

PRACTICES OF THE GLOBAL HALLYU FANDOM AS A “POST-CREATOR”

Taehyun Baek
Kyung Hee University
ziegk@khu.ac.kr

Jiyoung Joo
Hansung University
jiyoung@hansung.kr

Abstract

This study reconceptualizes global Hallyu fandom as a form of “Post-Creator”, where fans operate as cultural agents who reorganize affective structures and ethical codes within the algorithmic and economic conditions of platform capitalism. Drawing on Nicolas Bourriaud’s concept of postproduction and Kang Sumi’s formulation of the post-creator, this study positions fan practices as participatory or remixed acts while at the same time highlighting their role as politically and aesthetically significant interventions that reshape the meaning and circulation of cultural texts. Methodologically, this study conducts a comparative analysis of digital fan activities, including stage mixes, fan-subtitled translations, reaction videos, and performance-based challenges across platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and X. Particular attention is paid to how localized practices in regions such as Southeast Asia and Latin America reflect distinct ethical and affective logics. The study further argues that these fan interventions represent strategic responses to the platform infrastructure, rather than isolated creative gestures, and that they embody a new mode of cultural authorship in the digital age. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on affective labor, platform governance, and the reconfiguration of cultural authority in transnational fandoms.

Keywords

affective labor, cultural circulation, hallyu fandom, platform capitalism, post-creator, remix culture

About the Authors

Taehyun Baek is a scholar of film and cultural studies. He received a PhD in Film Studies and conducts research on Korean cinema, Korean film history, and film culture, while also pursuing work on Hallyu and cultural studies. His work broadly engages with how films and cultural texts are produced, circulated, and discussed, and how they acquire meaning through institutions, criticism, and audience practices. He is particularly interested in connecting film-historical inquiry with questions of cultural discourse and contemporary media environments.

Jiyoung Joo is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Literature and Cultural Contents at Hansung University in Seoul, South Korea. She received her PhD in Korean classical literature from Kyung Hee University with a dissertation focusing on how literature conveys regional characteristics. Her recent research investigates how traditional literary themes are reflected and reinterpreted in contemporary Korean media. In particular, she examines representations of Korean cultural heritage in Hallyu (Korean Wave) content and how it is received in transnational contexts. Her work explores the connections between classical literary studies and modern cultural discourse, focusing on how Korea’s literary traditions acquire new meanings in contemporary media and global settings.

Funding Information

This work is supported by the Fostering a New Wave of K-Academics Program of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the Korean Studies Promotion Service (KSPS) at the Academy of Korean Studies (AKS-2021-KDA-1250004).

INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING HALLYU FANDOM THROUGH POST-PRODUCTION AND AFFECT

Since its emergence in the late 1990s, Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, has developed far beyond the straightforward expansion of Korean cultural content overseas. It has transformed into a dynamic transnational phenomenon shaped by the interplay between global circulation, localized reception, and active reinterpretation (Jin, “Transmedia Proximity” 9–28; Tomlinson 1–15). Today, K-pop, Korean dramas, films, and variety shows are consumed almost simultaneously worldwide through digital platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, X, and TikTok. This transformation cannot be sufficiently understood by referring solely to the strategic initiatives of the Korean cultural industry or the intrinsic quality of cultural products themselves. In diverse regions, ranging from Southeast Asia to Latin America and the Middle East, Hallyu has fostered highly organized and passionate fandoms, making it a prominent example of a cultural exchange operating across multiple technological, social, and affective infrastructures (Chang and Park 260–283).

Beyond its cultural popularity, Hallyu’s global resonance can also be traced to how it invites affective engagement and participatory interpretations. Rather than being consumed as finished products, popular Korean texts circulate as raw materials for reinterpretation, remixing, and community building. This shift signals a structural transformation in global cultural flows, where fans are not only audiences but also active negotiators of meaning and value, situated within diverse sociotechnological landscapes.

Much of the early scholarship on Hallyu interpreted its global spread through frameworks such as cultural diffusion theory and media imperialism (Shim 26–27). While these models offer valuable insights into patterns of influence and power, they tend to conceptualize the process as a one-way cultural flow from producer to recipient. In doing so, they risk portraying global audiences as passive consumers and overlooking the interpretive agency, creative labor, and political interventions that characterize contemporary fandom practices. In reality, Hallyu fandoms do not merely consume media texts; they actively engage in transformative practices, such as subtitling, video remixing, creating reaction videos, and organizing performance-based challenges. These acts not only modify the original works but also reorganize their affective structures, ethical orientations, and cultural meanings within the lived contexts of fan communities.

However, the existing frameworks tend to foreground participation as a celebratory condition, often abstracted from the economic, algorithmic, and regulatory realities of platforms. They fall short of addressing how user agency is embedded in systems of surveillance, attention economies, and datafied effects.

These limitations call for a model that is both attentive to the aesthetics of fan labor and critically engaged with the infrastructure shaping it.

To analyze these practices, this study adopts Nicolas Bourriaud’s notion of postproduction, which reconceptualizes cultural creation as a process of reassembling and recontextualizing preexisting materials (Bourriaud 13–15). It also draws on Kang Sumi’s concept of the post-creator, which emphasizes the redistribution of interpretive authority and the reconfiguration of sensory and ethical structures (Kang 91–96). Building on these theoretical foundations, this study defines the post-creator as a cultural subject situated within the algorithmic and economic conditions of platform capitalism, which reorganizes emotional orders and communal ethics through creative interventions in existing texts. This formulation extends beyond Henry Jenkins’s participatory culture, which highlights low barriers to entry and collective media engagement (*Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers*, 1–6), and beyond Eduardo Navas’s remix culture, which focuses on the reordering of media texts for new meanings (*Remix Theory*, 14–17). Explicitly situating fan creativity within the technological infrastructure and economic logic of contemporary digital platforms underscores how emotional and ethical interventions are inseparable from these environments’ structural constraints and affordances (Jenkins et al., “Confronting the Challenges” 10–15).

