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Fan Participation in the Age of Social Media – the Case of Kris Wu's Fan Group

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore how fans use social media to participate in activities related to the idol, and what is the level of participation of different fans in the fan group. This thesis used qualitative research methods – online observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews to collect the empirical data, through focusing on the fan group of Kris Wu. The theories of Jenkins and Carpentier are also applied to explore and describe the participatory practices of fans. By employing the theory of Jenkin’s participatory culture to the first part of the analysis, the research results show that for the fans, social media plays an important role in their participation, providing fans with a new environment to communicate and organize activities. Fan activities can be categorized into three major types: online consumption behaviors, fan text productions, and online supporting activities. By applying the political and critical approach of participation, as well as Carpentier’s four-level analytical model to the second part of the analysis, this study finds that there are three sub-processes related to online fan communities – the management subprocess, the activity organization subprocess, and the subprocess of text production and distribution. In each fan group, there are four different roles of fans – leaders, creators, supporters, and less active fans. Besides, through analyzing the identities and decision-making moments, it can be said that although each fan is relatively equal in the whole participatory process, there are still certain power relations between each role of fans, especially in the process of fan group management.

Keywords: fans, fandom, online fan groups, participatory culture, fan practices, participation, participatory intensity, power relations, decision-making, social media, Weibo.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Landscape of Fandom

What do fans mean? According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a fan simply means “A person who has a strong interest in or admiration for a particular person or thing” (Oxford Dictionaries | English, 2019). From Wikipedia, there is a more general and popular definition – “a fan is a person who has a unique preference for a specific person or thing, such as a singer, a sport team, a book or a movie, and fans devote time and money to it” (En.wikipedia.org, 2018). In cyberspace, fans are defined as individuals “with a relatively deep positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous” (Duffet, 2013, p.18) making use of digital tools and communication technologies to create, share, discuss, or otherwise respond to a public performance or figure including, such as music and musicians, literature, sports and athletes, as well as film and actors. Collectively, the fans of a particular object or person constitute their fanbase or fandom. Fans and fan practices naturally precede the digital network society, for instance, the records show that the behaviors and contribution of enthusiastic and influential readers of literature in the 18th century European, as well as members of Brothers Baseball Club in the mid-19th century of America (Cavicchi, 1998, pp.4–5). However, in the digital era, fans and fan practices have changed compared with the past, which has been brought to the greater attention of the public and scholars, like the influential work of fan studies scholar Henry Jenkins.

Recent developments in media technology, particularly in the field of popular media suggest a shift towards growing initiative, participation, and interactivity in audience practices. This shift resonates with a growing interest towards fan practices and online fan communities as a new kind of participatory culture. Fans have even been considered as the pioneers of future audiences, (Jenkins, 2004) predicting transformation in audience practices -- something that might be referred to as the fanification of audiences. Early fans were passive, and they could only follow the idol created by mass media, like buying CDs and posters or voting for idols through messages. But with the development of the Internet and new media technologies, contemporary studies of fandom eschew earlier accounts of fans as the “ignorant, fanatical dupes” of commercial marketing and manipulative media representations (Jenkins, 2006a). Fans are no longer satisfied with merely absorbing and receiving the information conveyed

by traditional media. Instead, they have become participants, producers, communicators in the development of the idol.

Fandom seems to be at the very heart of media change, embodying the technological development seen now in the use of social media by fans thus possibly reshaping audience practices more widely. As we all know, social media plays an important role in expanding opportunities for fan practices and enhancing the cohesion of fan groups. On the one hand, social media empowers fans to participate in public discussion, facilitating a more engaging experience for contemporary media audiences (Vann, 2014). For example, individual fans engage in online spaces, including those that can be creative, promotional, controversial, adversarial, or profitable. On the other hand, as local supporters and global fans coexist, social media contributes to an internationalized virtual community for fans (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2014). More specifically, online communities create an interactive social space which yields enactment of social identity and formation of fan culture. Moreover, social media can help strengthen the connection between fans and promote the group identification (Sanderson, 2013).

Through social media, fans can interact and communicate with each other at anytime, anywhere. It can be said that the Internet has accelerated the direct participation of fans. The participation of fans has brought more and more profound influences on the social economy, the mass culture industry, and the social atmosphere. Therefore, this study focuses on the practices of fans on social media, that is, online fan practices. In addition, as online fans become influential, a growing number of researchers have focused on the communal aspect of online fans and have made an attempt to address the question of how to develop and manage fandom (Théberge, 2006). Specifically, some research has provided support for online fan communities' ability to engage, collaborate, and build a strong relationship with the idol and other fan community members as well (Han et al., 2014). But apart from cooperation and participation, is there a hierarchy between fans in the online fan community? In order to explore the participatory intensity of fans, the online fan communities are also being focused in this study.

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

Based on the participatory culture and Carpentier's analytical model, this study aims to explore the participatory practices of fans on social media and the participatory intensity of fans by focusing on the fandom of Kris Wu (a Chinese-Canadian singer). The varieties and multiple power relations of fan practices are being highlighted when tracing down the participation process of the fan group, thus revealing the institutional and technological spaces of shaping the pleasures of media consumption. In China, Sina Weibo possesses similar features and functions as Twitter, connecting fans and forming fan communities in a microblogging platform. The fan groups value the importance of building communities, making Sina Weibo an ideal vehicle for analysis. Therefore, this study mainly pays attention to fan engagement on Weibo. With the emergence of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2013), fandoms have been able to participate in many activities in relation to their idol. Instead of the traditional split of fan identity between the 'good' fan-producers and the 'bad' fan-consumers (Hills, 2002, p.27), the intriguing new role of 'prosumers' that integrates fan production, fan promotion, and fan consumption all in one. An examination of the process of fan practices will help us to deeply study the decision-making moments and the power relationship between fans in the fan group. Some questions I want to raise are: how do fans participate in idol related activities through social media? What are their online activities? What is the level of participation of fans in these online activities? Is there a hierarchy in the fan group? Based on these proposed questions, I developed two research questions that this study wants to explore.

Research questions:

RQ1: In what ways do fans use social media in relation to the idol?

RQ2: What is the participatory intensity of different fans in the fan group?

Through the first research question, I want to make a description of what kinds of activities related to the idol are organized by fans and fan groups online on social media. And the answer to the first research question can certify that social media play a pivotal part in fan practices. The 'participatory intensity' in the second research question refers to the hierarchy in the fan group as well as the differentiation and equalization of power relations between fans in the decision-making processes. By analyzing the process of fan participation, the purpose of the second research question is to find out the identities

of different roles of fans, and how these identities function in the participatory process, as well as to identify the decision-making moments and the power relations in the fan group, based on the analytical model developed by Carpentier (2016).

1.3 Motivation and Contribution

This study is motivated by Henry Jenkins' studies on participatory culture, especially his work on fan culture, as well as Carpentier's studies on participation. It cannot be denied that the development of the Internet and new media technologies has brought about some negative effects, such as Internet violence while promoting the development of fan culture. In order to protect their idols, fans will battle with other people vehemently online, which causes the instability of the online society. However, we must recognize that fan groups are representatives of subcultures, and they play an important role in the process of cultural development. Jenkins (2006a) has traced the process by which fans learned how to use new media resources to increase their visibility and expand their influence over popular culture. Carpentier's (2016) political and critical approach of participation functions as a guide for power analysis, and as the saying goes, where there is an organization, there is a power relationship. Hence, we should take a critical perspective on the power relationship between fans in the fan group. In addition, for myself, I often follow some entertainment news of fans and idols in social media (like Weibo), and there are always some interesting and crazy things happening to them, so I get this inspiration to do this research.

I hope this research can contribute to the following four aspects. Firstly, it can add new and updated empirical case studies for the study of fan practices in the era of social media. The second contribution is that this study explores the participatory intensity of fans in the fan group, which can help to extend the traditional study range and enrich the previous studies involving these aspects. Thirdly, this thesis uses both cultural theory and critical theory to analyze the research questions. Lastly, the careful dissection of the process of fan practices could provide the fans with guidance to cultivate their taste, generating a healthy thriving for fan culture in social media. The well-developed fan culture, in turn, can be conducive to society and contribute to cultural diversity.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis includes seven chapters. The thesis begins with a brief introduction of the whole landscape of fan culture with the development of Internet and media, aims and research questions, motivation, and contribution as well as the outline of the thesis.

In chapter two, some background knowledge, like the context of Chinese fandom, the introduction of Weibo and the Fandom of Kris Wu, will be introduced, which can help to gain a better understanding of this study.

In Chapter three, the literature review is presented in great detail covering a comprehensive review of previous researches on fans or fan culture, which contains four parts: fans and fandom, the identity of fans; the role of social media on fandom, as well as fandom and participation.

Chapter four presents the theoretical framework of this thesis. It starts with the introduction of participatory culture: the definition, the characteristics, and the application. Then, the contents of Carpentier's participation theory are elaborated.

Chapter five elucidates the research methodology, discussing the method of data collection: online observation and in-depth interviews, the method of data analysis (qualitative content analysis) and other relevant ingredients.

Chapter six demonstrates the analysis and results based on the collected materials from online observation and interviews. The first part of the analysis describes the types of fan practices and the behaviors of fans on social media. Then in the second part of the analysis, the participatory intensity of fans in the fan group will be analyzed.

Lastly, in chapter seven, the conclusion and discussion are reached, which refers to the research outcomes and main findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

2. Background

2.1 The Context of Chinese Fandom

As early as the 1980s and 1990s, with the reform and opening up, China's spiritual and cultural undertakings also had new developments, and the fan culture began to emerge. In 2005, the fans of Super Girls (a Chinese talent show) represented a milestone for fan culture development in China (Yang, 2009). The special way of making a star and the cultivation of the fans was unprecedented, leading the fans of Super Girls to follow their idols passionately and even exhibit certain wild and fanatical behaviors. Before that time, even though fan culture continuously developed and slowly expanded, it failed to draw much attention from the public (Yang, 2009). But this talent show stimulated the enthusiasm of the fans whose potential and influence began to loom large. Since then, China's fan culture has begun to develop, and the ways of fans following their idols have broken the boundaries between traditional media and the real world (Chen, 2015). At the same time, the Korean culture spread into China, and the Korean idols represented by “TVXQ” and “Big Bang” attracted a large number of Chinese fans who formed the fan group of the idol (Chen, 2015).

As entertainment and popular culture proliferate across the Chinese media landscape, fandom has become quite a relevant and prevalent phenomenon in contemporary China, with fan objects ranging from popular singers, movie stars, and sportsmen to film franchises, and video games (Zhang and Mao, 2013). The online space supported by Web 2.0 technologies not only provides a space for these fans to gather and interact, but also facilitates new ways to conduct the activities that the fans enjoy doing together. China has witnessed a rapid proliferation of online fan communities in recent years. Social media in China, such as BBS, blogs, Weibo, have offered numerous channels and various platforms for Chinese citizens to participate in cultural practices in pursuit of all kinds of idols. Taking Weibo as an example, Weibo has become a popular platform for fans to gather because of its features of timeliness and interactivity. Fans support their idols by posting and commenting on the content of their favorite idols on Weibo.

K-pop and its participatory culture have spread quickly among fans all over the world, boosted by social media. K-pop refers to a particular genre of Korean pop music that is

widely known for its boy/girl bands ('idols') and their signature dance performances and music videos (Yoon, 2019). In recent years, Chinese fan culture is greatly influenced by K-pop fan culture. For example, the supporting culture, voting culture and chart beating (*da bang*) culture of Korean fan culture are popular in Chinese fan culture. Supporting culture refers to the culture formed by fans supporting their idols; voting culture means the ways in which fans vote for their idols; and chart beating (*da bang*) culture refers to the actions taken by fans to make their idol's songs perform well on Korean music charts and Korean music programs when the idol releases new songs (Chen, 2015). However, due to regional and cultural differences, Chinese fans cannot be officially organized like Korean local fans. According to Chen's (2015) interpretation of China's K-pop fan base, we know that Chinese fans rely on the spontaneous organization of fans, and the Internet provides an organization platform for fans. Before the popularity of the Internet, fans were a dispersed group. Only a small number of people in the common area can get together to discuss and exchange of idols information. However, with the emergence of the Internet, fans began to gather together through cyberspace to form an organic whole, which enables them to communicate and interact with each other across the limits of time and space.

In recent years, the power of fans has gained unprecedented development in China, and the fan groups of various idols have drawn more and more attention of the public.

2.2 Weibo – a Chinese Social Media Platform

2.2.1 What is Weibo?

Weibo, a Twitter-like microblogging service site launched in 2009, has become one of the most popular social media platforms in China (Miles and Zhang, 2012). The 42nd China Internet Development Statistics Report released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC) pointed out that by the end of June 2018, among all individual social media applications, the user scale of Weibo has exceeded 300 million, and the usage rate has reached 42.1%, which occupies an important position in the social field of netizens in China (China Internet Network Information Center, n.d.). In the online interaction process of many Weibo users, a large amount of information, comments, and other text information are continuously generated and disseminated,

which has a potential impact on the public's cognition, emotions, and even the development of society.

Weibo is a platform based on user relationships, which is used to share information, spread information and obtain information. The principle is: Users can write, publish and comment on messages that are publicly readable by everyone; everyone can follow everyone else without the consent of the other party and everyone is able to comment on any public message that is posted on the network. Weibo invited many stars and celebrities to join the microblogging at the beginning (Koetse, n.d.).

2.2.2 Differences between Weibo and Other Social Media

Many scholars have argued that Weibo as a virtual platform is different from other social media in facilitating online participation. As with Twitter, Weibo allows users to post a short message within a 140-character limit on its platform, although messages tend to be more informative and detailed than Twitter messages (You, 2013). That is, language differences allow each Weibo post to contain more information, given that each Chinese character represents a whole word while each English word contains many letters (Sullivan, 2013). Unlike Twitter, Weibo also allows users to include web links and emoticons or attach images, music, or video files to each of their posts, which enables more efficient and informative content sharing. More importantly, users can re-share content posted by other Weibo users. For example, users can take screenshots of the original posts or comments and publish them as images on Weibo, thus breaking the 140-character limit (You, 2013); what's more, the feature of Weibo -- "Chang Weibo" ("Long Weibo post") enables users to upload posts more than 140 characters along with photos. This feature transforms each Weibo post into magazine-like spreads. Viewers only need to click on the post once to view a post several pages in length. In addition to providing more information, Weibo users can directly add comments, pictures, and videos under in the comment section, which makes it easier to follow and participate in online discussions, as users can reply directly to the original post, which is open to the public (Sullivan, 2013). Anyone interested in the topic can reply to form a discussion around the original post. Furthermore, Weibo integrates a host of applications such as "Micro Topic" where users can join specific topic discussions in this area, and "Micro Group" which allows users to create their own "communities" (Java et al., 2007, p.1), recruiting microbloggers with common interests into this group.

Weibo's contribution is a huge public domain where anyone can post, forward and comment at any time. All these differences make Weibo a powerful tool for stimulating online participation.

2.2.3 Topic Discussion Community on Weibo

The topic discussion community on Weibo is a community of interest based on a sustainable discussion topic, usually formatted as "# topic content #", which can facilitate information exchange on selected topics of interest among members of the site. Each topic discussion community is composed of a specific topic, and the users of this community tend to have a common identity and purpose, where they feel a bond with the other members. Taking “# Kris Wu#” *topic discussion community* as an example, the theme of this community is “Kris Wu”, and the members of the community are all fans of Kris Wu. If you want to interact with people in the community, you must join this community. The way to join the community is simple. First, searching for the community you want to join "# topic content #" and clicking on "Follow"; then you can join the community. After joining the community, members can check in every day in the community, and they can communicate with other members by posting words/videos/pictures and making comments on the posts. Members of the community have different levels which are determined according to their level of activity in the community. For example, members who sign up in the community every day, publish posts or interact with other fans will have a higher level.

2.3 The Career of Kris Wu

Kris Wu is a Chinese-Canadian actor, singer, and model. He is a former member of South Korean-Chinese boy band EXO and its subgroup EXO-M under SM Entertainment from 2012 to 2014 (En.wikipedia.org, 2019). Kris Wu is active as a solo artist and actor in China, and he is one of the most popular idols across all Chinese communities. His career is reflected in the popularity of his songs. In November 2015, he released his first Chinese single “Bad Girl”, which opened his solo career. In November 2016, the first English single “July” was released, which officially launched his hip-hop music career. In October 2017, collaborating with American rapper Travis Scott, Kris released “Deserve” which placed No. 1 on the US iTunes chart (Billboard, 2019). In May 2018, the single “Like That” was ranked 73rd on the Billboard Hot 100, becoming the first Chinese singer to enter the Billboard Hot100 singles chart; on

November 2nd, the debut album “Antares” was officially released worldwide (Billboard, 2019). The significance of Kris Wu in China lies not only in the cool image as a hip pop singer, but also as a cultural icon, who has driven the development of Chinese hip-hop.

In addition to his musical achievements, Kris Wu also has participated in many films, which gradually opened up his popularity in China. For example, Kris Wu made his film debut in *Somewhere Only We Know*, which was released on February 14, 2015, and debuted at No.1 on the Chinese box office, grossing US\$37.81 million in six days following its release (“China Box Office,” n.d.). He then starred in his second film *Mr. Six* which was a box office hit, grossing over US\$137 million and becoming one of the highest-grossing films in China (Makinen, n.d.). Furthermore, he has endorsed many brands, such as Burberry (“Kris Wu, Previous EXO Member, Is Now a Burberry Menswear Model - Vogue,” n.d.), Mercedes-Benz (“Three-pointed star shines at Auto China 2016 - Business - Chinadaily.com.cn,” n.d.) and so on.

Therefore, it can be said that Kris Wu has an important role in the Chinese entertainment market.

3. Literature Review

The increase and expansion of fans have captured academic attention, generating a wide range of research and investigation on it. For a long time, the research on fan studies, especially in the field of media culture research, has occupied a very important position, and fan studies have been developed steadily under various research perspectives and theoretical frameworks (Bury, 2017; Gray et al., 2007; Hills, 2002; Jenkins, 1992; Reysen and Lloyd, 2012). Therefore, in this chapter, some dimensions of fan studies based on previous relevant research will be briefly presented. This chapter will start with a comprehensive review of the concept of fans, including the origin and meaning of the term ‘fans’, as well as three waves of fan studies. Then, the second section will discuss fan identification by interpreting the meaning of identity and the identification process of fans. The third part discusses with the development of the Internet and new media technologies, what are the changes in the fandom, especially how social media facilitates the fan life. In the fourth part, the topic will be further narrowed down to the studies of the participatory behavior of fans, by discussing the different meanings between participation and other concepts (access, interaction), as well as different types of fan participation. Finally, there is a summary of this chapter.

3.1 Fans and Fandom

The term “fan” first appeared in the late seventeenth-century England, and it is an abbreviated form of the word “fanatic” (a religious zealot) (Duffett, 2013, p.28), which is rooted in the Latin word “fanaticus”. It became significant in the United States a century later, where it was used by journalists to describe followers of professional sports teams (especially in baseball) and the passion of baseball spectators, but soon was expanded to incorporate any faithful “devotee” of sports or commercial entertainment (Jenkins, 2013, p.12).

