The New Celebrity Economy in Cyberspace

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Abstract
The emergence of celebrities dates back to the mid-19th century, with some scholars tracing their origins to even earlier periods. However, it was the commercialization of the Internet in the 1990s, and more significantly, the rise of the social media industry in the mid-2010s that gave birth to what is now commonly referred to as the "celebrity industry." This industry has experienced a continuous upward trajectory ever since. While individuals with a discerning outlook may perceive celebrities, especially microcelebrities, as superficial and lacking in merit for societal attention, it is essential to recognize their pivotal role in reshaping global economic dynamics. This paper aims to elucidate the undeniable influence of celebrities, particularly microcelebrities, in stimulating ordinary individuals to allocate their hard-earned resources toward non-essential expenditures. Indeed, as the concept of 'consumption' itself has evolved into a potent driving force, celebrities' impact transcends economic domains, extending into the realms of society, personal life, culture, and even politics. This paper endeavors to elucidate the multifaceted consequences of this phenomenon.

Keywords: celebrity economy, celebrity worship, consumption, microcelebrities.

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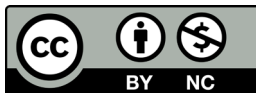
Introduction

The celebrity culture has long captivated the attention of scholarly investigation, with its historical roots extending to the emergence of the cult of personality during the early 20th century, as discussed by Boorstin in 1961. However, the contemporary landscape of celebrity is presently undergoing a transformative evolution. This evolution is propelled by the confluence of technological advancements, alterations in media consumption patterns, and evolving societal norms.

This article undertakes a comprehensive examination of an intricate phenomenon known as the "new celebrity industry". This industry has transcended conventional confines and has fundamentally reshaped the mechanisms governing the acquisition, exercise, and sustenance of fame. As we embark on this intellectual exploration, it becomes increasingly apparent that the democratization of fame facilitated by digital platforms, coupled with a redefinition of talent and achievement, has sparked a paradigmatic shift within the celebrity ecosystem.

At the heart of the evolution within the celebrity industry lies the pervasive influence of social media, particularly the advent of Web 2.0 technologies. In the contemporary landscape, the once-rigid boundaries that separated established celebrities from the general populace have progressively eroded. This transformation has given rise to what Gillespie (2018) has aptly termed "platform celebrity". Prominent digital platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, have played instrumental roles in catalyzing the ascent of "micro-celebrities"- individuals who accumulate substantial followings and wield significant influence through the creation of self-generated content, as highlighted by Andrejevic (2020). Besides content creation, these individuals also shape the fate of message shards on social media:

> "In Internet-based social networks, the nodes have the most pivotal role in the processes and outcomes of the networks. Whether they pay attention to a message in the network or ignore it defines the fate of the message. One message is shared and re-shared by millions of users and another is left forgotten" (Sabbar & Matheson, 2019: 23).

This democratization of fame underscores the participatory essence of digital culture. In this milieu, individuals are no longer passive consumers of celebrity narratives; instead, they actively engage, co-create, and contribute to the construction of the celebrity persona. This

phenomenon represents a profound shift in how celebrity is cultivated and experienced in the digital era.

The proliferation of the new celebrity industry has prompted a fundamental reconsideration of established paradigms concerning talent and achievement. Traditionally, celebrity status was conferred upon those demonstrating extraordinary proficiency in domains such as acting, music, or athletics. However, in the contemporary milieu, we witness the rise of "ordinary celebrity," a phenomenon characterized by individuals attaining fame through the sharing of relatable life experiences, personal narratives, and an ability to evoke emotional resonance, as expounded by Gamson in 2011.

As ordinary individuals harness the potent tools of authenticity, vulnerability, and relatability, a transformative shift occurs. This shift blurs the boundaries between celebrity figures and their audience, fostering a profound sense of intimacy and connection that transcends the conventional dynamics of the celebrity-fan relationship.

Although the new celebrity industry offers remarkable avenues for self-expression and the democratization of fame, it is accompanied by an array of challenges. One significant challenge arises from the ephemeral nature of online celebrity, which can engender complexities in identity management and mental well-being. Individuals are often confronted with the pressures of meticulously maintaining a curated digital persona, as noted by Marshall and Moore in 2022.

Zohouri and his colleagues identify another challenge related to the role of celebrities in the society in relation to the concept they term 'celebrity-slacktivism': "*In the context of slacktivism, another challenge emerges when individuals engage in online actions not to pursue anything valuable but simply because it aligns with the popular trend. This trend-following behavior can be referred to as 'celebrity slacktivism,' where people mimic online actions merely because they see others, including celebrities, doing the same*" (Zohouri et al., 2020: 161).

The pervasive phenomenon of "cancel culture" serves as a poignant illustration of the amplified consequences of missteps in the era of digital scrutiny, a topic astutely discussed by Ronson in 2015. Furthermore, the boundaries differentiating personal and public spheres are becoming increasingly indistinct, giving rise to ethical quandaries concerning privacy and consent in the age of hyperconnectivity. These challenges underscore the multifaceted implications associated with the contemporary landscape of celebrity.

Notwithstanding the challenges inherent to the new celebrity landscape, it concurrently presents opportunities for empowerment,

entrepreneurship, and community development. Emerging celebrities frequently exploit their digital platforms to expand their revenue streams by engaging in brand partnerships, merchandising endeavors, and crowdfunding initiatives, as elucidated by Djafarova and Rushworth in 2017.

The accessibility and reach afforded by online platforms empower individuals to cultivate specialized communities and champion social causes. This fosters a democratized form of influence that transcends the confines of traditional celebrity endorsements. In this context, the new celebrity paradigm becomes a dynamic catalyst for positive change, facilitating both personal and societal advancement.

