

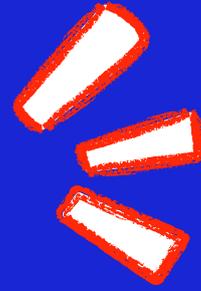
JOKINGLY

SERIOUS

HOW GEN Z USES MEMES TO DISCUSS GENDER



TABLE OF CONTENTS



SECTION 1: SETTING THE SCENE

- Page 3 - Project Introduction
- Page 4 - Overview: Memes in Vietnam
- Page 5 - Overview: Gen Z in Vietnam

SECTION 2: THE MEMES

- Page 8 - "I'm just a girl" - Top 5 popular topics
- Page 9 - It's a plot twist! - Top 5 rhetorics used in the memes
- Page 10 - A (funny) picture is worth a thousand words - Top 5 visual styles
- Page 11 - Is he a 'red flag'? - Top 5 most popular linguistic devices
- Page 12 - Section Conclusion: Old and new

SECTION 3: THE COMMENTS

- Page 14 - 'I don't think guys are like this' - Top 5 pages and memes with the highest interaction level
- Page 15 - Consensus: Play along with the joke
- Page 16 - Negotiation: 'It's not always like that, you know'
- Page 17 - Opposition: Nah, that's not true!
- Page 18 - Section Conclusion: Gender is open for debate

SECTION 4: APPLICATIONS

- Page 20 - For brands: Don't be tone-deaf! 3 tips to use memes in campaigns towards Gen Z
- Page 21 - For brands: Gender-related campaigns that did it right
- Page 22 - For educators: Gen Z, Gender & Studying: Ambition With a Sense of Humor
- Page 23 - For educators: A handy checklist: How should your classroom approach gender topics?
- Page 24 - For businesses: Through memes, you'll understand the 'weird' Gen Z colleagues
- Page 25 - Beyond Vietnam: Is There a Regional Meme Language?
- Page 26 - Section Conclusion: Why Understanding Gen Z's Meme Language Matters

SECTION 5: CLOSING

- Page 28 - Final notes: Memes are more than just silly entertainment
- Page 29 - What comes next?
- Page 31 - Acknowledgements

PROJECT INTRODUCTION

'BOYS WILL BE BOYS' AND 'IT'S A GIRL THING'

HOW DOES GEN Z IN VIETNAM SAY IT WITH MEMES?

What is the project about?

This e-zine comes from an academic study on how Vietnamese Gen Z uses memes as a language to discuss gender and gender equality in the digital space.

The research team consists of lecturers and researchers in the fields of media, culture, and gender, aiming to bring academic research findings closer to the public.



Where did we get the data?

Data was collected from popular meme communities on Facebook during the period of 2024-2025, focusing on visual content, language, and user responses.

This e-zine not only presents the main findings of the study but also opens up practical applications in education, media, and society. Our team aims to promote dialogue on gender equality in the spirit of SDG 5 (Gender Equality).



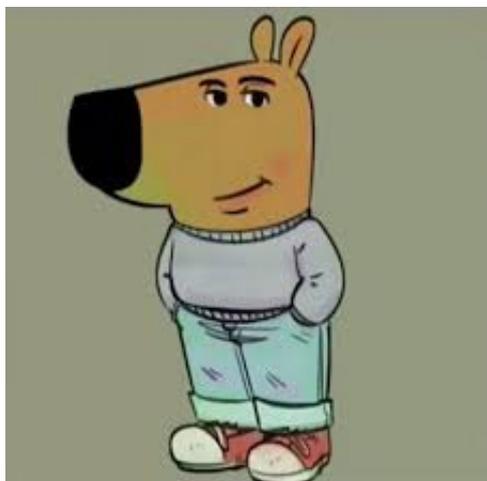
LET'S DIVE INTO THE
COLORFUL WORLD OF MEMES!



OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

MEMES IN VIETNAM



The Chill Guy meme that took over social media in 2024



Since 2017, the Distracted Boyfriend meme has been re-purposed many times

Common types of memes

1

Image: The basic type of meme that features a photo or a drawing with a short caption

2

Text: Memes that have screenshots of conversations, or personal thoughts and stories

Short video or GIF: Quick videos with a short caption in them, common in video platforms such as TikTok and Instagram

3



In Vietnam, memes have become the language of people between the age of 13 and 27 (Generation Z). Gen Z, who has been online since they were little, is happy to express themselves through this visual platform.

To them, it's fun to make and respond to memes. On social media, they repost memes, tag their friends in the comments, and share their opinions about the memes' content, building a vibrant community of both creators and sharers.

