1   **A Study on Gen Z's Social Media Behaviour: Consumer Preferences towards**

2   **Brands adopting Meme Marketing.**

3

4   **Abstract**

5   Having grown up surrounded by the internet and social media, the preferences and

6   behaviours of Generation Z are deeply rooted in their online experiences. Consequently,

7   brands are endeavouring to establish connections with this demographic in a manner that is

8   authentic, relatable, and culturally relevant. A relatively new phenomenon of meme

9   marketing has gained popularity among brands seeking to tap into Gen Z's humour,

10   creativity, and online interactions.

11   This study investigates the efficacy of meme marketing in influencing Gen Z's attitudes

12   towards brands, shaping their purchasing decisions, and fostering brand loyalty. By mixed-

13   method research, i.e. combining qualitative and quantitative data, this research will examine

14   Gen Z's social media behaviour and assess the effectiveness of meme marketing in capturing

15   their attention, affection, and online engagement.

16   The study will be uncovering the underlying factors of Gen Z's online demeanour, including

17   their preferred social media platforms and most popular memes. The insights garnered from

18   this research will be invaluable for brands seeking to connect with Gen Z on their own terms,

19   develop effective marketing strategies, and enhance their online presence. Furthermore, this

20   study will provide a comprehensive understanding of Gen Z's preferences and behaviours,

21   enabling brands to develop targeted marketing strategies that resonate with this demographic.

22   *Keywords: Gen Z marketing, social media behaviour, meme marketing, attitude towards*

23   *brand, mixed-method research, online interactions, consumer engagement*

24

25   **Introduction**

26   Meme marketing can mean various things depending on the context, but very often it

27   captures content or graphics to create advertisements that mimic the style of memes. Or

28   simply put, meme marketing involves the use of memes in order to promote a product, a

29   brand, etc. It is only a new form of marketing but marketing itself has its roots in the ancient

30   times. Brands are devising ways of reaching a wide customer base amid tough competition in

31   the industry. This is why Kenney has noted that, "when an advertisement, an image or a

32   video, flea market tickets or packing of products are invited to take part in a competitive

33   process and the winner is the one who will present the most interesting or surprising

34   advertisement, the nature of advertising changes."

35

36   Amid the current social media trends, many brands have had to adjust their marketing

37   strategies, gen z has been targeted largely with meme marketing than any other strategies

38   thanks to those visual contents that they seek. Dobson (2022) indicates that due to the

39   technological shift, the cultural generation of which the age demographic under discussion

40   was a part, rather content that was only appealing to the eyes was not enough, which is why it

41   had to be complemented with other forms, so the depth could and had to grow. Whereas the

42   conventional mode of publicity is composed of ads, which attract using certain appeals,

43   emotion based2 marketing employs shared experiences and funny moments, hence it is more

44   informal and user friendly as far as marketing goes. This allows those doing the brands to

45   create a bond with their audience making it more engaging and enhancing loyalty towards the

46   brand.

47

48   The most appealing aspect of meme marketing to the generation Z is its degree of credibility.

49   While memes depend on images and or text that convey messages to them, they do not come

50   out as advertisements. When corporate brands use memes, such as Netflix and Wendy's

51   hamburgers and the likes of which all fast food chains are almost trained on how to use

52   memes and put them in the right place. For instance, the witty and satirical Twitter account of

53   chain restaurant Wendy's showcases the ways in which brands can 'play' with memes in

54   order to reach out to younger consumers in a way that appears to be organic and indeed

55   respectful.

56

57   It is not a surprise that another prominent advantage associated with meme advertising refers

58   to the viral potential of engagement. This is effective because it is a meme and easy to share,

59   hence the message of the brand extends naturally across multiple social channels even

60   without ideal advertising scenarios. Such a mechanism is especially useful for building trust

61 among the Gen Z cohort who values the word of their peers more than any form of marketing

62 communication. Likewise, memes which are based on the current trends or events also act as

63 a bridge between them and the audiences, because such posters already denote that the brand

64 understands the current zeitgeist.

