Impact of Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives on Brand Engagement: The Moderating Role of User Generation

Alanood Almaghlouth[1], Mahmoud Saleh[2]

King Saud University, College of Business Administration,
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia[1,2]

ABSTRACT

In Saudi Arabia, social media has become integral to the digital landscape, connecting people, businesses, and communities across borders. Amidst this digital marketing context, an emerging phenomenon showing the widespread use of internet memes raised questions about to what extent they are impactful to the brand. Therefore, this research aims to identify the impact of meme-based brand content on consumer's brand engagement through the internal behavioural motives it evokes, including perceived pleasure, social gratification, self-congruence, and escapism. It also aims to explore the moderating role of generation type on consumer's brand engagement. A quantitative approach, including an online survey, collected 321 respondents, was applied. The research applied two statistical analyses, multi-linear regression. Findings showed that there are significant relationships between the four motives resulting from Memes and consumer's brand engagement. Moreover, the study revealed that the user's generation plays a moderating role in this relationship because different generations are motivated differently by memes. While the younger Generation showed higher brand engagement driven by memes escapism and social gratification, older generations were motivated by escapism and self-congruence. The research contribution is manifested through the growing body of knowledge on social media marketing, digital consumer behaviours, and the evolving landscape of digital communication. Findings will empower digital marketers, content creators, influencers, and social media managers to create more effective meme-driven campaigns about brands.

Keywords

Memes, Motives, Brand Engagement, Perceived pleasure, Self-Congruence, Social Gratification, Escapism

1. Introduction

Social media has become an integral part of consumers' daily interaction, connecting people across the globe and providing a platform for communication, entertainment, and brand interaction. In Saudi Arabia, social media has become integral to the digital landscape, connecting people, businesses, and communities across borders. Statistics show that there are 35.33 million social media users in Saudi Arabia, covering 94.30% of the population (GlobalMediaInsight, 2023). This high percentage reflects the significant role of social media in Saudi consumers' lifestyles.

Through interactions on social media, businesses that exist online are attempting to catch consumers' attention from the massive exposure of posts and content about their brands on social media by applying different digital marketing strategies. One of these strategies is meme-

based content. Amidst this digital landscape, this emerging phenomenon includes the widespread use of internet memes, which encapsulate the digital culture (Shifman, 2014). Many disciplines, including psychology, anthropology, and linguistics, widely adopt the term meme. In the digital marketing context, although memes are considered a contemporary cultural way of communication on social media networks, marketers apply them in their marketing activities (Murray et al., 2014). These objects, often relatable images, audio, or videos, spread rapidly through social networks, captivating users and generating conversations. Therefore, mems are digital metaphors with specific viral content characteristics that are used for marketing purposes to shape the mindsets and behaviours of consumers about brands (Shifman, 2014).

Various research investigated the impact of memes-based content in driving consumer engagement (Malodia et al., 2022), enhancing brand image (Teng & Lee, 2022), and brand experience (Vasile, 2021) and brand purchase (Meer et al., 2022). Moreover, McShane et al. (2021) demonstrated that the use of emojis, a form of meme, can increase brand engagement on Twitter. Further research showed that electronic word-of-mouth, often conveyed through memes, can lead to consumer brand engagement (Srivastava et al., 2021). However, Roster (2021) found inconclusive quantitative results on the impact of memes on survey engagement but noted that respondents found that memes provide respondents a fun break and relief from the cognitive burdens of answering online survey questions.

Research has consistently show that perceived pleasure plays a significant role in consumer brand engagement when considering the impact of perceived pleasure (Porat & Tractinsky 2012; Loureiro et al., 2019; Rather, 2019; Cai & Xu, 2006). Generally, these studies demonstrated that consumer-generated media stimuli, which can elicit pleasure, are positively related to consumer brand engagement. However, in the context of mems-based content, there was a limitation in the literature regarding the impact of perceived pleasure resulting from memes on brand engagement.

Furthermore, the impact of social gratification on consumer's brand engagement is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon as evidenced by a range of studies. Kujur and Singh (2017) and Kujur and Singh (2020) highlight the significant role of content characteristics, such as vividness, interactivity, and entertainment, in driving consumer brand engagement on social networking sites. These findings are further supported by Gogan et al. (2018), emphasizing the importance of social gratification in influencing users' emotional states and continuance use intention for using the online social network.

Previous research consistently shows that self-congruence significantly impacts consumer's brand engagement. It has been found that both self-brand image and value congruity influence consumer's brand engagement in online brand communities, and that brand engagement positively affects brand loyalty (Islam et al., 2018). This was further supported by Rabbanee et al. (2020), who found that self-congruity with a brand, particularly the social self, influences brand attachment and, subsequently, consumer engagement on social networking sites.

Regarding escapism, it has been shown that escapism can have both positive and negative effects on consumer engagement. Triantafillidou and Siomkos (2018) found that while escapism can distract consumers from brand content, it can also enhance their pleasure and presence in a virtual reality store (Loureiro et al., 2021). Similarly, Mir (2023) further demonstrated the influence of self-escapism motivation on online shopping engagement, with a partial direct impact on shopping cart use and online buying behaviour. These studies

collectively suggest that escapism can be a powerful tool for enhancing consumer brand engagement, but more research is needed on digital content memes-based marketing.

Those factors are considered internal motives related to consumers, driven by internal psychological needs, motivations, and behavioural effects of consuming mems-based content. Little empirical research exists considering the internal behavioural factors of these memes on consumer's brand engagement and attitudes. Thus, this research aims to fill that gap by exploring the influence of internal behavioural motives of memes-based content, including perceived pleasure, social gratification, self-congruence, and escapism, on user's brand engagement, with the moderating role of user's generation.

Generational differences significantly influence how individuals perceive and engage with memes' contents. Baby boomers, millennials, and Gen Z have distinct digital behaviours (Joiner et al., 2013). Understanding these generational nuances is crucial for marketers aiming to maximize the effectiveness of meme-based marketing strategies. Although there were many studies examining the type of generation with interaction with meme marketing, with a focus on Gen-Z (Bara & Magano,2021; Vardeman, 2024; Kala & Pawar,2022), there was a lack of research considering Gen-X and millennials.

Therefore, the main objective of this research is to identify the impact of memes-based content on consumer's brand engagement through the internal behavioural motives it evokes, including perceived pleasure, social gratification, self-congruence, and escapism. Also, this research aims to explore the moderating role of user's generation type on the relationship between meme's behavioural motives and consumer's brand engagement.

Research contribution will be manifested through the growing body of knowledge on social media marketing, digital consumer behaviours, and the evolving landscape of digital communication. Findings will empower marketers, content creators, influencers and social media managers to create more effective meme-driven campaigns that resonate with diverse audiences. Thus, by understanding the dynamics of meme in social media and its impact on consumer's brand engagement, this research will provide practical insights for social media managers and content creators.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media Memes
The concept of memes has evolved in the literature in different developmental stages. In the early stage, memes were considered a function of imitation. Dawkins (1976) was the first researcher to conceptualize the term "meme", claiming that memes are similar to genes by progressing the transmission of social ideas (Bauckhage, 2011). In the following stages, memes have developed from a unit of cultural transmission to a unit of internet culture (Zulli & Zulli, 2020) and become a component of linguistic discourse (Zenner & Geeraerts, 2018). With the evolution of social media networks, memes have a linguistic character that comes in various forms, including words, images, videos, and audio (Cannizzaro, 2016). Thus, memes play a significant role in social media and have become part of consumers' daily digital lives (Way, 2019). Moreover, the high spread of mems becomes valuable for marketers as it increases consumer's brand engagement (Shifman,2014). Much research has investigated the impact of memes on achieving digital marketing objectives, such as advertisement effectiveness (Williams, 2000), influencing market perceptions (Pech, 2003), augmenting customer experience (Csordás et al., 2017), and brand engagement (Brubaker et al., 2018).

