

MEME Marketing: A Paradigm Shift in Brand Communication: FGCs and UGCs on Brands at Different Stages Impacting Brand Perception and Conversion.

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ABSTRACT

Meme marketing has emerged as a transformative force within brand communication, integrating deeply into popular culture through its extensive use on social media platforms. This research investigates the impact of meme marketing on brand trust, employing a quantitative approach with data collected from 100 respondents across various Indian cities, targeting Millennials and Zillennials. The study is grounded in the Theory of Planned Behavior, which is utilized to analyze the relationship between consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions in the context of meme culture adoption for branding purposes.

The research identifies a critical gap in existing literature, where the qualitative dimensions of consumer engagement—particularly the nature and forms of content and behavior that drive engagement with brands on digital platforms—have been insufficiently explored. The findings demonstrate that meme marketing functions as a potent tool for conveying brand information, providing entertainment, and fostering consumer engagement, all of which significantly influence brand perception. A strong correlation is observed between brand perception and brand experience, with meme marketing playing a pivotal role in creating social influence that can either enhance or undermine brand equity.

Case studies of leading Indian brands reveal that successful meme marketing campaigns can substantially increase consumer willingness to engage with brands, contributing to the creation of User-Generated Content (UGC). Conversely, when meme marketing strategies result in miscommunication, they can lead to detrimental outcomes, including brand image erosion. The study further contrasts the roles of Firm-Generated Content (FGC) and UGC, finding that while FGC is more effective in influencing consumer consideration and purchase intent, UGC has a more significant impact on brand awareness and satisfaction. The research concludes by presenting a comprehensive model of Behavioral Reciprocation in meme marketing, offering actionable insights for the strategic application of meme marketing across diverse industries. **Key Words:** Brand Image, Brand Influence, Meme Marketing, Moment Marketing, Firm Generated Content, User Generated Content, Brand Trust, Brand Communication

Literature Reviews:

Impact of Brand Image and Brand Loyalty on Brand Equity: The outcomes of the research indicates that brand image has a confident and important relationship with brand awareness. Additionally, brand image and brand loyalty have a substantial brand equity relationship, and brand recognition intercedes the brand image and brand equity relationship (Zia. Et. al. 2021).

Ethical Marketing Controversial Products and Promotional Practices: The study concluded that there are a lot of problems associated with marketing products. There many levels of responsibility that the organization has the option of taking but very few of them are following. Consumers are manipulated effortlessly (Cohen. 2007).

Controversial behaviour and its Impact on Brand: There is certainly an impact of behavior of the brand and it leaves an impression on the mind of a consumer. Respondents further said they would be disappointed if the brand were to breach moral codes and they perceive a different impression of the brand when looking at the brand in isolation as opposed to the impression formed when asked to look at the brand along with the brand's ethics (Mitha, 2020).

Consumer Loyalty: The results indicate that all the multiple factors of shopping experience, considered for the study, have encouraging influence on consumer loyalty mainly because of Service quality, Price, Trust, and satisfaction (Zia, 2014).

Influence of Factors to remain connect with brand in difficult time: Research's findings indicates service quality and price are important parameters but not significantly influencing the consumers. But, the "Trust" has positive and significant influence consumer buying decision (Sudiraman, 2019). If the brand loses trust of consumers, under any circumstances they should work to regain the same.

Differing Demographic Factors Impact Consumers Loyalty: Indians prefer global fast food chains compared to Indian fast food chains. Loyalty towards global brands is higher than that for Indian brands because they are found to be of better quality which leads to higher frequency of visit and recommendation of the brands to their friends and colleagues (Srivastava, 2015).

Consumers preference towards Private label brands: In the research conducted by (Martínez- Ruiz et. Al. 2014) consumers admits being private label prone. Their preference is more towards these brands even in difficult times.

Retailers' role in customer loyalty: This research examines the impact of retailer personality on consumers' satisfaction with and loyalty. This article restrained through attitude and future behavioural intentions. This research suggests a model of the significances of retailer personality and advises that retailer personality is a significant concept that practitioners should consider (Louis, 2012).

