Meme marketing: How viral marketing adapts to the internet culture

Triet Minh Ngo

University of Northern Iowa

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MEME MARKETING: HOW VIRAL MARKETING ADAPTS TO THE INTERNET CULTURE

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors with Distinction

Triet Minh Ngo
University of Northern Iowa
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MEME MARKETING

This Study by: Triet Minh Ngo

Entitled: Meme Marketing: How Viral Marketing Adapts to the Internet Culture

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University Honors with Distinction

______________________________
Date: ____________________________
Dr. Christine Schrage, Honors Thesis Advisor

______________________________
Date: ____________________________
Dr. Jessica Moon, Director, University Honors Program
Abstract

Meme marketing (MM) is the practice of promoting a product or service using memes, an Internet-based phenomenon involving viral pieces of user-generated content, including image, articles, and video or audio clips. This latest form of viral marketing is starting to gain prominence in recent years following the infiltration of social media into everyday life thanks to the rapid advancement in communication technologies and dissemination thereof. As more people are exposed to and becoming part of the Internet culture, a bid to appeal to this growing audience can be an attractive use of resources for those wishing to advertise through meme marketing. 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. In addition, a survey targeting University of Northern Iowa students and an assortment of online and social media users has been conducted to gauge the attitudes towards real-world use of MM and to explore the relationship between said attitudes and other online or Internet-related behaviors. 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.

*Keywords:* meme, meme marketing, viral marketing, social media, sustainable competitive advantages
# MEME MARKETING

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Meme Marketing: How Viral Marketing Adapts to the Internet Culture

Introduction

Viral marketing, while not exclusive to the Internet, is a uniquely online phenomenon. Due to its ability to spread product awareness quickly and widely, akin to a virus, and its effectiveness being somewhat independent of marketing investment, viral marketing is highly popular with companies seeking to promote their products on the Internet, particularly through social media. In recent years, as the online landscape has evolved, with social media leading the charge, viral marketing has also taken on new forms as companies try to take advantage of an increasingly massive customer base. One such form of viral marketing, representing the latest in the evolution of the online landscape, is “meme marketing,” a phenomenon where companies would use internet memes to advertise products and/or brands by means of using, repurposing, or creating memes as well as engaging in activities that could be considered “meme-able.”

Given the premises, this thesis attempts to explain meme marketing generally in the English-speaking sphere through the documentation of the history of memes, how memes intertwine with viral marketing, and whether or not meme marketing is an effective strategy that is also sustainable for most companies. On the receiving end of marketing, how people view meme marketing and how they can potentially contribute to its virality will also be studied.

The Internet, being a culture in and of itself, has become an integral part of modern society. With a user base in the billions, the Internet also represents a tremendous opportunity for companies to advertise products. As such, knowledge gained as part of the research conducted by this thesis into the Internet culture will surely be of use for companies wishing to make a big splash online.
Literature review

What’s in a Meme?

Despite being most associated with the recent Internet culture, the concept of memes predates the Internet itself. The term *meme* was first coined by biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 as “a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation.” As such, memes can include “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches” that can be propagated from person to person (Dawkins, 2016, p. 249). From this premise, Zanette et al. (2019) also asserted that memes “evolved to become complex artefacts that are rich in cultural meanings and popular references” (p. 158).

Memes, like any other form of content, follow certain formats: most memes are composed of “an image juxtaposed with a written caption (both image and text can be modified during transmission), which carries an ironic, politically incorrect, and sometimes grotesque message” (Zanette et al., 2019, p. 159). While Dawkins certainly did not intend for memes to be a strictly online phenomenon, due to the integration of advanced communication technologies into the modern society, memes as of this writing most exclusively refer to digital videos, images, and other user-generated content that can be and are shared online and will henceforth be referred to as such.

Indeed, as the Internet grew, so did memes, which were split into many different genres, including photo fads, LOLCats, stock character macros, and rage comics, among others (Shifman, 2013, pp. 100-118). Though the means of creating memes have become increasingly accessible, to the point that “even a six-year-old can operate,” this endeavor requires “meme literacy;” certain genres “can be understood (and created) by almost anyone, whereas others require detailed knowledge about a digital meme subculture” (Shifman, 2013, p. 100). Similarly,
memes can also be interpreted as a means of intra-group communication in which “humorous social commentaries which are contextually relevant to a particular demographic of individuals” are depicted (Umair et al., 2020, p. 2).

The Internet Culture

As memes have evolved “in parallel with the web itself,” the Internet has provided “an environment conducive to the emergence of a participatory culture” (Zanette et al., 2019, p. 159). Bebić and Volarevic (2018) concurred earlier, further adding that the Internet’s “flexibility, ubiquitous presence, and accessibility enable users to transform existing memes and create new ones very easily” (p. 45). Given how memes can propagate freely and quickly on the Internet, it is important to examine how the Internet culture was created by and contributed to the proliferation of memes.

The Internet culture, as a whole, is nearly impossible to pinpoint due to the sheer number of people using it: as of July 2020, 4.57 billion people were active Internet users, most of whom come from China, India, and the United States (Clement, 2020). However, from a meme-centric perspective, such a culture is largely homogeneous around the world in terms of the memes’ content and purposes, and thus more open to crystallization. As mentioned above, memes are an expression of the beliefs held by particular communities and/or demographic groups. Waddock (2018), using the broader definition of memes, that is originally devised by Dawkins, posited that memes “frame how people think about the world around them, shaping attitudes, ideologies and belief systems, and, ultimately, behaviors and practices” (p. 18).

One of the most salient cultural identity of the Internet associated with memes is trolling, which is “the act of disrupting online conversations for the sake of doing so (just for the lulz), even if it includes harassing people or perpetuating controversial discourses” (Zanette et al.,
Fostered in a subculture environment known as “4chan,” trolls have been responsible for many popular memes, such as the aforementioned LOLCats, Advice Animals, and rage comics, etc. (Philips, 2015, p. 137). However, it is the motive behind these memes that provides an insight into the mindset of these meme pioneers, and subsequently the Internet culture itself. Philips (2015) noted that trolls have an “impulse to juxtapose death and destruction with pop-cultural iconography.” For example, following the September 11 attacks, 4chan trolls “fetishized” the event, producing the following:

World Wrestling Federation wrestlers smashing the towers to bits; Will Smith as the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air tap dancing as the first tower falls; Kanye West scolding both towers (“Yo al Qaeda, I’m a really happy for you, and I’mma let you finish. . .but the war of 1812 was the best attack on US soil of all time!”); Nyan Cat at the moment of impact (“Nyan 11: Nevar Forget”); Where’s Waldo careening out of the dust clouds wearing a troll mask; the Kool-Aid man emerging from the rubble; Obi-Wan Kenobi making racist jokes about “sand people”; the just-stricken towers crudely animated to look like two stick figures smoking a joint. (p. 117)

Due to the use of inside jokes, for a long time, memes were inaccessible to outsiders. However, as Internet memes became more popular with ordinary Internet users, or went “mainstream,” trolling, though still being a salient part of the Internet culture, has been relegated to more obscure corners of the Internet. The first salvo signaling the democratization of memes was rung by Know Your Meme (KYM), a “go-to resource for everything memetic.” KYM was explicitly created for the uninitiated with “detailed, almost clinical explanations of the Internet’s most popular participatory content” (Philips, 2015, pp. 139). In addition, thanks to meme-making
tools such as Meme Generator, people previously unfamiliar with memes can create and share their own memes quickly and efficiently (Zanette, 2019, p. 159).

With new audiences come new trends. As memes move away from in-jokes and obscure references, they become the vessel wherein the modern zeitgeist manifests itself. Most notable of the new waves of memes is “relatable memes” which document “the stresses of college, self-image issues, or the mundane aspects of office jobs.” Relatable memes either take the forms of “starter packs” which list stereotypical attributes of a certain subject, or “My Face When” which depicts common reactions using stock photos paired with captions specifying the context. This social aspect of memes has also turned memes into a new type of social currency: the more a person knows about memes, the more that person is considered trendy and popular (Lamphere, 2018, pp. 30-31).

Viral Marketing

Sometimes, certain things become popular in a very short time. Wharton School Professor of Marketing Jonah Berger identified six factors behind virality:

1. Social Currency: do things make people look good in social situations?
2. Triggers: are things associated with common aspects of people’s lives?
3. Emotion: do things appeal to people’s emotions?
4. Public: can things be seen and imitated easily?
5. Practical Value: do things contain useful information?
6. Stories: are things integral to stories that people tell? (Berger, 2013)

As things go viral and catch the attention of a significant audience, there are incentives for businesses to tap into the potentials of viral content. Indeed, in a marketing context, the use of viral content, as the name suggests, is often exclusive to the concept of viral marketing (VM).
Noting that the definition of VM varies among scholars due to the concept’s novelty, Sohn et al. (2013) offers to create a unifying definition where VM is a “marketer-initiated consumer activity that spreads a marketing message unaltered across a market or segment in a limited time period mimicking an epidemic” (p. 22).

The benefits and drawbacks of VM have also been widely discussed. In a research conducted by Cruz and Fill (2008), the advantages of VM are “lower levels of investment (costs) involved in developing campaigns and its ability to reach a large number of people, relatively quickly” while the most visible disadvantage of VM is “the relative lack of control over the message and its distribution, depending on placement” (p. 750). Lekhanya (2014) concurred with the latter, noting that “it is not easy to control information obtained via viral marketing” (p. 227). In contrast, Tucker (2015) implied that the low cost of viral marketing has prompted companies to switch “their emphasis on paid media, such as online display advertising, to earned media where consumers transmit the message” (p. 294).

As scholars have also conducted research into word of mouth (WOM), representing an emphasis on interpersonal influence which is believed to be central to the understanding of VM, a conclusion is reached: social networks play a significant role in how information is spread (Allsop et al., 2007, p. 410). When a notable social change is recognized and its effects observed, the origin of such a change is often sought out (Watts & Dodds, 2007, p. 455). Groeger and Buttle (2014) also noted that homophily, a principle in which people tend to develop close relationships with others similar to them, may “predispose the spread of WOM among relatively homogenous social network members” (p. 1201). This principle may also explain why relatable memes have been at the forefront of recent memetic developments, as noted later on by Lamphere.
Based on these findings regarding interpersonal communication and social networks, it is clear that the Internet, with its ability to massively streamline communication, has had an impact on VM. Indeed, the usage of new media, specifically the Internet, appears to amplify the impacts of WOM (Allsop et al., 2007, p. 399). In addition, social media on the Internet have also become go-to platforms for modern VM campaigns (Grifoni et al., 2013, p. 24).

“Memejacking” or Meme Marketing

As discussed above, memes represent a form of cultural transmission. Memes can only persist if they are viral themselves, “a symptom of the recursive process of memetic reproduction” (Wiggins & Bowers, 2014, p. 8). Zanette et al. (2019) echoed this sentiment, adding that the original meme can become “a text of reference to be quoted and changed along its circulation” (pp. 160-161). Given these characteristics and coupled with the benefits of VM, Internet memes, created with the purpose to be spread far and wide, are the epitome of viral content and thus incredibly suitable as a VM tool.

Indeed, in the twilight of the aforementioned 4chan-dominated Internet culture and the early proliferation of social media usage, “memejacking,” in which “marketers appropriate existing content for branding purposes,” took hold. This practice, marking the beginning of the corporatization and the subsequent democratization of memes among the masses, was met with frustration from 4chan’s founder as well as self-proclaimed meme enthusiasts (Philips, 2015, pp. 139-141). Memes were no longer for fun, as they are now marketable and, in many cases, profitable.

Despite pushback, “memejacking,” or its more comprehensible counterpart “meme marketing” (MM), which will be used henceforth, has evolved and is here to stay. As of this writing, a Google search for the term “meme marketing” shows numerous articles detailing how
companies can take advantage of memes for their marketing needs. Regardless, in the age of social media in the latter half of the 2010s onwards, detailed studies on how companies have been using meme marketing remain scant and inaccessible.

**Sustainable Competitive Advantages**

As MM is a relatively new phenomenon, and as such not extensively studied, whether or not MM is a worthwhile endeavor remains to be seen. However, existing models can predict whether or not companies will achieve and maintain sustained competitive advantages.

Perhaps the most widely accepted framework regarding competitive advantages is the resource-based view (RBV), which focuses on a firm’s internal resources as a source of competitive advantage. The RBV identifies four key characteristics of a company’s resources that determine the potential for sustained competitive advantages:

1. **Value**: a firm’s resources are valuable when these “enable a firm to conceive of or implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness.”
2. **Rarity**: a firm’s resources are rare when these are restricted to a few firms or unobtainable by most firms.
3. **Imitability**: a firm’s resources are imitable when its competitors can create similar resources that enable the implementation of identical strategies. Imitability depends upon one or a combination of following factors: historical conditions (how the firm obtains its resources), causal ambiguity (how the firm creates sustainable competitive advantages from a firm’s resources), and social complexity (the social conditions beyond a firm’s influence that are needed to create sustainable competitive advantages).
4. Non-substitutability: there must be no “strategically equivalent valuable resources that are themselves either not rare or imitable.” (Barney, 1991, pp. 106-111)

As memes, or rather the employment of memes by companies, can be considered a resource, the RBV model is particularly appropriate for the analysis regarding the benefits of MM. Indeed, a RBV discussion about MM will be discussed further in this thesis.
Research questions

The thesis attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How do companies utilize memes on social media as part of their marketing strategy?

2. How do memes created or used by companies spread?

3. How receptive are social media users to MM?

4. How viable are memes as a marketing tool?
What Meme Marketing Looks Like: A Qualitative Analysis

Corporate Memes and Where to Find Them

It is entirely reasonable for companies to advertise where their products will receive the most exposure and potentially be subjected to virality. As noted by previous scholars, with the advent of social media marketing taking advantage of massive platforms that house millions of users worldwide, companies can exponentially increase their reach by simply establishing their presence on these platforms.

