

Celebrity Influence Effect: The Development Path of the Tourism Industry from the Perspective of the Fan Economy

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Abstract. The global entertainment industry is growing fast, and social media is now widely used. Because of this, fan culture has become an important part of the economy. It is still not clear how celebrity influence shapes fan tourism behavior. This study looks at fan tourism, which is travel driven by emotional connections to idols. It examines how idol attractiveness, social media interactivity, and emotional involvement affect the intention to travel. The study used both questionnaires (n=100) and interviews. The results support the research model. The findings show that idol attractiveness and social media interactivity both increase emotional involvement. In turn, emotional involvement strongly increases travel intention. This means that an idol's authenticity and skills, together with the interactive nature of platforms like Weibo and Douyin, are important for building deep emotional ties that lead fans to travel. Based on these results, the study suggests several strategies for tourism stakeholders. These include working with local celebrities and influencers, creating fan-focused travel products like "Follow the Idol's Footsteps" tours, using social media to share fan-made content to build emotional connections, and adding emotional storytelling to marketing campaigns.

Keywords: Celebrity Influence Effect, Entertainment Industry, Fan Tourism Behavior

1. Introduction

The global entertainment industry is growing, and more people are using social media. Because of this, fan culture has become a strong economic force. Celebrities and influencers affect not only fashion and shopping habits but also where people choose to travel. In this study, fan tourism means traveling to places linked to idols or celebrities. Fans do this to feel closer to them. Countries like South Korea, Thailand, and Japan use fan tourism to build their national image and support local businesses. China is also growing fast in this area.

This study looks at how idol-related factors influence fans' travel behavior. It looks at how idol attractiveness and social media interaction influence emotional involvement, and how emotional involvement affects travel intention and tourism spending. It also looks at how idol attractiveness affects travel intention, how emotional involvement connects idol attractiveness and travel behavior, and how social media interaction influences both emotional involvement and travel intention. Fan tourism shows consumer behavior and is also a new cultural and economic trend.

2. Research design

2.1. Literature review

Fan tourism is a type of travel that comes from strong emotional ties to celebrities or idols. Past studies show that it is based on the fan economy, emotional buying, and cultural identity [1,2]. One important factor is idol attractiveness. This usually means how good-looking, trustworthy, or skilled the idol is. Research shows that these traits make fans believe the idol is real and trustworthy [3]. This then makes them more likely to travel. Social media helps fans feel more connected. Apps like TikTok and Weibo let fans comment, share, and join in. Wirtz et al. and Zhu et al. found that this kind of online interaction builds stronger emotional ties [4,5]. Emotional involvement, measured by Thomson, shows how deeply fans feel about their idols [6]. This connection is a key part of understanding their actions. Travel intention, based on Lee et al., shows how likely fans are to visit places linked to their idols [7]. Other research shows that emotional involvement helps turn idol attractiveness and social media activity into real travel plans [8].

2.2. Research methods

2.2.1. Questionnaire

Based on existing literature and theoretical foundations, this study, combined with relevant research on the influence of idols on fans' behavior, proposes the following hypothetical model. In the model, idol attractiveness, social media interactivity, and emotional involvement are taken as independent variables, and travel intention is taken as the dependent variable.

In this research, idol attractiveness, social media interactivity, and emotional involvement are the independent variables, and travel intention is the dependent variable. The study's core purpose is to investigate how these independent variables influence the dependent variable.

The following hypothetical relationships are constructed:

H1: Idol attractiveness has a significant positive impact on emotional involvement.

H2: Idol attractiveness has a significant positive impact on travel intention. H3: Social media interactivity has a significant positive impact on emotional involvement.

H4: Emotional involvement has a significant positive impact on travel intention.

This study adopts a quantitative research method and collects data through questionnaires to explore the impact of idol attractiveness, social media interactivity, and emotional involvement on fans' travel intentions. The questionnaire consists of two parts: the first part is the basic demographic information of the respondents (such as gender, age, educational background, occupation, etc.); the second part includes the measurement items for each variable. All variables are measured using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire was distributed through Wenjuanxing, and a total of 100 valid questionnaires were collected. Data analysis was completed using the SPSSAU platform, mainly including reliability analysis, factor analysis, and linear regression analysis.

The questionnaire in this study is aimed at young people, including students, working professionals, and freelancers. In terms of gender distribution, females account for 92.59%; the age group is mainly 16-25 years old, among which 21-25 years old account for 62.04%; in terms of occupation, students account for 75%. The reason for choosing young people as the research object is that they are the core group of fan culture, with high attention, and are more likely to engage in idol-related travel behaviors.

2.2.2. Interview

To complement the quantitative survey data and gain deeper insights into the psychological and behavioral mechanisms underlying fan tourism, qualitative interviews targeting fan tourists with diverse backgrounds were conducted. The purpose of the interviews was to explore participants' subjective motivations, emotional attachment, and decision-making processes in the context of idol-related travel. The interview design focused on three key dimensions: perceived idol attractiveness, social media interactivity, and emotional involvement, with special attention to how these factors shape travel intention and behavior.