So, Memes on social media networks are considered a rich content as they reflect the social media discourse and explain how ideas accumulate in condensed units and evolve through social networks (Denisova, 2019). It has been demonstrated that memes have emerged in social, cultural, and political contexts. The design of many social media networks allows users to participate in creating memes-based content, which was identified as user-generated content (Denisova, 2019). Although memes may be considered no different from other cultural commodities, opinions and views can be articulated through communication in a memetic way. Wiggins (2019) states that memes have a discursive power, that is, the capacity to constitute and reconstitute brand engagement in social networks. He distinguished internet memes from offline memes, stating that the former has the characteristics of forms' variety and is virality-dependent.

2.2 Memes Customers-related Factors

Customer-related factors of memes are crucial in meme marketing. They resonate with the audience and influence their engagement with the meme. Many studies have identified critical customer-related factors, including relevance (Yus, 2019; Scott, 2021) iconicity, humour (Gardner et al., 2021; Hecker, 2020; Yang, 2022), shareability (Blommaert & Varis, 2015; Cohen, 2019; Gardner et al., 2021), and social gratification (Malodia et al., 2022). These factors can enhance escapism, social gratification, and content gratification for target customers, organically increasing reach within target segments and enhancing brand performance regarding recall and engagement (Malodia et al., 2022). Malodia et al. (2022) have referred the meme-customer-related factors as the process, social, and content gratifications and pleasure caused by viewing or sharing memes. Rabbanee et al. (2020) found that self-congruity with a brand is one of the factors affecting brand attachment and consumer engagement on social networking sites. Of all these factors, this study will focus on four factors that motivate consumers to engage in social media memes, they are: perceived pleasure, self-congruence, social gratification, and escapism.

2.2.1 Perceived Pleasure

Perceived pleasure in a marketing context refers to the subjective feeling of enjoyment or satisfaction that a consumer experiences when interacting with a product, service, or brand. It is a concept related to consumer behaviour and psychology, specifically to understanding how consumers perceive and respond to various marketing stimuli. Previous studies have illuminated the concept of perceived pleasure and its influence on consumer motives and behaviour in several ways. Consumers usually passively obtain and experience pleasures from different goods or services (Alba & Williams, 2013). Hedonic product value can positively influence satisfaction (Ladeira et al., 2016).

Pleasurable and satisfied experiences with a brand can enhance consumer loyalty (Ahrholdt et al., 2019; Bakırtaş & Divanoğlu, 2013) and repeat purchases as consumers seek to replicate the positive feelings associated with the brand. Moreover, pleased consumers are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards it, express a greater intention to repeat purchases (Chiu et al., 2014). In online platforms, it has been observed that delighted consumers are more likely to share their positive experiences with others, leading to word-of-mouth marketing (Huang et al., 2017).

A study by Ha and Lennon (2010) revealed that pleasure and arousal induced by various online visual merchandising cues were positively related to consumer satisfaction, purchase intention, and approach behaviour. Their study included different situational involvement, such as browsing and purchasing (Ha & Lennon, 2010). This reflects the importance of online visual

cues for a consumer's pleasurable experience. In social media, pleasure can create emotional connections between consumers and brands, fostering stronger relationships and engagement. A further study by Jin et al. (2021) investigated the impact of applying virtual reality technology on emotional states. The results revealed that consumers' VR store experience (Virtual reality Store experience) evoked positive emotions and increased perceived store attractiveness (Jin et al., 2021).

Considering the relationship between pleasure and consumer's brand engagement, previous research consistently shows that perceived pleasure significantly impacts consumer's brand engagement. Park and Ha (2021) demonstrated that positive emotions, prompted by perceived values in information interactions, lead to consumer's brand engagement on social media. This is further supported by Porat and Tractinsky (2012) who found that the design of a web store, particularly its aesthetics and usability, can influence visitors' emotions and attitudes, ultimately affecting their brand engagement. Wang and Jiang (2007) add to this by highlighting the role of affect in consumption experiences, with consumers often seeking to experience specific effects, such as pleasure, during the consumption process. These findings collectively underscore the significant impact of perceived pleasure on consumer's brand engagement on social media. However, Halik & Nugroho (2022) found that consumer pleasure weakens the effect of content marketing on online shopping.

Therefore, perceived pleasure is a significant factor in consumer behaviour and can influence motives, attitudes, and behaviours in the context of marketing. This led to the formulation of the first hypothesis as follows:

H1. Perceived pleasure resulting from social media memes positively affects consumer's brand engagement.

2.2.2 Self-congruence
The theory of self-congruence (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy & Samli, 1985) is a psychological theory that explains how consumers' perceptions of products or brands align with their self-concept or self-image. According to this theory, consumers are motivated to select products or brands that are congruent with their self-image or identity.

Many studies have investigated the role of self-congruence in the context of consumer behaviour (Hosany & Martin, 2019) including its impact on consumers' choices (Ahn et al., 2013), attitudes (Zhu et al., 2019), emotional brand attachment, and consequently brand loyalty (Frank et al., 2014). Moreover, Ekinci and Riley (2003) found that actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence are both related to consumer behaviour, but their influence varies. The concept of ideal self-concept congruence is positively related to customer attitude, satisfaction, and service quality (Ekinci & Riley, 2003). These studies collectively confirm that consumers are likelier to choose products or brands that reflect or enhance their self-concept.

Brands often have personality traits associated with them, and consumers may choose brands with personalities congruent with their own self-image (Fournier, 1998; Keller, 2008; Catalin & Andreea, 2014). Marketers can leverage self-congruence theory by developing branding strategies that align with target consumers' self-concepts, using messaging and imagery that resonate with their values and identity.

From a social media networks perspective, research by Rabbanee et al. (2020) found that self-congruity with a brand is one of the factors affecting brand attachment and consumer

engagement on social networking sites, particularly Facebook. This is supported by a study that uses self-congruence as a moderator to investigate brand-related content in social media networks on consumer's extra-role behaviour, including helping behaviour and sportsmanship, and suggests that brands should include entertainment factors in their social media content to boost consumer voluntary behaviour and, consequently, their engagement (Guttena et al., 2024).

A recent study has shown that social media users are likelier to post content, including memes that resemble them and reflect true self-congruence. Social media platforms offer an opportunity for users to self-present authentically (Neufeld-Wall, 2023). Further research on the impact of social media memes on self-congruence has revealed several key findings. Mazambani et al. (2015) found that memes consistent with a group's theme are more likely to spread, while Wong and Holyoak (2021) identified congruity, relatability, and metaphorical aptness as key factors influencing meme sharing. Melo (2018) highlighted the role of memes in shaping self-images and circulating stereotypes, as memes have special discursive characters that enable them to circulate within social groups. Yus (2018) discussed the influence of meme communication on self-concept and identity. These studies collectively suggest that social media memes can significantly shape self-congruence by influencing group dynamics, personal relatability, and self-image.

In essence, the theory of self-congruence highlights the importance of understanding consumers' self-concepts and how they shape preferences and behaviours in the context of social media memes marketing. This led to the formulation of the second hypothesis as follows:

H2: Self-congruence resulting from social media memes positively affects consumer's brand engagement.

2.2.3 Social Gratification
Social gratification refers to the psychological satisfaction or pleasure that individuals derive from their social interactions, relationships, and activities within the context of consumer behaviour (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1997). This concept is rooted in the idea that individuals are influenced by social factors when making consumption decisions. Their choices are often driven by the desire to fulfil social needs (Palmgreen, 1984). In the social media context, consuming and creating on social media platforms allow users to achieve social gratification (Wright et al., 2021). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that social media networks provide users with media gratification in an immersive experience (Raj, 2021).

The rise of social media has amplified the role of social gratification in consumer behaviour. People showcase their lifestyles and experiences on social platforms to seek validation, likes, comments, and shares in a way researcher described as meaningful communication that fulfils their social needs and well-being (Rieger & Klimmt, 2018). Meaningful memes, also called eudaimonic memes, which focus on themes such as human connection, virtue, and endurance, have the potential to uplift users emotionally, inspire them to strive for personal growth and motivate them to engage in positive behaviours (Rieger & Klimmt, 2019).

Numerous studies discussed critical variables related to social gratification and its correlation with social media memes. Melodia et al. (2022) have proposed a theoretical framework for meme marketing, including customer-related factors. Social gratification is one of these factors that researchers recommend to enhance the creation of memes-based content to increase reach and improve brand performance in terms of brand recall and engagement (Melodia et al., 2022).

