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Meme marketing among Indian Gen Z: An analysis of Swiggy and Zomato's memes as instruments of economic sustainability

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Abstract

With innumerable startups and small business enterprises growing day by day, environment sustainability is a pressing concern for big corporations. Meme marketing has the potential to address this challenge by ensuring economic sustainability which is an issue of perpetual significance in the field of development communication. From originating as non-serious graphics and pop culture references, memes seem to attract especially Gen Z in online spaces. Prominently digital in creation and distribution, memes imbibe a unique force by combining the aspects of economic, social and cultural sustainability. As development communication entails, meme marketing demonstrates the characteristic of taking human behavioural factors in consideration while designing development projects. It is the way advertisers can ensure cost effective and ecofriendly marketing campaigns without creating environmental waste or causing financial overdue. Accordingly, two Indian food delivery apps – Swiggy and Zomato – that are utilizing meme marketing through YouTube communities have been studied to underscore their thematic undertones and popularity among Gen Z consumers. Born and brought up in internet culture, Gen Z understand the values of sustainable development and are often found at the core of such environmental campaigns. The thematic analysis using Braun and Clarke's framework has revealed valuable inputs for development communication,

some significant ones being the confirmation that Gen Z is no more passive audience but active consumers of memes who take interest in meaningful sharing. Unlike earlier studies that focus on virality and relatability of memes, the current findings have implicated that meme marketing can prove to be a successful way of tailoring strategies in vast demographics to incorporate environment sustainability in marketing. The study has also been instrumental in pointing out that personalized content creation, and not generic meme sharing converts to sales. These findings are important in the context of economic sustainability wherein Gen Z are responsible consumers who purchase subscriptions with awareness and responsibility not just impulse. Impulse works for a one-time offer but for building longer brand familiarity, brand recall and buying behaviour that requires time, and more importantly capital, can be solved if meme marketing is taken more seriously.

Keywords

YouTube, meme marketing, Gen Z, Swiggy, Zomato

Introduction

Memes are a type of user-generated, interactive media that have real-world effects on its audiences (Huntington, 2017). Richard Dawkins coined the term in *The Selfish Gene* (1976) describing it as a self-replicating organism as the gene in biology. Dawkins spoke of memes as essentially a replicator, analogous to the human gene, possessing the potential to affect human evolution by the algorithmic progression of it in popular culture. *The Meme Machine* informs that it is rooted in the Greek word mimeme, resonating with a monosyllable gene. Hence it is something that replicates or imitates (Blackmore, 2000). Sharing of memes is almost a degree of cultural transmission that occurs when an idea or a statement is reproduced with the help of catch tunes, phrases, text, video, jingles, image, fashion and several other such products of

popular culture. Memes can overcome socio-cultural, economic, political and interpersonal barriers to create what can be called a mediated society (Hughes, 2015).

Memos are usually light-hearted and refer to pop-culture in the form of images, gif, tunes, catchphrases and even video. While it may or may not be humorous, it is mostly thought-provoking and culturally-rooted. These can be created by anyone and are therefore low quality in terms of graphics, but their intertextuality is superior. In today's digital culture, memes have become an omnipresent trend that unites people from all professions and interests. They are easy to create, share and replicate, and are often used by Gen Z and millennials to establish a viewpoint, an unpopular opinion or confirm an information. Especially in the new media climate, memes have been successful in driving participatory culture.

Due to the ease of creation, they circulate and propagate online spaces reflecting views and information on a variety of topics covering politics, arts, literature, economics and sociology. Its users among Gen Z particularly find it crucial as it enables their participation in knowledge-sharing and cultural exchange in different contexts. Memes percolate the current social media ecosystem and impact their attention, often determining how they approach the information to interpret the environment. In the world of marketing, memes can replace hefty budgets that often generate tons of waste at the cost of environment, and financial overdue that have long term implications in the company's budgets. Unlike offline ads, memes have a longer shelf life and personalized interaction with customers.

Being online, the information and relatability that persists, propagates and influences consumer behaviour in memes is difficult to reach through other traditional forms of marketing. Hence, as the internet culture changes the way citizens educate and inform themselves, companies are increasingly looking to adapt newer forms of infotainment to attract their audience. Here, memes

have become the easiest exhibits of digital culture that present new information while presenting it across geographical boundaries. At this context, the present study seeks to find what makes memes popular with Gen Z and whether they have a role to play in influencing Gen Z's buying behaviours.

