RedFame

International Journal of Social Science Studies
Vol. 14, No. 4; December 2026
ISSN 2324-8033 E-ISSN 2324-8041
Published by Redfame Publishing
URL: http://ijsss.redfame.com

Self-Deprecation and Digital Carnival: Rethinking Bakhtinian Carnival through China's SBTI Phenomenon

Zhaolei Sun[1], & Tianhao Qin[1]

[1] Department of Global Convergence, Kangwon National University, Chuncheon, Republic of Korea

Correspondence: Tianhao Qin, Department of Global Convergence, Kangwon National University, Chuncheon, Republic of Korea.

Received: September 20, 2026 Accepted: October 28, 2026 Available online: November 24, 2026

doi:10.11114/ijsss.v14i4.9546 URL: https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v14i4.9546

Abstract

The popularity of China's SBTI personality test provides a context for reconsidering Bakhtinian carnival in digital culture. Drawing on carnival theory and scholarship on digital culture and platformization, this article develops a conceptual interpretation of SBTI as a form of platform-mediated digital carnival. It examines how digital participation, parody, self-deprecation, and "coronation and decrowning" reshape the relationship between identity expression and classificatory authority. It argues that self-deprecation enables individuals to appropriate potentially derogatory personality labels and renegotiate their evaluative meanings, but does not necessarily challenge the classificatory systems underlying them. Such practices may also reproduce existing stereotypes. Meanwhile, platform-mediated circulation shapes the visibility and social significance of identity labels, allowing their meanings to be reinforced, reinterpreted, and renegotiated over time. The article proposes that digital carnival is characterized not simply by fluid identity expression, but by an ongoing tension between the reinterpretation of classificatory meanings and the persistence of classificatory authority. This conceptual perspective extends discussions of Bakhtinian carnival and provides a framework for examining identity negotiation in contemporary digital culture.

Keywords: digital carnival, SBTI; Bakhtin, self-deprecation, digital identity

1. Introduction

With the rapid expansion of digital platforms, social media have become important spaces for emotional expression, identity construction, and cultural participation (Döveling et al., 2018). Practices such as sharing, parody, and creative remixing enable users to participate in the production and reinterpretation of digital culture. However, participation in these environments involves more than the circulation of content; it also creates opportunities for individuals to negotiate identity and shared cultural meanings. The growing visibility of playful and participatory digital practices therefore raises questions about how established categories and social norms may be reinterpreted through online interaction.

The recent popularity of the SBTI test in China provides a contemporary context for examining these questions. SBTI, short for Silly Big Personality Test, is a parody of the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) that replaces conventional personality descriptions with exaggerated, humorous, and often self-deprecating labels. According to Beijing Daily Client (2026), the test was developed by a Bilibili content creator and attracted widespread attention in China in early April 2026. It contains 31 questions and reportedly takes approximately three to five minutes to complete. Its results circulated across social media platforms, including WeChat Moments, Weibo, and Xiaohongshu, where personality-result screenshots provided a recognizable format for sharing and discussing labels. Unlike the more systematic classification framework associated with MBTI, SBTI foregrounds absurdity, parody, and self-mockery. Its labels may include descriptions that would ordinarily be perceived as negative or derogatory, yet these labels can also become resources for humor and self-presentation. Through exaggerated labels, humorous descriptions, and self-deprecating expressions, SBTI reframes personality classification as an everyday mode of online interaction (Sun, 2026). SBTI has consequently attracted scholarly attention as an example of youth subculture and self-deprecating expression in digital environments (Liu & Hu, 2026). Its significance, however, extends beyond the popularity of a humorous personality test. The phenomenon raises a more fundamental question: how can individuals use self-deprecating labels to negotiate the relationship between externally available classifications and their own

self-presentation? In particular, when individuals voluntarily adopt labels that might otherwise expose them to negative judgment, self-deprecation may alter how those labels are interpreted and used in social interaction.

