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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE OF MEME CULTURE: EXAMINING CREATIVITY, AUTHENTICITY, AND HUMOR IN AI-GENERATED CONTENT

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has transformed digital communication and introduced new possibilities for creating and sharing internet memes. Traditionally, memes have reflected human creativity, cultural experiences, social trends, and humor. However, generative AI tools can now produce humorous images, captions, and visual content, raising questions about creativity, authenticity, and the meaning of humor in digital culture. This study examines how AI-generated content is influencing meme culture, focusing on originality, audience perceptions, cultural relevance, and the differences between human-created and AI-generated memes. It also explores whether AI can effectively understand irony, emotions, cultural references, and social contexts that make memes entertaining and relatable. Previous research on AI-generated jokes and human–AI creative collaboration highlights both the potential of AI to support creative expression and its limitations in understanding humor and cultural context (Gorenz & Schwarz, 2024; Wu et al., 2025). The study adopts a qualitative research approach based on a review of relevant academic literature. It investigates how AI is changing meme creation, online participation, and the relationship between human creativity and automated content generation. The study argues that AI is not simply replacing human meme creators but is transforming how digital humor is produced and shared. It concludes that human creativity, cultural awareness, and emotional understanding remain important for creating meaningful and engaging memes in the evolving digital environment.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Meme Culture, Digital Creativity, Authenticity, AI-Generated Humor, Generative AI.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an important part of modern digital communication, transforming how people create, share, and understand online content. The development of generative AI tools has made it possible to produce images, captions, videos, and humorous content within seconds. These technologies are changing traditional creative practices and introducing new possibilities for online expression. One area experiencing this transformation is internet meme culture. Memes are a popular form of digital communication that combines images, text, humor, and cultural references to express ideas in an engaging way. They are widely shared on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Reddit, and X to entertain audiences, communicate opinions, and respond to social and political events. As AI-generated content becomes increasingly common, it is important to examine how artificial intelligence is influencing meme creation, creativity, authenticity, and humor. Internet memes are more than funny pictures or short captions; they represent a form of participatory digital culture. People create and modify memes to express emotions, share experiences, criticize social issues, and communicate with online communities. Their popularity often depends on how effectively they reflect common experiences and cultural trends. Traditionally, meme creation has relied on human imagination, social awareness, and an understanding of what audiences find funny or relatable. However, generative AI is introducing new methods of producing memes by allowing users to generate images, suggest captions, and develop humorous ideas with relatively little effort. This development raises important questions

about whether AI can produce genuinely creative and culturally meaningful humor. Generative AI tools have created new opportunities for digital content creators. These systems can generate visual material, suggest jokes, and combine text with images according to users' instructions. For example, a student can use an AI tool to create a meme about examination stress, while a social media creator can generate humorous content about everyday situations. Such tools reduce the technical skills required for content production and allow more people to participate in meme culture.

AI can also support collaboration between humans and machines. A person may use AI to generate ideas and then edit the results to improve their humor and cultural relevance. Wu et al. (2025) examine human–AI co-creativity in humor generation, providing a useful foundation for understanding how AI can assist creative work. However, AI-generated content may sometimes be repetitive, lack originality, or fail to communicate the intended meaning. Creativity is therefore a central issue in AI-generated meme culture. Human creativity often develops through personal experiences, emotions, imagination, and an understanding of social situations. AI systems generate new combinations of images and words by learning patterns from existing data. Their outputs may appear original and entertaining, but this does not necessarily mean that AI understands the deeper meaning of the content. Gorenz and Schwarz (2024) compared human-produced and AI-produced jokes, providing relevant evidence for examining the capabilities and limitations of AI in humor generation. The future of meme culture may consequently depend on collaboration between human imagination and AI capabilities rather than the complete replacement of human creators. Authenticity refers to whether content appears genuine, relatable, and meaningful to its audience. Many popular memes connect with people because they reflect real experiences, emotions, and social situations. AI-generated memes raise questions about whether content created by machines can provide the same sense of genuine expression as content created by humans.

