

Building a Community with Memes

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Abstract

This research explores the role of memes in building and sustaining online communities, focusing on how memes serve as tools for communication, bonding, and cultural expression. By integrating user-centered design methodologies such as surveys, interviews, empathy maps, and user flows, the study examines how a meme-centric platform can encourage engagement and community identity. Findings from both qualitative and quantitative research highlight the importance of humor, relatability, and shared experiences in the sharing of memes, while also underscoring the potential for memes to build social bonds between community members and encourage active participation within an online community. The research concludes that memes are not only entertainment tools but also powerful mediums for creating long-lasting connections and reinforcing community values.

Table of Contents

[Abstract](#)

[Table of Contents](#)

[Introduction](#)

[The Seven Elements of Successful Community Building](#)

[Attracting and Retaining Members](#)

[Creating a Sense of Belonging](#)

[Creating Value Through Exchange](#)

[Encouraging Contribution](#)

[Encouraging Collaboration](#)

[Providing Leadership](#)

[Regulating Community Members' Behavior](#)

[The Role of Memes in Online Communities](#)

[Defining Memes](#)

[Memes as Tools for Communication, Bonding, and Cultural Expression](#)

[How Memes Reflect Community Identity and Values](#)

[Persistence of Memes Through Dynamic Digital Interactions](#)

[Memes as a Source of Enjoyment and Relief from Daily Life](#)

[User Centered Design Methodologies](#)

[Using User Centered Design Principles to Create a Meme Sharing Community](#)

[Interviews](#)

[Surveys](#)

[Empathy Maps](#)

[Journey Maps](#)

[Personas](#)

[User Flows](#)

[Wireframes](#)

[Prototypes](#)

[User Testing](#)

[Meme Creation, Interaction and Use](#)

[Survey Results](#)

[Demographics](#)

[Preferred Platforms](#)

[Preferred Meme Types](#)

[Meme Topics](#)

[Meme Engagement](#)

[Analysis of Survey Results](#)

[Interview Findings](#)

[Designing the Community Platform](#)

[Design Influences](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Reddit](#)

[Threads](#)

[Encouraging Contribution and Collaboration](#)

[The Sharing Process](#)

[Overview of Community User Types](#)

[The Meme Creator and Consumer](#)

[Personas](#)

[Meme Consumer](#)

[Meme Creator](#)

[Empathy Maps](#)

[Meme Consumer](#)

[Meme Creator](#)

[Journey Maps](#)

[Meme Consumer](#)

[Meme Creator](#)

[User Flows of the Community and the Creator and Consumer Sharing Process](#)

[Creator and Consumer Sharing Process](#)

[Meme Consumer](#)

[Meme Creator](#)

[Wireframes of the Sharing Process](#)

[Meme Consumer](#)

[Meme Creator](#)

[Prototypes and User Testing of the Sharing Process](#)

[Meme Consumer](#)

[Meme Creator](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Research Data](#)

[Interviews](#)

[Journey and Empathy Maps](#)

[Personas](#)

[Presentation Deck](#)

[Prototypes](#)

[Storyboards](#)

[Survey Results](#)

[User Flow](#)

[User Testing](#)

[Wireframes](#)

[Resources](#)

Introduction

The emergence of online communities and digital culture has transformed the way people connect, collaborate, and engage across various platforms.

“Online communities are among the most popular destinations on the internet...

For every Facebook, with its millions of current users, there is a [Friendster](#) that was once successful but can no longer compete and scores of smaller social networking sites that never got enough members to be viable (Kraut, R. E., Kiesler, S., & Resnick, P., 2016, p. 2-3).” Whether they are based around shared interests, social causes, or professional networks, building a successful online community requires a delicate and strategic balance of seven important factors: attracting and retaining members, creating a sense of belonging, creating value through meaningful exchanges, encouraging member contribution, encouraging collaboration between community members, providing strong but compassionate leadership and regulating community members behavior in a way that keeps the community safe and free from destructive and toxic behavior.

The community meme-sharing platform that is described in this paper is designed to be vibrant and interactive where meme creators and meme consumers can come together to connect, share, and collaborate with one another. Rooted in the seven principles of community building, the community platform encourages active engagement by integrating features that encourage participation, creativity, collaboration, and a sense of belonging. Inspired by

popular social media platforms like Facebook's Reels, Instagram, Reddit, and Threads, the platform is built to be intuitive and user-friendly, making it easy for both creators and consumers to navigate and participate.

At the core of the community platform is the powerful role that memes and humor play in forming and strengthening community bonds. Memes, as an expression of humor, cultural commentary, and shared experiences, serve as a universal language that helps people connect across different backgrounds. By creating and sharing memes, users can not only find entertainment but they can also build a shared identity that forms the foundation of an engaged and loyal community. The platform's design ensures that both creators and consumers feel empowered to contribute regularly, whether by crafting new content, participating in discussions, or engaging with others through likes, comments, and shares.

Through a combination of intuitive tools for creators, personalized content feeds for consumers, and other robust community features, the community platform described in this paper works to cultivate a dynamic and evolving environment where contributions and collaboration are at the very center of the community members experience.

The Seven Elements of Successful Community

Building

Attracting and Retaining Members

At the very heart of any successful online community is the ability to attract new members and retain them. "Even established online communities must attract a stream of new members to replace others who leave (Kraut, R. E., Kiesler, S., & Resnick, P., 2016, p. 4)." By providing a combination of compelling value propositions and an inclusive atmosphere, communities can encourage new members to join by providing things such as access to exclusive content, opportunities for networking, or the ability to participate in discussions on shared topics of interest. "(People) who are potentially choosing from among other similar communities to join, frequently have insufficient information to make their choices and almost always have less commitment to a community than more established members have (Kraut, R. E., Kiesler, S., & Resnick, P., 2016, p. 4)." Thus retention of members who are already a part of the community is equally important to attracting new members and is often driven by how well the community meets the ongoing needs of its user base.

Creating opportunities for regular engagement and providing personalized interactions are contributing factors in making community members feel valued

and appreciated. This dynamic of member value and appreciation, when supported by the community at large and its leadership, can help to create a self-sustaining ecosystem where members not only participate but also actively contribute to the growth of the community.

Creating a Sense of Belonging

Another central tenet of attracting and retaining members in an online community is the ability to create a sense of belonging, wherein community members feel a strong emotional connection not only to the group as a whole but also to the individual members within it. "Human beings are inherently communal creatures. Ubuntu, an African philosophy emphasizes the interconnectedness of humanity, underscoring our intrinsic desire to belong and be part of something larger than ourselves. (Waithira, T., 2023, October 5)." Not only that but "the need to belong is as strong as the need for love and intimacy, and it represents a driving force that defines the choices made by humans in search of fulfilling the need (Vaughan, B., 2019, October 21)." A successful community achieves this sense of belonging and interconnectedness by providing an environment where people feel accepted, understood, and recognized as integral parts of something larger than themselves.

Creating Value Through Exchange

Along with creating a sense of belonging, a community should also encourage the exchange of ideas between members. This not only satisfies the immediate needs of its members to be a part something larger than themselves, it also provides for the base of long term member loyalty. Community members should have opportunities to share their knowledge, ask questions, and provide feedback to other community members. "When people feel that they've exchanged value, they're excited, inspired, and more likely to work with each other again. That's why value exchange is such a powerful framework for building relationships...(Michaels, G., 2023, November 17)." Such exchanges help to provide a reason for members to return and to continue to participate in the community. By creating value in both informational and emotional exchanges, communities become more than just transactional spaces, they become environments that fulfill a member's social and intellectual needs.

