

THE USE OF VIRAL HUMOROUS MEMES TO RAISE AWARENESS OF A SERVICE THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Donia Hisham, University of Greenwich
Ahmed AlSayed, University of Greenwich
Youssef Saad, University of Greenwich

ABSTRACT

Purpose –we see that Memes has a great effect in social media campaign and be a main part of success of this campaign, it's an a creative way to grab new customers and make customers more loyal and committed to see that memes, Netflix make that campaign and it encourage customers to subscribe it. We can use memes to gain more engagement on social media platforms. It also can help in subscription intention and building brand as it goes viral and spreads quickly. The aim of doing this research is to gather accurate information about the effect of social on consumer interaction towards using memes in advertising in social media platforms.

Design/methodology/approach –Through an online survey among Netflix users and structural equation modeling, the model connecting the measurement constructs is analyzed

Findings – This study shows that Netflix uses humorous content and memes to connect with their customers on social media, as it could be seen from the examples provided, Netflix integrate the use of popular internet memes featuring their shows' characters to make funny and attention grabbing content that encourages people to engage with their posts through likes, comments, and even tagging their friends whom they watch the show with. Surfing through Netflix's Instagram has a different feel, you feel entertained and you want to keep scrolling to see more of their content because it's fun to look at, it feels less formal and more humorous, keeping up with the latest trends on the internet and staying fresh.

Originality/value –The theoretical contributions reveal users' behavioral patterns in the peer-to-peer. This study can make other companies change their thinking about campaigns on social media.

Keywords: Social media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

People's way of life was altered by the internet since it has become such a crucial part of their everyday life, Web 2.0's era has provided people with lots of ways of communication like blogs, forums or chats. Individuals can communicate their ideas beliefs and thoughts through their internet (Alghizzawi 2019; Bury, 2016). Business has been transformed by the emergence of the Internet, and not only that, it has also developed the relationship between business and consumers, there is no doubt the internet Alshenqeeti (2014); Athapaththu (2017) plays an essential role in maintaining and developing brand reputation all over the globe in today's

market, this means that the way companies are communicating their brands to consumers is different from the past, hence the importance of memes (Lekhanya, 2014).

In addition, in social media platforms, there are elements for interactions as Like, Comment and Share. These icons for interactions of users are make the users more satisfied by expressing their reaction or judging it, these platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Any advertiser searching for content that make more engagement in these online platforms, Innovation Memes by the results is the content that make more engagement (Varis & Blommaert, 2015). This research will discuss the effect of using memes in viral marketing to boost customer engagement, subscription intention, and brand image. According to Mohr (2017), Digital tools have allowed buzz marketing to be integrated a method of viral marketing that capitalizes on the potential of word of mouth of a brand campaign through technology, may it be conversations or discussion on a social media platforms, nonetheless, there has to be more than just getting people to have conversations regarding the brand for buzz marketing to be implemented successfully.

Internet memes is a gain method for agencies but if they use it properly, a lot of advertising agencies nowadays go through digital, but they must study the behavior and the control of their user's reaction, because there is a lack of control from the advertisers and the agencies in marketing communication (Csordás, et al., 2017).

Theory Building

Customer engagement: Customer engagement is the relationship that a brand build with customers. It is the interactions that qualify the engagement for being unique than any other businesses, which brand loyalty and brand awareness help to maintain a positive engagement. (Kuvykaitė & Tarutė, 2015). When it comes to social media marketing, hence the emergence of customer engagement as a key concept to figure out the social media marketing effectiveness. Likes, comments and shares are usually how customer engagement is measured (Ge & Gretzel, 2017). As Järvinen (2013) stated, what makes humor so effective is its authenticity, when an individual uses humor it shows a sense of humanity and friendliness, same goes for corporation when they use humor, if it used appropriately it can be a very effective method to build a powerful connection with the customers since it would increase the corporation's credibility. Internet memes are widely spreading and shared worldwide. Internet memes can generate on innovative by changing the tools like: animation or music. The quality of memetics make advertising companies seeking for internet memes as they make their spreading quick and trendy (Benaim, 2018). This leads to following hypothesis:

H₁: *Integrating the usage of viral marketing through memes can increase customers' engagement with the page.*

Subscription Intention

Subscription is to follow a certain page on the website or blog to receive any information about this website or blog which must share customers' interests to gain from them the long-term relationship success (Zhang et al., 2017). Purchasing a product from a website or subscribing to its services is the last step of online transaction, hence the importance of the role that online purchase plays in online consumer behavior, for the customer to get to this stage they'd have to

have to trust the provider before they intend to purchase or subscribe (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2017). Humor can help build a real connection with customers because it reflects friendliness, when the company is more informal it reflects an easy-going, authentic attitude which makes the customers perceive the company as trustworthy (Athapaththu & Kulathunga, 2017). Humor can be extremely effective because of how authentic it is, as Järvinen (2013), which leads to the second hypothesis:

H₂: Viral marketing through memes does effect subscription intention.

Brand Image

Brand awareness refers to the level of satisfying and the acceptance of the consumer towards the brand. It's stated as it is the tracker to memorize the brand as it is the power of customer's memories, and this reduces the effort and the time of consumers searching for such this brand or something like it (Benaim, 2018). The brand value chain takes account of different levels of effect caused by marketing mix efforts as consumer mindset is divided in two dimensions brand awareness and brand image. An ideal tool to make this brand value. It can rapidly spread towards users to make a brand value. The brands message of meme is the process of making on engagement with the help of social media platforms, for example mailing the meme template that used for a campaign for the Dos Equis beer brand. Memes are the best ideal option to grabbing potential customers and make a brand value for any product or service (Csoradas, et al., 2017). Therefore, it is suggested that:

H₃: Viral marketing through memes can have a positive impact in brand image.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection and Sampling

Data were gathered in March 2020 by means of an online survey in English facilitated by SPSS. The online questionnaire was published via social media channels and in Netflix groups on Facebook that it have a lot of users there Farook (2017); Ge (2017); Jamal (2018); Lekhanya (2014); Malhotra (2013); Murray (2014); Poorvika, (2014); (Liat et al., 2014). The survey was designed in a way that anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were ensured. There were no participation incentives given to the respondents. The online survey mode is the best option to reach the potential target group Shifma (2013); Stemler (2001); Subramanian (2018); Taecharungroj (2015); Varis, (2015); Wijaya (2013); Shifman (2013). Because of the online data collection approach, convenience sampling is the only option and commonly used in studies analyzing peer-to-peer settings. Within the social media spaces, an inclusion criterion was implemented so that only those respondents who had used Netflix in the past were presented with Netflix-related questions. The following question being the first one was used to separate users from non-users: "Are you a user of Netflix?" (scale: yes vs no). A total of 362 respondents classified themselves as Netflix users in response to this questionnaire.

Questionnaire Development

In this study, the researcher will use quantitative research to measure the use of the viral humorous memes to raise awareness of a service through social media platforms. This research is depended on an online questionnaire. Respondents were asked to evaluate their Netflix experiences in general on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree and 5=strongly agree). Researchers used SPSS because it is useful program, covers statistical analysis test, organized data for analysis and evaluate the relationship between two or more variables.

RESULTS

Sample Description

To test the relationship on viral humorous memes through social media platforms and a questionnaire was used to collect data. The details of the conducted survey provides a detailed overview of the sample of 362 respondents, 227 males and 135 females (Table 1).

The all participants of the current study were born in Egypt; the average age was 25 years.

