

WholesomeMemes: Internet for the Spirit

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Abstract

Amidst a vicious election cycle and all the darkness on the Internet in late 2016 emerged a new subreddit, r/wholesomememes. This community provides a stark contrast from what most of reddit and most memes are about. Memes are typically meant to be funny, witty, but these are meant to be uplifting. It's a different spin on an internet sensation. An emerging trend online is to claim "the Internet" as an entity is a mean-spirited, sentient being. Our research team became an involved, engaged group of users in this community and studied others' behaviors and thoughts on the network. Through posts, comments, and a series of interviews we came to understand how this community functions and how those involved like to use it and why. We wanted to understand how this group of people had cultivated a community that was entirely positive and uplifting and how it impacted the lives of its users.

WholesomeMemes: Internet for the Spirit

Although WholesomeMemes is, as the name suggests, dedicated to wholesome memes, it was not the originator of the term. In late 2016, a countertrend to traditional memes began rising in popularity on Twitter (Hunt). As opposed to traditional memes, which are designed to be witty and mean-spirited, these memes flipped the tables to carry positive, but still creative messages with an ironic twist on the original usage of the meme. In August, wholesome memes were declared as “the next frontier in Internet culture” by New York Magazine (Feldman). From this surge in popularity, a subreddit was formed dedicated to this new concept.

Since its creation in late 2016, WholesomeMemes has acquired 463,106 “lovely people”. At any given moment, there are no less than 2,000 subscribers “loving you now.” Members of the subreddit, similar to those of other subreddits, can post content to the page as long as they contain are “wholesome”, a term that comprises of everything from uplifting stories found on Tumblr to amusing gifs of puppies. To a new visitor on /r/wholesomememes, it may seem quite difficult to understand how a site such as this could make subscribers feel better. Are these memes and comics not available elsewhere on the internet? A majority of the posts are reposts from Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook that members found appropriate to share with others on WholesomeMemes. Almost every one of these posts consists of at least one comment along the lines of “this made my day” or “you all made me smile after a very long time.” Unlike other online sites that allow content sharing, WholesomeMemes effectively filters out the negativity that is so recurrent in the online world.

WholesomeMemes is an excellent demonstration of a community acting together as a whole rather than its members acting individually, a feature of a successful online community as described by Kollock (1998). Every member of the subreddit is aware of the community rules

and actively abides by those rules, reprimanding any deviants breaking them. The moderators, another strong feature of WholesomeMemes, are dedicated to their task as overseers. They carefully monitor all activity and content, immediately responding to any unusual or unacceptable behavior. The downvote button, a feature available on every subreddit, is not present on WholesomeMemes. This eliminates the possibility of a post or comment spiraling into a non-wholesome discussion.

Though a site with such an odd theme and set of rules may not seem to have long-term viability, the site draws nearly one million unique visitors to /r/wholesomememes every month. We chose to study this community to gain further insight and knowledge into the success of the community and its implications for broader Internet trends. In this paper, both valuable and adverse features of the site are analyzed to evaluate WholesomeMemes as an online community.

Related Work

Looking at Dr. Bruckman's paper, *Finding One's Own in Cyberspace*, the inspiration for the paper was uncertainty over the safety of women online. Dr. Bruckman closed the paper by suggesting that users disgruntled by unsavory content online could build a more positive community. WholesomeMemes might be considered to be an answer to that call, a community exclusively dedicated to positive messages even as hate speech spikes to higher and higher levels (LaFrance). Our experiences with the site as well as information from interviewees suggest that Wholesome Memes has low incidence of inappropriate content posted, evidencing the "implicit sense" of appropriateness and taste that was proposed as a design element (Bruckman).

You can see a repetition of common themes in the comments on most posts. For example, the comments in Figure 1 and Figure 2 were taken from two separate posts on the main page.



