SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52 - 83

-

FACTORS IMPACT OF FACEBOOK MEME MARKETING ON CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GENERATION Z IN WESTERN PROVINCE, SRI LANKA

H.R.A. Viduranga[1]

Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka.

rashmikaav99@gmail.com

[2]P.L.G.S.D. Piumali[2]

Department of Marketing Management, Faculty of Management Studies, Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Belihuloya, Sri Lanka.

ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine how Facebook meme marketing impacts on Generation Z consumer engagement of consumers in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This study employed the survey strategy under the quantitative methodology. Following a positivist research philosophy and deductive research approach, a sample of 350 individuals of Generation Z active Facebook users residing in Western Province, Sri Lanka who engage with meme-based posts of brands was selected using a purposive sampling technique to collect data. The IBM SPSS 21 software has been used to analyze the collected data and multiple linear regression analysis of used to test the hypotheses. The findings reveal that entertainment, interaction,

informativeness, and electronic word-of-mouth of Facebook meme marketing positive impacted Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka, and the trendiness of Facebook meme marketing did not impact. The entertainment of Facebook meme marketing has been identified as the most influential factor that impacts Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka. The findings of this study provide valuable insights that can help marketers identify and effectively use meme marketing to enhance consumer engagement.

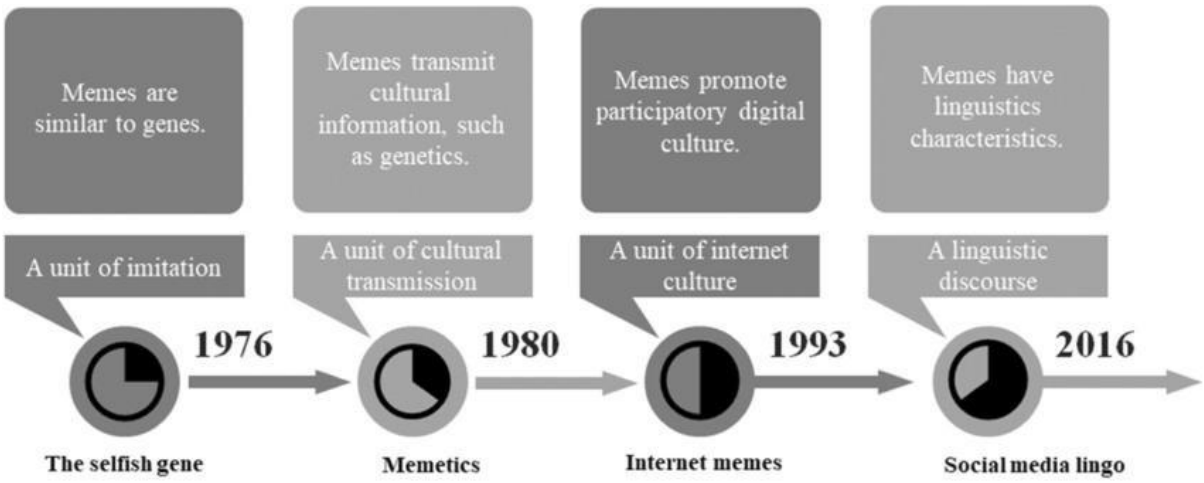
Keywords: *Consumer Engagement, Facebook Memes, Meme Marketing, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

Marketers must continually adapt to meet generational trends and changing cultural norms to stay relevant in an era where information can be instantly transmitted around the globe via the internet and users have the freedom to select how they consume this information. Meme marketing (MM) is a relatively new social media marketing (SMM) trend that has recently gained popularity. Richard Dawkins coined the term "meme" from the Greek word "Mimema," meaning "is imitated," in his book "The Selfish Gene." Internet memes (IM) are viral content that employs sarcasm, humor, and wit to promote a message or idea, and they can be transmitted in numerous formats such as image, text, tag, animation, GIF, or video (Brubaker *et al.*, 2018). They can also send information in an exceedingly short time (Zannettou *et al.*, 2018). According to Malodia *et al.* (2022), we can identify four stages of the evolution of the meme as a concept.

SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52 - 83

Figure **Error! No text of specified style in document.**: Evolution of the Meme as a Concept



Source: Malodia *et al.* (2022)

IM differs from typical online marketing channels in that they are customer-active and usergenerated (Teng, Lo and Lee, 2022). According to a recent SM activity survey done by YPulse, 75% of users aged 13-36 regularly share memes, and 30% of these people share memes every day (Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia, 2024). Memes have recently emerged as one of the greatest powerful ways of marketing communication, with some even claiming that they are the simplest approach to engaging target audiences. Memes play an increasingly important role in marketing (Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia, 2024). Nowadays, most Facebook users are likely to encounter or circulate a meme every day (Wiggins and Bowers, 2014). Companies employ IM to build advertisements because of their low cost and high transmission rate (Finkelstein, 2008). This marketing pattern based on a meme for promoting products or services is known as “meme marketing” (Lee *et al.*, 2019). In recent years, MM has been growing popular as an emerging concept in digital marketing. According to the report of the AMRA and ELMA (Top Meme Statistics in 2023), the global meme industry

was valued at US$2.3 billion in 2020, and it is predicted to grow to US$6.1 billion by 2025 (Djulich, 2023).

