

**MEME MARKETING: HOW DO MEMES INFLUENCE CUSTOMER
PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF THE BRAND**

A THESIS



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**MEME MARKETING: HOW DO MEMES INFLUENCE CUSTOMER
PERCEPTION AND AWARENESS OF THE BRAND**



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ABSTRACT

The increasing dominance of digital culture and the presence of Generation Z in the creative industry have influenced how brands communicate in the digital space. Meme marketing has emerged as a contemporary strategy, yet limited studies explore how Gen Z professionals interpret and respond to such content. This study aims to analyze how meme-based marketing affects customer perception and brand awareness, and to identify key factors influencing engagement. A qualitative research design was employed using a phenomenological approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight Gen Z professionals in creative fields such as content creation, social media, and digital marketing. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns. The findings show that memes are perceived as humorous, relatable, and emotionally resonant. Meme-based marketing is more engaging than conventional advertising, as it aligns with peer-style communication and digital culture. Five key factors influence engagement: humor, emotional relatability, trend-awareness, content simplicity, and authenticity. Additionally, meme marketing strengthens brand awareness when executed consistently and is culturally relevant. Meme marketing fosters short-term interaction through likes, shares, and comments and contributes to long-term brand familiarity and emotional connection. This study highlights the strategic potential of meme content in building brand relevance among Generation Z.

Keywords: meme marketing, Generation Z, consumer perception, brand awareness, emotional engagement

ABSTRAK

Dominasi budaya digital dan keterlibatan Generasi Z dalam industri kreatif telah memengaruhi cara merek berkomunikasi di ruang digital. Meme marketing muncul sebagai strategi kontemporer, namun masih sedikit penelitian yang mengeksplorasi bagaimana profesional Gen Z memahami dan merespons konten tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh pemasaran berbasis meme terhadap persepsi konsumen dan kesadaran merek, serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor utama yang memengaruhi keterlibatan audiens. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode fenomenologi. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan delapan profesional Gen Z yang bekerja di bidang kreatif seperti content creator, media sosial, dan pemasaran digital. Analisis tematik digunakan untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola yang muncul. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meme dipersepsikan sebagai konten yang lucu, relevan, dan menyentuh secara emosional. Pemasaran berbasis meme dianggap lebih menarik dibanding iklan konvensional karena meniru komunikasi antar teman dan selaras dengan budaya digital. Lima faktor utama yang memengaruhi keterlibatan adalah humor, relevansi emosional, kesadaran tren, kesederhanaan konten, dan autentisitas. Selain itu, strategi meme yang konsisten dan relevan secara budaya dapat memperkuat kesadaran merek. Meme marketing tidak hanya mendorong interaksi jangka pendek seperti likes dan shares, tetapi juga membangun koneksi emosional dan familiaritas merek dalam jangka panjang. Penelitian ini menyoroti potensi strategis meme dalam memperkuat relevansi merek di kalangan Gen Z.

Kata Kunci: Pemasaran Meme, Generasi Z, Persepsi Konsumen, Kesadaran Merek, Keterlibatan Emosional

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Yogyakarta, July 7, 2025



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly changed the way brands communicate with consumers. The widespread use of smartphones and constant internet connectivity has immersed individuals in a continuous stream of digital content. People now interact with media in more active and selective ways. Social media platforms have become central to users' navigating personal expression and brand interaction. Ashley & Tuten (2015) explained that social media is a communication tool among individuals and a powerful platform for distributing branded content.

Brands are forced to adapt to new behavioral patterns as consumer attention becomes more fragmented. Malodia et al. (2022) stated that brands increasingly turn to culturally embedded and interactive formats that feel natural to users' online behavior. These include short-form videos, relatable visuals, and emerging genres like memes. At the same time, users are growing more resistant to traditional digital advertising. Wielki (2020) found that many consumers actively avoid or block ads they perceive as irrelevant or disruptive. This reality has led marketers to seek more native, organic engagement methods.

Originally a form of user-generated content, memes have evolved into a strategic marketing tool. Benaim (2018) argued that memes function as cultural symbols, condensing shared experience and humor into highly portable formats. Their simplicity and entertainment value contribute to their viral nature. Alhabash et al. (2013) highlighted that emotionally resonant content leads to higher engagement and stronger recall on social platforms. Arie Bowo et al.

(2024) and Meer et al. (2022) confirmed that memes are particularly effective when they reflect the audience's sense of humor and emotional preferences.

Younger audiences like Generation Z are exceptionally responsive to this content. Arie Bowo et al. (2024) found that Gen Z engages more actively with meme-based marketing when it reflects their lifestyle, values, and language. However, informal and humorous memes can also carry reputational risk for brands. Chan & Lowe (2021) warned that humor in advertising, while helpful, can undermine brand image if it fails to connect. Aleem et al. (2024) emphasized that perceptions of authenticity and symbolic "coolness" shape how consumers respond to meme content.

Despite the growing popularity of meme marketing, much of the academic literature remains focused on surface metrics such as virality, reach, and engagement counts. Rathi & Jain (2023) argued that the core value of meme marketing lies not only in visibility but in emotional and cultural relevance. Kee-Man Chuah et al. (2020) supported this by showing that meme effectiveness depends on contextual familiarity and the coherence between visual and textual elements. Siddique (2024), in her case study of Indian food delivery platforms, found that Gen Z responded more positively to memes that aligned with their humor preferences and social language.

Given this context, this study explores how Generation Z professionals in the creative industry perceive meme-based content shared by brands on social media. Understanding their perspective is crucial because this generation not only consumes but also shapes digital communication practices. The findings of this research are expected to provide valuable insights for marketers in developing more effective and relatable strategies when using meme content to engage digitally native audiences.

1.2 Research Focus

- a. The object of this research is the younger generation, especially Gen Z, who have been involved in the creative world and are already working.

- b. The research problem focuses on how consumers respond to memes used by brands for marketing purposes and what factors make them more interested in or interact with memes.

1.3 Problem Formulation

1. How does Generation Z work in the creative industry respond to using memes in brand marketing?
2. What factors influence consumer interest in and interaction with marketing memes?
3. How can meme-based marketing strategies be optimized to increase engagement and brand awareness?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. Analyze how Generation Z in the creative industry understands and responds to using memes in marketing.
2. Identify the key factors that drive consumer engagement with marketing memes.
3. Explore meme-based marketing strategies to increase brand recall and awareness.

1.5 Research Benefits

- a. Theoretical benefits: This research is expected to enrich the academic literature in digital marketing, especially regarding the effectiveness of meme marketing in building brand engagement and awareness.

- b. Practical benefits: This research can guide marketers in designing more effective meme-based marketing strategies. By understanding the factors that drive consumer interaction with marketing memes, brands can optimize their content to be more engaging and relevant to the target audience.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Meme marketing

The meme concept originated with Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), where he described it as a cultural unit that spreads through imitation, much like a gene transmits biological information. In the digital age, memes have transformed into humorous, image-based content that circulates rapidly across social platforms such as Instagram, Reddit, TikTok, and Twitter. Their ability to encapsulate complex cultural messages with simplicity and humor makes them powerful communication vehicles. Scholars like Dynel (2016) argued that memes function as multimodal constructions, blending visuals and text in ways that enhance meaning and elicit strong audience reactions. Because of their adaptability and resonance with internet culture, marketers have begun to recognize the unique value of memes in building brand visibility and engagement (Lubis et al., 2021; Vasile et al., 2021).

Unlike traditional marketing, which often employs persuasive rhetoric and formal tone, meme marketing is characterized by its informal, playful, and often ironic communication style. According to Shifman (2013), memes thrive on intertextuality, allowing marketers to tap into cultural references and shared online humor to make brand messages more relatable. This mode of engagement aligns well with younger audiences, particularly Generation Z, who are digital natives skeptical of overt corporate messages and drawn to authentic, user-generated content (Kee-Man Chuah et al., 2020; Ngo, 2021). Meme marketing thus offers a pathway for brands to appear more "in tune" with their audiences while reducing the barriers associated with conventional advertising formats. This subtle yet effective approach humanizes brands and fosters community through shared cultural participation.

The viral potential of memes significantly enhances their marketing value. Research has shown that meme-based content often generates higher engagement.

Rates in the form of shares, comments, and likes when compared to traditional digital advertising (Lubis et al., 2021; Meer et al., 2022). Such virality can transform consumers into brand ambassadors as they actively participate in sharing, remixing, or commenting on branded content. This process of peer-to-peer dissemination helps create a decentralized marketing network that feels more authentic and grassroots. However, memes' spontaneous and unfiltered nature also introduces reputational risks, particularly when humor is misunderstood, poorly timed, or culturally insensitive (Vasile et al., 2021; Zulli & Zulli, 2022).

Successful meme marketing requires strategic thinking, cultural fluency, and constant monitoring of online discourse. Marketers must understand the nuances of digital communities and respond quickly to trends without appearing opportunistic or inauthentic. A misaligned meme campaign can provoke criticism, alienate target demographics, and damage brand credibility (Ngo, 2021). Therefore, while meme marketing holds significant potential for brand growth and visibility, it demands careful execution and sensitivity to audience dynamics. Brands that invest in understanding their digital ecosystems and maintain a balance between humor and responsibility are more likely to succeed in this dynamic marketing space.

2.2 Customer Perception

Customer perception refers to how individuals decode and emotionally respond to brand communication, mainly shaped by cultural context and digital familiarity. In meme marketing, this perception is deeply influenced by how well the content's humor, tone, and references align with the audience's shared knowledge and social positioning. The semantic flexibility of memes allows for a wide range of interpretations shaped by timing, context, and user background, making them highly dynamic cultural units (Dynel, 2016).

Humor is a central mechanism in meme marketing, mainly when it generates emotional engagement that drives recall, brand positivity, and sharing behavior (Alhabash et al., 2013). Among Gen Z and other digital-savvy audiences, humor is a naturally preferred form of interaction that softens resistance to marketing content and fosters brand closeness (Kee-Man Chuah et al., 2020). When memes feel authentic and culturally aligned, they create emotional trust and strengthen the

consumer-brand relationship.