Encouraging Contribution

However, establishing an environment where members feel encouraged to exchange ideas is not always straightforward. "To be successful, online communities need the people who participate in them to contribute the resources on which the group's existence is built (Kraut, R. E., Kiesler, S., & Resnick, P., 2016, p. 22)." This active participation is the lifeblood of any online community, and it's that participation that drives innovation, diversity of thought, and a sense of

ownership among community members. Understanding what motivates community members to contribute is essential for cultivating this level of engagement. By employing data collection methods such as surveys and interviews, community leaders can gain further insights into the community members interests, needs, and preferences.

By leveraging data driven strategies to understand and meet the needs of community members, the insights generated by that data can enable a community's leadership to craft strategies to develop new types of content that will resonate more profoundly with the community. When content aligns with members' motivations and interests, it not only encourages more frequent contributions but also encourages greater levels of collaboration between members (Like Minds Editor., 2023, November 29). This collaborative atmosphere is what enhances the richness of the community experience and when members feel their voices are being heard and their contributions are valued, community members will actively participate in contributing to the growth of the community.

Encouraging Collaboration

By encouraging participation through the creation of content that deeply resonates with community members, community leaders can actively encourage collaboration among them as well. Collaboration amongst community members is instrumental in helping to form a stronger collective community identity. When

members are invited to contribute content that reflects their shared interests, values, and experiences, they become more invested in the community's purpose and direction. This collaborative creation process not only stimulates engagement but also facilitates meaningful interactions between members. "Co-created content is more relatable and engaging to a broader audience because it incorporates diverse perspectives and voices. Collaborative efforts often benefit from the combined networks of all participants (Wilkins , E., 2024, June 10)."

Thus having community members work together on projects, such as developing shared resources, or participating in group challenges, further helps to break down social and cultural barriers that might otherwise prevent them from forming a more inclusive and cohesive community. Through these collaborative efforts, community members can learn from one another and appreciate the diverse perspectives they each bring to the community.

Collaboration also empowers community members by giving them a sense of ownership in the community, they know that their contributions will have a direct impact on the direction of the community as a whole. This feeling of empowerment enables members to have a sense of personal fulfillment that will continue to motivate them to participate in the future. Moreover, when individuals feel that their input is valued and makes a difference, it enhances their

commitment to the community's well being which helps to ensure the communities growth and sustainability over time.

Providing Leadership

But without leadership, whether formal or informal, a community will not be able to grow or create the self-sustaining ecosystem necessary to promote active contribution or collaboration between its members. "Like it or not, every community site comes with a set of rules. There is behavior that is welcome, and behavior that is not. And no matter how elegantly designed your site is, when push comes to shove, you still need to have rules. The challenge, then, is to set the rules wisely, communicate them clearly, and enforce them fairly. (Powazek, D. M., 2002, p. 121-122)." An effective community strikes a balance between allowing freedom of expression while maintaining order. Too many restrictions can stifle creativity and discourage participation, while too few can lead to chaos and negative interactions. Community leaders must balance these needs by creating guidelines that keep the community safe and free of destructive and toxic behavior, while simultaneously promoting positive engagement. Creating and enforcing these guidelines without being overly restrictive can be difficult which is why strong but compassionate leadership is a must in a successful community.

Regulating Community Members' Behavior

In addition to providing effective leadership by balancing members' needs through the promotion of positive engagement without being overly restrictive, the regulation of the behaviors of community members is another fundamental aspect of sustaining an online community. Through clear guidelines, effective communication, fair enforcement, and the active involvement of both leaders and community members, communities can maintain a positive environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute. Without appropriate oversight by a community's leadership, communities risk devolving into chaos and disorder, which can lead to negative experiences, disengagement, or even the eventual dissolution of the community all together. "This is the dirty secret of online communities: They end. But like the ending of any relationship, it can happen with anger and betrayal or respect and understanding—the choice is up to you (Powazek, D. M., 2002, p. 273)."

The Role of Memes in Online Communities

Defining Memes

Memes are "an amusing or interesting item (such as a captioned picture or video)... that is spread widely online especially through social media (Merriam

Webster., n.d.)" and they have become an important and integral part of online culture, profoundly influencing the way people communicate, bond, and express themselves within online communities. Memes serve as a form of creative expression and often involve the creative manipulation of cultural symbols and media in order to reflect broad societal trends and shared experiences (Vitiuk, I. et. all, 2020). They have evolved into a complex and unique form of communication that conveys nuanced ideas, emotions, and cultural references in a concise and accessible manner. Their widespread presence across social media platforms underscores their significance in shaping interactions among online community members.

Mememes as Tools for Communication, Bonding, and Cultural Expression

Mememes function as a unique mode of communication that transcends traditional linguistic and cultural barriers (Journalift., 2024, June 4). "On the surface, internet mememes are a ubiquitous source of light entertainment – a way for people to express themselves through cleverly remixed templates of text, images and videos (Brown, H., 2022, September 29)." Their visual and textual elements combine to convey messages quickly and effectively, often relying on a community's shared knowledge for full comprehension. This makes mememes particularly effective within communities where members have common interests, experiences, or backgrounds.

This research shows that in online communities, humorous memes are the most popular type of meme. The humor they provide acts as a form of social glue, strengthening relationships between community members. Humorous memes facilitate personal connections by highlighting shared understandings or inside jokes. When a member shares a meme that resonates with others, it reinforces a sense of belonging and mutual recognition.

Within a community, humorous memes can serve as icebreakers, initiating interactions among members who might not otherwise engage with each other. "Comedy can, through its effects on audiences, help contribute to... (community growth) by drawing attention, disarming audiences, lowering resistance to persuasion, breaking down social barriers and stimulating sharing and discussion (Rutgers University., 2020, June 22)." When community members share a laugh over a meme, it creates a moment of connection that reinforces their bond, which helps to create a more welcoming and enjoyable atmosphere for everyone.

In terms of cultural expression, memes enable individuals to easily address serious topics, such as politics, social justice, or cultural phenomena, with humor, irony, or satire. For example, "'Rice bunny' (米兔)... emerged in 2018 as part of the global #MeToo movement among women to expose sexual harassment. In China, where state censorship saw hashtags related to the campaign being blocked,

internet users had to find an alternative to coordinate the movement in their country. Enter the rice bunny. As an image it looks innocuous enough, but when the words for the two seemingly unrelated subjects are said aloud, the true meaning becomes clear – they are pronounced 'mi tu' (Brown, H., 2022, September 29)". The participatory and culturally independent aspect of memes helps to empower community members globally to contribute their perspectives and opinions, which in turn contributes to a collaborative environment where people feel accepted, understood, and recognized.

How Memes Reflect Community Identity and Values

Memes often represent the unique characteristics, values, and experiences of a community and its members. They can highlight shared communal interests, common challenges, or specific aspects of the community's culture. When members of a community circulate memes that resonate with other members they reinforce the communities collective identity.

For example, a community centered around a particular hobby or profession might develop memes that reference insider knowledge or industry specific humor. These memes become a form of symbolic communication, signaling a community member's knowledge of said hobby or industry and indicate understanding among those who "get" the references. This exclusivity can

strengthen bonds between members and enhance the appeal of the community to like minded individuals.

