

Use of Memes: A Comparison Between Japan and America

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Outline

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- Research Background
 - Definition of a Meme
 - Meme Examples
 - History of Memes
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Significance of the Study

Quenton

- I am interested in Japan's types of social media & user generated content
- I am interested in Japanese cultural associations & sense of comedy
- I am curious about why things become popular in social media

Heather

- I have been interested in development of internet memes for a while
- During study abroad, unique Japanese designs often caught my attention
- As a Japanese and CD major, I am interested in design similarities/differences between Japan & America

We would like to find the differences and similarities in meme culture between Japan & America in order to understand why they became popular.

Research Questions

- 1. What are the differences in Japanese and American students' perceptions and opinions on memes?
- 2. What cultural differences influence the variety of memes created in Japan versus America?



Research Background

- 1. Definition of a Meme
- 2. Meme Examples
- 3. History of Memes
- 4. Memes & Social Media



Definition of a Meme



Origin of Word = Ancient Greek "mīmēma"

Meaning "something imitated"

(Börzsei, 2013)

Pronunciation = /mi^xm/

Broad Definition = the posting, sharing, and remixing digital content to communicate jokes, emotions, & opinions

(Rosa-Carrillo, 2015)

Definition of a Meme: Original Materials

Memes are created from:

Unique phrasing





Personal photos





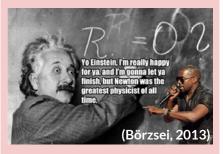
Famous images





Events in news



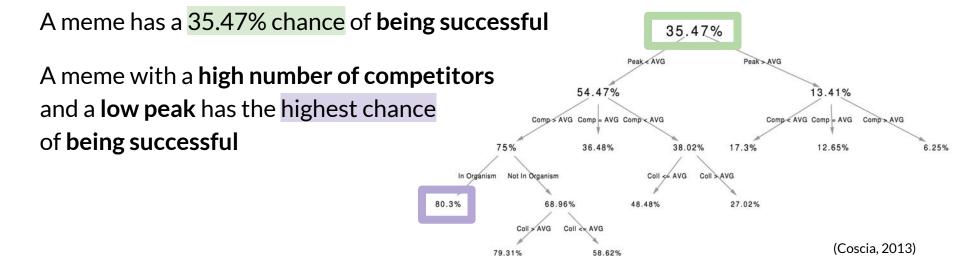


Memes Memes

Successful memes = 'meta-memes' (aka memeplexes)

Construct the overall belief system & fall within a currently acceptable set of norms, standards, beliefs, or practices for a given context

(Waddock, 2015)



Meme Examples: Main Types

Two main types of memes:

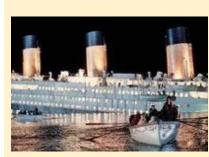
High-fidelity static memes

Replicated with very little variation



Remixed memes

Replicated via evolution, adaptation, & transformation of original







Meme Examples: Most Used Type

Most widely used type of meme = image macro (Börzsei, 2013)

Image macro = An image with superimposed text containing a witty message or catchphrase (Rosa-Carrillo, 2)15)





ライス頼んだはずなのに半ラ イスがきた





Meme Examples: Evolution

Meme evolution example: "Qi Attack" aka "Hadokening"

Based on the invisible qi-force attack used by characters in the game *Street Fighter* and anime *Dragonball Z*.



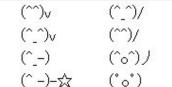




History of Memes

1980s















1990s



Adobe **Photoshop**





2000s













2010s













History of Memes: 1980s

(*^.^*) (^ ^)/ (^^)v $(^-^)$ \(^. ^)/ $(^{\circ})_{o}(^{\circ})$ 1980s (^_^)v (^^)/ (**●**^₀^**●**) \(-0-)/ (^o^) $(^{\Delta})$ (*^_^*) (^_-) (^o^)/ $(^{\circ}v^{\circ})$ \(~~~)/ $(^0_0^)$ $(^{^{}})$ $(^{\circ})$ (^_-)-☆ !(^^)! (°°°) (^u^) (*^^)v \(^o^)/)^_^(

