

## Datsun redi-GO: India's first car election campaign

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Entry-level car Datsun redi-GO achieved lifts in brand awareness and perception in India with a bold campaign that pitted it against its competition.

- New car brand Datsun redi-GO was struggling due to low awareness and the dominance of long-established competitor Maruti Suzuki Alto.
- Datsun decided to target Risers – Indians who did not play by the rules and challenged cultural constructs to reach their life goals – positioning itself as the rebel and Alto as a car people chose by inertia.
- The #VOTEFORCHANGE campaign mimicked the phases of an election campaign, asking people to vote for either Datsun or Alto, through TV, online films, influencer programmes, polls on Twitter and Facebook, and at dealerships.
- Awareness of Datsun redi-GO went up from 39.2% to 48.5% and sales increased by 21%, leading to the brand obtaining a 7.7% share of the category.

### Campaign details

**Agency:** TBWA\India

**Brand:** Datsun redi-GO

**Brand owner:** Datsun

**Market:** India

### Executive Summary

As a new and unknown entry-level car brand in India, Datsun redi-GO needed a compelling voice, given that its competition was a well-established leader with over 30 years of dominance in the automotive category. We decided to connect with Young Risers with the self-belief to not accept the world the way it is. To motivate this audience, the campaign showed the middle finger to the codes of auto industry advertising. Instead, it instigated them to #VOTEFORCHANGE by initiating the world's first ever car election campaign.

# Market Background

## Maruti Suzuki Alto – The big daddy of the entry-level car category in India

In India, 'a small car' equals 'Maruti Suzuki Alto'. Maruti has dominated the entry-level car category for three and a half decades and with two extremely successful brands: Maruti Suzuki 800 (now discontinued) and Maruti Suzuki Alto (launched in 2000). For years now, Maruti Suzuki Alto has defined the category.

Maruti Suzuki Alto is seen as the safe, familiar, trusted car brand for families on a limited budget. As the first car of any Indian household, Alto was also deeply entrenched as the first significant symbol of progress and upward movement in society, apart from being the medium of mobility, freedom and personal space outside of home.

Even in early 2017, Maruti Suzuki Alto commanded an overwhelming 60%<sup>2</sup> category share. Other smaller brands like Hyundai EON and Renault Kwid are fighting for their turf too.

## Datsun redi-GO – The newest kid on the block which was yet to make its dent in India

For Datsun redi-GO, a new car brand, competing in a big and complex entry-level car market like India was not going to be easy. Especially against a way more established competitor such as Maruti Suzuki Alto.

Datsun redi-GO was yet to complete a year in India and Datsun's future fortunes in India depended on its success (as it was the company's leading model in the country). However, consumer indifference towards Datsun redi-GO was clearly visible in the low spontaneous awareness score<sup>1</sup>, which also reflected in its sales volumes and category share. Datsun redi-GO's retail sales stood at 1845 cars<sup>3</sup> and its category share was 4%<sup>2</sup> in May 2017.

That was a perfect storm to be in, and therefore, it was extremely critical for Datsun redi-GO to show a considerable movement on both brand and sales metrics.

## Target audience

**Datsun is a brand for Risers, those who are looking to change their social and economic orbit in life – from a small town to a state capital to a metro city.** They show the middle finger to what they do not agree with, and wink back at the world. Even the entry-level car they buy needs to be as unconventional as them.

**The Indian milieu of today supports the challenging, questioning and rule-bending behaviour of the Risers.** As a society, we are less likely to adhere to directions from above and like to have a say in how we do things (unlike, for example, the Chinese society).

**We call our Risers 'The Sharp-Witted Dissenters', who poke fun at purposeless rituals to create change.** They use satire as an intellectual instrument for social commentary. They criticise and have fun at the same time. Instead of arguing, they open people's minds to ideas which they might otherwise reject. E.g. stand-up comedians, talk-show hosts and films like '3 Idiots' (a satire on engineering fanaticism).

## Objectives

When you have a great car but the brand's size and awareness hinder its success, it is important to alter some codes in the category. Fighting Maruti Suzuki Alto, the most mainstream car brand with the most mainstream strategies, would have cost an arm and a leg for Datsun redi-GO. We needed to overcome the high degree of difficulty with the quality of active choices.

- **Rain on Alto's parade to create conversations around Datsun redi-GO**

Surprise entry-level car consumers through provocative messaging in an extremely buzz-worthy manner, deploying digital-first thinking actively, so that Datsun redi-GO breaks into the conversation set of entry-level car buyers.

