The Plagiarism and Borrowing of "Meme Culture" in Short Videos in the Digital Age

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Abstract: In the Internet age, the public is exposed to "memes" almost every day. As a form of subculture unique to the Internet age, the spread of each meme is almost viral. However, in short videos, many people blur the line between borrowing and plagiarism, and in many cases, short video producers and viewers confuse the line between plagiarism and borrowing. Through questionnaire survey and data analysis, this paper explores the public acceptance of "meme" in short videos and the threshold of the public's borrowing degree of "meme", and finally finds that the public's acceptance of borrowing of "meme" is high, but their attitude towards its borrowing degree is blurred, which is due to plagiarism due to the lack of importance of intellectual property rights, which involves the responsibility of many parties, and finally this paper, from the aspects of the society, platforms and so on and platforms, and puts forward relevant suggestions to solve this problem.

Keywords: meme, borrowing, plagiarizing, intellectual property right

1.   Introduction

"meme" is a unique form of subculture in the Internet era. The word "meme" first originated from the English word "meme", which usually refers to a video, a text or a picture that is rapidly copied and spread on the Internet. The renewal of memes is also very fast, and new memes are born on the Internet almost every day, and at the same time, the borrowing and plagiarism of memes have also become a compelling topic. The purpose of this paper is to introduce the birth and spread of "meme culture" to the public from the perspective of communication science, to explore the scale between borrowing and plagiarism of memes, to study the acceptance of the public for the plagiarism and borrowing of meme culture, to draw relevant conclusions based on the results of the questionnaire survey, and to give advice to future researchers on the dissemination of meme culture. Based on the results of the questionnaire survey, relevant conclusions are drawn, and suggestions for the dissemination of meme culture are given to future researchers on meme culture-related topics.

2.   Meme Culture

2.1. How a Meme was Born

The word meme originally originated from the book *The Selfish Gene* by the famous British scientist

Richard Dawkins. Its core meaning is that it refers to a cultural unit similar to a gene that plays a role in the process of biological evolution, which is constantly copied and imitated and spread among people. Dawkins defines a mimic as a small gene-like cultural unit that plays an important role in human society. The word comes from the Greek word "mimema", which means "that which is imitated". By analogizing the process of cultural transmission to the rules of biological evolution, Dawkins emphasizes the spread and influence of modalities in society.

The scope of modes is wide, covering religion, rumors, news, knowledge, and even slogans, proverbs, and jokes. Unlike the copying of genes in nature, the copying of modalities is not a completely accurate imitation process; it also includes an element of creativity and follows the principle of superiority in the process. In society, modalities are constantly spreading and evolving, influencing people's ideology and behavior [1].

Just as genes spread through different individuals in the gene pool, modes realize their own spread through imitation in the modal pool by jumping from one person's thought to another. When a modality takes root in an individual's mind, it is like a virus infecting a cell, changing the way that mind operates and becoming a medium for spreading the modality. Dawkins points out that, as with genes, not all modalities are successful in spreading; some will have a widespread impact, while others may quickly disappear. The ability of a modality to survive depends on three key factors: its persistence, its power to spread, and its fidelity to replication [2].

2.2. The Use of Memes in Short Videos

As far as China is concerned, short-video platforms such as "Tiktok" and "Qwai" have been integrated into the lives of the general public, and in foreign countries, ins and TikTok are essential "flavorings" in their daily lives. In foreign countries, ins and TikTok are also essential "spices" in their daily lives. When users use this kind of software, they can always brush the video of similar kernel in the same period of time, and the "memes" in these videos were initially born in the works of a certain creator, and then entered into the netizens' field of vision through the dissemination of netizens and the secondary creation of the unique professional "netroots" in the Internet era. Through the dissemination of netizens and the secondary creation of professional "netizens" unique in the Internet era, the "terriers" were initially born in the work of a creator, and then spread by netizens in reality to expand their influence, and finally formed a closed loop of "terriers" dissemination. As a result of these operations, "terriers" are often viral, and they not only influence the trend of the Internet but also affect the lives of the public [3-4].

3. The Line between Plagiarism and Borrowing

The first point to make clear is that in our law, the line between plagiarism and borrowing depends on originality and copyright ownership. Plagiarism is the complete or partial copying of another work without the author's permission and publishing it as one's own, which is a legal infringement. Borrowing, on the other hand, is taking another person's work or idea as a reference and absorbing the beneficial parts for use in one's own creation within a reasonable range, which is permissible. However, if borrowing goes beyond a reasonable range, such as excessive use without proper explanation, it may constitute plagiarism, but in this case, plagiarism and borrowing are difficult to define, and some works involving plagiarism use this to escape the law.

In the use of short video culture, it is difficult for users to define plagiarism and borrowing, and the extent to which users are able to accept "borrowing" has become an important issue under the vehicle of digital media [5-7].