	Gender	Male: 227	Female: 135
	Origin	Egypt: 362	
	Age (years)	Mean: 25	
Descriptive statistics	Highest level of education	Uneducated: 4	Bachelor's degree: 145

Regarding the highest level of education completed, the majority was undergraduate (196). The average income was 4128 LE

Validity and Reliability

There's a high level of reliability and consistency between the 5 statements of viral marketing through memes impact on Netflix's Instagram page as their Cronbach's Alpha=0.821, there's a high level of reliability and consistency between the 7 statements of viral marketing through memes impact on Netflix's Instagram page as their Cronbach's Alpha=0.876, the 5 statements of viral marketing through memes towards customer engagement have Cronbach's Alpha = 0.822 which indicate high level of reliability and consistency of all the statements and the 4 statements of viral marketing through memes towards brand image have Cronbach's Alpha = 0.630 which indicate high level of reliability and consistency of all the statements.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical contributions

The first insight we can get from the research, the majority of the sample agreed that viral marketing through memes impact on Netflix's Instagram page which implies that they have a positive perception towards Netflix using memes in their Instagram page. In addition, most of the

sample also agreed that it could affect their intentions to subscribe Netflix, this indicates that using memes for viral marketing can make potential customers more likely to subscribe as well as making current customers renew their subscription. The third insight we can deduct from the fact that the majority of the sample agreed that viral through memes towards customer engagement which means that they have a positive perception about idea of Netflix memes. This could mean that using memes to derive engagement on social media platforms in the forms of likes, comments, and shares can be successful strategy since people already seem to have a positive perception of it, as the research had shown, using humor makes the company feels more informal and friendly, that's perfect for Instagram because the platform itself is informal, not to mention that people also use Netflix to look at funny memes and they follow pages specifically for that reason, so it would make sense that people would want to engage with the posts that has humor or memes in it in a platform like Instagram. Additionally, most of the sample agreed that viral marketing through memes can have an impact on brand image, we can derive the fourth insight from this result, the fact that they believe so can mean that the brand image could be enhanced through the usage of memes.

Managerial implications

Since most of the respondents reported that their income was on the lower levels (Less than 4000 LE), Netflix should promote their services by allowing users in Egypt to have a 'Mega account'. This account would allow more users to share the same account and therefore would reduce the cost of the service for each individual. An alternative would be that Netflix offers a discount on the service which would require less work, but we suggest the prior option because it capitalizes on Egypt's collectivist culture that values sharing with family and friends. In addition, we believe that this sort of method would have other benefits as potential users would tell their families and friends about it so they could all share the account which encourages word of mouth. This may act as a motive for other individuals whom were less likely to subscribe to the service but now have more reasons to do so, which is wanting to share with their friends and families and the fear of missing out and being out of loop. Most of the respondents agreed that Netflix Memes can make the brand easier to remember, and that it could be used to deliver the message more easily, furthermore, they agreed that they would frequently surf Netflix's Instagram page looking at their meme posts. That is why Netflix should integrate the usage of Memes to market their service online. This can be done with two approaches that could be used simultaneously. The first approach is for Netflix Instagram page to use popular internet Memes and relate it to one of their shows through the caption. The second approach is for Netflix to make a popular meme template out of the scenes of its shows by publishing it unofficially on platforms that is popular for sharing memes like Reddit, if the meme would go viral then people would be curious what show it is from, and consequently. Once they find out the show's name they would be interested in watching it, this would be a cheap yet efficient way of advertising the shows as people would be creating more memes out of the template and sharing the meme for its humor and as they do so they would in fact be helping the show grow in popularity.

Most of the respondents strongly agreed that they would subscribe to Netflix because they allow every account to have multiple users, this can be used to enforce the idea of the 'Mega

account' that we suggested in our first point since by creating an account that have more users would most likely increase subscription intention for potential users.

Since most of the respondents strongly agreed that they would subscribe to Netflix in order to watch their original content, Netflix should invest in creating more original content which in turn could increase the users' intention to subscribe.

Most of the respondents strongly agreed that they would subscribe to Netflix due to its reasonable subscription fees, which implies that the population perceives the fees to subscribe to Netflix's service to be an important factor in their intention to subscribe to the service, which further enforces the idea of the 'Mega account' that we established earlier, since the 'Mega account' would reduce the subscription fees for the individual, it would also increase their intention to subscribe.