Cahya and Triputra (2017) identified key motives influencing consumers to participate in memes of social media networks, namely, Path. These motives are entertainment, self-expression, socializing, and informativeness. Although the study reveals that humour is a key feature in internet memes, social gratification clearly connects with consumers' engagement with memes. Socializing and community building play a role in how audiences interact with internet memes (Cahya & Triputra, 2017).

Zhang and Gearhart (2022) found that engagement with politically-related memes can significantly impact how individuals interact with and use political content in a social media environment, providing specific gratifications based on how users engage with the content. They suggest that meme creators, particularly those using memes for political observation, have the potential to influence a broad audience and engage them in political issues through persuasive and emotionally impactful content. In similar contexts, it has been explored that the core motives for users to engage with political memes are self-expression, social identity, and entertainment. Regarding social identity, users engage with memes to identify with others who share similar beliefs, values, and experiences. Memes create a sense of relatedness and belonging among users, fostering a feeling of community and shared understanding (Leiser, 2022). These findings shed light on the complex dynamics of social media meme usage and its implications for user engagement and communication in the digital age.

Considering the role of social gratification resulting from social media on consumer engagement, research has shown that social gratification can significantly impact user engagement. Dange et al. (2022) and Chen and Cheung (2019) both found that users are motivated to engage with ephemeral content, such as memes, due to the fear of missing out, trust, immediacy, and social pressure and that this engagement is influenced by gratification. Further study supports this, showing that uses and gratification motivations, including social interaction and entertainment, can increase social media stickiness and engagement (Hoque & Hossain, 2023).

These studies provide insights into why audiences engage with internet memes on social media and shed light on the various factors driving brand engagement in this form of digital content. This leads to conclude the third hypothesis as follows:

H3: Social gratification resulting from social media memes positively affects consumer's brand engagement.

2.2.4 Escapism
The notion of escapism, or self-selected separation, has been a crucial subject in consumer behaviour studies, including media consumption escapism (Batat & Wohlfeil, 2009; Giddings, 2009), psychological and cognitive perspectives (Henning & Vorderer, 2001), retail and servicescape experience (Booms & Bitner, 1982). Escapism refers to the deliberate act of seeking relief or distraction from everyday real life problems through various consumption experiences (Jouhki et al., 2022). From a consumer perspective, escapism defines any consumption behaviour that distracts people away from a stressor (Mandel et al., 2017). Research by Jones et al. (2018) explores the concept of escapism in media consumption by highlighting the immersive and interactive nature of engaging with fictional narratives. They state that viewers not only passively consume content but also actively engage with the narrative, imagining possibilities beyond what is explicitly shown.

In the context of cyberspace and online consumer behaviour, the element of escapism plays a significant role. It has been demonstrated that the addictive nature of retailers' shopping apps

leads to regrettable escapism. This is due to the flow states of mind experienced during escapism (Mclean et al., 2022). This is getting more noticeable in social media networks. Kırcaburun and Griffiths (2019) investigated the relationship between perceived feelings of escapism and problematic Instagram use among young users. The study explores how different aspects of Instagram usage, such as watching live streams and liking and commenting on posts, are associated with problematic use. Therefore, understanding escapism can help address these issues by providing insights into why users may engage in addictive behaviours on the platform (Kırcaburun and Griffiths, 2019).

Considering the role of memes on social media, Meldoai et al. (2022) propose that escapism motivates consumers to view and transmit memes. This aligns with a study by Bowo et al. (2024), which discusses the role played by memes in providing escapism for individuals in various ways. They identified key variables regarding the role of memes in escapism. It includes humour, entertainment, connection and community, creative expression, cultural references, and nostalgia. By evoking nostalgia or cultural references, memes can transport individuals to a different time or place, offering a form of escapism through comforting content (Bowo et al., 2024).

Regarding the role of escapism on consumer's brand engagement, it has been shown that escapism can have both positive and negative effects on consumer's brand engagement. Triantafillidou and Siomkos (2018) found that while escapism can distract consumers from brand content, it can also enhance their pleasure and presence in a virtual reality store (Loureiro et al., 2021). Similarly, Mir (2023) demonstrated the influence of self-escapism on online shopping engagement, with a direct impact on shopping cart use and buying behaviour. These studies collectively suggest that escapism can be a powerful tool for enhancing consumer's brand engagement. However, more research is needed on digital content memes-based marketing.

Overall, escapism in consumer behaviour involves actively seeking and detachment from the mundane through various forms of consumption. Accordingly, users perceive memes as a medium for escapism and moments of relief, shaping their engagement with different content in digital spaces. This leads to conclude the fourth hypothesis as follows:

H4: Escapism resulting from social media memes positively influence consumer's brand engagement.

2.3 Consumer Engagement

Consumer brand engagement is a multifaceted concept encompassing participation, connection, and interaction with a brand or organization (Vivek, 2009). This engagement can manifest in various forms, such as enthusiasm, conscious participation, and social interaction (Vivek, 2009). In the context of car communities, consumer engagement is dynamic and multidimensional, leading to enhanced loyalty, satisfaction, and value co-creation (Nurrokhman, 2021). Innovative strategies, including the use of technology, are crucial for effective consumer engagement (Pangriya & singh, 2021). In the retail sector, factors such as product variety, discounts, and store ambiance significantly influence consumer engagement (Mahobia et al., 2016).

In social media networks, engagement is determined based on customers' comments, likes, and shares of posts (Dolan et al., 2019; Santos et al., 2019). The term has been widely used in the

context of digital marketing, describing the nature of consumers' interactive experiences on social media networks (Oh et al., 2018).

Current research raises a question of the extent to which different generation types can influence how consumers interact and engage with digital marketing strategies, particularly memes-based content. Age and generation diversity are evident in Saudi Arabia; according to the General Authority of Statistics, the Saudi Arabian population is 32,175,224, and the average age is 29 (Saudicensus.sa, 2022). That reflects that most of the population belongs to Generation Y, also known as millennials. Statistics show that Generation Z makes up 39% of the population, while Generation Y makes up 60%. Generation X makes up only 25.5% (Saudicensus.sa, 2022).

Research on consumer brand engagement and generation type has revealed several key findings. Msallati (2021) found that the type of advertising message can significantly impact consumer' brand engagement, with cognitive appeals leading to higher levels of engagement. This effect is further influenced by the generation of the consumer, with different generations evaluating advertising stimuli differently. Fletcher and Emmanuel-Stephen (2016) highlighted social media's role in reshaping Generation Y's consumption patterns, particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America.

Kaihatu (2020) demonstrated the impact of digital marketing on consumer's brand engagement and purchase intention, particularly in Generation Z. Finally, Dasgupta and Grover (2018) emphasized the importance of mood analysis in optimizing millennial consumer engagement. Additionally, it has been found that personal branding, social phobia, and self-focus affect how and to what extent members of Gen Y choose to engage on social media platforms (Brataas & Stothers, 2020). However, there is a research gap regarding measuring the engagement of Generation X. These studies underscore the complex interplay between digital marketing, consumer engagement with memes, and the need for tailored strategies based on generation type. Therefore, this leads to conclude the third hypothesis as follows:

H5: Behavioural effects of Mems, including perceived pleasure, self-congruence, social gratification, and escapism, are contingent upon the user's generation type, ultimately leading to consumer brand engagement.

2.4 Conceptual model
Based on the previous literature review and the suggested hypotheses, this research proposes the research' conceptual model as shown in figure 1.
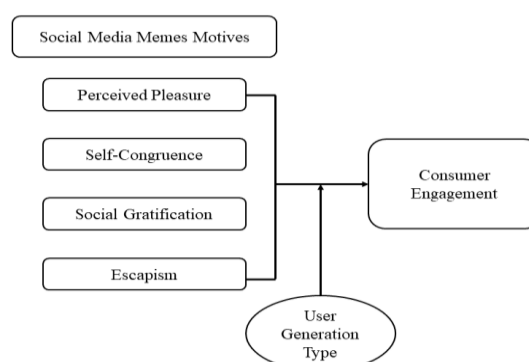

Figure1: Conceptual framework of the research

3. Methodology

3.1 Population and Sampling

The study population is residents in Saudi Arabia who use online memes regarding different brands that they are interested in. In 2024, statistics showed approximately 35.33 million social media users in Saudi Arabia, which covers about 94.30% of the population (GlobalMediaInsight, 2024). On average, people in Saudi Arabia spend 7 hours and 9 minutes per day using the internet and 3 hours and 6 minutes per day on social media (Statista, 2024). The most used social media platforms in Saudi Arabia in 2024 are WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, and Twitter GlobalMediaInsight, 2024).

