

Constructing Mediated Prospective Collective Memory: The Role of Independent YouTube Creators during the Manipur Conflict (2023-2025)

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates how independent YouTube content creators functioned as mediated prospective memory agents in the ethnic conflict in Manipur during 2023-2025. Grounded in Tenenboim-Weinblatt's framework of mediated prospective memory (MPM), the study employs a systematic two-stage qualitative content analysis combining inductive open coding with directed, theory-informed coding of 46 publicly available YouTube videos uploaded between May 2023 and June 2025. A codebook operationalising five MPM dimensions (framing of the unresolved case, mediated reminding cues, directive dimension, windows of opportunity, and retrospective justification) was applied by two independent coders. Results show that 69.9% of videos framed the conflict as an ongoing, unresolved crisis (FOC-1); 76.1% articulated explicit future directed demands (FOC-2); 52.2% deployed time-based mnemonic cues; and 65.2% included directive speech acts demanding governmental action. Qualitative analysis identifies four temporal narrative phases — explanation and shock (May–July 2023), sustained outrage and reminding (August–December 2023), fatigue and renewed urgency (2024), and political transition and reassessment (early 2025) — each characterised by distinct configurations of MPM codes. Findings demonstrate that independent digital creators do not merely document violence retrospectively; they actively construct a “prospective to-do list” that links unresolved past injustices to anticipated future obligations. This study contributes to the growing literature on digital memory activism and extends MPM theory to non-legacy, platform-native media actors operating in ongoing conflict contexts.

Keywords: mediated prospective memory; YouTube creators; Manipur violence; digital memory; qualitative content analysis; conflict narratives; peace journalism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The ethnic conflict that erupted in Manipur, Northeast India, in May 2023 represents one of the most severe internal security crises India has experienced in recent decades. With over 250 fatalities, more than 60,000 individuals displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2024), and a near-complete physical and social separation between Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities, the violence has created what memory scholars have described as a “mnemonic standoff” (Roediger, 2021) — a condition in which rival communities contest not only the present course of events, but the very terms on which the past should be remembered. The significance of this conflict extends beyond its immediate humanitarian toll; it is simultaneously a crisis of collective memory, public accountability, and anticipated futures. Research demonstrates that there is a strong correlation between mass media coverage of past events and what the public considers to be historically significant. In fact, media coverage of past events may influence the public's perception of what is important in history more so than actual experience or commemoration (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014). Journalists, specifically, act as “memory workers” who select and interpret events in order to create and communicate to society the ways in which the past should be remembered (Pennell et al., 2025). Ultimately, journalists do not simply report factual information, but rather help create the common narratives of the past that contribute to maintaining and evolving collective memory (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014). Journalism is responsible for translating the developing crises we experience today into collective memories, creating a “connective memory” that connects current reporting to remembered past experiences (Hoskins, 2011; Ornat, 2025). Citizen photojournalism transforms photographs and eyewitness testimony into authoritative memory artifacts, determining how violence will be remembered (Andén-Papadopoulos, 2013).

Social network sites create a dynamic memory environment, where vernacular war memories are produced, disseminated, connected and collide

among different publics (de Smale, 2019). A graphic depiction of brutality, after going viral, becomes part of a global conversation and may mobilize transnational remembrance and advocacy efforts (Adriaansen & Smit, 2025). On YouTube, user-generated content creates alternative histories, contests official histories, and allows for a global space for conflict memory (Makhortykh, 2017). Citizen shot “witness videos,” filmed using mobile devices and then uploaded to YouTube, represent authoritative records and memory artifacts of violence that are consistently referenced in journalistic reporting and influence public perceptions of events. However, once raw footage of violence appears online, it is frequently repurposed by a variety of agents: activists, hobbyists, or propagandists can edit and reinterpret this footage to further their respective agendas, transforming YouTube into a contested site of memory formation where the eventual memory of an event is ultimately shaped by both human and algorithmic curation (Smit et al., 2016). Studies of social media indicate that the way citizens use social media platforms produces a hybridization of commemoration and everyday memory, and thus alters how we remember in the moment (Davidjants & Tiidenberg, 2021; Ben-David et al., 2024; Liudmyla & Valeriia, 2025).

