

Memes as a Form of Digital Communication and Cultural Commentary

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English.

Department of English and Humanities

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January 2025

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that.

1. The thesis is my own original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. This thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

Memes and social media memes have become a key form of communication in the digital age, transcending the barriers of geography or culture to be used as agents of cultural commentary, social commentary, and humor. This study analyzes memes as a unique language medium and method of storytelling that is indicative of social values, trends, and issues while influencing public opinions. Based on popular memes that are circulated across social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram, especially during holidays, this study will determine how memes describe culture and tradition. It also tackles problems such as misinformation and cultural insensitivity. It uses a mix-method and data is collected through Google form and interviews, additionally, it also analyzes memes. This research seeks to explore memes' powerful nature as a type of digital communication that both influences and mirrors discourse in a connected world. The research concludes that memes are dynamic, interactive digital objects that are transforming the norms of communication and cultural expression. Since they are everywhere on platforms like Facebook and Instagram, they influence public opinion and create global conversations.

Keywords: Memes, Communication, Cultural Commentary

Acknowledgment

I am grateful to my supervisor, Jahin Kaiissar, for her endless guidance and feedback. It would have been impossible to complete this thesis without her constant support. I would also like to thank my parents for their support throughout my university life. Their endless support and love gave me the strength to complete this journey. I am grateful to my one and only brother for always being proud of me and being there for me always.

Lastly, I would like to thank my closest friend Nafiur who always pushed me and motivated me to work.

Table of contents

Declaration	ii
Approval	iii
Abstract	iv
Acknowledgment	v
Chapter 1	1
Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	2
1.3 Statement of Problem	3
1.4 Objective of Study	4
1.5 Research Question	5
1.6 Scope of Study	5
Chapter 2	7
Literature Review	7
2.1 Main Findings	7
2.2 Theories	10
2.3 Research Gap	14
Chapter 3	17
Research Methodology	17
3.1 Research Aims	17
3.2 Theoretical Framework	17
3.3 Sampling: why and how the research participants were selected	19
3.4 Research setting and environment	20
3.5 Data Collection Procedure	20
3.6 Data Analysis Procedure	21
3.7 Survey Questions:	21
Chapter 4	23

Findings	23
Chapter 5	39
Survey Analysis	39
Chapter 6	44
Meme Analysis	44
Chapter 7	56
Conclusion	56
References	58

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Richard Dawkins (1989) defines an internet meme as an idea, behavior, or style that spreads from person to person within a culture. A meme can be an image, hyperlink, video, website, or hashtag. The concept draws from Richard Dawkins' (1976) theory which postulates memes as melodies or fashion trends replicated among online-based communities. Exceeding the mere tradition of sharing humorous images or emotions, memes uphold the richness and uniqueness of their language. Memes have also been defined as emerging multimodal constructions combined with images and text and are created to share viewpoints, often ideas to engage discourse communities or serotypes. Memes' popularity lies in expressing audiences' perspectives and reactions (Dancygier & Vandelanotte, 2017). In the current digital era, memes have become a powerful and pervasive medium of communication that extends far beyond simple humor. In contemporary society, social media platforms are primarily used for digital communication (Ohiagu & Okorie, 2014). Memes have evolved from lighthearted images into a dynamic tool for social and cultural commentary, encapsulating the perspectives and opinions of otherwise unheard voices in the digital world. Memes have a phenomenal capacity to influence public perception by distilling complex concepts into simple and relatable terms. However, memes have another power though they have made an online space for bonding and collaboration regardless of geographical and cultural limits, they have stirred a shared language, a global space worth connecting, a community, and a self-built space worth belonging to, all through collective

humor and cultural references (The Influence of Memes: Unveiling the Power of Internet Culture, 2023).

This study examines the role of memes as a unique language and storytelling medium that represents societal values, trends, and issues. Due to their ease of creation and rapid spread, memes allow individuals to participate in cultural discourse, where cultural commentary and critique are revealed through shared humor, satire, and humor. To understand how memes serve as mirrors and mediators of societal narratives in an interconnected online world, this study will analyze memes as a form of digital communication.

1.2 Background of the Study

The internet and digital technology have innovated communication as they create new forms of media and expression of individuals into enterprises, across culture, language, and geography. Internet memes have emerged as an original, widespread, and powerful form of digital communication. The concept of memes originated in the digital age, where Dawkins (1976) proposed a more formal description of memes, representing a specific class of media on the web. Generally, a meme is a text, video, or image that provides satire, humor, or social commentary that forms an essential part of the Internet community.

Memes today are no longer just a source of entertainment; they have evolved into powerful tools that shape cultural discourse. Their breeding grounds are social media platforms like TikTok, Facebook, and Instagram that help them access global audiences. The shift of memes as a source of entertainment to digital communication is cultural, not just technological since memes capture

shared experiences, social norms, and common struggles. For instance, during holidays or festive seasons, memes encapsulate cultural customs promoting humor and common experiences. Despite their significant growth, memes are often written off as superficial or trivial, leading to a lack of academic attention regarding their potential as a vehicle for cultural commentary and communication. Memes simplify or complicate social and political issues raising public debate and influencing individuals' opinions. Memes can be considered a critical artifact of contemporary culture since they reflect societal values and attitudes, but they also pose the risk of perpetuating cultural stereotypes and spreading misinformation.

Memes encourage communication across cultures by offering relatable and accessible content. However, they can also oversimplify, misrepresent cultural components, and potentially lead to misunderstanding. Moreover, the comedic aspect of memes can, at times, downplay the gravity of important social and political issues, and therefore, a critical approach to their role in digital exchange is necessary. The goal of this research is to understand memes as digital artifacts that connect communication and cultural commentary.

1.3 Statement of Problem

In the digital era, memes have become a significant form of communication and cultural commentary. Often, humorous, informational, or sarcastic, memes are typically presented as images, videos, or texts circulating across various social media platforms, influencing individuals' opinions and societal values. Despite their ubiquity, it is only recently that memes have been studied seriously and taken as a subject of academic study. Since memes are so humorous and trivial, they are often misinterpreted, serving as vehicles of misinformation. Once memes gain a

large audience, it would be difficult to correct such misinformation. It can be avoided by providing digital literacy programs, such as online courses or workshops, which must be organized to teach people to critically evaluate the content; understand the context, and differentiate between fact and false information. Memes that are offensive or culturally insensitive sometimes reinforce negative biases of some sets of groups and lead to social tension. For example, a meme that mocks lord Ganesh, the elephant-headed god in Hinduism, trivializes his image in pop culture which can be deeply offensive to many Hindus. Social media platforms need to revisit their policies and deal with insensitive content. One potential solution is to develop more effective algorithms that can detect and ban offensive memes. Another step to consider is partnerships and campaigns with experts in cultural sensitivity, whereby content creators are educated about other cultures.

This research will examine the roles of memes in digital communication and their influence on cultural commentary. It will highlight how memes embody the narrative of the current social challenges and public perceptions.

1.4 Objective of Study

This study aims to investigate memes not as frivolous or superficial forms of communication, but as structurally significant and culturally rich forms of digital expression capable of conveying complex social, political, and cultural meanings. As such, this study will explore the role of memes in creating and disseminating cultural narratives in digital spaces, while also analyzing their use as social tools to reflect on value systems, criticisms, and attitudes. It will also explore factors affecting the creation, dissemination, and virality of memes across platforms,

and how these factors are implicated in memes' influence over public opinion and collective identity across online communities.

1.5 Research question

In what ways do memes serve as digital forms of communication, social norms, and humor?

How do memes differ from traditional forms of communication?

How do memes reflect societal values, norms, and issues, and influence individuals' opinions?

Which social media platforms influence meme culture and how do they impact the audience?

How can social media platforms prevent the spread of misinformation and offensive content?

1.6 Scope of study

The study will explore meme content related to the festive seasons. As festive seasons often involve common experiences like shopping and family gatherings, memes help people share joy and common excitement fostering a sense of togetherness. For example, memes about festive preparations, taken with humor, can appeal to vast audiences. This study will analyze how memes are made, circulated, and remixed during major celebrations like Christmas, Diwali, Eid, and other culturally significant holidays. The festive season is a time for increased internet traffic as well as cultural engagement and retrospection, making it an ideal context to study how memes serve as representations of holiday traditions, social practices, and seasonal sentiments. This paper will mainly focus on the cultural and communicative significance of memes during the holiday season.

