

Understanding the Power of Memes: A Critical Study of its Effectiveness as a Marketing and  
Communication Agent

Project Report

Submitted by

P V Gouri (SB21CE024)

Under the guidance of

Ms. Shahanaz M H

*In partial fulfilment of requirements for award of the degree*

*Of Bachelor of Arts*



St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), Ernakulam

College With Potential for

Excellence Accredited by NAAC with 'A++' Grade

Affiliated to

Mahatma Gandhi University

Kottayam-686560

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## Declaration

I do affirm that the project “ Understanding the Power of Memes: A Critical Study of its Effectiveness as a Marketing and Communication Agent” submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of the Bachelor of Arts degree in English Literature and Communication Studies has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, fellowship or any other similar title or recognition.

Ernakulam

P V Gouri

22nd March, 2024

Reg No: SB21CE024

B.A. English Literature and Communication Studies

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

## Certificate

I hereby certify that this project entitled “ Understanding the Power of Memes: A Critical Study of its Effectiveness as a Marketing and Communication Agent” by P V Gouri is a record of bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance.

Ernakulam

Ms. Shahanaz M H

22nd March, 2024

Department of Communicative English

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

## Acknowledgement

I take this opportunity to offer my humble prayers and thanks to God Almighty for His mercy and blessings for the completion of this project.

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P V Gouri

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## CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

*“It’s anything that goes viral”* – Richard Dawkins

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a meme is defined as *an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video) or genre of items that is spread widely online, especially through social media*. It is often characterised for its humorous, satirical, ironic, and funny content along with certain images/GIFs/videos to enhance its meaning/purpose. It is usually short and crisp as it is intended for immediate consumption. In the post-pandemic age, people have a limited amount of attention span and prefer short and quick content over lengthy ones. Reels and memes have revolutionised the social media platforms methodology.

The term *meme* is often credited to an evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins, who talked about it in his book, *The Selfish Gene*. It is a combination of the Greek *mimeme* (something imitated) and *gene*, pronounced to rhyme with ‘cream’. According to Dawkins definition, memes are contained in how our ideas, ideals, cultures, and customs replicate themselves. Almost like a virus, they travel from person to person through imitation, sharing, and repetition. He coined the term to highlight just how human culture can replicate itself. And in that sense memes have been present since humans have had cultures. But we can also see the kernels of what makes modern internet memes so successful in ancient forms of popular culture. The *Distracted Boyfriend*, and *Doge* are some of the most iconic memes ever made and are still in use. Just like how people used to reminisce or connect old movies to indicate similar scenes/instances, people now use memes instead.

According to the BBC, with the arrival and evolution of digital platforms and the Internet, the meme culture too, widened. Researchers at Facebook showed in a study in 2014 just how widely memes posted on the social media site can spread and evolve. In one example, they

found 1,21,605 different variants of one particular meme posted across 1.14 million status updates. We can analyse the collective consciousness of various users and viewers in Digital Folklore/Netlore. Paolo Gerbaudo, a reader in digital politics and director of the Centre for Digital Culture at King's College London, describes memes as a *"sort of a ready-made language with many kinds of stereotypes, symbols, situations. A palette that people can use, much like emojis, in a way, to convey a certain content"*. *"We can see not just the new ways people do things or the new ways people express themselves in public but also some of the themes, some of the anxieties or desires people have. All of these complex issues are reflected in things like memes"* says Gerbaudo. He mentions being a part of the meme culture and states that if you're looking at a meme and "you get through the kind of enigma or mystery around that at face value" you are probably part of the group it is aimed at. "You understand [the] language, you understand the assumptions of the group," he says.

Memes needn't be classified/promoted as solely funny ones either to gain attention. "Humour is important in popularising this form of expression and people like spreading cheerful content," says Limor Shifman, a professor of communication at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. That being said, "even if it's not funny, if it's disturbing, if it makes them angry, if it makes them feel things, they would still circulate it", Shifman adds.

Memes have an uncanny way of capturing a certain feeling/experience that resonates with people, according to the viewer's/reader's comfort zone. One small recent study found that people with depression rated depression-related memes as **more humorous, relatable, and shareable**. The researchers suggest memes elegantly portray the experience of depression which some may find hard to vocalise. And because they are highly relatable among people with depression, they could offer the perception of social support and emotional connection.