Figure 1

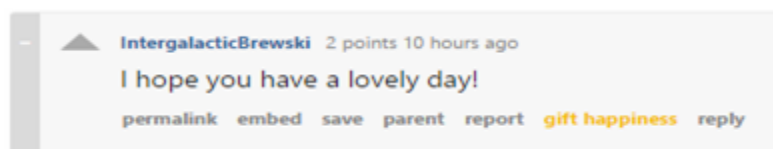


Figure 2

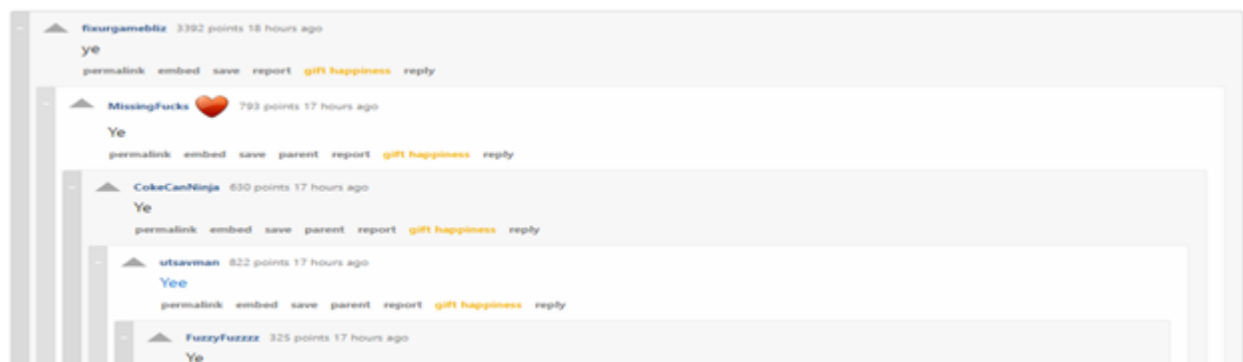


Figure 3

In “Understanding Deja Reviewers”, the researchers tried to understand the need for repetitive reviews in the comment section. It begs the question of what is the need for the same comment several times by many different people. How does it add to the subreddit? While in some other subreddits this behavior is not as rewarded as a witty or funny comment but in this subreddit kindness is the main priority. People are generally trying to be supportive of the person

posting it or trying to brighten the day of the user browsing the comments section so several of the same comments that are encouraging is appreciated for that reason.

In “Regulating Behavior in Online Communities” the authors discuss the many ways in which posters of inappropriate content can be dealt with. With WholesomeMemes, the community is self selecting, but given its overwhelming positivity and rapidly growing popularity it is a glaring target for trolls who want to bring the community down. With no downvoting allowed, there is no way to hide poor posts, so this leaves it to the users to report and the the moderators to sweep the page to clear it of any objectionable or simply unwholesome content. While the moderators could not talk to us to give us more details, from discussions it does not appear that if your post is removed that your account is immediately suspended or banned from the sub, however given repeated action it likely would be. Over the course of the few months I did not once see objectionable content on the “recent” posts, so the moderators have done a good job keeping trolls out of the community through a variety of methods including post removal, blocking, and banning.

Methods

The authors reached out many users of the WholesomeMemes community and interviewed a total of 9 people. Interviews were either conducted via instant messenger, phone calls or video chats. The time taken for each interview varied based on the means of communication and the interviewee’s answers. The authors were able to interview users from many backgrounds ranging from people who have used the subreddit for a few days to a few months. Each author spent from 10 to 20 participating in the community. The author’s participated by upvoting, commenting in the comment sections, posting memes, responding to

community threads, replying in the chat discords and direct messaging users of the subreddit.

The following users were interviewed:

Emanuel

Emanuel is a 20-year-old student from the Dominican Republic. He is currently studying Software Engineering and working. He has been browsing reddit for a few years but has been an official member of reddit for only a few months. He had been in the r/wholesomememes community for only a week. He loves the community because of the silly memes that put a smile on his face. He also participates in r/tifu, r/dadjokes and r/xboxone etc. He thinks this community stands out from others because of how nice members and moderators are in this community. He prefers to mostly browse the community and only post if something sticks out to him and doesn't tend to post very often. Emanuel likes the features and design decisions the community has made like the comment box that says "hello friendo.." or the "uplifted" text that pops up when you upvote. He likes the Karma system as well because it shows that people agree with his thinking. He would add a feature that would allow him to sign up for automated newsletter with the most upvoted memes of the day/week/month.

igetfourpointos

igetfourpointos is a student studying Business Administration. He found the community in the front page and joined it to "mellow down and feel good". He has been part of the community for about 2 months. He is a passive user who doesn't tend to participate in the comment section or make posts but he sees himself being a more active user in the future if the community stays positive. He likes the choice of functionalities allowed in the site. He thinks the reason for the success of the community is due to these design and rule decisions. He finds the

community members to be supportive and genuinely nice people and regardless of how they behave in other communities they are always cordial and supportive in this community.