Literature review

Understanding Gen Z and their social media behaviours

The generation born between 1997 and 2012 are classified as Gen Z. They have been born and are raised in the overarching presence of social media, thus making them highly proficient with digital technologies. Their familiarity with the social media architecture pushes them into challenging the conventional forms of media-induced learning, development and distribution. As millennials pass the flame to Gen Z, they are becoming the youngest generation with disposable income hence a subject of core interest of entertainment, infotainment and marketing industries. Their individualistic personalities are more expressive, aligned and aware as they continue to display their views on social media through Facebook posts, Instagram stories, and so on.

According to Priming Theory (Iyengar, Peters & Kinder, 1982), popular visuals and images and media reinforce the interpretative frame of audiences' minds, hence furthering their information processing, opinion formation and decision-making prospects. The current study draws on the Priming Theory as a premise to understand how memes with pop culture references across YouTube provide communicate directly with Gen Z to build priming tendencies. Other than providing information about marketed products, offers or brands, these marketing memes also reinforce them to engage in dialogues about them both online and offline, potentially influencing their purchasing behaviours without added costs of traditional marketing campaigns. Based on priming, marketing memes can be understood as regular utterances in communication, that, in order to make an impact must be first understood and

second, must be relatable. In today's social media space wherein memes have penetrated serious discourses, their popularity can be harnessed to create marketing campaigns without involving ecological and financial constraints. Gen Z is on a perpetual lookout for a platform to voice their positive and negative perceptions about diverse topics on social media. Marketing minds of the time are aware of this constant need thus brands are always aiming to create curiosity in their goods and draw the imagination of customers (Kala & Pawar, 2022). They are regarded as the epitome of the digital era (Wandhe, 2024) because they constitute the biggest opinion makers and shapers in online consumption trends. Their buying behaviour is characterized by prioritizing conscious buying experiences over material possessions. As consumers, they have high environmental consciousness, preferring more eco-friendly as attributes, especially when purchasing food (Su, et al., 2019). In fact, they are able to recognize and even appreciate eco-friendliness in brands, making them more popular choices in influencing their purchasing behavior (Palomo-Domínguez, et al., 2023).

Gen Z purchasing behaviour also includes endorsing brands that prioritize environmental sustainability (Salam, et al., 2024). These may be some motivations for Swiggy and Zomato to introduce healthy options for diet besides maintaining environment friendly standards for packaging. Statista (2023) reports that Gen Z make up about 52.3% users among India's 290 million active internet users. This figure is particularly alluring for studies in meme marketing as a way of economic sustainability as startup culture invades the industrial landscape in the country.

Memos and their potential in promoting economic sustainability

Among India's 290 million active social media users, millennial and Gen Z are the top

contributors making up 52.3 % of the user base (Wang, et al., 2023). Additionally, 28.4 % of social media conversations originate from Gen Z while 15.1 % initiate from those aged 35-44 years (Shrivastav, 2023). These stats when incorporated into the field of meme marketing, makes for an interesting case study to determine their potential in economic sustainability. In fact, Gen Z are the new disruptive players and companies must understand their technology-usage habits to market their products better (Marques, 2018). Additionally, rising digital disruptions in business have created the need for building sustainability in small and medium sized enterprises (Hanaysha, et al., 2022). Here is where memes can be utilized to fulfil the quest for sustainability.

Pioneering studies have pointed that marketers can network better through engaging, sarcastic and funny images (Murray, et al., 2014) than catalogues of heavy information. Memes can have a significant impact in campaign recognition (Kostigyna, 2020) as they are similar to celebrities for drawing customers and retaining customer interest (Kala & Pawar, 2022). Memes are often used as resource by marketing minds to engage customers in the online space (Malodia, et al., 2022).

Especially on social media of official brand channels, meme posts bring in thousands of likes and comments thus garnering higher engagement than traditional forms of advertising at the fraction of cost. These confirm memes ensure economic sustainability, and are already in use for efficient marketing (Funk, 2014).