65 Active participation of users content consumption and informal joyful and at times ludicrous

66 communication over online resources has brought them together into one concept and

67 practice called social commerce.

68

Literature Review

70 The literature on meme marketing and Generation Z indicates the growing importance of

71 memes in digital advertising. Research suggests that memes, as forms of user-generated

72 content, resonate deeply with Generation Z, who value authenticity, relatability, and humour

73 over traditional advertisements. This demographic, known for its digital fluency, engages

74 with memes that align with their values and social consciousness, allowing brands to connect

75 through cultural commentary and shared experiences. Memes' potential to go viral

76 significantly boosts brand visibility and strengthens community engagement, which are vital

77 for building lasting brand loyalty among younger consumers. Researchers suggest that real-

78 time marketing and meme-based campaigns can increase brand relevance by leveraging

79 trending topics and encouraging consumer interaction. This emerging research highlights the

80 crucial role of digital content in influencing modern consumer behaviour.

81 With the use of memes in the context of consumer engagement, new opportunities are

82 opening in achieving marketing goals. The success of memes in grabbing attention,

83 increasing understanding, creating positive experiences, deepening marketing

84 communications, and increasing social contagion makes them valuable instruments in

85 consumer-oriented marketing strategies. Plus, text is more effective in improving the

86 recipient's memory than text-only monomedia presentations.

87 Recent studies have highlighted how meme marketing, as opposed to traditional advertising,

88 resonates more strongly with Gen Z consumers. Johnson and Lee (2023) found that Gen Z is

89 more engaged with memes, which they perceive as more authentic and transparent, due to

90 their relatable, user-generated nature. This trend suggests brands should consider adopting

91 meme marketing strategies to better align with younger audiences' values. Similarly, Lieber

and Syverson (2012) discuss how memes appeal to Gen Z's digital fluency and preference for content that emphasises authenticity, humour, and social awareness, positioning memes as an effective tool for connecting with this demographic in digital advertising.

Gunders and Brown (2010) explore how memes help brands engage with Gen Z by aligning with their values and social awareness. Memes enable brands to connect with this demographic through shared cultural experiences, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Shadkam and O'Hara (2013) focus on the viral nature of memes and their effectiveness in enhancing brand visibility and community engagement. The study highlights the importance of community-building through meme marketing in today's digital world.

Muntinga et al. (2011) discuss real-time, meme-centric campaigns to enhance brand relevance. They suggest that meme marketing is essential in today's fast paced world as it promotes consumer engagement, dialogue and loyalty. Their findings emphasise the impact of digital content on consumer behaviour and brand recognition in the current digital landscape.

According to McKinsey (2022), 65% of Gen Z consumers feel an attachment to brands that incorporate humour and memes, impacting their purchasing behaviour. The viral potential of memes exemplified by the "Distracted Boyfriend" meme, has been used by brands to boost visibility and encourage user engagement.

The need for brands to understand cultural trends to use meme marketing effectively has increased to avoid backlash. Predominantly, Gen Z's social media habits influence their consumer behaviour and brands that skilfully use memes can boost engagement and build brand loyalty among this demographic, though more research is needed to assess the long-term effects on brand perception.

Duolingo's Playful Engagement

Duolingo is a language learning app downloaded across the globe. Although used by people of all age groups, their largest age group users are Gen Zs. Through social media apps like Instagram, they create and post light-hearted, humorous, trendy content which helps them foster a sense of connection with Gen Z as well as reinforce the brand's identity as a relatable and enjoyable language-learning platform.

122 **Nykaa's Meme Marketing**

123 Nykaa usually opts for UGC Content perhaps, recently Nykaa did a campaign, namely
124 #BreakTheHairache campaign, which focused on addressing common hair issues with a
125 humorous twist. Through this campaign, Nykaa aimed to promote its hair care range,
126 highlighting how their products can help with typical "hairaches" like frizz, dryness, and
127 general unruliness issues many people face. To promote this campaign, Nykaa did the "Ganji
128 Chudail" meme that went viral.

