

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON THE EFFECTS OF INTERNET MEMES ON
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF NEWS

LEE SHAU YAN
17AAB00382

DR.IHEDIWA SAMUEL CHIBUNDU

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LEE SHAU YAN

APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled A Qualitative Study on The Effects of Internet Memes on University Students' Perception of News prepared and submitted by Lee Shau Yan in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Communication (Hons) Journalism Faculty of Arts And Social Science is hereby accepted.

Date:

Supervisor

Dr.Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu

Re: U/SERC/184/2020

18 November 2020

Cik Farah Nabila Binti Hamdan
Head, Department of Journalism
Faculty of Arts and Social Science
Universiti Tunku Abdul
Rahman Jalan Universiti,
Bandar Baru Barat
31900 Kampar, Perak.

Dear Cik Farah,

Ethical Approval For Research Project/Protocol

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2.	A Study to Understand the Relationship of Social Media and New Media Literacy Among UTAR Students	Cheong Zien Keith	Mr Teh Boon Teck	
3.	Impact of Internet Advertising on Student of University Tunku Abdul Rahman	Jason Wong Chai Jee	Dr Ihediwa Samuel Chibundu	
4.	A Qualitative Study on the Effects of Internet Memes on University Students' Perception of News	Lee Shau Yan		

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Kampar Campus : Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia

Tel: (605) 468 8888 **Fax:** (605) 466 1313

Sungai Long Campus : Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, Cheras, 43000 Kajang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Tel: (603) 9086 0288 **Fax:** (603) 9019 8868

Website: www.utar.edu.my





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Chairman

UTAR Scientific and Ethical Review Committee

c.c Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Science
 Director, Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research

Kampar Campus : Jalan Universiti, Bandar Barat, 31900 Kampar, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia

Tel: (605) 468 8888 **Fax:** (605) 466 1313

Sungai Long Campus : Jalan Sungai Long, Bandar Sungai Long, Cheras, 43000 Kajang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

Tel: (603) 9086 0288 **Fax:** (603) 9019 8868

Website: www.utar.edu.my



ABSTRACT


This study is conducted to examine the effects of internet memes on university students' perception of news in Malaysia. Internet memes are the rising stars among variety of internet contents, and these are particular important element of communication especially among the younger internet users in their 20's to 30's. Digital study is an important academic sector as the world is now moving forward with daily advancement of technology. Malaysia as a developing country need to pick up its pace to research about local digital culture. Two research questions were set, what are the effects of internet memes on university students' perception of news and are memes a reliable news source. The literature review discussed about the basic of internet memes, memes and news and media representation theory. The study conducted with qualitative interview of nine Malaysia's university students. Interviews were recorded for transcriptions and then analysed and coded with the aid of NVivo12. The result concluded the effects of internet memes as products of short attention span, making issues entertaining and influencing perception. Memes was also concluded as not reliable news source.

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

Name : LEE SHAU YAN

Student ID: 17AAB00382

Signed : 

Date : 20 December 2020

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1.0 Introduction

Memes are widely accepted and used among the younger internet users all around the globe on various platform. In Malaysia, the age groups that are most active on social media are those between 20's to 30's (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). These age range of internet users are Gen Z and Y who are more tech savvy than the older generation. Hence, they are the internet users who are most constantly exposed to memes in term of creating and spreading. There are even platforms that are created specifically for users to create and spread memes such as 9Gag, 4Chan, Reddit and etc. Humour as one of the most universal and satisfying emotion element has been the root of memes (Taecharunroj & Nueangjamnong, 2014). Davison (2012) defined memes as “an Internet meme is a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (p. 122). Memes do not only bring entertainment for internet users, it is also a form of tools to express public opinion but in a more sarcastic and playful manner. For instance, political memes such as clown-faced Najib was spread all over the internet as a protest to against the former prime minister corrupting act (Nandini, 2016). It started with a right activist artist that painted a clown-faced Najib and posted it on his Twitter account. Then people started to join in the virtual protest and recreate different version of the image that eventually turned it into an internet memes that is very relatable to Malaysians at that time. A number of studies in the past (Fitrie, Siti, Sri, & Wira, 2016; Dr. Anushka, 2017) have illustrated the deep connection between politic memes and its effect to the internet users. This may be due to the fact that internet is a wide virtual space which provides total freedom of speech and expression to its users. Internet users are able to create and spread any memes that are favourable to their political standpoint without having the fear of breaking any law.

In 2018, internet usage in Malaysia rose up to 87.4% compared to 76.9% in 2016. This phenomena can be said to be caused by the innovation of 4G, accessibility and convenience of

internet, and mobile internet. The percentage of Malaysian using smartphones to browse the internet is 93.1% making it the most used device to access the internet. Smartphones are now able to complete almost all of the tasks that laptop and computers are able to accomplish and they are more affordable and portable. The rise and use of social media is the perfect case of mobile internet progress. Facebook is the most popular social media among Malaysian followed by Intstagram and Youtube (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Social media platform are now serving as important communication channel for users to transmit, receive and create local and global information, anything ranging from business to news portal. People don't even have to walk out the house to buy newspaper or stay at home for news channel at 8pm to know what is going on around the world. All you need is a small digital screen on your palm, and you can have every inch of news at any time. Hence, innovation of culture and communication occurred along the process of encoding and decoding the messages (Bernaim, 2018). Internet memes as one of the most successful and continuously element of innovation of culture. The term 'meme' has been coined by Dawkins (1976) as a cultural element that can be transmitted and copied through the process of imitation from one person to another. Dawkins as a strong follower of Darwinism, had related that term 'meme' to 'gene', as the two replicate themselves and undergo variation, competition, selection, and retention. According to the generation of internet memes model by Bernaim (2018), raw material (such as original picture, image or video) that undergo creative thinking which then create modified material which can be a remix and imitation of several raw material. The modified material is then put on forth on the internet and users decide which memes they want and make it viral by sharing, reposting or even recreate their own version of the memes. Memes in short innovate a new communication transmission channel for culture. Although memes are perceived as humorous internet element but it is more than that. Shifman (2013) stated that internet memes is a crucial element in researching for internet and digital culture related study.

It involves a collective of element (visual, text, colour and etc) that helps to complete a meaningful and persuasive memes.

As this study is focus on internet memes on Facebook therefor the media representation theory is suitable to investigate the issue (Fitrie, Siti, Sri, & Wira, 2016). Internet memes is constantly evolving, changing and generating to keep up with the rapid change in culture. This theory can help to unfold the meanings of internet memes to its users (Burton, 2010). Media representation theory explained representation as a process of how different element of culture on media is being portrayed then how this meanings affect the members of society.