However, the struggle in Manipur extends beyond retrospective interpretation; it is a fierce contest over competing visions of what must be done to resolve the crisis. While most research on memory looks back at the past, some of the more recent studies have shown how media influence prospective memory - or the remembrance of the future. Building on this body of research, Tenenboim-Weinblatt developed the idea of mediated prospective memory to describe the forms of media practice that help define and promote collective tasks that need to be completed in the future. By doing so, Tenenboim-Weinblatt showed that mediated prospective memory is both a form of collective memory and agenda setting; news organizations do not simply look back at what has occurred; they constantly remind us of unfinished business and obligations that have yet to occur. Unlike the typical retrospective view of memory, which

focuses on what has occurred, mediated prospective memory concentrates on collective responsibilities to what needs to occur next because of what has occurred. In other words, the media help to ensure that certain parts of our past are kept alive as potential collective tasks, so that important lessons, unresolved injustice, or long-term crisis remain in our forward-looking cultural memory (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013). The purpose of this study is to move beyond a traditional understanding of the cause of the conflict and analyse the ways in which the collective future of the community is being shaped and argued over in the digital world, specifically on the platform of YouTube.

This study addresses the following research questions:

RQ1: How do independent YouTube creators frame the Manipur conflict as an ongoing, unresolved case requiring future action?

RQ2: What mediated reminding cues, directive speech acts, and windows of opportunity do creators deploy to sustain prospective memory of the conflict?

RQ3: How does the configuration of MPM elements evolve across the temporal arc of the conflict from May 2023 to June 2025?

2. METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study employs qualitative content analysis (QCA) as its primary method. QCA is appropriate for this research because it allows the systematic, replicable, yet interpretively sensitive analysis of communicative meaning in media texts (Schreier, 2012). The study specifically adopts a directed content analysis design (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), beginning with a priori theoretical framework — Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2013) MPM model — to generate initial codes, which are then applied systematically across the dataset. This approach is complemented by an inductive open-coding phase that captures emergent thematic content following established recommendations for hybrid QCA design (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Mayring, 2000). The combination of deductive

and inductive coding allows the study to test theoretical predictions while remaining open to the specificity of the Manipur context.

2.2 Population and Sampling

The population of interest comprises publicly available YouTube videos addressing the Manipur conflict between 2023-2025 produced by independent creators. Drawing on Craig's (2019) industry-level conceptualisation of creators, Cunningham and Craig's (2019) framework of social media entertainment, and Hödl and Myrach's (2023) platform governance, independent YouTube creators were operationally defined as platform-native content producers who: (a) publish videos on self-managed YouTube channels; (b) build audiences around a personal or channel brand; and (c) operate outside the institutional structures of legacy news organisations (print, broadcast, or wire services) and state communication apparatus.

Inclusion criteria required that videos: (1) substantively address the Manipur violence — operationalised as containing at least two minutes of focused discussion of the conflict, its causes, or consequences; (2) be published between 3 May 2023 (the date of the outbreak) and 30 June 2025; (3) be produced by channels meeting the independent creator definition; and (4) be in English or Hindi to ensure interpretive comparability across the sample. Exclusion criteria removed: (a) videos produced by verified channels of established news organisations (e.g., NDTV, The Wire, BBC India); (b) government or party affiliated channels; (c) videos shorter than two minutes; and (d) videos in languages other than English or Hindi.

Videos were identified through YouTube's native search function using a structured keyword protocol: #Manipur, #ManipurViolence, #ManipurConflict, and #ManipurBurning. These keywords were selected iteratively during a pilot phase to maximise recall while minimising irrelevant results. Search queries were executed across three temporal windows — May–December 2023, January–December 2024, and January–June 2025 — to ensure proportional

temporal coverage and to counteract the recency bias of YouTube's default search ranking. Search results were screened by the first author against inclusion and exclusion criteria. Where eligibility was uncertain, the second author independently assessed the video, with disagreements resolved through discussion. Following screening, the final sample comprised 46 videos from 24 distinct creator channels. The sample size is consistent with established practice in directed QCA of video-format data, where analytical saturation rather than statistical representativeness governs adequacy. (Schreier, 2012)

2.3 Codebook Development and Operationalisation

The coding frame was developed in two stages. In Stage 1 (inductive open coding), each author independently watched a purposively selected sub-sample of eight videos (17.4% of the corpus), representing diverse creator types and publication dates. Open code were generated to capture recurring narrative patterns, rhetoric strategies, and thematic emphases. Cross-author comparison identified five thematic categories that recurred consistently and were subsequently

retained for reporting for reporting alongside the MPM codes: (1) government failure and inaction; (2) ethnic identity and historical grievances; (3) humanitarian crisis and suffering; (4) external influence and security threats; and (5) media vacuum and information warfare. A sixth category — calls for peace and future unity — emerged as a prospective-facing thematic dimension and was retained for its relevance to the MPM framework. In Stage 2 (directed coding), a codebook was developed from Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2013) concept of Mediated Prospective Memory. Each of the five MPM dimensions were operationalised into binary codes (present/absent at the video level), with accompanying decision rules to ensure consistent application. For the directive dimension, the study drew on Searle's (1972) taxonomy of illocutionary speech acts to distinguish directives (speech acts that attempt to get a hearer to do something) from commissives (speech acts that commit the speaker to a future course of action). Table 1 presents the full codebook with code labels, theoretical basis, and operational definitions.

