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DIVULGING COMMUNICATIVE VALUE OF MEMES

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Abstract

Memes are cultural components frequently utilised in popular culture and advertising. They are circulated online and frequently express humorous, sarcastic or relevant ideas. By creating content that consumers find humorous, symbolic, relevant, expandable, and content-gratifying, marketers can use meme marketing to improve the reach and recall of their brand. With an emphasis on their goals, approaches, and conceptualisations, this study explores the idea of memes and how they are used in several industries. The study investigates how memes are used in marketing communications and how they affect consumers' perceptions of brands and inclinations to buy through a qualitative investigation deploying in-depth interview technique. Total 25 participants were interviewed including users, influencers, meme producers, and brand managers. Purposive sampling approach was used to choose the participants. By recognising key antecedents like comparison, sarcasm, comedy, shareability, dark humour, puns, personification, exaggeration, silliness, surprise, and educational, minimalistic, and instructive themes, the researcher propose a conceptual framework with antecedents. The study has takeaways for marketers, content developers, academicians and scholars to explore more on memes for driving customer engagement.

***Keywords**: Memes, Meme, Marketing, Viral Marketing, Branding*

1. Introduction:

A meme is a cultural element that is shared and spread across the internet and commonly takes the form of images, videos, text, or other media (Adobe, 2023; Limor Shifman, 2014). They usually convey funny, satirical, or relatable messages that carry a specific cultural reference or joke (Adobe, 2023). Users can modify and evolve memes as they spread online (Adobe, 2023; Michael Benaim, 2018). Memes is the term used in advertising and popular culture (Gunders and Brown, 2010; Murray et al., 2014). Necessitating the adoption of various marketing approaches, the use of memes in marketing has become increasingly popular (Magic Media, 2020). Majority of online communities and internet forums use memes as their common language. Research suggests that meme value significantly influences consumer responses, indicating that high-quality meme content can enhance brand perception and purchase intentions (Mukhopadhyay et al., 2024).

As a consequence, many brands are using memes on various social media platforms to connect with younger audience members who are eager to share humour that resonates with them. Memes have the capacity to facilitate communication and raise awareness and interaction, which leads to a higher return on investment for marketers (Razzaq et al., 2023). Memes spread from brain to brain through a process of imitation and are comprehended as the evolutionary units of culture, helping to identify the characteristics shared by "memetic videos" (entities that reproduce themselves) (L Shifman– 2013). Meme marketing helps to quickly grab the attention of the target audience; people find them relevant and disseminate them swiftly, and it also encourages audience members to provide insightful comments and actively engage in user-generated content. Compared to other marketing strategies, companies have found meme marketing to be unique and more effective. Marketers prefer meme marketing due to its diversity (Channel Report, 2021), and when used appropriately and with minimal content, it can enhance audience relevance. Meme marketing has become a powerful weapon for industries such as fintech, OTT platforms like Netflix, and hyperlocal local marketplaces like Zomato and Swiggy. With the aid of certain well-known memes from the television series Wednesday, Stranger Things, and Squid Game, the biggest OTT platform, Netflix, was able to increase its sales and break all records (Forbes, 2022). Even fintech companies post memes on money, investment, money management, and money psychology. Thus, meme marketing now establishes the most basic expression of Internet culture.

Older studies on memes focused on the emergence of memes, imitation, the factors that lead to viral posts, and their final demise (Ajay K Manrai, 2013). The majority of studies on memetic communication have concentrated on internet memes to understand cultural trends and digital culture (Milner, 2013a; Shifman, 2013), community engagement, and spreadability (Jenkins, Ford, & Green, 2013; Miltner, 2014; Shifman, 2012). However, there is little business insight into memes (Dora Horwath, 2017); most of the literature is anecdotal or based on case studies. The types of gratification people seek when consuming memes are not clear (Suresh Malodia, 2022), and there is very little discussion of user-generated and customer-active communication channels, like memes, and their impact on brand image (HsujuTeng, 2022). Additionally, there is little prior research on how different meme marketing strategies impact consumer purchase decisions (Bayad Ali, 2021) and how various meme themes, used in different contexts, affect consumer perceptions. The current study thereby closes the aforementioned research gap by using 'use-gratification theory' to analyse the consumer engagement and purchase intention in relation to meme-based advertising. We conduct a qualitative analysis and draw findings from 25 in-depth interviews with various stakeholders involved in meme distribution, which include brand managers, influencers, and customers.

