유투브와 소녀시대 팬덤
YouTube and Girls' Generation Fandom

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요약

 2000년대 후반에 접어들며 한류의 전파는 초기와는 다른 양상으로 진행되기 시작했다. 한국 드라마와 영화에 더해 한국 대중음악(K-pop)이 한류 팬덤의 핵심이 되었으며, 이와 함께 한류의 주요 소비자층은 10대를 아우르는 세대적 포괄성을 갖추게 되었다. 인터넷의 발달은 한국 대중문화에 대한 접근성을 높였으며, 이에 따라 한류는 아시아라는 지역적 제한을 넘어선 전 지구적 현상으로 전개되게 되었다. 본 연구는 이러한 한류의 새로운 양상의 원인을 찾아내고, 이러한 변화가 갖고 있는 미디어연구에 있어서의 함의를 논의하고자 한다. 즉, 인터넷 등 신(新) 정보 테크놀로지와 대중문화 생산 및 수용 간의 함수관계를 밝히고자 한다.

 본 연구는 이러한 한국 대중음악의 초국적 전파 과정을 통시적으로 재구성하는 한편, 유투브에서 유통되는 '소녀시대'의 히트곡 <지Gee> 뮤직 비디오에 달린 유투브 사용자들의 댓글을 분석함으로써 온라인상에서의 팬덤 활동을 분석・평가하고, 온라인 커뮤니티의 매체적 의미를 논하고자 한다. 이를 위해 온라인 민속지학(online ethnography 혹은 nethnography)을 주요 방법론으로 사용할 계획이며, 피스크(Fiske), 버지스(Burgess) 등에 의해 주도된 팬덤과 온라인 커뮤니티 연구에 관한 문헌들을 분석하고, 이를 본 연구의 이론적 틀로 구성할 계획이다.

■ 중심어 : | 한류 | K-pop | 소녀시대 | 유투브 | 온라인팬덤 |

Abstract

 In this paper we draw from recent theoretical discussions of fan culture and the new media technologies to explore how online communities contribute to new forms of K-pop fandom. We suggest that these online sites play an important role in setting the new stage of dissemination and dialogue of K-pop knowledge, through which particular forms and spaces of online fan culture are being created and sustained. Moreover, these web-based communities challenge the existing concepts that have embraced interrelations between culture, consumption and technology. Based on an empirical study of YouTube, carried out using netnographic methods, this study tackles the following questions: how fans construct themselves as Korean pop fans through the online activities; how they exchange information and opinions of Korean stars; and, what meaning they extract from online file-sharing activities.

■ keyword : | Korean Wave | K-pop | Girls' Generation | YouTube | Online Fandom |

1. THE NEW SHAPE OF KOREAN WAVE

The shape of Korean Wave, which refers to the phenomenon of Korean pop culture being all the rage abroad, has noticeably changed in recent years. In the early 2000s, it was characterized by scenes of middle-aged housewives from East Asian countries chasing after Korean actors whom they were enamored of from watching television and VCDs. Now, Korean pop music has become the centerpiece of the Korean Wave, and it is largely enjoyed by teenagers around the world—not just in Asia. It is not uncommon that fans in paris, New York, and Buenos Aires to perform flash mobs to demand K-pop singers' concerts in their hometowns.

This new stage of Korean Wave, transnational diffusion of K-pop, is partly an outcome of socio-technological development. The rise of new technology such as file-sharing and VOD (video on demand) almost outdated compact disk-based media usage in the last decade. The technology-savvy young generation plugs into fan networks in virtual space to connect. For example, these prosumers(producers and consumers of information) post, distribute and exchange video-recorded information on YouTube. With its slogan Broadcast Yourself, YouTube, created in February 2005, was considered an embodiment of digital empowerment of the individual. When the American newsmagazine Time lauded 'You' for its annual 'Person of the Year' issue at the end of 2006, it addressed YouTube as an exemplary element in the democratic digital revolution, emphasizing its grassroots origin and participatory culture[1]. Receiving hundreds of millions of views a day, YouTube is ranked as the third most visited website on the Internet, only behind Google and Facebook[2]. As such, YouTube has become one of the most important sub-cultural

centers of today's new media age.

