

Mememes motivate people to engage and act

1 Warmer

- a. Content shared on online accounts, both business and personal, comes in many forms. It might include video, audio, text, or a mix of all three. Which of these types of media do you think drives audience engagement the most? Are there other types of media that will interest people and motivate them to act?

2 Key words

- a. Read the definitions and complete the sentences with key words found in the article. Paragraph numbers are given to help you.

- gradually changing and developing over a period of time (subtitle) *The food market is _____ and more customers are taking notice of companies that care for the environment.*
- the way in which different parts of something are arranged (1) *They had been keen to change the _____ of the office so that they could use additional space for staff to socialise during their breaks.*
- a series of events that make up the main story in a book, film etc (2) *Gurvinder had developed strong characters but she needed to work on the _____ to provide the story with a logical development.*
- to express what someone or something is really like in a way that people can clearly recognise (3) *They had developed an excellent presentation, managing to _____ all the key information that the client had requested.*
- important and well known (6) *He is a _____ member of his community and political experts are certain he will win votes and begin working for the government.*
- people who receive social website communication that another person sends using online social website services (6) *Businesses need to release regular information across social networks and always be looking for new ways to increase _____.*

7. described something in a way that made people notice it and think about it (7) *Studies have _____ the lack of equality between these groups and recommend that businesses focus on employing people from a wide range of backgrounds.*
8. people who buy and sell things (7) *The market attracts _____ from surrounding towns and villages, who come to sell food they have grown on their farms.*
9. done by a group of people working together (8) *Thanks to a _____ effort, the team were able to release the product on time and gain the custom of many parents whose children would soon be returning to school.*
10. fairly small, especially when compared with other things of the same type (9) *The client began their business with a _____ number of shops in the UK and then expanded across several continents, becoming the global power we know today.*
11. become less clear or noticeable until it finally disappears (12) *The influence that the internet holds over our lives is unlikely to _____, with online sales and interest in social platforms growing every day.*
12. the feeling you have when you are grateful to someone or something (13) *The customer left an online review expressing their _____ for the new and improved delivery service.*

How memes fuelled a boom in the 'stonk market'

FINANCIAL MEMEFICATION IS EVOLVING FROM A NICHE CORNER TO GROW DEEP ROOTS IN MARKETS

BY ROBIN WIGGLESWORTH

- 1 In 1944, two psychologists showed their students a simple film depicting a big triangle, a small triangle and a little ball bouncing around what looked like a schematic layout of a house. The results were fascinating — and relevant to markets today.
- 2 Overwhelmingly, Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel's students felt the big triangle was bullying the other shapes, imagining their emotions and even constructing a plot around what was going on. The experiment illustrates how humans can find narratives pretty much everywhere, no matter how tortuously constructed.
- 3 Narratives matter and have always mattered enormously to markets. Nobel laureate Robert Shiller has even written a book on how the stories we tell ourselves can shape economic ebbs and flows. But over the past year, a condensed, modern form of narrative — the internet meme — has grown deep roots in markets and evolved from attempting to capture reality to actually helping distort it.
- 4 Memes are easily-digestible and shareable images or videos, often in the form of a snapshot from popular culture, tweaked with custom captions to send myriad messages, from amusing self-deprecation to arch political commentary.
- 5 It may seem ludicrous, but financial memes can arguably shape perceptions just like verbose investment bank reports or newspaper opinion pieces. Arguably more so among younger generations with less patience for long-winded, staid traditional news and analysis. If a meme spreads, it can have a sizeable impact at a time when retail trading is a rising force in markets.
- 6 "Individually, a meme from one small account probably won't do much, but if it's a concerted effort and it goes viral, then there is the possibility to drive the share price," says a prominent finance "meme lord" known as Litquidity on Instagram where he has over half a million followers. He has declined to give his real name.
- 7 Memes have long been central to the rise of various cryptocurrencies, but their impact is starting to be felt in mainstream markets as well. This is most vividly highlighted by the mayhem surrounding a bunch of meme-friendly stocks adopted by a horde of online retail traders this year.
- 8 Shares in video game retailer GameStop and cinema chain AMC have climbed over 1,000 per cent and 2,600 per cent respectively this year, giving them a combined market value of \$46bn, overwhelmingly thanks to meme-inspired trading by young retail investors loosely organised on social media sites.
- 9 For now, this is primarily a factor in niche corners of markets. But it is a broader phenomenon than just the classic "meme stonks". Memes have also fuelled the boom in so-called special purpose acquisition companies, arguably in a modest way, even affected the wider stock market, exemplified by Tesla's market-rattling run. Almost half of 1,500 individual investors polled by advisory group Betterment said they invest in stocks based on social media buzz.
- 10 Kyla Scanlon, a young former industry insider who now creates TikTok videos explaining finance to younger generations, is among those both fascinated and alarmed by the "memefication" of markets. She observes the sense of community it engenders but also how it displaces reality from valuations. "We have this short-form content to help us process larger narratives," she says. "And I think that is going to keep showing up in the stock market."
- 11 Another pseudonymous finance memmer known as Dr Parik Patel — who has garnered over 300,000 followers on Twitter in less than a year — sees them mostly as fleeting entertainment at a tough time for many people. That said, he has noticed how they have spread far beyond the confines of his world. "I have friends working in completely unrelated

