

Research Report: Influencer Marketing During COVID-19

Survey Results from Leading Marketers on How the Pandemic Has Shifted Strategies and Plans



Marketers had to shift plans with the rise of COVID-19. New creative had to be created to go live in days, not months, and the media mix was evaluated and adjusted. Now, months into the pandemic, we wanted to hear from marketers on how their strategies have shifted and what they think the future holds for influencer marketing.

Based on a survey conducted in early May 2020, the report's results show how marketing plans have changed and what's to come, especially as it relates to influencer marketing. It's no surprise 98% said the pandemic changed their marketing strategy for Q2 2020. To better understand how it's changed, we asked about what social media channels are important right now, average engagement rates in social media and how influencers can make an impact. Here are the top 3 ways marketers are making shifts now:

#1

Digital Ad Spending Goes Down, Influencer Spending Stays Steady

67% of marketers said their overall digital marketing budgets have decreased in Q2 due to the pandemic, but only 41% said the same for their influencer budgets. In fact, almost 60% said their influencer budgets would stay the same or increase

#2

Influencer Content Can Make a Positive Impact for Brands During This Time

71% of marketers believe that influencers can make a positive impact for their brand during the pandemic. And it's not just in their social channels, 63% said that influencers could content compelling content for other channels - including TV.

#3

Marketers Are Leveraging Influencers to Strengthen a Brand's Message

Of the marketers running influencer campaigns now, 63% are using the channel to convey the right message for their brand, while 17% are trying to raise awareness and no marketers said they are leveraging influencers to drive sales. Influencers can create a powerful connection between brand and consumer in an authentic way.

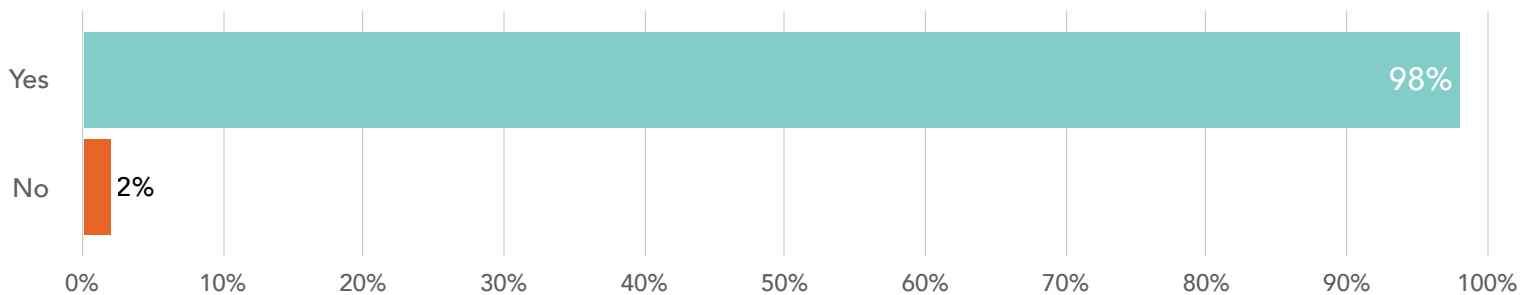
How the Pandemic Has Impacted Marketing

Nearly every marketer was impacted by the pandemic and their top focus went from trying to execute a campaign effectively to new pressing concerns. 32% of those surveyed said their number one concern was appearing insensitive while 22% were focused on keeping up with their inventory.