In psychology and consumer behaviour research, the primary method employed is empirical research, where data are drawn from objective evidence, such as surveys (Stimson, 2014). Thus, this research adopted a quantitative method approach and conducted non-probability sampling, namely convenience sampling method. This method involves selecting readily available and willing participants to participate in the study. Although convenience sampling has some limitations regarding sampling bias, it is considered an easy way for the researcher to access the sample units (Saravanavel, 2009). The primary data are collected using an online survey on Microsoft Forms. The nature of this research requires a large sample size to ensure the reliability and generalizability of the results (Hackett, 2018).

3.2 Scale Sources

Malodia et al. (2022) proposed a comprehensive framework for creating viral memes. Their model considers content-related factors, customer-related factors, and media-related factors. In this research, only customer-related factors, including perceived pleasure, self-congruence, social gratification and escapism, have been adopted. Perceived pleasure included three Likert-type statements to measure the extent to which a consumer expresses pleasure in consuming content. The scale was labelled as the Hedonic dimension of the CIP sourced from Voss et al. (2003). Self-congruence was measured with items adapted from Rabbanee and Spence (2020) and Sirgy et al. (1997). Social gratification and escapism scales were adapted from Malodia et al. (2022) and Lee & Ma (2012) cited in Malodia et al. (2022). Customer's brand engagement in social media memes scales with its three components (like, share, and comment) were adapted from (Rabbanee et al., 2020). Respondents are generally asked to rate their answers on a Likert-type scale, with five points ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree (Carifio & Perla, 2007).

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

This study relies on a survey for data collection. The survey is based on readings, previous studies, professional literature, and relevant published and unpublished theses. The questionnaire was designed through Microsoft Forms and distributed to potential survey participants. In this research, an online survey will be used to collect data for the study. These data will be used for statistical analysis.

3.4 Instrument Validity

A number of tests were performed on the questionnaire to ensure its validity and reliability. The validity of the questionnaire has been checked by:

3.4.1 Internal Consistency

The internal consistency of the questionnaire is the first statistical test used to determine its validity. Internal consistency is measured through the correlation coefficients between each

item in the construct and its total. Internal consistency of Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives as follows:-

Table 1: Correlation coefficient of each item of Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives

Perceived pleasure			**Self-congruency**		
Items	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Sig.**	**Paragraph**	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Sig.**
Item (1)	0.822**	0.000	Item (1)	0.906**	0.000
Item (2)	0.817**	0.000	Item (2)	0.941**	0.000
Item (3)	0.810**	0.000	Item (3)	0.952**	0.000
			Item (4)	0.952**	0.000
			Item (5)	0.949**	0.000
Social gratification			**Escapism**		
Item (1)	0.937**	0.000	Item (1)	0.542**	0.000
Item (2)	0.958**	0.000	Item (2)	0.855**	0.000
Item (3)	0.954**	0.000	Item (3)	0.857**	0.000
Item (4)	0.939**	0.000	Item (4)	0.873**	0.000

Table 1 clarifies the correlation coefficient for each item in Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of all items are significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), so it can be said that Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives scales are valid to measure what it was set for. Internal consistency of Consumer's Brand Engagement as follows :-

Table 2: Correlation coefficient of each item of consumer's brand engagement

Engagement Like			**Engagement Share**			**Engagement Comment**		
Paragraph	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Sig.**	**Paragraph**	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Sig.**	**Paragraph**	**Correlation Coefficient**	**Sig.**
Item (1)	0.865**	0.000	Item (1)	0.876**	0.000	Item (1)	0.876**	0.000
Item (2)	0.893**	0.000	Item (2)	0.921**	0.000	Item (2)	0.906**	0.000
Item (3)	0.840**	0.000	Item (3)	0.882**	0.000	Item (3)	0.843**	0.000

Table 2 clarifies the correlation coefficient for each item in Consumer's Brand Engagement. The p-values (Sig.) are less than 0.05, so the correlation coefficients of all items are significant at ($\alpha \leq 0.05$), so it can be said that Consumer's Brand Engagement scales are valid to measur what it was set for.

Composite Reliability (CR), a measure of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable (Bacon et al., 1995), was computed to test the factor's internal consistency. The acceptable threshold is CR>.70 (Sarstedt et al., 2022). Based on Table 4, it is initiated that CR value is greater than 0.7 for all the studied constructs which are acceptable values.

3.4.2 Construct validity

Convergent Validity: Convergent validity is established when items in a particular measure converge to represent the underlying construct. It is tested by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for any construct and Composite Reliability. The value of AVE is equivalent to the average of the square of completely standardized factor loadings across all its indicators (Cheung et al., 2023). The AVE should not be lower than 0.5 to demonstrate an acceptable level of convergent validity, meaning that the latent construct explains no less than 50% of the indicator variance (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Within this study, the factor loadings were mostly exceeded 0.612. The factor loadings ranged from 0.613 to 0.882. The AVE of the result indicates that all the variables have a value greater than 0.5 which means that less error remains. The highest AVE is "Consumer's Brand Engagement (Comment)" which is 0.7647 followed by Self-Congruency 0.631. The lowest AVE is "Consumer Engagement (Share)" which is 0.536. Based on Table 4, it is initiated that the AVE value is greater than 0.5 which are acceptable values for all the constructs.

Table 4: Convergent Validity (AVE and CR)

Group	No. Of items	AVE	CR
Perceived Pleasure	3	0.60320	0.81966
Self-Congruency	5	0.63103	0.89524
Social Gratification	4	0.57646	0.84477
Escapism	4	0.57128	0.84017
Consumer Engagement (Like)	3	0.55641	0.78913
Consumer Engagement (Share)	3	0.53648	0.77562
Consumer Engagement (Comment)	3	0.76472	0.90698

Discriminant validity was examined using Fornell and Larcker (1981) stipulating that the square root of the average variance extracted by a construct should exceed the correlation between that construct and any other. The outcomes of this examination are presented in Table

All the diagonal values are above their horizontal and verticals values respectively as follows:-.

Table 5: Discriminant Validity (Square root AVE is represented on the diagonal)

Variables	Perceived Pleasure	Self-Congruency	Social Gratification	Escapism	Consumer Engagement (Like)	Consumer Engagement (Share)	Consumer Engagement (Comment)
Perceived Pleasure	**0.7767**						
Self-Congruency	.751[**]	**0.7944**					
Social Gratification	.712[**]	.753[**]	**0.7593**				

Escapism	.629**	.554**	.687**	**0.7558**		
Consumer Engagement (Like)	.633**	.604**	.549**	.549**	**0.7459**	
Consumer Engagement (Share)	.580**	.537**	.589**	.604**	.671**	**0.7324**
Consumer Engagement (Comment)	.532**	.567**	.398**	.359**	.734**	.603**	**0.8745**

3.5 Instrument Reliability

The reliability of an instrument is the degree of consistency with which it measures the attribute it is supposed to measure. Reliability can be equated with the stability, consistency, or dependability of a measuring tool. Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha was applied to ensure the reliability of the questionnaire scales. Table 6 shows the values of Cronbach's Alpha equals (0.957) for each of the research variables and the entire questionnaire. Constructs with a Cronbach alpha exceeding .70 are deemed acceptable, aligning with the suggested threshold by DeVellis (2016) and Kline (2023). All the coefficients exceed the acceptable threshold, indicating an excellent reliability of the questionnaire scales.

