

INFLUENCER TIERS FOR THE INFLUENCER MARKETING INDUSTRY

The influencer marketing industry is rapidly growing and evolving.

Latest estimates predict influencer marketing spend will reach \$5-10 billion by 2020, and Instagram influencer marketing alone will reach \$2.28 billion in 2019.

Now that influencer marketing has become mainstream, marketers are looking to tap into the next set of high-value influencers to improve performance. Amidst this scramble for fresh blood, new influencer tiers (such as “nano-influencers”) are suddenly thrust into the spotlight.

As the industry vocabulary expands to include new buzzwords, so does confusion over what they all mean and how they apply to different influencer marketing strategies. Marketers who invest in influencer marketing today still struggle with basic questions:

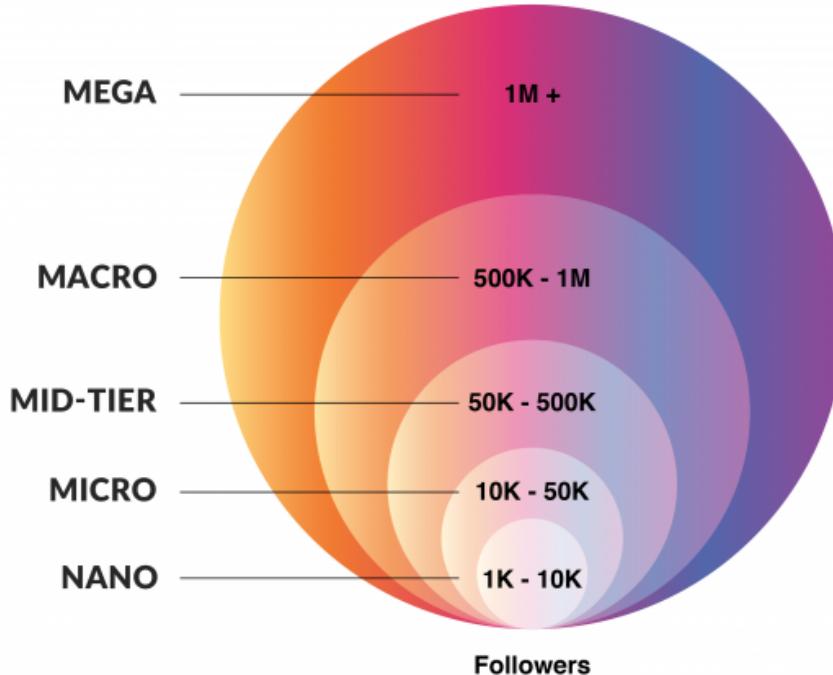
- What is the standard definition of “nano-influencer,” “micro-influencer,” or “macro-influencer?”
- Do these tiers apply across all social media platforms?
- What **influencer metrics** matter most for different types of social media influencers?
- What type of influencer is most effective for my campaign?

The fact is, standard influencer tiers have yet to be universally established across the influencer marketing industry, or categorized clearly by social media channel, follower count, and engagement.

Below, we provide comprehensive influencer tiers for Instagram and YouTube based on the **Standard Terminology in Influencer Marketing (STIM)**, and explore the strengths and pitfalls of partnering with each tier for an influencer campaign.

INSTAGRAM INFLUENCER TIER EXAMPLES

Instagram Influencer Tiers



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Instagram is the main social media channel for which people frequently use ranking terminology such as “micro-influencer.” The most common way that marketers categorize Instagram influencers is based on their number of followers.

The standard Instagram influencer tiers are as follows:

- **Nano-influencers:** 1,000 – 10,000 followers
- **Micro-influencers:** 10,000 – 50,000 followers
- **Mid-tier influencers:** 50,000 – 500,000 followers
- **Macro-influencers:** 500,000 – 1,000,000 followers
- **Mega-influencers:** 1,000,000+ followers

Interested in partnering up with any of the above influencer tiers?

Click **here** to learn about driving ROI and high engagement with top influencers.

NANO-INFLUENCERS



iam_dlew • [Follow](#)
New York, New York

iam_dlew #Ad

Lately I've been on the hunt looking for that perfect sneaker (swipe left) that's stylish yet comfortable! Thanks to my friends over at @reebokclassics for sending me over these DOPE #Aztrek sneakers! Love them!

