



Chapter 6

The Affective Economy and Online Fan Communities: A Case Study of Johnny & Associates


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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores participation and co-production in affective media experiences in Johnny & Associates' online fan communities. Johnny & Associates is a Japanese all-male talent management company established in the 1960s. As a pioneer in the idol industry, Johnny & Associates and artists under its management have been highly influential in the contemporary Japanese entertainment industry. These artists are collectively known as Johnny's idols or Janīzu. Much of the data are collected through participant-experienter and interviews. The originality of this case study stems mainly from the empirical data for Johnny & Associates, Janīzu, and the global fan base during Johnny & Associates' transition to a social media platform. This chapter analyses marketing strategy, audience awareness, and behaviour in relation to a mass media phenomenon. The complex interaction among Johnny & Associates, Janīzu, and fans generates tensions and contradictions that mirror the modern mediated life.

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INTRODUCTION

Japan is the second largest music market in the world, and its music is completely produced by local artists (IFPI, 2014). One branch of Japan's contemporary music scene is the idol industry. Johnny's idols, or Janīzu, is the term for artists represented by a Japanese all-male talent management company, Johnny & Associates. The term Janīzu, or Johnny's idols, is preferred to the term celebrity. Also, the term idol fits this popular subculture. Since different definitions of idol appear in the literature, this paper uses Hiroshi Aoyagi's (2005) concept of idols as "all-round popular talents" who sing, dance, act in dramas, and appear in commercials. While idols' performance is often ridiculed as artless or "bubble-gum," their popularity is an unmistakable phenomenon in Japanese society. The word idols is mostly relevant to young performers who sing, pose for photographs, and appear frequently in the Japanese media. However, the phenomenal popularity of Janīzu did not come overnight. The idols had to hone their skills in dancing, singing, and acting to please the audience. As the performers are trained to be observant of audience responses, they can handle unexpected situations by utilizing their resources. Also, during the global music crisis, Janīzu enjoyed unprecedented popularity and achieved impressive CD sales targets in the Japanese market.

More research that delve into aspect of consumer behavior and psychology in the digital economy is deemed necessary (Ling Chang, Ling Tam, & Suki, 2016; Nathan, Fook Chiun, & Suki, 2016; Suki, 2016). By way of a case study, this study focuses on commodification of Janīzu and how female fans experience the highly constructed personas of Janīzu. A range of specific affective dimensions in Johnny's fandom such as maternal feelings, shōnen, relatability, uncool-ness, and sexuality will be discussed. This chapter aims to advance the understanding of the interrelationships between the roles of affective components in marketing and how marketers use the affective component in their strategic marketing decisions.

The discussion draws upon ethnographic research conducted between November 2013 and March 2014 and 11 in-depth interviews with members of Johnny's English-speaking online fan communities on LiveJournal.

BACKGROUND

The affective economy refers to an understanding of the emotional relationship that the consumer has toward exposure to a product and purchase decision (Jenkins, 2006). Affect involves stimulation, drives, motivations, emotions, feelings, sensations, or that which is experienced in a lived and embodied place and time (McStay, 2013). In short, it is corporeal. Affect is an umbrella term for a set of more specific mental processes, including emotions, moods, and possibly attitudes. Thus, affect might be considered a general category for mental feeling processes, rather than a particular psychological process per se (Bagozzi et al., 1999). In the context of this case study, affect also refers to emotional experience, the feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion, and even the sense of connectedness or community (Hardt, 1999, p. 96). Rather than defining affect philosophically, this case study defines the term from a marketing perspective.

Scholars who study marketing have viewed the affective economy as the desire to link brand meaning to symbolic consumption. This means that advertising involves a delicate balance between consumer passion and rationality expressed in terms of a movement among visual play, emotion, passion, nonsense,

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and a call to order (Oswald, 2010). In regard to the social media environment, affective intensity creates a sense of being desirable and having importance and a sense of making things matter (Paasonen, 2018).

Celebrity is central to affective activities. Affective activism is often mentioned in fan studies literature due to fans' connection with the celebrity. Fan labor activities relate to affective activities undertaken freely and willingly that produce value for the user (unpaid labor) (Coté & Pybus, 2007; Jarrett, 2003; Terranova, 2000; Martens, 2011). Audiences are described not as passive consumers, but as active, emotionally engaged, and socially networked users (Jenkins, 2006). Commodified affective fan activism includes active promoters for the artists, creating content on fan sites, and creating content for advertisers/management (Baym & Burnett, 2009; Yang, 2009).

