

Facebook Meme as an Avenue for Discussing Serious Problems and Issues

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Abstract: People have been using different platforms to discuss some of the world's most serious issues and problems. In this age of information, the social media is now one of the primary mediums used to convey information or messages. People nowadays have been communicating their thoughts through social media memes, normally, either to downplay issues or just to indirectly voice out what is in their mind. These memes also serve as a mode of starting conversation. This paper analyzed how internet memes has been used by Filipino netizens to achieve a particular purpose while discussing or presenting the issues or problems through memes based on their perspective. Using Social Convergence Theory (SCT) or the fantasy theme analysis, this study found out the unique rhetorical visions or shared fantasies formed in these memes. Then, using the Invitational Rhetoric Theory (IRT), the study found out that the analyzed memes mostly served different purposes and did not created an environment that encourages audiences to share their perspective. The study concluded that if a meme has secured and created an environment that encourages audiences to share their perspective, there would be a considerable amount of engagement it will garner.

Keywords: Internet Memes, Fantasy Themes Analysis, Invitational Rhetoric Theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Philippines is one of the leading countries in terms of social media usage all throughout the world. Most notably on Facebook, which is according to Statista's recent report is the most popular social network worldwide with a global usage penetration of 35 percent, there are 75 million Filipino active users as of January 2019. In its Digital 2018 report, We Are Social said Filipinos spent an average of 3 hours and 57 minutes a day on social media sites, mainly on Facebook.

There are numerous factors why Facebook usage in the Philippines is fast growing. Estares (2018) on his article said that socio-economic aspect, age, cultural aspect and social movement are some notable reasons why Facebook usage growth drastically increasing. For socio-economic aspect, according to him, due to the wide range of cheap smartphones available in the country, there is more potential users from a wider socio-economic demographic. He added that "this would explain the high mobile traffic with 93% of Facebook users accessing via mobile" (para. 6). As for age aspect, he said that the biggest group of social media users in the Philippines are in the 18-24 age range which makes up to the 23% of active users. Cultural aspect, on the other hand, according to him is the well-known Filipino trait that they are very social people and are known for close familial ties. Meaning, social media can be of help when it comes to connecting families. Lastly, used for social movement, he explained that Facebook has been the go-to platform for social media users when they express disapproval and dissent to particular individual, issue, developments, setbacks etc.

The latter reason is the most interesting of all as it talks about and involves the personal values and beliefs of the users. That is why a lot of researches have been made in relation to this reason and tried to find out the implications of the said phenomena.

According to Hara and Huang (n.d.), the emergence of social movement online has signified the importance of the Internet as an organizational and mobilization vehicle for those engaged in social change. They added that the bundle of

new technologies associated with the Internet (e.g., streaming videos, website blogs, and social networking sites) has helped many modern social movements.

This was also true on the study made by Isa and Himelboim (2018) which examined movement to free Al Jazeera journalists (#FreeAJStaff), imprisoned by Egyptian authorities, utilized social media over almost 2 years, between 2013 and 2015. Their study applied a social networks approach to examine patterns of information flow within the #FreeAJStaff movement on Twitter. Study identified the mechanism used to create a *Spillover Effect* between social movements. *Spillover Effect* is one of the strategies to drive mobilization and enlarge social movements.

Anderson et al (2018) also supported these claims saying that “social networking sites have also emerged as a key venue for political debate and discussion and at times a place to engage in civic-related activities” (p. 6).

According to an article by Loudonback and Jackson (2017) published in Business Insider, according to millennials, through a survey, these are the world’s 10 most serious problems: climate change/destruction of nature, large scale conflict/wars, inequality, poverty, religious conflicts, government accountability and transparency/corruption, food and water security, education, safety/security/wellbeing, and lack of economic opportunity and employment. These issues can be regularly the topic of discussions online, especially on Facebook.

Sometimes debates and discussion start from a simple venting from a social media user. Normal venting can escalate to a debate once another party (another social media user) disagree on what the venter has uttered.

According to Liggett and Ueberall (2016), that a research study found out that the desire to share content that will receive a lot of attention is problematic because contents that elicit strong emotion is the most likely to gain attention from others via likes, shares and comments. Meaning, they are the kinds of contents that will go viral.

