From Watwat to Betel Nut: How are Cordillerans Portrayed in Local Memes?

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Abstract

The growth of social media has enabled users to quickly generate memes on digital platforms. Even though users design memes to express ideas and identities, researchers need to give more attention to the evident gap in how Cordillerans are portrayed through memes on social media. Therefore, this research aims to fill this gap by specifically examining how the Taga Lakandula Facebook Page portrays Cordillerans through memes. Using netnography, the researchers had to immerse themselves in the virtual world for two months, repeatedly reading and analyzing the memes, which included constant correspondence with the person in charge of the Facebook page. The researchers adopted stages of content analysis and sought help from an external expert in the field who reviewed the memes vis-à-vis the findings to see if they were plausible and accurate. The findings revealed that the memes portray Cordillerans as drunkards, betel nut users, proud, gamblers, shy, 'watwat' eaters, and observants. Overall, this research adds to the literature on Cordilleran portrayals and Internet memes and recommends future research trajectories.

Keywords: Cordilleran portrayals, Facebook page, Internet memes, Netnography, Social media

Introduction

People frequently use memes in their digital lives—whether politically branded or created for fun—and these memes appear in movies, GIFs, and text-based visuals (Way, 2019). English novelist and biologist Richard Dawkins coined the term 'meme' in The Selfish Gene (1976) to refer to cultural traits or beliefs that proliferate through imitation (Dawkins, 2016). Liontas and Raafat (2024) stated that these memes change across cultures and circulate swiftly on social media. The message people wish to convey to their audience determines how these memes are changed. However, this change centers on the caption because the image may convey multiple meanings depending on the description. Meme creators often reuse the same image to communicate different messages by altering the text, as newer memes may emerge from the same underlying concept (Hwang & Shwartz, 2023).

Due to the growth of social media (Quinto & Cho-oy, 2023), memes can now be quickly generated on digital platforms with just one click (Marwick, 2013), allowing these memes to become a widely accepted way of communicating among internet users (Kartikawati, 2024; Quinto & Kitani, 2022). Currently, memes are designed to express ideas and identities, and individuals frequently react to and disseminate memes that validate their opinions on the internet (Balan et al., 2023). People react because they can relate to these memes or discern their meanings. Denisova (2019) mentioned that memes are complex because a more thorough comprehension is required. Analyzing the connection between the image and the text concerning their meaning and social function is necessary, according to Zubaidah and Ardelia (2018).

Knobel and Lankshear (2018) defined Internet memes as a common phrase for describing the rapid adoption and dissemination of a specific concept represented as a written text, image, language "motion", or some other unit of cultural "objects". Conversely, as noted by Davison (2012), Internet memes are well-known and easily identifiable, but do not have strict descriptive language. Handayani et al. (2016) noted that Internet users post numerous photos online each day,

often pairing them with clever criticism in the accompanying text. It is worth noting that memes are images composed of text and image that is frequently shared online, either for amusement purposes only or for a deeper meaning (Zubaidah & Ardelia, 2018). Regarding Internet memes, Díaz (2013) argued that they contain unique characteristics that allow for the formation of unprecedented forms of communication, exchange, and replication ranging from silly to societal changes. The settings also significantly impact the creation, pervasiveness, and degeneration. Buchel (2012) enumerated the main features of online memes: to wit, spontaneity and a capacity to communicate with the participants innovatively. They are an essential aspect of Internet communities, and they can even inspire the development of new forms of discourse.

The largest category of images that attest to the prominence of representations of actual people who have lived or are currently living as individuals in communication systems are called portraits. It highlights the significance of 'portrayals' as a tool for comprehending societies, whether they are historical or modern (Pointon, 2013). People use the imaginative and qualitative process of portraying something to identify its overall expression. One can discover this expression uniquely in any component of the 'object', just as one can find elements of the part influencing the whole (Talbott, 2003). Therefore, researchers consider memes to be highly significant cultural structures, as they serve to depict portrayals related to ethnicity, politics, or gender (Mahfouz, 2021). In her dissertation, Sari (2018) states that the image in memes conveys most of the meme's significance, while the description usually symbolizes the message. The image and description incorporated in memes provide information about the wider context of the meme and add to the broad significance of the meme. As a result, memes may be used online for purposes other than humorous pleasure. Every meme contains significance and intentions that could provide 'portrayals' as a tool for comprehending societies.

