

We're all familiar with traditional advertising tactics: billboards, print ads, and especially, television commercials. Even popular streaming sites (e.g., Hulu) still interrupt your viewing experience with ads that you don't want to see, no matter if they're specifically targeted towards you as a viewer or not.

Television commercials are the perfect time to check your phone, get a snack, or run to the bathroom. You mentally tune out during a normal commercial, or fast forward. Even on YouTube, there is the option to skip the ads that appear before a video. Traditional advertising is not typically integrated with other original content in the same way as is done on an influencer's YouTube channel or a brand's social media accounts.

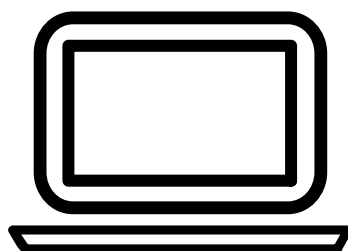
The demographics for influencer marketing favor targeting younger audiences. A study done by Kantar and reported by Mobile Marketer shared that 44% of Generation Z has bought a product based on a recommendation from an influencer, versus only 26% of the general population. Even in light of these specific targeted ads, the targeted consumer can still tune them out without much effort. By using a generalized brand sponsorship, a brand risks their partnership delivering ineffective results. To circumvent this caveat, brands need to align their strategy with the YouTuber's channel.

Brands and companies are investing more in brand deals with influencers, creating a rise of co-created content (i.e., paid authentic collaboration), where brands and influencers work together to integrate an ad into the content that loyal viewers have come to expect to see.

More than ever, integrating a brand into a piece of content is more beneficial than a "normal ad read," according to CJ OperAmericano in the AdAge article titled "Can TikTok prove the effectiveness of influencer marketing?" She goes on to explain, "It's not like an ad that someone would want to click away from...it's an actual story that makes the viewers want to participate in the product or the activity that I'm advertising."

A number of companies are slowly, but surely, realizing the opportunity to advertise via influencers - namely, The Clorox Company and Team SeatGeek. Both brands want to incorporate their products/services into influencers' regular content, but have different approaches going about that. The Vice President of the Clorox Company's cleaning division, Magnus Jonnson, recognizes the importance of having brand deals resemble influencers' regular content, stating to Kristina Monllos at DigiDay that, "Consumers don't necessarily know if this is paid advertising." Despite this statement, Clorox's partnerships with YouTubers from three months ago still disclose that a video is being sponsored by them, which might suggest their influencer marketing efforts are changing.

If the point is to capitalize off of authenticity, hiding the fact that a post or video is a brand deal could potentially come across as being inauthentic and unethical.

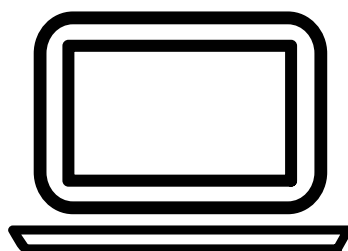


SeatGeek has gone a completely different route. While they have partnered with many influencers (e.g., Shane Dawson, Cody Ko, and Philip DeFranco), they are most known for their work with YouTuber David Dobrik. Dobrik will use the money he makes from a SeatGeek ad read to surprise other people with high-priced gifts such as expensive cars and tickets to the World Series in that sponsored video.

Ian Borthwick, Team SeatGeek's Director of Influencer Marketing summed up this partnership perfectly when he told Tubefilter's Geoff Weiss, "Now, when David [Dobrik] mentions SeatGeek in a video, fans don't skip through because they know that the minute he says our name, something amazing is going to happen." This is a perfect example of brand integration meets recognition. Dobrik integrated SeatGeek into his vlogs so that the company (and Borthwick himself) became a character within it, just as much as any of Dobrik's friends that regularly appear in videos and bits. If SeatGeek were trying to hide the fact that they were paying Dobrik to advertise for them, they wouldn't have as much recognition. Fans have posted compilation videos of all of the Dobrik x SeatGeek's surprises, and have recreated his ad reads verbatim. Even when Dobrik partnered with another company to surprise someone with a car, the comment section was populated with sentiments about SeatGeek.

During the Super Bowl, Borthwick tweeted about how the views of the event compare to the views of a YouTube video such as one of Shane Dawson's popular conspiracy videos. Analytics - such as unique views and amount of time it took to accumulate 38M views - would have to be looked at in order to actually accurately compare the two. Still, Borthwick's point is that influencer marketing can be cheaper than traditional advertising and still have similar results. The Super Bowl is an annual event, whereas influencers post several videos (daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) throughout the year. As influencer marketing continues to take off, the price discrepancies paid out to networks vs. creators might begin to lessen.

Viewers tend to trust the influencers whose content they consume. As is articulated in a study by Marina Dekavalla published earlier this year in *Media, Culture & Society*, one of the key components to facilitating trust between the content creator and the content consumer is authenticity. Brands need to align their ads with the content that an influencer's audience is used to seeing. Chances are, the targeted audience will be more likely to trust a brand because of their association with the influencer. Instead of flippantly shoving in an ad read and then never mentioning the brand again, brands should work together with their influencer of choice to figure out a way to integrate their company within a piece of content. This could lead to greater brand recognition, since the brand would now be connected to a moment.



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