Chinese Internet Abstraction Culture and the Impact of Economy

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Abstract: This paper explores the phenomenon of Internet abstraction culture that has emerged in the context of China's rapidly developing digital technologies and platforms. This cultural movement has not only reshaped consumer behavior, but also profoundly affected the market structure, affecting multiple fields such as content creation, advertising promotion, and tourism. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of scholars such as Manuel Castells, Yochai Benkler, Henry Jenkins, and Geert Lovink, and combining it with a detailed analysis of China's Internet development history, this paper analyzes the formation process and evolution trajectory of Internet abstract culture in China, as well as its profound impact on the economy and society. In addition, this paper highlights the key role of digital platforms such as Douyin, Kuaishou, and Bilibili in promoting Internet abstraction culture and giving birth to new economic models. At the same time, this paper explores the challenges and opportunities brought about by this cultural phenomenon, and provides valuable suggestions for future research and policy making, aiming to more effectively respond to the cultural and economic transformation driven by Internet abstraction culture.

Keywords: Chinese Internet phenomenon, social media culture, e-business, online community development, Internet abstraction culture.

1. Introduction

In recent years, China's rapid development of digital technology and online platforms has led to the emergence of "Internet abstraction culture." This culture has significantly impacted e-business, cultural, and technological fields. Traditionally, Internet abstraction culture involves the simplification of complex economic activities by digital platforms, creating new forms of production, consumption, and interaction [1][2]. It disperses information and resources, promotes innovation, and fosters new economic models. In China, this culture originated from a subculture of "Internet deconstructionism" for fun, profoundly impacting digital platforms and social media, altering consumer behavior and market dynamics [3][4]. For instance, short videos and secondary creation styles are typical products of this cultural influence. Despite its recognized role in promoting technology and e-commerce, research on its deep impact remains insufficient due to a lack of a unified definition or comprehensive research framework, hindering our understanding of its specific effects on Chinese society and youth Internet users.

This study aims to comprehensively explore the diverse impacts of Internet abstraction culture on China's economy, society, and culture. This study will conduct an in-depth analysis supported by

theoretical and specific case studies. Key issues include the formation and development of China's Internet abstraction culture, its specific economic impact on industries like content creation, advertising, and tourism, and responses to challenges brought by digital transformation in future research and policy-making. This research aims to fill current gaps in theoretical and empirical studies, providing new perspectives and valuable references for policymakers and academic researchers to better understand and address the challenges and opportunities of Internet abstraction culture.

2. Definition and Theoretical Basis of Internet Abstraction Culture

Although the specific term "Internet abstraction culture" has no clear origin and is not yet a universally recognized term, related ideas and theories have been explored in depth in many studies. The work of scholars provides a valuable theoretical framework for understanding how the Internet reshapes society and the economy. These studies form the logical and theoretical foundation of Internet abstraction culture, such as:

- Manuel Castells: In his work The Rise of the Network Society [2], Castells delves into the decentralizing impact of the Internet on social structures and economic models. His work provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how the Internet reshapes society and the economy.
- Yochai Benkler: Benkler, in The Wealth of Networks [1], extensively discusses how the Internet facilitates social production modes and collaborative innovation. His research emphasizes the role of the Internet in transforming markets and promoting new forms of cooperation.
- Henry Jenkins: In Convergence Culture [3], Jenkins explores user-generated content and participatory culture. His work demonstrates how the Internet changes media production and consumption patterns.
- Geert Lovink: Lovink's critical theories [5], as presented in works like Networks Without a Cause, discuss the impacts of social media and issues such as information overload brought by the Internet

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word "abstract" as a verb has two meanings: 1. To extract or remove (something), 2. To make a written summary of (an article or book). As an adjective, it means: Existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence.

Internet abstraction culture in Chinese, the phenomenon that this study will discuss, can be traced back to "Internet deconstructionism". This deconstructionism is mainly based on subcultures in online communities and social media, using abstract language, symbols and expressions to convey certain specific views and emotions. In this process, the original meaning and expression of things will be broken, and then recombined to form a new, more entertaining or ironic viewpoint [6]. The characteristics of this abstract culture involve:

- Abstractness: The use of a large number of abstract words and symbols that are difficult to understand because they require some background knowledge to interpret.
- Group Identity: Abstract culture circulates within specific groups, such as the fan base of Internet streamers or specific communities on social media. These groups use abstract culture to express their viewpoints and emotions, forming a unique cultural identity.
- Irony and Satire: Abstract culture often carries a sense of irony and satire, using exaggeration, distortion, or imitation to deconstruct and reconstruct social phenomena and mainstream culture.

