kolsquare

October 2026

THE BUDGET REPORT: 2027

Why bigger influencer budgets feel smaller, and what to do about it



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

BIGGER BUDGETS WON'T FEEL BIGGER.

89% of brands will plan to raise budgets for influencer marketing in 2027, even as fees for micro-influencer content and social ads rise.

CHEAP AT SCALE IS DEAD.

The shrinking price gap between mega and micro creators means larger rosters now add cost faster than they add reach.

INVESTMENT IS OUTPACING INTEGRATION.

79% of brands treat influencer marketing as a core or important channel, but only 10% say it is fully integrated into the marketing mix. Shared KPIs and a single reporting view close the gap.

VALUE MATTERS AS MUCH AS COST.

Two micro creators on the same fee can differ by more than two and a half times in EMV (earned media value). Benchmark every booking against EMV and measure top-of-funnel work to ensure you're meeting both value and performance goals.



INTRODUCTION

Bigger budgets... same squeeze

2027 will see more brands commit more money to influencer marketing. But as the discipline becomes further integrated into the full mix, more money moving through the channel puts marketers under increasing pressure to do more with it'.

From scaling nano and micro creator strategies to optimising for paid, affiliate or PR/comms, brands can expect influencer marketing budgets to be in a constant state of flux.

Globally, marketing spend remains flat this year, at 7.8% of company revenue, according to Gartner's 2026 CMO Spend Survey. Given the persistent economic uncertainty in most major markets, flat spend overall is arguably a good result.

Within that, median budgets for influencer marketing have risen from €127K in 2025 to €144K in 2026 on a like-for-like basis, according to Kolsquare's The Future of Influencer Marketing survey. At enterprise companies, median spend hit €367K.

€127K to €144K
median influencer budget (2025 to 2026)

€367K
enterprise median

7.8%
of revenue on marketing (flat)

Gartner 2026 CMO Spend Survey

The wider numbers back that up. Global content-driven advertising, which includes influencer marketing, is estimated to rise 8.2% to $720.2bn in 2026, according to WPP Media.

In the US, eMarketer forecasts influencer spend specifically will hit $13.7bn by 2027, up from $10.5bn in 2025, while in the UK, advertising investment in creator partnerships will jump 26% in 2026 to reach £1.217bn, according to the IAB.

Influencer Marketing Spend

USA **$13.7BN** by 2027

UK **£1.217BN** (+26%)



INTRODUCTION



That companies, almost universally, are spending more on influencer marketing is hard evidence that influencer marketing works, and not only for brand visibility in saturated markets. It works across every stage of the funnel.



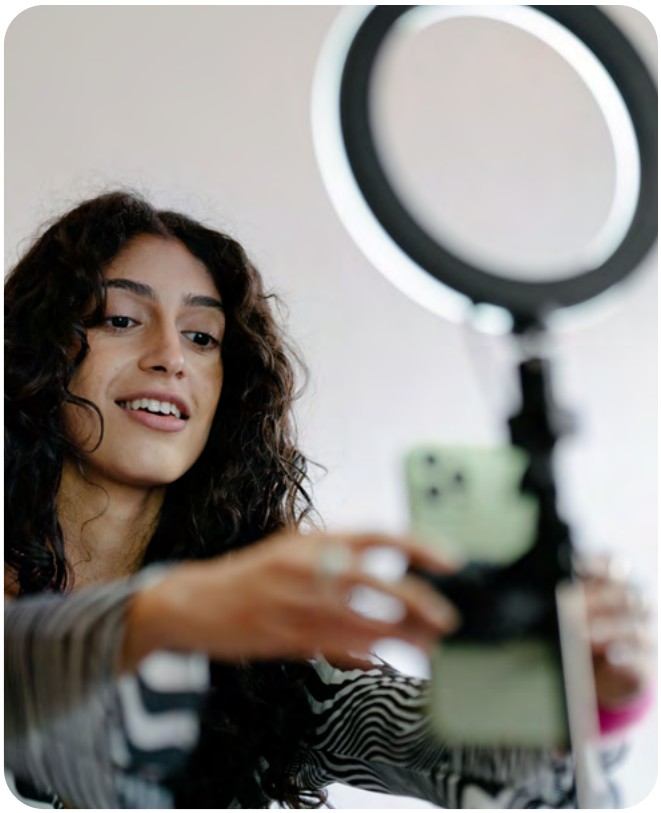
‘Brands are paying with their eyes open. Influence produces measurable effects on awareness, consideration and sales, and the shift towards performance has made those effects legible: you can see what each piece of content brings in, and you keep doing what works,’

Charlie Trouillebout,
Partner & Co-founder, Matriochka Influences.

