



**How influencers
can impact your
brand's perception**

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Foreword

Social media has evolved our online interactions. It has now become our go-to place for finding information, with [74% of consumers relying on it](#) to make a buying decision. With the rise of social media and platforms like YouTube we have seen the rise of the influencer, meaning a [girl in her bedroom](#) can reach audiences across the globe and influence their opinions and purchases.

[One in three consumers](#) trust an influencer over a brand, making the power of the influencer undeniable. Brands, in recent years, have been capitalizing on influencers and the trust they generate with their target audience. Most influencer relationships with brands are positive, leading to increased sales, growing audiences and improved brand reputation. But it's not always plain sailing. As with all crisis management activities, you need to hope for the best but plan for the worst. The same applies to your influencer marketing strategies.

For one thing, unlike traditional marketing an influencer is often not held to strict rules around what they can and can't say. They are, after all, individuals who cannot be managed in the same way an employee or agency can.

Influencer campaigns are different to traditional campaigns as whilst they have contracts and guidelines in place, they can't always prepare a brand for what happens if it goes wrong. The internet is full of examples of influencer fails, from [copying and pasting the emailed instructions](#) from the brand to [racist](#) or [homophobic](#) remarks. There are so many areas where a brand can get caught up in a scandal without ever meaning to.

In this guide we look at the pros and cons of working with an influencer as well as offering some expert tips to help you manage your influencer relationships. We hope you find it useful.

The Crisp Labs Team

The global authority on social media risk

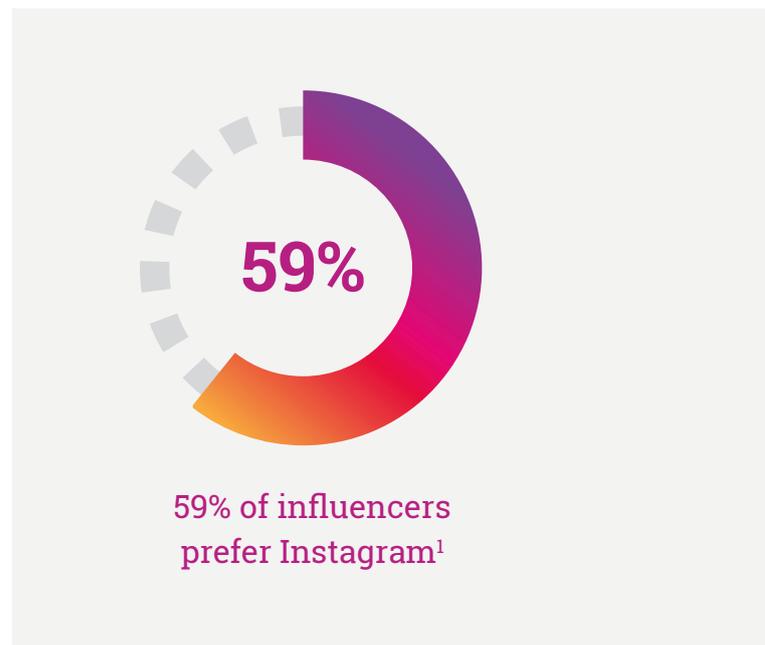
How audiences engage with influencers across different platforms

Adverts are often viewed as an annoyance to consumers, they interrupt their experience whether it's scrolling through Instagram or watching TV and most consumers tune them out, or where possible, block them altogether. In fact, [45% of consumers use an ad blocker](#) now so that their experience isn't interrupted. Using an influencer isn't disruptive advertising, and with [66% of online users trusting user generated content](#) such as reviews, it makes complete sense to team up with an influencer to promote your product.



Instagram

Instagram is the most popular platform for influencers with [59% of influencers preferring it](#) to any other platform as they say it's the most effective for engagement. It's easy to see why as it has the highest average interactions per thousand followers. The [average engagement on Instagram is 29.67](#) per thousand followers, per post whereas Facebook comes in with just 16.54.