Digital marketers have constantly tagged memes as a new trend in sustainable development practices as they fit naturally into personalized marketing strategies of consumers (Dutta & Kumar, 2024). Memes have been known to evoke emotions, reactions, and humour due to their relatability. Coupled with their ease of distribution are cost effective marketing for startups that

make meme marketing an inviting area of research in development communication landscape. Meme samples used for this study from YouTube communities of Swiggy and Zomato show community pages having conversation threads under memetic posts that span across hundreds of pages. Such is the engagement rates under memetic posts that during a temporary breakdown in 2023, customers of both these platforms communicated via memes on social media (NDTV, 2023). This is how virality of memes are demonstrated in the internet culture where Gen Z are quick to respond, reiterate and express through memes (Ling, et al., 2021).

While available literature discusses memes in participatory communication, harnessing them for economic sustainability in marketing practices, and to the larger body of development support communication remains a scope for future inquiry. The present study has thus attempted to explore how memes can inspire decision-making and act as call-to-action while proving to be cost effective means of marketing.

Methodology

For this research, the methodology was planned on two levels: data collection through digital ethnography wherein the YouTube communities of Swiggy and Zomato were recorded for a year to build a dataset of memes; and secondary, in-depth interviews were conducted with Gen Z netizens who were regular on social media and are actively engaged in meme creation or resharing. The corpus of the present study consisted of 150 memes collected from the YouTube pages of Swiggy and Zomato during the period of September 2023 and September 2024. While the data collected for the research were done through digital ethnography, a follow up of thematic analysis of interviews using Braun and Clarke 6-Step Framework was done.

Data collection

Digital ethnography is described as the practice of representing real-life cultural events using

the internet and digital spaces (Kaur-Gill & Dutta, 2017). It is an extension of the traditional ethnography, essentially characteristic of mapping the indigenous practices and cultures of a people while assimilating in such environments (Paoli & D'Auria, 2021). Just like an ethnographer fixates their attention, timing and focus in knowing the history, status quo and culture of the chosen population, a digital ethnographer resides in that digital space to study the multitudinous behaviour of the sample. Especially after the Coronavirus pandemic, studies in online ethnography have accelerated as virtual groups across demographics and culture have sprawled up on the internet (Willow, 2021).

Digital ethnography is built on capturing data through note-taking, participant observation, interviews, surveys and focus group analysis of the virtual communities who are non-geographically bound. They share similar likes, dislikes and aspirations with active goals (Parks, 2010). Thus I embarked on this data collection journey into the YouTube communities of Swiggy and Zomato with the aim of selecting such internet-based Gen Z audiences who share and reshare the memes. Such a diversified and representative sample is important to understand consumer behaviour in marketing studies.

The memes collected for this study were gathered from the YouTube official pages of Swiggy and Zomato, accounting to a total of over 500 chat threads across Facebook and Instagram. Since these are high engagement platforms for Gen Z, they were the ideal resources for exploring their customer behaviour, brand recall and individual shopper preferences. Out of the overall conversations between September 2023 and 2024, 150 posts contained memes. The timeline was chosen because it marks the seasonal beginning of Indian festivities including Diwali, Durga Puja, Christmas, New Year, Valentine's Day and International Women's day. These events are usually when brands spend the most to attract shoppers from all ages and professions

indulge in gifting or buying for the said events. The timeline also coincides with some popular shopping events like Black Friday Sale, End of Season, Amazon Great Indian Festival and so on.

Sampling

Deriving the busiest hours for YouTube commenting through HubSpot, two slots in a day - 10 AM to 11 AM and 8 PM to 10 PM – were chosen between September 2023 and 2024 for harvesting data. Memes collected within the given timings were saved onto my personal desktop with the help of GoFullPage capture, turning memes into PDF forms. From the PDF thus generated, I could monitor regular commentors or meme-sharers who were actively involved in responding to meme marketing by Swiggy and Zomato.

Looking into the PDFs helped me track 150 memes that were posted in a year. I applied the randomization technique through the online random numbers generating tool, Stat Trek. Inputting the values for maximum and minimum, and eradicating all the duplicates gave me a set of 75 random numbers. These 75 memes were further used in the interviews of online communities to gauge themes like brand recall, brand awareness, cost effectiveness, and other consumer perceptions. I took each meme was taken as a single unit for ensuring the themes are succinctly displayed. To ensure reliability of the thematic coding, I involved two other researchers wherein the intercoder rating was 91%.

A year of monitoring and saving PDFs gave me a list of dedicated subscribers who I followed up with on Instagram and Facebook to understand if they are interested in participating in my study. I used the snowball sampling technique to sample 14 respondents for my interviews. Usually those who were community members had subscriptions of Swiggy and Zomato apps, and if not, they would refer me to someone they knew who created memes around marketing offers and discounts by the brands.

