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Discuss the Following Statement: 'Fans' Creativity is Valuable to The Media and Cultural Industry

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the growing impact of fan culture on the media and cultural sectors of East Asia, with a specific emphasis on China, Japan, and South Korea. The initial step is differentiating between the concepts of 'idols' and 'stars', whereby idols are positioned as a distinct subcategory within the entertainment sector. These individuals are frequently cultivated through talent competitions or prominent entertainment conglomerates. This study examines the economic viability and artistic contributions of fans within the entertainment and arts industries, with a particular focus on their involvement in the "fan economy". This article examines the manner in which fans participate in symbolic consumption, social identity construction, and the creation of fan-generated content, thereby making substantial contributions to the achievements of their heroes and affiliated enterprises. Furthermore, the research delves into the ethical and legal complexities inherent in fan cultures, specifically focusing on issues related to the infringement of intellectual property rights. The results indicate that individuals in East Asia who are fans of certain media are not passive observers, but rather engage actively in influencing the media and cultural environments through their emotional commitments and creative manifestations. This change highlights the imperative for media and cultural businesses to acknowledge and utilize the potential of fans' creativity in order to achieve long-term growth and foster innovation. The paper finishes by emphasizing the significance of maintaining a delicate equilibrium between regulatory measures and cultural sensitivities in order to fully use the potential of the fan economy.

1. Introduction

In recent years, East Asia, led by China, Japan, and South Korea, has seen a rise in the influence of idols with large fan bases who have been nurtured through talent competitions or by large entertainment companies [1].

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1.1 Idol And Star: A Conceptual Clarification

1.1.1 The idol phenomenon in east Asian entertainment

What is the idol exactly? This subject cannot be discussed without a precise definition. The common belief is that idols constitute a distinct subgenre within the entertainment industry, distinct from the domain of regular personalities. However, for the purposes of this article, it is necessary to distinguish between "idols" and "stars."

1.1.2 Varieties and categories of Idols

Artists in film, music, or sports who have achieved widespread acclaim without commencing their careers on reality television talent shows are sometimes referred to as "stars." Nevertheless, there are numerous varieties of idols. This includes groups such as H.O.T and S.E.S, who debuted in the early to mid-2000s, and groups such as Girls' Generation (SNSD) and Super Junior, who debuted after 2006.

1.2 The Impact of Idols on The Fan Economy

1.2.1 Idol influence and fan culture development

The essay will examine the commercial potential of idol admirers as well as their contribution to the entertainment and arts industries through their unique creativity. This section will explore how idols' influence on their fans and the entertainment industry has led to significant structural changes within the industry.

2. Background

Consider the East Asian nation of China. In modern China, it is evident that admirers of renowned actors and musicians wield considerable influence. These celebrities are referred to as "traffic celebrities" and "influencer celebrities" in Chinese media. Because in their culture, "traffic" is synonymous with pervasive media coverage and interest in an individual or event. In China's entertainment industry, a celebrity's "traffic" is measured through television ratings, box office performance, social media followers and engagement, and general public interest. A celebrity with a large following and the ability to promote other artists and businesses is a formidable force in the entertainment industry [2]. Using 2019's pre-"Double 11" e-commerce marketing as an example, People's Daily Online in 2019 reported that a 1cosmetics company engaged an idol to be their spokeswoman for only one hour, and as a result, sales surpassed 40 million yuan. In three minutes, pre-sales of 30,000 units of another brand of common items endorsed by a celebrity sold out. In addition, an electric toothbrush recommended by a celebrity generated approximately 20 million yuan in pre-sales revenue in only three days. These examples illustrate the influence of followers as consumers. According to previous studies [3-5], fans are individuals who find social and emotional fulfilment through structured forms of fan contact. Fans contribute to the construction of both the subject of their fandom and its collective labels. Furthermore, fans are motivated by their emotions when they engage in activities such as purchasing merchandise, joining fan groups, and participating in online discussions and other forms of interaction with other fans [6]. Fan culture has its roots in popular culture and is a complex cultural and social phenomenon. The disorder is characterized by a pathological fixation on a single physical or abstract object [7]. The term "textual poachers" to refer to individuals who pilfer texts without authorization [8]. Participation and investment in popular phenomena by cultural consumers are comparable to the psychological feedback experienced by hunters who shoot at one location before moving to another. The sensory experience of hunting and the subsequent sense of accomplishment represent one aspect, while the poachers' fervor and speed after violating "right phase" norms represent another. This implies that devotees turn to their idols