An industry fueled by another industry

The celebrity industry functions as a distinct entity within our society, yet its sustenance is not solely reliant on the celebrities' own fame; rather, it thrives in symbiosis with an ever-expanding trend of consumerism. Consumerism, an inherent facet of modern economies and societies, is characterized by a multifaceted interplay of psychological, sociocultural, and economic factors that significantly influence consumer behaviors and preferences (see for example Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Kotler & Pfoertsch, 2006). Notably, scholarly examinations of consumption over the past century have often cast it in a critical light.

One seminal theoretical framework, Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, posits that individuals are propelled by a hierarchical arrangement of needs. This hierarchy dictates that fundamental physiological requirements take precedence over higher-order psychological desires such as self-esteem and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). When applied to the domain of consumerism, this theory implies that as individuals advance towards the fulfillment of their basic needs, their consumption patterns undergo a transformation. This transformation involves a shift towards the acquisition of goods and services that cater to emotional, social, and self-expressive needs (Higgins, 2006).

Thorstein Veblen's Theory of Conspicuous Consumption, as elucidated in his seminal work *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), provides valuable insights into the proclivity of individuals to engage in conspicuous consumption. This behavior entails the acquisition and public display of products not solely for their practical utility but rather as symbols of one's social status and affluence (Veblen, 1899). This theory underscores the competitive dimension inherent in consumption, wherein individuals vie to surpass one another in showcasing their wealth, leading to the elevation of specific brands and products as insignias of prestige and

societal position (Podoshen, 2013). It is worth noting that Veblen's theory has subsequently been adapted and expanded upon by other scholars in various forms (Shahghasemi, 2021).

Thorstein Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption, expounded in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), offers a valuable framework for understanding the intricate relationship between consumer behavior and social status. Veblen contends that individuals often engage in consumption not solely to satisfy their essential needs but, more prominently, to conspicuously exhibit their wealth and social standing. This concept of "conspicuous consumption" involves the deliberate acquisition of luxury goods and services as a means of signaling affluence, thereby perpetuating a competitive cycle of emulation among peers (Veblen, 1899). Moreover, Veblen's theory introduces the concept of "conspicuous leisure," wherein non-productive activities, often devoid of utilitarian purpose, serve as indicators of one's social standing within a community (Ibid). In contemporary contexts, Veblen's insights prompt contemplation regarding the societal implications of materialism and the relentless pursuit of social status through consumerism. This enduring theory continues to provide a framework for analyzing the intricate dynamics of conspicuous consumption and its ramifications in modern consumer culture.

Arising from the realm of economics, Rational Choice Theory postulates that consumer decision-making hinges on a rational assessment of costs and benefits. It is propelled by individual preferences and bounded by financial constraints (Becker, 1976). Nevertheless, this theory's apparent simplicity falls short in encapsulating the complexities inherent to consumer behavior, which often succumbs to the influence of emotional reactions, societal pressures, and cognitive biases (Simonson & Tversky, 1992).

Pierre Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital underscores the significance of consumption as a tool for signaling one's social affiliation and differentiation (Bourdieu, 1984). Within this theoretical framework, consumer decisions emerge as mechanisms for individuals to articulate their cultural identity and affiliate with particular social groups or subcultures (Chaney, 1996). Here, the act of consumption transcends mere acquisition of material goods; rather, it serves as a potent instrument for establishing a sense of belonging and distinguishing oneself within the broader societal landscape.

In light of the ascendance of experience-driven consumption, scholars have delved into the emotional and experiential aspects of consumer behavior (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Contemporary

consumers actively pursue products and experiences that elicit positive emotions, contribute to an enhanced sense of well-being, and facilitate the creation of memorable moments (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). This contemporary shift toward prioritizing experiential satisfaction over the mere accumulation of material possessions exemplifies the evolving facet of consumerism in the modern era.

Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Hyperreality posits that contemporary consumerism is marked by a conspicuous blurring of distinctions between reality and simulation (Baudrillard, 1981). In this context, brands and advertising craft hyperreal narratives that effectively mold consumer desires, often disassociated from pragmatic necessities (Lury, 2011). This theory underscores the potent sway of media and marketing in shaping consumer aspirations.

As environmental concerns have gained increasing prominence, ecological and anti-consumerism theories have also come to the fore (Schor, 2010). These theoretical perspectives critique the perils of excessive materialism and advocate for more sustainable and conscientious consumption patterns (Sheth et al., 2011). The emphasis placed on well-being, experiential enrichment, and societal impact in these theories signifies a departure from conventional materialistic consumerism.

Despite the presence of predominantly critical theories concerning over-consumption, consumerism continues its trajectory, with industry stakeholders ceaselessly seizing every opportunity to persuade individuals to purchase items they may not genuinely require. Within the captivating realm of statistics pertinent to the consumer goods industry, it is noteworthy that the projected global expansion of this market is anticipated to reach an impressive USD 39.89 Trillion by the year 2027, demonstrating a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.8%. This numerical forecast provides a clear indication of a consistent and ongoing progression. Consequently, individuals such as strategic planners, investors, and industry experts would do well to acquaint themselves with this robust data, for it holds the key to promising prospects within the market. Beyond its numerical significance, this statistic encapsulates far more than raw data; it serves as a reflection of the substantial potential for innovation, competitive dynamics, and future profitability within the consumer goods sector.

