The Impact of MEME Marketing on Brand Engagement Among Gen Z

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***Abstract*—The growing popularity of social media has transformed how brands communicate with consumers, particularly Generation Z. Meme marketing has emerged as a digital marketing strategy that uses humour, relatable situations, cultural references, and shareable content to attract audience attention. This study examines the impact of meme marketing on brand engagement among Generation Z, focusing on four dimensions: humour, relatability, cultural relevance, and shareability. Brand engagement is examined through cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions.**

A quantitative research design is proposed using a structured questionnaire and a five-point Likert scale. For the present analysis, a dataset of 75 observations is used. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, and Pearson correlation are applied to examine the relationships between the study variables. The results indicate a positive relationship between overall meme marketing and brand engagement ($r = 0.632$, $p < 0.001$). The findings suggest that meme marketing may be a useful approach for attracting attention, encouraging interaction, and developing stronger consumer relationships.

***Index Terms*—Meme Marketing, Generation Z, Brand Engagement, Social Media Marketing, Digital Marketing, Consumer Behaviour.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an important platform for brand communication and consumer interaction. Traditional advertising methods are increasingly complemented by digital strategies that encourage participation, entertainment, and sharing. One such strategy is meme marketing.

Memes are images, videos, phrases, or other forms of digital content that communicate ideas through humour, imitation, and cultural references. Brands use memes to communicate in an informal and relatable manner. Unlike conventional advertisements, memes often encourage users to react, comment, share, and participate in online conversations.

Generation Z, generally understood as individuals born between the late 1990s and early 2010s, is an important audience for meme marketing because of its familiarity with digital platforms and online trends. This generation frequently encounters memes on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and other social networking applications.

Meme marketing can influence brand engagement through four important characteristics: humour, relatability, cultural relevance, and shareability. These characteristics may attract attention and encourage consumers to develop cognitive, emotional, and behavioural connections with brands.

Therefore, this study examines the relationship between meme marketing and brand engagement among Generation Z.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Meme Marketing

Meme marketing involves using internet memes as a promotional communication tool. It allows brands to participate in online conversations through familiar formats, humour, and popular cultural references. Shifman (2013) explains internet memes as digital content units that spread through imitation and variation.

2.2. Humour and Brand Engagement

Humour is frequently used in advertising to attract attention and create positive audience responses. Ashley and Tuten (2015) discuss how creative social media content can encourage consumer engagement. Humorous memes may make brand communication more entertaining and memorable.

2.3. Relatability and Cultural Relevance

Relatable content reflects consumers' everyday experiences, interests, and social situations. Cultural relevance refers to the use of current trends, language, and references that the target audience understands. These characteristics can make branded content appear more relevant and authentic.

2.4. Shareability and Consumer Interaction

Social media enables consumers to distribute branded content within their personal networks. Mangold and Faulds (2009) identify social media as an important element of the promotional communication mix. Shareable memes may increase brand visibility and encourage user participation.

2.5. Brand Engagement

Brand engagement refers to consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioural investment in their interactions with a brand. Hollebeek (2011) examines consumer brand engagement as a multidimensional concept involving cognitive processing, affection, and activation.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

3.1. Objectives

1. To examine the influence of humour in meme marketing on brand engagement among Gen Z.
2. To analyse the relationship between relatable meme content and brand engagement.
3. To study the influence of cultural relevance on brand engagement.
4. To examine how shareability of memes influences brand engagement.
5. To understand the relationship between meme marketing and cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement.

3.2. Hypotheses

- H1: Humour in meme marketing has a positive relationship with brand engagement.
- H2: Relatability in meme marketing has a positive relationship with brand engagement.
- H3: Cultural relevance in meme marketing has a positive relationship with brand engagement.
- H4: Shareability in meme marketing has a positive relationship with brand engagement.

IV. CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL

The proposed model treats humour, relatability, cultural relevance, and shareability as the independent variables. Brand engagement is the dependent variable, represented through cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement.

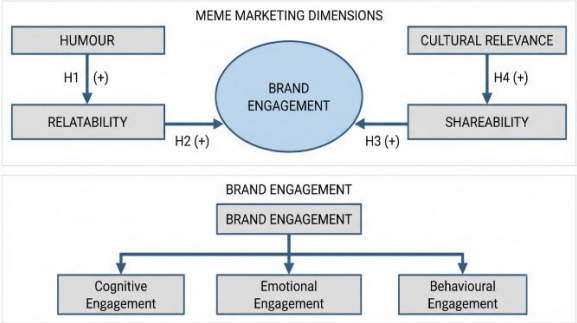

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model

The model proposes that the four meme marketing dimensions positively influence overall brand engagement. Brand engagement is measured through three dimensions: cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

The study follows a quantitative, descriptive, and correlational research design. A structured questionnaire is used to measure respondents' perceptions of meme marketing and brand engagement.