Meme content incorporating Gen Z's digital culture and language, such as pop culture references, slang, or platform-specific humor, elicits stronger emotional engagement and encourages meaningful sharing behavior (Siddique, 2024). Research has also shown that meme-based identity signaling reinforces emotional attachment and loyalty to the brand (Rathi & Jain, 2023). In a digital society, where user participation is central, memes function as cultural symbols, and when brands misuse or misalign these symbolic codes, audiences respond critically (Shifman, 2013). The resulting backlash highlights the importance of cultural sensitivity and timing in brand communication (Vitiuk et al., 2020). Thus, meme marketing requires brands to be attuned not only to trends but also to the cultural literacy of their audience.

2.3 Awareness of the Brand

Brand awareness refers to the degree to which consumers can recognize or recall a brand under various conditions, particularly in today's saturated digital media landscape. In the context of meme marketing, awareness is often developed through frequent exposure and the viral spread of humorous or culturally relevant content that subtly carries brand cues. Bilgin (2018) argued that social media marketing can enhance brand awareness by fostering emotional engagement and sustaining brand visibility within users' online environments. In this way, memes become an effective vehicle for embedding brand messages that feel organic rather than forced (Malodia et al., 2022).

Successful meme marketing strategies often rely on indirect branding, using recurring motifs, styles, or humorous formats that become associated with the brand over time. For example, brands may repeatedly employ a specific meme template or internet character to establish a recognizable content identity. Over time, this strategy helps create brand recall without relying on overt logos or slogans (Kee-Man Chuah et al., 2020). This method aligns well with younger audiences who prefer subtlety and creativity over traditional promotional tactics. When executed

well, it increases the brand's presence in everyday online conversations without triggering the usual advertising fatigue.

Not all meme-based campaigns effectively enhance brand awareness. The success of such efforts depends on how well the content aligns with current cultural conversations, the creativity of the execution, and the perceived authenticity of the brand voice (Zulli & Zulli, 2022). Audiences can quickly detect when a brand is trying too hard to be relatable, which may result in negative sentiment or disinterest. In such cases, the brand may be remembered for the wrong reasons, potentially diminishing long-term loyalty or credibility. Thus, consistency in tone and relevance is crucial for sustaining awareness over time.

In addition, the rapid turnover of online trends presents another challenge. A meme format that is viral today may become outdated tomorrow, and brands that lag may appear disconnected or irrelevant (Vasile et al., 2021). This volatility necessitates real-time engagement and agile content creation to align with cultural rhythms. Therefore, meme marketing as a brand awareness tool requires creativity and an ongoing investment in social listening, cultural understanding, and audience feedback. When these elements are effectively managed, meme marketing can significantly elevate a brand's visibility and cultural presence.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This research uses qualitative methods to understand social phenomena in depth, especially in the context of meme-based marketing. Qualitative methods were chosen because of their ability to explore experiences, behaviors, and meanings constructed by individuals in certain situations. Qualitative research allows for a deep understanding of human experiences, particularly when exploring meanings that are socially constructed and context-dependent (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The approach used in this study is phenomenology. The phenomenological approach aims to understand individuals' subjective experiences of a particular phenomenon by exploring the meanings they give to these experiences (Neubauer et al., 2019). This approach was chosen for its ability to explore individual experiences deeply and reflectively, which is in line with the purpose of this study, which is to understand how Generation Z, particularly those working in the creative industry, respond to meme-based marketing.

This study aims to explore how meme marketing can shape consumers' perceptions and awareness of a brand. By examining consumers' experiences and responses to meme-based marketing, this research is expected to uncover factors contributing to the effectiveness of meme-based marketing strategies and their impact on brand engagement.

In addition, this research also aims to provide insights for marketers in designing more effective digital marketing strategies. By understanding how and why consumers interact with meme-based content, the results of this study can serve as a reference in developing marketing campaigns that are more relevant and appealing to the target audience.

3.2 Research Resource Persons

The number of interviewees in this study was set at 8, using data saturation in qualitative research. This decision was based on the interview results, which showed that no significant new information was found after the eighth interview, so it was considered sufficient to describe a stable thematic pattern. This is in line with previous research, which states that data saturation in qualitative research is generally achieved in the range of 6-12 interviews, especially in thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2006). Therefore, the number of 8 interviewees in this study is adequate to gain an in-depth understanding of Generation Z's perception of meme marketing. Data saturation is a significant factor in determining the appropriate sample size in qualitative research. Although there is no standardized minimum and maximum number of interviewees, previous research has shown that 6-12 interviews are sufficient to identify key patterns, especially in in-depth interviews with groups of informants with specific characteristics (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). Therefore, the number of 8 interviewees in this study was chosen not only based on the principle of data saturation, but also to ensure that the insights gained were in line with the objectives of this study.

The characteristics and suitable research sources are:

1. Aged 21-27, belongs to the Generation Z group.
2. Work in the creative industry, such as a content creator, social media specialist, digital marketer, graphic designer, or other professions related to digital marketing.
3. Actively use social media and have experience interacting with meme marketing.
4. Knowledge of digital marketing strategies through work experience or educational background.

Table 3. 1. Research Informant Table

No.	Code	Gender	Age	Jobs
1.	IF1	M	24	Social Media Specialist
2.	IF2	F	23	Copywriter
3.	IF3	M	22	Content Creator
4.	IF4	F	21	Graphic Designer
5.	IF5	M	23	Social Media Specialist
6.	IF6	F	26	Digital Marketer
7.	IF7	F	27	Digital Marketer
8.	IF8	M	24	Content Creator
*IF: Informant *F: Female *M: Male				

3.3 Source of research data

3.3.1 Research Instruments

The primary research instrument in this study is the researcher, supported by a semi-structured interview guide. This guide is designed to maintain a consistent questioning structure while allowing flexibility to explore participants' thoughts and experiences in depth. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a pivotal role as both the collector and interpreter of data. This requires reflexivity, active listening, and responsiveness to emerging themes throughout the interview process (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The aim is to generate rich, contextual insights grounded in the subjective perspectives of participants.

This study investigates how consumers, specifically members of Generation Z working in creative industries, perceive and interact with brand communication that incorporates internet memes. The research is motivated by the increasing use of memes as a marketing tool and the need to understand their impact on consumer perception and brand awareness. As a digitally native generation,

Gen Z tends to evaluate brand content critically and shows a preference for communication that is creative, culturally attuned, and emotionally resonant.

Previous studies highlighted that humorous and culturally embedded content, such as memes, can strengthen consumer engagement and enhance the effectiveness of brand messaging (Malodia et al., 2022). Meme-based content is especially relevant to Gen Z audiences, who value authenticity and informal storytelling over conventional advertising approaches. This study, therefore, aims to explore how meme-driven marketing content is interpreted and what elements contribute to favorable audience reception.

3.3.2 Data Collection Method

This study employed semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method, chosen for their flexibility and depth in exploring participants' subjective experiences and perceptions. This approach enables researchers to gather rich, detailed narratives while maintaining a guided structure aligned with the research objectives. Semi-structured interviews are considered especially powerful in qualitative research because they enable researchers to gather in-depth, flexible, and context-rich information while maintaining alignment with the study's focus (Ruslin et al., 2022).

Through this method, the study aimed to investigate the factors influencing consumer engagement with meme content and understand how memes shape brand identity and awareness perceptions. Interview questions were designed to elicit responses about participants' interpretations of humor, relatability, and relevance in meme advertising. Open-ended prompts encouraged spontaneous discussion and helped uncover the underlying attitudes that inform digital content preferences (Ashley & Tuten, 2015).

3.4 Data Analysis Technique

The data analysis technique used in this study is thematic analysis, a method used to find, analyze, and report patterns or themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process is carried out through several stages,

This includes an initial understanding of the interview data that has been collected, coding or identifying the main themes that emerge, grouping themes according to the research objectives, and drawing conclusions based on the findings obtained (Nowell et al., 2017).

Thematic analysis allows researchers to understand how Generation Z responds to meme marketing and how viral memes influence consumers' perceptions of brands and shape brand awareness. This method provides the flexibility to identify broad patterns and nuanced meanings within participants' narratives, making it suitable for interpreting complex social interactions in the digital space. As Mulyana & Linando (2024) noted, thematic analysis enables researchers to explore the richness of individual experiences and their implications through recurring themes that emerge from qualitative data. Therefore, this approach is considered appropriate to provide a comprehensive understanding of how meme virality supports brand marketing effectiveness in the creative industry and what factors shape its appeal among consumers. The results of the thematic analysis are available in the appendix.

3.5 Data Validity and Credibility

Data validity in this study aims to ensure the extent to which the research findings accurately reflect the reality based on data collected from the field. Validity in qualitative research can be assessed through various approaches that ensure the findings are not merely subjective, but can also be evaluated for their trustworthiness through systematic procedures such as triangulation, audit trails, and peer debriefing discussions (Nowell et al., 2017).

The credibility test in qualitative research ensures that the collected data represent the phenomenon being studied and can be trusted to reflect the informant's lived experiences. Credibility in this study is an essential component, as the interpretation of data depends not only on the interview transcripts but also on the researcher's ability to capture the meanings intended by participants through an iterative and reflective analytical process (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Credibility testing can be done in various ways. In this study, the credibility test was carried out by peer debrief.

Peer debrief

- Peer debriefing refers to a structured discussion process between the researcher and a peer or expert in the field to evaluate the research objectively. This method is used to identify potential bias, test the consistency of findings, and ensure the validity of data interpretation. Janesick (2015) explained that peer debriefing enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of a qualitative research project by allowing a qualified peer to act as a critical observer, assessing transcripts, codes, and conclusions throughout the research process. In this study, peer debriefing was conducted by involving a research supervisor who provided critical feedback on data categorization and interpretation. This step ensured that the findings accurately reflected how meme-based content influences consumer perception and brand awareness in digital marketing contexts.

