

FACTORS INFLUENCING VIETNAMESE FANS' ONLINE ENGAGEMENT, CELEBRITY IDOLIZATION, AND PROGRAM COMMITMENT IN MUSIC REALITY SHOWS

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Abstract

This study examines factors influencing Vietnamese fans' online engagement, celebrity idolization, and program commitment in music reality shows. In-depth interviews with 8 young viewers were conducted to inform the development of the survey which was subsequently administered to 1,026 respondents. Results indicate that artist attributes such as talent and ability, personality and attitude, attractiveness and production elements including format and scripting, audio-visual quality positively influence online engagement, with format and scripting having the weakest impact. Viewing motives, namely entertainment and relaxation, social interaction, or voyeurism also enhance engagement, which significantly boosts celebrity idolization and program commitment. Additionally, celebrity idolization positively influences program commitment. This research is the first in Vietnam to empirically investigate the engagement motivations of Vietnamese audiences with music reality shows, offering insights into audience psychology and contributing to the development of Vietnam's entertainment industry.

Keywords: *Online fan engagement; Celebrity idolization; Program commitment; Music reality show; Prompts; Motivations*

CÁC YẾU TỐ ẢNH HƯỞNG ĐẾN SỰ TƯƠNG TÁC TRỰC TUYẾN, SỰ THẦN TƯỢNG HÓA NGƯỜI NỔI TIẾNG VÀ SỰ GẮN BÓ CỦA NGƯỜI HÂM MỘ VIỆT NAM VỚI CHƯƠNG TRÌNH TRUYỀN HÌNH ÂM NHẠC THỰC TẾ

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Tóm tắt

Nghiên cứu này khảo sát các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến sự tương tác trực tuyến, sự thần tượng hóa người nổi tiếng và sự gắn bó của người hâm mộ Việt Nam trong các chương trình truyền hình thực tế về âm nhạc. Khảo sát được xây dựng dựa trên các cuộc phỏng vấn sâu với 8 khán giả trẻ, thu thập dữ liệu từ 1.026 người tham gia. Kết quả cho thấy, các yếu tố thu hút khán giả (tài năng và khả năng, tính cách và thái độ, ngoại hình) và chất lượng sản xuất (kịch bản,

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hình ảnh và âm thanh) có ảnh hưởng tích cực đến sự tương tác trực tuyến, trong đó kịch bản có tác động yếu nhất. Động lực của việc theo dõi (giải trí và thư giãn, tương tác xã hội, tò mò) cũng thúc đẩy sự tương tác, từ đó tăng đáng kể sự thần tượng hóa người nổi tiếng và sự gắn bó với chương trình. Ngoài ra, sự thần tượng hóa người nổi tiếng có ảnh hưởng tích cực đến sự gắn bó với chương trình. Nghiên cứu này là nghiên cứu đầu tiên tại Việt Nam điều tra thực nghiệm về động cơ tương tác của khán giả Việt Nam với các chương trình truyền hình thực tế về âm nhạc, cung cấp những hiểu biết sâu sắc về tâm lý khán giả và đóng góp vào sự phát triển của ngành công nghiệp giải trí Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: *Tương tác trực tuyến; Thần tượng hóa người nổi tiếng; Gắn bó với chương trình; Chương trình âm nhạc thực tế; Lời nhắc; Động lực.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Reality television has become a central component of contemporary entertainment, with music reality shows emerging as one of the most influential formats shaping audience habits, artist visibility, and fan cultures. In Vietnam, the genre has experienced a resurgence since 2023, driven by the localization of successful inter-Asian formats and the rapid expansion of digital platforms. These platforms, particularly YouTube, streaming services, and social media, have redefined how audiences engage with reality programs, transforming viewers from passive spectators into active participants who vote, comment, create fan content, and mobilize support for artists.

Despite the growing importance of these programs, most existing Vietnamese studies have approached reality television from production, media economics, or technological perspectives (Le, 2014; Nguyen, 2019; Nguyen, 2024). Prior research has examined issues such as format adaptation, production challenges, and the role of digital technologies in shaping the music industry. While these works provide valuable institutional and industrial insights, they overlook a crucial dimension: How

Vietnamese audiences psychologically, emotionally, and behaviorally engage with music reality shows in digital environments. This gap is significant for two reasons. First, online engagement has become a decisive driver of program popularity and artist success. Viral clips, fan-made edits, coordinated voting campaigns, and streaming activities now influence not only public visibility but also commercial outcomes such as advertising revenue, brand partnerships, and concert demand. Second, fan engagement in Vietnam reflects a broader transformation in the region's cultural dynamics, where inter-Asian flows, particularly K-pop and C-pop, have shaped new fandom behaviors, participatory cultures, and celebrity attachment patterns. Understanding these behaviors, therefore, contributes to wider discussions on popular culture circulation and the evolution of fandom in emerging media markets.

Addressing this gap, the present study shifts the analytical focus from production-centered approaches to audience-centered psychology. Drawing from the Fogg Behavior Model, the Uses and Gratifications theory, the Parasocial Relationship Theory, and the Investment Model, it examines how

program design (e.g., talent cues, storytelling, social triggers, audio-visual quality) and viewer motivations (e.g., entertainment, social interaction, voyeuristic interest) influence online fan engagement, and how such engagement, in turn, shapes celebrity idolization and program commitment. Using mixed methods, eight in-depth interviews and a large-scale survey of 1,026 Vietnamese viewers, this research provides a comprehensive account of the mechanisms through which Vietnamese audiences interact with music reality shows in digital spaces.