YouTube

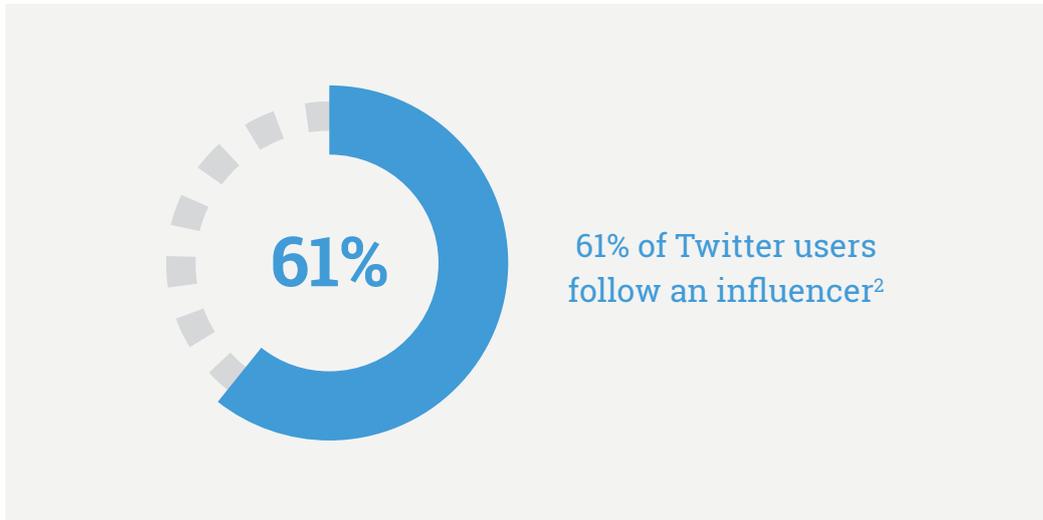
Whilst Instagram is the most popular platform, many influencers started out as YouTubers. YouTube engagement is high, with [70%](#) of subscribers preferring YouTube stars to celebrities and [24.6%](#) of consumers saying that they prefer using YouTube to engage with sponsored content.

¹<https://business.instagram.com/blog/500000-advertisers/>



Twitter

2 in 3 Twitter users believe that content creators (aka influencers) change and shape culture, and 61% of users follow a content creator. By working with influencers your brand can engage with a huge audience in a very meaningful way.



Facebook

Facebook remains a firm favorite with influencers, and with brands using influencers. It is the most used social media platform, with 1.47 billion daily users and 2.23 billion monthly users. It also allows for the most rounded approach as Facebook allows for video, large posts, links in every post, images and engagement from followers which is a large part of the appeal for influencers using the platform.

²https://blog.twitter.com/marketing/en_us/topics/research/2018/The-Power-of-Creators-on-Twitter.html

Pros of working with an influencer

The biggest pro of working with influencers is getting your brand in front of a specific and engaged audience through a trusted source. Working with influencers can act as a 'shortcut' to creating a following of engaged buyers who trust your brand. An influencer's recommendation can give your company a quick and easy seal of approval.

Influencers already know their audience, they have nurtured their following to trust them and their recommendations. [66% of consumers trust online recommendations](#) but only 42% trust the brand themselves, highlighting how much reach an influencer has compared to other forms of marketing. As a result of working with an influencer, brands saw a [64% increase in intent to recommend](#) from their customers.

Examples

Revolve clothing chose to use Coachella festival as a platform to work with 416 different influencers, resulting in 4.4 billion social impressions - that's 5 times the amount of the other brand that also collaborated with the festival. The company attributes around [60% of its revenue](#) to the work it does with influencers.

