

Role of Meme Marketing in Building Brand Identity among Youth Audiences

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Abstract: Meme marketing has become a very relatable and engaging marketing tactic in the modern digital age, particularly with young consumers. The purpose of this study is to investigate how young customers' perceptions of brands are influenced by amusing, trend-based, and culturally relevant content, as well as the role that meme marketing plays in helping them develop a brand identity. The study focuses on how meme marketing affects young people's brand recall, relatability, engagement, authenticity, and emotional connection. Both primary and secondary data served as the study's foundation. A systematic questionnaire was used to gather primary data from young respondents who frequently use social media. Academic publications, research papers, internet articles, and previously published material on meme marketing, digital branding, and consumer behavior were the sources of secondary data. To examine how young audiences perceive and react to meme-based brand marketing, a descriptive and exploratory research approach was used. The results show that meme marketing significantly enhances audience engagement, brand visibility, and emotional connection to brands. It makes brands seem more contemporary, relatable, and associated with youth culture. However, elements like timing, authenticity, inventiveness, and audience preference relevance all affect how successful meme marketing is. The study comes to the conclusion that meme marketing is a strategic branding technique that, when applied correctly, may effectively improve brand identity among youth consumers rather than just being a passing fad.

Keywords: Meme Marketing, Branding, Youth audience, Digital Marketing, Consumer, social media.

I. INTRODUCTION

Marketing communication has changed significantly in the quickly changing digital age. More interactive, captivating, and culturally sensitive modes of communication are progressively supplementing—and sometimes even replacing—traditional

advertising methods including print ads, television commercials, and outdoor promos. Among them, meme marketing has become one of the most effective and pertinent tactics, particularly when it comes to reaching younger audiences who are heavily engaged with internet culture.

Memes are typically amusing, relatable, and easily shared content in the form of pictures, brief films, text, or captions that quickly proliferate on digital networks. Memes, which were formerly only thought of as online amusement, have evolved into a crucial communication tool that companies utilize to interact with customers in a more casual, humorous, and emotionally impactful manner. Their appeal stems from their capacity to convey ideas simply, convey cultural or societal moods, and grab viewers' attention right once.

Younger people, especially those in the 18–30 age range, are among the most frequent users of social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, X (previously Twitter), and Snapchat. Short, visually appealing, hilarious, trend-driven, and culturally relevant content is typically preferred by these people. Because of this, meme marketing has emerged as a logical choice for companies looking to forge a more distinctive personality and presence among young consumers. It makes businesses seem more approachable, personable, and aware of online culture.

A brand's self-presentation and desired audience perception are referred to as its brand identity. Brand personality, tone, communication style, values, visual components, and emotional connections are all part of it. Developing a memorable and unique brand identity has become more difficult than ever in the digital world, where consumers are continuously exposed to conflicting signals. By leveraging relatability and

comedy to create stronger audience associations, meme marketing gives firms a chance to break through this congestion.

A well-written meme can increase audience engagement, brand recall, emotional connection, and social shareability. When a brand consistently communicates through culturally relevant and humorous content, it is more likely to be seen as modern, approachable, and youth-friendly. This has been seen in the digital communication tactics of companies like Zomato, Swiggy, Netflix India, and Amul, who have effectively employed meme-style communication to create devoted fan bases and strong online identities.

But there are certain difficulties with meme marketing. Timing, inventiveness, platform relevance, and audience comprehension are all critical to its success. Confusion or even backlash may result from a meme that is poorly timed, forceful, inappropriate, or unrelated to company values. Consequently, meme marketing must be properly employed to enhance long-term company identity rather than just short-term virality, even though it offers great engagement potential.

This study investigates how meme marketing helps young consumers develop a sense of brand identity. It aims to comprehend how young customers view meme-based communication, what makes it successful, and how companies may use it to forge more robust and genuine online personas.