1.1 Problem Statement

Digital study is an important academic sector as the world is now moving forward with daily advancement of technology. Malaysia as a developing country is picking up its pace to research about local digital culture. Malaysia's scholars have conducted research on topic related to digital study such as 'The use of social media technologies among Malaysian youth' (Farrah, Melati, 2013); 'A Study on the Negative Effects of Social Networking Sites Such as Facebook among Asia Pacific University Scholars in Malaysia' (Aida, Behrang, Berooz, 2014) and 'Gen Y: Social Media Use And Outcomes Among Kuis Foundation Students' (Fardillah, Nor, Iza & Nor, 2014). However, there is lack of study on effects of memes on local internet users. This study need to be done as memes has obviously become an important social element especially on the internet in Malaysia. An obvious real life example is with the political chaos of resignation of the 7th Prime Minister. During the week, there were hundreds of memes that were shared as Malaysians' reaction to the situation. All studies referred to in the background of this study are mostly from western countries (Benaim, 2018; Duchscherer & Dovidio, 2016). Although there are some studies (Taecharunroj & Nueangjamnong, 2014; Fitrie, Siti, Sri &

Wira, 2016; Dr. Anushka, 2017) that are from other parts of Asia yet these studies had used local issue in their topic so the studies can't be related to Malaysian culture as much.

In addition, Shifman (2013) and Benaim (2018) had raised the issue of overlooking the importance of internet memes to the culture and public. Both scholars argued that internet memes are more than just 'funny' and 'stupid' images or contents circulating on the internet, they are important product of culture communication. Davison (2012) also stated that internet memes are spreading rapidly and constantly undergoing recreation and replacement which is why their life span is not long. The ever changing pace of the internet has made study of memes more complicated as there are constantly new memes being created while this sentence is being typed. This is why there is a need to research on the effects of memes, and to understand how it changes from time to time. Sharma (2018) urged researchers to understand how internet users react and understand memes, only then the effects of memes can be measured and study for further knowledge on memes.

In United States, Delhi, Lexington & São Paulo (2019) wrote that teenagers below 20 years old in this century are not concerned about politic if they are not presented as a memes. This idea was supported earlier by Alison Head, the founder and executive director of Project Information Literacy at the 2018 American Library Association (ALA) Annual Conference and Exhibition in New Orleans (Stieglitz, 2018). The study found that 89% of American high school and college students get their news from social media and unexpectedly memes on social media. Brockwell (2017) reported that LG spokesperson said it on LG press release that people nowadays do get their news and information from memes on social media. This new memes that they are just exposed to have alerted them about the newest information on the table. Hence, this study can help the understanding of a new culture, which is the culture of getting news information from memes on social media.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What are the effects of internet memes on university students' perception of news?

This study is determined to observe whether internet memes bring negative, positive or both effects to the permanent residents of internet. Bennett & Segerberg (2012) stated the sharing of political memes through social media can influence 'connective action networks' which in the end can produce effective movements (as cited in Graeff, 2012). Graeff (2012) then further discussed that this form of influence does not only appear under the sharing of political memes instead sharing of all different kind of memes can indeed influence the followers on social media. It is also a useful tool to disseminate minority's voice which then will allow the world to gain awareness and understanding on the minority culture. In Duchscherer & Dovidio (2016) research, they found that White participants will reject a racist memes when they saw the other person reject the memes. This shows the power of memes in influencing one's perception on the virtual world where people are less likely to oppose to an idea which is widely accepted.

2. Are memes a reliable news source?

According to Media Insight Project (2015, as cited in Drok, Hermans & Kats, 2017) the trend of young people in news consumption has been gravitating towards news that are able to provide social connection, problem solving, social action and entertainment. They are less likely to read or use professional news provider for such news therefore social media is the platform for them. This idea is further examined in the study where the participants showed strong relationship between social engagement and news interest. In short, young people nowadays consume news in order to be able to engage with other people through common understanding of news. Pryanhina & Vasilyeva (2019) stated that memes representing certain culture are 'very human and emotional base'. They also stated that memes are very useful for internet journalism because it is an ideal tool for identity representation. However, in

Hungtinton (2017) research, participants are consuming memes as a form of media but do not trust it, they did not take memes as a serious message vehicle.

1.3 Significance of Study

This study is significant because it will help to fill the existing gap in literature regarding effects of memes on Malaysian students' perception of news. Currently, there is lack of literature on this topic in terms of the Malaysian context. Sharma (2018) proposed that internet memes have been able to generate a brand new internet language because it is able to compress an issue into a small package of text and image that can be understood at first glance. This can be linked to the idea that memes may be spread on a micro level but it is influencing the society on a macro scale (Shifman, 2013; Bernaim, 2018; Duchscherer & Dovidio, 2016). This study is then able to contribute more knowledge on how this new internet language has been used and understand within the community in Malaysia context. Memes has been researched as a new media artefact by many scholars particularly internet memes (Cannizzaro, 2016; Ross & Rivers, 2019; Evnine, 2018). This is because memes are package of various compressed elements which is also a product of the current digital communication process. Through this study, the reliability of validity of memes as a news source can be examined. Memes is said to be an ever evolving digital culture and has been a huge trend on social media. It is often use to express certain message. Therefore by examining its reliability, the study can contribute to journalism industry in Malaysia on the usage of memes in news production.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Internet Memes

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the term ‘meme’ was coined by Dawkins (1976). It was a combination of a Greek word ‘Mimeme’ and ‘gene’. He argued that the society is in need of a term to describe all the cultural transmissions ranging from music to religion. Fast forward to the 21st century, the term ‘meme’ has been paired with internet as internet memes. According to Shifman (2013), internet memes refer to digital elements such as jokes, rumour, videos or websites that are shared and passed on from one person to another through internet. The following writings will just refer memes to internet memes.

Memes is special and unique because it has its own language (pop culture expressions, idols and pictures) that need to be learnt before one can start to understand certain memes (Felixmüller, 2017). Researchers had stated that new media has helped establish and modernize internet memes. Internet memes has become the popular kid on social media across all devices that are able to connect to the World Wide Web (WWW) (Cannizzaro, 2016; Shifman, 2013; Mazambani, Reysen, Carlson & Hempelmann, 2015). Online platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat allow their users to constantly recreate content (participatory culture). People now are able to see an enormous amount of different versions of memes on the internet every day at any time compared to the days before the existence of internet (Sharma, 2018). They agreed that internet memes is a mature culture element that is in need of study to explore its feature since banks and education have started using internet memes as one of their marketing tool. In addition, they proposed the need of researching memes as a system instead of a sole unit or entity (solely an image or a video or a phrase). It is a relational entity because it consists of a collection of element that cooperate with each other to create an acceptable internet memes. There are two important strategies that are used by internet users to make

memes relatable. Remixing, the process where a single media element (video or picture or text or audio) is created into a memes by adding information to make it meaningful. Mimicry, the process of copying others work for example copy a popular memes and change the text to make the memes acceptable by public.

