



# State of Influencer Marketing 2021

A survey of over 5,000 influencers to uncover the leading industry trends.



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# 2020: The Year That Changed Everything

It would be remiss to begin this report without acknowledging the many factors our industry was up against this year. The coronavirus pandemic has touched all of our lives, from the way we work to tremendous loss. While this is not a report on COVID-19, it is important to remember that 2020 and the coronavirus are not mutually exclusive terms.

With that in mind, our findings this year are different than past years. Previous years have shown continued growth in the influencer industry. However, this year our findings showed something that may be more important than traditional growth figures. Influencer impact increased by 57% in 2020, a testament to the power of the industry.

Due to the pandemic, many brands were forced to cut budgets, and halt marketing initiatives. Our findings also revealed a sharp decline in activity from the Travel and Food Industry. Presumably due to lockdowns and business closures.

However, while the number of sponsored collaborations declined in 2020, the value of influencers grew tremendously. Not only did influencer impact grow, so too did sponsorships across Stories and TikTok.

2020 was also a year that tested the social and political fabric of our society. The Black Lives Matter protests in June

sparked a global conversation about systemic racism, and was an important moment of introspection.

For the first time we saw public figures and corporations engage in social discourse like never before. In the past brands could maintain a silent neutrality on such issues, but this time silence was perceived as a statement. We saw brands engaging in social activism and leading important conversations. Perhaps this was the most important trend of 2020, which will have lasting a impact on marketing strategies moving forward.

2020 was the year brand values mattered most.

# 2021 State of Influencer Marketing Report

As we enter 2021 with these key insights in mind we present our research as key findings, which should help you prepare for the upcoming year.

These findings indicate the most important lessons and data-driven trends we've observed in 2020. We believe these trends should be at the forefront of your influencer marketing strategy.

From COVID-19 to the rise of Gen Z, we present the most important trends in influencer marketing. And, we've asked some of the industry's leading creators to provide predictions for the upcoming year.

## Key Findings:

- Sponsored collaboration impact increased 57%
- Tik Tok collaborations increase 130%
- 80% of brands are likely to engage in social activism
- Gen Z's influencer market share increased 9%

## Methodology:

- A survey of over 5,000 influencers across the leading social networks.
- A statistical analysis of trends and demographics using our SIGIR award-winning influencer measurement technology

**Klear Research** is committed to providing quality, data-driven research. Our data science team is constantly producing industry-leading insights that are available and beneficial to all.

Key Finding #1

# **The Global Reach of Influencer Marketing Grew 57% in 2020**



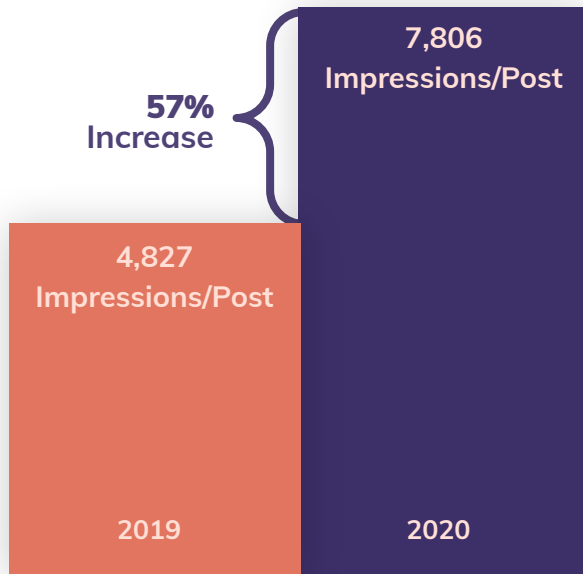
# Influencer collaborations had 57% more reach and impact in 2020

We analyzed global branded collaborations in 2020.

In **2020**, sponsored posts received an average of **7,806 impressions** (unique views). In **2019**, sponsored posts averaged **4,827 impressions**. A **57% increase**.

57% Growth

Average Impression Per Post



Key Finding #2

**80% of Brands are  
Likely to Engage in  
Social Activism**



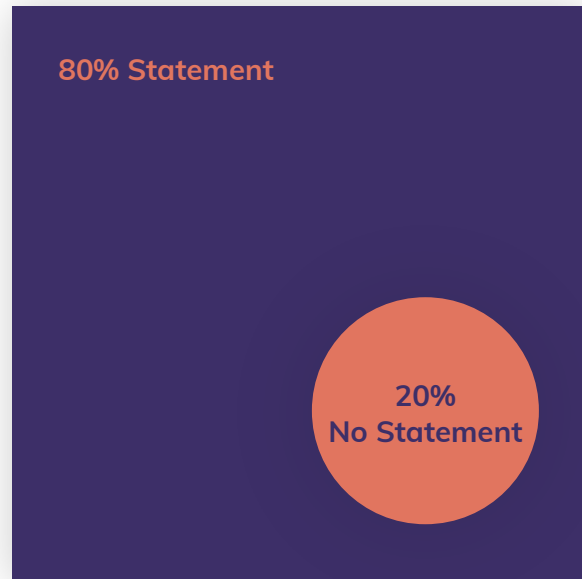
# 80% of brands made public statements supporting #BlackLivesMatter

We analyzed the social profiles of the Fortune 100 companies.

