

# Research on Marketing Strategy Formulation and Optimization of Korean Wave Idol Market under Modern Aesthetic Changes

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**Abstract.** The modern aesthetic is on the path of continuous innovation, and the modern aesthetic has been part of the cause of the expansion of consumerism for a long time. The marketing strategy of Korean idols has been developed and optimized to a certain extent in this context. In order to study the development and optimization of the Korean idol market in the context of modern aesthetics, this paper investigates the changes and optimization of the marketing strategies of the second-generation girl group "Girls Generation" in the early and late stages and summarizes the impact of modern aesthetics on their marketing strategies. It also suggests how the marketing strategy can be optimized more flexibly and effectively under modern aesthetics, such as accelerating the input and output of information, enhancing market research, and optimizing innovation. These three aspects are used to develop and optimize the marketing strategy with modern aesthetics in mind. The conclusion is that the modern aesthetic, the rise of consumerism, compared to the previous distinctive combination of styles and personalized marketing strategy companies more focused on the development of multiple styles, and more "consumer" as the focus, and reduce the proportion of the combination itself.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Research background

The Korean Popular Culture is called "Hallyu". Since the 1990s, the Korean popular culture of 'Idol groups' has had a constantly rising trend. From the 1990s to the 1920s, it continued to show an upward trend. From the mid-1990s, the company expanded its market overseas, with China and Japan as the main audience countries in the Asian market and the United States as the main market in the West. According to the data shown in 2023, the Korean pop culture market in each country is. The number of albums sold in the first half of each year has increased noticeably since 2018, which saw 10.48 million album sales. The first half of 2019 showed 12.93 million sales, the first half of 2020 was 18.36 million sales, and the first half of 2021 was calculated to be 25.96 million sales [1].

The idol market is an important part of the Korean pop market. It has always been a part of the Korean cultural industry focusing on operations as a doorstep to the international market for the Korean music market. As the Korean idol market continues to innovate and change, there are various algorithms for "generation change" in the market, but the most common one is to use a time span to group idols from different eras. (Aesthetics is defined as a special form of human understanding of the world, which refers to a state of non-utilitarian, symbolic, and emotional relationship with the world.

Along with the social process, the advent of modern society has also created a new generation of human aesthetic reform, and the acceleration of the modernization process has simultaneously led to the accelerated arrival of modern aesthetic change [2]. "Aesthetics" is an important influence on the Korean idol market, and marketing to modern aesthetics is the key to attracting long-term consumers and expanding the audience. Comparing the concept, planning, and music style of the first-generation idol groups with the fourth-generation idol groups, most Korean entertainment companies have developed and optimized their marketing strategies for idol groups to a certain extent based on modern aesthetics.

### 1.2 Literature review

Ruhui Wang proposed the overseas dissemination of IP film adaptations of online literature and the presentation of postmodern aesthetic landscapes. The rise of "consumer culture" and the replacement of traditional textual art by visual culture, fragmented, entertaining, and carnivalized consumer culture reflect the clear postmodern cultural symptoms of Chinese society, and the trend of traditional paper media is broken. The appreciation and criticism of Chinese film art through modern Western aesthetics can better examine the development and characteristics of the film aesthetics presented in the current Chinese context [3].

Baojie Zhu analyzed that the postmodern aesthetic has three different reconstructions: visual, auditory, and

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tactile [4]. The visual aesthetic is held hostage by the visual culture guided by the consumer society and is becoming increasingly shallow, sensory, and homogenized. The development of multiple modern technologies has integrated music in the aural realm into the carnival of images. People realized the senses against technology and formed a plural aesthetic critique against a single modernity.

Lingliu analyzed cultural audiences, the Korean government, Korean companies, and Korean national culture working together, and economic profitability tools for Korean companies [5]. The process of constructing "Korean Wave" are come from the cultural sociology perspective - taking Korean TV dramas, TV variety shows, and KPOP music as examples.