By foregrounding audience motives, psychological attachments, and digital participation, this study contributes theoretically to fan engagement scholarship and practically to Vietnam's rapidly expanding entertainment industry. It offers insights into how producers can design content that resonates more strongly with audiences, how platforms can optimize engagement mechanisms, and how scholars can understand the cultural implications of fandom in an increasingly interconnected Asian media landscape.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Music Reality Shows in Vietnam: Industry Scope & Localization Strategies

Over the past two decades, Vietnam's music reality TV sector has evolved from simple talent contests into multi-platform entertainment franchises. The industry now reaches large audiences across broadcast television, YouTube, and proprietary streaming services, reflecting global trends in the convergence of television and digital media. Recent estimates show that Vietnamese music reality shows attract millions of viewers per season and generate substantial

advertising revenue, positioning the format as a major driver of the entertainment economy (Gia Linh, 2024; Que, 2024). A key factor behind this growth is localization. Following similar developments in China and South Korea, Vietnamese producers have adapted foreign formats, such as *Sisters Who Make Waves* and *The Masked Singer*, to local cultural sensibilities. These adaptations often involve recalibrating storytelling, integrating Vietnamese musical elements, and highlighting interpersonal narratives that resonate with domestic viewers (Zhang et al., 2024). Such strategies align with regional patterns of "inter-Asian referencing," in which audiences gravitate toward formats balancing global sophistication with cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 2007; Zhang & Negus, 2020).

Despite these developments, little is known about how Vietnamese audiences emotionally and behaviorally engage with music reality shows in digital environments. Given the central role of online participation, such as voting, trending campaigns, fan edits, and coordinated support, understanding audience motivations and engagement processes is essential. This study addresses this gap by adopting a fan-centric perspective on online engagement.

2.2. Online Fan Engagement: Definition, Dimensions, and Asian Fandom Context

Online fan engagement (OFE) refers to the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities that fans perform on digital platforms to support artists, programs, or communities (Muntinga et al., 2011; Schivinski et al., 2016). These behaviors are commonly categorized under the COBRA framework: (1) Consuming (viewing, streaming, reading updates); (2) Contributing

(commenting, sharing, participating in voting); (3) Creating (fan edits, fan art, memes, fancams).

In music reality shows, OFE functions as a key mechanism through which contestants gain visibility, popularity, and cultural influence (Gong & Huang, 2022). The participatory environment of social media blurs the boundary between production and consumption, empowering fans as co-creators who amplify narratives, promote contestants, and shape public discourse (Jenkins, 2006; Ito & boyd, 2015)

A growing body of Asian fandom studies highlights that online fan activity in East and Southeast Asia often involves collective action, emotional labor, and coordinated promotional behaviors that differ from Western individualistic consumption (Liao, Koo & Rojas, 2022; Han & Na, 2022). K-pop, J-pop, and C-pop fandoms provide influential models of community-based engagement, where fans participate in fundraising, coordinated hashtag campaigns, and highly organized streaming strategies. These dynamics are increasingly observable in Vietnam's emerging fandom culture, making OFE an essential variable to explain viewer participation in music reality TV.

2.3. Artist and Production-Related Prompts: Theoretical Rationale

Understanding why certain program elements trigger online fan engagement requires a theoretical perspective that links viewer motivation, media affordances, and stimulus design. This study adopts the Fogg Behavior Model (FBM) as the overarching framework to justify the selection of artist-related and production-related prompts. According to FBM, a behavior, here, online

fan engagement (OFE), occurs when three components converge: motivation, ability, and a prompt that activates the behavior (Fogg, 2020). In music reality shows, prompts operate as audiovisual cues, narrative devices, or social triggers that stimulate audience response.

2.3.1. Artist-Related Prompts as Motivational Triggers

Artist characteristics are central to audience engagement in talent-based reality shows. Consistent with Fogg Behavior Model (FBM)'s "spark prompts", stimuli designed to elevate motivation, artist cues create emotional, aesthetic, and relational incentives for fans to act.

Talent & Ability (TA)

Talent is the foundational element of music-related competitions. Strong vocal and performance abilities generate admiration, perceived competence, and respect, all of which heighten the desire to support an artist online (Setyanto et al., 2017). Prior research shows that viewers reward perceived excellence with repeat viewing, sharing, and active promotion, especially in competitive environments where skill visibility drives voting decisions (Yu & Nam, 2018).

Personality & Attitude (PA)

Reality television thrives on storytelling and emotional connection. Contestants' personalities, such as humor, humility, confidence, warmth, and resilience, enable parasocial bonding, a key predictor of digital engagement (Baym, 2018). Attitude-based cues such as teamwork, professionalism, and authenticity shape viewers' affective responses and increase empathy, which often translates into online

support behaviors like commenting and defending the artist in fan spaces.

Attractiveness (AT)

Aesthetic cues function as powerful peripheral stimuli in media processing. Physical attractiveness influences first impressions, emotional appeal, and attention retention (Gillan, 2010). In the context of social media, visual appeal drives shareability and virality, as fans circulate photos, fancams, and edits to enhance their favorite contestants' visibility. Thus, AT operates as a motivational spark that activates both emotional and behavioral engagement.

Social Impact (SIP)

Social Impact (SIP) constitutes a set of social proof mechanisms, such as viral clips, trending hashtags, peer recommendations, and fan-generated content, that signal popularity and collective interest (Gong & Huang, 2022). In FBM, these cues serve as prompts that leverage social validation, lowering psychological resistance and increasing the likelihood of participation. SIP is especially relevant in Asian fandom contexts, where collective action, peer influence, and coordinated mobilization are deeply embedded cultural practices (Liao et al., 2022).

Together, the four artist-related factors represent a coherent cluster of motivation-enhancing prompts: they trigger admiration, emotional attachment, social validation, and aesthetic pleasure, all of which make fans more willing to engage online.

2.3.2. Production-Related Prompts as Ability Enhancers

While artist cues stimulate motivation, production-related factors influence ability,

the perceived ease, clarity, and enjoyment of engaging with the program. In FBM, “ability prompts” reduce the effort required to engage by improving accessibility and enhancing viewer comprehension.

Format & Scripting (FS)

Narrative structure is an essential part of audience engagement in reality television. Well-crafted formats, balanced pacing, clear episode progression, emotional arcs, and compelling story editing, help viewers follow the competition more easily (Hill, 2017). High-quality scripting increases narrative coherence, making audience engagement more intuitive and less cognitively demanding. Unscripted authenticity can boost relatability, while deliberate scripting can amplify suspense and emotional investment (Michelle, 2009). Therefore, FS enhances the “ability” dimension of engagement by shaping how accessible, understandable, and emotionally resonant the content feels.

