

〈研究論文〉

# Affective Economics in the East Asian Media and Entertainment Industry: Comparative Case Studies of Music Competition Television Series

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**Abstract:** This study examines the case of East Asian media and entertainment industries in terms of emotional economics. First, this paper examines the discussion on emotional economics. Next, a case study in East Asia based on similar previous studies will be presented. The case study is based on the *Produce 101* music competition television series that incorporates audience voting. *Produce 101* was broadcasted in 2016 and gained popularity in East Asian countries. Due to the success of the South Korean original version other Asian countries, such as China and Japan, have co-produced licensed versions. This study compared and analyzed the content of these works, the media environment, and viewer behavior.

**Keywords:** Affective Economics, Viewer Vote, East Asian Media and Entertainment Industry

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, the convergence of smartphone communications, entertainment and financial functions has prompted a restructuring of the media and entertainment industry. This has increased cross-border production and promoted collaboration between media entertainment conglomerates. The East Asian regions are no exception. This study examines the current case of the media and entertainment industry in East Asia from the perspective of emotional economics. Affective economics is an important perspective in analyzing the restructuring of the post-internet media and entertainment industry, and was popularized by prominent media researcher Jenkins.

First, this paper will introduce affective economics Jenkins from and others. According to Jenkins, aggressive fans enthusiastic about viewer voting have

become a global phenomenon and caused an evolution in the global media and entertainment industry.

Next, case studies from East Asia will be presented. In recent years, music competition television series for smartphone users that incorporate viewer voting have been produced and gained popularity in East Asian countries. East Asian fans are eager to support multinational shows. A typical example is the *Produce 101* series from South Korea. *Produce 101* started in 2016 and became popular in East Asian countries. After success in South Korea, versions of the show were co-produced in South Korea and Japan, and licensed versions have been produced and broadcast in China and Japan.

This study, will compare and contrast these programs with particular reference to the convergence of the media and entertainment industry in program production and the support of fans. The research

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method combines content analysis of broadcast programs and comment analysis, which is called online ethnography in media research<sup>1</sup>. Objectivity will be ensured by referring to official announcements and mass media reports of programs as appropriate.

## 2. Restructuring the Media and Entertainment Industry for Affective Economics

### (1) Affective economics in the media convergence era

The analysis of the media and entertainment industry after “media convergence” is effective from the perspective of affective economics<sup>2</sup>. Jenkins defines affective economics as creating a deeper and more emotional connection between consumers and products. This theory finds potential value for active audiences and fans. The spread of social media has made it possible for fans to negotiate with companies and communicate with artists and idols.

The spontaneous migration of fans across various media contents has a great influence on creating information flow and transforming the real world. Fans are willing to buy if their preferences are reflected, but there is also a backlash if fans are disappointed<sup>3</sup>. The market success of products in the smartphone era depends heavily on the behavior of enthusiastic fans. Search results are ranked by popularity and relevance, so products that aren't featured are harder to find and are therefore often less profitable. Boyd describes these mechanisms in the term “attention economy.”<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, corporate public relations have put a great deal of effort into creating a mechanism for spontaneous fan engagement with products. Jenkins explained this concept with the example of the famous *Idols* music competition television series<sup>5</sup>.

### (2) Viewer participation system

*Idols* is a reality music competition television format created by British television producer Simon Fuller and developed by Fremantle<sup>6</sup>. Fuller became famous as the manager of a girl group *Spice Girls*. There is also a program group titled “Superstar” instead of “Idol”. The prototype is the British television series *Pop Idol*, which was broadcast in 2001. Adopted in more than 46 regions around the world, with various versions broadcast in 150 countries, it has become one of the most successful entertainment formats.

The program winners became celebrity singers and the show contributed to the major shifts in the music, broadcast, communication, information and entertainment industries. The success of *Idols* is primarily due to high viewer interaction, where viewers vote on their phones in mobile text messages, or on official websites. With the introduction of the voting system, viewers enjoyed the right to decide who will survive in the show, increasing empathy for competing performers. Fans asked family and friends to vote for their favorite performers. As a result, more and more people are interested in the program. The fans enthusiastically discussed the editing of the program and the fairness of the competition. When fans found bias or unfairness in the competition, they protested and conducted a boycott campaign. The support battle on social media by fans and anti-fans has attracted worldwide attention to programs.