Following are the research questions of the study:

RQ 1 – What are the key themes suggested by past literature?

RQ 2 – What are stakeholders' opinion about meme marketing?

The structure of the study is as follows. Firstly, we synthesised the available literature on various meme and meme marketing-related topics. Second, we discuss research methodology, including the respondents, the interviewing procedure, data coding, and reliability and validity testing procedures used. Third, we expand theoretical claims and develop a conceptual framework of

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meme marketing. Finally, we established research findings and discuss limitations and future scope.

2. Review of Literature:

We extensively analysed the prior literature by looking at its objectives, methods, and conceptualisations of memes, as well as the metrics for gauging memes virality. We examined how various meme topics are taken into account in terms of the demographics and verticals that consumers, authors, brand managers, and influencers apply, as well as how they might be utilised to their benefit. This study is grounded in the 'uses and gratifications' theory to better understand the factors related to content, consumers, and media that have a role in using a range of meme themes in an attractive way. We develop a conceptual framework for meme marketing and discover major antecedents, such as comparison, sarcasm, comedy, and shareability, as well as dark humour, puns, personification, exaggeration, silliness, surprise, and educational, minimalistic, and instructional themes. Our study is a first attempt to offer a comprehensive framework for developing theme-based memes based on the various verticals from the viewpoints of consumers and industry stakeholders.

On the basis of past literature, the study distinguished five stages in the development of memes' conceptualisation. The first stage focuses on examining memetics in terms of culture, marketing, and advertising. A lifecycle model predicted the success of memes in advertising. It discussed numerous meme infection elements, meme selection on the basis of different aspects of the lifecycle model and other criteria, and the elements which lead to encouraging memes' spread and success. (Ajay K Manrai, 2014).The second stage discusses how quickly memes spread and how marketers have been using them as a communication tool. People argue that meme marketing strategies need to incorporate humour to leave a lasting impression on people's minds. Thus, an attention-grabbing image with some brief and humorous text has become the foundation of many advertising campaigns (Beata Bury, 2016).The third stage involved an investigation into how businesses could engage with Indian internet users by leveraging the growing internet meme trends. Netnography is used as a key research technique to examine Facebook usage patterns in India. They further classified humour into categories such as personification, exaggeration, puns, sarcasm, silliness, and surprise. According to

the results of the netnography research, marketers should create memes that speak to the two customer archetypes, "The Opportunist" and "The Whistle Blower," who are more inclined to interact with such material. Further, it is stated that advertising experts and other professionals need to understand the distinction between viral and memetic success to maximise the impact of their communications (Harshit Sharma, 2018). Viral success measures how many people the memes have reached, unlike memetic success, which measures the likelihood that individuals will copy and share them.