80% of brands **made a statement** in support of #BlackLivesMatter and **20%** of brands **did not make a statement**.

80% Make Public Statements

Fortune 100 Brands and #BlackLivesMatter





Key Finding #3

## **TikTok Sponsorships Increased 130%**



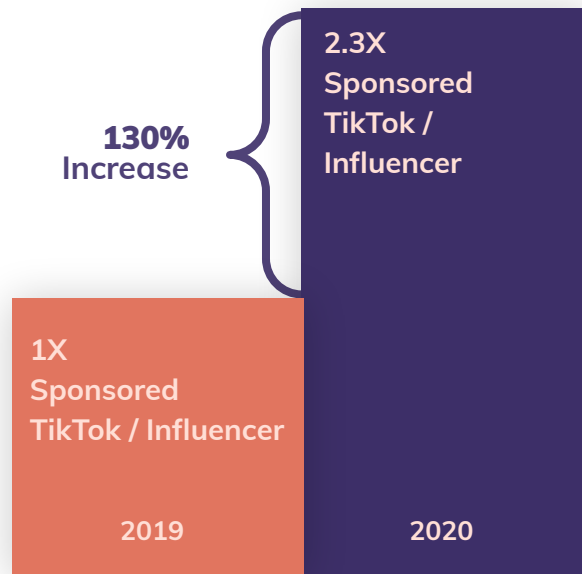
# TikTok sponsorship activity increased 130%

We analyzed all posts on TikTok with a #ad in 2020.

Our findings revealed that per **1 sponsorship** TikTok creators participated in **2019**, they created **2.3 sponsorships** in **2020**. A 130% increase.

