

Meme Your Brands on Social Media: The Impact of Memes on Perceived Humor and Consumer Engagement

Summary

As social media becomes a major tool for businesses, brands strive to maintain relationships with consumers using social media platforms. One recent phenomenon that has emerged recently is the widespread use of memes on social media. According to a recent survey (YPulse 2019), about 75% of 13 to 36-year-olds tend to share memes, with 79% of 13 to 17-year-olds tending to do the same. Social media is often replete with memes, as evidenced by the growing number of social media accounts dedicated solely to posting funny memes for their followers. Keeping up with this trend, an increasing number of brands use memes to promote their products. For example, Netflix is well known to regularly use memes related to their series on their Twitter account.

However, despite the popular use of memes on social media, little is known about whether and how memes affect consumer attitudes and engagement. In the present research, we fill this void. Using three experiments and one study with real-world data collected on Twitter, we show that when communicating through memes on social media, brands increase perceived humor and consumers' interest in brands, which in turn enhances consumer engagement via liking and sharing memes. To the best of our knowledge, our research is the first empirical research to establish the causal link between memes and perceived humor with the downstream consequences of increased interest in brands/products and consumer engagement. Our findings provide practical implications for social media managers by outlining the effectiveness of the currently popular trend of using memes on social media.

Literature Review

The word “meme” was originally coined by Richard Dawkins in 1976 in the book “The Selfish Gene” and he defined it as “a natural human spreading, replication, and modification of ideas and culture” (Anne Garcia Claire Anne P Luces & Engay, 2018; Bury, 2016; Miles, 2014; Tomaz̃ & Walanchalee, 2020; Wu & Ardley, 2007). A parallel has been drawn between memes and genes in the literature, the memes that initiate a cultural change are the ones that have imitated, adapted, and outlasted others, highlighting the fitness of memes (Sharma, 2018). The success of a meme largely depends on its fitment in the environment, for natural selection to start (Wu & Ardley, 2007). Dawkins’s conceptualization of memes and memetics form the basis for the concept of contagion and viral marketing (Miles, 2014).

A contagion can induce the receiver to respond in a certain manner, very much like how we can be “fashion victims” or “catching up to a trend” (Marsden, 1993). Previous literature has drawn a parallel between the phenomenon of the spread of memes and virality, an emotional one in this case, that will elicit similar responses in like-minded individuals (Guadagno, Rempala, Murphy, & Okdie, 2013). This is in line with what has been explored in influencer marketing, wherein the emotions with which the influencer posts are expected to induce similar emotions in the viewers (M. T. Lee & Theokary, 2020). Emotional contagion essentially enables the receiver to experience the same emotion as the receiver and can result in attitudinal bias of the receiver towards what was sent (Malhotra, 2005). Previous research has identified stages of success of memes (Bury, 2016): Transmission (memes are embedded in meme-carriers), Decoding (meme seen and deciphered by host), Infection (meme dwells in the brain of the host), Storage (meme stored by the host), Survival (meme contests with other memes) and Retransmission (meme transmitted from one host to the other).

Memes are largely reliant on humorous punchlines to draw attention and can only have the desired outcome when it is understood in the same context as the one in which it is posted (H. H. Lee, Liang, Liao, & Chen, 2019). The quirky or offbeat humor inherent in memes has been studied and extant literature recognizes the use of humor in memes (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). This use of humor has been recognized to be entertaining and appeal to the emotional domain of individuals (Dolan, Conduit, Frethey-Bentham, Fahy, & Goodman, 2019). Memes have been classified to belong to the humor genre and their communicative purpose has been recognized (Tomaz̃ & Walanchalee, 2020). In the context of internet memes, they have been identified as a pathway to get ideas to a wider audience in a short span of time (Ajayi, 2020). Online memes

have been widely studied to explore why certain ideas gain more popularity, are more productive, and have a longer life, than others (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007). In the context of memes, they are often related to shared humor on popular social and cultural discourse (Sălcudean & Motoroiu-Ștefan, 2020). Indeed, memes are now an important facet of netizen vernacular (Shifman, 2013). The phenomenon of “memejacking” has been established in previous research, essentially looking at popular memes being used by brands for their marketing (Chuah, Kahar, & Ch’ng, 2020). Even when extant literature supports the humorous nature of memes, it remains to be empirically tested. Hence, we formally propose our first hypothesis:

H1: Brand posts are perceived to be more humorous when they use memes (vs. no memes).

