

Community Order and Spontaneous Economic Behavior: Fan Community, Fan Economy and Psychology of Cai Xukun

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the fan community and fan economy in the era of idols. Taking Cai Xukun's fans as a case, the research information is obtained through methods of interview and observation. The article finds that the fan community is a strict structure with clear division of labor, and fans involved are committed to the same goal, which is to enhance Cai Xukun's economic value and topical heat. Fans buy products to support idols, and the cost ranges from a few hundred to tens of thousands. These purchase behaviors are often motivated by support, satisfaction, closeness, and related affection, which build a virtual bridge between fans and their idols.

Keywords: fan community, fan economy, fan psychology, Cai Xukun

1. INTRODUCTION

Cai Xukun, born in 1998, is currently one of the most popular new stars with everybody's attention in the mainland entertainment industry. He gets 27.28 million followers on Weibo and 763,000 on Instagram, and there are thirteen singles have been released in two years. In 2018, Cai Xukun made his debut through the talent show "Idol Trainee". At that time, he received the most votes of group members and became the leader of the debut group NINEPERCENT.

Cai Xukun's fan is called Ikun. The purchase volume and purchase speed of Ikun are relatively excellent in the fan circle. Among Cai Xukun's fans, there are many mature groups with spending power who are willing to pay for him. In 2019, the total sales of Cai Xukun's magazine exceeded 40 million, the consumption reached to 70 million in 90 days, and the sales of the first digital album "YOUNG" exceeded 40 million. Among the organized fan groups, a series of economic activities are implemented inside and outside the fan group.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

"Fans", refers to "people who are fanatically involved in ball games, commercial or entertainment activities, obsessed with or admired film stars or sports stars". A large number of individual fans form groups because they

love the same celebrity and have the same topic, which is similar with condensing each "fascinated lonely person" into an online group with a common slogan. This group is called the fan community [1]. As a public figure, celebrities have a certain influence in society, and they will subtly influence the values of fans. Each fan in the fan community has a strong emotional connection and consistent cultural consumption behavior before each other, which derives a fan economic industry chain. Fans began to participate in the cultural industry, and many business models began to develop around the fan community, which is also called fan economy [2]. Fan economy is a kind of circle economy which uses the Internet or mobile phones as information media and uses platforms such as Weibo and WeChat to conduct information exchange product transactions, servicing trade and other spiritual and material activities within the circle [3]. The economic profit increase of fan consumption increases the connection between fans and products, increases user stickiness, turning consumers into fans, and then spreads the effect and economic benefits through word of mouth from fans. Because of the super communication effect of the Internet and the super low marginal cost of the fan community itself, the expansion of the entire community has greater economic value [4].

Fans cherish idols, which will lead to consumption behaviors. They will invest in their idols, not only

psychologically, but also financially. Fans will express their love for idols by consuming products related to idols. Merchants establish friendly emotional communication with consumers through the emotion “love me love my dog”, and regard it as a link, beginning to bundle products with celebrities, so that consumers can transfer their feelings for idols to products and brands [5]. Under this circumstance, fans are willing to purchase celebrity-related products to satisfy their admiration for their idols and to make fans get psychological and social resonance. When fans consume idol-related products, they care about the lifestyle and taste associated with idols, not the value of the product itself. They look for satisfaction, a sense of group belonging, and the realization of self-awareness in the process of consuming idol-related products [6].

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses case methods to focus on fan communities, fan structure, and fan consumption. For this research, fan community of Cai Xukun is the main research object. Different fan communities have different internal operating mechanisms and community structures. Their consumption patterns are also different. Therefore, this article chooses Cai Xukun's Weibo fan community as the case object.

This research is oriented by case study, with interview method as the main source of data collection. This research conducted online interviews with Cai Xukun fans, trying to understand the internal structure of Cai Xukun's fan community, consumption methods and concepts, and consumer psychology. The subjects selected by the research are all from the Weibo fan group "Cai Xukun's Kittens", with ages ranging from 13 to 24 years old. All became fans of Cai Xukun after the broadcast of variety show “Idol Trainees.

4. COMMUNITY STRUCTURE: A STRICT AND ORDERLY “WORK TASK GROUP”

This research studies the structure of the fan community by observing the "Cai Xukun Fan Group Official". The group was founded by the Weibo id for "Cai Xukun Official Weibo", with 4 administrators and 851 members. Although the name of the group contains the word "official", the group is entirely spontaneously formed by fans.