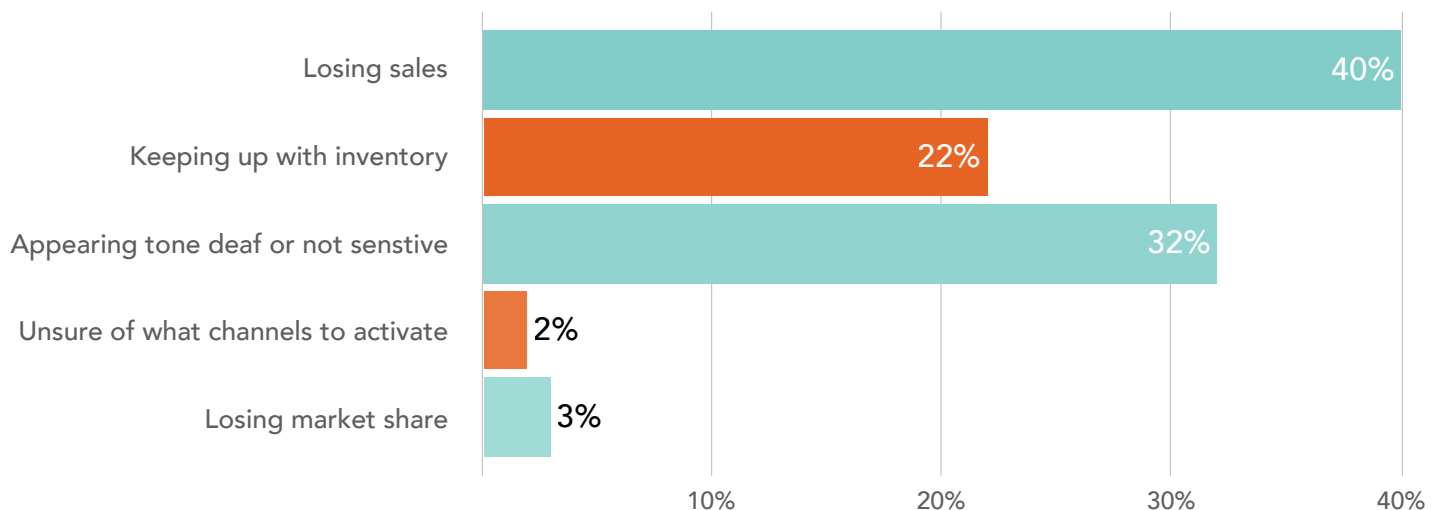
As for budgets, 64% of marketers said that their digital marketing budgets have decreased, and only 20% say that their budgets are the same as before the pandemic. However, nearly 60% marketers said their influencer budgets will remain the same or increase post COVID-19.

// *32% of marketers say their top concern is getting their marketing message wrong* //

Has COVID-19 impacted your marketing strategy for Q2?

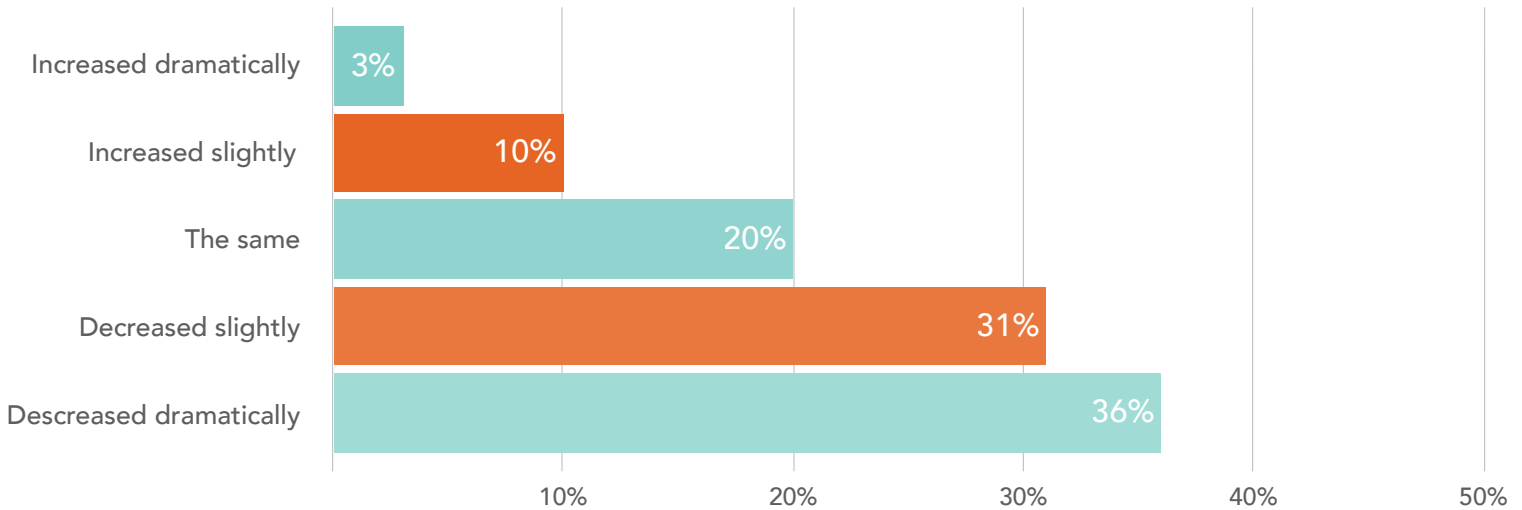


What are your top concerns right now in terms of how COVID-19 has impacted your marketing strategy?

