

Research on the Spillover Effect of Fan Behavior on Star Image in the Idol Industry Era

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Abstract: With the increasing public influence of stars, this paper takes the famous '2.27' event among Chinese fans as the fundamental perspective to deeply analyze the formation process of the Chinese idol industry and fan culture. In this process, it is found that fan behavior plays a vital role in the public perception of a star's image, which can not only make the celebrity more valued by the sponsor but also make the public have a strong aversion to a particular star. This study summarized and analyzed the specific behavior of fans and its significance. Based on the existing studies, it elaborated how the spillover effect of star image from the psychological perspective produced and had a cognitive impact on the public through the primacy effect, recency effect, and halo effect. In view of the negative spillover effect caused by fans' behavior, the paper also gives two levels of stars' personal and social supervision to deal with the problem and attempts to improve the wrong order in the star-worshipping group.

Keywords: star image, idol industry, fan culture, spillover effect

1. Introduction

The term "idol" originated in East Asia and was born in Japan in the 1970s. However, on the Internet, which is highly dynamic and advocates "freedom of expression", fan group polarization events occur frequently. The appearance of extreme speech, network violence, and extreme behavior worsens the "fandom" environment. The anti-intellectual tendency of fans will affect the image of stars at least, and the stability of Chinese literary and art circles and even the social atmosphere at most. Group polarization events, such as the "Xiao Zhan 227 incident", have brought significant adverse effects, clearly reflecting that the extreme behavior of fans is detrimental to the regular operation of the network order and endangers the healthy and long-term development of China's literary and artistic undertakings.

In 2020, Chinese male star Xiao Zhan can be said to be one of the most famous idols, with more than 26.96 million followers on Weibo, which is extremely popular and has a huge fan group. On February 24, 2020, Xiao Zhan's fans found that the online novel "Falling Down" had a description of damaging the image of an idol, so they gathered people to report on the website that published

the novel, which led to the suspension of the domestic operation of the well-known website, resulting in the dissatisfaction of many groups such as the animation circle, the game circle, the Japanese and Korean circles. Therefore, on February 27, the two sides launched fierce online abuse, and the fans of the website carried out personal attacks, online abuse Boycotts of the products, and other acts endorsed by Xiao Zhan, and Xiao Zhan's fans have had a destructive social impact on the website writers' online violence and stigma attacks on a large scale. Because of the large number of groups involved in the event, the negative impact of the network was far-reaching, which caused the attention of all sectors of society to the behavior of fans [1].

In the era of big online data, the Internet platform undoubtedly holds the most comprehensive and fastest entertainment information. The overall demand for social entertainment shows a trend of networked development. According to the 50th Statistical Report on the Development of Internet in China, by June 2022, the number of Internet users in China was 1.051 billion, and the Internet penetration rate reached 74.4% [2]. The explosion of short video software and the rise of social software make the public more eager to meet their entertainment needs through fragmented browsing. The power of network media is enormous, and the speed of hot spots is rapid, which makes the public digest the novelty of entertainment faster, resulting in a sharp increase in social entertainment demand. This has led to more exposure channels for stars and more diversified ways for fans to pursue stars. Fans are no longer limited to getting news of idols through cold TV screens and complicated newspaper news. The environment of free speech also allows everyone to track down stars through the most convenient social software. Fans can grasp the latest trends of idols on these media, comment on subjective ideas openly at any time, and even form a complete fan support system in the process of change. These clustered fan communities will collectively promote idols on social platforms, control the direction of public opinion in the comment area, and fight back against negative comments. The close cohesion of fans and the influence of idols have gradually become the basis of "fan economy". "Fan economy" is reflected in many aspects of the era of idol industry. Fans will spontaneously buy products endorsed by idols, spend money to vote for idols, and bring economic benefits through community interaction.

