Meme Insider

A NEW ERA BEGINS

As the Decade Comes to
an End, We Look at the Most
Impactful Formats and Memes
of the 2010's

M

WELCOME BACK!
TO MEME INSIDER

Hello and welcome, everyone, to a new decade of memes! Over the last decade, we have watched memes grow from an online trend to a global sensation. Everywhere you go, people discuss memes like they are discussing sports or politics. You were there for that. You were a part of that. You helped turn memes into something that will last forever. And now, as we enter the 2020s, we have an opportunity to watch the internet, and the content on it, mature and strengthen. We hope you enjoy this month's magazine as we continue to strive further into achieving meme perfection. Please email us at contact@memeinsider.com with any questions, concerns, or comments. We look forward to hearing from you!

Best,

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INSIDE THE ISSUE

The Cybertruck

Was it always meant to be a meme?

/u/thelegend28

Elon Musk is well known among the online community. He seems to be someone who's very in-tune with internet culture. Naturally, he posts memes all over his social media, asking others of the younger generation to send him more. He also pulls off elaborate publicity stunts (such as the unwarranted Space X launches that made LA residents terrified that aliens were invading on two separate occasions). He also finds a way to get himself in the news headlines for anything from accusing someone of being a "pedo" to suggesting we deploy nuclear weapons to the planet Mars. Basically, he knows how to earn himself some attention online.

Musk's car company, Tesla, just released a very strange creation known as the Cybertruck. In the fashion of its predecessors at Tesla, the Cybertruck is an electric vehicle, but this one contains some weird twists. It's built to be indestructible, hauls anything from an ATV to another truck, and is quite possibly the ugliest looking thing to ever be street legal. From the moment of its conception, Musk must have known the Cybertruck would ignite millions of jokes online. With a truck that looks like a military tank from the distant future doing a very poor job disguising itself as a modern-day car, there's no way people could resist mocking it. The blunder of its launch also garnered attention, with the "bullet-proof" glass windows shattering

and Musk continuing the presentation with the backdrop of the cracked prototype.

Some have speculated that the Cybertruck's strange design and awkward reveal were set up so the Cybertruck would become a meme. This theory isn't far fetched. In fact, it was revealed that, aside from company presentations, Tesla has spent no money at all on advertising. They invested in no commercials, ads, or anything a sane company would use to keep its business afloat. Instead, Musk seemed to know that the internet would spread the word of his bizarre invention. And it certainly did — the Cybertruck has already sold 200,000 preorders.

It's possible that Musk didn't waste his money on advertising because he knew his invention would be so bizarre that it would reach all corners of the internet in the form of Lightning McQueen memes. It's also believed that Musk has a secret Reddit account, keeping track of all the popular memes. And, if this is truly the case, how do we know he isn't the one subtly putting out all of these memes until they've caught on?

While it might seem counterproductive to shame your own invention to millions, Musk has the right idea. If he created the Cybertruck with the knowledge that it would be a joke online (as anyone who looks at that thing would instantly understand), he knew that a bunch of people would become exposed to his new truck everywhere from Instagram to Facebook to YouTube. Thus, meme marketing has been employed.

Meme marketing is something that we're just beginning to catch up on, though it's probably been done for years. In theory, a company could produce something ridiculous that the internet

would swarm to dismember, and it would gain traction. Movies and TV shows can also employ this with certain scenes or characters that are definitely meme material, like Fat Thor or Baby Yoda. By including something like this, they know images from the show will suddenly make their rounds online, allowing them to gain a cult following overnight.

This hasn't always been unheard of. There are lots of examples of products, movies, events, and more being marketed online. Some companies even attempt to create memes, though most are so embarrassingly unsuccessful that they're ignored entirely. However, some have been successful — the Wendy's twitter roasts, for example, have garnered a lot of attention. Viral marketing is gaining in popularity in the current age — it was only a matter of time before we accidentally did the marketing ourselves. With the arrival of the Cybertruck, we've somehow fallen into a Black Mirror-esque universe, driving a company's sales up just because we think a box-shaped car looks funny.

So, is there more meme marketing in the future? With the success of the Cybertruck, which was advertised in memes alone, it's easy to predict companies trying to employ this tactic even more. Musk had the advantage because he's familiar with internet culture and knew his street brick would get roasted. It's not unreasonable to expect that other companies will soon follow in his footsteps, creating thousands of oddly shaped products no one ever needs just because they know it'll catch on.
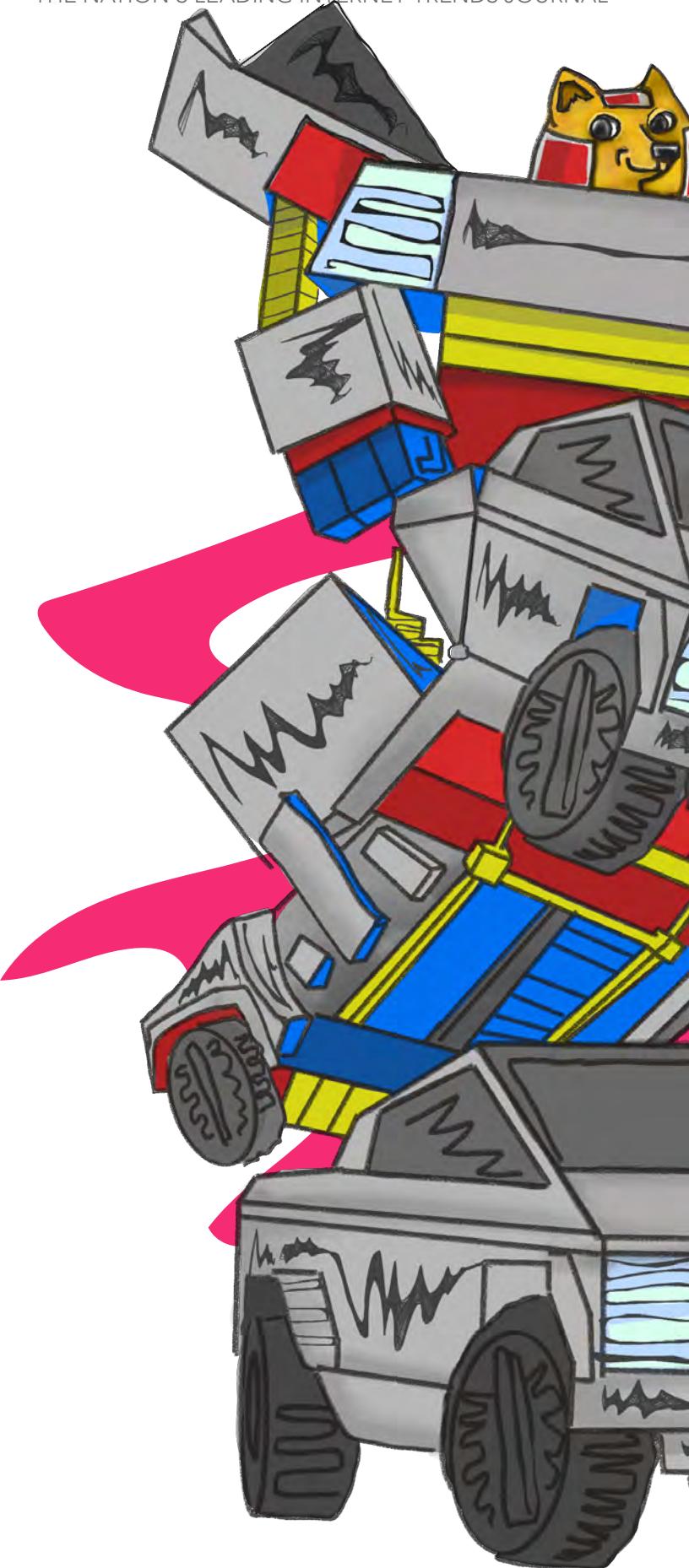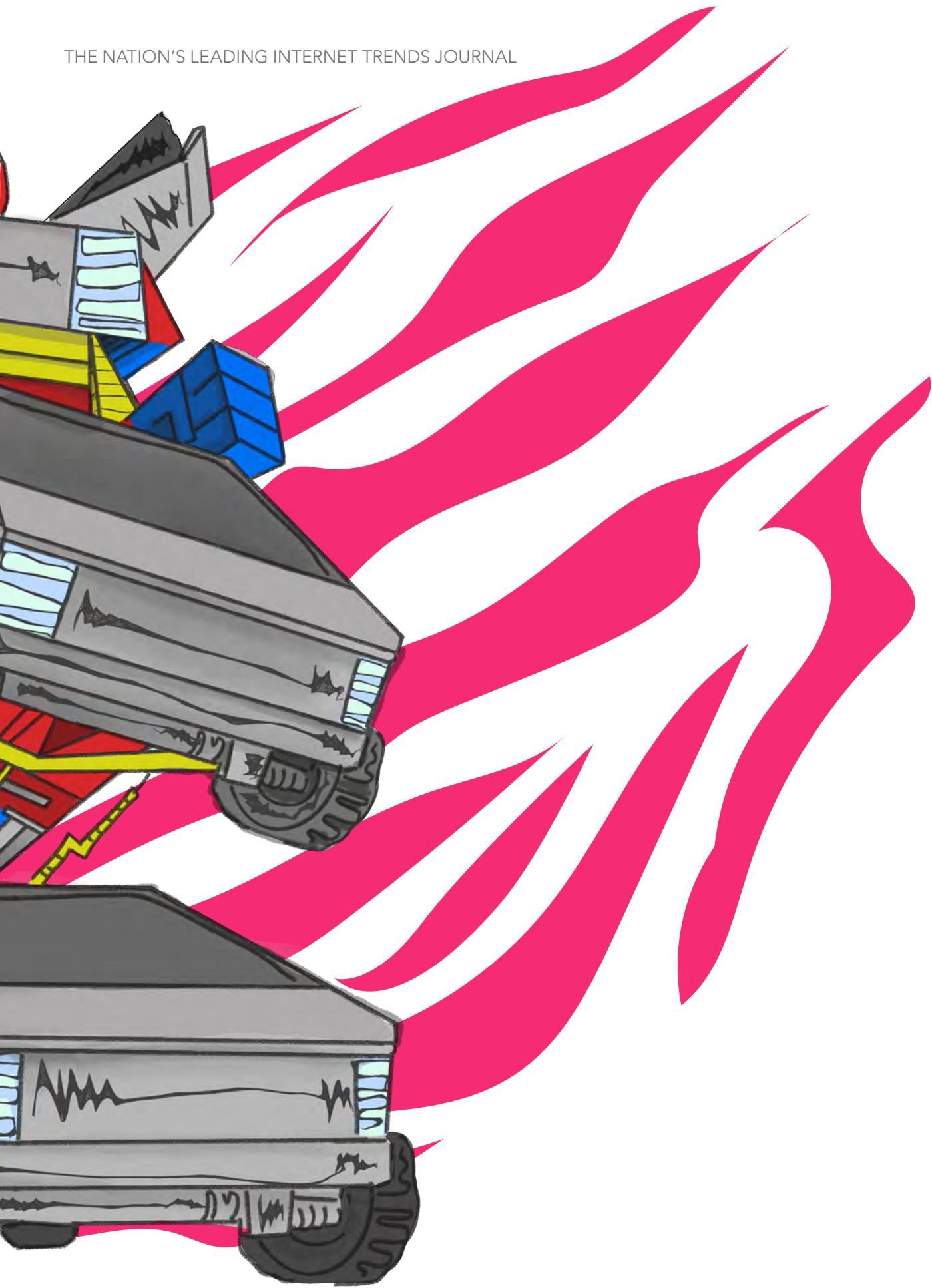
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Padoru Padorun't

