

MEMETICS: A STUDY ON THE MILLENNIAL TOOL OF MARKETING

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Abstract

A meme can be any process, notion, slogan, or piece of media that propagate, often as mimicry or for humorous purposes, from contact to contact via any shared platform (primarily internet). Over the time memes have taken over the internet world by a storm and have adapted themselves to be more than just a mere representation of humour, rather they have become a primary source of information in the most understandable manner. Indians record the highest number of users in the world across different social media platform hence meme marketing has become a significant tool for implementing various marketing strategies. In this context the primary objective of the paper is to explain an overview of the history of memetics, to assess the perception of viewers on memetics and analyse the significance of memetics as a marketing tool. The research methodology used is primary and secondary data where respondents belonging to geographical area of Hyderabad were given structured questionnaire to get their responses. Chi-Square test used for analysis of data. The outcomes of the study are; majority of the respondents are familiar with 'memes'.

Keywords: meme, memetics, social media, perception and marketing tool.

INTRODUCTION

After the Industrial Revolution, the production of goods was the stage which was most focused upon, and then the attention shifted towards economical production where minimizing the cost of production and maximizing the efficiency of machinery. Later years, this interest shifted to increasing the sales during which promotion became the fiber of successful sales. Over the ages, the promotion had taken many forms, what started as basic shout outs amidst the tantrums of a market, evolved to designing of pamphlets, banners, sponsorships, and campaigns. The boon of the internet gave the ability to advertise to a limitless population, almost anyone who owns a business is able to afford connectivity, and due to this the number of ad-exposures an average customer is bombarded with has increased drastically over the years, cluttering the inbox of a customer on the way. This crowded buzz of advertisements mandated the marketers to be better than their competitors for making sure that their promotion reached their target market successfully, several marketing strategies were made and one such successful marketing type in recent times is the viral marketing. With the advent of digitization and the whole world shifting online, even marketing is going online. Online marketing and advertising are like the basis of a businesses' success. Nowadays, we have various kinds of online marketing. These include email marketing, influencer marketing, social media marketing, etc. Another important kind that is gaining rapid popularity is meme marketing. Meme marketing is the latest trend these days. Promoting a product or service while making people smile and laugh, what is better than that. So, keeping this in view, various top brands are now indulging

in meme marketing. In simple words, when a brand's marketing strategy includes the use of memes, it's called meme marketing. Meme marketing is no less than an art. It is an art by which the brands display their discounts, deals, and their promotions in a meme. Then they implant these memes in the meme community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jurveston, (2000) observed that a viral marketing campaign is more effective than any third party endorsements, one of the first companies to do that was *Hotmail.com*, with every mail that a user sent to a friend or co-worker of his/her, there was a link placed in the mail stating get a mail of your own, this made the user an indirect mediator of the company, also as this was shared by an immediate friend or co-worker the impact was much more effective, causing an incredible growth in the number of users in a very limited time, via this technique, Hotmail created one import element of viral marketing where a customer becomes a salesperson of the product just by using it. **Liisi Lainesk, (2016)** from his study has found out that memetics has been an important source of primary information to digitally active people, in the form of modified memes and videos known as vines, it has been observed to be universal in nature as it uses humor to shape the opinion of the viewers and the population they are exposed to, as according to the paper "Laughing across borders: Intertextuality of Internet memes. European Journal of Humor Research."

Vineetha, (2016) in her paper named "laughter rage and criticality cybernetic" finds out memesas one of the most welcomed and retained form of opinion for the common people, in herResearch she has done a case study on a Malayalam troll website on Facebook named as "International chalu union" and finds that the satirical posts made are often covering genres like politics to modern system as a whole, it often takes digs on new laws passed. Regardless of the language barrier any politically aware person gets the message, slyly placed in-between lines. The point to be withdrawn from this paper is that the reception made by this website is a humongous number and is on par with another medium of information. It can be concluded that due to the universality of memetics, the reach, both demographic and geographic is more than just the break-even and is on par with that of several another medium of information vis-à-vis the scale of viewership.

MdRakib Hussain, (2018) through his research has established viral marketing as anindependent variable and purchase decision as dependent variable, and throughout the study it was found that the viral marketing messages have a positive impact on the purchase pattern of the customer, he goes on to validate the same by taking various other researcher's works into consideration too. We can also confirm that both the marketers and retailers who promote their product via viral marketing have keen chances of scoring good promotion and overall success.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To Study an Overview of Memetics.
2. To Study the perceptions of Viewers towards Memetics.

METHODOLOGY:

Primary as well as secondary data has been used for the purpose of the study. Primary data has been collected through a structured questionnaire is administered through Google docs, among 150 viewers and 114 responses were found suitable to make the study. Secondary data has been collected from various Books, Journals, Articles and Websites.

Statistical tool used for analysis of data: Chi-Square.

HYPOTHESIS OF STUDY

1. **H₀**- There is no relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness towards Memes.
2. **H₀**- There is relationship between the age of the respondents and pursuance and influence level towards memes.

