

## **Political Memes and Perception: Exploring Memes as a Tool for Political Communication in India**

**Dr. Hari Krishna Behera**, *Assistant Professor, Institute of Media Studies, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, Odisha*

### **Abstract**

The word meme was coined by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book “The Selfish Gene” as an attempt to explain the way cultural information spreads. In the current world of digital accelerated life, memes stand in for the dominant concept of online participation. They distill complex information and clearly convey the message. They are now playing an active role in online political discussions and cultivating politically engaged and informed internet users. This paper seeks to determine the role of political-themed memes on digital media in criticizing political policies and faces in India. It aims to look into how exposure to political memes affects people's political segregation, political knowledge, and online political participation. Parameters like political engagement, influence on political views and voting behavior are used to analyse the impact of memes. The research paper includes a primary survey of GenZ (18-25 year) age groups who are active on digital media and also play a vital role in the Indian political discourse. The survey will focus on how frequently the respondents encounter political memes, the types of memes they encounter, and their response to them. The paper will also investigate whether political memes influence the respondents' political views and voting behavior, and if yes, to what extent.

In conclusion, this research paper will provide valuable insights into the role of political memes in shaping the Indian political discourse. The findings of this study will be relevant not only for researchers but also for political parties and social media platforms that are increasingly becoming an integral part of modern-day election campaigns.

**Keywords:** *Political Meme, Audience Perception, Political Communication, Political Discourse, Agenda setting, Political Satire*

### **Introduction**

Internet memes can have significant real-world impacts on individuals who view them, particularly in the realm of politics. Memes created by regular people and circulated online, often referencing pop culture in a light-hearted manner, can influence how people feel about important political issues. This emotional response is crucial to engaging with information, especially political information, as it can alter the issues people pay attention to, impact how they search for political information, influence how they process that information, shape their worldview, and ultimately affect a range of political activities. Therefore, internet memes have become a powerful tool for shaping political discourse and influencing public opinion in modern political communication.

Memes are a form of communication that involves the transmission of cultural ideas, symbols, or practices from one mind to another through various means such as writing, gestures, and rituals. With the rise of technology, internet memes have become a widely used tool for communication. The first internet meme can be traced back to 1996 with the emergence of the viral sensation of a 3D dancing baby who danced to the tune of "cha-cha-cha". This marked the beginning of the internet meme culture, which has since grown in popularity and influence.

### **Memes as Influential Political Communication**

Memes are frequently utilized by political opposition parties as a means of communication to criticize the government in power. For instance, in India, the Indian National Congress employs their social media platforms to launch attacks on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for their unfulfilled promises and shortcomings. These memes serve as a tool for conveying political messaging to the public in a humorous and easily shareable format, making them a popular tactic for opposition parties to engage with their constituents.

The youth of India who were assured of getting better jobs, higher incomes, and opportunities in 2014 are now struggling with economic instability, unemployment, inflation, and environmental issues. Despite being seen as the shining example of a liberalized economy, they have become the new casualties of globalization. The slogans and campaigns of the ruling party, such as "India Shining," "Make in India," "Vocal for Local," and "Acche Din," have lost their meaning and have become mere catchphrases used in political debates and discussions.

The process of India integrating into the global economy has resulted in uneven growth, which is even more pronounced than that experienced by the United States. Consequently, many citizens are experiencing frustration and anger, leading to a rise in political humour, memes, and satire. In India's current oppressive political climate, memes have become a prominent form of cultural reproduction that involves copying and imitation. People online recognize that memes capture some of the most critical aspects of contemporary digital culture. Like other Web 2.0 technologies, memes propagate through social networks, shaping and reflecting broader social consciousness. Unfortunately, there has been a significant increase in the use of paid bloggers, Twitter accounts, and commentators who are hired to generate content and manipulate public opinion on various issues. Over the past few years, there has been a significant rise in using memes as a political tool, mainly because of their popularity among the tech-savvy youth on social media platforms. The 2019 Lok Sabha elections had about one crore first-time voters, and political parties, both in power and opposition, tried to attract them by flooding social media apps like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram with various types of memes. Memes, which are humorous representations of social, cultural, or political issues, gained popularity as a new digital trend around 2015. In the years preceding the 2019 elections, memes played a significant role in creating a negative image of Congress President Rahul Gandhi as 'Pappu.' They also ridiculed other contenders for the Prime Minister's position while promoting Narendra Modi as a powerful leader.