Bakhtin's theory of carnival offers a conceptual framework for examining the relationship between playful expression and the temporary reorganization of established meanings. Bakhtin characterizes carnival as a form of "second life" distinct from the normative order of everyday existence, in which hierarchical distinctions may be temporarily suspended or inverted (Gardiner, 1993; Dewberry, 2026). The carnival square, collective laughter and parody, and the processes of "coronation and decrowning" provide conceptual resources for understanding how established meanings and social relations may be challenged. These ideas offer a useful starting point for interpreting SBTI as a form of digital carnival. However, applying carnival theory to digital culture requires attention not only to the circulation of humorous content but also to the ways in which participants engage with the meanings of the labels themselves. Self-deprecation is particularly important in this regard. Rather than simply accepting a negative classification, individuals may appropriate it through humor and use it to anticipate or deflect external judgment. Such appropriation can potentially transform a classificatory label from a basis for evaluation into a resource for self-expression and social interaction. This process does not necessarily eliminate the authority of the classification itself; instead, it raises the possibility that the meanings and social functions of labels can be renegotiated through their use. Moreover, digital carnival differs from traditional carnival in its modes of participation and circulation. Digital expressions can move across platforms and everyday social contexts, while their visibility is shaped by the technological environments in which they circulate (Lee & Wei, 2026). A conceptual account of digital carnival must therefore consider both the participatory possibilities of digital culture and the ways in which individuals reinterpret the classifications through which identity is expressed.

Against this backdrop, this article develops a conceptual interpretation of SBTI as a contemporary form of digital carnival, drawing on Bakhtin's carnival theory and scholarship on digital culture. Using SBTI as a cultural case, it examines the relationship between digital participation, self-deprecation, identity expression, and classificatory authority. The central argument is that self-deprecation can enable individuals to appropriate potentially derogatory personality labels and renegotiate their evaluative meanings, while leaving the underlying classificatory framework largely intact. To develop this argument, the article addresses three theoretical questions: (1) How can Bakhtin's notion of the "carnival square" be reconsidered in relation to participation in digital environments? (2) How do self-deprecation, humor, and parody enable the negotiation of classificatory authority? (3) How can the Bakhtinian concepts of "coronation and decrowning" explain the changing meanings of personality labels in digital environments? By addressing these questions, the article extends the conceptual discussion of digital carnival beyond participatory forms and humorous content, highlighting the tension between users' interpretive agency and the persistence of classificatory authority.

2. Literature Review

Bakhtin's theory of carnival provides a foundation for understanding the relationship between popular participation, laughter, and authority. In Rabelais and His World, Bakhtin (1984a) conceptualizes carnival as a cultural space in which official hierarchies and established meanings can be temporarily challenged through collective laughter, parody, and grotesque realism. The carnival square enables forms of interaction that blur the distinction between performers and spectators, while the ambivalent nature of carnival laughter allows degradation and renewal to coexist. In Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, Bakhtin (1984b) further develops the concept of carnivalization and the symbolic process of coronation and decrowning, through which established authority is temporarily elevated, challenged, and brought into question. Together, these concepts provide a theoretical framework for examining how digital participation reconfigures the meanings of identity labels through parody and self-deprecation, while potentially retaining the classificatory structures underlying them.

Research on digital culture has extended discussions of carnival to Internet memes, participatory humor, and online ridicule. Shifman (2013a ,2013b) conceptualizes Internet memes as cultural expressions that users imitate and transform, while Milner (2016) examines memes as sites of participatory public conversation. Such practices resemble aspects of carnival through their use of parody, repetition, and the reinterpretation of established cultural symbols. However, online humor is not inherently resistant: ridicule may challenge dominant meanings while also reproducing stereotypes and social exclusions (Phillips, 2015). Chinese-language scholarship has also extended Bakhtin's carnival theory to the study of Internet communication and digital popular culture. Ye (2006) examines the relationship between carnival principles and network communication, particularly the tensions between the ideals of equality and dialogue and the power inequalities embedded in online environments. Zhang (2018), in turn, applies carnival theory to the analysis of Chinese internet remix culture, focusing on how parody and subversive expression manifest in guichu videos. Together, these studies demonstrate the relevance of carnival theory to Chinese digital culture, while highlighting the importance of examining the specific cultural practices through which carnival-like participation is enacted.