- KPIs: overall brand awareness, spontaneous brand awareness, brand engagement and other social media metrics.

- **Build an active intention to purchase**

Get entry-level car buyers to go and check out Datsun redi-GO as a compelling option beyond Maruti Suzuki Alto.

- KPIs: enquiries, test drive delta

- **Improve share in the category**

Create a real impact on Datsun redi-GO's share in the category.

- KPI: category share delta

## Insight and strategic idea

**Insight:** All of us secretly desire change, but negate it with our rational minds. What if the same rational mind helped us actively choose change?

When compared to Datsun redi-GO, Maruti Suzuki Alto is an outdated car platform, and it loses against us on most counts like technology, interior space, ground clearance, suspension, power, exterior styling etc. However India's entry-level car consumers were not choosing for themselves, but were rather driven by what others were buying or how the previous generation bought cars in India. Continuing to choose Alto was clearly a sign of strong inertia in the segment and their rationalisation of the inertia.

**Idea:** Say 'no' to the most 'yes car' of India.

## Execution

Instead of just another advertising campaign, we created India's first car election campaign. Our #VOTEFORCHANGE campaign showed the middle finger to Maruti Suzuki Alto and to every code of small-car advertising in India.

'Election in India' is the strongest metaphor for the 'power to change what is not acceptable' and in turn choose something that is new, modern and progressive. Why do Indian brands usually shy away from the theme of elections, whereas the news and debating culture feeds off it in a big way? Maybe that's what the term 'being politically correct' means, but we had different plans.

Datsun redi-GO decided to harness the evocative power of elections, which cuts through geographical, cultural, linguistic, ethnic and religious barriers, and invites people to come out in the open and participate in a process of change. The moment of change arrived in the Indian small-car segment and car buyers were exhorted to exercise their choice and #VOTEFORCHANGE.

Our campaign mimicked the phases of an election campaign. It featured six TVCs and seven web films, influencer programmes, opinion polls, YouTube innovations, NDTV content hub, opinion polls on Twitter and Facebook, polling booths at dealerships and Datsun Experience Zones.

## **Phase 1**

We provoked the issues of entry-level cars and build opinion in an unbranded phase (using digital videos on social media channels like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube).

A protest against issues such as obsolete technology, poor ground clearance, power and insufficient space in the ordinary car was captured live on Datsun redi-GO's news channel and delivered by the most famous news anchor Arnab Goswami's, who was dubbed redi-GOSwami. Simultaneously, Twitter and Facebook polls were conducted about the change people wanted in their life.

## **Phase 2**

We launched the Datsun Party, its election symbol and manifesto (an integrated campaign comprised of TV, press, radio, digital media, dealership activity and BTL).

With a spoof on Narendra Modi's signature demeanour, the Datsun Party was launched, with redi-GO as its candidate in a press conference. This phase also saw the spoofing of other famous politicians such Mamata Banerjee, Lalu Prasad Yadav and even Baba Ramdev, supporting our candidate and asking viewers to #VOTEFORCHANGE.

## **Phase 3**

Datsun redi-GO, the candidate, drove through the streets to encourage people to vote for change.

Ground activations at Datsun Experience Zones were carried out in 250<sup>1</sup> satellite cities from the Taluka level and above, travelling through the cities and villages to promote the call of 'Car Lao, Becar Nahin', meaning 'Get a car, not a becar (useless)', and again boldly asked them to #VOTEFORCHANGE.

## **Phase 4**

We launched a digital video where viewers voted for the candidates, namely 'car' (Datsun redi-GO) and 'becar' (Alto). The subsequent TV film and digital videos showcased the victory of Datsun as the new leader through redi-GOSwami's coverage of the event.