This study offered a theoretical foundation for creating meme marketing campaigns in the fourth stage. We develop a formula for popular meme marketing. It uses a mixed-method approach to investigate the causes, moderating variables, and antecedents (i.e., content-related factors, customer-related factors, and media-related factors). The study highlights the potential of viral memes in marketing messages since they increase brand engagement and brand recall. Field findings and the social contagion hypothesis show that the distribution strategy can amplify a meme's influence on the virality of a marketing campaign. (Suresh Malodia, 2020).The fifth stages discuss that brand perception, brand attitude, and social influence have a positive and significant impact on brand engagement. Additionally, it looked at how brand involvement affected consumers' behavioural intentions. It is also viewed that brand engagement positively mediates the impact on behavioural intention (Sorina Vasil, 2021).In the sixth stage, the study conceptualised meme marketing definitions using theories of speech acts and consumption values. Based on this, meme marketing was distinguished from other pertinent digital marketing constructs, such as e-WOM, digital content marketing, and viral marketing. We further used a qualitative content analysis to taxonomise meme marketing speech acts, thereby empirically validating the proposed definition. It is discovered that meme marketing is a rich source of communication, conveying the brand's intentions through both individual and combined speech acts which provide customers epistemic, emotional, and social values (Ali Razzak, 2021).

The current study divulges four key features of Internet memes in the seventh stage – humour, positive emotional intensity, brand interactions and prestige, and memes' spreadability that encourages users to create, share, and spread memes. The findings of the study show that Internet memes have

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a beneficial impact on brand perception. Further in contrast to all meme features, only brand prestige, engagement, and humour enhanced the brand image (Hsuju Teng, 2022).

3. Research design:

The study employed a qualitative research approach to achieve the following goals: a) Identify the key themes of the memes; b) Obtain the viewpoints of numerous stakeholders, including users, meme creators, meme fans, media outlets, brand managers, and influencers, to identify the main memetic topics. The study uses an inductive research strategy based on grounded theory to address the lack of existing research on memes. We have adopted an exploratory qualitative approach and conducted expert interviews to understand the industry perspectives (Sharma H. 2018).

Participants :

We conducted twenty-five thorough interviews with fifteen users, six meme creators, four influencers, and five brand managers over a period of two weeks. We selected participants using the convenience sampling method, a form of non-probability sampling (Vasile et al., 2021). Through mail and phone calls, we sent invitations to 40 memers, influencers, and brand managers—exclusively those people from the sector who were active on social media and involved in producing or using memes for their brands. Due to some prior appointments, only 25 out of the 40 invited individuals were available for the interview. We conducted interviews in person, via Google Meet, and over phone conversations at the interviewees' convenience. The 25 respondents accurately reflected the demographics of the invited 40 respondents. Table 1 describes the brief overview of the classification of these entities and their role in the meme advertising industry. The meme creators we spoke with had a great deal of experience working with trustworthy businesses, and their meme sites had amassed over 1 million followers (Instagram). The brand managers who participated in the interview had prominent roles. Meanwhile, the influencers had more than 50,000 followers (Instagram). All of the interviewees were experts in their respective disciplines. These respondents range in age from 20 to 45 years, and they are largely from Asia.

The stakeholders were interviewed to understand the current level of industry awareness and opinion about memes and their potential in the marketing and advertising of brands (Sharma H. 2018). For the purpose of gathering data, we adopted semi-structured interviews. Probing questions were also used to elicit responses, as they aid in the generation of more detailed and meaningful data (Malodia et al., 2022). The interviews provided important insights into the meme marketing phenomenon, allowing us to capture the different perspectives of all parties involved in meme marketing and identify the primary themes of the memes.

Table 1: Entities in the industry of meme advertising

Theme

Description

Role in the industry

Example

Informative & educative

Informative memes raise audience knowledge of new products on the market.

include current events, Be simple for users to determine whether the meme is providing sufficient information and relevant information to the target users.

Fintech companies, Credit Karma, Financewithsharan

Humorous

A few varieties of humour include dark humour, comparison, silliness, surprise, pun, sarcasm, exaggeration, and minimalistic comedy.

Funny memes connect users who are sad or bored and target users with witty or trendy templates.

Zomato, Netflix, Swiggy, Blinkit

Linguistic

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The language of memes is the most important communication tool, which is important to understand; most of the time, the local language is used to target local consumers.

It focuses on people's emotions and understanding so as to deliver it to target consumers.

