The memoji-mask

Face and expressiveness in digital culture

La máscara-memoji

Rostro y expresividad en la cultura digital

A máscara-memoji

Rosto e expressividade na cultura digital

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ABSTRACT

This article reflects on graphic representations of the face in the digital environment through an analysis of digital avatars known as memojis, which have evolved from emojis by allowing the user's face to be personalized. Unlike conventional emojis, which express emotions in a standardized way, memojis make it possible to create customized avatars, incorporating the individual's physical characteristics. In addition, they can be used not only in text messages, but also to replace profile photos or faces in video interactions. Using a theoretical approach to digital culture and contemporary subjectivity, this study examines Apple's memojis through the lens of Peircean semiotics. The hypothesis guiding the work suggests that replacing the real face with a memoji could enhance expressiveness and individuality, although it also carries risks of homogenization. We conclude that these figures can be used as masks in increasingly sophisticated communication practices, but still in a limited manner, since they are based on an essentially optimistic perspective in a somewhat idealized world.

KEYWORDS: *memojis, emojis, face, digital culture, semiotics.*

RESUMEN

Este artículo reflexiona sobre las representaciones gráficas del rostro en el entorno digital mediante el análisis de los avatares digitales denominados *memojis*, los cuales han evolucionado a partir de los *emojis* al permitir la personalización facial del usuario. A diferencia de los *emojis* convencionales, que expresan emociones de manera estandarizada, los *memojis* posibilitan la creación de avatares que incorporan características físicas del individuo. Además, pueden utilizarse no solo en mensajes de texto, sino también para reemplazar fotos de perfil o el rostro en interacciones por video. A partir

de un enfoque teórico sobre la cultura digital y la subjetividad contemporánea, examinamos los *memojis* de Apple con el apoyo de la semiótica peirceana. La hipótesis que guía el trabajo plantea que la sustitución del rostro real por un memoji podría reforzar la expresividad e individualidad, aunque también conlleva riesgos de homogeneización. Concluimos que estas figuras pueden usarse como máscaras en prácticas de comunicación cada vez más sofisticadas, pero de manera aún limitada, puesto que se sustentan en una perspectiva esencialmente optimista de un mundo edulcorado.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *memojis, emojis, rostro, cultura digital, semiótica.*

RESUMO

Este artigo reflete sobre representações gráficas do rosto no ambiente digital por meio da análise de avatares digitais conhecidos como *memojis*, que evoluíram dos *emoji*s ao permitir a personalização facial do usuário. Diferentemente dos *emoji*s convencionais, que expressam emoções de forma padronizada, os *memojis* possibilitam a criação de avatares customizados, incorporando características físicas do indivíduo. Além disso, podem ser usados não apenas em mensagens de texto, mas também para substituir fotos de perfil ou o rosto em interações por vídeo. A partir de uma abordagem teórica sobre a cultura digital e subjetividade contemporânea, examinamos os *memojis* da Apple com o aporte da semiótica peirceana. A hipótese que norteia o trabalho sugere que substituir o rosto real por um memoji pode aumentar a expressividade e a individualidade, embora também acarrete riscos de homogeneização. Concluímos que estas figuras podem ser usadas como máscaras em práticas cada vez mais sofisticadas de comunicação, mas de forma ainda limitada, uma vez que se fundamentam em uma perspectiva essencialmente otimista de um mundo edulcorado.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *memojis, emojis, rosto, cultura digital, semiótica.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The continuous and instantaneous production, commentary, and exchange of content are everyday actions of the contemporary individual, ubiquitously connected to a global network. In this digital environment, multiple screens, platforms, and resources are used for individual expression through texts, images, and videos, giving rise to an increasingly complex, agile, and sophisticated process of communicative mediation.

In the construction of this digital narrative, individuals select images of themselves that take into account formats, angles, clothing, and social, professional, or intimate contexts, along with diverse intentions. Although chosen individually, these images are perceived and evaluated collectively, which blurs the boundaries between the public and the private, understood as a discursive and sociocultural construction. From a Peircean perspective, community sanction does not occur afterward but is intrinsically part of the perception and interpretation of media signs, conditioning the meanings produced from the outset.

A digital overrepresentation of the face can be observed, which has become the central symbol of digital identity and is managed through profiles on different social networks (Moncada, Martínez & Barrera, 2024). The profile picture, for example, is a strategic decision that may be used to facilitate recognition, convey cheerfulness, express positive emotions, or reinforce an image of professional success.