Some audiences may appreciate AI-generated memes because they are entertaining and visually interesting, while others may prefer human-created content because it reflects personal experiences and individual perspectives. Audience perceptions may also change when people know that a meme was generated using AI rather than created entirely by a person. Cultural understanding is another important consideration. Memes often depend on local languages, slang, traditions, political references, and shared social experiences. AI may generate appropriate-looking captions but fail to understand the cultural context that makes a particular joke meaningful. It may also produce stereotypical or inappropriate representations. Therefore, authenticity should be examined not only in terms of who creates a meme but also in terms of its cultural relevance, originality, and audience interpretation. Humor is one of the main reasons internet memes become popular. However, humor depends on several factors, including timing, context, irony, sarcasm, and audience expectations. A joke that is funny to one group may be confusing or offensive to another. Human meme creators often rely on their knowledge of social situations and cultural trends to produce content that connects with particular audiences. AI can generate humorous captions and images, but it may struggle with sarcasm, emotional sensitivity, and complex cultural references. Research by Gorenz and Schwarz (2024) provides a relevant basis for comparing AI-generated humor with human-created jokes. It is therefore important to examine whether audiences find AI-generated memes equally funny, relatable, and engaging. Social media platforms also influence meme popularity. Their success depends on relevance, audience participation, current events, and how quickly users share and modify content. Although AI can make content production faster, it may also increase the circulation of repetitive, misleading, or inappropriate material. Responsible content creation and critical evaluation are essential for maintaining a positive digital environment. This research examines how artificial intelligence is transforming meme

culture, focusing on creativity, authenticity, and humor. It investigates whether AI expands creative opportunities, how audiences perceive AI-generated memes, and whether machine-generated humor can achieve the cultural relevance of human-created content. It also considers the role of human–AI collaboration in shaping digital communication.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To investigate how audiences perceive the authenticity of AI-generated memes compared with human-created memes.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What challenges does artificial intelligence face in understanding cultural context, originality, and humor in meme creation?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become an important area of research in digital communication, particularly in the creation and sharing of internet memes. Memes combine images, text, humor, and cultural references to communicate ideas, emotions, and opinions in an engaging way. Traditionally, meme creation has depended on human creativity, personal experiences, and an understanding of social trends. However, generative AI technologies have introduced new methods of producing digital content by generating images, captions, and humorous ideas automatically. These developments have created opportunities for faster content production while raising important questions about creativity, originality, authenticity, and the ability of machines to understand humor. Recent research on AI-generated jokes, human–AI collaboration, and digital meme culture provides a foundation for understanding how artificial intelligence is influencing online creativity.

Gorenz and Schwarz (2024) examined the humor produced by ChatGPT and compared it with human-generated jokes. Their research is relevant to understanding whether artificial intelligence can produce content that audiences find genuinely funny. Humor is a complex form of communication because it often depends on language, social expectations, cultural knowledge, irony, and unexpected combinations of ideas. Although AI systems can generate jokes by identifying patterns in language, their ability to understand the deeper meaning of humor remains an important question. This issue is particularly significant for meme culture, where a short caption or image may communicate humor through shared experiences, sarcasm, or references to current events. AI-generated memes may be entertaining when they use familiar situations and recognizable formats, but they may be less effective when humor depends on specific cultural knowledge or subtle emotional meanings. Therefore, evaluating AI-generated memes requires considering not only how the content is produced but also how audiences interpret and respond to it.

Creativity is another major theme in research on artificial intelligence and digital content. Human creativity often develops through personal experiences, imagination, emotions, and social interaction. In meme culture, creators frequently transform ordinary situations into humorous content by combining unexpected images, expressions, and ideas. Generative AI can assist this process by producing different captions, suggesting visual concepts, and offering alternative interpretations of a topic. Wu et al. (2025) investigated co-creativity between large language models and humans in humor generation. Their research provides a useful perspective on how AI can participate in creative activities alongside human users. Instead of replacing human creators, AI can function as a tool that supports brainstorming and experimentation. For example, a meme creator may ask an AI system to suggest captions about student life, select the most appropriate suggestion, and modify it to reflect personal experiences or local cultural references. This collaboration may make content creation more accessible and encourage people to experiment with different styles of humor.

