



SOCIAL NETWORKS AND ONLINE IDENTITIES

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K-pop's global success is built on selling more than just music. It sells the idea of connection and closeness between the artist and fanbase. K-pop marketing strategies are created to cultivate and grow parasocial attachment of the fandom. I will be looking at the marketing strategies they use through the theories of parasocial interaction, the attention economy and Anderson's (1983) concept of imagined communities, to analysis why they have been so successful.

Horton and Wohl defined **parasocial interaction** as the one-sided emotional relationship audiences feel towards performers they do not know personally. Content is marketed as authentic and to get to know these idols, when in fact it is highly controlled to fit a specific image of idols. Quasi-parasocial interaction is the passive kind, usually developed through observation.

K-pop marketing revolves around constant content, and idols stay constantly visible to capture and retain their audience. The **attention economy** argues that human attention is a scarce resource, and that modern media competes to capture and hold it (Davenport & Beck, 2001). ENHYPEN is a highly visible group on social media; they always have content across various platforms, such as YouTube and Weverse Live. Their fans have a continuous loop of engagement, leaving little room for rival groups to capture their attention. The constant updates mean their fans encounter their content on all major platforms, creating parasocial bonds as the content is always available, making them feel like they know what they are up to at any giventime. In this way, ENHYPEN's marketing directly reflects the attention economy model: visibility equals relevance, and relevance keeps fans emotionally and financially invested.

Imagined communities are when people with similar interests interact online, and they feel a sense of community despite never meeting most members (Benedict Anderson, 1983). Imagined communities strengthen parasocial behaviour as the one-sided emotional interactions with idols are normalized and collectively experienced. Fans create their collective identity through shared symbols like light sticks, fandom names, and even inside jokes. Imagined communities are powerful because of strong fan communities amplifies loyalty and spending, turning individual parasocial bonds into large-scale, self-sustaining promotion.

Conclusion

K-pop's marketing creating communities of parasocial individuals who will spend a lot of time and money on K-pop artists. They achieve this by cultivating emotional intimacy between idols and fans on social media through constant accessibility and consistent content. Fans create free marketing by sharing social media content with others and remixing it to make it more spreadable, amplifying their image. K-pop's global impact relies not only on music but on carefully engineered relationships and collective belonging.