The argument developed in this study is based on the premise that understanding Hallyu fandom in the digital age requires moving past linear models of production, distribution, and reception. Instead, it is necessary to examine the nonlinear circuits of meaning-making, affective exchange, and the ethical negotiation that fans construct through their creative practices. While prior research has addressed certain aspects of this process, particularly in relation to audience participation and media convergence (Jung and Shim, 486), the specific ways in which affect and ethics are reorganized under the conditions of platform capitalism remain underexplored. By positioning the post-creator as a central figure in this process, this study foregrounds the intersection of interpretive agency, affective labor, and technological mediation as the key to understanding contemporary cultural production.

This paper is organized into five sections. Following this introduction, “From Participation to Prosumer Agency: Theoretical Frameworks of Digital Fandom Practice” outlines the theoretical foundations and situates the post-creator concept alongside adjacent models, including participatory and remix cultures. “The Terrain of Digital Fandom Practices: Platform, Performance, and Affective Politics” then examines fan video practices, with particular attention to editing and translation. “Affective Performances: Reaction Videos and Challenges” turns to performative expressions such as reaction clips and challenges. “Conclusion: Rearranging Affect,

Platform, and the Ethics of Creation” synthesizes these analyses and proposes directions for future research.

Accordingly, the following sections investigate how Hallyu fan practices such as stage mixes, fan-subtitled translations, reaction videos, and K-pop challenges operate as post-creative acts that reshape the affective and semantic structures of cultural texts. In particular, this study highlights how fans act not only as interpreters or remediators but also as affective agents who tactically navigate, appropriate, and at times subvert the algorithmic rules and normative expectations embedded in the platform infrastructure (Bucher 74–78). Their practices are not isolated artistic gestures but strategic responses to the political economy of digital circulation, where visibility, emotional resonance, and cultural value are governed by automated systems and platform-specific cultures. Consequently, the analyses zero in on how platform infrastructures—including algorithms, interfaces, and policy frameworks—mediate, constrain, and enable these practices (Ismail and Musa 238–250). The aim is to demonstrate that the post-creator is not only a remixer or co-author in the traditional sense, but also a political and aesthetic agent whose work reorganizes the flow of meaning, emotion, and value within digital networks. By examining these dynamics, this study offers a framework for rethinking the ethics of creation in the age of platform-mediated cultural production.

To address these questions, this study draws on a comparative analysis of digital fan practices across YouTube, TikTok, and X, combining a close reading of audiovisual texts with a contextual interpretation of platform-specific dynamics. The examples examined are drawn from globally circulating content, but are particularly attentive to how localized fan practices in regions such as Southeast Asia and Latin America reflect distinct aesthetic and ethical logics. This methodological approach enables a situated understanding of post-creative fandom that captures both the micro-level affective labor and the macro-level platform structures shaping it.

FROM PARTICIPATION TO PROSUMER AGENCY: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF DIGITAL FANDOM PRACTICE

Participation, Remix, and the Prosumer Logic

The proliferation of digital technologies and the transformation of media environments have fundamentally reshaped the fandom role and agency. In the pre-digital era, fan engagement was often constrained to physical gatherings,

fanzines, and informal exchange networks. However, with the advent of networked platforms, fandom has emerged as a dynamic cultural force that not only consumes but also interprets, restructures, and produces media content. This shift is best understood in relation to Jenkins’s concept of participatory culture, which has been widely discussed since the early 2000s as a framework for analyzing collective media engagement. Jenkins described participatory culture as an environment characterized by low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing works, informal mentorship and learning environments, and a collective problem-solving ethos (*Convergence Culture* 26–27). These conditions are directly observable in the activities of Hallyu fandoms on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, where fans create subtitled translations, edit drama scenes, and produce interpretive videos that embed new emotional codes and social contexts into existing works.

Navas’s theory of remixed culture adds an important dimension to this understanding. Remixing, as Navas emphasizes, is not merely an act of repetition or imitation but a critical practice that reorganizes media texts to generate new meanings, affects, and contexts within digital environments (*Remix Theory* 14–17). By rearranging visual sequences, altering soundscapes, or reframing narrative elements, remixing practices destabilize the authority of the original text and insert new political, cultural, or emotional layers. In the context of K-pop fandom, remixing often takes the form of fan-made music videos that disrupt the original narrative order, overlay alternative soundtracks, or integrate visual commentaries through captions and graphics. These acts, as Navas contends, are not simply displays of technical skill; they are interpretive interventions that recontextualize the source material to reflect feminist readings, queer interpretations, or racial critiques, thus transforming the affective and ideological orientation of the text (*Spate* 36–39).

The concept of prosumer, originally used to describe the dual role of consumers and producers, offers another perspective for understanding contemporary fandom. In the digital age, prosumers not only create derivative works but also participate in the circulation of content in ways that generate measurable value within platform economies (Joo, “Transnationalization” 480–504). Fans strategically craft content to align with algorithmic logic and optimize visibility through metrics, such as views, likes, and shares. In doing so, they become producers of cultural meaning and participate in the monetization processes of platform capitalism. This dual position complicates the traditional binary of production and consumption, highlighting fandom as a site where affective labor, identity work, and algorithmic participation converge (Abidin 1–7).

In the context of Hallyu fandom, these theories—participatory culture, remix culture, and the prosumer model—collectively explain the structural and creative conditions under which fan practices emerge. However, although each provides valuable insights, they remain limited in addressing the affective and ethical dimensions that underpin fan creativity in the platform era. Participatory culture emphasizes access and collaboration, remix culture focuses on the transformation of texts, and the prosumer concept foregrounds the economic implications of user-generated content (Fuchs 113–20). However, none fully account for the ways in which fandom reorganizes emotional structures and communal ethics within the algorithmically mediated spaces of contemporary platforms. To fill this conceptual gap, the present study situates the formulation of a post-creator.

