

MASS MEDIA STRATEGIES AND ITS PROMOTION OF JAPANESE IDOL
CULTURE IN CHINA: A CASE STUDY OF SNH48 AND AKB48



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ABSTRACT

With the rapid expansion of Internet technology and the pace of commercialization of culture, different kinds of fan economies have become a hot topic of concern in recent years. This study aims to study the use of mass media strategies to promote Chinese idols (SNH48), and to compare the use of mass media strategies promoting SNH48 and Japanese idols (AKB48). The main research samples include three different types of mass media (paid vs. owned vs. social media) used by AKB48 and SNH48. With the three combined qualitative research methods -- case study, textual analysis, and participatory observation, the formation and development of its fan economy through mass media strategies were examined. It was found that this special model is a two-stage commercial model, which uses the long tail effect of the Internet and benefits from communication channels. The biggest innovation of this mode lies in its online-based social media and its offline communication strategy.

Keywords: Communication, AKB48, SNH48, Fan Economy, Special Mode,

We Media, Media Strategies

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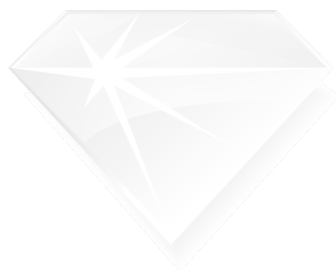
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study describes rationale and problem statement of the study, objective of the study, scope of the study, and research questions. In addition, it provides significance of the study and definition of terms.

1.1 Rationale and Problem Statement

1.1.1 Background on Idols and Idol Culture

In Japanese, "idol" is written as "アイドル", which is a direct pronunciation of the word "Idol" in English. In the United States in the first half of the 20th century, "Idol" derived a new meaning, referring to "young and popular people." This usage first appeared in Rudy Vallee and Frank Sinatra, the former is a popular singer with "my blue heaven" in 1927, while the latter, relying on her own influence, created the "Bobby Soxer" group in the 1940s. Similar figures include Elvis Presley in the 1950s and the Beatles in the 1960s. In 1966, the Beatles visited Japan and formally brought the derivative meaning of the word "Idol" (that is, young and popular people) into Japanese society.

Therefore, before the 1970s, "Idol" in Japan referred to young artists in Europe and the United States, while domestic artists were called "stars." It was only in the 1970s that Japanese idols gradually emerged. Compared with western countries which use the word "Idol" to describe young and attractive artists, Japan has developed "Idol" into a professional category. In the Japanese entertainment circle, "idol" refers to such a kind of people: the growth process and fans together,

the existence is the charm. Their characteristics are all-round development, and they are active in various fields such as singing, dance, film, television, variety show and so on. Unlike stars in the traditional sense, idols do not emphasize appearance too much. The key to popularity is the character that is easy to get close to.

In the past few years, the capital operation of major mainstream media and cultural companies made the "Korean wave" sweep the Chinese cultural market. Major satellite TV stations are scrambling to introduce Korean variety shows, such as "Running Man" (Zhejiang satellite TV), "Where Are We Going, Dad?" (Hunan Satellite TV), "I am a Singer" (Hunan Satellite TV), "Masked King" (Jiangsu Satellite TV), and "We Got Married" (Hunan Satellite TV). At the same time, mainstream video websites such as IQIYI and Tencent are also committed to promoting popular Korean dramas, launching one after another "National husbands" - Song Joong Ki (Descendants of The Sun), Kim Soo Hyun (My Love from the Star), Lee Min Ho (The Heirs), and Lee Jong Suk (Pinocchio). In addition, Korean idol group such as Super Junior, EXO and Girls' Generation have also come to China to develop and seize the pop music market, which has brought about the K-pop boom. The cooperation between these official media and South Korean entertainment industry not only makes the "Korean wave" take on the official color, but also attracts a large number of active "Korean fans," forming the majority of domestic fans.

At present, the domestic cultural industry is greatly affected by the "Korean wave", but in fact, at the end of the last century, "Japanese wave" has also made considerable progress in China. In addition to the popularity of Ken Takakura's films and the popularity of a large number of Japanese anime, the "Idol theater" of Hong Kong Satellite TV's Chinese channel (the predecessor of Phoenix Satellite TV), also

introduced a large number of Japanese dramas in the 1990s. With the popularity of Japanese dramas such as "Long Vacation", "Asunaro White Paper" and "Forbidden Love", etc., Idol stars such as Kimura Takuya, Takizawa Hideaki, Yamashita Tomohisa, etc. have become popular in the Chinese language circle. He stated, "With the popularity of pirated DVDs, Chinese mainland audiences have learned the charm of Japanese dramas and stars, and many senior "Japanese fans" have emerged." (Li, 2004).

In the late 1990s, with the cold relations between China and Japan and the withdrawal of Japanese dramas from Chinese TV screens, it was difficult for Japanese pop singers to start singing in the mainland, and "Japanese fans club" gradually turned into "underground". It is precise because of the ebb of "Japanese wave," that China's entertainment and the cultural market provides sufficient space for the development of "Korean wave."

Since the new century, the influence of Japan's entertainment industry on China seems to be "folk", which is often invisible, lacking the "official" aura of the Korean wave. However, it is worth noting that with the rise of social media, the visibility of Japanese fans club has become increasingly apparent. Especially on Weibo and Bilibili, it can be seen that the influence of Japanese entertainment culture on the young Chinese consumers is deepening, especially in the fields of ACG and Japanese drama. As domestic TV stations plagiarize and embezzle all kinds of entertainment programs in Japan, Japanese fans have launched actions against plagiarism on the Internet for many times, which objectively promotes the attention of domestic entertainment industry to originality. Also, affected by the "ban on South Korea" at the end of 2016, the Japanese wave has a warming trend and began to gain

more official recognition. For example, Japan's famous bullet screen website NicoNico cooperated with CCTV to broadcast important events such as the 9.3 military parade, the 2017 Spring Festival Gala and the opening meeting of the fifth session of the 12th National People's Congress to the Japanese public. At the same time, it registered an official account in Weibo in October 2016 to attract Chinese ACG fans to watch the website.

The rich and diverse cross-border cultural flows between China, Japan and South Korea have not only changed the trend of domestic cultural market but also exerted a comprehensive impact on the production, dissemination and consumption patterns of China's entertainment and cultural industry. Since 2014, TFboys and SNH48, two local groups based on Japanese Idol model, have become popular in China, which fully demonstrates the shaping power of Japanese idol culture on Contemporary Chinese popular culture. The former is a Chinese youth idol group created by Time Fengjun Entertainment based on the Japanese Johnny's trainee mode; The latter was once the official sister group of Japanese girl idol group AKB48 in China. Among local groups, TFboys is the most popular. The number of Weibo fans of the three members is more than 20 million.

AKB48, a large Japanese girl's idol group, was founded on December 8, 2005, with Akimoto Yasushi as the chief producer. It is divided into five teams: team A, team K, team B, team 4 and team 8. Because its birthplace "Akihabara" is abbreviated as "Akiba" in Japanese, its initial is called "AKB". AKB48 and its sister group both have the number "48", which is often referred to as "48 series idols". There are more than 400 family members. As Akimoto Yasushi's attempt in the new century, 48 series idols continue many characteristics of "kitten club". For example,

ordinary girls who have no acting experience are selected as members through the public talent show. The number of members is large. The members have both personal activities and small teams to carry out group activities, etc. 48 series idols take "idol that can meet" as the business purpose, subverting the idea that idols can only be seen on TV. Through special theater and handshake meeting, it has cultivated many loyal fans, and set off a boom in Japanese fan economy and created many economic miracles. Since its establishment, AKB48 has made remarkable market achievements, even covering the whole of Asia. He stated, "In May 2013, it became the highest-selling female singer group in the history of Japanese music, with a total sales volume of more than 30 million CDs in Japan. AKB48 has created a miracle in the Japanese music market and launched a similar model of girl's music idol groups in overseas markets" (Tanaka, 2014).

In recent years, "SNH48", a sister group established by AKB48 in Shanghai, has sprung up in the Chinese cultural market. In four years, SNH48 developed from more than 30 people at the beginning of its establishment to a phased organization with more than 160 members. After that, it broke away from AKB48 and began to operate independently. SNH48 Group was established and expanded in China with branches. So far, it has developed into a large girl's idol group with more than 300 people in Shanghai (SNH48), Guangzhou (GNZ48) and Beijing (BEJ48). There are more than 1,000 performances in the three places in the whole year, and the annual growth rate of core fans is over 400%.

SNH48 fully absorbs the model characteristics and brand communication experience of Asian girl idol group AKB48 and carries out the localization of "Chinese expression" and "common touch". Its development goal is to select

outstanding talents among the 1.4 billion Chinese people in the world. Make full use of the most imaginative, innovative and forward-looking star-making concepts and technical methods in the Internet and social network era, actively cultivate all-round idol artists with both music, dance and film and television performances, and strive to create a healthy, upward and youthful vigor, The first girl idol group in the global Chinese-speaking region with international influence, and makes SNH48 a new benchmark for Chinese idol culture and fan economic industry in the era of Internet and social media. He stated, “With a star packaging strategy completely different from traditional stars, they have taken "face-to-face idols" as the core concept based on the development of AKB48 in Japan and made their fans grow explosively through online and social media communication strategy” (Xu, 2014).

1.1.2 Media Strategy Overview

Media strategy refers to the skills of reasonably selecting and using advertising media. Today's society is a fully media oriented society. Compared with traditional media, social media has the advantage of timely update, that is, users can receive the information released by the outside world at the first time, make real-time comments according to the information content, and access to historical information is more convenient and faster. In addition, as the publisher of information, social media can effectively help them to count their popularity and change media forms in real time according to user preferences, for example, from pictures and text to video or audio forms. In short, the purpose of social media (from text to screen to audio to video) is to share, and sharing means that users can have more space to express themselves, while reducing the cost of browsing. In addition, due to the characteristics of Internet connectivity, sharing, comments and browsing can be tracked and counted.

With the advent of the information age, traditional media can no longer meet the needs of the public. More and more people start sharing in the form of live broadcast and video shooting, which directly drives the growth of the number of social media software and expands the market of social media. There are all kinds of lectures, songs, skills and talent performances, game explanations, etc. on the live network platform every day, which greatly broaden the audience's vision and better meet the diverse needs of the audience. Relevant data show that the average daily activity of various types of web cast has reached more than 100000. Because of the strong interactivity of social media, webcast is becoming more and more popular, and social media live broadcasting platforms emerge in an endless stream.

The era of mobile Internet has changed the traditional way of star making. It has not only produced batch after batch of "Internet celebrities", but also brought Chinese idol culture into the public view by riding the great wheel of we media. He stated, "Different from the route that Japanese idols use traditional media (TV, theater, paper media, CD, etc.) to become famous, SNH48 has distinct Internet characteristics. Their fans are distributed all over the country, with different economic and cultural backgrounds" (Jiang, 2015). They gather together because they have common concerns and love for SNH48, and then based on their love for different members of SNH48 different teams and different combinations form highly cohesive groups. Each group interacts through Baidu Post Bar, BBS, Weibo, Zhihu and other online social media to participate in discussions, share information, provide help, make plans for their favorite members or teams, and even write plans. In addition, there are many support organizations, when they come across the annual idol or Golden Melody voting, they will raise funds for their favorite idols, compete with

each other to support their idols, and produce the same thinking and values in constant communication and competition. Their "fan culture" has the characteristics of Chinese Internet.

1.1.3 Problem Statement

Based on the previous rationale, "Japanese idol culture" was searched as the keyword, and several journal articles with Johnny's and AKB48 as the research objects appeared, but the reference value was not significant. Its mainly analyzed the star-making mode with a brokerage company as the center, and rarely involved in "idol culture". However, there is very little research on the idol culture industry in China. Domestic academic circles not only lack independent research but also rarely introduce overseas literature. How can Japanese idol culture be cultivated in China via social media such as Weibo? What social media communication strategies are used to promote Chinese idols like SNH48. With such questions, I put forward Chinese idol culture and social media communication strategies to be topic for my research.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The purposes of this study are stated as below:

1.2.1 To study the use of mass media strategies to promote Chinese idols (SNH48).

1.2.2 To compare the use of mass media strategies promoting SNH48 and AKB48.

1.3 Scope of Study

This study is a case study of SNH48 idol girls' group. It will make a descriptive study of social media communication strategy and SNH48 phenomenon through qualitative analysis. Considering that the core of SNH48 is AKB48 mode and Internet technology, which has strong reproducibility and is quite different from the domestic traditional star mode, this paper first uses the literature analysis method to sort out the previous research on AKB48 and traditional star manufacturing mode, and summarizes its advantages and disadvantages; Then through the method of observation, it analyzes the current situation of the development of Chinese and Japanese idol culture and the similarities and differences between AKB48 and snh48 in media strategy. Through my own understanding and verification, I described and explained the current situation, internal and external environment, existing strategies and origins of the exhibition, so as to raise questions, describe phenomena, summarize experience, and put forward optimization suggestions; Summarize the media strategies for the localization and development of Japanese idol culture in China, interpret, summarize and analyze the snh48 girls' alliance, and deepen the understanding of this group. In addition, exploring the success of snh48 can not only see that Japanese idol culture is accepted by domestic fans, but also help us understand the changes in star production mode and media strategy in the Internet era.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the above research objectives, this study aims to provide answers for the following two research questions:

1.4.1 What are mass media strategies used to promote Chinese idols (SNH48)?

1.4.2 Do the mass media strategies used to promote SNH48 differ from those used to promote AKB48?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this paper mainly includes the following two aspects. On one hand, it is of academic significance, idol culture is a unique cultural form in Japan, which is rarely investigated by scholars in China. The understanding of "Idol" in domestic academic circles and the public is still in a state of confusion with the concepts of "Star," "artist," "singer," and "actor." The academic research seldom takes "idol" itself as the research object but takes "idol worship" as the foothold. This paper takes idol culture as a new research object, which fills the gap of domestic research in this field.