GEN Z

SOCIAL MEDIA

Sources: DataReportal 2025, Nielsen 2025, Q&Me 2025, Oxford Dictionary, Kenh14, Brands Vietnam, VN Express, Hoa Hoc Tro, Wired

SMARTPHONES AND MEMES

NUMBER OF GEN Z IN VIETNAM

14.7 MILLION IN 2025



On average, Gen Z spends **7 hours** a day on their phone - higher than any other generation

Facebook is the most popular social media platform in Vietnam



ENTERTAINMENT

MEME

PARODY ACCOUNTS

are the 2nd most followed type of social media accounts in Vietnam

28.7% social media users in Vietnam follow at least one entertainment, meme and parody account

Reasons for memes' popularity

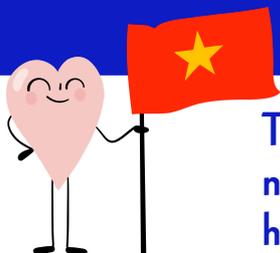
- Simple (to create and understand)
- Visual
- Funny
- Featuring trendy topics
- Featuring relatable situations

Some popular community pages in Vietnam that frequently post memes

	Trường Ngươi Ta	3.2 million followers
	Why So Serious	3.1 million followers
	Tuyết Bích Collection	2.3 million followers
	Lớp Ngươi Ta	1.9 million followers
	Insight mắt lòng	1.4 million followers
	Insight Gen Z	1.2 million followers
	Cột sống Gen Z	664K followers
	Đài tiếng nói Gen Z	412K followers

Data as of December 2025

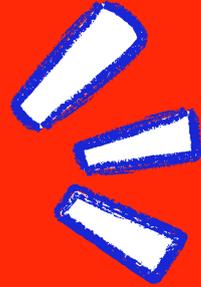
Some meme trends in 2025



To understand Gen Z in Vietnam, brands, educators and employers need to understand the language of memes. Funny or serious, they're how young people make sense of the world around them.



SECTION 2



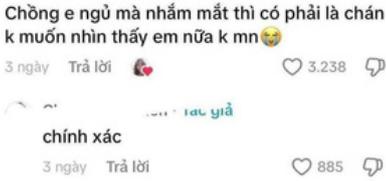
THE MEMES

I'M JUST A GIRL

TOP 5 POPULAR TOPICS

Our team found great diversity in the memes' content – they addressed a wide range of gender stereotypes (in either positive, negative or mixed manners). Here are the top five most common stereotypes found in our data:

1



'I don't use logic'

Irrational women: This stereotype believes that women tend to be unreasonable creatures who act in an emotional manner.

2



'Strong men will win'

Superior men: This stereotype paints the picture of men as wealthy, knowledgeable and strong providers for their women.

3

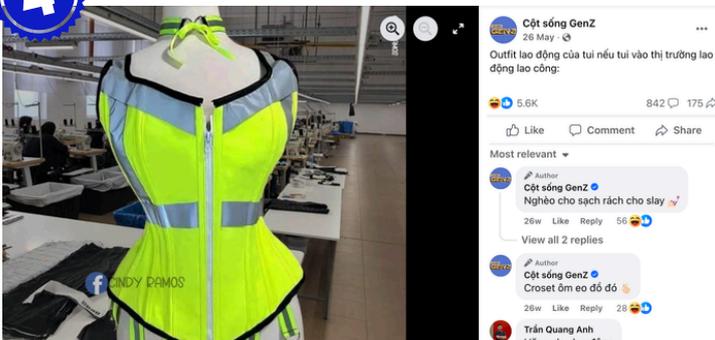
Khi tui kể với với hội đồng quản trị tui có mỗi mới kiểu:



'Sisterhood forever!'

Female bonding: This stereotype says that women usually enjoy gossiping, and discussing relationship problems, with their female friends. They also provide life advice to each other.

4



'I want to look good'

Appearance matters: According to this stereotype, women tend to spend a lot of time and efforts on their looks, from make-up and hair to fashion.

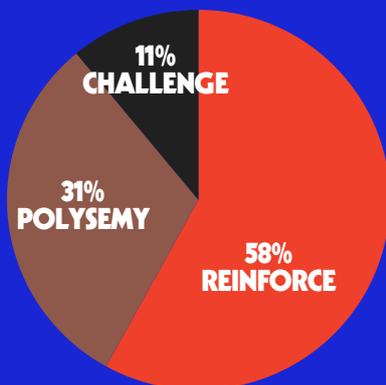
5



'The ignorant male'

Men are disappointing: This stereotype believes that most men are clueless and aloof – to the horror of their wives or girlfriends

In each meme, the author either agreed with, showed mixed emotions towards, or disagreed with these stereotypes. Here's a quick breakdown of the viewpoints:



58% REINFORCE: Our memes tend to agree mostly with the 'irrational woman' stereotype, followed by the 'female bonding' and 'superior men' ones.

31% POLYSEMY: These memes are either ambivalent, or they feature a mix of stereotypes, or they're open to different interpretations. The top stereotype in this category is 'irrational woman vs rational man'.

11% CHALLENGE: Many memes disagree with the 'ignorant male' beliefs, as well as 'women are weak' stereotypes.

Vietnamese Gen Z is vocal about various gender matters, and have a wide range of feelings towards common stereotypes. Thanks to memes, these seemingly difficult topics have become much easier to grasp.

IT'S A PLOT TWIST!

TOP 5 RHETORICS USED IN THE MEMES

Each meme in our list is a story in itself, full of twists and turns that can leave readers rolling in laughter. In particular, Gen Z authors aren't afraid to show off their story-telling skills with the clever rhetorical tools below:

1 Parody



Q: "What's happening to her"? A: "Her date got cancelled after she finished her makeup"

Isn't it Snow White in this meme? Or Hello Kitty? Oh wait, it's in fact the sitcom Sex in the City!