The interview sample consisted of five female participants who self-identified as active fans and had experience or a strong intention to continue to engage in fan-related tourism. The participants were deliberately selected to reflect a range of age groups and cross-cultural experiences: Two participants were working professionals in their mid-20s and early 30s. One was a South Korean graduate student currently residing in Korea. One was an undergraduate student from mainland China who had lived and studied in Korea for one year. One was an international foundation student studying in Australia.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an eight-question guide covering idol preference, tourism experiences, digital engagement, consumption behavior, and expectations for future fan tourism development. Interviews were conducted via video calls or face-to-face, lasting approximately 15-20 minutes each. All conversations were recorded and transcribed with participant consent, and thematic analysis was used to identify common patterns and divergences in responses.

3. Results

3.1. Reliability and validity analysis

3.1.1. Reliability analysis

Cronbach's α reliability analysis showed that all variables had α values above 0.7, with an overall scale α of 0.901, indicating good internal consistency. Specifically, idol attractiveness (0.896), social media interactivity (0.890), emotional involvement (0.892), and travel intention (0.885) all fell within acceptable ranges. An $\alpha > 0.7$ is acceptable, confirming the reliability of the scale.

3.1.2. Exploratory factor analysis

The KMO value was 0.833, and the Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating suitability for factor analysis. Four common factors explained 70.169% of the cumulative variance, with all items loading onto their respective factors, verifying good structural validity. Each item clearly loaded onto its corresponding factor, confirming the reliability of the questionnaire's dimensional division.

3.2. Linear regression analysis

3.2.1. Impact of idol attractiveness and social media interactivity on travel intention

As shown in Table 1, idol attractiveness and social media interactivity have a significant positive impact on travel intention ($p < 0.01$). The regression model is: $\text{Travel Intention} = 1.302 + 0.402 \times \text{Idol Attractiveness} + 0.319 \times \text{Social Media Interactivity}$, explaining 34.1% of the variance ($R^2 =$

0.341). The model is statistically significant ($F=25.062$, $p=0.000$) and reliable, with no multicollinearity ($VIF < 5$) and a D-W value close to 2.

These findings support Ohanian's idea that consumer perception of a celebrity's attractiveness, competence, and trustworthiness can significantly influence their behavioral intentions [9]. Fans who view their idols as charming and authentic are more likely to have a stronger intention to travel for them, a finding consistent with [3]. Furthermore, the results align with the work of Wen Lingqian and Hu Chun, who found that entertaining and responsive online interactions are crucial for maintaining customer engagement [10]. The significant positive impact of social media interactivity on travel intention demonstrates that platforms like Weibo and Douyin are now powerful drivers of fan tourism.

Table 1. Linear regression analysis result 1 (n=100)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	1.302	0.424	-	3.071	0.003	-	-
Idol Attractiveness	0.402	0.103	0.366	3.926	0.000	1.279	0.782
Social Media Interactivity	0.319	0.094	0.315	3.377	0.001	1.279	0.782
R 2			0.341				
Adjusted R 2			0.327				
F			F (2,97)=25.062, p=0.000				
D-W value			2.048				

Note: Dependent Variable Travel Intention

$p < 0.05$ $p < 0.01$

3.2.2. Impact of idol attractiveness and social media interactivity on emotional involvement

The results shown in Table 2 indicate that both idol attractiveness and social media interactivity have a significant positive impact on emotional involvement ($p < 0.01$). The model is: Emotional Involvement = $1.039 + 0.288 \times \text{Idol Attractiveness} + 0.400 \times \text{Social Media Interactivity}$, explaining 31.9% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.319$). The model is stable and significant ($F = 22.758$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 2. Linear regression analysis result 2 (n=100)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	1.039	0.432	-	2.406	0.018	-	-
Idol Attractiveness	0.288	0.104	0.262	2.761	0.007	1.279	0.782
Social Media Interactivity	0.400	0.096	0.394	4.154	0.000	1.279	0.782
R ²	0.319						
Adjusted R ²	0.305						
F	F (2,97)=22.758, p=0.000						
D-W Value	2.285						

Note: Dependent Variable Emotional Involvement
p<0.05 p<0.01

3.2.3. Impact of emotional involvement on travel intention

As shown in Table 3, the results from this analysis show that emotional involvement has a significant positive impact on travel intention ($p < 0.01$). The regression equation is: $\text{Travel Intention} = 2.045 + 0.579 \times \text{Emotional Involvement}$, with $R^2 = 0.336$, indicating that emotional involvement explains 33.6% of the variance. The model's validity was confirmed by the significant F-test. This finding supports Thomson's proposition that strong emotional attachments, characterized by feelings of affection, self-connection, and passion, are a key link between a consumer's relationship with a human brand and their behavioral intentions [6]. The results align with Matiza and Slabbert, who found that emotional bonds are a critical driver of travel actions in fan tourism [8].