Results and discussion

Thematic analysis

This section discussed the main themes and consumer perceptions of the meme marketing that were carried out between September 2023 and 2024 by Swiggy and Zomato’s YouTube official profiles.

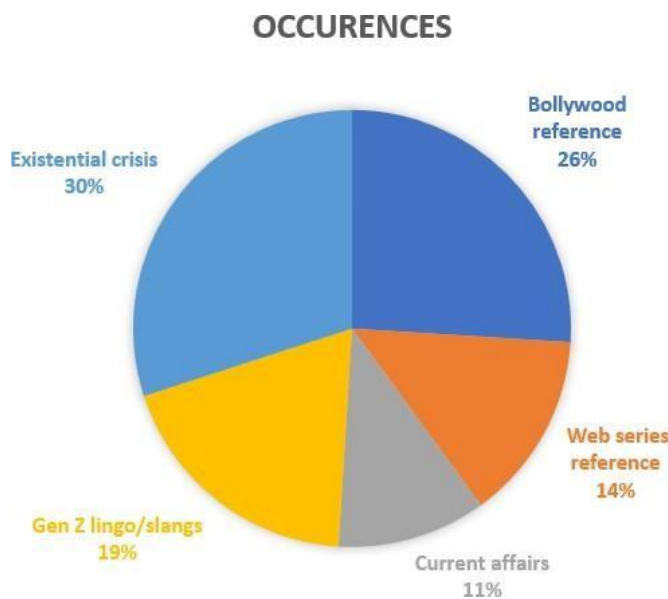


Figure 1: Frequency of themes in Swiggy and Zomato memes during September 2023 and 2024

Figure 1 shows the 5 primary themes that emerged from Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis, namely – Existential crisis, Bollywood reference, Gen Z lingo/slangs, Current affairs and Web series reference.

Figure 1 is a representation of the most prominent themes in the memes investigated in this study for one year from September 2023 to September 2024. It is of paramount significance to note that meme marketing increases during the festive season and even though occasions keep changing, the topical intensity of memes remain transitioning between the 5 themes. The highest frequency is of existential crisis memes at 30 per cent. These memes are

usually about daily struggles like getting up late to work, having a delay in order delivery, looking for a special someone, saving and finances or simply personality-based memes. Gen Z is an expressive category of youths who find such hilarious memes “relatable” and “share-worthy”, thus making an instant connect with memes themed around existential crisis. These codes also signify the ingredients of a successful meme that advertisers and marketers can focus on while creating cost effective campaigns. Some examples of such memes are given below:



Figure 3: A meme on existential crisis/daily struggles posted by Zomato



Figure 2: A meme by Zomato

Figure 2 displays a meme posted by Zomato which has been high in appeal to Gen Z because they agree that finances are a big worry in their generation but even that is not stopping them to indulge in ordering food online. Such memes are “a great call-to-action” message for potential buyers.

Another example is Figure 3, another meme marketing post by Zomato that became a hit with Gen Z. The meme shows a *samosa*, an Indian deep-fried snack that is superimposed with a cat, which is another popular pet option among youngsters suggesting that like a *samosa*, they keep their

“fillings” (feelings) inside. It is both socially and personally relatable as Gen Z who are heartbroken find it hard to trust again. When they see their “inner feelings depicted on memes”, they “can laugh instantly, learning to accept their flaws in the long-term.”

The second most popular themes for meme marketing was found to be Bollywood-centric characters and references at 26 per cent that Gen Z finds “funny”, “informative” and “entertaining”. Interview respondents indicated that references to their favourite films, powerful dialogues or most liked actors make them feel “heard”. They strongly believe that films are a mirror of their own life experiences and when they become the dominating theme in memes, Gen Z are more likely to engage with the products or brands that centre their memetic content around Bollywood. Some even felt such meme marketing are “a great way to reduce costs of marketing campaigns” as they “require no more than one creator who knows using online free edit software.” Figure 4 is an example of a meme from this study that shows an iconic film title of the King of Bollywood, Shah Rukh Khan. The film, *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* has been craftily refashioned to be a marketing meme for Swiggy's Instamart. Respondents said the meme was “successful in conveying its message” that “Instamart is there



Figure 4: *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* meme by Swiggy Instamart

for all your last-minute grocery worries and deliveries”. Some even said that Instamart has “ecofriendly products range” that pushed them into the online grocery setup rather than local

markets. Some even confessed that they would cancel venturing outdoors for shopping and instead “turn to Instamart” and “purchase more than what was on the to-do list.”



