

Do memes mutate and adapt like DNA? Yes, say Facebook data scientists

Richard Dawkins likened memes to genes, but a [new study by Facebook shows](#) just how accurate that analogy is.

Memes adapt to their surroundings in order to survive, just like organisms. Post a liberal meme saying no one should die for lack of healthcare, and conservatives will mutate it to say no one should die because Obamacare rations their healthcare. And nerds will make it about Star Wars.

Facebook's data scientists [used anonymized data](#) to determine that "Just as certain genetic mutations can be advantageous in specific environments, meme mutations can be propagated differentially if the variant matches the subpopulation's beliefs or culture."

When a meme has a clear template with substitutable variables, people recognize how to put their own spin on it. They're then more likely to share their own modified creations, which drives awareness of the original.

For social networks like Facebook, understanding how memes evolve could make sure we continue to see fresh content. Rather than showing us the exact copies of a meme over and over again in the News Feed, Facebook's algorithms could purposefully search for and promote mutated variations.

Read the full, original article: [Facebook Data Scientists Prove Memes Mutate And Adapt Like DNA](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Can you trust Facebook with your genetic code?](#) Venture Beat
- [Would you post your DNA on Facebook?](#) Wall Street Journal