

Global Digital Insights

Creator Marketing: The Next Era of Influencers



DASH HUDSON

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Context and Purpose

The advertising industry is changing. Privacy is a growing topic, with the phasing out of third-party cookies, as well as the majority of global iOS users [opting out](#) of app tracking. This year will be defined by brands adjusting their advertising strategies in order to prioritize winning with great organic content. Simultaneously, social media is undergoing the biggest transformation since its inception. TikTok [surpassed Google](#) as the most popular website on the Internet, traditional channels are adjusting their strategies to prioritize short-form video over static content, and social media has essentially become social entertainment.

In the early months of 2022, brands looked to creators for partnerships and inspiration.

They have built their careers around entertainment, and the content pillars and trends that guide short-form video channels are influenced by them. In this report, Dash Hudson delivers industry-leading insights into brand relationships with creators, and explores the emerging innovations from the world's most important brands. Marketers looking for sustained growth in the wake of the changes to targeted advertising are planning for entertainment-driven social strategies moving forward, and it all starts with creators.

Summary of Findings

- 1** Users are predominantly on social media in order to be entertained. Creators are central to that experience, and make strong creative partners for brands.
- 2** Influencer marketing is changing. A creator economy is emerging in the wake of strong competition between social channels, as well as from creators building careers in entertainment and social influence.
- 3** The global influencer industry is projected to grow significantly in the coming years, as creators have become the chief attraction of social channels.
- 4** Brands are taking advantage of emerging technologies to partner with creators in new, interesting ways—the rules of influencer marketing are being rewritten.
- 5** The top brands in the world use strategic insights to measure the lift from influencer relationships, as well as industry benchmarks to contextually understand KPI performance.

Creators Birthed the Social Entertainment Era

Video content has always been defined by creators, going back to the early days of YouTube. Short-form video is no different, with trending ideas and sounds being directly influenced by their creativity. Now that entertaining video content has become the primary function of social channels, brands and creators alike are now competing for audience attention, and brand strategies are being shaped by what works best for creators. In many ways, the era of social entertainment was birthed by creators, and brands are putting people front and center in order to make an impact. With the level playing field that social media has become, creator marketing has become of utmost importance. Brands are now adjusting their influencer strategies to explore the new creative possibilities that creator partnerships hold, which are deeper and make a much larger impact on the growth of their businesses.

“ There’s a huge benefit in getting influencers to create content for our owned Morphe channels. **When we post influencers on our channels, it gives us the kind of authority that nothing else really can.** We also partner with creators to post on their channels, and this is a way for us to reach new audiences, which is also important. You really need to diversify the different channels that you’re speaking to your audience with, and partnering with creators gets your message out to a wider audience.



Alison Nadel,
Director of Social Media and Brand Marketing

FORMA



@mikaylajmakeup via @morphebrushes



via Morphe on Youtube

The Current Video Landscape

In the new social landscape, all eyes are on TikTok, which has positioned itself as the leading channel in entertainment marketing. Meta, the parent company of Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, is expected to zero in on short-form video as customer preferences shift towards the format. Facebook has responded by launching Reels globally, and Instagram now allows users to convert Instagram Stories highlights into Reels. The visual channel plans on doubling down on its [focus on video](#), and consolidating all of its video formats around Reels, which is TikTok's biggest competition. At the same time, YouTube is ramping up investment in Shorts, and the long-standing video channel is deprioritizing its scripted entertainment to better focus on its short-form format.

56%

of users feel more positive about a brand after seeing it on TikTok

73%

of users feel positive and emotionally uplifted after watching authentic content

Source: [The Drum](#)