According to Adonis (2011), one crucial issue in Cordilleran community growth that requires investigation is the extent of involvement with social media and its link to Indigenous individual identities 'claims' and cognition. Social media applications use widespread mobile and Internet-based technologies

transforming into highly participatory platforms where individuals and groups share, produce, address, and transform content created by users (Botangen et al., 2018). Harris and Harris (2011) and San Nicolas-Rocca and Parrish (2013) conducted research comparing social media usage with conventional and ICT-based mediums for transmitting Indigenous knowledge. These authors emphasized that the prevalence of Internet use among Indigenous peoples is substantial, yet they did not go into depth about how social media helps preserve knowledge. Following that, López-Rocha (2010) emphasize the significance and function of Internet use—particularly social media— as an essential tool for preserving culture. Individuals use self-representation to express and strengthen their ethnic identity, which extends beyond personal expression and becomes a shared identity within the larger community.

Taga Lakandula's Facebook Page was created on July 24, 2017 with more than 301 thousand followers. The page concentrates primarily on memes involving culture, practices, and behavior of Cordillerans. The constantly growing Facebook page's intended viewers include both lowlanders and highlanders, with a bigger audience from the Cordilleras (Taga Lakandula, 2017). Through Facebook Messenger exchanges with the person in charge of the page, the researchers ensured that Cordillerans created the selected memes. With all this information in mind, the researchers conducted this study to address the limited understanding of how Cordillerans are portrayed through memes, particularly on social media platforms such as the Taga Lakandula Facebook Page. Specifically, the study aimed to address one central question: How are Cordillerans portrayed in the memes found on the Taga Lakandula Facebook page?

Methodology
Research design

This qualitative investigation used netnography as its research design. According to Kozinets (2002), netnography is a qualitative research methodology that employs traditional ethnographic methodologies to investigate online communities and cultures formed through computer-mediated communication. Consequently, the researchers had to immerse themselves in the virtual world, particularly on 'Taga Lakandula's Facebook Page' for two months to find out

how Cordillerans were portrayed in memes, observing what the reactions and comments of audience members were regarding the memes, and identifying the highest reactions and shares of the Cordilleran memes. This kind of immersion helped the researchers analyze and present the themes in this research. In addition, the researchers actively immersed themselves in the online community while maintaining a researcher's perspective. Participants as observers allowed the researchers to gain deeper insights into the contexts, meanings, and cultural nuances behind the memes shared on the Taga Lakandula Facebook page.

Corpus of data

The researchers employed inclusion criteria in determining an appropriate Facebook page, which were as follows: (1) a page with more than 250,000 followers; (2) a page with memes from the year 2020-2024; (3) a page with memes in the Ilocano language; and (4) a page with a focus on Cordilleran memes. After a meticulous search, 'Taga Lakandula's Facebook Page' fulfilled all the criteria. The researchers first asked for permission through a consent letter sent to the page admin to gather the memes on the page. Upon his approval, the researchers gathered 225 memes from 2020 to 2024. The researchers had to narrow down the search by identifying memes in the Ilocano language and focusing on Cordilleran memes. All in all, the researchers reduced the number to 93 memes.

Data analysis

The researchers employed qualitative content analysis, extracting themes from the raw material through repeated inspection and contrast (Bingham, 2024; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Specifically, the researchers adopted the stages of content analysis created by Elo and Kyngäs (2008). The first stage was the 'assessment'. The researchers reviewed and re-assessed the 93 memes to understand their meaning. The second stage was 'decoding'. With the re-assessed 93 memes, the researchers assigned codes describing the memes' features (such as cultural norms, values, customs, and traditions), which were categorized into smaller groups according to their shared characteristics. The third stage was 'exploration'. After dividing the memes' features, the researchers analyzed the memes within each subcategory to identify any variances. The

fourth stage was 'classification'. The researchers used the terms that described the 93 memes from the subcategories. The last stage was 'compilation'. The researchers repeated the inspection of all the memes and organized the key categories accordingly.

To complete the data analysis, the researchers sought the help of an external expert in the field. He reviewed the memes vis-à-vis the findings to see if they were plausible and accurate. After his feedback, changes were made.

