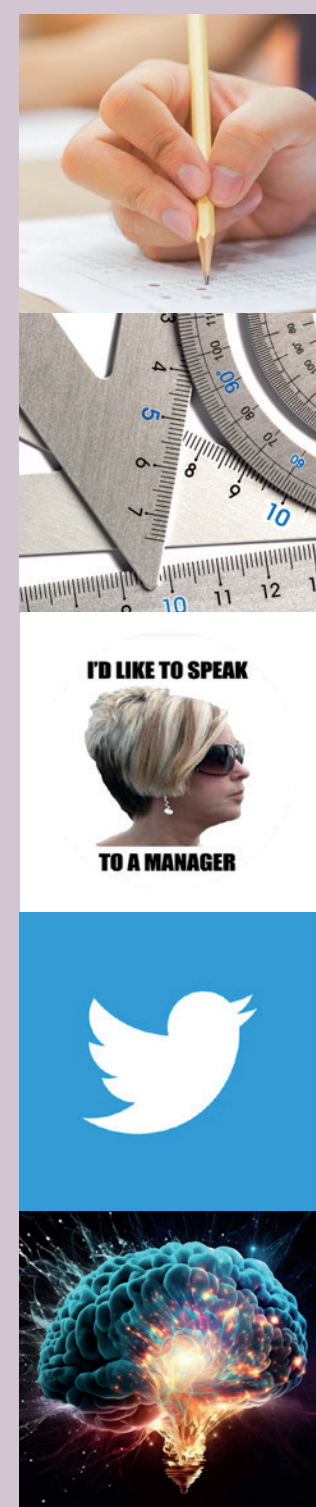# PERSONA NON GRATA?

EXAMINING CROWDSOURCED PERSONAS VIA MEMES

RESEARCH QUESTION

Understanding the process of **consumer vilification** and how crowdsourced personas change.

AIM: Examine marketplace sentiment (Gopaldas, 2014) using William Gamson's (1992) Framing Devices and Kenneth Burke's (1969) Pentad Model.

MEASUREMENT:
1. Shared emotions
2. Visual expressions
3. Intertextual references

CONTEXT: Social media posts invoking the Karen meme – an angry customer demanding to "speak to the manager."

DATA: A 5-month sample of 875 original pandemic-era Tweets with photos, created by 593 authors (January-May)

TAKE-AWAY: Visual communications (memes) reveal complex symbols that constitute marketplace sentiment.

RESULTS:
Thematic frames and episodic frames
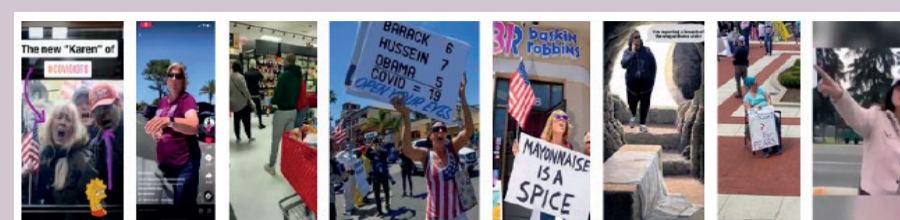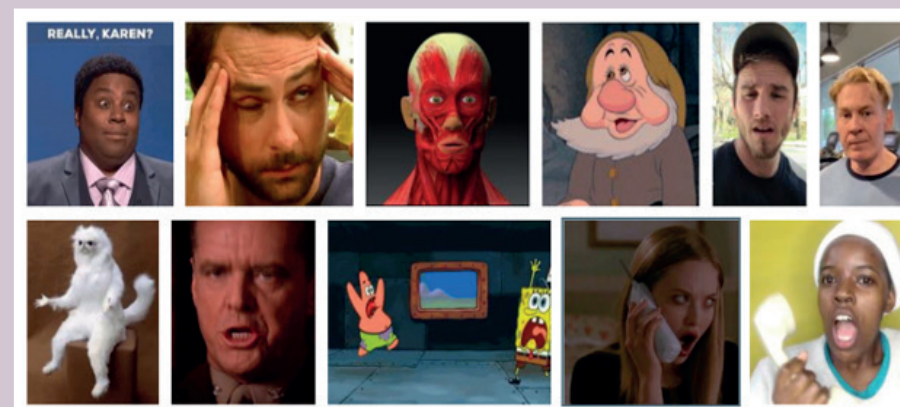
EXPRESSING REACTIONS TO KAREN
- Emotionally expressive, exaggerating feelings (e.g., mesmerized, confused, surprised, and shocked)
- Entertainment figures (e.g., SpongeBob SquarePants, Jean Luc Picard, Whoopi Goldberg), animals, or other known meme characters

PROFILING KAREN'S APPEARANCE AND INTERESTS
- Stereotyped portrayals, stressing visual aspects of Karen: Hairdo, furious demeanour, and employing symbols such as the American flag, MAGA t-shirts. Figures associated with privilege (e.g., Donald Trump and Elon Musk)

REPORTING KAREN'S ACTIVITIES
Real-life Karens
- Reported on social media and in the press
- Karen captured during an anti-mask protest or during a tantrum in a supermarket or restaurant

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