Research Gap

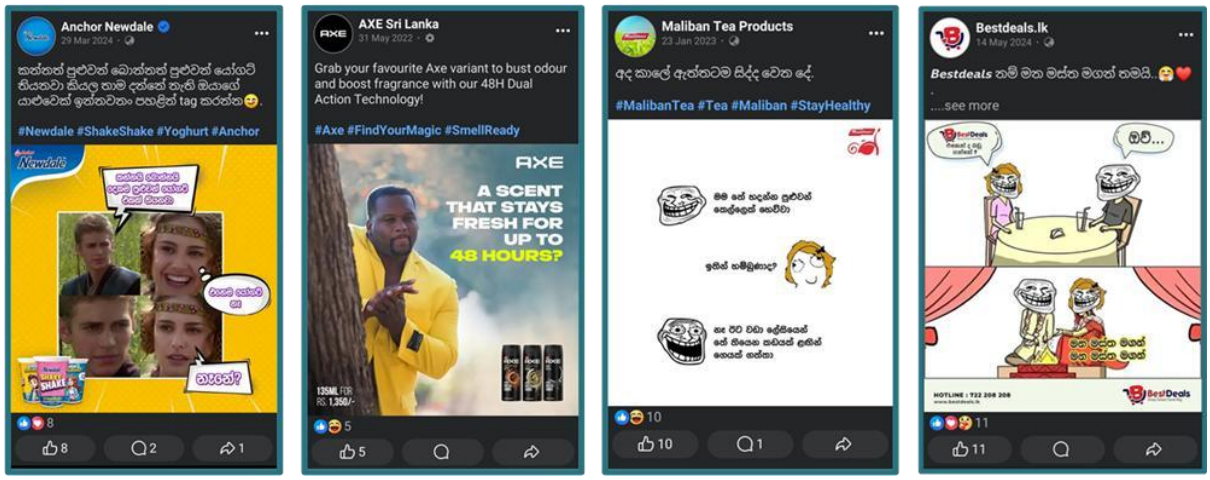
The use of memes in advertising and marketing strategies is becoming more and more common across different companies and brands (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). For example, Heinz started a MM campaign in that effort to spread the argument of whether tomatoes are considered vegetables or fruits. The company created hashtags for the campaign and invited individuals to choose a side. The campaign targeted only one million impressions (total reach). But in the end, it ultimately generated over four million impressions and over 80,000 engagements (likes, comments, and shares) on Facebook (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). Even for business-to-business (B2B) companies like Joseph Cyril Bamford (JCB) Excavators Ltd., a meme featuring the hashtag **#JCBKiKhudai** (digging with JCB) generated publicity worth one million dollars (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). Luxury companies like Gucci have also adopted MM. The **#TFWGucci** (That Feel When Gucci) hashtag became Gucci's most engaging campaign, with over 21,000 comments and 2 million likes (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). A more thorough analysis of the market indicates that a wide range of companies like Luxury businesses (Gucci and Prada), food delivery apps (Swiggy a Zomato), over-the-top (OTT) platforms (Netflix and Amazon Prime), dating apps (Tinder), and more are now using memes to engage with their target audience.

The use of memes in advertising results in a 30% SM engagement rate as opposed to a 1% CTR when utilizing Google AdWords (Paquette, 2019). A meme campaign has a 14% higher CTR than email marketing, and CTRs in regular marketing campaigns are above 6%, whereas

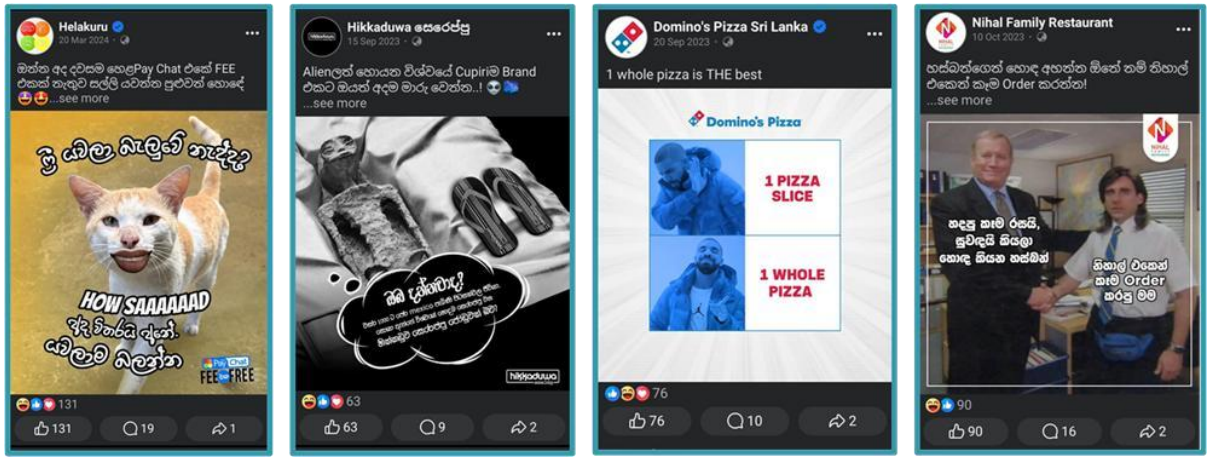
SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52 - 83

CTRs in a meme campaign are approximately 19% (Djulich, 2023). According to the report of AMRA and ELMA, memes have an approximate reach of 10 times greater and generate 60% organic interaction when compared to standard marketing graphics (Djulich, 2023). Compared to non-meme-based posts, meme-based posts result in higher levels of consumer engagement (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). There are a lot of youthful, meme-savvy people in Sri Lanka and most people share memes on Facebook (Abeythunga, Jayasinghe and Almeida, 2023). Several memes were also created in 2022 in response to Sri Lanka's economic crisis and public unrest, and these were widely disseminated on SM (Vaidyanathan, 2022). According to statistics published in Meta's advertising tool at the beginning of 2024, Sri Lanka has 8.4 million average monthly Facebook users. However, in the context of Sri Lanka, a notable disparity arises where brands' meme-based posts on Facebook fail to elicit significant consumer engagement. Despite the global trend indicating that meme-based posts generate higher consumer engagement compared to non-meme-based posts, the local market response in Sri Lanka presents a puzzling challenge as shown in the below posts.