Impact of Social Media: While no single factor may explain an entire online marketplace's success or failure, there is a consensus that high-quality communication among buyers and sellers may be a critical success factor for buying getting influence by social media. In reference to their study involving the use of social media platforms brand managers, brand ambassadors and advertisers are considered to interact with consumers (Rambe, P., & Jafeta, R. J. 2017) and that leads dilutes the negative perception.

Impact of Brand Loyalty in difficult times: The consequences demonstrates that brand image has a positive and significant relationship with brand awareness. Moreover, brand image and brand loyalty have a considerable brand equity relationship, and brand recognition mediates the brand image and brand equity relationship (Anas Zia, 2021).

Visual Communication and Consumer-Brand Relationship on Social Networking Sites - Uses & Gratifications Theory Perspective. Visual communication has been observed to have a significant impact on engagement behaviour on social media further adding to sales. The study presented a theoretical model of how visual communications through consumer engagement on corporate Social Networking Sites pages influences the consumer-brand relationship. The study validated the effect of visuals with informative,

entertaining and remunerative content on consumer engagement further leading to consumer-brand relationship. (Et.al. Fedric Kujur¹ and Saumya Singh²)

Social media-based visual humour use in tourism marketing: a semiotic perspective. This is a a compound content analysis-semiotic analysis to identify visual content and its symbolic meaning embedded in destination marketing organization (DMO)'s social media post contemplating humour as a symbli feature. The study examined the assertion that visual humour use on social media acts as a creative way of socialization, self-expression, and meaning-making. (et al. Jing Ge)

Conceptualizing the Implications of Mobile App Usage and Stickiness: A Research Agenda. This study has mapped the conceptual and research issues building the framework based on the central tenets of interactivity combined with the insights gleaned from exploratory studies and a survey of interdisciplinary literature underlying consumers' decision journey and outcomes with respect to mobile apps. The implications for research and practice in this emerging area of interest is discussed. (et al. Pradeep Racherla)

Social labour: exploring work in consumption. the concept of social labour is driven by observational vigilance and conspicuous presence which is defined as the means by which consumers add value to their identities and social relationships through producing and sharing cultural and affective content.. (Et. al Anderson, S., Hamilton, K.) (2016)

Boosting Health Campaign Reach and Engagement Through Use of Social Media Influencers and Memes. The study examined how content and source features of Twitter messages about truth campaigns influence their popularity, support, and reach, concluding that revealed that campaigns that utilized social influencers as message sources generated more campaign-branded and sharable content, which signified that significane of harnessing cultural elements endemic to social media. (Et. al. Ganna Kostygina¹)

How to Grow Brand Post Engagement on Facebook and Twitter for Airlines? An Empirical Investigation of Design and Content Factors. This study introduces a conceptual model on brand post engagement on social media and contributes to extant knowledge on the effectiveness of the determinants of such engagement in the airline industry. models explain 52 and 58 percent of the variance in likes for Facebook and Twitter respectively. The study points out the distinction between consumer brand post engagement on two of the biggest social media platforms and thus, provides a guide for the design and content of messages that could be used by airlines in building consumer engagement on Facebook and Twitter. (et al. M e n o n, Vishn u, Sig u r d s s o n, Valdim ar, Fag e r s t r o m, Asle, Lars e n, Nils M a g n e a n d Foxall, Gordon ORCID)

The Case for Memes in Qualitative Research: The research was conducted on significance of memes to current and future qualitative research. The author then showcases distinctive ways memes can be effectively incorporated in qualitative research pursuits and publications. It concluded that incorporating memes in qualitative research illuminates the power and realities possible of work that is meaningful, relevant, and reflective of who we are as people. (Constance Iloh)

Creative Use of Internet Memes in Advertising: This study focuses on the creativity of Internet memes used in advertising campaigns. To conclude, being able to skilfully and cleverly alter the original meme and create the humourous effect are the main goals of marketers. (Beata Bury

How brands can extract topics from user generated images: this research was on trying to understand how memes can reveal the opinions of people about socio-cultural matters, political beliefs or brand reputation. n successfully showed that brands can potentially analyze memes to understand consumer opinions and perceptions. (Nicolò Pagliari)

