

Meme Marketing through Social Media for Online Audience Attention, Awareness, and Engagement with Brand

Pankaj Sharma

Assistant Professor

Shri K. K. Shastri Government Commerce College, Gujarat

Shital Rathod

Assistant Professor

SLU Arts & H. & P. Thakore Commerce College for Women, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad

ABSTRACT

In this digital interactions and social media dominated era of memes have emerged as powerful tools for conveying messages in a humorous and relatable manner. Therefore, this study focuses on the use of memes by companies to increased customer engagement with a specific focus on leveraging the prevalent viral vibes in the Indian context. The main objective of this study is to identify the meme marketing strategy of top Indian brands along with their engagement on Instagram. The descriptive research design has been used to meet the objective of this study. The meme marketing strategy has been identified from available memes posted on Instagram page of respective brand. The data used and method adopted in this study have certain limitations and same are applicable to this study. This study concludes that all brands leverage sector specific content, humor, relatability, relevance, trends, and viral vibes for improved engagement however the paytm is most successful among selected brands in doing so by maintaining balance in quantity and quality of memes. The findings of this research contribute to the field of digital marketing, providing insights into the dynamics of meme marketing in a diverse and culturally rich market like India.

Keywords: Meme, Social Media, Digital, Marketing, Customer, Engagement.

Introduction

Meme marketing is a creative and modern digital marketing strategy that involves the strategic use of memes like humorous, relatable, and shareable images, videos, or text to engage and connect with a target audience. For leveraging the virality and cultural relevance of memes the brands integrate these shareable content pieces into their marketing campaigns to enhance brand awareness to build a sense of community and tap

into current viral trends. Meme marketing capitalizes on the internet's collective culture that aims to evoke emotions and create relatable content which ultimately drive user engagement and brand loyalty in a manner that aligns with the dynamic and informal nature of online communication. This approach allows brands to connect with a diverse audience and establish a more authentic and approachable online presence.

Literature Review

Table 1: Literature Review on Meme Marketing

Authors	Description	Key Findings	Methods / Insights
Razzaq et al. (2023)	Defined the meme marketing as a form of digital marketing that uses memes to communicate brand intentions and provide customers with epistemic, emotional, and social values.	Differentiated Meme marketing from other digital marketing constructs.	Conceptualization of meme marketing using speech act theory and consumption values.
		Meme marketing serves as a rich communication source with various values.	Empirical qualitative content analysis of 699 meme marketing posts.
Zhang & Huang (2022)	Conducted a case study of how a herder's accidental viral fame led to increased interest in visiting his hometown.	Viral marketing can significantly increase tourism interest.	Use of meme influencer marketing in tourism.
		Collaborations between influencers and destinations can be effective.	It presents a case study of a herder who went viral and attracted tourists.
Razzaq et al. (2023)	Provided a conceptualization and empirical evidence towards understanding meme marketing.	Meme marketing is a valuable strategy for engaging consumers.	Conceptualisation of meme marketing
		Memes can enhance brand awareness and create positive brand associations.	Empirical evidence analysis
Lenda et al. (2020)	Discussed the use of amusing internet memes in conservation marketing and how they can positively influence individuals' interest and engagement in protecting unappealing species.	Amusing internet memes positively correlate with interest in unappealing species.	Google Trends data analysis
		Conservation marketing with memes and social media complements traditional campaigns.	Google Search and popular media materials search
Марина (2022)	Discussed the use of memes in marketing, including their features, types, and methods.	Possibilities of using memes in advertising communication	Methods of using memes in marketing are discussed.
		Advantages and disadvantages of using memes in marketing	The features and main types of memes.
Teng (2022)	Discussed the influence of Internet memes on brand image.	Internet memes positively influence brand image	Delphi method used to refine Internet memes' constructs and dimensions
		Brand prestige, interaction, and humor enhance brand image	Questionnaire used to collect data from 348 valid Internet consumers

