

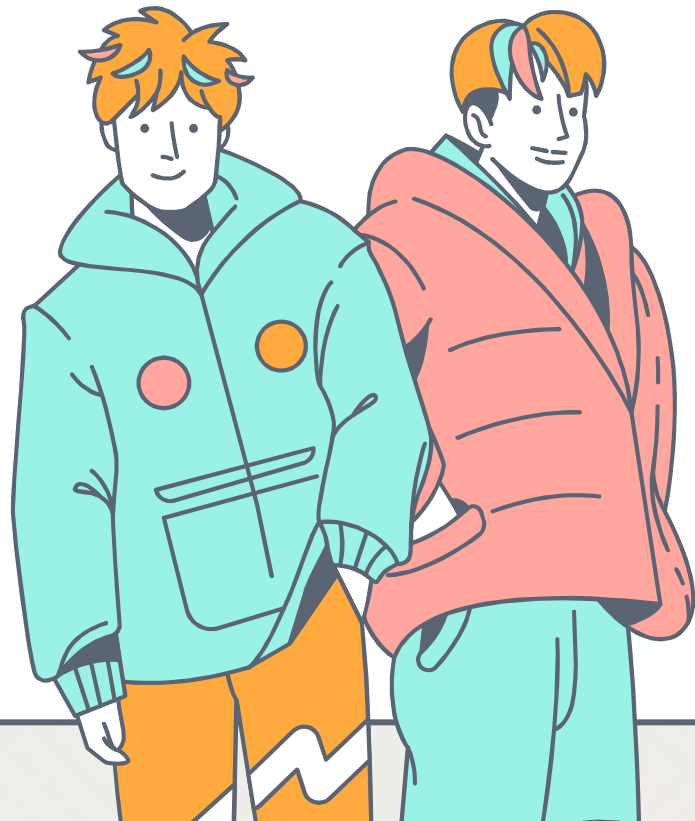
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The impact of Korean support culture on the relationship between MIRROR & their fans

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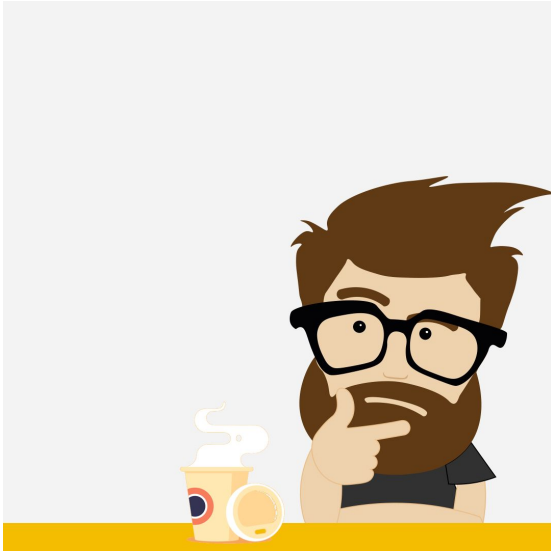
Research Topic & Questions

Topic: The impact of Korean support culture on the relationship between MIRROR and their fans

Research questions:

1. What are the similarities between local support culture and the Korean support culture?
2. What does the Korean support culture transform the ways that fans support their idols in Hong Kong?
3. How does the local support culture influence the distance between MIRROR and their fans?

Assumptions



- The support culture in Hong Kong is influenced by the Korean support culture (Hallyu)
- MIRROR fans took reference from the ways of supporting idols among fans of Korean idol groups
- ➔ Based on observation
- Support culture helps narrow the gap between MIRROR and their fans



Contents

01

Background

Support culture of Jpop, Kpop, past Cantopop and now MIRROR

02

Methodology

Survey, literature review, interviews

03

Findings

There are 3 findings with regard to the research questions

04

Conclusion

How the findings answered our research questions



Background (Japan)

“Supporting ” evolved from the Japanese word 応援 (おうえん), meant to show solidarity and cheer.

Fan support was **first inspired by sporting events.**

- Cheer on athletes at Japanese school sporting events,
- Wear headgear and hold fans
- Cheer with chants and gestures.



