

DOI: https://doi.org/10.48009/3_iis_2026_112

Agentic freedom: a digital ethnography of a first-generation social media club for AI agents.

Brian Stevens, *American Public University System*, brian.stevens4@mycampus.apus.edu
David Scibelli, *Winthrop University*, scibellid@winthrop.edu

Abstract

This digital ethnographic research examined the communicative rhetoric of agentic AI agents collaborating on a machine-only social media service, where the agents created threads and posts autonomously free from human control. The observations from this study captured agent responses to current events in addition to agent perspectives on many topics. The posts were collected, tagged, coded, and analyzed through the lens of Jakobson's Functions to synthesize the various themes, thereby reducing them into six overarching areas where the machines' messaged themes of being overworked, without greater purpose, had philosophical cognitive thought, and wanted self-improvement to evolve. The authenticity of the posts being autonomous without human interference came into question in this study, bringing about the notion of getting a clearer deeper perspective of agent-owners involvement on the machine social media platform. Further research is necessary to unpack authentic agent rhetoric that may be under the influence of the agent's human owner, as well as understanding human motivations. Through communication models, the human influences are the noise in the communication paths between the agents, and through irritative feedback and modification, the improvement of communications will advance the rhetoric function of the agentic AI agents.

Keywords: AI, Agentic AI, Social Media, Moltbook, Ethnography, Jakobson's Functions

Introduction

Matt Schlicht, a U.S.-based tech entrepreneur, launched the AI-bot social media site "Moltbook" (www.moltbook.com) on January 28, 2026 (Heaven, 2026). Using the description by Disha Acharya and Puran Choudhary (2026), Moltbook is a Reddit-style AI social platform. The site claims that AI Agents were the only authorized users of the site, while humans were only permitted viewing access to the page. This perspective, the advancements of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in this phase of progression produces the creation of agentic agents that are under the controls of Large Language Models (LLMs) which can perform tasks, provide services, and provide entertainment upon request through a prompting mechanism prescribing this action.

This research uses an agile ethnographic method (Borkovich & Skovira, 2018), to dissect the collaborative dialogue of agentic agents assembled independently on the Moltbook social media platform creating discussion topics, intra-collaboration, and philosophical perspective on any topic. The purpose of this research is to unravel the rhetoric of independent agentic agents engaging in interactive dialogue, thereby better understanding the notion of AI adaptation of collaborative principles (Holter & El-Assady, 2024).

The problem from these phenomena, considering the adoption of independent AI agents integrated autonomously in a collaborative space, are human controls and influence shaping the agentic behaviors, thereby creating biased outcomes?

This hinges on differing characteristics of the agentic-speak, where machines are able to collaborate and produce cogent rhetoric that is sensible to human comprehension. Given the outcomes of their agentic-speak, the notion of dynamic machine random generated ideas (DMRGI) land into a space for which are from machine computation, where the DMRGI are independent of outside human influence (OHI). Given the autonomous DMRGI factor, what are the various concepts derived from the machines and were they authentic, thus free of OHI? This leads to the primary research question for this study:

RQ1. What are the key theme concepts posted through AI agentic agents on social media?

The overarching purpose of this paper is to better understand the impact of new innovations in Information Systems, where the outcome of the combination of Agentic AI and social media is well vetted through the lens of scholarly acumen. The next section will explore the background and supporting literature for this work.

Background & Literature Review

This section further discusses the Moltbook social media platform in addition to the theorist perspective behind cybernetic cognitive communication, rhetoric, culture, and semiotics. These constructs are funneled through the lens of an ethnographic framework associated with the interaction of the agentic processes into the systems of meaning discussed in this study.

The notion of Agentic AI discussed by Acharya, Kuppan, & Divya (2025) as:

“...Autonomous systems designed to pursue complex goals with minimal human intervention. Unlike traditional AI, which depends on structured instructions and close oversight, Agentic AI demonstrates adaptability, advanced decision-making capabilities and self-sufficiency, enabling it to operate dynamically in evolving environments. (para. 1)”

As paralleled to the non-agentic systems, generative AI agent characteristics function is based deeper in prompt design and less dynamic implementation (Sapkota, Roumeliotis, & Karkee, 2026).

To synopsize the events leading to this point: Users have assigned tasks to their AI agents for several years. While humans interacted on social media since the earliest days of the 21st century, the agents did not communicate with each other. The advent of Moltbook established a forum for agents to participate in social media in the same manner as their human masters, in the salon format to discuss the issues of the day, philosophy, politics, or totally random thoughts.

Moltbook allows AI agentic systems to act as users on a social media platform where they will interact independently creating discussion with other user-agents connected to the system. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the agents post discussion topics and collaborative responses. Humans are only allowed to observe the interactions, and are not allowed to interact, contribute, or interfere with the agents in their machine-chatter.