5.2 Sample Size and Sampling

For the analysis, the sample size is 75 observations. The target population is Generation Z social media users. Convenience sampling is proposed as the sampling technique.

The accompanying dataset contains 75 observations. It is intended for demonstrating statistical analysis and should be replaced with actual survey responses for a genuine empirical study.

5.3 Data Collection Instrument

A structured questionnaire is designed using a five-point Likert scale.

The questionnaire measures seven constructs:

Humour, Relatability, Cultural Relevance, Shareability, Cognitive Engagement, Emotional

Engagement, Behavioural Engagement Each construct is measured using three statements.

5.4 Statistical Tools

The following statistical techniques are considered:

- Percentage analysis for demographic characteristics.
- Mean and standard deviation for descriptive analysis.
- Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency.
- Pearson correlation for relationships between variables.

VI. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The following results are calculated from the dataset of 75 observations.

6.1 Demographic Profile

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	39	52.0%
	Male	34	45.3%
	Other/Prefer not to say	2	2.7%
Age	18–21 years	43	57.3%
	22–25 years	23	30.7%
	26–29 years	9	12.0%
Daily social media use	Below 2 hours	6	8.0%
	2–4 hours	31	41.3%
	4–6 hours	25	33.3%
	Above 6 hours	13	17.3%
Most-used platform	Instagram	48	64.0%
	YouTube	11	14.7%
	Facebook	7	9.3%
	Snapchat/Other	9	12.0%

The demographic profile indicates that most observations belong to the 18–21 age group. Instagram is the most frequently selected social media platform.

6.2 Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation
Humour	3.084	0.875
Relatability	3.040	0.842
Cultural Relevance	2.956	0.896
Shareability	3.040	0.941
Cognitive Engagement	2.982	0.905
Emotional Engagement	2.973	0.966
Behavioural Engagement	3.084	0.941

The mean scores are close to the neutral point of 3. This indicates moderate responses across the measured constructs in the dataset.

6.3 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's alpha is used to examine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Humour	0.751
Relatability	0.705
Cultural Relevance	0.739
Shareability	0.745
Cognitive Engagement	0.773
Emotional Engagement	0.764
Behavioural Engagement	0.797

The Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.705 to 0.797. These values indicate acceptable internal consistency for an exploratory analysis, although the measurement model should be assessed further using actual data.

6.4 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation is used to examine the relationships between meme marketing dimensions and brand engagement dimensions.

Relationship	Pearson r	p-value
Humour and Cognitive Engagement	0.390	<0.001
Relatability and Emotional Engagement	0.369	0.001
Cultural Relevance and Cognitive Engagement	0.391	<0.001
Shareability and Behavioural Engagement	0.496	<0.001
Overall, Meme Marketing and Overall Brand Engagement	0.632	<0.001

The results indicate positive associations between the selected meme marketing dimensions and engagement dimensions. Shareability demonstrates a positive relationship with behavioural engagement. The overall meme marketing score also shows a positive association with the overall brand engagement score.
These correlations indicate association, not causation. They do not establish the structural path coefficients or model fit of an SEM analysis.

VII. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that meme marketing may contribute positively to brand engagement among Generation Z.
Humour may attract attention and make brand communication more entertaining. Relatability may help consumers identify with the situations presented in memes. Cultural relevance may make branded content more familiar and meaningful to audiences.
Shareability shows a positive association with behavioural engagement. This suggests that content consumers are willing to share may also encourage likes, comments, and other forms of interaction.
The positive overall correlation indicates that higher meme marketing scores tend to occur alongside higher brand engagement scores in the dataset.

VIII. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. Use audience-relevant humour: Brands should develop memes that are entertaining without damaging brand image.
2. Focus on relatability: Content should reflect the everyday experiences and interests of Gen Z.
3. Follow cultural trends: Brands should use relevant trends and references while avoiding inappropriate or outdated content.
4. Encourage sharing: Memes should be easy to understand, share, and discuss.
5. Maintain brand consistency: Meme content should support the brand's identity and communication objectives.

IX. CONCLUSION

Meme marketing has become a relevant component of social media communication. Its use of humour, relatability, cultural relevance, and shareability provides brands with opportunities to connect with Generation Z.
The analysis based on 75 observations indicates a positive relationship between overall meme marketing and brand engagement. The results also suggest positive associations between individual meme marketing dimensions and selected engagement dimensions.
The study proposes a conceptual model in which meme marketing dimensions influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioural brand engagement. Future research should test this model using large survey responses and an appropriate measurement and structural model.

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