Fan Community Activities That May Destroy Value

- *A Focus on Music Artist Brands, Fandoms and Value Destruction*

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Abstract

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to research brand communities and understand if certain brand community activities may contribute towards the destruction of value of the brand. Specifically, this thesis will focus on music artist brands, their fandom communities and how the fan activities and discourse may be destructive in nature for the value of the music artist's brand.

Theoretical Perspective: To answer the research question, this study will use existing theory in brand communities with a focus on value creation and destruction. To better understand which value is being created and destroyed, there will also be references to Economies of Worlds Worth.

Methodology: This study adopts a relativist ontology with a social constructionist epistemology. Using a qualitative research design, specifically netnography, will be conducted on social media platforms to gather empirical data. A part of the analysis will also follow an abductive approach to understand the existing value of the music artist.

Conclusion: The findings of this study show that certain fans within the fandom could indeed participate in activities or discourse that ends up being destructive in nature for the music artist's brand. Through analyzing the empirical findings, we were able to find four different themes of activities that ended up either decreasing or destroying some kind of value for the music artist's brand.

Contribution: This study focuses on contributing additional findings and themes to the existing literature within brand community activities. This thesis especially focuses on addressing the lack of focus on value destruction within brand communities and how this changes the outlook on what value brand community members bring for a brand.

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1.0 Introduction

After a long day of work on Friday evening, you scroll through Instagram on your subway ride back home. While scrolling through an influx of Instagram posts, you stumble across your favorite music artist's post with a caption: "My new album has been released! Have you listened to it yet?" You quickly get on to your music streaming platform to listen to the new album. As you listen intently and appreciate the new album, you get on to social media platforms like Reddit and Twitter to see what your fellow fans are saying about the music artist's new album. While reading through people's posts and tweets, you also share your own thoughts. You even ponder buying the album or even consider traveling back to your home city so that you and your friends can attend your favorite music artist's concert that is around the corner. In a stressful life of work and other personal errands to attend to, you find the biggest joy in being a fan of your favorite music artist.

1.1 Background

From western music artists like The Beatles, Beyoncé and Jay Z, to Eastern music artists with rising popularity like BTS, Blackpink and EXO, music artists and their brands have been taking over in so many different areas. But this popularity would not just be possible by the music artists themselves. A root cause for music artists being able to stay relevant in changing times is because of the love and loyalty shown from fans. Fans engage in several fan activities such as - listening and sharing the music artist's music, purchasing albums or even by co-creating content and merchandise expressing their undying love for the music artist. These activities have helped create value for artists in several areas such as economical worth, popularity, inspiration, creativity and even overall civic good.

Although most fan activities are said to focus on the positivity of value creation, there are few instances where these same fan activities or discourse could turn destructive in nature for the music artist. This thesis will focus on researching and analyzing those fan activities within fan communities that could destroy value for the music artist. Existing research on this topic had a Euro- and American centric perspective and focused on music artists in the West and how their fans create value for the artist. But we feel there is a lack of research when it comes

to the music artists in the East and their fandoms. Therefore, in our thesis, we want to use music artists from the East as an example and how their fans might contribute to the destruction of the music artist. For this thesis, we will be using the popular Korean-Pop music boy band, EXO to exemplify our case.

1.2 Rationale

O'Hern and Rindfleisch (2010) argued in their article Customer Co-Creation that brand community members might be active in the role of value co-creation for a brand. To further research this area, Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) were able to observe over nine different brand communities, their members, and how brand community members may co-create value for the brand. Although this article and other past research material is very centric on how brand communities could contribute to the aspect of value co-creation, there are instances where we would like to challenge that theoretical assumption.

Therefore, we would like to observe brand communities and how their activities or discourse may pave the way to the ultimate destruction of value for the brand. Due to the limits of this study, we would like to streamline our thesis and focus on music artist brands and their fans as brand communities. The technical term we will be using to define the fans of the music artist will be delved deeper in a later section. We would also like to use Eastern artists as examples in this thesis, deviating from the general discussions and research that already exists with Western music artists. This is due to the technical and cultural differences within how Eastern vs Western music artists interact with their fans.

There are several technical and cultural differences to how music artists in the East engage with their fans. The technical differences are with the events and affordances that music artists and their entertainment companies use to engage with their fans. In the West, this is usually through affordances like social media apps and possibly a few backstage events while they go on concert tours. But with the East, music artists and their entertainment companies use several different affordances to either target or engage with their fans. Few of those examples include fan meeting events and the LYSN Bubble App (App Store Preview, 2022).

Fan meetings are usually the most social events where the fans are usually picked to attend through an online contest or a lucky draw. Upon winning an opportunity to meet their favorite music artist, the fan meetings are held at a common event area - sometimes in the public,

sometimes at the entertainment company's building or other places like restaurants and cafes. During fan meetings, the music artist spends about half a day with their fans by interacting, performing, signing autographs or playing games with them.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, fan meetings were not possible because of the events being susceptible to the spread of the virus. Therefore, even during the pandemic, entertainment companies were very creative in the way they held these fan meetings. When SUHO, a member from EXO debuted as a solo artist, he had worked along with SM Entertainment, the entertainment company that manages him as an artist, to draft solutions to replace in-person fan meetings. Therefore, he worked on establishing online fan-meetings, where fans were able to call one-on-one with SUHO and spend about 5 minutes talking to the music artist (Kim, 2020b). This event was tremendously successful, further paving the way for more music artists to adapt for their own use.

Beyond fan meetings, the development of apps like LYSN and WeVerse were key to opening a new cultural and capitalistic society with regards to fan-artist interactions (Stitch, 2021). The LYSN Bubble application is an exclusive social media application created for SM Entertainment and their music artists. The application has an interface similar to that of a messaging app, where artist-to-fan interactions take place. The app is also a central place for fan club memberships - both free and paid memberships.

Therefore, applications like LYSN have been tremendously successful in not just maintaining fan-to-artist interactions but also with generating revenue for entertainment companies. With the introduction of the private messaging aspect in the LYSN app, the app saw a growth in revenue, generating over 3.6 million dollars in just the second quarter of 2020 (Koreaboo, 2020a). This has shown the strength and opportunities that lie within digital fan-to-artist interactions and how the relationships could be sometimes used as an option to monetize as well. And the East is leveraging this opportunity very well, surpassing even the West in a lot of criterias. But the technical differences of how Eastern music artists choose to interact with their fans is not the only area of difference.

The cultural difference is equally important to note. While 'respect' is considered to be a value prevalent in any country around the world, it is truly rooted a lot more in everyday conversations and interactions, especially within Asian cultures. Younger people are expected to usually pay respect to their elders, even if the elders may not be from their own family. This etiquette of maintaining respect is what culturally differentiates Eastern music artists to

the West. Even if music artists may have an outstanding amount of wealth and popularity that situates them in a different social status altogether, within Asian cultures, they are still expected to be humble and maintain respect with the society, especially with their fans.

With regards to the Korean culture and the Korean-pop music industry, the quality of being humble and modest is seen as something very important when it comes to what fans look for in their favorite music artist. To be on par with that quality, music artists are usually seen using honorific language while engaging with their fans. This is a quality not prevalent in the Western society because fan-to-artist interactions in the West are usually seen as something much more casual, as though talking to a close friend.

But in the East, or specifically even looking at the South Korean music industry, music artists are required to maintain a formal relationship with their fans. Sometimes, the tone of these conversations could even be compared to that of how children are expected to engage with their parents. But the signs of respect towards their fans are seen in other instances as well. Especially in South Korea, bowing is considered to be a sign of respect, especially prevalent with the cultural belief system of Confucianism (Asia Society, 2022).

Usually, younger people or people of lower social classes are expected to bow to their seniors as a sign of respect. But music artists are seen engaging in the act of bowing, to pay respects to their fans who have supported them from the beginning and through tough situations as well. Rookie music artists are usually seen bowing on their knees, with the intensity of the bow gradually decreasing over the amount of years, signifying the amount of experience the music artist has gained over the years in the industry. But sometimes, music artists with seniority also express their gratitude with a deep bow, which has always proven to spread a good image of themselves within a fandom or even beyond that. Figure 1 is of EXO's leader SUHO doing the traditional bow along with the other EXO members to show gratitude to their fans. After the event, fans took to social media to express how such a famous music artist is still humble, despite spending more than 8 years in the industry.

EXO bowing to their EXOLs. No one comes close to how much they love, respect, and cherish their fans. - Tweet by Alpaca

Figure 1 EXO's leader SUHO bowing to his fans at the end of the EXplOration Concert

Beyond etiquette, the Korean-pop music industry has also been striving hard to make sure that the parasocial relationships of fans with their favorite music artist is changed to rather be a mutual relationship (Espinal, 2021).

1.2 Aims and Objectives

With existing research pointing into the value creating aspect of brand community activities, the aim of this thesis is to research and explore whether brand community activities, especially those within the music industry might also destroy value for the music artist. When fans become overly passionate about their love towards the music artist, the very same brand community activities that create value for the music artist could end up being equally destructive in value. Therefore, this thesis will focus on exploring such brand community activities that may destroy value.

Although fan interaction and engagement is important to create value for the music artist, the over exaggeration of the same could lead to destructive situations - both for the fandom and for the music artist in question. Especially within the Korean-Pop music arena, music artists are known to actively indulge in fan conversations, strengthening the bond between themselves while also creating value for themselves. Therefore, by addressing the ugly side of the same fan interactions may bring more clarity on maintaining boundaries within brand

communities. This will contribute to bring more awareness and understanding of the phenomena for people working with brand awareness within the music industry - by understanding and getting a grip of the subject this research will be informative about the topic and help people develop deeper understanding of the phenomenon researched.

As mentioned previously, with extensive fan-to-artist interaction in the Korean-Pop music industry, this thesis will use one such music artist group, 'EXO' as an example to observe for this thesis. EXO's fandom, also known amongst EXO and their fans as 'EXO-L', will be observed using netnographic research methods. By examining the EXO-L fandom, we will be able to identify and enquire if certain activities or discourse initiated by fans, may or may not contribute to the value destruction of the music artist.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to question and challenge the focus on the value of brand community activities. While past research focuses on the ideology of brand community members and their role in the co-creation of value for brands, in this thesis, we would like to challenge this existing theory. This will be done by researching the brands of specific music artists, their fans and the activities their fans follow. The phrase 'activities' in this thesis could range from simple actions such as listening to music artists, purchasing their albums or attending their concerts, to much more intense actions. Fan activities will be explained in detail in other sections in this thesis. Further, we will be challenging the positive outlook on fan activities to see if there are instances where these same activities could contribute towards value destruction for the music artists. Upon gathering information through netnographic research, we will be creating themes of fan activities that may destroy value and focus on theory contribution. This is due to the lack of existing research within value destruction in a context of brand community activities. As explained in the rationale section, this research will also use Korean-Pop music artists in the East as an example rather than Western Artists and their fandoms.

Therefore, the research question in short would be:
> **How may fan community activities destroy the value of a music artist brand?**

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

This thesis will flow in a specific direction to help readers grasp the findings and analysis with more clarity. Following the Section 1.0 Introduction, the readers will be able to delve into Section 2.0 Literature Review. Section 2.0 will inform readers about the current understanding and existing research on brand community activities and their value creation process, followed by a subsection that focuses on addressing the theoretical contribution that this thesis will hope to achieve.

Continued by that will be Section 3.0 Methodology, which will go further in depth with the research method choices for conducting this thesis research. This section will be essential to understand the data collection methods, as well as the scientific methods and philosophy this thesis will fall under.

Following the briefing on methodology will be Section 4.0 Analysis. This section will be divided into pre-analysis and analysis. The pre-analysis section will focus on following the abduction method, where readers will get to understand EXO's existing value in the light of existing literature and material on brand community activities that create value. With this understanding in hand, the reader will be able to go into the analysis and better grasp new findings and theories contributed through this research.

After the analysis will be Section 5.0 Discussion, where the findings from the analysis will be discussed with relation to existing literature within brand community activities and value creation & destruction. Followed by it will be Section 6.0 Future Research. This section will specifically focus on the interesting findings that we have encountered during research and how these interesting themes or trends might be worth researching for the future. Finally, this thesis will end with Section 7.0 References.

2.0 Literature Review

This section of the thesis will focus on informing the reader about the current understanding and research on brand community activities and their value creation process. Therefore, this thesis and its research will draw from the existing research within brand community, brand community activities, as well as research on value creation and value destruction. As most of the previous research on brand community activities focus on the positive aspects of value creation, this research will add current situations and focus on the value destruction end of brand community activities. Finally, this chapter will conclude by addressing the necessity for the research on this topic, as well as the possible theoretical contributions towards the area of value destruction with regards to brand community activities.

2.1 Marketplace Culture

"The consumer culture theory considers marketplace cultures as sites for the creation of collective experiences", is the description of marketplace culture according to Arnould and Thompson (2018). Through consumption and belonging to a certain consumption culture or consumption community, people can create and possess shared meanings, experiences, expressions, and feelings. There have been many theories regarding this, but what differs in our research is that we want to link not only what creates the collective experiences and creations of this value - but also how this value can be destroyed and interrupted by the very same people and factors as the one that created it - in the first place.

As explained by Arnould & Thompson (2018), there exist several forms of marketplace cultures. While there might be similarities within these different forms, there still exist few differences to help separate each of the forms. Some of these forms include but are not limited to consumer tribes, brand communities, brand publics and fandoms. There is a lot of research with regards to each but the major differences are as follows: Consumer Tribes are usually formed naturally and are not limited to physical consumer experiences. Consumer

tribes could also be formed with leisure based activities or hobbies or even with simple activities that express a lot of passion and creativity.

On the other hand, brand communities are specialized, non-geographically bound communities that are usually formed because of a common interest or admiration for a specific brand. With a sociological standpoint, brand communities are great at forming collectives around commercial symbols. Meanwhile, from a managerial standpoint, brand communities are great for value co-creation since the brand community members act as spokespeople for the brand without being directed to do so. On the other hand, brand publics is an organized space on media platforms that are surrounded around certain activities such as hashtags. Lastly, fandoms are also used to refer to a community of people who are also formed because of a common interest, admiration or empathy just like brand communities, but usually these communities are for a specific celebrity, movie, tv series or other such entertainment products.

Although usual language and technical terms define people supporting or showing love to music artists as 'fans' or a 'fandom', the fans of Korean-Pop music artists are defined in quite a different way. This is because of the nature of how these music artist bands are formed. Most of the boy band and girl group music artists in the Korean-Pop industry are formed by their respective entertainment companies. Most of the members within a group are either scouted or have attended auditions, joined the entertainment company, and were later formed to become a boy band or girl group. These groups were formed in hopes of creating a successful music artist that becomes popular within the Korean-Pop music industry and creates their own value in the music industry.

