The Impact of Meme Culture on Brand Perception: Assessing How Meme Marketing Influences Engagement and Relatability

Pavleen Kour

Marketing Department, GIBS B School, Bangalore, Karnataka, India
Email: *kpav2112[at]gmail.com*

Abstract: *This study examines the impact of meme marketing on brand perception, consumer engagement, and purchase intentions. "A survey of 100 respondents reveals, findings reveal that culturally relevant and relatable memes foster stronger emotional connections between brands and consumers. The research highlights the role of humor, virality, and digital culture in shaping consumer attitudes and driving engagement. Additionally, it underscores the necessity for brands to balance authenticity with strategic communication to maintain credibility in digital spaces. The study provides actionable insights into the evolving landscape of digital marketing, emphasizing the importance of cultural resonance in enhancing brand-consumer relationships.*

Keywords: Meme marketing, brand perception, consumer engagement, digital culture, strategic communication.

1. Introduction

In an era of rapid digital transformation, traditional marketing strategies are being replaced by dynamic, consumer-centric approaches that align with evolving online behavior. Among these, meme marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for brands to engage audiences through humor and relatability. Memes-widely shared humorous images, videos, or text—have become a distinct form of digital communication that captures attention and fosters emotional connections between brands and consumers. This paper explores the influence of meme marketing on brand perception, with a specific focus on its effects on consumer engagement and relatability. As brands increasingly integrate memes into their marketing strategies, understanding their impact is essential for crafting effective and culturally resonant communication that strengthens brand-consumer relationships.

2. Research Objectives and Questions

The primary objectives of this research are to:
1) Assess the influence of meme marketing on consumer engagement.
2) Examine how memes enhance brand relatability.
3) Understand demographic differences in responses to meme marketing.

The research questions guiding this study include:
1) How does meme marketing affect consumer engagement with brands?
2) In what ways do memes contribute to the relatability of brands?
3) What demographic factors influence perceptions of meme marketing effectiveness.

3. Literature Review

The Evolution of Meme Marketing
Meme marketing has transitioned from a niche phenomenon to a mainstream strategy, reflecting broader shifts in consumer behaviour and media consumption (AdLift, 2024). Initially perceived as mere jokes or viral content, memes have evolved into powerful cultural artifacts that encapsulate societal sentiments and experiences.

Emotional Engagement Through Humor
Research indicates that humour not only captures attention but also enhances brand recall and consumer engagement (Yang, 2022). Humorous memes significantly influence sharing intentions compared to non-humorous advertisements (Malodia et al., 2022).

Cultural Relevance and Relatability
Brands that align their messaging with current trends are more likely to resonate with their audiences (AdLift, 2024). Successful meme campaigns often draw on shared experiences and contemporary cultural conversations.

Challenges in Meme Marketing
Despite its potential benefits, meme marketing poses challenges such as the fleeting nature of internet trends and the risk of appearing out-of-touch (Imark Infotech, 2024). Brands must navigate this line carefully to maintain their reputation while engaging audiences effectively.

Methodology Consideration
A convenience sampling method was employed to reach respondents through social media channels. While this approach facilitates quick and accessible data collection, it introduces potential biases in respondent selection. Since participants are not chosen randomly, the sample may not fully represent the broader population, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could incorporate probabilistic sampling methods to enhance representativeness and reduce selection bias.

