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MARKETING, OPINION

Chandan Bagwe | 7 hours ago

Beyond the follower count: When influence meets due diligence

The influencer economy is growing up—fast. For brand marketers, it's no longer about viral reach but strategic fit, risk control, and real consumer resonance, says C Com Digital founder.



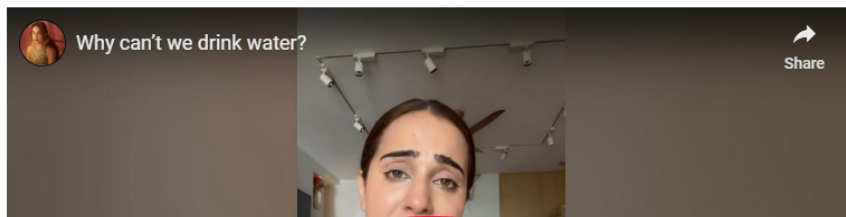
Influencer-actor Kusha Kapila's brand Underneat leverages her authenticity, community trust, and narrative control—turning her voice on body image into a consumer-driven business success.

Influencers are the new-age brand ambassadors. With millions of followers, hyper-personalised content, and loyal communities, they offer brands a shortcut to attention. But like all powerful tools, this comes with a catch. The influencer economy sits at a volatile intersection of personality, performance, and public perception. A single campaign can go viral or backfire.

Let's examine a successful example first. The Indian fashionista, social media personality and actress Kusha Kapila has come a long way from her sketch-comedy roots to becoming a household name. Her relatability and voice on social issues helped her cultivate a massive following.

Her latest venture, Underneat, a shapewear brand rooted in body positivity and practical design, is a prime example of how influencer-led businesses can succeed when built on authentic values. Recently backed by Fireside Ventures and Mamaearth's Ghazal Alagh, the brand shows that Kusha's credibility goes beyond content; she influences purchase decisions.

What has worked? Authenticity, community trust, and narrative control proved the decisive factors behind Kusha's success. She has long championed conversations around body image, making Underneat a natural progression of her narrative. Her followers don't just consume her content; they connect with her message. She steers the story, shaping the mission and defining how it reaches the market.



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Given these realities, how should brands work with influencers? Influencers are individuals with platforms. The key is for brands to partner with them strategically instead of shying away entirely.

Let's explore a possible roadmap. Do a deep dive to start with. Beyond follower count, assess past behaviour, values, audience sentiment, and tone. Focus on fit. Choose influencers whose content naturally aligns with your brand message.

Authenticity cannot be faked. Assess the potential risks involved. Use social listening tools to analyse whether the influencer is prone to controversy.

Prevention is cheaper than crisis management. Create ambassador programmes that allow for gradual audience relationship-building. Don't rely on one influencer; rather, diversify. Spread the budget across macro, micro, and niche creators.

By prioritising due diligence, authenticity, risk mitigation, long-term vision, and diversification, brands can harness the true power of influence to participate in and lead the conversation, taking their presence and impact to new heights.

Influencer marketing is maturing. The glitz of viral fame gives way to a demand for substance, values, and consistency. The era of simply chasing follower counts is over; strategic alignment, genuine resonance, and measurable impact are important. Brands that recognize this shift and work with influencers as long-term partners will win the attention and the trust of consumers in the present and future.



-- Chandan Bagwe, founder and director of C Com Digital.

Source: *Campaign India*

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