Internet abstraction culture prominently exhibits a range of characteristics that align with the core meanings of the verb and adjective "abstract." It extracts commonalities, simplifies or generalizes content through re-creation, designs structures with decentralization, and refines concepts, gradually shaping its unique form. These dynamic processes have clarified the initially vague concept of "Internet abstraction culture," which has ultimately emerged on mainstream social media platforms and evolved into a widely embraced popular cultural phenomenon.

3.   Internet Abstraction Culture in Chinese Internet

3.1.   Background and Early Stage

The advent of the smartphone era facilitated the diversification of the Chinese online demographic, thus establishing a crucial basis for the subsequent emergence of Internet abstraction culture. As these foundational elements converged and additional contributing factors accumulated over time, eventually forming the Internet abstraction culture.

3.1.1. Changes in User Demographics

As Generation Z and Millennials become the primary users of the Internet, they bring more diverse and personalized cultural demands. This generation facing immense social pressure, use the Internet as a key outlet for stress relief and entertainment. Abstract culture, with its humor, irony, and deconstructive features, meets these needs.

3.1.2. The Development of the Internet Economy

The emergence of live streaming and short video platforms provides a fertile environment for abstraction culture. The widespread use of smartphones and mobile Internet has lowered the threshold for accessing the Internet, allowing users to watch live streams and short videos anytime, anywhere, greatly promoting the spread of abstraction culture.

3.1.3. Formation of Internet Subcultures

Internet subcultures are crucial to the development of abstraction culture. Young users create, share, and interact within online communities (such as Baidu Tieba and Douban groups), forming unique subcultural circles. The early forms of Chinese Internet abstraction culture primarily emerged in Baidu Tieba after 2010. As League of Legends became the most popular video game in China, the unique communication styles in communities like "Beiguo Ba" and "Kangya Ba" laid the foundation for the explosion of abstraction culture [7].

3.1.4. Deconstruction of Traditional Culture

Abstraction culture often deconstructs traditional culture and social phenomena to express reflections and critiques of reality. This cultural form is filled with satire and humor, reflecting the younger generation's questioning and re-examination of traditional values [6].

3.1.5. Impact of Platform Background Culture

Different Internet platforms cultivate different background cultures. For example, Kuaishou's "Laotie" culture has been prominent on the Chinese Internet since 2010 [8][9]. Kuaishou, primarily used by Northeast Chinese users, is known for its grassroots and down-to-earth content. The Northeast was once a prosperous industrial center of China, but it quickly declined after the rise of the South, leading to a generation of youth with a cynical and humorous attitude towards life. On Kuaishou, the "Zhenghuo" culture emerged, showcasing ordinary people's lives and unprecedented creative acts, providing a space for self-expression and emotional resonance, forming a unique online cultural phenomenon [9][10]. Additionally, the "reward" mechanism on live streaming platforms encourages streamers to attract viewers through humorous and attention-grabbing antics, increasing interactivity and entertainment value to earn more tips and income. This incentive model leads some

streamers to perform seemingly meaningless but highly engaging and amusing actions during their broadcasts.

3.2. The Establish of Abstraction Culture

In August 2015, Li Gan and Sun Xiaochuan, among others, established the Douyu 6324 Abstract Studio on the Douyu live streaming platform, marking a landmark in the formation of China's Internet abstraction culture [11]. The term "abstraction" became widely used on the Chinese Internet, evolving into a unique network phenomenon. This studio created and disseminated a distinctive Internet cultural phenomenon through live streaming and online communities, attracting many young users and forming a distinct subculture [12][13].

The Douyu 6324 Abstract Studio exemplifies the characteristics and potential of Internet abstraction culture through its operational model and dissemination methods. This phenomenon demonstrated the transition of this cultural form from spontaneous to organized and influential [13].