Given this premise, the following provides examples of meme usage by corporations and businesses and where these are most likely to be found which include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Reddit, and Snapchat. While instances of MM can undoubtedly be found elsewhere, these platforms are the most likely places to encounter them based solely on the sheer size and reach of their user bases.

The Many Uses of Meme Marketing and its Effectiveness

It is worth recalling that Richard Dawkins considers memes as a unit of cultural transmission and subsequent studies have confirmed how important memes have played a part in shaping the history of the online culture and the Internet itself. In addition, as marketing as a whole is ultimately aimed towards facilitating product awareness and the consumer engagement, memes therefore can be leveraged by businesses to fulfill the following purposes:

1. Cultural communication and/or participation: as memes evolve, companies using the latest memes or those that pertain to the latest cultural phenomena can be seen as “relatable” by online users, which are most prominently young and culturally aware people.
2. *Incentivizing engagement from the audience*: memes can contain elements that promote user engagement with the products, the businesses, or both.

3. *Building a unique brand identity*: companies may develop behaviors, memes included or not, that gradually tie their own existence to memetic elements; in many cases, the company may become a meme in and of itself.

It is worth noting that while these are the main purposes identified through primary research by the principal investigator (PI), these purposes are by no means mutually exclusive. MM can indeed fulfill just one purpose; it can also accomplish more, if not all, of the aforementioned purposes. In addition, while it can be argued that there are more uses of memes than the ones put forth in this research, the PI has determined that the presented purposes of MM can comfortably cover all known uses thereof.

**Methodology**

In an effort to document the uses of memes in this thesis, the PI included one prime example for every possible outcome of each aforementioned purpose; one MM purpose may correspond to more than one outcome and as such, more than one example will be associated. Limiting each outcome to one example allowed the PI to conduct a more focused and thorough analysis without cluttering the study and preventing readers from understanding these memes more deeply. These memetic examples were pulled from various companies’ social media pages with their number of likes/favorites and shares documented to assess how popular these MM efforts were. In addition, notable comments were also analyzed from the perspective of the PI to determine whether or not they are approving, disapproving, or neutral towards the meme materials shown. This effort also accounted for the fact that most social media platforms rank comments by their popularity, usually based on the number of likes, by default.
From this premise, the desired data collected from each instance were as follows:

1. General details regarding the post containing memetic elements specific to a genre

2. Content interpretations of said memetic elements, with comparisons to the origin where possible

3. Reactions toward the “memejacking” instance, which include the following metrics:
   a. Affinity: number of likes or favorites
   b. Engagement: content evaluation of the first 50 user comments (excluding nested comments as well as posts with less than 50 comments, in which case all comments will be evaluated), which may include interactions between companies and social media users
   c. Spread: number of shares or retweets, or instances of media exposure other than social media

Though memes can be found anywhere on the Internet, for ease of access, popular social media platforms with a significant number of users and a large corporate presence, such as Twitter and Facebook, were prioritized. And since memes are often not understood equally, the meme encyclopedia KYM was referenced whenever possible to ensure consistency regarding the interpretation of memes, including the meaning and history thereof. In addition, content that is not in English was translated by the PI using online translation tools, such as Google Translate, and consulting fluent speakers of the language. This qualitative research, though not a prerequisite, provided a more focused direction for the subsequent quantitative research.
Memes as Cultural Communication and Participation

As younger people are the primary users of social media and the Internet as a whole, it is arguably advantageous for businesses to appeal to this demographic. Just as much as memes have become a new social currency thanks to its social values manifested through the oft-relatable content, being relatable and being able to connect with the audience online can be powerful marketing tools. And since memes have been one of the most significant contributors of the Internet culture and its spillover into the public sphere, companies can be obligated to stay up to date with the latest trends in memes in order to participate in the popular culture of the era.

The following are examples of MM being used to communicate relatability towards the audience.

McDonald’s Goes to Mars

On February 19th, 2021, McDonald’s official Facebook page posted a black-and-white image depicting a packet of the company’s renowned Szechuan Sauce on a seemingly extraterrestrial surface along with the caption “there it is” (McDonald’s, 2021; see Figure 1).
Figure 1

_McDonald’s Meme Post_

Note. McDonald’s Facebook post depicting a packet of the company’s renowned Szechuan Sauce on an extraterrestrial surface. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from

https://www.facebook.com/McDonalds/photos/a.10150319191897014/10158069396327014

It is clear from the abnormal nature of the photo that the post is intended as a meme designed to grab attention. Indeed, the image was digitally altered, or Photoshopped: the original image, posted by NASA’s Perseverance Mars Rover’s Twitter account on February 18th, 2021, depicts the rover’s first photograph taken on the surface of Mars (see Figure 2).
The original photograph itself is not the only memetic element, however: the fast-food chain’s signature Szechuan Sauce, more accurately known as “McDonald’s Mulan Szechuan Sauce,” is itself a meme. As a promotion for the 1998 Disney’s animated film Mulan, McDonald’s released a limited special edition Szechuan dipping sauce. Nearly two decades later, on April 1st, 2017, the premiere of the season 3 of Rick and Morty, a popular animated show on Adult Swim, featured the main character Rick Sanchez’s obsession with finding the original Mulan Szechuan sauce. Thanks to Rick and Morty’s sizable fanbase, the premiere propelled McDonald’s Szechuan sauce back into the spotlight. As demand was growing rapidly on social media and on the Internet, the fast-food chain began to acknowledge and respond to the fervor surrounding the sauce (see Figure 3).
Figure 3

*McDonald’s Twitter response to Rick and Morty’s Szechuan sauce craze*

![Twitter conversation between Rick and Morty and McDonald's](image)

**Note.** The company’s phrase “McNugga Lubba Dub Dub” is a modified version of “Wubba Lubba Dub Dub,” a line uttered frequently by *Rick and Morty*’s main character Rick Sanchez. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/McDonalds/status/848573499874709506

For the next several months, McDonald’s would start to promote the re-release of the Szechuan sauce and later announced that the sauce would be available on one day only, October 7th, 2018. The chain failed to anticipate the demand, however, as the limited release of the sauce ended in chaos: many stores ran out of the sauce quickly or did not even receive the sauce, prompting customers to “riot,” many incidents of which were caught on camera and shared widely. People who did get the sauce also posted viral videos that contain unusual or comedic sauce-related activities. The chaotic rollout of the sauce prompted McDonald’s to issue an apology regarding the shortage and a promise that the sauce would return in the winter of 2017. McDonald’s would later release a podcast in February 2018 about the disastrous limited release from the company’s perspective. Furthermore, the company would subsequently release the
Szechuan sauce, totalling up to 20 million containers, at all of its locations (“McDonald’s Mulan Szechuan Sauce,” 2017).

The company was far from the only one who posted memes based on Perseverance's image. Within minutes of the image being posted by NASA, online users quickly came up with various edits containing popular characters or objects, many of which are memes in their own right (“Perseverance Rover Landing Photograph,” 2021). For example, Twitter user @nascarcasm posted an edit showing Senator Bernie Sanders sitting and wearing mittens on Mars within an hour of the original post (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Twitter user @nascarcasm edit of the Perseverance rover’s photo*


Given the popularity of its product and the timeliness of the cultural buzz generated by the Mars landing, McDonald’s certainly expected that its meme would go viral. For its effort, the
attempt at making memes was well-received: as of March 15th, 2021, the post garnered 7005 reactions, 1761 shares, and roughly 200 comments (McDonald’s, 2021; see Table 1).

<table>
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<th>Count</th>
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<td>Reactions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>3,602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haha</td>
<td>2,992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wow</td>
<td>155</td>
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<td>Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shares</td>
<td>1,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Approx. 2,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/NASAPersevere/status/1362507436611956736. For what the specific icon for each reaction looks like, see Appendix C.

In terms of affinity, the reactions towards the meme on Facebook were overwhelmingly positive. As of March 15th, 2021, the meme garnered over 7,000 reactions, with positive reactions, including “likes,” “haha,” “love,” “wow,” and “care,” being the majority. Negative reactions are scarce and effectively insignificant, as there were only 13 “angry” and 10 “sad” reactions. It is thus reasonable to assume that McDonald’s intended audience largely supported the company’s MM effort, whether they identified with the product or liked the meme itself.
On a more granular level, of the first 50 comments, most comments were positive, and few are negative and/or unrelated to the post itself. While the commenters were by and large supportive of the meme, many of whom cracked jokes and added onto the post, it is worth noting that people were also clamoring for McDonald’s to bring back popular, yet discontinued items, the Szechuan sauce included. Some examples are as follow:

“Please bring back the chicken snack wraps I haven’t seen them in a while”

“Why not just bring [Szechuan sauce] as a regular? It’s so goooooood”

“Please let this be a hint your [sic] bringing it back again. While your at I begging [sic] you to bring back the Chicken Fajitas they were so good” (McDonald’s, 2021)

On the other hand, negative reactions were directed mainly at the fast food chain’s practices and services:

“Yeah along with the chicken hoodies that were sold to basically no one except bots”

“How about y'all sell your sauces in bottles like chick fil a does [sic]...I know for a fact I'm not the only one asking for this to happen.. No other sweet and sour sauce is as good as McDonald's sweet and sour” (McDonald’s, 2021)

Coupled with the warm reception that the meme received, the meme was also popular and highly engaging: the memetic post was shared close to 1,800 times and attracted roughly 2,000 comments, which will likely boost the post’s visibility on many people’s Facebook timelines.

More specific, albeit private, metrics notwithstanding, such as numbers of clicks, people reached, photo views and links, etc., current numbers available to the public indicate virality, at least more so than those of the company’s other Facebook posts. This virality then may translate to more people looking up and purchasing the company’s products and thus contribute to an
increase in revenue and potential profit. Without specific financial reports, this remains a speculation, however. Nonetheless, one can still safely conclude that this meme marketing effort by McDonald’s was effective.

**Takesabroso: Mexican Restaurant takes on Marvel Studios’ Thanos**

Thanks to the advancements in telecommunication technologies in an increasingly globalized world, popular cultures are not just limited to one specific country or geographic area. Everything originating in a specific region can be viewed and enjoyed by virtually anyone anywhere in the world. Memes centered around popular cultural phenomena, therefore, are typically universally understood, regardless of one’s linguistic or memetic background.

On August 13th, 2019, Twitter user @goingonajournie shared a video that was an advertisement of Takesabroso, a Mexican restaurant, along with the caption “this is a real ad that a real restaurant in mexico made [sic].” The advertisement shows edited the Spanish-dubbed climactic finale of Marvel Studios’ blockbuster *Avengers: Endgame*, where the main villain Thanos, portrayed by Josh Brolin, says “Yo soy inevitable” (“I am inevitable” in English) snaps his fingers with an intent to wipe out half of living beings across the universe, only to find out that the required “Infinity Stones” are not there. The scene is immediately followed by Takesabroso’s owner replying, “Yo soy Takesabroso” (“I am Takesabroso”) and then snapping his fingers. The screen then flashes white and cuts to footage of the restaurant’s offerings and address set to the cumbia remix of the Avengers’ theme, with a parodied version of Thanos dancing in a suggestive manner in the lower corners of the video (journie, 2019; see Figure 7).
**Figure 5**

_Takesabroso’s Advertisement on Twitter_

![Image of Twitter post](https://twitter.com/goingonajournie/status/1161145837256228864)

*Note.* Mexican restaurant Takesabroso’s parody advertisement, as shared by Twitter user @goingonajournie. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/goingonajournie/status/1161145837256228864

In this instance, the memetic element is Thanos’ memorable quote “I am inevitable” in Marvel’s _Avengers: Endgame_. The significance of this quote lies in the context: the full quote uttered by Thanos during the movie is as follow:

“But the work is done. It will always be done. I am inevitable.”

As Thanos finishes the line, he snaps his fingers while wearing the Infinity Gauntlet with the Infinity Stones in hopes of wiping out half the universe and potentially the superheroes,
known as the Avengers, who have been fighting him. However, Thanos is surprised as nothing happens; he realizes, to his horror, that the Infinity Stones have been stolen and are now in the possession of Iron Man portrayed by Robert Downey Jr. Before snapping his fingers and thus vaporizing Thanos and his alien invasion forces, Iron Man says:

“And I... am Iron Man.” (Russo & Russo, 2019, 2:30:29)

While the catchphrase “I am inevitable” is a memorable line in and of itself, its connection with the character of Thanos, the context in which it is said, and the popularity of the Marvel franchise are what ultimately propel the line into memedom. The catchphrase is only one of many memes spawned out of the movie, however: many of the movie’s memorable moments have been turned into memes and the villain, Thanos, is also the subject of many popular memes.

Aside from the meme from the movie, it is worth noting that the original owner of the meme, Mexican restaurant Takesabroso, is highly aware of the effects of using a popular meme to advertise and relate to their customers. In fact, on Takesabroso’s Facebook page, their cover photo features meme characters, including Shrek, Thanos, Sonic the Hedgehog, and Cheems the dog, alongside the doner kebabs as well as the restaurant’s motto, which reads “Tacos, Tortas, Gringas, Memes y más...” — “Tacos, Cakes, Gringas, Memes and more...” in English—(see Figure 6).
Figure 6

*Takesabroso’s cover image on Facebook*

![Figure 6](image)

*Note.* Takesabroso’s tagline reads “Tacos, Cakes, Gringas, Memes and more” in English.


Furthermore, a quick look at the restaurant’s Facebook timeline reveals that the restaurant frequently posts Spanish-language memes that double as advertisements, all of which attract hundreds to thousands of likes and comments (see Figure 7). The restaurant owner, affectionately referred to as *tío*, or *uncle* in English, appears to be a memetic personality as well since he frequently appears in Takesabroso’s promotional videos and photos, memetic or otherwise.
Figure 7
*Takesabroso’s 2-for-1 Wednesday Taco meme*

![Meme Image]


As for the specific Thanos meme that Takesabroso used for their advertisement, the endeavor has been a tremendous success, in both Spanish and English-speaking communities. The restaurant’s original post on Facebook is highly popular: the video was viewed roughly 971,000 times and garnered 21,523 reactions, 28,780 shares, and roughly 5,700 comments (see Table 2).