Hashire sori yo, kaze no you ni, tsukimihara wo, PADORU PADORU

/u/deros94

One of the bigger tragedies of this year was the abysmal state of Spooktober and how it failed to make a distinctive impact. Seasonal memes are an important way for the online meme community to flex creativity. In many ways, limiting oneself is a way to try to stretch the limit of creation. However, this year's Spooktober showed that regurgitation won over innovation. Although Luckycosmos' is of the opinion that the death of Spooktober would not be felt by the meme community stating, "Christmas and other seasonal holidays that have memes of their own are completely independent and not affected by Spooktober, but should be wary all the same" (Spooktober is Dead and We Killed It, Issue 35 Meme Insider). The latter half of the statement is what will be tested in this analysis as the Animemes community welcomed and abandoned the Padoru Padoru meme.

A brief explanation of what Padoru Padoru is will be important before using it to tackle Luckycosmos' statement. Padoru Padoru came from a clip of a Fate/Extra, a PSP game in the long and convoluted Fate Series. Fate is a mess of visual novels, anime, manga, and novels under the TYPE-MOON (also known as Notes) game company. One thread of the Fate Series is that historical figures and mythical figures are turned into anime girls. The most famous is

Saber, a female version of King Arthur who has many "clones" in the series, one of which is Nero Caesar. In the PSP game, a small version of Nero Caesar is singing a song that is similar to the tune of Jingle Bells while dressed as Santa. Although the game was released worldwide in 2011 the meme came from its viral explosion in 2016.

The fact is that the meme is directly tied to Christmas, as Nero sings a tune like Jingle Bells while wearing a Santa suit. While the meme is not strictly limited to the month of December, it is rare to see Padoru appear outside of the holiday season. Looking at the trend graph for the past five years shows when the meme took over Fate/Extra. In July 2018, interest in the game briefly spiked, implying another viral moment tied to the Padoru meme. The connection may be linked to the celebration of "Christmas in July," an unofficial holiday popularized within countries in the southern hemisphere, such as Australia and New Zealand. Essentially, Padoru is widely interpreted as a Christmas meme, and should be expected to dominate Reddit during the holiday season in some form or another.

But why Padoru didn't dominate during its peak season this year? One possibly explanation is that Redditors were experiencing a form of burnout with holiday-related memes, as the community grew exhausted with Halloween memes just two months prior. However, going against this statement is a popular post on the 16th of December of the titular manga character Komi-san from Komi Can't Communicate dealing with

> **"**
> **That trend is uncreativity and an oversaturation of posts this time it's Padoru Padoru and possibly a sign of the times**
> **"**

Nero in a simple meme parodying the famous scene (and subsequent meme) from Captain Phillips. Yet, it was a single instance of a Padoru meme on Reddit in twenty-four hours. In fact, on the 16th there were only six total Padoru memes when searched by Top and only eight when searched by new. This is the meme's peak season and it can't even get ten new posts in a twenty-four hour period. This suggests that seasonal memes are faring poorly in the marketplace of /r/Animemes, a trend that likely stems from a similar issue that plagued Spooktober.

That trend is uncreativity and an oversaturation of posts this time it's Padoru Padoru and possibly a sign of the times. Padoru had a spike this year after Halloween which is a common trend as most people know that Christmas music and the season itself begins on All Saints Day. Then the trend dipped while staying consistent until a massive relative spike at the beginning of December until falling rapidly to the level seen on Halloween. This suggests that interest in Padoru Padoru is higher than ever, but that conflicts with the lack of content. In this conflict lies the answer that anime memes are growing, but inside them the Padoru Padoru meme is outdated, full of low effort content, and ultimately is going the way of Spooktober.

Social media is a new tool that marketing professionals and agencies have begun to utilize heavily in their brand's and client's advertising campaigns. Its' freshness comes with a lot of confusion on the validity of its' successes and the potential of its' risks. Brand-related social content has become a popular and cheap way of converting views into dollars, but the consequences of a social campaign failure needs to be considered as well. It is becoming important for social media managers to realize the true influence successful and failed social media campaigns can have on their client's overall profit and image.

Silence Brand!

A Review, In Detail

In this review, we investigate how branded social media impacts company profits, how social media relationships between brands can increase profits, and how social loyalty can be converted to real world purchases. Due to the recency of the phenomenon that is social media, the research on this topic is comparatively limited; however, in the past ten years, more time and studies dedicated to advertising through social media have been conducted. This topic is important to get a better understanding of because of the large amounts of money that are being invested by companies into their brand's social media. Branded social media is an undervalued component of digital advertising which when executed correctly can be used as a tool to increase company profits and value, create new B2B relationships, and build old and new customer loyalty.