The face and its expressions are also the basis of graphic figures known as emojis, which are used in digital written communication to add layers of meaning, reduce ambiguities, and express affectivity. This is based on the assumption that human facial expressions constitute a universal channel of nonverbal communication for conveying emotions (Park & Suk, 2022). Moreover, these paralinguistic resources (Bai et al., 2019) have intensified the growing visual trend in writing practices (Delfa, 2020). For this reason, emojis have been widely studied by researchers from various disciplines (Sato, 2024).

The history of this type of graphic representation dates back to the early 1980s, with the introduction of emoticons in digital messages. Built from combinations of punctuation marks, they represented facial expressions in a vertical orientation. For example, the combination ":)" resulted in a smiling face to express emotions, justifying the term "emoticon." In Japan, through a similar process, kaomojis emerged, combining the characters "kao" (face) and "moji" (character), and unlike emoticons, they are read horizontally.

In 1999, emojis were created by the Japanese telecommunications company NTT DoCoMo. Unlike emoticons, emojis are autonomous graphic characters designed to simplify the expression of emotions in text messages without combining characters. The term "emoji" comes from

the combination of the Japanese words "e" (image) and "moji" (character). The original set included several stylized faces representing different emotions.

After their introduction in Japan, emojis quickly spread worldwide, being incorporated into Apple operating systems in 2011 and Android systems in 2013. Since then, they have become ubiquitous elements of digital communication, especially the yellow circular faces expressing various emotions. Their use can influence emotional interpretation in online interactions, as they reduce hostile atmospheres and ease tensions (Smith, 2015).

The popularity of emojis can be illustrated by the fact that in 2015 the "face with tears of joy" emoji was chosen as the "word of the year" by the Oxford Dictionary. On Instagram, it is estimated that half of all messages contain at least one emoji (Garun, 2015), while approximately six billion figures are sent daily through instant messaging applications (Deseret News, 2017).

Over time, new emojis have been introduced to broaden diversity and representation. In 2014, skin tone options were added to promote greater ethnic and racial inclusion. In 2017, gender variations were incorporated, followed in 2019 by emojis representing people with disabilities and nonbinary identities.

This article focuses on a significant evolution within this context: memojis. Introduced in 2018, memojis represent the trend toward customization and animation of emojis and are available across different companies and digital platforms. Unlike standardized emojis, memojis offer a high degree of customization, allowing users to construct a unique digital identity. These elements often replace the user's real face in profile pictures or video conversations and enhance their expressiveness and individuality. Their potential for emotional communication has sparked growing academic interest (Park & Suk, 2022).

To contribute to this discussion, this study aims to understand the meaning possibilities of these digital avatars and their relationship with facial expressions in digital culture. The hypothesis guiding the work suggests that replacing the real face with a memoji could reinforce expressiveness and individuality, while also entailing risks of homogenization. To this end, we selected the memojis available on Apple devices as the object of analysis, examining both their basic design and the range of customization options, which may be used in stickers and video calls.

This article is structured as follows: first, digital culture and facial expression online are discussed. Next, an analysis of memojis is presented, preceded by a historical overview of these elements and the analytical methodology, which employs a Peircean semiotic framework, and concluding with a discussion of the main findings.

2. DIGITAL CULTURE AND THE FACE ON THE NETWORK

The study of the contemporary context is intrinsically linked to technological advancement, whose growing impact has been intensified in recent decades by the emergence of new information and communication technologies. These transformations have been enabled by high-speed data transmission networks and materialized in connected mobile devices such as smartphones.

From an academic standpoint, theoretical production on the digital environment has expanded in parallel with the progressive adoption of new technologies, both individually and collectively. Initially, optimistic perspectives prevailed regarding the democratic and inclusive potential of the Internet, emphasizing concepts such as interaction, collaboration, and collective intelligence in the construction of a digital culture (Lévy, 2010). However, more recent and critical approaches have problematized the impacts of accelerated digitalization, addressing issues such as surveillance, control, and technological dependency (Morozov, 2018; Zuboff, 2021). These debates have significant implications in fields such as education, legislation, and economics, and they are widely undertaken by corporations, governments, and civil society.

