

Research on The Development of Fan Consumption of Celebrity Music Works

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Abstract

Compared to the 20th century, when the Frankfurt School was born, the development of the Internet has liberated consumers of cultural products from a state of passive acceptance. It shifts to actively selecting and interpreting the content of cultural products, and the emergence of the fan economy is a testimony to this shift. This study takes fan consumption of celebrity music products as the research object. Using the Korean group EXO as a case study, the study was conducted using the content analysis method and the case study method. Based on the cultural idol theory and the symbolic theory of consumption, the study screens the review data of EXO's two albums for coding and combines them with fan interviews to find that fans' consumption of music products is mainly based on self-expression and identity based on entertainment needs, emotional needs, and musical needs. Its interaction with idol texts possesses spontaneous action, creativity, and reproduction of textual content. Thus, this paper proposes a development strategy for the fan economy.

Keywords

Text; Content analysis; Idols; Fan consumption.

1. Introduction

1.1. Research background

As times change, looking at the start and development of Hallyu, marketing strategies are constantly pushing out new ideas, and star concept planning and derivative consumer products are being replaced one by one. From the development of support sticks to the crazy rise of album sales, and then to the flurry of inflated prices of derivative products, the strategies of entertainment companies and the consumer psychology of fans have changed one by one. Around 2010, it was difficult for album sales to break the 100w mark; but as more and more K-pop groups have been implemented since then, today's album sales are shooting straight up into the millions. The reason for this is not only the increased spending power of fans, but there are more reasons to be discovered, such as the expansion of audience coverage. After analyzing the reasons and marketing strategy trends, not only can entertainment companies grasp the direction and path of future marketing strategies, but fans can also gain insight into the layers of the system behind idols' deployment. The purpose of this study is to look beyond physical albums to digital albums and explore the reasons for the soaring rise in album sales.

Henri Tajfel's (1919-1982) social identity theory argues that "the individual recognizes that he (or she) belongs to a particular social group and also recognizes the emotional and value significance that being a member of the group brings to him (or her)." Because fans are all in a common "small group," they change emotionally over the achievements of the same idol and then recognize the value they created in the idol's achievements. Ultimately, based on this sense of identity, they continue to enjoy their status as fans and fulfill their obligation to contribute to their idols. Denis McQuail (1935-2017) argues that "audiences are a product of both the social environment (which leads to the same cultural interests, comprehension, and

information needs) and a specific mode of media supply." Fans, as the largest audience group of idol activities, share the same interests, identities, and goal pursuits under the influence of the rice circle culture. Analysis of such a fan audience group enables the reasons for changes in album sales to be derived from the psychological level of fan behavior.

An analysis of the phenomenon of soaring album sales in the last decade can also bring out many practical aspects. 1. Behind the soaring album sales, there is also the rapid expansion and development of the fan base and fan economy. The common consumption of the fan base is involved in the development of changes at the economic level. The entertainment industry is an important part of economic development, especially in South Korea, where Hallyu culture (entertainment consumption) has been developed as one of the national pillar industries. In the context of the strong implementation of Hallyu idol groups in recent years and their rapid spread on the Internet, fans have invested heavily in idols' albums and support derivatives for text consumption, and the amount invested is even rising sharply at an alarming rate. An analytical study based on this can delve into the organizational consumption operation of fan groups and the fan group economy. 2. The study of album sales trends and fan group economics can bring feedback to entertainment companies. On the surface, it is the fan groups that are competing with each other for idol scores, but in reality, it is the entertainment companies that are really exploring new marketing strategies to seek to maximize their own interests and eventually gain a place in the market, especially in the context of the Korean entertainment industry being monopolized by individual entertainment companies. By studying the changes in consumption trends in recent years, entertainment companies will be able to produce more competitive products and strategies based on the positive relationship between consumers' desired idol texts and expected consumption goals, starting with the album design concept itself and fan consumption psychology.

This study uses the content analysis method as a method to study the main concepts of cultural idols and the theory of consumer society and symbolic economy. Cultural idols refer to when culture and commerce are combined, and commodities are worshipped and consumed avidly by humans. Idols are produced in this process, and fans will embrace the produced idol texts and consume them to achieve the desired goal. The theory of consumer society and symbolic economy suggests that symbols and even everything around human beings, in addition to ordinary objects, begin to be consumed by human beings. This theory believes that the meaning of the object is reflected in the consumed object, and being consumed is the final destination of the object.