Secondly, as a small-scale girls idol group in China in recent years, the communication strategy of SNH48 has not attracted the attention of Chinese academia. In Japan, the 48 series girls group has attracted more and more attention because of its rapid development and amazing economic benefits. The search results of the literature library show that the main research objects in China are mainly about the traditional performance brokerage model and the brand packaging of traditional artists. Since 2013, the industry has been the first to realize that the 48 series girls group, a new idol group popular among young people, has research value. It has written several business reviews and music review articles, while there is no academic literature related to snh48 media strategy. Chinese scholars have not yet made a

detailed and systematic analysis of this imported "Superstar making mode" localized media strategy. Therefore, this topic comprehensively combs the SNH48 media strategy, analyzes the factors behind its success from the perspective of media communication strategy, and hopes to promote the research process of domestic localized artist media strategy, and provide some reference for more artist idol brand communication theories in China.

1.6 Definition of Terms

This section provides definitions of the important terms as followings.

1.6.1 Social Media

Social media refers to the content production and exchange platform based on user relationship on the Internet. Social media is a tool and platform for people to share opinions, opinions, experiences and views with each other. At this stage, it mainly includes social networking sites, Weibo, wechat, blogs, forums, podcasts, etc. Social media has flourished on the fertile land of the Internet and burst out dazzling energy. The information it spreads has become an important content for people to browse the Internet. It not only creates one hot topic after another in people's social life, but also attracts traditional media to follow up.

Weibo, as the largest social media platform for Chinese user groups, plays an important role in the dissemination of culture and information. It is the main platform for our research.

1.6.2 Mass Media Strategy

Mass media strategy refers to the skills of reasonably selecting and using advertising media. Transform the marketing needs into actionable media goals, and

then fully study the marketing background, marketing goals, marketing channels and other basic marketing problems, and then make the goals feasible in the media, and then solve them through media methods.

1.6.2.1 Paid Media

It refers to the marketing resources that reflect the direct cost obtained by paying or exchanging resources. This part contains the vast majority of paid advertising, which is an effective way to expand coverage. Such as search engine advertising, alliance advertising, targeted advertising, television advertising, etc.

1.6.2.2 Earned Media (Free media)

It means that customers, news or the public actively share brand content and get brand exposure without paying. It does not necessarily mean that the media itself is "free". Including content sharing, mentioning, forwarding, free news reports and social media content and comments.

1.6.2.3 Social Media (We media)

We media refers to the way in which the general public releases their own facts and news through the Internet. It is a way for the general public to provide and share their own facts and news after connecting with the global knowledge system through digital technology. Including self owned websites, blogs, Sina Weibo, apps, online stores and social media platforms.

Social media communication strategy means that after comprehensively understanding the content and characteristics of the communication objectives and the psychological characteristics and situation of the communication audience, using the network media mode of social media, multi pronged and focused, and finally shaping the image of the communication object in the communication

process so that the communication audience can form the expected communication image concept of the communication image.

1.6.3 Cultivation

"Cultivation Department" idols refer to a kind of idols created by entertainment companies, which take "cultivation" and "accompanying growth" as the appeal points, sell their real life growth process, and make fans appeal to their own "sense of participation" and "sense of identity".

1.6.4 Idol

The "Idol" mentioned in this paper is one of the types of Japanese artists, which is derived from the English "Idol", which is made in Japanese-English. In Japanese, the word originally refers to "worshipped person or thing", "admired person" and "person who has a fanatical pursuer"; in the Japanese entertainment industry, it mainly refers to "sharing the growth process with fans, and the existence itself is a kind of charismatic character". Its characteristic is to create its own image in an all-round way and carry out activities in many fields such as singing, dancing, drama, variety show, etc. Compared with the models who pay the most attention to appearance, the appearance of an idol does not have to be very outstanding, on the contrary, it is relatively easy to be close. On the other hand, because of the pursuit of internal "gorgeous" and personal charm, excellent idols and fans can be said to have a close relationship.

1.6.5 Idol Culture

Idol industry is a cross industry based on the basic entertainment industry, which takes idol as the center, music industry as the foundation, and derives to the entertainment fields such as film and television, variety show, advertising and so on.

Idol culture is a unique part of Japanese pop culture. The term technically refers to male or female singers, performers, and actors with highly-commodified images and an intensely passionate fan bases, but idols are more commonly teenage boys or girls performing in groups.

1.6.6 Japanese Idol Culture

AKB48 Group as the representative of the Japanese idol culture has a large number of members, and the biggest characteristic of the average age is low.

The selling point of this idol culture is not an excellent song and dance performance and super personal ability and beautiful appearance but has youthful vitality, full of dreams, super affinity, can accompany fans and grow together. It is precisely because of the emotional appeal of the public changes with the changes in the society that the practitioners of the entertainment and cultural industry transform to cater to the audience. The idol industry in contemporary Japan can be said to be a national "Nurturing" game, which not only triggered a new economic growth point in China but also became a typical representative of Japanese popular culture and an important content of the foreign cultural output.

1.6.7 Chinese Idol Culture

Due to the constraints of modern political and economic development, Chinese idol culture started late and has not formed its own unique style. In recent years, it has been influenced by Japanese and Korean pop culture for a long time, and gradually formed a characteristic with "tolerance" as its greatest feature. The idol culture market, therefore, has the idol culture characteristics of different countries. After entering the 21st century, with the popularity of entertainment programs, especially talent shows, Chinese idol culture has entered the era of "grassroots Idol".

Through the major talent shows, the distance between "contestants" and "audiences" has become increasingly blurred in the minds of consumers. A vigorous nationwide "star-making" movement has made the idols in China's entertainment market step down from the altar. The birth of civilian idols means that the era of consumers choosing, making idols and consuming related cultural products has come.

1.6.8 AKB48

AKB48, a large Japanese girl's idol group, was founded on December 8, 2005, with Akimoto Yasushi as the chief producer. It is divided into five teams: team A, team K, team B, team 4 and team 8. Because its birthplace "Akihabara" is abbreviated as "Akiba" in Japanese, its initial is called "AKB". AKB48 and its sister group both have the number "48", which is often referred to as "48 series idols".

There are more than 400 family members. As Akimoto Yasushi's attempt in the new century, 48 series idols continue many characteristics of "kitten club". For example, ordinary girls who have no acting experience are selected as members through the public talent show. The number of members is large. The members have both personal activities and small teams to carry out group activities, etc. 48 series idols take "idol that can meet" as the business purpose, subverting the idea that idols can only be seen on TV. Through special theater and handshake meeting, it has cultivated many loyal fans, and set off a boom in Japanese fan economy and created many economic miracles.

1.6.9 SNH48

Since its establishment, AKB48 has made remarkable market achievements, even covering the whole of Asia. In May 2013, it became the highest-selling female singer group in the history of Japanese music, with a total sales volume of more than

30 million CDs in Japan. AKB48 has created a miracle in the Japanese music market and launched a similar model of girl's music idol groups in overseas markets. In 2012, SNH48, located in Shanghai, China, was born. In four years, SNH48 developed from more than 30 people at the beginning of its establishment to a phased organization with more than 160 members. After that, it broke away from AKB48 and began to operate independently. SNH48 Group was established and expanded in China with branches. So far, it has developed into a large girl's idol group with more than 300 people in Shanghai (SNH48), Guangzhou (GNZ48) and Beijing (BEJ48). There are more than 1000 performances in the three places in the whole year, and the annual growth rate of core fans is over 400%.

SNH48 fully absorbs the model characteristics and brand communication experience of Asian girl idol group AKB48 and carries out the localization of "Chinese expression" and "common touch". Its development goal is to select outstanding talents among the 1.4 billion Chinese people in the world. Make full use of the most imaginative, innovative and forward-looking star-making concepts and technical methods in the Internet and social network era, actively cultivate all-round idol artists with both music, dance and film and television performances, and strive to create a healthy, upward and youthful vigor, The first girl idol group in the global Chinese-speaking region with international influence, and makes SNH48 a new benchmark for Chinese idol culture and fan economic industry in the era of Internet and social media.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews related literature and previous studies on idol, idol culture, Japanese and Chinese idol culture, cultivation, social media communication, and social media communication strategies. It also provides a thorough review of relevant theory as a foundation for developing research questions and conceptual framework for this study.

2.1 Related Literature and Previous Studies

2.1.1 Idol and Idol Culture

2.1.1.1 The current situation of research in Japanese academic circles

Generally speaking, most of the researches on "idols" in Japan are from the perspective of economics to analyze the stimulation and contribution of idols industry to the Japanese economy. Secondly, from the perspective of cultural history, the development process of Japanese idols is described in detail. When it comes to "idol culture", Japanese scholars generally believe that "Idol" is a new cultural form produced by the collision with other cultures in a specific era, just like literature, music and film. Their research on "idol culture" can be divided into two schools: male idols of "Johnnys" and female idols of various schools. The reason for this distinction is that Japanese female idols and male idols are totally different systems. The former can generally represent the development history of Japanese idol culture, while the latter is the original creation of Johnny's firm. He stated, "In the early days, when Japanese people mentioned the word "Idol", almost all of them referred to women.

It was not until Johnny's firm that male idols became a feature of Japanese entertainment and culture industry” (Hu, 2008). Therefore, when we study Japanese male idols, we only need to consider the artists of Johnnys.

First of all, let's look at the representative research results in the field of female idols. In 1989, Inamasu Tatsuo published "idol Engineering", which is the first work to study the Japanese female idol craze as a cultural phenomenon. The book mainly puts forward the following points: the mutual recognition between idols and fans is a phenomenon similar to religion; the development of idols in the TV age cannot be separated from the "Stories (i.e., the positioning stories of people)" created by the media. The popularity of idols reflects the "Cute" of girls' culture; magazines and photo portraits are crucial to the development of idols. Although this book does not involve AKB48 and Johnnys idols, its theoretical prototype has a profound impact on the later idol culture research. "Idol Engineering" was written on the eve of the "idol ice age". After entering the 1990s, with the development of idols falling into a low ebb, the research on idols in the academic circle is not good enough. Most of them take the emergence of a certain combination as an opportunity to carry out specific analysis, and the academic value is not high. It was not until the idols of various schools competed to develop in the new century that the study of idol culture became active again.

Okajima & Okada (2011) published "The evolution of idol group: Idol Warring States era has finally arrived! " Taking the female idol group as the research object, this paper analyzes the establishment and development history of the female idol group from the perspectives of idol charm, media strategy, fan community, and the change of fans' communication channels. It claims that the "idol Warring States

period" in the 21st century has come. Hidemasa (2013) published "A history of beauty culture: Gods and idols". Starting from aesthetics, it takes the images of female performers (body and clothing) as the research object, starting from the oldest goddess in myths, legends and religions, and extending to the beautiful pictures in Kabuki and Rukiya paintings, and modern female idols represented by Yamaguchi Momoe and AKB48.

Takashi (2014) published a monograph on cultural criticism, reading "idols: exploring the chaotic 'narrative' ". Starting from the meaning evolution of the word "Idol", the book puts forward that "Idol" has been rooted in the deep culture of Japanese society after more than 50 years of development, and is no longer just a fashion trend. The author also elaborates on the following aspects: what are the characteristics of idols as a professional category in the performing arts industry; the important role of SNS (Social Media) and live (concerts, handshakes event, etc.) on the development of idols; the virtual and real reality of idols; the identification desire of fans. In the same year, Kazuhiro Kojima's "3.11 and idols" explored the changes of idols' existence significance after the 311 earthquakes in Japan from the perspective of sociology and psychology, and explored the relationship between idols and disasters for the first time. Masayoshi Sakai's "on the wealth of idols" discusses the development history of female idols in the past 50 years from the 1980s represented by Matsuda Seiko and Nakamori Akina to the 21st century represented by AKB48 and Momoiro Clover, as well as the economic impact of female idols on Japanese culture and industry.