Within the expansive landscape of the consumer goods industry, it is intriguing to observe that a substantial 81% of businesses are actively adopting advanced analytics as either a high-priority or even a critical component of their operations. This shift towards digital methodologies

signifies the prevailing trends in how these corporations are integrating state-of-the-art technology. Importantly, this transition is no longer viewed as an optional enhancement but has become an essential element of their strategic framework. The importance of this trend, underscored by the statistical representation, highlights an era wherein numerical data and algorithms exert significant influence over market dynamics. Essentially, by comprehending, interpreting, and applying this valuable piece of information, enterprises within the consumer goods sector can refine their competitive edge and establish a more robust position within the industry's fiercely competitive landscape.

The United States' consumer market commands a substantial volume, amounting to an impressive USD 4,649 billion. This figure is of considerable significance and cannot be disregarded lightly. It serves as a vivid representation of the consumer goods industry's vast potential, akin to having a treasure map that reveals the location of the most significant riches. It underscores the substantial purchasing power held within the borders of the United States, an enticing proposition for any enterprise operating within the consumer goods sector.

Furthermore, this astronomical market volume sets the tempo for emerging trends, innovation, and global expansion within the consumer goods domain. Given the sheer magnitude of this colossal market, each of its movements sends ripples across the world, exerting a considerable influence over strategic approaches and financial outcomes. In the intricate landscape of consumer goods, acknowledging and adeptly navigating this pivotal element on the chessboard could very well determine the distinction between securing an advantageous checkmate and finding oneself in a precarious stalemate.

Operating within an intensely competitive and saturated sphere necessitates the implementation of specific strategies and unwavering perseverance. Marketers, in particular, face considerable pressure as they formulate their communication strategies, particularly in the context of financing their marketing campaigns. Global spending on advertising reached a remarkable zenith of approximately $710 billion in the year 2021, translating to roughly $90 for each individual on the planet. Evaluations for 2022 indicated substantial increases in advertising expenditures across various markets. Notably, there was a 34% surge in the United Kingdom, a 30% increase in Brazil, a 27% upswing in Canada, and a 23% rise in Australia. These escalations can largely be attributed to a series of monumental sporting events scheduled for 2021 and 2022, including the rescheduled Tokyo Summer Olympics in 2021, the early 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, and the FIFA World Cup slated for late

2022 in Qatar. A conspicuous outcome of these circumstances has been the upward trajectory of advertising expenditures.

The United States maintains a significant lead in terms of overall advertising spending when compared to other nations (Kotabe & Helsen, 2022). In this environment, marketers must navigate not only the competitive landscape but also the financial considerations tied to their advertising campaigns, making strategic decisions all the more critical.

In the quest to establish a distinctive and lasting presence in the minds of consumers within the fiercely competitive landscape, certain companies opt to establish partnerships with celebrities. These enterprises enlist celebrities as endorsers or spokespersons to champion and promote their concepts, products, or services. Within the contemporary realm of marketing, celebrity endorsement has risen to a position of paramount importance. Furthermore, marketers firmly believe that celebrities possess the ability to captivate consumer attention and direct it towards the products they endorse. They achieve this by effectively transferring their image values, which are closely associated with their celebrity persona and captivating attributes, to the products they endorse. This conviction frequently prompts marketers to allocate substantial resources towards aligning their products with well-known celebrities. Undoubtedly, celebrity endorsements continue to hold enduring significance as a strategy for enhancing marketing communications (Chekima & Chekima, 2019). In essence, celebrity endorsements serve as a strategic mechanism through which companies skillfully navigate the intricate dynamics of consumer attention, image projection, and cultural resonance. This synergy results in a potent and influential tool within the domain of contemporary marketing (Ibid).

In the previous century, achieving celebrity status was an exceptional accomplishment, often viewed as an aspiration beyond the reach of the average person. However, in the contemporary era marked by the proliferation of social media, the landscape has undergone a profound transformation. The emergence of micro-celebrity exemplifies this paradigm shift, representing the evolution of an ordinary individual into a recognized public figure. This transformation involves a shift from non-media to media personas, reflecting the pervasive influence of the digital age. Micro-celebrities, frequently active on various social media platforms, rise to prominence within the extensive user base. Their journey entails harnessing these platforms to curate content that cultivates a dedicated fan following, effectively transforming their online presence into a form of performative celebrity exhibition.

Operating across a diverse spectrum of domains, including but not limited to fashion, health, fitness, beauty, humor, technology, gaming, and culinary pursuits, micro-celebrities embody the multifaceted nature of contemporary online influence. In recent times, this phenomenon has experienced a surge encompassing a wide array of personalities, ranging from bloggers and glamour models to social media coaches. These digital luminaries not only amass popularity and recognition through their content but also capitalize on lucrative opportunities for financial gain. Corporations are increasingly recognizing the potential of social media platforms as effective channels for product promotion, leading to their eagerness to collaborate with micro-celebrities. In an evolving landscape marked by intense competition, marketing strategies have evolved from direct approaches to incorporate more subtle and indirect methodologies. Among these approaches, the involvement of prominent micro-celebrities across various social media platforms emerges as a significant and relevant strategy.

The incorporation of micro-celebrities provides enterprises with a direct channel for connecting with their consumer base. Given the substantial followings of these micro-celebrities, their content enjoys widespread viewership and shares. Through associations with these digital influencers, marketers effectively tap into an extensive and engaged audience. In the context of India, businesses have recognized the effectiveness of micro-celebrities in enhancing customer engagement and expanding their outreach. Furthermore, this symbiotic relationship cultivates positive "word of mouth" publicity, thereby enhancing a brand's reputation. Such collaborations empower organizations not only to establish connections with their clientele but also to bolster their brand presence, encapsulating the essence of customer engagement.