Table 3. 2. Interview Questions

Variable	Literature	Interview Questions
Meme Marketing	Shifman (2013); Ngo (2021)	How would you define a meme in a marketing context?
	Chuah et al. (2020); Kumar et al. (2024)	Have you ever encountered a brand that uses memes in their marketing campaigns? If so, what was your first impression of them?
	Kumar et al. (2024); Ashley & Tuten (2015)	In your opinion, what is the main difference between conventional advertising and meme marketing?
	Malodia et al. (2022); Eisend (2022)	What elements do you think make a meme interesting or relevant?
	Shifman (2013); Zulli & Zulli (2022)	How important is cultural context or current trends in creating a compelling meme?
	Ngo (2021); Siddique (2024)	Examples of brands that you think are not suitable for using meme marketing
Meme Marketing (Ethics and Limitations)	Eisend (2022); Siddique (2024)	When do you think a brand's use of memes can be considered ineffective or inappropriate?

Customer Perception	Chan & Lowe (2021); Chuah et al. (2020)	How do you usually feel when you see a meme from a brand on social media?
	Eisend (2022); Otterbring (2021)	Does humor in memes play a big role in grabbing your attention?
	Wu & Ardley (2007); Kumar et al. (2024)	Can using memes change the way you view a brand's values or personality?
Brand Awareness	Bilgin (2018); Lubis et al. (2021)	How effective do you think memes are in increasing consumer awareness of a product or brand?
	Siddique (2024); Rathi & Jain (2023)	Did a viral meme from a brand make you want to know more about the brand?
Engagement	Rathi & Jain (2023); Ashley & Tuten (2015)	Have you ever shared or interacted with a meme uploaded by a brand?
	Rathi & Jain (2023); Alhabash et al. (2013)	What usually motivates you to like, share, or comment on a brand's meme?
Engagement / Brand Loyalty	Vasile et al. (2021); Benaim (2018)	Do you feel memes can be an effective tool for building community or customer loyalty?

Table 3. 3. Additional Questions

Variable	Literature	Interview Questions
Customer Perception	Alhabash et al. (2013); Kumar et al. (2024)	How does the visual quality or design of a meme affect your interest?
	Ashley & Tuten (2015); Chuah et al. (2020)	Have you ever felt more emotionally connected to a brand after seeing their memes?
Brand Awareness	Aleem et al. (2024); Chan & Lowe (2021)	How do you think the use of memes can affect a brand's reputation or image?
	Rathi & Jain (2023); Kumar et al. (2024)	Do you remember brands that use memes more easily than those that don't? Why?
General Strategy	Kumar et al. (2024); Lubis et al. (2021)	What advice do you have for brands looking to use memes as part of their marketing strategy?

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Research Result

Based on the results of data analysis, the researcher found several findings related to how Generation Z in the creative industry perceives and responds to meme-based brand marketing. These findings also include the factors that influence their interaction with memes and the role of memes in increasing brand awareness.

4.1.1 Perception of Meme Marketing by Gen Z

In marketing, Generation Z professionals working in creative industries largely perceive meme marketing as a relatable, engaging, and emotionally resonant strategy. Most informants agreed that memes offer a light-hearted and less invasive alternative to conventional advertising formats. They emphasized that memes are especially effective in capturing attention quickly due to their humor and familiarity with internet culture. Moreover, memes allow brands to integrate seamlessly into digital conversations without interrupting the user experience. This subtle integration is crucial for Gen Z, which is known for its resistance to overt or forced marketing efforts.

During an interview, informant 1 (IF1), a social media specialist, shared that memes can serve as emotionally compelling tools to convey brand messages without triggering defensive reactions from the audience. The informant noted, “I think it works quite well today because the delivery is clear and emotionally engaging. Even when it is hard-selling, people do not feel disappointed once they realize it is an ad, because it comes with a meme.” From this, meme-based marketing can be inferred to create a softer entry point for promotional content, reducing resistance while maintaining engagement. By embedding emotional cues within humor, brands are perceived as more relatable and less commercial. This emotional resonance fosters a positive perception of the brand even when the underlying message is promotional.

IF2, a copywriter, emphasized that memes represent a refreshing deviation from conventional campaigns' saturated and repetitive nature. She stated, "After being bombarded by repetitive brand campaigns, encountering a brand that communicates through memes feels like a breath of fresh air; it is unique and easier to engage with." This perspective highlights how memes function as content differentiators in digital environments with fragmented user attention. Memes' informal tone and cultural relevance help brands stand out and create memorable impressions. Rather than pushing products, memes offer a form of soft persuasion that aligns with the preferences of younger digital audiences.

IF3, a content creator, described how meme content could surprise and engage audiences by masking its commercial intent until later. "Sometimes I do not even realize it is an ad until the end, I find the content funny. When a meme turns out to be an ad, that is clever and stays in my mind." This statement suggests that memes can enhance brand recall through subtlety and surprise. By embedding brand messages within humorous narratives, marketers can increase the chances of message retention. Such strategies appeal to Gen Z's preference for entertainment-driven content rather than direct promotional appeals.

However, several informants stressed the importance of audience fit and brand alignment when using memes. IF4, a graphic designer, pointed out that memes may not be adequate for all target segments. She noted, "If a brand targets older generations or has a more serious tone, memes might not land well. They can be confused if the message feels too casual or inconsistent with the product." This reflects the risk of brand misalignment when meme content deviates too far from a company's core identity. Marketers must ensure that the meme's tone matches the target demographic and the brand's communication strategy to avoid cognitive dissonance or audience alienation.

Further reinforcing this point, IF5, a social media specialist, mentioned that meme marketing is more suitable for business-to-customer (B2C) than business-to-business (B2B) contexts. He remarked, “Memes can be powerful for casual brands, but for B2B or highly professional sectors, they might not resonate. Especially if a meme is overused, it feels repetitive and loses impact.” This underscores the importance of content freshness and originality in meme campaigns. Recycled or overly familiar meme formats can quickly lose appeal and damage the brand’s image if perceived as trying too hard. For meme marketing to be effective, it must be creatively executed and contextually relevant.

IF6, a digital marketer, also identified timing as a crucial factor. She warned about the risk of entering meme trends too late, stating, “When memes are overused and a brand joins in late, it can feel cringeworthy to the audience. You have to get the timing right or the whole effort backfires.” This illustrates the temporal sensitivity of meme marketing. While memes can create viral exposure, that potential is diminished if the content appears dated or inauthentic. Therefore, brands must monitor trend cycles closely and act swiftly to maintain credibility and relevance.

The emotional relatability of memes was emphasized by IF7, who argued that the best memes reflect shared experiences or frustrations. She stated, “The most effective memes are the ones that stem from shared frustrations or daily struggles, something people laugh at because it mirrors their reality.” This insight highlights the psychological dimension of meme effectiveness. Content that reflects the audience’s lived experiences entertains and validates, making the brand feel more human and trustworthy. When brands mirror real-life emotions or scenarios, it deepens audience engagement beyond surface-level amusement.

Finally, IF8, another content creator, described how meme consistency could build brand familiarity over time. “I followed a page just because of how funny and consistent their memes were. Eventually, I started paying attention to who they were and what they offered, and I became genuinely interested in the brand.” This suggests that meme marketing can long-term influence audience retention and brand curiosity. Repeated exposure to well-crafted meme content can

Create emotional associations that gradually evolve into consumer loyalty. Thus, when consistently applied, humor becomes more than just entertainment; it becomes a strategy for building lasting brand relationships.

Table 4. 1. Perception of Meme Marketing by Gen Z

Perception	Summary
Positive emotional appeal	Gen Z appreciates memes that are humorous, entertaining, and emotionally engaging.
Authenticity	Memes that feel genuine and unforced are more likely to be received positively.
Peer-like brand tone	Brands that communicate through memes in a casual, “friend-like” manner are preferred.
Adverse reaction to forced content	Outdated, cringey, or overly promotional memes lead to disengagement and negative brand impressions.

The perspectives gathered from Generation Z professionals reveal a largely favorable view of meme marketing as a modern and culturally attuned tool for brand communication. While most informants recognized memes as effective in delivering brand messages with humor and emotional resonance, a few expressed concern over context mismatch or brand misalignment. Informants IF1, IF3, and IF8 emphasized the value of emotional appeal and subtle messaging, whereas IF4 and IF6 pointed out the importance of aligning content with audience expectations and timing. The findings show that Gen Z prefers advertising that feels native to their digital experience and mimics the informal communication style of peer content.

Overall, memes are perceived not merely as vehicles of humor but as culturally significant artifacts that enable brands to humanize their messaging and reduce the distance between brand and audience. However, this perception highly depends on whether the meme content maintains authenticity and consistency.

With the brand's tone and demographic. Forced, irrelevant, or out-of-touch meme campaigns are ineffective and may harm brand credibility. These findings affirm the importance of cultural awareness, emotional intelligence, and strategic consistency in meme-based communication efforts.

4.1.2 Factors Influencing Engagement and Interaction

Based on the data gathered from eight informants, several key factors influence how Generation Z professionals engage with meme-based marketing content. These factors are primarily emotional and cultural, with humor, relatability, trend-awareness, simplicity of visual content, and authenticity emerging as dominant themes. Informants consistently highlighted that meme content must resonate with their experiences and reflect current digital culture to trigger meaningful interaction. The forms of interaction reported include liking, sharing, commenting, and even following the brand for future content. Thus, meme content that strikes an emotional or cultural chord is far more likely to foster deeper engagement.

Informant 1 (IF1) emphasized that emotional connection is vital in determining whether users interact with meme content. “When the audience feels something from the meme before they realize it is an ad, they are likelier to stay and even interact with it.” This suggests the content must be emotionally compelling, even before the branding is recognized. Emotional resonance increases cognitive involvement and lowers the audience’s guard, making it more likely that they will respond positively to the underlying brand message. When a meme makes users feel “seen” or understood, it promotes a favorable reception of the brand.

