

A Study on Fandom and Fan Culture: Socioeconomic Implications in the Digital Era

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Abstract

The study of fandom and fan culture has grown in significance in the digital age. Fandoms are communities of individuals with shared interests who participate in activities like reading, viewing, and making fan art. Fandom's socioeconomic effects include its contribution to the production and consumption of cultural content as well as its effects on the travel, entertainment, and retail industries. But there are also societal effects like “gatekeeping” and copyright-related legal problems. It also reveals how crucial it is to comprehend the dynamics of power and identity in fandom communities. This study sheds light on issues with intellectual property and social identity as well as shifts in popular culture and media in the digital age.

Keywords: Fandom, fan culture, socioeconomics, crowdfunding, social identity.

INTRODUCTION

With the development of digital technology and the prevalence of popular culture in the current media environment, the study of fandom and fan culture has grown in significance within the socioeconomic framework in recent years. Fandom is a term used to describe a group of people who are passionate about the same things, such as movies, books, music, or famous figures. Zhang and Benyoucef (2016) defines fandom as a participatory cultural process whereby individuals communicate their emotional connection to other people’s creative works. Within this framework, fandom is a phenomenon that includes a wide range of activities, such as reading, watching, writing, and creating fan art, as well as attending conventions and taking part in online forums. The socioeconomic effects of fandom are enormous. One of these is within the entertainment sector, where fans frequently buy cultural goods.

Fans are not only consumers; they are also cultural producers who contribute to the growth, enhancement, and distribution of media products, as Jenkins (2006). Concerning the old understanding of fans as passive consumers, this statement demonstrates a paradigm shift toward a better appreciation of their active participation in creating and disseminating popular culture. The entertainment industry no longer provides its products to fans blindly, instead, fans participate in the alteration, reconstruction, and expansion of the works they adore. The significant role that fans play in the creation and consumption of cultural content has significant economic ramifications for the entertainment industry, impacting their product development, monetization, and marketing

plans. In addition, fandom can generate a considerable amount of profit. A good example is the tourism and merchandise sectors, which appeared up around the fandom phenomena. The significance of fan conventions as major economic drivers for the communities hosting them. In addition, the market for associated products and services, such as the sale of official and unauthorized merchandising, location tours, and customized tourism offerings, also grows as a result of fandom. But there are also social effects of the fandom phenomena that should be taken into consideration. One such example is the phenomena known as “gatekeeping,” whereby a few of the most devoted followers may establish criteria for identifying who qualifies as a “true fan” and who is a “new player” or “fake fan.” For those who don't feel competent or committed enough in a certain fandom community, this might result in exclusion and marginalization.

As it is known how crucial it is to comprehend identity dynamics and power dynamics within the setting of fan groups, particularly with regard to the ways in which social structures like gender, ethnicity, and class can affect people's experiences and engagement in fandom. In addition, legal disputes regarding copyright and intellectual property rights may arise from the fandom phenomena. Fans frequently use copyrighted works in fandom-related activities including cosplay, fan writing, and fan art. As a result, it becomes difficult for the holders of the rights to draw the boundary between acceptable usage and copyright infringement. It highlights the value of communication and collaboration between fan communities and rights holders in order to create an atmosphere that supports the creation and consumption of creative and sustainable content.

All things considered, the fandom phenomenon provides insightful information about how popular culture and the media landscape are changing in the digital age. In addition to opening up new financial options, the active participation of fans in the creation, sharing, and consumption of cultural content also challenges established ideas about intellectual property, cultural participation, and social identity. Gaining better insight into the socio-economic dynamics of fandom can help us create more efficient plans for managing and maximizing the benefits of fan groups while reducing their drawbacks.

METHOD

Analytical is the methodology employed in this study, which is based on gathering and evaluating information from pre-existing sources. Data that has already been gathered and examined by other researchers is then repurposed for new research. Finding scholarly publications that are pertinent to the study topic, fan culture, crowdfunding, and the impact of social media on fan culture is the first step in the secondary data-gathering procedure. After determining which publications are appropriate, the author peruses and comprehends the papers' contents. The primary concepts, significant discoveries, the original researcher's technique, and the research's ramifications are all analysed. After that, the author focuses on the key conclusions and the implications from a larger perspective in her explanation and analysis of each journal that was used. This procedure includes compiling the data from the journals, synthesizing how each article advances knowledge of the study issue, and analysing the connections among the many publications.