TheAnneh

TheAnneh is a student who has been part of the reddit community for many years and part of wholesomememes for a few months. She finds the community supportive and calm. She also thinks that the members nice and responsive. She is mostly active in comedy subreddits but she also browses the mental health subreddit to provide or receive help. TheAnneh uses the reddit app on her phone so her view of the subreddit is different from a lot of other users. Her app is plain without any CSS and allows features like downvotes that are absent for the web users of the subreddit. She doesn't use the downvote button in the spirit of community. She occasionally participates in the comment section and doesn't post memes very often. She thinks the community is flexible in the way of how much you want to get involved. It can be helpful to make friends or to casually talk to someone. She likes the new discord right now to talk to other community members. She feels awkward commenting in other subreddits sometimes because of downvotes but in this subreddit she feels comfortable participating. She plans to be part of the community for a long time.

Will

Will is a person residing in the U.K. He is a 27-year-old male with a goal of becoming a full-time Twitch streamer. He is a fan of FPS video games and has been on Reddit for 6 years, currently serving as a moderator to two subreddits. He first discovered WholesomeMemes about three months ago.

Nicola

Nicola is a 20-year-old female also residing in the U.K. She is currently working and likes writing, as well as being a fan of K-pop. She has been on Reddit for 11 months, initially joining while looking for story ideas. She found WholesomeMemes about four months ago after seeing it being referenced in comments. For her, the community's positivity contrasts with the overall nature of Reddit, which at times can be negative.

Erika

Erika is a 25-year-old Canadian graduate student in the field of statistics studying in Arizona. She has been a long-time user of Reddit, using the site for more than five years. She attributes her current status to Reddit helping her with a number of aspects of her life. She is also an active participant on WholesomeMemes, but mainly through comments.

Yash

A 21 year old student living in New Delhi, India studying Information Technology at Manipal Institute of Technology. He browses the sub before he goes to sleep because it helps him with his insomnia because it makes him genuinely happy. He likes the positivity of the community and how it avoid political subjects. He is motivated to post in the subreddit by his desire to make people feel better. He thinks upvotes are "fake internet points" so he doesn't care about them but he appreciates seeing them because he can see how many people day he brightened.

Samson

Samson is a student living in the UK, who visits the page to get into a better mindset. The subreddit has helped him flip around his mindset from self deprecation to a more positive one. He use to make jokes about him being "weird, lonely and sad" which he thinks might have gotten his mood down subconsciously. He believes that this change of mindset about humour

might have made him a happier person. He wants to get more involved in the community therefore he participate in the Discord both via text and voice chat.

Lucas

Lucas is a high school senior living in New York City. He has engaged the community because of the positive vibes of the community in contrast to the edgy, self deprecating attitude of the rest of Reddit. He was unaware of the community's inability to downvote. If there is one thing he could change it would be that people would be looking to form more friendships, because being able to talk to others is very helpful when you're down. He's very active on the Discord channel and likes to find people to talk to on it.

u/homo_euphoric

u/homo_euphoric is a 23 year old graduate student who has recently moved to Washington, DC. When she found WholesomeMemes, she would mostly just upvote but has began commenting and posting more often. She finds the site appealing because of its "heartwarming content" as opposed to the "disturbing or enraging or gross" content elsewhere. One of her best experiences online was a short discussion with another member in a post thread about the satisfaction that comes from seeing "something happy" on the internet.

Tolga Aydin

Tolga Aydin is an 18 year old student living in Germany. He is a League of Legends enthusiast and his username, senseimadara, was inspired by Madara from the Japanese manga series Naruto. He is a fan of boards, which brought him to join Reddit, on which he is now a member of numerous subreddits such as /r/lol, /r/sadcringe, /r/aww, and, of course,

/r/wholesomememes. The “positive energy” found on WholesomeMemes has helped him through hard times and, in turn, he tries to participate on the site as often as possible.