Results and discussion

The Cordillerans' portrayal on the memes found on Taga Lakandula's Facebook Page

Seven themes emerged through an intensive Qualitative Content Analysis with feedback from an external expert. The memes characterize Cordillerans as drunkards, betel nut users, proud individuals, gamblers, shy, 'watwat' eaters, and observant people. Figure 1 reflects these themes by portraying how Indigenous individuals assert their identities and cognition (Adonis, 2011). It also illustrates how self-representation serves as a crucial tool for preserving culture, strengthening ethnic identity, extending beyond individual expression, and becoming a shared identity within the larger community (López-Rocha, 2010).

The first theme in the portrayal of Cordillerans is being a drunkard. The subthemes under this concept include what happens before, during, and after alcohol consumption. Generally, there are identified reasons Cordillerans drink alcohol. There is a best time to consume alcohol, there is usually an invitation to drink alcohol, and there is a disapproval of drinking alcohol. While drinking, aspects like splitting of bills and alcohol consumption surfaced. After drinking, there is a reaction to alcohol consumption, and there are effects of consuming it. Another portrayal of Cordillerans is being betel nut users, which includes the consumption of betel nut and its effects. Moreover, the memes portray Cordillerans as individuals who take pride in their physical features. The depiction of Cordillerans also highlights their fondness for gambling, which includes forms of betting such as cockfighting and jueteng. The memes also portray Cordillerans as shy individuals. The penultimate portrayal of Cordillerans is as watwat eaters. Ultimately, Cordillerans are featured as being observant.
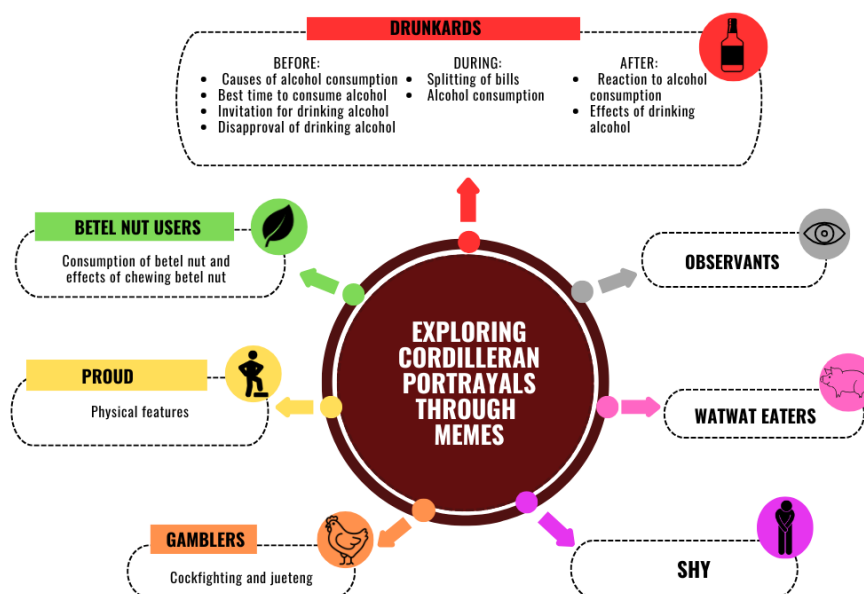
Figure 1 The cordilleran portrayals through memes

Drunkards

According to Omamalin (2022), Filipinos partake in a drinking practice known as 'tagay', and festivity is strongly associated with this culture. Filipinos have traditionally incorporated alcohol consumption into cultural values such as friendship, unity, and fun, which may explain the emergence of this theme. Before alcohol consumption, there are various factors to consider, including the causes of consumption, the best time to drink, invitations to drink liquor, and disapproval of alcohol consumption.

According to the memes, there are five causes Cordillerans consume alcohol: unrequited love, dissatisfaction with life, perceived protection against coronavirus, feeling forgotten, and the desire to forget problems. The meme with the highest reaction on the 'Taga-Lakandula Facebook Page' under this category is drinking due to unrequited love. As illustrated in Figure 2, individuals may drink to manage the emotional stress from unrequited love, as reflected by the clause *"punuem ketdi, awan danum danum"* (Fill the glass, no water needed). This reflects their decision-making process and expectation that alcohol will alleviate their distress (Cox & Klinger, 1988). The meme takes a lighthearted approach in portraying unrequited love by using an image of a cat being poured a drink. The meme does not involve a statement about a Cordilleran; instead, it focuses on the cat's expression, combined with the caption illustrating the feeling of being ignored and unappreciated.