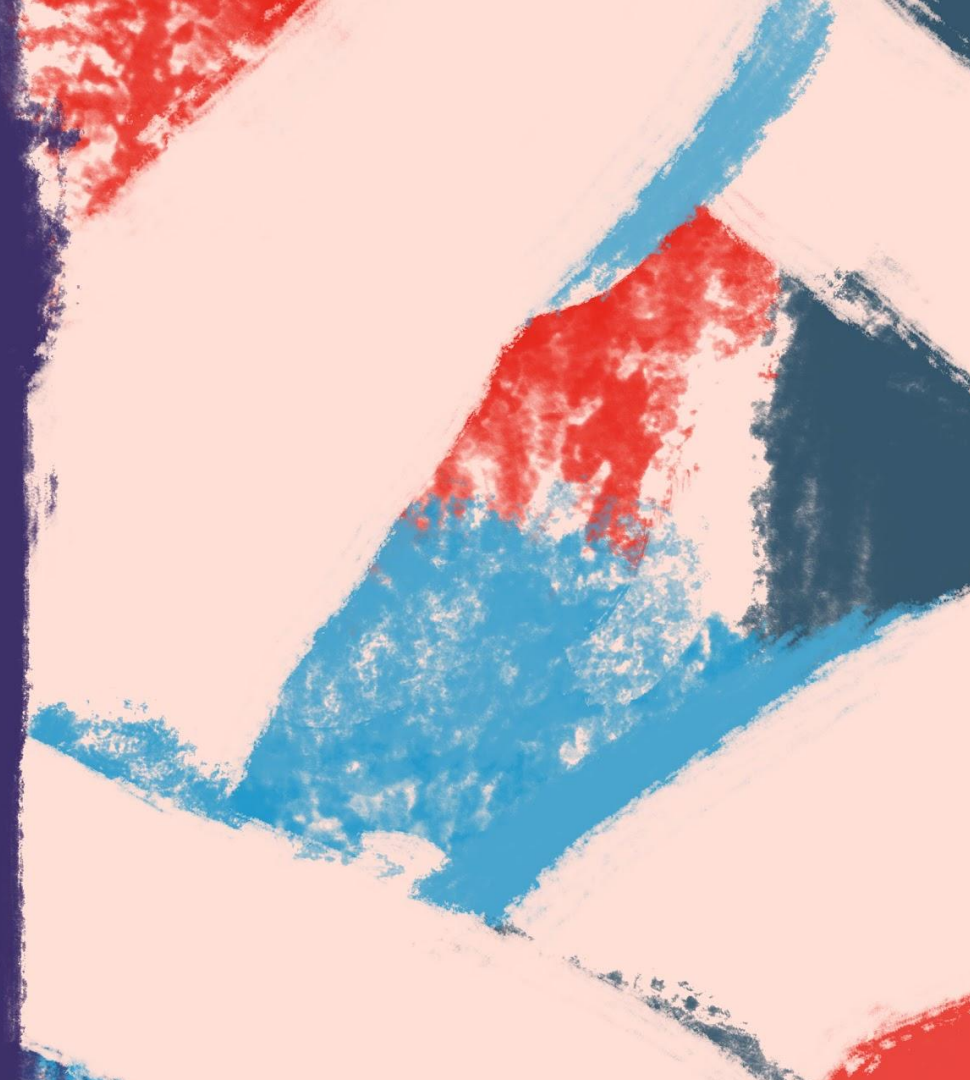
**130% Growth**

TikTok Sponsorship Activity



Key Finding #4

# **Influencers Created 32% More Sponsored Stories in 2020**



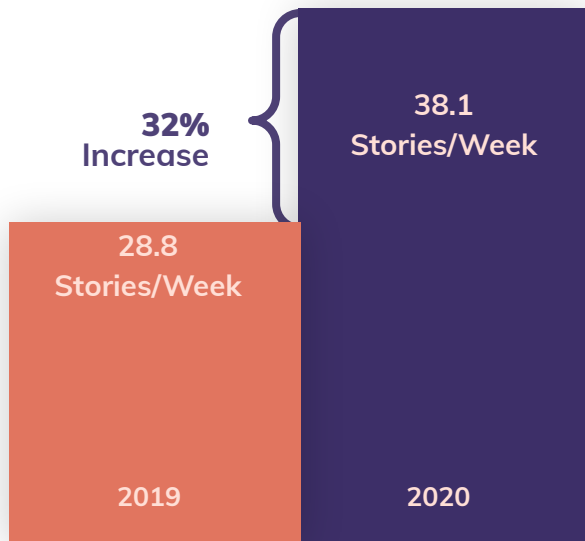
# Sponsored Stories are increasing in popularity

We saw a sharp increase in sponsored stories, which aligned with an overall trend of story usage in 2020.

Sponsored stories increased 32% this year. In **2020**, influencers created **38.1** sponsored stories a week, in **2019** they created **28.8**.

32% Increase

Volume of Instagram Sponsored Stories



Key Finding #5

## **Gen Z's Market Share Increased 9%**



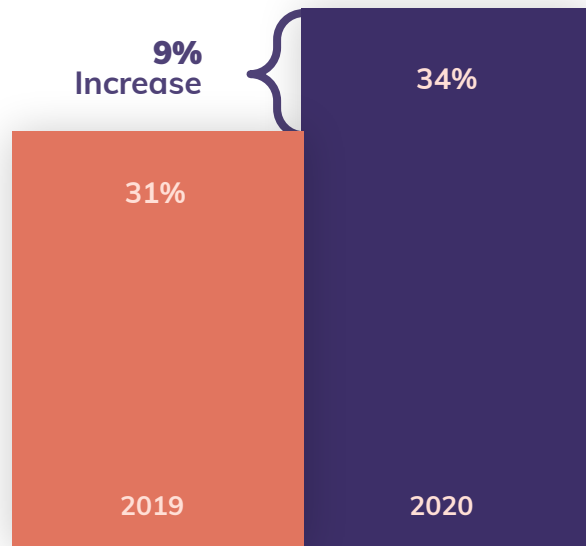
# Gen Z's market share increased 9% in 2020

When comparing influencers creating #ad content in 2020 to #ad content in 2019, we identified a 9% increase in Gen Z's market share.

In **2020** influencers aged **18-24** made up **34%** of the influencer industry, in **2019** influencers aged **18-24** made up **31%** of the industry.