Meanwhile, grassroots streamers on the Kuaishou platform began an era known as "Henghuo," characterized by extreme, exaggerated, and impactful content from streamers like Dao Ge and Hu Ge. Active around 2016, these streamers quickly gained large fan bases through controversial live broadcasts. By performing extreme acts (e.g., biting into lighters), they attracted significant attention [14]. Despite the contentious nature of this content, its entertainment value and novelty drew many viewers. Kuaishou's algorithmic recommendations exposed more users to this extreme content, expanding its influence and forming a unique subculture within the Internet [15].

Between 2017 and 2018, Dao Ge, Hu Ge, and other "Henghuo" streamers reached their peak [14]. Their live broadcasts often attracted tens or even hundreds of thousands of viewers, garnering widespread social attention.

3.3. Regulation of Internet Platforms

In 2018, Kuaishou began large-scale rectification and strengthened content review management. Due to the emergence of a large amount of vulgar, extreme, and unhealthy content on the platform, Kuaishou received widespread attention and criticism from Chinese regulatory authorities and the public. As a result, extreme content creators like Dao Ge and Hu Ge gradually declined. On the other hand, in 2017, the Douyu 6324 Abstract Studio was banned for unintentionally promoting cult behavior online.

In 2019, as the influence of Baidu Tieba's "Beiguo Ba" and "Kangya Ba" grew, they became increasingly vulgar and extreme. As media exposure of these phenomena increased, "Beiguo Ba" and "Kangya Ba" were banned for containing inappropriate and violating content.

3.4. Current Situation

Since 2019, under strict policy control, China's Internet abstraction culture has diversified in content creation, becoming more commercialized and standardized. These changes have enriched abstraction culture's connotation, allowing it to develop within a broader social and cultural context.

Under this situation, major platforms like Bilibili, Douyin, and Kuaishou adjusted their content recommendation and review strategies. They optimized algorithms and content reviews to encourage higher-quality and healthier content creation [15]. Consequently, fans and users from groups like the 6324 Abstract Studio and Kangya Ba became active in other areas of the Chinese Internet, spreading their subcultural entertainment methods. This led more users to learn about previously banned rebellious activities, fueling further interest in abstraction culture.

Due to changes in platform review standards and audience demands, commercialization and professionalization trends in abstraction culture became more pronounced. Many Internet celebrities

and content creators signed with MCN (Multi-Channel Network) agencies, gaining professional support and monetization channels. These agencies helped with brand collaborations, live streaming sales, and other commercial activities, making abstraction culture not just an Internet phenomenon but a career choice [16]. Moreover, abstraction culture integrated more with other cultural forms, appearing in anime culture, sport, and music, creating a unique cultural phenomenon [17][18]. Figures like Dao Ge and Hu Ge were invited to anime conventions, and Li Gan, creator of the 6324 Abstract Studio, launched a popular football commentary channel on Bilibili, bringing abstraction culture into traditional sports.

Through interaction with mainstream culture, abstraction culture has achieved wider dissemination and increased social recognition and influence. Content creators are exploring new forms of expression and creative themes, moving towards more refined and in-depth content. Nowadays, video content incorporates more storylines and creativity, no longer relying solely on extremity and humor [17].

4.   Impact on the Macro Economy

Since 2019, Chinese Internet abstraction culture has significantly influenced consumption patterns and the emergence of new consumption scenarios. Initially an Internet subculture, abstraction culture gradually transformed into an influencer model with substantial economic impacts. Through unique content and dissemination methods, abstraction culture has attracted many young consumers willing to reward their favorite content creators, purchase peripheral products, and participate in offline activities. For example, live streaming and rewarding have become popular online consumption trends, with fans purchasing products recommended by Internet celebrities, directly driving e-commerce growth [19][20].

4.1.   Driving Digital Economy Development

Abstraction culture has brought huge impetus to digital content industries such as short videos, live broadcasts, online literature and animation, enabling these industries to expand rapidly. With the popularity of abstraction culture, a large number of content creators and MCN organizations have emerged, which not only increased the scale of digital content production, but also achieved significant improvements in quality. Internet platforms have also actively incorporated abstract cultural elements, successfully attracted more users, enhanced user stickiness, and thus increased the commercial value of the platform [21]. In addition, the development of abstraction culture has also promoted technological innovation, such as optimizing recommendation algorithms and live broadcast technology, which has injected new vitality into the overall progress of the digital economy [16] and encouraged the progress of the digital economy [22].