The theories that will be dealt with in the coming chapters fall under the Media Effects Theory. In simple terms, Media Effects Theory mentions the various effects caused by media on the person/people using it. In the field of mass communication, it explores how different modes/forms of media influence different scales i.e., individuals, groups, and society. It exposes or enlightens the potential consequences of media exposure which can be intended or unintended. The theory sees the audience as passive media users. Media can influence beliefs, behaviours, emotions, thought processes, ideologies, culture, politics, etc. It can shape public opinion and therefore, has the potential to create a dynamic change in the social system. There are various theories under this category and this project will be analysed using the following theories:

#### 1. Uses and Gratification Theory:

This theory is attributed to researchers Jay G. Blumler and Elihu Katz. In 1974, the duo published 'The Uses of Mass Communication: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research'. This has the complete picture of the theory. However, the theory originated with the research of Harold Laswell, an American political scientist and communication theorist. This theory focuses on the needs, motives, and gratifications of media users. It states that media consumers play an active role in media consumption and therefore is against the fact that the audience is passive consumers. This will be mentioned in detail in the coming chapters.

#### 2. Social learning Theory:

Albert Bandura is considered the Father of this theory. In the 1960s, he conducted his famous experiment called the Bobo doll Experiment which led to the birth of this theory in 1977. As it is a psychological theory, it suggests that people learn new behaviours, attitudes, and values through observation and imitation of others. This is still used to study how media affects

individuals and society. Media often depict certain behaviours and attitudes as more prevalent and acceptable, even if they are not primarily present. It can normalise and stigmatise certain kinds of behaviours. This will be dealt with in detail in the coming chapters.

With technology evolving all the time, various kinds of media are rising, and analysing them with theories can be beneficial to understand how it influences people and therefore contributes major impacts in this landscape.

In this project, the objective is to prove that memes have shaped communication strategies, the “pictures speak a thousand words” ideology, the influence and impact of memes, how it is used as a tool for marketing and publicity, and how efficient it is. It is through various communication models and theories that originate/enhance the marketing element of memes and therefore, shape and evolve the people’s culture and behaviour. Theories under ‘Media Effects Theory’ portray/show/explore the potentiality of mass media on individuals and society as a whole. Under this category, this topic will be analysed based on ‘Uses and Gratification Theory’ and ‘Social Learning Theory’. There will be examples to prove and show how memes have been censored, how various advertisements use memes to promote their products/services, and how it was used as a tool in various circumstances like political freedom and people's participation in the making/reinventing of memes.

## CHAPTER 2: THE AUDIENCE PERSPECTIVE

This chapter will present various aspects of how memes have shaped communication styles, how effectively information/ideas are circulated, and how the audience perceives memes.

“Though Internet memes were first created by millennials (born 1981–1996), the word *meme* originated with evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976, combining the Greek word *mimeme*—translated to “imitated thing”—and *gene*. By Dawkins’ definition, memes are cultural ideas that spread and repeat themselves across society. Add the Internet and an evolving sense of humour, and you have the Internet meme: a vessel of communication, a signifier of the comedic zeitgeist, and a device for channelling the inherent anxieties of youth.” – The Philosophy of Meme Culture

In the same article, it is said that a poll was taken in 2018 by the Pew Research Center, a non-profit organisation in Washington D.C that informs the public about the issues, attitudes, and trends shaping the world’s communication methods, 70% of American teenagers reported depression/anxiety/mood disorders as a major problem. An increase in uncertainties like climate change, the aftermath of the pandemic, wage issues, political power play, war, terrorism, and so on has contributed to the deteriorating mental health. Their defence and coping mechanism too went through a change so significant because of how memes are circulated, e.g., “I may look fly, but I want to die”. Chandler, the character from the sitcom Friends, introduces himself as “Hi, I’m Chandler. I make jokes when I’m uncomfortable.” He even mentions how after his parent’s divorce, he started using humour as a coping mechanism for traumatic and uncomfortable situations. This is the mindset of Generation Z (1996-2010) and Generation Alpha (2010-2024).