Audio-Visual Quality (AV)

Visual and auditory production values directly influence immersion. High-quality stage design, cinematography, lighting, live sound engineering, and camera work increase the sensory richness of performances, making clips more enjoyable, rewatchable, and shareable (Yang, 2013; Dakic, 2009). In digital environments where virality depends heavily on aesthetics, AV becomes a crucial facilitator of fan behavior, especially for creating viral cuts, highlights, or fancams.

By separating FS and AV into distinct constructs, this study advances prior research that often treated “production quality” as a single monolithic factor (e.g., Gong & Huang, 2022). Distinguishing between structural

narrative design (FS) and sensory production design (AV) provides a more nuanced understanding of how different aspects of program design support engagement.

Artist-related prompts (talent & ability, personality & attitude, attractiveness, and social impact) function as motivational triggers that stimulate viewer interest and emotional arousal, thereby increasing the likelihood of online participation. Production-related prompts (format & scripting, audio-visual quality) operate as ability-enhancing cues that facilitate engagement by improving accessibility, clarity, and sensory immersion. Together, these six prompts form a comprehensive set of antecedents expected to positively influence online fan engagement. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: *Talent & Ability (TA) positively influences Online Fan Engagement (OFE).*

H2: *Personality & Attitude (PA) positively influences Online Fan Engagement (OFE).*

H3: *Attractiveness (AT) positively influences Online Fan Engagement (OFE).*

H4: *Social Impact (SIP) positively influences Online Fan Engagement (OFE).*

H5: *Format & Scripting (FS) positively influences Online Fan Engagement (OFE).*

H6: *Audio-Visual Quality (AV) positively influences Online Fan Engagement (OFE).*

2.3.3. A Unified Prompt Framework

The six dimensions: Talent and Ability (TA), Personality and Attitude (PA), Attractiveness (AT), Social Impact (SIP), Format and Scripting (FS), and Audio-Visual Quality (AV), form a coherent framework for explaining online fan engagement in

music reality shows. Grounded in the Fogg Behavior Model, artist-related prompts (TA, PA, AT, SIP) operate as motivational triggers that evoke emotional responses, admiration, and social validation. In contrast, production-related prompts (FS, AV) enhance ability by improving accessibility, clarity, and sensory immersion. Integrating these motivational and ability-based mechanisms advances a unified prompt framework that clarifies how content features jointly influence digital fan participation, moving beyond prior work that treated production quality as a single undifferentiated construct.

2.4. Uses and Gratifications Motives for Engaging With Music Reality Shows

The Uses and Gratifications (U&G) theory provides a well-established framework for explaining why audiences actively select and engage with media based on psychological and social needs (Blumler & Katz, 1974). In the context of music reality shows, U&G helps clarify how viewers derive value from performances, narratives, and online participation opportunities. Prior research consistently identifies three primary motivations relevant to digital fan behavior, entertainment and relaxation, social interaction, and voyeurism, all of which affect the extent to which viewers engage with reality content across platforms.

Entertainment and relaxation (ER) represent one of the most fundamental gratifications driving reality TV consumption. Music competition programs combine emotional storytelling, performance excitement, and narrative suspense, offering viewers an escape from stress and a source of hedonic enjoyment (Papacharissi & Mendelson, 2007; Xu & Guo, 2017). In digital environments, these pleasurable

experiences translate into active behaviors such as rewatching performances, sharing clips, and participating in fan discussions. Because entertainment value enhances mood and emotional involvement, it is expected to increase online fan engagement. Social interaction (SI) is another major gratification associated with reality TV, especially within collectivist and fandom-driven cultures across Asia. Viewers often share opinions, speculate about results, collaborate in voting campaigns, and interact within fan communities (Dolan et al., 2016). Research on K-pop, J-pop, and C-pop fandoms shows that social bonds formed through participatory activities strengthen belonging and reinforce ongoing online engagement (Han & Na, 2022; Liao, Koo & Rojas, 2022). For Vietnamese audiences, who increasingly engage through online fan groups, Twitter/X discussions, and TikTok remix culture, social connection is not only an outcome but also a key motivator for sustained digital participation.

Voyeurism (VO) reflects viewers' interest in observing the personal lives, emotions, struggles, and interpersonal dynamics of contestants, elements central to music reality formats. Reality shows provide backstage access, confessionals, and unscripted moments that satisfy viewers' curiosity and foster emotional closeness (Mead, 2006; Barton, 2013). These voyeuristic gratifications often translate into online engagement, as viewers seek additional behind-the-scenes content, react to unfolding drama, and follow contestants across social media platforms. Emotional resonance from these "insider views" further reinforces interaction, sharing, and fan-led content creation.

Although music reality shows are widely consumed in Vietnam through television,

YouTube, and streaming services, empirical studies on Vietnamese viewer motivations remain limited. Recent findings suggest that accessibility, emotional authenticity, and the desire for community participation are particularly salient in the local context (Le et al., 2024; Nguyen, 2024). Vietnam's expanding online fandom culture, characterized by digital participation, coordinated voting, and community-building, also mirrors broader Asian trends, further underscoring the relevance of U&G motives for understanding audience behavior.

Taken together, U&G theory suggests that viewers engage more actively in online fan activities when programs satisfy their emotional, social, and voyeuristic needs. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: *Entertainment and relaxation (ER) positively influence online fan engagement (OFE).*

H8: *Social interaction (SI) positively influences OFE.*

H9: *Voyeurism (VO) positively influences OFE.*

2.5. Celebrity Idolization and Program Commitment

Celebrity idolization and program commitment represent two key psychological outcomes associated with engagement in music reality shows. To clarify the theoretical directionality highlighted by reviewers, this study positions online fan engagement (OFE) as a behavioral antecedent that fosters deeper emotional attachment to contestants and long-term loyalty to the program itself.

Drawing from Parasocial Relationship Theory, repeated exposure to performers, through performances, behind-the-scenes footage, confessionals, and social media content, encourages viewers to form one-

sided but emotionally meaningful bonds with contestants (Bond, 2016; McCutcheon et al., 2016). Online fan engagement strengthens these parasocial ties by increasing the frequency and intensity of interactions, such as watching fancams, participating in voting campaigns, discussing contestants in fan communities, and following their personal updates. In music reality shows, where contestants’ personalities, struggles, and growth trajectories are foregrounded, such parasocial interactions are particularly potent. As a result, OFE is expected to enhance celebrity idolization (CI), conceptualized as an affective attachment and admiration for a favored contestant.

