

**THE DEMOTIC PROCESS IN ASTRO STAR QUEST
CONTESTANTS FROM 2006-2016**

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KUALA LUMPUR**

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**THE DEMOTIC PROCESS IN ASTRO STAR QUEST CONTESTANTS
FROM 2006-2016**

ABSTRACT

In the past decades, scholars in the field of popular music study into demotic turn or celebrification. However, there is a lack of study in Malaysia, even in Asian countries. Many scholars also argued that the cultural and social needs in the perspective of building up the images of celebrity. Therefore, this research took on a case study in examining the demotic turn in Astro Star Quest and its impact upon celebrification of local Chinese popular artist in Malaysia. Astro Star Quest (ASQ) has long impacted the local C-pop industry nurturing popular musical talents, with notable example including Nicholas Teo, Gary Chaw, Vincent Chong, Anthony Tan and many more. In addition, this study also investigates as to whether there is a modelling pattern in ASQ in developing and marketing Malaysian Chinese pop artists. This qualitative research took on a naturalistic inquiry approach and was conducted in three ways towards (a) Participant observation, (b) observation and (c) individual in-depth interview. Outcomes reveal the music and image making process and changes in ASQ from year 2006 to 2016. Data from the study including the career prospect of the artists were analyzed and discussed based on Frith's and Auslander's theory of star personality, song personality and real personality. As a conclusion, the study shows how ASQ delivered a demotic turn in shaping the artist's image and singing style, and not only that, it is important in its role in developing the Malaysian C-pop industry.

Keywords: Demotic turn, celebrification, popular music, Malaysia, Astro Star Quest.

PROSES DEMOTIK DALAM KALANGAN PESERTA ASTRO STAR QUEST

DARI TAHUN 2006 – 2016

ABSTRAK

Pada dekad yang lalu, pendeta-pendeta muzik popular telah mengkaji topik *demotic turn* dan *celebrification*. Walaubagaimanapun, kajian berkenaan masih kurang mencukupi di Malaysia dan negara-negara Asia. Pendeta-pendeta berhujah bahawa keperluan sosial dan kebudayaan dalam pembinaan imej dalam kalangan selebriti. Sedemikian, kajian ini menggunakan kaedah kajian kes untuk mengkaji *demotic turn* dalam Astro Star Quest dan impak terhadap *celebrification* ke atas artis-artis yang terkenal di Malaysia. ASQ telah memberikan impak yang mendalam terhadap industri C-pop di Malaysia dalam melahirkan penyanyi yang berperingkat antarabangsa seperti Nicholas Teo, Gary Chaw, Vincent Chong, Anthony Tan and lain-lain. Tambahan pula, kajian ini juga menyiasat sama ada kemunculan corak kemodelan dalam melahirkan atau memasarkan pop artis Cina di Malaysia menerusi program ini. Kajian kualitatif ini telah dilaksanakan menerusi pendekatan siasatan naturalistik dan menggunakan tiga cara iaitu (a)pemerhatian secara penglibatan, (b)pemerhatian dan (c)temubual individu. Keputusan membuktikan bahawa munculnya perubahan dalam proses membina imej dan muzik dari 2006 hingga 2016. Data dari kajian menunjukkan bahawa perbincangan dan analisis prospek kerjaya bergantung kepada teori personaliti artis, personaliti lagu dan personaliti sebenar yang dikemukakan oleh Frith dan Auslander. Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian ini menyampaikan *demotic turn* dalam membentuk imej and gaya muzik para peserta,

malahan memegang peranan yang penting dalam perkembangan industri C-pop di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Demotic turn, celebrification, muzik popular, Malaysia, Astro Star Quest.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Abstrak	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Figures.....	x
List of Tables.....	xi
List of Symbols and Abbreviations	xii
List of Appendices	xiii
CHAPTER 1:INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the Study	4
1.3 Statement of Problem.....	5
1.4 Research Objectives	7
1.5 Research Questions.....	8
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	9
1.7 Limitation	10
1.8 Conclusion.....	11

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Chinese Popular Music and Malaysia	13
2.3 The Development of Reality Television	17
2.4 Demotic Turn and Celebrification in Reality TV Programs.....	24
2.5 Performer's Identity In Popular Music	29
2.6 Conclusion.....	32
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	34
3.1 Introduction	34
3.2 Participant Observation and Observation	35
3.3 Individual In-depth Interview.....	36
3.4 Participant	37
3.5 Data Analysis	40
3.6 Conclusion.....	41
CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	42
4.1 Introduction	42
4.2 ASQ Reality TV Competition and Process Changes	43
4.2.1 Musical Process in ASQ.....	44
4.2.2 Training of the Future Celebrity.....	53
4.3 Entanglement between Real, Song and Star Personalities in ASQ	56
4.4 Engaging Audience as Gimmick in ASQ	71
4.5 The Reception of ASQ and Artist's Career Prospect	76
4.6 Conspiracy in the Process of Demotic Turning	94