Therefore, although the term 'fandom' or 'fan community' might be true for defining communities of fans who like these music artists, the term 'brand community' might be equally a right choice. Therefore, this thesis will focus on addressing the fans as both part of a 'fandom' and a 'brand community.' EXO, their fans and the technical terms for their fan community will be addressed in a later section.

2.2 Brand Community

As Muniz & O'guinn (2001) describe in their article Brand Community, admirers and lovers of a certain brand will go above and beyond to express their love in the forms of brand

communities. In the early days, brand communities used to be geographically bounded but over time and with the increase of use of the internet, brand communities have become non-geographically bound communities that have certain social practices to express their love towards a brand. Although this might be true for monetary and capitalistic brands, brand communities might be prevalent amongst people seen as successful brands or even with countries as brands.

As seen in personal branding situations, there might be popular social media influencers or celebrities who have fans that take part in certain fan community practices. The same is true for music artists as well. As our research will focus more on music artist brands and their fan communities, we will be finding online fan communities of music artists, especially spreading our focus on Korean-Pop culture music artists and their brands.

The article by Muniz & O'guinn (2001) mentions how brand communities and brand community members have certain practices that they adhere to, in order to express exclusivity within the brand community. As the authors mention in the article, these brand community practices are expressed through important elements such as the following:

1. Consciousness of Kind

2. Rituals and Traditions

3. Moral Responsibility

2.2.1 Consciousness of Kind

Members of a brand community share a connection stronger than one compared to outsiders of the brand community. Even strangers are seen to make friendships and accept people as part of their community as long as they meet all the specific criterias of being part of that brand community. This is seen as an important element to have as a member of a brand community because without the strong connection, neither will the member be able to connect with the brand, nor will they be accepted as a member of the brand community.

With regards to our research, we will be using research methods and techniques to identify that shared consciousness of fans of K-Pop music artists. We will be using netnography to access online communities where old members of the fan community of a certain music artist might already be sharing how they became fans of the music artist and why they feel the connection towards that specific music artist. There might also be instances where newer fans

are able to empathize with that specific feeling and share their own connection with the music artist as well. Specific research methods and techniques we have chosen for this thesis will be explained in further detail in Section 3.3 Data Collection.

2.2.2 Rituals and Traditions

Certain brand community practices are carried out by the members to establish specific rituals and traditions that showcase being part of the community. These could come in the form of purchase behavior, sharing stories, sending suggestions or even just taking part in community activities. These brand community practices are essential to also create value for the brand itself. But most of the time, these practices are carried out without the direct influence of the brand. But over time, these have changed as well. Brands have realized the importance of brand communities and brand community members. Hence, brands have themselves established brand communities that encourage co-creational relationships amongst the brands and brand communities.

The same is true for fan communities as well. Early in the days in Korean-Pop culture, fan communities were created and managed by fans themselves. They would have fan community meetings every week or month depending on how active their music artist was and would also elect a fan community president to maintain decorum. But over time, music and entertainment companies have realized how important fans have become in the co-creational relationship of creating value for the music artist. Therefore, several agencies have started to create and maintain fan communities while fans now only have to take part in community practices and contribute to the fan community through activities like purchasing albums, streaming content and attending concerts.

We hope to use our research to find certain rituals and traditions that may be specific to being a fan of a certain music artist. Using online communities and social media, we will be identifying the rituals and traditions that fans use to belong to the fan community of their favorite music artist. We will also be identifying if these practices are intended to create value for the music artist or if the practice acts as a counter-effect as it may eventually destroy value for the artist.

2.2.3 Moral Responsibility

Members of a specific brand community may feel morally responsible to take care of each other within the community. This may be reflected in actions such as helping to teach new members about rituals and traditions, or may be reflected in retaining members or may even be reflected in situations where the members feel responsible for the rise or the downfall of the brand they support and love. Moral responsibility showcases how strong a brand community is and how willing each community is to take collective action durings crises and other situations.

With regards to our research, while most fans may carry out these existing activities to showcase moral responsibility, some may go even above and beyond. Korean-pop culture fans are known to actively take part in volunteer and donation activities. For example, fan communities participate in charity events to show support to their favorite music artist by purchasing 'bags of rice.' Sometimes these donations and charity contributions may account for a few kilograms to sometimes even several tonnes of rice (The Korea Times, 2015). This has shown that fans of certain music artists feel a certain moral responsibility of not only being responsible for their own music artist but also for the general public. We will be using our research to find if there are specific activities and practices that may show how fans feel morally responsible.

2.3 Brand Community Practices That Create Value

Most of the past theories, research and literature focus on how brand communities may create value for the brand. Even in the article by Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009), there is a specific focus on how brand community practices create value. As brand communities have existed to be a very positive influence both for the brand and for non-members of the brand community, the creation of value is usually seen to be something inevitable and seamless.

The process of value creation and co-creation practices might be found in several thematic categories as follows:

1. Social Networking
2. Impression Management
3. Community Engagement
4. Brand Use

These four brand practices have several sub-categories within, where each of them deal with a specific method of value creation. As per the authors, each of these themes focus on collective creation of value, almost similar to an imagery of shifting gears. The specific themes will be focused with more detail in the sub-categories 2.3.1 - 2.3.4. Later, the specific brand community practices within the EXO-L fandom will be dealt with in the Analysis section.
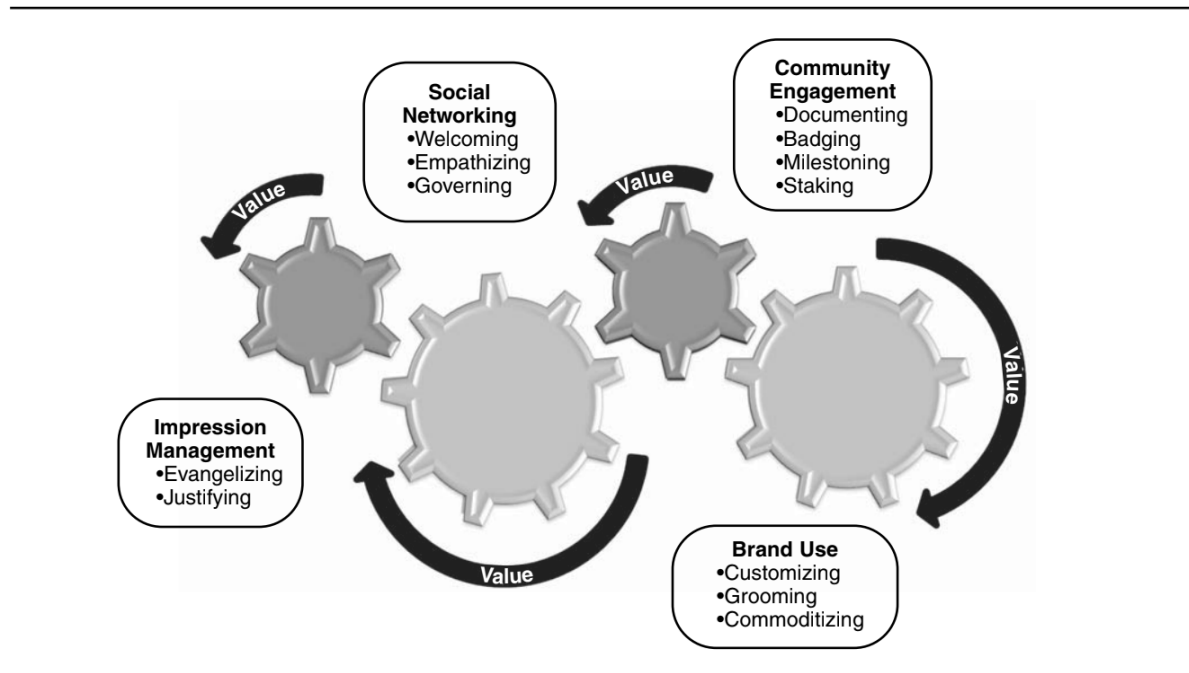
Figure 2 The Process of Collective Value Creation in Brand Communities

2.3.1 Social Networking

Social networking practices are those that create value by welcoming members, empathizing with them and sustaining ties with them. These practices are usually carried out with the notion that all members are equal and the same with regards to the brand community and that any brand community practices carried out by the members of the community are normal. The frequency of social networking practices is essential to create value in this category - most members interact daily or weekly with members within the brand community, with some of these lasting over several months or even several years. Even if the members might have outgrown some of the social networking practices, they are usually bound with the community because of reasons like loyalty or nostalgia.

2.3.2 Impression Management

Now that members have started taking part in social networking practices, the next step in value creation practices focus on managing the brand's impression. These are carried out by evangelizing the brand and justifying each of their actions. This is seen as an important practice because it focuses a lot on image and impression management of these brands. While brands themselves might spend time and money to maintain their own image, these practices carried out by fans help create value for the brand itself. These might focus on enhancing an existing positive image or might even to actively change a negative narrative into a positive one.

2.3.3 Community Engagement

The third overall theme is community engagement, which focuses much more on internal engagement within members of the community. The subcategories include practices such as staking, milestoning, badging and documenting. These four practices are to emphasize and guard the heterogeneity of the brand community and its members. Some members express or co-create value in this theme by participating in milestone activities such as anniversaries, badging themselves with significant elements such as merchandise and by documenting their journey within the community, as well as the brand's journey.

2.3.4 Brand Use

The last theme is brand use and this is when members within brand communities either extensively use, take care of, or customize to make it as personal as possible. These are seen with sub-practices such as grooming, customizing and commoditizing. Grooming is the act of taking care of milestone merchandise or other products within the brand by cleaning or restoring them because of natural wear and tear over usage. Meanwhile, customizing is when members of a brand community use different elements to personalize their product or brand to showcase their own taste. With regards to commoditization, it is usually a gray area. Members want to be able to purchase products or merchandise of the brand but they usually do not want it to be exploited too much. Therefore, this practice within the brand use theme occurs with significant care.

2.4 Worlds or Principles of Valuation

When the value of a brand is mentioned in literature, it is usually measured by the monetary performance of the brand. This is otherwise known as the market world, as explained by Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) in their book, where value is measured by price and monetary worth. Elements such as stocks, net worth and other such ratios are used to determine the monetary value of a brand - be it a brand that sells products or people as brands. While stocks may be used for corporate brands, celebrities and their value are usually measured by applying certain algorithms to determine their net worth. But the worth or valuation of any brand does not just stop with the market world.

Value is also measured by certain other elements such as efficiency, fame, creativity, talent, and other such cultural and political measures. This has been further developed by Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) as the worlds of worth or the worlds of valuation, as listed in Table 1. While the article by Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009) might specifically address value creation with regards to brand community practices, it is equally important to understand how these same brand community practices may destroy value for the brand. Therefore, the analysis section will briefly address EXO's already existing worth and value as a brand and the further sections will deal with new theoretical contributions that address the destructive aspect of these fan activities.

Table 1 Worlds/Principles of Worth/Valuation.

World of Worth/Valuation	Measurement of Which Value?
The Market World	Price
The Industrial World	Efficiency (input/output ratio)
The World of Fame	Degree to which a person or organization is recognized by others
The Domestic World	Connections to others and place in a hierarchy
The Inspired World	Expressions of talent or passion that produce unique & creative results
The Civic World	The extent to which actions are directed to the common good
The Green World	The extent to which actions reflect the

	principles of environmentalism (non-pollution, protection of wilderness and animal health)

2.5 Value Destruction

2.5.1 Brand Assemblages

As Parmentier & Fischer (2015) describe in *"Things fall apart: The dynamics of brand audience dissipation"*, fans can contribute to the destabilization of a brand identity, even though they have been members of this very same fandom before. This is in the article referred to as "brand audience dissipation" and can be applied to the research conducted on Korean-Pop music artists as well. 'Brand Audience Dissipation' is related to the loss of attention from fans. This happens when consumers seek tension within the brand community and when their expectations are not being met - they lose interest. Such as loss of attention when a Korean pop music artist decides to leave the band, or the long wait until the next album's release - leaving the fan with no other choice than to turn their back on the artist. This can be a form of destabilization and therefore also a way of the mildest form of value destruction. As long as the fan leaves the community without any extra consequences this will not have a huge effect on the fandom - but in some cases, this needs to be examined further.

Parmentier & Fischer (2015) use assemblage theories created by DeLanda (2006) and Deleuze & Guattari (1987) to explain and apply this further research. The authors focus on individual consumers' experiences and the communities' consumption patterns. In this case, the consumption of music. These assemblages are conceptualized and explained as different components that together create either value destruction for the consumer and therefore indirectly for the brand in question. Since we are looking at the Korean fans not just as fandoms of music artists, but also as brand communities - the theory of assemblages is applicable and can be used to better understand and conceptualize the theory of brand destruction within Korean music artists lacking in the theory found at the moment.

How these assemblages work is that they are together - as components either stabilize or destabilize the identity of the assemblage. Much like the brand identity within corporate brand theories, these assemblages create or destroy the value for the music artists. These

components can exist as consumers, physical elements, technologies, and so on. If we take these elements into account and include components that marketers indirectly or directly control as well as the audiences, or in the case of Korean pop music - the fans we can argue that these fan communities have a huge effect on the destruction and creation of value.

By using the concepts of assemblages, to explain how fan communities, or brand fan communities act - we can, later on, explain what happens when such destabilization happens and easier answer our research question.

2.5.2 The Value Destructive Side of Branding

Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) have also approached the value destructive side of branding by referring to how valuation can be approached in different ways. They mention how the valuation of a brand is usually seen from a managerial point of view, especially looking at specific elements such as stock price and net worth, which is referred to as the 'Market World' in the Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) article. But the authors also make a reference to the Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) article on the varied principles or worlds of valuation and how that can be used to approach the concept of value in a much wider sense.

Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) also make a mention of inter-world and intra-world valuation. Inter-world valuation is when the valuation of a brand in one world (for example, the Market World) may end up intentionally or unintentionally destroying the value in another world (for example, the Civic World.) Meanwhile, the intra-world valuation is when a brand's value could be created and destroyed within the same world. This would be important to understand because the very same brand community activities that could help create value for the brand could also prove to be value destructive in nature. Further during the analysis and discussion of this thesis, we will be checking to see if the inter-world and intra-world valuation holds true with our research findings as well.

The authors also discuss the two existing views on how brand management literature views the concept of value creation of brands, as well as adding two new theories on concepts that focus on the value destruction of brands as well. As Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) state, previous branding literature has focused on showcasing the value creation of branding as two themes - Branding as distillation and Branding as platforming.

Branding as distillation is the concept of how the brand is usually a distilled or fractionated view of the larger organization that the brand is usually part of. The metaphor of distillation is explained in such a way that the multiple parts of the large organization is usually shown through a distilled element - be it the brand essence or brand identity. Meanwhile, the other element of branding as platforming focuses on the concept of value co-creation and how consumers use these brands as a platform to create experiences and construct meanings with activities related to the brand. Following these value creation themes of branding, Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) mention - Branding as discursive closure and Branding as hypocrisy - both of which are focused on the value destructive view of branding.