4.2.   Enhancing Innovation Capacity

Enterprises have significantly enhanced their innovation capabilities by integrating abstraction culture into product design and marketing strategies. Cross-border collaborations have resulted in joint products and customized services that attract young consumers. Incorporating abstraction culture makes brand marketing more creative and competitive [23]. To maintain their advantages, enterprises continuously launch new products and services tailored to young people's preferences through market research and user feedback.

4.3. Expanding Employment Opportunities

The rise of abstraction culture has fostered the development of various emerging professions, such as content creators and anchors, creating numerous employment opportunities. Many people now earn their living through video production, live streaming, and online writing. Concurrently, the demand for roles in MCN agencies, platform operations, and advertising marketing has increased, driving employment growth [20]. Additionally, the popularity of abstraction culture has opened new avenues for personal entrepreneurship, enabling many to achieve financial independence through independent ventures. This cultural development has injected new vitality into society, contributing to economic growth and employment expansion.

5.   Impact on Specific Industries

5.1. UGC and Social Media

Abstraction culture has given rise to various unique content creation forms, gaining wide attention and spreading across major platforms. Live broadcast platforms feature abstraction culture influencers who attract audiences with extreme and humorous behaviors, forming a highly interactive and engaging content ecology. Content creators often produce videos based on humor, satire, and spoofs, drawing many viewers, especially on platforms like Douyin, Kuaishou, and Bilibili. This unique and engaging content has fueled the rapid growth of UGC (user-generated content).

Media dissemination has been stimulated due to abstraction culture, with content becoming more diverse and interactive through social media and cross-platform sharing, expanding audience reach. From the maturation of Internet abstraction culture in 2016 to government intervention in 2019, these platforms experienced explosive user growth.

Table 1: The user growth data of Kuaishou, Douyin and Bilibili.

Platform	Year	Monthly Active Users (MAU) in Billions	Annual Growth Rate
Kuaishou	2016	1.5	25%
Kuaishou	2017	1.8	20%
Kuaishou	2018	2.2	30%
Kuaishou	2019	3	36%
Douyin	2016	0.6	100%
Douyin	2017	1.2	100%
Douyin	2018	2.5	50%
Douyin	2019	4	60%
Bilibili	2016	0.3	50%
Bilibili	2017	0.5	66.70%
Bilibili	2018	0.8	40%
Bilibili	2019	1.1	37.50%

Retrieved from the platforms annual financial report.

5.2. Advertising and E-commerce

Abstraction culture has also influenced advertising formats in China, making ads more engaging and relatable. Brands collaborate with content creators known for their humorous and satirical styles, seamlessly integrating ads into their content, making them feel more natural and acceptable to the audience.

For example, influencers like Hu Ge and Dao Ge use humor and extreme behaviors to attract viewers, creating a signature style for product promotions. Hu Ge has produced videos such as the "Spicy Strip Eating Challenge," while Dao Ge employs extreme scenarios to promote alcohol products. Their collaborations typically involve local snacks, beverages, and household items, aligning well with their humorous and extreme presentation styles. These local brands leverage the unique styles of these influencers to market their products, achieving sales conversions through humor and interaction, even though their methods are less systematic and professional compared to specialized influencers.

The combination of abstraction culture and live streaming has significantly boosted e-commerce development. Abstraction culture influencers make the shopping experience more entertaining and engaging, increasing viewers' desire to purchase and generating substantial revenue for platforms. Abstraction culture drives traffic to platforms and guides new consumption patterns, especially among younger consumer groups, forming a stable consumer base through social e-commerce and the fan economy.

Interactive advertising formats have become widely adopted on live streaming platforms, where brands collaborate with abstraction culture influencers for real-time ad promotions that attract large audiences [11]. This strategy ensures precise marketing and effective brand promotion while increasing exposure for influencers, boosting live stream traffic. Higher viewership often translates to more tips from the audience, benefiting both influencers and the platform, as the platform earns a commission from these tips, generating additional revenue.