Many memes use popular culture, such as taking characters in movies and novels out of context, to maximise the humour.

2 Metaphor

Hình chụp hội chị em thân thiết của tui kiểu:



Actual photo of me and my besties

Nothing is more vivid than a good metaphor – and meme authors understand this well. From legal terms and snakes to math equations and cars, memes paint powerful images that convey the message quickly.

3 Plot twist

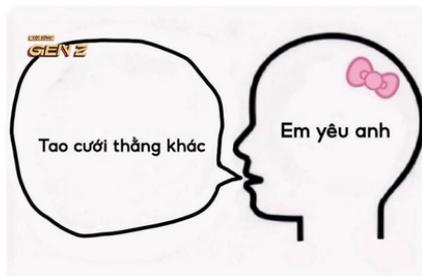


One person: "My lover is so understanding. I can't be mad at them". Another one: "Their ex taught them that. Mad now?"

It starts one way but – surprise! – ends in a completely different manner. Unexpected storylines keep readers on their toes, especially when they mention predictable tropes.

4 Sarcasm

Ngôn ngữ tình yêu của tui:



My love language: (inside) I love you; (outside) I'll marry someone else!

It might be more fun to say things that mean the opposite of what you mean – especially when you are being critical. Since gender stereotypes can be sensitive, authors can let readers guess that they mean without being confrontational.

5 Irony



(Heart) Done healing. Let's send another guy here. (Brain): Here you go again.

Very similar to sarcasm is the use of irony. To mock gender stereotypes in a subtle and hilarious manner, memes' authors write the opposite of what they mean, or place two contrasting situations next to each other.

A (FUNNY) PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

THE TOP 5 VISUAL STYLES

Together with words, visuals help memes convey the message. An eye-catching photo, or graphic, is even more crucial given that memes belong to social media, where audiences spend only a split-second reading content.

Here are the 5 visual techniques found in our memes:

1 Recap of online chat

The most popular visual style is screenshots of private chats on Facebook. The screenshots usually feature back-and-forth arguments, explanations, or reactions between couples and friends – where gender stereotypes emerge.

2 Personal story sharing

If the meme only features one person, the visual tends to be a recap of that person's internal thoughts about gender roles, and how their actions are influenced by their own gender. It can also be a question they posed to fellow netizens – and any responses that they received.

3 Meaningful visuals

To help express feelings, memes also include meaningful visuals such as emojis, stickers, and trendy cartoon characters.

This is similar to how Gen Z text their friends on social media, which enhances the memes' 'relatable' aspect.

4 Parody of popular culture

Meme parodies of pop culture, such as Harry Potter, Disney characters or popular Vietnamese novels, usually include a photoshopped picture of those characters.

The humour lies in these taken-out-of-context photos, which originally have nothing to do with gender stereotypes.

5 Parody of existing photos

Any photos can be used in these memes: Random photos of animals, students, couples, friends, or celebrities usually accompany the text.

For this type of visual, the text does the heavy lifting since photos are for illustration purposes only.



We don't have a lot of money, but we have a lot of gossip

Tui tạo dáng trong mỗi bức hình vì đây là dáng duy nhất mà tui thấy dễ làm dễ đẹp:



This is my favourite pose because it's the only one I can do well.

Tui khi tức giận:



Tui khi giải thích lý do vì sao:



(Left) Me when angry. (Right): Me when explaining why.

IS HE A 'RED FLAG'?

TOP 5 MOST POPULAR LINGUISTIC DEVICES

A core aspect of humour is linguistic devices, and memes are chock-full of them. In fact, we believe that meme authors are indeed poets, as their skills shine through a variety of methods below:

1 **Slangs**

Trendy social media slangs, such as 'trap girl' (unfaithful girl) or 'boy phố' (urban guy), usually make their way to the memes' captions. This practice connects the memes to trends, ensuring Gen Z has a good laugh out of them.

2 **Spoonerism**

If there's a contest for the most witty linguistic device in the Vietnamese language, spoonerism should take the top place. Gen Z authors, being witty Vietnamese themselves, also use this age-old method in memes – such as 'nấu xói' instead of 'nói xấu' (gossiping).

3 **English code-switching**

Globalisation, and increasing English literacy among young Vietnamese, means that trendy English slangs are also common in memes.

It's very easy to find phrases such as 'overthinking', 'Hey Siri', 'joke of the day', 'red flag' and 'pmg' (pick-me-girl).

4 **Emojis**

Young people anywhere love their emojis and Vietnamese Gen Z is no different, especially in memes that feature online texting.

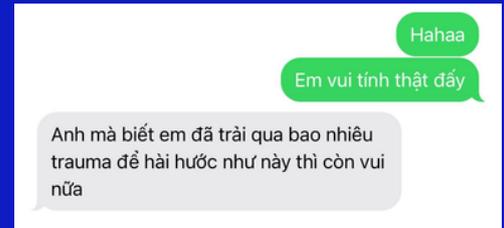
An interesting point: Emojis aren't just for expressing literal feelings – they're also a device for sarcasm and irony.