The benefit of employing secondary data is that it can give users access to information that already exists without requiring the time and resources to gather main data. It is crucial to remember, though, that secondary data has drawbacks as well, including possible bias from the original researchers and restrictions on the range of approaches they employed. To create an explanation and study of the function of social media, crowdfunding, and fan culture in the

entertainment sector, secondary data techniques are applied in this context. Through the utilization of published scientific journals, the author is able to offer a thorough comprehension of these subjects and identify relevant trends and consequences requiring further study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The idea of fan culture and its quickly expanding economy is presented in the journal article “The Fan Culture and Fan Economy” authored by Liu, F. in 2022. An effort is being made to investigate and comprehend the phenomenon of fan culture as a whole, which is more than just a pastime or a way of life, rather, it is a powerful economic force in the entertainment and creative industries. A description of the ways in which fans engage in various popular culture-related activities, as well as an analysis of the ways in which fan culture has evolved, been affected, and been influenced by a range of causes, from technical breakthroughs to paradigm shifts in consumer behaviour. This shows that the writers see fan culture as an essential component of larger trends in popular culture and social interaction rather than just a singular occurrence.

Next, this analysis digs deeper into the influence of fan culture on the entertainment and creative industries. By highlighting how interactions between fans and creators can influence the production, marketing and distribution of content, this journal opens up space for a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics between producers and consumers in today’s digital era. Liu highlights a number of important aspects of how fan culture has impacted and changed the contemporary entertainment industry. The money that fans provide to the entertainment sector is one of the most notable features. In addition to being the main purchasers of event tickets, merchandise, and other associated goods, fans are also the key force behind the quickly expanding fan economy. New marketplaces, such as digital subscription services and crowdfunding platforms, have emerged as a result of technological advancements and the growth of digital media.

These platforms enable fans to actively support the creative projects they are passionate about. By disseminating information about content they enjoy via social media and online forums, fans may also act as powerful marketing agents by increasing the content's visibility and popularity. Fan response and feedback can also influence creative decisions in content production, allowing work creators to adjust stories, character designs, and other artistic direction according to fan preferences and expectations. As a result, the huge success of a piece of content among fans can shape the dynamics of the entertainment industry, encouraging further investment in that content and creating new economic opportunities. So it can be seen that fan culture is not just a social phenomenon, but also has a significant impact on the creative economy and the entertainment industry at large. The author conducts a thorough examination of the function and consequences of crowdfunding in relation to the creative business in the second journal article, “The Moral Economy of Crowdfunding and the Transformative Capacity of Fan-ancing” by Scott, S. (2014). This journal provides a thorough analysis of the crowdfunding phenomenon, with a focus on the fan-ancing model, in which supporters of creative projects serve as the primary source of funding. In an all-encompassing manner, Scott presents the idea of the “moral economy” and relates it to crowdfunding activities, emphasizing how this model affects and even reinforces moral standards and values in the creative industries. Scott (2014) explains how crowdfunding contributes significantly to the creative industries’ revenue through a fan-ancing approach.

The advent of crowdfunding has brought about a significant revolution in the creative industries. It explains how the fan-ancing model has enabled independent producers to create

inventive and diverse material that they might not have been able to make with traditional funding methods. It not only opens new doors for those involved in the creative industry, but it also allows for a wider range of content to be produced, making the industry's ecosystem more vibrant and welcoming. Scott then goes into further detail about how the crowdfunding environment has altered the dynamic between producers and customers. With the fan-ancing model, fans are not only passive consumers, but also play an active part in supporting and shaping the material created, they actively contribute to the projects they adore by buying items, tickets, or being involved in crowdsourcing initiatives. Deeper involvement is produced by this more direct communication between producers and customers.

Another area of study might be the social and economic effects of crowdfunding in the creative industries. Scott (2014) looks at how social inclusion, accessibility, and justice in the funding of artistic endeavours affect the industry's capacity for innovation and creativity. In addition to how it affects the dynamics of competition and cooperation among industry participants, this includes a discussion of how crowdfunding can allow for greater participation from historically underrepresented groups in the creative industries. This journal is anticipated to have case studies and in-depth analyses as well, which will offer specific examples of crowdfunding's success or failure within the creative industries. In-depth understanding of the significant role that crowdfunding has played in the restructuring of the creative industries, as well as the broader ramifications for society and the economy at large, are sought to be provided by this article's thorough and complete examination. In the framework of a growing creative economy, this analysis also considers the moral implications and underlying principles of crowdfunding behaviours.

With regard to fan activities, Jia et al.'s literature review from the journal "Transformation of fan culture under the influence of Social Media" (2021) provides a thorough analysis of how social media has radically altered the fan culture landscape as the third topic of discussion. In the context of a comprehensive study, this article shows how social media has developed into a potent tool for creating a larger, more interconnected fan community than it was merely a place for interaction. As social media has become more widely used, fan culture has undergone a tremendous shift. Social media, as platforms that offer a place for people to communicate, exchange, and produce content, has completely transformed how fans engage with popular culture. The change in the nature of the relationship between fans and their idols is among the most notable features.

