

Meme Marketing: Generation Z Consumer Behavior on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the phenomenon of "Meme Marketing" and its impact on the consumer behavior of Generation Z on social media. The research focuses on the characteristics, classification, coherence levels, and format evolution of memes, as well as their role in marketing strategies. Meme characteristics, such as fidelity, fecundity, longevity, and additional elements like relevance, ease of replication, uniqueness, and humor, are identified as key influencers on meme dissemination. Meme classification involves four types proposed by Knobel and Lankshear, along with considerations of genre, format, and media, providing an overview of meme diversity. The transformation of meme formats, from single images to GIF videos, reflects adaptation to trends and social media technology. The role of memes in marketing strategies goes beyond brand awareness, becoming a source of innovation in the cultural industry. Humor, as a key element, plays a crucial role in attracting attention and creating appeal for consumers. Meme virality factors, such as relevance, iconicity, humor, and format, require effective embedding and distribution strategies. In the context of Generation Z consumer behavior, memes provide satisfaction in entertainment, social interaction, and information. Media factors, including embedding and distribution strategies, are crucial for the successful dissemination of memes and consumer engagement. Applying marketing theory frameworks, this research offers both theoretical and practical implications for the development of effective marketing strategies in the digital era

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1. Introduction

In the ever-evolving digital era, marketing through social media is becoming the main focus for many companies to reach their audience, especially Generation Z who have unique consumption habits. An eye-catching phenomenon in this context is the use of "memes" as an effective marketing tool. Memes, which were originally cultural units or expressions, have evolved into key elements in marketing strategies, especially on social media.

Since the term "meme" was used so widely in popular culture and marketing (Sax, 2012), the role of memes in marketing has become increasingly significant. In the context of marketing, memes

are used as online content that can be easily copied and have humorous appeal (Gunders & Brown, 2010). With the proliferation of cultural branding, marketers are recognizing the value of memes in attracting attention and expanding their marketing campaigns (Holt, 2004).

Meme-based marketing campaigns involve leveraging social media to spread a brand's message. In this context, rapid response to tweets, the use of YouTube videos, and collaboration with traditional media are key strategies. However, despite the success of this campaign, constraints regarding message control have arisen, especially in the context of meme-based multimedia campaigns. While it has advantages such as cost-effectiveness, leveraging popular memes, and organic engagement with audiences, meme-based campaigns also face challenges. In particular, the constraints of message control are significant, given that memes are often generated and disseminated by end users.

Our understanding of meme-based advertising is still limited. Four significant gaps in the literature need to be addressed: (1) lack of literature on content factors that support meme virality, (2) unclear consumer satisfaction with memes as an advertising mechanism, (3) the role of media factors in contributing to meme virality that has not been clarified, and (4) lack of research on the results of viral memes. This study aims to address the gap by investigating content factors, consumer satisfaction, media factors, and the results of viral memes in the context of Generation Z marketing.

In the context of consumer behavior, there is a significant paradigm shift, especially among Generation Z. Brand loyalty is considered to have lost its significance, with Gen Z consumers preferring cheap and convenient products rather than fixating on established brands (Taylor, 2018). The Internet provides easy access to information, allowing consumers to make purchasing decisions based on value, not just brand. Virtual retail is increasingly popular among Gen Z consumers, influenced by factors such as flexibility, increased convenience, wider reach, low cost, and diverse product collections (Lieber & Syverson, 2012). Value awareness is becoming increasingly important for Gen Z consumers, who tend to show value awareness when shopping.

Gen Z consumers, as the newest and trendiest generation, show significant behavioral differences compared to previous generations (Gen X and Gen Y). The use of technology, the freedom to choose from a variety of product alternatives, and the paradigm shift in the purchase of products and services require a deep understanding of marketers and brands to create effective advertising strategies. Understanding the factors that support the success of memes can provide valuable guidance for marketers, allowing them to create more effective and impactful content. The research hypothesizes that Generation Z shoppers tend to switch between brands they are comfortable with, and value awareness becomes an important factor in their purchasing decisions. Furthermore, this research will explore content factors, consumer satisfaction, media factors, and the results of viral memes in the context of Generation Z marketing. Through this scientific approach, it is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution to marketing literature and guide practitioners in designing more effective campaigns in this digital era.