How do internet memes affect brand image?: This study aims to investigate how Internet memes affect brand image. The study results indicate that Internet memes positively influence the brand image. Not all meme characteristics were correlated with the brand image; only brand prestige, interaction and humour enhanced brand image. (Hsuju Teng, Chi-Feng Lo, Hsin-Hui Lee)

Meme Marketing and Purchasing Behavior: A Study of Active Social Media Users: Objectives of this study were to see how meme marketing affected people's buying habits and how memes are influencing the

purchasing decision of an active social media through it. The results of this study

revealed that meme does affect the purchasing intention of an active social media user and it does compel the consumer to make a purchase after watching a meme made by brand for endorsement purpose. (Arsha Saleem Meer, Rehan Ahmed Khan, Syeda Kanwal)

Using “Memes” as a Marketing Communication Tool in Connecting with Consumers within the Age of Digital Connectivity: This research explored the impact of brand attitude, brand perception and social influence on brand engagement. It also investigated the impact of brand engagement on behavioural intention. It was found that while Brand Attitude positively influences Brand Engagement, the effect was not found to be significant. (Vasile, S., Mototo, L., & Chuchu, T. (2021))

Meme marketing: How viral marketing adapts to the internet culture: The following thesis attempts to provide a historical background of memes through the examination of previous studies and academic literature in addition to an analysis of current manifestations of meme marketing on popular social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. This quantitative study found no apparent links between meme consumption habits and attitudes toward MM, as age is the only reliable predictor of the latter: younger people are more negative towards the use of memes for commercial purposes. (Triet Minh Ngo (2021))

Using “Memes” as a Marketing Communication Tool in Connecting with Consumers within the Age of Digital Connectivity: This research explored the impact of brand attitude, brand perception and social influence on brand engagement. It also investigated the impact of brand engagement on behavioural intention. The results indicated that Brand Perception and Social Influence both have a positive and significant effect on brand engagement. (Sorina Vasile, Lebogang Mototo, Tinashe Chuchu (2021))

Impact of meme marketing sales: The project aims at analyzing the influence of Meme Marketing on Sales. The project results conclude that Meme Marketing has better recall, better at conveying the message, higher novelty and results in better purchase intent. (Milind Maruti, Patil Pradeep, Sakhare Priyanka (2021))

Meme Marketing to Fellow Kids: This study aims to reach higher knowledge of successful corporate engagement in memetic media. It shows how an authentic identity is ascribed to the corporation through vernacular means, and how the prevalence of vernacular play forces the corporation to surrender message control in order to gain authenticity. (Lind, Williams (2019))

Creative use of internet memes in advertising: This study focuses on the creativity of Internet memes used in advertising campaigns. To conclude, being able to skilfully and cleverly alter the original meme and create the humourous effect are the main goals of marketers. (Bury B. (2016))

Meme marketing: How can marketers drive better engagement using viral memes?:This study makes a phenomenological contribution by examining viral memes, exploring the antecedents (i.e., content-related factors, customer-related factors, and media-related factors), consequences, and moderating factors. The study found that viral memes are topical and highly relatable and are thus well received by the target groups, which increases customer engagement and brand recall. (Suresh Malodia, Amandeep Dhir, Anil Bilgihan, Pranao Sinha, Tanishka Tikoo (2022))

The study presents a holistic framework for creating viral memes based on the viewpoints of customers and industry stakeholders. Four quantitative studies (i.e., a lab experiment, an online quasi-experiment, an event study, and a brand recall study) validate the theoretical model identified in the qualitative study. The research points to the potential of viral memes in marketing communications to enhance brand recall and brand engagement. The study found that viral memes are topical and highly relatable and are thus well received by the target groups, which increases customer engagement and brand recall. The marketers can adopt the findings of this study to design content for memes that consumers find relevant, iconic, humorous, and spreadable. Furthermore, marketers can use customer-related factors suggested in the theoretical framework for enhancing escapism, social gratification, and content gratification for their target customers which in turn shall organically increase their reach within their target segments and enhance brand performance in terms of brand recall and brand engagement.

engaging in expensive push marketing, they can co-opt the volition and creativity of the brand followers themselves to adapt and transmit the brand’s symbols and beliefs to their peers in the online space and

further popularise the brand. The strategy can also backfire since the company performance has to relinquish control over the brand's interpretations and symbolism to the online users. The example of the youth fashion brand Supreme is offered as a case study to highlight online memetic positioning tactics and their resulting benefits and challenges. The paper concludes by providing implications for marketing managers from this contemporaneous approach to brand positioning.

