

IDENTIFYING MEME PATTERN BETWEEN PARENTS (BABY BOOMER) AND CHILDREN (GEN Z) IN COMMUNICATION

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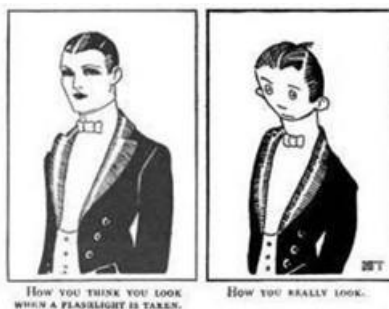
*Filiation Communication,
Generation Gap,
Intergenerational Meme,
Memetic, Semiotic*

ABSTRACT

One of the communication modes that has been used in society is humor or joke or what people say nowadays as memes. Just like language, which is evolving over time, humor such as memes is also evolving and creating a generational gap between the decades of 2000 and 2020. By using qualitative methods, drawing from subjective experiences by perceiving memes for years before using it on collecting data, considering context, meaning, and interpretation objectively to understand the phenomenon in detail. As well as reviewing, through the social media platforms commonly used by each generation, to understand the pattern and study the transition and evolution in humor that often causes audiences from other generations to lose track of the humor style. The phenomena that brought here is that Gen Z could understand earlier humor styles or memes from the earlier generation, but not the other way around. The children are expected to interpret the parents' (Baby Boomer) style of humor due to their time spent surfing on the internet and social media, adding their knowledge to understand it, makes them easier to understand many internet cultures, while parents are otherwise. This article also studies the context of some of the main patterns, symbolism, and culture in memes that are usually shared from children to parents. Analyzing and elaborating on meaning, interpretation, and context to be more easily understood and to prevent further misunderstanding that can cause miscommunication between children (Gen Z) and the parents (Baby Boomer).

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the communication modes in society is the spreading of meme culture or jokes. We often see that every joke differs only by the different decades, just like language. Like an entity, language grows and evolves over time, Since the first meme ever identified until today.



Picture 1.1

The first meme ever identified might be in the 1920's decade from a satirical magazine, The Judge. It can't be identified as a meme for several reasons. The term meme starts to become popular in the 21st century as a term for a joke. Different from any kind of joke, the name meme came from the Greek word *mimema* which means "imitated" and can be associated with a word "mimicking." Or

according to Richard Dawkins, memes are "ideas that spread from brain to brain" in his book The Selfish Gene (1976).



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Each generation has their own communication style that diverse over decades. This what creates a phenomenon called the “misunderstanding gap”. This also impacts how every generation speaks based on their age's background. Baby Boomer likes typical Facebook joke that is way too simple for Gen Z, while Gen Z’s jokes that has plot and reference which is way too complicated for Baby Boomers.

This study is to observe how each generation incorporates their misunderstandings into humorous communication. The diversity will result in different types of humor, making it challenging for the other generation to understand, especially between parents and children communication, when it comes to having quality time together.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Grundlingh, it is mentioned that “In recent years, research on memes has increased. The research topics include the language found in memes (Davidson 2009; De la Rosa-Carrillo 2015), discourse and identity in participatory media through the use of memes (Milner 2012) and the cultural logic of photo-based meme genres (Shifman 2014).” (Grundlingh, 2017). Some websites or organizations that have been established for explaining humor, especially memes for the last few decades are “Know Your Meme” and “Lessons In Meme Culture (LIMC)”.

Using semiotics as the approach to this study meets the relevancy to elaborate, explain, and break down the phenomena of different patterns in memes. Especially, memes that are commonly exchanged between parents and children nowadays. As well as acts as a bridge between different generation’s understandings towards each other.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employs qualitative methods by examining subjective experiences, objective observations, meanings, and interpretations to describe phenomena in detail. In which this research, a lot of examples and explanations from the author's experiences.

Some platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter (now X), Instagram, and Tik Tok will be used to view the types of memes across generations. The memes involved in this study will have context through pictures and captio. As well as the memes that young people (mostly gen z) usually show to their parents (baby boomers).