The more significant and valuable a memes is, the easier it is for a memes to be selectively stamped in one's minds (Boudry, 2017). A study showed that memes that are consistent with in-group norms are more likely to be spread because the in-group members are familiar with the memes information (Mazambani et al., 2015). Ondraskova (2016) stated that memes is ever-changing because it is the reaction of society to a certain event. Moreover, memes that provide background information such as misuse of term in Obamacare memes used in the study has allowed the member to understand an issue better and hence avoid conflict between each other on that particular issue. In addition, memes that consist of commonly known stereotypes are easier to be recognised and spread by people. Ford (2019) discussed the same concept as the above study, which memes survival is depending on its relatability to the sociocultural environment. He thinks that when one language is growing larger and toward dominance it can be repressive to members of out-group. It creates communication gap between generations and in-group (understand memes) and out-group (do not understand meme).

Internet memes has another unique feature where it has to go viral on the internet only then it is a certified memes. The lifespan of internet memes are usually not long and the growth of it is not important as internet users are only interested in the process of digesting a memes' message. People are usually not interested in the origin and death of the memes, they just enjoy the pleasure from deciphering a memes and when it is fading, they just let it go. Cannizzaro, (2016) then proceed to discuss memes in Peircean concept of habit where firstness refers to 'the germ if chaos subsumed', secondness of 'the compulsiveness' and thirdness of 'the goal

directed stability'. This philosophical model discussed how a habit is changeable under these three steps. Rebecca's Black Friday memes was used as an example to display the transformation of memes. The word 'Friday' in the song was mistakenly heard as 'fried egg' and it was turned to a memes due to its outburst reaction of internet users. Other internet memes such as Advice Animal and Condescending Wonka took on the habit and fused into a new memes. This showed that even without the same visual element, people are still able to make connection between the memes through the use of text. In this case, the firstness is the confusion of 'Friday' to 'fried egg' then secondness is the creation of Rebecca's Black Friday-Fried Egg memes and thirdness is the fusion of the fried egg memes with other popular memes. This has proven that internet memes does take on the habit of change and it can be understood through verbal and nonverbal elements. The same concept was previously discussed by Shifman (2013) where different variations of Pepper Spraying Cop is the result of memes undergo evolution and diffusion; some takes on playful element, some takes on sarcastic element (related to politic issue) and some takes on pop culture element.

Ross & Rivers (2019) studied how memes use frame theory to set perspective of issue and being spread to the public. The uniqueness of memes compares to the traditional media is that it is able to be framed and presented in both positive and negative perspective. The study had used the same memes template in arguing the issue of climate change both in agreement and disagreement. This feature of memes has created an interesting relationship between the memes creator and audience where one is reacting and decoding the message a memes is delivering in this second and the next second the audience can create the same memes with siding the message or opposing it. One can now be both memes creator and audience and so now the audience may be one of the agent of framing process. The study also showed that memes do not need direct identification and clear information to deliver their message. It is able to conform one's perspective in believing that climate change is real or implant fear in

those that support the opposition. As the researchers mentioned, each memes carry a message that consist of shared message known by the internet community. 'Internet memes are simplistic creations means that the message is delivered and interpreted in an equally simplistic way.'(p.18). The fact that the origin of memes creation are anonymous, allows it to spread information and message virally and rapidly compare to traditional media. Hence, memes shall not be taken merely as an irrelevant online joke instead it is a powerful media communication tool.

When memes is posted on the internet, it may carry a certain message that was assigned to it by its creator but it is the internet audience that decide its purpose and survival in the community. An obvious example that Ford (2019) used in her study is during the 2016 United State election is that the existence of a Facebook group named 'Bernie Sanders' Dank Meme Stash'. This group was said to be established to create Sanders memes that attract more young generation's votes. 'Every time a meme is viewed and shared to a new person, the meme gains authority, making its message even more valid.'(p.173) Memes can be said as the reflection of the society therefore when one criticizes the idiocracy of memes culture, he or she is neglecting the human interaction and connection.

Although in some cases there are people who create memes without having a specific message to be delivered. Even if the creator does set a specific meaning to a memes, the original message may sometimes get diverted after it was being analysed by the audience and take on a new form or message (Evnine, 2018). He then conceptualized memes as 'M is a meme if and only if M is made, as part of memographic practice, out of norms for producing things as parts of that memographic practice' (p.10).

Bebić & Volarevic (2018) used the memes 'ćaća se vraća; (The father is coming back) which directed to the former Croatian Prime Minister, Ivo Sanader as a study on how powerful

memes is in communicating politics. Sanader was accused of bribery, corruption and abuse of position and got sent to jail to wait for his trial. The memes became viral in 2015 (while he was still in jail) with the context of Sanader being a savior of the nation and internationally. When he was released from jail, he said “I will follow you on Facebook” and he was dismissed from all the charges as well. According to the research, he was presented positively in memes for 87% as a saviour although to be noted with a tone of mockery. This phenomena has caused most media to report neutrally about him and not many negative reports. Even when the media referred him as ‘ćaća’, it was in a positive tone, no negativity or sarcasm was ever reported with the term. This started as a sarcastic act toward Sanader had ended up gaining neutral and slight positive attention from the public and media.

2.2 Elements in Memes

As the previous chapter had mentioned that memes include everything from video to picture. However, in this study only image macro based will be tested. This is because this genre of memes is the most common and exposed memes on the internet. Shifman (2014) photo-based memes have diverging forms and are able to explain each element of memes (organic image, text and format) better. Image macro memes are a memes template with photograph or image as the focus accompanied by caption or text (Chandler, 2013).

Evnine (2018) termed memographic practice as ‘meta-level of activity in which examples of these image macros are discussed, commented on, up-voted, down-voted, criticized, collected, replied to in kind, and so on’(p.3). This practice is important in studying memes as it can help to understand the process and creation of memes. Image macro memes in need of idiosyncratic, user-generated text to an organic image because it needs to deliver the message with the relatable image. Memographic practice helps anyone who wants to create memes to understand that the affect and narrative must go hand in hand to be able to associate

with the organic image so that message of the memes can be delivered by both imagery and external imposition.

Boudry (2017) said memes need to be recognized by human senses only then it can be spread. Felixmüller (2017) agreed to the same concept where in her study he discussed memes in term of its pictorial element where human interaction and communication summon the need for picture. Memes come in as a culture unit on collective memory that energized the human to act as active role in reacting to meme. She discussed memes in term of Warburg's psychology culture that human react and spread memes on their own free will because the pictorial element has triggered their emotion. Not because that people are simply just being misguided by the memes. Memes with only image can be interpreted into different meaning depending on the audience's perception which why a memes with the same image can have different variation.

Text is another important element in image macros memes. Text of memes often are simplified spelling or has intentional misspellings (Ford,2019). In fact, the first typeface that was being used in memes is Impact which is still used nowadays in a lot of the memes (Brideau & Berret, 2014: 307, as cited in Cannizzaro, 2016). One of the most prominent reason that Impact is still the go-to font for memes is because the first cat memes which was created used Impact and hence the tradition has since been passed on (Edwards, 2015). It is one of the format for memes. Zhang's (2017) study showed that there were no difference in viewing time between memes with both image and text and memes with only image. However, the participants did enjoy memes with image and text better because it is easier to be understood.