Thomson (2017) on her study posited that venting, communicating negative emotions and seeking emotional support from others are considered examples of emotion-based coping mechanism. It means that venting online is becoming an outlet for them to release these emotions.

A study by Jalonen (2014) explored the idea of social media being a new arena for venting negative emotions. His paper’s main contribution was the anatomy he formulated showing the diffusion of collective negative emotion in social media.

Even though, primarily, social media has been used as a gateway to expel emotions, people know the consequences it might cost them. That is why most of the time they do venting or they voice out their thoughts in stealth ways.

One of which is the use of memes. Davison (2012) defined internet meme as “a piece of culture, typically a joke, which gains influence through online transmission” (p.122). The term of “meme” is first introduced by Dawkins in 1976, a biologist from England. Its word rooted from Greek: mimeme which means “imitation”. Even though in its “nonserious” form, memes, may highlight a societal issue, and their viral presence contributes a lot in developing social consciousness (Calimbo, 2016).

The advent of social media and the Internet in general has become monumental in the transformation on how people communicate. Taecharungroj and Nueangjammong (2014) posited that due to the rise of social media, the role of the users has turned from content consumers to producers. This means that everybody, as long as they are connected to the internet, could communicate his or her own interpretation or thoughts on an issue which can potentially alter others’ point of view on that issue.

A similar study by Plevriti (2014) claims that memes about politics can make politics more inclusive and accessible, specially to the younger generations who are considered as the consumers and followers of the pop culture. He added that memes can be explored and studied in terms of “race, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, education, age and other factors, ideally with a greater number of focus groups.”

Not only these memes provide information about politics and current affairs, but memes are also used in presenting realities of life, specifically wealth disparity and inequality. Chandler (2008) on his study identified several binary oppositions between the meme series that he analyzed that indicated ideological beliefs about these topics.

According to Plevriti (2014) there are numerous motivations behind the creation of different types of meme usage. He posited that the core motivations for meme creation are for self-expression and the need to belong to a community.

Another study by Handayani et. al. (n.d.) explored the idea of the use of meme as a representation of public opinion in social media. He added that opinions expressed in meme could carry more than one issues, such as distance, bad traffic, hot temperature, and damaged roads. Also, according to him that the nature of memes makes them more likely to get immediate responses. This study helped the researcher as this study by Handayani et. al. focused on finding how public opinion was represented through memes. Similarly, this study wants to find out exactly that. But, in contrast this study considered the conversations formed by the memes in evaluating what representation of public opinion has been primarily formed for one specific issue.

To break it down, previous studies primarily focused on analyzing the meaning, purpose, motivations, representations, humor etc. But limited studies have been made on the conversations' by-product that these memes can produce, and on finding out the consensus themes that can be formulated on specific memes or kinds of memes. As well as on the success of the memes in terms of achieving their purposes. Meaning, most of the studies worked on the semiotic analysis and seldom studies focused on the socio-cultural and critical aspects of the internet memes. This is why the researcher is embarking on a study focused on these aspects.

This paper analyzed memes created by Filipino internet users that presented and discussed serious issues. It will try to find out possible mechanism behind the use of meme. Using the fantasy themes analysis, the paper tried to explain and uncover the rhetorical visions formed in the discussion of these memes. Then, based on the results of this, the study was also analyzed to find out whether the memes' objectives have been fulfilled. In this study memes are examined and tested if they will pass as an invitational rhetoric, but with the help of the Invitational Rhetoric Theory, it will be proven based on the results, memes might have other rhetoric mode functions, mainly it can be a tool for an indirect persuasion. This paper will also try to prove that invitational rhetoric is not always possible for every situation. This situation, in this context, is the use of memes and the discussions it creates. Specifically, in Facebook environment.

Research Objective and Problems

This study aims to discover whether rhetorics like memes will create an environment for safe, valuable and free comments from the audiences, and also to find out the distinct themes created in the discussions of memes about serious issues. Specifically, this study answers the following question:

1. What are the rhetorical visions or common fantasies created in the discussion of serious issues through memes?
2. Do the memes can be considered as invitational rhetoric and created an environment that encourages audiences to share their perspective? If not, also keeping in mind of the rhetorical visions they created, what rhetoric mode they can be classified into now?

II. THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

This study aims to analyze and explain the mechanism of memes in the discussion of important and serious issues, and to uncover the shared common fantasies or rhetorical visions of the people involved in the communication formed by memes from socio-cultural and cybernetic viewpoint. In achieving this, the researcher used primarily the Symbolic Convergence Theory or popularly known as fantasy theme analysis of Ernest Bormann with the incorporation of Invitational Rhetoric Theory of Sonja K. Foss and Cindy L. Griffin.

Symbolic Convergence Theory or fantasy theme analysis according to Boorman (1982) provides a description of the dynamic tendencies within systems of social interaction that cause communicative practices and forms to evolve. Dickerson (2008) added that it attempts to explain how communication can create and sustain group consciousness through sharing of narratives or fantasies.

Another theory used, the Invitational Rhetoric Theory according to Foss and Griffin (1995) is defined as an invitation to understanding as an avenue to produce a connection entrenched in fairness, value, and free will. They added that the theory tests the old meaning of rhetoric as form of persuasion — as the goal of an invitational rhetoric is not to make the audience change his mind but just to receive the views of others.

This theory has many critics, most notably the argument that invitational rhetoric necessarily involves persuasion. They said that invitational rhetoric can't be used at all times and is not suitable in every occasion. That is why according to Foss and Griffin, it is just one of many useful rhetorical options. Others are conversion, conquest, advisory and benevolent.

There are two rhetorical options in invitational rhetoric according to Foss and Griffin: offering perspectives, and creating external conditions that encourage audience members to share their perspectives with the rhetor. Since Facebook posts have options to enable comments from the audiences, memes offer the latter option. Meaning, in this study it was examined not only if the creator of the memes offered their perspectives, but more importantly, whether they have created external conditions. To accomplish this objective, the invitational rhetor (the meme) should have successfully created these three conditions: safety, value, and freedom.

Safety, according to them, is the creation of “a feeling of security from danger for the audience.” In a rhetorical situation, when safety is created commenters will feel secure both physically and intellectually. They feel like they can share and question ideas and that the rhetor with whom they are sharing their perspective will respect their ideas and will not degrade or belittle them.

Value, on the other hand, according to them is the acknowledgment by the rhetor that the audience members have intrinsic worth. Rhetors show that they value audience members when they treat them as unique individuals with worthwhile perspectives. As a result, they encourage audience to contribute in significant ways to the interaction.

Lastly, Freedom, as they defined, is when rhetors give audience members freedom, they do not expect them to make some choices they have made; they give them the freedom to believe and act as they themselves choose. Freedom also means that rhetors are not disappointed or angry if audience members are not disappointed or angry if audience members choose not to adopt the perspectives they offer.

These three were considered as the aim of the study is also to find out how effective the memes in creating a platform for discussion. As well as an easy evaluation and identification of the rhetorical visions formed. And to know whether the meme is solely an invitational rhetoric and not a rhetoric of persuasion and has an agenda.

These theories were combined to create a framework that examined the memes through the lenses of socio-cultural and critical traditions, specifically to identify the rhetorical visions created, and to find out the success of the memes based on the themes or representations created. In this study, all memes were considered and examined as invitational rhetorics as memes are invitation in nature – comments and reactions are welcomed. Based on the results of examination of the discussions to identify the themes or rhetorical visions created, and through the result of the three-way examination whether the memes can pass as invitational rhetorics, memes were ultimately classified into their respective rhetoric modes.

At the sight of the memes with topics about serious issues and problems, they were processed through fantasy theme analysis and the Invitational Rhetoric Theory. The purpose of the processing is to find out whether the objective of the memes was accomplished. The accomplishment of the objective was based on whether the memes created three conditions for the audience – safety, value, and freedom. Along this process, memes were tested if they can be considered as invitational rhetorics. But, before identification whether the memes are invitational rhetorics in nature, the comment section of the posted memes were examined to find and identify the rhetorical visions formed. Ultimately, the result of the first examination was cross-checked to the result of the second examination so that the memes can be now properly classified into their respective rhetoric modes.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study aims at finding out the rhetorical visions formed in the discussions of the serious issues through these memes, and to know whether the objective of the creation of these memes, which were examined as an invitational rhetorics, were attained based on whether they created or have not created a “safety-valuable-free” environment or a situation for audience to comment.