One million hours

of beauty tutorials are watched on YouTube daily³

³<https://www.youtube.com/yt/about/press/>



Fleur DeForce ✓
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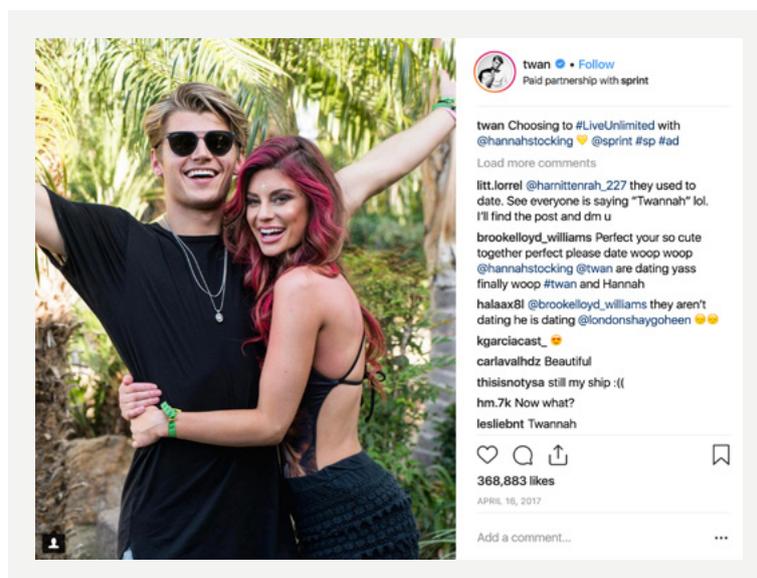
It's FINALLY HERE guys! My MAC Lipstick goes on sale TODAY! THE LIPSTICK HAS NOW COMPLETELY SOLD OUT! Thank you guys for the amazing support, there may still be a couple left in store at Selfridges & Brown Thomas, but online is totally sold out xxx

Sell out products

Partnerships between brands and influencers can lead to sell-out products. In one example, Lord and Taylor department stores gave [50 influencers the same dress](#) and asked them to style it the way they would normally, rather than to fit a specific brief that reflected the company image. By the end of the week the dress had sold out. Another example was Fleur De Force's collaboration with MAC, Fleur launched a lipstick with MAC, within 12 hours it had sold out online.

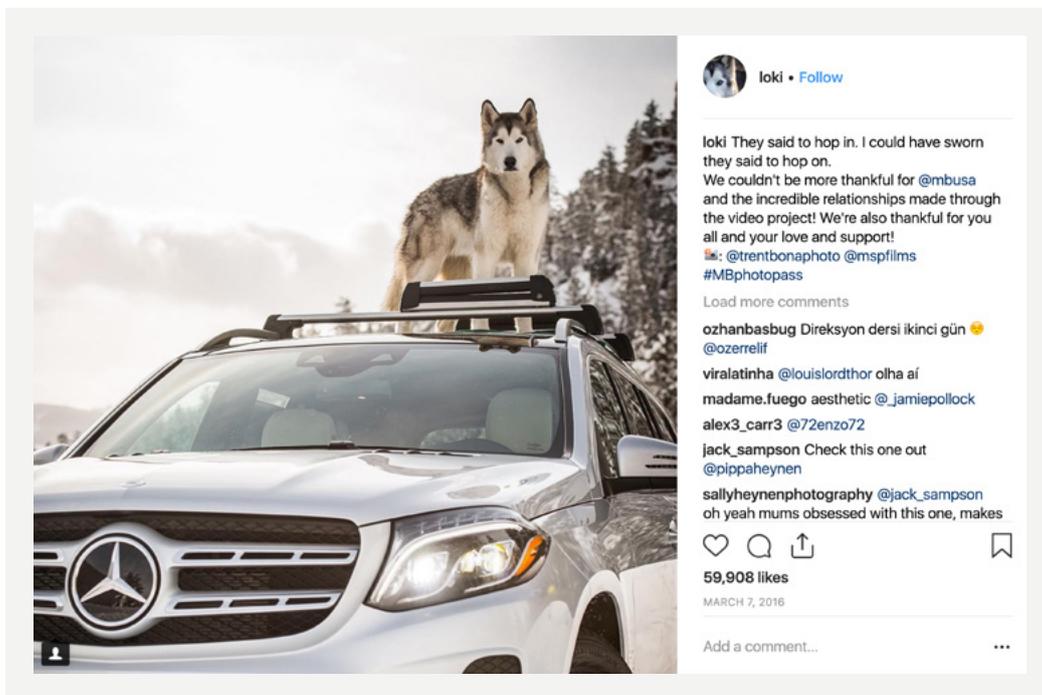
International campaigns

It's not just about products though, service brands can benefit from the use of influencers too. Service provider Sprint, for example was successful in using influencers to compete against its two main rivals. They spread the campaign between Sprint's US and Latin American teams and hired influencers from both areas to create a truly multi-cultural feel to the campaign. By working with influencers from different nationalities Sprint gained better reach than just engaging with only US influencers.