Persistence of Memes Through Dynamic Digital Interactions

The iterative and dynamic process of meme creation, adaptation, and sharing allows memes to stay relevant and engaging over time. The “practices of meme repackaging have become an essential and valued component of the digital participatory culture: patterns of intertextual referencing to other memes may produce a sense of belonging to online communities (Giorgi, G., 2021, August 20),” thus users will often remix or modify existing memes to reflect new contexts, events, or sentiments, keeping the content fresh and relatable. This continuous evolution is facilitated by the interactive nature of digital platforms, where users can easily contribute their own variations and disseminate them widely. The viral potential of memes means that they can rapidly spread across networks, reaching large audiences and influencing broader cultural trends. Memes persist because of this dynamic interaction (Wiggins, B. E., & Bowers, G. B., 2014).

Mememes as a Source of Enjoyment and Relief from Daily Life

Beyond their communicative and cultural functions, many people find memes are able to provide them with enjoyment and a break from the stresses of

everyday life. In online communities, the entertainment value of memes lies in their ability to deliver humor, satire, or clever observations in a concise format. This ability to quickly and easily deliver engaging content can offer a community member a mood boost, a moment of levity, or a distraction from their own personal challenges. It adds an element of fun and relaxation which can make the community more inviting and enjoyable for its members.

The positive association this creates encourages members to return frequently, increasing engagement and strengthening community bonds. And when members share memes that resonate with others, they may receive feedback in the form of likes, comments, or shares, which reinforces their sense of belonging within the community and helps to reinforce connections between them, which in turn creates a more enriching and enjoyable experience for all community members.

User Centered Design Methodologies

Using User Centered Design Principles to Create a Meme

Sharing Community

Designing an online community where users can connect, collaborate and share memes requires a thorough understanding of user needs, behaviors, and motivations. By utilizing the process and principles of User Centered Design

(UCD) we can build a community platform that meets the actual needs of its users rather than relying on assumptions. This approach involves continuous user engagement, incorporation of user feedback, and a process of iterative improvements. By focusing on the user's perspective, the community becomes more accessible, enjoyable, and conducive to active participation and sharing.

Interviews

By conducting interviews with potential community members we can gain valuable qualitative insights into their motivations, preferences, and pain points when it comes to participating in online communities. By conducting one-on-one interviews, we can explore the experiences individuals have had with existing meme sharing platforms and communities, which will in turn help us to discover any potential unmet needs and desires that existing communities and platforms may have. The data collected from these interviews will allow us the opportunity to improve on those unmet needs and desires through the consideration of design options for new features and improvements in our own community platform.

Surveys

The use of surveys that focus on individuals who use, share, and interact with memes will help us to collect additional quantitative data from a larger potential user base than we could with interviews alone. This data can be used to identify trends and common behaviors amongst meme users. Surveys that target

these individuals should include questions about the frequency of meme creation and sharing, preferred platforms for engaging with memes, and favored content types or themes when sharing. Additionally, including questions about user satisfaction with current meme sharing communities and experiences, along with other general demographic questions, will increase our understanding of the diversity of meme users. A major benefit of utilizing surveys is that they can help to validate the insights that we obtained from our interviews with potential community members on a larger scale. These additional data points can help to guide the prioritization of features and improvements in our own community platform.

Empathy Maps

Using empathy maps we can capture what users think, feel, say, and do at each stage of the sharing process. With this knowledge we can highlight their emotional responses and motivations as they engage in sharing memes. By focusing on how users experience the act of sharing, such as what excites them, what concerns they have, and what encourages them to participate, we can gain valuable insights into their feelings about the community's sharing process.

Journey Maps

By developing comprehensive journey maps of our community's sharing process, we can gain a more thorough understanding of the steps potential

community members may take when they begin to actively share or consume memes in the community. Journey maps of the sharing process will allow us to visualize the entire user pathway related to sharing, highlighting each phase of their interaction with the platform in this context. By mapping out these steps, we can identify touchpoints where community members may encounter challenges in the sharing process or conversely find delight when sharing.

Personas

By analyzing the research data from the surveys and interviews, we can develop detailed personas that include essential information about our communities potential user types: meme creator and meme consumer. The purpose of creating personas for the meme creator and the meme consumer is to develop representative profiles that encapsulate the key characteristics of these distinct user groups, such as their goals, frustrations, technical proficiency, and social media habits. These personas will provide insight and help to guide design decisions by ensuring that the features and functionalities of the community platform meet the specific needs of both types of user.

User Flows

By creating user flows of the overall community and the community's sharing process we can detail the steps users need to take to accomplish the tasks of creating and sharing memes. To accomplish this we must diagram the

process of using the site as well as that of creating, uploading, and sharing a meme, as well as outlining the steps for discovering, interacting with, and responding to memes shared by others. By identifying the most common decision points and potential obstacles in the user's journey, we can locate the areas where users might experience confusion or frustration and work to improve them through the iterative process of UCD. By working to optimize each step of the sharing process, we can enhance the overall user experience, encourage more active participation by community members and ensure that we provide the necessary elements for the community to thrive through sharing.

Wireframes

Creating wireframes of the community's sharing process will help establish the fundamental structure and layout of the platform's user interface. These initial designs will showcase the elements needed to accommodate both meme creators and consumers when it comes to sharing in the community. This involves the creation of sketches of the key screens involved in the platform's meme sharing process, ensuring that essential elements such as buttons, menus, and content areas are strategically placed to facilitate an intuitive and seamless user experience. The benefit of utilizing wireframes in this manner is that they enable early testing of usability and navigation, allowing the potential identification of any design related issues which can help to make the meme sharing experience more intuitive, enjoyable, and accessible for all community members.

Prototypes

Beginning with the creation of a low fidelity paper prototype, this simple, but effective hand drawn representation of the community's potential features will allow us to further visualize the placement of essential elements in a basic interactive way. By starting with low fidelity prototypes, we can gather initial user testing feedback and make any adjustments that may be needed without having to invest significant time or resources.

Following up on the initial paper prototypes, we can design a higher fidelity interactive prototype that will more closely mimic a users experience with the community's features. By creating a clickable prototype we can incorporate some of the core features of the community in a functional manner that allows for more comprehensive user testing. By observing users' interactions with the higher fidelity prototype through user testing, we can continue to identify additional usability issues, better understand user behavior, and gather more valuable feedback on the overall user experience.

User Testing

By recruiting participants who accurately represent our target personas, individuals who actively create, use, share, and interact with memes, we can begin to understand how these types of users might navigate the community through the testing of our interactive prototype. By monitoring how they interact

with the prototype, we can start to identify how intuitive and seamless the sharing process is for both creators and consumers, as well as begin to identify any pain points that may be part of this process as well. By addressing both the positive and negative points of the sharing experience for both meme creators and consumers, we can continue to refine the platform through the iterative process of UCD to provide a more engaging, user friendly, and effective way to share memes in the community.

Meme Creation, Interaction and Use

Survey Results

To better understand how individuals use, create, and interact with memes in online communities, two online surveys were conducted which attracted a total of 74 participants. The surveys aimed to gather insights into the ways people engage with memes, including their preferences for meme formats, platforms, and topics, as well as their motivations for sharing and interacting with meme content in online communities. By exploring the behaviors and attitudes of meme users, the survey provided valuable quantitative data from a larger potential user base than we could get from interviews alone on how memes contribute to community engagement and communication. The data collected will help to inform the design and development decisions of our meme centric community platform.

The following analysis presents the key findings from the survey and highlights patterns of meme usage, creation, and interaction within online communities.

Demographics

According to the data, the majority of respondents were female (63%), with 76% holding a college degree and 60% over the age of 36. This demographic profile highlights an audience that is well educated and skewing slightly older, suggesting that meme culture is not limited to younger generations but has appeal across a wide age range.