A detailed analysis on the history and effects of corporate social media and advertising

@hugeplateofketchup
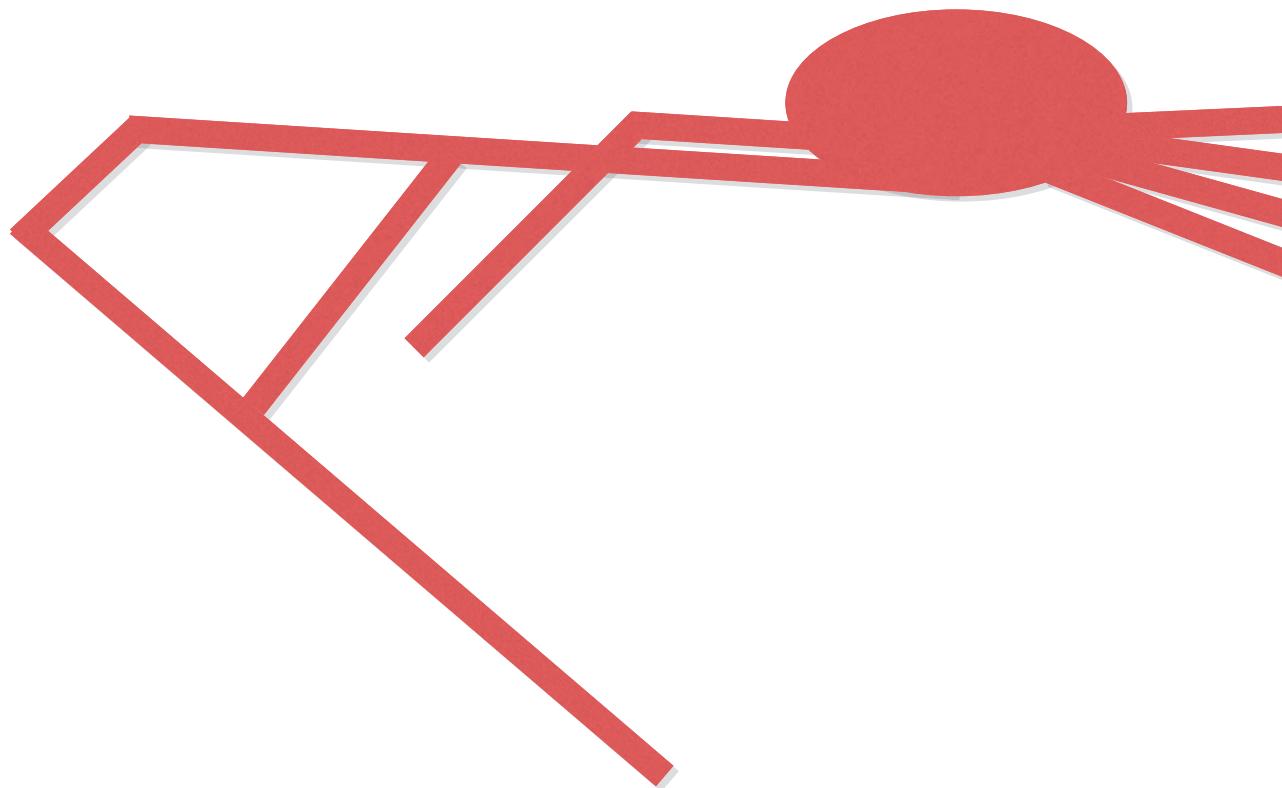
Beginnings and Basics of Branded Social Media

Before consumers saw ads and brands with their own social pages, advertising through the computer was found under a completely different marketing style, "The first digital ad, an AT&T banner on what would become Wired. com, debuted in October 27th, 1994. The digital ad space has changed so much since that time that it sounds more like a mythological creation story than anything resembling our present-day digital ecosystem" (Gil, 2017, pp. 1). Nowadays, rather than trying to attack consumer eyes with 'buy buy buy!' marketing schemes, "the idea of aggressively selling to consumers through flashy advertisements is no longer pursued, at least not by the savvy marketer. As consumers become more resistant, advertisers must become more subtle and subliminal" (Wright, 2010, pp. 74). Since conquering the Web 2.0 version of the internet with ads, brands have had to think at

a higher level in terms of how they choose to spend their advertising dollars as, "the days of mass marketing to all consumers are long gone, and marketers are now forced to think more strategically about their objectives then they have in years past" (Wright, 2010, pp. 76). Target marketing is a term that predates the internet but has since become more widely used due to the internet's ability to select more accurately who is seeing what type of ad. Brands, especially through paid social media and Google AdWords, are finding the need to research and select specific demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of users that they feel are the potential consumers of their product(s) in order to see a better return on investment. This tactic of selective marketing rings true for the newest form of online brand advertising, organic brand social media. That is, a brand's Facebook, Twitter, on
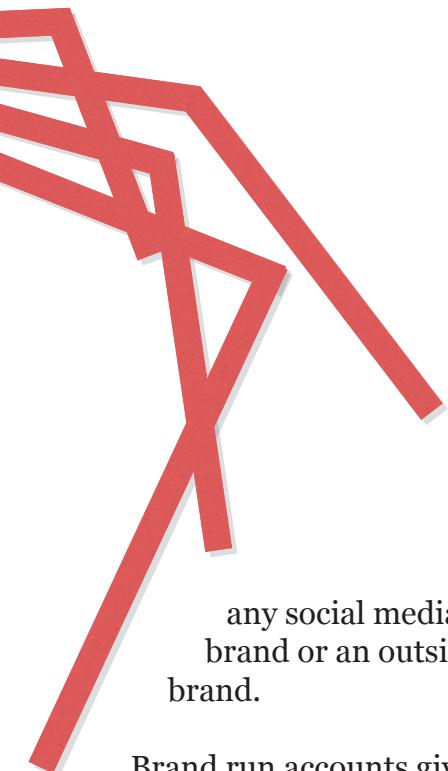
any social media account run by the brand or an outside agency hired by the brand.

Brand run accounts give consumers a place online to learn more about what a brand offers, stances they have on particular issues, what types of products they are selling, the ability to purchase right from their social feed, and many other tools for consumers to inform themselves with. Since social media is interactive, brands also learn a great deal about their consumer base. "Social media offer different values to firms, such as enhanced brand popularity, facilitating word-of-mouth communication, increasing sales, sharing information in a business context and generating social support for consumers" (Hajili, 2014, pp. 338).

This next section will entail a literature review of studies regarding the full impact of a brand's social media presence on consumers and other businesses. The content of this literature review will be organized as follows: 1) research regarding brand social media's effect on profit and shareholder value 2) how business to business (B2B) relationships are formed and changed through these social media 3) how brand social media impacts/is impacted by consumer loyalty.

Literature Review

Brand Social Media's Effect on Profit and Shareholder Value

Before brands entered the social media scene in large waves, it was known and is still true today that the social "environment is heavily consumer, not marketer, controlled", (Yoon, 2018, pp 31). It is one place where brands do not hold the cards. Brands abide by the social constructs, norms, and regulations that have already been put in place by communities and individuals online. Since brands are new to the game, there is not that immediate sense of trust when a branded account enters a social conversation or discussion. This sense of trust can be expanded to different parts of digital B2C relationships as, "trust is a cornerstone in developing e-commerce. In a business-to-consumer relationship, trust

in the e-vendor is important in assessing risk in the transaction " (Hajili, 2014, pp. 392). Trust of a brand's social media can become a deciding factor for if a new product sees success or failure.

