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I. K-POP Culture: Idol Birthday Celebrations

K-POP is such a big part of South Korean culture and when in Seoul it is only right to experience some of the fun parts within K-POP. Besides the concerts and festivals that happen very frequently, celebrating idol's birthdays are also a very big part of the K-POP fan experience. While in Seoul I had the opportunity to experience these things with some of my classmates.

a. Birthday Cafes

One of the major celebrations done for idols are what fans call "birthday cafes". Dedicated fans and fanclubs will partner with a cafe of their choosing and turn the cafe into the theme of the idol's whose birthday is happening. Typically, these events will last at least one week leading up to the idol's actual birthday date. When visiting these cafes, special menus will be prepared and if you purchase from this menu fans will be gifted items such as a customized paper cup, photocards, keychains, etc. Additionally, the cafes themselves will be decorated with pictures or décor related to the idols. If you visit with friends, it is a great opportunity for many photo-ops. And to find the location of these birthday cafes, you can easily search on Twitter as many fans will post about and make threads of the many locations around Seoul. The Hongdae area is usually the area where many of these birthday cafe events will happen.

b. Public Advertisements

Another major celebration are advertisements that are custom designed by fanclubs. These advertisements are typically displayed at metro stations, bus stations, and sometimes even as billboards around the city. As these advertisements are sometimes displayed on TV screens with different ads playing on loop, many fans will wait and stand by these advertisements just to get a glimpse and take pictures of the birthday ads that will show up.

c. Exhibits/Installations

Not as common as birthday cafes, however, some fanclubs will rent public spaces to pop-up installations related to the idols to celebrate their birthdays. For example, maybe a ginormous blow-up doll of the idol's cartoon character may be spotted on the streets of Hongdae. Other times there will be physical exhibitions like art/museum exhibits where the fanclubs will display photos, items, and art pieces related to the idols.

d. Birthday Party Fan-meetings

The least common are fan-meetings hosted by the idols themselves to meet their fans on the day of their birthdays. Not every idol does these types of events and

typically tickets to these events are only available for fans who have membership to the official fanclubs of the idols. Therefore, if an event does happen tickets are also hard to obtain. During these events the idols may play short games, chat, or perform a few songs for the audience.