In the past, traditional media or public events served as the main channels for connecting fans with celebrities. On the other hand, social media gives fans the opportunity to communicate directly, respond to each other in real time, and develop more personal and direct relationships with the celebrities they adore. Fans may interact with one another, discover shared interests, and even organize get-togethers or events around the globe by using tools like discussion groups, hashtags, and live streaming. In addition, social media has developed into a place where fans may create thriving, cohesive communities. Social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter allow people to build online communities based on common interests and obsessions, even if they live far apart. Fans' sense of self and spending patterns are reinforced by interactions within these communities, which also foster an atmosphere that enhances and encourages their exposure to different cultures.

The effects of this change go beyond the experiences of specific fans, they also have an impact on tactics and choices made by the entertainment sector as a whole. Fans can, for instance, plan events or gatherings offline or online, contribute creative works, and exchange information.

It is imperative for content creators and entertainment organizations to stay flexible in response to evolving fan tastes and conduct, and Content producers and entertainment companies must continuously monitor and adapt their strategies to keep up with evolving trends and dynamics in the digital space to leverage social media as a means of establishing and preserving robust connections with their target audiences. It is impossible to overlook the role that social media plays in forming fan identities.

These platforms enable fans to actively participate in the development of trends and popular culture in addition to offering widespread access to cultural information. Fans can contribute to emergent cultural narratives by reinterpreting and reproducing content according to their own perspectives and tastes through memes, fan art, and other creative interpretations. Social media then becomes more than just a platform for passive consumption; rather, it turns into a platform where followers can actively create and influence culture. The study highlights the significant influence that social media, crowdfunding, and fan culture have had on the entertainment business. While Scott (2014) investigates the democratizing effects of crowdfunding, Liu (2022) emphasizes the economic power of fan culture. Examine Jia et al.'s work, which emphasizes how social media may completely change the way fans interact with you. Collectively, they demonstrate how the entertainment industry must change to accommodate changing fan dynamics, emphasizing the importance of digital platforms for audience engagement and content development in the modern entertainment environment.

A thorough understanding of the socioeconomic effects of fandom can help to explain how digital platforms and online communities are affecting marketing tactics, cultural norms, and consumer behaviour. Three categories can be used to group the research on the significant socioeconomic implications of fandom:

Objective I: Evaluation of Fan Engagement in The Digital Era

According to the report, there has been a notable shift in fan involvement in the digital age. Fans may now engage with the fans favourite content creators and content through social networking platforms, online forums, and crowdfunding sites. By emphasizing fans' active participation in creating and disseminating media content, participatory culture blurs the distinctions between creators and consumers (Jenkins, 2015). The results imply that the spread of digital platforms has made fan groups more accessible to a wider audience and allowed fans to interact with fans favourite content in fresh and meaningful ways through co-creation and collaboration.

Objective II: Socioeconomic Impacts of Fan Culture on Creative Industries

The research brought to light the significant socioeconomic effects of fan culture on the creative industries, namely with regard to the creation of content, marketing tactics, and income generation. Giving niche or unusual content financial support, crowdfunding helps fans feel more connected to one another. The study also noted the impact of fan interactions on content creation, since content producers are increasingly asking fans for their opinions and suggestions in order to better customize fans' works to the taste of its target audience.

Objective III: Market Dynamics and Fan-driven Economics

The study clarified how fan-driven economies are changing the market dynamics and highlighted the mutually beneficial relationship that exists between fans and content creators. By examining crowdsourcing websites such as Kickstar and Patreon, researchers showed that fans are not just consumers but also actively involved in the production and dissemination of cultural material. The social and economic value attached to cultural practices is highlighted by the notion of cultural capital, which is consistent with this (Turk, 2014). Based on the research, it appears that the financial and social contributions made by fans are very important in determining the viability and success of artistic projects, which in turn affects the entertainment industry's economic environment

CONCLUSION

The literatures demonstrate how these channels have allowed fans to contact their idols more directly and have allowed larger, worldwide fan communities to flourish. With social media, followers can actively influence trends and popular culture in addition to serving as a platform for engagement in this context. When combined, these three journals suggest that fan culture has evolved from a purely social phenomena to a creative and commercial force that affects the whole entertainment business. They illustrate the ways in which active fan participation, fuelled by social media and technology, has transformed the relationship between fans, content creators, and the creative business as a whole. As such, fan culture is not just a subculture but a vital component of the ecology that surrounds the modern entertainment industry.

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