Table-1: Age of the Respondents

Age (Years)	No. of Responses	Percentage
17-21	93	81.6%
22-30	12	10.5%
31-45	4	3.5%
>45	5	4.4%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data)

The table shows us a division of the respondents on the basis of age, as can be seen, the majority of the respondents are taken by 17-21 age group, the categorization of the age group was done by taking the concept of generation division, 31-45 are generation X, 22-30 being the generation Y and respondents younger than 22 belong to generation Z. The maximum of the respondents belongs to generation Z by 81.6%.

Table -2: Social media accounts or apps used by the respondents

App/ website	No. of Responses	Percentage
Whatsapp	108	95.6%
Instagram	89	78.8%
Snap Chat	46	40.7%
Hike	9	8%
Reddit	8	7.1%
Facebook	58	51.3%
Twitter	23	20.4%
LinkedIn	11	9.7%
Tumblr	1	0.9%
We Chat	1	0.9%

(Source: Primary data)

From the above table (table -2), maximum respondents (108 respondents) are using WhatsApp as their mainstream application, followed by Instagram with 89 users, the respondents were provided with the option to select multiple applications, and WhatsApp was the most common of them.

Table-3: Category of social-media user the respondents

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage
Casual user	17	15.3%
Medium user	43	38.7%
Intense user	51	45.9%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data)

Social media applications have become day-to-day utility for many, over time, they have taken place as one of the most essential tools, for both communications and sharing information/content. This question aims at finding the intensity of social media usage in the selected sample population. Majority of the population is under the category of “intense user” where the respondents were asked if they follow various content origin sources and use it to frequently share content for sharing. The table shows 51 respondents as an intense user, 43 as a medium user and 17 as casual users.

Table- 4: Awareness of Respondents towards Memes

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage
Yes	103	90.3%
No	4	3.5%
Unclear about it but have a brief idea	7	6.2%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data complied through MS-Office)

Upon analysis, it can be seen that the majority of the population knows about memes 90.3% of the respondents it can be interpreted that the sample population is aware of this internet phenomenon called memes. 6.2% are unclear about it but have a brief idea about what it could be, and 3.5% have no idea about it.

Table- 5: Knowledge gained about the product/service or offers upon seeing a meme

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage
Yes	56	49.1%
No	18	15.7%
Maybe	40	35.2%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data)

As per the table, 49.1% of the respondents came to know about a product or service in the form of a meme. 18 respondents did not find any such promotion, and 40 are in dilemma to this situation.

Table-6 I have seen the product as a meme on the internet but I don't know its name.

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	13	11.4%
Disagree	9	7.9%
Neutral	52	45.6%
Agree	33	29%
Strongly Agree	7	6.1%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data)

From the total responses received, a majority of the responses are being neutral to the statement “I have seen the product as a meme on the internet but I don’t know its name.” it can be analysed that only small segment (6.1%) of the population strongly agree that they have seen a product depicted in a meme and cannot place its name. It can be interpreted that a meme has the potential of stating a product’s utility into the minds of the viewers but is quite unsuccessful at placing the name of the brand. However, 11.4% agree to be able to place the name of the product after seeing it on a meme.

Table-7: Level of agreeability of respondents to the following statement: “I am aware of the product or service showed via the meme but did not get influenced to buy it.”

Level of agreeability	No. of Responses	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	12	10.5%
Disagree	9	7.8%
Neutral	54	47.3%
Agree	26	22.8%
Strongly Agree	13	11.4%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data complied through MS-Office)

From the Table, it can be interpreted that 47.3% of the responses selected neutral as their decision for the statement “I am aware of the product or service showed via the meme but did not get influenced to buy it”. More than average of the respondents agree that they have seen a product being advertised as a meme but did not get influenced to buy it.

Table-8: The industry that the meme belonged to

Name of the Industry	No. of Responses	Percentage
FMCG	41	36.9%
Movies	72	64.9%
Beverages	38	34.2%
Food Delivery	43	38.7%
Food Industry	37	33.3%
Clothing	1	0.9%
Apps	1	0.9%

(Source: Primary data)

The respondents were then asked to tell about the industry they can relate the meme to, the lead was taken by movie industry with 64.9% and then the second and third place with a close battle in between food delivery and FMCG industry with about 43% and 41% respectively. The diagram gives us an interpretation that the movie industry is the most found upon meme by the respondents. This question gives us an idea about the most active industry in the memetics marketing field and film industry can act as a proper example for other industries and inspire them to adopt this into their marketing framework.

Table-9: How likely are the respondents to share a meme if they like it

Scale/Level	No. of Responses	Percentage
Never	6	5.2%
Very rarely	4	3.5%
rarely	31	27.2%
Frequently	31	27.2%
Always	42	36.9%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data)

On a scale of “never” to “every-time” 36.9% of the respondents chose to share a meme if they like it, which shows how potential a meme can be for a viral marketing scheme, memes encourage the word-of-mouth behaviour among the people which in turn makes it easier for a marketer to make sure that the idea or promotion reaches manifold. Majority of the population chose to share a meme, a total of $27.2\% + 27.2\% + 36.9\% = 91.3\%$.

