

Authenticity and Reality TV: Finding the Perfect Influencer Match for Your Brand

In today's ever-evolving world of smoke, mirrors, and fluorescent fake tan – can reality TV and authenticity co-exist? For Gen Z and millennial viewers, the extent to which product ads 'keep it real' significantly shapes their buying decisions.

In our survey, we discovered:

- 76% of Gen Z and 68% of millennials consume reality TV today
- 'Authenticity' ranks higher than 'attractive', 'stylish' and 'glamorous' in influence over purchasing decisions
- More than two-thirds of Gen Z audiences are likely to fork out for clothing worn by stars
- Heavily photoshopped content puts most people off buying a product

Cheesy 90's pop music. Dark chocolate digestives. That mid-week sauvignon, just because.

We all have (and need) our guilty pleasures in life. Yet, out of all the small-but-mighty things we look forward to in our everyday hectic lives, reality TV could well be considered the most delicious indulgence of them all. Specifically speaking, **Love Island**.

The moment those bikini-clad, ripped-torso-baring contestants strut into *that* villa – we all know they're destined for a future of elite influencer status. Whether that lasts for five minutes or five years, however, is another matter.

Along with many UK households, brands have been taking their 9pm position on the sofa to determine which of this year's dating hopefuls will be best trusted with their money (and their messaging) for potential collaborations.

So, which personality traits should brands be looking out for to ensure these stars are more just their 'type on paper'? We carried out a survey to find out exactly what would entice people to make that purchase. What can we say? 'We're loyal, babes.'

Hashtag, looks aren't everything.

While the Love Island contestants will happily choose their potential love partners based on how defined their abs are, viewers (read: your potential customers) are far more likely to fall for the individuals' personalities. In fact, most people in our study said they'd be more swayed to buy a product if the star selling it came across as "authentic" (34%) rather than stylish (22%) or glamorous (12%).

What's more, the most-valued characteristic for all age groups was "funny or engaging", followed by "down to earth or authentic".

The research also suggested that looks really don't count for much when it comes to sustaining long-lasting relationships with audiences. Factors such as "if they were aspirational or posted inspirational content" and "if they were glamorous or lived a glamorous lifestyle" were much more influential than looks. Hey, you can't call the consumers of today shallow...

The days of flicking through a magazine to see our favourite celebs looking inhumanly airbrushed in fashion adverts appear to be becoming a thing of a past. What our study shows is that people relate to people – flaws and all – and that unfiltered 'realness' is what brands need to look out for when choosing who they collaborate. Working with authentic influencers could significantly boost your chances of making a sale, all while boosting your brand sentiment. It's a win-win.

Red flag alert! What characteristics would put people off following a reality TV star?

This leads nicely on to the next question in our survey, which asked participants about qualities that discourage them from following reality TV stars on social media. It comes as no surprise that "heavily photoshopped images/videos" is a

big red flag for most people, with the “posting of controversial opinions” coming in at a close second.

With Instagram placing a ban on filtered ads last year, it’s encouraging that *some* action is being taken to curtail the proliferation of unrealistic beauty standards on social media. Slow progress is better than no progress – but this doesn’t stop influencers from sharing heavily filtered images on their everyday posts and stories. Anyone with a smart phone can erase a blemish, narrow their nose, or cinch in their waist at the tap of the finger – warping user perceptions of reality.

Brands should look at an influencers’ content holistically. If they’re willing to show their less glamorous side (even if it puts them in a vulnerable position for trolling), as well as have a sense of humour and a relatable personality – you know they’re worth the investment.

If they look like they’ve just been cloned from an airbrushed 2000s beauty ad, call a cab. You’re #leaving. *Asks driver to make a Nando’s pit stop on the way home*

How does reality TV influence millennial and Gen Z spending habits?

With 76% of Gen Z, 68% of Millennials, and 50% of females from every age group consuming reality TV, shows like Love Island are far more than a seasonal guilty pleasure. They carry significant commercial influence.

Our insights revealed that millennials are most engaged with the social media presence of stars, with 70% following at least one contestant.

When it comes to products featured on reality TV more generally, **millennials are also the most active spenders on makeup, skincare, personal tech, accessories, nightclubs, restaurants, and apps.** This indicates some seriously strong potential for brands across a variety of sectors looking to work with the stars. The opportunities for creating campaigns are endless.

This takes us on to the younger, most socially active, demographic. Also known as today’s ‘digital natives’, **Gen Z came out as the most likely to:**

- **Buy clothing worn by stars**

- **Use a discount code provided by a reality star**
- **Visit holiday destinations featured on the shows**

They're also the second most likely purchasers (after millennials) in every other spending category. It's safe to say there's plenty of scope for attracting this digital savvy audience. Once you have built that crucial consumer trust with Gen Z, it can only continue to gain value as their spending power increases. As the Love Island saying goes, 'crack on.'

How do consumers engage with reality TV stars?

With a deck chair laced pool of addictively interactive functions, it's no surprise that **Instagram wins the hearts of both Gen Z (79%) and millennials (70%)** as the platform of choice to engage with reality TV stars. **TikTok creeps in at second place, engaging almost half of the Gen Z audience** – confirming the significance of video content in hooking in potential customers.

Across all age groups surveyed, people follow an average of 17 reality TV stars on social media. Most respondents said that they begin following a star after watching more than one episode, suggesting it's a considered decision. With the importance of authenticity, it takes more than an aesthetically pleasing feed to make audiences hit 'follow'. Much like the wooing strategies of Love Islanders, audiences prefer to keep it open – especially during the early stages.

Why brands should care about reality TV

With thousands of potential matches to choose from, we understand choosing the right influencer to align with your brand's reputation can be a tricky task – especially with so many emerging into the market through summer reality TV shows like Love Island. Our data has revealed some surprising insights into how reality TV affects user behaviour.

Now, let's take things to the next level. If you want to learn more about how we can tap into the world of influencers to elevate your brand, [get in touch](#):

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