

What marketers are looking for in social media influencers

By [Tshiti Ndhlovu](#)

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It goes without saying that social media influencers have grown considerably over the years and marketers have embraced this wave which has given their brands an opportunity to communicate messages in a way that has never been done before. The world in which we know it has changed; people don't want to engage with brands, they want to engage with people. They want brands to listen to them, they want to create personalised connections that go beyond a one-size-fits-all broadcast message.



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Marketers have grown to understand influencer marketing very well and can be rightfully finicky when having to select influencers to work on a brand campaign. It's pivotal for influencers to know this in order to package themselves in a way that is fitting to this criterion or they could be wondering why they're simply not getting noticed.

In this day and age, it takes more than just showcasing impressively large numbers of followers as a selling point. Influencers now find themselves in a space where they need to put in some serious thought into "what it is that they're influencing" and truly understanding their niche, packaging of tasteful content and what the stats behind every post and campaign actually mean.



Content strategy and influencer marketing: A fusion that'll change how things work

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The more influencer marketing grows, the higher the expectations from influencers as content creators. Back then influencers could get away with just posting, trending a topic and moving on the next campaign but nowadays, a trending topic needs to come with greater analytics in order to track success on a campaign and that's an area that influencers need to examine with a fine-tooth comb.

I've highlighted a few pointers that influencers need to take note of in order to package themselves better for future marketing campaigns:

Content creation, appeal to audience and audience relationships

Content lies at the centre of what social media influencers do, so it goes without saying that they need to critically consider the content they put out and what it looks like. Marketers also look at the relationship influencers have with their community and how they interact with each other. Do your followers look to you for information that affects their purchase decisions?

Number of followers in relation to impact, engagement, reach and real followers

Of course, the number of followers you have still matters, but there's an added layer of how they engage with your content. Do your posts have reach? What percentage of your following is real or not? It happens that social media influencers have a high following but produce very little impact, engagement and reach. Oh, so awkward!

Find your tribe and stick to it

There are various communities that influencers advocate for, and often those communities form part of a brand's target market. In South Africa, we've got influencers with strong voices in the music, fashion, beauty, fitness, food and travel cultures, and many brands find their passion points in these and other spaces; often relying on influencer partnerships to create conversations that infiltrate these cultures and their subcultures.



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Although influencers can find themselves thriving in these spaces, it isn't without understanding their audience, what makes them tick and the extent in which they connect with each other's content that makes them stand out amongst the pack.

Budget

Marketers will always want to know if the social media influencer makes sense for their budget. Usually, this is where the negotiations come in, where most marketers will want to get the most out of their buck for the brief at hand and where most influencers and their managers will want to consider the scope of work and length, a potential new relationship, and the budget available (among other factors) in meeting the required brand objectives.

Influencers need to have competitive, industry-related rates as this will always make negotiations easier.

Previous work (with competitors)

Most marketers will always check your social media pages to see your previous work and particularly look at whether you've worked with any of their competitors and to what extent. This is an important element to think about and I cannot stress this enough.

Relationship with brand and authenticity

Has the influencer actually used the brand's products? Having a relationship with a brand that you're looking to work with is always a bonus. There's nothing like an influencer that doesn't drink beer but working on a beer campaign, although marketers can overlook this sometimes.

Influencer brand fit and personality

Does the influencer and his/her lifestyle fit the brand image? An influencer brand fit analysis will always help marketers find

influencers who are the best fit for their brand, influencers with the right personality and attitude to represent the brand externally. Accessibility can sometimes be a hindrance in marketing messages reaching the desired target audiences authentically.

Influencer expectations vs brand expectations

Influencer's expectations will always matter to marketers, sometimes these expectations can be the reason why they don't get the brief. We should always remember that expectations will always differ from influencer to influencer, some influencers have worked with many brands previously so they may have their own processes on how they conduct business.

Essentially, influencers need to have an understanding of the industry, how it works and where they come in so that they can co-exist in an ever-growing eco-system. These are just some pointers for influencers and aspiring influencers to consider, it will help them get into the minds of marketers for a second and be able to package themselves better for future considerations and recommendations.

ABOUT TSHITI NDHLOVU

I am passionate about the world of brands. I've had the honour of working on some of the biggest local and global brands in my professional career, executing bold and cutting-edge PR, marketing and influencer social media campaigns over this time. I've mainly worked for PR agencies, handling lifestyle accounts in the FMCG space. I'm currently running a new influencer content and brand sponsorships agency where we connect brands with the right influencers for effective campaigns.

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