Social media has provided brands with a unique opportunity for content marketing, wherein it is the digital content of the brand that is being marketed, implicitly promoting the brand (Rowley, 2008). Content marketing has increasingly been an essential part of the commercial landscape (Koiso-Kanttila, 2004; Rowley, 2008). Previous literature has recognized that social media may be a powerful tool for consumer engagement by brands which in turn can impact their loyalty towards the brand (Keller, 2016). In the context of the digital domain, information exchange has been recognized to be pivotal for engagement (Carter, 2009).

Brands increasingly are encouraging consumer engagement on social media (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). When political memes are posted, they are known to initiate a discussion (Anne Garcia Claire Anne P Luces & Engay, 2018). The advent of the internet provided unique opportunities for consumer engagement, going beyond the attractive designing of websites and other conventional methods (Rowley, 2008). The use of memes by brands provides an opportunity to increase creative engagement, although it can be challenging (Benaim, 2018), it being a double-edged sword, and if the content of memes isn’t understood, the brand could potentially suffer (Sharma, 2018). Humorous public health messages on social media can result in increased engagement (Lister et al., 2015). Internet memes tend to persist in the minds of people (Rabea Hecker & de Jong, 2020), hence providing a unique opportunity to brands for customer engagement. Taking all these perspectives into account, we formally propose our second hypothesis:

H2: Brands produce higher consumer engagement when memes are present than when they are absent because of the perceived humor associated with the memes.

People prefer to watch humorous content on the internet (Heimlich, 2010). Humor has the power to deliver messages that could backfire if delivered seriously (Gulas, McKeage, & Weinberger, 2010). Experiencing humor usually aids the achievement of hedonic goals by increasing positive emotion and helps consumers reinforce relationships (Warren, Barsky, & McGraw, 2018). Further, most viral content has been found to be humorous (Reichstein & Bruschi, 2019). Brand messages when accompanied by humor captures and maintains the receiver's attention (Spotts, Weinberger, & Parsons, 1997; Weinberger & Madden, 1982). Previous research has established that humor in an ad for an organization seeking support leads individuals to perceive the organization as worthy of receiving support (Gelb & Pickett, 1983). How consumers on social media might react to a social media message is a key determinant of what is posted on the brand's social media account (Voorveld, 2019). Humor can lead to increased attention and liking for the ad as well as the product and causes less frustration towards the ad (Duncan & Nelson, 1985).

When consumers engage with brands on social media, it may be viewed as brand advocacy on their part since they are willing to share the brand's content on their social media pages (Gavilanes, Flatten, & Brettel, 2018). Brand satisfaction and gratitude have been known to be the drivers of consumer engagement on social media platforms and such consumers are more likely to have a more favorable attitude towards a brand and its offerings (Simon & Tossan, 2018). Intended engagement also has been found to increase the intent to use a social media tourism website (Harrigan, Evers, Miles, & Daly, 2018). Taking these into account, we formally propose our third hypothesis:

H3: The positive effect of memes on consumer engagement is explained by perceived humor and consumer interest in products in this sequential order.

Discussion of the Proposal

In what follows, we report three experimental studies and one field study. Study 1 examined the effect of memes on perceived humor (H1). Study 2 provided evidence that brands' use of memes results in higher consumer engagement due to higher perceived humor associated with the memes. Study 3 established that brands using memes experience higher consumer engagement due to higher perceived humor, which in turn, leads to increased interest in the product offered by the brand. Study 4 tested the link between the brand's use of memes and consumer engagement by using actual Twitter data. A summary of studies appears in Appendix A.

