

A Brief Analysis of the Development of the K-pop Industry from a Cross-Cultural Perspective to Drive User Consumption Behavior: Taking the "Small Card" of Idols as an Example

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Abstract: The K-pop industry, as a representative of South Korea's entertainment industry, has shown significant influence globally in recent years. With the continuous export of K-pop culture, its peripheral products, as a characteristic product, have gradually been actively sought after by a large number of fans. Among them, small cards, as a representative product of the peripheral industry, have gradually become popular and popular, but there is still consumption chaos in their consumption process. Based on globalization theory and cross-cultural communication theory, this article uses in-depth interview research methods to explore the psychology and specific mechanisms of small card consumption, while analyzing the problems and challenges it brings. This article analyzes that the forms of small card consumption are diverse, and their hot sales reflect the development of the fan economy and the dissemination of K-pop culture, providing theoretical and practical significance for the future development of the small card market. Based on this, the following suggestions are proposed: improving consumer awareness, regulating merchants and trading platforms, and strengthening government supervision.

Keywords: k-Pop, Small Card, Globalization, Cross-Cultural Communication

1. Introduction

Since the late 1990s and early 21st century, k-pop has attracted global attention for its unique musical style and visual charm. Since President Kim Dae Jung proposed the "cultural nation" development strategy in 1998, the South Korean government has been vigorously supporting the cultural industry as a key industry for national development in the 21st century [1]. Therefore, based on government support, the K-pop industry has gradually developed into a popular industry culture with global influence. With the expansion of globalization, its influence has driven the popularity of derivative products, including small card consumption. With the increasing influence of K-pop idols, small cards have become a popular product for fans to collect and trade.

At present, most domestic and foreign research only focuses on comprehensive research on the development of the K-pop industry, with a very small number of studies mentioning the rise of peripheral product consumption driven by this industry. There is currently no survey on the consumption behavior of dividing small cards into a single consumer product, nor is there a detailed

study analyzing the consumer's consumption purpose, content, channels, etc. of small cards. However, since small cards are randomly included in albums, this mechanism can be equivalent to the nature of opening blind boxes. The box scenario caters to the consumer psychology of contemporary young consumers who pursue unknown and surprising experiences and is a widely recognized marketing model among young consumers [2]. These studies have well explained people's consumption psychology and consumption purposes, and analyzed the influencing factors of consumption behavior, providing a certain degree of reference for the study of small card consumption behavior. However, blind boxes and small cards are essentially two different products that cannot be completely equated. With the expansion of the impact of the K-pop industry and the expansion of the small card market, small cards are no longer limited to album giveaways but also include special cards, signing cards, and song-playing cards [3]. Therefore, relying solely on research on blind boxes cannot achieve a more specific and in-depth exploration of small card consumption behavior.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the interaction between the cultural industry and the consumer market in the academic field, revealing the influence of the cultural industry on the consumer market and the feedback effect of the consumer market on the development of the cultural industry. In addition, this study explores the motivations and psychological mechanisms behind fan consumption behavior, which can provide a deeper understanding of the impact of fan culture on modern society. Regarding its practical significance, it can help everyone understand the purchasing and consumption process of small cards, providing a reference for those who have a demand for small cards, as well as providing market analysis and prediction basis for relevant enterprises and providing policy and regulatory recommendations for the government and cultural institutions.

2. Research Methods and Content Analysis

2.1. Research Design

This study mainly used in-depth interviews to collect interview content from 5 small card buyers. Through face-to-face communication, interviewees can be guided to articulate their viewpoints. This helps to understand individual differences and psychological processes among different buyers and explore their subjective feelings and experiences. Therefore, more personalized information can be obtained, allowing for a deeper exploration of the viewpoints and opinions of the respondents, and providing richer and more specific instance support for research [4].

