

# Seeking Labels and Rejecting Labels: The Identity Paradox and Platform Mediation in the MBTI and SBTI Youth Subcultures

Yanru Gong\*

*Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Harbin Institute of Technology, Harbin, 150001, China*

*\*Corresponding author: Yanru Gong.*

---

## Abstract

The MBTI personality test continues to heat up on the Chinese Internet, resulting in the SBTI meme phenomenon that deconstructs the MBTI classification system. On the one hand, there is the identity construction of “seeking labels”, and on the other hand, there is the deconstruction resistance of “rejecting labels”. The two tendencies appear at the same time in the same cultural field and transform each other. This paradox provides a unique observation perspective for understanding the youth subculture in the digital age. This article sorts out 17 core literatures from 2020 to 2026 and analyzes them along the three clues of “the dynamics of identity construction - memetic resistance - platform mediating mechanism”. The analysis shows that in terms of explaining the motivation of “seeking labels”, some studies have formed a multi-layered consensus from individual psychological compensation to structural dilemma response, but there are still differences on the effectiveness of resistance to “rejecting labels”. Some studies regard it as “ritual resistance”, and other studies judge it as “false resistance”. This article tries to use the “practical paradox” to summarize the transformation logic between “seeking labels” and “rejecting labels”. At the same time, it puts forward that “paradoxical co-optation” is an explanatory concept for understanding the mediating mechanism of the platform, in order to provide a discussable analytical framework for subsequent research.

## Keywords

MBTI, SBTI, youth subculture, platform infrastructure, meme-based resistance, practical paradox

---

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 From “Seeking Labels” to “Rejecting Labels”: The Cultural Paradox of the MBTI and Sbti Phenomena

Since 2020, the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) personality test has undergone a profound transformation on the Chinese Internet. It was originally based on Jung’s psychological type theory and was a professional assessment tool [1], but later evolved into a popular symbol for young people to build identity and carry out social interaction [2-3]. By 2023, the audience coverage of MBTI in China has exceeded 10%, the number of readings of Weibo topics has exceeded 3.9 billion, and the total number of members of 16 personality types groups on Douban has exceeded 690,000 [4]. However, the continuous warming of the MBTI

boom did not stop at the classification behavior of “seeking labels”, but gave rise to its own negative form. The SBTI meme, centered on homophonic puns and reaction images, emerged around 2025, and the young man began to “tear off” the personality label he had embraced enthusiastically in a joking way [5-6]. The evolution from MBTI to SBTI leads to a question worth asking: young people use classifications to fix their identity while dismantling this classification. How can these two seemingly contradictory tendencies occur in the same cultural field at the same time? Whether the meme practice of “rejecting labels” is dissolving the classification authority of MBTI, or reversely strengthening its topicality as a cultural hotspot? Existing studies have not given a clear answer to this.

This paradox is not only a cultural wonder at the empirical level, but also touches on the three core propositions of youth subculture research in the digital age: The tension between identity construction and classification system, the political effectiveness of meme resistance, and the role of platform infrastructure in subcultural generation and evolution. Based on the existing research of MBTI and SBTI, a multi-dimensional analysis has been carried out from the perspective of identity anxiety, social currency, structural dilemma, etc. in terms of the dynamic mechanism of “seeking labels” [2-3,7]; In terms of the practical pattern of “rejecting labels”, deconstruction techniques such as homophonic puns and reaction images and derivative creations have been identified [5,8]. Some scholars call it “ritual resistance” [9], and some scholars understand it as “intergenerational mentality with both critical and defensive characteristics” [10]; In terms of the role of the platform, the shaping of MBTI identity of algorithm recommendations [11] and the promotion of the spread of memes by platform interaction rituals [12-13] have also been preliminarily discussed. However, there are still three obvious shortcomings in the existing research. First, “seeking labels” and “rejecting labels” are basically discussed separately as two independent topics, and few studies have incorporated the two into a unified analysis framework to examine their intrinsic relationship. Second, most of the analysis remains at the textual level, and the platform's economic logic, such as its data monetization mechanisms and attention allocation rules, has not been examined as a core variable. Third, the applicability of the resistance-co-optation paradigm of the Birmingham School in the digital age also lacks a positive academic response [15].