Tsukada & Matsuda (2016) published "Idol theory textbook", which explores idol culture from the four fields of linguistics, history, mathematics and

geography. The perspective is novel and has many unique opinions. For example, the book puts forward the research direction of "urban space" of idols, analyzes the characteristics of Shibuya and Akihabara, the birthplaces of idols, and holds that "idol culture" redefines "city". Also, this book is of great reference significance to explore the evolutionary history of "fans" of female idols. It is mentioned in the book that with the development and change of mainstream idol forms and media means, the appellation of fans has developed from "guards" to "otaku".

The next is the research results of Japanese local male idols, there are two aspects in the study of Johnny's firm in Japanese academic circles: one is to grasp the whole brokerage company, including its development history, business model, communication strategy, social influence and status, contribution to Japan's economic and cultural soft power, and fan community culture (derivative catchwords, Doojin's creation, fans group images, idols' religiousness, etc.). The second is a detailed discussion of the members of a specific idol group, such studies are mostly from the perspective of artists' image, development route and social influence, with obvious narrative traces.

Saijo Noboru published "Johnny's funny evolution" in 1999. Starting from Japanese funny culture, this paper comprehensively analyzes Johnny's "funny strategy", and examines SMAP's history of using variety shows to dominate major TV stations in the idol ice age of the 1990s, creating a precedent for idols to be "handsome and funny". This book is of great reference significance for us to understand the strategic adjustment of Johnnys in the idol ice age, and also provides a theoretical source for the later transformation of Johnnys' Idol style.

Ootani, Hayami & Yano (2012) published the book "Johnnys Research Society: a theory of Johnny's culture" In the form of a dialogue between three cultural critics, taking Johnnys as the starting point, this paper discusses the history of Japanese popular culture after World War II, including music production, the operation mode of TV stations, the development history of dance style, the origin of idol culture, and the phenomenon of fans' familiarization, and even tries to explore the changes of subculture and social customs from the perspective of Japanese American relations. The book also compares Johnnys with Japanese female idols such as AKB48, Morning Musume, and Takarazuka Revue Company. It not only has a comprehensive grasp of Johnnys but also combines the development history of Johnnys with the development history of the Japanese entertainment industry to sort out the idol system of the entire Japanese performing arts industry.

2.1.1.2 The current situation of English academic research

Most of the studies on "Japanese idol culture" in English academic circles come from scholars engaged in Japanese studies. His pioneering monograph is "The eight million smile Island: Idol performance and symbol production in contemporary Japan" (Aoyagi, 2005). The concept of "Idology" is put forward in the book. Taking the Japanese entertainment industry and its environment as the background, he spent ten years collecting a lot of data, and through these data, he explained how young artists, promoters and fans have jointly constructed a field. In this field, "idols" are held on the altar, commercialized, consumed and shaped as spiritual models of young people. Hiroshi Aoyagi believes that the performance of idols proves the capitalist values existing in the consumption society of Contemporary East Asia. Although such performances are very crude in the eyes of critics, idols help

the entertainment industry to establish a more important role by transforming public desire into commodity consumption.

Another English book on "idols" is a collection of essays edited "idols and celebrities in Japanese media culture." (Patrick & Jason, 2012) The anthology was published in 2012 and contains ten papers, covering two systems of Japanese male and female idols. Starting from the four keywords of systems, desire, difference and image, this paper analyzes Japanese idol culture. Among the ten papers, I would like to focus on the following, W. David Marx wrote "the jimusho system: understanding the production logic of the Japanese entertainment industry", focusing on "the firm", analyzes the relationship between the emergence and development of idols in the Japanese entertainment industry and the accounting mechanism. "Johnny's idols as icons: female desire to fantasize and consume male idol images" by Kazumi Nagaike, taking the male idol of Johnnys as the research object, analyzes the fantasy and consumption of female fans. From boys next door to boys' love: gender performance in Japanese male idol media by Lucy Glasspool, taking a couple of Arashi members Satoshi Ohno and Kazunari Ninomiya as examples, this paper analyzes the integration of idol culture and boys' love (BL) culture. Patrick W. Galbraith's "idols: the image of desire in Japanese consumer capitalism" puts forward that in the consumer capitalist society, idols are not only exchangeable and disposable goods but also can be used as currency in the advertising of goods and services.

In addition to this collection of papers, there are two papers worth mentioning. "Pop Idols and the Asian Identity" published by Hiroshi Aoyagi in 2000. This paper mainly puts forward the following points: idols often respond to fans in lyrics; idols' upsurge is related to the rapid development of postwar economy and the

pursuit of pleasure by young people; idols, as entertainment leaders, have made great contributions to the economic development of East Asia (mainly referring to Taiwan, Hong Kong, Shanghai and South Korea). The other is Eva Tsai's paper "the dramatic consequences of playing a lover: stars and television culture in Japan" published in 2010. This paper refers to "the idolization of Taranto", and analyzes that idolized artists are playing the role of "lover" for fans, and the consequences of this role have both advantages and disadvantages.

2.1.1.3 Research status of Chinese Academic Circles

There is very little research on Japanese idol culture in China, and there is hardly any academic book on this topic. The discussion on Japanese animation and film and TV plays are more common. Among them, the more pioneering one is the collection of essays co-edited by scholars from China, Hong Kong and Japan, "cross border Japanese popular culture". The book is divided into two parts. The first part is a survey of Japanese popular culture by local scholars. The second part discusses the cross-border spread of Japanese popular culture in East Asian countries. The main areas mentioned are animation, games, film and television drama, pop music. Among them, Qiu Kaixin's papers " 'Takizawa loves his fans', 'no, Takizawa loves me!' ——An Anthropological Study on Takizawa Hideaki's Hong Kong Fans" In this paper, it depicts the fan scene of Johnny's idol Hideaki Takizawa when he went to Hong Kong for publicity. From the perspective of fan culture, he analyzed the complexity of star-chasing behavior and the diversity of reasons for star-chasing. Although this book is a rare study of Japanese pop culture in China, it does not mention "idol culture".

Also worth mentioning is the "Knowing Japan-Idol" special episode of the "Knowing Japan" series. "Knowing Japan", as a pioneering magazine in the study of Japanese culture in China, introduces various types of Japanese culture to the Chinese people through a special collection of keywords, and is sought after by many readers. The "Idol" special feature selects some Japanese idol genres to briefly describe.

The most valuable is the exclusive interview with a series of industry insiders in the Japanese entertainment industry, including Johnnys music producer Toshiya Kamada and underground idol group "Masked Girl." BiS rebel idol agent Junnosuke Watanabe, etc. The downside is that the topic of discussion is "Japanese idols," but it does not define what "idols" are, nor does it explore the background and reasons for the formation of Japan's unique idol concept. At the same time, the content is too small, ignoring many milestones and events. It can only be said to be a general reading book for readers who do not know Japanese pop culture.

AKB48's lattice skirt Economics: new life and creativity in fan effect, written by Hidetomi Tanaka and translated by Jiang Yuzhen, was published by people's Posts and Telecommunications Press in 2014. This is the first book about Japanese idols introduced from Taiwan. At the beginning of the book, the question is raised "Why did AKB48 create an economic miracle in a period of deflation when people's willingness to consume is generally low (Jiang, 2010)?" Then it interprets AKB48's creation, mode, the relationship between idols and fans, and the introduction of individual members, trying to analyze the "idol economy" and "fan effect" in Japan. From an economic point of view, this book lacks data support and is not professional. However, it is easy to understand. The miracle of AKB48 can be simply

classified as deflation economic background, setting the low price to lock in target consumer group "otaku", and keeping updating with competition mechanism.

2.1.2 Japanese Idol Culture

2.1.2.1 Characteristics of Japanese Idol Culture

Through the analysis of AKB48's idol system, we can have a more comprehensive understanding of Japanese idol culture. Generally speaking, Japanese idol culture has the following key concepts:

A. Mental Consumption

Thomas C. Schelling wrote an article entitled "the mind as a consuming organ" in the 1980s, and he believes that under the depressed economic situation, people dare not implement too much material consumption, and will turn to low-cost cultural goods such as movies, novels, and TV dramas, and the joy of consumption plots and stories, such as the movie "Lassie Come-Home" "The upsurge caused in the United States. Hidetomi Tanaka, a Japanese scholar, translated this form of consumption as "mental consumption", which refers to the consumption of non-economic activities without money feedback. In the Internet age, people write and read stories on SNS (Social Network), which are the forms of mental production and consumption. The characteristic of mental consumption is that the cost is zero. For those who are "idle but have no money", they can produce and consume as long as they have time.

The idol culture has developed into an upsurge in this context of the prevalence of mental consumption. Although AKB48 was founded in 2005, only a few people participated in the initial theater performances. It became popular in 2007 and 2008 when the subprime mortgage crisis broke out. Idol members recorded their

own thoughts and experiences online, while fans consumed these stories through social media, which formed a "consumption network of mind". Whether it's the course of the idol's growth and struggle, or the characters behind the idol, whether it's virtual or real, it's a "story" created for fans. Idols are related to love and dream, showing fans' self-projection and identification desire. Most of the time, what makes fans moved is not the idol's artworks, but the resonance of the idol. Although the material cost of "mental consumption" of idols is meager, once emotional dependence is formed, and emotional identity is established, the moved fans will turn to crazy material consumption.

Mental consumption is also one of the differences between Japanese idols and Korean idols. Japanese idols value the stories behind their idols. Their charm is not only on the stage but also in their personalities. In the process of growing up, discovering their cuteness requires more attention and time from the audience. Korean idols attach great importance to the stage performance effect and visual enjoyment, so you don't need to do much digging to discover their charm.

B.Virtual Love

The relationship between Japanese idols and fans is not simple worship, but a suspected love relationship. In AKB48's member contract, it is explicitly stipulated that "love is forbidden". These lack of "humanity" rules are to create a "lover" role for fans. The best embodiment of this virtual love is that idols often respond to fans in lyrics.

For example, AKB48's single song "Heavy Rotation", which creates a sales history, depicts the green and sweet love from the perspective of women, conveys the theme of "the people you like are in infinite circulation in their minds".

The lyrics of "I love you, I need you" appear many times, and the whole song uses the second person to allude fans as lovers. When the song was performed in the theater, it caused an unprecedented event. Tickets for the performance were hard to obtain. The single set a record of 340000 sales in just one day.

C. Cultivate

The "cultivation" here refers not only to the star-making ability of fans, but also to accompany their idols to grow up. Idol younger age is one of the trends in East Asia entertainment market. Only when exposed from a young age can the growth process be fully displayed in front of fans, and the fans can be provided with a sense of achievement that is slowly "cultivated". AKB48 idol girls, the average age of joining the office is about 13.6 years old, but the average age of debut is about 16 years old. This age is the fastest growing and changing age. Fans witness idols grow into adults. This sense of "accompany" is easy to retain fans. Therefore, The "coming-of-age ceremony" held by idols at the age of their 20s is also one of the days for fans to revel (Japanese adults at the age of 20). He stated, "Although Korean 'finished idols' can attract many followers, the relationship between finished idols and fans is far weaker than that between cultivated idols and fans (Tang, 2013)".

D. Branding and Copyright Protection

From the success of AKB48, we can see that "branding" idols are the fundamental way to ensure the sustainable development of brokerage companies. Only by developing the "bundled sales" model of seniors and juniors in the firm, and forming a recognizable idol brand, can one group quickly fill up with another group when it is down, retains fans, and develop a monopolistic market share. Moreover, as far as idols are concerned, their brokerage companies have a stable position in the

entertainment industry, which is beneficial to their long-term development (both in front of the stage and behind the scenes). In addition, brokerage companies pay attention to legitimate rights protection, actively develop legitimate related products and monopolize the consumption channels of fans, so as to ensure the company's profits. To protect the image right of its idols, it is also convenient for the company to maintain the image of idols.

2.1.2.2 The Development History of Idol Girl Groups in Japan

Since the "flower trio" (Yamaguchi Momoe, Mori Masako, Sakurada Junko) in the 1970s, the girl idol group has always occupied an important position in the Japanese performing industry. In its development history, "Onyanko Club", "SPEED", "morning Musume" and AKB48 can be regarded as important coordinates in the development process.

Born in 1985, "Onyanko Club" is regarded as a miracle of Japanese entertainment circle in the 1980s. Its members are all middle school students who lack performing experience. Taking Fuji TV's program "Sunset Nyan Nyan" as the main performance venue, it won the champion of Japanese single sales list seven months after its establishment, with 30 singles winning the 36-week sales champion. However, due to factional struggle, frequent scandals and aesthetic fatigue among the team members, Onyanko Club was rapidly disbanded from prosperity to decline. Since then, Japan's performing industry has entered a decade long "idol ice age".