Compared to popular representations of fans, the portrayal of fandom in early academic approaches was rooted in an almost exclusive emphasis on structure (Zhang and Mao, 2013). According to Linden and Linden in the book *Fans and Fan Cultures*, there exist a traditional view of fans as “others” which definitely holds a view of alienation for the concept (Linden and Linden, 2017, p.9). From the stereotypical conception of the fan, the term “fan” is assumed more negative connotations, “of religious and political zealotry, false beliefs, orgiastic excess, possession, and madness” (Jenkins, 2013, p.12).

Based on the term's traditional association with madness and demonic possession, fans used to be represented by the mass media as obsessed, deviant, and dangerously fanatic. However, with the further development of research and the emotional investment of scholars within the fan community, the perceptions of fans have changed a lot. In the book *Understanding Popular Culture*, John Fiske (1989, p.173) defines "fans" as excessive readers, and he believes that fans' behaviors are usually active, fanatical, and participatory. Fans actively pay attention to and accept media contents in a participatory manner, and participate in media activities by giving them meanings, so as to produce media texts (Fiske, 1992). Also, Henry Jenkins in the book *Textual Poachers*, rejecting fans as cultural dupes, social misfits, mindless consumers, and passive victims of showbiz exploitation, perceives fans as "active producers and manipulators of meanings" (Jenkins, 2013, p.23).

According to Gray, Sandvoss, and Harrington (2007) in *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, the study of fandom can be contextualized across three distinct "waves" since the 1980s.

The first wave of fan studies was inspired by Michel de Certeau's (1984) distinction between the strategies of the powerful and the tactics of the disempowered. John Fiske's work on popular culture and fandom (1989, 1992) provided a useful starting point and an overall paradigm. Fiske's emphasis is on resistant readings and construction of the popular from the grassroots and audiences' guerilla-style tactics of constructing meanings, fan communities, and, thus, sub-cultural resistance to the dominant culture. The research in this period was critical of capitalist ideology, but still regarded "fans" as "others" (Gray et al., 2007, p.3), and did not discuss fans from the perspective of fans themselves. The early phase of fan studies "constituted a purposeful political intervention that sided with the tactics of an audience in their evasion of dominant ideologies, and that set out to rigorously defend fan communities against their ridicule in the mass media and by nonfans" (Gray et al., 2007, p. 2). The subsequent work, like Jenkins' (1992) *Textual Poachers* which explores the relationship between fan consumption and the media, allowed fans to speak of and for themselves and was written by those inside respective fan cultures, and the rhetorical defense of fans by some first-generation fan scholars left media and cultural studies with considerable

baggage (Gray et al., 2007, p. 3). This stage of fan studies is referred to as “fandom is beautiful” phrase (Gray et al., 2007, p. 3).

The second phase was a response to the spread of new media and new forms of fan culture in the 1990s. The fan as a specialized yet dedicated consumer has become a centerpiece of media industries’ marketing strategies (Gray et al., 2007, p. 3). In this stage, the researchers focused on the hierarchical concept of society and culture in the fan culture, and the choice of fan objects and practices of fan consumption were constructed by their habits, which also reflected people’s social, cultural and economic capital (Gray et al., 2007, p. 6). Henry Jenkins (1992), in his book *Textual Poachers*, used the ethnographic research method to explore the complex relationship between media fan groups and capitalist consumer society, cultural practices and mass media, thus playing a key role in constructing the theoretical discourse of fan culture research. Furthermore, in this phase scholars often focused on the fans’ construction of identities through their insertion into fan communities (Harris and Alexander, 1998). Through their identification with fan objects, people helped to define themselves.

Due to the popularity of the Internet, scholars of the third phase of fan studies began to expand their research horizons to the fan groups formed in the online community, focusing on the purpose of the practices of fans and the reasons for the fascination. In this phase, the studies of fans and fan objects expanded from looking at individual tastes and participation and examination of fan objects to “investigation of fandom as part of the fabric of our everyday lives” (Gray et al., 2007, p. 9). These fan studies aimed “to capture fundamental insights into modern life” (Gray et al., 2007, p. 9). Thus, studies have broadened the analytic scope to a wide range of different audiences reflecting fandom’s growing cultural currency (Hills, 2002).

3.2 Fan Identification

Most of the research on fan identification is the study of fan identity and group identity. In general, group-based identity and person-based identity influence the individual’s everyday communication and interaction. Our awareness of our group membership identity and personal identity stems primarily from the internalization of the viewpoints of others around us (Mead, 1955). The core processes of individuals’ reflective self-conceptions are formed via symbolic communication with others (McCall and

Simmons, 1978). We are able to acquire our generalized views of ourselves and others as well as particular ways of considering ourselves and others in various situations through communication with others. According to Tajfel and his associates (Tajfel and Turner, 1986), we know that identity has two meanings: individual and social, and social identities refer to an individual's conceptualizations of the self that derives from memberships in emotionally significant categories or groups. Personal identities, on the other hand, refer to an individual's self-conception defining the individual compared with others.

In the fan community, the identification of fans is a complex process, which does not lead to the "abolition" of their personality (Courbet and Fourquet-Courbet, 2014, p.277), but rather enables them to take on additional roles related to their identity, which they can emphasize in certain situations in order to stand out from their immediate circle or to affiliate themselves with a peer group (other fans). Two main processes are developed by fans in constructing their identities (Reysen and Lloyd, 2012). First, the individual forms a social identity as a member of a group of fans who like the same celebrity. After becoming a member of the fan community, fans gained a sense of identity by sharing a unique set of concepts, symbols, meanings and values of their idol. In fan groups, social identity can also be understood as "group identity" (Courbet and Fourquet-Courbet, 2014, p.277). Second, within the fan group, individuals feel that they are unique individuals who are different from other fans. Fans constantly recognize themselves and discover themselves in the fan group, and at the same time, they are shaping their own groups through various behaviors. From 'not being a fan' to 'becoming a fan', fans are more appreciative about the charm of idol personality, which is the recognition of the external image and inner charm of idols. The process by which fans generate this mentality is also the construction and creation of their self-identity (Courbet and Fourquet-Courbet, 2014). Self-identity is used to distinguish the uniqueness of individuals, and group identity is a process in which individuals find commonness with others.

3.3 Fandom and Social Media

In the new media era, fan culture has also changed. Postman (Postman, 1970 in Scolari, 2012, p.205) defined media ecology as "the study of media as environment", which means that media create an environment that surrounds the individual and shapes their

perception, cognition and behavior. Based on the definition of media ecology, we can see that in the fan studies, the rapid adoption of a new generation of ICTs such as social media, in recent years has served to expand participatory culture, in part, by creating multiple, visible entry points into fandom (Bury, 2017). Fandom, according to Jenkins, “is everywhere and all the time, a central part of the everyday lives of consumers operating within a networked society’ (Jenkins, 2007, p.361). And Jenkins (2007) calls attention to the fact that fans are usually early adopters of new technologies, which means that they are important trendsetters and drivers of popular culture. Therefore, it should not be surprising that fans are prolific users of social media.

A number of studies have been conducted on the use of social media of fans (McCarthy et al., 2014). According to Carr and Hayes (2015), social media refers to “Internet-based channels that allow users to opportunistically interact and selectively self-present, either in real-time or asynchronously, with both broad and narrow audiences who derive value from user-generated content and the perception of interaction with others” (p.50). As interactions on social media are not restricted to temporal and geographic limitations, social media has fostered substantial changes to communication between fans as well as fans and idols (Hoeber et al., 2016). First, the popularity and development of the Internet have made it possible for fans to gather into groups online. Fans spontaneously establish virtual communities for communication, and fans share information and communicate with each other in the virtual communities. Twitter provides fans a unique opportunity to discuss their interested topic online (Vann, 2014). Serving as an extension to the formally mediated narrative delivered by the television screen, social media increases efficacy to cope with problems via writing and expressing feelings with kindred spirits. Consequently, the user-generated content on Twitter makes it an important information source pertaining to public opinion and online interactions (Hoeber et al., 2016). Furthermore, through social media, fans have more opportunities to interact and communicate with the idol. For example, fans used the microblogging services (Twitter, Weibo) to follow their favorite television series, actors and/or showrunners as well as other fans and to check official and unofficial hashtags during a live broadcast (Bury, 2017, p.637), and fans can also make comments and give ‘likes’ for their idol’s posts. In addition, celebrities and their publicists now often use social media platforms to promote and protect the celebrity brand. They do so by providing ‘fresh’ celebrity news/images and countering gossip or scandal and establishing the

semblance of a direct relationship with their fans. ‘Celebrity tweets’, for example, are typically written in the first person, creating the impression that they are personal communications between celebrities and their followers. Such tweets are “regularly cited in newspaper articles and blogs as ‘official’ statements from the celebrity himself/herself” (Jeffreys and Xu, 2017, p.246).

3.4 Fans and Participation

Before discussing the participatory behaviors of fans, the definition of participation should be elaborated. ‘Participation’ is distinct from ‘interactivity’ in that “we participate in something; we interact with something” (Jenkins et al., 2016, p.12). Carpentier (2011) defines the concept of participation by discussing it in relation to access and interaction, two concepts which are often mistaken as participation. Access and interaction are fundamental in the participation process however it is important to distinguish them from each other. Access is needed for both interaction and participation to take place, but individuals can interact with each other or with media devices without participating in anything. The concepts of access and interaction are less related to power (meaning influence or decision-making). Carpentier (2011) describes that “Access become articulated as presence, which implies achieving presence to technology or media content” (p.129). While interaction is seen as the construction of socio-communicative relationships, and participation is linked to power and decision-making (Carpentier, 2011, p.130).

The participation behavior of fans not only satisfies the needs of individual fans for pleasure, self-identity and group ownership but also promotes the development of the cultural industry. After reading the relevant literature, I found that the participation behaviors of fans can be divided into different types. On one hand, all fan behaviors can be regarded as consumption of specific content and media forms. Hills (2002) emphasizes that consumer culture is closely related to the phenomenon of fans, and fans always have the identity of active consumers constantly engaged in material consumption activities connected to direct products (e.g., music albums, DVDs, and concert tickets) and derivative commodities (e.g., tie-in commercial goods and star-represented brands). On the other hand, the consumption of fans is also a kind of production and their access to the media and the interpretation of media information are also productive behaviors. Fiske (1992) affirmed the productivity of fans and

pointed out that the fan group has formed a "shadow cultural economy" (p.30), which has many similarities with the mainstream and official cultural economy. Jenkins (2006b) believes that the ordinary consumers and fans are becoming increasingly active participants in the production and dissemination of culture in the digital age, and it is precise because of the unique cultural practices of the fan community, the way of understanding the world and the expression patterns that guide them to actively participate in social networks and change the way of communication. Jenkins (2013) proposed the concept of participatory culture, and as a part of this culture, participants act no longer as consumers, but actively contribute to creating content (Jenkins, 2006b).

Different from the above binary division of fans as producers or consumers, Hills (2002) argues that fan culture is complex, and we cannot simply classify them as "good" producers or "bad" consumers (p.28). Fans are dedicated to what Fung (2009) calls "immaterial labors" (p.286), in which they collectively participate in public activities supporting their idol and establish their rapport and mutual identification through sharing and communicating informational content or affective expression. To certain extents, fans begin to assume an intriguing new role of prosumers that integrates fan production, fan promotion, and fan consumption (Yang, 2009). In addition to the above division of fan participation, media theorist Schäfer (2011) distinguishes explicit and implicit participation, which has made an important contribution. Explicit participation describes the conscious and active engagement of users in fan communities. Implicit participation is subtler and unfolds often without the user's knowledge. Implicit participation is achieved by implementing user activities into user interfaces and back-end design. Schäfer (2011) argues that the success of popular Web 2.0 and social media applications thrives on implicit participation. The notion of implicit participation expands theories of participatory culture as formulated by Henry Jenkins (2013) who focuses most prominently on explicit participation (Schäfer, 2011, p.44).

Nowadays, the development of social media, in particular, empowers fans. More specifically, fans can gradually participate in the production and development of idol products and they even become planners and decision makers of the development of the idol. This leads to Bruns' (2008) idea of "equipotentiality: the assumption that while the skills and abilities of all the participants in the produsage project are not equal, they have an equal ability to make a worthy contribution to the project" (p.25). Some

scholars (Yeates, 2018, Yeritsian, 2018, Jenkins et al., 2013) think that the anonymity and freedom of computer-mediated communication could eliminate the markers such as gender, age, appearance, race and status in real communication and make interpersonal communication more equal and democratic. But by studying the fan base of a science fiction TV program, Andrea MacDonald (1998) explores the impact of computer technology on the fan base and how the new way of communication, the Internet, has changed the fan base, and she found that in fact, there are hierarchical systems and group rules in computer-mediated communication, which is not completely equal and free. She believes that the level of knowledge, the level of engagement, the level of contact opportunities, the level of opinion leaders in the fan group will determine the status of fans in the group (MacDonald, 1998).

3.5 Summary

Through reviewing the previous research, we can find that the fan studies have been developed and researched by many scholars and from various aspects. Specifically, the findings of the studies show that fandom develops rapidly especially with the emergence of social media which have provided more media spaces and opportunities for fans to participate in the idol-related activities. Therefore, this study will examine the fan participation in social media based on the theoretical approaches of Jenkins and Carpentier which will be elaborated in detail in the following chapter.

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of theories and concepts related to participatory culture and participation that will be used for analyzing the empirical data further in the thesis. Firstly, the theory of participatory culture discussed by Henry Jenkins will be elaborated here to describe fan practices through social media, because Jenkins has laid the foundation for the study of participatory culture. Particularly, the meaning, characteristics, and forms of participatory culture, and its application in the new media era will be presented. In order to analyze the different levels of participation of fans in the fan group, the concept of participation from a political (critical) perspective will be explained in the second part of this chapter because Jenkins' understanding of participation in participatory culture lacks democratic and political views. Then, Carpentier's four-level analytical model developed from the political and critical approach will be presented. Finally, there is a summary and reflection considering the use of these theories for the analysis.

4.1 Participatory Culture

4.1.1 What is Participatory Culture

The concept of participatory culture was proposed by Henry Jenkins against the background of an uncomfortable and unstable relationship between media corporations and fan communities (Jenkins, 2006b), as referring to “the properties of the culture, where groups collectively and individually make decisions that have an impact on their shared experiences” of media (Yeates, 2018, p.7). Participatory culture is an opposing concept to consumer culture -- in other words a culture in which private individuals (the public) do not act as consumers only, but also as contributors or producers (Fuchs, 2014). In Miller's (2011) *Understanding Digital Culture*, he makes the argument of the idea of how the lines between producer and consumers have become blurry. By referring to Bruns' (2008) idea of ‘prosumer’, Miller (2011) argues “with the advent of convergent new media and the plethora of choice in sources for information, as well as the increased capacity for individuals to produce content themselves, this shift away from producer hegemony to audience or consumer power would seem to have accelerated, thus eroding the producer-consumer distinction” (p. 87).

The concept of participatory culture is closely intertwined to the development of media technologies. As Jenkins (2006c) argues that a succession of new media technologies allows average citizens to participate in the archiving, appropriation, transformation and recirculation of media content (p.554), which has transformed the meaning of being a fan from a simple audience to a more active role. Jenkins (2006c) considers this new way of being a fan as a part of a new form of consumerism, which is referred to participatory culture. For example, the uses of mobile phones enable us to create our own 'tracks' for our real-life experiences, and to see ourselves more and more connected within a networked communications environment; moreover, the popularity of computers and the Internet has encouraged us to see ourselves as active participants in the world of fiction (Jenkins, 2006c, p.555). The Net opened up a new space for public discussions of media content, like the online discussion community, and the Web became an important showcase for grassroots cultural production (Ibid, p.555).

In the book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau (1984) has discussed that consumption is also a kind of production. Although consumers cannot produce their own culture, they can creatively consume cultural products and produce their own meaning (Jenkins, 2013). Fiske's (1992) fan culture theory is deeply influenced by de Certeau. He believes that fans are the most active and discerning group of consumers, because all the public can create their own production from the consumption of cultural industrial products, but fans can transform the production into a form of communication which can be spread among specific fan communities, thus creating a fan culture with its own unique production and communication system. Fiske (1992) considers "Participation and Productivity", along with "Discrimination and Distinction", as well as "Capital Accumulation", as the three main characteristics of fandom (p.34). Fiske (1992) also divides fan productivity into three types: semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity, and textual productivity. All such productivity occurs at the interface between the industrially-produced cultural commodity (narrative, music, star, etc.) and the everyday life of the fan (Fisk, 1992, p.37). Semiotic productivity means that fans create their own meanings and pleasures that pertain to their social situation out of the products of the culture industries (Fisk, 1992, p.37); enunciative productivity is a public form of declaration that externalizes symbolic meaning into specific context through fans' communication and sharing. This form of declaration includes fan talk, clothing and hairstyles with internal characteristics, which is a way to establish fans' identity

(Fisk, 1992, p.38). Textual productivity refers to the ability of fans to construct original official texts and produce new ones. This thesis uses social media platforms to observe the production behavior of fans. Since the semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity is not fully reflected in the Internet platform, this study mainly investigates the textual productivity of fans.

Drawing on the work of Michel de Certeau — de Certeau's poaching analogy, Jenkins (2013) points out that fans are poachers of popular culture. Jenkins directly challenges the notion that cultural texts 'disintegrate' and/or lose their value through 'irreverent consumption' (Adorno, cited in Jenkins, 2013, p.51). On the contrary, texts 'accumulate' meaning through repeated use (Ibid, p.51). Fannish reading, he argues, is 'a process, a movement from the initial reception of a broadcast toward the gradual elaboration of the episodes and their remaking in alternative terms' (Jenkins, 2013, p.53). Fans thus need to be understood as textual poachers who do not uncritically accept the meanings offered by content producers but instead collectively engage in a range of interpretative and creative practices (Jenkins, 2013). Moreover, Jenkins (2013) argues, fans are not just "poachers" but "nomads", moving from one text to another, creating new meanings by appropriating other texts, rather than being fixed to one. The fans' response typically involves not simply fascination or adoration but also frustration and antagonism, and it is the combination of the two responses which motivates their active engagement with the media. Fans reject the idea of a definitive version produced, authorized, and regulated by some media conglomerate. Instead, fans envision a world where all of us can participate in the creation and circulation of central cultural myths (Jenkins 2006c, p. 557).

4.1.2 The Features of Participatory Culture

In the book *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: media education for the 21st century*, Jenkins (2009) explains the characteristics of participatory culture. He believes that participatory culture has the following characteristics: in this participatory culture, there are relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement; what's more, people value being members of the fan community and feel some degree of social connection with one another (at the least they care what other people think about what they have created). Not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute when ready and that what they contribute will be

appropriately valued. And one of the most important features of participatory culture is collective intelligence, a practice by which fans create and share knowledge with each other and experienced fans pass their experiences to novices in some informal way to help them. This practice, as Jenkins (2006b) described in his case study of Lucasfilm, has led to a series of debates on the copyright of media content and the related issue of film revenue (p.139-148). Lucasfilm indeed exerted significant pressure on its audiences with the aim of transforming fan communities into corporation-controlled fan clubs. The dilemma for commercial producers, however, lies in the fact that aware of the value of the audience, it is often not in their interest to pursue these kinds of legal issues related to fan activities. Audiences can function as the bearers of business messages and their innovation can be harnessed for commercial use. From Jenkins' discussion, we see how participatory culture grew in response to the cultural hegemony of mass communication (Hou, 2018).