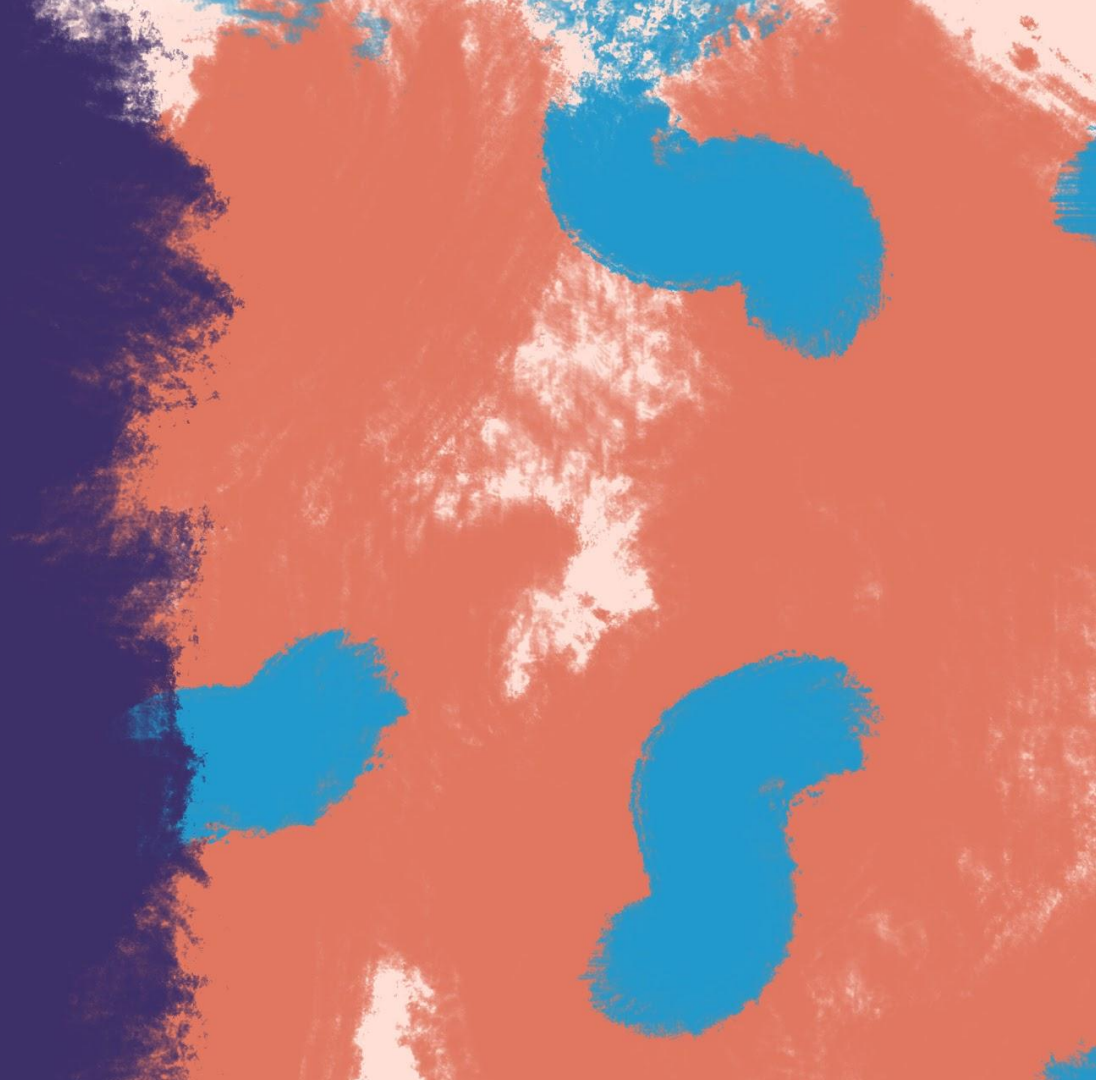
**9% Growth**

Gen Z Influencer Market Share



Key Finding #6

**#ad Usage Declined  
19% in 2020**



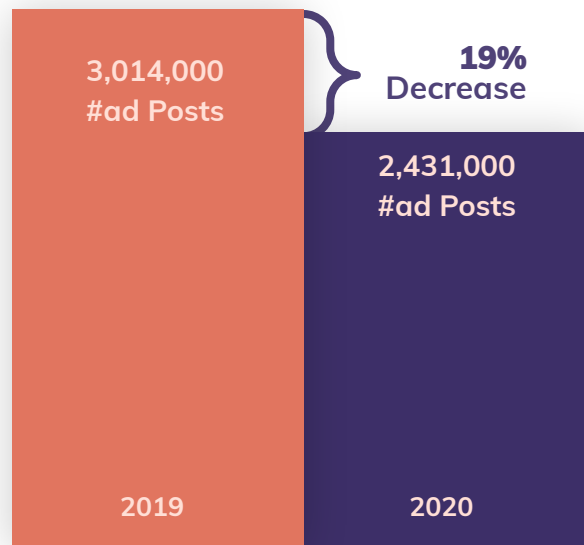
## #ad usage declined 19% in 2020

We analyzed all #ad post on instagram in 2020. In **2020** we there were **2.4M** sponsored posts, and in **2019** there were **3M**.

However, this does not necessarily indicated that sponsored content and paid partnerships declined in 2020.