Even if modern brands are using meme marketing more and more, little is known about how precisely it shapes brand identity among young people, especially in the Indian context. Thus, this study aims to investigate how young consumers' perceptions and identities of brands are influenced by meme relatability, comedy, authenticity, and cultural relevance.

The increasing usage of meme marketing as a contemporary branding and communication strategy by companies aiming to reach young audiences is the reason for this study. Memes have developed into a potent technique for attracting attention, engagement, and emotional connection since young customers are very active on social media. This study is required to determine whether meme marketing is merely a

passing digital fad or if it makes a significant contribution to audience perception, trust, brand identity, and brand memory.

II.LITERATURE REVIEW

(Noel Murray, 2012) The concept of the "meme" has the potential to completely transform our understanding of culture, much as the gene has transformed our understanding of biology. But memetics has failed to deliver on its promise of offering a more complex and thorough explanation of culture. This essay explores the reasons why memetics has not lived up to initial expectations. It assesses the contribution of memetics to explanatory objectives in advertising, business, and culture. The study investigates why memetics has been more widely accepted in the scientific and mathematical fields than in the social sciences. The social sciences have paid little attention to the two main theoretical metaphors of memetics: viruses of the mind and genetics.

(Ngo, 2021) Meme marketing (MM) is the use of viral, user-generated content, such as photos, videos, or posts, to promote goods or services. Memes have gained popularity as a marketing tactic to reach internet-savvy consumers due to the increasing impact of social media and digital communication. Memes are being used by brands more frequently to draw attention and maintain relevance as more people interact with online culture. The development of memes, their application in marketing, and audience perceptions of them are all examined in this study. Results indicate that although memes are widely used, younger viewers could be a little more critical of companies that use them for marketing.

(S. Malodia, 2022) This study investigates the factors that lead memes to become popular and how they affect marketing results. It emphasizes that although there isn't a set recipe for virality, elements including related content, prevailing trends, and platform dynamics are crucial. The results demonstrate that viral memes, particularly those that are funny and culturally appropriate, greatly increase consumer engagement and brand memory. Additionally, the study highlights how memes meet user needs for social interaction and amusement. Overall, it implies that by producing meme material that is relevant, interesting,

and simple for their target audience to share, brands can improve their performance and reach.

(MP Schlaile, 2020) This study combines concepts from social network analysis and meme theory to investigate how the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge spread. It examines both the challenge's content—what made it memorable and shareable—and the outside elements, such as social ties, that contributed to its viral success. The study employs a simulation model to examine how network structures affected the challenge's spread after first analyzing it using memetic principles to comprehend its success. By combining these methods, the study offers a better understanding of how social interactions and cultural trends work together to propel widespread online movements.

(Shifman, 2013) The concept of memes in today's digital culture is revisited in this work. Even before the internet, memes—originally thought of as cultural aspects transferred from person to person—existed, but online venues have increased their visibility and effect. The study emphasizes the benefits and drawbacks of using memes to comprehend digital communication. In order to effectively describe and analyze memes, it also presents a clear framework based on three essential elements: content, form, and position. The paper illustrates how this paradigm might be used and offers future options for researching meme-driven digital material using the example of the popular "Leave Britney Alone" video.

(T Csordás, 2017) Through shared humor, concepts, and relatable content, internet memes have grown to be a potent and dynamic aspect of online society. People frequently utilize them to convey their personal opinions, frequently reinterpreting branded content in ways that deviate from the original objective of the company. Despite their widespread use, companies are still figuring out how to properly comprehend and apply memes. The idea of memetics is presented in this part, along with an explanation of how memes serve as a tool for communication and culture. Additionally, it draws attention to the expanding potential of memes as an innovative and powerful digital marketing tactic for companies.