Being able to get creative

Mercedes tried something new with their influencer campaign and teamed up with internet sensation, Loki the wolfdog and his owner, to promote their new series of cars. Working with Loki, Mercedes were promoting their latest car using VR technology and allowing you to see the journey from Loki's perspective.



Cons of working with an influencer

Unfortunately, all this positivity isn't the only thing you can get from an influencer relationship. There are those that hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons and, whilst most influencers rebound from these incidents unscathed, the brands often suffer repercussions well after the initial incident.

Influencers are often used for short term campaigns rather than long term relationships with a brand. They're often not as engaged with the brand as they would be if they were an ambassador, and if the relationship fails they have no obligation to be positive about the brand after a campaign, although professionalism may stop them from airing their grievances fully.



Public arguments

If there were any challenges during the brand/influencer relationship this can turn into a public argument; as one influencer found out when she tried to get a free stay at a hotel and was very publicly denied. This led to both the influencer and the hotel being swept up in a lot of negativity that could have been avoided.

Racist comments

The most recent drama in the influencer community has cost a number of influencers their standing with brands. Laura Lee (a beauty YouTuber) was discovered to have made a series of racist tweets prior to her rise to influencer status. One brand who had a relationship with Laura Lee issued a statement directly from their CEO to say they had cut all ties with her and that this was not the kind of person they wanted to be associated with.

He confirmed that they do closely check the influencers they work with; however, they cannot spot everything. Other brands have stopped the launch of her products into their stores to distance themselves from the scandal. Some retailers have made no statement but have removed her products from their websites.

Impact on stocks

Celebrity influencers can heap even more bad press on a brand. [One negative mention from Kylie Jenner](#) can wipe over a billion dollars off a brand's bottom line. Whilst the brand will recover from the negative comments, it is a lengthy process that ultimately damages the brand and loses revenue.



Fake engagement

Another common issue is [fake and bought engagement](#). Twitter has recently clamped down on fake accounts, with many people losing followers as a result. This is a problem across all platforms, not just Twitter, and can make

working with influencers difficult. Brands have to identify genuine and fake engagement, or risk being out of pocket as they have failed to achieve any real engagement.

Content rights

Content ownership is just starting to become a problem for influencers and the brands they work with. There have been examples of influencers accusing brands of stealing their content for marketing purposes without permission. This can lead to lengthy law suits and time consuming battles over ownership of content and copyrights.

Influencers with over
1 million followers
can charge up to
\$20,000
per post⁴

Brands in the US and Canada spent \$150 million in Q2 on Instagram influencers, and 7.3%, equal to \$11 million, was lost to bots⁵

Trust in affiliations

Also on the increase is influencers saying they are affiliated with a brand when they are not. Some bloggers are outright lying about the brands they work with in order to make their audience and other brands believe that they are more influential than they are. What are the consequences of these lies? That would be a fair question to ask, as for the influencer there are none. The above example was an influencer who had made anti-Semitic comments trying to demonstrate his return to favor with brands. Until the lie was discovered the brand in question appeared to be working with an anti-Semite - not something brands want to be associated with.

⁴ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-44539536>

⁵ <https://www.chiefmarketer.com/bots-eating-one-third-brands-budgets-instagram-influencers-report/>

Influencers are becoming increasingly immune to bad press and their followers remain loyal, however brands are not coming out of this as unscathed as the influencer. Often people find it easier to attack the big corporation than an individual.



Image doctoring

Image doctoring is also an issue when it comes to authentic content. A number of influencers have been accused of [photoshopping themselves into locations](#) they haven't visited to promote a product for a brand.



FTC regulations

Other controversies begin when the [influencer is unclear on whether the post has been sponsored or not](#). This is being increasingly regulated by the FTC, [who recently contacted 90 influencers](#) reminding them to clearly disclose their advertisements.