1990s



Adobe Photoshop





2000s





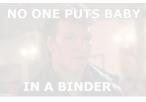








20109













History of Memes: 1980s

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1980s
 1982 First meme = emoticons created by Scott Fahlman (Börzsei, 2013)
            Entertain as well as convey complex ideas & emotional states
        :DD
               Happy smiley face :-F Bucktooth vampire
       +<||-) Knight
                                        5:-) Elvis Presley
 1986 Emoticons first used in Japan by Taishi Wakabayashi & binbou (Suzuki, 2007)
        (\omega) Cheerful (\geq \nabla \leq) Anticipation
                                         (/дヾ) Fearful
                                         ( ______ Antipathy
 1989 Richard Dawkin's The Selfish Gene = first use of the word "meme"
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Meme = Units of culture hosted in minds of more than one person and can reproduce itself, therefore jumping from mind to mind

History of Memes: 1990s

1980s

















1990s



Adobe **Photoshop**





20009













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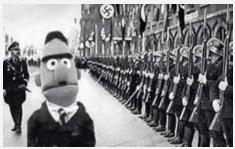
History of Memes: 1990s

1990s

1990–4 Adobe Photoshop released Layers make manipulating images easier



1997 First modern remixed meme = "Bert is Evil" by Dino Ignacio







1998–9 Easily add text to images in Photoshop "Save for Web" adjusts image size & quality for Internet use (Börzsei, 2013)

History of Memes: 2000s

1980s

















1990s



Adobe Photoshop





2000s





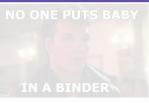








2010













History of Memes: 2000s

2000s

2000 Improved Photoshop interface = easy for anyone to make a meme

Widespread access to Internet begins (Börzsei, 2013)

2006 Large number of pet photos leads to animal based memes
(Börzsei, 2013)









2009 Word "meme" emerges in mainstream language (Rosa-Carrillo, 2015)

History of Memes: 2010s

1980s



1990s







2000s













2010s













History of Memes: 2010s

2010s

2010 Use of memes to address societal issues:

- Express opinions
- Encourage participation
- Stand up for a cause



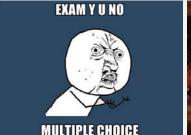


2012 Webpages for community-specific memes arise

University Example



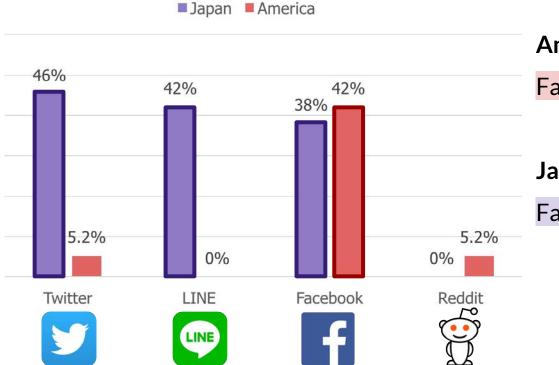






Memes & Social Media

Top 3 Social Media Platforms



Americans use:

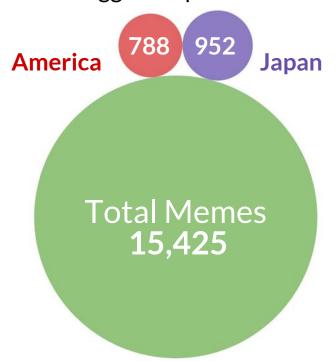
Facebook

Japanese simultaneously use:

Facebook, Twitter, & LINE

Memes & Social Media (cont.)

Memes Tagged "Japan" & "America"

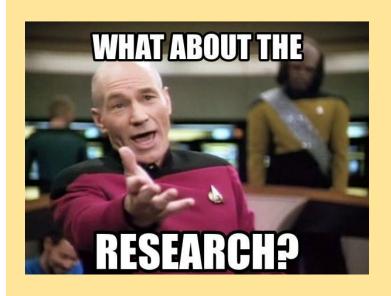


Of 15,425 documented memes, only a small percentage are acknowledged as "Japan" or "America."