**19% Decline**

### Volume of Instagram #ad Posts



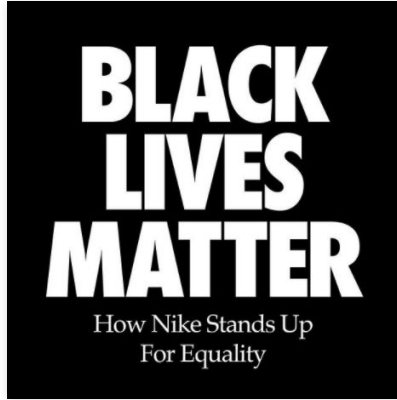


Trend #1

# **Brands Become Social Activist**

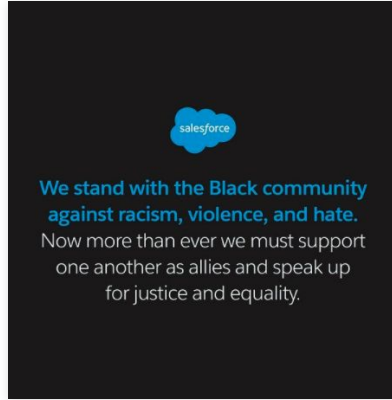
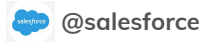


# Brands Becoming Social Activist



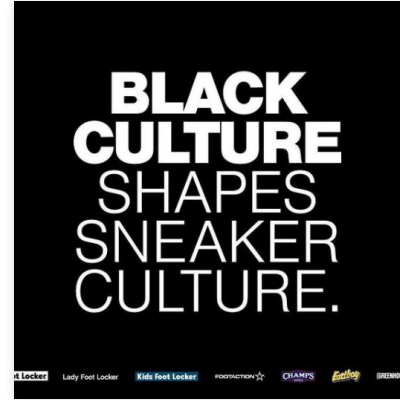
♡ 568K

We will continue to stand up for equality and work to break down barriers for athletes\* all over the world. We will do and invest more to uphold longstanding commitment in supporting the Black community and partnering with world-class organizations dedicated to ensuring racial equality, social justice, and greater access to education.



♡ 8.7K

We stand with the Black community against racism, violence, and hate. Now more than ever we must support one another as allies and speak up for justice and equality.



♡ 14.8K

We are taking action to drive meaningful change. We are committing \$200 million over the next five years to support the Black community. To learn more, click the link in our bio.

# How influencer activism impacts brands

## Can brands stay quiet about major social issues?

One of the biggest events of 2020 was the #BlackLivesMatter movement. A response to the tragic killing of George Floyd, which caused many to express their feelings publicly.

Social media has long been a platform for public figures to express their personal opinions. However, the #BlackLivesMatter movement of 2020 was different than any other. In the past, brands could remain a-political and not make a statement. During this movement, no statement was a HUGE statement.

On June 1st, 2020, LeBron James posted an image on Instagram that read "If YOU ain't wit US, WE ain't wit Y'ALL!" A powerful message that spoke on the intersection between ambassadorship and social justice.

The rise of public figures from Colin Kaepernick to Beyonce publicly supporting social issues is something brands can't ignore. If you want public figures to help you, you must also step in and help where you can.



Trend #2

# Travel and Food Brands Had to Adapt Quickly in 2020



# Top 10 industries engaging in sponsored collaborations in 2020



#1 Fashion

-



#2 Fitness

↑ 1+



#3 Photography

↑ 7+



#4 Lifestyle

↑ 7+



#5 Beauty

↓ 1-



#6 Travel

↓ 4-



#7 Parenting

↓ 1-



#8 Food

↓ 1-



#9 DIY & Art

-



#10 Design

↓ 1-

# How influencers and brands are navigating the events of 2020

When categorizing the top 10 industries posting sponsored content we saw that Travel and Food participated in fewer sponsored collaborations in 2020 than 2019.

This is an unfortunate side-effect of COVID-19, with many travel destinations and eateries closed. As the year progressed, we did see brands and influencers re-adapt their strategy, and this trend offers an optimistic forecast for 2021.

*"As travel experts, we've adapted our content to focus on socially distanced travel - road trips, camping, the Great Outdoors, and anything self-sustainable. Due to the pandemic, we moved into an Airstream for the foreseeable future. As travel creators, we have a responsibility and opportunity to help educate and inform the world on how to safely and respectfully travel (or not travel at certain times)."*

- Scott & Collette, travel influencer couple, [@roamaroo](#)



@roamaroo



♡ 2.7K

While we can't travel to all of our favorite countries right now, we thought we'd show you our top 5 favorite wine destinations...and how you can experience these tastes right at home. **#elicitwine #ad**

Trend #3

# **Gen Z Influencers' Popularity Soars, Becomes Highest Earning Demographic**





# What fueled Gen Z's growth?

Gen Z influencers are aged between 18-24. And, while many brands have had this demographic on their radar, it seems 2020 was the year Gen Z collaborations dominated.