Figure 5: Bollywood-centric meme marketing by Swiggy on a dialogue from the film *Wanted*



Figure 6: Zomato's meme on *Phir Hera Pheri*

Figure 5 is a screengrab of a scene from Bollywood film *Wanted* by Salman Khan. The reference is a witty take on the constant juggle between delivery partners accepting orders from potential buyers. Respondents found it “#truestory”, “laughable” and “actually the truth”. Figure 6 is a Zomato meme that displays a scene from the cult Bollywood comedy genre film *Phir Hera Pheri*. It is an “everyday struggle to get food delivered on time in between office and classes”, and therefore an “undeniable truth” that keeps Gen Z waiting for food immediately after they have placed an order.

At 19 per cent is the thematic Gen Z lingo/slangs that demonstrate social media trending buzzwords and lingo like bae, dad jokes, simp, lit, vibe check and so on. A viral meme by Zomato on Figure 7 shows how Gen Z responds to relationship worries. The meme promotes a 60 per cent off on Cheesy garlic bread orders from Zomato for the day. The meme is suggestive of the fact that instead of “cheesy compliments”, cheesy garlic bread can lighten the mood of their bae (Gen Z abbreviation for special someone or before everyone else). Such memes not

just “promote but inject the idea of buying instantly” thus again making meme marketing a strong “go-getter” for driving sales.



Figure 7: Zomato's meme on Gen Z lingo *bae*



Figure 8: Swiggy's meme on Gen Z lingo *dad jokes*

Figure 8 is a Swiggy Instamart meme that wishes Father's Day cleverly with the Gen Z lingo dad jokes, while also wittily adding a swipe button that echoes swipe for dating apps. Dad jokes, a common Gen Z slang refers to a pun and clever one-liner that are aimed at provoking a negative groan among listeners. This is another call-to-action meme marketing that interviewees found to be a “classic humorous” take on “everyone's favourite genre of internet jokes.” When asked whether they had seen any offline advts during such eventful days, respondents confessed that “outdoor advertisements are of the bygone era” because they are “too busy to watch” or “involve with billboard ads” while on the go. Online ads through memes specially were “more visible”, “accessible”, “relatable” are “not only engaging but also ensure less waste goes down the drain” than average ad campaign equipment's.

Web series form a 14 per cent stakes on themes of meme marketing by Swiggy and Zomato according to the Braun and Clarke analysis. When Gen Z is struggling to find meaning of their

daily challenges or professional hurdles, they usually look towards binge-watching a popular web series. While these shows might not always be philosophical lessons, these help Gen Z “find ease, joy and understanding”. This trend is quite viral with both the food delivery apps where they refer to both Indian and foreign web series to make a point, promote an offer or inform their subscribers ahead of festivities. Figure 9 is a Zomato meme that resonates the immensely viral dialogue of *Kokilaben* from the web series *Saath Nibhaana Saathiya*, “*rasode mein kaun tha* (who was in the kitchen?)”. The dialogue was an insulting remark to the lead character *Gopi Bahu* who is tortured by her mother-in-law *Kokilaben*. The dialogue became so popular that it was later adapted into a song by YouTuber and music composer Yashraj Mukhate and was also endorsed by many as a moment marketing success (Sahrash & Agarwal, 2023). The meme not just promotes the idea of ordering online but also commemorates the total orders given by the user Yash from Bengaluru.

This kind of personalized advertising is “a sure appeal” among Gen Z who feel “valued”, “heard” and “noticed in the era of cancel culture”. Some even said they get suggestions from memes and are “informed about recent web series sometimes through just memes.”



Figure 9: Zomato's meme referring to the viral TV show, *Saath Nibhaana Saathiya*, that became a bigger hit when available on web-based Disney-Hotstar



Figure 10: Zomato's meme referring to *Mirzapur* series for urging customers to order sweet dishes during winter

Figure 10 is another example of how meme marketing channelizes the popularity of web series, like *Mirzapur*, to remind users it is the time for ordering sweet dishes. In the meme one can see the dialogue of character *Munna Bhaiya* is inviting guests for a *gajar ka halwa* (carrot sweet dish) treat in winter. Respondents agree that lovers of the show “are sure to have a craving of *gajar ka halwa*” after watching the meme. Those who are not fans of eating sweet dishes also find the meme “a smart promotional” that is “relevant and timely” to the season’s most loved foods.