Preferred Platforms

When it comes to viewing platforms, the top three were Instagram (33%), Facebook (16%), and Reddit (14%), indicating a strong preference for visual and interactive platforms. Instagram's popularity is unsurprising given its visual nature, making it an ideal platform for meme sharing. Facebook and Reddit, while different in their community dynamics, are also major hubs for meme consumption, suggesting that these platforms play a crucial role in how people engage with and share memes.

Preferred Meme Types

In terms of meme types, respondents preferred image based memes (38%), followed by videos (21%), and text based memes (18%). This shows a clear preference for visual content over text, which aligns with the overall popularity of visual social platforms like Instagram. Images are quick to consume and easy to share, making them by far the dominant format for meme culture.

Meme Topics

When asked about their preferences for meme topics, respondents said that everyday life (23%), pop culture (21%), and animals (19%) ranked as the most popular categories. This suggests that memes related to relatable, day to day experiences and widely recognizable cultural references are particularly effective at capturing the audience's attention.

The importance of humor in memes was overwhelmingly supported in the results, with 67% of respondents saying humor was very important, followed by 21% saying it was important. This emphasis on humor reinforces the idea that memes function primarily as entertainment, with a focus on making people laugh. The preferred humor type was generally funny memes (40%), followed by satirical (28%) and informative (15%), highlighting that while memes can serve various purposes, entertainment is the dominant driver of meme sharing.

Meme Engagement

When it comes to engagement with meme content, 29% of respondents said they interact with them daily, with another 24% saying that they engage rarely. This suggests that there are varying levels of engagement, with some users being highly active and others users participating less frequently. In terms of discussions sparked by the sharing of memes, 29% of respondents said that they often participate, with a further 41% saying that they only engage in discussions sometimes, which indicates that while many users enjoy meme consumption, fewer participate actively in discussions.

In the context of relatability, 47% of users said that they are very likely to engage with relatable meme content, highlighting the importance of making personal connections when sharing memes. The ability to relate to a meme is a key factor in driving engagement and sharing within communities. Moreover, 53% of respondents said they are likely to share memes to increase their involvement in the community, which indicates that sharing memes is not only about entertainment but also about feeling connected to a larger group.

In terms of building community identity through memes, 35% of respondents said sharing memes made them feel very connected to the community and 29% felt it was important for their sense of inclusion in a community. Inside jokes were also crucial, with 77% of respondents valuing them,

and 100% of respondents agreeing that humor is essential for creating a cohesive community. This demonstrates that memes play a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging and shared identity within a community, with specific community related memes and inside jokes enhancing this connection.

Analysis of Survey Results

The survey results demonstrate that memes are not only a popular form of entertainment but also a powerful tool for communication and community building. The data from the surveys reveal that humor, relatability, and shared experiences are key drivers when it comes to engagement with memes. With users being drawn to content that resonates on a personal level or reflects their common cultural references. Memes also serve as a unique universal language that allows people to communicate complex ideas, emotions, and social commentary in a simple, often humorous, format. This shared humor allows community members to more easily create connections between each other, helping to create the important sense of belonging an online community needs.

Moreover, the results highlight the potential for memes to go beyond casual entertainment by playing a significant role in strengthening community identity and encouraging participation. Memes that reflect inside jokes, shared experiences, or cultural trends help to solidify a community's bonds, making community members feel more connected to one another. The survey data underscores how memes can build bridges between individuals, allowing them to

feel part of something larger than themselves. Ultimately, the survey results suggest that memes are a vital aspect of online engagement, helping to drive interaction, create a sense of unity, and promote long lasting connections between community members.

Interview Findings

Interviews were conducted with 6 participants with the goal of gathering more in-depth insights into how individuals use, create and share memes across various platforms. The group was evenly split between genders, with 50% male and 50% female participants, providing a balanced perspective on meme sharing behavior. Additionally, 66% of the participants were over the age of 36, once again highlighting the involvement of an older demographic in meme culture, which continues to suggest that meme culture is not limited to younger generations but has appeal across a wide age range.

All of the interview participants held a college degree, suggesting a well educated user base that may approach meme creation and consumption with a nuanced understanding of humor, cultural references, and social dynamics. This diverse yet educated group provided valuable insights into the motivations, platform preferences, and behaviors that shape meme sharing practices in online communities.

From the interviews, it can be seen that several key patterns emerge regarding platform preference and meme sharing behavior which are similar to what was discovered in the survey results. These results help to provide an even more clear picture of how users engage with memes across various social media platforms. X, formerly known as Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, and Reddit are consistently highlighted as the most preferred platforms for meme consumption and sharing. For example, Instagram and TikTok, with their highly visually engaging formats, appeal to those who prioritize meme creation with images, while Reddit's community driven structure attracts users interested in niche topics and highly specific content. While X, with its fast paced nature, provides users with the ability to quickly share relatable and humorous memes.

A common thread across all of the interviews is the importance of humor and relatability in driving meme sharing. Memes that resonate with shared experiences or cultural references are the most likely to be shared. However, the underlying motivations for sharing memes vary among individuals. Some prioritize personal enjoyment, seeing meme sharing as a fun and creative outlet where they can express themselves or engage with content they find amusing. Others are more mindful of audience engagement, focusing on what their followers or friends might find entertaining or relevant. Content appropriateness is also a significant factor, with some participants filtering the memes they share to avoid offensive or controversial topics, especially when sharing with diverse groups.

While analytics and content performance are not major concerns for most participants, a few expressed curiosity about how their shared memes perform. Platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which offer detailed insights into post reach, likes, and shares, provide opportunities for users to monitor engagement. Although analytics are not a priority, the availability of these insights on certain platforms allows users to gain a better understanding of how their content is received, which can inform their future sharing behavior.

The findings also suggest that any community platform designed for meme sharing should prioritize ease of use, content relevance, and flexible features that cater to diverse user preferences. The platform should allow for seamless meme creation and sharing while offering features that support users' varying levels of engagement. For users who care about performance metrics, providing insights into how their memes are received could enhance their sharing experience, while others may simply appreciate the ability to share content without the pressure of tracking data. Ultimately, the platform must strike a balance between serving casual users looking for fun and those who seek more structured community interactions or those who wish to explore more deeper cultural implications of meme sharing through analytics.

Designing the Community Platform

The goal of the platform is to provide an interactive environment where meme creators and consumers can connect, share, and engage with memes in meaningful ways. By designing ways to seamlessly integrate the needs and experiences of both meme creators and meme consumers we can provide an engaging, user-friendly environment for content creation, sharing, and community interaction.

For meme creators, the platform offers a robust suite of tools to facilitate the creation and sharing of high-quality memes. The meme editor, scheduling tools, and cross-platform sharing options enable creators to efficiently manage and distribute their content. Additionally, features like community creation, content categorization, and moderation enhance the user experience, allowing creators to manage their own niche communities and maintain active engagement with their followers.

For meme consumers, the platform offers the benefits of a curated content feed that delivers personalized meme recommendations based on their preferences and interests. And provides a sharing process that is made simple through multi-platform options, allowing meme consumers to easily distribute memes they enjoy across different social networks. Engagement in the community

is enhanced by features like commenting, liking, and participating in meme discussions.

Design Influences

The design of the community platform draws inspiration from a variety of popular social media platforms, including Facebook Reels, Instagram, Reddit and Threads. Each platform brings unique features that have influenced key aspects of the community's layout, functionality, and interaction dynamics, helping to shape a vibrant environment tailored to meme sharing, discovery, and collaboration.

Facebook

The influence of Facebook Reels is apparent in the platform's focus on short-form, highly engaging content. Much like Reels, the platform encourages meme creators to share quick, impactful content that can be consumed easily by users. Additionally, the option to share memes directly with groups or individuals, much like Reels' sharing features, promotes a more personalized and engaging experience.

