Click, Laugh, Buy: The Power of Memes in Shaping Jordanian Gen Z's Brand Preferences

Humorous memes in social media marketing have proven to be highly effective, with a New York University study revealing that over 60% of consumers are more likely to make a purchase from businesses using memes. Memes outperform traditional marketing methods, boasting 14% higher conversion rates (Persuasion Nation, 2024).

Defined as humorous content shared online (Kiljańczyk, 2024), memes resonate with younger audiences like Gen Z, who appreciate their relatability and comedic value (Mukhopadhyay *et al*.,, 2023). Memes excel in engaging audiences due to their low cost, viral potential, and capacity to communicate complex ideas in simple, humorous formats (Kamath, 2024; Bowo, 2024). They are uniquely effective in influencing consumer attention. Their appealing visuals, humor, and relatability make them memorable and engaging, aiding brand recall and recognition (Meer, 2022; Yang, 2021). Iconic examples like *Squid Game* illustrate how memes amplify media campaigns, turning them into cultural phenomena.

Emotional engagement is a critical factor influenced by memes. Humor evokes positive emotions like joy and laughter, creating connections between consumers and brands (Ali and Husain, 2024; Vasile and Chuchu, 2021). Emotional responses to memes can drive deeper engagement, influencing purchasing decisions by resonating with consumers' values and desires for self-expression (Kang *et al*., 2020; Sharma *et al*., 2023). When consumers form emotional bonds with a brand, they are more likely to recall and recognize it, enhancing the overall effectiveness of advertising campaigns (Cheung *et al*., 2021).

Jordanian Gen Z, a digitally native and socially active demographic, offers unique characteristics that make them a compelling target for meme marketing research. According to global and regional reports (e.g., Hootsuite's Digital Report, 2023), over 85% of Gen Z in Jordan are active on social media, with platforms like TikTok and Instagram being the most popular. These platforms are prime locations for meme marketing due to their visual and viral nature. Jordanian Gen Z operates in a hybrid cultural environment, balancing traditional Arab values with global modernity (Qdeimat, 2023). Memes allow marketers to tap into this dual identity by using humor that reflects shared cultural experiences, such as jokes about family expectations, societal norms, or modern career aspirations (Kiljańczyk, 2024; Mukhopadhyay, 2023).

While meme marketing has been studied globally, there is little academic or industry-focused research on its application in Jordan. For example, Qdeimat (2023) explores Gen Z's digital habits in Jordan but does not address meme marketing specifically. Investigating meme marketing among Jordanian Gen Z is essential due to their digital engagement, unique cultural blend, and preference for authentic, relatable content.

With humor and creativity at its core, meme marketing has the potential to drive emotional engagement, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions within this demographic. Such research would not only fill a critical gap in marketing literature but also provide actionable insights for brands aiming to thrive in Jordan's dynamic market. This study explores how humorous memes impact emotional engagement and purchase intentions, providing actionable insights for businesses aiming to engage Jordanian Generation Z.

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