

OpenSponsorship Research shows Mid-Tier Influencers as Least Efficient Creator Category in Analysis of 1,527 Campaigns

OpenSponsorship analysis of real paid campaigns finds the 50K–250K "mid-tier" influencer delivers the worst cost per view and worst cost per engagement

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[OpenSponsorship](#), an AI-first athlete and creator marketing platform, today [published](#) findings from an analysis of 1,527 completed, paid creator campaign deliverables run on the platform between January 2025 and June 2026. The research surfaces several findings that contradict prevailing influencer marketing guidance -- including one that the company describes as the single most likely place brand budgets are leaking.



OpenSponsorship
AI-FIRST ATHLETE AND CREATOR MARKETING PLATFORM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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New Data from 1,527 Creator Campaigns Reveals the Influencer Tier Brands Should Stop Buying

OpenSponsorship analysis of real paid campaigns finds the 50K–250K "mid-tier" influencer delivers the worst cost per view and worst cost per engagement of any creator category -- simultaneously

KEY FINDINGS

- THE MID-TIER DEAD ZONE**
50K–250K followers delivered the worst results of any tier
\$0.19 COST PER VIEW
\$7.07 COST PER ENGAGEMENT
- THE COUNTERINTUITIVE COST-PER-VIEW RESULT**
Mega influencers (1M+) delivered views at **\$0.07** PER VIEW vs. \$0.13 for nano influencers (<10K)
- SMALL CREATORS WIN ON ENGAGEMENT**
Micro (10K–50K) and nano creators deliver **\$3.05–\$3.11** PER ENGAGEMENT vs. \$5.00 for mega and \$7.07 for mid-tier
- BIG DEALS ARE VOLATILE, NOT JUST EXPENSIVE**
Deals over \$7500 cost **\$0.41** PER VIEW -- 4X more than deals under \$500 (\$0.10)
- PREDICTABILITY MATTERS**
Within the over-\$7500 band, cost per view varied 18x
\$0.065 – \$1.18 25TH – 75TH PERCENTILE

ABOUT OPENSponsorSHIP
OpenSponsorship is an AI-first athlete and creator marketing platform connecting brands with 25,000+ athletes and creators across 160 sports and 120 countries. The platform has completed 10,000+ sponsorship deals and runs three proprietary AI agents in production. Founded in 2015 by Ishveen Jolly, the company is backed by Serena Ventures and reached profitability in 2025 with 200% revenue growth. OpenSponsorship was named to the Sports Business Journal Game Changers list in 2025.

Read the full report at [opensponsorship.com](#)

2026 Influencer ROI Report

25,000+ ATHLETES & CREATORS | 160 SPORTS | 120 COUNTRIES | 10,000+ SPONSORSHIP DEALS | 200% REVENUE GROWTH

The study analyzed real transactions -- actual brands paying actual creators, with tracked performance data attached -- and reports medians rather than averages to reflect what brands typically experience rather than what outlier campaigns produce.

“

Every influencer marketing article tells you the same thing: micro-influencers are better value. Almost none of them show you the receipts. So we pulled ours”

Ishveen Jolly, Founder and CEO of OpenSponsorship

Key Findings

The Mid-Tier Dead Zone

Creators with 50,000 to 250,000 followers -- the tier most commonly described as a "safe" or "credible" choice in influencer marketing guidance -- posted the worst cost per

view (\$0.19) and the worst cost per engagement (\$7.07) of any creator category measured. The finding held across 513 campaigns, the second-largest sample in the study.

The Counterintuitive Cost-Per-View Result

Conventional guidance holds that smaller creators deliver better value. On raw reach economics, the data contradicts this. Mega influencers (1M+ followers) delivered views at a median of \$0.07 each -- roughly half the \$0.13 cost per view of nano influencers (under 10K followers). However, nano creators generated views equal to 19.9% of their follower count versus 1.1% for mega influencers -- an 18x difference in how far content travels relative to audience size.

Small Creators Win on Engagement -- Decisively

On cost per engagement -- the metric that matters for conversion, trial, and intent -- micro influencers (10K-50K followers) delivered at \$3.05 per engagement and nano creators at \$3.11, versus \$5.00 for mega influencers and \$7.07 for the mid tier. Small creators buy actions approximately 40% more cheaply than large ones.

Big Deals Are Volatile, Not Just Expensive

Deals over \$7,500 cost a median of \$0.41 per view -- four times the \$0.10 median for campaigns under \$500. More significantly, within the over-\$7,500 band the 25th percentile came in at \$0.065 per view and the 75th percentile at \$1.18 -- an 18-fold spread inside a single spend category. A portfolio of smaller campaigns is not just cheaper; it is measurably more predictable.

"Every influencer marketing article tells you the same thing: micro-influencers are better value. Almost none of them show you the receipts. So we pulled ours," said [Ishveen](#) Jolly, Founder and CEO of OpenSponsorship. "The mid-tier finding is the one we think brands need to act on fastest. That creator looks credible in a deck. The data says it is the most expensive place your budget can be."

Methodology

The study analyzed 1,527 completed paid deliverables from deals marked Accepted, created between January 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. Each deliverable required a tracked view count above 100 and a recorded fee of at least \$50, removing test records and product-only placeholders. Medians are reported throughout. Two primary metrics were used: cost per view (fee divided by views delivered) and cost per engagement (fee divided by combined likes, comments, shares, and saves). Data was pulled in July 2026. The dataset is weighted toward sports, wellness, food, and lifestyle categories.

About OpenSponsorship

OpenSponsorship is an AI-first athlete and creator marketing platform connecting brands with

25,000+ athletes and creators across 160 sports and 120 countries. The platform has completed 10,000+ sponsorship deals and runs three proprietary AI agents in production for discovery, data enrichment, and content workflows. Founded in 2015 by Ishveen Jolly, the company is backed by Serena Ventures and reached profitability in 2025 with 200% revenue growth. OpenSponsorship was named to the Sports Business Journal Game Changers list in 2025.

The full report, including complete data tables, methodology, and category-specific findings, is available at opensponsorship.com.

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