Moreover, the element of humour is the undeniable strong component of memes. It is the root of memes (Shifman, 2013; Huntington, 2017; Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong, 2014). Huntington (2017) showed that humorous memes are more effective in its message and

decrease the possibility of argument among its audience. This means that funny memes are more likely to be accepted by the audience and its message can be delivered more effectively compared to unfunny memes. Another study by Taecharungroj & Nueangjamnong (2014) found that humorous memes in Thailand and western country have different context. The westerners tend to like 'self-defeating' humour which people make fun of themselves whereas in Thailand, people tend to like 'self-enhancing humour' which people share memes that describe their current feeling. This particular study did find that there were other memes that went viral (other than funny memes) with the elements of cute, inspirational, emotional and etc.

2.3 Memes and News

Gaylan, Osserman & Taylor (2019) explained news as a means to meet a fundamental human need which is to connect people with the world, it allows people to know things that are happening around the world. It plays an important role in social communication and binding of people around the world to work together. Social media is the most used platform for news among the younger generation because it allows user to control and curate one's own preference and interest. Users are able to choose from a wide array of perception on an issue ranging from professional to layperson furthermore they are able to engage directly with the news. Delhi, Lexington & São Paulo (2019) reported that politicians in the States summarized that teenagers who are in their early 20s almost entirely consume news through social media, they are visual news consumers. One third of the planet is under 20 and these teenagers are the future, therefore it is important to understand their culture and interest to attract their attention onto news. A report by Kalogeripoulos (2019) stated that those below 35 years old are very reliant on mobile and spend a lot of time on different social media which in the study is referred to Gen Z. This group of teenagers are more likely to check on their social media and messaging apps as soon as they wake up therefore news brand are not necessarily important to them

compared to those over 35 years old (Gen Y). Also, there is no news app within the top 25 most used apps among the research participants. This study also found that this generation are visual news consumers as they showed strong interest in news format with more visual elements than written articles.

In American Press Institute (2015) research, past researchers concluded that millennials' (18 to 34 years old) awareness to the world is narrow, the news they received are passive and incidental because news is just one of the random elements floating around social media. However the research concluded their result negatively to that statement. It showed that social media allow millennials to be exposed to more news than they initially anticipated. They may also pay attention to news that they might have neglected on their own due to peers' recommendation. 70% of the millennials participating in the research said that social media exposed them to different perceptions on an issue, 16% said their social media have mostly different perceptions from their own. This is contrary to the idea that social media only allow the users to receive information piece of their own liking.

Internet memes nowadays is said to be used as tools to express individual's opinion on websites and forums (Cannizzaro, 2016). Memes can be viewed as a new form of journalism because it provides information and rouses discussion for the recent salient issues. In addition, because of its unique characteristic that allows anyone to become a memes creator, it is a democratic mean to bring thousands and millions of disinterested people into the discussion. The Huffington Post and Chicago Tribute had recognized the significance of memes and wrote articles about memes (Ondraskova, 2016). Reddit is the new growing most used social media platform among younger generation in the States. It is a platform which allow its users to follow and subscribe to any subreddit (equivalent to Facebook page) to receive or release news related to the subreddit. It is also the most famous platform for memes viewer and creator (Gaylan, Osserman & Taylor, 2019).

The memes Facebook page 'UChicago Memes for Theoretical Midwest Teens' allows the students to communicate and understand the culture of the university because it is made by and for the university students. In this case it also serves as a source for campus information. The memes page has been able to serve as a useful information tool to report about the protest at Student Government meeting. Other universities in Ohio and Penn State have similar meme Facebook page that discussed issue of sexual abuse within sports leagues and had gained attention among the students. Although a lot of serious and non-serious issues discussed on the memes pages are in the tone of mockery or sarcastic, students are able to relate to them and as platforms for them to discuss such issues in their own way (Spande, 2019).

Dockser (2018) examined the article wrote by Luke O'Brien, 'My Journey to the Center of the Alt-Right'. O'Brien as a journalist uses 4chan and Reddit to understand the world of alt-right. He also found that Andrew Anglin, the founder of The Daily Stormer (forum for alt-right politic) included the Nazi Pepe memes in his forum which caused the crazy uproar among netizens and then was declared as a hate speech by the United States government due to its negative circulation on the internet.

2.4 Media Representation Theory

Representation theory as presented by Stuart Hall is "using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people. (Evans, Nixon & Hall, 2013, p. 2)" The term 'language' refers to everything ranging from words, spoken language to images. It is a process where human undergoes complex thinking to construct meaning to something in order to be able to communicate that something to other people in a commonly shared language. Media representation theory focuses on how media represent culture in the form of written, spoken, digital and image based. Memes is a form of media therefore using by using this theory, the message in memes can be examined better. In addition,

memes is said to be a cultural element that will be understood by the in-group members (Mazambani et al., 2015; Ford, 2019) therefore this theory can explain what culture does a certain memes carry and how the meaning is being interpreted by memes users all over the internet. This theory explained the process of identity construction of each and every one of users on social media. The memes that users interact, respond, share or produce express the individual's thoughts and emotion which will be perceived by others as personality (Graeff, 2012).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Method

This study will use qualitative research method to examine the effect of memes on university students' news perception and reliability of memes as news source. The research instrument is in-depth interview. This research method is able to understand deeply about the memes usage among the university students and their opinions on memes. It is rated as one of the most efficient research method in collecting primary data as it is able to find out details of the participants' experience on a particular subject (Showkat & Parveen, 2017). The interviews questions will be set to answer the two research questions which are

1. What are the effects of memes on university students' news perception?
2. Are memes reliable news source?

3.2 Participants

The target population of this study is Malaysia young generation that are within the 20s age range. This is because this age range of Malaysians are the most active social media users (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2018). Hence, this age group is most familiar with memes. Furthermore, these young generation are the future of the nation

hence it is important to understand culture from their perspective (Delhi, Lexington & São Paulo, 2019). The sample of the study are university students within the 20s age range and are active social media users. A purposeful sampling had been employed to search for participants that suit the above criteria. In result, a total of 9 Malaysians who are active social media users, in the age range of 20s and university students were willing to take part in this study.