Branding as a discursive closure focuses on how brands usually choose to highlight certain topics, while remaining silent on others. Brands usually carry out this theme because they want to make it easier for the consumer by simplifying choices and only highlighting the good. Through this angle, this theme could be considered as focusing on value creation but the opposite could also be true. Sometimes, brands follow topical avoidance, which is very much focused on avoiding certain conversations to save the face of the brand. Such situations could prove to be harmful for the brand because while the valuation of one topic may help the brand, the downfall of other topics is also inevitable.

Lastly, the authors talk about the theme of branding as hypocrisy. As the name may explain, some brands may state to be holding a certain brand identity or image while their actions might prove to be otherwise. This theme shows how brands sometimes struggle to combine both their branding process with the production of it - be it the production of physical goods or production of anything the brand may offer. Therefore, several brands focus on a decoupling process, where they separate the branding of the organization from their production process.

Table 2 Value Creation and Destruction in Branding

Metaphor	Branding is distillation	Branding is platforming	Branding is discursive closure	Branding is hypocrisy
Focus	Value creation	Value creation	Value creation and destruction	Value creation and destruction
View of the	Brand is a	Brand is a	Brand is a	Brand is a

brand	complete representation of the organization	platform where value is co-created	fragment of the organization	hypocritical image
Main process	Identification and transmission of brand essence	Platform design	Selection and communication of fragments, suppressing alternatives	Separating symbols from organizational activities

The table illustrates the concepts from the Bertilsson & Rennstam (2018) article in a simpler manner. The concepts and literature from this article will be essential to understand the concepts of value destruction in branding and how this could be prevalent within the field of research within our thesis as well.

2.6 Theoretical Contributions

Most of the research done on brand communities and brand community activities focus on the aspect of value creation. But rather than defining value creation to those specific brand community practices as mentioned in Section 2.2, we would like to explore if there might be value destructive activities as well. Since we will be focusing on music artist brands and their fans, we would like to see if there might be activities specific to these fan communities as well.

Although we do not deny the existence of value creation elements, we also believe that some activities may carry a different effect. For example, there may be members that might carry out an activity with the intended effect of creating value for the brand. But this might backtrack to becoming destructive in nature. There might also be 'fake' members who join with the intention of being intrusive or destructive in nature. Therefore, we would like to use our research methods and techniques to see if there might be instances of such value destruction activities in brand communities.

3.0 Methodology

The methodology section will be essential to understand the scientific methods and the philosophy for this research. This section will also address the research design in detail, as well as the steps taken to achieve research goals. It will also address the research method specifically chosen for this thesis. Lastly, this section will also address how the findings are organized in the analysis section and how it will contribute new findings to existing theoretical information within brand community literature.

3.1 Scientific Method

Music is an art form that is usually very abstract. This means that a consumer of any song may have their own perspective on the meaning of the song. The same comes with choosing to be a fan and being part of a fan community for the artist. Every fan has their own unique experience with a music artist - they may have encountered the artist when they were a kid because their parents listened to them, or they may have found a new music artist through friends with different music tastes or may have accidentally stumbled upon the music artist. Therefore, this means that the views about reality will stem through different perspectives, in short, a relativistic ontology. But at the same time, fans of music artists also use their own language and other shared experiences to create meaning for the music artist. Which means that a nominalistic ontology may also be applicable in this thesis. We believe that fans use several fan community activities to construct meaning for an artist, even if they may not speak the same language as their favorite music artist.

To be able to observe and enquire into these views of the world, we feel that social constructivist epistemology will be ideal. As mentioned, we believe thoroughly that people construct meanings to realities and that it would be important to make sense of those constructed experiences in order to better understand the reality as well. In our thesis, we believe that fans belonging to certain fan communities have constructed meaning through certain fan community activities. Using certain research methods as mentioned in the following paragraphs, we will be identifying and analyzing those certain fan activities in detail. Further, we will be using value creation and value destruction literature to further

analyze how each of these fan activities could contribute towards value creation and value destruction for the music artist.

Through grounded theory, we hope to derive certain themes and categories that identify fan activities. Further, we will be analyzing these themes to see if there are certain that translate into value creation for the artist or if they result in the value destruction. Although our research will focus mainly on the element of value destruction, we believe that it is inevitable to omit the value creation element. We believe it is important to identify both - in that way, we will be able to make a better aim at theory contribution. This will be possible through the various research methods, which will be explored in detail in the next section of this thesis.

3.2 Research Design

For this thesis, we will be focusing on relativist ontology and social constructivist epistemology using qualitative research methods. Since the research will focus on fans, fan communities and how they construct certain activities, we believe qualitative research will help us get closer in terms of feelings and expressions. Also, due to the rise of the internet being a great platform to find new participants without researcher bias, we believe it will help us find fans from different parts of the world, as well as find information from different perspectives as our representative ontology expects us to do so.

We hope to follow a specific timeline for our qualitative research method steps:

1. Pilot Study - Assessing Brand Loyalty within the music industry and their fans using the abductive approach
2. Netnography - online fan communities and social media research to gather information
3. Creating themes - value creation for music artist and value destruction for music artist
4. Analysis of themes in relation to theory and new theory contribution

In the pilot study, we were able to interview six fans of K-Pop music artists to assess if there was loyalty within fans and how they express their loyalty. Since it was a pilot study, we focused on interviewing a small sample to understand their feelings towards their favorite music artist. The results upon abductive analysis with Aaker's Brand Loyalty Pyramid showed that fans were willing to use several fan activities to express their loyalty or love

towards their favorite music artist. Therefore, we wanted to use this as a starting point to further develop our research for the thesis. Since it is quite evident that there is love or loyalty towards the music artist, we hope to identify in further detail what specific fan activities are used by fans. This will be carried out with the help of research methods and techniques such as Netnography. Further details about specific netnographic activities used will be discussed in the upcoming parts of this section.

Within the analysis section, the first half will focus on establishing the different values of EXO's brand. This will be analyzed by using the abduction method of. Further, using the information gathered through qualitative research, we will be deriving themes that showcase specific fan activities. These themes will then be analyzed in relation with existing theory to see if there are new or different fan activities that may result in value destruction for the music artist.

3.3 Data Collection

For the data collection, we will be carrying out netnography research methods and techniques. As fans are prevalent on several social media applications, we will be using select communities to observe and communicate with. Through these methods, we hope to gather fruitful and important information that will be further useful during the analysis section and for theory contributions as well.

3.3.1 Netnography

There are plenty of platforms where fans are able to easily access content of their favorite artist, are able to participate in fan community activities and even where they are able to invite newer fans to join as well. For our research purposes, we will be focusing on specific online fan communities of a specific music artist from Korean-Pop culture, EXO. Because there are several different music artists with huge fan communities within Korean-Pop culture, it is possible to have an influx of extensive information. Therefore, we have chosen EXO, a K-Pop boy band as the subject of our study. We will be focusing on the following online fan communities of EXO to gather more information.

EXO is a K-Pop boy band that has been active in the music industry for 10 years. EXO was also ranked as one of the top five most influential celebrities on the Forbes Korea Power Celebrity Ranking list from 2014 to 2018, also being labeled as one of the most influential

artists to transform the music industry not just in South Korea, but around the world (Forbes, 2018). Their huge success was possible, thanks to their huge fan base and fan communities dedicated towards EXO. Therefore, we will be using the following online fan community platforms to look further into EXO fans:

Table 3 Online Fan Communities of EXO

Although there are several online fan communities of EXO's fandom, we have picked those with a larger sample size. This will help us get a better idea of fan sentiments with regards to EXO.

Platform	EXO
Reddit	r/exo 28,793 members
Facebook	EXO-L WORLDWIDE FAN CLUB 430,748 members
LYSN Bubble	EXO-L Community 7,000,000+ members
Discord	718 members

3.3.2 Social Media Research

Although online communities are essential to monitor, we would also like to analyze EXO's mentions and fan interactions on a few social media platforms because of their popularity on such platforms. We would like to use hashtags specific to those artists to find content that we can use for further analysis on brand community activities. We will also be looking into each of the member's social media platforms to find specific fan rituals or discourse.

Table 4 Social Media Accounts of EXO members with Follower Count

Platform	EXO & Members
Twitter	@weareoneEXO - 12.7 million @B_hundred_Hyun - 7 million @layzhang - 3.6 million
Instagram	@weareone.exo - 9.8 million @kimjuncotton - 9.7 million @baekhyunee_exo - 21.5 million @e_xiu_o - 8 million

	@zkdlin - 13.8 million @layzhang - 13.9 million @oohsehun - 22.9 million @real__pcy - 23.7 million
TikTok	@weareone.exo_official - 2.4 million

Table 5 Hashtags pertaining to EXO and EXO-L Fandom

Platforms	Hashtags
Twitter	#exo #exo-l
Instagram	#exo #exo-l
TikTok	#exo #exo-l

3.4 Delimitations

Since there are several brands and their respective brand communities, there are multiple possibilities on conducting research to find certain brand activities that may contribute to value destruction for the brand. But this research will be only focusing on the music industry, music artists and their brand value. Therefore, the theoretical contribution will not be applicable to all brands and their brand value, but we hope to find and contribute new theories that could help advance the existing literature on brand community activities and value destruction.

With regards to the music industry, there are also several successful music artists and music artist groups from around the world. But this research will be specifically focusing on Eastern music artists, especially the Korean-Pop music industry. This is due to the lack of research in the East, as well as the rising fame and popularity of music artists from the Korean-Pop music industry. There is also an apparent difference in the way Korean-Pop music artists interact with their fans in comparison with Western music artists.

Most Western music artists restrict their fan interaction to activities like rare fan interactions on social media platforms and by organizing concerts for fans to attend. But with the Korean-Pop music industry, all music artists are required to make an effort to interact with

their fans. Some of these include elements such as fan-to-artist interaction apps, photocards, album sales, merchandise, fan meetings, as well as the usual elements such as social media interactions and concerts. Therefore, this research will also address those differences in further detail and how this knowledge might help with the research, as well as theory contribution.

By using EXO and their fans as an example in this thesis, we will be looking for all discourse by fans, but more specifically those that showcase an intention to destroy or damage EXO's brand value. Since we will be using netnographic research methods such as online fan communities and social media platforms, we believe there will be less issues with regards to sample size and selection. With a lot of fan communities being online nowadays, we believe it will be easier to approach and find information using netnography in comparison with other research methods.

To also limit the elimination of any fan communities due to language barriers, we have chosen to include fan discourse in other languages that we, as authors, are comfortable translating in. For example, author Anesa is knowledgeable in English, Swedish and Bosnian, while author Chandhni is knowledgeable in English, Hindi, Tamil, Chinese and Korean. Therefore, we will be using this to our advantage and translating fan comments and discourse from the mentioned foreign languages to English, in order to provide more content useful for the analysis section. By providing content from different languages and in some cases regions we will be able to take more fans into consideration and use more data.

The literature review section will be focusing on addressing all the existing literature and theories within the topic of the thesis. But there are few areas that lack previous research studies on this topic, which has paved the way for further analysis. The literature review will focus on those limitations as well and how we hope to address those limitations through this thesis.

3.5 Empirical Analysis

As authors Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018) suggest in their book, we have analyzed the qualitative research material by three important steps - sorting, reducing and arguing. After sorting through several tweets and other fan discourse on online fan community platforms,

we were able to find the four important themes that were prevalent with regards to fan community activities that may destroy value for the music artist brand.

After the sorting process, we were able to arrive at the four important themes of Critique; Obsession; Possessiveness and Gatekeeping. Further, we were able to reduce our gathered netnographic material, retaining the specific fan discourse in the form of tweets and posts that we thought fit very well with the information we were looking for. This helped us form an idea for the analysis and how we would argue for the aspect of theory contribution.

Lastly, we were able to write our analysis in two different parts - the first being the pre-analysis section that follows the abductive approach. Section 4.1 and 4.2 focuses on addressing EXO's existing brand value and how fans have helped create that value for the music artist. This section was essential to include because it helps the reader to get an idea of EXO's existing stance with regards to their already strong brand value.

Following this section, the analysis will focus more on theory contribution. Following the sorting and reduction of the netnographic material, section 4.3 will argue and showcase the findings of the research through an analysis format. Following this analysis format helped us to better analyze the findings and the organization of the analysis will equally help the readers to grasp the material better.

To keep the original authors of the tweets anonymous, we will be addressing the authors with animal names. The following names will be used for the 25 tweets found on this thesis: Alpaca; Anteater; Antelope; Armadillo; Beaver; Bluebird; Butterfly; Caterpillar; Cheetah; Chinchilla; Coyote; Dinosaur; Dolphin; Elephant; Ferret; Flamingo; Gazelle; Giraffe; Grasshopper; Hamster; Hedgehog; Hyena; Jaguar; Kangaroo; and Lobster.

4.0 Analysis:

This section of the research will start with the pre-analysis sections 4.1 and 4.2, focusing on information regarding EXO and their value with regards to the Worlds of Valuation and their value created by brand community practices. Following sections 4.1 and 4.2, section 4.3 will address new theoretical contributions formed from the findings through netnographic research. While some of the findings will be compared with existing literature, following the abduction method, most of the information in section 4.3 will be new material, focusing on brand community activities that may destroy value.

4.1 Analyzing EXO's Worth in the Worlds of Worth

Usually, music artists are formed naturally. They are not formed by a specific company or with the intention of producing monetary success. But our thesis research focuses on Korean-Pop music artists and their brand value around the world. With the example of EXO in our thesis, it was formed by their entertainment company, SM Entertainment, with the intention of making EXO a successful music artist group with great monetary success. Although the entertainment company's intention was to increase EXO's value in the market world, EXO was able to also see a rise in value in the other worlds as well. Sections 4.1.1 to 4.1.4 will use existing theories developed by authors Boltanski & Thévenot (2006), and analyze where EXO stands with regards to the several worlds of worth. Please keep in mind that the headings for sections 4.1.1-4.1.4 were already developed and we will be only using them in the abduction method to analyze EXO and their existing value. This will be important to do so we can understand which value could end up being destroyed.

4.1.1 Worth of EXO in the Market World

SM Entertainment was established by the founder Lee Soo-Man in 1995. Since then, SM Entertainment has operated as a multinational company with several roles such as being a record label, talent agency, music production company and as a music publishing house. Over those years, SM Entertainment has been able to hire and showcase several local and overseas

talent representing the Korean-Pop music industry. Few of those include music artists, boy bands and girl groups such as SHINee, EXO, NCT, Aespa, who have been able to shine within the music industry. The success of these music artist groups has helped them meet great revenue with regards to the market world, valuing the company at $1.658 billion USD, which equals close to 2 trillion South Korean Won (Han, 2021).