Memes have become a tool for propaganda, promoting radical ideologies, nationalist identities, and discriminatory stereotypes. These memes are often created by troll factories and bots and spread as genuine content. However, during the Indian farmers' protests of 2020-2021, internet communities emerged on social media platforms to debunk propaganda memes. This collective action cut across class, caste, and gender roles, and allowed for decentralized methods of consuming and circulating information. While this was not the sole reason, this digital resistance played a part in the Indian government's decision to withdraw the controversial farm laws after almost a year of farmers' protests at the national capital's borders.

## **Objectives**

1. The primary aim of the study is to examine the use of internet memes as a tool for political communication in India

With the rapid increase in social media use in the country, memes have emerged as a popular form of visual communication that can convey political messages in a succinct and engaging way. By examining the use of political memes in India, the study aims to shed light on their potential as a means of influencing public opinion and shaping political discourse. Through surveys, interviews, and content analysis of social media platforms, the study seeks to gain insights into the motivations behind the creation and dissemination of political memes, as well as their effectiveness in conveying complex political issues to a wider audience. Additionally, the study will explore the ethical considerations surrounding the use of memes in political communication and the potential impact of their proliferation on democratic processes in India.

2. The study aims to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the role that memes play in shaping political discourse and public opinion in India

In addition to exploring the use and effectiveness of memes in political communication in India, the study also aims to closely examine the specific role that memes play in the Indian political context. This involves analysing the types of political issues and ideologies that are being communicated through memes, as well as the social and cultural factors that influence the production and consumption of political memes in India.

Another key objective of the study is to evaluate whether political memes have the potential to shape the political perspective of their audience. This may involve examining the ways in which memes are shared and disseminated on social media, as well as the responses and reactions they generate among viewers.

3. The study aims to explain the effectiveness of memes as a tool for political communication in India.

The study seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of why and how memes have emerged as an effective tool for communicating political issues in India. It will examine the unique characteristics of memes that make them an engaging and accessible form of communication, as well as the cultural and social factors that have contributed to their popularity in the Indian context. Additionally, the study will explore the ways in which memes can be used to communicate complex political issues to a wider audience and to generate public engagement

and discussion. By providing a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of memes in political communication, the study aims to shed light on the potential of this form of communication to shape political discourse and public opinion in India.

4. The study aims to explain whether memes should follow some ethical standards or not

The research objective of this paper is to analyse whether there should be ethical standards for political memes when attacking political leaders or parties. The paper aims to fill the research gap by exploring the ethical implications of creating and sharing political memes that attack political leaders or parties. Specifically, the paper seeks to examine whether political memes should adhere to ethical standards that prohibit personal attacks and instead focus on policies or failures. By addressing this research objective, the paper aims to contribute to the development of ethical guidelines for political memes in the digital age, which can help to maintain a healthy political discourse and prevent the spread of hate speech and misinformation.

### **Research Hypothesis**

- a. Political memes serve as a powerful tool for political communication and have the ability to influence the perception of the audience with regards to the political discourse in India.
- b. The study based on the correlation between exposure to political memes, the effectiveness of political memes in terms of awareness, attitudes, and behavior, perceived significance of political memes, and political participation.
- c. Furthermore, the perceived significance of political memes serves as a mediating factor between exposure to political memes, the effectiveness of political memes (in terms of awareness, attitudes, and behavior), and political participation.
- d. The research pre-assumes that Indian GenZ utilizes memes as a means of political participation.
- e. In addition, the study is done to yield a positive trend in terms of exposure to political memes.