Table 1. Participants' details

Name	Age	University	Field of Study
Cheong Zien Keith (M)	27	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus	Journalism
Kathryn Chew Siok Mei (F)	23	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus	Journalism
Lee Boon Jun (M)	21	INTI College Nilai	Computer Science
Lee Yu Qian (F)	21	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus	Journalism
Lim Dao Shwen (M)	18	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Sungai Long Campus	Foundation in Science
Lim Dao Yang (M)	22	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus	Advertising
Ng Jing Hui (F)	22	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus	Psychology
Sharlyn Koh (F)	21	Murdoch University	Animal Science
Sin Jo Yee (F)	22	Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus	Psychology

3.3 Interview

A set of open-ended questions were set for interview session with the participants (Appendix A). This set of questions consists of four sections: Section A: Participant's understanding and familiarity with popular memes format, Section B: Participants' perception on memes, Section C: Effects of internet memes on participants, Section D: Reliability of internet memes as news source. Section A was set to examine participants' basic understanding and familiarity of internet memes; Section B and C examine the effects of internet memes on the participants and Section D interpret the internet memes' reliability as a new form of news.

In Section A, a popular meme template was chosen, the thumbs up crying cat meme (Figure 1). This meme has gained its popularity since June 2019 although its first appearance on the virtual space was back in 2014 (Know Your Meme, n.d.). This meme is used to express disappointment with the cat's photoshopped teary eyes and added compliance with the thumbs up. It gained its popularity by being akin to another popular meme, Crying Cat (Figure 2) and especially this year with the spread of Covid-19.



Figure 1 Thumbs Up Crying Cat



Figure 2 Crying Cat

The meme used was created by local entertainer

Facebook Page, MGAG. The page served entertainment and humour to the Malaysians hence it has a relative high number of followers, at over 900,000. The meme was posted back in 1st of October 2020, it used Dr Noor Hisham's tweet stating 'how about all stay at home for awhile again' together with the thumbs up crying cat and the caption of 'do what you need boss', to express the sadness of Malaysians when they saw that particular tweet but had to compliance with the decision as well. Noted that in this time period, Malaysia's situation was getting worse as the nation was expecting a second wave of mass Covid-19 spread. Kaos (2020) reported an increase of 260 local confirmed cases with 118 at Sabah and 98 at Kedah. This situation was very worrying for the people of Malaysia as the country had not have such high amount of confirmed cases for the past 3 months. This meme was chosen as an example visual for the participants because the meme template is an image macro memes which is the most popular and widely used template; the thumbs up crying cat meme is popular during the Covid-19 situation and the meme is conveying local message hence the participants can understand the context of the meme even if one has not seen before.

The interview was carried out through Whatsapp voice call and each session was recorded and turned into transcripts (Appendix B) to ease the data analysis process. Each session took an average of 8 minutes with the shortest session at 6.5 minutes and the longest at 12 minutes. The transcripts were then analysed with the aid of the computer package NVivo 12. Responses from participants were coded appropriately and analysed thematically.

4.0 Findings

Section A was set to examine the participants' understanding and familiarity with internet memes. All nine of the participants can understand and interpret the provided meme accurately. Half of the participants felt that this meme is funny; two (Lim Dao Yang & Sharlyn Koh) found it to be disappointing as another possible lockdown may be occurring; while for Lee Boon Jun, this meme is overrated because it is everywhere on the internet (referring to the meme template) and Lim Dao Shwen expressed his support to Dr Noor Hisham's tweet of urging the Malaysians to stay home as much and comply to the SOPs. All participants were familiar with this meme except for Kathryn Chew Siok Mei as she didn't seem to see this meme often on her social media.

Section B was set to examine the participants' perception on memes, three questions were asked:

1. Please describe internet memes in your own words.
2. What's your relationship with internet memes?
3. How often do you access memes on internet?

The participants' answer to the first question was coded into one theme, funny. Some of them added the explanation on functions of visual and textual elements in the meme. Cheong Zien Keith said that, "Internet memes although is a form of joke make up with entertaining aspect of images and sarcastic words but it's actually a form of understating an issue. Just as the meme

shown just now, it is actually diverting the attention from the seriousness of widespread Covid-19 cases in Malaysia because people interpret it as a funny joke. Therefore, memes actually are working as a dysfunctional in the society as it constantly divert people on the true focus of an issue". Kathryn, Lee Yu Qian and Lim Dao Yang all mentioned that meme is used to express a situation or an issue.

Moving on to the second question, all participants were in a positive relationship with memes except Kathryn who mentioned that she was not interested in memes. However, there were no participant who was meme creator, all were just viewer. Out of the eight positive participants, only Lim Dao Shwen, Lim Dao Yang and Sharlyn were actively looking for memes on the cyberspace. Both Lim Dao Shwen and Lim Dao Yang mentioned the use of Reddit, a meme based social media platform (Gaylan, Osserman & Taylor, 2019) to enjoy funny memes while Sharlyn used Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to look for memes that help to cheer her up. Others were not actively seeking for memes on social media but did saw them on their social media feed usually shared by their friends. Lee Yu Qian and Cheong Zien Keith both stated that they sometimes get memes in their chatting apps and chatrooms. "I get to see quite some amount of memes whenever I on Facebook and my friends sometimes send memes to me on Whatsapp when we are joking", said Lee Yu Qian. Third question had the same result as the previous with Kathryn as the only one who do not access to internet memes frequently while the other eight participants manage to access memes on daily basis, whenever they are on social media.

Section C was set to examine the effects of internet memes on participants. The questions were as below,

1. Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

2. How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

To answer the first question, five participants had stated that they are not hopping onto social media just for memes. Then eight of the participants did agree on the humour of memes is the important element to keep others and themselves to enjoy memes on the internet. Sharlyn said, “No need for too much explanation. People who look at memes, understand them and laugh at it. They make a common understanding among the people on internet to understand memes in the same way”. While on the other hand Sin Jo Yee and Cheong Zien Keith were confirmed that internet memes have no effects on them while Kathryn and Lee Boon Jun were not sure of the effects of internet memes. There were a few answers to the effects of internet memes that were provided by the participants. Firstly, internet memes make issues more entertaining. As Lim Dao Shwen said, “Issues become more light hearted. I get to know new information or issue, news with memes without having the read long article. Understand the main point of the news straight away”. For Lee Yu Qian, “I am usually attracted to memes about political news in Malaysia because a lot of internet users are making politics memes a lot of the time to politic issues funnier”. Five of the participants including Lim Dao Shwen agreed that internet memes to a certain extent are entertaining and funny to express an issue. Secondly, internet memes can influence perception. An interesting story told by Ng Jing Hui, “I recently enjoy the memes by Uncle Roger a lot because he’s funny and the jokes he make about Asians are very hilarious. The memes he make made me related it back to the Malaysia culture. I realize a lot of funny thing that I always do are Asian culture that I didn’t realize before Uncle Roger’s memes”. Lim Dao Yang in the other hand stated a negative influence of internet memes on perception. “News become one sided. Easily shift my opinion to one particular perspective of a news, instead of seeing the situation as a whole.” Out of the nine participants, only four of them expressed a certain amount of influence internet memes have on them on Malaysia’s issues while the rest didn’t have any internet memes influencing their opinions on local issues. However, Ng Jing

Hui's answers were conflicting as she answered Ungle Roger's memes had made her realize the common Malaysia culture but she then proceed to answer that internet memes have no influence on her opinions.