The study used qualitative descriptive approach by analyzing the memes themselves, the comments to these memes and the reactions they garnered. The issues and problems that were considered in the selection of the memes are climate change/destruction of nature, large scale conflict/wars, inequality, poverty, religious conflicts, government accountability and transparency/corruption, food and water security, education, safety/security/wellbeing, and lack of economic opportunity and employment.

The criteria set by the researcher in selecting the memes that have been analyzed are: 1) created or posted by Filipino netizen 2) the topics of the memes are any of the mentioned above 3) memes have a decent engagement, with at least 10 reactions, or have at least 10 comments, and or have at least 10 shares. These criteria have been set to meet the variables of the study. The selection of the headlines was based on the condition that they should have been published during the last three years. Memes included in this study could be fake (news), biased or distorted.

Originally, the researcher hoped to secure and find at least one meme per problem/issue to be analyzed to see the differences on how Filipino netizens discussed different problems/issues. But since it was impossible to achieve that based on the results of the researchers' intensive searching for memes, he just set the criteria discussed above in selecting the memes that have been discussed in this study. Also, it is now difficult to find posts from the yesteryears with the new privacy settings of the Facebook. The total number of memes that were analyzed is 4. One for corruption, one for poverty, one for religious conflict and one for education issue. It is hoped that with limited scale of data collection, the study had provided the readers with the description of how memes have been used as instruments to specific purposes, and based on the discussions formed by the memes, how it formed rhetorical visions or representations of public opinions.

The study employed the following steps in gathering and analyzing the data: 1) internet memes were selected through the use of criteria discussed above, 2) Memes' rhetorical visions or the representations of public opinions were identified, 3) Memes were analyzed and examined using a three-way test whether they could pass as invitational rhetorics and created a safe environment for audiences' opinions, and 4) using the results of the previous examinations (1 and 2), the memes were properly classified into their respective rhetoric modes.

For the second step, identification of the rhetorical visions in the discussions formed by the memes, SCT or fantasy theme analysis is the method that was utilized. The memes were initially analyzed and dissected through its elements and components like the actors of the topic or the characters used in the memes, the plot, the scene, and the context. The result of this was helpful as the memes underwent three phases of examination. There were three phases that have been considered in identifying the rhetorical visions formed in the discussion of issues, these three phases also explain how the fantasy chains keep going in a communication or within a group. The first phase, consciousness creating, is where people to come to create a commonality among their group. In the context of the meme creation and of this study, this phase is the creation and posting of the memes themselves by the netizens and the commonality will be manifested through the reactions and comments that the memes will gather. The second phase, consciousness raising, will subsequently fall in line next, if the group shares common fantasies. Lastly, if the first two phases were achieved, it will create a sustaining fantasy chain that will last (Bormann (1982). In this study, the second and last phases are demonstrated in the meme's top comments. Usually, top comments are the most commented and reacted comments. It is manifested there the consciousness raising and consciousness sustaining of the fantasy chains. The researcher will base its identification of unique and common rhetorical visions through finding the top comments in the comment section of the posted memes.

For the third step, identification and examination of the selected memes as Invitational Rhetoric, Invitational Rhetoric Theory was utilized in accomplishing the task. A three-way test whether the memes or the creator of the memes created an environment that encourages audiences to share their perspectives was implemented. Attaining the three would label a meme as invitational rhetoric. Below are the three conditions and the questions the researcher asked to himself in deciding whether the meme creators or the memes themselves created this environment:

TABLE I: CONDITIONS THAT THE MEMES SHOULD CREATE TO ACCOMPLISH THEIR OBJECTIVE

Conditions	Questions to Ask in Deciding
Safety	Does the meme created or established "a feeling of security and freedom from danger" for its audiences?
Value	Does the meme acknowledge the audiences intrinsic worth and that their perspectives are worthwhile?
Freedom	Does the meme give audience freedom, that they do not expect them to make the same choices they have made, and that they give them the freedom to believe and act as they themselves choose?

And for the last step, to identify the meme's rhetoric mode, the result of the first step and the result of second step were cross-examined. The researcher identified whether the memes passed the testing made and could be labeled as invitational rhetorics (if the memes met the conditions stated above) or they could be classified into other rhetoric modes.

Table 2 provides an explanation and definition of all the rhetoric modes.