There are a total of 39 memes found across the five social media platforms mentioned. The memes collected have upload dates ranging from the mid 2000’s-2010’s for Facebook memes, the early 2010’s-2020’s for Instagram and Twitter memes, and the mid 2010’s-2020’s for YouTube and TikTok memes. Most memes are being shared and reposted freely across the internet to be shared and to gain more exposure among whoever feels related to the content.

These are some examples of meme types that are not analyzed here (no context, absurd, and random memes).



Picture 2.1.1



Picture 2.1.2



Picture 2.1.3



Picture 2.1.4

These are some examples of meme types that are analyzed here (mimicking situation memes).





Picture 2.2.1



Picture 2.2.2



Picture 2.2.3



Picture 2.2.4

The study categorizes memes and analyzes patterns across different platforms, linking these patterns to each generation's understanding and behavior toward peers. Then finding gaps between generational meme patterns that often lead to confusion and aims to clarify each pattern for better comprehension among generations seeking to understand each other's meme patterns.

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a semiotic approach to analyze the visual aspects of the subject. Some memes are filled with pictures as the main focus to mimic the context in caption can be studied through a semiotic approach in order to break down the description, context, symbol, and literal meaning. Especially the memes which parents (Baby Boomers) and young people (Gen Z) share to each other that often create misunderstandings.

3.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data was collected from platforms like YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Pinterest, and Google. Some platforms can be the source of the memes and others can be the place of distributed and shared.

This analysis focuses on Gen Z meme patterns, particularly those shared with Baby Boomers, who often misunderstand them. The selected memes for analysis have clear context and meaning, those that represent or mimic concepts, rather than those lacking coherence.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok each have distinct meme styles, with observations categorized by platform to define generational differences in understanding memes.

Meme from Boomer & Baby Boomer generation (mostly Facebook):



Picture 3.1.1



Picture 3.1.2



Picture 3.1.3



Picture 3.1.4

Facebook, established in 2004, is predominant among Millennials and was one of the first platforms introduced to Baby Boomers. It features humor and memes popular with older generations; half of them made by artists, half often lack context and are primarily for entertainment through captions with minion pictures as a complementary aspect. Some memes



are complaining about the youth generation according to Matthew Chatfield in his article “Why Do Boomers Like Minions” (2022).

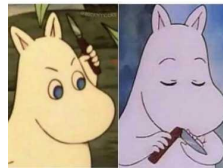
Memes from the Millennial & Gen Z generation (mostly Twitter & Instagram):

When you've got a deep rage burning inside you but you've got to act nice because you're at work...



Picture 3.2.1

typing an entire rant and deciding not to press send



Picture 3.2.2

Me: It's just a cough
 Mom: It's just a cough
 Doctor: It's just a cough
 Google:



Picture 3.2.3

How I feel when my hair is not washed



Picture 3.2.5

Twitter, founded in 2006, serves both millennials and Gen Z. The platform is primarily used for sharing memes, which have evolved from simpler formats to include minimal editing. Memes from these generations often feature straightforward captions with images to actually represent the context, resembling older meme patterns but with more relevant imagery.

Instagram, established in 2010, serves as a transition point between millennials and Gen Z as well. From what appears to be, Instagram has millennials that are more relevant with the updates of the current time meme patterns.

Meme from Gen Z generation (mostly YouTube & TikTok):



Picture 3.3.1



Picture 3.3.2



Picture 3.3.3



Picture 3.3.3

YouTube, established in 2005, has gathered memes through early 2000's until now. Its user base mostly involving Gen Z, this makes the platform to maintain a relevant range of humor that evolves with each decade and archiving meme diversity throughout the decade.

TikTok, established in 2017, is primarily utilized by younger generations such as Gen Z and Gen Alpha. Gen Z memes are dominating the platform, showcasing increasingly creative meme patterns characterized by comparisons, intensity, editing, and riddle joke with hidden meanings.