This article tries to work on the above gaps, using the platform infrastructure as a mediating variable, using the “practical paradox” as an analysis tool, and integrating “seeking labels” and “rejecting labels” into the same analysis framework. The article first explains the literature source and research methods, and then defines three core concepts: platform infrastructure, practical paradox and paradoxical co-optation. Then it examines the dynamic mechanism of “seeking labels”, the effectiveness controversy of “rejecting labels” and the mediating role of the platform in the dual movement. Finally, it summarizes the research findings and points out the limitations and future direction of the research.

## 1.2 Data Sources, Research Methods, and the Definition of Core Concepts

This study conducted a combined search in the CNKI and Wanfang databases. The keywords include “MBTI”, “youth subculture”, “identity”, “SBTI”, “meme” and “platform”, with a time span from January 2020 to July 2026. There are four screening criteria: the research object is directly MBTI or SBTI, focusing on youth groups, published in academic journals or master's thesis, and the content involves identity or subcultural practice or platform communication mechanism. In addition, an SSCI journal article [1] and a CSSCI article [10] studying the “X” meme were also supplemented. Finally, 17 studies were included, including 12 CSSCI source journals, 1 SSCI journal, 1 master's thesis, 2 core journals of Peking University, and 1 newspaper article. The proportion of literature in the past five years (2021-2026) is about 88%. This article adopts a combination of literature review and theoretical analysis to distill core issues and differences on the basis of combing out existing research, and tries to put forward a conceptual framework for subsequent discussion.

The three core concepts involved in this article are defined as follows. Platform infrastructure refers to the architectural functions of social media platforms as the material infrastructure of subcultural practices, covering algorithm recommendation, tag aggregation, interactive functions, data collection and commercialization mechanisms [11,13]. The practical paradox means that in the process of pursuing a certain goal, the actor's behavior may reverse the negative form of the goal. In the specific context of this article, young people seek identity certainty by “seeking labels”, but the full development of this classification behavior may give rise to the deconstruction impulse of “rejecting labels”. Paradoxical co-optation refers to a possibility that is different from the traditional “resistance-co-optation” pattern, that is, the resistance behavior and the co-optation process may occur at the same time; Under the role of platform mediation, every meme

practice of “rejecting labels” contributes data traffic to the platform, so “resistance” itself may constitute “co-optation” material. At present, this concept is still in the explanatory category and needs to be tested by subsequent empirical research.

## **2. Three Explanatory Frameworks for the “Seeking Labels” Phenomenon and Their Inherent Limitations**

Regarding the motivation mechanism for young people to actively seek personality classification in the MBTI boom, the existing literature generally gives three levels of explanation. The first is the level of psychological compensation, which emphasizes the relief function of labels on identity anxiety [2]. The second is the level of social interaction, highlighting the exchange value of labels as social currency [3,7]. The third is the level of cultural transformation, focusing on the transformation process of MBTI from psychological discourse to popular cultural symbols [1,9]. Three explanatory approaches focus on different things, but they all point to a core judgment: MBTI today has surpassed the initial function of personality testing and become a cultural resource for young people to establish their identity. However, most studies only explain where the thrust of “seeking labels” comes from, but rarely trace the consequences of “seeking labels” after it is fully developed. This question constitutes the starting point of the analysis in this section. The following examines how tags are used as strategies to deal with identity anxiety, how the interest-based communities support the construction of digital identity, and whether it is possible to subvert oneself after the classification behavior is fully developed.