Platform studies further demonstrate that digital participation takes place within infrastructures that shape the circulation and visibility of content. Gillespie (2010) argues that platforms are not neutral intermediaries, while Bucher (2012) shows how algorithmic systems influence users' visibility and experiences of potential invisibility. These perspectives suggest that the reach of a cultural expression cannot be explained solely by user participation; it is also conditioned by platform-mediated distribution. Accordingly, the visibility of a personality label should not be equated with a transformation of its meaning or a loss of classificatory authority.

Despite these contributions, the relationship between self-deprecation, personality classification, and the ambivalence of digital carnival remains insufficiently conceptualized across these strands of literature. This article addresses this issue through a conceptual analysis of SBTI, arguing that self-deprecation may allow users to appropriate potentially derogatory labels and renegotiate their evaluative meanings without necessarily dismantling the classificatory authority underlying them. By reconsidering the digital carnival square as a platform-mediated participatory environment and coronation and decrowning as a recurring negotiation of identity meanings, the article develops a conceptual account of digital carnival centered on the tension between the reinterpretation of classifications and their continued authority.

3. A New Mode of Collective Participation: The Multi-Spatial Dynamics of the Digital Carnival Square

Bakhtin's notion of the "public square" provides an important perspective for understanding the spatial dimension of carnival participation. In traditional carnival, the public square was not merely a physical gathering place but a shared social space in which individuals with different identities and social roles could participate, express themselves, and interact (Bennett & Woodward, 2016). With the development of digital media, this participatory space has acquired new forms. The circulation of SBTI is not confined to a single location or platform; rather, it extends through user participation, social interaction, and content circulation, forming a digitally mediated space characterized by multiple and interconnected sites of participation.

This space does not necessarily emerge from a single organized event or central actor. Instead, it develops through users' ongoing engagement with content in everyday digital environments. Unlike forms of digital participation centered on a particular livestream or scheduled event, SBTI can circulate through repeated acts of testing, sharing, and reinterpretation. It can therefore be conceptualized as a multi-spatial participatory structure organized around three interconnected processes: production, circulation, and recreation. Rather than unfolding in a strictly linear sequence, these processes overlap and reinforce one another, allowing participation to continue beyond the initial act of taking the test (Wang & Che, 2026).

At the production stage, users take the test, receive their results, and interpret or present them in relation to their own experiences. They thus become not only recipients of a classification but also participants in the production of its social meaning. SBTI results are commonly expressed through concise and recognizable personality labels, making them suitable for sharing across social media. Importantly, these labels need not retain only their original classificatory meanings. When users present them humorously or connect them to personal experiences, the labels may also serve as resources for self-expression, parody, and social interaction. This shift creates a conceptual link between digital participation and self-deprecation: a label that might otherwise be understood as an external judgment can potentially be appropriated and reinterpreted by the person to whom it is assigned.

During circulation, social media recommendation mechanisms can increase the visibility of content and expose it to audiences beyond its initial circle of participants (Thorson & Wells, 2016). SBTI's concise labels and readily recognizable formats may facilitate their repeated sharing across platforms (Liang, 2022). Circulation is therefore not simply the transmission of a fixed classification from one user to another. As labels travel between users and contexts, their meanings may be reinforced, altered, or detached from the circumstances in which they first appeared. A label's social significance can consequently depend not only on its original definition but also on how users present, interpret, and respond to it. The circulation of SBTI thus provides a context in which the relationship between classification and self-presentation can be continually renegotiated.

