

**The Role of Meme Marketing in Building Brand Awareness on Social Media**

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E-Mail Id: [Deepok.Chaudhary@mangalayatan.edu.in](mailto:Deepok.Chaudhary@mangalayatan.edu.in)**Abstract**

Marketing channel has widened with the introduction of internet. Social media is one of them. A revolution in the way brands communicate with consumers is the rise of social media. Brands are now able to connect and communicate with their customers through various social media platforms instead of the traditional ways like print advertisements and TV commercials. One of the newer options brands have begun using is by doing meme marketing. Memes are generally humorous and relatable, which is why the majority of people will often consume and share content based on them every day. With markers having the ability to be creative in their approach to using memes to promote their products, they become a part of the overall experience, rather than just an advertisement. This catches the attention of younger generations and encourages those individuals to interact with the brand by liking, commenting, or sharing that post. In certain instances, consumers will recreate or modify an existing meme related to that brand; thus creating ways for a brand to grow their organic reach. While meme marketing is a cost-effective method for brands to stay visible while maintaining a connection with their consumers and developing a more relatable/approachable brand image over time, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Some memes may be inappropriate for certain brands, while at times, due to miscommunication or misinterpretation of the meme itself, a message will be lost altogether. Memes also die quickly, resulting in brands needing to produce new content regularly.

**Keywords:** Internet Marketing, Social Media, Meme Marketing, Brand Communication, Consumer Engagement

**INTRODUCTION**

Internet marketing is a process which involves a variety of evolving continuous innovations and an increasing number of diverse applications (Md. Saifullah Khalid et al. 2022). Today, digital technology and social media is growing very fast and it has changed marketing in many ways (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In earlier time, companies mostly used television, newspaper and radio for doing advertisements (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). But now these methods are not enough alone, so companies are also using digital marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (X) and TikTok are now very important tools for businesses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). With the help of these platforms, companies can reach large number of people, communicate with customers and also improve their brand image online (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Now people spend a lot of time on internet, so marketers are trying to create content which is interesting, creative and easy to share (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Because of this change, meme marketing has become a popular and new way of promoting brands on social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). And also, it also helps in loyalty program. Loyalty program is a marketing strategy which is designed to increase the customer loyalty through personalized experiences. (Verma et al. 2022)

The idea of memes was first given by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* (Dawkins, 1976). He said memes are ideas or actions which spread from one person to another by copying (Dawkins, 1976). But now in today world, memes meaning is changed (Shifman, 2014). Now memes are mostly funny pictures, videos, GIFs or small text which spread very fast on internet (Shifman, 2014). These memes are based on trends, movies, celebrities or daily life things, so people understand it easily (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Because memes are funny and relatable, people like it and share with others (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Memes is very popular, mostly in young people (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Because it spread very fast, companies started using memes for marketing (Shifman, 2014).

Meme marketing means using memes in planned way to promote a brand or product (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). It is different from traditional advertising (Berger & Milkman, 2012). In traditional ads, companies directly promote their product, but in meme marketing message is not direct and more fun (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Brands use humor, creativity and trends to connect with people (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). They mix brand message with well-known meme formats so people enjoy it and also remember the brand (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Because of this, meme posts get more likes, shares, comments and reposts (Berger & Milkman, 2012). This helps content to spread fast and reach more people on social media (Berger & Milkman, 2012).

Brand awareness is one of the most important parts of marketing (Keller, 2013). When brand awareness is high, there is a high chance that people will choose that brand (Keller, 2013). On social media, brand awareness is dependent perception of people for the brand, and also how much they interact with it and how visible the content is in their feed (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). So, companies always try to make content that is more attractive and easier to remember (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Meme marketing is becoming very useful in building brand awareness (Shifman, 2014). Social media is full of different types of content and advertisements, so sometimes people ignore normal ads (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). But memes are different because they are fun and entertaining (Berger & Milkman, 2012). People do not feel that it is an advertisement, they just enjoy it (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Because of this, they are more likely to like, comment and share the meme with others (Berger & Milkman, 2012). This sharing helps the brand message to reach more audience and spread widely (Tuten & Solomon, 2017).