Table 6: Cronbach's Alpha for study instruments

Axis	Field	No. of Paragraphs	Cronbach's Alpha
Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives	Perceived pleasure	3	0.936
	Self-congruency	5	0.967
	Social gratification	4	0.961
	Escapism	4	0.747
All Social Media Memes' Behavioural Motives' items		16	0.930
Consumer Engagement	Like	3	0.827
	Share	3	0.872
	Comment	3	0.845
All Consumer Engagement items		9	0.944
Total		**25**	**0.957**

4. Data Analysis and Results

This section includes the answers to the main questions designed to achieve the research objectives. It presents the results, interpretations, and discussions of the study outcomes. The analysis was based on the data collected through the participant's survey.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 7 shows the demographic characteristics of the research sample. Females represent 63.1% of the sample, whereas males represent only 36,9%. Respondents aged 18-27 years

represent 55.5%, followed by respondents aged 28-43 years (30%). These two generations represent 85.5% of the study sample. Most of respondents are Saudi citizens as they represent 95.3% and Non-Saudi represent only 4.7%. This is normal because Non-Saudis are still minority in the Saudi population. The respondents below academic degree represent 53,9%, followed by respondents who hold postgraduate degree (30.3%), and respondents who hold undergraduate degree (15.8%).

Table 7: Distribution of study sample

	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	117	36.9%
	Female	200	63.1%
Age	18 - 27 years	176	55.5%
	28 – 43 years	95	30.0%
	44 – 59 years	46	14.5%
Nationality	Saudi	302	95.3%
	Non-Saudi	15	4.7%
Educational Level	Below academic degree	171	53.9%
	Hold an undergraduate degree	50	15.8%
	Hold postgraduate degree	96	30.3%
Total		317	100.0%

4.2 Hypothesis Testing:

To test the first four hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to evaluate how different independent variables (Perceived Pleasure, Social Gratification, Self-Congruence, and Escapism) jointly influence the dependent variable (Consumer Engagement) through social media memes. Table 8 and Table 9 show that the 4 independent variables have significant positive relationships with the dependent variable. Escapism (B=0.304) and social gratification (B=0.233) have the highest effect on customer engagement respectively, followed by self-congruence (B=0.184), then by perceived pleasure (B=0.080) as the lowest motive affecting customer relationship through social media mems.

Table 8: Effect of the four motives on consumer engagement

ANOVA[a]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	96.395	4	24.099	116.124	<.001[b]
	Residual	64.748	312	.208		
	Total	161.143	316			

a. Dependent Variable: Consumer engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Escapism, Perceived Pleasure, Self-congruency, Social Gratification

Table 9: Coefficients of the four motives on customer engagement

	Coefficientsᵃ					
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.583	.169		3.459	<.001
	Perceived Pleasure	.080	.039	.077	2.080	.038
	Self-congruency	.184	.057	.231	3.199	.002
	Social Gratification	.233	.066	.273	3.535	<.001
	Escapism	.304	.058	.306	5.227	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement

To test the fifth hypothesis, multiple regression comparing between different generations was applied. Table 10 shows the coefficients and significance of the relationship between (perceived pleasure, self-congruency, social gratification, and escapism) as independent variables and the dependent variable (customer engagement) in each generation. In generation 18-27 years old all relationships are significant, escapism comes first B=0.226), followed by social gratification (B=0.220), then self- congruence (B=0.177), and finally perceived pleasure (B=0.139). In generation 28-43 years old, customer engagement is highly motivated by escapism (B=0.376), followed by social gratification (0.323). In this age group self-congruence and perceived pleasure are insignificant. In generation 43-59 years old, customer engagement is highly motivated by escapism (B=0.138), followed by self-congruence (B=0.114) In this age group social gratification and perceived pleasure are in significant.

Table 10: Coefficients between variables according to generation groups

		Coefficientsᵃ					
			Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Generation	Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
18 - 27 years	1	(Constant)	.701	.263		2.663	.008
		Perceived Pleasure	.139	.063	.129	2.209	.028
		Self-Congruence	.177	.081	.216	2.185	.030
		Social Gratification	.220	.093	.254	2.382	.018
		Escapism	.226	.081	.234	2.795	.006
28 - 43 years	1	(Constant)	.518	.297		1.742	.085
		Perceived Pleasure	.027	.074	.022	.362	.719
		Self-Congruence	.099	.111	.121	.892	.375
		Social Gratification	.323	.118	.383	2.749	.007
		Escapism	.376	.103	.381	3.645	<.001
44 - 59 years	1	(Constant)	.281	.357		.786	.437
		Perceived Pleasure	-.008	.076	-.008	-.111	.912
		Self-Congruence	.307	.114	.438	2.685	.010
		Social Gratification	-.063	.148	-.079	-.429	.670

Escapism	.676	.138	.591	4.900	<.001

a. Dependent Variable: Customer Engagement

5. Discussion

The investigation has uncovered intriguing insights into the complex interplay between social media memes behavioural motives and the resultant consumer engagement, In addition to the moderating role of generations. Research findings showed that escapism is considered higher motive of the social media memes' behavioural motives from the perspective of a large group of respondents. More specifically, customer engagement is highly motivated by escapism. This result is consistent with numerous studies that explored the impact of escapism on consumer engagement (Loureiro et al., 2021; Mir, 2023). Social gratification was found the second of social media memes' behavioural motives from the perspective of a large group of respondents. The findings of this research showed a significant relationship between social gratification and consumer engagement in social media networks. This result aligns by Dange et al. (2022) and Chen and Cheung (2019) who found that users are motivated to engage with ephemeral content, such as memes, due to the fear of missing out, trust, immediacy, and social pressure, and that this engagement is influenced by gratification. Further study supports this, showing that uses and gratification motivations, including social interaction and entertainment, can increase social media stickiness and engagement (Hoque & Hossain, 2023).

Self-congruency was found the third of social media memes' behavioural motives. Findings showed significant relationship between self-congruence resulting from social media memes and consumer engagement. This result aligns with various studies in the literature regarding this subject. Research by Rabbanee et al. (2020) found that self-congruity with a brand is one of the factors affecting consumer engagement on social networking sites, particularly Facebook. Moreover, a study that uses self-congruence as a moderator to investigate brand-related content in social media networks on consumers suggests that brands should include entertainment factors in their social media content to boost consumer engagement (Guttena et al., 2024). Perceived pleasure represents the least motive of social media memes' behavioural motives. This is in contract to other studies that found perceived pleasure as an important motive on social media memes (Park and Ha, 2021; Porat and Tractinsky, 2012). In a life that if full of stress on people and people are socially isolated from each other because of too much work and no enough time to use for real social relationships, engagement in social media became an easy way to keep in touch with other and escape of difficulties and stress of real live. For that reason, escapism and social gratifications are the most important motives of social media memes that have higher effects on customer engagement.

Regarding generation effect on the relationships between social media memes motives and customer engagement, in generation 18-27 years old and generation 28-43 years old, customer engagement is highly motivated by escapism, followed by social gratification. This aligns with a study's findings about the positive effect of escapism on Australian and American millennials' online purchase intentions (Dharmesti et al., 2019) and a study found that social media dependency significantly affects the gratifications sought by Chinese Gen Y users (Li et al., 2019). These results may be attributed to the desire of these generations to communicate with others on social media and to know about different brands from the people who have experience with brands. At the same time people in these two generations are totally engrossed in education or doing business or having a job, which makes more stress on them to succeed and attain their ambitions. Thus, they use social media to alleviate this stress and get refreshed. People in these

Generations tend to be more social on social media seeking personal and work-life balance (Gibson, 2015; cited in Wiedmer, 2015).

In generation 43-59 years old, years of stability in life, customer engagement is highly motivated by escapism, followed by self-congruence. This is supported by a study that demonstrated Gen X's attributes, highlighting their desire to work independently, looking to be fast-paced and engaged in interesting work (Wiedmer, 2015). The reasons for that may be attributed to the desire of older people to escape the real life pressure they may suffer in this age because of diseases or household problems or having more leisure time after pensioning or retirement or living in an empty nest so that they go to virtual life on social media. Thus, social media are the best way for them to escape form real life problems and difficulties, to use their leisure time, and to find people at the same conditions and interests to share experiences and get recommendations, including recommendations about brands of different products and services. However, perceived pleasure is found a least motive in social media memes that may affect consumer engagement in all studied generations. This is aligned with a study done by Halik & Nugroho (2022).

