopping on your socials and hailing down the next available influencer. It demands identifying the right creators, crafting compelling campaigns and effectively measuring engagements.

Whether you're an experienced marketer well-versed in the art of creator collaborations or a relative newcomer, this guide is your VIP pass to the world of creator marketing that will decode the jargon - equipping you with the best practices and actionable insights you need to activate effective campaigns.

Share of consumers who followed influencers in the UK in April 2023, by generational cohort



What is creator marketing?

To give it a dictionary-worthy definition, creator marketing is when brands and creators collaborate to create content that drives brand awareness, consideration and sales on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. Activity can be exclusive to one platform or run across a diverse range of platforms.

Unlike more traditional marketing approaches, creator marketing emphasises advocacy over push messaging, empowering creators to act as authentic advocates within their online communities.

Creators cultivate communities by sharing both relatable and aspirational content, which in turn can facilitate full-funnel marketing objectives - ranging from expanding reach and awareness to conversions.

The rise of content creators highlights a significant shift in how we define 'influence'. With social media platforms democratising access to influence, virtually anyone has the tools to become a creator. This challenges the historical dominance of traditional celebrities, serves to give niche communities a broader platform and redraws the boundaries of fame.

Similarly, creator marketing is redefining the landscape of brand perception and consumer behaviour. In this new age of influence, authenticity and community engagement emerge as paramount, driving brands to forge meaningful partnerships with creators who resonate with their target audiences. In fact, the UK has the third biggest creator marketing sector in the world according to Statista - following the US and China - and it's predicted to almost double in size by 2027.



“While historically influencers have inspired by tapping into feelings of aspiration, today anybody can be a creator. Being a creator means you have the ability to influence others.”

*Lucy Whitehead,
Creative Product Marketing, TikTok*

Many well-established brands have achieved huge success activating collaborations with content creators - from Dunkin' Donuts' **lucrative partnership** with TikTok sensation Charli D'Amelio to MrBeast's sponsored YouTube videos, which regularly receive **millions of views** in the first 24 hours.

To understand the power of creator marketing partnerships, you need look no further than the success that content creators themselves enjoy. Molly-Mae Hague became the Creative Director of UK retailer PrettyLittleThing, Khabane (Khaby) Lame **became a star character** in 'Fortnite' - a game with 230 million monthly users - and Matilda Djerf launched her brand, Djerf Avenue, which has gone **from zero to \$35 million in revenue** in just over four years.

The key terms you need to know

Allowlisting: This is when a creator grants a brand permission for paid media amplification via their owned social channel

Creator: An individual who produces content for a brand in exchange for either a product or paid partnership. Often used as the new go-to term for 'influencer'

Creator tiers: The system used to categorise creators in terms of their following - nano (1k+), micro (10k+), mid (50k+), macro (500k+), top (1m+), VIP (5m+)

Creator types: The sectors, platforms or aesthetic style of a creator i.e. "they are a travel-focused YouTube short creator"

Kidfluencer: Children who have gained considerable followings with kid-oriented content

Key opinion leader (KOL): A creator who is usually top tier with a higher following range and makes branded content in exchange for a fee

Paid amplification: Putting media spend behind top-performing assets

Reach: The measure of a content creator's audience size

Share-of-voice: Measures the percentage of brand awareness within a given market that a brand or organisation enjoys

Social commerce: The sale of products or goods directly via social media platforms

Talent: Higher tier creators may also be referred to as 'talent' and are usually represented by an agency

Usage: The channels/platforms on which paid-for content appears and the duration it is used for

How to activate creator marketing campaigns

The platforms & channels that should be on your radar

Instagram: With its visual appeal and diverse user base, Instagram remains a primary platform for creator marketing, offering versatile content-sharing options such as grid posts, carousels, video reels, stories and live streams.

TikTok: TikTok has rapidly gained popularity among younger demographics, offering short-form, in-feed video content that encourages creativity and authenticity.

YouTube: As one of the largest video-sharing platforms globally, YouTube is a hub for creators producing a wide range of content - from tutorials to vlogs to reviews - all in traditional long-form videos or YouTube Shorts.

Snapchat: Snapchat offers unique opportunities for brands to connect with audiences through interactive augmented reality (AR) lenses, sponsored filters, and influencer takeovers, all on full-screen videos.

Facebook: Facebook's extensive user base makes it a popular platform for creator collaborations looking to harness the power of its groups, its more age-diverse audience and a variety of content-sharing options.