In recent years, there have been a large number of adverse events of fan groups, which have aroused widespread concern in society, making it urgent for the country to rectify the fan groups, which is not only related to the beauty and purity of the network environment but also about the improvement of the quality of the public in the social context [3]. This paper cites the concept of "spillover effect", which refers to the fact that the behavior of a subject produces other phenomena beyond its associated subject. This concept echoes the influence of fan behavior on idols. Fan behavior to the stars and even the entertainment industry has a certain extent of the impact, fan behavior to China's entertainment industry, idols themselves spillover effect. Therefore, it is necessary to study the spillover effect of fan behavior on the media environment and even the whole society. Researchers can explore the potential logic of this social behavior and analyze what values netizens and managers should establish in the idol industry era to promote the construction of a positive and sunny fan group environment.

This paper will first analyze the impact factors of the increase in the demand for entertainment in China's current society from a macro perspective, and extend the general background that the public is in the era of the idol industry. Next, it points out the "star economy" prevailing in China's entertainment industry, and explores the shaping of the persona behind the stars becoming popular idols and reshaping the public's thinking. Next, explain the process of fans forming a value circle, and study the significance and value of fans' specific behavior. After that, researchers will explain the concept of the "spillover effect" brought by fans' behavior and analyze the consequences of spillover effect. Finally, researchers will explore reasonable and effective methods to promote the

healthy development of fans and explore the positive combination of entertainment development and social life.

2. Interpreting the Phenomenon

2.1. The Chinese Idol Industry

In the 1970s, the growth of the Japanese economy led to the emergence of the Asian idol industry. Gradually, it formed a complete system, including the selection and training of idols, which was introduced to other East Asian countries, such as China, in the 1980s. Idols were also distinguished from singers and actors, becoming specialized entertainment industry professionals. In the last decade, along with the process of media change and the booming of the entertainment industry, fan organizations and fanization centered on idol artists/celebrities have generally gone through three stages of development in mainland China, namely the pre-web era, the era of web communities, and the era of big data. Most of the fan organizations in the pre-web era were fan clubs, which were usually small in size and limited by geography, and it was difficult to conduct various activities frequently. In the era of the Internet community, the fan network was started by the talent show "Super Girl" at a time when the number of Internet users was increasing. It started the talent show craze, and the participation of fans evolved from SMS voting to "support" for idols in the form of posting, tumbling and microblogging. As a huge industry chain, the idol industry integrates many elements, including stars and their agents, fans, the entertainment capital, and streaming media.

2.2. The Star Economy

Star economy refers to forcing "stars" and "products" together through advertising campaigns to "move" people's limited "imagination" and "empathize" with them through "association." Through "association", the "empathy" of people for the celebrity and the product is exploited.

In the buyer's market, the attention power of people directly determines the purchase intention, so the competition for consumers' attention power becomes the key to marketing. The essence of the celebrity economy is to use highly visible celebrities to drive the rapid concentration of attention power resources, thereby achieving the purpose of "curved marketing". This means that the celebrity actually becomes the sensor of consumer attention and product marketing.

From the buyer's market perspective, consumers' attention span determines purchase intention, and capturing consumers' attention is the key to marketing. The celebrity economy overturns traditional market logic, such as price, function, style, quality, and technology, and quickly creates a strong sense of identity and persuasiveness in the population by virtue of the herd mentality brought about by the celebrity effect.

Brands have also taken advantage of this economic form and use celebrities to attract the attention of their fans and turn them into loyal customers of the brand to participate in the sales and promotion of products or services. For example, in recent years, brand sponsors of popular talent shows such as Create Camp 2020 have designated participants to shoot a poster to promote the sales of their products; in the case of the Pure Selection product, by setting up a voting model, consumers will want to vote more for their favorite participant to buy the product, even though the price of the product will be relatively high. As a result, businesses can maximize their economic benefits by increasing consumer demand through the use of the celebrity effect and by investing in celebrities.

3. The Role of Fans

3.1. The Formation of the Fandom

Modern Chinese fan culture took shape in the mid-to-late twentieth century when stars from Hong Kong and Taiwan emerged to meet the spiritual needs of young people at that time. However, during this period, the worship of idols by fans was confined to a one-way communication mechanism, with fans mainly receiving information, and the term "groupies" came to the forefront of people's minds. The popularity of the 2005 Super Girls show brought fans into the mainstream as a unique social group and cultural phenomenon. Not only did fans help their favorite voters to "pass" in one round, but they also made the contest an "all-people participation" event [4].