Where memes originate is largely unknown.

The Study



Research Method

Respondents

- Total: 80 University Students (ages 17-32+)
 - 40 Japanese
 - 18 Male
 - 22 Female
 - 40 American
 - 18 Male
 - 20 Female
 - 2 Other

Research Instruments

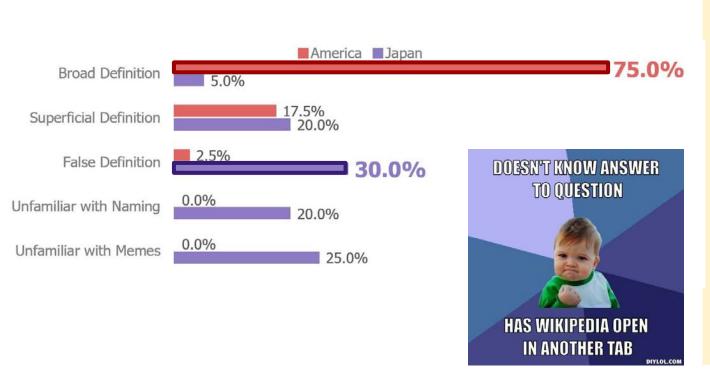
- Google Forms survey
 - English survey
 - Japanese Survey
- 23 questions each

Research Question 1 Findings

What are the differences in Japanese and American students' perceptions and opinions on memes?



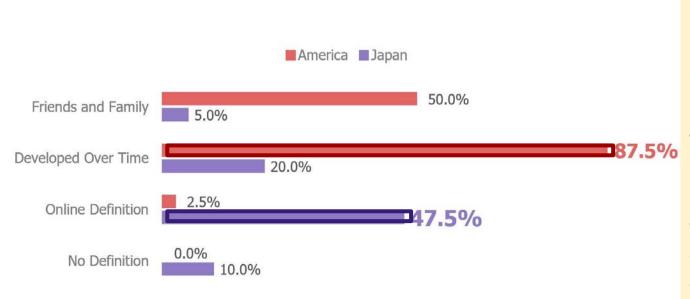
What is the best definition of an "internet meme"?



All American students knew memes & most chose broad definition

Of 55% Japanese students who knew, only ¼ chose broad definition

Where did you get your definition of "internet meme"?



Most American students developed a definition over time

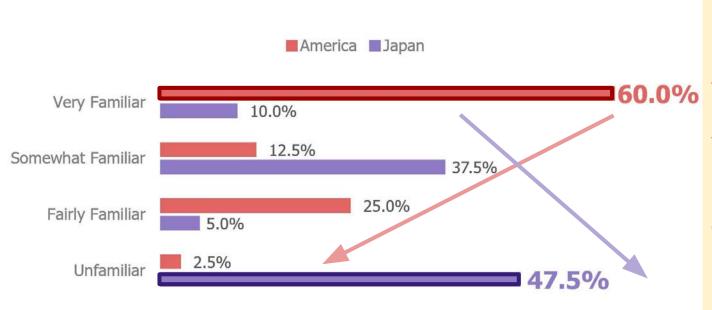
Nearly half of

Japanese students

saw a definition

online

How familiar are you with internet memes?



60% of the

American students

answered they are

very familiar

Nearly half of the Japanese students answered unfamiliar

How many of these memes do you recognize?

