

Person or Product? Made-To-Order K-Pop Celebrities as Products

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Abstract

Audiences usually expect artists to express themselves in order to create an original piece of art. Artists who are perceived to adapt their artistic expression to achieve commercial success are often accused of selling out and may lose their value and authenticity. However, this does not seem to apply in the context of Korean pop music (K-Pop). These artists/celebrities are managed by entertainment companies via intensive training to meet audience expectations; nevertheless, K-Pop fans remain supportive. How do audiences still like K-pop celebrities when their firms clearly present these celebrities as made-to-order? A mix of five qualitative approaches revealed that fans perceive a K-Pop celebrity as a person and a product simultaneously, thanks to several managerial strategies. These strategies seem to make audiences appreciate the product part of the celebrity's identity that is tailored to their needs. This study contributes to the literature on customer-centric approaches, human branding, and objectification.

Subject Areas: *Consumer Behaviour, Entertainment Marketing, Marketing Strategy*

Track: Consumer Behaviour