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### **Meme Marketing and Purchasing Behavior: A Study of Active Social Media Users**

#### **Abstract**

*The term "Internet Meme" was coined as a result of the rise of social media, and it is frequently used to advocate a product or a business. Meme Marketing is a clever and creative word used by advertisers and marketers to promote various companies and products.*

*Objectives of this study were to see how meme marketing affected people's buying habits and how memes are influencing the purchasing decision of an active social media through it. The respondents of this research were active social media users who are addicted to check their social platforms frequently. The researcher has conducted a survey to get the results and purposive sampling has been used for the selection of respondents.*

*Value- Attitude- Behavior model has been taken as the theoretical support to this research and the results of this study revealed that meme does affect the purchasing intention of an active social media user and it does compel the consumer to make a purchase after watching a meme made by brand for endorsement purpose.*

*Keywords: Memes, Marketing, Internet Memes, Purchasing Behavior*

#### **Introduction**

Marketers are continually conceiving of novel methods to convey their messages and persuade clients to purchase their products and services. As the twenty-first century began, experts projected that the Internet would bridge the gap between customers and marketing businesses (Hamel & Sampler, 1998; Sotelo, 2017).

Recent technology improvements and the availability of inexpensive smart phones have led to an increase in the use of social networking sites. Globally, around 3 billion people use social media on a monthly basis (Global digital report, 2018).

Internet usage is predominantly for communication, information, and entertainment, but business transactions are on the rise. Marketing has been one of the most prevalent applications of the Internet as a commercial medium. The bulk of successful firms may someday rely heavily on the Internet as a distribution channel. Utilizing social networking sites for marketing and brand communication is one of them (Thompson, 2002).

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Internet's proliferation has accelerated data dispersion, giving rise to the phrase "Internet meme." Most social media users today regularly view and/or share memes (Wiggins, B.E.; Bowers, G.B. Memes, 2015).

Internet memes are remixed or parodied media that become emergent memes, which are then shared online as memes (Wiggins, B.E.; Bowers, G.B. 1886–1906).

Internet memes are digital items with shared characteristics, such as online images and movies that are created by Internet users and rapidly replicated, imitated, and enhanced. This word also refers to artefacts that get viral rapidly (Shifman, 2014).

As digital marketing strategies become more intertwined into our lives and culture on social media, companies' efforts to look as accessible as possible become more apparent. Others are just getting started with internet culture and so-called memetic media, but many individuals are already aware of the benefits of social media marketing (Literat & van der Berg, 2019). In popular culture and marketing, the term "meme" has received significant attention in order to reach their target population (Sax, 2012).

Meme marketing is one of the most effective social media marketing methods. As a result of the remarkable emergence of social media, meme marketing has been included into brand marketing tactics. No matter which social media network you use, you cannot avoid the millions of memes that are uploaded every day. Many brands have utilized memes as their primary social media strategy due to their ability to go viral and increase brand recognition.

Memes, as opposed to other marketing tactics, are frequently effective at reaching the younger generation with their sometimes bizarre and perplexing jokes. 2020 (Carr, s.).

Important are the purchasing patterns of individuals and households who acquire products and services for personal consumption. Purchase intent is generated when there is a demand for a product and consumers have a favorable view toward it. (Fishbein, M.; Ajzen, I.1981).

Once consumers have established a specific attitude about products or brands, their purchasing intentions will be influenced by a further external factor (Mullet, G.M.; Karson, M.J.1985).

According to the findings of the aforementioned studies, customers develop a favorable attitude toward a product prior to forming purchase intent. Using the Value Attitude Behavior model, we can see how online memes affect customers' purchasing intentions. The study is anticipated to demonstrate whether Internet memes result in true consumption or are merely an attention-getting ploy that yields no results.