American Memes









Japanese Memes



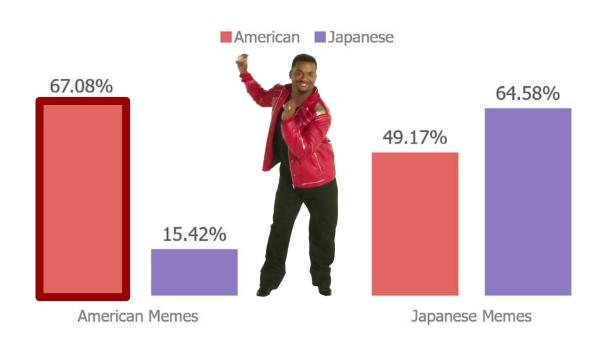






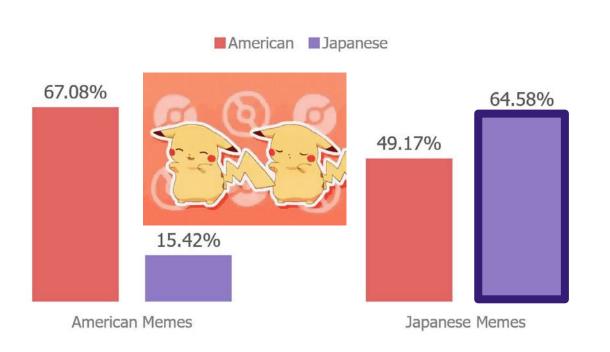


How many of these memes do you recognize?



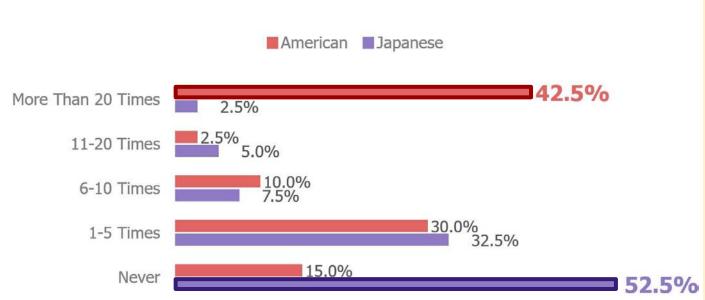
American students
recognized memes
more frequently
with emphasis on
American-based
memes

How many of these memes do you recognize?



Japanese students
recognized memes
less frequently
with emphasis on
Japanese-based
memes

How many times have you shared internet memes?

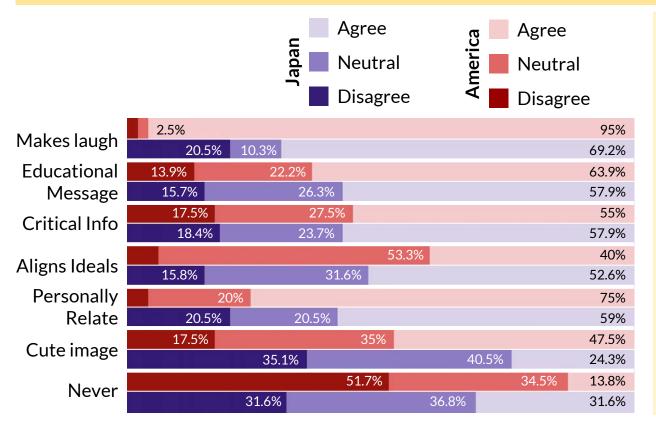


About 43% of American students have shared memes over 20 times.

About 53%

Japanese students
have never shared
a meme.

I would share an internet meme if it...

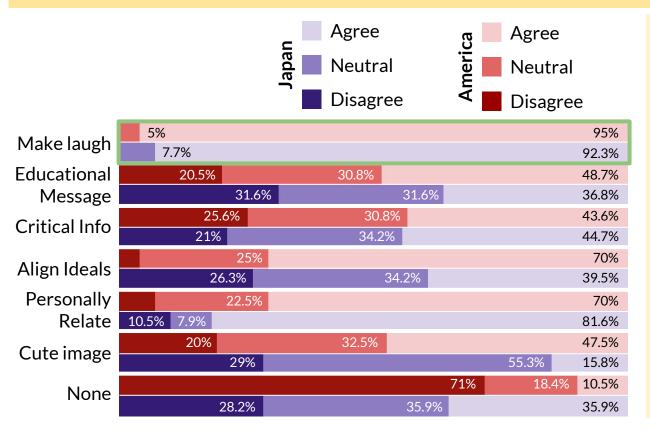


Both Japanese & American students

like to share memes that **make people laugh** most.