5 **Serious language**

Sometimes, to maximise irony and sarcasm, memes also feature formal language with proper grammar and pronunciation.

For example, serious phrases, such as legal terms or pseudo-psychology sentences, are often placed next to trendy slangs.

Formal language is also a sign of generation gap, in which Gen Z authors mock their parents, or older partner, for texting in a serious manner.



"You're so funny!" - "It's even funnier if you know what kind of trauma I went through to be this funny"



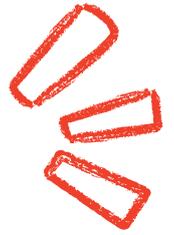
Me to my bestie when our source of gossip is coming near



"Why did you lie and tell me you're single?" - "Yes, I lied, which is the thing I hate the most in the world. I did that to protect the girl I love"

FINAL NOTES

OLD AND NEW



Overall, we can say that gender memes in Vietnam are diverse in terms of topics, rhetorics, visual styles and linguistic devices.

Through witty methods such as sarcasm, parodies and a good chunk of slangs, Gen Z authors show that they're willing to address gender stereotypes head-on.

The memes are indeed fun, but they aren't silly or meaningless. In fact, these memes have proven to be powerful tools for young people to engage in a centuries-old debate: How do gender roles shape the lives of Vietnamese men and women?

TRY THIS!

The next time you come across a gender meme (and probably have a good laugh about it), how about going a bit deeper? Let's try these fun questions to help you engage a bit more with them:

1

What topic does the meme talk about? Is it a popular stereotype in your culture?



2

What makes it funny? Did the author use metaphor, plot twist or sarcasm?



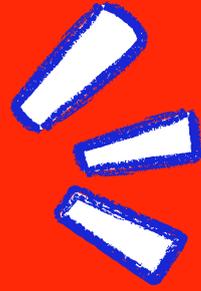
3

Is there anything special about the visual style? Is it a parody of pop culture, or a personal-style story sharing?





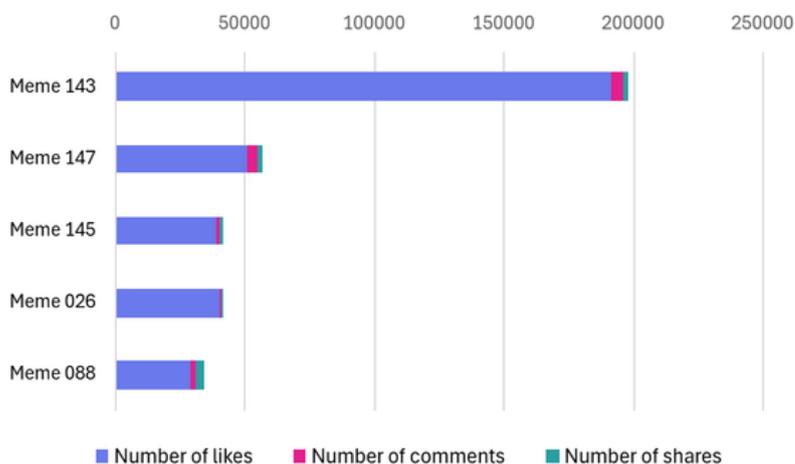
SECTION 3



THE COMMENTS

OVERVIEW: THE LIVELY COMMENT SECTION

TOP 5 MEMES WITH THE HIGHEST INTERACTION



We found that many Facebook users are eager to voice their reactions to gender memes. They like, share or comment on the ones that they have strong opinions about, whether it's agreement, mixed feelings or disagreement.

In many cases, they also tag their friends, either to recall fond memories together or share the sentiment with each other.

This level of enthusiasm helps memes go viral quickly. In our study, the top five most engaging memes received between **34,506** and **198,049** interactions, including likes, comments, and shares.

TOP 3 PAGES WITH THE HIGHEST INTERACTION

The top three meme pages recorded **49,254 to 161,922 interactions per post**. This also confirms the popularity of meme pages on Vietnam's social media - users love a good laugh, and they're willing to show that.



Page	Number of memes collected	Total engagement	Average engagement per post
 Tuyet Bitch Collection	3	485,765	161,922
 Lop Nguoi Ta	12	1,204,664	100,389
 Insight Gen Z	19	935,828	49,254

On the next page, we'll discuss in more detail the types of responses that these memes receive from Facebook users.



CONSENSUS

PLAY ALONG WITH THE JOKE

In consensus comments, users agree with the meme's message. They either accept the joke as it is, or repeat and reinforce the humor.

In our study, memes receiving a high level of consensus comments often focus on common gender stereotypes.

For example, many users agree with memes that say women are emotional beings who tell friends everything about their lives, and obsess over their appearance.

They also love the portrayal of men as providers, decision-makers, or the ones who take the lead in romantic situations.



Reinforces the idea that men must provide for their women

Relevant comments: 131
Consensus : 100%



Reinforces the idea that women are emotional and irrational
Relevant comments: 65
Consensus : 100%



Reinforces the idea that women are emotional, irrational and that they tell their friends about relationship

Relevant comments: 70
Consensus : 100%



The text laments how emotionally exhausting it is for women to take the lead in love.

