Online Distribution of Memes:

The Relationship between Personality Characteristics and

Digital Literacy to Online Distribution of Memes

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This study examines the influence of the interaction between personality characteristics and digital literacy of the online meme recipient on his tendency to distribute it. A meme is a cultural evolution's information unit, equivalent of a gene, which replicates itself and is distributed from one person to another through imitation and copying. Dawkins coined the term meme in his book "The Selfish Gene" (1976). In the last few years, the phenomenon of internet memes, which are the evolutionary development of the classic memes, has become widespread. Among other media, the memes are distributed through video movies and funny pictures. The memes serve as a viral package for a variety of subjects, from amusing daily situations to harsh criticism of current social and political events. For a meme to be distributed, it needs to have a few characteristics that make it viral and 'sticky'. Internet users receive and distribute memes mostly via electronic mail and online social networks. The study's hypotheses are that user's personality characteristics and behavior, combined with the types of thought and skills that he uses for the purpose of performing tasks in a technological environment, influence his tendency to distribute memes via the internet. Users may differ in personality characteristics, which influence a person's character and forms of behavior. They may be extroverts or introverts, agreeable, mentally open to experience, conscientious, emotionally stable or neurotic, as well as have various combinations of these kinds of characteristics. In addition, users differ in the level of their digital literacy, which influences the user's familiarity and involvement with computerized environments and the internet, and which is used for the purpose of distributing online information. An experimental research method was used in order to introduce the participants to three different memes' conditions by distributing online questionnaires to students in a number of academic institutes in Israel and to members of the online social network LinkedIn (N=264). The study's findings may contribute to our understanding of the tendency to distribute online memes.