4.1.3 The Application of Participatory Culture

In addition, Jenkins (2009) has also highlighted that the forms of participatory culture can be manifested in affiliations, expressions, collaborative problem solving, and circulations. Affiliations include both formal and informal memberships in online communities centered around various forms of social media (such as Facebook, MySpace, Weibo and Tencent QQ – the Chinese social media). Expressions refer to the types of media that could be created. This may manifest as memes, fan videomaking, fan-fiction, or other forms of mash-ups. When individuals and groups work together on a particular form of media or media product, like a wiki, then they engage in collaborative problem-solving. Finally, circulations refer to the means through which the communication may be spread. This could include blogs, vlogs, podcasts, and even some forms of social media (Jenkins, 2009). Based on these four forms of participatory culture, this thesis will explore what are the practices of fans participating in.

In *Convergence culture*, Jenkins (2006b) associates participatory culture with media convergence for discussion, and he suggests that convergence is both a top-down corporate driven and bottom-up consumer-driven process (the latter being discussed as a participatory culture) (p,39). To Jenkins (2006b) the new audiences in the era of convergence are active, and in addition, they take the media in their own hands. Jenkins (2006b) has explored participatory media in fan culture, seeing a radical reworking of

access for everyday people to create contents. Contemporary participatory culture includes appropriation through replication or parody and can even involve the active contribution of audiences to the creation and circulation of new media products, such as in the case of *Star Wars* fan films (Jenkins, 2006c).

4.2 Participation from the Political Critical Perspective

No matter how broadly or narrowly we define a site of participation, there will always be ‘silences and absences.’ As Jenkins (Jenkins and Carpenter, 2013) notes that some voices get heard more loudly than others, and formal and informal hierarchies of voice also emerge in ostensibly egalitarian projects such as fan discussion forums. In order to understand the realities of participation in these sites, Carpentier suggests earlier in the conversation to conduct microanalyses focusing on ‘power balances and struggles at different levels, moments and locations’ (Jenkins and Carpenter, 2013, p.267).

Although Jenkins’ fan culture participation as a preparation for more participation later is useful as a starting point for re-imagining society, Jenkins’ perspective neglects issues of control, involvement in decision-making, and is not grounded in the actual economic reality of cultural production (Fuchs, 2014, p.55). Fuchs (2014, p.55) points out that a somewhat laissez-faire understanding of “participatory culture” weakens the weight of the term “participation” as it was used in theories about participatory democracy. Jenkins’ understanding of a participatory creation of culture does not adopt the detailed requirements developed for participatory democracy, thus reducing the political requirements for participatory culture. This is in line with Carpentier’s (2016) critique of inflated use of the term “participatory” in which he proposes that participation be understood as, “the equalization of power inequalities in particular decision-making processes” (p.72), which indicates the power distribution of “privileged and non-privileged actors in formal and informal decision-making processes” (Carpentier, 2016, p.72). The reason why Carpentier (2011) discusses the concept of participation from the democratic perspective is that the concept of democracy focuses on integrating people into the political decision-making process. Participation is interpreted by different democratic models, which have diverse ideas about what should be considered participation and how much a citizen should participate. The political approach of participation follows Pateman’s (1970 in Carpentier, 2016) understanding of participation in the field of democratic theory,

which shows the significance of power in defining participation. Pateman distinguishes participation into two different ‘degrees’: *partial* and *full* participation. She defines *partial* participation as “a process in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only” (Pateman 1970, p.70 in Carpentier, 2016, p.73), whereas *full* participation is seen as “a process where each individual member of a decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions” (Pateman 1970, p.71 in Carpentier, 2016, p.73).

This perception of the political approach to participation presents participation aligned with democratic theory, emphasizing decision-making and power struggle. Focusing on the political approach and the logics of power, almost inevitably critical a perspective is brought up. The critical perspective is concerned about social change and “democratization of democracy” (Giddens, 2002, p.93 in Carpentier, 2016, p.71). By taking a critical approach, as Carpentier (2016) puts it that “normatively problematic discrepancies in power relations” (Carpentier, 2016, p.74). The normative reference point on the critical analysis, in this context, refers to an equalization of society that emerges through an increased level of power distribution (Carpentier, 2016). The political approach to participation allows to examine the level of power equality in a participatory process, to which the critical perspective adds an additional level to analyze the intensity of the participatory process. The critical is a possibility not a requirement, which indicates the importance of power in participatory analyses and shows the alignment of the critical and participation. Thus, the political critical perspective can be used to evaluate the particular participatory intensities, which means that participation is an object of struggle, and different ideological projects (and their proponents) defend different levels of participation (Carpentier, 2016, p.73). From Carpentier’s (2011) interpretation of minimalist and maximalist participation, we can see that more minimalist versions of participation tend to protect the power positions of privileged (elite) actors, to the detriment of non-privileged (non-elite) actors, without totally excluding the latter. In contrast, more maximalist versions of participation strive for a complete balance between all actors (which protects the non-privileged actors) (Carpentier, 2016, p.73). Specifically, in the discussion of participatory ethics, Ward (2011, cited in Carpentier, 2016, p.76) explains how participation in a specific process might be intense in one component, but minimal in another. Take YouTube as an example, allowing for participating in the release of video, but not in the management

of YouTube itself. As Jenkins (Jenkins and Carpentier 2013, p.275) argues that there are “limits to our ability to participate in YouTube—the degree to which participants lack any direct say in the platform’s governance. This is very different from discussing how participatory communities might use YouTube as a distribution channel”. Therefore, this political and critical approach of participation provides another perspective on fan participation, that is, we should realize that although every fan has the opportunity to engage in fan activities, there is a certain power relationship between each fan in the fan group.

4.3 Carpentier’s Analytical Model

Based on the political and critical perspective of participation, Carpentier (2016) develops a four-level analytical model to evaluate participatory intensities in participatory processes, which positions the many different theoretical and analytical concepts and thus can act as a guide for participatory research applying the political approach. The central point of the analytical model is that it allows for an evaluation of the level of participation in a process. This model is considered to be more comprehensive to recognize the complexity of participatory processes, and thus more suitable for participatory analysis than the prior ladder-based model originally proposed by Arnstein, which seems to fall into a trap of simplicity in participatory analyses (Carpentier, 2016).

In the first level, the starting point of the analytical model is to identify a particular media process whose participatory nature will be investigated and the goals of this process (Carpentier, 2016, p.77). Drawing on the definition of the process from Juran (2003 in Carpentier 2016, p.77), the process refers to as a series of related goal-oriented activities. The concept of a process is important because it allows the analysis of objects to be limited to a specific process that can be defined, described, and analyzed. In addition, the process notion allows for the idea that participation is always within a specific process and high levels of complexity, which requires detailed analysis (Carpentier, 2016, p.78). Recognition of process allows us to find participation in a particular process, and furthermore contextualize the process to its field which has its own basic characteristics, thus, the following is to analyze how the field is constructed and structured, and how the relationships between the particular process and the field are organized (Carpentier, 2016, p.78).

The second level of the model turns the attention to the actors, which identifies all involved actors and maps their relations, as well as focuses on the analysis of their identities, material processes and the all actors' field positions (Carpentier, 2016, p.79 & 80). The actors are defined by Hindess as "a locus of decision and action where the action is in some sense a consequence of the actor's decisions" (Carpentier, 2016, p.79). There are many different meanings of identities and this thesis focuses on the social and cultural identity. As Carpentier puts it "identity is seen as a discursive structure that gives meanings to objects and individual and collective agents" (Carpentier, 2005, p.175). Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory (in Carpentier, 2016) emphasizes that identities are contingent and fluid, as actors are not dominated by material structures and discursive structures either. It is the contingency of identities and the failure to achieve a full identity that creates space for subjectivity, organization, freedom and the particularity of human behavior (Carpentier, 2016). When analyzing the positions of actors are privileges or not in the field, it is important to emphasize that the notion of positions here is referred to the general societal positions of actors, and not the position of actors in the particular participatory process (Carpentier, 2016, p.80). And the rationale of investigating the positions is that a participatory process corrects a more general societal power imbalance, where actors that have different power positions in society enter into a process where this power imbalance is (partially) addressed and equalized (Carpentier, 2016).

The third level of the analytical model charts the decision-making moments within the participatory process and their significance in relation to the goals of the participatory process (Carpentier, 2016, p. 81). The concept of the decision is defined according to Laclau and Mouffe (2000), and Bachrach and Baratz (1962), whose understanding of decisions complement one another. Laclau and Mouffe (2000 in Carpentier, 2016, p.81) refer the decision as a moment of fixation, which arrests the continuous flow, structuring it in a particular way, which also implies that decisions are the moments where power is exercised (or not), as Bachrach and Baratz argue (1962). The analysis of decision-making moments is complicated due to their different natures and therefore the decision-making moments need to be generated through the analysis itself.

After identifying the decision-making moments, the actions of the different actors (and their groups/clusters) within these decision-making moments, and the relations with their material positions, identities and role can be further zoomed, which involves a lot of complexity. The complexity of the analysis is caused by the diversity of different actions that may range from passive and silent acceptance of a decision, over resistance towards decisions taken by others, to active and collective practices of decision-making (Carpentier, 2016, p. 81). Another complexity is caused by the multitude of possible relationships between actions, material positions, roles, identities and identifications (Carpwntier, 2016, p.82).

The fourth level of the model focuses on the analysis of power relations, which analyzes the power positions of different actors in decision-making moments by applying the distinctions between generative, restrictive and resistant aspects of power (Carpentier, 2016, p.82). Foucault (1978 in Carpentier, 2016) develops the strategic/Foucauldian power model which emphasizes that power relations are non-egalitarian (Carpentier, 2016, p82). The restrictive component is consistent with Foucault's understanding that power relations can be unbalanced, while the generative component refers to the objectives and achievements of the strategies on which Foucault builds his analytics of power. However, resistance to power can limit the outcomes of power practices and intervenes in both the generative and the restrictive component, so it can be considered an additional part of the power model (Carpentier, 2016). Therefore, the overall effect of restrictive, generative and resistant strategies then becomes labeled as the productive dimension of power. Once the different power relations of the actors involved in particular decision-making moments have been inventoried, these power relations can be compared, paying particular attention to the power positions of privileged and non-privileged actors (Carpentier, 2016, p. 82), and the aggregation of power balances and imbalances for the entire participatory process needs to be evaluated (Carpentier, 2016, p. 83).

4.4 Summary and Reflections

To sum up, Jenkins, as a proponent of empowering participatory culture, argues that participatory media “make them [consumers] an integral part” (Jenkins, 2009) of the success of a product or text, and he stresses the power of fans to “speak back to producers” and states that they know how to organize to lobby (Jenkins, 2013, p.27).

Instead of regarding fans as marginal to the operations of our culture, Jenkins (2013) constructs an alternative image of fan cultures in *Textual Poachers*, where Jenkins (2013) shows the ways in which fans as poachers and nomads, create and produce their own meanings and their own fanzines productions. Therefore, fandom becomes a participatory culture which transforms the experience of media consumption into the production of new texts, indeed a new culture and a new community (Jenkins, 2013, p.46). *Convergence Culture* describes a moment when fans are central to how culture operates. The concept of the active audience, so controversial two decades ago, is now taken for granted by everyone involved in and around the media industry. New technologies are enabling average consumers to archive, annotate, appropriate, and recirculate media content (Jenkins, 2006a). From the explanation of the characteristics and forms of participatory culture, we can see that within the new media technologies, fans have more opportunities to engage in the media activities related to the idol. The theory of Jenkins' participatory culture shows an understanding of fan engagement, tracing the ways in which fans manufacture their own fanzine texts, pictures, videos, performances, etc., as well as how they organize and participate in activities in the era of social media (RSQ1).

Carpentier proposes another perspective of participation — the political (critical) approach which focuses on power, and the equality of power relations or the removal of forms of domination are at the heart of the critical (Carpentier, 2016, p.74). Based on Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" which argues "that citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power" (1969, cited in Carpentier, 2016, P.77), Carpentier developed a four-level analytical model which positions many different theoretical and analytical concepts, and this thesis focus on the levels of the model to analyze the participatory intensities of fans in the fan group (RSQ2). Through investigating and analyzing the process of fan participation, we will understand the different decision-making moments of the fan group and know the power relations between the fans.

5. Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approaches that have been used in this study. The study undertakes a qualitative case study on Kris Wu's fan group. This approach is appropriate for the inquiry into areas with limited academic inquiry (Creswell, 2013), enabling researchers to examine contemporary phenomena within a real-life context. "Qualitative research allows researchers to get at the inner experience of participants, to determine how meanings are formed through and in culture, and to discover rather than test variables" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 12). Meanwhile, considering the aim of this study is to explore the process of fan participation, which is a dynamic process, thus using qualitative methods to investigate how fans use social media for engagement and the different levels of participation of fans in the fan group. Firstly, the reasons for why I choose the fan group of Kris Wu as a case for analysis are present. Then, the qualitative methods of data collection – digital ethnography, including online observations and in-depth interviews are explained and evaluated. The third part discusses the method for sampling the respondents. In the fourth part, the detailed information concerning how to conduct the qualitative analysis of data is elaborated. Finally, the limitations and ethical issues of this study are discussed.

5.1 Case Selection

The fans of Kris Wu are selected as a target group to analyze the fan practices in the era of social media. I focus on online fan practices and online fan communities, and Kozinets (2010) argues that the online group which is selected for research should have six features. Based on four of these characteristics: (1) relevant to the research focus and questions; (2) active, which means that fans have recent and regular communications; (3) interactive and have a flow of communications between fans; (4) data-rich, meaning that it can offer more detailed or descriptively rich data (Kozinets, 2010, p.89). There are three reasons for why I choose Kris Wu's fan group as a case for analysis. Firstly, Kris Wu is a fan-created idol with high popularity in China, which means that such idols have a strong connection with their fans, and fans play a very important role in promoting the development of the idol. In addition, Kris Wu has a large number of fans. As of March 2019, Kris Wu has nearly 46 million fans on Weibo, and most of the fans are very active in the online spaces. There are a lot of activities organized by fans spontaneously. Secondly, for the fans of Kris Wu, there are many "fans incidents" happening on social media that attract many people's attention. For

example, on 25 July 2018, a topic about “fans fighting online” quickly became the hot search list of Weibo, and more than 30 million people participate in reading and discussing this topic on Weibo. The cause for this incident was that “Hupu”, a sport online community, published a post on Weibo which disrespected and attacked Kris Wu, and then the fans of Kris Wu actively battled with the sport online community on Weibo and other social media in order to protect the idol. The battle lasted about a month, which had never happened before in China. After the incident, Kris Wu’s fans became popular on social media and aroused many people’s attention.

Therefore, the fan group of Kris Wu is chosen as the research object in this study, hoping to provide a new perspective on the evolving culture of fans.

5.2 Method of data collection

Data was collated from a three-month digital ethnography that combined systematically online observation with a direct follow-up contact via in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Two major methods are logically incorporated and combined in this thesis in a scientific way. Two methods have their own focus, aim, and weight; hence, they take different factors and emphasis into account to procure relevant data.

5.2.1 Digital Ethnography

Ethnography is a method of practical research. There are many different definitions of ethnography, and following Karen O’Reilly (2005), ethnography is defined “iterative-inductive research (that involves in design through the study), drawing on a family of methods. Ethnography acknowledges the role of theory, as well as the researcher’s own role and views humans as part object/part subject” (O’Reilly, 2005, cited in Pink et al., 2016, p.3). Ethnography emphasizes that researchers should study objects or phenomena in depth and collect data through “long-term participant observation” or “one-on-one interviews”. In the beginning, ethnography focused on realistic communities, but with the development of the Internet and digital media as well as the emergence of online virtual communities, scholars applied this method to digital research, and a new form of ethnography -- digital ethnography was born. Digital ethnography outlines an approach to doing ethnography in a contemporary world, and in the digital ethnography, we are often in mediated contact with participants rather than in direct presence (Pink et al., 2016, p.3). For example, we observe what people

do by digitally tracking them, or ask them to invite us to their social media practices or communicate with participants in digital ways. As the sociologist Dhiraj Murthy (2011) describes “digital ethnography as being centered on the data-gathering method [that] is mediated by computer-mediated communication”, which includes digitally mediated fieldnotes, online observation and online focus groups (cited in Pink et al., 2016, p.5).

The digital ethnographic approach accurately provides methods by which to investigate practices as they unfold, both as they are performed and as they are reported and demonstrated. This might include researching people's participation in communities and interpersonal relations (Facebook, Weibo) and the co-creation of media content. As many scholars argue, new media technologies such as mobile phones have become so ubiquitous in many parts of the world that they have become a taken-for-ground and relatively invisible part of our daily lives. At the same time, through the spread of interactive technologies such as social media, we have increasingly become active producers and shapers of media content (Pink et al., 2016, p.45). Just like fans, they not only consume the produced media, but they also produce their own media products. Compared with the traditional ethnographic methods, the main research field of digital ethnography is in the virtual society. The main research object is the behavior and activities of groups or individuals in the virtual space. Since most of the behaviors of fans are carried out on the Internet, their posts, comments and other information are concentrated in the online community, so using digital ethnography can obtain relatively rich first-hand information. Moreover, the Internet transcends the limitation of geographical space, which greatly reduces the time and economic cost for us to contact the research participants. And the relationship established through the virtual network is easier to obtain unfamiliar research respondents. An ethnographic approach to researching digital media practices enabled me to flexibly develop methods that could explore in greater depth and detail the practical behaviors of fans. Therefore, online observation, as well as in-depth interviews, were used to collect the data in this study.

5.2.2 Online Observation

Online observation is an established method for media and social research of online interactions and involves the generation of data from existing discussion forums, social networking sites, vlogs, and blogs that address the topics of relevance to the research (Pink et al., 2016). The method is valuable in order to gather data for the purpose of understanding how social media function as an organic space of interconnections among platform users to engage and debate psychological, cultural, societal, and political issues.

In the digital media era, most of the activities of the fan community and the ways of organizing activities have been transferred to the Internet, and the fan community of China is generally concentrated on Sina Weibo, Baidu Tieba, QQ, WeChat. The Internet not only leaves the track of fans' activities but also records the content of their activities, which makes it easier for the researcher to get close to fans, observe their online activities and obtain research materials. Therefore, this paper adopts the method of online observation to better understand the fan group. Considering the openness of the social media platforms, Sina Weibo was chosen as an online observation platform where a multitude of fans of Kris Wu gather together and they have the strongest participation and interaction on this platform. The aim of the online observation was to enter the participants' life-world as mediated through Weibo and to understand the roles it plays in relation to fan activities. Hine (2000) discusses the value of active participation in the field as beneficial for providing the first-hand experience of the communicative activities and practices in which the research participants are themselves involved. This study focused on what the fans were doing, making notes of how this doing was performed, that is what modes were involved (and combined) in the creation of particular meanings. As Weibo users share pictures, videos, comments, discussions and hyperlinks through status updates that report on their feelings and events, the multimodal content they distribute is part of the work undertaken to manage accountability (Koteyko and Hunt, 2016).

