

# The Impact on the Spread of ACGN Culture Caused by Social Media

## Jingwen Ma

Repton School Dubai, Dubai, United Arab Emirates  
jingwen.ma726@gmail.com

### Abstract:

Social media has played a crucial role in the global spread and transformation of ACGN (Anime, Comic, Game, Novel) culture, significantly affecting how fans interact with content and with each other. This paper takes ACGN as an example to analyze the impact of social media platforms on the development of niche cultures. Platforms like Bilibili, and Douyin in China, and global platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), have provided spaces for ACGN enthusiasts to discuss, share, and create content. These platforms have not only facilitated the exchange of ideas but also fostered communities that bridge geographical and cultural boundaries. In conclusion, social media has revolutionized the way ACGN culture spreads and evolves. By providing platforms for real-time interaction and cross-border collaboration, it has allowed ACGN fandom to flourish in a globalized digital space, while also creating new forms of digital communication and fan engagement. Therefore, the development of niche cultures should focus on seizing the opportunities of the times and fully utilizing the widespread nature of social media platforms to achieve effective development.

**Keywords:** Social media; ACGN culture; fan engagement

## 1. Introduction

For the past twenty years after the start of the 21st century, different media platforms including social media and video websites have developed very fast. More and more people started to use the internet and the younger age group got access to devices earlier than before. Just in China, according to what China Internet Network Information Centre known as the CNNIC has released in their 54th "Statistical Report on China's Internet Development Status", more

than 2 billion people have access to the Internet up till June 2024, which is 78% of a Chinese citizen. Another report on Statistia shows that 5.45 use the internet worldwide in 2024 which is 67.1% of the world population. Different from people born before the 2000s younger generations born after the 2000s are growing up with the development of the internet. These people get access to the internet and a variety of different information when they are just teenagers or even younger. They are too young to specify all the information whether they are useful or harmful.

This causes many issues that all these varieties of information are not all beneficial but could be adverse to these teenagers. With the wide spread of the internet, different varieties of minority cultures are also shown to teenagers. In this situation, people are highly affected by what is posted on social media. Therefore, it is necessary to research to explore how social media affects people's opinions on ACGN cultures. Based on the discussion above, this paper uses the spread and development of ACGN culture on the internet to discuss how social media affects subcultures.

## 2. Definition and Development Background of ACGN

### 2.1 Definition of ACGN

Animate, comics, games, and novels are the four main components of Japanese pop culture that come together to form what is known as ACGN culture. A stands for 'Animate' which means animated movies or cartoon series. Mainly from East Asian countries like Japan, China, and Korea. They are normally based on manga or novels. It is widely spread as an adult version of cartoons as it can show more fantasy scenes than movies filmed by human actors. C stands for 'Comics' which is comic books, it is similar to manga. G stands for 'games' which includes video games that contain two-dimensional characters similar to animate or manga. N is 'Novel' which in Japan is mostly a light novel but could also be counted as a general novel.

Deep involvement with these media forms is a defining feature of ACGN culture, which has spread throughout the world due to the development of social media. It is a highly common element spread on line among the young generation.

### 2.2 Development Background of ACGN

Nowadays, there are different social media platforms around the world. Social media platforms like X, Reddit, Instagram, and TikTok provide a space for fans of ACGN culture to form communities. These platforms facilitate easy interaction, whether through dedicated fan pages, hashtags, or group discussions. People interested in the same thing can be united together. Users can post their pictures or words under any tags. It then developed different community rules of what is allowed to be posted, people who first use X might not understand their community rules, hence they will research and get more into the community. This is how many subculture community develops on social media like X. Moreover, the role of social media

in the informal learning processes within ACGN communities has been explored by Xu et al. who demonstrate that platforms like We-media have become spaces for fans to exchange knowledge and skills, particularly in creating fan works like doujinshi (self-published works), which are deeply embedded in ACGN culture [1]. These fan-driven practices not only promote creativity but also create learning environments where fans collaboratively engage with each other's content, thus democratizing content creation.

## 3. The Impact and Hindrance of Social Media Platforms on the Development of Niche Culture

### 3.1 Positive Impact

The rise of social media platforms has had a profound impact on the development of niche cultures. Through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, etc., individuals and groups can quickly share and spread specific interests and subcultures, creating a more diverse and interactive cultural environment. Social media algorithms and recommendation systems have allowed niche cultures to reach global audiences, breaking the boundaries of geography and social circles. At the same time, social media also provides a space for niche cultures to express themselves, build identity, and interact with communities, promoting rapid cultural evolution and innovation.