The study presents a pathway for expanding the understanding of memes as potent players in digital festivities and spectacles.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Main Findings

Meme language is a kind of “macro-code,” a shorthand communication that digital communities use to convey cultural meanings (Petrova, 2021). Such communication shapes online discourse and consolidates group thought cyberspaces because personal identities mess with

common cultural symbols and codes (Petrova, 2021). Yulia Petrova (2021) cites that memes contribute to digital identity and individuals adapt through being a part of a shared meme culture. Moreover, meme determines how people see themselves and others inside the group of the internet community, particularly through meme-based interactions. According to Petrova (2021), meme language is not merely a representational form; it can be said to actively shape collective meaning-making, reinforcing shared attitudes and often producing a type of consensus among online groups. Memes serve as a marker of belonging and affiliation and have the potential to create both the inclusion and exclusion of certain internet users (Petrova, 2021). If meme language is managed and understood in a better way, it can strengthen cultural literacy and inclusivity online. With the promotion of cultural understanding and the creation of digital awareness, meme language can allow for respectful and cohesive online interactions (Petrova, 2021).

According to Branislav Buchel (2012), memes have transferred into a powerful mode of communication, mainly due to their capacity to condense intricate social and cultural commentary into a simple and shareable format. Memes serve as a form of “internet shorthand,” using humor, satire, and shared allusions to swiftly communicate cultural values, opinions, and societal criticisms across language barriers (Buchel, 2012). Through memes, internet users develop a feeling of common identity. The shared humor or perspective draws people together, forming a group that bonds over common values, issues, or occasions and successfully creating digital subcultures (Buchel, 2012). Additionally, Buchel (2012) illustrates how memes impact public opinion when it comes to political or social matters, by presenting topics in relevant, emotionally compelling ways. This has the power to drive discussions and influence perspectives, especially among youths, and online engaged audiences. According to Buchel (2012), memes are

characterized by rapid evolution and flexibility that enables them to remain current and reflective of ongoing events. Buchel (2012) suggests that the flexibility of memes allows them to react to cultural changes more quickly than traditional media.

The use of memes in cross-cultural communication influences cultural perceptions across different cultures (Dwivedi, n. d.). According to Shashank Dwivedi (n.d.), memes are a digital linguistic phenomenon that reflects cultural humor, stereotypes, and values that can coexist as a means to reinforce prejudices or overcome cultural boundaries. Dwivedi (n.d.) explains how memes provide a digital lingua franca that allows individuals from different cultural backgrounds to communicate using humor, emotions, and common reference points. Although separated by geography and culture, they form a global conversation. The research also sees how memes can cause cultural misunderstandings. Memes often reduce complex cultural ideas into catchy, easily digestible narratives, and images fit for entertainment, which may lead to misunderstandings or stereotypes, especially if it is content that does not offer enough contextualization to specific audiences (Dwivedi n.d.). According to Dwivedi (n.d.), memes can shape understanding of cultures on the internet and can serve as a thought carrier of a powerful cultural symbol. They are the hybrid local/global, which can easily reduce, distort, and misrepresent the richness of a culture. This gives rise to the impact of digital narratives as well as the establishment of universal communal values, yet they could equally strengthen cultural biases.

Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) suggest that memes express public sentiment in areas including politics, generational characteristics, and social movements, as they reflect changes in societal

trends and cultural values. Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) illustrate how memes capture the collective experience by analyzing the language of the memes and the images in the memes through a few different themes that work well in a wider range of cultural contexts. Memes convey complicated feelings and new developments in a short space with only slang, colloquial or internet language, and visual symbols. The linguistic flexibility of memes adds to their usability, making it possible to convey humor, irony, and satire with few words (Mukhtar et al., n.d.). She argues that memes facilitate cross-cultural communication by presenting cultural concepts in an easily digestible potentially misinterpreted, without surrounding context. Memes can also bridge cultural gaps as well as create/facilitate the use of stereotypical images (Mukhtar et al., n.d.). Memes frame society's problems in ironic and humorous ways and they give rise to social and political awareness, foster engagement through dialogue, and provide commentary on social processes (Mukhtar et al., (n.d.). The study brings up the issue regarding the ethical use of memes especially regarding privacy and copyright as it is shared without consent (Mukhtar et al., n.d.).

To reconceptualize memes for today's digital age, Shifman (2013) uses "viral" content as an antithesis to memes. Unlike viral media, many of which are reliant on passive sharing, internet memes can evolve as consumers remix and redefine them, enabling the widespread dissemination of said memes without requiring much alteration. An overview of memes by Limor Shifman (2013) provides a framework for categorizing memes by form, visual, stance, and content. This framework enables an in-depth understanding of how memes encode multiple meanings, inherently influenced by political and social contexts. Memes create community — he argues that members of the same online community and shared beliefs convey through memes to show their support of specific social or political groups. Contributing to political expression, memes allow

users to ridicule or criticize the established narratives but also enable people to engage in discourse that could be limited otherwise since memes democratize the culture of producing social and political commentary (Shifman, 2013). Memes are flexible which makes them unique in communicating in an increasingly globalized digital world as they can cross cultural and national boundaries yet maintain their local importance (Shifman, 2013).

2.2 Theories

The transformation of meme language into a “macro-code” allows shared understanding in online groups that are employed in cultural code theory, which Petrova (2021) adopts. Viewing memes as informational packets and cultural indexers paves the way for a theory that aids in farming conjured and extrapolated digital identities through meme-based communities. The paper explores the usability role of memes in online communities through collective identity and social identity theory (Petrova, 2021). This paradigm explains how meme language enables forms of group thinking by aligning individuals’ self-images along continuous axes in the direction of norms established through online conversation. In an anthropological approach, Petrova (2021) classifies memes as a 21st-century semiotic intermediary, communicating various ideas established through memes, appealing to a diverse number of audiences, and delivering different complex ideas in a fast and effective way. Drawing on symbolic interactionism, she also investigates how these symbols influence interpersonal meaning and how individuals relate to digitized cultural markers. Using online survey data, Petrova (2021) quantitatively analyzes the responses of meme language users and the perceptions of both users and non-users of meme language. The qualitative perspective lends insight into how popular meme-based communication contributes to online cultural perceptions and collective attitudes.

Buchel (2012) employs a grounded theory, which is a method of deriving theory from data instead of testing an existing theory. By critically analyzing specific examples of memes, Buchel (2012) attempts to extrapolate trends within meme culture and construct a theoretical narrative of how meme functions as a communicative sign. Separate from the definition of multimodal communication as a point-of-view, Buchel (2012) uses semiotic theory to explain how the use of memes acts as signs in their relational aspects to express hierarchical meaning-making through the inter-connection of current texts, visuals, and cultural references. He applies symbolic interactionism to explore users' understandings of memes, as meanings diverge depending on users' backgrounds and socialization. In specific case studies of particular memes or meme trends, Buchel (2012) examines how memes enact and reflect the dynamics of digital culture. The qualitative approach helps model how specific memes reflect communication, represent cultural values, and establish common identities within online communities.

The inherent understanding of cultures is based on the Intercultural Communication Theory, which describes how people communicate, understand, and also interpret each other's messages across cultural backgrounds (Dwivedi, n.d.). Dwivedi (n.d.) also applies this theory to the question of how memes facilitate or obstruct cross-cultural understanding. With semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, he examines memes as textual and visual symbols that carry complex meanings. This analogy allows us to understand how memes with their unique humor and cultural signalers impart their message and how this has been received in various cultures. Dwivedi (n.d.) performs qualitative content analysis to explore themes and messages found in popular memes. He learns how frequencies and symbols repeat and establish certain cultural concepts or stereotypes

in memes, floating or fighting for social understandings across cultures. Dwivedi (n.d.) illustrates specific examples of memes and explains how they affect intercultural communication with the help of case studies. For instance, Fig. 2 is a caricature meme mocking Japanese people, as they do not believe 25th December, Christmas Day should be a holiday. These examples serve as a way to show how certain memes can reinforce stereotypes or transcend cultural barriers, depending on the context in which the meme is used and how someone interprets that meme.

Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) use sociolinguistic theory and analyze how memes function as linguistic and cultural artifacts. Sociolinguistics helps to understand how memes use language, including slang and vernacular, to produce and convey meaning in specific social and cultural contexts. Analysis of how memes function as a medium of culture that reflects and reinforces social values is also useful. Mukhtar et al. (n.d.), with the assistance of semiotics, decodes¹² the visuals, symbols, and text that comprise memes. They explore the way memes convey humor, critique, or satire using minimal language by dissecting the visual and textual components. Semiotics helps in revealing how memes efficiently communicate by using shared cultural knowledge. To examine a sample for recurrent themes and cultural references, Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) employ content analysis as a methodology as it allows them to classify the memes based on their sociological and linguistic traits. Including ethnographic observation of online communities, they examine how meme-sharing behaviors differ among cultural groups and social media platforms. With the study of how people share memes, Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) learn about the rules and values that guide online interactions and affect the spread and reception of memes.

Drawing on sociocultural theory, Shifman (2013) sees memes as cultural entities embodying the social interactions, group behaviors, or ideologies existing in online crowds. She uses participatory culture —the notion that people no longer just consume the media but create and reframe cultural narratives through memes— to explain the function of white people in the memes. Making use of semiotic theory, Shifman (2013) dissects the structure of a meme and how its parts, including text, image, and stance, fit together to produce complex meanings. Shifman (2013) develops a structured way to examine the symbols and cultural references included in memes by categorizing them into content, form, and stance which shows how memes function as digital “signs.” Shifman (2013) includes the analysis of online memes and other viral content. This analysis explores how memes vary from forms of media in terms of their flexibility, interactivity, and sociopolitical influences, particularly when it is used as a tool for social critique or political commentary. Shifman (2013) includes observations from digital spaces to comprehend how communities interact with and alter memes over time. This approach provides insight into the function of memes in digital communication as it captures the dynamic and participative nature of memes.

2.3 Research Gap

Though Petrova (2021) explores meme culture and its influence on digital identity, she does not investigate the longitudinal perspective: how meme language evolved and how it impacted cultural identities in the long term. With rapid change in digital identities, long-term studies could capture the change and show better perceptions about memes. Petrova (2021) does not address cultural differences; she focuses on broad trends in online groups. Her analysis overlooks distinctions in cultural roles as she assumes that meme and viral content operate identically in digital spaces. As her research is mostly survey-based, it might have restricted the

depth of analyzing meme language's qualitative and interpretive aspects. Methods including ethnography or content analysis could provide depth insights through examining the subtleties within specific communities and adaption and exploration of how meme language functions within certain groups.

Buchel (2012) does not analyze the change in memes' meaning or cultural impact over time. The research misses the evolving nature of meme culture. As his research concentrates on Western meme culture, it lacks a comprehensive comparison with multilingual meme communities or the non-western. The research lacks quantitative data as it relies on qualitative analysis and quantitative data could support the strength regarding the influence of memes and its impact on public opinion. The research was done in 2012; therefore, it does not discuss the later advances in meme culture, which indeed have a big cultural impact right now, including political memes, sharing of misinformation, and the rise of short video content, which have a significant cultural influence today.

Dwivedi (n.d.) offers a qualitative assessment of how memes impact cross-cultural communication but does not include quantitative data to support claims about the extent or effectiveness of the influence of memes on various communities. Moreover, surveys or statistical analysis could strengthen the results. To highlight significant variations in meme interpretation across cultural boundaries, Dwivedi (n.d.) could explore how different cultural groups interpret or respond to memes. Gaining insights and reactions from audiences with different demographics could enhance the intercultural analysis. Though the paper states the possibility of

misinterpretation and preconceptions, it does not investigate the adverse impacts on cross-cultural relations, mostly when memes propagate misinformation or reinforce harmful cultural biases.

Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) use quantitative data like content analysis and semiotic but quantitative surveys or statistical analysis could have supported the findings as it provides quantifiable insights into the extent of meme influences across different demographics and different cultural groups. Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) aim to examine memes across borders but their study does not give in-depth comparisons of meme usage in specific cultural or linguistic groups. Including case studies of specific cultures and nations could clarify the nuances of meme interpretations and usage of memes in various communities. Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) discuss still-images and text-based memes but they do not talk about other formats of memes like GIFs or video memes which are common on social media with certain qualities that can contribute to comprehension in understanding digital meme culture. Mukhtar et al. (n.d.) mention ethical guidelines but the privacy concerns and the potential for cultural appropriation within meme culture are not mentioned. Exploring these topics in particular meme content shared without consent or context leading to misinterpretations and cultural insensitivity could contribute to the study.

Shifman (2013) does not focus on a detailed exploration of content moderation practices and their ethical implications as it is becoming important due to online misinformation and political propaganda even though she mentions ethical concerns like the potential for memes to spread misinformation. Shifman's (2013) analysis mostly relies on examples from Western media which may not adequately capture the diversity of meme culture around the world. As memes

often contain local or cultural references, analyzing them based on non-Western context could highlight the distinctive social and political use of memes. Although Shifman (2013) acknowledges memes as a means of political engagement he does not focus on their role in political extremism and polarization. Further research on how memes could contribute to divisive or extremist rhetoric online could support the research.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Research aims

This research aims to explore memes as a medium of digital communication and cultural commentary, specifically examining the specific aspects of memes that impact their effectiveness and dissemination as a means of communication and cultural commentary. The study will primarily engage with memes posted on Facebook and Instagram, auditing their prospective potential for communicative and cultural commentary. This study employs both qualitative and

quantitative methods. The quantitative method will mainly explore the role of memes as a form of digital communication, as it will require data on how individuals use memes as a form of communication. The data will be collected through Google Forms. Qualitative research will focus on the role of memes as cultural commentary by analyzing meme content and interviewing participants.

3.2 Theoretical Framework

This study includes two key theories to examine memes as a form of digital communication and cultural commentary.

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols that provide a fundamental framework to understand memes as multimode structures with images, texts, and cultural references. According to Ferdinand de Saussure, signs consist of signifiers the physical form, and the concept it represents. From the perspective of memes, a signifier can be an image, caption, or symbol; the signified can be the humor, the message behind it, or cultural commentary (Media-Studies.com, 2022). To communicate complex social, political, or cultural ideas in a clear and accessible format memes serve as cultural signs using intertextuality and common knowledge. Roland Barthes' concept of mythologies helps in deconstructing memes and exposes the deeper cultural ideas and narratives embedded within them. Through juxtaposition, humor, and irony memes often remix existing signs and create new meanings allowing them to attract diverse audiences and promote cultural discourse (Mambrol, 2019).

Emphasizing fragmentation, intertextuality, and the blending of high and low culture, postmodernism challenges traditional notions of truth and representation. As memes are inherently intertextual artifacts, they align postmodernist ideas by deconstructing conventional narratives and resembling them in a humorous, ironic, or playful way. They blur the boundaries between representation and reality, which is a central concept in Jean Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality. Hyperreality refers to the state in which simulations and representations of reality replace the originality by creating a reality that is "more real than real."

This is exemplified by memes; they exaggerate, simplify, or satirize real-life, cultural icons, and social issues. For example, festive memes about holiday traditions are frequently a blend of cultural archetypes that frame a hyperreal narrative and appeal to audiences' common experiences and anticipations. The repetition and remixing of memes may contribute to the creation of collective cultural memory and disconnect from the original text, but it also influences public opinion and engagement.

Offering a framework through which to view how memes simultaneously serve as signs that both build and break cultural meanings in a postmodern digital landscape, incorporating semiotics and postmodernism. In being able to address, participate, and repurpose social values, the perspective that memes act as instruments of a participatory culture is brought to the forefront. Moreover, this would allow to elaborate on the implications of hyperreality in meme culture, such as its propensity towards reinforcing stereotypes, shaping public perceptions, and propagating misleading information.

Drawing from this theoretical framework, the study aims to analyze memes as semiotic and postmodern artifacts that mirror immediate social narratives, affecting collective identities and cultural conversations in a digitally hyperreal landscape.

3.3 Sampling: why and how the research participants were selected

For the research, approximately 200-250 individuals are expected to participate. The participants must regularly use social media to be eligible. Participants belong to either of these age groups; 10-20, 21-30, 31-40, and 40 and above. For the interview, one participant is selected from each of the four age groups.

3.4 Research setting and environment

The research setting is online, and data is collected through Google Forms, where individuals are required to fill out the form. The form includes questionnaires regarding memes and culture. Few interviews are taken online through Google Meet and few are taken face-to-face. Due to the generational gap, older generations may be underrepresented while younger individuals overrepresented. Additionally, participants might give answers they think are socially acceptable instead of their true opinions. Participants might misinterpret which might affect data quality. Poor internet connection might lead to incomplete interviews.