2027 will see brands try to further close the loop. The net effect, far from marketers feeling like they have cash to splash, is the need to do more with a budget that feels like it’s less.

Because even as budgets rise, so do costs: of the content itself, of IRL events to generate it, of ads to boost it. You name it, it’s rising.

This is the 2027 Budget Report: what it now costs to run influencer marketing well, where rising spend is actually going and what it takes to make a bigger budget feel like one.



L'ORÉAL

L'ORÉAL, FROM SHARE OF VOICE TO SHARE OF INFLUENCE

€14.2BN AD AND PROMO SPEND (32% OF NET SALES) | 500,000 CREATORS | 29% SHARE OF INFLUENCE.

With annual advertising and promotional spend that reached €14.2bn in 2025 (32% of net sales), L'Oréal, the world's largest beauty group, has adopted influencer marketing as its workhorse.

The company works with some 500,000 creators globally and today claims a **29% 'share of influence',** a metric the group has adopted as the successor to traditional share of voice.

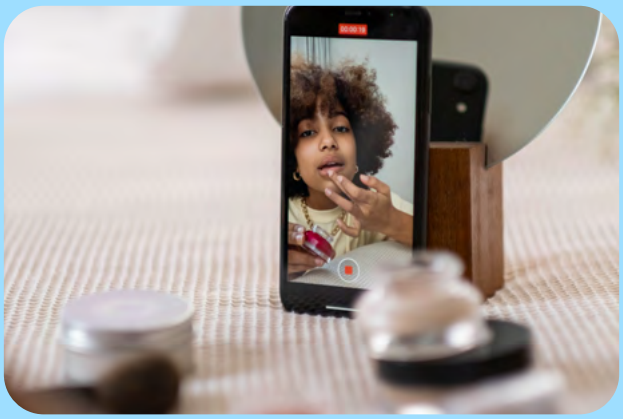
> 'In this world of influencers, very fast rocket takeoffs and some others that do not react as well, we have to be super agile to allocate … and reallocate our resources to whatever is flying. I think that's a bit the new name of the game'
>
> **Nicolas Hieronimus,**
> L'Oréal CEO

(The lesson here is clear: agility doubles as cost control. Money left on content that isn't landing is money not backing what is.)

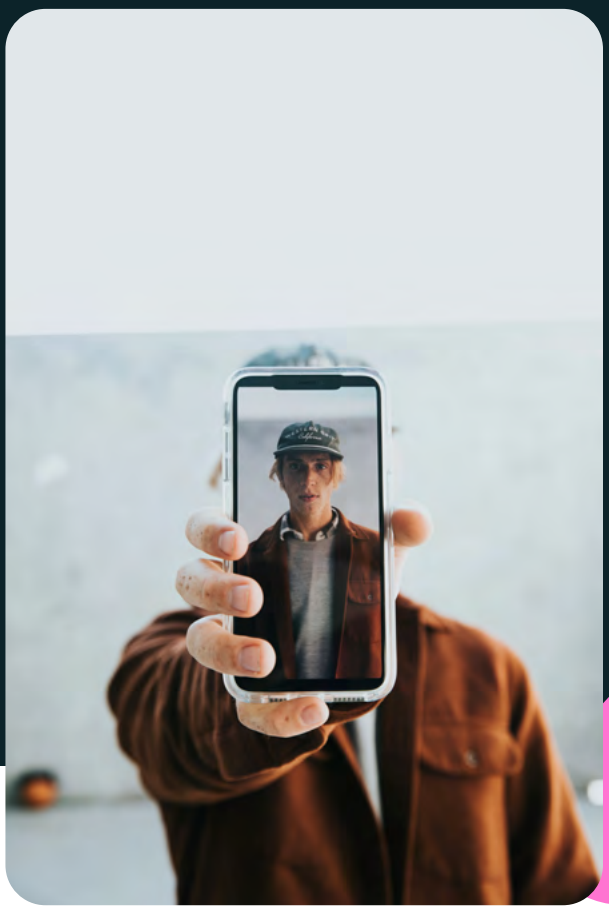
Underlying its ambitions is the company's bespoke measurement tool, BetIQ, now operational in some 10 markets, and built to weigh short-term transactional return against long-term brand equity rather than treating creator spend as pure performance media.