There is a certain division of responsibilities within the group. As far as the administrator is concerned, there are three main responsibilities and roles. First of all, the administrator will supervise whether the behavior in the group is correct. If the fans speak whether there is an obvious personal tendency, it will have a certain impact on the cognition and opinions of other fans, especially the negative evaluation of Cai Xukun. In addition, the administrator will also supervise whether the fans in the

group mention artists other than Cai Xukun. If a fan has the above behavior, the administrator will warn him first, and if it occurs multiple times, the fan will be removed. Secondly, the administrator is a powerful promoter of maintaining the popularity of Cai Xukun's Weibo. On the one hand, when Cai Xukun has product endorsements and magazine official announcements, the administrator will forward the relevant Weibo and urge fans to forward comments, likes, and control comments to increase popularity. On the other hand, whenever Cai Xukun posts a new Weibo, the administrator will promptly remind fans to follow and forward comments and likes. Furthermore, the administrator will recommend products endorsed by Cai Xukun to some extent to help increase sales. For example, when Cai Xukun endorses the Proya brand, the administrator will forward the relevant brand's Weibo to the fan group, reminding fans of the time point of purchase, quantity limit, etc. Although the administrator will not explicitly request fans to purchase, it could stimulate fans' desire to buy and promote the sales of Cai Xukun's endorsement brand.

In addition to the administrator, the fans who occupy a larger proportion in the group are the powerful executors of the administrator's instructions. The number of administrators is small, and they often play a role in issuing instructions. However, the increase in popularity of Weibo and the purchase of endorsement products often rely on a large number of fans. In addition, fans will remind each other of the purchase time of endorsement products and magazines and encourage purchases within an affordable range. It is worth noting that fans will share the true feelings of Cai Xukun's endorsement product in the group so that other fans can take it as a reference. As a supplement to the administrator's responsibilities and roles, fans will assist in implementing certain administrator functions, such as fans urging other fans to pay attention to Cai Xukun's movements and increasing his popularity data, or fans will also ask other fans to complain about Cai Xukun's negative comments every day.

The structure of this fan community is more rigorous, which is more like a work task group. However, unlike the workplace task group, which is organized by external forces, the "Cai Xukun Fans Official Account" is established by fans' love of Cai Xukun and is an internal drive. In addition to the operation of the official economic company, a fan group composed of fans spontaneously provides fan contributions for Cai Xukun to create his own commercial value and influence through activities such as increasing popularity, recommending products, and detecting negative reviews.

The strict order existing in the fan community allows it to efficiently complete tasks such as raising idol popularity and promoting idol endorsement products. Although this task does not take into account indicators, fans are still willing to perform it free of charge. They are

willing to accept the supervision of the discipline of the fan community, and always regulate themselves and supervise other fans to prevent the occurrence of unqualified fan behavior. The emergence of this kind of community structure is mainly due to strong fan drive and love for their idols.

5. PURCHASE BEHAVIOR: FORMING A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE AMONG FANS, IDOL AND BUSINESS

In terms of product purchases, through interviews, most of fans will choose to buy some beauty and skin care products, such as Yangshengtang facial mask, Proya Anti-Essence, Givenchy lipstick, SUNCUT sunscreen, kangaroo shampoo and Tomson Beijian's health products, these products are all endorsed by Cai Xukun. With idol endorsements, fans can come into contact with some brands and products that they would not pay attention to, and make purchases, which indirectly increases product sales and brand exposure. The idol endorsement time ranges from a few months to a few years. In addition to the early sales, fans will have a loyal willingness to the product to a certain extent and make long-term purchases. In addition to endorsement products, fans will also support Cai Xukun's magazines. The sales of magazines are an important measure of Cai Xukun's fashion and commercial value. The prices of these magazines are generally not high, ranging from RMB 10 to RMB 30, which fans can afford. But Cai Xukun also endorsed some luxury goods, such as Prada, fans will also imitate purchase behavior. Among the fans interviewed, the consumption amount of the fans ranged from several thousand to tens of thousands. The fans who spent the most had purchased the endorsement products of Cai Xukun for about 20,000 yuan, which is a large number for ordinary fans.

As the fans said: "I only know about this through my idol, but it is more because it is the endorsement of the idol, or I only consume when it comes to idols." "Firstly, I hope Cai will be affirmed by the market. Secondly, the endorsements selected by my sweetheart (Cai Xukun) are also very cautious. The product is guaranteed, and it is also good to use. I think this is the reason why fans buy repeatedly." Fans regard idol endorsements as an important channel for buying products and choosing products, which also shows that idol endorsement products have commercial significance and value.

In terms of purchase channels, most fans will learn about the products being sold through social platforms such as Weibo and WeChat and click to jump to the product page to directly make payments. A fan named Jiejie said: "Fans don't follow the activities of the merchants online every day, they are posted on Weibo, or there are discussions in the WeChat fan group, someone says 'It's a good deal', so I'll check it out and post it on Weibo and WeChat." By observing the official WeChat

account of Cai Xukun's fan club, it is clearly seen that before Cai Xukun's endorsement product goes on sale, fans will conduct a lot of publicity in Chaohua, a place for fans to be active, such as sending a large number of repetitive emphatic words, with some warning pictures to attract fans Attention, so as to achieve the purpose of letting more fans know and "brainwashing" to buy, such as "Kun has become Proya's spokesperson, everyone must support on someday,", "IKuns still not acting? The heart is not as good as action. "And other obvious propaganda techniques will be used to attract and stimulate fans to purchase.