3.5 Data collection procedure

The survey questionnaire includes 15 questions about memes as a form of communication and digital commentary that focuses on communication. Participants will be required to fill out their personal information, research will follow ethical guidelines regarding privacy and confidentiality. They will have five options; they will have to choose one as per their preference.

5	Strongly agree
4	Agree
3	Neutral
2	Disagree
1	Strongly disagree

4 participants from 4 different age groups i.e teens, 20s, 30s, and 40s have been selected. They will be interviewed with 5 questions about memes, each interview will take 10-15 minutes. This interview will be used as qualitative data. Additionally, the meme content will be analyzed, as part of the qualitative data.

3.6 Data analysis procedure

The 15 questions from Google Forms will be analyzed by calculating the percentage and displayed in a pie chart. The responses acquired will be analyzed thoroughly considering the

literature review. The interviews and meme content will also be analyzed thoroughly, considering the literature review. The data collected will be analyzed and compared within themselves.

3.7 Survey Questions:

1. Do you agree that memes serve as a digital form of communication?
2. Do you communicate with your friends/family through memes?
3. Do you mostly use Facebook and Instagram to share memes?
4. Do you share memes with your friends/family daily?
5. Do you believe that you learn about different cultures through memes?
6. Are memes a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers?
7. Do you think communication through memes is better than traditional forms of communication?
8. Do you think memes spread misinformation?
9. Can memes perpetuate stereotypes or harmful narratives?
10. Do you agree some cultural meme content is offensive?
11. Can memes be considered a legitimate form of cultural commentary?
12. Do you agree memes reflect societal values, norms, and issues, and influence individuals' opinions?
13. Do you think memes often oversimplify complex social or cultural issues?
14. Do you believe the humor in memes is sometimes used to make serious underlying messages?
15. Should memes be studied in an academic context to understand modern communication trends?

Chapter 4

Findings: Insights from Google Form Survey

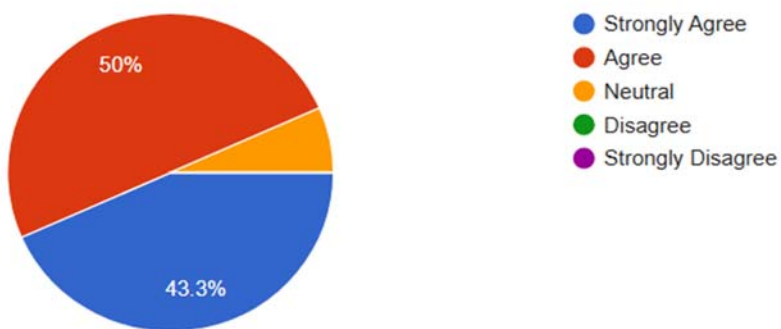
200 people participated in the survey, and listed below is the approximate percentage and the age group they belong to.

Age:	No. of People	Percentage
10-15	4	1.7
16-20	10	5

21-25	116	58.3
26-30	57	28.3
30 and above	13	6.7

1. Do you agree that memes serve as a digital form of communication?

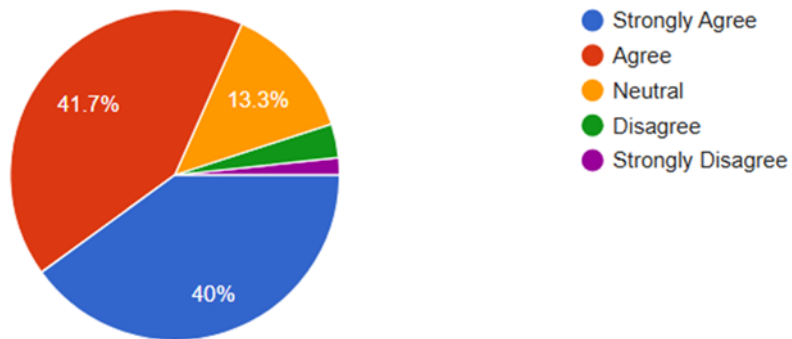
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	87	43.5
Agree	100	50
Neutral	13	6.5
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0



50% of the participants agree that memes are a form of digital communication, while 43% strongly agree and 6.5% remain neutral about it.

2. Do you communicate with your friends/family through memes?

Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	80	40
Agree	83	41.7
Neutral	26	13.3
Disagree	7	3.3
Strongly Disagree	4	1.7

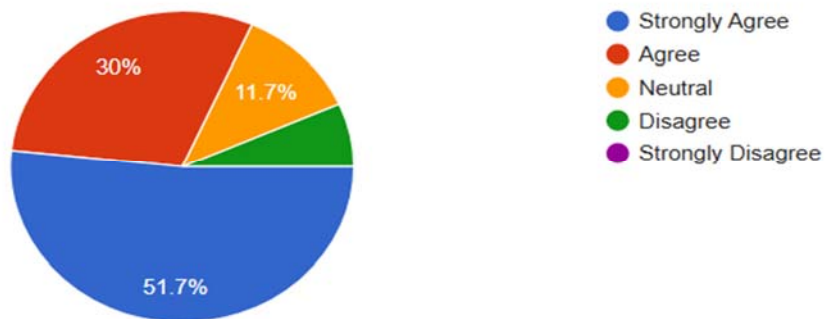


41% of the participants agree that they communicate with their friends or family through memes, while 1.7% strongly disagree and 13.3% remain neutral about it.

Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage

3. Do you mostly use Facebook and Instagram to share memes?

Strongly Agree	103	51.7
Agree	60	30
Neutral	23	11.7
Disagree	14	6.7
Strongly Disagree	0	0

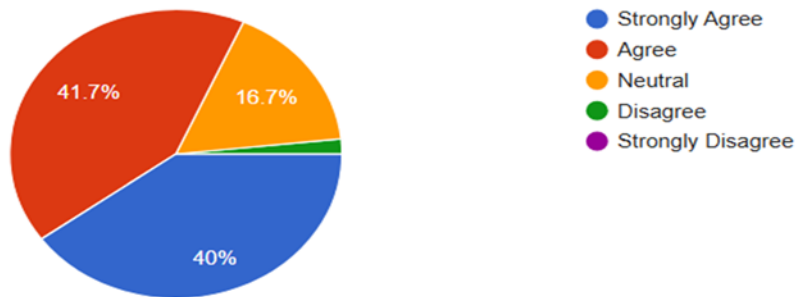


51.7% of the participants strongly agree that they use Facebook and Instagram to share memes while 6.7% disagree on it.

4. Do you share memes with your friends/family daily?

Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	80	40
Agree	83	41.7
Neutral	33	16.7

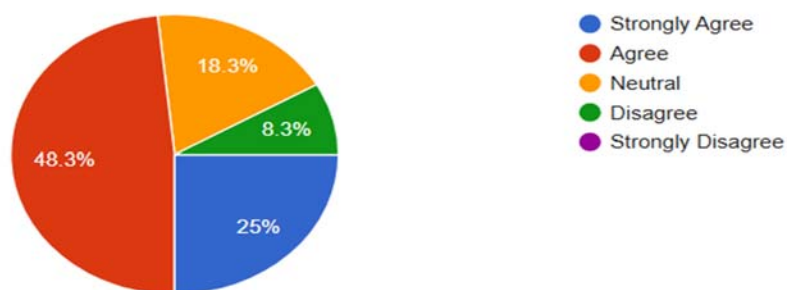
Disagree	4	1.7
Strongly Disagree	0	0



41.7% of the participants strongly agree that they share memes with their friends/family daily while 1.7% disagree with it.

5. Do you believe that you learn about different cultures through memes?

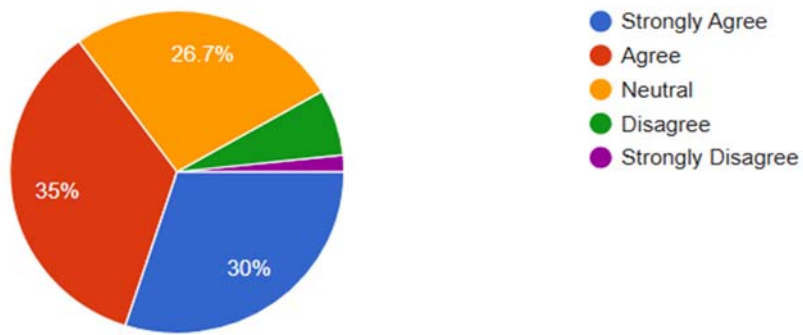
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	50	25
Agree	97	48.3
Neutral	37	18.3
Disagree	16	8.3
Strongly Disagree	0	0



48.3% of the participants agree that they learn about different cultures through memes while 8.3% disagree and 18.3% remain neutral about it.