Instagram

The platform's design borrows heavily from Instagram's emphasis on visual content, streamlined sharing, and the ability to engage with posts through likes, comments, and direct messaging. The community's layout mirrors Instagram's

curated feed, where users are presented with meme content tailored to their preferences which encourages seamless discovery and interaction. The multi-platform sharing options, a staple of Instagram's design, allow users to easily share memes both within the platform and across external social media sites, further promoting interaction and content distribution.

The platform's use of hashtags and content categorization is also influenced by Instagram. Meme creators can use hashtags to make their content more discoverable, while consumers can explore memes based on specific tags or trending topics, similar to Instagram's exploration feature.

Reddit

Reddit's influence on the platform is evident in the community driven and collaborative nature of the design. Like Reddit's subreddits, the platform allows meme creators to create and manage their own niche communities based on specific interests, which promotes tight-knit groups where users can engage with content that aligns with their particular preferences.

Reddit's moderation features have also informed the community's design. Meme creators can assign moderation roles within their communities, ensuring that the spaces they build remain inclusive and respectful, much like Reddit's

moderation system. This approach allows for community-driven content management, where group members can help maintain the quality and tone of discussions, fostering a sense of shared ownership and responsibility.

Threads

Threads, Meta's text-based social platform, has influenced the community-building and engagement aspects of the platform. Much like Threads, the community encourages real-time conversation and interaction within groups centered around specific interests. Users can join niche communities and engage in meme-related discussions, with the platform emphasizing continuous conversation and connection among members.

Encouraging Contribution and Collaboration

The community platform is designed to encourage both contributions and collaboration among its users, whether they are meme creators or meme consumers. By integrating features that simplify interaction, enhance visibility, and encourage active engagement, the platform creates an environment where all members feel motivated to participate and collaborate effectively.

For meme creators, the platform provides a comprehensive suite of tools to streamline content creation and sharing. The meme editor allows creators to easily

design and produce high-quality content, while options like scheduled posts and targeted sharing enable them to plan their contributions strategically and reach their desired audience more effectively. The platform also allows creators to build and manage their own community groups, creating spaces for niche audiences to engage around shared interests. This collaborative environment allows creators to directly interact with their audience, receive valuable feedback, and collaborate on ideas with other creators.

For meme consumers, the platform offers a personalized content feed, making it easy to discover and share memes tailored to their interests. This curated experience allows consumers to effortlessly share memes with friends, groups, or the broader public, either within the platform or across multiple social media networks via multi-platform sharing options. Consumers are also encouraged to engage with content by participating in discussions, commenting on memes, and reacting through likes and shares. This interactive process creates a feedback loop, where consumers feel their contributions are valued, which strengthens collaboration and keeps the platform dynamic.

The interactive nature of the platform promotes continuous engagement. Users aren't just passive consumers of content; they actively participate by liking, commenting, sharing, and discussing memes with others in real time. This

dynamic exchange creates a much deeper sense of connection and engagement within the community.

By combining intuitive design, interactive features, and a community-driven approach, the platform creates an environment where contributions are frequent, and collaboration thrives. Users are continuously encouraged to engage, share, and collaborate, building a vibrant and evolving community. This approach ensures the platform remains inclusive, dynamic, and engaging for all members, supporting a culture of creativity and interaction that is sustained over time.

The Sharing Process

The sharing process for both meme creators and meme consumers on the platform is designed to be intuitive and efficient, allowing for seamless interaction with content.

For meme creators, the sharing process begins with the meme editor, where creators design and finalize their content. After creating the meme, they can choose to share it immediately or schedule a post for later. Creators have the option to share within the platform's communities, target specific groups or audiences, or expand their reach through cross-platform sharing to external social media like Instagram, X, or Facebook. The platform also offers features like

content categorization and hashtag use to enhance visibility. User feedback highlighted the need for clearer icons and navigation, which has been addressed to streamline the sharing process.

For meme consumers, the sharing process focuses on discovering memes from their personalized feed and then sharing them either internally within the platform or externally to other social media platforms. Consumers can share memes with individuals, groups, or publicly, depending on the desired audience. They also have the option to engage further by commenting or participating in discussions related to the shared content. Based on user testing, the platform has simplified the sharing process with clearer icons and added features like cross-platform sharing to ensure ease of use for consumers.

In both cases, the sharing process is designed to encourage engagement and interaction within the community, making it easy for creators to distribute content and for consumers to spread memes across various platforms.

Overview of Community User Types

In the online community we are designing there are two primary user types that form the backbone of community interaction: the meme creator and the meme consumer. The community is designed to allow for the seamless creation, sharing, and consumption of memes within a dynamic, user-driven environment.

Meme creators are users who produce original content and share it within communities that they create and manage. These creator-led communities function as smaller ecosystems within the larger platform, where creators have the autonomy to curate content, set themes, and engage directly with their followers. Meme creators can customize their spaces to reflect specific topics, humor styles, or niche interests, allowing them to build their own communities around their unique content, while still participating in the larger community platform.

The meme consumer actively participates in the community by exploring and joining various creator-lead communities within the platform. Consumers engage with memes by liking, sharing, or commenting, and they are not limited to the platform's ecosystem, they can share memes both internally with other community members or externally across other existing social media channels.

This dual-user system allows for an interactive and vibrant meme-sharing ecosystem, where creators have the tools and freedom to build engaged communities, and consumers can explore, share, and connect with content that resonates with them. The platform's design emphasizes creativity, collaboration, and flexibility, providing users with the ability to create, consume, and disseminate memes while cultivating meaningful community connections.

The Meme Creator and Consumer

Personas

Meme Consumer

The persona of Emily Johnson, a meme consumer. Emily is a 40-year-old professional with a Master's degree, working in a corporate environment. She enjoys staying informed about current events and popular culture, often discussing these topics with friends and colleagues. Her primary platforms for consuming memes are Instagram and X (Twitter).

In terms of meme preferences, Emily favors image-based memes with clever or humorous text. Her interest spans topics such as pop culture, everyday life, politics, and technology, with a strong emphasis on memes that reflect current events or trending topics. She values humor highly, finding it a crucial aspect of meme consumption, and tends to share content that resonates with her personal experiences. Emily also appreciates memes with visual appeal, preferring those with high-quality graphics.

One of the challenges Emily faces in her meme consumption is navigating censorship and dealing with algorithm changes on social media platforms. These

shifts can affect the type of content she sees and shares, adding friction to her overall experience. Emily's persona highlights the importance of humor, relatability, and relevance in her engagement with memes, as well as her desire to stay connected with trends and cultural conversations.

Meme Creator

Mike Rivera is a 25-year-old male who lives in an urban area and actively engages in digital art and meme creation. His preferred platform for viewing and sharing memes is Instagram. He enjoys image-based memes that combine images with witty, satirical text. Mike is particularly drawn to memes that align with his interests in niche subcultures, technology, and artistic expression.

In terms of meme preferences, humor also plays a significant role in his engagement, as he values clever and nuanced humor. While humor is important, Mike also appreciates memes that are thought-provoking and intellectually stimulating. He shares memes that resonate with his personal interests and the niche communities he is part of. Relevance is another factor he considers when choosing memes, especially those connected to current internet trends and online subcultures. Additionally, Mike prefers memes with artistic elements and creative designs, reflecting his broader interest in visual arts.

One of the challenges Mike faces as a meme creator is balancing his creative expression with the constraints of the platforms he uses. Despite these challenges, Mike continues to find inspiration and value in his interactions with other like-minded creators in online communities.

