

Copyright Concerns and Meme Morality

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Abstract

The pervasive presence of memes in social media has brought forth a myriad of ethical concerns, one of which is copyright infringement. This study delves into the ethical implications surrounding this phenomenon within meme culture, exploring its impact on legal frameworks and the creative landscape of online expression. Copyright infringement in memes presents a complex ethical dilemma, as these digital artifacts often rely on the use of copyrighted material without proper authorization or attribution. Through an examination of the intersection between meme creation and intellectual property laws, this research navigates the ethical tensions inherent in the creation and dissemination of memes. Specifically, this study explores how memes blur the boundaries between original expression and derivative works, which raises questions about the balance between freedom of expression and the protection of intellectual property rights. Moreover, the study considers the ethical responsibilities of meme creators and platforms in addressing copyright infringement. It examines strategies for promoting ethical practices, such as respecting fair use principles and seeking permission for the use of copyrighted material. Through a multidisciplinary approach, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the ethical challenges posed by copyright infringement in meme culture. By fostering dialogue and critical reflection, it seeks to advance the development of responsible practices and policies that uphold ethical standards while fostering creativity and innovation in online communication.

Keywords

Mememes, Meme Ethics, Copyright Infringement, Intellectual Property, Freedom of Expression

1. Introduction

Internet memes have become a significant force in contemporary digital communication, serving as vehicles for social commentary, humor, and cultural expression.

Castaño Díaz (2013) defines a meme as a unit of information (such as a representation, pattern, rule, or imitational icon) that is replicated through various platforms and communication channels. Castaño Díaz (2013) also states that memes require a medium and an agent for transmission and can be passed on as exact copies or evolve through mutations in meaning or structure. According to Wiggins (2019), memes are considered “mediators of cultural evolution” (p. 3) and the speed by which memes are “produced and spread underscores their importance” (p. i). Given this, the success of a meme’s replication and mutation depends on the social context in which it is shared. A meme’s adaptability then allows it to resonate with diverse audiences and be repurposed for various communicative goals.

While memes are now known through the Internet, their history predates it. It was author Richard Dawkins who coined the term “meme” in 1976 to describe a unit of cultural transmission. In addition, some linguists argue that humans have utilized memes for communication for centuries (Benveniste, 2022). Dawkins drew parallels between “memes” and “phonemes,” the smallest unit of sound in speech, or “morphemes,” the smallest meaningful subunit of a word (as cited in Benveniste, 2022). The concept of a meme as a cultural replicator was first introduced in Dawkins’s book *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins intentionally chose a monosyllabic term that resonated with the concept of a “gene,” which emphasizes the parallel between biological and cultural evolution. The word “meme” effectively captures the essence of cultural transmission, as it suggests the replication and spread of ideas, behaviors, and styles within a society. This reflects the idea that memes, like genes, are replicated and spread through imitation.

Likewise, etymologically, the word “meme” is derived from the Greek word “mimeme,” meaning “that which is imitated.” (Benveniste, 2022). This captures the concept of a meme as a self-replicating chunk of information can be likened to an inside joke or a catchy advertising jingle that sticks in one’s head (Benveniste, 2022). These chunks of information are shared and repeated, demonstrating the self-replicating nature of memes. While the concept of memes has existed for a long time, the Internet has significantly amplified their reach and impact. Online platforms have facilitated the rapid spread and evolution of memes, making them a ubiquitous part of digital culture. In the digital context, then, memes are defined as “an image, video, piece of text, etc., typically humorous in nature, that is copied and spread rapidly by Internet users, often with slight variations” (Lonnberg et al., 2020, p. 1).

Given its pervasive nature and significance, it is crucial then to examine the ethical dimensions associated with the creation and dissemination of memes. As memes frequently incorporate and transform existing copyrighted material, aspects such as creativity, fair use, and intellectual property rights enter into a complicated interplay. Guided by the Doctrine of Double Effect as the study’s framework, the research aims to answer the following research questions: 1) How does the Doctrine of Double Effect apply to the creation and dissemination of internet

memes that utilize copyrighted material? 2) To what extent does the transformative nature of memes influence their ethical acceptability? and 3) What are the potential unintended consequences of meme creation and sharing, even when the act itself is considered ethically permissible?