Figure 2: Brand-related Meme-based Posts



SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52 - 83



Source: (Facebook, 2024)

This indicates that, in the context of Sri Lanka, while companies/brands/businesses are turning into MM, this strategy might not be as successful in generating significant consumer engagement. This suggests that, in the context of Sri Lanka, there is a significant practical gap regarding the effect that MM has on consumer engagement, even though its use is on the rise, especially on platforms like Facebook. This disparity emphasizes how important it is to pinpoint and comprehend the factors that influence consumer engagement with brand-related meme-based posts.

Despite the growing importance of MM globally, its special implications in Sri Lanka remain unclear (Nanayakkara and Liyanage, 2022). Also, the impact of the factors of Facebook MM on consumer engagement in Sri Lanka has not been studied in a deeper context. In the context of Sri Lanka, there is a significant empirical research gap exists and it emphasizes the necessity for studies on studies how the factors of Facebook MM affect consumer engagement. Therefore, the ultimate goal of this research is to fill both empirical and practical gaps in the field of social media MM by exploring the impact of the factors related to Facebook MM and consumer engagement in Sri Lanka.

SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52 - 83

Research Questions

The following research questions have been developed based on the problem of the current study.

1. Does the entertainment of Facebook meme marketing impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka?
2. Does the interaction of Facebook meme marketing impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka?
3. Does the trendiness of Facebook meme marketing impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka?
4. Does the informativeness of Facebook meme marketing impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka?
5. Does the electronic word-of-mouth of Facebook meme marketing impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka?

Research Objectives

General Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the impact of the factors of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement with Special reference to Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka. **Specific Objectives**

To achieve the general objective of this study, the following specific objectives are developed.

1. To investigate the impact of entertainment of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka.
2. To investigate the impact of the interaction of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka.

3. To investigate the impact of the trendiness of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka.
4. To investigate the impact of the informativeness of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka.
5. To investigate the impact of electronic word-of-mouth of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement of Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is a key theory in media psychology (Das, 2023). The SCT was first proposed by Bandura (LaRose and Eastin, 2004). According to the SCT, by seeing their peers in their social surroundings, people pick up patterns of thought and behavior (Rathi and Jain, 2023). According to Das (2023), people are more likely to accept and interact with memes when they see others doing the same, particularly, if they believe these memes to be significant or related to them personally. From the perspective of the SCT, people who generate and distribute memes that reflect their own values, views, and sense of humor frequently engage in selective attention and selective perception (Das, 2023). Memes can also be used as a tool for social comparison since people use them to connect with people who hold similar values and to express their identities and options (Das, 2023). Memes have a significant impact on how people perceive the world because they can either confirm or contradict preexisting attitudes and ideas (Das, 2023). Memes' ability to people's ideas, attitudes, and behavior is better understood through the lens of the SCT, which emphasizes

the interaction of cognitive and affective processes in the production, propagation, and impact of memes (Das, 2023).

Uses and Gratification Theory

The Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT) was first developed by Katz and Blumber in 1974 to analyze consumer behavior in traditional media (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974).
However, given the Internet's widespread influence, is has since been expanded to include SM studies (Rathi and Jain, 2023). According to this theory, people look for media that fulfills their requirements and gives them satisfaction, which leads to frequent use of various media sources (Cahya and Triputra, 2017). UGT states that users may interact with memes for the need of information, entertainment, or social interaction (Das, 2023). Three different kinds of gratifications (process gratification, social gratification, and content gratification) were identified by the UGT as what drives users to see and share memes across different online platforms (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). Individuals interact with memes because they find them entertaining, informative, or fulfill personal needs or goals (Rathi and Jain, 2023). This claim is consistent with the UGT, which holds that IM serve as instruments of self-expression, creating connections between people, providing amusement, and spreading information, all of which increase consumer engagement (Cahya and Triputra, 2017). In the digital age, memes are a kind of media that have grown in popularity, and UGT can help explain why individuals interact with them (Das, 2023).

The SCT and the UGT can be used to analyze the appeal of memes to internet users (Rathi and Jain, 2023). MM needs to exhibit factors such as entertainment, interaction, informativeness, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM), and relevance to current trends (Sharma, 2018). Entertainment, interaction, trendiness, and informativeness are aligned with the UGT, and eWOM is associated with the principles of SCT (Sharma, 2018; Rathi and Jain, 2023). These two theories help to understand the dynamics of MM and can be used to analyze the appeal of memes to internet users (Sharma, 2018; Rathi and Jain, 2023). Therefore, the researcher used these two theories in the current study.

Consumer Engagement

Consumer engagement refers to the level of interaction, interest, and commitment that consumers exhibit toward a brand or its content across various SM channels (Zheng, Li and Na, 2022). Most studies evaluate consumer engagement in the context of SM platforms using behavioral measures like likes, comments, and shares in reaction to branded content on SM platforms (Lee, Hosanagar and Nair, 2018). These indicators are significant because they offer insightful information about the degree to which marketing communications effectively connect with the target audience (Xiao, et al., 2023). Memes play a major role in shaping an emotional connection between firms and potential consumers by associating the brand with relatable and humorous content (Teng, Lo and Lee, 2022). This emotional bond has the potential to boost advocacy. A smart step for firms trying to increase consumer engagement is to use memes in their marketing campaigns. According to Lee, Hosanagar and Nair (2018), businesses utilize MM as a means of promoting SM metrics such as likes, comments, and shares, which function as a continuous form of consumer engagement. The claims made by

Vasile, Mototo and Chuchu (2021), Nanayakkara and Liyanage (2022), Malodia *et al.* (2022), and Rathi and Jain (2023) confirm this, highlighting that, there is a positive correlation between MM and consumer engagement. From these findings, it is evident that MM may be a powerful strategy for brands looking to strengthen their relationships with consumers. The previous study has found that entertainment, interaction, trendiness, informativeness, and e word-ofmouth positively impact on consumer engagement (Rathi and Jain, 2023). Through a comprehensive understanding of the diverse facets of consumer engagement and the factors that impact it, brands may formulate more focused and efficient promotional tactics.