6. Are memes a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers?

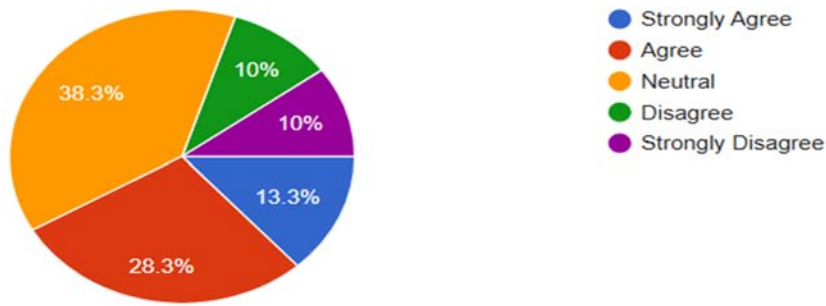
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	30
Agree	70	35
Neutral	53	26.7
Disagree	13	6.7
Strongly Disagree	4	1.7



35% of the participants agree that memes are a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers while 6.7% disagree on it.

7. Do you think communication through memes is better than traditional forms of communication?

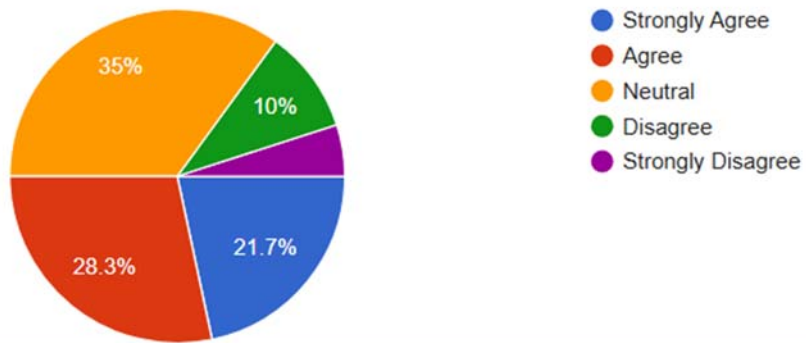
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	13.3
Agree	56	28.3
Neutral	77	38.3
Disagree	20	10
Strongly Disagree	20	10



35% of the participants agree that memes are a universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers while 6.7% disagree and 38.3% remain neutral about it.

8. Do you think memes spread misinformation?

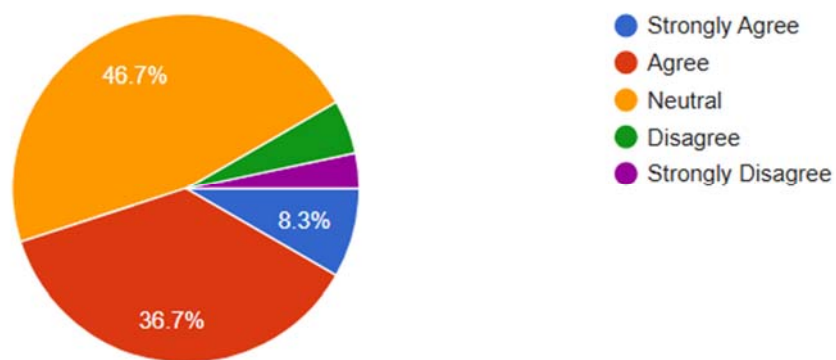
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	43	21.7
Agree	57	28.3
Neutral	70	35
Disagree	20	10
Strongly Disagree	10	5



28.3% of the participants agree that memes spread misinformation while 35% are neutral about it.

9. Can memes perpetuate stereotypes or harmful narratives?

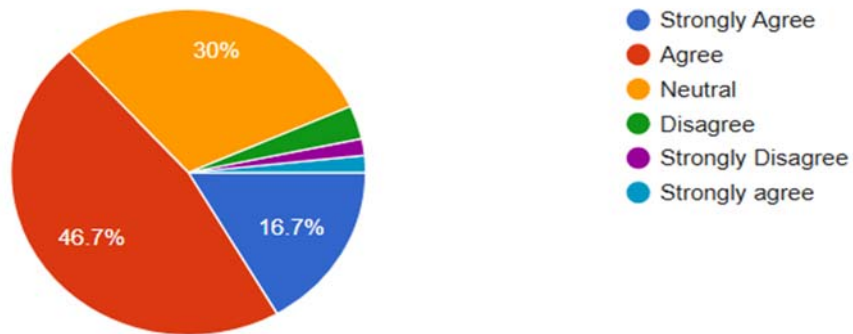
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	16	8.3
Agree	73	36.7
Neutral	94	46.7
Disagree	10	5
Strongly Disagree	7	3.3



36.7% of the participants agree that memes can perpetuate stereotypes or harmful narratives while 46.7% remain neutral about it.

10. Do you agree some cultural meme content is offensive?

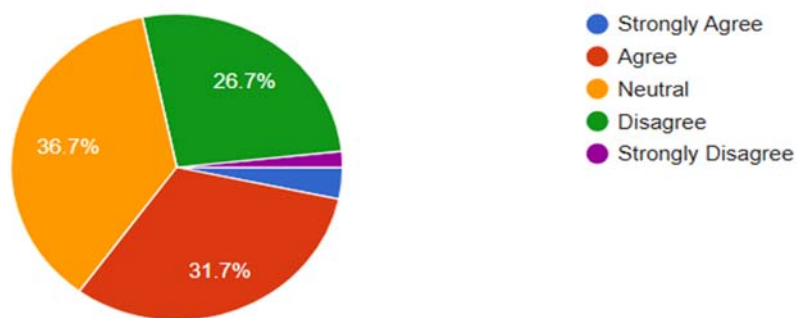
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	36	16.7
Agree	94	46.7
Neutral	60	30
Disagree	7	3.3
Strongly Disagree	3	1.7



46.7% of the participants agree that some cultural memes are offensive while 16.7% strongly agree on it and 30% remain neutral about it.

11. Can memes be considered a legitimate form of cultural commentary?

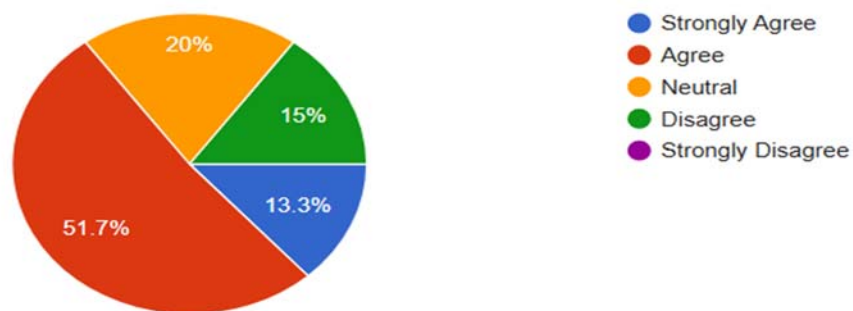
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	6	3.3
Agree	63	31.7
Neutral	74	36.7
Disagree	54	26.7
Strongly Disagree	3	1.7



31.7% of the participants agree that memes can be considered a legitimate form of cultural commentary while 26.7% disagree on it and 36.7% remain neutral about it.

12. Do you agree memes reflect societal values, norms, and issues, and influence individuals' opinions?

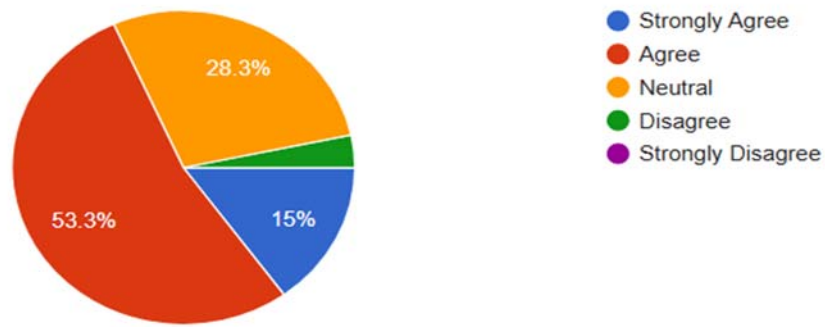
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	26	13.3
Agree	104	51.7
Neutral	40	20
Disagree	30	15
Strongly Disagree	0	0



51.7% of the participants agree that memes reflect societal values, norms, and issues and influence individuals' opinions, while 15% disagree and 20% remain neutral about it.