## Literature Review

Reicks, A. M., & Ahmas, R. (2019) conducted a study on Meme-Marketing: How Modern Corporations Enhance Customer Engagement in response to companies that have leapt on internet platforms like Twitter and Instagram to establish a strong presence by building a bridge between consumers and brands through communicating and connecting with them. Internet memes are being used by businesses to attract customers. Internet memes are now being used by brands and organizations to reinforce and define their personality and voice. This study looks at how firms use online memes for branding and the general effectiveness of memes in engaging customers. We discovered evidence that firms with an edgy or hilarious personality had higher engagement when utilizing this technique of marketing, while more luxury brands should avoid employing memes, based on an exploratory examination of brands across different media pages. Between All Saints' Day, 2018, and February 1, 2019, the study examined and analyzed the social media accounts of four companies that regularly utilize memes to sell their brands. The findings imply that there is no direct link between online memes and consumer involvement, but that they can be used in conjunction with traditional marketing to increase engagement.

Lee, H. H., Liang, C. H., Liao, S. Y., & Chen, H. S (2019) conducted a study on analyzing the Intention of Consumer Purchasing Behaviors in Relation to Internet Memes Using VAB Model the popularity of social media has given rise to the phrase "internet meme," which is now widely used. The spread of an internet meme is aided by the use of social media networking platforms.

According to this study, digital media marketers employ Internet memes to create marketing campaigns that greatly increase their Internet exposure in order to determine whether or not consumers develop purchase intent after being drawn to an Internet meme. The study's theoretical foundation is an implied value–attitude–behavior model, which discusses how consumers' values created as a result of an Internet meme influence their purchase decisions through their attitudes.

Wu, Y., & Ardley, B. (2007) conducted a study on Brand strategy and brand evolution: Welcome to the world of the meme. This research explains the idea of memes and relates it to branding. Evolutionary theory says the meme is the cultural equal of the gene. Memes are visible as self-replicating entities which leap from human host to human host. In a comparable manner to the gene with inside the organic world, there's a complicated converting commercial enterprise surroundings in which a few memes are a success and others are now no longer.

This paper argues that manufacturers are meme like entities, conforming to the dictates of evolutionary principle. A critical query is likewise raised regarding the maximum suitable manner to investigate the meme phenomenon. Considerable present studies in branding argue that achievement effects from the growing complexity of emblem control and strategy. The memetic technique offers a special angle on emblem achievement however. Memetics does now no longer argue for class and complexity as a course to achievement. Natural choice is primarily based totally in simple terms at the health of the meme.

Williams, R. (2000) did study on the business of memes: memetic possibilities for marketing and management, which traces the origins of the concept of memes from Richard Dawkins' initial works in biology to the social (business) realm and argues the usefulness of his work (memes). Memetics claims to be able to assist humans in comprehending human thought. In the framework of advertising and management theory, this concept is debated. However, the project's findings on how to put the memetic principle into practice for commercial audiences were mixed. Although you find memes instinctively appealing, more effort needs to be done to comprehend, "enrich," and alter human thoughts before advertisers and management thinkers can harness the discretionary power of memes.

Taylor, Strutton, and Thompson (2012) did a study on Self-Enhancement as a Motivation for Sharing Online Advertising. According to their findings, purchasers prefer 15 user-generated material to commercials made by companies, therefore the more interesting the ad is, the more likely it is to be shared. The urge for self-improvement is also connected to social media users' message sharing practices. Consumers are more inclined to share an internet advertisement that is congruent with their identity since it represents who they are and what they like. As a result, "advertisers should think about the symbolic and self-expression aspects of their online commercials and connect them to the self-concepts of their target consumers." In other words, an organization's marketing must be compatible with the interests of its target market. These research' conclusions all point to the importance of CGA and its impact on internet marketing.

Sadath, S. M., & Shanmugasundaram, S. (2019) conducted a study on the attitudes of millennial consumers toward meme marketing In today's world, social media plays a critical part in product or brand recognition. Memetic marketing is a new and extravagant style of

social media promotion that certain businesses are paying attention to these days. The goal of this study was to see if independent characteristics like gender and educational background have an impact on the idea of memetic marketing, as well as purchasing behaviour and commercial social media pages, among millennial consumers. This is a descriptive study that collects key data from 217 respondents via structured questionnaires utilising convenience sampling approaches. To report key findings, statistical procedures such as the Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and percentage analysis were used. The findings of this study will aid businesses in calculating the impact of meme marketing on millennial consumers and developing strategic social media advertising strategy.