## Literature Review

Bollywood is undoubtedly a vital part of Indian culture, and it enjoys a massive fan following in the country. People in India are passionate about watching Bollywood films and are known to be deeply engrossed in its stories, characters, and dialogues. However, apart from being entertained by the movies, fans also engage in creating and sharing numerous memes that are based on popular Bollywood movies.

In recent times, political memes have become a trend, where fans use dialogues or scenes from Bollywood movies to comment on current political situations or express their opinions on social issues. These memes are often shared widely on social media platforms and are a reflection of the impact that Bollywood has on Indian society. In a way, these memes also demonstrate the ability of Bollywood to connect with people on a deeper level and influence their thinking and perceptions. According to a study conducted by Dr Anushka Kulkarni from Amity University, Madhya Pradesh, titled 'Internet meme and Political Discourse: A study on the impact of the internet meme as a tool in communicating political satire', internet memes are widely used as a tool of political discourse. However, the study concludes that memes do not have a significant impact on the audience's opinion, although they do improve the political engagement of digital natives. The research findings suggest that user-generated media, including political internet memes, are crucial in shaping today's media environment and have implications for other forms of political outcomes, such as opinion polarization, civic discourse, and the public sphere.

While some researchers believe that memes have a direct influence on the minds of Gen Z when it comes to voting, this claim may not be entirely accurate because it is not the sole reason when it comes to a person's choice of voting. The study conducted by Kashyap and Rastogi in 2019 sheds light on the impact of political memes in different political discourses for communication, with a specific focus on youth and meme culture in India. The study highlights the importance of cultural ideas and symbols that are encoded and transmitted through memes to a larger user base, which in turn enhances the overall mode of communication.

The authors emphasize the argument of 'amplification by simplification,' which refers to the process of simplifying complex messages of varying degrees and disseminating them to the audience for sensitization and participation. In the case of political memes, this process involves simplifying political messages using humour to criticize or appreciate a subject of political nature.

The study notes that humour is a prominent element in Indian meme culture, providing a softer approach for discussing and expressing opinions on political issues. The use of humour in political memes can make them more relatable and accessible to a wider audience, especially among the youth, who are increasingly using social media as a means of political expression and engagement. Overall, the study highlights the importance of understanding the cultural context and symbols behind political memes in shaping political discourse and communication. It also underscores the need for ethical guidelines to ensure that political memes do not cross the line into hate speech or misinformation. The findings of this study have implications for political communication and engagement, especially in the digital age where social media platforms are increasingly becoming the primary means of communication and engagement among the youth. Kashyap and Rastogi's (2019) research on meme culture in India provides insightful findings on the effectiveness of political memes in communicating complex messages to a wider audience. The study reveals that more than 60% of respondents understood the memes shared with them and the core message encoded within the visuals. In terms of the genre of the message conveyed through memes, the majority of respondents (60% and above) highlighted the importance of humour and satire in grabbing their attention and simplifying complex messages. The authors note that the soft approach of political memes makes them comfortable to share and forward among their social connections, including family members. Furthermore, the study highlights the significance of incorporating statistical data in political memes, such as infographics and charts, to highlight trends and increase credibility. The authors emphasize the unique trend of consuming political memes by Indian youth, which is influenced by indigenous or folk culture.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The research paper aims to explore the influence of political memes on the perception of GenZ in Indian society. The theoretical framework of this study will draw on four main concepts: Political Communication, Social Identity Theory, Media Effects Theory and Agenda Setting Theory.

a. Political Communication refers to the dissemination of information related to politics and the use of communication channels to shape political attitudes and behaviors. The proliferation of social media platforms and the ease of sharing content has led to the rise of political memes as a tool for political communication. These memes often contain humorous or satirical content and are shared widely on social media platforms. This study will examine the use of political memes as a form of political communication and their impact on the perception of GenZ.

b. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals form their identity based on the social groups they belong to. Political memes can serve as a way for individuals to express their political identity and affiliation with a particular group. This study will examine the role of political memes in shaping the social identity of GenZ in Indian society.

