Insights on Meme and Meme Marketing:
A Review of Available Literatures

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Abstract:

Purpose: *The primary objective of this research was to gain insights on meme and meme marketing using available literatures.*

Design/methodology/approach: *The researcher has exclusively used the relevant secondary data pertaining to meme and meme marketing regard, gathered from the authentic sources.*

Findings: *Meme Marketing is the most effective tool to promote the brand among the target audience. It has an influence on brand recall, brand awareness, and purchase intentions. The humorous meme has more shareability. The researcher has recommended that memes used in the marketing should be humorous, trending, successful, and relevant to the brand. Apart from this, the marketer must have the knowledge of target audience to grab their attention.*

Originality & Value: *The research conducted is original in nature and the study emphasized on offering the useful insights on meme and meme marketing.*

Keywords: *Meme, Marketing, Brand, Purchase, Awareness*

1. Introduction

With the advent of digitalization, the scope of marketing has expanded considerably. Marketers are trying their best to entice their brand attention under any circumstances. With the proliferation of brands, it is confirmed that marketers are looking out for innovative means of promoting their products and services to the customers. One of the most prominent ways to reach to the consumers is through the social media platforms.

According to Forbes, the number of social media users is expected to swell to approximately 5.85 billion users by2027. The forecasts also predict a (CAGR) compound annual growth rate increase of 26.3% from 2023 to 2030. This is indeed a positive challenge to the marketers to seize the opportunity in order to make their brands more noticeable to the consumers. Meme marketing can beis a new buzzword in the face of emergence of digitalization and advent of social media.

In general parlance, a meme refers to a joke or catchphrase or funny dialogue that is shared online for humorous purposes. In other words, it is something, usually humorous and is copied and circulated online with slight adaptation. These internet memes can be in a form of image or video. Among young generation, it is quite popular as they get to laugh, share, enjoy. Interestingly, virtual memes are trending on social media and offer plenty of opportunities to engage the people.

As a matter of fact, the term meme was coined by evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 to describe how ideas replicate, mutate, and evolve. It is a way to carry a shared idea or trend to engage a target group.

According to the report of AMRA and ELMA (Top Meme Statistics in 2023), the global meme industry was valued US$2.3 billion in 2020 which is expected to grow to US$6.1 billion by 2025 and 75 percent of people belonging to 13 to 36 years of age group share the memes. According to Forbes, as compared to email marketing, click through rate of a meme campaign is 14 percent higher.

In the recent survey conducted by the Forbes, more than 60 percent of target audience would like to buy those brands which are marketed through memes.
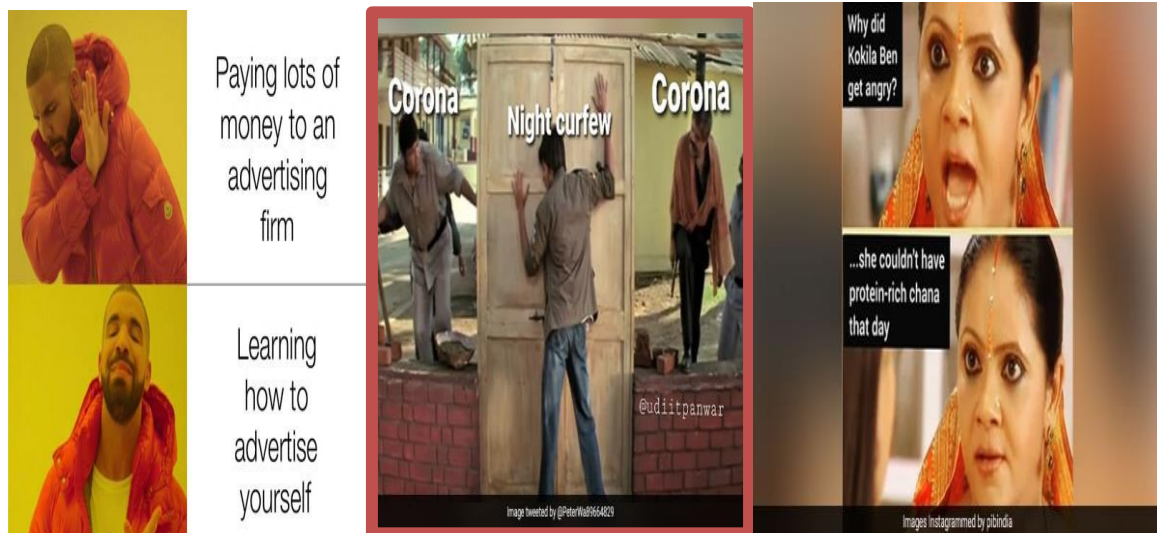

Figure 1. Popular memes that got viral on social media

2. Research Objective
The primary objective of this paper is to understand the importance and usage of meme and meme marketing based on the available literatures.

3. Method and Material
The present study is descriptive in nature. It describes the emergence and present status of meme and meme marketing. All relevant information was gathered by the researcher from the available literatures and reports pertaining to meme and meme marketing. Hence, the study is exclusively based on the secondary data.

4. Memes
As discussed above, for the first time, Richard Dawkins introduced the word 'meme' in his book namely 'Selfish Gene' in a year 1976. According to him, meme refers to culture units that are passed down and spread by no genetic influence(Richard, 1976). (Heylighen, 1998) gave four steps namely assimilation, retention, expression, and transmission, through which a meme gets transferred from one person to another. (Brown & Gundar, 2010) explained that why memes are suitable for internet, firstly easy transmission to end number of people, secondly, they can be sent in different format such as video, text or image, thirdly unknown meme creator, and fourthly survival of strongest meme. Memes are said to be the famous messages, ideas or style used as narrative networks in order to create influence (Veerasamy & Labuschagne, 2014).