General Patterns from Gen Z and Baby Boomer

when u tell your mom a funny story and it turns into a lecture



Picture 3.4.1

Mememes analyzed are those shared between Gen Z and baby boomers, highlighting generational misunderstandings. When Gen Z shares humorous memes with their parents, it often leads to miscommunication, with parents lecturing rather than understanding their children's attempts to share joy



during quality time.

Gen Z's Meme Pattern in General:

"When I'm 25, I'm gonna buy my own house, buy my own car and live my own life"
Me at 25:



Picture 3.5.1

Gen Z employs various images, including roughly edited ones, to humorously represent and mimic situations, often using widely recognized references for their audience.

when your kids get hepatitis B instead of hepatitis A+



Picture 3.6.1

The use of a meme to illustrate a situation need not be based on popular pop culture, it can stem from a familiar and relatable image or an ordinary picture that humorously represents the context. As long as the image resemble the mental image or the feeling.

Roland Barthes' theory simply explains the phenomenon how memes serve as both depictions and descriptions, effectively conveying messages indirectly through images as a symbol.

(Baby) Boomer's Meme Pattern in General:



Picture 3.7.1

Baby boomers commonly put captions that tell their situation and simply just add supporting pictures just to sweeten the overall image. They often used minion pictures that sometimes have one of the aspects in the caption they put (in this image, phone to send message). They also usually put captions that jokes around complaint.



Picture 3.8.1

Some artists create memes that resemble comics, expressing short plots related to complaints over the younger generation's habit. These memes often convey humor about the situations depicted directly in their drawings.



The Phenomenon Where Gen Z Understands Baby Boomer's Meme Pattern, While It Does Not Happen the Same Way the Other Way Around

Picture 4.1.1

Facebook Boomer Starter Pack



Gen Z generally has a better understanding of Baby Boomer humor and meme trends but not the other way around. This due to Gen Z's extensive internet exploration of cultural patterns. They often create memes that reference Baby Boomer content as a slander, showing Gen Z's understanding of humor across generations.

Picture 4.2.1



The analysis focuses on the meme patterns shared from children to parents, highlighting that Generation Z understands and recognizes the humor in Baby Boomer memes. In contrast, older generations misinterpret the meme patterns shared by Gen Z, viewing them as serious rather than humorous. (A reminder that this actually happens).

Picture 4.2.2

Parents often mistaken the context as literal meaning. In this example where a person conveys their condition to their mother. The mother mistook the feeling conveyed there about the little monkey's, which its image was only a supporting image for a purpose to enhance the atmosphere about the child's feeling, not the monkey's.

Discussion

Meme Patterns from Gen Z That Are Still Unreadable for Baby Boomers

The analysis here will explore the meaning of memes shared between children and parents, categorizing them based on similar patterns for further explanation.

1. "My-/Me When-/When-" and "How-" pattern:

This pattern This involves using roughly edited or exaggerated images to humorously mimic or represent a situation, making it the clearest form to understand.



Picture 5.1.1

A confused person is depicted alongside a caption defining "roasting" as severe criticism expressing annoyance. The inclusion of Pinocchio illustrates that if his nose does not grow longer, it signifies he was honest while roasting the speaker. A longer nose would indicate dishonesty.



Me, about to make an outrageous amount of spaghetti because I never know how much to cook



Me: "Why haven't I made any friends in college?"

me when the lecture ends



when you have to go to the bathroom after your dad



My brain after I try something new and I'm not instantly pro at it in 5 seconds



Picture 5.1.2

A man carries a large bundle of straws on his shoulder, symbolizing an equivalent mountain of spaghetti, illustrating the speaker's uncertainty on the appropriate portion size to cook, as both visually resemble each other.

Picture 5.1.3

A scene from "The Office" showcases a man hurriedly leaving, with the screen frame blurring to emphasize his rush. This scene symbolizes his eagerness to depart after the lecture, illustrating how this behavior contributes to speaker's difficulty in making friends.

