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Course

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International K-Pop Fans

The International K-pop fan base are a discourse community that have discussion forums where they can speak in their own language, are passionate about the artists to think that they deserve worldwide recognition, but struggle in their efforts as many of the fan base are not born in North or South Korea. New people getting into the K-pop realm will be confused by who they like or don’t like or how to speak about who they care for since many of them are teenagers to young adults. Many of the seasoned fans create a long range of media, from YouTube to Allkpop, to have people relate to the topic or new ones to understand what it would be like to be a K-pop fan.

Korean pop is a genre where many artists sing in their native language, Korean. But the artists do not have to be in Korea to be in the genre. There could be Japanese or Pilipino people that can jump in this genre and be a part of the success as well. K-Pop is a range from Hip hop to Pop. Even though the genre is named K-Pop, there actually is plenty of room for other types of music to fit in that genre. The abbreviation stands for the popular music in Korea today. The music doesn’t have to be actual pop music, just music that is popular in that region.

K-pop fans, whether they are Korean or something else, they created a language to communicate with each other to express their passion for the genre in their own way. For an example, someone can have a certain “bias” towards someone in an K-pop group. Usually a bias is what you favor or prefer over anything else. The word is kind of similar in that instance but it can be confusing for people getting into the community. A “bias”, used with K-pop fans, shows that they like or are passionate about more than the other artists in the group. The fans do love the entire group in general, but there is that one person that stands out above the rest, hence why many call who they like their “bias”. Many people in the fandom use the word in English as it is the universal language. The language reaches out to a variety of people who understand the language and have them interact with one another.

Another example is the term, “manake” where the word means someone who is younger in Korean. Older K-pop fans tend to use this term, especially in huge groups where a member is younger than the rest. Many use the Korean term to make the language K-pop fans communicate interchangeable. They use a mix of English and Korean words to establish their own, unique communication method. The word also could be confusing for new K-pop fans, who could get overwhelmed by the new information overload. But many people who have blogs or social media, use that outlet to help the new fans get acquainted to what happens when they are new in the K-pop community. A young woman on Wordpress, explained her own experience in the K-pop community. She showed some of the word terms the group use. People can use her blog and many others to get a sense of what the K-pop fandom is like.

While learning how the members of the community communicate with each other, it is also beneficial to know how much they are at a disadvantage. International Korean pop fans do not get much of a benefit when it comes to K-pop. Since it is Korean pop, a lot of the artists started and got famous in Korea. They focus their efforts on their Korean or Japanese fan base much more than the fan base in America or Europe. That said, that means the American or European fans will not get a lot of opportunities than the Asian fans. Not being able to see your favorite K-pop artist in concert, is an example. It is hard for fans living in those countries where their artist does not come in or near there their hometown. They would have to resort to hoping that their artist would come to their country or must watch a low-resolution video on YouTube.

Fans watch people discussing K-pop so they can relate to a person who has got multiple views and recognition on the internet. Steven Deng, a member of the K-pop fan base, created multiple videos ranging from the K-pop language to how international fans struggle. He created the video to let people know that they are not alone in terms of struggling as an international fan. He gives this sense of reassurance as he is famous and recognizable for people to relate to him. Many of K-pop fans can use his video to share to their friends of how relatable he is.

International K-pop fans even struggle with knowing the actual, English version lyrics to the songs. The lyrics are in Korean but many people are not aware of the language or cannot read or speak well. So, it is difficult when a new music video comes out to a song and there are not English or any other language subtitles. But that is where that sense of community comes in as many people who know how to speak Korean, tend to translate the lyrics from Korean and put it on You Tube for people who wanted to know that the lyrics are and mean. That way the fandom can watch the video with the lyrics repeatedly so they can have a clear understanding of the lyrics mean.

Other than YouTube, many fans also create discussion forums to talk about a wide range of topics in the K-pop community. They create threads and combine their made-up knowledge to discuss with each other. On a website called Allkpop, it is filled with discussion threads and topics that range from anything K-pop related. This is a great resource for new and seasons K-pop fans they can talk about what they like with other people. They can build friendships and create meaningful sources any fan can use.

K-pop fans are passionate about their groups and want them to succeed all over the country. America is one of the countries that have a huge impact with the music industry and the artists that make it big. K-pop fans want the artists in their genre, have more recognition so everyone can see that Asians are talented. A woman, involved in the K-pop community, told other fans that there’s no need to hope for their artists to have worldwide recognition. It was an opinion article but plenty of fans read it and had their own views on it. Good and bad.

This topic is controversial as plenty of people have different views on western media’s value to K-pop. Some think that the recognition is important as there could be an abundance group of people who want many K-pop artists to succeed in other countries. They want them to win Billboard awards, Video Music Awards or Grammy’s to make people aware of other music than the one that shows in America.

Others think that there is no point in having them be on American award shows or even performing at them. The racist comments about Asians will not go away. In fact, many believe that more racist comments will come and affect the artists in a negative way. The racism will still exist and many Western artists will not be affected by the new Asian exposure. There could be new collaborations with the group but that is just about it. It is nice that the K-pop fans want their favorite groups to have recognition. This shows that many people in the fandom care about the genre passionately and will want it to have more awareness in the world.

The people that make up the International K-pop fan base are a discourse community that communicates with each other in their own language mixed with English and Korean. It expands to a wide range of fans who know both languages and one more than the other. The fandom also participates in discussion forums as they talk about their favorite artists with other people. This shows the discourse community using the internet to collaborate and communicate with each other people who have similar interests. But through it all, this discourse community struggles with receiving the same amount of attention the Korean fan base has. Despite of the struggles, they continue to be fans as they love being involved in the K-pop community period. They worship their artists and that will not stop no matter the disadvantages they face.