Another important reason for success of meme marketing is that it matches with internet culture (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Memes are a big part of online communication (Shifman, 2014). Meme is now a good source of online communication where people use it to share their feelings, opinions and humor (Shifman, 2014). By following current trends in meme, brands look more relatable and connected with the audience (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). This changes the image of brand to more friendly and modern (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021) and also helps in building emotional connection between brand and consumers (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). A lot of studies show that meme marketing works really well for younger people, especially Millennials and Gen Z. One reason is that they have been using internet and social media from a very young age, so it is kind of normal for them. Memes are not just for fun now, but also a way people express their thoughts, feelings or even daily situations. Because of this, when brands use memes, it does not feel like proper advertising. It feels more like the regular content they already see while scrolling online. This is why people don't mind interacting with it. They are more likely to like it, share it with others or comment on it without thinking too much. Sometimes they don't even realise it is part of marketing. Slowly, this kind of content spreads more and more, and helps the brand reach more audience. In this way, brands become more visible and familiar to people without doing direct promotion. Meme marketing also supports user-generated content (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). When people find a meme interesting, sometimes they make their own version and share it online (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). This increases the spread of content even more (Berger & Milkman, 2012). In this process, users are not just watching but also taking part in sharing and creating content (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Without directly promoting, they still help the brand to reach more audience (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). This type of promotion is useful because it feels more natural and helps in improving brand awareness. But meme marketing also has some problems (Shifman, 2014). Sometimes memes include jokes, sarcasm or cultural things which everyone may not understand in same way (Shifman, 2014). Because of this, message can be misunderstood (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Also, trends on internet change very quickly, so a meme which is popular now may not work after some time (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). That is why companies need to stay updated and careful while using memes (Shifman, 2014). If they use wrong or outdated meme, it can create a bad impression about the brand (Shifman, 2014).

Another challenge in meme marketing is to maintain balance between entertainment and promotion (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Memes are mainly for fun, but brands also need to convey their message in a very understandable manner. (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). If the meme is only funny and does not show the brand properly, people may enjoy it but not remember the brand (Keller, 2013). So, companies need to carefully mix humor with brand message so that both things work together (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Many companies have successfully used meme marketing (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Brands like Netflix, Wendy's and many fashion and tech companies use memes in their social media posts (Shifman, 2014). They follow latest trends and create content which people can relate with (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). This helps them to connect better with audience and increase their brand awareness (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Their success demonstrates that meme marketing can be useful if applied properly (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). In today's time, social media is very important for marketing (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). So, it is necessary to understand how meme marketing works in building brand awareness (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Many studies and reports show that meme-based content can increase engagement and help people remember brands better (Berger & Milkman, 2012). By studying different research and data, we can understand how meme marketing works in real situation (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Therefore, this study is centered on gaining a deeper understanding of how meme marketing contributes to building brand awareness on social media by relying on secondary data and existing literature (Keller, 2013). It attempts to explore the ways in which meme marketing enhances brand visibility, captures audience attention, and strengthens brand recognition among users (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). In addition, the study is expected to provide meaningful insights for marketers, enabling them to design more effective strategies by making use of memes and emerging digital trends in the future (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). By using the secondary data, this study aims to examine the role of meme marketing in developing brand awareness through social media platforms. It also seeks to build a clear understanding of the concept and key features of meme marketing in the digital environment, along with analyzing how social media platforms support and facilitate the spread of meme-based marketing. In addition, the study focuses on evaluating the impact of meme marketing on brand awareness and brand recognition among audiences. Furthermore, it attempts to identify both the advantages and the limitations of meme marketing as a modern digital marketing approach.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is about the connection between meme marketing, consumer engagement and brand awareness. These days, memes are very common on social media and almost everyone sees them while using apps. The main reason is that memes are funny and simple, so people understand them quickly. Many memes are also based on daily life or trending topics, so people can easily relate to them and pay attention.

When people see memes related to a brand, they usually react in a simple way. Some people like the post, some comment, and many just share it with others. Most of the time, they share it because it looks funny or relatable, not because they are thinking about the brand. But still, the brand name is part of the meme, so it keeps going along with the post. As more people like and share the meme, it reaches more people step by step. One person shares it, then another person sees it and shares again. In this way, the post spreads to many users. Because of this, the brand becomes more visible to people who may not have seen it before. This idea can be shown like this: Meme Marketing → Consumer Engagement → Content Sharing → Increased Brand Visibility → Brand Awareness

Meme marketing works in a simple way because it does not feel like a direct advertisement. It feels like normal content that people already enjoy. Because of this, people do not ignore it and they interact with it more easily.