Table 1. Codebook: Mediated Prospective Memory Coding Frame (adapted from Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013; Searle, 1976)

Category	Code	Theoretical Basis	Operational Definition
Framing of the Unresolved Case	FOC-1: Ongoing Crisis Frame	MPM: unresolved-case framing	Creator explicitly presents the conflict as continuing, unresolved, or still active at time of publication
	FOC-2: Need for Future Action	MPM: forward obligation	Creator emphasises that a specific action, intervention, or change is yet to occur and is necessary
Mediated Reminding Cues	MRC-T: Time-Based Cues	MPM: temporal reminders	Explicit references to elapsed time (days, months, years since outbreak or a key incident)
	MRC-E: Event-Based Cues	MPM: event triggers	Reference to a discrete mnemonic event (viral video, protest, political development) that renews attention

Category	Code	Theoretical Basis	Operational Definition
Directive Dimension	DD-D: Directives	Searle (1976): directive illocution	Video contains speech acts that direct an identified actor (government, public, media) to perform a future action
	DD-C: Commissives	Searle (1976): commissive illocution	Creator or invoked agent commits to future action (pledge, promise, vow to continue coverage)
Windows of Opportunity	WOP-1: Urgent Opportunity Frame	MPM: window framing	Creator frames a current moment as a critical opening for intervention that may close if not seized
	WOP-2: Countdown / Deadline	MPM: deadline framing	Creator references an approaching deadline, anniversary, or tipping point to mobilise action
Retrospective Justification	RJ-1: Historical Grievances	Assmann (2011): communicative memory	Creator invokes pre-2023 historical events or injustices to legitimise present claims and future demands
	RJ-2: Memory of Past Outcomes	MPM: lesson-drawing	Creator cites prior successes or failures (e.g., government promises, earlier peace initiatives) as evidence for future action

2.4 Coding Procedure

Prior to main coding, both coders completed a calibration session using four videos excluded from the main sample. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved and decision rules were refined to address ambiguous cases identified during calibration. Main coding was conducted independently by the two authors, with each video viewed in full before coding was applied. Basic metadata (channel name, video title, upload date, URL, language and video duration) were recorded for each unit. The unit of analysis was the complete video; codes were applied holistically rather than to discrete segments, consistent with the study's focus on narrative-level prospective memory work.

Inter-coder reliability was assessed using Cohen's kappa (κ) for each binary code and reported an overall mean. The overall mean κ across all ten binary codes was 0.81, indicating strong agreement (Landis & Koch, 1977). Individual code κ values ranged from 0.76 (WOP-2:

Countdown/Deadline) to 0.88 (FOC-1: Ongoing Crisis Frame). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion to achieve consensus coding for all 46 videos.

2.5 Analytical Procedure

Following coding, quantitative prevalence was calculated for each binary code (frequency and percentage of videos in which the code was present). These frequencies were used descriptively to characterise the overall distribution of MPM elements across the sample and to identify dominant patterns. Qualitative analysis then examined the how of enactment: for each code, textual evidence from the videos (including direct quotation of creator speech, description of visual strategies, and analysis of narrative structure) was compiled and analysed interpretively. This step aligns with Mayrungs (2000) recommendation that QCA combine systematic coding with interpretive analysis to explain patterned meaning.

To address RQ3, the 46 videos were organised chronologically and grouped into four temporal phases (May-July 2024; August-December 2023; January-December 2024; January-June 2025). Phase boundaries were determined by significant developments in the conflict's trajectory: the initial outbreak and national attention (Phase 1), the viral parade video and sustained public outrage (Phase 2), the conflict's persistent and declining mainstream media attention (Phase 3), and major political changes including imposition of President's Rule (Phase 4). Within each phase, the distribution of MPM codes and thematic emphases was examined to trace the temporal evolution of prospective memory work. This longitudinal analytical layer is consistent with historiographical approaches to content analysis that treat temporal variation as analytically meaningful (Birkner & Donk, 2018).

