

# Study On the Influence of Animation Films and Television on Meme Culture Research

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**Abstract.** Richard Dawkins first introduced the concept of the meme in his seminal work, "The Selfish Gene." Dawkins drew analogies between genes and memes in terms of their roles in evolutionary reproduction and cultural transmission. Cultural inheritance, according to Dawkins, provides a mechanism for individuals to convey social memories and cultural ideas. Originally, memes were defined as "units of cultural transmission" that embody an infusion of art and culture, projecting ideas and stimulating critical thought. In contemporary society, the propagation of memes has expanded beyond their initial definition. They are now disseminated through various mediums, including but not limited to religion, rumors, speeches, gestures, news, knowledge, ideas, habits, customs, and slogans. Memes have become a predominant form of communication, allowing individuals to express opinions and convey messages effectively. This article's research focuses on the intersection of meme culture and the animation/film industry. It explores how memes, initially conceptualized as units of cultural transmission, have evolved into a pervasive mode of communication and cultural expression in the digital age. The study investigates the utilization of memes within animation and film to reflect and influence audience reactions, thereby enhancing the understanding and dissemination of cultural elements on a global scale. By examining this dynamic interplay, the research aims to elucidate the role of memes in shaping contemporary cultural landscapes and their impact on the animation and film industries.

**Keywords:** Influence; Animation Films; Television; Meme Culture.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

The meme was first created in the book written by Richard Dawkins. Dawkins's Analogies of genes into evolutionary reproduction rules in biology are similar to the meme. Cultural inheritance is a "way for people to transmit social memories and cultural ideas to each other. The meme was first defined as the picture within the words. It is an infusion of art and culture used to project ideas about its target to projector critical thought. But now, memes are propagated in different ways, which can be done through but not limited to religion, rumors, speeches, gestures, news, knowledge, ideas, habits, customs, and even slogans. Memes nowadays are gradually becoming one of the main ways people communicate and express their opinions. Other researchers reckoned that the meme is a viral phenomenon because memes can continuously evolve through a process of variation, mutation, competition, and inheritance to materialize as various diffusions. Nowadays, according to the popularization of the Internet, there are over 5.3 billion Internet users; in 2023, the Internet will be a better channel for propagating memes. Animation and film work are an important part of contemporary popular culture and have a broad global audience. Most animation fans are internet users who spread cultural elements rapidly. A fun fact pointed out is that memes can be comments or estimations of the audience. These are the representations for these animation products. Because the memes intuitively reveal the actual feelings of the audience in this animated film and television product, the correlation between advertisements and memes is blunt and most trusted and can be worth researching.

Zackary first discussed the anime creation on YouTube, "The Anime Zone," which is simply like a rapid-fire barrage of dry humor and slideshow images chock full of inside jokes and pop culture

references [1]. Then, within the development phase, the anime zone becomes more like a giant community. According to YouTube, this platform created a new developing culture in the whole world, not only just in Japan; the anime culture became more popular with the sign of pop culture, further strengthening the ties between Japan and other countries” via the promotion of Japanese cultural products. This research pointed out that the creation of the meme cannot be left with the cultural creation, as shown by group research by Christian et al. [2]. The Memeology researchers pointed out that during the COVID-19 pandemic, memes were heavily produced because people were always locked at home [3]. The active users of various social media platforms would consider memes a source of online entertainment and humor during the pandemic, which gives them the opportunity to create memes. Kayali and Altuntas found that the memes and the lesson teaching to the Turkish students can help these students remember unfamiliar vocabulary more easily within the memes [4]. Also, the researchers can use memes in classroom activities to encourage the student’s proficiency level. From the group work of Wenjie Lo et al., researchers revealed that Internet memes are currently an emerging field [5]. Lots of brands are trying to enhance the public’s image of the brand through memes, including humor, brand interaction, and prestige.

On the Internet, these brands can more easily listen to consumers’ suggestions and try to use humor way to increase the heat of discussion over this research. It can also be used as a reference for anime or film projects. Between the connection of meme culture and anime teleworks, although memes cannot replace the ability of comments and advertisements, they also create a new area or the opportunity to create a new vision for audiences to know about this film or teleworks. Memes are more friendly and easy for Internet users to understand. Also, given the widespread use of the Internet, as shown in the research below, the meme culture with the animation teleworks business is more focused on the audience’s reaction.

## 1.2. Research Context

Based on the above content, the research in this article focuses on the intersection of meme culture and the animation/film industry. It explores how memes, originally conceptualized by Richard Dawkins as units of cultural transmission, have evolved into a pervasive form of communication and cultural expression in the age of the Internet. The study examines how memes are utilized within animation and film to reflect and influence audience reactions, enhancing the understanding and spread of cultural elements globally.

