

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF POLITICAL MEMES AS A FORM OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AMONGST MILLENNIALS IN UGANDA

Faiswal Kasirye

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of political memes as a form of political participation among millennials in Uganda. The study examined the relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior) and political participation among millennials in Uganda. Additionally, mediating effects of perceived significance of political memes on those variables were also tested together. Elaboration likelihood model of persuasion was the theory for this study. Self-administered questionnaire was employed and respondents were recruited using non random sampling. Two hundred and twenty-five participants took part in the survey to gather responses on the subject. The analysis of the data included bivariate and partial correlations as well as descriptive analyses. All the bivariate tests performed on the effectiveness of political memes emerged significant. The test on the mediating effect of perceived significance of political memes using partial correlation also partially mediated the variables. Some of the significant correlations performed previously reduced in their strength and others turned out non-significant. The findings of the study inform us, that exposure to political memes is an important factor that influences participation of citizens in politics as well as its significance to them. Thus the increased use of the memes especially by millennials in the politics of the country. Therefore, the government of Uganda and the Uganda communications commission should consider formulating future policies to govern online publications with a view of improving their services and in line with citizen expectation.

Keywords: political memes, political participation, Elaboration likelihood model, millennials.

INTRODUCTION

Since 2016 presidential election in Uganda, every national political event including street demonstrations for and against the government, protest against the 2016 re-election of president Museveni, releases of political leaders under contested premises, and of-course electoral campaigns have been scrutinized by online political discussions among Internet users, with online memes gaining prominence. No wonder, the elections were marked as the “elections of memes”. Candidates shared their perceptions by developing influential strategies for the Web, from content created specifically for Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook and other social platforms to widen their support base.

Coined by Dawkins (1976) referring to the viral spread of ideas, memes are defined as the analogous concept to the biological “gene”; they are self-replicating and present the knowledge, views, perceptions, and beliefs, which are communicated from person to person (Shifman, 2013). Memes are also units of information, ideas or mental representations, cultural instructions that are not only self-replicating but also contagious. The word “meme” is a contagious or viral process that fuels memetic ideas to move via texts, objects, images, sound, or behaviors. Memes are viewed figuratively as organic objects because they are selfishly driven to survive by replicating, circulating, and evolving in order to capture public attention (Sci & Dare, 2014).

Currently, it is nearly impossible to scroll through one’s social media feed and not see something political. And it’s not just reports and commentary from the known media companies Whether it’s a comic response to a politician’s tweet, comment or a post calling for awareness on an issue, political statements have increasingly been reaching people in an unlikely form of memes. Unfortunately, very few understand the power of political memes. Virality and humor is what drives them. It sometimes seems hard to believe that social media sites like Facebook and WhatsApp which were originally designed for keeping up with friends could influence our political views. While political memes have been around for quite some time, they became far more dominant with the 2016 presidential election in Uganda, but still voters didn’t quite understand their relevance in the communication industry and hence this study.

Therefore, in this paper, we shall focus on the effectiveness of “political memes” as a form of political participation amongst Ugandan millennials through the study of political memes.

This research paper thus deals with the study to:

1. Find out the pattern of exposure to political memes among Ugandan millennials.
2. Establish whether Ugandan millennials use memes to participate in politics.
3. Examine the relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior), perceived significance of memes and political participation among millennials in Uganda?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Studies on the uses of technology in political communication are thriving in Uganda and elsewhere on the continent. A number of studies have focused on the use of social network sites as part of a campaign strategy for political actors as Gainous and Wagner (2014) stipulate. These technological tools enable an identification of specific groups of voters, in order to gather

supporters and volunteers, this according to Marques and Sampaio (2011). Some analyses like that of Valenzuela (2013) point to connections between access of information on networks as an expression of political opinions and activism.

Memes have been generally described as shallow and natural content, a simple display of expression by Miltner (2011). This perception is perhaps mistaken, due to a lack of studies on the universe of political memes and their uses and appropriations in political contexts. Studies that have examined memes such as Ross and Rivers (2017); Bebić and Volarevic (2018); Martínez-Rolán and Piñero-Otero (2016) and others at large are largely concerned with critical informal analysis, making no attempt at outlining common patterns and features of political memes.