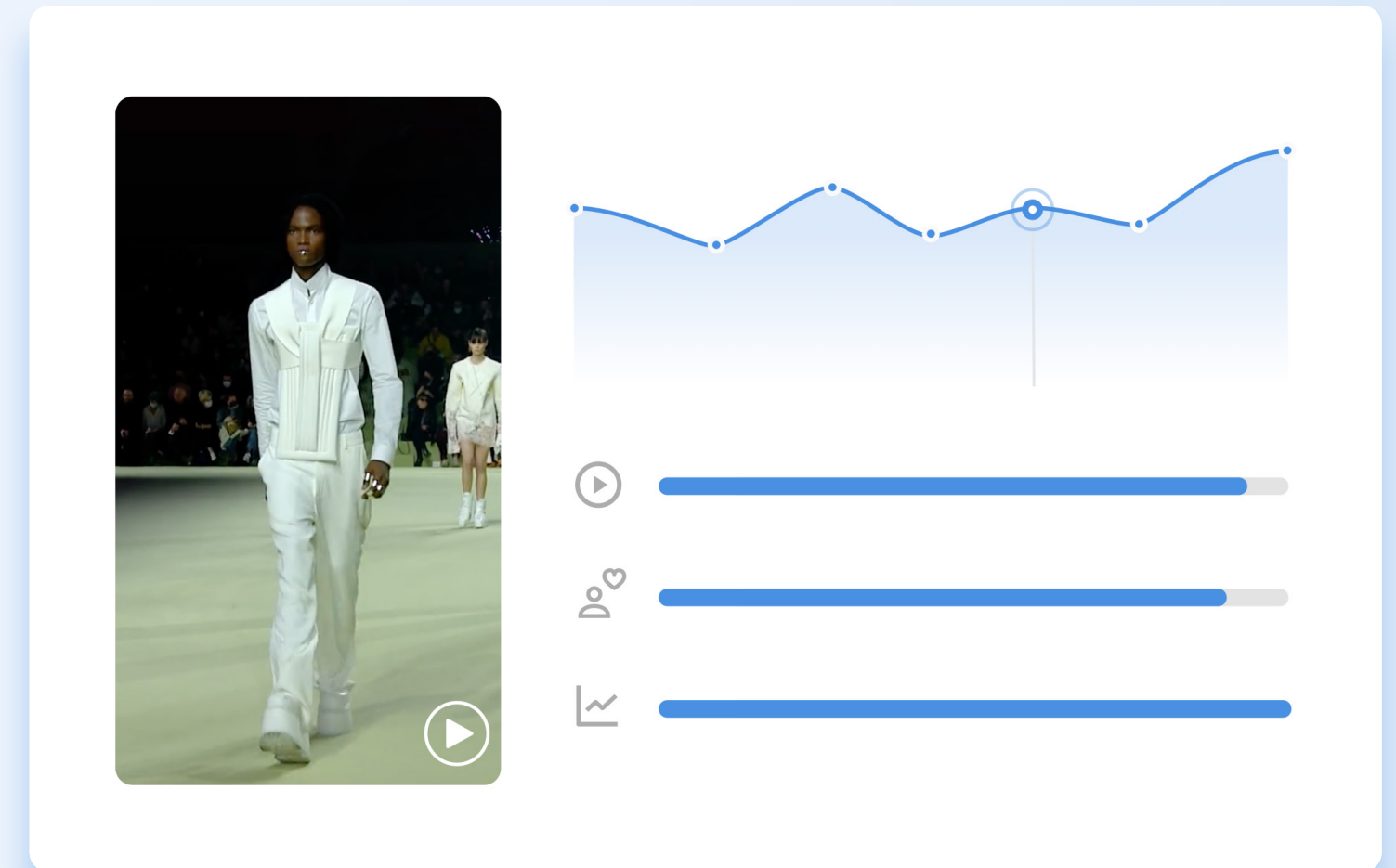


Image via [@balmain](#)

“ What’s really exciting about this moment in time is that we are in a new age of content. We are in a renaissance period where organic content has had a significant resurgence. **Organic content is showing incredible engagement and impressions—if you have the best content.** You need to rethink and reprioritize your organic strategy, because it does matter, especially on channels like TikTok where you can obtain incredible reach.



Kate Kenner Archibald,
CMO

DASH HUDSON

Source: GDS CMO Summit keynote in March 2022

The Changing Creator Economy

Instagram is adding [special tags](#) to its content, allowing creators to receive credit for their viral trends and posts.

Influencers have become video producers, writers, and directors. The introduction of Reels to Facebook globally will change content marketing strategies for the largest social channel, which has remained relatively unchanged in its network focus until now. Reels will make content more discoverable on Facebook, and introduce Instagram creators to a whole new audience, opening up a new world of opportunities for both creators and brands.



TikTok ads with creator partnerships achieved [65% higher](#) 2-second view rates, and 91% higher 6-second view rates



TikTok ads with creator partnerships achieved [83% higher](#) engagement rates



@nhl

TikTok is making waves by bridging the worlds of entertainment and social media, including its high profile multimedia partnership with the **NHL**. As a part of the TikTok Tailgate Stage, country music star Walker Hayes, whose career was propelled by his TikTok viral hit “Fancy Like,” performed live on the NHL account. The original video has [32 million views](#), and the song peaked at #3 on the Billboard Hot 100 after it was discovered by TikTok users.



@cocokindskincare



@cyrusveyssi via @cocokind

Hollywood agencies are beginning to sign [TikTok talent](#), which is the strongest indicator yet that the nature of celebrity is changing. Creators come with pre-existing loyal followings, which has the potential to elevate the entertainment industry just as much as it has elevated influencer marketing. In the era of social entertainment, brands that invest in creator partnerships are also investing in that creator's future success, which is mutually beneficial, and has longer-term benefits than transient influencer sponsored posts.

“ People who are not traditional influencers are now able to garner a ton of followers. People are interested in them based on their sense of humor, how they film videos, and trends. What we're seeing is the idea of an influencer changing into something that puts people who are funny or relatable first.