As of March 2022, EXO's net worth is valued at over $950 million USD, equating to almost half of that of SM Entertainment (Seoulspace, 2022). This is due to EXO's tremendous success with regards to the sales of their physical albums, merchandise, as well as their digital sales on online music platforms. Ever since their debut in 2012, EXO has been able to remain in the top 10 with regards to album sales, despite even announcing a temporary hiatus in 2019 due to South Korea's requiring all able-bodied males to complete mandatory military service. To be able to monitor and track South Korea's music artists and their performance, the Korea Music Content Association developed the Gaon Music Chart, a chart similar to the Billboards in the United States of America (Han, 2010). As per Gaon Music Charts, EXO is still considered to be SM Entertainment's all-time best selling music artist.
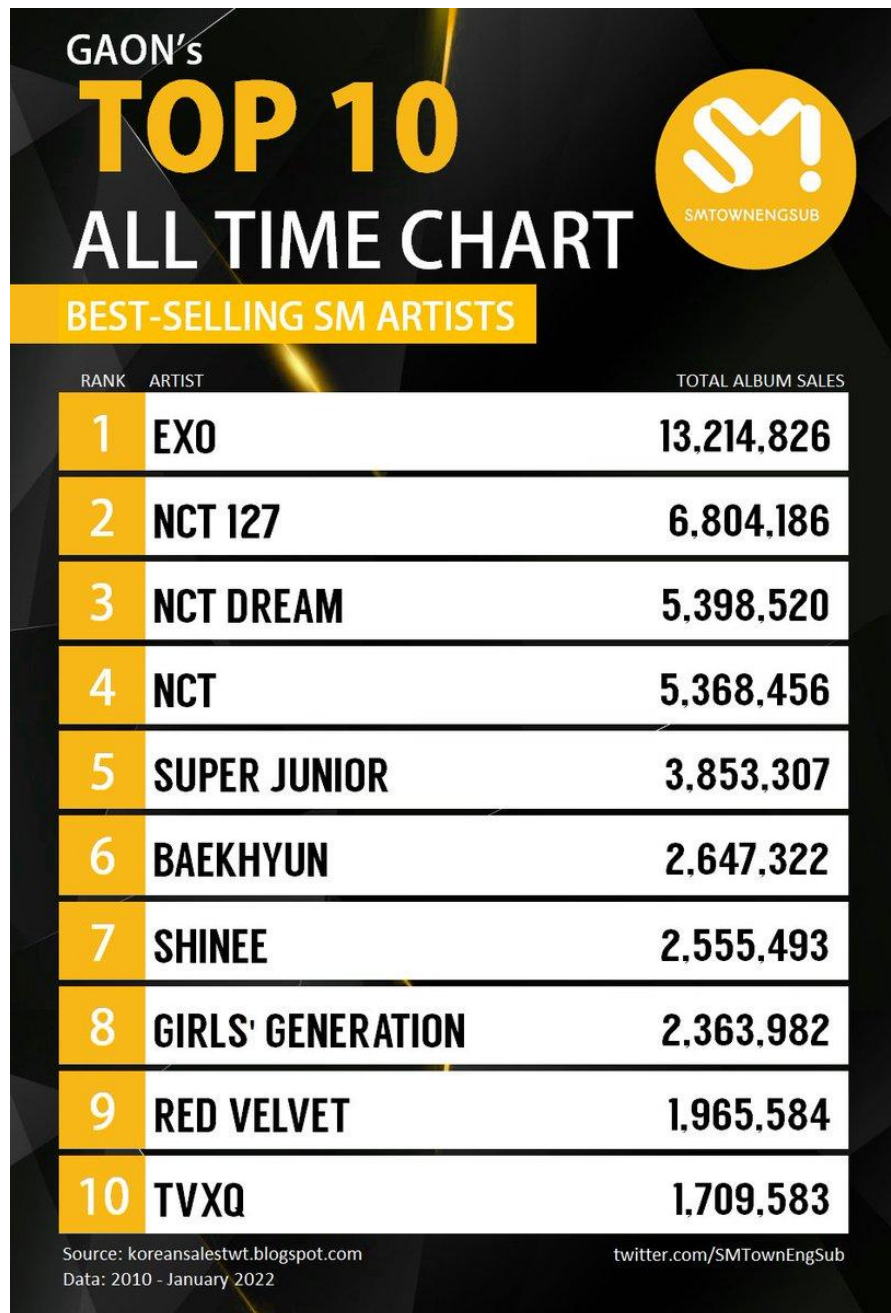
Figure 3 GAON's Top 10 All Time Chart featuring Best-Selling SM Artists
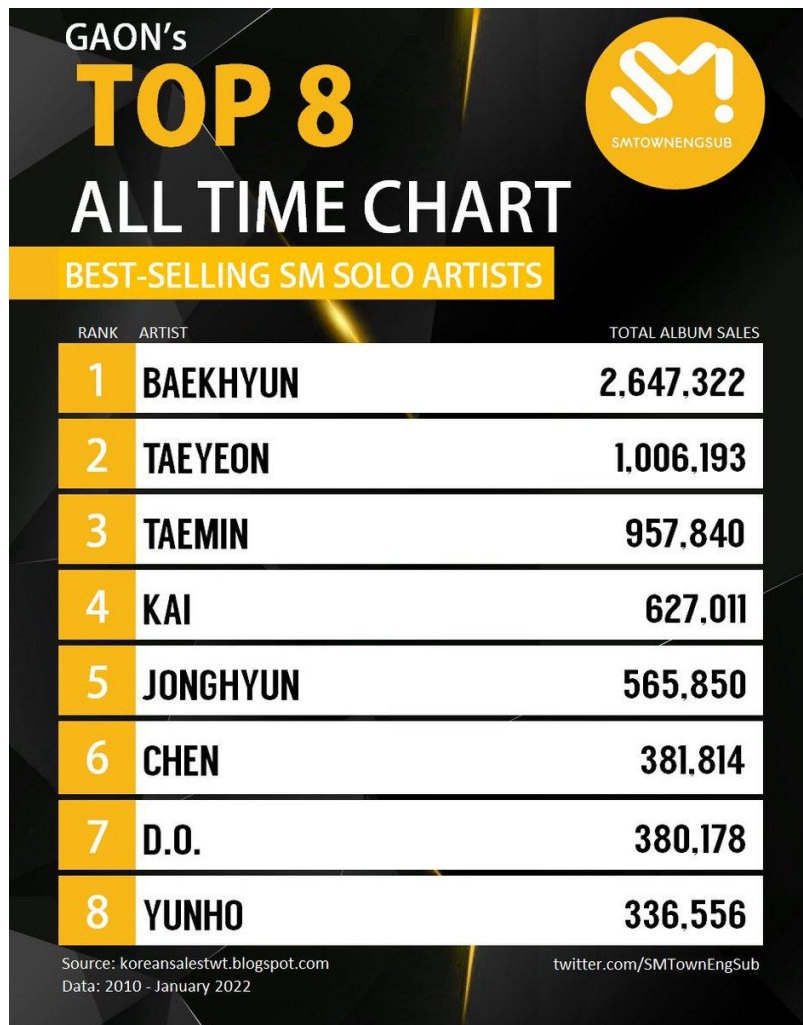
Figure 4 GAON'S Top 8 All Time Chart featuring Best-Selling SM Solo Artists

Beyond EXO's success as a group, each member of EXO has been valued as tremendously successful celebrities in and outside South Korea. EXO's members Chen, Xiumin, Sehun, D.O, Kai, Lay and Chanyeol are said to be valued over $12 million USD, with member Baekhyun and the leader Suho surpassing their fellow members with a net worth of $17 million USD and $15 million USD respectively. Few of the members of EXO also have their own solo music career, along with some members partaking in acting roles in movies, television shows and in versions of the Broadway musicals in the Korean language (Seoulspace, 2022).

Some of the members have also taken part in modeling activities and have been brand ambassadors for huge fashion brands like Gucci, Dior, Tommy Hilfiger, Prada, Hublot and Bvlgari (Hall, 2021). A recent event includes EXO's member Kai collaborating with Gucci to release his own line of handbags and clothing designed by Gucci's creative director Alessandro Michele, earning Kai the nickname "Human Gucci" (Prestige, 2021). All these

factors have helped determine that EXO as a group and the individual members have brought in a lot of value with regards to the market world.

4.1.2 Worth of EXO in the World of Fame

Over time, the music artist group was able to gain a lot of support, which translated into a very strong fandom. This helped them increase their value with regards to the world of fame. Within the world of fame, value is measured with regards to the degree to which a person or organization is recognized by others around them. With regards to EXO, they were not only gaining fame and popularity within South Korea. As EXO was a music artist group with Chinese members as well, they saw tremendous amounts of success and popularity in countries like China, and other neighboring South East Asian countries like Japan, Thailand. Myanmar and Cambodia (KBIZoom, 2021). Even though there have been several new music artists that have debuted in and outside South Korea, EXO has still managed to maintain their value in the world of fame.

Even after announcing their temporary hiatus as a group, EXO has been able to maintain conversations surrounding themselves on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and recently, TikTok. In the year 2021, EXO ranked #4 on Twitter, with over 2 billion tweets about the group or its members (Kim, 2021). The hashtags #exo and #exol (a hashtag representing EXO's fan club) has had plenty of interaction over time, with Instagram garnering over 46.4 million posts and TikTok having over 26 billion views for videos featuring those hashtags. These impressive metrics have gotten American magazines like Forbes and Billboard mention how EXO constantly and dramatically over-performs on social media, with the band ranking #2 on Billboard Year-End Social Charts (Billboard, 2018).

But their worth in the World of Fame does not just stop with their social media performance. EXO has constantly broken several records in and outside South Korea, all due to their fame and popularity around the world. With their first concert being sold out in 1.47 seconds (Soompi. 2014), to EXO being the first K-pop music artist to have their song played at the Dubai Fountain at Burj Khalifa Lake (Soompi, 2018), the music artist group has been able to boast a lot of different accolades, thanks to their immense popularity. EXO was also elected by South Korean citizens as the ideal music artist to represent K-Pop and South Korea at the closing ceremony of the 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea (Herman, 2018). This earned them the nicknames 'Nation's Pick' and 'Global Pick.' These various

elements have helped determine EXO's worth in the World of Fame. The next section will focus on how they have used this fame to construct their value in the Inspired World and the Civic World.

4.1.3 Worth of EXO in the Inspired World

Beyond being successful themselves, EXO was able to spread their influence and create immense value in the Inspired World. The Inspired World mainly deals with the expression of an individual or group's talent or passion, which made use of in the right way, produces unique and creative results. SM Entertainment influenced a lot of the decisions made with regards to EXO. Ever since their trainee period in 2006, the company has been investing in a lot of their elements such as their music and dance classes, their music video sets, their concepts for each album and even sometimes with fashion. Despite having immense support and direction from their company, EXO and its members were still able to find unique and creative ways to express their talent and passion.

Harvey Mason Jr., the current CEO of The Recording Academy (known for The Grammy Awards) mentioned in an interview that EXO and its members are quite like "painters having every color to paint with" because of how well they express their talent of singing, dancing, composing and song-writing (Melendez, 2017). For example, the song 'Promise' on their repackaged version of their second album was written by the members Chen and Chanyeol, while member Lay helped write and produce the song. But writing and producing is not the only talent EXO holds.

It is no surprise for a boy band to be really good at singing. But members of EXO have been continuously voted to be the best singers in the nation, earning them the nickname 'vocal powerhouse.' Despite being a pop-band, EXO and its members have been able to comfortably excel in several different genres such as rock, reggae fusion, ballad, electronic dance music, and hip hop. Their unique and creative work has been able to influence several popular music artists like NCT, Wanna One, Kang Daniel and Kim Dong-Han.

Their impact and influence in the world of music have won them over 150 awards, with South Korea's Prime Minister Commendation, an honor bestowed only to few, recognizing their public service and their excellence in their field (Kpop Herald, 2017). Beyond music, EXO members have been considered radical with regards to their fashion statements and trends (Bell, 2020). Kai, the main dancer of EXO has occasionally been spotted donning crop

tops, earning him the nickname 'Crop Top King.' In an industry where male idols are usually criticized heavily for their fashion choices, EXO's Kai has been able to show that he is comfortable with his own sexuality and that fashion has no gender boundaries (Glasby, 2018). These elements have been able to construct and improve EXO's value in the Inspired World.

4.1.4 Worth of EXO in the Civic World

Although EXO members are not public workers and are not entitled to perform public service work to cater to the common good for the public, they are still celebrities with a huge amount of influence over the public. Therefore, EXO has always been very conscious with the image they present in public and the sponsorships they accept. As a music artist that attracts a younger audience, they have always mentioned how they feel the pressure and burden to stay as positive role models for their fans and the public. Therefore, EXO members have always been seen expressing the importance of education through verbal affirmations and actions.

EXO members went through periods of singing and dancing training as middle schoolers, which resulted in most of them only being able to complete their school education. Despite all of that, all members have been able to earn their university degree. 6 out of the 9 members have even been able to finish their master's degree online, and one of the members Xiumin has been working towards his PhD. Hence, a lot of parents have been happy that their children would be able to be fans of celebrities that also stress the importance of academics in one's life.

But their outstanding civic good does not stop with that. EXO members have been active with charity work, even donating portions of successful revenue from a few of their album sales. They have been spokespeople for the UNICEF Smile for U campaign, South Korea's Red Cross Youth, and for the 2014 Summer Youth Olympics. They have also donated personally and volunteered at childcare centers, Korea Childhood Leukemia Foundation, Siheung Women's Resource Development Center and China's Hunan province medical services. South Korean citizens have also applauded EXO's fandom EXO-L for being active with charity work. The fans have constantly donated a lot of money and volunteer time during the member's birthdays, EXO's debut anniversary and even during the COVID-19 pandemic. The fan's charity work has also earned the artist group accolades and value in the Civic World, earning EXO awards like 'Charity Angel' (KBIZoom, 2022).

While EXO and their fandom EXO-Ls may have worked really hard to construct values in their respective worlds, there have also been instances where anti-fans have actively worked towards destroying the reputation and value of the music artist due to jealousy. But sometimes, fans themselves have unintentionally damaged the value of their favorite artist in these worlds. These might happen when someone might only be a fan of a specific member from EXO rather than the entirety of EXO. Or it might also happen when fans are too emotionally invested in fan activities and discourse that they use obscene or vulgar language against other music artists that might be competitors of EXO. This thesis will focus on how such fan discourse might cause damage or destruction of value for the music artist in these respective worlds.

4.2 Analyzing EXO's Fan Community Practices that Create Value for EXO

To better understand and analyze the existing fan practices within the EXO-L fan club and how they have equally helped in creating EXO's value in the industry, we observed online fan clubs and fan groups. Upon observation, the netnographic research material was later applied to the theories from Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009) article using the abduction approach. This analysis will help understand how fans have been instrumental in creating EXO's value. Therefore, the analysis in section 4.2 will stand as an assistance to better understand the new findings in section 4.3. As mentioned in earlier sections about the technical terminology of brand community and fandom, this section will refer to the duality of the EXO-L fandom being both a 'fandom' and a 'brand community.'

