

CRED- Reinventing the Art of Branding

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When Zeenat Aman debuted on Instagram, everyone received her with open arms. With her grace and dignity, she soon earned an enviable 402000 followers (21st August, 2023). As expected, she was flooded with offers for partnerships and collaborations. Between the ones she selected, one choice stunned many. She posted an ad that she had shot for the fintech company, CRED. The company is well-known for its tongue-in-cheek ads and its own brand of self-deprecating humour that many may find offensive. With Zeenat Aman joining the league of Bappi Lahiri and Madhuri Dixit, the brand again captured the attention of its consumers.

Background

CRED is a fintech company that was started in 2018 and was branded as an exclusive club for people with a CIBIL score of 750 and above. It enables credit card users to pay their bills through its app and gets exclusive offers and discounts. Recently, it has also added features like rent payment, CRED cash, loans and discount coupons. It is a members-only club that encourages people for paying their bills on time and giving its users access to premium products. It has an AI-backed system that tracks every aspect of credit usage right from bill payment reminders, spends and other credit card usage statistics. And in return of this financial discipline, CRED rewards its users with attractive rewards from well-known brands.

There are multiple benefits of using CRED. It provides a one-stop platform for paying credit card bills online. The rewards for paying the card is in the form of CRED coins that the user can redeem to avail the various discounts and rewards on the platform. One can also track the payment history of all the cards and get multiple reminders to pay the bill on time.

The Business Model of CRED

CRED was founded by Kunal Shah in 2018. He has done his graduation from Wilson College and MBA from Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS). His first venture was PaisaBack with Sandeep Tandon that provided offers, cashbacks and coupons on purchases made by users. In 2010, they closed down PaisaBack and started FreeCharge that was acquired in 2015 by SnapDeal. FreeCharge was acquired by Axis Bank in 2017 and he left it and started CRED in April, 2018.

CRED became a unicorn in 2020. Businesses listed on CRED store offer their products on discount and exclusive offers to its users. The businesses pay a fee for getting listed and get access to 7.5 million customers of CRED. It uses the payment data to create a database of customers who might be interested in buying their products. CRED shares this information for a fee.

CRED became a Unicorn within a span of 2 years. It received funding of \$ 251 million from Falcon Edge Capital and Tiger Global. The e-series round of funding of CRED had other investors, namely, Marshall Wace, DST Global, Steadfast Venture Capital, Insight Partners, Sofina, Coatue Management LLP, Dragoneer and RTP. But inspite of investments, the company has been posting huge losses. In the last financial year 2022-23, CRED has reported a loss of Rs. 1280 crore. CRED has spent around Rs 975.8 crore on marketing and promotions that totals to 57.3% of the total expenses.

But it has also contributed around 1.5% of all UPI transaction volume in India and spent Rs. 158.6 crore on Payment Gateway charges. In January 2023, CRED emerged as the third largest Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS) agent institution. The BBPS is a RBI mandated system that offers “integrated and inter-operable bill payment services to customers across geographies with certainty, reliability and safety transactions.” This indicates that more and more users are using CRED to pay their mobile, electricity and other bills. CRED came third after Google Pay and Amazon.

CRED’s Branding and Advertising Strategy

CRED has been in the limelight for its ads that have its own brand of humour. It became a social media sensation when it released its advertisement featuring Rahul Dravid calling himself “Indiranagar ka Gunda.” This advertisement along with one featuring Jackie Shroff were released during the early days of Indian Premium League (IPL) in 2021.

Since then many celebrities have signed up for advertisements for CRED. An entire campaign comprised of yesteryear celebrities like Govinda, Madhuri Dixit, Udit Narayan, Alka Yagnik, Bappi Lahiri and others. These celebrities along with others enact an audition for CRED and each one of them get rejected. What caught the attention of the viewers was the ease with which the celebrities made fun of themselves on the screen.



CRED advertisements featuring Anil Kapoor, Madhuri Dixit, Bappi Lahiri and Rahul Dravid

The advertisements have been conceptualized and written by a team that was specially brought together by CRED. It had an agency to create the advertisements but the choice of writers included people who were earlier associated with All India Bakchod (AIB). The writers included Tanmay Bhat, Puneet Chadha, Vishal Dayama, Devaiah Bopanna and Nupur Pai. Many of them are trained media professionals with experience of working in the ad industry. The group ascribes its success to the free hand given to them by CRED.

This group that is so adapt in making content viral on social media, made advertisements that became instant online sensations. The main attraction was the importance given to the company more than celebrities. It also made it very obvious that entry to the CRED club was not for everyone. Not even a celebrity. There was another series of advertisements where famous sports personalities were enacted an audition and then later asked to read lines from a paper. It gave the message that no person is more important than the brand and hence they just had to read the lines about CRED and not do anything else.

Marketing and advertising experts are now debating on whether this brand of humour will continue to stay. While the initial reactions of the audience is good, there are people who feel that an organization that is dealing with sensitive financial information of people should come across as more serious. The fun image is not for an organization dealing with such serious business.