In 2014, research was conducted that, "postulates that microblogging word of mouth (MWOM) shared through Twitter and similar services affects early product adoption behaviors by immediately disseminating consumers' post-purchase quality evaluations. This is a potentially crucial factor for the success of experiential media products and other products whose distribution strategy relies on a hyped release." (Hennig-Thurau, 2014, pp. 1). In simpler terms, products that lean on publicity for their profit are also impacted by the word of mouth that happens on social media. Hennig-Thurau's study was focused on the effect that over 4 million tweets regarding 105 new movies had on their respective opening weekend box-office sales. "The immediacy of MWOM enables consumers to share product evaluations with a large social network in real time, which might influence product success at a point at which other WOM product evaluations have traditionally been scarce." (Hennig-Thurau, 2014, pp. 3) Social media gives consumers the ability to see what everyone is saying about a new movie and if it is worth seeing. Brands with a strong social media presence can utilize this for their financial gain.

The results of Hennig-Thurau claim that, "whereas negative Twitter reviews shared on a movie's opening day decreased the movie's revenues on Saturday and Sunday, we cannot claim that positive Twitter reviews shared in the same time frame translated into higher revenues in the next two days" (Hennig-Thurau, 2014, pp. 8). What someone tweets about a movie right after they go to see it, can affect how many people decide how to go to see it the next day. A brand's

Products that lean on publicity for their profit are also impacted by the word of mouth that happens on social media

social media department cannot ensure that all movie goers will enjoy their film; however, their style of response to negativity and criticism about the movie has potential to deter even more people from going to see it, "companies might need to act immediately and create their relevant real-time digital responses. Therefore, consumers' digital engagement (e.g., commenting) could influence not only revenue but also the number of posts" (Yoon, 2018, pp. 31). The way a brand posts about their new film or product is just as important to the potential profit as the way they respond to related consumer's posts.

Evidence suggests that a company's shareholder value is also influenced by brand interactions through social media. A recent study by the University of Groningen conducted in 2017, "investigated the value-related consequences of firm-initiated customer engagement behaviors" (Beckers, 2017, pp. 366). They essentially compared how the market value of a company changed in comparison with how it was responding to consumers on social media.

Their data shows the consequences that come with poor brand social media engagement tactics, "Our first key finding is that companies' customer engagement initiatives decrease, on average, market value by $66.31 million for a median-sized company in our sample. Shareholders are thus likely to respond negatively to customer engagement initiatives, because they are sensitive to the risk of these initiatives backfiring" (Beckers, 2017, pp. 378). Companies have seen social media engagement initiatives backfire from their response to other consumer's posts, while also from their own initialization, "McDonald's, for instance, encountered the dark side of firm-initiated customer engagement when a Twitter campaign set up to promote positive word-of-mouth became a platform to bash the chain" (Beckers, 2017, pp. 366).

This study also notes the importance of how differences in the size of a company can account for the effect brand social media engagement has on its' market value, "companies that operate in a competitive environment or do not advertise much can create value by stimulating customer engagement, while companies with a strong corporate reputation are likely to not benefit from it." (Beckers, 2017, pp. 366). Engaging with customers can be a dangerous but rewarding strategy that small and large brand social media managers use with caution.

These studies primarily suggest the importance of not just organic brand social media posting on profit and value, but also that the response or lack thereof to consumer posts can be as impactful. A brand managers decision to respond to a comment has more weight on how a company is viewed and its' profit than previous studies have shown. A hypothetical newer company will see more success and less risk with more consumer engagement while an established company will be more inclined to stand pat and have a conservative social response strategy.

Brand Social Media's Effect on Consumer Loyalty

"In 2011, more than 50% of social media users follow brands on social media" (de Vries, 2012, pp. 83). Since then, that percentage has increased even with the mass amount of new social media users, "Overall, 85% of U.S. consumers said they used social media. Additionally, 58% of all those surveyed (1,176 consumers) said they follow brands through social media." (McDaniel, 2016, pp. 1). This same survey found that the top three reasons consumers follow a brand on social media were, "coupons, interest in buying their products, an incentive like a sweepstakes" (McDaniel, 2016, pp. 2). These reasons provide insight as to why and how branded social media can help increase real world and social consumer loyalty.

A 2012 study, which is relatively old as far as social media research is concerned, looked through over 350 posts on social media pages and discovered that, "Consumers who become fans of these brand fan pages tend to be loyal and committed to the company, and are more open to receiving information about the brand" (de Vries, 2012, pp. 83). Brand social media at its heart is concerned with ultimately converting social fans into dollars. This same study took this a step further and saw that, "brand fans tend to visit the store more, generate more positive word-of-mouth, and are more emotionally attached to the brand than non-brand fans" (de Vries, 2012, pp. 83).
Also in 2012, a Turkish study was done to learn more about what causes brand loyalty and, "identify the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty of the consumers" (Erdoğmuşa,

2012, pp. 1353). They discovered through a survey that, "advantageous campaigns on social media are the most significant drivers of brand loyalty followed by relevancy of the content, popularity of the content among friends, and appearing on different social media platforms and providing applications" (Erdoğmuşa, 2012, pp. 1358). These two studies have the basics for why brand loyalty works through social media but it is not until recently that brands began truly building their own loyal communities.

Brands have so far been unable to create a popular community revolving around their brand that is as strong as naturally formed social communities. That has not deterred them from implementing themselves in places where other communities can already be found. Kool-Aid, and its' mascot Kool-Aid Man, launched a streaming campaign on popular streaming site, Twitch, earlier this year. (Man, 2019, pp.1) The Kool-Aid Man streamed himself playing popular video games with commentary for his social media audience of over 50,000 Twitter followers. This move was made to attempt to create a connection between those who already expressed interest in video games and the brand of Kool-Aid.

As a Japanese study in 2018 points out that, "brand-related social media engagement is fostered if users of company-initiated social media sites are socially connected with each other and have a sense of community" (Yoshia, 2018, pp. 216). Brands are coming into social communities and activities that already exist and are trying to position and align themselves
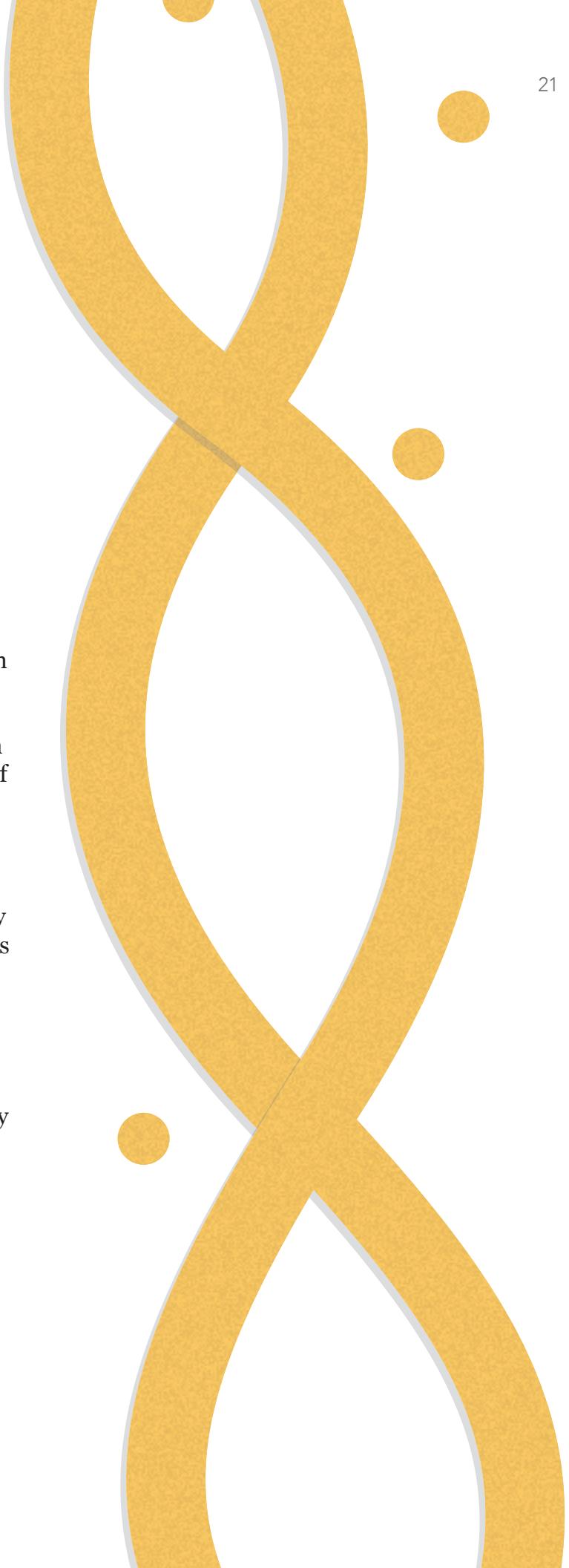
with them, just like how famously Coca-Cola in the early 20th century successfully aligned their brand with the Christmas holiday.