129 Nykaa connected with Gen Z through the "Ganji Chudail" meme by using self-deprecating
130 humour and relatable, everyday struggles that resonate with young audiences. The character's
131 messy hair frustration reflects common Gen Z experiences, making it both funny and highly
132 shareable. By embracing meme culture, Nykaa showcased an understanding of Gen Z's
133 digital language, blending humour with practical beauty solutions. This approach boosted
134 engagement and built a relatable brand image.

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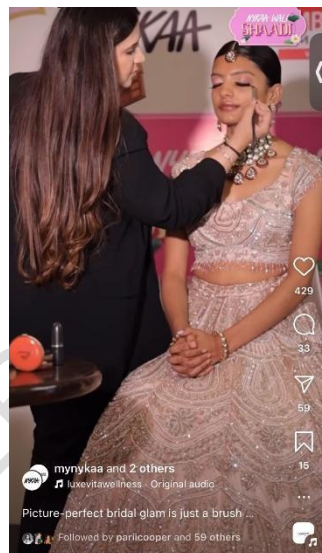
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138 **Amul's Meme Marketing**

139 Amul is a renowned brand in India and India completely depends on Amul for its dairy
140 products because as the line goes "Amul the taste of India". Their iconic "Amul Girl" has
141 become a staple in Indian advertising, using humour and wit to increase engagement. They
142 have very creatively incorporated memes and relevant pop culture during significant events
143 like the Olympics or political happenings, that resonate with the public sentiment, effectively

144 blending brand messaging with pop cultural commentary. By leveraging humour and social
145 relevance, Amul successfully maintains its position as a beloved brand in India.

146

147 **Swiggy Meme Marketing**

148 Swiggy's meme marketing strategy leverages humour and relatability to connect with its
149 audience. A standout example is their "meme multiverse" campaign, which creatively used
150 popular meme formats to promote group ordering, generating significant online engagement.
151 Another viral hit was a Vadapav meme set to a Bollywood song, which amassed over 1.9
152 million views, showcasing Swiggy's knack for tapping into food culture. Collaborations with
153 influencers, such as a cricketer mimicking order acceptance, further enhanced their reach.
154 Swiggy also launched a campaign on meme marketing in August 2024. This campaign was
155 launched to promote Swiggy's group ordering feature. By using relatable social media trends
156 and humour it increased Generation Z audiences enhancing brand recognition and
157 encouraging consumer interaction. By integrating humour and current trends, Swiggy
158 effectively builds a relatable brand identity that resonates with consumers, making meme
159 marketing a vital part of their promotional strategy.

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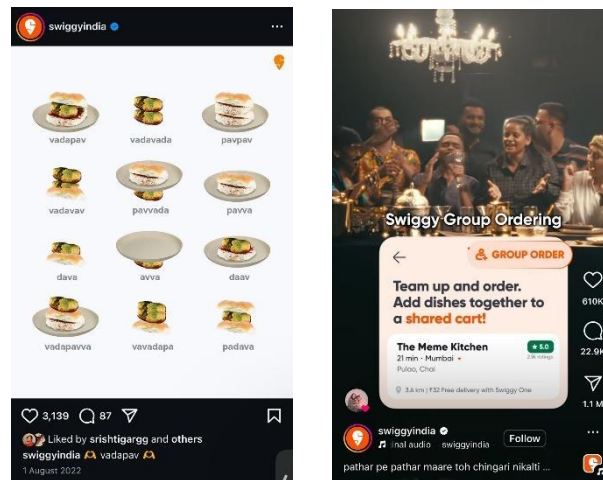
162 **Zomato Meme Marketing**

163 Zomato the food delivery platform's social media presence is full of culturally relevant

164 memes by referencing pop culture, popular shows and viral internet trends. Zomato's memes

165 cater to young audiences in a humorous way making the brand appear more relatable,

166 entertaining, relevant, and approachable. This strategy not only increases engagement but

167 also creates a sense of community as young consumers interact and share the content.