IF2 echoed this sentiment, focusing on the power of relatability and humor in peer-to-peer sharing. “I often share memes from brands with my friends or partner when they are funny or relatable. It is usually because they reflect something I have experienced.” This highlights the role of shared experiences in increasing the virality of meme content. Memes that reflect social truths or common frustrations are more likely to be reshared, thus expanding organic reach. For Gen

Z, sharing memes serves not just to spread humor, but also to express identity and connect with others who share similar values or lifestyles.

Interestingly, IF3 pointed out that the visual quality of memes was not a significant factor as long as the humor and message were clear. “Sometimes I see memes that are low-quality visuals, but if they are funny or on point, I still share or like them.” This supports the idea that authenticity in tone often outweighs visual polish in meme marketing. In fact, overly designed or corporate-looking memes may appear inauthentic or commercialized. Gen Z audiences are more receptive to “lo-fi” memes resembling user-generated content than traditional ads.

IF4 shared that engagement is higher when meme content reflects small, everyday behaviors that people may not consciously notice. “If the meme talks about something I did not even realize I did in real life, it hits harder.” This demonstrates how micro-level relatability can be a strong driver of interaction. Memes that reflect subtle truths about daily life can spark instant recognition and laughter, making them highly shareable and emotionally engaging. In such cases, the meme is a mirror and a connection between the brand and the audience.

According to IF5, engagement also depends heavily on timing and trend freshness. “Engagement usually increases if the meme is trending, and they jump in early. Nevertheless, people ignore it if it is too late or repetitive.” This highlights the importance of cultural and temporal relevance. Meme marketing that aligns with the right moment can amplify engagement, while delayed execution often results in diminished interest. Brands must remain agile and observant to digital trend cycles to capitalize on these brief engagement windows.

Platform appropriateness also emerged as a key consideration. IF6 noted, “On TikTok, memes work great because people scroll for entertainment. However, if a brand uses the same meme format on LinkedIn, it feels out of place.” This reflects the necessity of contextual strategy in meme deployment. Each platform carries different user expectations and cultural codes. What works on one may appear unprofessional or awkward on another, thus reducing effectiveness or even harming brand perception.

Meanwhile, IF7 highlighted the importance of content consistency in building habitual engagement. “If the content is funny and consistent, I follow the account. I even save the memes to reflect on or show friends later.” This points to the long-term benefits of maintaining a recognizable meme voice or brand personality. Consistency builds familiarity, which in turn increases trust and repeated interaction. It transforms episodic engagement into a continuous relationship.

Lastly, IF8 emphasized how memes tied to collective frustrations, such as work stress, have a greater impact. “The memes that come from workplace stress or frustrations are the funniest. Because we all go through that, it makes it more bearable when it is in a meme.” This suggests tapping into community-based pain points or experiences can be a robust content strategy. When memes validate people's feelings, they invite emotional responses and peer sharing.

Table 4. 2. Factors Influencing Engagement and Interaction

Factor	Description
Humor	Funny content is the strongest driver of initial interest and attention.
Relatability	Memes that reflect daily life or shared frustrations encourage emotional connection.
Trend-awareness	Current and relevant meme formats improve perceived relevance and shareability.
Simplicity	Visual clarity and brief, easy-to-understand content are preferred.
Subtle messaging	Gen Z avoids content that feels too promotional; soft-sell Approaches are more effective.

The informants consistently highlighted key factors influencing their engagement with meme marketing content: humor, emotional relevance, cultural alignment, and proper timing. Informants such as IF1 and IF2 emphasized content's emotional resonance and relatability as essential engagement triggers, while IF5 and IF6 focused on timing and originality to avoid fatigue. Others, like IF4 and IF8, drew attention to the connection between meme content and shared real-life experiences, especially frustrations in social or work settings. The data further show that platform appropriateness and consistency in content voice influence ongoing engagement, as indicated by IF6 and IF7.

These findings suggest that Gen Z's interaction with branded meme content is strongly driven by how well the content reflects their emotions and social reality. Memes that appear too commercial, overly edited, or off-trend will likely be disregarded. Conversely, funny, fresh memes and emotionally or culturally "on point" tend to be shared widely and even spark user-generated responses. Humor and relatability are not just entertainment tools but psychological entry points into more meaningful digital interactions. This insight suggests that emotional and contextual alignment is key in designing content beyond visibility to trigger authentic engagement.

4.1.3 Meme Marketing's Role in Brand Awareness

Based on informant responses, it is clear that successful meme strategies rely on authenticity, cultural fluency, participatory formats, and strategic consistency. Rather than merely jumping on meme trends, brands are encouraged to create original content that aligns with their identity while offering audiences an opportunity to engage creatively. Using humor, minimalist design, and platform-sensitive formatting was frequently cited as key to success.

Informant 1 (IF1) emphasized that meme marketing should balance emotional value with subtle promotional intent. "When memes evoke emotions and people enjoy the content, even after realizing it is an ad, they are more likely to remember the brand.

and not feel annoyed by it.” This illustrates that emotional resonance boosts short-term engagement and enhances brand recall. When audiences associate positive feelings with a meme, the brand benefits by association, even if the promotional element is subtle.

IF2 shared that brands should focus on being distinctive and culturally integrated. “There are brands I remember specifically because of how good their memes were. It becomes part of their identity and makes me want to keep checking what they will post next.” This supports the idea that consistently executed memes can contribute to brand equity. A recognizable meme voice can be an informal yet powerful identifier, reinforcing long-term audience interest and followership.

Creativity and originality were highlighted by IF3, who noted, “When a brand uses memes creatively, it creates this unique vibe. You know it is their content even before seeing the name.” This shows that meme branding can go beyond the content to establish a brand persona. A consistent meme style, whether in tone, visual elements, or humor, helps position the brand in a crowded content landscape.

However, several informants cautioned against using memes disconnected from the brand’s core values. IF4 remarked, “If the meme is too random or unrelated, people might remember the meme but not the brand behind it.” This insight warns against disjointed meme usage that may generate laughs but fails to support branding. For meme marketing to be effective, the content must tie back to what the brand offers or represents.

IF5 emphasized the value of memes as entry points for brand discovery. “Sometimes I do not even know the brand, but if the meme is good, I visit the profile.” This finding suggests that memes can serve as low-barrier access points, especially for smaller or newer brands. Rather than relying on paid exposure, engaging memes attract voluntary exploration, which can lead to deeper brand interest.

IF6 discussed the importance of consistency in meme style and tone to enhance brand familiarity. “When I see consistent meme styles from a brand, I remember their vibe almost like they have a personality.” This observation highlights the importance of maintaining continuity across meme campaigns. Audiences are likelier to develop emotional connections with brands that present a stable identity, even in informal formats.

IF7 added that meme marketing builds brand awareness through repeated, humorous exposure. “At first, I just laughed at their content. However, over time, I realized I knew the brand and what they do, just from seeing their memes regularly.” This reinforces the long-term power of consistent and relevant meme campaigns. Over time, humor becomes a channel through which brand meaning is constructed.

Finally, IF8 noted that memes can inspire users to seek more information about the brand. “I looked up a brand because I liked their memes so much. I just had to know who was behind it, which made me like them more.” This supports the strategic use of meme content to build awareness, emotional loyalty, and brand curiosity.

Table 4. 3. Meme Marketing’s Role in Brand Awareness

Strategy	Explanation
Original content	Memes should reflect the brand’s unique voice and not follow trends mindlessly.
Trend alignment	Use trending meme templates while they are still relevant and timely.
Platform adaptation	Meme format and tone should align with the characteristics of each platform.
Audience participation	Interactive approaches like meme challenges or remixable formats increase engagement.
Responsive evaluation	Brands should monitor user responses and adapt their content strategy accordingly.

Informants revealed that meme marketing contributes significantly to brand awareness by increasing brand visibility, memorability, and audience curiosity. IF1, IF2, and IF3 illustrated how humor and emotional tone in memes aid in remembering the brand without perceiving it as an aggressive promotion. Meanwhile, IF4 and IF6 emphasized that brand recognition improves when memes consistently reflect the brand's tone and message. Some, like IF5 and IF8, noted that well-crafted meme content can drive them to explore new or unfamiliar brands. These insights show that meme marketing creates low-barrier entry points for consumer attention and facilitates long-term recognition when applied with consistency and strategy.

The results indicate that memes serve dual roles in brand awareness: first as attention-grabbing entertainment, and later as subtle carriers of brand meaning. Informants' reflections also show that repeated exposure to emotionally relevant meme content strengthens recall and encourages continued interaction. The most successful strategies involve more than simply following trends; they depend on having a consistent, authentic tone that speaks to the digital behaviors of Gen Z. By sustaining this tone over time and tailoring it to platform culture, brands can transform occasional laughter into ongoing interest and familiarity.

4.2 Research Discussion

4.2.1 Perception of Meme Marketing by Gen Z

The study reveals that Generation Z perceives memes as a more natural and engaging form of communication when used by brands. Rather than seeing them as advertising tools, participants viewed memes as content they would typically encounter in everyday social media use. This supports the idea that memes blur the boundary between entertainment and marketing, allowing brands to enter audience spaces without resistance. According to Eisend (2022), humor lowers persuasion resistance, especially when it does not feel manipulative or overly promotional. Gen Z is more likely to respond positively when the tone aligns with peer communication.

Several participants mentioned that when memes are relatable or mirror their experiences, they tend to stop scrolling and pay attention. This ties into Otterbring's (2021) explanation that humor and emotional familiarity create shortcuts for cognitive attention, especially in a digital environment saturated with content. Participants preferred content that felt like it came from someone like them, not a faceless corporate account. This finding affirms that authenticity is desirable and essential for meme marketing to succeed. Gen Z quickly detects insincerity and responds by ignoring or rejecting the message. This supports the view that consumers do not absorb marketing messages passively but instead engage with content selectively, interpreting it through personal values and lived experience (Alza & Linando, 2025).

