

Picking Personalities:

An investigation into Idol-development programs



Fan Chengcheng's fans were showing their light boards for Fan Chengcheng ("Mgie Baby Fan Chengcheng") on 18th June in the northern gate of datong dynasty, Da Tong, Shanxi. They supported Fan Chengcheng since Fan would attend to the opening ceremony of filfest in Datong. (Shoot by Meng Jia on 18th June)

Inspired by the texts that our friends re-posted on social networking websites in June

TEAM01

Ariel Gu, Carol Zhang, Betty Shi, Cynthia Cao, Amber Zhang, Anne Song

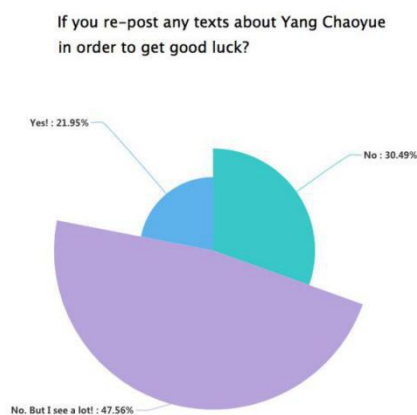
Haimen Zhongnan Dongzhou International High School

Can you win a singing contest when you cannot sing? Can you gain popularity if you make mistakes on stage? Our report says, “Yes!”

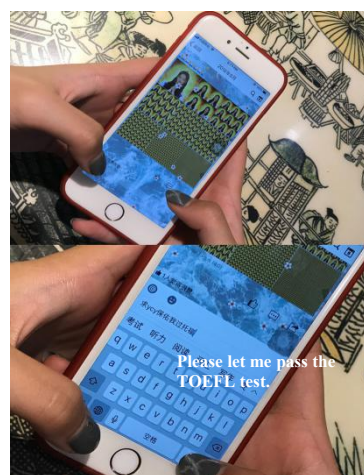
Idol-development programs like “Produce101” have been on fire in China in recent months. So, what personalities do teenagers want to see on these contestants? What personalities do they pick? A survey of 82 students aged 13 to 18 and attending high school in Haimen that we did in June found that students believe they are learning life values by watching idol programs, including such qualities as strength and diligence. These qualities are the right way for people to survive in this society; luck and good appearance do have their own power, but without real strength and diligence, few people can achieve long-term success. Let’s see the stories.

✧ Vote for beauty?

Yang Chaoyue is a contestant in “101”, which is an idol survival show in China like “American Idol”. She is gorgeous. Her strength, however, is not as well as others. Yang is not good at singing or dancing, but many teenagers become her fans and vote for her. Akira Song, a grade 11 student at St. Mary’s Haimen, is one of Yang’s biggest fans. Before taking TOEFL test, she re-posted a text about Yang and the caption read, “Please let me pass the TOEFL test.”



This graph is collected from the survey results which shows the phenomenon of re-posting “luck Yang” online among students.



Akira is re-posting a text about Yang Chaoyue in order to get good luck in her TOEFL test. (Photo by Carol on 9th August)

Therefore we did an in-depth study about it.

Bonnie Gu, who is a tenth grade student at St.Mary's Haimen, was crazy about idol-development programs. She had her own opinion regarding the popularity of Yang. 'When looking at her, I can see myself. Everyone has their shortcomings. The only thing we can do is overcoming them instead of avoiding them. Yang Chaoyue never refuses to admit her disadvantages. Indeed, she uses her disadvantage as a platform to silence her critics. So I vote for Yang everyday since I appreciate her courage of honestly showing her weakness to the public,' Bonnie said.

Nevertheless, Bonnie changed her attitude to Yang later. 'Although her strength is not as powerful as other, they can be improved through her efforts. However, she is not one of the TOP8 diligent competitors in "Produce 101". I am disappointed about it,' Bonnie said. She recalled her feelings about Yang, 'I admitted that Yang Chaoyue is a very beautiful girl. But her performance is really bad as if she did not prepare at all. I am not sure if I should continue supporting her. I think it is unfair to other competitors who have not been discovered by the public but have real strength as well as working hard.'

Bob Xu, a tenth grade student at our school said, 'I understand other contestants' feelings. Last time, I compete for the minister of accounting department of the Student Union. I have better strength and working attitude than another competitor. However, the president of the Student Union chose that competitor instead of me to be the minister just because of his appearance. They think the minister should be handsome or beautiful. Thus, I just be the vice minister. The competitive environment is totally unfair.'

If Yang is this kind of contestant, why does she can deserve to be No.3 in the "Produce 101"? We conducted the following interviews.