### **2.1 Two Explanatory Approaches to Labels as a Strategy for Coping with Identity Anxiety**

Regarding the driving logic of “seeking labels”, the existing literature has roughly formed two complementary explanation paths: one focuses on individual psychology and social interaction strategies, and the other focuses on macrosocial structure and cultural context changes. The analysis at the individual level usually starts from the subjective needs of young people, that is, they need to be seen, classified and accepted. Li Qifeng and Fu Qianying identified three motivations behind the MBTI boom: identity construction, social identity, and social currency. They believe that MBTI labels meet the composite needs of youth self-anchoring, group belonging and impression management at the same time [2]. Sun Jinyu explained the social motives of young people “from ‘not being defined’ to ‘seeking definition’” from the perspective of communication difficulties, technical tension and institutional contradictions [3]. With the help of Giddens’ theory of self-identity, Chen Xinmin and Cao Chang further pointed out that under the conditions of “late modernity”, the clear role given to young people by traditional society has disintegrated, and “uncertainty” and “risk” have become the background of daily life [14]. Wang Shuixiong’s perspective is more positive. He understands the MBTI boom as a kind of “subcultural protest” - young people do not passively bear anxiety, but express their demands to society through personality tests, demanding to break the single performance evaluation logic [7]. Chen Feini cut into the sociology of knowledge and believes that the reason why MBTI can be accepted by young people as a “source of knowledge that guides self-cognition and social interaction” is that it has completed two transformations on social media: from professional discourse to popular text, and then internalized from popular text to personal subjective reality [13].

Based on the above research, it can be judged that “seeking labels” is not just entertainment, but a strategic behavior for young people to deal with identity anxiety. However, there is a remarkable difference in explaining the distribution of the center of gravity: one part of the study focuses on the “push” effect of structural dilemmas on young people, while the other part emphasizes the active response of young people to the social structure. The essence of this difference lies in the different presuppositions of the “youth-society” relationship, that is, the former regards young people as the bearers of the social structure, while the latter as active participants. The two explanations have their own reasonableness, but neither of them fully responds to a question: whether “seeking labels” relieves identity anxiety while creating new sources of anxiety. The establishment of the interest-based communities can be understood as an extension of the socialization of this motivation. Young people not only need to “find” their own label, but also need to be identified in the group of the same label. Li Junxin and Zhan Mingyu used the symbol narrative framework to analyze and found that young people carried out the narrative practice of “different symbol separation” and “identical classification” through MBTI to establish cognitive group boundaries. They summarized this as “type text persistence” and believed that MBTI was essentially a game of the self [4]. The participatory observation (interviews with 24

young people) carried out by Chen Xinmin and Cao Chang in 16 MBTI groups of Douban further provided empirical support: young people experienced the cycle of “recalling their own experience - comparing with the experience of others - verifying test results - turning into reality for consolidation” in the group, completing the identity construction process from “concern” to “self-confirmation” to “continuous attention” [14]. Both studies show that the interest-based communities not only provide emotional support, but more importantly, they allow individuals to grasp a certain certainty in the fluid digital life through the mechanism of self-identity with a given category. However, the shift toward interest-based communities also brings a notable consequence, that is, the function of MBTI gradually shifts from “self-recognition” to “self-performance”.

## 2.2 How the Full Development of Categorization Gives Rise to Forces That Undermine Itself

The above research together points to a deeper question: once the “label seeking” is fully developed, it is possible to create its negative form in turn. Although Li Qifeng and Fu Qianying reminded that “everything can be MBTI” may be solidified as a cognitive cage and stereotype, they did not have an in-depth discussion on it [2]. The contribution of Chen Xinmin and Cao Chang lies in making a more systematic diagnosis of the consequences of this identity. They summarized four risks: shallowness, that is, individuals’ understanding of themselves is compressed into superficial label characteristics; regulation and training, that is, MBTI becomes the “Big Other” in Foucault’s sense, and individuals shape their own behavior according to the expectations of the type label; Confusion, that is, the inconsistency between the test results and self-perception leads to cognitive rupture; suspicion, that is, MBTI is used as a social criterion to judge others, and individuals who are classified as “unpopular” type produce self-denial [14]. The four risks are connected to form a complete paradoxical chain: the more young people rely on MBTI to define themselves, the deeper they are bound by it. Li Junxin and Zhan Mingyu touched on the same problem from the perspective of the construction of the symbolic self, that is, “type text persistence” strengthens the boundary of separation, making people more inclined to accept the same kind and exclude the same kind, which ultimately leads to “the ‘cage’ of the non-personal circle becoming the ‘cage’ of their self-limiting” [4]. The negative meaning of this sentence is equally important: the persistence of the type text itself is creating a cage.