TABLE II: RHETORICAL MODES

Modes	Explanation/Definition
Conquest	An interaction which is winning is the goal; rhetor wants to establish that his idea, claim, argument as the best one from among competing position.
Conversion	Designed to change other's perspectives or behaviors based on the superiority or rightness of the position.
Benevolent	Designed to help others improve their lives; information is typically provided to others with the aim of benefiting them in some way. Example of this is a health campaign.
Advisory	Requested information is provided to someone. Counselling and education are two cases of advisory rhetoric. Recipients of advisory rhetoric expose themselves to new and different perspectives in the hopes of improving life.
Invitational	Desired outcome is not to change others but to invite the understanding of different perspectives on the part of all involved in the interaction.

For the memes that failed the examination whether they created an environment that encourages audiences to share their perspective, the researcher based his judgment on the memes' rhetorical modes on the rhetorical visions or shared fantasies they created.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the result and discussions of the memes about serious issues' mechanism. The aim is to find out whether the selected memes could be considered as invitational rhetorics or they could be classified to other rhetoric modes namely conversion, conquest, benevolent and advisory. Also, to find out what are the distinct themes or representations created in the discussion formed by these memes.

In this study, memes were tested whether they created a safe, valuable and free environment for audiences or commenters to voice out their thoughts on the issues. Thus, memes were ultimately classified into their respective rhetorical modes based on the results of the testing, as well as to the identified rhetorical visions or shared fantasies formed in the discussions formed by these memes. The rhetorical visions created also dictates the purpose of the creation of these memes.

Figure 1 to 4 are the actual memes about corruption/accountability of public officials, education, poverty and religious conflict. Table 3 to 6, on the other hand are the selected top comments of the memes.

A. Rhetorical Visions or Shared Fantasies of Meme about Corruption/ Public Officials Accountability

The first meme is about corruption/ accountability of public official. The persona in the meme is the incoming senator Bong Revilla who was just been recently released after being convicted for plunder charges. The meme was posted a day after the midterm elections in the Philippines. Subsequently and unexpectedly, Revilla is sitting (on that time) just in the magic 12 of the senatorial race. Which mean if the counting ended on that very moment, former senator Revilla "the convicted plunderer" would be once again going to be Senator for the next six years. Now, the context of the meme is that the poster sarcastically captioned the meme (image) "*Salamat Papi* Bong Revilla, you deserve to be in the top 12." In English the italicized phrase is translated as "Thank you Bong Revilla." It becomes a sarcasm because the text on the meme is translated as "We will STEAL the West Philippines Sea in the hands of China."



Fig. 1: Meme about Corruption/ Accountability of Public Officials

Since there is an ongoing territorial dispute between China and Philippines on the West Philippine Sea or the South China Sea, the meme intended to have fun of the situation of a possibility that a “convicted stealer” becoming a senator once again, and that since he is a proven in that regard, he could at least help steal the territory.

The meme went viral with over 35,000 reactions, over 5,700 comments, and over 70,000 likes. Table 3 below shows five of the top comments on the meme with English Translation if necessary.

TABLE III: SELECTED FIVE TOP COMMENTS FROM THE CORRUPTION MEME

Comment	English Translation	Total Reactions
<i>Thank you sir you deserve to be in top 12. Asap sir ha, nakawin na ang west ph sea</i>	Thank you, sir, you deserve to be in top 12. Please sir, ASAP, let’s steal the West PH Sea	317
He protec[t] He attac[k] But most importantly, He steal our land bac[k]	N/A	527
Let's put your talent into good use.	N/A	127
<i>Tama used your experience hahah</i>	Yes! Use your talent/experience hahah	44
Do not underestimate the heart of a thief	N/A	72

Based on the top comments and the reactions they garnered, commenters, in sarcastic nature, describing and insisting Bong Revilla, as undeserving on their eyes, could still be valuable with the “proven skill” that he has. In sarcastic nature, they believed that Bong Revilla can be the Philippine savior in the West Philippine Sea dispute. In summary, the rhetorical vision or the shared fantasy is that the only thing Bong Revilla is good at is stealing.