Section D was set to examine the reliability of internet memes as news source, two questions as below were set.

1. How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?
2. Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

The result of taking internet memes as news source split into half, with five participants didn't use memes as their source of news and the other four learned new issues due to the exposure of memes. Kathryn, Ng Jing Hui and Cheong Zien Keith noted that they rely on reliable news sites on social media to get information on latest news and Sin Jo Yee stated that she doesn't learn new issues due to exposure of internet memes because she is not interest in memes. Next, on to the reliability of memes as news source, majority of participants agreed on the unreliable side and two agreed that memes as news source is averagely reliable. For Sharlyn, the reliability of memes lies in the reader of the memes. "For younger generation like me and my peers, it is understandable by everyone. But for older generation like my parents they often misinterpret the message of memes. They don't get it, they understand memes in another meaning. So for me I will say it depends, teenagers can understand memes well so memes are carrying message to teenagers but not necessarily for older people." Participants who agreed on memes are not reliable news source mentioned about the creation of memes. "Because people tend to add something that are of their own comprehension that twisted the content of the news. The memes created is a form of the creator own perception so it doesn't reflect the news correctly."

Similarly, Ng Jing Hui, Sin Jo Yee and Cheong Zien Keith raised the issue that the memes created are of the purpose of entertaining and altered stories therefore memes are not reliable. Furthermore, Lee Yu Qian added on with “For me, I think we still need to double confirm the message in memes because it may be spoof or misuse by netizens. We need to understand the news from different perspective too. For example, a issue related to political issue, we can access and get the reliable news from a proper news source”.

5.0 Discussion

All participants are active users on social media hence they can understand and interpret the given meme accurately. Therefore, this result matched with the report by MCMC (2018) which stated that those between 20’s to 30’s are the most active internet users and most tech savvy generation in Malaysia. The participants are the in-group members of social media (Mazambani et al., 2015; Graeff, 2012), as they are familiar with the diffusion of memes. Some of them perceived the given meme as a funny meme but some do feel as the cat’s reaction. Grundlingh (2018) wrote a typology that differentiate meme as just an internet joke. The scholar differentiated two types of memes, memes as jokes which are just joke without any underlying message and memes as humorous comments or opinions which appear to be jokes but consist of comment to provide opinions on very serious matter. In this study, the meme used was funny, but it has the underlying message of urging Malaysians to stay home and stay safe to avoid another wave of Covid-19 in the nation. And this message was identifiable by all participants. Since, every participant are well-equipped with meme literacy (Johann & Bülow, 2019) therefore they are able to provide some insights on the effects of internet memes.

The participants termed internet memes as the internet element that combine the usage of visual and text to express a situation or issue in a humorous way which make sense to the majority. This finding is persistent with the previous studies (Vasquez & Aslan, 2020; Ross &

Rivers, 2019; Mazambani et al., 2015) where memes need to use popular trends as template but also able to carry message that is understandable to the public majority, if not memes are not able to spread far and will see its death soon. As Mazambani et al. (2015) study showed that memes that are consistent with the in-group are more likely to spread faster and gain more support from the in-group members.

A study by Technical University of Denmark (2019) reported that the human attention span has decreased dramatically over the years due to the emergence of social media. The study analysed the global daily top 50 hashtags on Twitter and found that a hashtag stayed in the top 50 rank for an average of 17.5 hours but in 2016 it decreases to only 11.9 hours. With the increase of time spent on social media, the attention span for information decrease gradually. Creation of memes is therefore the products of short attention span as a few participants mentioned the easy-to-understand element with eye-catching visual and direct short phrase. Vasquez & Aslan (2020) noted that with the background knowledge of the context of memes, the message can be interpreted clearly. Internet users can move on from one meme to another in no time because memes don't require much time to read and research. Memes are important as they provide entertaining and comprehensible content on the social media. All participants agreed that entertainment and humour are the elements that attract people to memes. As mentioned by previous scholars (Shifman, 2013; Huntington, 2017; Taecharungroj & Nueangjammong, 2014) humour is the main component of memes. The spread and usage of memes have then unconsciously fit into the society creating memes culture and slowly altering the way we perceive humorous content. This is why Reddit gain its popularity because emotions are more effective in driving one's action (Huntington, 2017; Felixmüller, 2017). Among the nine participants, there were three that showed slight addiction to memes. Two were using Reddit as their main social media platform to enjoy memes and one browsed Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for memes, all were on daily basis. The other effect of internet

memes concluded from the study was internet memes are influencing perception. In both Lalancette & Small (2020) and Kulkarni (2017) papers, they stated that politicians used internet memes as tools of propaganda to help spread positive image for themselves. Although the effects were not weighted in Kulkarni's (2017) study but Lalancette & Small (2020) recorded some effects on creation and propagation on internet memes. If citizens are only sharing memes that consist of their shared belief, false perception or misunderstanding may occur for certain issue and events. However, one participant did share her positive experience with exposure to internet memes. Memes are created with variety of template and topics hence memes are able to spread an assortment of messages in term of pop culture, music, fashion, politics etc.

Memos are still not considered as a reliable news source as most of the participants agreed on. This result aligned with Lalancette & Small (2020)'s result on the possibility on false perception of issue due to reliance on analogous opinions of memes. Over half of the participants don't rely on internet memes for access of information but just enjoying memes as interesting internet content. Some participants also urged others to analyse and filter the information conveyed by internet memes instead of taking it all in because internet memes are made by their creators to bring laughter to the audience so memes don't convey the full information on issues or events. Nevertheless, a participant did mention that the reliability of memes as news source laid on the age of viewer. It relates back to the in-group culture where if the viewer of memes is a teenager who understands memes culture, memes can be reliable news source but if the viewer is an elderly, he or she might interpret the message of memes inaccurately and hence memes are not reliable news source for them.

6.0 Conclusion

This study is able to add implications to the theoretical framework. Although none of the participants had stated their sharing of internet memes but they were all well equipped with

meme literacy. They are considered the in-group members of memes culture. Memes are created as a tool of identity and idea representation (Pryanhina & Vasilyeva, 2019). Internet users choose to react and share the memes which are consistent with their beliefs (Hungtinton, 2017; Graeff, 2012). By sharing and understand the joke (internet meme), one is set to be part of a community and being represented by memes that are corresponding to the community, one will construct powerful form of identity and community construction. In addition, with the easy template of memes, now everyone is able to use this tool to express their message to the public sphere. The spread of information through this tool is fast and universal hence it is able to encourage discussion and action towards a serious issue such as climate change, politics etc (Ross & Rivers, 2019) in the form of memes as humorous comments or opinions as written by Grundlingh (2018). Due to its humourous characteristic, memes are not reliable news source, but it is an effective communication and advertisement tool. Kulkarni (2017) concluded from the study that memes as politics propaganda tool is not able to make paradigm shift among the Indians as they were treating political memes as interesting humour. They still prefer traditional media for political news and information. However, the scholar did mention that internet memes can be put to good use by media organization to frame the citizen's mind. Although memes are not considered as reliable news source, but it may be a point of attraction to open up a new entry point to a news (Dishman, 2018).