Previous research in fan-related activities shows that affective activities allow fans to gain cultural capital, establish social connections with the celebrities and feel close to them, and channel their knowledge through "collective intelligence" (Jenkins, 2006; Baym & Burnett, 2009). Fans' affective activities also build "affective labor," which produces social network forms of community within their social group (i.e., their relationship with other fans) (Hardt, 1999, p. 96). This, however, does not necessarily generate economic return for the fan.

While such participation seems like a form of empowerment, it is also a way for agencies to exploit fans' labor to create commodified cultural products which they in turn can sell back to the fans who helped shape them (Martens, 2011). In a previous study on the star-making process of a Chinese idol, Li Yuchun, the fans were involved in affective activities by being active promoters of Li. Her fans voted during the show, actively promoted her albums, and bought multiple copies of her album. However, her fans felt exploited when Yuchun's management company read their comments on forums and repackaged Li according to the fans' comments, including their stated desire to see Yuchun be more involved with her music/album production (Yang, 2009). This chapter aims to advance the understanding of the interrelationship between the role of affect and its influence on fans' consumption.

JANĪZU AS A COMMODITY

Janīzu as Hardworking and Relatable Idols

Rather than charisma, a core characteristic in the marketing of Janīzu is the boy-next-door image (Glasspool, 2012; Nagaike, 2012). An idol has to be relatable, and Janīzu's star quality takes a long time to build. The Shōnen Club (Boys Club) television program plays an important role in shaping the idols as hardworking, relatable, and "uncool" idols. The Shōnen Club was aired twice a month by the NHK television channel. In 1998, Hideaki Takizawa of Tackey & Tsubasa, leader of the Johnny's Junior faction at that time, kick-started the program. Today, the Shōnen Club features the most recent Johnny's group to make its debut and Johnny's Junior. They generally sing from an enormous track list created by the Seniors and compete against each other in variety-like game segments, allowing fans to see their individualism. The Shōnen Club often airs clips of the Juniors from their early days, thereby showing how much they have grown as idols.

Another important element of building this image is attributed to portrayal of hardworking idols on variety shows and concert backstage documentary DVDs. JOHNNY'S WORLD: Top of the J-Pops, a television documentary, follows Ryosuke Yamada learning to walk a tightrope. The learning process is narrated until the first day of the performance. On observing this process, one of the Juniors said:

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Some people find it too tough, and it is hard, but it's how you make your dream a reality. If you give up now, you give up on the dream. (JOHNNYS' World: Top of the J-Pops, 2013)

Koichi Domoto of KinKi Kids reflects his own journey building up his career as an idol in the same television documentary. He said:

We were trained since kids. It taught us to be brave, to stand strong. What happens after that is gradually you learn to go further on your own. Not everyone does, of course, that's where you see the difference

Janīzu anticipate their singing debut, which they refer to as their CD debut; only then are they considered to have officially made their debut in the Japanese entertainment industry. However, the biggest avenue for them to be recognized by the public and found by overseas fans is through their appearance on various television programs.

During the interviews with fans, they noted various ways they could enjoy their favorite Janīzu. Because Janīzu are multi-talented with careers in many areas of the entertainment business, fans have many ways to enjoy their idols. For example, TOKIO was the first group of Janīzu to debut as a band. The five members of the band - leader and guitarist Shigeru Joshima, bassist Tatsuya Yamaguchi, keyboardist Taichi Kokubun, drummer Masahiro Matsuoka, and frontman Tomoya Nagase, did not have choreographed dance routines to their songs. However, TOKIO had the same career path as their Seniors. Their weekly variety program titled *The! Tetsuwan! DASH!!* is performed while the five members carry out labor-intensive work such as carpentry to help local communities across Japan with conservation projects. On the program, they wear white crewneck T-shirts and overalls and wrap their heads in a white towel for wiping sweat away and don safety helmets. Their image on the show is in sharp contrast to their on-stage persona where they dress smartly in power suits. Variety programs are essential in Japan to market the idols as being relatable to their fans and the general audience. This creates a breed of idols known as real-life idols.

The image of Janīzu in popular dramas is very much constructed by television producers with a script that is likely agreed on with Johnny & Associates. This observation is in line with David Marx's assessment of Japanese talent agencies and their business principles (Marx, 2012). He suggested that these agencies "exert strong control over the entertainment" industry ecosystem (p. 41-46). In contrast, variety programs have a more laid-back approach when using the idols. For this reason, they play a crucial part in showcasing the human side of Janīzu. A few examples of variety programs mentioned by the study participants that attracted them into fandom are TOKIO's *The! Tetsuwan! DASH!!*, V6's *Gakkō e Ikō*, and the *Shōnen Club*.