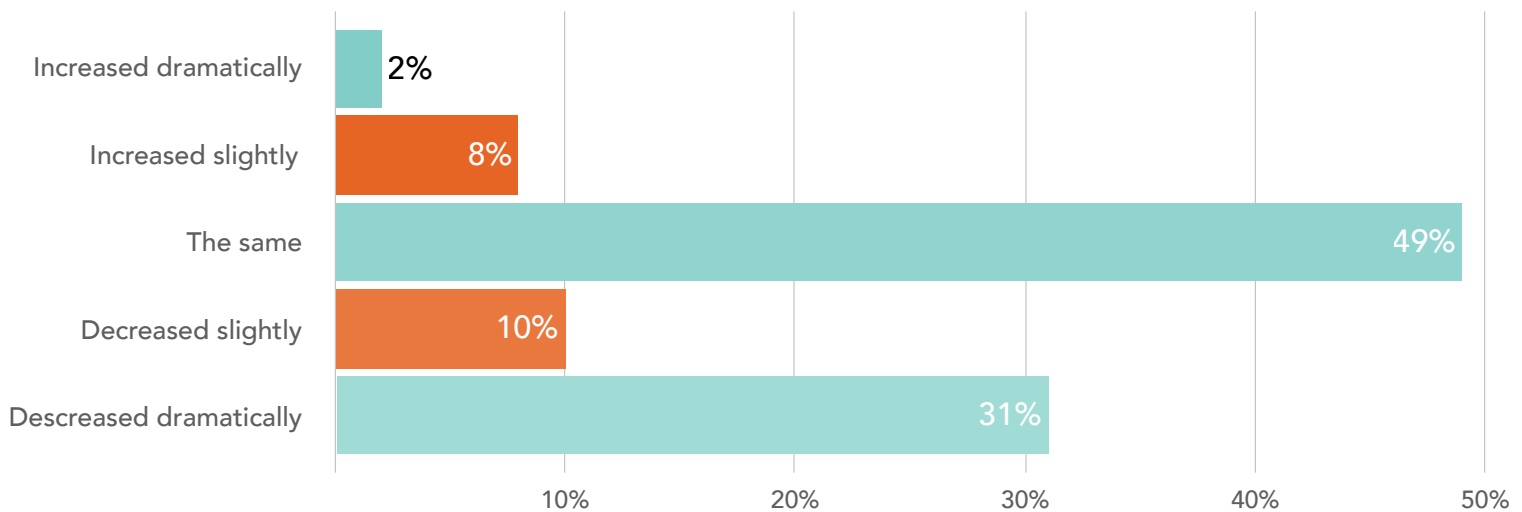


Marketing Budget Shifts

How have your digital marketing budgets changed for Q2 in light of COVID-19?



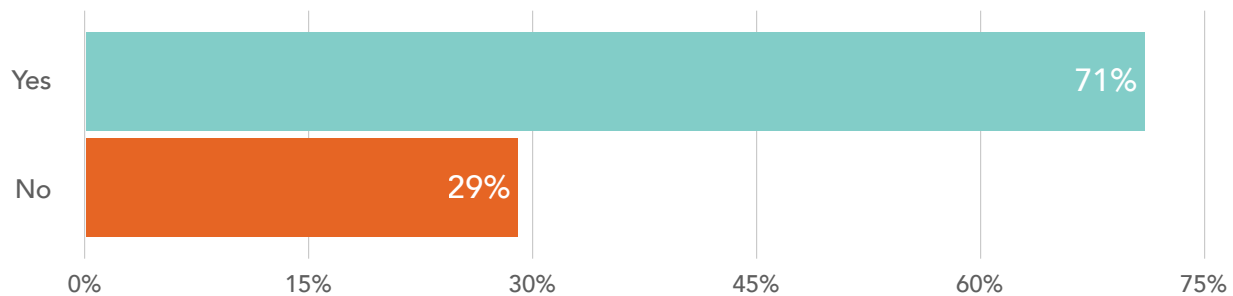
How has your influencer marketing budget changed in Q2 in light of COVID-19?



