



SOCIAL INFLUENCERS

How Optical Is Adapting to the Evolving Marketing Landscape

JAMIE WILSON / ASSOCIATE EDITOR

NEW YORK—Influencer marketing has seen immense growth as social media platforms evolve, metrics become more sophisticated and brands lean toward creating more authentic connections with consumers. The continued dominance of influencers shows no signs of slowing down as a favored marketing tactic among brands both large and small.

According to a Braintrust CAA-GBG and CreatorIQ report, “Influencer Data Mapping: Unlocking the ROI

of Your Influencer Strategy,” influencer marketing is experiencing a highly fruitful period with projected spend set to be in the billions by 2020.

This marketing strategy remains one of the most powerful tools brands can utilize to appeal to audiences, namely Millennials and Gen Z who value authenticity and transparency.

The report noted that, “social creators are arguably the most authentic targeted voice of our time. As brands uncover social communities and align with their causes, lifelong bonds and market opportunities will be formed.”

Optical companies such as Zyloware Eyewear have picked up on these marketing trends. The company recently included some insight into partnering with social media influencers in a post on its blog, [WeAreZyloware.com](https://www.zyloware.com/blog).

The company stated, “One of the greatest benefits of partnering with a social media influencer is the trusted audience they are able to reach. With so many competitors out there, it can be difficult for a smaller business to stand out from the crowd and win the trust of their target audience.”

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Kenmark Taps into Instant Messaging Via Influencers

With the continued rise of influencer marketing much has changed in the ways that brands reach and relate to their consumers. For Kenmark Eyewear, navigating this digital marketing landscape in order to effectively reach their audience has been for the better.

Overall, the company's use of social media has helped them to better engage with consumers, but influencers have allowed Kenmark Eyewear to be introduced to new and different audiences each time they wear a Kenmark brand.

"This has been really special for us to hear feedback firsthand and also see which styles are most wanted by consumers and what is getting the most engagement," Marissa Cundiff, marketing director said.

Along with this feedback, influencer marketing has allowed Kenmark Eyewear to really spread its general brand message or a specific campaign that they might be promoting in a rapid and effectively short amount of time.

"When you work closely with the influencers on the message, but also let them be authentic, I think for the end consumer and their followers, the message really resonates and begins to spread a lot more quickly than we could do on

our own," Cundiff said.

She continued, "Influencers are trusted by those that follow them. In a world with so much pressure surrounding us, I feel influencers are still a trusted source of helping find new brands and giving style tips to their followers, who already follow because they like that particular fashion style of the influencer or feel that person resonates with them. With that being said, I think they trust their suggestions and really go to them for new trends and ideas."

In addition to its social media influencer marketing, Kenmark Eyewear recently expanded on its use of influencer relationships with the launch of an eyewear line.

"We have done large influencer campaigns in the past, but currently use this mostly on our website and social media. We also recently launched a limited-edition collaboration with influencer Gemma Styles, which was really successful for us. Overall, we use these influencers for more brand awareness and street cred for our brands and company as a whole," Cundiff added.

Cultivating Genuine Relationships With KREWE

At New Orleans-based independent eyewear brand, KREWE, they believe in creating authentic relationships with the influencers that they work with and would recommend that to any brand seeking to get into influencer marketing.

"Influencers are able to act as brand ambassadors, tell the brand's story, and shape the way new customers are perceiving and interacting with KREWE for the first time," Ashley O'Neill, creative content and communications manager said. "Utilizing influencers for optical doesn't differentiate much from sun; our influencer's audiences are looking to them for trends and products to purchase. They've been an asset in establishing KREWE as an optical brand alongside our sunglasses line."

KREWE has seen firsthand what power influ-

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encers wield and the ability they have to put an independent brand on the map. “When Beyonce was spotted in KREWE in 2016, our digital presence skyrocketed; from increased coverage on digital and print publications to growth in our social following to influencers and the general public purchasing and advocating for the brand.”

In the vein of cultivating the most authentic experience when it comes to influencer marketing, each influencer that KREWE works with wears a model that “makes them feel more themselves” allowing the company’s hashtag #DoYouInKREWE generate and promote confidence, individuality and self-expression.