Empathy Maps

Meme Consumer

The empathy map for Emily Johnson, a meme consumer, provides a detailed understanding of her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors regarding meme consumption and sharing. Emily values humor highly and sees memes as a way to stay engaged and informed about current events. She prefers platforms like Instagram, which she believes offer the best access to relevant and humorous content. Memes for Emily are not just entertainment; they are a tool for understanding and interacting with the world around her. She finds satisfaction in sharing memes that reflect her personal experiences and enjoys discussing these with her friends and colleagues. The humor and relatability of memes are key to her engagement, as she seeks content that resonates with her views and helps her stay connected.

Emotionally, Emily experiences a mix of feelings throughout her meme journey. She feels a sense of accomplishment when she finds a meme that

perfectly expresses her emotions or current views. This fulfillment is amplified when her shared memes receive engagement, such as likes, comments, or shares. She also feels joy when her meme-sharing sparks meaningful conversations or resonates with her audience, giving her a sense of belonging in her online communities. However, Emily also faces negative emotions in her meme interactions. She becomes frustrated when she encounters repetitive or low-quality memes and feels disinterested when the content shown to her doesn't align with her interests. Additionally, the pressure to continually share memes and the anxiety over how her shares will be perceived can cause stress.

From the empathy map, several pain points emerge in Emily's experience as a meme consumer. She is often frustrated by the overwhelming volume of memes and the repetition of content, which reduces her interest in engaging with memes. Social media algorithms that show irrelevant or outdated content further detract from her enjoyment. Additionally, Emily sometimes feels anxious about the reception of the memes she shares, especially if they are misunderstood or if they challenge social norms.

Opportunities to enhance Emily's experience as a meme consumer involve improving the relevance and timing of content delivery. Customizing her meme feed to align with her current mood and interests, creating curated meme collections, and offering a daily digest of trending content could improve her

engagement. New sharing options, such as selective sharing based on audience groups, and better insights into the impact of her shared memes would empower Emily to engage more confidently and thoughtfully. By addressing these pain points and offering more personalized, meaningful interactions, the platform could enhance her meme-sharing experience and strengthen her connection to the community.

Meme Creator

The empathy map for Mike Rivera, a meme creator, provides a detailed understanding of his thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses in relation to meme creation and sharing. Mike sees memes as a key tool for expressing his creativity, using humor and visuals as a way to communicate with his audience. He frequently states that he values clever, thought-provoking humor in memes, and finds himself compelled to share memes that make him laugh or think. Mike also acknowledges the challenge of balancing quality with quantity in the content he produces, as he strives to create engaging, meaningful memes while also keeping up with the fast-paced nature of internet trends.

Mike's thoughts emphasize the importance of humor being nuanced and respectful. He believes that memes are a powerful form of communication in the digital age, but he also considers it crucial to respect different viewpoints and cultural sensitivities when creating and sharing content. This highlights his awareness of the broader impact memes can have within online communities. His

creative process is driven by his desire to engage with diverse perspectives, niche subcultures and emerging trends.

Emotionally, Mike experiences a mix of validation and frustration in his role as a meme creator. He feels validated and fulfilled when a meme resonates with a diverse audience or gains positive feedback from his community. This sense of accomplishment fuels his motivation to continue creating high-quality content. However, the pressure of consistently producing new, impactful memes can be a source of frustration for him. The demand for creativity, combined with the need to stay relevant in ever-changing online spaces, adds to the challenge of maintaining a steady output of content.

In terms of actions, Mike is proactive in engaging with online communities, not only to share his own content but also to explore the diverse perspectives and cultural context in which his memes are consumed. He actively follows internet trends and stays attuned to the pulse of emerging subcultures, using this knowledge to help shape the types of meme content he creates. Ultimately, Mike's empathy map reveals a creator who is deeply thoughtful about the power of memes as a communication tool, driven by both his creative aspirations and the community's reception of his work.

Journey Maps

Meme Consumer

The meme consumer journey map for Emily Johnson offers a detailed look at her interaction with memes, broken down into four main phases: awareness, engagement, reflection, and sharing. Each stage reveals both positive and negative feelings throughout her experience as a meme consumer.

In the awareness phase, Emily discovers memes through her regular browsing on platforms like Instagram and Twitter. She follows specific meme accounts, influencers, and friends whose content aligns with her interests, such as pop culture, politics, and humor related to everyday life. Emily feels excited and entertained when she comes across fresh, relatable content that resonates with her mood or interests. However, she occasionally feels frustrated when the algorithm shows her repetitive or irrelevant memes, diminishing her enthusiasm.

During the engagement phase, Emily interacts with memes by liking, commenting, or saving them for future sharing. She also engages in conversations around the memes that particularly resonate with her. This phase brings Emily a sense of connection and amusement, as she enjoys sharing inside jokes or cultural references with others. Nevertheless, she sometimes feels overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content, making it hard to find high-quality or relevant memes amid the clutter.

The reflection phase finds Emily thinking about how the memes she consumes and shares reflect her personality and align with her audience's preferences. She evaluates whether the content will resonate with her friends and community before she shares it, considering factors like humor, relevance, and the potential for discussion. Emily feels a sense of satisfaction when she selects memes that spark conversations or memes that reflect on shared experiences. However, she can occasionally feel anxious or stressed about how her shared memes will be perceived or if the humor will be misunderstood by those she shares it with.

Finally, in the sharing phase, Emily shares memes both within the community and outside the community via other social media platforms. When her shared memes receive positive engagement, such as likes or comments, Emily feels fulfilled and validated. The feelings of validation from sharing gives her a sense of belonging in the community. On the other hand, Emily occasionally experiences anxiety over the reception of her shared memes, especially if they don't receive the engagement she expected or if they are interpreted differently than intended. The pressure to keep up with emerging trends and to continue finding shareable content can also lead to feelings of burnout.

Pain points in Emily's journey include encountering repetitive or low-quality memes, dealing with irrelevant content in her feed due to social media algorithms, and feeling stressed about the reception of her shared memes. Additionally, the constant influx of content can become overwhelming, making it harder for her to stay engaged.

The opportunities to enhance Emily's experience involve improving content curation to ensure she sees memes that are aligned with her preferences, introducing more personalized meme recommendations to her feed, and offering tools that allow her to save and organize memes more effectively. Providing insights into how her shared memes are performing (e.g., likes, shares, and comments) could give her more confidence in her sharing habits. Features that reduce content overload, such as curated meme collections or a daily digest of trending content, could help keep Emily engaged without the fatigue of endless scrolling.

Meme Creator

The meme creator journey map for Mike Rivera offers a detailed look at the various stages of his creative process, highlighting both positive and negative feelings throughout his experience. His journey is divided into four main phases: awareness, engagement, reflection, and sharing.

In the awareness phase, Mike regularly researches trending topics across platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Reddit. He follows meme influencers, digital artists, and popular content creators to gather inspiration, and he actively searches for images and other digital assets that could be repurposed into new meme ideas. At this stage, Mike feels creatively inspired by new trends and enjoys discovering content that excites him. However, he often experiences feelings of inadequacy when comparing himself to other creators and can feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of content he needs to keep up with to stay relevant.

During the engagement phase, Mike collaborates with other creators, engages with his followers, and experiments with different meme formats to see what resonates best with his audience. This phase also includes analyzing the best times to post and promoting his content through relevant hashtags. Mike feels empowered when his memes connect with a wide audience, and he derives satisfaction from the creative process. However, he can feel frustrated when creative experiments don't meet his expectations, and the pressure to constantly innovate can be overwhelming. The anxiety over how his content will be received by his audience can further add to his stress as a creator.