Social media has also helped ACGN culture develop a lot of new words, and the wide spread of these words has brought popularity to ACGN culture.

For example, Bilibili's ability to foster a sense of identity and community among its users is further enhanced by its ability to satisfy the social needs of young ACGN fans. As Chen et al. explain, the platform satisfies a variety of psychological needs, such as the desire for recognition, social belonging, and emotional satisfaction [2]. Through participation in ACGN-related discussions, sharing fan works, and receiving feedback from other users, fans experience a sense of accomplishment and connection. This interactive process not only reinforces the subcultural identities of users but also motivates them to continue participating in and contributing to the ACGN ecosystem. Social media platforms like Bilibili, with their ability to provide both content and community, are crucial for the ongoing development of ACGN subcultures in China. They provide a space where fans can not only consume content but also create, share, and engage in a larger cultural conversation, thus driving the continuous evolution of these subcultures. These younger age people who are interested in ACGN culture would like to participate in and create their works,

like videos or articles. This leads to another subculture which is the Doujin culture.

Doujin culture, which could also be called fan fiction, a subculture within ACGN (Anime, Comics, Games, and Novels) communities, has been significantly shaped by the development of We-media platforms, which allow for decentralized and participatory content creation and sharing. As described by Xu et al, doujin culture is rooted in a spirit of independence, where creators engage in non-commercial, often fan-driven works that are not constrained by mainstream industry pressures [3]. This includes a wide variety of content such as fan art, fanfiction, self-published comics, music, and digital games, which are often re-imagined versions of original anime, manga, or video games. Social media has amplified this creative activity, enabling fans to share their works instantaneously, interact with other fans, and even collaborate on new projects. These platforms have allowed doujin culture to flourish from a niche, offline community to a global phenomenon, with fans and creators able to connect across vast distances and share their creations in real time. In this digital environment, doujin communities have grown exponentially, cultivating a unique space for self-expression, creativity, and the exchange of ideas. In this way, social media has become a crucial tool for both the growth of doujin culture and the informal educational processes that occur within it.

Many others are also developed through ACGN culture, according to Xie new types of entertainment virtual idols are also developed [4]. In a new paradigm of digital performance, virtual idols rely on technologically driven media performances rather than any one biological performer. However, for digital natives growing up in new media environments, this disintegration of the real and the data personality does not create a sense of cultural alienation because the real does not create a sense of cultural alienation. The reason for this is that the virtual environment in which digital natives live initially shapes their perception of reality. In the case of virtual idols, such as Hatsune Miku and Kizuna Ai, their “bodies” are generated and maintained using advanced graphic rendering, motion capture technologies, and audience engagement. Xie further notes that the creation of virtual idols involves a blend of OGC (Occupationally-generated Content), PGC (Professionally generated Content), and UGC (User-generated Content), illustrating the collaborative nature of their development. Virtual idols initially gained traction in niche ACGN communities but have since crossed over into the mainstream, aided by platforms like social media and variety shows. For instance, Hatsune Miku’s rise to fame is rooted in both professional production and the enthusiastic, voluntary participation of fan communities,

whose fan-generated content helped expand the virtual idol’s cultural impact. The development of virtual idols within ACGN culture is a perfect example of how social media and digital technology have transformed the way subcultures develop. Virtual idols embody a fusion of entertainment, technology, and fan-driven content that both challenges traditional notions of celebrity and provides fans with new ways of participating in and shaping their cultural landscape. Through this digital cultivation, social media not only enables the rapid global spread of ACGN culture but also allows young people to engage in complex, evolving forms of cultural expression and identity formation.

### 3.2 The Problem Exists

Based on the discussion above, this paper will be focused on several questions on ACGN culture because people interested in ACGN culture have a high percentage of people accepting subcultures. People interested in ACGN cultures are also more easily accepting other subcultures. Hence, chose ACGN culture as an example when researching the development of subcultures.

While social media has given fellow enthusiasts a platform to communicate with each other, it can also be harmful in some ways. Many of the people who use these social media are less mature teenagers and may be easily influenced by some of the other people in this community who may have bad intentions.