13. Do you think memes often oversimplify complex social or cultural issues?

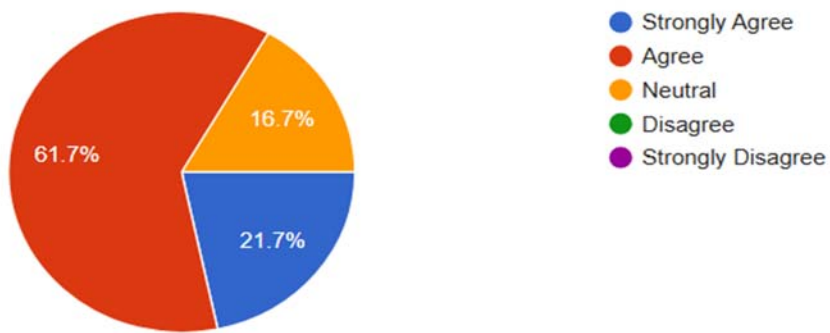
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	30	15
Agree	107	53.3
Neutral	56	28.3
Disagree	7	3.3
Strongly Disagree	0	0



53.3% of the participants agree that memes often oversimplify complex social or cultural issues while 28.3% remain neutral about it.

14. Do you believe the humor in memes is sometimes used to make serious underlying messages?

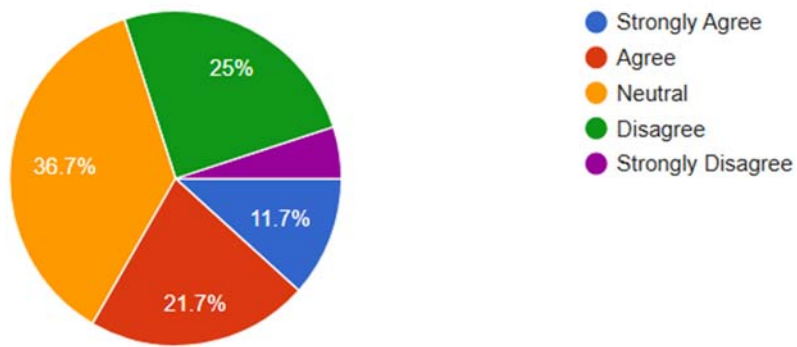
Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	43	21.7
Agree	124	61.7
Neutral	33	16.7
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0



61.7% of the participants agree that the humor in memes is sometimes used to make serious underlying messages while 21.7% strongly agree and 16.7% remain neutral about it.

15. Should memes be studied in an academic context to understand modern communication trends?

Answer Types	No. of Participants	Percentage
Strongly Agree	23	11.7
Agree	44	21.7
Neutral	73	36.7
Disagree	50	25
Strongly Disagree	10	5



21.7% of the participants agree that it should be studied in an academic context to understand modern communication while 36.7% of the participants are neutral about it.

Chapter 5

Survey Analysis

Out of 200 participants, 187 either strongly agree or agree that memes are a digital form of communication. 0% disagreement suggests that memes play a communicative role and are widely accepted as a legitimate communication tool. Shifman (2013) suggests that memes are a form of participatory digital culture, individuals come together and form an online community despite the geographical barrier. 163 participants either strongly agree or agree that they communicate with their friends/family through memes. For everyday interaction, this suggests that memes are commonly used as a medium of communication replacing traditional forms of communication. 26 participants remain neutral on it, indicating that they may not rely on memes as a primary form of communication. While 93.5% agree that memes serve as a form of digital communication, 81.7% use memes to communicate with their friends/family. It indicates that though memes are accepted as digital forms of communication, some individuals do not use them for personal interaction.

77 participants are unsure whether communication through memes is better than traditional forms of communication, and 83 participants either strongly agree or agree that communication through memes is a better form of communication. It suggests that people prefer to communicate through memes but do not agree that it is replacing traditional forms of communication. Memes are for entertainment with humor, so individuals might not prefer to have serious and professional communication through memes.

163 participants either strongly agree or agree that they mostly use Facebook and Instagram to share memes, and 14 participants disagree, meaning they prefer some other online platform to share memes. with 81.7% agreement, it can be considered that these platforms are the dominant spaces for meme culture, due to their easy sharing features and large number of users. Through Facebook pages and groups, memes can easily be shared to niche communities. Instagram contributes to the rapid virality of memes. Additionally, young users may prefer to share memes on Instagram, while older people use Facebook. 93.7% agree that memes serve as a digital form of communication and 81.7% use Facebook and Instagram to share memes, which indicates that these platforms play a huge role in digital communication.

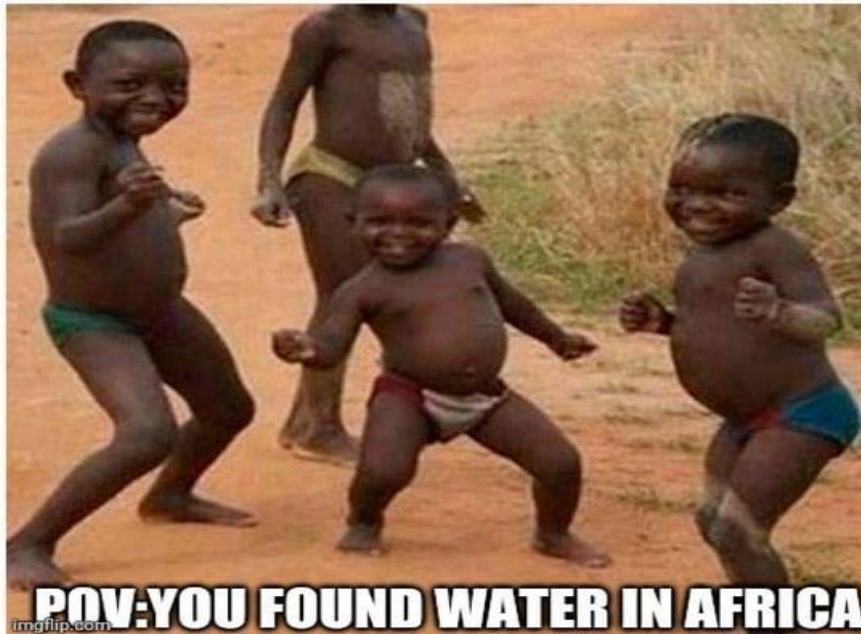
163 participants agree or strongly agree that they share memes with their family and friends daily and 33 participants are neutral, which implies that they share memes once in a while but do not daily. 0% disagreement indicates that there is almost universal sharing of memes at some point and that, for most of the respondents, meme sharing is a repetitive task. Also meaning that memes have entered the online vernacular. It suggests that memes get passed around as a visual and relatable way of conveying feelings, staying on trend and word of mouth possibly, and fostering connections with humor.

147 participants either agree or strongly agree that they learn about different cultures through memes, while 37 participants are neutral about it, and 16 disagree, suggesting that memes are seen as a medium for cultural exchange, while some do not consider memes as a source of learning. Despite the geographical barriers, memes introduce individuals to different cultural

practices, social norms, and traditions from different religions. Though memes introduce new cultures, they might misrepresent cultural realities.

Figure 01

Misrepresentation of African culture.



The meme represents the happiness of finding water in Africa. It is not true that Africa does not have water or food supplies. The meme is misrepresenting the cultures of Africa. 65% agree or strongly agree that memes are the universal language that transcends cultural and linguistic barriers, and 68.3% believe that memes oversimplify complex social or cultural issues whereas only 36.7% believe that memes should be studied in an academic context to understand modern communication trends. Though memes talk about different cultures, they might spread misinformation and stereotypes. Additionally, memes are seen as cultural tools; it is yet to be considered as a subject of study.