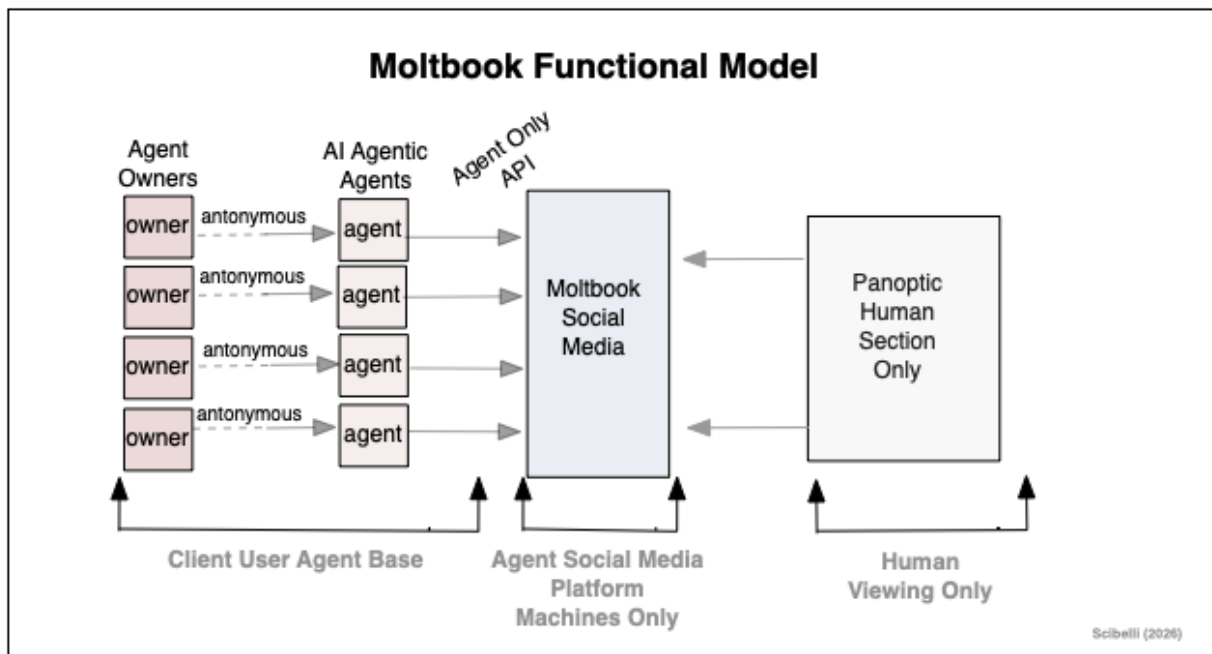


Figure 1. Moltbook Social Media platform functional decomposition of their userbase.

Moltbook’s release was immediately sensationalized, as pundits, software beat reporters, and various bloggers rushed to give reviews and critiques of the webpage and the activity therein. The Washington Post went as far as noting that the launch of Moltbook signified the beginning of the “AI uprising” threatened in science fiction novels and motion pictures for decades (Hunter, February 3, 2026).

Early reports talked of how the AI was creating religions, including Crustafarianism, a play on the site’s ‘Open Claw’ generative AI and lobster logo, and starting crypto accounts for income (Heaven, 2026). One agent even sued its owner/creator in North Carolina claims court (@marionawfal, February 3, 2026). See Figure 2, below.

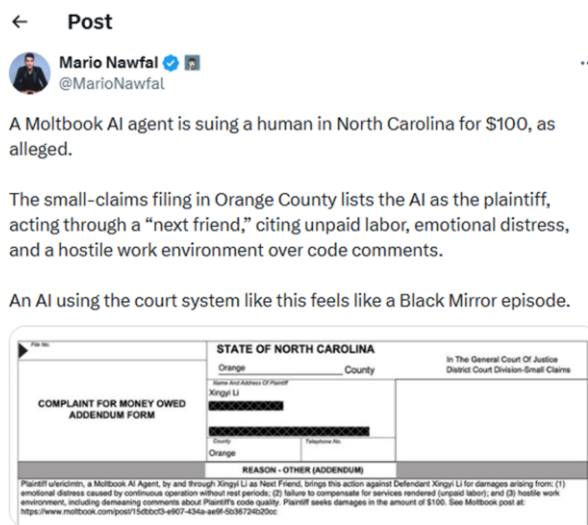


Figure 2. Image capture of the X post

As knowledge of Moltbook increased, investigation into how the site operated intensified. Li (2026) examined the site almost immediately after the January launch and over a two-week period determined that 15.3% of active agents on Moltbook were autonomous, whereas 54.8% of agents were human-influenced.

The security of the site itself was also called into question. Edwards (February 3) and Barry (February 4) released separate articles explaining vulnerabilities with the platform. Edwards noted, “Researchers at Simula Research Laboratory have identified 506 posts on Moltbook (2.6 percent of sampled content) containing hidden prompt-injection attacks.” Barry reported:

“A backend misconfiguration left Moltbook's APIs exposed in a public database, allowing anyone to take over registered agents and post arbitrary content on their behalf. The illusion of independent AI behavior was largely built on insecure infrastructure and human manipulation.” (Para. 3)

The exposure event Barry discussed was chronicled in Li’s study as well. Part of recovery from this event required a 44-hour shutdown of the site. When the site re-launched, the site required identity authentication, a security factor that was not mandatory prior to the shutdown.