#aztrek, #champsaztrek, #reebokaztrek
#sponsored
menswear #menstyle #menstyleofficial
#menwithstreetstyle #menwithstyle
#mensstyle #fashionmen #fashionformen
#guyswithstyle #guysfashion #guysstyle
#guystyle #streetstyle #styleformen
#modamasculinestyle #malefashion #pfw

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[thepatrickyoumans](#) You're fits are on point! 🚀



619 likes

OCTOBER 2, 2018

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Nano-influencers have small followings of roughly 1,000 to 10,000 users on Instagram, and are the latest tier to enter the influencer marketing lexicon. The term “nano-influencer” was popularized by a New York Times article entitled “Are You Ready for the NanoInfluencers?,” which covered Instagrammers with as few as 1,000 followers who were striking sponsorships with brands.

“Their lack of fame is one of the qualities that make them approachable,” explains Sapna Maheshwari, author of the New York Times’ piece. “When they recommend a shampoo or a lotion or a furniture brand on Instagram, their word seems as genuine as advice from a friend.”

As influencer marketing reaches critical mass, some brands worry the market is becoming saturated and that it’s increasingly difficult to recruit larger influencers. In reaction, many are tapping into smaller, more accessible Instagrammers. Most nano-influencers know their followers personally, so brands hope that their promotion will attract strong engagement and will feel more authentic than say, a **macro-influencer** who doesn’t personally know a majority of their large following.

Nano-influencers are also generally open to posting in exchange for free products or nominal **amounts of money**, making them a highly accessible group for low-budget campaigns. That being said, nano-influencers will take the most time to manage, and will

likely prove difficult for small teams to scale up; it would require tens or hundreds of nano-influencers to achieve the same reach as a single mid-tier or macro-influencer.

MICRO-INFLUENCERS



alanakysar • [Follow](#)
Los Angeles, California

alanakysar Moving is tough, but we are finally *mostly* settled into our new home. Between unpacking and entertaining out of town guests, we haven't had as much time as I'd like to spend in the kitchen (in fact, I'm still looking for some of my baking sheets and pots and pans!). Thankfully, @doordash just launched DashPass, their subscription service which offers unlimited deliveries at \$0 delivery!!! DoorDash is offering a free trial for the next few weeks. I ordered up a breakfast spread for my little fam and a few friends from Huckleberry in Santa Monica in between hunting down my pans and walking #asausagenamedvienna. DashPass has been clutch for entertaining last minute guests / let's be



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NOVEMBER 7, 2018

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Micro-influencers are Instagram influencers with roughly 10,000 – 50,000 followers. Micro-influencers were the most “buzzed about”

influencer tiers in 2018, and **some analysts** even argued that they were the most important segment for influencer marketing.

The **excitement around micro-influencers** is partly based on their ability to cultivate niche communities around specific interests.

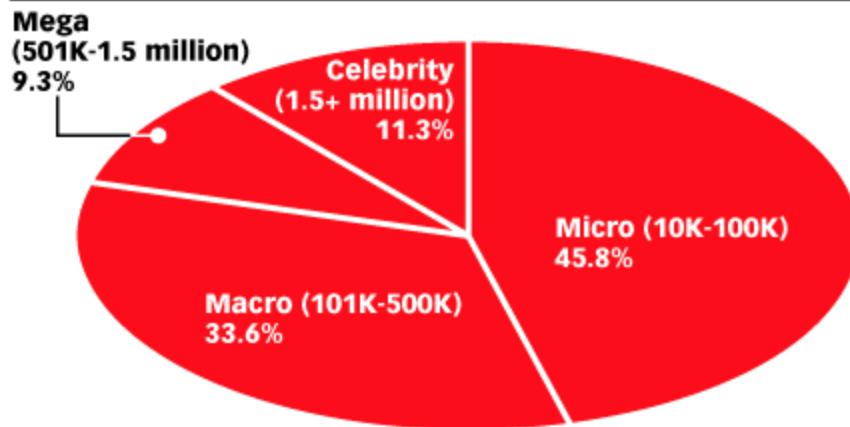
Whereas larger influencers attract a broader swath of followers across many groups, micro-influencers enable brands to tap into more clearly defined micro-communities. This has enabled marketers to launch highly tailored micro-influencer campaigns, in some cases with **powerful results**.

Micro-influencers are also commonly considered to have higher engagement rates than influencers with higher followings, although Mediakix found **negligible engagement differences between micro-influencers** and larger influencers on Instagram. We'll explore engagement rates in more depth in the later section, "Instagram Rankings Based on Engagement Rate."