Another common theme was the negative response to memes that appeared forced or out of touch. IF4 and IF6, for instance, described feeling “cringed out” when brands used outdated memes or formats that no longer reflected current digital trends. This points to the importance of cultural awareness in meme communication. As Wu & Ardley (2007) noted, humor that misses the mark can result in a worse perception than no humor. Gen Z has little patience for brands that try too hard to be relevant without understanding the platform or the audience.

In contrast, when brands can produce or adopt timely and stylistically appropriate memes, they gain attention without relying on traditional calls to action. This matches the view presented by Arie Bowo et al. (2024), who stated that memes allow brands to exist within the content stream rather than interrupt it. Participants noted they are likelier to engage with or remember a brand if the meme fits their typical content consumption habits. This approach encourages organic interactions rather than engineered campaigns. As a result, the brand becomes part of their digital routine.

Lastly, the findings suggest that Gen Z prefers content that feels spontaneous and reflects current conversations online. IF7 explained that a meme that captures a trending joke or shared social moment immediately earns respect and attention. This implies that meme marketing must be authentic, agile, and culturally fluent. Delayed responses or poor timing reduce the effectiveness of the content, regardless of quality. Brands must therefore commit to cultural

listening and quick content creation to maintain resonance.

4.2.2 Factors Influencing Engagement and Interaction

This study finds that meme content is more likely to generate engagement when it aligns with five main factors: humor, emotional relatability, platform fit, simplicity, and originality. Participants emphasized that humor is the first hook that will stop them from scrolling if something is funny. However, it is not just about laughter; it is about laughter that comes from recognition. Otterbring (2021) explained that humor grounded in shared social truths creates a stronger emotional response. Therefore, humor in meme marketing must reflect the lived experiences of Gen Z. Emotional relatability stood out as one of the most cited reasons for interacting with branded meme content. Participants shared that when memes reflect common frustrations, such as professional burnout or social awkwardness, they feel more connected to the message. This observation aligns with Wu & Ardley (2007), who found that emotional alignment in humor-based advertising increases viewer empathy and recall. Gen Z enjoys memes and relates to them as expressions of personal or collective experience. This creates a form of micro-bonding between the audience and the brand.

Platform adaptation also played a central role. Participants were clear that memes must feel natural on the platform where they appear. A meme that works on TikTok may not have the same effect on LinkedIn, due to differences in audience tone and content culture. Arie Bowo et al. (2024) emphasized that meme strategies should be designed based on where the brand's target users are most active and how they communicate there, ignoring these distinctions risks making the content feel awkward or irrelevant.

Simplicity and visual clarity were also repeatedly mentioned. Gen Z does not respond well to content that is too cluttered or requires too much time to understand. According to Lubis et al. (2021), meme-based campaigns are most effective when the message is visually light, quick to digest, and emotionally intuitive. Participants expressed that even low-resolution or "lo-fi" memes could be

effective if the humor landed. This further supports the idea that engagement is driven by emotional sharpness, not graphic perfection.

Finally, originality was seen as a differentiator. While participants appreciated familiar meme templates, they preferred it when a brand added a creative twist. Overused memes were often seen as lazy or unimaginative. When a brand creates something unique that still plays into a popular trend, it generates surprise and delight. In other words, originality does not mean creating from scratch; it means adding something fresh to what is already culturally recognizable.

4.2.3 Meme Marketing and Brand Awareness

The third part of the discussion focuses on how brands can better structure meme-based strategies to build long-term engagement and awareness. One recurring theme is that meme marketing must be part of a broader identity, not a one-time gimmick. Participants valued consistency in tone and humor, noting that they follow accounts that repeatedly make them laugh or feel understood. Lubis et al. (2021) emphasized that content rhythm drives sustainable digital engagement, not just one-off success. Brands that post memes regularly and maintain a consistent voice are likelier to become part of their audience's daily media cycle.

Another emerging strategy was participatory design, inviting audiences to contribute, remix, or respond to meme content. Several informants described enjoying brands that let users participate in the joke through duets, comments, or meme challenges. Arie Bowo et al. (2024) supported this by stating that memes with interactive potential generate higher satisfaction and emotional investment. Instead of broadcasting messages, the brand becomes a facilitator of online expression. This sense of involvement builds loyalty and makes the audience feel seen.

Timeliness and trend sensitivity were also highlighted as key success factors. Participants noted that memes lose their impact if they arrive too late or miss the core of the trend. The content needs to reflect what is happening now, not last week. According to Eisend (2022), humor must be contextually relevant to

Trigger the desired emotional response. This means brands must be culturally agile and monitor meme cycles closely to remain relevant.

Participants also considered monitoring and evaluation essential. Several informants mentioned that they appreciate brand adaptation based on user feedback or engagement patterns. Lubis et al. (2021) also argued the importance of performance tracking in meme strategy, especially in fast-moving digital environments. A strategy that fails to evolve may quickly become stale or repetitive. Therefore, meme marketing should be treated as an iterative process combining creativity and responsiveness.

Lastly, the long-term goal of meme marketing is not just virality but brand recall and emotional connection. Participants indicated they remembered brands more clearly when the meme style stayed consistent. This is supported by Kumar et al. (2024), whose findings show that consistent, emotionally resonant meme campaigns significantly improve brand awareness and foster authentic audience relationships. When meme tone aligns with audience expectations, it creates a lasting impression, making the brand memorable even without traditional promotional cues.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusion

This study aims to explore the responses of Generation Z working in the creative industry toward meme-based marketing, to identify factors influencing their engagement, and to analyze strategies that can optimize meme content for brand awareness. Based on qualitative data gathered from interviews, it can be concluded that Generation Z shows a favorable attitude toward meme marketing, especially when the content feels humorous, relatable, and emotionally authentic. Memes that resemble casual communication among peers are more effective in grabbing attention and avoiding resistance toward promotional messages.

The study found five main factors influence Gen Z's engagement with meme content, they are humor, emotional relatability, trend-awareness, simplicity, and authenticity. These elements increase the likelihood of interaction, such as likes, shares, comments, or tagging friends. Emotional and cultural relevance significantly convert passive viewers into active participants, leading to organic content spread and brand visibility.

Regarding strategic application, meme campaigns are most effective when adapted to platform culture, delivered with appropriate timing, and designed to invite audience interaction. Tactics such as participatory meme challenges or remixable formats help strengthen the emotional bond with the brand. Additionally, consistency in the tone and humor of meme content reinforces brand recognition over time. When implemented thoughtfully, meme marketing can go beyond short-term trends to become a sustainable approach for fostering emotional connection, brand recall, and long-term engagement with Gen Z audiences.

5.2 Suggestion

Future research should involve more diverse respondents from various professional and cultural backgrounds to obtain broader insights regarding meme marketing effectiveness. Expanding the sample to include participants from industries such as B2B sectors or more formal institutions would also provide comparative perspectives beyond the creative field. In addition, applying a quantitative or mixed-method approach would enable a more measurable evaluation of consumer engagement patterns with meme content. Researchers are also advised to explore platform-specific strategies and investigate potential phenomena such as meme fatigue and brand credibility risks over time. These directions can enrich the academic understanding of meme marketing while providing practical implications for digital communication strategies across different contexts.

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APPENDICES

Thematic Analysis

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
IF1	Memes give the impression that brands are more creative and engaging, especially because they are able to touch the emotions of the audience even when the ad is a hard sell.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Memes increase audience awareness of brands, but their effectiveness depends on the relevance and creativity of the content.	Memes' influence on perception
	Visuals are less important than humor and relevance. Simple but funny memes are more effective than memes with visuals that focus too much on aesthetics.	Meme Visuals and Trends
	Memes are effective for attracting audience attention and engagement, but building loyalty requires additional elements such as a casual communication style.	Meme Effectiveness
	Memes should fit the target audience and relevant trends. Irrelevant or overly forced memes can decrease the effectiveness of the campaign.	Appropriateness to Audience
	Memes help increase engagement, but building loyalty requires additional	Loyalty and Community

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	consistent communication, such as a casual and relevant admin style.	
	Memes are only effective if they are relevant and not forced. Trends that don't match the brand identity can undermine the effectiveness of the campaign.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	DNVB	Brand Example (Relevant)
	LV, Loewe (Exclusive Brand)	Brand Example (Less Relevant)
IF2	Memes make brands more relatable and innovative in the eyes of the audience, especially if the content is relevant and funny.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Memes are very effective for brand recall if they become part of the brand identity. Consistent memes make brands easier for audiences to remember.	Memes' influence on perception
	Visuals are a supporting element. Funny memes remain effective despite their simple visual quality. However, relevance to the trend is key.	Meme Visuals and Trends
	Memes become an effective strategy to increase awareness if they are aligned with the brand's tone of voice and consistent in marketing campaigns.	Meme Effectiveness
	Meme trends should be chosen carefully to stay true to the brand's character and target	Appropriateness to Audience

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	audience. Not all trends are suitable for adoption.	
	Consistency in the use of memes can help create audience loyalty, especially if memes become part of the brand identity.	Loyalty and Community
	The risk arises if brands insist on following meme trends that are not in line with their communication or product strategies.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	DNVB	Brand Example (Relevant)
IF3	Creative and funny memes give the image that the brand is flexible and agile. However, generic or repetitive memes can decrease positive perceptions.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Viral and fresh memes can encourage audiences to explore more about the brand, but memes that are too mundane don't leave a lasting impression.	Memes' influence on perception
	Blurry or unappealing meme visuals reduce interest. Too repetitive or overused meme trends can also make audiences lose interest.	Meme Visuals and Trends
	The effectiveness of memes depends on the creativity, relevance and continuity of the content. Memes that are unforced and fresh are more likely to build brand awareness.	Meme Effectiveness
	Choosing memes that are relevant to the audience is more effective than simply following a general trend. Memes that are	Appropriateness to Audience