Comment:

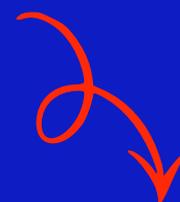
(tagged a friend). I flirted with N back then, and it was even in front of the guys, I felt like Fansipan wasn't high enough for me - Himalaya was more my level"



Screenshot of a chat where a man uses controlling language about "letting" his partner go shopping for Women's Day, posted with caption "A patriarchal man, but I like it"

Comment:

"Please mass-produce this kind of man."
("sản xuất theo lô dùm !")



Overall, the consensus comment sections are filled with users laughing along, tagging their friends, repeating similar views, or giving personal examples to illustrate the stereotypes.

NEGOTIATION

'IT'S NOT ALWAYS LIKE THAT, YOU KNOW'

In negotiation comments, users partly agree with the meme but adjust its meaning. They soften, re-interpret, or slightly challenge the gender stereotype instead of fully accepting it. For example, in response to memes that portray women as irrational, users re-frame female emotions as situational, exaggerated, or humorous.

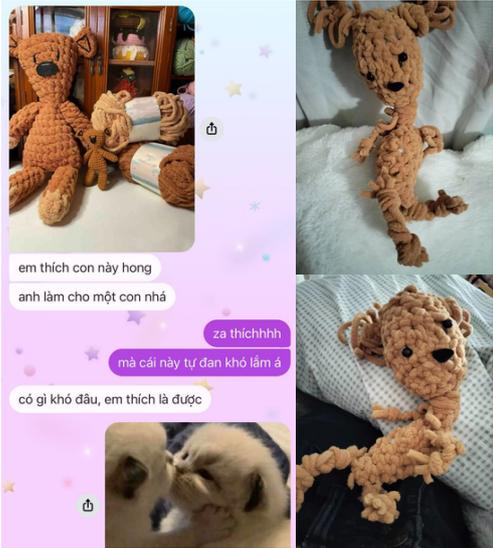
When memes discuss what a man 'should be like', many users question what counts as "normal" male behaviour in the context of modern masculinity. For instance, some comments argue that the men they know also do housework, or they believe that women can take the lead in dating.



Challenges the idea that men don't care about women's health and reinforces the idea that women think they suffer more than men due to menstruation
Relevant comments: 20
Negotiation: 75%



Reinforces the idea that women are emotional and irrational
Relevant comments: 99
Negotiation: 66%



Reinforces the idea that men are not crafty, challenges the idea that men are emotionally distant in a relationship
Relevant comments: 44
Negotiation: 45%



A chat where a boy tells a girl that his friend complimented her looks, and the friend is female. The follow-up screenshot confirms the friend's admiration, implying same-sex interest.

"Comment: Honestly, when guys compliment you, it's just normal. Getting praised by girls feels way better — except when it's a pick-me girl, though."



Screenshot of a chat where a man uses controlling language about "letting" his partner go shopping for Women's Day; posted with caption "A patriarchal man, but I like it"

Comment: "Whether it's true or not depends on personal situation and opinion. I believe in integrity and personal feelings in all relationships. Everyone has their own criteria for feelings. What you think is true doesn't also mean that I'm wrong and vice versa - it just means that we're different in our opinions"



These comments show how young people negotiate between old and new gender expectations, using humour and everyday examples to talk about fairness, double standards, and shifting social norms.

OPPOSITION COMMENTS

NAH, THAT'S NOT TRUE!

In opposition comments, users challenge the joke, question the humor, or push back against the stereotype shown in the meme.

Memes with a high level of opposition comments trigger strong pushback because they rely on stereotypes that many Gen Z find outdated or harmful.

For example, users reject the memes that believe women are weak, dependent on male support, and defined by beauty. Commenters want to re-frame women as capable and self-reliant.



Reinforce the "predatory male" trope and "romantic pick-up lines" trope, also reinforces the "dramatic woman" stereotype

Relevant comments: 38
Opposition 55%



Reinforces the generation gap, and the idea that older men are unfamiliar with trendy Gen Z terms

Relevant comments: 12
Opposition: 50%

Không một ai:
Tay chị em phụ nữ chúng tôi
cùng một lúc có thể:



Challenges the idea that women are weak and can't take care of themselves

Relevant comments: 12
Opposition: 50%



The meme stated that men should be ashamed for not being able to hit women.

Comment: "The key thing here is that they physically hurt another person. It's a crime for both genders, so why does 'being ashamed as a man' matter here?"



"my ex bought me a tiny ring vs my current boyfriend who bought me so many rings".

Comment: "People commenting here are all gold-diggers."

We can see that memes exaggerating traditional gender roles, or reversing them in extreme ways, are criticised by users. Opposition comments also challenge toxic masculinity stereotypes. They instead promote more nuanced ideas of modern masculinity.

CONCLUSION



GENDER IS OPEN FOR DEBATE

Young audiences are not passive consumers of meme content. Through comments, they interpret and reshape memes based on their point of view and personal experience. Some go along with the joke; others tweak it, and some push back. They also tag their friends and reply to each other's comments, creating a lively debate in the comment section.

In summary, Gen Z often agrees with familiar and relatable jokes. These usually draw on well-known stereotypes.