The reflection phase involves seeking feedback from his audience and peers, as well as evaluating his own work. Mike feels a sense of accomplishment when he successfully integrates feedback and improves his content. He also feels

confident when he receives positive feedback, but when a meme does not resonate with his audience or is poorly received, he feels disappointed. Reflecting on his work in comparison to others can make him feel insecure, especially when he feels that his efforts didn't yield the desired results.

Finally, in the sharing phase, Mike shares his memes across platforms where his target audience is most active. He seeks feedback and engagement, feeling content when his memes receive positive responses and spark conversations within the community. However, Mike also experiences negative emotions during this stage, such as disappointment when his memes don't perform as expected or anxiety about how they will be perceived. The constant need to create and share content to maintain engagement can lead to burnout and stress.

Pain points in Mike's journey include struggling to find original ideas in a saturated content space, the pressure to constantly produce high-quality content, dealing with critical feedback that undermines his confidence, and inconsistent reach due to unpredictable platform algorithms. Additionally, he feels discouraged when his memes are misunderstood or taken out of context.

The opportunities for improvement in Mike's experience include providing tools to help predict emerging trends, features that facilitate collaboration with

other creators, and advanced analytics that go beyond basic engagement metrics like likes and shares. Tools to test different versions of memes before release, and scheduled posting features based on audience activity, could also alleviate some of the pressures he faces. A collaborative environment for idea sharing and real-time discussions about trends would further enhance his creative process, helping him stay ahead of the curve while managing the stress and challenges of meme creation.

User Flows of the Community and the Creator and Consumer Sharing Process

The overall user flow for the community platform is designed to facilitate both meme creators and meme consumers in their respective roles while encouraging interaction and engagement within the broader community.

1. Onboarding:

Both meme creators and consumers begin with an onboarding process where they set up profiles. This includes basic preferences and interests to tailor their feed to relevant content, whether for viewing or sharing memes.

2. Content Discovery:

Meme Consumers: Consumers access a personalized content feed based on their interests, previous interactions, and trending memes. The algorithm curates a variety of meme content from different creators, allowing consumers to engage with it through likes, comments, and shares.

Meme Creators: Creators also have a personalized feed, but their focus is more on discovering trends and gathering inspiration. The platform suggests relevant memes based on their niche interests and creative style.

3. Creation and Editing:

Meme Creators: Creators have access to a meme editor where they can craft their content. The editor includes a variety of tools like typography, image adjustments, and testing options. Once the meme is ready, they can save it or directly share it with any of the communities they have created.

4. Sharing:

Meme Consumers: Consumers can share memes they find interesting either within the platform to other community members, or across external social media.

Meme Creators: Creators can share their memes across their communities within the platform. They also have the ability to schedule posts or target specific audience groups for optimized engagement.

5. Engagement:

Meme Consumers: Consumers engage by liking, commenting on, or saving memes for later. They can also participate in discussions related to the meme and build connections with other members of the community.

Meme Creators: Creators actively track how their memes are performing through engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. This data helps them improve their content strategy and maintain an active connection with their audience.

6. Community Interaction:

Both meme creators and consumers can participate in broader community events, challenges, and conversations, encouraging interaction beyond just sharing and liking content. This interaction strengthens the sense of community and collaboration within the platform.

Creator and Consumer Sharing Process

Meme Consumer

The user flow for Emily Johnson, a meme consumer, begins with the Content Discovery phase, where she accesses her Feed to browse a curated selection of memes. The platform personalizes this feed based on Emily's past interactions, interests, and trending topics, making it easier for her to find relatable or humorous content.

Once Emily finds a meme she enjoys, she enters the engagement phase. In this stage, she has several options to interact with the meme, including liking, commenting, and saving it for future reference. Emily can also choose to share the meme in multiple ways, such as with individual friends or groups of friends. The sharing options extend beyond the platform, allowing her to share across external social media platforms such as Instagram or Twitter.

In the interaction phase, Emily can engage more deeply by joining meme-related discussions within the platform's community. This involves joining individual creators' communities, participating in conversations around specific memes, reacting to comments, or engaging with content shared by others, creating a sense of connection with other users.

The final stage in Emily's flow is her ability to track how her shared memes are performing. Metrics such as likes, comments, and shares give her insight into how well her content resonates with others. This feedback loop not only encourages her to continue sharing but also allows her to refine her sharing habits to better align with her audience's preferences.

Meme Creator

The user flow for Mike Rivera, a meme creator, outlines the steps he takes from meme creation to community engagement and tracking interactions. The flow starts with the meme creation phase, where Mike uses the platform's meme editor to create and refine his content. The meme editor includes features such as testing different versions of memes, saving drafts, uploading existing content or creating new content, ensuring flexibility in his creative process.

Once a meme is ready, Mike moves into the sharing phase, where he can distribute his memes through various channels. This sharing process includes targeted sharing, where he selects to share his memes with specific communities that he's created. Additionally, Mike has the option for cross-platform sharing, allowing him to expand his meme reach beyond this single community platform.

In the engagement phase, Mike interacts with his audience through feedback and participation in meme-related challenges or discussions. This

involvement helps him to build connections with both peers and fans, keeping the community aspect at the forefront of his activity.

Finally, engagement tracking and analytics allow Mike to analyze trends and integrate feedback from his audience or peers into his creative process. This tracking helps him refine future content, allowing him to make data-driven decisions to adjust his memes based on the reception of his audience.

Wireframes of the Sharing Process

Meme Consumer

The meme consumer wireframes for Emily Johnson provide a clear, structured flow for how she interacts with memes and engages in the sharing process. The wireframes are designed to make the meme-sharing experience intuitive and efficient, beginning with a personalized meme feed and leading to several sharing options.

1. Personal Curated Feed:

Emily's curated feed of memes, where she can browse through content relevant to her interests.

Key features include:

- A quick user profile that displays important updates, links to her full profile, messages, engagement analytics, and a search bar.
- Each meme post includes information about the user who posted it, the content of the meme, and options to like, comment, share, or learn more about the meme's context or creator.

2. Sharing Options:

When Emily selects to share a meme, she is presented with multiple options, making it easy to distribute content across different groups or individuals:

- **Individual Sharing:** She can share directly with a single person, selecting the recipient from her contacts.
- **Group Sharing:** Allows her to share with multiple people by selecting a group from her list of contacts.
- **Public Sharing:** Posts the meme to her public feed, making it visible to all users.
- **Other Sharing Options:** Includes features like generating a link to the meme or using one-click cross-platform sharing to spread the content on other social media platforms.

3. *Community Engagement:*

Emily can further engage with memes through commenting. The wireframes demonstrates how she can:

- Add a comment by clicking on the comment icon, which opens a text box for input.
- Engage in conversations by viewing and responding to comments from others, all while having the ability to return to her feed seamlessly.

These wireframes are designed to facilitate smooth meme consumption and sharing, with a focus on simplicity and ease of use. The multiple sharing options allow for flexibility in how Emily interacts with her friends, groups, and the broader public, while community engagement features ensure that she can actively participate in discussions around the memes she enjoys.

Meme Creator

The wireframes for Mike Rivera, the meme creator, outline a structured and intuitive process for creating and sharing memes. These wireframes focus on the essential steps in the meme creation journey, with tools and features that make the process efficient and engaging.

1. *Personal Curated Feed:*

Mike's homepage displays a personalized feed, showing meme posts with information about the user who posted them, the time they were shared, and options to like, comment, share, or learn more about the context or creator. His user profile includes links to his messages, engagement analytics, and a file archive for previously created memes.

