

A Study on Meme Marketing in The Digital Age: Examining The Role of Meme Creators in Brand Virality

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Abstract

Memes today are far more than online jokes; they have become a cultural language that shapes how people interact and how brands are perceived in the digital space. This study examines the role of meme creators in driving brand virality, with a focus on their creativity, opinion leadership, and authenticity. Data were gathered from 132 respondents in Coimbatore through a structured questionnaire, supported by secondary sources such as journals and articles. Analytical tools including Chi-square, One-way ANOVA and Frequency analysis were used to interpret the results. Findings reveal that gender does not significantly influence daily social media usage, while the choice of platform strongly impacts brand engagement and loyalty. Creativity and opinion leadership were closely tied to authenticity, underscoring the importance of meme creators in shaping brand personality and emotional connection. However, virality and trust appear to depend more on external factors such as platform dynamics and peer sharing. The study concludes that memes are most effective in building identity and emotional resonance rather than recall or recommendation. These insights highlight the value of collaborating with creative meme influencers to design culturally relevant strategies that strengthen brand visibility and appeal across diverse audiences in today's fast-changing digital world.

Keyword: Memes, brand engagement, Social media, Meme creators

INTRODUCTION

Memes have grown into more than just online jokes; they are now a cultural language that spreads quickly, feels relatable, and shapes how people view brands in the digital age. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and X have turned memes into everyday touchpoints, making them a powerful tool for marketers who want to connect with audiences in authentic ways. Unlike polished advertisements, memes carry a sense of humor and realness that younger audiences engage with effortlessly. At the center of this trend are meme creators—digital natives who understand timing, humor, and audience behavior. Their creativity and cultural awareness often decide which content goes viral and how brands build genuine connections. Despite their growing influence, research on meme creators' role in brand virality remains limited. This study explores how memes and their creators shape brand visibility, engagement, and perception, with a focus on authenticity and collaboration. By viewing memes as both cultural artifacts and marketing tools, the research highlights how brands can design stronger digital strategies and stay relevant in today's fast-changing online space.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Memes today are more than just entertainment; they have become a universal language of online communication that spreads quickly, feels relatable, and shapes how people connect with brands. Recognizing this, companies increasingly use memes to engage audiences—especially younger ones—in ways that feel authentic and culturally relevant. At the center of this phenomenon are meme creators, whose creativity, timing, and cultural awareness often decide which content goes viral and how brands gain visibility. Despite their growing influence, the role of meme creators in shaping brand engagement has not been studied extensively. This research seeks to fill that gap by examining how meme creators contribute to brand virality, focusing on the impact of their traits on consumer perception and online conversations. By viewing memes as both cultural artifacts and marketing tools, the study underscores the importance of authenticity and collaboration, offering valuable insights into how brands can design stronger digital strategies and remain relevant in today's fast-changing online space.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

The study is important to understand how meme marketing helps brands become more visible and go viral in today's digital world. It looks at how memes are created, how people engage with them, how online trends evolve, and how meme creators influence what becomes popular. As online communication becomes faster, funnier, and more creative, brands are turning to memes to connect with audiences in a more relatable way. This makes it essential to explore how these factors shape the success of modern branding.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study explores how memes have become a driving force in helping brands gain popularity online and how meme creators play a key role in this process. It examines the way memes are crafted, shared, and received on social media, highlighting the cultural and emotional connections they create with audiences. By focusing on the influence of meme creators—the individuals who shape trends and decide what captures attention—the research provides deeper insight into how meme marketing works in practice. The findings aim to bridge the gap between entertainment and strategy, showing how memes can strengthen brand visibility and engagement in the digital space. Beyond immediate results, the study also offers guidance for future research in digital marketing and online culture, emphasizing the importance of authenticity, creativity, and collaboration in building successful branding strategies in today's fast-changing online world.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To analyze how age differences influence brand engagement and loyalty in meme marketing
- To test whether gender influences daily social media usage time which leads to frequent exposure to memes.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

PRIMARY DATA: Primary data was collected using a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire included both multiple-choice and Likert scale questions to gather detailed insights into the role of meme creators in brand virality.