Based on the above literature, a structure that has not been clearly pointed out before has emerged: the original intention of young people’s “seeking labels” is to anchor self-identity in the fluid modernity, but once the classification behavior is pushed to the extreme, the “type text persistence” it relies on creates new boundaries and constraints. That is to say, the means of alleviating identity anxiety have become a new source of anxiety after reaching the extreme. This article tries to summarize this structure as a “practical paradox”, and “seeking labels” and “rejecting labels” may not be two successive events, but two forms of expression of the same set of cultural logic: the former seeks certainty by classification, and the latter responds to the oppression brought by classification by deconstruction. However, although the existing research points out the paradoxical nature of the “identity crisis”, it does not continue to ask a key question: Since classification behavior systematically creates an identity crisis, why don’t young people directly give up MBTI, but create SBTI to reverse the operation? This gap constitutes the starting point for the analysis of the next section of this article.

## 3. Debates over the Effectiveness of “Rejecting Labels” Memes and the Sources of Disagreement

Regarding the manifestation and political effectiveness of SBTI memes as “anti-classification” practices, existing studies have formed a certain consensus in terms of morphological depiction, but there are significant differences on the question of “whether this behavior constitutes effective resistance”. Around SBTI and its similar “X” memes [10], the existing research is roughly divided into two positions: one positions it as a “ritual resistance” for young people to deal with identity anxiety [9], and the other determines that it is only an “emotional performance” that belongs to “false resistance” [6]. This section follows the order of “Diffusion Mechanism-Symbolic Method-Efficacy Assessment” and aims to reveal the root cause of the difference.

### 3.1 The Diffusion Mechanism, Symbolic Strategies, and Identity-Building Functions of SBTI

In terms of its manifestations, Wang Ping and Li Boran analyzed the homophonic puns, reaction images, derivative creations, and community chain meme practices of SBTI, and believed that its popularity stemmed

from the young people's humorous reaction to the rigidity of MBTI classification [5]. Zhou Lijuan and Pan Yu supplemented the argument from the perspective of meme dissemination that the communication logic of "replication-mutation" itself provides decentralized symbol dissolution conditions for "rejecting labels" [8]. The KUFAT model (Known, Usable, Functional, Appropriate, Triggered) proposed by Williams and Wu when studying MBTI's "cultural meme" to explain the rapid spread of MBTI on Chinese social platforms [1] is also applicable to the analysis of SBTI's "anti-meme". From the empirical level, the diffusion path of SBTI on the social platform is in line with many characteristics of the KUFAT model: it targets the MBTI classification system, can be used for social interaction, can carry emotional expression, conforms to the algorithmic recommendation logic of the platform, and is continuously promoted by hot topics. This means that "rejecting labels" and "seeking labels" share the same platform-based diffusion mechanism. However, it is precisely because of the consistency of communication logic that the question of whether SBTI is also easy to be taken over by platform algorithms has not been answered in existing studies.

At the level of symbolic mechanisms, homophonic puns, reaction images, and chain meme practices have been repeatedly confirmed as the core techniques of "rejecting labels". When studying the short video of "cat meme", Wang Xuan and Yezi found that the platform promoted memes out of the circle through algorithms, and at the same time implemented "co-optation" of creative activities by lowering the technical threshold [16]. This logic also applies to SBTI, that is, the low-threshold design of one-click generation test and one-click sharing significantly reduces the cost of participation. Chen Aimei et al. introduced Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" when analyzing the "X" memes, and understood the practice of such memes as a "differential space": it accommodates contradictions and deviations and carries social criticism, but does not try to establish a new classification system, but dismantles those idealized symbols highly packaged by the medium through parody and exaggeration [10]. In this sense, "rejecting labels" is first and foremost a deconstruction operation at the symbolic level, and its effectiveness depends on the criteria for judging "resistance" itself.