The international expansion of these types of programs is facilitating integration in the global media and entertainment industry as various international collaboration projects are derived.

### 3. Affective Economics of East Asian Music Competition Television Series

#### (1) The birth of a “National Producer”

##### ① Viewer voting system

In this paper the case of *Produce 101* will be presented as an East Asian case study similar to Jenkins'. *Produce 101* is a reality music competition television series created by South Korean entertainment conglomerate CJ E&M<sup>7</sup>. *Produce 101* features one-time performances combining various performers who do not usually perform together, as well as new performers. The purpose of the program is to create a new idol group by voting. The membership of the new idol group debuting from the program is decided by viewers' votes and is called “National Producer”. Another groundbreaking change was that the name of the new group was also chosen by viewer voting.

Viewers vote on the program's official website and on related websites where products can be purchased, but voting is only available to South Korean residents. Basic voting was free, but there was a charge when deciding the group members in the final stage. Additional votes could be obtained by purchasing items on affiliated websites. Audience voting also determined who would be eliminated fans could pay for additional votes or provide voluntary support directly to the performers. In South Korea, competition to succeed as an idol group is fierce<sup>8</sup>. Despite the training in singing and dancing from early childhood, the number of performers who can be featured in the show is limited. Performers who are eliminated from this program may not be able to sing or dance again. Therefore, fans support their chosen performer. Fans raised funds and promoted them at subway stations and bus stations. In addition, fans worked on increasing the number of views

on music and video distribution sites<sup>9</sup>.

##### ② Fan engagement with the media and entertainment industry

K-POP idol fandom is very active online and has promoted the global spread of K-POP. Some K-POP idol groups include members from other East Asian countries, and *Produce 101* also had performers from Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. The introduction of the fan voting system in the creation process of the idol group has intensified the support of fans. Since Season 2, fans have advertised not only in South Korea but also in Times Square in New York<sup>10</sup>. The idol group formed by this program will acquire a fan base that has proven their willingness to invest in and advertise the group<sup>11</sup>.

While this increases the group's chances of success after their debut, the fan battles have become more extreme each season. Malicious fans spread rumors about rivals and wrote comments on social media to try to save their performers from being eliminated. Mnet's reality audition program has been raising viewership through so-called “devil editing” (biased editing). Despite being a reality show, certain performers' footage was edited with an emphasis on highlighting failures, bad personality traits and habits. Fans have protested over-editing, presenting events out of sequence, and broadcast bias<sup>12</sup>.

##### ③ Fandom radicalization

South Korean fans sued and boycotted talent agencies when they discovered that their idols' policies were different from what the fans wanted. BTS, which won the first place in the Billboard Top 100 and became a global star, could not release previously recorded Japanese songs due to the opposition of fans<sup>13</sup>. In recent years, K-pop fans have tended to prioritize their

demands over the performers' financial concerns.

Fans who are dissatisfied with the results of Season 4 are currently in the suing for fraud<sup>14</sup>. In the final episode, several viewers suspected that the vote totals had been manipulated. After the winning performers were decided, the viewers, who felt the results were fraudulent, filed a lawsuit seeking compensation. Producers of the series and other talent agency representatives were later charged with sabotage, fraud, and bribery<sup>15</sup>. The fraud charge was possible because of the paid voting and the promise of "100% national vote". As a result, the boy band selected for *Season 4* was dismantled. These have become huge South Korean entertainment scandals. Even after the news of the dissolution, fans continue to protest in front of CJ E & M<sup>16</sup>.

#### ④ Affective economics of "National Producer"

As Jenkins revealed in the analysis of the idol series, this South Korean case shows that a very deep emotional connection has been created between the consumer and the product. Fans' empathy for idols increased in proportion to their investment. As consumption increased, emotional connections deepened and the market grew. The idol group, a product launched by the media entertainment conglomerate, has become a commercial success with the voting system building deep emotional ties with the customer base of fans.