At the stage of recreation, users may incorporate existing labels into everyday situations, modify their wording, exaggerate their implications, or adapt them to new contexts. Such practices resemble the circulation of internet memes, in which recognizable expressions are reproduced while their forms and meanings are transformed. Through humor and parody, users may distance themselves from the literal implications of a label or turn a potentially unflattering description into a shared joke. Self-deprecation is particularly relevant here because it allows a person to participate in the interpretation of a label that might otherwise position them as an object of judgment. This does not mean that every humorous reinterpretation challenges the authority of classification. Rather, recreation creates the possibility that labels can be used in ways that exceed their initial classificatory function.

Production, circulation, and recreation are better understood as interconnected processes than as separate stages. User-generated content gains visibility through circulation, attracts further participation, and becomes material for

subsequent reinterpretation, generating new cycles of production and engagement. Through this ongoing process, SBTI develops beyond a one-time testing activity into a digitally mediated participatory space. Unlike the traditional carnival square, this digital space is not defined by physical co-presence but by the interaction of user engagement, content circulation, and meaning-making across multiple contexts. Within it, personality labels function simultaneously as classificatory categories and as resources for humor, self-deprecation, and social interaction. This participatory structure creates opportunities for users to renegotiate the evaluative meanings of digital identity labels, a question examined further in the following section.

4. Negotiating and Reconstructing Authority: Personality Classification in Digital Carnival

The circulation of SBTI raises a question about classificatory authority: when users adopt and reinterpret personality labels, does their participation challenge the authority of the classification system, or does it reproduce that authority in a more playful form? The distinction between conventional personality testing and SBTI provides a starting point for examining this question.

This transformation becomes more apparent when SBTI is compared with conventional personality tests such as MBTI (Table 1). MBTI is characterized by a relatively stable classification structure and has been disseminated through testing platforms, books, and related media over an extended period. Its primary function is to classify individuals and provide an interpretive framework for understanding personality (Quan & Rui, 2024). SBTI, by contrast, relies predominantly on social media and circulates through concise labels, emotional expressions, and meme-like content. Its low-complexity format facilitates rapid circulation, imitation, modification, and recreation by users. Personality classification is consequently transformed from a relatively stable classificatory practice into a more accessible form of participatory digital expression.

Table 1. Comparison of the Circulation of MBTI and SBTI

Dimension	MBTI (Conventional Personality Test)	SBTI (Digital Carnival Phenomenon)
Mode of circulation	Stable and sustained	Rapid and meme-like
Main media	Testing platforms, books, and related media	Social media and user-generated content
Content characteristics	Structured and classificatory	Playful, emotional, and highly malleable
Forms of participation	Individual testing and interpretation	Sharing, imitation, interaction, and recreation
Discursive characteristics	Stable and norm-oriented	Less formalized and oriented toward entertainment and interaction
Continuity	Stable circulation	Frequent and cyclical circulation

This transformation does not mean that SBTI replaces or dismantles existing personality-classification systems. Instead, users appropriate recognizable categories as cultural resources and reinterpret them through sharing, joking, and recreation. They may identify with particular labels while simultaneously using self-deprecation or parody to modify their evaluative implications. The authority of classification is therefore neither fully accepted nor entirely rejected; rather, it is renegotiated through the tension between identification and reinterpretation. Individual reinterpretations can also become collective practices through social media interaction (Blommaert & Varis, 2015). As increasing numbers of users repeat, imitate, and recreate similar labels, initially dispersed expressions begin to form a shared context of interaction. Personality labels thus become more than individual test results; they function as cultural symbols through which users express themselves, recognize others, and participate in shared forms of interaction. Within this environment, the relatively serious logic of personality classification is transformed into a more playful and open mode of communication, creating additional space for the reinterpretation of established meanings.

Overall, SBTI does not represent a direct rejection of the authority associated with personality classification. Instead, it illustrates how such authority may be renegotiated through everyday digital interaction. Personality labels retain elements of their original classificatory structure while acquiring new meanings through users' identification, joking, self-deprecation, and recreation. Digital carnival therefore does not simply eliminate existing forms of authority; rather, it creates opportunities to reinterpret the meanings and uses of classificatory labels. Among these practices, self-deprecation and parody warrant particular attention because they allow individuals to engage with potentially negative classifications through humor rather than straightforward acceptance or rejection. SBTI therefore illustrates a tension between users' interpretive agency and the persistence of classificatory authority. Users may change how personality labels are used without abandoning the categories themselves. This distinction suggests that changes in the social meaning of a label should not automatically be treated as evidence that the authority of classification has weakened. The next section examines self-deprecation as one possible mechanism through which this tension is negotiated.