When people keep seeing the same brand again and again in such posts, they slowly start remembering it. Even if they are not focusing much, the name stays in their mind. After some time, they become familiar with the brand. So, meme marketing helps brands reach more people in an easy and indirect way. Through likes, comments and sharing, the content spreads and this helps in increasing brand awareness over time.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social media platforms are used very much nowadays and it has changed the way marketing communication happens and also how consumers engage with brands. Earlier marketing was more one side but now it is more interactive. In the last decade many researchers have studied how digital marketing strategies affect consumer behaviour, brand awareness and engagement also. Among different strategies, meme marketing is becoming popular which uses humor, creativity and also current trends to communicate brand messages. This review is based on different studies and theories related to meme marketing, social media marketing and brand awareness using secondary data.

**Social Media Marketing and Consumer Engagement:** Social media is now an important part of marketing strategies because it helps companies to directly interact with consumers and build relationships with them over time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). It is not like traditional marketing because here communication is two way and not just one side. Tuten and Solomon (2017) explain that social media marketing is about using social platforms to promote products and services through content which people can engage with. This includes likes, comments, shares etc. So, users are not just watching but also participating.

Consumers now are more active and they also create and share content. This increases the reach of brand messages because when people share something it goes to more audience (Tuten & Solomon, 2017). Also, research shows that engagement on social media helps in improving brand awareness and perception. When users like or share content, it becomes more visible and more people can see it. This repeated exposure helps in brand recall (Keller, 2013). Because of this marketer try to make content which is more engaging.

**Concept of Internet Memes:** The concept of meme was first given by Dawkins (1976). He said memes are like ideas or information that spread from person to person. In today's time, memes are digital content like images, videos, GIFs or text which people share online. Shifman (2014) says that internet memes are group of content which are similar and are created with awareness of each other. These are copied, changed and shared again and again by users, which makes them spread fast. Wiggins and Bowers (2015) explain that memes are a form of communication which combine visuals and text. They are usually short and funny, so people understand them quickly and share them without much thinking.

**Meme Marketing as a Digital Marketing Strategy:** Because memes became very popular, marketers also started using them. Meme marketing is when brands use memes to promote their products or services in a humorous way. Berger and Milkman (2012) found that content which creates emotions like humor is more likely to be shared. Since memes are mostly funny, they spread very fast. Meme marketing is not like traditional ads because it does not directly tell people to buy something. Instead, brand message is included in a subtle way inside the meme. So, it looks more natural and not forced. Tuten and Solomon (2017) also say that when marketing is combined with entertainment, it becomes more effective. People don't feel like they are watching advertisement, so they engage more with it.

**Meme Marketing and Brand Awareness:** Brand awareness means how easily people can recognize or remember a brand (Keller, 2013). It is important because people usually prefer brands they already know. Social media plays a big role in this because users see content again and again. Keller (2013) says repeated exposure helps in improving brand recall. Meme marketing helps because memes are highly shareable. When users share memes with brand content, it reaches more people. Berger and Milkman (2012) also explain that humorous content spreads more. So, memes increase visibility of brand. Also, when people connect a brand with something funny, they remember it better. This creates a kind of emotional connection which helps in recall.

**Meme Marketing and Generation Z:** Meme marketing is more effective for younger audience like Generation Z and Millennials. They spend more time on social media and interact more with such content.

As per Djafarova and Bowes (2021), young users prefer content that are connected to internet culture and trends. For them, memes are like a common language which are easily understandable. When brands use the relatable memes, it helps brands to connect better with audience. Because of this, users are more likely to like, comment or share. Also, users sometimes create their own memes related to brands. This increases the spread of brand content even more because it is shared by many people.

**Challenges and Limitations of Meme Marketing:** Even though meme marketing is useful, there are some problems also. One main issue is that memes change very quickly. What is trending today may not be trending tomorrow (Shifman, 2014). Another issue is that memes depend on culture and context. Not everyone understands the same joke. If brands use wrong meme, it can create negative reaction. Also, sometimes people remember the meme but not the brand. In that case the marketing purpose is not fully achieved. So, marketers need to be careful and make sure that brand message is clear in the meme.