Entertainment

According to Algharabat (2017), the effect of having fun and enjoyment in using SM is entertainment. Social networking sites are frequently used by people as a source of entertainment (Dholakia, Bagozzi and Klein, 2004; Rohm, Kaltcheva and Milne, 2013). Shang *et al.* (2022) confirmation of this point, pinpointing entertainment as one of the main reasons people use social media platforms. According to certain studies, entertainment has a greater influence on likes, comments, and shares (Rietveld *et al.*, 2020). According to Razzaq, Shao and Quach (2024), MM is a strategic approach that capitalizes on the widespread popularity of online memes to help brands interact and communicate with consumers in a realistic way by effortlessly incorporating brand features into entertainment content (Razzaq, Shao and Quach, 2024). MM has surfaced as a new marketing communication strategy in which brands can strategically place or integrate their brand elements into entertaining memes to boost engagement. According to Enginkaya and Yılmaz (2014), entertainment

value makes it easier for consumers to communicate with brands online, which encourages consumer engagement.

Brands that offer entertainment-valued content to consumers will encourage favorable behavioral reactions like consumer engagement (Shang *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, Ashley and Tuten (2015) found that consumers will be more inclined to return if they find brand posts to be more enjoyable. The findings of Rathi and Jain (2023) revealed the entertainment of MM positive impact on consumer engagement.

Interaction

Interaction is the exchange of options and ideas happening between SM platforms and consumers (Yang *et al.*, 2022). When people in online communities can rapidly converse and share information or thoughts, there is interaction on SM (Wirga *et al.*, 2022). According to recent reports, SM interaction raises a brand's exposure and traffic (Moslehpour *et al.*, 2021). Potential leads result from this, which eventually raised consumer engagement. De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang (2012) and Luarn, Lin and Chiu (2015) reported that consumer brand post engagement on Facebook is influenced by interaction. According to several studies, users are more likely to share, comment, and like brand postings that actively encourage interaction

(Luarn, Lin and Chiu, 2015). Whether liking, commenting, or sharing memes, consumers' engagement with brands can be improved through interaction in memes (Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia, 2024). According to consumer satisfaction theory, users' interaction with memes can convey fascinating and amusing information about a product or service, hence

increasing user satisfaction (Kotler and Keller, 2016). SM users can interact with memes by sharing, liking, and commenting on them, which increases consumer engagement with the product or service the meme symbolizes (Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia, 2024). The findings of Rathi and Jain (2023) revealed the interaction of MM positively impacts on consumer engagement. Their results show how brands are more likely to engage people with memes that meet their basic desire for social interaction.

Trendiness

Trendiness is defined as offering the newest SM updates and trending topics of conversation (Wirga *et al.*, 2022). Trendy information can enhance consumer loyalty intentions, draw favorable sentiments from consumers, and grab their attention (Cheung, Pires and Rosenberger, 2020). Memes are trending topics on the internet that are started by individuals or organized groups and have the potential to become quite famous (Zubiaga *et al.*, 2015). According to

Malodia *et al.* (2022), memes that are trending can yield superior outcomes than those are not. Thus, employing a meme that is trending now rather than a brand-specific, non-trending meme can provide different outcomes (Fryklund and Stenlund, 2022). Not only would a campaign fail if a company used unpopular or outdated memes, but the brand's reputation would also be jeopardized (Rathi and Jain, 2023). According to Kamath and Alur (2024), trendy memes are transient and they frequently result in low consumer engagement. The findings of Rathi and Jain (2023) revealed the trendiness of MM positively impacts on consumer engagement. They contend that the use of trendy memes is essential for drawing in consumers and encouraging interaction.

Informativeness

The accuracy, breadth, and usefulness of the information a consumer finds on SM is referred to as informativeness (Shang *et al.*, 2022). Effective consumer interaction is driven by brand communications that are rich in relevant information (Islam and Rahman, 2017). MM can be an innovative way to provide additional information that enhances consumer engagement. By using memes as a marketing strategy, businesses may communicate important information and increase consumer engagement (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). When information about a meme is widely circulated and has a high positive emotional intensity, the consumer perceives them as

"amazing" symbols that perfectly express their feelings, whether positive or negative (Razzaq, Shao and Quach, 2024). Recipients of an informative meme will be encouraged to spread it even more (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). According to Dhir and Tsai (2017), information seeking has a major impact on how much teenagers and young adults use Facebook. This demonstrates people's intrinsic value in informative content on SM platforms. According to Shifman (2013), memes are useful for the dissemination of ideas and ideologies because they use memetic content to deliver information in a context-specific manner. The informativeness of MM has positively impact on consumer engagement (Rathi and Jain, 2023). Their results validate the idea that marketers looking to engage their audience more deeply and establish a connection with them might use informative memes as a potent weapon.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)

The electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) generally refers to the impression that consumers have of how much other consumers recommended and share their SM experience (Jacobson, Gruzd and Hernández-García, 2020). SM platforms are perfect medium for eWOM since users may freely generate and share brand-related content in their personal social networks with friends, family, and other contacts (Chu and Kim, 2011). In the realm of MM, eWOM serves as a powerful catalyst, significantly enhancing the campaign's scope and influence by fostering deeper consumer engagement (Rathi and Jain, 2023). The shareable nature of memes makes them ideal for generating positive eWOM that resonates with consumers and keeps them engaged with the brand (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). This can ultimately shape the brand's reputation and foster loyalty among consumers (Dutta *et al.*, 2024). According to Van Doorn *et al.* (2010), one of the main motivators of consumer engagement is eWOM activity. When a brand's MM campaign generates positive eWOM, it can lead to increased user-generated content creation, conversation, and engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares. The findings of