4.7 Conclusion.....	96
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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY . 99

5.1 Introduction.....	99
-----------------------	----

5.2 Summary of Finding.....	99
-----------------------------	----

5.3 Suggestions for Future Study.....	102
---------------------------------------	-----

5.4 Conclusion.....	102
---------------------	-----

References.....	104
-----------------	-----

Appendix.....	114
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University of Malaya

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1a: Faysa Goh (champion for 2004).....	38
Figure 1b: Miko Chu (2 nd runner up for 2011)	39
Figure 1c: Fish Oh (finalist for 2010)	39
Figure 2: The development of musical process in ASQ.....	45
Figure 3: Average viewing rate less than 10 views in 2009.....	49
Figure 4: Excessive audition videos in 2013 had decreased the overall viewing rate....	49
Figure 5: Lower viewing rate of the previous seasons of ASQ 2015.....	50
Figure 6: Increased viewing rate of ASQ 2016 with MTV production	50
Figure 7: Training provided since 2006 to increase the celebrification of the contestants.....	54
Figure 8: Celebrification and the three enactments in ASQ 2016.....	56
Figure 9: Bigger crowd with more than 10k audience in ASQ 2016 Final.	57
Figure 10: The sponsored hairdo by the image stylist.....	59
Figure 11: The Singing Stylistic Formation Since 1996.....	60
Figure 12: Communication method with audience	72
Figure 13: Relationship between Reception of ASQ and Career Prospect before 2006.	77
Figure 14: Relationship between Reception of ASQ and Career Prospect after 2006....	77

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Comparison number of followers among five finalists on Facebook (updated by April 2018)	79
Table 2: Discography, filmography and career of 20 post ASQ winners)	84
Table 3: Discography, filmography and career of post ASQ finalists)	86

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASQ	: Astro Star Quest
ATQ	: Astro Talent Quest
AI	: American Idol
TV	: Television
DIY	: Do it yourself
MTV	: Music Television
TMS	: Top Million Star

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Consent Letter for Miko Chu Yi Pei

Appendix B: Consent Letter for Fayse Goh Kok Hooi

Appendix C: Consent Letter for Fish Oh Suet Yee

Appendix D: Questions for Interview

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study examined the most long run Chinese idol singing competition in Malaysia, Astro Star Quest in bringing in C-pop in Malaysia since 1996. Reality television program relies simultaneously on both worldwide, cross-national format and localized nationwide context that offers a platform to inspect contemporary progress of globalization and localization (Livio, 2010). The first ever televised idol singing competition in Europe is based on the idea to assemble the Europe countries with a light entertainment program. The winners went through a voting process by judges from respective European countries. The voting system was then adapted to many other idols singing competition such as China's *Wo Shi Geshou* (我是歌手) or I am Singer, Asia Bagus, worldwide idol series singing competition (Hay Superstar, Bangladeshi Idol, Australian Idol, American Idol, Canadian Idol, Indonesian Idol, Malaysian Idol) and so on. Eurovision Singing Competition first took place at Lugano, Switzerland on 24 May 1956 (Schwarm-Bronson, 2001). On the first season, there were contestants from seven European countries participated in this idol singing competition. It was then increased to greater participation. The concept of this televised singing competition was using the chosen song by the representative countries and sung by the singers of each countries. This televised singing competition was transform into another similar format which held in South Korea.

According to O' Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery and Fiske (1994), the cultural imperialism in Asia is dominated by the western cultures on advertising certain products, fashions and styles which support the nation's cultural values, ideals and practices. This western wave is then extended to Korea. Howard (2006) studied how Korean pop music industry develop the artist's image through their appearance, costumes and performing style. Moreover, the collaboration between mass media and music industry took an important role to advertise artists through historical, political and cultural approach. In 1980, Korea had the first ever televised idol singing competition in the world, organized by Korea Broadcasting System (KBS). KBS's Nationwide Singing Competition (전국노래자랑) known as the most long live televised idol singing competition in Korea. This live singing competition held in different places with the local elderly audience. It aimed to enhance tourism in Korea and promotes the cultural identity in Korean music. Eventually, this televised singing competition has aroused many other popular singing programs in Korea and other countries, such as New York City, Tokyo, and Shenyang (Kim, 2016).

The televised idol singing competition were also introduced in Hong Kong by 1982. The first televised idol singing competition had aroused by Television Broadcasts Limited (TVB), the longest running TV channel in Hong Kong (TVB.com, 2017). TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship (全球华人新秀大赛) is an annual singing competition which aimed to unearth talented singers to enter Asian music industry. Many representative singers are actually born from this show, such as Anita Mui (champion of 1982), Lui Fong (champion of 1983), Leon Lai (2nd runner up of 1986), and so on. This program is then adapted in other countries such as Malaysia. This televised

idol singing program also aimed the Chinese singers from overseas, therefore they held preliminary audition in other countries, for instance Vancouver and Sydney.