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	too generic or forced can damage the brand image in the eyes of the audience.	
	Audience loyalty arises if brands continue to produce creative and fresh memes. Loyalty is difficult to build if you only rely on one viral meme without continuity of content quality.	Loyalty and Community
	Memes that are overused by many brands or too generic tend to be ineffective and can bore the audience.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	Muryotokijing	Brand Example (Relevant)
IF4	Memes make it easier for audiences to digest information because they are relevant and funny, creating a different and interesting approach. Memes also help audiences realize things that may not have previously been considered interesting.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Memes increase awareness because funny and interesting content makes people spend more time with the content. Memes tend to be more memorable than regular marketing methods.	Memes' influence on perception
	The current Meme trend often adopts other people's videos that are then adapted to brand marketing. However, this trend is not always suitable for all types of products.	Meme Visuals and Trends
	Effectiveness depends on the type of product and brand positioning. Memes are	Meme Effectiveness

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	more suitable for Gen Z audiences and less effective for brands with more serious segments, such as health products or those targeted at the elderly.	
	Memes are suitable for Gen Z because they are relevant and fun. However, for older or serious segments, the use of Memes can be confusing or irrelevant.	Appropriateness to Audience
	Relevant memes can attract audiences to interact (e.g. likes, shares, comments), creating an emotional connection that can strengthen loyalty and community.	Loyalty and Community
	Memes can be biased if they don't fit the target segmentation. Brands with a more serious audience may lose trust if the Meme is too joking. The wrong visuals and context of a Meme can cause confusion.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	Widya Herbal Indonesia	Brand Example (Less Relevant)
IF5	Effective for B2C products because they are more easily accepted by the general public. Less effective for B2B because the audience is more specific.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Viral memes can increase brand awareness, especially when used on wide-reaching platforms like TikTok.	Memes' influence on perception
	Meme designs don't need to be overly polished or professional, instead, those that	Meme Visuals and Trends

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	seem natural and spontaneous are more appealing to the audience.	
	It really depends on the brand positioning and target audience. Not all brands are suitable for meme marketing.	Meme Effectiveness
	Memes are suitable for brands that want to build a relaxed image and be close to their consumers. Less suitable for more formal brands.	Appropriateness to Audience
	If a meme manages to be entertaining and relatable, it can increase engagement and interaction with the audience.	Loyalty and Community
	Not all platforms are suitable for meme marketing. For example, LinkedIn is more suitable for professional content than memes.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	Fortegoods	Brand Example (Relevant)
	B2B Brands	
IF6	It can increase positive perception if used at the right time. However, if a meme is used too late, it can be perceived as "cringe" by the audience.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Helps unknown brands to attract new audiences.	Memes' influence on perception
	Interesting visuals can make audiences more curious and want to know more about the brand.	Meme Visuals and Trends

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	Effective if used with the right timing. If used too often without variation, it can bore the audience.	Meme Effectiveness
	Brands need to be quick to adapt to trends in order to stay relevant in the eyes of the audience.	Appropriateness to Audience
	Audiences tend to be more loyal to brands that use memes in an authentic and engaging way.	Loyalty and Community
	If a meme is overused, it can lose its appeal and make the brand look uncreative.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	Clothing Brands	Brand Example (Relevant)
IF7	Memes can make brands look creative and engaging, but their effectiveness depends on the execution.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	If the meme is relatable and attention-grabbing, the audience can be curious and find out about the brand.	Memes' influence on perception
	Successful memes usually come from relatable concerns, not necessarily following viral trends.	Meme Visuals and Trends
	It's up to the creativity of the marketing team to connect the meme with the brand without it feeling forced.	Meme Effectiveness
	All brands can use memes if they are packaged in a way that suits the brand's character.	Appropriateness to Audience

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	Relatable memes can create a closer relationship between a brand and its audience community.	Loyalty and Community
	If a meme is forced into a brand context, it can feel crisp and actually reduce brand credibility.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	Schoters	Brand Example (Relevant)
IF8	Memes that are not tied to a momentary trend are more effective for building brand image in the long run.	The Effect of Memes on Perception
	Memes can be a powerful branding tool if created with a concept that matches the brand identity.	Memes' influence on perception
	Timeless memes are more effective for branding than just following a fleeting trend.	Meme Visuals and Trends
	Utilizing memes as part of a digital marketing strategy can increase engagement in a more casual and natural way.	Meme Effectiveness
	Before using a meme, brands must ensure that it fits with the brand's identity and values.	Appropriateness to Audience
	Engaging memes can build a community around a brand as they encourage interaction and content sharing.	Loyalty and Community

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
	Brands in the health sector or academia should be careful in using memes so as not to trivialize sensitive issues.	Limitations and Risks of Memes
	White Board Journal	Brand Example (Relevant)
	Health Brands	Brand Example (Less Relevant)

Additional Data

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
IF1	Memes are an emotional marketing tool, touching audiences without feeling intrusive.	Meme Definiton
IF2	Memes are a combination of text, images or videos that convey marketing messages in a unique and engaging way.	
IF3	Memes combine entertainment with marketing needs, such as increasing brand awareness or sales.	
IF4	Meme marketing is a marketing strategy that packages product or brand promotion in the form of humor that is relevant to the audience. Because memes are easy to digest and attract attention	
IF5	Meme marketing is an entertainment-based marketing strategy with a soft selling approach, so that the audience receives the message without feeling “forced” to buy.	
IF6	Memes are visual or video content that contains humor and has a context relevant to a particular phenomenon.	

Respondents	Verbatim	Group
IF7	Memes are funny content that often arise from people's concerns and are used as a joke.	
IF8	Memes are a humor-based communication medium that can be used to convey messages in a light and easy-to-understand way.	

Interview Transcribe

Informant 1

Interviewer (00:02):

Bro, how do you see memes in the context of marketing?

Informant (00:12):

Memes in marketing? Honestly, I'm not entirely sure. Do you mean whether it's used as a campaign or just casual posts that include memes? Or are the memes made as part of an ad campaign?

Interviewer (00:42):

Yeah, like lately there's a trend of hard-sell marketing using memes. It could be ads or just regular content. The dominant style now is transition memes, like shitposts or "perfect clip" types. What do you think?

Informant (01:10):

From my perspective as a marketer, it actually works quite well nowadays. It communicates the message in a way that people can easily understand and feel emotionally connected to. Even if it's a hard-sell, the emotion kicks in before they realize it's an ad. So when they do realize, because it's in meme form, the emotional impact isn't too jarring. So I think memes in marketing are pretty effective.

Interviewer (02:14):

So you've seen many brands use memes in their campaigns. From your experience, what's the main difference between conventional advertising and meme-based marketing?

Informant (02:43):

I'm not entirely confident in my answer, but as far as I know, meme marketing falls under digital marketing. So if you're comparing conventional with meme marketing, you're basically comparing conventional vs digital marketing.

Interviewer (03:13):

Yes, but I'm referring specifically to meme-based digital marketing.

Informant (03:29):

Got it. So compared to conventional methods, digital (especially meme-based) marketing has a broader and more massive reach. It's easier to reach audiences, it's cheaper, and more targeted. But I still think memes are just an extra spice to amplify a campaign. If your strategy is weak, memes won't magically drive sales. They're just an enhancer, not the core.

Interviewer (04:48):

So memes just act as the "hook," right?

Informant (04:56):

Yes, they can serve as a hook to grab attention.

Interviewer (05:08):

Do memes influence the customer's perception of a brand?

Informant (05:14):

In what way?

Interviewer (05:20):

Like can a meme make people remember the brand? For example, "oh, that brand always uses funny memes in their campaigns."

Informant (05:31):

Definitely. Let me give you an example. There's an agency in Yogyakarta called DNVB. Their content is well-researched, and they use memes consistently. It becomes part of their brand identity. Like when they post carousels, memes usually appear by the third or fourth slide. That uniqueness helps them stand out.

Interviewer (06:34):

Do you think memes help increase consumer awareness of a brand? And if yes, does it have to be a viral meme?

Informant (06:50):

Awareness in what sense?

Interviewer (06:53):

Like, seeing a meme makes people curious and want to know what the brand is all about.

Informant (07:11):

I'm not too sure about that. I believe memes can help spark interest like a click or curiosity, but making people fully aware that your brand sells product A, for example, that's a longer journey. What was your next question?

Interviewer (07:52):

Should the memes always be viral ones?

Informant (07:56):

Not necessarily. I don't think brands should jump on every trend. For instance, if your brand has nothing to do with politics, don't force political memes just because it's trending. It's okay to ride the wave, but you need to be selective.

Interviewer (08:26):

Has a meme ever made you like, comment, or share something from a brand? Or even build brand loyalty?

Informant (08:49):

For engagement yes, I agree. If the meme is relatable and taps into a trending topic, engagement increases. But when it comes to building a community or loyalty, it involves many other factors too, like the admin's communication style. For example, DNVB's admin is very casual and fun, which helps foster community. So it's not just about memes.

Informant 2

Interviewer (00:00):

Hi Zah, I'd like to ask, how do you see memes in the context of marketing?

Informant (00:09):

Hi Topeng. I would define memes as a form of image, video, text, or a combination of the three. They're usually funny or sometimes sarcastic, but generally very relatable to everyday life. In a marketing context, I'd say memes are tools that brands use in their marketing strategies to deliver their brand message in a unique and interesting way.

Interviewer (00:47):

Have you ever seen brands adopting memes for their campaigns? What's your impression?

Informant (00:58):

Back then it was quite rare, but lately I've seen more and more brands use memes in their marketing strategies. From my perspective, I enjoy it when brands use memes. As a customer, we're exposed to so many campaigns and marketing content every day that it becomes very saturated. Seeing brand A today, then brand B tomorrow, it's nonstop. We consume so much branded media daily. But when a brand appears and communicates using memes, I'd say it feels like a breath of fresh air. After being overwhelmed with repetitive marketing, having a brand convey their message in a more unique, humorous way is refreshing.

Interviewer (02:06):

Have you ever interacted with memes made by brands? If yes, what made you do so?