Picture 5.1.4

A scene featuring Jerry from "Tom and Jerry" wearing a safety mask humorously illustrates the discomfort of having to use the bathroom after his father, highlighting the strong, unpleasant smell typically left behind.

Picture 5.1.5

A picture of Shaquille O'Neal, a well-known figure in pop culture, shows him making a "stop" gesture. This image symbolizes the brain's response to new experiences, emphasizing that mastering new skills requires time and that results are not always immediate.

2. "Hidden Meaning" pattern:

This pattern employs unrelated images that effectively represent an object or situation, requiring deeper contemplation akin to a more complex version of "show don't tell." A closer examination reveals understanding in under a minute.

Realtor: 36 People have died in this house and it's haunted

Horror movie families:



Picture 5.2.1

A scene from the animated cartoon "Spongebob SquarePants" features characters entering a house, unaware of a character trapped beneath the sand floor due to the house's weight. The caption humorously references horror movie tropes, suggesting that such situations often occur in haunted houses, with the trapped character symbolizing a "unalived" individual. This familiar cartoon scene serves to engage viewers by

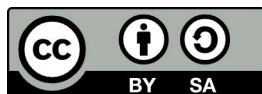
providing a relatable reference.

Nobody: Bartenders for no reason:



Picture 5.2.2

The text describes a mechanic pouring lubricant in an atypical manner, akin to the way bartenders serve drinks. This unusual movement emphasizes the similarities towards bartender in their pouring technique.



Things I'll never see in my life



Picture 5.2.3

Several images depict creatures unseen to the observer, accompanied by text stating "a government program that works efficiently." The association suggests that both the mythical creatures and an efficient government program are equally nonexistent in reality.

My alarm clock settings in the morning



Picture 5.2.4

A painting depicts a person being simultaneously attacked by multiple figures, symbolizing a series of alarms set 15 minutes apart. This imagery conveys the speaker's experience of being jolted awake by overwhelming alarms in succession.

Vegetables: We need to be stored in special conditions; with ideal humidity and temperature
Potatoes:



Picture 5.2.5

The image depicts a person covered in dust, symbolizing potatoes. Potatoes can be stored in rough, dry conditions and remain intact, unlike other vegetables that require specific storage conditions to maintain freshness.

3. Comparison Pattern:

This pattern emphasizes comparisons using familiar references, complemented by supportive images and often exaggerated narration to enhance engagement and evoke emotions.

Falling off a roof when you're a kid



Sneezing too hard when you're an adult



Picture 5.3.1

The text compares the intensity of intensity of pain experienced in childhood with those in adulthood, highlighting how feelings of physical pain differs at various ages.

How I imagined drug dealers as a kid



Actual drug dealers



Picture 5.3.2

Two images from the animated cartoon "Spongebob SquarePants" are described, contrasting a fierce character with an average-looking character. The fierce figure symbolizes drug dealers in mind, while in reality, drug dealers often resemble average individuals.

Girls in the kitchen



Boys in the kitchen

Picture 5.3.3

The text contrasts the average cooking results from girls and boys, highlighting that girls produce well-arranged dishes while boys create unusual arrangements for fun and entertainment.





Picture 5.3.4

The meme features two images of apples bitten into, highlighting the process of oxidation as the flesh darkens. This is paralleled with two images of Michael Jackson, representing his skin transformation over time due to vitiligo, but in reverse it is emphasizing the theme of change and

oxidation.



Picture 5.3.5

A picture features a dog next to a monster dog statue. The caption contrasts real-life mutations, which tend to be docile and harmless, with those in sci-fi movies, which are often fatal and lead to significant physical changes, as commonly portrayed in fiction.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the humor styles of parents and children differ significantly, leading to a disconnect in understanding. Children tend to share humor that is relatable and easily grasped, whereas many Gen Z memes include references and symbols that are often unfamiliar to older generations. This generational divide aligns with Roland Barthes' theory, emphasizing the context and meaning over the specifics of references.

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