Given these research questions, the primary objective of this research then was to conduct a thorough examination of the ethical implications surrounding copyright infringement in the creation and dissemination of memes. It aimed to explore the balance between freedom of expression and the protection of intellectual property rights in the context of meme creation. Lastly, it sought to uncover the ethical responsibilities of meme creators and platforms in addressing copyright infringement. Ultimately, the goal of this research is to contribute to the discourse of meme ethics and the promotion ethical practices within the context of the meme culture.

2. Literature Review

Roles of Memes

According to Vitiuk et al. (2020), the rise of internet memes is directly related to Web 2.0 technologies, which allowed users to become “creative consumers” who could “create and transfer their content on the Web” (p. 46). They claim that this shift in the relationship between users and the Internet is a “cardinal shift” in the processes of symbolic production and exchange, as it allowed users to become the center of symbolic value production (Vitiuk et al., 2020: p. 46). This entails that the ability of users to easily create and share content led to the rise of social media platforms, which have become central to the spread of internet memes.

Mememes, particularly internet memes, play a multitude of roles in the digital community. On the one hand, they play a crucial role in humor, often relying on absurdity, satire, and cultural references to elicit laughter. Their shareability and adaptability contribute to their comedic appeal, as individuals can remix and re-interpret them to suit their own tastes and contexts. This can foster a sense of community and shared experience among those who engage with and propagate the memes. On the other hand, memes also serve as a form of cultural expression, reflecting and shaping the values, beliefs, and practices of online communities. They can be seen as artifacts of digital culture, encapsulating the zeitgeist of a particular moment in time. The “Zalgo” meme, for instance, draws upon elements of horror and the grotesque to create a distinct aesthetic and subcultural identity.

Furthermore, Vitiuk et al. (2020) also discuss that memes are often created for entertainment purposes. They can also be used to communicate ideas and opinions, which make them a unique form of intellectual and artistic expression in the digital age. For instance, in the realm of social commentary, memes provide a platform for individuals to express their views on current events, political issues, and societal trends in a concise and often humorous manner. As memes are viral in nature, it allows said messages to reach a wide audience quickly, potentially sparking conversations and raising awareness. For example, the “Pepper Spray

Cop” meme discussed by Castaño Díaz (2013) emerged from a real-life event involving police brutality and was subsequently repurposed to critique broader issues of power and authority.

Issues Surrounding Memes

The existing discussion surrounding memes is not free from issues and controversies. For instance, in the realm of political discourse, De Leon and Ballesteros-Lintao (2021) claim that, on the one hand, political memes can be used to simplify complex political narratives through humor. On the other hand, they can also be a tool for spreading misinformation. These memes often employ humor signifiers such as intertextuality, parody, and binary opposition to create a simplified narrative that is easy to digest. While this can be an effective way to communicate ideas, it can also be used to manipulate public opinion and spread propaganda. De Leon and Ballesteros-Lintao (2021) found that political memes often contain all ten of the propaganda characteristics identified by Walton (1997, as cited in De Leon & Ballesteros-Lintao, 2021), including dialogue structure, message content, goal-directed structure, and emotive language. These characteristics can be used to influence the audience’s perception of political figures and issues and to promote a particular agenda—something which may not be ethical at all times.

Another ethical concern surrounding the use of memes is copyright infringement. This is because these digital artifacts often rely on the use of copyrighted material without proper authorization or attribution (Bonetto, 2018; Capelotti, 2020; Joshi et al., 2024; Mielczarek & Hopkins, 2020; Patel, 2013). This unauthorized use can manifest in various ways. Firstly, there is direct copying of copyrighted images or videos. Many memes use images or video clips taken directly from copyrighted sources, such as movies, TV shows, or photographs, without obtaining permission from the copyright holder. This raises questions about fair use and the extent to which memes can be considered transformative works (Mielczarek & Hopkins, 2020; Patel, 2013). Additionally, there is sampling or remixing of copyrighted music. Some memes incorporate snippets of copyrighted music, raising similar concerns about fair use and the potential for economic harm to the original artist (Bonetto, 2018). Lastly, there is a lack of attribution. Even when memes transform the original material, they often fail to credit the original creators, depriving them of recognition and potential compensation (Capelotti, 2020).

The ethical implications of copyright infringement in memes are complex and multifaceted. On the one hand, memes are a form of cultural expression and social commentary that should be protected under the right to freedom of speech (Capelotti, 2020; Mielczarek & Hopkins, 2020). On the other hand, unauthorized use of copyrighted material can harm the economic interests of creators and undermine the incentives for producing original content (Bonetto, 2018; Joshi et al., 2024).