However, even L'Oréal can only tie creator-post performance to sales inside Meta's walled garden, and the company is still looking for a partner to close that measurement loop across the rest of its channels. That gap, further along than most but still incomplete, is a useful benchmark for where the rest of the industry sits on the same problem.

The bet is clear. Being able to measure the true impact of creator marketing in both the short and long term, and being able to connect it clearly to outcomes and pivot as necessary, will separate the winners from the also-rans.



Source: Marketers & Money, July 2026



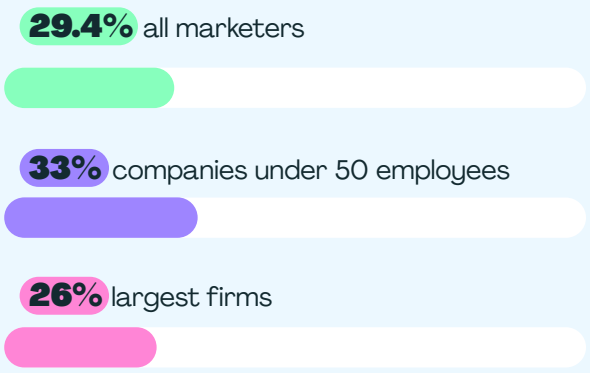
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THE PRICE OF SCALE

The rising cost of influencer marketing now sits at the top of the table of key challenges cited by influencer marketers. But the pressure isn't evenly felt.

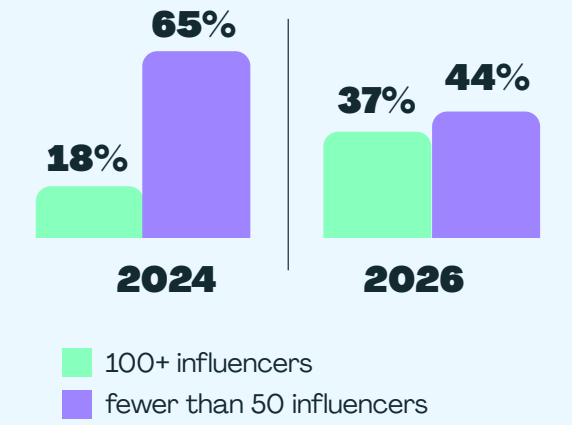
Kolsquare's The Future of Influencer Marketing found 29.4% of marketers cite rising costs as a key challenge for 2027, with that figure rising to 33% amongst companies with fewer than 50 employees, and dropping to 26% at the largest firms.

Which influencer marketers nominate rising costs as a key challenge?



Central to cost pressures is the rate at which companies are growing their influencer rosters. The share working with 100 or more influencers has nearly doubled since 2024, from 18% to **37%**, while the share working with fewer than 50 has fallen from 65% to 44%. That trend will continue, with 85% of brands and agencies planning to boost rosters in 2027.

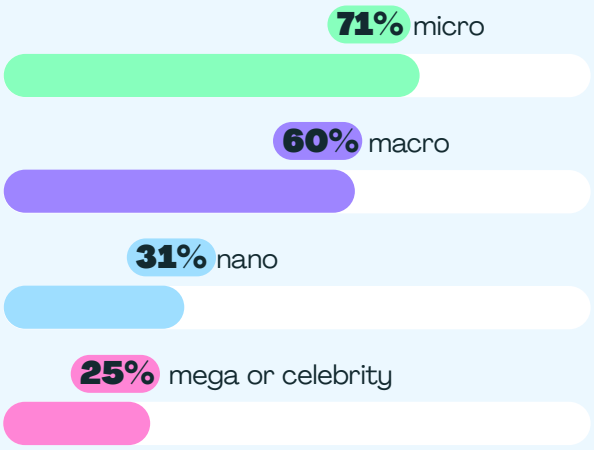
How many influencers do companies work with?



85% planning to grow rosters in 2027

Amongst them, micro-influencers are doing most of the heavy lifting: **71%** of brands now work with micro-tier creators, ahead of macro (60%), nano (31%) and mega or celebrity creators (25%). The logic has been simple: more authentic voices, smaller individual fees, better cost efficiency per activation.

