

Why is “K-pop” popular in China: Research on the consumption behavior patterns in the New Media Environment

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Abstract

With the entertainment industry and the prevalence of consumerism today, the birth of the fan consumer culture in recent years has shown more and more powerful influence, fan economic market is growing. The emergence of new media communication channels, so that the emergence of new ways of communication, and then to provide a broader fan consumption exchange, trading platform. “Hanyu” also has many loyal fans in China, especially “K-POP” fans. This paper takes the “K-POP” fans in China as the main research object, studies their consumption behavior, analyzes the causes of this phenomenon and the factors that affect the consumption behavior of fans, further enrich the research results in the field of cultural consumption, explore the unique advantages of fan consumption culture for better manufacturing of Chinese products and dissemination of Chinese culture.

Keywords

New online media, fans, consumer behavior KPOP.

1. Introduction

In the 1990s, the Korean Wave began to spread. In recent years, changes in the political and cultural context, as well as cultural disputes between the two countries, have made the domestic fan consumption environment more complicated. On the other hand, China's Idol industry is also developing rapidly, the number of fans willing to continue paying for “K-POP” despite offering more safety options to young Chinese has only increased.

The study of fans and their culture arose in the west in the late 1980s. Henry Jenkins' (1992) *Poachers of Text: TV Fans and Participatory Culture* is considered the cornerstone of fan research [1]. The concept of the fan economy was first proposed by John Fisk in his book *The Fan Cultural Economics* [2]. There are several mainstream theories that define the fan economy. Fisk summed up the main characteristics of the fan economy as “Preference and differentiation”, “Productivity and participation” and “Capital accumulation”. Jenkins defines fan culture as participatory culture and believes that the business model based on fan participation behavior is fan economy.

From the perspective of the new media environment, here are some ideas. China's Huang chuxin and Guo haiwei in “China's media integration development problems and countermeasures,” a brief account of the fans from one-way consumption to achieve interactive participation, fans become an important part of the economic marketing closed-loop process [3]. Hao Yu and Ma Yuhuan point out that there are many problems in fan economy, such as “Fast food”, lack of follow-up consumption power, single operation and profit model [4]. Li Song also pointed out that there are some problems in the text construction of the fan economy at present in his article “The capital logic of the fan economy in China and its virtuous circle” [5]. Based on this article, the purpose is to provide a new perspective for the current study of fan culture, enrich the research results in the field of cultural consumption, and provide some reference for

the production and marketing of domestic cultural products, in order to promote the healthy development of fan culture and fan economy, so that the community can face up to the positive energy transmitted by fans in cultural consumption, to excavate the unique advantage of fan consumption culture in promoting the national cohesion of young people and spreading Chinese culture.

2. The consumer behavior of the “K-POP” fan community

2.1. Consumer content

2.1.1. Music

Due to the introduction of copyright, fans in mainland China can usually buy the physical album. In South Korea, the return of idols will participate in major television stations “Hit song”, which is like “Hit”, that is, the public performance of new songs on television. A big factor in determining whether a regression is effective is a single-digit number of “Hit songs,” and getting one involves a number of criteria: Album Sales, broadcast ratings, live polls, and audio sources, in order to show support for Your Idol, do your best to buy the album as a major part of your fan base.

Table 1 18 June 2024 popularity ballad one settlement score

	Supernova AESPA	Armageddon AESPA	How Sweet New Jeans
Record sales (10%)	664	664	14
SNS (30%)	1656	3000	739
Advance voting (5%)	0	130	48
On-air score (10%)	91	0	432
Real-time voting (5%)	500	25	277
Source (55%)	5500	2788	4707
Total score	8411	6607	6217

2.1.2. Idols around

The term “Peripheral”, which originated in Japan, now generally refers to idol-related products made and sold directly by brokers or authorized by brokers to be sold or co-sold by other companies. It usually includes a support stick, a support card, a small card, a game week, a DVD, a doll, etc... In addition, in addition to the official periphery launched by the brokerage company, the domestic fan support stations will also create “Station Week”, which is not for profit, the person in charge would usually use the profits from the sale of the idol for publicity and support activities.

2.1.3. Endorsing products

Hollywood first discovered this “1 + 1 > 2” money-making model. When the idol has a certain fame and influence, the brands will be signed with them, let them endorse their products, attract fans to consumption. Fans sometimes buy products endorsed by their idols not because they need them, but simply because they are endorsed by their idols.

2.2. Consumer motivation

2.2.1. Alternative satisfaction with self-actualization

Maslow's theory of “Self-actualization” holds that the process of self-actualization is the development or discovery of the real self, the development of existing or potential capabilities. In this context, idolatry can be seen as the behavior tendency retained by adults in the process

of continuous evolution, which is the projection and amplification of people's feelings and beliefs, it is essentially a realization, personalization and idealization of the deep self.

Freud said, "In order to endure life, we cannot do without buffers. There may be three such measures: a powerful diversion, which blinds us to pain; a substitute satisfaction, which relieves our pain; and an intoxicating method, which dulls and numbs our pain." So, People's own ideals rest on stars who can replace them. People subconsciously turn the desire for self-realization into the pursuit of stars, from the pursuit of stars to obtain an alternative satisfaction [6]

2.2.2. A sense of community

"Fans" bring together groups of people with the same experiences, interests, or opinions to express themselves in symbolic ways, by re-encoding and decoding the transmission symbols, it reinterprets the meaning it represents and spreads and uses it among the same circles, making it a new type of symbol system with special group characteristics and unique cultural significance.