However, Gen Z tends to negotiate when memes touch on changing gender norms. In these cases, comments sound like "this is kinda true, but it depends," blending agreement with reinterpretation.

Gen Z is most likely to push back when memes feel clearly sexist or harmful. That's when comment sections shift from humour to calling out bias and demanding fairer portrayals.

TRY THIS!

The next time you see a gender meme, scroll through the comments.

1 Which comments agree, disagree, or show mixed feelings about the meme?

2 What is your opinion? Why do you have that reaction to the meme's message?



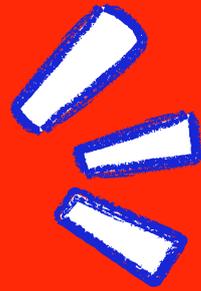
"This is what girls look like when applying mascara"



The comment section challenges the idea that only women do housework, and reinforces the idea that women need to 'trick' men into doing housework



SECTION 4



APPLICATIONS

DON'T BE TONE-DEAF!

FOR BRANDS

3 TIPS TO USE MEMES IN CAMPAIGNS TOWARDS GEN Z

What marketing managers should know:

For gender memes used in marketing campaigns, the risk includes brands trying to hop on the funny bandwagon, without understanding the specifics of Gen Z humour.

Our most engaged branded memes worked because they felt emotionally real. Using familiar GenZ chat formats, soft colours, and everyday rituals like milk tea, these memes slipped brand messages into moments of vulnerability, care, and quiet humour.

But there's a catch. While these memes connect deeply, they often rely on the same "cute" gender scripts. The humour softens it, the aesthetics modernise it — yet the imbalance stays.

Less-engaged branded memes showed why subtlety matters. When the product or playful "bribe" becomes too obvious, emotional moments feel deflected, and the meme reads more like marketing than culture.

OUR BRANDED MEMES WITH THE HIGHEST ENGAGEMENT



"Your friend H is mad at me, can you bring this milk tea to her?" - "Ok!" - "There's one more for you, please stop telling her to break up with me". It's hard to overthink when he's like this

OUR BRANDED MEMES WITH THE LEAST ENGAGEMENT



"Let's break up" "Oh no, I just stood in the sun and bought you this huge milk tea" "Woah, is it really huge?"

Takeaways!

Our 3 tips for branded memes:

1

Respect emotional authenticity

2

Be mindful of what social ideas the memes reinforce while chasing relatability.

3

Keep the balance between insightful/funny content and marketing content

FOR BRANDS

GENDER-RELATED CAMPAIGNS THAT DID IT RIGHT

Here are three marketing campaigns that managed to address gender issues in an engaging, and respectful, manner.

Case study 1 Generation Vietnam

Organizers: Oxfam, CISDOMA, TUVU Communication

A youth-focused initiative encouraging young people to rethink gender norms through conversation rather than instruction.

Its strength lies in a bottom-up approach that mirrors Gen Z meme culture — open, non-preachy, and participatory.

Like memes, it allows humour and everyday language to negotiate stereotypes instead of imposing fixed messages.



Case study 2 Closeup – “Kiss It Your Way”

Organizer: Closeup

A youth-oriented brand campaign that reimagines dating and intimacy on Gen Z’s own terms.

Rather than prescribing how relationships should look, it celebrates choice, self-expression, and emotional openness.



Through playful visuals and relatable moments, the campaign uses soft humour and romantic irony to normalise diverse relationship styles. This is a lot like memes that gently negotiate gender expectations instead of enforcing them.

TAKEAWAY: NO “CRINGE” HERE - BE OPEN AND GROUNDED

Across these cases, one pattern stands out: Gen Z engages most with gender communication that feels open, negotiable, and emotionally grounded.

Memes offer a powerful reference for how marketing and advocacy can challenge stereotypes, without triggering resistance or backlash.

Case study 3 “I Do” Campaign

Organizers: Institute for Studies of Society, Economics and Environment (iSEE) and the ICS Center

A social campaign advocating recognition of same-sex marriage. Its success came from visual symbolism, remixing, and shareability — elements Gen Z easily turned into meme-like expressions.

Rather than confronting traditions directly, the campaign used emotional storytelling to softly challenge norms around love, gender, and family.



What educators should know:

The most-engaged school memes show Gen Z students treating academic pressure with warmth, irony, and emotional realism — not drama.

In highly engaged memes, gender roles are present but flexible. These joke works because it acknowledges the stereotype while quietly questioning whether it still fits. By contrast, the least-engaged school memes lean into emotional manipulation. When academic advice is mixed with passive-aggressive care or ego-driven messaging, the humour turns sour. Gen Z readers seem quick to disengage when “support” feels controlling, rather than empowering.

OUR MEMES WITH THE HIGHEST ENGAGEMENT ABOUT SCHOOLING:

BẠN GÁI SẮP THI THẠC SĨ
MỖI NGÀY ĐỀU DẬY TỪ 7H
ĐỂ ỒN BÀI. ĐẾN NAY, EM
MỆT, DÀ LÊN KHÓC. T LIÊN
DỒ DÀNH: “KHÔNG THI NỮA,
VỀ NHÀ KẾT HÔN VỚI ANH
ANH NUÔI EM”

SÁNG NAY, MỚI
3H SÁNG ĐÃ THẤY EM
DẬY HỌC BÀI...

