

MEME MARKETING AND CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT ON NETFLIX INDONESIA: THE ROLES OF PERCEIVED ENTERTAINMENT AND SELF-CONGRUENCE

Shafa Chairunnisa Setiawan¹⁾, Therando Lei²⁾, Elfi Elfi³⁾

¹⁾Universitas Pelita Harapan, ²⁾Universitas Pelita Harapan., ³⁾Universitas Pelita Harapan

Email: shafasetiawan@gmail.com, therandolei04@gmail.com, elfi.liu@uph.edu*

ABSTRACT

This study examines the effect of meme marketing on customer engagement in the context of Netflix Indonesia's Instagram account, with self-congruence and perceived entertainment as explanatory variables. The study is motivated by the relatively low engagement rate observed despite the increasing use of meme-based content as a digital marketing strategy among Generation Z. Data were collected through an online questionnaire from 117 Generation Z respondents who actively use Instagram and had been exposed to Netflix Indonesia's meme content. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The results show that meme marketing has positive and significant effects on both self-congruence and perceived entertainment. Perceived entertainment has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement, whereas self-congruence does not significantly affect customer engagement. Meme marketing also has no significant direct effect on customer engagement. These findings indicate that perceived entertainment is more strongly associated with customer engagement than self-congruence in the context examined. The study suggests that using memes alone may not be sufficient to generate engagement; audience perceptions of entertainment are particularly important for generating engagement. The findings provide practical implications for digital entertainment brands by emphasizing the importance of humor, creativity, and entertainment value when designing meme-based content for Generation Z audiences.

Keywords: meme marketing, self-congruence, perceived entertainment, customer engagement

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini menganalisis pengaruh meme marketing terhadap customer engagement dalam konteks akun Instagram Netflix Indonesia, dengan self-congruence dan perceived entertainment sebagai variabel penjelas. Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh relatif rendahnya tingkat engagement meskipun penggunaan konten berbasis meme sebagai strategi pemasaran digital semakin meningkat di kalangan Generasi Z. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring dari 117 responden Generasi Z yang aktif menggunakan Instagram dan pernah terpapar konten meme Netflix Indonesia. Data dianalisis menggunakan Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meme marketing berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap self-congruence dan perceived entertainment. Perceived entertainment berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap customer engagement, sedangkan self-congruence tidak berpengaruh signifikan terhadap customer engagement. Selain itu, meme marketing tidak memiliki pengaruh langsung yang signifikan terhadap customer engagement. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa perceived entertainment memiliki hubungan yang lebih kuat dengan customer engagement dibandingkan self-congruence dalam konteks yang diteliti. Penelitian ini mengindikasikan bahwa penggunaan meme saja belum tentu mampu menghasilkan engagement; audiens perlu merasakan bahwa konten tersebut benar-benar menghibur. Temuan ini memberikan implikasi praktis bagi merek di sektor hiburan digital dengan menekankan pentingnya humor, kreativitas, dan nilai hiburan dalam merancang konten berbasis meme bagi audiens Generasi Z.

Kata Kunci: meme marketing, self-congruence, perceived entertainment, customer engagement

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of digital media has intensified competition among brands in capturing audience attention, particularly on social media platforms such as

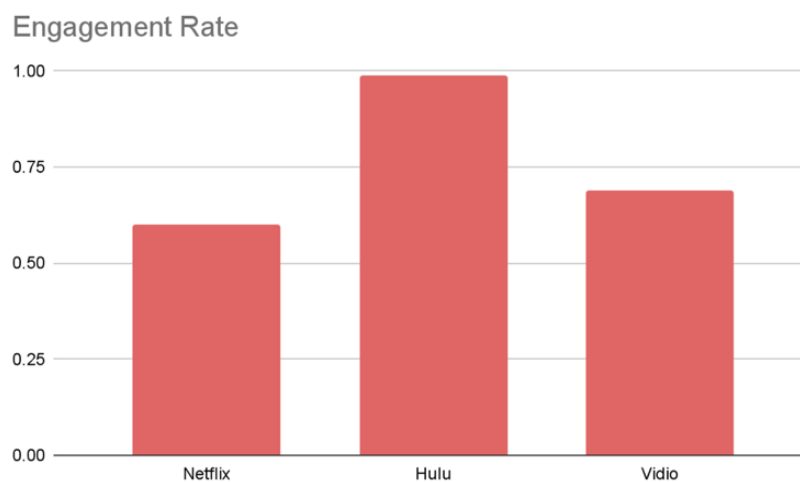
Instagram. In this environment, content strategy plays a critical role in determining how effectively brands engage with their audiences (Ly-Le, 2025). One increasingly popular approach is meme marketing,

which uses humor, cultural references, and visual simplicity to create content that is easily understood, relatable, and widely shared (Shifman, 2013; Milner, 2018). This strategy is especially relevant for Generation Z, a segment characterized by high social media usage and strong preferences for entertaining and identity-relevant content (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021).

Netflix Indonesia is one of the brands that actively utilizes meme-based content as part of its digital communication strategy on Instagram, which is consistent with the growing importance of strategic marketing communication across industries (Ly-Le, 2025). Through meme posts, Netflix attempts to position itself as culturally relevant and relatable to younger

audiences. However, despite the frequent use of such content, the engagement rate of Netflix Indonesia's Instagram account remains relatively low compared with the selected competing entertainment platforms. This suggests that the presence of meme content alone may not be sufficient to generate meaningful customer engagement (Brodie et al., 2011). Figure 1 presents the Instagram engagement rates reported by Social Blade for Netflix Indonesia, Hulu, and Vidio, retrieved in October 2025. The values were obtained directly from Social Blade rather than independently calculated by the authors and represent a point-in-time comparison based on the metrics available on the platform at the retrieval time.