Memes: Evolution from Imitation Units to Linguistic Components

Memes, as units of cultural information, have the ability to be transmitted through imitation from one individual to another in a society. The form can be an idea, concept, image, or phrase. The role of memes in popular culture and marketing has grown in importance in recent years.

In the early stages of its evolution, memes served as units of imitation that included ideas, concepts, beliefs, or behaviors transmitted through the process of imitation from one individual to another (Dawkins, 2016). Imitation, in this context, is a form of learning process by imitating the behavior of others. The process of meme evolution can occur through natural selection, whereby memes that provide an advantage to individuals or populations are more likely to survive and spread, while less favorable memes have a tendency to become extinct. Dawkins compared memes to genes, positing that the two have a lot in common. Like genes, memes can also evolve, spread among populations, and have a positive or negative impact on the individual or population that carries them.

Examples of memes as imitation units include popular songs, fashion styles, trends, new dances, innovative ideas or concepts, and new behaviors. The impact of memes on society is very diverse, affecting people's way of thinking, behaving, and values. Memes can be used as tools to spread information or propaganda, express identity or community, shape public opinion, and even spark social change. The phenomenon of memes is complex and interesting, with the potential for positive or negative impacts on society.

In the second stage of meme evolution, the main focus was on the development of memes as units of cultural transmission. In this period, memes began to become objects of study that were analyzed using evolutionary models, especially models sourced from the field of genetics. This approach is used to detail the process of transmission and evolution of memes within a population. One model of evolution that is widely applied to analyzing memes is the memetic model developed by Richard Dawkins. The model illustrates that memes evolved through natural selection, where memes that provide an advantage to an individual or population have a tendency to survive and spread, while less favorable memes tend to go extinct.

The application of memetic models has resulted in various studies in the context of cultural phenomena, including the dissemination of ideas, trends, and behaviors. For example, (Bauckhage, 2011) investigated the spread of memes in the internet environment, finding that memes that are interesting and memorable have a greater potential to spread. Similarly, research by (Davis, Heiman, & Menczer, 2015) on the spread of memes on social media shows that memes that evoke emotions tend to be more successful in spreading.

Some other studies, such as those conducted by (Benaim, 2018) in the context of the spread of memes about political issues, show that memes that favor one particular side tend to get greater attention. The conclusion of these studies is that evolutionary models can effectively explain various cultural phenomena, providing an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms of meme spread and evolution, as well as their impact on society.

The second stage of meme evolution has significant implications, including:

- [1] Memes can be considered as evolutionary agents that have the potential to influence society.
- [2] Memes can be used as a tool to spread information or propaganda.
- [3] Memes can shape public opinion through the dissemination of certain ideas and values.
- [4] Memes have the potential to spark social change through the spread of certain ideas or actions.

In the third stage of meme evolution, a shift in focus occurred, elevating memes as a unit of internet culture. At this stage, memes are not only interpreted as elements of imitation or cultural transmission, but also as integral elements of internet culture. The uniqueness of this stage manifests in its rapid replication among internet users, making it a dominant element in participatory internet culture (Zulli & Zulli, 2022) (Vásquez & Aslan, 2021). Several fundamental factors are driving this change:

- [a] The development of the Internet and digital technology play a central role. Advances in the internet and digital technology catalyzed the spread of memes, making them easier and faster. Memes can be smoothly spread through various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok.
- [b] Active participation of Internet users is a key element. Internet users can easily engage in the spread and evolution of memes. They have the freedom to create their own memes or adapt existing memes according to their creativity and personal preferences.
- [c] The unique characteristics of memes are the main attraction. Memes have certain properties that make them suitable for internet culture, including:
 - [1] Vulnerability to change: Memes can be easily changed and adapted to specific contexts.
 - [2] Ability to convey messages briefly and clearly: Memes are able to convey messages briefly and clearly, facilitating understanding by internet users.

A number of examples of popular memes on the internet include pictures of cats, pictures of celebrities, and images of text. Cat images are often used to express a range of emotions, celebrity images to criticize or satirize their behavior, and text images as the most common form of conveying a message or humor. The impact of memes on internet culture cannot be ignored. Memes become tools of identity or community expression, shaping public opinion, and even sparking social change. Implications of the third stage of meme evolution include:

- [1] Memes have become an integral component of internet culture, used by users as a means of communication, self-expression, and identity formation.
- [2] Memes can be used as tools to spread information or propaganda, influence public opinion, and even trigger social change.
- [3] Memes become a place to express creativity, allowing internet users to create unique and interesting works of art, music, or videos.