American students are generally more willing to share memes.

What do you think is the purpose of internet memes?

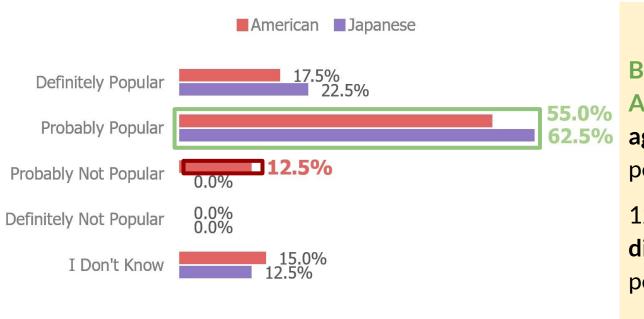


American students think memes have multiple purposes

Both American & Japanese students answered "Make laugh" the most

Do you think internet memes are just as popular in Japan/America?

(Americans asked about Japan, Japanese asked about America)

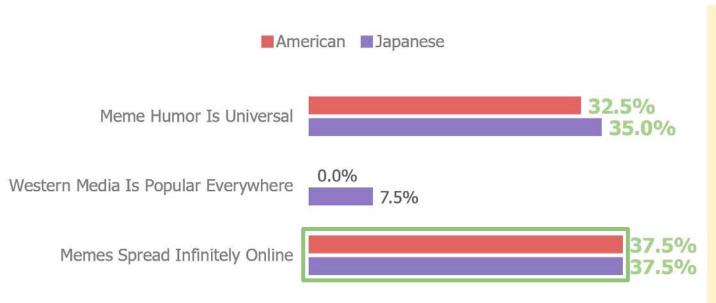


Both Japanese & American students agree—memes are popular.

12% of American students disagree—memes are not popular.

Why do you think memes <u>are</u> popular in Japan/America?

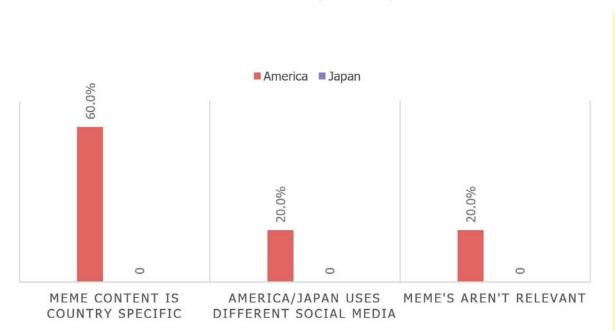
(Americans asked about Japan, Japanese asked about America)



Both agree that memes can spread infinitely online & humor is universal.

Why do you think memes <u>aren't</u> as popular in Japan/America?

(Americans asked about Japan, Japanese asked about America)



Five American students answered

60% because meme content is country-specific

20% each because "Japan uses different social media" & "memes arent' relevant"

No Japanese students answered

Summary of Research Question 1 Findings

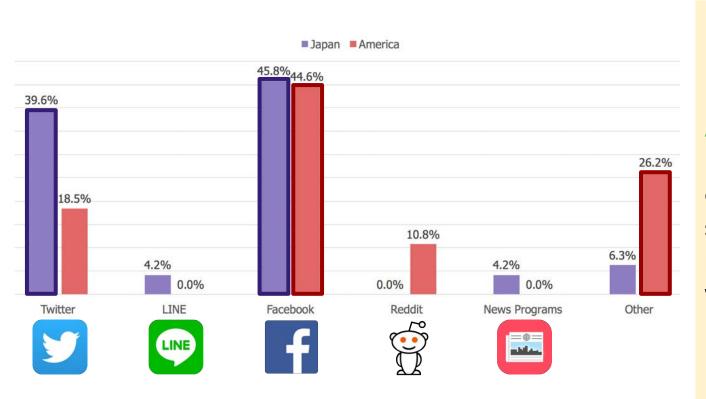
	Japan	America	
Chosen Definition	False definition	Broad definition	
Definition Development	Saw online	Developed on own over time	
Memes Recognized	More familiar with own country's memes		
Willingness to Share	Willing to share memes		
Purpose of Memes	Particular purposes	Various purposes	
Why Popular	Memes spread infinitely online		
Why Not Popular	Meme content is country-specific		

Research Question 2 Findings

What cultural differences influence the variety of memes created in Japan versus America?