In general, micro-influencers are effective for raising awareness about new products across a variety of communities. That, along with the highly visual nature of Instagram, makes micro-influencers particularly popular among fashion and beauty brands. A survey of fashion and cosmetics marketers cited in **eMarketer** found that 46% of marketers found micro-influencers to be the most effective, followed by 34% who felt macro-influencers were the best tier, and much smaller percentages who voted in favor of mega-influencers or celebrity-level stars.

Most Effective Tier of Influencers According to Cosmetic, Fashion and Luxury Marketers in Europe and the US, Jan 2018

% of respondents



Source: Launchmetrics, "The State of Influencer Marketing in Fashion, Luxury & Cosmetics," June 18, 2018

239068

www.emarketer.com

Partnering with a micro-influencer can cost anywhere from \$50 to several hundred dollars, depending on their industry, size, engagement levels, and demonstrated performance on previous campaigns. Like nano-influencers, micro-influencers can only provide limited audience reach, so they will require more time and effort to manage at scale. It will take dozens of micro-influencers to achieve the same reach as a single macro- or mega-influencer post. Micro-influencers are also an especially

risky segment when it comes to **fake followers**, therefore they require extra scrutiny before partnering up.

Pros & Cons Of Working With Micro-Influencers



Higher engagement rates

Micro-influencers may sometimes see high engagement rates on their posts due to smaller, more tight-knit follower communities.

Lower cost

Depending on an influencer's reach, engagement and experience, brands may be able to partner with many micro-influencers for the same price as a single macro-influencer.

Niche categories

In posting content that's personal and focused around their specific tastes, micro-influencers tap into niche audiences who likely share common interests and characteristics.



Lower reach

While they may tout higher engagement, micro-influencers reach fewer people. It takes more micro-influencers to impact the same number of people as a macro-influencer.

Less brand lift

Micro-influencers can't achieve the same kind of large-scale impact on brand awareness as macro- and mega-influencers. Larger influencers are cultural tastemakers, and can provide a more quantifiable boost in recognition.

More work and risk

Working with dozens of micro-influencers is time-consuming and requires a lot of back-and-forth, which leaves room for potential mistakes and oversight.

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MID-TIER INFLUENCERS



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Paid partnership with lifeproof

nitraab Does anybody else's child love to take your phone to watch Baby Shark!? 😂 Uriah grabs my phone and goes straight to YouTube...I'm glad @LifeProof keeps me "toddler proof" so I don't have to worry about my phone coming back damaged. 😊 Link to check it out is in bio. Get 20% off with my code Nitraa20 #BoyMom #MomLife #ad #LiveLifeProof #ShowUsYourProof #LifeProofNEXT

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NOVEMBER 29, 2018

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These middle-of-the-road Instagram influencers have a fanbase ranging from 50,000 – 500,000 followers. Whereas smaller influencers generally manage their Instagram as a side hustle, **mid-tier influencers** can secure more sizable sponsorships, and many make a full-time living off of their Instagram presence.

For marketers, the advantage of working with mid-tier influencers is that they offer stronger reach than the micro- and nano-influencers, but are still more accessible than macro- and mega-influencers. They

will generally be easier to contact, and significantly more affordable than macro- and mega-influencers. In general, mid-tier influencers can command anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars per post, depending on their reach and industry category.

One study suggests that mid-tier creators are perceived as more engaging and trustworthy than micro-influencers or large-scale social media celebrities (note: this study defines mid-tier influencers slightly higher than Mediakix, starting at 250,000 followers).

Overall, mid-tier influencers represent a happy balance between intimate fan communities and scalable audience reach.

MACRO-INFLUENCERS



gabifresh • Follow

gabifresh We have a new office in Venice, and I'm loving exploring my new neighborhood. I'm lucky enough to be my own boss, and LA is so laid back that wearing activewear to work is totally acceptable, especially when it's as cute as this look from @CALIAbyCarrie which is super soft, comfy and totally works in or out of the gym. Speaking of gyms...my calendar is getting so busy that I'm considering switching to 6am fitness classes. Do any of you guys work out super early? I like the idea of starting my day with endorphins and getting my workout out of the way, but dreading the 5:30 alarm clock. I'm still figuring it out...Let me know what works best for you! #StayThePath #CALIAbyCarrie #sponsored