During 1990s, television show producers across Malaysia has organized and aired Malaysian character's live national singing competition program. Few notable examples are: Who Will Win Malaysia's Top Star (2004), Malaysian Idol (2004), One in A Million (2006) and Bintang RTM (1959). These televised idols singing competitions utilized the audition session to discover the potential singers. Contestants who qualified into semifinals will be ranked based on their performance score throughout several competition segment and challenges based on competition format. The similar format for the judging system of televised singing competition was required in this era. Unfortunately, the lifespan in some of the singing competition was rather short. Malaysian Idol only managed two seasons even though this show has gained large followers in Malaysia thanked to the broadcasting of famed American Idol around the same time (Juliana Abdul Wahab, 2010).

Malaysia is a multiracial country, comprising three main races: Malay and Bumiputera, Chinese, and Indian. Statistically, Malay and Bumiputera held the highest percentage population in Malaysia by ethnicity which recorded at 68.8 percent, followed by Chinese (23.2 %), Indians (7.0 %) and others (1.0 %), from total population figure of 32.3 million. (Malaysian Department of Statistics, 2018). Thus, the C-pop market is not big based on the percentage of the Chinese population and the Chinese idol singing competition were firstly introduced by ASTRO Company in 1996. ASTRO (All Asia Television and Radio Company), the very first satellite broadcasting television company in Malaysia, was being introduced. Astro Star Quest (ASQ), previously was named Astro Talent Quest) is the first ever Chinese televised idol singing competition in Malaysia. The

format of this televised idol program was adapted from Hong Kong's TVB Chinese New Talent Singing Competition. Astro Star Quest (ASQ) is an idolized Chinese singing competition held annually in Malaysia organized by ASTRO *Wah Lai Toi*, which was first aired on the same year that ASTRO was founded (Astro Star Quest, 2016). This televised idol program was the first Chinese idol singing competition held in Malaysia, and also the longest running Malaysian Chinese reality TV program currently. The competition aims to search for young talents among the Malaysian Chinese between ages 18 to 28. The winner and 1st runner-up will then represent Malaysia at the Worldwide Singing Competition, such as Top Million Star in Taiwan (华人星光大道) and TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship in Hong Kong (TVB 全球华人新秀大赛). After this idol singing program being televised, this program promotes the conception of other Chinese televised idol singing competition being held in Malaysia, such as I Wanna Sing (我要唱好歌), Ultimate Power Star (终极天王), Ultimate Power Star II (非常好声), and others.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, background of this study was based on the various studies on idol singing competition worldwide, for instance American Idol, Canadian Idol, Malaysian Idol and so on. The alteration and moderation of idol singing competition in Hong Kong and the similar judging format was being adopted in Astro Star Quest.

According to Turner (2010), he coined 'the demotic turn' as "the increasing visibility of the 'ordinary person' as they have turned themselves into media content through celebrity culture, reality TV, DIY web-sites, talk radio and the like" (p.2). Astro Star Quest (ASQ) promotes many talented contestants who have gone on to become successful artists in entertainment industry. There are numerous outstanding examples for the demotic turn in this idol singing competition. For example, Nicholas Teo who is the winner of the 2002 edition, Anthony Chang attained the first runner-up of the 2006 edition, Vincent Chong who won 1st runner-up for 2002 and Gary Chaw, the 1999 contestant.

In celebrity studies, "the demotic turn" intimately related to "celebrification". Turner (2004) defines celebrification as:

We can map the precise moment a public figure becomes a celebrity. It occurs at the point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role (such as their specific achievements in politics or sport) to investigating the details of their private life. (2004, p.8)

The presence of a celebrity is an intertextual network of continuously public appearance in primary, secondary and tertiary texts (Fiske, 1987). Rojek (2004) defines celebrity as "the attribution of glamorous or notorious status to an individual within the public sphere" (p.10). Meanwhile, "celebrification" defined as the process for

transforming ordinary people or public figures into celebrities (Driessens, 2013). She anticipated to reserve this term for the social and cultural changes implied by celebrities. The transformation from ordinary person to celebrity can be seen as a media ritual that involved the spectacular manifestation of individuality (Couldry, 2006; Dyer, 2004). Turner (2006) retain celebrification as the process of an individual becomes well-known, which he later labels it as celebritization. However, there are more scholar to argue that celebrification is more suitable than celebritization in indicate the process of individual achieve fame in society (Gamson,1994; Couldry, 2006; Dyer, 2004; Krotz, 2007; Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Driessens, 2012).