4.   Public Acceptance of "Meme Culture" in Short Videos

4.1.   Research Methodology

In order to study the public acceptance of "meme culture" in short videos, this paper will adopt the form of questionnaire research. The questionnaire was designed and distributed by Questionnaire Star, with a valid sample size of more than 80 people, and the questionnaire collection time was one week. The questions of the questionnaire mainly focus on "the definition of plagiarism in the memes that the public comes into contact with in daily life" and "the threshold of the public's borrowing degree of meme culture", and whether the questionnaire is a valid answer is judged by whether or not the fill-in-the-blank questions are filled in with valid answers. The validity of the questionnaires was determined by whether valid answers were filled in the blanks. The data were analyzed by frequency analysis, which was used to study the distribution of the fixed categories, the frequency of choices and the percentage of choices, in order to visualize and analyze the frequency of choices for each option.

4.2.   Research Process

The following tables(Table 1 to Table 6) summarize the results based on a questionnaire survey of the general public using frequency analysis. The table consists of six sections, namely, basic information, views on memes, frequency of viewing and aversion thresholds for memes, views on plagiarism and borrowing of memes, types of memes favored by the general public, and the spread of memes.

Table 1: Basic information

Questionnaire Title	options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Your age	Under 18	5	5.00	5.00
	18-26 years	19	19.00	24.00
	26-35 years	39	39.00	63.00
	35-55 years	31	31.00	94.00
	55+	6	6.00	100.00
Your gender	Male	50	50.00	50.00
	Female	50	50.00	100.00
Your profession	students	13	13.00	13.00
	functionary	19	19.00	32.00
	office workers	43	43.00	75.00
	freelancer	23	23.00	98.00
	Unemployed or unemployed	2	2.00	100.00
How often do you usually use short video software	Rarely used	24	24.00	24.00
	occasional use	34	34.00	58.00
	regular use	42	42.00	100.00

Table 2: memes

Questionnaire Title	options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Do you think original stems are more appealing or secondary creations in short videos are more appealing	original	71	71.00	71.00
	secondary	29	29.00	100.00
Do you care about the originality of the stems in a short video?	pay no attention to	24	24.00	24.00
	I don't really care. It just looks good.	39	39.00	63.00
	a bit concerned	18	18.00	81.00
	very concerned	11	11.00	92.00
	very concerned	8	8.00	100.00
Do you brush up on a popular meme and look up its source?	be sure to	25	25.00	25.00
	will not (act, happen etc)	67	67.00	92.00
	maybe	8	8.00	100.00

Table 3: Homogenization of memes

Questionnaire Title	options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
How often do you see videos using the same "meme" on short video platforms over a period of time?	extremely high frequency	17	17.00	17.00
	Higher frequency	23	23.00	40.00
Do you think the content of short video platforms is homogenized at present?	Very serious	16	16.00	16.00
	very serious	39	39.00	55.00
	general	29	29.00	84.00
	Not too serious.	14	14.00	98.00
	not serious	2	2.00	100.00

Table 3: (continued)

How often do you get bored and disgusted when you brush up against the same type of terrier	10%	5	5.00	5.00
	20%	20	20.00	25.00
	30%	27	27.00	52.00
	40%	24	24.00	76.00
	50%	16	16.00	92.00
	60%	3	3.00	95.00
	70%	3	3.00	98.00
	80%	2	2.00	100.00
What's your attitude when you see homogenized content or when someone posts that they've been copied?	Will defend the person being plagiarized	12	12.00	12.00
	Will express his opinion	37	37.00	49.00
	No comment	39	39.00	88.00
	have nothing to do with me	12	12.00	100.00

Table 4: Meme borrowing and plagiarism

Questionnaire Title	options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
What level of borrowing of stems do you think is considered plagiarism in short videos?	Copying copy or pictures or videos exactly	34	34.00	34.00
	Highly similar content (e.g., using nearly identical copy)	33	33.00	67.00
	Content is more similar but different (e.g., same smiley setup but different kernel)	21	21.00	88.00
	There are some similarities in content (e.g. using the same bgm, laughs set to the same genre, etc.)	12	12.00	100.00

Table 5: Different elements of the meme

Questionnaire Title	options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Do you think there is a generation gap between different age groups?	yes	79	79.00	79.00
	no	21	21.00	100.00
Do you often feel disconnected from the meme culture?	Always out of touch.	5	5.00	5.00
	Often out of touch	14	14.00	19.00
	occasionally out of touch	58	58.00	77.00
	It's never been out of touch.	23	23.00	100.00
Foreign meme	unchecked	87	87.00	87.00
	decide upon a candidate	13	13.00	100.00
Military related	unchecked	71	71.00	71.00
	decide upon a candidate	29	29.00	100.00
Secondary Related	unchecked	80	80.00	80.00
	decide upon a candidate	20	20.00	100.00
fashion culture	unchecked	62	62.00	62.00
	decide upon a candidate	38	38.00	100.00
entertainment star	unchecked	60	60.00	60.00
	decide upon a candidate	40	40.00	100.00
Campus/Student Related	unchecked	93	93.00	93.00
	decide upon a candidate	7	7.00	100.00
Gaming/Sports	unchecked	81	81.00	81.00
	decide upon a candidate	19	19.00	100.00
Culture/politics	unchecked	72	72.00	72.00
	decide upon a candidate	28	28.00	100.00
concert	unchecked	59	59.00	59.00
	decide upon a candidate	41	41.00	100.00