"SPEED", a girl idol group with an average age of 12, made a rapid success in the market. In the past three years, the cumulative sales of records exceeded 20 million. But in 2000, SPEED was disbanded because of internal strife. "Morning Musume", which took over "SPEED", is known as "national girl idol

group", and its highest selling single "love machine" sold about 1.65 million copies. The operation mode of "morning Musume" can be simplified as follows: recruit trainees through music school and continuously cultivate new people through intermittent selection meeting mode. After "hell training", new people go on the road, rely on activities dominated by concerts to open up popularity and sell all kinds of peripheral products to make profits. In 2002, after goto Maki, a popular member of the audience, graduated from the group, "morning Musume" showed a downward trend in popularity in the Japanese performing industry, and its position was gradually replaced by AKB48, a rising star.

Akimoto Yasushi, the founder of "Onyanko Club", established AKB48 in Akihabara, Tokyo, Japan in 2005. AKB48 continues many characteristics of "Onyanko Club". For example, girls without performing experience are selected as members by means of the public draft. There are a large number of members. Members not only have personal activities but also disrupt and reorganize internally. Group members are positioned as girls next door, and so on. AKB48 had five singles that sold more than one million in 2011 and became the highest selling female singer in Japanese history in May 2013. Currently, the girl idol groups active in the Japanese pop music market, represented by "48 series", "46 series", "Morning Musume" and "Momoiro Clover", still occupy an important position in the Japanese music market.

2.1.2.3 The Development and Operation Mode of AKB48

The miracle of the fan economy: 48 series cultivate growth idols, AKB48, a large Japanese girl's idol group, was founded on December 8, 2005, with Akimoto Yasushi as the chief producer. It is divided into five teams: team A, team K, team B, team 4 and team 8. Because its birthplace "Akihabara" is abbreviated as

"Akiba" in Japanese, its initial is called "AKB". AKB48 and its sister group both have the number "48", which is often referred to as "48 series idols". There are more than 400 family members. As Akimoto Yasushi's attempt in the new century, 48 series idols continue many characteristics of "kitten club". For example, ordinary girls who have no acting experience are selected as members through the public talent show. The number of members is large. The members have both personal activities and small teams to carry out group activities, etc. 48 series idols take "idol that can meet" as the business purpose, subverting the idea that idols can only be seen on TV. Through special theater and handshake meeting, it has cultivated many loyal fans, and set off a boom in Japanese fan economy and created many economic miracles.

48 series idols take "cultivation" as the selling point, so what is "cultivation" in the end? The word "cultivation" originates from the "cultivation game" that has sprung up in Japan, such as "beauty factory" and "star volunteer". This is a kind of "dream" game. Every action of the player can make the characters in the game closer to the perfect image in the player's mind, and finally, give it to the system to bring an unknown ending to the player. The fun of the game is that the cultivation object should be weak enough and strong plasticity, to arouse the players' desire for protection and bring them a strong sense of achievement. The appeal of 48 series idols is just like this, which makes the dream making function of idols and the cultivation task of fans to the extreme. The operation of AKB48, a large-scale cultivation game, includes the following key links.

A. Special Theater

AKB48 Theater, located in Akihabara center, is the first dedicated theater of AKB48. It can provide up to 250 fans with close contact with idols.

Even the audience in the last row is only a few meters away from the stage. Here, AKB48 members perform almost every day. The setting of a small theater not only controls unsold seats but also allows members and producers to observe the reaction of fans in real time. Early theaters distributed questionnaires to the audience, asking them to write down the names of their favorite members, and what they thought needed to be improved and what they did well. The information collected in this way will become the reference for the next public performance. For example, if a member standing in the central position of this public performance does not give a good evaluation, she will be transferred to another position or even directly step down in the next public performance. Fans' discourse power has been fully mobilized. Also, the public show ticket price has been maintained at around 3000 yen (about 180 yuan). The low price strategy can not only ensure the long-term patronage of Otaku but also reflect the group's attitude of cherishing fans and not forgetting their original intention. In an era surrounded and infiltrated by the virtual world created by the media, AKB48 dares to return to the theater and let the audience experience the interaction on and off the stage with the real facial senses. The identity relationship established by this form is very profound——Otaku dream of falling in love with idols, caring for idols and helping them grow up. Female fans hope that they can be like AKB members and never perfect to strong.

B. Sale and Handshake Meeting

In 2012, the sales volume of CDs and DVDs of AKB48 reached 19.1 billion yen (about 1 billion yuan), which broke the annual total sales record of women's groups in the past dynasties, and made great contributions to Japan's total sales of music products ranking first in the world. Therefore, AKB48 is called

"economic miracle" in Japan. The reason why AKB48 can maintain the sales of physical music products in the Internet era of digital music popularization is the handshake activity set up by Akimoto Yasushi. According to the concept of "idols who can meet", AKB will hold "national handshake meeting" and "personal handshake meeting" from time to time according to the release time of the single. The handshake tickets required for participation are attached in the CD. A CD contains a handshake ticket that can shake hands with members for 10 seconds. In this short ten seconds, fans can chat with their idols, express their opinions and cheer up. In the long run, idols will get to know some senior fans and express "long time no see" and "have you changed your hairstyle?" "Hard work" and so on. To participate in the handshake meeting and have a one-to-one relationship with idols, many fans are hoarding CDs to prolong the handshake time. AKB48's huge CD sales come from fans' desire to establish direct emotional ties with idols.

C. General Election

Since 2009, AKB48 has held a general election every year. Because of the large number of members, it is not guaranteed that all members will participate in a single recording, and there are also different positions on stage. The main purpose of the general election is to determine the allocation of resources for the next year. The top members will enjoy the priority of acting in magazines, singles, photoshoots and variety shows. From the fans' point of view, some fans are tired of the fixed members in the front row. They don't trust the opaque resource allocation standard of the company and want to give the members they support a chance to gain exposure. From the perspective of the company's interests, the general election can not only create a topic, become a major event focused by the national media, but also increase

CD sales (only when you buy a CD, you can get a vote) and encourage fans to vote. The election not only makes members establish a sense of competition but also makes fans feel a strong "sense of mission" because the purchasing power of fans directly determines the fate of idols and the development of their combination. Therefore, this is a "triple-win" selection mechanism for companies, members and fans. In June 2012, the general election in Japan Budokan was not only broadcast by Fuji TV station but also attracted the attention of foreign media such as Youtube. The final total number of votes reached 1.38 million. The economic benefit of the total election is about 20 billion yen.

D. Graduation System

To ensure the freshness and vitality of AKB48, the company implements the "member graduation" system, and members with high popularity will continue to support the younger generation and find the right time to withdraw from the group after the development is mature. Several ace members of AKB48, Maeda Atsuko, Oshima Yuko and Itano Tomomi, all left the group under this graduation mechanism and looked for other development modes in the performing arts circle. The popularity of ACE members has been high enough, if not updated, fans will be weakened by the lack of sense of achievement. The graduation system not only ensures the sustainable development of the combination but also achieves the "idol branding" to sustain AKB's fan economy.

E. Copyrighted Goods

To monopolize the benefits brought by idols, the company has produced a variety of copyright products according to the needs of fans, including photos, posters, clothes, accessories, stationery, calendar, games, etc. Single CD will

be divided into limited version, ordinary version and theater version. Concert DVD will also design multiple covers with different members. All this is to control the consumption demand of fans in the official and to prevent fans from obtaining similar products from other channels.

F. Member Tagging

AKB48 targets Japanese otaku, who are mostly immersed in the "second dimension" culture. Therefore, tagging members is a shortcut to establishing intimacy. The specific operation method of tagging is to add different attributes to each member, such as Kojima Haruna, in the context of the secondary meta culture "Daze and cute" (slow to do things and slow to respond), Kashiwagi Yuki's "belly black" (pure and good on the surface, but actually scheming), Itano Tomomi's "cover up shyness" (inconsistent words and deeds, pretending to be cold in order to hide her shyness), etc. the members' performance in the late-night program AKBINGO! Of Japanese TV station also strengthened the image of "tagging". After accepting these character settings, fans will take the initiative to find materials to prove the member's attributes for dissemination, so as to deepen this impression. Tagging is a strategy of audience segmentation, which helps to strengthen the adhesion of fans.

Compared with Korean idols (especially idols like Girls' Generation), members of AKB48 are diverse in appearance and talent. If Girls' Generation can shine as soon as it appears, AKB48 can only be said to be an "unfinished" product. Because of this "confessed imperfection", fans can start from Akihabara to watch their performances, follow, accompany and support their growth. Members also share their successes and setbacks in their growth process through theatrical performances,

handshake meetings, SNS, fan club, etc., so that fans can watch them turn from ignorant girls into perfect idols. This process in turn encourages further cohesion of the "imagination community". She stated "This unparalleled sense of reality and participation, creating fans adhesion is amazing. An important manifestation of this adhesion is that AKB48 is a religious existence for fans (Iizumi, 2012)". The etiquette during the theater performance (such as Wota performance), the theater as a "holy land", the emotional sustenance of idols as "Redemption", etc., all reflect the profound fetters of fans on idols.

In the cultivation system of fans deciding the development prospect of idols, AKB48 members are constantly survival of the fittest according to fans' preferences. Every year, some members withdraw or advance. A large number of team members also meet the various needs of the market. The opinions of fans are respected the most. The whole group will not be eliminated by the market due to positioning or a member's problems, and AKB48 has become a brand, member changes no longer affect the overall development. Fans' sense of participation and enthusiasm have brought huge economic effects. Fans can get the chance to vote for their idols by buying single CDs. Only by buying enough votes can they make their idols go on better. Therefore, the annual general election held every year will promote the sales peak of AKB48 single CDs. Takuro Morinaga, a Japanese economic critic, estimated that the total economic benefit of the election was as high as 20 billion yen (about 1.6 billion yuan). The annual election is a national idol Carnival in Japan. It is this general election system that makes AKB48 gradually surpass the small theater mode and become a Japanese national idol group.

The cultivation mode of AKB48 has the internal logic of success, that is, based on the stable operation of the small theater, it is completely market-oriented and fans oriented. It connects fans' consumption with team development and forms a benign interaction between fans and idols, to achieve the best effect of economic benefits and brand promotion. This is a business model that can be copied. This successful business model makes the Japanese music market continuously active, which is supported by the Japanese government and applied to the international communication strategy.

2.1.2.4 The International Expansion of AKB48 Model

Due to the recession of the economy and the acceleration of aging phenomenon, the consumption of pop culture in Japan is shrinking irresistibly. To ensure the continued prosperity of the Japanese cultural industry and enhance the soft power of culture, the Japanese government spared no effort to push pop culture to the overseas market. AKB48's excellent performance makes it a powerful weapon for the expansion of Japanese culture. If we say that South Korea's cultural export is to expand popular culture into a prepackaged product to the market of various countries (regions), Japan's global expansion is to present the product as local culture. He stated “The former is represented by Korean dramas and K-pop music, which is based on the disseminator's desire to arouse the audience's interest in the origin of the products, while the latter is focused on cultivating the interest in the products within the target market (Yu, 2005)”.

The first overseas market that AKB48 pays attention to is Indonesia. As the second-largest population in the world, Indonesia's economy has developed rapidly in recent years and has become the main position for the Japanese government

to promote popular culture. In November 2011, AKB48's first overseas sister group was established in Jakarta, Indonesia. It was co-operated by "Dentsu Young & Rubicam Inc., DY&R" and "Media Nusantara CITRA", Indonesia's largest media group. It was named "JKT48" with the abbreviation of Jakarta, and its exclusive theater was opened in the shopping center "FX" of Jakarta. It follows the brand operation model of AKB48, including small theaters, handshake meetings, and election systems, with "face-to-face idols" as the core. Subsequently, AKB48 announced the establishment of TPE48, MNL48 and BNK48 in Taiwan, Philippines and Thailand. So far, AKB48's overseas sister groups have included JKT48 (Jakarta, Indonesia), BNK48 (Bangkok, Thailand), CGM48 (Chiang Mai, Thailand), MNL48 (Manila, Philippines), SGO48 (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam), AKB48 Team SH (Shanghai, China) and AKB48 Team TP (Taipei, China).

In April 2012, AKS Co., Ltd. an AKB48 operating company, and Shanghai Jiushang performance Agency Co., Ltd. (later renamed as Shanghai Siba culture media Co., Ltd.) held an AKB48 Chinese fans meeting in Shanghai Hongqiao World Trade Mall and jointly announced the establishment of a joint venture in Hong Kong and Shanghai, which not only started the official promotion of AKB48 in China but also established a brand new overseas sister group "SNH48" based in Shanghai. AKB48 has entered a new stage of localized operation in the mainland of China, and in 2016, it separated from AKB48 group for independent operation.