**Summary of Literature:** Overall, the studies show that meme marketing is becoming an important part of digital marketing. Social media helps content to spread fast and memes make it more engaging.

Meme marketing helps in increasing engagement, shareability and brand awareness. It is especially useful for younger audience.

But its success depends on timing, creativity and how well the brand is included in the meme.

So, meme marketing is effective but it should be used properly and carefully.

**Research Gap:** Although many studies have examined how social media marketing influences consumer behavior and brand awareness, very few have focused specifically on meme marketing as a strategic tool. Most existing research mainly discusses traditional digital content such as influencer marketing, sponsored posts, and branded advertisements, while giving limited attention to memes as a form of marketing communication.

Earlier research shows that memes are mainly used for entertainment and cultural expression and they spread quickly in social media platforms (Shifman, 2014; Berger & Milkman, 2012). However, research on how meme-based marketing contributes to brand awareness and recognition is limited

In addition, most studies focus on engagement measures like likes, shares, and comments, but do not clearly explain how meme marketing affects long-term brand recall and perception. While some research suggests that humorous and relatable content can build emotional connections, this area still needs further study. Another limitation is that meme marketing is rarely studied as an independent concept, despite its growing use on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. Therefore, this study aims to examine how meme marketing helps in building brand awareness on social media using secondary data and existing literature.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on secondary data and it focuses on understanding how meme marketing helps in building brand awareness on social media platforms. In this research, no new data is collected from people directly. Instead, already available information from different sources is used. This method is helpful because it saves time and also gives access to many studies which are already done on similar topics.

The research design used here is descriptive type. It means the study tries to describe and explain the topic in detail rather than testing anything. The main aim is to understand how meme marketing works and how it affects brand awareness and also consumer engagement. The study is not experimental and no survey or questionnaire is used. It only depends on previous research and existing theories, so it is more theoretical in nature.

For collecting data, only secondary sources are used in this study. These include research papers, journal articles, books and some reliable internet sources. Different authors and researchers work has been used to understand the topic properly. These sources provide information about social media marketing, memes, digital trends and brand awareness. By using these sources, it becomes easier to connect different ideas and understand the topic in a better way.

The data which was collected from these sources was not used directly in random way. First, all the information was read carefully and then it was divided into different parts like social media marketing, concept of memes, meme marketing and brand awareness. After that, the information was compared and linked together. This process helped in finding common points and understanding how all these concepts are connected with each other.

The method of analysis used in this study is qualitative. It means the study is focused more on understanding ideas, meanings and explanations instead of numbers. No statistical tools are used here. The focus is on explaining how meme marketing works, why people like memes and how it helps brands to become more visible. The study also looks at how humor and trends play an important role in attracting audience. There are some advantages of using secondary data in this research. It is easy to access and does not require much cost. Also, it provides a wide range of information from different studies which makes the understanding clearer. It also helps to study the topic from different viewpoints. But there are some limitations also. Since the data is already collected by others, it may not be fully updated according to current trends. Also, sometimes the information may not be exactly matching with the research topic. Another limitation is that no primary data is used, so there is no direct response from consumers. Because of this, the study is more general and not based on real time opinions. Even with these limitations, the study still gives useful understanding about meme marketing and brand awareness. It shows how memes are used by brands and how they help in increasing engagement on social media. The methodology used here is simple but effective for understanding the topic based on available information.

