

I influence you, therefore, I am!

 By [Graham Deneys](#), issued by [Dentsu](#) 31 Aug 2018

Much talk has surrounded the power of influencers in campaigns in 2016 and 2017, something that I don't see slowing down in 2018. Large numbers of loyal followers eagerly waiting for the next tweet, post, tip or rant. Recently, however, the industry has been looking a little deeper into the science behind this growing channel.



As a strategist, I can certainly appreciate the role that influencers play in integrated campaigns and the effect they can have at certain points of a buying journey but there are a few points to consider before jumping in.

Traditionally, influencers will always quote their numbers of loyal followers to illustrate their "influence" but the numbers alone don't tell the full story as the playing field is somewhat uneven.

If influencers are going to compete on reach, surely it should be on an apples versus apples basis not just trust? With pressure to justify spends and numbers within campaigns why is the influencer category not subjected to the same rigour and data demands that are put into other channels?

If we broke these follower numbers down we might find that not all the followers are as loyal and obsessed as we are told. For example, how do we know that the quoted followers follow out of interest versus following to get a valuable follow in return.

Do we know anything regarding the psychographics and demographics of the followers, and a scary thought - are the followers even real at all as they might have been farmed (bought) from one of the hundreds of "pay me for followers" providers that are out there. Check out www.mrinsta.com for a quick taste.

This leads me to another thought - is an influencer "following" an indication of influence at all? The rest of the reach based channels in the media mix are scrutinised under a microscope every day and most influencer followings would struggle against the established, relevance-at-scale platforms. A better tactic might be to adopt an influencer and pay for the reach ourselves, if followers (reach) is the metric we use to establish "influence".

From an influence point of view, should we not rather be looking at an influencer in our campaigns as just that, an influential personality that should be the embodiment of our brand and authentically promote it through his or her daily life as opposed to just being paid to send a tweet or write a post to their followers.

This influencer reach methodology too can also be rather controversial at times as no loyal follower wants to find out that their trusted influencer's opinion is in fact being funded and thus paid to tell you that they think a particular product is great. We follow them for their opinions, right? They should therefore be as objective as possible to be authentic, in the same way a magazine editor or contributor is expected to do. (This can be debated due to efforts like celebrity endorsement, which

work well.)

Now, just as a caveat, I do realise that there are many verification methods and organisations that do in fact do the homework required around this, however this is far outweighed by the number of influencers out there with staggering amounts of followers and “influence” that just don’t stack up.

I would say that to the benefit of us all, influencers, brands, media buyers and of course consumers - should we not be looking at a body or organisation that can promote consistent number verification and influence metrics that are not based on reach only and support the influencer industry in SA to be the best it possibly can be.

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