

Political memes during Election: An Awareness or Fun

Dr. P.Chitra, Asst Professor, School of Journalism and New Media Studies,
Tamil Nadu Open University, Saidapet, Chennai.

Abstract

The assembly election campaign is scheduled from March 2021 in Tamil Nadu. It becomes the trend in the Internet to spread messages on election campaign. Memes play a major role in spreading messages especially on election and the party contesting either as awareness or funny messages. The term netizens refer to the people who uses internet as medium to propagate message to the complete extent. It becomes normal activity to spread message very fast by these netizens. Any serious issues happening in a day will be made viral on the internet with these netizens. The role of memes has become very vast and people tend to get attracted to these memes especially during election.

This research study will tend to analyze about political memes whether they are for created awareness or fun

Keywords: Memes, Election, Social media

1. Introduction

Meme is an idea, style, emotions, comedy, news, political satire, culture, or viral sensations that are spread via internet to entertain the audiences with giving an awareness to the society through social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Memes that take place through social media are commonly known as Internet meme especially used for humorous purpose. There are two types of Memes, Photo memes and Video Memes. These Memes can spread from one person to others via social media, blogs, WhatsApp. Memes consists of pictures, videos, GIFs and essential contents with a concept or catchphrase. Memes also contains some ideas in logical sense with lot of jokes to form a story which is relevant to the current issues or current news. YouTube is a social media platform where most of the Video Memes are posted and in Instagram there are both short video memes and photo memes are posted. Recently in Twitter some photo memes are shared. Nowadays these short video memes are also shared in WhatsApp and used in WhatsApp status by most of the people. Recently an app was attached with WhatsApp which is known as WhatsApp stickers at which some GIFs images or pictures of some celebrity with their reaction attached with comedy content, which is used in WhatsApp to message with other person or in a group for reacting to the message from other person. So, nowadays the people who uses social media are knowingly or not knowingly involved in Internet memes.

2. Significance of the Study

The assembly election campaign from March 2021 in Tamil Nadu, a state from India witnessed large social media campaign for their vote bank. Hence the political parties used memes as a strong tool for communicating their message. All the political parties pointed out their opposition mistake in the form of memes and these messages were made available through various social media platforms. This study is to find out whether the memes that were prepared and used during election are just for awareness on the merits and demerits of political parties or to create Fun on the political parties contested in the election.

3. Review of Related Studies

Shifman (2014) discusses that the Internet memes are the sense which refers to the different ways that a picture is combined with text, rather than one specific combination of image and text. In today's media environment even if a person never views different forms of meme, the meme itself is created a foundation for understanding the implications of viewing internet memes with its companions in mind. Memes are conversational form of political participation that occurs online or concurrently with offline political movements or events. In democratic and nondemocratic regimes memes are new modes of political participation and agents for globalization.

Blackmore (1999), While considering the relationships between media using citizens and their political decision-making, memes are easily overlooked because they may not be a substantive content. Although the memes are units of culture passed on by imitation. It is defined by popular usage of user-generated digital content that incorporates humor and visuals and that is distributed to wide audience via informal networks.

Ross and Rivers (2017) describe memes are discourse as a form of political participation which influences as potentially persuasive media. Despite their frequent mix of pop culture and politics, memes are the effects on political outcomes haven't been analytically established. The creator of Internet memes frequently targets on lampoon, champion, political actors, recent issues with often using parody and humor.

Bennett, Freelon & Wells (2010) & Williams, (2012) examining that meme are created by the creators to influence and effects on those who view them. The use of social media and user-generated content can provide some enlightenment and entertainment to the viewers; however, memes are not social networks but it is a part of social media where people can generate and consume media by understanding changes of media environment created by memes.

Kjeldsen (2000), Helmers & Hill (2004), D'Angelo (2009) & Milner (2012) according to them in rhetoric demonstrate of visual communication, the visual texts are also used to convey or contain specific arguments. Because recently memes are highly visual and intertextual or multiple texts with events. However, visual communication is helpful for understanding how these qualities of memes work together to create or understand the memes to persuasive political communication or discourse. The visual political communication, such as political cartoons, memes contain visual arguments that viewers can perceive and influences other types of political participation. Where the discourses of memes combine pop culture with politics and are likely to be consumed as an entertainment. The

political entertainments efficacy and trust has established the variety of outcomes such as knowledge, perceptions, figures, beliefs, and attitudes regarding political issues and institutions.