The practices mentioned from section 4.2.1 to 4.2.3 are all developed by authors Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009) in their article 'How Brand Community Practices Create Value.' Therefore, this section will purely follow an abduction method, where we refer to the practices as mentioned by Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009) and how these practices would compare with EXO and the EXO-L fandom.

4.2.1 Social Networking

The first major thematic category of brand community activities that create value is social networking. Social networking is very much focused on the communicative aspect of the brand community. For example, the activities within the thematic category of social

networking focuses on creating a relationship with other fans within the brand community, improving their relationships, as well as sustaining it. In the context of EXO and EXO-Ls, the fandom invites new fans by asking certain questions about their knowledge of EXO. Once a part of the online communities, the admins usually direct these new fans and existing fans to share discourse related to EXO. This helps them maintain conversations with a common interest in EXO, while also helping sustain the fan relationship with each other.

4.2.1.1 Welcoming

The cordial welcoming of new fans into the fandom happens in a very structured process. As seen in Figures 5 & 6, most of the fan clubs on different social media platforms require new members to answer certain questions to officially become a fan. The examples show how the welcome messages look like on the 'EXO-L We Are One! International' Facebook group and the 'EXOcord' Discord server.
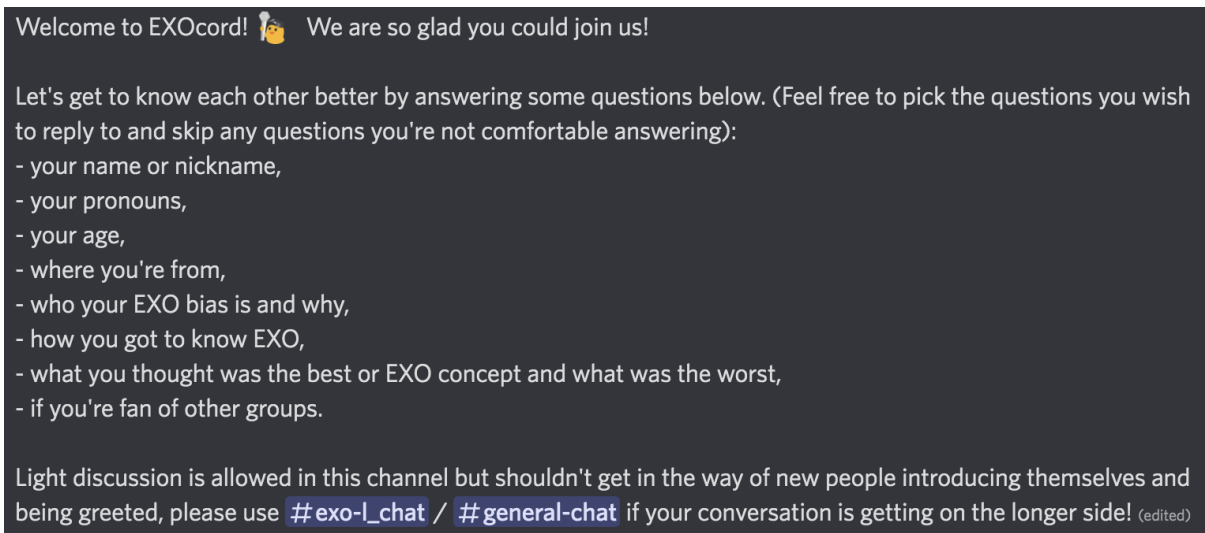
Figure 6 EXOcord Reddit Community Welcome Page

Most of the time, fandoms and brand communities have certain standards and structure on welcoming new members. This is to make sure that all of those who join the fan club are adhering to the rules and maintaining decorum in the online fan club environment. Meanwhile, some groups do not really have a stricter welcoming structure. For example, the EXO Reddit server is open and welcome to use by anyone who is interested in EXO. But the admins on the EXO Reddit server are much stricter on regulating the posts on the server. This is to ward off those who are not fans or those who post unrelated content on the EXO server.

4.2.1.2 Empathizing

This is when existing members and new members within the fandom focus on interacting with each other, inviting fans to online or physical fan events, as well as providing emotional and physical support to the fans if needed. Most of the time, the conversations surrounding this sub-theme are very centric within fan interaction. But this is not necessarily always true. Since the fan club is created surrounding conversations about the music artist these fans like, it is also very likely that most of the conversations that keep the fan club alive and help them sustain through tough times is to talk about the music artist.

As for fan-to-fan interactions, some conversations surround their personal lives as well. Within the EXO fandom, most fans are known to be very supportive and understanding with each other. For example, some posts on the Facebook group have been about fans sharing their personal achievements and accomplishments pertaining to their education, career or

even personal goals. Most of the fans try to react, comment and interact on these posts to show their support for their fellow fans.

4.2.1.3 Governing

This sub-theme is usually a continuation of the sub-theme on welcoming new members and fans into a fan club. While it is easy to create an online community for people to join and interact, there is also a necessity to maintain decorum. Therefore, most of the groups have admins that solely focus on governing the online fan communities, as well as focus on monitoring behavioral expectations of fans within the online community. The images below show certain examples of expected rules within these online communities and the penalty for not abiding by them.

About this group

MUST :
1. EXO-related topics
2. EXO daily updates
3. News and announcements about EXO
4. Photos/Videos (individual/group)
5. Post using ENGLISH language ONLY

MUST NOT :
1. Spamming the group
2. Hate and indecent posts
3. Comparing of members
4. Comparing of/from other groups
5. Plug other groups
6. Non-english and non-EXO related posts
7. Fanwars

Addition: Fandom jokes are allowed, but not too much. Don't make it a habit.

Figure 7 EXO-L We Are One! International Facebook Group Rules

Figure 8 EXOcord Reddit Community Rules

4.2.2 Impression Management

Both the sub-themes within the impression management thematic category focus on both managing the impression of the music artist and the impression of the fandom. In brief, the sub-themes specifically summarize how fans are involved in certain discourse inside and outside the fan club to evangelize their favorite music artist and justify everything the music artist does. Sometimes, this pandering may actually become very toxic, annoying and off-putting. The repercussions of those over-bearing actions of evangelization will be discussed in further detail in section 4.3.

4.2.2.1 Evangelizing

Evangelizing EXO is usually done through multiple fan activities. Some of these include sharing their accomplishments on public social media platforms, sharing other content that either panders or preaches the artist in a positive light, or sometimes might even be done by comparing EXO with other music artists within the same genre of music.

While most of these posts might help fellow fans to feel good about their favorite music artist, some posts might be to spread attention about EXO so non-fans are inspired to check out the artist or their music. This is carried out in a very subtle way so non-fans do not feel forced or pressured to become a fan.

4.2.2.2 Justifying

While evangelizing focuses on the fans amplifying the positive qualities of the music artist, the theme of justification focuses a lot more on managing the impression of the fandom. With fans spending so much time with their favorite music artist, it is likely for outsiders and non-fans to feel like these fans are most of the time obsessed with the celebrities in question.

Therefore, most fans try to justify their reasons for why they support their favorite music artist. While the fans might agree along with other fans within the fandom, the non-fans and outsiders see this as an opportunity to understand the fan club. This sub-theme is also mentioned by Kozinets (2001) in his article on Star Trek fans.

In his article, Kozinets (2001) mentions how there is always stigma around the consumption of popular media and culture with outsiders usually asking these fans to "Get A Life." Because of these stereotypical stigmas around being a fan, most fans find it essential to defend themselves, as well as their actions of being a fan.

4.2.3 Community Engagement

The community engagement thematic category is very centric on those specific fan activities that are meant for fans to show off their membership milestones - be it their physical memento or just a memory from being a fan of the music artist. This wide thematic category also includes four different sub-themes, which will be explored in further detail in the upcoming sections with relation to EXO and their fandom, EXO-L.

4.2.3.1 Staking

Staking is the act of differentiating fans within their own fanclub. This could be as simple as differentiation with regards to use - some fans listen to EXO dedicatedly because it supports their mental health, while some other fans really do not depend on the music artist as much as other fans do. Few other intra group distinctions include but are not limited to aspects like 'length of knowing the music artist' and 'the amount of artist merchandise the fans own.'

But the most important differentiation that usually happens amongst fans is the act of picking a 'bias' (Morin, 2019). Picking a bias is when fans choose a favorite member from the music artist group and choose to stay loyal to this specific member from the group. This usually happens over time. As fans start to listen to the music and join the fandom, they eventually get to know more about each individual member from the group. Over time, the fans grow fond of a specific member from the group and address them as their 'bias.' This act is usually seen to be very unconscious in nature but some fans tend to go overboard. The outcomes of destruction with picking a bias will be addressed in a later section.

4.2.3.2 Milestoning

Milestoning on the other hand is a very materialistic and capitalistic practice that includes owning different artist merchandise that very well fit each era of the music artist. For example, every single album that EXO has released thus far is considered to be its own era. Therefore, for each album release, fans flock to their nearest physical store or the online store to order either a single version or multiple versions of the same album.

Figure 9 EXO Album Collection Over The Years Displayed By an EXO-L Fan

Although now, most albums are available to purchase beyond that specific era, fans still consider this an important practice to uphold. Few other big milestoning activities specific to being a fan include activities like attending concerts, preparing banners and signs for these concerts, as well as being involved in fan chants.

Figure 10 EXO Lightstick (aka) Eribong Pictured at an EXO Concert

4.2.3.3 Badging

Badging is essentially a continuation of the sub-theme of milestoning. Badging usually involves creating certain symbols from the milestones that fans have gathered along the way of their fan journey. With regards to EXO, some of the badging examples include things like 'maintaining photocard albums,' 'creating a shrine of albums and other merchandise that are specific to EXO,' 'saving confetti from concerts to reminisce,' and others like 'purchasing EXO lightsticks.' Figure 10 includes an example of badging.

Figure 11 Confetti Pictured at an EXO Concert
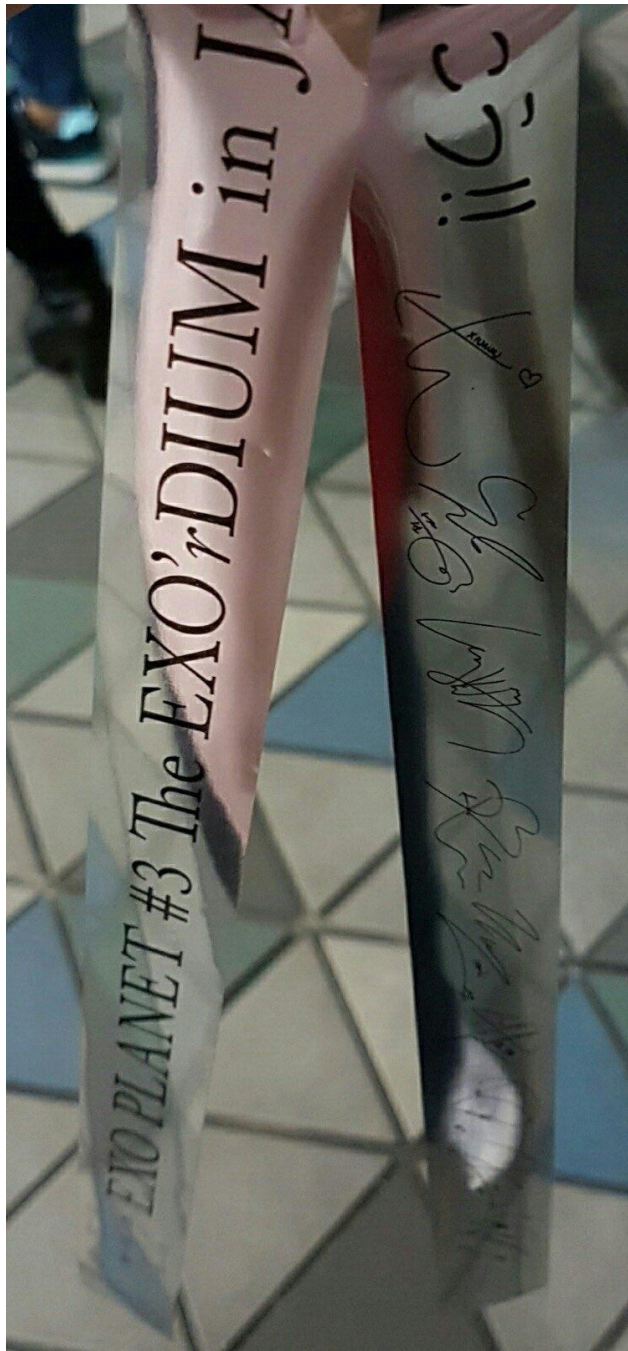
4.2.3.4 Documenting

Just like the previous sub-themes of milestoning and badging, documenting is also a practice that involves the documentation of the fan's activities and activities throughout the journey. While most fans consider the physical elements and merchandise gathered over the years as their identity for documentation, some fans carry out other extensive events.

For example, the EXO fandom was founded on August 5, 2014. Therefore, fans all around the world either throw events at local cafes to celebrate this day, while looking through their previous documentation of their fan journey. The documentation elements may be as simple as listening to an EXO song to reminisce about the old days, to something more elaborate as creating a scrapbook or documentary that shows both EXO's journey and the fan journey in further detail.

4.2.4 Brand Use

The last thematic category is very focused on the use of the brand. Since EXO is a music artist brand and isn't a brand that sells tangible material, it is quite difficult to define this thematic category. But, as explained in the literature review section, EXO is considered to be its own brand. This is because of the technicality of how EXO operates as a music unit. Although they are a music artist group, they have their own net worth, brand image and brand reputation that makes them a worthy brand by themselves.

4.2.4.1 Grooming

Grooming specifically focuses on the caretaking aspect of all the album merchandise and other elements that the fans have purchased along their fan journey. The small steps in achieving the practice of grooming include things like cleaning the albums, cleaning the CDs that come with the album, dusting the shelves where these albums and merchandise lay, and a lot more such patterns.

Usually there aren't any specific steps that fans are asked to follow to maintain the grooming activities but sometimes fans share their own steps in caretaking merchandise on online fanclub platforms or other social media. This is in aims of helping other fans to get an idea on how to take care of their own merchandise. A popular grooming tip shared by EXO-Ls is about maintaining the EXO lightstick.

4.2.4.2 Customizing

The customization of products in relation to EXO and its members have taken a huge stride in the several years. While some include physical customization, some of the products are in the form of creative media. With EXO's undying fame in foreign countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, some fans have found it tough to purchase merchandise from the company's headquarters in South Korea. Therefore, few fans have resorted to opening their own online

stores that customize trinkets and other keepsakes. While this was a small practice in those South East Asian countries, it has now widely spread to the West as well.

With regards to creative content customization, there is a wide variety that can be found online. These creative content usually range from small content like images customized using Photoshop, memes and GIFs, to large content like fancams, compilations and fan fiction stories. Fans immerse themselves into a rabbithole of creative content and encourage other fans to either contribute content themselves or to keep up with content that they deem to be "necessary for a fan of EXO to know."