Fans' purchase of idol endorsement products is a "circle economy" behavior. In the Weibo community, fans recommend and stimulate each other to generate consumer purchase behavior. Sales of such products often depend on fans to boost sales, making it difficult to make an impact on consumers outside the fan base, but fans are breaking through this circle. They will conduct a lottery in Chaohua. The requirement for participating in the lottery is to repost Weibo, and the content of Weibo may be to recommend products endorsed by Cai Xukun. Through a series of activities, it will get better publicity and attract the attention of non-fan consumers, which is what fans call "out of the circle".

Fans' purchases, organization, and recommending purchases are all free of charge. Out of their love for Cai Xukun, they voluntarily organize and implement a series of promotional activities. In the invisible interaction between idols and fans, a virtuous circle is formed. Fan purchase and promotion have increased the commercial value of idols, promoted the exposure of idols, and is conducive to the production of high-quality idols, which in turn attracts more business endorsements.

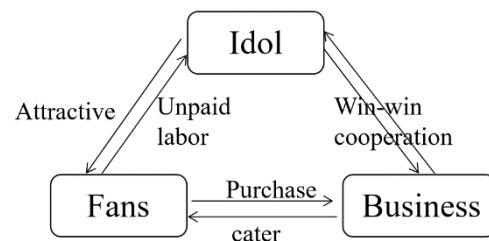


Figure 1 The relationship and attitude between idols, fans and businesses

6. PURCHASE PSYCHOLOGY: SUPPORT, SATISFACTION AND CLOSENESS

Out of support, psychological satisfaction, and psychological closeness, fans buy idol products. Due to love, fans hope that idols will have a more long-term development and provide support to idols from economic activities such as purchasing products. It can be concluded from the interview that most of the fans completely trigger shopping behavior because of love for

Cai Xukun. For products endorsed by Cai Xukun, most fans still consider Cai Xukun as a spokesperson to purchase, rather than needing this product indeed. At their psychological level, consuming idol-related products is a kind of idol who supports themselves in disguise. Fans' support for idols is more critical, and even completely determines the idol's future. Therefore, they are willing to buy products to help idols develop. In the hearts of fans, supporting the people they love will give them a sense of pride and satisfaction, as if they had achieved an achievement.

In addition, in the process of consumption, fans will develop psychological closeness due to the purchase of goods, using the goods as a virtual bridge between themselves and their idols. In the interview, there are some young fans who will buy the same product of Cai Xukun. For instance, the high school student, kk, she has been obsessing with Cai Xukun since 2018. In the interview, she revealed that her most impressive shopping was buying the same pajamas from Cai Xukun, she said: "It's cool, the same style!" She admitted in the interview that wearing the same clothes as an idol would have a sense of psychological satisfaction. Since most fans have no chance to have close and long-term contact with their idols, they will buy the same products as their idols to make themselves feel closer to idols. Fans will also buy products such as pillows, envelopes, bookmarks, etc. These products will have the image of idols and will be often used in their daily lives, reflecting the fan's desire to make idols be around all the time, thus generating stronger closeness.

Similarly, buying the same item of idol also has a certain sense of related affection, which can also be called "love me love my dog". When you see your favorite idol wearing a piece of clothing, you will naturally like the product and the product, and subsequent shopping behaviors occur. Also, kk has a sudden increase in the popularity of Prada, and immediately bought its backpack because Cai Xukun has become the spokesperson of it. As well, because Cai Xukun endorsed L'Oreal Black Bottle, fan Enqi believed that "Cai Xukun would not endorse bad products", and therefore developed a sense of love and trust in L'Oreal Black Bottle.

7. CONCLUSION

Through a case study of Cai Xukun fans, it is found that the community structure of fans is relatively strict,

more like a "work task group", with clear division of labor and higher organizational behavior efficiency. They are connected via the Internet and have their own clear division of functions in the fan community, including administrators and ordinary fans. Through mutual cooperation, their work includes increasing the popularity of Cai Xukun, purchasing products endorsed by Cai Xukun and anti-criminal online, contributing to the establishment of a positive image of Cai Xukun and the enhancement of commercial value. They support the idol by buying products, and the cost ranges from a few hundred to tens of thousands. They have won resources for the idol and made his business value higher. They believe that the idol's endorsement of the product makes them feel good and trust about the product and brand. Their economic buying behaviors are often motivated by support, satisfaction, closeness, and associated love, they could build a virtual bridge between themselves and their idols by purchasing products. However, due to the personal limitations of the researcher, the fans in this survey are somewhat lacking in fan diversity, for example, they are all female and young. In the future, this research will start with more samples of fans and conduct deeper research.

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