But now, these fans are suing the media entertainment company for compensation. As quoted in the previous chapter, fans are willing to buy if the performers reflect their demands, but will lash out if disappointed. In this case, the paid voting led to a fraud case. If the purchase price and emotional depth of the customer's demographics are too extreme, the backlash

will be more intense and it will be difficult to manage.

### (2) Export of "National producer" to China

#### ① Localization for Chinese viewers

As explained on the previous page, *Produce 101* is considered a successful example of emotional economics in South Korea. Viewer voting has created a strong emotional tie between fans and idols, and has achieved commercial success. In fact, this voting system was only available to South Korean residents, so fans who lived abroad who wanted to be a "National Producer." were unable to take part, which spawned spin-off series in other countries. First, the "National Producer" was exported to China, where K-POP has a strong influence. *Produce 101 CHINA* was co-produced by the Tencent group under license from CJ E & M<sup>17</sup>. Tencent Group is a telecommunications conglomerate with significant influence in China. On Weibo, the show was more talked about than the Soccer World Cup, which was held at the same time.

The program was modified by more than 50% in order to localize content, and there were many differences from the original version of South Korea. The focus for localization was "Super Female Voice", which began broadcasting on Hunan TV in 2005. This was China's first program to introduce a viewer voting system using mobile phone short mail. The biggest difference was the audience voting system, as there are many paid voting options<sup>18</sup>.

#### ② Fans' investment battle

The Chinese version had many more paid voting options than the South Korean version, which resulted in a fan investment battle. This was criticized as a social issue. Many of the fans who participated in the money game are called "Super Girl Generation" and were girls

in 2005 when “Super Girl Voice” was broadcast. As this generation grew up and gained money and power, the fans frantically voted as if the performers they were supporting were their own children.

The performers on the Chinese version varied in shape and character, and they insisted on their identity and personality. The reason was that the purpose of the program was to create idols that modern Chinese women could identify with. The female director of the program sought to create a female image that would not be an object of consumption, but the enhancement of the pay voting system introduced a system that over-exploited female fans.

### ③ Affective economics in China

The girl group created in this show is not doing well due to contract problems between the show and some talent agencies. As explained before, Chinese audition programs have been broadcast on information and telecommunications subsidiaries. For this reason, the emphasis was been placed on the development of a pay voting system. In addition, the main business focus of the producers was investors, who were more interested in information and communication systems, such as games, than entertainment<sup>19</sup>. In the United States and Europe, teen celebrities are used by information and telecommunications companies to lock in their portal sites. These global telecommunications conglomerate movements are also affecting China.

Since around 2016, many talent agencies have been established in China. During these periods, the “Korean wave” (the global popularity of South Korea’s cultural economy exporting pop culture, entertainment, music, TV dramas and movies)<sup>30</sup> was banned in China, and Korean celebrities were unable to perform in the country. In China, it was regarded as a good opportunity

for the development of the idol culture, but the investment of fans was so intense that it was considered unhealthy for young people, and the idol culture was regulated.

### (3) Producing global idols through cross-border collaboration

#### ① Collaboration between Japanese talent agencies and South Korean programs

According to the official website, *Produce 48*, the third season of *Produce 101*, is a collaboration between the South Korean Reality Competition Program and the Japanese Idol AKB 48 system. Members of the Japanese AKB 48 group participated in the program as performers<sup>21</sup>. The purpose of the program is to create a global girl group through a Japan- South Korea collaboration. On social media, some South Korean netizens criticized AKB 48 for entering the South Korean media and entertainment industry. AKB 48 has sister groups in some East Asian countries, but none in South Korea.

The program was broadcast simultaneously in South Korea and Japan, but viewer voting was only valid in South Korea<sup>22</sup>. The program explained that the reason for the Japanese vote being impossible was to prevent the concentration of votes on the famous members. All content did not indicate the introduction of the Japanese system, but was in the same format as the original South Korean program.

#### ② Convergence of different idol cultures

Before the broadcast, public opinion argued that the program would be a match between South Korea and Japan, but the producer explained that he did not intend to do so. In the early broadcast, the difference between South Korean and Japanese idol culture was discussed.

At the beginning of the program, a scene where a Japanese performer proposed to resolve who would take a part by rock-paper-scissors became a hot topic. Viewers criticized Japanese idols for neglecting their singing and dancing abilities.