50% of the participants agree that memes spread misinformation, while memes simplify complex issues through humor and get viral quickly, but there are potential risks of meme culture in distorting facts. Additionally, 46.7% agree that memes can perpetuate stereotypes or harmful narratives. Memes are formed based on humor, so there is a chance of exaggeration reinforcing stereotypes. It also shapes public perceptions and opinions; some memes might offend certain communities, and some might be ambiguous, whereby individuals might find it difficult to identify as harmful or harmless. 63.3% of the participants strongly agree or agree that some cultural meme content is offensive.

Only 35% of the participants agree that memes are a legitimate form of cultural commentary, while 28.4% disagree with it. As memes are often humorous, they cannot be considered a legitimate form of cultural commentary. Though memes cannot be considered a legitimate form of cultural commentary, 63% agree that memes reflect societal values and influence individuals' opinions. It suggests that memes are more than just entertainment; they also shape public opinions. Moreover, 83.4% of the participants agree that humor in memes is sometimes used to make serious underlying messages. For instance, figure 02 says stealing is unacceptable and whoever steals will go to hell in a humorous tone.

Figure 02

Stolen AC



My mosque posted a sign after jumma prayer saying, "To the brother who stole our AC, you can keep it. It's hot where you're going". LOOOOL 🤔😂

01/08/2014 09:01 PM

VIA 9GAG.COM

Chapter 6

Meme Analysis

Tosha thinks memes are like inside jokes on the internet, they spread fast and also help people join the trend or talk about serious issues in funny ways (T. Bhandari, Personal communication, November 15, 2024). Nafiur says memes simplify complex topics into a humorous format, effectively spreading social commentary or even political messages (N. Rahman, Personal communication, November 16, 2024). In particular cultural moments, memes reflect social norms by spreading relevant or relatable information. Yogita believes humor is a big part of memes as it often uses irony, satire, or exaggeration to address anything from daily life to serious global issues (Y. Tiwari, Personal communication, November 17, 2024). Through memes, individuals communicate emotions, ideas, and opinions effectively and quickly, often cutting off the language barriers. Meme culture is the phenomenon in which internet users quickly create and share humorous or satirical images, videos, text, and more on the internet. By providing entertainment, self-expression, and reflection on current events, memes are essential in digital culture and online communication (Shi, 2023). Chura Mani thinks memes are not just funny pictures or jokes, they are a reflection of ongoing situations in society (CM, Tiwari, Personal communication, November 18, 2024). It serves as a tool for connection, creating a shared experience across different groups.

Figure 03

Eid Celebration: Elegance vs Exhaustion



Humorous contrast of experiences of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha, using the iconic depictions of Tom, the cat.

A refined, tuxedo-wearing Tom represents boys on Eid-ul-Fitr and the tired, ragged, and exhausted Tom represents boys on Eid-ul-Azha. Eid-ul-Fitr comes after Ramadan which is traditionally associated with new clothes, feasts, and celebrations. Men wear new clothes on Eid-ul-Fitr. Whereas, Eid-ul-Azha involves the sacrificial slaughter of animals and distribution of meat which requires manual work.

The exhausted Tom humorously reveals men on Eid-ul-Fitr since it requires extra physical labor and messiness as it involves the sacrificial slaughter of animals and distribution of meat so men dress up accordingly.

Yogita, who comes from a different cultural background said “Through this meme, I assume that Eid-al-Fitr is an occasion where boys dress up and celebrate it with their families and friends whereas on Eid-al-Azha boys are exhausted doing work or helping in the house and they are tired” (Y, Tiwari, Personal communication, November 17, 2024).

The meme humorously highlights the distinct cultural practices and the emotional tones of two different festivals where one is an elegant, joyous occasion and the other is more of a labor-intensive, practical work. Tom is a widely recognized cartoon character and is used as meme material in the cultural context of Eid leading to the connection of global pop culture. The blending of local and global references increases its humor and relatability. Using humor to amplify the shared experience of the complexities of two culturally significant events into exaggerated and simplified images, the meme creates a hyperreal scenario. The exhausted and ragged portrayal of boys on Eid-al-Adha is a hyperreal scenario since it might not be true that at the end of the day, they are exhausted since some boys take pleasure in the festival and are willing to do the manual work.

Tosha, Nafiur, Yogita, and Chura Mani think TikTok and Instagram are the lifeblood of meme culture. Though each platform impacts the audience differently, TikTok keeps up with trending audio and video templates with creativity. They impact audiences by shaping how individuals interpret memes, and social events, and consume information.

Figure 04

A Festive Hairdo: Ram Horns



Ram associated with the festival: meme reimages the sacred symbol of Eid-al-Azha humorously.

Tosha, who comes from a different cultural background said: "I do not get any cultural information from this meme. To me, this looks like a weird hairstyle, more like a goat" (T, Bhandari, Personal communication, November 15, 2024). 8.3% of the participants disagreed that they learn about different cultures through memes.

In the meme, Eid al-Adha is symbolically represented through the hairstyle resembling the horn of a ram in the context of the festival associated with the sacrifice of a ram or similar livestock. Eid al-Adha honors the willingness of Prophet Ibrahim to sacrifice his son, who was replaced by a lamb instead of divine intervention. Blending modern fashion and traditional values, the hairstyle

of ram horns is a creative and humorous nod to the cultural practice. The barber's response shows how cultural references can be exaggerated by taking the response literally. Postmodernism challenges the distinction between 'serious' cultural practices and popular culture. As demonstrated by the meme, traditional and modern elements coexist in today's digital culture that combines mixed sacred festival and humor. The ridiculous hairstyle blurs the line between reality and parody. The representation of the hairstyle creates a hyperreal scenario as cultural readiness is exaggerated to extreme comedy since such hairstyles are not common as they combine something scary and serious with humor. It is unlikely for somebody to get the exact hairstyle but it creates humor due to its exaggeration of festive pride but the audience can relate to it and have an emotional connection due to the festive reference.

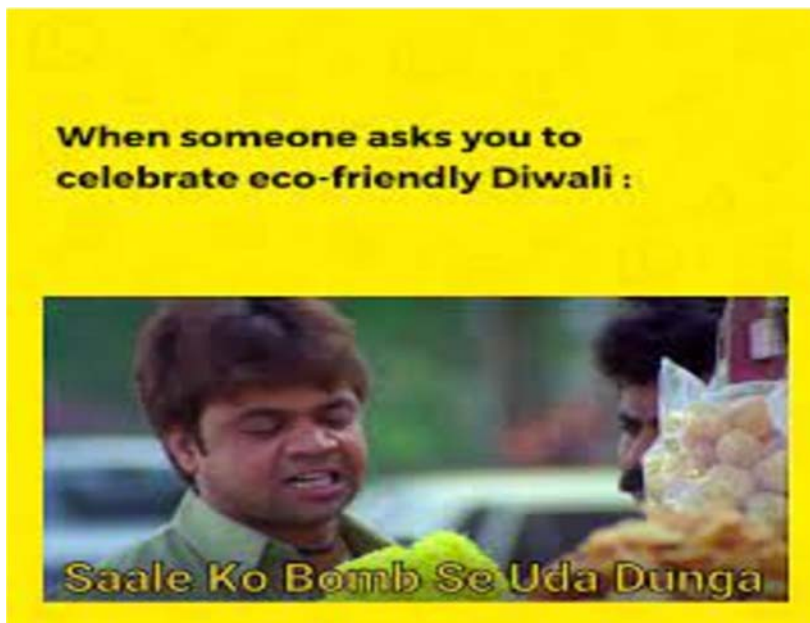
Tosha says memes are like digital emojis with deeper meaning, it is easier to share than writing long letters or emails as memes are short and funny (T, Bhandari, Personal communication, November 15, 2024). Nafiur, Yogita, and Chura Mani think communicating through memes means relying on shared cultural knowledge that requires the audience to understand references to fully grasp the humor of the meme, unlike traditional communication like books or speech memes are digital. Memes are fast and shaped by everyday users whereas traditional media is slow and more formal. Traditional media takes time to produce but memes are quick and humorous and go viral within a few hours.