Informant (02:17):

Yes, I really enjoy memes. I often share them with friends or my partner. I don't usually interact through likes or comments, but I do share a lot. I share them because they're funny or because the key message relates to my life. Sometimes I just find it really impressive when a brand can ride the wave of meme trends so smoothly. Not all brands can pull that off. But when a brand nails it, I usually share their content and discuss it with friends like, "Wow, this strategy is really smart."

Interviewer (03:19):

When it comes to creating memes, do you think cultural elements or trends make a meme more interesting?

Informant (03:39):

I think the most important thing is that it's funny. The message has to be relatable to the viewer. Sometimes there are trending formats, but that doesn't always make them interesting. Whether a meme is interesting or not depends on the person. But to me, humor is the most important factor.

Interviewer (04:06):

What if the meme is funny, but the design or visual quality is just average? Is it still funny?

Informant (04:12):

In my opinion, the main point of a meme is the humor or the key message it conveys. Not the visuals. I've seen tons of hilarious memes being widely shared just because they're really funny and relatable, even if the visuals look like they were taken with a 1990s camera. So for me, visuals are secondary. Sometimes, the worse the visual, the funnier it gets.

Interviewer (04:47):

Do you think memes can help you feel connected to a brand?

Informant (04:55):

Personally, yes. I love memes, and there's one community I follow. It's not exactly a brand, but it's called E-Commerce and it's for workers in Indonesia. They communicate with their community using memes. Their content is hilarious and deeply relatable to everyday working life. They often include adorable cat memes. I love their content so much that I even turned on post notifications. I always want to stay updated with their posts and stories.

Interviewer (05:60):

So in your opinion, are memes an effective way to raise brand awareness?

Informant (06:11):

Yes, absolutely. As a meme-loving customer, I find memes to be a very effective strategy for brand campaigns. I can recall several brands that became top-of-mind for me because of their meme marketing. One example is DNVB. That brand always comes to mind because of its funny and charming meme content. I believe memes can become part of a brand's character. People even start waiting for the

brand's next meme. When a brand changes its communication style, customers may even ask, "Where's the meme?" Personally, their memes make me curious about what kind of company they are and what products they sell.

Interviewer (07:54):

Do you think all types of memes, like viral or iconic ones, can be used in meme marketing?

Informant (08:04):

Not necessarily. It depends on the product and whether the brand wants to communicate that way. If a brand's tone of voice is friendly and close to the customer, then yes, using memes and riding the viral wave could work. But if a brand's strategy is more formal from the beginning, meme marketing might not be suitable. It really depends on the company and what they're trying to sell.

Informant 3

Interviewer (00:01):

Is, what is your opinion about memes in the context of marketing?

Informant (00:06):

In my opinion, by definition, memes are entertainment tools. When applied in marketing, they serve as a bridge between entertainment and marketing objectives, such as promoting sales, building brand awareness, or achieving other business goals.

Interviewer (00:31):

Have you ever encountered a brand using memes in their marketing campaigns? What was your first impression?

Informant (00:43):

Yes, I have come across that. It often happens in moments when I am not expecting it. For example, while scrolling through Instagram or TikTok, I usually see funny videos or memes. Sometimes, a meme suddenly reveals itself to be part of a marketing message, and I find that surprising in a positive way. I think it is quite creative. The idea feels fresh and unexpected, yet it successfully delivers both humor and promotional content at the same time. I would say I was impressed.

Interviewer (01:30):

What do you think is the difference between conventional advertising and meme-based advertising?

Informant (01:38):

I think the difference is significant. The marketing industry continues to evolve, and brands need to innovate to survive. If they rely solely on conventional strategies, their campaigns may not spread widely or gain sufficient attention. Therefore, while conventional marketing still has its place, companies should also consider alternative methods such as meme-based content.

Interviewer (02:23):

Have you ever shared or interacted with meme-based marketing content from a brand?

Informant (02:43):

Yes, I have. I sometimes leave comments if I find the content particularly funny. I recall one example where a marketing team adapted a real estate selling format to promote cemetery headstones (Muryoto kijing). It was so creative and humorous that I felt compelled to interact and show appreciation for their idea.

Interviewer (03:11):

Do you think that kind of content affects how people perceive the brand?

Informant (03:17):

Yes, absolutely. As I mentioned earlier, I find it impressive when a marketing team shows agility and creativity. A brand that embraces trends and is open to new approaches tends to appear more modern and adaptable in my eyes.

Interviewer (03:41):

Does the visual quality or design of a meme influence whether it catches your interest?

Informant (03:49):

Yes, I believe it does. If a meme has visuals that are too cluttered or blurry, or if the content is hard to understand, I usually lose interest quickly. Within the first couple of seconds, I am likely to scroll past it.

Interviewer (04:14):

Have you ever felt emotionally connected to a brand because of its use of memes?

Informant (04:27):

Not really. In my experience, memes usually provide a brief moment of entertainment. I might laugh, but then I move on. They do not usually create a lasting emotional bond with a brand.

Interviewer (04:47):

Do viral memes ever make you want to learn more about a brand?

Informant (04:59):

Sometimes they do, but only when the meme is truly funny. If the meme feels forced or if it is an overused format, I tend to get bored and skip it. On the other hand, if the content is fresh and genuinely humorous, I may become curious and look into the brand behind it.

Interviewer (05:32):

Do you think memes are effective for building customer communities or brand loyalty?

Informant (05:42):

It depends. Humor is subjective, and people have different tastes. If a brand can consistently produce content that is funny and original, I would enjoy following them and staying updated. However, I have also seen brands go viral with one meme, while the rest of their content receives very little attention. In my opinion, consistency is essential in building loyalty through meme-based strategies.

Interviewer (06:37):

As you mentioned, not all memes are effective. When do you think meme usage becomes ineffective or inappropriate?

Informant (06:57):

I think memes are less effective when they are overused. If many brands rely on the same meme format and it no longer feels relevant, the message becomes repetitive and forced. In those cases, the strategy loses its impact.

Informant 4

Interviewer (00:01):

Hi Nab, I'd like to ask, how do you see memes in the context of marketing?

Informant (00:08):

In my opinion, memes in marketing refer to promoting a product through humor. Memes typically use jokes that feel more relevant and relatable to people. As a result, they are easier to digest and more engaging. When humor is used in a marketing context, it helps people become more aware of the brand because the approach feels different and more appealing.

Interviewer (00:47):

So would you say memes can influence brand awareness?

Informant (00:59):

Yes, I think they can. Traditional marketing content might tell people about a product, but not all of it sticks in people's minds. Some messages are memorable, while others are not. Memes, however, are more likely to capture people's attention for a longer time because they are funny and engaging. This longer engagement can increase awareness of the product.

Interviewer (01:31):

Have you come across meme content before?

Informant (01:35):

Yes, I have.

Interviewer (01:36):

Have you ever interacted with that kind of content — liked it, shared it, or commented?

Informant (01:44):

Yes, when a meme feels really relevant or relatable, I usually like it. I enjoy that kind of content because it often highlights something we do in daily life without realizing it. Memes bring awareness to those behaviors, and I find that fascinating. It feels like, "Oh, I do that too," and it becomes something fun to talk about. That's what makes memes interesting.

Interviewer (02:25):

Can you name any brands that have adopted memes?

Informant (02:30):

There probably are some, but I can't remember specific names at the moment.

Interviewer (02:43):

Do you think memes are effective for all brands, or does it depend on their positioning?

Informant (02:55):

It definitely depends. Not every product is suited for meme marketing. For example, recently many memes are made by remixing existing videos and inserting branded content into them. Some of these work well, but others do not. It depends on whether the brand and the format align. A brand that is more serious or aimed at older audiences probably won't benefit from this style. Meme marketing is more suitable for Gen Z.

Interviewer (03:39):

Can you give an example of a brand type that would not be a good fit?

Informant (03:44):

Health products might not be a good fit. When people look for health products, they usually want serious information about the product's function. If the content is presented through memes, which are generally associated with jokes, it might confuse the audience about the intended message.

Interviewer (04:08):

So there's a risk of message bias?

Informant (04:10):

Yes, exactly.

Interviewer (04:12):

Would WHI be an example of a brand that is not suitable for memes?

Informant (04:15):

Yes, because WHI's target audience is older adults. If their memes are overly humorous or casual, it may not fit well. Unless the meme uses visuals that are subtly relatable to the audience. Meme formats vary, and people interpret them differently. For example, WHI once posted a meme about ice peaks — that one was still relatable and appropriate. But memes commonly found on TikTok or Facebook, especially those targeting younger audiences, would not work well for WHI.

Interviewer:

Okay, thank you. That's all.

Informant 5

Interviewer:

How would you define meme marketing?

Informant:

In my view, meme marketing is a marketing strategy that uses memes to convey messages. It typically falls under soft selling. As the audience, we receive it as entertainment, but there is suddenly a marketing message in it. That makes it feel more acceptable and less intrusive.

Interviewer:

So you've probably seen a lot of brands adopt memes as part of their marketing. Do you think it's effective?

Informant:

Whether it's effective or not depends on the product being marketed. For simple products or those that are business-to-consumer (B2C), I think meme marketing is effective. It helps the message reach audiences more easily and broadly, as it can

appeal to many different groups. On the other hand, for business-to-business (B2B) brands or large-scale products, I think it's less effective. Meme marketing is too general, so it does not target a specific recipient very well.

Interviewer:

Have you ever engaged with meme-based content — liked, shared, commented, or saved it?

Informant:

Yes, definitely. Especially if the content is funny, I always hit like. But I rarely comment or share. Sometimes I save the post, especially if I want to use it as a reference later or if I'm working on creating content myself.

Interviewer:

So humor clearly plays a big role, right?

Informant:

Absolutely. Especially on platforms like TikTok, where the main purpose is entertainment, meme content fits perfectly.

Interviewer:

Do memes used in marketing have to be viral or based on original formats?