In a research endeavor led by Khim-Yong Goh, Cheng-Suang Heng, and Zhijie Lin (2013), an investigation was carried out to examine the impact of user-generated content (UGC) and marketer-generated content (MGC) on engagement within brand communities on social media. The findings of this study unveiled a positive correlation between increased engagement and higher spending on purchases. Additionally, the research highlighted a significant disparity in influence, with UGC exerting a more pronounced effect on consumer purchasing behavior in comparison to MGC.

In a landscape saturated with advertisements promoting similar products from various companies, consumers often grapple with decision-making dilemmas. Consequently, consumers frequently resort to reviews and feedback available in blogs or video blogs authored by users or micro-celebrities regarding such content as authentic and

trustworthy. This perception of authenticity arises from the perceived sincerity of user-generated content, which stands in contrast to the potential skepticism directed at marketer-generated content, often viewed as having ulterior motives geared towards boosting sales. Micro-celebrities further contribute to this dynamic by conducting polls, a practice highly valued by end-users as a dependable precursor to making purchasing decisions (Tolani & Sao, 2020). Consistent findings from studies of a similar nature underscore consumers' enduring positive disposition towards social influencers. This preference is primarily rooted in the authenticity and trustworthiness inherently associated with micro-celebrities. Many consumers perceive micro-celebrities as more reliable compared to conventional celebrity figures, a perspective substantiated by research (Ibid).

In a similar vein, Maria Kolarova (2018) conducted a comparable experimental investigation to assess the relative effectiveness of traditional celebrities and micro-celebrities as influencers in shaping consumer behavior. Remarkably, the study unveiled that micro-celebrities wield greater influence as influencers in contrast to traditional celebrities. This heightened effectiveness can be attributed to the amalgamation of expertise and trust that inherently resides in micro-celebrities, consequently amplifying consumers' inclination to make purchasing decisions and fostering brand loyalty. As a result, businesses are increasingly incorporating these social influencers as integral components of their marketing strategies, often willing to provide substantial compensation for their contributions (Tolani & Sao, 2020).

Collectively, these observations underscore the pivotal importance of micro-celebrities in today's consumer behavior landscape. Their authenticity, reliability, and capacity to nurture consumer loyalty render them indispensable assets for businesses seeking to enhance their marketing initiatives. Enterprises meticulously identify and research micro-celebrities in relevant domains, subsequently offering compensation for their endorsement of products through various mediums such as videos, blogs, or online platforms. Through these collaborations, companies endeavor to establish a direct avenue for engagement with their target audience (Ibid). According to research findings, the prevalence of celebrity endorsements is notably higher in Asian countries when compared to Europe and the United States. This distinction has been substantiated through a cross-national analysis of 6,359 television advertisements spanning 25 countries. The results of this analysis revealed a substantial prevalence of celebrity endorsements in Asian advertisements, particularly in South Korea and China, where it

ranged from 61% to 25%, respectively. In contrast, European countries featured celebrity endorsers in less than 15% of their advertisements (Chekima & Chekima, 2019).

The fundamental rationale behind the use of celebrities in advertising lies in their potential to influence consumer purchase intentions. This influence is rooted in the belief that celebrities' profiles and attributes can captivate consumers' attention, thereby leveraging a rub-off effect to imbue message communication with certain image values. This phenomenon is particularly salient in Malaysia, where companies allocate significant budgets for celebrity endorsements and promotional campaigns. In this context, meaning is deeply entrenched in both the social and physical realms, intricately woven into the fabric of the culture. Consequently, through the interplay of fashion and advertising mechanisms, consumer products undergo a transference that ultimately impacts the lives of consumers (Ibid). Celebrity endorsement plays a pivotal role in facilitating this transfer process, serving as a conduit for conveying cultural and aspirational significance.

In India, a substantial portion of companies allocates approximately 5% to 7% of their marketing budget to micro-celebrities, as evidenced by survey findings. This allocation not only results in increased recognition for micro-celebrities but also leads to significant financial gains. An intriguing facet of the "micro-celebrity" phenomenon lies in its accessibility, which is not contingent on formal educational qualifications. Significantly, the essence of "micro-celebrity" embodies inclusivity, affording individuals the opportunity to achieve recognition and financial rewards not solely based on conventional achievements but by captivating audiences through compelling content and cultivating a sizable following.

This contemporary pursuit of social media fame is particularly pronounced among today's youth. Contemporary young people demonstrate a strong preference for quick content consumption, prioritize privacy considerations, value seamless connectivity, and exhibit impatience toward delays. Furthermore, their propensity for selective sharing aligns with a steadfast commitment to social causes (Tolani & Sao, 2020). One of the most renowned instances of celebrity endorsement in modern marketing is Nike's utilization of the American football player Colin Kaepernick in 2018. Kaepernick had become widely recognized in 2016 when he, along with several other African-American football players, took a knee during the playing of the American national anthem before a game. This symbolic act was a form of protest against the ongoing injustices faced by African-Americans. Likely due to this

gesture and the ensuing controversy, Kaepernick was not signed by a new National Football League team in 2017 (Fuller et al., 2018).

The Nike advertisement prominently featured the athlete gazing solemnly into the camera, accompanied by a caption that read: 'Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything. This advertisement presents a compelling case study that underscores the pivotal role of social media in contemporary marketing campaigns. Upon its release, the advertisement triggered a mixed response on Twitter, sparking the hashtag #BoycottNike. However, in a somewhat predictable fashion, Nike's #justdoit hashtag also garnered approximately 240,000 Twitter engagements in the days following the advertisement's launch. Consequently, the advertisement proved to be controversial; while it alienated some Twitter users, it also "galvanized [Nike's] supporters" (Duong & Zeller, 2017).