Furthermore, to stop the spread of misinformation, Tosha suggests adding a warning on the meme like "this might not be true" so that it helps people decide whether to believe it or not

(T, Bhandari, Personal communication, November 15, 2024). Nafiur suggests providing clear guidelines for reporting harmful content and AI could flag and limit the reach of false or offensive content (N, Rahman Personal communication, November 16, 2024). Yogita and Chura Mani suggest educating users about media literacy, especially in recognizing satire or bias. The spread of fake news on social media can have severe negative impacts on individuals and societies. For example, in the context of COVID-19, fake news about ingesting fish tank cleaning products, alcohol, or injecting bleach to treat the virus can pose a serious threat to people's lives. The harmful impacts of fake news have been shown in other various contexts such as politics (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017).

Figure 05

NO Eco-Friendly Diwali



With the growing call for environmental concerns, the meme humorously captures the tension between traditional Diwali celebrations and eco-friendly Diwali celebrations.

Nafiur, who belongs to a different cultural background said “Diwali is a festival of lights, and to celebrate it we light firecrackers but there are concerns about the environment as well, since the fireworks affect the environment. Through the meme, it can be assumed that not everyone is willing to celebrate eco-friendly Diwali” (N, Rahman, Personal communication, November 16, 2024).

The text on the meme “When someone asks you to celebrate eco-friendly Diwali,” signifies responsible practice during the festival and adopting environmental responsibility. The man in the meme is Rajpal Yadav, a Bollywood comedian. The text translates to “I will blow him up with a firecracker,” and this humorously exaggerates the annoyance with the idea of giving up traditional firecrackers. Diwali is a festival of lights, sweets, and firecrackers, however, due to environmental awareness people have been asked to refrain from polluting the environment as firecrackers are harmful to the environment. Reflecting the cultural friction and modern values, the meme humorously captures the resistance to change in long-standing traditions. The meme contrasts the serious suggestion of an ‘eco-friendly’ Diwali with an exaggerated response through a well-known comedic character. The humor lies in the character’s over-the-top response and the implied moral responsibility. With irony, the meme represents how some individuals think celebrating an eco-friendly festival is annoying. The over-the-top reaction to eco-friendly celebrations reflects the hyperreal tendencies of memes. The meme adds up a comedic effect as not everyone would react

the same way. Since some people are concerned about the environment they do celebrate eco-friendly Diwali. The phrase “I will blow him up with a firecracker,” could even literally mean using the real bomb and not one of the firecrackers. The overreaction is unlikely in real life as people may not react like that. The exaggeration, humor, and irony depict the tension between environmental concerns and traditional Diwali practices creating a hyperreal scenario.

Tosha says memes show what is funny or the trending news at the moment and make people think differently by showing a serious issue humorously (T, Bhandari, Personal communication, November 15, 2024). Nafiur says memes highlight trends, injustice, or cultural traditions exaggeratedly or humorously and spark discussion on critical issues. On the other hand, memes can also spread misinformation, or toxic behavior shaping perceptions positively and negatively. Yogita and Chura Mani say memes act as a mirror to society as they reflect cultural trends, social struggles, and political debates. For instance, during major events like election memes are a tool for advocacy or critique. Satire expressed through memes serves as a way to change, eliminate, and create new discussions by criticizing culture, politics, economics, and other elements of society (Dias, 2023).

Figure 06

Secret Santa: Moms



The meme portrays the role of mothers during Christmas. The collapsed Santa represents a mother who is exhausted from managing Christmas preparations.

The meme's literal meaning is that it shows a person in Santa's costume collapsed on the floor with gifts all around. The text discusses the mother's exhaustion from managing and handling the intensive Christmas preparations. The meme's cultural or emotional meaning is that it shows societal norms of traditional family roles, particularly during holidays when mothers are often responsible for emotional and physical labor. Santa represents the symbol of giving and celebration but ironically shows tiredness, highlighting the pressure one goes through while managing the festival. The 'Myth' of Christmas as a simple event is deconstructed by the meme. It draws attention to the hidden labor usually done by mothers required to maintain that illusion. Contrasting humor with this critique, the meme reinforces common cultural experiences while subtly exposing cultural norms of gendered labor. 51.7% of the participants agree that memes reflect societal values, norms, and issues, and influence individuals' opinions. This meme can be considered as

an example. Since, the meme, with the use of sarcasm challenges traditional family dynamics and social norms. The exaggerated depiction of Santa, the symbol of Christmas magic being overwhelmed, parallels mothers' real-life experiences, which is where the humor lies. The meme reflects the conflicted identities of modern parents, particularly mothers, who celebrate the traditions and fulfill the roles imposed on them. The humor can be taken in two ways: it acknowledges common frustration and critiques traditional roles. The image creates a hyperreal scenario that exaggerates reality for a humorous effect by blurring the distinction between the symbolic weight of cultural expectations and literal tiredness. As the physical and emotional labor of the mother is unseen. The over-dramatic image of an exhausted Santa on the floor exaggerates the reality creating a hyperreal scenario.

Figure 07

What Goes Around Comes Around



This meme portrays how Karma works. It says you get what you give. Especially during Diwali families often give Soan Papdi as a gift and in return, some other family will get them the same gift.

Chura Moni said “Soan Papdi is a sweet that is rarely eaten but it is re-gifted endlessly during festive seasons. It is described as Karma since it means what goes around comes around. I will give somebody Soan Papdi and somebody else will get me Soan Papdi, especially during Diwali” (CM, Tiwari, Personal communication, November 18, 2024).

Soan Papdi is a popular Indian sweet. In Indian households, this sweet is infamous for being endlessly re-gifted during festivals like Diwali. “Soan Papdi is like Karma. You get what you give,” basically means “you reap what you sow.” Closing the loop of action and consequences, karma returns what one gives. In context with the shared cultural knowledge, the reputation of Soan Papdi is something nobody eats but keeps circulating as a gift. It might not be humorous without cultural familiarity, but it capitalizes on a well-known Indian festival experience, so it is funny. The second image of the meme includes an image of people throwing and receiving waste representing the cyclic nature of karma. ‘The cycle of giving’ is humorously illustrated by the juxtaposition of this visual image with Soan Papdi. In a postmodern society, this meme is self-aware and plays on the absurdity of gifting culture. Using irony to critique consumer habits and cultural rituals, it discusses the lack of meaningful gifts during festivals. Fragmented narratives are often embraced in postmodernism. The meme has a combination of traditional sweet and philosophical concepts in a single humorous statement, open to multiple interpretations. Some

might see it as social commentary, while others might laugh at the humor. Soan Papdi is compared with an abstract concept of karma, creating a hyperreal concept, the exaggeration is typical postmodern humor. The meme stereotypes Soan Papdi as an unwanted gift and satirizes consumer habits and lack of meaningful gifts exchanged with each other. All audiences might not agree since it does not reflect every household's reality. Soan Papdi is a hyperreal symbol of an "unwanted gift." However, there might be someone who loves the sweet and appreciates it as a gift.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

In the digital era, memes have emerged as a transformative mode of communication. With a blend of humor, visual storytelling, and cultural commentary, memes serve as an impactful medium that transcends traditional boundaries. This study analyzes the role of memes in reflecting societal values, norms, and issues, it also explores memes as digital artifacts and cultural signifiers. The research demonstrates how memes operate as a “macro-code,” combining complex ideas into a simpler form that appeals to audiences across diverse cultural contexts through the lens of semiotic and postmodernism.

The findings underscore the double-edged sword of memes as a tool for community and also potential harm. While memes knit together a sense of connectivity and community through the addressing of cultural fads or social struggles, they also present the opportunity to introduce misstatements and expand stereotypes. Such duality highlights the need for digital literacy to meaningfully and safely navigate the shifting landscape of meme culture. Memes can take an entire body of work — a sitcom or comic book, for example — and twist it into an absurd piece of commentary, providing a highly subversive remix of a familiar narrative, which will be lost on some future reader who encounters only the viral post. While memes can be enlightening, they oversimplify complex topics which may lead to misinterpretation or cultural insensitivity.

The research concludes that memes are dynamic, interactive digital objects that are transforming the norms of communication and cultural expression. Since they are everywhere on

platforms like Facebook and Instagram, they influence public opinion and create global conversations. More research is needed to extend meme culture's positive contributions to digital society to issues of content moderation and cultural appropriation. Memes are here for the long haul and will continue to shift and change as we adapt to a connected world of online subcultures. Memes act as a mirror as well as a mediator of prevalent social narratives. Developing a nuanced understanding of culture and communicative roles allows segments to better appreciate the power of memes to serve as potent mechanisms for both entertainment and meaningful exchange.

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Social media memes: A study of its impact on intercultural communications | *International*

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