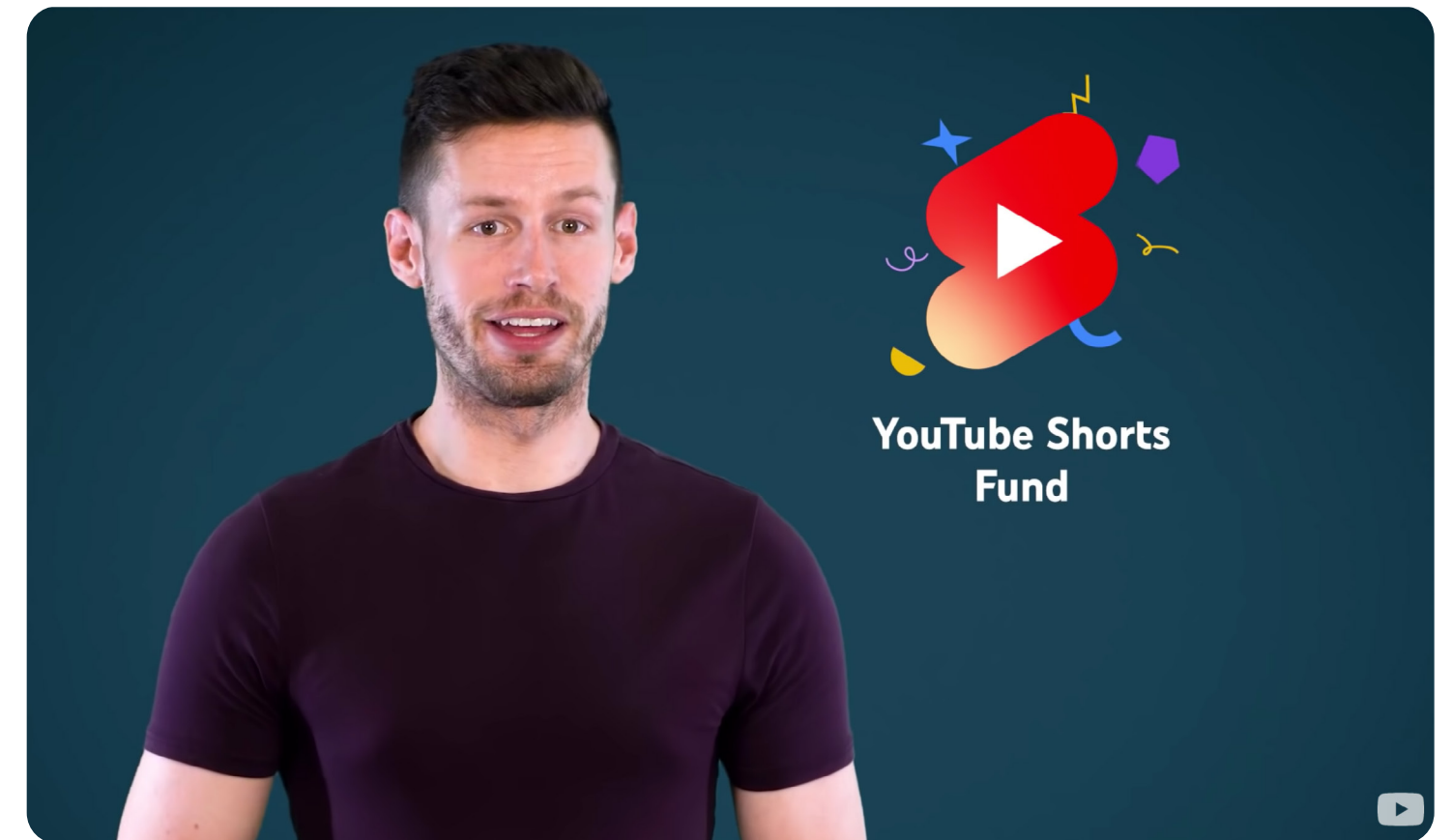
Lauren Bliss,
Director of Social Media
cocokind

Monetization of Creators

Social channels are getting serious about opening up avenues for creators to build their careers using their platforms. All major short-form video channels have designated funds to reward creators for their content, as well as entice them to make content for that specific channel. Creators are everything in the world of entertainment, and social channels are competing for talent through lucrative payouts, similar to a competitive job market.



The global influencer market is predicted to reach [\\$16.4 billion](#) in 2022, a 19% increase over 2021



via YouTube Creators on YouTube

YouTube

- Has a [\\$100 million](#) Shorts Fund in addition to monthly AdSense payments

Meta

- Investing a total of [\\$1 billion](#) in creators
- Introduced a Reels Play bonus program, which pays creators up to [\\$35,000](#) a month based on views
- Introduced semi-transparent banner ads on Reels, as well as sticker ads that can be placed by creators—both of which enable creators to earn ad revenue

ByteDance

- Introduced its music distribution platform [SoundOn](#), which will pay 100% royalties to music creators on its platforms, including TikTok, and allow creators to retain the rights and masters



@barbie



@lilmiquela

Virtual Influencers

The virtual influencer industry reached [\\$1 billion](#) in China in 2021

Meta's social virtual reality platform, Horizon Worlds, has reached [300,000](#) monthly users

Virtual influencers are digital characters that individuals and brands use as social avatars. They have exploded in popularity in the past year, from creators taking on “VTuber” identities on YouTube, to Fortnite transforming Ariana Grande into a digital character for a concert experience. Virtual influencer Dong Dong became a highlight of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games on Alibaba’s Taobao Live platform, where she hosted streams, sold merch, and interacted with superfans. Virtual influencers will only become more common as the metaverse emerges in the social landscape, and brands such as Barbie use their existing intellectual property to engage with fans in new ways.

Instagram is a prime destination for virtual influencers, with the character Lil Miquela amassing over 3 million followers after being introduced in 2016. Meta is making further investment in this space on Facebook and Instagram by allowing users to create avatars that can be used in Stories and DMs, aligning with its metaverse channels such as Horizon Worlds, and creating a direct link between social media channels and video game entertainment.

Dash Hudson's Creator Relationships Benchmarks

Dash Hudson analyzed the organic reach from creator relationships, analyzing performance across nearly 1000 of the world's most important brands. Dash Hudson's Relationships solution allows brands to measure the impact of every influencer and creator relationship, giving important context to the value of user-generated content, earned media, and influencer programs. These touchpoints allow brands to extend their reach far past their own following, with creators often acting as the conduit to supercharge social media performance.

71%

of people surveyed strongly associate Instagram
with following celebrities and influencers

Source: [Meta for Business](#)

93%

of marketers plan to use Instagram for their
influencer marketing programs

Source: [Statista](#)

Media Industry

Notably, accounts with more than 150,000 followers earn a significant number of followers for the media industry, which is understandable, as celebrities are powerful drivers of traffic for media brands. Brands should also take note of the effectiveness and engagement rate of content from micro creators and influencers, as they significantly outperform average benchmarks for organic content from media brands. While user-generated content from smaller accounts results in fewer followers gained, it makes more of an impact on those who see it than content from larger accounts. **Hulu** is a UGC giant that strategically partners with both celebrities and micro creators to celebrate its programming and extend its organic reach far past the following of its accounts.