On the other hand, there are experts who feel that it is time for the advertising industry to try something new. Meme marketing and content marketing are the easiest way to go viral nowadays. It seems that virality is one of the objectives of CRED's strategy and so they have discarded the common practice of having an advertisement agency and instead have their own team of writers and only the execution of the advertisement is being done by the agency. The target group of CRED are the up market urban audience and the flavor of the humour is also of that kind. However, the experts are now waiting for the writers' team to come up with advertisements with emotional appeal other than humour. They feel that the former AIB team is an expert on humorous content. They have never ventured into other territories. Hence, it will be difficult for them to catch the attention of the audience once they get tired of their brand of humour.

CRED came up with another innovative print ad campaign where their advertisements would appear in the newspapers in the form of classified ads, matrimonial ads, product listings and in some cases, as apologies.

JOB VACANCY	FLAT FOR RENT	ANNOUNCEMENT
<p>This is Pravinbhai Sudani, need an instructor to teach me riding a bike. He must be polite cuz if I wanted to be humiliated I would've asked my dad to teach me. He shouldn't be a Gemini as they are irresponsible. Also if he loves anime we can discuss Naruto. My bike is Jawa Bobber</p> <p>Don't ask for unreal money as I won it by playing bidblast on the CRED store</p>	<p>A fully furnished 3 bhk flat in Pune (peaceful society). The tenant must not be an Andrew Tate fan. Must be popular on IG as the house deserves to be flexed. The rent is negotiable as the owner i.e. me, Rahul Srivastava is on a trip to Krabi and Phuket which I won by playing bidblast on CRED store, and decided to stay for a little longer. There are 10 cute street dogs in the society, if you don't love dogs then this ad is not for you!</p>	<p>this is to inform everyone that I Don Joseph has managed to beat the odds and won the bounce infinity electric scooter by playing bidblast on CRED store.</p> <p>I want to thank me and the only person who believed in me, which is me again.</p>

CRED advertisements in newspapers

The special feature of the advertisement is that they did not look like one and the only common thing between the ads were that they all mentioned CRED. The audience liked it immensely and shared pictures and screenshots on social media and Whatsapp. Through the advertisements, CRED was trying to promote its product BidBlast, a game where the bidder with the lowest and unique bid wins.

This campaign was conceptualized and created by Deepak Kumar along with his team at Youngun. This became a perfect example of meme marketing which turned out to be an effective method of both educating and entertaining young people. The positioning of these advertisements are in within classified ad sections of newspaper and are not very visible to the reader. But once, someone reads the copy, they will understand and appreciate the humour. It is a perfect example of subversive advertisement.

ON MATHURA COURT ORDER FOR

19-yr-old Ker woman caught smuggling gold worth ₹1cr

Kozhikode: Police stopped a teenager outside Calicut Airport on Monday and, after physical search, seized Rs 1 crore worth of gold compound concealed in her innerwear. She was arrested. Police recovered one pack of gold compound from the panty and two packs from her bra. **TNN**

CBI lens on working sa

Plaint Filed By Health Dept, 73 Under Scanner

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New Delhi: On a complaint filed by the health ministry, the CBI has initiated a probe to ascertain how dozens of foreign medical graduates allegedly got themselves registered with the state medical council (SMCs) or Medical Council of India (MCI) without qualifying the foreign medical graduate examination (FMGE). At least 73 such candidates, who studied medicine in different countries, are under the scanner, sources said adding that many of these candidates studied in Russia, Ukraine and China between 2011 and 2022.

An FIR under sections of prevention of corruption act apart from IPC sections pertaining to criminal conspiracy, cheating and forgery has been registered.

IPHONE 13 FOR SALE

I'm Venkat Manne, selling my iPhone 13. Buyer must have these qualities

- he/she/they/it should always flex apple logo,
- ready to fight when someone calls 'iPhone' just 'phone',
- brings 'iPhone' in every conversation,
- can throw shade on android users anytime.

reason for selling: I won an iPhone 14 by playing bidblast on CRED store

contact
venkat.dontreachout@gmail.com

TIMES interact

Connecting People, Connecting Needs.

business

BUSINESS PROPOSALS

INVITING Developers/ Builders For Redevelopment Shradha CHS Ltd Amrut Nagar, Ghatkopar(W) Mumbai - 400086, CTS. 26, Plot 133, 134 Contact : 9920555133/ 9224207696

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ADMISSION FOR 2022-23
B.P.Th PHYSIOTHERAPY & Basic B. Sc. NURSING
Institutional Quota (including NRI and OMS)

Applications are invited from candidates who have appeared for NEET UG- 2022 and are desirous of taking admission under institutional quota (including NRI and OMS) for admission to B.P.Th in Physiotherapy and B.Sc. Nursing

Picture of a CRED advertisement in a newspaper

Future Challenges

CRED has been very successful in creating a buzz on social media by creating advertisements with its own brand of cheeky humour. One might attribute its more than one crore installations of CRED app to the advertisements. But the company is yet to post any profit. The market experts are hence looking forward to see if these increasing installations is actually going to lead the company towards profits. Another challenge for CRED will be to maintain the buzz that its advertisements have created till date. Will humour always work for them? Will the team be able to deliver consistently? What will happen when they have to steer away from humour and move to other emotions?

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