Brands, such as the meat-stick snack Slim-Jim, are trying to get people to think of their product whenever the meme community is brought up. In the past year, Slim Jim has seen their Instagram following rise from 10,000 to over 620,000 followers (Blade, 2019, pp. 1), due to the creation of original Slim-Jim themed memes. Followers of Slim-Jim's Instagram refer to themselves as the 'Long Boy Gang' and use hashtags like #LBG4L to identify themselves as a member. (Bradley, 2019, pp.1). This sense of community shows its value every day for Slim-Jim, as they consistently repost on average 15-20 of other people's pictures of bought Slim-Jims on their Instagram Story daily. The social media manager for Slim Jim explained that, "the gang owns and influences the content, They tell us what to do and we do what we can to make them happy." (Bradley, 2019, pp.1). This brand's loyalty to its' organically created community reciprocated back to it in real world purchases, "the brand is growing at the fastest rate it has grown in over five years. We crossed the $600 million mark from a retail sales perspective, according to IRI data, and we are gaining market share" (Bradley, 2019, pp.3). Brand social media has just recently has found that memes are one way to convert social loyalty into real world loyalty. Time and more research will tell if there are more 'memes into money' situations waiting to develop.

Conclusion

The goal of this paper was to compile research and data on different aspects of brand social media to show the importance and impact brand social media can truly have on a company.

First, research shows that it is important that brand managers realize that they do not hold the power in the world of social media; the consumer does. They can leverage this along with the interactivity of social media to increase company profits and value by acting and responding appropriately. Not only is posting about a product important, but responding using proper engagement response strategies for the type of company is as well.

Secondly, brands can interact with other brands and form alliances and use a larger brand's social power. Relationships between actors with large social media followings and movies are on the same level as B2B relationships.

Finally, the main reasons for why consumers follow brands on social media in the first place can be boiled down to coupons, interest in a product, and giveaways/sweepstakes. Brands have used this information to build social loyalty through the invasion of pre-existing online communities they wish to align with. Most recently, brands have begun successfully using memes and creating their own communities to increase product profits.

Discussion

After a thorough and deep review of the literature gathered during this paper, it can be said that brand social media needs a larger amount of resources and time dedicated to study its' more nuanced and complicated aspects. Multiple different studies noted in their introductory sections how the lack of research of their particular angle of brand social media was their main reason for conducting their study. Managers of large brands are not all aware of the large impact that they are having on their brand's profit and image in the community by even the most minor of engagements. Consumers should have more information available to them about their habits and how brands on social media are evolving to act like a consumer in order to get more sales. Social media is only going to keep getting bigger and more influential deeming it is necessary that our research level into the effects of brand social media keeps up.

The research and data discussed in this paper are good keystones for any social media manager to keep in the back of their minds when brainstorming a new social campaign. The research in this paper shows that consumers are more powerful on social media than most businesses have come to realize. Branded social media is just at its' beginning and thus much more research is needed to explore the best practices and effects of such marketing

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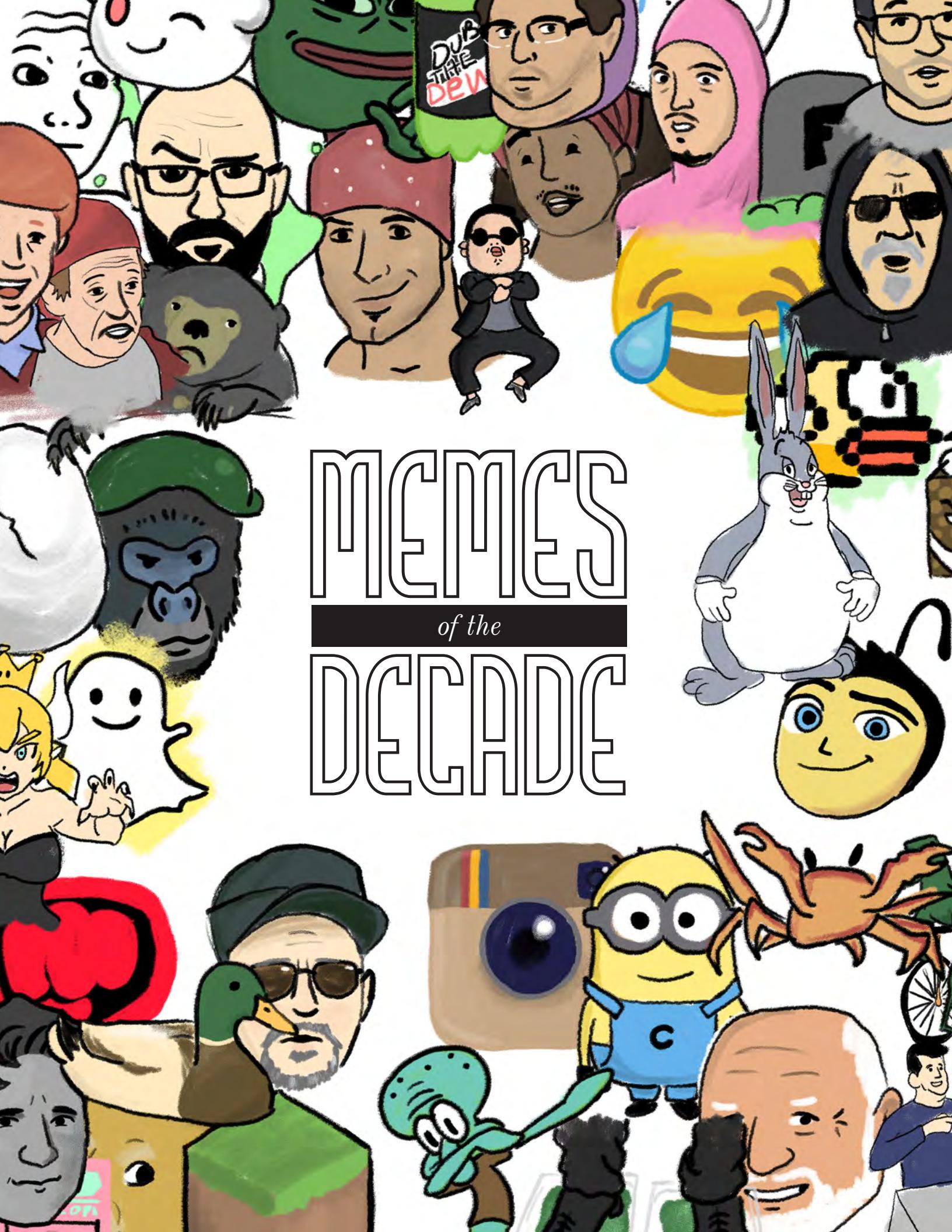
MEMES
of the
DECADE

In the past month, it seemed like everyone had their own version of the decade review list. Some people reviewed memes, others reviewed music, but one thing was clear: a decade in review was an easy content listicle to pull off. Rather than pushing a low quality one for the sake of following everyone else, we at Meme Insider took the time to carefully look through our meme folders and carefully categorize the memes correctly by year and make a nice timeline to show you. This list isn't every single meme, simply because many memes weren't quality enough to count, but just like pepperidge farms, we remembered, and we're here to help you remember too. You may notice that 2019 isn't actually featured on this list, but this was done deliberately, as many decade lists seem to favor the most recent additions, and this one is about looking back longer than just a few months.