6. Conclusion and implications

In conclusion, this research has shed light on the significant impact of social media memes on consumer brand engagement. It has been observed that memes, with their unique blend of creativity and cultural relevance, profoundly influence consumers' behavioral motives, thereby driving brand engagement. Interestingly, the study also revealed that the user's generation plays a moderating role. Different generations, shaped by distinct socio-cultural experiences and technological familiarity, motivated differently by memes. While the younger Generation showed higher engagement driven by memes escapism and social gratification, older generations are motivated more by escapism and self-congruence. Accordingly, this research underscores the importance of marketers understanding of the dynamics of memes' cultural and behavioral motives among different generational cohorts. By doing so, they can leverage memes more effectively as a tool for consumer brand engagement in the digital age. These insights can equip businesses with the knowledge to harness the power of memes and optimize their social media strategies, ultimately enhancing consumer engagement and business performance. Businesses, content creators, digital marketing strategists, and social media managers can tailor their marketing strategies to resonate with specific age groups.

In terms of content creation, this research highlights the importance of creating culturally relevant content in the form of memes that take into account that escapism and social gratification are the most important motives of participants on social media. Marketers can leverage this insight to design content that aligns with trending topics, thereby increasing consumer brand engagement. Furthermore, memes can be a powerful tool for showcasing a brand's personality and values. Brands that effectively use memes can appear more relatable and engaging to their target audience. For instance, meme-centric campaigns might be more effective for engaging millennials and Gen Z, while traditional forms of social media content may be more appealing to older generations.

7. Limitations and Future Research

First, the research primarily focuses on the behavioral motives of different generational cohorts. However, there can be significant variations in meme comprehension and engagement within each generation due to factors like personal experiences, cultural background, and

individual personality traits. Second, Memes are often deeply rooted in specific cultural contexts. This research may not fully account for the diverse cultural interpretations of memes, which can influence consumer engagement. Third, the nature of memes is constantly evolving with trends and internet culture. The findings of this research may become less relevant over time as new forms of memes emerge. Fourth, the research might lack qualitative data to support the quantitative results. Finally, depending on a convenience sampling method affect the generalizability of this research. These previous limitations provide opportunities for future research to delve deeper into these areas, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the role of memes in consumer engagement. Thus, future research could further explore the specific elements of memes that resonate with different generations. In the ever-evolving social media landscape, memes have emerged not merely as a form of entertainment but as a potent catalyst for consumer engagement. So, social media metrics can be used to track the consumer's online behavior for a comprehensive vision. Also, more qualitative research should be conducted to explore the underlying motives, personal traits, and cultural backgrounds for a deeper understanding of the phenomena.

References

Ahn, T., Ekinci, Y., & Li, G. (2013). Self-congruence, functional congruence, and destination choice. Journal of Business Research, 66(6), 719-723.

Ahrholdt, D. C., Gudergan, S. P., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). Enhancing loyalty: When improving consumer satisfaction and delight matters . Journal of business research, 94, 18-27.

Alba, Joseph W. & Williams, Elanor F (2013). Pleasure Principles: A Review of Research on Hedonic Consumption. Journal of Consumer Psychology 23(1):2–18. DOI:10.1016/j.jcps.2012.07.003

Bakırtaş, H., & Divanoğlu, S. U. (2013). The effect of hedonic shopping motivation on consumer satisfaction and consumer loyalty. International Journal of Asian Social Science, 3(7), 1522-1534.

Bara, Rafaela Sirimarco & Magano, José (2021). Marketing Trends: Using Memes to Target Generation Z. Percursos & IDEIAS. doi: 10.56123/percursos.2021.n11.23

Batat, W., & Wohlfeil, M. (2009). Getting lost 'Into the Wild': understanding consumers' movie enjoyment through a narrative transportation approach. Advances in Consumer Research, 36, 372-377.

Bauckhage, C. (2011). Insights into internet memes. In Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Socia Media, 5(1).

Blommaert, J., & Varis, P. (2015). Conviviality and collectives on social media: Virality, memes, and new social structures. Multilingual Margins. A journal of multilingualism from the periphery, 2(1), 31-31.

Booms, B. H., & Bitner, M. J. (1982). Marketing services by managing the environment. Cornell Hotel and Restaurant. Administration Quarterly, 23(1), 35-40.

Bowo, F. A., Anisah, A., & Marthalia, L. (2024). Meme Marketing: Generation Z Consumer Behavior on Social Media. Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains, 5(02), 188-201.

Brataas, A. E., & Stothers, R. A. . (2020). Consumer engagement behavior in social media Why members of Generation Y decide not to engage . (Master's thesis).

Brubaker, P. J., Church, S. H., Hansen, J., Pelham, S., & Ostler, A. (2018). One does not simply meme about organizations: Exploring the content creation strategies of user-generated memes on Imgur. Public relations review, 44(5), 741-751.

Cahya, M. B., & Triputra, P. (2017). Motives that Influence Participatory Culture Internet Meme (A Case Study of Social Media Path Audience of Postgraduate Communication Students University of Indonesia). Jurnal InterAct, 6(1), 30-40.

Cai, S., & Xu, Y. (2006). Effects of outcome, process and shopping enjoyment on online consumer behaviour. Electronic Commerce research and applications, 5(4), 272-281.

Cannizzaro, S. (2016). Internet memes as internet signs: A semiotic view of digital culture. Σημειωτκή-Sign Systems Studies, 44(4), 562-586.

Carifio, J. & Perla, R. J. (2007). Ten Common Misunderstandings, Misconceptions, Persistent Myths and Urban Legends about Likert Scales and Likert Response Formats and their Antidotes. Journal of Social Sciences, 3(3), 106-116. https://doi.org/10.3844/jssp.2007.106.116

Cătălin , Munteanu Claudiu & Andreea, Pagalea (2014). Brands as a mean of consumer self-expression and desired personal lifestyle. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 109 (2014) 103 – 107. www.sciencedirect.com

Chen, K. J., & Cheung, H. L. (2019). Unlocking the power of ephemeral content: The roles of motivations, gratification, need for closure, and engagement. Computers in Human Behavior, 97, 67-74.

Cheung, Gordon W.; Cooper-Thomas, Helena D.; Lau, Rebecca S.; & Wang, Linda C. (2023). Reporting reliability, convergent and discriminant validity with structural equation modeling: A review and best-practice recommendations. Asia Pacifc Journal of Management. file:///C:/Users/mhami/Downloads/s10490-023-09871-y.pdf

Chiu, C. M., Wang, E. T., Fang, Y. H., & Huang, H. Y. (2014). Understanding customers' repeat purchase intentions in B2C e-commerce: the roles of utilitarian value, hedonic value and perceived risk. Information systems journal, 24(1), 85-114.

Cohen, J. (2019). What Drives Meme Virality? A Quantitative Study of Meme Shareability Over Social Media. (Doctoral dissertation, Master's Thesis. University of Toronto).

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. . Commercial communication in the digital age: information or disinformation,, 247-266.

Dange, A., Gowda, K. R., Srinidhi, V. R., & Halaswamy, D. (2021). Analysing the Attitude of Social Media Users towards Ephemeral Marketing as a Digital Marketing Tool. Acta Universitatis Bohemiae Meridionales, 24(3).

Dasgupta, S., & Grover, P. (2018). Optimizing millennial consumer engagement with mood analysis. IGI Global.

Dawkins, R. (1976). The selfish gene . Oxford University Press.

Denisova, A. (2019). Internet Memes and Society:S ocial, Cultural, and Political Contexts. Taylor & Francis.

DeVellis, R.F. (2016). Scale Development: Theory and Applications, Sage Publications, Newbury Park California, Vol. 26

Dharmesti, M., Dharmesti, T. R. S., Kuhne, S., & Thaichon, P. (2021). Understanding online shopping behaviours and purchase intentions amongst millennials. Young Consumers, 22(1), 152-167.