Whether or not Takesabroso’s advertisement is aesthetically pleasing or logically coherent, it is clear that the advertisement received overwhelmingly positive feedback: as of March 21, the majority of 21,523 reactions were positive, with only 32 “sad” and “angry” reactions.
Table 2
Breakdown of the numbers of views, reactions, shares, and comments under Takesabroso’s Facebook advertisement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Views</td>
<td>Approx. 971,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactions</td>
<td>21,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>15,119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haha</td>
<td>4,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>1,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wow</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares</td>
<td>28,772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Approx. 5,700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The audience did not just express their approval by clicking the reactions button, however, they also showed their support in the comment sections:

“Simplemente por esto, te ganaste mi fidelidad” (“Just because of this, you earned my loyalty”)

“Puedo ser taquesabroso? Ya viste que mi poder es comerme tacos de dos mordidas”

(“Can I be [Takesabroso]? You saw that my power is eating tacos in two bites”)
“Joder, iré mañana mismo, es la mejor publicidad del mundo xD” (Damn, I’ll go
tomorrow, it’s the best advertisement in the world xD) (Takesabroso, 2019)

It should be noted that many commenters also tag their Facebook friends into their
comments, which will notify and expose the recipients to the comments in the advertisement
itself. Given the number of shares and comments that the advertisement has, this practice further
complements its reach.

While the advertisement was indeed popular on Facebook, it became even more of a
sensation when Twitter user @goingonajournie shared Takesabroso’s advertisement. As of
March 21st, the tweet, and the advertisement itself, has gained roughly 6.1 million views,
380,812 favorites, 137,069 retweets and around 3,200 comments (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Views</td>
<td>Approx. 6,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favorites/Likes</td>
<td>378,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>136,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non quote tweets</td>
<td>125,993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote tweets</td>
<td>10,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Approx. 3,200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3
Number of views, favorites, retweets, and comments of Takesabroso’s advertisement shared by Twitter user @goingonajournie

Note. Retrieved 16 April 2021 from https://twitter.com/goingonajournie/status/1161145837256228864

Although quantitative evidence clearly explains the advertisement’s popularity, the
comments are more diverse and somewhat ambiguous. Many of the top commenters simply
commented “@this_vid,” a phrase that triggers DownloadThisVideo, a bot that sends a download link of the video and enables commenters to download the video to their devices (DownloadThisVideo, n.d.). Other users post reaction Graphics Interchange Formats (GIF) or clips of relevance. For example, user @Dalie_T2 posted a video of a person in full Thanos costume dancing at a party to the Spanish version of the *Avengers*’ theme. And in this post’s replies, user @troyareyes comments “Thaños,” which is a play on either the origin of Takesabroso’s advertisement or the comment that comes before. Regardless, both comments themselves accrue a considerable number of retweets and favorites (see Figure 8).
Figure 8

Notable comments found under @goingonajournie’s Tweet

Note. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/goingonajournie/status/1161145837256228864

Aside from the overall supportive attitudes towards the post, many commenters point out, jokingly or otherwise, that there is a good chance that Takesabroso will be sued by Marvel Studios or its parent company, The Walt Disney Company, which is notorious for being incredibly protective of its intellectual property (IP) (“Disney Antipiracy,” 2021). For instance, in the replies, user @Westside_LEE posts a reaction GIF featuring WWE wrestler Seth Rollins’
entrance, along with the caption “When Marvel lawyers get wind of this bullshit,” implying that the “Marvel lawyers” will swiftly make a case against Takesabroso (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9**

*Comment using a reaction GIF under @goingonajournie’s Tweet*

![Reaction GIF featuring WWE wrestler Seth Rollins. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/goingonajournie/status/1161145837256228864](image)

*Note.* Reaction GIF featuring WWE wrestler Seth Rollins. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/goingonajournie/status/1161145837256228864

In addition to the amount of attention Takesabroso’s advertisement has accrued on social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter, the restaurant has also been noticed by reputable new sources: Time magazine and Vice News. Time’s article, titled “Mexican Restaurant Makes Excellent Use of Avengers Footage for Delightful Commercial,” asserts that the meme version of one of *Avengers: Endgame’s* most memorable sequences “might make you crave tacos for
“lunch” (Greenspan, 2019). Similarly, in the Vice News’ article, “This Mexican Restaurant’s Bonkers ‘Avengers’ Commercial Is the Best Thing You’ll See Today,” the author notes that the advertisement in question “isn’t the first time that Takesabroso—and its video editor, Jorge Lajud—have been willing to go dank in their commercials” (Castrodale, 2019).

Clearly, having a broader appeal can give companies access to a bigger audience and more potential customers. By pairing their products with a significant cultural phenomenon such as the release of *Avengers: Endgame*, Takesabroso understood that their commercial would generate mass appeal that can lead to virality, which it undoubtedly did.

**Memes as Engagement**

Aside from using memes as a means to communicate with Internet users, companies can also use memes as a way to incentivize consumer engagement. Although popular memes often warrant engagement from the intended audience purely by virtue of being humorous, some memes can contain elements that encourage viewers to respond in specific ways. Thus, as companies utilize these types of memes in their promotional materials, whether they are tweets, images, or video clips, they can also incorporate calls to action (CTAs) that compel their audience to participate in propagating the content.

**OREO Thins’ Many Flavors**

On January 19th, 2021, American cookie brand OREO’s official Twitter account tweeted the following: “Oh you love OREO Thins? Name every flavor” (see Figure 10).
Figure 10

OREO Cookie’s Tweet

![OREO Cookie's Tweet](https://twitter.com/Oreo/status/1351688391629402118)


This seemingly simple tweet is itself an instance of a text-based meme template known as “Oh, You Love X? Name Every Y.” Originally known as “Oh, You Love a Band? Name Three of Their Albums,” the meme parodies “gatekeeping and music elitism, often associated with hipsters” (“Oh, You Love X? Name Every Y,” 2017). According to KYM, this meme, or rather the expression “Name three of their albums” has been used to “test someone’s knowledge of a musical artist since before the Internet.” However, the earliest documented instance of this meme online was in 2011 and appears to be of a sincere sentiment (see Figure 11).
Over time, the intention behind the meme, that is to mock elitism in music, evolved into mocking stereotypes that are relatively relatable to social media users. In 2017, a new permutation of the meme appeared and was henceforth known as “Oh, You Love Your Mom? Name Three of Her Albums.” The CTA element in this meme, specifically “Name three of her albums,” would then supposedly invite answers that reflect “common motherly expressions” written as if they were actual album titles (see Figure 12).
Figure 12

First instance of the meme “Oh, You Love Your Mom? Name Three of Her Albums”

![Meme Example]

David DeWeil
@daviddeweil

Oh you love your mom? Name three of her albums

1. There's food at home
2. I'm not one of your little friends (went 3x platinum)
3. I'll give you something to cry about


The meme experienced two more resurgences in late 2019 and 2020 with increasingly subversive and self-aware intentions. The former saw the meme expanding its “requirements,” telling the audience to name either one or all items related to a subject. The 2019 resurgence also saw the incorporation of other memes, such as the “Doge” meme (see Figure 13).
The 2020 resurgence was marked by the meme’s self-referential potential taken to the logical conclusion: having been given the prompt “oh you love jojo? name every jojo character,” Discord user PAB proceeded to list “every major and minor named character appearing in *JoJo’s Bizarre Adventure* manga series.” The incident, which was manifested into a YouTube video, sparked a sub-trend where people would “name every single instance of something”—popular culture entities were most readily exploited—and made YouTube videos out of it (“Oh, You Love X? Name Every Y,” 2017).

Although it can be difficult to ascertain what the thought process behind OREO Cookie’s tweet with regard to the background history of the meme in question, it is possible that the
account wanted to take advantage of the CTA element in the phrase, that is “Name every…,” to explicitly increase engagement and possibly gauge their Twitter audience’s interests in OREO Thins’ flavors. From these assumptions and based on the responses that the tweet had been able to gather, it appears that OREO Cookie received what they were hoping for, that is engagement, specifically in the forms of 5,000 likes, roughly 150 retweets, and over 700 comments (see Table 4).

Table 4
Number of favorites, retweets, and comments of OREO Cookie’s tweet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Favorites/Likes</td>
<td>4,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retweets</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non quote tweets</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quote tweets</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>704</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Retrieved 16 April 2021 at 4:00 PM from https://twitter.com/Oreo/status/1351688391629402118.

While the number of Twitter likes and retweets can indicate and encourage engagement, the comments reflect the degree to which engagement manifests itself more accurately. And in this instance, the comments were predictable: many Twitter users would list their favorite OREO Thins’ flavors, to which the OREO Cookie account would comment on their lists (see Figure 14).
Figure 14

Example of the phrase “Name Three of His/Her Albums” using a Doge template


Whether or not the engagement was deemed effective by OREO Cookie’s standards, the CTA element of the meme certainly gave the tweet significant exposure, wherein the official Twitter account of Among Us, a massively popular online social deduction game à la Mafia where players attempt to identify “impostors”, tweeted a response in favor of the bean flavor (see Figure 15).
Among Us Twitter Account’s Response to OREO Cookie’s Tweet

Note: Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/AmongUsGame/status/1351997247563718664

Given the gigantic fanbase of Among Us, the response itself was predictably well received, with 2,889 likes and 40 retweets (see Figure 15). The comments under the response were also particularly humorous, combining elements of the video game and OREO cookie flavors:

“I love Among Us Oreo!!”

“among us flavour”

“You failed to mention mint? We have an impostor here!”

“what do the among us beans taste like tho, thats the real question” (Among Us, 2021)

Using memes as a tool to explicitly encourage engagement can be a somewhat effective marketing strategy, especially when another popular brand is involved, as demonstrated above. However, being confined to specific formats where an invitation to participate is possible, as
well as the fact that humorous or relatable content can usually generate exposure and trigger indirect engagements without any invitational element certainly limits this memetic usage to very specific situations, which are mostly those that involve gauging public interests in a particular product.

**Meme as a Way to Build Brand Image**

As memes are essentially “units of cultural transmission” as stated by Richard Dawkins, one can make a case that anything that can be spread quickly and widely can be and is rightfully a meme. This line of reasoning can be taken even further, essentially implying that anything popular can essentially be a meme. While any company can reasonably use memes to promote their products, turning one’s brand into a meme, either intentionally or unintentionally, can significantly boost the business’ exposure and consumer engagement online.

**Wendy’s Smug, Never Frozen Memes**

The most successful, or rather most visible, example of “memeifying” one’s brand online is American fast food chain Wendy’s, or more specifically, the brand’s official Twitter account, @Wendys. Wendy’s memetic presence online was so significant that there are two KYM entries as of March 2021: one documenting the memetic rise of the fast-food chain and the other, “Smug Wendy’s”, examining the trend of anthropomorphizing the chain’s mascot as a result of the former.

Wendy’s was not known as a meme brand until 2017, when the company’s Twitter account, @Wendys, got into a conversation with another user, @NHride, who accused the former of using frozen beef in their burgers. Wendy’s denied the accusation and ended the conversation with, “You don’t have to bring [McDonald’s] into this just because you forgot refrigerators existed for a second there.” (‘@Wendys,” 2017; see Figure 16).
The exchange was later captured in a screenshot by another user and widely circulated on Twitter-sphere and beyond: according to KYM, the tweet gained nearly 62,000 retweets and 153,000 likes and was featured by media outlets such as The Daily Dot and AV Club which “covered the exchange as well as the positive reaction it had received on Twitter.” The extensive media attention that the tweet had received also kicked off a trend where Twitter users asked Wendy’s to roast them. On January 3rd, 2017, the roast became a Twitter Moment, entitled
“Wendy’s is feeling itself right now” ("@Wendys", 2017; “Wendy’s is feeling itself right now”, 2017; see Figure 17).

Figure 17

Wendy’s Roast as a Twitter Moment

Note. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/i/events/816420995519037440

Wendy’s official Twitter account later got into a feud with McDonald’s. The latter tweeted out that by mid-2018, all Quarter Pounder burgers at most McDonald’s restaurants will be made with fresh beef. This prompted Wendy’s to respond by asking if McDonald’s had been using frozen beef in most of their burgers. The response subsequently received “more than 74,000 retweets and 179,000 likes” as of 2017 and media attention from major media outlets, including USA Today and CNBC ("@Wendys,” 2017; see Figure 18).
Figure 18

*Wendy’s snarky response towards McDonalds about frozen beef*

Note. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/847478772311834626

The feud was reheated roughly a year later, on March 6th, 2018 when Wendy’s Twitter account, recognizing that it was National Frozen Food Day, posted unappealing images of McDonald’s signature burgers supposedly made with frozen beef (see Figure 19). The tweets received considerable attention on Twitter and were subsequently featured on Uproxx (“@Wendys,” 2017).
Figure 19

*Wendy’s mocking McDonald’s frozen beef on National Frozen Food Day*

![Tweet from Wendy's](https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/971141834872324099)

*Note.* Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/971141834872324099

Wendy’s infamous roast also gave rise to another trend: “Smug Wendy’s,” also known as “Wendy-chan,” where people created “anime-style anthropomorphic personification of the @Wendys Twitter feed” based on the account’s snarky responses towards other users. These drawings often depict the fast-food chain’s mascot exhibiting smug demeanors, with the earliest known example posted on Twitter on February 18th, 2018 by user @ScottyArtz (“Smug Wendy’s,” 2017; see Figure 20).
“Smug Wendy’s” became more popular as artists created their own versions of the mascot; the trend caught the attention of the humor site Dorkly, which compiled a list of popular Wendy’s fan art (Smug Wendy’s). In addition, the smugness of Wendy’s has become such a popular meme that it was featured on the Epic Rap Battles of History’s (ERB) “Ronald McDonald vs The Burger King” episode, in which the character of Wendy’s interrupts the rap.
battle and ends the episode with the lines “I’m the fast food Queen / Mean with a Tweet sesh /
Leave opponents frozen / Cause I always keep my beef fresh.” (ERB, 2019).