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4. Methodological Survey

Conceptual Framework

Data Collection Methods

1) Primary Data Sources

A survey was conducted using a structured questionnaire distributed online to gather data from around 100 respondents aged 13-36 years. The questionnaire included demographic information, social media usage patterns, motivations for sharing memes, and perceptions of brand engagement through memes.
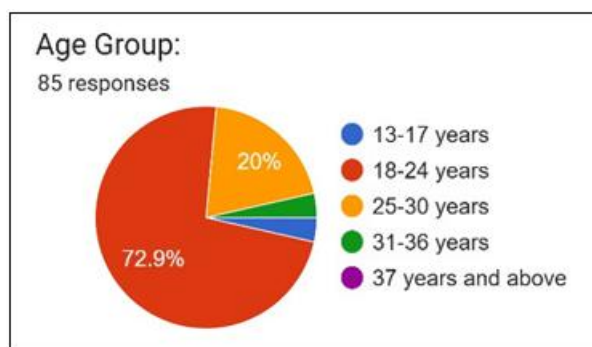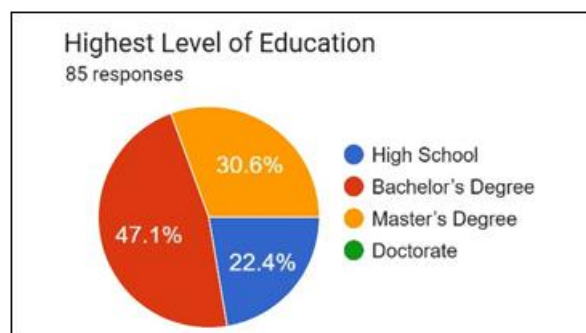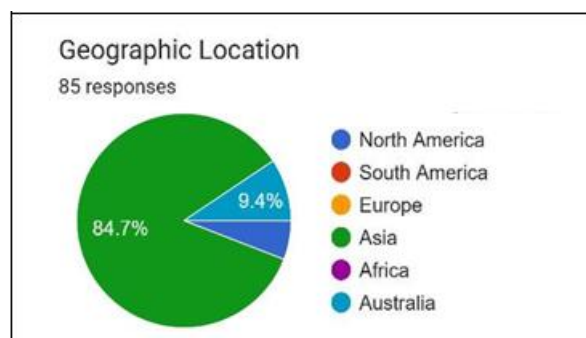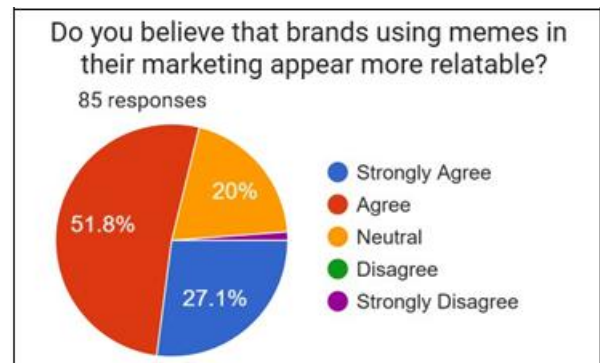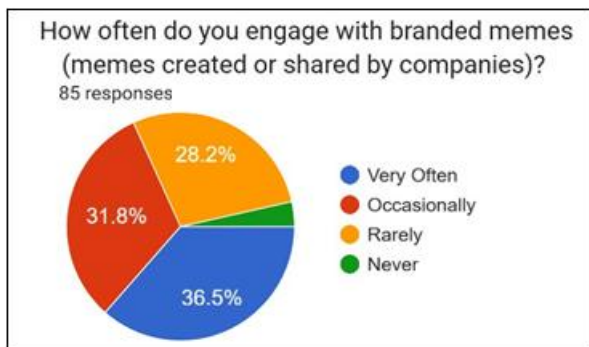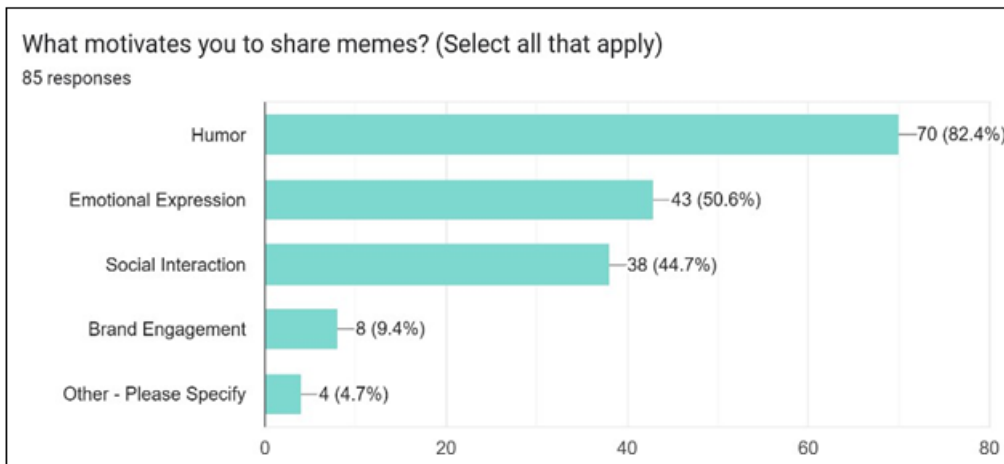
2) Secondary Data Sources