2010

Feb 23 2010
Kabosu/Doge Pic
Uploaded

April 29 2010
Pewdiepie Starts
YouTube

May 2010
First Wojack
Posted
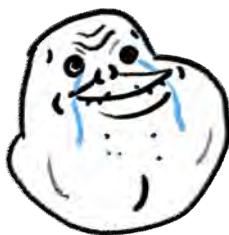
May 28 2010
Forever Alone
Posted to Funnyjunk

Jun 9 2010
VSauce Posts
First Video

Jul 9 2010
Double Rainbow
Song

Oct 11 2010
Crying Laughing
Emoji Added to
Unicode

Jul 6 2010
Despicable Me
Released

Jul 31 2010
Bed Intruder
Song

Oct 6 2010
Instagram
Released

Oct 15 2010
Ricardo Milos
Video Posted

Nov 11 2010
Navy Seal
Copypasta

2011

Feb 15 2011
Skull Doot Video
Posted by
Piepuppy89

March 10 2011
Kappa Emote
Goes Viral

Jun 26 2011
The Reddit
Switch-A-Roo
Chain Begins
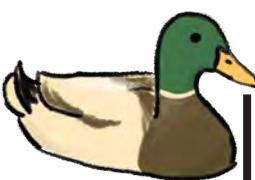
Jun 2 2011
Smug Pepe
Posted to 4chan

Jun 19 2011
Actual Advice
Mallard Posted
to Reddit
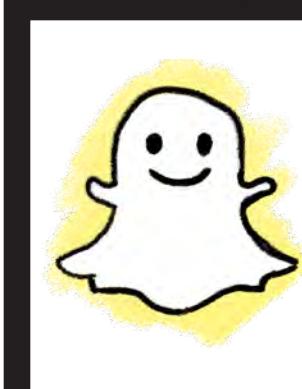
Jul 8 2011
Snapchat
Released

Sept 13 2011
Hide The Pain
Harold Posted
to FacePunch

Aug 14 2011
Chuck Testa
Ad Uploaded
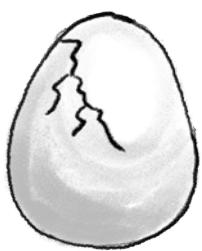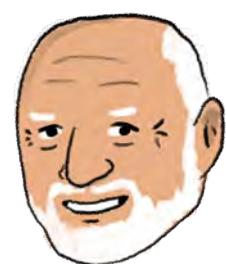
Dec 8 2011
HowToBasic
Posts First Video
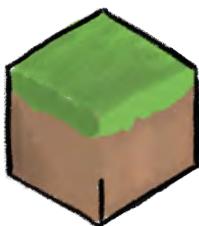
Oct 1 2011
/pol/ Created

Nov 18 2011
Minecraft 1.0
Released

2012

Dec 9 2011
Macintosh Plus
Releases
Floral Shoppe

Jan 23 2012
Bad Luck Brian
Posted to
Reddit

Feb 16 2012

30 Rock Airs "How Do You Do Fellow Kids" Scene

Mar 29 2012

Spooderman Posted to Funnyjunk
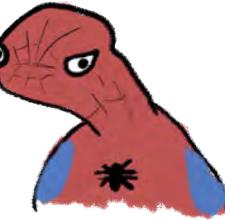
Jun 7 2012

Overly Attached Girlfriend Posted to Reddit

Jul 15 2012

Gangnam Style Uploaded

Jun 29 2012

Slender: The 8 Pages Released

Jun 21 2012

Confession Bear Posted to Reddit
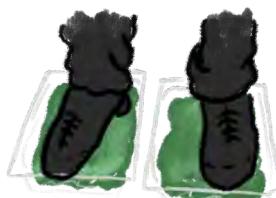
Jul 16 2012

Burger King Foot Lettuce Posted to 4chan

Aug 13 2012

4chan Raids the "Dub the Dew" Contest

Sept 23 2012

Grumpy Cat Posted to Reddit

Jan 12 2013

Shrek is Love Shrek is Life Posted to 4chan

2013

Nov 18 2012

Lenny Face First Posted to Yilauta Boards

(͡° ͜ʖ ͡°)

Jan 30 2013

Filthy Frank Uploads the Harlem Shake
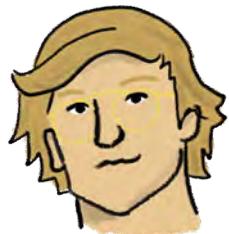
Mar 10 2013

Logan Paul Starts Vine

Apr 29 2013

H3H3 Starts YouTube Channel

May 24 2013
Flappybird
Released

Sept 3 2013
"What Does the Fox
Say" Released

Sept 12 2013
Side Eye Chloe
Video Uploaded
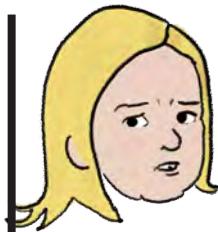
Nov 2 2013
Superkai64 Asks
About Dedotaded
Wam

Sept 19 2013
Full Bee Movie
Script Posted to
Tumblr

Oct 6 2013
Sam Hyde Presents
2070 Paradigm Shift

Dec 17 2013
Big Man Tyrone
Opens Goes Viral

2014

Feb 12 2014
Twitch Plays
Pokemon

June 20 2014
Marble Hornets
Concludes

Feb 13 2014
FHRINTP Appears
on YouTube

June 13 2014
Five Nights at
Freddys Released

June 22 2014
"None of My
Business" Posted
to Tumblr

Aug 16 2014
Gamergate
Controversy Begins

Sept 23 2014
"Dank Meme"
Coined on 4chan
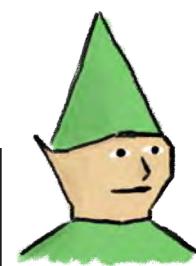
Aug 31 2014
The Fappening

Nov 4 2014
CoD Advanced
Warfare "Press F to
Pay Respects"

Dec 10 2014
First Wednesday
Frog Uploaded to
Tumblr

2015

Feb 25 2015
The Dress Photo
Posted to
Tumblr

Dec 27 2014
First Pepe
REEE Posted
to /R9K/

Mar 24 2015
Deez Nuts Video
Uploaded

Mar 28 2015
Rare Pepe Trading
Begins

Jun 16 2015
Trump Begins
Presidential Race

2016

Jul 31 2015
Hotline Bling
Released

Sept 2 2015
Tai Lopez Uploads
"Here in My Garage"

Jan 26 2016
Squidward Dabs at
Universal Studios
Orlando

Feb 2 2016
History of Japan
Uploaded

Feb 15 2016
Damn Daniel Posted
to Twitter

Apr 29 2016
Dat Boi Posted
to Tumblr

May 28 2016
Harambe is Shot

Aug 11 2016
Hugh Mungus
Video Posted to
Facebook

Nov 1 2016
Grandayy Uploads
His First Meme
Edit
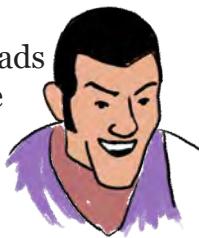
Oct 9 2016
Ken Bone Appears
on National TV

Oct 10 2016
Stefan Karl
Stefansson's
GoFundMe Created

Nov 8 2016
Evil Kermit
Goes Viral

Nov 9 2016
Trump Wins
US Election
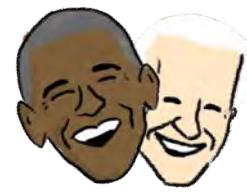
Nov 10 2016
Joebama Memes
Go Viral

2017

Dec 27 2016
/r/PrequelMemes
is Created

Nov 17 2016
Meme Insider Issue
#1 Released

M
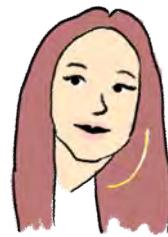
Jan 5 2017
Cash Me Ousside
Girl Posted to
Instagram

Jan 7 2017
Salt Bae Uploads
Video to Instagram

Jan 20 2016
HWNDU Round
One Begins
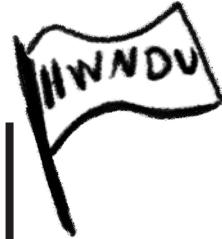
Jan 31 2017

Trash Doves
Released on
Facebook
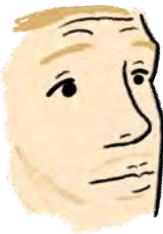
Feb 5 2017