5. Parody and Offense: The Power of Laughter in Digital Carnival

The preceding section established that users can reinterpret personality labels without necessarily rejecting the classificatory systems from which they derive. Laughter, as a cultural practice through which meanings are produced, circulated, and negotiated (Zou, 2020), provides a useful starting point for examining self-deprecation as a possible mechanism of such reinterpretation. Specifically, this section considers whether humorous appropriation changes the evaluative meaning of a label or instead reproduces the stereotype that makes the humor recognizable.

SBTI can be examined as a parodic engagement with the recognizable format of personality classification. By drawing on the conventions of personality tests while presenting labels through colloquial, exaggerated, and humorous expressions, it creates a tension between the appearance of systematic classification and the playful character of its content. This tension provides a basis for interpreting SBTI through the concept of parody: rather than simply rejecting personality classification, parody may reproduce its recognizable form while altering the meanings and expectations associated with it. The analytical significance of this process lies not in an assumed intention behind the test's creation, but in the relationship between the classificatory format and the humorous expressions through which its labels are communicated.

The relationship between parody and offense becomes particularly significant when personality labels carry derogatory or self-deprecating connotations. Within humorous contexts, potentially negative labels may acquire meanings beyond their classificatory functions. When individuals voluntarily apply such labels to themselves, self-deprecation may allow them to anticipate external judgment, distance themselves from its seriousness, or redirect the label toward self-expression and social interaction. A classification that might otherwise serve as a basis for evaluation can therefore be interpreted as a resource for self-presentation. However, self-deprecation does not necessarily neutralize offense or challenge existing stereotypes. Repeating a derogatory label may also reproduce the assumptions embedded within it. The potential for renegotiating evaluative meanings is thus contingent on the context in which the label is used, the interpretations of other participants, and the social relationships through which its meaning is negotiated. The key distinction is whether self-deprecation changes the evaluative implications of a label or merely changes the manner in which its existing stereotype is expressed.

The interplay between parody and offense gives laughter a dual significance within digital carnival (Matamoros-Fernández et al., 2023). Exaggeration and ridicule can create distance from established expectations, while repeated humorous expressions establish a shared repertoire through which users recognize and interact with one another. Laughter can therefore facilitate both symbolic distancing and collective affiliation. An individual may use a label to distance themselves from an unfavorable judgment while simultaneously drawing on its shared meaning to connect with others.

This process also highlights a difference between digital carnival and carnival organized around physical co-presence. In traditional carnival, collective laughter may emerge through the simultaneous participation of people gathered in a shared space. In digital environments, humorous expressions can circulate beyond their original time and location, allowing users to encounter, reuse, and reinterpret them asynchronously. In the case of SBTI, personality labels can connect users who do not share a physical setting, while their meanings remain open to modification across contexts. Platform-mediated circulation may extend the reach of these expressions, but visibility and repetition do not necessarily indicate that a label has lost its evaluative authority. Wider circulation can facilitate reinterpretation while also reproducing existing categories and stereotypes.

SBTI thus illustrates how laughter can connect individual self-presentation with collective participation in digital carnival. Parody creates distance from conventional personality classification, while self-deprecation may reposition individuals from passive recipients of labels to active participants in negotiating their meanings. Yet this shift remains partial and context-dependent: the capacity to reinterpret a label does not guarantee control over how others understand or use it. The central proposition advanced here is that self-deprecation is more likely to renegotiate classificatory meanings when humorous appropriation creates distance from the evaluative assumptions embedded in a label. When the humor depends on reaffirming the same stereotype, self-deprecation may reproduce rather than weaken its classificatory force. This proposition does not assume that either outcome necessarily follows from digital participation; instead, it identifies a distinction that can be examined through empirical research. Digital carnival thus provides a context in which the renegotiation and reproduction of classificatory meanings may occur together, rather than a process that necessarily overturns established authority.