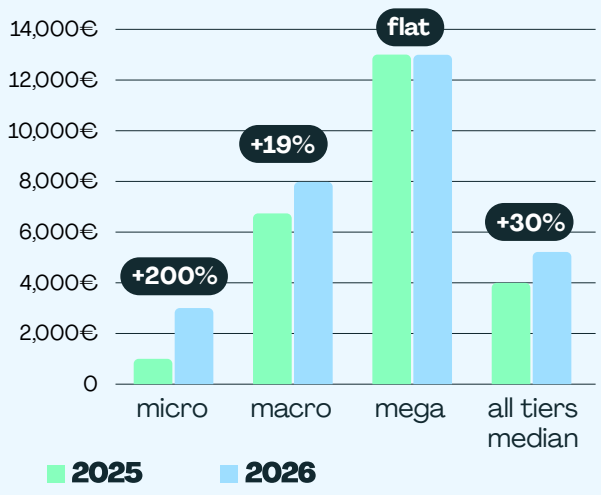
Whick kinds of influencers do you mostly work with?



But that cost efficiency logic is getting harder, if not impossible, to sustain. A creator pricing study from Paris-based Matriochka Influences, based on more than 600 paid collaborations, found the median price of a standard collaboration (one feed post plus one story) rose 30% from €4,000 to €5,200 between 2025 and the first half of 2026.

However, the increase was far from uniform across creator tiers. Fees for micro-influencer collaborations rose 200%, from €1,000 to €3,000, while macro prices rose 19% to €8,000. Mega-influencer pricing held flat, at €13,000.

Creator fees, France, 2025-2026



Source: Matriochka Influences, 600+ paid collaborations.

In essence, the price gap between mega- and micro-influencers collapsed from 13 times to roughly 4 times in a year. The result is that brands can no longer book more than a dozen micro-influencers for the price of one celebrity creator.

→ 13X TO 4X

The same study found a hedge against the trend: influencers who re-sign with the same brand year on year raised prices rise just 10%, a third of the market-wide increase, rewarding the long-term relationships covered later in this report.

+10% RE-SIGNED CREATORS **VS** **+30% MARKET-WIDE.**



'The 2027 portfolio will look like a media plan: one big one-off signing for a brand's key moments, and a core of mid-tier and micro creators under contract over the long term,'

'As for the limit, it exists: on a real cost-per-contact basis, a micro-influencer is already more expensive than paid social. What the brand is paying extra for is the production of authentic content and the quality of the contact with its audience. That premium holds up as long as the influencer contact outperforms a bought impression.'

Charlie Trouillebout,
Partner & Co-founder, Matriochka Influences..

In parallel, paid social and video advertising has become more expensive on all the major social media platforms. Meta reported its average price per ad rose 12% year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, alongside a 19% increase in ad impressions delivered. TikTok, which doesn't publish financial filings, saw CPMs rise roughly 12–16% year-on-year across independent ad-tech benchmarks, while YouTube ad revenue rose 11–13% year-on-year through 2026.

Meta **+12%** price per ad

TikTok **+12–16% CPM**

YouTube **+11–13%** ad revenue

Combined, price rises for content and ads matter for what influencer content is now being asked to do. Standing out in the noisy world of social media is only getting harder as more brands and creators compete for the same feed. Research by the IAB (Interactive Advertising Bureau) predicts social video ad spend in the US will rise 13% in 2026, while eMarketer predicts spend on creator production fees and amplification will even out in 2027.

In 2027, optimising the impact of high-performing creator content by putting paid reach behind it will have moved from a nice-to-have to a strategic necessity.



'You need to play the long game with the creator, as the best ROI is seen in the 3–6 month partnership. You build a creator ecosystem, where you work with the creator for their creative skills.

Within this ecosystem, you fit them into an organic post from the brand, their organic creator post and a creator ad boosted via their profile or via the brand profile. For me it's clear that as of 2027 paid and organic are mixed, because once you've hit organic, you can put spend behind it.'

Klara Verzele
Founder, KLARENCE, and Influencer Marketing Alliance board member



MORE NUTRITION: COMMISSION OVER COST

10% COMMISSION | 1,300 CREATORS | €1BN REVENUE

More Nutrition built a billion-euro supplement brand on a single mechanism: a flat 10% commission on sales, no flat fees, no paid media, no agency. 'We put 100% of everything into influencer marketing,' says **VP of Influencer Marketing Laura Koch.** 'We couldn't buy reach. We were invisible outside of Instagram.' The model has since scaled to 1,300 creators, a volume the team **now manages through Kolsquare.**

The brand's own hedge against rising costs mirrors the pattern in this report's pricing data: long-term, trust-based relationships over one-off deals.

