



IMPACT OF MEMES ON ONLINE BRAND PROMOTION

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Abstract

This work aims at understanding the effects that memes have on brand awareness and involvement, with emphasis on engagement, recall and the evoked emotions. The study employs both quantitative and qualitative data; social media campaign engagement data and focus group discussions as well as interviews. The study shows that meme promotion is a more effective campaign type than typical advertising methods, which garner higher interaction rates and higher recall value. Memes help to build better emotional bonds with audiences, especially with young, digital natives as brands feel more approachable and REAL. However, the study indicates that there are so many risks of launching humor into an organization that include; The risks of being culturally sensitive and the probable risk of jeopardizing professionalism all in the name of humor. This paper demonstrates the use of memes as useful in fashion and entertainment industries while at the same time has informed that it should be used cautiously and in industries such as finance and healthcare.

Keywords: Social Media Advertising, Promoting Brands, Public Relations, Recalling Brands & Business, Emotions, Social Media Advertisement, Advertising, Marketing Effectiveness, Cultural Marketing

Introduction

There is one issue that is characteristic of the digital marketing environment – companies are always looking for new ways to engage the audience in an increasingly noisy environment. Another up-and-coming marketing strategy that has received much awareness and-interest is the use of memes for marketing brands. Memes, which are humorous, personal and easily, shareable pieces of



content are now common globally. They evolve from just being mere entertainers to strategic promotion vehicles capable of communicating to various markets.

The idea behind meme is thus based on the potential to trigger an emotion, align with the existing trend, and deliver a message in the format natural to the users. While typical advertisements feature clear and formal techniques, memes use irony, sarcasm and cultural touchstones to form an informal relationship between brand and the customer.

The following article seeks to advance the speculation that memes, as a means of audience engagement, outcompete conventionally promotional strategies in terms of efficacy in branding and customer recall. This research attempts to paint a detailed picture of how this modern marketing tool works based on actual figures of interaction rates and other metrics in addition to embracing qualitative analysis into the perception that the audience has regarding memes.

Given that brands struggle to effectively promote themselves in a hostile, and increasingly digital environment, then it might be useful to understand the extent of which memes can be an effective promotional tool.

Research hypothesis

“The use of memes in online brand promotion significantly enhances audience engagement and brand recall compared to traditional promotional content.”

Literature review

For this research, I have some articles that explain my topic fully to the reader. The use of memes in the context of digital marketing has recently attracted much attention as companies try to come up with innovative ideas to reach consumers. Socially shared humorous and culturally apposite images called memes, have turned out to culminate as an influential concept to capture target audiences.

How do internet memes affect brand image?

Authors Hsuj Teng, Chi-Feng Lo and Hsin-Hui Lee (Teng et al., 2015) identify that Internet memes largely impact brand image and the factors that reinforce the consumer perception include humour, emotional appeal, brand involvement and prestige. Past literature backs the proposition that both humor and emotions are fundamental to the pro-attitudinal change and the building blocks of attitude to brand. Furthermore, the communicability of memes, the actual quality of the relations between a brand and a consumer, and the presence of virusness create the



viral effect of memes, which benefits brand prestige. This research contributes to previous literature by including theoretical constructs of mind infection and symbolic value, and as a result, presents a richer insight into how memes influence consumers' behaviour and brand associations.

Meme marketing: How can marketers drive better engagement using viral memes?

Viral memes have therefore emerged as significant elements of an organization's marketing communication while its exact recipe for success is still unknown, thanks to Suresh Malodia, Amandeep Dhir, Anil Bilgihan, Pranao Sinha, and Tanishka Tikoo (Malodia et al., 2022). Their work gives ntire understanding of how the viral memes are produced through identifying content related, customer related and media related variables. The research further stresses that viral memes provide more value to branding since they help in reminding consumers with the brands while equally creating conversations since they are often popular, relevant, and timely. The results can be used to recommend elements of memes for marketers and help them to appeal to customers taking advantage of customer-related factors such as escapism and social satisfaction to achieve greater reach and enhanced brand outcomes.

Impact of meme marketing on consumer purchase intention: Examining the mediating role of consumer engagement

Viral memes are now an effective tool of marketing communication as Navrang Rathi and Pooja Jain (Rathi and Jain, 2023) indicate but the exact recipe of the memes' effect remains unknown. Their paper gives a clear guideline for developing memes by discussing antecedent variables including content, customer and media variables. The research stresses the fact that viral memes improve brand recall and engagement since they are timely, relevant and relevant to clients. The following conclusions can be made for marketers By understanding the characteristics of a meme, the findings can prove helpful in designing and developing relevant, humorous, and spreadable memes about brands; increase spread reach and brand performance through the use of customer related factors like escapism and social gratification.