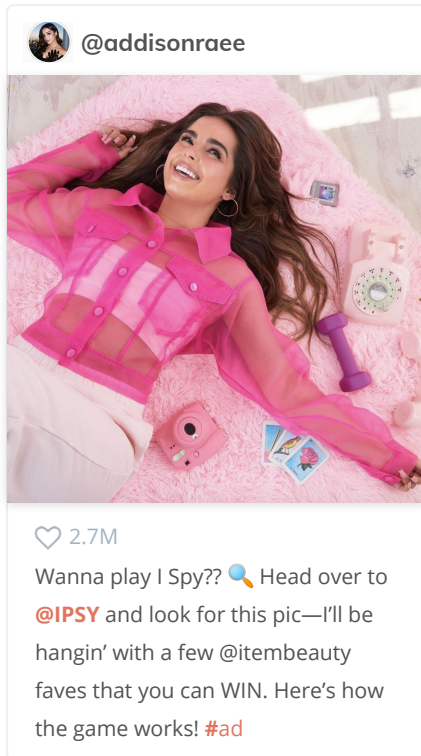
**9% Growth Acceleration**

In **2019** Gen Z made up **31%** of sponsored Instagram posts, and in **2020** Gen Z made up **34%** of sponsored posts. The only demographic to grow in 2020.

## What Caused Gen Z's Growth?

Many brands have had their eyes on Gen Z for some time. It seems like 2020 was the year that Gen Z was not just something brands were talking about, rather an integral part of their strategy.

One platform that saw a boost in Gen Z influencers was TikTok. Creators like Addison Rae have grown their Instagram following in 2020. The introduction of TikTok influencers to other platforms, could have contributed to Gen Z's growth.





# Gen Z are the highest earning demographic

We surveyed over 5,000 influencers to understand average rates for each influencer demographics.

Our findings revealed that Gen Z is the highest-earning influencer demographic across all Instagram categories.

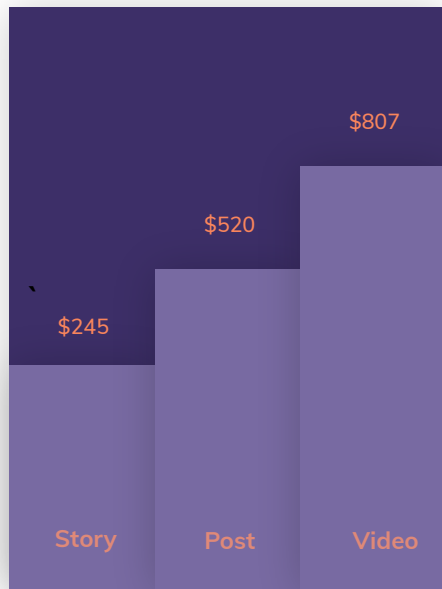
**Gen Z are the most in-demand demographic, and the most expensive demographic!**

## *Get To Know Gen Z*

- Aged 18-24
- Most racially and ethnically diverse generation
- Digital natives
- Most educated generation
- Progressive political and social values
- Comfortable with gender-neutral pronouns and gender expression

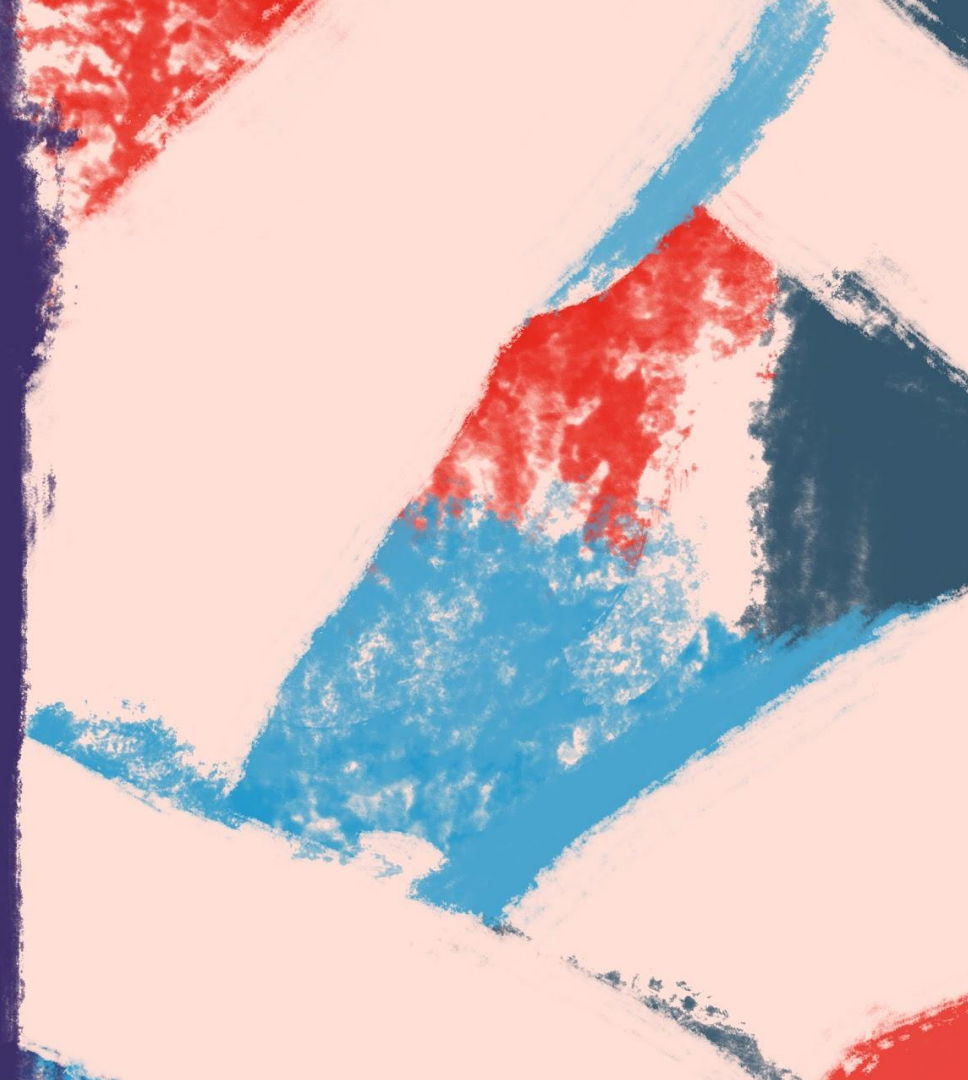
\*from [Pew Research Center](#)