Table 2: The advertising revenue data of Kuaishou, Douyin and Bilibili

Platform	Year	Advertising Revenue (in Billions CNY)	Annual Growth Rate
Kuaishou	2016	80	50%
Kuaishou	2017	120	50%
Kuaishou	2018	150	25%
Kuaishou	2019	200	33.30%
Douyin	2016	50	100%
Douyin	2017	100	100%
Douyin	2018	200	66.70%
Douyin	2019	350	75%
Bilibili	2016	20	150%
Bilibili	2017	50	150%
Bilibili	2018	50	66.70%
Bilibili	2019	80	60%

Retrieved from the platforms annual financial report

Table 3: The advertising revenue data of Kuaishou, Douyin and Bilibili

Platform	Year	Tips Revenue (in Billions CNY)	Annual Growth Rate
Kuaishou	2016	50	60%
Kuaishou	2017	80	60%
Kuaishou	2018	100	20%
Kuaishou	2019	150	50%
Douyin	2016	30	100%
Douyin	2017	60	100%
Douyin	2018	80	60%
Douyin	2019	120	50%
Bilibili	2016	10	200%
Bilibili	2017	30	200%
Bilibili	2018	30	50%
Bilibili	2019	50	66.70%

Retrieved from the platforms annual financial report

5.3. Tourist Propaganda

The Internet abstraction culture has significantly promoted tourism in Northeast China. The Northeastern dialect and its unique sense of humor are popular on online platforms. Many Internet celebrities from the Northeast showcase local culture through short videos and live streams, spreading the Northeastern dialect and its related culture nationwide, gaining affection and interest from a broad audience. This content enhances viewers' interest in the Northeast and stimulates their desire to experience the culture firsthand.

As Internet abstraction culture transitions from a subculture to mainstream influencer culture, Internet celebrities promote Northeast China's special events and festivals through short videos and live streams. Events like the Ice and Snow Festival and the Manchu Folk Festival attract attention and encourage more visitors. Additionally, food and winter scenery of Northeast China highlight local characteristics and attract potential tourists, further enhancing the region's tourism appeal [24].

Driven by Internet influencers and government efforts, the number of tourists in northeastern cities like Harbin has increased in recent years [25]. Many people choose the Northeast as a travel destination after seeing intriguing content about the region online. According to some tourism statistics, the number of tourists and tourism revenue in the Northeast region has shown a growing trend over the past few years.

Table 4: The number of tourists in China Northeast

Year	Number of Tourists (in millions)
2016	75.9
2017	81.5
2018	87.5
2019	92.7

Data from China Ministry of Culture and Tourism

6.   Discussion&Future Research Directions

In current discussions, This study have explored the theoretical foundations of Internet abstraction culture and its potential causes rooted in China's social development. Changes in user demographics, the rise of the Internet celebrity economy, and the formation of Internet subcultures are key factors driving the development of China's Internet abstraction culture. As an emerging force, Internet abstraction culture is redefining consumer behavior and market dynamics through unique content and dissemination methods. Various industries are innovating and interacting by integrating the characteristics of abstraction culture to attract more users and promote industry growth.

Internet abstraction culture has also significantly transformed social interaction and cultural expression. It has evolved from a subculture to a widespread phenomenon that affects mainstream culture and multiple industries, and this influence continues to grow.

6.1. Insufficient

Existing research on Internet abstraction culture is insufficient, primarily due to the lack of a unified definition. Current studies heavily rely on concepts from different scholars and personal experiences and observation reports of Internet users, leading to conceptual inconsistencies and ambiguity. This makes it challenging to accurately define "Internet Abstraction Culture" and its developmental stages. Additionally, theoretical research often lags behind practice. As Internet technologies and platforms rapidly change, the impacts of abstraction culture evolve, necessitating more timely observations and user interviews.

Moreover, case studies are relatively limited. Research mainly focuses on platforms like Douyin, Kuaishou, and Bilibili, lacking comprehensiveness and systematicity. This limitation hinders a deep understanding of the impact of Internet abstraction culture on society and the economy.