In the fourth stage, memes become part of linguistic discourse, can be words, phrases, expressions, iconic images, or recognizable references (Zenner & Geeraerts, 2018) (Cannizzaro, 2016). Popular memes tend to use colloquial phrases by deliberately capitalizing on spelling mistakes, abbreviations, and nonstandard language (Dynel, 2016) (Sharma, 2018). In the fourth stage of meme evolution, a shift in focus occurred that elevated memes as part of linguistic discourse. At this stage, memes are not only understood as a cultural unit of the internet, but also as a linguistic unit integral to everyday conversation.

Mememes at this stage have become an indispensable element of everyday language, often used to convey emotions, humor, or information. In addition, memes also have a role in shaping identity or community. A concrete example of a meme that has permeated linguistic discourse is the "Wkwkwk" meme that is popular in Indonesia. This meme features an image of a man with a funny facial expression, often used to express laughter or humor.

Popular uses of memes tend to make use of colloquial phrases by intentionally incorporating spelling mistakes, abbreviations, and nonstandard language, the goal of which is for memes to become more interesting and memorable. For example, in the "Wkwkwk" meme, the phrase "wkwkwk" stands for "hahaha", often used in everyday conversation in Indonesia to express laughter or humor. In addition, the "Wkwkwk" meme is often combined with the phrase "anjir", which is nonstandard language used to express various emotions, such as surprise, frustration, or cuteness.

With its widespread popularity and use, the "Wkwkwk" meme has become an indispensable part of linguistic discourse in Indonesia, used in everyday conversation to express laughter or humor. The implications of the fourth stage of meme evolution include a significant impact on the way we communicate on a day-to-day basis. Memes have had a marked influence on language usage, with phrases and phrases from memes becoming an integral part of our conversations. In addition, memes have also influenced the way we express ourselves, whether in terms of emotions, humor, or identity. With memes, we can convey ourselves in a unique and interesting way. In addition, memes also play a role in shaping personal and group identities, creating unique spaces of expression to express a particular identity or community.

(Blackmore & Blackmore, 2000) was instrumental in popularizing the concept of memes and developing memetic theory. Blackmore defines memes as "units of cultural imitation". Blackmore argues that memes, like genes, can evolve and spread within a population. Memes can be ideas, concepts, beliefs, or behaviors that are transmitted from one individual to another through imitation. Blackmore developed memetic theory, which is a branch of evolutionary biology that studies the spread and evolution of memes. Memetic theory argues that memes can have a significant impact on society. Memes can influence people's way of thinking, behaving, and even values.

Blackmore differs from some other meme theorists in that his views on the relationship between memes and genes. Blackmore argues that memes and genes are examples of universal replicators. A universal replicator is an agent that can replicate itself and spread within a population

(Williams, 2002). Blackmore argues that memes and genes have a lot in common. Both can evolve, both can spread through populations, and both can benefit or harm individuals or their populations. Blackmore argues that memes and genes are two different types of replicators, but they can work together to shape culture. Memes can help genes to spread and survive, and genes can help memes to adapt to the environment.

Blackmore's view of the relationship between memes and genes has some interesting implications. One implication is that memes can have a significant impact on human evolution. Memes can affect the way we think, behave, and even our values. This could lead to significant changes in human evolution. Blackmore's views also have implications for understanding culture. Culture can be seen as a collection of interacting memes. These memes can influence each other and evolve together.

(Blackmore & Blackmore, 2000) introduced the concept of "plucking drive" as a mechanism that explains the interplay between memes and genes, as well as how the two can evolve together. According to Blackmore, memes have the ability to influence genes through the process of natural selection. Memes that provide greater benefits to individuals or populations will be more likely to survive and spread. For example, memes about the importance of hygiene can trigger changes in genes associated with the immune system, which can then provide reproductive benefits for the individuals who carry them.

The concept of impulse picking illustrates that the interaction between memes and genes is dynamic and can influence each other. Selection picking is a process in which some memes survive and spread better than others, which can produce changes at the genetic level. Genetic selection, in the context of drive picking, explains that genes that support an individual's ability to better mimic new memes are more likely to be inherited. For example, memes about the importance of education can trigger changes in genes associated with intelligence, giving individuals an advantage in achieving educational and career success. Furthermore, genetic selection to pair with the best imitators is a process by which individuals who are better at mimicking memes have a greater chance of obtaining mates and offspring. Prominence in mimicking memes can increase social appeal, skills, and genetic inheritance passed on to offspring (Murray, Manrai, & Manrai, 2014).