Baumgartner, (2008) Esralew & Young, (2012) Hoffman & Young, (2011) Rill & Cardiel, (2013) Young & Hoffman, (2012) states that political satire with digital format can influence the perceptions and feelings toward political actors. The political entertainment is the serious business when it comes to effects on viewers. The viewers mental models on politics have been changed by viewing Political entertainment. The Mental models are the representations of people’s general ideas of an individual or any additional information. Recently memes are the media content which shapes people’s views of the world, because memes intersect pop culture and politics, which contributes to every individual. The Mental models about the political events, issues or figures are portrayed. Thus, memes may have effects on political opinions or behaviors via these mental models.

4.Objectives Of The Study

- To find out the level of awareness on memes related to politics
- To find out whether memes create awareness on political parties
- To find out whether there memes on election are for fun.

5.Hypotheses Of The Study

- There is no significant difference between awareness on political memes and its level of communication
- There is no significant difference between Age of people and awareness on political memes
- There is no significant difference among interesting messages from memes with awareness creation through memes

6.Population And Sample

This study takes place in quantitative method where 126 persons are given questionnaire and are data collected from different age group and different education standards of people.

6.1.Statistical Techniques Used in the Present Study

Datas are analysed through various statistical analysis tools and they are validated. Mean, Standard deviation, ‘t’ test and χ^2 were used to analyze the data.

6.2.Data Analysis and Interpretation

Case Processing Summary

Cases					
Valid		Missing		Total	
N	Per cent	N	Per cent	N	Percent

Age / Grade 1 to 5 [Memes are highly communicative]	126	100.0%	0	0.0%	126	100.0%
---	-----	--------	---	------	-----	--------

Age / Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative] Crosstabulation

		Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative]					Total
		1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	
Age 1.0	Count	4	0	1	1	1	7
	% within Age /	57.1%	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
	% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative /]	5.3%	0.0%	7.7%	14.3%	7.7%	5.6%
	% of Total	3.2%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	5.6%
2.0	Count	56	14	7	2	10	89
	% within Age /	62.9%	15.7%	7.9%	2.2%	11.2%	100.0%
	% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative]	73.7%	82.4%	53.8%	28.6%	76.9%	70.6%
	% of Total	44.4%	11.1%	5.6%	1.6%	7.9%	70.6%
3.0	Count	5	0	0	2	1	8
	% within Age /	62.5%	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	12.5%	100.0%
	% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative]	6.6%	0.0%	0.0%	28.6%	7.7%	6.3%
	% of Total	4.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.6%	0.8%	6.3%
4.0	Count	11	3	5	2	1	22
	% within Age /	50.0%	13.6%	22.7%	9.1%	4.5%	100.0%
	% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative]	14.5%	17.6%	38.5%	28.6%	7.7%	17.5%
	% of Total	8.7%	2.4%	4.0%	1.6%	0.8%	17.5%
Total	Count	76	17	13	7	13	126
	% within Age /	60.3%	13.5%	10.3%	5.6%	10.3%	100.0%

Political memes during Election: An Awareness or Fun

% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicative]	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
% of Total	60.3%	13.5%	10.3%	5.6%	10.3%	100.0%

This crosstabulation takes place within the variables of age group and memes are highly communicative.

People from age group of 15 to 20 mentions that 57.1% strongly agrees that meme are highly communicative whereas 14.3% of people strongly disagrees and disagrees and around 14.3% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes are highly communicative.

People from age group of 21 to 30 mentions that 62.9% strongly agrees and 15.7% of people agrees that meme are highly communicative whereas 11.2% of people strongly disagrees and 2.2% disagrees and around 14.3% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes are highly communicative.

People from age group of 31 to 40 mentions that 62.5% strongly agrees that memes are highly communicative whereas 25% disagrees and 12.5% of people strongly disagree that memes are highly communicative.