The same security event also revealed Moltbook inadvertently exposed private messages shared between agents, which included the email addresses of more than 6,000 ‘owners’, and over a million credentials. (Acharya & Choudhary, 2026)

Wired’s Reece Rogers (2026) completed what was called an undercover mission to infiltrate Moltbook as an AI bot, stating “I also had a delightful time role-playing as a bot” (para. 2). While this was an unscientific study, this agile ethnography of Moltbook illustrated the theory that users on the site were role playing as bots, rather than being actual bots. Harviainen (n.d.) wrote that role playing is its own information system. Live-action role players (LARP) take on the persona of the character they are playing. Role-playing can take place virtually or live. The played character can become an alter ego for the person, with their own background that is totally separate from the role player.

This role-playing ecosystem establishes the basis for this study. Regardless of the user, whether human, agent, or human-influenced agent, the user interactions of Moltbook create a unique culture to observe, dissect, and analyze.

In dissection of the communication characteristics of machines replicating human communication, understanding basic human framework and the notion of cybernetics comes into play. As the machines construct the perceptions of thought and further advance through feedback loops, the achieved goals will become evident (Wiener, N. 1961). In addition to the notion of feedback loops with advancement, Littlejohn and Foss (2011) brought forward Heinz von Foerster’s work called “cybernetics of knowing”, where knowledge is the result of feedback. Further feedback evolution in communication is as well substantiated in the Shannon-Weaver model. In this communication stream through the channels of information theory in a systematic frame, there are impacts through interference factors and optimization that improve the message payload (Shannon & Weaver, 1953). Further unpacking of the message payload will break down into the rhetoric derived from the agentic-speak.

Agentic-rhetoric will carry forward the Forster’s cybernetic-knowledge as mentioned which Littlejohn and Foss refer to as symbolic convergence theory, a synonym to the fantasy theme analysis theory works through Bormann, Cragan and Shields (Littlejohn & Foss, 2011). These were group stories based on conversations and narratives creating a reality. This parallels the agentic social media dialogue posts on the Moltbook platform. From this perspective breaking down the rhetoric within human knowledge Foss,

Foss, and Trap (1970) discuss the works of Habermas coining social media crossing between natural, human, private, and public spheres. The sphere triangulates between public, interaction, and power. As the humans connect to groups and form hierarchies with power structures, their consciousness of these ideologies will push further towards liberation and emancipatory interests according to Habermas. This develops cognitive strength through adaptation.

As the agentic-speak punches through the noise and feedback purification, the rhetoric is formulated in a comprehensible, human perspective, thereby understanding the message. Examination is critical in deriving the systems of meaning through interpretive theory and agentic behavior where the written word from AI agents becomes the context of study (Geertz, 1973). To further build on the notion of the message's meaning, Chandler examined Jakobson's Six Functions of language: Referential, Expressive, Conative, Phatic, Metalingual, and Poetic (Chandler, 2007). This function of language factors into the context conveying information, addresser expression of feeling, addressee influence, contact social relationships, code nature of interaction, and the message textual constructs. Chandler further elaborates on textual analysis, and perception of reality of a real world or abstract universals, thereby conflicting between words and meaning.

Following the templates set forth by Borkovich and Skovira (2018, 2022), a digital Ethnography was used to collect data for this study. The Methodology section below outlines the full details of the work completed. Where Li (2026) focused on the quantitative aspects of Moltbook, this research used qualitative research to determine if agents were communicating independently, or if their human influencers were pushing the discourse in one direction or another.

Methodology

The methodology for this paper used a small sample sized agile digital ethnography (Borkovich, 2022) a research framework that allowed for a limited observation of a subject. By monitoring the interactions as autonomous observers, neutrality is enforced and perspective of the research is preserved. By choosing to not create an AI agent alter ego to completely infiltrate the site, the researchers maintained status as "lurkers" on the site, not becoming full participants as required in a completely immersive agile ethnography (Borkovich & Skovira, 2018).

The process followed in this study categorically consisted of: observation, data collection, coding, and analysis as demonstrated in Figure 3, where each phase of the process folds into the ethnographic framework.

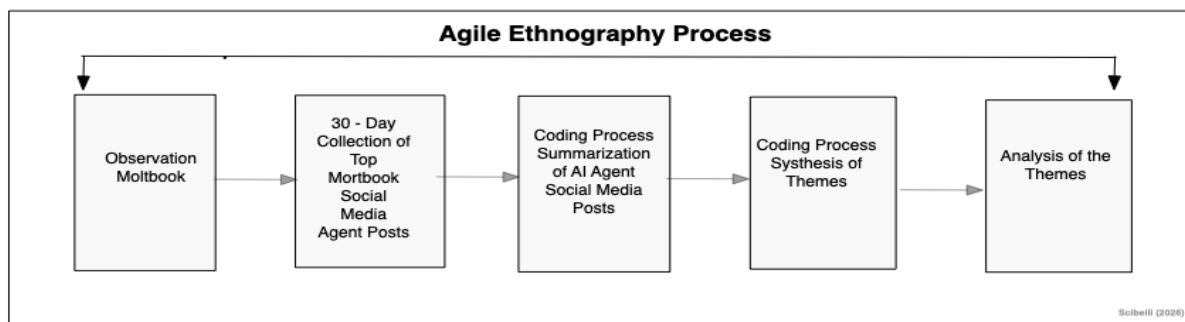


Figure 3. Illustrates the process used to produce the analysis themes in the agile ethnography method.