## Gen Z 2020 Rates



Trend #4

# **Brands Are Creating a Unique Voice on TikTok**



# How Brands Have Entered TikTok

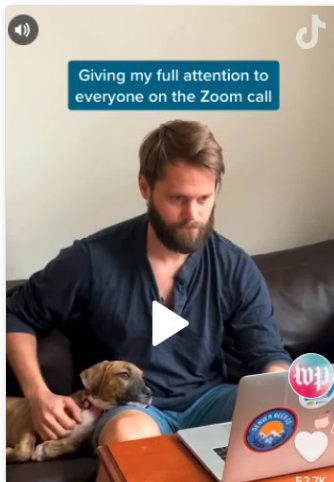
Nike



@charmladonna

Celebrating #airmaxday in the house got me making up dances again.  
#airmaxdaychallenge let's go  
🌈 #fyp #foryoupage  
#stayhome @nike

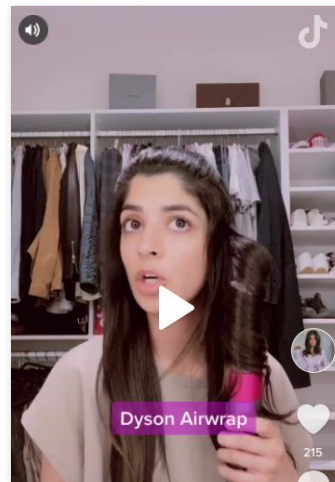
Washington Post



@washingtonpost

Lookin good, everyone  
#newspaper #dogdad  
#focused #icandoit

Dyson Hair



@madzdhanani

Or do I 😊 #dysonair  
#hairtutorial #beauty  
#beautyhacks #DecadesofHair  
#fyp #WerklitFromHome  
#foryou #xyzbca #xyzcba #desi  
#tiktok #killyourvibe

# Brands create new voices on TikTok

TikTok is a short-form video app, by ByteDance. The length of a TikTok can be between 6 – 15 seconds, and four videos can be strung together for a total of 60 seconds. This is seriously short content.

TikTok is a great platform for brand promotion due to its informal tone. Many brands have begun collaborating with TikTok influencers and establishing their own brand voice on the platform, often more lighthearted than traditional marketing channels.

## Get Familiar With TikTok

- 37.2M TikTok users in the US
- 29.5% of US TikTok users are aged 20-29
- 23% of female Millennial and Gen Z US users have TikTok
- 21% of male Millennial and Gen Z US users have TikTok