In various global issues, people remark on such situations with jolly words like “yikes”, and “oof”, it may/may not be used to ignite anger/frustration among other generation-Internet users. This is just their way of escaping realities by taking/finding them not so catastrophic and being ignorant voluntarily. “Yeet into the void”, can look funny, but there is a certain amount of honesty in it, i.e., it shows how they just want to disappear and not be in a world where everything is just going wrong. To help each other, they use/create memes to lighten the mood. After all, laughter is the best medicine, and humour is the best method. This article ends by saying (picturing one of the realities of Internet users/Meme lovers), ‘Because if you can’t laugh in the face of your existential dread, what else can you do?’

The ever-growing meme culture, initially used memes to convey an idea through attractive/funny catchphrases, images, short clips, etc. It was basically for entertainment and slowly people/users started recreating their memes, which later turned into a trend and is continuing. The way an audience perceives memes is complex and equally informative as everyone has different points of view, preferences, and perspectives. However, certain common key aspects that are found in the creation of memes which shaped the audience’s perception, like

1. Humour and entertainment: It is primarily seen as a source of humour and entertainment, with the ability to make people laugh, relate to shared experiences, and connect with others through shared humour.

2. A window to the factual/informative world: It can be a powerful tool for social commentary, current affairs, political figures, and social trends. They can spark conversations, raise awareness, and even influence opinions.

3. Identity and belonging: It can foster a sense of identity and belonging for individuals who share common interests or experiences. Sharing and creating memes within these communities can be a way to express oneself and connect with like-minded people.

Different platforms have different meme cultures and audiences. For example, memes shared on Twitter may be more political, while memes shared on Instagram may be more visual and lighthearted. The context i.e., the meaning and reception of a meme can vary depending on the context in which it is shared. For example, a meme that is funny in one context may be offensive in another. The individual's own experiences and biases: People's perception of memes can be influenced by their own experiences, beliefs, and sense of humour and such idiocentric characteristics can change the meme's initial reaction/purpose.

In the coming chapters, the impacts of such perception will be observed in a detailed manner.

### CHAPTER 3 : IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

Living in the digital age, memes provide a bridge to connect with people of all sorts. In the texting culture, people often use memes/stickers to convey their feelings and answers about a certain situation/circumstance. They even find time to search for new and novel ones to convey better meanings or to produce a much better reaction from the other person. This ultimately encourages participation, shareability, and curiosity to find/make/modify new memes. Many brands and organisations ask the users/customers/public to contribute certain elements to their products/services so that marketing is cheaper and more entertaining.

With an increase in OTT Platforms, movies, series, shows, and sitcoms, there are more chances of getting new and better memes. Certain iconic memes are references/part of popular shows/movies/songs. Such influence can cause both positive and negative results, which will be dealt with in later chapters.

Memes can influence the system of Popular Culture and vice versa as well. It is used as a means of communication, as discussed in a nutshell in Chapter 1. Through different social media platforms, like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, there has been a huge emergence and birth of vibrant memes of varying intensity and scales. Visual media too, has evolved and thus people love things to be more visually appealing. Memes are often used for trend-making purposes too, it goes viral within a heartbeat because of their shareable capabilities. This enhances the marketing sphere too, by emerging as a new tool for publicity.

This is the era of popular culture and it significantly influences and creates impacts in the meme culture as well. It provides various source materials from different streams of platforms (series, soap operas, films, songs, etc). The culture creates a shared vocabulary which in turn,

widens the meme's sphere of knowledge. It reflects and amplifies trends and acts as a cultural mirror. It creates a channel of 'distribution'/'communication' for sharing memes.

Popular culture provides the fuel, the language, and the platforms for meme culture to thrive. It's important to note that this influence is not one-sided. Meme culture can also impact popular culture by influencing trends, shaping public opinion, and even leading to the creation of new cultural products. The relationship between these two forces is dynamic and constantly evolving. This symbiotic relationship ensures that both meme culture and popular culture continue to shape and reflect each other in the digital age.

Culture is defined as the ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society, it creates a sense of belongingness through humour due to shared experiences like movies, shows, series, soap operas, etc. It serves as an inside joke for millions, bridging and bonding people together, online and offline. When a language changes or modifies itself due to various reasons, this affects the culture that brought it as well which, therefore, influences our usual speech. So, memes are more than just funny pictures. They're changing the way we communicate, express ourselves, and even how brands interact with us. And as technology and culture keep evolving, memes will too, become even more interactive, personalised, and integrated into our lives.

