

THE IMPACTS OF MEME MARKETING ON PURCHASE INTENTION ON FOOD DELIVERY APPLICATIONS OF GENERATION Z IN HO CHI MINH CITY

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Abstract: *Through the survey of 302 youngers between 16 and 30 ages in Ho Chi Minh City from March to June, 2023, the article shows that there are major points that are worth noticing to food delivery applications (FDAs): (1) Female customers tend to connect more emotionally with advertising or brands than men; (2) Ads containing quick and simple content make it easier for audiences to absorb information; (3) People who are active on social media tend to prefer meme ads and engage with brands more; (4) Informativeness surprisingly dominates the impact besides entertainment factors as expected.*

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Introduction

More and more marketers are shifting towards using Internet memes as a marketing strategy to stimulate users to share and repost their content. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the use of memes needs to be done carefully and with a clear understanding of your target audience. Because, while memes can generate positive sharing and interaction, they can also provoke negative reactions if not utilized correctly. By conducting research and gaining a better understanding of food delivery applications (FDAs) target demographic, businesses can maximize the potential of meme marketing to enhance purchase intent and build closer relationships with their customers.

Review of literature and research methodology

Review of literature

Although the concept of meme has been around for a long time in the field of biology, the concept of meme when applied to marketing has been studied quite little, especially in theory. Typical theoretical studies on the topic of applying memes to business marketing models can include: "The business of memes: memetic possibilities for marketing and management", conducted by Russell Williams in 2000 to operationalize the meme concept for a business audience. The study also discovered that "learnability"

and "infectiousness," two other characteristics, are related to meme power. Williams also said that strong memes have a higher chance of surviving, and as a result, marketers and advertisers who are aware of the strength of memes are more inclined to use memes to their advantage. However, the author admits that this study cannot be the most complete to evaluate because this research was conducted at the incipient meme stage and the technology was still limited as well as the customers' personality (Generation X) at that time was not suitable for the innovative and updated elements of Internet as well as digital marketing in general.

Pech (2003) asserted that not all memes are effective, citing "meme fitness" and "cognitive hardwiring" as two essential components. According to Pech, innovation involves more than just creating a new product; it also entails finding creative ways to communicate with target audiences and manage their views.

Regarding the characteristics of meme marketing, there has been a number of studies showing that one of the most important factors is humor. Taecharungroj and Nueangjamnong (2015) made the case that humor is the essential component of the internet meme phenomena. The study identified four humor styles using the source-message-channel-receiver framework: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive,

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and self-defeating. Seven categories of humor were also proposed by the study within each comedy style: comparison, personification, exaggeration, pun, sarcasm, silliness, and surprise. This study has clearly shown the factors that create the virality of meme advertising campaigns adequately in terms of entertainment and humor, but still not enough to create the virality of the ad because of the lack of emotional connection as well as factors inside the customer.

On the negative side of meme marketing, Casey (2018) and Sharma (2018) has also highlighted a number of drawbacks of memes' usage in marketing, despite certain arguments in favor of memes and their potential advantages for firms in their research. Starting off, Casey suggested that memes might produce harmful material and hence have a detrimental impact, argued that memes are uncontrollable and mostly user-generated, in contrast to traditional media, which enables marketing messages to be strictly managed. This study shows most of the disadvantages of using meme marketing but does not clearly show the relationship between negative customer reactions to marketing activities as well as brand image. Therefore, there is no conclusion for the relationship between the drawbacks of meme marketing and purchase intention.

Triet Minh Ngo's research is such an example as "Meme marketing: How viral marketing adapts to the internet culture" conducted by this author at the university of Northern Iowa in 2021 is one of the rare theoretical studies on this topic. The history of memes, how they relate to viral marketing, and whether or not meme marketing is a viable approach for most businesses are all covered in this thesis, which aims to explain meme marketing in the English-speaking world. It will also be investigated how consumers respond to marketing through memes and how they might help spread the trend. The research also demonstrates that as a sort of viral marketing, meme marketing is susceptible to the benefits and drawbacks of the medium: it is affordable, but once it is made public, its messaging becomes unmanageable. Meme marketing can nonetheless develop into a potent weapon when supported by the influence of word-of-mouth marketing. And to effectively use meme marketing, two skills are necessary: in-depth familiarity with memes and Internet culture, as well as the capacity to recognize and capitalize on the buzz surrounding popular occurrences. As the author mentioned above, this study has not yet clearly shown

how meme marketing affects purchase intention and there is not enough time to study more e-commerce related categories death, although this is a new study because it was conducted in 2021.