Firstly, a preliminary introduction should be made to the interview topic to understand the basic information of the interviewees, such as gender, age, profession, etc., to better understand their thoughts and attitudes. Briefly introduce the purpose and background of the interview, and propose the correlation between the K-pop industry and small cards. Ask some questions about their understanding of the K-pop industry, determine if they have sufficient knowledge about small card consumption, and provide background support for subsequent interviews. For example, "What aspects of the K-pop industry do you know about?" "What are your favorite or favorite idols or idol groups? Why did you become a fan?" "What do you know about small cards? Have you ever purchased them?".

Next, regarding the main research object of small cards, there are different consumption experiences of fans about small cards, and buyers share some experiences and lessons. Detailed understanding of fan consumption behavior from three aspects: consumer psychology, consumption process, and consumption experience, in-depth understanding of consumer motivation, exploration of its emotional value, understanding of consumption channels, styles, prices, and other information, asking questions about the consumption platform and intermediaries of small cards, and emphasizing the real purchasing experiences of different buyers. Ask relevant questions, such as "Can you provide a detailed description of the purchasing process if you have purchased a small card? (purchasing

method/method/price...) "For what purpose did you consume a small card?" "How do you feel about the experience during your consumption process? Please provide a detailed description of the specific situation."

Then, regarding the subjective thoughts of buyers towards small card consumption, it should focus on understanding the significance and importance of small cards in their lives. It is feasible to inquire about their views on the future development of small card consumption, to gain a deeper understanding of the intrinsic value of small cards, identify existing problems in small card consumption, and collect buyer suggestions for the future development of small cards. "If your living expenses are not particularly sufficient, and there is a small card that you particularly like for sale, would you be willing to save in other ways to purchase a small card? Why?" "What is your opinion on the small card trading market?" "What do you think is the impact of small cards or small card transactions on your life?"

2.2. Analysis of Research Results

2.2.1. Diverse Forms of Small Card Consumption

In terms of purchasing channels, all respondents mentioned three ways: the first is to obtain a small card by drawing an album and randomly giving a small card as a bonus when buying an album. The second is to purchase a second-hand small card through the second-hand platform Xianyu, and the third is to collect the card from the corresponding idol Super Talk. The first way to obtain a small card is random, and the included small card may not be the favorite or most desirable small card for consumers. The latter two methods can specify the style of the purchased small card to ensure that the expected small card style is obtained. In addition to these three channels, two of the respondents also mentioned purchasing agents, offline purchases (obtained from offline album stores in China "Always Entertainment"/Korean offline purchases), Xiaohongshu (a Chinese lifestyle platform and consumer decision-making portal), Meilumercari (a Japanese shopping website), and Twitter (a social networking platform in the United States). The popularity of the Internet and intelligent devices has brought more possibilities to small card consumption. The multi-channel consumption reflects the complexity of fans' consumption behavior and the diversified competition in the market environment.

2.2.2. The Popularity of Small Cards Directly Reflects the Development of Fan Economy

When it comes to the purpose of purchasing small cards, the common answer is "like" and "they are my idols, and seeing beautiful small cards makes me happy". Everyone unanimously chooses "like" as their main purpose. They are not only collectibles but also emotional sustenance for fans. By collecting small cards, fans can better understand their idols and feel the close connection between them. Small card consumption has become an important carrier for fans to express emotions and pursue individuality. The support and love of fans for their idols are no longer limited to spiritual love. The fan community is no longer limited to paying for their idol works but has begun to pay for all media content related to their idols. Its material aspect is not only limited to traditional consumption items such as magazines and concerts but also further expands to the consumption of peripheral products, promoting the development of peripheral industries. Therefore, it reflects the deep development of the fan economy centered on idols, community-centered business models, and media content-centered IP economy. The fan culture is becoming increasingly popular and expanding, and the fan economy has penetrated people's daily lives [5].