Zomato, Swiggy, Tinder

Remunerative

Meme marketing is a digital marketing tactic that may help firms increase revenue.

Money from memes is generated through freelance, ads and sponsored posts.

ads, posts, celebrity posts, etc.

Semi-structured interviews:

The study conducted in-depth interviews with 25 participants, 10 of whom were industry professionals and 15 of whom were consumers. These interviews, which lasted an average of 20–25 minutes, assisted in understanding the key issues of meme marketing campaigns, as well as the various humorous themes that are commonly employed by brands for creating memes, improving consumer engagement, and increasing brand recall. Before recording the interviews, we obtained their consent for later analysis. These interviews provided us with useful information for our research investigation. Firstly, each interviewee provided basic information about their activities before the commencement of the interview, including a brief introduction about themselves and their business. Secondly, we investigated the following components of meme marketing using a semi-structured interviewing process: a) the factors considered when choosing a particular theme of humour for creating a meme; b) how the industry would guarantee that users would enjoy the meme— that is, how marketers gauge the effectiveness of a meme marketing campaign and the results they hope to achieve. c) The use of humour to engage consumers on different social media platforms necessitates a varied humour theme; d) The recent craze for memes that are most popular; and e) Why is a certain meme's theme more popular? f) Why are users liking it more? and g) utilising a pun as a theme and its effects on some people's feelings, whereas questions asked from users were a)

platforms they watch memes on, b) their change in emotions after watching viral videos, c) basic knowledge of memes, d) the most preferable content for the memes, e) different meme themes that grab their attention, f) the kind of content they sent to and received from their pals, and g) what action they take after watching We organised the interview discussions around four main topics: content, consumer engagement, social media, and industry sectors— each of which influences the vertices of memes differently. ices of memes. These interviews gave us insight into which themes captivate them the most and how they help retain information about the brand effectively.

4. Data Analysis:

Three researchers independently transcribed and examined every interview. We coded the interviews using a thematic content analysis strategy to look for recurring themes across the entire dataset. We categorise statements into groups based on their purpose. We then identified additional patterns in the responses and categorised them separately. We also conducted a literature review to guide our analysis. Finally, we divided the various heads into subcategories. This approach provided a methodical understanding of the memes' marketing-related vertices. The dependability testing process involved three steps. We conducted the reliability analysis using inter-rater reliability, which involved appointing two experts and integrating the coding sheets of various researchers.

5. Results:

Through a qualitative analysis of the interview data, we were able to determine four key components: content, customer engagement, social media, and industry. We identified 15 subcategories for these four components using the 'uses and gratification' approach. This theory helps determine customer engagement and purchase intentions. To ensure content validity, we handpicked a group of participants to examine the categories. We then discuss the results of the coding procedure.

Content:

Content-related aspects help to establish significant brand recognition, brand engagement, and brand recall. The various identified elements of content-related aspects in the study are informative,

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educative, humorous, remunerative, linguistic and original.

Informative and educative:

If a meme is informative and educative, people are more likely to share it. The following criteria must be met in order for a meme to be informative and assist the audience with awareness of new things in the market: a) The content must be widely shared; b) include current events; c) make it easy for users to determine whether the meme is providing sufficient information; and d) provide relevant information to the target users. Here are a few of the interviewees' comments from our in-depth interviews.

One should be cautious while making a meme. Our main motive for creating a meme is to grab the user's attention. If we fail to do so, then the meme will no longer be of any value. Frequently, we produce memes that inflict emotional distress on certain individuals. To the best of my knowledge, if we obtain consent from that segment, they won't be offended, according to the interviewee.

The takeaways that we can get from these findings are that the key factor in a meme's popularity among the general audience is its content. The content used should be current, and if it might offend any viewers, prior approval from a significant portion of them must be obtained. The topic of personification, which is the process of giving things, plants, or animals human traits, was highlighted during this particular interview.