The concept of meme-gene coevolution has important implications, one of which is its significant impact on human evolution. Memes can affect human mindsets, behaviors, and values, resulting in substantial changes in human evolution. Meme-gene coevolution also illustrates that culture can be understood as the result of evolution involving complex interactions between memes and genes, where culture can adapt and change through processes of natural and cultural selection.

In the context of marketing, the evolution of memes from imitation units to elements of internet culture and linguistic discourse made a significant contribution to popular culture and marketing strategies. Memes can be used as an effective communication tool to connect with an audience. Marketers can leverage memes to create relevant, unique, and engaging messages. A deep understanding of the stages of meme development allows marketers to create successful campaigns, gain public attention, and build unique and relevant relationships with the target audience.

Gen Z on Social Media

The phenomenon of the digital explosion, characterized by advances in information and communication technology (ICT), has had a significant impact on consumer behavior and various aspects of life (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011). The rapid growth of smartphone usage, driven by increasingly affordable prices and cheaper internet data plans, has made these devices popular among the public, including in rural areas.

Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, grew up in tandem with the advancement of social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter. According to a survey by (Tyson, Kennedy, & Funk, 2021), 97% of Generation Z actively use social media, with 62% of them accessing it daily—a number far beyond previous generations. The unique characteristics of Generation Z are reflected in their

consumption behavior that tends to be online, influenced by factors such as early internet usage habits, easy access, and diverse content choices.

The increase in social media penetration in Indonesia, especially among the younger generation, has brought a significant impact in the world of marketing. Marketers now have a great opportunity to reach consumers through social media platforms. Social media facilitates global marketing, specific targeting based on demographic and psychographic data, and enables the building of personal relationships with consumers (Andrew Smith, 2019).

The existence of two main marketing models, traditional and digital, is a major consideration for marketers. The development of digital marketing, with the choice of strategies such as social media, search engines, and email marketing, requires adjusting to marketing noise—a condition in which consumers are exposed to information overload. The success of a marketing strategy is also closely related to the wise selection of company goals, audiences, budgets, and capabilities (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

Different generations of consumers, namely X, Y, and Z, show different patterns of consumption behavior. Generation X tends to combine traditional and digital media, Generation Y relies more on digital technology mainly through smartphones, while Generation Z, who has low purchasing power, relies heavily on technology and the internet.

Social media has brought about a transformation in the way individuals interact and communicate. The presence of social media allows instant communication through the internet, creates deeper personal expression, and changes the dynamics of everyday life (Sidonie Smith & Watson, 2014). The impact of social media penetrates into various walks of life, both in everyday aspects and in the business world, becoming an important tool for communication, information retrieval, entertainment, shopping, education, marketing, promotion, customer service, and public relations (Qualman, 2012).

A number of social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, are becoming dominant trends, shaping the way they interact and convey information. Facebook facilitates connectivity and information exchange, Instagram focuses on self-visualization, while TikTok becomes a place for creativity through short videos. This constant development creates a new landscape in interpersonal relationships and business dynamics, bringing challenges and opportunities that need to be deeply understood and adapted (Paul Russell Smith & Zook, 2019)

Social commerce, a concept that combines social media and e-commerce, has become a crucial element in electronic commerce. As a form of business that involves social media users in online collaboration for business opportunities, social commerce includes dimensions such as Social Shopping, Rating and Review, Recommendations and Referrals, Social Media Optimization, and Social Ads and Applications (Shadkam & O'Hara, 2013). Generation Z, with their habit of getting used to social media early on, shows significant consumer potential in social.

Business people in social commerce can implement marketing strategies such as advertising through influencers, utilizing consumer reviews, giveaway activities or prizes, and direct sales through live broadcasts on social media. This strategy aims to reach a wider audience, build trust through reviews, attract attention through giveaways, and provide a direct and interactive shopping experience (Musyarofah, Utami, & Raharjo, 2020). The implementation of this strategy is expected to increase consumer engagement and product sales through social commerce.