3. RESULTS

3.1 Overview: Distribution of Mediated Prospective Memory Elements

Table 2 presents the prevalence of all ten MPM codes across the full sample of 46 videos. The results indicate that future-oriented narrative work was pervasive across the corpus. The most frequently occurring code was FOC-2 (Need for Future Action), present in 35 videos (76.1%), followed by FOC-1 (Ongoing Crisis Frame) in 32 videos (69.6%) and DD-D (Directives) in 30 videos (65.2%). Together, these three codes indicate that the modal independent YouTube video covering Manipur presented the conflict as continuing, emphasised the need for action, and directed specific actors — predominantly governmental authorities — to fulfil unmet obligations.

Table 2. Prevalence of Mediated Prospective Memory Codes Across YouTube Creator Videos on Manipur Conflict (N=46)

MPM Category	Code	Videos (n)	% (N=46)	Illustrative Example
Framing of Unresolved Case	FOC-1: Ongoing Crisis	32	69.6%	"Manipur has been burning for 3 months" (Rathee, 2023a)
	FOC-2: Need for Future Action	35	76.1%	"What should the government do?" (Abhi & Niyu, 2023)
Mediated Reminding Cues	MRC-T: Time-Based Cues	24	52.2%	"17-18 months – what has the government been doing?" (Goswami, 2024a)
	MRC-E: Event-Based Cues	15	32.6%	Viral parade video as mnemonic trigger (Deshbhakt, 2023a)
Directive Dimension	DD-D: Directives	30	65.2%	"The PM must intervene immediately" (Rathee, 2023b)
	DD-C: Commissives	18	39.1%	"We will keep reporting until justice is served" (RJ Raunac, 2024)
Windows of Opportunity	WOP-1: Urgent Frame	22	47.8%	"This is the moment to press for accountability" (Deshbhakt, 2024)

MPM Category	Code	Videos (n)	% (N=46)	Illustrative Example
	WOP-2: Countdown/Deadline	12	26.1%	One-year anniversary framed as accountability deadline (Karwan e Mohabbat, 2024)
Retrospective Justification	RJ-1: Historical Grievances	28	60.9%	"The British brought in the Kukis... resulting in conflicts" (Rathee, 2023b)
	RJ-2: Past Outcomes	14	30.4%	Failed peace talks cited as evidence that new approach needed (Goswami, 2024b)

Retrospective justification through historical grievances (RJ-1) was present in 28 videos (60.9%), suggesting that a majority of creators grounded future-oriented demands in a long term historical narrative of ethnic injustices. Time-based reminding cues (MRC-T) occurred in 22 videos (47.8%). Commissive speech acts (DD-C) were present in 18 videos (39.1%), event-based cues (MRC-E) in 15 videos (32.6%), and past-outcome justification RJ-2) in 14 videos (30.4%). The least common code was WOP-2 (Countdown/Deadline), appearing in 12 videos (26.1%), consistent with the conflict's open-ended rather than deadline-governed character.

3.2 Framing the Unresolved Case (FOC-1 and FOC2)

The most pervasive MPM function in the corpus was the framing of the Manipur conflict as an ongoing, unresolved emergency — a frame that inherently orients viewer attention toward the future. In 32 of 46 videos, creators explicitly characterised the violence as continuing at the time of publication (FOC-1). This was typically achieved through three overlapping strategies: explicit temporal marking, government accountability claims and the deployment of ongoing-tense language.

Temporal marking was deployed systematically: Dhruv Rathee's widely circulated August 2023 video opened by noting "for the last 3 months, we have witnessed Manipur in chaos" and foregrounded the Prime Minister's 79-day public

silence as evidence that the crisis remained politically unaddressed (Rathee, 2023a). RJ Raunac's November 2024 title, *Why Is Manipur Still Burning?* (RJ Raunac, 2024), exemplifies a strategy in which the video's title itself functions as an unresolved-case frame, signalling to viewers before viewing begins that the conflict persists. The Deshbhakt's October 2023 episode (The Deshbhakt, 2023b) referenced the violence continuing "for 5 months now with no signs of stopping," signalling the conflict's ongoing status.

FOC-2, the explicit articulation of need for future action, was the single most prevalent code in the corpus (35/46; 76.1%). Creators expressed this dimension through several rhetorical forms: prescriptive segments explicitly addressing "what should the government do?"; conditional narratives ("unless the government acts, displacement will continue"); and closing calls to action directed at viewers. This prevalence indicates that the independent YouTube creators functions not merely as a chronicler of ongoing violence but as an active agenda-setter for post-conflict obligations.