On the contrary, this study has a few limitations. Out of the nine participants, seven of them are from the same local university, one from local private college and one from Australia's university. Since the participants are mainly from one university, the result might not be able to generalize internet memes phenomena among Malaysians' teenagers. Therefore, future study should incorporate tertiary education students from different states of Malaysia in order to get a generalizable result on the effects of memes. Moreover, for those who answered internet memes have influenced their perception on Malaysia's issue were not able to provide

an exact example. Even if there were examples mentioned, they were all from foreign countries, not a single Malaysia events or issues that were posted as memes were mentioned. Future study may put the focus on Malaysia related memes regardless of cultural or political. Researchers may compare the memes literacy of Malaysians on local and foreign memes and examine which are more influential to the teens.

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Appendix A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview questions

Section A: Participants understanding and familiarity with popular memes format.



1. How do you feel about this memes? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this memes?

Section B: Participants' perception on memes

2. Please describe internet memes in your own words.
3. What's your relationship with internet memes?
4. How often do you access memes on internet?

Section C: Effects of internet memes on participants

5. Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?
6. How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

Section D: Reliability of internet memes as news source

7. How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?
8. Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Appendix B

TRANSCRIPTS

Name: Cheong Zien Keith

Age: 27

Gender: Male

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus

Course: Bachelor of Communication (HONS) Journalism

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

It is quite funny as the cat's emotion represents us all Malaysians when we saw the DG posted such a statement. This particular cat meme is about forcing to agree to something that one don't want to, therefore the cat's sad expression and thumbs up. I will say I'm pretty familiar with this memes as I have seen it on a lot of social media platform.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Internet memes although is a form of joke make up with entertaining aspect of images and sarcastic words but it's actually a form of understating an issue. Just as the meme shown just now, it is actually diverting the attention from the seriousness of widespread Covid-19 cases in Malaysia because people interpret it as a funny joke. Therefore, memes actually are working as a dysfunctional in the society as it constantly divert people on the true focus of an issue.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

I can always see memes on my social media because it is always spreading on the social media platform. I will say that I have a fair relationship with memes. I don't interact much with it but I see it everywhere, Facebook and Whatsapp.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Basically everytime when I access the internet. My friends share it on social media and chatrooms.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

Personally speaking, I'm not on the internet because of internet memes. Tho I cant deny the fact that memes are funny and attractive but I'm one that not particularly influence by memes.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

I don't really get affected by internet memes. Memes are there just as jokes so I don't take them seriously. I always refer to reliable news source for information.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Not really. Again because I get my news and information from reliable news source like news sites and newspaper so I don't take information on memes seriously.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Memes are created by internet users with their piece of opinion towards a certain issue and in that sense it's not delivering messages in a neutral form. Other misinformation may be added

along the process of creation. And also, memes are often one sided so it doesn't deliver the whole story clearly, and so people who see and understand the memes will be receiving message one sidedly. For example, Donald Trump memes are all conveying bad things that he did and so people that did not dive deep will obviously think he's a bad president. However, he did set some good policy for the US economy and that is something you wont see people making a meme of.

Name: Kathryn Chew Siok Mei

Age: 23

Gender: Female

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus

Course: Bachelor of Communication (HONS) Journalism

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

I find this funny because the cat looks very sad about Noor Hisham statement. It is describing the feeling of the Malaysians, we're sad about MCO but need to accept it. It's very funny. I'm not very familiar with this meme.

9) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Mix use of pictures and words to make funny memes. The picture needs to be funny from the internet and everyone can understand. Then the words are used to explain the picture or situation.

10) What's your relationship with internet memes?

I don't have any relationship with memes because I'm not into memes.

11) How often do you access memes on internet?

Not really because I'm not into memes.

12) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

I go onto social media not because of memes la. For me, I personally think people like memes because it's funny lo. I don't know what effects memes have on me because I don't really like memes.

13) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

No for me la.

14) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

No. Because I get to know news from newspaper and news websites.

15) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

For me, it's not reliable because a lot of people will add a lot to the memes to make it funny.

And also not everyone can understand a meme the same way so it's not reliable.

Name: Lee Boon Jun

Age: 21

Gender: Male

University: INTI College Nilai

Course: Undergraduate in Computer Science

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

I feel this meme is overrated, it's everywhere. It's a form of expression of frustration but with acceptance Very. Very familiar.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Bunch of wanna-be editors keep making internet pictures to make people laugh.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

Not strong, but not weak, so average. It's everywhere, it's good for a chuckle but that's all.

Also I'm not making it or spreading it so for me, meme is enjoyable.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Very often. Every time I'm on my social media, I'll come across it.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

Memes are funny and enjoyable but it is not the only content that I enjoy on social media. I don't really know what effects memes have on me.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

Definitely yes. Like people will use memes to bring up a issue and share it around the social media.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Very often.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Averagely reliable. Because some of the memes are meant to be funny and not addressing to the situation. It's just to make funny things, make unknown internet people laugh so the context of the memes cant be taken seriously sometimes.

Name: Lee Yu Qian

Age: 22

Gender: Female

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus

Course: Bachelor of Communication (HONS) Journalism

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

This meme is funny to me. It somehow alert people with the spread of Covid-19 as Noor Hisham tweet is showing that another possible lockdown. I am familiar with this meme because it was flooding my social media, the cat meme is all over but the caption with this format is a new one for me.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

For me, internet meme is a form of gif or image that was created and spread very fast online. It brings a meaning or trying to express a phenomenon in a funny way. It use graphic to showcase a certain situation.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

I get to see quite some amount of memes whenever I on Facebook and my friends sometimes send memes to me on Whatsapp when we are joking. So I will say I have a positive relationship with internet memes.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

It usually will appear on my social media, especially when something new happen.

Sometimes a post or under the post's comment. My friends also often send memes to me in chatroom of WeChat and Whatsapp to entertain us. I think something like this connect us because we have the same humour.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

For me, picture speaks better than word that is why memes are able to grab people's attention. As internet memes has grown popularity, a lot of Malaysians are making memes on the internet. I am usually attracted to memes about political news in Malaysia because a lot of internet users are making politics memes a lot of the time to politic issues funnier.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

Sometimes memes are the first thing that I come across about a new issue. Unconsciously when Malaysians make memes it is something we care about and I will think this is a unique culture,

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Not often because although memes bring me a new issue but I think if you want to deeper understand an issue you need to put in effort. An information filtering is a must. Cannot just absorb just the messages from memes.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

For me, I think we still need to double confirm the message in memes because it may be spoof or misuse by netizens. We need to understand the news from different perspective too.