1.2. Literature related to fan behavior and economy

In terms of fan economy, the main studies include: Qian Zhang (2018) analyzes how fan communities are constructed from the perspectives of community imagination, value scales, and power relations through a study of "flow fresh meat" idols and "fan groups". He argues that in the music streaming environment, "fan-participatory" production is being taken over by the commercial subjects of streaming media, and the subjective initiative of fan groups is further weakened. Qian Zhang heavily analyzes the repetitive consumption of digital albums. He points out that fans are not just "cultural dupes" but create a culture in the process of repeatedly buying digital albums. Fans forward and give them as "gifts" to gain recognition and satisfaction through self-empowerment. [1] Xinran Tang, Yidan Xu, and Zhenyue Chen (2021) analyze that the "celebrity effect" in the new era affects college students' consumption from the perspective of the fan economy and argue that the "celebrity effect" and the "fan economy" coexist. Among them, the cooperation between new media platforms and celebrity groups, the mutual influence among fans, the achievements that idols can achieve from their consumption behavior, the goal of group belonging and self-identity, and personal emotional attachment become the mainstream reasons for college students' consumption and make them the main promoters of

fan economy. [2] Cheng'ai He (2017) combines Internet data from the music industry to study the impact of Sina Weibo fan ratings on Korean music album sales. He considered Sina Weibo as an important channel for the socialization of major domestic fans based on three major advantages: a large amount of information, high timeliness of information dissemination, and high impact on society. The data calculation comparing EXO's EX'ACT and Bulletproof Boy Group's Fancy led to the conclusion that album sales and fan behavior tired reviews are related, but fan attitude-type reviews have an unstable effect on albums. [3]

1.3. Star production (idol raising) related literature

In terms of star production and idol formation, the main studies include: Taking the group EXO as an example, Shuyan Chen (2016) argues that entertainment companies will tailor the packaging of artists differently and summarizes four strategic features: 1) artists are generally young, with high plasticity and greater prospects in later stages; 2) Comprehensive and strict training with greater strength; 3) The diversity and uniqueness of the group attract the masses and reduces the economic risk of the agency; 4) High investment by the company. [4] Wei Tan and Linyuan Nie (2009) assert that television can not only serve as a platform for discovering new talent but also as a medium for commercial promotion and activities. The process of television broadcasting can be seen as a win-win process; stars can accumulate a certain amount of popularity from the program, and the program can attract viewers through the big-hitting stars. In this process, the star's agent also plays a multi-faceted role. The agents commercialize the artists through discovery, cultivation, packaging, and management and build a complete star mechanism. [5]

2. Current Situation and Analysis of Music Consumption of Kpop Fans

2.1. Text collection

The text content extraction is performed first. This time, the content text is the comments of some songs in the comment section of EXO's two recent paid albums, DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING and OBSESSION in QQ Music. Song comments are the most intuitive reflection of the audience group and can reflect the true feedback of the song among the masses. Checking and filtering the comments in the comment section under the QQ Music paid albums not only depicts the audience of this paid album but also grasps the intuitive evaluation and feelings of the masses about the songs.

After filtering according to the type of reviews, shorter, more repetitive, and irrelevant reviews were excluded, and 21 reviews of DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING and 27 reviews of OBSESSION were collected. A total of 48 comments were collected for the two albums, for a total of 48 analysis samples.