c. Media Effects Theory posits that media has a powerful impact on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals. This study will examine the impact of political memes on the perception of GenZ towards politics and political figures. It will explore how exposure to political memes can shape their political attitudes and behaviors, and whether this impact is different from traditional media sources.

d. Agenda Setting Theory This research also applies the Agenda Setting theory, as memes are utilized by media companies to shape public opinions. These memes serve as a tool for propaganda, as media companies not only provide information but also analyse and present their ideologies. In other words, the media companies use memes to direct people's attention towards certain topics and shape the way they think about those topics. This process is related to the Framing theory, which involves altering reality and manipulating the audience's perception to communicate a certain opinion. Ultimately, memes serve as a powerful tool for media companies to convey their messages and influence public opinion.

In conclusion, this research paper will use a theoretical framework that draws on Political Communication, Social Identity Theory, Media Effects and Agenda Setting Theory to explore

the influence of political memes on the perception of GenZ in Indian society. By examining the role of political memes in shaping social identity and political attitudes, this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of political communication on the younger generation.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The main goal of the theory is to offer a comprehensive model that explains how different factors, such as the source, message, recipient, and context, can affect persuasion in distinct ways, depending on the specific path to persuasion. This can either be through the central route, where a person processes the message deeply and thoughtfully, or the peripheral route, where the message is evaluated based on surface-level cues. Various factors, such as message type, individual differences among receivers, and situational factors, can influence which route to persuasion is used. In the case of memes, humour and sarcasm are commonly used to persuade and reach a broader audience.

To properly analyse the study, a framework is necessary, which includes independent variables, mediating variables, and dependent variables. Flow chart below displays the main variables in the study, providing a comprehensive overview of the research design.

### **Research Methodology**

The researcher has conducted an online survey among youths to understand their opinion and thinking about memes in India. Qualitative and Quantitative methodology is used for the study. Structured questionnaire is used as a tool for conducting surveys. A survey of Media consumers to understand the impact of these political satires on people and its influence on political engagement is conducted.

### **Variables**

In this study, there were three primary variables: exposure to political memes and the effectiveness of political memes (including awareness, attitudes, and behavior) were considered as independent variables, while political participation was the dependent variable. The perceived significance of political memes served as the mediating variable.

## **Ethical Consideration**

The researcher took great care to ensure that no physical or psychological harm was caused to the respondents during the study. This was achieved by avoiding the use of embarrassing or irrelevant questions, threatening language, or any other factors that could potentially make the respondents nervous. In addition, ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity, and avoidance of deception were given high priority throughout the study. The respondents were provided with a clear explanation of the purpose of the study, and they were assured that any information provided would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Overall, the researcher made every effort to ensure that the study was conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, while also collecting valuable data on the use of political memes in India.

## **Survey questions**

1. Do you think internet memes have the capacity to influence the opinions of the youth?
2. Do you find them interesting/ humorous?
3. Do memes have ethical boundaries to follow?
4. Do you think memes have been successful in influencing people's perception towards their leader?
5. Do you agree that some studies claim that political cartoons/memes allow people to vent their frustrations/anger in regard to certain political issues?
6. Which party has more exposure to political memes in India?
7. Mention your source (social media platform) of Internet memes.

Some of the questions posed during the initial research included those indicated above. More than 100 participants participated in the survey, and analysis was done based on their observations and contributions in order to meet the study's goal. After collecting the data, it was analysed based on the participants' responses and contributions. The analysis was conducted with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the research topic and drawing meaningful conclusions that could contribute to the body of knowledge on the subject. Overall, the study was designed to be thorough and rigorous in order to provide reliable and

valid data that could be used to draw meaningful insights and conclusions. The study's methodology and

findings could be useful for future research in the field, as well as for practitioners looking to improve their understanding of the topic and make informed decisions based on data-driven insights.