Social media platforms and fan communities thrive on the open exchange of content, ideas, and creativity, and any attempt to restrict access to or filter out specific types of content could stifle the vibrant and participatory nature of ACGN subcultures. Censorship could limit this expression, making it harder for fans to access diverse content and share their creative works with the larger community. McLelland further argues that such restrictions could also result in a fragmentation of global fan communities, as international fans may be subjected to different censorship standards based on their geographic location [5]. Local censorship policies might already limit the accessibility of certain content, further complicating the ability of fans to interact with and contribute to the global ACGN subculture.

## 4. Discussion

Therefore, the development of niche culture cannot be separated from the promotion of social media platforms. Minority cultures should also make full use of the advantages of the historical background to achieve positive, technological, and diversified development.

ACGN (animation, comics, games, light novels) culture

has crossed borders and influenced fans and audiences in different regions worldwide through Chinese social media platforms such as Bilibili. Chinese social platforms such as Douyin, Rednote, and Weibo provide a community for ACGN enthusiasts to communicate and share. Especially Bilibili, which is not only a gathering place for ACGN culture, but also creates a new digital interactive way through its unique “barrage” comment system. This way, fans can comment in real time while watching videos, interact with the content, and enhance their sense of participation and community cohesion.

With fans from many geographical areas actively participating in the spread and alteration of Japanese anime, manga, video games, and light novel content, social media has enabled ACGN culture to cross national boundaries. For example, Yan argues that the interaction of Chinese viewers with video content on websites like Bilibili--where viewers comment in real-time through a “barrage” system--reflects how ACGN culture has influenced the digital communication styles within communities, creating a distinct form of fan interaction that blends commentary with fandom engagement [2]. The platform, originally known for its content centered around anime, comics, and games, has since evolved into a hub for diverse fan activities, including cosplay, fan art, and doujin creation [6]. Central to its appeal is the way Bilibili fosters interaction and community building among fans. Through features such as “bullet comments” (danmu), which allow users to interact in real-time while watching videos, and fan-driven content like reviews and discussions, Bilibili creates an immersive environment that not only strengthens fans’ sense of belonging but also reinforces their identity within the ACGN subculture. Chen et al. emphasize that these interactions are key to the identity construction of users, as they can actively engage with content creators, share their thoughts, and contribute to the ongoing dialogue within the ACGN community [3].

Overall, social media has facilitated the global dissemination of ACGN culture and shaped new forms of interaction among fans, promoting diversity in digital cultural exchange. This phenomenon reflects how the fan community carries out cultural communication and innovation through the Internet, especially the real-time interactive platform.

## 5. Conclusion

The development of ACGN subcultures, particularly doujin culture and cosplay also things developed through ACGN has been deeply influenced by the rise of social media platforms that foster creativity, interaction, and informal learning. As demonstrated in the case of China, these subcultures have transitioned from underground, niche activities to globally recognized cultural movements, thanks in large part to the widespread accessibility of digital platforms. Social media has enabled fans to share their works, collaborate with others, and engage in dynamic, real-time feedback processes that enhance their creative and learning experiences. Moreover, these platforms have provided a space for self-expression and identity exploration, where youth can challenge societal norms and connect with others who share similar interests. As ACGN subcultures continue to evolve in the digital age, social media will remain a crucial tool for both cultural production and informal learning, helping to shape the future of youth subcultures globally.

## References

- [1] Xu Q, He J, Fu Q. Research on informal learning characteristics of ACG Doujin Community in the age of We-media. *Proc. 2nd Eurasian Conference on Educational Innovation*, 2019, 103-106.
- [2] Chen J, Fu J, Wang L. Interaction and satisfaction: Analysis of the identity style and behavioral motivation of ACG Subcultural Groups in Bilibili. *News and Communication Review*, 2022, 75(2): 103-113.
- [3] Yan J H, Pan Y, Yun T. Analysis of Chinese video website barrage language based on the influence of The ACGN Culture. *International Journal of Internet, Broadcasting, and Communication*, 2021, 13(2): 195-207.
- [4] Xie Y. The cultural empowerment and cultural imagination of virtual idols. *News and Communication Review*, 2022, 75(2): 91-102.
- [5] McLelland M. Australia’s proposed internet filtering system: its implications for animation, comics, and gaming (ACG) and slash fan communities. *Media International Australia*, 2010, 134(1): 7-19.
- [6] Wang K. *Cosplay in China: Popular culture and youth community*. 2010.