Chuah, K. M., Kahar, Y. M., & Ch'ng, L. C. (2020) social media marketing has gained traction in recent years due to its capacity to engage target audiences in a short amount of time, according to a study on "we" meme" business: investigating Malaysian millennials' interpretation of internet memes in social media marketing. Various types of social media marketing methods have been introduced and tested, with network memes being one of the most popular. Despite the widespread use of memes, it is vital to determine whether their iconicity will be impacted when they are employed in a local setting. The relationship between form (image and text) and meaning is referred to as iconicity.

This article presents the findings of a qualitative study that examines the iconicity of marketing memes by examining the language qualities linked with target responder response (ie young people from Malaysia). A total of 50 people took part in the study, and they were asked to score how well they understood and interpreted 30 memes before conducting in-depth interviews with five of them. The study's findings revealed that the majority of memes have a high level of signature, with only seven having a low amount of signature. The language's main qualities are also examined. Low-iconicity memes are more likely to include complicated sentences with short forms and words, as well as imperative words. The findings of this study may not be generalizable, but they are instructive for local businesses planning social media marketing, particularly those hoping to capitalise on the growing trend of Internet memes.

Taylor, Strutton, and Thompson (2012) Self-Enhancement as a Motivation for Sharing Online Advertising was the subject of a study. According to their findings, purchasers prefer 15 user-generated material to commercials made by companies, therefore the more interesting the ad is, the more likely it is to be shared. The urge for self-improvement is also connected to social media users' message sharing practises. Consumers are more inclined to share an internet advertisement that is congruent with their identity since it represents who they are and what they like. As a result, "advertisers should think about the symbolic and self-expression aspects of their online commercials and connect them to the self-concepts of their target consumers. In other words, an organization's marketing must be compatible with the interests of its target market. These research' conclusions all point to the importance of CGA and its impact on internet marketing.

Bampo et al., (2008) conducted a study on The Effects of the Social Structure of Digital Networks on Viral Marketing Performance brands which says viral marketing has evolved into a method for merchants to market and provide additional information about their brands or items. Because communication is more targeted to a brand's intended consumer, a viral approach to online advertising has a significant advantage. This is due to the fact that "viral communication provides the marketer with a greater degree of creative liberty through a more intimate and personalized message delivery channel, hence improving the possibility of reaching hard-to-reach audience members

In order to quantify the effectiveness of a company's engagement in interactive advertising, Pavlou and Stewart (2000) undertook a research titled Measuring the Effects and Effectiveness of Interactive Advertising: A Research Agenda. One set of metrics concentrates

on media selection, information search, and data processing. The second set of metrics looks at the effects of consumers' use of interactive media. Retailers can keep track of the kind of information that interactive media users seek, allowing them to figure out what information consumers find most beneficial when evaluating a product. This is an important idea for merchants to consider when determining how responsive consumers will be to their social media promotional and marketing initiatives. Because of the reciprocal connection between the marketer and the consumer, it will be difficult to isolate the impact of any advertising exposure; as a result, the focus of advertising evaluation will need to change from outcomes to both process and outcome. Finally, the consumer's position has shifted, and it's critical to track how people react to online ads in order to run successful social media marketing campaigns.

## Statistical Analysis

### Reliability test

Cronbach's Alpha has been applied to check the reliability of the questionnaire. The following conclusion has been drawn.

#### Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.976	.980	13

The result shows Cronbach alpha value is 0.976, which is an excellent range. According to the result, the questionnaire is reliable.

### Hypothesis Testing:

Correlation was applied to assess the results of the survey after inserting them in SPSS. The following conclusion has been drawn.

H1: "Branded memes compel the audience to buy a product" has been approved.

H2: "Meme Marketing can change the perception of consumers towards the brand"

#### Correlations

		Do you believe that memes can compel you to buy a product?	Do memes change your perception towards a brand?
Do you believe that memes can compel you	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	1	.796** .000

to buy a product?	N	100	100
Do memes change your perception towards a brand?	Pearson Correlation	.796**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	100	100

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

By applying the correlation test, it has been approved that the Memes has influenced the purchasing behavior of Active Social media users.