Social media has been playing a critical role in political elections. The 2008 U.S presidential election, dubbed the “Facebook Election,” was the first time voters could view and share debates, interviews, commercials and statements on-demand. 2012 saw the evolution continue with Barack Obama utilizing social platforms to not just distribute his message, but actually engage with his voters directly. At this time, visuals didn’t play a big role since social platforms like Instagram and Pinterest had just come into existence and Twitter had not yet fully integrated visuals. Over the past few years, however, people’s desire to communicate visually has caused these platforms to explode in popularity. Empowered with the ability to share images such as memes, voters today can distribute images to millions of people worldwide, and the impact that this is having on the current generation of millennials is overwhelming.

Another example is the 2016 United States of America election that was also regarded as the meme election. In February 2016, the Washington Post characterized the presidential primaries as “the most-memed election in the U.S. history” It is argued that president Donald Trump and his closest contender Hillary Clinton were both appealing to memes as an alternative to mainstream media. Infcat, the consensus in mainstream newspapers in the U.S was that memes had a remarkable ability to engage people who were not ordinarily involved in bipartisan political processes.

Internet and political studies in Uganda point to a need for further research on the relationships between political communication and new emerging technologies. Some researchers like Sampaio, et al. (2012) have examined the changes in the representative system and the introduction of online discussion processes and electronic participation platforms, breaks and links between candidates and voters in campaign strategies with new communicating dynamics Aggio (2016). There are, however, few studies that try to understand political and electoral components from a memes perspective.

In this paper, we are particularly concerned about investigating the changes in the circulation of political information on the Internet, especially those that appear more spontaneous. Our efforts focus on understanding the meme’s content and its political appropriations in a more immediate context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

As one of media effect theories, Elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of management explains how persuasion is used as a tool to affect opinions. (Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, 1980) argues, that the theory measures people’s willingness to engage in elaboration. This depends on their motivation and competence. In general, people are more motivated to elaborate when the message is important to them. The idea is that when a person is presented with information, they process it on a certain level of elaboration. There are two ways of persuasion. One that focuses on elaborating what is presented and the second, where an argument is formed to persuade a person and his/her opinion is manipulated. This is the peripheral route of persuasion. Memes are a tool of political participation that uses the cognitive and the peripheral route to communicate and influence public opinions. This tool of awareness uses humor and sarcasm as elements for persuasion. (McClure, 2016).

Exposure to political memes

The concept of memes was invented by Richard Dawkins who, in *The Selfish Gene* (1976), uses “meme” to refer to minimum cultural information units that move between individuals and generations, through the process of replication or transmission (Dawkins, 2006). According to this definition, memes can be songs, videos, catchphrases or images.

Memes have now become popular these days. There have been many websites like knowyourmeme.com, memedump.com, or memebase.com who act as an archival for the memes. Many professions like public relations and advertising personnel have started using memes creatively to communicate their messages in order to attract audiences. Memes that are used in political campaigns are aimed at creating public opinion and as a tool for propaganda (Bauckhage, 2011).

There has been an increase in the number of people who use the internet, social media platforms, as well as websites for their political activities (Nowak, 2016), as such, people are continuing to get exposed to this new medium of communication especially because the contemporarily texts and writings are fading out. People no longer want to read but they prefer to take a few seconds to view a meme and make a simple comment or adjustment to it and resend it to another destination. Whereas reading a text story will take them some time to finish. That’s why African countries like Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya Ghana and the likes, have since adopted the use of memes in their political communication in order to cope up with the current trends in the world. And as such, citizens in those countries have resorted to the consumption of memes for political content because the mainstream media they have all along been relying on, always deliver the news the following day, yet with the current technological advancements, the world have moved from the analogue trends.