CONCLUSION

In our research we applied on Netflix, we see that Memes has a great effect in social media campaign and be a main part of success of this campaign, it's an a creative way to grab new customers and make customers more loyal and committed to see that memes, Netflix make that campaign and it encourage customers to subscribe it and it succeeded in that and by our findings in content analysis and interview with its users we see that Netflix gain more engagement in their social media platforms. They try making customer in a good mood by memes to keep subscribing and paying money for receiving the benefits that customers gain from them.

REFERENCES

- Alghizzawi, M. (2019). A survey of the role of social media platforms in viral marketing: The influence of eWOM. *International Journal of Information Technology and Language Studies*, 3(2), 56.
- Alshenqeeti, H. (2014). Interviewing as a data collection method: A critical review. *English Linguistics Research*, 3(1)
- Athapaththu, J.C., & Kulathunga, K.M.S.D. (2017). Factors Affecting Online Purchase Intention: A Study of Sri Lankan Online Customers. *International Journal of Scientific & Technology Research*, 7(9), 120-128.
- Benaïm, M. (2018). From symbolic values to symbolic innovation: Internet-memes and innovation. *Research Policy*, 47(5), 901-910.
- Bury (2016), Creative Use of Internet Memes in Advertising, P. 33.
- Csordás, T., Horváth, D., Mitev, A., & Markos-Kujbus, É. (2017). 4.3 User-Generated Internet Memes as Advertising Vehicles: Visual Narratives as Special Consumer Information Sources and Consumer Tribe Integrators.
- Farook, F.S., & Abeysekara, N. (2016), Influence of social media marketing on customer engagement. *International Journal of Business Management Invention*, 5(12), 115-125.
- Ge, J., & Gretzel, U. (2017). The role of humour in driving customer engagement. In *Information and Communication Technologies in Tourism 2017* (461-474). Springer, Cham, P. 2.
- Jamali, M., & Khan, R. (2018). The impact of consumer interaction on social media on brand awareness and purchase intention! Case study of Samsung. *Journal of Marketing*, 114.
- Järvinen, M. (2013). Humor as a marketing communications tool: A case of a Finnish e-retailer., P (12).
- Lekhanya, L.M. (2014). The impact of viral marketing on corporate brand reputation. P.2
- Liat, C.B., Wuan, Y.S., & Nilai, P. (2014). Factors Influencing Consumers' Online Purchase Intention: A Study among University Students in Malaysia, 1-13.
- Malhotra, N.K., Baalbaki, I. B. & Bechwati, N.N. (2013). *Marketing research: An applied orientation*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education.
- Murray, N., Manrai, A., & Manrai, L. (2014). Memes, memetics and marketing. *The Routledge Companion to the Future of Marketing*. New York, NY: Routledge, 336.

- Poorvika, & Kavitha. (2014). A Study on Impact of Viral Marketing on Consumers. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/7557802/A_Study_On_Impact_Of_Viral_Marketing_On_Consumers, P.150
- Shifman, L. (2013). Memes in a digital world: Reconciling with a conceptual troublemaker. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 18(3), 365.
- Stemler, S. (2001). An overview of content analysis. *Practical assessment, research & evaluation*, 7(17)
- Subramanian, K.R. (2018). *Social Media and the Word of Mouth Publicity. Science*, 3(2), 96
- Taecharungroj, V., & Nueangjamnong, P. (2015). Humour 2.0: styles and types of humour and virality of memes on Facebook. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 10(3), 288-302.
- Varis, P., & Blommaert, J. (2015). Conviviality and collectives on social media: Virality, memes, and new social structures. *Multilingual Margins: A journal of multilingualism from the periphery*, 2(1), 31-31.
- Wijaya, B.S. (2013). Dimensions of brand image: a conceptual review from the perspective of brand communication. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 5(31), 1-11.