YouTube has raised the issue of participatory culture and its conflict with mainstream media such as copyright issue, that is, the control of distribution of mass produced cultural products, in North America[3]. On the level of international communication, however, YouTube has brought out new topics – Internet users' transnational reception of pop culture such as transnational fandom of Mexican female stars[4] and the construction of international online fandom of K-pop, the new stage of Korean trend.

After Google bought YouTube in November 2006, however, media corporations have become official YouTube users, being able to showcase their content directly to individual users through their YouTube channels. They also make good use of YouTube's social networking services so that their channel subscribers post message and get alert for new music videos[5]. YouTube's global reach and easy access also led major talent agencies/recording labels in Korea including SM entertainment (SM, hereafter) and YG entertainment (YG, hereafter) launch their channels on YouTube to advertise their artists globally. This commercial infiltration is a strategic move for the media corporations to incorporate the participatory practices of active fans. With their enthusiastic dedication, close textual readings and growing numbers due to easier access to YouTube, active audiences are recognized as significant fan base. In the end, these active fans become 'agents of consecration'[6] who show loyalty to their stars and possess particular knowledge of them.

Since opening in August 2006, SM's official YouTube channel has recorded more than 502 million for the number of music video views and more than 14.8 million for the number of channel visits until 5 August 2011[7]. According to an executive of YG,

'YouTube is important in disseminating K-Pop. Especially, YouTube has an advantage in providing real-time responses'[8]. Recently, many international news media report that the Internet and video-sharing websites such as YouTube have facilitated the global spread of K-pop fandom. [Tables 1] and [Tables 2] below show the global composition of YouTube users who have seen 923 K-pop music videos uploaded by the three major Korean talent agencies, i.e., SM, JYP, and YG, in the period of 2010[9][10]. Registered users have to upload their own personal information onto the YouTube database. There is, however, a possibility that some may fake their information.

Table 1. Views of K-pop music videos on YouTube (by Continent) [10]

Continent	Views	Continent	Views
Asia	566,273,899	Middle East	15,197,593
North America	123,475,976	Oceania	10,738,793
Europe	55,374,142	Africa	1,924,480
South America	20,589,095	South Pole	27

Table 2. Views of K-pop music videos on YouTube (by Country)[10]

Country	Views	Country	Views
Japan	113,543,684	Saudi Arabia	10,312,005
Thailand	99,514,297	France	9,707,334
USA	94,876,024	Australia	9,358,642
Taiwan	73,160,633	UK	8,278,441
Korea	57,281,182	Brazil	6,049,920
Vietnam	56,770,902	Germany	5,588,687
Philippines	38,833,639	Russia	1,287,345
Canada	20,859,251	Egypt	630,000

As shown in the tables above compiled by the Joong-Ang Daily, the total number of views of K-pop videos by the netizens in 229 countries was around 793.5 million. As noted, the reach of K-pop fandom is not restricted to Asia. What is noteworthy is that non-Asian countries such as USA, Canada, Saudi Arabia and France are ranked among top ten countries of K-pop video views on YouTube.

2. GIRLS' GENERATION ON YOUTUBE

Arguably the most globally famous K-pop musicians, the nine-member girl band Girls' Generation (also known as 소녀시대, So Nyuh Shi Dae, SNSD, SoShi, and 少女時代) was formed by a Korean music label giant SM Entertainment in 2007. Their popularity in Asia was such that they attracted more than 24,000 attendees at their two-day concerts in Taiwan in 2010. About that time, their single Genie reached the number two spot on the Japanese weekly Oricon Chart, a record for non-Japanese musicians to achieve for the first time in 30 years. Girls' Generation's popularity is not limited to Asia that it is reported that their USA-based fan club Soshified boasts of 120,000 members. For information, Soshified is a coined term by combining 'SoShi' and 'Satisfied.' As such, Girls' Generation has countless fan clubs scattered around the world, with SM-sanctioned official fan club called S♡E (reads: 'So One'). 'S♡E' symbolizes fans' desire to be 'so one' with SNSD, by changing 'o o' in 'so one' into '♡"So one' is also an English literation of SNSD's Korean single 소원.