Figure 1. Comparison of Engagement Rates of VoD



Source: Social Blade (2025)

This phenomenon raises an important managerial and theoretical question regarding how meme marketing actually influences engagement behavior. Although memes are generally assumed to be entertaining and engaging, user interaction may depend on deeper psychological responses rather than content exposure alone. In particular, perceived entertainment and self-congruence may explain how users interpret meme-based communication. Perceived entertainment reflects the extent to which content is enjoyable and emotionally satisfying

(Ducoffe, 1995), while self-congruence refers to the alignment between brand communication and users' self-identity (Sirgy, 1982). These internal evaluations may determine whether meme content leads to behavioral engagement such as liking, commenting, and sharing (Calder et al., 2009).

Previous studies have widely examined customer engagement in social media marketing, particularly through entertainment value, advertising appeal, and general digital content strategies (Calder et al., 2009; Gummerus et al., 2012;

Logan et al., 2012). Research on self-congruence has also shown that identity alignment strengthens consumer–brand relationships and engagement outcomes (Malär et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2018). However, meme marketing as a distinct form of digital communication remains underexplored, particularly regarding the respective relationships of affective and identity-based responses with customer engagement. Most prior studies focus on general social media content rather than meme-based communication, which is characterized by humor, symbolic meaning, and participatory culture (Shifman, 2013; Milner, 2018). In addition, limited studies examine these relationships in the context of Indonesian Generation Z consumers, despite their strong exposure to meme culture and high social media intensity.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the effect of meme marketing on customer engagement, with perceived entertainment and self-congruence as explanatory variables among Generation Z users of Netflix Indonesia's Instagram account. This study contributes theoretically by extending the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework in digital marketing, particularly by comparing the relative roles of affective response (perceived entertainment) and identity-based response (self-congruence) in explaining customer engagement. This study examines whether perceived entertainment or self-congruence is more strongly associated with customer engagement in the context of meme marketing. By comparing these relationships, the study provides context-specific evidence regarding the relative importance of affective and identity-based responses in explaining customer engagement. Consequently, the study provides a basis for comparing the respective relationships of affective and identity-based responses with customer engagement in the present context.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) framework, which explains how external stimuli influence internal psychological states and subsequently lead to behavioral responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Eroglu et al., 2001). In this context, meme marketing functions as the stimulus, perceived entertainment and self-congruence represent the organism, and customer engagement is the response. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) further supports this framework by explaining that individuals actively select media content that satisfies their needs for entertainment and identity expression (Katz et al., 1974).

2.2 Customer Engagement

Customer engagement refers to the level of consumers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement in their interactions with a brand (Brodie et al., 2011; Steviano & Sihombing, 2023). In digital environments, customer engagement extends beyond purchasing behavior and includes activities such as consuming, interacting with, and sharing brand-related content through social media platforms. Dessart et al. (2015) and Steviano & Sihombing (2023) further conceptualize customer engagement as a multidimensional construct consisting of cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that collectively reflect the strength of consumers' relationship with a brand. Accordingly, customer engagement in this study is defined as the extent to which consumers cognitively attend to, emotionally connect with, and behaviorally interact with Netflix's meme-based content on social media.

2.3 Self-Congruence

Self-congruence refers to the degree of consistency between consumers' self-concept and the image projected by a brand (Sirgy, 1982). This concept reflects the extent to which consumers perceive a brand

as representing who they are or who they aspire to become. Sirgy et al. (1997) distinguish self-congruence into actual self-congruence and ideal self-congruence, both of which influence consumers' attitudes and behaviors toward brands. When consumers perceive a strong alignment between their identity and a brand, they tend to develop stronger emotional attachment and more favorable behavioral responses (Malär et al., 2011). Accordingly, this study operationalizes self-congruence as general perceived identity fit rather than distinguishing actual-, ideal-, or social-self congruence separately. It refers to the extent to which Netflix's meme content reflects the audience's personality, lifestyle, and identity.

2.4 Perceived Entertainment

Perceived entertainment refers to the extent to which consumers perceive marketing content as enjoyable, fun, and emotionally gratifying (Ducoffe, 1995). Rooted in Uses and Gratifications Theory, individuals actively seek media content that satisfies their needs for enjoyment and emotional fulfillment (Katz et al., 1974). In digital marketing contexts, entertaining content attracts attention, enhances user experience, and encourages continued interaction with media platforms (Logan et al., 2012). Therefore, perceived entertainment in this study is defined as the degree to which consumers experience enjoyment, amusement, and positive feelings when viewing Netflix's meme-based content on social media.

2.5 Meme Marketing

Meme marketing refers to the use of internet memes as a communication strategy to promote brands, products, or services through humorous, creative, and culturally relevant content. Shifman (2013) defines memes as groups of digital content that share common characteristics and are circulated, imitated, and transformed by online users. Similarly, Milner (2018)

views memes as part of digital participatory culture, enabling users to create and share meanings collectively. Because memes are highly relatable and easily shared, they have become an effective tool for engaging online audiences and increasing brand visibility. In this study, meme marketing is defined as Netflix's use of humorous, creative, and trend-related meme content to communicate with and engage its social media audience.

2.6 Hypothesis Development

2.6.1 Meme Marketing and Self-Congruence

Meme marketing is also expected to positively influence self-congruence, as meme content often reflects shared experiences, cultural references, and social identities that resonate with audiences. According to self-congruence theory, consumers are more likely to connect with content that aligns with their self-image and identity (Sirgy, 1982). Empirical studies have shown that alignment between brand communication and consumer identity strengthens emotional attachment and enhances perceived relevance (Malär et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2018). In digital contexts, content that reflects users' lifestyles and values can foster a sense of identification with the brand, particularly among younger audiences (Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Additionally, meme content, which is often rooted in shared cultural symbols, enables users to perceive the brand as relatable and reflective of their identity (Shifman, 2013; Milner, 2018). Thus, meme marketing is likely to enhance self-congruence.

H1: Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on self-congruence.