Since then, with the development of the new media environment, fan files have transformed: the original one-way communication between fans and idols has changed to two-way communication, and virtual communities have enhanced the scale and organization of fan groups. Weibo has become a gathering place for fan activism, providing a platform for fans to communicate directly with their idols. It provides a platform for direct communication between fans and idols, fulfilling the pseudo-interaction relationship built by fans' consciousness and creating discordant sounds. On the other hand, the grid has further increased the size of the fan group, which has become the so-called "fandom", creating its own discourse system and power system, and fan activities have become more organized through the grid. At the same time, the emergence of professional star-studded websites and APPs has further helped commercialize the fan network and create more diversified fan activities.

Against this background, the fandom culture came into being. The "fandom" is a collection of groups that transcends the barriers of time and space and has its own unique discourse system and rules, which is often referred to as "fandom language" and "fandom thinking". This is often referred to as "fandom language" and "fandom thinking". However, the "heterotopia" of the fandom is in contact with the mainstream culture and is not completely independent, so there is a conflict between the unique thinking of the fandom and the universal values. However, the "fandom" has really influenced the language form of the Chinese network and the thinking logic behind it, and is therefore often criticized.

3.2. Specific Acts of Fans

Under the enormous influence of the fan economy, the fans' fan mode is now not the "original" individual activities of the early days but organized and distributed collective activities. Fan operation is no longer a secret in the industry. Even "casual fans" are well aware of the tactics of "fixing", "abusing" (to strengthen emotional ties by portraying idols as "bullied" to arouse fans' desire for protection), "purification", and "explosion-proof".

At the same time, driven by the trend of consumerization, society has changed from a production-oriented to a consumption-oriented society, and the fan economy has flourished with the generalization of the fan file. Fans are not only the main body of culture but also the leading economic body, playing a huge role in consumer society. Therefore, it is only logical that "professional fans" have emerged. Professional fans earn money through fan activities or cooperate with agencies and media companies to operate fans for pay [5].

3.2.1. Hot Search, Charting, and Sales

These three activities are the most useful and direct ways for fans to support idols, except for the fan group operation group.

(1) Hot search refers to fans posting about specific topics or hashtags for a certain period of time to raise the buzz and popularity of their idol's words. The more people add a specific topic to their posts during this period of time, the more buzz can be raised quickly and the more highly recommended and trended the topic is on social media. This allows more fans and passersby to be drawn in and learn about the good, positive aspects of the idol that fans are showing in these topics. This can effectively raise the idol's awareness and build a positive impression of the idol.

(2) The purpose of charting is to show the popularity and ranking of the idol in the relevant field, which requires fans to post to their favorite stars on designated platforms or polls to raise their popularity, canvass for votes to raise the ranking of the star, or give praise and gifts to the idol in the live broadcast. For example, in the annual poll for the world's most handsome/beautiful face, fans will vote and repost a lot every day for their idols to rank higher or even ask people around them to vote for their idols.

(3) Sales is a way for fans to buy as many of their favorite stars' albums, magazines and merchandise as possible, and even to buy the same items as their idols in large quantities. In the case of Korean girl group BLACKPINK's second album, released in September 2022, fans bought the group's album in large amounts during the pre-sale period, resulting in sales of over two million copies, making the album the highest-selling girl group album. This is not only a direct reflection of the group's popularity and fan purchasing power but also an indirect reflection of the popularity of the songs on the album, the commercial value of the artists, and their influence. This can open up new opportunities for stars.

3.2.2. Connection and Influence

The variety of fan activities in the multimedia channel environment promotes fans from individuals to relatively stable communities. In addition, collective labor, such as charting and sales, stimulates the emotional connection of the group, such as successfully helping one's idol get to the first position in the charts, which increases individual recognition of the community. To prevent the loss of fans, fan events are usually regular or frequent; in this case, the community can maintain relative stability. At the same time, the increasing number of communication channels, including microblog fan groups, WeChat groups, and QQ groups, provide the basis for closer and more personal connections, and the mix of personal connections increases the stickiness of the community [6].