2. Materials and Methods

This research is a descriptive research. Descriptive research is research that aims to describe or analyze existing social phenomena. The study did not manipulate variables or look for cause-and-effect relationships. The focus of descriptive research is on the "what" and "how" of a phenomenon, not the "why". This study used secondary data. Secondary data is data that has been collected by others before. Secondary data sources in this study are articles, journals, and various websites.

Secondary data are selected based on certain criteria, such as relevance to the research topic, data quality, and ease of access. Data analysis in descriptive research can be done using quantitative or qualitative techniques. Quantitative techniques are used to analyze numerical data, while qualitative techniques are used to analyze text data. In this study, data analysis was carried out using qualitative techniques.

3. Result and Discussion

Meme Characteristics

In the exploration of the characteristics of memes, which are units of cultural information that can be conveyed through imitation (Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015), this study describes three main aspects identified by (Dawkins, 2016), namely loyalty, fertility, and longevity. Fidelity refers to the capacity of memes to be replicated appropriately, where memes that show a high level of fidelity have a tendency to last longer and spread more widely. For example, memorable joke memes are more likely to be remembered and retold by other individuals.

Fertility reflects the ability of memes to spread to a variety of individuals, with memes that have appeal or funny elements tend to be shared more often by many people. Meanwhile, longevity refers to the resilience of memes over time, and memes that have meaning or relevance to everyday life tend to last longer.

These three main characteristics are interrelated and mutually supportive. High fidelity makes it easy to accurately transmit memes, while high fertility expands the range of their spread. It is important to note that understanding the characteristics of memes is not just limited to the concept of Dawkins, but also involves additional factors that can affect the spread and survival of memes.

One such additional factor is meme awareness, which refers to the ability of memes to survive and spread in a particular environment (Pech, 2003), such as memes relevant to local culture. The ease of copying and translation demonstrates the ability of memes to be replicated and translated into different languages and cultures, helping memes penetrate various environments (Cannizzaro, 2016). Uniqueness, as an attribute of memes that sets it apart from others, increases its appeal and likelihood of spreading (Brubaker, Church, Hansen, Pelham, & Ostler, 2018). Humor, as a key element, gives memes the ability to make people laugh, so memes containing jokes or parodies are more likely to be remembered and shared (Sharma, 2018).

Overall, a deep understanding of the characteristics of memes, especially involving the concepts of fidelity, fertility, and longevity, not only provides insight into the sustainability and spread of memes, but also involves additional factors such as meme adaptability, ease of copying and translation, uniqueness, and humor.

Meme Typology Classification

In an exploration of the typology of memes based on their intended use, this study refers to the classification framework of four types of memes proposed by (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). First of all, there is a category called "Social Commentary," where memes aim to provide commentary or criticism of social phenomena with a satirical or sarcastic touch. Examples of memes in this category include criticism of government, consumer culture, or general societal behavior. Second, there's a category known as "Absurd Humor," which involves memes that utilize unexpected or absurd elements of humor to elicit laughter. Memes in this category might use slapstick jokes, absurdities, or other funny elements to achieve the desired effect. Next, there is a type of meme called "Otaku," aimed specifically at fans of Japanese pop culture such as anime, manga, or video games. Memes in this category often use characters or elements from Japanese pop culture, such as anime, manga, or video game characters. Finally, there is the category of "Hoaxes," where memes are used as a tool to spread false or misleading information with the intent of deceiving or manipulating public opinion. Hoax memes can present false information about certain events, products, or people. In addition to these four types, this study also considers the classification of memes by genre, format, and media, as proposed

by (Segev, Nissenbaum, Stoler, & Shifman, 2015). In terms of genre, memes can be divided into memes of text, photos, videos, animations, or a combination of some of these elements. Meanwhile, in terms of format, memes can be grouped as templates, edits, parodies, or mashups. In terms of media, memes can be identified as internet memes, social media, television, or movies.