'Our relationship with our creators is the number-one factor in our success,' comments Laura Koch.

Selection still runs on community strength and product fit over follower count, a bet that reach alone 'meant nothing', the same logic behind the shift towards micro and nano creators documented earlier in this section.



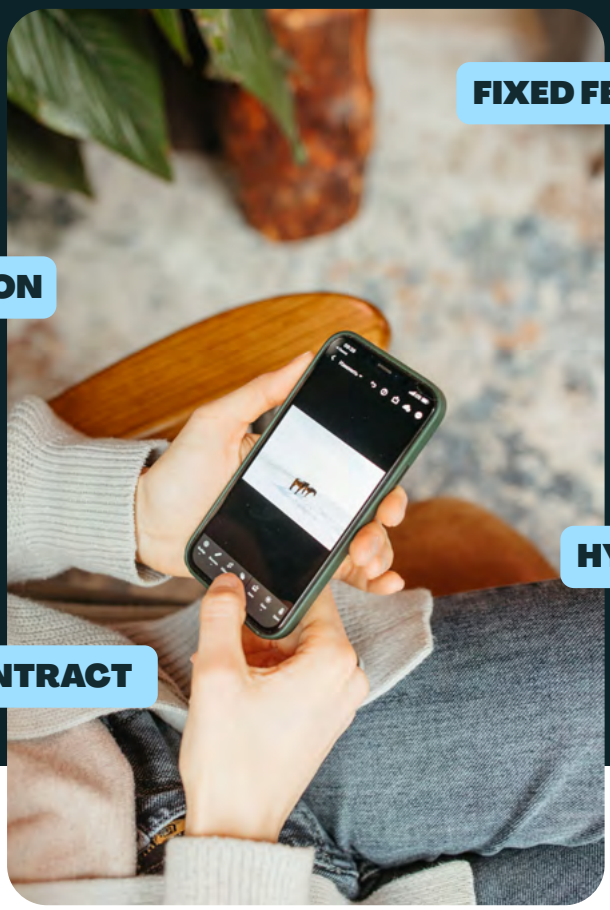
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR 2027

01 **PUT YOUR BEST PERFORMERS ON REPEAT CONTRACTS.**
French creators who re-signed with the same brand raised their fees by 10%, against a 30% rise market wide

02 **DON'T ASSUMING MICRO IS CHEAP BY DEFAULT.**
Check cost per contact against paid social before scaling the roster.

03 **RING-FENCE AMPLIFICATION BUDGET.**
With Meta ad prices up 12%, put paid reach behind proven content rather than spreading it across the roster.





2

CHASING FULL INTEGRATION... OR HOW TO OPTIMISE SPEND ACROSS THE FUNNEL

The role of influencer marketing has been settled: 79% of brands now treat it as a core growth driver or an important supporting channel. But even as investment keeps climbing, just 10% of brands describe their strategy as fully integrated in the marketing mix, according to the latest Kolsquare data.

79%
CORE OR IMPORTANT CHANNEL

10%
FULLY INTEGRATED

Kolsquare, The Future of Influencer Marketing.

Brands continue to invest heavily in organic influencer and sponsored content campaigns, and increasingly beyond them. Influencer content is now routinely repurposed for use on brand-owned channels. There is also clear differentiation in the types of content and creators being activated, and in the broadening set of KPIs used to evaluate the impact at each stage of the funnel.

As a consequence, payment models are diversifying. While fixed fee per post is still the most common payment structure, commission-based deals, long-term contracts and hybrid models are all now mainstream rather than niche.

FIXED FEE PER POST

COMMISSION

LONG-TERM CONTRACT

HYBRID DEALS



Taken together, it points to more strategic planning, designed to optimise influencer marketing activations across the funnel to grow visibility, trust and conversions.

Underlying the push to optimise influencer spend and impact across the mix is the fact that influencer marketing in 2027 will be as much a data-driven discipline as a human one. The share of brands using a dedicated influencer marketing platform jumped 26 percentage points in 2026 compared to 2025, while 84% of organisations say they are using AI or automation in influencer workflows, according to The Future of Influencer Marketing. However, just 13.9% of brands and agencies using AI are doing so for predictive analytics.