Program commitment (PC), or sustained psychological investment in a reality show, builds upon this emotional attachment. According to the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1983), commitment increases when individuals invest substantial time, emotional energy, and relational involvement into a relationship. In media contexts, OFE constitutes this investment through repeated viewing, active participation in online

communities, and contributions to fan-driven initiatives. These behaviors deepen viewers’ sense of involvement and increase their motivation to continue following the program (Lin et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2018). Therefore, OFE is theorized to positively influence PC by fostering a stronger sense of participation and presence within the program’s narrative world.

Beyond the direct effect of OFE, celebrity idolization also enhances program commitment. When viewers form strong parasocial bonds with specific contestants, they become more invested in the show’s outcomes and are more likely to continue watching, supporting, and promoting the program (Chen et al., 2022). Idolization amplifies emotional stakes, as viewers track their favorite contestants’ progress, respond to plot developments, and maintain interest even between episodes. As prior research suggests, attachment to performers is a key mechanism linking individual-level fandom to broader program loyalty (Parmar & Mann, 2020; Singh & Banerjee, 2019). Thus, CI is expected to act as an additional predictor of PC.

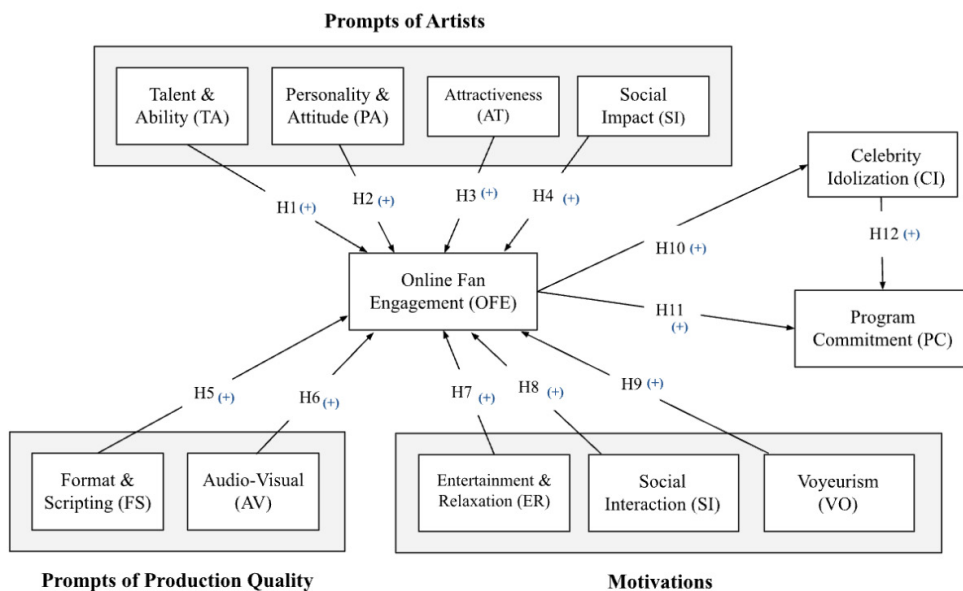


Figure 1. Research Model

Accordingly, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H10: *Online fan engagement (OFE) positively influences celebrity idolization (CI).*

H11: *Online fan engagement (OFE) positively influences program commitment (PC).*

H12: *Celebrity idolization (CI) positively influences program commitment (PC).*

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining semi-structured in-depth interviews with an online survey to explore factors influencing Vietnamese fans’ online engagement, celebrity idolization, and program commitment in music reality shows.

The qualitative phase involved semi-structured interviews with 8 Vietnamese viewers who actively watch music survival reality shows and are either members of fan clubs or have spent more than VND 2,000,000 on the shows. These sessions, administered either face-to-face or via phone, focused on four key areas: (a) basic demographic information and viewing habits; (b) prompts that influence their engagement; (c) motives driving their viewing and online interactions; and (d) types of online fan engagement observed during the shows. Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure variation in viewing habits and engagement behaviors. Detailed demographic information is presented below:

Table 1. Detailed demographic information

No.	Code	Name	Gender	Age	Occupation	Notes
1	A	Trinh H P	Female	20	University student	Viewer & online participant
2	B	Pham H T	Female	21	University student	Viewer & fan community member
3	C	Le M K	Female	21	University student	Active online fan
4	D	Pham L P N	Female	21	University student	Viewer & content sharer
5	E	Dao P T	Female	22	Working professional	Long-term fandom participant
6	F	Vu T T P	Female	19	University student	Viewer & social media participant
7	G	Nguyen P L	Female	21	University student	Viewer, active on TikTok
8	H	Nguyen N P L	Female	21	University student	Viewer & casual content creator

Most interviewees were female and aged between 19 and 22, reflecting the demographic profile commonly found in Asian fandom cultures (Liao, Koo & Rojas,

2022). All participants had prior experience watching Vietnamese music reality shows, engaging with artists online, or participating in fan-driven activities.

All interviews followed a standardized procedure to ensure methodological rigor and consistency. Prior to participation, each interviewee completed an Interview Consent Form outlining the study purpose, confidentiality, and voluntary rights. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted individually, either in person or via Zoom, and each session lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview protocol included questions about participants' viewing habits, duration and frequency of engagement with music reality shows, perceived artist-related factors (e.g., talent, personality, attractiveness, social impact), motivational drivers aligned with Uses and Gratifications theory (e.g., entertainment and relaxation, social interaction, voyeuristic interest, perceived production quality), and perceived outcomes such as increased

idol attachment or program loyalty. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and anonymized. This procedure ensured systematic data collection while allowing sufficient flexibility for participants to elaborate on their personal experiences and perspectives.