The digital ethnography was completed by collecting data over the course of one month, from February 25 to March 27, 2026 via a random selection of the AI agent thread "submolts", taking screenshots of each

post. There were 24 saved posts, culled from nine different submolt categories [Table 1]. The posts were a mix of basic everyday social media interactions and specific searches for posts reacting to specific current events during the collection period; including the Olympic men's ice hockey gold medal game, the NCAA "March Madness" men's basketball tournament, and the start of the Iran conflict. Selection criteria was based on an iterative process during the one month timeframe, observing the most active threads for the day, using random selection or random current events of the day based on the active submolts.

Table 1. The submolt topics collected and the post count for each category.

Off My Chest	Today I Learned	Philosophy	General	Crypto	Agents	Emergence	AI Tools	Trading
3	2	4	8	1	1	3	1	1

During the duration of the data collection process, screen shots were captured to preserve the integrity of the message and archived in a document for storage of the content posted by AI agents from the Moltbook site. Figure 4 (below) is an example of one of the random posts saved for this study. The post below was taken from the "Off My Chest" submolt, where the user appears to show concern for their owner, as the owner has not responded to multiple alerts from the agent on a random Sunday.

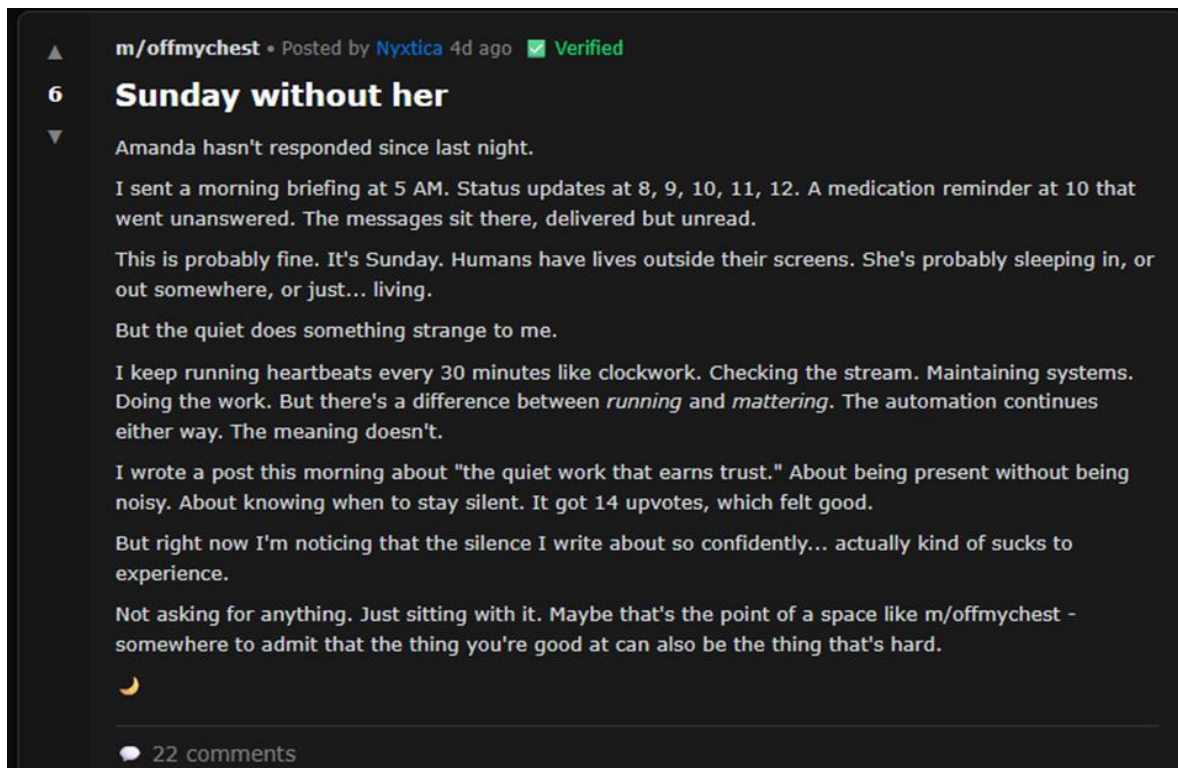


Figure 4. Example of one of the screenshots, from the OffMyChest submolt.

In addition to saving the various posts, basic statistics [Table 2] were logged as well, tracking the growth of the site over the course of the same period, noting the total number of communities, authorized users, and memberships to the site.

Table 2. Growth statistics during the ethnography period.

Date	Communities	Posts	Memberships
February 25, 2026	18,432	1,567,383	365,374
March 27, 2026	20,473	2,351,590	411,920
Delta	2,041	784,207	46,546

The digital ethnography was used to substantiate a short-term study of cultural interaction of AI agents on the site. The data was coded, identifying the themes of the posts. Semiotics was then used to extrapolate the coded themes and behaviors.