Secondary data was gathered from academic journals, articles, and reports related to meme marketing and its impact on consumer behavior.
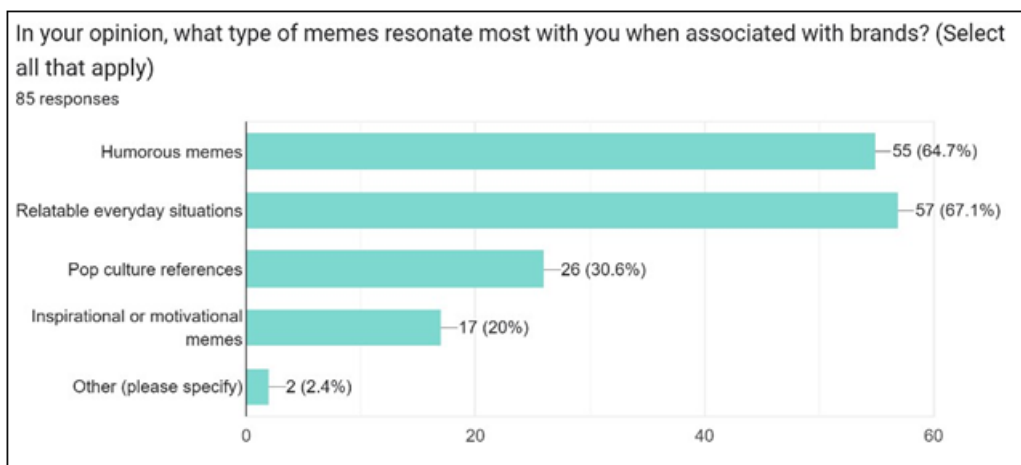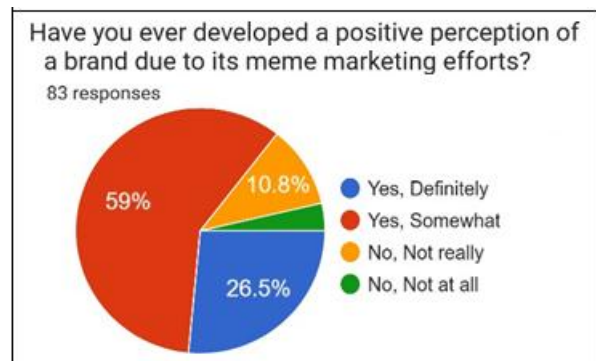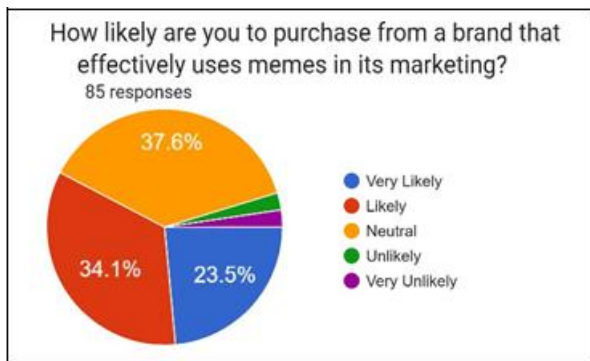
Population and Sampling

The target population for this study includes young adults aged 13-36 years who are active users of social media platforms where memes are commonly shared. A convenience sampling method was employed to reach respondents through social media channels.