Various researchers' mention, that exposure to political memes increases political attention and helps in learning about political issues especially in the digital world. This also leads to an increase in the feeling of political effectiveness and interest. Also, political memes are a mix of humor and user generated content. It thus includes the opinion of the masses and hence has a deeper impact on the audience. (Hajizada, 2010). People now days communicate such political content via social platforms like WhatsApp that they deem convenient especially to the millennials. They mostly receive and send memes as well as creating recreating them and hence they become viral on that account.

Effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitudes and behavior)

LaBerge (1997) associates awareness with an experience that becomes one's own experiences. It is also associated with the term attention. Attention is said to be linked to our expression, enhancement and control. In this study, the more aware an individual is about political mems, the more they fall in love and hence use the memes to communicate political messages.

According to (Malik et al, 2013), the more aware one is, the more familiar they get to a particular issue. In this case, the more people get familiar with political memes, the more they get attached to them and start using them in their daily communications including politics. Because the memes are always humorous in nature, their attraction is tempting because Political humor has been an important part of political communication in our societies. It attracts not only people who are active in politics but also helps in forming opinions for those who are not active participants in political issues and discussions.

Studies on the importance of memes indicate, that participatory media have been vital to the 21st century movements. Huntington (2013) adds, in democratic and non-democratic societies, citizens use memes to react, critique, protest and speak truth to power. Using social media platforms like reddit, Tumblr, twitter, facebook, Instagram, YouTube and the like, citizens spread political messages and mobiles support for their causes.

Culbertson (1968) defined attitude as a set of belief which helps in deciding if something is good or bad. He also includes the tendency to behave in a certain manner in terms of retaining or removing the activity. Therefore, if people regard political memes in a positive or negative manner, the tendency to behave or act includes engaging in their practice and participate in their creation, dissemination and discussion as well. Chaiklin (2011) adds, that if in any case attitude changes, behavior shall automatically change accordingly. Because behavior is closely associated with action of a human being towards a particular subject.

Perceived significance of political mems.

According to wang (2007), perception is the the human sixth sense since almost our cognitive functions rely on it. Perception, according to Wang (2007), helps in detecting, connecting, interpreting, and searching for internal information. Because it is closely linked to cognitive process, it helps in the development of our personality because once we perceive a message, we develop it until we get meaning out of it. It is related to human feelings and emotions since it interprets a situation for them. So once one receives a meme and they process it in their heads, their level of perception elevates to developing it or ignoring it for that matter. And once the perception is positive, the chances of engaging in politics with the developed meme are on a higher side.

A famous research by Berger & Milkman (2012) studies how emotion shapes social transmission or the viral dynamics. The findings from the research show, that the role of emotion is more complex than valence, whether the emotion is positive or negative alone. Although positive content is more viral than the negative ones, some contents with strong negative valence such as anxiety- and anger-inducing could be highly viral as well. The authors concluded that the content that "evokes high-arousal emotions (i.e., awe, anger, and anxiety), regardless of their valence, is more viral" (Berger & Milkman, 2012). Furthermore, the study by Heath, Bell, & Sternberg (2001) found that people were more likely to pass along contents that produce high level of "disgust". The role of "surprise" is also documented and the messages that contain elements of surprise with either positive or negative emotions have higher probability to be viral (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Dobeles, Lindgreen, Beverland, Vanhamme, & van Wilk, 2007).

Memes as Political Participation and Communication

Memes have quickly adapted to comment on a range of political issues in several countries, but there is still some debate about how they function as a form of political communication. Shifman (2014) argues that memes are used as a form of political participation, and that this participation can be broken into three categories: memes as persuasion, memes as grassroots action, and memes as models of expression.

Shifman (2014) uses the "Obama Girl" video, a video created by a young girl singing about her crush on candidate Barack Obama during the 2008 campaign, as an example of memes as political persuasion. She argues that voters are more influenced by friends and peers than mass media campaigns (Shifman, 2014). Videos like the "Obama Girl" meme can use simple, cheap video editing and creation to send a persuasive message out to a large community. As Grabe and Bucy (2009) argue, visual candidate framing can be very important to a campaign, and the "Obama Girl" video is an example of users creating a meme as a way to participate and comment on the media framing of Barack Obama as a young, attractive, and hip candidate.