2.6.2 Meme Marketing and Perceived Entertainment

Meme marketing is expected to positively influence perceived entertainment, as meme-based content is inherently designed to deliver humor, enjoyment, and emotional appeal. Prior

studies have consistently shown that entertaining content increases users' positive perceptions and enhances their experience when interacting with digital media (Ducoffe, 1995; Logan et al., 2012). In social media contexts, entertainment has been identified as a key driver of user engagement, as enjoyable content captures attention and encourages continued interaction (Calder et al., 2009; Gummerus et al., 2012). Furthermore, meme-based communication, characterized by humor and cultural relatability, has been found to enhance users' perceived enjoyment due to its alignment with popular digital culture (Shifman, 2013; Milner, 2018). Therefore, meme marketing is likely to increase the level of perceived entertainment experienced by users.

H2: Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on perceived entertainment.

2.6.3 Self-Congruence and Customer Engagement

Self-congruence is expected to positively influence customer engagement because consumers are more likely to interact with brands that reflect their personal identity, values, and lifestyle. When brand communication aligns with users' self-concept, consumers develop stronger emotional attachment and are more willing to participate in brand-related activities. According to self-congruence theory, individuals prefer brands that are consistent with their self-image because such brands help reinforce identity expression (Sirgy, 1982). In digital environments, engagement behaviors such as liking, commenting, and sharing often function as symbolic forms of self-presentation. Algesheimer et al. (2005) found that identity fit significantly increases participation in brand communities through advocacy, interaction, and community involvement. Islam & Rahman (2017) also demonstrate that consumers who perceive stronger self-brand congruity show higher engagement

and stronger willingness to maintain long-term brand relationships. Therefore, higher levels of self-congruence are expected to lead to greater customer engagement.

H3: Self-congruence has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement.

2.6.4 Perceived Entertainment and Customer Engagement

Perceived entertainment is expected to positively influence customer engagement because enjoyable content creates positive emotional experiences that motivate users to interact with brand communication. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1974), individuals actively consume media content that fulfills psychological needs such as enjoyment, relaxation, and emotional satisfaction. In social media environments, entertainment functions as an important driver of user participation because enjoyable content increases attention and emotional attachment toward the brand. Hollebeek et al. (2014) explain that customer engagement involves cognitive, emotional, and behavioral investment, which becomes stronger when users experience positive affective responses during brand interaction. Vivek et al. (2012) also found that pleasurable brand experiences encourage consumers to participate more actively in brand-related activities. In addition, Islam & Rahman (2016) demonstrate that entertainment value significantly increases customer engagement in online brand communities by strengthening emotional involvement and repeated interaction. Therefore, when users perceive Netflix meme content as entertaining, they are more likely to develop stronger customer engagement.

H4: Perceived entertainment has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement.

2.6.5 Meme Marketing and Customer Engagement

Meme marketing is expected to positively influence customer engagement

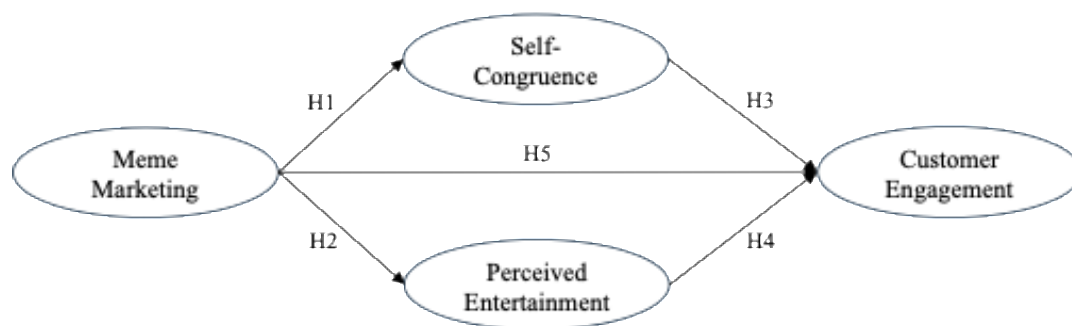
because meme-based content is highly interactive, socially relevant, and designed for rapid sharing across digital platforms. Memes are not only humorous content but also a form of participatory communication that allows users to express opinions, emotions, and social identity through simple interactions such as liking, commenting, and reposting (Shifman, 2013). This participatory nature makes memes particularly effective in stimulating engagement behavior. Brodie et al. (2011) explain that customer engagement emerges when consumers actively interact with brand-related content through cognitive, emotional, and behavioral participation. Dessart et al. (2015) further argue that interactive social media content increases

engagement because users are encouraged to become active contributors rather than passive receivers. In addition, Malodia et al. (2022) demonstrated that meme marketing enhances consumer engagement by increasing content relatability, emotional resonance, and users' willingness to participate in online brand interactions. Therefore, meme marketing is expected to directly increase customer engagement in the context of Netflix Indonesia's Instagram communication.

H5: Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement.

The conceptual framework was developed based on previous studies as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of the Study



3. Research Method

This study employs a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design to examine the relationships among meme marketing, perceived entertainment, self-congruence, and customer engagement. The unit of analysis is the individual, specifically Generation Z users in Indonesia who actively use Instagram and have been exposed to meme-based content from Netflix Indonesia.