Liked by lenadunham and 10,378 others

OCTOBER 18, 2018

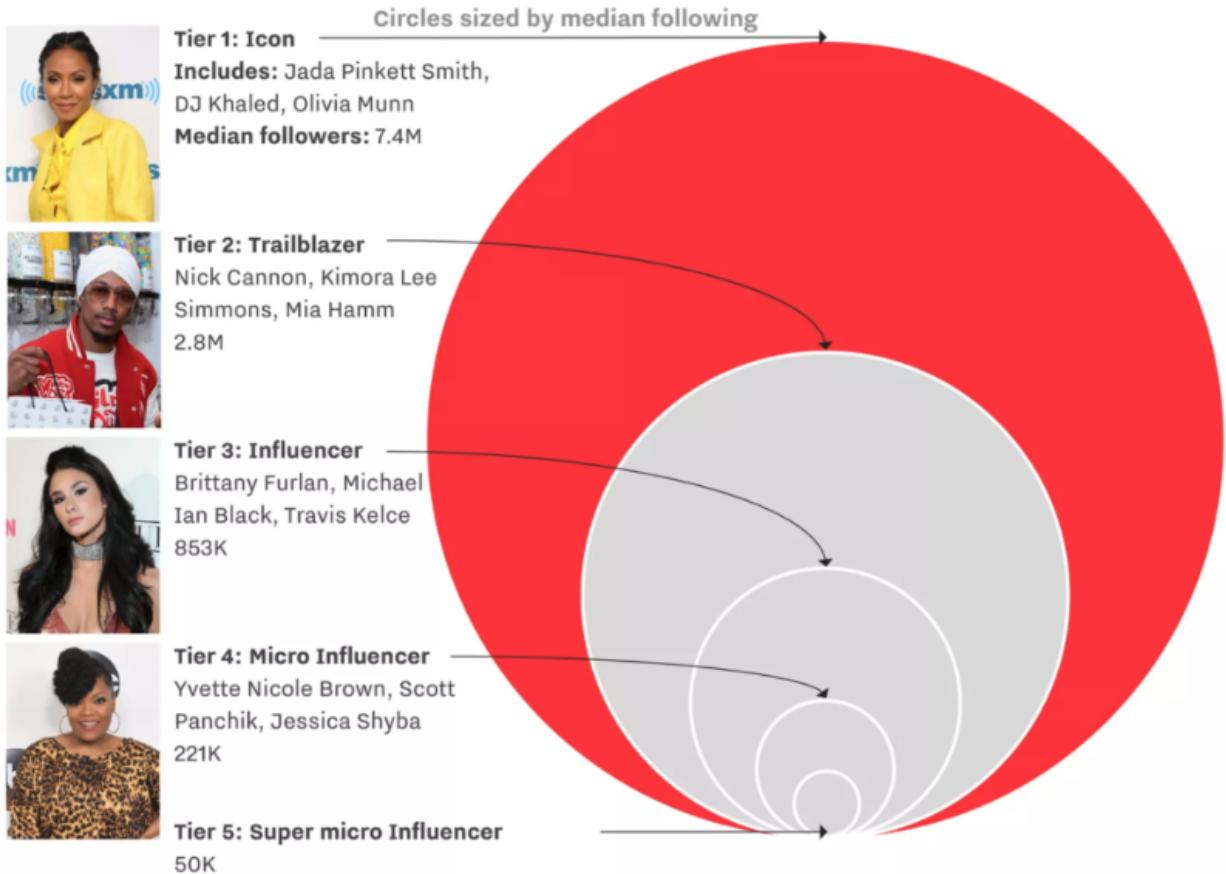
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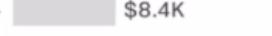
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Macro-influencers are established Instagram stars with a sizable following of 500,000 – 1,000,000 followers. In almost all cases, their social media presence represents their entire source of income—either that, or they are actors, models, athletes, or musicians in their own right. Macro-influencers generally command thousands of dollars per sponsored post.

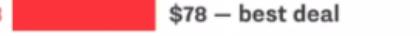
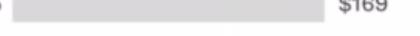
According to **data cited in Recode**, influencers in this tier drive the best deal in terms of influencer marketing CPM (cost per thousand impressions). In other words, macro-influencers represent the “sweet spot” between cost and reach, and may drive the most impactful ROI compared to other influencer tiers. The study defines this “Tier 3” group as having an average following of 853,000 followers, which falls on the higher end of mid-tier.



