

Motivation of Fan Behavior Under the Influence of Psychology and New Media

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Abstract

In the wake of the development of the internet and digital media, new media as known as the fourth media become overwhelming in the globe. It contributes to almost all youth subcultures by gathering a specific group of people together on the media platform. Fandom as one of the biggest subculture groups today were also be affected by this new medium system. That is the reason when researchers want to analysis the fan behavior, psychology and mass media become two major ways to study. The aim of this paper is to study in what make people became a fan, find the motivation behind it through abound psychology theories such as Theory of McMillan & Chavis (1986) works inside fan community and para-social relationship between fans and their object of fandom. At the same time, the new media also play an important role in explain fan behavior which can be revealed by participatory culture, Uses and Gratifications Theory and so forth. All signs point out that in order to drive the huge account of fan economy, the flow platforms will keep encouraging the fan culture. Therefore, in order to meet fan's needs, study in the motivation under fandom behavior become considerably vital.

Keywords: *Fan culture, Fan behavior, New media, psychology*

1. INTRODUCTION

Fan culture is gradually changing from subculture to mass culture in the context of web2.0, It appeals to consumerism and come to be a popular way for entertainment today. Therefore, fan culture and fan behavior had quickly turned into an urgent issue for study in the context of technology in the current era. This paper is going to demonstrate why would people choose to become someone's fan, and to consider the reason behind the actions be called "fan behaviors".

The argumentation of the literature will be divided into two groups, one from a psychological perspective and the other from a media doctrine. In the process of analysing the literature, there will be some basic psychological theories or media theories extract to be interpreted in detail, which may be accompanied by some social cases use to support them.

Although the beneficial to the idolizing industry and the potential profit involved is considerable, the main significance of this topic is educational. there are mass young people involved in fandom clubs, to lessen the problems that can be brought along by group

polarization, we should understand the basics of this culture, in case to guide the fans behavior in the right value.

2. PSYCHOLOGY AND MEDIA'S INTERPRETATION OF FANDOM BEHAVIOR

2.1 Life Stage Theories, attachment and para-social relationships

Basic on the Life stage theories, human see the crisis in different ages as the different life stages, most of the solutions leads to a healthy ego identity, which includes many issues like identity diffusion, intimacy, or self-absorption etc. corresponding to different ages. Fan behavior, or named it adoring stardom, can be seen as one solution of how people tackle the crisis in their life stage.

The age group with the largest number of fans is undoubtedly the youth group. Identity diffusion, in this stage is the greatest problem, adolescents are looking for the answer of who are they and what kind of person they want to be in the future. This looks like a simple

question but it can definitely update to a seriously issue when they can not find a role model in their own family. In that way, various celebrities on the outside will be targeted by teens as their choice of role model. Youngsters' values are not yet stereotyped in this stage, celebrities can replace their parents and foster their views of life in some way. However, they can also easily adore the wrong person as they might be struggle in their rebel period.

In addition, young adults can also contribute to the fan community, and their crisis of life stage is usually related to intimacy. In this case, most of them try to achieved intimacy through conduce attachment with celebrities. The new media giving a proper platform for it, "The need to see the authentic person behind the performance was enhanced and to some extent created by the illusion of intimacy the new technology created, which was allowing the fans to come very close (through close-ups) while at the same time being distant" [1]. Horton and Wohl's (1956) study, which coined the pejorative term "para-social relationship," focused on the one-way adoration inherent in a celebrity/fan interaction[2]. Furthermore, most of female fans try to attain this virtual intimacy because of the increasing feminity awareness and less Inequalities between different sexual in nowadays society, less women need rely on men to survived, that make them considering more terms when they are looking for the partner, which sometimes leads young people to the isolation and demand intimacy much more than before.

By the same time, emotional and sexual trauma might contribute to people to become a fandom and obsessed to the unreal relations, they utilize this para-social interactions to escaping from the danger in the real world, which can be domestic violence, date rape, or a suffering break-up.

Moreover, there are also some people prefer to be fans in their middle-ages. On one hand, it can be an advisable steps to hedge against aging. For example, A number of women who were interviewed from the Josh Groban fan base recount that having romantic feelings for him makes them feel young again [3]. On the other hands, this is also a solution to some people who seeks solace in the social environment of a fan club and re-engages the world of relationships by engaging in one that is imaginary. They usually face the lost of a significant person in their life, but fandom gave them a second chance to get involved with the world. Noteworthy, this view is different with all the former contents because it points out that not only stardom matters in the fan culture, the relation between fans in fan community can also be significant to a fan itself.

