Definition: 

**meme** from *The Macquarie Dictionary*

1. a cultural element, as a custom, concept, etc., which is passed on through time and across cultures by communication or imitation; contrasted with a *gene* which is transmitted biologically.

**Plural:** memes

2. internet meme memes

**Etymology:** coined by British zoologist Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* (1976); extracted from Greek *mimema* an imitation, formed as a monosyllable to complement *gene*

**memetic** /məˈmɛtɪk/, /muhˈmeɪtɪk/ adjective

**memeticist** /məˈmɛtɪst/, /muhˈmeɪtuhsɪst/ noun

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**Summary Article: Memes**

*From Encyclopedia of Public Relations*

The term *meme* originated in 1976 from the work of Richard Dawkins who used it to define the spread of cultural phenomena such as fashion. Modern use of the term refers more specifically to *Internet memes*; that is, the spread of ideas materialized in images, videos, hashtags, hyperlinks, text, phrases, and so on via the Internet.

Social media allow for the instantaneous spread of ideas and thus, offer the potential for an idea to be viewed by numerous individuals through sharing on social networks, blogs, vlogs, microblogs, and so on.

Internet memes generally share the following features: (1) widespread; (2) viral; (3) amusing; and often (4) nonsensical to those who are not part of such Internet subculture.

Internet memes may be long- or short-lived. For example, LOLcats describe a meme that features images of cats with accompanying text termed *LOLspeak*; that is, a language structure used by participants (e.g., [http://speaklolspeak.com](http://speaklolspeak.com)). The cultlike following of LOLcats and the associated use of a special language demonstrates the existence of Internet memes as cultural phenomena, bearing resemblance to Dawkins's original definition of memes. LOLspeak has since expanded into its own meme, being applied to contexts other than cats. Another popular example includes the text or hashtag *fail* or *epic-fail* as applied to a variety of online media featuring a failure to correctly do something (e.g., [http://failblog.org](http://failblog.org)).

Shorter lived Internet memes may include the hashtag *first-world-problems* that trended in 2011 as a humorous method of posting about inconveniences experienced by individuals in developed areas (as opposed to those issues faced by individuals in underdeveloped areas).

Internet memes may spread offline as in the case of *rickrolling*. Rickrolling on the Internet involves tricking others into following a disguised hyperlink to a music video of Rick Astley's (1987) song “Never Gonna Give You Up,” which currently has more than 63 million views on You-Tube. In 2008, the New York Mets offered a Web poll to determine which song would be played during their home opener.
Organizers allowed a blank field for write-ins, and Astley’s song received more than 5 million write-in votes.

Communication professionals have sought to embrace memes for the purposes of viral and guerilla marketing efforts, sometimes termed memetic marketing. As with any viral campaign efforts, communicators may find the spread of brand memes difficult, as memes are generally considered part of an Internet subculture that does not generally welcome contributions by organizations. However, organizations such as Cadbury and BlendTec have found success in using humor for such an approach.

The technical creation of an Internet meme is easier than ever with the advancement of photo- and video-editing software and websites dedicated to the creation of memes (see, e.g., http://quickmeme.com). The preponderance of ideas as proposed memes has even led to the creation of websites such as http://knowyourmeme.com, which offers a searchable database of memes that detail origin, year, uses, and so on. The site also includes status, which either confirms or rejects the status of the idea as a meme.

See also Guerilla Marketing

Further Readings


Melissa D. Dodd

APA

Chicago

Harvard

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https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/memes