While we ensure that the meme content is informative and is appropriate for the target audience, there are no chances that it can hurt someone's sentiments. In fact, people get to know more of that particular thing (interviewee response).

The respondent was making reference to the pun-themed memes in this sentence. Puns are created by manipulating language to produce new, hilarious connotations. The reply used the Spanish word "vomos" from Argentina's victory in the FIFA World Cup as an example, as well as the Bengali word "Khela hobe". People from the opposite community, according to the respondent, become more interested in learning about these words, which increases their knowledge.

Linguistic:

Marketers must use language to ensure clients understand their memes. When creating memes, we should pay particular attention to language. The language of memes, a unique form of communication that enables the creation of accurate and reliable representations, shapes aspects of people's lives. Memes' use of language is their most crucial component. The accessible language makes it simple for youngsters to comprehend the memes, which they can then share with their friends. Users should be able to dissect and reassemble the hidden meanings of memes. Successful memes, therefore, must be highly iconic (Malodia et al., 2022). Here are comments from respondents:

The memes' language is key to attracting users. The high usage of iconic memes leads to liking and sharing them. Using simple and common words enhances comprehension of the meme's conveyed message (interviewee response). We found that memes which emphasised more on the language aspect are more common and simple to comprehend. Thus, brand managers, influencers, and memers should use words that are popular and have the potential to grab the attention of the consumers.

Humorous:

Enjoying the nuances of the message is considered content satisfaction. The more enjoyable the content is, the more users will like and encourage others to interact with it. Humour dissolves barriers; it is a powerful and effective tool for communicating. Some of the elements of the humour identified are: dark humour, comparison, silliness, surprise, pun, sarcasm, exaggeration, and minimalistic comedy. The respondents made the following observations:

Humour is an integral part of our lives. I prefer watching humorous memes because they provide a break from my hectic life. Marketers can impress me through humour only (interviewee only through humour).

This was a response from a social media user who constantly monitors memes. Your statement clearly indicates that incorporating comedy into your meme marketing is a highly recommended strategy to attract attention. The majority of users access social media during downtime or during breaks; therefore,

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using comedy currently to engage potential clients would work wonders.

Remunerative:

Memes may help a brand make a lot of money. Marketers and brand managers are now employing digital marketing to get the attention of their customers. Memes, when made properly, can assist businesses in generating income for the company. Meme monetisation is the practice of paying people to publish memes. Respondents commented as follows:

Generating money from memes is not a tough job; it's just that one needs to be smart enough to know what type of content you should include in your meme, which will be liked by the users (interviewee response).

Getting a copyright for your meme is critical. Piracy is rampant today, so marketers must secure copyrights for their content.

Products that are based on the latest memes seem very trendy and cool. I often buy t-shirts which have meme content printed on them (interviewee response).

The above responses exhibit that memes are worth making a lot of money. It is also critical to obtain the meme's copyright. Copyright safeguards the uniqueness of memes.

Consumer:

Through our research, we attempted to pinpoint the key memetic themes that consumers enjoy the most. Marketers and brand managers may exploit these themes to develop loyal client bases. Getting customers interested in their memes poses a challenge for marketers; therefore, brands must create memes that resonate with their customers. The themes identified based on interviews using the "uses and gratifications theory" are cognitive needs, affective needs, social identity and personal identity. UGT explains the types of gratification needs that motivate people to prefer a specific type of media use (Kaur et al., 2020).

Social Identity:

Social identity is defined, for our purposes, as "how people make sense of you [an individual]" (Donath, 2014). Consumers use memes to communicate and socialise with groups. The "set of competencies and knowledge" necessary to properly construct and understand their format and content connects memes to social identity (Kanai, 2016). The meme user commented as follows:

Memes are a very trendy thing to follow on social media. They are very useful for socialising with our friends and cousins. Sarcastic and dark humour memes are perfect for socialising with our peer groups. This feeling makes my peers think about how up-to-date I am. This feeling gives me a certain type of satisfaction (interviewee response).