In this thesis, the online observation was divided into two phases: pre-study phase and study phase, and the interest of online observation was limited to the activity generated by the respondents on the Internet. In the preparation phase, approximately 4 months (July 25, 2018 – November 30, 2018) personal observation was conducted to get to

know the field; first, this study paid attention to some online incidents related to Kris Wu which happened in this period and caused heated discussions on the Internet, such as the incident -- “online battle between fans”, which happened on July 25, 2018, on Weibo. Two related hashtags “#虎扑恶搞吴亦凡音乐#” (“#Hupu denigrated Kris’s music#”), “#吴亦凡粉丝 虎扑#” (“#Fans of Kris Wu, Hupu#”) were selected to observe the reactions and behaviors of fans for this incident. I browsed through these two hashtags almost every day until the online battle between the fans gradually subsided. In the study phase in which the duration of the formal observation is from December 2018 to March 2019, a specific online community related to Kris Wu on Weibo was chosen as the main object of observation, because this online community has the largest number of fans of Kris Wu (around 2.47 million fans) and posts (3.175 million posts). What’s more, I also attracted online fans to participate in the discussion by publishing some posts on Weibo in this online community, from which we can learn the real situation and opinions of fans. During the study phase, this online community was visited every two days over the three-month period to identify the content related to the idol which fans had published. The contents were considered as important and useful for the research if they explicitly mentioned fan activities in which fans have participated in, as well as the relations between each fan. Observations were recorded through screenshots of participants’ posts and comments and saving external webpages that the participants shared or linked to in their posts in order that when needing the materials and data in the discussion, related information could be located efficiently. When doing the observations, I try to be as extensive as possible to see alternative possibilities for interpretation. Contributions saved by screenshots and posts were organized according to the content of activity they constituted (fan text production, fan consumption, fan charity, etc.) in order to build a picture of the sorts of practices they engaged in within them. Specifically, the basic information about the observation materials is as follows.

Table 1: General Information about the Observation Materials

Materials	Number	How to construct
Screenshots	38 screenshots	Classified by the content of screenshots
Saved posts	26 posts	Classified by the contents of the posts

5.2.3 In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews are one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research, and some ethnographers such as Malinowski stressed the importance of talking to people to grasp their point of view (Burgess, 1982, cited in Legard et al., 2003). Thus, the semi-structured, in-depth interviews with fans were conducted through audio voice to provide respondents with the opportunity to present their understandings. I chose to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews in order to be flexible in adding questions and changing the order of questions which have been prepared in advance.

In view of the Internet age, the operation of fan groups began to be organized, so it is necessary to select different levels of fans to conduct interviews. According to my understanding of the online fan community of Kris Wu on Weibo, the fans are mainly divided into four categories: the leaders of the fan community (those who have their own followers, have a certain voice, and are opinion leaders in the fan group), creators of fan texts (those who are responsible for the production and dissemination of various promotional materials, such as writing fan articles, making videos, pictures and so on.), supporters for some fan activities (those who are responsible for voting, online promotional activities, topic discussion and so on.), and less active fans. The interviewees will include two leaders, three creators of fan texts (one responsible for articles, one responsible for pictures and one responsible for videos), one supporter of fan activities and four less active fans in order to get information from the different angles. Before the interviews, based on the previous literature and theories, I prepared an interview outline which is mainly used as a reminder. The conversation was divided into several main themes: introduction, the use of social media, and intensity of participation (see the Appendix of the Interview Outline).

Written consent from the interviewees was obtained through emails when I first contacted them. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, and during the interview, I tried to keep quiet and listen when the interviewees started to talk, instead of interrupting them. In these ten interviews, eight interviews were conducted in Chinese and two interviews in English. All interviews were recorded, but because one of the interviews conducted with the less active fan in Chinese was not recorded successfully, only nine interviews were transcribed; these were supplemented by field

notes on the general feel of the interview and key points. All transcripts were approved by interviewees. Participant checking was used during the stages of transcript approval, initial coding and key themes identified at within case-level to enhance validity.

5.3 Sample of the Participants

Since I am also a fan of Kris Wu, and I have joined some fan groups of Kris Wu. I usually take part in some online activities or post some discussions related to the idol in the fan group. Meanwhile, I follow some Weibo accounts who are also the fans of Kris Wu. During my participation in the practical activities, I collected and analyzed the posts and comments of fans in the community and tried to find the participants for the in-depth interviews. However, although some fans have commented on my posts and we have communicated with each other before, there were very few people who agreed to be interviewed. Besides, I contacted some fans through private messages, who are in the #Kris Wu# topic discussion community, but some of them did not answer me, and some of them refused me. Therefore, through the form of interpersonal communication, the respondents were recruited by the snowballing method which is the well-known practice of asking interviewees to recommend other interviewees. Snowball sampling can always increase the number of respondents until the collected information reaches saturation (Small, 2009, p.14). During the sampling procedure, I intentionally sought for diversity in terms of personal background, opinions, and community affiliations. The final sample almost involves all different roles of fans in the fan group, including two leaders, three creators of fan texts (one responsible for articles, one responsible for pictures and one responsible for videos), one supporter of fan activities and four less active fans. For example, I first found three of my fan friends for interviews who are in different roles in three different fan groups, (one is the leader and the other two are less active fans), and then I asked them to introduce their friends to me who were also fans of Kris Wu and in different roles of fans. This sampling method continued until I have sufficient respondents. Some of these selected interviewees have been the fans of Kris Wu for a long time, some of them just become the fans of Kris Wu; some of them are active fans, some of them are relatively inactive, but they all have their own opinions on fan participation.

Finally, 10 effective interviewees were recruited, and these interviewees are from several fan groups. The basic information of the interviewees is as follows.

Table 2: General Information about the Interviewees

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Length of Time as a Fan	Occupation
F1	Female	17	4 years	Student
F2	Female	16	5 years	Student
F3	Female	25	6 years	Student
F4	Female	23	4 years	Employee
F5 (not recorded successfully)	Female	27	8 months	Student
F6	Female	20	1 year	Student
F7	Female	16	7 years	Student
F8	Female	22	Nearly 5 years	Employee
M1	Male	21	2 years	Students
M2	Male	26	7 years	Employee

Note: Because the respondents do not want to reveal the real name, the names of the respondents involved in this study were pseudonyms.

5.4 Method of data analysis

In order to examine the data gathered from interviews and online observations, a thematically qualitative content analysis was conducted. Qualitative content analysis is commonly used for analyzing textual data, which include interview transcripts, observations, speeches, online posts, etc. (Julien, 2008, p.120). Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicate that qualitative content analysis lends itself to creating an insightful description of what is empirically gathered. Using qualitative content analysis methods allowed me to understand the literature related to the purpose of the study, and also gave me a starting point to analyze the data by identifying patterns and participants' behaviors and perceptions.

A general inductive approach was used to organize and reduce the data, which allows themes to be derived through the interpretation of the raw data (Thomas, 2006) and ensuring data-driven themes emerged. Thomas' (2006) steps for inductive coding were adopted and included preparing the data, a close reading of the text, creation of categories, reduction of category overlap, and redundancy and creation of most important themes. Analysis began with a close reading of the raw materials, allowing the researcher to gain an understanding of the themes and events within the data (Thomas, 2006). Responses were reread, and related data were grouped together and assigned a theme or themes. Throughout this process, emerging themes were identified and developed, which continued until no new themes emerged, indicating all major themes had been identified (Thomas, 2006).

To be specific, I read and examined all collected data including the interview transcripts, written field notes, screenshots and the saved posts from online observation. Data analysis was completed manually in order to maximize researcher interpretation of the data. Firstly, the interview transcripts were coded. Through initial coding, I read all the transcripts and the information relating to social media, fan participation, decision-making and power relations was singled out. With the guidance of the research questions, pertinent data was analyzed and arranged by comparing the similarities and differences. Then, through focused coding, I searched for the most frequent or significant initial codes, and similar data were integrated and then put into a theme. During the coding and analysis process, it became clear that some answers of the interview questions were diverging, and a constant comparison method (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.73) was used to develop themes that are described at length in the next chapter, which means that I integrated the majority themes with the new codes or themes and compare their differences. After coding interview transcripts, the same way was used to code the materials collected from online observation. Then I took the codes and themes together and explored how they are related to each other. Finally, the data was summarized into categories through connecting to the relevant theory and further linked to the research subject and possibly presented into the discussion. The detailed procedure of data analysis consisting of four major steps is distinctly illustrated in the following figure.

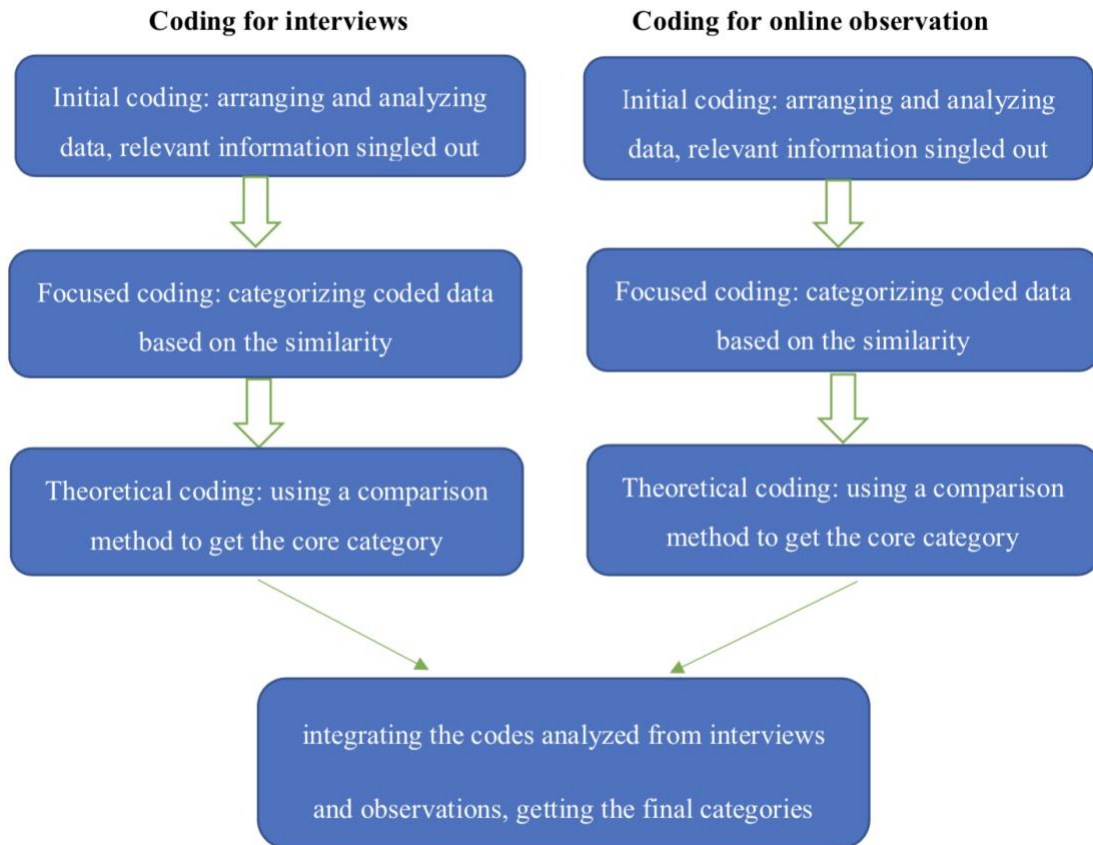


Figure 1: *The procedure of data analysis*

Through the coding process, different types of fan practices (RSQ1), were classified such as fan text production (including fanfiction writing, fan videomaking, and fan photo texts), fan consumption (buying concert tickets or idol-related goods online and etc.), fan supporting activities (voting, controlling comments, fan charity activities). Besides, the codes and categories related to the participatory intensity of fans (RSQ2) were generalized.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

In this study, there are three limitations in the research methods, which can be improved in future studies. Firstly, although the study has made efforts to avoid the selected interviewees too concentrated and to involve various identities of fans, it is impossible to represent the entire fan group. In addition, the recruiting techniques almost certainly contributed to a substantial degree of homogeneity among the interviewees, and the representativeness of the sample is not guaranteed, which is one of the disadvantages of snowball sampling. Secondly, as Kris Wu has a large number of fans, but the number

of fans who were being observed and interviewed is limited, this study may be biased to some extent. However, the data collected through online observations and in-depth interviews are considered sufficient to investigate and analyze research problems. Lastly, there are some subjective tendencies in the in-depth interviews, so the research has certain subjectivity.

5.6 Ethics

Based on the Swedish Research Council's (2017) statement of research ethics, we, as researchers, should achieve a balance between the research criterion and the criterion of protection of the individual, which means that "we are to conduct qualitatively good research with an important purpose, and at the same time protect those individuals taking part in the research" (p.13). Doing research online gives rise to ethical concerns issues relating to consent, privacy, and anonymity of research subjects. Therefore, when making ethical decisions, researchers must balance the rights of subjects (as authors, as research participants and as people) with the social benefits of research and researchers' rights to conduct research (Markham and Buchanan, 2019). There are three major issues that arise repeatedly in discussions about ethical practice in internet research: Human subjects, private/public, and data (text)/persons, and the question of privacy in the context of social media remains an ongoing issue (Highfield and Leaver 2016). As the ethical guidelines of internet research suggest that ethical conundrums are complex and rarely decided along binary lines (Markham and Buchanan, 2019, p.5), Highfield and Leaver (2016, p.57) also argue that

"it may be more useful to move away from the binaries of public or private and consider whether the act of researching surfaces material that would otherwise had little attention and whether amplifying that material through research and research reporting has the potential to do any harm."

Regarding the ethical issue of personhood, although some information is not collected directly from individuals, there is considerable evidence that even 'anonymized' datasets that contain enough personal information can result in individuals being identifiable. Therefore, scholars and technologists continue to wrestle with how to adequately protect individuals when analyzing such datasets (Sweeney, 2004).

Sensitive to these concerns, first, for the interviews, this thesis makes sure to assure the anonymity of respondents, to ask their permission for recording the interviews, and also their personal privacy will be protected. Second, for the online observation, the texts, comments or pictures collected for analysis are from open sources, like Weibo, which means the contents on these platforms are not password protected and are available to everyone; and when analyzing the materials collected from interviews and online observation, I will try to adequately protect individuals. In addition, I paraphrased quotations before completing this thesis, which makes it impossible for readers to directly identify any specific individuals within the data or through the analysis and ensures the identities of those observed will not be revealed (Swedish Research Council, p.27). At last, as Nissenbaum (2010) points out, “what people care most about is not simply restricting the flow of information but ensuring that it flows appropriately” (Nissenbaum, 2010, p.2, cited in Markham and Buchanan, 2019, p.7), I will guarantee that the data collected in this study will only be used in this research and presented appropriately, and I also ensure that the data will not be released to the wrong places.

6. Findings and Analysis

From the methodology chapter, the methods of data collection have been introduced, by which I have collected the empirical materials used for the analysis, and the method and procedure for analysis have also been pointed out. In this chapter, a synthesized analysis of the empirical data collected from online observations of the “# Kris Wu#” topic discussion community, semi-structured interviews, as well as the content analysis of the empirical materials will be presented. In the process of analysis, the relevant theories of Jenkins and Carpentier which have been presented in Chapter four, are applied to the findings. The analysis in this chapter presents the categories and subcategories that have been summarized through inductive coding and interpretation of the empirical data. In the following sections, based on two research questions, the analysis is divided into two aspects: firstly, a comprehensive description of fan activities through social media is outlined, which can be concluded as the category – fan practices in social media (6.1). After that, based on Carpentier’s analytical model, different levels of fan participation in the fan group will be investigated, that is the category – the participatory intensity of fans in the fan group (6.2). In each category as mentioned above (fan practices in social media, and the participatory intensity of fans in the fan group), specific subcategories will be introduced which are derived from the interpretation of the data generated during the coding analysis of observations and interviews. In each subcategory, the corresponding empirical evidence is presented and elaborated. After explaining each category, there is a summary of the inductive results connecting to relevant theories.

6.1 An Overview of Fan Practices in Social Media

According to Jenkins’ (2009) argument that in the participatory, the barriers between artistic expression and civic engagement are relatively low (one features of participatory culture), we can see that fans as ordinary audiences can participate in the idol-related activities. As has been discussed in the theoretical framework, the concept of participatory culture is closely related to the development of new media technologies (Jenkins, 2006c). From the analysis, we can find that social media plays an important role in fan activities, which provides new environments and new ways for fan practices. By referring to Burns’ (2008) idea of prosumers, we can see that in the participatory culture, fans act as prosumers, that is, fans have the dual identity of ‘consumers’ and ‘producers.’ Based on the concept of Jenkins’ (2013) participatory culture, this section

analyzes the practices of fans in social media. Through online observations and interviews, this study finds that there are various forms of fan practices which can be divided into three types: online consumption behaviors, fan text production, and online supporting activities.

In the presentation of the analysis, I refer to the collected data by putting the screenshots and saved posts into references and citing them in the thesis.

6.1.1 Online Consumption Behaviors

As has been discussed by Jenkins (2006c), the consumption behavior of fans is an expression of participatory culture. Fans have been closely linked to consumption and they are often referred to as ‘fanatic consumers.’ Especially in the Internet era, the consumption mode of fans has become the main way of making money for the modern entertainment industry and network economy. Three common fan consumption behaviors in the age of social media are presented in the following sections.

Buying concert tickets online: when asking “*what fan activities have you joined in?*”, some respondents answered that “*the fan activity I usually participate in is to go to the live concert.*” Watching the idol’s concert is the dream of every fan, so fans are really excited when the news that Kris Wu will have his first national concert tour in April and May this year is announced. On March 7th, the official ticketing channel for Kris Wu’s concert in Nanjing (a city of China) was opened, and the tickets were sold out within an hour. “*KrisBar*”¹ as an official Weibo account of Kris Wu regularly publishes some ticketing information, such as notice of restocking of remaining tickets (Screenshot 1), notification of changing the ticket order information, which shows that if fans want to change the information, they can send private messages to KrisBar on Weibo, and they need to attach the required information (Saved post 1), as well as notice of reserved tickets for overseas fans which announced the reservation method and link (Saved post 2).

1 “*KrisBar*” is a member of the *#Kris Wu# topic discussion community*, and he is at a higher level in the community, which means that he plays the role of a leader and organizer in the community.

In order to make it convenient for fans to consult ticketing information and buy the tickets, fans have also set up some specific concert fan groups, which are the main channels for fans to ask for tickets. As interviewee F3 put it

“I usually ask for concert tickets in the fan group on Weibo or WeChat, because I am afraid of meeting cheats.”

In addition, fans post in the “#Kris Wu# topic discussion community”, asking for tickets for Kris Wu's concert (Screenshot 2). However, at the same time, there are some scammers who catch the fans' eagerness to buy tickets, selling fake tickets online with false documents and false orders (Saved post 3), and there are even some people who take advantage of the concert fan groups to defraud money (Screenshot 3). Therefore, in the fan group, there will be some notice of ticket buying instructions and precautions (Screenshot 4) which inform fans to be vigilant when buying tickets and pay attention to property safety so as to avoid being cheated.

Promotion of the new album: For fans, buying their idol's new album and going to the concert are the most basic consumption behaviors. In the social media era, when the news of the release of the new album by the idol is announced, fans will try their best to support the idol's new album. On November 2, 2018, Kris Wu's first album “Antares” was released, and it has successfully ranked first in the US iTunes list. Among the promotional efforts of fans, several consumption behaviors are particularly noteworthy. First and foremost is their continuous effort to promote the album on the Internet through chart beating. Music platforms such as Weibo have a fixed music chart, and in order to put the album into the top position on these music charts, fans set up special QQ groups and Weibo groups and tried their best to vote for the idol. Fans have spent a lot of time, money and energy trying to improve the sales of the new album. For example, interviewee F8 said,

“..... our group members are grouped on various social media platforms, such as Weibo, QQ music to vote for him, and generally, when you download the new album, it usually needs to pay for that, and people in our group who have the ability will also pay to download, to enhance the album's popularity.”

