

The Relationship Between Star-chasing Consumption and Happiness

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Abstract: This study explores, especially in the context of idol worship, the relationship between fan consumption of celebrities and psychological well-being (PWB). A large percentage of young people spend money to support their idols as a result of the growth of fan culture, especially among Generation Z. Excessive idol consumption can result in financial distress and dependency, despite earlier study suggesting that following celebrities might improve PWB through happiness and social support. Based on a review of the literature and a survey with 106 respondents, the study examines the reasons for star-chasing behaviour and how it affects happiness. The initial hypothesis is challenged by the results, which show no significant association between the amount spent on celebrity consumption and PWB scores. One of the limitations is that the sample was focused in China's more affluent regions, which could have skewed the results. In order to encourage healthy consumption habits and improve life satisfaction among fans, future study should investigate additional elements influencing PWB and diversify the demographics of participants.

Keywords: Star-chasing consumption, well-being, Generation Z.

1. Introduction

In modern society, the phenomenon of idol worship is becoming increasingly popular, and fan culture has deeply rooted in the lives of young people. Nowadays, idol worship is not just about expressing one's love for idols through words on various platforms. With the improvement of living standards and the continuous development of the Internet, the fan group is consistently growing, which means the fans now have more time and energy to support their idol's career through consumption behavior, which makes the phenomenon of star-chasing consumption (SCC) a rather common issue. For example, according to a survey conducted by China Business News, among all the generation-z participants, 69.04% of celebrity fans have spent money on their idols, and 4.67% of celebrity fans spend an average of over 5000 yuan per month on their idols, indicating that SCC has become one of the important consumption areas for young people [1].

Psychologists have indicated that for individuals, following celebrities can indeed enhance their psychological well-being (PWB) to some extent, such as gaining happiness and satisfaction by witnessing idols' improvements, and enhancing interpersonal relationships and social support [2]. However, at the same time, celebrity worship consumption may also bring a series of problems, such as economic pressure caused by excessive consumption and too much dependence on idols, which may lead to negative impacts on people's PWB.

Therefore, through this study, the author hope to explore whether there is a certain relationship between the amount of money spent on celebrity consumption and the PWB of fans. What's more, this study aims to analyze the motivations behind celebrity consumption and the possible influencing factors of PWB, and finally, helping people to find out a lifestyle with healthy psychological state and satisfaction.

This study used the method of literature review and questionnaire surveys. The study published 106 questionnaires on social media platforms, and conducted data analysis using t-test to summarize relevant conclusions.

2. Star-chasing Consumption

2.1. Definition

With the development of the Internet, chasing stars has become one of the main entertainment methods for the public. Celebrities from different regions and fields have attracted the love and follow of a large number of fans. In economics, consumption is defined as the process by which individuals or groups use goods and services to fulfill their needs and desires [3]. Thus, under the context of star chasing, the fans will be willing to make consumption behaviors to support their idol's career as well as to meet their own emotional needs, which has attracted the attention of merchants. In order to attract those fans, all kinds of star-related products and industrial chains have occurred one after another, resulting in SCC. In particular, the process of consumption in the context of star chasing includes spending money on products and services directly associated with celebrities, such as merchandise like clothes, tickets to events like concerts, and media subscriptions related to celebrities [4].

2.2. Motivation and Positive Effect

SCC is extremely common among fans in recent years and even become a rather trendy behavior. Many studies have shown that compared to other consumers, the fan groups have their own consumption characteristics, that is, they often show a stronger initiative when spending money for their idols, so as to express their love and worship towards the celebrities or even constructing part of the meaning of their life. Therefore, many people regard star-chasing people as a typical representative of consumerism [5,6]. Actually, this kind of special consuming mode which has a strong intention can be attributed to the flowing factors:

2.2.1. Sense of Belonging

From the group perspective, another motivation that drives SCC is conformity. Conformity refers to the tendency for individuals to adjust their attitudes or behaviors in a way that align with those of a group or social norms. The reason of showing conformity is because people are willing to obtain social approval from others and the desire to fit in [7]. That is to say, due to the existence of conformity, when the fan base of a celebrity is engaged in SCC, in order to gain a sense of belonging and psychological satisfaction in the fan group, those who originally do not anticipate in consumption activities may also choose to start consuming. For example, an interview study in China investigated about the consuming motivation and habit among the fans of a Chinese celebrity. According to the study, many respondents stated that they did not originally have a strong willingness to consume. However, when most of the other fans are spending money for their idol, in order to better integrate into the group, they would choose to consume as well and they undergo positive emotions from it. And this experience further drives their consumption willingness on idol worship [8].