Objectives of the Study

169 ● To analyse engagement: Examine Generation Z's interaction with meme marketing on
170 social media.

171 ● To explore brand perception: Investigate the impact of meme marketing on brand
172 perception among Generation Z.

173 ● To identify effective memes: Determine which meme types are most successful in
174 marketing.

175 ● To understand humour preferences: Identify humour styles that resonate with
176 Generation Z.

177 ● To measure shareability: Assess meme shareability and its effect on brand visibility.

178 ● To study frequency of exposure: Examine how often Generation Z encounters meme
179 marketing.

180 **Hypothesis**

181 H1: Users who believe memes make a brand more relatable are more likely to engage with
182 memes from brands.

183 H2: Consumer brand preference is positively impacted by high-quality, culturally relevant
184 meme content used in marketing campaigns

Research Methodology

186 To expand on the research methodology, detailing both the survey design and data analysis
187 process is essential. The questionnaire was meticulously structured to capture the social
188 media preferences of the target demographic and to gain insights into their views on meme-
189 driven marketing campaigns. The survey evaluates key areas such as the frequency of meme
190 interaction, favored meme formats, and the influence of memes on purchasing choices. It is
191 divided into sections that first gather demographic data, followed by questions about social
192 media habits, familiarity with memes, and the perceived impact of meme marketing
193 compared to traditional advertising.

194 To ensure a thorough understanding of Gen Z's attitudes, the survey includes open-ended
195 questions allowing respondents to share their experiences with meme-based advertising,
196 covering aspects like creativity, relatability, and its effect on brand trust. This qualitative
197 component enables a deeper exploration of the emotional and cognitive factors in their
198 response to meme marketing.

199 The survey is distributed via Instagram and WhatsApp, two platforms widely used by Gen Z.
200 Instagram's visual nature suits users accustomed to meme content in posts, stories, and reels.
201 WhatsApp, popular for informal communication and meme sharing, reaches individuals less
202 active on other platforms but still within the target group. These platforms create a familiar
203 setting, encouraging genuine responses.

204 Quantitative and qualitative techniques will be used to analyse the data collected from the
205 survey. Statistical tools, such as chi-square tests, will identify correlations, for example,
206 between meme interaction frequency and purchasing behaviour. Cross-tabulation will further
207 explore connections between variables like age, gender, and social media use, offering a
208 detailed view of this demographic's behaviours.

209 Visual tools like bar graphs will represent trends such as preferred meme types and primary
210 platforms for meme consumption. These visuals will aid in quickly identifying key patterns.

211 Qualitative responses will be coded into themes, highlighting common views on meme
212 marketing and refining insights into Gen Z's brand expectations.

213

214 Overall, this methodology seeks to provide a comprehensive view of memes within Gen Z's
215 media consumption, their effectiveness in advertising, and their role in shaping brand
216 perception. The blend of quantitative and qualitative data offers a solid foundation for
217 assessing meme marketing's potential as a lasting strategy for engaging this demographic

218 **Data Analysis**

219 This research investigates how meme marketing affects brand engagement and preference
220 among Gen Z in Mumbai. The study focuses on two main hypotheses:

221 H1: Users who feel memes make a brand more relatable are more likely to engage with
222 branded meme content.

223 H2: High-quality, culturally relevant meme content has a positive impact on consumer brand
224 preference.

225 The responses of 104 participants, aged 12-27, were analysed using chi-square tests, bar
226 graphs, and cross-tabulation, providing insights into these relationships.

227 The following is a detailed demographic profile of the respondents.

Demographic Parameter	Description	Sample (Number)	Percentage
Age	12-15	03	2.9%
	16-19	39	37.5%
	20-24	57	54.8%
	25-27	05	4.8%
	Total	**104**	**100%**
Location	Mumbai	128	100%
	Total	**128**	**100%**
Gender	Male	41	39.4%
	Female	63	60.6%
	Total	**104**	**100%**

228

Demographic Overview of Respondents

The demographic composition of the sample is as follows:

Age: The majority of participants (54.8%) are between 20 and 24, followed by 16- to 19-year-olds (37.5%), which aligns with the core of Gen Z.