In addition to these, there is also the rise of meme-related businesses, such as selling memes on merchandise or as digital products, which further complicates

copyright issues (Patel, 2013). While some argue that these practices are a legitimate form of cultural entrepreneurship, others raise concerns about the exploitation of copyrighted material for profit without permission or attribution. Addressing the ethical concerns surrounding copyright infringement in memes requires a balanced approach that respects both the rights of copyright holders and the value of memes as a form of cultural expression. This could involve educating meme creators about copyright law, promoting fair use and attribution practices, and exploring alternative licensing models that allow for the legal and ethical use of copyrighted material in memes.

Several studies have explored the ethical issues surrounding internet memes, particularly focusing on copyright concerns. For instance, on the one hand, Bonetto (2018) examined internet memes as derivative works under EU copyright law. Bonetto (2018) highlighted the potential conflict between copyright protection and freedom of expression, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach that considers the social and cultural value of memes. Bonetto's (2018) research contributes to the ethical discussion by raising awareness of the legal challenges and potential chilling effects of copyright enforcement on meme culture. On the other hand, Mielczarek and Hopkins (2020) conducted a legal research analysis of U.S. copyright cases to understand how the standard of transformativeness has been applied in court decisions. They argued that memes, as transformative works, often deserve legal protection under fair use principles. Their research contributes to the ethical discussion by advocating for a balanced approach that protects both copyright holders and the creative expression inherent in memes.

In addition, the study of Patel (2013) explored the applicability of the fair use defense to internet memes in the U.S. context. By analyzing memes through the lens of normative theories like cultural interchange, market failure, and productive consumption, Patel (2013) argued that meme creators are likely to prevail in copyright infringement cases if they assert a fair use defense. Meanwhile, Capelotti (2020) discussed the dangers of controlling memes through copyright law, focusing on a case in Brazil where the government attempted to restrict the use of the president's image in memes. Capelotti argued that such actions threaten freedom of expression and the democratic value of memes as a form of social commentary. This research highlights the potential for copyright law to be misused to suppress political criticism and emphasizes the importance of protecting meme culture as a form of free speech.

Lastly, Joshi et al. (2024) investigated the use of knowledge graphs, specifically the Internet Meme Knowledge Graph (IMKG), to contextualize internet memes and potentially identify copyright infringement. By mapping memes to the IMKG, they aimed to determine the prevalence of memes across platforms, identify popular memes, and understand how the IMKG can enrich meme context (Joshi et al., 2024). While their primary focus was not on the ethical implications, their work has potential applications in addressing copyright concerns by tracing the origins and evolution of memes.

The review of related literature shows that the transformative nature of memes is a key factor in determining their copyright status. If a meme significantly alters the original work by adding new expression, meaning, or message, it is more likely to be considered fair use (Mielczarek & Hopkins, 2020; Patel, 2013). Likewise, in the U.S. context, Mielczarek and Hopkins (2020) and Patel (2013) argue that memes could be protected under the fair use doctrine, particularly if they are considered transformative works. They suggest that memes often add new meaning or message to the original copyrighted material, thus fulfilling the criteria for fair use.

However, not all memes may qualify for fair use protection. The studies above acknowledge that the legal landscape surrounding memes is complex and evolving. Factors such as the purpose of the meme, the nature of the original work, and the potential market impact can influence the determination of fair use (Patel, 2013). Moreover, Bonetto (2018) highlights that under EU law, memes could be considered derivative works, potentially infringing on copyright holders' rights. These suggest then that while memes have the potential for copyright protection, especially under fair use principles in the U.S., the issue is not clear-cut. The legal and ethical status of a meme depends on various factors, and the evolving nature of meme culture and copyright law still warrants further discussion and analysis.

Given these aforementioned studies, this research then aims to directly address the ethical considerations surrounding copyright infringement in memes. The investigation explores the unique challenges memes pose to traditional notions of authorship and originality, the responsibilities of both meme creators and platforms, and the balance between intellectual property rights and freedom of expression within meme culture.

3. Methodology

This research utilized a qualitative research design through the examination of a single meme, i.e., the Drakeposting meme, through the lens of the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE). This originated from the works of Thomas Aquinas and was further developed by philosophers like Joseph Mangan (1949) and Philippa Foot (1967). The DDE recognizes that actions can have both positive and negative consequences and offers criteria for determining the moral permissibility of such actions (Boyle, 2022). In this study, the DDE is employed to assess the ethical implications of meme creation and dissemination involving copyrighted materials.

