

Soyjaks as Forms of Communication in Online Communities

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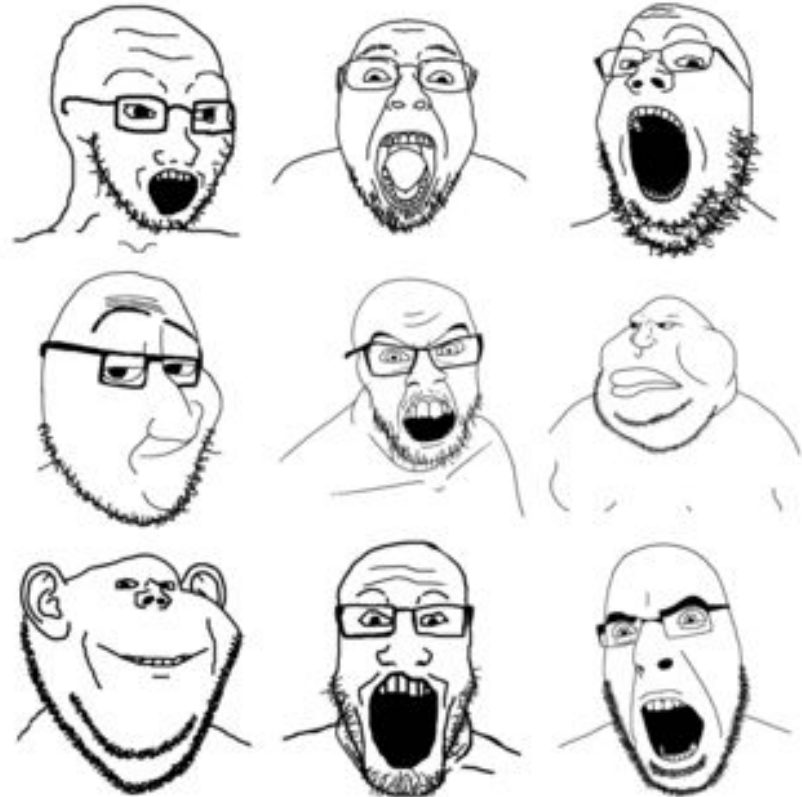
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Introduction

- Soyjaks are a group of crudely drawn internet meme characters
- Typically include traits such as glasses, gaping mouths, and neckbeards
- They can be used to represent any being or object
- Specific images of soyjaks that are famous enough to have a name are called variants



Soyjak Culture

- Soyjak culture extends beyond images of soyjaks
- Originates from a broader online network called the Soysphere
- Includes multiple platforms such as imageboards, archives, and forums
- Users have developed their own language called Soyspeak

Literature Review

- Memes are a major form of communication online
- Combine visual and textual meaning
- Spread through remixing and participation
- Required shared knowledge to understand

Research Gap

- Existing research examines memes broadly
- Limited research on specific internet communities
- Little analysis of how visual classification, language, and participation work together

How do soyjaks function as forms of in-group communication and identity signaling within online communities?

Methodology

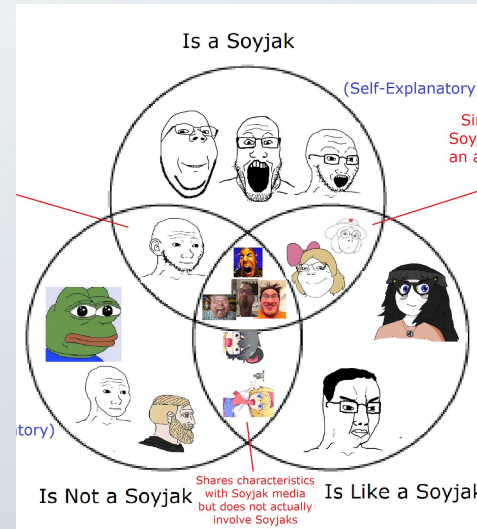
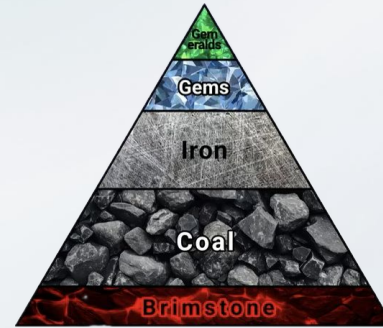
- Qualitative exploratory research method
- Collected data from imageboards, forums, and mainstream social media platforms
- Organized the data into three analytical categories based on recurring patterns
 - language
 - images
 - participation

Finding #1

- Soyspeak functions as a structured communication system
- Uses consistent patterns (abbreviation, syllable removal, altered spelling)
- Requires prior knowledge to interpret meaning
- Acts as both a communication tool and identity marker

Finding #2

- Soyjaks are organized into recognizable variants
- Variants share repeated visual traits
- Variants can branch into subvariants
- Classification systems:
 - IAS (Is A Soyjak)
 - NAS (Not A Soyjak)
 - Mineral rating system (coal, gem)



Finding #3

- Communication relies on continuous user participation
- Content is created through remixing, response, and modification
- Ways of interaction:
 - Quoting
 - Reposting, editing, and remixing existing content
 - Reuse and adaptation of existing formats to create new meanings

- Knowledge of systems signals insider status
- Outsiders lack context to interpret meaning
- For example, “nusoi” used to label users entering from mainstream platforms

Finding #4

- Soyjak culture demonstrates that memes can function as structured communication systems
- Meaning is constructed through shared linguistic, visual, and participatory frameworks
- Identity is shaped through access to and understanding of internal systems
- In-group boundaries emerge through knowledge rather than explicit exclusion
- Online meme communities can develop culture-like systems of meaning and belonging

Conclusion

Limitations

- Analysis based only on publicly available online content
- No direct interviews or user verification of intent
- Possible sampling bias from selected posts and platforms
- Rapidly evolving nature of meme culture may affect consistency over time
- Qualitative interpretation limits generalizability of findings
- Findings reflect observed patterns rather than statistically measurable behavior

Citations

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Thank you