(Scorita 2025) Through a review of the literature, this study aims to discover successful digital marketing

tactics for Gen Z and Millennials. It emphasizes how both groups are greatly impacted by digital technology and favor visual, interactive, and genuine content. According to the survey, socially conscious messaging, influencer partnerships, and tailored marketing are more effective at grabbing their interest and fostering loyalty. Additionally, it highlights how crucial mobile-first tactics, short-form videos, and artificial intelligence are to the success of campaigns. In today's digital world, organizations may develop marketing strategies that are impactful, relevant, and engaging by taking into account the distinctive characteristics of different generations.

(Dr. Nirav B. Halvadia, 2021) Digital marketing has grown to be a crucial component of contemporary marketing, utilizing social media, internet platforms, and cutting-edge technologies to advertise goods and services. With only a few clicks, people can now quickly buy anything, thus a brand's online presence is essential. The goal of this study is to comprehend how customer purchasing behavior is influenced by both established trends like social media, content marketing, and search engine marketing as well as new trends like influencer marketing, personalization, and visual search. The study, which uses descriptive research and data from 136 respondents, concludes that customer decisions and purchase habits are greatly influenced by both established and new digital techniques.

Wymbs (2011) The rapidly expanding digital economy is changing the nature of marketing and rendering many conventional techniques obsolete. Marketing education must change in tandem with technology improvements in order to meet the demands of contemporary businesses and students. This necessitates a change in the way marketing is taught, with a greater emphasis on digital trends and practical applications. The study emphasizes the necessity of updating learning models appropriate for the digital age and reviewing existing methods in order to adapt the curriculum. It also discusses the difficulties in putting these changes into practice and offers a framework that other colleges might utilize to successfully update their marketing curricula.

Chourasiya (2017) Online marketing leverages the interactive aspects of digital media to create meaningful connections and interactions between

businesses and consumers. Since it includes strategies like online advertising, market research, promotions, and pricing, it is a modern approach to marketing in today's digital economy. Its success depends on effective strategies like audience targeting, product positioning, price, distribution, and promotion. This study looks at the advantages and disadvantages of online marketing in relation to traditional methods. It also looks at how businesses may benefit from it, as well as its growing influence on traditional marketing tactics and cultural norms.

Velayudham, A. (2019) This study investigates how search engine marketing (SEM), which offers easily accessible and pertinent information, affects consumer purchase behavior. It emphasizes how SEM uses practical tactics to help businesses increase their return on investment. Statistical procedures such as percentage analysis, correlation, and chi-square testing were used to analyze data gathered from respondents, including professionals and students. The results show that buying decisions are greatly influenced by the order in which search results appear (Ahir et al., 2026; Gandhi et al., 2026; Jha et al., 2026; Kapoor et al., 2026; Mehta et al., 2026; Rohit et al., 2026; Shah & Jani, 2026; Upadhyay et al., 2026). It also demonstrates that people who are more adept at searching are more assured of their purchasing decisions. Additionally, although consumers are less inclined to buy electronic goods online, they still rely on search engines for comprehensive information.

(A Ghose, 2016) The study emphasizes how the measurement of digital advertising efficiency has improved due to the availability of comprehensive individual-level data. It concludes that exposure to display advertisements alone can boost consumers' interest in a brand and promote both active and passive information searching. Additionally, the study demonstrates that advertisements have a favorable effect on consumer behavior. It's interesting to note that extended exposure to advertisements encourages consumers to visit brands directly rather than using search engines. Furthermore, the functions of various display advertisements vary. All things considered, the study offers a solid framework for comprehending how digital advertising influences customer involvement and decision-making.

(M Sudha, 2017) social media has drastically changed how people make judgments about what to buy, going beyond the conventional buying behaviour paradigm. With the abundance of information available to them now, consumers may investigate brands, weigh their options, and read firsthand accounts before making a decision. Users can also instantaneously post their thoughts, reviews, and comments on social media sites like Instagram and Twitter. Because of this, a single message or experience can have an impact on thousands of people in a matter of minutes. Because of this, purchasing behavior has become more social, interactive, and informed, making digital word-of-mouth a potent influence on customer choices.

