

Essentials of Viral Marketing: a Case Study of Rahul David's Cred Advertisement

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ABSTRACT

Viral marketing is among the few strategies that can produce tremendous growth in a short span of time. It makes use of the fact that people with strong social ties utilize their cell phones, tablets, laptops, etc. to connect with one another online. This presents a chance for businesses to draw in and entice clients with a persuasive message or communication that can instantly and swiftly spread to a sizable group of individuals with a cascading impact. In the world of social media, it becomes easy for people to spread information through various social media platforms. Hence, it becomes crucial to understand the various elements that add to the virality of an advertising campaign. In this study, we conducted a systematic literature review and analyzed the various elements that triggered the virality of a popular advertisement of CRED that featured Rahul Dravid in 2021. Further, it was observed that creating contagious content and adding an element of surprise that appeals to the emotions and feelings of their target audience is the key to a successful advertisement campaign. The results of this research will assist brands in crafting more impactful advertising campaigns, ultimately fostering brand awareness and establishing credibility.

Keywords: Viral Marketing, Advertisements, Social Media, Virality

I. INTRODUCTION

Due to the widespread use of Internet channels, online advertising is consistently expanding while marketing through conventional channels like television, radio, or print media is declining. The belief that information spread like viruses has been linked to the development of "viral marketing" as an advertising strategy. Memetics, the field that evolved around this idea, reached its height of prominence in the 1990s. The concept is that if a "responsive" person sees such an advertisement, they will become "infected" (i.e., embrace the notion) and spread it to other people,

"infecting them too". Information sharing has greatly changed as a result of this kind of transition, particularly in terms of speed and reach. Porter and Golan (2006) employ the term "viral advertising" to describe the organic, unpaid dissemination of provocative content among peers. The objective of such content is to stimulate users to share it, thereby facilitating its widespread circulation across the Internet. Viral Marketing (VM) encourages consumers to use their current social networks and communicate information such as product specs, upgrades, campaigns, etc. with their friends via email or other social media. It is sometimes referred to as Internet Word-of-Mouth marketing. R.F. Wilson (2000). The dynamics of communication have changed to new levels of involvement with the emergence of social media. It has grown in popularity over the past several years among people and corporate organizations all over the world. According to Global Statistics 2022, the count of Internet users in India has surged to an impressive 658 million, encompassing approximately 47% of India's entire population. Social media is widely used today. With the help of social media platforms, people share information that they find useful and appealing. Hence, it becomes important for brands to know the elements of ad campaigns that appeal to the audience and can trigger virality. There are numerous popular social media platforms where users can readily access a wide range of information, spanning global news, arts, and lifestyle recommendations, as well as product research and purchasing options.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Viral Marketing: A Game Changer

The term "viral" denotes a marketing strategy in which promotional messages are transmitted from one customer to another, much like how the flu virus spreads. This method, known as viral marketing, is highly effective for enhancing brand recognition as it enables customers to disseminate product details within their social

circles.Palka, W., et al (2009).A video, picture, tweet, or another piece of material that spreads like wildfire online is known as viral content. The same idea is what viral marketing attempts to apply to brand promotion. The term "viral" describes how quickly such content travels from user to user on the Internet. The promotion strategy mainly relies on users willingly disseminating material that has the potential to go viral. VM occurs when members of your target market or customers willingly share, disseminate, or discuss your goods, services, or brand. (Sahakiyan, 2022) Word of mouth plays a major role in spreading information. Customers who use a product or service effectively take on the role of unpaid salespeople for the company. They don't think twice about telling their friends and relatives about this brand-new solution. Viral marketing relies on social media to "pull" people to the marketing content as opposed to "pushing" an advertisement message to the customer through conventional means, which is how it differs from traditional advertising. Thus, viral marketing is dependent on the natural process of drawing customers to the marketing material through social media sharing (Quesenberry & Coolsen, 2019)

Today, content is the acknowledged money on the internet, which serves as the global marketplace. It's how brands communicate with their audience in order to inform, educate, or amuse them. Online viral exposure can increase your impressions and engagement on social media platforms in addition to giving your brand fantastic brand exposure. Additionally, it might create a favourable reputation that can ultimately improve the bottom line. Hence, it becomes important to understand the various elements that can boost virality. According to Reichstein & Bruschi (2019)Marketing tactics that enable exponential spread of content across network-based channels in the quickest time with relatively little effort as well as demonstrable added value generation through the content are known as viral marketing. This has a high cost-benefit ratio.

There are six elements suggested by Jonah Berger that can fuel virality. All six STEPPS have been analyzed in the book *Contagious: Why Things Catch On*.