According to a BBC article titled 'The surprising power of Internet Memes' by Helen Brown, it showcases how memes are efficiently and effectively spreading ideas and beliefs. The article starts with an incident in China where images of a rice bunny were spread virally in 2018. But there is a deeper and more controversial history behind that. During the global #MeToo campaign, China censored and blocked everything related to the campaign and internet users had to find 'an alternative' to coordinate the movement in their country. Rice bunny" (米兔), two

‘seemingly unrelated subjects’ when said aloud, are pronounced as ‘mi tu’. Women in China, thanks to this innovative method of revolution, spread their stories within a country that can be ‘highly suspicious of organised social movements’. On the surface level, memes can be seen as a source of ‘light entertainment’ but it is far more powerful than that. The example above clearly showcases its power. It can ‘transcend cultures and construct collective identities between people’. It can be used as a weapon for ‘self-expression, social influence, and even political subversion, says the article’.

In 2015, female scientists shared ironic memes of themselves dressed in lab overalls and protective clothing with the hashtag #distractinglysexy. This gathered more than 10,000 posts on social media in just a few hours and led to wider discussion about sexism in science in the mainstream media.

"In today's world, memes are the seeds from which social movements grow," Xiao Mina says in her book *Memes to Movements*. "But to flower, they must find their homes in the fertile ground of minds and cultures."

Memes’ influence is varied and various factors offers both positive and negative effects-

Positive:

1. It fosters a sense of belongingness by sharing and spreading common experiences. It can be used as a language for interacting with people all over the globe.
2. Humour can be an effective tool for disseminating complex ideas and awareness on various topics and issues.
3. It is a platform and a chance to revive the idiosyncratic humour and creativity for reflecting or expressing their unique perspectives.



Negative:

1. It can be easily used to spread misinformation/disinformation and manipulation of data and information, which can lead to propaganda. Echo chambers are a major problem where individuals are only exposed to information that confines with their existing beliefs, which narrows them from 'thinking from another angle'.
2. Offensive and discriminatory messages can be shielded/disguised as a joke, which can cause harm to individuals.
3. This can be used as an unhealthy coping mechanism and can be used as a protective cover to avoid real-world issues.

It is evident that memes have colonised mainstream media communication and it is an effective method for the marketing world to connect with different kinds of audiences. The growth of the internet and the growth of the standards of memes go hand in hand. Social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter have contributed to the success of meme culture and vice versa. 'What's clear is that the modest meme should not be underestimated. They conceal complexity and culture beneath their simple exterior. Online, memes are important facilitators of communication, belonging, and digital activism that can both unite and divide us, depending on who we are and how we participate with them. In conclusion, memes have become an integral part of modern pop culture, providing a means of expression, communication, and social commentary for people worldwide. While their impact is undeniable, it is important to be mindful of the potential harm that memes can cause. As internet culture continues to evolve, so will the role of memes in shaping the conversation and reflecting the zeitgeist of our time.'

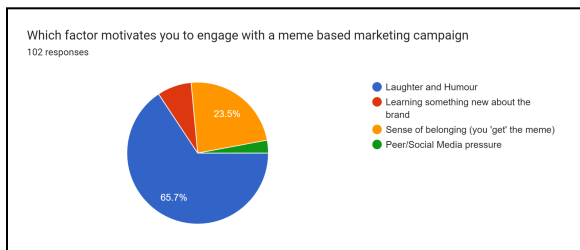
CHAPTER 4 : METHODOLOGY

The chosen quantitative method is Google Forms. This survey has no age restriction.

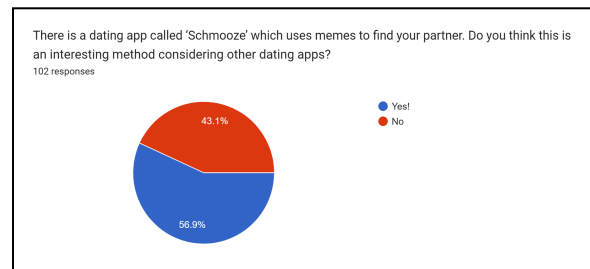
With a total of one hundred and two responses, the form was divided into two sections, Marketing and Communication having five questions each.