Location: All respondents are based in Mumbai, allowing for an urban-focused analysis.

Gender: The sample is composed of 60.6% female and 39.4% male respondents, offering a balanced gender representation.

Statistical and Visual Analysis Techniques

To test these hypotheses, we employed:

Chi-Square Tests: These measured the relationships between meme relatability and engagement, and meme quality and brand preference, showing statistical significance.

240 Cross-Tabulation: Allowed for exploring engagement patterns by demographic and assessing
241 how meme quality affects brand affinity.

242 Bar Graphs: Provided visual insights into engagement and brand preferences, making it easier
243 to interpret the data.

244 **Memes' Relatability and User Engagement**

245 To address H1, we explored whether users who find memes relatable are more inclined to
246 engage with meme-based branded content. Through cross-tabulation, we observed that users
247 who identify with memes are significantly more active in interacting with brand content,
248 often by liking, sharing, or commenting. A chi-square test validated this relationship,
249 showing statistical significance ($p < 0.05$). A bar graph further illustrates that higher
250 engagement aligns with those who consider branded memes relatable.

251

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.147[a]	6	.790
Likelihood Ratio	4.448	6	.616
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.712	1	.191
N of Valid Cases	104		

252

253 a. 8 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .26.

Engagement Rate * Preference of Meme Crosstabulation

Count

		Preference of Meme			
		Video / Reel	Picture / Post	Both	Total
Engagement Rate	Rarely	0	0	3	3
	Few times a week	0	1	4	5
	Once a Day	1	1	9	11
	Several times a day	15	7	63	85
Total		16	9	79	104

Influence of Meme Quality on Brand Preference

For H2, we analysed the influence of meme quality and cultural relevance on brand preference among Gen Z consumers. Cross-tabulation and chi-square analysis revealed a positive association, with respondents favouring brands that produce high-quality, culturally relevant memes. This trend, visualised with bar graphs, shows that well-crafted, relevant memes significantly enhance brand affinity, supporting H2.
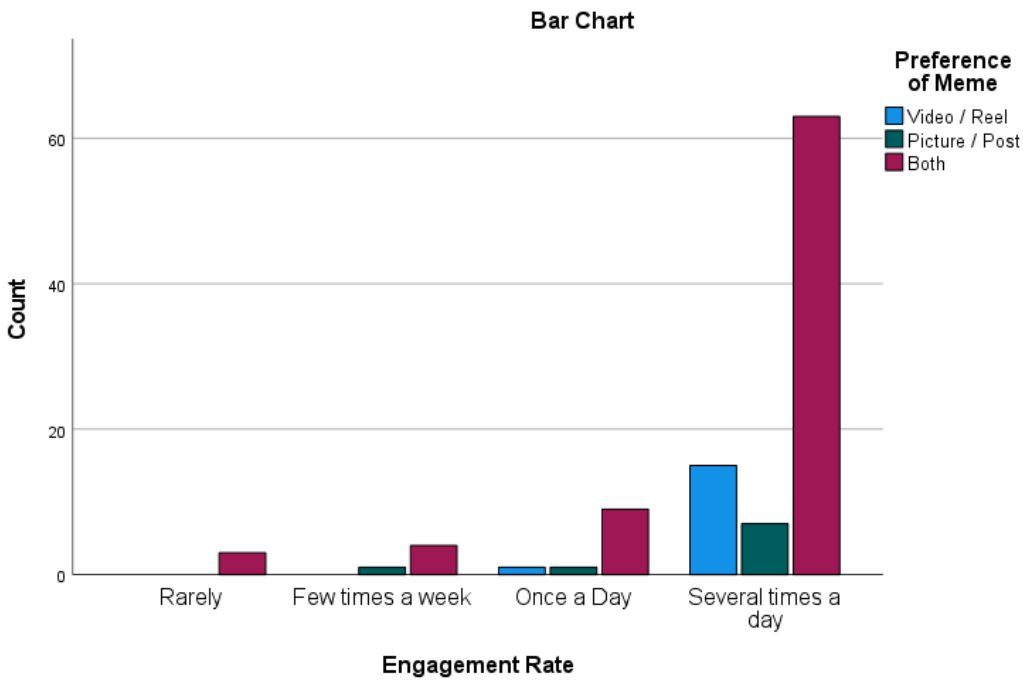
264   The purpose of this study was also to determine the main factors that motivate Generation Z
265   to interact with memes published by brands. Each of the respondents was asked to indicate
266   one of the following aspects: Humour, Reliability, Authenticity, All, or Other (in case of
267   other anchorage). The responses were useful in showing how Gen Z members feel towards
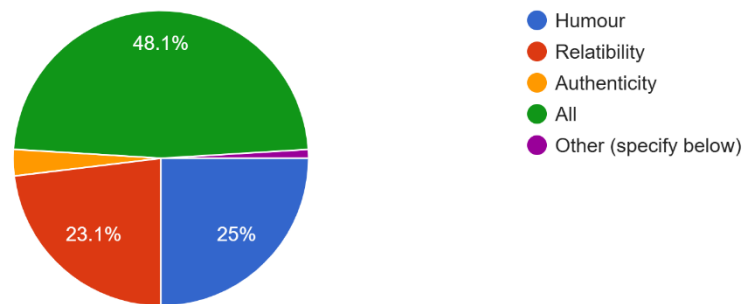268   such content.