4.2.4.3 Commoditizing

This specific sub-theme has been a very sensitive topic both within the fan club and for the entire Korean-Pop music community as well. While EXO as a music artist has produced albums that are up for physical purchase, most fans have debates and discussions about the commoditization of the individual themselves. For example, while EXO performs on stages or at other events, they are usually required to wear a certain outfit that accentuates their physique or other charms in their body. This has enraged several fans, making them feel as though the artist is entirely commoditized and sexualized beyond limit.

Also with South Korea being very conservative with topics such as dating and marriage, most idols are expected to remain single for several years and abstain from such social activities. This has angered several fans, with most of them sharing their opinion by saying that the private lives of their favorite music artist should remain separate from their work. Since this sub-theme has a swaying aspect of being both constructive and destructive in nature, the aspect of commodification with EXO and other similar celebrities will play an important role in the upcoming section.

4.3 Fan Community Activities That May Destroy Value

By focusing on social media platforms and online fan communities, we were able to observe fan interactions, discussions, discourse and other material to infer four major thematic categories that induce destruction for the artist's value. The four categories are: 4.3.1 Critique; 4.3.2 Obsession; 4.3.3 Possessive; and 4.3.4 Gatekeeping. Few of these major thematic categories also have sub-themes to further categorize the findings in a much more organized manner, which will be discussed in further detail in the upcoming sections. The

headings for each section are developed by us, the authors of this thesis, based on our findings and the analysis of the same.

The first thematic category consists of activities that are focused on critiquing everything that seems to be a threat for their favorite music artist. These could be fellow fans, other rival music artists or even the company that manages EXO. Broadly explained, this is where fans believe they have a say in criticizing all external factors that may be hindrances towards EXO's success and value creation. While this might be with good intention, the tone and delivery of these messages may bring destruction for EXO's value. For example, people who are not part of the EXO-L fandom may encounter these remarks to be extreme, causing non-fans to form predetermined or stereotypical impressions about the fandom or the music artist.

Secondly, obsession is where few fans within the fandom express their emotions or love for their favorite artist through extreme methods. While there are several examples of how this unfolds, the subthemes in this thematic category are (1) Stalking and (2) Invasion of Privacy. There have been several instances where few fans have either stalked EXO or the individual members, hiding in hotel rooms, renting cars to kidnap the members, and much more such extreme measures (Griffiths, 2018). Fans within the EXO fandom diminish these obsessive fans and label them as 'sasaeng fans,' which roughly translated from Korean means 'private life fans.' This label is intentionally given to the obsessive fans who are intrusive in nature with EXO members and their private lives (Carpio, 2020).

The third thematic category focuses on possessiveness. As EXO is considered a boy band with several members, it is usual for fans to pick a favorite member and be an exclusive fan of that member while still rooting for EXO's success as a whole. But this might also become extreme to the point that certain fans root for their favorite member out of EXO while also praying for the downfall or actively ruining the lives of the other members within EXO. Some instances include situations where these fans share rumors or private information of the members to get people to show hate towards their least favorite members within EXO. Once again, just like the term 'sasaeng fans' for obsessive fans, the fandom usually addresses these fans as 'akseong gaeinpaen', which translates from Korean to English as 'malicious individual fan' (Pop!, 2021)

Lastly, the thematic category of gatekeeping is the one that is much more prevalent in fan-to-fan interactions, either within the same fandom or sometimes with non-fans as well

(Oberkrom, 2021). As stated in the article by Muniz & O'Guinn (2001) and the article by Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009), fans within a fandom or members within a brand community usually involve themselves in certain activities that are used to prove their membership within the brand community or fandom. In the context of this thesis, these activities may include but are not limited to activities like buying albums, attending concerts, becoming involved with social media fan communities or even simply being involved in fan-exclusive discourse. But sometimes, there are also fans that do not necessarily take part in all these activities or there might be new fans that are still learning their way into being a fan. During situations like this, some fans take the liberty to call out or attack the fans for their lack of knowledge, leading these other fans to consider hating EXO as a group or even leaving the fandom altogether.

4.3.1 Critique

Critiquing may come natural with both fans and non-fans. Be it with EXO or with any music artist or any celebrity in the eyes of the public, there is bound to be some kind of scrutiny with anything and everything they do. But with regards to EXO and their fandom EXO-Ls, netnographic research shows that the critique is not towards the artist themselves. The criticism that comes from fans are most of the time directed towards SM Entertainment, the company that manages EXO.

As explained in earlier sections, SM Entertainment aided in the process of forming and debuting EXO back in 2012. Therefore, every album released by EXO was promoted by SM Entertainment since the company was responsible for it. Over the years, SM Entertainment has slowly stopped directing their attention towards EXO. The lack of involvement from SM Entertainment was expressed in various ways - mistreatment of current and past EXO members, less promotion for EXO's music releases, neglect of international fans, and much more. Therefore, fans have taken it to social media platforms and the online fan platforms to express their concerns and grievances towards SM Entertainment.

"i think is SO funny how sm will pay millions for ads so their 2 youngest groups will have more views on yt but when it comes to promoting their other groups they can only post teaser pics on social media" - Tweet by Anteater

Meanwhile, several comments are usually also targeted towards SM Entertainment while specifically calling out their mistreatment towards the specific members of EXO. While most of the concerns include up-to-date events, some of the tweets and posts even mention the

former EXO members and how the company's actions drove those former members to have to leave EXO for the sake of their own sanity.

"I fucking hate SM, they have done Sehun so much dirty. He's been into the busines for near 10 years and look at the amount of lines he got. Just look at EXO's album and songs from start till now and see how much Sehun is there. They literally wasted his talent for so many years." - Tweet by Antelope

"I have a long list of reason why I turned my back from SM long ago, from DBSK break up, Luhan, Kris and Tao leaving EXO due to mistreatment, loosing Jonghyun from Shinee and loosing Sulli, whom they can't even protect. I even find this too late." - original post by Tweet by Armadillo

Fans' enragement towards SM Entertainment took a rough turn when SUHO, the leader of EXO, expressed his disappointment towards how SM Entertainment has started to pay less and less attention towards EXO. Although SUHO considered it to be an incidental remark, fans took it to social media platforms to comment about the entire situation. Some fans said that they weren't even surprised with SUHO's comments because they have been aware of SM Entertainment's mistreatments towards EXO since day 1. Meanwhile, some other fans said that they were very disappointed with how SM Entertainment was managing EXO, a group that brings the company the highest revenue amongst all of their artists.

"Isn't EXO the most important pillar among the many pillars in SM? Then the company must be aware of this, but seeing these stories directly on air on prime time television, I feel that the problem is serious.. SM, please work hard so that the artist does not feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied…" - comment left on YouTube video of SUHO on Radio Star

"It could be the last warning a leader throws at the company" - comment left on YouTube video of SUHO on Radio Star by Beaver

While fans find this an important problem to address, the same could become destructive for EXO's value. While seeing the comments made by fans, the non-fans and outsiders are usually met with content that is full of criticism and discontentment towards SM Entertainment. This leads to a preconceived notion from non-fans that anything with regards to EXO could be criticism-worthy. Several non-fans have abstained from becoming a fan of EXO because of SM Entertainment's treatment towards EXO.

"i hate EXO, I hate that I like them, I hate SM groups, I hate everything with them right now" - Tweet by Bluebird

This has shown how existing fans or even new fans are reluctant to keep supporting EXO because of SM Entertainment. But the fans who have stuck through all the ups and downs of EXO state that a true fan will stay with EXO, even if the company that manages EXO might be disastrous. Even non-fans and outsiders have acknowledged how true EXO-Ls have stuck through the roughest times of EXO, even if SM Entertainment actively taints a bad image of EXO and its members.

"we might fight all the time but i really respect exols cause they unconditionally support and love exo members no matter what and real ones don't even think of switching up fandomes just cause there's obvious lack of of content and mistreatement given from sm" - Tweet by Butterfly

Even in the Swedish region where Korean-Pop music is not as popular as expected, there are several tweets by the EXO-L fandom which underline their hate and frustration towards the SM Entertainment company. This can be once again connected to section 4.1.1 and how both EXO and the SM Entertainment company's value in the world of fame could be destroyed through fan discourse. With a rising resentment towards SM Entertainment, the fan interactions on platforms like Twitter can only bring more value destruction for SM Entertainment and EXO.

The discussion that arises from this is whether EXO's parent company, SM Entertainment, is doing more good than harm for EXO, and if this type of behavior from the company can be a contributing factor to the destructive parts of both the artist and the fandom. Since the fans feel bad emotions towards SM entertainment, they do everything in their power to express this hate as well – this can indeed be seen as a part of destroying the value for EXO.

The decisions from the EXO-L fandom to hate on SM Entertainment's management style is having counter-effects on them trying to be protective of the members of EXO. This is because fans are trying to protect EXO by hating on the people who did harm to them but the discourse might sometimes be counterproductive since it attracts negative attention from both non-fans and outsiders. This kind of fan discourse is also causing problems amongst the fans themselves, which will be discussed further in section 4.3.4 Gatekeeping.

4.3.2 Obsession

There is always some level of obsession that is apparent with being a fan of a music artist. Without being obsessed with the celebrity and their work, there is no way an individual can call themselves a fan. But when the obsession turns into a toxic habit, that is when fans start crossing the line. While these obsessive individuals call themselves 'fans,' the reaction from

the fandom is usually the opposite. Most fans dismiss calling these individuals as 'fans' and rather address them with names such as 'stalker' or 'sasaeng,' which roughly translates to 'fans invading private life' from Korean. The overall theme of Obsession will focus on the two sub-themes 4.3.2.1 Stalking and 4.3.2.2 Invasion of Privacy, as well as how these sub-themes slowly contribute towards destroying the value of the artist.

4.3.2.1 Stalking

Several instances of stalking have scarred the members of EXO, even changing the way they interact with their fans because of the need to be much more cautious with their surroundings and environment. Ever since the members have started seeing a rise in popularity, they have been stalked by obsessive individuals, sometimes even fearing for their own life. Most of these instances are quite scary for even non-fans or outsiders to fathom.

Some instances of stalking include when the former Chinese member of EXO, Tao, was followed by obsessive individuals to be secretly photographed while he walked in and out of his room wearing a bathrobe. They had also installed microphones inside the EXO members' rooms to record conversations. Post the incident, Tao took to RenRen, a Chinese social networking app similar to Facebook, to share his annoyance with the situation. The post by Tao roughly translates to say that it is cheap for fans to express their liking for him by indulging in such activities. He briefly also mentioned that fans who like him shouldn't overdo it but if those fans wouldn't stop, he warned them to stay away from him.

Figure 12 Former EXO member Tao's comment on the stalking situation, posted on RenRen, a Chinese social networking application.

But these obsessive 'fans' did not just stop with instances like this. Most of these fans know the schedule of the artist, therefore following them around to music shows, radio shows, interviews or even to personal events. One such instance is when an obsessive fan broke through to attend EXO member Baekhyun's brother's wedding. Although a private family affair, the popularity of EXO's Baekhyun had attracted these obsessive fans to make their presence known at the event. Witnesses at the event had shared how the event was going well until EXO's members showed up to sing a congratulatory song for Baekhyun's brother.

Eventually, the situation turned chaotic, leading to several uninvited people standing on top of chairs to try and record videos of EXO members.

These instances have led fans, non-fans and even outsiders to share their thoughts. Most fans within the fandom usually consider these obsessive individuals to not be 'fans.' The fandom try their best to discredit these fans and warn even new fans to think twice and judge if the content they are sharing on social media is from a real fan or from an obsessive 'sasaeng.'

"i hope people know that sasaengs are not just obsessive 'fans', some of them are stalkers/haters who would do anything for money and can even attack/harm exo. and to think that they are purposely being put in that situation is......" - Tweet by Caterpillar

"Newbies have to learn the difference between EXO sasaeng and EXO-L. Those people are sick! They hurt the idols physically and mentally. They are not fans. You're are disgusting trying to hurt us by connecting them with EXO-L. Every day you show to the world how stupid you are!" - Tweet by Cheetah

Meanwhile, non-fans and outsiders have even shared their own thoughts on how these obsessive fans act around their favorite music artists. One of the non-fans shared their thoughts online, stating "EXO's Baekhyun is also a human. If you really like him, shouldn't you show basic human manners?" while another online post said, "This is really crazy. You can see how flustered the EXO members are during situations like this." These instances of stalking have made both the music artists and their fans really worried on how EXO would be perceived as a group. There have also been instances where fans of individual members have verbally and physically supported sasaeng fans, angering the fandom.

"EXO could be stabbed and antis(anti-fans) would defend the person who stabbed them while making EXO look bad for being stabbed like it sounds crazy but I've just seen antis defend a fucking sasaeng I seriously believe antis hate EXO more than they love their faves how sad" - Tweet by Chinchilla

4.3.2.2 Invasion of Privacy

Beyond stalking members physically, these obsessive individuals have also taken part in other scary measures such as invading their private spaces. These could be drastically different - from spamming their personal phone numbers, sharing their pictures without consent, or to even stake out the EXO member's private residence or dorms. According to these 'sasaeng fans,' they consider these activities to be done out of pure love for the music artist.

One such instance is when an obsessive individual acquired EXO Baekhyun's personal phone number to later call and threaten the music artist. The 'sasaeng fan' told EXO's member Baekhyun to stop bothering EXO's other member Sehun, saying that Baekhyun had kept picking on Sehun in the name of 'fun and games.' Meanwhile, Baekhyun had answered the call in a calm tone, stating that the caller must have so much time in her hands and asking her to please hang up.

While the EXO-L fandom appreciated the way Baekhyun handled this phone conversation, some other people said that Baekhyun shouldn't have been so harsh to a 'fan.' As a form of retaliation and as a fight for his own privacy, EXO's Baekhyun had revealed the number of a 'sasaeng fan,' leading for EXO-Ls to call and send messages to the 'sasaeng', asking the 'obsessive fan' to stop bothering EXO's Baekhyun. Later on, the obsessive 'fan' apologized on Twitter, saying that she was a fan of EXO's Baekhyun and did not intend to bring harm to the music artist.

Angered by her statement, several fans within the EXO-L fandom left a thread of tweets on her post saying how she would never be a true EXO-L fan when she partakes in such obsessive activities. Several other fans also asked the fandom to take severe action and report her account, and maybe even report her malicious attempts to the police forces. Other fans even mentioned how her lack of maturity had brought immense damage to Baekhyun's reputation and value as a music artist, even sometimes destroying the entirety of EXO and EXO-L fandom's value.

Other EXO members have also been vocal about these incidents, some of the members even having to take intense measures like threatening or even filing police reports. EXO's Kai mentioned during an Instagram Live that 'sasaeng fans' had gathered outside the EXO dormitory and that he was worried for his and his member's safety. Kai had also mentioned

during the same Instagram live that he would call the police if the fans would not leave the premises. Upon Kai's remarks, several fans took it to social media, asking 'sasaeng fans' to leave EXO alone.