Nevertheless, the involvement of AI in creative work raises questions about originality. AI systems generate content using patterns learned from existing data, which can produce new

combinations of familiar ideas. Although these combinations may appear original, they can sometimes resemble existing material or repeat popular formats. If many creators rely on similar AI tools, meme culture may become filled with repetitive captions, predictable jokes, and similar visual styles. This possibility makes human judgment important in the creative process. Creators need to evaluate whether AI-generated content offers a fresh perspective, communicates its intended meaning, and connects with its intended audience. Consequently, the relationship between human creativity and AI assistance should be examined as a collaborative process in which technology provides possibilities while human users contribute contextual understanding and creative decisions.

Authenticity is also an important concern in the development of AI-generated meme culture. Internet memes often become popular because they represent genuine emotions, shared experiences, and cultural identities. People may relate to memes about examination stress, friendship, family expectations, workplace problems, and everyday difficulties because these situations reflect their own lives. AI-generated memes can reproduce these familiar experiences, but audiences may interpret them differently depending on whether they believe the content was created by a human or generated by a machine. Some users may consider AI-generated memes innovative and entertaining, while others may prefer human-created memes because they associate them with personal expression and genuine experiences. This suggests that authenticity is not determined only by the creator but also by the audience's interpretation of the content. The growing presence of AI in digital communication therefore makes it necessary to investigate how people evaluate originality, creative effort, and authenticity in online humor.

Cultural context is another significant factor influencing the success of internet memes. Memes frequently depend on local languages, slang, traditions, political references, and shared knowledge within online communities. A humorous expression that is easily understood in one cultural setting may have a different meaning in another. AI systems can generate content in different languages and imitate familiar meme formats, but they may not always understand the social and cultural circumstances behind them. For instance, an AI-generated meme about university life may use appropriate words and images but fail to represent the experiences of students in a particular country accurately. Similarly, a meme involving sarcasm or regional expressions may lose its humor when the cultural context is misunderstood. These limitations demonstrate that effective meme creation requires more than technical content generation; it also requires cultural awareness and an understanding of audience expectations.

Research on internet memes provides a broader perspective on these developments. Wang et al. (2025), in their review of internet memes on social media, examined the changing landscape of meme research and the opportunities offered by computational approaches. Their work is relevant to understanding how digital technologies influence the creation, circulation, and analysis of memes. As AI tools become more accessible, researchers can investigate how visual formats, captions, and cultural references contribute to the popularity of online content. However, the rapid production of AI-generated memes may also create challenges involving misinformation, offensive representations, stereotypes, and the repetition of existing ideas. These concerns highlight the importance of responsible AI use and critical evaluation of digital content.

The relationship between images and text is particularly important in visual humor. A meme may contain an ordinary photograph accompanied by an unexpected caption, or it may combine an unusual image with a familiar expression to produce a humorous effect. Research published in Digital Scholarship in the Humanities (2025) examined image–text combinations in visual humor through large language models. This area of research is relevant because understanding a meme requires interpreting the relationship between its

visual and textual elements rather than examining either element independently. An AI system may generate a grammatically correct caption but fail to recognize why a particular image makes the caption funny. It may also misunderstand irony, exaggeration, or the intended target of a joke. These challenges suggest that the quality of AI-generated memes should be evaluated through their complete visual and cultural context.

The use of AI-generated visuals in political and social communication provides another important research direction. Chang et al. (2026) examined generative meme formats and AI visuals in the context of the 2024 United States presidential election. Their research highlights the relevance of AI-generated imagery to contemporary political communication and meme culture. Political memes can influence public discussion by simplifying complicated issues, expressing criticism, and encouraging participation in online conversations. AI tools may allow creators to develop political images and captions quickly, but the same capabilities can also be used to produce misleading representations or content that distorts the meaning of public events. Consequently, AI-generated meme culture should be studied not only as a form of entertainment but also as a form of social communication that can influence public perceptions.