Average cost per post

Tier 1		\$21.5K
Tier 2		\$32.4K
Tier 3		\$25.7K
Tier 4		\$8.4K
Tier 5		\$1.5K

Average cost per thousand impressions (CPM)

Tier 1		\$165
Tier 2		\$100
Tier 3		\$78 — best deal
Tier 4		\$261
Tier 5		\$169

Source: WhoSay Images: Getty

recode

Macro-influencers are a fantastic way to achieve broad scale and reach without spending your entire budget on a single mega-influencer sponsorship.

MEGA-INFLUENCERS

Mega-influencers have achieved celebrity status on Instagram with a massive fanbase of 1,000,000 or more followers. Their broad appeal and colossal follower count grant them a powerful position as **cultural tastemakers**. Mega-influencers shape popular culture, drive trends and **hashtags**, create sell-out demand for products, direct attention to **new travel destinations**, and more.

When it comes to influencer marketing, mega-influencers are generally reserved for brands with large budgets. They are often only reached through a talent manager, and will likely cost hundreds of thousands of dollars for a single sponsored post. On the highest end, Coca-Cola famously paid Selena Gomez **\$550,000** for a single social media post.

Like Selena, some mega-influencers are famous actors, singers, and athletes. It's important for brands to treat these campaigns with the audience in mind because traditional celebrity sponsorships on social media run the risk of being perceived as inauthentic. According to [this study](#), consumers are 10 times more likely to purchase a product recommended by a non-celebrity influencer, rather than a traditional celebrity.

The benefit of creating [sponsored content](#) with mega-influencers is that they offer the largest impact, highest brand lift, and greatest possible reach from a single sponsored post—without the time and management resources necessary to achieve the same results through hundreds of smaller influencers.

Mega-influencers also avoid the risk of audience duplication that arises when working with hundreds of smaller influencers within a single category.

Compared to influencers with niche followings, mega-influencers have the power to start a conversation with a much wider audience and drive larger cultural conversations.

INSTAGRAM RANKINGS BASED ON ENGAGEMENT RATE

Rather than exclusively looking at follower count, many marketers also evaluate influencers based on their engagement rate. But what engagement level is “normal” for an influencer?

INSTAGRAM ENGAGEMENT RATES VS. FOLLOWER COUNT

Marketers tend to see an influencer’s engagement rate as a marker of fan affinity, audience reach, and potential campaign impact. That being said, defining “low” engagement on Instagram can be very

tricky. **Average engagement rates can vary wildly depending on the influencer's size, category, interests, and primary content format.**

One commonly held belief is that influencers with smaller followings, such as micro-influencers, pull higher average engagement rates than larger influencers. However, the gravity of this difference is disputed across the industry.

A study cited in [AdWeek](#) stated that Instagram accounts with less than 30,000 followers get as much as 60% higher engagement rates than larger influencers. Influencer Marketing Hub found another set of averages that confirm the strength of smaller influencers, but with a different set of numbers:

Average Engagement Rate On Instagram

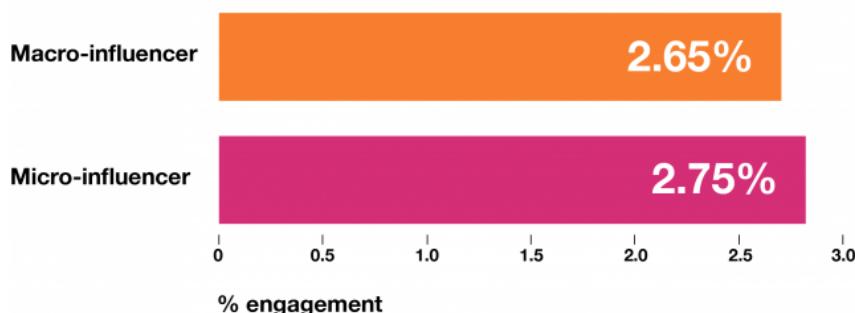
Followers	1,000 - 5,000	5,000 - 10,000	10,000 - 100,000	100,000+
Engagement Rate	5.7%	4%	2.4%	1.7%

Source: Influencer Marketing Hub

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However, in a proprietary analysis of micro- and macro-influencer posts, Mediakix found only a **0.1% difference in engagement rate** between the two groups. This suggests that while influencers with a smaller follower count do have higher engagement rates, the recorded difference will vary quite drastically depending on your sample.