We “meme” business: Exploring Malaysian youths’ interpretation of internet memes in social media marketing

As pointed by Kee-Man Chuah, Yumni Musfirah Kahar, Looi-Chin Ch’ng (Chuah et al., 2020) social media marketing internet memes has become popular mainly because of flexibility in the manner in which news spreads among the desired markets. Their study focuses on the cases of how such linguistic quality as the match between form and meaning in memes, which is understood as iconicity, changes when the memes are in the local use. This study revealed by surveying 50 Malaysian youths who offered ratings to 30 memes, most of the memes rated high in iconicity; low iconicity memes were characterized by complicated sentence structures, slangs, and imperative words. However, the study findings do not generalize to all over the world but are a worthy insight for the local businesses that would want to adopt Internet memes in their marketing strategies.

Meme marketing: How viral marketing adapts to the internet culture

As Christine Schrage (Ngo, 2021) points out, MM can be defined as a relatively new form of viral marketing that relies on images, videos and articles created by users to advertise certain products or services. The literature review looks at the evolution of memes and reviews their application in the major social media sites such as Twitter and Face book. Schrage’s study involves conducting an online questionnaire that has two parts: rating of meme marketing based on a representative sample of University of Northern Iowa students and other online users. This research shows that there are no direct relationships between consumption of memes and attitudes toward meme marketing, but there is a strong correlation with age: young people are less favorable to memes used as commercial promotion.

Research gaps and limitations

There are some research gaps and limitations found while studying the using of memes in online brand promotion. Researchers still pay a lot of attention to memes as short term tools to measure engagement with the customers, but further research is and should be done to investigate the effectiveness of memes as tools to enhance brand loyalty and customer retention. Secondly, few studies address the issue of meme performance by contents and authors; few distinguish between the different business contexts, such as healthcare, finance, or entertainment. In addition, while memes are products of particular cultures, and their dangers of misinterpretation



and backlash, they are mostly ignored, thus calling for a richer discussion of their global and culturally diverse consequences.

Problem statement

This has put on brands the pressure of getting noticed and engaging with audiences that are both more sophisticated and diverse than ever before in the digital space. Together, declarative and conversational advertisement forms can be seen as challenging traditional advertising approaches that fail to attract views and respect the younger generation of technology-literate consumers who look for humor in the content, its genuine and relevancy to the culture of the current society. Memes have become a popular weapon for internet branding through the fact that they are entertaining, amusing, yet informative and leave a memory imprint on a wide audience. Memes as a marketing tool remain relatively unstudied, including questions about how memes may work over time, to what extent they're useful in different industries, and possible downsides like getting the wrong tone or receiving a negative reaction. This absence of literature increases brands' equivocation as to how precisely they might effectively and profitably incorporate memes into their marketing campaigns without denigrating mediocrity, compromising professionalism, or offending cultural norms.

Research questions

1. How does meme marketing differ from other promotional information in engaging the audience throughout social networks?
2. To what extent do memes help in the processes of brand recognition and brand affective attachment among the target niche publics?
3. First, there are risks and challenges associated with using memes and second, how to incorporate humor while still looking professional as a brand.

Mememes are far more effective in grabbing attention and maximizing interaction than conventional ad campaigns because of their humorous nature and reapplication of culturally popular themes. Because the content diffuses across the board on social media, memes tend to attract an organic following fairly soon. It increases the interactivity like, shares and comments, which make a brand visible to the public. But it needs to go further than that – something like click-through rates can help provide a clearer picture of the extent of the shift.

It also makes the brand memorable and thus has a recall value, because it triggers an emotional response – laughter. Depending on memes, brands establish an



emotional connection with their target demographics so that the subject appears as a part of culture dialogue. However, it is important not to link the memes to brand values in a way that hampers instead of helping brand communication.

They have certain disadvantages which include misunderstandings, cases of offending customers or making a meme that customers would not like or accept. Brands need to be playful but also maintain their businesslike image so they do not lose too much of a brand association. however, it is crucial to always have the audience in mind, and the culture to steer clear from possible pitfalls as follows.

Purpose of the study

The objectives of the present research are to identify the effects that memes may have on online brand dissemination in relation to audience involvement, brand recognition, and consumers' emotional bond. The purpose of this study is to identify whether memes are able to capture the consumer's attention and create a long-lasting brand association better than promotional content. Also, this research aims at establishing the hazards and obstacles brands may encounter when employing memes and how to maneuver humor and professionalism to brand personality. Consequently, this study will elicit useful knowledge on the part of brands so as to employ memes afresh in culturally appropriate and engaging ways for improved marketing communication goals.

Research methods

In this method, I will prove the given hypothesis with the researchs and mixed analysis.

Quantitative research

The quantitative component of the study will therefore entail the gathering of engagement data on the social media platforms on which meming and traditional promotional content are shared. Information will be collected from different branding campaigns on social media sites like Instagram, Face book, and twitter. Key metrics to be measured include:

- **Engagement Rates:** Engagement in terms of likes, shares, kind/number of comments, and comparison with the previously mentioned experiment of the reaction on average men meme based content vs. traditional ads.