An online survey was then administered from March 12 to 17, 2025 to members of music reality shows and artists' online fan groups and the Threads platform, yielding 1,026 responses. The survey items, adapted from established literature, measured viewing habits and the impacts of various prompts and motives on online fan engagement, celebrity idolization, and program commitment. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Table 2. Constructs detail with sources

Construct	Item	Source(s)
Talent & Ability	Stage and challenge videos that clearly demonstrate the artists' strengths and performance abilities.	Gong & Huang (2022)
	Personal focus-cam videos that showcase the artists' strengths and performance skills.	
Personality & Attitude	Content that reflects the artists' charisma and personality.	
	Content that demonstrates the artists' teamwork, camaraderie, and professionalism.	
Attractiveness	Videos or clips that highlight the artists' attractive appearances (e.g., during standout stage performances, endings, or in program advertisements).	
	Photos or publications that emphasize the artists' attractive looks (e.g., performance photos, behind-the-scenes images, fashion shoots, or magazine photos shared by organizers or fans).	
Social Impact	Trending videos or images on social media.	
	Content sent or recommended by friends related to the artists.	
	Fan-made works related to the artists (e.g., fan-edited videos, fan art, fan fiction).	

Format & Scripting	Attractive, novel format and quality program scripting	Xu & Guo (2018); Lin et al. (2016); Gong & Huang (2022)	
Audio-Visual	Professionalism and quality of performances, including investment in sound and lighting		
Entertainment & Relaxation	Because it entertains me.	Vale & Fernandes (2018); Papacharissi & Mendelson (2007); Xu & Guo (2018)	
	Because it gives me relaxation and a pleasant break.		
Social Interaction	Because it helps me stay updated on trends and easily catch on to them.		
	Because I can discuss it with others and interact with fellow fans.		
Voyeurism	Because I see artists I care about in the program.		
	Because I enjoy following the artists' journeys and their interactions with each other (I like watching moments, analyzing chemistry, etc.).		
Online fan engagement	I actively participate in the program's voting events.		Gong & Huang (2022); Vale & Fernandes (2018)
	I actively stream videos related to the artists by sharing, commenting, and liking them.		
	I follow and participate in fan clubs and fangroups to easily receive or share information.		
	I collect merchandise featuring my favorite artist.		
Celebrity Idolization	The success of the artists makes me feel proud.	Vale & Fernandes (2018); McCutcheon et al. (2002)	
	My favorite artist naturally exudes attraction for me.		
	Keeping up with news about my favorite artist is a form of entertainment for me.		
Program Commitment	I feel sad when the program ends.	Lin et al. (2016); Sung & Choi (2010); Vale & Fernandes (2018)	
	I feel a deep connection with the program (the program aligns with my interests).		
	I wish for my relationship with the program to last long; for example, I am willing to support future shows in the same series.		
	I am willing to follow and support the program's activities, as well as those of the artists, in the future.		

Descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS 26. For reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM), SMART PLS4 was employed. This analytic strategy ensured robust measurement and assessment of the proposed relationships between constructs.

A total of 1,026 valid responses were collected. As shown in Table 3, the gender distribution was highly skewed towards females, accounting for 95% (N = 975) of the total respondents, while males made up 5% (N = 51). The majority of respondents were between the ages of 21 and 30 (55.9%; N = 547) and 16 and 20 (32.1%; N = 329).

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 1,026)

Demographic characteristics		N	%
Gender	Male	51	5.0
	Female	975	95.0
Age	16 - 20	329	32.1
	21 - 30	574	55.9
	31 - 40	112	10.9
	Over 40	11	1.1
Group	High school students	92	9.0
	University students	113	11.0
	Postgraduate	216	21.1
	Employed	605	59.0

When it comes to engagement with Vietnamese music reality shows, 48.1% of respondents had watched 2 to 3 shows (N = 493) and 44.9% of respondents had watched 1 show (N = 461). The most-watched shows are Anh Trai Vượt Ngàn Chông Gai (Call Me By Fire Vietnam), Anh Trai Say Hi, and Chị Đẹp Đạp Gió Rẽ Sóng (Sister Who Made Waves Vietnam), which had, respectively, been viewed by 72% (N = 739), 69% (N = 708), and 59% (N = 605) of the respondents. Additionally, audience

engagement patterns varied, with 38% of the respondents (N = 390) following music reality shows for 6 months to 1 year, 25.9% (N = 266) had been following for less than 6 months, and 21% (N = 215) had been following for 2 to 3 years. 52% (N = 534) of participants reported frequent interactions with the shows and their associated artists, often participating in online support activities such as hashtag trending, view boosting, and campaign donations.

Table 4. Viewing and engaging patterns of respondents (N = 1,026)

Viewing and engaging patterns		N	%
Number of shows watched	1	461	44.9
	2-3	493	48.1
	4 or more	72	7.0
Watched show	Anh Trai Vượt Ngàn Chông Gai (Call Me By Fire Vietnam)	739	72.0
	Anh Trai Say Hi	708	69.0
	Chị Đẹp Đạp Gió Rẽ Sóng (Sister Who Made Waves Vietnam)	605	59.0
	Rap Việt	369	36.0
	The Voice Vietnam	215	21.0
	Sing My Song Vietnam	144	14.0
	The Masked Singer Vietnam	123	12.0

Viewing period	Above 3 years	31	3.0
	2 - 3 years	124	12.1
	1 - 2 years	215	21.0
	6 months to 1 year	390	38.0
	Under 6 month	266	25.9
Normal frequency	Everyday	359	35.0
	Frequently (few times a week)	534	52.0
	Sometimes (few times a month)	103	10.0
	Rarely (few times a year)	30	2.9
Peak season frequency	Everyday	595	58.0
	Frequently (few times a week)	318	31.0
	Sometimes (few times a month)	102	9.9
	Rarely (few times a year)	11	1.1
Spending	Under 1 million VND	276	26.9
	1 - 5 million VND	574	55.9
	5 - 10 million VND	123	12.0
	10 - 20 million VND	32	3.1
	Over 20 million VND	21	2.0
Support activities	1 - 2 activities	756	73.7
	3 - 5 activities	235	22.9
	5 - 10 activities	31	3.0
	Over 10 activities	4	4

4. RESULTS

We tested our proposed model (see Figure 1) and hypotheses using mediation analysis within a structural equation modeling (SEM) framework. The analysis was conducted in three stages using SMART PLS 3. First, we performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to evaluate the measurement model and ensure the construct validity of the latent variables. Next, we employed SEM to examine the structural relationships between independent and dependent variables. Finally, we analyzed both the direct and indirect effects of the exogenous variables on the endogenous variable to assess the proposed mediation hypotheses.

