

The Strategies of Chinese and Korean Entertainment Companies Attracting Fans to Consume-Comparing TIMES FENG JUN and YG Entertainment

Nianwen Liu^{1,a,*}

¹*Soochow Foreign Language School, Suzhou, Jiangsu, 215000, China*

a. Shaojian2012@suda.edu.cn

**corresponding author*

Abstract: Celebrities used to make use of the wide spread of online common platforms to share their daily routines with fans in order to strengthen fans' enthusiasm. Nowadays, they see media as a new handy way to advertise. Big companies usually have a fixed mode of marketing strategies that could fully utilize the passion of fans and the quick spread of the anything provide a foundation to stars of promoting the products to maximize the probability of people purchasing on items related to them. This paper aims to weigh up the marketing strategies of a Chinese company and a Korean company, TIMES FENG JUN and YG Entertainment, which are quite mature and famous in the two countries to help people think more critically in consumption ideas. Through the research, the comparisons between the two companies were made and found some similarities and differences. To deal with the drawbacks, several suggestions on improving the relationship between fans and celebrities are given for the two companies according to the study.

Keywords: entertainment, marketing strategies, fan culture, social media

1. Introduction

Covid-19, started at the end of 2019, has caused unimaginable influences on human-beings. In the years that people preferred stay online instead of going outdoors, Internet surfing is showing a growing trend. In the 51st China Internet Report of CNNIC published in 3rd, February 2023, the number of Chinese netizens had reached the number of 1.067 billion up to 2022 December [1]. As the world have come into the information age, messages from different countries are integrated and can be easily learned on the Internet. One of the most non-negligible changes is the sharp rise of e-commerce, especially on social media platform. The development of sales is also advanced from the popularized of the social media platforms. There is quite a few of anchors who have made astonished results. When the famous anchor Jiaqi, Li showed up for the first time after the 3-month disappearance without any trailer, it was viewed 21 million an hour. At the end of the two hours' live, 18 products were sold out which reached the sale of 120 million and was viewed over 63.5 million, gaining likes above 160 million [2]. Through the circumstance, it is clear to know that the consumption behavior of consumers is gradually transforming to a new development tendency due to the widely used of social media platforms and celebrity effect.

The celebrities are not only known in their home-country but also globalized.

Lisa, a member of the world-famous girls' band BLACKPINK, set her first Guinness World Record in 2021 on account of the music video for "Lalisa" which is her first individual solo logging 73.6 million views on YouTube in just a day of release, and then became the platform's most-watched video by a solo artist in 24 hours and the most-watched video by a solo K-pop singer in 24 hours.

Chinese singer Jackson Wang is the first Chinese solo artist to perform on the main stage at the biggest music festival Coachella. The movement helped him to further broaden European and American markets and he started his first world tour since 2022.

The tremendous data definitely approved the degree of propagation of Korea entertainment in universe and is highly persuasive evidence of the mighty force of the large fan group.

Online celebrity means to carry huge traffic amount which can be told from the word itself. Because of the lack of fresh activities, people in recent years, began to become more focused on entertainment. The topic of Fan Culture has been discussed more frequently after fans shown strong purchasing power.

In a new type of variety show in 2018, contestants made their debut through earning the top 9 supports voted by audience while audiences could only get the votes by purchasing the specific brand of milk. Some fans built up groups called fan clubs to gather money from all the supporters that may not have enough money to afford whole boxes of milk but could provide small change. When there was an amount raised, they bought and voted for their favourite player. According to the top 1 candidate's fan club, the publicised fund-raising data had ascended 12.852 million and switched to 180 million votes though the group was even not registered [3]. In a similar program, the sales of water increased to 500 times by the reason of attaining votes.

The astonished data could also be seen when fans buying the endorsed goods, or the products promoted by their favourite stars. A statistic of the physical magazine sales in 2020 listed out the top 20 sales data of the magazine endorsed by celebrities. Every magazine was sold up to a sales volume of over ten million [4].

The aim of the paper is to study on the strategies of Chinese and Korean companies that are specialized on entertaining of how they attract fans to consume involving the effects of social media platforms. The research will be focused on two specific companies, TIMES FENG JUN in China and YG Entertainment in Korea. These two companies are chosen since they both have an experience of operating for over ten years and are relatively mature which means having enough mass base comparing to the rest of the companies in each country. The main research method is contrastive analysis and the goal is to make fans consume more rationally.