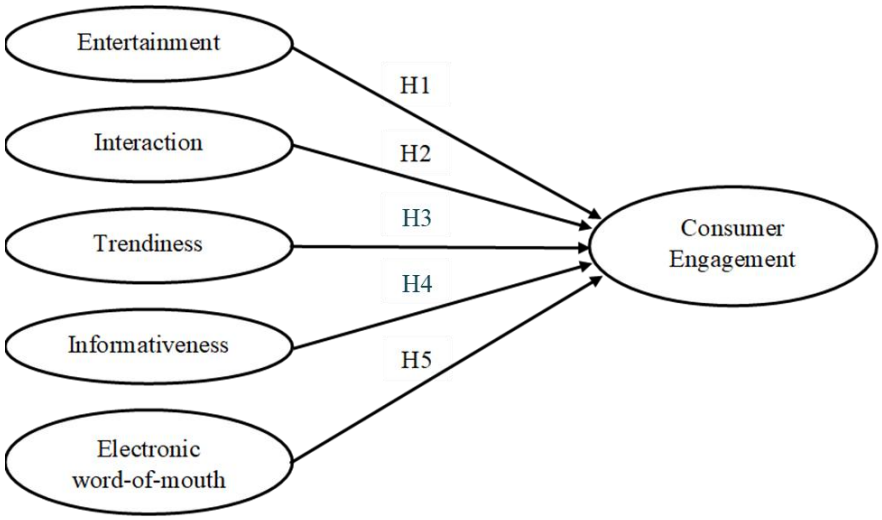
Rathi and Jain (2023) revealed the eWOM of MM positively impacts consumer engagement. This eWOM helps to increase brand awareness, drive traffic to brand pages, and ultimately lead to higher consumer engagement metrics like likes, comments, and shares.

METHODOLOGY

Conceptual Framework

SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52- 83

Figure **Error! No text of specified style in document.**: Conceptual Framework



Source: (Rathi and Jain, 2023)

The conceptual framework has been developed based on the SCT and the UGT (Rathi and Jain,

2023). The conceptual framework has five independent variables and one dependent variable. The five independent variables are entertainment, interaction, trendiness, informativeness, and electronic word-of-mouth. The dependent variable is consumer engagement.

Research Design and Techniques

The purpose of the current study is to examine the factors of Facebook meme marketing on consumer engagement with special reference to Generation Z of the Western Province in Sri Lanka. This study employed the survey strategy under the quantitative methodology.

The population of the current study is individuals who are residents of the Western Province in

Sri Lanka, possessing an active Facebook account (spend at least 30 minutes per day on

Facebook), having awareness of brand-related memes, and falling within the age cohorts of Generation Z. The researcher has chosen individuals of Generation Z who are residents of the Western Province in Sri Lanka to collect data because memes resonate with Generation Z the most and meme accounts on SM are mostly followed by Generation Z (Smith, 2022), and the Western Province has the highest number of Facebook users (22.8%) (Induruwage, 2023) and highest number of monthly active Generation Z users in Sri Lanka (Digital Outlook, 2024), and it records Sri Lanka's highest population density (CBSL, 2023). Following a positivist research philosophy and deductive research approach, the data were gathered using purposive sampling method because the population is unknown. According to the Cochran formula, the calculated sample size is 384.

As the data collection method of this study, a structured questionnaire has been used to collect primary data. To analyze the study data, both descriptive and inferential statistics were conducted by using the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) 21 software as a statistical tool. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the degree of relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Table 1: Summary of the Reliability and Validity Test Measures

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha Value (0.7<)	KMO (0.5<)	Bartlett's Test Sphericity (0.05>)	AVE (0.5<)	CR (0.7<)

Entertainment	0.837	0.727	0.000	0.755	0.843
Interaction	0.776	0.696	0.000	0.693	0.852
Trendiness	0.832	0.723	0.000	0.749	0.844
Informativeness	0.812	0.707	0.000	0.728	0.847
Electronic word-of-mouth	0.809	0.708	0.000	0.726	0.847
Consumer Engagement	0.845	0.847	0.000	0.621	0.880

Source: Survey Data (2024)

As mention in Table 1, Cronbach's Alpha value of all the variables was greater than 0.7 and it revealed that all the variables are reliable. KMO values for all six variables were greater than 0.5 and all of the variable's Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significance values are reported as 0.000, which means that the correlation matrices differ considerably from an identity matrix, which is a desirable outcome for factor analysis. Average Variance Extracted values were greater than 0.5, and Composite Reliability values were greater than 0.7. Therefore, the convergent validity requirement has been met.

The mean value of Entertainment, Interaction, Trendiness, Informativeness, Electronic wordof-mouth, and Consumer Engagement are respectively 3.6190, 3.6219, 3.4914, 3.4752, 3.5352, and 3.5051. So, it can be concluded that all the six variables are operating at the standard level. The standard deviation of all six of the variables are respectively 1.05724, 1.03222, 1.09050, 1.06095, 1.04919, and 1.00789. Therefore, the data set can be interpreted as cluttered because of its considerably high value. As a result, the data set has less variation.

SEUSL Journal of Marketing, Vol. X, No.1, 2025 ISBN 2513 – 3071
Page Number 52- 83

According to the skewness and kurtosis, all the values are position in between the +2 and -2. So, it can be concluded that data were normally distributed for all five factors of consumer engagement (Scott, 2002). Therefore, regression analysis is applied to test the research objectives and research hypothesis.

