

Parasocial Relationships: Dating Your Favorite Celebrities?

An Analysis of Fans' Reactions to Luhan and Guan Xiao Tong's Relationship

Extensive research has been done in the field of media psychology regarding the concepts of Parasocial Interaction (PSI) and Parasocial Relationships (PSR). Horton and Wohl (1956) first put forth the term PSI as the reaction of a media user toward a media performer during (and restricted to) the viewing episode, in which the media user perceives the performer as an intimate conversational partner. In other words, PSI refers to a false sense of mutual awareness that arises in a media user that occurs during viewing. A similar concept that is often interchanged with PSI is PSR, in which the media user forms a more enduring relationship with the media performer that may commence during viewing, but can extend beyond the single viewing episode (Dibble, Hartmann, & Rosaen, 2015).

In the article [*Fans Dibikin Baper dengan Foto Mesra Luhan dan Guan Xiao Tong*](#), it is depicted such that fans have formed a PSR with the main subject of the article: Luhan. Luhan is a Chinese singer and actor, well-known for his previous affiliation with the world-renowned South Korean-Chinese boy group EXO. Fans all over the world are susceptible to PSI with members of boy groups, as they often go on tour for concerts (in which media performers interact with or direct their attention toward the audience) and are repeatedly presented in the media. According to Wirth (2006 in Hu, 2016), repeated PSI with media performers may lead to PSR. Thereupon, repeated PSI between fans and Luhan lead to PSR.

A similar concept, media interaction, was introduced by Nordlund (1978). He defined it as “a multifaceted phenomenon of audience involvement in certain portions of media fare, ranging from readiness to be preoccupied with and muse upon media characters, to talk about them with others, to relate their circumstances to one’s own, to feel as if in some relationship with them and, at the extreme, to get fully involved in their fate” (p. 151). The fans’ interest in the personal life of Luhan and the behaviour of

discussing it with others poses as evidence that mediated interaction is present. Furthermore, the negative emotional reactions and comments that arose due to the disclosure of Luhan's affiliation with Guan also depict a certain level of social involvement.

Giles (2002) argued that when media users make judgments about media performers during PSI, there is an application of personal knowledge (such as perceived physical attractiveness and favourable personality characteristics). These judgments then produce certain affective responses from media users. If PSI is pleasing to the media user, they may engage themselves in various activities after exposure, for instance, imitating the media performer's behaviour, discussing them with other people, imagining interactions with them, and attempting to contact them (Hu, 2016). Judgments made by the fans that were emotionally affected by the news of Luhan's relationship were based on the usage of their personal knowledge regarding Luhan, such as how physically attractive they found him and pleasing personality characteristics (made from inferences based on media depictions). Since PSI was satisfactory, fans engaged themselves in discussions about Luhan, made inquiries about his love life, and sought out verification in the form of visual proof (pictures of the two celebrities together).

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