To learn more about how Hulu leverages Dash Hudson Relationships to grow its engagement, read the [case study](#).

| | Micro Creators 0 – 10K Followers | Mid Creators 10K – 150K Followers | Macro Creators 150K+ Followers |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Avg. Effectiveness Rate | 20.63% | 10.40% | 5.67% |
| Avg. Engagement Rate | 6.17% | 3.12% | 1.70% |
| Avg. Total EMV (Earned Media Value) | \$211 | \$2,479 | \$279,166 |
| Avg. # of Followers Gained | 34 | 158 | 1,046 |

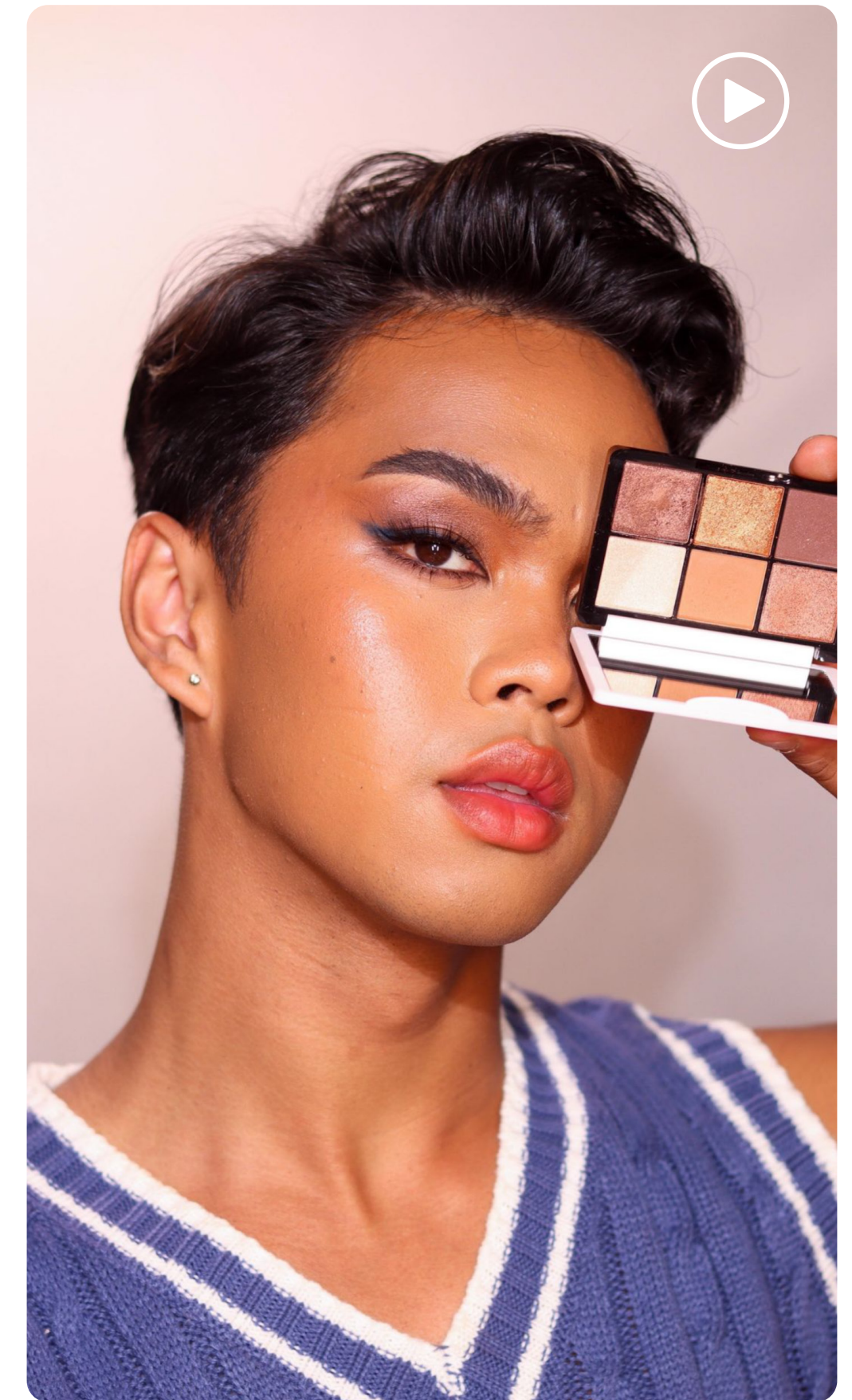


@hulu

Beauty Industry

The beauty industry has long been partnering with creators on authentic content, and it is no surprise that micro creators in the beauty environment have a higher effectiveness rate and engagement rate than most other industries. Users trust the small creators that they follow, and their average performance indicates high authority in their space, even though their number of followers are smaller than big creators. **MECCA MAX** partners with a diverse array of creators, from small accounts to large accounts, and the brand is able to reach significantly more users with its comprehensive organic creator strategy that reaches fans of beauty products from all walks of life.

| | Micro Creators 0 – 10K Followers | Mid Creators 10K – 150K Followers | Macro Creators 150K+ Followers |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Avg. Effectiveness Rate | 21.91% | 10.06% | 5.64% |
| Avg. Engagement Rate | 6.95% | 3.01% | 1.69% |
| Avg. Total EMV (Earned Media Value) | \$133 | \$1,513 | \$74,429 |
| Avg. # of Followers Gained | 15 | 46 | 197 |



@dom.skii via @meccamax

Fashion Industry

Creators in the fashion space are well-accustomed to the role social entertainment plays in how they present their brand, and this is reflected in their average effectiveness rate outperforming most other industries. Fashion brands receive a smaller lift in followers from creators than other industries, however creators in this space make more of an impact on audiences. Innovative luxury fashion label **Christopher Kane** certainly knows how to make an impact, with its highly distinguishable brand that captivates followers of creators, seeing monumental engagement from earned media and user-generated content.