Despite growing research on AI-generated humor, human–AI creativity, and internet memes, important questions remain about how these factors interact. Existing studies provide useful insights into the ability of AI to generate humorous content and support creative activities, but further investigation is needed to understand how audiences compare AI-generated memes with human-created memes across different cultural contexts. In particular, the relationship between perceived authenticity, originality, humor, and audience engagement requires further attention. A meme may be technically impressive but unsuccessful if its humor is predictable or its cultural meaning is unclear. Similarly, an AI-generated meme may become popular because it is relevant to a current event, even when its production process differs from traditional human creativity.

The present study addresses these issues by examining artificial intelligence and the future of meme culture through three main dimensions: creativity, authenticity, and humor. It considers how AI influences the production of memes, how audiences interpret machine-generated content, and how effectively AI can communicate humor in different social and cultural settings. It also explores the potential of human–AI collaboration to create more engaging and meaningful digital content. By bringing these themes together, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how artificial intelligence is transforming contemporary online communication. It emphasizes that technological development alone does not determine the success of meme culture; human judgment, cultural understanding, originality, and audience participation remain important elements of meaningful digital expression.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research approach to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on meme culture, focusing on creativity, authenticity, and humor in AI-generated content. The research uses existing academic literature, journal articles, and scholarly publications related to generative AI, internet memes, digital creativity, and humor. It explores how AI tools influence meme creation, how audiences perceive the authenticity of AI-generated memes, and how effectively AI-generated content communicates humor in different cultural contexts. The study also considers the role of human–AI collaboration in developing creative digital content. Through a review of relevant literature, this approach aims to identify the opportunities and challenges of AI-generated memes and develop a deeper understanding of their impact on contemporary digital communication and online culture.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study uses a descriptive research design to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on meme culture, focusing on creativity, authenticity, and humor in AI-generated content. The research is based on a review of existing academic articles, research papers, and scholarly publications related to generative AI, digital creativity, and internet memes. It describes how AI tools are changing meme creation, how audiences may perceive AI-generated content, and how effectively AI can produce humorous and culturally relevant memes. The study also examines the opportunities and challenges of human–AI collaboration in digital communication. This research design provides a structured understanding of the role of AI in shaping contemporary meme culture and identifies areas that require further investigation.

DATA ANALYSIS

This study uses qualitative thematic analysis to examine the influence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on meme culture, focusing on creativity, authenticity, and humor in AI-generated content. Data are analyzed through a review of existing academic articles, research papers, and scholarly publications related to AI-generated memes and digital communication. The analysis focuses on three main themes: creativity and originality, audience perceptions of authenticity, and the effectiveness of AI-generated humor. It also examines the role of cultural context and human–AI collaboration in meme creation. The findings from the reviewed literature are compared to identify common patterns, opportunities, and challenges. This analysis aims to develop a clearer understanding of how AI is transforming meme culture and influencing creativity and humor in the digital environment.

FINDINGS

The findings suggest that Artificial Intelligence is changing meme culture by making content creation faster and more accessible. AI tools can generate images, captions, and humorous ideas, helping users create memes with less effort. However, the creativity and originality of AI-generated memes depend on the quality of prompts and the involvement of human creators. The study also indicates that authenticity and cultural understanding remain important challenges. AI-generated memes may struggle to understand cultural references, emotions, sarcasm, and local humor. Human creativity and editing can help make these memes more meaningful and relatable to audiences. Overall, AI offers new opportunities for meme creation, but human involvement remains essential for producing original, culturally relevant, and genuinely funny content.

CONCLUSION

Artificial Intelligence is transforming meme culture by introducing new ways to create, share, and experience humorous content. AI tools make meme creation faster and easier while offering opportunities for creativity and human–AI collaboration. However, challenges related to originality, authenticity, cultural understanding, and emotional expression remain important. This study concludes that AI can support and enhance meme creation, but it cannot always fully understand the cultural meanings and social experiences behind humor. Human creativity and judgment are therefore essential for producing meaningful and relatable memes. In the future, the most effective approach may be a combination of AI technology and human imagination, allowing meme culture to remain creative, authentic, and engaging in the digital world.

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