All fans from the interviews also shared that they are attracted to Janīzu because they are hardworking. The fans described the hardworking nature of the idols as follows:

Not necessarily "handsome" or naturally talented but somebody who works hard and can make the most of their looks and abilities. (Fan #7, research interview, 2013)

I deeply admire his professionalism and how he always seem to put in 150% effort (or even more) in everything he does. On top of that, because Kame is my age, I see him as my role model. (Fan #10, research interview, 2013)

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October 2005 when I watched hana Yori dango Japan version while comparing with the Taiwan version, Matsuda shota was awesome (still my fav) and domyouji was a darling (he still is to me). And then in 2007 Toma was in the second season first episode and he just rox big time!! Mid2007 I was suicidal and found the web page on Toma and that's where all of it seriously started. (Fan #5, research interview, 2013)

Based on the interviews with fans, the life experiences of Janīzu and fans are similar. Additionally, without exception, every interviewee revealed that the idols played a significant part during a difficult time in their lives. The fans admitted that as they faced serious problems at various stages of their lives, such as the death of a loved one or work or college troubles, the idols cheered them up. The fans also pointed out that they could relate to the idols' own struggles and how they worked through them was inspirational. This finding supports Rajagopalan's (2011) statement that a celebrity is a catalyst in fans' emotional transformation from a state of misery and hardship to contentment and emotional well-being. He presented a case of Russian online fans navigating losses and hardships through emotional support from a Hindi superstar, Shah Rukh Khan.

The idols are seen as very hardworking even from an early age. They are signed up as Juniors when they are between 6 and 12 years old and debut as soon as management thinks they are ready to launch. Based on the fans' quotations above, they feel that Janīzu seem to lose their childhood, and it is clear that the idols seem to experience a very different upbringing from their fans. The majority of the fans encountered Janīzu in their early 20s while in college. As soon as they started working, they claimed that they used Janīzu's life experiences and work ethic as a point of reference to overcome workplace difficulties and real-life situations. As the fans grow older at the same time as their idols, they encounter the same experiences and problems as the idols. These parallel experiences seem to make the fans' transition from college to working life easier as the circumstances create the illusion that they are growing up with their idols.

These findings are aligned with Stevenson's (2009) research suggesting that this interaction is evidence of an intimate relationship between fan and idol. This is achieved through fans' immersion in the music and the artist's life over the years. Stevens (2011) studied David Bowie's fans, who had been fans since they were teenagers. Their fandom occupying many years of their lives and their relationship with Bowie developed over time. His fans considered him to be a survivor of cultural change, which provided them with hope to be able to adapt to a fast-changing society.

Likewise, the idols are not afraid to show their emotional or vulnerable sides. A few examples are Sho Sakurai of Arashi who is afraid of heights, Ryuhei Maruyama of Kanjani Eight who battles weight gain, and A.B.C-Z who compares their popularity to another Johnny's group of the same age, Kis-My-Ft2. Consequently, because fans can relate to these down-to-earth personal qualities, they idolize the idols for their off-stage attributes first rather than their musical talents.

Building Boys-Next-Door Image Through Seishun Dorama (Youth Television Drama Series)

Many young Japanese talents make their acting debut through youth-oriented drama series (seishun dorama), and as Johnny's Juniors join early, Johnny & Associates makes good commercial use of their youthfulness (shōnen). High school settings are vital to this genre and dorama production. Seishun dorama themes revolve around friendship, first loves, and dreams, which many viewers can relate to (Iwabuchi, 2004). Kinpachi-sensei, a famous dorama, has starred members of the Tanokin Trio, Shun-

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suke Kazama, KAT-TUN, and Hey! Say! JUMP. Seishun doramas cultivate transnational imagination and a self-reflection toward one's own culture and society (Iwabuchi, 2004), and they have successfully transcended across international audiences. Iwabuchi's assertion is reflected in several fans' discovery stories of Janīzu from seishun dorama, as follows:

Anyway, when I heard of Hokuto and Yugo's new drama Bakaleya, I just had to watch it. After watching that drama, my bias quickly changed from Nakaken to Hokuto XD. (Fan #11, research interview, 2013)