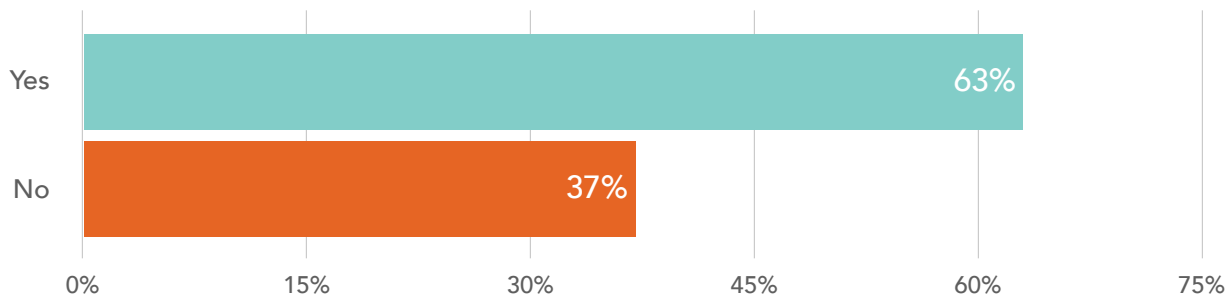
Influencer Marketing During the Pandemic

Influencer budgets haven't been impacted the same way as overall digital ad spends, possibly due to the effectiveness of the content influencers produce. 71% said it can make a positive impact for their brand. And 63% believe that the content is strong enough to use in other channels - including TV.

Do you think influencers can make a positive impact for your brand during the pandemic?



Do you think influencers can create compelling content you could use in the other channels - such as TV, programmatic or email?

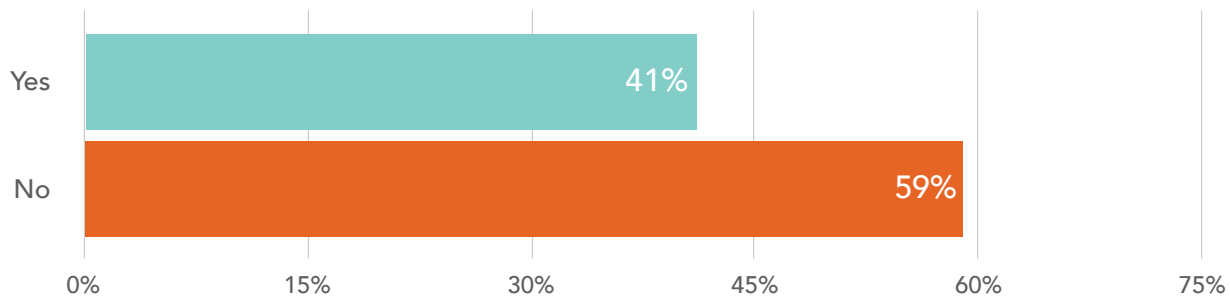


Leveraging Influencer Marketing Now

At the time of this survey, about half - 41% of marketers - said that they were planning to run an influencer marketing campaign in the next two months. And of those that are planning to run an influencer campaign, 25% actually plan to use more influencers than what they typically use.

Interestingly, the purpose of their influencer campaign is to convey the right message, and none selected that the goal will be to drive sales. Although driving sales was a top concern, 63% of marketers are leveraging influencers to assist with that second concern of using the right message to not to be insensitive.

