

A Study on The Role of Meme Creators in Brand Virality

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Abstract

Memes have become more than just online jokes; they are now a powerful cultural language that brands use to connect with audiences in authentic and relatable ways. This study explores how meme creators influence brand virality, focusing on their creativity, opinion leadership, and authenticity. Data were collected from 132 respondents in Coimbatore through a structured questionnaire, complemented by secondary sources such as journals and articles. Statistical tools including Chi-square, One-way ANOVA, Correlation, and Frequency analysis were applied to interpret the findings. Results show that gender does not significantly affect daily social media usage, while the choice of social media platform strongly impacts brand engagement and loyalty. Creativity and opinion leadership were found to be closely linked with authenticity, highlighting the importance of meme creators in shaping brand personality and emotional resonance. However, virality and trust appear to depend more on external factors like platform dynamics and peer sharing. The study concludes that memes are most effective in building identity and emotional connection rather than recall or recommendation. These insights suggest that brands can strengthen their cultural relevance and appeal by collaborating with creative meme influencers and designing strategies that resonate across diverse audiences.

Keywords: Digital world, meme marketing, creativity, Social media platforms

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital world, memes have evolved into more than just jokes—they are a cultural language that spreads quickly, feels relatable, and shapes how people perceive brands. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and X have transformed memes into everyday touchpoints, making them a powerful tool for marketers. Unlike polished advertisements, memes carry a sense of authenticity, which is why younger audiences engage with them so naturally. At the heart of this phenomenon are meme creators—digital natives who understand humor, timing, and audience behavior. Their creativity and cultural awareness give them the ability to make content go viral and help brands connect in ways that feel genuine. Yet, despite their growing influence, research on meme creators' role in brand virality remains limited. This study investigates how memes and their creators impact brand visibility, engagement, and perception, with a focus on authenticity and collaboration. By treating memes as both cultural artifacts and marketing tools, the research highlights how brands can build stronger

digital strategies and remain relevant in the fast-changing online space.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's digital world, memes have grown beyond entertainment to become a central part of online communication. Brands have quickly recognized their power, using memes to connect with audiences—especially younger ones—in ways that feel fun, authentic, and relatable. At the heart of this trend are meme creators, the individuals who shape what becomes popular and how quickly content spreads. Their creativity, timing, and cultural awareness often determine whether a meme goes viral, yet their influence on brand visibility and engagement has not been studied in depth. This research addresses that gap by examining the role of meme creators in driving brand virality, focusing on how their traits impact consumer perception and online conversations. By treating memes as both cultural artifacts and marketing tools, the study highlights the importance of authenticity and collaboration, offering insights into how brands can

strengthen digital strategies and remain relevant in a 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

The study looks at how memes help brands become popular online and how meme creators influence this process. It focuses on the way memes are made, shared and reacted to on social media. This research aims to give a clearer understanding of how meme marketing works today and offers useful guidance for future studies in digital marketing and online culture.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To study how meme creators creativity, opinion leadership influence brand engagement.
- To identify whether different social media platforms make users more likely to trust or engage with brands that use memes.
- To investigate how age influences the relatability of meme marketing.

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:

- CORRELATION
- ANOVA
- CHI-SQUARE

LIMITATION OF STUDY

- The geographical scope of the study is limited to the Coimbatore city so the findings may not apply to other regions
- The study is based on 132 responses which may limit the generalization of the results.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jihye Kim & Minseong Kim (2024)¹, in their study "*Viral dynamics on social media: enhancing brand engagement through meme marketing strategy*", investigated the transformative role of meme marketing in shaping both brand engagement and consumer perception in modern digital ecosystems. The objective was to explore how brands can strategically leverage memes to foster a sense of online community and customer loyalty. While the exact sample size was not specified, the data was drawn from a range of meme-centric brand campaigns and analyzed using a combination of qualitative content analysis and digital analytics to assess audience engagement metrics and brand sentiment. The study found that authenticity in meme content, along with a strategic alignment between the meme's tone and the brand's identity and values, significantly increases engagement levels. Furthermore, omni-channel distribution strategies were shown to amplify the reach and resonance of meme campaigns, while user-generated content emerged as a critical driver in fostering participatory cultures and audience creativity. The authors concluded that for marketers to fully harness meme marketing's potential, they must prioritize authenticity, align meme narratives with audience values, and consider long-term cultural integration, suggesting future research on the intersection of technology, culture, and consumer behavior in the age of memes.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

ONEWAY ANOVA

Table no.1 – Comparison between most used platform and their impact on brand engagement and loyalty

H₀: There is no significant difference among different social media platforms and brand engagement and loyalty.

H₁: There is a significant difference among different social media platform and their brand engagement and loyalty.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
[Meme-based marketing improves my recall of brand names]	Between Groups	3.396	4	.849	1.083	.368
	Within Groups	99.596	127	.784		
	Total	102.992	131			
[Memes influence my perception of a brand's personality]	Between Groups	17.429	4	4.357	2.925	.024
	Within Groups	189.200	127	1.490		
	Total	206.629	131			
[I am more likely to recommend brands that use creative memes]	Between Groups	10.391	4	2.598	1.674	.160
	Within Groups	197.124	127	1.552		
	Total	207.515	131			
[I associate meme-using brands with being youth-oriented and trendy]	Between Groups	11.479	4	2.870	2.630	.037
	Within Groups	138.581	127	1.091		
	Total	150.061	131			
[I feel a stronger emotional connection with brands that use memes]	Between Groups	3.423	4	.856	3.061	.019
	Within Groups	35.509	127	.280		
	Total	38.932	131			