The sample consists of respondents who meet the following criteria: (1) belong to Generation Z, (2) actively use Instagram, and (3) have previously viewed or interacted with meme content from Netflix Indonesia. The sampling method used in this study is non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, as respondents were selected based on

predefined criteria. A total of 117 valid responses were collected and used for analysis. To ensure adequate statistical power, the minimum sample size was determined using a priori power analysis with G*Power software. Power analysis is recommended to calculate the minimum number of observations required to detect significant effects and to reduce the risk of Type II error in hypothesis testing (Cohen, 1988; Faul et al., 2009; Memon et al., 2020). The analysis was conducted for linear multiple regression (fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero) with an effect size (f^2) of 0.15, a significance level (α) of 0.05, statistical power ($1-\beta$) of 0.80, and three predictors. The results indicated a minimum required sample size of 77 respondents. Therefore, the sample size in this study exceeds the minimum

requirement and is considered adequate for the analysis.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online. All measurement items were adapted from prior studies to ensure content validity. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Meme marketing was operationalized as the extent to which Netflix's meme-based content is perceived as humorous, creative, shareable, and aligned with current trends (Malodia et al., 2022; Razzaq et al., 2024). Self-congruence reflects the degree to which the meme content aligns with the respondent's personality, lifestyle, and sense of relatability (Sirgy, 1982; Malär et al., 2011; Djafarova & Bowes, 2021). Perceived entertainment captures the extent to which the content is experienced as enjoyable, entertaining, and emotionally satisfying (Davis et al., 1992; Venkatesh, 2000; Childers et al., 2001). Customer engagement represents users' cognitive, affective, and behavioral interaction with the content, such as recalling the content, developing interest in the brand, and engaging through actions like liking (Brodie et al., 2011; Vivek et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014). Meme marketing was specified reflectively in accordance with the measurement approach adopted from Malodia et al. (2022) and Razzaq et al. (2024). Under this specification, humor, creativity, shareability, and trend alignment are treated as observable manifestations of respondents' overall perceptions of Netflix's meme-marketing content. Nevertheless, the possibility that these characteristics may function as formative dimensions is acknowledged as a limitation and an avenue for future research. The detailed operationalization of variables is presented in Appendix A.

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The analysis was performed in two stages: measurement model evaluation

and structural model evaluation (Hair et al., 2024). The measurement model was assessed based on indicator reliability (outer loadings), internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and rho_A), convergent validity (Average Variance Extracted/AVE ≥ 0.50), and discriminant validity using the Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT), with values below 0.9 considered acceptable for conceptually related constructs (Franke & Sarstedt, 2019).

Because this study relies on self-reported data collected from a single source, common method bias (CMB) was considered as a potential concern. Procedural remedies were applied by ensuring respondent anonymity and using clearly structured questionnaire items to reduce response bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). In addition, collinearity assessment was conducted using variance inflation factor (VIF) values. The results indicate that VIF values remain within acceptable limits for structural model evaluation, suggesting that multicollinearity is not a serious issue. Nevertheless, the possibility of common method bias cannot be completely eliminated and should be considered as one of the study limitations.

The structural model was evaluated by examining collinearity using VIF, coefficient of determination (R^2), and path coefficients. Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping procedures to obtain t-values and p-values for assessing the significance of relationships among variables (Hair et al., 2024).

4. Results dan Discussion

4.1 Results

A total of 117 valid responses were analyzed in this study. The respondents' profile is presented in Table 1 to provide an overview of the sample characteristics. In terms of gender, the distribution is relatively balanced, with a slightly higher proportion of male respondents. Most respondents are domiciled in Java Island, indicating that the sample is concentrated in

the main economic region of Indonesia. In terms of occupation, the majority are employees, followed by smaller proportions of students, business owners, and other categories. The education level of respondents is nearly evenly distributed between high school graduates and those with a bachelor's degree. In addition, most

respondents fall within the middle-income category, and the majority report spending between one to more than four hours per day on Instagram. Overall, the profile suggests that the sample represents active Instagram users with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Table 1. Respondents Profile

Description	Category	Number (n)	%
Gender	Male	62	53%
	Female	55	47%
Domicile	Java Island	104	88.9%
	Outside Java Island	13	11.1%
Occupation	Job seekers	2	1.7%
	Employees	79	67.5%
	Students	11	9.4%
	Own a business	15	12.8%
	Part-time	5	4.3%
	Others	5	4.3%
Education	High School and equivalent	60	51.3%
	Bachelor's program	57	48.7%
Monthly income	≤ Rp 2,500,000	12	10.3%
	Rp 2,500,001 – Rp 6,000,000	45	38.5%
	Rp 6,000,001 – Rp 10,000,000	38	32.5%
	> Rp 10,000,000	22	18.8%
Daily Instagram time	< 1 hour	13	11.1%
	1–2 hours	32	27.4%
	2–4 hours	36	30.8%
	> 4 hours	36	30.8%

Source: Authors' processed data (2025)

Following the respondent profile analysis, a collinearity assessment was conducted to evaluate potential multicollinearity among the predictor constructs. Because the study relied on a single-source self-reported questionnaire, the possibility of common method bias was also considered during interpretation of the findings. As presented in Table 2, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values remain below the threshold of 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity is not

a serious issue in the structural model. These results support the suitability of the structural model for subsequent hypothesis testing. However, because the study relies on cross-sectional, self-reported data collected from a single source, the possibility of common method bias cannot be completely ruled out despite the procedural remedies implemented. The results of the collinearity assessment are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Variance inflation factor

Construct	VIF
Meme marketing -> Customer engagement	2.622
Meme marketing -> Perceived entertainment	1.000
Meme marketing -> Self Congruence	1.000
Perceived entertainment -> Customer engagement	3.889
Self Congruence -> Customer Engagement	2.153

Source: SmartPLS (2025)

After confirming that collinearity was within acceptable limits, the next step was the evaluation of the measurement model to assess construct reliability and validity. As presented in Table 3, all indicator outer loading values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.743 to 0.927, indicating satisfactory indicator reliability. The highest loading is found in SC2 (0.927), while the lowest loading is observed in PE4 (0.743), both of which remain acceptable. Internal consistency reliability is also confirmed, as all Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.790

to 0.902, rho_A values range from 0.803 to 0.903, and composite reliability values range from 0.878 to 0.938, all exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70. In terms of convergent validity, all AVE values are above 0.50, ranging from 0.664 to 0.836, indicating that each construct explains more than half of the variance of its indicators. These results confirm that the constructs demonstrate satisfactory reliability and convergent validity. The detailed results of construct reliability and validity are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Construct reliability and validity