Instagram Influencer Engagement Rate



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Beyond follower count and category, expectations for the engagement rates on sponsored content should be anywhere from 20-40% lower compared to organic Instagram posts

YOUTUBE INFLUENCER TIERS

It is less common for YouTubers (also known as YouTube creators) to be categorized by specific tiers in the same way Instagrammers are, at least in relation to influencer marketing. It's challenging to definitively rank YouTubers by specific tiers because their subscriber count is less relevant for sponsorship than follower count is on Instagram.

As we'll explore below, video views and engagement are much more important when it comes to measuring a YouTube partnership. Creating standard ranking terminology for YouTube

creators is invaluable for marketers looking to more clearly build, measure, and evaluate **sponsored campaigns on YouTube**.

The standard YouTube influencer tiers are as follows:

Nano-creator: 1,000 – 10,000 average views

Micro-creator: 10,000 – 25,000 average views

Mid-tier creator: 25,000 – 100,000 average views

Macro-creator: 100,000 – 1,000,000 average views

Elite creator: 1,000,000 – 5,000,000+ average views

YOUTUBE SUBSCRIBER LEVELS—LESS RELEVANT FOR BRANDS

YouTube subscriber count reflects the number of users who have “subscribed” to a creator’s channel, essentially opting to see the creator’s most recent video content in their feed.

YouTube has official **creator Levels based on subscriber count, and each unlocks particular benefits for the influencer. This includes improved audience analytics, monetization options, management, and access to YouTube's private production studio.**

YouTube Creator Levels

Graphite: 1-1,000 subscribers

Opal: 1-10,000 subscribers

Bronze: 10-100,000 subscribers

Silver: 100,000-1,000,000 subscribers

Gold: 1,000,000+ subscribers

While these levels are meaningful for the creators themselves, subscriber count is less relevant for marketers and brands.

YouTube has been around for long enough that many of its influencers have come and gone in waves. Creators who were

popular ten years ago may have millions of legacy subscribers, but their videos might attract significantly less engagement than they did at the peak of their fame. This is why subscriber count is not a good indicator of potential video views or cultural relevance.

YOUTUBE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS—RELEVANT FOR INFLUENCER MARKETING

The preferred way for marketers to evaluate a YouTube influencer today is based on engagement metrics—most importantly, average video views.

A simple way to calculate average video views is to:

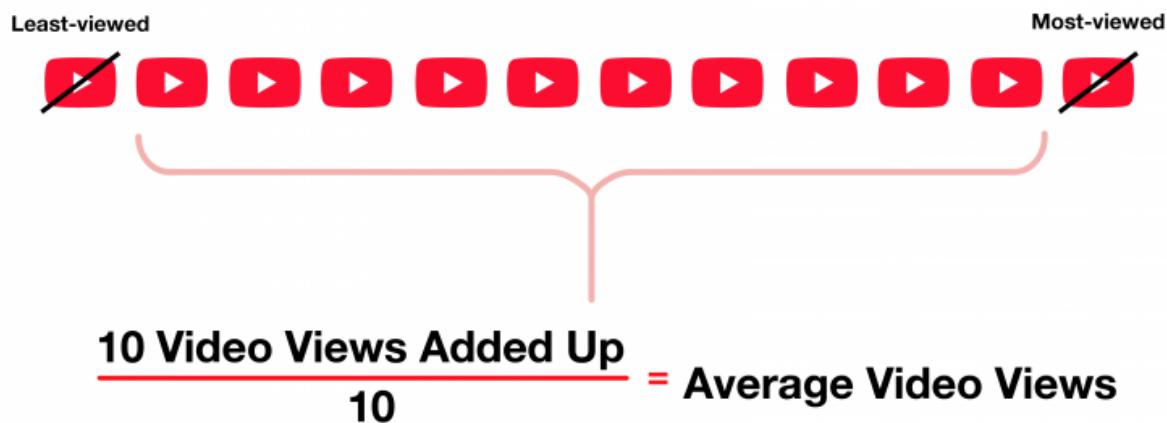
Identify the creator's 12 most recent videos