Baudrillard argues that the interaction between an individual and an object is based not only on the use value or function of the object, but also as a way of communicating with others [7]. Every consumer in the consumer society is not isolated, but related to each other, consumers identify different goods through the symbol to distinguish and then integrate into the group. Therefore, consumption is also the key for consumers to integrate into the fan base and enhance the sense of belonging to the group.

3. Consumer behavior characteristics of K-POP fans

3.1. High-cost mania

High cost is first reflected in the objective distance [8]. In recent years, the activities of Korean idol in the Chinese mainland have been limited, K-POP fans in China must choose to go to Hong Kong, Macau, Japan, South Korea, Southeast Asia and other areas for offline activities.

Second, there are additional costs associated with cultural consumption. Postage is even higher than the product itself when buying a physical album or merchandise. At the same time, the language barrier is a natural barrier. But that doesn't stop K-Pop fans in China from spending more on their idols than in other countries, for "Self-fulfilling alternative gratification." Fans will love, support are projected into the high consumption, as a "Long-distance" compensation. China loses, refers to the K-POP idol in the physical album, peripheral and other products in China sales. It is an important measure of the popularity and commercial value of a star or team in the Chinese market. K-pop fans in China have a huge buying power in terms of albums, and in many groups over half of all album sales are made by Chinese fans. For example, Blackpink member Kim jisoo's SOLO album "Me," released on March 31,2023, sold 1,172,351 albums in its debut, of which 884,736 were lost, accounting for 75.47 percent.

Table 2 China's losses as of November 5,2023

Ranking	Name	Lost	Album	Date of return
1	Kim Jisoo	884736	ME	March 31,2023
2	BAEKHYUN	664470	Bambi	March 10,2021
3	Jung Kook	491176	Golden	November 3,2023
4	BAEKHYUN	480630	Delight	May 25,2020
5	KARINA	476047	My WORLD	May 8,2023
6	THE 8	456453	FML	April 24,2023

7		433543	Seventeen HEAVEN	October 23,2023
8	Hwang Hyun- Jin	418343	5-START	June 2,2023
9	Choi Yeon Jun	394165	TNC: Temptation	January 27,2023
10	Zhang Hao	380800	Youth IN THE SHADE	July 10,2023

3.2. Consumption of philatelic goods

Philatelic consumption refers to the fan consumers like to collect favorite brands of different series of products or souvenirs. Collecting is an important part of fan culture, but “There is a tendency to be more inclusive rather than exclusionary-the focus is not on getting a few good things, but on accumulating as many as possible”. Fans spend philatelic and museum-style, not in the spirit of refinement but in the spirit of abundance. Is based on the fan identity to express the idol and related products around the love and loyalty [9].

K-POP fans' craze is more about their love of the idol itself than their appreciation of the aesthetics of the album's design. As a result, fans are in an irrational state of consumption, buying all the idol-related products they can get, at a pace that is almost identical to the speed at which the company sells its products.

Second, in addition to the surrounding stamp collection, many fans also tend to buy a collection of value around. Such as limited, limited peripheral products. Most of these peripherals are expensive, scarce, and hard to buy.

3.3. Ceremonial expression

These include the unique dress and language of the fan community, which conveys feelings of loyalty at ceremonies, and the ritual of sex in celebration of idol-related events, concerts, and meet-and-greets. For example, when watching a concert, fans will choose to wear a color with the aid of the help stick for decoration, their own production materials to be distributed offline.

3.4. Rational addiction

Citing the rational addiction theory of economics to analyze, the consumption behavior of fans belongs to habit-forming consumption, it does not conform to the economics of “Diminishing returns to marginal utility” here is a “Diminishing returns to marginal utility” characteristics. As far as fans are concerned, releasing their pursuit and yearning for idols in the process of consuming peripheral products can give them inner solace, such a compensation mechanism encourages fans to consume “Drugs” like the general consumption of peripheral products addiction. The author's friend, in 2023 to a Korean boy band spent nearly 100,000 yuan, and not satisfied with the status quo. Leaving aside this rather exaggerated example, the average monthly spending of K-POP fans around them was also around 300-500 Yuan. Even during the blank period, they would keep buying products that they had not bought before as a collection, to collect stamps.

4. Conclusion

China's K-pop fan base has shown great spending power. At present, this kind of consumer culture is no longer unique to this group, began to widely affect other fan groups, fan economic prosperity.

Today, fans are no longer passive consumption, but the idol-centered, showing great initiative, creativity and self-organization. Therefore, we should face up to the economic operation of fans

in all kinds of chaos, but also should use an objective and inclusive view of the new generation of fans, not to generalize[10].

As a kind of industrial economy, the fan economy also needs to constantly perfect its development mode, give it moderate and loose development space, promote the maturity of our country's fan economy development mode, promote fan economy to create a bright future of connection, sharing and cooperation[11].

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