WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal Homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Study on the Impact of Meme Marketing on Purchase Intention among Generation Z Social Media Users in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Memes have become a mainstream language of social media, and brands increasingly use them to reach young consumers. This study examines the impact of meme marketing on the purchase intention of Generation Z social media users in Andhra Pradesh. A structured questionnaire measured four dimensions of meme marketing (meme exposure, humour, relatability and brand attitude) and purchase intention on a five-point Likert scale from a sample of 200 respondents aged 18 to 27. Data were analysed in Microsoft Excel using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, chi-square tests, one-way ANOVA and simple and multiple linear regression. The scales were reliable (alpha between 0.81 and 0.86). Daily meme exposure was significantly associated with the level of purchase intention (chi-square = 28.77, $p < 0.001$), whereas gender was not. Purchase intention did not differ significantly across age groups or platforms. Overall meme marketing explained 45.6 per cent of the variance in purchase intention (R-squared = 0.456, $p < 0.001$), and the four dimensions together explained 47.1 per cent; relatability and brand attitude were the strongest predictors. The findings suggest that brands targeting Gen Z should prioritise relatable, culturally familiar meme content that builds a favourable brand attitude. *(Figures are based on the illustrative dataset; update with real data.)*

Keywords: meme marketing, purchase intention, Generation Z, social media marketing, Andhra Pradesh

1. Introduction

Social media has changed how brands communicate with consumers. Traditional advertising, built on polished and often one-way messages, competes for attention with a constant stream of user-generated content. Within this environment the internet meme, a piece of humorous, easily shared and easily remixed content, has become one of the most common forms of online expression. Dawkins (1976) coined the word 'meme' for a unit of cultural transmission that spreads by imitation, and Shifman (2014) describes internet memes as groups of digital items that share common features and are circulated, imitated and transformed by many users. Because memes are cheap to produce, quick to spread and native to platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp and Facebook, marketers have begun to adopt them as an advertising tool, a practice commonly called meme marketing.

Generation Z, usually described as those born between the late 1990s and early 2010s (Dimock, 2019), is the first cohort to grow up with smartphones and social networks. Its members spend a large part of the day on social platforms, are quick to ignore content that feels like conventional advertising, and respond to humour, irony and shared cultural references. For brands, this makes Gen Z both an attractive and a difficult audience. Meme marketing promises to bridge that gap by speaking to young consumers in their own idiom.

India has one of the largest young populations and social media user bases in the world, and Andhra Pradesh, with its growing urban centres, expanding educational institutions and rapidly spreading smartphone and mobile data access, offers a relevant setting for studying youth consumer behaviour. Yet most discussion of meme marketing is anecdotal or based on global brands and Western audiences. Empirical evidence from a regional Indian context, on whether memes actually influence what young consumers intend to buy, is limited. This paper addresses that gap.

2. Review of Literature and Theoretical Background

2.1 Meme marketing

Meme marketing refers to the deliberate use of memes, or meme-style content, by a brand to promote its products, build awareness and engage audiences. Brands may create their own memes, join trending meme formats or encourage users to share brand-related memes. Its appeal lies in low cost, speed, shareability and the sense of authenticity that humorous, peer-like content creates. At the same time, it carries risks: a meme used late, used clumsily or

used in a way that misreads the audience can look forced and damage credibility. *[Add 8 to 10 recent peer-reviewed studies on meme marketing, humour in advertising and social media advertising from Scopus, Web of Science or Google Scholar, and summarise their findings here.]*

2.2 Purchase intention

Purchase intention is a consumer's stated likelihood or plan to buy a product or service. In the theory of planned behaviour, intention is the immediate antecedent of behaviour and is shaped by attitude, subjective norms and perceived control (Ajzen, 1991). Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) likewise treat attitude as a key driver of behavioural intention. Because actual purchases are hard to observe in a survey, purchase intention is widely used as a proxy for the commercial effectiveness of marketing communication.

2.3 Theoretical lenses

Uses and gratifications. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) argue that audiences actively choose media to satisfy needs such as entertainment, social connection and identity. Memes satisfy needs for amusement and belonging, which helps explain why young users seek them out and share them.

Attitude toward the advertisement. MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) show that attitude toward an advertisement influences attitude toward the brand and, through it, purchase intention. A funny, likeable meme can therefore transfer positive feeling to the brand.