Level of Regularity in Memes

This study reviews the level of regularity as one of the key factors in the classification of memes, in addition to paying attention to their purpose. Regularity, which reflects the degree of interconnectedness between elements in memes, becomes a crucial aspect of analysis. In line with this concept, (Brubaker et al., 2018) propose four groups of memes that form the basis of the classification. First, "Family 1" describes memes that are very cohesive with related elements and have a clear meaning, often using elements of humor or satire to comment on social phenomena. For example, memes that combine images of political figures with criticism of government policies can be categorized as this family. Second, "Family 2" includes memes that are somewhat cohesive with related elements, but their meaning is not always overt. Memes in this category may use absurd or unexpected humor, such as memes of animal images with unrelated captions. Meanwhile, "Family 3" refers to memes that are not cohesive with conflicting or unclear elements, often used to spread false or misleading information. For example, memes that use edited images to spread false information about an event may be classified as non-cohesive memes. Lastly, "Family 4" includes a very incohesive meme with elements that have no relationship at all, perhaps used for aesthetic purposes or to express emotions without tying to a certain regularity. This study also reviews the integration of hoaxes into the four meme typologies. Hoaxes are considered elements that can be classified by purpose, degree of regularity, genre, format, or medium. For example, hoaxes used to criticize the government can be included in the category of social commentary memes. The integration of hoaxes into meme typologies provides a deeper understanding of the complexity of hoaxes and their various forms and intended uses in the context of memes.

Meme Format Transformation

The process of evolution of memes as a format reflects a significant metamorphosis of single images and ideas originally published on specific platforms into more complex and diverse formats, allowing distribution through multiple media (Malodia, Dhir, Bilgihan, Sinha, & Tikoo, 2022). The beginning of the development of memes was marked by the emergence of a single image or idea on specialized web platforms. To illustrate, the events of "Nyan Cat" in 2011 first appeared on 4chan. In the next phase, entering an era where memes are presented in text form at the top and bottom, adding a humorous dimension to the content. This format is commonly implemented on the Tumblr site, allowing users to add text to existing imagery. For example, the famous "*Distracted Boyfriend*" meme in 2017 first appeared on the Tumblr platform.

Growth continued in the third stage, where anger comics became a prominent meme format. Created with simple tools like Microsoft Paint, these comics often depict angry or frustrated characters. For example, the popular "*Woman Yelling at a Cat*" rage comic in 2015 was first created using *Microsoft Paint*. Recent developments in the last stage show that memes have adopted new formats, such as GIF videos, which can be easily disseminated through modern social media platforms. GIF videos allow memes to be more dynamic and engaging, creating a more interactive experience. For example, the viral "*Doge*" GIF video in 2013 was first created and disseminated through the Imgur website. This overall evolution reflects the adaptation of memes to changing trends and technologies in the media world, having a significant impact on the production, consumption, and distribution of memes.

Peran Meme dalam Strategi Pemasaran

In recent years, the meme phenomenon has become a significant element in the realm of marketing. The use of memes in marketing strategies is not only about creating brand awareness, increasing product understanding, and stimulating sales, but can also be considered as an important

source of innovation for the development of the cultural industry. The success of memes in marketing can be explained through several key factors, such as the ability of memes to be easily understood, the alluring power of infection, the alignment of memes with the culture and target audience, and the ability of memes to stimulate brain areas related to emotions and rewards. Humor, as a key ingredient in memes, proves itself to be a major factor in attracting attention and creating an appeal that allows sharing and memory. Previous research has emphasized the importance of humor in memes as the fulfillment of social needs, such as connection, cohesion, and entertainment. In the realm of marketing, there is a framework that can provide guidance to advertising and marketing practitioners in integrating elements of humor into meme-based advertising. Crucial steps in this framework involve identifying the target audience to understand the type of humor they will appreciate, choosing an appropriate format (image, video, or animation), use of humor relevant to the product or service being promoted, clear goal setting for meme-based advertising, and testing and measuring ad effectiveness. Although memes promise great benefits for businesses, there are some drawbacks that should be taken into account. Potential negative content, such as hate speech or discrimination, can negatively impact a business's reputation and elicit unwanted reactions from consumers. In addition, the inability to control the spread of memes carries additional risks, as users have the freedom to alter or manipulate memes as they see fit. Other drawbacks involve the potential for rapid obsolescence of memes and the difficulty in understanding subjective humor. In order to reduce risk and maximize benefits, research suggests that marketers have a deep understanding of meme culture, use memes that are relevant to the target audience and the product or service being promoted, and consistently test and measure the effectiveness of meme-based advertising. With a mature understanding of the dynamics of memes, companies can utilize them as an effective marketing tool and responsive to changing trends and consumer preferences.

Factors Related to Meme Virality

In marketers' efforts to create memes that have viral potential, a number of factors related to content become crucial. The success of a meme largely depends on its relevance to the target audience and the context in which it is shared. The relevance of content, which is an important parameter, is judged based on aspects of actuality, popularity, familiarity, ease of understanding, contemporary, and absence of controversy (Axelrod, 1973). Memes deemed relevant should associate themselves with current events or trends that interest the audience, as well as use familiar content and easy-to-understand language. The importance of minimizing potential controversy is also integral to efforts to create relevant memes.