Continued on next page

fields to finance who had no interest in the industry pre-pandemic now trading their own portfolios and following the hottest finance meme pages,” he says.

- 12 How durable is this phenomenon? It seems unequivocally linked to how maniacal markets have been in the post-Covid era. Scanlon and Patel reckon that it will therefore likely fade once the ebullience eventually evaporates.

- 13 Litquidity, however, worries that the growing appreciation for how social media can be harnessed to make money means that market memefication might prove more resilient than many expect. “I don’t think it’s a good thing, but I don’t think it’s going anywhere unless some sort of regulations are put in place,” he says.

FT

Robin Wigglesworth, 21 June 2021.

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3 Understanding the article

a. These statements contain information about the business article. **Circle** True or False for each statement.

1. A study carried out in the 1940s has helped us to understand which shapes people prefer to see in their homes.
True / False
2. Humans like to attach stories to abstract situations, even when there is no logical connection between the two.
True / False
3. Images and videos with short captions of text, known as memes, have proved very popular on the internet.
True / False
4. This type of short content is funny and appeals to people, but it hasn't been successful in changing their opinions and affecting markets.
True / False
5. Some people have been releasing financial memes online and this has helped them to gain more followers on social media.
True / False
6. Shares in cinema and video game chains have dropped after memes made jokes about them and upset customers.
True / False
7. Investors pay attention to internet trends, which can help them to decide how to invest in stocks.
True / False
8. Short content such as memes and videos can help people to understand complex information contained in longer content.
True / False
9. Dr Parik Patel believes that memes will continue to be popular and that followers will request more financial memes.
True / False
10. Social networks can be used to make companies lots of money and rules might need to be put in place to control how memes are used in future.
True / False

4 Business Language

a. Complete the text with the words in the wordpool.

depicting evolved layout perceptions plot shape

Excited to start work experience, Huong decided to research the media organisation and become familiar with the news stories they published. She reviewed their most popular newspaper, comparing the traditional print version to the online version. She paid special attention to the (1) _____ of the digital pages and noted how the content had (2) _____ to work well in the online environment.

Huong noticed that journalists favoured stories (3) _____ the experiences of people in local communities. Several years ago, reports had often focused on prominent figures, but (4) _____ had changed. Readers today wanted to know about the lives of people they could understand on a personal level and that more closely resembled their own.

Work with a media company would differ from her previous experience editing novels for a fiction publisher. Stories had to feel genuine and would not need to follow a complicated (5) _____. However, journalists still needed to (6) _____ reports so that they had a good flow and followed a logical structure. Huong felt her previous work experiences had enabled her to build strong skills that would benefit her when starting this new role.