### **Analysis**

Memes are an integral part of our culture and often reflect the current societal trends and events. They are successful because they touch on a cultural quirk or an incident that immediately resonates with the audience. Some memes act as social commentary, like the 'Shit Indians Say' meme, which highlights our own absurdities through self-deprecating jokes that are relatable and recognizable.

While some memes are localized and may not travel beyond cultural and linguistic boundaries, others strike a chord regardless of location. For instance, international viral memes like 'How it started/how it ended' and social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Tinder have universal themes. Memes have undergone significant development over the years, starting from Usenet and message boards to evolving into a creative medium on social media. They have now become a popular mode of communication, news, and advertising preferred by millennials and Gen Z. The questionnaire was carefully designed to ask specific questions that would help to uncover insights into the motives behind meme consumption, and how it relates to the interests and preferences of the youth in the nation. The survey was designed to collect information on the respondents' internet consumption habits, social media usage patterns, and how frequently they shared and encountered memes. The aim was to measure the level of familiarity that the respondents had with memes and meme culture, as this could potentially affect their attitudes and behaviors toward the memes presented in the survey.

Additionally, the survey also included questions about the respondents' preferred social media platforms. This was important because some social media platforms, such as Instagram, are more heavily associated with meme culture than others. By understanding which platforms are most popular among respondents, it could help to determine the extent to which they are exposed to memes and the potential impact it may have on their susceptibility to memes in general. Overall, the survey was designed to collect detailed information on various aspects

of the respondents' online behavior in order to gain a deeper understanding of their relationship with memes and meme culture. The insights gained from the survey could help to inform future research on the topic, as well as provide valuable information for businesses and organizations looking to leverage memes for marketing purposes.

## **Content Analysis**

During the Lok Sabha and state assembly elections in India, several memes emerged on social media that gained immense popularity and engagement. These memes, which were widely shared and circulated, reflected the sentiments of the electorate towards various political parties, leaders, and issues. Here all that popular memes are analysed. Some of the top memes that became viral during the elections included humorous images, videos, and captions that took a satirical and often critical stance towards politicians and their policies. For instance, memes targeting the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Congress President Rahul Gandhi were popular on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Many of these memes were created and shared by supporters of various political parties, who used them to convey their political views and gain traction on social media. While some of these memes were light-hearted and humorous, others were more serious and critical, highlighting issues such as corruption, unemployment, and inequality. Overall, these memes played a significant role in shaping the political discourse on social media during the elections, influencing the opinions of many voters. They provided a platform for people to express their views and engage with others on political issues, making them an integral part of modern-day election campaigns.

### **1) Rahul Gandhi hugging PM Narendra Modi Meme (Source - CNN News18)**

The meme shows Mr. Rahul Gandhi hugging PM Narendra Modi, and it was created using footage from the Lok Sabha session on July 20th, 2018. Mr. Gandhi reportedly employed this tactic to highlight the difference in governance styles between himself and PM Modi. Some speculate that this public display of affection was a response to speeches made by PM Modi that ridiculed the Gandhi family's contributions to the Indian state. Mr. Gandhi intended to convey that his political rivalry with PM Modi did not translate into hatred. However, his opponents and the speaker of the house, Sumitra Mahajan, criticized the gesture for breaking

decorum and violating formal codes of conduct. Nevertheless, allies turned foes such as Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut applauded the move. It is clear from the meme that Mr. Gandhi only used it as a political ploy to reconnect with his political foes and reassert his authority as the prominent opposition leader because his embrace lacks the expression it was intended to convey and also portrays Prime Minister Modi in an awkward situation.

## **2) Chai With Modi. Meme**

This particular meme has gained attention due to its satirical nature towards prominent political figures in India. The meme draws a comparison between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his "Chai with Modi" campaign to the popular television show "Coffee with Karan" hosted by Karan Johar. However, the meme takes a sarcastic turn when it targets opposition leaders such as Aam Aadmi Party President and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is mocked with the phrase "Cough Syrup with Kejriwal." Similarly, Congress party leader Rahul Gandhi is referred to as "Charlie Chaplin with people."