This article examines new forms of mediation and subjective communication in networks that occur within digital culture. This is an environment in which the abundance of media and screens turns social space into a mediated public stage, where the idea of the "15 minutes of fame" predicted by Andy Warhol becomes evident (Semprini, 2006). In theory, any individual has communicative means to express themselves in a multiplatform scenario of high reach and dispersion (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2015).

The pursuit of visibility has become a central aspect of this context, in which digital influencers play a prominent role. Digital social networks function as the main space for such communicative practices and enable the construction of various virtual personas through individual profiles. The audiovisual language that permeates these interactions reinforces the centrality of the image, especially the face. The name "Facebook," for example, refers to student yearbooks that gather photographs and basic information about students, reflecting the importance of the face in digital identity.

The virtualization of social experience also presents challenges for individuals, as the life projected on social networks is idealized and edited, resembling an advertising narrative. It is a partial and curated representation in which desirable aspects of personal life are displayed—an aestheticization of everyday life akin to advertising.

An example of this phenomenon is the expression "Instagram Face," characterized by the excessive use of filters and image editing, giving rise to standardized and aesthetically enhanced faces (Moncada, Martínez & Barrera, 2024). This homogenization of self-image is not limited to the digital environment; it

also influences the pursuit of aesthetic procedures in the physical world, such as plastic surgeries, with the aim of aligning real appearance with images from social networks.

Moreover, the conflicts derived from the multiplication of digital identities are also relevant. The contemporary individual manages multiple personas on different social networks, through interactions in various spaces and occupying different roles (Turkle, 1997). However, this identity fragmentation is not necessarily detrimental; on the contrary, it can be strategically used to reinforce identity construction and broaden forms of self-expression, in line with the multivideos discussed by Canevacci (2018).

Networked interaction does not occur solely through texts but also through figurative elements such as emojis and stickers, used by individuals, brands, and companies (Pompeu & Sato, 2015, 2016, 2018). Among these resources, memojis stand out, playing a central role in contemporary visual culture and in the personalization of digital communication. These elements reinforce the visual and interactive dimension of social networks and expand the expressive possibilities available to individuals in the digital environment.

3. APPLE *MEMOJIS*: HISTORY AND METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The history of paralinguistic elements in message-based communication within virtual environments shows a constant evolution aligned with technological development and social uses, as mentioned in the Introduction of this article.

Recent transformations in these elements include the possibility of customizing and animating figures that represent or replace users' faces. These resources are presented as evolutions of emojis and are offered by major smartphone manufacturers and developers, such as Apple and Samsung. Their use is widespread among young people from Generations Y (Millennials) and Z (Costa & Prata, 2019).

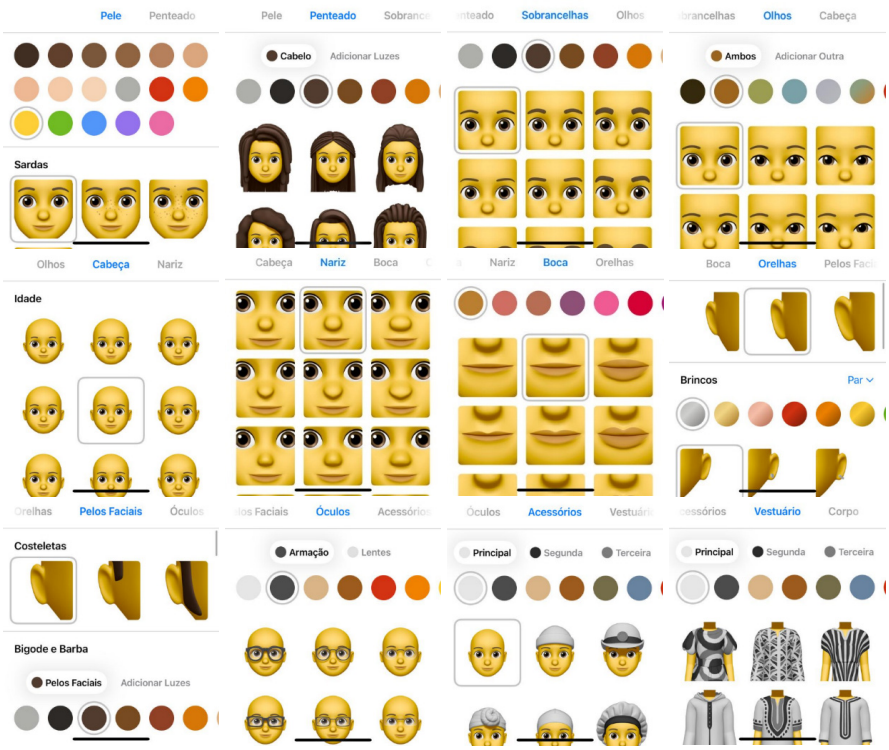
These digital avatars known as memojis by Apple, as the name suggests, are figures that resemble the user's own face. Prior to their creation in 2018, there was an intermediary stage with animojis, launched in 2017. Animojis are animated emojis that capture the user's facial movements and include predefined characters such as a unicorn, a panda, and a robot.[1]