2.2.2. Self-identity

From the individual perspective, firstly, according to the principle of self-respecting consumption motivation, people generally want to get a positive evaluation from others [9]. Hence, consumers will tend to choose symbolic products, in order to highlight their social identity and gain a sense of self-identity [8]. Additionally, by means of SCC, fans get the chance to indirectly reflect the recognition of their position and self-identity. In this way, the fans are able to gain a sense of satisfaction. An experiment in China interviewed fans of a Chinese male group on their motives of SCC. The results showed that the reason why fans rush to buy TFBOYS endorsement products is, on the one hand, out of love for their idols, and on the other hand, it is also to strengthen their perception of belonging to a specific fan group, and also to recognize their own choices and values [6].

2.2.3. Personal Emotional Projection

Secondly, American scholar Sheels pointed out that "Fans' worship of idols was appropriate to a religious subject" [10]. The emotional connection of fans towards their idols is a kind of behavior that is interactive and continuous. Fans may project their emotions towards ideals and other beautiful things onto their idols, using their idols to express the fans' longing for a better life. This kind of gill constantly stimulates fans' obsession with stars and promote the formation of a strong desire to consume [11]. In a Chinese interview study, fans claimed that they do project their desire for their dreams onto their idols. In witnessing the process of their idols realizing their dreams, fans themselves can also gain great satisfaction and pride, and this kind of emotion drives fans to continue to consume for their idols [6].

2.3. Negative Impact

The consumption during the process of chasing stars can indeed bring positive emotional experiences to fans. However, at the same time, this consumption mode will also bring certain drawbacks.

2.3.1. Group Polarization

As mentioned earlier in this article, people's thoughts and behaviors will be adjusted according to the characteristics of their group, in order to better integrate into a certain group. When members of a group move towards more extreme positions after engaging in a like-minded community, group polarization may occur [12]. Group polarization can lead to negative effects such as poor at decision making and reduction in decision making. Meaning to say, when fans are exposed to too much information that prompts them to consume for the sake of chasing stars for a long time, it is highly possible that the person's perspective become increasingly extreme and polarized over time, and the desire of SCC will become stronger as well. Plus, people's ability to justify whether making consumption on star chasing will decline as well, which can cause the phenomenon of over consumption.

2.3.2. Impulsive Consumption

First, a large number of studies have shown that the fan group consumption exhibits a certain degree of addiction. In 2008, Lee and Smith established an econometric model using Major League Baseball fans as an example to study the quantity of games watched and related products and services consumed by fans at each time period when lifetime expected utility is maximized. Based on the collected quantitative data, their test results show that fans do have a habitual, relatively stable, and predictable addictive consumption behavior [13]. What's more, fans, especially those who are under age, are prone to excessive addiction and blind consumption in order to highlight their loyalty to their

idols, which may even affect their normal personal lives. A questionnaire survey was conducted to investigate the SCC status among 1616 middle school students in 2021. The results comes out and shows that 42.8 percent of the teenagers surveyed said SCC accounts for more than 10 percent of their living expenses, and most of these money are from their parents [14]. Moreover, in order to watch their idols' performances, some even purchase high priced scalpers' tickets. These scalpers often drive up prices, seriously disrupting the market economy and the lives of fans [15].

3. Psychological Well-being

3.1. Definition

The World Health Organization defines mental health (MH) as a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their communities [16]. The improvement of living standards has made people increasingly aware of the importance of MH, and well being becomes one of the criteria for evaluating MH. PWB encompasses both experiencing positive emotions including happiness, confidence and engagement and effectively managing one's daily functioning, such as having healthy interpersonal relationships and being able to control over one's life. Meanwhile, being able to cope with negative emotions like pain is another essential factor for maintaining long-term well-being [17]. Higher well-being level contributes to stronger mental resilience, healthier social relationships and better life satisfaction [18-20].

3.2. Impact Factors for Well-being (WB)

Many factors contribute to the level of well being. According to various researches, 3 main factors are contributing to the level of PWB, which are personality, adaptation and social relationships [21].

3.2.1. Personality

According to scholars' research, people who are prone to becoming fan groups often have distinct personality traits. For example, sports fans mostly have an extroverted and easy-going personality. They have a clear need for arousal and stimulation, as well as a strong desire for possession and collection [22]. At the same time, according to the Big Five personality traits, higher extraversion is typically linked to greater WB. This is because extraverted individuals tend to experience more positive emotions and have stronger social connections, which contribute to their overall life satisfaction and well being [23]. Meaning to say, the fan groups might have a personality advantage in achieving well being.