2.2. Data analysis and extraction

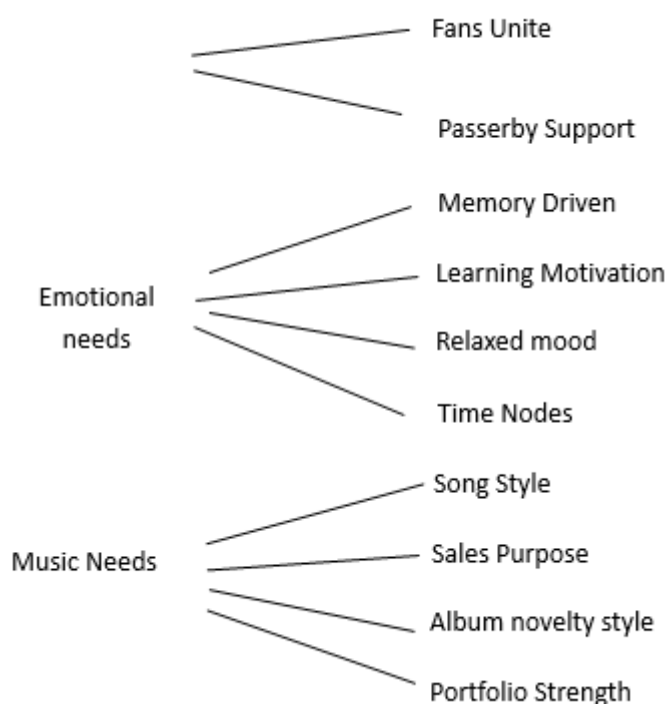
The analysis unit was used to analyze the song comments by splitting them into subwords so as to perform subword filtering and frequency calculation. The 21 comments on DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING and 27 comments on OBSESSION were stored in txt text format, and then the text was imported into ROST software that can perform text content processing for analysis to obtain the subword text and word frequency text. The results were counted, and it was possible to obtain 81 for DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING (see Table 1) and 83 for OBSESSION (see Table 2), for a total of 164 analysis units.

Table 1. Analysis unit of DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING

Serial number. Participle/word frequency	14. Happiness/3	28.2 years/2	42. Senior year/1	56. Struggle/1	70. The Great Trend/1
1. Return/12	15. Experience/3	29. Youth/2	43. Omnipotence/1	57. Do your best/1	71. Sales/1
2. Album/8	16. Ally/3	30. Bohyun/2	44. Trends/1	58. Strength/1	72. As always/1
3. High school entrance exams/5	17. Candidates/3	31. The end of suffering/2	45. The Builder/1	59. Circulation/1	73. Gift/1
4. Nine years/5	18. Multi-year/2	32. brand new/2	46. Shock/1	60. unknown/1	74. Meaning/1
5. Portfolio/5	19. Memory/2	33. Refueling/2	47. Smooth/1	61. Happy/1	75. Charisma/1
6. Forever/5	20. bumpy/2	34. Soprano/2	48. Music/1	62. All-round/1	76. Overcome all difficulties/1
7. Mood/4	21. Stage/2	35. Believe/2	49. Global/1	63. Fit/1	77. Unprecedented/1
8. Fans/4	22. Side by side/2	36. Congratulatory gift/2	50. Concert/1	64. Good to hear/1	78. Annual/1
9. Idol/4	23. Singer/2	37. Lyrics/1	51. Groups/1	65. Good wishes/1	79. Ranking/1
10. Achievements/4	24. Future/2	38. Song/1	52. Giant Wave/1	66. Expectations/1	80. Members/1
11. Effort/4	25. Follow/2	39. Miracle/1	53. Solidarity/1	67. Shocking/1	81. Growth/1
12. Acquisition/3	26. Invincible/2	40. Confidence/1	54. Future/1	68. Radiant/1	
13. Time lapse/3	27. Time/2	41. Congratulations/1	55. Proud/1	69. Conceit/1	

Table 2. Analysis unit of OBSESSION

Serial number. Participle/word frequency	14. Perfection/2	28. Mass/2	42. Strange/1	56. Growing up/1	70. Future/1
1. Brother/8	15. Rhythm/2	29. Heart/2	43. Effort/1	57. unfolding/1	71. Sincerity/1
2. Style/7	16. Try/2	30. Mains/2	44. forever/1	58. Full force/1	72. Fresh/1
3. Album/7	17. Happiness/2	31. Sound/2	45. Unique/1	59. Male group/1	73. New Wave/1
4. Good to hear/6	18. Passerby/2	32. Radio Station/2	46. Strong/1	60. Happy/1	74. Curiosity/1
5. Ally/6	19. Strength/2	33. Comfortable/1	47. Melody/1	61. Trend/1	75. Surprise/1
6. Time/5	20. Drumbeat/2	34. Make money/1	48. Enjoyment/1	62. Harness/1	76. Ideal/1
7. Return/4	21. Dance music/2	35. Wishes/1	49. Market/1	63. Guardianship/1	77. Fate/1
8. Companionship/3	22. Prelude/2	36. Spend/1	50. Advanced/1	64. luminous/1	78. Expectations/1
9. Fashion/3	23. Rhythm/2	37. sales/1	51. High School Exam/1	65. Dance/1	79. Heat/1
10. attraction/3	24. Warmth/2	38. Going to school/1	52. Beat/1	66. Dance/1	80. Star chasing/1
11. Purchase/3	25. Sales/2	39. Going to work/1	53. Voice/1	67. wonderful/1	81. Voice/1
12. First time/3	26. Wu Shihun/2	40. Lyrics/1	54. confession/1	68. confused/1	82. As always/1
13. Faith/2	27. Persistence/2	41. Miracle/1	55. Shock/1	69. Baekhyun/1	83. Story/1