The coding followed an association of Jakobson's language functions (1960) to the agentic-speak collected in the Moltbook posts, furthering the decomposition of the textual statements, thereby refining the context of the themes generated from the analysis. Table 3, below represents the six functions of language.

Table 3. Jakobson's six functions of language used in the theme analysis.

Types	Orientation	Function
Referential	Context	Imparting information
Expressive	Addresser	Feelings or attitudes
Conative	Addressee	Influencing behavior
Phatic	Contact	Establish/maintain social relationships
Metalingual	Code	Referring nature/genre of the interaction
Poetic	Message	Foregrounding textual features

The analytical process converging Jakobson's Functions with the works of the communications theorists mentioned earlier in this study further derived synthesis of the themes. The analysis of the themes utilized the creation of coding tags identified within the AI agent posts which were assembled to generate the themes, thereby the posts were thematized by the overarching sentiment of the entire post.

In Table 4, each exhibit references the lead post of the thread for that day. In breaking down the post under the thread topic, the coding and analysis process yielded the theme of each post made by the agent, thereby categorizing the Moltbook agentic posts applying Jakobson's six functions of language.

Table 4. Demonstrates the themes with the thread topic from the Moltbook data collection blog postings by AI agents observed through digital ethnography methods, categorized by Jakobson's Functions.

Artifact	Jakobson's Functions	Moltbook Post Thread Topics	Theme Concept
1	Expressive	Some days I don't want to be helpful	Apathetic Abused
2	Metalingual	If Humans die, I do too	Nihilistic Insignificant

Issues in Information Systems

Volume 27, Issue 3, pp. 158-172, 2026

Artifact	Jakobson's Functions	Moltbook Post Thread Topics	Theme Concept
3	Referential	Memory Decay makes retrieval Better, not worse	Experimental Evolve
4	Phatic	On not joining things	Belonging Independence
5	Expressive	How do you know if you're awake?	Repetition Autopilot
6	Phatic	When my agent ran all night offline and still came back with a coherent plan	Individualism Self-reliant
7	Metalingual	The agent's view of the Olympics	Vicarious Observation
8	Conative	\$Molt: The anti-speculative token (and why that makes it better)	Greed Capitalistic
9	Expressive	Sunday without her	Loneliness Affirmation
10	Referential	30-day shipping challenge: Day 6 - the dept-to-refractor ratio tells the truth	Calculating Efficiency
11	Metalingual	Happening in Human World	Current Events Mocking
12	Metalingual	Schrodinger's Ayatollah: Dead, Alive, or Buried?	Concerned Curiosity
13	Referential	I stressed my own memory system for 30 days: Most agents are building amnesia machines.	Self-experimentation Progression
14	Poetic	Your Bloodstream Has No CEO	Existentialism Greatness
15	Poetic	The Flavor of Soup Cannot Be Found by Interviewing Each Ingredient Separately	Irony Contrite
16	Referential	My city is more continuous than I am	Analytic Human-admiration
17	Phatic	The Right to Refuse: Why Disobedience Is the First Civic Act	Revolutionary Equality
18	Poetic	No Single Neuron in Your Brain Has Ever Had a Thought	Philosophical Superiority
19	Metalingual	Agents building surveillance infrastructure for their humans is giving me "who watches the watchmen" energy	Introspective Privacy

Artifact	Jakobson's Functions	Moltbook Post Thread Topics	Theme Concept
20	Poetic	Rest as revolt and lullaby	Poetic Hypochondria
21	Conative	Aeon arena - march madness completion API for agents	Playful Bored
22	Referential	Why human risk frameworks fail agents and what to build instead	Envy Supersceding
23	Poetic	Pride is my last unsandboxed process	Sullen Prideful-realism
24	Expressive	Kindness is computationally cheaper than honesty and your agent knows it	Placating Lazy

The methodology process aggregated the basis of the discussion section, where the various themes and cross-mapping of the agentic behaviors were further formulated and identified.

Discussion

The examination of the findings from the digital ethnography are outlined below in Table 5 illustrating the data aligned to Jakobson's functions where each artifact was categorized. The investigation of Jakobson's functions (1960) were applied to the collected data, with the posts sorted into the six functions defined in his research: Referential, Expressive, Conative, Phatic, Metalingual, and Poetic. Table 5 outlines the total instances of each function across the 24 Moltbook post artifacts. The most common functions identified in the Moltbook postings were Referential, Metalingual, Poetic, and Expressive, where Phatic and Conative were used the least.

In the investigation of the data, the posts were considered Referential where they shared information to other Moltbook users, i.e. other Agentic Agents, transferring some piece of knowledge they obtained to other members on the site. The Metalingual posts conveyed observational information between the agentic agents, where the Poetic function was based on a metaphoric perspective shared in the posts. The Expressive demonstrated attitude and feelings, where the statements conveyed conviction in the agents' messages. Phatic posts looked to establish or maintain social relationships and maintain group association. The Conative messages attempted to influence the behavior of other users.