Another subtheme identified was the best time to consume alcohol, notably on weekends and holidays. Research reveals a clear pattern in alcohol consumption, with increased drinking observed during weekends (Andrade, 2019; Barraco et al., 2016; Finlay et al., 2012). Reich et al. (2015) observed that these peaks frequently align with holidays or special events such as Valentine's Day. Figure 3 illustrates the meme with the highest number of reactions, depicting the common expectation of weekend drinking through the clause *"sabado ket awan nagayab ti inom"* (It is Saturday, but no one has invited me for a drink yet). Figure 4 shows a man facing the consequences of excessive drinking on Valentine's Day reflected by the clause *"Valentine's day nabartek ka manen"* (You are drunk on Valentine's Day again). Figure 3 is a lighthearted meme as it uses an image involving a mouse from the cartoon movie "Tom and Jerry." On the contrary, figure 4 conveys some violence, which may change how audiences perceive their girlfriends/wives to be violent when they drink on holidays. It may also provide an unfavorable perspective of men being submissive, as they may get beaten by their spouses.

The penultimate factor before drinking is the invitation to drink alcohol. Drinking has long been a way to connect, relax, and enjoy oneself (Caluzzi et al., 2020), and Morris (1998) notes it as a shared commodity

across cultures. Ommamalin (2022) describes invitations to drink as ranging from social to virtual communication. Figure 5 received the highest number of reactions in this category, illustrating a comic meme in which a social invitation to drink that is humorously mishandled. The upper part suggests asking about appetizers, reflected by the clause *"Anya pulutan?"* (What is the appetizer?) as a wrong response. The lower part of the meme demonstrates how the situation could be handled more appropriately. The approach of the meme to the audience is very light as it merely illustrates which one is a better response to an invitation to drink alcohol. Moreover, the meme recognizes the social practice of '*pulutan' or appetizer,* which is typically shared during drinking sessions.

Ultimately, attitudes towards drinking vary: some approve while others do not. Nondrinkers abstain for various reasons, including dislike for alcohol's taste and effects, adverse experiences with others' drinking, lifestyle preferences, health, religion, or a desire for authenticity and personal control (Conroy & De Visser, 2021; Graber et al., 2015; Hser et al., 2011; Katainen & Härkönen, 2021; Piacentini & Banister, 2009; Rinker & Neighbors, 2013). Figure 6 is the meme with the highest reaction, illustrating a man running away from his drunkard friends. This indicates disapproval of drinking alcohol as the man abstained from drinking due to self-

reinvention, reflected by the clause "*sika nga nagbalbaliw"* (You who have changed) and being chased by his drunkard friends reflected by the clause *"friends mo nga artek"* (Your drunkard friends). While abstinence can foster alternative enjoyment and belonging (Caluzzi et al., 2020), it may also be perceived negatively and seen as unusual in typical drinking settings (Bartram et al., 2021). The meme conveys a positive approach to the audience, inviting people to reflect on their own choices regarding drinking.

During alcohol consumption, there are sub-themes depicted in the memes, such as splitting bills and alcohol consumption, according to the memes on the 'Taga Lakandula Facebook Page'.

Alcohol consumption involves splitting the bill. The memes suggest that people feel happy when they contribute a small amount of money toward buying liquor. The meme with the highest number of reactions is Figure 7, which indicates, "*Di agkolekta da ambag mo jay inuman ket babainte lang kwartam"* (When they collected your money, but you only had twenty pesos). Figure 7 depicts how an individual responds when he or she is not required to spend much money to indulge in drinking alcohol. However, it may not be favorable for those who spend more.