Iconicity, which refers to the natural relationship between form and meaning in the world of memes, has a significant role. The concept of iconicity helps strengthen understanding and memory of memes (Chuah, Kahar, & Ch'ng, 2020). Utilizing the close relationship between form and meaning, as seen in the memes "Distracted Boyfriend" or "Woman Yelling at a Cat," proves the effectiveness of iconicity in facilitating understanding, especially for audiences with diverse backgrounds (Otterbring, 2021) (Caselli & Pyers, 2020). These findings confirm that careful use of iconicity can improve the comprehension and recall of memes in the context of digital visual communication.

The selection of humorous elements is key in determining the success and appeal of a meme. Positive humor and negative humor are emerging as the two main types in the world of memes, affecting the interaction rate and memory of the audience. Selection of humor that matches audience identification, understanding preferences, and avoiding humor that has the potential to harm reputation are important aspects in building effective memes (Eisend, 2022) (Weber & Quiring, 2019). The spread of memes, as the main parameter of virality, is influenced by liking and shareability. A meme's relevance, iconicity, humor, and format are key factors that influence its spread, with memes that have appropriateness, memorability, humor, and a shareable format likely to spread to a wider audience.

Generation Z Consumer Behavior On Social Media Related Memes

In research on Generation Z consumer behavior on social media related to memes, it was found that there are three types of satisfaction that are the main motivation for Generation Z consumers in creating and spreading memes that have viral potential. First, satisfaction comes from the process of engaging in a particular activity, such as seeking entertainment, disengaging or leisure time. The findings reinforce the concept that such contentment encourages Generation Z users to view and share memes as an escape into a world of humor, shared misery, and nihilism, in keeping with previous literature on the importance of *escapism* in internet and social media use.

Second, satisfaction arises from individuals' efforts to seek out memes as a means to connect and socialize with others, as well as express self-identity and seek validation of their ideas. The social aspect is a key element in understanding Generation Z's consumer satisfaction with memes. Another satisfaction arises from consumers who rely on memes as a medium to share and receive informative content, explaining that memes not only act as entertainment but also as a source of information for Generation Z consumers.

In the context of the spread of memes, factors related to the media are introduced. Social networks are considered facilitators of successful and influential meme spread to the target audience. To maximize the reach and virality of memes, the selection of appropriate media factors becomes a must. Qualitative results show two media factors that are positively correlated with meme virality, namely planting and distribution strategies. Planting strategies involve selecting attractive media, including initial target segments, media types, and release times. Instead, distribution strategy deals with strengthening memes through partnerships with related parties, such as influencers, meme lords, and meme pages.

Both of these factors can be explained by social contagion theory, which emphasizes the role of well-connected individuals in the spread of viral content. The importance of the results of viral memes also received attention in the study. Memes that make it to virality can have a positive impact on a company, especially in increasing brand awareness and consumer engagement. Viral memes can create top-of-mind awareness of the product or service offered, which ultimately increases brand recall.

Further, consumer interaction with brands can be enhanced through participation in memes, such as commenting, sharing, or liking meme content. In the context of meme content relevant to Generation Z consumers, these factors can be grouped into two main categories: conformity to the interests and values of Generation Z, and creativity and originality. Successful and viral memes should match their interests and values, such as entertainment, informative, trend-relevant, and reflect the unique characteristics of tech-oriented, innovative, curious Generation Z.

Creativity and originality are important keys in attracting attention and stimulating social media user interaction with a meme. In the context of consumer satisfaction, memes are considered as a medium that provides satisfaction to Generation Z consumers through three types of satisfaction: entertainment, social, and informational. Entertaining meme content can provide fun and relieve stress for consumers. Memes also serve as a tool to connect and socialize with others, as well as a source of information.

Media factors play a central role in the spread of viral memes. Planting and distribution strategies are key in maximizing the reach and virality of memes. The results of a viral meme have a positive impact as it increases brand awareness, creates a positive impression, and makes it easier to recall. More specifically, research by (Wu & Ardley, 2007) supports the finding that viral memes have a positive impact on *brand awareness*. Consumers exposed to viral memes tend to be better able to remember the brand of the product or service that is the subject of the meme, indicating the effectiveness of memes in building brand awareness.