2.1.3 Chinese Idol Culture: The Development History of Idol Girl Groups in China

In the entertainment market of the mainland of China, the earliest combination of girl idols is "青春美少女 (Beautiful young girl)", which was founded

in 1996. At the same time, "Morning Musume" appeared in Japan. It's also a group of five, and also a girl's idol group. There are many similarities between "Beautiful young girl" and "Morning Musume". However, when "Morning Musume" has become an important symbol of Japanese pop music market, the glory of "Beautiful young girl" only lasts for a while.

Liqing Chen, the founder of "Beautiful young girl", has been in Japan for many years. After returning home, he selected five girls with an average age of 14 to form a group. The first generation of "Beautiful young girl", who received training in vocal music, dance and other aspects in Japan, followed the Japanese Idol building model, and once launched, it quickly achieved success in China's entertainment market at that time. "Beautiful young girl" participated in CCTV Spring Festival Gala twice in 1997 and 1998 and participated in CCTV programs many times. She stated "At the same time, in the good atmosphere of cultural exchanges between China and Japan at that time, "Beautiful young girl" also successfully entered the Japanese music market (Yue, 2009)". However, when the group became more and more powerful, there was a lawsuit dispute between the core members and the brokerage company. The first and second generation members withdrew from the group one after another, and "Beautiful young girl" survived in the name. After that, the third and fourth generation of "Beautiful young girl" launched a photo called "farewell to virginity" with "sexy" as the selling point, and also naked as the endorsement of game products, which completely deviated from the early image of the combination and was gradually forgotten by people.

After "beautiful young girl", from 2000 to 2010, there were some women's idol groups such as "Chinese spice girl", "Mingjun girl", "Meimei group" and "i Me",

but they failed to get a good market response and most of them have been dissolved. The entertainment market in mainland China has long been dominated by "Twins", "S.H.E", "4 in love", "Michelle Vicki" and other women's music idol groups from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

After 2010, influenced by Korean and Japanese girl's idol groups such as "Girls Generation", "Wonder Girls" and AKB48, several new girl's idol groups appeared in China, such as "AK98", "Sapphire girl", "7 Sense", "1931", "Lunar", SNH48, etc. AK98, founded in Hangzhou, and "Sapphire girl" in Guangzhou, learn from AKB48 mode and take "civilian idol cultivation" as the selling point. Members are divided into different teams to launch singles and variety shows. However, the two groups were labelled as "Plagiarizing AKB48" after they were launched, and they were dissolved one after another within two years. Among the girl idol groups that are still active at present, "7 Sense" and SNH48 meet the needs of consumers at different levels, backgrounds and regions, and have achieved a certain degree of success respectively.

"7 Sense" is characterized by "ancient Chinese culture style". When it came out in 2012, it was marketed on Sina Weibo, renren.com, kaixin.com and other social networking sites. It took "crying because of beauty" and other popular words as the so-called "tipping point", and its video hits exceeded 10 million. The members of "7 Sense" are all from Shenzhen University, and they have high school experience in domestic girl's idol groups. Its team image is similar to South Korea's "Girls Generation", with dance as its main selling point. The unique positioning of "ancient Chinese culture style" has made "7 Sense" popular on the Internet. However, in the later stage, its songs did not make a big breakthrough in melody and failed to bring

freshness to consumers. Coupled with the problem of members leaving the team, the group has gradually become silent in recent years.

SNH48, as the sister group of AKB48 in China, has received more attention and expectation than other girl's idol groups since its establishment. After the first two phases of exploration, SNH48 gradually opened up a nationwide situation. From peripheral product sales, single sales, to theater performances, "handshake event" and other activities, SNH48 gradually established its own characteristics based on copying AKB48.

2.2 Mass Media Strategy in Idol Management

For idol management, mass media strategy is an important part. The choice of communication channels should match the way and habits of the audience to receive information. Different communication channels and platforms also have different emphasis on the choice of communication content. For communicators, the integration and selection of communication channels and platforms determine the realization process of communication effect. Communication is marketing, and the process of information communication is also a marketing process. For idol management, the integration of communication channels can make the communication content reach every target audience more accurately. It is closely related to the information receiving preferences and information focus of potential fans and existing fans. A good mass media strategy can maximize the popularity and influence of idols, and it is the only way for idols to realize their commercial value.

2.2.1 Paid Media

For a long time, films and TV dramas have been the best soil for the birth of artists. Movies born out of popular culture have great advantages of popular artists, and they also have interdependent natural connections with artists. The emergence and popularization of TV is a historical progress for the mass media. The wide audience and influence of TV have made it a leader in the media. It is the most common channel for the audience to relax, receive information, and grasp social dynamics and fashion trends.

As the traditional way for idols to enter the public, TV dramas and movies are also the most beneficial weapons to gain popularity. These two kinds of cultural works are closely connected with people's lives, and the fascinating plot also makes people prefer this kind of entertainment, so they occupy most of people's daily leisure and entertainment, and are enduring, and are not impacted by new media. TV dramas and movies not only provide an excellent stage for the management of idols, but also are more conducive to the shaping of idols themselves. Especially, idol dramas and movies tailored for idols are powerful tools to attract fans. These idol dramas and idol films are mostly famous for their beautiful pictures of handsome men and beautiful women. By telling tortuous and moving love stories, coupled with sensational and beautiful music, they create a vague reality dream world for the audience and meet the audience's aesthetic needs.

With the popularity of the idol group AKB48, a popular idol drama came out. "Majisuka school" is a late night drama produced and broadcast by Tokyo TV in 2010. It is co-directed by Sato, Yoichi Matsumoto, Keisuke TOJIMA, etc. Akimoto Yasui served as the producer, and AKB48, SKE48, SDN48 members starred. As a TV series

broadcast by Tokyo TV station at 12:00 p.m., the audience rating can reach up to 4.3%, and the soundtrack also uses AKB48 songs. This TV series is very popular in Japan and overseas.

If movies and TV series are completely a fantasy space that blurs the roles and idols themselves, then variety shows are an attempt to expose idols to the public. TV variety show is an entertaining program form presented to the public through TV stations, which usually includes many performances, such as music, funny, games and so on (Liu, 2016). The addition of idols can enable TV variety shows to obtain higher ratings and advertising investment, and idols who are invited to perform in the program and participate in the game segment as guests can also improve their exposure in this way. After fading the charm aura given by the characters in movies and TV dramas, they can seize the opportunity to show their own personality and good image to the public in time, so that the audience can pay more attention to their real personal image, so as to improve their popularity. More and more TV variety shows tend to invite idols to participate in the recording and encourage fans to participate in the interaction, which can not only bring benefits to idols and fans, but also improve their ratings. AKB48 also received the Title Variety "AKBINGO!" exclusive to Japanese television.

2.2.2 Earned Media

The media's news report is the most basic way of information transmission in the traditional media. Newspapers, radio, television, Internet and other media will use the way of news report for information transmission, and the publicity of idols is inseparable from media reports, and media reports will inevitably become one of the important channels for the dissemination of idols.

The report on idols can also be said to be a part of cultural news, which mainly "takes the dynamic news of the entertainment industry and the relevant reports of artists as the main content (Li, 2008)". Media reports have a great impact on idols. Media reports are timely, which can make the news of idols be conveyed to the public at the fastest speed, and the authenticity and simplicity of media reports can make the public see the image of idols most intuitively. Moreover, the media can selectively express a certain aspect of the idol's personal or work life through the use of different expression skills such as words and images, and endow the idol with unique personal charm, or outstanding appearance, or perfect personality, or unique personality, etc. The way for the public to know idols is largely achieved through media reports. Through well-designed media reports, entertainment idols can easily gain public favor and popularity.

However, media reports are not always positive. Some media reports seize the curiosity and recreation psychology of the audience, focus a large area of reports on the lives and scandals of idols, deliberately release some eye-catching gimmicks and fake news to attract the attention of the audience, and use people's curiosity and moral knowledge to create a sensation in order to gain high hits and reading. Moreover, some vulgar hype also uses media reports, and even takes people's abuse of vulgar information as another form to win attention, or uses exaggerated and eye-catching news to occupy the headlines.

It is in this way that media reports repeatedly report on idols, making people and events the focus of social information, and expanding the popularity and influence of idols.

2.2.3 Social Media (We Media)

In the process of idol operation, media exposure and interaction with fans are two indispensable lessons. After entering the Internet era, the new media springing up like mushrooms has changed the dominance of traditional media. The changes in communication channels and modes have also greatly changed the process of idol operation. The emergence of new media has shortened the distance between the general public and idols. Through the Internet, people can have a more comprehensive and specific understanding of idols. With the deepening penetration of the Internet in people's lives, idols begin to move towards new media while shaping their own image through traditional media. Traditional media is no longer the key force for success, and idols do not only appear in the spotlight of traditional media. A large number of online programs, such as online dramas and online variety shows, have provided new opportunities and platforms for idol shaping, and the rise of webcast in 2016 has opened a new door for fans to pursue stars.

2.3 Related Theories

This study reviews two communication theories – Cultivation Theory and mass media-related theory (different type of media). The following sections gave full review of these theories.

2.3.1 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is also called cultivation analysis, education analysis and acculturation analysis. In the 1960s and 1970s, American communication scholar Gerber and others began to carry out a series of research on the content of TV violence. In addition to the content analysis of TV violence, they also measured

the impact of TV on the audience's attitude, and finally created the "training theory". The training theory school puts forward the theories of "mainstream effect" and "echo effect". The mainstream effect means that the values that should be diversified become similar to the mainstream opinions presented by TV due to exposure to TV. This coincides with the spiral theory of silence. As a mass media, television represents and guides the mainstream public opinion, so as to make the public opinion tend to be consistent. This theory should be used by the news media to actively guide mainstream public opinion.

As a large country with diversified cultures, China actively absorbs foreign cultures and spreads them. The popular idol culture in Japan is rare in China. Through the communication of mass media, imperceptibly cultivates the audience's world outlook and accelerates the dissemination and development of Japanese idol culture in China.

2.3.2 Mass Media-Related Theory

Practitioners of the uses and gratifications theory study the ways the public consumes media. This theory states that consumers use the media to satisfy specific needs or desires. For example, you may enjoy watching a show like *Dancing With the Stars* while simultaneously tweeting about it on Twitter with your friends. Many people use the Internet to seek out entertainment, to find information, to communicate with like-minded individuals, or to pursue self-expression. Each of these uses gratifies a particular need, and the needs determine the way in which media is used. By examining factors of different groups' media choices, researchers can determine the motivations behind media use (Papacharissi, 2009).

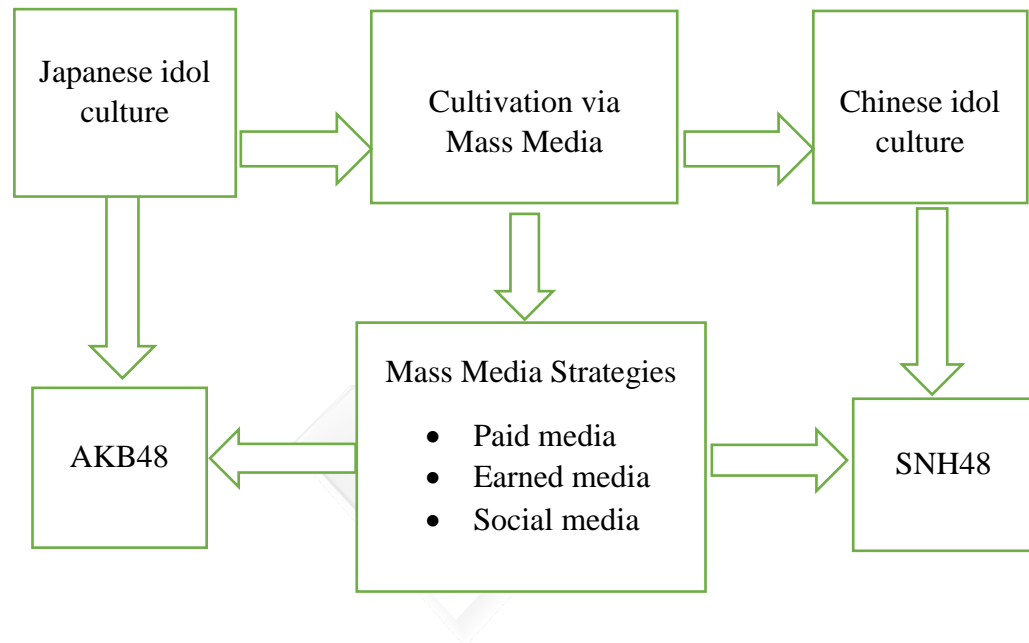
A typical uses and gratifications study explores the motives for media consumption and the consequences associated with use of that media. In the case of Dancing with the Stars and Twitter, you are using the Internet as a way to be entertained and to connect with your friends. Researchers have identified a number of common motives for media consumption. These include relaxation, social interaction, entertainment, arousal, escape, and a host of interpersonal and social needs. By examining the motives behind the consumption of a particular form of media, researchers can better understand both the reasons for that medium's popularity and the roles that the medium fills in society. A study of the motives behind a given user's interaction with Facebook, for example, could explain the role Facebook takes in society and the reasons for its appeal.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory is often applied to contemporary media issues. The analysis of the relationship between media and violence that you read about in preceding sections exemplifies this. Researchers employed the uses and gratifications theory in this case to reveal a nuanced set of circumstances surrounding violent media consumption, as individuals with aggressive tendencies were drawn to violent media (Papacharissi, 2009).