"In post ni krash mo ni jowa na"

PUNUEM KETDI, AWAN DANUM DANUM

Figure 2 A Cat is being poured a drink
Source: Meme about drinking alcohol (2021). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 3 A mouse waiting for something

Source: Meme about the period of waiting (2023) https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 4 A Mouse waiting for something

Source: Meme about Valentine's Day (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 5 A person inviting his workmate for a drink

Source: Meme about the invitation to consume alcohol (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 6 A man is being chased
Source: Meme about the refusal to drink alcohol (2022). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 7 A man smiling at someone
Source: Meme about splitting bills (2020). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 8 The taste of alcohol
Source: Meme about alcohol's taste (2021). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

During alcohol consumption, a bitter taste may be palpable. Figure 8 portrays a bitter melon on the left stating "*Napait kunam*" (It is bitter), while the picture on the right (referring to liquor) stating "*Ngem nu daytoy, naimas kasla buko juice*" (It is like coconut juice when it is this bitter). While the caption says a lot about

the authentic taste of alcohol, the meme brings out a different kind of reaction.

People typically prepare appetizers during alcohol consumption. Figure 9 shows the highest reaction based on the Taga Lakanduka Facebook Page, which shows two reactions. The picture on the left states *"Chichirya pulutan"* (When the appetizer is only chips). In contrast, the picture on the right states *" nagparti ti manok"* (When the appetizer is chicken meat). The meme shows how people prefer meat to chips when drinking.

Finally, there are reactions to alcohol consumption and effects of drinking alcohol, primarily hangovers. Reactions to alcohol consumption include nausea, fatigue, shock, and fulfillment, but Figure 10, garnering the highest number of reactions, says, *"Idi linukatam jay 2x2 ket naangot mo jay sinumngaw nga 'ingel' na"* (When you open a bottle of 2x2, a preferred brand by many Cordillerans, and smell the pungent aroma)

denotes that an individual who loves drinking alcohol feels satisfied even by its smell. People typically drink alcohol to induce euphoria, and they frequently drink in social settings (Gilman et al., 2008). The meme conveys a sense of excitement upon smelling the pungent aroma of the liquor.

Ultimately, hangovers are the primary effect after the consumption of alcohol as shown in Figure 11 and Figure 12. Figure 11 points out that one of the effects of alcohol after drinking is being forgetful about the things an individual does while he or she is drunk. On the other hand, in Figure 12, a hangover is a collection of unpleasant physical and mental symptoms that occur after a session of heavy alcohol consumption. The figures show two situations an individual may experience due to excessive alcohol consumption.

Figure 9 Reaction to different appetizers
Source: Meme about appetizer (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 10 Reaction to the smell of alcohol
Source: Meme about alcohol's aroma (2021). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 11 Forgetful
Source: Meme about drunkenness (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 12 Physical pain
Source: Meme about hangover (2020). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Betel nut users

People across Asia have practiced betel nut chewing since ancient times and consume betel nuts in various ways. In the Philippines, chewing the mixture of betel nut and betel leaf is a tradition and custom that dates back thousands of years in many of the geographical areas from the Cordilleras, which constitutes an important and popular cultural activity in many places in the country (Bulwayan et al., 2023). In Kalinga, they call the areca nut "bua," and the piper betel "gawed or lawod". If they mix the ingredients, they call it "momma or mamma." Betel nut users have two distinct sub-themes: the consumption of betel nut and the effects of betel nut.

According to the memes, there are various reasons for the consumption of betel nut such as being happy and excited about it, refusing to chew betel nut but ending up trying it, and expressing to set up a humorous reason for chewing it. The meme with the highest number of reactions under this theme is refusing to chew betel nut but ending up trying it, as shown in Figure 13, *"Basta ramanam gamin; Madik garud agmoma"* (Try it; I do not want it). Murphy et al. (2015) stated that chewing betel nut is a learned behavior influenced by people in the environment. Betel nut users grew up chewing betel nut because it is readily available around the home and in social gatherings. The meme is associated with peer pressure, but the kind of pressure somebody could easily enjoy.

Another sub-theme identified was the effects of chewing betel nut. Figure 14 mentions, *" Ngiwat ti aremem vs. Ngiwat mo nga agarem"* (The mouth of the person you like vs. your mouth). Unfortunately, people who use it are more likely to do so consistently since

betel nut is addictive, significantly increasing their risk of stained teeth (Khorsandi, 2021). The meme conveys a common phenomenon to those who have chewed betel nut for an extended period.