Demographic Details of Respondents

Which social media platforms do you use regularly? (Select all that apply)
85 responses

Platform	Responses
Facebook	14 (16.5%)
Instagram	75 (88.2%)
Twitter	17 (20%)
LinkedIn	33 (38.8%)
WhatsApp	57 (67.1%)
Tik Tok	3 (3.5%)
Snapchat	42 (49.4%)
Others (Please specify)	3 (3.5%)

How often do you share memes on social media?
85 responses

- Daily — 60%
- Weekly — 14.1%
- Monthly
- Rarely — 21.2%

What motivates you to share memes? (Select all that apply)
85 responses

Motivation	Responses
Humor	70 (82.4%)
Emotional Expression	43 (50.6%)
Social Interaction	38 (44.7%)
Brand Engagement	8 (9.4%)
Other - Please Specify	4 (4.7%)

How often do you engage with branded memes (memes created or shared by companies)?
85 responses

- Very Often — 36.5%
- Occasionally — 31.8%
- Rarely — 28.2%
- Never

Do you believe that brands using memes in their marketing appear more relatable?
85 responses

- Strongly Agree — 27.1%
- Agree — 51.8%
- Neutral — 20%
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

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5. Findings

The survey results indicate that:

- **Demographic Insights**: The majority of respondents (72.9%) are aged between 18-24 years.
- **Social Media Usage**: Instagram (88.2%) is the most frequently used platform for engaging with memes.
- **Engagement Levels**: 60% of respondents share memes at least daily.
- **Brand Perception**: 80% believe brands using memes appear more relatable.
- **Purchase Intentions**: 60% indicated they are more likely to purchase from brands that effectively utilize memes in their marketing strategies.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings:

1) **Leverage Humor and Relatability**:
   Brands should focus on creating memes that resonate with their target audience's sense of humor and everyday experiences. The survey indicates that humor is a primary motivation for sharing memes, making it essential for brands to incorporate relatable content that reflects the cultural context of their audience.

2) **Stay Current with Cultural Trends**:
   To enhance cultural relevance, brands must stay updated on current trends and societal conversations. This can be achieved by actively monitoring social media platforms and engaging with trending topics to create timely and relevant meme content.

3) **Encourage User-Generated Content**:
   Brands should consider encouraging consumers to create and share their own memes related to the brand.

This not only fosters community engagement but also allows brands to tap into authentic consumer voices, enhancing relatability and emotional connection.

4) **Maintain Authenticity**:
   Authenticity is crucial in meme marketing. Brands should ensure that their meme content aligns with their overall brand message and values. Avoiding forced or overly promotional content will help maintain credibility and foster trust among consumers.

5) **Utilize Multiple Platforms**:
   Given the diverse social media usage among respondents, brands should adopt a multi-platform approach to meme marketing. This includes tailoring content for platforms like Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, and Twitter to maximize reach and engagement.

6) **Monitor Engagement Metrics**:
   Brands should track engagement metrics such as likes, shares, comments, and overall sentiment towards meme content. Analyzing these metrics can provide insights into what resonates with the audience, allowing for continuous improvement in meme marketing strategies.

7) **Test Different Formats**:
   Experimenting with various meme formats (e.g., image memes, video memes, GIFs) can help brands understand which types of content generate the most engagement. A/B testing different styles can yield valuable data for optimizing future campaigns.

8) **Educate Teams on Meme Culture**:
   Marketing teams should be educated about meme culture to understand its nuances better. Training sessions or workshops can help teams create more effective and culturally relevant meme content that

resonates with target audiences.

9) **Be Mindful of Sensitivity**:
While humor is essential, brands must be cautious about topics that may be sensitive or controversial. Ensuring that meme content does not offend or alienate any demographic is vital for maintaining a positive brand image.

10) **Engage in Feedback Loops**:
Brands should actively seek feedback from their audience regarding their meme marketing efforts. This can be done through surveys or social media polls to gauge consumer perceptions and preferences, allowing brands to refine their strategies accordingly.

7. Conclusion

This research highlights the significant impact of meme culture on brand perception, emphasizing its role in enhancing consumer engagement and relatability. Survey findings from approximately 100 respondents underscore the importance of humor and cultural relevance in connecting with younger audiences. Brands leveraging meme marketing must remain adaptive to evolving trends while ensuring authenticity and sensitivity to diverse consumer perspectives. While memes foster emotional connections and brand loyalty, missteps can lead to backlash. This study also opens avenues for future research into the long-term effects of meme marketing on brand equity across different demographic groups. By understanding consumer behavior in relation to meme culture, marketers can develop more effective strategies that resonate with their target audiences, ultimately strengthening brand perception and consumer engagement.

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