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 describes the conceptual framework of this study by showing how three different types of mass media strategies (paid vs. earned vs. social media) were used to promote the SNH48 in China. It also guides how to compare whether mass media strategies used by SNH48 differ from those used by Japanese idols (AKB48).

Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter present research design, population and sample selection. In terms of research instrument, it also explains how communication strategies regarding Chinese idols on Weibo were analyzed. In addition, it describes validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Research Design

This research is aimed at the media strategy research of AKB48 and SNH48 Idol Girls and their sister groups. It will mainly carry out descriptive research on the special model, innovation and different media strategies of AKB48 and SNH48 and their sister groups' fan economy through qualitative research methods as followings.

A. Case Study Method

The case study method is a study carried out for a specific individual or topic. Using this research method in this paper, on the one hand, it can show the problems to be studied more concretely, on the other hand, it can combine theory with practice to reveal the application value of this research. This article is a study of idol communication strategies. In order to make the study more specific, AKB48 and SNH48 are selected as research cases. 48 GROUP's idol culture is popular throughout East Asia, and is a representative group of Japan's new form of idol culture, with sufficient representativeness.

B. Textual Analysis

Textual analysis is a common, ancient and vigorous scientific research method. The collation of relevant documents at home and abroad is conducive to the formation of an objective understanding of the research problem itself. In order to better complete the independent study writing, the author combined the development origin and theoretical principles of the "AKB48 model", understood the application of the "AKB48 model" in communication, and then sorted out the relevant texts on the study of idol culture. The accumulation of literature and relevant data provides theoretical support and a large amount of reliable information for the research work of this paper.

C. Participatory Observation Method

Observation method is a research method in which researchers directly observe the subject with their own subjective feelings and experiences and other auxiliary tools with a certain research purpose and plan to obtain data. In order to analyze the research object more deeply and intuitively, the author, as an audience, transforms his research identity into SNH48 fans, "immerses" in the activities of SNH48, and interacts with the majority of fans, observes the interaction behavior of the audience in the actual interaction behavior of idol culture transmission, and obtains the real interaction emotion, which is more conducive to the study of SNH48 series of idol audience groups.

3.2 Population and Sample Selection

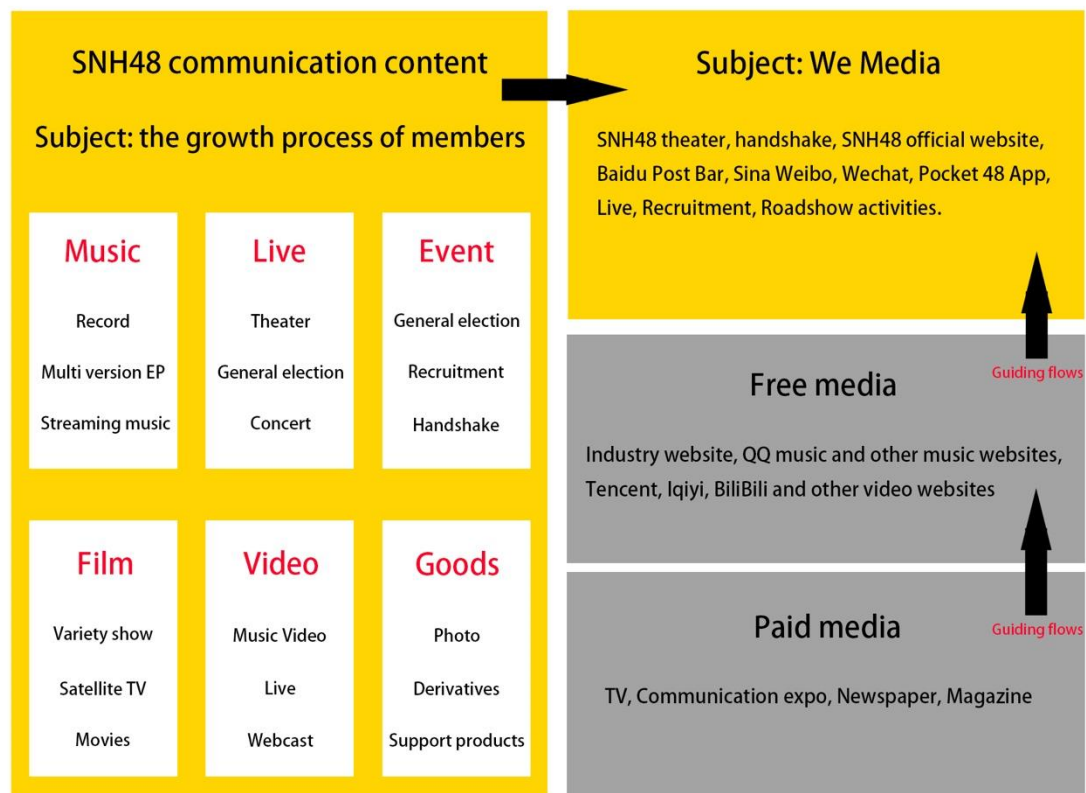
Compared with Western countries, China has a huge number of fans, but the related research on fan culture has just started in contemporary China. My country's

fan culture should first appear in the late 1980s. Influenced by Hong Kong's diverse entertainment environment, the Chinese public in the early stage of reform and opening up showed a strong liking and pursuit of Hong Kong films, Hong Kong dramas and Hong Kong stars with a strong sense of entertainment. Teresa Teng's extravagant voice, the nonsensical comedy starring Stephen Chow, the Huang Feihong series of martial arts action films, and martial arts films such as "New Dragon Inn", "Swordsman", "Dong Xie. West Poison", all became popular in the mainland at that time.

Cultural text, and as a result, a large number of fans of Hong Kong's entertainment culture have emerged. If Hong Kong's entertainment culture gave birth to the emergence of Chinese fan culture, then the singer talent show "Super Girl" created by Hunan Satellite TV in 2005 was the first time that China's fan culture was constructed. "Super Girl" is the first time in China to create stars through the program's public audition. It not only created a large number of stars such as Li Yuchun, Liangying, and Zhou Bichang, but also produced China's first self-organized and vigorously active fans. In the community, countless "corn", "jelly" and "box lunch" came into the public's eyes in an instant. Today, although the influence of the "Super Girl" fan community is not as strong as it was in the past, its influence on Chinese popular culture and fan culture has always existed. With the continuous introduction of "Korean Wave" in my country, watching Korean dramas, listening to K-pop, and chasing Korean stars has become a new fashion, and a "Ha-Korean" craze has flourished in China. Among them, the Korean idol fan culture imported with "Korean Wave" has also become the main object of study and reference for domestic fans to chase stars, which has brought new changes to China's fan culture.

I summarized the media content of AKB48 and SNH48 in three kinds of mass media (Figure 3.1). We media represented by Weibo is our main research sample.

Figure 3.1: Model of Communication by SNH48



The media attribute of the network is self-evident. Compared with traditional media, the characteristics of network communication are characterized by complexity, connectivity, openness, multi-level and networking. The traditional media include not only interpersonal media such as telephone but also mass media such as newspapers, radio and television. However, the network is a composite media, which integrates multiple media. The various forms of communication it carries have formed

a complex relationship of interwoven and mutual action. From the perspective of communication form, websites, forums, blogs, Weibo, email, instant messaging, etc. are interconnected and infiltrated, forming a three-dimensional communication network. The interweaving of various forms of communication makes the specific process and structure of communication more complex. Communication in digital media can be either "point to point" or "point to point"; It can be one level of communication or multi-level communication; It can be synchronous propagation or asynchronous propagation. The transmission of a piece of information may span multiple forms of transmission and carry out multi-level transmission in multiple transmission channels. Therefore, digital information transmission is often "compound" transmission. In such a complex communication process, on the one hand, communicators can choose the combination of communication methods according to their own needs in order to maximize the communication benefits.

3.3 Research Instrument and Data Analysis

Today, with the vigorous development of new media, traditional media also ushered in new development opportunities. In fact, for the process of communication, different media only play the role of communication tools. Both traditional media and new media have their own advantages and disadvantages. For example, the popularity of television, the strong penetration of radio and the in-depth reading provided by newspapers and magazines are beyond the reach of new media at this stage, But at the same time, the rapidity, interactivity and powerful ability to form public opinion topics shown by new media should not be underestimated. Therefore, integrating different media to make them interact and integrate has become a major trend in the

modern communication process. The shaping process of entertainment idols is also the spreading process of entertainment idols. The concept of communication, namely, marketing, is also applicable to entertainment idols. In the shaping of entertainment idols under this general trend of communication, the interaction of the media is conducive to the three-dimensional shaping of the image of entertainment idols, and also conducive to improving the comprehensiveness of the publicity of entertainment idols, increasing the focus, and carrying out the integrated layout of the propaganda channels according to the characteristics of different media platforms.

SNH48 has a clear and complete idea of the integration and linkage of media. At the beginning of its establishment, SNH48 was less publicized by traditional media due to a lack of funds, but its audience is mostly senior users of new Internet media. Brokerage companies quickly concentrated their efforts on We Media to create momentum, established a communication idea centered on Internet thinking, and developed mobile APP The website forum and other new media publicity platforms have quickly attracted fans of the original "AKB48 series", and also gained a large number of new fans through Weibo communication, and gradually entered the traditional media after the growing number of fans. In the process of traditional media publicity, they also kept track of the new media dynamics, guided the public to pay attention to the new media information, and realized the mutual communication and integration of traditional media and new media. Through the interaction of various topics of SNH48 on Weibo and the information collection and interaction of multiple fan clubs, we can support the text analysis of SNH48's media strategy.

With the growing maturity of SNH48's fan ecosystem, SNH48's operation team not only carried out official publicity but also started localized fan marketing.

It is impossible for the official operation team to explicitly guide fans to support a member or a team, so the task of guiding many fans to vote and compete for a member is naturally handed over to the opinion leaders of each fan club. Therefore, SNH48 operation team has strengthened the communication and exchange with the opinion leaders of the fan circle (such as the president of the support association), Provide resources for these fan club members to consolidate their position as opinion leaders for secondary communication. These resources first include information resources. The operation team will provide the opinion leaders with the latest or exclusive idol itinerary, graphic materials, election schedule and competition system, election war report, etc., and the opinion leaders will release the information on their behalf. Weibo's social groups that often release information become more active, and fans have more opportunities to learn about the dynamics of idols. Weibo can quickly start discussions and even instantly become a hot topic, integrating the SNH48 brand into the lives of fans all the time.

In addition, when holding the annual general election, the operation team also authorized some loyal fans to carry out momentum and canvassing activities, allowed them to open Taobao stores or crowdfunding projects with the theme of SNH48 annual general election, provided some promotional prizes, and raised funds from fans all over the country by selling virtual props or Internet crowdfunding. The fund-raising activities initiated by opinion leaders among fans have changed the general election from a sales behavior to a behavior of working together to support idols. The mutual encouragement among fans makes crowdfunding voting consumption regarded as a normal phenomenon. Fans consciously or unconsciously convey the values of normalization of idol consumption to others around them, So that fans burst

out unimaginable enthusiasm in the process of raising funds for idols.

The fan club has become the basis for the sustainable development of SNH48 as the idol of the training department, which is determined by the popular Weibo social communication mode in China. If the theater mode is the place where SNH48 grows, then the Weibo promotion mode is the amplifier and stabilizer after the development of SNH48. All brand marketing methods used by SNH48 team are to maintain loyal consumers like fans. These methods normalize the consumption habits of fans within the group and stimulate the consumption desire of fans internally through their own communication on Weibo social media. SNH48 has consolidated its position as an idol of the Japanese model for sustainable development in China, and Weibo has played a vital role in promoting idol culture by enthusiastically and actively sharing and publicizing the daily dynamics of idols in Weibo and attracting new fans.

