# Brands must co-create with influencers to shape cultural narratives and stay relevant



In an era where consumer engagement is shifting dramatically, brands must evolve beyond traditional marketing strategies, tapping into the unique dynamics of influencer culture. Anna Kohl from Landor underscores this pivotal transformation, suggesting that influencers are not merely endorsers but architects of consumer desire, reshaping the very essence of branding.

Historically, the branding landscape was dominated by a model of control—companies dictated messages that consumers would receive passively. However, the rise of the influencer economy has propelled a fundamental shift. Today’s consumers interact with brands across various digital platforms, from TikTok to Instagram, creating a fragmented but rich tapestry of engagement. This is particularly important as Generation Z continues to redefine cultural landscapes through authentic online interactions, compelling brands to adapt swiftly to maintain relevance.

The statistics around influencer marketing underscore its growing significance. With the industry now valued in the billions, successful brands are cultivating flexible identities rather than rigid designs. Brands such as Nike and Dove exemplify this approach. They have shown that by allowing influencers to co-create and shape narratives, brands can foster deeper connections with consumers. This is evident in Nike’s collaboration with BMX champion Nigel Sylvester, where the iconic swoosh was recontextualised within BMX culture. Instead of merely placing a logo on a product, Nike let Sylvester transform its identity, creating an authentic cultural moment that resonated deeply within the BMX community.

Similarly, Dove's innovative campaign turned everyday mothers into ambassadors, transforming them into campaign influencers who challenged beauty standards. This proactive approach illustrates how brands can engage directly with influential groups, creating a ripple effect of cultural participation through adaptable assets.

The effectiveness of influencer collaborations extends beyond simple advertisement; these partnerships enable brands to resonate on a cultural level. Take KitKat's recent launch of its vegan variant. By crafting a bespoke product for celebrity Kim Kardashian, the brand cleverly intertwined itself into a narrative that was timely, relatable, and shareable—a strategy that highlights the importance of agility over uniformity in today’s rapidly evolving marketing landscape.

Kellogg's is another brand facing the challenge of maintaining cultural relevance while reinvigorating its masterbrand. The recent changes to its branding strategy showcase its commitment to a more liberated system capable of omnichannel impact, which is essential in a market saturated with competing messages. By extracting the “OG” from its logo and embedding it within a fresh campaign, Kellogg’s aims to connect with a new generation whilst reinforcing its heritage.

As brands strive to connect with increasingly discerning consumers, particularly younger demographics, the rules of engagement are evolving. There's a heightened expectation for brands to not only convey messages but to participate authentically in cultural dialogues. This means embracing versatility and fluidity in branding strategies, where interaction is not merely transactional but symbiotic.

Influencers are increasingly positioned as conduits between brands and consumers, harnessing their insights to influence brand narratives. Their keen understanding of trends empowers brands to navigate cultural shifts effectively, allowing them to remain relevant in an ever-changing landscape. Thus, in a world where brands must accommodate the narratives shaped by their audiences, the ability to adapt and co-create is essential.

The call for brands is clear: to stay relevant in this dynamic marketplace, they must embrace the collaborative spirit of the influencer age. As they do so, they might just find that those who resist adaptation don’t fade—they vanish altogether. The challenge lies in recognising the fluidity of modern branding, allowing both brands and influencers to shape a narrative that resonates deeply within the fabric of contemporary culture.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3, 5-7, 9
2. Paragraphs 4, 8
3. Paragraph 4
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 7
6. Paragraph 7
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2025/05/16/it-time-influencers-be-shaping-not-just-selling-your-brand> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.nike.com/launch/t/air-jordan-1-nrg-nigel-sylvester> - Nike's collaboration with BMX athlete Nigel Sylvester resulted in the Air Jordan 1 NRG 'Nigel Sylvester' sneaker. This design features a distressed aesthetic, mirroring the wear and tear on Sylvester's personal riding shoes, and includes unique elements like a reflective Swoosh and 'Jordan Biking Co.' branding, highlighting the fusion of BMX culture with Jordan Brand's legacy.
3. <https://www.nike.com/gb/launch/t/jordan-nigel-sylvester-brick-by-brick-apparel-collection-static-emea> - The 'Brick by Brick' apparel collection is a collaboration between Jordan Brand and Nigel Sylvester, reflecting Sylvester's personal story and the architectural essence of New York City. The collection includes BMX jerseys, jackets, T-shirts, and pants, along with an exclusive Firewood Orange Air Jordan 4 sneaker, symbolizing resilience and strength.
4. <https://www.si.com/fannation/sneakers/interviews/nigel-sylvester-elevates-bike-culture-with-jordan-brand-collab> - An interview with Nigel Sylvester discussing his collaboration with Jordan Brand, marking him as the first BMX athlete sponsored by the brand. The conversation delves into his campaign titled 'Grandma's Driveway,' which accompanies the release of the Nigel Sylvester x Air Jordan 4 RM 'Grandma's Driveway' sneaker, paying homage to his roots in Queens, New York.
5. <https://www.gq.com/story/nigel-sylvester-air-jordan-4-rm-grandmas-driveway> - GQ's coverage of the Nigel Sylvester x Air Jordan 4 RM 'Grandma's Driveway' collaboration, highlighting the first-ever low-top Air Jordan 4 RM silhouette. The sneaker features 'Pro Green' suede, a rubber caging system, and a 'Bike Air' logo, reflecting Sylvester's BMX heritage and personal connection to his grandmother's driveway in Queens.
6. <https://www.hotnewhiphop.com/889855-nigel-sylvester-sneaker-news> - An overview of Nigel Sylvester's collaborations with Nike and Jordan Brand, emphasizing his impact on sneaker culture. The article details his journey from the Air Jordan 1 collaboration in 2018 to the 'Grandma's Driveway' Air Jordan 4 RM, showcasing his unique blend of BMX culture and sneaker design.
7. <https://www.nylon.com/articles/nigel-sylvester-nike-dunk-sb> - Nylon's feature on the Nigel Sylvester x Nike Dunk SB collaboration, marking the first retail release by a BMX rider. The sneaker boasts a black Nubuck upper with Safari print accents, a gum outsole, and insoles bearing Sylvester's signature and 'S.O.M.P' (Standing On My Pedals), reflecting his BMX lifestyle.