+26 POINTS
dedicated IM platform use

84%
using AI or automation

13.9%
using AI for predictive analytics

Scandinavian hotel group ESS Group has recently moved from running straight brand awareness influencer campaigns to experimenting with affiliate links with trusted creators. Reporting and predictive data analysis are key to justifying influencer spend against other channels.





'With new AI integrations with Kolsquare, we will have it all: Google Analytics, our social media management tool, Meta Ads and Kolsquare

The reports you can get from that combination are just mind-blowing.'

Philip Björck
ESS Group Head of PR & Socials

ESS GROUP



For many in the industry, committing more budget to influencer marketing is the easy part. What comes after that is the real challenge: breaking down team silos and reorganising team structures to work across common goals, with integrated reporting and KPIs to ensure outcomes at every step.

Establishing the data infrastructure to support that change has been a key focus over the past year. In 2027, joining the dots between what can be seen and what can be confidently predicted will further help brands optimise content and spend.

NEUTROGENA'S COLLAGEN BANK: ONE CAMPAIGN, EVERY FUNNEL STAGE

210 PIECES OF CONTENT | €1.37M EMV | 7.55M REACH

To launch its Collagen Bank skincare range in Spain, Neutrogena and Ogilvy built a single campaign that ran across the entire funnel: an exclusive KOL and press event for credibility, a street-level activation in Madrid for mass engagement and a partnership with Vogue's Mercado de las Flores to close the loop with purchase.

Creator selection shifted by phase: dermatology-credible KOLs for the launch and high-reach, trend-relevant creators for seeding, rather than running one casting brief for the whole campaign.

01 KOL and press event, credibility.

02 Street activation in Madrid, mass engagement.

03 Vogue's Mercado de las Flores, drive to purchase..

Every phase was tracked in tracked in Kolsquare rather than reported separately.

> 'Being able to track all three phases of the campaign in one place was enormously useful,'
>
> **Rocio Bustamante,**
> Business Director and Head of Influence Marketing at Ogilvy Spain

EMV tracking gave the team a basis to prove impact to the client and benchmark the launch against past campaigns, exactly the reporting discipline many brands are still chasing brands still lack.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR 2027

01 **AGREE SHARED KPIS BEFORE THE CAMPAIGN, NOT AFTER.**
Set funnel-stage goals with paid, CRM and brand teams up front.

02 **USE AI TO ANALYSE AND PREDICT, NOT JUST TO PROCESS.**

03 **MATCH THE PAYMENT MODEL TO THE FUNNEL STAGE.**
Fixed fees for awareness, commission or affiliate deals for conversion. Centralise reporting for each phase.





3

UNITED KINGDOM

THE UK CONTENT VALUE GRID: WHAT IS ONE PIECE OF INFLUENCER CONTENT WORTH?

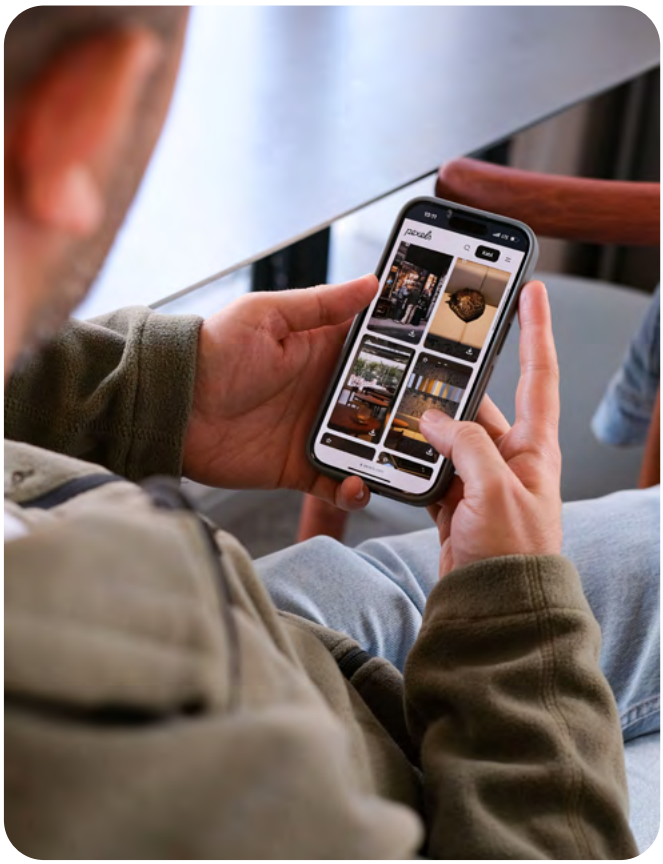
UNITED KINGDOM

Cost is only half the budget equation. The other half is what a piece of influencer content returns.