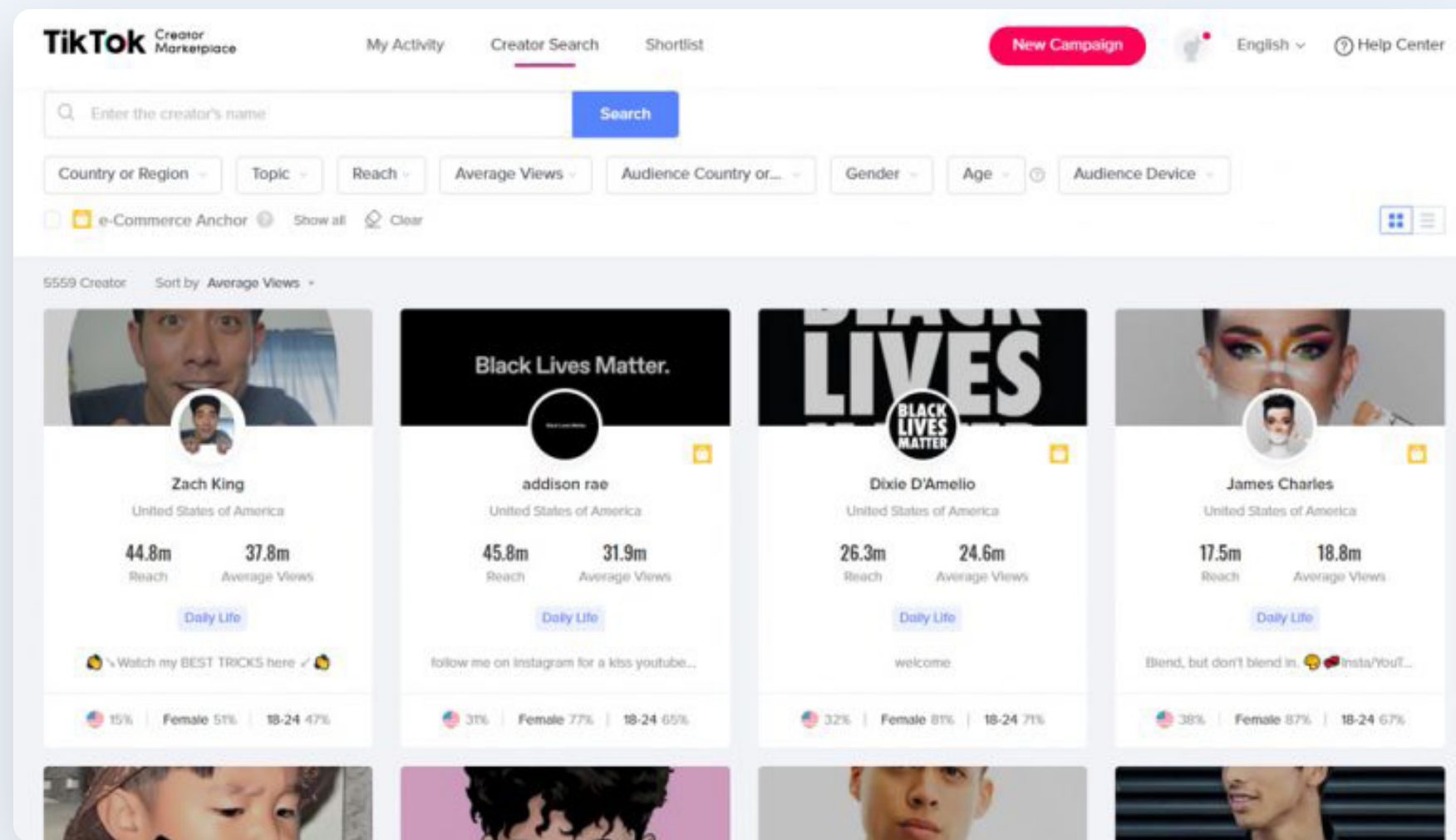
| | Micro Creators 0 – 10K Followers | Mid Creators 10K – 150K Followers | Macro Creators 150K+ Followers |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Avg. Effectiveness Rate | 23.34% | 9.90% | 6.99% |
| Avg. Engagement Rate | 7.02% | 2.97% | 2.10% |
| Avg. Total EMV (Earned Media Value) | \$156 | \$1,709 | \$21,745 |
| Avg. # of Followers Gained | 27 | 44 | 105 |



@christopherkane

Creators and ROI

Creator partnerships are the best method for brands to maximize their advertising ROI in social entertainment. TikTok users themselves agree—[62%](#) say that creators are the best way for brands to connect with them. The channel has democratized creator partnerships with its TikTok Creator Marketplace, allowing brands to work with creators directly without an intermediary.



via mediakix.com

The global influencer marketing market value stands at \$13.8 billion, of which YouTube makes up \$6.6 billion dollars. As the progenitor video content channel for creators, YouTube should not be discounted by marketers, as the channel is projected to reach over [2.8 billion](#) users by 2025, and it benefits from Google's sophisticated advertising infrastructure.