For example, a issue related to political issue, we can access and get the reliable news from a proper news source.

Name: Lim Dao Shwen

Age: 18

Gender: Male

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Sungai Long Campus

Course: Foundation in Science

1) How do you feel about this memes? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this memes?

Telling Malaysians to stay at home and comply to SOP. I support this memes. I'm quite familiar with this because I'm always on Reddit everyday.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Internet jokes spread around the internet.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

Good I guess. I'm always on Reddit looking at memes.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Everyday because I'm on the internet everyday.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

The element that keeps me on social media with memes is funny. I have been constantly browsing on Reddit ever since it's the first hand platform for memes, I rarely go on other social media, Facebook, Instagram as often. I enjoy memes a lot than other content on social media.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

Issues become more light hearted. I get to know new information or issue, news with memes without having the read long article. Understand the main point of the news straight away.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Every time. Most of my social media spread news in memes format so when I see a new memes, I know that this is something new.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Not really reliable. Because people tend to add something that are of their own comprehension that twisted the content of the news. The memes created is a form of the creator own perception so it doesn't reflect the news correctly.

Name: Lim Dao Yang

Age: 22

Gender: Male

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus

Course: Bachelor of Communication (HONS) Advertising

1) How do you feel about this memes? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this memes?

Felt very aggrieved because was forced to stay home for a longer period of time which was unintended. Very familiar with this memes since a lot of people on the internet are cry babies so I see this a lot on social media.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Using pictures to express one's ideas or thoughts toward a situation.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

Only watch but never use. I enjoy looking at memes on social media especially reddit, but I don't personally make a memes or use it.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Everyday. I'm constantly browsing social media, Reddit. Reddit is a social media platform that allow the users to share memes on it.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

Using memes to relate to the latest news, any and every news in the world. Memes are funny and pleasurable to me, so I become reliant on funny pictures to get more latest news.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

News become one sided. Easily shift my opinion to one particular perspective of a news, instead of seeing the situation as a whole.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Very often. For example, US election. As a Malaysian, the news are not updates as fast as the US. Therefore, I will rely on my most browse social media platform which is Reddit to get the latest information about it.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Average. Not everyone can interpret from few words and a picture and also not everyone can interpret memes the same way so it takes time to convey message to people and for everyone to understand it similarly. But memes can be a reliable news source in the future when the society is all used to it.

Name: Ng Jing Hui

Age: 22

Gender: Female

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus

Course: Bachelor of Social Science (HONS) Psychology

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

I feel this meme is very funny. This meme is about the lockdown, another possible lockdown in Malaysia and the people feel sad but need to agree to it also. I'm very familiar with this meme because this meme is always used on internet. It describe people's feeling that don't agree to something but got no choice but to accept. I find it very funny.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Internet jokes. Uses funny pictures to make a situation or something funny. It's all over the internet now, every day. Every time I scroll my social media, I'll see memes. Memes are very funny and I like it.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

Nothing. I don't search for memes on social media. I just see on my social media and find them funny but I don't look for memes on Facebook and Instagram.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Nowadays, memes are on the social media at anytime. Therefore, I see memes on my social media everyday.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

Memes are funny but this is not the reason to keep me scrolling my social media. Meme is one of the content on social media that I enjoy. I recently enjoy the memes by Uncle Roger a lot because he's funny and the jokes he make about Asians are very hilarious. The memes he make made me related it back to the Malaysia culture. I realize a lot of funny thing that I always do are Asian culture that I didn't realize before Uncle Roger's memes.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

No. I don't believe in internet memes. I only find them funny and like the entertainment value of it.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Not very often. Because I look at news website or news Facebook Page to get to know about news. I don't really take memes as a news. For me meme is made by people so it's meant to be funny and I don't think the few words in meme is enough to bring out a complete message for a news. And memes is because meme is made for entertainment value so I only take meme as a joke.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Not reliable because when people make meme, they will add a lot of their opinions or extra into the meme to make it funnier. Memes are for entertainment value, not as a news source so I don't think it is reliable. And memes made reflect the person's own thought so it is not accurate in explaining the whole situation.

Name: Sharlyn Koh

Age: 21

Gender: Female

University: Murdoch University

Course: Undergraduate in Animal Science and Animal Health

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

I feel the same as the cat. The crying cat shows the same feeling as us that we have no choice but to accept the fact. The feel is very sad but you need to accept, so crying and agreeing. Very familiar because I saw it everyday on the internet.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

It makes the internet colourful, interesting and funny. Memes make issues lighter and easier to understand with a few words and picture then everyone can have a laugh at it.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

I see it everyday, every hour. I'm on the internet almost 24/7 and I can see memes popping up at all my social media feed, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. They keep me entertain for my miserable life.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Every day, every hour.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

No need for too much explanation. People who look at memes, understand them and laugh at it. They make a common understanding among the people on internet to understand memes in the same way.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

Not in particular that I remember. I don't express my opinions on social media nor have discussion about issues in Malaysia and I don't really care so yeah.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

Everyday.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

Depends. For younger generation like me and my peers, it is understandable by everyone. But for older generation like my parents they often misinterpret the message of memes. They don't

get it, they understand memes in another meaning. So for me I will say it depends, teenagers can understand memes well so memes are carrying message to teenagers but not necessarily for older people.

Name: Sin Jo Yee

Age: 22

Gender: Female

University: Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman Kampar Campus

Course: Bachelor of Social Science (HONS) Psychology

1) How do you feel about this meme? Describe this meme. How familiar are you with this meme?

Funny. Very funny because the it explains that the people's feeling when they saw this tweet. It's like no one wants lockdown but the people got no choice but to accept. Very familiar because I saw it very often on internet.

2) Please describe internet memes in your own words.

Internet jokes that are spread on the internet.

3) What's your relationship with internet memes?

Average. I look at memes and laugh at it but I don't actively search for it or create it.

4) How often do you access memes on internet?

Every day, whenever I'm on social media I will see it.

5) Of what importance are memes as a content that attracts you to social media? What effects do internet memes have on you as a Malaysian?

No importance? Because I get on social media not because of memes. I don't think memes has influenced me.

6) How internet memes influence your opinion on certain issues in Malaysia?

No. Because I'm not very interested in memes. I only see memes when it is on my social media. Then if it's funny I'll laugh and if not then I just let scroll over it. Memes is just something on the internet I see then scroll off.

7) How often do you learn about a new issue or news as a result of exposure to internet memes?

No because I'm not interested in memes.

8) Internet memes have grown into a new form of communication because it carries message from sender to receiver. So, how reliable do you think memes as a form of news?

I don't think memes are reliable news source because memes have personal perspective. Memes are created by people and often are being extra by adding more elements or twisted stories so it is no reliable. Without extra elements and funniness, memes will not be good because people enjoy memes for their funniness. So for me, memes can only be a internet joke cannot be a reliable news source.