Dolan, Rebecca; Conduit, Jodie; Bentham, Catherine; Fahy, John (2019). Social Media Engagement Behavior: A Framework for Engaging Customers through Social Media Content. European Journal of Marketing 53(2). DOI:10.1108/EJM-03-2017-0182

Ekinci, Y., & Riley, M. (2003). An investigation of self-concept: actual and ideal self-congruence compared in the context of service evaluation. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 10(4), 201-214.

Fletcher, K. A. P., & Emmanuel-Stephen, C. M. (2018). Social Media Engagement: Reshaping the Consumption Patterns of Generation Y Caribbean and Latin American Consumers. Media Influence: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice, 494-514.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. Journal of Marketing Research, 18, 39–50.

Fournier S. (1998), Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research," Journal of Consumer Research, vol. 24 (2), pp. 343–73.

Frank, Björn F; Torrico, Boris Herbas; Enkawa, Takao; Schvaneveldt, Shane J. (2014). Affect versus Cognition in the Chain from Perceived Quality to Customer Loyalty: The Roles of Product Beliefs and Experience. Journal of Retailing. 90(4), 567-586

Gardner, K. J., Jabs, N. M., Drabble, J., & Akram, U. (2021). Humor styles influence the perception of depression-related internet memes in depression. Humor, 43(4), 497-517.

Giddings, S. (2009). Events and collusions: A glossary for the microethnography of video game play. Games and culture, 4(2), 144-157.

GlobalMediaInsight (2023). https://www.globalmediainsight.com/blog/saudi-arabia-social-media-statistics/

Gogan, I. C. W., Zhang, Z., & Matemba, E. D. (2018). Impacts of gratifications on consumers' emotions and continuance use intention: An empirical study of Weibo in China. Sustainability, 10(9), 3162. file:///C:/Users/mahsaleh/Downloads/sustainability-10-03162.pdf

Guttena, R. K., Wu, C. H. J., & Atmaja, F. T. (2024). The influence of brand-related social media content on customer extra-role behavior: a moderated moderation model. Journal of Product & Brand Management, 33(2), 220-233.

Ha, Y., & Lennon, S. J. (2010). Online visual merchandising (VMD) cues and consumer pleasure and arousal: Purchasing versus browsing situation. Psychology & Marketing, 27(2), 141-165.

Hackett, P. (2018). Quantitative Research Methods in Consumer Psychology: Contemporary and Data Driven Approaches. Taylor & Francis.

Halik, A., & Nugroho, M. (2022). The role of consumer pleasure moderating the effect of content marketing and price discount on online shopping decision and loyalty of generation Z. Media Ekonomi dan Manajemen, 37(1), 35-54.

Hecker, R. (2020). Are you serious it is just a joke?: The influence of Internet memes on the perception and interpretation of online communication in social media . (Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente).

Henning, B., & Vorderer, P. (2001). Psychological escapism: Predicting the amount of television viewing by need for cognition. Journal of Communication, 51(1), 100-120.

Hoque, S., & Hossain, M. A. (2023). Social Media Stickiness in the Z Generation: A Study Based on the Uses and Gratifications Theory. JOURNAL OF INFORMATION SCIENCE THEORY AND PRACTICE, 11(4), 92-108.

Hosany, S., & Martin, D. (2012). Self-image congruence in consumer behavior. Journal of Business Research, 65(5), 685-691.

Huang, Minxue; Ali, Rizwan; & Liao, Junyun (2017). The effect of user experience in online games on word of mouth: A pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) model perspective. Computers in Human Behavior 75(3). DOI:10.1016/j.chb.2017.05.015

Islam, J. U., Rahman, Z., & Hollebeek, L. D. (2018). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A solicitation of congruity theory. Internet Research, 28(1), 23-45.

Jin, Byoungho; Kim, Gwia; Moore, Marguerite & Rothenberg, Lori (2021). Consumer store experience through virtual reality: its effect on emotional states and perceived store attractiveness. Fashion and Textiles, 8(19).

Joiner, R., Gavin, J., Brosnan, M., Cromby, J., Gregory, H., Guiller, J., ... & Moon, A. (2013). Comparing first and second generation digital natives' Internet use, Internet anxiety, and Internet identification. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 7, 549-552.

Jones, Scott; Cronin, James; Piacentini, Maria (2018). Mapping the extended frontiers of escapism: binge-watching and hyperdiegetic exploration. Journal of Marketing Management, 34(5-6):497-508. DOI:10.1080/0267257X.2018.1477818

Jouhki, Hannu ; Savolainen, Iina; Anu, Sirola, Oksanen, Atte (2022). Escapism and Excessive Online Behaviors: A Three-Wave Longitudinal Study in Finland during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2022 Oct; 19(19): 12491. doi: 10.3390/ijerph191912491

Kaihatu, T. S. (2020). Purchase intention of fashion product as an impact of digital marketing, mediated by customer engagement in the generation z. Jurnal Manajemen Pemasaran,, 14(2), 61-66.

Kala, I., & Pawar, S. . (2022). What is in a Meme: Analysing the Perception of Gen Z to Memes and Virality in Modern Marketing. Cardiometry, 737-742.

Keller K.L. (2008) Strategic Brand Management - Building, Measuring and Managing Brand Equity, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall

Kırcaburun, Kagan & Griffiths, Mark D. (2019).   Problematic Instagram Use: The Role of Perceived Feeling of Presence and Escapism. International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction, 17, 909–921. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-018-9895-7

Kline, R. B. (2023). Principles and practice of structural equation modeling. Guilford publications.

Kujur, F., & Singh, S. (2017). Engaging customers through online participation in social networking sites. Asia Pacific Management Review, 22(1), 16-24.

Kujur, F., & Singh, S. (2020). Visual communication and consumer-brand relationship on social networking sites-uses & gratifications theory perspective. Journal of theoretical and applied electronic commerce research,, 15(1), 30-47.

Ladeira, W. J., Nique, W. M., Pinto, D. C., & Borges,. (2016). Running for pleasure or performance? How store attributes and hedonic product value influence consumer satisfaction. The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research,, 2.

Leiser, A. (2022). Psychological perspectives on participatory culture: Core motives for the use of political internet memes. Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 10(1), 236-252.

Li, Yixiao,; Yang, Shuiqing; Zhang, Shuai (2019). Mobile social media use intention in emergencies among Gen Y in China: An integrative framework of gratifications, task-technology fit, and media dependency. Telematics and Informatics 42(1):101244. DOI:10.1016/j.tele.2019.101244

Loureiro, S. M. C., Bilro, R. G., & Japutra, A. (2019). The effect of consumer-generated media stimuli on emotions and consumer brand engagement . Journal of Product & Brand Management, 29(3), 387-408.

Loureiro, S. M. C., Guerreiro, J., & Japutra, A. . (2021). How escapism leads to behavioral intention in a virtual reality store with background music? Journal of Business Research, 288-300.

Mahobia, H., Dubey, R. K. D., & Jain, T. K. (2016). A Study on Factors Influencing Consumer Engagement in Retail. International Journal of Research in IT and Management, 6(2).

Malodia, S., Dhir, A., Bilgihan, A., Sinha, P., & Tikoo, T. (2022). Meme marketing: How can marketers drive better engagement using viral memes? Psychology & Marketing, 39(9), 1775-1801.

Mandel, Naomi; Rucker, Derek; Levav, Jonathan; Galinsky, Adam (2017). The Compensatory Consumer Behavior Model: How self-discrepancies drive consumer behavior.
Journal of Consumer Psychology. Volume 27, Issue 1, January 2017, Pages 133-146. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2016.05.003

Mazambani, G., Carlson, M. A., Reysen, S., & Hempelmann, C. F. . (2015). Impact of status and meme content on the spread of memes in virtual communities. Human Technology, 11.

McLean, G., Al-Nabhani, K., & Marriott, H. (2022). Regrettable-escapism' the negative effects of mobile app use: A retail perspective. Psychological Marketing, 39, 150–167.

McShane, Lindsay ; Pancer, Ethan;   Poole, Maxwell Grimshaw; & Deng, Qi (2021). Emoji, Playfulness, and Brand Engagement on Twitter. Journal of Interactive Marketing 53(3):96-110. DOI: 10.1016/j.intmar.2020.06.002

Meer, Arsha; Khan, Rehan; Kanwal, Syeda (2022). Meme Marketing and Purchasing Behavior: A Study of Active Social Media Users. JRSP, 59(3), 216-223.