6. Coronation and Decrowning: The Fluidity of Digital Identity

Bakhtin's concept of "coronation and decrowning" offers a framework for examining how identity meanings are reinforced and contested through social interaction (Bakhtin, 1984b). Applied to SBTI, these concepts help explain how personality labels acquire social significance while remaining open to reinterpretation. Rather than treating coronation

and decrowning as a linear sequence, this section considers them as interconnected processes through which the meanings and evaluative implications of identity labels are negotiated in digital environments.

In this context, coronation refers to the temporary reinforcement of a personality label as a recognizable identity position. When individuals use an SBTI type to describe themselves, the label provides a reference point for self-presentation and social identification. Interactions such as likes, comments, and reposts may further strengthen its social significance by facilitating collective recognition. However, coronation should not be equated with popularity or visibility alone. A label acquires identity significance through the ways in which users adopt, interpret, and incorporate it into social interaction.

Decrowning, by contrast, involves questioning or reframing the evaluative meanings attached to these identity positions. Through self-deprecation, exaggeration, and parody, users may appropriate labels with negative connotations and transform them into resources for humorous self-expression. In doing so, they participate in negotiating how such labels are understood rather than simply accepting their original implications. However, decrowning does not necessarily eliminate the category or its underlying classificatory assumptions. Its significance lies in the possibility of challenging a label's evaluative meaning while retaining its recognizability.

The relationship between these processes is particularly important in digital carnival. A label may be symbolically decrowned through parody while remaining recognizable because its original classificatory associations persist. This coexistence means that the reinterpretation of identity labels can simultaneously weaken their evaluative force and reproduce the assumptions that sustain them. Platform-mediated circulation further shapes this process. Through recommendation, reposting, and imitation, labels may gain visibility and become resources for collective identification. As they move across users and contexts, they may also be modified, exaggerated, or parodied. Such circulation can reinforce a label's temporary significance while creating opportunities for its reinterpretation, although neither outcome is guaranteed by increased visibility.

This dynamic also distinguishes digital carnival from carnival organized around physical co-presence. In digital environments, participation can be asynchronous, allowing identity labels to circulate beyond their original contexts of use. The social significance of these expressions is therefore shaped by both user interaction and the mechanisms through which content is distributed. The digital carnival square is not simply a virtual reproduction of a physical gathering place; it is a mediated environment in which participation, visibility, and the negotiation of identity meanings intersect.

The application of coronation and decrowning to SBTI thus extends the conceptual discussion of Bakhtinian carnival to platform-mediated identity practices. Rather than describing the simple rise and decline of identity labels, these concepts illuminate the recurring tension between users' capacity to reinterpret identity categories and the persistence of the classificatory structures that make them socially recognizable. Digital carnival, in this sense, does not necessarily dismantle classificatory authority but provides a context in which its meanings and implications can be continually negotiated.

7. Conclusion

This study has examined SBTI as a case through which to reconsider Bakhtinian carnival in the context of platform-mediated communication. It has explored how digital participation, personality classification, parody, self-deprecation, and "coronation and decrowning" interact in the construction and reinterpretation of identity. Rather than treating digital carnival as a direct reproduction of traditional carnival in an online environment, this study conceptualizes it as a form of cultural participation shaped by the continuous circulation and recreation of user-generated expressions.

The analysis suggests that the Bakhtinian "public square" takes a distinct form in digital environments. Participation is distributed across users, interactions, and contexts rather than confined to a single physical gathering or bounded event. Through the production, circulation, and recreation of SBTI-related content, users can share and modify personality labels, while platform-mediated mechanisms influence which expressions become visible and widely circulated. These processes extend the temporal and spatial reach of carnival-like participation, although increased visibility does not necessarily indicate a corresponding transformation in the meanings or authority of the labels being circulated.