B. Rhetorical Visions or Shared Fantasies of Meme about an Educational Issue

The second meme is about an educational issue which occurred last year. There were rumors that instead of Filipino language subjects, the Senior High School students will instead have Korean language subjects in their curriculum. Though it turned out that the rumors were fake, there are considerable opinions came out regarding that possibility.

The persona in the meme is Dr. Jose Rizal, the National Hero of the Philippines. The context is that Filipinos should not be thought of other languages, instead they need to learn to love their own. The text on the meme can be translated to “We fought and died for our language, but you still want to learn Korean language? I hoped you were the ones shot dead.” The poster made it look like Rizal is the one uttering this statement.

The meme went viral as well with over 4,800 reactions, 1,600 comments, and over 16,000 shares. Table 4 below shows five of the top comments on the meme.

TABLE IV: SELECTED FIVE TOP COMMENTS FROM THE EDUCATION ISSUE MEME

Comment	English Translation	Total Reactions
<i>sa ENGLISH at FILIPINO subject nga ang daming mahina ang utak eh tapos magdadagdag pa ng ALIEN language... abay naloko na</i>	In English and Filipino subjects, there are already numerous students who struggle, and then you will add another one which is totally alien to us? We are doomed.	5
<i>Bakit si Rizal gumamit rin naman sya ng iba't-ibang language ah?</i>	Do you know that Rizal know and had used different language before?	3
<i>Pano maging bobo? Tignan mo yung mga pilipinong kunwari makabayan pero di marunong gumamit ng tamang spelling ng wikang kinagisnan.</i>	How to be dumb? Look at these Filipinos who tell others that they are patriotic but don't know how to use correct spelling in their own language.	2
<i>Pasensya na mga bayani dahil ang inyong bansang ipanaglaban ay nilamon na ng wikang banyaga dahil ang inyong wikang pinaglalaman ay balak ng palitang ng bansang sinilangan</i>	Pardon us our Heroes because what you fought for has been wasted, as the language you died for will soon be changed into a foreign language.	3
<i>Kinain na ng kpop yung taga deped</i>	Philippine Department of Education was hit by KPOP syndrome/phenomenon	2

It is hard to identify what could be the rhetorical vision for this specific meme. But based on the top comments, commenters majorly gave credit to the heroes and showed sentiments that Filipino language/subjects should be prioritized in school. Thus, the rhetorical vision or the shared fantasy could be that for you to be patriotic, you should love your own language.

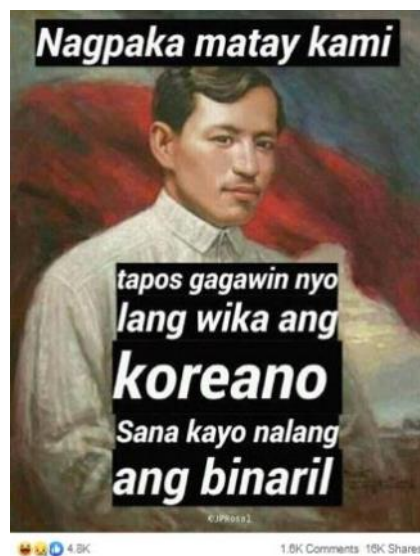


Fig 2: Meme about an Educational Issue

C. Rhetorical Visions or Shared Fantasies of Meme about Poverty

Poverty is one of the world's biggest problem. Sometimes, people who are well-off don't know what it is like to be poor and to not eat three times a day. Most of the time they have no concrete context about how these people feel while facing life. That is what the next meme is all about. Figure 3 shows a face of a man, with dirty clothes wrapped in his head as a protection from the heat, who was probably photographed while on duty. The uploader used the man's face to symbolize poverty or the man himself as a poor. Now, the context of the meme is that it is a response from Filipino netizens who voted for candidates that they thought don't deserve to win, which were on that time were winning.

The meme was captioned by a very long explanation why people should stop belittling people who voted for candidates that deserve to win. The uploader's stance is that most of the people who voted for these candidates have no resources needed to become literate with regards on whom they should vote. He instead calls these people as misinformed or uneducated voters rather than Bobo (Filipino word for stupid). To top his explanation, he added the image below (figure 3). The text on the image can be translated as "Now look me in the eyes and tell me I am stupid." It is like a dare for the people he identified that they should not call the misinformed people as stupid.