O’Neill added, “Not only can they talk about the brand, a start-up that is doing something unexpected from a place — New Orleans — that no one would expect, they can also talk about how the frames make them feel, which is powerful. It

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Photo by @carlybroome



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Arian Fartash, OD, Paves the Way for ECP Influencers

Arian Fartash, OD, known on Instagram to over 46,000 followers as @glamoptometrist, knows both sides of the influencer and consumer spectrum. While influencers and influencer marketing isn’t that new, Fartash sees the job of influencers within the optical industry as a “fairly new role.”

“In 2016, I was one of the only ECPs who had started to explore the idea by posting on my Instagram and blog for different optical brands. Fast forward a few years later and the number of influencers in eyecare has grown tremendously. The reason for this is because brands have seen value in having trusted professionals in eyecare post about their products,” Fartash said.

The reach that Instagram has when it comes to a product launch is immense, due to the possibility of a single post being able to reach millions. She explains that through this marketing



method, people don’t have to wait for their annual eye exams to see what new products are available to them.

Fartash plays a split role in this influencer

landscape as a consumer, influencer herself and a growing brand. She added, “When an influencer posts about my line GlamBaby, I get many new sales in just one hour. It goes to show that brand recognition is higher when posted by influencers as well as the connectivity people have to the brands they use.”

Along with this, influencers have the opportunity to engage with consumers on a more personal level since their followers have developed a trust and a connection to them.

“Speaking from experience, I have bought many clothes, products, and visited places based on what I have seen an influencer post.” She continued, “It’s as if you are seeing your friend wearing their pretty new glasses or suggesting you visit a new store, instead of seeing an actor that you have not been following in their everyday life.” ■

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also has helped personify the KREWE brand and establish trust between KREWE and our customers. Influencers have increased our social following, website traffic and ultimately, sales. At the end of the day, that's the biggest ROI."

Looking Through Luxottica's Lens of Brand-Aligned Personalities

The continued growth of influencer marketing has enabled Luxottica to target specific talents and tap into their engaged followers. Through these relationships and a valued sense of authenticity in each campaign, followers have grown to genuinely support the company's brands.

"Each Luxottica brand embodies a different lifestyle; influencer marketing has allowed us to convey those unique messages through the lens of brand-aligned personalities that consumers look up to," Chiara Bernardi, vice president of marketing, Luxottica Wholesale North America said.

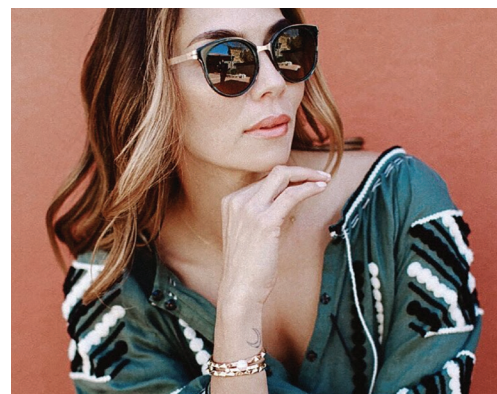
As this marketing strategy generally continues to grow, it has also found its place within the optical category highlighting an important concept that optical frames can also be a stylish accessory.

Bernardi continued, "Influencers help showcase optical frames as an accessory that is folded into their lifestyle, reinforcing the message that you can have the vision correction you need with the style that you want. Influencers have the power to position optical as not only a medical necessity, but as a style-driven accessory that consumers want to purchase."

However, influencer marketing is a strategic concept that involves different layers. Bernardi explained that the key to influencer marketing is to work with talents who are authentically aligned with the brand's DNA, messaging and product.

"Does this product or message seem like a natural extension of the individual, or does it seem forced? It's all about harmony," she said.

When it comes to reaching a target demographic Bernardi also mentions that Millennials and Gen Z look to social media more than tradi-



tional marketing routes which has changed the ways that Luxottica markets its products.

"Influencers can bring their own personality and voice to a specific campaign or product launch in a way that resonates with their engaged audience. For example, Ray-Ban's holiday campaign focused on feeling 'proud to belong.' Partnering with influencers who were able to tell their own unique stories about belonging expanded on the brand's messaging to create a more authentic dialogue," she said.