Relationship between age of the respondents and awareness about memes.

The following statistical test will help us understand if there is any relationship between the age of a person and their awareness about a meme.

H₀- There is no relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness of memes.

H₁- There is relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness of memes.

TABLE-10: OBSERVED FREQUENCIES

Age	Awareness about memes			Grand Total
	No	Maybe.	Yes	
17-21	1	3	89	93
21-30	2	1	9	12
30-45	0	2	2	4
45 and above	2	1	2	5
Grand Total	5	7	102	114

(Source: Primary data)

TABLE-11: EXPECTED FREQUENCIES

Age	Awareness about memes		
	No	Maybe.	Yes
17-21	4.08	5.71	83.21
21-30	0.53	0.74	10.74
30-45	0.18	0.25	3.58
45 and above	0.22	0.31	4.47

(Source: Primary data)

TABLE-12: Chi-Square Values

Chi-Square (p-value)	0.0000006
$\alpha =$	0.05
Conclusion	Reject H₀

(Source: Primary data)

As the P-value is less than the α value the H_0 has to be rejected, Hence, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between the age of the respondents and awareness about the memes. As the majority of the age group is 17-21, marketers should focus on utilizing memes as a front for announcing any new campaigns or schemes due to the awareness factor, as the chances of it spreading is very high. However, the awareness is comparatively low for higher age groups, age groups from 22-30 and above a comparatively lower awareness about memes.

Relationship between age of the respondents and pursuance level of memes.

The following test will help us analyse the significance between different age groups of respondents and the pursuance level of memes, pursuance level talks about the brand retaining ability of a meme, after the test we will know if different age groups of people have one-one relevance with the placement of a brand from a meme.

HYPOTHESIS FOR THE TEST:

H₀- There is no relationship between the age of the respondents and pursuance level of memes.

H₁- There is relationship between the age of the respondents and pursuance level of memes.

The question asked was, "I have seen the product as a meme on the internet but I don't recall its name." How much do you agree.

TABLE-13: OBSERVED FREQUENCIES

Age group	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Grand Total
17-21	28	8	40	6	11	93
21-30	3	1	5	1	2	12
30-45	2	0	2	0	0	4
45 & above	0	1	4	0	0	5
Grand Total	33	10	51	7	13	114

(Source: Primary data complied through MS-Office)

TABLE-14: EXPECTED FREQUENCIES

Age group	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Grand Total
17-21	26.92	8.16	41.61	5.71	10.61	93
21-30	3.47	1.05	5.37	0.74	1.37	12
30-45	1.16	0.35	1.79	0.25	0.46	4
45 & above	1.45	0.44	2.24	0.31	0.57	5
Grand Total	33	10	51	7	13	114

(Source: Primary data)

TABLE-15: Chi-Square Value

Chi-Square p-level	0.874407626
α	0.05
Conclusion	accept H_0

(Source: Primary data)

From the test, we find out that α is less than the chi-square p-value hence, the alternate hypothesis is to be rejected, which means that there is no relationship between the age and the persuasion skill of a meme on them, however as can be seen from the table, 51 out of 114 responses were in neutral, which means that majority of the population is unsure about the fact whether they have completely forgotten a product from a meme or have a faint idea about it.

The study reveals that regardless of the age, the pursuance level of a meme tend to be similar with no significance as such, marketers should make memes by taking the brand delivery into their mind such that the viewer remembers it. The hindsight from this result is that, as the question tends to ask two questions at a time, people are unable to answer both of them at a time, however when coincided with another set of responses, (below figures).

Table-16: Knowledge of respondents of any product or service being advertised via memes

Response	No. of Responses	Percentage
Yes	85	74.6%
No	29	25.4%
Total	114	100%

(Source: Primary data)

It can be seen that 74.6% of respondents have seen a product being advertised as a meme but are not sure if they remember the name, hence they select neutral as the option in the immediately asked question.

TABLE-17: Preferred mode of promotion.

Options	No. of Responses	Percentage
Ads on YouTube or Facebook	38	36.2%
Promotional Digital Poster	7	6.7%
The meme about a product with humour/message behind it	60	57.1%

(Source: Primary data)

57.1% of the population chose to have memes as a preferred promotion mode, with ads on YouTube or Facebook as the second favourite.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, with the ever-increasing numbers of social media users, it isn't far where small screens will become the biggest window for advertisements, and also considering the increasing awareness of the viewers,

marketers must find ways to convey their messages in a non-linear fashion, and memes can be the possible solution they are looking for, with the right research and development put into it, a company can utilize memes as a promotional tool like any other and maybe reap the best benefits out of it. Memetics has the unique characteristic of being able to promote a product or service without the viewer being conscious about it hence it has the potential to become a millennial tool of marketing.

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