Table 2: Regression Analysis

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	
Entertainment	0.280	0.047	0.000
Interaction	0.193	0.054	0.000
Trendiness	0.052	0.047	0.272
Informativeness	0.170	0.048	0.000
Electronic word-of-mouth	0.247	0.049	0.000

Source: Survey Data (2024)

According to Table 2, entertainment ($\beta = 0.280$; p-value < 0.05), interaction ($\beta = 0.193$; p-value < 0.05), informativeness ($\beta = 0.170$; p-value < 0.05), and electronic word-of-mouth ($\beta = 0.247$; p-value < 0.05) of Facebook meme marketing have a positive and statistically significant impact on Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka, and the trendiness (p-value > 0.05) of Facebook meme marketing does not impact.

DISCUSSION

The results of the analysis validate the positive impact of entertainment of Facebook meme marketing on Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka.

Companies can take advantage of this fact by concentrating on creating entertaining meme-based advertisements that will affect Generation Z consumer engagement. Rathi and Jain (2023a) investigated how entertainment of social media meme marketing affects on consumer engagement and found that positive influence of entertainment of social media meme marketing on consumer engagement. Their study highlights the crucial role that entertainment of social media meme marketing plays in influencing consumer engagement, which is consistent with the present findings. Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia (2024) examined that, entertaining memes on social media can reduce tension and make people fun. And also, they found that memes provide satisfaction to Generation Z through entertainment. Both this research and the current study support the notion that entertainment of meme marketing plays a significant role in influencing Generation Z consumer behavior.

According to the findings of this study showed a significant impact of interaction of Facebook meme marketing on Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This research emphasizes how crucial it is to improve Generation Z consumer engagement. Rathi and Jain (2023a) have repeatedly stated the crucial impact that interaction of social media meme marketing has on consumer engagement. They found that the interaction of social media meme marketing has a positive influence on consumer engagement. Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia (2024) found that Generation Z consumers feel more connected to one another and more involved because social media memes are interactive and frequently encourage likes, comments, and shares. Also, they repeatedly stated that memes provide satisfaction to Generation Z through social interaction. These findings (Rathi and Jain, 2023; Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia, 2024) are totally aligned with the

current research findings, which highlight how important it is to create a Facebook meme-based advertisement that not only entertains consumers but also encourages them to actively interact.

According to the findings of this study showed that the trendiness of Facebook meme markting did not impact on Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This demonstrated that Generation Z consumers of Western Province in Sri Lanka might give more weight to the other qualities than the trendiness of Facebook meme marketing. This result is aligned with previous studies on the topic. Kamath and Alur (2024) investigated how memes are integrated into social media marketing and discovered that trendy memes are transient, they frequently result in low consumer engagement. This supports the findings of the current study and suggests that brands should put more attention on creating valuable Facebook memes rather than following trends. Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia (2024) found that originality and creativity are crucial for getting attention and encouraging Generation Z social media users to engage with a meme. Their findings show that Generation Z consumers give priority to the originality and creativity of memes rather than the trendiness of them.

The findings from the study revealed a significant impact of the informativeness of Facebook meme marketing on Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This demonstrates that rich informativeness has a significant impact on Generation Z consumer engagement through Facebook meme marketing in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This finding highlights that rich informativeness plays a major role in boosting Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka. Research by Rathi and Jain (2023a)

has repeatedly highlighted the critical influence that the informativeness of social media meme marketing has on consumer engagement. They discovered that the informativeness of social media meme marketing has a positive impact on consumer engagement. This is totally in line with this study, which emphasizes how important it is to enhance Generation Z consumer behavior. Arie Bowo,

Anisah and Marthalia (2024) stated that memes act as an informative source for Generation Z. As well as they also found that memes provided satisfaction to Generation Z through information.

The findings from the study revealed a significant impact of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) of Facebook meme marketing on Generation Z consumer's engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka. This indicates that the impact of positive eWOM on Generation Z consumer's engagement through Facebook meme marketing in Western Province, Sri Lanka.

This emphasizes that how crucial it is to enhance eWOM of Facebook meme marketing to boost consumer engagement. Research conducted by Rathi and Jain (2023a) repeatedly highlighted the critical impact that the electronic word-of-mouth of social media meme marketing has on consumer engagement. They found that the electronic word-of-mouth of social media meme marketing has a positive impact on consumer engagement, which is consistent with the current findings. Arie Bowo, Anisah and Marthalia (2024) stated that viral memes have the power to boost consumer engagement. (Malodia *et al.*, 2022) discovered that memes are an excellent way to generate eWOM because of their viral nature.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The current study was conducted under the topic of "Factors Impact of Facebook Meme Marketing on Consumer Engagement: With Special Reference to Generation Z in Western Province, Sri Lanka." To carry out this study, the researcher found a practical gap between Facebook meme marketing and consumer engagement. To accomplish the research objectives, the researcher gathered data from 384 people who are residents of the Western Province, possessing an active Facebook account, having awareness of brand-related memes, and falling within the age cohorts of Generation Z. The data were gathered using purposive sampling method. The results of the reliability and validity analysis showed that all the variables are reliable and valid. The sample adequacy has been measured by using the KMO values and Bartlett's test of Sphericity values and it confirmed that the data are sufficient for explanatory factor analysis. The key characteristics of the data were summarized by the descriptive statistics, which provide a clear overview of the research variables. Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, it can be concluded that entertainment, interaction, informativeness and electronic word-of-mouth of Facebook meme marketing positively impact on Generation Z consumer engagement in Western Province, Sri Lanka, and the trendiness of Facebook meme marketing did not impact. These findings will pave the way for more investigation and managerial implications, providing insight into the future for marketers and businesses looking to thrive in this ever-changing landscape. Therefore, this study offers a blueprint for marketers who are developing Facebook meme-based marketing initiatives.