Among their releases, Gee in early 2009 is considered the most successful hit single home and abroad. It ranked at the number one spot for nine weeks in a row at the KBS Music Bank chart in Korea and for six weeks in a row at a major Thai music chart[11][12]. Since spring 2009 when SM Entertainment uploaded the music video of Gee on its official YouTube channel, 48,488,555 page views have been recorded and 92,540 comments posted until 2

August 2011. Gee's success is comparable to American pop sensation Lady Gaga's Poker Face (95,939,707 page views and 84,868 comments on its official YouTube channel as of 2 August 2011).

In addition to the Gee music video on SM's account, we can find more than fifty video clips of Girls Generation's various performances of Gee at TV music shows, their domestic and international lives, and music award ceremonies on YouTube. We can also find many fan-made video clips of dance covers and music covers with their own musical instruments. Considering some YouTube accounts were already suspended and their video clips erased due to the copyright infringement, it is almost impossible to count the exact number of Gee clips.

Since it was difficult for us to examine more than 92,000 comments on the Gee threads at SM Entertainment's YouTube account, we had to make a selection among such a vast amount of data. Therefore, we select the first 2,000 comments posted, second batch of comments posted in the period of December 2010 (approximately 2,000 posts) and third batch of comments post in the period of June and July 2011, the period after SM Town held its Paris Tour with it artists, for our analysis.

This article is composed of the six sections: (1) The New Shape of Korean Wave; (2) Girls' Generation on YouTube; (3) Research Methods and Questions; (4) Constructing Imagined Community; (5) Defending the Community; and, finally, (6) Conclusion and Discussion. In the next section, we will explicate netnography for our research method.

3. RESEARCH METHODS AND QUESTIONS

We use netnography as the main research method in this study. Netnography, which is also called digital ethnography or virtual ethnography, is an online practice of ethnography. According to Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods, it is 'a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of the online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications'[13]. A Canadian consumer researcher Robert Kozinets is attributed to have started the netnography as a research method. In 1995 when doing a field research of Star Trek fan convention, Kozinets discovered that some Star Trek fan clubs had established their own online communities based on the Internet bulletin board system. As an anthropologist by training, Kozinets adapted the traditional ethnographic research methods to understanding online consumer cultures in a series of his research projects. For one, Kozinets appropriated netnography to examine the online fandom of X-File, a famous science fiction TV show[14]. Since then, many scholars have chipped in with their own researches towards developing this online research method[15][16].

Following Kozinets, many researchers on online marketing and consumer behavior have adopted netnography. For example, Xun and Reynolds adopted netnography to understand the characteristics of eletronic word-of-mouth which influenced significantly on the consumer's decision-making process[17]. Jennifer Sandlin appropriated netnography when she examined the consumers' learning process on informal consumer education sites[18].

Besides consumer and marketing research, online cultural researchers also adopted netnogrphy. For example, Giesler and Pohlman applied netnography to examine the way music fans used the Napster for downloading music files and produced meanings from

their activities[19]. Taking cues from Mauss′s concept of 'gift'and Malinowski′s research on the tribal economics of Trobrianders in Papua New Guinea, Giesler & Pohlman saw the Napster users′ sharing of music files as gifting through which users created their own imagined community. In addition, through a netnographic analysis of the online message board for the British rock band Depeche Mode′s World Tour 2005-2006, Beaven and Laws examined the ways music fans sought the pre-sales tickets and showed their loyalty to the band[20]. Further, Rokka and Moisander used netnographic methods to investigate an online site for travelers[21]. By examining travelers' discussion on the site, Rokka and Moisander explicated how travel enthusiasts constructed active consumer citizenship by sharing and negotiating environmental knowledge in a web-based consumer community. Gary Bowler Jr used netnography to examine podcasting, electronic discussion groups and online blogging[22].