The rise of Japanese idol groups, fans adopted a similar approach to support their idols

Wotagei (ヲタ芸), also known as otagei (オタ芸) is one of the way for supporting the singers/idols. Involving jumping, clapping and chanting slogans.

Background(Korea)

In the late 1990s, Kpop fans adopted Japanese support culture to support their idols.

At that time, there was already a competition for resources and the charts between different groups. H.O.T. and SECHSKIES had a battle with each other.

Major part of Korean support culture

- group's unique support colours
- Unique fan name
- This emphasised the boundaries between different fan groups and created a strong sense of belonging to each group.

New ways to support idols

- Food truck support
- Making banner
- Advertising support etc.



Kpop idols support colour and their fan names

Food truck support



Banners making by fans



Fans place advertisement for idol



Background(Hong Kong)

In the 1970s to 1990s, the Hong Kong Four Heavenly Kings(四大天王) started to gain popularity.

There was already a tendency for fans to support their idols by going to live events, such as award presentation ceremonies, holding light signs and chanting their names.

Some special ways to connect with idol

- Send letters to idol's company
- Call the company
- Put up posters
- Buy tapes and radios, records





The Rise of MIRROR

- Formed during the reality competition show "Good Night Show- King Maker" of ViuTV
- Pandemic: shifted the attention to the local bands and Cantopop music
- Political circumstance: lyrics from MIRROR's songs cheer people up in the downcast atmosphere →
- Hongkonger identity: local boy band





Methodology



Survey



Assisted to collect information about the local support culture by asking both closed and open-ended questions



Literature review

Built upon the discussion among scholars and used the articles to support our findings



In-depth interview

Based on the data collected in the survey, one-to-one interview were conducted to deeply understand the idol-fan relationship.

Interview respondents

Interview Respondents	Sex	Age	Occupation	Experience of being obsessed with their idol(s)
Interviewee 1	Male	23	Sales assistant	Worshipped Super Junior and now adore MIRROR
Interviewee 2	Female	16	Secondary school student	Adoring NCT (Korean boy band)
Interviewee 3	Female	20	University student	Adoring MIRROR only
Interviewee 4	Female	19	University student	Adoring Korean 1 boy band (Got7) and many girl bands
Interviewee 5	Female	30	Programme Assistant	Worshipped BEAST and now adore MIRROR

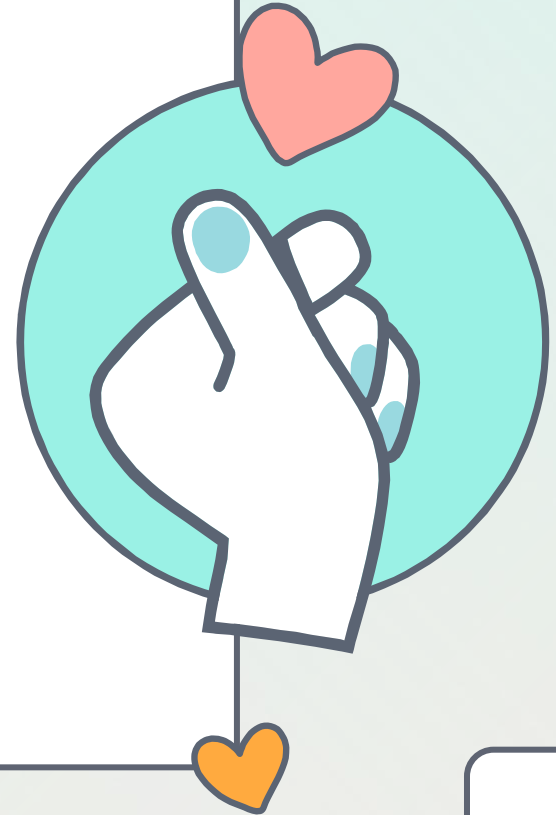


Literature review

Guerra.P & Sousa.S (2021) *Ultimate bias. Memorabilia, K-pop and fandom identities*, *Openedition Journal*

Fans (cp fans/group fans) buy/make supporting products is a way to communicate with each other and to let people know which fan group they belong to.

Supporting product becomes a set of codes, shared by the same group of fans for meaning, thus enhancing their sense of identity and belonging to the community.





