



Empirical Research of Fans' Consumption in China's Talent Show Economy

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Abstract

In recent years, with the continuous development of China's draft industry, internet drafts have become common throughout China. The talent show industry has not only won the love of audiences, but also the attention of capital. A lot of capital was invested in the talent show industry to cultivate new popular idols. Through social media platforms, fans can purchase products recommended by idols and vote for idols to increase their ranking. Idols also gain more popularity and sell more endorsed products through interactions with fans. Through questionnaire surveys and empirical methods, this study explores the factors that affect fans' consumption of idols. Diversified participation, idols' abilities, social influence, and empathy have been proven to have positive impacts on fans' intention to consume. This research provides detailed empirical evidence regarding China's talent show market, which has a strong role in promoting the sustainable development of the talent show economy.

Keywords:

*Talent show economy
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1. Research Background

According to past international experience, when a country's per capita GDP reaches 10,000 US dollars, the idol industry will drive rapid development, and the development of China's idol industry is at a key turning point. Owhat, an interactive platform for loyal fans of stars, released a white paper on the idol industry and fan economy in 2019, pointing out that the market scale of China's idol industry will reach 100 billion yuan by 2020. The Chinese talent show market has great potential and has rapidly developed in recent years (Dai, 2019) through popular talent shows, from "Idol Trainee" and "Creation 101" to the popular series of "Creation Camp" and "Youth With You". All of these shows are produced in the name of idol cultivation to create a new era of Chinese idol groups, putting the fate of the contestants in the hands of the audience. Every promotion of a contestant is decided by voting until the final idol group is elected, which greatly improves the participation of fans and leads to national balloting. This kind of mechanism allows fans to see the progress and growth process of the idol step by step and see how their support changes the fate of the contestant, thus they will continue to support them (Bai, 2018). It's such group talent shows that aim to practice and cultivate a variety

of talents. Through the joint efforts of famous producers, powerful mentors and powerful network platforms, they fulfill the desires of the young audience group looking for the latest consumption trends. The popularity of the program caused a lot of capital pursuit, which is the reason behind the huge economic value of the talent show market; therefore, this paper uses idol nurturing programs to study the main factors affecting the financial value behind the talent show economy.

Due to the sizeable development prospects of idol talent shows in China's domestic market, major video platforms have introduced series such as Tencent Video's "Creation Camp", iQIYI's "Youth With You", and Youku's "We Are Young". But at the same time, the popularity of the programs also gave rise to cyberbullying. Because of the fierce competition among the players, fans abuse and insult other contestants online in order to fight against injustice for the contestants they support, which pollutes the internet environment. Talent shows not only bring huge economic benefits; they also have social benefits, correctly leading young people's consumption and the value of the fame-chasing groups (Liao, 2019). Secondly, there is a wide range of audience groups, but the majority are young people. Most of them are not economically independent, but they still display many irrational consumption behaviors. What are the reasons for the fans' consumption, and how do they change from audience members to consumers? Therefore, this research takes these popular variety shows as the research subject, summarizes the factors that influence fans' consumption by consulting relevant literature and theories, and then designs a questionnaire survey. Finally, according to the experimental results and conclusions, it analyzes the influence of different factors on the financial value of talent shows and what fans get from the consumption of these talent shows. In order to offer a beneficial background on consumption, this paper puts forward some suggestions regarding rational consumption to help the relevant platforms understand the consumption psychology and demands of fans, help video platforms offer better content to everyone, and help the domestic idol industry improve and develop more quickly (Li, 2020).

In recent years, the popularity of idol talent shows has attracted the attention of a large number of scholars in China. However, the focus of the research is mainly on the structure and marketing of these programs and very few people have focused on the reasons for the huge economic value behind them (Hao, 2019; Hou, 2018). Secondly, the audience's understanding of draft shows in China is mostly from "Super Girl" in 2005. From this time on, the relevant research on fans in China has gradually increased. However, the research mainly focuses on the irrational consumption behavior of fans and criticizes the blind pursuit of stars, with fanaticism being synonymous with this group of people. But with the development of network and media technology, entertainment programs are becoming more and more diversified, catering to different tastes of audiences. The number of fans gradually expands, and the social and economic benefits become apparent (Liu, 2019). In a consumer society, we need to change the research ideas and pay special attention to the latest idol programs, explore the consumption psychology of fans, explore the specific performance, causes and social impact of fan culture in consumer society, and determine their specific theoretical value.