Less successful was a 2017 television advertisement by Pepsi, which featured Kendall Jenner, a prominent figure known for her association with the reality series "Keeping Up With The Kardashians" and her glamorous and largely apolitical lifestyle. In this advertisement, Jenner is depicted joining a protest rally (the cause of which remains unspecified) that culminates when she hands a can of the soft drink being promoted to a white policeman.

Jenner's image in the ad, along with the attire of the attractive young activists surrounding her, starkly contrasts with the subject matter typically associated with protests and social movements. Moreover, the image of Jenner handing over the can bears a striking (and possibly intentional) resemblance to a widely recognized photograph featuring an African-American woman defiantly facing policemen—a symbol often associated with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. The Jenner advertisement was met with significant backlash on Twitter, with some critics accusing it of "trivializing" the BLM movement and the serious issue of police brutality. One tweet, for instance, featured an image of an African-American child attempting to hand a bottle of water to a policeman, accompanied by the caption: "We did this in Baltimore. Nothing changed @Pepsi." Subsequently, Pepsi withdrew the advertisement from circulation, although it remains accessible on YouTube (Thompson & Weldon, 2023).

A compelling example of celebrity endorsement is epitomized by the collaboration between the acclaimed artist Rihanna and Fenty Beauty, a cosmetics brand. Rihanna's affiliation with Fenty Beauty not only infuses authenticity into the brand but also underscores its dedication to inclusivity and diversity (Sheffield, 2020). By harnessing her

considerable influence and appeal across diverse demographics, Fenty Beauty has effectively established a unique and prominent presence within the cosmetics market.

The partnership between actor George Clooney and Nespresso represents another noteworthy case study. Clooney's refined and sophisticated persona harmoniously aligns with Nespresso's brand image, creating an ambiance of luxury around the product (Akagawa, 2017). This collaboration exemplifies the influential role a celebrity personality can play in elevating the perception of a product beyond its mere functional attributes.

The dynamic intersection of pop culture and the world of refreshments is vividly exemplified by the synergy between global artist Beyoncé and Pepsi. Pepsi has effectively harnessed Beyoncé's vibrant presence to craft marketing campaigns that seamlessly merge entertainment with the concept of refreshment (Pepsi, 2013). This case underscores the substantial potential of celebrity endorsements in forging emotional connections with consumers and strengthening brand associations.

The enduring alliance between basketball icon Michael Jordan and Nike stands as a prime illustration of the profound influence of celebrity endorsements. The Air Jordan sneaker line, endorsed by Jordan, not only brought about a revolutionary transformation in the athletic footwear industry but also solidified the idea of athlete endorsements as a fundamental pillar of marketing strategy (Thomson, 2018).

Television host Ellen DeGeneres' collaboration with CoverGirl serves as a testament to the significance of authenticity and relatability in shaping consumer perceptions. DeGeneres' endorsement resonates with a diverse audience in search of products that align with individuality and self-expression.

Lionel Messi's endorsement of footwear brands, including Adidas and his own Messi brand, serves as a compelling example of the immense impact of celebrity influence within the athletic footwear sector. Messi's status as one of the greatest footballers in history significantly elevates the appeal of the products he endorses. His endorsement effectively aligns these brands with a sense of excellence, compelling consumers to connect the footwear with top-tier performance and prestige.

Cristiano Ronaldo's affiliations with consumer goods brands extend well beyond the soccer field. His partnerships with brands like CR7 and fragrances accentuate the allure of his personality and fashion sense. By endorsing fragrances, Ronaldo adds an element of sophistication to his image, resonating with consumers who seek a touch of luxury (Chadha & Husband, 2006).

Kylian Mbappé's collaborations with Nike and other sports brands highlight the influence of young talent within the consumer goods arena. Mbappé's endorsements inject a youthful dynamism into these brands, appealing to aspirational consumers. His image embodies determination and vibrancy, making his endorsements particularly attractive to a younger demographic.

Neymar Jr.'s endorsement deals, including those with Puma and lifestyle brands, exemplify how soccer celebrities extend their reach beyond sporting equipment. Neymar's magnetic personality and global appeal enhance the brands he endorses, influencing consumers in search of products that embody contemporary trends and cultural relevance.

David Beckham's evolution from football stardom to a fashion icon serves as a quintessential example of the remarkable impact of celebrity endorsements. Beckham's associations with brands such as H&M and luxury fashion labels symbolize his effortless foray into the realm of fashion. His endorsement resonates strongly with consumers who prioritize style and embrace contemporary trends (H&M, 2018).

An industry per se

The ascent of micro-celebrities at its core signifies a profound paradigm shift in the dynamics of fame (Shahghasemi, 2020). This transformation is instigated by the equalizing influence of social media and a shifting societal perspective (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This transition confers upon individuals the capacity to harness their talents to garner recognition, financial gain, and influence in the digital sphere (Tolani & Sao, 2020).

Social media has fundamentally reconstructed the trajectory to celebrity status, offering an egalitarian platform through which individuals can showcase their skills, personalities, and creative inclinations to a worldwide audience. Through the consistent generation of content and the strategic deployment of platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and Twitter, individuals can amass a following that resonates with their distinct style. A direct and interactive rapport with these followers, be it through comments, live broadcasts, or Q&A sessions, fosters a personalized connection that cultivates a devoted fan base.

Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the other facet of this phenomenon, one that is less benign in nature. Conventional celebrities continue to be manufactured within the precincts of established institutions, notably Hollywood (Díaz, 2020), and various other industry hubs.