So, I have this friend whom I share our interests with each other even when we are in different fandoms; we're open to new things. She just finished watching Nobuta wo Produce around Feb 2008 and found Yamapi's character really cute. She started googling around and realized that Kame is very pretty. Both of us love pretty boys. So, she ended up sharing (spamming) with me Kame's pretty pictures for a month, before I finally caved and decided that Kame is really an ikemen and ikemen is really good as a stress reliever (laughs). (Fan #10, research interview, 2013)

Shiritsu Bakaleya Koukou (Bakaleya) and Nobuta wo Produce are popular seishun doramas starring Johnny's idols. In fact, the majority of participants in the study encountered Janīzu from the popular drama Hana Yori Dango starring Jun Matsumoto of Arashi. Hana Yori Dango is based on a popular shōjo (girls) manga. Matsumoto, who plays Tsukasa Domyōji, is a high-school student from an upper-class family who falls in love with a student from a working-class family. Tsukasa Domyōji's naivety and his strong feeling for the girl attracts the female audiences to the actor who plays the character (Harris & Ferris, 2011). The young audience also feels an intense sympathy toward another Romeo and Juliet character (Iwabuchi, 2004). This leads to the discovery of his idol group, Arashi.

The interviews with fans revealed that those who were drawn to the Japanese popular media content through a dorama would eventually watch more doramas. This leads them to discover other young actors such as Toma Ikuta, Tomohisa Yamashita, and Kazuya Kamenashi of KAT-TUN. This again supports Iwabuchi's (2004) assertion that the dorama plays an important role in spreading the Japanese popular culture. The fans who searched on the Internet for information about these actors were all directed to the same place, namely, Johnny & Associates.

The idols wear high school uniforms in doramas. In 2014, one of Johnny's Juniors from Bakaleya dorama, Hokuto Matsumura, also starred in SHARK. Aside from Matsumura and Iwamoto, SHARK starred a different line-up of Johnny's Juniors. SHARK is a dorama about a five-member band that wants to change the world with their music; they dream of making their major debut. In contrast to his school image in Bakaleya, Matsumura was styled in black and leather rock clothing to emphasize a mature image and position himself as a "cool" idol among fans.

Matsumura's transformation is just one example of capturing fans' feelings of growing up with the idol. Fans can see and feel the Junior (and idols) from the high school, college, working, and having-a-family aspects of the idols' life on the screen. Johnny & Associates also holds coming-of-age ceremonies at Meiji Shrine, Tokyo. The ceremonies are usually swarmed by fans.

Jason Karlin made the case quite well when he described Japanese idol fans as having a "motherly gaze" because they have been following the idol's career since the idol was a Junior. As a result, the fans adopt these idols into their family (Karlin, 2012). All the fans' feelings of being equals, motherly, or an older sibling are attributed to the construction of a real-life type of idol. Karlin's "motherly gaze" is another face of affective labor (Hardt, 1999). Female fans derive their pleasure from supporting and

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encouraging the success of their idols. By enacting complete control over the transformation of the idols, from boys to men, through television doramas and album releases, Johnny & Associates can market relatable idols and sell the idols themselves.

Transformation From Boys to Men Through Female Magazines

Janīzu are expected to maintain a youthful shōnen image, despite their actual age; hence, idols smile with bared teeth and clear, sparkling eyes to display marketable cuteness. This is illustrated by their appearance on the covers of idol magazines. The pictures are often digitally enhanced to make lips pinker and eyes sparkle with stars on top of the idols' invariably slender, stylishly dressed figures against a brightly colored background (Glasspool, 2012).

The success and popularity that Janīzu enjoy with female audiences is no doubt attributed to their looks and sex appeal, often labeled by fans and media as ikemen (pretty boy). Janīzu occasionally have long hair, are always clean shaven, and have lean bodies. In concerts, they often wear costumes that cross gender boundaries, such as form-fitting suits, with huge flowers, feathers, and sequins sewn to their costumes. One of the most notable of Johnny's jokes among fans and the idols themselves refers to Arashi's transparent costume, made from clear plastic, under which the group wore only white shorts. They wore the costumes when promoting their debut single A●RA●SHI between 1999 and 2000.