### **3.2 Evaluating the Effectiveness of "Rejecting Labels": The Debate Between Ritual Resistance and Pseudo-Resistance**

Whether the symbolic deconstruction constitutes "effective resistance" is the core of the difference. Zhou Chunfa positioned the deconstruction practice of MBTI as a kind of "ritual resistance", that is, young people are still willing to participate in collective decoding knowing the ambiguity of the test and completing symbolic resistance through the closed loop of "test-sharing-creation-consumption" [9]. Chen Aimei et al. also admitted that there was a motive for disenchantment, but at the same time pointed out that it had the color of "defense" [10]. In contrast, Liu Yingjie and Hu Gang used the "label cage" as an analogy and believed that SBTI's self-mockery was indeed a stress response to the state of being "imprisoned", but the problem was that it stayed at the level of "emotional performance" and did not really touch the existing power structure, so it could only be regarded as "false resistance" [6]. The difference between the two positions is rooted in the different measures of "resistance": one position believes that the subversion at the symbolic level has constituted resistance, while the other position requires the actual changes at the level of power structure to count. It is worth noting that neither position seriously discussed the variable of the platform, that is, when every operation of "rejecting labels" leaves data traces on the platform, whether the material structure of the platform will affect the actual direction of resistance, which needs to be further studied.

Chen Aimei et al.' analysis of the "X-study" meme provides a more theoretically flexible framework. They introduced Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" and positioned meme practices as a "heterotopic space" that really exists in the social structure, that is, it accommodates contradictions, presents deviations, and carries social criticism. The study points out that such memes do not try to build an alternative classification system, but disintegrate the idealized symbols highly packaged by the media through parody, exaggeration and reinterpretation [10]. In this sense, "rejecting labels" is first and foremost a deconstruction practice at the symbolic level.

## **4. The Platform'S Dual Mediating Role and the Mechanism of Paradoxical Co-optation**

Regarding the role of the platform in the two ends of "seeking labels" and "rejecting labels", the existing literature has touched on the two aspects of algorithm-enhanced classification and community empowerment deconstruction respectively, but the two have not been included in a unified framework for examination. This

section discusses from three levels: how algorithm recommendations can strengthen personality classification cognition (4.1), how platform interaction provides conditions for deconstruction practice (4.2), and how attention logic forms a possible co-optation channel between the two ends (4.3).

#### **4.1 Algorithmic Recommendation and the Reinforcement of Personality Classification Cognition**

Cao Gaoyuan linked the platform algorithm with MBTI social identity, pointing out that the tag aggregation and recommendation mechanism strengthens the classification cognition of MBTI at the technical level [11]. Chen Feini added a more detailed mechanism from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge: the “labeling” of Xiaohongshu accurately distributes MBTI content according to the browsing, liking and commenting behavior of users. At the same time, through the community-based dissemination, fans gather based on interest and constantly update MBTI knowledge in the collision of “collective wisdom” [13]. The common point of the two studies is that the tags “found” by users are not the result of completely independent selection, but the product of algorithm sorting, algorithmic weighting and community mechanism joint screening. This means that the initiative of “seeking labels” has been ceded by part of the platform architecture from the beginning, and the user’s active search behavior actually occurs within the preset option set of the platform.

#### **4.2 Platform Interaction as a Condition for Deconstructive Practices**

After Qin Jianpei et al. used the interactive ritual chain to analyze the Xiaohongshu platform, they found that the functions of commenting, forwarding, derivative creation and other functions provided conditions for collective interaction for the deconstruction practice of SBTI [12]. Ma Zhonghong and Hu Liangyi pointed out in a more general sense that the “click button” on the interactive interface of the platform is similar to non-human actors, and users’ inadvertent operations can push private domain topics into the public domain [17]. These studies show that the “connection” function of the platform has incorporated every operation of the user into the quantifiable data track, and “rejecting labels” and “seeking labels” share the same set of underlying logic of datafication. That is to say, the platform’s deconstruction empowerment of “rejecting labels” and the classification enhancement of “seeking labels” are the same in terms of technical architecture.

#### **4.3 The Logic of Platform Traffic as a Potential Channel of Co-optation**

The above two paths capture the different roles of the platform in the bipolar movement, but they do not ask whether the business logic behind the platform also constitutes a kind of co-optation. Judging from the operating logic of the platform economy, whether users are testing MBTI or making SBTI diagrams, every click, comment and forwarding is recorded as quantifiable data by the platform. From the perspective of business logic, this constitutes an implicit transformation mechanism. There is no essential difference between the user’s “resistance” behavior and daily consumption behavior at the data level.