Methodology and Findings

Study 1

The objective of Study 1 was to establish the humorous nature of memes. We created a fictitious brand of bags, Style bags. The stimuli of all studies appear in Appendix B. As a cover story, participants were informed that the brand was pilot testing its handbags. A total of 217 participants ($M_{age}=43.4$; 40.5% female) recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) completed the study. We had a three-factor between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to either a meme, image-only, or phrase-only condition, in which participants were first presented with a Twitter post by the brand. Next, we measured perceived humor (Zhang 1996) with five items ($\alpha = .60$) on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Sample items are "The post was humorous" and "The post was funny." Noting that posting of humorous content on social media lacks the face to face interaction and assumes the users will understand the context for the content expressed (Papapicco & Mininni, 2019), we asked participants to indicate whether the post was familiar (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; Alden et al, [2000]). We also measured participants' current mood with four items adapted from Allen and Janiszewski (1989) on a 7-point scale (1 = bad/unpleasant/sad/negative, 7 = good/pleasant/happy/positive; $\alpha = .96$). These two variables (familiarity and current mood) served as control variables.

Results

To test our hypothesis, we performed a one-way ANCOVA on perceived humor with familiarity and current mood as control variables. As predicted, there was a significant difference across conditions ($F(2,212) = 5.730, p = 0.004$). Specifically, participants perceived the meme post as more humorous ($M = 4.22$) than the image-only post ($M = 3.58; F(1, 140) = 10.051, p = 0.002$) and the phrase-only post ($M = 3.68; F(1, 141) = 6.768, p = 0.010$), supporting H1.

Study 2

The objective of Study 2 was to establish the downstream effect of the increased perceived humor of memes on consumer engagement. We recruited 138 Amazon MTurkers ($M_{age} = 41.6; 37.3\%$ female). We created a fictitious brand of potato chips – Yummy Potato Chips. As a cover story, participants were informed that they would evaluate a Twitter post made by the brand. The study had a two-factor between-subjects design, in which participants were randomly assigned to either a meme or phrase-only condition. For consumer engagement, we asked participants to indicate their likelihood to put a like and retweet the post both on 7-point scales (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely), which were combined to form a composite scale of brand engagement ($\alpha = .90$; Pishko, [2019]). For perceived humor, we asked participants to indicate their agreement with the statement “The post was funny” on a 7-point scale (Alden et al, 2000). As in Study 1, we measured perceived familiarity with the post using a one-item 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = very much; Alden et al, 2000) and current mood using a 4-item 7-point scale (1 = bad/unpleasant/sad/negative, 7 = good/pleasant/happy/positive; $\alpha = .98$; Allen and Janiszewski [1989]), both of which served as control variables.

Results:

Using Hayes (2017) Model 4, we tested for the mediation effect of perceived humor on brand engagement with familiarity and mood as control variables. As expected, the indirect effect model excluded zero ($b = .27, SE = 0.15, 95\% CI [.0313 \text{ to } .6410]$), displaying a significant mediation effect. Additionally, the direct effect became marginally significant ($p = 0.06$), suggesting a partial mediation.

Study 3

In this study, we tested for the serial mediation model, in which we examined the effect of memes on consumer engagement through both perceived humor and consumer interest in products sequentially. We recruited 200 Amazon MTurkers ($M_{\text{age}} = 42.3$; 48.8% female). The study had a two-factor between-subjects design. We created a fictitious brand of a streaming service – The Stream. As a cover story, participants were told that The Stream is an upcoming streaming entertainment service, and they would evaluate this brand’s social media post. Participants were randomly assigned to either a meme or image-only condition, in which participants were first presented with a Facebook post by the brand. For consumer engagement measures, we asked participants to indicate their likelihood to put a like on the post, visit the page, and share the post, all on 7-point scales (1 = extremely unlikely, 7 = extremely likely), which were combined to form a composite scale of brand engagement ($\alpha = .66$). For perceived humor, we asked participants to indicate their agreement with the statement “The post was funny” on a 7-point scale (Alden et al, 2000). We measured consumers’ interest in the service using a 3-item 7-point scale ($\alpha = .92$; Hamilton et al, 2011). A sample item is “How interested are you in owning a subscription to the streaming service whose post you just saw?” (1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Additionally, as in our previous studies, we controlled for perceived familiarity and current mood ($\alpha = .96$).