In comparison with the traditional ethnography, there are some merits in netnography. First, it provides information that is unobtrusive without researcher elicitation. Therefore, a netnographer is at a vantage ground to understand lived culture that is naturally occurring in an online environment[23]. In addition, it is relatively easy to download, summarize and analyze the data online. However, in order to avoid superficial and de-contextualized interpretation of the research object, a researcher must be adept in phenomenological *verstehen* (understading). For this, he/she should be accepted as a member of the culture he/she studies, to obtain nuanced cultural understanding and interpretive subtlety.

Netnography poses its own ethical issues. While the anonymity in the fan site makes it possible for informants to disclose their natural opinions, it also raises questions about their authenticity. Further,

there were heated debates on whether online information should be considered private or public. For example, King argues that consent must be obtained from informants whenever the researcher uses the online information[24]. On the other hand, Frankel and Siang argue that online information is one that is made public by the informant[25]. From our communication with informants for this research, we concluded that many of the YouTube subscribers were aware that what they posted was publicly accessible. Above all else, the anonymity of informants poses an important question of how to handle the identity of the research subjects. Although we can find their age, sex and nationality by clicking their IDs on YouTube, we have no reliable means of having confidence of their information.

With all these concerns and challenges of netnography, however, we rely on this research method as it is the most suitable tool to understand the global K-pop fan culture by examining various modes of fan interactions in the online environments. In order to protect their privacy, we renamed all the IDs of YouTube users whenever we cited their textual communication. We also endeavored to retain the original texts to preserve the unobtrusive and naturalistic characteristics of the netnography.

In this paper, we draw from recent theoretical discussions of online fandom and methodological discussions of netnography to explore global K-pop fan culture on YouTube. In particular, we ask following questions: How do these fans experience sense of community on YouTube?; How do fans articulate their fan identity in confrontation with challenges from non-fans? For this, we shall analyze comment postings on the discussion threads attached to K-pop girl group Girls' Generation's Gee music video within SM Entertainment's official YouTube channel.

4. CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY

YouTube's primary function is sharing video files. Such transaction between donors and recipients fosters the idea of community. Giesler and Pohlman examined the music file sharing practice at the Napster[20], in the frame of early anthropologist Marcel Mauss's concept of gift and Michel Serres's parasite. Mauss considered gift giving as a behavior which would lead to social network creation and individual integration[26]. Gift giving in social networks does not necessarily involve the reciprocity between two individuals, but a different form of reciprocity among anonymous people within the network. Therefore, by accepting gift—video files on YouTube—people feel the social obligation to repay to his/her network. This transaction of gift giving and repaying is embedded on the whole in the YouTube community, leading to the sense of community.

Different from the Napster of which community being not based on textual communication, the concept of community on YouTube is, however, based on textual communication among users as much as file sharing. What is important about the YouTube channel is not that it is a sum of videos, but that the videos attract users to post comments. In this process of textual communication, popular cultural capital is transmitted as gift[27]. Here, popular cultural capital refers to fans' knowledge about their stars. When the music video of Gee was initially uploaded on YouTube, many novices in K-pop posted questions on the whole gamut of information about Gee and Girls' Generation.

It did not take long time for the more knowledgeable users to respond to such posts. For example, when Xenga asked about each member's name of Girls'Generation, Athena answered it in 35 minutes. Iris also answered Mazinga's following queries within an hour.

Can someone tell me there [sic] names? Cause they're hot xD

0:41 Seohyun, 0:52 Tiffany, 1:02 YoonA, 1:12 Jessica, 1:41 Sunny, 1:51 Sooyoung, 2:02 Hyoyeon, 2:11 Taeyeon, 2:40 (the one in the middle) Yuri. [sic]

Then, koyashiki revealed his K-pop knowledge as follows.

the leader name is taeyeon.........she is wearing a scout cap and a purple jean....my fav is tiffany.....the one that aid "listen boy, my first love story"..... [sic]

A YouTube user MeRetarded responded to this posting.