At 11 per cent is the frequency of current affairs as the topic of memes, denoting that meme marketers are quick to immerse into trending events across news, sports and politics to create memes. Also referred to as moment marketing, such memes garner high engagement while a live event is being telecasted or playing out, including sports, news, politics and local incidents. Figure 11 shows juxtaposes themes of Bollywood and current affairs by selecting a scene from the film *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*, featuring Nawazuddin Siddiqui as journalist *Chand Nawaz* who is reporting live from Pakistan. The graphic is portrayed like a live Breaking News broadcast on a television news channel with the text ticker “*IND-PAK match ke dauran log 250 biryanis per minute mangwa rahe hai* (People are ordering 250 biryanis per minute during the ongoing Ind vs Pak cricket match)”. The meme not only promoted online biryani offers but also responded to an urgent pulse of the Gen Z. It is an example of “brand engagement at its best” and “a true brand recall”, interviewees feel. This spontaneous meme gathered immediate attention due to its mention of the ongoing India vs. Pakistan cricket match. Generally, the cricket matches between the two neighbouring countries receive huge viewership across continents while becoming the centre of discords online and offline. Swiggy, however, tries to depart from such tense situations and on a lighter note talks about the common love for Biryani between the two

countries.

Figure 12 as Zomato's meme marketing strategy promoted its deals of the day, marking the full-fledged wedding season or *shaadi* season that usually falls during winter months of October, November, December and January in most of north India. The graphic is of a still from the web series *Mirzapur* juxtaposed with the wedding season, becoming at once "relatable" for subscribers of the app. The text reads "*Hum karte hain prabandha aap chinta mat kariye* (I am making some arrangements, don't worry)" uttered by lead character Akhandanand Tripathi, portrayed by Pankaj Tripathi. The meme "speaks to its audiences" as many of them might not have invites but can have Biryani, the common wedding dish right in their homes with Zomato making full arrangements for the same. Such online ads are "more ecofriendly", "sustainable", and "high impact" than other forms of traditional promotions.



Figure 11: Swiggy's spontaneous meme on Ind vs Pak live cricket match featuring a still from Bollywood film *Bajrangi Bhaijaan*



Figure 12: Zomato's retake on *Mirzapur* during the wedding season

Interview analysis

Figure 13 checks a general query to understand whether Gen Z engages with memetic content

on a daily basis or not, to gauge the popularity of meme marketing. As visible in the chart, most of them follow more than 3 meme pages excluding Swiggy and Zomato and are quite familiar with memes. While the same people were not aware if offline ads on similar events, they had seen, if not :How many meme pages do you follow on your social media handles?

14 responses

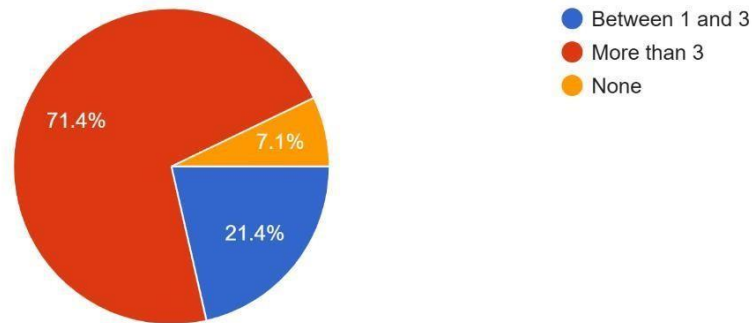


Figure 13: Familiarity with memes

Figure 14 is an inquiry into the shareability of memes among Gen Z. While offline campaigns cannot be shared instantly and shared unless photographed or talked about, online memes are personalized information mechanisms. However, Gen Z does not share every meme they come across. They are selective in sharing memes on their social networks thus highlighting the need for advertisers to focus seriously on meme marketing with Gen Z as target audience.

Similarly, the ingredients of meme marketing is also underlined in the thematic analysis of this study. The memes that have existential crisis, Bollywood references or current affairs mentions score higher in engagement. This can be a cue for marketers working for the studied brands as well as others who are making a foray into meme marketing.