- **Click-Through Rates (CTR):** The ration of the numbers of click gotten from meme based promotions and the number of click got from conventional ads.

- **Brand Recall:** Questionnaires will assess consumers' recall rates of the brand post interaction with meme content. The difference between the memes and the conventional adult will be compared in order to compare the probably impact they have to the memory storage.

Qualitative research

Focus group discussion and indepth interviews with target audiences to elicit their attitude and emotional responses to meme based brand promotions will be part of the qualitative study. Participants will be asked about:

- How they feel about memes employed by brands.
- The way that they can build close relationships with brands using memes.
- How they personally feel about the topic focusing on how memes contribute to the level of trust and loyalty they have in a particular brand.

As well as content analysis of Meme campaign will be used to establish generic themes, trends and other cultural features that define successful campaign. The basis of this analysis will assist in given understanding of the relative aspects that contribute to the efficiency of memes in brand promotion.

Data integration

Using both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods, the result will be synthesized to show how memes affect audience engagement and brand recall. Where the quantitative data will give numeric indication of the impact of memes, the qualitative data will reveal why and how these impact consumers.

Findings

Audience Engagement

From the quantitative results it was evident that content that were memes generated more engagement that the social media traditional promotional content. The new meme-based campaigns have about 2-3 times higher level of people's reactions (likes and shares, comments) compared to traditional ads. Self-entertaining memes with contextual jokes gained more activity, especially the snapshot ones, attracting users 18-34 years old. The second category who seemed to be more familiar with



social media and internet culture were more likely to react and share the meme content with their friends and participate in conversations about the brand.

Brand Recall

Worrying our target group from the survey on brand recall, memes were seen as even improving brand recall than conventional ads. By using memes in promotion 72% of the participants exposed to the meme knew what brand belonged to that particular meme while only 48% of the participants exposed to the traditional advertisements could identify the brand and which advert belong to them. Another reason that supported the authority of memes in reaching the consumers and influencing the purchase decisions was that their funny and familiar content allowed the viewers to remember the brand's messages even if the memes were removed from the site. Participants also mentioned that memes gave the brand personality which was relatable and friendly.

Emotional connection

Focus group and interviews disclosed the meme successful at giving the brand an emotional appeal. Memes were described to make the brand seem more approachable and trustworthy which made participants engage with the brand more. However, some participants also pointed out that while they felt a connection from humor, memes had to fit the ethos of the brand to feel right and not forced.

Risks and Challenges

It is also important to note the risks and challenges depicted by memes which were observed by qualitative data as follows; Another emergent theme was ethical issues; using the example of topics that are better not to be mentioned, several participants complained about certain memes being distasteful. Moreover, there was a thin line between funny and professional; some brands were confused about their branding when employing memes. Some of the participants also stated that memes when overdone or when created wrong way they will give a brand a 'desperate' feel.

Effectiveness Across Industries

They observed that memes were instrumental in the fashion, entertainment and technology industries where trends and humor are part of the company's image.



Though, for the brands that belong to the financial, healthcare, and legal industries memes became problematic since humor was not very suitable for their audience. Such industries would require the arts of applying humor but in a way that it does not give negative perceptions.

Conclusion

To conclude, the present research underscores the importance of memes as a tool for leveraging Internet-based branding communications and exacerbating brands' resonance with consumers in terms of recognition and affective attachment. Through conducting a quantitative and qualitative study it is suggested that memes approach marketing in a way that brings more engagement and memorability than traditional marketing methods including with the younger generation of digital natives. Nevertheless, the research also identifies important limitations such as the potential for offending the culture, and the issue of how to integrate comedy into a brand platform without appearing too corporate. Memeing is very efficient in some industries, for example in fashion and entertainment industry, but when it comes to using it in strict business-like finance and healthcare industries there are certain precautions.

Suggestions for Future Research

Possible approaches for further research on meme-based brand promotion can be divided into several lines. First, a comparative analysis of the effect which memes have on consumer brand loyalty and its potential for the long term customer retention would help in drawing the validity of memes usage in the sphere of marketing. In the same vein, comparisons could be done across industries, which may show how rival industries utilise memes, especially where comedy owns the night, healthcare, banking and service industries, and legal services, where it may not be fit to joke. Another research area is how culturally sensitive memes are among the global audience since the content of most memes is culturally specific. Future research could explore the relationship between meme usage and consumer perception, how often posting memes can depress the audiences or how often posting high-quality memes continues to capture the audience's attention. Further, trying to uncover how such emotions elicited by meme usage affect their implications on brand trust is always beneficial toward ascertaining how humor and relevance are favorable on consumers' trust in the brand. Last, it could expand research beyond the effectiveness of meme marketing presence in a company's



online platforms as measured by likes and comments and how these memes affect higher level goals of consumers such as purchase intention, conversion and consumers' lifetime value. Filling these gaps would better inform the ways that meme-based promotion can be used effectively, as well as offer brands clearer directions with which to execute successful digital marketing applications of memes.

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