Isarans

isarans is a 25 year old IT consultant in India. He likes to spend some of his free time on WholesomeMemes to unwind after a long day at work. He has found that participating on WholesomeMemes has changed the way he behaves in other online communities: “It is very easy to dehumanize strangers on the internet....[WholesomeMemes] reminds me that the blobs of text I read are still by a human being.” He also believes Karma is an effective way of controlling the “bandwidth” of users’ posts. It has positively influences his participation because it is “self-checking and a community system where not all the comments are equally perceived.” He doesn’t plan on ever becoming a moderator unless he is being paid, as it seems like a very tiring and time-consuming job.

One thing noted from interviewing users was that users find the barrier to posting to be difficult. None of the interviewed users had made a post, and one cited the need to have good content as a barrier. It’s not impossible to make text posts, but because the subreddit is geared towards images, any text must first be put in image form. Creative posts are difficult to produce on demand, which reduces the number of “good” posts that a member can hope to make. The interviewees liked seeing the wholesome memes, although they were not generally prone to respond to them.

One team member had a very interesting experience with the second post they made on the site. The post was a comic by a self-described “cartoonist lady person and social reporter.” It was something thought to fit in with the culture of the site. The comic was a depiction of the cartoonist sharing her problems with her dog, which was captioned, “it’s good to have friends,” (Lee & Pippin). It soon started surging in



Figure 4

popularity. Over the course of the day, it received thousands of upvotes, and was at one point the second ranked post, behind another post that was later removed, in effect making it the top post.

One remarkable aspect was the number of upvotes the post had received. Since there are no downvotes on Wholesome Memes, we did not expect the number of upvotes to go down. However, yesterday as the page was refreshed, the number of votes went up and down each time. Online research for the answer yielded the result that Reddit obscures the actual upvote count to its end users to prevent it from being manipulated. As of the time of writing, the post has received 10,500 points with a 96% upvote rate.

There were a large number of comments for the post, about a hundred, and we read through them to gain insight into how people reacted to the post. The comments were all focused on dogs, and people were sharing stories about their dogs, such as helper dogs they had seen. Some people described how their dogs had passed away or how they no longer had dogs and the post made them feel better, or miss having a dog, or want a dog. One that was particularly

striking was a person whose dog had just been euthanized a day ago and who really appreciated seeing the post. The idea that something we had posted actually helped someone deal with their significant loss was far and away beyond our expectations. It's amazing how a simple 4-panel comic led to this much discussion.



Figure 5

As an experiment, a similar comic to the first one posted was created, using screenshots from a popular anime TV show. On a superficial level, the theme is the same. A character is talking to a dog about valuable life lessons. However, the second post received a barely significant number of upvotes, around 60. The interviewees were asked to speculate on the reasons behind the popularity of the posts. All the interviewees pointed to the presence of a dog, and the generally positive message of the post as reasons for popularity. Asked about reasons behind a post's popularity in general, one interviewee suggested that the timing of a post also played a large role. As for the second post, one interviewee believed that the anime origin of the second post would alienate some users from liking the post. In his words, anime "is seen as

bizarre, gross and in some cases stale and old,” and he further noted that the last panel was somewhat negative. Another interviewee said that the change in the way the girl spoke to the dog was significant.

Research Questions

1. How long have you been part of Reddit and the r/wholesomememes community?
2. What do you like the most about the community?
3. What other communities do you actively participate in?
4. How do you find this community different from other communities on reddit?
5. In what ways do you participate on the subreddit?
6. How did you find this community?
7. How did you come to be a moderator on WholesomeMemes? What are some experiences you have had as a moderator?
8. How would you describe the atmosphere of WholesomeMemes?
9. How do you feel about the design features and rules of the site compared to the rest of reddit?
10. How would you deal with a troll in the subreddit?
11. Does the Karma system matter to you? Describe the significance of Karma and upvotes
12. Describe your future on WholesomeMemes (moderator? Long term member?..)
13. If there was a feature you could add to the subreddit what would it be?
14. Demographic Questions: Age, Location...

Evaluation as an Online Community

Based on Amy Jo Kim’s “Nine Principles of Community Design,” WholesomeMemes incorporates features that are both advantageous and unfavorable to its success as an online

community (2000). The subreddit has been analyzed based on these nine principles and their relevance.