That's Tiffany? Shit... I thought she was the short-haired girl with big eyes. [sic]

Koyashiki corrected MeRetarded's mistaken recognition of each member's identity, and used this occasion as an opportunity to further disclose his knowledge of Girls' Generation.

that is jessica......tiffany best pal.....both of them are good in english.... [sic]

taeyeon is the only one that have some kind a string on her jean.....thats how you can tell she is the leader....and also she always had strong part at the end of their song coz she have a strong voice.... [sic]

According to his profile on YouTube, Koyashiki, 23-year old Malaysian man, subscribes to 179 YouTube channels as of 30 January 2011, most of

which are K-pop related ones. He even uploaded Tiffany's photo for his avatar, which is a small picture in his personal profile page on YouTube.

Novices also post questions about Korea and Korean culture in general, interest of which they derive from Girls' Generation. For example, on Gerald's question of each member's age, Charles18 replied to it briefly. Then, berman58 dilated upon the Korean age reckoning practice.

She's 22 in Korean age, and 21 is her international age. In korea you are one year old the day you are born. apparently Korean age is so complex there are considerations to be considered she might just be 20 not sure though^^. [sic]

Different from the international age system, newborns in Korea start at one year old, and each passing of a Lunar New Year adds one year to the person's age. As such, berman58 charmed novices by explaining the abstruse Korean age reckoning. Even some fans post their translation of Korean words and terms in relation to the lyrics of the Song. Sang, whose nationality is Singaporean, explicates Korean appellations in English for who do not know Korean.

Oppa is what girls say to boys who are similar in age or it also means older brothers.
Unnie is the same only girls say it to girls.
Hyung is the same as oppa but only boys say it to other boys. Noona is the same as unnie but only boys say it to girls.

In addition, when the average YouTube users asked the meaning of lyrics of the song Gee, fans who already knew Korean language competitively (and, also virtuously) posted their answers. For example, Selah, from USA, asked the meaning of 'bula bula

bula' in the song.

Oh, and another question...can someone tell me what "bula bula bula bula" means? And the point of rubbing fists together? (Selah)

Correcting Selah's 'bula' to 'molla', Mullens and Phantom, both from USA, post their answers.

Actually, Seohyun was saying molla molla molla, which translates to "I dont know, I dont know, I dont know" (in a cute, innocent way) in Korean;)) (Mullens)

Bula means Don't know. Which part rubbing fist do you mean? (Phantom)

This altruistic behavior and showing gratitude are what keeps online communities up and running. Fans enjoy not only gaining information about the TV show, but also giving it[28]. Talk of distributing information helps the information-poor and novices participate in the fan community as well as enjoy texts more fully. Today, celebrity talk plays a huge role in social relations, 'strengthening links and bonds between people … and providing common ground for strangers to share'[29][30]. It is suggested that such virtue of knowledge-sharing eventually leads to constructing and sustaining an imagined community of online K-pop fandom.

5. DEFENDING THE COMMUNITY

Since it is easy to join YouTube, and there is no restriction on subscribing to a channel, channels and discussion threads are open to both fans and haters. Fans tend to regard themselves as protectors/

defenders of Girls' Generation territory against intruders who post negative and vulgar comments. In this vein, DorinaAmei56 posted what is called the S♡e nationalist's Oath.

S♡E NATIONALIST's OATH

As a Sone Nationalist, I shall uphold the pride of 9. I shall promote the girls to friends and non-shippers and I shall detest all rumors against the girls. May our nation prosper for a thousand years!!!

The membership to a certain community is strengthened when its members actively promote the community's credos. Once formed, a fan club should make every effort to sustain, defeating outside challenges. Here is one example of fans showing their loyalty and devotion to Girls' Generation by vehemently responding to haters' negative comments or misconceptions.