Benny (2025) The emergence of digital culture, particularly among Generation Z, has altered online brand communication. Although meme marketing has gained popularity, little research has been done on how young professionals see it. This study uses qualitative data from Gen Z workers in creative industries to investigate how memes affect consumer perception and brand awareness. The results show that people perceive memes to be hilarious, relatable, and emotionally compelling. Humor, sincerity, simplicity, trend relevancy, and emotional connection are important elements that propel engagement. In addition to increasing short-term engagement, frequent usage of meme marketing fosters long-term brand recognition and a closer bond with younger customers.

(S. Ali, 2025) This study looks at how customer purchase intentions are impacted by social media influencers (SMIs), particularly when it comes to meme marketing. The study, which used Smart PLS to analyze responses from 210 university students, discovers that characteristics like influencers' social attractiveness and similar attitudes make audiences feel more connected and personally involved. But physical appeal by itself has little effect on this relationship. Additionally, the study demonstrates that good brand opinions are significantly shaped by authenticity and a sense of self-expansion. In the end, audiences are more likely to form positive impressions about the company and exhibit stronger purchase inclinations when they feel connected to and trust the influencer.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive and exploratory research design is used in this study. The descriptive design is employed to comprehend youth audiences' present inclinations, attitudes, and views regarding meme marketing and its impact on brand identity. It clarifies how young customers engage with meme-based material and how it impacts their brand perception, memory, and trust. New and developing trends in meme marketing, such as cultural allusions, comedic styles, trend relevance, and real-time communication tactics, are investigated using the exploratory design.

Research Objectives

- (1) To analyze how meme marketing contributes to brand identity formation among Indian youth.
- (2) To evaluate the relationship between meme humour, cultural relevance, and brand engagement.
- (3) To assess youth perceptions regarding brand authenticity and trust in meme-based communication.
- (4) To identify challenges and opportunities in meme-based brand strategies.

Data Collection

The survey method was the main technique utilized to gather data. Google Forms was used to administer a structured questionnaire with direct response gathering. The primary items on the questionnaire were: 5-point Likert scale comments, multiple-choice questions, and closed-ended questions. The purpose of these questions was to gauge respondents' perceptions of awareness of meme marketing, exposure frequency, relatability of branded memes, trust in companies that use them, impact on engagement and buying behavior, and effect on brand recall.

Data Analysis Tool

The gathered information was examined using MS Excel is used for percentage analysis, frequency distribution, graphs, charts, tables, and descriptive interpretation. These tools made it easier to spot trends, comprehend how young people think, and analyze how meme marketing contributes to the development of brand identity.

Research Instrument

A standardized questionnaire intended to acquire quantifiable answers about brand identity and meme marketing served as the study's data gathering tool. Both demographic and perception-based questions were included (Gupta et al., 2025; Bhambhani et al., 2025; Jani et al., 2026). A 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, was used to gauge the majority of opinion statements. To promote better comprehension and accurate responses, the questionnaire was created in a straightforward, understandable, and youth-friendly manner. Memes, relatability, brand recall, humor, trust, and buying influence were among the topics it addressed.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The responses gathered from young audiences about their awareness, involvement, and perception of meme marketing are interpreted in the data analysis section. According to the results, meme-based communication has a significant impact on how young customers remember, relate to, and assess brands.

Demographic Findings: The survey mainly focused on young respondents between the ages of 18 and 30, including young people who were engaged on the internet and undergraduate and graduate students. Because they make up the most engaged audience section on social media sites like YouTube, Instagram, and X, this demographic is extremely relevant. The respondents were in a good position to assess the function of memes in brand communication because they frequently consumed online content.

