

Memevertisement: The Life Cycle of Online Meme Ads in Redefining the Brand Image

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Method Article

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Abstract

Today it is a common practice by advertisers and users themselves to induce different brands in *meme ads* (Memetic Social Media Ads), (Horvath, 2017). But the impact of memetic ads on the brand image is still questionable phenomenon. Along with images, symbols and texts used in any meme there is also a subliminal message attached with it usually decoded by the audience to which it is shared (Nooney & Portwood-Stacer, 2014). Due to the catchy nature of memes, different products and brands can be induced into different textual, audio, video or graphical memes in order to seek instant attention of the audience (Cozma, 2015). The present proposed research holds an element of newness as it would be the first time study to evaluate the impact of memetic ads on brand image. It would be beneficial for the advertisers and brand managers to redirect their use of brand name in any memetic ad campaign and to handle the consumer generated memetic ads inducing their brand.

Introduction

Nowadays it is common by advertisers and users themselves to induce different brands in *meme ads* (Memetic Social Media Ads), (Dora Horvath, 2017). But the impact of memetic ads on the brand image is still questionable phenomenon. Along with images, symbols and texts used in any meme there is also a subliminal message attached with it usually decoded by the audience to which it is shared (Nooney & Portwood-Stacer, 2014). Due to the catchy nature of memes, different products and brands can be induced into different textual, audio, video or graphical memes in order to seek instant attention of the audience (Cozma, 2015). The components of lifecycle of meme ads introduced by Murray (2013) are to be used to test the impact of meme ads on brand image. Later for further in-depth analysis is to be carried out through interviews while using a mind mapping technique as suggested by Dora (2017). For this purpose Murray (2013) in adapted lifecycle of meme ads presented different properties of each stage of the lifecycle, thus providing a solid ground for a quantitative approach to analyze the impact of meme ads on the brand image.

Research Gap and Questions

To find a number of brands used in social media memes is quite normal nowadays. Now it is of critical importance to find that how consumers associate different meanings to the brands after encountering the memetic ads (Dora Horvath, 2017). Thus, there is no any research yet performed which analyzed the impact of memetic ads on the brand image when respective brand is used in that memetic ad. Therefore, the following Research Questions are to be answered through this proposed research:

- How the memetic ad impacts the overall image of a brand when introduced in that respective memetic ad?
- If the Brand used in a memetic ad is overshadowed by the content of that memetic ad?
- What is the nature of consumers' perceptual opinions on memetic ads?

Objectives of the Research

- To analyze the nature of components of the lifecycle of memetic ads.
- To get to know the overall impact of memetic ads on brand image.
- To study the consumers perceptions towards the brands induced in any memetic ads and the meanings they align to those brands.
- To develop a set of instructions for advertisers and different brands towards the usage of products in meme advertisement.

Significance of the Study

This proposed research holds an element of newness as it would be the first time study to evaluate the impact of memetic ads on brand image. It would be beneficial for the advertisers and brand managers to redirect their use of brand name in any memetic ad campaign and to handle the consumer generated memetic ads inducing their brand.

Literature Review

The roots of memes are associated somewhere in the theory of biological evolution. Dawkins (1976) introduced the idea of memes and elaborated how memes work among individuals during their interaction. In his book *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkin (1976) presented the meme as an imitating unit responsible for the transmission of information, data or ideas. The practical execution of genes and memes are relatable as the genes get transferred from one body to the other through the process of intercourse and memes get transferred from one human brain to other human brain through the process of replication when different human beings interact with each other (Dawkins, 1976).

The evolutionary past of the memes did not have numerous information cascading mediums such as social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and many others. Modern communication technologies and new ways of interaction on internet have enabled the transmission of memes to be executed even more briskly among different individuals (Blackmore, 1999). Memes are catchy in their nature such as they may comprise of subliminal sense of humor, fear appeal or any message accepted by a large audience as a collective interpretable idea (Ashley, 2013). Due to the catchy nature of memes, different products and brands can be induced into different textual, audio, video or graphical memes in order to seek instant attention of the audience (Cozma, 2015). Also, for the sake of increase in sales by inspiring their customers some of the businesses took into account the importance of the replicability of the memes when used as advertisement purposes (Rintel, 2013).

Murray (2013) adapted a lifecycle model of the memes presented by Bjarneskans (2005) and introduced it into memes advertisement in order to get to know that how do meme ads work and convey the message related to the brand or product to the relative audience. Meme ad lifecycle consists of six

different stages such as transmission, decoding, infection, storage, survival and retransmission thus providing a continuous loop of meme ad circulation among the consumers (Neol Murray, 2013)

Through meme ads consumers are able to manifest their internal meanings and perceptions towards the brand that is introduced in the respective meme ad, thus reflecting their experiences in redefining a new positioning of that brand (Dora Horvath, 2017). Therefore, the representation of ideas on such large scale can be considered as a helping tool for assessment of the redefined image of any brand, when exposed in meme ads. For this purpose, a qualitative approach can be applied such as mind mapping to find out the second order or third order meanings aligned to the brands by consumers (Dora Horvath, 2017).