This inference constitutes a noteworthy contrast with the experience of subculture “reverse co-optation” revealed by existing studies. According to the research of Zhang Meilan and Zhong Ying, because two-dimensional fans have a relatively organized cultural production and circulation system (reverse cultural export, self-built production and circulation, active self-co-optation), their relationship with the dominant culture is no longer completely passive “co-optation” [18]. SBTI, on the other hand, has neither a hierarchical structure nor written norms. It is mainly composed of a large number of individualized and improvised jokes. In contrast to the two, “degree of organization” may be an important factor affecting the effectiveness of subcultural resistance - when resistance appears in the form of dispersion and fragmentation, its ability to negotiate with the platform may be relatively limited. Of course, this judgment is currently only based on the comparative observation of the two groups of cases, and needs more empirical research to be tested. Wang Minzhi once pointed out that the subculture in the digital age “is not more divided and confrontation between subjects, but bridged and cooperated”, and the traditional framework of “resistance/co-optation” should be re-examined [15]. Judging from the empirical phenomenon presented in the existing literature, the relationship between resistance and co-optation may be more complicated than the time pattern of “first resistance and then co-optation”, or it can be understood as a co-temporal structural relationship.

## 5. Conclusion

### 5.1 Theoretical Contributions and Main Findings

This article sorts out 17 core documents of MBTI and SBTI youth subculture research from 2020 to 2026, following the three clues of “the dynamics of seeking labels - the controversy over the effectiveness of rejecting labels - the mediating mechanism of the platform”. Existing research suggests several notable directions. At the dynamic level, “seeking labels” is a coping strategy between identity anxiety and structural dilemmas, but after it is fully developed, it may give birth to the seeds of deconstructing itself. At the deconstruction level, as a memetic resistance, there is a tension between symbolic subversion and emotional performance. The root of the difference lies in the different standards of “resistance” itself. At the platform level, the classification function of the algorithm and the deconstruction conditions of the community may exist at the same time, but whether this constitutes a “paradoxical co-optation” needs to be tested by more empirical research.

Based on the above review, this article puts forward three analytical ideas for further discussion. First, the “practical paradox” can be used as a conceptual tool to understand the structural transformation relationship between “seeking labels” and “rejecting labels”. Second, “the degree of organization” may be an important variable affecting the effectiveness of subcultural resistance. Third, as an explanatory concept, “paradoxical co-optation” can be used to understand the mediating mechanism of the platform in the dual cultural movement, but its applicable boundaries and conditions need to be tested and modified by subsequent research.

### 5.2 Practical Implications

The review of this article has certain reference significance for understanding the generation and evolution of youth subcultures in the digital age. First of all, the tension between “seeking labels” and “rejecting labels” shows that it is not appropriate to simply understand the MBTI boom as “blindly following the trend”, nor to directly judge the SBTI meme as “effective resistance” or “purely performative”. The transformation relationship between the two is worth further examination. Secondly, the role of the platform suggests that the subcultural practice in the digital age has always been embedded in the technical framework of the platform, and the study of youth subculture cannot only be limited to the meaning analysis at the text level. Thirdly, the variable “degree of organization” provides a possible analytical cut for the evaluation of the effectiveness of subcultural resistance.

### 5.3 Research Limitations and Future Directions

The limitations of this article are mainly reflected in three aspects. First, in terms of international literature on platform research, this article only quotes Williams and Wu [1], and fails to include the discussion of van Dijck, Poell, de Kloet and other scholars on the relationship between platform infrastructure and subculture. The “platform society” analysis framework proposed by scholars such as Van Dijck and Poell, as well as de Kloet’s empirical research on the relationship between the platform and Chinese youth culture, are of great theoretical value for an in-depth understanding of how the materiality of the platform shapes subcultural practice. This limitation limits the depth of dialogue between the “platform materiality” argument in this article and the international academic community, and follow-up research can be expanded in this direction. Second, the discussion of the platform co-optation and co-optation mechanism is mainly based on literature deduction, which lacks the support of first-hand empirical data. Third, the platform analysis focuses on Xiaohongshu, and the differentiation mechanism of TikTok, Weibo and other platforms has not been developed.