In the year 2007, Marié Digby, then a 24-year-old aspiring musician, attracted considerable attention through her utilization of YouTube as a

platform for sharing homemade videos. In these videos, she showcased her vocal prowess by rendering acoustic covers of well-known songs, including a rendition of Rihanna's "Umbrella." Her overarching objective was to attain virality, with the hope that this would capture the interest of music industry executives who might offer her a coveted recording contract. Marié Digby's YouTube performances swiftly garnered popularity, with her rendition of "Umbrella" even featured on MTV's The Hills. This musical interpretation received airtime on radio stations across multiple states, including Oregon and California, and was made available for purchase on iTunes. In a notable interview conducted in July with Los Angeles DJ Valentine on KYSR-FM, Marié Digby recounted her meteoric ascent to fame, revealing that she had previously been a hopeful caller vying for event tickets that would bring her into proximity with celebrities like John Mayer. A mere month following this interview, she expressed her astonishment on her social media platforms, emphasizing her disbelief that her modest "Umbrella" video had translated into television appearances and a presence on iTunes. Accumulating more than 2.3 million views on her singing videos, Marié Digby's aspirations bore fruit when Hollywood Records, a subsidiary of Walt Disney Co., officially announced her signing in a press release, hailing her as a "Breakthrough YouTube Phenomenon" (Beasley, 2013).

However, subsequent revelations unveiled a carefully constructed image and narrative surrounding Marié Digby. It emerged that unbeknownst to the public, Hollywood Records had already inked a record deal with her approximately two years prior to her YouTube notoriety (Ibid). Collaboratively, the label and Digby devised an intricate marketing strategy firmly rooted in the realm of social media. This strategy was predicated on portraying her as an ordinary individual harboring aspirations of musical stardom, effectively leveraging YouTube's platform as an avenue where anyone could potentially emerge as a vocal sensation. Strikingly, this approach bore resemblance to that of singer Colbie Caillat, who similarly catapulted to fame by sharing her music on her Myspace profile, ultimately securing a record contract.

In essence, Marié Digby's journey, from an aspiring musician to a perceived YouTube sensation, underscores the strategic interplay that exists among artists, corporate entities, and social media platforms in the construction of celebrity identities and narratives, all orchestrated for promotional objectives (Ibid).

A discernible transformation in the preferred archetypes of individuals sought for celebrity status has transpired, particularly in the realms of television and the internet. This shift signifies a departure

from the hitherto prevalent reverence for the elite and a concurrent embrace of individuals from ordinary backgrounds. The concept of "ordinariness" has traditionally played a pivotal role in discussions about celebrities, paradoxically accentuating a celebrity's elevated stature while simultaneously venerating their intrinsic commonness.

Historically, "ordinary people" have experienced periodic selection from their everyday lives and thrust into the limelight. Industries such as film and music have incorporated this phenomenon into their cultural narratives and industrial practices. Notably, this practice has gained pronounced prominence in contemporary times. Entire media formats have materialized to chronicle the transformation of everyday individuals, and modern media consumers have become accustomed to witnessing the elevation of an "ordinary" person to a meticulously defined and constrained form of celebrity status.

A salient manifestation of this trend is conspicuous in the context of reality television programs like "Big Brother." In certain jurisdictions, contestants on "Big Brother" have been disqualified from the competition if it comes to light that they possess pre-existing ties to the entertainment industry, as their participation was seen as an attempt to integrate their newfound visibility into an established media career. However, it is imperative to recognize that this trend transcends the domain of reality TV. There is a burgeoning demand for ordinary individuals within the media landscape, and their personal expressions are now reproduced with an unprecedented degree of fidelity, respect, and authenticity (Turner, 2006).

Once chosen, contestants find themselves ensconced within meticulously crafted narrative frameworks. Producers meticulously curate storylines, conflicts, and interpersonal dynamics to engender captivating and emotionally charged content. These narratives often involve challenges, competitions, and dramatic confrontations, all designed to augment viewer engagement and engender indelible moments (Hill, 2005). The emergence and proliferation of reality television, confession-style talk shows, documentary-style soap operas, and reality-based game shows have significantly elevated the demand for ordinary individuals aspiring to attain celebrity status through television. This burgeoning demand and the concurrent supply of such content have synergistically reinforced each other, leading to rapid growth in this genre. It is important to note that while it is widely acknowledged that the "reality" portrayed in reality TV is a carefully constructed narrative, the crux lies in how these formats adeptly exploit television's illusion of "liveness."

This heightened sense of immediacy, where the viewer perceives events as unfolding in real-time, magnifies the impression that what is being witnessed is unadulterated and authentic. Consequently, it challenges any reservations about the possibility of scripted content produced solely for the camera's sake. Frequently, reality TV takes the concept of "liveness" to an extravagant extreme by presenting content in real-time, often accompanied by live video streams accessible via the internet. For those inclined to engage actively, avenues are available through websites, online chat rooms, and audience participation in the form of voting.

A notable example of this is the show "Big Brother," which airs daily for extended periods, becoming not just a live media spectacle but also an integral part of the daily routines of its audience (Turner, 2006). Reality TV fosters a cultural dialogue wherein contestants become subjects of discussion and scrutiny in mainstream media and public discourse. This sustained attention contributes significantly to their evolving celebrity status, as audiences continue to follow their lives and developments even after the show concludes (Murray & Ouellette, 2009).

One consequential outcome of the paradigm shift toward ordinary individuals attaining celebrity status and the concurrent rise in the popularity of reality TV formats is the acceleration of the industrial cycle governing the creation and disposal of the products arising from these trends. In the realm of reality television, where participation in shows such as "Big Brother" can rapidly catapult someone to celebrity status, it is equally noteworthy that this fame can dissipate just as swiftly. Indeed, for formats like "Big Brother" to sustain their replication across numerous seasons, it is imperative for each cohort of contestants to be readily succeeded by a new group.