Also, Murray (2013) in adapted lifecycle of meme ads presented different properties of each stage of the lifecycle, thus providing a solid ground for a quantitative approach to analyze the impact of meme ads on the brand image. In the meme ad lifecycle the first stage holds the factors like mutation, fecundity, simplicity, primordial drives, repetition and media selection, while second stage holds the factors like visibility and meme-complex fit, on the other hand third stage holds factors like Baits, Originality and digestibility while fourth stage holds the factors like assimilation, elaboration and external storage while fifth stage comes with the factors like immunity and sociotype fit, at the end last stage holds the factors like hooks, gatekeeping hosts, celebrity hosts and retro mutation (Neol Murray, 2013).

Hypotheses

- There is no significant relationship between components of meme ads' lifecycle and brand image.
- There is a positive relationship between components of meme ads' lifecycle and brand image.
- There is a negative relationship between components of meme ads' lifecycle and brand image.
- Memetic ads tend the consumers to associate different meanings to relative brands.

Methodology

Philosophy

The philosophy of the research alludes towards the presumptions made by an analyst with respect to how research ought to be directed to create learning hence comprehension of research ideal models is basic for scientists and research theories fall between the two extremes, in particular positivism and interpretivism (Erkan, 2016). Positivism accepts that the truth can be portrayed as unbiased by such properties that can be quantified and depends upon the instrument designed by the scientist; in this way positivism is connected with factual investigation and quantitative analysis while interpretivism considers the subjectivity of human mind thus claims that it is not possible to measure the reality in an objective aspect. Thus, the proposed research philosophy would be *Pragmatism* (Combination of both

positivism and interpretivism) because first part of proposed research is quantitative and second is qualitative.

Research Approach

There are two sorts of methodologies, known as deductive methodology and inductive methodology while it is possible to combine both approaches such as Erkan (2016) introduced the *Triangulation* of quantitative and qualitative methods for better results. Thus, *Triangulation* is the proposed approach of research.

Research Strategy

Testing its hypothesis is one of the aims of this study; so for this purpose this research demands large quantity of data to be collected through survey method later for the deeper understanding of the quantitative phase results in-depth interviews using mind mapping techniques would be carried out for further better explanation of the results.

Population

Making a choice about population size is also of critical importance for a researcher. Collis and Hussey (2009) said that size of the sample must be large enough for the representation of the population respectively. Population of this research is the respondents who use social media platforms are aware of the meme ads.

Data collection and Sampling

Aim of this research is to validate its hypothesis through empirical investigation and further evaluation through interviews. In order to get this aim fulfilled, a survey method will be selected and a questionnaire will be designed using the components of lifecycle of memes presented by Murray (2013). Sample size would be selected by (Constructs×10) rule.

Analysis of Quantitative Data

SPSS software would be used for data analysis. Tests such as preliminary screening, missing values treatment, reliability test, normality test and for finding the impact multivariate regression test would be applied.

Declarations

Statement for Conflict of Interest

There exist no conflict of interest among the authors of this article.

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Figures

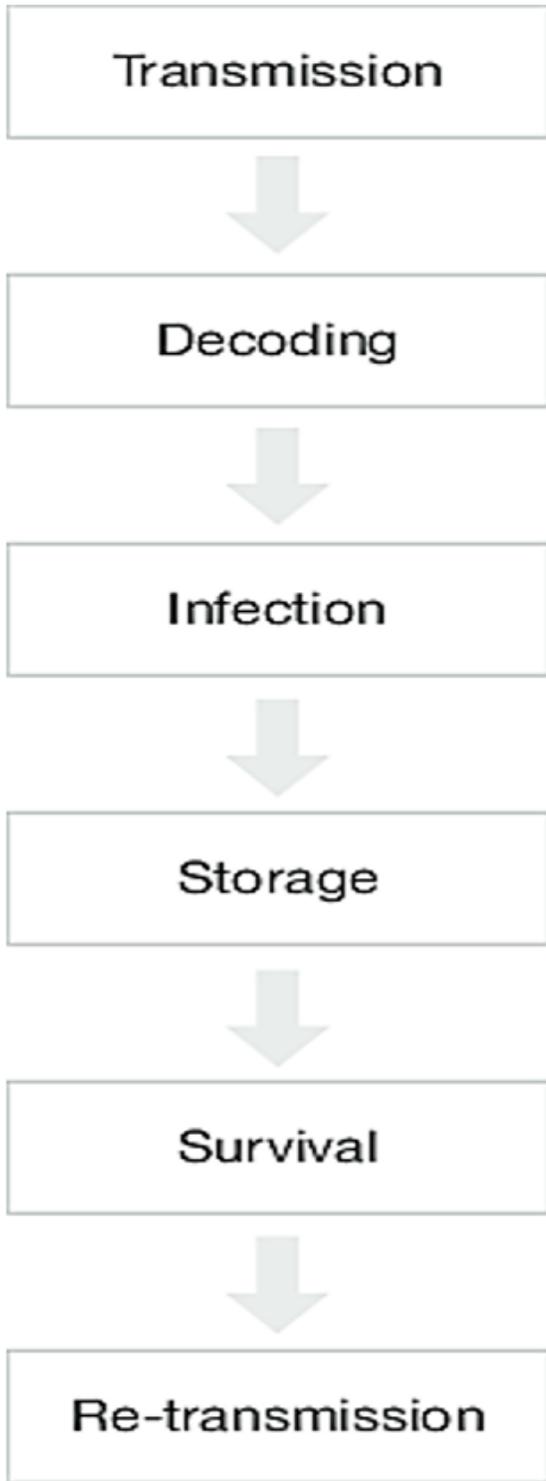


Figure 1

Meme Ad Lifecycle by Murray (2013)