

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEME-MARKETING IN IMPROVING ONLINE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT IN SRI LANKA

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Abstract

In an era where internet memes are highly influential in swaying public opinion, and there is limited research on the concept, this study investigates the effectiveness of meme marketing as an approach for brands to improve online consumer engagement in Sri Lanka. Through a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection (four expert interviews/ 187 survey responses) and examination of existing literature, the study focusses on; a) topicality, humour, creativity, and relatability as factors that make memes effective, b) the extent to which meme marketing is utilized in Sri Lanka, c) attitude of millennial social media users towards memes, and d) whether it could be an effective tool for brands to cultivate consumer engagement. The research provides insight on experiences of digital content experts and the attitude of consumers towards meme-based advertising, finds a positive correlation between meme marketing and consumer engagement, advantages and potential in the use of memes for brands with essentially playful personas, and potentially damaging effects for brands with more formal personas. The results of the study are significant for decision-making in strategic marketing for brand management, especially in relation to evolving trends.

Keywords: Consumer engagement, Content marketing, Memes, Meme marketing, Social media