After explain the motivation of being fan in different age stages, research will go on to the fan behavior itself. The principle of attachment that arises from celebrity following behavior relates to ethological theory.

Newborn baby prefers to staring at caregivers' face because this behavior can enhance intimacy. It can be the explanation of why people establish one-way intimacy with some specific face on online media. Stever (2011) suggests that "Anyone who looks frequently enough at pictures of a media figure is likely to form an attachment to that figure." and furthermore "Exhibited feelings off amiability, i.e. emotions like concern, care, and attraction[3]".The way they obsessed to contacting with the celebrities and collecting their memorabilia can be attributed to the proximity seeking system, then finally became the components of their unreal intimacy. The extreme manifestation situation is that some fans confuse para-social intimacy and trying to track to their idols or trying to hurt them self in order to capture star's attentions. However, as long as they do not cross the boundary, star studios are glad to make profits from the fans' fascination with idols.

2.2 Psychological Sense of Community in Fan clubs and peer pressure

Similarly, the important relationships in fandom are not necessarily the ones between fans and celebrities; instead, strong relationships between fans are formed via a shared fandom[2]. To demonstrate the connections inside the fan community, Psychological Sense of Community must be mentioned, which was first raise by the McMillan & Chavis (1986). First they focus on the concept of membership, boundary and a common symbol system is what make fans think they are different with others. For example, Otakus who really into cosplays might wear costumes and props that inspired by a fiction characters to the animation exhibition and speak some unusual languages which sometimes makes them totally distinct to the common, but also increasing their emotional safety and belonging sense to some extend and encourage their personal investment. Briefly, one draws identity by being a member of the community, has emotional support, and is reinforced for the behaviors that are beneficial to the functioning of the community itself [4]. This simply explains why some teenagers like to join the fan club in order to get rid of identity diffusion, for show their difference, they utilize the ready-made membership to identify who they are.

The second level in the psychology sense of community is influence. members in clubs can affect each other, group polarization can be used to reveal this view, fans in their clubs tend to show some exextreme opinion or action compare with their choice out of the groups. It is common that some fandom groups blind adherence to their idols, defending the image and interests of idols without distinguishing between right and wrong. However, in the positive ways, fan community provides a balance that allows to the individual to make their contribution to the community

and it is possible to conduct a guidance to teenager fans in the right moral way.

Integration and fulfillment of needs is the third concept that raise in this theory. Fans can contribute and achieve status inside the community by demonstration of competence and the shared values. In other words it can be understand as "an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them" [5].

Lastly, due to the unique community the fans in, the events they been through together can successfully build a connection between the fan members, it's another form of boundary, which distinct fans with other people who do not engaged the specific community with them, but on the other hand, fandom who in the same groups will owned the same experience and similar feelings, and that is what we called "shared emotional connection".

One more thing to note is that another possible motivation on why people became fandom is the peer pressure. Brown. and his partners from University of Wisconsin—Madison found that "the adolescents expressed more willingness to accede to peer socializing than antisocial pressures from friends" [6] This support the idea of some teenagers, as the greatest age groups in fandom, might join the fan clubs or adoring celebrities because of the pressure from their peer, such as find common topics for incorporate into the peer groups. It is understandable that teenagers are adoring some of the top stars to meet friends, after all, the huge fan base of some top stars is enough to shift some people's social states.

2.3 Uses & Gratifications Approach and Carnivalization Theory

From a psychological point of view, the essential reasons why fans follow celebrities are analyzed. However, in the context of the web 2.0 system, new media, as a new medium that changed the way people live, also involved or reinforced in the behavior of fans. This is not only from a technological point of view, but also behavior aspect, including but not limited to facilitate the para-social interactions mentioned above and enhance intimacy by providing big data information.