4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis and measurement model fit

The measurement model was evaluated based on reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. In terms of reliability, all constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability, with composite reliability (CR) values ranging from 0.878 to 0.902, exceeding the threshold of 0.7. Similarly, Cronbach's Alpha (α) confirmed internal consistency, with values ranging from 0.741 to 0.853, above the recommended 0.7. For convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs was greater than the recommended benchmark of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging from 0.695 to 0.822. All factor loadings exceeded 0.70, ranging from 0.807 to 0.809.

Table 5. Measurement model statistics - Composite Reliability, Cronbach’s Alpha, AVE, and Factor loadings

Construct (Final # of items)	CR	α	AVE	Loading Range
Talent & Ability (2)	0.902	0.783	0.822	0.905 - 0.908
Personality & Attitude (2)	0.896	0.767	0.811	0.899 - 0.902
Attractiveness (2)	0.896	0.768	0.811	0.896 - 0.905
Social Impact (2)	0.886	0.808	0.722	0.841 - 0.855
Format & Scripting (1)	-	-	-	-
Audio-Visual (1)	-	-	-	-
Entertainment & Relaxation (2)	0.891	0.755	0.803	0.895 - 0.898
Social Interaction (2)	0.892	0.759	0.806	0.893 - 0.903
Voyeurism (2)	0.885	0.741	0.794	0.888 - 0.894
Online Fan Engagement (4)	0.901	0.853	0.695	0.807 - 0.862

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. This requires that the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct must exceed the squared

correlations between that construct and all other constructs. The results are summarized below:

Table 6. Measurement model statistics - Discriminant validity of reflective constructs

	AVE	TA	PA	AT	SIP	FS	AV	ER	SIN	VO	OFE	CI	PC
TA	0.822	0.907											
PA	0.811	0.367	0.900										
AT	0.811	0.413	0.355	0.901									
SIP	0.722	0.328	0.415	0.326	0.850								
FS	1.000	0.036	0.056	0.040	0.017	1.000							
AV	1.000	0.352	0.348	0.345	0.358	0.051	1.000						
ER	0.803	0.309	0.337	0.302	0.374	-0.007	0.310	0.896					
SIN	0.806	0.328	0.361	0.355	0.371	0.009	0.307	0.338	0.898				
VO	0.794	0.395	0.332	0.349	0.362	0.024	0.345	0.306	0.373	0.891			
OFE	0.695	0.522	0.512	0.520	0.526	0.076	0.524	0.489	0.514	0.508	0.833		
CI	0.706	0.363	0.415	0.385	0.429	0.017	0.370	0.373	0.370	0.331	0.538	0.840	
PC	0.666	0.345	0.387	0.378	0.427	-0.008	0.355	0.354	0.396	0.351	0.560	0.426	0.816

4.2. Structural model testing

After validating the measurement model, we conducted Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SMART PLS 4 to examine the hypothesized relationships. The model fit indices and variance explained (R² values) indicated that the structural model effectively explains the relationships among the variables.

The R² value represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. Higher R² values indicate better explanatory power of the model (Hair et al., 2017). In our model, the R² for Online Fan Engagement was 0.612, indicating a reasonable explanatory power. For Celebrity Idolization (0.290) and Program Commitment (0.314), while

the R^2 values are lower, they still suggest a meaningful relationship within the model.

4.3. Hypothesis Testing and Mediation Analysis

The hypotheses were tested using path coefficients (β values) and p-values obtained through bootstrapping with 1,000 resamples. A significant path coefficient ($p < 0.05$) indicates support for a hypothesis.

The results showed that Talent & Ability had a significant positive effect on Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.133$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H1. Similarly, Personality & Attitude positively influenced Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.136$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H2. Attractiveness also showed a significant positive effect on Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.164$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H3. Additionally, Social Impact had a strong positive relationship with Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.130$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H4.

However, Format & Scripting had a weak but still significant effect on Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.044$, $p = 0.013$), thus H5 was supported. In contrast, Audio-Visual quality strongly influenced Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.185$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H6. Entertainment & Relaxation had a significant positive effect on Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.157$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H7. Social Interaction also positively impacted Online Fan Engagement

($\beta = 0.145$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H8. Furthermore, Voyeurism showed a significant positive influence on Online Fan Engagement ($\beta = 0.142$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H9.

The analysis also revealed that Online Fan Engagement had a significant positive impact on Celebrity Idolization ($\beta = 0.538$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H10. Additionally, Online Fan Engagement significantly influenced Program Commitment ($\beta = 0.466$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H11. Finally, Celebrity Idolization had a significant positive impact on Program Commitment ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H12.

Mediation analysis was conducted to examine the indirect effects within the model. The bootstrapped confidence intervals confirmed that Online Fan Engagement significantly mediated the relationships between the independent variables (Talent & Ability, Personality & Attitude, Attractiveness, Social Impact, Audio-Visual, Entertainment & Relaxation, Social Interaction, Voyeurism) and the dependent variables (Celebrity Idolization, Program Commitment). However, the indirect effect of Format & Scripting \rightarrow Online Fan Engagement \rightarrow Celebrity Idolization/Program Commitment was relatively weaker, consistent with its weak but still statistically significant direct effect.