Yang (2022)	Discussed the effectiveness of using funny memes in brand -related Twitter posts and how bandwagon cues can moderate the impact of memes on persuasion through perceived humor.	Using funny memes is more effective than serious images in brand -related Twitter posts.	2 (image type: funny meme vs. serious image) × 2 (level of bandwagon cues: high vs. low) between-subjects online experiment
		Bandwagon cues moderate the effect of memes on persuasion through perceived humor.	Statistical analysis of participants' attitudes, intention to share, and brand recall
Hansen & Wilson (2023)	Described the use of memes as an innovative technique to engage students in marketing classes.	Using memes as graded homework exercises increases student engagement.	Requiring students to submit graded homework exercises using memes
		Competitive aspects such as student voting and prizes enhance engagement.	Using a picture of the instructor as the background photo for the meme
Chuah et al. (2020)	Discussed the use of Internet memes in social media marketing, specifically focusing on the interpretation of memes by Malaysian youths. It provides insights for local businesses planning meme-based marketing strategies.	Memes with high iconicity can still reach the target audience despite cultural differences.	Qualitative research design
		Users with greater exposure to different cultures understand memes faster.	Interpretive approach
Kala & Pawar (2022)	Discussed the use of memes in marketing and how companies can leverage them to engage with consumers and promote their products or services.	Memes are used by advertisers to draw and retain customer interest.	Methodological analysis of an exploratory type
		Generation Z is susceptible to economic and social threats.	Collating insights and evidence from published works
Csordás et al. (2017)	Discussed the concept of memetics and the use of internet memes as marketing vehicles. It evaluates the prospects of using internet memes for advertising purposes.	Introduction to memetics and its connection with Internet memes	Introduces the concept of memetics and its connection with Internet memes
		Evaluation of using Internet memes as marketing vehicles	Evaluates the prospects for using Internet memes as marketing vehicles
Murray et al. (2014)	Discussed the use of viral themes in social media campaigns, suggesting that memetics can be beneficial in advertising contexts.	Memetics has failed to deliver a complex model of culture	Analyzed the failure of memetics to deliver a complex model of culture.
		Memetics should rely less on biological models	Proposed a lifecycle model of meme management in advertising.
Bury (2016)	Described the creative use of Internet memes in advertising campaigns,	Internet memes are creatively used in advertising campaigns.	Analysis of a random selection of memes

Petrova (2021)	Examined the influence of meme language on digital culture and collective thinking.	Memes influence language, culture, and thinking in digital communities.	Online survey
		Memes are an element of postmodernism and contribute to Internet cultures.	Analysis of visual techniques and qualitative data
Williams (2000)	Revealed the concept of memes and their potential use in marketing and management.	Memetics has potential for advertisers to create better cultural survivors.	Rule-based solutions, storytelling, and case study approaches are used.
		Memes that are more interesting and able to replicate themselves have higher fitness.	Examples of meme power include oranges and priesthood.
Malone (2001)	Discussed the use of memes in marketing, suggesting that memes can be used as replicators to spread marketing messages and potentially aid in survival.	Memes are linguistic signs and units of culture.	Memetic analysis of marketing messages and advertisements
		Memes can be used in marketing to spread messages.	Exploration of the use of memes in the fashion and music industries
Alexandrovskiy et al. (2021)	Discussed the influence of factors such as entertainment, informativeness, and irritation on the value of video advertising with memes.	Informativeness of advertising has the highest influence on advertising value.	Study of 448 Russian consumers
		Entertainment and informativeness influence innovators, while irritation has no influence.	Analysis of factors influencing value of video advertising with memes

Research Gap

There are numerous studies that have been conducted on meme marketing that focus on measuring the effectiveness of memes posted by reputed brands and companies, understanding consumer perception, identifying effective meme advertising strategies, how memes can help in improved marketing, cultural aspects of memes, etc. However, there are very few studies that focus on identifying the top meme marketing strategies adopted by specifically Indian top brands and analyzing the engagement of selected top Indian brands. Therefore, this study is directed to identify the meme marketing strategy of top Indian brands along with their engagement on Instagram.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this study is to identify the meme marketing strategy of top Indian brands along with their engagement on Instagram. The descriptive research design has been used to meet the objective of this study. The sample of top meme active 11 Indian brands are selected. The data is collected from the Instagram page of the respective brand. The collected data has been analyzed using metrics like total posts, total followers, and followers per post. The meme marketing strategy has been identified from available memes posted on the Instagram page of the respective brand. The data used and method adopted in this study have certain limitations and some are applicable to this study.