In today's hectic world, humour can make people feel lively, and through these memes, they get a chance to socialise with their loved ones (interviewee response).

We can infer from the two comments that consumers prefer to watch sarcasm. They can avoid loneliness and stay up to date on market trends by connecting with family and friends through these memes. It's going on in the market. This feeling gives them the essence of being part of a social group.

Personal Identity:

Personal identity refers to an individual's distinct identity across time. It aids in distinguishing between two or more people. The respondent shared the following:

My target audience is the 21-30 age The cont The content I use to create memes has profound meanings that a teenager may find difficult to understand. ly. I utilise humour in my content creation, focussing primarily on sarcasm and comparisons, as these themes resonate well with people (as evidenced by interviewee responses).

The themes around which most of my memes revolve are sarcasm and dark humour. These themes enhance the enjoyment of the content for users, according to the interviewee's response.

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We can infer from the statements above that memes frequently use sarcasm, humour, and comparisons as their main forms of humour. Using these elements attracts more consumers' attention and enhances their awareness of that particular meme. These memes gain popularity due to their high level of trendiness. Every target segment contains a diverse range of individuals with varying tastes, preferences, and interests, making it even more crucial for marketers to create memes for different consumers and impress them in novel ways.

Social Media:

Social media networks such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, 9GAG, Reddit, Snapchat, and WhatsApp can assist marketers in getting the attention of their target consumers. These social networking platforms can quickly determine which memes are more popular with their users, thus making it simple for marketing and brand managers to target their customers accordingly. We identified two key social media factors, i.e., first, timing and second, media types.

Timing:

Meme timing refers to the use of a trending topic in memes. Users select memes that align with the current issue. Marketers can direct people to their marketing memes by regularly uploading memes related to current topics. During our interviews, few users commented as follows:

Brands need to be attentive all the time. They need to keep track of all the trendy topics that are there in the environment (interviewee response: User1).

I need to stay up-to-date with all the new offers that marketers have introduced. India is a country known for its festivals, and creating memes based on these festive offers can attract a significant number of consumers. (Interviewee response: User2)

If you need to leave an impact on the consumer's mind, then one should timely release their memes into the media. Using a trending topic will reach out to a large chunk of the audience because that is when people are actively searching for that topic (interviewee response: brand manager).

The majority of respondents interviewed said that the memes' timing should be just right. T The audience is more likely to love memes that align with the most popular market trends. omparison, and dark humour dominated the response. Additionally, we found that dark humour based on these themes is currently gaining popularity. Many industries are trying to attract customers using this theme. We also found that individuals enjoy disseminating memes featuring current and popular themes.

Media Types:

The term "media types" refers to the many social media channels where these memes circulate. Some of the most appropriate media types cited by our respondents are Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, 9GAG, Reddit, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. The participant commented as follows:

I prefer to use different themes of humour for different platforms. For instance, comparison is mostly used for Instagram users; reels include the sarcasm, and trendy themes are used for WhatsApp (interviewee response).

I prefer to watch memes on Reddit and 9GAG (interviewee response).

From the above statements, we can deduce that the meme makers also attempt to use the most recent meme templates, since these are the ones shared on the most social media platforms. As the meme spreads from one user to another, the likelihood of capturing a sizable portion of the audience increases.

Industry:

To obtain more insightful information for the key themes that marketers can utilise to capture the attention of customers, our study attempted to explore some of the most popular themes for various sectors. We chose three industries for our research: hyperlocal (Zomato & Swiggy), OTT platforms (Netflix), and fintech. Table 2 shows the industry-wise popularity of memes.

Hyperlocal:

Hyperlocal marketing is the technique of targeting prospective clients in a highly particular, geographically limited area, sometimes as small as a few blocks or streets, with the goal of attracting

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people who make "near me" searches on their mobile devices (World Stream, 2018). We chose Zomato and Swiggy for our study because they are extremely connected with their clients through meme sharing. Respondents commented the following:

The meme war frequently features Zomato and Swiggy. They heavily use the themes of comparison and sarcasm. I like the mems that they share. They are very trendy (interviewee response).