Besides, it is common to see various posts calling for chart beating or buying the album on Weibo. Saved post 4 shows that fans appeal to people to post a photo with the “*Antares*” outdoor advertising billboard on Weibo by presenting gifts, thus playing a role in promoting the new album. Besides, screenshot 5 indicates that you can join Kris Wu's fan base as long as you post a screenshot of purchasing the album “*Antares*” on Weibo. Due to the large number of fans of Kris Wu and the limited number of fans groups, not all fans can join one group, and some new fans do not know how to join the fan group. Therefore, this is a good way to promote sales.

In addition to fan promotion, the fans of Kris Wu provide a strong customer base for the idol's music products. Fans with strong economic ability are willing to buy repetitively in order to boost the sales number of Kris Wu's albums. Two fans purchased 666 “*Antares*” albums at NetEase Music (a music platform) to support Kris Wu (Saved post 5). What's more, on February 14th, fans exchanged 18,868 RMB they won in one event for 1,424 albums as a Valentine's gift for Kris Wu (Saved post 6).

Buying goods related to the idol online: In addition to the consumption of concert tickets and albums, fans often buy some idol-related products, such as the respondent F1 saying that “*I have bought two cushions of Kris Wu on Taobao², and I hold them every day.*” In addition, the products endorsed by the idol are also a kind of products purchased by fans. For example, some items worn by idols in advertisements or used in daily life, such as clothes, shoes, bags, cosmetics or food, tend to attract the fans to buy. This is an expression of identification, but also to prove their love of idols. As shown in screenshots 6 and 7, some fans saw the news that Kris Wu was endorsing “*良品铺子*” (a snack brand) on Weibo, and they bought a lot of these snacks to eat online. And from the interview with F4, she mentioned that “*Fans have brought strong purchasing power to idols. When Kris Wu was on the Burberry show, his Trench Coat was not valued by the market. But after the show, many consumers went straight to buy this kind of coats.*”

² “Taobao” is a Chinese online shopping website and owned by Alibaba.

6.1.2 Fan Text Productions

As has been discussed by Michel de Certeau (1984) that consumption is also a kind of production, thus fans also playing a role as producers. Through social media, fans not only consume the Idol-related texts but also interpret and create these texts based on their own understanding. Jenkins (2013, p.24-28) drawing on the concept of "poachers" proposed by de Certeau, argues that fans are both nomads and poachers of popular culture who appropriate and reinterpret these popular texts. "Fans are especially productive" (Fiske, 1992, p. 34), and their productivity can be divided into three categories: semiotic productivity, enunciative productivity, and textual productivity (Fiske, 1992, p.37-42). Among them, the textual productivity of fans can better reflect their participatory practices, and textual productivity has become an important guarantee for the maintenance and development of the online fan community. Jenkins (2013, p.148) divided the texts reproduced by fans based on official texts into fan fiction texts, fan video texts, and fan music texts. Therefore, based on the fan productivity and one of the forms of participatory culture – expression (Jenkins, 2009), as well as through online observations of fan texts and interviews with different fan creators, this thesis focuses on the analysis of fan text productions from three aspects: fan fiction, fan photo collection and creation, as well as fan videomaking.

Fan Fiction: Through data collection and analysis, I found that fan fiction is the most popular fan text production. Fan fiction refers to the stories created by fans regarding their favorite idols, songs, advertising endorsements, movies, variety shows, etc., as original texts, which includes the transformation of the original texts and the creation of new texts. Specifically, on the one hand, the interpretation and transformation of the original texts mainly include: first, according to the content of the interview with the idol, fans interpret and create it. For example, one fan, based on the content of the NYLON interview, wrote a small story on Weibo to show Kris Wu's musical goal -- he wants to be a symbol of the music field (Saved post 7). Besides, one fan sorted out some documents about Kris Wu in a post, such as his daily life, music works, film and television works and some photos of him, in order to provide for everyone to know about him (Saved post 8). The long post (Saved post 9) based on the "Chinese New Rap" variety show, shows Kris Wu's musical attitude - he hopes that through his efforts can change people's fixed impression of rap music, so that the environment of rap music is getting better and better in China. Furthermore, fans draw on their idol's quotations

to write some posts. Screenshot 8 directly quotes one sentence of Kris Wu *"I hope that liking me is a proud thing"*, and saved post 10 uses one saying of Kris *"I am not sad, and I am a very optimistic person, although life is so cruel to me, I am still optimistic"*, which expresses the understanding and support for him.

On the other hand, there are also many fans creating original texts, and the most common forms are short poems and prose poems, as well as small prose and (short) stories. And through these forms, fans convey and express different kinds of information. For example, screenshot 9 (small prose), screenshot 10 (a very short story), and screenshot 11 (a prose poem) present that fans express their love and praise for Kris Wu through different ways. Many fans are willing to write some memories of Kris Wu to show the experiences of his life or work (Screenshot 12), his love to fans (Screenshot 13) and the experience of being a fan of Kris Wu (Screenshot 14). And the interviewee F2 indicated that

"I have written a novel on "Shuqi novel" (a novel software) three years ago. The content is that I met him at school, and he came to our school for a concert. In addition, I will occasionally write some short poems and send them in the group to let everyone give some comments."

The interviewee M2 also suggested that,

"..... I always wrote some short stories on Weibo, about the experiences of Kris and the life of the team before. It's like when Kris did something and said something. I posted them on Weibo for new fans to see, in order to better understand him."

Through these written texts, fans want to record some special moments related to Kris Wu, which can express their love to him and also let others get to know him. In addition, fans, through the short prose poem (Screenshot 15), and the combination of a short poem and prose (Screenshot 16) showed their blessing and supports for Kris Wu.

Fan Photo Collection and Creation: First of all, in the fan groups of Kris, there are some fans who have a certain painting skills or painting talents, and they are good at converting the original image of the idol into different forms of images, such as "cartoons" (Screenshot 17 and 18), "hand-drawn sketch" (Saved post11), and "oil painting pictures" (Screenshot 19). Based on the official image texts, these paintings produce new visual image texts by adding fans' own aesthetic characteristics. Secondly,

fans will use Photoshop and other software to modify the original images of the idol, adding appropriate filters (Screenshot 20) or adjusting the brightness. *“For example, in 2019, I collected a lot of pictures on the cover of CRASH Magazine and modified some of them and saved them in QQ space.”* the interviewee F7 said, and the screenshot 21 shows that she grouped the collected pictures of *CRASH Magazine* and then highlighted the original image. Finally, fans will also make emojis by adding some humorous texts into static or dynamic pictures (Screenshot 22). On the one hand, these emojis make the idol closer to fans, and on the other hand, they can achieve the purpose of entertainment.

Fan Videomaking: To some extent, the editing and production of fan video texts can better represent the identity of fans as “text poachers” (Jenkins, 2013, p.24), because in the process of fan videomaking, the video materials adopted by fans are not limited to the same original video texts. Instead, fans assemble new videos by using various video clips from different texts. For example, a fan made a video of Kris Wu’s partial musical work, in which he edited and pieced together different song videos according to his own feelings. And in this video, he showed that the original intention of cutting and making this video was to share Kris Wu's music with others and showed the uniqueness and diversity of his music (Saved post 12). In addition, as indicated by the interviewee M2,

“..... I felt that the video form is more visual than the written texts in expressing what I want to express, so I began to explore video making. After I like Kris Wu, I often have some interesting ideas which I want to share with other fans by using the form of video. Later, I found that this kind of sharing can bring me a lot of satisfaction and happiness.”

Therefore, some fans really enjoy making videos, because in this process, they illustrate their interesting ideas and obtain a kind of pleasure of expression and recognition.

In addition to the above-mentioned text forms, from the data, some examples show that fans will combine words with pictures or words with the video for text production, such as the screenshot 19 which is the combination of a short poem with a picture, and the saved post 13 which combines a short text with a video to show the support and blessing to him.

6.1.3 Online Supporting Activities

With the prevalence of K-pop fan culture, the supporting culture and supporting behaviors gradually spread in China, and they are developing rapidly. In the age of social media, the data can be regarded as an indicator for evaluating the values of stars, because for stars, the data is a symbol of popularity. Therefore, fan groups attach great importance to the network data traffic of the idol. The network data traffic here refers to the amount of website visits, which is used to describe the number of users accessing a website and the number of web pages viewed by users, and at the same time, the ranking of the idol on various data platforms (such as Weibo hot search ranking) is also a reflection of data traffic. The data visualizes the virtual popularity and better reflects the popularity of idols. Therefore, in order to prove the high popularity of the idol, fans will spare no effort to support the idol and spread the information of the idol through different forms of social media (blogs, vlogs) (Jenkins, 2009). The online supporting activities of fans reflect the form of collaborative problem-solving in the participatory culture which refers to individuals or groups working together on a media or media product (Jenkins, 2009).

Daily supporting activities: Among the online support activities, the most common is the daily support behavior of fans. First, most fans keep track of the idol through following the idol's Weibo account, and they always give a 'like' or make comments to the idol's posts, as the interviewee F3 said that *"I'll keep track of his dynamics and pay attention to his life through his Weibo account. And I'll comment on everything he posts. For example, when he's going to release a new song, I usually comment below to show my like and support."* Secondly, fans will check in and post some posts to the online fan community every day (screenshot 23 shows the homepage of the #Kris Wu# topic discussion community). Besides, in the community, fans can vote for the idol through clicking the button of "chart beating" (see the screenshot 23), which will contribute influences to improving the ranking of the idol in Weibo topic discussion communities (Screenshot 24). Thirdly, when it comes to the negative news or fake news of the idol, fans play an important role in idol public relations. Fans will report these kinds of news online immediately (Screenshot 25) or call on other fans to report them by posts (Saved post 14). Furthermore, fans engage in online arguments with detractors by posting posts (Screenshot 26 and 27), and the interviewee F7 expressed that

“I’ll argue with them. Last year, the online sport community “Hupu” posted on Weibo and disrespected Kris, when I saw this, I was really angry, although I knew that it may be useless to argue with them online, I still do that.”

While fans also indicated that they should keep rational in the process of arguing so as not to bring further negative influence on their idol (Interviewee F6). In order to reduce the impact of the negative news, fans also publish some posts about the positive influence of the idol, like interview F7 wrote a long post to defend Kris Wu’s image. She introduced that

“..... The content of the long post is about that: it cannot be denied that Kris Wu drives the development of Chinese hip-hop. Although his singing ability is not the best, he shows his advantages and his wonderful life. So please show your strength, when you disrespect him, let us be convinced.”

Controlling comments is another way to eliminate the impact of the negative news, which is through making good comments about the idol under the original post to drown out the negative comments (Interviewee 6).

Concert supporting activities: In addition to daily supporting activities, fans will spontaneously organize online promotional activities to expand the popularity and influence of the idol’s events. The development of social media and the Internet has provided a larger platform and diversified channels for news release and promotion. For Kris Wu’s concert tour this year which will be held in Nanjing, Beijing and Chongqing respectively, in order to highlight the popularity of the idol, the fan group has organized various promotion and support activities. On the one hand, the leaders will organize some official promotional activities. First, the fans who are responsible for photo or video production in the fan group will make the official promotional pictures of the concert (Screenshot 28) and videos (Saved post 15), which will be used for various promotional activities later. For example, the video in the saved posts 15 was planned to be launched at Human Coffee, a popular coffee shop in Nanjing, from March 4th to March 9th (Saved post 16). Besides, “KrisBar” as an official leader of the fan group organized several different parts of support activities, and the saved posts 17,

18 and 19 show the first three parts with different themes that planned to launch promotional pictures (Screenshot 29, 30 and 31 which illustrate the design preview of the promotional pictures and a preview of the support effect) in different places in Nanjing, Beijing and Shanghai at different times. In addition to the official promotional activities organized by the fan group, the fan group will also join hands with other organizations to support Kris Wu's concert, such as the raffle event organized jointly with the “Mafengwo” APP³, in which if the number of participants reaches 1000 people, the promotional photo or video of Kris Wu’s concert can be launched in Beijing Sanlitun for one week⁴, and be played as the advertisement on “Mafengwo” App for one day (Saved post 20).

In addition, there are also some individual supporting activities of fans. For instance, the interviewee F8 (one supporter) said that

“Then this year, I tried my best to lead my group members to support for the concert of Kris. The fans who are responsible for writing will write some promotional articles, some fans make promotional photos, and some produce small videos, etc,”

What’s more, some fans made some simple pictures (Screenshot 32), spread them in Weibo and QQ groups, and call on everyone to use these pictures as their avatars of Weibo or QQ, which could also play a certain role in promoting the concert.

Birthday supporting activities: Birthday supporting activities refer to a series of birthday celebrations that fans make before their idol’s birthday and during the birthday day. On the one hand, the birthday supporting activities express the fans' deep wishes for the idol’s birthday, and on the other hand, they also play a certain role in publicizing

³ “Mafengwo” APP is a BBS about tourism, to provide a travel communication platform for the majority of travelers. Users in the platform can share their own travel stories and provide travel tips. Besides, this App also provide some information about hotels, airfares, visas and other aspects.

⁴ Taikoo Li Sanlitun (Chinese: 三里屯太古里), formerly Sanlitun Village, is a popular shopping center in the Sanlitun area of the Chaoyang District in Beijing, China.

the popularity of the idol. For example, November 6 is Kris Wu's birthday, and the birthday supporting activities of fans for the idol are different countries, connecting online and offline. Interviewee F3 suggested that on that day, almost all fans would post on Weibo to wish Kris Wu a happy birthday (Screenshot 33), and she also said *"Also, when his birthday is celebrated, I will send my best wishes to him through a private message on Weibo."* Fans also post their own made birthday gifts on Weibo. Interviewee F1 made a birthday wishes booklet for Kris Wu for his birthday last year. Besides, some fans collected birthday wishes from fans from different countries and made them into a video which was spread on different online platforms (like Weibo, Bilibili⁵), as the birthday gift for Kris Wu (Saved post 21).

Fan Charity Activities: Fan charity activities refer to the social charity activities that fans participate in in the name of their own idol. These charity activities with no fixed source of funds, no fixed participants, no fixed organizational form, carried out by the fans group on their own initiative. Screenshot 34 summarizes that in 2018, the fan group of Kris Wu conducted a total of 43 charity activities and encouraged everyone to devote themselves to the charity activities in the new year. To be specific, October 17th, 2018 is the National Poverty Alleviation Day, and Kris Wu posted on Weibo to call on people to carry out poverty alleviation actions (Saved post 22). *"After seeing his post on Weibo, I donated clothes and books for the impoverished mountainous areas."*, the respondent F2 said. Fans also organized some corresponding poverty alleviation activities. For example, fans came to a small mountain village in Shandong province and distributed down jackets and cooking oil to poor families, hoping they could have a better life (Screenshot 35).

In addition, fans have organized some other kinds of charity activities. In March this year, fans organized a charity event to encourage children to be filial to their parents, in which the fan volunteers guided children to put hand cream on their parents' hands and express their gratitude to them (Saved post 23, 24). On the one hand, these fan

⁵ Bilibili (Chinese: 哔哩哔哩) is a video sharing website themed around animation, comic, and game (ACG) based in China, where users can submit, view, and add commentary subtitles on videos.

charity activities are an important part of fans' participation in idol image building. On the other hand, they also enrich traditional public welfare forms and promote the development of social public welfare undertakings.

6.1.4 Summary

This section provides a comprehensive overview of fan practices, which can be summarized into three aspects: online consumption behaviors, fan text productions, and online supporting activities. These three aspects mainly relate to the theory – participatory culture of Jenkins (2006, 2009, 2013). In particular, from the interpretation of the meaning of participatory culture, we can see that fans first act as consumers who consume the goods or information related to the idol, like the consumption behaviors mentioned above. Besides, based on one of the features of participatory culture – low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement (Jenkins, 2009), and Fiske's (1992) elaboration of fan productivity, fans also play the role of producers, that is, they can participate in the production of media content. In this role, Jenkins (2013) argues that fans are both poachers and nomads, who interpret and create original texts, and form new ones, which includes three types: fan fiction, fan photo, and fan videomaking, based on the form of participatory culture – expression (Jenkins, 2009).

According to the forms of participatory culture -- collective problem-solving and circulation, fans are dedicated to online support campaigns. They take advantage of their collective intelligence (Jenkins, 2009) to support their idols in various ways. In the above-mentioned fan practices, fans have certain social connections with their idols and other fans, which is related to the characteristic of participatory culture -- people feel some degree of social connection with one another (Jenkins, 2009).

The next section, therefore, moves on to discuss the different participatory intensities of fans in the fan group by analyzing the decision-making process and power relations of fans in these fan activities.

6.2 Participatory Intensity of Fans in the Fan Group

Drawing on Carpentier's (2016) political and critical perspective of participation which emphasizes decision making and power relations, as well as the collected empirical data, we can find that there is a hierarchy between fans. Almost every interviewee has expressed that although everyone in the fan group has the equal rights and opportunities to love and support their idol, as well as participate in activities, there are actually different roles of fans in the fan group. From the answers of the respondents, it can be concluded that in online fan community, fans are in different levels depending on how long they have joined the community, how active they are in the community (such as how much time they have spent in the community and how many posts they have published), as well as how much they have contributed to the idol. Different levels of fans have different rights and responsibilities. Therefore, based on Carpentier's (2016) four-level analytical model, I will make a detailed analysis and elaboration on the participatory intensity of fans by focusing on the fan group of Kris Wu.

6.2.1 The Process and the Field

There are three sub-processes related to online fan communities – the management subprocess, the activity organizing subprocess, and the subprocess of text production and distribution. In the management process, the leaders in the fan group play a major role, which means that they can decide how the fan group will be managed and operated. But other fan members can express their opinions and suggestions for each decision-making process regarding the management and operation of the fan group. In the activity organizing process, since most of the activities are organized by fans themselves, it is the fans that decide what kind of activities will be organized, as well as how to carry out the activities. But it needs to be highlighted that there are different roles of fans in the fan activities. In the process of text production and distribution, fans are relatively free to choose what type of texts and what content they want to produce and post, but in some way, this process is restricted by the leaders, which will be analyzed in detail later. A fan group is like an operation team, with a corporate structure. According to the function, in general, there are different roles of fans in each online fan group, and each role of fans is dependent on the goal of the process, and their roles are all closely linked with each other.

The goal of the online fan community is to gather fans from all over China and even all over the world, to provide a place for fans to share information and communicate with each other so that they can cooperate to better support the idol. The field where this process -- online fan community, takes place is the area of social media which has provided more beneficial conditions and opportunities to achieve the goal of the online fan community. Fans have organized their own online fan groups on different social media platforms, such as Weibo and Tencent QQ. Considering the relationship between online fan groups and the field of social media, social media play an important role in the online fan groups, and at the same time, online fan groups are of the great importance to the field because of its huge influence. In the era of traditional media, idols are beyond the reach of fans. In contrast, built on the explanation of characteristics of participatory culture, especially the features of collective intelligence, as well as reducing barriers to civic participation (Jenkins, 2009), it can be said that the development of social media not only breaks the barrier between the idol and fans, and between fans and fans, but also provides enough media space for the construction of fan communities and enriches the types of fan groups. Among the 10 interviewed fans of Kris Wu, they have shown their different ideas on the role of social media for individual fans and fan groups, but all they demonstrated that social media plays an active role in their fan lives. According to their answers, the following points can be summarized: first of all, the dissemination of social media information is timely, which makes it more convenient for fans to get idol information, as interviewee F4 expressed that *“It (social media) can help you find the latest news of your idol in a timely manner and let you know about him quickly.”* Secondly, social media has shortened the distance between idols and fans, fans and fans, and enhanced the participation and interactivity of fans. This view was echoed by the interviewee M1 who indicated that

“..... For the fan groups, social media like a bridge between each fan group. Since there are many different fan groups of Kris Wu, and if they want to organize some activities, they can share idol-related information with each other and communicate with each other through social media, like Weibo or QQ, which breaks down the boundaries of time and space. That is, through social media, the communication and collaboration between fans and fan groups are much easier.”