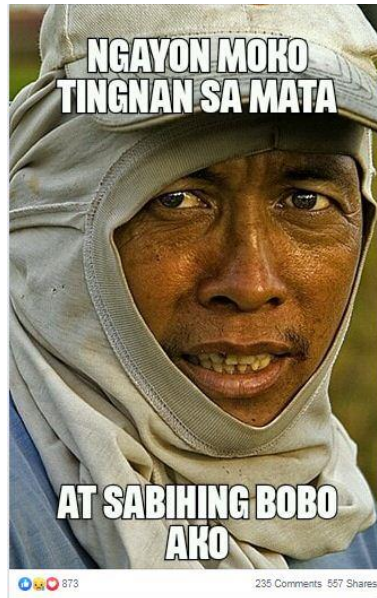


Fig. 3: Meme about Poverty

Table 5 presents five selected comments from the comment section of the meme about poverty. The meme has over 800 reactions, over 200 comments, and over 500 shares.

TABLE V: SELECTED FIVE TOP COMMENTS FROM THE POVERTY MEME

Comment	English Translation	Total Reactions
Having said your piece, the more i am convinced that not everyone should be allowed to vote.	N/A	6
Very well said. <i>Karamihan kase sa voters yung anditu sa mga probinsya at yung iba walang smartphone or tv man lang</i>	Very well said. Most of the voters are from provinces and rural regions, and most of them have no smartphones.	3
I definitely agree with you Odine. You are right in all angle.	N/A	2
<i>Hindi ka bobo kuya.</i> The government just deprived you of your right to quality education so you'll be gullible.. so you'll remain misinformed. It's so sad but its never too late.	You are not stupid my brother. The government just deprived you of your right to quality education so you'll be gullible.. so you'll remain misinformed. It's so sad but its never too late.	1
This culture of calling others 'bobo' is intoxicating. Yes we all agree that most of the winners in the midterm elections are criminals. But do we really have the right to call them names? Seriously? Even some candidates from the opposition have flaws.	N/A	4

Most of the top comments have similar views with the uploader. The rhetorical vision formed is that some voters are not stupid, they are just misinformed and uneducated so don't feel entitled.

D. Rhetorical Visions or Shared Fantasies of Meme about Religious Conflict

This meme was posted by an identifiable Ang Tamang Daan (The Right Way) church member and Brother Eli Soriano supporter. The context is that he presented arguments on why and how Soriano is a way superior religious leader than Eduardo Manalo of Iglesia Ni Cristo (Church of Christ). The meme itself (the image) illustrates people lining up to hear and talk with Soriano.



Fig. 4: Meme about Religious Conflict

The meme has a good engagement, but did not went viral, with 36 reactions, 10 comments and 18 shares. Those 10 comments are very loose and have not really created a clear rhetorical vision. Below are some the comments.

TABLE VI: TOP COMMENTS FROM THE RELIGIOUS CONFLICT MEME

Comment	English Translation	Total Reactions
<i>Brad natatawa tlga ako sa bwat post mo..sapul n sapul tlga eh..hehe</i>	Brother! I am laughing so hard on every post you make	1
<i>Uu tol! 'Pag katawa-tawa ang topic, nakakatawa talaga! C Manalo kelan ba nten ginalang at kelan b ntn igagalang yung paniniwala nyang apo xa ng anghel!</i>	Yes brother! Manalo is a laughable dude. How we will respect him if he is a self-proclaimed as the "The Grandchild of Angel."	2

This meme doesn't really go viral probably because it has a specific target audience, and that target audience is really few. Because of its few comments, and limited reactions, forming a rhetorical vision for this meme is hard. But based on the above top comments, it is safe to say that the fantasy theme or rhetorical vision created is that for Eli Soriano's supporters, he is the true definition of a preacher and scholar of the word of God.

E. Rhetoric Modes of the Memes

Another objective of this study is to find out the quality of memes being produced nowadays and whether they encourage healthy discussions. To know this, it is practical to check whether these memes can pass to be considered as an Invitational Rhetoric as such are designed only to invite the understanding of different perspectives on the part of all involved in the interaction. If a meme doesn't pass the test, the rhetorical vision formed was revisited to identify and classify its suitable rhetoric mode.

Table 7 below presents the result of the three-way testing made to each meme to identify whether they created environment that encourages audiences to share their perspective.