## RESULTS

From the study and different sources which was used, it is seen that meme marketing is actually helping brands in increasing their awareness on social media. Memes are very common now and people see them daily, so when brands use memes, it gets more attention. Compared to normal ads, memes are more interesting and people don't ignore them easily. One main finding is that meme marketing increases engagement of users. When brands post memes, people usually like, comment and also share it more. This makes the post reach more number of people. Because of this, brand visibility also increases. It was also noticed that meme posts spread faster than normal promotional posts because people enjoy sharing funny content with others. Another thing found is that meme marketing helps in brand recall also. When people see a meme which is funny or relatable, they remember it for longer time. If a brand is connected with that meme, then they remember the brand also. Humor makes it easy to remember, so it helps in recognition later. As per the study, meme marketing works more effectively for young people. They spent more time on social media and understand memes better. For them, memes are only normal part of everyday communication. So, when brands use memes, their content feels less like advertising and more natural. Because of this, they interact more with the content. One more finding is about user-generated content. Sometimes people make their own memes related to brands and share it. This increases the spread of brand message without company doing anything extra. So, users also become part of promotion in some way. This helps brand to reach more audience. It is also seen that meme marketing does not require very high cost. Brands can create simple memes using trends and still get good reach. In comparison to traditional advertising, it is more cost-effective. However, it is also not free from negative side, it has some negative sides. One of them is that memes do not last long. Since trends change very quickly, so meme becomes outdated in short time. People will not like it if the brand uses the outdated meme. Another issue is that not everyone understands memes in same way. Some jokes are based on culture or trend, so it can be confusing for some people. In some cases, it can also create wrong impression. Also, sometimes people only remember the meme but not the brand. If brand is not clearly shown, then purpose of marketing is not fully complete. So overall it can be said that meme marketing is useful for increasing brand awareness and engagement. But it should be used carefully with proper timing and understanding of audience, otherwise it may not work properly.

## DISCUSSION

From the results, it can be understood that meme marketing is becoming important in today time, especially on social media. Earlier memes were only for fun but now brands are also using it for promotion. This shows that marketing is changing and becoming more informal. One thing clearly seen is that memes help in getting attention of people. Normal ads people sometimes ignore, but memes people watch because it is funny or relatable. Because of this, engagement is more in meme posts. People like, comment and share more, and this increases the reach of content. So, it helps brand to become more visible.

Another point is about humor. Memes mostly use humor, and people usually remember things which make them laugh. So when a brand is linked with a meme, it becomes easier for people to remember it later. This helps in brand recall. It is not like serious advertisement, it feels more light and easy to understand.

Also meme marketing works more for younger people. Generation Z and millennials understand memes better because they spend more time on social media. For them, memes are just a normal thing, not something new. Because of this, when brands use memes, it feels more relatable and not like forced promotion. This makes it easier for brands to connect with them.

One more thing is users also take part in this. They don't just see memes, sometimes they also create their own memes. When people make memes related to a brand, it spreads more among others. In this way, users also become part of marketing without knowing it. This is different from traditional marketing.

But there are some drawbacks as well. Memes change very fast. What is popular today may not be tomorrow. So, brands need to be updated always. If they use old meme, people may not like it or ignore it. Another issue is understanding. Not everyone understands same meme. Some memes are based on specific jokes or trends. If people don't understand it, then message is not clear. Sometimes it can also create confusion. Also, sometimes people remember meme but forget brand. If brand is not shown properly, then purpose is not complete. So, brands need to balance between fun and promotion. So overall, meme marketing is useful but it is not easy also. Meme needs right timing and knowing the audience well.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that meme marketing is helpful in building brand awareness on social media. As social media is growing fast, companies are also changing their marketing methods. Meme marketing is one of those new methods. Memes are popular because they are simple and funny. People like to see memes and also share it with others. Because of this, memes spread very fast. When brands use memes, their message reaches more people. This helps in increasing brand awareness. Another important thing is engagement. Meme posts get more likes, comments and shares. This makes content more visible. So, brand becomes more known among people. Compared to normal ads, memes work better in many cases.

Memes also help in remembering the brand. When people see something funny, they remember it. If brand is connected with that, they remember brand also. So, it helps in brand recall. Meme marketing is more effective for young people. They use social media more and understand meme culture. For them memes are part of daily life. So, brands can easily connect with them using memes. But there are some problems also. Memes do not last long. Trends change quickly. So, brands need to use memes at right time. If they use old trend, it may not work. Also, not everyone understands memes same way. So sometimes message may not be clear. This can create confusion. Another issue is brand visibility. Sometimes meme is funny but brand is not clearly shown. In that case people remember meme but not brand.

So, it is important that brands use memes carefully. They should understand audience and trends before using it. Overall, meme marketing is useful and low-cost method for increasing brand awareness. It helps in connecting with people in easy and informal way. But it should be used properly otherwise it may not give good results. In future, more studies can be done with real data from people. This will help in understanding better how meme marketing works in real life.

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