Star-hunting is now more like the process of fans giving meaning to their idols. After an idol emerges, fans create an ideal "persona" for them. Based on this "persona," fans will package the idol through videos, files, photos, and other materials to make him look the way they want him to look. In this process, a sense of spiritual companionship is created between fans and idols. Idols cater to their fans' preferences for the sake of traffic, while fans invest a lot of time, effort, and emotion in creating their ideal image of perfection and are not willing to accept criticism from them. This is why some fans go crazy when some idols "collapse" due to misconduct.

In addition, the increasingly fierce competition in the idol market has intensified the battle for fans to "go out". In recent years, to 'cut the lion's share', brands often find a group's members to represent the same product, and then open a single chain to count each person's sales. Fans have to buy many products to prove that their idols are popular. Then those who bought more mocked those who bought less, and those who bought less questioned those who bought more. When the brands made enough money to carry their customers, the fans were left with endless products and endless curses.

4. Spillover Effect

The spillover effect refers to the part of the income generated by the activities of individuals or organizations in their work and life that exceeds their own value. That is to produce additional effects and benefits, and this extra part has a particular influence on members outside the organization and even society. But a star is not as easy to define as singers, actors, and other pure art workers. In addition to the individual, the star also includes the building of his team, marketing strategy, traffic and fans. Because the behavior of fans described above plays a non-negligible role in the overall image construction and commercial value evaluation of stars. Therefore, how a celebrity is perceived in front of the public is not limited to his own packaged image but also includes the feelings brought by the behavior of fans to the public. This can be summarized as fan behavior will affect the public's perception of their image, forming the star image's spillover effect. For example, Rihanna performed on stage with her pregnant belly in the halftime performance of Super Bowl. Based on her good stage performance, fans praised her as a superman who "can sing and dance perfectly even when she is pregnant". Through the publicity of fans, the public will recognize her as such an image, attracting more fans. And this show also increased the popularity and sales of her cosmetics company through the design of makeup touch-ups.

Some scholars have studied and analyzed the effects of the different main mechanisms as influencing factors on the spillover effect of celebrity image and its specific mechanism. The scholar believes that the main mechanisms affecting the star image's spillover effect are the spotlight effect, association effect and responsibility attribution. The spotlight effect means that the behavior of fans builds the accessibility of the celebrity to the public, and enhances the public's positive or negative impression of the celebrity. The correlation effect is to make everyone's cognitive transfer of existing things, for example, fans who are too fanatical will make people lower others' evaluation of the star; Or a star who is liked by people who think they have outstanding ability and are widely praised by people around them will make people think that the star has excellent strength. The scholar said that due to the influence of fans' behavior, the public would attribute the positive or negative influence caused by fans to the stars, which is also the key reason for the spillover effect of the star's image [7].

This study believes that the spillover effect of star images results from various psychological effects. In addition to the three effects mentioned above, they include primacy, recency, and halo effects. The primacy effect and recency effect have a similar part in the role of public perception of the star image. For example, when the audience read the post of singer Selena for the first time or the last time, they might say that she was a powerful singer with sweet looks and a charming singing voice, then people would form a deep and long-term impression. However, people will subconsciously doubt or reject this bad statement when the audience sees a post saying she is ugly in singing. Fans' extensive publicity of idols can, to a large extent, make the public inadvertently act on this psychological factor, establish a good image of stars, and let the public remember the positive image of stars through these two effects. The halo effect acts on the performance of the public's behavior of fans and the spillover of the star's image because the positive image of a certain aspect spreads to the whole star. It is not difficult to find that most of the advertising films are those famous singers, movie stars, and rarely see those unknown minor figures, because the products launched by the stars are easier to get everyone's recognition. It is the halo effect that once a writer is famous, all the manuscripts that were sitting on the bottom of the box are published and all the books are sold. To sum up, it is not difficult to find that the spillover effect of star image has a great impact on the public.

4.1. Interpretation and Analysis of the Consequences of the Spillover Effect

The main force that promotes the spillover of the star's image is the fan base. Fans promoting a good celebrity image undoubtedly helped them establish and promote the personality so that more passersby who accidentally saw the controlled commentary post quickly understood and remembered the celebrity, leaving a deep impression on people [8]. But setting up a person to bring benefits to the star also contains great danger. Whether it is extreme marketing or the collapse of the character set will get a massive blow to the star.