In this context, the process of manufacturing celebrity through television can be perceived as a production system that deliberately incorporates the concept of planned obsolescence into its product design. The notion of a replaceable celebrity-commodity assumes a pivotal role in two prominent primetime formats targeted at the pivotal 14–35-year-old demographic: reality TV and soap opera (Turner, 2006).

Historically, the media primarily featured celebrities who had risen to prominence through sports, news, and entertainment contexts or responded to overtures from publicists, promotions, and PR representatives. However, contemporary television, in particular, has introduced a significantly higher degree of vertical integration into the industrial framework responsible for crafting celebrities. Beyond relying on individuals who have already achieved recognition through

alternative avenues, television has recognized its capacity to conceive, fabricate, promote, and commodify celebrities entirely from scratch, and on a grander scale than ever before.

Through the inclusion of everyday individuals in game shows, documentary-style soap operas, and reality TV programming, television possesses the capability to nurture its own brand of celebrities. It can meticulously oversee their marketing endeavors before, during, and after production, all the while ensuring that the celebrity's prominence remains subservient to the specific demands of the program or format. The ubiquity of this practice and the extensive visibility achieved by its most successful outcomes mark a profound and remarkable shift. This transformation transcends mere celebrity production and consumption; it profoundly influences how the media actively contribute to the cultural construction of identity and desire (Ibid). Upon the conclusion of these shows, contestants are afforded the opportunity to leverage their newfound recognition to explore a diverse array of opportunities, ranging from brand endorsements and public appearances to media engagements and entrepreneurial ventures. Their affiliation with the show serves as a springboard for embarking on various career trajectories (Creeber, 2008).

In line with various other cultural products, the construct of celebrity emerges from intricate interactions between processes of inception, portrayal, and reception. Its establishment is notably reliant on strategies inherent in capitalist production, aiming to foresee the unpredictable inclinations and preferences of audiences. Nonetheless, celebrity introduces a multifaceted dynamic as a cultural commodity, serving dual roles within the realm of cultural creation. On one hand, it functions as an integral component within cultural productions such as movies or television shows. Simultaneously, it operates as a commodity in its own right, detached from any specific cultural creation. This duality underscores the intricate nature of the phenomenon of celebrity within the framework of contemporary culture.

Research underscores the multifaceted role of stars within the entertainment market. They encompass various dimensions, serving as a form of intellectual property embodied by a brand name and image. This branding can be effectively harnessed to secure funding for a film project. Moreover, stars function as a pivotal conduit through which films are marketed to audiences who hold specific expectations and anticipations linked to the star's involvement in the production. Stars also represent a valuable asset, not only for the star themselves but also for the studio and the professionals engaged in their promotion. However, it's crucial to

acknowledge that stars can also pose a significant expense during the film production phase. They entail both financial and logistical considerations in the crafting of a marketable cinematic product.

Intriguingly, stars simultaneously serve as an integral aspect of the labor invested in the creation of the film as a marketable entity. Once the foundational "raw material" of an individual is transformed into a star, this transformation is the culmination of the collaborative contributions of numerous professionals. These include hairstylists, coaches, dieticians, makeup artists, among others, in addition to the efforts of professionals engaged in the filmmaking process and the star's performances. This collective endeavor converges to shape the "star image," a composite identity that audiences come to recognize and engage with (Collins, 2008).

The Celebrity Manufacture Theory posits that the emergence of celebrities and our collective fascination with them are heavily influenced and molded by the media. An essential premise of this theory is that an individual's level of fame is not necessarily contingent on their talent or achievements. Instead, it frequently hinges on how the media constructs and promotes that individual as a celebrity. In contemporary celebrity culture, a particular form of fame is idealized—one that is intentionally engineered and sustained through media mechanisms. Consequently, a meticulous process of shaping and commodifying individuals is actively at play. Diverging from theories that prioritize the quest for authenticity, the Celebrity Manufacture Theory does not emphasize the pursuit of genuine representation. Rather, it falls within the category of "manipulation theory." It delineates how media industries manipulate audiences by orchestrating the creation of celebrities through mass-mediated techniques (Matusitz & Simi, 2021). This perspective underscores the media's influential role in crafting and perpetuating the concept of celebrity in today's cultural landscape.

Elevating broadcasting stars to enhance viewership is a commonly adopted strategy. Nevertheless, achieving high visibility and impressive media ratings alone does not suffice to establish a robust competitive advantage. The crux of the matter revolves around the relative bargaining power between these stars, who represent external assets, and the media company itself. To delve into this dynamic, I conducted an analysis of both superstars and celebrities, assessing their capacity to attract viewers and their negotiation leverage within the industry.

In the context of "self-made" superstars, their ability to draw audiences is rooted in the perceived excellence of the services they deliver. Conversely, celebrities captivate viewers by functioning as sources

of fascination and intrigue. It is noteworthy that superstars possess substantial bargaining power due to their distinctive performances and the accumulation of specific consumption capital by consumers. In stark contrast, "manufactured" celebrities are more interchangeable and consequently wield limited market influence in terms of capturing value.

It is unsurprising that the cultivation and exploitation of celebrities have evolved into substantial undertakings within the media industry. Nonetheless, the potential market impact of "manufactured" celebrities remains constrained, primarily because they tend to thrive only in sectors of entertainment that demand minimal talent or expertise (Nüesch, 2008). This analysis underscores the nuanced interplay between stars and media companies in the pursuit of competitive advantage within the broadcasting landscape. Nowhere in the world is the process of celebrity manufacturing more evident than in South Korea. The K-pop industry, in particular, exemplifies a systematic and multifaceted manufacturing process orchestrated by entertainment companies to cultivate and promote their talent. This intricate procedure encompasses several key stages, including talent scouting, rigorous training, image crafting, and strategic promotion (Lee, 2020).