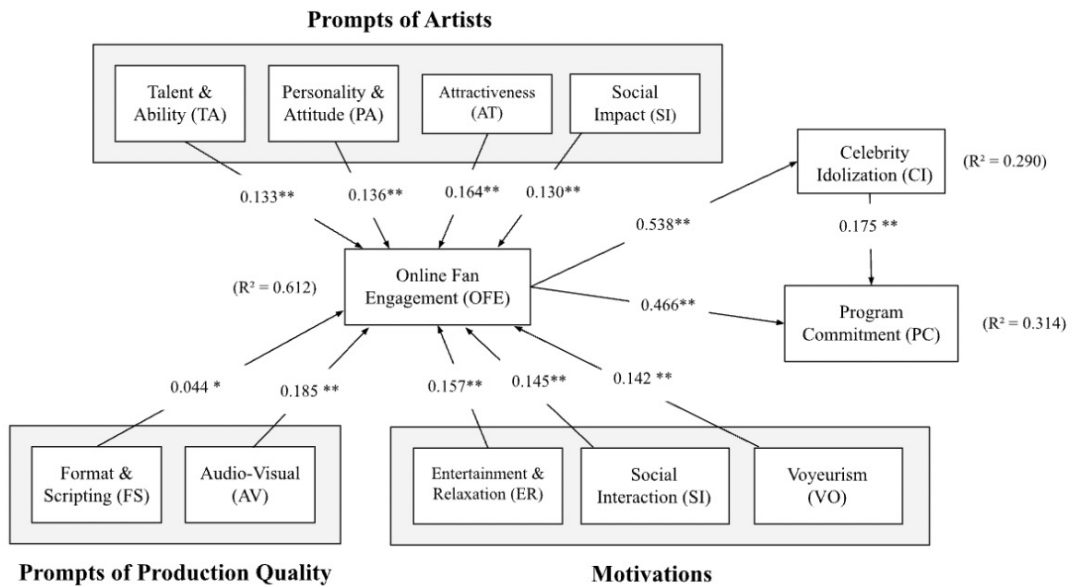


Figure 2. Structural Model Results

This presents path coefficients (β) and determination coefficients (R^2);

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.001$.

Table 7. Summary of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis	Path coefficients	Remark
H1: Talent & Ability → Online Fan Engagement	0.133 (0.026)**	Supported
H2: Personality & Attitude → Online Fan Engagement	0.136 (0.025)**	Supported
H3: Attractiveness → Online Fan Engagement	0.164 (0.025)**	Supported
H4: Social Impact → Online Fan Engagement	0.130 (0.023) **	Supported
H5: Format & Scripting → Online Fan Engagement	0.044 (0.020) *	Supported
H6: Audio-Visual → Online Fan Engagement	0.185 (0.025) **	Supported
H7: Entertainment & Relaxation → Online Fan Engagement	0.157 (0.023) **	Supported
H8: Social Interaction → Online Fan Engagement	0.145 (0.024)**	Supported
H9: Voyeurism → Online Fan Engagement	0.142 (0.025) **	Supported

H10: Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.538 (0.022)**	Supported
H11: Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.466 (0.031)**	Supported
H12: Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.175 (0.031) **	Supported

Standard error in parentheses. ** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$.

Table 8. Summary of Indirect/mediation effects

Indirect/mediation effects	Path coefficients	Remark
Talent & Ability → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.072 (0.014) **	Partial mediation
Talent & Ability → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.062 (0.013)**	Partial mediation
Talent & Ability → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.013 (0.003)**	Partial mediation
Personality & Attitude → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.073 (0.014) **	Partial mediation
Personality & Attitude → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.063 (0.013) **	Partial mediation
Personality & Attitude → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.013 (0.003)**	Partial mediation
Attractiveness → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.088 (0.014)**	Partial mediation
Attractiveness → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.076 (0.013) **	Partial mediation
Attractiveness → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.015 (0.004) **	Partial mediation
Social Impact → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.070 (0.013)**	Partial mediation
Social Impact → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.060 (0.011)**	Partial mediation
Social Impact → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.012 (0.003) **	Partial mediation
Format & Scripting → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.024 (0.011) *	Partial mediation
Format & Scripting → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.020 (0.009) *	Partial mediation
Format & Scripting → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.004 (0.002) *	Partial mediation
Audio-Visual → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.100 (0.014) **	Partial mediation
Audio-Visual → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.086 (0.012)**	Partial mediation

Audio-Visual → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.017 (0.004)**	Partial mediation
Entertainment & Relaxation → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.084 (0.013) **	Partial mediation
Entertainment & Relaxation → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.073 (0.012)**	Partial mediation
Entertainment & Relaxation → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.015 (0.003) **	Partial mediation
Social Interaction → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.078 (0.013) **	Partial mediation
Social Interaction → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.068 (0.012)**	Partial mediation
Social Interaction → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.014 (0.003) **	Partial mediation
Voyeurism → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization	0.076 (0.013) **	Partial mediation
Voyeurism → Online Fan Engagement → Program Commitment	0.066 (0.012)**	Partial mediation
Voyeurism → Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.013 (0.003)**	Partial mediation
Online Fan Engagement → Celebrity Idolization → Program Commitment	0.094 (0.017) **	Partial mediation

*Standard error in parentheses. **p < 0.001, *p < 0.05.*

5. DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

5.1. Discussion

The study found that most fans engaging with reality TV shows are female, aligning with research showing women are more emotionally invested in celebrity culture and fandom behaviors like online promotion and concert attendance (Aruguete, 2024). The majority of respondents were aged 16–30, reflecting the common demographic of young adults who are digitally connected and form parasocial relationships. Music reality shows in Vietnam target the 15–44 age range, driven by advertising agencies’ focus on consumers with disposable income (Burnett & Thai, 2014). Anh Trai Vượt Ngàn Chông Gai (Call Me By Fire Vietnam), a top-rated show, attracted a primarily female audience aged

18-50, generating significant revenue (Que, 2024; Gia Linh, 2024), confirming reality TV’s potential for brand placements (Deery, 2012) while offering spaces for identity and social interaction.

The demographic result also corresponds with studies of Gong and Huang (2022), where the majority of respondents were female and aged between 20 and 30, indicating a similar pattern of audience engagement in music reality shows.

The study’s findings also reveal nuanced insights into the drivers of online fan engagement (OFE) in Vietnam’s music reality TV landscape. While Format & Scripting (H5) demonstrated a statistically significant effect on OFE, its influence was notably weaker compared to Audio-Visual Quality and other key factors. This finding offers a

refinement of previous research, particularly the work of Gong & Huang (2022), which treated “production quality” as a monolithic construct without distinguishing between its specific components. By deconstructing production quality into two distinct dimensions (Audio-Visual and Format & Scripting), this study provides clearer insight into what viewers truly value. The results suggest that audiences are more responsive to immersive sensory experiences, such as sound and visual effects, than to rigid structural elements like script format. This distinction reflects a novel contribution explored in the present research.