Regarding modern aestheticization, most scholars focus on the rise of "consumer culture" and the impact of the changes of consumerism on aesthetics caused by modern society. Consumerism is a product of the fast-food era, so what was literal in itself is gradually becoming digital and electronic, and along with that, image culture is increasingly emerging. As for the marketing strategy of the Korean idol market, most scholars have analyzed the influencing factors and characteristics in detail. In contrast, in the context of modern aesthetic changes, only a few scholars have conducted specific studies on the Korean pop idol market.

### 1.3 Research Framework

This paper will study a specific Korean idol group, "Girls' Generation". The characteristics of the group meet the following three points, span a certain period, have a unique marketing concept, and undergo a clear shift in style and marketing strategy. Finally, the longitudinal comparisons between the period before and after are studied.

And a step-by-step study is conducted to address the sequential issues raised by this iconic portfolio case.

## 2 Case description

Girl's Generation is a Korean Female Idol Group of nine members formed by SM Entertainment in 2007. The original members of Girl's Generation are Yoona, Tiffany, Yuri, Hyoeon, Sooyoung, Seohyun, Taeyeon, Sunny, and Jessica. Girl's Generation released their first album in 2007. They started other activities in 2008-2010, returning to the mini-album, which debuted in Japan. They had activities in Japan for the whole of 2011. Now, the member Jessica is departed, and they sequentially release the album of Lion, Heart, Holiday, and line up. They released their sixth regular album, "Hoilday Night" on August 7, 2017. Five years later, on August 5, 2022, the group released their seventh album, "Forever1" [6].

Since their debut in 2007, the group has not been officially disbanded, and the number of members has changed from 9 to 5. The total debut time is 14 years. According to the division of the idol era in the Korean idol market, Girls' Generation belongs to 2nd generation

group. According to the data, Girls' Generation has won major achievements since its debut, such as Korea Golden Record & Record Awards, Seoul Song Awards, Forbes Korea Celebrity List for 3 years, Top 10 for 8 years, Gallup Korea Singer List for 3 years, Top 5 for 10 years, Melon 2000s Decade List, and YouTube Music Video of the Year Award [7].

Through the audio data of major music software, the physical album sales of Girls' Generation's once most influential album "Gee" was 140,000. With the arrival of "Gee", Girls' Generation it also reached its best result during its service period. "As Girls' Generation videos on YouTube presented statistical maps that suggest popularity in countries as diverse as Mongolia, Peru, Saudi Arabia, the Philippines, New Zealand, and the US. When Girls' Generation debuted in 2007, they were targeted at the local market with a decidedly cute image, but the larger geographical spread of imagery related to the group has intersected with the maturation of its members. Korean girl groups have a long tradition of emphasizing uniformity [7]."

The main concept of the debut song 'The world of Reunion' is 'the second era of girl group'. The song has various elements of "feminist" theme and is intended for "women". In the '00s, the Korean idol market was still mainly developed in the Korean domestic market.

After 14 years, the Korean idol market has undergone aesthetic changes with modern aesthetics. When Girls' Generation returned in 2022, they kept their own style but changed their planning scheme to create a new concept.

This study aims to analyze the longitudinal comparison between the debut song of Girls' Generation and its return in 2022 over a certain period. The study aims to analyze the development and optimization of the marketing strategy of the same group in the context of modern aesthetics.

## 3 Analysis of problem

Since the 1990s, the development of the "Korean Wave," or the Korean entertainment industry, has contributed greatly to the economic situation in Korea. At the end of the last century, Korea proposed a "cultural nationhood" strategy and gradually focused on a content-based "cultural industry nationhood strategy. The "Korean Idol Industry" is an important part of the "Korean Wave". 2022, the launch of each "idol group" needs to be linked to influence, commercial value, and fan consumption power, with companies, idols, and fans forming a clear industrial chain. Idol groups are the entertainment industry's equivalent of "merchandise" and require investment in packaging, concept planning, and marketing strategies. The formation and development of Hallyu are characterized by individuality and is in line with human aesthetic judgment and orientation. The Korean culture industry has a strong ability to create stars, and the "core" of the Korean idol market, both before and now, is "creating various image symbols centered on body fantasies. In addition, the body fantasy created by Korean entertainment companies has become a metaphor for a

