

For example, the memeplex of players/breezersluts is characterised by the belief that it is important to accentuate their sexuality and to frequently change boy or girlfriends. For girls, this is exemplified by wearing mini-skirts, low necklines and lots of make-up. They like luxury brands like Armani and Bikkemberg, live in the present and want to have fun. For boys this is reflected in binge drinking or by linguistic memes such as talking about 'scoring girls'. By studying the overlap between the memes of different subcultures, we found that subcultures, and their memes, can be grouped along two dimensions:

- Me versus we. Some subcultures have memes that stress the individual over the group. They are egocentric and think they are superior to other kids. Fashion boys/girls (more exclusive clothes), players (more feminine/masculine look), nerds (top of the class), gabbers (best in jumpstyle dancing) and rappers (best rapper) are more 'me' oriented. At the 'we' end, the subgroups believe that the group is superior as typified by the memeplexes of punkers (fight for justice) and hippies (make the world a better place).
- Change versus conservatism. Social groups on the 'change' end contain memes that reflect openness. They are extravert, like to explore unknown territories, and have activities which take them outside of the home. They are aware of new social trends. Rappers, skaters, fashion boys/girls and altos score high on this dimension. Conservative subcultures have memeplexes that keep things the ways they are, constructed with memes that come from a fantasy world. They value spirituality and mystery, prefer to stay at home and relax with their friends and participate in restricted niche events organised for their own group such as nerds with LAN parties.

HOW MEMES SPREAD

Being part of a subculture means a youngster has adopted the group's memeplex, and rejected the memeplex of groups that deviate from their ideas. Similar to the survival of the fittest genes, to assure the transmission of their own memes they will not adopt the memeplexes of another subculture but will be more open if the meme structure of another subculture is related. By considering the dynamics of friendly and hostile memeplexes, one can anticipate the spontaneous transition of memes.

Friendly memeplexes- The closer two subcultures are on either dimension, the greater the overlap between their memes and the more likely they will infect each other. Altos and skaters will probably transmit memes because they are on the 'change' dimension, have

memes that reflect openness, and borrow elements from friendly memeplexes. They are therefore often seen as trendsetters. The further teenagers are located on the conservative side of the spectrum, the less memes they adopt from other subcultures and the slower their memes evolve.

Hostile memeplexes- The less meme subcultures have in common, the less easily they adopt memes from each other. Fashion boys (at the me/change part of the axis), will, for example often refer to gothics (at the we/conservatism part) as their non-group. Thus, youngsters protect their memes by not interacting with subcultures that have an opposing memeplex.

Kids promote their personal memeplexes so memes spread spontaneously, but taking a more proactive approach, they also communicate memes through the content they generate on their social networks, uploading pictures of brands that are part of their memeplex that support their identity. Online polls of subcultures on the 'we' side contained more society-related memes like the environment whereas polls of 'me'-groups mostly dealt with their appearance and getting feedback on their profile.

MEMETIC BRANDING

How can marketers use memes and their evolutionary dynamics in branding and communication with kids? Here are four guidelines for marketing managers:

1. Make your brand a targeted meme

If your brand is adopted as a carrier by kids to transmit their memes, it will have a better chance of survival and success. Winning brand memes depend on their fitness for a subculture. Complexity, sophistication, novelty or vividness through brand activation, communication and conversation may be attractive but not sufficient for memes to spread. A meme is more likely to replicate if it fulfils a subculture's needs, so brands need to offer targeted utility such as content or extra services to match the needs and tastes of specific groups. Memes should also be simple so they can lucidly convey messages to complete their mission for reproduction.

Some subcultures are more likely to adopt specific brands as memes. Groups located on the 'me' side of the axis are more brand-sensitive and buy brands that positively differentiate them from their peers whereas 'we' oriented subcultures possess memes that relate to styles and characteristics such as colours and shapes. For brands to be accepted as a meme, it is easier to target 'me'-oriented and brand managers should identify leading subcultures according to the product categories.

2. Utilise natural meme spreading

Once your brand is adopted by a subculture, the brand meme will spread naturally: friendly memeplexes will integrate adjacent memes in their memeplex. By analysing the transition of memes among subcultures on the 'me' side of the spectrum, we observe a clear pattern: fashion boys and girls spot the trends and make these memes common in their social group. They infect players and gabbers who imitate them and finally nerds adopt them usually because their mothers buy their clothes and try to give them the best chance of social success by imitating groups that are close to their social group (gabbers and players) or the mainstream. It is important to understand the spread paths and neighbouring subcultures to benefit from the natural evolution of memes. The right communication memes must be used to stimulate brand acceptance in certain subcultures. Avoid combining memes from hostile memeplexes that limit their proliferation.

3. Adopt mainstream memes

Most kids are mainstream but adapt memes from various subcultures. The ultimate for a brand is to be adopted as a mainstream meme that is friendly for other subcultures so that a brand will be incorporated in the identity of a large group and have a bigger chance of survival. While the number of brands that are part of the mainstream memeplex are limited, brands that are not a meme

can still profit from popular style memes. Sweatshirts with hoods (from skaters) have become popular mainstream memes.

4. Develop meme-insights and manage conversations

A good understanding of the memes for each specific brand and product is crucial for success. The best way to achieve this with kids is through applying an integrated research design of connected research tools and mass ethnography. Because social media and mobile technology are integrated in kids' lives, memes reproduce much faster than with other groups and may mutate for better or worse to strengthen or harm a brand. This means that managing conversations by observing, joining and facilitating is imperative if brands want to benefit from meme reproduction.

Mememes are a key marketing tool because they spread in a viral fashion among youngsters. Knowing which memes form part of your target group's identity and which ones do not is critical for youth marketers. **RWW**

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