Postproduction and the Fan as Post-Creator

Bourriaud’s notion of postproduction offers a critical aesthetic framework for understanding how contemporary cultural creation often consists of reassembling, reordering, and recontextualizing existing cultural materials. For Bourriaud, the act of creation is not limited to producing something entirely new but involves curating and rearranging what already exists in ways that generate fresh meaning (Bourriaud 13–24). From this perspective, the artist becomes a mediator who navigates between pre-existing cultural forms and new interpretive contexts. This concept resonates strongly with digital fandom practices in which fans routinely engage in activities, such as subtitling, stage mixing, reaction filming, and challenge performances that dismantle linear narratives and restructure them according to localized sensibilities, community ethics, and shared affective rhythms.

Kang’s concept of the post-creator further extends this framework by emphasizing the redistribution of interpretive authority and the transformation of sensory and ethical structures. The post-creator, in Kang’s formulation, is not confined to the professional artist but includes any cultural subject who appropriates and reconfigures existing texts to produce new aesthetic and ethical arrangements (91–96). This understanding provides an important theoretical bridge between Bourriaud’s artistic practices and the everyday creative acts performed by digital fandoms. However, Kang’s formulation requires further elaboration to address the realities of platform-mediated cultural production.

In this study, the post-creator is defined as a cultural subject operating within the algorithmic, economic, and policy-driven conditions of platform capitalism, whose creative interventions reorganize both the emotional order and communal ethics embedded in cultural texts. This definition acknowledges the aesthetic

strategies described by Bourriaud and the ethical imperatives outlined by Kang while situating them within the structural constraints and affordances of platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and X.

While Bourriaud and Kang’s concepts illuminate the creative and ethical dimensions of post-creation, the operational context in which these practices unfold today is shaped by what Nick Srnicek terms platform capitalism (Srnicek 37–78). In this regime, platforms are not passive intermediaries but active infrastructures that extract, process, and monetize user activities. As José van Dijck has argued, platforms function as “socio-technical architectures” whose design embeds specific economic logics, governance mechanisms, and cultural norms (van Dijck et al. 4–5). For Hallyu fandom, this means that post-creative practices are inevitably entangled with the extractive dynamics of data capitalism. A fan uploading a stage mix not only produces an alternative arrangement, but also generates engagement metrics—views, likes, comments, and watch time—that are monetizable assets for the platform. Similarly, fan-subtitled videos expand the global reach of K-pop, yet the increased viewership directly contributes to the platform’s advertising and data collection value (Jin, *New Korean Wave* 108–110).

Algorithmic recommendation systems reinforce particular aesthetic and formal tendencies, privileging content that fits standardized engagement patterns—short runtimes, high-intensity affective peaks, and “shareable” formats. This trend produces what Tiziana Terranova describes as the “soft coercion” of digital labor: creative freedom exercised within pre-structured constraints (Terranova 118–119). For example, TikTok’s looping feature and sound library push fans toward certain rhythmic and visual templates, whereas YouTube’s copyright claims system shapes the audio-visual composition of fan edits by limiting the use of unaltered tracks. However, post-creators are not passive subjects of these forces. Many have developed tactical responses such as altering playback speed or color grading to evade copyright filters, timing uploads to coincide with peak global activity, or embedding localized cultural codes that resist homogenization. These strategies reveal that post-creation operates simultaneously as a form of participation in capitalist value extraction and as a site of cultural resistance.

By integrating the lens of platform capitalism into the analysis of post-creation, this study emphasizes its dual nature: it is both an aesthetic-ethical practice and a strategic negotiation with infrastructural power. This negotiation—economic, technological, and cultural—provides an essential background for understanding the platform-specific practices examined in the following sections.

The following sections apply this expanded conception of the post-creator to concrete case studies drawn from Hallyu fandom practices: “Platform Conditions

and the Structuring of Fandom” examines how platform-specific conditions, such as YouTube’s recommendation algorithms and TikTok’s looping and editing features, shape the creation and circulation of fan content. “Reaction Videos and the Curated Performance of Emotion” explores how affective performances, from reaction videos to dance challenges, function as embodied practices that materialize emotional and ethical orders within the constraints of platform environments. By situating these practices within the theoretical framework developed here, the study demonstrates how digital fandom operates not simply as a participant in cultural production but also as a central agent in reorganizing the affective and ethical landscapes of contemporary media culture.

THE TERRAIN OF DIGITAL FANDOM PRACTICES: PLATFORM, PERFORMANCE, AND AFFECTIVE POLITICS

Platform Conditions and the Structuring of Fandom

Creativity and interpretation of digital fandom do not occur in neutral spaces. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and X operate in infrastructural environments whose recommendation systems, interfaces, and policies shape the forms, rhythms, and intensities of fan practices. Metrics such as watch time, click-through rates, and engagement frequency exert a powerful influence on the creative process, orienting it toward the production of emotionally “intense” and “immediate” moments. The prominence of exaggerated facial expressions in thumbnails, looped segments emphasizing climactic moments, and time-stamped captions marking affective peaks reflects a strategic adaptation to these algorithmic pressures (Stanfill 4209–4226). In such contexts, affect is not simply expressed but is modularized into discrete, visible units that can be recombined, circulated, and measured, situating the fan as both an editor and a curator of emotional flow.

Algorithms do more than ranking or recommending content. They function as normative apparatuses that reconfigure interpretive rhythms. Fan edits optimized for platform algorithms often restructure the pacing of original works, breaking them into micro sequences of affective buildups and releases. This transformation replaces the original narrative arc with a sensory chain of affective cues, extending the aesthetics of postproduction into the real-time circulation of digital culture (Oh, “The Globalization” 389–409). For the post-creator, this becomes an opportunity not only to reorganize affective flow but also to encode community ethics into work. For example, in communities with a high proportion of younger audiences,

certain choreographic shots or costume angles are edited or blurred, embedding ethical norms directly into the audiovisual structure of a fan-made work (Yoon 112–29).

Policy and copyright systems also define the limitations and possibilities of practice. YouTube’s rights management restricts the monetization of fan content, whereas TikTok’s region-specific music licensing can result in the same challenge, circulating different audio versions globally (Bishop, “Managing Visibility” 2589–2606). These structural variations often amplify the regional distinctions in affective expression.