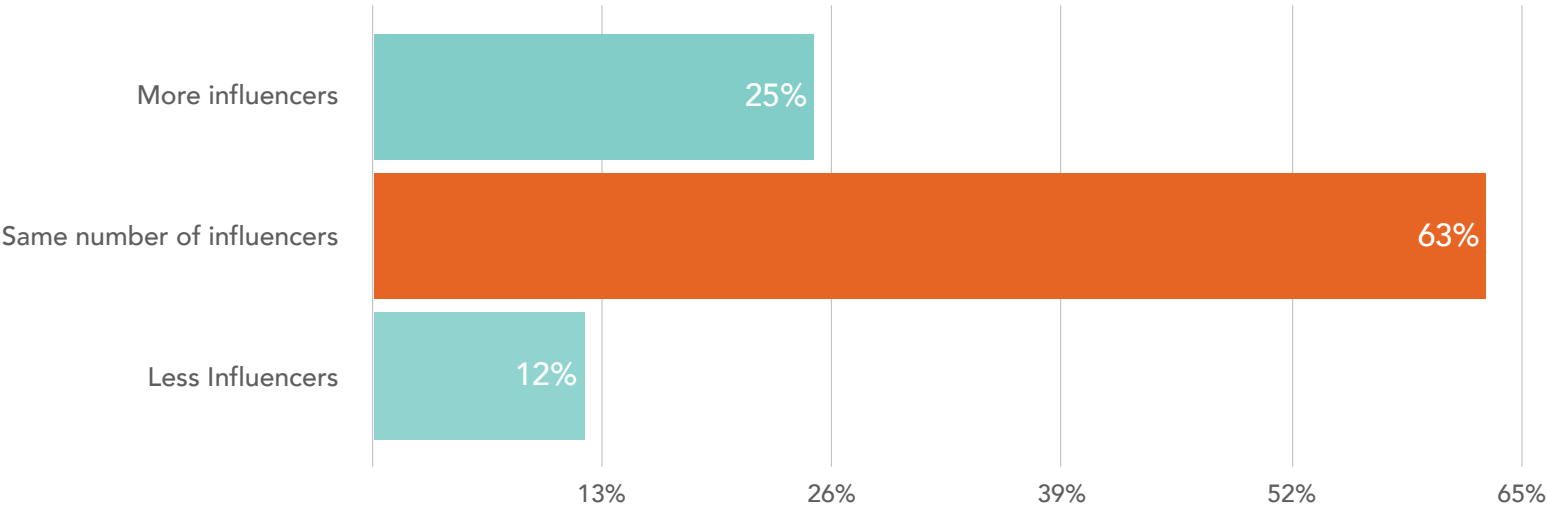
Are you currently running or do you plan on running an influencer marketing campaign in the next 1-2 months?



Shifts in Leveraging Influencers Now

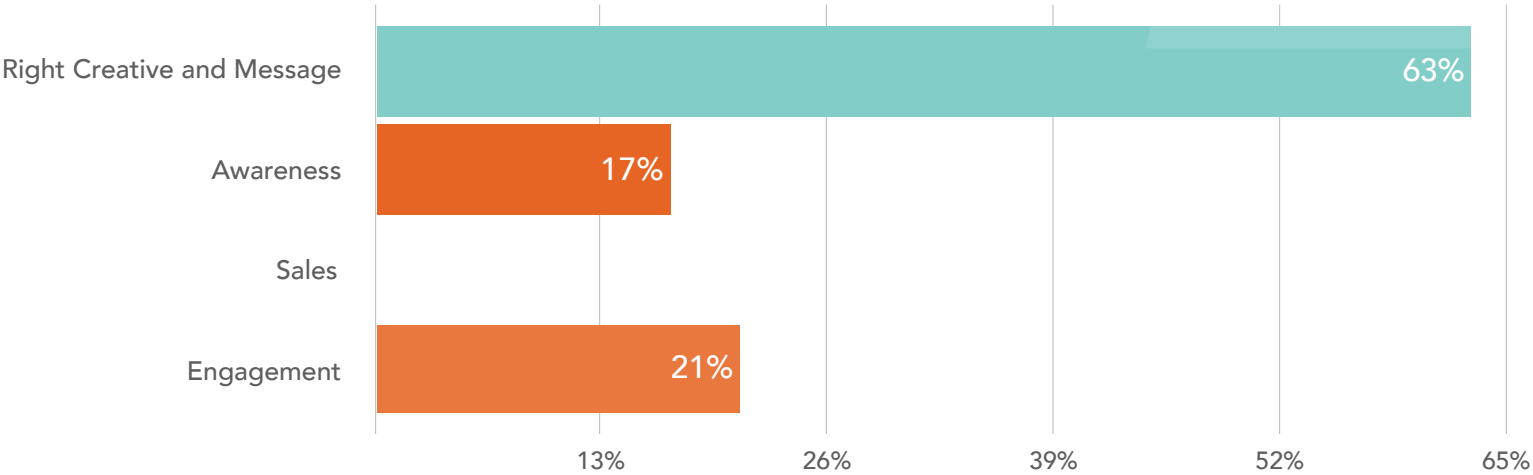


How many influencers do you plan to use during the pandemic compared to previous campaigns?