Conceptual framework

The primary intention of the theory is to provide a unifying framework that could explain how the classic inputs into persuasion like the source, message, recipient, context could have different impacts, depending on the particular route to persuasion. Thus, either the central route or the peripheral route can be evoked in various situations involving different message types, individual differences among receivers, and environmental (or situational) factors. Here, memes use humor and sarcasm as elements of persuasion to spread them to wider audiences.

The framework below illustrates the main variables in the study; independent variables, mediating variables as well as dependent variables to help in conducting a proper analysis of the study as displayed in figure 1 below.

Independent variable

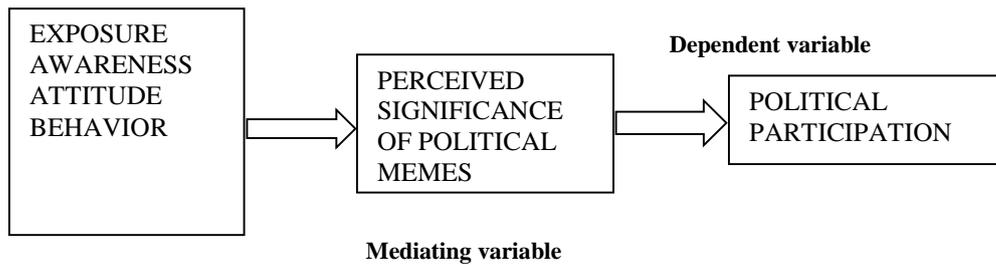


Figure 1. Source: Author 2019

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative survey is employed to the study where descriptive and inferential analyses are conducted to determine results from the study. The design was chosen because it helps in gathering more information on dependent and independent variables. The data that was collected sought to establish the effectiveness of political memes as a form of political participation amongst millennials in Uganda. A structured questionnaire is used as a tool for conducting the survey where non random sampling is employed to 300 respondents from millennials in Uganda specifically students of Islamic University in Uganda, carefully chosen young political actors and a few Kampala city residents as respondents to provide a quick snapshot of the status of political memes as a form of political participation among millennials in the country.

Variables

There were three main variables for this study namely; exposure to political memes and effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitudes, behavior) as independent variables, political participation as dependent variables and perceived significance of political memes as mediating variables. All the variables were measured on five Likert scale.

Ethical considerations

The researcher was careful to avoid causing physical or psychological harm to respondents by asking them embarrassing and irrelevant questions, threatening language or making respondents nervous (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Moreover, ethical considerations such as confidentiality, anonymity and avoidance of deception are important in social research. The purpose of this study was explained to the respondents and they were assured that the information gathered will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Closed ended questions were analyzed using SPSS to determine the results of the study while answering the research questions set out in the study to determine the effectiveness of political memes as a political participation amongst millennials in Uganda.

Findings and interpretation

There are two types of data analysis to be considered in this study namely; descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. For descriptive analysis, frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation is used for demographic information and the level of each variable.

Bivariate correlation is employed to analyze relationships between awareness, behavior, attitude, perception and exposure to political memes as well as political participation.

Relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior), perceived significance of political memes and political participation.

To test the first hypothesis (H1), Bivariate correlation is conducted to observe the relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior) as independent variable, political participation as the dependent variable and perceived significance of political memes as the mediating variables. Results show, that all the five variables tested emerged significant namely; awareness to political memes, Awareness to political memes, behavior towards political memes, attitudes towards political memes, perceived significance of political memes, results show, that the strengths of the relationship found were weak, however, all the correlations turned out to be highly statistically significant at .000 level. As indicated in **table 1 below**. Therefore, this means that the first hypothesis (**H1**) is accepted.

Furthermore, Political participation correlated significantly with all the five variables tested (exposure to political memes, awareness, attitude, behavior and perceived significance of political memes), with perceived significance of political memes emerging out the strongest of all the variables ($r = .787^{**}$; $p = .000$). this finding indicates, that those who reported that they regularly perceived political memes significant, also showed a tendency to report that they frequently participated in politics. Hence, there is a positive weak relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior), perceived significance of political memes and political participation among Ugandan millennials. This finding further answers **H3** in affirmative.