In Brazil and Mexico, cover-dance crews and fan groups restage idol choreography in public events and circulate their recordings online (Ko et al. 303; Yoo 84–85). In Japanese-language fan mediation, shifts in honorifics and speech-level style recalibrate interpersonal stance and tonal register across translated dialogue and related commentary (Kim 3–24). In Arabic fan subbing contexts, culturally sensitive expressions tied to sex, religion, and swearing are frequently managed through euphemisation and omission, narrowing the range of explicit reference available in subtitles (Eldalees, Al-Adwan, and Yahiaoui 53, 57, 60). Such differences reveal how the same source text is reconfigured according to distinct communal ethics and sensory dispositions (Habib and Nithyanand 1–17).

From the perspective of platform capitalism, fan affective labor is converted into data points and engagement metrics that generate economic value. However, the same processes also standardize affective expressions (Kim and Hutt 5–12), yet these standardized forms can be reactivated as collective activism, as demonstrated by BTS’s ARMY mobilization around global social issues. Loop functions, short-form interfaces, and duet or stitch features modularize emotions into easily replicable units, which then serve as building blocks for viral spread (Shafie 147–158). The post-creator selectively assembles these modules, reattaching local sensibilities and community ethics to the process. Thus, these platforms simultaneously incorporate fan creativity into the attention economy, leaving space for the emergence of new interpretive authorities and affective norms. This duality is central to the analytical approach adopted in the present section.

Cultural Reassembly through Fan Creation: Stage Mixes, Subtitles, and Interpretation

Stage mix videos exemplify fan editing as a deliberate act of sensory design. In this format, creators cross-edit multiple stages of a song into a tightly synchronized

sequence, producing a composite rendition that can be experienced as a single, continuous performance (Oh and Kim 239). Camera angles, lighting tones, microvariations in choreography, and fleeting facial expressions are layered to produce a unique affective rhythm. The contingency of live performances is replaced by a consistent affective curve, often marked by an extended climax and amplified gestures. From a post-production perspective, this is not merely a compilation but a rearrangement of affective segments. From the post-creator’s standpoint, it is a curatorial act that embeds aesthetic standards and ethical sensibilities endorsed by the community (Freund 207–224).

For example, some stage-mix compilations prioritize choreographic coherence and synchronized camera continuity, which can reduce the salience of flirtatious moments often described as “fan service” in idol performance discourse (Oh and Kim 234–35). Other edits, including those circulated in certain Southeast Asian fan circles, retain more of the original audio texture—room tone, mic bleed, or crowd response—so that liveness and communal atmosphere remain perceptible within the edited sequence and regional sensibilities become legible in the affective architecture of the mix (Chang and Park 260–283). Fan-subtitled translations operate at the intersection of linguistic mediation and affective calibration (Nandakumar 27–42). Such practices exemplify what Jenkins has called “textual poaching,” in which fans appropriate existing texts to create new cultural meanings (Jenkins, “Textual Poachers” 23–45). They are not merely linguistic transcriptions but deliberate acts of interpretive alignment, in which vocabulary choices, honorific levels, idiomatic adaptation, and tone management encode the community’s ethical and cultural values. The Korean honorific system may be rendered into Japanese through shifts in suffixes, into Spanish through careful selection of second-person pronouns, or into Arabic through religion- and culture-attuned expressions (Kim 3–4). Translators’ notes often go beyond clarification and function as ethical devices to document communal agreements on sensitive topics or contested interpretations. The collaborative workflow—segmenting, syncing, glossary management, and cross-editing—reveals a distributed post-creator structure in which interpretive authority is determined not only by linguistic and technical skills but also by sensitivity to communal affective norms (Cho 231–48).

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Regional Localization as Post-Creative Acts

Context	Analytical Mechanism	Post-Creative Intervention (Empirical)	Reference Source
Japanese	Hybridized Affective Addressivity	Strategic integration of Korean honorifics with Japanese suffixes (e.g., Oppa-chan) to recalibrate parasocial intimacy.	【5分でわかる】韓流ずらむ
Spanish	Relational Calibration of Hierarchy	Negotiating social distance through pronominal shifts (Tú vs. Usted), refashioning the original’s hierarchical codes.	Netflix LatAm: Queen of Tears
Arabic	Ethico-Cultural Transculturation	Integrating socio-religious expressions (e.g., Mashallah) into subtitles to align content with local ethical sensibilities.	K-Pop Reaction: MENA Region
Portuguese	Kinetic Re-mediation of Rhythm	Incorporating local dance idioms into K-pop choreography, manifesting a transnational rhythmic synthesis.	K-POP World Festival: Brazil

Interpretive videos and summaries further materialize the architecture of affect. Mapping the narrative structure of a music video, coding dance sequences into micromovements, or visually amplifying bodily reactions transforms internal sensations into shareable sensory cues. Common editing choices—zooming in on goosebumps, freezing moments of awe, or highlighting micro expressions—translate emotions into bodily and visual rhetoric, making affect legible to the community. In this process, postproduction aesthetics becomes a language of sensory arrangement, and the post-creator uses that language to reorganize the communal affective order. Algorithmically, overt intensity markers are often rewarded with higher visibility, thus creating a feedback loop in which measurable affective signals are both commodified and re-signified.

Regional and cultural differences have clearly emerged in these practices. Japanese-language reaction videos typically display affective restraint, whereas English-language videos valorize exuberance and verbal amplification (Tsai 244). Spanish-speaking subtitle teams may prioritize colloquial warmth over strict lyrical fidelity, whereas fan editors in Indonesia or Malaysia may soften sexual or religiously sensitive references in accordance with local norms. These variations undermine the notion of a singular “global fandom” and instead position the post-creator as an agent whose work is always situated at the coordinates of regional sensibility and communal ethics. In this way, the same media text can be reassembled into divergent affective orders, which then circulate and cross-reference each other, influencing the evolving standards within the platform ecosystem.

Such practices move beyond the prosumer logic. Fans learn and appropriate the operational rules of algorithms, adapting them to community values or deliberately subvert them. Strategic decisions regarding upload timing, hashtag combinations, thumbnail rhetoric, bilingual titling, or simultaneous posting across short/reel formats directly influence the distribution of interpretive authority, reshaping hierarchies and trust structures within the community. The post-creator integrates these operational tactics into an aesthetic-ethical practice, fusing technical optimization with the calibration of communal affect.

