

# Influencer Trend

May 2026

[@zahr4](#)



# Report

## ***Staying Tapped-In***

*The brands that win aren't just leading the moment, they're tapping in, responding fast, and showing up where the conversation is already happening.*

## ***Moments that Move the Internet***

*Real-time creator moments are turning into viral movements, while upcoming high-volume content trends signal where brands should show up next.*

## ***The New Meta Playbook***

*Meta is reshaping the feed to reward native, lower-lift formats, pushing brands and creators toward content that feels more organic, intentional, and built for how users actually engage.*

## ***Fine Print in the Feed***

*Scrutiny on influencer marketing is expanding beyond disclosures to music usage, making compliant audio selection a critical, non-negotiable part of creator strategy.*

# Staying Tapped-In

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## The Marriott Pour

One creator turned a routine Courtyard Marriott stay into a viral moment. When Jacob Higgins received an over-the-top wine pour, it sparked **2.3M+ views and 2K+ creator remixes**, quickly evolving into a repeatable “**Marriott Pour**” trend.

The ripple effect was real: **TikTok searches for “Marriott” surged 173%**, driven entirely by creators. Marriott didn’t engage, but the moment still scaled, and even led to a brand deal for Jacob with PF Chang’s. It’s a sharp example of how creator-led content can build cultural visibility fast, with or without brand participation.

@thejacbhiggins



## The Marshalls House

What started as a **joke** between @sarreexcuse & @macythompsonn about Marshalls sending them to Coachella quickly turned into reality, with the brand stepping in to fund their trip, outfits, and full festival experience. The “**Marshalls House**” became a **perfect example of how a creator-led bit can evolve into a full brand activation** when companies are willing to listen and respond. Rooted in humor and authenticity, the moment resonated because it felt earned, not engineered. For brands, it’s a reminder that the most impactful **campaigns don’t always start with a brief, they start with a scroll.**

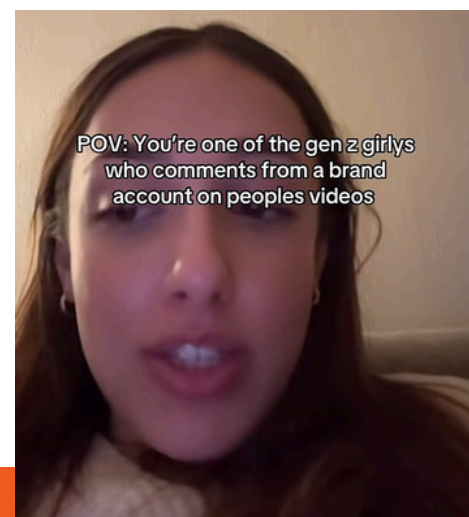
@macythompsonn



## Comments > Content

Social media manager @sarahlemoinee kicked off a TikTok calling out brands known for showing up in the comments, and names like Pepsi, Sephora, Kate Spade, and Shark didn’t miss the cue. The moment spotlights a growing shift: brands behaving like creators in real time. **Comment sections have become high-visibility real estate**, where audiences expect interaction and often find it as entertaining as the content itself. The takeaway is clear: **community isn’t built in posts alone.** The brands breaking through are showing up with personality, not polish, treating comments like culture, not an afterthought.

@sarahlemoinee

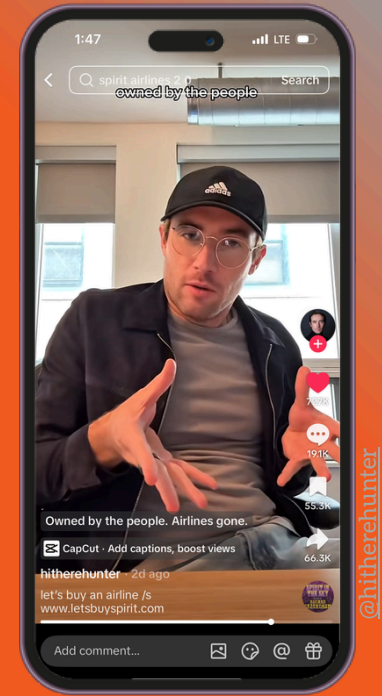


# Moments that Move the Internet

## Social's Spirit

As news of Spirit Airlines' shutdown broke, creator discourse quickly took over, with reactions and hot takes flooding feeds. Out of the noise, [@hitherehunter](#) shared a "crazy" idea: buy the airline and rebuild it as a people-owned carrier. The TikTok hit 4.9M+ view within 48 hours and quickly moved beyond content, with a [website](#) to pledge support and an Instagram hub, [@spiritair2.0](#), launching within hours.