Table 1: Shows the relationship between awareness, attitude, behavior, perceived significance of political memes and political participation.

Construct	Total Exposure to Pol. Memes	Total Awareness towards pol. memes	Total Behavior towards pol. memes	Total Attitude towards pol. memes	Total Perceived significance of pol. memes	Total Political participation
Total Exposure to Pol. Memes	1					
Total Awareness towards pol. memes	$r = .249^{**}$ $p = .000$	1				
Total Behavior towards pol. memes	$r = .673^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .544^{**}$ $p = .000$	1			
Total Attitude towards pol. memes	$r = .670^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .348^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .680^{**}$ $p = .000$	1		
Total Perceived significance of pol. memes	$r = .528^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .665^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .682^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .533^{**}$ $p = .000$	1	
Total Political participation	$r = .391^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .703^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .685^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .641^{**}$ $p = .000$	$r = .787^{**}$ $p = .000$	1

The subsequent analysis performed is for partial correlation where perceived significance of political memes is tested to find out whether it mediates the relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness to political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior) and political participation. The findings on partial correlation indicate, that perceived significance of political memes partially mediated the relationship between all the variables as their relationship strength was reduced, apart from the relationship between exposure to political memes and political participation whose correlation strength was reduced from $r = .421$ ($p = .000$) to no significant relationship ($r = -.020$; $p = .773$), attitude and awareness to political memes was also reduced from $r = .325$ ($p = .000$) to a no significant relationship ($r = -.091$; $p = .195$) and lastly between awareness to political memes and exposure to political memes, whose correlation strength was also reduced to a no significant relationship from $r = .285$ ($p = .000$) to ($r = -.118$; $p = .092$). These findings show full mediation of the three set of different variables as seen in **table 2 below**. Hence **H2** is accepted.

Table 2: Partial correlation for given variables

Control variable	Variables (N=202)	M	SD	Exposure to pol memes	Awareness to pol. memes	Behavior towards pol. memes	Attitude towards pol. memes	Perceived significance	Political participation
	Exposure to pol memes	3.665	0.915	1					
	Awareness to pol. memes	3.665	0.930	$r = .285$ $p = .000$	1				

	Behavior towards pol. memes	2.916	1.045	r = .673; p = .000	r = .544; p = .000	1		
	Attitude towards pol. memes	3.746	0.754	r = .734; p = .000	r = .325; p = .000	r = .680; p = .000	1	
	Political participation	3.663	0.700	r = .421; p = .000	r = .711; p = .000	r = .685; p = .000	r = .590; p = .000	1
	Perceived significance	3.581	0.799	r = .522; p = .000	r = .686; p = .000	r = .682; .000	r = .554; p = .000	r = .824; p = .000
Total PP	Exposure to pol memes	3.666	0.915	1				
	Awareness to pol. memes	3.665	0.930	r = -.118; p = .092	1			
	Behavior towards pol. memes	2.916	1.045	r = .507; p = .000	r = .143; p = .041	1		
	Attitude towards pol. memes	3.746	0.754	r = .626; p = .000	r = -.091; p = .195	r = .497; p = .000	1	
	Political participation	3.663	0.700	r = -.020; p = .773	r = .354; p = .000	r = .296; p = .000	r = .282; p = .034	

Table 3: Summary of hypothesis results

No.	Hypothesis	Result
H1	There is a relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior), perceived significance of political memes and political participation.	Accepted
H2	Perceived significance of political memes mediates the relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness to political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior) and political participation	Accepted
H3	Ugandan millennials use memes to participate in politics	Accepted
H4	There is a positive pattern of exposure to political memes	Accepted

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

In this section, H1 to H4 hypotheses which are related to relationships and levels between variables are discussed.