Memojis differ from animojis in that they are fully customizable, allowing users to create a detailed digital image of themselves with various options for hair, accessories, and makeup. In addition, they use the phone's front camera to capture emotions in real time and can be used in messages, video calls, and stickers.

1 In 2023, Apple introduced the Apple Avatar (Apple ID Avatar), a customizable avatar that can be used to represent the user in their Apple account (Apple ID) and in services such as iCloud, Game Center, and iMessage. Unlike memojis, Apple Avatars are not animated and are used primarily as profile images.

Since their launch, Apple has expanded memoji customization options to allow more accurate and diverse digital versions of users. Currently, the process of creating or editing a memoji is carried out through sequential screens, illustrated in Image 1.

Image 1. Memoji customization options



Source: Screenshots taken from a mobile device taken by the authors.

The memoji settings are divided into 13 categories (Table 1), of which 9 refer to facial features, highlighting the centrality of the face in the user experience. Another 2 categories (glasses and accessories) also focus on the face, while only 2 categories (body and clothing) concern the upper body and attire.

Table 1. Memoji customization categories

Skin	Hairstyle	Eyebrows	Eyes	Head	Nose	Mouth
color, freckles, cheeks, and marks	hair styles, lengths, and hair colors	varied shapes, thicknesses, and colors	shapes, sizes, colors; heterochromia (different eye color for each eye)	shapes, sizes, and apparent age	Shapes and sizes	lip shapes, sizes, and colors
Ears	**Facial hair**	**Glasses**	**Accesories**	**Clothing**	**Body**	
sizes, accessories (earrings and headphones)	beards and mustaches in various styles and colors	frame shapes, frame colors, and lens colors	hats and masks with a variety of styles and colors	top colors and styles	upper-body shapes (waist, chest, shoulders, and arms)	

Source: Prepared by the authors.

To analyze the memojis and their customization options, we use a framework based on Peircean semiotics (Perez, 2004), which draws on the trichotomies of the sign in itself, in relation to its object, and in relation to the potential meanings generated. We evaluate the following dimensions: qualitative–iconic, singular–indexical, and conventional–symbolic.

In the qualitative–iconic dimension, the analysis focuses on the quality from which the sign is made (qualisign) and its iconic relationship to the object, that is, qualitative aspects that can be perceived at first glance: shape, design, color, volume, texture, composition, lines, brightness, etc. These more concrete and visible qualities may be associated with more abstract meaning effects, responsible for the initial associations the sign generates, shaping first impressions and immediate suggestions.

In the singular–indexical dimension, the analysis considers the sinsign and its indexical relationship to the object based on understanding the context of use and the existence of the sign in a specific space and time, for a specific purpose and audience. This dimension seeks traces of the context of use, characteristics of the user, and cause–effect relations derived from the circulation of the signs involved.

Finally, in the conventional–symbolic dimension, the analysis centers on the ground of the sign and its symbolic relationship to the object. This involves examining the broader cultural context in which the sign is embedded—not in its singularity, but in its more universal aspect. The goal is to understand broader values and shared cultural meanings.

4. ANALYSIS OF APPLE MEMOJIS: VIDEO CALLS AND STICKERS

In the evaluated set of memojis, the first impression conveyed in the qualitative-iconic dimension is softness. The human figure and the customization options feature rounded shapes and smooth surfaces—that is, faces without wrinkles or expression lines, and clothing and accessories without noticeable textures. The colors are uniform and favor high visibility. The face stands out due to its large, prominent eyes with a shiny effect, which give the figure expressiveness, while the eyebrows, nose, and mouth maintain a symmetrical, non-aggressive pattern. The frontal perspective reinforces a sense of two-dimensionality, despite the slight presence of shadows and volume, which invites a tactile gaze. Overall, the impression is one of familiarity and a friendly sign universe, easily associated with human beings and their attire, yet rendered in a soft and playful manner.