"Creators are sitting at the centre of online communities and culture. If you want relevant and relatable content that engages an audience of advocates and builds your brand, knowing how to engage creators is the key to that castle."

Zoe Mitchell,
Chief Growth Officer, Buttermilk

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How to find the right creators for your brand

Understand your audience: Identify the common interests of your audience and tap into creators that align with them, such as cooking, sports or travel. Also explore your audience's social habits. What platforms are they on? Who are they following? How are they consuming content? These are all questions that will help you to define the right strategy.

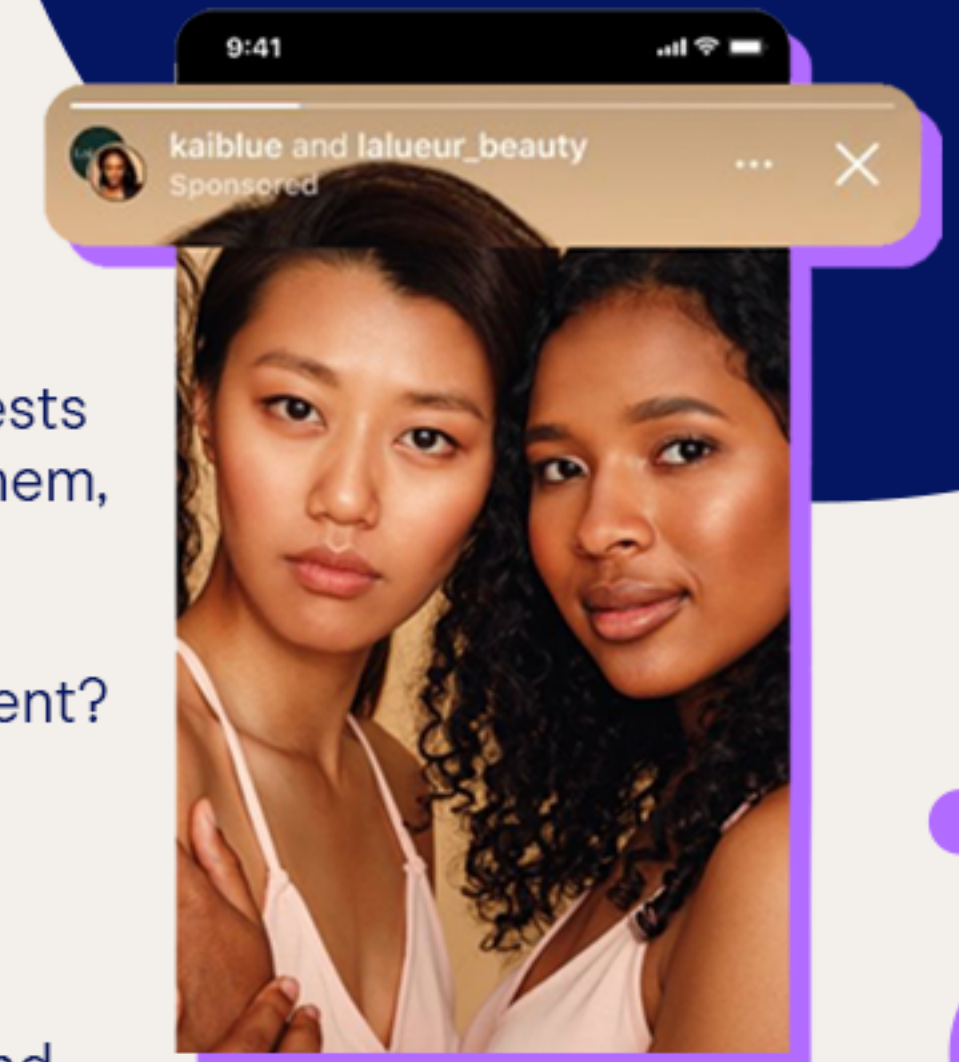
Conduct influencer research: Find out who is talking about your brand. If a creator is supportive of your brand already - and a genuine customer of yours - that's a great place to start.

Focus on your shared values: Identify creators that share similar values to your brand. This will make for a stronger brand partnerships and message alignment.

Define your campaign objectives: Determine campaign objectives from the outset to select creators that align with your goals and can deliver the desired results - and decide if you need creators for ongoing collaborations or specific campaigns.

Build real relationships with creators: Invest time in building relationships with content creators to understand their process. This will allow you to collaboratively shape ideas that align with your brand's style and aesthetic and to trust them to create content that will resonate more with their (and your!) audience.

