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Facebook Groups

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This article focuses on the ironic meme community and the geography of Facebook memepages.

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Introduction

Facebook's ironic meme community, or Weird Facebook, has two important components. They are **memepages** and **shitpost groups**. A third, yet underdeveloped component are individual users with many followers, called *influencers* by Facebook. This article focuses on the ironic meme community and the geography of Facebook memepages.

Facebook as a platform

Facebook offers six main channels of communication:

1. Pages

Pages are always public unless unpublished or deleted. They function like a blog and the administrator of a page can post text posts, videos and pictures to the page. Followers of a page will see the content displayed on their main feed depending on their settings and Facebook's algorithm, which determines which feeds to display a page's content on depending on factors such as the initial popularity of the post.

2. Groups

Groups can be public, closed or secret. If closed, the group itself is visible along with its descriptions and member list, but not its content. If secret, the group is only visible to members of the group. Depending on the settings of a group, members of a group may invite other people into the group. A user can set their settings so that they see fewer or more posts from a group, but the default setting is for them to see many posts rather than few.

Note: There are important differences between a 'page' and a 'group'. A page acts as a single profile and may be operated by multiple administrators. Unless a user has chosen to see the page first or receive notifications for all posts by the page, not all posts from a page are visible on the main feed of the users that follow a page. Even pages which post very often do not generally reach the same rate of activity as a large group, as multiple users can post into one group. A page is always publicly accessible and therefore much more likely to attract new participants in the comments section, whereas a group is generally only accessed by members of that group or those invited by said members. This leads to a

higher risk of mass-reports for a page, which can result in its deletion by Facebook, as well as exposure to radically different groups of users.

3. Timelines

A timeline is the profile of an individual user and functions like a Facebook page. A key difference is that privacy settings allow the owner of a profile to determine who can see each post. Other users may follow the timeline to see their public posts on their own main feed or add the owner as a friend for access to other content with more restrictive privacy settings. Other users may post content to the timeline depending on the privacy settings.

4. Main feed

The main feed is different for each user. Its content is arranged and displayed variously depending on various factors such as the user's filter settings or Facebook's algorithms. Actions from users the particular user follows such as commenting or liking a post can cause Facebook to display the content in the main feed.

5. Side bar

The side bar displays the activity of users and pages which the particular user is following. Such activity includes a user or page the particular user is following liking a post, making a new post, sharing a post or commenting on a post. Content from users and pages that a user is not directly following may appear in the feed this way.

6. Chats

Chats can be one-on-one or a group of up to a little below 200 participants. Anyone can create a chat, invite new participants or remove a participant.

Some important functions

1. Posts

A post is the main form of content on Facebook and can include pictures and videos. A post can be made by users either through their personal accounts or a page they administrate, onto their own respective

timelines, a group or another user's timeline, or the page wall in the case of a page. A user cannot post onto another user's wall as a page. Comments can be made to a post unless the post has been locked.

2. Comments

A comment can be made to a post if the user has access to it, such as through group membership. They may be displayed in the order of importance (such as popularity, the page or the owner of the timeline adding a sub-comment to it) or chronologically depending on the setting of the page or timeline.

3. Sub-comments

Sub-comments can be added to a comment that has been added directly to a post. They are displayed chronologically.

4. Shares

A user can share a post to post an embedded link of the original post in the same way as they would normally create a post. Text descriptions can be added onto the new post, and the original post is always linked even when the share button on the link post is used.

5. Tagging

A user can tag another user, a group or a page without using a URL address to link to the pages. This results in a hyperlink to the respective pages and alerts the owner of the profile, except in cases where the comment is not visible to that user or the tag is for a group.

A short history of Facebook's meme community

Early 2014: The Golden Age of Historical Alliteration Memepages and the Great Meme War

During early 2014, pages seldom had more than 10 thousand likes, and just one thousand likes qualified a page to participate in the scene as a respectable player. Interaction between pages playing personas such as various countries is an important part of community and content, which often relied on role play narratives by the pages. Shitposting groups were seldom connected to memepages. The ironic meme

movement reached escape velocity during this time as making a Facebook page to experiment with the features became popular and accessible.

The most important family of memepages during this era was the historical alliteration memepage. These pages had specific themes about various countries in history such as “Jammin’ Japanese Memes”, “Edgy Egyptian Memes” or “Kinky But Kosher Korean Memes” and produced large amounts of original content based on parodying normie memes by replacing their contents with history trivia. These pages engaged in role play as part of their performance, play acting wars by making memes depicting conflicts between each other or forming alliances and sharing each other’s content or pages to boost the ally’s reach.

The proliferation of memepages and their competition for reach resulted in the first Great Meme War of 2014. Admins of various pages took advantage of Facebook’s faulty moderation system, rallying followers to report competitors until their pages were deleted. The practice of creating ‘backup pages’ became commonplace during this time, in order to quickly rebuild following in case of such deletion.

Late 2014 - Early 2015: Weird Facebook and The Second Great Meme War

At this stage in late 2014, the biggest pages have around 50 thousand likes. Most memepages are happy enough with 20 thousand or fewer. There was a shift from dramatized interactions between memepages to engagement with the fan base for more exposure and growth. Some pages began creating groups for their fans to shitpost in. The Second Great Meme War was much larger in scale than the first, and highly political. The US general elections saw an explosion of political memes both in and out of Facebook, attracting huge amounts of membership to various politics themed discussion groups and pages. Competition for reach and influence between the left and the right resulted in countless leftist-themed and rightist-themed pages forming alliances and rivalries which frequently resulted in mass reports and page deletions on Facebook. Much of the memes during this time on memepages were imported from 4chan and 8ch where they were invented. The tradition of creating original content derived from pre-existing templates also continued to develop, as memepages competed to scoop one another on trending topics and political news to make memes about.

Late 2015 - Early 2017: Perpetual Meme War

By 2017, the largest memepages, which have achieved mainstream success, have between 500 thousand and several million likes (i.e. followers). Smaller memepages focusing on more specific topics and relatively niche themes have 50-150 thousand likes. The US presidential election saw an explosion of fan groups and fan pages about politics, which saw hundreds of thousands of members posting into one group. While users with a background in anonymous imageboard culture dominated the memepage scene with their libertarian use of controversial humor, left-leaning users prospered in the shitposting group scene taking advantage of group moderation tools.

Numerous political discussion groups developed due to splintering: those who disagreed with the administration or the political culture of a given group would often simply create new groups and administer them under different policies. Many very large groups (upwards of tens of thousand members) were destroyed over disputes over admin rights, administration teams and sometimes entire groups being purged in the process. This trend was very strong in the leftist community and led to interesting new practices such as tagging the name of a group with a snarky name to simultaneously make a political statement. This group-tagging meme had the powerful side effect of attracting new members to those groups, as users hitherto unaware of their existence joined them with the knowledge that they were full of like-minded users.

Notable Sub-Communities

Facebook memepages and shitposting groups are decentralized but often collaborate or overlap in demographic to form clusters, depending on content created and shared. The two most important deciding factors for cluster formation are **form** and **content**. The form involves the aesthetic aspects of the content produced by a page or group members, such as with art pages sharing each other's artworks or ironic memepages posting memes that parody less esoteric pages. The content involves the subject matters dealt with in the memes posted, such as academic pages sharing scientific trivia or leftist pages posting political articles. Because pages receive reach for both

Political

Many pages and groups in the community are political, either due to the demographic or the posts themselves. There are many discussion groups specifically focusing on particular political issues or

stances.

Leftbook

Facebook pages, groups and popular users with a far-left political stance.

Rightbook

Facebook pages, groups and popular users with a far-right political stance.

Hobby

Many pages are dedicated to the pursuit of hobby activities, ranging from academic to sports. Serious discussions and sharing of resources or news are common.

Academic

A lot of hobbyist pages are based on academic fields, such as sciences and the arts. Many groups exist for discussions.

Entertainment

Various hobbyist pages exist around entertainment such as video games or anime.

Aggregators

Content aggregators repost memes rather than produce original content. They tend to be large pages with little to no personal input from the admins, and are sometimes operated by businesses. They tend to be diverse in the content and post more frequently.

Animal memepages

These pages post pictures of dogs, birds and other cute animals with a caption.

Aesthetics pages

These pages post aesthetically pleasing images.