Data Analysis

Table 2: Meme Marketing Strategy of Selected Brands

Sr. No.	Brands	Meme Marketing Strategy
1	Zomato	Zomato has engaged in humorous and relatable memes on social media, often incorporating food -related humor and trending topics. They leverage memes to connect with their audience.
2	Netflix India	Netflix India is known for creating memes related to popular shows and movies on their platform. They often engage with current events and trends to stay relevant.
3	Alt Balaji	Alt Balaji has used memes to promote their web series, creating content that resonates with the younger audience. They focus on humor and relatability to capture attention.
4	Tinder	Tinder has a playful approach to meme marketing, using humor and relatable dating scenarios. They aim to connect with their audience by tapping into the culture of online dating.
5	Disney + Hotstar	Disney + Hotstar creates memes related to their vast content library, incorporating characters and scenes from popular shows and movies. They aim to engage with their diverse audience.
6	Paytm	Paytm has used memes to communicate about their various services, promotions, and cashback offers. They often incorporate trending topics and cultural references to stay relevant.
7	Amazon	Amazon's meme strategy revolves around showcasing the variety of products available on their platform. They use humor to highlight the convenience and wide selection of items.
8	Swiggy	Swiggy uses memes to connect with food enthusiasts, often featuring humorous situations related to food delivery and ordering. They engage with current trends to stay in the spotlight.
9	Unacademy	Unacademy has utilized memes to make learning more fun and relatable. They often incorporate academic humor and motivational content to connect with their student audience.
10	Brand Factory India	Brand Factory India employs memes to promote their sales and discounts. They often use humor and relatability to convey the message of affordable and trendy fashion.
11	Pepsi India	Pepsi India's meme strategy involves incorporating their brand into pop culture and current events. They create memes that resonate with the youth and promote a fun and energetic image.

Table 3: Analysis of Instagram Post and Followers of Selected Brands

No.	Brands	Instagram Followers (Overall)	Posts	Followers Per Post (Engagement)	Rank
1	Zomato	903000	2735	330.16	4
2	Netflix India	8800000	12423	708.36	2
3	Alt Balaji	1100000	8630	127.46	9
4	Tinder India	146000	1864	78.33	11
5	Disney + Hotstar	1900000	8727	217.72	6
6	Paytm	4100000	2845	1441.12	1

7	Prime Video	5100000	12045	423.41	3
8	Swiggy	492000	2918	168.61	7
9	Unacademy	933000	3899	239.29	5
10	Brand Factory India	359000	3002	119.59	10
11	Pepsi India	134000	972	137.86	8

(Source: <https://www.instagram.com/> retrieved on 27th January, 2024)

From the table 3 it is observed that Netflix India has the highest number of Instagram followers among the listed brands, with 8,800,000 followers while Pepsi India has the lowest number of Instagram followers among the listed brands, with 134,000 followers. Further the table 3 shows that Prime Video has the highest number of Instagram posts among the listed brands, with 12,045 posts while Pepsi India has the lowest number of Instagram posts among the listed brands, with 972 posts. Moreover, the analysis revealed that Paytm has the highest average of followers per post, with 1,441.12 followers per post while Tinder India has the lowest average of followers per post, with 78.33 followers per post.

The analysis revealed that the Netflix India has the second-highest number of followers but Paytm outperforms it in terms of engagement. Therefore, the Paytm's high engagement suggests a more active and involved audience which

indicates that mere follower count might not always be the sole indicator of social media success. The social media active brands should consider both quantity and quality of engagement. From the table it is observed that the Tinder India has the lowest followers per post. Here it may be possible that the dating apps have a more challenging time engaging users on Instagram compared to content-driven platforms. This emphasizes the importance of understanding the nature of product of the brand and tailoring social media strategies accordingly. The Prime Video has the highest number of posts this indicate an active presence but it also raises questions about the quality and relevance of the content. Therefore, it is suggested that brands should focus on maintaining a balance between quantity and maintaining high-quality, engaging content.