Drew Scanlon GIF
Posted to Twitter

Feb 23 2017

@_Dekhbai Posts
Disctracted Boyfrien
to Instagram
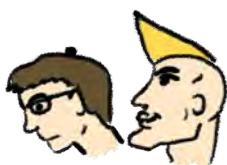
Mar 29 2017

Club Penguin
Closes
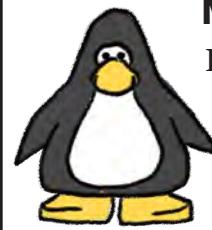
Mar 12 2017

Petscop Episode
One Posted
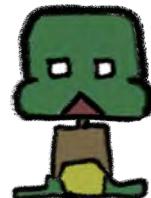
Jun 6 2017

Virgin Vs Chad
Memes Posed on
/R9K/

Oct 1 2017

You Know I Had To
Do It To Em Trends
on Twitter

Dec 25 2017

Somedoby Toucha
My Spaghet Posted
to Twitter

Dec 31 2017

Logan Paul Suicide
Forest Video

Jan 1 2018

Ugandan Knuckles
Posted to YouTube

2018

Feb 16 2018

Change My Mind
Picture Posted to
Twitter

Feb 6 2018

SpaceX Sends Tesla
To Orbit

Mar 9 2018

Apyr Posted
to Twitter

Apr 1 2018

Crab Rave Uploaded
to YouTube

Apr 10 2018
Mark Zuckerberg Testifies Before Congress

Apr 11 2018
E Meme Posted to Reddit

Apr 23 2018
Avengers: Infinity War Released

Jun 24 2018
Pepoclown Posted to Discord

Aug 6 2018
Alex Jones Banned From Social Media

Apr 30 2018
First Boomer Meme Posted to 4chan

Sept 6 2018
VoiceOverPete "John Wick" Video Uploaded

Sept 10 2018
NyannyanCosplay Uploads Hit or Miss TikTok

Sept 19 2018
Bowsette Webcomic Posted to Twitter

2019

Dec 7 2018
Big Chungus Posted on Twitter

Sept 26 2018
Surprised Pikachu Posted to Tumblr

You may be asking, 'but why didn't you include any 2019 memes?' The answer is simple: you should already know the 2019 memes because you're subscribed to us and getting the mag sent to you.

(and also we didn't want to favor recent memes in favor of those that were tried and truly legendary)

Half-Life 3

CONFIRMED

A STORY OF GRIEF AND CATHARSIS

GOURY

Case No. _____

Notes **WARNING: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS SPOILERS FOR OLD GAMES**

When it first came out in 1998, the original Half-Life was adored by fans and critics alike. Valve's GoldSource engine, level design, and sci-fi atmosphere made Half-Life rise to the same level of fame as other iconic FPSs such as Doom, Quake, and Halo. Valve capitalized off the game's success, making multiple spinoffs, ports, and eventually a sequel. Half-Life 2 and its episodes once more engrossed the public with its physics system and narrative. At the end of Half-Life 2: Episode 2, players were given a cliffhanger ending before fading to the credits. In 2007 Valve said they would make an episode 3, concluding the story of Gordon Freeman, Alyx Vance, the G-Man, and Half-Life. Weeks became months. Months became years. Years turned into decades. There was no sign of episode 3, or a Half-Life 3 to be found. Valve executives like Gabe Newell were unwilling to say anything about the matter in interviews and Valve developers were not saying a word. While Valve never stated that they canceled Half-Life 3, the shroud of mystery in its stead was enough to entice many to follow it.

This is where the story of the game Half-Life 3 ended, and the story of the conspiracy, desperation, and mythos of Half-Life 3 began. Since 2006, before the release of Half-Life 2: Episode 2, many fans started to speculate what the third episode would be. Screenshots and rumors began circulating the web, particularly on 4chan's /v/ board. From the start, this air of mystery had caught the attention of many fans, but it was not until after episode 2s release did the rumors, speculation, and memes begin to take off.

Around the early 2010s, many of these memes were innocent, if not humorous. Some were similar to the "Illuminati confirmed" meme that had been going around, with the phrase "Half-Life 3 confirmed" becoming commonplace online. After the release of other Valve games such as Portal 2 and Left 4 Dead 2, many users began to poke fun at the face of Valve, Gabe Newell, for not delivering them the long-awaited sequel. Many began to joke that Newell and his company were physically incapable of counting to three,

citing the fact that Valve had never released a game with 3 in the title. However, some dug deeper. They noticed that during his tenure at Microsoft, Newell had worked on Windows 1.0, 2.0, and 2.1 before leaving the company shortly before the release of Windows 3. With this information, the Half-Life chase was more than just a joke or meme, but a full-blown conspiracy.

People became invested, convinced that Half-Life 3 was still out there.

One of the most prominent reporters was Tyler McVicker, creator of Valve News Network. Since 2010, VNN has been documenting and reporting every leak and rumor in the Valve community. Despite the efforts of many like VNN, as the years went by with no sign or contact from Valve, the shroud of mystery turned into a shroud of doubt. The years between 2012-2017 can be considered a dark age for all things Half-Life, as every lead led to one dead end or another.

The memes, in particular, once more took a turn in tone. What started as a simple joke turned conspiracy was now a compilation of despair and sadness. Memes began to show the idea that Half-Life 3 didn't exist. Many showed dismay that Valve had forgotten their flagship title, throwing it to the wayside in favor of newer, more profitable ventures such as Steam and DOTA 2. On Half-Life's 20th anniversary in November 2017, Valve gave no signs of recognition to the series. No sale, no video, not even a tweet.

All was not lost, as earlier in 2017 ex-Valve employee and Half-Life writer Marc Laidlaw released a Half-Life "fanfiction" on his blog titled Epistle 3. Epistle 3 detailed the would-be story of Half-Life 3, and it sent the internet into shock. Not only was this the most Half-Life content released in years, but it was the ending many fans had

hoped. Many believed that this was the end of the Half-Life story and that nothing else was to come. Some were inspired by the tale, such as the team of Project Borealis, who are currently developing a Half-Life fan game based around Laidlaw's post. Others were dismayed and resigned to the fact that there was to be no Valve-made Half-Life any more.

Then, we arrive at the present. For Half-Life's 21st birthday, Valve announced that they had been developing Half-Life: Alyx, a new Half-Life game for virtual reality. Many couldn't believe their eyes. It was not Half-Life 3, but the mere fact that Valve recognized the franchise and would make a game based on it electrified the audience. Valve News Network, in particular, who had been documenting the alleged VR project since 2016, was thrilled that his work had paid off. With the internet currently exploding due to the new announcement, the nature of many Half-Life memes has taken a more celebratory mood. For the first time in many years, communities such as r/halflife are filled with memes illustrating the shattering of fan's shallow expectations.

While many in the Half-Life community celebrated and danced, skepticism began to come in on the quality of the game. Most criticisms were directed towards its VR status, which as of writing this article, isn't accessible to many. Whether the game turns out to be good or not is up in the air, but the fact remains that Valve has recognized Half-Life once more. ■

Now that Meme Insider has sold out, there's ad space!