Literature Review

盧彥妤(2021),為偶像包下巨型廣告、巴士和郵輪應援, 你如何看應援方式的新高度?, theinitium.com

Hong Kong fans are now more involved after Hallyu came to Hong Kong.

In the 80's and 90's, the ways to support idols were relatively simple and passive, but nowadays, fans have become more active.

"Fans don't need their idols present, they can take the initiative to create/attend events to support them".

Sun, M. (2020). K-pop fan labor and an alternative creative industry: A case study of GOT7 Chinese fans. *Global Media and China*, 5(4), 389–406.

Fans as a creative labor make various things to support their idols

Three general categories of K-pop fan labour: specialized labour, managerial labour and unskilled labour

In the idol industry, the fan does not want to be simply a spectator, receiving rewards from others, "I don't want to baipiao", but rather believes that he or she should give as part of it.



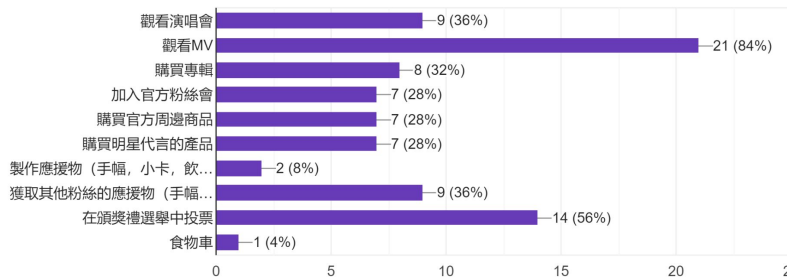
Finding 1: Fans' ways to support idols

Ordinary ways to support idols

How do you support Hong Kong idol i.e. Mirror?

你有用過以下方式應援香港偶像嗎？（如未曾追香港的明星，請跳過）

25 則回應



: Follow news related to Mirror
Watch the MV/ Programs related to Mirror
Join Fans Club
Vote for Mirror in several poll/ Chart Awards
Receive fan-made products

: Buy DVD/ official merchandise
Buy products endorsed by Mirror
Donate money for supporting activities

: Produce fan-art / products related to Mirror

The top 3 popular activities people engaged in supporting Mirror:

1. Watching MVs (84%)
2. Vote for Mirror in the chart awards (56%)
3. Join the concerts and receive fan-made products (36%)

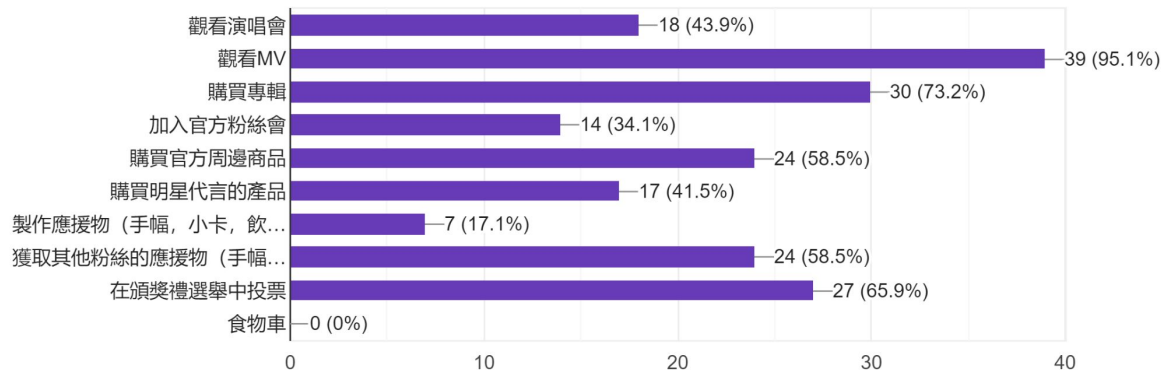


Finding 1: Fans' ways to support idols

How do you support Korean celebrity?