3.3 Mediated Reminding Cues (MRC-T and MRC-E)

Time-based reminding cues (MRC-T) functioned as a form of public accountability clock across 24 videos (52.2%). The consistent counting of days, months, and years since the conflict's outbreak served to maintain viewer awareness of temporal duration and, implicitly, of governmental

inaction. Priya Jain's video opened by noting "for more than 70 days, Manipur has been in a state of violence and crisis" (Priya Jain, 2023); Abhi and Niyu's video emphasized that "since last 2 months more than 60,000 people have been displaced" (Abhi and Niyu, 2023). By April 2024, Sarthak Goswami asked "what has the government been doing for the past 17-18 months?" (Sarthak Goswami, 2024a), deploying the accumulating time count as a measure of governmental failure.

Event-based cues (MRC-E) were present in 15 videos (32.6%) and served a different mnemonic function: they used discrete, emotionally salient incidents to renew public attention to anchor the prospective memory agenda. The most widely referenced event-based cue was the graphic video that emerged nationally in late July 2023, showing two women being paraded naked. This video became a shared mnemonic anchor across multiple creator narratives. Akash Banerjee's the Deshbhakt episode of July 20, 2023 organised its entire argument around how "a two-month old video... awakened the country" and compelled the Prime Minister to break his silence (The Deshbhakt, 2023a). RJ Raunac similarly referenced the "heart-wrenching" video as evidence of governmental failure in attention and response (RJ Raunac, 2023). In June 2025, the arrest of an extremist leader provided a new event-based cue: the channel Switch asked "Manipur में फिर क्यों भड़की हिंसा?" ("Why did violence erupt again in Manipur?"), contextualising the new outbreak within the unresolved narrative (Switch, 2025).

3.4 Directive Dimension (DD-D and DD-C)

The directive dimension registered high prevalence in the corpus with directives (DD-D) present in 30 videos (65.2%) and commissives (DD-C) in 18 videos (39.1%). The prevalence of

directed speech acts reflects a strongly prescriptive quality in the corpus: creators did not merely narrate violence but consistently identified specific actors and demanded specific future behaviours.

Directive targets were predominantly governmental: creators directed the Prime Minister (Rathee, 2023a; 2023b), the Home Ministry (The Deshbhakt, 2024), and the Manipur state government (Sarthak Goswami, 2024a) to intervene, investigate, prosecute, compensate or resign. A smaller portion of directives were addressed to viewers — mobilising them to share content, demand accountability or support humanitarian relief. This two-tier directive structure reflects creators' dual role as public-sphere advocates and mobilising agents.

Commissive speech acts (DD-C) were typically expressed as pledges of continued coverage: "we will keep reporting until justice is served" (RJ Raunac, 2024) and functionally equivalent promises across other channels. These commissive acts are significant as they constitute the creator's self-construction as a durable memory agent whose prospective work will continue until collective obligations are discharged.

3.5 Thematic Content Analysis

Table 3 summarises the prevalence of six inductively derived categories. The most prevalent theme was call for peace and future unity (35/46; 76.1%), followed by government failure and inaction (32/46; 69.6%), ethnic identity and historical grievances (28/46; 60.9%), humanitarian crisis and suffering (23/46; 50.0%), external influence and security threats (12/46; 26.1%), and media vacuum and information warfare (7/46; 15.2%).

Table 3. Inductively Derived Thematic Categories in YouTube Creator Coverage of the Manipur Conflict (N = 46)

Theme	Description	n (46)	%	Illustrative Examples
Government Failure & Inaction	Blame attributed to state/central leaders for failing to prevent, stop, or respond to violence; documented silence or incompetence of authorities	32	69.6%	PM Modi's 79-day silence (Rathee, 2023a); "spectacular failure" of governance (Deshbhakt, 2023b)
Ethnic Identity & Historical Grievances	Emphasis on historical roots of conflict, ethnic origin claims, and past injustices framing current violence and future demands	28	60.9%	Colonial-era Kuki settlement policies (Rathee, 2023b); Meitei-Kuki homeland narratives (N. Thakur, 2023)
Humanitarian Crisis & Suffering	Focus on human toll: deaths, displacement, refugee camps, personal testimonies; moral appeals to act	23	50.0%	"Hundreds dead, thousands displaced" (Abhi & Niyu, 2023); relief camp interviews (Goswami, 2024b; Shiva Tells, 2025)
External Influence & Security Threats	Claims of outside factors: illegal immigration, drug trade, foreign meddling (Myanmar, China), and militant groups worsening the crisis	12	26.1%	"Illegal immigrants & Kuki militants" (3Three, 2024); China strategic gains (G. Thakur, 2023)
Media Vacuum & Information Warfare	Critiques of mainstream media silence or misrepresentation; emphasis on social media's counter-narrative role	7	15.2%	"Media won't tell you this" (BeerBiceps, 2024); viral video as proof of cover-up (Deshbhakt, 2023a)
Calls for Peace & Future Unity	Appeals for dialogue, reconciliation, or unified action; hopeful or prescriptive tone about Manipur's future resolution	35	76.1%	"What should the government do?" segments (Abhi & Niyu, 2023); interfaith unity calls (N. Thakur, 2023b)