Construct	Indicator	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_a	Composite Reliability	AVE
Meme Marketing (MM)	MM1	0.915	0.877	0.888	0.915	0.730
	MM2	0.821				
	MM3	0.857				
	MM4	0.821				
Perceived Entertainment (PE)	PE1	0.848	0.873	0.878	0.908	0.664
	PE2	0.829				
	PE3	0.846				
	PE4	0.743				
	PE5	0.803				
Self-Congruence (SC)	SC1	0.899	0.902	0.903	0.938	0.836
	SC2	0.927				
	SC3	0.917				
Customer Engagement (CE)	CE1	0.839	0.790	0.803	0.878	0.706
	CE2	0.898				
	CE3	0.779				

Source: SmartPLS (2025)

Following the evaluation of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity, discriminant validity was assessed to ensure that each construct is empirically distinct from the others in the model. As shown in Table 4, all Heterotrait–Monotrait ratio (HTMT) values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, indicating acceptable discriminant validity (Franke & Sarstedt,

2019; Hair et al., 2024). The highest HTMT value is found between perceived entertainment and customer engagement (0.874), followed by customer engagement and meme marketing (0.828), while the lowest value is observed between self-congruence and meme marketing (0.814). Since no HTMT value exceeds the threshold, the results confirm that each construct measures a distinct concept and

that discriminant validity has been successfully established. The results of the

discriminant validity test are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Discriminant validity (HTMT)

	Customer Engagement	Meme Marketing	Perceived Entertainment
Meme Marketing	0.828		
Perceived Entertainment	0.874	0.865	
Self-Congruence	0.855	0.814	0.871

Source: SmartPLS (2025)

After the measurement model was confirmed to be reliable and valid, the structural model was evaluated to examine the model's explanatory power through the coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2 value for customer engagement is 0.775, indicating that 77.5% of the variance in customer engagement can be explained by meme marketing, perceived entertainment, and self-congruence. This suggests strong explanatory power for the main dependent variable in the model. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for perceived entertainment is 0.590,

which shows that meme marketing explains 59.0% of the variance in perceived entertainment. The R^2 value for self-congruence is 0.535, indicating that meme marketing explains 53.5% of the variance in self-congruence. These results indicate that the model explains a substantial proportion of variance in the endogenous constructs, particularly customer engagement. The structural model and the results of the coefficient of determination are presented in Figure 3 and Table 5.

Figure 3. Inner Model

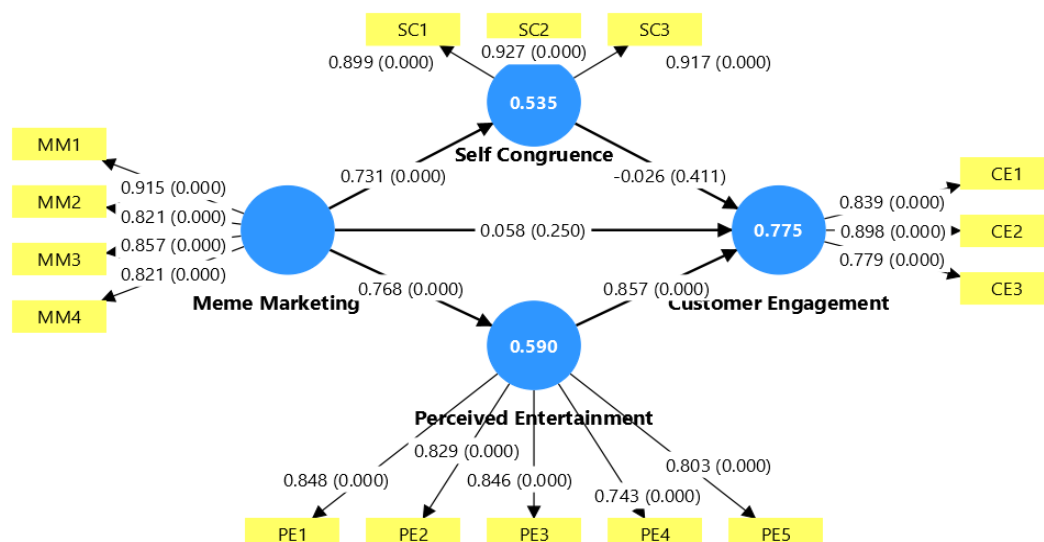


Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

Constructs	R^2
Customer engagement	0.775
Perceived entertainment	0.590
Self-Congruence	0.535

Source: SmartPLS (2025)

After evaluating the explanatory power of the model through the coefficient of determination (R^2), hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the significance of the relationships among the constructs. The assessment was performed using the bootstrapping procedure in SmartPLS by analyzing path coefficients and p-values. As presented in Table 6, three hypotheses are supported and two hypotheses are not supported. Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on self-congruence ($\beta = 0.731$; $p < 0.001$) and perceived entertainment ($\beta = 0.768$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that meme-based content

enhances both users' entertainment perception and identity alignment. Perceived entertainment also has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.857$; $p < 0.001$). However, self-congruence does not significantly affect customer engagement ($\beta = -0.026$; $p = 0.411$), and meme marketing also does not have a significant direct effect on customer engagement ($\beta = 0.058$; $p = 0.250$). These findings indicate that perceived entertainment has a stronger positive relationship with customer engagement than self-congruence in the model examined. The complete results of hypothesis testing are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypotheses	Std. Path Coefficient	P-values	Result
H1: Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on self-congruence.	0.731	< 0.001	Supported
H2: Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on perceived entertainment.	0.768	< 0.001	Supported
H3: Self-congruence has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement.	-0.026	0.411	Not supported
H4: Perceived entertainment has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement.	0.857	< 0.001	Supported
H5: Meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement.	0.058	0.250	Not supported

Source: SmartPLS (2025)

4.2 Discussion

This study examines the relationships among meme marketing, self-congruence, perceived entertainment, and customer engagement among Generation Z users exposed to Netflix Indonesia's meme content on Instagram. The results support three of the five hypotheses. Meme marketing is positively associated with both self-congruence and perceived entertainment, while perceived entertainment is positively associated with customer engagement. Conversely, self-congruence and meme marketing do not have significant direct relationships with customer engagement. These findings indicate that, within the context examined, entertainment is the organism response most strongly associated with engagement.