Jongin (EXO Kai's birth name) is doing an Instagram Live right now and apparently there are Sasaengs outside EXO's Dormitory.. Jongin said he is gonna call the Police..

Please leave the boys alone.. - Tweet by Coyote

There were also two Chinese 'sasaeng fans' who tried to break into EXO's Chanyeol's officetel, which Chanyeol has been using as a workspace and music studio. Following the news of the break in, Chanyeol immediately called the police to file a report. This was not the first time fans had invaded Chanyeol's private space. Back in 2016, another fan had followed Chanyeol's car, purposefully trying to catch up to the music artist. Being frustrated with the encounter, Chanyeol expressed his anger on the 'sasaeng fan' in a now deleted post on Instagram. Meanwhile, the EXO-L fandom has always been supportive of EXO members and asked them to be vocal about these situations. Fans who wanted to truly support EXO members stated that even if EXO may be celebrities, they are humans first, and that it is important for them to secure their privacy over satisfying the public.

"im so glad i stan people who call out their fans if needed and who do not tolerate sasaeng behavior... so proud of exo" - Tweet by Dolphin

Meanwhile, EXO's Baekhyun has always been known to be one of the members who has always been vocal about such issues, even earning praises from both fans and non-fans. Baekhyun's statements have also been very centric on value destruction - he has always expressed how he is worried that the actions and activities by these obsessive fans might bring destruction of value for himself, his fellow EXO members, and even the EXO-L fandom. After an incident of two 'sasaeng fans' waiting outside his private apartment, Baekhyun took to the LYSN app to express his anger towards the situation.

Figure 13 EXO member Baekhyun's comment on the invasion of his privacy, sent through LYSN Bubble, a Korean artist-to-fan interaction application.

On the LYSN platform, through a message directed towards the EXO-L fandom, Baekhyun expressed how he was worried that situations like these may eventually paint the EXO-L fandom in a negative manner. He also mentioned how he didn't want to negatively attack anyone before sharing what had happened with the sasaeng fans. Ending the message, he also pleaded with these people to protect his privacy, begging them to stop showing up outside his private residence. Several EXO-Ls also shared their thoughts on this incident

4.3.3 Possessiveness

As mentioned in multiple sections, the love for the music artist is what makes fans want to interact and keep up with their favorite celebrity. The same stands true for EXO and the EXO-L fandom. The fans' love for EXO is the glue holding the fandom together. But on some occasions, the same love could become toxic for the fandom. This comes in the form of solo fans, colloquially addressed in Korean as 'akseong gaeinpaen' or 'akgae fan', which translates from Korean to English as 'malicious individual fan.'
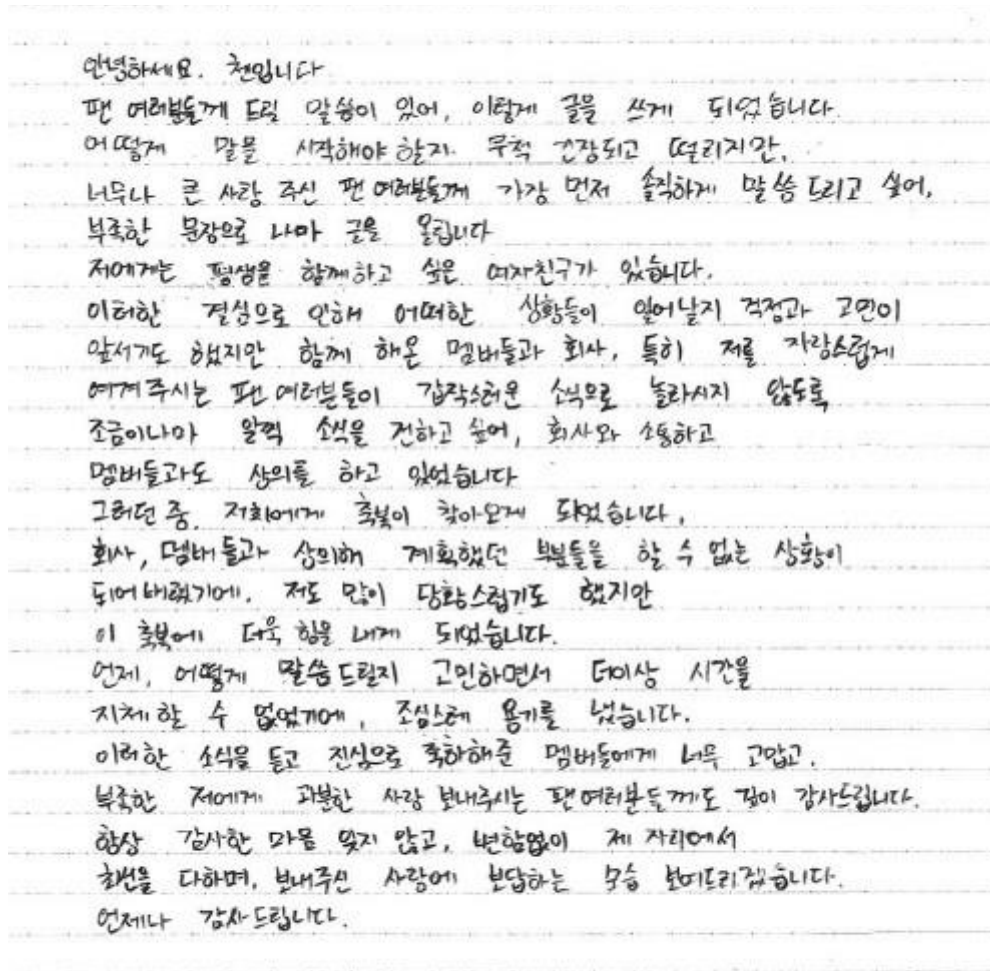
These solo fans are those that are overly possessive of one member out of the music artist group and choose to only support activities that their favorite member participates in. Their love towards one member usually is reflected with hate towards the other members within the group. For example, within EXO, the music artist group consists of nine members. Therefore, a solo fan would only support one of their favorite members while spewing hate towards the rest of the eight members.

The fandom usually tries to differentiate themselves from these solo fans since the solo fans are known for being notorious in the ways they show hate towards the EXO members. These hateful activities could be something small as leaving hate comments on social media, to larger activities like partaking in protests to kick out their least favorite member from EXO, or to even indulge in other value destroying activities like stalking and acquiring private information about their least favorite member or members within the group. The fandom has always called out such behavior, saying that even if a fan may have a favorite member, it gives them no right to hate other members.

"The thing I still don't understand is how people become solo stans just bc one Exols did smthg to their bias. I thought you stanned the group and not the fans?? Like a fb did smthg wrong so I hate the rest of exo 🥴 just say you never like exo and move on" - Tweet by Elephant

The activities of these solo fans usually drive a bad image towards both the fandom and EXO, eventually resulting in destruction in value. This is because most solo fans call themselves a 'fan of EXO' while their actions may mean the opposite. One of the most impactful, value destroying events that caused the rift between the fandom was during an ongoing fan debate about EXO's member Chen's development of his personal life.

To get a better grasp on the situation, on January 14 2020, both SM Entertainment and EXO's member Chen had released statements about Chen's marriage with his long-time girlfriend, who was pregnant at the time as well. This had caused a rift within the fandom - where most fans congratulated the member for the development in his private life while some other fans said that EXO's Chen had to leave EXO or better yet, leave the entire music industry.

Figure 14 Letter from Chen addressed to the EXO-L Fandom

The letter from Chen, mentioning the development in his personal life. He asked for understanding from fans and hoped that the fans would be happy for him and his future wife.

The entire fandom engaged in several tweets directed at each other, few expressing how EXO members are human themselves and that they needed to carry on with their personal lives. These fans had also mentioned how other fans, especially solo fans should stop being judgemental about their favorite music artist's life choices and should be accepting of whatever decision they make.

On the other hand, the solo fans had mentioned how Chen's sudden decision to marry his pregnant girlfriend would bring damage to both EXO's value and the rest of the EXO members as well. The point of view of solo fans was that fans gave these celebrities their luxurious career in music and that the music artist should respect the fans by stifling themselves from personal distractions like dating, marriage and parenthood. The difference in opinions had caused an uproar on social media, with so many fans sharing their opinions about this issue.

There was also a geographical divide in how the fans within the fandom had accepted Chen's marriage and new responsibilities of soon being a father. While international fans were much more accepting of the information, the Korean fans within the EXO-L fandom had released statements expressing their wish for Chen to be removed from EXO. The Korean faction of the EXO-L fandom, EXO-L ACE, had even gone to extreme lengths and participated in several activities to demand the removal of Chen from EXO.

The EXO-L ACE faction of the fandom had first released a statement towards SM Entertainment, requesting for the company to consider the removal of Chen from both EXO and the SM Entertainment company. Their reasons stated that Chen's dogmatic behavior had affected the reputation and value of EXO, had damaged the EXO-L fandom, and had created an unstable environment for further group activity or schedules. Following the statement from a partial section of the fandom, SM Entertainment had released a counter statement addressing the EXO-L ACE faction of the EXO-L fandom.

Within this statement, SM Entertainment had stated that both the company and the EXO members had spoken through Chen's situation and had made the decision to stick together as a group, no matter what may happen in any member's personal life. This had angered those specific fans even more, making them indulge in even severe activities like protests and even developing specific challenges to show their hate towards Chen. Those fans had also used the very same online fan community they had used to express their love for EXO to plan such events for the removal of Chen.

Figure 15 Faction of fans from EXO-L Ace protesting outside SMTOWN's Coex Artium for removal of Chen from EXO

The protest was held right outside the SM Entertainment company's headquarters, with police surrounding the area just in case the situation got out of control. The fans attending the protest had also brought all their EXO merchandise featuring Chen to discard. This was to express that Chen was out of their lives, aligning with their hashtag of #Chen_OUT.

As a way to further show disgust and hate towards EXO's member Chen, these fans also initiated a challenge called the 'K-EXOL Delivery Challenge,' urging fans to ship out their EXO merchandise featuring Chen back to SM Entertainment. While most of the Korean fans had participated in the challenge, several international fans had also expressed their interest in wanting to remove Chen out of their lives.

Over time, these challenges and protests were not the only activities fans had taken part in. Several fans even went to the extreme of sharing vulgar comments on social media channels about Chen, his girlfriend at the time and their unborn child, even sending death threats and leaking private information. Such activities had not only brought damage in value for EXO

but the fandom as well. Non-fans and outsiders started regarding these fans as an image of the entire EXO-L fandom, therefore wondering if these were the same values EXO members had instilled into their own fandom.

> *"Death threats for jongdae (Chen's personal name), his child and future wife, leaking of private informations such as their home address, name of the girlfriend and her social medias, petitions for getting him kicked out of the group. The image of the group has been damaged not by the news, but by fans."* - Tweet by Ferret

This showed how destructive brand community activities could eventually become a huge factor in destroying both EXO and the EXO-L fandom. But the fans supporting Chen started to also voice their opinions on these damaging fan activities and activities that were taking place to kick Chen out of EXO. Some of the tweets even mentioned how it did not make sense that fans organized such protests because they wanted to protect EXO, while all it reflected was hate. The tweets even urged such fans to rather drop all activities and just leave the fandom.

> *"I've been reading some EXO fans are demanding Chen departure from EXO just to "protect EXO" from hate. And is the most absurd thing I've seen because the hate Jongdae is getting is from his own fandom. maybe you are the ones who should leave the fandom"* - Tweet by Flamingo

> *"The ones who are ruining EXO's image are "fans" who hate Chen and demand that he leaves the group. These are the people that are hurting EXO. You have the power to call them out but all you do is ask for a statement from SM when they have made it clear that they support Chen."* - Tweet by Gazelle

This discussion about Chen's personal life had even attracted non-fans and outsiders to voice their opinion on the situation. Fans of other music artists within the Korean-Pop music industry mentioned how this was a generalized problem with regards to fan-to-artist relationships within the Korean-Pop music industry. The fans have started to love the artist so much that even the slightest disappointment would trigger a reason to hate them.

> *K*op fans are so toxic sometimes I actually hate them. Imagine boycotting EXO and calling for Chen to leave bc Chen, a grown ass adult man, married the love of his life and has a kid. A grown man has a life and career oh no he wants to work to take care of his fam oh no fkn* 🤡 - Tweet by Giraffe

Several other non-fans and outsiders even urged people to sign petitions to keep Chen within EXO.

"Well... Im not an EXO fan but still, what people are doing with him is wrong. So please help signing this petition.

SM Entertainment: Protection for EXO's Kim Jongdae - Sign the Petition!
http://chng.it/QX6NCP44 via @ChangeOrg_India" - Tweet by Grasshopper

Meanwhile, a few other fans had started a Twitter account under the name - @CHENProtection to retaliate and resist tweets that shared hateful speech against Chen. The admins of the account work round the clock to find tweets that share hate speech against Chen, further sharing it on their platform and asking people to report and block the account without engaging or further escalating any conversations. Accounts like these are examples of how value destructing activities could be further retaliated with value creating activities.

4.3.4 Gatekeeping

Healthy competition amongst humans is very natural. It happens to almost all of us in different scenarios - be it in school, at work or even while simply spending time with friends. Therefore, the feeling of competition is natural amongst a brand community or fandom where several fans interact with each other. But with intense competition comes the need to prove themselves as being superior. Therefore, fans indulge in a value destroying activity of gatekeeping. Gatekeeping occurs when fans in some way or another try to keep information or keep EXO "to themselves" – accusing other people within the fandom of not being real fans or blaming fans for not knowing enough about EXO.

Sometimes, gatekeeping could be expressed as something fans do to other fans in order to encourage them to learn more about EXO but some fans do it to exert their dominance over other fans. While the need for few fans to be dominating is not an intentional act, other fans might find this very uncomfortable, leading them to badmouth each other or even in some extreme situations, leave the entire fandom.

"YES! and I hate that their fans are the worst, so you feel guilty for liking them because of their fans" - Tweet by Hamster

This tweet refers to how a fan's experience in the fandom has turned sour due to their interaction with other fans.

"I hate exo. I hate all the fucking fans. I hate everything that has to do with them. The fans are horrible" - Tweet by Hedgehog

This tweet is referring to other fans as the reason they might end up not liking EXO as much, or even being embarrassed of liking EXO. Although the domineering fans might have intended to be helpful or encouraging to other fans, sometimes overdoing it might bring destruction of value not just for the EXO-L fandom but also for EXO themselves. There are other instances that drive these 'ex-fans' to want to leave the fandom.

While some of the fans within the fandom find it important to express all grievances against SM Entertainment as a way of standing in solidarity with EXO, other fans see it as overwhelming and too much to handle. Originally, the fans within the fandom involved in such discourse and activities may be doing so because they feel a moral responsibility to stand up for EXO or because they feel like this is their moral responsibility as a fan, as mentioned in 2.2.3. But the other fans decide to leave the fandom because they are tired of such fan discourse that primarily focuses on 'complaining.'