This particular ethical framework was chosen primarily because it considers both the potential benefits and harms involved in the dilemma. According to Kockler (2007), DDE enables scholars to “navigate various actions that may or may not be morally justifiable in some circumstances,” such as in the context of this study. On the one hand, a meme can be beneficial to the meme creator and the community through cultural expression and social commentary. On the other hand, it can also be harmful to the owner of the copyrighted material. The four criteria of the DDE (McIntyre, 2023) have guided this study in balancing these

two opposing effects.

The meme that was analyzed in this study was chosen based on the study of Joshi et al. (2024) that investigated the prevalence of memes on Reddit and Discord in July 2023. The most top-rated meme on the social media sites during the said period as the Drake-Hotline-Bling or Drakeposting meme which features a two-panel image of the rapper Drake (Joshi et al., 2024). In the first panel, Drake is portrayed as if disapproving of something, wherein he can be seen with a gesture of pushing something away. In the second panel, he seems to approve of something else, as he is portrayed with a gesture of pulling something towards him. The meme is used to express a preference for one thing over another in a humorous way. This chosen meme's popularity, clear structure and content, and socio-cultural relevance contributed to the researcher's decision to choose it as the subject of analysis.

4. Findings

Criteria 1: The action itself is morally good or neutral.

For C1, the analysis considered whether the act of creating and sharing a meme is morally neutral or even positive, given its potential for creative expression and social commentary.

The Drakeposting meme, based on a screenshot from Drake's "Hotline Bling" music video, is a popular meme format used to humorously contrast preferences. Based on C1, it can be inferred that the creation and dissemination of a meme can be regarded as a morally neutral act, which constitutes a form of creative expression and cultural communication. In the context of Drakeposting, it is evident that the act itself of creating or disseminating the said meme does not intrinsically engender harm.

Criteria 2: The bad effect must not be the means by which the good effect is achieved.

For C2, the analysis examined whether the meme's intended effect (humor, critique, etc.) is achieved independently of any copyright infringement. This will involve exploring whether the copyrighted material is essential to the meme's message or if it could be effectively replaced with non-copyrighted content.

Given this, it is evident that the Drakeposting meme's primary objective is to elicit humor and convey a preference or opinion. This is accomplished through the strategic juxtaposition of two images of Drake, wherein each panel represents contrasting sentiments, coupled with superimposed text that articulates the users' preferences. The humor arises from the incongruity between the visual representation of Drake's emotions and the textual content expressing the user's choices. The meme's effect does not hinge on the act of copyright infringement itself but rather on the clever interplay of visual and textual elements to create a humorous and relatable message.

The use of Drake's image serves as a recognizable cultural reference as it draws upon his celebrity status and the popularity of the "Hotline Bling" music video

during its rise. However, the humor is not derived solely from the use of Drake's likeness but from the creative repurposing of his image to represent the complexity of human emotions and preferences. In essence, Drake becomes a symbolic figure whose facial expressions and gestures are utilized to communicate a message that transcends the original context of the music video. Furthermore, the text accompanying the images plays a crucial role in conveying the meme's message. The text typically presents two contrasting options or preferences, often in a humorous or exaggerated manner. This juxtaposition of contrasting text and images creates a comedic effect that resonates with the audience and encourages them to share the meme with others.

Given this, it can be argued that the meme's intended effect—to generate humor and express a preference—is achieved through the creative manipulation of images and text, not through the act of copyright infringement itself. The use of Drake's image, while contributing to the meme's cultural relevance and recognizability, is not the sole or primary factor responsible for its humorous impact.

Criteria 3: The good effect is intended.

For C3, the study investigated the intentions of meme creators. *Did they intend to infringe copyright, or was it an unintended consequence?*

In the case of C3, while it may be possible, it is highly unlikely that the majority of individuals who create and share the Drakeposting memes harbor any malicious intent toward Drake or consciously seek to violate copyright laws. Their primary motivation is likely to engage in creative expression, participate in online culture, and generate humor or relatability through the meme format. Meme creation is often driven by a desire to connect with others, share experiences, and express opinions in a lighthearted and accessible manner (Wiggins, 2019). The playful and participatory nature of meme culture encourages individuals to repurpose and remix existing cultural artifacts, such as Drake's image in this case, and to create new meanings and interpretations (Milner, 2018).