Besides being snarky on the Internet, Wendy’s has also been known for getting involved
in seemingly outlandish endeavors. One such incident involved Twitter user @carterjwm, or
Carter Wilkerson, asking Wendy’s how many retweets it would take for a free one-year supply
of chicken nuggets, to which Wendy’s Twitter account replied, “18 Million.” The conversation
was captured and posted by Wilkerson, where it became a sensation due to how quickly he
accumulated retweets: the conversation became a Twitter moment with its own hashtag
“#NuggsForCarter,” and the story was picked up by major news outlets, including CNBC,
Fortune, The Verge, and Fox News (“@Wendys,” 2017; see Figure 21).

Figure 21

_Carter Wilkerson’s plead for 18 million retweets_

![Carter Wilkerson’s tweet](https://twitter.com/carterjwm/status/849813577770778624)

The screenshot has been cropped for aesthetic reasons.
The infamous tweet, then on track of becoming the most retweeted of all time, was also mentioned by talk show host Ellen Degeneres, who later enlisted other celebrities to “help keep her tweet at the top by recording a PSA ... asking fans to retweet her Oscar selfie,” effectively putting herself in direct competition with Wilkerson’s. Later, on April 18th, 2017, Ellen Degeneres invited Carter on her show. Eventually, on May 9th, Wilkinson’s tweet became the most retweeted of all time, and to commemorate, Wendy’s indeed provided him with a year’s supply of chicken nuggets and donated $100,000 to the Dave Thomas Foundation for Adoption, which bears the namesake of Wendy’s founder (“@Wendys,” 2017).

Wendy's status as a meme was eventually solidified when the fast-food chain released its own hip-hop mixtape called “We Beefin?” in late March 2018, with the first track entitled “Twitter Fingers,” which likely referenced the chain’s aforementioned snarky encounters on Twitter (“We Beefin?”). The mixtape was released to much fanfare: the chain’s announcement on Twitter “received more than 2,400 retweets and 11,300 likes in six days” (“@Wendys,” 2017; see Figure 22).
Figure 22

Wendy’s releasing its Spotify album

![Image of Wendy's Spotify album]

Note. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/Wendys/status/977198610361221121. The screenshot has been cropped for aesthetic reasons.

Furthermore, the mixtape was also covered by several media outlets and on March 27th, 2018, Wendy’s CEO Todd Penogor went onto the Mad Money segment on CNBC to discuss the mixtape (“@Wendys,” 2017). While there is no way to gauge the audience’s reaction on live television, the comments under the YouTube video of the segment are largely supportive of the chain’s mixtape:

“Go ahead and give the marketing PR team a raise. You will get that influx you are looking for.”

“Mixtape just as fire as the food [“fire” emojis]”

“CANT WAIT FOR MC DONALDS DISS TRACK BACK [“laughing and crying” emojis]” (CNBC, 2018)
There is currently no defined formula that involves shaping one’s brand image into a meme. In Wendy’s case, it was not clear whether or not the chain had planned to turn itself into a meme initially, though it has reasonably been apparent that the chain had embraced their status as a meme since. The extent to which this approach is effective and reproducible as well as whether there is any meaningful difference between using memes as a marketing tool and engineering a memetic brand image will be discussed further.

**Behind Every Brand…**

In many cases, a company’s public brand image is heavily influenced by the personality behind it. And nothing represents this argument better than Elon Musk, CEO and founder of Tesla, Inc., an electric vehicle and clean energy company, and SpaceX, an aerospace manufacturer and space transportation services company.

As the CEO and thanks to his presence and activities online, mainly Twitter, Musk is perceived by many to be the public face of these companies, even though these companies themselves understandably have their own marketing departments and strategies. As a result, while these companies have not marketed themselves as meme brands specifically, their founder has.

On February 6th, 2018, Musk tweeted out video footage from SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy launch, which successfully put a mannequin, affectionately named “Spaceman,” wearing a spacesuit and driving a Tesla Roadster into Earth’s orbit. In just 24 hours, the tweet “received more than 450,000 likes” (“Elon Musk,” 2015; see Figure 23).
Figure 23

*Elon Musk’s tweet about the SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy launch*

![Elon Musk’s tweet about the SpaceX’s Falcon Heavy launch](image_url)

*Note.* Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/960992715579125760

Similar to the Perseverance Rover’s Mars landing in 2021, this moment was meme-ified shortly after, and like the Mars landing, the image was the subject of pre-existing memes. For example, one still from SpaceX’s launch became the psychedelic punchline of a meme referencing edibles, or food infused with cannabis (see Figure 24).
Figure 24

A cannabis related meme using the image from SpaceX Falcon Heavy launch

Me: “These edibles ain’t working I should take another one”
Also Me:


While it is unclear whether or not Musk has always been an avid meme user before his rise to prominence on social media, it is apparent Musk has since leaned heavily into memedom, often posting memes unrelated to his business. On October 25th, 2018, Musk asked Twitter users to send him their “dankest memes” (see Figure 25).
Figure 25

*Elon Musk’s asking Twitter user to send him the “dankest memes”*

![Image of Elon Musk's tweet](https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1055517521082609664)

*Note.* Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1055517521082609664

According to KYM, the tweet gained “over 294,000 likes and 64,800 retweets” within 24 hours. Users happily obliged, though some used the opportunity to make fun of Musk’s out-of-touch attempt to appear cool and hip with younger netizens (see Figure 26).

Figure 26

*A meme making fun of Musk’s attempt to appear relatable*

![Image of a meme](https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/people/elon-musk)

*Note.* Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/people/elon-musk
Nonetheless, the event was made into a Twitter moment on the same day and was entitled “Elon Musk’s call for ‘dank memes’ might have backfired” along with a “Dis Gon B Gud” reaction GIF featuring Musk’s face superimposed on actor Jason Momoa’s *The Game* character Roman who is unfolding a folding chair with one hand (“Elon Musk,” 2015; see Figure 27).

Figure 27

*Elon Musk asking for memes as a Twitter moment*

![GIF](image)

*Note.* Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/i/events/1055528316763951104

Given that the public images of Tesla and SpaceX are tied to Elon Musk, they are at the mercy of their founder, whose frequent use of memes and popular culture references effectively gives them a memetic identity which can produce unpredictable, and sometimes undesirable, effects.
One example of how Musk’s use of memes translates to real-world consequences is his “Funding Secured” Tweet. On August 7th, 2018, Elon Musk announced that he would consider “taking Tesla private at $420” and that the funding for this had been secured (see Figure 28).

**Figure 28**

*Elon Musk thinking of privatizing Tesla at $420*

Note. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://twitter.com/elonmusk/status/1026872652290379776

While the initial reactions to the memes were warm, with people making memes out of the “Funding secured” portion of the tweet and creating a Twitter moment, some voiced concerns about the implications of Tesla’s stock price: the tweet caught the attention of the former Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Chairman Harvey Pitt, who cautioned that Musk could be penalized “if his tweet contained a false statement.” Indeed, nearly two months later, the SEC accused Musk of “committing fraud and misleading investors,” further adding that the $420 stock price had been chosen “because of the significance of that number in marijuana culture and his belief that his girlfriend would be amused by it.” Following this incident, Musk agreed to “resign as chairman of Tesla and pay a $20 million fine,” though he remained CEO of the company. In this instance, Musk referenced a meme—the number 420—and Tesla was penalized: the company’s stock price went down and only regained its value once Musk had accepted the settlement (“Elon Musk,” 2015).
In the period leading up to Musk’s getting penalized by the SEC, on September 7th, Elon Musk appeared on The Joe Rogan Experience, the world’s most popular podcast as of 2018. In the episode, Musk joined the host, Joe Rogan, in smoking a cannabis joint. A still image of Musk smoking weed was then extracted and made into a meme with the caption “hits blunt / Dude, what if… what if we launched my car into space?” (“Elon Musk Smoking Weed,” 2018; see Figure 29).

Figure 29

First instance of the “Elon Musk Smoking Weed” meme

The meme quickly caught on became trendy on Reddit. However, aside from the positive attention that Musk received from smoking weed on camera, the incident prompted an investigation from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) into SpaceX to “ensure the companies are meeting NASA’s requirements for workplace safety, including the adherence to a drug-free environment” on November 20th, 2018. On the same day, Joe Rogan also tweeted a Gizmodo article about the investigation (“Elon Musk Smoking Weed,” 2018; see Figure 30).

Figure 30

Joe’s Rogan tweet about NASA Investigation into SpaceX following Elon Musk’s weed smoking incident

Based on the memetic identity cultivated by Elon Musk that surrounds his companies, it is apparent that tying a business’ image to a particular celebrity-like figure can be unpredictable, especially when such a figure commands immense influence online and in real-life. Essentially, everything that this figure does will be reflected in the public perception of the company, and a potential lack of absolute control over the figure’s personality and behaviors may result in unwanted repercussions. Furthermore, given the popularity of figures like Elon Musk, any attempt to distance one’s business from them, even when it is justified, will likely not succeed without significant backlash.
Social Media Users’ Attitudes towards Meme Marketing: A Quantitative Analysis

Methodology

In addition to the qualitative analysis of MM online, a quantitative study was also conducted through a Qualtrics survey targeting social media users who are most likely to be exposed to or familiar with Internet memes. The survey, containing a total of fourteen questions in addition to the informed consent agreement and a definition of memes consistent with past literature presented in this thesis, was structured to ascertain participants’ knowledge about memes, meme consumption patterns, social media usage, attitudes towards MM, and demographic information, including genders and age groups. The responses are anticipated to answer some of the study’s hypotheses concerning whether or not said attitudes can be influenced by one’s relationship towards memes in general.

Regarding the survey’s distribution, it was presented to a surprisingly diverse audience, considering the time and bureaucratic constraints. The biggest demographic that received the survey was students from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). More specifically, the survey was forwarded by email to Marketing majors through Dr. Matthew Bunker of the Marketing Department and Honors students through UNI Honors Program’s Director Dr. Jessica Moon Asa. In addition to these demographics, the survey was also shared with online users through the PI’s social media accounts, namely Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. Furthermore, the survey was also presented to faculty members, presumably within the College of Business Administration, by thesis’ advisor, Dr. Christine Schrage.

Prior to the distribution of the survey, the PI underwent ethics training through online modules required by UNI Institutional Review Board (IRB) and was later IRB certified. Then, an application outlining the proposed survey was submitted and ultimately approved by the IRB on
March 26th, 2021. Following the approval, the survey became active and data collection was conducted from March 29th to April 7th, 2021 by the end of day, using distribution methods outlined above.

In accordance with IRB ethics guidelines, the target audience was informed of the purpose of the study as well as any associated benefits and risks. The audience was also given the choice of whether or not to participate, with no penalty incurred. Collected responses, anonymized to prevent bias and ensure data privacy, were subsequently filtered and analyzed using tools readily available through Qualtrics, mainly the reporting feature and Stats IQ.

In total, there were 112 responses, 93 of which valid and completed responses. Of these responses, only one person did not consent to the survey and thus was not included in the data set. Of the 92 consenting responses, all indicated some degree of familiarity towards Internet memes. Many respondents would also provide their own input in addition to predetermined options offered by the survey (Appendix B).

**Quantitative Analysis and Findings**

The ultimate goal of the survey and of this study is to explore the perception of MM in the eyes of social media and online users. Based on the qualitative analysis of existing MM instances as well as previous studies on memes and viral marketing, four hypotheses were tested by the principal investigator. It should be noted that while some respondents picked the “other” option regarding the purpose to which their attitudes are warranted, no specifics were offered and thus were not included in the analysis, though the sample size, which was 92, remained unchanged.

Overall, in most instances, the data has shown that the only reliable predictors of whether or not people hold favorable views towards MM are age and the levels of memetic knowledge,
although most respondents indicated that they are at least favorable and understanding towards the practice of MM. And even in instances where hypotheses are accepted, it is due to technicality, further pushing the underlying influences of one’s attitudes into the realm of uncertainty. Nevertheless, a qualitative examination of the responses to the survey into the relationship between online users and memes revealed a growing acceptance of memes into regular social interactions: memes have been increasingly used to express one’s interests as well as emotions and reactions towards various subjects, and to establish connections among people sharing the same or similar interests.

**Testing the Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis #1: People who are more knowledgeable about memes are more negative/disapproving of meme marketing.**

It was hypothesized that those who are more knowledgeable about memes would also be well-versed in the background information belonging to each meme and why companies may want to use specific memes to their advantage. The effort may then be considered inappropriate and out-of-touch, simply because companies, many of which are major corporations, are generally perceived to be more concerned with their bottom line than understanding the essence of memes and the Internet culture as a whole.

Using Chi-squared test ($\alpha = .05$), the PI found that attitudes toward meme marketing vary depending on the expressed purpose to which the practice was carried out (see Table 5).

If meme marketing serves the purpose of appearing relatable and/or to gain attention, there is no statistically significant relationship between the level of memetic knowledge and the attitude towards meme marketing. In this case, the hypothesis was rejected since there was no significance in the data ($\chi^2 = 20.3$, $\phi_c = 0.271$, $n = 92$(df = 12), $p > .05$).
If the purpose of meme marketing is to engage with consumers, there is a strong correlation between the level of knowledge about memes and the attitude towards meme marketing with the given purpose. In this case, the hypothesis was accepted due to the fact that there was significance in the data ($\chi^2 = 23.6, \varphi_c = 0.293, n = 92(df = 12), p < .05$).