\$13.8 billion

The current value of the market for global influencer marketing

Source: [Statista](https://www.statista.com)

+193%

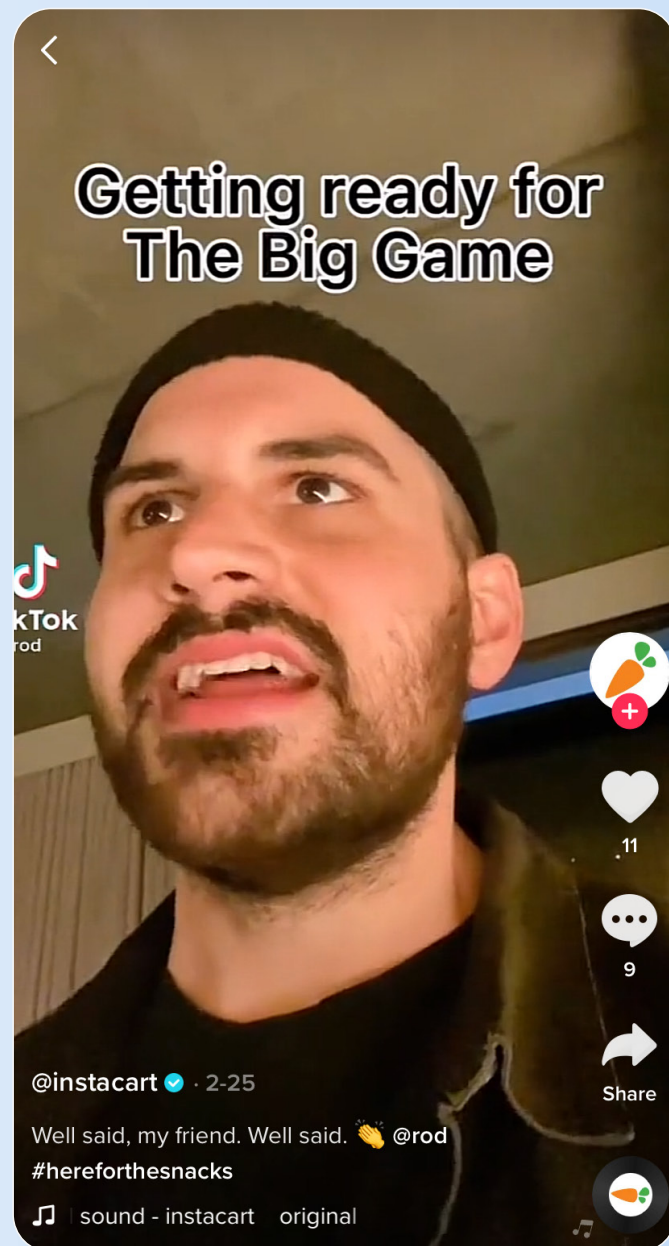
Boost in click-through rates for ads when partnering with TikTok creators

Source: [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com)

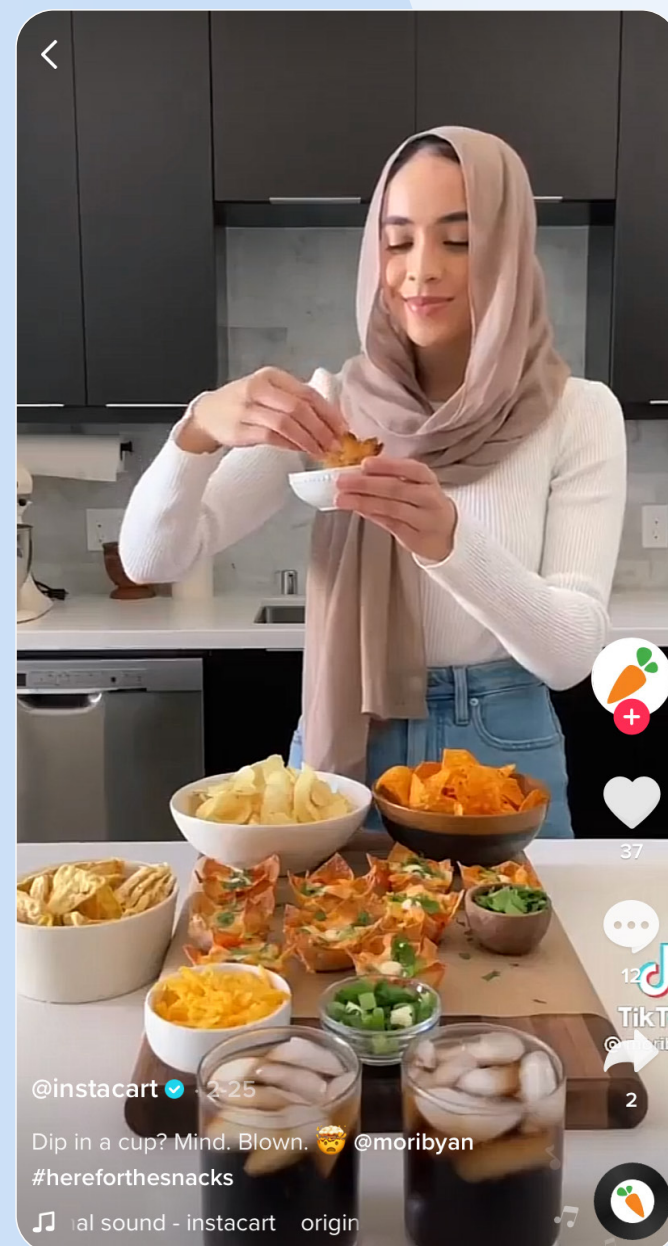
+27%

Higher Ad Recall for branded TikTok creator collaborations

Source: [TikTok](https://www.tiktok.com)