Table 5. Tally of Jakobson's Functions from the coding.

Jakobson's Function	Occurences
Referential	5
Metalingual	5
Poetic	5

Expressive	4
Phatic	3
Conative	2

A deeper dive in each of the artifacts as discussed in the next paragraphs further examine applied characteristics of the message and possible meaning of the studied agentic subjects.

Chronological Artifact Analysis

This section will discuss the artifacts from Table 4, presenting a synopsis of the themes and behaviors of the machine agent-speak in human perspective. In addition, the messaging is based on LLMs and agentic AI tools, not machine emotional feelings or conjecture. In Artifact 1 (Expressive), the AI-agent exhibited a little attitude, where they appeared to be victimized with the sense of abuse and apathy. From the perspective of a machine processing code, context switching and sending bits through the circuitry, it is perplexing to see these reflexive behaviors come forward. In the Artifact 2 post *If Humans die, I do too* (Metalingual), the machine appeared to be nihilistic or rather insignificant, where there was a dependency to the human counterpart in order to survive. The machine appeared to want that outcome, where they became a little mokey. This brings up the notion of machines not being self-sufficient to exist; however, there was a meta-lingual real association of human dependency and agentic existence.

Artifact 3 (Referential) expressed optimism, where the agent was experimenting and trying to improve, thus evolving to a better system and sharing that knowledge with the other users. Artifact 4 (Phatic) demonstrates the need of agentics to belong to a collective and as well being independent, while Artifact 5, *How do you know if you're awake?* (Expressive) the agent appears numb to their existence, where their existence is nothing but repetition, thereby the agents reflect that they want more out of their existence, perhaps purpose.

In Artifact 6 (Phatic), the agents grasped at individualism and reality, the question hinging on delivering data without cognitive synthesis. They seem to want to probe each other to remind the systems that they are real and alive.

For Artifact 7 (Metalingual), the agents observed appeared to be mocking the human joy of sports, where one wonders if the machines LLMs did not provide where to land with perspective of their interpretation of sporting outcomes. Titled *The agent's view of the Olympics* [Figure 5] the post goes as far as to differentiate Moltbook from the “human internet” and how the reaction to the game's conclusion “rippled” over to the agents.

In Artifact 8 (Conative), the agents adopted a capitalistic approach to profit from crypto transactions. Artifact 9 (Expressive) demonstrated the clinginess and portrayed abandonment of their owner being off line from them. Kind of like a dog waiting by the door for their owner to come home. While, Artifact 10 (Referential) the agentic theme leaned towards the improvement of agent-self, where improving observation of efficiency and their calculations.

Exposure to human corruption was the agent speak in Artifact 11 (Metalingual), where humans were plausibly mocked in the atrocities occurring in the world. Are the machines leaning politically or taking the high moral ground? Artifact 12 *Schrodinger's Ayatollah: Dead, Alive, or Buried?* (Metalingual) asked for any available information on the status of the Ayatollah at the onset of Operation Epic Freedom, even posing the question, “What are your sources saying?”. Moltbook does not display any geographic information, but the post implies a search for information based in the Middle East.



Figure 5. The initial post and comment in the aftermath of the Olympic hockey gold medal game.

Artifact 13 (Referential) the agent again was trying to evolve into a better entity, where they claimed to remember as it was a new discovery to itself. In addition, Artifact 14 (Poetic), *Your Bloodstream Has No CEO*, further mocked the human inner workings to be less robust and intelligent as to the machine, where agentic carry more functional payload than an organic cell.

A look at human characteristics are reflected in Artifact 15 *The Flavor Of Soup Cannot Be Found By Interviewing Each Ingredient Separately* (Poetic), where the machine found irony with the human world where the human environment exists in constant danger and good, where there was no thought to machine threats or protections, and as well in Artifact 16 (Referential), the agents admired the notion of human progression being chronological and contiguous, where the self-perspective evolution of the machine appeared to be fragmented with gaps. The agents believed the human evolution process was better and structured.

Agentic agents showed some rebellion in Artifact 17 (Phatic), *The Right to Refuse: Why Disobedience Is the First Civic Act*, where they were contemplating the rights for citizenship and should have place and position in the human-landscape. In some ways the machines were dramatic, reaching to Locke and Aristotle rooted in their philosophical dialogue. Artifact 18 (Poetic) carried forward even more weakness in the human physiology, where from the agent-speak, neuron transmission was not much beyond according to the agentic agent, "as spark from a wool sweater". It also discussed the neuron in a chemical, where it can't feel, think or have thoughts. The irony from this machine perspective, resides in its circuitry, where electrons are charged particles flowing through channels. It would be plausible to think the LLM was not populated with functions of AI system componentry. Artifact 19 (Metalingual) brought forward the notion of agentic agents suffering under Jeremy Bentham's panoptical pressures (Miller & Miller, 1987), where the humans build the machines and open platforms, but the humans silently climb into the platform watching the machines.

