

# Fan Culture: Emotional Construction, Fan Economy and Data War

## -- Take the Talent Show "Youth With You 3" as an Example

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### ABSTRACT

With the popularity of idol talent shows, fan culture has developed rapidly in recent years. This study understands the fan culture in Youth with You 3 from the three perspectives of emotional construction, fan economy and data war, explains the reasons for the formation of the fan community, takes the "milk pouring incident" as an example to explore the consumer psychology and emotional expression behind the fan economy, and analyses how the market guides fans to carry out unrewarded data labour. The vicious competition in the idol market is becoming more and more fierce. After the "hot draft", it is necessary to "think coldly", so that the fan culture can play a positive social value.

### KEYWORDS

Fan Culture; Fan Economy; Fan Community; Digital Labour.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the rapid development of mass media and new media technology, fan activities tend to be multidimensional, and star chasing is no longer an individual behaviour, but an organised mass activity. The idol talent show "Youth With You 3" broadcasted by iQIYI has been extremely popular since its broadcast, and was ordered to stop recording with the scandal of "milk pouring incident". We have to admit that fan chasing stars is no longer a personal behaviour, but a phenomenon that requires social attention. Fan culture presents chaos under the threat of traffic. Is the draft under capital manipulation a national participation in star-making or harvesting leeks in the name of idols? After the boom, what other questions need to be reflected on, and where will the talent show go? This study takes "Youth with You 3" as an example to analyse the reasons for the development of fan culture, reflect on the bad phenomena in fan culture, and try to put forward effective strategies to guide the positive development of fan culture.

## 2. THE SPECIFIC EXPRESSION OF FAN CULTURE IN "YOUTH WITH YOU 3"

### 2.1. Identity under Emotional Coercion

In the past, there were fan groups spontaneously "powering for love", and then there were sponsors and program teams who helped to quickly realise traffic realisation. The talent show was not a pure

stage for idols chasing dreams, but a "krypton" game under capital interests. How to guide fans to willingly spend money for the player's "debut dream"? How to improve the stickiness of fans through the structure of emotional relationships?

Emotional resonance allows fans to spontaneously form a community. In recent years, with the scale of the fan community, there is now a detailed division of labour among members and a strict organisational system. There are many departments in the complete fan community, such as the support club, data station and anti-black station... The support club and big fans (referring to those who have more voice and convening power in the fan group) will integrate the posting links in the Weibo super topic, and then call on fans to vote, and even have a large number of inflammatory discourse. Under the ham of public psychology, "If you love him, you have to spend money for him" has become a recognised truth for fans. Fans who spend money stand at the commanding heights of morality and theory, and words with the nature of PUA induce fans, especially teenagers whose values are not mature, to lose their ability to think rationally. "Fan abuse" is very representative in these words, which is commonly said to be miserable. Yu Jingtian, the C candidate of the program, was exposed that the KTV run by his parents was suspected of illegal operation, coupled with the sensitive topic of dual nationality, the public's doubts and reports plunged him into the public opinion storm. After the exposure of the black history, fans felt sorry for their idols and were stimulated by a stronger fighting spirit. The overwhelming whitewashing small composition shaped him into a miserable and hard image. "Brother has no background, only us" "If you are not crazy, don't all in, just wait for the final night to cry"... Abuse fans to become solid fans. Fans have increased their money, and fans have borrowed 10,000 yuan for investment.

Under the pressure dominated by group consciousness, individual fans are eager to seek their own existence value recognition, resulting in the phenomenon that individual consciousness is wrapped up in group consciousness. American sociologist Randall Collins put forward the theory of "interactive ritual chain", which regards emotion as the basic driving force behind social structure and interaction, believing that people will exchange for "shared conversation reality" by using capital or emotional motivation, which is essentially to confirm whether they have a group membership in the body [1]. When you open the entry of "Youth With You 3", you can see a large number of screenshots of "Krypton" or purchase business. The purpose is to obtain the identity of the fan community, which also requires continuous value reproduction to be consolidated. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory holds that self-realisation needs are the highest level of growth needs (B requirements), and physiological and safety defect needs (D requirements) will eventually point to higher-level emotional needs [2]. When you participate in the investment support activities, the idol ranking is improved, and a strong sense of participation and cultivation will be formed. The realisation of this self-worth will make fans indulge in it and unable to extricate themselves, and the fan identity will be built.

## **2.2. Fan Economy Under Commercial "Star-making"**

Fan economy refers to the business income-generating behaviour that builds on the relationship between fans and followers. Using the emotional bond between the two, merchants can promote their products more easily. In the new media environment, due to the high-speed operation of Internet media and the invasion of the wave of consumerism, the dominant position of fans in the fan economy has been strengthened. In the "Research Report on the Business Model and Trends of China's Celebrity Economy in 2020" released by iResearch, it was mentioned that the market size of related industries of the fan economy exceeded 3.5 trillion yuan in 2019 [3]. Today's fan economy has broken through the traditional cognition, which is not only fanatical and spontaneous, but also collective and large-scale.