Implementation of Internet Memes to Build Brand Awareness of E-Commerce in Indonesia. This study aims to assess the potential of memes to be used in advertising to improve the brand awareness of an Indonesian e-commerce business, Fabelio. The brand awareness level for both groups were compared using t-test. The result of this study shows that the brand awareness level of the experimental group is similar with the control group which shows that memes is as effective as traditional ads in improving the brand awareness. In addition, the type of meme that has the highest virality level is silliness and sarcasm type. This finding could be used as consideration for business to implement memes as form of ads.

Research Design:

The study is conducted to examine the perceptions of audience towards the brands pursuing meme and moment marketing in order to enhance brand engagement and interactions which leads to impact the brand communication and fabricate the brand image. Hence, the research is based on the gaps found in the 50 undergone literature reviews and case studies with the objective to find the significance of difference of impact in UGCs and FGCs in the controversial times of brands due to meme marketing, based on the questionnaire with data of 100 responses covering all the metropolitan cities of India. The data is formulated and undergone Anova Test and Spearman's Correlation Test.

Objectives:

Primary Objectives:

To determine Influence of Meme Marketing through FGCs and UGCs on Brands at Different Stages Impacting Brand Perception and Conversion.

To determine a significant change in the perception of consumers towards the brand through meme marketing.

To determine the impact on brand image through brand communication through meme and moment marketing.

To determine the conversion ratio of a brand through meme marketing and moment marketing.

To determine the reliability of FGC and UGC and its impact in correspondence to different industries.

Secondary Objectives:

To determine the impact on creation of trust on consumers by UGC and FGC.

To evaluate the impact of Twitter Threads on consumers' perception

To determine impact of meme or moment marketing on consumers' trust

To determine the reliability of FGC and UGC.

Sources of the Data. Primary data collection

Primary data was collected with the help of questionnaire which was filled by sample units.

Secondary data collection

Secondary data was collected from various online websites such as news websites and other literature review sites on various search engines.

Scope of Study

The primary data covers the six cities of India including four of the metro-cities.

The secondary data is collected from the online platforms available on social media as well as websites of social media marketing companies.

100 respondents are taken into consideration.

Sampling Plan:

Sampling is done on the basis of Non-Probability Convenient Sampling Method.

Limitation:

Results being generalized due to small sampling size.

May not be comparable to international population.

Sample bias emerging as the factor of generation gap.

The data is limited to few industries only.

Research Gap:

The researchers can extend the demography to enhance outcome.

I

nclusion of different industries can elevate the research

Data Analysis:

Gender * Occupation Crosstabulation

	Income					Total
	Rs. 0.0 toRs. 2,50,0 00	Rs. 2,50,0 01 to Rs. 5,00,0 00	Rs. 5,00,0 01 to Rs. 7,50,0 00	Rs. 7,50,0 01 to Rs. 10,00, 000	Rs. 10,00, 001 to Rs. 12,50, 000	
Male	8	11	11	8	11	49
Female	11	8	11	11	10	51
Total	19	19	22	19	21	100

Companies	Hypothesis	Value	Interpretation
Zomato	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Zomato. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Zomato.	.000	Not accepted
Dunzo	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Dunzo. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Dunzo.	.794	Accepted
Coke	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Coke. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Coke.	.852	Accepted
Pepsi	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Pepsi. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Pepsi.	.801	Accepted
McDonald's	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of McDonald's. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of McDonald's.	.578	Accepted
Domino's	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Domino's.	.637	Accepted