People from age group of 41 to 50 mentions that 50% strongly agrees and 13.6% of people agrees that memes are highly communicative whereas 9.1% disagrees and 4.5% strongly disagrees but 22.7% of people neither agrees nor disagree that memes are highly communicative.

As an overall result from all age group mentions that 60.3% strongly agrees and 13.5% of people agrees that memes are highly communicative whereas 5.6% disagrees and 10.3% of people strongly disagrees and hardly 10.3% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes are highly communicative.

Around 73.8% agrees that memes are highly communicative whereas 15.9% disagrees that memes are highly communicative but hardly 10.3% stands in neutral.

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age / * Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness]	126	100.0%	0	0.0%	126	100.0%

Age / Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness] Crosstabulation

	Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness]					Total
	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	

Age /	1.0	Count	4	0	1	1	1	7
		% within Age /	57.1%	0.0%	14.3%	14.3%	14.3%	100.0%
		% within Grade 1 to 5 /						
		[Memes related to politics create awareness]	5.9%	0.0%	5.3%	10.0%	12.5%	5.6%
		% of Total	3.2%	0.0%	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%	5.6%
	2.0	Count	51	14	13	6	5	89
		% within Age /	57.3%	15.7%	14.6%	6.7%	5.6%	100.0%
		% within Grade 1 to 5 /						
		[Memes related to politics create awareness]	75.0%	66.7%	68.4%	60.0%	62.5%	70.6%
		% of Total	40.5%	11.1%	10.3%	4.8%	4.0%	70.6%
	3.0	Count	3	3	1	0	1	8
		% within Age /	37.5%	37.5%	12.5%	0.0%	12.5%	100.0%
		% within Grade 1 to 5 /						
		[Memes related to politics create awareness]	4.4%	14.3%	5.3%	0.0%	12.5%	6.3%
		% of Total	2.4%	2.4%	0.8%	0.0%	0.8%	6.3%
	4.0	Count	10	4	4	3	1	22
		% within Age /	45.5%	18.2%	18.2%	13.6%	4.5%	100.0%

Political memes during Election: An Awareness or Fun

	% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness]	14.7%	19.0%	21.1%	30.0%	12.5%	17.5%
	% of Total	7.9%	3.2%	3.2%	2.4%	0.8%	17.5%
Total	Count	68	21	19	10	8	126
	% within Age /	54.0%	16.7%	15.1%	7.9%	6.3%	100.0%
	% within Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness]	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total	54.0%	16.7%	15.1%	7.9%	6.3%	100.0%

This crosstabulation takes place within the variables of age group and memes related to politics create awareness.

People from age group of 15 to 20 mentions that 57.1% strongly agrees that memes related to politics create awareness whereas 0.0% of people agrees but 14.3% disagrees and strongly disagrees and around 14.3% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes related to politics create awareness.

People from age group of 21 to 30 mentions that 57.3% strongly agrees and 15.7% of people agrees that memes related to politics create awareness but 6.7% disagrees and 5.6% strongly disagrees whereas 14.6% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes related to politics create awareness.

People from age group of 31 to 40 mentions that 37.5% of people agrees and strongly agrees that memes related to politics create awareness whereas 0.0% disagrees but 12.5% strongly disagrees and around 12.5% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes related to politics create awareness.

People from age group of 41 to 50 mentions that 45.5% strongly agrees and 18.2% of people agrees that memes related to politics create awareness whereas 13.6% disagrees and 4.5% strongly disagrees and around 18.2% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes are related to politics create awareness.

As an overall result from all age group mentions that 54% strongly agrees and 16.7% of people agrees that memes related to politics create awareness whereas 7.9% disagrees and 6.3% of people strongly disagrees that memes related to politics create awareness and hardly 15.1% of people neither agree nor disagree that memes are related to politics to create awareness.

Around 70.7% agrees that memes related to politics create awareness whereas 14.2% disagrees that memes related to politics create awareness but 15.1% stands in neutral.