2.2.3. Reflects the Popularity and Influence of K-pop Culture on a Global Scale

The hot sales of small cards mean that a large number of fans are willing to pay for products related to K-pop idols. With the popularity of K-pop culture, small cards are sold worldwide, driving the development of related industries and promoting the global spread of Korean culture. The hot sales of small cards further prove the influence of K-pop culture on a global scale. In terms of consumer experience, respondents expressed a good sense of experience. Through small card transactions, they met many friends of different ages and countries, and the buyers they met were generally generous. They also received small gifts that buyers packaged with small cards, which became a cross-cultural social activity among fans. Especially in the new media era, the fission of the Internet enables individuals to quickly find identity groups, and audiences with the same interests and hobbies gather together. Not only is the distance between idols and fans shortened, but also between fans and fans. Sharing experiences further promotes the spread and popularization of K-pop culture. This reflects that the influence of K-pop on a global scale cannot be underestimated.

3. Question

Although all five respondents reported a good purchasing experience, they mentioned that there were still negative phenomena in their consumption process.

3.1. Over-Exploitation of Fan Economy

The price of small cards is artificially high, and a card printed with selfies can even be bought for hundreds or even thousands of yuan. Even the idol himself expressed shock and incomprehension about this. When the respondents mentioned the purchasing channels, they mentioned that although the waiting time for small cards to be shipped and received on overseas platforms is longer, the price is relatively cheap. Some people will increase the price of small cards purchased at low prices overseas several times on domestic platforms, resulting in a phenomenon of disorderly price increases. Taking advantage of this information asymmetry, buyers cannot judge the authenticity and value of small cards, which gives some unscrupulous merchants a profitable opportunity. Moreover, due to the scarcity of popular celebrity small cards and the economic support of fans, the supply of certain small cards has led to the supply of small cards. The quantity is limited, but the demand for it is also large, and this phenomenon of supply-demand imbalance is particularly reflected in popular idol groups. Scarcity leads to an imbalance between supply and demand, and scarcity makes things expensive [6]. The prices of these popular celebrities' small cards will be inflated and doubled, using the market situation of supply and demand imbalance to hoard small cards, hype up small card prices, and obtain higher profits. The majority of people who purchase small cards are non-income groups such as minors and college students. In some cases, minors may spend a lot of money on purchases without the unified support of their parents. Some college students may save on essential expenses when their living expenses are not sufficient and even resort to more extreme ways to purchase small cards, which can damage family relationships and hurt their growth.

This leads to the fan economy deviating from its good construction and developing excessively, with small cards even becoming a symbol of value to show off and showcase wealth, changing the value concept of fan consumption, and causing an endless stream of bad consumption behaviors [7].

3.2. Excessive Utilitarian Operation

Some entertainment companies induce and deceive fan groups to demand greater economic benefits, do not attach importance to the business level and quality improvement of idols, and invest heavily in the production, promotion, and distribution of peripheral products. The money and time invested

by fans do not match the emotional value that idols can provide. Many brokerage companies utilize the admiration and admiration of young fans for celebrity artists in public relations, capturing their unclear social cognition and the early stages of value establishment. They indirectly output some utilitarian values, forming values such as "love him, buy him" and "the more money you spend, the higher loyalty you have". Such cultural value orientation is distorted [8]. Sellers may also sell pirated or low-quality small cards on second-hand platforms. After receiving the goods, buyers may find that the small cards do not match the product description, and have scratches, stains, and other defects on the surface. At this time, the seller ignores or mishandles the buyer's after-sales problems, resulting in the buyer being unable to obtain a satisfactory purchasing experience.

4. Suggestion

4.1. Enhancing Consumer Awareness

Consumers should maintain rationality while enjoying pleasure, and strengthen their understanding of the small card market and risks through multiple channels. With the popularity of small card culture, there will inevitably be many negative consumption phenomena. Firstly, it is necessary to consume within one's economic capacity and prevent some fans from investing a lot of money to obtain limited edition small cards. Secondly, when purchasing small cards on various platforms, one must keep their eyes open to prevent being deceived when buying pirated small cards. Don't buy at a high price just to get your desired small card, as this will only give unscrupulous merchants favorable opportunities to continuously raise the price of small cards and disrupt the normal market order.