Advertising value. Ducoffe (1996) identifies entertainment, informativeness and irritation as determinants of advertising value and attitude. Humour and entertainment are central to meme content.

2.4 Research gap

Existing work either studies meme culture in general, treats humour in advertising without reference to the meme format, or relies on samples from other countries. Few studies examine how specific dimensions of meme marketing (exposure, humour, relatability and brand attitude) jointly relate to purchase intention among Gen Z consumers in a regional Indian state, and fewer still test whether demographic factors and platform choice make a difference. This study fills that gap for Andhra Pradesh.

3. Conceptual Framework, Objectives and Hypotheses

3.1 Conceptual framework

The study treats four dimensions of meme marketing as independent variables and purchase intention as the dependent variable.

- **Meme exposure (ME):** how often the respondent encounters brand-related memes.
- **Humour (HU):** the extent to which brand memes are found funny and entertaining.
- **Relatability (RE):** the extent to which brand memes reflect the respondent's own life, language and trends.
- **Brand attitude (BA):** the favourable feeling towards a brand created by its meme content.
- **Purchase intention (PI):** the likelihood of buying products promoted through memes.

Gender, age group, platform and daily meme exposure are examined as classification variables.

3.2 Objectives

1. To study the demographic profile and meme-viewing pattern of Gen Z social media users in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To examine the association between respondent characteristics (gender and daily meme exposure) and the level of purchase intention.
3. To compare purchase intention across age groups and social media platforms.
4. To measure the effect of overall meme marketing on purchase intention.
5. To identify which dimensions of meme marketing influence purchase intention most strongly.
6. To suggest strategies for brands that use meme marketing to reach Gen Z.

3.3 Hypotheses

- **H1:** There is a significant association between gender and the level of purchase intention.
- **H2:** There is a significant association between daily meme exposure and the level of purchase intention.

- **H3:** Mean purchase intention differs significantly across age groups.
- **H4:** Mean purchase intention differs significantly across social media platforms.
- **H5:** Overall meme marketing has a significant positive effect on purchase intention.
- **H6:** Meme exposure, humour, relatability and brand attitude each have a significant positive effect on purchase intention.

Each hypothesis is tested against its null (H0) of no association, no difference or no effect, at the 5 per cent significance level.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research design

The study uses a descriptive, cross-sectional, quantitative design based on a primary survey.

4.2 Population, sample and sampling

The population is Gen Z social media users aged 18 to 27 residing in Andhra Pradesh. A sample of 200 respondents was used, which exceeds the minimum needed for the planned analyses and for a large population under the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970) at an acceptable margin of error for exploratory work. Respondents were reached through convenience and snowball sampling using an online form shared through student groups and social media. *[State your actual sampling method, districts covered and survey period.]* Only respondents who view memes on social media were included.

4.3 Data collection instrument

A structured questionnaire had two parts. Part A collected gender, age group, education, place of residence, the platform on which memes are mostly seen, and average daily time spent viewing memes. Part B contained 15 statements, three for each of the five constructs (ME1 to ME3, HU1 to HU3, RE1 to RE3, BA1 to BA3, PI1 to PI3), rated on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The full instrument is in the 'Questionnaire' sheet of the workbook. The items were adapted from the literature on advertising attitude and purchase intention. *[Cite the specific scales you adapted.]*

4.4 Variables and scoring

Each construct score is the mean of its three items. The purchase intention score was classified as Low (below 3.0), Moderate (3.0 to 3.99) or High (4.0 and above) to permit chi-square testing. The overall meme marketing score is the mean of the four independent-variable scores.

4.5 Statistical tools

All analysis was performed in Microsoft Excel with formulas, so every result updates when the data change.

- **Cronbach's alpha** (Cronbach, 1951) for internal consistency; values of 0.70 or above are considered acceptable (Nunnally, 1978).
- **Chi-square test of independence** (Pearson, 1900) for association between two categorical variables, with Cramer's V as effect size.
- **One-way ANOVA** (Fisher, 1925) to compare mean purchase intention across groups, with eta squared as effect size.
- **Simple and multiple linear regression** to estimate the effect of meme marketing on purchase intention (Hair et al., 2019).

4.6 Ethical considerations

Participation was voluntary and anonymous, respondents were told the purpose of the study, and no personally identifying data were collected.