2. Meme Editor:

The meme editor is a key component, allowing Mike to upload images or videos and use tools such as typography, drawing tools, and an A/B testing tool to experiment with different meme formats. The editor also includes the option to save memes to a file archive for future use or to directly share them after editing.

3. Sharing Options:

Mike has the ability to schedule posts by selecting the date and time for when a meme will go live. Other options include cross-platform sharing and generating shareable links, making it easy to distribute content beyond the platform.

4. Community Engagement:

The wireframes also feature tools for engaging with the community, allowing Mike to view and respond to comments from other users on his memes. This phase encourages interaction, feedback, and conversation, which helps strengthen community bonds.

5. Engagement Tracking:

Mike can track how his memes are performing through a detailed engagement tracking feature. By selecting a time period from a drop-down menu, he can view various engagement metrics such as likes, shares, and comments. These insights help him refine his content strategy and measure audience reactions over time.

These wireframes provide a comprehensive system that supports the entire meme creation and sharing process, from editing and scheduling to targeted sharing and community engagement. The combination of creative tools and analytic features ensures that Mike can both produce high-quality content and optimize its impact across different audiences.

Prototypes and User Testing of the Sharing Process

Usability testing was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness, ease of use, and overall user experience for both the meme consumers and the meme creator. A total of six participants, split evenly between the two user roles, were interviewed, three as meme consumers and three as meme creators. The testing aimed to uncover potential pain points, gather insights on platform navigation, and assess how well the sharing features supported each type of user's specific needs.

Meme Consumer

The user testing for the meme consumer was conducted to evaluate the overall usability, design clarity, of the sharing functionality of the platform from the perspective of those who primarily consume and share memes. This process involved gathering feedback from interactive interviews on how intuitive the navigation was, how effectively users could engage with and share content, and whether the platform met their expectations for a seamless meme-consuming experience.

The testing focused on key areas such as icon clarity, ease of use in the sharing process, and the integration of group and cross-platform sharing features.

Through detailed feedback and real-time observations, the testing aimed to uncover potential pain points and areas for improvement, ensuring the platform delivers an engaging and user-friendly experience for meme consumers.

The user testing of the meme consumer sharing options revealed several key insights and areas for improvement in the platform's design and functionality. A recurring theme from the participants was the need for enhanced icon clarity. Many users found the share icon to be ambiguous, leading to confusion during the sharing process. Suggestions included adding text labels or using more intuitive icons to ensure users clearly understand each button's function. Similarly, the navigation and overall interface clarity were highlighted as critical elements for improvement. Participants appreciated features like sticky menus but recommended clearer section dividers, better scroll indicators, and more intuitive placement of certain buttons, such as the cancel share option.

In terms of the sharing process, users repeatedly emphasized the importance of making the share button more visible and easier to use. They suggested combining the options for sharing to groups and individuals into a single, seamless interface, drawing comparisons to Instagram's familiar sharing flow. This would simplify the process and make it easier to select recipients, especially when users have playful or unclear usernames. The ability to cross-platform share, allowing users to share memes on external social media

platforms, was also a highly requested feature. Participants stressed the need for external sharing options like direct links or sharing to platforms such as Pinterest and Tumblr, though this should be balanced with promoting internal sharing within the app.

While the feedback on group and community sharing was largely positive, the users did express a preference for easily managing and creating groups of individuals to share with. They recommended that frequently shared groups or contacts appear at the top of the list for quick access, and they appreciated the idea of being prompted to save groups for future sharing. Additionally, the inclusion of confirmation messages for group sharing actions was seen as valuable, offering reassurance that the user's actions were successful.

There were calls by some testers for greater consistency in language and design across screens. They often stressed the importance of ensuring that visual and textual elements remain consistent throughout the platform to avoid confusion. Cross-platform sharing, icon clarity, and navigation improvements emerged as the top priorities for enhancing the user experience, with participants consistently highlighting the need for intuitive design and flexible sharing options.

Meme Creator

User testing from the meme creators perspective was also conducted through interactive interviews to assess the platform's functionality, ease of use, and design clarity for the development and sharing of memes. The testing aimed to uncover potential challenges in the user interface, the sharing process, and community engagement tools. The feedback provided valuable insights into improving the user experience for creators with a focus on key aspects such as icon clarity, navigation, cross-platform sharing, and community management.

One of the primary points raised by all participants was the ambiguity of certain icons, such as the icon used to denote the creation of memes, which led to confusion during the content creation process. In terms of menu and interface clarity, users pointed out several opportunities for improvement. All participants noted that resizing certain menu icons and adding text labels would make it easier to navigate the platform. Some suggested hiding less frequently used icons in a hamburger menu, allowing for a cleaner and more organized interface. The presence of back and forward navigation buttons was appreciated by all participants, as it enabled easier movement through different sections of the platform without the need to retrace steps unnecessarily.

The need for tutorials or guided overlays was strongly emphasized, particularly for first-time users. Participants believed that these guided features

would greatly improve the onboarding experience by helping creators understand the functions of various tools and icons, reducing frustration and making the interface more user-friendly.

The sharing process received positive feedback, with participants appreciating how easily content could be shared. However, they recommended adding features like a calendar picker for scheduling posts, which would allow creators to manage their content more effectively. Additionally, participants expressed a strong preference for cross-platform sharing options, indicating that simply providing direct link sharing would not be sufficient for their needs. They emphasized the importance of having the ability to share memes across multiple social media platforms seamlessly.

When it came to creating communities, participants found the process of creating communities to be straightforward and liked the option to categorize content and use hashtags. However, there was concern about the moderation of these communities, with participants advocating for a group-based moderation system rather than relying solely on the content creator to manage and moderate the community. They drew comparisons to Reddit's moderation system, which allows a group of moderators to manage content, thus distributing responsibility.

Conclusion

Meme sharing is a dynamic and interactive process and a well designed community platform that caters to creativity, engagement, and collaboration, while also incorporating the seven principles of community building is ideal. At the heart of this platform is the use of memes and humor as tools to bring people together. By laughing at the same inside jokes, or sharing humorous content that reflects a shared experience, users feel more connected to each other. This shared humor builds trust and engagement, which are essential to sustaining long-term community participation.

By giving creators the ability to manage and moderate their own community spaces, the platform supports a sense of ownership and belonging, which is another critical element in building a strong community. Meme consumers, in turn, can join these communities, not just to consume content but also to contribute to the collective identity of the group through sharing memes, commenting, and participating in discussions.

And by supporting both meme creators and meme consumers in a meaningful way by drawing inspiration from successful social platforms like Facebook Reels, Instagram, Reddit, and Threads, this community platform creates a seamless experience, enhancing both interaction and community participation.

And through the sharing of humor and collective participation by community members strong connections can be built making this community platform not just a meme-sharing space, but a thriving online community.

Research Data

Interviews

[Survey follow-up interviews](#)

Journey and Empathy Maps

[Emily, Meme Consumer](#)

[Mike, Meme Creator](#)

Personas

[Emily, Meme Consumer](#)

[Mike, Meme Creator](#)

Presentation Deck

[Advisory board presentation slides](#)

[Advisory board presentation video](#)

Prototypes

[Low Fidelity, Paper](#)

[High Fidelity, Figma](#)

Storyboards

[Emily, Meme Consumer](#)

[Mike, Meme Creator](#)

Survey Results

[Meme create, interact and use](#)

[Memes in communities](#)

User Flow

[Emily, Sharing as a meme consumer](#)

[Mike, Creating and sharing as a meme creator](#)

User Testing

[Interviews](#)

Wireframes

[Low/Medium Fidelity, Initial ideas](#)

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