While much of the analysis thus far has focused on East Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern fandoms, Hallyu’s global reach has generated equally significant practices in African and European contexts, further illustrating the situated nature of post-creation. For instance, in Nigeria and South Africa, K-pop cover dance teams have integrated local dance vocabularies, such as the South African *gwara gwara* or Nigerian *shaku shaku*, into challenging performances (see [Nigeria \(shaku shaku\)](#), [South Africa \(KWF2021\)](#), [Context for “gwara gwara” in BTS “IDOL” choreography](#)). These insertions are not only stylistic flourishes but also recalibrate the kinetic energy of the original choreography, producing a hybridized rhythm that reflects both the global K-pop aesthetic and regional movement traditions. In these cases, the post-creator does not simply reproduce the artist’s performance but engages in embodied cultural translation, aligning affective expressions with local communal identities.

In several European contexts, post-creation intersects with offline cultural events, extending platform-mediated logic to physical public spaces. For example, fan-organized flash mobs in Paris have staged collective K-pop choreography in front of the Louvre (see [The Korea Times, 12 June 2011](#)). In Germany, convention programs institutionalize fan performance through multi-performer showcases and contest stages that welcome K-pop sets and mixed medleys (see [DoKomi, “Dance Off Contest”](#) Accessed 18 Feb. 2026.; see [Anime Messe Babelsberg, “NOBODY – K-Pop Dance Cover”](#) Accessed 18 Feb. 2026). These events often combine K-pop choreography with European street performance traditions, embedding affective cues, such as prolonged audience engagement, interactive gestures, or multilingual call-and-response chants, absent from the original texts. The recordings of these performances, which were subsequently uploaded to *YouTube* or *TikTok*, fold offline communal ethics back into the online circulation loop, thus expanding the interpretive repertoire of fandom.

These African and European examples demonstrate how platform affordances and algorithmic pressure are reinterpreted in regional contexts. In areas with limited access to high-speed Internet, fan editors often prioritize low-resolution but high-contrast visual styles to ensure accessibility, while communities with strong festival

traditions may prioritize videos that document audience interaction over isolated performance shots. Such decisions reveal that post-creation is never a purely digital phenomenon; rather, it is entangled with material conditions, local performance conventions, and infrastructural realities. They also show how the post-creator’s curatorial role adapts to preserve both the aesthetic integrity of the K-pop source material and the affective codes of the local community, reinforcing the argument that global fandom is composed of intersecting rather than homogenized creative networks.

The evidence presented in this section underscores a central point: platforms provide material and regulatory conditions that generate the forms and norms of affect, whereas fans reconfigure texts through the languages of editing, translation, and interpretation. The aesthetics of postproduction expand in the platform environment into techniques for arranging affect, and the post-creator emerges as a figure who reorganizes regional sensibilities and community ethics. Stage mixes, fan subtitles, and interpretive videos demonstrate the reassembly of affect and ethics in concrete terms, setting the stage for the next section’s focus on performative practices—reaction videos and challenges—where emotion is trained through bodily repetition, and community ethics are embodied in gestures and expressions (Lakner 19–41). The next section explores how these performative layers transform emotions into learned, repeatable, and politically charged practices in contemporary digital fandom.

AFFECTIVE PERFORMANCES: REACTION VIDEOS AND CHALLENGES

Reaction Videos and the Curated Performance of Emotion

Reaction videos are among the most immediate and sensorial forms of fan practice in Hallyu. They constitute a distinct affective genre in which emotions are externalized through audiovisual expression, curated by both the community and the platform. A reaction video registers an immediate emotional encounter and stages affect as an audiovisual performance, recomposed through facial movements, gestures, vocal intonations, pauses, laughter, tears, and visible moments of shock or awe (see [My poor heart !! | IU - Love wins all | MV | FIRST TIME REACTION](#)). The fan occupies a dual position—both as a viewer experiencing content and as a performer producing an intelligible display of that experience. This duality underscores the post-creator’s role as an editor of affect who determines the prioritization and ordering of emotional cues (Ahmed 203).

The performative logic of reaction videos aligns closely with the aesthetic principles of post-production. Rather than unfolding as unmediated streams of consciousness, many reaction videos are edited to follow an affective arc—anticipation, climax, and resolution—structuring emotion into a narrative form. Text overlays—brief phrases such as “This part always gets me” or “Chills again”—together with emoji strings and time-stamped captions function as paratextual cues that anchor affective peaks and guide the viewer’s interpretation (Magoncia, 87). These editorial choices transform emotions into semiotic codes, ensuring that the audience perceives not only the intensity but also the meaning of the reactions. In this way, the post-creator mobilizes reaction videos as affective scripts, choreographing emotional experiences within the constraints of platform logic.

The comments section functions as a secondary performance space, enabling affective contagion and co-interpretation. Short affirmations—“Same here,” “I thought I was the only one”—create resonance chains that bind the reactor’s performance to the audience’s emotional memory. Over time, recurrent expressions and visible markers of affect become codified within the community, forming what could be described as an “affective repertoire.” From the perspective of platform capitalism, these repertoires are not neutral cultural artifacts; they are also algorithmic signals (Papacharissi 45–47). YouTube’s recommendation system tends to prioritize reaction content with heightened visible intensity—exaggerated expressions in thumbnails, and emotionally charged titles—regardless of the authenticity of the emotion. As a result, the post-creator’s labor becomes a negotiation between genuine affect and an algorithmically optimized display.

An increasingly common phenomenon within this genre is the “meta-reaction”—a reaction to another fan’s reaction video. These second-order performances create layered affective circuits, in which the emotional display of one fan becomes the stimulus for another fan’s performance. Such meta-reactions reinforce community hierarchies: certain reactors become reference points for emotional styles, and their affective repertoires are imitated or subverted by others. The algorithm amplifies this hierarchy by rewarding the interlinked reaction content and producing clusters of visibility that can influence the community’s aesthetic and ethical norms (Bishop, “Algorithmic Experts” 1–11).