In the area of new media, there are also a bunch of theories that can explain the reason why people adore stars especially when streaming media becomes the proper platform. To begin with, Use and gratifications approach can be a favorable theory to explain because it posits that media use is goal driven, with consumers of media using specific, selected channels to satisfy needs and achieve gratifications [7]. Speaking of needs, Uses & Gratification research has identified four primary areas of use. First is information, as what is mentioned

in the intimacy area, fans will continue to collect photos, videos and other material of their favorite celebrities to increase intimacy, that is also what mass media can be use for. The personal identity is the same because it concerned on fans, especially adolescent fans try to find a model of behavior on the media, which can be called idolizing the stars. Moreover, fans also find reinforcement for personal values with the membership of fans, and that actually agree with the idea in psychology area. Third is social interaction, which can be simply achieved from the sense of belonging that gain by the action of join the fan clubs, within the cosy from community, fans can have a substitute for real-life companionship with the stars they worship. It is obvious that the personal identity and social interactions are exactly what motivate people to become fandom, and in the needs demonstrate by this approach, diversion can also be one of the options that satisfy fans when they are following stars.

Furthermore, new media is more than a platform, it provides a more free and opening entertainment environment for fans according to the carnival theory. The basic notion of this was suggested by Bakhtin Michael, he inspired by the carnival this tradition which owned long history in western country, because in carnival, everyone can enjoy the festival without pay attention on their race, status or wealthy. The main idea of this activity and this theory is mass carnival, equality, freedom and democracy. It seems like the atmosphere today online, people are free to talk and share their views. In the work written by Xin Shi, he post that "this allowed the common people, who were bound to the hierarchical order, to have a full voice and to express their feelings and emotions, which is the essence of the "carnival"[8]. This offering a superior condition for fan culture because the hierarchy inside fan clubs are not on the basis of fan's social status or capacity, since most of them conduct online communicates they are ignoring it for most of time and range their status according to the experience they owned or the contribution they make to the community, and that do not always connect to the status they owned in real life.

From another perspective, the characteristic of new media that fits the carnival theory is that it offers a new mode of entertainment to the audience, which also fits the essence of fandom as a kind of popular culture, and It is also consistent with the aforementioned that fan culture as a means of satisfying diversion needs, In this cases, new media promoting the development of fan culture and providing a better answer for people to call themselves fans

2.4 Technology Empowerment and Participatory Culture

In addition to providing an excellent platform, the new media also provided more forms for the following

of celebrities, and gradually changed the identity and behavior of fans. Start with identity, in the book "The Culture Industry", F Wasser argued that culture itself is being commodified and standardized and people tend to think themselves as consumers compare to citizens or actors in a political system. In this context, fans, as the considerable group of people who contributed to the popular industry, with the priority identity of consumers.

According to the Theory of Technology Empowerment, the emerge of new media helps the public gain power from the level up of tech, or we can also say the new media. They break up the dissemination monopoly that creates by the government and elitists. Ordinary audiences are empowered to produce content to express their views and opinions more freely in the open space of the web. In that way, fans can participate in the process of producing and dissemination. In this process, Fans obtain the identity of producer and However, according to the Theory of Technology Empowerment, the emerge of new media help the public gain power (producing or disseminating contents) from the level up of technology, They break the dissemination monopoly that created by the government and elitists. Ordinary audiences are empowered to produce content to express their views and opinions more freely in the open space of the web. In that way, fans can participate in the process of producing and dissemination, with more than one identity as consumers. Moreover, this also comply the theory of Carnivalization which shows on how unprivileged people avoiding monopoly of high classes and free to share on online community.

Additionally, this has also been named by the participatory culture. The definition of participatory culture is under the context of web 2.0, various peoples in different societies or cultures will be able to interact with new media in a way that allows them both to add and collect information from the medium. To be more specifically, fans started have change to to create fan fiction and fan vids, this kind of adaption behavior was named by Jenkins as "textual poaching". It is clear that the impact of new media on fan identity and fan behavior is far-reaching, with fans gaining multiple methods of stardom following with the help of new media technology.

3. CONCLUSION

As the researcher demonstrated in this paper, why people became fans and further more analysis on the fan behavior nowadays can be explained by both way in psychology and media levels

From a psychological point of view, it can be learned that people have different psychological needs at different ages and situations. For example, teenagers gain their identity through idol worship, young people

get rid of loneliness through para-social with stars, and even some middle-aged people who suffered a major blow re-enter society through fan clubs. Fan community helps fans feel a sense of belonging and even provides a place for them to realise their self-worth.

In terms of media doctrine, the needs of fans can be interpreted in terms of their choice of media, such as identification, socialisation, or entertainment. As mentioned earlier, the point is that the new media provided fans with a platform that is both free and open, and this upgrade changed the way fans follow the stars, even moving them from being single consumers to producers and disseminators. In that way, idol worship is be able to derive fan fictions or fan vids as new fan activities.

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