2.3. Analysis of fan demand and preference coding results

Through the above content analysis, a total number of 310 text analysis results can be obtained. Among them, the order of demand in the comments section of the two albums is music demand (123) > entertainment demand (97) > emotional demand (90). Some suggestions for targeted strategies can be made to entertainment companies based on the above data.

3. Recommendations and Countermeasures

1. Continue to promote innovation in song styles and maintain the positioning of idol groups. Given that music demand has the highest percentage of the three fan demand text analysis results, it is recommended that entertainment companies focus first and foremost on the musical quality of albums and songs. If the albums are of high quality and meet public expectations, then there is bound to be a positive proportional increase in fans and other consumers to purchase the albums, contributing to album sales growth. On this basis, as society and culture, and aesthetics change, the company cannot guarantee that the original songs and concepts of the group will be positioned to meet the changing needs of the times and the expanding audience. Therefore, it needs to continue to explore the potential of the group and develop a more diversified repertoire and musical concepts.

2. Maintain the amount of practice that is expected of a trainee to ensure smooth singing and performance. The strength of the group is an important factor in supporting the demand for music. The entertainment industry is highly mature in Korea and is known worldwide for its rigorous trainee requirements and training. Even after a group has successfully debuted and gained a foothold in the mass market, it is still necessary to maintain a certain amount of training to ensure the quality of stage performances.

3. More fan benefits or peripherals are implemented to consolidate fans and common people. Entertainment demand is the second highest percentage in text analysis, and fans play the lion's share of it. It is well known that in the case of stable combinations, most of the sales come from long-term fans. Therefore, if an entertainment company wants a group to flourish for a long

time, it must maintain the number of fans and even keep absorbing new ones. Then, during the gap period when the group is not releasing albums, the company needs to implement some new forms of peripheral products or fan benefits (such as combining the group's image with daily necessities, food, or apparel) to stabilize the fans' sentiment and at the same time widen the possible channels to attract passersby to consume and transform into fans.

4. Pay attention to the important time points and select the right time to release the album. Although emotional demand accounts for the lowest percentage of textual analysis results among the three demands, it is also a component that cannot be ignored. In the analysis results of the two albums, many analysis units mentioned the words "college entrance exam", "senior high school", "candidate", etc., reflecting that many teenagers are interested in the release of the group's album because it coincides with a major event in their lives (e.g., the release of the album). This reflects the fact that many teenagers see the album as a motivation for their struggle because the release of the group's album coincides with a major life event (e.g., college entrance exams). Releasing an album on such a date essentially constitutes a win-win situation for both the fans and the group and the company, as the group and the company can build up their fan base and reap the benefits. Therefore, choosing a suitable date to release an album can have a significant positive impact on boosting album sales.

4. Conclusion

This paper uses content analysis to analyze two paid albums of EXO within QQ Music, DON'T FIGHT THE FEELING and OBSESSION. By subjecting user comments to comment disassembly, word frequency calculation, and text result analysis, the order of users' main purchasing needs is derived as music needs > entertainment needs > emotional needs. And based on this, targeted suggestions were made to entertainment companies: song innovation, keeping practice, implementing peripherals, and focusing on release time. In addition, as Shan Hao and Xuena Tong (2022) stated, "the view of music consumption, the role of music consumption, and the dynamics of music development are constantly changing, and the consumption model of digital music albums should also change with the changing market to achieve mutual benefits." [6] Digital albums themselves will be linked to fan consumption because of copyright issues and will also reflect the sales of physical albums to some extent. With entertainment companies implementing rationalization programs and maximizing operations in parallel, the entertainment industry can be further developed to its potential to attract a larger fan base, thus promoting the fan economy.

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