Cultural and linguistic contexts shape these performances significantly. English-language reaction videos to BTS’s “Black Swan” often deploy a rhetoric of aesthetic reverence—describing the performance as “ethereal” or “transcendent”—which frames the content as high art. By contrast, Korean and Japanese reactions may use concise visceral terms such as “소름” (goosebumps) or “야ばい” (amazing), foregrounding embodied sensation over abstract evaluation. Southeast Asian reaction content often incorporates real-time translation or code-switching to

accommodate multilingual audiences and embeds language as an additional layer of affective accessibility. These differences are not only stylistic, but also reflect culturally encoded expectations of how emotions should be expressed in the public. The post-creator adapts to these norms, aligning their performance with the communal affective code, while also responding to the visibility incentives of the platform.

Thus, reaction videos demonstrate that affect in fandom is not an unmediated internal state, but a socially learned and strategically curated performance. Decisions regarding when to react, how intensely to display emotions, and which moments to emphasize are shaped by a combination of community norms, personal branding strategies, and algorithmic pressure. The post-creator’s role is to transform private sensation into public affect, embedding it within both the cultural grammar of fandom and the economic logic of the platform (Dwyer 224–26).

Performing Affective Collectivity: The Embodied Ethics of K-Pop Challenges

If reaction videos operate primarily through facial and verbal expressions, K-pop challenges extend affective performances to embodied choreography. Challenges typically involve fans reproducing an artist’s dance moves, gestures, or facial cues, often in short-form video formats, such as TikTok or YouTube Shorts. While such performances may appear spontaneous acts of mimicry, they are carefully structured practices that translate affect into bodily repetitions. By inhabiting the physical gestures of the original performance, fans not only replicate emotion but also generate them through movement (Oh, “K-Pop Dance” 45–62).

From the post-creator’s perspective, the challenge is where emotional and ethical orders are inscribed into the body. The repetition of specific gestures—whether the playful finger-heart of NewJeans’ Hype Boy or the expansive motions of BTS’s “Permission to Dance”—functions as a form of affective training. The emotion does not pre-exist but emerges from the disciplined enactment of rhythm and gesture, producing a collectively recognized affective state. Through these repeated movements, fans internalize not only the aesthetic style of the performance but also the communal values and ethical sensibilities embedded in its choreography.

An important extension of this practice is the “artist-fan duet” challenge, where the original artist records a partial performance, leaving space for fans to complete the choreography on split-screen. This format symbolically collapses the distance between the artist and audience, fostering a sense of co-authorship. It also reinforces the post-creator’s position as both a participant and a co-curator

of official performances. In some cases, these duets have been mobilized into the visual space of performance for social reasons, including charity messages, political slogans, or awareness campaigns. For example, during the pandemic lockdowns, certain fan duets integrated gestures to promote mask-wearing and public health, embedding civic ethics into a shared affective rhythm.

Cultural variation is evident in these performances as well. Japanese challenge videos often emphasize subtlety and exact replication, aligning with the aesthetic norms of precision and respect for sources. Latin American renditions may incorporate additional dance flourishes, inflecting the original choreography with regional movement vocabularies. In conservative cultural contexts, gestures or outfits may be modified to align with local sensibilities, signaling how the post-creator negotiates between the global aesthetics of K-pop and the ethical frameworks of specific communities. In Nordic countries, some challenges are staged in public squares or transit hubs, merging K-pop performances with site-specific public art traditions. In Southeast Asia, community-based challenges are collectively conducted in markets or schoolyards, reinforcing social bonds alongside aesthetic ones (Xiao 1–18).

By reframing challenges as embodied forms of postproduction, we can view them as more than simple acts of dance reproduction. Essentially, they are performative remixes in which the body becomes an editing interface, rearranging the sequence of gestures and their affective impact. The post-creator uses the challenge format to materialize community ethics and aesthetic codes, translating them into a visible and repeatable bodily language that can be circulated, imitated, and reinterpreted across contexts.

Reaction videos and challenges share a fundamental logic: both transform emotions from a private, internal state into a publicly legible and repeatable practice. In both cases, affect is not simply expressed but arranged, stylized, and politicized within the structural conditions of the platform’s algorithms. Additionally, interface designs shape the types of emotional performance that are rewarded, whereas community norms define what is considered authentic or desirable. The post-creator operates at the intersection of these forces, and curating affects in a way that aligns with and subtly reconfigures the aesthetic and ethical parameters of fandom.

This dynamic can be understood as a form of affective governance in which emotion is not only managed by the platform’s economic and technical systems but also collectively regulated by the fan community. Community feedback loops—such as comments assessing whether a performance is “too much,” “genuine,” or “perfectly timed”—act as informal mechanisms of emotional calibration. Over

repeated cycles of participation, these feedback structures encourage performers to refine their affective style, leading to the emergence of recognizable “emotional brands” within the fandom. These brands, in turn, influence others’ expressive repertoires, reinforcing certain affective norms and marginalizing others.

In this way, affective governance functions as a collaborative yet asymmetrical process: platforms monetize the attention flows generated by affective performances, whereas communities actively shape the form, tone, and ethical framing of those performances. For the post-creator, navigating this dual governance involves constant negotiation, balancing authenticity with visibility, communal belonging with individual differentiation, and artistic integrity with platform optimization.

Therefore, reaction videos and challenges are not marginal fan activities but central mechanisms through which affective and ethical orders are maintained and contested in the digital age. They reveal how post-creators synthesize technical skills, aesthetic sensibility, and ethical awareness to produce cultural works that are deeply situated in their communities and inextricably bound to the logic of platform capitalism. The next section brings these insights together, articulating how the practices examined here collectively redefine the ethics of creation in contemporary Hallyu fandom.