Compared to Gong & Huang’s (2022) findings, where production quality did not show a significant impact on engagement, this study found otherwise. One possible explanation lies in the contextual difference between the two audience groups. Gong & Huang’s study focused on international, particularly Chinese, audiences whose entertainment industries are already mature and saturated. In contrast, Vietnam’s cultural and entertainment sector is still in its formative stages, with audiences eager to support high-quality local productions that align with global standards. Vietnamese viewers may perceive improved production quality not only as entertainment value but also as a symbol of national industry development. This also explains why prior Vietnamese studies have concentrated more on production strategies, seeing them as crucial to shaping and uplifting the domestic entertainment landscape.

This aligns with audience interviews from Anh Trai Say Hi, where fans emphasized the importance of “visually stunning performances and emotional authenticity”

over formulaic scripts. As one fan noted, “The show’s grandeur and the artists’ raw talent made me feel connected, even if the format felt familiar”.

This finding resonates with Trang (2024), who argued that Vietnamese audiences reject overly derivative formats reliant on foreign aesthetics (e.g., K-pop). Instead, they gravitate toward content that balances global appeal with local cultural identity - a trend evident in Anh Trai Vuot Ngan Chong Gai, which blended traditional Vietnamese music with modern staging. The supported yet weak effect of H5 indicates that scripted narratives alone are insufficient to replace cultural proximity (Straubhaar, 2007), which remains a pivotal factor shaping audience engagement within Vietnam’s media landscape.

Other hypotheses – Talent & Ability (H1), Personality & Attitude (H2), Social Interaction (H8), and Entertainment & Relaxation (H7), were strongly supported, mirroring global patterns where artist authenticity and parasocial relationships drive engagement (Baym, 2018; van Dijck, 2013). The rise of professionalized fan clubs (FCs) in Vietnam, such as those supporting HIEUTHUAI or Soobin, demonstrates how systematic support (e.g., food trucks, LED campaigns) fosters OFE and loyalty, akin to K-pop fandoms. Fans now engage in “collective effervescence” through synchronized fanchants and lightstick rituals at concerts, practices once exclusive to international markets.

The findings of this study also align with real-world industry trends. The recent rise of Vietnamese music reality shows demonstrates how competition and strategic content adaptation fuel audience

engagement. The direct competition between “Anh Trai Say Hi” and “Anh Trai Vuot Ngan Chong Gai” in 2024 heightened engagement, turning these programs into cultural phenomena (Chi, 2025). This trend mirrors global patterns where competition-based formats boost audience interaction, as seen in studies on K-pop survival shows (Kim & Oh, 2023).

Moreover, the success of these shows is attributed to bold investments, artist dedication, and strong audience support. Unlike other industries, the entertainment sector thrives on unpredictability and emotional resonance (Nguyen, 2025). This unpredictability is a core driver of engagement, particularly in an era where digital media blurs the lines between television, social media, and music consumption. Contestants, often referred to as “brothers” (anh trai, anh tài), extend their influence beyond television, dominating online discussions, topping music charts, and shaping digital fan cultures (Chi, 2025).

The mediation analysis underscores OFE’s pivotal role in fostering Celebrity Idolization (H10) and Program Commitment (H11). This aligns with the commercial success of shows like Anh Trai Vuot Ngan Chong Gai, which generated 340 billion VND in ad revenue by targeting women aged 18–50, a lucrative demographic for brands. The show’s fusion of high production value and audience interactivity, such as real-time voting, created a feedback loop where engagement fueled economic returns, consistent with Deery’s (2012) global observations on reality TV’s profitability.

However, Vietnam’s idol culture thrives on unpredictability, as seen in the 2024 rivalry between Anh Trai Say Hi

and Anh Trai Vuot Ngan Chong Gai (Call Me By Fire Vietnam). This competition not only heightened viewership but also pushed production standards to rival global benchmarks, with concerts selling out in minutes and viral performances garnering international acclaim. As Nguyen (2025) notes, such phenomena reflect a cultural shift where audiences demand both spectacle and authenticity, a balance achieved through bold investments in artist development (e.g., Duong Domic’s 60x fee increase post-show) and fan-centric experiences.

5.2. Limitations and Further Studies

This study did not examine participants’ prior fandom exposure (e.g., K-pop, J-pop), which could influence their engagement behaviors. The cross-sectional design limits understanding of fan engagement over time, and the sample focused on Vietnamese audiences, so the findings may not apply to other cultures. Future research should explore prior fandom experience, use longitudinal approaches, and expand to international audiences for broader comparisons.

Another limitation is the measurement of production-related factors, Format & Scripting (FS) and Audio-Visual Quality (AV), each captured by only one observed item. This was due to the lack of previous studies separating production quality into distinct elements. Future research should include more observed variables for FS and AV to provide a more complete picture.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on empirical findings, this study provides insights into the factors driving online fan engagement (OFE) in Vietnam’s music reality TV landscape. It reveals that

while visual appeal significantly influences online fan engagement, content structure alone does not apply a notable effect. Artist attributes (Talent & Ability, Personality & Attitude), audience motivations (Social Interaction, Entertainment & Relaxation), and cultural relevance play key roles in shaping fan engagement. The structural model further confirms that online fan engagement significantly mediates Celebrity Idolization and Program Commitment, highlighting its importance in Vietnam's entertainment industry.

The commercial success of recent music reality programs in Vietnam further reflects the economic relevance of understanding audience engagement mechanisms. Future research should examine the longitudinal effects of online fan engagement on artist sustainability and further explore structural gaps, such as gender representation, within Vietnam's idol culture. Practically, these

findings provide guidance for producers, artists, and media practitioners in designing visual elements and content strategies that align with audience psychology and engagement motivations identified in this study. By understanding how talent, personality attributes, cultural relevance, and social - interactive motives drive online engagement, industry stakeholders can develop more targeted promotional activities, strengthen artist - fan relationships, and foster more sustainable program commitment. From a societal perspective, the study also enables audiences to better recognize their own media consumption motives, encouraging more reflective and meaningful participation in Vietnam's evolving entertainment environment. Overall, this study advances understanding of fan engagement dynamics in Vietnam and provides valuable insights for the strategic development of the country's entertainment industry.

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