If companies use meme marketing to develop brand image by giving their brand a memetic identity, there is a statistically significant relationship between the level of memetic knowledge and the attitude towards meme marketing. In this case, the hypothesis was accepted since there was significance in the data ($\chi^2 = 22.9, \varphi_c = 0.288, n = 92(df = 12), p < .05$).

**Table 5**

*Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.0611</td>
<td>0.0229</td>
<td>0.0286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér's V)</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>0.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdict towards H$_0$</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > 0.05.

**p < 0.05.
Hypothesis #2: People who share memes are more positive towards meme marketing.

The PI assumed that people who share memes often did so because they like or hold in high regards whichever meme they came across, and as such they would also be favorable towards meme marketing efforts. However, using ranked analysis of variance (ANOVA) ($\alpha = .05$), the PI was unable to find any correlation between the tendency to share memes and the attitude towards meme marketing, regardless of the latter’s purposes (see Table 6).

For attitude towards companies attempting to appear relatable and/or to gain attention, there was no statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($f = 0.228$, $p > .05$).

For attitude towards companies attempting to engage with consumers, there was no statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($f = 0.237$, $p > .05$).

For attitude towards companies attempting to appear relatable and/or to gain attention, there was no statistically significant relationship between the two variables ($f = 0.195$, $p > .05$).

Table 6

*Ranked ANOVA Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.0924</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>0.319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cohen’s f)</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>0.237</td>
<td>0.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdict towards H₀</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *p > 0.05.
Based on these results, the overall hypothesis was rejected due to a lack of significance in the data in all given circumstances.

**Hypothesis #3: Young people, defined as those aged 18-35, are more negative towards meme marketing than older people, defined as those who are 36 and above.**

Since younger people are demonstrably more experienced with the Internet and social media as many indeed grew up with technology, it was assumed that younger people would be more familiar with and interested in online phenomena. Given that the Internet culture played a pivotal role in the rise of Internet memes, it would also be appropriate that younger generations are more likely to have a better understanding of memes, and in line with the first hypothesis, more disapproving towards meme marketing.

Using Chi-squared test ($\alpha = .05$), the PI determined that whether or not age plays a role in one’s attitude towards meme marketing depends on the purpose of such an endeavor (see Table 7).

If the purpose of meme marketing is to appear relatable and/or gain attention, there is a strong statistically significant relationship between age and the attitude towards meme marketing. In this case, the hypothesis was accepted due to the significance in the data ($\chi^2 = 28.7$, $\phi_c = 0.323$, $n = 92$($df = 12$), $p < .05$).

If the purpose of meme marketing is to engage with consumers, there is a statistically significant relationship between age and the attitude towards meme marketing. However, Stats IQ noted that there were not enough data points in certain cells in the table and as such, the result may not actually be statistically significant. Nevertheless, the hypothesis was accepted purely due to the statistical significance in the data ($\chi^2 = 22.0$, $\phi_c = 0.282$, $n = 92$($df = 12$), $p < .05$).
Interestingly, if the purpose of meme marketing is to develop brand image, there is no statistically significant relationship between age and the attitude towards meme marketing. The hypothesis was rejected due to the lack of statistical significance in the data ($\chi^2 = 10.3, \phi_c = 0.193, n = 92 (df = 12), p > .05$).

Table 7
Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.00430</td>
<td>0.0378</td>
<td>0.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.323</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>0.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chi-Squared Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Verdict towards H_0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appear relatable /</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain attention</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with consumers</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop brand image</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were not enough data points in certain cells and as such the result may not be statistically significant.
*p > 0.05.
**p < 0.05.

Hypothesis #4: Frequent social media users are more positive towards meme marketing.

The PI hypothesized that active social media users tend to be more engaging towards online content, and as such, more approving towards the use of meme marketing. While this may seem contradictory towards previous hypotheses which noted the negative influence of memetic
knowledge on the attitude towards meme marketing, it is important to note that social media usage does not necessarily correlate with the level of understanding of memes.

Using Chi-squared test ($\alpha = 0.05$) for each social media platform, the PI determined the following relationship between the frequency of social media usage for each platform and the attitude towards meme marketing (see Table 8.1 through Table 8.8).

**Table 8.1**

*Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding Facebook*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.0830</td>
<td>0.0686</td>
<td>0.0146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.310</td>
<td>0.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>41.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdict towards $H_0$</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aThere were not enough data points in certain cells and as such the result may not be statistically significant.

*p > 0.05.*

**p < 0.05.*
Table 8.2
Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding Instagram

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.432</td>
<td>0.664</td>
<td>0.915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>0.181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdict towards $H_0$</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > 0.05.
Table 8.3  
Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding Twitter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Squared Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.374</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size</td>
<td>0.264</td>
<td>0.138</td>
<td>0.192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cramér’s V)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chi-Squared Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chi Square</th>
<th>Degrees of Freedom</th>
<th>Verdict towards H₀</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p > 0.05.
### Table 8.4
*Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding Reddit*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.288</td>
<td>0.0785</td>
<td>0.0205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.250</td>
<td>0.283</td>
<td>0.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verdict towards H₀</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rejected</strong>*</td>
<td><strong>Rejected</strong>*</td>
<td>Accepted**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*There were not enough data points in certain cells and as such the result may not be statistically significant.

*p > 0.05.

**p < 0.05.
Table 8.5
*Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding TikTok*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.0981</td>
<td>0.373</td>
<td>0.318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.278</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
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<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verdict towards H₀</strong></td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > 0.05.*
Table 8.6
Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding Snapchat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>0.239</td>
<td>0.386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>0.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
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<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verdict towards H₀</strong></td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
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</table>

*p > 0.05.
Table 8.7
Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding YouTube

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.190</td>
<td>0.557</td>
<td>0.0915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.224</td>
<td>0.280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
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<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>20</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdict towards H₀</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > 0.05.
Table 8.8

Chi-Squared Test Results for each purpose of meme marketing of Hypothesis #4 regarding LinkedIn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Appear relatable / Gain attention</th>
<th>Engage with consumers</th>
<th>Develop brand image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Test</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P-Value</td>
<td>0.663</td>
<td>0.381</td>
<td>0.212</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effect Size (Cramér’s V)</td>
<td>0.236</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td>0.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chi-Squared Results</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chi Square</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>29.2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degrees of Freedom</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verdict towards H₀</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
<td>Rejected*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p > 0.05.

Based on these findings, it is clear that while the hypothesis could be accepted under certain conditions, it was soundly rejected in most scenarios. Furthermore, even in the scenarios where the hypothesis was accepted, it was by mere statistical calculations; the lack of data points as noted by Stats IQ also weakened the acceptance of the hypothesis severely. Therefore, it is safe to assume that based on the gathered data, there is no statistical significance in the relationship between one’s social media usage and attitude towards MM.

Additional Findings

Aside from the examination of the relationship between one’s attitude towards marketing and various factors relating to one’s meme knowledge, consumption patterns, and demographic,
the PI was also interested in the respondents’ relationship with memes in a more generalized context.

Firstly, the PI asked respondents about all the means by which they are exposed to memes. While a majority of responses indicated that most people come across memes online, either through simply browsing the web or being active on social media. Interestingly, roughly 60 people are exposed to memes through other people, whether through text messages or just the act of physically showing memes on smartphones. Specific inputs from respondents indicate that traditional media, such as physical advertisements, books, TVs, and podcasts, as well as meme applications can be viable ways for people to be exposed to memes. Personal interest, such as one’s own research, was given as a gateway towards meme exposure as well (see Appendix B, Table B3.1 & B3.2).

In addition, according to the results, a vast majority of respondents, 59.87 per cent, are passive regarding memes in that these respondents only consume memes that appear in front of them or shown by other people. This does not mean that people do not specifically look for memes, however, as up to 33 respondents, or 35.87 per cent of total, at least make an effort to look for memes, one of whom even indicated that they would create memes themselves (see Appendix B, Table B4.2).

In keeping with the trend of respondents being casual consumers of memes, most people rarely, if ever, look into the background of memes, and only do so if they need to. According to the survey results, only a small percentage of respondents, 9.78 per cent, actively seek out information about memes, favorite or not. Indeed, one respondent made it clear that they do not do research about memes unless “something political, historical, or unclear event that [they] want to understand better” is involved (see Appendix B, Table B5.2 & B5.3).
As memes become more popular on social media than ever, as discussed above, the social aspect of memes should also be examined. In the confines of this survey, it is expressed through the act of sharing memes. Interestingly, while the majority of respondents (70.65%) share memes, nearly one third do not (see Appendix B, Table B7.2). The types of memes shared are intuitive enough: the majority indicated that they typically share memes they like, memes that align with their interests, and memes that they think others may like. Interestingly, one respondent explained that they would share memes that would fit a specific situation, “almost like using an emoji” (see Appendix B, Table B8.2).

In terms of the frequency at which people share memes, of those who do share, only a minority would share memes more than half the time, which is consistent with the respondents’ noted passive behaviors (see Appendix B, Table B9.2). And as to the means by which respondents share memes, according to the quantitative and qualitative results, the most popular method of meme sharing remains texting, in all of its digital manifestations, followed closely by physically showing other memes, either through smartphones or similar devices. Twitter retweets remain the most popular platform-specific method of sharing, followed by Instagram stories, Facebook shares, and Snapchat stories (see Appendix B, Table B10.1, B10.2 & B10.3).

In addition to exploring the relationship between online users and memes, the PI has also asked respondents to record their reactions and attitudes towards MM. When asked about what respondents would do as they came across instances of MM, a majority indicated the interactions would typically be limited to liking and sharing the memes. It should be noted that while the PI failed to include “ignore” or similar phrases as a selectable option in this question, personal responses made it clear that a sizable portion of the sampled population would simply ignore the memes, contributing to the observation that most meme consumers are passive. Nearly 18 per
cent of respondents reported not having encountered anything resembling MM, which can be attributed to the assumption that everyone’s experiences online are different; inactive social media users may not encounter as many memes as do active social media users, for example (see Appendix B, Table B11.1 & B11.2).

On a more granular level, regarding all the purposes of the subject matter explicitly stated in the survey, attitudes towards the use of memes by businesses online are generally favorable: most respondents expressed their approval towards the use of MM while at least acknowledging that others may not share such favorable views (see Appendix B, Table B12.1 & B12.2).

Finally, to fully understand the relationship between online users and memes, and to an extent, MM, the PI determined that it was important to know which types of memes are popular among the respondents. Using an open-ended question format, respondents were given the choice of listing their favorite types of memes. People’s favorite trendy memes included Doge, Stonks, Cheems, and Are You Winning Son?, to name a few. Aside from liking memes that are popular, memes about popular culture entities, including TV shows and movies, were repeatedly mentioned, with specifics such as memes from The Office, The Simpsons, Spider-man, Star Wars, and Aliens. Ongoing events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, were also considered as favorable subject memes. In addition to the pandemic, recent notable events were also noted: given the time period during which the survey was distributed and active, that is from March 29th, 2021, to April 7th, 2021, many respondents also listed the blockage of the Suez Canal, the incident in which the container ship Ever Given accidentally blocked the canal from the March 23rd to March 29th, as the subject from which their favorite memes were created. Popular events further back in time were also cited as a favorite among respondents; memes involving Senator
Bernie Sanders wearing mittens or former President Donald Trump were a common response (see Appendix B, Table B6).

Although popularity can indicate mass appeal, one’s favorite memes do not necessarily have to be mainstream. One respondent’s favorite memes include those that “fit [their] life the best at the moment” whereas another listed memes intended for more niche audiences such as “dog memes, cat memes, workday memes … funny family memes” (see Appendix B, Table B6).

Nonetheless, based on these responses, clear patterns emerged: current memetic trends, popular culture phenomena, as well as other notable events can heavily influence people’s tastes in memes; and as noted in the qualitative research into how MM looks online, many of these entities have themselves become memes.
Viability of Memes as a Marketing Tool

Based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis conducted so far in this thesis, it is clear that MM, when it is done right, is a visible and often highly engaging form of viral marketing strategy. Given the benefits that memes have brought to those who have utilized them, as shown above, a discussion, then, regarding the viability of memes as a sustainable marketing tool and whether or not memes can become a valuable resource for companies, is warranted. It is also worth noting that the following is based on the informed opinions of the PI and should not be construed as factual information.

A Resource-Based View (RBV)

A company’s success greatly depends on the resources at its disposal. Considering that memes are one of the tools with which the company can carry out its marketing efforts, it is reasonable to view memes, or rather the knowledge and application thereof, as a strategic resource. And as a resource, the RBV analysis using the VRIN (Value, Rarity, Imitability, Non-substitutability) framework put forth by Barney (1991) should be able to provide a holistic view of MM as a marketing tool.

Value

Based on selected examples demonstrating the different ways businesses have been engaging in meme marketing, it is clear that meme marketing can be valuable when done right. As memes are a driver of cultural transmission relatable to the masses and that technological advances have accelerated this type of transmission, the ideal outcome of meme marketing, in a commercial context, is the massive surge in attention a product or service can receive, all at a relatively minimal cost.
Indeed, from the aforementioned examination of corporate use of memes, it is apparent that the target market, mainly social media and web users, does enjoy the use of popular memes by companies even if this study determined that online usage does not affect the attitude towards meme marketing: these promotional memes often attract thousands and in many cases, hundreds of thousands of likes, shares, and comments, which can boost engagement and enable the memes, and the associated products or services themselves to become viral throughout the Internet. And while the financial information pertaining to meme marketing from the companies of interest is currently inaccessible, it can reasonably be assumed that the added awareness will translate into additional revenue and potential profits for these companies. Furthermore, brands that have taken on a memetic identity, such as Wendy’s, Elon Musk, and his companies, have been able to leverage their viral identities through many means to great effects and subsequently achieved attention and exposure beyond their home realm of social media.