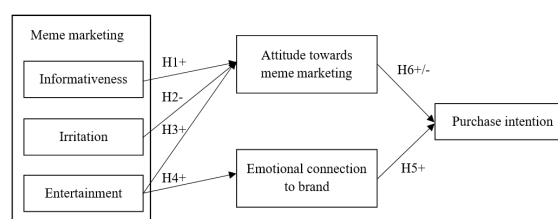
In conclusion, reviewing the extant foreign literature, the author observed that no prior study has identified and presented customers' point of view in both attitude towards meme marketing and emotional connection to brand and how meme marketing impacts on purchase intention by Richard J. Lutz and Scott B. MacKenzie (1989), which marked the importance of the factor in generating profit process via marketing.

Moreover, memes also provide a forum for social interaction and consumer advocacy and can aid marketers in understanding customer mindsets. However, the underlying multi-dimensional elements influencing meme virality have been disregarded in the existing literature. This research makes an effort to fill in these gaps in the literature. On the other hand, as the globe transitions to the Internet era, social media plays a crucial part in the growth of any company's product sales. These results showed that consumers are aware of meme-based viral marketing, which has a significant influence on consumers' purchasing decisions.

Proposed research model

Through the process of synthesis, analysis of theories, theoretical models, and experimental models, the authors propose a research model consisting the dependent variable being "Purchase intention"

Figure 1: Proposed research model and hypotheses



Source: Self-devised by authors, 2023

Hypothesis

H1. The perceived informativeness of meme marketing messages generate positive consumers' attitude towards meme marketing.

H2. The irritation caused by viral marketing messages has a negative impact on consumers' attitude towards meme marketing.

H3. Entertainment positively affects consumer's attitude towards meme marketing.

H4. Entertainment offered in meme marketing will positively influence emotional connection between the brands on social media and users.

H5. Emotional connection between the brands on social media and users in meme marketing will positively influence the user's purchase intentions.

H6. There is a relationship between consumers' attitudes towards meme marketing with consumer purchase intention.

Research methodology

Data collection took place over a span of four-month period about young people (Gen Z) between 16 and 30 ages, from March to June, 2023 utilizing online methods by Google Forms. In total, out of the 1.500 responses received, with an 20.13% response rate, 302 email copies are preserved.

Result and discussion

Cronbach's alpha coefficient test

Regarding Corrected Item - Total Correlation, the results of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient analysis show that all measuring items have a length greater than 0.30, and almost all of them have an index higher than 0.60. The most subordinate Corrected Item - Total Correlation index is 0.40.

Regarding Cronbach's Alpha coefficients, these indexes of 6 variables are all above 0.70, with the most elevated index being up to 0.910 (ATT).

Regarding Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted, it should be noted that for FC4, its Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted index is higher than FC's Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, 0.85 compared to 0.803. The author chooses not to delete FC4 because its Corrected Item-Total Correlation index (0.40) is higher than the 0.3 benchmark. There are 5 out of 6 variables that have Cronbach's Alpha coefficient within the range of 0.80 – 0.95, particularly, ATT, PI, EN, INF, EC in the descending order. These numbers indicate a very high level of internal consistency of the study model's variables.

Additionally, the lowest Cronbach's Alpha coefficient recorded is as high as 0.794 (TFF), indicating a very high level of reliability.

Additionally, it should be emphasized that no measurement item should be destroyed because the index for "Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted" is lower for each measurement item than the aggregate current Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients result of the official study

Variables	Abbreviations	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Purchase Intention	PI	0.867	5
Emotional connection to brand	EC	0.838	5
Informativeness	INF	0.839	4
Irritation	IRR	0.750	3
Entertainment	EN	0.869	4
Attitude towards meme marketing	ATT	0.910	6

Source: Summarized by the author from SPSS result (2023)

Explanatory Factor Analysis (EFA)

The acquired result also complies with all the requirements in terms of EFA for PI. Table 2 shows that the KMO coefficient is 0.870 (0.5 KMO 1.0), indicating that the factor analysis is sufficient, and that the Sig value of the Bartlett's test of sphericity is similarly 0.000, indicating that the observed variables have qualified correlation.