According to the findings, the most influential variable is entertainment which is boosting consumer engagement in Facebook meme marketing. This implies that companies should give priority to creating entertaining content that appeals to their target market. To make the consumer experience enjoyable and boost consumer engagement, brands should focus on creating meme content that blends subtle messaging with entertainment.

The results show that the interaction of Facebook meme marketing has a positive impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z. Higher degrees of interaction are typically generated by memes that invite user participation. Brands should provide Facebook meme content that encourages audience participation by utilizing polls, challenges, etc. Consumers are encouraged to actively interact with the business via this interactive approach.

The other variable that impacts on consumer engagement is the informativeness of Facebook meme marketing. This suggests that while the entertainment of Facebook meme marketing is important, using Facebook memes to convey important information can greatly increase their effectiveness. Therefore, marketers should provide the most appropriate, educational, and supplementary information about goods, services, and trends through memes. So that consumers are aware that it is an informative meme and not just for fun.

Furthermore, the results show that the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) of Facebook meme marketing has a positive impact on consumer engagement of Generation Z. Memes are a great method for creating eWOM because of their shareable nature (Malodia *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, brands should create shareable and relatable memes that are consistent with the ideas of their target audience.

The findings reveal that the trendiness of Facebook meme marketing not impacts on consumer engagement of Generation Z. But it is still an important factor for Facebook meme marketing even though the study's findings did not show that it had a positive impact on consumer engagement. Although it might not increase consumer engagement directly, remaining trendy can help keep the brand relevant. This implies that meaningful consumer relationships cannot be sustained by just profiting from trendy topics. Brands should focus on creating long-term value in their Facebook meme-based advertisements rather than short-term trends.

Incorporating these managerial implications into the business strategy can help marketers/businesses/companies who use social media meme marketing in Sri Lanka thrive in a competitive digital market and leverage the power of meme marketing to impact consumer engagement effectively.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has certain limitations. This study has been conducted based on the Generation Z active Facebook users in the Western Province, of Sri Lanka. Therefore, future researchers can expand the study's framework to other generations and other provinces in Sri Lanka, as well as other countries. As well as, future researchers can examine the impact of the factors of meme marketing on other social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, etc. The study was conducted using the quantitative research method. So, future researchers can be use qualitative research method. Additionally, the mixed method can be applied. Although the purposive sample method was used in this study. Therefore, future researchers can use more

rigorous and diverse probability sample methods such as simple random sampling or stratified random sampling. As well as, future studies can address other possible variables that the current study did not address but that could affect on consumer engagement.

REFERENCES

Abeythunga, M., Jayasinghe, N. and Almeida, S. (2023) 'THE MEME CULTURE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SRI LANKAN ENGLISH MORPHOLOGY', *International Journal of Research in Science, Commerce, Arts, Management and Technology*, pp. 410–421. Available at: https://doi.org/10.48175/ijarsct-13062.

Algharabat, R.S. (2017) 'Kybernetes Article information :Linking social media marketing activities with brand love The mediating role of self-expressive brands', *Marketing*, 46(10), pp. 1801–1819. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/K-04-2017-0130.

Arie Bowo, F., Anisah, A. and Marthalia, L. (2024) 'Meme Marketing: Generation Z Consumer Behavior on Social Media', *Jurnal Indonesia Sosial Sains*, 5(02), pp. 188–201. Available at: https://doi.org/10.59141/jiss.v5i02.995.

Ashley, C. and Tuten, T. (2015) 'Creative Strategies in Social Media Marketing: An Exploratory Study of Branded Social Content and Consumer Engagement', *Psychology and Marketing*, 30(6), pp. 15–27. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.

Brubaker, P.J. *et al.* (2018) 'One does not simply meme about organizations: Exploring the content creation strategies of user-generated memes on Imgur', *Public Relations Review*, 44(5), pp. 741–751. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.06.004.

Cahya, M.B. and 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), pp. 30–40.

Cheung, M.L., Pires, G. and Rosenberger, P.J. (2020) 'The influence of perceived social media marketing elements on consumer–brand engagement and brand knowledge', *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 32(3), pp. 695–720. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-04-2019-0262.

Chu, S.C. and Kim, Y. (2011) 'Determinants of consumer engagement in electronic Word-OfMouth (eWOM) in social networking sites', *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), pp. 47–75. Available at: https://doi.org/10.2501/IJA-30-1-047-075.

Das, S.S. (2023) 'Rising Popularity of Internet Memes in India: A Media Psychology Perspective', *Indian Journal of Social Science and Literature*, 2(3), pp. 5–9. Available at: https://doi.org/10.54105/ijssl.c1058.032323.

Dhir, A. and Tsai, C.C. (2017) 'Understanding the relationship between intensity and gratifications of Facebook use among adolescents and young adults', *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(4), pp. 350–364. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.08.017.

Dholakia, U.M., Bagozzi, R.P. and Klein, L. (2004) 'A social influence model of consumer participation in network- and small-group-based virtual communities', 21, pp. 241–263.

Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2003.12.004.

Van Doorn, J. *et al.* (2010) 'Customer engagement behavior: Theoretical foundations and research directions', *Journal of Service Research*, 13(3), pp. 253–266. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670510375599.

Dutta, S. *et al.* (2024) 'Meme Marketing: Leveraging Internet Culture's Influence for Digital Marketing towards customer retention', *European Economic Letters*, 14(1), pp. 134–148. Available at: https://doi.org/10.52783/eel.v14i1.1007.