## 2. Case Description

The basic introduction of the relationships between anime and memes is mostly like regular comments from people, such as the audience or product watchers, so that they may give different opinions. These factors may also influence people who have not watched the anime. The reason why anime can be the first thing to be researched in this paper is that the group of anime nowadays are mainly teenagers or millennials. The elder animations are not enough, or very few of them have themselves memes. Also, anime memes produce a lot of business value for them. A classic example of a famous animation meme is “Detective Conan,” which represents the inner lighting eyeglasses that are so magic. Many audiences have created peripheral products that are like real lighting eyeglasses. Also, other anime can use these memes as references, like the classic anime “NEON GENESIS EVANGELION” the father of the main character, IKARI SHINJI, when he is a conductor in combat to the monsters, always Put his hands together against his chin then, and his eyeglasses are continuing lighting. This behavior creates humor and attraction in the audience. Different anime with the memes culture combination may take the previously unimagined effect to the anime with a turnaround in public opinion. Also, meme creation can exactly lengthen the age of anime because people are mainly focused on the quality of it and ignore the meme effect. People do not want to forget the existence of this anime, so after it is published as a serial, people create memes to give the

new meaning that can form the memes of this anime. Other people can doubt the name of anime, and this can also lengthen the age of anime to bring the heat to it.

### 3. Analysis of the Problem

#### 3.1. Impact Analysis

##### 3.1.1 The issue of Pepe meme use

Pepe, also known as “The Sad Frog,” is the most common meme symbol in the world. These memes are created by the artist Matt Furie. He serialized a comic strip on the Internet, “The Boys Club.” this book is about the daily lives of a group of male college students, and the pipe is one of the protagonists. In 2008, in one of the chapters in this comic, Pepe is making some really weird behaviors, then his roommate asks him, “Why are you doing that?” Pepe replied, “Feels good, man.” this sentence makes Pepe blazing on 4chan. People always use the “Pepe feels good man” image to chitchat and feel extremely good, also with the negative sentence “feels bad man” with a sad Pepe expression that is the origin of Pepe, the sad frog. Nowadays, Pepe can represent every single expression of one’s feelings on the Internet. With more and more people using Pepe emoticons on the Internet, more and more people are starting to produce related emoticons and peripheral products such as Pepe pillows, teacups, and other products for sale. However, there are still some people who don’t like the use of Pepe emoticons by internet celebrities and people with different political opinions and believe that Pepe, the sad frog, should be a cyber symbol for a small group of people rather than a part of the popular culture.

As a result, people on 4chan have started producing pepes with extremist memes such as fascist, KKK, and Arab terrorism, trying to redefine the use of Pepe and even going so far as to link them to Trump to politicize the symbol.

After Oliver Nuzzi’s interview with users on 4chan, she wrote about how the Pepe frog has become a symbol for Trump supporters and the alternative right, an article that has sparked discussion amongst many political groups during the US election where Hillary’s team even continued to report that the pepe is a symbol of white supremacy, racial hatred, and extremism.

This was met with disbelief and derision from the general public, as the pepe had been around for ten years by 2016, and its use by the general public inevitably led to racist and extremist exploitation. This is a very typical misunderstanding of the meme and thus will be taken as an extremist symbol. It’s hard to be taken as a pop symbol for a particular piece because it’s so well-known to the public.

##### 3.1.2 Influence on the Sigma Man

Popularized on the Internet in early 2024, the Sigma meme is a representation of the handsome, wealthy, and confident young American urban male, who is typically muscular and has high cheekbones, as in the classic gigantic had image. A Russian photographer, Krista Sudmalis, took a set of photos of muscular men with powerful muscles synthesized through AI technology. On the other hand, the sigma meme is from a movie (American Psycho) in which the main character, Patrick Bateman, is a classic sigma man.

However, in the movie, he is very different from the classic sigma man. In the company, he is a very nice financial man, but in reality, he is a vicious murderer who enjoys killing homeless people, prostitutes, and cats on the side of the road. In fact, when the sigma culture came out, he was the archetypal figure and thus became a product of symbolism. When people on the Internet use this meme, it’s not so much about the evil in his movies as it is about his handsome, golden sigma face. This creates a dilemma of misunderstanding between those who have not seen the movie and those who have. Who thinks he is a successful man because of his first impression, but those who have seen American Psycho think he is a murderous maniac. This will also lead to a deconstruction of the culture of terpsichoreanism, making people focus on a character rather than the central point of the movie or television.

## **3.2. Problem Identified Analysis**

### **3.2.1 Key selection factors influencing animation films from audience's perspective**

In Jiang's data-based study of the factors that are important to viewers in choosing to watch animated products, it is clear that the top three dimensions in the FAHP model are visual effects, story, and production [6]. In the GRA model, the most significant dimensions are story, visual effects, and production. Marketing is the least important factor in both the FAHP and GRA models, so a character with the most expression and personality, as well as the overall storytelling of the show, is preferred by viewers [7]. However, there is a problem in that meme culture represents a marketing factor but actually brings more revenue to the anime product to drive the audience to experience the show through the main characters in the meme, which is a very important part of marketing. Also, among the memes, each anime character can be easily defined by the netizens. Thus, it makes the viewers who have not seen it curious. The audiences must see the anime for themselves to determine if the character is good or bad.