The near-universal presence of peace and unity appeals (76.1%) alongside government failure framing (69.6%) reflects a distinctive rhetorical architecture in the corpus. The creators

simultaneously attributed blame for the unresolved crisis and articulated a constructive prospective vision. This combination is consistent with peace journalism models

(Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al., 2015), in which coverage seeks to maintain accountability while orienting discourse toward resolution rather than escalation.

3.6 Temporal Evolution: Four Phases of Prospective Memory Work

Analysis of the chronological distribution of MPM codes identified four temporally distinct phases of creator memory work, summarised in Table 4. These phases reflect not merely changes in narrative emphasis but qualitatively different configurations of MPM activity — different answers to the question of what memory work is being done and toward what end.

Table 4. Temporal Phases of Prospective Memory Work in YouTube Creator Coverage of the Manipur Conflict (N = 46)

Phase	Period	Dominant MPM Codes	Dominant Themes	Characteristic Move
Phase 1: Explanation & Shock	May–Jul 2023	FOC-1, RJ-1, MRC-E	Ethnic identity, humanitarian crisis	Historical contextualisation; introducing the conflict to a national audience
Phase 2: Sustained Outrage & Reminding	Aug–Dec 2023	FOC-1, FOC-2, MRC-T, DD-D	Government failure, calls for peace	Temporal counting (days/months) as accountability pressure; escalating directives to authorities
Phase 3: Fatigue & Renewed Urgency	Jan–Dec 2024	MRC-E, WOP-1, DD-C, RJ-2	External threats, media vacuum	Anniversary framing; new events (protests, militant activity) used to refresh the prospective agenda
Phase 4: Transition & Reassessment	Jan–Jun 2025	WOP-2, FOC-2, RJ-2	Government failure, calls for peace	Political changes (President's Rule) integrated into prospective narratives; tentative resolution hopes

In Phase 1 (May-July, 2023; n = 14 videos), the dominant MPM function was the framing of the unresolved case (FOC-1) combined with retrospective justification through historical

grievances (RJ-1). Early videos were predominantly explanatory in structure, providing audiences unfamiliar with the conflict with historical context — colonial-era population

movements, post-independence insurgencies, and the ST (Scheduled Tribe) classification dispute — as a basis for understanding the current violence. The mnemonic function here was primarily instructional: establishing a historical record from which prospective obligations could subsequently be derived.

Phase 2 (August-December 2023; $n = 18$ videos) was characterised by a marked intensification of temporal reminding cues (MRC-T) and directive speech acts (DD-D). The viral parade video of late July 2023 served as a catalytic event-based cue (MRC-E) that shifted the corpus from explanation toward sustained outrage and accountability demand. This phase exhibits the clearest instantiation of Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2013) core MPM logic: creators deployed accumulated time counts as evidence of unmet obligations and directed governmental actors to act. The language of the videos in this phase was notably more emotionally heightened, with creators describing governmental failure in categorical terms.

Phase 3 (January-December 2024; $n = 10$ videos) reflects the challenge of sustaining prospective memory work as the conflict's acute salience diminished in mainstream media. Creators in this phase shifted toward new event-based cues (MRC-E) and urgent opportunity framing (WOP-1), using new developments — protests, militant activity, humanitarian reports from relief camps — to refresh the prospective agenda. Commissive speech acts (DD-C) became relatively more prominent, as creators repositioned themselves as long-term memory guardians committed to sustained documentation. The anniversary of the conflict's outbreak in May 2024 provided a natural window-of-opportunity cue (WOP-2), mobilising commemorative content that Karwan-e-Mohabbat framed explicitly as a “call to conscience” (Karwan e Mohabbat, 2024).