Another study by (Burman, 2012) adds a new dimension by showing that memes not only affect brand awareness, but also have the potential to create trends in society. Memes as a means to

disseminate new information and ideas can influence consumer behavior, affirming the important role of memes in the dynamics of trends and public opinion. Consumer engagement, as a concept that includes the level of interest, attention, and participation in a product or service, has significant implications in the achievement of marketing objectives, such as increased sales, consumer loyalty, and brand image.

In the context of using memes as a digital communication format, there are factors that make memes an effective tool to increase consumer engagement. Memes, as modified images or videos with humorous, satirical, or entertaining text, have the property of being catchy and attention-grabbing. Through the use of engaging and emotional images or videos, memes are able to grab consumers' attention effectively. In addition, the interactive nature and virality of memes contribute to increasing consumer engagement.

The ability of memes to be shared, commented on, and liked by social media users creates a space of interaction that deepens consumer engagement with the product or service the meme represents. Within the framework of marketing theory, three relevant theories in the context of Generation Z marketing are consumer satisfaction theory, marketing communication theory, and social theory. Consumer satisfaction theory explains that consumer interaction with memes can increase consumer satisfaction through the presentation of interesting and entertaining information about a product or service (Kotler & Keller, 2016) (Zeithaml, Berry, & Parasuraman, 1996).

Marketing communication theory emphasizes that memes, with their engaging and interactive nature, can enhance marketing communication through visual appeal that draws consumers' attention to marketing messages (Schiffman, Kanuk, & Wisenblit, 2010). Interactive memes can deepen consumer *engagement*, increase the effectiveness of marketing communications, and recall of the message. Social theory highlights that memes have the potential to increase social contagion by building communities, disseminating information, and influencing consumer behavior (Bandura, 2020).

With the use of memes in the context of consumer engagement, new opportunities are opening up in achieving marketing goals. The success of memes in grabbing attention, increasing understanding, creating positive experiences, deepening marketing communications, and increasing social contagion makes them valuable instruments in consumer-oriented marketing strategies. Plus text is more effective in improving the recipient's memory than text-only monomedia presentations. (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) theory of why concentrating on customers is more important than focusing on increasing sales is also relevant to multimedia marketing. The "*push-pull* theory" suggests that using various aspects of digital marketing can help gather leads, increase conversions, and increase ROI.

4. Conclusion

This research investigates various aspects of meme marketing and their impact on Generation Z consumer behavior on social media platforms. The results provide deep insight into the characteristics of memes, their classification, degree of regularity, format evolution, role in marketing strategy, factors influencing virality, and their impact on Generation Z consumer behavior.

In the context of meme characteristics, this study considers the factors of loyalty, fertility, and longevity as the basis for understanding the viability and spread of memes. The influence of meme adaptability, ease of copying, uniqueness, and humorous elements are also recognized as significant additional elements that influence the rate of spread.

The typology classification of memes, involving four types of memes by Knobel and Lankshear, as well as genre, format, and media variables, provides a comprehensive picture of meme diversity. The degree of regularity was also identified as a key factor in classifying memes into groups that reflected a degree of cohesiveness and meaning.

The evolution of meme formats, from single imagery to more complex formats such as GIF videos, reflects the adaptation of memes to changing social media trends and technologies. This transformation is a snapshot of meme's ability to remain relevant and interesting to consumers in an era of constant change.

The role of memes in marketing strategy is increasingly prominent, not only as a tool to increase brand awareness and product understanding, but also as a source of innovation in the cultural industry. Humor, as a major element in memes, plays a key role in grabbing attention and creating appeal for consumers.

Factors related to meme virality, including relevance, iconicity, humor, and format, require effective embedding and distribution strategies to maximize the reach and impact of meme virality. Careful management of these aspects is crucial in the success of a meme-based marketing campaign.

In the context of Generation Z consumer behavior, memes provide satisfaction in three main aspects: entertainment, social interaction, and informing. Media factors, such as planting and distribution strategies, point to a central role in the successful spread of memes and impact on consumer engagement.

The application of marketing theory frameworks, involving consumer satisfaction theory, marketing communication theory, and social contagion theory, is recognized as relevant in the context of Generation Z marketing. The theoretical and practical implications of this research can provide direction for the development of more effective marketing strategies in the ever-evolving digital age.

5. References

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