Some trainers commented on the program that the key ability of idols was singing and dancing in the case of South Korea, while being able to communicate directly with the audience in the case of Japan. Japanese performers were told that their job was to make their fans smile and happy. Critics explained the performers' remarks based on differences in domestic demand between the two countries. South Korea's low domestic demand requires universal capabilities because of the need for success in overseas markets, while Japan's high domestic demand requires only the ability to satisfy the local fans<sup>23</sup>.

### ③ Affective economics of Japan-South Korea collaboration

Viewer voting resulted in a group which was made up of nine South Koreans and three Japanese performers<sup>24</sup>. In South Korea, the EP has set a new record for the largest number of albums sold on the first day of the girl group's debut release on the first day of the release. The record holder before IZ' ONE is TWICE. TWICE also has three Japanese members. In Japan, even before their official debut, they were ranked number one in Oricon's Weekly Album Ranking and Weekly Digital Ranking.

Shortly after their debut, they were invited to all awards ceremonies in South Korea, Japan, and Hong Kong, participated in a large US concert hosted by Mnet, and performed headliner concerts in East Asian countries. They have also been nominated for the European Awards ceremony, the MTV European Music

Awards. IZ'ONE frequently holds autograph sessions in South Korea and handshake events in Japan. During the handshake event, idols and fans interact, such as having a conversation where performers remember the fan's face, name, or Twitter account.

Some AKB 48 fans in Japan also participate in South Korean style fan support, signing and concerts in South Korea, and airport photography. Fans may also interact and collaborate across countries, such as posting on Times Square in New York. In addition, some AKB 48 members who participated in *Produce 101* have been active as K-POP girl groups and talents on South Korean TV programs.

### (4) Export of "National producer" to Japan

#### ① Relationship between the Japanese version and the original version

Even among Japanese K-POP fans, *Produce 101* is a very popular show, and the fans wanted to become a "National Producer". *Produce 48*, the third season, was officially announced as a collaborative production between Japan and South Korea, but could only be voted on from South Korea. *Produce 101 JAPAN* was broadcast in Japan in 2019 as a derivative of the South Korean TV series *Produce 101*. The purpose of the program is to create a global idol group by voting. Yoshimoto Kogyo, a Japanese entertainment conglomerate, produced the program with the cooperation of CJ E & M in South Korea<sup>25</sup>. SoftBank affiliates broadcast the program and provided some accompanying content. Only the first and last episode were broadcast on TBS<sup>26</sup>. Some content for smartphones operated by SoftBank affiliates was created. The VR live distribution platform delivered high-quality performance videos.

Yoshimoto Kogyo is a comprehensive

entertainment company with many comedians from the Kansai region, which has greatly influenced trends in Japanese popular culture. The first part of *Produce 101 JAPAN* was filmed in a South Korean training camp. The opening and original songs of the program were produced and choreographed by famous composers of K-POP. When the Japanese version was being broadcast, the Mnet vote manipulation investigation became a social issue. *Produce 101 JAPAN* issued an official statement that they were not affiliated with the South Korean production team and have a separate voting system, with votes analyzed by a group of third-party lawyers<sup>27</sup>.

## ② Fans' investment in the Japanese version

In the Japanese version, the debut group was decided by viewer voting. The difference between the Japanese version and other countries is that voting is completely free right up to the end. In K-POP fan culture, it is common for fans to raise funds and advertise voluntarily. The Japanese version of *Produce 101* allowed the support of this K-POP style, which has been prohibited in Japan until now, but unlike in other countries, the program specified the advertising material and rules in detail, but the fans adhered to the rules.

Although not related to the regular ranking of the program, there an option where fans could support the performers for a fee. A video distribution site with a billing system hosted several "video battles" that ranked performers' PR videos based on the amount paid by fans. The most expensive gift here is 100,000 yen at a time and is shown on the video with a castle illustration<sup>28</sup>. The results of the battle did not affect the regular ranking on the program, but the fans paid eagerly to for the performer they were supporting to win. Performers who won the PR battle got huge street ads from the

program's official sponsors. Frequent English and Chinese comments also appeared on the videos, indicating that many gifts were sent from overseas. In the Japanese version, official voting was also possible from overseas. Since the start of the program, massive votes from Chinese fans have been reported on social media.