Results

Using Hayes (2017) Model 6, we tested for the serial mediation effect of perceived humor on brand engagement through increased interest in the service with familiarity and mood as control variables. As expected, the indirect effect model excluded zero ($b = .38$, $SE = 0.08$, 95% CI [.2212 to .5702]), displaying a significant mediation effect. The direct effect became non-significant ($p = 0.72$), suggesting a full serial mediation. Additionally, to rule out the alternative explanation of reverse causality, we reversed the order of the two mediators. The indirect effect was not significant ($b = -0.0180$, $SE = 0.0149$, 95% CI [-0.0546 to 0.0041]), displaying confidence for our theorizing.

Study 4

In this study, we examined the effect of memes on consumer engagement with actual Twitter data that lends additional support to our theorizing. We first collected data from Google with keywords – brands using memes – and made a list of brands. The two most mentioned brands were Netflix and Barkbox. Among those, we chose Netflix as it is a Fortune 500 company. We then collected all Netflix tweets for a recent period of one month (11/28/2020 – 12/30/2020). We recorded a total of 380 tweets, which were classified into two groups: 75 memes and 305 non-memes. We note that we removed outliers whose number of likes and retweets had more than three standard deviations from the mean yielding a total of 371 posts: 71 memes and 300 non-memes. Most of these outliers were related to Ariana Grande, a popstar who has huge popularity among youth and her series that would be released soon on Netflix at that time.

Results

For our dependent measure, we recorded the number of likes and retweets for each of the tweets. To form a composite score of brand engagement, we averaged the number of likes and retweets ($\alpha = .50$; Pishko, 2019). We tested our prediction by using an independent samples t-test with brand engagement as the dependent variable. As predicted, brand engagement was significantly higher for tweets with memes ($M = 5522.66$, $SD = 9002.64$) than tweets with no memes ($M = 2461.00$, $SD = 4532.22$); $t(369) = -2.783$, $p = 0.007$).

Discussion and Conclusions

To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first empirical research to establish the causal link between memes and perceived humor with the downstream consequences of increased interest in the product and consumer engagement. Given the widespread use of memes on social media, our findings provide theoretical and practical implications. The use of memes has been worldwide with research on meme usage studying it in Nigeria (Ajayi, 2020), Bangladesh (Inzamul & Rakib, 2019), the Philippines (Anne Garcia Claire Anne P Luces & Engay, 2018),

and India (Sharma, 2018), among others. Memes themselves are ideas but “meme-carriers” are more observable, and they are the reasons for the spread of memes (Csordás, Horváth, Mitev, & Markos-Kujbus, 2017). We take this a step further and apply the concept of contagion to support our hypotheses of memes being perceived as more humorous and resulting in increased engagement due to increased interest in the product being offered by the brand.

Our studies used various product categories and our results held each time which is a testament to the generalizability of our findings. Study 1 empirically tested the humorous nature of memes. Study 2 established the downstream effect of increased consumer engagement due to the humorous nature of the memes. Study 3 tested the causal chain with the humorous nature of memes leading to increased engagement due to increased interest in the product offered by the brand. In Study 4, the field study with real-world data collected over a period of one month on Twitter provides additional robust evidence for our results. Our experimental studies used fictitious brands and the field data was collected for a well-known brand (Netflix) ruling out the bias towards the brands as an alternative explanation and enhancing generalization.