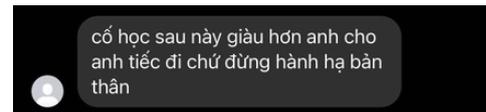


“My girlfriend cries because she must wake up at 7am every day to study. I told her to marry me so that I’ll take care of her, no need for any exams. The next day, she wakes up at 3am to study...”



“Let’s study a bit more so our future wives won’t suffer”

OUR MEME WITH THE LOWEST ENGAGEMENT ABOUT SCHOOLING:



“Stop torturing yourself. You should study hard to become rich. That will make me regret you”

Takeaways!

Gen Z memes should be ‘too cool for school’

In an academic setting, Gen Z students might respond best to meme content that:



respects independence



softens pressure with humour



treats gender roles as playful references — not fixed rules.

FOR EDUCATORS

A HANDY CHECKLIST: HOW SHOULD YOUR CLASSROOM APPROACH GENDER TOPICS?

- Use humour to open discussion about academic stress and emotional pressure
- Help students recognise when “care” becomes control in academic or personal contexts
- Analyse how gender expectations shape ideas of studying, ambition, and success
- Critically reflect on provider narratives linked to education and future roles
- Encourage discussion on balancing independence, relationships, and academic goals
- Compare individual motivation with peer-group or collective motivation
- Examine how relatable humour can still reinforce gender stereotypes
- Discuss why emotionally warm, supportive content drives higher engagement
- Task students with designing inclusive, stereotype-aware academic messages

What businesses should know:

The oldest Gen Z have begun their career, and it's important that businesses understand this cohort's social values and sense of humor.

This will help businesses build a stronger workplace culture, and attract the best employees.

Our study reveals that Gen Z cares a lot about gender issues. High-engagement memes often celebrate female financial independence, or reimagines provider roles.

By contrast, rejected or low-engagement memes portray women as dependent or irrational.

Similarly, workplace or relationship memes that rely on male ego, passive-aggressive "care," or emotional manipulation perform poorly.

Gen Z audiences also push back against rigid masculinity in professional and personal contexts.

EXAMPLES OF WORK-RELATED MEMES



"I have to work tomorrow, babe" - "How much do they pay you a day? Hand me your bank account details, I'll transfer that sum to you".



"I'm an artist with a "bad boy" boyfriend. I complained to him that nobody likes my art on social media, so he told his entire gang to like my art".

Takeaways!

3 tips for a more gender-inclusive culture at work

From our study, we can tell that Gen Z prefers employers who:

1
Avoid gender stereotypes in their policies and culture

2
Reject outdated beliefs about masculinity

3
Support men's diverse emotions and women's financial independence

For Gen Z, memes have become micro-level advocacy tools — using humour to negotiate gender equality at work and in everyday life.

IS THERE A REGIONAL MEME LANGUAGE?

Finally, let's zone out a bit. Do Vietnamese Gen Z speak the same meme language as their Southeast Asian peers? From our research, not really! Memes' meanings are shaped by local culture, language, and social norms.

Thailand: Cute Rage, Safe Expression



Moo Deng Female Rage - Thailand

In Thailand, viral memes like Moo Deng — a baby pygmy hippo from a zoo — show how cuteness becomes a socially acceptable way to express frustration, emotional overload, or “female rage.” By using animals and playful visuals, Thai memes allow strong emotions to surface without direct confrontation, reflecting a culture that values indirect expression and symbolic humour.

Indonesia: Memes as Voice and Critique

They are used to comment on society, express identity, and respond to political or social issues. Linguistically rich, these memes rely on sarcasm, hyperbole, slang, and code-mixing. Gender memes are often direct, exaggerating stereotypes about women's roles or personalities, and openly reinforcing or challenging power structures.

Indonesia meme about fake friendship among girls



Filipina Maiden. Still shot from Youtube.com video that became a meme.

Philippines: Memes as Everyday Language

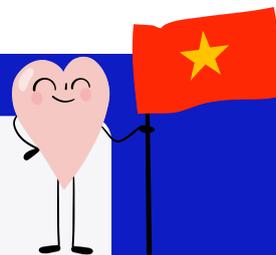
In the Philippines, memes are deeply embedded in daily communication. Using Taglish and regional references, they resonate strongly with local audiences and even shape how people speak offline. Brands actively participate in this meme culture, gaining high engagement.

Vietnam: Soft Resistance Through Humour

Vietnamese Gen Z memes take a different path. Rather than parody or activism, they use gentle irony, emotional nuance, and relational humour.

Gender issues are approached carefully, often through layered jokes and implied meanings.

This “soft resistance” invites negotiation rather than confrontation, allowing audiences to agree, disagree, or reinterpret.



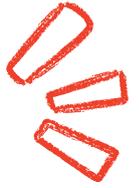
Takeaways!

Your meme language reveals where you're from

Mememes may look similar across Southeast Asia, but they do not speak one language.