Your Corporate Shilling Here

The Case Against Meta Memes
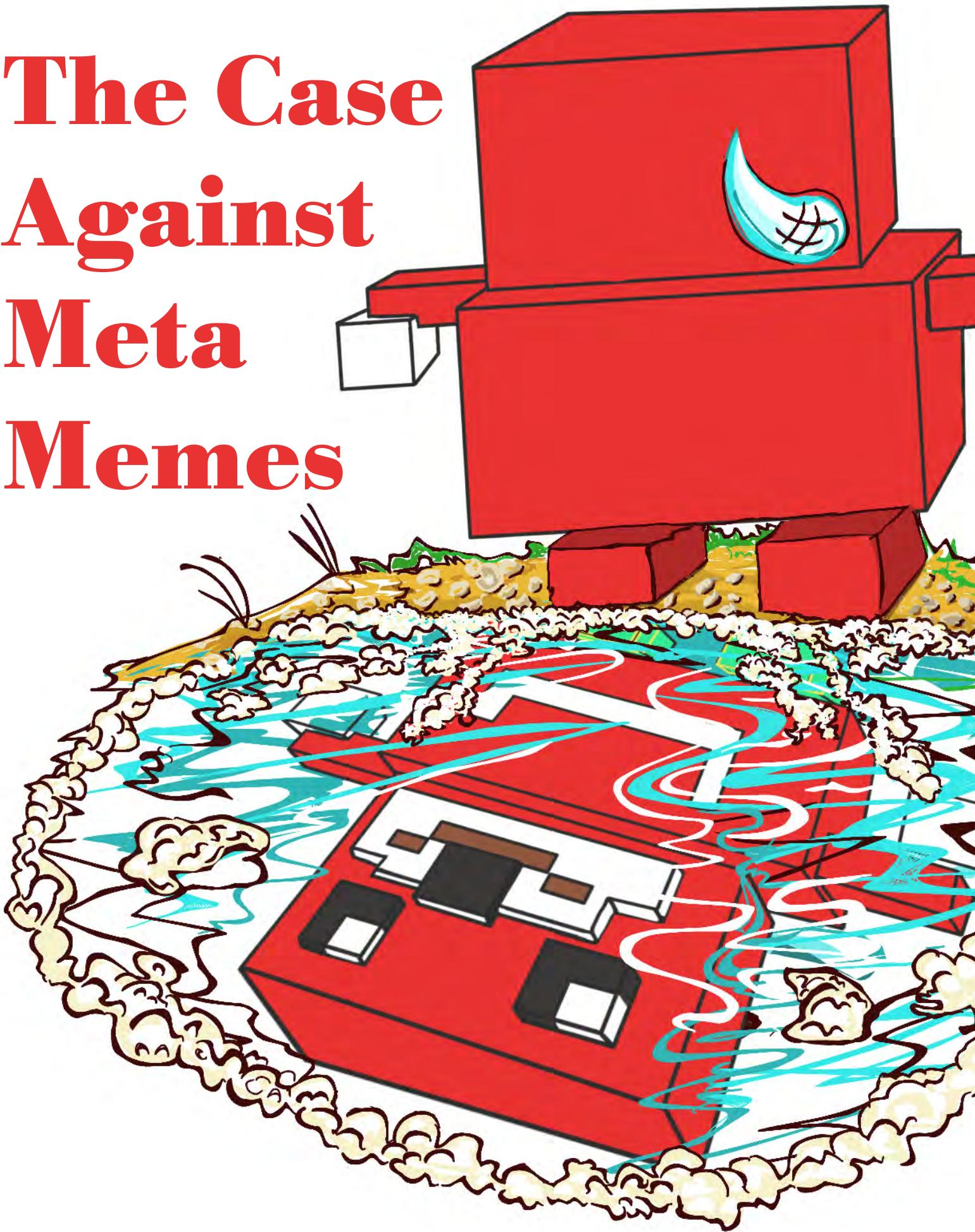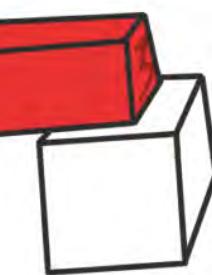
When done right, meta memes can be powerful and can have a lasting effect on the meme economy. This is rarely the case, however, and so these should be approached with caution.

Joshua Cooper

The use of self-referential language or design is commonplace in various mediums — from TV to film, YouTube to memes, and so on. So much so that we have adopted a rather encompassing term into our pop culture lexicon to describe this phenomenon: "meta." The term has likely existed in its current usage in some form since the 70s when the term "metafiction" was coined to describe self-referential works of literature. Since then, it has evolved into its own word, meta, to describe any form of circular referencing. If I were to write an article about Meme Insider, that would be a meta article, for example.

"Meta" as a term within meme circles is nothing new. In fact, an argument could be made that the internet's adoption of the term could be what helped cement the term in its current usage. One of the most classic and recognizable examples of this is with the "bone hurting juice" meme, which spawned an entire genre of its own. Meta memes also tend to make the rounds in meme circles whenever a particularly bad meme becomes popular, where the meta meme can be used to critique that meme.

Like any memetic theme, however, it is delicate and easily abused. Knowing how to navigate meta memes properly can result in an impactful, long-

lasting meme. This tact is often lost on low-effort creators, who mistake "meta" for "automatic comedy." Much like "edge," it isn't a magic wand which, when waved, casts a Spell of Comedy over all it touches. It's a powerful tool in the arsenal of the meme creator (or comedian), though a tool that requires a deft hand and a creative mind that few people have — despite believing otherwise.

GOOD META MEMES

To showcase a properly-made meta meme, let's look at an example.

When you look inside your guitar, to find your pick

As of writing, this meme is the most-upvoted post on r/bonehurtingjuice. This is an example of a meta meme that references itself, often overlapping with anti-memes. It references itself, doing so in a unique way and drawing inspiration from the meme itself. This is the type of meta meme that someone would look at and say, "I never thought of it that way," or "The Office is overrated."

Explaining the joke makes the joke (or meme, in this case) less funny, of course. But that would be your fault for subscribing to Meme Insider.

Another example would be a meta meme created for the explicit purpose of criticizing other memes, meme trends, or the meme economy as a whole. Take this meme about Ugandan Knuckles, for example. This meme was posted in response to the (failed) attempt to ironically revive Ugandan Knuckles, a meme coup that failed miserably.

Both of these memes, as well as many other "good" examples of meta memes, have some consistent threads. Most notably, they aren't overly self-aware just for the sake of self-awareness, and they don't overuse meme vocabulary for no apparent reason.

BAD META MEMES

In contrast, the majority of meta memes tend to take one of two approaches.

First would be what one could call "the Family Guy approach," where the meme creator tries to appeal to the recognizability of the joke rather than any actual redeemable comedic value. Much like Family Guy, many of its jokes don't provide their own humor, they simply make references. For some people, just making a reference that they recognize is enough to elicit a positive reaction. However, such a meme will find little or no success outside of this audience, an audience that is notoriously volatile with meaningless taste in memes.

Take this meme, for example.

Me: yo pass me the meme template

Friend: You better not make a meta meme that crossreferences other memes

Me to me: say no more

There is no actual joke. No comedy is present. It is strictly a format with as many memes — all of which even the greenest of meme fans could recognize — packed into one meme as physically possible. For the roughly 70 people who upvoted this trash-tier meme on Reddit, this was all it took for them to find it funny, but anyone else would not consider this a good meme in any sense. Its over-reliance on recognizability and lack of anything resembling a joke make it a meme which is entirely disposable.

The second — and least tolerable — (IMAGE 4) approach to making a terrible meta meme would be to attempt to derive humor exclusively from incorporating meme vocabulary.

me trying to explain the meme economy to people who have lives

The "appeal" here is simply that the target audience will typically perceive themselves as a "high-tier memer," revolving their entire personality around these memes. "Ah yes, a fellow memer!" they might say before upvoting, as they shovel an entire bag of Cheetos into their mouth.

In a similar sense, the meme itself is almost entirely devoid of any real comedic value; any positive interaction the target audience may bring is largely due to the perceived community involvement, not because the meme is actually funny.

The abuse of meta formats are not exclusive to any particular platform, but this phenomenon tends to be disproportionately more severe on certain platforms. In particular, this is evident on platforms that already maintain a sort of "theme park culture" — a culture where community members tend to be hyper-fixated on the group in which they belong. Meta memes such as Reddit's "Only 7 Upvotes" exemplify this culture, which attempts to derive humor from the community

for which the meme is intended. As with our previous examples, it is dependent on the meme being recognizable in order to elicit a reaction, a sign of poor meme quality.

Using meta memes in such lazy, derivative ways as outlined here is certain to limit your meme to obscurity. It may find appeal in others who follow the same comedic value, but this sort of audience is one that should never be pandered to if your goal is to create something with longevity and merit. Remember that a meme can be powerful without implementing meta themes and that being meta doesn't bring much value in and of itself. Recognizing when to use certain themes is much of the responsibility of a great creator.

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