Behind the success of talent shows, there must be huge hidden benefits. Following the upsurge of idol talent shows, video platforms, program makers, sponsors, idols themselves, and economic companies are all exploiting fans to cash in quickly. Therefore, this paper focuses on fans as consumers to tap the huge potential of this market. Contestants in talent shows are seen by producers as similar to products on an assembly line that can be manufactured to meet the preferences of different audiences. Thus, the spiritual needs of consumers can be further satisfied.

From this point of view, the research of this paper has great practical significance. In essence, we can treat nurturing talent shows as a consumer market and the contestants as commodities. In the process of watching programs, the viewers automatically become fans, and fans turn into consumers (Xu, 2019; Zhang, 2019). Fans enjoy the sense of control they get by being able to play a part in the fate of the contestants, but in the process of obtaining a sense of control and achievement, they must expend a certain amount of emotion, time, money, etc.

2. Hypotheses

Fans not only consume, they also have their own initiative in the consumption process, hoping that the whole process develops according to their wishes (Yang, 2016). The traditional star-making method moves from market research to product development to manufacturing. However, as long as there are problems in any link, the program will fail. The main advantage of idol cultivation is that it is consumer-to-manufacturer (c2m) model, that is, the model in which customers directly communicate with manufacturers. This model will adjust the style of the stars according to the needs of fans, so that fans have a stronger desire to participate. Therefore, fans will have stronger consumption stickiness (Liu, 2021).

Due to the current upsurge in the talent show economy, the enthusiasm of fans is becoming stronger. According to different fans' economic level, fans' consumption content and consumption intensity are also different. In the voting model of idol talent shows, everyone has a certain number of free votes, and if you want to get more votes, you must buy the designated products. Fans can also invite their friends to vote or participate in crowdfunding arranged by a support committee. Fans with different economic conditions can vote in different ways according to their personal wishes; they can buy endorsed products or participate in fan

group activities, so the audience participation mode set by the program is an important factor that affects fan consumption (Qiu, 2019). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Diversity participation has a positive impact on fans' consumption.

Since the audiences of idol talent shows are mainly women, they are more susceptible to the emotional influence on consumption. The idols selected during the audition are generally very prominent, good at singing and dancing, and have a clear attitude and personality. Therefore, the idol's own ability is a prerequisite to attract fans to consume. Idols are managed and packaged by brokerage companies to enhance their comprehensive capabilities so that fans can selectively purchase goods or vote according to their preferences for different types of idols (Liu, 2020). Therefore, the second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Idol ability has a positive impact on fans' consumption.

In the process of supporting idols, fans find like-minded groups of people. They have the same hobby of following stars, influence each other, and form alliances. They will all be proud of the dazzling achievements of their idols and enjoy emotional satisfaction together (Li, 2004; Liang, 2020). When packaging an idol, the media will create a fan group, because it is more convenient to mobilize fans to buy idols' merchandise, albums, peripheral products, etc. by bringing together fans with common interests (Chen & Zhang, 2020; Xiong, 2019). This will enhance the overall popularity of the idol. Therefore, the third proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Peer influence has a positive impact on fans' consumption.

Affect theory posits that human beings are mainly motivated by emotional states. The emotional state in psychology is the subjective experience of emotion (Jean, 2000; Liu, 2021), and the subjective experience of emotions can be classified according to the physical reactions that emotions cause. Affect theory believes that there are three main types of emotions (Pang & Wan, 2020), which are positive, neutral, and negative. Positive emotions are happiness, interest, and excitement. According to theory, mental health can be achieved by maximizing positive effects and minimizing negative effects. A key component of understanding emotion theory is that emotion is an involuntary response to external stimuli. Fans empathize with their favorite stars and form an alliance with other fans around them through empathy (Zhang & Dai, 2019). Fans not only feel satisfaction from this process of empathy, but also become friends in life or online through empathy. Therefore, fans are more willing to consume because of empathy in the process of enjoying star-chasing. Therefore, the fourth hypothesis proposed is:

H4: Empathy has a positive impact on fans' consumption.