Fans within the fandom call these other fans as part of the 'SM Family' because they are much more worried about hurting the reputation and value of SM Entertainment as whole, rather than worrying about EXO's value. Even during times when fans misunderstand and spew hate on each other, the fandom usually tries to put the blame on SM Entertainment and their management style.

"sm stans do nothing for exo and exols hate other fandoms and groups. sm family doesn't exist and it never will because the company doesn't want to. they want fans fighting each other, competing against each other because that brings more money, losers" - @byunshiho on Twitter

While these other fans may leave the fandom, the fans who stay with the fandom talk about how the true meaning of being a fan means to stay with EXO and the fandom from the start to end.

"if anyone says "i WAS an exo-l" then no you never were because true exo-ls don't leave" - Tweet by Hyena

"The level of clingyness EXO and EXO-Ls have for each other is the main reason why i cannot stop stanning EXO. Despite being forced to leave the fandom. I will never leave because EXO is my 2nd family. Even if they don't know us personally their care and love for EXO-Ls is true" - Tweet by Jaguar

Although this might be considered a simple remark, this spews further hate between fans, leading fans wanting to once again leave the fandom because they simply cannot stand such remarks. This simply creates a rift within the fandom with two types of fans - the devoted fans who try to get themselves involved with anything regarding EXO and other types of passive fans who find it hard to keep up with the fan life. Meanwhile, older fans also get involved in such discourse, expressing how the fandom has changed and does not hold up to EXO's slogan 'We Are One.' They share how the fandom has transformed since the original days and how the fandom also 'deserves' better fans.

"We are one is now becoming a joke.😔 Instead of focusing more on votings, Some EXOLs choose to fight with each other. God. I HATE THIS! EXO deserves better fans tbh.🤣🤣🤣"
- Tweet by Kangaroo

"Back then, most of us (senior exols) never hate each other. We are always together. But today, it's a whole mess rn. Idk who is the real hypocrite fans now. I'm gonna sit at the back & enjoy the show." - Tweet by Lobster

Tweets like this are considered to be lighthearted but it has had a counter-effect on the fandom. Seeing tweets like this gives off an impression of the EXO-L fandom being very toxic, therefore making new fans reluctant to want to join the fandom in the first place. If the value of the fandom is slowly destroyed, there will eventually be less support towards the EXO members, eventually resulting in the destruction of EXO's value.

5.0 Discussion

This section will focus on addressing the overview of the key findings in the analysis section. The further subsections will focus on discussing the findings in relation to existing literature and how the new findings will be useful in understanding brand community activities.

5.1 Overview of Key Findings

Prior to conducting the netnographic research on brand community and fandom activities within the music industry, the research question we formed was "How may online fan community activities destroy the value of the music artist?" Following the study, we were able to point out several patterns on how brand community and fandom activities may contribute to the value destruction of the music artist. Even if the fan community is overwhelmingly positive and impactful with value creation for the music artist, there are also other activities within the fandom that may contribute to value destruction for the music artist.

This research was hence able to answer the research question, finding four important themes that are centric on the value destruction aspect of brand community activities. With the four themes being critique, obsession, possessiveness and gatekeeping, there are signs of how people within the same fandom may go to strong extremes - because they are either unsatisfied with the music artist, or because they have extreme love towards their favorite music artist and are simply oblivious about the activities they indulge in to express that love.

The research also pointed towards several revelations on how the same fans who wish for the success of the music artist could turn their backs on the very same music artist as soon as they feel dissatisfied or disappointed. With regards to EXO and their fans, this theme could be spotted within the themes of 4.3.3 Possessiveness and 4.3.4 Gatekeeping.

With EXO's member Chen getting married and having kids, the fans were not able to accept the decision. Therefore, in order to protect EXO and their other favorite members within EXO, the solo fans started to show hate towards Chen, demanding him to leave the group.

Although their actions might have been carried out with the intention of saving the brand image and value of EXO, most of the time the fan activities proved to be counter productive.

In most of the fan discourse found through netnographic research, it is evident that most fans and their fan activities are with the intention of creating value for the music artist, but sometimes end up creating a negative image and indeed, instead destroy value for the music artist. A perfect example of this happening can be found in the empirical study made, to quote ourselves *"The fans have started to love the artist so much that even the slightest disappointment would trigger a reason to hate them."* which refers to the hatestorm music artist Chen received after announcing plans of marriage with his long-time girlfriend.

In an attempt to "protect" the rest of EXO group members, a lot of the fans went against Chen, believing that Chen's personal life would get in the way of EXO's musical career. Meanwhile, few fans held their thoughts firm and mentioned that Chen's personal life had nothing to do with the success or downfall of EXO as a music group. This rift in thoughts led fans to go against each other. Therefore, the attempt to protect EXO actually led to both conflicts within the fan community as well as a destructive environment for the music artists themselves. Trying to protect, enhance and strengthen the love and relationship for their favorite music artist ended in a destructive behavior.

With the theme of gatekeeping, it is evident how the tension amongst fans could be a contributor to few fans eventually starting to hate the fandom or the music artist, eventually leading to them wanting to leave the fandom altogether. This is another instance how the strong love for the music artist could actually become toxic, pushing fans to one-up each other. The aftermath of gatekeeping activities only leads the fandom to run into the risk of ex-fans wanting to spread bad messages about the fandom and the music artist, eventually leading to a high risk of destroying the value of the music artist.

Other themes within the findings also point to fans indulging in destructive activities because of their inability to define the difference between loving the music artist and being obsessed with the music artist. While this obsessive behavior such as stalking and invasion of privacy may bring stress and fear for the music artist, it could also be deeply damaging in brand value and brand image of the music artist. Even though it might be a fraction of the fandom that goes to extremes to express their love for the music artist, this very same fraction ends up representing the entire fandom. Therefore, there becomes an impression that all fans are obsessive in nature, eventually destroying the value of both the music artist and their fandom.

Finally, the theme of critique is an interesting finding within the research that we have conducted. It is quite interesting because the discourse of critique from the fans are not directed towards the music artist but instead to SM Entertainment, the company that manages them. Although the entertainment company that manages a music artist may not usually be important, the same is not true for music artists in the Korean-Pop music industry. Because most companies have a very rich musical history, the general public are much more bound to listen to show support to a music artist that belongs to a reputable entertainment company. Therefore, fans engaging in conversation that destroys the value for SM Entertainment will not only affect the company, but will eventually and slowly trickle into destroying the value of the music artist as well.

5.2 Relating Key Findings to Existing Literature

Throughout this thesis, we have been able to research and observe brand community activities of music fandoms, that in some terms either create or destroy value for the music artist. Included in these findings were several topics and themes that could be related to the already existing literature. Section 5.2 will focus on relating those key findings to existing literature on brand community activities, value creation and value destruction.

One of the findings related to the existing research is the situations where fans found themselves hating EXO due to other fans, as mentioned in the tweet of section 4.3.4. This is an example of how brand community activities are not necessarily always focused on value creation - it could also end up destroying value.

This can be seen as a form of brand audience dissipation, as Parmentier & Fischer (2015) argue in their article. This audience dissipation occurs when people within the fandom have had enough of other fans within the fandom - either because they are acting superior or for other reasons. Regardless of the reasons, it is bringing our attention to the fact that some people will even let go of their love for EXO and stop associating with the music artist or the fandom when this happens. This is one parameter that can be concluded as a way of destroying value for the music artist.

This type of brand audience dissipation has been observed in other cases as well. As discussed in the previous section, one of the destructive parts of the fandom is when they try to protect their favorite music artist from, in this case, SM Entertainment, which in the end

leads to destructive discourse and hate towards SM Entertainment, the company that manages EXO.

The problem with this is not about fans protecting the EXO from the "bad guy." It is the difference in fans' thoughts towards this issue that might eventually lead to audience dissipation within the fandom. If one fan hates on SM Entertainment whilst another fan feels like this constant hate is too negative for them to be a part of, there is a risk that this action that was intended as some part of protection of the artist gets the opposite effect. During our time of conducting this research, we have such value creation intended brand community activities eventually become much more destructive in nature.

On the other hand, we were able to challenge the theories put forth in the article 'How Brand Community Practices Create Value' by Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009). Through our findings and analysis, we were able to find patterns where fans were not necessarily stuck with the co-creation of value. There were evident patterns where fans were either destroying the value of the music artist or at least decreasing the value with their actions. While some actions were intended to be destructive in nature, most of them ended up being repercussions of activities intended to be good that turned bad.

Therefore, through this thesis, we were able to challenge the existing theories and thoughts towards brand communities and the value co-creation process within those communities to look into the value destruction process that may have been inherent in the same brand communities. Although this is true, we still think that the value may not necessarily be entirely destroyed. Although several fans have been able to decrease EXO's value in several worlds of worth or practices, we have not seen an apparent case of entire value destruction.

For example, we have seen instances where fans have left the fandom or have stopped purchasing albums, which shows a decrease in the Market World value for EXO. We have also seen several instances where EXO's value in the World of Fame took several plunges because of the reckless actions and discourse by fans regarding the matter of Chen's personal life. While the fans engaged themselves in destructive discourse with the intention of safeguarding EXO's fame, it had the opposite effect on EXO's value in the World of Fame.

Through our findings, we were also able to realize how the value destructive activities and co-creation activities really go hand in hand with each other. For example, fans who are able to stalk and invade the privacy of EXO are only able to while carrying out the value creation

practices of Milestoning and Badging. In short, fans attending the concert or other events to support EXO and create value for the music artist, sometimes end up being those that indulge themselves in destructive activities like stalking and invading the privacy of the same music artist they love so much.
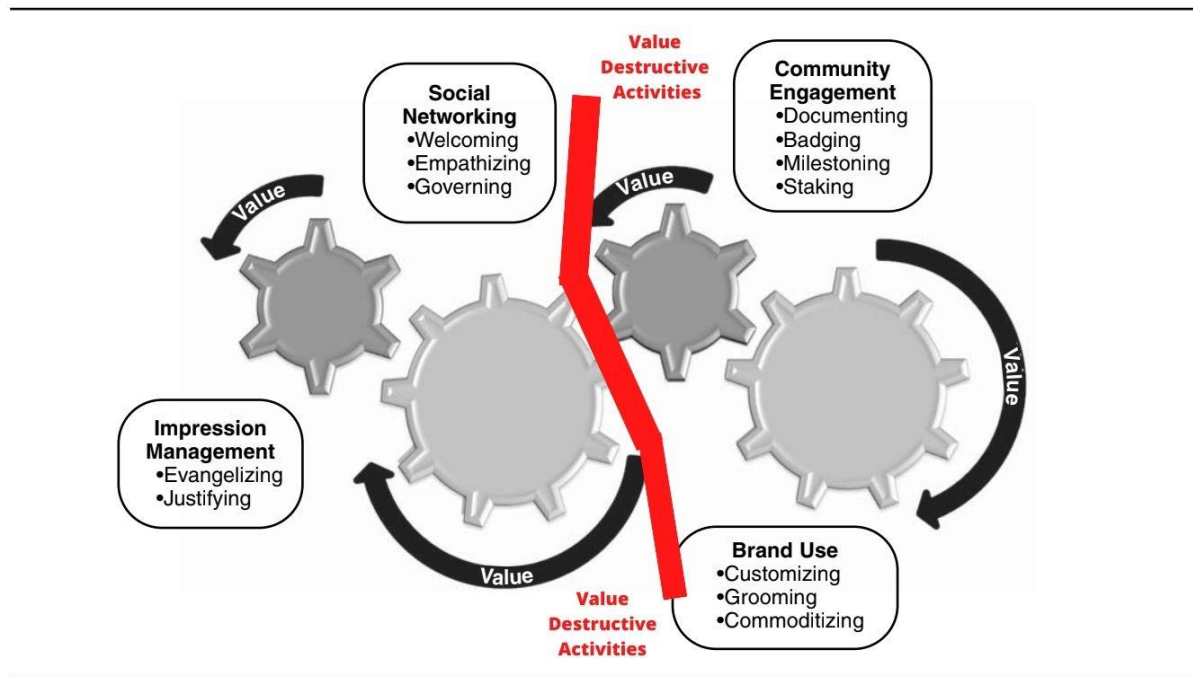

Figure 16 Our Updated Figure: The Process of Collective Value Creation in Brand Communities Might Stop The Gears When Met With Value Destructive Activities

Schau, Muniz & Arnould (2009) compare the process of collective value creation in brand communities to that of shifting gears. With each value creating activity or discourse that a community member engages in, there are shifting gears that create a seamless flow of value creation. But through our research, we have found that this is not always the ideal case. Any brand might face destructive elements such as heavy traffic or a pedestrian while the gears are functioning at their best. In short, when the harmony of gears is lost, the machine stops.

6.0 Future Research

While carrying out the methods for the research, we were able to find interesting themes that would be worth looking into for future research. Therefore, this section will focus on addressing those elements and how it could be further researched in the future.

During our research, we were also able to find interesting trends or themes that we feel would be ideal to explore for future research. One such is the extension of the theme 4.3.3 Possessiveness within our analysis. During our research, we were able to find several tweets and other netnographic material that pointed towards fans showing hate towards Chen for the decisions he made with his personal life. Beyond that, we were able to also find other fans retaliating or resisting these hate tweets by sharing positive tweets about Chen or even coming up with other creative fan activities to show support for Chen.

With any new update from Chen, supportive fans of Chen took it to social media platforms, asking other fans to share kind messages or positive discourse about Chen as a way to show support towards him. Few of these tweets urged other fans to comment positive messages on Chen's YouTube channel while other fans took the liberty to even write creative messages that fans could use while commenting. While other fans took other extreme measures towards combating the hate thrown towards Chen.

Few fans had come together to create a Twitter account called @CHENProtection. The sole purpose of the Twitter account is for admins to hunt down tweets that spread hate speech or engage in targeted harassment towards Chen. These tweets are then shared, urging fans to report and block the accounts that spread hateful messages about Chen. While it is natural for a fan to defend their favorite music artist, we felt like this specific theme of retaliation towards value destructive fans is quite excessive, in a positive manner.

For example, usually the entertainment company that manages the artist deals with such hate speech or other harassment shown towards Chen or any other EXO member. Therefore, it is not really essential for fans to dedicate such time and effort to look out for their favorite music artist. But the love for the music artist drives these fans to go to extreme efforts,

pushing these fans to engage in activities that they might not even get compensated for. Therefore, we feel that the retaliation of fans engaging in value creating fan activities to nullify or invalidate the value destroying fan activities are quite interesting and would lead to interesting future research.

Finally, this thesis only focuses on music artist brands and their fandoms, and how their activities may destroy value for the music artist. Therefore, this research might have a different outcome by researching brands that have an exclusively monetary relationship with their consumers or customers. We thoroughly recommend that individuals looking to further research the potential value destruction within brand communities, do so with strictly corporate brands as well.

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