Data Indication	Recommendation
This study finds that the Netflix India leads in overall Instagram followers with a significant count of 8,800,000, indicating its massive audience reach and popularity among selected brands.	Leverage Netflix India's popular shows and characters in memes to tap into the existing fan base and create memes that relates with the diverse interests of the audience by combining humor with references to trending content.
The Paytm stands out with the highest engagement with average 1,441.12 followers per post which indicates a strong and active connection with its audience.	To develop memes that reflect the convenience and benefits of using Paytm app also utilize humor to highlight cashback offers and promotions by creating relatable content that encourages user interaction.

<p>The Prime Video has the highest number of posts 12,045 with a good followers per post ratio of 423.41 this suggests a balance between quantity and quality of content.</p>	<p>To create memes that showcase the diverse content available on Prime Video and incorporate popular characters and scenes into humorous memes by maintaining a balance between frequent posting and content relevance.</p>
<p>The Tinder India faces challenges in engagement with the lowest followers per post ratio of 78.33 this might indicate a need for tailored content strategies in the competitive dating app space.</p>	<p>To develop mem es those are relevant with the dating app culture and tap into relatable and humorous dating scenarios.</p>
<p>The Alt Balaji has a low followers per post ratio of 127.46 while the Pepsi India's engagement is moderate with 137.86 followers per post. However, the both brands might benefit from reevaluating and adjusting their content strategies to enhance engagement.</p>	<p>The Alt Balaji should create mem es that connect with the audience's emotions by leveraging viral vibes with content from web series. The Pepsi India should focus on creating dynamic and visually appealing memes that align with the brand's energetic image.</p>
<p>The Swiggy and Brand Factory India have moderate overall followers and engagement metrics this suggest the potential for growth by refining their social media strategies to attract a larger audience.</p>	<p>To develop memes that showcase the uniqueness of Swiggy's food delivery service and Brand Factory India's affordable and trendy fashion. They should utilize humor and current viral vibes & trends to attract a larger audience.</p>
<p>The Unacademy maintains a solid engagement with 239.29 followers per post indicate effective content strategies in the education sector.</p>	<p>To create memes that blend humor with educational content and Highlight the benefits of learning on Unacademy in a lighthearted manner for encouraging students' engagement and participation.</p>
<p>The Paytm secures the top rank indicating an overall strong performance in terms of both followers and engagement this brand effectively balances quantity and quality which resulted in a comprehensive social media success.</p>	<p>The Paytm should continue the current strategy of creating engaging and relevant memes and regularly analyze audience preferences and adapt meme content to maintain a strong and dynamic social media presence.</p>

Major Findings

The findings present diverse and effective meme marketing strategies adopted by the selected brands. The Zomato connects with the audience through humorous and relatable food related memes while Netflix India engages with viral trends and popular shows and leverages its own content. The Alt Balaji focuses on capturing the attention of the youth through memes promoting

their web series by employing humor and relatability. The Tinder adopts a playful approach for connecting with the audience through relatable dating scenarios. The Disney + Hotstar incorporates characters and scenes from its shows in memes to engage with its diverse audience. The Paytm effectively communicates various offered services, promotions and cashback offers using memes and remains relevant by incorporating viral vibes. The

Amazon showcases its wide product selection with humor while Swiggy connects with food enthusiasts through humorous situations related to food delivery. The Unacademy makes learning fun and relatable by incorporating academic humor and motivational content in memes. The Brand Factory India employs humor and relatability to promote sales and discounts for

growth potential that suggests the need for refinement of social media strategies to attract a larger audience. The Unacademy's effective engagement in the education sector demonstrates the success of blending humor with educational content. The Paytm's top - ranking position underscores its balanced approach in maintaining both quantity and quality in meme marketing.