Our theoretical contributions are in the field of consumer engagement, social media and specifically in the field of internet memes and marketing. Consumer engagement has been identified as “the future of advertising” with a need for an emerging focus on “contextual factors” that can increase the effectiveness of the advertising (Kumar & Gupta, 2016), our research fits in very well with this corollary.

Previous studies have established how students use memes to indulge in self-deprecating humor which highlights their humorous failures to express their routine struggles, highlighting the use of humor to normalize an otherwise covert topic (Ask & Abidin, 2018). Organizations have been known to include humor for conveying messages that could have potentially harmful content or disinformation (Csordás et al., 2017). The possibility of practicing managers using memes to convey a message that might be otherwise considered taboo or not talked about as much might be an interesting avenue for future research. Social media managers could be in the lookout for popular memes that they can effectively use to convey their brand messages.

As with all research, our research has limitations as well. A humorous communication can only be successful when it is used appropriately to convey the message, pointing out the intricate balance between making the appropriate message and adding the element of humor in it (Taecharunroj & Nueangjamnong, 2015). Hence, there could be situations when the use of

memes could backfire. Also, culture has been found to have an effect on humor (Y. H. Lee & Lim, 2008) and future research could outline when memes would work/not work and the role culture plays in our proposed relationship.

REFERENCES

- Ajayi, T. M. (2020). Beyond Joking: A Pragmatic (De)construction of “Nigerian Realities” in Selected Humour-Evoking Facebook Memes. *Israeli Journal for Humor Research*, 9(1).
- Anne Garcia Claire Anne P Lucas, J. N., & Engay, B. Q. (2018). *The Use of Memes as a Means of Expressing Political Views in Social Media Extension Program in Pampanga*.
- Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 79–95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1>
- Ask, K., & Abidin, C. (2018). My life is a mess: self-deprecating relatability and collective identities in the memification of student issues. *Information Communication and Society*, 21(6), 834–850. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1437204>
- Benaim, M. (2018). From symbolic values to symbolic innovation: Internet-memes and innovation. *Research Policy*, 47(5), 901–910. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2018.02.014>
- Bury, B. (2016). Creative Use of Internet Memes in Advertising. *World Scientific News*, 57(57), 33–41.
- Carter, E. V. (2009). Competency Codes: Marketing Management for the Digital Future. *Marketing Management Journal*, 19(1), 16–36.
- Chuah, K. M., Kahar, Y. M., & Ch’ng, L. C. (2020). We “meme” business: Exploring Malaysian youths’ interpretation of internet memes in social media marketing. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 21(2), 931–944. Retrieved from <https://meme.xyz/meme/10263>
- 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. In *Commercial Communication in the Digital Age* (pp. 247–265). <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110416794-014>
- Dolan, R., Conduit, J., Frethey-Bentham, C., Fahy, J., & Goodman, S. (2019). Social media engagement behavior: A framework for engaging customers through social media content. *European Journal of Marketing*, 53(10), 2213–2243. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-03-2017-0182>
- Duncan, C. P., & Nelson, J. E. (1985). Effects of humor in a radio advertising experiment. *Journal of Advertising*, 14(2), 33–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1985.10672944>
- Gavilanes, J. M., Flatten, T. C., & Brettel, M. (2018). Content Strategies for Digital Consumer