The first finding shows that meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on self-congruence, supporting H1. This result indicates that Netflix's meme content can create a sense of alignment with users' personalities, lifestyles, and everyday experiences. Memes often incorporate contemporary language, shared cultural references, and situations familiar to Generation Z. Such characteristics can make Netflix appear more relatable and compatible with how its audience perceives itself. This interpretation is consistent with self-congruence theory, which proposes that consumers respond favorably to brand communication that reflects their self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). It also corresponds with prior findings that congruence between brand communication and

consumer identity can increase perceived relevance and emotional closeness to a brand (Malär et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2018). Given that the respondents were active Instagram users, their familiarity with digital trends and meme culture may help explain why Netflix's culturally relevant content was associated with greater perceived identity fit.

The second finding shows that meme marketing has a positive and significant effect on perceived entertainment, supporting H2. The coefficient for this relationship is slightly higher than that of meme marketing and self-congruence, indicating that entertainment is a particularly salient response to Netflix's meme content. Humor, creativity, shareability, and alignment with current trends are central characteristics of the meme-marketing construct used in this study. These characteristics are compatible with the entertainment needs of social-media users and can generate enjoyment, amusement, and positive emotional experiences. This finding is consistent with Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains that individuals actively select media content that satisfies needs such as entertainment and emotional gratification (Katz et al., 1974). It also supports previous research showing that entertaining digital content attracts attention and enhances users' evaluations of marketing communication (Ducoffe, 1995; Logan et al., 2012). The respondents' regular Instagram use further indicates that they are familiar with rapidly consumed visual content, making meme-based communication an appropriate format for generating entertainment.

The third finding shows that self-congruence does not have a significant effect on customer engagement; therefore, H3 is not supported. Although Netflix's meme content can reflect users' personalities, lifestyles, and sense of relatability, this perceived identity fit does not necessarily lead to cognitive, affective, or behavioral engagement with the content.

Users may recognize themselves in a meme without subsequently remembering it, developing greater interest in watching Netflix, or liking the post. Thus, relatability may shape how users evaluate the content without being sufficient to motivate further interaction.

Several contextual and measurement considerations may explain this unsupported relationship. First, identity-congruent content may be processed as familiar and personally relevant but may not produce the immediate emotional activation needed to stimulate visible social-media engagement. Second, self-congruence may be more consequential for outcomes involving brand attachment, identification, or loyalty than for short-term reactions to individual Instagram posts. Prior research has connected self-congruence with stronger consumer-brand relationships (Malär et al., 2011; Japutra et al., 2018), but those relational outcomes are broader than the content-level engagement examined here. Third, the customer-engagement indicators combine meme recall, viewing interest, and liking behavior. Because these represent different forms of response, their relationships with identity fit may not be equally strong. The non-significant result should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that self-congruence is irrelevant, but as context-specific evidence that it did not directly explain the engagement measure employed in this study.

The fourth finding shows that perceived entertainment has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement, supporting H4. This is the strongest structural relationship in the model, indicating that enjoyment is particularly important in explaining how respondents engage with Netflix's meme content. Entertaining content can capture attention, generate positive affect, and encourage users to remember or interact with a post. This finding is consistent with Uses and Gratifications Theory because users are more likely to respond positively to media

content that satisfies their entertainment needs (Katz et al., 1974). It also aligns with customer-engagement research showing that pleasurable brand experiences can strengthen cognitive, emotional, and behavioral involvement (Vivek et al., 2012; Hollebeek et al., 2014). For Netflix, an entertainment-oriented brand, humorous meme content may also be congruent with the benefit audiences expect from the brand itself. Accordingly, perceived entertainment appears to provide a more immediate basis for engagement than identity alignment in this setting.

The fifth finding shows that meme marketing does not have a significant direct effect on customer engagement; therefore, H5 is not supported. This result suggests that the use of memes alone does not automatically generate audience interaction. Meme content may contain humor, creativity, shareability, and topical relevance, but audiences must still evaluate the content positively before deciding whether to remember, like, or otherwise respond to it. The popularity of memes as a communication format therefore should not be treated as evidence that every branded meme will generate engagement.

The absence of a direct relationship may also reflect the high volume of meme-based and entertaining content encountered by active Instagram users. Frequent exposure can make the format familiar, reducing the distinctiveness of merely presenting brand communication as a meme. What appears to matter more in the present model is whether users actually experience the content as entertaining. Nevertheless, this pattern should not be interpreted as evidence of mediation because indirect effects were not formally tested. It only demonstrates that meme marketing is significantly associated with perceived entertainment, perceived entertainment is significantly associated with customer engagement, and the direct relationship between meme marketing and customer engagement is not significant. Future studies may formally examine

whether perceived entertainment transmits the effect of meme marketing to engagement.

Overall, the findings provide partial support for the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework. Meme marketing, as the stimulus, is significantly associated with both internal responses examined: self-congruence and perceived entertainment. However, only perceived entertainment is significantly associated with customer engagement as the response. Self-congruence does not demonstrate a significant relationship with engagement in this model. Therefore, within the specific context of Netflix Indonesia’s Instagram content and the Generation Z respondents examined, the affective response represented by perceived entertainment is more strongly associated with customer engagement than the identity-based response represented by self-congruence.