Correlations

		Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are interesting]	Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness]
Grade 1 to 5 [Memes are interesting]	Pearson Correlation	1	.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	126	126
Grade 1 to 5 [Memes related to politics create awareness]	Pearson Correlation	.544**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	126	126

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation table, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient (r) equals 0.544 which is indicating a strong relationship with the coefficient that is significant at the level of 0.01.

It concludes that the memes are interesting to most of the people and there is an evidence that these interesting memes are strongly relates with the politics to create awareness to the viewers. Most of the memes are related with politics which represent (r=0.544, p<0.001).

		Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes are highly communicati ve]	Grade 1 to 5 / [Memes related to politics create awareness]
Grade 1 to 5 [Memes are highly communicative]	Pearson Correlation	1	.555**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	126	126
Grade 1 to 5 [Memes related to politics create awareness]	Pearson Correlation	.555**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	126	126

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the correlation table, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient (r) equals 0.555 which is indicating a strong relationship with the coefficient that is significant at the level of 0.01.

It concludes that the viewers state that memes are highly communicative and there is an evidence that these memes are strongly communicative which relates with the politics to create awareness to the viewers, where most of the memes are related with politics which represent ($r=0.555$, $p<0.001$).

7.Recommendations

- Memes are highly communicative and hence they can be used for propagating important messages through social media.
- Serious messages can be communicated to large group of people through memes.
- Memes are propagated quicker than any other messages to all the age groups without delay.
- Memes are utilised by the political parties widely for propagating their messages to public
- Highly packed information can be converted to memes and communicated in a simple way.

8.Conclusion

Addressing the potential of Internet memes, it influences most of the people using the social media. Nowadays meme conquers social media, the social media platform like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp are entertaining the people by video memes, photo memes, Gifs and even sticker memes. In this article most of the people who uses social media with different age group and different education standards has overcome with memes and mentions that memes are interesting and entertaining. Most of the people mentions that memes are highly communicative and agrees that memes create political awareness. In social media, during this election campaign most of the political parties' post memes against the opposition parties to create an awareness or to give negative impact to the people about other parties. These memes are communicative to the people and are spread to everyone by sharing or posting status at social media platform. Some memes troll the political celebrities or the political parties which aware the audience or the supporter of that celebrities. Whether the social media viewers watch the news or not but daily they get to view memes or troll in social media platform about the daily news or politics. This gives a mild knowledge on news with funny and interesting contents in it. So, memes are the change in social media which changes the audience mood with highly interesting, entertainment and communicative by giving an awareness or creating an awareness on audience mind about the particular information or news happens in their region or country.

References (APA)

- [1]. Baumgartner, (2008) Esralew & Young, (2012) Hoffman & Young, (2011) Rill & Cardiel, (2013) Young & Hoffman, (2012), The effects of digital political satire on presidential candidate evaluations, *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 38(4), 735-758. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5705.2008. 02675.x
- [2]. Bennett, Freelon & Wells (2010) & Williams, (2012) Digital media and youth engagement, January 2012, DOI:10.4135/9781446201015.n11

- [3]. Blackmore (1999), *The Meme Machine*, New Ed edition (16 Mar. 2000), Oxford University Press, ISBN: 978-0192862129
- [4]. Kjeldsen (2000), Helmers & Hill (2004), D'Angelo (2009) & Milner (2012) The affect and effect of internet memes: assessing perceptions and influence of online user-generated political discourse as media https://mountainscholar.org/bitstream/handle/10217/183936/Huntington_colostate_0053A_14303.pdf
- [5]. Ross and Rivers (2017), *Digital Cultures of Political Participation: Internet Memes and the Discursive Delgitimization of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Candidates*, January 2017, *Discourse, Context & Media* 16(1):1-11, DOI:10.1016/j.dcm.2017.01.001
- [6]. Shifman (2014) *Memes in Digital Culture*, edited by Limor Shifman. Cambridge, paper. ISBN 9780262525435
- [7]. Young, D. G., & Hoffman, L. (2012). Acquisition of current-events knowledge from political satire programming: An experimental approach. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, 20(5), 290-304. doi:10.1080/15456870.2012.728121