### Discussion and Data Analysis

The research title "Impact of Meme Marketing on the purchasing behavior of active social media users". The researcher aimed to conduct a research on the memes influencing the purchasing behavior of avid social media users and if it is changing the purchasing behavior or not. The main aspect of conducting this research was to see if memes will be a new tool to marketing in near future or not and how active social media users of today age take memes as. Researcher also wanted to check that can a meme shared with a promotional intentional by a brand get more engagement than memes originally made and shared for entertainment purposes.

After seeing the results of conducted survey on active social media users we can clearly see that people are more likely to develop interest in brands with humorous approach that can cause rapid increase in production. Memes will be a new dynamic in market, research showed. Interestingly we got to see that people also recreate and share memes on their timelines which helps the brand in reaching millions of audience. Which concludes that if you are reaching to 1 million audiences with a traditional campaign, you can generate reach to 2 million users with the production cost of 1 million with the help of memes because it is called viral or user generated advertising.

With the findings of survey we also came to know that if a brand wants to revamp itself, it can do it in a more attractive way through the helps of memes for example if Cocomo or Dingdog ever want to do rebranding they can simply do it by making the audience known about its huge popularity back in 90's among Gen Z. When people start remembering the product, they will more likely to start finding it to fulfill their needs of belonging mentioned by Maslow in the hierarchy of need model.

The researcher conducted a survey method to collect the data regarding "Impact of Meme Marketing on the purchasing behavior of Active Social Media Users". The target population is digital marketers and avid social media users who are consuming social platforms for more than hours. The reason behind the selection of digital marketers and active social media users was to evaluate their perceptions regarding memes apart from entertainment purposes and they consider memes as a tool to marketing.

### Conclusions

Mememes are very popular on social media networking sites in almost all the countries of the world including Pakistan but due to the lack of research on its diversity it remained uncovered due to which we were never able to explore its ability of influence in the field of marketing. This study explores the "Impact of Meme Marketing on the Purchasing Behavior of Active Social Media Users". This study is essential as due to pandemic and audience on social sites brands are now coming towards digitals campaigns and memes can be a dynamic

idea if executed well.

Memes generally attract the audience as audience find them humorous and relatable and with an attempt to recreation it gives it more reach which a brand looks for while planning a campaign. These memes sometimes include brands which compel the audience to make the purchase. Developing a sense of belonging or popularity could be a reason for a person to make a purchase of a specific product which can later on help the brand in generating more revenue.

The major purpose of entertainment for most viewers of memes incorporating companies is entertainment, but for brands, it might be a means of producing additional reach, which could enhance output. Today, brands are gravitating toward memes because the audience is more inclined to pay attention to them than to a business-oriented approach. This research adds to the body of knowledge about the impact of memes in marketing from the standpoint of iconicity. To impress customers, businesses should begin focusing more on social media platforms with inventive meme advertisements. In memes, trending information should be blended with hilarious components.

Marketers should aim to communicate their idea as simply as possible; the audience may not be interested in watching extensive advertising. Memes' viral success is mostly due to their creativity. Marketers should be cautious while creating meme advertisements because if the message is unclear, it can harm their brand's reputation. Companies should make an effort to expand their number of social media followers. To summarise, well-received positive meme commercials that align with consumer attitude can help increase sales, company image, and profits.

It's also a good idea for businesses to keep up with what's current on social media so that the memes they use in marketing don't become old. As a result, great consideration must be given to matching the appropriate meme with the appropriate message of products and services, so that customers understand it is a "memes" business and not just for fun.

The major focused area of this research was social media users living in the Lahore the capital city of Punjab province of Pakistan. A total of 100 sample of SMU was collected by applying the probability technique of sampling. Majority of the respondent shared that they are very familiar with internet Memes and they love to see memes incorporated with brands. The respondents also expressed that by sharing the memes their social interactions with Face book and Instagram friends increase and they love to mention their friends in relevant memes. The hypothesis "Memes can compel you to buy a product" hence proved because the survey results show majority of people like to see brands with meme approach and use the memes to relax their mind and even the memes indirectly change the purchasing decision of viewers by repeated exposure to the memes. This study concluded that participants understood the use of memes for marketing purposes and they are now considering as beyond mere jokes.

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