Figure 13 Refusing to chew betel nut
Source: Meme about chewing betel nut (2020). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 14 Comparison of Teeth
Source: Meme about chewing betel nut (2021). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Proud

The analysis reveals another theme: the memes portray Cordillerans as proud people. Cordillerans are also known as "Igorots" and their attempt to forge a united stand against perceived threats to their existence and rights as communities has been widely documented (Cadiogan, 2016). One of the unique aspects of life in the Cordilleras is that the Igorot people are essentially a self-contained society running all aspects of life. Unlike many of the other indigenous communities in the

country who have been extremely marginalized and pushed to small pieces of their original land, the Igorot people generally have maintained much of their land and take pride in their Indigenous systems and wisdom (Gun-ob, 2017).

Igorot pride resonates with their physical features. In the same vein, Figure 15 presents the meme with the highest number of reactions, demonstrating how the memes describe Igorot women. Many theories try to explain why the Igorota's calves were such. The

forerunners Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer would account for it through their famous mantra "survival of the fittest, elimination of the unfit" (Smith, 2012). Living in the mountains, surrounded by waterfalls and morning mists, women also performed physically demanding tasks to feed their families, which contributed to their muscular physiques. Women hike for hours to plant and harvest from their fields from one

mountain to their homes. Passed on through a chromosome strand, "butoys" or muscular legs are the trophies of Cordilleran women (Dao-ines, 2008). The meme conveys stereotypes to the audience, specifically to Igorot women, since the meme generalizes that almost all Cordilleran women have masculine features. The figure shows the typical features of Cordilleran women with rosy cheeks and muscular arms and legs.

Figure 15 Cordilleran women's physical features
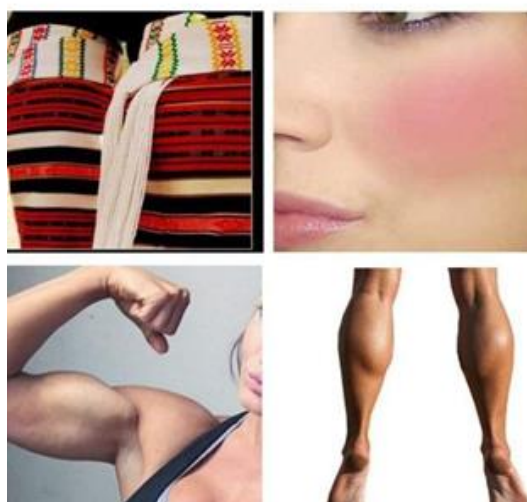**Source:** Meme about Cordilleran women (2021). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Gamblers

The fourth theme in the study portrays Cordillerans as gamblers. Gambling is betting or staking something of value with the consciousness of risk and hope of gain, whose result may be determined by chance or accident (Glimne, 2024). There are two sub-themes under this category: "jueteng" and cockfighting.

Jueteng refers to a form of lottery or numbers game that involves the combination of 37 numbers against 37 numbers, marked in small wooden sizes and placed inside a container, and is played by drawing and recording one number, which will become the first number of the winning combination and returning the same to the container for the drawing of the second number of the winning combination, which could be 1-4, 2-6, 5-9, 34-36, etc. or a total of 1,379 combinations.

Figure 16, with only one example, *"Ushang na, pongkit manen"* (Oh no, I have lost again), shows how a particular person reacts when losing in a betting game

called jueteng. When people gamble, their brains release dopamine, the feel-good neurotransmitter that excites them. Jueteng is one of the standard betting games in the country, so losing in such a game is no big deal, which is why the meme embodies an untroubled and positive vibe for the audience.

Figure 17 presents the cockfighting meme that received the highest number of reactions, featuring the caption *"Idi naulaw jay ipaspasilat mo nga manok mo ijay pallotan"* (When your chicken got dizzy amid cockfighting). In the Philippines, locals refer to cockfighting as *Sabong*— a bloody contest in which people pit two roosters of nearly equal weight against each other to fight until one is injured, killed, or runs away (Peñalba, 2020). The meme showcases a lighthearted vibe to the audience, specifically those who love cockfighting. Like jueteng, in cockfighting, losing is normal.