to fulfil a psychological need in their lives. Consequently, during the process of idolatrous desire, idols simply fulfil emotional needs and provide effective, positive emotional value at the appropriate time. By speaking candidly and honestly about difficult topics and disseminating optimistic messages, idols provide emotional support to their followers. This may help followers develop a strong emotional attachment to their preferred celebrity. When admirers donate to their idols, they may believe that they are investing in a shared vision of the future [9]. This is due to the fact that these fans are not only devoted devotees, but also willing to financially support their idols [10]. Some fans may feel a strong sense of community and connection with their idols and other fans, and this sense of belonging motivates them to purchase merchandise featuring their preferred personalities. In the context of Idol's fan culture, symbolic consumption behavior may be observed [11]. The inclusion of arbitrarily selected member image cards with each album has become a prominent method for K-pop admirers to demonstrate their support. In addition to serving as symbols of supporters' loyalty and devotion to their preferred artists, the aforementioned objects also serve as indicators of their uniqueness and status within the fan community. Collecting chits of all the members of a K-pop group is one method for followers to acquire respect and status within the K-pop community. In addition to demonstrating support for their role models, the aforementioned actions enable the youth to articulate who they are and where they belong [12]. Fans invest a substantial amount of time and money in the pursuit of these items. It represents an investment in culture and a strategy for being an active member of the fan community [13]. Understanding the "idol effect" and how it influences consumers requires an appreciation of the intersection of devotion, symbolic consumption, and social identity. The term "idol effect" describes a marketing strategy in which renowned individuals are utilized to increase interest in related products [14]. This affects how consumers perceive a brand and its products. This strategy is effective in the fan economy, where fans also function as consumers. Supporting one's idols financially demonstrates one's emotional devotion and commitment. Purchasing an artist's merchandise is an excellent method to demonstrate support. Buying a devotee item serves a dual purpose. In the first place, it fosters a more intimate relationship between supporters and their preferred celebrities. Second, it provides a means for followers to directly support their idols financially. The effect is substantial. As a result of Kris Wu's involvement with Burberry, rumor has it that brand sales and recognition skyrocketed. According to reports, BTS member V's support for Gucci helped the fashion house acquire market share. There is potential to increase brand awareness and sales in fan-based economies by utilizing the idol effect. It is feasible that the "idol effect" could motivate followers to take action. Purchasing merchandise that contributes to idol culture brings admirers closer together. Fan culture is vital to the welfare of the fan community and fandom economy [15]. A combination of the idol effect, social identification, and symbolic consumption behaviors associated with fan culture motivates fans to purchase merchandise [16]. This article illustrates how companies can leverage the influence of personalities to attract and profit from fan-based commerce. Particularly, the endorsement of fashion products by celebrities or "idols" has been profoundly impacted by the fan economy. In an effort to emulate their idols or demonstrate their support, admirers frequently purchase items recommended by famous people. Consistent with Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital" [17], which states that people consume certain items to enhance their social status within a group, we observe the above phenomena. Companies select influential and alluring celebrities to endorse their products, capitalizing on the celebrities' large fan bases to increase product sales and visibility [18]. It was stated that Puma's sales increased substantially after the renowned K-pop band BTS endorsed the brand. Increased sales are predominantly attributable to the large number of individuals who like BTS. The investigation revealed that the promoted product sold out within a few hours of Chinese celebrity Lu Han

becoming the spokesperson for Cartier. These examples illustrate the importance of the fan economy to the success of businesses and how it influences consumer behaviour and economic growth.

3. Fashion communication is important in the consumer economy

Due to the proliferation of social media, superstars have a greater impact than ever before in the modern era. Sharing, remarking, and liking all play significant roles in the world of fashion communication, and the internet platform provides a venue for enthusiasts to do so [19]. This perspective is consistent with a study with theoretical framework of the "Network Society," which accentuates the influence of digital networks on cultural and economic events [20]. BTS's fashion sense influences global fashion trends because it is extensively discussed and shared on social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Despite its antiquated nature, print media still carries significant weight in this context. Idols have a significant impact on the world of fashion communication, as evidenced by the increased sales of magazines featuring idols. In 2017, the issue of "Bazaar Men" featuring Kris Wu on the cover was rapidly sold out, demonstrating the immense purchasing power of fans and the profound impact of idols on print media. Both new and traditional forms of media have highlighted the significance of the fan economy in propelling fashion communication. The production of fan-generated content, such as fan literature, fan music, and fan art, is becoming an increasingly vital aspect of the fan economy in East Asia. This dynamic has permeated popular culture with innovative concepts. According to Jenkins' concept of "Participatory Culture," which emphasizes the role of enthusiasts in the creation and dissemination of content [21], the remark in question is accurate. The prevalence of fan-generated content that incorporates the iconography and stories associated with their preferred personalities infuses popular media with new, fan-centric perspectives. However, it is essential to recognize that such practices typically exist in a legal grey area. Concerns have been raised regarding the potential infringement of copyrighted materials due to their use in fan fiction. Despite being an obvious violation of copyright laws, the fan-made manga phenomenon known as Doujinshi has become widely tolerated in Japanese culture. Additionally, some user-generated content may contain mature themes, which can limit its audience and raise ethical concerns.

A Comprehensive Analysis of the Philanthropic Endeavors of Idols: Charity work is a prevalent practice among East Asian superstars, which may enhance their public standing and even influence the moral compass of their followers. Fans may therefore participate in these activities, which serve a social purpose. The aforementioned event is consistent with a study assertion that the media can influence our identities and relationships [22]. The renowned Korean music group BTS collaborated with UNICEF to introduce the "Love Myself" initiative in an effort to protect children and adolescents from violent offences. Many individuals around the world have supported the "Love Myself" campaign by hosting their own fundraising events and donating to various causes [23]. It's a good example of how idols' philanthropic efforts can inspire their followers to become involved in political and social issues and to develop an appreciation for the values shared by others.

4. Conclusions

The fan economy in East Asia, particularly in China, Japan, and South Korea, has had a significant impact on the media and cultural milieu of the region. The inventiveness and influence of admirers distinguish the phenomenon at hand, which has far-reaching implications for amusement, fashion communication, and charitable endeavors. The growth and success of affiliated businesses can be directly attributed to the emotive connection supporters have with their idols, as evidenced by their financial contributions and purchases of affiliated merchandise. Due to the positive energy generated by the relationship between idols and their followers, fans produce original content and participate

in social activities. The popular culture is enhanced by the introduction of new concepts and positive values.

Infringement of intellectual property rights and other ethical issues are only two examples of the difficulties that may arise in the fan economy. It is essential, therefore, to implement regulatory measures while also considering potential cultural effects. The fan economy represents a paradigm shift in the manner in which we interact with and analyze the media, publishing, and fashion industries. Fans are now valuable assets in numerous disciplines because they are no longer passive observers but rather active contributors and creators. For the future development and success of the media and cultural sector, it is crucial to comprehend and utilize the inventiveness and loyalty of fans.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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