你有用過以下方式應援韓國偶像嗎？

41 則回應



The top 3 popular ways to support korean celebrities:

1. Watching MVs (95.1%)
2. Buying albums (73.2%)
3. Vote for Korean celebrity in chart awards (65.9%)



Finding 1: Fans' ways to support idols

Similarity between Hong Kong people on support Mirror and Korean idols

Based on the questionnaire,

- Watching MVs is a must
- The least popular is food truck and producing merchandise

⇒ Free activities

- > Activities costs money
- > Actively engage in the production of merchandise





Finding 1: Fans' ways to support idols

Adding local elements in support culture

Examples:

- Minibus signs Merchandise
- Hong Kong Tramways Advertising
- Supporting events are held in Bubble Tea Shop

⇒ Hong Kong fans think of a variety of methods to promote Mirror

⇒ Hong Kong fans adopt the support culture from foreign countries and add their own color into the formation of support culture in Hong Kong





Finding 1: Fans' ways to support idols

Behind the supporting culture

1. Formation of imagined community

"Under ambience tribale, fans [...] construct fundamental recognition through a celebrity and this affect their daily life." (QING, 2021)



From interviewee 3, "It was glad to see people watching Anson Lo's MV on their phone when I was on the bus as others like AL as me. I am so delighted as a 神徒"

⇒ Sense of belonging to the fandom



Finding 1: Fans' ways to support idols

Behind the supporting culture

2. Eudaimonic Production

Fan-made merchandise :

Involve the love towards their celebrity

Non- profit making

Charitable event:

Fans use the name of their favorite celebrities to do charity

E.g. Fans of Keung To donated money to Lantau Buffalo Association and organization that focus on SENS

→ **Self-actualization**

→ **Eudaimonic well-being**



source: (QING, 2021)



Finding 1: Interview



Interviewee 5 (worshipped BEAST and now adore MIRROR): "I was the admin of a Hong Kong BEAST's fan page (站姐) from 2013 to 2016. I organized a lot of unofficial fans events, like filming dancing cover dance or making merch when they had a concert in Hong Kong. Due to certain reasons, I changed my focus on Canto-pop from K-pop. Now I'm one of the admins of mirror fan page on Instagram. With the experience of being admin in Korean fandom, I also adopt the similar ways from Korean support culture to support mirror. For example, designing hand banners for mirror's concert and new songs promotion. I think these fan-made creation can show our support to idols, and that's why I still using the same ways when adoring mirror."

Approach of Canto-pop fans who previously worshipped K-pop idols:

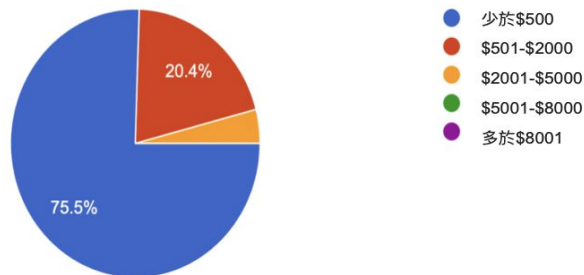
- Introduce & Adopting same ways of Korean support culture to Hong Kong idols
- Influence of Korean support culture towards Hong Kong fans

Finding 2: Parakin Relationship between Mirror and Fans

How much money would you spend in a month to support your idols?

你每月會花多少錢在應援/支持偶像？

49 則回應



Less than
\$500

75.5%

\$501-\$2000

20.4%

\$2001-\$5000

4.1%

- >20% of the respondents are willing to spend more than \$500 for supporting their idols

Finding 2: Parakin Relationship between Mirror and Fans

Diversity of Social Media

- Most fans think that idols had Livestream or uploaded related photos on Instagram = Giving responses of their love.
- The function of Instagram Live: Fans can interact with their idols by leaving some comments.

How would your idol respond after those supporting events organized by fans?

以開live形式及作品回應

網上慰問

Ig與粉絲互動，出歌

ig story repost 

偶運食物應援，地鐵站應援拍照認證，演唱會手幅認證

ig認證粉絲的應援（應援燈箱/應援cafe/食物車）/開live回應/演唱會回應

Finding 2: interview

- Focused on asking the motivation of paying money to adore idols and their daily interaction (if any)
- Interviewee 1(Mirror's fan who claimed that he is a **father-fan** of Keung To): 'When I saw Keung To fainted away during attending the event in TST, I was so worried and left rude comments under Ahfa Wong's(花姐) IG. I hope she can stop continuously assigning a high workload to my son. After the accident, I put more money into the fan page which would deliver the food box to a venue of the event.'
- Interviewee 3(Mirror's fan): 'I have **funded to fan page** for celebrating members' birthdays and promoting their latest song. And I remembered that some of them have reposted it on their Instagram story, which could be called '**認證相**' in our fans circle. If they have spare time, they possibly do a **live broadcast on IG** for updating their current situation and interacting with us. I think we are in a **two-way relationship**. They can be the **older brothers to talk with us**. And, sometimes I can be their **sister-fan** when I saw they do some silly things on IG Livestream. It looks different from what they show in the performance. I feel like...I really know about them, **the 'real' self**. It also makes me more willing to provide money for supporting them.'