The first hypothesis H1 “there is relationship between exposure to political mems, effectiveness of political memes, perceived significance of political memes and political participation among Ugandan millennials.” Is accepted and results show, that there is a weak positive relationship between all the variables. The researcher found out, that the more one is exposed to political memes, the more they become addicted to participate in politics. This is followed by H2 “Perceived significance of political memes mediates the relationship between exposure to political memes, effectiveness to political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior) and political participation” which is also accepted with a weak statistically positive relationship. This is consistent with the findings of Wang (2007) as he mentioned, that if an individual associated positive feeling like that of politics, they get a positive perception to the subject and hereby continue to engage more in politics using memes. This implies, that in this study, the perceived significance of politics to participants is high and therefore they will engage in politics.

H3 states, “Ugandan millennials use memes to participate in politics”. This hypothesis is also accepted because results from the tests performed indicate a high statistically significant performance as both the higher and lower mean scores exceed the set target value. This means, that respondents have a tendency of participating in politics using political memes.

H4 “There is a positive pattern of exposure to political memes” this hypothesis is accepted because according to one simple t-test performed on exposure, all the items measured turned out to be highly significant and exceeded the test value indicating that more respondents were exposed to political memes. And as a result, their participation in politics was on a higher note.

Recommendation

The current study is focusing on effectiveness of political memes towards political participation among millennials. Hence it is specific only on millennials yet they constitute only about a quarter of the Ugandan population according to the 2016 Uganda bureau of statistics report. Uganda as a country has more than forty-five million people and according to Uganda bureau of statistics "UBOS", seventeen children are born every second. This stresses the argue for another research that will be able to cover the entire population of the country.

The study concludes, that even though political memes do a great job in creating political awareness among millennials as well as communicating political messages, there is still more that needs to be done to sensitize the public on the dangers of the meme because there many of them who use them badly to the extent that they end up miss informing the public especially in this digital era where people cannot live without their gadgets.

The current research received feedback from participants indicating that they are very familiar and comfortable with communicating and receiving political messages through memes. Therefore, it is recommended that systems should be put in place to regulate the usage and consumption of memes to avoid spreading of damaging information and propaganda to the public, the public deserves to know what is credible and what isn't.

political parties and participants should do more research on the advantages of using memes so as to save the public's time in calling them out for rallies even when they can just send out their manifestos with a single burton using their gadgets because Uganda as a country embraced digital migration and therefore almost everything is done digitally.

Finally, this research can be useful for advertisers and marketing practitioners who are working on political campaigns. A meme is an important element in political communications and it can help enhance the spreadability of the message. Nevertheless, it is not the only way to make viral contents and not all styles of memes are created for the same purposes. However, the memes that can spread the most effective messages behave like vessels for receivers to communicate their thoughts and emotions by sharing the memes in their networks.

Conclusion

The research is set put to examine the effectiveness of political memes as a form of political participation among millennials in Uganda. The independent variables for the study were exposure to political memes and effectiveness of political memes (awareness, attitude and behavior). Dependent variable that works as the effect and outcome of the research is political participation whilst perceived significance of political memes is the mediating variable in the research theoretical framework. The research aimed at investigating the level of all variables, relationship of the independent and mediating variables towards dependent variables as well as the mediating variable on between the independent and dependent variables.

For the past few years, political memes have been used as a tool in communicating political messages especially with the advent of new technologies as well as new medium of communication. The new mediums are slowly taking over as the preferred medium of communication for the millennials although currently they are both still considered vital to the people. Memes are accepted by citizens especially millennials with access to digital platforms like mobile phones and computers and they have an impact on the voting behavior and political views of citizens.

The study also spills out that political parties use memes to propagate, oppose as well as criticize the different political issues among people. The memes are transmitted through social platforms to communicate political ideas to the desired large political groupings as most of messages are designed by political parties and actor to further their agendas.

The findings of the research revealed, that all the hypotheses set out were accepted. The study found out that there is a relationship between all the variables exposure to political memes, effectiveness of political memes, perceived significance of political memes and political participation.

Because of memes' visual nature and the centrality of their ability to tap into emotions and feelings in their spread (Shifman, 2014), it is a useful place to begin to understand political memes' potential effects as a form of media. If memes influence viewers' affect, such as emotions or feelings, this is an important step towards understanding their implications for outcomes such as perceptions of political figures or issues at large.