Social currency - states that people are more willing to share things that make them feel good about themselves. People strive to be noticed. They distribute material because it makes them feel recognized. Which gives them a sophisticated, cool, or enthusiastic air? They disseminate information that enables them to rise in the eyes of their fellow students. Therefore, if you can provide your customers with a reason to feel special about

particular features of your items, they are more inclined to tell others about you.

Triggers- A trigger, whether it's a word, phrase, or image linked to a message, serves as a connection point. Ultimately, a trigger is anything that prompts your audience to contemplate your service or brand. Triggers are often related to what's currently occupying your audience's thoughts, forging a connection to the narrative. People are more predisposed to discuss topics currently on their minds, driven by the notion that if something is presently relevant, it becomes a frequent topic of conversation.

Emotion- When we feel something, we share it. When viewers are interested in and care about the information, they become emotionally touched. Happiness, excitement, awe, interest, thankfulness, and other good emotions are more likely to influence a decision to evaluate something positive than negative emotions like wrath, despair, and jealousy. It suggests that our attitudes toward things are genuinely influenced by our emotions. Therefore, to achieve virality for your product, focus on evoking the most potent emotions that inspire people to take action.

Public - People are more inclined to copy something if it is more visible to them. Visible and accessible information can serve as a barometer of quality. The more people see it, the more likely they are to remember it and tell their friends about it. In terms of the extensive web of Internet connections, showing is fairly simple. The method of spreading, however, appears to be fairly difficult because you cannot force people to decide whether or not to tell their friends about it. They will choose this on their own.

Practical value- Ensure that the information is both practical and actionable. People share knowledge with the intention of helping others, so it's essential for content to be relevant, information-packed, and aligned with your audience's interests or challenges.

Stories- The key to successful content marketing lies in compelling storytelling. Stories possess the ability to shape our thoughts and emotions, making information most absorbable when woven into a narrative.

Viral marketing stands out as a crucial and highly effective marketing strategy. The rise of social media has amplified the impact of viral marketing campaigns, making them cost-efficient and enabling rapid access to their intended audience. Utilizing video-sharing portals, such as video-sharing websites, allows for the creation of viral marketing videos, which are free types of advertising. This approach has grown rapidly, and

it now provides considerable potential to reach a wide audience. Social media networks have been cited as a tool for marketers to communicate with customers about content connected to their brands, with customers occasionally acting as marketers by distributing branded messaging contagiously on their own. Sheehan, K. B., & Morrison, D. K. (2009). Over the past few years, the emphasis in Internet marketing has shifted from "paid" media, in which a company invests in brand promotion, to "earned" media, where customers serve as the conduits for delivery. (Corcoran, 2009). Customers and followers can influence the brand image and alter other consumers' perceptions of it thanks to

the broad reach of WOM (word-of-mouth) on social media platforms, which has a long-lasting and regional impact (Laureano et al., 2018).

Additionally, another strategy for brands to promote their goods and improve productivity is through viral marketing on social media networks. Kanapathipillai, K., & Kumaran, S. (2022). One of the active strategies employed by businesses to maximize their social media presence is viral video advertising. In order to boost content consumption, brand exposure, and engagement, marketers try to create videos that inspire viewers to interact with them by sharing, commenting, and liking them.

Factors contributing to the Virality of an advertisement

Factors	Statement	References
Content characteristics	<p>Positive content becomes more viral than negative content.</p> <p>Positive messages reach wider audiences than negative ones, but negative ones spread more quickly.</p> <p>Important determinants: length of the title, runtime, humour, surprise, irony, the presence of minorities, the caliber of the music, the presence of young people, and talent.</p> <p>The relevance of video content is an important factor that people consider before sharing information.</p> <p>Topical content like news and political opinion circulates more swiftly than non-topical content like entertainment and music.</p>	<p>Berger, J., & Milkman, K. (2010); Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2013).</p> <p>Miquel-Romero, M. J., & Adame-Sánchez, C. (2013); Elnoshokaty, A., et al; Rawi, A. A. (2017); Tellis et al (2019); Ehlers, L., & Van Schalkwyk, S. (2021); Kaur, B., (2022); Dubal, R., & Bhatia, H. (2022); Berger, Ferrara, E., & Yang, Z. (2015).</p> <p>West, T. (2017).</p> <p>Botha, E.M., & Reyneke, M. (2013)</p>
Surprise element	An element of surprise motivates people to spread a message.	Lindgreen, A., & Vanhamme, J. (2005); Dafonte-Gómez, A. (2014). Knossenburg, Y.L., et al. (2016)
Emotions	<p>Positive emotions trigger sharing of online content.</p> <p>Online content can go viral if the post has a strong emotional connection with its audience.</p> <p>More people share content that</p>	<p>Nikolinakou, A., & King, K. W. (2018).</p> <p>Berger and Milkman's (2012)</p> <p>Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L.</p>

	causes strong emotions, such as amazement, rage, or anxiety. Element of surprise and joy are vital for making videos viral	(2013). Dafonte-Gómez, A. (2014).
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The CRED advertisement and its viral ingredients:

