

The Cision logo, featuring the word "CISION" in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are primarily teal, with the letters 'S', 'I', 'O', and 'N' having a vertical orange stripe running through their center. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the letter 'N'.

VOLUME IV

# Shaping Narratives

# Enhancing social media and influencer marketing strategies



# Inform, Innovate & Inspire

With its capability to enhance brand storytelling, constant stream of news content, tremendous reach, and easy access to reporters, social media channels are crucial to the effective functioning of communications teams. The most recent ICCO World PR Report reveals that 45% of those surveyed plan to invest in social media community management in the year ahead, positioning it as the priority when allocating budgets. It's a risk-free investment, especially compared to the consequences of not aligning social media with a PR

and communications strategy. We're in a digital-first, consumer-driven world and brands are starting to think more about the role social media can play in evolving and amplifying messages, engaging with communities, and putting out the flames in a crisis.

However, the role of social media is not limited to simply publishing timely content that engages with audiences.



The widespread adoption of social media and digital channels by consumers means brands and organisations have to be where their consumers are and engage with them on their terms – in a timely and personalised manner.

Devising a holistic social media strategy requires a sound and thorough understanding of key audience's needs and preferences. Today's ever-evolving digital space is flooded with nuggets of information and constant streams of conversation, making it increasingly difficult for communications professionals to cut through the noise and sift out metrics that are useful in formulating a solid strategy.

The traditional strategy has been to distribute content through trusted news and trade sources, monitor engagement, and measure the uptick in share of voice and sentiment against advertising value equivalent. Social media has further exposed the limitations of that approach.

More than **77% of the UK population** are active social media users, spending an average of **110 minutes a day** on their chosen platforms, of which most of us typically use **six on a monthly basis**. For **36% of the population**, Facebook is their chosen news source, and among the 16-24 age group, Ofcom estimates that as many as 9 in 10 eschew print and broadcast sources in favour of online news. That's because there's a more direct route to consumers that catches their attention where they spend most of their time. Here's where it becomes relevant to highlight the importance of social listening, and the metrics that accompany it:

## 01.

---

### Media reach:

Tracking the landscape to assess brand reach and the potential size of your audience is the foremost metric to consider when formulating a holistic social strategy in line with your communications strategy.

## 03.

---

### Share of voice:

Analysing conversations surrounding your brand across multiple channels and assessing the impact it may have on brand image is key to refining overall messaging.

## 02.

---

### Audience resonance

Following online conversations and staying abreast of the topics that end-consumers are engaging with is central to conceiving a robust social media strategy.

## 04.

---

### Competitor benchmarks:

Being cognisant of other leading players in the industry and tracking conversations surrounding their brands makes it significantly easier to stay ahead of the curve and outperform competition.

# Why brands need to be careful on social

The problem many brands will encounter is that marketing and social media are closely connected but not the same. Social media disrupts the consumer's attention at a different moment and context and it's easy to strike a false note. Brands must be particularly aware of the following:

## ▶ 01.

Social is a conversational medium, not a broadcast channel. The golden rule is to personalise conversations as much as possible, and stay close to the authentic brand voice, mission, and purpose. No brand wants to be guilty of a “How do you do, fellow kids” moment.

## ▶ 02.

Leveraging platforms effectively to get your brand's message across is crucial. Understanding which platform to deploy given the nature of the brand, industry and product is a key part of the challenge. You don't need to be everywhere, and you probably shouldn't be either. If you're on LinkedIn and TikTok for the same campaign, it might be a clue that the campaign lacks strategic focus.