INTERPRETATION

The ANOVA results indicate that meme-based marketing has mixed effects across different platforms. While brand name recall (p = 0.368) and recommendation likelihood (p = 0.160) show no significant differences, suggesting these factors are not strongly influenced by different platforms, other variables reveal meaningful variations. Perception of brand personality (p = 0.024), association of meme-using brands with being youth-oriented and trendy (p = 0.037), and emotional connection with

brands that use memes (p = 0.019) all show significant differences across different platforms. This means that memes are particularly effective in shaping how audiences view brand personality, reinforcing youth-oriented and trendy associations, and building emotional bonds, even though their impact on recall and recommendation remains limited. Overall, the findings highlight that memes play a stronger role in influencing perceptions and emotions rather than in driving recall or direct advocacy across different social media platforms.

CHI SQUARE TEST

Table no .2 – Chi-square values – Age and relatibility factor

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	33.098 ^a	12	.001
Likelihood Ratio	20.963	12	.051
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.393	1	.122
N of Valid Cases	132		

a. 17 cells (85.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

INTERPRETATION

The Chi-Square test results indicate that there is a statistically significant association

between age and the relatability factor. The Pearson Chi-Square value shows a p-value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05, confirming the

presence of a meaningful relationship between the variables. The Likelihood Ratio value ($p = 0.051$) is slightly above 0.05, suggesting a weaker level of significance, while the Linear-by-Linear Association value ($p = 0.122$) indicates no significant linear trend. This suggests that while the overall association between the variables is

statistically significant, the strength of the relationship may vary depending on the test applied. However, the presence of many cells with low expected frequencies (85% below 5) may affect the reliability of the test results and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

CORRELATION

Table 3 – Correlation

Correlations

		[Meme creators play a key role in making brand memes go viral]	[I trust meme content more when shared by popular meme creators]	[The creativity of meme creators determines the reach of branded memes]	[Meme influencers act as opinion leaders in online culture]	[Brands collaborating with meme creators appear more authentic]
[Meme creators play a key role in making brand memes go viral]	Pearson Correlation	1	.011	.139	.104	.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.897	.112	.235	.228
	N	132	132	132	132	132
[I trust meme content more when shared by popular meme creators]	Pearson Correlation	.011	1	.062	.012	-.090
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.897		.481	.888	.304
	N	132	132	132	132	132
[The creativity of meme creators determines the reach of branded memes]	Pearson Correlation	.139	.062	1	.487**	.506**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.112	.481		.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132
[Meme influencers act as opinion leaders in online culture]	Pearson Correlation	.104	.012	.487**	1	.624**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.235	.888	.000		.000
	N	132	132	132	132	132
[Brands collaborating with meme creators appear more authentic]	Pearson Correlation	.106	-.090	.506**	.624**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.228	.304	.000	.000	
	N	132	132	132	132	132

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

INTERPRETATION

The correlation analysis shows that the creativity of meme creators is strongly linked to their role as opinion leaders and to the perception that brands collaborating with them appear more authentic. Similarly, opinion leadership is closely connected with authenticity, suggesting that audiences trust and engage more with brands when memes come from creators who are both creative and influential. On the other hand, factors like virality and trust in popular meme creators did not show strong or significant relationships, meaning that simply being popular does not guarantee impact. Overall, the findings highlight that creativity, opinion leadership, and authenticity are

the key drivers of how meme creators shape brand perception, while virality and trust depend more on external factors such as platform dynamics and peer

sharing.

Findings

The study shows that memes have become a powerful tool for shaping how audiences connect with brands, though their impact varies depending on the context. Gender does not play a role in how much time people spend on social media, meaning memes reach audiences equally across male and female users. What really matters is the platform—different social media spaces influence how people perceive brand personality, build emotional connections, and see meme-using brands as youth-oriented and trendy. At the same time, recall and recommendation likelihood are less affected by platform choice. Age also plays a role, with younger

audiences finding memes more relatable than older groups. Finally, the analysis highlights that creativity, opinion leadership, and authenticity among meme creators are closely linked, making them central to how audiences trust and engage with brands. Virality and trust, however, depend more on external factors like peer sharing and platform dynamics rather than creator popularity alone.

Suggestions

Based on these insights, brands should focus on working with meme creators who are not only creative but also culturally aware, since their authenticity helps audiences see brands as more genuine. Campaigns should be tailored to 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 so the brand itself isn't lost in the joke. Since memes are especially effective in building emotional bonds and reinforcing youth-oriented perceptions, brands should lean into this strength to connect with younger audiences while still designing campaigns that appeal universally across genders. Encouraging user-generated memes and peer sharing can further amplify reach and virality. Future research should expand beyond Coimbatore and include larger, more diverse samples to provide broader insights into meme marketing's effectiveness across different regions and demographics.

Conclusion

Overall, the research highlights that memes have evolved into a cultural language that helps brands connect with audiences in ways that feel authentic, fun, and relatable. Meme creators, through their creativity, opinion leadership, and authenticity, play a crucial role in shaping brand personality and emotional resonance, making them valuable partners for marketers. While memes are most effective in influencing perceptions, building identity, and fostering emotional connections, their impact on recall and recommendation is less consistent. Virality and trust are shaped more by platform dynamics and peer sharing than by creator popularity alone. The study concludes that brands can strengthen their cultural relevance and digital appeal by collaborating with meme creators, designing platform-specific strategies, and

embracing authenticity to remain competitive in today's fast-changing online environment.

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