It is clear from the response that brands under hyperlocal usually use comparison and sarcasm to create an image in the minds of their consumers.

OTT Platforms:

We abbreviate over-the-top media services as OTT platforms. These OTT platforms are quite fashionable and desirable in the current market. Everyone enjoys watching OTT platforms, from small children to teenagers and adults. We chose Netflix as an example for our research. During our interviews, the meme user commented as follows:

Memes that revolve around Netflix are purely based on themes of dark humour and sometimes sarcasm (interviewee responses).

Therefore, Netflix mostly uses dark humour as its main theme for the memes.

Fintech:

Financial technology, or fintech, refers to companies that provide financial services using cutting-edge technology. Respondents offered the following remarks:

These memes are mostly based on educational themes. Through these memes, the companies try to make their customers aware of the products and services (interviewee responses).

Memes that are based on the stock markets are very informative and also provide education about stocks to the users (interviewee response).

It is clear from above that memes on fintech industries are mostly based on educational themes. Thus, fintech companies can attract the customers by sharing more informative content through their memes.

Table 2: Industry-wise meme popularity

Industry
Hyperlocal (Zomato & Swiggy)
OTT Platforms (Netflix)
Fintech
Key Themes
Comparison & Sarcasm
Dark Humour & Sarcasm
Educational

6. Implications:

The current study has a number of management and theoretical consequences. We conceptualise the affected elements of media, consumers, and content in this study. The paper explores themes like minimalism, dark humour, education, timing, comparison, puns, sarcasm, surprises, silliness, personification, and exaggeration. Adopting social contagion theory, this study helps us better understand the factors related to content, consumers, and media that play a major role in effectively utilising the aforementioned themes. We offer several humorous themes that might serve as the foundation for a meme to increase brand engagement and brand recall. A meme is more likely to be remembered, appreciated, and shared by its users if it is humorous and has the ability to relate the brand's humour to the consumer. Our findings align with the current literature on humour, which reports that it is effective only when it is properly timed and unanticipated (Malodia et al., 2022).

On the other hand, if brand managers and influencers don't employ the latest and relevant humorous themes while developing memes, consumers will start ignoring them and will feel alienated, which will ultimately lead to a decrease in

customer engagement. Therefore, our study provides a roadmap for brand managers and marketers who are developing meme-based marketing initiatives. Dark humour, sarcasm, and comparisons are the most popular topics among users. Therefore, these themes could be adopted by many managers and marketers for their digital marketing using memes. Additionally, our findings show that memes should be simple to the point where consumers may readily relate to them while also having sufficient content.

7. Limitations and future scope of study:

Scholars and industry stakeholders have exhibited an interest in identifying the underlying dimensions of the components of viral memes and the relationship between meme advertisements. However, the recipe for creating a meme strategy for various industries still remains obscure. The study makes a phenomenal contribution by various factors of brand recall, brand image, life cycle model and exploring the antecedents of consumer buying behaviour related to media factors and also presents a comprehensive framework for creating meme strategies based on customers' buying behaviours across diverse sectors. However, there are few limitations of the study. It is a qualitative analysis and to attain conclusive results, thorough investigation is warranted. The scope of the study can be enhanced by working on more specific brand related themes and their success rate. A social media engagement study through the lens of memes can offer deep insights and multiple perspectives.

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Purchase Intention

Consumer Engagement

Content

- Informative
- Educative
- Humorous
- Linguistic
- Remunerative

Industry

- Hyperlocal
- OTT platform
- Fintech

Social media

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- Timing
- Media types

Consumer

- Social Identity
- Personal Identity

Figure 1: Consumer engagement and purchase intention framework.

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