How often do you consumer/share memes on your social media?

14 responses

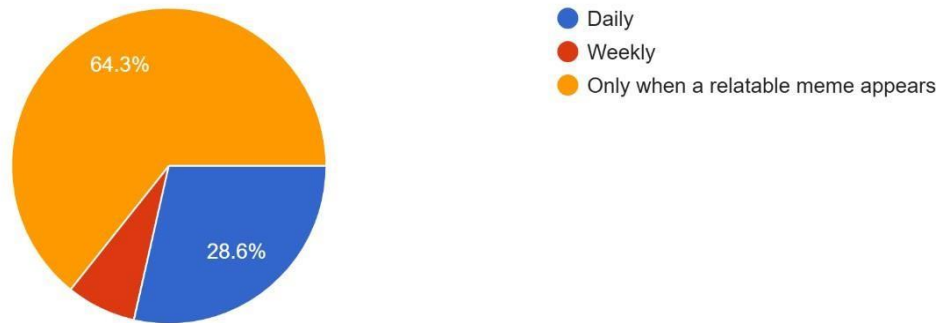


Figure 14: Shareability of memes

Figure 15 represents the research query of finding out whether meme marketing are the primary information points regarding discounts or offers for Gen Z or not. A high percentage (57.1 per cent) said “sometimes” they are likely to be made aware of promotional through meme marketing while “never” has not received a single response. This implies that although meme marketing is happening, they are not necessarily always about promotional, rather just to build engagement and brand familiarity among their customers. In fact, most promotions are sent through notifications and emails, according to respondents and that they use memes for gratification purposes besides entertainment and relatability. It is imperative to understand here that offline and expensive ad campaigns might not be thoroughly visible among their target audience, but memes can be localized and shared within target demographics to ensure low costing and high delivery campaigns.

To what extent do you think marketing memes increase your awareness of promotional on Netflix, Prime Amazon Video, Swiggy and Zomato?

14 responses

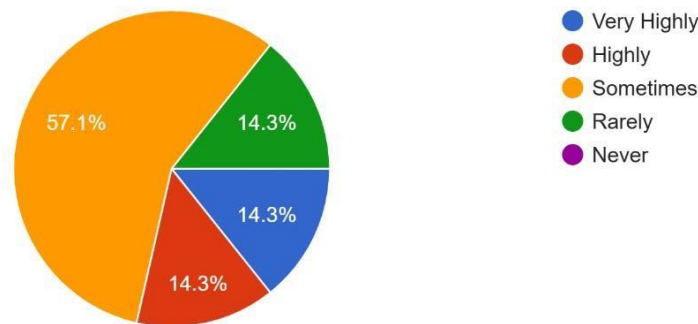


Figure 15: Memes as primary sources of information and promotion for Gen Z users

Figure 16 graphically represents the probe into consumer's perceptions specifically their buying behaviour. 57.1 per cent of respondents indicated that they were "somewhat likely" to subscribe when offers or discounts are promoted through meme marketing. While this might not be a pleasing stat for marketers, it definitely opens up the opportunities of working on the content and visibility of memes across different social media channels other than YouTube.

How likely are you to subscribe to Netflix, Prime Amazon Video, Swiggy and Zomato's offers/discounts seeing their marketing memes?

14 responses

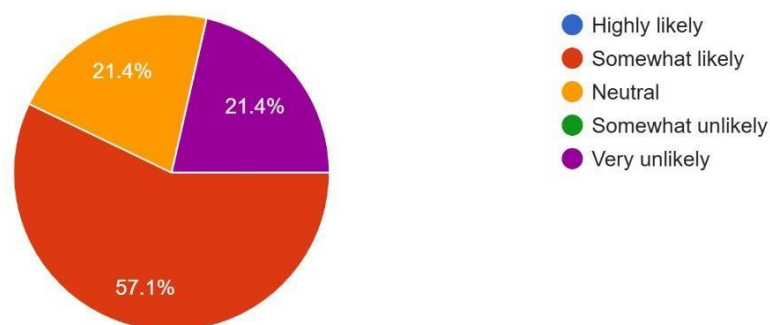


Figure 16: Influence of meme marketing on subscription of Swiggy and Zomato

Figure 17 shows a direct answer to the research question on the impacts of meme marketing in acting as call-to-action among Gen Z consumers. Customers are 42.9% “likely” to respond to call to actions, which is a significant percentage in comparison to traditional offline ads. This perspective also reconfirms that meme marketing has a long way to go as it is not targeted at immediate sales but rather it attempts at building brand familiarity among its target audience for the long-term. Usually these exercises of perception building of brands takes years of efforts, time and money but with memes, they can be reduced to ensure economic sustainability.