Goals in Running Influencer Now

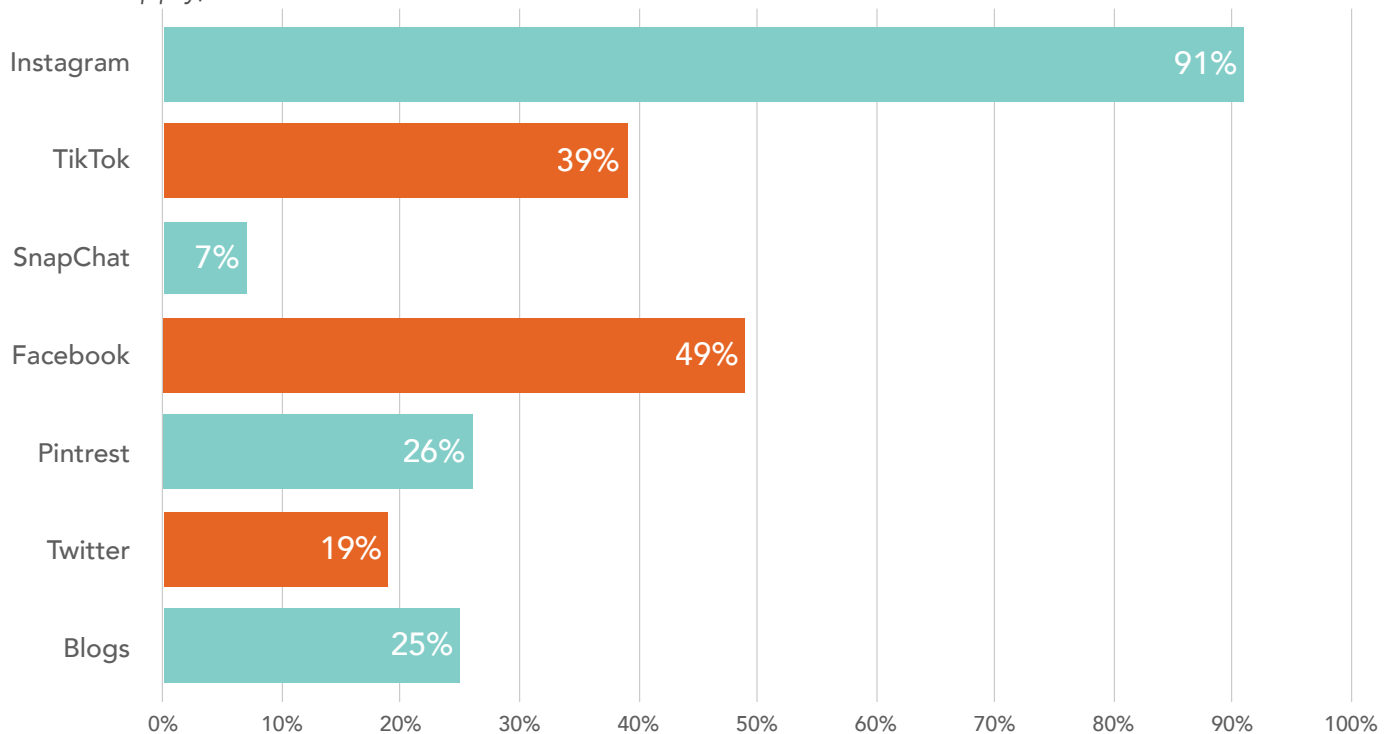
What's most important for your influencer marketing campaign?



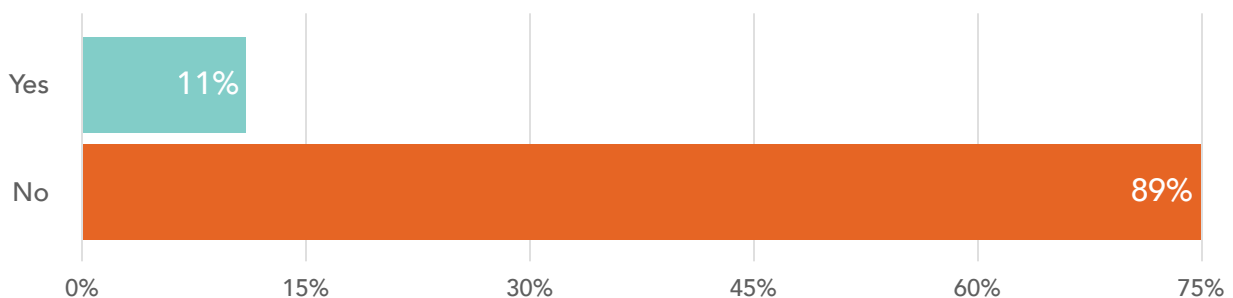
Platform Strategies During the Pandemic

Marketers are evaluating a number of platforms right now to leverage during COVID-19. Instagram continues to be first, but with a sizable lead over other platforms. TikTok comes in third. In our State of Influencer Marketing study from earlier this year, only 16% of marketers planned to use TikTok in 2020. Now almost 40% think it's an important channel to activate, but only 11% have a strategy for it.