As brands race to trace creator content to sales, the question of what content does before anyone clicks has slipped out of view. The top of the funnel (awareness, consideration and the brand's place in people's heads) is the part of influencer spend that is the hardest to prove and the easiest to cut.

Earned media value (EMV) puts a number on that work. The media value grid sets out the EMV of a single piece of content by creator tier, platform and format, drawn from 535 creators with at least 30% of their audience in the UK, across 594 accounts. It measures the value the content generates, not what it costs to produce. Set those figures against what you actually pay and the result is your own value-to-spend ratio.

Calculating median CPM adds a secondary layer; expressed as value per 1,000 views, it effectively puts creator content on the same footing as paid media.



UNITED KINGDOM

Creator tier	Platform	Format	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile	Median CPM
Nano (under 10k)	Instagram	Post	£120	£208	£319	£69
		Reel	£62	£161	£554	£60
		Story	£11	£14	£17	– ↗
	TikTok	Video	£73	£165	£251	£153
	YouTube	Video	£211	£550	£1,208	£512
		Short	£58	£103	£176	£93
Micro (10k–100k)	Instagram	Post	£865	£1,384	£2,252	£58
		Reel	£596	£1,117	£2,197	£67
		Story	£80	£125	£129	– ↗
	TikTok	Video	£232	£513	£1,697	£130
	YouTube	Video	£974	£2,552	£6,359	£516
		Short	£383	£965	£2,015	£77
Mid (100k–500k)	Instagram	Post	£4,845	£6,506	£10,296	£65
		Reel	£3,085	£6,468	£10,737	£61
		Story	£645	£862	£918	– ↗
	TikTok	Video	£1,633	£3,847	£8,640	£137
	YouTube	Video	£7,018	£12,571	£23,555	£496
		Short	£388	£995	£3,099	£126

UNITED KINGDOM

Creator tier	Platform	Format	Lower quartile	Median	Upper quartile	Median CPM
Macro (500k–1M)	Instagram	Post	£13,415	£19,067	£29,621	£75
		Reel	£8,081	£12,169	£19,826	£63
		Story	£1,576	£1,829	£2,236	–↗
	TikTok	Video	£3,361	£9,357	£22,146	£133
	YouTube	Video	£13,707	£28,884	£111,965	£523
		Short				
Mega (over 1M)	Instagram	Post	£23,162	£73,179	£149,589	£136
		Reel	£22,082	£32,089	£83,710	£66
		Story	£2,411	£3,183	£4,145	–↗
	TikTok	Video	£12,357	£32,521	£61,061	£143
	YouTube	Video	£20,755	£48,446	£189,459	£452
		Short	£3,980	£9,067	£26,770	£110

How EMV is calculated: each like, comment, share and view on a piece of content is given a monetary value from the Ayzenberg social media value index, and these values are added together. Where creators don't share their statistics, views are Kolsquare estimates. Median CPM is EMV per 1,000 estimated views. Instagram Stories are calculated differently (↗).

Reading the table: the lower and upper quartiles mark the 25th and 75th percentiles, so half of all content falls between them. They are shown instead of minimum and maximum because a single viral post distorts the range. Only rows with at least ten creators are included, so YouTube Shorts is not shown at the macro tier. The mega Instagram sample leans towards a cluster of creators whose main channel is YouTube, which explains its higher post CPM. Each row covers different creators, so comparing a format across tiers means comparing different people. Figures are converted from euros at £0.8571 (mid-market rate, 29 September 2026).

↗ Instagram Stories have no public likes, comments or views, so they are valued at a fixed rate per 1,000 estimated reach. Their value depends only on audience size, so CPM is not shown. Compare Stories with other Stories, not with other formats.

Source: Kolsquare data, 535 UK creators (at least 30% UK audience, 1,000+ followers) across 594 Instagram, TikTok and YouTube accounts, each platform sampled from its own exports, September 2026.