5 Business Language

a. Match the words and phrases for investment with their meanings.

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. acquisition | a. the activity of buying and selling shares in a company |
| 2. investors | b. the amount of money that something is worth or can be sold for |
| 3. market value | c. the cost of shares in a company |
| 4. share price | d. a person or organisation that invests money |
| 5. trading | e. the process of buying something or obtaining it in some other way |

b. Read the conversation in pairs and complete gaps in the speech with the words and phrases for investment from a.

Constance and Acuzio are senior managers working for a large cinema chain. They have experienced recent success and are discussing business plans for the next five years.

Constance: Thanks to the (1) _____ of our competitor, we now own the biggest market share and can start making plans for next year. As you will know, cinema has taken a big hit recently and we need to get customers back through our doors.

Acuzio: We certainly have had a hard time over the past couple of years, but people are desperate to get out and enjoy their lives again. The (2) _____ of the film industry is rising and (3) _____ are taking an interest in our company.

Constance: Yes, and this interest has also helped to boost the (4) _____, showing other interested parties that cinema is worth investing in. I want to see huge numbers of customers coming back to us though, so we need to restrict home releases that people can watch online. That worked for us recently, but it won't work going forward – we need to see big profits in the theatres.

Acuzio: I agree, home release needs to be reduced. We should focus on a great experience. People shouldn't just be coming to watch a film and eat some sweets, they need to enjoy added value. If we can offer new experiences, perhaps forming partnerships with production companies and selling products that relate to the films, then customers will come to us for rare shopping experiences as well.

Constance: That's a good idea! If that works well, we might get the attention of other investors that are interested in (5) _____ and buying shares in our chain. Who knows? Maybe we will gain more investment potential and enter lots of different markets!

Acuzio: Yes! We could be about to enter the new golden age of cinema!

Constance: Let's hope so! We should share our thoughts with Andre. I'll send him a message now and see when he can meet.

6 Discussion Questions

a. Discuss these questions

- Do you think memes will continue to influence industries after problems caused by the virus have ended? Why/Why not?
- Should rules be introduced to control content that people see online? What are the benefits and disadvantages of doing this?

7 Wider business theme – Influential media

a. Work in pairs to do the roleplay. Read the description for A or B.

A

You work for a natural foods company. You are known for growing foods without the use of chemicals and taking care of the environment. You are experiencing success, but you are new to the market and want to increase your customer numbers. To develop a loyal customer base, you realise that you need to increase the number of followers on your social networks.

However, media staff working at your company have limited time to work on this and you don't have time to hire new staff at the moment. To solve the problem, you have decided to hire the services of an external media organisation so that they can do the work for you. They are very experienced and successful but their services are not cheap – you need to make sure they do the project well to ensure their services are worth the cost.

Your company has a good website and is present on several social media sites. You often publish articles about your products, the health benefits of buying them and the good things you do for the environment on your company's website. You will want to tell the media company about this and encourage them to increase followers across all the different networks.

You are meeting with the company to discuss your needs and tell them more about your business. They should tell you how they will approach the task and what can be expected from the campaign. By the end of the meeting, you should have reached an agreement and know how the campaign will be delivered.

B

You work for a media services company. Other businesses hire you to help them with media work, such as writing articles for websites, running competitions on social networks and increasing the number of followers on different websites. You are approached by a natural food company that wants to increase their followers and gain a loyal customer base.

The company have a good website that they use to publish articles about the products they sell, the health benefits of buying them and the great work they do to help the environment. They will want these values to be expressed in communications that you send out for them.

You will need to use a mix of media to gain the audience's attention and to attract new followers. Your services are expensive, so you will want to ensure that this campaign is successful and your client will get good value for money.

You are meeting with the client to discuss their needs and learn more about the company. You need to tell them how you will approach the task and what can be expected from the campaign. By the end of the meeting, you should have reached an agreement and know how you will be delivering the campaign.