3.2.2. Social Relationship

Social relationships are an inevitable part in interpersonal communication. Based on the nature of relationships, they can be roughly divided into family, friendship, social group relationships, etc. An experiment used a questionnaire survey consist of 1166 adult participants studied the relationship between people's satisfaction with life and the social support they received. The results showed that, perceived support was a significant predictor of life satisfaction and negative affect, enacted support was a significant predictor of life satisfaction [24]. For fans, establishing positive social relationships with people who are in the same fan group is one of the sources of well being, and consumption is an important way for fans to communicate and establish relationships, as well as a mean of gaining social support. This is because these consumption activities can strengthen fans' recognition and sense of belonging to their group. Many fans state that both online and offline consumption activities can make them feel like they are "caring for each other like family". Even from strangers they have never met

before, they can draw great cohesion and make some like-minded friends [6]. Moreover, these are all the well being that brought to fans by idol consumption and social relationships.

4. Method

4.1. Literature Review

Firstly, this article adopts the method of literature reading, selecting books, journals, and literature related to celebrity chasing consumption, consumer psychology, consumption motivation, and PWB in recent years that are relevant to this research topic. We extracted and organized the main viewpoints in the literature for reading analysis. At the same time, we summarized the drawbacks of previous research and make modifications and innovations in this study.

4.2. Questionnaire Survey

Secondly, this study mainly adopts the form of questionnaire survey.

The study mainly distributed questionnaires to people of all ages through social work platforms such as WeChat and Teams and has received 106 answers.

The questionnaire consists of 22 questions, of which questions 1-6 are surveys on celebrity consumption, and questions 7-22 are assessments of PWB. Among them, the questions on celebrity consumption mainly studied the objects, amounts, and fields of people's celebrity consumption. In addition, for the PWB assessment scale, this study adopted the C-PHBS-16 happiness scale, which was redesigned by Langrui, Wang Yuling, Li Zuoshan, and others based on Ryff's C-PHBS-42 translated PWB scale [24]. According to previous testings, the scale has good structural validity and can accurately measure people's level of PWB. This scale consists of 16 questions, each with 5 dimensions (option 1 represents strongly disagree, option 5 represents strongly agree). Among them, 8 questions are about participants' subjective feelings towards situations that may bring negative experiences in life, while the other 8 questions investigate participants' feelings towards positive events in life, such as healthy intimate relationships and self-esteem. The order in which positive and negative questions appear is random.

Finally, t-test was used for data analysis in this study. In the t-test, we separated participants with monthly star chasing expenses of over 100 yuan and below, and whether there are between-group differences in positive and negative questions about WB across different monthly star chasing expenses subgroups.

5. Results

This study has collected 106 questionnaires in all, including 24 for males, 79 for females, and 3 for other genders(as shown in Table1). The age distribution is mainly below 25 years old, with a total of 80 people and 26 people are aged above 25(as shown in Table 2).

Table 1: Gender distribution.

Male	24(22.64%)
Female	79(74.53%)
Other	3(2.83%)

Table 2: Age distribution.

below 16 years old	15(14.15%)
16-18 years old	57(53.77%)

Table 2: (continued).

18-25 years old	8(7.55%)
above 25 years old	26(24.53%)

Base on Table 3, the proportion of people who are not spending money on celebrity chasing consumption is the highest among participants in all age groups, which are 40%, 49.12%, 50% and 75.69% respectively. Additionally, the group of people who spend higher amount of money on idol worship, those who spend 5000 yuan or more, has the lowest proportion, and in some age groups, they have not even engaged in high consumptions. What's more, the distribution of celebrity spending among other age groups are relatively even. Meanwhile, among the non-consumer groups, minors account for a relatively higher proportion, which is 64.15%.

Table 3: Age and amount of consumption distribution.

Consumption amount/age	Not spending money	Below100yuan	100-1000yuan	1000-5000yuan	above5000yuan	Subtotals
Below16 years old	6(40%)	4(26.67%)	4(26.67%)	1(6.67%)	0(0.00%)	15
16-18 years old	28(49.12%)	13(22.81%)	12(21.05%)	3(5.26%)	1(1.75%)	57
18-25 years old	4(50%)	1(12.5%)	2(25%)	1(12.5%)	0(0.00%)	8
above25 years old	15(57.69%)	5(19.23%)	4(15.38%)	1(3.85%)	1(3.85%)	26

It can be seen from the data in Table 4 that the majority of participants are currently unemployed, and half of them have no consuming behaviors on celebrities. However, at the same time, the proportion of non working participants who engage in SCC is the highest among all income groups, but the proportion of people with higher consumption in this group is relatively small. Meanwhile, participants with the highest income (i.e. monthly income above 10000 yuan) are most likely to make higher consumption on idol worship, at 11.76%. That is to say, whether or not to engage in celebrity worship consumption is not closely related to monthly income, but there is a certain correlation between the amount of celebrity worship consumption and monthly income.