certain fantasy and a symbol of healing". The pop culture of the "entertainment" era has also reinforced the sexual characteristics of the body fantasies of celebrity idols. "Body glamour" was formed according to the symbolic political economy and became an object of fashion and consumption". The main content of Korean idol groups is "music," and Korean pop music is a typical industrialized operation of the assembly line type, with a clear tendency to mix, fuse, and mix ecologies, combining European, American, and Japanese styles, and "reinventing" Korean independent music according to the local Korean musical aesthetics. "The idol groups are the equivalent of the entertainment industry's The aforementioned "assembly line" production model has also led to the "hotness" and "popularity" of most idol groups in the early days, resulting in the concept of musical styles and group styles. The convergence effect. In addition to the "core" and "music" mentioned above, the Korean idol market also "packages" and "markets" the corresponding idol groups. "The so-called packaging refers to style packaging, which includes the planning of the concept, the design of the makeup, and the "character" and "setting" of the idol itself. The packaging is the scaffolding for the marketing plan and further "marketing" for them. The Korean Wave has gone through a certain time span, and under the transformation of modern aesthetics, the Korean idol market has undergone "optimization" on the marketing strategy while maintaining the core principles, which is to follow the modern aesthetics in terms of combination style and concept. The so-called "optimization" is the adjustment of the group style and concept to the modern aesthetic, and the transformation of modern art to tradition has been strengthened in the digital media era. According to the previous literature, modern society has transitioned from a production society to a consumer society, and the aesthetics of the consumer groups in the Korean idol market have transformed accordingly under the extreme expansion of consumerism. And among them, the earlier concepts and marketing strategies have faded away in favor of a new wave of wind.

Idol groups are the entertainment industry's equivalent of "commodities" and require investment in packaging, concept planning, and marketing strategies. Take SM's Girls' Generation group, for example, which was established in 1995 with seven departments: a casting department, training department, record production department, record production department, marketing department, publicity department, and company department, and has developed the performing arts industry into a professional and complete industrial system, the most influential entertainment empire. As one of SM's popular girl groups, Girls' Generation has been continuing the "SMP" marketing method, the so-called SMP is

The abbreviation of "SM MUSIC PERFORMANCE", SMP style, was proposed by Mr. Lee Soo Man, former music director and CEO of SM. SMP is a stage-centered art emphasizing the fusion of stage performance and music. SMP songs have an indefinable style, mostly fusion (Urban Hippop, Teen POP, Future Bass, Electornica, Trap Bass, Fusion, Fusion Pop Dance, etc.) SMP is also evolving and

changing in the market development. As an early SM idol group, Girls' Generation is one of the few groups within the Korean idol market that does not have a single style and is not heavily homogenized by contemporary styles. Moreover, just like the "girl" in the name of "Girls' Generation", the image shown in the early stage of Girls' Generation was "sweet" under the traditional aesthetics. The image of "girl" in the early stage of the Korean idol market has a more obvious "male gaze tendency", reflected in most female groups. Girls' Generation is no exception, even with a more serious The male gaze is even more severe. According to research, Girls' Generation debuted during a time when Korean society was undergoing a significant transition. With the financial crisis of 2008, the social atmosphere was gloomy, and the style of many idol groups reflected social reality, conceptually incorporating social The idol songs and concepts of this time were mostly "new and different", fashionable, creative, and conceptual. The debut song of Girls' Generation, "The World Reunited Again," is the style of "girl crush," which is a voice for "Korean women" and shows its head in silence. And "voice for women" also became the entry point of Girls' Generation's marketing in 2008, targeting "women" with lower social status in Korea and focusing on "women's rights". The campaign resonated with women treated unfairly for a long, breaking the social culture to innovate. The contrast between the image of the "girl with vitality" as a pioneer and the voice of "women" attracted a lot of attention and attention for the debut song of Girls' Generation. But at the same time, it also caused a lot of questions, "breaking the traditional society and culture", and some people who are sadly cured by the society and culture questioned it. The combination of "questioning" and "innovation" is an important part of Girls' Generation's marketing strategy at the beginning of their debut. The combination of "questioning" and "innovation" was an important part of Girls' Generation's marketing strategy at the beginning of their debut and caused a new trend for a long time for the girl idol group "girl crush".