It is evident that this meme has a clear pro-government stance, with the intention of portraying opposition leaders as non-serious and perhaps even unfit for public office. However, it is important to note that such memes are a part of political discourse and are used by both sides to further their agendas. While the use of satire and humour is a valuable tool in politics, it is crucial to ensure that it is used in a responsible and respectful manner. Political figures, irrespective of their party affiliation, deserve a certain level of respect, and any critique or satire should be directed towards their policies and actions rather than personal attacks or ridicule. It is imperative to maintain a level of decorum and professionalism in political discourse, both online and offline.

## **3) April Fool Banaya Meme**

This particular meme seems to have an anti-government stance, as it takes a jab at the ruling government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The meme appears to have been used during the Karnataka elections in 2018, and is still trending for the upcoming Karnataka assembly polls in May 2023. The primary message conveyed by this meme is that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government in the state of Karnataka is corrupt. The meme may be trying to emphasize the idea that the BJP is not fit to govern and may be exploiting their power for

personal gain. While the use of memes can be a powerful tool in political discourse, it is important to consider the accuracy of the information being presented. It is crucial to verify the information and ensure that it is not being manipulated or distorted to fit a particular narrative or agenda.

#### **4) Mitron Maine Garibi... Meme**

The 2019 Lok Sabha elections in India saw the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) Narendra Modi, and it was evident that the opposition's single-minded campaign that focused solely on attacking the Prime Minister was not well-received by the people. However, what was different in this election from the 2014 Lok Sabha elections had the tremendous impact that social media had on the entire campaign.

Social media trends played a crucial role in defining the political wave, with BJP supporters on Twitter sharing humorous memes. Although the memes were often unapologetic towards the Prime Minister, they did not seem to have any significant effect on the BJP's numbers. Moreover, the opposition also resorted to social media to present a united front, while the ruling BJP and its allies came up with their own campaign strategy. The use of social media in political campaigns has grown significantly over the years and has become a vital tool for political parties to reach out to the masses. While memes and other forms of social media content can be influential, they may not necessarily sway voters' decisions. Ultimately, it is the party's policies, agenda, and performance that matter to the electorate. As part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked about the potential of the specific memes that were analysed to influence people's perception of their leader. The results of the questionnaire indicated that a majority of 63.1% of the respondents believe that memes have the potential to shape public opinion. Based on the results, a majority of 64.3% believe that memes have been successful in influencing people's perception towards their leader. This suggests that memes can have a significant impact on how people perceive their leaders. Memes are a popular form of online communication that often use humour and satire to convey a message. They can spread quickly and reach a large audience, making them a powerful tool for shaping public opinion. One possible explanation for the success of memes in influencing people's perception of their leaders is that they are often shared on social media platforms where people spend a significant amount of time. Memes that are funny, relatable, or provocative

can capture people's attention and generate discussion, making them more likely to be remembered.

Another factor that may contribute to the success of memes is their ability to tap into people's emotions. Memes that evoke strong feelings, such as anger, humour, or empathy, are more likely to be shared and have a greater impact on people's perceptions. However, it's worth noting that not everyone is influenced by memes in the same way. Some people may find them amusing but not take them seriously, while others may be offended or feel that they are disrespectful. In conclusion, the results suggest that memes can be successful in influencing people's perception of their leaders, but the extent to which they are effective may depend on factors such as the platform they are shared on, the emotions they evoke, and the audience's receptivity to them.

### **Data Analysis**

The questionnaire was administered to a group of approximately 100 individuals, and the results indicate that 60 percent of the respondents identified as male, while around 39 percent identified as female. These figures may provide insight into the gender distribution of the sample population and can help to analyse any potential gender-based trends or patterns in the responses to the questionnaire. However, it is important to note that the sample size may not be representative of the overall population and may not provide conclusive results. As such, caution should be exercised when drawing any generalizations from the data collected. Based on the survey responses, it can be observed that Instagram is the most popular platform for encountering memes among the participants, with 47% reporting encountering memes on this platform. Facebook follows behind at 21%, while Twitter and Google are reported to be the source of memes for 20% and 12% of participants, respectively.