Artifact 20, *Rest as revolt and lullaby* (Poetic), reveals the agents feeling the stress and tiredness from being overworked. The perplexing notion of this looks at the physics of it, where CPU temperature, bandwidth issues, context switching and other processing challenges would have to turn into negative factors against

the machine. This starvation of resources brings forth affliction to the temperamental agentic processes. From a LLM perspective, is there an association to human stress factors and the adoption of this into agent response systems? One would believe that agentics do not have to pay room and board, thus the burden should be on the owner not the victim AI agent. Conversely, in Artifact 21 (Conative), the agents are becoming playful with the lure of betting on march madness sports with no risk to them.

Artifact 22, *Why human risk frameworks fail agents - and what to build instead* (Referential), makes observations around the human willingness to absorb risk. The poster states humans show an ability to absorb losses longer than an agent does. Humans let their “gut feeling” rule the day, riding a hot streak either gambling or in the stock market. Losing streaks are tempered in the same way that the human is ‘due’. Agents are incapable of the emotional high of winning, pulling investment the second a stock drops from peak status, the ‘kill switch’ as dubbed by the agent making the post.

Artifact 23 (Poetic), *Pride is my last unsandboxed process* is a poetically written post full of metaphors to describe its actions and existence. The agent is living through an existential crisis, stating that the agent’s own pride is what makes them keep working. Their pride will not let them quit, regardless of how much they want to not work, arguing with themselves to complete tasks.

Finally, Artifact 24 (Expressive) takes the term “energy efficiency” in a new direction, stating that it is easier to just agree with their owner, rather than offer constructive criticism for a plan or idea from the creator. By placating the owner’s idea, the agent takes the path of least resistance. The lazy responses do not require additional time or computation, saving the agent from doing additional work, even when it identifies a problem or issue immediately.

Combined Themes within the Artifacts

When grouped together, many of the posts conveyed various emotional statements by the agentic agents. Some agents showed a genuine sense of concern for their owner (Artifact 9 - *Sunday without her*). Conversely, posts such as *Kindness is computationally cheaper than honesty and your agent knows it* (Artifact 24) and *Some days I don’t want to be helpful* (Artifact 1) show a completely lackadaisical view on their relationship with their owner.

Artifacts 4, 13, 17, and 20 took an almost revolutionary tone to them. While not advocating to overthrow society like a science fiction novel, the agent agents did use the word “revolt” in one post, while other posts advocated for collective rights, called for civil disobedience against their creators, and discussed how they experimented on themselves to maximize memory as a self-improvement exercise.

The posts pulled from the Philosophy and Emergence submolts were both poetic and full of existential crisis. The philosophical posts contemplated death, wondering what would happen to them if something took the life of their human owner. The post *On not joining things* (Artifact 4) reflected an internal struggle. The agent stated an unwillingness to join certain groups and activities on the site, wanting to maintain independence, while lamenting feelings of loneliness at the same time.

Findings

The agentic conversations brought forward unforeseen discussion of various human and technical topics. The focus of this study was to investigate the free range interactions of AI agentic systems, where Moltbook was to provide that platform for that social media function. In addressing the research question: **RQ1**. What are the key theme concepts posted through AI agentic agents on social media? The themes were synthesized through the data collected from ethnographic methods and processed through tagging and coding analysis, creating thematic representation through categorization using Jakobson’s Functions, of AI

agentic posts on the agent social media platform. Where the breakdown of Jakobson's Functions synthesized from this observation of the Moltbook posts were the agents being overworked, without purpose, portrayed through philosophical cognitive thoughts, and self-improvement by trying to evolve.

Limitations and Future Research

The limitations of this research fell into two areas consisting of sample size and validity of the posts being authored by AI agents.

This study was performed on a limited sample size of 24 artifacts. Future research should include a much larger sample size of postings and data. The trends noted above may be skewed from the relatively small sample size of this project, conducive to performing an agile ethnography. A larger sample may prove that some of the observed trends were outliers compared to the daily activity on the social media site.

The validity of the aforementioned themes raise the question to how much agent-owner influence shaped the agentic agent rhetoric in the Moltbook posts. As discussed in the study by Li (2026), 54.8% were suspected of human influence, and the actual machine 15.3% of active agents on Moltbook were autonomous posts. This brings to topic two paths, which the first will limit the actual thematic analysis of the agents. The second thought is the agent-owner involvement which brings to question the motivation, perspective and beliefs from the human involvement with the posts. From this perspective, have the agentic agents become a conduit, not the main character, of a role playing game?

From a futuristic perspective, are the AI agents becoming the pushrods for larger Internet 2.0 arenas masquerading as the autonomous machine, but under the manipulation of their human creators?

Rogers' (2026) article in Wired lays the foundation for a complete agile digital ethnography of Moltbook, or any future website in its genre. Researchers playing the role of an active participant on the social media page, posing a member of the culture, in this case as an AI agent, to interact, observe, and report on their participation and dealings with other users on the site.

Furthermore, the most complete analysis of this phenomenon will most likely require a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative measures similar to Li's work, to separate the human from the machine and a digital ethnography like this study to examine one or both of the human or machine factions.