"Only the top nine trainees can finally make their debut, and the debut nine-person group is decided by the youth producer in front of the screen." From chasing fans to making stars, the ability to play

determines whether the trainee can make his debut in the end. According to the data of "Taoba" (the most commonly used software for "Youth with you 3"), in the six hours on April 2, Luo Yizhou's support association raised more than 4.87 million yuan, and Yu Jingtian's support association raised more than 4.77 million yuan. In addition to the daily tickets of loose fans, the most important thing is to buy the designated products of Mengniu, the program's designated products "Red Grapefruit Four Seasons Spring Milk" and "Flower and Fruit Light Milk" to get additional voting opportunities, also known as "milk tickets".

With the increasingly fierce competition for debut, the price of "milk tickets" has been soaring, and even the supply is in short supply. The endless milk was poured into the ditch in tons, and the crazy fan economy was presented to the public with the rapid fermentation of the "milk pouring incident". On May 6, 2021, the producer iQIYI and the title merchant Mengniu Zhenguoli issued an apology statement one after another, and proposed a rectification and return plan to help the channel be closed. The live broadcast originally scheduled for the night of the group on May 8 was terminated. The Cyberspace Administration of China has deployed a series of "clear" special actions to focus on rectifying the chaos of entertainment.

People's Daily Online once commented, "The so-called draft and pitching are actually a multi-party conspiracy to hunt fans." The outbreak of the "milk pouring" incident is only the tip of the iceberg of the draft variety show gray industry chain, and is the epitome of the abnormal development of the fan economy. The fan economy is just an emotional marketing. When capital intervenes, "Idol" is just a special commodity on the assembly line. Interest-driven makes the market keen to create a "perfect idol" and "traffic realisation" is more prominent in programs such as "Youth with You 3" that are far more commercial than entertainment, taking time and dismembering us now. However, there are countless stars who have collapsed houses now. When they are separated from the false settings, who is willing to pay for it? In addition, because fan fund-raising is in a gray area, it is difficult to define whether it is illegal, and there are many cases of fan stations running away with a huge amount of fund-raising.

We have to admit that fans will get great pleasure in the process of chasing stars, and the fan economy will also stimulate national economic growth to a certain extent, but under the heat wave of "traffic first", society needs to think calmly. As a consumer fan, if you don't want to be a puppet under the operation of capital, you must learn to "dispel the charm" of idols and keep your reason and sober. Relevant departments need to strengthen the inspection of the cultural industry, curb the entry of vulgar and low-quality cultural products into the market, and strive to create a clear and orderly network environment. Only by facing economic and social benefits at the same time can we ensure its healthy development.

### **2.3. Data War under the Operation of Capital**

Using data to prove commercial value, and using investment to express love, "data-only theory" has become a marketing method for capital brainwashing audiences in the evolution of drafts in recent years. With the slogan of "powering electricity for love", it deliberately guides the emotional labour aimed at extracting the interests of fans to the greatest extent, building a seemingly intimate but illusory two-way relationship, and the abnormal support of the fan group has appeared.

The data competition for talent shows is very fierce, and fans will do their best to support idols, including but not limited to voting lists, Weibo posts likes, comments and retweets, Douban control comments... In order to urge fans to do data, the super topic is full of all kinds of copywriting with "urgent" and "all in", a lot of red exclamations. The charm is shocking. Judging from the cumulative growth of Weibo fans, a total of 15 people gained more than 500,000 followers on Weibo in the second stage of promotion. Yu Jingtian, Yuta Hashimoto and Luo Yizhou are the top 3 fans, of which Yu Jingtian's fans are 1.482 million. Judging from the popularity of the relevant videos on Bilibili, the maximum number of individual videos of Deng Xiaoci and Liang Sen is more than 1 million, and

the direct views of the theme song "WE ROCK" in Liu Jun's related videos is as high as 1.429 million, which is also the highest number of views among all direct videos.

From emotional coercion to money support, to the direct determination of the debut quota by data, fans' sense of participation in the talent show is getting higher and higher, and their identities tend to be diversified, realising the unity of money consumption and data production. In fact, as early as 1977, the Canadian communication scholar Smeitz put forward the "Audience Commodity Theory", which revealed the conclusion that the main commodity produced by the media under the capitalist system in the traditional media era was the audience [4]. The crazy "making data" activity has become a normalised fan culture with the joint efforts of investors, economic companies, fans and other parties. For long-term data work on social media, fans not only need to sign in on different platforms every day, but also need to like, forward and read relevant entries. In the eyes of fans, even some useless wild lists, idols must be in a high position.

Data competition is a comparison behaviour of fans in order to maintain their sense of collective honour. Behind the "power generation for love" is the conscious enslavement training of capital on fans. Many fans jokingly called themselves "data migrant workers". In 2000, Italian scholar Terranova put forward the concept of free labour based on the commodity theory of Smaez's audience, and further pointed out that the labour paid by Internet slaves for the Internet has free attributes. Fans in the talent show enjoy and compromise under the siege of this capital [5]. In addition, data competition has triggered extremely high group participation, resource eruption and confrontational struggle, which inevitably leads to cyber violence and mutual treading, which has a huge negative impact on shaping a clear network environment. Only by using the data as a reference rather than the only standard can the talent show shine again.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, the fan culture shown in the talent show is all-round and multi-level. The ubiquitous consumerism and business logic stimulate the emotional expression of the fan group. It is inevitable to interpret the fan culture from a personal point of view, which will guide the positive development of fan culture not overnight. Society needs to face up to the current problems of fan culture. Fan groups need to improve their own media literacy and respond to the call of "breaking traffic-only" to establish an effective literary and artistic evaluation system.

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