- Engagement in Social Networks: Why Advertising Is an Antecedent of Engagement. *Journal of Advertising*, 47(1), 4–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405751>
- Gelb, B. D., & Pickett, C. M. (1983). Attitude-Toward-The-Ad: Links to Humor and to Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 12(2).
- Guadagno, R. E., Rempala, D. M., Murphy, S., & Okdie, B. M. (2013). What makes a video go viral? An analysis of emotional contagion and Internet memes. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(6), 2312–2319. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.04.016>
- Gulas, C. S., McKeage, K. K., & Weinberger, M. G. (2010). It's just a joke: Violence against males in humorous advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 39(4), 109–120. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367390408>
- Harrigan, P., Evers, U., Miles, M. P., & Daly, T. (2018). Customer engagement and the relationship between involvement, engagement, self-brand connection and brand usage intent. *Journal of Business Research*, 88, 388–396. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.11.046>
- Heimlich, R. (2010). The Internet: Comedy Central | Pew Research Center. Retrieved April 26, 2021, from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2010/06/08/the-internet-comedy-central/>
- Inzamal, M., & Rakib, H. (2019). *Name A More Iconic Duo, I'll Wait: Exploring the Role of Humour in Bangladeshi Internet Meme Culture*.
- Keller, K. L. (2016). Unlocking the Power of Integrated Marketing Communications: How Integrated Is Your IMC Program? *Journal of Advertising*, 45(3), 286–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1204967>
- Knobel, M., & Lankshear, C. (2007). Online memes, affinities, and cultural production. In *A new literacies sampler*. Retrieved from <http://literacyandtech.pbworks.com/f/Text.pdf#page=209>
- Koiso-Kanttila, N. (2004). Digital Content Marketing: A Literature Synthesis. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 20(1–2), 45–65. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725704773041122>
- Kumar, V., & Gupta, S. (2016). Conceptualizing the Evolution and Future of Advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 45(3), 302–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1199335>
- Lee, H. H., Liang, C. H., Liao, S. Y., & Chen, H. S. (2019). Analyzing the intention of consumer purchasing behaviors in relation to internet memes using VAB model. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(20). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11205549>
- Lee, M. T., & Theokary, C. (2020). *The superstar social media influencer: Exploiting linguistic style and emotional contagion over content?* <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.11.014>

- Lee, Y. H., & Lim, E. A. C. (2008). What's funny and what's not - The moderating role of cultural orientation in ad humor. *Journal of Advertising*, 37(2), 71–84. <https://doi.org/10.2753/JOA0091-3367370206>
- Lister, C., Royne, M., Payne, H. E., Cannon, B., Hanson, C., & Barnes, M. (2015). The laugh model: Reframing and rebranding public health through social media. *American Journal of Public Health*, 105(11), 2245–2251. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302669>
- Malhotra, N. K. (2005). Attitude and affect: New frontiers of research in the 21st century. *Journal of Business Research*, 58(4), 477–482. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963\(03\)00146-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0148-2963(03)00146-2)
- Marsden, P. S. (1993). Marketing Intelligence & Planning. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 11(3), 1–48. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb045784>
- Miles, C. (2014). The rhetoric of managed contagion: Metaphor and agency in the discourse of viral marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 14(1), 3–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14705931113506433>
- Papapicco, C., & Mininni, G. (2019). *Impact memes: phds humor(e)*.
- Pishko, J. E. (2019). *When Brands Tease Their Rivals on Twitter: Consequences for Consumer Engagement*.
- Rabea Hecker, B., & de Jong, M. (2020). *The influence of Internet memes on the perception and interpretation of online communication in social media*.
- Reichstein, T., & Bruschi, I. (2019). The decision-making process in viral marketing—A review and suggestions for further research. *Psychology and Marketing*, 36(11), 1062–1081. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21256>
- Rowley, J. (2008). Understanding digital content marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 24(5–6), 517–540. <https://doi.org/10.1362/026725708X325977>
- Sălcudean, M., & Motoroiu-Ștefan, R. (2020). Visual Humor through Internet Memes. Iconicity, Irony, and Virality in the Digital Age (I) Memes as Discourse: The Nearest Kind and the Specific Difference. *Transilvania*, 4, 67–72.
- Sharma, H. (2018). Memes in digital culture and their role in marketing and communication: A study in India. *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, 9(3), 303–318. https://doi.org/10.1386/iscc.9.3.303_1
- Shifman, L. (2013). Memes in a digital world: Reconciling with a conceptual troublemaker. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 18(3), 362–377. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12013>
- Simon, F., & Tossan, V. (2018). Does brand-consumer social sharing matter? A relational framework