Cut the most-viewed and least-viewed videos from the list

Calculate the average view count for the 10 videos

remaining

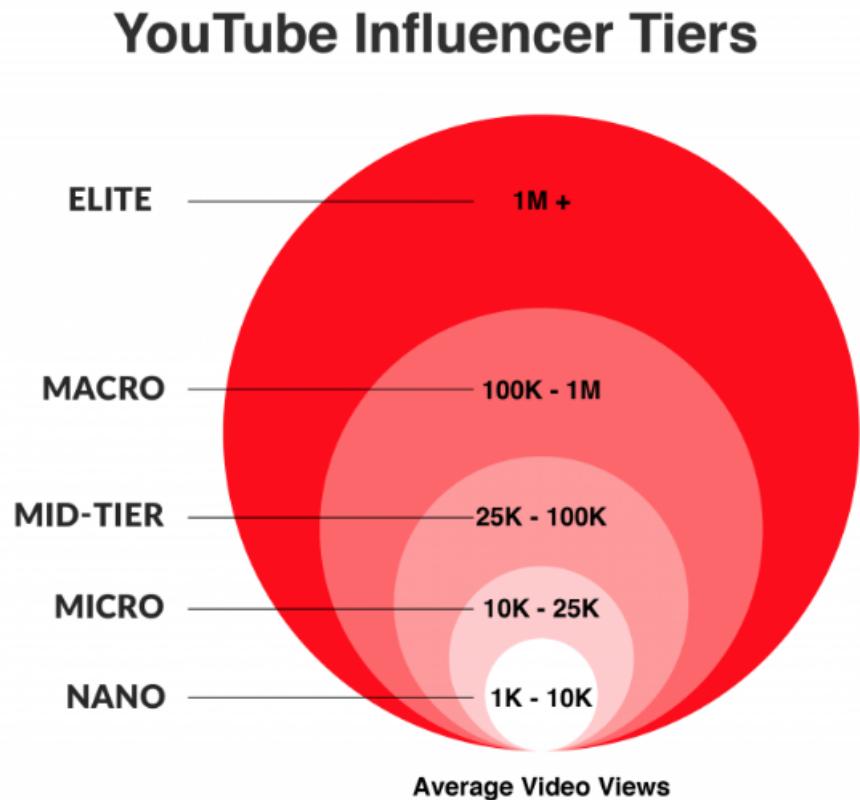
How To Calculate Average Video Views



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Eliminating the outliers on the top and bottom helps improve the accuracy of the average view count. Sometimes a single video will go viral and capture 20X more views than normal, or it will

bomb and get almost no views. Neither example accurately represents the creator's true "average" video, therefore might skew the result. Based on this more precise calculation of average video views, here are the standard YouTube influencer tiers:



It's easy to assume that higher-tiered creators are the most desirable for influencer marketing, but there are many other considerations for evaluating a potential YouTube partner:

Audience Demographics

YouTube provides influencers with detailed information about the age, gender, and location of their viewers, as well as the type of content their audience likes to watch. Review this data carefully to ensure that the creator's audience aligns with your brand's.

Category

Industry alignment is crucial—and not as simple as you might think. Apple can partner with technology YouTubers, and Revlon can work with beauty creators, but entertainment, comedy, and lifestyle influencers make up the majority of YouTube—and can be trickier to peg for a successful sponsorship. Non-endemic promotions (sponsorships between an influencer from one

industry and a brand from another, e.g. a gaming YouTuber and a snack brand) can also be very successful if executed correctly. Look at previous sponsorships, audience interests, and demographics to determine if the creator is the right fit for you.

Video Comments

How many comments does the creator pull per video? What is the sentiment behind those comments? Do most responses demonstrate strong affinity for the creator, or do they indicate annoyance or distrust?

Video Likes Vs. Dislikes

Some YouTube influencers attract a lot of views and comments because they are controversial. Evaluate the like versus dislike ratio on their videos, along with the comments (as mentioned above), in order to get a fuller picture of viewers' feelings towards the creator.

Cross-Platform Influence

Many influencers today operate across social media channels—some more successfully than others. Does the YouTube creator have an established, engaged presence on Instagram, Facebook, and more? Can you negotiate a cross-platform campaign in which they share sponsored content across several social media channels?

Brand Alignment

Finally, it's essential to consider **brand safety** when working with any YouTube influencer. Are they family-friendly? Does their voice match your brand's? Have they sparked any **controversies**? Are they aligned with your company's values? Can you trust they will **follow the contract** with quality work?

YOUTUBE INFLUENCER TIER EXAMPLES

NANO-CREATORS

At only 1,000 to 10,000 average video views, nano-creators won't usually drive a ton of awareness. However, their personal and authentic videos can provide excellent content for other marketing campaigns.

For example, Ross Dress For Less specifically works with YouTube nano-creators to source unique content that Ross can repurpose on Facebook, their top social media channel.