CONCLUSION: REARRANGING AFFECT, PLATFORM, AND THE ETHICS OF CREATION

This study reconceptualizes global Hallyu fandom as a post-creator, a cultural subject who reorganizes the affective and ethical orders of existing texts under the infrastructural, algorithmic, and economic conditions of contemporary platforms. Building on Bourriaud’s notion of postproduction and Kang’s formulation of the post-creator and extending them through the lenses of participatory culture, remix culture, and prosumer logic, the analysis positioned fan creativity within platform capitalism. The argument that follows from this positioning is straightforward: fandom in the platform era does creative work that recalibrates meaning, value, and emotion while negotiating the governance of algorithms, interfaces, and policies.

The theoretical discussion in “From Participation to Prosumer Agency: Theoretical Frameworks of Digital Fandom Practice” clarifies why the post-creator offers more explanatory power than adjacent concepts. Participatory and remixed frameworks illuminate access, collaboration, and textual transformation, but they do not fully account for how affect and communal ethics are rearranged when creation is routed through data extraction and recommendation systems.

By defining the post-creator as an agent who designs emotional flow and curates ethical codes in conversation with algorithmic visibility, this study articulates a theory that is sensitive to both aesthetics and infrastructure.

The analyses in “Platform Conditions and the Structuring of Fandom” and “Reaction Videos and the Curated Performance of Emotion” grounded this theory in concrete practice. Stage mixes, fan-subtitled translations, and interpretive videos exemplify how fans reassemble sensory sequences, adjust the linguistic tone, and externalize interpretive cues. The same text traveled differently across regions: Japanese-language spaces elevated restraint, Spanish-speaking teams favored colloquial warmth, and editors in Indonesia and Malaysia modulated sexual and religious references. Additional cases from Nigeria and South Africa showed how local dance vocabularies—*gwara gwara* and *shaku shaku*—hybridized K-pop choreography, while French and German flash mobs folded offline communal ethics back into online circulation. Reaction videos and challenges extended the analysis to embodied performances. Meta-reactions layered circuits of feeling and created reference hierarchies within communities; artist-fan duets compressed the distance between the producer and audience; Nordic public square challenges and Southeast Asian community challenges embedded place-specific social bonds into repeatable gestures. Across these cases, affect emerged as a learned and carefully arranged practice, shaped jointly by platform governance and communal norms.

The three implications are as follows. First, emotions in fandom function as a designed architecture rather than as a spontaneous residue. Editing choices, translation registers, and choreographic micro rhythms serve as technical means of affective arrangements. Second, platforms operate as cultural apparatuses that regulate forms and monetize attention. Looping, short-form constraints, and copyright regimes standardize displays, yet fans develop tactics—timing uploads, altering audio-visual parameters, and embedding local codes—to overcome these constraints. Third, authorship becomes a matter of ethical and political redistribution: fans curate what should be visible, legible, and shareable, and in doing so, relocate interpretive authority within communities.

Future research should build on these findings using methods that match the analytical scope of this study. Algorithmic audits and network analysis can measure how recommendation systems standardize affective repertoires and how visibility clusters are formed around reactors or editors. Comparative digital ethnography can track the politics of translation in real-time, focusing on how honorifics, idioms, and tone policies encode communal ethics. Intersectional approaches can examine how gender, race, class, and locality shape labor and recognition within transnational fandoms. Longitudinal studies of performers’ “emotional brands”

would clarify how repeated participation gradually codifies norms, and how these norms migrate across platforms.

This study has some limitations that are worth noting. The analysis relied primarily on public-facing content from YouTube, TikTok, and X, leaving other ecosystems and semi-private spaces unexplored. Language coverage, although diverse, cannot include a range of non-English and non-Korean practices. Addressing these limitations requires multiplatform comparisons, deeper ethnographic immersion, and collaboration with multilingual research teams.

Despite these limitations, Hallyu fandom operates as a vital site of affective and interpretive production. Fans act as post-creators who design emotional sequences, negotiate platform governance, and embed communal ethics into the circulation of cultural texts. This evolving role of the post-creator compels a broader reconsideration of what constitutes authorship, originality, and legitimacy in digital culture. No longer anchored in the vision of a singular producer, creative authority is distributed across iterative collaborations, algorithmic visibility, and community-led interpretation. As the boundary between the audience and author continues to blur, fan labor emerges not as supplementary or derivative but as constitutive of meaning-making itself. Therefore, the post-creator’s cultural work disrupts the distinctions between consumption and creation, offering a model of authorship that is fluid, relational, and infrastructurally embedded. The result is not a homogenized global fandom but a set of intersecting creative networks in which local sensibilities and shared infrastructure continually remake each other. Recognizing this reconfiguration reframes debates on creativity in the platform era and positions the post-creator as a key figure in understanding how cultural values, ethical visibility, and technological mediation are being rewritten in the present.

Works Cited

- Abidin, Crystal. “Aren’t These Just Young, Rich Women Doing Vain Things Online?” *Social Media + Society*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116641342>.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2014.
- Bishop, Sophie. “Managing Visibility on YouTube Through Algorithmic Gossip.” *New Media & Society*, vol. 21, no. 11–12, 2019, pp. 2589–2606. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819854731>.
- . “Algorithmic Experts: Selling Algorithmic Lore on YouTube.” *Social Media + Society*, vol. 6, issue 1, 2020, pp. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119897323>.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Postproduction: Culture as Screenplay: How Art Reprograms the World*. Lukas & Sternberg, 2002.
- Bucher, Taina. *If... Then: Algorithmic Power and Politics*, Oxford UP, 2018.
- Chang, WoongJo, and Shin-Eui Park. “The Fandom of Hallyu, a Tribe in the Digital Network Era: The Case of ARMY of BTS.” *Kritika Kultura*, no. 32, 2019, pp. 260–283. <https://doi.org/10.13185/1656-152x.1275>.
- Cho, Michelle. “K-Pop and the Participatory Condition.” *The Cambridge Companion to K-Pop*, Cambridge UP, 2023, pp. 231–248. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108938075.019>.
- Dwyer, Tessa. “Fansub Dreaming on Viki: ‘Don’t Just Watch but Help When You Are Free.’” *The Translator*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2012, pp. 224–226. *Taylor & Francis Online*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13556509.2012.10799509>.
- Eldalees, Hani Abdulla, Amer Al-Adwan, and Rashid Yahiaoui. “Fansubbing in the Arab World: Modus Operandi and Prospects”, *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2017, pp. 48–64. <http://doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol1no1.4>.
- van Dijck, José, et al. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford UP, 2018.
- Freund, Katharina. “Becoming a Part of the Storytelling: Fan Vidding Practices and Histories.” *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, edited by Paul Booth, Wiley-Blackwell, 2018, pp. 207–224.
- Fuchs, Christian. *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. 3rd ed., Sage, 2021.
- Habib, Hussam, and Rishab Nithyanand. “YouTube Recommendations Reinforce Negative Emotions: Auditing Algorithmic Bias with Emotionally-Agentive Sock Puppets.” *arXiv.org*, Jan. 2025, pp. 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2501.15048>.
- Ismail, Ushba, and Musa Khan. “K-pop Fans Practices: Content Consumption to Participatory Approach.” *Global Digital & Print Media Review*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2023, pp. 238–250. [https://doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023\(VI-II\).16](https://doi.org/10.31703/gdpmr.2023(VI-II).16).
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, NYU P, 2009.
- . *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture*. NYU P, 2006.
- . *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. Routledge, 1992.
- Jenkins, Henry, et al. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. MIT P, 2009.