In contrast to their shōnen image, the idols are aware that they are viewed as sex objects and often play upon this construction. Almost every year, one of Janīzu pose nude for an appearance in an.an, one of Japan's most popular women's magazines. The picture exists purely as an example of sexually desirable masculinity for the visual pleasure of the magazine's readership, which is entirely composed of females. The feature is sexually explicit, incorporating staged sexual positions with female, Caucasian models, fondling of the female breasts, or posing in a shower. However, an.an's annual sex issues have always caused shocks and scandals among readers through images of eroticized male bodies and nude shots of Janīzu, thus prompting readers to project their own images onto the pictures. Although their ideal image has been described as boyish and youthful, this idealization has been challenged with Janīzu appearances in women's magazines like an.an. This idea is in line with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory (1926), which suggests a role for unconscious wishes and desires, where, in this case, the images attract the reader to escape from her world and enter a world of fantasy and daydreams. These images signify appropriate symbolic terms that are related to the consumers' unconscious desires. Thus, this raises an issue of the extent to which these variations of Janīzu image representations are interpreted by fans and how such interpretations influence fans' consumption.

Fans expressed their desire to idealize the sexual appeal of the idols as follows:

Matsumura Hokuto is my number 1:D he doesn't have an official group though but goes by HokuJe together with Jesse:) I love that pair. The reason he is my favorite is because he is flirty and eroi. X) It's like the main reason that I'm in the Johnny's fandom in the first place... give me hip rolls or go home. (Fan #11, research interview, 2013)

Why Matsujun from Arashi is my fav? Bcos when he was younger, he wriggled and shakes like nobody business!!! Now he do it lesser oh why they all grow up!!! And he is my darling domyouji!! (Fan #5, research interview, 2013)

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Surprisingly, the sexiness of Janīzu is not discussed openly by many in the interviews. Only two fans said that the idols dance routine is choreographed so the fans can enjoy the idols' bodies. This finding is similar to Darling-Wolf's (2004) study of SMAP, whose choreography is designed to please the female audience.

In many of Janīzu television dramas, scenes in which they take showers are among the most anticipated. Janīzu are allowed to cross boundaries such as posing nude for the magazine as well as showing their sex appeal on television as long as their actions are authorized by Johnny & Associates. The management terminated the contract of Koki Tanaka, a former member of KAT-TUN in October 2013, when a full-frontal photo of him made the tabloids' front cover. Previously, Tanaka had played the bad boy image in the group, but in reality the bad boy act was not well received by the management.

Even though they are aware that they represent the ultimate fan fantasy, not all Janīzu are comfortable with their sexual objectification. In the variety show *Himitsu no Arashi-chan* (2012) that aired on May 10, 2012, Satoshi Ohno of Arashi stated that for his 2008 *Maō* television drama, the script required him to perform in two shower scenes which he actually hated doing. He also referred to another member of the group, Jun Matsumoto, who usually acted as a leading man in romantic dramas such as *Hana Yori Dango* as being much more adept in doing shower scenes. Ohno, who is very reserved in terms of his actions and words, constructed an authentic identity unique among Janīzu.

In a different television program, *Arashi ni Shiyagare*, which aired on November 13, 2010, the other members of Arashi expressed having a difficult time adjusting to being alone at home after performing to 70,000 fans at the Tokyo Dome a few hours earlier. Ohno said that he felt the most real when he is at home, absorbed in his drawing, and said that television appearances are a sharp contrast to his actual life and his television appearances feel like a dream. Ohno is an example of tensions that exist between what Johnny & Associates wants the idol to be and the idols' struggles to stay real.

The intensity of Johnny's fans' association with their idols is similar to the relationship of many East Asian celebrities with their fans. For example, the Hong Kong celebrity Jackie Chan was marketed by his former talent agency as everybody's Jackie, especially to his Japanese female audience (Morimoto, 2013). Chan, who is a popular star in action movies, was not allowed to be involved in any romantic movie projects until his contract with his former agency ended and he had established his own production company. It is not clear who is to blame here, the idols, the fans, or the marketing, but it nonetheless highlights the complex relationship between the idols and their fans.

IDOL-FAN RELATIONSHIP

In Japan's entertainment industry, idols are regarded as dream sellers, and the fans buy into their fantasy, devouring as much of this dream commodity as they can. The following further illustrates how the intensity of Janīzu-fan relationships is formed. First, one of the fans asked one of the idols, Yuya Takaki of Hey! Say! JUMP, in the *JOHNNYS' World* documentary how he regarded his fans: His response was "as my girlfriend" (*JOHNNYS' World: Top of the J-Pops*, 2013). Janīzu always have pet names for their fans and the names are only known among the fan's circle. For instance, Subaru Shibutani has named Kanjani Eight fans as eighters although this is not to be mistaken with the official Janīzu fan club, Johnny's Family Club. Likewise, Junta Nakama of Johnnys' WEST often writes to an imaginary fan named JasMine on his blog on Johnny's Web, Johnny's mobile site.