*What channels do you think are most important to use right now for influencer marketing?
(select all that apply)*

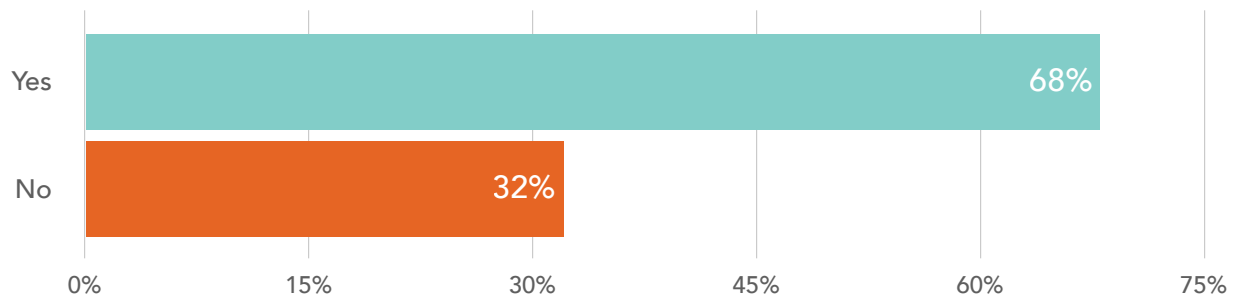


Do you currently have a TikTok influencer strategy for during COVID-19?



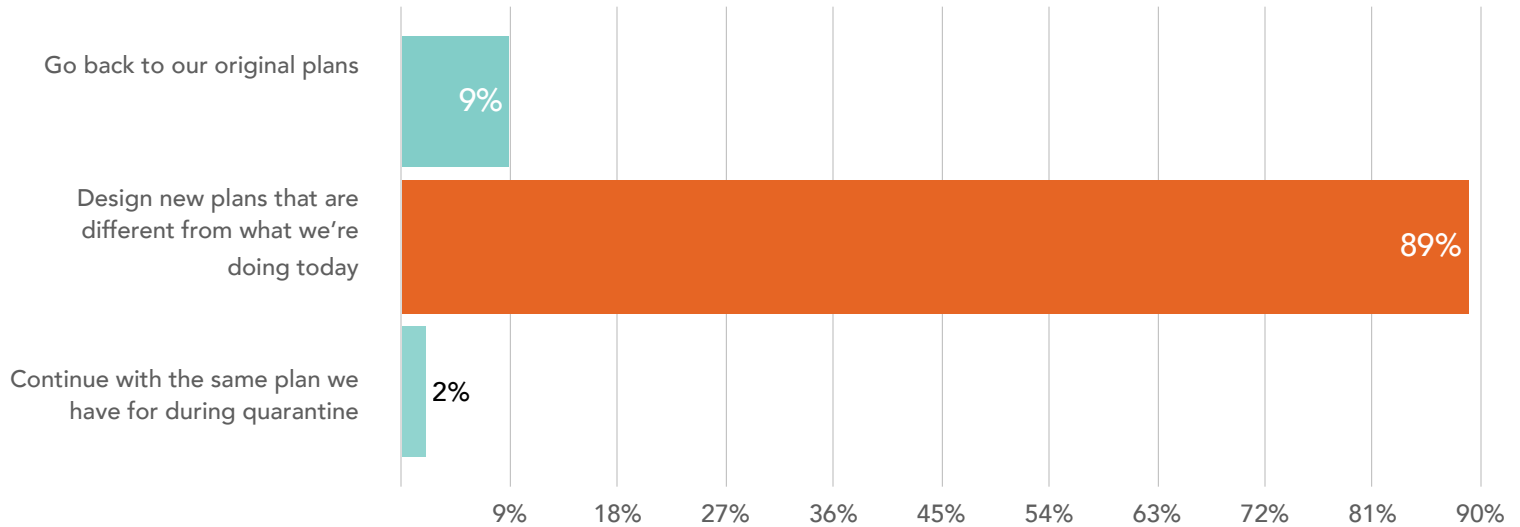
Social Media Engagement during COVID-19

Are you seeing an increase in engagement on your organic social media campaigns during COVID-19?