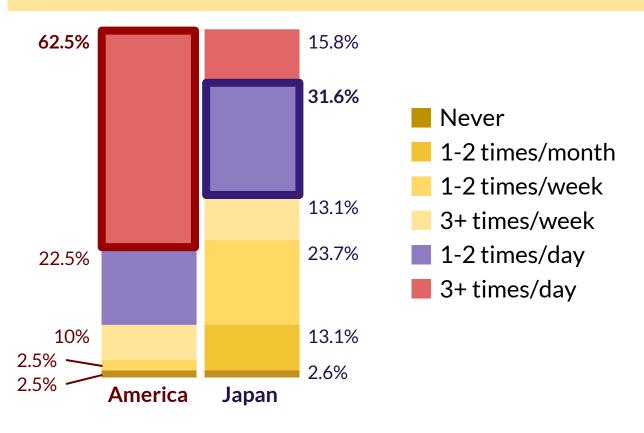


Where do you see internet memes most often?



Both Japanese &
American students
mainly see memes
on Western-based
social media sites
popular around the
world

How often do you see internet memes?



American students see memes more often than Japanese.

Americans replied "3+ times/day" 4 times more than Japanese.

What types of memes do you see most often? What types of memes do you like/dislike?

Animals

Viral Media

Popular Media

Recent Events

Politics





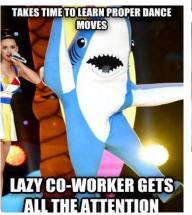


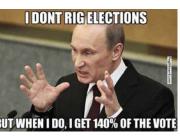








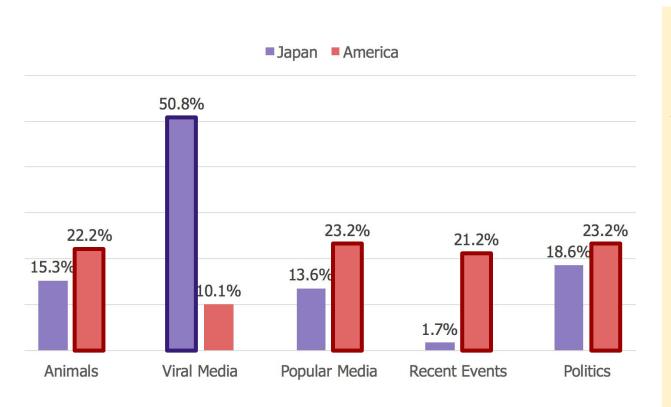






WHO WORE IT BETTER?

What types of memes do you see most often?



American students
see a wide variety of
memes at a near even
split

Japanese students mostly see Viral Media memes

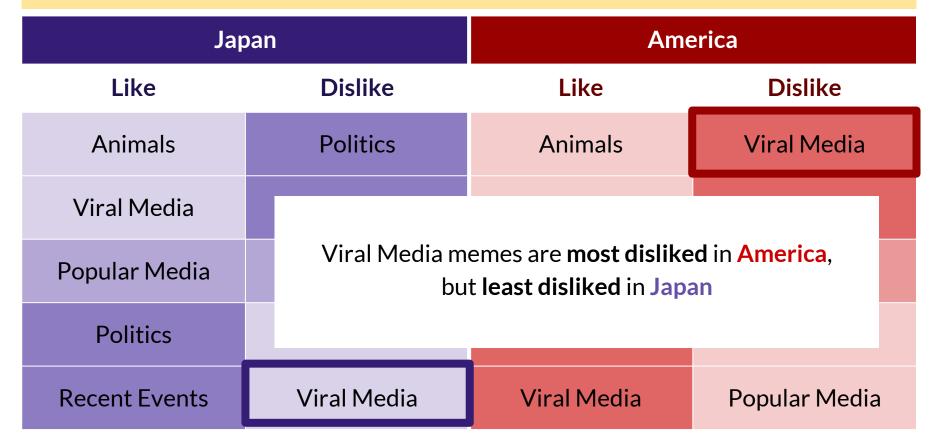
What types of internet memes do you like/dislike?