Under ‘Marketing’ section:-

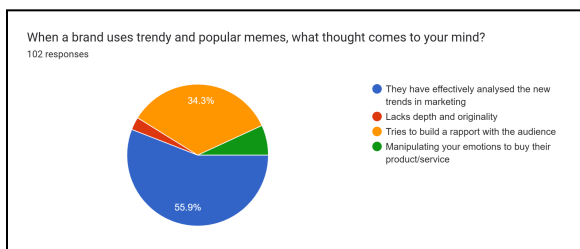
The number of people who voted for the options below are sixty-seven, eight, twenty-four and three



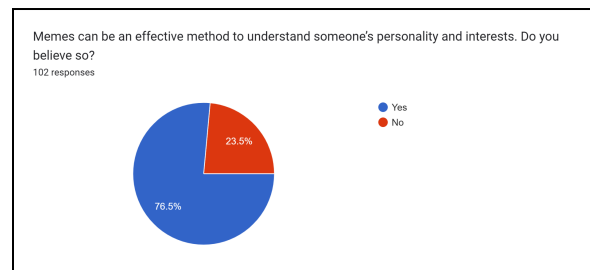
The number of people who voted for the options below are fifty-eight and forty-four respectively.



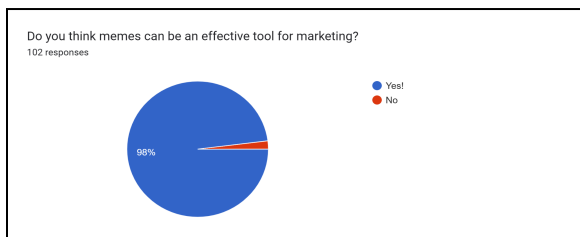
The number of people who voted for the options below are fifty-seven, three, thirty-five and seven respectively



The number of people who voted for the options below are seventy-eight and twenty-four respectively.

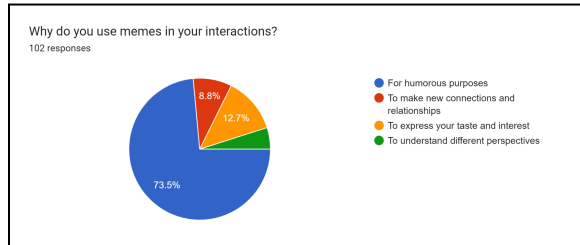


The number of people who voted for the options below are hundred and two respectively

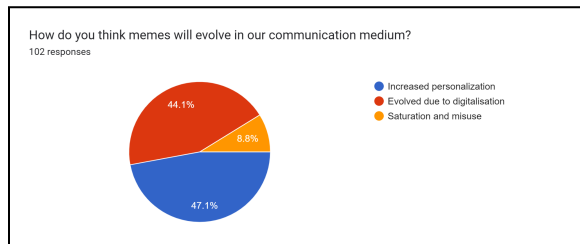


Under 'Communication' section:

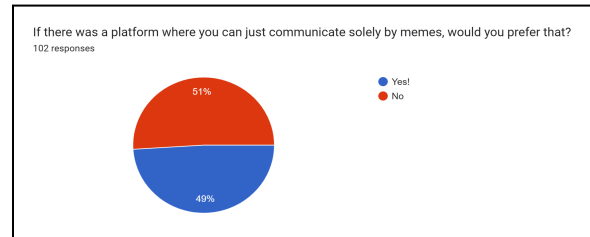
The number of people who voted for the options below are seventy-five, thirteen, nine and five respectively.



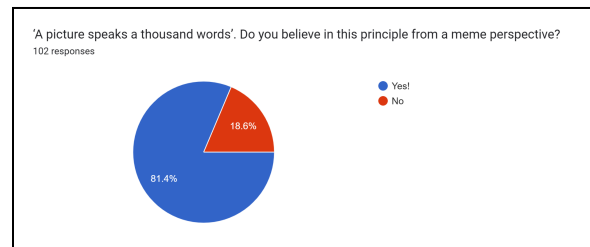
The number of people who voted for the options below are forty-eight, forty-five and nine respectively.



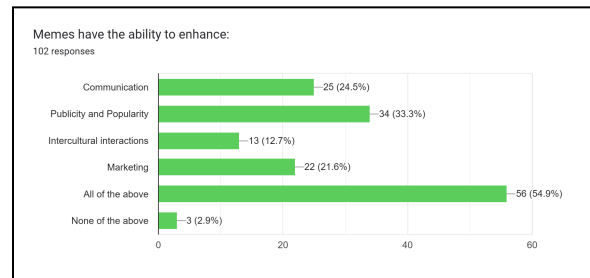
The number of people who voted for the options below are fifty-two and fifty respectively.