2. Information of TIMES FENG JUN

2.1. Brief Introductions

TIMES FENG JUN (TIMES) was set up in 2009. When Korea Wave was sweeping the world in 2013, it formed the boy band TFBOYS imitating the training modes of Korean and Japan artists which took the lead at the time [5]. This is the first try of operating cultivating idols in China. In 2014, February, TFBOYS received the prize "Most Influential Singer in the Mainland" by Vchart Awards which needed to boost popularity online to rank and had a strong impact to Chinese entertainment at the time [6]. After the live of the award ceremony broadcast, TFBOYS caught the attention of the public and shoot to fame. Even till now the three members are still active in different Chinese entertainment areas like acting and singing. Though they rarely appear in the name of the group, TFBOYS the band is regarded as the founder of idols in Chinese mainland and the top boy band in China by most of viewers.

2.2. The Overall Trend of the Strategies and Judgments

The band brought both the property and status to the firm. While TFBOYS were not solo but still working as a team, TIMES continuously launched new idols following their mode and has gained quite a few achievements. TIMES developed a homegrown software called TF Fansclub selling the merch of the firm's stars, for examples the photobooks shot by the company's team. Sometimes fans charge in the APP for the idols or group they like to let them debut or getting more chances to make appearances on stages. In TIMES self-made variety show "YOUTH ON FIRE" in 2020, seven members in the teenage band "TEENS IN TIME (TNT)" were divided into 8 different kinds of couple combinations and worked together for a show. Fans could vote for the program they like and the group which got the biggest number of votes would have another chance of cooperation perform. At last, the cooperation of Haoxiang Yan and Junlin He obtained approximately 64 million tokens, converting into more than 6 million RMB. The overall polling station received above 10 million RMB [7].

Three common ways are considered that are in the interest of TIMES. Except the method of charging to vote that is mentioned above, the purchase on their individual products and the auction for the tickets of TF Family's activities play a vital role in earning profits. Take TNT as an example. As a relatively animated and long-live boy band in China at present, TIMES launches souvenirs of TNT once in a while. The souvenirs maintain photos and special reports that are not visible in social media but are available after buying. Usually, the artists post some pictures or selfies of the campaign to arouse people's desire to buy. Because of the temporary releasing, fans need to take notice of the online mall regularly, especially in the weeks after new videos are posted. The quantity of the product usually depends on what type of campaign the product is for. On members' birthdays, for instance, the souvenirs are limited not only on the consuming number but also the selection on the members stated that only one specific member's merch can be chosen to buy in a year. The first physical album of them exceeded the sales of 100 million RMB within 119 hours and refreshed the record of mainland boy band's sales volume as it achieved the largest quantity of 630,000 pieces [8].

In summer or holidays, when artists in TIMES are skipping from schools, TIMES hosts events and invites loyal fans to participate for free. But the definition of "loyal" is based on the amount of money the fans spend on the APP or official website. There were once or twice that fans needed to bid for the admission quota. In TF Family's Sports Meeting in 2020 June, 270 tickets were sold on the website gaining a income of 2600,000 RMB that each ticket was valued for more than 10 thousand RMB in average [9].

Besides the consumption on items, people have to pay 298RMB to sign up an account at first so that they could be allowed to purchase then. With the strategies of hunger marketing and extending exquisite makeup on social media platform and then give limitations on various conditions, TIMES makes use of the irrational emotion the fans have to promote purchasing.

3. Information of YG Entertainment

3.1. Brief Introductions

K-pop, the simplify of Korean popular music, is a genre of music originating from South Korea and is now popularized around the world [10]. Many musical influences are involved in K-pop songs, such as jazz, hip-hop and so on. The songs are usually performed by bands of youths or teenagers in a group of four to twenty-one people. As a vital part of prevailing of Hallyu, k-pop celebrities go viral relying on the support of the strong performance agencies. On the list of ranking the Operating profit of leading K-pop entertainment companies in 2020, YG Entertainment (YG), the company established in 1996 by Yang Hyun-suk was the top three company [11]. As the most representative

artists under the company, the girl band BLACKPINK that debuted in 2016 and the boy band BIGBANG debuted in 2006 have both broken the record on billboards and won historical titles [12].

3.2. The Overall Trend of the Strategies and Judgments

According to the statistic, YG's gross profit in 2022 amounted to around 127.95 billion in South Korea wide, the highest recorded figure during the considered time period [13]. The contributions roughly came from the earnings of physical albums and the audio source service. Though BLACKPINK came out again, the only appearance did not make many helps to the subsidiary of YG which is absorbed in music distribution and still showed a fiscal deficit of 7.4 billion WON [14]. The low-spirited atmosphere in the industry that COVID-19 brought compulsively made the firm to stay online to complete the activities.

The only online APP it provides is the one cooperating with HYBE. Idols do post their daily life and routines on it, but not so frequently as HYBE's stars do. The providing of the goods is poor too comparing to other entertainment companies [15].