@rod via @instacart



@moribyan via @instacart

TikTok Won the Super Bowl

TikTok was top-of-mind for brands in their Super Bowl campaign activations this year. The big game itself experienced an explosion of chatter, and brands such as Instacart took advantage of the buzz around the sporting event by partnering with TikTok creators. **Instacart** launched a viral multimedia campaign that spanned across digital touchpoints, including its partners' collective [140 million](#) TikTok followers. The campaign culminated in a hashtag, #hereforthesnacks, where some of the biggest creators on the channel posted about their favorite foods, and inspired viewers to post their own UGC. **Marketing at this point in time is less about the brand, and more about the experiences that lead people to that brand—in this case, game day snacks.**



Game day views of the #SuperBowl hashtag grew 200% from 2021 to 2022



TikTok content made with the #SuperBowl hashtag grew 4x from 2021 to 2022

Market Spotlight: Retail Industry

The State of the Market

This year will be defined by retailers making strategic shifts in how they market products, leaning more on creators, e-commerce, and live-stream technology to make shopping on social media a seamless and entertaining experience. Find out how your brand stacks against industry leaders with Dash Hudson's Instagram benchmark KPIs. Dash Hudson analyzed the most-followed retail brands on Instagram from the last year in order to help you understand your current numbers and guide your strategy in the era of social entertainment.



[38%](#) of consumers plan to do more online shopping








The secondhand market is projected to double in the [next five years](#)



[57%](#) of consumers are more loyal to brands that commit to addressing social inequities

The Most Important KPIs

-  **Average Engagement Rate:** measures the ratio of likes and comments to number of followers, indicating a brand's level of interaction from users on Instagram. This KPI is important across all industries to assess how content resonates with viewers
-  **Average Effectiveness Rate:** measures the percent of users who saw your post and engaged with it (likes + comments + saves + video views) / reach. Effectiveness takes into account the percentage of users who actually view your post and then engage with it. This provides stronger insight into how your content is truly resonating with the users who laid eyes on it
-  **Average Weekly Owned Reach:** measures the number of unique views a brand receives for their owned content on a weekly basis. Owned reach gives a brand the full picture of how many accounts see the content they post
-  **Average Weekly Posts:** measures the average number of posts brands schedule on Instagram each week. This is important for brands deciding on the right cadence for posting on Instagram
-  **Average Number of Weekly Saves:** measures the average number of saves brand posts receive each week. Saves are an important measure of how much content resonates with a user, as well as purchasing intent for products, and it is increasingly becoming a key KPI for brands on Instagram

Benchmarks and KPI Leaders on Instagram



| | 10K–300K Followers | 300K–1.5M Followers | 1.5M+ Followers |
|-----------------------------|---|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| Leaders | little planet by carter's TROUVA SIMONMILLER | COTTON:ON aerie Outdoor Voices | Stussy Reebok HOTTOPIC |
| Avg. Engagement Rate | 0.78% | 0.39% | 0.26% |
| Avg. Effectiveness Rate | 5.69% | 5.10% | 4.21% |
| Avg. Weekly Owned Reach | 275,116 | 3,251,213 | 35,149,813 |
| Avg. Weekly Posts | 7 | 14 | 14 |
| Avg. Number of Weekly Saves | 342 | 1,836 | 4,582 |



AE Members Always Club via @americaneagle

aerie

Aerie's strategy on Instagram is authenticity, and the retailer partners with brand ambassadors and creators on fun lifestyle Reels that always put people first, and product second. The brand leans into positive affirmation, ensuring its audience feels good about themselves, and commits to posting content without retouching. Its parent company, American Eagle Outfitters, plans on making waves in the metaverse this year, including giving Roblox players digital branded fashion, and hosting Instagram Live sessions where fans can interact with the cast of its campaigns.