TABLE VII: RESULTS OF THE THREE-WAY TESTING TO THE MEMES

Memes	Conditions		
	Safety	Value	Freedom
Corruption	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education Issue	No	Maybe	Yes
Poverty	Yes	Maybe	Maybe
Religious Conflict	No	No	No

Based on the results of the analysis made with the memes based on whether they have provided safety, value and freedom conditions to their audiences, the meme about corruption is the only one could be considered as solely invitational in nature. Since it was presented in non-harmful way (through sarcasm), commenters had an easy feeling about voicing out their own thoughts. And it was manifested in the memes' engagements. Even the top comments have considerable amount of reactions and appreciations.

As for the education issue meme, it was not safe because on the meme itself there is a threat already on the lives of the people. It is like if you oppose the meme, you will already be judged. Though, audience were still given a freedom whether they will agree to the stance of the meme or not. In terms of value, it is a maybe as the poster, based on the caption, is only interested in gaining likes and followers.

For the poverty meme, safety was assured even though it is like the poster wanted to push for his idea as the idea that the audiences should have. But even though safety was assured, it is not definite if the meme gave the commenters value and freedom.

Lastly for the religious conflict meme, all conditions were not met. Meaning, that the poster wanted to establish that his idea is the best. Also, based on his captions, which are explanations why Ang Tamang Daan is better than Iglesia Ni Cristo, he really believes in Brother Eli Soriano and really hates what Manalo is doing. In effect, the tone has become totally biased. Thus, he failed to create a safe, valuable and free environment for his audiences. This was manifested in the few engagements the meme gathered.

Since the corruption meme is the only one passed as an invitational rhetoric. What could be the other three most suitable rhetoric mode? Table 8 presents how the rhetorical visions formed in the discussions of the memes helped in classifying the memes.

TABLE VIII: RHETORIC MODES OF THE EDUCATION ISSUE, POVERTY AND RELIGIOUS CONFLCIT MEMES

Memes	Rhetorical Visions	Rhetoric Mode
Education Issue	To be patriotic is loving your own language.	Conversion
Poverty	Some voters are not stupid, they are just misinformed and uneducated so don't feel entitled.	Advisory
Religious Conflict	Eli Soriano is the definition of a preacher and a scholar of the word of God.	Conquest

Education issue meme can be classified as conversion as it is trying to sell the idea that for you to be someone (which is to be patriotic) you need to do this and that (love your own language and not patronize foreign languages).

On the other hand, poverty meme is an advisory rhetoric as it is trying to educate the identified people that they are wrong on calling other voters names and that they should not belittle them.

Lastly for the religious conflict meme, the rhetoric mode is conquest. As discussed earlier, the aim of the poster is to push that his idea is the superior idea of all. He wants people to believe in what he is trying to sell.

V. CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to find out and examine the mechanism of Facebook memes as an avenue for discussing serious issues. With a limited number of examined memes, it is hoped that it will set a benchmark for succeeding study about memes as a rhetoric.

This study has found out that for each selected meme, there were purposes that they tried to accomplish. With the use of a framework of Invitational Rhetoric Theory, memes were classified accordingly.

Upon classifying them, it can be concluded that if the audiences felt that they are safe, valuable and free to share their thoughts and feelings about a certain issue, the higher the engagement that the meme or post will gather. This is just a natural effect of a communication made as an invitational rhetoric.

Also, it could be noted that rhetorical visions formed could be based on what kind of rhetoric the meme is. It means that each mode will gather specific audiences and will form a suitable rhetorical vision or shared fantasy.

The result of the study could be helpful to netizens as they could use these as a framework on how they could read and approach memes before actually commenting or whether it is safe to contribute in the discussion or not.

The researcher believes and argues that memes can make the discussion and presentation of the world's most serious issues more inclusive and accessible. Consequently, meme creation and consumption should be subject for proper scrutiny as based on the results of this study, memes could be used to persuade and make others believe of something in which most of the time used wrongly.

Also, the researcher observed upon identifying the rhetorical visions of the memes, an audience could be persuaded by the comments on the memes. Thus, in other occasion, there could also be some question on the validity of the engagements of memes or posts in general. The researcher believes that some people or organizations already using this as a tool in persuading and converting other people. Another study could be done in this regard.

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