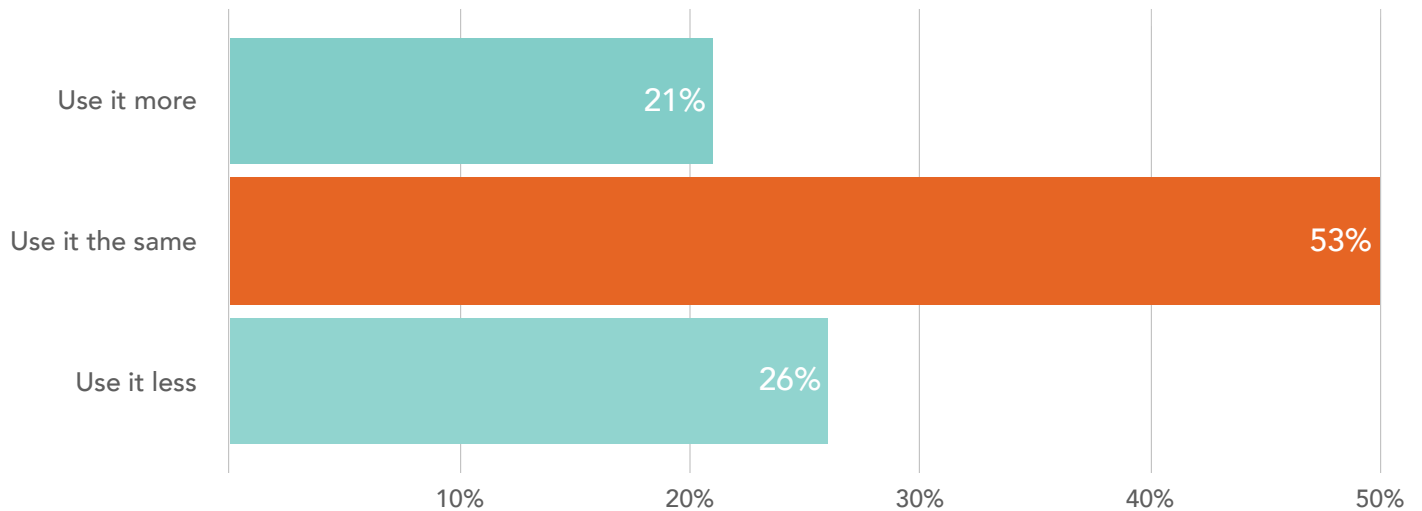
How Quarantine Lifts Will Change Your Marketing

After quarantines are lifted, how do you think digital marketing strategies will change? We will:



Using Influencer Marketing Post Quarantine Lifts

After quarantines are lifted, how will you use influencer marketing?



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*74%
of marketers plan
to use influencer
marketing more
or the same as
before*

When quarantines are lifted, nearly all marketers say they will be designing a whole new marketing plan to activate. And when it comes to influencer marketing, 74% plan to use influencer marketing the same or more than they did before the pandemic.



Conclusion

Marketers are living in uncertain times. Things are constantly changing, but one thing is certain, influencers are a powerful tactic in any marketer's toolkit because of they can convey a brand's message with authenticity. With the majority of marketers saying their influencer marketing budgets will stay the same or increase, it's time to leverage influencers to understand your ever-changing market as well as to form that connection between your brand and your target audience.

Unsure what your message should be now? Linqia offers our Influencer Council, where brands can learn from influencers what message or creative should be to form the strongest connection.

Now is the time to lean in. Marketers who are leveraging influencer now can form deeper connections with their target audience. Reach out to Linqia to discuss your goals and how you can leverage influencers today.

59 marketers and agency professionals participated in across a variety of industries including CPG, Food & Beverage, Media, Retail and their agencies. This survey was conducted in May 2020.

About Linqia

Linqia is a leading influencer marketing company leveraging AI to deliver high-quality influencer selection and executing high performing influencer campaigns that deliver business results. Backed by the most comprehensive third-party measurement suite in the industry, Linqia measures true business impact that goes beyond engagement to measure brand perception, store visits or product sales. Linqia also delivers qualified influencer creative for use in paid, earned and owned channels. Founded in 2012, Linqia works with over 500 leading national brands, including Kimberly-Clark, McDonald's, Nestle, Unilever, Anheuser-Busch and Walmart. Linqia is headquartered in San Francisco, CA, with offices in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Bentonville. For more information, visit <https://linqia.com>.

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