This study also represents early research into the effects on viewers of a particular type of user-generated political media called political memes. These memes fill a position in the modern media environment, in that they can be considered as a form of public speech in a digital public sphere. In many ways, memes are similar to everyday talk that happen outside of traditional channels for political discussions, but still contribute to a cycle of influence regarding political matters. By joining in the broad participatory practice of meme production, memes' creators are also producing digital media messages that other people can consume as media or entertainment. Through this intertextuality, memes can be powerful pieces of visual rhetoric packaged in a simple form. However, little is yet known about how these visual arguments may influence those who view them. This study responds to the call to establish their effectiveness in delivering the messages, and how these effects might be measured (Shifman, 2014).

The study employed the theory of elaboration of likelihood model of persuasion to demonstrate how persuasion is used as a tool to affect emotions. Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, 1980 believes, that the theory measures people's willingness to engage in elaboration which is the core principal that motivates political memes. The rate at which they move and elaborate to

the different parts of the world. People are more motivated to elaborate when the message is important to them. The idea is that when a person is presented with information, they process it on a certain level of elaboration. Therefore, Memes are a tool of political participation that uses the cognitive and the peripheral route to communicate and influence public opinions. This tool of awareness uses humor and sarcasm as elements for persuasion. (McClure, 2016).

Hence the study has proved, that political memes do effectively impact on millennials as a form of political participation. In fact, there is shift in the tools used due to the coming of new media. new mediums are used for communicating with the millennials. These memes are used through social networking platforms to communicate ideas of political actors to a larger audience.

REFERENCES

Andrew S. Ross and Damian J. Rivers, 2017. "Digital cultures of political participation: *Internet memes and the discursive delegitimization of the 2016 U.S. presidential candidates*," *Discourse, Context & Media*, volume 16, pp. 1–11. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.01.001>, accessed 19 January 2019.

Bauchhage, C. (2011). Insights into internet memes. *Association of Advancement in Artificial Intelligence*.

Bell, C. and Steinberg E. (2001). Emotional Selection in Memes: The Case of Urban Legends.

Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2012). *What Makes Online Content Viral?* *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 192–205. doi:10.1509/jmr.10.0353.

Camilo Aggio, 2016. "Campanhas online e Twitter: *The interaction between campaigns and public in 2010 Brazilian presidential elections*," *Revista Famecos: Mídia, cultura e tecnologia*, volume 23, number 1, at <http://revistaseletronicas.pucrs.br/ojs/index.php/revistafamecos/article/view/22088>, accessed 19 January 2019. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15448/1980-3729.2016.1.22088>, accessed 19 January 2019.

Chick, G. (1999). What's in a Meme? The Development of the Meme as a Unit of Culture *Social Science Today*.

Chaiklin, H. (2011). Attitude, behavior and social practice. Retrieved from https://www.wmich.edu/hhs/newsletters_journals/jsnw_institutional/individual_subscribers/38.1.Chaiklin.pdf.

Clubertson, H.M. (1968). What is an attitude? Retrieved from <https://joe.org/joe/1968summer/1968-2-a2.pdf>.

Dawkins, R. (1976). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford Landmark Science.

Dawkins, R. (2006). *The selfish gene*. Oxford: *Oxford University Press*. (O.V. 1976.)

Dobele, A., Lindgreen, A., Beverland, M., Vanhamme, J., & van Wijk, R. (2007). *Why pass on Viral messages? Because they connect emotionally*. *Business Horizons*. 50. pp. 291.

Francisco Paulo Jamil Almeida Marques and Rafael Cardoso Sampaio, 2011 "*Internet and 2010 Elections in Brazil: ruptures and continuities in media patterns on online political campaigns*," *Galáxia*, number 22, pp. 208–221, and at <http://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/galaxia/article/view/7065>, accessed 19 January 2019.

Grabe M. E. and Bucy E. P., (2009). *Image Bite Politics: News and the Visual Framing of Elections*. New York: *Oxford University Press*.