In the following period of time, Girls' Generation returned with a distinctive style, from the sexy uniform of "Genie" to the cool style of OH's "RDR", all with a clear change of style. However, the concept of "female" and the marketing strategy of "music" leading to "idol" are not far from the essence.

But in the transition and transformation of modern aesthetics, the expansion of consumerism, and cultural change, combined with the times and social background of the people's perception of the change. The style pursued by consumer groups is no longer a single "new and different" or "hotness as the core" of the idol market. In recent years, there has also been a significant shift in the marketing of Korean idols. The most recent return of Girls' Generation was its 15th anniversary in August 2022. In the latest song, "forever1", Girls' Generation continues the "female" voice concept with a certain amount of optimization. In "forever1", the music video of Girls' Generation is full of "princess dresses" and "uniforms", which is more than the single Girl crush or Genki style, and adds a lot of "special effects" to it. Special effects" are used to transform time and space

and enhance the visual effect of the music video, rather than a single style or concept. The content is not limited to a single concept, but is presented more diversely as much as possible in front of the consumer group to deliver more content and information in a shorter time.

The transformation mentioned above is the product of the Korean idol market under the modern aesthetic "consumerism" and digital media transformation. With the advent of the fast food era, the entertainment industry is trying to enrich information as much as possible. It is moving from "depth" to "breadth" to cater to the public's taste with a broader style than the previous one of being different or speaking for the times. The idol market is now more inclined to find the hot spots and trends in society and to develop and optimize marketing strategies with an "independent" style.

## 4 Suggestions

### 4.1 Accelerated information input and output

As modern aesthetics are changing, the Korean idol market needs to expand its "consumer base" and expand its culture as a whole in order to retain a larger audience and expand new consumers, thus keeping the industry alive. In an era of rapid information expansion, it is important that the Korean idol market detects new changes in "modern aesthetics" and adjusts to the signals. Thus, speeding up the input and output of information is also an important step to speed up the detection of signals. In the process of processing and counting the huge amount of consumer and market information and monitoring the trend of the times, the Korean idol market has to deal with a large amount of information. The process of processing this information is "input" and "output", and accelerating the input of information can make it possible for The market to analyze the consumer group's aesthetic changes through big data. The process of processing this information is "input" and "output", and accelerating the input of information can make it possible for The market to analyze the consumer group's aesthetic changes through big data. Even the slightest changes can be obtained in a short time. The corresponding strategy can be adjusted quickly to ensure the hotness of the idol group and the corresponding fan base. From the level of information output, the ability of the entertainment companies in the Korean idol market to export information in a timely manner after adjusting the marketing strategies of idol groups within a certain time limit is also crucial, as how to show the changes in idol groups in high quality and quantity is the "information output" in the idol industry. The signal needs to be released at high speed so that the consumer group can notice the "transformation" of the idol industry and digest it quickly. In summary, accelerating the input and output of information is an important step for the entertainment industry to develop and optimize strategies based on modern aesthetics, ensure the information chain's effectiveness, and quickly obtain and release effective information to consumers.