Individuals selected for K-pop stardom are subjected to a demanding training regimen that spans multiple years, covering a wide range of disciplines including vocal training, dance instruction, language acquisition, and etiquette coaching. The process also involves the meticulous construction of a marketable image, encompassing elements such as the selection of a stage name, the cultivation of a distinctive appearance, fashion choices, and the overall conceptualization of the artist. This comprehensive approach exemplifies the highly organized and calculated nature of celebrity manufacturing within the South Korean entertainment industry, particularly in the realm of K-pop. Group dynamics are of paramount importance in the world of K-pop, as K-pop idols are frequently assembled into meticulously curated idol groups. The formation of these groups is strategically guided by factors such as synergy, the complementary strengths of individual members, and the chemistry that exists among them.

The period leading up to a group's official debut, known as pre-debut activities, is instrumental in shaping their future success. These activities include cameo appearances in music videos, participation in reality shows, and other promotional efforts. Such strategic moves are employed to cultivate anticipation and recognition among prospective fans, effectively laying the groundwork for a successful debut. This underscores the deliberate and calculated nature of the K-pop industry,

where meticulous planning and execution are key to achieving and maintaining stardom.

Upon their official debut, K-pop stars actively engage in a comprehensive array of promotional activities. These encompass a spectrum of endeavors, ranging from music releases and live performances to media appearances and direct interactions with fans through social media platforms and fan meetings. Crucially, the post-debut phase is marked by an ongoing commitment to training, which remains a hallmark of K-pop stars' careers. This continued training is essential for maintaining skill proficiency and adapting to the ever-evolving trends and demands of the music industry.

This elaborate manufacturing process not only shapes the careers of K-pop stars but also contributes significantly to their cultural significance and global expansion strategies. The internationalization of K-pop is a strategic endeavor that involves deliberate efforts, including collaborations with Western artists, the release of English-language music, and extensive worldwide concert tours. These initiatives underscore the global appeal and influence of K-pop as a cultural phenomenon with a meticulously planned and executed trajectory.

Conclusion
In contemporary media and entertainment contexts, the concept of celebrity has evolved into a burgeoning economic sector, which can aptly be termed the "celebrity economy." This paradigm centers on the systematic development, promotion, and utilization of individuals who capture public attention and fascination. These celebrities, spanning actors, musicians, athletes, influencers, and reality television figures, function as valuable assets within a multifaceted framework that generates significant financial returns for a diverse array of stakeholders.

The process of celebrity fabrication involves a deliberate fusion of talent, marketing expertise, and media orchestration. This intricate interplay is meticulously designed to engage audiences and cultivate a devoted fan base, ultimately resulting in heightened visibility, endorsements, and significant revenue streams. This discussion will elucidate the fundamental mechanisms driving the celebrity economy and shed light on how these luminaries are assiduously constructed to yield substantial financial returns. The celebrity economy hinges on the cultivation of "superstars" who demonstrate exceptional proficiency within their chosen field. These individuals showcase extraordinary talents, honed skills, and a unique ability to deliver outstanding performances. Whether it is an actor's captivating portrayal or a

musician's remarkable vocal abilities, their excellence becomes a focal point that captivates audiences and encourages consumers to invest in an exceptional experience (Smith, 2018).

The meticulous construction of a persona and image stands as a pivotal aspect of achieving celebrity status. Media conglomerates, public relations experts, and marketing professionals invest substantial efforts in crafting and perpetuating a compelling persona that resonates with the target demographic. This carefully curated image exerts influence over consumer perceptions and fosters a sense of connection or aspiration (Turner, 2013). Conversely, in the realm of "manufactured" celebrities, the focus shifts towards intrigue and gossip as means of sustaining public fascination. While these individuals may lack extraordinary talents, they excel in generating public curiosity. Scandals, controversies, and personal narratives serve as tools to maintain a continuous presence in the media, thereby ensuring ongoing audience engagement and entertainment (Rojecki & van Damme, 2000).

Subsequently, the monetization of celebrity status becomes a prominent avenue. Celebrities extend beyond mere notoriety; they represent channels to lucrative opportunities. Brands eagerly associate themselves with prominent figures, negotiating endorsement contracts that capitalize on their influence. These collaborations span various domains, from fashion collections to fragrance partnerships, enabling brands to reach a well-defined fan base, thus bolstering sales and fostering brand loyalty (Holmes, 2011). Furthermore, the emergence of social media platforms has revolutionized the paradigms of celebrity engagement. Celebrities now have the means to establish direct interactions with their followers, adding an intimate dimension that enhances their connectivity. This interactive rapport fosters increased visibility, fan loyalty, and opportunities for monetization through sponsored posts and collaborative ventures (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Simultaneously, celebrities form integral components of the extensive entertainment framework. Their involvement in films, television productions, concerts, and events results in ticket sales, streaming revenue, and merchandise sales. This multi-faceted engagement ensures a steady influx of revenue streams (Gehl, 2013). Moreover, the processes of globalization and digital permeation have eradicated geographical boundaries, allowing celebrities to garner a transcontinental following (Marwick, 2013). Their sphere of influence extends beyond local territories, facilitating international brand associations and partnerships that enhance their earning potential.

Ethical considerations
The authors have completely considered ethical issues, including informed consent, plagiarism, data fabrication, misconduct, and/or falsification, double publication and/or redundancy, submission, etc.

Conflicts of interests
The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

Data availability
The dataset generated and analyzed during the current study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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