With memes becoming a universal Internet-based phenomenon and many of which center around popular media that transcend borders, memes have been shown to add a significant international appeal. From the example of the Mexican restaurant Takesabroso, the use of memes belonging to a popular piece of media, the movie *Avengers: Endgame* in this case, can break down language barriers, amplify a brand’s online presence, and help bring in an international audience who may otherwise not be aware of its existence. Takesabroso, whose use of meme marketing is a selling point and has long preceded their finest hours, can now comfortably add non-Spanish-speaking customers to its existing target audience. And once again, with added exposure comes additional potential customers, revenue, and profits.
**Rarity**

While the value of meme marketing is highly visible and has been extensively documented, the rarity of memes as a marketing resource largely depends on how these memes are used. As noted by Philips (2015) and Zanette et al. (2019), the democratization of memes, through the introduction of meme repositories such as KYM, and online meme generators with popular templates ready to be used, practically anyone can make memes that can become incredibly popular. In addition, while meme marketing remains a relatively rare sight compared to other marketing media, it is only so by virtue of being a new phenomenon as avid meme users, who are often young, have only begun to enter the workforce. This begs the question of whether or not there is utility in using memes to promote one’s products and services in the long run, since the means by which memes are made are readily accessible to virtually anyone on Earth.

To further explore how rare meme marketing as a resource can be, a distinction must be made between the process of making memes and the content thereof. Given that the means of meme production have effectively been seized by the masses and that meme marketing, like any other marketing media such as print, radio, or television, etc., can be utilized by any interested party, the attention, then, should be shifted towards the memetic content of promotional materials.

The memetic content can be broken down further into the subject matter and the meme format. While there are important distinctions between these two categories, they are not mutually exclusive. In fact, they are complementary towards one another.

**The Format**

Certain meme formats shine in certain contexts and knowing which memes to use when is important. In this regard, such knowledge becomes a vital marketing resource that requires
experiences in meme consumption, either through browsing or making memes. In the marketing management context, this knowledge is acquired collectively through the online experiences of employees in charge of managing a company’s online presence. These capable employees, then, become a strategic resource to be acquired and utilized. Unfortunately, as the Internet has become an integral part of modern life, where virtually everyone is expected to have some exposure to the online environment, and thanks to memetic encyclopaedias such as KYM, the memetic knowledge needed has also become much easier to acquire and get acquainted with and thus, not a rare resource.

The Subject

While knowing how to apply memes to different scenarios may have been more and more universal, knowing which scenarios to use as a meme marketing apparatus is more complicated. It has been well-established in this thesis that essentially anything popular can become a meme itself or produce memetic content; examples in this thesis include the Mars landing in early 2021, the movie *Avengers: Endgame*, and Wendy’s interactions with its online audience. As such, being cognizant of what is happening can be advantageous when attempting to meme-ify one’s products. This involves keeping up with social media trends, popular culture announcements, celebrity gossip, and more. While one can certainly make the argument that this sort of knowledge is not so different from memetic knowledge, since both require exposure to the online environment, there are risks associated with predicting which event will become popular enough to warrant a memetic response and thus, an element of luck is expected. In this regard, the ability to know which popular thing can be exploited for memetic reasons can be an extremely rare resource, even if it is by mere luck.
Imitability

Given that meme marketing is relatively accessible and only rare in the sense that the trend has not yet caught on due to older generations having not grown up with social media who still account for the majority of the workforce, it is not necessarily unique and thus can easily be imitated. The visibility and accessibility of memetic content allow companies to observe, imitate and/or adapt each other’s memetic strategy for their own use. Nonetheless, the element of luck involved in predicting meme-able subjects, cannot, by its own nature, be imitated or reproduced, and thus remains an entirely situational advantage.

Non-substitutability

While meme marketing has value, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, it is by no means the only way to advertise a company’s products and services. In fact, companies may choose not to engage in meme marketing at all and still reap the benefits that meme marketing offers in terms of exposure and the perception of relatability. In fact, as demonstrated through Wendy’s Twitter account, non-memelike approaches can often produce memetic results, given sufficient amount of initial exposure and/or uniqueness. Companies can then choose not to engage in meme marketing explicitly, but to rather engage in marketing endeavors that have a great probability of becoming viral memes themselves.

When Meme Marketing is Not Ideal

Having conducted the VRIN analysis with regard to meme marketing as a resource, it can be concluded that meme marketing, by and large, is a gimmick that still needs to be supplemented with traditional marketing channels. Although meme marketing can really shine when it works, as Takesabroso has shown, success is not often guaranteed. Indeed, the instances of marketing shown in this study so far have only demonstrated how businesses had successfully
been using memes for their benefits. The reason for this apparent bias is simple and intuitive: successful use of memes warrants a greater degree of exposure, and thus allows this memetic content to be discovered more easily; on the contrary, many memetic attempts do not usually get much exposure and thus are relegated to obscurity or in many cases, they do get attention but for unintended and unfavorable reasons.

*When Meme Marketing Fails: The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*

Throughout this study, only examples of relatively successful attempts of MM were included, which beg the question of what failed attempts would look like. Based on the VRIN framework, it has been determined that successful meme marketing attempts require intimate background knowledge about memes and which specific situations these memes can be applied to. Conversely, when memes are not understood, either entirely or partially, as well as applied inappropriately, consequences are to be expected.

This lesson was learned the hard way by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ (HHS), which on February 20th, 2014, posted an image of a Shiba Inu playing in the snow with broken English phrases splattered all over to encourage people to sign up for federal health care plans (see Figure 31).
Presumably, to the surprise of whoever came up with the meme, and in contrast to the successful meme marketing examples in the initial qualitative section, this attempt at meme marketing by the HHS was met with universal ridicule. As of 2020, this Facebook post garnered 2,964 reactions, 2,862 of which were likes, around 7,800 shares, and roughly 1,600 comments (see Table 9).
Table 9  
Breakdown of the numbers of views, reactions, shares, and comments under HHS’ Facebook post

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reactions</strong></td>
<td>2,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>2,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haha</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wow</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shares</td>
<td>7,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Approx. 1,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although it may seem contradictory that the meme was panned given the disproportionate number of likes compared to other reactions, it is important to note that reactions other than “like” were first officially added to Facebook in early 2016, two years since meme had been posted, and therefore they would not accurately represent Facebook users’ view towards the memes. By the number of likes alone, the meme was certainly popular, though for the wrong reasons, based on the comments which will be examined shortly. Perhaps more significant is the observation that the number of shares, as of this writing, tripled that of reactions, which is indicative of the fact that Facebook users shared the meme precisely because
it was bad and they wanted to make fun of it: the shared posts, with the most recent in February 2021 as of this writing, contained comments reminiscing the time the HHS posted a bad Facebook meme.

Aside from the extrapolations about the number of likes and shares, the comments, which provide a more accurate picture of the people’s collective sentiment, were largely and understandably unforgiving, some of which even mocked the meme using the same broken English verbiage, albeit without any accompanying imagery:

“So, is the poster being sarcastic, or are they that delusional?”

“Y u do dis / Very lie / Such unconstitutional / Much coercion / Doge unapproved”

“Please government, just stop”

“wow / many market awareness / such advertise / so desperation / wow” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014).

Clearly, the meme marketing effort was a failure, though the original poster presumably tried to make a Doge meme in order to appear relatable to the audience as the format was popular in 2014 and even today, which is evident through the use of a picture of a Shiba Inu, which is the breed of the dog in the Doge meme. However, the picture that the HHS’ used was not the “official,” or most popular, template, which features a completely different dog and background (see Figure 32). Thus, even though there are many memetic variations within the Doge-verse designed for different scenarios, none of them were applied correctly by the HHS and such a misuse of the format caused the audience to perceive the HHS meme as forced and thus unfunny (“Doge,” 2013).
Figure 32

*The Shiba Inu known as “Doge”*


In addition, the disapproval also came from the subject of the meme itself, which in the HHS’ case, government-funded health care. As the meme was made in 2014 during the Obama administration, the HHS tried to advertise Obamacare, an attempt at a universal health care model that was and is still controversial to this day. Many people who are already dissatisfied with the health care, expressed their disapproval towards the meme. One commenter even deconstructed every visible part of the meme, an effort that earned them 22 likes:

“Many coverage? Tell that to the millions and millions of folks who had their plans cancelled. Much affordable? Tell that to the (again) millions and millions of folks who, like me, have seen deductibles skyrocket and premiums only stay low thanks to subsidies. You know a meme is living on borrowed time when the government starts using it to desperately try and shore up an unpopular program. Look, I know you need to appeal to young people so they'll sign up and give the ACA some semblance of fiscal
sustainability, but bad memes are not the way to do it!” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014)

As mentioned above, successful meme marketing attempts require intimate background knowledge about memes in addition to the scenarios to which these memes can be applied, both of which the HHS lacked: the agency’s attempt at marketing the government-funded health care plan failed spectacularly because they used the wrong meme format to promote a demonstrably unpopular policy.

“Silence, brand:” A Memetic Response to Meme Marketing

According to Lamphere (2018), relatable memes have been a persistently popular trend over the years. Coupled with younger populations who have become well-versed in technology and popular culture, there is an incentive for companies to appear relatable, whether or not meme marketing is used. However, as demonstrated through the HHS’ attempt at making a Doge meme, not every attempt at becoming relatable is welcome; on the contrary, appearing relatable can be and have been seen as disingenuous and insincere.

And when companies appear disingenuous, disapproval is warranted and memes can be used to express such sentiments: as noted above, there were memetic responses to the HHS’ badly made meme, mainly expressed through broken English phrases mimicking and mocking the original post. Indeed, there are more than one way of being clever with responses. One of the more popular memes used as a reaction towards responding to brands trying to be “cool” and relatable is the “Silence, brand” meme (see Figure 33).
Note. The meme features a crab shooting laser from its eyes towards a smaller crab, with an explosion sprite. Retrieved April 16, 2021 from https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/shut-the-fuck-up-liberal

It is worth noting that the meme had a background somewhat detached from the commercial sense: according to KYM, the meme “Silence, brand” originally evolved from “Shut the fuck up, Liberal,” a catchphrase “used by both conservatives and far-left internet users most often realized in image macros where a character with glowing eyes is firing a laser beam.” The earliest iteration of the meme, featuring “an edited image of Daiei Film’s turtle monster Gamera,” appeared on the 4-chan far-right political discussion board /pol/ in 2016 (“Shut the Fuck Up, Liberal”, 2018; see Figure 34).
Since then, many more variations appeared with different characters accompanied by different phrases referring to different political targets. However, the most popular variation is the “crab edit,” featuring a “glowing-eyes crab” who would later be depicted to be “firing a laser with the text ‘Silence, Liberal’”. This variation, discovered in August 2017, would become more popular in the coming months as politically left-wing communities criticized liberal policies (“Shut the Fuck Up, Liberal,” 2018; see figure 35).
This variation also spawned a moderately popular iteration of its own: the “Silence, brand” meme as it is discussed in this thesis, where the word “liberal” is replaced with “brand” superimposed on top of a black rectangular background, as seen above. And as noted by KYM, it is explicitly used “in response to brands on social media attempting to appear relatable via memes,” and understandably, in less than approving terms (“Shut the Fuck Up, Liberal,” 2018).

The “Silence, brand” meme thus emphasizes the need for brands on social media to make the effort to understand the meme culture in which they operate and how these brands can leverage memes to their advantage, lest they want to receive backlash or negative exposure.
Conclusions and Recommendations

Meme marketing, despite having been visible for a long time, is still a relatively new phenomenon with a newfound prominence. To accurately gauge how effective meme marketing is on a larger scale can therefore be difficult. Indeed, even when a quantitative study is carried out and based on the analysis of survey data collected as part of the study, it seems that people’s attitudes towards meme marketing are somewhat random and independent from their social media and meme usage patterns; the only reliable predictors are one’s age and own perceived knowledge of memes, both of which are simultaneously too broad and too narrow of a categorization for any effective real-world application.

In addition, the definition of a meme itself has become too broad, as there is no governing body and that anything popular can certainly become one, given enough exposure and widespread acceptance. As such, it can be difficult for companies to assess whether or not anything has the potential to become memes and be open to memetic exploitation.

Once again, the VRIN analysis of memes as a marketing resource has established that while MM is largely a gimmick and should not be the sole marketing strategy of any business. As a form of viral marketing, MM falls prey to the upsides and downsides of the medium: it is inexpensive, yet its messaging becomes uncontrollable once it is public. Regardless, backed by the power of word of mouth, MM can still become a powerful tool. And to successfully employ MM, two things are required: intimate knowledge of memes and the Internet culture, as well as the ability to identify and take advantage of the buzz surrounding popular phenomena. Businesses can thus employ MM to great effects for whatever reasons by employing people who are proficient in social media engagement and knowledgeable about the Internet and popular cultures, memes included.
Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As this research was conducted by an undergraduate student on a very tight schedule to explore a somewhat novel topic, limitations are to be expected. Nonetheless, future scholars may take these considerations into account as they conduct their research into topics such as this.

As previously mentioned, the topic of this research, MM, despite having a long-documented history, has not yet achieved prominence until very recently, and as such, exhaustive research on this specific topic has been sparse and largely inaccessible for students without considerable academic privileges. And even when MM is acknowledged, it is often nothing more than a footnote of larger research about viral marketing, social media marketing, or the like. As such, in exploring this topic and analyzing the instances of MM, the PI has taken some liberties with their personal interpretation of memes and relied heavily on the crowd-sourced meme encyclopedia KYM for additional information, which, like memes themselves, is updated constantly and regularly. Therefore, although the PI has strived to meet the academic standards whenever possible in this research, the volatility of information regarding memes and to an extent, MM, stresses the importance of having more academically rigorous and standardized research into the topic.