I wanna Slap their fuckin cute face! this group cant sing they just sell sex and surgery body ewh!actin cute and girly like chipmunk is so 2000 late hoek. [sic] (spikypushy)

spikypushy shut up ! you dont wanna start a fight! these girls are much more than just cute, they are respectful, nice and just wonderful, they dont have surgery body! If you would take care of your body and train and dance you could look like that!

They are GIRLS and girls are girly and they can act cute thats totally fine. These girls are just dancing and smiling like a girl can or should do they arent dancing like sluts and they dont look like sluts! We love SNSD <3 [sic] (mruntouchable22)

This page is to listen to Girls' Generation's Gee. Theres no room for your hatred. So take your hatred and PISS off. Much Appreciated. From, the 31+ Million Viewers Who Watched 'Gee' [sic] (helmetgirl24)

If you hate SNSD so much, why are you even on this video ? thats right. your just a little kid who has no friends and no like. you TROLL. [sic] (alaskaroyal91)

Troll is an informal Internet term for a person who posts a message intended to provoke other or to disrupt the channel's intended purpose. In addition to such counters against trolls, some fans actively participate in quarrels out of rivalry with other girl groups. At one point of time in 2010, there broke out a bout of exchange of insults between S♡NE and Blackjacks, the 2NE1 fan club. A K-pop girl group 2NE1, a product of YG Entertainment, is considered Girls' Generation's huge rivals. Sometimes rivalry among idol groups is reproduced and amplified through heated verbal exchanges on YouTube channels between those fan club members. When a fan of 2NE1 posted an abusive word on the Gee discussion threads, countless fans of Girls' Generation counterattacked with furious responses, eventually leading the 2NE1 fan to withdraw from the battlefield of words.

Sluuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuts. [sic] (2ne1forever3000)

So you're trying to say SNSD's sluts and your id is like 2NE1 thing ? Go away if you don't like SNSD's MVs or their looks ⋯. [sic] (TheVenusVanitas)

LOL. Who started this? go check 2ne1's vids and ull see that btch whos bashing 2ne1. And yeah for me

they re luts got a problem? LOOOOOOOOOOL [sic] (beazazama)

shut up.. if you hate them so much, I don't see a need of you coming here to waste your time and post a comment to bash them. [sic] (Sujulove)

ur just jealous of SNSD face the fact dun come here and bash on SNSD vids grow up u little kid ur srsly lifeless and u need to get alife soon xD [sic] (SujuWife)

Some of the posts above were written by supposedly Super Junior fans, based on their IDs such as 'Sujulove,' 'SujuElfBravo' and 'SujuWife' suggesting their fan identity. As a product of SM Entertainment, Super Junior is considered Girls' Generation's brother group. Therefore, some Super Junior fans seemingly have allied themselves with Girls'Generation fans against the intruders. Different from Fiske's critical idea of active audience[31], these participatory fans have been incorporated by the SM Entertainment's strategic move to expand and integrate different fan bases.

After going through this entire fracas, some fans made petitions to refrain from posting negative comments on rival idol groups' channels, and to behave and respect each other. Here is an example:

HEY SONEs! if YOU call yourself a SONE. be a proper one, recently, i saw 'SONE' going around 2NE1's videos, bashing them. this ain't the right way to promote SNSD. you will only be flamed back and at the same time, staining the reputation of SNSD and SONEs. noe do you see where the anti's are coming from? no war doesn't mean you have to start one. respect other groups, just like SNSD does. if you see other 'SONE' doing so, please stop them. :)

Jigeumeun So Nyuh Shi Dae! [sic] (Bezzie46)

A total of 125 YouTube users have clicked 'thumbs up' sign right after the post, as a gesture for agreement to the post as of 30 Dec. 2010.