Figure 3.2: Final Ranking of 2018 SNH48 Annual General Election

SNH48 GROUP第五届偶像年度人气总决选终报							
	队伍 (Team)	姓名 (Name)	得票数 (Votes)		队伍 (Team)	姓名 (Name)	得票数 (Votes)
NO. 01	SNH48 TEAM HII	李艺彤	402040.40	NO. 34	GNZ48 TEAM G	陈珂	23742.88
NO. 02	SNH48 TEAM NII	黄婷婷	276897.20	NO. 35	BEJ48 TEAM E	马玉灵	23495.14
NO. 03	SNH48 TEAM NII	冯薪朵	174020.18	NO. 36	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	唐莉佳	23293.72
NO. 04	SNH48 TEAM NII	陆婷	145963.66	NO. 37	BEJ48 TEAM E	陈倩楠	21830.38
NO. 05	SNH48 TEAM SII	莫寒	116283.52	NO. 38	BEJ48 TEAM J	黄恩茹	20970.48
NO. 06	SNH48 TEAM NII	赵粤	100522.08	NO. 39	BEJ48 TEAM B	胡晓慧	20498.88
NO. 07	SNH48 TEAM SII	许佳琪	91582.06	NO. 40	SNH48 TEAM SII	李宇琪	20228.46
NO. 08	SNH48 TEAM SII	戴萌	75186.42	NO. 41	SNH48 TEAM X	李钊	19207.06
NO. 09	SNH48 TEAM SII	钱蓓婷	69039.06	NO. 42	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	左婧媛	18471.98
NO. 10	SNH48 TEAM HII	林思意	65464.62	NO. 43	BEJ48 TEAM B	陈美君	17566.12
NO. 11	GNZ48 TEAM G	谢蕾蕾	61115.92	NO. 44	SNH48 TEAM HII	洪珮雲	17128.92
NO. 12	SNH48 TEAM SII	吴哲晗	59537.14	NO. 45	SNH48 TEAM X	徐诗琪	17005.54
NO. 13	SNH48 TEAM SII	孔肖吟	56029.90	NO. 46	SHY48 TEAM SIII	赵佳蕊	16916.00
NO. 14	BEJ48 TEAM E	苏杉杉	54696.94	NO. 47	BEJ48 TEAM B	青钰雯	16661.78
NO. 15	BEJ48 TEAM B	段艺璇	53190.64	NO. 48	SHY48 TEAM SIII	王诗蒙	16536.74
NO. 16	SNH48 TEAM SII	张语格	52339.94	NO. 49	SNH48 TEAM HII	沈梦瑶	16236.28
NO. 17	SNH48 TEAM SII	孙芮	47733.14	NO. 50	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	肖文铃	15440.72
NO. 18	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	郑丹妮	42798.84	NO. 51	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	卢静	15398.20
NO. 19	SNH48 TEAM X	宋昕冉	38662.76	NO. 52	SNH48 TEAM HII	许杨玉琢	15330.34
NO. 20	SNH48 TEAM X	张丹三	37827.82	NO. 53	BEJ48 TEAM J	王雨煊	15085.60
NO. 21	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	刘力菲	35577.08	NO. 54	SNH48 TEAM NII	谢妮	15041.66
NO. 22	SNH48 TEAM SII	徐子轩	35187.08	NO. 55	GNZ48 TEAM NIII	刘倩倩	14953.00
NO. 23	SNH48 TEAM X	杨冰怡	35141.76	NO. 56	SNH48 TEAM HII	孙珍妮	14840.56
NO. 24	SHY48 TEAM SIII	韩家乐	34627.68	NO. 57	BEJ48 TEAM E	李梓	14291.44
NO. 25	SNH48 TEAM NII	易嘉爱	31666.04	NO. 58	GNZ48 TEAM G	高源婧	14170.32
NO. 26	SNH48 TEAM HII	万丽娜	31610.80	NO. 59	BEJ48 TEAM B	刘姝贤	14146.32
NO. 27	SNH48 TEAM NII	张雨鑫	31594.78	NO. 60	BEJ48 TEAM J	葛司琪	14013.38
NO. 28	SNH48 TEAM HII	姜杉	29806.26	NO. 61	GNZ48 TEAM G	张琼予	13816.08
NO. 29	BEJ48 TEAM E	冯思佳	28616.90	NO. 62	SNH48 TEAM SII	蒋芸	13557.16
NO. 30	SNH48 TEAM SII	刘增艳	28561.76	NO. 63	SNH48 TEAM SII	袁雨桢	13314.54
NO. 31	SNH48 TEAM NII	张怡	27404.24	NO. 64	SNH48 TEAM X	祁静	12162.42
NO. 32	SNH48 TEAM HII	费沁源	27355.24	NO. 65	BEJ48 TEAM B	闫明筠	11145.12
NO. 33	BEJ48 TEAM J	张怀瑾	26994.08	NO. 66	BEJ48 TEAM B	胡丽芝	11008.38

@SNH48

Source: SNH48 Official Sina Weibo. (2018). Retrieved from

<https://weibo.com/u/2689280541>.

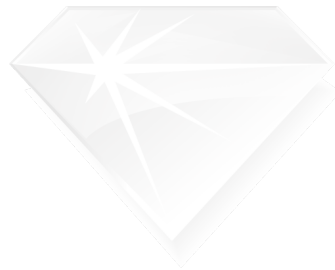
3.4 Validity of the Study

Based on the valid data of Weibo, as of the research date, the number of AKB48 official Weibo followers was 965,000, the number of SNH48 official Weibo followers was 9.259 million, the number of SNH48 super-topic discussions was 8.26 billion, the number of related posts was 167,000, and the number of fans active in Weibo for information sharing and publicity was about 270,000. Based on the long-term participatory observation, and data analysis of such large sample data, it provides sufficient validity for the textual analysis of the SNH48 media strategy.

3.5 Reliability of the Study

The official Weibo tracking number of SNH48 has surpassed the influence of AKB48 in China by nearly 10 times. They have been established for more than 10 years under the mutual promotion of new media and traditional media, and gradually become the largest women's idol group in China. It is one of the idol groups that cannot be surmounted in China at present. From the perspective of the communication effect, it provides me with reliability for the research results of the SNH48 media strategy. The so-called communication effect refers to the impact of mass communication on society and culture. The long-term and potential effect is that the audience, the media and the society interact with each other, which is independent and unified, restricting and promoting each other's development. The essential law of network group communication is consistent with that of traditional group communication. However, due to the changes in communication channels and communication environment, there are some particularities in some places, and the communication of communication groups is often restricted by geographical factors.

Due to the restrictions of communication channels and means, the communication within these groups is sometimes not smooth, while the group communication in the network exceeds the geographical restrictions. Various cross-regional communication means to provide effective and flexible channels for the communication of different types of groups, which helps to improve the frequency of group communication and also helps to expand the breadth and depth of communication.



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CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter reports findings of this study. It provides answers for the proposed research questions regarding mass media strategies used to promote Japanese idol culture in China, using Japanese musical groups (BNK48) and Chinese musical groups (SNH48), as a case study.

4.1 Findings on Research Question # 1

RQ # 1: What are mass media strategies used to promote Chinese idols (SNH48)?

Firstly, SNH48's exclusive theater "Xingmeng Theater" is one of the most important tools used for its brand communication, and it is also SNH48's self-satisfied "long-term relationship with existing potential customers and free media" and "listening and feedback". There is media. The Star Dream Theater, located in the National Music Industry Base, will hold 5-6 performances every week, and each performance can accommodate 340 spectators. These audiences come from Shanghai, surrounding cities and even further afield. Every performance has Independent theme and performance teams allow fans to watch idol performances with their own eyes. Through frequent performances and handshake meetings, we maintain uninterrupted communication and meetings with fans, attract new fans and audiences, and adhere to the principle of low ticket prices to ensure that loyal fans will not pay too much. The dual function of "solid fans" has gradually accumulated a huge number of fans and achieved considerable influence, which is the starting point for SNH48 to realize

the brand positioning of "face-to-face idols".

Secondly, in terms of Internet, the official website of SNH48 (<http://www.snh48.com>) is a tool for the organizers of the SNH48 open group to express their will and ideas, and to disclose group information, and has a special, authoritative and open nature. This website is responsible for the promotion of SNH48's brand image, information disclosure, news release, event announcement, album release, group member recommendation, variety show and video work display, ticket sales, peripheral sales, and dissemination of corporate culture. It is the way for fans to obtain official and accurate information only channel. In terms of localization, SNH48 does not follow AKB48's route of selling products through traditional distribution channels, but provides a channel for online shopping on the official website for fans who are used to online shopping. SNH48 fans do not need to visit the derivatives store in Shanghai. Just click the button on the official website to complete the purchase process. Although the sales channel is single-one, the conversion rate of sales is better than AKB48 due to the high degree of fan gathering and the high communication reach rate. Through promotions such as handshake coupons, voting coupons, and combination packages, SHN48's album sales have reached the level of domestic first-line stars, and the daily sales volume during the peak period can exceed 40,000 copies.

Thirdly, social network media is also the main gathering place for SNH48 fans. Fans can obtain the information released by them anytime and anywhere through SNH48's official Weibo and the personal Weibo of each member, and share the point of life with their idols. Bit by bit, let idols interact with fans at zero distance, and gather idol popularity. Compared with other celebrities' Weibo, SNH48's Weibo has a

larger proportion of life and interesting information. A more typical story is the story of TEAM NII member Li Yitong. Li Yitong, who used to be a substitute, did not have many opportunities to participate in performances or handshake meetings. She released a number of very interesting original graphic sketches through Weibo, making fun of SNH48's The daily training life and performance costumes have made it popular on Sina Weibo and recognized by more people. The number of registered fans on Weibo has quickly reached 600,000, and he has found a new way to win the love of fans. In the end, he was elected sixth in the SNH48 general election, and got the opportunity to participate in and shoot the MV.

4.2 Findings on Research Question # 2

RQ # 2: Do the mass media strategies used to promote SNH48 differ from those used to promote AKB48?

In the early stage of team creation, SNH48 focused on brand cooperation and communication. Faced with increasingly fierce competition, idol stars have sprung up, and no newly formed group can quickly open up the market. Therefore, it is a smart choice to find a partner who has the same goal and can learn from each other to develop the market and spread the brand together. The first batch of fans of SNH48 all came from the attention of the AKB48 group. Kiran, the project director of Guangdong District of Siba Culture, mentioned that "for fans, whether SNH48 or AKB48, it represents a high-quality girl group. Fans are not limited to their love for a certain member, but are more keen on the introduction of new members, just like paying attention to the new styles launched by a certain clothing brand."

In the early days of the team's establishment, SNH48 used the method of event marketing communication. The operation team of SNH48 attracts the attention of the media, the public and fans by producing and organizing various news-worthy events, thereby increasing the exposure of emerging girl groups. In January 2014, SNH48 Ju Jingyi was selected by the Japanese media as "China's No. 1 Beauty in 4000 Years", saying that her beauty surpassed that of Japan's No. 1 beauty Mai Shiraishi, thus gaining the attention of Japanese netizens, and believed that the general "face of the SNH48 group" Value" far exceeds AKB48. Such a high evaluation has made many Chinese netizens have a strong interest in the emerging group SNH48. Domestic mainstream media followed up with reports, the topic spread widely, and successfully created the image of China's first beauty. The event ranked 6th on Baidu's Top Events TOP list, ranked 1st on Sina Weibo's real-time list, and ranked in the top 10 on Sina Weibo's daily and weekly lists. Ju Jingyi's Baidu Index rose to 320,000, the SNH48 Baidu Index rose to a maximum of 65,000, and the media index exceeded 220.

4.3 Conclusions

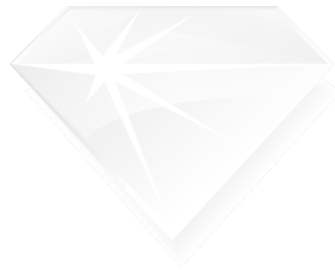
The media and entertainment industry is a sunrise industry in the current economic development. It has shown a vigorous and upward development trend since its emergence and development. The improvement of material life has made people's pursuit of spiritual entertainment continue to increase. The existence of entertainment idols satisfies people's imagination of perfection and enriches people's entertainment life. economic and cultural aspects. The development history of Chinese entertainment idols is not long, but from the 1980s when entertainment idols entered

people's attention to the explosive development in 2005 to today's blowout of hundreds of flowers, in just a few decades, my country's entertainment idols have shaped the industry. It has achieved leapfrog development from scratch, which shows that the market potential of entertainment idols cannot be underestimated.

In terms of the entertainment idol shaping operation mechanism, the Japanese and Korean entertainment idol shaping operation mechanism provides many good model cases and meaningful experience references for the development of my country's entertainment idol shaping industry. Their entire set of idol shaping models and means of communication are worth our visit. Research and mining, this article summarizes the different ways they have adopted in entertainment idol shaping and marketing, and analyzes three important aspects of content, audience and channels in the communication process from the perspective of integration. The shaping of entertainment idols has the guiding role of getting twice the result with half the effort, which is conducive to maximizing the use of the resources of the brokerage company and helping decision makers to make the most sensible decisions. Integrate the long-term experience of Chinese and foreign entertainment idol shaping industry with modern integrated communication ideas, while taking into account my country's national conditions, with theory as the fulcrum, case as the support, the two are combined, and at the same time, the current problems in entertainment idol shaping are analyzed. and suggestions, and pointed out the future development trend of entertainment idol shaping, so as to summarize a road that can effectively use integrated communication to shape entertainment idols in my country.