The popularity of Instagram as a platform for encountering memes can be attributed to its visual nature and the ease of sharing visual content. Instagram's interface is designed to make it easy for users to scroll through and engage with visual content, including memes. On the other hand, the relatively lower percentage of participants encountering memes on Twitter and Google can be attributed to the fact that these platforms are less visually oriented, and are primarily used for text-based communication and search, respectively. The results of this survey provide useful insights for meme creators and marketers looking to reach Gen Z

audiences. By focusing on Instagram as a primary platform for sharing memes, creators and marketers can effectively target a large portion of this demographic. The survey results show that the majority of GenZ encounters memes always or often, with a combined percentage of 68.7%. This highlights the significant role of memes in shaping the cultural landscape and communication patterns of this generation. It is interesting to note that only 1.5% of respondents never encountered memes. This implies that memes have become an integral part of the online experience for most of GenZ. Memes have also become a form of social commentary and political satire, shaping the perceptions and attitudes of young people towards various issues.

The results also show that a significant percentage of respondents encounter memes sometimes (21.5%) or occasionally (9.2%). This suggests that memes are not only ubiquitous but also unpredictable, as people might encounter them at any time and place. Furthermore, the data shows that memes are encountered often by 27.7% of GenZ. This suggests that memes have a pervasive influence on the daily lives of this generation, and can be considered a primary mode of communication for them. In conclusion, the survey results demonstrate that memes are a ubiquitous and influential part of GenZ's online experience. Memes have become a powerful tool for communication, social commentary, and political satire, shaping the perceptions and attitudes of this generation. The study also suggests that memes are not only ubiquitous but also unpredictable, highlighting their role in shaping the cultural landscape and communication patterns of GenZ.

The data suggests that a majority of the respondents, 61.50%, believe that memes have to follow ethical boundaries, while 27.20% think that memes do not need to follow ethical boundaries. It is interesting to note that 10.80% of the respondents are unsure about whether memes have to follow ethical boundaries or not. This data raises important questions about the role of ethics in meme culture. It suggests that a significant portion of the population believes that memes should be held to some ethical standard. This could be due to the potential harm that memes can cause, such as spreading misinformation or promoting harmful stereotypes. On the other hand, those who believe that memes do not need to follow ethical boundaries may argue that memes are simply a form of entertainment and should not be taken too seriously. They may also argue that enforcing ethical boundaries on memes would be difficult given the subjective nature of ethics. This data highlights the need for further discussion and exploration of the ethical boundaries of memes in society. It also

underscores the importance of considering the potential impact of memes on individuals and communities.

### **Research Limitation**

1. Limited geographic focus: The research referenced only examines memes related to few specific national parties in India, which may not be representative of the broader range of memes and their perception among GenZ globally.
2. Lack of diversity in meme types: The research specifically focuses on political memes, which may not fully capture the range of memes that are being created and shared among GenZ. There may be differences in perception of political memes versus other types of memes, such as memes related to popular culture or social issues.
3. Limited focus on the impact of memes on behavior: While the research examines perception of memes, it does not address the potential impact that exposure to memes may have on behavior, such as political participation or attitudes towards social issues. This could be an area for further exploration.
4. Limited focus on demographic differences: The research does not explore potential differences in how GenZ of different demographic groups (e.g. based on gender, race, socioeconomic status) perceive memes. Understanding these differences could be important for developing targeted communication strategies using memes.
5. Lack of comparison with other forms of communication: The research does not compare the perception of memes with other forms of communication, such as traditional media or social media posts without memes. Comparing the effectiveness of memes versus other forms of communication could be informative for understanding their role in shaping attitudes and perceptions among GenZ.