## **Phase 5**

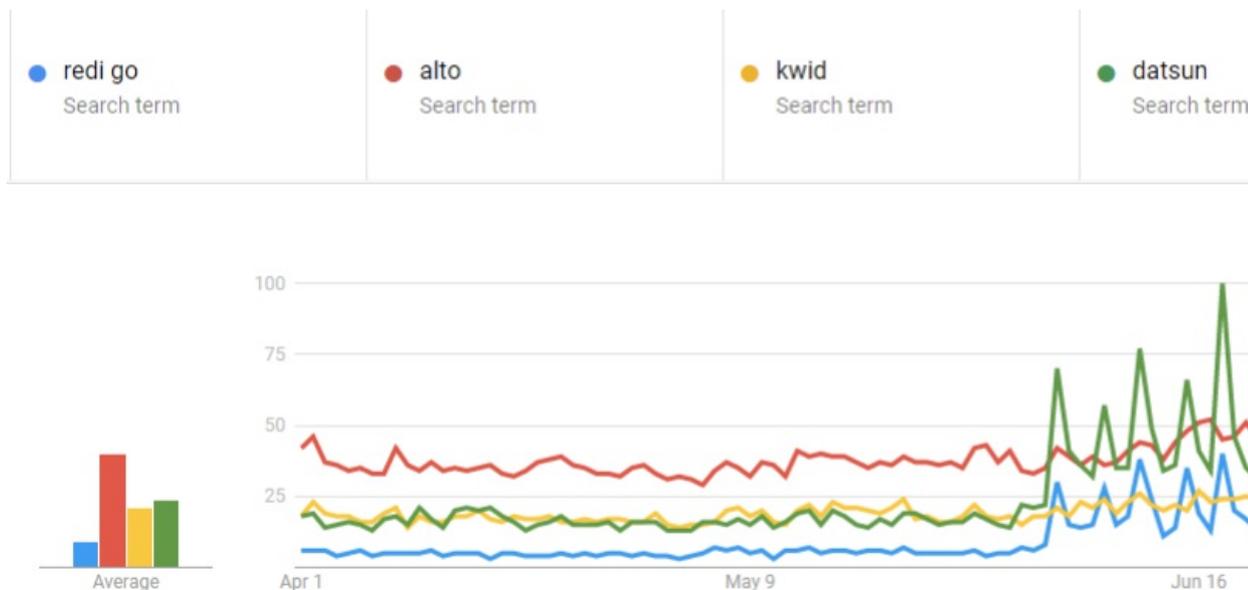
We delivered on our promises with the launch of the powerful 1.0 Litre Datsun redi-GO.

## Results

The audaciousness of the campaign re-introduced Datsun to the first-time car buyer with the bang redi-GO needed. It was phenomenally engaging and led to a shift in brand perception, producing never-before-seen results in the history of Datsun in India. It also earned a Bronze at the 2018 APAC Effie Awards.

### Brand awareness and customer engagement

- Customer engagement and conversations
  - Engagement improved to 22.3 million<sup>7</sup> (against the target of 3.2 million)
  - Conversations volume went up by 524%<sup>6</sup>, SRS rose by 14%<sup>2</sup>
  - Influencers like Virender Sehwag, Tanmay Bhat (AIB) and Sorabh Pant, helped Datsun redi-GO reach 9.87 million<sup>8</sup> people within just 24 hours of launch
  - Twitter opinion polls generated over 20,000<sup>8</sup> votes for Datsun redi-GO
  - The number of subscribers to Datsun's YouTube channel increased by 200%<sup>9</sup>
  - Monthly website visits improved to 1.3m<sup>5</sup> (21% increase against target)
  - Brochure downloads improved from 35,857 to 51,621<sup>5</sup> during the campaign
  - Our victory video featured in the Top 10<sup>10</sup> YouTube Ad Leader Board
- Steep rise in Datsun redi-GO awareness
  - 33.1<sup>7</sup> million video views on Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (against a target of 17.5 million)
  - Awareness went up to 48.5% from 39.2%<sup>1</sup> post campaign and spontaneous awareness improved from 3.6% to 5%<sup>1</sup> (supported by a reach-based media plan)
  - Digitally, Datsun experienced a growth of 13%<sup>2</sup> in share of voice



*Upsurge in organic Google searches during the campaign<sup>11</sup>*

### Build an active intention to purchase

- Enquiries, walk-ins and test drives

- Datsun redi-GO garnered more than 54,800<sup>3</sup> enquiries in the month of June (an additional 113%<sup>3</sup> over May 2017 and 1,39,299<sup>3</sup> in a period of three months – 57% delta in average monthly enquiries)
- A 107%<sup>3</sup> spike in walk-ins at the showrooms compared to the previous month
- Average monthly test drives increased to 10,936<sup>3</sup> for the three months, June 2017 to August 2017, compared to 4,300<sup>3</sup> in May 2017
- The Datsun Experience Zones led to 16,410<sup>12</sup> enquiries between June and September with 250<sup>12</sup> on-the-spot bookings

## Improve share in the category

- Impact on category share
  - 21%<sup>3</sup> increase in redi-GO sales
  - Category share rose to 7.7%<sup>4</sup> in a collective period from June 2017 to August 2017, from 4%<sup>4</sup> in May 2017
  - Maruti Alto's sales dipped along with all other brands in the category (Alto, Eon and Kwid)<sup>4</sup>

## Sources

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