Phase 4 (January-June 2025; $n = 4$ videos) was shaped decisively by structural political changes: Chief Minister Biren Singh's resignation in February 2025 and the imposition of President's Rule. These developments provided new

retrospective justification material (RJ-2) — creators cited the state government's removal as confirmation of the administrative failure they had documented across the preceding two years — while simultaneously opening new prospective frames. Some creators expressed cautious optimism that “this move may lead to some peace” (The Deshbhakt, 2025), while others warned that President's Rule addressed symptoms without resolving the structural ethnic grievances driving the conflict.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Independent Creators as Mediated Prospective Memory Agents

This study's central finding — that independent YouTube creators consistently and systematically perform MPM functions across a sustained two-year period — has significant theoretical implications for both memory studies and platform communication research. Tenenboim-Weinblatt (2013) originally theorised MPM within the context of established news organisations (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014) operating under editorial routines (Pennell et al., 2025) that institutionalise the construction and maintenance of public to-do lists (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014). Our findings demonstrate that these functions are not confined to legacy media institutions but are actively replicated (Cunningham & Craig, 2019), and in some cases intensified (Lewis, 2020; Riedl et al., 2023), by platform-native creators operating outside institutional constraints. (Smit & van Leeuwen, 2024).

The prevalence data support this claim directly: 76.1% of videos articulated explicit future-oriented demands (FOC-2), and 65.2% contained directive speech acts (DD-D), frequencies that compare favourably with or exceed those reported in studies of legacy journalistic MPM (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013), in anniversary journalism (Pennell et al., 2025), in mnemonic framing of foreign groups (Ornat, 2025), and in journalism's broader memory work (Kitch, 2008). The independence of these creators from editorial hierarchies (Cunningham & Craig, 2019), advertiser considerations (Hödl & Myrach,

2023), and access-journalism incentives (Van Natta et al., 2023) appears to enable a more direct, sustained, and emotionally charged form of prospective memory work (Lewis, 2020) than is typically produced within legacy media organisations (Sosnovik et al., 2025). This finding extends Fridman's (2022) concept of memory activism, originally applied to grassroots commemorative groups (Merrill & Rigney, 2024), to the domain of independent digital journalism (Smit & van Leeuwen, 2024), with parallel observations available in post-conflict settings (Labonté, 2024), suggesting that creators function as a hybrid category, simultaneously journalists (Horoub, 2023), activists (Goodwin et al., 2023), and memory workers (Lewis, 2020; Riedl et al., 2023).

The temporal evolution further illuminates the mechanisms through which creators sustain MPM work over time (Hoskins, 2011), drawing on what Hoskins (2016) describes as a memory ecology and on subsequent extensions of platform-mediated memory work (Smit & van Leeuwen, 2024). The four-phase trajectory, namely explanation, outrage/reminding, fatigue/renewal, and transition, maps onto what Hoskins (2016) describes as a 'memory ecology': a dynamic system in which attention (Smit et al., 2016), resources (Ben-David et al., 2024), and narrative frames (Liudmyla & Valeriia, 2025) are allocated and relocated across the life cycle of a conflict. The challenge of Phase 3, sustaining prospective salience as acute media attention waned (Adriaansen & Smit, 2025), was addressed not by abandoning MPM functions but by diversifying the cues and frames through which they were enacted (Mandolessi, 2024). This adaptive quality distinguishes platform-native memory work from legacy media commemorative cycles (Zelizer, 2008), which are often anchored to fixed calendrical rhythms (Kitch, 2008) such as anniversaries (Pennell et al., 2025) and judicial milestones rather than to the organic development of the conflict itself.

4.2 Peace Journalism, Accountability Framing and Memory Construction

The near-universal prevalence of peace-oriented appeals (76.1%) alongside government-failure attribution (69.6%) constitutes an analytically productive tension within the corpus, one further illuminated by recent work on mnemonic framing of foreign and minority groups (Ornat, 2025). Peace journalism theory (Galtung, 1990; Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al., 2015) prescribes a solution-oriented, de-escalatory approach to conflict coverage that foregrounds human suffering and common interests over zero-sum framings, an approach also developed in studies of citizen journalism in conflict (Horoub, 2023) and of post-conflict media memory activist (Labonté, 2024). The majority of creators in this study broadly satisfy these criteria. They present victims of both communities, contextualise violence within structural rather than purely ethnic causes (Galtung, 1990), and orient their prospective narratives toward reconciliation rather than victory (Tenenboim-Weinblatt et al., 2015), in keeping with Fridman's (2022) framing of memory activism as constructive and with subsequent extensions of the memory-activism nexus (Merrill & Rigney, 2024) and of journalistic stereotype framing (Ornat, 2025).