Global idols need to attract the support of overseas fans. However, Japanese fans were concerned that large-scale voting from overseas fans could significantly affect their rankings, and demanded voting restrictions from outside Japan, so program management modified voting to require SMS authentication. After the messenger app LINE was integrated into SoftBank, additional voting via LINE became possible.

## ③ Japanese affective economics

The mission of this program is to produce a global idol group. However, there were some contradictions between this goal and the Japanese fan culture, and program management struggled with trial and error. *Produce 101* was originally a South Korean program, but the Japanese "National Producer" group of voters included many non-K-POP fans. As a result, fans interpreted the concept of creating a global idol group while voting in various ways, and this sometimes resulted in conflicts, depending on their position.

First, the Japanese fans seemed to prefer voting for individuals, not groups, and especially voting to prevent their favorites from being eliminated. Viewers had to select 11 trainees each week to vote for, but the number was too large for Japanese fans. Japanese fans are eager to vote on supporting only one idol, rather than creating an ideal idol group. Rankings fluctuated weekly as fans voted for the lowest members to protect the performers they supported.

As a result, many mid-ranked performers did not receive many votes and were eliminated early and lost their program competitiveness.

Secondly, there was a fight between fans in different positions regarding performers with K-POP idol experience. The Global Idol Group needs performers who have experience with K-POP idols, but fans who thought it was unnecessary protested. As a result, these performers voluntarily dropped out of the program, despite playing a major role in guiding inexperienced Japanese performers<sup>29</sup>.

Third, global idols need to attract the support of overseas fans. However, Japanese fans were concerned that large-scale voting from overseas fans could significantly affect the rankings, and demanded voting restrictions from outside Japan, so program management was been modified to require SMS authentication. However, after the messenger app LINE was integrated into SoftBank, additional voting via LINE became possible, and voting from overseas became easier again.

The boy band selected from the program started a training camp in South Korea shortly after the program ended.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study examined the media and entertainment industry after media convergence from the perspective of affective economics. Affective economics has studied the mechanisms by which markets are expanded by creating deeper, more emotional connections between consumers and products. The focus here has been on the role of active viewers and fans. Following on from the research of Jenkins, this study looked specifically at the music competition television series. The *Produce 101*

series was an entertainment program tailored to the needs of East Asian youth using smartphones. For the overseas versions, the content of the program has been localized to accommodate differences in culture and industrial structure. As a result, even in the same series, different patterns and characteristics emerged in affective economics and media convergence depending on the combination of cooperating companies.

The program involved a variety of collaborative projects across borders under the leadership of the media entertainment conglomerate to develop a new youth entertainment market. Most of the profits invested by fans and earned by idols are for the benefit of new media environments and businesses. While the development of a new media ecosystem is very beneficial, it has also been criticized for strengthening youth exploitation.

In South Korea, fans sought lawsuits against program operators and it became a social issue. This case suggests that interactive content operators need to think about the intensity of backlash among social media users. The media and entertainment industry must pay attention to the transparency and fairness of information disclosure. And while the media and entertainment industry is developing across borders, it is important that it contribute to the coexistence and prosperity of East Asian countries.

#### Annotation:

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- 2 Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*, New York and London: New York University Press: 91-93.
- 3 Fraade-Blanar, Z. & M.Glazer, A. (2017). *Super fandom: How Our Obsessions Are Changing What We Buy and Who We Are*, W. W. Norton & Company: 51.
- 4 Boyd, D. (2014) *It's complicated: the social lives*