### **3.2.2 Animation memes influence on teenagers: Attack on titans as a sample**

Teenagers should observe the age limit for accessing the Internet and should not watch anime within their age limit, whereas the related culture can be disseminated through cultural works, thus bypassing regulatory restrictions. This can have an impact on the youth's outlook on the world, life, and values, which can lead to pornography, violence, and political influences such as fascism and racism. Take Attack on Titan as an example of political representation in Salam's study. The Eldar is often compared to Jews and discussed in anime community discussions, so when Alan, as the Eldar, summons the giants in the manga to stamp out the world because of conflicts between other nations and races, 70% of the human population suffers from the giants' stomping in the manga.

Therefore, this chapter caused a lot of discussion when it was published, as well as a number of memes of Alan and Hitler in the same frame, and these factors are also influencing immature-minded teenagers who like the characterization of Alan as a person but also try to whitewash some of the racist behavior. Therefore, the meme of this cartoon can have a bad influence on teenagers because the Internet is not regulated enough, thus creating a corresponding social education problem

## **4. Suggestions**

### **4.1. Anime Character Recognition**

Using the symbol of the pepe frog as a reference to meme culture, it is difficult to evaluate an anime work on the basis of a meme that is a widely disseminated symbol but has no actual meaning, especially if it is prone to misunderstandings. Moreover, as the original manga of Pepe Frog (The Boys Club) is not known to many people in modern times without intentional searching, the manga is a failure in terms of commercial value, as the manga does not bring the original authors considerable income and the discussion in the relevant forums is very little heat. It is also a failure in terms of commercial value, as the manga did not bring the original author much income and was rarely discussed in related forums. However, the Pepe Frog anime peripheral is a successful business model [8]. The use of the Twitch live platform and major anchors favor the mascot, which has a market value of several hundred million and even has its icon of virtual currency appearing in the market. No one cares about how the manga is doing, but people love the main character, Pepe the Frog, and the contribution of Pepe the Frog to millennial pop culture is invaluable. So, for the cultural popularity of an anime product, a prominent character meme is useful, but for the popularity of an anime, this single character meme can't be so popular that people forget about the anime!

### **4.2. The Key Selection Reasons for Animation**

Just like the movie, the romantic storyline of the hero and heroine in its movie has caused quite a stir on the Internet, leading more and more people to travel to the setting of the anime movie to have

a beautiful encounter. A variety of memes have been created on the Internet about the meeting of the characters on the red staircase where the hero and heroine meet. A large part of the reason why viewers choose anime is due to the positive effect of this meme, as summarized in the study by Sangkyun Kim and Philip Long, in the case of soap operas, which is the same as in the movie “The Name”. As summarized in a study by Sangkyun Kim and Philip Long, soap operas usually produce dramas that have a positive effect on the viewers because they can put themselves into the shoes of the main characters by traveling to the locations of the dramas and experiencing the life of the main characters at that time, which in turn leads to the development of the local tourism industry [9]. Therefore, in the case of a famous Internet meme, the venue will naturally generate more backpackers who will travel to the area and visit local customs. Therefore, the factors for the audience to choose are not only some mathematical data analyses but also people’s desire and experience of human life, which will become the key selections for watching anime.

### **4.3. Effectiveness of Meme Culture Promotion in the Animation Industry**

Many anime memes on public communication platforms such as Reddit, discord, and Tieba are widely used in groups rather than on other internet sites, so the use of memes is more skewed towards people who have already watched the anime in question. In terms of communication, memes are viral and can reach a wider audience on social media, which is contradictory to today’s anime communication. Therefore, anime makers can personally use memes as a promotional tool to attract more anime viewers. For example, Shikanoko Nokonoko Koshitantan was initially produced as a promotional anime for the Nara Prefecture in Japan, and the official government added a lot of meme elements in the anime to promote it for a comedic effect [10]. Therefore, it is a good idea to use memes as a promotional tool. The anime was also a big success in reality, attracting many tourists to Nara Prefecture to play the meme dance of the main character, shikoku, in front of the Nara deer.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1. Key Findings**

What is indispensable for an anime work is the support of the audience and the reflection and discussion of the work in Internet streaming. In the successful production of anime works, it is important to avoid large-scale publicized memes that make people forget the original meaning of the work, as well as to avoid memes of pornographic and violent plots that will have a negative impact on the work and on underage viewers. Therefore, this study concludes that the generation of anime memes is driven by the communication of the anime community, which relies on the activity of the Internet and the creativity of the official plot.

### **5.2. Research Value**

In this study, the most commercially viable belongs to the pepe sad frog, as it is a prominent avatar because it is too trendy and even jumps out of the range of being a meme. Because the public generally knows it, the Internet market has given it a corresponding commercial value such as Pepe virtual currency and Twitch anchor peripheral products. But this is just an example. There are a huge number of virtual images on the Internet, but only one pepe has realized its own commercial value, so a commercial animation company should pay more attention to the creativity of the meme with the people, as well as when in the anime group fire after the response. This is actually something that needs to be taken into consideration, and the meme should be put on a regular path to express optimistic thinking so that it will not only reap more favorable comments and benefits but also give life to the anime counterpart.

### 5.3. Limitations

But for the limitation problem, this paper does not lack the first data as a consideration, so in the future, for some companies to use the meme as a publicity anime tool will be used to obtain primary data by way of interviews.

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