After Promax rotation, the cumulative percentage of Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings reaches 65.238, which means that one factor (PI) is responsible for 65.238% of the total variation explained. In addition, factor loading for the five observed variables for PI is all higher than 0.6, which is far higher than the acceptable threshold of 0.5.

Table 2. KMO, Bartlett's test and total variance explained

Indicator			Value (for variables without CI)	Implication (CI)
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			.901	.870
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square		3408.977	657.556
	df		231	10
	Sig.		.000	.000
Total Variance Explained	Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings	Cumulative %	68.041	65.238

Source: Summarized by the author from SPSS result (2023)

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

As specified in table 3, reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity of the model would be tested through estimates of Standardized Loading Estimates and the indexes of CR, AVE, MSV, SQRTAVE and Inter-Construct Correlations.

As for Standardized Loading Estimates, factor loading values extracted by 27 scale items exceed the acceptance level of 0.5. Among them, 24 items having factor loading of above 0.7, reaching the ideal value for reliability test. These figures indicate all measurement items in the model are statistically significant.

As for other indices of reliability, convergent validity, CR and AVE indexes of all variables

are respectively higher than 0.7 and 0.5, with the highest CR value being around 0.91 (ATT) and the highest AVE being 0.628 (ATT). Hence, the model is validated to have no concerns over reliability and convergent validity.

Furthermore, the square roots of the AVE (SQRTAVE) values of all constructs are greater than Inter-Construct Correlations. Plus, MSV value of a certain construct is also lower than its respective value of AVE. Hence, discriminant validity is established.

Table 3. Model fit and result of measurement model (CFA)

Criterion	Obtained value
CMIN/df ≤ 2 : Good; CMIN/df ≤ 5 : Acceptable	CMIN/df = 1.488
GFI ≥ 0.8 : Acceptable; GFI ≥ 0.9 : Good; GFI ≥ 0.95 : Very good	GFI = 0.904
CFI ≥ 0.9 : Good; CFI ≥ 0.95 : Very good	CFI = 0.962
TLI ≥ 0.9	TLI = 0.957
RMSEA ≤ 0.08 : Good; RMSEA ≤ 0.03 : Very good	RMSEA = 0.040
PCLOSE ≥ 0.01 : Acceptable; PCLOSE ≥ 0.05 : Good	PCLOSE = 0.985
GFI ≥ 0.8 : Acceptable; GFI ≥ 0.9 : Good; GFI ≥ 0.95 : Very good	GFI = 0.904

Source: Summarized by the author from SPSS result (2023)

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The sequence in which PI, ATT, and EC have an impact on the dependent variables can be inferred from a cursory glance at the table 4. Regarding PI, it is confirmed that among the two components, ATT (=0.342) has the greatest impact, followed by EC (=0.239). In addition, INF shows to have the highest impact on the development of ATT with a value of =0.488, followed by EN (=0.351) and IRR (=0.18). Regarding EC, EN (=0.266) is the only impact on this measure.

Table 4. Standardized Regression Weights

Hypothesized path	Estimate (β)
EC \leftarrow EN	0.266
ATT \leftarrow EN	0.351
ATT \leftarrow INF	0.488
ATT \leftarrow IRR	0.18
PI \leftarrow EC	0.239

Source: Data from IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0, 2020

Table 5 exhibits the squared coefficient of multiple correlation, or R^2 , that indicates how well a given variable can be predicted using a set of other variables. Specifically, for ATT, its $R^2=0.645$ suggested that 64.5% of the total variation in ATT can be explained by the model, particularly by 03 factors (INF, IRR, EN). Furthermore, with R^2 being equal to 0.199, the independent EN variable have statistically significant explanations for 7% of the variation of EC. Likewise, when it comes to PI, three variables of ATT and EC can predict around 19.9% of variation within PI, whose R^2 stands at 0.199.