From a managerial perspective, Netflix Indonesia should not rely merely on adopting the meme format or making its content relatable. The results suggest that engagement is more closely associated with whether audiences genuinely experience the content as enjoyable and entertaining. Meme content should therefore prioritize effective humor, creative execution, topical relevance, and an understanding of the audience’s entertainment preferences. Relatability remains useful because meme marketing significantly increases self-congruence, but identity alignment alone may not produce engagement. Managers should consequently evaluate meme performance not only through its cultural fit or shareability but also through audience responses indicating that the content delivers meaningful entertainment value.

5. Conclusion

This study examines the relationships among meme marketing, self-congruence, perceived entertainment, and customer engagement among Generation Z users exposed to Netflix Indonesia’s meme content on Instagram. The results show that

meme marketing has positive and significant effects on both self-congruence and perceived entertainment. However, only perceived entertainment has a positive and significant effect on customer engagement, whereas self-congruence does not. Meme marketing also has no significant direct effect on customer engagement. Within the context examined, these findings indicate that perceived entertainment is more strongly associated with customer engagement than self-congruence.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings provide partial support for the Stimulus–Organism–Response framework. Meme marketing, as the stimulus, is significantly associated with both organism responses examined: self-congruence and perceived entertainment. However, only perceived entertainment is significantly associated with customer engagement as the behavioral response. This result suggests that different organism responses do not necessarily have equivalent relationships with engagement. In the context of Netflix Indonesia’s Instagram communication, the affective response represented by perceived entertainment appears more relevant to customer engagement than the identity-based response represented by self-congruence. Nevertheless, this interpretation is specific to the constructs, measures, sample, brand, and platform examined in this study.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that Netflix Indonesia and other digital entertainment brands should not assume that using memes will automatically generate customer engagement. Although meme marketing can increase both entertainment perceptions and identity alignment, the results indicate that engagement is more closely associated with whether audiences genuinely experience the content as enjoyable and entertaining. Managers should therefore prioritize effective humor, creative execution, topical relevance, and alignment with the entertainment

preferences of their target audience. Relatability and identity alignment may still improve audiences’ evaluations of the content, but these qualities alone may not be sufficient to encourage engagement. Regular audience testing can help brands determine whether meme content is not only culturally relevant but also sufficiently entertaining to stimulate interaction.

This study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional design does not capture changes in audience perceptions and engagement over time or establish temporal causality among the constructs. Future research may employ longitudinal or experimental designs to provide stronger evidence regarding the direction and development of these relationships.

Second, the study focuses on one brand, one Instagram account, and a purposively selected sample dominated by respondents domiciled in Java. These characteristics limit the generalizability of the findings to other brands, industries, platforms, geographical regions, and demographic groups. Future studies should replicate the model across different brand categories and social-media platforms and use more geographically diverse samples.

Third, customer engagement was operationalized using a limited number of indicators representing meme recall, interest in watching Netflix, and liking behavior. These indicators may not capture the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of customer engagement with equal depth. Future studies should employ a more comprehensive and validated multidimensional engagement scale or theoretically narrow the construct to the specific engagement outcomes being measured.

Fourth, the respondent-screening criteria were limited to Generation Z status, active Instagram use, and prior exposure to Netflix Indonesia’s meme content. The survey did not specifically establish respondents’ Netflix subscription status, whether they followed Netflix Indonesia’s Instagram account, the frequency of their

exposure, or the recency of their interaction with the content. Future research should apply more detailed screening criteria to ensure sufficiently recent and sustained exposure to the focal brand and its social-media communication.

Fifth, this study tested only the direct relationships specified in the conceptual framework and did not formally assess indirect effects. Although the corrected structural results show that meme marketing is significantly associated with perceived entertainment, perceived entertainment is significantly associated with customer engagement, and the direct relationship between meme marketing and customer engagement is not significant, this pattern should not be interpreted as evidence of mediation. Future research may formally test whether perceived entertainment mediates the relationship between meme marketing and customer engagement by reporting bootstrapped indirect effects and confidence intervals.

Sixth, the study relied on self-reported data collected from a single source. Although respondent anonymity

and clearly structured questionnaire items were used as procedural remedies, the potential influence of common method bias cannot be completely ruled out. Future studies may employ temporal separation, longitudinal designs, behavioral engagement data, or data collected from multiple sources to reduce potential common method bias.

Finally, the conceptual proximity between the humor-related meme-marketing indicator and the perceived-entertainment indicators should be considered when interpreting the findings. Although the revised HTMT results support discriminant validity, future studies may further distinguish the characteristics of meme content from audiences' affective evaluations. Researchers could also examine whether meme-marketing characteristics are more appropriately specified as formative dimensions and investigate other explanatory variables, such as perceived authenticity, content relevance, humor style, or platform-specific interaction norms.

REFERENCES

- Algesheimer, R., Dholakia, U. M., & Herrmann, A. (2005). The social influence of brand community: Evidence from European car clubs. *Journal of Marketing*, 69(3), 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.69.3.19.66363>
- Brodie, R. J., Hollebeek, L. D., Juric, B., & Ilic, A. (2011). Customer engagement: Conceptual domain, fundamental propositions, and implications for research. *Journal of Service Research*, 14(3), 252–271. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670511411703>
- Calder, B. J., Malthouse, E. C., & Schaedel, U. (2009). An experimental study of the relationship between online engagement and advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 23(4), 321–332. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2009.07.002>
- Childers, T. L., Carr, C. L., Peck, J., & Carson, S. (2001). Hedonic and utilitarian motivations for online retail shopping behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(4), 511–535. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359\(01\)00056-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(01)00056-2)
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Davis, F. D., Bagozzi, R. P., & Warshaw, P. R. (1992). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to use computers in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 22(14), 1111–1132. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1992.tb00945.x>
- Dessart, L., Veloutsou, C., & Morgan-Thomas, A. (2015). Consumer engagement in online brand communities: A social media perspective. *Journal of Product & Brand*