		•	
Japan		America	
Like	Dislike	Like	Dislike
Animals	Politics	Animals	Viral Media
Viral Media	Popular Media	Popular Media	Recent Events
Popular Media	Animals	Recent Events	Politics
Politics	Recent Events	Politics	Animals
Recent Events	Viral Media	Viral Media	Popular Media

What types of internet memes do you like/dislike?

Japan		America	
Like	Dislike	Like	Dislike
Animals	Politics	Animals	Viral Media
Both countries like Animal memes			Recent Events
Both countries like Aminal memes			Politics
Politics	Recent Events	Politics	Animals
Recent Events	Viral Media	Viral Media	Popular Media

What types of internet memes do you like/dislike?



Why do you <u>like</u> those types of memes?

Japan

Ideals Align

Cute Image

Make laugh
Personally relate
Personally relate
Educational message
Critical Info
Ideals Align

America

Cute Image

Critical Info

Same trend for top 3 in both countries

Cute image is least popular reason in Japan despite "cute culture"

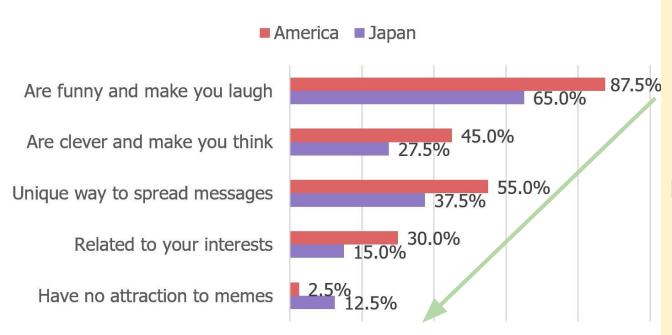
Why do you dislike those types of memes?

Japan America

Don't personally relate	Don't personally relate	
Don't align ideals	Don't make laugh	
No critical info	Don't align ideals	
Don't make laugh	No critical info	
No educational message	No educational message	
No cute image	No cute image	

Inability to relate on a personal level is foremost reason for dislike

What is the overall attraction of memes for you?



Both countries follow same trend



Reasons for attraction are shared between America & Japan

Summary of Research Question 2

	Japan	America	
Social Media	Western-based social media		
Frequency	Not as often	More often	
Most Viewed	Mainly Viral Media memes	Wide variety of memes	
Most Liked	Animal memes		
Most Disliked	Political memes	Viral Media memes	
Reason Like	Make laugh, relate personally, have an educational message		
Reason Dislike	Don't relate personally, don't align with ideals		

Conclusion

- Japan is still becoming familiar with memes, while America already has a history with internet memes as well as clearly defined likes and dislikes.
- Both Japanese & American students' shared reasons for liking memes, but the types of memes they liked varied between countries. Japanese students disliked political memes, while American students tended to express their own opinions. This may be a reflection of Japan's culture of consideration toward others and America's culture of emphasizing personal opinion.
- This cultural influence is also reflected in the contents of shared memes.
- Memes can instantaneously spread anywhere in the world via the internet, simultaneously broadening shared world perspectives and making similarities more pronounced. This means that memes may be a gauge that reflects global society.

Limitations & Future Studies

Limitations

- We only surveyed students from a few universities, so data cannot be generalized
- Limited existing research on memes in Japan made collecting research materials difficult

Future Studies

- We would like to know more about origin of memes in Japan
- We would like to research similar image macros such as Japanese stamps and their correlation with memes
- We would like to find out what cultural values influence entertainment preferences

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Questions?