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Fans who were interviewed said that they liked the fact that Janīzu pay attention to the fans. They feel like they are part of something important, as expressed in the following excerpts:

My love for him only grew after I got to meet him, and now I write to him every now and then on his radio show or through j-net promotions and I hope that he still remembers me (he at least said he did on his radio show). (Fan #3, research interview, 2013)

So that fans can feel they're a part of something. Which is much of what the appeal is, I think. When fans have so many different ways to enjoy their idols, they become a bigger part of their life, which is what keeps their love going strong. (Fan #6, research interview, 2013)

In idol magazines such as Duet and Wink Up, as well as television interviews, Janīzu are often asked questions about their type of woman, ideal date, and other questions that highlight their romantic side. On television programs and during concerts, Kazunari Ninomiya of Arashi often flashes flirty winks to appeal to the female audience. Although the majority of Janīzu songs are based on love themes, each group has at least one serenade song often dedicated to their fans, such as Hey! Say! JUMP's Romeo and Juliet. These findings are consistent with Duran Duran's fans, where the fans embedded the love song into their own fantasies; the fans wanted to see themselves as the woman for whom the singer was expressing such yearning (Anderson, 2012).

Kimura Takuya of SMAP fame has always insisted that he is a "public property" (Galbraith & Karlin, 2012). In East Asia, this is taken seriously to the point that if a celebrity gets married or even starts to date, the fans are entitled to a "rebate." An uproar from fans always follows a marriage announcement. Takuya himself married a fellow female Japanese idol in 2000. His marriage announcement also included news of his girlfriend's pregnancy. Nevertheless, he has never mentioned his wife or children in media interviews. With the exception of Takuya, all other Johnny's idols get married after they have passed the peak of their popularity. Kitagawa has to approve of the marriage as a business strategy and partly because Kitagawa serves as a father figure to the idols. Despite his approval, their marriage would not be announced by their agency, and it is never mentioned in their biography on the Johnny & Associates official website. Usually, the celebrity and spouse will hold a press conference to announce their news to the media. After the marriage, however, they do not mention their marriage during events or concerts so that they look like they are not involved in any romantic relationship. The fans know about the marriage but choose not to think about it.

When an idol does get involved with a woman, usually in secret, the Japanese media, especially the red tops, go crazy. Even the idols who attend gōkōn (group blind dates) are stalked by the paparazzi, so it is clear that the media treat them differently, and the "scoop" is often not as it seems. However, it is not exclusive to Janīzu to have a scandal-free image in Japan. The most extreme case in Japan's idol scene was when AKB48's Minami Minegishi shaved her head to apologize to fans when the news of her dating another celebrity leaked in January 2013. Head-shaving symbolizes an act of penance in Japanese culture. Still, her actions caused an uproar as the video was uploaded to AKB48's official YouTube channel where she apologized to her fans. It is rumored among the AKB48 online fan communities that her management had suggested Minegishi's action.

The most intense reactions by the Johnny & Associates management team following an idol marriage was to Jin Akanishi's marriage in February 2012; the reaction indicates how tightly Johnny & Associates controls everything. Akanishi married a fellow Japanese actress in 2012, but he failed to notify Johnny

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& Associates about his nuptials. The agency then canceled his United States music activities and his Japanese tour. Akanishi's scandal is an indication of how tightly Johnny & Associates management controls its idols' images. Consequently, both male and female idols in Japan are expected to remain (or seem to remain) single and available for fan fantasies. Their public image is supposed to reconcile with chaste *shōnen* (young boys) or *shōjo* (young girls). Fans have linked idols to single and chaste *shōnen* based on their desire. This has formed a highly complex idol-fan relationship. Having discussed the idols' image construction, the following section examines Johnny's fangirls' role in supporting Janīzu careers.

AFFECTIVE WORKS OF JOHNNY'S FANGIRLS

This section provides descriptive background of the research participants to understand the type of fan who engages and participates in Johnny's fan culture. Before we can understand whether and how the fans are aware of being exploited by the commercial agency, we must first understand how the fans use Internet technologies for their media consumption. It is important to note the Internet's significance to overseas Johnny's fans in their media consumption within the fandom. It is also important to study the fans from "below" a grassroots cultural approach that considers them from the perspective of consumers themselves to permit understanding of the role they play in the consumption but also production of Johnny & Associates (Turner, 2004). Access to Japanese celebrity culture outside of Japan is difficult to attain if a fan does not live in a major metropolitan area that carries imported Japanese cultural goods or in a country that imports Japanese television programming and, even then, access is quite limited. As a result of this lack of physical access, the Internet is the gateway for Johnny's media consumption (Pradhan, 2010), where LiveJournal is considered a hub for Johnny's-related media. Not only is the physical unavailability overcome by the Internet, but television shows, dramas and commercials, radio shows, magazines, J-webs, and photos are all available in digital form.