- Yang is real. She doesn't treat herself like a superstar. Thus she will not allow the public to feel a sense of distance that they usually experienced with celebrities.
- Most teenagers have the same experience as Yang—even if you work hard, you still cannot have the same strength as "top students".
- Yang looks pretty. Her appearance meets the definition of idols for teenagers.

Compared with Yang, what are other idols advantages that make them popular among teenagers?

❖ What are Chinese teenagers looking for?

Fan Chengcheng is a popular contestant in another idol-development program. As the brother of Bingbing, who is the most actress in China, Fan was the center of attention on the show. But he made some mistakes in his first rap show. Hence most people said he gained popularity only



Bob(right one) is watching Fan's dance show as well as introducing Fan to classmates after class.(Photo by Anne Song on 28th June)

because his sister laid the foundation for him. However, Fan wanted to use his own strength to prove to himself that he did not rely on his famous sister. By working hard, he showed not only his rap ability, but his dancing, even his vocal strength. Finally, most people saw his efforts and knew that he had his own power. 'Actually, he was excellent enough at the beginning of the competition. However, he doesn't want others always say that Fan Chengcheng can be so popular just because his sister is Fan Bingbing. Therefore, to prove himself, he chose to work harder than others. This is why I like him and I tend to learn from him,' Bob said.

Both Fan and Yang have gorgeous appearance. They all gain high popularity in the public, who are well-known contestants among all competitors. However, Fan works more harder than Yang and he is willing to try new things. For instance, he was a rapper at first, but later he tried to sing some lyric songs and won audience appreciation.

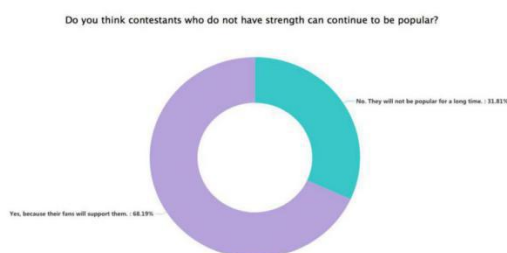
What other personalities do teenagers look for? Answers can be found in trainees in idol-development programs according to our observation. Qin Fen, who is one of Fan Chengcheng's competitors, is gaining popularity among teenagers in China. At the age of 27, he is no longer young compared to other trainees, which means he has fewer opportunity to debut. But with the dream of performing on stage, he overcomes the problem of age as well as helping other juniors by playing the role of leader in the team. Struggling for the dream although losing at the outset, "elder Qin" shows the responsibility of idols in China. And this is why he is accepted by Chinese young people.

✧ Chinese idol VS Korean idol

Compared with idols in Korean, Chinese idols have higher level in society than idols in Korea. Most Chinese fans think that idols are their dreams that they want to follow idols steps everywhere. However, idols in Korea is a normal job as others. In addition, idol management system in China are not as mature as those in Korea. For instance, the idol development system in Korea is extremely strict, which means idols' training lives are unpredictable painful. Although the process is difficult, the result is obvious. Nearly all idols in Korea are developing comprehensively. On the contrary, idols in China do not experience that kind of hard life. Some idols just need to have good appearance and then they can become Superstars. Of course, there are still lots of idols in China who have the ability to lead teenagers in the right way.

✧ Chinese Idols and teenagers

Different people tend to pick different personalities in these programs. In the case of Yang, we could still see her shining personality. 'Regardless of my results, I will stick to do it. I cannot disappoint people who give me preference.' Yang said. This is her spirit. It's not crucial for her to get a good result, but she works hard so as not to disappoint her fans. Based on the interviews and surveys among students in school, we can reach a conclusion that most teenagers support contestants who are diligence, persistent and have real strength as well. Importantly, teenagers




The graph is collected by the survey of People's opinions about contestants who do not have any real strength.

established the values of “diligence and strength are more important” when they watch idol survival shows. If young people build up their own attitude with these personalities , China's future entertainment industry will have a more promising future, rather than non-connotative works.besides, teenagers can also have more opportunities for success in their own field when led by their idols.

‘People who are better than me are still improving themselves, why should I stop working hard?’
Bob said in the last interview.

Appendix

The questionnaire:

 <https://www.wenjuan.com/report/weixin/5b422c3392beb540c0d4ed16/?pid=5b422c3392beb540c0d4ed16&vcode=8e8828728262a4fe1ce4054f549450be&client=ios> S

Survey respondent: Students in Nantong

Survey method: questionnaire website

Sample size: 82

The photo in cover comes from Fan Chengcheng's fan Meng Jia. We found her and used Wechat and Weibo to talk about our purpose of using this photo and we hoped to get the permission. The photo has been granted permission.