- of customer engagement to brand-hosted social media. *Journal of Business Research*, 85, 175–184. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.12.050>
- Spotts, H. E., Weinberger, M. G., & Parsons, A. L. (1997). Assessing the use and impact of humor on advertising effectiveness: A contingency approach. *Journal of Advertising*, 26(3), 17–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.1997.10673526>
- Taecharunroj, 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. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258615614420>
- Tomaž, K., & Walanchalee, W. (2020). One does not simply ... project a destination image within a participatory culture. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 18, 2212–2571. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100494>
- Voorveld, H. A. M. (2019). Brand Communication in Social Media: A Research Agenda. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(1), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1588808>
- Warren, C., Barsky, A., & McGraw, A. P. (2018). Humor, Comedy, and Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 0(March). <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucy015>
- Weinberger, M. G., & Madden, T. J. (1982). The effects of humor on attention in magazine advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, 11(3), 8–14.
- Wu, Y., & Ardley, B. (2007). Brand strategy and brand evolution: welcome to the world of the meme. *The Marketing Review*, 7(3), 301–310. <https://doi.org/10.1362/146934707x230112>

Appendix A: SUMMARY OF ALL STUDIES AND MAIN FINDINGS

Study 1: Meme has higher perceived humor (Product type: Bags; N = 217; MTurk)			
	Meme condition	Text condition	Image condition
Perceived Humor	4.22	3.68	3.57
Main finding: Meme was perceived to be more humorous than text and image posts			
Study 2: Mediation through perceived humor of memes leading to higher consumer engagement with Familiarity and Mood as covariates using Process Hayes Model 4 (Product type: Potato chips; N = 138; MTurk)			
	Meme condition	Text condition	
Perceived Humor	4.54	3.30	
Consumer Engagement	3.12	2.95	
Main finding: Memes lead to increased consumer engagement due to higher perceived humor of the memes			
Study 3: Serial mediation through perceived humor of memes leading to higher consumer engagement because of increased interest in the product with Familiarity and Mood as covariates using Process Hayes Model 6 (Product type: Entertainment streaming service; N = 200; MTurk)			
	Meme condition	Image condition	
Perceived Humor	3.46	1.94	
Interest in the product	3.53	3.73	
Consumer Engagement	3.45	3.43	
Main finding: Memes lead to increased consumer engagement due to higher perceived humor that leads to interest in the product.			
Study 4: Memes lead to higher consumer engagement (Brand: Netflix; N = 371 tweets; Field data)			
	Meme condition	Non- meme condition	
Consumer Engagement	3724.74	1676.89	
Main finding: Use of memes by brands lead to higher consumer engagement.			

APPENDIX B: STUDY DETAILS AND STIMULI USED IN STUDIES

Study 1:

Stimuli used in Study 1:

Meme condition:



Text condition:

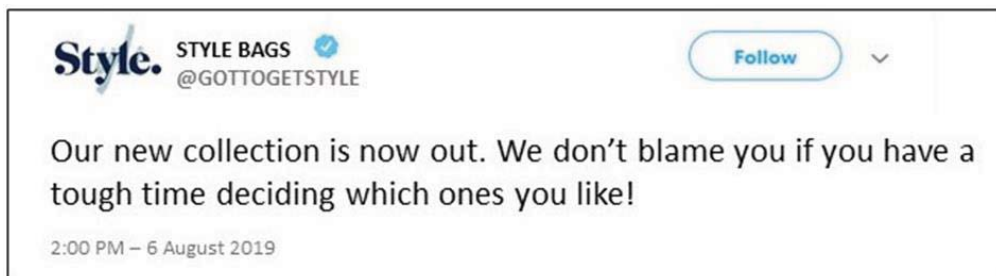





Image condition:

Style. STYLE BAGS 
@GOTTOGETSTYLE Follow 



Our new collection is now out. We don't blame you if you have a tough time deciding which ones you like!

2:00 PM - 6 August 2019

Study 2:

Stimuli used in Study 2:

Meme condition:



Text condition:



Study 3:

Stimuli used in Study 3:

Meme condition:



Image condition:

