Abstract

Internet memes have been attributed a relevant role in the interaction of social media and political participation. But do we already know what a meme is? Although there have been attempts to provide a definition, there seems to be a considerable gap between what academics and the average Internet user understand as meme. In this article, we identified several theoretical and methodological challenges as an attempt to narrow down this gap, and discuss the obstacles that these challenges impose for the further understanding of meme production, comprehension and use. At the end, we outline an experimental approach to begin to overcome these challenges, as first steps towards integrating the user’s perspective to the notion of meme. We expect that our proposal would contribute to pave the ground to a more solid social media research that can address questions related to new forms of online political participation.

Keywords: Internet memes, social media, digital artifacts, user’s perspective, experimental design