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K-pop

Do K-pop boy bands outperform girl groups?



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K-pop sensation BTS. Courtesy of Big Hit Entertainment

By Dong Sun-hwa

For K-pop record labels, boy bands have long been thought to be more lucrative than girl groups because the former often attract loyal female followers who loosen their purse strings for costly concerts and albums.

In terms of concerts abroad, phenomenal boy band BTS's 2019 world tour "LOVE YOURSELF: SPEAK YOURSELF" had an accumulated audience of more than 2 million, while heavyweight girl group BLACKPINK's "KILL THIS LOVE" drew around 260,000 concertgoers. Billboard reported that BTS grossed about 136 billion won (\$117 million) through ticket sales — Touring Data said BLACKPINK earned 44.2 billion won (\$38 million).

When it comes to album sales, BTS topped Gaon's 2019 chart, selling more than 3.7 million copies of its sixth mini-album "Map of the Soul : Persona." Another all-male group Seventeen came next, with its third studio album, "An Ode," selling 850,000 copies. TWICE secured the No. 10 spot on the chart, the highest position for a girl band with its eighth mini-album, "Feel Special," selling around 413,000 copies.

At first glance, it looks like today's K-pop female bands are comparatively underperforming. But in a deeper sense, they should rather be dubbed the game-changers who have made breakthroughs in the K-pop universe by shattering the traditional beliefs that girl groups — which relatively lack solid international fandom — cannot generate notable profits through concerts abroad. Spearheading the trend are TWICE, BLACKPINK and Red Velvet.

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"Thanks to a spike in the number of female fans and the expansion of global fandom, the three are playing concerts overseas, not only in Asia but also in North America, and making substantial profits," Seattle-based music critic Kim Young-dae told The Korea Times.



K-pop girl band TWICE. Courtesy of JYP Entertainment

In the case of TWICE, the nine-piece act played 25 gigs in 16 cities around the globe last year, as part of its world tour. It also performed in the Tokyo Dome, which can accommodate 100,000 people. A wave of K-pop boy bands including TVXQ, EXO and BTS previously had concerts there, but TWICE was the first female K-pop act to hold one.

Critic Park Soo-jin, who writes for music magazine IZM, said one of the rationales behind the girl bands' recent rise was their image transformation from passive girls to active women.



K-pop girl group BLACKPINK. Courtesy of YG Entertainment

"As can be seen from BLACKPINK's Kill This Love (2019), the female stars are exhibiting a more active and charismatic demeanor," Park said. "They are relaying different messages to people through their songs, as the times change. This seems to have appealed to listeners of the same gender."

But are female fans truly more loyal and willing to spend money on their stars compared to male followers?



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"The K-pop scene was jam-packed with male musicians in the beginning," Park said. "Iconic male groups such as Seo Taiji brought life to new sonic styles in Korea in the early 1990s, while female singers virtually had no foothold, as people in the past regarded them as doing something shameful rather than artistic."

Kim elaborated on this, saying: "Therefore, the main consumers of the music have been young girls and the industry has evolved in a way that can appeal to their taste. Almost all music-related businesses, such as merchandise and concerts, have been customized to suit female followers. This is why the number of female fans willing to use their cash for their stars is greater than that of male fans."

Critic Jung Yeon-kyung told The Korea Times, "Female fans also tend to gather together on online platforms, and as they take collective action to affect their stars, they feel close ties to each other. This sense of connectedness also seems to make them more loyal to their singers, leading them to play more active roles in their community."

In terms of album sales, K-pop girl bands may be weaker than the boy groups, but they have gained the upper hand in digital streaming, largely because their numbers are mostly easy-listening.

"If we observe music streaming platforms like Melon, the female bands' tracks are usually ranked higher on the charts," critic Kim said. "Those who do not know much about music and artists generally prefer the girl bands' songs, so they have a greater appeal with the general public as well."

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**Mike Sousa**

I don't really understand the purpose of this article. It's a fact there are more female fans than male fans! It's also a fact that amongst fans, male fans will more likely listen to K-Pop girl groups than boy bands because a lot of those male fans will just watch mv to see girls showing more and more parts of their body with the oversexualisation of K-Pop. On another hand, while a part of female fans will do exactly the same towards K-Pop boy bands they won't avoid girl groups unlike male fans with boy bands because they will want to identify with those female idols while most male fans don't... [See More](#)

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