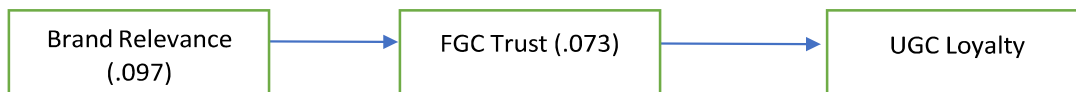
	H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Domino's.		
Fevicol	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Fevicol. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Fevicol.	.066	Accepted
Amul	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Amul. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Amul.	.503	Accepted
Lays	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Lays. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Lays.	.899	Accepted
Tinder	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Tinder. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Tinder.	.923	Accepted
Bumble	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Bumble. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Bumble.	.794	Accepted

Netflix	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Netflix. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Netflix.	.899	<i>Accepted</i>
Amazon Prime	H0: There is no significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Amazon Prime. H1: There is a significant impact of age on meme and moment marketing of Amazon Prime.	.153	<i>Accepted</i>

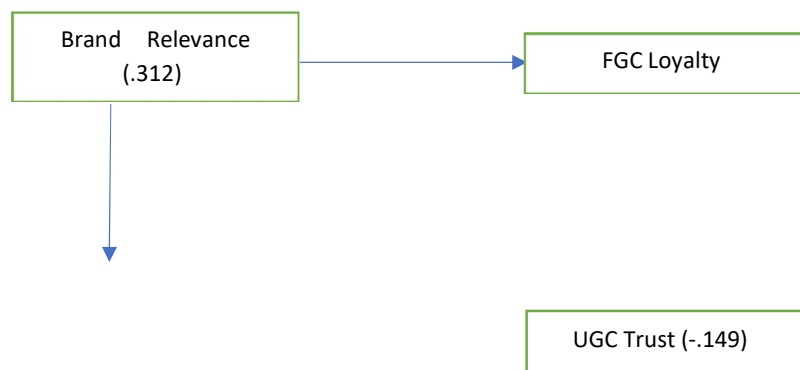
Interpretation:

Here, the data collected from 50 millennials and 50 Zillennials indicate that the impact of meme and moment marketing done by the different brands has impact observed due to categorized and varying industry. To look into the details, FMCG brands with market share in over a period which have been recognised by both the age segments have undergone the memetic tactics of the brands. Whereas, the service sectoral such as dating applications and new entrants of delivery segments observe less awareness on their social media pages, especially from Millennials.

Spearman's Correlation:



A brand's relevance and the trust augmented from FGC is directly correlated to the Brand Loyalty reinforced by UGC. FGC fabricating the trust and brand relevance accumulate and delineate an increase of brand loyalty pullulated through UGC. The impact of the same is marked in Dunzo, a brand undertaken in the primary data collection through questionnaire and the Brand Relevance had been found moulding trust from FGC, which implicates the constructed Loyalty from UGC. In the secondary data, the correlation is examined in the brand 'Blinkit' where its brand instituted surging its relevance through FGC which generated UGC Loyalty through brand engagement.



In the case of FGC loyalty impacting UGC trust, the brand's relevance has a positive correlation whereas UGC trust has a negative correlation. To the contrary from the above case, the research deciphers the impact of FGC with a brand's existent consumer loyalty, where the UGC with oftenthe reviews do not influence the brand preference escalating to their loyalty at the cost of longerrelationship, influencers or any outer factorial impact including peers. This was decoded through the instances of Zomato and McDonalds from the primary data analysis and from the case study of Maggi at its controversial times in India due to the quality intervenes.

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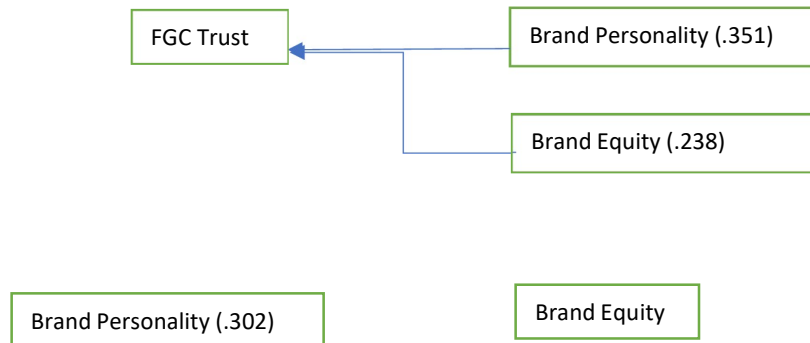
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UGC generated trust seems to plunge with the irrelevancy of the user's created content with the brand's rendering product, resulting into a negative correlation. The respondents also added a noteof suspicion for the UGC being forged to ameliorate the brand's relevance and consumer's faith in the product. The respondents rely on the influencers with majorly unbiased and explicit review.