CONCLUSION

WHY UNDERSTANDING GEN Z'S MEME LANGUAGE MATTERS



Gen Z's memes are not random jokes — they are a shared language that carries values, boundaries, and expectations.

Understanding this language matters because different sections of society interact with Gen Z in different ways.

For **brands**, meme literacy helps distinguish emotional connection from forced relatability.

In **education**, when used thoughtfully, memes encourage dialogue. When misused, they reveal power imbalances that Gen Z quickly resists.

At the **societal level**, especially at **work**, memes act as micro-level advocacy. They allow young people to negotiate gender norms, question stereotypes, and express disagreement without confrontation.



Looking across the region, Vietnam's meme culture highlights the importance of context.

Unlike protest-driven or confrontational meme cultures elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Vietnamese Gen Z relies on soft resistance — layered humour, emotional nuance, and implied meaning.

In summary: Understanding Gen Z's meme language is not about copying formats, but about recognising how humour, emotion, and silence work together.

Try this!

Get to know the Gen Z around you

You're likely to have a Gen Z family member, work with young colleagues or run campaigns for Gen Z consumers. To understand them, these questions might be helpful:

1

Are we listening to how Gen Z communicates, or only reacting to what they share?

2

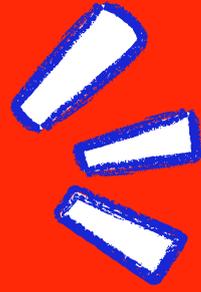
Which stereotypes do our messages quietly reinforce — even when they feel “harmlessly fun”?

3

How much cultural nuance are we missing when we copy trends across borders?



SECTION 5



CLOSING

FINAL NOTES

MEMES ARE MORE THAN JUST SILLY ENTERTAINMENT



Overall, memes serve both as a tool for humorous and creative expression, and as a space where social stereotypes are reproduced and debated.

Through humour and irony, memes act as soft power, supporting the goals of **SDG 5 (Gender Equality)** by making sensitive topics approachable rather than confrontational.

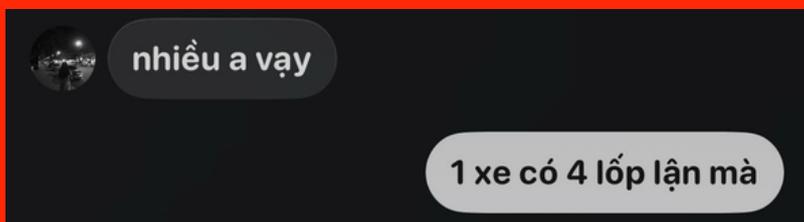
Influenced by Confucian ideas about gender and family roles, many memes reproduce or play with traditional expectations, but audience reactions reveal shifting values.

The concise images, abbreviated language, and satirical style help messages spread quickly.

At the same time, the comment section has become spaces of social participation where young people actively agree, negotiate, or reject what they see. This confirms that memes not only reflect online culture but also actively participate in shaping contemporary social discourse.



My sister asked me to lend her the makeup blush right before she went into labor"



"You have so many guys!"

"A car has 4 tires, so...?"

FUTURE PLANS

WHAT COMES NEXT?

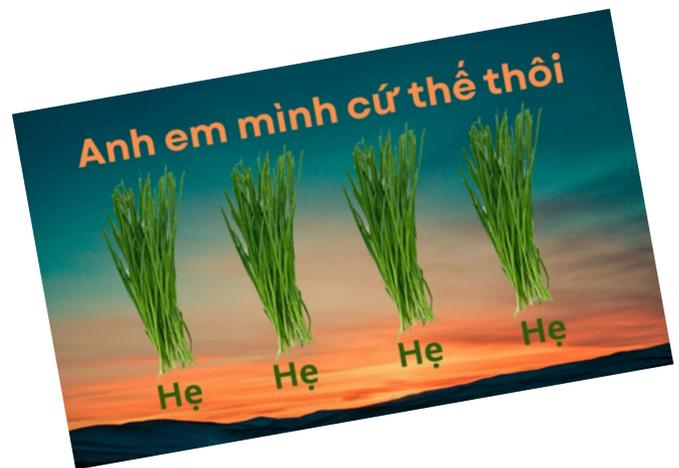


For research

Due to time restrictions, the scope of our study is rather limited.

Future studies could expand the data collection timeframe, comparing memes across years to observe changes in gender discourse.

Further analysis of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, or video memes, as well as the combination of quantitative and AI methods, would enhance the depth and generalizability of the data.



For your own use

When you scroll Facebook and see a gender meme, let's spend a few minutes for these fun activities:



1

Pay attention to the message, ongoing patterns and tone

2

Participate in discussions by commenting politely, asking open-ended questions, sharing personal experiences, and avoiding attacks or prejudice.

3

Follow pages for academic research, media outlets, social organizations, and community campaigns on gender equality.



OUR SOURCES



Our research project analysed memes from the following Facebook pages:

Cot Song Gen Z
Dai Tieng Noi Gen Z
Insight Gen Z
Insight Mat Long

Truong Nguoi Ta
Tuyet Bitch Collection
Why So Serious
Lop Nguoi Ta



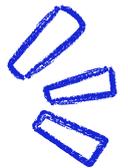
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