Table 5: (continued)

cinematic	unchecked	56	56.00	56.00
	decide upon a candidate	44	44.00	100.00
Others, please add	unchecked	100	100.00	100.00

Table 6: Transmission of peduncles

Questionnaire Title	options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative percentage (%)
Do you think "Internet celebrity" is a good vehicle for spreading the culture of the meme?	yes	53	53.00	53.00
	mo	44	44.00	97.00
	maybe	3	3.00	100.00

4.3. Results of the Questionnaire

Table 1 shows that more than 30% of the samples that chose age chose "26-35 years". And the percentage of the sample of "35-55 years old" is 31.00%. The proportion of males and females in the gender sample is almost the same. In terms of occupation, more than 40% of the samples chose "office workers". In the question of "How often do you usually use short video software", the proportion of "often use" is 42.00%. Another 34.00% of the samples used it occasionally. From the above four questions, it can be seen that young and middle-aged people are the main team that swipe short videos, and the occupations that use short video software the most among the samples are office workers. Most people in the sample use short video software.

In the question of "Do you think original stems are more appealing or secondary creations in short videos are more appealing" (see Table 2), the proportion of people choosing "original" is 71.00%. However, in the question "Do you care about the originality of the stems in a short video?", most of the samples chose "not too much, as long as they look good", accounting for 39.00%. From the answers to these two questions, it is clear that a brand-new and original meme will arouse the public's interest more than a second creation, but the public seldom pays attention to whether a meme is original or not, as long as it can bring them joy in their daily life, so in the question of "Will you check the source of a popular terrain when you swiped it? Therefore, in the question "Do you brush up on a popular meme and look up its source?", the proportion of "will not" is 67.00%.

In the question "How often do you see videos using the same "meme" on short video platforms over a period of time?"(see Table 3), the proportion of those who chose "generally" was 43.00%. 43.00%. In the question "Do you think the content of short video platforms is homogenized at present?", more than 30% of the samples answered very seriously. In terms of how often you get bored or disgusted with the same type of stems, "30%" accounted for the highest proportion of 27.00%. In terms of what's your attitude when you see homogenized content or when someone posts that they've been copied, there are relatively more "no comments" in the sample, with a proportion of 39.00%. The answers to these four questions can prove that even if many people feel that the content they swiped is highly homogenized, they are unlikely to look deeply into the reasons or whether it is plagiarized.

In the question "What level of borrowing of stems do you think is considered plagiarism in short videos?"(see Table 4), the proportion of "Copying copy or pictures or videos exactly" is 34.00%, and

the proportion of samples with Highly similar content (e.g., using nearly identical copy) is 33.00%, which proves that the public is currently plagiarizing. 33.00%, which proves that the public's judgment between "borrowing" and "plagiarism" is relatively lax, which allows many plagiarized videos with the name of "borrowing" to continue to be active in the public's view. The definitions of "copy" and "plagiarism" are relatively lax, allowing many plagiarized videos to remain in the public's view.

From Table 5, More than 70% of the samples answered "yes" to the question "Do you think there is a 'meme' generation gap between different age groups?". In terms of the multiple choice question, "trendy culture", "movies" and "music" were the top three choices respectively. In the question "Do you often feel disconnected from the meme culture?", 58.00% of the respondents chose "occasionally out of touch". This shows that the "information cocoon" of the Internet is gradually forming, and people of the same age and hobbies basically brush the same kind of memes, meanwhile, it is difficult for the general public to come into contact with memes that are not of the same age and kernel.

From the distribution of (see Table 6) "Do you think "Internet celebrity" is a good vehicle for spreading the culture of the meme?", most of the samples are "Yes", the proportion is 53.00%. There are also 44.00% of the samples are "not". This can give us more suggestions for spreading from Internet celebrity.

5.　Conclusion

From the results of literature analysis and questionnaire research, "terrier culture" has undoubtedly been thoroughly integrated into the life of the public, but the boundary between plagiarism and borrowing of "terrier culture" is blurred, and the public has an ambiguous attitude towards plagiarism most of the time. The attitude of "terrier" is ambiguous, which leads to more and more plagiarism of "terrier culture" on the Internet. The root of the problem is that the lack of attention to intellectual property rights leads to rampant plagiarism. Relevant laws should be introduced to the public to clarify the boundaries of borrowing and plagiarism; In terms of platform supervision, review efforts should be intensified to nip plagiarism in the cradle and encourage original and non-plagiarized secondary creations; In terms of platform supervision, review efforts should be intensified to nip plagiarism in the cradle and encourage original and non-plagiarized secondary creations. People should strengthen self-discipline, report plagiarism promptly when exposed to plagiarism, and put an end to plagiarism. There are still many limitations in this paper, such as insufficient collection of information on legal knowledge and failure to analyze the trend of "meme" in foreign countries, which still needs to be explored in depth.

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