CRED is a unicorn firm with its headquarters in India. The company was established in 2018 and is headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The major features of this platform are awards for users and the ability to pay credit card bills via a mobile application. The business is highly known for its innovative and imaginative advertising. The CRED’s commercial (2021) featuring Rahul Dravid gained widespread attention and became viral within hours of posting it online. In this study, the researcher conducts a systematic review and analyzes the various elements of the advertisement that boosted its virality.

On April 9, the video was posted to social media and within an hour had amassed a million views. The ad begins with Jim Sarbh, saying that CRED gives CRED coins when credit card bills are paid. Additionally, he claims that users of this network can redeem CRED coins for cashback and prizes. The actor continues by claiming that it is absurd to compare Rahul Dravid's rage issues to this. Rahul Dravid loses his cool while driving in the following frame. The former Indian cricket team captain is seen becoming aggressive in CRED’S commercial as a result of the Bengaluru–Indiranagar gridlock. One of Bengaluru's major districts, Indiranagar is well-known for its heavy traffic. Along with being the location of CRED's headquarters, it is also where Rahul Dravid grew up and the neighbourhood where he now resides. Rahul Dravid is seen to lose his cool in the

advertisement, and he turns violent. He behaves erratically and throws coffee before using his cricket bat to smash the rear-view mirror. He exclaims that "Indiranagar ka Gunda" has the audience's attention.

There are many reasons why advertisements become popular online. Firstly, there was an element of surprise and definitely shock for some as the ad showed an entirely different side of the cricketer, that no one has ever imagined. The content of the ad was such that the audience cannot easily forget for years to come. The primary factor in the first acclaim this advertisement received was how it subverts public perceptions of Rahul Dravid and expectations. Rahul Dravid is also known as "The Wall" and "Mr. Dependable." That ought to give you a decent notion of how the man has created and maintained an image of being cool, composed, and collected, of being the good man amid the storm, of remaining courteous and polished in the face of taunts and teasing. Active emotions, whether they be positive ones like laughter or surprise and negative ones like rage or panic, are crucial components in creating viral commercials, as any good advertiser will tell you. Mashelkar, (2021) It appears to be a simple advertisement at first glance. a man becoming impatient with the traffic. But if you stop to think about it, it's also a well-known hero who, in response to a tiny discomfort, normalizes violence, destroys property, and threatens other people who are also the victims of the same problem but who, it must be said, are handling it much better than he is.



Then, there was the element of relatability. The urban, affluent crowd that uses credit cards is the target market. As it happens, this is the precise audience that resides in India's metropolises and is familiar with the arduous commutes that take an average of close to an hour (one-way). The advertisement punched them right in the feels, reminding them that despite being globally connected and tech-savvy, they still have to deal with the annoyances of daily life in a developing nation. Mashelkar, P. M. (2021).

III. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATION:

It has been rightly said by Jeff Bezos (CEO of Amazon.com.) "If you make customers unhappy in the physical world, they might each tell 6 friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends." In the present scenario, where technology is so advanced that everything can be made available in just a single click, companies need to be cautious of what, how, and when they are serving their customers. A single negative e-word of mouth can spread like fire on online platforms and can result in a negative image of the company or a brand. Brands need to be cautious while designing their marketing campaign as with the increasing popularity of social media platforms it takes seconds to spread any information worldwide. The findings from previous research on viral marketing suggest that there are various elements that altogether trigger the virality of information among which content characteristics and emotions play a vital role. Marketers and researchers need to understand the variables that affect how information goes viral. Researchers who seek to study the factors that cause virality will find this study to be helpful. For instance, the marketing industry can create its campaign based on the findings.

IV. CONCLUSION:

More information is going viral as technology develops and social media's fame grows. As a result, the spread of internet material raises genuine concerns, making its identification difficult. Identifying the elements influencing the popularity of information is crucial. The subject of online virality is investigated through a study of existing literature, which offers an overview of pertinent elements. The results of the literature research show that there are a number of elements that contribute to information spreading quickly. Evidence suggests that the most important factors are emotions and content features. In this, the

researcher analyzed the various factors that lead to the popularity of CRED ad. The most important factor that triggered the virality of this ad was the element of surprise. Marketers and researchers need to understand the variables that affect how information goes viral. Researchers who seek to study the factors that cause virality will find this study to be helpful. For instance, the marketing industry can create its campaign based on the findings.

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