### 4.2 Intensify marketing research

As an assumption of good market position, marketing research provides a solid foundation for good and efficient management moments [8]. Market research evaluates the viability of a new service or product through research conducted directly with potential customers. Market research allows a company to define its target market and get opinions and other consumer feedback about its interest in a product or service. The research may be conducted in-house or by a third-party company specializing in market research. This can include information gathered to determine market segmentation and product differential. The "consumer" or "fan" is an important part of Korean idol marketing strategy, and basically, all marketing strategies are oriented to the fan base. The main audience of the modern aesthetic background is also the "consumer" group, and the consumer group of the idol market is constantly innovating with the change of idols, renewing generation after generation as time goes by. A small group of surviving consumers, together with the remaining new consumers, make up the consumer base of the Korean idol market. The consumer base is extremely mobile because of the speed of renewal and the super-rapid expansion of "consumerism" under modern aesthetics. Then, in order to be competitive in the highly mobile market, entertainment companies in the industry need to optimize their market research departments, find the right entry point for in-depth market research broadly and deeply, strengthen the flexibility of market research, change their strategies according to the mobile market in a soulful way, conduct efficient and high-return research, and deeply understand the psychology of consumer groups. According to their modern aesthetic analysis and market research results for developing and optimizing marketing strategies.

### 4.3 Improve creativity

"Innovation" is the indispensable nature of the entertainment industry, which itself is an industry that requires constant innovation to attract consumers. The following strategies can be used to increase innovation: enhancing trend and hotspot sensitivity, enriching the knowledge base, embracing cultural diversity, and conducting targeted training. The above strategies are all related to "diversity", and the entertainment industry needs to have sufficient reserves within the industry, innovate and reform the basic knowledge, culture, and hotspot reserves, and innovate when the breakthrough point of the above concepts is found, and to retain the original style of idol groups and to integrate new concepts and styles is the most conservative but also the most important concept in the idol market. It is also the most effective way to innovate. No matter how the aesthetic changes, the innovation of the idol market will become the pioneer of the new generation of aesthetics and cause a new wave of modern aesthetic changes. Therefore, maintaining the power of innovation is the most effective and direct way [9-10].

## 5 Conclusion

### 5.1 Key findings

The conclusion is that the modern aesthetic, the rising of consumerism, compared to the previous distinctive styles of idol groups and personalized marketing strategies. The Korean idol market tends to focus on the development of multiple styles, and more "consumer" as the focus, and reduce the proportion of the idol group itself.

In this paper, we study and analyze the development and optimization of marketing strategies for Korean idols under modern aesthetics, using Girls' Generation as an example. The impact of modern aesthetics on the marketing strategy is pointed out, as well as how to consolidate the Hallyu idol market and how to further optimize the marketing strategy within the market in order to respond more flexibly and effectively to the changing society of modern aesthetics to ensure sufficient popularity and benefits. This paper's background, issues, and recommendations are based on real-life data, research, and situations. This research can help the Korean pop idol market identify potential relationships between modern aesthetic changes and marketing strategies, and provide a more flexible and targeted way to optimize marketing strategies in response to the current situation, which can be further optimized along the recommendations. The proposed ideas can be further optimized, and the efficiency and benefits of the Korean pop idol market can be improved.

### 5.2 Limitations

First, this paper lacks of primary data. Since the core of the idol market is the "packaging" and "characterization" to arouse consumers' fantasies, there are few public resources to report on the development of marketing strategies behind the scenes, and most Korean entertainment companies hide the combination as much as possible. Most of Korean entertainment companies hide the marketing methods behind the group as much as possible to increase the authenticity of the idols, reduce the "marketing share" in front of the consumers, and keep the space for the fantasy of the idols. Therefore, there are less Primary resources available. And the "authenticity" and "accuracy" are also biased.

A field survey can improve this limitation. Field research is a more direct and effective way to go deep into the entertainment company to conduct interviews and questionnaires to obtain data with high authenticity and accuracy directly.

Second, this paper's analysis tend to be subjective. Idols are human-centered; in the idol market, what consumers perceive and say is subjective. The resources, reports, and literature collected are inevitably subjective about idols and the idol market. The case study of "Girls Generation" in this paper is inevitably also subjective, which may result in questions and suggestions irrelevant to the value generated.

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