269   While "All" option was chosen by the majority, 48.1% respondents expressed that humor,
270   reliability, and authenticity interactively compel Gen Z consumers to enjoy brand memes.
271   This indicates that when this particular audience is provided with humorous content while
272   maintaining a simple level of reliability and authenticity, the engagement levels are likely to
273   be higher. Humor was the second most popular factor as 25%of the respondents claimed it
274   was the most important attribute. This significance shows how attractive entertaining content
275   is, to the Gen Z audience, who loves brands that make them giggle or tickle their sense of
276   humor in any way.

277   Reliability also came out strongly as a factor as 23.1% of the respondents enshrined it. This
278   suggests that Gen Z appreciates content that is encumbered and corresponds with the brand
279   image to some extent, thereby creating trust as a factor in brand memes. Most interestingly,
280   only 2.9% of the participants sampled indicated that authenticity was the most important
281   factor for them. Though still a concern, authenticity may not be as potent in inducing
282   engagement levels as humor and reliability.

283   These results imply that even in Gen Z countries, meme marketing has to be more than
284   simply real. This demographic is likely to respond to content that has humor, credibility and
285   realness. The results indicate that for meme marketing to be effective, it should be a
286   composition of all the engaging, believable and attractive content that fits in Genz's lacuna.

287

What motivates you to engage with meme marketing?
104 responses

Legend:
- Humour
- Relatibility
- Authenticity
- All
- Other (specify below)

48.1% — All
25% — Humour
23.1% — Relatibility

288

289

290 As part of our study, every participant was requested to remember any striking memes
291 utilized by the brands in question throughout the year. The answers revealed the extent of
292 creativity some of the brands have embraced in relation to memes especially for the sake of
293 the millennials using different ways for the different consumers. Wendy's Brisk Iced Tea
294 advertisement lost meme appeared quite a number of times. Wendy's humour, which is filled
295 with understanding and sarcasm, was perfect for Gen Z, who were every willing to participate
296 in the exercise that bordered more on chatting than advertisement. Similar attention was paid
297 to Nykaa's "Ganji Chudail" meme, which jokingly spoke against the beauty norms and
298 tapped into the longing for rawness and empowerment present in Generation Z. In the case of
299 Instagram, both Swiggy and Zomato's meme marketing was particularly appealing due to the
300 humour and relatability of the content. These brands are good at making up funny pictures
301 about food cravings and about the everyday task of having food delivered, embedding the
302 content in the lifestyle and humour of Gen Z. Duolingo too made fair use of memes as it tried
303 to attract younger audiences to learn new languages with the help of its animated humorous
304 mascot taking cues from meme cultures. A sub aspect of their campaign, though, that
305 garnered a lot of eyeballs is how Zepto personalized the Diwali campaign by sending a box
306 containing an edited figure of the Mona Liza drawn wearing a saree with some witty pickup
307 lines. This engaging and culturally pertinent campaign appealed greatly to the youth and
308 showed the great potential that lies in memes in making branding pleasurable and personal.
309 To top it off, of all the memes featuring the Amul Girl, the most recent ones draw criticism
310 for being topical in a humorous sense, which Gen Z consumes avidly with savage briefs on
311 the latest news. These instances cover the role of memes as a source of entertainment and