In addition, regarding the instances of MM, the selection process was not entirely random. The instances were found only on Twitter and Facebook, two social media platforms that the PI is intimately familiar with. The PI also did not have any appropriate frame of reference regarding how this subject should be researched; the PI thus sought out the most visible examples in an effort to demonstrate how MM could or could not be a viable marketing tool. Indeed, for every successful meme post, there may be many more posts that will never grace the limelight. Nevertheless, more popular and successful MM posts are more visible, since
more people like them and share them more widely. And coupled with algorithms used by social media platforms to further boost the visibility of popular posts, it is understandable why these posts are included. Of course, this research was conducted under a very tight schedule within the confines of the Spring 2021 semester at UNI, and as such, efforts towards seeking out more popular posts could not be made by the PI. Therefore, as part of standardizing the research into memetic subjects as mentioned above, future scholars should devote more time and resources to properly analyze a wider range of memes as well as MM efforts.

Another peculiarity of this research is the involvement of another language, Spanish, as part of the PI’s efforts to demonstrate how popular culture and memes can transcend across language barriers, using the Mexican restaurant Takesabroso as an example. While the PI relied heavily on their own Spanish language skills, translation tools such as Google Translate, and asking fluent Spanish speakers to interpret Spanish phrases, the fact that the PI is not a fluent Spanish speaker may pose a bias. Therefore, any study that involves more than one language should include in its process native speakers, or at the very least, fluent speakers to preserve the authenticity of the languages being investigated.

Aside from the qualitative portion of this research, the quantitative study, although having a more standardized structure, was not without issues. Considering the subject of which the study focuses on, which is MM, the survey that was conducted focused almost exclusively on people’s knowledge of and opinions towards memes in general as well as their social media usage. While the PI reasoned that understanding people’s meme consumption habits influence their attitudes towards the use of memes by businesses, some can certainly make the case for a more balanced inquiry. In addition, minor flaws with the survey, such as the lack of “ignore” as a valid option regarding people’s reaction upon coming across an instance of MM, have hampered
the flow of the study and added unnecessary complications to the analysis of the survey data. Future researchers are thus advised to devote more time towards refining their surveys, especially when a novel topic such as MM is involved.

As this study is conducted by an undergraduate student with limited time and resources, the distribution of the survey was carried out with convenience in mind. Despite the anonymized survey and the somewhat appropriate number of respondents needed to conduct research, due to the distribution methods, the target audience of the survey, consisting of English-speaking social media users, was biased towards Marketing students from the College of Business Administration at UNI and to a lesser extent, students from the UNI Honors Program with varying majors. While others were also given the survey, UNI faculty members, social media users on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat, these respondents were expected to be in the minority. Despite the proliferation of technology and that anyone is theoretically able to have equal access to popular cultural phenomena, the concentration of respondents in such a small geographical area, UNI, can influence these respondents’ attitudes, and as such be seen as a limiting factor. Of course, the remedy to this issue would be to gather as many participants as possible from a diverse range of demographics, which can be accomplished given enough time and resources, qualities that are not always available for an undergraduate student.

Finally, along with the data collection process, the data analysis stage of this study was not without fault, even though the number of valid responses collected was deemed satisfactory by the PI. The data analysis stage of quantitative research was conducted entirely using the StatsIQ tool offered by Qualtrics, which can greatly speed up the analytical process while posing a risk of being over-reliant on technological convenience and not traditional and more rigorous methods. As for the additional findings, which are solely based on the PI’s own generalized
interpretation of the collected data, the same shortcomings befalling the qualitative research portion of the thesis should be expected, more specifically the PI's own perspective and experience which can potentially influence the interpretation of such data.

Despite all these limitations, the study is hoped to be looked upon as a worthwhile attempt to explore the uncharted territory that is meme marketing. The data and other information provided by this study, regardless of their interpretations by the PI, should also be able to inform readers of this thesis of what to expect when it comes to meme marketing.

Ultimately, meme marketing, when done right, clearly has value to those who have tried to apply the concept to their marketing repertoire. Taking advantage of a brand-new avenue on which consumers can be reached, businesses’ successful attempts at MM, as shown and analyzed throughout this study, have raked in millions of views and generated user engagement that far exceeds traditional marketing efforts. And according to the survey results collected in this study, however limited they may have been, most people appear to be at least favorable towards the practice. From these observations, one can make the assumption that the massive exposure afforded by memes can at least partially translate into extra revenue and thus profits through the potential influx of new consumers who are exposed to MM, although without concrete financial reports, this assumption remains a speculation. Nonetheless, one thing is certain: meme marketing works when it is done right.
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Almost 4.57 billion people were percent of the global population.

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https://www.facebook.com/HHS/photos/a.577318915631772.1073741828.573990992631231/711923322171330/?type=1


*Wendy’s is feeling itself right now.* (2017, January 3). [Twitter moment]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/i/events/816420995519037440


Appendix A: Blank Survey

Project Title: Social Media Users' Attitudes towards Meme Marketing

Principal Investigator(s): Triet Ngo
Faculty Advisor(s): Christine Schrage

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Northern Iowa and the following information is provided to help you make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. Participation in this study is completely voluntary: you can withdraw your consent at any time by exiting the survey window and you can submit your response with no penalties. Your decision to allow use of your data is also voluntary. This survey is being conducted for research regarding the online habits of social media users and their attitudes towards the use of Internet memes for marketing purposes (meme marketing) on social media platforms. The results of this survey will be collected and analyzed to identify the relationship among background knowledge in memes, social media usage, and the associated attitude (positive or negative) towards meme marketing.

Risks to participation are minimal and are similar to those experienced in day-to-day life. You are expected to have access to an electronic device with a stable Internet connection in order to participate in this survey.

No direct benefits to participants are to be expected, but this research may generate important information about online meme consumption and meme marketing that may be of use for future studies and/or publications.

Your responses will be anonymous, and no direct identifier will be collected. Your confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. However, no guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data transmitted electronically. The summarized findings with no identifying information may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference. If you have questions regarding your participation in this study or about the study generally, please contact the project investigator and advisor using the following contact information:

Principal Investigator:
Triet Ngo
ngot@uni.edu
(319) 888-2138

Faculty Advisor:
Christine Schrage
christine.schrage@uni.edu
(319) 273-2126 or (319) 346-1365

For answers to questions about the rights of research participants and the research review process at UNI, you may contact the office of the IRB Administrator at (319) 273-6148.
Q1: By selecting "I agree" below, you acknowledge that you are of the legal age where you reside and that you are fully aware of the nature and extent of your participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it.

If you do not wish to continue, you can end the survey by selecting "I do not agree."
Thank you for your participation.

☐ I agree.  (1)

☐ I do not agree (end the survey).  (2)

Skip To: End of Survey if Q1 = 2

Definition of a meme:

The term meme was first coined by biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976 as “a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation.” As such, memes can include “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes, fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches” that can be propagated from person to person (Dawkins, 2016, p. 249). From this premise, Zanette et al. (2019) also asserted that memes “evolved to become complex artefacts that are rich in cultural meanings and popular references” (p. 158).

While Dawkins certainly did not intend for memes to be a strictly online phenomenon, memes in the modern day most exclusively refer to digital videos, images, and other user-generated content that can be and are shared online. Most memes are composed of “an image juxtaposed with a written caption (both image and text can be modified during transmission), which carries an ironic, politically incorrect, and sometimes grotesque message” (Zanette et al., 2019, p. 159).

References:

Q2: Based on the given description and your own judgment, how knowledgeable are you about Internet memes?

- Extremely knowledgeable (1)
- Very knowledgeable (2)
- Moderately knowledgeable (3)
- Slightly knowledgeable (4)
- Not knowledgeable (I do not know what memes are) (5)

*Skip To: Q13 if Q2 = 5*

Q3: Please indicate how you are typically exposed to memes (select all that apply)

- Online (Social Media) (1)
- Online (Web) (2)
- Indirectly (i.e. someone else shows you memes) (3)
- Other (please specify) (4) ________________________________

Q4: How often do you interact with memes?

- I actively look for memes constantly while also creating my own memes (1)
- I actively seek out memes on a regular basis (2)
- I look at memes regularly and I sometimes seek out memes for my own consumption (3)
- I consume memes as they are shown to me online or by someone else (4)
- I avoid memes when I can, though I am still knowledgeable about them (5)
- Other (please specify) (6) ____________________________________________
Q5: How often do you research or read about memes?

- I actively seek out information about memes, even those that are not my favorite (1)
- I actively seek out information about memes I like (2)
- I seek out information about memes when I have to (3)
- I rarely research memes (4)
- I do not generally research memes (5)
- Other (please specify) (6) ________________________________________________

Q6: Please provide a few types of Internet meme you know and/or particularly enjoy. You can include a link to or your own description of said memes (i.e. "Grumpy Cat," "no one, absolutely no one" or "Spongebob speaking in a mocking manner" are acceptable descriptions)

______________________________________________________________

Q7: Do you share memes?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Skip To: Q11 if Q7 = 2

Q8: What types of meme do you typically share? (Select all that apply)

- Memes that are trendy and popular (1)
- Memes that I personally like (2)
- Memes that align with my interests (3)
- Memes that are interesting to people I know (4)
- Other (please specify) (5) ____________________________
Display This Question:
If Q7 = 1

**Q9: How often do you share memes?**

- Always (1)
- More than half the time but not always (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Less than half the time (4)
- Never (5)

Display This Question:
If Q7 = 1

**Q10: How do you typically share memes? (Select all that apply)**

- Twitter Retweets (1)
- Twitter Fleets (2)
- Facebook Shares (3)
- Facebook Stories (4)
- Snapchat Stories (5)
- Instagram Stories (6)
- Texts, including social media platforms and applications with a messaging function (please indicate all applicable platforms) (7)
- Physically showing memes to other people (8)
Display This Question:
If Q7 = 1

Q11: What do you typically do when you encounter an instance of meme marketing?
(Select all that apply)

- Like/Favorite (1)
- Dislike (2)
- Share (3)
- Comment (4)
- Engage directly with the business entity (5)
- I have not encountered any instance of meme marketing (6)
- Other (please specify) (7) ________________________________________________

Q12: How do you feel about businesses using memes to...?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I do not approve and businesses should stop doing it (1)</th>
<th>I do not approve, but I understand others may enjoy it (2)</th>
<th>Indifferent/Neutral (3)</th>
<th>I approve, but I understand that others may not enjoy it (4)</th>
<th>I approve and businesses should keep doing it (5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q13: Which of the following social media platforms do you use and how often do you use them?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Media Platform</th>
<th>Never (1)</th>
<th>Less than once a month (2)</th>
<th>Once a month (3)</th>
<th>More than once a month (4)</th>
<th>More than once a week (5)</th>
<th>More than once a week (6)</th>
<th>Daily (7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook (1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram (2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter (3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit (4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Options</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>(6) o o o o o o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>(7) o o o o o o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>(8) o o o o o o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>(9) o o o o o o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q14: Please indicate your gender.**

- [ ] Male (1)
- [ ] Female (2)
- [ ] Other (3)
- [ ] Prefer not to say (4)

**Q15: Please indicate your age range.**

- [ ] 18-24 (1)
- [ ] 25-35 (2)
- [ ] 36-55 (3)
Appendix B: Master Code Sheet

Q1: By selecting "I agree" below, you acknowledge that you are of the legal age where you reside and that you are fully aware of the nature and extent of your participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it.

If you do not wish to continue, you can end the survey by selecting "I do not agree."

Thank you for your participation.
Figure B1
*Responses to the survey’s informed consent information.*

(Note. 92 out of 93 respondents agreed to participate in the study. Generated by Qualtrics.)

### Table B1.1
*Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note. Coded values are as follow:
1.00 = “I agree”
2.00 = “I do not agree (end the survey)”

### Table B1.2
*Breakdown of all responses to Question 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I agree</td>
<td>98.92%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I do not agree (end the survey)</td>
<td>1.08%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q2: Based on the given description and your own judgment, how knowledgeable are you about Internet memes?

Figure B2

Responses to Question 2

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.

Table B2.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Coded values are as follow:
1.00 = “Extremely knowledgeable”
2.00 = “Very knowledgeable”  
3.00 = “Moderately knowledgeable”  
4.00 = “Slightly knowledgeable”  
5.00 = “Not knowledgeable (I do not know what memes are)”

Table B2.2  
*Breakdown of all responses to Question 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Extremely knowledgeable</td>
<td>20.65%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Very knowledgeable</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Moderately knowledgeable</td>
<td>43.48%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Slightly knowledgeable</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Not knowledgeable (I do not know what memes are)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100% 92

Q3: Please indicate how you are typically exposed to memes (select all that apply)  
Figure B3  
*Responses to Question 3*
Table B3.1
Breakdown of all responses to Question 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Online (Social Media)</td>
<td>43.68%</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Online (Web)</td>
<td>22.63%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indirectly (i.e. someone else shows you memes)</td>
<td>30.53%</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>3.16%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total | 100% | 190 |

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.

Table B3.2
Other Means by Which Users are Exposed to Memes (6 Responses)
Advertising, books (publications), TV, podcasts
texted to me

Text messages

Finishing up research about COVID-19 memes

Texts

I have an app on my phone specifically for memes

Q4: How often do you interact with memes?

**Figure B4**

*Responses to Question 4*

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.

**Table B4.1**

*Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 4*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Coded values are as follow:

1.00 = “I actively look for memes constantly while also creating my own memes”

2.00 = “I actively seek out memes on a regular basis”

3.00 = “I look at memes regularly and I sometimes seek out memes for my own consumption”

4.00 = “I consume memes as they are shown to me online or by someone else”

5.00 = “I avoid memes when I can, though I am still knowledgeable about them”

6.00 = “Other (please specify)”

### Table B4.2

**Breakdown of all responses to Question 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I actively look for memes constantly while also creating my own memes</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I actively seek out memes on a regular basis</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I look at memes regularly and I sometimes seek out memes for my own consumption</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I consume memes as they are shown to me online or by someone else</td>
<td>59.78%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I avoid memes when I can, though I am still knowledgeable about them</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I do not look for memes

I collected close to 400 memes for the research. Outside of that - not much

**Q5: How often do you research or read about memes?**

**Figure B5**

*Responses to Question 5*

![Bar chart showing responses to Question 5](image)

*Note.* Generated by Qualtrics.