In the online fan group, fans both work and communicate with the actors of the process (different roles of fans), and the actors of the field (the idol, the management company and the official support group of the idol). The process is fairly democratically designed. However, as most interviewees mentioned that certain rules and restrictions must be applied in order to fulfill the responsibilities of the process, for example, according to the interview with F6, she said that in order to regulate and restrain the behavior of fans, so as not to cause bad influence on the idol, there are relevant rules in the fan group.

6.2.2 The Actors and Identities

According to the information provided by the interviewees, the identities of fans can be divided into four types: leaders, different roles of creators, supporters of different activities and less active fans. Besides, other identities related to the idol include the management company and the official support group, but in this thesis, I will focus on the analysis of the four types of identities of fans. Considering fans as the main research object group, their relationships are mapped below (Figure 2.). Among all the actors, the idol is at the core, and the management company is mainly responsible for the overall development and management of the idol, such as idol's positioning, packaging and promotion, idol's commercial value development, and it provides idol with more good resources and economic support. The official support group usually has more direct contact with the idol compared with the online fan community. For example, the supporter, F8 indicated that

“in the fanbase, there will be an official support group (only one) which gets the relevant information of the idol faster and earlier, and the group posts it online, then fans will know the latest news of the idol, and the activity schedule of the idol.”

The online fan communities are not the official organization, and are usually organized by fans themselves, but they are well structured and organized, in which there are different specific role assignments, as the interviewee M1 suggested that

“there usually will be one or several leaders in each online fan group, who are usually builders and organizers of the fan group. Besides, the roles of fans also include the creators who are responsible for producing the written texts, photo texts, and video texts, as well as the supporters of activities and general group members.”

All roles of fans are positioned by fans themselves. In general, fans will position their fan roles according to their skills and advantages. Different roles of fans in the fan group get along well with each other, and they cooperate to support Kris Wu. The leaders of the online fan groups generally have a relatively high number of followers on Weibo and the posts they send will be forwarded, commented or liked by many people. It can be said that they are the ones who have more voice in the fan group (Interviewee F8). They are responsible for the management and operation of the fan group, like recruiting members and setting the rules, dealing with all kinds of things. As the images of fans will have a certain impact on the idol, the leader, F6 said that “..... *I try my best to manage the fan group well enough, in order to have a positive influence on the idol.*” Leaders are also very helpful in the fan group whenever any fan needs help. “*there is a uniform format for the name of the fans in my fan group. When any new members join in, I will help them to change their name if they asked me to do that.*” (one leader, interviewee F4). Leaders are also more experienced compared with new fans, and they teach other fans a lot of things, which was described by the interviewee M2 as follows: “*for the fans who just entered the fan group don’t understand a lot, the leaders usually share some information with them, so that they can have a certain understanding of the fan group as well as Kris Wu.*”

In addition to the leaders, there are also creators of different functions between whom there is a strong cooperative relationship. The creators are creative, for instance, the photo creators are responsible for producing creative posters, the Q version image of Kris Wu; besides, the video creator M2 with a big imagination often has some interesting ideas which she will show and share with others through making videos. The content and layout of articles, photos, videos are all decided by creators themselves. However, leaders will check and make some suggestions before publishing the content. Supporters are those “*who are in charge of the specific supporting activities, such as the concert.*” (Interview M2). They usually pay close attention to all kinds of information about the idol, so that they can help their idol at the first time. For example, the supporter F8 mentioned that when Kris Wu has a new album release, she led her members to vote on different music platforms. Except for the less active fans who just like Kris Wu and seldom contribute to the idol (Interview F1), the other roles of fans are actively speaking in the fan group or actively participate in the organized activities. The less active fan F3 said that she rarely speaks in the group while the leader, F6

indicated that *“as long as I have time, I will communicate with other fans and attend the activities, like checking in the fan group every day.”* In the online fan group, there are some rules for all fans regarding being a member of the fan group (Screenshot 36) and participating in activities (Screenshot 37). All actors need to obey the rules of the fan group, including the leaders, but these rules are mainly used to regulate the behavior of group members, which makes them feel a bit restricted. Anyone who violates the group rules will be warned and those who repeatedly violate the group regulation will be kicked out of the group.

From the analysis of the actors' positions and identities, and as interviewee F4 said, *“in my mind, the dimension of fan level is like this: leaders > creators = supporters > less active fans,”* we can see that in the online fan group, leaders, creators and supporters are relatively privileged, and leaders are more privileged than other actors. Less active fans are considered non- privileged, but as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) claim that identities are contingent and fluid (Carpentier, 2005), through the process, less active fans also get some free hands to do things, which makes them feel empowered. As the less active fan F3 expressed that the online fan group has become a symbol of democracy and power, in which regardless of the age, gender, or different social classes, every fan is relatively free to do things, as long as they do not do anything that will have a bad influence on the idol. For example, fans can choose and decide what they want to do and how they will do it. As the less active fan M1 said

“I just a general member of the fan group, so I don't have any special duties, but I can participate any activities of the fan group if I want, and leaders or other fans will not force me to do anything.”

What's more, for some decision-making moments, they can provide their own opinions or suggestions, such as the suggestions for setting up the group regulation. For each fan, they are equal in loving and supporting their idols, and they are free to contribute when ready and their contribution will be appropriately valued.

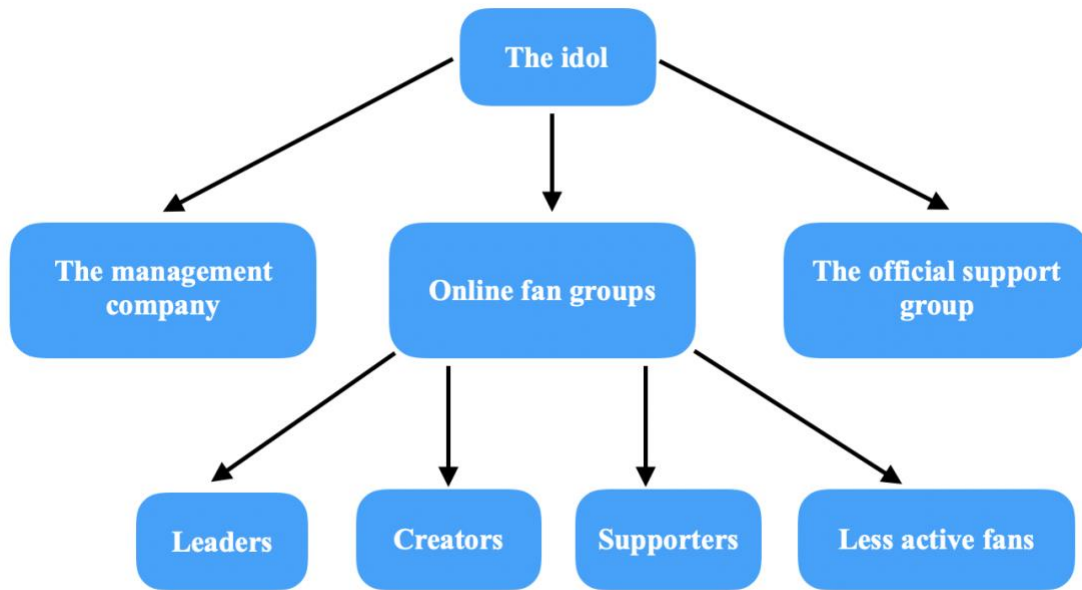


Figure 2: *The actors' relation map*

6.2.3 Decision-making

Considering fans' participation and empowerment in the particular participatory process, the decision-making moments have been charted into three categories which will be analyzed in this part. These categories are fan group management, activity organizing, and text production/distribution.

Fan group management: Fan group management as a category of decision-making, includes the recruitment and selection of members, as well as the formulation of group rules. The hierarchical aspects and the material positions of the actors become visible in the management process of the fan group. The process of fan group management was primarily the leaders' responsibility but was supported by other actor-groups.

Firstly, for the recruitment and selection of group members, in order to check whether the people who want to join the fan group are a true fan of Kris Wu or not, as well as how much they know about Kris Wu, there are usually some questions for them to answer before joining the group, which are all about Kris Wu, and most of them are very basic, such as what Kris does not like to eat, what you like about Kris and how long have you been a fan of Kris (Screenshot 38). These questions are set by the leaders.

In general, it is up to the leaders to decide whether he or she can join the group. However, *“other fans of the group can express their opinions and communicate with the leader if they think the final decision is not appropriate. Then I will consider their opinions comprehensively and make the final decision on the selection of group members.”* (Interviewee F6). Besides, group members can invite their fan friends to join, but they must get approval from the leader.

Secondly, it is the leaders that decide how the fan group should be managed. Considering the anonymity of online speeches and the influence of fans' speeches on idol's images to some extent, leaders have spontaneously formulated the group regulations which are mainly derived from the contradictions that are often encountered. *“Generally, these rules and regulations are generally emerged based on the mistakes people often make in the group.”* (Interviewee F2). These rules are varied in content, but in essence, they are mainly implemented to restrain fans' behaviors, which makes it easy to manage the group. Setting group regulations is mainly the leaders' responsivity, by following *“the leaders list the specific directions first, and the creators of the text, according to the instructions of the leaders, are responsible for summarizing these directions into a formal text which will be published in the group announcement.”* (Interviewee F6). However, we cannot ignore that in the process of setting group regulation, except for the leaders, other fans can also express their opinions. *“when setting up group regulations, leaders will ask for suggestions from us, but the final decision is up to the leaders.”*, as the less active fan, F1 said. All actors (leaders, creators, supporters, and less active fans) indicated that they are all obligated to obey group rules, and the less active fan M1 suggested that *“any behavior that does not comply with the regulations will be punished.”*

Activity organizing: Activity organizing refers to the decision-making moments of organizing different activities and communication between each actor-group. Every fan can organize activities to support their idol as long as they want, no matter the scale or form of the activities. Since the fans are the organizers of activities, they have the freedom to decide how to organize. The freedom of fans to organize activities had two sides according to which their positions in the field varied. On the one hand, they did not feel too restricted by the management company and the official support group of the idol, and they are pretty free to do many things. As the interviewee F8 said that

“I feel that after entering the fan group for so many years, we are relatively free to do whatever we want. We can freely express our love for idols and the concern for idols. Now a lot of fan activities are organized by us.”

But on the other hand, fans have to meet the requirements and obey the rules of the fan group in order to be a member of the fan group. *“So, I realized these rules myself. Since if I don’t abide by the rules, I will be punished. I don’t want to leave the fan group. Besides, I think that being a fan of Kris Wu, we should do something good for him.”* Most fans felt obligated to represent the idol, so they have to pay attention to their behaviors so as not to have a bad influence on the idol.

The material positions of actors in this category of decision-moments are not apparent, because fans get much freedom to make decisions by themselves. The democratic and collective aspects of the activity organization in some fan groups were strongly highlighted by fans, giving an impression of full participation (Pateman, 1970). The democratic aspects are shown in different activities. For example, the interviewee F8 said that

“My own group is more democratic. The final decision of many of our activities is made by many of us together. For example, when we decide when to gather, the leaders in my group first ask the majority members of the group, what time they are free, and finally, decide to gather at the time when the number of people with free time is the most.”

From this citation, we can see that everyone in the fan group is equal in the decision-making of the activity organization and they have the rights to make their voices be heard. What’s more, during the ticketing session of this year's concert, “KrisBar”, one leader of the “#Kris Wu# topic discussion community”, published a post (Saved post 25) to ask fans to vote on whether the group ticket rules should be changed: should there be a question and answer session when buying tickets? (Because there are some fans who encounter scammers when buying concert tickets online.) This post shows that due to respecting the different considerations and ideas of fans, “KrisBar” organized the vote, asking the opinions and suggestions of fans, and fans made the decision.

However, in some other fan groups, some hierarchical aspects during the activity organization process emerged from the interviews. The decision-making was more in the hands of the leader, creating power imbalances and some level of uncertainty regarding positions amongst other fans. “..... *when it comes to the gathering of fans, some fan groups have strict rules, that is, the leader decides what time to gather, and every fan of the group must gather at that certain time, otherwise it will violate the group rules.*” (Interviewee F1) This remark neglects the recognition of full participation of fans in the process and positions other roles of fans somewhat undemocratically within their group. But this has created comparable resistance within the fan group - as the less active fan, F1 expressed that for many student fans, they cannot strictly abide by the rule — gathering at a certain time, because they may study at that time and have no time to gather. Therefore, nowadays, in most of the fan groups, the time for gathering is not fixed, and it depends on the free time of most group members. The collective aspects were more emphasized by the interviewees, as the interviewee F3 said that “..... *the power of one person is not enough, but the power of a group is great.*” In addition to the collective behavior within the fanbase, the fan groups cooperate with the management company or the official support group to help support the idol's development.

Text production/distribution: Text production and distribution in the process incorporate the moments of the content of the texts as well as the decision of whether the texts can be published or not. On the one hand, every fan can engage in producing and publishing their own texts in different social media platforms to show their ideas and opinions. And they are relatively free to choose what they want to write about (the topic and the content) as well as how they write the texts (the form of the texts, like fan fiction, photo, video or other forms). As the creator, M2 said that “..... *Their choice of content is unrestricted, as long as they like it.*” Fans have the right to make their own decisions for the content, and other fans, especially the privileged actors (leaders, creators, and supporters), will not make any changes and interventions of the texts. However, on the other hand, there are still some restrictions for fans that they should follow when writing. “*if there are some posts which abuse other idols, which are about the idol's private lives, or which may have a bad impact on Kris Wu, the leaders will intervene*” (Interview F7). Therefore, when writing the texts, fans are not completely free. In particular, in general, there are some limits for the content that fans post in the

fan group. For instance, the creator, F2 argued that *“the fan group does not allow fans to send any irrelevant information or advertisements in the fan group.”* And also, the leaders will check the content before publishing, in order to avoid any problems. Thus, *“if the leader found that there were some words or sentences that were not very appropriate in the texts, the leader will communicate with the fan, discussing that maybe she or he can remove the words or sentences, or change another way to write”*, interviewee M2 said.

The decision of whether the texts can be published or not is made by fans themselves. But leaders have a responsibility to control what fans post. As the leader, F4 said that

“..... In general, if someone sends irrelevant information to the fan group, I will warn them not to send it again. And we give them three chances in the group. If they send irrelevant information more than three times, they will be kicked out of the group.”

Every fan, although has some free hands for text production and distribution, as indicated by the leader F6, *“if they do not obey the rules considering the content and publish, they will be punished.”* Therefore, almost every fan tries their best to create and publish texts while following group rules.

6.2.4 Power Relations

This part aims to identify the different power positions of each actor under scrutiny and their relations with other actors in the process. Based on the theory of Carpentier about power relations elaborated in chapter four (Carpentier, 2016), the following sections try to identify the generative, restrictive and resistant aspects of power to each decision-making moment, compare the power positions of the actors in the fan group and evaluate the (un)balanced nature of the power relations of privileged and non-privileged.

Power within fan group management: Generative power components within the process of fan group management can be made visible by asking the questions ‘What can each role of fans generate and what is generated for them?’ (Carpentier, 2016, p.82). As had already analyzed the different decision-making moments in the chapter above, it becomes clear that the decision of fan group management is located in the actor-group of leaders. Hence, it can be seen the generative power aspects for leaders. Specifically,

leaders are in charge of the recruitment and selection, as well as the setting of the group rules, which are chosen independently and driven by leaders' decisions.

Because of the group regulations, the other roles of fans do not have much to say in these two decision-making moments. The group rules thus functions as restrictive power component for other fans, since in some aspects the rules constrain the fans' freedom, not only because to be a fan, they must meet some requirements, like you must be the true fan of Kris Wu, but also because of the restrictions of what they can say and what they can do for being involved in the fan group. In addition, the questions that everyone has to answer before joining the fan group can be considered as another aspect of restrictive power towards fans, because those who have not answered these questions correctly cannot join the fan group. The leader, F6 expressed that these rules are aimed to be restrictive – intentions of the practice of power do not always align with the actual outcome (Carpentier, 2016), but they convey a feeling of restriction of behaviors to the fans. Due to the lack of decisions in the management moments, no generative components of power by other roles of fans can be determined. However, it cannot be ignored that the power is generated for other fans except leaders, by giving the opportunities for them to express their opinions and suggestions regarding the decision of the selection of fans and the formulation of the group rules. Consequently, the fans show a small amount of resistance to, which manifests in internal discontent with the leaders or groups rules. Like the less active fan, M1 said that

“It's a good practice to set questions to check fans in order to avoid fake fans coming in. But I think some questions are too difficult for those who just become fans of Kris Wu, or even those experienced old fans cannot answer these questions, which results in many real fans cannot join the group.”

In addition to this resistance behavior, when I conducted the online observation on Weibo, I found that there some fans posting on Weibo to complain that they really want to join the fan group, but they cannot find and they do not know how to join (Saved post 26). And below the post, many fans comments, saying that they also could not find an organization.

Power within activity organizing: Considering the activity organizing decision of fans, as discussed above, each role of fans has the equal opportunity to organize activities, which can be seen as the generative component of power for every fan. For each activity, regardless of the scale of the activity, the organizer will communicate and discuss with other fans to make the final decision, which is another aspect of generative power. Here, fans have free hands to decide on what kind of activity they want to organize and how to organize and manage the activity. Fans are completely independent in this process and most decisions are made by them together. This process fully reflects the power of democracy and the collective as has been discussed in the chapter above. Because of the democratic and collective aspects in this process, the restrictive power components are minor.

However, the generative power components of the activity organizing resulted from fans' resistance in form of a complaint during previous strict rules for the activity. As mentioned by the less active fan F1,

“since many student fans cannot strictly follow the rule to gather at a specific time, now in most fan groups, the decision of gathering is made by the group members together.”

Power within text production/distribution: Based on the discussion of the different decision-making moments in the process of text production and distribution, we can see that producing and posting texts online are the generative power aspects for each role of fans. Fans function independently regarding the selection of the topic, content, and the forms of the texts. A restrictive power component within the text production is the criteria or guidelines for fans that they must follow when they are writing their own texts. Thus, they are not totally free considering what to write about. Another aspect of restrictive power is in the decision-making moments of text distribution, that is, based on the limits of the content that fans can write, *“if they send some restricted information in the online fan group, their sending will definitely be withdrawn.”*, the interviewee M2 said.

Considering these restrictive aspects, from the interviews with fans, there are few resistances from them, but there are in fact, following that *“although there are the limits for the content, there is still much irrelevant information sent in my group. For example,*

some people often send some links, such as asking for help to vote, asking for a “like”, or advertising.” (Interview F3). In this case, the leader, F4 said that “I usually give the group members three chances. If they violate the group rules more than three times, they will be kicked out of the group.”