- Management*, 24(1), 28–42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-06-2014-0635>
- Djafarova, E., & Bowes, T. (2021). “Instagram made me buy it”: Generation Z impulse purchases in fashion industry. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 59, 102345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102345>
- Ducoffe, R. H. (1995). How consumers assess the value of advertising. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 17(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.1995.10505022>
- Eroglu, S. A., Machleit, K. A., & Davis, L. M. (2001). Atmospheric qualities of online retailing: A conceptual model and implications. *Journal of Business Research*, 54(2), 177–184.
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A.-G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior Research Methods*, 41(4), 1149–1160. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149>
- Franke, G., & Sarstedt, M. (2019). Heuristics versus statistics in discriminant validity testing: A comparison of four procedures. *Internet Research*, 29(3), 430–447. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IntR-12-2017-0515>
- Gummerus, J., Liljander, V., Weman, E., & Pihlström, M. (2012). Customer engagement in a Facebook brand community. *Management Research Review*, 35(9), 857–877. <https://doi.org/10.1108/01409171211256578>
- Hair, J. F., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., & Gudergan, S. P. (2024). *Advanced issues in partial least squares structural equation modeling* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Hollebeek, L. D., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2013.12.002>
- Islam, J., & Rahman, Z. (2017). The impact of online brand community characteristics on customer engagement: An application of stimulus-organism-response paradigm. *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(4), 330–340. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2016.06.008>
- Islam, J. U., & Rahman, Z. (2016). The transpiring journey of customer engagement research in marketing: A systematic review of the past decade. *Management Decision*, 54(8), 2008–2034. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-01-2016-0028>
- Japutra, A., Ekinci, Y., & Simkin, L. (2018). Positive and negative behaviours resulting from brand attachment: The moderating effects of attachment styles. *European Journal of Marketing*, 52(5–6), 1185–1202. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-10-2016-0566>
- Katz, E., Blumler, J. G., & Gurevitch, M. (1974). Uses and gratifications research. In J. G. Blumler & E. Katz (Eds.), *The uses of mass communications: Current perspectives on gratifications research* (pp. 19–32). Sage Publications. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2747854>
- Logan, K., Bright, L. F., & Gangadharbatla, H. (2012). Facebook versus television: Advertising value perceptions among females. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 6(3), 164–179. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17505931211274651>
- Ly-Le, T.-M. (2025). From recruitment to retention: Strategic marketing communication for higher education management in Vietnam. *DeReMa (Development Research of Management): Jurnal Manajemen*, 20(2), 135–146. <https://doi.org/10.19166/derema.v20i2.10035>
- Malär, L., Krohmer, H., Hoyer, W. D., & Nyffenegger, B. (2011). Emotional brand attachment and brand personality: The relative importance of the actual and the ideal self. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 35–52. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.75.4.35>
- Malodia, S., Dhir, A., Bilgihan, A., Sinha, P., & Tikoo, T. (2022). Meme marketing: How can marketers drive better engagement using viral memes? *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(9), 1775–1801. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21702>
- Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. MIT Press.

- Memon, M. A., Ting, H., Cheah, J.-H., Thurasamy, R., Chuah, F., & Cham, T. H. (2020). Sample size for survey research: Review and recommendations. *Journal of Applied Structural Equation Modeling*, 4(2), i–xx. [https://doi.org/10.47263/jasem.4\(2\)01](https://doi.org/10.47263/jasem.4(2)01)
- Milner, R. M. (2018). *The world made meme: Public conversations and participatory media*. MIT Press.
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 63, 539–569. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452>
- Razzaq, A., Shao, W., & Quach, S. (2024). Meme marketing effectiveness: A moderated-mediation model. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 78, 103702. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2023.103702>
- Shifman, L. (2013). *Memes in digital culture*. MIT Press.
- Sirgy, M. J. (1982). Self-concept in consumer behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(3), 287–300. <https://doi.org/10.1086/208924>
- Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., Park, J.-O., Chon, K.-S., Claiborne, C. B., Johar, J. S., & Berkman, H. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(3), 229–241. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0092070397253004>
- Steviano, A., & Sihombing, S. O. (2023). Pengaruh manajemen hubungan masyarakat dan orientasi pemasaran hubungan terhadap loyalitas merek dengan keterlibatan pelanggan dan kepercayaan merek sebagai variabel mediasi. *DeReMa (Development Research of Management): Jurnal Manajemen*, 18(2), 86–108. <https://doi.org/10.19166/derema.v18i2.6808>
- Venkatesh, V. (2000). Determinants of perceived ease of use: Integrating control, intrinsic motivation, and emotion into the technology acceptance model. *Information Systems Research*, 11(4), 342–365. <https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.11.4.342.11872>
- Vivek, S. D., Beatty, S. E., & Morgan, R. M. (2012). Customer engagement: Exploring customer relationships beyond purchase. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 20(2), 122–146. <https://doi.org/10.2753/MTP1069-6679200201>

Appendix A. Variable Operationalization

Meme Marketing

1. Netflix memes are funny.
2. Netflix memes feel creative.
3. Netflix memes are easy to share.
4. Netflix memes are aligned with current popular trends.

Adapted from: Malodia et al. (2022); Razzaq et al. (2024)

Self-Congruence

1. Netflix memes reflect my personality.
2. Netflix memes reflect my lifestyle.
3. Netflix memes feel relatable to me.

Adapted from: Malär et al. (2011); Djafarova & Bowes (2021)

Perceived Entertainment

1. I find Netflix memes enjoyable.
2. Netflix memes feel entertaining.

3. I enjoy watching Netflix memes.
4. Netflix memes are highly entertaining.
5. Netflix memes make me feel happy.

Adapted from: Davis et al. (1992); Venkatesh (2000); Childers et al. (2001)

Customer Engagement

1. I often remember funny Netflix memes.
2. Netflix memes make me want to watch Netflix.
3. I often like Netflix memes.

Adapted from: Brodie et al. (2011); Vivek et al. (2012); Hollebeek et al. (2014)