Informant:

It doesn't have to be one or the other. It's flexible. A newly viral meme that fits well with current trends can go viral again. But if a meme has already been reproduced by many creators, it tends to become boring and repetitive.

Interviewer:

Can you give examples of brands that are suitable for using memes and others that are not?

Informant:

I think brands that are more suitable for memes are B2C brands. Also, brands that maintain a casual or informal tone on their social platforms — like TikTok — tend to do well with meme content. On TikTok, there is a lot of freedom to entertain. But if you try to use memes on a professional platform like LinkedIn, I feel it is less appropriate or less wise.

As for specific examples, one brand that comes to mind is Portegoods, a footwear brand. They have used memes in several of their posts. As for brands that are not suitable, I would say B2B companies. For them, meme marketing tends to be less relevant.

Interviewer:

So it really comes down to brand positioning, right?

Informant:

Exactly.

Interviewer:

Besides humor, do visual and design aspects of a meme matter?

Informant:

When it comes to memes specifically, I think the visual and design should not be overly polished. The character of a meme is often more natural and casual. It should not be too clean or follow strict layout guidelines. Messy is fine, because the point of memes is to entertain, not to appear perfect.

Interviewer:

Alright, thank you.

Informant 6

Interviewer:

Hi Mbak Dijah. How would you define a meme?

Informant:

To me, a meme can be an image or a video that is funny and has some sort of context. It could come from a cartoon, a trend, or a certain phenomenon. What makes a meme funny is that it reflects something with meaning or relevance behind it.

Interviewer:

Memes are currently very popular on social media, and they're also being used in marketing. In your opinion, how do memes function in the context of marketing?

Informant:

In marketing, such as in advertisements, memes can be very hit or miss. Some ads that incorporate memes are successful, and people engage with them. However, if the meme is already overused and a brand jumps in too late, it can feel awkward or even cringe. That's why timing is important. When a meme is trending, brands need to move quickly to adopt it before it becomes stale. The moment people start seeing the same meme repeatedly, they begin to get bored. Ads that appear after that point tend to lose impact and may even annoy viewers.

Interviewer:

Can you give an example of a brand that has adopted memes?

Informant:

Let me think. I honestly don't remember clearly. But I do recall the "Capybara" meme trend — particularly the "Mas Bro" phrase. I remember some brands, possibly fashion brands, incorporated that term into their content. That's the one that stuck in my memory.

Interviewer:

Have you ever engaged with meme-related content — for example, by liking, sharing, saving, or commenting on it?

Informant:

Yes, I usually just like it. I mostly interact with ads on X (formerly Twitter), so I tend to like or repost the content. Most of the time, the brands involved are in the beauty industry.

Interviewer:

Have beauty brands using memes ever made you want to find out more about the brand?

Informant:

Yes, sometimes. First, I might be attracted by the visual. Then I wonder, “Which brand made this? It looks really good.” That’s especially true if it’s a brand I haven’t heard of before. In that case, I’ll look into it more. But if it turns out to be a big, well-known brand, I usually just focus on the product itself. So the brand name only catches my attention when it’s new or unfamiliar.

Interviewer:

Do you think meme marketing is effective for all brands, or are there some that should not use it?

Informant:

I think meme marketing can be effective for all brands, but it depends heavily on timing and how the meme is presented. Timing is critical because memes move

quickly. If the brand is too late or the execution is off, it may not work. But yes, all brands can potentially use memes if the timing and packaging are handled well.

Note (additional information):

A shitpost is typically more random and lacks clear context, while memes usually contain some kind of background or narrative. A meme might refer to a known cartoon or social phenomenon, whereas a shitpost is more chaotic and often nonsensical.

Informant 7

Interviewer:

Can you define what a meme is, and explain its relevance in the context of marketing?

Informant:

To me personally, a meme is a piece of content, usually funny, that makes the viewer laugh. It often comes from something people can relate to. It usually reflects frustrations or shared experiences that are turned into jokes.

In terms of marketing, I have seen meme-based content presented in multiple slides. Some are connected to a brand, while others are not. When they are connected to a brand, I often think, "Wow, they really found a creative way to link this to their product." People even joke that the creators have a PhD in marketing because of how cleverly they manage to tie a meme to a brand. But when the meme does not reference a brand directly, it just feels like regular humorous content. People will share and engage with it, but may not notice the brand at all.

Interviewer:

So, have you encountered any brands that have adopted meme marketing?

Informant:

Yes, one example is Schotters. They have been using memes quite a lot, especially over the past year. Their content often uses popular memes and relates them to their brand, which focuses on education and study-abroad scholarships. When a meme goes viral, they adapt it with captions that connect it to their services and message.

Interviewer:

So it really depends on the brand's context and how well the meme fits, right?

Informant:

Exactly. Some memes can feel very awkward or out of place when forced into brand messaging. Others work really well. It depends a lot on the creativity of the brand's social media or content team.

Interviewer:

From your own experience, does meme-based content influence your awareness of a brand?

Informant:

Yes, it definitely does. The humor and relatability of the content make people engage with it. While I may not always look up the brand immediately, I often end up saving the meme. Later, when I go through my saved content, I might click the profile and realize, "Oh, this account belongs to that brand." So even if the effect is indirect, it still contributes to brand awareness.

Interviewer:

So memes also help drive engagement?

Informant:

Very much so.

Interviewer:

Are there brands that you think cannot or should not use memes?

Informant:

In my opinion, any brand can use memes as long as the content matches their brand identity and tone. Meme content does not always have to be linked directly to the product. Sometimes, brands can share funny stories from their office or customer service experiences. That kind of storytelling can also be turned into a meme. So yes, I believe every brand has the potential to adopt meme content if they understand how to package it according to their context.

Interviewer:

When using memes, should brands rely on viral ones or stick with the original meme format? For example, memes are often made from photos and text that express emotions through humor. Which approach works better in your view?

Informant:

I think the most effective memes are the ones that come from genuine frustration or shared experiences, whether or not they are viral. Even when using a trending meme format, the key is to relate it to something people truly feel. That is what makes it relatable and funny. So the origin matters less than whether it captures something real.

Interviewer:

One more thing — are you familiar with the term "shitpost"?

Informant:

I've heard of it, yes. Although I don't always notice the difference between a meme and a shitpost.

Informant 8

Interviewer:

How would you define a meme? Before we dive into its marketing context, let's start with your basic understanding of what a meme is.

Informant:

Honestly, I don't know the exact definition of a meme. I grew up with memes already all over the internet. If we look at its origins, it goes back quite far. For me, a meme is a way to be funny without needing to use words or deliver a punchline directly. You just use a picture or a certain visual. It's that simple. I see memes as a tool for delivering messages, especially for comedic purposes. It's all just for fun, really.

Interviewer:

So how do you see memes in the context of marketing?

Informant:

It's quite interesting, because memes can cover so many aspects. Initially, people used memes to express frustrations or roast others. But now, memes can also be used for selling products, especially in this digital era. In digital marketing, I think memes play a fairly important role.

If you want to generate engagement, one of the easiest ways is to follow trends. And in those trends, there are usually memes or humorous elements embedded. Some people say that memes go through cycles or seasons. There is also this idea, which I remember hearing from Richard Dawkins, that a successful meme is one that is not tied to time. In other words, a truly effective meme can be timeless.

Take SpongeBob memes, for example. They have been around for years and are still very popular today. This makes them one of the easiest meme formats to use for marketing. Back when I was active on Facebook, there were pages like Meme Komik Indonesia (MCI) and Meme Comic Republik (MCR). Over time, they began to use memes for selling things too, especially merchandise and books. Eventually,

memes became a medium for them to promote services. That's why I still believe memes have a strong place in digital marketing.

Interviewer:

So based on what you've said, memes don't have to be viral to be effective, right?

Informant:

That's right. A meme just needs to be appropriate for the context. That context could be the product, the audience, or the moment. Viral memes are not always a perfect fit for every brand. In my opinion, the best meme is the one that fits closely with the brand's own identity. That's what makes it work.

Interviewer:

Have you ever come across a brand whose meme content made you curious enough to explore who they are?

Informant:

Yes, one example is Whiteboard Journal. They post regularly on Instagram and often use memes to share information. Sometimes a single post contains multiple slides, each with different memes, and often they are memes from various popular formats throughout the year. I remember wondering, "What is the purpose of these memes? And what kind of brand is this?" That curiosity led me to look deeper. Eventually, I learned that Whiteboard Journal is more like a community-based media platform that publishes articles, stories, and opinions from contributors. They are somewhat similar to Medium.

Interviewer:

Are there any types of brands that you feel should not use memes?

Informant:

This is a bit of a tricky question. Personally, I think almost all brands can use memes. It really just depends on how well the meme fits the brand's tone and values. Before using a meme, the brand should ask whether it is appropriate or not. I wouldn't say that certain brands are entirely incompatible with memes. Instead, I think for some brands, meme usage might feel less appropriate.

If I had to choose one example, it might be health-related brands. These brands usually need to communicate in a more educational or academically sound way. If they use memes, it could make serious health information seem like a joke, and that could be seen as disrespectful or misleading. That's why I would say meme usage in this context is not ideal, even if it is still technically possible.

Interviewer:

So it may come across as trivializing the subject?

Informant:

Exactly. It could make something very serious, like health, feel too lighthearted or even careless. That's why I think health-related content should be handled more carefully.

Interviewer:

Can you give an example of a meme that made you engage with it — such as liking, commenting, sharing, or saving it?

Informant:

SpongeBob memes, without a doubt. There are so many variations of them. Another meme that I find interesting is based on "Solo Leveling." I think that meme format is quite unique because it can be used in many different contexts. It is especially effective when used to make brand comparisons or show growth. I have liked and saved several of those memes. In fact, they often inspire content ideas for me.

One specific Solo Leveling meme shows the main character transforming from someone weak into someone powerful. There is also a version that shows statues sitting down, symbolizing a turning point or comeback. I thought that one was especially clever and well-executed.