Power positions: Comparing the power relations between leaders, creators, and supporters and less active fans, one has to distinguish between positions in the field and in the process. While in the field, these four roles of fans are belonging to the online fan groups, which are relatively independent and not subject to the management company and the official support group of the idol. As the interviewee F2 said that

“There are no power relations between fans and the other actor-groups. Correspondingly, the power of fans’ voice is also continuously enhanced, and the influence of fans plays an important role in the development of the idol, which cannot be ignored.”

Thus, the fans are becoming privileged, but the most privileged actor in the field is the idol. In the process of fan group management, leaders are more privileged than the other role of fans. But taking a look at the process of activity organization and text production/distribution, it becomes clear that there is a strong change in power relations. Every fan all plays a much crucial role, and they are being empowered through the whole process, due to the freedom and recognition which they receive from other actors.

Even though in comparison to other actor-groups (creators, supporters and less active fans), leaders are the most privileged actors in the process, since they organize and manage the fan group, formulate the rules and implementation and are responsible for the final decision making in most moments, but the difference of privilege between the actors diminishes. This indicates a more equal spread of power and a more balance between each fan when drawing on Foucault’s construct of power as “a general matrix of force relations at a given time, in a given society” (Dreyfus and Rabinow in Carpentier, 2016). But when proceeding on the assumption that decisions are moments where power is, (or is not), exercised (Bachrach and Baratz’s, 1962) and focusing on the decision-making moments that were discussed earlier, it becomes visible that especially in the fan group management process – the process that allegedly seems to provide the most privilege to the leaders. In the two other processes, the distribution of privilege is not obvious which means that every role of fans is equal, but some decisions

are restricted by the rules of the fan group. This shows that the fan group practices power with some restrictive components that are not immediately visible during the process and thus the leaders are still highly superior on the privilege scale.

Considering the evaluation of the (un)balanced nature of the power relations of privileged and non-privileged, this brings us back to the Foucauldian dimension of productive power and the overall effect “what kind of participation is being produced within the participatory process under scrutiny?” (Carpentier, 2016, p.84). Through the overall analysis, different roles of fans in the fan group show different levels of participation in different subprocess based on Pateman’s understanding of participation. But every fan is being empowered through the fan group, which means that the fan group strengthens the engagement of fans in the whole process through numerous endeavors, and the power relations between fans, and between fans and other actors of the field (the idol, the management company and the official support group of the idol) are becoming balanced.

6.2.5 Summary

Taken together, based on the analytical model of Carpentier (2016), these results suggest that in the whole participatory process, fans are given the idea of being empowered or privileged and of being able to participate in the activities related to the idol, but we have to admit that the main power actually lies with the leaders. In addition, not every fan achieves individual empowerment since the less active fans seldom participate in these processes. However, greater efforts must be made to challenge institutions that permit or even generate power imbalances within society.

According to Carpentier’s (2011) interpretation of minimalist and maximalist participation, and connecting to Pateman’s understanding of participation (1970 in Carpentier, 2016), the fans, in a whole, participate to a full degree, especially in the subprocesses of activity organization and text production/production, each fan has the power to make decisions equally. But considering the actual power relations the analysis conveys, we can see that in the subprocess of fan group management, not every fan has the full participation, since the decision making for this subprocesses is influenced by leaders and other fans, but finally leaders have more power than other group members regarding who makes the final decisions.

7. Conclusion and Discussion

7.1 Conclusion

The study found that in the current media environment, the behavior of fans is heavily dependent on social media. The development of fandom is closely related to the development of new media technologies (Jenkins, 2006c), so the role of fans has changed dramatically compared to the past. To Jenkins (2006b), fans are active, and in addition, they take the media in their own hands. In the participatory culture, fans act as both consumers and producers (Jenkins, 2006c). Out of their love for idols, fans will mobilize all their enthusiasm to participate in idol-related activities. Through online observations of fans' participation behaviors and interviews with fans of different roles, this thesis outlines fan practices on social media (**RQ1**). Firstly, fans as fanatic consumers show their strong consuming power in different aspects: the consumption of concert tickets, albums, and idol-related goods. Secondly, fans are regarded as poachers and nomads by Jenkins (2013), who show their textual productivity in fan fiction, fan photo production, and fan videomaking. Among these created texts, some are adaptations of official original texts, and some are their original creations. Thirdly, another important fan practice that most fans engage in is the online supporting activities, and particularly daily supporting activities, concert supporting activities, birthday supporting activities and fan charity activities are elaborated in detail.

Through the analysis of fan practices in social media, it can be said the participation of fans has been enhanced, and they are being empowered through these fan practices – the audience is given the right to choose their own idol, and they are free to contribute (Jenkins, 2006b, p.64). However, Fuchs (2014, p.55) argues that the perspective of Jenkins' fan participation ignores the power relations at different levels of fans and different decision-making moments. Therefore, turning to **RQ2**, based on Carpentier's (2016) four-level analytical model, the participatory intensity of different role of fans in the fan group was investigated. First of all, all fans are equal to participate in any fan practice related to the idol as long as they want, but within each fan group, there is a division of roles for fans: leaders, creators, supporters and less active fans (ordinary fans). Then, three subprocesses in relation to the online fan group were outlined, and different decision-making moments and power relations within these three subprocesses were analyzed. The empirical results indicate that the hierarchy in the fan

group is not very obvious, although the leaders are considered as the most privileged actors in the fan group who have more decision-making voice compared with other actor-groups (creators, supporters and less active fans). Through the analysis of the three subprocesses, every fan has the freedom to express their own opinions and suggestions, especially in the subprocess of activity organizing and text production/distribution, almost all decisions are made by fans together. Therefore, according to the Pateman's understanding of participation (1970 in Carpentier, 2016), the participation of fans is in a full degree to some extent. But in the subprocess of fan group management, the roles of fans — creators, supporters, and less active fans, participate only partially and are strongly restricted by the leaders, since the leaders are more powerful in making the final decision.

7.2 Discussion and Reflection

7.2.1 Earlier Research

Compared with the previous research on fan participation, this thesis delves into a particular sub-cultural group of Kris Wu's fans in Chinese social media and reaps corresponding outcomes with new and original findings. On the one hand, through reviewing the previous research, I find that there are many various dimensions of fan culture, like the research on fan identity, fan and social media, as well as fan participation. Particularly, the research on fan participation is a research hotspot in the field of fan culture. Bury (2017) points out that the rapid adoption of social media has served to expand participatory culture, and some scholars (McCarthy et al., 2014) conducted studies on the use of social media of UK football clubs which shows the important role of social media in managing brand presence. Through the analysis, this study finds that social media plays a significant role in the process of fan participation. To be specific, the advent of social media updates a fresh form of communication and interaction and provides a unique space where fans can associate with each other. The traditional media, with which the fans first came into being, was progressively replaced by social media. The transition of media usage enables fans to be directly connected with each other and provides a new environment. Characteristics, function, and influence of social media further offer advantageous conditions for both the individual fans and fan group to facilitate their participation. The establishment of virtual communities provides more opportunities for fans to organize or participate in activities,

as well as makes the fan group more systematic and sustainable, which deeply enhances the sub-cultural identity of the fans.

With the development of information technology, fan practices have also changed in the new media environment. This thesis based on Jenkins' participatory culture, outlines three types of fan practices on social media, which can be proved from the examination of Yang's (2009) research. Yang (2009) examine Corns' (the name of the fan group) dedicated support of Li Yuchun's (a Chinese singer) music career, which shows that fans are assumed the intriguing new role of 'prosumers' that integrates fan production, fan promotion, and fan consumption all in one. Therefore, this study has added new empirical data for previous research.

On the other hand, some studies indicate that the power of fans is being enhanced (Yang, 2009; Yeates, 2018; Zhang and Mao, 2013). However, MacDonald (1998) through exploring the impact of computer technology on the fan base, found that there are hierarchical systems in computer-mediated communication, which suggests that fans are not totally equal or free. In this thesis, we can see that these two perspectives of fan participation both have been definitely proved. From the analysis above, the results show that the power relation between fans varies in different decision-making moments. Fans, at first sight, participate to a full degree in the whole process, but considering the specific subprocess, some fans participate only partially since they are restricted by the leaders. The bias of the fans' participation becomes apparent by comparing the above-mentioned three subprocesses.

7.2.2 Limitations

Of course, there are still some limitations in this research. First of all, this thesis takes the fan group of Kris Wu as the research object, trying to show the basic situation of the development of fandom, but Kris Wu's fans are only a small part of all Chinese fan groups, thus not reflecting the characteristics of other fan groups and not representing all fan groups. Secondly, this thesis is mainly concerned with the social media – Weibo and focuses on the “#Kris Wu# topic discussion community”, which pays little attention to other virtual fan communities, resulting in the lack of in-depth discussion and research of some problems. Thirdly, considering the theories applied for the analysis, this thesis has constructed a clear structure of the theories of Jenkins' participatory

culture and Carpentier's analytical model, which is helpful to analyze fan participation in the social media era, especially fan power. However, to some extent, these theories fail to shed light on the fan collective power, which is an important aspect for analysis, because fan collective power has contributed to the development of the idol. In the theoretical framework, this thesis did not mention any theories about (online) fan communities, but this study mainly focused on the online fan groups of Kris Wu and investigated their participatory practices. Specifically, in Jenkins' participatory cultural theory, he mentioned one characteristic of participatory culture – collective intelligence, but this thesis did not elaborate on it. Besides, Carpentier's four-level analytical model focuses on power, but it was mainly employed for analyzing the equality of power relations between fans. Therefore, these theories did not appropriately capture fans collective power. In addition, due to the lack of data collection, this thesis neglects the conflicts within the fan group, which is also of certain significance to this study. The research on fan participation in this thesis mainly focuses on the positive image of fans, while the criticism is slightly insufficient. To some extent, it also leads to a lack of critical research on fans.

7.2.3 Social Relevance

In the era of social media, fans make full use of social advantages and group advantages to create a series of social practices, improve the connotation of fan culture, create an unprecedented fan economy, and produce a huge social impact.

In terms of fans, in the process of fan practices, they can constantly improve their personal abilities. Due to their efforts in the fan practices, some fans have become professional photographers, some have become excellent video editors, and some have become an expert at advertisement plan, and some became crisis public relations experts. The ability and strength of the fan group are invisibly promoting the development of society. In addition, under the influence of Korean pop culture, the fan base of China is getting bigger and bigger, and their influence is growing stronger and stronger, and even affecting our consumption patterns and habits in daily life. As a popular idol in recent years, Kris Wu has achieved great success in the Chinese entertainment market. In addition to the strength and efforts of the idol, the social practices of the fan groups have played a major role.

Through the analysis, we can find that the number of fans and their level of dedication makes them a force to be reckoned with. This study has presented that there are a lot of fans of Kris Wu who have made great contributions to the development of the idol. Kris Wu has more followers than many elected political people, such as Vladimir Putin (Kris Wu has 46 million fans on Weibo, and Putin has 3609 followers on Twitter). The sheer number of fans makes them a force that commercial actors need to be taken into account. Fans, as the main consumers of the idol, have shown greatly commercial power. On the one hand, they cost much money to buy every idol-related good, and on the other hand, they will try their best to promote the idol and idol-related products, thus increasing people's purchasing power. Besides, fans and fan groups are well-organized. There are no official organizers to lead fans, and all online fan bases are spontaneously organized by fans. They hold the idea of being united towards the idol and show strong actions in supporting the idol. Therefore, the power of fans has exerted a certain influence on the economy and society.

The three waves of fandom which have been discussed in Chapter 3 (3.1), present a positive perspective on fan research, especially in the last two waves. With the development of the Internet and new media, the research discussed fans from the perspective of fans themselves. Jenkins (1992) conducted ethnographic research to explore the complex relationship between media and fans. With the advantage of social media communication, the fan group has more voice on the Internet. The distance between fans and idols is closer, and the communication between fans is easier. Therefore, as long as there is negative information on their favorite idol, fans will use social media platforms to defend themselves and their idol. However, in addition to the positive impact of social media, because of the anonymity of online speech and the lack of clear punishment measures, this makes the behavior of fan groups alienate on the Internet, which means that the fan practices bring some negative impacts to our society. This has also led many people to question and oppose the extreme behaviors of the fan base. However, we should treat the behaviors of the fan group rationally. In the new media environment, the fan group as a practice group of fan culture is not only a kind of cultural symbol, and their identity is becoming more and more recognized and valued in the public. Although there are some irrational behaviors in the fan group, as a cultural phenomenon, we should see more positive contributions from this group to society.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

For future research on fan participation, I bring up several suggestions for further research goals, based on four perspectives.

The first perspective is concerned with the negative influence of fans on the idol. Most fan studies focus on the positive impact of fans, that is, fans' love, identification, and support for the idol. Similarly, in the study of fan participatory practices, this thesis also focuses on the active and positive behaviors of fans. However, with the variety of fans, their emotions and behaviors for idols are more complicated. Take Kris Wu as an example, in addition to fans who love and support Kris Wu, there are a large number of fans who mainly criticize or disrespect Kris Wu. Therefore, future studies could explore fan practices on social media from the negative impact of fans on the idol.

The second perspective is based on the particularity and reasons for fan participation. This thesis mainly analyzed the commonness of fan practices and focused on the types of fan practices, ignoring the particularity of fan participation. On the one hand, future research could continue to dig into the particularity of fan participation. On the other hand, it could further explore the deep reasons behind fan participation and further enrich the research of fan culture.

The third perspective encourages more research on internal conflicts among fans when analyzing the participatory intensity since the conflicts within the fan group indicate that fans have disagreements at a certain decision-making moment, which can better reflect the power relations between fans.

Based on the limitations of these theories, the fourth perspective suggests adding some theories related to online fan communities and elaborating more on the collective intelligence of fans, such as the importance of fan communities and the collective behavior of fans.

Despite the fact that this research has a number of limitations, this thesis enriches the field of media and communication studies with a particular angle towards fan participation by investigating the case of Kris Wu's fans in Chinese social media and reaching outcomes of distinctive fan practices and participatory intensities of fans in

the fan group. What's more, the research also hopefully attracts much attention to the subculture of the fan group which deserves more studies from different perspectives.

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Screenshots from the topic discussion community on Weibo


Screenshot 1




吴亦凡吧-KrisBar 

3-13 09:35 来自小米Note 3 拍人更美




💎吴亦凡  #天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会#

 【余票重新上架通知】


本次上架的26张票来源于：1、由于违规而被回收的票共16张。2、早前为海外粉丝预留的名额中，由于其中有部分粉丝选择了其他价位，因此富余1680价位的票共10张。

以上两个渠道收回的共26张余票将于3月17日（本周日）中午12:00准时开售。

余票购买链接：  [网页链接](#)

余票购买方式同正式团购相同，依旧需要大家填写正确的个人信息包括【姓名（与证件一致）、电话号、身份证号】，请大家认真填写，以免后期带来不便。

另，余票名单会随之前的团票名单合并成完整版择日发出，不再单独发布。


祝妮好运~ 







【超话】吴亦凡


320.4万帖子 249.2万粉丝

Screenshot 2



侯亦凡旁边那...     

16分钟前 最后评论 来自微博 weibo.com



💎吴亦凡

日常求吴亦凡演唱会门票 有小朋友临时有事去不了的
请联系 谢谢!! 

购票妮妮需知

死奶奶小跟班❤️绒绒 3月3日 09:53

南京站没抢到凡吧 别慌
大麦9300张票够的！守住3.7号
千万别买黄牛！一旦发现黄牛请举报！
看到超话求票的，发给因缺屏蔽
不要晒票！不要晒票！不要晒票！

微博截图内容：

南京站没抢到凡吧 别慌
大麦9300张票够的！守住3.7号
千万别买黄牛！一旦发现黄牛请举报！
看到超话求票的，发给因缺屏蔽
不要晒票！不要晒票！不要晒票！

微博正文：
南京站没抢到凡吧 别慌
大麦9300张票够的！守住3.7号
千万别买黄牛！一旦发现黄牛请举报！
看到超话求票的，发给因缺屏蔽
不要晒票！不要晒票！不要晒票！

评论区截图内容：

假冒凡吧！
骗子！

Screenshot 5

下面是一个新粉群，愿意进群想交流的小姐妹，请【主动】私信@Ujo_薯 @帅不过三条 @铮苏 @暴躁奶球的圣父鸭 @大豆锤 @原君毁 中任意一人，晒购买专辑《antares》的截图进行审核！一起来玩儿吧😁
@Mr_凡先生



Screenshot 6

今天吴亦凡有女儿了吗 🤔🐼 NO.261599 ✓
7小时前 来自吴亦凡迷妹Android 已编辑

#吴亦凡代言良品铺子# 良品麻辣花生不错 做到了宣传标语写的粒粒酥脆 就是不够麻辣😭关键是没有油!!! 🤔🐼 @Mr_凡先生 查看图片

@Mr_凡先生:



转发 评论 1

Screenshot 7

综合 用户 实时 关注 问答 视频 十

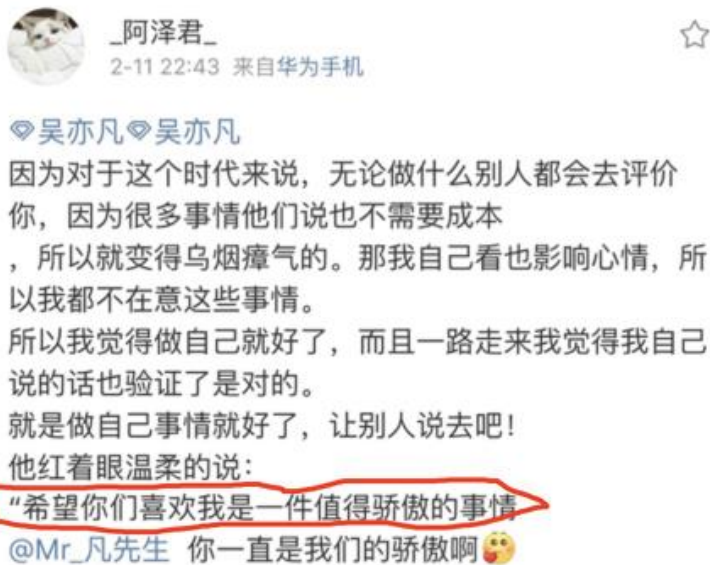
吴亦凡同学1234 🤔🐼
3-22 来自iPhone客户端

#吴亦凡代言良品铺子#我瘦不下去了是有原因的😭谁叫我男神代言的是良品铺子这么好吃又放心的零食呢🤔🐼



转发 评论 4

Screenshot 8



Screenshot 9



你浑身是光，连空中漂浮不定的尘埃都终将被你沾染，从此伏在你柔软的发梢，慢慢开出透明的花，萦绕在你头顶，衬得愈发清澈，愈发俊俏。更何况是我。你没念咒语，但星星都已坠进我眼眸@Mr_凡先生

Screenshot 10



Screenshot 11

💎吴亦凡❤️#天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会#
哪里都一起去
一起仰望星星
一起走出森林
一起品尝回忆
一起误会妒忌
一起雨过天晴
一起更懂自己
一起找到意义
我爱你
我不要没有你
我不能没有你
绝不能没有你🌌@Mr_凡先生

Screenshot 12



【逻辑不通的回忆录】

记得他刚出道的时候，公司给他冷都男的人设。这个对着镜头一直酷酷的小孩，拽的飞出galaxy的感觉。第一次觉得他可爱，是他第一次快本，这个笑起来这么温暖的男孩子，内心肯定是柔软的，肯定是个可爱宝贝。那时候还是初中生，只有那么一个小小的内存特别小的智能手机，存着那个甜系少年。

Screenshot 13

💎吴亦凡吴亦凡有个小习惯，每次到机场都会出来见粉丝和大家打招呼。保安师傅都知道的，他们会跟粉丝说你们等的是吴亦凡对吧，他是唯一会每次都出来见粉丝的明星。只因为他知道他们是他们喜欢的人，他们等他很久了。他会收粉丝的信，读完在折好放起来。他会把粉丝送的玩偶随身携带，甚至为它创建品牌。就是这样一个人，他不会把爱粉丝时时刻刻挂在嘴上，而总是把它落实在行动中。他会告诉粉丝不要因为他而忽略了自己的人生，我想告诉阿凡，因为你我们变成了更好的自己，感谢有你！

Screenshot 14

💎吴亦凡 | #天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会# 🎵💎 #吴亦凡2019全国巡演# 🚢 #吴亦凡巡演南京站# 📺 #吴亦凡代言路易威登# 🔥🚀 #i.t is 吴亦凡# 🍷💎 #吴亦凡代言芝华士# 🍷

说到是怎么入坑凡凡的，我肯定入坑不算太久，但也有一点一段时间了。

要从271说起了，当时271几乎每天都在更新中国有嘻哈的消息。于是我就看了当期的节目，是60秒淘汰赛，其他两组导师都比较和善，就凡凡比较严格，他一开口讲话我就迷上他了，他讲的细节越多，我反而越着迷，因为我知道他是真的懂音乐。之后，我看前几期的节目，我发现我又被他的颜值给迷上了。还有每一期节目的穿搭，每套我都超喜欢，一直想了解他越了解他就更喜欢他，他身上有着无穷的潜力，还有天生外表身材的优势，现在凡凡的音乐，已经交出了一张漂亮的成绩单，我只是希望他越来越好，每天也开开心心的，我会一直为他加油 🍷🍷

💎💎@Mr_凡先生 💎💎🔥🔥>Explore-Mr_凡先生

Screenshot 15



Artist_UjoFan音乐站 🍷

17-12-18 04:06 来自超话



【Artist_UjoFan】始于20171218

All for Artist Kris Wu.