Follow-up research can further investigate under what conditions the platform algorithm may be reversed from a mechanism of co-optation to a resource for resistance, carry out cross-platform comparisons to examine how the recommendation mechanism and community structure of different platforms affect classification and deconstruction, and use computational communication methods to test the Granger causal relationship between SBTI popularity and MBTI popularity, providing an empirical basis for the proposition of “paradoxical co-optation”.

## References

- [1] Williams, J. P., & Wu, S. (2025). The MBTI as a cultural meme, its diffusion on Chinese social media, and its significance for millennials' and Gen-Z's selves and identities. *Symbolic Interaction*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.70012>
- [2] Li, Q., & Fu, Q. (2025). *Youth social carnival: The internal logic and risk review of the MBTI craze*. *Journal of Hubei University of Economics (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, 22(3), 30–35.
- [3] Sun, J. (2025). *From "refusing to be defined" to "seeking definition": The manifestations, causes, and guidance strategies of the contemporary youth MBTI craze*. *Journal of Southwest University of Science and Technology (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, 42(5), 91–98.
- [4] Li, J., & Zhan, M. (2026). *Symbolic self-narratives and in-group interaction among contemporary youth based on MBTI*. *Future Communication*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.13628/j.cnki.zjcmxb.20260121.001>
- [5] Wang, P., & Li, B. (2026). *The representational patterns and diffusion drivers of SBTI memes*. *Contemporary Youth Research*, (2), 78–86.
- [6] Liu, Y., & Hu, G. (2026). *"The cage of labels": The formation mechanism, risks, and governance of the SBTI youth subculture—Observations on youth emotional performance from MBTI testing to SBTI self-mockery*. *Journal of Youth Studies*, (3), 103–111.
- [7] Wang, S. (2024). *Behind the popularity of MBTI personality tests: Youth mentality and social structural adjustment*. *People's Tribune*, (6), 78–81.
- [8] Zhou, L., & Pan, Y. (2025). *Labelized social interaction under constraint: Alienation and critical reflections on MBTI meme dissemination*. *Journalism & Communication*, (23), 56–58.
- [9] Zhou, C. (2025, August 30). *A cultural sociological decoding of the MBTI craze*. *Chinese Social Sciences Today*.
- [10] Chen, A., Zhang, L., & Shu, Y. (2026). *Humor, resistance, and reflection: Symbolic interaction and identity construction in youth "X Studies" memes*. *China Youth Study*, (3), 15–23.
- [11] Cao, G. (2026). *Algorithms as platform will: The technological construction of users' MBTI-based social identity*. *Voice & Screen World*, (4), 98–100.
- [12] Qin, J., Wang, X., & Zhao, Y. (2023). *The communication mechanism of MBTI memes from the perspective of interaction ritual chains: A case study of Xiaohongshu*. *New Media Research*, 9(8), 45–52.
- [13] Chen, F. (2025). *MBTI as "reality": A study of knowledge production and dissemination on Xiaohongshu* (Master's thesis, Shanghai Normal University).
- [14] Chen, X., & Cao, C. (2024). *Identity construction or identity crisis? The popularity of MBTI and youth self-identity*. *Contemporary Youth Research*, (6), 27–39.
- [15] Wang, M. (2020). *Beyond the myth of subculture theory: A discussion of online subcultures in the digital age*. *Cultural Studies*, (4), 50–62.
- [16] Wang, X., & Ye, Z. (2024). *Platform-driven stylistic changes in meme culture: A case study of "Cat Meme" short videos*. *China Media Technology*, 31(10), 22–26.
- [17] Ma, Z., & Hu, L. (2021). *Infinite connectivity: The "breaking-out-of-the-circle" phenomenon of subcultures under the technological logic of online platforms*. *Journalism and Writing*, (6), 21–29.
- [18] Zhang, M., & Zhong, Y. (2021). *Self-preservation: Anti-co-optation among contemporary ACG fandoms*. *Journal of Hubei University (Philosophy and Social Sciences)*, (5), 69–78.

## Funding

This research received no external funding.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **Acknowledgment**

This paper is an output of the science project.

### **Copyrights**

Copyright for this article is retained by the author (s), with first publication rights granted to the journal. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).