Table 3. Linear regression analysis result 3 (n=100)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant	2.045	0.321	-	6.378	0.000	-	-
Emotional Involvement	0.579	0.082	0.580	7.047	0.000	1.000	1.000
R ²	0.336						
Adjusted R ²	0.330						
F	F (1,98)=49.667, p=0.000						
D-W Value	1.828						

Note: Dependent Variable Travel Intension
p<0.05 p<0.01

3.3. Analysis of qualitative factors

This study also did in-depth interviews with five female fans from different age groups and backgrounds. The aim was to explore the factors that influence fan travel intention, focusing on idol attractiveness, social media interaction, and emotional involvement. The interview results were the same as the survey results and showed the psychological and behavioral patterns behind fan tourism.

The interviews showed that idol attractiveness was a main reason for travel intention. Participants often said the idol's looks, skills, and real personality were key reasons for building an emotional connection. This attraction often led to a strong wish to travel to concert venues, filming spots, or tourist places linked to the idols. Some participants gave examples, such as traveling to Seoul or Japan to join events or visit places shown in idol-related content.

Social media also played a big part in shaping fan travel behavior. Many participants said they often used platforms like Weibo, Xiaohongshu, Twitter, and Douyin to get the latest idol-related travel news. Fan-made content, such as vlogs, guides, and maps, made trip planning easier and made routes more fun. Participants also said that talking to idols on social media, or even thinking they were talking to them, made their emotional bond stronger and made their trips feel more special.

The survey finding that emotional involvement affects travel intention was clear in the interviews. For fans, travel was not only about visiting a place. It was full of deep feelings and personal meaning. One participant said it was like "walking the path of their idols." For many, idol tourism was not just a free-time activity but a cultural practice that joined strong feelings with personal meaning. Even fans who were not deeply into idol culture said their travel choices were often led by emotion, sometimes causing sudden trips based only on feelings.

Other things also mattered, such as time, money, and travel partners. When deciding to travel, fans had to think about work hours, costs, and whether friends could join. Many said the strong emotional bond and sense of realness made the effort and cost worth it.

Some fans also saw idol tourism from a wider view. They thought this type of travel helps boost local economies, increases a city's popularity, and builds understanding between people from different cultures. They hoped for better services in the future, such as more varied tour options, better fan-friendly venues, and richer cultural experiences.

These interview findings give clear real-world support for the study's model, using simple examples to show how idol appeal, online activity, and strong emotions work together to lead to real fan travel actions.

4. Recommendation

Based on the results of this study and following Liu et al., here are some practical suggestions for the tourism industry to leverage celebrity influence in fan tourism. Tourism boards and travel marketers should team up with popular local celebrities, like K-pop idols or online influencers, who already have strong one-sided relationships with their fans. This collaboration can generate powerful emotional and visual interest that significantly boosts fans' travel intentions. To support this, apps like Xiaohongshu, Douyin, and Weibo should be utilized to share fan-made posts and tools, such as maps and trip ideas, alongside other emotional and exciting content. This approach helps fans feel a closer connection to places associated with their idols.

Furthermore, travel companies and tourism managers should create special fan-based travel products, such as "Follow the Idol's Footsteps" tours, concert and travel bundles, or curated visits to filming spots. These packages should focus on telling emotional stories rather than just showcasing places. Local governments and travel services can also improve the experience at fan tourism

locations by adding clear, multilingual signage, dedicated photo zones, fan shops, and special events that reflect the idol's brand. In marketing, the focus should shift from simple visuals to emotional storytelling; ads and promotions should feature real fan stories and feelings to portray destinations as safe and special spaces where fans can feel a genuine connection to their idols.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the mechanisms by which idol-related factors influence fan travel behavior, focusing on fan tourism as travel motivated by emotional connections to idols. Using a mixed-methods approach with quantitative questionnaires (n=100) and qualitative interviews, the research successfully confirmed its hypothetical model. The findings demonstrate that idol attractiveness and social media interactivity positively impact emotional involvement, which in turn significantly enhances travel intention. All variables in the quantitative analysis showed good reliability with Cronbach's α values above 0.7. The regression models explained between 31.9% and 34.1% of the changes in the dependent variables. This showed the results were strong.

The qualitative interviews also supported these results and gave more detail about the psychological and behavioral patterns of fan tourism. Participants often said that idol attractiveness, including looks and true personality, led directly to a strong wish to travel. Social media also had an important role in making travel planning easy and in making emotional bonds stronger. The interviews clearly showed that for fans, travel is not only about going to a place. It is a deep emotional and cultural activity, with some saying it was like "walking the path of their idols."

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