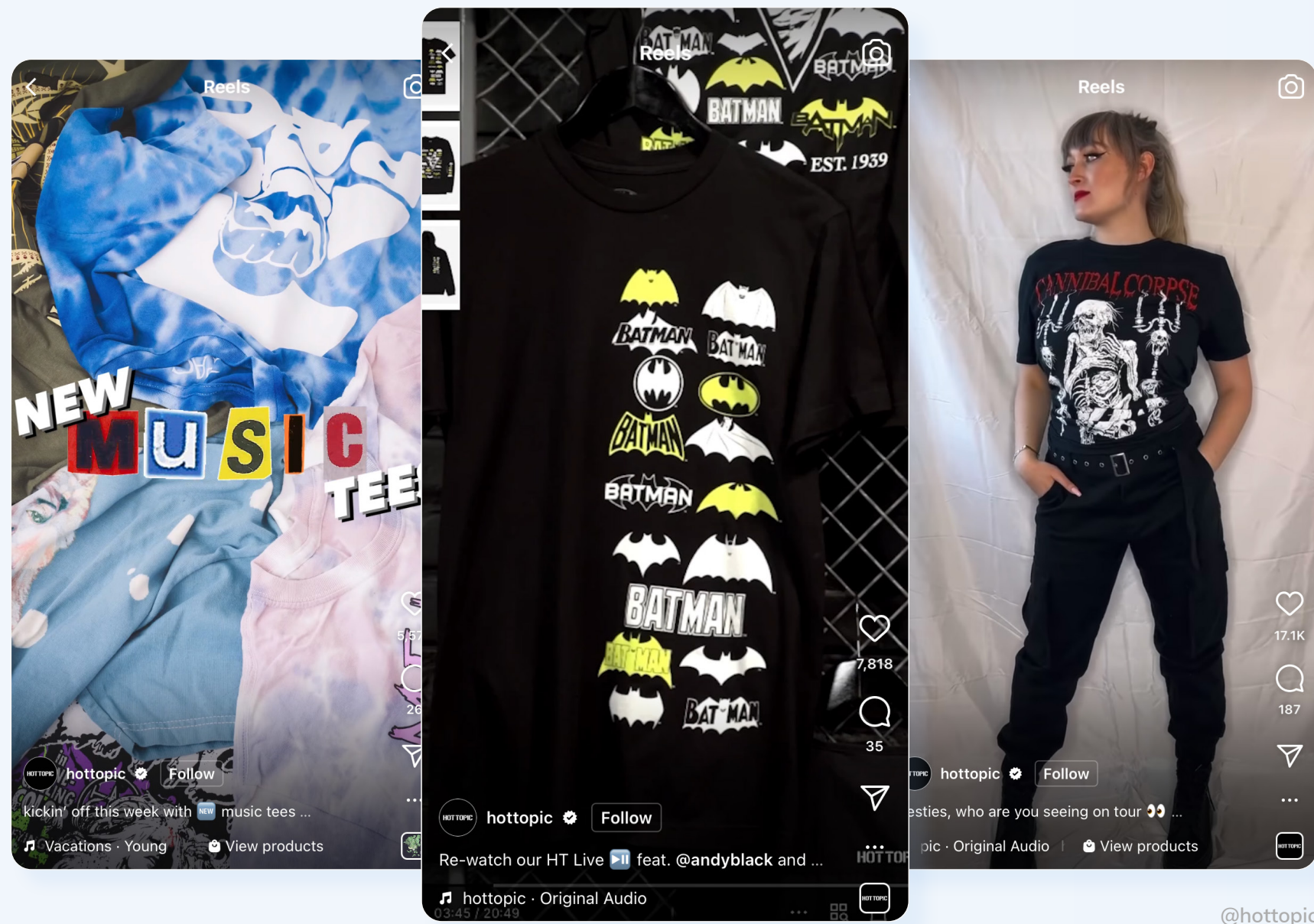


Parent company American Eagle [hosted a party](#) in the Roblox metaverse platform

HOT TOPIC

Hot Topic hosted its first livestream shopping event, partnering with DC Comics on a Batman theme

Hot Topic presents itself as more than just a retailer. Its Instagram feed is a cultural hub, where countless fandoms are able to celebrate their entertainment of choice. Hot Topic also makes extensive use of Reels, using the visual medium to bring its store to life with merchandise reveals, creator collaborations, and shopping hauls. The brand has also established itself on the Discord platform, where it hosts an anime-focused server for fans to engage with one another under the company's banner. Hot Topic is going big on social entertainment this year, including partnering with creators on live shopping events.



@reebok



Reebok plans on introducing NFTs this year, bringing sneaker culture to the metaverse

Reebok keeps the social media chatter going with star-studded content, such as their high-profile collaboration with Cardi B. The collection proved to be a hit with fans of trendy streetwear, and the brand is continuing its partnership with the Grammy-winning rapper with new capsule collections this year. The athleticwear brand understands how much audiences love entertainers, and it is no surprise to see great partnerships earn considerable engagement on Instagram.

Conclusion

Without a doubt, the social entertainment era is here. Audiences are now using social media in order to find entertaining content, much of which is video. Creators are central to short-form video experiences, and they are driving culture forward at a lightning fast pace. The biggest social channels are investing heavily in creator growth, as creators have become the primary reason why users interact with content. The worlds of social media and Hollywood are beginning to converge, as creators are being signed on by agencies, and the idea of a celebrity is starting to shift towards creators who earn the most engagement.

Brands must be aware of the growing importance of their influencer strategies. As creators are attuned to trending content and sounds, and their careers involve keeping up with ever-shifting algorithms, they make strong creative partners for brands. The days of sponsoring a staged photograph are over. Brands are now partnering with creators on dynamic entertainment that captivates audiences. Creator partnerships on TikTok lead to higher view-through rates, as well as Ad Recall, and marketers who are looking to optimize their media spend should be tapping into TikTok as the next destination for powerful advertisements that reach key demographics that cannot be found on other social channels.

Experimentation, backed by the right creative insights, is what will differentiate successful brands in social entertainment. Only Dash Hudson provides the powerful insights your brand needs to elevate its creative marketing performance in this new era.

For the Rest of 2022

- TikTok is a juggernaut, and legacy social channels are responding by pivoting to video content—brands that are not prepared for this shift will struggle to find growth
- Focus on elevating the reach of your video content, which means thinking like a creator in order to capitalize on trends and make entertaining content that lands
- Creator partnerships lead to higher view-through rates and Ad Recall, and marketers should be tapping into TikTok as an advertising channel
- Ensure your brand is equipped with the best industry insights and solutions stack in order to measure the impact of creator relationships, as well as develop strong KPIs

Check back twice a year for more insight into social media, e-commerce, and visual marketing from Dash Hudson. And, for all the tools you need to succeed year round, request a demo today.

[Get a Demo](#)