The number of people who voted for the options below are eighty-three and nineteen respectively



The number of people who voted for 'All of the above' is fifty-six.



In the next chapter, an analysis of the above data will be done using the two theories to analyse whether memes can be a potential marketing and communication strategy/tool.

## CHAPTER 5 : ANALYSING IF MEME CAN BE A MARKETING TOOL USING USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

This chapter will analyse the data taken from the section 'Marketing 'using Uses and Gratification Theory and Social Learning Theory.

Social Learning Theory revolves around the importance of observational learning, modelling, and imitation of behaviours and attitudes. Applying this theory in the communication and marketing realm, it focuses on the psychology of the human mind and behaviour in their various communication models and marketing behaviours. Using such a simple idea to understand the core concept of behavioural and imitation learning, media can influence and teach how people learn behaviours and attitudes from the content that they consume. Culture plays an important role in the development of communication as well.

Uses and Gratification Theory discusses the effects of the media on people. It explains how people utilise the media for the satisfaction of their needs. It revolves around what people do with the media rather than the other way around. It is a user-centric approach. There are several needs and gratification but the most common are of five categories. They are:

1. Cognitive Needs - People use media to acquire knowledge, information, facts, and ideas.
2. Affective Needs - People use media for satisfying emotional needs and pleasure.
3. Personal Integrative Needs - People use media to ensure their prominence and status.
4. Social Integrative needs - People are social beings and therefore, use media for social networking.
5. Tension-Free Needs - People use media as a tool for escaping reality, to relieve tension and stress.

In the Marketing section, the first questions deal with the kind of engagement in a meme-based marketing campaign and the majority opted for the first option, Laughter and Humour.

Using Uses and Gratification Theory:

This option gives importance to the 'affective needs' of people. The primary factor for people's engagement in meme-based marketing campaigns is for their emotional needs.

Using Social Learning Theory:

Humour and laughter can be a powerful tool for social reinforcement, which would lead to new and potential connections. It involves and evolves the social circle and cycle of people, laughter being the best medicine and key for relationship building.

However, the option that is clearly relevant to this theory and is also the alternate option, is 'Sense of Belonging (you 'get' the meme)'. Due to shared knowledge, and popular culture influence, finding a meme and understanding it to the core induces belongingness among users and effectively, influences social relationships with other users.

The second question deals with the kind of thought that occurs in users when a brand uses trendy memes and the majority opts for the first option.

This comes under the contents of UGT. Users find that the media has successfully analysed the various changes that are happening in the field and gives contents that correspond to these factors. When they feel that they can understand this new kind of method, this induces Personal Integrative Needs in individuals, where they feel like their prominence and status as digital users is restored and not compromised in any way.

The alternate choice was the third option, 'Tries to build a rapport with the audience'. This option is highly relevant in SLT content, as it gives importance to 'relationship building'

and 'sense of belonging'. In a way, users here can be passive and when they think/feel that the media is trying to maintain a relationship with them, they feel wanted and needed and thus, will use it for further purposes.

The third question is if memes can be an effective tool for marketing and the majority opted for Yes. Memes can certainly be an effective tool for marketing and this can be proved based on all the categories of needs in UGT. Users will understand the novel and unique methods of marketing by a brand, concisely and memorably (Cognitive and Social Integrative Needs); Users will feel satisfied (when they can understand the content and concept). It can be used for entertainment purposes as well, therefore, adding as a source for escaping reality (Affective and Tension-Free Needs); Sharing/Engaging with a meme-based marketing can make users feel like they are part of the group that has prominence and status, making them feel wanted and superior (Personal Integrative Needs).

In the case of SLT view, memes will naturally evolve due to the massive spread of digitalisation and the growing popular and internet culture. Once people understand and get familiar with various kinds of memes, and when they notice/comprehend their usage in marketing fields, they feel like they belong in a group and try to imitate or share this information with others (widening their radius of social integration).

The fourth question talks about a dating app called 'Schmooze' which uses memes to understand the user's humour and character, and then, matches perspectives with this data, and whether this technique is interesting and innovative and the majority opted for Yes.

Unlike other dating apps like Bumble and Hinge, where users can swipe right/left based on their sole preference, Schmooze uses memes to understand the type of content and humour the user has and matches them with potential partners using this data. In the context of UGT,

memes are the new trend. A few laughs can break the ice and create a lasting first impression (personal integrative and social integrative needs).