The moment signals a broader shift: social is no longer just where culture is discussed, it's where it's built. **Big ideas don't need boardrooms, they need community.** As audiences rally around participatory, mission-driven concepts, **this is one to watch for how far creator-led momentum can go beyond the feed.**



## What's Breaking Through

### The Met Gala

The The Met Gala is quickly becoming a creator-driven moment, with influencers shaping the conversation both inside and outside the room. **Tapped by E!**, [@girlbosstown](#) brought her "couch review" to the Met for real-time reactions. Other creators are driving the narrative through outfit rankings & hot takes, as we watch commentary continue to unfold in the days ahead.

### Intern Season

Intern content is set to resurface with creators sharing DIML vlogs or commute routines that blend ambition & relatability. More importantly, interns bring a fresh, in-the-know lens, often **turning brand accounts into viral moments** through trend fluency and cultural awareness. Expect brands to tap in by featuring interns on their own channels or allowing them to completely takeover.

### Alix vs. Alex

Our reports usually veer from influencer drama, but when **the biggest players of social and podcast have the whole internet picking sides**, we need to keep people in the loop. After years of internet discourse, Alex Cooper has publicly called on Alix Earle to share her side of their Unwell fallout (watch [HERE](#)), so we're staying tuned for Earle's take; she's 'On it'!

# The New Meta Playbook

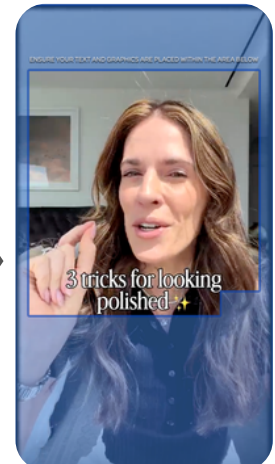
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## Meta Safe Zones Tool

Meta is turning best practices into built-in functionality with new safe zone overlay frames for Reels and Stories that show exactly where text and key visuals should live when content is boosted.

O/g creator [@emilykammeyer](#) made a real-time fix →

**Why It Matters:** It removes guesswork and streamlines workflows. Brands can now bake this directly into creator briefs, driving better alignment upfront, fewer revisions, and content that's optimized for paid before it even goes live.



## Carousel Posts

Instagram is doubling down on Carousels, now surfacing them in the Reels feed and rewarding swipeable content with extended reach.

**O/g's POV:** Carousels are becoming a stronger player in the content mix, reflecting how audiences are choosing to engage:

- *Storytelling > disruption:* Tutorials, photo dumps, and step-by-steps feel native and less interruptive
- *Perceived authenticity:* In fashion, home, and beauty, static has the opportunity to read as more real and less produced
- *Control + pacing:* Many users prefer to consume content on their own terms, driving stronger completion and engagement
- *Balance is key:* Don't fret, **video isn't gone**; the strongest strategies balance motion, storytelling and authentic formats

Carousels offer a native, intentional way for brands to show up, and should be a part of any high-performing *organic content mix*.

## Proof in Performance

*Don't believe us? Here's a quick look at an O/g client test where we put Reels vs. Carousels head-to-head.*

Test: Reels → Carousel swap

Result: Immediate lift across both creators

- Creator 1: +60% engagement | +16% ER
- Creator 2: +324% engagement | +133% ER

## The Rules of Audio

Remember last May when we called out the \$50M lawsuit around paid partnership disclosures? That scrutiny is expanding. Now, attention is shifting to how music is used in sponsored content.

**What Happened:** Quince, a global retailer, is facing a lawsuit from major record labels, including Universal, Sony, and Warner, over the alleged use of copyrighted music in influencer posts without proper licensing. The claim centers on creators using trending or popular audio in branded content, something that feels native to the platform, but may not be cleared for commercial use. As brands scale creator partnerships, this gray area is quickly becoming a legal flashpoint, with potential damages stacking quickly across multiple pieces of content.

**Why It Matters:** Creator content is no longer operating in a gray area. As influencer marketing becomes a core media channel, it's being held to the same standards as traditional advertising. What feels native, like trending audio, can carry real legal and financial implications. The risk now extends across brands, creators, and partners involved in distribution.

## O/g's Playbook

This isn't new for us, it's how we've always operated:

- **Contract-first Clarity:** Use of royalty-free music is required in all agreements, regardless of paid usage
- **Built into Briefs:** Direct links to TikTok and Meta's Commercial Music Libraries included every time
- **Pre-Approval Checks:** Creators must share song name + artist during review so we can cross-reference

# We are Change Makers

If you're seeking creator  
support, reach out!

[influencer@ovative.com](mailto:influencer@ovative.com)

NYC | CHI | *MPLS*