Enginkaya, E. and Yılmaz, H. (2014) 'What Drives Consumers to Interact with Brands through Social Media? A Motivation Scale Development Study', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, pp. 219–226. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.07.037.

Finkelstein, R. (2008) 'A MEMETICS COMPENDIUM', *Concepts of Capital*, (May), pp. 229–236. Available at: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315080727-27.

Fryklund, W. and Stenlund, E. (2022) 'Meme marketing's effect on brand recall and sharing intention'.

Islam, J.U. and Rahman, Z. (2017) 'Telematics and Informatics The impact of online brand community characteristics on customer engagement : An application of Stimulus-Organism-Response paradigm', *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(4), pp. 96–109. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.01.004.

Jacobson, J., Gruzd, A. and Hernández-García, Á. (2020) 'Social media marketing: Who is watching the watchers?', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 53. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.03.001.

Katz, E., Blumler, J.G. and Gurevitch, M. (1974) 'Utilization of Mass Communication by the Individual. In J. G. Blumler, & E. Katz (Eds.)', *The Uses of Mass Communications: Current Perspectives on Gratifications Research*, 37(4), pp. 19–32.

LaRose, R. and Eastin, M.S. (2004) 'A Social Cognitive Theory of Internet Uses and Gratifications: Toward a New Model of Media Attendance', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 48(3), pp. 358–377. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4803_2.

Lee, D., Hosanagar, K. and Nair, H.S. (2018) 'Advertising content and consumer engagement on social media: Evidence from Facebook', *Management Science*, 64(11), pp. 5105–5131. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2017.2902.

Lee, H.H. *et al.* (2019) 'Analyzing the intention of consumer purchasing behaviors in relation to internet memes using VAB model', *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(20). Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/su11205549.

Luarn, P., Lin, Y.F. and Chiu, Y.P. (2015) 'Influence of Facebook brand-page posts on online engagement', *Online Information Review*, 39(4), pp. 505–519. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-01-2015-0029.

Malodia, S. *et al.* (2022) 'Meme marketing: How can marketers drive better engagement using

viral memes?', *Psychology and Marketing*, 39(9), pp. 1775–1801. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21702.

Moslehpour, M. *et al.* (2021) 'The dynamic stimulus of social media marketing on purchase intention of Indonesian airline products and services', *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 33(2), pp. 561–583. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-07-2019-0442.

Nanayakkara, M. and Liyanage, P. (2022) 'AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEME- MARKETING IN IMPROVING ONLINE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN SRI LANKA'.

Rathi, N. and Jain, P. (2023) 'Impact of meme marketing on consumer purchase intention: Examining the mediating role of consumer engagement', *Innovative Marketing*, 20(1), pp. 1–16. Available at: https://doi.org/10.21511/im.20(1).2024.01.

Razzaq, A., Shao, W. and Quach, S. (2024) 'Meme marketing effectiveness: A moderatedmediation model', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 78(7), p. 103702. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103702.

Rietveld, R. *et al.* (2020) 'What You Feel, Is What You Like Influence of Message Appeals on Customer Engagement on Instagram', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 49, pp. 20–53. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2019.06.003.

Rohm, A., Kaltcheva, V.D. and Milne, G.R. (2013) 'A mixed-method approach to examining brand-consumer interactions driven by social media', *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 7(4), pp. 295–311. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-01-2013-0009.

Shang, Y. *et al.* (2022) 'The Nexuses Between Social Media Marketing Activities and Consumers' Engagement Behaviour: A Two-Wave Time-Lagged Study', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13(April), pp. 1–14. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.811282.

Sharma, H. (2018) 'Memes in digital culture and their role in marketing and communication: A study in India', *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture*, 9(3), pp. 303–318. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1386/iscc.9.3.303_1.

Shifman, L. (2013) 'Memes in a digital world: Reconciling with a conceptual troublemaker', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 18(3), pp. 362–377. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12013.

Teng, H., Lo, C.F. and Lee, H.H. (2022) 'How do internet memes affect brand image?', *Online Information Review*, 46(2), pp. 304–318. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-05-20200192.

Vasile, S., Mototo, L. and Chuchu, T. (2021) 'Using "Memes" As a Marketing Communication

Tool in Connecting With Consumers Within the Age of Digital Connectivity', *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 11(3), pp. 30–35. Available at: https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.11313.

De Vries, L., Gensler, S. and Leeflang, P.S.H. (2012) 'Popularity of Brand Posts on Brand Fan Pages: An Investigation of the Effects of Social Media Marketing', *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(2), pp. 83–91. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2012.01.003.

Wiggins, B.E. and Bowers, G.B. (2014) 'Memes as genre: A structurational analysis of the memescape', (May). Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814535194.

Wirga, W. *et al.* (2022) 'The Effect of Entertainment , Interaction , Customization , Trendiness

, and Ewom (Electronic Word Of Mouth) Againts Brand Image in The Digital Bussiness Study Program of Bali State Polytechnic', pp. 35–42.

Yang, Q. *et al.* (2022) 'Sustainable customer retention through social media marketing activities using hybrid SEM-neural network approach', *Plos One*, 17(3), pp. 1–23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0264899.

Zannettou, S. *et al.* (2018) 'On the origins of memes by means of fringe web communities', *Proceedings of the ACM SIGCOMM Internet Measurement Conference, IMC*, (Imc), pp. 188–202. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1145/3278532.3278550.

Zheng, R., Li, Z. and Na, S. (2022) 'How customer engagement in the live-streaming affects purchase intention and customer acquisition, E-tailer's perspective', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 68(May), p. 103015. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2022.103015.

Zubiaga, A. *et al.* (2015) 'Real-time classification of Twitter trends', *Journal of the Association*

for Information Science and Technology, 66(3), pp. 462–473. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.23186.