Purpose

The purpose of the community is to provide a space where people are able to share popular images and text with the intent of bringing about positive feelings in people. The site offers several definitions for wholesome memes that are written out on a sidebar of the site. The definitions are as follows: “a meme that promotes health or well-being of body, mind, and/or soul, a meme that is pure of heart, devoid of corruption or malice, modest, stable, virtuous, and all-around sweet and compassionate, a meme that conveys support, positivity, compassion, understanding, love, affection, and genuine friendship by re-contextualizing classic meme formats, and using them to display warmth and empathy, a meme with no snark or sarcasm that displays genuine human emotion and subverts a generally negative meme to be more positive.”

The negative potential of Reddit is well-documented. For instance, looking at cases of cyber-vigilantism, many of these originated from a subreddit and were unchecked. The site has come under repeated criticisms for not moving fast enough to stem abusive content. In February of 2017, Reddit moved to remove a number of subreddits that were from the alt-right and generating what it deemed to be hate content. An alternative site has been formed by disgruntled users who were formerly members of subreddits removed from Reddit. Talking to users of WholesomeMemes, a common theme is that they appreciate the contrast that WholesomeMemes provides against other communities in Reddit. However, WholesomeMemes is not the only community they are a part of.

WholesomeMemes is a relatively new creation. The subreddit was created on September 17, 2016. However, the notion of a wholesome meme dates back further, and an organization

devoted to sharing them existed at least nine months ago, when Erika identified she had first heard of the term in the context of a Facebook group. The subreddit took a few weeks to begin growing, but according to RedditMetrics, the big initial leap was moving from 5,000 to 30,000 subscribers in just two weeks, between October 25th and November 8th. Presently the subreddit has over 400,000 subscribers, crossing that mark in February.

The design of the site definitely reinforces the purpose. The site has replaced standard Reddit features such as upvote, downvote, and give gold with “uplift,” no downvote system, and “give happiness.” It should be noted that removing downvotes is only a cosmetic change, since determined users are able to downvote in a number of ways. These methods include downvoting posts from the main page of reddit, downvoting from the reddit app, which does not have customizations for individual subs, and downvoting using third-party apps. When viewing the page on a desktop, the sidebar displays a collage of popular meme figures, which serves to remind and reinforce the purpose of the subreddit.

Users of the subreddit are split on the usefulness of these features. One user felt that such an option had no impact on the interaction with the community, but the other two users, one of which not having seen the features, felt it would give a better sense of identity to the community. The fact that some of the users had not heard of the features speaks to the fragmentation of the Reddit platform as a whole, since mobile users do not see subreddit customizations, and Reddit allows for the use of third-party client apps, which also do not have personalized views.

Gathering Places

The community gathers in a subreddit of the reddit website. /r/wholesomememes is the central point of meetup but members browse and socialize in other tabs within the community and participate in conversations by going to the comment sections of a post. The members also

gather in community events created by the moderators, such as threads for making friends or the chat discord. The number of meeting places grows based on the amount of activity and traffic in the site. The top of the main page acts like a guide to where you want to go in the community. The tabs and the conversation threads are pinned to the top of the main page and can be clicked to get to different parts of the subreddit.

The WholesomeMemes community has also spread to other social sites. One such subcommunity is its Discord. Discord is a platform for chat and voice communication originally developed to serve gamers, but perfectly equipped to accommodate any other type of group. Each group has its own server, which in turn contains channels dedicated to different subtopics. For WholesomeMemes, these include academia, media, and serious. As opposed to the thread-comment format of Reddit, free-flowing chat allows for more ephemeral and intimate conversations among members. Although the moderators on the Discord are not the same as the subreddit moderators, the power structure of the Discord means that subreddit moderators dictate the general rules and behavior to the appointed Discord heads, who then instruct their subordinates to moderate accordingly.