The central theoretical contribution concerns the role of self-deprecation in negotiating classificatory authority. SBTI does not simply reject personality classification; instead, it appropriates recognizable classificatory forms and makes them available for humorous self-expression, parody, and social interaction. When individuals use potentially derogatory labels to describe themselves, they may reposition the meanings of those labels and participate more actively in interpreting their identities. However, this process does not necessarily undermine the classificatory framework itself. Self-deprecation may challenge the evaluative force of a label in one context while reproducing the stereotypes that

sustain it in another. The relationship between humorous appropriation and classificatory authority is therefore contingent rather than inherently emancipatory.

This argument also refines the interpretation of Bakhtin's "coronation and decrowning" in digital carnival. In the SBTI case, these concepts can be used to understand how the identity significance of labels is temporarily reinforced and subsequently renegotiated through circulation, parody, and recreation. Yet such processes should not be reduced to the rise and decline of popular expressions. Their theoretical significance lies in the possibility that labels can be reinterpreted without losing their classificatory force. Digital carnival may therefore sustain a recurring negotiation between users' capacity to appropriate identity categories and the persistence of the systems through which those categories become socially meaningful.

Despite its theoretical contributions, this study has several limitations. First, its analysis focuses on SBTI as a specific case of digital carnival in the Chinese social media context. The interpretations developed here may not fully capture the diversity of digital carnival practices across different platforms, cultural contexts, and user communities. Second, as a conceptual analysis, this study offers a theoretical interpretation of self-deprecation, classificatory authority, and "coronation and decrowning" rather than an empirical assessment of how users actually interpret and use SBTI labels. The proposed relationship between humorous appropriation and the renegotiation of classificatory meanings therefore remains open to further empirical examination. Third, although the discussion considers the role of platform-mediated circulation, it does not systematically examine how specific recommendation mechanisms, visibility metrics, or patterns of user interaction shape the circulation and reinterpretation of personality labels.

Future research could address these limitations through comparative studies of digital carnival across platforms and cultural contexts, as well as empirical investigations into how users employ and interpret self-deprecating labels. Such research could examine when self-deprecation challenges existing stereotypes, when it reproduces classificatory assumptions, and how these outcomes vary across interactional contexts. Further investigation into platform visibility and circulation could also clarify the conditions under which the reinforcement and reinterpretation of identity labels become more closely connected. These directions would help assess the explanatory scope of the proposed framework and further develop a contextualized understanding of Bakhtinian carnival in digital culture.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Author contributions

Dr. Sun Zhaolei was primarily responsible for the conceptualization, research design, literature review, data analysis, and manuscript drafting. Dr. Qin Tianhao was primarily responsible for research supervision, methodological guidance, interpretation of the findings, and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors contributed to the study, read and approved the final manuscript, and agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work. The authors made different but complementary contributions to the research, and no equal contribution is claimed.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Redfame Publishing.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

Open access

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/).

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

References

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984a). *Rabelais and his world*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1984b). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Beijing Daily Client. (2026, April 10). “SBTI”登上热搜，一夜刷屏的人格测试什么来头？ [SBTI trends online: What is the personality test that went viral overnight?]. Retrieved from https://news.bjd.com.cn/2026/04/10/11680104.shtml

Bennett, A., & Woodward, I. (2016). Festival spaces, identity, experience and belonging. In *The festivalization of culture* (pp. 11-26). Routledge.