Modo Extends Its Reach Through Influencer Marketing

For Modo, influencers have extended the brand's reach to new consumers who may not have been previously aware of its brands. It's no secret that influencers are key contributors in marketing and play an essential role to elevating brand awareness and expanding promotional opportunities for fashion products, and Modo is utilizing these unique influencer relationships as one tool in a broader

strategy to do just that.

"Utilizing influencers is just one tool in a broader, more comprehensive marketing strategy. However, certain target audiences are especially tuned in to and connect with influencers, especially Millennials. Using social media influencers as part of a larger marketing plan is a popular (and effective) method to reach a large audience and increase brand awareness," Modo said.

The company added, "With influencers, we have a way to rapidly and directly interact with consumers. The entire consumer engagement process is accelerated! We've learned that influencers are a great way spread brand awareness and to connect to traditionally more 'difficult to reach' demographics."

Influencers play an integral part in impacting consumer perception. They bring with them relatability and are seen as aspirational personas for their followers.

"They have a unique ability to cross-promote our brand(s) by combining our products with comple-

mentary brands, showing their followers how to incorporate and weave our products into their style."

"In addition to cross-promotion, influencers get others involved in actively spreading our message. When influencers post amazing, high-quality images that feature our products, they help their followers interact with us and our aesthetic of stylish, harmonious, clean and minimalistic design."

Creating an Authentic Voice With Safilo's Influencer Campaigns

Influencer marketing has changed the ways companies approach traditional marketing campaigns. For Safilo, that has meant altering its marketing messaging to expand beyond just two big campaigns a year and evolve into producing a series of "thumb-stopping" content as well as plan "360-degree programs marked by synchronization and synergy across consumer touchpoints."

Daniel Rocker, director, global brand management, Safilo North America understands the pow-

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Transitions Optical Modernizes Brand Through Influencer Partnerships

Transitions Optical has been shifting its marketing messaging and strategy to incorporate more influencers and social media targeted efforts in an aim to communicate to consumers in a way that resonates. The move toward modernizing the brand came last year with the company's unveiling of its new "global brand identity," logo and refreshed marketing campaign during the 2018 Transitions Academy. In 2018, the company also expanded its influencer roster by tapping fashion designer, Christian Siriano to become the brand ambassador for its new campaign, Light Under Control.

To make the brand more relatable to style-savvy consumers, Siriano, a member of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), challenged people to use Transitions lenses to style their everyday eyewear in a manner that reflects



their personal look.

Transitions Optical also went on to debut its new Transitions Signature lenses style colors and Transitions XTRActive style mirrors at an exclusive event hosted by Siriano where he also unveiled a specially designed Christian Siriano x Transitions collection in collaboration with Transitions Light Intelligent Lenses while incorporating pieces from his 2018 resort collection.

While traditional marketing methods will always be necessary, Transitions uses their influencers and social media networks to enhance brand image, share insights uncovered through research and explain the cutting-edge technology they offer.

The company has new initiatives in the works for this year and details about their 2019 influencer partnerships will be revealed this month at the Transitions Academy. ■

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er of the influencer, the unique role they play in marketing today and how a brand can leverage this to get the right ROI.

“Influencers go beyond communicating, they can blow up a brand—expanding brand visibility and perception in an instant. A brand can get the right return on investment by going beyond pretty images—by being purposeful and leveraging the influencer’s capabilities to build brand equity and expand upon the brand’s DNA with new and relevant stories. To close the loop, as marketers, we have immediate access to their followers in a single post aiding in customer acquisition,” he explained.

However, it’s important for brands to carefully choose the influencers they are partnering with in order to receive the most authentic results.

Rocker said, “Having original content from influencers to share with consumers helps brands reveal themselves on a deeper level, creating a more comprehensive narrative. As optical becomes more of a fashion accessory and part of the full visual identity for a lifestyle brand, influencers bring that to life in



an authentic way for their followers.”

This method of seeking to create the most authentic narrative for consumers can be seen in the shift that some brands have made toward utilizing “micro-influencers” on a larger scale as opposed to always looking for the biggest names to help market a product.