东坡何罪 唯名太高
聆听作品 翻译灵魂
因爱发声 不卑不亢
架起桥梁 平等沟通
期待共鸣 和而不同

对于音乐来说，没有评价者，审美不会提升，没有传播者，信息流通不会加快。而音乐人最大的孤独，是不被听见。淹没于封闭环境，淹没于文化差异，淹没于众口铄金。于是做Kris Wu（吴亦凡先生）的聆听者、传播者、接收者。为他整理，为他传播，为他创造。
Cause he deserves everything. @Mr_凡先生

《聆听者》——写给Kris Wu的黄金时代以及
@Artist_UjoFan 的初心

🍷 #吴亦凡# 🍷

Screenshot 16



亦欣姑凉 🏠 🍷 🐼

18-12-16 13:32 来自华为Ascend P7



💎 吴亦凡

愿你暮暮与朝朝顺遂康健

May you be blessed with good health and happiness

愿你的付出皆能甘之如饴

May you savor every minute of your life, bitter or sweet

愿你孤身直行有良人相伴

May you find like-minded people on your lonely journey

愿你赤诚之心仍一如当初

May you hold a golden heart as you always do

愿你所得皆心欢 多喜乐 长安宁

May all your wishes be granted, and you'll always wrapped with love and peace

愿时光暂缓 相伴前行

Shall the clock ticks slower as we travel alongside each other

@Mr_凡先生

Screenshot 17



亦欣姑凉 🏠 🍷 🐼

2-28 来自HUAWEI Mate S



无水印原图



Screenshot 18



Screenshot 19



Screenshot 20

💎吴亦凡||💎吴亦凡壁纸库

【修图🍓】

波光粼粼🌟🌟

part 1<带刺玫瑰>

p5预告

🔥 @Mr_凡先生



Screenshot 21

💎吴亦凡||#天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会#

【修图】只调亮版

我饮下世间最温吞的雾，你在云中，翩翩起舞💕

🔥 @Mr_凡先生



Screenshot 22



JKrisfanfanfanfan 🐼🐼

3-1 11:15



💎 吴亦凡 🍑 #撩人最好用的表情包# wyf 51f
打包带走 🐼🐼🐼 @Mr_凡先生



【超话】吴亦凡

328.5万帖子 253.8万粉丝

Screenshot 23

This screenshot is the # Kris Wu # topic discussion community which has 2.485 million followers at that time.

明星超话榜No.25
影响力1671533

打榜

Chart beating

吴天神的小宝贝
刚刚 最后评论 来自魅蓝 E

吴亦凡一看到老吴图片的常态
求积分呀!! 有互必回!! #天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR
吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会#

已签到

Check in

发帖

Post

Screenshot 24

我的嘻哈小奶球
10小时前 来自超话

我为吴亦凡贡献69影响力，超话目前还差309232影响力超越上一名！戳这里→[网页链接](#) ~跟我一起打榜 应援爱豆提升排名吧~

【超话】吴亦凡
吴亦凡，1990年11月6日生于中...
2484690人关注

已关注

Screenshot 25



Screenshot 26



Screenshot 27

卧槽？不看微博热搜我还不知道呢，
王嘉尔先生，麻烦管好你家粉丝，别疯狗乱咬人了
啊，还有吴亦凡只是不想跟你们计较，他只想好好开
好他的演唱会，明明是你家粉丝骂吴亦凡的，你还反
过来告吴亦凡的粉丝，你家粉丝多次无故辱骂吴亦
凡，p吴亦凡以及家人的遗照，吴亦凡粉丝就是说了一
句他胡逼就被告，而且谁先骂谁的你们自己没点逼
数吗？希望大家的爱豆能远离这种小心眼团队。
顺便宣传一下吴亦凡的演唱会，4.20重庆，5.15北
京，5.26南京三场，等你来哦！

Screenshot 28

💎吴亦凡 天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR 巡演宣传图 New
Shot! 东西方元素结合的“凡式”风格. 🔥👑



Screenshot 29

吴亦凡
2019巡回演唱会
每个你应援Part 1

当来往的行人怀揣遥远的回忆，
启程重聚，
带着满心期待的向往，
奔向远方，
当昔日的难言排满名为浪漫、
期待、新生等美好事物，
就接受春风的爱慕吧，
在这里唱出自己的歌。

让人潮涌涌一抬头就能看到你，
在你热爱而温暖着——
天地东西，任你遨游。

中国
南京

欢迎来到
“天地·东·西 ALIVE TOUR 吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会”
南京站

投放地点：南京市禄口机场 国内安检口LED广告
投放时间：2019年3月22日~3月28日

广告资源位于人流量密集的安检入口，正对巨大的客流
覆盖大厅内乘客，媒体面积大，最佳可视距离远，广告视觉冲击力强

设计预览
尺寸：35.2m x 3.97m

应视效果图

东经118° 46'，北纬32° 03'
从这里出发，从这里经过
4月20日
天地东西，不见不散

& 每个你

Screenshot 30

地 东 西

吴亦凡

2019巡回演唱会

每个你应援Part2

清风拂晓，暖阳照心湖
情在归乡，路在征途
奔向目的地之前
总需驻足等待
等待春暖花开时
等待情况不危急
等待一封
读天地东西的最清话
你我从你的世界过路

欢迎来到

"天·地·东·西·ALIVE TOUR 吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会"

南京站

投放地点

南京南高铁站刷屏机媒体

候车区一体机/独立刷屏

投放时间

2019年4月1日-4月7日

媒体数量

一体机14台 (2.08m x 1.76m 65英寸)

独立刷屏30台 (3.15m x 1.36m 84英寸)

☆☆☆

南京南高铁站作为亚洲第一大高铁站

连接多条重要线路，每天接待巨大的客流量

媒体位置位于人群主要集中地且停留时间长的鞋票口

并且包含整个高铁站的独立一体机

覆盖范围广，视觉冲击力强，关注度极高

设计预览

应援效果图

车轮滚滚，脚步匆匆

我的出发和归途，幸有你相伴

4月20日，南京见

Screenshot 31



吴亦凡
2019巡回演唱会

你曾问我是什么人呢
是站在人群最前方的人
是完成一切小心思的人
是别开眼角的文艺青年
是随时保持冷静，所不及的疯狂
是能从此刻开始起程
马不停蹄去任何你想去的地方

每个你应援Part3
北京上海商场LED大屏应援

天·地·东·西·ALL THE TOUR
吴亦凡2019巡回演唱会

投放时间
2019年4月5日-4月7日

设计
视觉

投放地点
北京

应援效果
视觉

朝阳大悦城
应援面积 50m²
大屏位置 引地快速通道
大屏位置图

世茂广场·工三
应援面积 80m²
大屏位置 商场中庭F1
大屏位置图

凯德MALL·西直门
应援面积 50m²
大屏位置 商场电梯通道F1 13号出入口
大屏位置图

投放地点
上海

应援效果
视觉


日月光中心
应援面积 150m²
大屏位置 中庭
大屏位置图

新天地
应援面积 80m²
大屏位置 商场中庭
大屏位置图


繁华的都市，热烈的身影
在你出现的时候，全化为背景
4月20日，天地东西，有我相伴

每个你

Screenshot 34



吴亦凡梦想行走团 🧑‍🚶
2-4 04:07



💡吴亦凡💡吴亦凡益起来

【年度总结】

截止至目前，吴亦凡梦想行走团共进行193场公益活动~高考公益54场，生日公益65场，援助灾区6次.....在即将过去的戊戌狗年，共进行43场公益活动，收获满满。赠人玫瑰，手有余香。感谢善良的每个你这一年的公益付出，无论是辛苦的地区负责人妮妮还是参与线上线下活动的妮妮，是每个你的共同努力，才顺利完成了每一次的活动！

己亥猪年，即将到来。因梦而生，为梦行走。期待着新一年，在公益中与“你”见面~也祝每个你，猪年大吉，猪事顺利，猪年要不止“有点幸福儿”“有点快乐儿”“有点意思儿”噢~

过年喽~

Screenshot 35

💡吴亦凡💡吴亦凡益起来

【公益反馈】

昨天，我们去到了山东杨集村贫困户家中，在村干部的帮助下，为每户分发了羽绒服、食用油，小小心愿他们能感到温暖~ 新年快乐~

精准扶贫非一日之事，跟着吴亦凡益起来 🌹

活动使用明星新势力官方应援金5000元，本次活动共计花费1515元，剩余钱款将继续用于后续公益活动，谢谢大家监督 ❤️



Screenshot 36

本群需知

死奶奶小跟班❤️绒绒 2月1日 07:52

17人已读

欢迎各位梅格妮（曼曼）！！！！

世界之大，相聚不易，大家都是为了凡凡好，望群内成员友好相处！！！！

为了方便群内管理，拟定以下群规，请大家共同遵守。我们的群规不是为了约束大家，而是为了防止一些不好的风气。俗话说得好，没有规矩不成方圆是不！希望大家支持并遵守，谢谢！

本群群规：

- 1、群内名片一律改为克里斯Wu~
 - 2、名片，空间没有关于吴亦凡的不许进群
 - 3、禁止打广告，发与吴亦凡无关的链接等。。
 - 4、群内聊天内容禁止外泄，违者直接踢
 - 5、群内只收唯粉（以爱护凡凡为荣，以诋毁凡凡为耻）
 - 6、凡凡行程、活动、知道的都会在群里通知，不知道的就先略过~
 - 7、群内可以私下互加，但是有些妮妮创群，拉本群的妮妮，这种情况就禁止×××（毕竟本群一点一点扩大不易）
 - 8、希望各位妮妮、曼曼积极参与投票 打榜（平常聊天可以的 可以更好的了解熟悉各位）
 - 9、任何群友一视同仁 就事论事
 - 10、★最重要的一条 群内不养闲人 爱潜水的 不参加打榜、不做事的，请自行退群！望大家广而告之！★
- PS: 拉人记得审核通过后再拉！

路遥知马力，陪凡闯天地

Screenshot 37

关于签到打榜与管理

死奶奶小跟班❤️绒绒 3月21日 11:39

127人已读

- ①管理员保持活跃，上课期间没时间的话在后面标上（学生党上课请假）
- ②管理员尽量固签，早，中，晚粉丝团签到，签到只需要十几秒
- ③没有固签又没有活跃的管理员，我可以拥有不向你解释就撤管理的权利(管理员必须在本群固签)
- ④活跃并在本群固签超过三个星期的群员可以向我申请要管理(有管理权利之后请参考以上三点)
- ⑤没有时间打榜的群员在后面标上请假二字，或者私聊我，星期六星期天有时间的话到本群签到集结(因为不定时清群，不想因为不活跃而失去任何一位凡凡粉丝)
- ⑥不活跃的时间不能超过一个月

Screenshot 38

 申请加群 发送

问题: 凡凡不喜欢吃什么

输入答案

问题: 喜欢凡凡什么?

输入答案

问题: 喜欢吴亦凡几年

输入答案

Saved posts from the topic discussion community on Weibo

Saved post 1

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HjZwD70XF?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554828347904 (Notification of change in group booking information)

Saved post 2

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HnTSsnnih?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554826673384 (The opportunity to reserve tickets for overseas fans)

Saved post 3

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HmTMQ3N9G?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827204986 (Notes for buying tickets to avoid being cheated)

Saved post 4

https://www.weibo.com/5342096824/H0FoYEvYO?type=comment#_rnd1555865383819 (Album promotion)

Saved post 5

https://www.weibo.com/5424729563/H42BNuTqJ?type=comment#_rnd1555873274106 (buying the “Antares” album)

Saved post 6

https://www.weibo.com/5818690960/HgCAO1E81?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554826829174 (using bonus to exchange the album)

Saved posts 7

https://www.weibo.com/5690636195/Hi87KkLMi?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827761450 (the post of drawing on the content of NYLON interview)

Saved post 8

<https://www.weibo.com/5489730757/Hi23S3ToS?type=comment> (the introduction of Kris Wu)

Saved post 9

<https://www.weibo.com/ttarticle/p/show?id=2309404344059601784723> (the musical attitude of Kris Wu)

Saved post 10

https://www.weibo.com/5430201887/HlHnkAZzA?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1555947787298 (drawing on one of sayings of Kris Wu)

Saved post 11

<https://www.weibo.com/6506924473/HkggrmA6X> (Hand drawn sketch)

Saved post 12

<https://www.weibo.com/6442441332/Hg15o6fWQ?pcfrom=msgbox> (a mixed video of Kris Wu's songs)

Saved post 13

<https://www.weibo.com/5136434093/Hf74ayTDW?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment> (the combination of text with video)

Saved post 14

<https://www.weibo.com/6294989516/HktHZ8odi?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment> (reporting the fake news)

Saved post 15

<https://www.weibo.com/5029487836/HjcAtswVw?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment> (concert promotional video)

Saved post 16

https://www.weibo.com/6631719319/HjefRzoDR?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554826537268 (launching the concert promotional video)

Saved post 17

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HlsDAAHRY?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827073155 (concert supporting activities: part 1)

Saved post 18

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HmwDw3yzC?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827193324 (concert supporting activities: part 2)

Saved post 19

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HmYUsgHaA?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827346397 (concert supporting activities: part 3)

Saved post 20

https://www.weibo.com/5818690960/HmFGJ4Uoe?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554826939775 (the raffle event organized jointly with the “Mafengwo” APP)

Saved post 21

<https://www.weibo.com/3944436515/H1nXhpfIm?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment>
(A video of fans’ birthday wishes to Kris Wu from 28 countries)

Saved post 22

https://www.weibo.com/3591355593/GDRwn4ovo?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827375089 (Kris Wu’s post)

Saved post 23

https://www.weibo.com/5163900683/HnrdOl4pV?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554826611023 (Charity activities organized by fans)

Saved post 24

https://www.weibo.com/5163900683/Hmnd7FdTe?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827073103 (Charity activities organized by fans)

Saved post 25

https://www.weibo.com/3195941251/HmTSEAAIn?pcfrom=msgbox&type=comment#_rnd1554827206868 (Announcement on the voting result of whether it will be the rule rectification for the group ticket.)

Saved posts 26

https://www.weibo.com/3913774243/HiKiimIES?type=comment#_rnd1556452647424 (Fans post to complain that they cannot find fan groups or do not know how to join the fan group)

Appendix I: Correspondence with Interviewees

Invitation to Interview (via Weibo or QQ direct message):

Hi there! My name is Tianyi Wang and I'm currently doing my master study in Digital Media and Society at Uppsala University. I'm writing about fan studies - specifically, fan participation behavior through social media and participatory intensity of different fans. I am interested in how fans use social media in relation to the idol, the different levels of participation of fans on the online fan group and the power relations between fans. Therefore, as a fan of Kris Wu, I selected the online fan group of Kris Wu as a case to study, and I am interested in the Weibo online community *Kris Wu* and Tencent QQ fan group. I have seen that you are a member of Kris Wu's online fan group., and I have selected some Weibo accounts that I think really demonstrate these qualities and I'm interested to hear your thoughts. I would like to ask for your permission to conduct an interview with you for my study. This is a very important part of my thesis and I would like to get a positive or a negative answer from you (so that I can explore other options). If you agree, the interview will be online through QQ, and if you want you can remain anonymous throughout the whole study. Thanks for your answer in advance!

Appendix II: Interview Outline

Introduction

1. Could you tell me a little bit of your interests of Kris Wu?
 - When did you become a fan of Kris Wu? And why?
2. How did you become a fan of Kris Wu?
3. How did being a fan of Kris Wu affect you? Positive and negative?
4. Which social media platforms do you often use to follow Kris Wu? And in these platforms, which do you use most frequently, and why?
5. What is the role of social media for fan individuals and groups?
6. How does social media facilitate your fan life?

The use of social media

7. As a fan of Kris Was, how do you use social media? Please tell me.
8. What fan activities have you participated in? (e.g. improving the ranking of the idol in various lists, public welfare activities organized in the name of idols, etc.)
9. Have you made any texts production?
 - If yes, what kind of texts production have you made? (such as written poems, fan fiction, fan video, etc.) And also, please write down your Weibo account, I will collect these texts for research and analysis.
 - If not, what is the reason?
10. How often do you participate in fan activities?
11. Have you participated in any cyberwarfare? Please give an example.
12. What do you usually do when others attacked and denigrated Kris Wu?
 - For example, what did you do to eliminate the negative influence on Kris Wu during the incident which happened on 25 July 2018?
13. Are there any other fan activities outside of social media? If yes, please tell me in detail.

Participatory intensity

14. Could you tell me a little bit of your role in the fan group?
 - What are your duties in the fan group?
15. Are there any other roles in the fan group?
 - If yes, what are their duties?

16. Do you usually interact with other fans through social media?
17. Is there a hierarchy in the fan group?
 - If so, what are the criteria?
 - How is this hierarchy formed?
18. Who can decide on how the fan group is managed and operates?
19. Who decides whether she/he can be a member of the fan group?
20. Are there any criteria for joining the fan group?
21. Who makes the final decision for fan activities? Please give some examples.
22. Do you think that there is any change in the relationship between fans and idols in the era of social media? If yes, what changes?
23. Is there any power relationship between fans and idol's agency? That is to say, do fans have to be subject to the agency, or do fans have the right to decide how to participate in the process of creating and shaping idols' image?

More open questions

24. Would you like to add something more about fan life, fan participation?

Please state:

1. Gender:
2. Age:
3. Occupation
4. Would you like to remain anonymous?
5. If yes, is there any other name you want to be referred as (please state the name)?