Table 5. Squared Multiple Correlations

	Estimate
EC	0.07
ATT	0.645
PI	0.199

Source: Data from IBM SPSS AMOS 24.0, 2020

Conclusion and implications

Conclusion of the research

Regarding the model of factors purchase intention FDAs, there are major points that are worth noticing: (1) Female customers tend to connect more emotionally with advertising or brands than men; (2) Ads containing quick and simple content make it easier for audiences to absorb information; (3) People who are active on social media tend to prefer meme ads and engage with brands more; (4) Informativeness surprisingly dominates the impact besides entertainment factors as expected; Therefore, it is essential to empirically examine how specific factors influence user intention; so that FDAs companies can work on relevant, customer-centric innovations that approach audiences better and thus, promote FDAs.

The demographic analysis provides a clear illustration of the findings from the sample data that was evaluated. Two components in the research model are empirically demonstrated to influence the dependent variable, the buying intentions of Gen Z FDAs in HCMC. The findings of the thesis are generally consistent with earlier studies on the behavior of social media users and the intentions of FDA customers. The proposed research model's factors may account for 87.5% of the dependent variable, demonstrating its statistical significance. The author then goes on to draw pertinent findings and managerial recommendations that businesses can use to modify and improve the elements of the FDA's brand marketing strategy in order to increase purchase intention. With the following conclusions, the thesis's goal is then fully achieved:

In terms of study methodologies, a research model with a trustworthy measuring scale was suggested to identify the variables influencing purchase intention on FDAs of Gen Z in HCMC.

In terms of the importance of the research, the suggested research methodology and the findings will add to the existing literature on meme marketing and general factors influencing purchase intention on FDAs. The thesis can be used as a resource for future pertinent study based on this premise.

In terms of practical significance, the research's conclusion presents pertinent, implementable findings and management implications that managers may use as a guide when developing customer-focused marketing strategies that improve business outcomes. In conclusion, the thesis recommends that FDA companies and agencies should increase the informativeness, entertainment, and avoid irritability of meme marketing in order to create a favorable perception of meme marketing and a strong emotional connection on the app's user value on social media.

The study believes that businesses primarily use amusing material combined with trending current events to create Internet memes, which are effective in engaging customers. Actually, this marketing strategy is what draws customers rather than the products themselves.

Recommendations

Recommendations for marketers to stimulate Gen Z's attitude towards meme marketing

For informativeness: Anticipated that amusement would be the most important aspect of meme marketing. Since finding entertainment, amusing advertisements, and providing entertainment for the audience are some of the reasons users spend a lot of time on social media, it may help users develop a positive attitude toward advertising and brand advertisers.

For irritation: The use of negative emotions in advertising needs to be done with caution, as when the company causes consumers to experience negative emotions, the offered products should be able to address those emotions, which can lead consumers to purchase and use the brand advertisers' products. Therefore, irritation factor in meme marketing should be developed skillfully and carefully, avoiding too much influence on the marketing campaign and the brand.

For entertainment: Businesses should emphasize this factor which is a potential factor because this can boost consumer preference for the brand and the commercials itself. This factor is crucial for maximizing the advertising's efficacy in order to further impact the company's marketing efforts' revenue and return on investment (ROI). Especially, Internet memes spread quickly within online communities in part because of their funny "punchlines."

Recommendations for brands to build strong emotional connection by meme marketing

Through emotions, the relationship between the brand and the customer will become closer and more developed, so brands need to focus on connecting emotionally with customers. Emotional connection to brand mediates between meme marketing and purchase intention which provides us a result that when a brand uses the medium of meme advertisement to advertise their brand, the viewers get a good stimulus of it, which later generates a favorable impact on the brand equity. Emotional connection to brand mediates between meme marketing and buy intention. By being present on social media they can have a dedicated staff to interact and assist the customers, provide the most recent information or updates, and advertise their goods and services for very little money by being active on social media. Additionally, marketers can use social media to introduce their goods and solicit feedback from customers on those goods and services. The customer would feel valued as a result, strengthening their ties to the brand. Additionally, by doing this, the business is able to both keep its current clientele and draw in new customers.

Brand anthropomorphization through mascots, images and text plays a huge role in making meme marketing more important in the process of building an emotional connection between customers and the brand. The cuter and funnier the company's Brand Mascot, the more people will remember them. In addition, the company can completely experiment and reinvent the mascot from time to time to suit its marketing needs at each development milestone.

Memes are a quick and easy way for consumers to respond to company news, which can be hugely beneficial for many brands. By following the company's news, users can quickly get a feel for how it's going by looking at meme responses from consumers. Share any user-generated memes on channels in the most organic way

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