Memes that get viral on internet are virtual text which are context bound, spread by mutation or replication as described by (Denisova, 2020).Today, memes have occupied the prime importance in the marketing carried on a digital platform especially social media (Krasniqi & Palmstadius, 2021).

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Due to social media, memeshave garneredthe attention especially in digital marketing (Meer, Khan, & Kanwal, 2022). This has resulted into popularisation of meme marketing for endorsing any brand in a humorous and comic way which is mostly remembered by the targeted people. Actually, it hits the minds of the people. The more creative the memes are, the more possibility of getting it viral on social media. Meme Marketing is found to be popular in digital culture (Fryklund & Stenlund, 2022).

5. Meme Marketing and its Impact

(Gobora, 1996) discussed as to how the memes are evolved and spread and she believed that when the memes are analysed it provides a way to inquire the concepts and by products of social interactions of a group.(Dickerson, 2010) found that positive meme on a brand influences the opinion of target group and majority of respondents can easily remember the brand featured in the meme.(Murray, Manrai, & Manrai, 2013) discussed the lifecycle model of management consisting of transmission, decoding, infection, storage, survival, and retransmission. (Veerasamy & Labuschagne, 2014) are of the view that social media are widely being used to send out the memes and messages via memes gets promptly noticed by the social media users.(Mazambani, Carlson, Reysen, & Hempelmann, 2015) revealed that when the memes are initiated by the low status members, they tend to get viral faster than those are initiated by the moderate and high-status members.

(Kulkarni, 2017) concluded that there is no major impact on target audience when internet memes are used as one of the tools of political branding in spite of it enhances political engagement. (Reicks & Ahmas, 2019) discussed in their research on meme-marketing that virtual memes are being used to define the brand personality & brand voice and also to get the attention of social media users towards a brand. In the same line, hilarious memes have more potential to attract the people. However, memes are not preferred for the most luxurious brands. (Lee H. H., Liang, Liao, & Chen, 2019) showed in the findings that marketers create and use internet memes as a social media campaign to know about purchase intention of the target audience and concluded that purchase decision is influenced by the internet memes. (Lee H.-H. , Liang, Liao, & Chen, 2019) asserted that emergence of internet meme is the result of proliferation of internet and also suggested that memes based on hedonic value and of witty nature should be designed by the marketers to attract the target audience.

(Krasniqi & Palmstadius, 2021) found that brand is perceived differently when it is positioned in the meme. In their opinion, with the advent of meme marketing, the perception of consumers towards brand personality is changed.(Sinha, 2021) asserted that because of social media, meme on digital platform has the great relevance. (Meer, Khan, & Kanwal, 2022) viewed meme marketing as an effective social media marketing method and today it is infused with brand marketing tactics due to widely use of social media.(Malodia, Dhir, Bilgihan, & Sinha, 2022) reported in the study that target audiences well perceive the viral memes because they can be related and very apt. The researchers affirmed that meme marketing is capable to enhancing the brand call and also concluded that meme-based advertising can lead to high brand engagement as compared to non-meme based one. (Meer, Khan, & Kanwal, 2022) concluded that purchase intentions of social media users are greatly influenced by the memes. In other words, memes do affect the purchasing behaviour of those who are on social media and come across such memes.(Fryklund & Stenlund, 2022) undertook the research with the primary objective of examining as to how meme marketing influences brand recall and sharing. The results indicated that there was a significant positive correlation and impact of funny meme on shareability and there existed a positive impact of meme marketing on brand recall.

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Figure 2. Meme Marketing of Brand Factory, Sensodyne and Bigbazaar.com

6. Managerial Implications

- In the present time of digitalization especially when social media and WhatsApp University immensely affect people's lives and where everything gets viral so quickly, meme marketing is considered to be the most powerful and popular social media marketing strategy.
- Evidently, millions of memes are posted on social media and young generation would post and share the memes.
- Memes get viral speedily and increase brand exposure.
- Memes are also used by the marketers to increase social media followers as well as social media engagement.
- Today, meme marketing is preferred among the marketers because a meme can easily be created, it entertains the target audience, it brings creativity in marketing, it promotes digital culture, it leads to brand engagement and increases followers on social media page designated for marketing, and it can be easily shared.

7. Recommendations

- To make the meme marketing effective, one has to have first of all, knowledge of the audience. Without taking it into consideration, the meme may fail to grab the attention of the target group.
- It would be better if original memes are created for marketing. Sometimes, successful memes can also be replicated.
- The marketer should understand the meme's life cycle. The meme which are unpopular and obsolete should be avoided as it fails to attract the audience.
- Memes that are going to be used must have the element of humour. Sometime, sarcasm can also be incorporated as one of the features of a meme.
- The idea or message encoded in the form of meme should be easy to understand.
- The memes can be created using latest current events occurring in any sphere.
- Latest trending memes should be identified and the same can be used for marketing.
- The memes that are being used should have relevance with the brand.
- Memes created or used should have potential to make the people immediately laugh.

8. Limitations and Scope for Future Research

The present study was carried out using the available literatures on meme and meme marketing and hence it lacks the research based on primary data. For future study, the opinions of social media users can be studied. Moreover, the effectiveness of meme marketing can also be investigated. Similarly, the study emphasizing on the impact of meme marketing on brand recall, brand awareness, and purchase intentions can be undertaken.

9. Conclusion

To sum up, in the recent time, meme marketing has become the prominent tool to grab the more attention of target audience. The use of creative and humorous meme has a potential to influence the brand recall, brand awareness, and purchase decisions.

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