Figure 1 shows the overall research model.

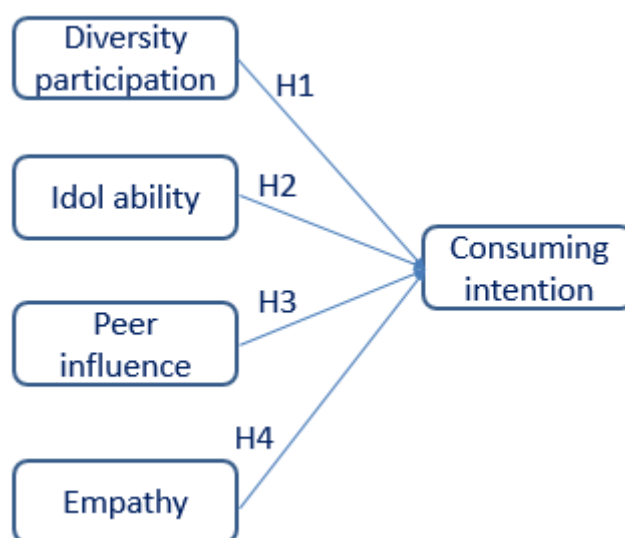


Figure 1. Research model.

3. Research Design and Analysis

The questionnaire was distributed mainly among star-chasing groups. A total of 222 questionnaires were collected in different cities in China through the internet. Table 1 gives the demographic results of the survey population. A total of 73% of the fans are women who watch talent shows and like to chase stars. Nearly half of them consume products endorsed by celebrities or pay for celebrities to improve their draft rankings. The respondents' monthly expenditure for their idols is not too high because 68.4% of them are under 25 years of age and spend less than 20 dollars on their idol per month. The reason could be that most of them are young students with little or no income and they tend to support their idols through free means.

The reliability test values are listed in Table 2. The Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values are greater than 0.7 (Sun, Dedahanov, Shin, & Kim, 2019), and the value of the average variance extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5 (Sun, Dedahanov, Shin, & Kim, 2019), which proves the reliability of the model.

Table 1. Demographics.

Category	Subject	N	%
Gender	Male	60	27.0%
	Female	162	73.0%
Consumption frequency (Per month)	≤2 times	105	47.2%
	>2≤5	77	34.6%
	>5 times	40	18.2%
Age	≤20	95	42.7%
	>20≤25	78	35.1%
	>25≤30	35	15.7%
	>30	14	6.5%
Monthly expenditure	≤20\$	152	68.4%
	\$20-\$50	45	20.2%
	\$50-\$100	21	9.4%
	>\$100	4	2.0%

Table 2. Convergent validity and composite reliability test results.

Construct	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (CR)	AVE
Diversity participation	0.878	0.774	0.670
Idol ability	0.793	0.789	0.658
Peer influence	0.974	0.801	0.621
Empathy	0.881	0.743	0.654
Consumption intention	0.886	0.772	0.672

Table 3 shows that the load of these projects is higher than that of other projects. Therefore, all relevant tests have proved the reliability and effectiveness of the model for structural evaluation (Sun, Dedahanov, Shin, & Li, 2021).

Table 3. Correlation matrix and square roots of the AVE.

Construct	1	2	3	4	5
DP	0.818				
IA	0.257	0.811			
PI	0.359	0.297	0.788		
EM	0.412	0.346	0.401	0.809	
CI	0.398	0.199	0.235	0.501	0.819

Table 4 indicates that all of the four hypotheses are supported. The relationships between diversity participation and consumption intention, idol ability and peer influence, peer influence and consumption intention, and empathy and peer influence are all highly significant. This proves that diversity participation, idol ability, peer influence and empathy are key factors that positively affect the consumption intention of fans.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results.