- of networked teens*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- 5 Jenkins, H. (2006): 95-98.
  - 6 "Pop Idol creator Simon Fuller is 'most successful British manager'". The Daily Telegraph. London, UK. May 19, 2008. Accessed 2020 January 30, 2020, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/1987250/Pop-Idol-creator-Simon-Fuller-is-most-successful-British-manager.html>.
  - 7 The program was broadcast on the paid channel Mnet, and also on affiliated channels in Japan, Asian countries and North America. The first season of Produce 101 started in 2016. The original release is January 22-April 1, 2016. For a limited time, the debuted group performed various idol activities under the control of CJ E & M.
  - 8 Jung, M. & Lee, N. (2009) "Fandom Managing Stars, Entertainment Industry Managing Fandom", *Media, Gender & Culture* (12), Korean Women's Communication Association.
  - 9 Yoshimitsu, M. (2018) "Industry-Fan Interaction: K-POP Female Fan Culture," *New Sociology Research*, No. 3, 2018: 18-33.
  - 10 Liu, W. (2017) "Research on Training Program Transmedia-Storytelling Strategy Focused on the case of <Idol m@ster> and <Produce 101 Season 2>," Konkuk University Master Thesis.
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  - 14 The original release of Produce X101 for Season 4 is May 3-July 19, 2019.
  - 15 Lee Han-na, "Police investigate Produce X 101 vote counting controversy". The Korea Times. September 12, 2019, Accessed 2020 January 30, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2019/07/732\\_273069.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2019/07/732_273069.html).
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  - 17 Produce 101 CHINA was co-produced by 7-D Vision and Tencent Penguin Pictures under license from Mnet owner CJ E & M. The original release is April 21-June 23, 2018.
  - 18 Votes for this show are called Likes and there are four channels: Tencent video doki, Weibo Star Power List, Oppo community, and Tencent WeChat. Tencent Video doki regular users have 11 votes per day and VIP users have 121 votes per day. On the other three platforms, each platform has 11 votes per account per day. All votes can be completely freely distributed and all cast on the same trainee. Plus, each week's favorite player on the Oppo community channel gets an additional 10,000 votes. With a custom card of 30 yuan, 121 additional votes are possible. Tencent was the first in Asia to join the world's five largest companies in 2017.
  - 19 Liang, Y. and Shen, W. (2016) Fan economy in the Chinese media and entertainment industry: How feedback from super fans can propel creative industries' revenue, *Global Media and China*, 1 (4): 331-349.
  - 20 "Korean Wave (Hallyu)-The Rise of Korea's Cultural Economy & Pop Culture". January, 2019. Accessed 2020 January 30, <https://martinroll.com/resources/articles/asia/korean-wave-hallyu-the-rise-of-koreas-cultural-economy-pop-culture/>.
  - 21 "AKB 48 system" means regular concert activities and direct communication with fans in dedicated theaters.
  - 22 The program was broadcast on Mnet, Mnet Japan and BS Sky Perfec TV. The original release is June 15 to August 31, 2018. CJ E & M was streamed live on the TVing Global service and broadcast on tvN Asia in several Asian countries and regions. Later it was broadcast on Abema TV's K WORLD channel. Viewer voting is available from the official websites of Mnet and Gmarket.
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ENTERTAINMENT under CJ E&M, the label in Korea is Stone Music Entertainment, and the label in Japan is EMI Records (Universal Music).

25 Naoko Yokota, "Popular audition program in Korea Landed in Japan in partnership with Yoshimoto", Nikkei electronic version. September 21, 2019. Accessed 2020 January 30, <https://style.nikkei.com/article/DGXMZO49879270X10C19A9000000/>.

26 GYAO, a subsidiary of SoftBank!. It was distributed on Internet-based video and content distribution services operated by Yahoo and GYAO Inc. The distribution period was from September 26 to December 12, 2019. The first and last episodes were broadcast on TBS terrestrial broadcasting. It was first announced in April 2019 as a joint production between Yoshimoto Kogyo of Japan and CJ E & M of South Korea. The VR live distribution platform is LiVR, which also distributes videos for SoftBank Hawks and AKB 48 Group.

27 "PRODUCE 101' Japanese Version 'No Fraud' Official Statement of Suspicion in Korea". Oricon News. November 15, 2019. Accessed 2020 January 30, <https://www.oricon.co.jp/news/2148810/full/>.

28 The site that distributes trainee selfies is Mista.

29 Aya Ikuta, "PRODUCE 101 JAPAN South Korean participants declined one after another, dropping to zero. Official statement prohibiting slander of SNS" The Huffington Post. December 5, 2019.

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