Utilise third parties: Use third-party services to help find and brief creators, leveraging their expertise and network. There are a number of tools available to research and verify creator data points across multiple metrics to support your decision-making.



Top tips to effectively activate creator marketing campaigns

Nail the brief: Provide a clear, detailed brief outlining campaign objectives, key messages, deliverables, required disclosures, mandatory messages or creative considerations to agencies / talent.

Lay the foundations: Establish a working timeline with creators (leaving room for amendments and approvals); align on the scope of work (including deliverables and usage rights); and set measurable KPIs to track campaign success.

Cast a wide net: Engage both macro and micro creators to maximise your reach and engagement. Understand the ecosystem of stakeholders involved, including brand teams, agencies, talent representatives and fulfilment partners.

Foster collaboration: Actively communicate with creators to spark ideas and build stronger relationships.

Be prepared to relinquish control: Trust creators to authentically represent your brand and its message in their content. Embrace their interpretation of your brand, granting them creative freedom to maximise their value.

Adhere to industry best practices: Guidance on best practice and regulations regarding creator marketing is available from organisations like the [ASA](#), [CMA](#), [IAB](#), [ISBA](#), and social platforms themselves.

What metrics should you be using to evaluate campaign success?

To measure the success of a creator marketing campaign, consider tailored metrics based on your objectives and the stage of the purchase journey your content is aimed at.

- For **upper funnel goals** like brand awareness, track metrics such as engagement rate (ER), view-through-rate (VTR), views, impressions and completion rate.
- For **lower funnel objectives**, focus on conversion-oriented metrics like conversion rate (CVR), cost-per-acquisition (CPA), return-on-ad spend (ROAS) and traffic.
- Conducting a brand lift study can provide insights into brand impact.
- Additionally, assess awareness through impressions, reach and video views, engagement via likes, comments, shares and saves, and consideration via link clicks.
- Measure sentiment through social media monitoring - analysing both organic and paid posts mentioning the brand.

Why is creator marketing effective?

The success of creator marketing lies in its authenticity, versatility, seamless integration and potential for long-term community engagement.

Creator content meets consumers where they are spending their time and encourages feelings of authenticity as the content is less intrusive than traditional ads and is coming from creators who are known and relatable. This is particularly the case among Millennials and Gen Z, with Morning Consult research showing that 61% said they trust influencers in 2023 (up from 51% in 2019). The relationship that creators have with their communities leads to strong engagement and conversion rates, enhanced brand favourability and increased purchase intent.

Creator marketing also allows for a lot of creativity. Content creators are agile and can cater to diverse audience preferences quickly and authentically. Peer-to-peer advertising accelerates community building and yields long-term benefits beyond campaign periods, enhancing brand advocacy and loyalty. It's human nature - consumers buy from people, not businesses, and if you identify the right people to sell your brand, your audiences will return time and time again.

"The most successful brands today are leaning into creator marketing as a key strategy to drive impact across the funnel. Not only does creator marketing + BAU outperform BAU alone, it also cuts down on creative studio costs and encourages brands to outsource ideas, allowing them to be more agile and relevant, while also breaking into new audiences."

*Michelle Capp,
Client Partner, Retail Ecommerce, Meta*

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"Influencer and creator marketing is a key strategic focus for Publicis Groupe as we integrate our media properties and bring more powerful content and brand amplification solutions to our clients."

*Agata Narkowicz,
Business Director - Influencer Marketing, Publicis Media Groupe*

Let's take a closer look at some of the areas where creator marketing proves to be particularly effective...

- **Seamless integration:** Research indicates that over 75% of social content consumed is creator-made, blending seamlessly into users' feeds to add value rather than interrupt the experience
- **Building trust:** 61% of consumers trust recommendations from an influencer, according to a Morning Consult study
- **Valuable content:** 70% of internet users want to get information about products through content instead of traditional ads, according to a US-based study
- **ROAS increase:** Brands on Meta witness a 15% rise in return-on-ad spend with creator-based campaigns

To sum up, creator marketing presents a huge and growing opportunity for brands. Unlike conventional marketing, it champions advocacy and amplifies diverse voices in the process. Authenticity, community and collaboration define this channel and, if executed well, creator marketing offers brands powerful opportunities to grow their reach, connect with their audience and build genuine loyalty.

If you would like to join the IAB UK Creator Marketing group, please email membership@iabuk.com

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