Johnny's fangirls or JE fangirls (Johnny's Entertainment) is the common name by which fans address themselves. The fans who were interviewed shared similar profiles. They were professionals who had a stable monthly income and fixed working hours. These types of fans stated that they were involved in fandom activities within working hours. There were also fans who are studying in graduate schools on a full-time or part-time basis; one is working in shifts and arranges her time for fan-related online activities, such as downloading and posting concert updates around classes and work shifts. The majority of fans considers Johnny's fandom a significant part of themselves.

The existence of Internet technologies allows fans to bypass traditional media networks to obtain information directly. Fans manage web sites, LiveJournal blogs and communities, Tumblr, and Twitter accounts to provide news and information to their fandoms. Johnny's LiveJournal online communities hold a unique position as they are built on fan-generated contents. On LiveJournal communities, fans can create their personal blog, as well as contribute to the communities, thus creating and amassing information. Johnny & Associates never intended to target the overseas market. Therefore, Johnny's LiveJournal online communities create user-generated content (UGC) to reach a significant audience. All the acts in the community are voluntary. UGC might represent both the expression of customer complaints and brand fan dedication (Burmam, 2010).

Fans use the online communities to praise and critique the Johnny's-related brand. They also take upon themselves the work of marketing and branding Johnny's, as follows:

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I didn't like how Western/English language fans were always trashing JE music!! This is good music if you just get rid of American preconceptions of what "good" music is. So, I wanted to give fangirls a different vocabulary for music and a different frame of reference. (Fan #7, research interview, 2013)

The responses I get are always interesting. It's enough to make me wish somebody from Arashi's team really was reading through to see how fangirls respond to their music. (Fan #7, research interview, 2013)

And then after that I started buying TV navi magazine pretty regularly. They have a 1-page interview each month on Ueda and Nakamaru's radio show. I love that radio show. No one really scans the magazines so I'll buy and scan them. The Ueda fandom has always been rather small, so the mentality then was to buy photos/doujinshi/magazines so as to keep and share with more people. (Fan #10, research interview, 2013)

Lately I've been trying to find time to translate scans, been doing a few but I don't have as much time for that as I might want. I don't want it to start to feel like a job. Considering all the other missions I've set myself on doing I might have less time translating. More of late, when I decided to start contributing to dramawiki, I started creating pages for most Johnny's boys that didn't have one (mostly Juniors). I've created some drama pages also but they require more work and time so I haven't done as many of those. Dramawiki is fun, and it was always the site I turned to since the beginning of my fangirling. (Fan #11, research interview, 2013)

Fans are reworking the commercial brand from the agency through creation of their own work – fan fiction, fan work, and fan art. Fans also are drawing attention to their favourite idols by making more information available on the Internet and also in English. One fan even shows a keen interest in the performance and musical aspects of Janīzu where she often updates her personal LiveJournal with screenshots from the Shōnen Club and various Japanese music shows that feature Janīzu. She created a LiveJournal community to review Johnny's music to give her own interpretation of the music.

Another example of affective fan work done by Johnny's fangirls is sending mass postcards for KAT-TUN. Following Koki Tanaka's dismissal in 2013, KAT-TUN was left with four members. In October 2013, members of KAT-TUN's LiveJournal online community started a project, where fans of each country were to send postcards to KAT-TUN each month. The post was described as follows:

Never could we imagine that it would be in such moment and under such circumstances that we would be presenting this idea. Then again - now is the moment, when our boys KAT-TUN need our support more than ever, need to know that they are still loved by us – their hyphens.