However, while the intention behind meme creation may be benign, it is essential to acknowledge the potential for unintended harm. The widespread dissemination of a meme, especially one that incorporates copyrighted material, can have unforeseen consequences. In the case of Drakeposting, the extensive circulation of the meme could potentially impact Drake's public image, especially if the meme is used in a way that he deems unflattering or misrepresentative. Additionally, the meme's popularity could inadvertently diminish the commercial value of the original "Hotline Bling" music video if it becomes so ubiquitous that it overshadows the original work. Therefore, while C3 is generally met in the case of Drakeposting, it is crucial to recognize that even well-intentioned actions can have unintended negative consequences.

Criteria 4: The good effect outweighs the bad effect.

Lastly, for C4, the research weighed the potential benefits of the meme (e.g., humor, social commentary, cultural relevance) against the potential harm to the copyright holder (e.g., financial loss, reputational damage). This involved examining

questions such as: *Does the meme offer significant social or cultural value that outweighs the potential harm to the copyright holder?*

C4 necessitates a careful weighing of the benefits and harms caused by an action to determine if the good outweighs the bad. In the context of the Drakeposting meme, this involves evaluating the potential harm to the copyright holder (Drake and his record label) against the societal benefits derived from the meme. For instance, the meme's widespread use could theoretically detract from the value of the original "Hotline Bling" music video, which can potentially impact Drake's income from views, streams, or licensing deals. However, this is difficult to quantify and memes have also been shown to increase the popularity of the original work. In addition, if the meme is used in a context that portrays Drake negatively, it could damage his public image.

On the other hand, the meme also has a number of benefits. The meme provides amusement and enjoyment to a wide audience, which contributes to online culture and social interaction. Likewise, the meme has become a cultural phenomenon, which allows individuals to express themselves creatively and participate in shared online experiences. Lastly, the meme's format can be used to critique or comment on various topics, potentially fostering dialogue and social awareness.

In the case of the Drakeposting meme, the potential harm to the copyright holder seems relatively minimal. This is especially the case when the said potential harm is compared to the significant social and cultural benefits that it generates. For instance, as mentioned above, the meme primarily serves as a tool for humor and communication, and its impact on Drake's financial or reputational standing is likely negligible. The meme has even arguably increased the visibility and cultural relevance of Drake's original song and music video for "Hotline Bling."

Therefore, it can be argued that the good effect of the meme, i.e., humor, cultural expression, and social commentary, outweighs its potential bad effects, i.e., minimal financial or reputational harm to Drake. This satisfies C4 of the DDE, which further supports the argument that the creation and sharing of the Drakeposting meme is ethically permissible.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the Drakeposting meme through the lens of the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE) reveals the complicated dynamics between creative expression, copyright law, and ethical considerations. While the meme's creation and dissemination generally align with the DDE's criteria for ethical permissibility, what warrants further discussion potential is the unintended harm and the nuanced nature of copyright in the digital age.

The finding that the meme's humorous effect is not solely reliant on the use of Drake's image aligns with existing literature on memetic transformation. Scholars like [Shifman \(2014\)](#) and [Milner \(2018\)](#) have emphasized the creative repurposing of existing cultural material as a defining characteristic of memes. The Drakeposting meme exemplifies this, as it takes a pre-existing image and imbues it with

new meaning through textual overlay and juxtaposition. This process of transformation can be seen as a form of cultural participation and creative expression. This, of course, is distinct from the act of copyright infringement.

However, the potential for unintended harm, as highlighted by the DDE's third criterion, raises questions about the ethical responsibilities of meme creators. While most individuals may not intend to harm Drake or violate copyright laws, the widespread dissemination of the meme can have unforeseen consequences for both his public image and the commercial value of the original work. This aligns with concerns raised by scholars like Phillips (2016), who argue that the viral nature of memes can amplify both positive and negative messages, which potentially causes unintended harm to individuals or groups.

The fourth criterion of the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE), proportionality, mandates a comprehensive evaluation of the benefits and detriments resulting from an action to ascertain whether the positive outcomes outweigh the negative ones. In the context of the Drakeposting meme, this entails a meticulous assessment of the potential harm inflicted upon Drake's financial or reputational interests vis-à-vis the societal benefits derived from the meme. While the meme undoubtedly offers substantial social and cultural value through the humor, the creative expression, and the social commentary it brings, the potential for harm to Drake's financial or reputational standing cannot be entirely dismissed.