4. Comparisons of TIMES FENG JUN and YG Entertainment

4.1. Similarities

Though TIMES and YG operating in different countries, there are several similarities between the companies on selling and the working of artists. First of all, the artists show up most in social media platforms that are visible for all the viewers. While completing targets on personal APPs monthly, they would rather increase exposure even though it would not get profit at present. Artists endorse brands, too. The companies scatter endorsements and idols would wear the specified customs the brand gave and accept interviews or requests of group photo from fans in public areas. Once the journalists and followers uploaded the photos on medias, it would highly increase the publicity of the brand to promote purchasing, by benefiting from the desire of wearing couple suits with fans' favourite idols or just the appreciation of how they collocate the designs. Moreover, to purchase for the most relatively merch, both the companies have a threshold. Although it may sometimes strike down strangers' enthusiasm, more people consider it as the basic way of demonstrating the love to the idol and to find self-identity in the fan groups.

4.2. Differences

However, since there are non-negligible effects on the situations of China and Korea and the positioning and audiences of the stars, differences are not just a few. The biggest difference is that the forms of souvenirs. In Korea, celebrities endorse huge amounts of other brands outside of the company to make revenues, but not taking the sales of homemade derivatives as the primary method. All four members in BLACKPINK have their own endorsement on luxury brand such as Chanel and Dior. The advertisements on social medias play a really vital role because of the widely propagandized and the discounts provided by fans groups in order to motivate. Meanwhile, TIMES prefer to promote artists under the banner only in the fans group that has already been formed. They are likely to advertise on their official blogs or interact with fans through fixed contact person with the poor applications of personal endorsements.

In some particular circumstances, it depends on the stars themselves. For varies reasons of them or the companies there may have a delay on sharing and obtaining opinions with followers. The latency of the pronounces misleads people from time to time and even causes unimaginable effects. Hence, though it is definitely correct to ignore some of the bad words from haters, it is significant of accessing to information in time.

5. Inspiration

To prevent idols of being deified, the illegal fund raising should be forbidden. Nowadays the fan culture is popular in Generation Z, which means there must have some fans that are too young to form up their views and judges of the world outlook, they would unavoidably be influenced by some statements that are not so conformed to moral values. To both the personal and holistic regards, fans should show their attitude of being independent and having the ability of critical thinking so that people would not lead along by merchants and waste unnecessary money. Everyone, especially the elder fans should have their own point of views on purchasing. Think twice and make budgets before paying the bill in order to consume rationally.

Meanwhile, the popularize of social media platforms among teenagers in Korea makes Koreans keen on surfing on the Internet to discuss rumour and gossips. In the circumstance of suffering from the huge class difference in the country, the distinct life between celebrities and civilians makes the everyday life more mysterious and triggers curiosity of the public. That could be a reason of why people would buy clothes after they saw a star wearing it in public or they endorsed the brand. In some aspects, the act of copying celebrities' life may satisfy people's vanity and brings idols and fans closer after seeing them doing the same just like the ordinaries does seeking for a sense of identity from the person they chase for and a sense of belongings to the fan group which is an organization of people all buying the same clothes.

6. Conclusion

Based on the current circumstance, both the overflowing of the caution to the external nor the emphasizing to the internal side are disadvantageous to the development of the businesses focusing on entertainment industry. If the audiences were not stable enough to support a long-term consuming, artists would be refreshed soon since fans are less intrigued by them than before and they would be replaced by new freshmen for their creative forms on reality shows and attractive characteristics.

Obviously, it is extremely urgent to build up a tight connection between consumers and entertainment celebrities carrying on an invariable mode when both satisfying the needs of consumers to feel of being engaged and the needs of the companies of making money. For the sake of the sustainability, as the two companies are operating in models that look similar to some extent, exploring overseas markets after investigating local fan conditions should be put on the agenda. Because of the culture integration, it is beneficial of TIMES and YG to elevate through external resources from time to time despite it is indeed that some of the national conditions could not go for the same which make it unlikely to be treated identically. Still, there are some conceptions that make it available to use for references due to the same basic features of fan culture and the talent agencies. If there was a chance, it would be a win-win situation of TIMES and YG if they could have a conversation on sharing the perspectives and the experiences.

In conclusion, none of these companies are perfect or well behaved enough to deserve the titles and the reputations. The mindless love from fans and the excessive pursuit to entertainers in China and Korea also caused the absurd situation. Not only the companies should improve themselves internally, to behave themselves in front of and behind the stage, viewers should also reconsider if it was the so-called "real" love to those who they are addicted to by praising them without preconditions and provide unlimited access to money, especially when they still need to rely on the supports from their parents or are not independent on finance. To create a healthy and sensible entertaining environment, every tiny effort made by the public is the key concept to a better tomorrow.

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