In the context of SLT, social and digital communication can enhance the internet language, therefore, shaping the user's meme 'game'. Imitation and observation of other users, their feedback and experiences, induce users to try things out just to feel belonged and included. No new and great ideas were initially appreciated, certain downfalls are certain.

The last question deals with whether memes can be used to understand the personality, interests, and character of a person, and the majority opted for Yes.

In the context of UGT, memes can be used to express the personalities of users/people. The kind of content, humour and style of sharing various memes can portray the person's personality and interests. This portrays and satisfies Affective. Cognitive and Personal Integrative needs as it shows the emotions and feelings, information and knowledge about the kind of memes that people/users engage in and has a standard or a status in the meme spectrum. In the context of SLT, being a part of meme culture can bring out a social identity due to shared preferences, knowledge, and experiences. People can use this fact and deal/blend with people who match their interests and ideologies. This enhances the person to be an integral part of the community and thus, can shape the person's personality, individually and in a group.

## CHAPTER 6 : ANALYSING IF MEME CAN BE A COMMUNICATION TOOL USING USES AND GRATIFICATION THEORY AND SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY:

This chapter will analyse the data taken from the section 'Communication' using Uses and Gratification Theory and Social Learning Theory.

The first question deals with how memes can be used in communication and interactive discourses and the majority chose the first option.

Using Uses and Gratification Theory, people's actions are driven by their innate needs and wants. Humour is always an easy choice to choose as it is lighthearted and creates a positive atmosphere (affective needs). Using Social Learning Theory, observation, imitation, and interaction with others, creates a mindset and a blueprint for future and potential communication discourses. People see others using memes for humorous purposes and to feel wanted. This potentially influences and shapes their interests, therefore trying to approach others through such trendy and funny memes. This transforms their communication strategies and humour becomes their way to a wider social relationship.

The second question deals with the evolution of memes in the communication medium, and the majority chose the first option.

In major social media apps, the kind of posts, comments, and videos that users interact and engage in, influence their overall digital landscape and language, which therefore increases their screen time, as it shows their preferences and interests. Due to this 'social network', contents in various social media platforms are heavily personalised for the user's convenience. Using UGT, the users will be fully aware of the kind of content they want to see and modify them accordingly. This satisfies their choices and interests (affective needs), therefore being more personalised.



Using SLT, as memes become more personalised in nature, enhances their ability to understand and explore various kinds of memes of similar content. This changes their overall social behaviour, and their digital language, which also shifts their social identity in a group as they can communicate and adapt (through imitation and observation for better content).

The third question inquires about people's interest if presented with a platform solely reliant on memes for communication and the majority opted for Yes.

Using UGT, sharing ideas/thoughts visually with a trendy/funny/apt picture can convey messages as efficiently as scripted content. This enhances the user's cognitive needs as it is a new kind of information and knowledge-seeking ability to talk through memes and not through words. This motivates users to engage in similar conversations (affective and tension-free needs), and a shared language and culture emerges through these platforms which enhances the social integrative needs of users, and memes can be a great tool for understanding one's personality as well as enhancing it, for example, updating themselves with new and trendy memes and not just the old ones (personal integrative needs).

Using SLT, through a meme-based platform, people can use this as an opportunity to try out what others are excited about, as this is an opportunity to understand and analyse other people's behaviours/attitudes. When they start using such platforms, positive reinforcements, i.e., feedback and good reactions from other users can help them to be more invested in these platforms.

The fourth question seeks people's view on the 'a picture speaks a thousand words' principle in the usage of memes and the majority opted for Yes.

Visual media can surely enhance the overall idea of content. Memes heavily depend on images and little texts. Using UGT, instead of reading long paragraphs, people prefer pictures and visuals. Memes have that potential, they can convey controversial/newsworthy information through humour, which can even go unnoticed if not aware of the background.

Using SLT, which focuses on observational learning and imitation, this ideology can be difficult at the beginning stage, but once people get the hang of it, it could be easier to comprehend and can even have the ability to understand the hidden meanings as well.