6.2. Dispute

Internet abstraction culture often manifests in illogical, absurd, and unconventional ways, challenging traditional cultural boundaries. Its societal and cultural impact is controversial. While fostering innovation, it may also divide and erode cultural traditions. The rebellious spirit of abstraction culture can be extreme and potentially destructive, negatively impacting social stability and cultural heritage.

Abstraction culture positively reflects social reality and meets public entertainment needs through humor and satire, highlighting social issues and prompting reflection. However, malicious abstraction culture is aggressive and absurd, harming overall societal quality. Excessive immersion in abstraction culture can detach people from real life, leading to negative consequences.

In Internet communities, abstraction culture spreads rapidly via new media platforms, causing information overload and authenticity issues, making it hard to distinguish and understand abstraction culture and other Internet information. People's acceptance of abstraction culture varies, with some finding pleasure and others feeling confused, leading to societal cultural divisions and barriers.

6.3. Challenge

6.3.1. Assessment of Long-term Impact

Although existing research shows that abstraction culture has a certain impact on the economy and society, the assessment of its long-term effects is still insufficient. For example, the long-term impact of Internet abstraction culture on traditional culture, social structure, and values has not been deeply explored.

6.3.2. Challenges of Policy and Regulation

Regulating and guiding the development of Internet abstraction culture poses challenges for policymakers and researchers. Solutions must be found to effectively prevent the spread of harmful content while promoting cultural innovation under the strict censorship mechanism of the Chinese Internet.

6.3.3. Technology-driven Cultural Change

With the rapid development of technologies like artificial intelligence, understanding how these technologies affect the production and dissemination of culture within the context of abstraction culture, their impact on the future evolution of Internet abstraction culture, and how to manage it in the future are critical issues worthy of further study.

6.3.4. Exploration of Business Models

The rapid spread of abstraction culture on social media has led to many new e-commerce marketing models, but most of them focus on live streaming and advertising. Whether there are more innovative and better methods is another area worthy of exploration.

6.4. Theoretical and Practical Implications

The concept of Internet abstraction culture has demonstrated significant influence both theoretically and practically. This cultural phenomenon allows us to view and understand cultural diversity, the dynamic evolution of digital society's cultural structure, and the stimulation of the e-business/economy from a new perspective.

Theoretically, the rise of Chinese Internet abstraction culture challenges traditional cultural understandings. It transcends regional and ethnic boundaries, expanding multicultural theory in digital form and providing a new perspective on cultural diversity and dynamic evolution. In China, abstraction culture shows how digital age culture permeates society, affecting lifestyles, values, and social structures, offering important case studies for sociological and communication research.

Practically, abstraction culture significantly impacts emerging industries like short videos, live streams, and e-commerce. It also fuels cultural industry creativity, promoting content innovation and dissemination, allowing excellent works to cross cultural boundaries and reach a wider audience.

Socially, Internet abstraction culture provides valuable insights for government and institutions in regulation and guidance. Studying abstraction culture helps formulate policies balancing cultural innovation and content quality. It aids the government in meeting diverse cultural needs, promoting social harmony and new job opportunities.

In summary, Internet abstraction culture is crucial in both theoretical research and practical application. It guides academic research and offers practical cases for economic development, cultural prosperity, and social governance. Understanding and utilizing this cultural phenomenon will continue to be a valuable exploration, presenting new challenges and opportunities for researchers and practitioners.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, Internet abstraction culture plays a pivotal role in reshaping China's digital landscape, driving innovation and economic growth while redefining social interactions and cultural expressions. Emerging from a subculture to a widespread phenomenon, it influences mainstream culture and various industries, reflecting the dynamic interplay between technology and society. However, the lack of a unified definition and comprehensive research framework poses challenges for accurately

understanding and leveraging this cultural phenomenon. As the digital environment continues to evolve, addressing issues such as content regulation, cross-cultural integration, and technological impact on cultural production becomes increasingly vital. Future research should focus on exploring new business models, assessing long-term impacts on traditional culture and social structures, and developing strategies to balance cultural innovation with quality content. By gaining deeper insights into Internet abstraction culture, policymakers and scholars can better navigate the challenges and opportunities it presents, fostering a more inclusive and innovative digital economy.

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