Finding 2: Parakin Relationship between Mirror and Fans

→ From the interview, we find that...

- ◆ The imagination of being family members of Mirror (From parasocial to parakin relationship)
 - Parasocial: In the entertainment literature, the way fans ostensibly “interact” with celebrities in the age of TV has been heavily researched as parasocial interaction—the nonreciprocal, imaginary interaction between fans and media personae (Gleason et al., 2017; Horton and Wohl, 1956). (Yan & Yang, 2021.)
 - Parakin: Fans fantasized kinships between fans and idols. In the process of cultivating idols, parakin fans are highly self-organized with clear divisions of duties and responsibilities and a strong dedication to action-taking. (Yan & Yang, 2021.)
- ◆ Fans think that taking care of their idol is their duty

→ Response of Mirror provide...

- ◆ Companionship
- ◆ Sense of authenticity

→ Two-way interaction aid to create a closer relationship between Mirror and fans



Finding 3: relationships between fans



- Contributing to the fandom is essential: the self-identification as a fan
 - Sense of responsibility
 - Influenced by other fans
- } Engaged in fandom as a “creative labour”

“Creative labour” in the fandom

- Systematic and diversified
- Division of labour: “specialized labor, managerial labor, and unskilled labor.” (Sun, 2020)
- Also reflected in the MIRROR fandom

Specialized	Running MIRROR fans pages, photoshopping images/ editing fanmade videos, designing/ creating merchs (e.g. MIRROR keychains)
Managerial	Crowdfunding for the billboards (celebration of MIRROR members' birthdays/ promotion of their newly release songs)
Unskilled	Voting for their songs, streaming music videos (MV)



Finding 3: relationships between fans



- As creative labors: negotiating their positions and roles in fandom and for supporting the idol

Signification of the official merchandise and original creative merchandise

- Enhance their fan identities & sense of belonging to the fandom
- "Fans attach emotions to the objects of their fandom" (Hills, 2002) & "cultural meanings to fan practices" (Fiske, 1989b)
- "Set of codes that followed by the fans" (Guerra & Sousa, 2021) and the meanings of these signs are shared
- Othering the non-Kpop fans

All these fan practices → not wanting to baipiao (白嫖)

- Originated from the saying of "visiting prostitutes without paying" (Sun, 2020), later became a fan vocabulary
- A self-surveillance: avoiding being judged by other fans

Finding 3: interview

- Interviewee 2: "As I considered myself as a cp fan (couple fans), I will design and create merchandises that **revolve around the two members in NCT**. Since the cp day (15/4) is approaching, my friend and I came up with an idea of making the cereal cup that has their faces printed on it when we were having a quick lunch of cereal during online lesson."
- Fans' self-identification in the fandom influence their ways of supporting the idol

She also mentioned how the cp day was established: "It was the sum of the two members' dates of birth, we, as cp fans, **have the consent of having celebration on this day**, but the ways vary between fans."

- Othering the non-CP fans in the NCT fandom
- Meaning making: April 15 as cp day, meaning is shared among cp fans



A draft of fanmade cereal cup composed by the interviewee and her friend



To answer the research question...

1. What are the similarities between local support culture and the Korean support culture?

- Those expressions of showing their love to idols

2. What does the Korean support culture transform the ways that fans support their idols in Hong Kong?

- Idea/expression of adoring a k-pop star -> expression of adoring Mirror

3. How does the local support culture influence the distance between MIRROR and their fans?

- The relationship of fans themselves: can be enhanced by the merchandise, thus facilitating fans to stick to the fandom and make connection with idols.
- Social media assist to foster a close relationship between fans and idols.



for your listening

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