312 cultural interaction to the extent that they become facilitator of branding exercise targeted to
313 the Gen-Z cohort. If they conform with the sense of humour as well as values of the Gen Z,
314 the brands will easily win their loyalty and engagement.

Limitations of the Study

316 As the study focuses on Gen Z, the scope is limited although social media consists of all age
317 groups and memes are viewed and enjoyed by all. Additionally, the study could also be done
318 on other social media apps used by the same target audience (e.g. X, Snapchat, etc) perhaps it
319 is limited only to Instagram. Personal Taste and Humour is inherently subjective when it
320 comes to Gen Z, leading to different reactions to the same meme marketing efforts. This
321 subjectivity can make it difficult to measure the effectiveness of meme marketing across a
322 wide audience. Furthermore, as the meme culture is dynamic, they have a short lifecycle and
323 may quickly fade in relevance, hindering the validity of this research. This study can guide
324 social media managers, and brands in effective meme marketing targeting Gen Zs. The
325 research also provides useful insight to academics, and researchers into Gen Z's preferences
326 which will be useful for digital consumer behaviour.

Suggestions and Conclusion

328 Meme marketing has transformed the normal approach to engaging Generation Z.

329 Cultural relevance, humour and relatability are most valued by Generation Z when it comes
330 to social media preferences. This study looks at the importance of meme based marketing in
331 enhancing engagement and brand preference among Generation Z audiences. The findings
332 confirm that when users view memes as relatable, they are more likely to engage with
333 branded content, such as by liking, sharing, or commenting. This connection between
334 relatability and engagement highlights the need for brands to design content that aligns with
335 the unique social experiences and preferences of Generation Z, confirming the first
336 hypothesis.

337 Furthermore, high-quality, culturally relevant meme content has shown a strong positive
338 influence on brand preference. Quality memes that feel authentic and culturally attuned are
339 better received, building trust and affinity for the brand among users. This validates the
340 second hypothesis, reinforcing the need for brands to focus on high production standards and
341 trend alignment when developing meme-based marketing content. By doing so, brands can
342 connect with Gen Z in a manner that feels genuine and respectful of their social and cultural

values. The study draws insights from successful meme marketing campaigns, such as Duolingo's humorous and interactive language memes, Nykaa's customer-centred #BreakTheHairache campaign, Amul's culturally relevant memes, and Swiggy's creative "meme multiverse" approach. Each of these campaigns shows that humor, eye-catching high-quality design, and cultural relevance are key to engaging younger audiences, strengthening brand loyalty and creating meaningful long lasting connections with consumers.

For brands aiming to succeed in meme marketing, it is essential to focus on relatability, authenticity and staying attuned to current trends. Creating customer profiles and keeping pace with social shifts can help in crafting more impactful content. Additionally, investing in meme quality and trend relevance ensures that meme-based advertisements are visually and contextually appealing, bolstering brand reliability and engagement potential.

As memes shift rapidly, brands must be agile, frequently adjusting their approaches to resonate with the latest trends and humor. This adaptability enables brands to connect meaningfully with Gen Z, reflecting both their current interests and cultural values.

By emphasising on these crucial elements, brands not only capture Gen Z's attention in the moment while also fostering lasting loyalty and engagement, creating a strong foundation in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

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