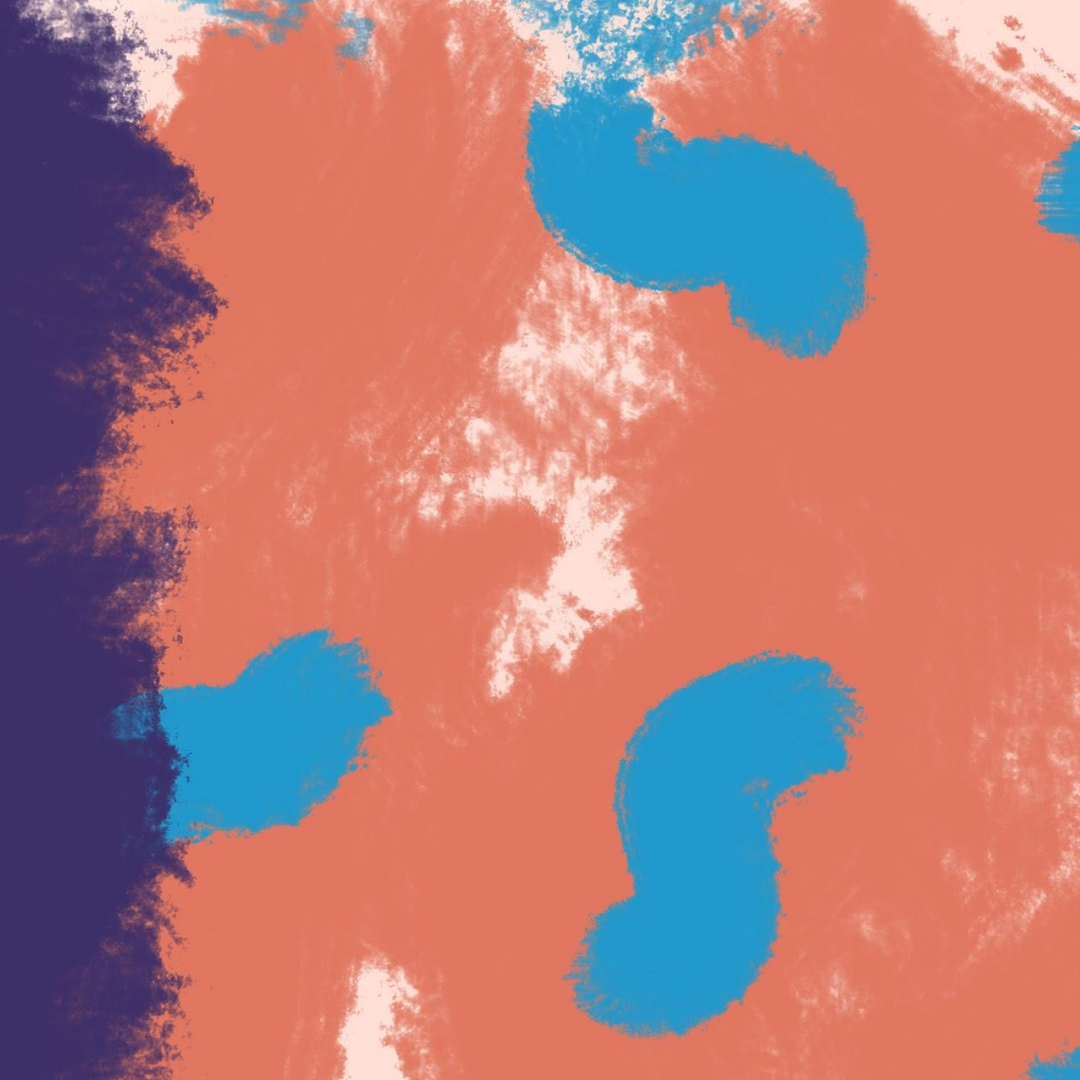
\*from [statista](#)

## How To Get Started on TikTok

1. Create a personal TikTok account and begin exploring the platform
2. Check if your competitors are on TikTok and discover the type of content they are creating
3. Look to see if the influencer you have collaborated with in the past are on Instagram, and try to understand the type of content they create

Trend #5

## **New Ways to Identify Sponsored Content**



# Did Sponsored Content Really Drop In 2020?

We measured posts with a #ad across Instagram, in order to understand trends in sponsored content in 2020.

#ad has long been the best way to identify sponsored content on Instagram as it was the most common way to disclose paid partnerships and comply with FTC regulations.

While #ad might have gone down, it does not mean sponsored content is down.

## Instagram's Paid Partnership Feature

Instagram released the feature in 2017, but it got its most significant push in 2020.

With the feature, influencers can tag a brand as a paid sponsor in both a Post and Story.

Still, according to FTC regulations, it is up to the influencer to disclose paid collaborations not the platform.



Trend #6

# **What Do Leading Creators Predict for the Industry in 2021?**





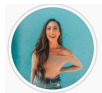
# 2021 Influencer Predictions



*"Influencers will be more purposeful with who they choose to collaborate with. I think we're going to see a level of authenticity and storytelling."*

[@mireille.sine](#)

Mireille Siné  
Fitness Influencer



*"2021 is going to weed out the businesses and creatives who are or aren't willing to adapt to change. This is going to be a year where creative video content will be pushed more than any previous year."*

[@itsmodernmillie](#)

Millie Adrian  
Fashion Influencer



*"Brand relationships seem to be moving more towards ongoing ambassadorships and multiple posts, and brands are having a direct relationship with influencers even when working on campaigns through an agency."*

[@monalogue](#)

Ramona Jones  
Fashion & Lifestyle Influencer



## About Klear



# The New Standard in Influencer Marketing

Klear is the leading influencer marketing platform for Fortune 500 brands and agencies.

Powered by award-winning influencer measurement technology, Klear is setting a new market standard for finding social creators, assessing influence and measuring ROI.

**Learn more at [klear.com](https://klear.com)**