SECONDARY DATA: Secondary data was obtained from existing research papers, journals, articles, company reports, and online sources related to meme marketing and social media marketing

SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE:

A Simple Random Sampling technique is used to select a representative sample from consumers in Coimbatore. 132 samples were collected from the respondents.

TOOLS USED FOR ANALYSIS:

- CHI-SQUARE TEST
- ANOVA
- FREQUENCY ANALYSIS
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LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- The research relies on respondents opinion which may involve personal bias.
- The research has been limited to Coimbatore region only. So the findings may not be applicable to different region only.
- Only 132 samples have been taken for the study. A larger sample size may yield a different result

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Guolan Yang (2022)⁴, in their study *“Using Funny Memes for Social Media Marketing: The Moderating Role of Bandwagon Cues”*, explored how humor in memes interacts with social proof indicators to shape consumer reactions to brand posts. Conducting a 2×2 online experimental design with 258 participants, the research compared the effects of funny memes versus serious images, as well as high versus low bandwagon cues (e.g., number of likes, retweets, comments). Findings demonstrated that humorous memes significantly enhanced positive attitudes

toward the post and increased sharing intentions, while high bandwagon cues amplified the perceived humor. However, the study also uncovered a counterintuitive effect: despite boosting engagement, humorous memes sometimes reduced brand recall, suggesting that

the entertainment factor can overshadow the brand message. Yang concluded that while humor is a valuable persuasive tool, marketers should balance it with clear brand visibility to avoid diminishing brand memory.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

FREQUENCY ANALYSIS

Table no.1 – Frequency analysis

S.No	Particulars	Classification	No.of respondents	Percentage
1.	Gender	Male	63	46.7
		Female	72	53.3
		Total	135	100
2	Age	Below 18	9	6.7
		18-24	117	86.7
		25-34	7	5.2
		35-44	1	0.7
		45 above	1	0.7
		Total	135	100
3	Educational qualification	School level	5	3.7
		Under graduate	109	80.7
		Post graduate	16	11.9
		Others	5	3.7
		Total	135	100
4	Occupation	Student	110	81.5
		Employed	19	14.1
		Self-employed	4	3
		unemployed	2	1.5
		Total	135	100
5	Area of living	Urban	73	54.1
		Rural	51	37.7
		Semi - urban	11	8.2
		Total	135	100
6	Type of family	Nuclear family	105	78.4
		Joint family	30	21.6
		Total	135	100

Table no 1 above makes it evident that the respondents overall profile reveals that, 63% of the respondents are male and 37% of the respondents are female. 6.7% of the respondents are below 18 age group, 86.7% of the respondents are 18-24 age group, 5.2% of the respondents are 25-34 age group, 0.7% of the respondents are 35-44 age group, 0.7% of the respondents are 45 & above age group. 3.7% of the respondents belong to school level, 80.7% of the respondents belong to under graduate level, 11.9% of the respondents belong to

post graduate level and 3.7% of the respondents belong to other qualification or professional qualification. 81.5% of the respondents are students, 14.1% of the respondents are employed, 3% of the respondents are self-employed, 1.5% of the respondents are unemployed. Among the respondents 54.1% reside in urban area, 37.7% reside in rural area, 8.2% reside in semi-urban area and 78.4% belong to nuclear family and 21.6% belong to joint family.

CHI-SQUARE TEST

Table No - 2: Chi-square values-gender and average time spent on social media

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	4.216 ^a	6	.647
Likelihood Ratio	4.584	6	.598
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.662	1	.197
N of Valid Cases	132		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .05.