Melo, L. B. (2018). Social Web Memes: Self Images and the Circulation of Stereotypes on Google and Facebook. In Anais do IX Workshop sobre Aspectos da Interação. Humano-Computador para a Web Social , 013-024.

Mir, I. A. (2023). Self-escapism motivated online shopping engagement: A determinant of users' online shopping cart use and buying behavior. . Journal of Internet Commerce, 22(1), 40-73.

Msallati, A. (2021). Investigating the nexus between the types of advertising messages and customer engagement: Do customer involvement and generations matter? Journal of Innovations in Digital Marketing, 2.

Murray, N., Manrai, A., & Manrai, L. . (2014). Memes, memetics and marketing: A state-of-the-art review and a lifecycle model of meme management in advertising. The Routledge companion to the future of marketing, 331-347.

Neufeld-Wall, M. E. (2023). Being Real: Gen-Z, Self-Presentation, and Authenticity on Social Media. digitalcommons.trinity.edu.

Nurrokhman, M. (2021). Consumer Engagement Patterns In Car Communities. ICORE, 5(1).

Oh, J., Bellur, S., & Sundar, S. S. (2018). Clicking, assessing, immersing, and sharing: An empirical model of user engagement with interactive media. Communication Research, 45(5), 737-763.

Palmgreen, P. (1984). Uses and gratifications: A theoretical perspective. Annals of the international communication association, 8(1), 20-55.

Palmgreen, P., & Rayburn, J. D. (1997). Uses and gratifications and exposure to public television: A discrepancy approach. Communication Research,, 6(2), 155-179.

Pangriya, R., & Singh, A. P. (2021). Creative and Innovative Ways of Consumer Engagement. Insights, Innovation, and Analytics for Optimal Customer Engagement, 117-132.

Park, J. S., & Ha, S. (2021). From information experiences to consumer engagement on brand's social media accounts. Fashion and Textiles, 8(1), 21.

Pech, R. J. (2003). Memetics and innovation: profit through balanced meme management. , 6(2), . European Journal of Innovation Management, 111-117.

Porat, Talya; Tractinsky; Noam (2012). It's a Pleasure Buying Here: The Effects of Web-Store Design on Consumers' Emotions and Attitudes. Human–Computer Interaction, 27(3), 235-276.

Rabbanee, F. K., Roy, R., & Spence, M. T. (2020). Factors affecting consumer engagement on online social networks: self-congruity, brand attachment, and self-extension tendency. European Journal of Marketing, 54(6), 1407-1431.

Raj, Nepul, A. (2021). Meme usage culture on social issues among youth. Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education (TURCOMAT),, 12(11), 2099-2107.

Rather, R. A. (2019). Consequences of consumer engagement in service marketing: An empirical exploration. . Journal of Global Marketing, 32(2), 116-135.

Rieger, D., & Klimmt, C. (2018). The daily dose of digital inspiration: A multi-method exploration of meaningful communication in social media. New Media & Society, 21(1), 97-118.

Rieger, D., & Klimmt, C. (2019). The daily dose of digital inspiration 2: Themes and affective user responses to meaningful memes in social media. New Media & Society, 21(10), 2201-2221.

Roster, C. A. (2021). Using memes in online surveys to engage and motivate respondents. International Journal of Market Research, 63(3), 754-771. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785320981821

Saravanavel, P. (2009). Marketing Research & Consumer Behaviour. Vikas Publishing House Pvt Limited.

Sarstedt, M., Hair, J. F., Pick, M., Liengaard, B. D., Radomir, L., & Ringle, C. M. (2022). Progress in partial least squares structural equation modeling use in marketing research in the last decade. Psychology and Marketing, 39(5)

Saudicensus (2022). General Authority for Statistics, Saudi Arabia. https://portal.saudicensus.sa/portal

Scott, K. (2021). Memes as multimodal metaphors: A relevance theory analysis. Pragmatics & Cognition, 28(2), 277-298.

Shifman, L. (2014). Memes in digital culture, . Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Sirgy, M. Joseph; Grewal Dhruv; Tamara Mangleburg (1997). Assessing the Predictive Validity of Two Methods of Measuring Self-Image Congruence. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 25(3):229-241. DOI:10.1177/0092070397253004

Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self concept in consumer behavior: a critical review. Journal of Consumer Research, 9, 287–300.

Sirgy, M. J., & Samli, A. C. (1985). A path analytic model of store loyalty involving selfconcept, store image, geographic loyalty, and socioeconomic status. . Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 13(3), 265–291.

Srivastava, M., Sivaramakrishnan, S., & Saini, G. K. (2021). The relationship between electronic word-of-mouth and consumer engagement: An exploratory study. IIM Kozhikode Society & Management Review, 10(1), 66-81.

Stimson, R. (2014). Handbook of Research Methods and Applications in Spatially Integrated Social Science. Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Teng, H., Lo, C. F., & Lee, H. H. (2022). How do internet memes affect brand image? Online Information Review, 46(2), 304-318.

Triantafillidou, A., & Siomkos, G. (2018). The impact of Facebook experience on consumers' behavioral Brand engagement. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 12(2), 164-192.

Vardeman, C. (2024), "Advertising to Gen-Z college students with memes? A focus group study", Qualitative Market Research, Vol. 27 No. 1, pp. 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-05-2023-0073

Vasile, S., Mototo, L., & Chuchu, T. (2021). Using "Memes" as a marketing communication tool in connecting with consumers within the age of digital connectivity. , 11(3), 30. International Review of Management and Marketing, 11(3), 30.

Vivek, S. D. (2009). A scale of consumer engagement. . The University of Alabama.

Voss, K. E., Spangenberg, E. R., & Grohmann, B. (2003). Measuring the Hedonic and Utilitarian Dimensions of Consumer Attitude. Journal of Marketing Research, 40(3), 310–320. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.40.3.310.19238

Wang, C. L., & Jiang, Y. . (2007). Consumer Goal Orientation in Different Service Contexts: The Different Impacts of Affect on Perceived Quality and Satisfaction. ACR North American Advances.

Way, L. C. (2019). The importance of memes. European Journal of Communication, 43(5), 552-556.

Wiedmer, T. (2015). Generations do differ: Best practices in leading traditionalists, boomers, and generations X, Y, and Z. Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin, 82(1), 51.

Wiggins, B. E. (2019). The Discursive Power of Memes in Digital Culture: Ideology, Semiotics, and Intertextuality. Taylor & Francis.

Williams, R. (2000). The business of memes: memetic possibilities for marketing and management. Management Decision, 38(4), 272-279.

Wong, E. F., & Holyoak, K. J. (2021). Cognitive and motivational factors driving sharing of internet memes. Memory & Cognition, 49(5), 863-872.

Wright, Len Tiu; Moutinho, Luiz; Stone, Merlin; Bagozzi, Richard P. (2021). The Routledge Companion to Marketing Research. Taylor & Francis.

Yang, G. (2022). Using funny memes for social media marketing: The moderating role of bandwagon cues. Journal of Promotion Management, 28(7), 944-960.

Yus, F. (2018). Identity-related issues in meme communication. Internet Pragmatics, 1(1), 113-133.

Yus, F. (2019). Multimodality in memes: A cyberpragmatic approach. Analyzing digital discourse. New insights and future directions, 105-131.

Zenner, E., & Geeraerts, D. (2018). One does not simply process memes: Image macros as multimodal constructions. Cultures and traditions of wordplay and wordplay research, 6, 167-194.

Zhang, B., & Gearhart, S. (2022). It's obviously funny to be a meme: Viewing, sharing, & creating memes for political entertainment & observation. The journal of social media in society, 11(2), 53-76.

Zhu, X., Teng, L., Foti, L., & Yuan, Y. (2019). Using self-congruence theory to explain the interaction effects of brand type and celebrity type on consumer attitude formation. Journal of Business Research, 103, 301-309.

Zulli, D., & Zulli, D. J. . (2020). Extending the Internet Meme: Conceptualizing technological Mimesis and Imitation Publics on the TikTok Platform. New Media & Society.