“It’s vitally important to hand-select each influ-

encer partnership. Engaging micro-influencers has really helped us to drive engagement and action for brands such as Carrera, kate spade new york, Fossil and Polaroid, to name a few. Micro-influencers are becoming more and more of a focus for brands; they have high engagement, purchase intent and even college student influencers have proven to have a powerful reach,” he said. ■

Optician Sheena Taff on How Industry Insiders Affect Consumers’ Decisions

Sheena Taff, licensed managing optician at Roberts & Brown Opticians and known on Instagram as @optician.about.town believes that influencers who are directly involved with the optical industry whether they are optometrists, opticians or industry insiders often have a big effect on consumer decisions “as they are viewed to have more knowledge and can share personal experience with the products.”

Taff explained that consumers are looking for content that is less like a traditional ad and has noticed a shift in consumer perception when it comes to the types of influencers that consumers are most likely to engage with. When it comes to influencers with massive followers who might not have direct ties to the products they are selling, the notion that they have less



experience makes their campaigns come across as less authentic.

“I think it’s important for influencers to have a

defined mission statement. A set of guidelines for what you believe in and what products you are most passionate about. You will garner more authentic influence and have better value to a brand if your values fall in line with theirs,” Taff said.

The role that influencers have taken on in marketing to consumers has caused brands to change the ways in which they engage with their audiences.

Taff added, “It’s like having a giant focus group at their fingertips, one that can give them real time feedback. Influencers can engage with consumers and offer that feedback to the brand. A connection and conversation with the influencer, is more personal. It also gives smaller brands the opportunity to get their products out there for a small investment.” ■

Photo by @optician.about.town

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The influencer landscape has changed since its inception and has seen trends emerge such as the advent of the micro and nano-influencer. According to Influencer Marketing Hub—a resource for influencer marketing platforms, agencies and case studies—2019 will see a greater emphasis on these digital personalities with smaller followings.

“Brands need to balance the increased authenticity and engagement of nano-influencers with the increased reach of micro-influencers,” an Influencer Marketing Hub Benchmark Report stated. In addition to this, they also predicted that brands will focus on alignment over follower numbers, asserting, “in 2019, brands now realize that the most essential requirement for working with an influencer is that the people they influence match up to your target audience.”

Thomas Burkhardt, senior vice president of global brands, marketing and design at Mar-

“Social creators are arguably the most authentic targeted voice of our time.”

- Braintrust CAA-GBG and CreatorIQ report

chon Eyewear, Inc. echoes this sentiment when it comes to creating influencer partnerships with Marchon's various eyewear brands including initiatives with Calvin Klein, Chloe, Flexon, Lacoste, Longchamp, MCM, Nine West and Salvatore Ferragamo, among others.

Burkhardt said, “We believe in including influencers as a component of our promotional activities to elevate brand awareness and further connect with our customers and end consumers. We find that it's most impactful to work in tandem with our brand partners to integrate eyewear into

their influencer programs and ambassador initiatives as well as to gift product for high-profile celebrity wardrobing, to create positive associations and help drive demand.”

Between navigating the ever-changing digital scene and reaching the younger generations coming into their own as spending powerhouses, capturing loyalty will become even more necessary. In this feature, VM takes a look at how optical is adapting to the evolving influencer marketing landscape to build brand awareness and authentic connections with their consumers. ■

Darryl Glover, OD, Believes in the Power of Authentic Dialogue

Darryl Glover, OD, and co-founder of DeFocus Media, believes that the utilization of influencers as a part of a larger marketing strategy is the “smart and current thing to do.” Glover notes that influencers have the ability to create authentic dialogue that an audience can relate to.

He added, “I am more prone to using a product or service that someone I can relate to uses. I think influencer marketing is here to stay and will only get bigger.”

Within optical, Glover believes that influencer marketing plays a big role and helps to support the entire picture of why and what the doctor has prescribed. He noted that while a doctor might prescribe a photochromic lens to a patient with an active lifestyle, an influencer has the



ability to show how that lens technology has impacted them.

“Most influencers are viewed as friends who

have all the answers. The influencer has already gained the trust of the consumer which indirectly can persuade a consumer into buying something. Also, the ability to watch an influencer discuss the pros and cons of a product really gives the influencer the power to convince consumers,” Glover said.

When it comes to the shift in the ways brands have positioned themselves throughout the rise of the social media influencer, Glover notes that “brands are really starting to be more personable, authentic and lifestyle specific.”

He continued, “Brands now understand the importance of relatability. Influencers make their followers feel that anything is within reach and brands are now tapping into that same concept.” ■