**Table B5.1**

*Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 5*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Coded values are as follow:

1.00 = “I actively seek out information about memes, even those that are not my favorite”
2.00 = “I actively seek out information about memes I like”
3.00 = “I seek out information about memes when I have to”
4.00 = “I rarely research memes”
5.00 = “I do not generally research memes”
Table B5.2
**Breakdown of all responses to Question 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I actively seek out information about memes, even those that are not my favorite</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I actively seek out information about memes I like</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I seek out information about memes when I have to</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I rarely research memes</td>
<td>31.52%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I do not usually research memes</td>
<td>35.87%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B5.3
**Other Frequencies at Which Users Research Memes (1 Response)**

I don't normally do research unless it involves something political, historical, or unclear event that I just want to understand better.

Q6: Please provide a few types of Internet meme you know and/or particularly enjoy. You can include a link to or your own description of said memes (i.e. "Grumpy Cat," "no one,
absolutely no one" or "Spongebob speaking in a mocking manner" are acceptable descriptions)

**Table B6**

*Respondents’ Favorite Memes (responses indicating no preferences and/or no valid answers are omitted) (48 Responses)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What ever fits my life the best at the moment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girl catching her guy looking back at girl in red</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hi Bestie tik tok lady, yelling lady + screaming cat, Oprah meme, I am going to Sue Sylvester meme, Am I pragnat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peanut butter baby “ah”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocean memes, grumpy cat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spider-Man pointing at himself, that stuff white animal with the hands, stock image of the old man being uncomfy, couple walking and the guy turns and looks at another girl, no one: me:. STONKS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>can’t say I enjoy any of them as a class. Now and then one comes along that is funny, but I don’t see any particular type regularly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge Memes, Memes centered around tv shows (ex: star wars), or the Aliens one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suez canal, conservatives accidentally being liberal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken nugget kid, the kid who’s smirking as a fire is behind her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grumpy cat, the ship that got stuck, Gavin meme kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ricardo Milos, Doge, Cheems, Door Stuck, Dab me up, Are ya winning son, Ace Attorney debates, Return to monke, Uh oh stinky, Loss, Shaggy's power, Shrek, and countless more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pikachu looking surprised, the Gossip Girl meme where the letters are rearranged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The trenders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad luck Brian, Success Kid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical art memes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss, mostly about current events, such as politics or world events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
facebook text memes, mom said it's my turn ______ (e.g. on the xbox), buff doge vs. normal doge memes

Grumpy Cat, Bernie and Mittens

Big chungus, the more you know, the boat blocking the Suez Canal, man with salt, old man that smiling though the pain

The tiktok "What's Wrong with Me" music, most vine references (I don't have enough money for chicken nuggets is a favorite), memes about tv shows (WandaVision was the most recent one), the defrosting meme, memes related to college

"I watch movies the way they are intended" --- "This is an Avengers level threat" -- "Sassy cat at a dinner party" -- "This is fine dog"

meme from The Office t.v. show

Grumpy cat, how it started, handsome squidward

no one, absolutely no one; when...

bernie sanders meme, "is this a pigeon?", stonks, "no one, absolutely no one", many many more

Use memes to send to friends in messages. Usually movie related. Sometimes the simpsons or family guy.

COVID-19 memes

the one with the butterfly and the caption is "is this a _____?" and it does not say butterfly. the one with the house burning and the dog is like "this is fine everything is fine"

"we" with hand over face, images of characters edited to have acrylic nails and hoop earrings, "Everyday I ___" marriage story meme

Suez canal memes, Michelle from Full House memes

Movie quotes on mems and Gifs.

photos with funny captions....nothing particular.....always looking for humor memes

grumpy cat is about it...

Since you mentioned it, "Grumpy Cat," although he has not appeared lately
happiness, sunshine, dance, friends

Dog memes, cat memes, workday memes, I'm tired memes, stupid Trump memes, funny family memes,

Hey Girl

Big Grey Cat

Bernie Sanders mittens, lots of eye rolling memes, a gray-haired man in a jacket with different captions (a few I can think of, not necessarily enjoy)

Anything humor related or inspirational

“Phew I thought something bad happened.” “And I took that personally”

"This is Fine", "Unimpressed Chloe", "Baby with the Fist"

Mine usually involve Queen Elizabeth's "immortality" or anything with the royal family right now.

Sully waiting in line

Dog sitting in flames “this is fine,” monkey puppet, Jim from the office with the white board

Suez Canal, The Last Dance, The Wire, Oprah interview, Vine compilations

Kermit sipping tea, not a single sole, "I...", Shocked Pikachu, pepe, over attached girlfriend, that fire and little girl

Q7: Do you share memes?
Figure B6
Responses to Question 7

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.

Table B7.1
Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.
1.00 = “Yes”
2.00 = “No”
Skip To: Q11 if Q7 = 2

Table B7.2
Breakdown of all responses to Question 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>70.65%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>29.35%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q8: What types of meme do you typically share? (Select all that apply)
Figure B7
Responses to Question 8

![Bar chart showing responses to Question 8]

Table B8.1
Breakdown of all responses to Question 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Memes that are trendy and popular</td>
<td>14.18%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Memes that I personally like</td>
<td>35.46%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Memes that align with my interests</td>
<td>23.40%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Memes that are interesting to people I know</td>
<td>24.11%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>2.84%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note.
1.00 = “Memes that are trendy and popular”
2.00 = “Memes that I personally like”
3.00 = “Memes that align with my interests”
4.00 = “Memes that are interesting to people I know”
5.00 = “Other (please specify)”
This question is displayed if Q7 = 1.


Table B8.2
Other Memes Respondents May Share (4 Responses)

memes that illustrate a specific conversation point in a humorous way

If I share a meme, it’s usually because I’m looking for a meme for a specific situation… almost like using an emoji

funny memes

Memes that I believe will make my friends laugh, getting them to laugh puts a smile on my face

Q9: How often do you share memes?

Figure B8
Responses to Question 9

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.

Table B9.1
Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Coded values are as follow:
1.00 = “Always”
2.00 = “More than half the time but not always”
3.00 = “About half the time”
4.00 = “Less than half the time”
5.00 = “Never”
This question is displayed if Q7 = 1
Skip To: Q11 if Q7 = 2

Table B9.2
Breakdown of all responses to Question 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6.15%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>More than half the time but not always</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>About half the time</td>
<td>24.62%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Less than half the time</td>
<td>44.62%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1.54%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q10: How do you typically share memes? (Select all that apply)

Figure B9
Responses to Question 10

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.
Table B10.1

Breakdown of all responses to Question 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Twitter Retweets</td>
<td>16.22%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Twitter Fleets</td>
<td>0.68%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Facebook Shares</td>
<td>6.76%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Facebook Stories</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Snapchat Stories</td>
<td>4.73%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Instagram Stories</td>
<td>9.46%</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Texts, including social media platforms and applications with a messaging function (please indicate all applicable platforms)</td>
<td>29.73%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Physically showing memes to other people</td>
<td>26.35%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>6.08%</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.*
1.00 = “Twitter Retweets”  
2.00 = “Twitter Fleets”  
3.00 = “Facebook Shares”  
4.00 = “Facebook Stories”  
5.00 = “Snapchat Stories”  
6.00 = “Instagram Stories”  
7.00 = “Texts, including social media platforms and applications with a messaging function (please indicate all applicable platforms)”  
8.00 = “Physically showing memes to other people”  
9.00 = “Other (please specify)”  
This question is displayed if Q7 = 1.
### Table B10.2

*Social Media Platforms and Applications with a messaging function (24 Responses)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Communication Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>iMessage</td>
<td>iMessage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insta DMs, Twitter DMs, TikTok</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram messaging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>Instagram, tiktok, sometimes snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discord, snapchat groups (not stories ever), facebook messenger, instagram messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>tweeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iMessage</td>
<td>iMessage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram DM, Twitter DM, Facebook Messenger, SMS Text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat, Messages App</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text, pinterest</td>
<td>Messenger, Twitter DM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tik tok, instagram, snapchat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>Twitter, snapchat, Instagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google chat, iMessage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinterest facebook, instagram</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts to my family with appropriate link</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>texts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texts or instant messaging</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table B10.3
Other Means By Which Respondents Share Memes (9 Responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Send them in Social media direct messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t share those I see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I send them by texting or through private message on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook Messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Messages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q11: What do you typically do when you encounter an instance of meme marketing? (Select all that apply)

Figure B10
Responses to Question 11

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.
Table B11.1
Breakdown of all responses to Question 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Like/Favorite</td>
<td>38.68%</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dislike</td>
<td>4.72%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Share</td>
<td>12.26%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>3.77%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Engage directly with the business entity</td>
<td>0.94%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I have not encountered any instance of meme marketing</td>
<td>17.92%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>21.70%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 100% 106

Note:
1.00 = “Like/Favorite”
2.00 = “Dislike”
3.00 = “Share”
4.00 = “Comment”
5.00 = “Engage directly with the business entity”
6.00 = “I have not encountered any instance of meme marketing”
7.00 = “Other (please specify)”

Table B11.2
Other Actions Performed when Respondents Encounter an Instance of Meme Marketing (23 Responses)

Nothing

I don’t do anything

Scroll past

Depends on the quality of the meme. GrubHub did terribly, while Old Spice got it down good
I don’t usually interact with them
occasionally i’ll like the post if I like it enough

Do nothing

Passively look at the meme and do nothing

I don’t intend to interact. I don’t use twitter a lot, so I don’t see a lot of examples

I will look at it, but I typically will not interact with the post

View but do not engage

Sometimes I don’t do anything at all, just keep scrolling

I do nothing but keep scrolling

Ignore neutral

avoid it

Depends on the meme

I just leave it alone

DOn’t engage at all

Memes do not affect my thinking or actions

Mainly just cringe because they’re mostly bad

I am unsure of what is meant by “meme marketing” but intuition suggests that it is advertising through memes, if that’s the case i simply ignore them

I don’t necessarily “like” it but I enjoy seeing businesses use them and I think more favorably of that business

Not interact
Q12: How do you feel about businesses using memes to...?

Figure B11

Responses to Question 12

Note. Generated by Qualtrics.
Table B12.1
Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 12, sorted by each purpose of meme marketing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Appear relatable / Gain attention</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Engage with consumers</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Develop brand image</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Other (please specify)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Coded values are as follow:
1.00 = “I do not approve and businesses should stop doing it”
2.00 = “I do not approve, but I understand others may enjoy it”
3.00 = “Indifferent/Neutral”
4.00 = “I approve, but I understand that others may not enjoy it”
5.00 = “I approve and businesses should keep doing it”
Table B12.2
Breakdown of all responses to Question 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>I do not approve and businesses should stop doing it</th>
<th>I do not approve, but I understand others may enjoy it</th>
<th>Indifferent / Neutral</th>
<th>I approve, but I understand that others may not enjoy it</th>
<th>I approve, and businesses should keep doing it</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appear relatable / Gain attention</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
<td>7.61%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage with consumers</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>18.48%</td>
<td>48.91%</td>
<td>25.00%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop brand image</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>11.96%</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>21.74%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>7.14%</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>35.71%</td>
<td>14.29%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q13: Which of the following social media platforms do you use and how often do you use them?

Figure B12
Responses to Question 13

[Bar chart showing responses for different social media platforms]
Note. Generated by Qualtrics.

Table B13.1
Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 13, sorted by social media platform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Facebook</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.27</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Instagram</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Twitter</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Reddit</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Tiktok</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Snapchat</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 YouTube</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 LinkedIn</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Other (please specify)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. Coded values are as follow:
1.00 = “Never”
2.00 = “Less than once a month”
3.00 = “Once a month”
4.00 = “More than once a month”
5.00 = “Once a week”
6.00 = “More than once a week”
7.00 = “Daily”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Never %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Less than once a month %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Once a month %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>More than once a month %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Once a week %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>More than once a week %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Daily %</th>
<th>#</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>9.89%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10.99%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.59%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.88%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>45.05%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16.30%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47.83%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>29.35%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14.13%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.26%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.61%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>32.61%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reddit</td>
<td>69.57%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TikTok</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.61%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.35%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>29.35%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52.17%</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.52%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>30.43%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>26.09%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>19.57%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10.87%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8.70%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14.13%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.96%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>22.83%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11.96%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>53.58%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15.38%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7.69%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23.08%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table B13.2
Breakdown of all responses to Question 13
Q14: Please indicate your gender.

Figure B13
Responses to Question 14

Table B14.1
Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Coded values are as follow:
1.00 = “Male”
2.00 = “Female”
3.00 = “Other”
4.00 = “Prefer not to say”

Table B14.2
Breakdown of all responses to Question 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23.91%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>72.83%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>2.17%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 100% 92
Q15: Please indicate your age range.

Figure B14

*Responses to Question 15*

![Age Range Bar Chart]

*Note.* Generated by Qualtrics.

Table B15.1

*Statistical summary of the collected responses regarding Question 15*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Coded values are as follow
1.00 = “18-24”
2.00 = “25-35”
3.00 = “36-55”
4.00 = “56 and older”

Table B15.2

*Breakdown of all responses to Question 15*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Value</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>64.13%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>25-35</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>36-55</td>
<td>14.13%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>56 and older</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: Facebook Reaction Icons as of 2021

Figure C1

Facebook Reaction Icons as of 2021

*Note.* From left to right: like, love, care, haha, wow, sad, angry. Retrieved from Facebook.