INTERPRETATION:

The Chi-Square test results indicate that there is no statistically significant association between gender and average daily time spent in social media. The Pearson Chi-Square, Likelihood Ratio, and Linear-by-Linear Association values all show p-values greater than 0.05, confirming the absence of a meaningful relationship between the

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
[Memes increase my likelihood of engaging with brand posts]	Between Groups	.718	4	.179	.237	.917
	Within Groups	96.214	127	.758		
	Total	96.932	131			
[Meme-based marketing improves my recall of brand names]	Between Groups	7.025	4	1.749	6.341	.001
	Within Groups	35.186	127	.276		
	Total	42.083	131			
[I feel a stronger emotional connection with brands that use memes]	Between Groups	.428	4	.107	.147	.964
	Within Groups	92.383	127	.727		
	Total	92.811	131			
[Memes influence my perception of a brand's personality]	Between Groups	12.184	4	3.002	7.689	.002
	Within Groups	50.081	127	.394		
	Total	62.265	131			
[I am more likely to recommend brands that use creative memes]	Between Groups	10.090	4	2.499	5.305	.0003
	Within Groups	60.879	127	0.465		
	Total	70.970	131			

INTERPRETATION:

The ANOVA results show that meme-based marketing significantly influences brand name recall, perception of brand personality, and recommendation likelihood across groups. Other factors such as engagement likelihood and emotional connection do not show significant differences. This indicates that memes play a role mainly in enhancing cognitive recall, shaping brand personality perceptions, and driving word-of-mouth advocacy, while their impact on

variables. This suggests that gender does not significantly influence the average daily time spent in social media. However, the presence of some cells with low expected frequencies may slightly affect the reliability of the test results.

ONE WAY ANOVA

Table No – 3: Comparisons between the age group of audience and their brand engagement and loyalty through meme marketing .

H₀: There is no significant difference among different age groups audience and their brand engagement and loyalty through meme marketing .

H₁: There is a significant difference among different age groups of audience and their brand engagement and loyalty through meme marketing .

direct engagement and emotional bonding remains limited across different age groups.

FINDINGS

The study shows that meme marketing has its strongest impact on younger audiences, especially those between 18–24 years old, who are the most active on social media. Interestingly, gender does not play a role in how much time people spend online, meaning memes reach audiences equally across male and female users. What really matters

is the platform—different social media spaces influence how people engage with brands and build loyalty. The analysis also reveals that memes are particularly effective in helping people remember brand names, shaping how they see a brand's personality, and encouraging them to recommend brands to others. On the other hand, memes don't seem to make a big difference in emotional bonding or direct engagement. Creativity, opinion leadership, and authenticity among meme creators stand out as key traits that help brands feel more relatable and genuine, while factors like virality and trust depend more on external elements such as peer sharing and platform algorithms.

SUGGESTIONS

Based on these insights, brands should focus on working closely with meme creators who understand online culture and humor, as their creativity and authenticity can make campaigns feel more genuine. Since gender doesn't affect meme exposure, strategies can be designed to appeal universally rather than targeting specific groups. Marketers should also adapt their meme campaigns to fit the unique vibe of each platform, whether it's Instagram, TikTok, or X, to maximize engagement. Humor should be used wisely—while it grabs attention, it should be balanced with subtle brand cues like logos or slogans to ensure the brand itself isn't forgotten. Encouraging audiences to share memes or create their own can further boost word-of-mouth advocacy and expand reach. Finally, future studies should look beyond Coimbatore and include larger, more diverse samples to provide broader insights into how meme marketing works across different regions and demographics.

Conclusion

Overall, the research highlights that memes have become a powerful cultural language in the digital

age, helping brands build visibility and connect with audiences in ways that feel authentic and fun. Meme creators play a crucial role in this process, as their creativity and influence shape how people perceive brands and whether content goes viral. While memes are highly effective in driving recall, shaping brand personality, and encouraging recommendations, their role in emotional bonding and direct engagement is less pronounced. Gender does not influence exposure, but platform choice strongly affects engagement and loyalty. In essence, memes are best at building identity and emotional resonance rather than trust or recall alone. For brands, the key takeaway is clear: collaborate with creative meme influencers, design platform-specific strategies, and embrace authenticity to stay culturally relevant and competitive in today's fast-changing digital world.

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