For example a large fashion brand 'took over' social media to celebrate the relaunch of an iconic bag and engaged with 100 different influencers from celebrities to micro influencers. The problem was, [no-one mentioned that it was an advert](#), leaving many consumers confused and mistrusting of the brand. Not clearly demonstrating marketing posts makes brands look underhanded and deceitful, even if it was the influencer's choice not to disclose the sponsorship.

Over a 4 year period there was a 193% increase in complaints about advertising content on social media, many of these linking back to influencers not being transparent about their content being sponsored⁶

⁶<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2017/oct/05/social-media-stars-breaching-rules-on-promoting-brands-watchdog-says-instagram-twitter>

Checklist

Key points for a positive influencer relationship

- Research your potential candidates**

Performing due diligence is key to working with influencers. Look at their social media channels for any potential risks that could arise during your relationship. Do they have any skeletons in their closet? How have they previously worked with brands? Was there any fall out?
- Finding the right influencers**

Ensure when you look for influencers you find ones with a similar tone of voice as your brand. Get to know them, learn about their views on wider issues so you can highlight any areas where they might not fit with your brand. Don't pick a light-hearted bubbly influencer if you have a serious brand - the partnership won't feel authentic and they could easily miss the mark with your existing consumers.
- Use clear contracts to protect your brand**

Brand engagement with influencers is increasing, resulting in an increase in contacts around their work. Make sure you're working closely with your legal team to ensure that the contract protects your brand as well as offering the flexibility to use the full potential of the influencer. Some brands even include [morality clauses](#) to add another layer of protection that ensures the influencer does nothing scandalous.
- Have a crisis management strategy in place**

Despite strong relationships with your influencers, they could create a PR issue for your brand through the content they post, or from historic activity. Make sure your influencer strategy includes [social media risk monitoring](#) so you're the first to know about an issue and can activate your [crisis management strategy](#).
- Continue monitoring what they say after the partnership ends**

An influencer can still pose a risk, even when your contract is over. Monitoring their future activity will give you the ability to stay ahead of any potential PR crises that may occur post-campaign.

Summary

We have looked at a number of ways that working with influencers can boost your business, highlighting some of their key selling points and the engagement that is possible when collaborating with them. We've also looked at the potential pitfalls, not to scare your brand from working with influencers, but to highlight the necessity of a good crisis management strategy.

Whether you choose to build relationships with micro, macro or celebrity influencers they all have the potential to damage your brand reputation due to their fast and far reach.

It is not only the content you've asked them to post that can cause you difficulty. It may be their past relationships that draw them into another brand's PR crisis, their private opinions, or a drunken out-of-hours post with friends. As they are not fully-contracted to your brand, you can't control everything they do, and you shouldn't try to, but you need to be aware of when issues may be gathering momentum online, so you can put your crisis management strategy into action.

Whilst there are negatives, we believe there are plenty of benefits to working with influencers and your brand can enjoy these if you enter an influencer relationship with your eyes open.

How can Crisp help?

Having social media risk management in place allows your brand the reassurance it needs to work safely with influencers.

Crisp's social media risk management service supports you with:

- **Complete protection:** The industry's most comprehensive risk detection, covering all risks to your brand and reputation from user-generated content online
- **Bespoke solutions:** We work with you to establish which risks have the most impact on your business and who is best-placed to be alerted to high risk content when it appears. Our services are tailored to your brand's needs so that you know you're always covered on social media
- **Alerts, only when you need them:** We verify the credibility and severity of risks and alert the right stakeholders within minutes, without false alarms
- **Language and cultural nuances covered:** Our global team of expert Risk Analysts are native speakers of over 50 languages, so risks are never missed through misinterpretation
- **Lower-level risks managed for you:** We identify and act against non-critical risky content within 15 minutes, for guaranteed brand protection 24/7, 365 days a year
- **Protection that scales in a crisis:** When your brand is under attack our service scales up to ensure nothing gets missed, no matter how many comments are received

To find out more about protecting your brand online, please get in touch with our risk consultants: partnerships@crispthinking.com