The postcard is custom made with the KAT-TUN member's photo or art, name of the country of the sender, and the project logo created by fans and includes International Hyphens Support KAT-TUN as the motto. The objective of the project is to show support to KAT-TUN and show Johnny & Associates that Janīzu have many fans all over the world. Fans from Russia, the United States, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic, and Moldova participated in the postcard-sending project. Since the one-way nature of Johnny's artist-fan interaction is still in place, some Johnny's fangirls send snail mail regularly to show support for their idols. Snail mail is one way to sustain social bonds not only between fans from various locations (Galuszka, 2015) but also between fans and artists. Johnny's fangirls can send their fan letters

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to Johnny's Family Club building in Shinjuku. However, "building" is an exaggeration. The Shinjuku's Johnny's Family club refers to a physical place; a basement that displays Janīzu's awards, signed posters, signed CDs, and message cards to fans—it is a Janīzu's museum with free entrance.

Even though Johnny's fangirls want to be noticed by the agency, they also show contradictions. On New Year's Day 2014, TOKIO's variety program aired a segment in which they tried tasting realistic-looking objects made from chocolate such as shoes, door handles, and photo frames. Johnny's fangirls had made animated gifs and posted them on Tumblr. Although this was not their intention, the animated gifs caught the attention of the Internet and went viral overnight.

However, some fans were displeased by the sudden attention received by Janīzu on the Internet:

Tokio is now famous overseas and the agency might come down on international fandom.... if this somehow links back to je fandom and all our sharing sites, it could get really bad quick... this whole thing is just making me feel very protective for some reason...they are not TOKIO anymore, they're nameless funny faces. (Fan #3, Twitter, January 2014)

This fan conveyed her uneasiness with the sudden attention that TOKIO received. This situation may lead the agency to international fandom, and the consequence is that the agency might shut down the community, a situation that Johnny's fangirls would like to avoid. On one side, the fans want to be recognized by the agency; however, yet another conflict is the attention that they receive and feeling protective of the community. This is just an example of the complicated dynamics between fans and the agency.

In a similar vein, in regard to SMAP's disbandment, the group's Japanese fans launched a campaign that encouraged the purchase of the tune, Sekai ni Hitotsu Dake no Hana, to stop SMAP from disbanding (Kyodo, 2016). As a result, the single topped the Oricon, with 2.6 million copies sold, nearly reaching the campaign's goal of 3 million copies. Even though the fan's efforts did not stop the group from disbanding, this circumstance illustrates the agency's monetary gain from fans' affective work.

All the above examples are consistent with Jenkins' (2015) research of the Harry Potter Alliance audience. Jenkins used a mechanism similar to fan groups' letter-writing and "save the show" campaigns, which moved the audience from engagement within participatory culture to involvement in political life. Fans are no longer just active producers who collaboratively produce fan works, such as fan fiction, fan art, and subtitling or translation services for foreign texts. Fans are mobilized as active participants in social and political movements because they are united by a common factor: their consumption of popular culture (Chin & Morimoto, 2013). They become promoters of and collaborators with their favorite brands (Yang, 2009; Hamilton & Hewer, 2010; Baym & Burnett, 2009). Although their direct and indirect appeals to Johnny & Associates can be seen as positive acts to support their favorite artists, the appeals can also be interpreted as contradictory to Johnny & Associates' business decisions. This reveals the other side of the coin of prosumers, which are resisters and anti-fans of the brand (Hamilton & Hewer, 2010; Gray, 2003). This is in line with Gray's (2003) argument that "fan studies have taken us to one end of a spectrum of involvement with a text, but we should also look at the other end to those individuals spinning around a text in its electron cloud, variously bothered, insulted or otherwise assaulted by its presence" (p. 70). Therefore, Johnny's fangirls' affective works illustrate a correlation between loving and disliking Johnny & Associates' products and brands.

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CONCLUSION

This chapter presents and considers field data in the form of fan testimonials. The chapter aims to answer this question, “What are the commodification processes carried out for artists of Johnny & Associates?” To answer, the chapter explores the strong affective emotional response of fans through their response to Johnny & Associates’ information management practices.

The chapter outlines how the image created for and by the celebrity is consumed by fans on the Japanese side of the business. The frequent appearance of Janīzu on television adds to the perception that they are simply a next-door neighbor. The multi-personas of Janīzu and the tensions that the idols experience to stay real with what the management implies and what is expected from them also is explored. Janīzu as the ultimate female fan fantasy, along with the complex relationship between the idols and their fans, is discussed.

Finally, the most significant finding to emerge from this chapter is the agency’s highly evolved marketing strategy and how it operates, particularly in generating the idols’ public image. This highly constructed image is how the agency tries to increase the fan base, its desire and demand for more products. The agency commodifies elements of the idols’ youth (shōnen) and real-self authenticity to further capitalize on the emotional intimacy between fans and idols.

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