Hajizada, K. P. (2010). Humor as a means of dissent in the digital era: *The case of Authoritarian Azerbaijan. No laughing matter*.

Huntington, H. E. (2013). *Subversive Memes: Internet Memes as a Form of Visual Rhetoric. Selected Papers of Internet Research 14*. Retrieved from <http://goo.gl/dyhqeL>

Huntington, Heidi E (2015) *Affect and effect of Internet memes: assessing perceptions and influence of online user-generated political discourse*.

Jason Gainous and Kevin M. Wagner (editors), 2014. *Tweeting to power: The social media revolution in American politics*. Oxford: *Oxford University Press*.

Kaplan, A.M. & Haenlein, M. 2011. *Two hearts in three-quarter time: How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance*. *Business Horizons*. 54. pp. 253-263.

Kate Miltner, 2011. "SRSLY phenomenal: An investigation into the appeal of LOLcats," Master's dissertation, London School of Economics.

LaBerge, D. (1997). Defining Awareness by the Triangular Circuit of Attention. Retrieved from <http://www.theassc.org/files/assc/2363.pdf>.

- Liisi Lainesk, P. V. (2016). *Laughing across borders: Intertextuality of Internet memes*. *European Journal of Humour Research*.
- Luqiu, L. R. (2018). *Counter-hegemony: grassroots use of the Internet to save dialects in China*. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39(8), 663–674.
- Malik S, et al. (2013) Mechanisms of antisense transcription initiation from the 3' end of the GAL10 coding sequence in vivo
- McClure, B. (2016). Discovering the Discourse of Internet Political Memes. *Adult Education Research Conference*.
- Mills, A. J. (2012). *Virality in social media: the SPIN Framework*. *Journal of Public Affairs*, 12(2), 162–169. doi:10.1002/pa.1418.
- Mugenda, O., & Mugenda, A. (2003). *Research methods quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Nairobi: Act Press.
- Nowak. (2016). *Internet meme as meaningful discourse: Towards theory of multi participant popular online content*. *Central European Journal of Communication*.
- Nowak, J. (2013). Political Communication, Social Media and Popular Culture. *Political Communication in the Era of New Technologies*.
- Oblinger, D. (2003). Boomers, Gen-Xers and Millennials: *understanding the new students*. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 38, 4, July/August, 37– 47.
- Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). *The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion*. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 123–205. doi:10.1016/s0065-2601(08)60214-2.
- Sebastián Valenzuela, (2013). “Unpacking the use of social media for protest behavior: *The roles of information, opinion expression, and activism*,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, volume 57, number 7, pp. 920–942. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479375>, accessed 19 January 2019.
- Sci, S. A. & Dare, A. M. (2014). *The pleasure and play of Pepper Spray Cop Photoshop memes*. *The Northwest Journal of Communication*.
- Rafael Cardoso Sampaio, Samuel Barros and R. Morais, 2012. “*Como avaliar a deliberação online? Um mapeamento de critérios relevantes [How to evaluate the online deliberation? A map of relevant criteria]*,” *Opinião Pública*, volume 18, number 2, pp. 470–489. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-62762012000200010>, accessed 19 January 2019.
- Shifman, L. (2013) *functions of political memes*.
- Shifman, L. (2014). The Cultural Logic of Photo-Based Meme Genres. *Journal of Visual Culture* 13, 307-313.
- Shifman, L. (2013). Memes in a digital world: Reconciling with a conceptual troublemaker. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 18, 362–377. doi:10.1111/jcc4.12013
- Shiftman, L. (2013). *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA MIT Press. Uganda Bureau of statistics 2016 results.
- Wang, Y. (2007). *On the Cognitive Processes of Human Perception with Emotions, Motivations, and Attitudes*. Retrieved from [http://www.ucalgary.ca/ivic/files/ivic/77-IJCINI-1401 Perception](http://www.ucalgary.ca/ivic/files/ivic/77-IJCINI-1401%20Perception).

Faiswal Kasirye
Department of Communication
International Islamic University Malaysia, P.O Box 10, 50728, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Email: kasirye.faiswal@gmail.com