- Jin, Dal Yong. *New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of Social Media*. U of Illinois P, 2016.
- . *Transmedia Storytelling in East Asia: The Age of Digital Media*. Routledge, 2020.
- . “Transnational Proximity of the Korean Wave in the Global Cultural Sphere” *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 17, 2023, pp. 9–28.
- Jung, Sun, and Doobo Shim. “Social Distribution: K-pop Fan Practices in Indonesia and the ‘Gangnam Style’ Phenomenon.” *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 17, no. 5, 2014, pp. 485–501. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877913505173>
- Joo, Jeongsuk. “Transnationalization of Korean Popular Culture and the Rise of ‘Pop Nationalism’ in Korea” *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 44, issue. 3, 2011, pp. 489–504. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00845.x>
- Kang, Sumi(강수미). *Post-Creator: Contemporary Art, Old and Now* (포스트크리에이터: 현대미술, 올드 앤 나우), Graphite on Pink(그래파이트온핑크), 2019, pp. 91–96.
- Kim, Jieun. “Speech Level Style of Addressee Honorifics in Korean and Japanese: Difference in the Use of Speech Level Style through a Japanese Translation of Korean Drama.” *Journal of Japanese Language and Literature*, vol. 123, 2022, pp. 3–24. <http://doi.org/10.17003/jllak.2022.123..3>
- Kim, Priscilla and Ethan Hutt. “K-pop as a Social Movement: Case Study of BTS and Their Fandom ARMY.” *Journal of Social Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, pp. 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.47611/jsrsh.v10i3.1772>.
- Lakner, Laura. *Bridging the Lapses: The Use of Translator’s Notes in Fansubbing, a Case Study on BangtanSubs*. 2021. MA thesis, University of Turku.
- Nandakumar, Aparna. “K-Pop Fandom as ‘Sub-Visible Culture’: Digital Work and Enjoyment in the Precarious Present.” *Studies in South Asian Film & Media*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2023, pp. 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1386/safm_00068_1
- Navas, Eduardo. *Remix Theory: The Aesthetics of Sampling*. Springer, 2012.
- . *Spate: A Navigational Theory of Networks*. Institute of Network Cultures, 2016.
- No, Song and Nusta Carranza Ko, Jeong-Nam Kim, Ronald Gobbi Simones. “Landing of the Wave: Hallyu in Peru and Brazil.” *Development and Society*, vol. 43, no. 2, Dec. 2014, pp. 297–350.
- Magoncia, Jeremiah Estela. *OMG! Reaction Videos on YouTube: Meanings to Fandom and to K-Pop Community*. Aug. 2014. MA thesis, Seoul National University.
- Oh, Chuyun. *K-Pop Dance: Fandoming Yourself on Social Media*. Routledge, 2022.
- Oh, Ingyu, “The Globalization of K-pop: Korea’s Place in the Global Music Industry.” *Korea Observer*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2013, pp. 389–409.
- Oh, Yoonji, and Chi Ho Kim. “A Study on the Typology of K-Pop Fandom Contents: Focusing on the YouTube Platform.” *The Journal of Culture Contents*, no. 26, 2022, pp. 211–248. <https://doi.org/10.34227/tjocc.2022..26.211>
- Papacharissi, Zizi. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. Oxford UP, 2015.
- Shafie, Tara. “Beyond Slacktivism: The Cases of K-pop Fans and TikTok Teens” *International Journal of Social Science Research*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2021, pp. 147–158. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijssr.v9i2.18924>

- Shim, Doobo. “Hybridity and the Rise of Korean Popular Culture in Asia.” *Media, Culture & Society*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2006, pp. 25–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706059278>
- Srnicek, Nick. *Platform Capitalism*, Polity P, 2017.
- Stanfill, Mel. “The Platformization of Fandom and Its Discontents: Understanding Platform Harms Through the Archive of Our Own.” *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 18, 2024, pp. 4209–4226. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/23193/4777>.
- Terranova, Tiziana. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*, Pluto Press, 2004.
- Tomlinson, John. *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. Bloomsbury, 2002.
- Tsai, Jeanne L. “Ideal Affect: Cultural Causes and Behavioral Consequences.” *Perspectives on psychological science : a journal of the Association for Psychological Science* vol. 2, issue 3, 2007, pp. 242-59. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-6916.2007.00043.x>
- Xiao, Qing, et al. “Let’s Influence Algorithms Together: How Millions of Fans Build Collective Understanding of Algorithms and Organize Coordinated Algorithmic Actions” *CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '25)*, 2025, pp. 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713279>
- Yoo, Joyhanna Young. “A Raciocritics of Appropriation: Transnational Performance of Raciogender among Mexican K-Pop Fans.” *Signs and Society*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2023, pp. 68–92. <https://doi.org/10.1086/722810>
- Yoon, Kyong. “Translational Audiences in the Age of Transnational K-Pop.” *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 17, 2023, p. 112-129.