In the singular-indexical dimension, the customizable elements of memojis convey the idea of individuality and thus indicate differences among users. However, this is achieved in a moderate and limited way, since the central facial features (shape, eyes, and mouth, mainly) show only subtle variations. This means that each memoji has its own peculiarities but at the same time belongs to a cohesive family of memojis, inevitably creating similarity among all users. This subtlety in customization options extends to clothing and accessories, which prioritize neutrality, avoiding exaggerations, plunging necklines, or strong contrasts between available elements, even though some options do signal representativeness and diversity, such as garments and head accessories related to ethnic and religious identities.

In the conventional-symbolic dimension, the set of memojis evokes the universe of traditional cartoons and comics, with a less realistic and more simplified appearance of the human face. In this sense, they evoke a more fantastical and sugar-coated world, constructing a universal and optimistic environment aligned with the principles of emojis, the predecessors of memojis. Conversely, they move away from a more realistic universe, which in a way minimizes tensions or negative emotions.

One of the most prominent uses of memojis occurs in video transmissions, where the digital figure automatically replaces the user's face, adapting to the expressions captured by the smartphone camera (Image 2).

Image 2. Use of memojis in video calls (FaceTime)

Source: Screenshots taken from a mobile device taken by the authors.

There is little variation in the angles of the memoji face, since it is necessary to always look directly at the phone screen. Likewise, the nose, ears, chin, and cheeks play a less prominent role, as the eyes and mouth are the elements that generate the most evident reactions and dominate the facial expressions of the animated memoji.

Because of their size and design (colors and shapes), the face occupies a prominent space on the screen, adding a playful layer with the idea of a mask that conceals and indexes who is behind the memoji. In the same way, the insertion of additional figures of the same memoji expands expressive resources and generates the sensation of multiple "selves" coexisting on the same screen and behind it, as additional layers of mediation in the screen-to-screen dialogue.

Finally, there are potentially conventional meanings related to technology and spatial relations, especially territorial hybridity, arising from the composition of the memoji with the user's body and the setting of the transmission. Thus, the combination of memoji, physical body, and environment reinforces the notion of a hybrid virtual conversational space.

Below, we discuss in more detail the stickers available once a memoji is created. The set of static expressions is made up of 54 different expressions (Image 3), which users can employ in various communication situations, making conversations more interactive and personalized.

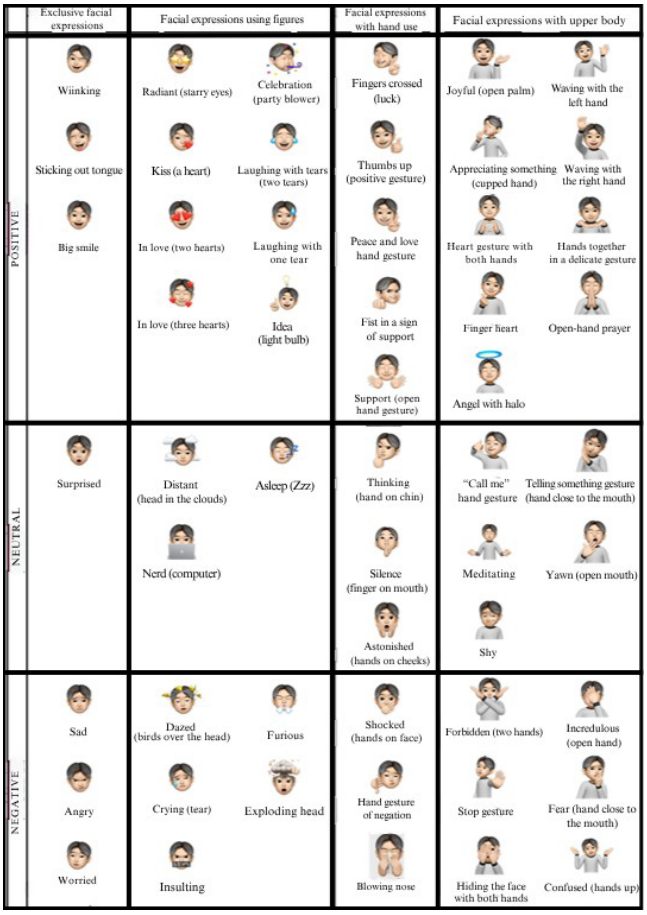
Image 3. Set of 54 Apple Memojis

Source: Screenshots taken from a mobile device taken by the authors.