Hypothesis	Path	Estimated t-value	
H1	DP→CI	0.081	1.854*
H2	IA→CI	0.143	2.726**
H3	PI→CI	0.093	1.842*
H4	EM→CI	0.291	5.887**

Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

Figure 2 below indicates the path coefficients of the four hypotheses. Empathy is proven to be the most important factor that influences fans' consumption intention. Idol ability plays the second key role in consumption intention. Diversity participation and peer influence are also drivers for fans to consume. The degree of R-squared of the overall model is 0.281.

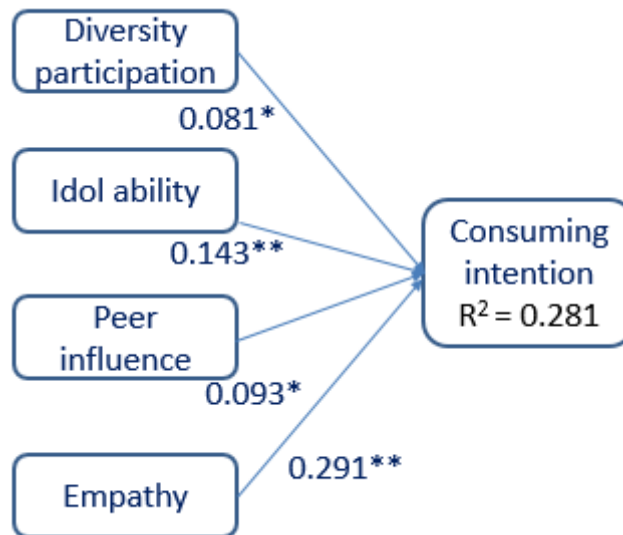


Figure 2. Structural model.

Note: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01.

4. Discussion

Fans hope that every purchase made gets a substantial return, but voting for idols, participating in fundraising activities for fan support, participating in public welfare activities advocated by idols, etc., provides more of a psychological satisfaction or sense of accomplishment without any substantial return. Fans show their support for idols by purchasing their film and television works, peripheral merchandise, and endorsement products. Fans have developed an empathy with celebrities, and celebrities provide fans with comfort, wisdom and happiness (Li, 2004). The diversity in the participation of fans is also an important factor affecting consumption intention. This is mainly manifested in two aspects – through a series of activities that support idols on their own social platforms to portray a good image in the fan circle; and through their own consumption, expand their idol’s social influence, thus helping their idols to receive market recognition and increase social opportunities (Lin, 2018). Peers use voting mechanisms and various marketing methods to update fan rankings every week, so there is also a certain degree of competition among fans. Therefore, fans will always maintain a sense of crisis and spend a lot of time, money and emotion to achieve a higher position and a better reputation in the fan groups.

Producers of future talent shows should improve the content and use innovative mechanisms. It is not enough to imitate other variety shows; new content should be developed to cater to the local market, attach importance to the value of fans, give fans greater power, increase fan interaction, and enhance empathy (Yang, 2018). In the current fierce competition in the idol market, if idols want to stand out and attract fans, they must have outstanding strengths or talents in order to be liked and sought after by fans. Additionally, idols themselves should play a role in leading by example, so they must have virtues and maintain a good public image. Although the Chinese idol market has achieved rapid development with the support of fans, the analysis of fan consumption behavior shows that irrational consumption behaviors still exist. The main consumers in the idol market are young people with a low income, and the fanatical pursuit may lead to impulsive consumption. In addition, the fan community lacks official supervision regarding fundraising and crowdfunding, and the person in charge may keep the funds for themselves. Therefore, fans must protect themselves from being targets of crimes and be cautious of activities involving fundraising and crowdfunding (Liu, 2019). With the popularity of talent shows and the development of social platforms, communication between different fan groups has become more convenient, but online violence and cyberbullying has also appeared. Artists/celebrities and fans have been slandered and insulted on the internet. Therefore, fans should be mindful of what they say, and everyone should be responsible and accountable for his words and deeds (Ye, 2020).

5. Limitations

This research only focuses on Chinese talent shows. Future research may compare talent show characteristics across the world. This research also lacks the perceptions of talent show idols themselves. They may have more convincing suggestions to improve the quality of the talent economy; hence, future research could conduct a survey among talent show idols to glean more useful ideas for the talent show economy.

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