How to use the grid

01 **FIND THE ROW FOR YOUR BOOKING**
creator tier, platform and format.

02 **SEE WHERE THE CREATOR'S RECENT CONTENT SITS IN THE RANGE**
below the lower quartile, above the upper quartile or in between.

03 **COMPARE OPTIONS AT THE SAME FEE**,
not against a threshold.

Example: two UK micro creators each quote £1,000 for an Instagram post. One usually lands near the lower quartile on EMV (£865), the other near the upper quartile (£2,252). Same tier, same fee, more than two and a half times the value.

EMV isn't revenue, and it isn't what creators charge. Use it to rank bookings against each other, not to decide whether one booking pays for itself.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR 2027

01 **BENCHMARK THE QUOTE BEFORE YOU SIGN.**
Compare a creator's quote with others in the same tier and format, and check where their recent content sits in the range. Use it to rank options and negotiate.

02 **CHOOSE THE FORMAT FOR THE OBJECTIVE, THEN JUDGE ITS VALUE.**
Value per 1,000 views ranges from £58–£75 for Instagram posts and Reels in most tiers, to more than £450 for long-form YouTube in every tier. Short formats can deliver fast reach around a launch moment; content aimed at consideration needs a format that holds attention. Set the objective first, then check the format's value against it.

03 **REPORT AWARENESS IN EMV ALONGSIDE SALES.**
Top-of-funnel work is the first to be cut when it can't be shown. Give it a number in every campaign report.

CONCLUSION

Less room for error, more room to grow

Influencer marketing goes into 2027 with more money behind it than ever. That is the good news. It is also the problem.

Budgets are rising. Median influencer spend reached **€144K** in 2026, and UK investment in creator partnerships is set to pass **£1.2bn**. But costs are rising fastest in exactly the places brands have leaned on hardest. The price gap between micro and mega creators has collapsed, and the paid reach needed to amplify creator content keeps getting more expensive.

The so-called 'cheap-at-scale' model simply does not exist.

The brands winning in influencer marketing are not waiting for perfect attribution. They are changing how they buy.

Long-term contracts are the clearest hedge against inflation: creators who re-sign with the same brand raised their fees by a third of the market-wide increase, according to Matriochka Influences. Commission and hybrid deals tie cost to outcome. Always-on programmes and full-funnel campaigns tracked in one place turn scattered activations into a channel that can be planned, benchmarked and defended.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR 2027

Budget for value, not volume.

Fewer, better-matched creators on longer contracts will outperform bigger rosters bought on follower count. Price every booking against what the content is worth. Agree shared KPIs and a single reporting view before the money goes out, not after. And protect the top of the funnel, because the work that is hardest to measure is often the work that makes everything else in the mix pay off.

Rising investment and rising costs leave less room for error. The brands that plan for that will find a bigger budget finally feels like one.

ABOUT

kolsquare

KOLSQUARE IS A GLOBAL INFLUENCER MARKETING INTELLIGENCE PLATFORM HELPING BRANDS AND AGENCIES BUILD, MANAGE, MEASURE, AND SCALE INFLUENCER MARKETING STRATEGIES WITH DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS.

Combining advanced data analytics, AI, and machine learning technologies, Kolsquare enables marketing teams to discover the right creators, understand their audiences, manage campaigns from end to end, measure impact, and benchmark performance against industry standards.

Trusted by more than 2,000 global and national brands and agencies, Kolsquare provides access to one of the world's most comprehensive creator intelligence database, covering millions of creators across 180 countries and major social platforms including Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat and Twitch.

As a Certified B Corporation, Kolsquare is committed to advancing Responsible Influence by promoting transparency, ethical collaborations, and more sustainable practices across the creator economy.

In October 2024, Kolsquare joined Team.Blue, one of Europe's largest private technology groups and a leading digital enabler for businesses and entrepreneurs.

Team.Blue brings together more than 60 brands across web hosting, domains, e-commerce, online compliance, lead generation, application solutions, and social media.

Visit www.kolsquare.com for more information or to book a demonstration with one of our Influencer Marketing experts. Or contact us directly at contact@kolsquare.com.

Speak with an expert →

Certified B Corporation

Sophie Douez, Journalist, Kolsquare

Lucie Torres, SEO & Content Manager, Kolsquare