4.2. Standardize Merchants and Transaction Platforms

Develop industry norms that require businesses to comply with market rules and refrain from engaging in inappropriate behaviors such as false advertising and price speculation. Strengthen the supervision and punishment of merchants, crack down severely on illegal activities, and maintain market order.

Encourage businesses to establish their reputation systems, such as enhancing credibility through third-party authentication, customer evaluations, and other means. For popular products in the small card market, an official or third-party certification system can be established to ensure the authenticity and quality of the products. Consumers can prioritize certified products when purchasing small cards to reduce purchasing risks. Encourage the establishment of official or third-party small card trading platforms to provide consumers with a safe and reliable trading environment.

Establish a strict review mechanism on the trading platform to authenticate and review merchants and products, ensuring the rights and interests of both parties involved in the transaction. Strengthen platform supervision and punishment efforts, crack down severely on businesses engaged in fraud, counterfeit sales, and other behaviors, and maintain market order.

4.3. Government Strengthening Supervision

Relevant departments should strengthen the supervision of the small card market and crack down on illegal activities such as fraud and counterfeit sales by unscrupulous merchants. Establish a sound complaint and reporting mechanism, encourage consumers to actively report illegal behavior, and protect consumer rights. Establish specialized regulatory agencies or teams to conduct regular inspections and surprise inspections of the small card market, ensuring that merchants comply with market rules. Intensify punishment measures, including fines and revocation of business licenses, to severely punish merchants who engage in fraudulent and counterfeit activities. Establish a rapid

response mechanism to promptly handle illegal behaviors reported by consumers and protect their rights and interests [9].

Establish and improve relevant laws and regulations, and clarify the legal status and regulatory requirements of the small card market. Strengthen legal supervision of the small card market and protect the legitimate rights and interests of consumers and businesses. As a subsidiary product of K-pop culture, small cards belong to a foreign culture and should be regulated to a certain extent by the government. They should not be allowed to develop recklessly and should be moderately regulated in conjunction with the domestic market form. Guided by relevant government policies and effectively supervised by market regulatory agencies, it aims to guide the new generation of young consumers to form correct consumption concepts and help the small card market develop healthily [10].

5. Conclusion

The ultimate goal of this study is to explore the impact of K-pop culture on the current market, analyze the consumption phenomenon and motives of small cards, and provide strategies and suggestions for relevant populations or industries.

According to the survey results, it can draw three conclusions: First, with the development of globalization and the rapid progress of Internet technology, people can consume small cards through various online shopping channels, providing convenient conditions for people's consumption behavior, and its forms are more diverse. Fans can not only make purchases through their own country's shopping platforms or even social media but also obtain consumption channels on online platforms in other countries. This not only enriches the consumption choices of small card consumers, but also promotes cross-cultural interaction and communication among fans, and further promotes the expansion of the small card consumption market.

Secondly, the popularity of small cards directly reflects the fans' love and pursuit of idols. For ordinary consumers, small cards may just be ordinary cards printed with selfies, but for fans, beautifully packaged small cards have great collectible value. Even if they receive limited edition or special edition small cards, they will become items worth showing off to fans. Buying small cards also shows a physical form of fan support for idols. To attract fans to purchase, new small cards are constantly launched to attract fans to consume.

In addition, the fanatical consumption behavior of fans towards small cards indirectly reflects the popularity and influence of K-pop culture on a global scale. Fans support their favorite idols by purchasing small cards, which is essentially a recognition of the popularity of K-pop culture. Therefore, they are willing to consume for their love of K-pop, which is also a promotion of K-pop culture. This is not only about using consumption to obtain satisfaction on the material level but also about the love and affirmation of K-pop culture on the spiritual level.

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