Excessive marketing features can lead to public disgust or worse, to the impression that the star's fans are too fanatical. However, this behavior often does not cause too much harm to fans, but only affects the public's evaluation of celebrities. The consequences of the collapse of the personality are much more serious than over-marketing. At this time, not only will the public judge the star, but the fans will also feel betrayed and sad. For example, the actor Li Yifeng has always created a "warm man" character set, but the media exposed that he went into prostitution many times and was subsequently confirmed by the police. This news has undoubtedly caused great harm to fans. The collapse of the personality will not cause the public to have too extreme emotions, but it will consume the overall trust of the entertainment stars in public.

4.2. The Way to Improve the Bad Atmosphere of Fans

Reviewing the example of improper handling of the relationship between Xiao Zhan and his fans in the beginning, it is not difficult to find that the star himself plays an important role in managing fans and purifying the overall environment of the fan group. Because fans will inevitably do some irrational or "impulsive" things when they are fully devoted to a star, the star himself should take the responsibility of a public figure to guide and appropriately manage the fan base positively. Usually, a word of persuasion from a star is more effective than education from friends or the public. Because fans already worship their idols, of course, they are more willing to listen to their advice so as not to attack others on the Internet, over-marketing, or spend a lot of money and experience in pursuit of celebrities [9].

Secondly, the unhealthy atmosphere in fan circles should be addressed from the social level. For example, social platforms should regulate extreme comments on the Internet, and timely take measures such as deleting posts and banning users from controlling the spread of extreme comments.

And improve the user report and platform verification process and the efficiency of the related processing. Moreover, in 2019, China launched the 'Clean Up Action', in which relevant state departments supervise the order of information dissemination on the Internet [10]. It not only reports the truth and refutes rumors on hot social issues in a timely manner, but also cracks down on many fan sites that spread rumors and slander on the Internet and illegally raise funds or even lend money.

According to official data, since 2019, the campaign has cleared more than 20 billion pieces of illegal and harmful information and nearly 1.4 billion accounts. This has undoubtedly played a very important role in controlling the fan group chaos at the social level. Furthermore, the special campaign has not only made China's Internet platforms more positive but also allowed fans to speak online and follow stars in a more rational and calm way.

5. Conclusions

To sum up, the era of idol industry is a huge industrial chain. After the formation of the "star economy", the traditional market logic has been subverted by the way of "curve marketing", which may lead to a marginal decline for corporate brands and blind consumption for fans. The virtual

community has improved the scale and organization of the fan group. The concept of "spillover effect" is introduced, and the result that the spillover effect of star image makes a variety of psychological effects work together is obtained. Subsequently, this study analyzed the consequences of spillover effects, concluding that spillover effects are easy to lead to "excessive marketing and artificial collapse". This paper explores the spillover effect of fan behavior and lists the causes and manifestations of the spillover effect. This study also gives suggestions on measures to manage fans and purify the community environment. In combination with the outstanding results of "Qinglang Action", the study hopes that the language environment of the Internet platform will be more positive, the behavior order of fans will be more orderly, and China's cultural and entertainment industry will be more prosperous.

This study analyzes and explores the spillover effects of idol systems and fan behavior and obtains rich research results. However, due to the inadequacy of the research, there are still some limitations. First of all, most of the research methods used in this study are hermeneutics. The investigation and collation of data are still not comprehensive, and the quantity of qualitative data is small. Secondly, the observation perspective of this study is narrow, and the logic of fans' behavior is viewed from an objective perspective, without further identity conversion. The motivation of fans' behavior is studied from the perspective of stars or power. Finally, this study lacks a more detailed classification for different characteristic groups, such as: Will fan behavior be affected by age, education and other factors? Therefore, in future research, researchers are looking forward to more extensive observation and collection of data, more detailed investigation and collation, and a more in-depth understanding of the power system behind fan behavior. The researchers expect the management department to be more strict in the governance of the restaurant environment, promote the positive development of fan culture, and strengthen the stability of the social system.

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