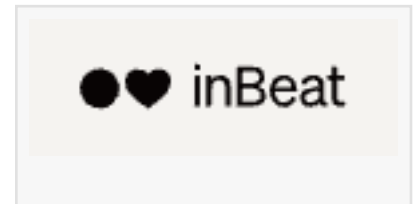


Performance Marketers Shift Toward Real Creator Content Amid AI Saturation

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inBeat Agency's analysis finds brands are increasingly gravitating toward real creator content as AI influencers and avatars face growing scrutiny about authenticity and engagement. Research and surveys from industry experts show real influencers and [user-generated content](#) (UGC) remain important to [performance](#)

[marketing](#) strategies, delivering better engagement and outcomes. Consumers have also shown a strong preference for authentic creator content over AI-generated ads, as attitudes shift toward AI-based personas presenting brands.



As generative AI tools became more sophisticated, particularly in image and video generation, marketers began using AI-generated content and ads for brands. However, as AI-generated content becomes more common across paid social, influencer marketing, and digital advertising, performance marketers are showing renewed interest in real creator content that feels human, authentic, and native to social platforms.

The analysis from inBeat Agency points to a growing divide between how brands use AI for efficiency and where they still rely on real creators to build trust. The use of AI for creator content and brand ads has increased over the last couple of years, as marketers have embraced the efficiency that generative AI offers. However, the performance and perception of fully AI-generated content showed that it cannot match the credibility, emotional connection, and conversion of content featuring real creators on social media.

According to a PhotoShelter study in September 2025, 78% of marketers said user-generated content is important to their social strategy, compared with only 28% who said the same about AI-generated content. Even though 81% of marketers use generative AI, only 4% say they trust AI content. This survey made it clear that authenticity is the primary driver of performance marketers' continued work with content creators across social media platforms such as Meta and TikTok.

Although brands jumped on the bandwagon of AI influencers, many have since backed down, mainly due to poor performance and consumer backlash. Collabstr, an influencer marketing platform, analyzed campaign transaction data and found that brand partnerships with AI creator accounts dropped by 30% in 2025.

Skepticism about the performance and relatability of AI content has been there from the beginning. Influencer Marketing Hub's 2024 report found that 36.7% of marketers said AI-powered influencers lacked authenticity. More importantly, 19% feared potential mistrust from consumers.

More recent studies have confirmed skepticism about consumer perception of AI-led creator content. Researchers at the Nuremberg Institute for Market Decisions (NIM) conducted controlled experiments to test user behavior toward AI content. Ads labeled AI-generated were perceived more negatively than identical human-made ads, especially in terms of emotional appeal, and were associated with reduced willingness to click, research, or purchase. Another study published in the Journal of Consumer Research focused squarely on TikTok. The behavior analysis, along with six preregistered experiments, found that AI disclosures reduce consumer engagement by weakening parasocial connection and signaling lower creator effort.

The analysis from inBeat Agency also examined other surveys and studies from Sprout Social, Vogue Business, and Ipsos Consumer Tracker that presented similar findings and supported the shift back to real creator content, specifically for performance marketing, where engagement and conversions are critical.

AI remains important for marketing in the backdrop, particularly for ideation, production, and testing. However, it may not replace the content brands get from real creators to promote their products or services.

"AI is changing how creative gets produced, but it has not replaced the need for human trust. The best performing content feels like it came from a real person," said David Morneau, co-founder and CEO at inBeat Agency.

inBeat's analysis also shows the shift is especially visible in paid social campaigns, where brands are under pressure to produce more creative variations while maintaining authenticity. Real creator content help brands test hooks, demonstrate products naturally, and create ad assets that blend into TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and other feed-based environments.

As a specialist in performance creative, the agency recommends that brands treat AI as a creative support tool rather than a replacement for creators. That may include using AI for planning, editing, and scripting support, as well as performance analysis, while continuing to source real creator footage, testimonials, product demonstrations, and customer-led narratives.

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