To analyze this broad set of elements with a focus on the face, we created two distinct criteria. The first concerns the involvement of the face in the composition, divided into four types: a) only the face and its facial expressions, b) an additional figurative element next to the face, c) the face together with the hands, and d) the face with the upper part of the body. The second criterion is the type of emotion represented: positive, neutral, or negative. The memojis analyzed and their classification according to these criteria are presented in Table 2.

A general observation about the set of stickers is that many of them are not related to a specific emotion but rather to an action performed by the sender (such as blowing their nose or sneezing), thus approaching the category of the index by signaling observable events. However, these actions may acquire symbolic or metaphorical meanings and evoke affective or social concepts in the interpreter. Other stickers reinforce a personality trait or existential characteristic through the use of stereotypes, such as the nerd with the computer or the angel with a halo, functioning in these cases iconically or symbolically depending on the context.

Table 2. Classification of Memojis by Type of Expression and Conveyed Emotion



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the types of composition used according to the prominence (or lack thereof) of the face, we observe that in all images the face is present, but with different levels of importance. Among the four categories, the use of figures that include the upper body in a wider frame predominates (31%), which reduces the prominence of the face and makes it harder to clearly see the figure as a whole, as well as the facial expression and the hands—especially considering their primary use on mobile phone screens. There are situations in which the presence of the torso does not add a meaningful difference to the main message the sticker aims to communicate, as is the case with the yawning memoji, for example. In general, the arms and hands play a more significant

role in the represented action or emotion than the torso. In a few cases, some rotation of the body is used to facilitate the understanding of the message, such as with the memoji making a "stop" gesture, where the avatar shows the right side of the body slightly turned back, enhancing the perception of movement. We also note that this set of stickers including the upper body is the least similar to the well-known facial-expression emojis.

Continuing with the quantification, facial expressions with additional elements account for 30%, such as the "crying with laughter" memoji, in which two blue tears appear, recalling the well-known original emoji. In this sense, the quantity of elements conveys the idea of intensity—there is another memoji with just one tear, which would represent a less enthusiastic reaction compared to the emoji with two tears. Elements traditionally used in animated cartoons and widely recognized appear recurrently: the light bulb, the birds, and the clouds around the face evoke meanings associated with an idea, impact, and distraction, respectively. The heart appears both in its traditional figurative form (red heart) and through the use of the hands in two variants: with both hands or with the fingers, a form known as the "fingers heart," which refers to celebrities of Korean pop culture (Jeon, 2024).

In this regard, the use of facial expressions combined with hands (20%) also draws on widely recognized gestures to ensure the comprehension of the memoji: gestures of approval, denial, and the peace-and-love sign are some examples. Finally, facial expressions alone (13%), without additional elements, seem intended for less complex emotions and therefore are more easily identifiable.

Regarding the type of emotion or message conveyed (positive, negative, or neutral), Table 3 presents the distribution of memojis according to the two criteria used.

Table 3. Quantification of Memojis by Type of Expression and Conveyed Emotion

Composition	Exclusive facial expressions	Facial expressions with additional figures	Facial expressions with hand use	Facial expressions with upper body	Total
POSITIVE	3	8	5	9	**25** *(46%)*
NEUTRAL	1	3	3	5	**12** *(22%)*
NEGATIVE	3	5	3	6	**17** *(31%)*
TOTAL	**7** *(13%)*	**16** *(30%)*	**11** *(20%)*	**17** *(31%)*	**54** *(100%)*

Source: Prepared by the authors.

There is a predominance of positive expressions (46% of the stickers). Even in stickers that convey something essentially negative, the use of resources drawn from cartoons and comics softens the emotion (for example, insults are represented by a black bar with punctuation marks). As analyzed previously, the strokes, shapes, and colors used also contribute to this softening,

gamification, and a certain infantilization of the message, functioning as a kind of visual euphemism. It is also worth noting that there are no images that reference situations such as hunger, thirst, heat, cold, or basic physiological needs. Likewise, no libidinous or sexual emotions are represented, nor themes related to addictions or pathologies in general, which reinforces the sweetened and sanitized vision that predominates in the emoji universe.