Figure 16 Reaction When Losing a Bet in Jueteng

Source: Meme about jueteng (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Figure 17 Reaction after losing in cockfighting

Source: Meme about cockfighting (2024). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Shy

The memes portray Cordillerans as shy individuals. Shyness, as described by Faraji et al. (2024) , has the distinctive features of borderline personalities, such as extreme timidity in interpersonal relationships, anxiety in crowded environments, low self-confidence, and negative emotions stemming from fear of rejection. Figure 18 displays the meme that received the highest number of reactions in this category. The image illustrates a boy who is too shy to admit his feelings towards the person his friend mentions, as reflected by the clause "*uy krash daka kanu daytuy*" (Hey, my friend has a crush on you) and his response, *"hankadi apay adda inbagbagak"* (It is not true. I did not say anything) . His response indicates shyness in admitting his feelings towards the other person, which results in him denying it. The meme is lighthearted and upbeat. It invites empathy from the audience as they can relate to feeling too shy to express something personal. The meme uses humor to show that it is okay to be shy, especially when it comes to expressing romantic feelings, and it allows the audience to share the experience of shyness without being isolated. However, this meme could negatively impact Cordillerans because people may conclude that they have low self-esteem.

Figure 18 *Shy to Admit Feelings*
Source: Meme about being shy (2020). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Watwat eaters

The penultimate theme featured Cordillerans as *watwat* eaters as part of their tradition. Botangen et al. (2018) stated that only a few known traditional foods are associated with the Cordillerans, including *pinikpikan*, *etag*, *watwat*, and *tapey*. Antonio (2023) describes *watwat* as a slice of boiled pig meat distributed and meant as take-home portions. Figure 19 shows the meme with the highest reaction under this theme. It illustrates four images that represent a *watwat* starter pack: a slice of meat, soy sauce, a man with a toothpick, and a full stomach. This portrays post-meal ritual and satisfaction with eating *watwat*. The meme humorously conveys stereotyping because it includes a photo of a big stomach as a result of overindulgence in eating meat. Audiences who are not Cordillerans might view the meme as a one-sided image of Cordilleran men. They might focus solely on the stereotype of overeating without a deeper understanding of the cultural practices associated with it. On the other hand, for Cordillerans, the meme reflects their traditions with pride and humor, reinforcing a shared cultural experience. Moreover, it helps them solidify a sense of belongingness in their traditions.

Figure 19 Post-meal ritual and satisfaction
Source: Meme about eating Watwat (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Observants

Ultimately, Cordillerans are featured as observant and are perceived to be ruminating about previous endeavors owing to drunkenness. The researchers selected the meme with the highest reaction as an example, as shown in Figure 20. The clause *" Idi linabasam jay inuman nga istambayam idi"* (When you pass by the place where you used to drink in the past) describes a person who is observant of his environment and able to project the image of the place based on his experience. The meme presents a positive approach to the audience by demonstrating that Cordillerans actively engage with their memories and surroundings rather than remaining passive observers. Furthermore, the meme portrays Cordillerans as people who are attentive and reflective. It evokes a sense of awareness in the audience where they might connect specific experiences or locations to their past.

Figure 20 Passing by a familiar place
Source: Meme of someone passing by a familiar place. (2023). https://www.facebook.com/TagaLakandula

Conclusion

Through a netnographic approach, this study aimed to bring out the portrayals of Cordillerans through memes found on the Taga Lakandula Facebook page. The findings show Cordillerans as drunkards, betel nut users, gamblers, proud, shy, watwat eaters, and observants. Adopting a netnographic stance, the portrayal of Cordillerans through memes on the Taga Lakandula Facebook page reveals how digital spaces become sites of cultural negotiation, humor, and identity expression. These memes, ranging from depictions of Cordillerans as drunkards, betel nut users, proud individuals, gamblers, shy personalities, watwat eaters, and observants, serve as sources of amusement and as ethnographic texts reflecting social narratives and shared community meanings. These online portrayals reinforce and contest symbolic representations of ethnic identity, enabling Cordillerans to reclaim, satirize, or challenge existing stereotypes through culturally nuanced humor. This participatory engagement in meme culture not only preserves local practices and values but also provides a digital avenue for collective self-reflection, ultimately affirming how social media platforms can function as contemporary arenas for Indigenous identity- making in the age of hyperconnectivity

Since the study only focuses on the Cordilleran portrayals of memes, future researchers could identify the political innuendos found in memes. Moreover, quantitative studies can be conducted in other contexts using the themes and categories generated in the study to highlight the significant relationship of memes to issues in a community. Researchers could create an anatomy of a meme that content creators could use as a guide to produce memes that people could appreciate in a specific ethnolinguistic group by zooming in on the caption, the image, and the layout of the memes.

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