Effect on Recall and Brand Relatability: The study's most compelling conclusion is that meme marketing greatly increases brand relatability. Many respondents concurred that brands that successfully employ memes make them feel more connected. This suggests that comedy and online culture serve to bridge the gap between brands and consumers, giving them a more relatable, approachable, and human appearance. This demonstrates how memes aid in brand remembers, particularly when they are connected to current events, societal allusions, or common adolescent experiences. Memes inherently promote greater brand recall since they are made to be instantly identifiable and emotionally compelling.

Meme Marketing and Brand Authenticity: Additionally, the data demonstrates how sensitive respondents are to

authenticity. Many young customers concurred that memes can only enhance favorable perception and trust when they are authentic and consistent with the brand's identity. Audiences are less likely to react favorably to memes that seem duplicated, out-of-date, irrelevant, or too promotional. This implies that young consumers reward companies that utilize memes in a way that feels authentic to their tone and identity rather than just for adopting memes. Therefore, authenticity is crucial in assessing if meme marketing enhances brand perception.

Risks and Negative Perceptions: Although respondents' opinions of meme marketing were generally favorable, they nevertheless recognized some concerns. The company's reputation can be harmed by offensive humor, out-of-date allusions, excessive exploitation of trends, or memes that don't fit the brand. This supports the notion that meme marketing works best when it is applied thoughtfully, tactically, and consistently with a brand. Overall, the statistics show that by enhancing relatability, recall, engagement, and emotional connection, meme marketing plays a significant and powerful role in developing brand identity among young audiences.

V.FINDINGS

- (1) High Knowledge of Meme Marketing
- (2) Enhancement of Brand Relatability
- (3) Enhanced Recall of the Brand
- (4) One of the main motivators is humor
- (5) Cultural Relevance Is Important
- (6) Trust Is Affected by Authenticity
- (7) Meme Marketing Promotes Interaction
- (8) Impact on the Perception of Customers
- (9) The Importance of Brand-Specific Style
- (10) Inappropriate Use May Damage a Brand's Image

VI.IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Implications

According to the study, meme marketing can help brands increase audience engagement, relatability, emotional connection, and brand recall. This means that in order to stay relevant to younger consumers, brands need to go beyond standard promotional messages and develop more culturally competent communication strategies.

For marketers, the findings suggest that meme marketing is not only about humor but about identity alignment.

Suggestions

- (1) Comedy and brand messaging should be balanced by brands.
- (2) The tone and values of the brand should be reflected in meme material.
- (3) Brands need to keep up with youth culture and current trends.
- (4) Before utilizing specific humor techniques or references, it is imperative to comprehend the target audience.
- (5) Meme content that is rude, divisive, or insensitive should be avoided by brands.
- (6) To strengthen one's individuality, tone and originality should remain consistent.
- (7) Reach and engagement can be increased by working with influencers or meme pages.
- (8) To find out what content works best, performance analysis should be done on a regular basis.
- (9) Memes that are culturally and regionally relevant can help marketers reach a larger audience of young people.
- (10) Prioritizing originality over mindlessly adhering to viral trends is important.

VII.FUTURE SCOPE & CONCLUSION

Future Scope

- (1) Incorporate a broader and more varied sample.
- (2) Compare various age groups outside of youth audiences
- (3) Analyze the efficacy of industry-specific meme marketing, research regional language meme marketing,
- (4) Investigate long-term effects on loyalty and purchasing behavior
- (5) Compare meme marketing across various brands and industries.

Conclusion

According to the study's findings, meme marketing has developed into a potent and successful strategy for establishing brand identification among young consumers in the digital age. It is a great way to engage young consumers since it combines comedy, relatability, cultural significance, and shareability. The

results demonstrate that meme marketing, particularly when it feels genuine and fits with brand personality, improves brand awareness, memory, trust, engagement, and emotional connection. However, timing, inventiveness, audience comprehension, and strategic execution are all necessary for meme marketing to be successful.

To sum up, meme marketing is a significant change in contemporary marketing communication. When applied carefully and regularly, it can assist brands in building stronger, more memorable, and relatable identities among young consumers who are active online.

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