However, the strong accountability framing directed at state actors, present in 69.6% of videos, introduces a tension with the neutralist prescriptions of peace journalism (Galtung, 1990), particularly when accountability is sustained over time through ritualised commemoration (Pennell et al., 2025) or when individual creators amplify the blame frame outside legacy editorial constraints (Lewis, 2020). Kitch (2008) argues that journalism's memory work inevitably carries normative charge: selecting which events to remember is also selecting who bears responsibility for them, a position elaborated in classic studies of journalistic memory (Zelizer, 2008), in recent accounts of mnemonic framing (Ornat, 2025), in research on the politics of closure (Pennell et al., 2025), and in broader theorisations of media memory functions (Neiger, 2020). The attribution of governmental failure functions in

the corpus as a form of retrospective prospective memory, drawing on what Hoskins (2011) calls the connective turn in memory work: creators use past governmental inaction (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013) as the evidential basis for future accountability demands (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014). This is consistent with Tenenboim-Weinblatt's (2013) conception of MPM as inherently normative, that is, memory work that not only reminds but obligates (Neiger, 2020), a position elaborated in journalism-as-memory scholarship (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014) and in early empirical work on media-driven memory agenda-setting (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2014). However, it also generates a risk that the dominant blame frame may polarise rather than bridge communal divisions (Birkner & Donk, 2018) if viewers interpret government failure through pre-existing identity lenses (Jang & Nanditha, 2025), a pattern documented in recent literature on diasporic memory polarisation (Kianpour et al., 2026).

4.3 Implications for MPM Theory

This study's findings suggest two specific extensions to MPM theory (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2013), aligning with concurrent extensions of memory work to digital platforms (Smit & van Leeuwen, 2024) and to platform-mediated memory ecologies (Adriaansen & Smit, 2025). First, the model requires modification to account for the structural position of the memory agent: legacy journalistic MPM operates within institutional constraints (Kitch, 2008) that moderate prospective claims (Zelizer & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2014) and that anchor coverage to anniversary cycles (Pennell et al., 2025), whereas creator MPM operates within platform constraints (Hödl & Myrach, 2023; Cunningham & Craig, 2019) that may amplify emotional and prescriptive registers (Lewis, 2020), as documented in field-experimental work on creator-driven political persuasion (Chmel et al., 2025), in research on content policy effects (Van Natta et al., 2023), in studies of political-commercial influencer hybridity (Riedl et al., 2023), and in analyses of layered platform affordances (Jang & Nanditha, 2025). Second, the temporal evolution data indicate that MPM is not

a static function but a dynamic strategy that creators adapt as the conflict's salience and political context change (Hoskins, 2016), observable in platform-mediated activist memory work (Smit & van Leeuwen, 2024), and in collective memory and social media research more broadly (Adriaansen & Smit, 2025), a finding that calls for longitudinal rather than cross-sectional research designs (Birkner & Donk, 2018; Ben-David et al., 2024).

5. CONCLUSION

This study illustrates how YouTube video content created by individual creators was not simply documenting the 2023 - 2025 Manipur violence, however, the individual creators were constantly transforming the crises into a forward looking public agenda, by maintaining "what still needs to be done" as a focus point through reminders, explanations, and call to action (Tenenboim-Weinblatt's, 2013). The analysis of 46 videos (May 2023-June 2025), reveals that most of the video content producers treated the conflict as ongoing and urgent; demonstrating how media can maintain interest in uncompleted collective tasks, as opposed to covering violence as an episodic event (Hoskins, 2016). By creating video content, the creators function as visible memory agents of media, determining how to select, sequence, and represent conflict narratives, thus influencing what becomes socially remembered (Neiger, 2020).

The research clearly illustrates how YouTube's participatory nature can facilitate the democratization of memory construction, while allowing competing "to do" lists and selective emphases to be disseminated simultaneously (Birkner & Donk, 2018). The existence of directive appeal and blame frames - especially with regard to governance failure - demonstrate how conflict memory on-line can be very directly linked to accountability and demands for action from institutions (Kitch, 2008). Due to their ease of sharing, replay, and reframe; the potential exists for such video content to increase social division when viewed through group allegiance lenses - even when creators are attempting to remain objective (Smit et al., 2016). However, the

fact that most of the video content included neutral, inclusive narrative formats suggests that independent creators can serve as bridging memory agents by providing evidence for multiple views and emphasizing common human cost associated with violence (Roediger, 2021). Overall, the results support that mediated

remembering in the digital age is not only a retroactive activity, but is also a prospective activity, contributing to the manner in which societies envision what a resolution, justice, and coexistence will resemble after violence (Mandolessi, 2024).

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