In today's society, entertainment idols have become a part of people's lives, and their influence has been deeply imprinted on all aspects of social life. People's

attitudes towards entertainment idols have gradually changed, from passers-by to fans, from fans. To passers-by, behind this free change of identity is the awakening of people's consumer mentality and the change of values. In this case, the entertainment idol shaping industry also needs to have a new thinking change, and use this to meet new development and challenge.



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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses research findings. It also presents limitations of the study, together with recommendation for further applications, and recommendation for future research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

Japanese idol culture is gradually shaped with the development of social economy and culture. Although China does not regard "idols" as a professional category like Japan, the "idols" in domestic popular culture are also changing with the changes of social culture.

During the period from the founding of the people's Republic of China to the cultural revolution, China was in a state of high political and cultural unity, and heroism and collectivism were the dominant social ideas. Therefore, under the leadership of the state, the cultural form of "Lei Feng" heroic model and model drama became the "spiritual enjoyment" of national unity. After the reform and opening up, with the economic progress and the popularity of television, social and cultural forms began to develop towards diversification. The people also have the material basis of cultural consumption. Pop singers and film and television actors who have been promoted by commercial packaging and media have become the new respected objects of the public. After entering the new century, grassroots culture has become increasingly powerful. A large number of talented shows with the participation of "short message voting" have emerged, giving birth to a number of "civilian idols".

Since this period, the great role of fans has begun to appear. They are not only capable of chasing stars, but also capable of making stars. However, what has really changed the core of Chinese fan groups is the development of social platforms led by "Weibo". Fans of draft idols mostly build momentum for players and improve the ranking of the competition during the season, which is still a way to follow the official pace. After the rise of Weibo, the omnipresent power of fans has changed the status and relationship between idols and fans, and made it possible for nurturing idols such as SNH48 to exist and become popular.

5.2 Discussions

Findings of this study lead to discussion for the following issues.

5.2.1 Development of Girl Groups

With the advent of the era of individuation, young groups gather together with common interests and emotional experience as a link, and a new group order is gradually established in the long-term common emotional experience.

The development of the Internet, especially with the emergence of new media, has broken the boundaries between the virtual and the real between idols and fans, and fans and fans. "Nurtured" idols emphasize the mutual growth of idols and fans, "two-way". "Interaction" is enhanced.

As the largest female idol group in China, SNH48 takes "face-to-face idols" as its operating philosophy. With its unique ecosystem, SNH48 has formed a closed circle based on theater and with high fan participation. The online community platform provides a new way for fans to interact. Fans find a fulcrum attached to the group in the interaction, thus building their identity.

5.2.2 Localized Transformation of SNH48

On the basis of the establishment and operation of AKB48's multinational overseas groups, SNH48 has carried out a series of localized transformations to enable it to take root in the domestic cultural context. The internal motivation is: SNH48 provides products with high entertainment value make. Different from other grassroots idol groups in China, SNH48 has the advantage from the beginning that it has the AKB48 Daqu library, and has a complete and mature business model. Combined with China's localization transformation, it has been adjusted to meet the aesthetics of domestic audiences. Production, choreography, and personal styling all take a very short time, but can present a high-level performance. The time saved allows SNH48 members to engage in fan interaction, various theater performances, concerts, program recordings or magazine shoots And so on to work.

SNH48 gives people an irreplaceable up-close experience. In the past, celebrities could only be seen on TV. Now, as long as you can see those idols at low cost through the Internet or small theaters, fans can feel the charm in the most intuitive way. The effect of this direct impression is that of print media. Propaganda is difficult to achieve, and once accepted, such a consumer impression is difficult to be replaced.

SNH48 gives people the feeling of being served by idols. The popularity of SNH48 is derived from the. From the direct experience that can be seen and felt, people can easily start to project their expectations and fantasies onto these idols, and finally even put themselves Tie tightly to the idol. The handshake meeting is not an evil promotion, but in the eyes of fans, it is a full benefit.

SNH48 gives people the feeling of "sympathetic consumption". The script setting of SNH48's development game can be said to be "a story of a group of girls who continue to hone their strength through theater performances and finally develop towards the entertainment industry". After the members of SNH48 pass the selection, they will have the opportunity to stand on the stage of the theater. Every day the changes are seen by fans. In the process of SNH48 brand dissemination, a large number of life details and pictures are provided. These pictures can easily evoke the memory of people's life, thus resonating and gaining recognition from people's hearts.

5.2.3 Sina Weibo as Powerful Promotion of Idol Culture

Sina Weibo is an important service social media platform for entertainment, life and information sharing in China. It was launched by sina.com in 2009. It is the Weibo product with the largest number of users in China. At present, Weibo, as a representative social platform in China, has an obvious tendency of Pan entertainment. According to the "2018 Weibo user development report", the entertainment section ranks first in Weibo's reading volume in the vertical field. At the same time, Weibo's influence is still expanding. In 2020, the total number of fans of entertainment stars increased to 16.7 billion, an increase of 3.9 billion compared with 2019. Compared with likes, the forwarding and comments of entertainment stars Weibo can directly participate in the life of stars account for 13.2% and 15.9%, The growth trend is obvious. In addition to the grassroots, weak censorship and open communication characteristics of microblog itself, it's functional setting also makes it the most important field for fans to shape and chase idols in China.

It can be seen from Weibo's basic function settings that Weibo has the highest degree of association and interaction with idols compared with social media such as WeChat, QQ and post-bar. Weibo is of great significance to idols. Weibo is more of its resident platform for public publicity and official speech. Under the effect of star Weibo, more fans join Weibo's content production and dissemination.

In Weibo Plaza, users can independently express their views, continuously produce content, and it is easy to find like-minded people and establish new social relationships. The key to the formation of fan community lies in the same interest preference and value orientation. The super topic marked by # also provides fans with an entrance to quickly browse the topics they are interested in and find partners with common interests. It not only aggregates and collects Weibo content related to the topic but also provides fans with an interactive discussion community. Through keyword search and online interaction, super topic has become a "virtual community" where fans gather, deepening the connection between fans.

On the other hand, Weibo platform has a powerful search engine diversion, which can not only make it easier for fans to obtain information, but also has its own hot search attribute. The increase of browsing and discussion energy can easily trigger the "hot search" function. If there is more topic and heat, it will become a unique group phenomenon, which will lead to network public opinion and get the attention of users other than fans. It has greatly increased the opportunities for the idols of the training department to come out of the circle and be noticed by the broad masses and the mass media. In this case, the idol producers of the training department often choose Weibo as the platform for publicity and promotion to set the agenda, create topics and drive the emotions of fans, so as to attract in-depth participation and

communication of fans. The leaderboard set by Weibo has become an important standard to measure the popularity of idols. The data makes the traffic visible. The ranking is affected by the number of fans, posts, reading, check-in and other aspects in the star Weibo and super voice. The higher the interaction, the greater the influence of idols, and the higher the ranking. The leaderboard settings of major leaderboards stimulate the behavior of fans to participate in the interaction spontaneously.

At present, Weibo has become the mainstream social platform with the most concentrated and active fans in China's social media. Whether analyzed from multiple perspectives such as user scale, function setting and user participation, Weibo is the best sample to study the fan group at present. Therefore, Weibo has become the main exhibition space for cultivating idols in China to accumulate fans and reverse detonate the attention of the public and the media, this proves the reliability of the research samples and data.

5.2.4 Positive Impact: Innovating Weibo's Information Dissemination Mode

The continuous growth and development of fan club culture in new media has innovated the technical means and modes of communication. In the Weibo era, the media of information communication changed from newspapers and television to mobile phones and computers, which greatly innovated the mode of communication and improved the speed of communication. Microblog has gradually become the preferred media for major platform activities to attract audiences and gather fans. The annual Star Awards, Golden Eagle Festival, tmall show and other important activities will open the microblog channel to vote. Fans vote for their favorite idols on the platform. The organizers of these activities choose popular stars through voting

to participate in the red carpet, backstage interview, stage performance and other links. Fans' participation in information dissemination enhances the interactivity of information dissemination. Information is no longer unilaterally output by the mainstream media and then transmitted to Internet users, but Internet users selectively absorb and give information their own imagination and creation. This makes the traditional one-way, single and authoritative communication of information change into two-way and interactive communication. People's absorption of information also changes from passive absorption to active acquisition and active creation.

5.2.5 Negative Impact: The Occupation of Weibo Public Space

With the pan entertainment characteristics of fan club culture, there is a large amount of crowding out of public space and excessive entertainment of Weibo environment. Weibo is more entertaining than today's headlines and other news search apps, and the expanding influence of fan culture intensifies the entertainment of the Weibo platform. For example, under Weibo released by Hunan TV's Spring Festival Gala list, fans' controlled-comment area and publicity of their idols can be seen everywhere. These unified comments are issued by fan leaders and praised by public fans, occupying the front row of Weibo comments. The behavior of "grabbing the front row" is a routine operation for fans to publicize idols, However, the result of these behaviors is that the staff of Hunan TV station can't see the real thoughts and feedback of netizens on the party. These fan behaviors make Weibo a public space occupied by a large number of people, and some netizens have a strong resistance to it. Weibo's Pan entertainment and idolization are becoming more and more serious, and the negative impact of fan club culture is gradually emerging.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

China's media resources are not as powerful as Japan's. The traditional entertainment industry is on the decline. The role of national media resources is increasingly limited; China has a vast territory. The radiation effect of small theatres and handshakes is smaller than that of Japan. The Chinese people have no idol culture foundation, and the fans who like small theatres and handshakes are not as many as AKB48. However, China's Internet industry is much stronger than that of Japan, both in terms of number and market value, which is far beyond the scale of the Japanese market. SNH48's localized media strategy has many characteristics of online marketing. In view of China's more developed network situation, the spread of the Internet is a layer of chips that SNH48 must add to reach a new height.

In the process of research, due to lack of academic ability, some regrets were left when writing: for example, the characteristics of SNH48 fan group could not be deeply analyzed; Failed to analyze the difference between traditional stars and formative stars in different media strategies; The number of observation samples is too small. Because we are in it, we pay more attention to the exploration of the group's famous members and fans; Although it is a case study, it failed to analyze in detail the media strategy of the same type of idol groups that appeared in the later stage of our country, and raised the case to the classification study of our country's idol factions.

5.4 Recommendation for Further Application

Findings of the study provides useful implications for communication strategists. Firstly, in terms of the operational mechanism of entertainment idol

development, Japan and South Korea have provided numerous best practices and meaningful strategic references for improving business of entertainment idol development. Their idol-development models and communication methods are worth studying and exploring. Secondly, this article is based on a summary of the different ways they have adopted in developing and marketing entertainment idols, and analyzes the three important elements in the communication process – message (content), channel, and receiver. The mass media strategy has an integral role in shaping entertainment idols, which is conducive to maximizing the utilization of the resources of brokerage companies and helping decision-makers make the wisest decisions.

They also yield beneficial implications for brand managers such that they should integrate the long-term experiences of the Chinese and foreign entertainment idol-development industry with suitable communication and media strategies, while taking into account China's national conditions. By combining the two elements -- theory as the fulcrum and case studies as support, brand managers would be able to enhance the effectiveness of their media communication efforts. In addition, findings of this study will not only allow brand managers to identify the problems that arise in the current entertainment idol development, and to point out the future trend of entertainment idol development, but also to suggest a path that can effectively utilize integrated communication to shape entertainment idols in China or other countries with similar mechanism.

As for consumers or fans of any idols, the findings provide insightful understanding on how particular idol agencies use mass media strategy to cultivate idol culture and to connect with their fans.

5.5 Recommendation for Further Research

SNH48's "face-to-face idol" formative star making model and media strategy are no better or worse than those created by traditional methods. They are aimed at different fan groups. Under the dominant culture and commercial interests, they must comply with the requirements of the times and build their own values in consumer society. The reason for taking SNH48 as the research object is not only because of the recognition of their communication strategies but also because in the era of male idol prevalence, it is hoped that more people can know a group of ordinary girls who have their own life, attitudes, dreams and pursuits. The trend of pop culture is always changing. The chaos of star idols such as "derailment", "drug abuse" and "gossip" is frequent, which makes the public gradually lose their favor with star idols.

However, the spiritual pursuit of the Chinese people is constant. What the Chinese people advocate is the socialist core values after all. Only by conforming to this core value, spreading correct ideas and guiding the development of idol stars with this concept, can the cultivation and tradition be consistent in the long history.

It would be beneficial to carry out media strategy research related to idol culture in other countries with differing cultural values such as U.S.A., European countries, Middle East countries in the future.

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