These activities of defending community are not restricted to the rivalry among K-pop groups and their fans but extended to the conflict among Asians and non-Asians. In May 2011, some newcomers, mostly from USA, confessed that Zach Porter, a lead singer of Allstar Weekend, brought them into this video. Allstar Weekend, composed of four boys, is a San Diego-based pop rock band. However, not all the US fans of Allstar Weekend seemed to like Gee music video. Some negative and apathetic responses written by Allstar Weekend fans provoked Girls' Generation fans' anger and aroused furious controversy between both fan groups.

According to McMillan and Chavis, a community is 'a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together'[32]. In a sense, a community becomes a community through its members experiencing it. Through participation in warfare with its rivals, it is found that members' distinction from non-members is articulated, and shared emotional connection among members is strengthened. In the end, the sense of community among Girls' Generation fans is being reinforced.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper suggests that YouTube plays an important role in setting the new stage of K-pop fandom. As an Internet platform, YouTube provides venues for fans to maintain emotional affinity, by

which the sense of community is being formed. As noted by Hyun-ji Son, emotion is still an important aspect in digital media performance[33]. According to Anderson, media is an important resource for constructing an imagined community[34]. In a sense, the users of the same media will almost never meet or hear of their fellow users, but in the minds of each user lives an image of their communion. This is especially the case with YouTube where members from all over the world surpassing the physical boundaries create a virtual network of fandom taking advantage of the technological possibilities of the Internet. As such, the fans produce transnational dialogues, share cultural meaning, and form affective ties with each other.

Within this de-territorialized and virtual space, fans also help others to further indulge in K-pop consumption, constantly educating each other using their popular cultural capital in K-pop. Against outside attacks from trolls, Girls' Generation fans rally to defend and strengthen their online community. It is known that this kind of online fights between different fan clubs are not uncommon. There are, of course, other aspects of online fan community activities such as giving notice on new concerts, raising money for charitable causes, etc. We, however, focused on the aspects of constructing and defending the community on account of space consideration.

Table 3. Girls' Generation's Fandom

Imagined Community on YouTube	
Constructing Community	Defending the Community
Gift Change	Countering Negative Comments
Information Sharing	Making Distinction from Non-members
Showing Gratitude to Fellow Members	Alliance with Affiliated Fandom

According to Fiske, fans today create their own popular culture by appropriating corporate media-produced mass culture[31]. In a sense, there exists a constant tension in the sites of cultural production, distribution and consumption. While the media institutions would control the flow and meaning of media products, media consumers try to distort the top-down processes[35]. However, possibly because of the innate limitation of the research object in this paper being the corporate media-organized community, there were few comments that criticized SM's desire and intention to control and sanitize the fandom. In fact, more and more corporate entertainment producers are trying to exploit these fan practices by engaging in YouTube to maximize their economic profits. In late 2010, when a major Korean television station MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Company) initiated a new talent search show, it made a strategic alliance with YouTube. In this sense, it seems that media corporations continue to hold a dominant position into the new media age by having collaboration with active fans. A Foucauldian approach to power, however, suggests that we should look at diverse ways in which media institutions influence ordinary fans[36]. After all, further research should investigate the power relations between the corporate media and fandom today.

As our main research method is netnography, we did not meet our informants in person, but depended on their postings on the online forum for data gathering. We also acknowledge that while this paper paid attention to fan activities such as gift exchange or popular cultural capital sharing, it left out an aspect of fans' emotion and labor. Such a labor can be expressed in various forms, individual and community labor, both immaterial and material spanning across social, creative, affective and emotional labor practices. In relation to this question, it would be

worthwhile to study what implications Girls' Generation's images in Gee music video project in relation to existing Asian women stereotypes. Further, netnography in this paper took audiences as homogenous. What needs to be further examined is an inquiry into modalities of fan practices in relation to the differences in terms of nationality, ethnicity, class and gender. Like most ethnographic research, we focused on a small number of subjects in this study. As such, while generalization from this study might be called into question, we tried to demonstrate interpretive subtlety and nuanced cultural understanding that are strengths of ethnography. All in all, more empirical research is required on the processes of participation and empowerment of fandom, and its interaction and tension with the ongoing commercialization and corporatization in the online universe.

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