This raises questions regarding the extent to which transformative use should be permissible in the context of internet memes. For instance, the unauthorized use of Drake's image and likeness could potentially be considered a violation of his right to publicity. This right allows individuals to control the commercial use of their name, image, and likeness. If the meme were to be used for commercial purposes without Drake's permission, it could potentially deprive him of revenue that he would otherwise be entitled to.

In terms of reputation, the meme could potentially harm Drake's image if it is used in a context that he deems unflattering or offensive. For example, if the meme were to be associated with a controversial or negative topic, it could tarnish his reputation and alienate his fanbase. However, it is important to note that the potential harm to Drake is not always clear-cut. As Shifman (2014) argues, memes can also have a positive impact on the popularity and cultural relevance of the original work. In the case of the Drakeposting meme, it is possible that the meme's widespread use has actually increased interest in Drake's music and persona, leading to increased sales and exposure.

Given these, the case of the Drakeposting meme then demonstrates the challenges and complexities of applying ethical frameworks like the DDE to user-generated content in the digital age. While the meme's creation and sharing may generally be considered ethically permissible, it is crucial to recognize the potential for unintended harm and to engage in ongoing conversations about the balance between creative expression and intellectual property rights in the online environment.

Consequently, there are various ways by which meme creators, and the digital public in general, can ensure responsible meme creation and meme sharing. Firstly, as copyright infringement remains to be reason for ethical tension in meme creation and use, creators should be educated about copyright law and fair use. Unfortunately, they may not be aware of the legal and ethical implications of using copyrighted material. Providing educational resources and workshops on copyright law, fair use, and creative commons licensing then can empower them to make informed decisions about the content they use and share.

Additionally, meme creators should learn to give credit to the original creators of the content they use. This is a simple yet effective way to promote ethical practices. This can be done through proper attribution in captions or descriptions, linking back to the original source, or using tools that automatically generate attribution information (Boyle, 2022). Likewise, one can also explore alternative licensing models. For instance, Creative Commons licenses offer a flexible framework for copyright holders to grant permission for the use and sharing of their work under specific conditions (Margoni & Peters, 2016). Encouraging the use of such licenses can facilitate the legal and ethical use of copyrighted material in memes.

Furthermore, social media platforms and online communities can play a crucial role in promoting ethical meme culture. They can do so by establishing clear guidelines on copyright infringement and providing tools for users to report infringing content. Likewise, these platforms can implement algorithms or filters that can detect and flag potentially infringing memes (Joshi et al., 2024). Eventually, this can promote a culture of respect for intellectual property, especially within meme communities, can encourage creators to seek permission, give credit, and consider the potential impact of their memes on the original creators. According to Meese and Hagedorn (2019), people are becoming more aware of the importance of giving credit to the original creators of content. This is likely due to a combination of factors, including increased awareness of copyright issues, the desire to support creators, and the norms established by social media platforms themselves.

6. Conclusion

This research delved into the ethical implications of copyright infringement in internet memes, focusing on the Drakeposting meme as a case study. By applying the Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE), the study found that meme creation and sharing, while often involving copyrighted material, can be ethically permissible under certain conditions. The analysis revealed that the meme's humorous effect is not solely reliant on copyright infringement, and the intentions of meme creators are generally benign. Moreover, the social and cultural benefits of the meme were found to outweigh the potential harm to the copyright holder.

However, the study also highlighted the potential for unintended harm, even in cases where the meme's creation and sharing are ethically permissible. The

widespread dissemination of memes can have unforeseen consequences for both the copyright holder's public image and the commercial value of the original work. This emphasizes the need for responsible meme creation and sharing practices.

7. Implications

The findings of this research have several implications for meme creators, social media platforms, and policymakers. Firstly, it highlights the importance of educating meme creators about copyright law and fair use. By understanding the legal and ethical boundaries of meme creation, creators can make informed decisions about the content they use and share. Secondly, the study emphasizes the role of social media platforms in promoting ethical meme culture. Platforms can implement measures to educate users about copyright, provide tools for reporting infringing content, and foster a culture of respect for intellectual property. Lastly, the research suggests that policymakers should consider the unique nature of memes when developing copyright policies. Striking a balance between protecting intellectual property rights and fostering creative expression is crucial in the digital age.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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