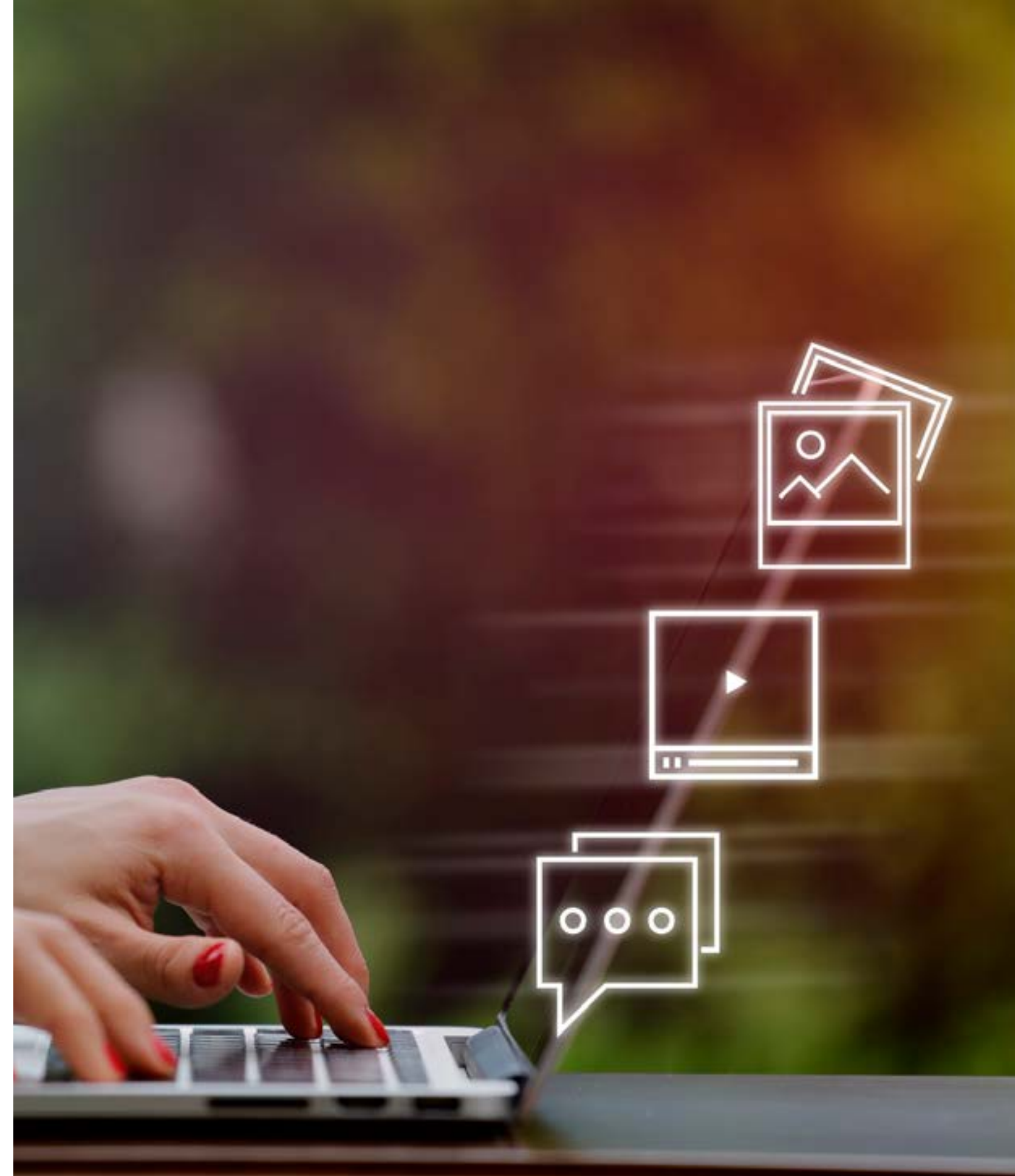
With these in mind, PR, Marketing and Social must come together and be tightly coordinated with services and sales. Customer experience is the prize when it comes to building trust in a brand.



# You can't have one without the other

Social media brings brands to a much larger audience, and that's a positive if the connection is authentic. And speaking of trust and authenticity, there's one contested, yet important word, we have yet to mention with regards to social strategy and that's... you guessed it: **Influencers!**

While campaign success might once have been measured in double page spread coverage in national print media (whose circulations continue to post [double-digit decline](#)), there are millions to reach on Facebook, Instagram or YouTube. And today, Influencers hold the keys to the corporate kingdom.



# The growing importance of the influencer

While influencer marketing is still a relatively new phenomenon, it has been projected that in the coming years, partnerships between brands and influencers will be stronger, more inclusive, and more powerful than ever owing to a handful of reasons:

## ▶ 01.

### Influencers lend brands a sense of authenticity:

A [recent survey](#) found that consumers are more likely to trust influencers they follow on social media than the actual website of the company that is being promoted. Another 2019 study found that [8 out of 10](#) shoppers made a purchase after seeing an influencer promote the product. Far from being vanity metrics, these statistics point to an important fact: audiences connect better with brands that retain a sense of authenticity in their promotional activities.