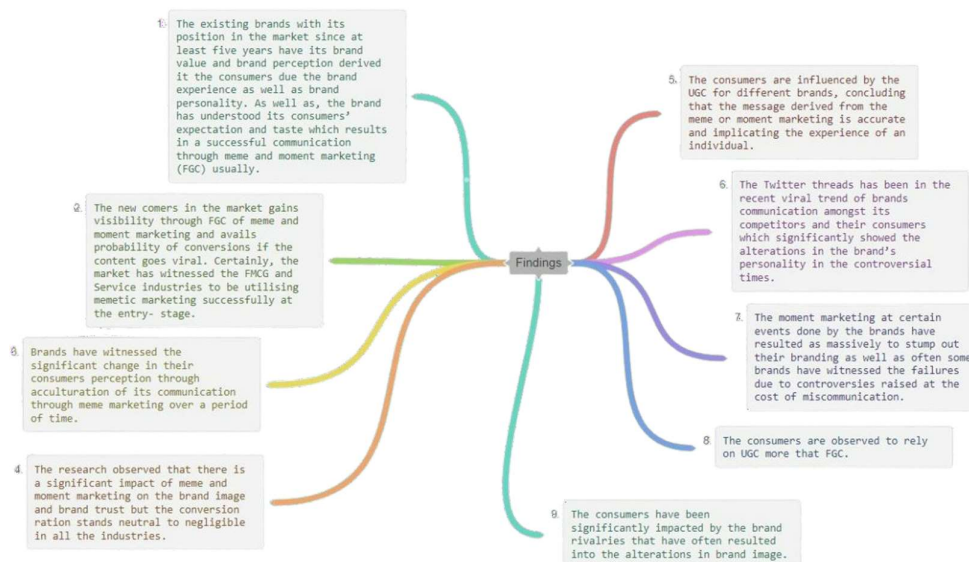


A brand's personality seems to increase due to the increase in the trust generated by UGC, with apositive

correlation. The brands found to have a massive impact on UGC from the relevant influencers whom the respondents rely for their reviews, generating Trust and impacting conversions for the same. Adding to this, the secondary data evaluated the surge in sales of many brands such as Skippi Icepops, Urban Monkey, and the major instance is Shark Tank where the sharks are observed as influencing factor being majorly trusted by the audience and their funded brands have examined and witnessed a overnight hike in sales.



An upswing in brand's relevancy and personality has been found compounding the brands equity. As, predetermined, the inter-correlation between the brand's personality and brand's relevance has a significant impact in formation of Brand Equity.



The existing brands with its position in the market since at least five years have its brand value and brand perception derived from the consumers due to the brand experience as well as brand personality. As well as, the brand has understood its consumers' expectation and taste which results in a successful communication through meme and moment marketing (FGC) usually.

The new comers in the market gain visibility through FGC of meme and moment marketing and avail probability of conversions if the content goes viral. Certainly, the market has witnessed the FMCG and Service industries to be utilising memetic marketing successfully at the entry-stage.

Brands have witnessed the significant change in their consumers perception through acculturation of its communication through meme marketing over a period of time.

Suggestions:

Industries: Meme and Moment Marketing can be utilised for enhanced communication in industries with fast moving and rapid consumption goods and majority of service sectors.

Accuracy: The meme has to be communicative and adaptive to be able to engage a wide range of audience.

Visiblity: The brands entering in the market should definitely adapt the memetic language to communicate with prior market research.

Brand Trust and Conversion: UGC being adapted as a more reliable source of data by the consumers, can be utilised by the brands to generate more trust and conversions.

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