Blommaert, J., & Varis, P. (2015). Conviviality and collectives on social media: Virality, memes, and new social structures. *Multilingual Margins: A journal of multilingualism from the periphery*, *2*(1), 31-45. https://doi.org/10.14426/mm.v2i1.50

Bucher, T. (2012). Want to be on the top? Algorithmic power and the threat of invisibility on Facebook. *New Media & Society, 14*(7), 1164-1180. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444812440159

Dewberry, D. R. (2026). “How much have you had to drink?” and other questions to ask the police: Reading Bakhtin vis-à-vis free speech. *Communication and Democracy*, *60*(1), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/27671127.2025.2536480

Döveling, K., Harju, A. A., & Sommer, D. (2018). From mediatized emotion to digital affect cultures: New technologies and global flows of emotion. *Social media+ society*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305117743141

Gardiner, M. (1993). Bakhtin’s carnival: Utopia as critique. In *Bakhtin: Carnival and Other Subjects* (pp. 20-47). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004455054_009

Gillespie, T. (2010). The politics of “platforms.” *New Media & Society*, *12*(3), 347-364. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809342738

Lee, T. K., & Wei, L. (2026). Carnivalesque: Staging postdigital literacy. *System*, *103905*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2025.103905

Liang, M. (2022). The end of social media? How data attraction model in the algorithmic media reshapes the attention economy. *Media, Culture & Society*, *44*(6), 1110-1131. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437221077168

Liu, Y., & Hu, G. (2026). The cage of labels: The generative mechanism, risk assessment, and governance pathways of SBTI youth subculture—An observation of youth emotional expression from MBTI testing to SBTI self-deprecation [“标签的牢笼”：SBTI 青年亚文化的生成机理、风险审视及治理路径——从 MBTI 测试到 SBTI 自嘲的青年情绪展演观察]. *青年学报 (Youth Journal), 3,* 103-111.

Matamoros-Fernández, A., Bartolo, L., & Troynar, L. (2023). Humour as an online safety issue: Exploring solutions to help platforms better address this form of expression. *Internet Policy Review*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.14763/2023.1.1677

Milner, R. M. (2016). *The world made meme: Public conversations and participatory media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262034999.001.0001

Phillips, W. (2015). *This is why we can’t have nice things: Mapping the relationship between online trolling and mainstream culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/10288.001.0001

Quan, R., & Rui, C. (2024). MBTI Assessment as Social Currency: A New Digital Cultural Phenomenon in the Meta-media Era. *Contemporary Social Sciences*, *9*(4), 53-67.

Shifman, L. (2013a). Memes in a digital world: Reconciling with a conceptual troublemaker. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *18*(3), 362-377. https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12013

Shifman, L. (2013b). *Memes in digital culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9429.001.0001

Sun, K. (2026). Abstract carnival: A study of the communication patterns and social functions of SBTI personality tests among young people [抽象狂欢：SBTI 人格测试的传播形态与青年社交功能研究]. 科技传播 (Public Communication of Science & Technology), *18*(14), 117-121. https://doi.org/10.16607/j.cnki.1674-6708.2026.14.036

Thorson, K., & Wells, C. (2016). Curated flows: A framework for mapping media exposure in the digital age. *Communication theory*, *26*(3), 309-328. https://doi.org/10.1111/comt.12087

Wang, Y. L., & Che, Z. Y. (2026). From MBTI to SBTI: Psychological motivations and guidance strategies underlying self-deprecating behavior among college students on the internet [从 MBTI 到 SBTI：大学生网络自嘲行为的心理动因及引导策略]. *文化软实力研究 (Research on Cultural Soft Power)*, *11*(4), 76-83. https://doi.org/10.19468/j.cnki.2096-1987.2026.04.007

Ye, H. (2006). Internet communication from the perspective of Bakhtin’s carnival theory [巴赫金狂欢理论视域下的网络传播]. *理论建设 (Theory Research)*, *5*, 66-68. https://doi.org/10.19810/j.issn.1007-4767.2006.05.020

Zhang, L. (2018). Subversion and reconstruction: An interpretation of guichu phenomena from the perspective of carnival theory [颠覆与重构：狂欢理论视域下的鬼畜现象解读]. *视听 (Audio-Visual)*, *6*, 54-55. https://doi.org/10.19395/j.cnki.1674-246x.2018.06.031

Zou, S. (2020). Beneath the bitter laughter: Online parodies, structures of feeling and cultural citizenship in China. *Global Media and Communication*, *16*(2), 131-147. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766519900303