## ▶ 02.

### Influencers enable more focused targeting:

With audiences specific to different niches, industries, and countries, influencers make it increasingly easier for brands to sharpen their focus and engage with more defined demographics. Moreover, influencers are also [topical experts](#) who can produce and publish valuable content.

## ▶ 03.

### Influencers drive higher engagement:

[60% of marketers](#) found that influencer-generated content performs better than branded content. In addition to the two aforementioned points, one of the primary reasons behind this would be that given how *relatable and approachable* influencers are, audiences find it easier to engage in a dialogue with them.

# Influencers vs Celebrities

While [celebrity endorsements and partnerships](#) have been successful in yielding significant financial rewards such as positive stock returns, the influence they wield stems from being colloquially “rich and famous”. Celebrities, with their “star power”, lend brands a sense of status that may have been perceived as effective and attractive in the past.

However, the tides have changed immensely. While celebrities enjoy fame, influencers have a following. It’s an important distinction because the power dynamic can distract from a campaign.

The focus with celebrity endorsements is on the star, not the product.

Influencers, on the other hand, are audience focused. They are creators and curators of content, with a keen sense of what drives most engagement.

Brands can no longer parachute an A-list face into a campaign and expect the endorsement to trigger a sales rush.



There are signs that [Gen Z consumers](#) in particular are underwhelmed by raw “star power” and are looking for something with a stronger emotional hook. The celebrities they value are those who speak up on their issues and use their platform to promote something more memorable than perfume or Pepsi.

For an illustration of how far power has shifted from celebrities to influencers, look at the widespread derision that greeted the star-studded March 2020 [‘Imagine’ video](#) posted on Instagram, which was perceived as tone deaf and entitled. Compare that to YouTube mega-influencer Mr. Beast, whose [Squid Game tribute video](#) received more views in five days than the original Netflix series did in its first month.



# Why influencers are increasingly effective

According to one [2020 report](#), influencer marketing can earn up to \$18 return on every \$1 spent, putting it second only to email marketing in terms of ROI. The value is there, as is the infrastructure. Whole agencies have now emerged that are focused uniquely on managing influencer talent, making it much easier for brands and PR professionals to find the most appropriate figures for their campaigns.

Since influencers operate on social media, intangibles are kept to the minimum. Their performance is trackable and measurable, whether it's sales conversions, page impressions, social media engagement, or earned media value.



# When crafting influencer marketing strategies, consider the following:

## 01.

---

### **Target influencers that matter:**

Remember that the loudest voice may not be the ideal voice for your campaign. Be rigorous in vetting your shortlist to ensure that they are aligned with your brand and pose no threat to your reputation, whether it's collaboration with a rival brand or a rogue tweet from years back that makes the wrong headlines.

## 03.

---

### **Analyse campaign impact:**

Tracking the success of the campaigns run, being aware of the traction they have received, and analysing where your brand may have missed the mark during execution are just as vital as recruiting the right influencers. Employing a data-driven approach to influencer marketing campaigns is key to ensuring their long term success.

## 02.

---

### **Analyse influencers' media reach:**

It's important to craft campaign strategies that inspire conversations which translate into results. Therefore, while selecting influencers, it is essential to understand their media reach, following, and engagement in previous campaigns to assess if they are the right fit for your brand.





Cision's Social solutions powered by Brandwatch give you access to the world's largest database of online conversations. We help you discover the conversation around your brand, and help shape the way you're being perceived on social. To find out more, speak to one of our consultants today.

As a global leader in PR, marketing and social media management technology and intelligence, Cision helps brands and organisations to identify, connect and engage with customers and stakeholders to drive business results. **PR Newswire**, helps companies meet their communications and disclosure needs. A network of approximately 1.1 billion influencers, in-depth monitoring, analytics and its **Brandwatch** and **Falcon.io** social media platforms headline a premier suite of solutions. Cision has offices in 24 countries throughout the Americas, EMEA and APAC.

For more information about Cision's award-winning solutions, including Cision Communications Cloud®, visit **[www.cision.co.uk](http://www.cision.co.uk)** and follow **[@CisionUK](https://twitter.com/CisionUK)** on Twitter.