A reddit member has the choice to be part of WholesomeMemes, but once a subscriber of the community they cannot customize the subreddit to their preference or create their own environment inside the subreddit. There are sorting and filtering features that you can click once in the subreddit that allow you to avoid content you don't want to see, for example "No Comics", "Only comics" or "No Meta". Being a member allows you to see the popular content of the subreddit in your Reddit homepage. Otherwise, members are treated the same way as passersby in the subreddit[add that you have to have a reddit account first]. Kindness is a valued trait in the subreddit and it is rewarded with upvotes and encouraging comments throughout the community.

Evolution of profiles

There are very few barriers to entry in the community. There is a general requirement for a minimum amount of Reddit karma before posts and comments can be made more often than every every few minutes. Once this is met, an effectively unlimited number of posts and comments can be made. Non-members have full access to view any posts and comments, but are not able to upvote without having a Reddit account. Members have their own profiles with regards to Reddit, but not in relation to WholesomeMemes. Reddit maintains a history of all users' posts in the community, and moderator-deleted posts may appear in that user's profile, although they are no longer present in the community. The only special category of membership is for the moderators.

The downvote system is not implemented in the WholesomeMemes subreddit, as it is in other sites on Reddit. The lack of the system is a bit hard to grasp at first, because explanations of it are themselves Reddit posts, making them a bit difficult to find. Official documentation suggests that downvotes are to be used for posts or comments that are not relevant to the respective subreddit or topic. However, the reality is that posts are downvoted if they *are not liked*, relegating this button to dislike status. One interviewed user, well-versed with Reddit, expressed his strong discontent with this system, because it's not being used as intended. Wholesome Memes has taken some steps to remove the downvote button, but it's not impossible. Other users interviewed did not feel as strongly about the use of this feature.

Leadership

The moderator is mostly selected based on their previous experience on reddit. If a certain time shift is vacant then the moderators for that shift can also be selected based on time availability. For example, almost all the moderator for the subreddit are based in North America

so the night shift is taken by a person who works the graveyard shift at a hotel. The moderators are given a set of rules that they use to decide how to monitor the subreddit and discord chatroom. If a moderator is unsure about what action to take, then there is a layer of authority that they can reach out to.

The subreddit moderators are the highest level of authority. The chain of command in the subreddit moderators is decided based on the timeline on which the moderator joined the subreddit. The older moderators have the highest authority in the subreddit. Poppwall was the user who initially started the subreddit 6 months ago. Since then Poppwall “has handed off management to AwkwardTheTurtle”. AwkwardTheTurtle is a very experienced reddit user who is a moderator of 1700+ subreddits. The chain of command in the discord goes from discord boss to moderators to janitors. Subreddit moderators keeps discord boss in check who in turn keep an eye on all the moderators of the discord. Moderators can moderate and ban content and janitors delete the flagged contents. Lower level authority asks higher level authority if they are not sure about anything.

Code of conduct

The community has explicitly defined 8 main rules in the main page, as noted in Figure 6.

1. All posts must be wholesome memes.
2. Please make posts general rather than specific personal experiences. This helps make posts more relatable.
3. Please avoid submitting NSFW content.
4. Please do not troll, harass, or be generally rude to your fellow users.
5. Please do not post personal information, yours or others.
6. Please link to images directly. This makes browsing easier for those using RES or through a mobile device.
7. Please do not mention upvotes in your post. No "Upvote in..." or "Upvote if..." type titles or memes. See here.
8. Please avoid re-posting memes.

Figure 6

Meme and wholesome meme is also defined in many ways to make certain that the members are clearly aware of the meaning. This is further made clear in the link in Rule 1 of the rules section that leads to examples of appropriate and inappropriate memes that follow or break the subreddit's rules. The subreddit was created just 6 months ago; therefore the code of conduct is relatively new.

There are currently 31 moderators. The head moderators usually make the rules. Head moderators are moderators who joined as moderators earlier. Poppwall has the highest authority since he started the subreddit and is the oldest member.

Events

As WholesomeMemes accommodates members from all over the world, there is not often a common discussion of any holidays or events. However, when any culturally, religiously, or geographically-specific holiday or celebration nears, it is not uncommon to notice a prevalence of memes and comics related to the event. On occasions such as National Pizza Day, there is a noticeable surge of pizza-related wholesome memes. Though there may not be any announcement feature on the subreddit, internationally-acknowledged events do get attention when appropriate.