How likely are you to respond to these marketing memes on Zomato by purchasing, sharing, or subscribing to plans? <https://www.youtube.com/@zomato/community>

14 responses

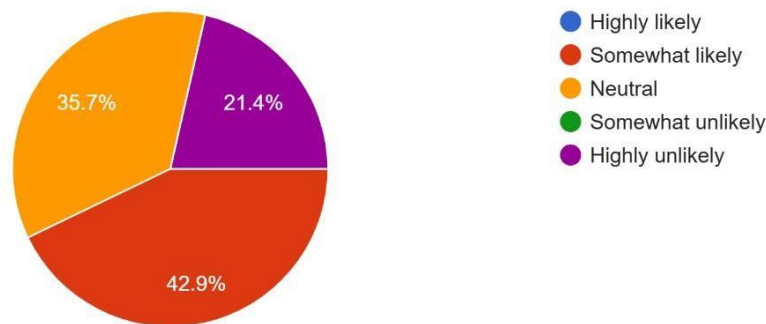


Figure 17: Influence of call-to-action and buying behaviour perceptions through Zomato's meme marketing

Figure 18 answers the research question of the feasibility, popularity and effectiveness of meme marketing in showing that a larger percentage (57.1) of consumers are affected by the trending marketing technique. In fact, meme marketing serves as a perception building and brand familiarity strategy to humanize their brands among a conscious buyer audience of Gen Z.

Do you agree meme marketing influences/affects your perceptions about the brands endorsing through them?

14 responses

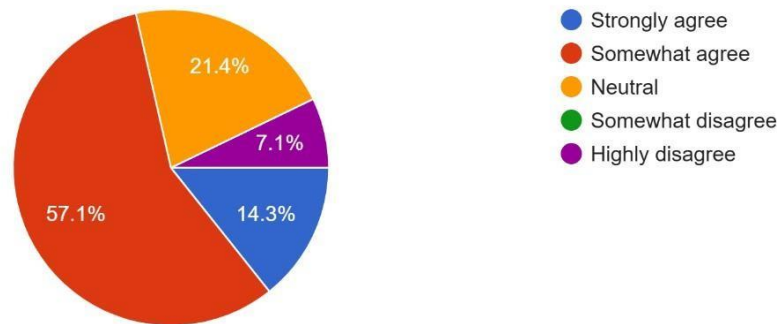


Figure 18: Consumer perceptions of Gen Z regarding meme marketing

Conclusion

This study is a unique intervention in both development communication and marketing studies due to its qualitative nature. Most marketing and business research is focused on the quantitative aspects of advertising and buyer behaviour but figures and numbers only tell half the story. A thematic analysis of qualitative interviews has revealed the future course of study not just for academics but also for marketers in the industry. One of the most important revelations in the study is that not all memes work. Memes, especially for marketing purposes need to be relevant for their target audience otherwise the meme might not even enter the chain of virality.

Memos have a cultural resonance and emotional appeal so they cannot be rid of these qualities when used for marketing (Almaghrabi, 2023). However, some memes built during festivities are usually emotionally appealing but they don't convert into sales because of affordability factors. Therefore, brands must also invest time more than money when creating memes for marketing. Instead of one-time customers who make purchases over the spontaneity of meme, brands must invest in gaining permanent customers who speak to them.

Since Gen Z is an environmentally conscious group, they utilize memes for gratification purposes

and do not always look for urgent action of buying. So, brands can humanize their products and empathize with Gen Z customers by making more informed choices of topics in memes. This conclusion agrees with Relevance Theory revealing that memes have a cognitive and communicative role in marketing and must be employed for market research studies.

In terms of Gen Z audiences, memes have a functional role that is pragmatic, everyday and urgent that can inculcate relationships between brands and consumers when handled with care. Thus, meme familiarization among Gen Z is a great potential that marketers can channel for attracting target audiences at the fraction of cost they employ in creating expensive ad campaigns.

Furthermore, studying meme marketing across other demographics and platform-specific behaviour can be a timely research endeavour in the field.

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