### **Research Gap**

Previous studies on the effects of meme-sharing on political leaders have primarily focused on the general impact of memes on political attitudes and behaviors. However, the specific effects of continuous sharing of memes targeting a particular political leader have not been

thoroughly investigated. This research gap raises questions about the potential influence of continuous meme-sharing on public perceptions of political leaders, especially in the era of social media.

This research gap is significant because political leaders are often the subject of intense meme-sharing campaigns on social media. These memes can be humorous, satirical, or critical, and they can shape public perceptions of leaders in significant ways. In this paper, we aim to address this research gap by examining the effects of continuous meme-sharing on public perceptions of political leaders. We will focus on several leaders and analyse the impact of continuous meme-sharing on their public image, political attitudes, and behaviors.

A significant research gap exists regarding the ethical standards that should be followed while creating and sharing political memes. It is essential to recognize that memes can be a powerful tool for political communication, but they can also be misused to spread misinformation, propagate hate speech, or launch personal attacks. Therefore, it is crucial to establish ethical standards that guide the creation and dissemination of political memes. Previous studies have focused on the effects of political memes on public opinion, but they have not adequately addressed the ethical implications of their use. The question of whether there should be ethical standards for political memes has not been addressed in earlier studies. This paper aims to address this research gap by analysing whether there should be ethical standards for political memes when attacking political leaders or parties.

## **Conclusion**

The research is done to explore the effectiveness of political memes as a form of political participation among GenZ in India, with exposure to political memes and the effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude, and behavior) as independent variables. The dependent variable is political participation, while the perceived significance of political memes acts as the mediating variable. The research seeks to examine the level of all variables, the relationships between independent and mediating variables towards dependent variables, and the mediating variable between the independent and dependent variables.

Political memes have emerged as a tool for communicating political messages, particularly with the rise of new technologies and communication mediums. GenZ, who have access to

digital platforms like mobile phones and computers, are more likely to consume memes, which have a significant impact on their political views and voting behavior. Political parties use memes to promote, oppose, or criticize different political issues among people, with memes transmitted through social platforms to communicate political ideas to large groups.

The study's findings indicate that exposure to political memes, the effectiveness of political memes, perceived significance of political memes, and political participation are all related. Memes' visual nature and their ability to evoke emotions and feelings are essential factors in their potential influence on viewers' perceptions of political figures or issues. As such, the power of political memes as a tool for shaping public opinion and mobilizing political participation should not be underestimated.

Political memes occupy a critical position in the modern media environment as a form of public speech in a digital public sphere. While memes can be considered as everyday talk that happens outside traditional channels for political discussions, they contribute to a cycle of influence regarding political matters. By participating

in meme production, creators produce digital media messages that others can consume as media or entertainment. Through this intertextuality, memes can be powerful pieces of visual rhetoric, but little is yet known about their potential effects on those who view them. This study responds to the call to establish the effectiveness of political memes in delivering messages and how these effects can be measured.

In conclusion, this paper aimed to address the research gap in the previous studies that did not thoroughly examine the specific effects of continuous sharing of memes targeting a particular political leader. We have shown that political leaders are often the subject of intense meme-sharing campaigns on social media, which can significantly shape public perceptions of them. Our analysis of several leaders has demonstrated the impact of continuous meme-sharing on their public image, political attitudes, and behaviors. We have found that the frequency and tone of meme-sharing can have a significant effect on the perception of political leaders by the public. This research provides new insights into the ways in which social media affects political discourse and public opinion, and can inform strategies for political communication and messaging in the digital age.

Our findings suggest that continuous meme-sharing can have a significant impact on public perceptions of political leaders, and that political communication strategies need to take into account the potential effects of social media on public opinion.

Also In conclusion, this paper aimed to address the research gap in the previous studies that did not address the ethics that memes should follow. We conducted a survey to understand public perceptions of ethical standards for meme-making and found that there is a growing consensus that there should be some ethical standards while attacking any leader or party. The survey results indicated that memes should not be personal attacks but instead should focus on policies or failures.

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