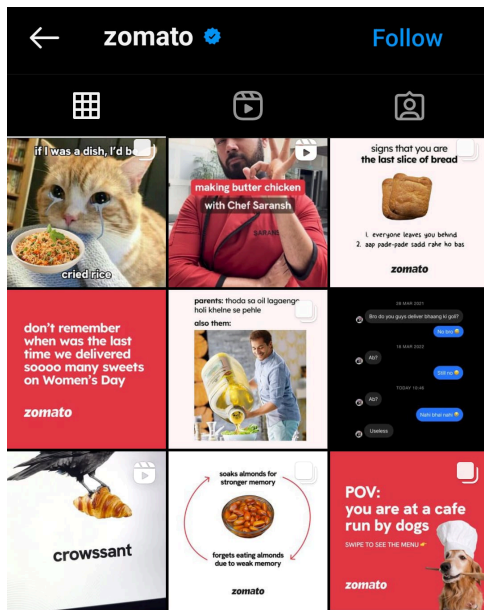
The fifth question deals with the enhancement of the power of memes and the majority opted for 'All of the above'.

Due to intense technological advancement and the rising influence of internet culture, people need to see various kinds of content to be captivated. Naturally, all fields will be in fierce competition for the audience to notice them. Using memes and trending images/content can get various kinds of people from different ages/cultural backgrounds to be engrossed in this. Voters in the age group of 18-25, the main users of social media platforms, may know about political leaders and celebrities because of their memes (if any), which can ultimately influence their voting choices. Using UGT, people become aware of how memes are used and this widens their knowledge due to the prominence of meme culture. To meet their affective needs, personal and social integrative needs, cognitive needs and tension-free needs, they use these memes to engage in such activities. Therefore, memes can certainly enhance these fields.

Using SLT, Public Relations agencies, due to the positive impact showcased by the usage of memes for the popularity of various celebrities, started using memes to enhance their social engagement with people of various interests; apps like Schmooze came about due to the influence of meme culture; a shared language breaks intercultural barriers; the powerful impact of memes and its addictive nature proves to be a marketing stunt to attract various people and users (imitation and observational learning).

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

In the sixth chapter, the theories successfully analysed that memes indeed play a huge role in the emerging marketing field. Taking the example of Zomato, their meme marketing has escalated their popularity with various kinds of people. “Their marketing strategy is a perfect blend of humour, creativity and reliability”, as mentioned by a website from Social Nation’s article, Zomato’s mouthwatering meme marketing magic’. Animal meme marketing has been



rising, especially the ones that have cats. The picture on the left shows how they use memes to attract social engagement. Compared with their competitor, Swiggy, Zomato has 939K followers whereas Swiggy has 503K followers. When a company/app starts to realise that its competitors' growth is rising on a large scale, they try to imitate its marketing strategy (Social Learning Theory). Zomato successfully used memes’ relatability, shareability, and memorability into consideration and

these are the factors that help users and people explore such apps to satisfy their needs (Uses and Gratification Theory). There's no better example to prove how memes can be an efficient marketing tool.

In the sixth Chapter, the theories successfully analysed how memes shape and become a new communication tool. Communication is the key to building relationships and the lock for maintaining them. Memes too, create a sense of community and belonging as people share memes that are of cultural references and others too, bonding people with similar experiences, and interests. Human beings being social beings, creates a bond with people of various kinds

uniting to the same emotion or content that can be humorous. Likewise, this can shape cultural attitudes and even alter cultural norms and stereotypes. Humour can be a great tool for making great changes of varying intensities for the betterment of society (Social Learning Theory).

Humour, Emotional bond, Social identity, and Entertainment, are some of the basic needs that humans try to achieve. Memes have the potential to satisfy these needs as it has humorous and funny content; can be informative as they can be used to portray powerful statements; sharing memes with the world can enhance the individual's social standing and act as a tool for entertainment as well. An example where memes acted as a powerful tool was the #MeToo Movement in China. Images of two unrelated things, a rabbit and a bowl of rice, were being circulated within this country. On the outer appearance, it looked cute, but there was a hidden



agenda behind this. China's censorship forced women and internet users to find an alternative option to voice out about sexual harassment. Pronounced as 'mi tu', women in China were able to share and spread their stories. Due to this, people

used memes for fulfilling their needs (Uses and Gratification Theory), and observing the massive spread of word through memes, led other women to use this as a source of communication to voice out their stories (Social Learning Theory).

The two theories successfully analysed how memes can be a powerful tool and agent for marketing and communication.

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