Implication of the Study

	Implications
Theory	Theoretical implications emphasize the importance of aligning meme strategies with audience interests and industry dynamics. Further research could delve into the psychological aspects of humor and relatability in meme marketing.
Practice	Practically, brands are encouraged to refine their social media strategies continually. Brands can learn from successful examples like Paytm and adopt a balanced approach, considering both quantity and quality in meme creation to maximize engagement.
Policy	Brands could benefit from establishing internal policies that prioritize meme marketing as a dynamic and evolving aspect of their overall digital strategy. Such policies would promote agility and responsiveness to changing audience preferences.
Future Extension	Future research could delve into the deeper nuances of meme impact on consumer behavior, considering factors such as cognitive responses and emotional triggers. Exploring the role of memes in financial apps, as exemplified by Paytm, could provide insights into industry-specific meme marketing strategies.

targeting affordability and trendiness. The Pepsi India incorporates its brand into pop culture through memes related with the youth and promotes a fun and energetic image. The analysis of Instagram metrics finds the Paytm's overall success in both followers and engagement that shows Paytm's balanced approach in quantity and quality.

Conclusion

The findings reveal a spectrum of effective meme marketing strategies employed by the selected brands. The Zomato, Netflix India, and Alt Balaji leverage humor and relatability to connect with audiences with specific interests. The Tinder faces engagement challenges which suggest the need for customized content in the competitive dating app space. The Swiggy and Brand Factory India show

Therefore, this study concludes that all brands leverage sector specific content, humor, relatability, relevance, trends, and viral vibes for improved engagement but the paytm is most successful among selected brands in doing so by maintaining balance in quantity and quality of memes.

References

- Alexandrovskiy, S. V., Zinchak, E. V., Kozyreva, D. S., & Sofonova, E. N. (2021). Consumers attitude toward video advertising with memes. *Moscow University Economics Bulletin*, (4), 181-195.
- Bury, B. (2016). Creative use of internet memes in advertising. *World Scientific News*, 57.
- Chowdhury, A., & Chakraborty, P. (2021). Memes that evoke emotions: a neurodesign

- strategy for brand communication and experience. In *Design for Tomorrow - Volume 1: Proceedings of ICoRD 2021* (pp. 147-156). Springer Singapore.
- Chuah, K. M., Kahar, Y. M., & Ch'ng, L. C. (2020). We “Meme” business: Exploring Malaysian youths' interpretation of internet memes in social media marketing. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 21(2), 931-944.
 - Csordás, T., Horváth, D., Mitev, A., & Markos-Kujbus, É. (2017). 4.3 user-generated internet memes as advertising vehicles: Visual narratives as special consumer information sources and consumer tribe integrators. *Commercial communication in the digital age: Information or disinformation*, 247-265.
 - Hansen, J. M., & Wilson, P. (2023). Increasing student engagement using 'meme based' exercise innovation. *Marketing Education Review*, 1-5.
 - Kala, I., & Pawar, S. (2022). What is in a Meme: Analysing the Perception of Gen Z to Memes and Virality in Modern Marketing. *Cardiometry*, (24), 737-742.
 - Lenda, M., Skórka, P., Mazur, B., Sutherland, W., Tryjanowski, P., Moroń, D., ... & Wilson, K. A. (2020). Effects of amusing memes on concern for unappealing species. *Conservation Biology*, 34(5), 1200-1209.
 - Malone, L. (2001). The meme is the message: A study of memetics & marketing.
 - Murray, N., Manrai, A., & Manrai, L. (2014). Memes, memetics and marketing: A state-of-the-art review and a lifecycle model of meme management in advertising. *The Routledge companion to the future of marketing*, 331-347.
 - Petrova, Y. (2021). Meme language, its impact on digital culture and collective thinking. In *E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 273, p. 11026). EDP Sciences.
 - Razzaq, A., Shao, W., & Quach, S. (2023). Towards an understanding of meme marketing: conceptualisation and empirical evidence. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 1-32.
 - Teng, H., Lo, C. F., & Lee, H. H. (2022). How do internet memes affect brand image?. *Online Information Review*, 46(2), 304-318.
 - Williams, R. (2000). The business of memes: memetic possibilities for marketing and management. *Management Decision*, 38(4), 272-279.
 - Wu, Y., & Ardley, B. (2007). Brand strategy and brand evolution: Welcome to the world of the meme. *The Marketing Review*, 7(3), 301-310.
 - Yang, G. (2022). Using funny memes for social media marketing: The moderating role of bandwagon cues. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 28(7), 944-960.
 - Zhang, T., & Huang, X. (2022). Viral marketing: Influencer marketing pivots in tourism—a case study of meme influencer instigated travel interest surge. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 25(4), 508-515.