The analysis presented on the set of Apple memojis (memoji design, customization options, use in video calls, and set of stickers) identified that the meaning potential of these elements is directly related to a characteristic style of cartoon characters, with simplified lines, large eyes, flawless skin, and rounded, symmetrical facial contours. The signs used emphasize positive emotions and even soften those traditionally associated with negative situations or emotional states. As a result, memojis convey a playful, affectionate, and familiar appearance.

We highlight that memojis represent an evolution of the indexical aspect of emojis, as they change according to each user's facial features and can transform dynamically during video calls, reflecting the expressions of the person behind the "memoji-mask." In other words, these elements go beyond the original conception of emojis, which were created to refer to emotions and affects through an iconic facial expression whose conventional structure belongs to the symbolic sphere. In this context, the additional layer of meaning in memojis is built upon a promise of personalization and customization, which coexists with a conventional representation of facial expression and leads us, through symbolic mediation, toward the emotional experience.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

As we have seen, memojis constitute a softened and euphemistic visual universe. This graphic design choice aligns with the evolution of emojis, as people tend to use them in positive contexts and for socializing purposes (Tang & Hew, 2019). Moreover, motivations for using emojis revolve around simplicity, convenience, and emotional expression. In this sense, Shiha and Ayvaz (2017) affirm that emojis help guide the meaning of textual messages, mitigate negativity, and reinforce positive aspects of content, thereby promoting more favorable feelings.

On the other hand, the graphic characteristics of emojis and memojis may diverge from real human facial expressions, which can result in imprecise or softened messages, detached from reality and from the emotional diversity that, in certain cases, would need to be conveyed—especially in times of social and emotional instability.

Academic studies on memojis reinforce these limitations and highlight the need for more accurate representations that account for ethnic and cultural diversity and minimize stylistic variations across different software (Park & Suk, 2022). In a study conducted by the authors to evaluate how users interpret

the emotions expressed by memojis, the results indicated that emotional communication through these figures can be ambiguous or imprecise. When comparing the understanding of expressions in photographs and in memojis, the same researchers concluded that photographs represent emotions more accurately than memojis.

Similarly, Herring et al. (2020), when investigating gender differences in the use of memojis, noted that memoji facial customization options are exaggerated and better represent (young) female faces than male ones. In addition, the rounded facial shapes and available customization options seem to favor hairstyles and makeup traditionally associated with the feminine universe.

We understand that future research could explore the rituals and meanings of memojis from the users' perspective, since this article approached the topic from the viewpoint of the sender and the semiotic potential of the memoji set. Furthermore, understanding users' motivations could deepen the discussion on critical aspects related to the idealized and sanitized vision of memojis.

In this regard, Stark and Crawford (2015) question whether emojis promote a certain lifestyle with conservative values and, by doing so, naturalize behaviors, ethics, and values desired by companies, which could shape a unique and controlled model of representation, even concerning human expressions. The growing digitalization of the human face through facial recognition systems and digital avatars is also a concern for Leone (2024), who highlights the need for a deeper critique of the impact of such practices on society.

Likewise, more than a decade ago, Marcondes (2012) discussed the limits of computer-mediated experiences of alterity and the importance of authentic dialogue that recognizes the other as a distinct being. The use of the "memoji-mask" can diminish and conceal the authenticity of the face, in a digital construction that simulates presence without offering the same subjective and relational depth. Therefore, the mask introduces a facial ambiguity that hides or makes individuality less visible (Perez & Sato, 2022).

These concerns appear increasingly relevant due to future trends in the use and creation of digital avatars, which will integrate with emerging technologies such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence. Such integration will provide greater interactivity, incorporation into the metaverse, interactive virtual spaces, and the use of algorithms for memoji personalization, including automatic suggestions of expressions and gestures based on conversational context and intentions. These perspectives indicate that digital communication will become increasingly visual, expressive, and individualized, introducing new forms of interaction for users (Ling, 2017; Kiaer, 2023).

We conclude this article by confirming that memojis can simultaneously expand individual expression and standardize self-image. Thus, memojis continue the visual construction of emojis as an exuberant form of individual and collective expression, conventionalized and universalized. However, this

expression is based on a normative and predominantly optimistic view of the world, which may not only conceal the real face through the "memoji-mask," but also limit the emotional range that could be communicated through these technological resources.

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