Table 4: Amount of consumption and monthly income distribution.

Consumption amount/monthly income	Not spending money	Below100yuan	100-1000yuan	1000-5000yuan	above5000yuan	Subtotals
Below2000yuan	3(37.5%)	2(25%)	3(37.5%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	8
2000-5000yuan	2(50%)	0(0.00%)	2(50%)	0(0.00%)	0(0.00%)	4
5000-10000yuan	5(55.56%)	2(22.22%)	1(11.11%)	1(11.11%)	0(0.00%)	9
Above10000yuan	9(52.94%)	2(11.76%)	3(17.65%)	1(5.88%)	2(11.76%)	17
Not having a job yet	34(50%)	17(25%)	13(19.12%)	4(5.88%)	0(0.00%)	68

In order to investigate whether there are between-group differences in the score for positive and negative questions in the WB scale across different monthly star chasing expenses groups, this study

used the t-test method. The null hypothesis of the study is that there is no correlation between the amount of celebrity consumption and the score of the happiness scale. While the alternative hypothesis is that the higher the amount of celebrity consumption, the higher the score of the happiness scale. The study separated the group of people who spend less than 100 yuan per month and those who spend more than 100 yuan, and calculate their total scores for positive and negative questions on the happiness scale. Finally, we will use the testing method of t-test to investigate whether there is a difference in the average scores between the two groups of data for positive and negative questions. In the end, the detection results of the two sets of data were $p=0.405$ (see Table 5) and $p=0.090$ (see Table 6), respectively, which did not reject the null hypothesis. That is to say, the amount of money spent on celebrity worship per month make no difference high or low scores on the happiness scale.

Table 5: SCC and positive question score.

Mean(a)-Mean(b)	t	df	P	two-tailed
0.2956	+0.24	104		0.810803

Table 6: SCC and negative problem score.

Mean(a)-Mean(b)	t	df	P	two-tailed
1.7833	+1.35	104		0.179947

6. Discussion

This study mainly used literature reading and questionnaire survey methods to investigate the impact of celebrity chasing spending on people's PWB. After data collection, a method of Paired Samples t-Test was used to test whether there was a connection between the two, and the conclusion was drawn that there was no significant correlation between the amount of celebrity chasing consumption and the level of PWB, which is contrary to the hypothesis of this study.

Certain drawbacks exist in this study. Firstly, most of the participants in the study come from three cities in China: Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Shanghai. The economic level and living standards of these three cities are relatively high compared to other cities in China, so the data collected may not fully reflect the consumption level and PWB level of the entire country and even the whole world. People living under high income conditions may have a higher level of happiness due to the lack of economic pressure. Therefore, this may be the reason for the insignificant differences between the study groups. Meanwhile, due to time constraints, this study only explored the relationship between consumption and PWB in the field of idol worship. However, in real life settings, people's consumption field is not limited to idol worship, and the factors that affect PWB are not limited to consumption, but also include the quality of intimate relationships, social conditions, political situations, etc. Therefore, in future research, researchers should expand the scope of participants and pay attention to the differences in fan consumption habits between different cultures as well as other factors that may affect PWB. However, despite this, through this study, individuals are still able to gain a better understanding of the factors influencing human PWB and its importance for personal self-development and living standards. At the same time, we hope to reduce impulsive celebrity chasing consumption behavior through this study and guide fans to focus more on real life issues. More significantly, the study aims to help people obtain higher quality entertainment activities and lifestyles, and create a more comfortable and satisfying life.

7. Conclusion

Ultimately, this research illuminates the intricate relationship between the consumption of celebrities and the MH of their followers. The results show no evidence of a meaningful association, despite the premise that spending on idols would positively correlate with increased WB. This implies that the reasons behind SCC—such as emotional projection, self-identification, and social conformity—may not always result in better MH. Even though fans may have good experiences from their relationships with idols, the negative effects of excessive consumption—such as dependency and financial burdens—may outweigh the positive effects. The concentration of the sample in wealthy Chinese cities emphasises the need for caution when extrapolating these findings to other demographic groups and cultural situations. Expanding the subject pool and looking at additional impacting elements including interpersonal interactions and individual personality features should be the goals of future study. Furthermore, delving further into the context of consumption outside of idolatry may yield more insightful information about how it affects wellbeing. In the end, the study highlights how critical it is to mentor followers towards better consuming practices that place a higher value on true fulfilment and contentment in life than on rash purchases motivated by idol worship. A more meaningful and long-lasting engagement with one's hobbies and communities can be developed by encouraging a balanced approach to fandom.

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