A successful aspect of the subreddit is the announcements. Moderators are capable of posting an announcement that remains at the top of the page for a designated amount of time, acting somewhat like a billboard. Since the start of studying WholesomeMemes, the announcements have included news about new subreddits such as /r/wholesomecomics, a survey created by one of the moderators, and an announcement of the new official Discord Chat Server. Of the few announcements posted, the "Find a Friend" thread grew exponentially in a matter of

days. Members of WholesomeMemes were invited to make an introduction and share facts about themselves to find like-minded individuals who might want to build a relationship.

The survey mentioned above consisted of questions concerning the various categories that content on WholesomeMemes can be divided into. The purpose of this, it seemed, was to determine if new subreddits should be created to accommodate those different types of content.

Range of roles

Like nearly all other Reddit subs, there are a variety of roles a user can decide to take on or work their way into. WholesomeMemes exhibits the progression a user can take from a visitor to an elder, as modeled by Kim's "membership lifecycle" (2000). A user can start out as a lurker, or a visitor. On Reddit, this does not require the creation of an account. A lurker is a user who observes, but does not actively participate. By doing this, it allows the user to learn the conventions of the community before they actively participate, improving their contributions when they decide to become more involved.

An intermediate stage between lurker and a user who comments is one who upvotes posts. In many communities, they would be able to upvote and downvote, but due to the rules of r/wholesomememes it is not possible to downvote, so a user is afforded the ability to essentially just "like" the posts they enjoy. This requires the creation of an account, but has very little risk in terms of interrupting the community. As the user feels more comfortable they can begin commenting on posts, initially they may only comment once every ten minutes until they build up enough karma, but once they do, they are able to comment at will. By commenting and responding to others' comments the user can begin to get a better feel for the community and become an active member. They may begin recognizing other familiar user names and start to engage these users through comments on various posts and eventually even via direct message.

As a user becomes more and more involved in and comfortable with the community they may get a feel for the posts and start making their own. As a content creator, they will earn karma for good posts and will gain notoriety, building up rapport within the sub. If a user decides the sub is really for them they could start taking steps towards becoming a moderator and therefore having a very active, involved role in the community becoming one of the few people who actually run it.

Sub-groups

Since r/wholesomememes is already a sub on a larger online community there aren't official subgroups, however moderators have established and publicized groups for members of the r/wholesomememes community on other social platforms. One such platform is Discord, a free voice and text chat geared towards gamers, that works both on desktops and mobile devices. While the topics in the wholesomememes channel of this chat rarely is about gaming, the service provides a great way for members of the community to engage in a more free flowing dialogue than Reddit can give them. It still abides by the community rules of r/wholesomememes for the most part, but allows a different type of interaction, that has a more personal feel to it.

Additionally, for the more game oriented members there is a group on Steam, a digital distribution platform which allows gamers to purchase and download games in addition to multiplayer gaming and social networking services. This group periodically hosts game events, but otherwise it provides the members of wholesomememes a place to find others to play with who hold a more wholesome mindset. So while r/wholesomememes does not have official subgroups as part of the Reddit sub, it has branched out to other services to give people who share a desire for a wholesome mindset to share their common interests.

Integration in the real world

After speaking with some members of the subreddits, it was found that very few have off-site relationships with other members. Many relationships are limited to co-modding or communication with recurring commenters. The WholesomeMemes discord, however, exhibits more relationships than the subreddit. Though it is not the online community under study, many of the members interviewed also participate in the Discord channel, where they are more likely to make friends than on the subreddit. As WholesomeMemes is somewhat of a forum rather than a networking site, it is understandable that members don't have or even desire offsite relationships with other members. As u/homo_euphoric stated, other members can be promoted from strangers if she "[sees] them on the threads they frequent, otherwise there isn't really any need to create relationships because [they're] all there for the same purpose."

Despite being formed only a few months ago, Wholesome Memes is quickly capturing the attention of Reddit users and people across the Internet. Even before the subreddit's creation, broader audiences were beginning to take note of the popularity of the genre, and with one of the fastest-growing subreddits now dedicated to the concept, awareness of wholesome memes will only rise. Users of the community are very passionate about the community's mission and have a lot of love for the positive corner of the Internet that they have created together. Wholesome Memes is truly a positive community accessible to anyone.

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