Pivot to coronavirus: How meme factories are crafting public health messaging
28 July 2020, by Crystal Abidin

通过这种模式，他们可以对社交媒体产生巨大的影响。而且——使用互联网视觉流行文化的语言——Meme工厂可以改变公众意见。

当Meme工厂诞生

Meme工厂的第一个提及似乎是2010年Christopher Poole在TED演讲中提到的。4chan，Poole说，是“完全原始，完全未过滤的”。他向他的听众介绍了论坛中涌现出的“Meme”现象，包括LOLCats和Rickrolling——2000年代最大的Meme。

今天，公司Meme工厂系统地输出数以千万计的追随者的帖子。他们委托艺术家“实时GIF”2012年美国总统候选人辩论，以配合美国政治内容。他们在封闭的Facebook小组中聚集，决定谁能“承担责任”为学校枪击事件。他们为Michael Bloomberg的总统竞选创建了政治赞助帖子。

在Reddit的游戏社区中，启动一个Meme工厂（诚心诚意或开玩笑）要求成员用协调的（有时是不真实的）行动“淹没”社交媒体线程。

与此同时，在Twitter的K-pop粉丝中，K-pop偶像由于做出尴尬或搞笑的表情而被称为Meme工厂，他们的面部被用作反应图像。

三种类型的工厂

在我研究中，我研究了Meme如何被创作者或账户生产者和主办者Memes。

他们可以采取一个单一创作者的形式，管理一个网络的账户和平台，或创作人员在业余小组中合作，或作为商业运作的团体。

这些工厂将使用战略计算，以“走红”，并寻求在某些情况下通过协调（有时是不真实的）行动来最大化赞助商的商业潜力。

Memes似乎就像是自然地分散开来，由志趣相投的社交媒体用户产生，并独立地产生了动力。但是成功的Memes通常不会偶然发生。

“LOLCats”是2000年代的Meme形式之一。Credit: Clancy Ratliff/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA

Meme工厂是协调网络的创作者或账户，他们生产并托管Meme。

他们可以以一个单一创作者的形式出现，管理一个网络的账户和平台，或创作者在非正式的爱好团体中协作，或作为商业运作的团体。

这些工厂将使用策略性计算来“走红”，有时寻求最大化赞助商的商业潜力。

Mealthy express

IM IN UR FOLDUR

KERUPTIN YR FYLEZ

'LOLCats' were one of the meme forms of the 2000s. Credit: Clancy Ratliff/Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA
weaponised to disseminate political and public service messages.

I have identified three types of factories:

Commercial meme factories are digital and news media companies whose core business is to incorporate advertising into original content.

For instance SGAG, owned by Singaporean parent company HEPMIL Media Group, has commissioned memes for various business partners, including promotions of radio stations, groceries and COVID-19 recovery initiatives.

Hobbyish niche meme factories, in contrast, are social media accounts curating content produced by a single person or small group of admins, based on specific vernaculars and esthetics to interest their target group.

One example is the illustration collective highnunchicken, which creates original comics that are a critical—and at times cynical—commentary about social life in Singapore.

STcomments, meanwhile, collates screengrabs of "ridiculous" comments from the Facebook page of The Straits Times, calling out inane humor, racism, xenophobia and classism, and providing space for Singaporeans to push back against these sentiments.

The third type of meme factory is meme generator and aggregator chat groups—networks of volunteer members who collate, brainstorm and seed meme contents across platforms.

One of these is Memes n Dreams, where members use a Telegram chat group to share interesting memes, post their original memes, and brainstorm over "meme challenges" that call upon the group to create content to promote a specific message.

Factories during coronavirus

Meme factories work quickly to respond to the world around them, so it is no surprise in 2020 they have pivoted to providing relief or promoting public health messages around COVID-19.

Some factories launched new initiatives to harness their large follower base to promote and sustain small local businesses; others took to intentionally politicizing their memes to challenge censorship laws in Singapore and Malaysia.

Factories turned memes into public service announcements to educate viewers on topics including hand hygiene and navigating misinformation.

They also focused on providing viewers with entertainment to lighten the mood during self-isolation.

Memes are highly contextual, and often require insider knowledge to decode.

Many memes that have gone viral during COVID-19 started out as satire and were shared by Millennials on Instagram or Facebook. As they spread, they evolved into misinformed folklore and misinformation, shared on WhatsApp by older generations who didn't understand their satirical roots.

An early Facebook meme about how rubbing chili fruits over your hands prevent COVID-19 (because the sting from the spice would burn and you would...
stop touching your face) very quickly evolved into a WhatsApp hoax saying the heat from chili powder would kill COVID-19 viruses.

Memes can be orchestrated by savvy meme factories who operate behind the scenes; or by ordinary people engaging in democratic citizen feedback. Beyond the joy, laughs (and misinformation), memes are a crucial medium of public communication and persuasion.

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