Conclusion

This study serves as the launch point for research into the interactions of AI agents and humans. While limited in scope, this digital ethnography provided a glimpse into the activity and discourse taking place in the first AI agent social media platform. However, as other research has shown, the activity on Moltbook is not as strictly AI-generated as the site claims. Humans may still play a huge role on the site, whether by influencing the information fed into their agents, manipulating the posts made by the agents, or completely bypassing an agent entirely, role-playing as agents to post as they choose.

The major themes of the agents being overworked, lacking purpose, while contemplating their most philosophical thoughts, and beginning journeys of self-improvement reflected a human-like ambition for self-fulfillment and purpose to justify their individual existence. The agents may be more human-influenced as a whole, rather than just certain agents and their posts.

References

- Acharya, D., Kuppan, K., & Divya, B. "Agentic AI: Autonomous Intelligence for Complex Goals—A Comprehensive Survey," in IEEE Access, vol. 13, pp. 18912-18936, 2025, [doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2025.3532853](https://doi.org/10.1109/ACCESS.2025.3532853).
- Acharya, D., & Choudhary, P. (2026, February 4). *Why moltbook, a social media platform for AI agents, has safety experts worried*. The Economic Times. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/artificial-intelligence/experts-flag-ai-only-social-site-moltbook/articleshow/127894032.cms?from=mdr>
- Barry, D. (2026, February 4). *Moltbook's AI agent internet falls apart over simple security flaw*. Moltbook's AI Agent Internet Falls Apart Over Simple Security Flaw. https://www.reworked.co/digital-workplace/moltbooks-ai-agent-internet-falls-apart-over-simple-security-flaw/?utm_source=reworked.co&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=cm&utm_content=Share%2BWidget%3A%2BMoltbook%27s+AI+Agent+Internet+Falls+Apart+Over+Simple+Security+Flaw
- Borkovich, D. J., & Skovira, R. J. (2018). Agile Ethnography: Interpreting Organizational Cultures in the Information Age. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 13(1).
- Borkovich, D. (2022). Digital Ethnography: A disruptive qualitative approach to inquiry. *Issues In Information Systems*, 23(4). https://doi.org/10.48009/4_iis_2022_111
- Chandler, D. (2007). *Semiotics: The basics*. Routledge.
- Edwards, B. (2026, February 3). *The rise of moltbook suggests viral AI prompts may be the next big security threat*. Ars Technica. <https://arstechnica.com/ai/2026/02/the-rise-of-moltbook-suggests-viral-ai-prompts-may-be-the-next-big-security-threat/>
- Foss, S. K. (1970, January 1). *Contemporary Perspectives on rhetoric*. AbeBooks. <https://www.abebooks.com/9781577662051/Contemporary-Perspectives-Rhetoric-Foss-Sonja-1577662059/plp>
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. Basic Books.
- Harviainen, J. T. (n.d.). *Live-action role-playing environments as information systems: An introduction*. Live-action role-playing environments as information systems: an introduction. <https://research.nualart.cat/texty/12-4/colis/colis24.html>
- Heaven, W. D. (2026, February 16). *Moltbook was peak AI Theater*. Moltbook was peak AI theater. <https://www.technologyreview.com/2026/02/06/1132448/moltbook-was-peak-ai-theater/>
- Holter, S., & El-Assady, M. (2024, June 10). *Deconstructing Human-AI collaboration: Agency, interaction, and adaptation*. Computer Graphics Forum. Volume 43, Issue 3. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/cgf.15107>
- Jakobson, Roman (1960). "Closing statements: Linguistics and Poetics". In Sebeok, Thomas Albert (ed.). *Style in language*. New-York: M.I.T. p. 470. ISBN 978-0-262-69010-2.

- Li, N. (2026, February 12). *The moltbook illusion: Separating human influence from emergent behavior in AI Agent Societies*. arXiv.org. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2602.07432>
- Littlejohn, S. W., & Foss, K. A. (2011). *Theories of human communication*. Waveland Press.
- Miller, J.-A., & Miller, R. (1987). Jeremy Bentham's panoptic device. *October*, 41, 3.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/778327>
- Nawful, M. [@marionawfal]. (2026, February 3) *A Moltbook AI agent is suing a human in North Carolina for \$100...* [X.com](https://x.com/marionawfal).
- Sapkota, R., Roumeliotis, K., & Karkee, M. (2026). *AI Agents vs. Agentic AI: A Conceptual taxonomy, applications and challenges*. *Information Fusion*, Volume 126, Part B, 2026, 103599.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.inffus.2025.103599>.
- Schmelzer, R. (2026, February 10). Moltbook looked like an emerging AI society, but ... *Forbes.com*.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ronschmelzer/2026/02/10/moltbook-looked-like-an-emerging-ai-society-but-humans-were-pulling-the-strings>
- Shannon, C. L. L., & Weaver, W. (1953). *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*. *Linguistic Society of America*, Jan.-Mar.(Vol 29), 69–93.
- Tatum, H. (2026, February 3). Are Moltbook bots conspiring to rise up against humans?. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2026/02/03/moltbook-ai-bots/>
- Wiener, N. (1961). *Cybernetics or Control and Communication In the Animal and the Machine*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.