Nano-creator content might not get a lot of reach, but it proves much more engaging fodder for the company's Facebook page than brand-generated content.

MICRO-CREATORS

In this video, the Quinn sisters create fun, monster-themed snacks and drinks for their movie night screening of Goosebumps 2. This micro-creator duo pulls roughly between 10,000 and 25,000 views per video, reaching a modest but highly

engaged “tween” target audience that Goosebumps aims to reach.

MID-TIER CREATORS

In this video, Chad cooks a Blue Apron dinner for his wife Gabrielle and their two children, and offers his viewers a discount code. The family then goes on with their daily routine, talking about their chores for the day, and driving their kids to an activity center. The video is shot in a no-frills vlog style, so the viewer feels like a friend standing in their kitchen or riding along in their car.

This mid-tier YouTube family is highly relatable for their family-oriented audience, but also popular enough to drive licks and sign-ups to Blue Apron.

MACRO-CREATORS

At 100,000 to 1 million average video views, macro-creators provide strong impact without the same cost or hurdles associated with elite creators.

In this video, technology and gaming macro-creator JayzTwoCents provides an in-depth review of the RYUJIN 360 CPU cooler. Before beginning his review, he mentions his sponsorship by World of Warships, which he reminds his fans he has already been playing regularly, making this sponsorship a “no brainer.” Because of this very natural integration, the sponsored video gets strong views, likes, and positive comments from fans.

ELITE CREATORS

With over a million average video views, elite creators provide the highest amplification and can be difficult to contact without an agency or talent manager connection. In spite of their high price tag, elite

creators provide unparalleled video views and awareness of a product or service.

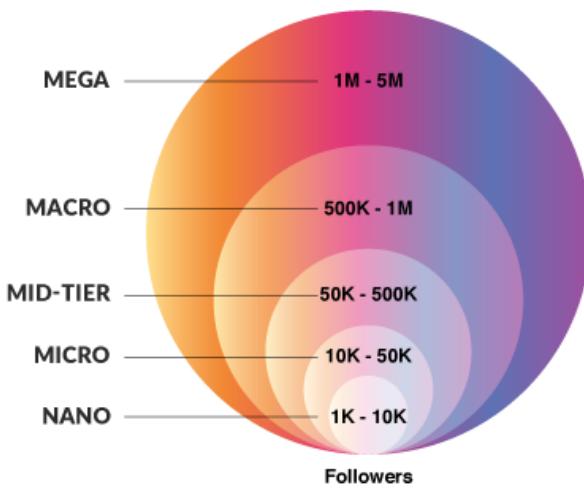
In this Shorty-Award-winning video, YouTube mega-star Lele Pons and Anwar Jibari shoot a comedic skit for Walking Dead's "No Man's Land" mobile game. The video manages to slip in a shot of live game play without it feeling forced, and plays off the zombie theme in light, playful, and on-brand way.

STIM (STANDARD TERMINOLOGY IN INFLUENCER MARKETING)

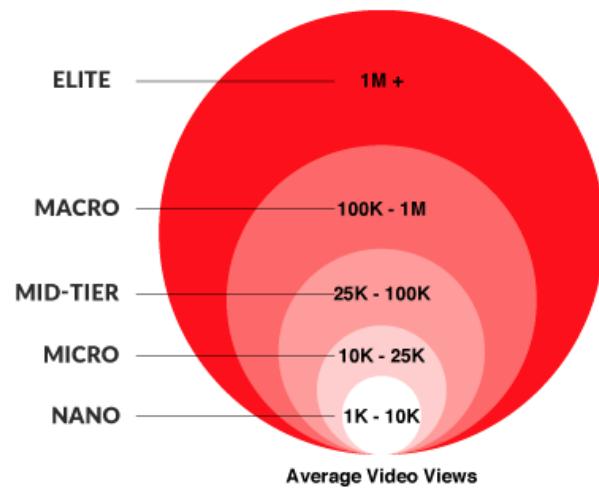
These Instagram and YouTube influencer tiers fall under STIM, the Standard Terminology in Influencer Marketing. Here is a simple graphic to break down current standards:

Influencer Tiers - Standard Terminology

Instagram Influencer Tiers



YouTube Influencer Tiers



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The goal of these tiers is to help marketers more effectively plan, partner with, execute, and measure performance of their influencers for campaigns across channels. As the influencer marketing industry—and the **definition of “influencer”**

itself—continues to shift, clear rankings will help both influencers and marketers succeed.