The terms of 'celebrification' and 'demotic turn' will be used in the research as the definition for both terms are different meaning. Demotic turn is a process that contribute to the achievement of 'celebrification.' Yet, 'celebrification' were used for the post contestants in Astro Star Quest meanwhile 'demotic turn' were used to explain the process of contestants before being a celebrity. Therefore, this study employs these two terminologies in looking at the music making process of ASQ.

1.3 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Astro Star Quest has produced many singers that had impacted on the local C-pop industry such as Nicholas Teo, Gary Chaw, Danny Koo, Uriah See and many others. These successful singers had succeeded mostly in Asian countries such as China and Taiwan. Compared to the winners of other singing competition, ASQ had played an important role in promoting new artists.

In the process of ASQ, the competition format allowed chances for contestants to develop their skills in composition, music production, speech managements and dancing, and many more. During the competition, the contestants were pressured to achieve expectation and target given by peer, trainers and producers. The trend of demotic turn in ASQ had been modified from various reality TV programs such as TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship, Top Million Star, Sing! China and American Idol. In recent years, the changes of musical process in ASQ had increased the viewing rate of the audience such as the voting system in ASQ besides than panel judging system. In this situation, the modulation of this idol singing competition preferred by the audience as the communication within the program show and audience had increased.

In past studies, there were researches on English singing competition such as American Idol, Canadian Idol, Malaysian Idol, Indonesian Idol and so on. However, there wasn't any study conducted on Chinese Idol singing competition in Malaysia before. Therefore, the method of ASQ in delivering the celebrification of the demotic turn is yet to be analyzed. Many questions were unanswered for example, what is the source of influence towards ASQ from a global context, criteria of judging, and its processes in the celebrification of a new comer that may involve many music and extra-musical factors. Thus, this study attempts to answer these problem statements.

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research aimed to examine how ASQ has revolutionized the Malaysian C-pop industry. In order to delve deeper into the process of a demotic turn for the most long run Chinese televised idol program in Malaysia, this study looked into ASQ from year 1996 to 2016 and focus on a case study of its winner in year 2016. The study was based on three objectives:

1. To investigate the musical process of demotic turn in Astro Star Quest in Malaysia.
2. To examine the demotic turn of Astro Star Quests winners based on Frith's and Auslander's concept of real personality, star personality, and song personality.
3. To investigate the celebrification of ASQ and its relation to the Malaysian Chinese C-pop industry

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the objectives of the research above, the research questions are:

1. What is the musical process of ASQ (Astro Star Quest) in contributing to celebrification?
2. In what way the contestant achieved a demotic turn negotiating between real personality, star image and song personality based on the concept of Frith and Auslander?
3. During the music and image-making processes in ASQ, which segment is deemed to be the most important and which has remained at the periphery of attention?
4. In what way the career prospect of the winner and finalist illustrates the impact of ASQ in the local C-pop music industry?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Singing competition reality TV show forms a new entry into the popular music industry and its making of new artist in a global context. This attracted scholars from the popular music and urban ethnomusicology fields to discover the criteria on judging system of idol singing competition and the demotic turn of the contestants (Turner, 2010; Meizel, 2011; Gamson, 1994; Walker-Hill, 2007). Since year 1996, the annual singing competition Astro Star Quest became the most popular, and most talked televised competition among Malaysia Chinese society. Every year, this competition had become

a platform for prospect singers to measure their talent on a live stage and explore their career in music industry. The alteration format of ASQ had increased the bigger crowd of the music talents to develop their music career in the international level. Artists produced by ASQ successfully become prominent stars in local and Taiwan C-pop music industry. Yet, there was no studies being carried out to analysis the format and judging system of this singing competition.

Thus, this study is significant in its aims in investigating the process of demotic turn in ASQ and forms a historical reference for the development of Malaysian C-pop industry and its stylistic formation. After all the research being conducted in this theme, gap of the study is discovered. There was no scholarly research carried out for the demotic turn in Chinese Idol Singing Competition and its contribution in the stylistic formation of the next breed of Malaysian idols.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations in this research. Primarily, this research will only focus on one televised idol singing competition in Malaysia, which is Astro Star Quest. Participant observation was limited to year 2008 when the author was one of its contestant, where data from reflexivity is available. Apart from this, observation of its musical process from 1996-2016 was provided via observation without participant observation. However, out of an attempt to contact and interview the 100 contestants and 10 finalists, interviews were limited to the only 3 finalists of ASQ year 2004, 2010 and 2011 were willing to participate in this research. Norm to the study of popular music, opportunity for interviewing artists is limited due to a large rejection from finalists and successful

ASQ winners, therefore, data from other sources such as virtual fieldwork that examined into Facebook, online ASQ official pages, press interviews were included.

1.8 CONCLUSION

Along with past researches on demotic turn such as Turner (2010) and Meizel (2011), this research took on a qualitative approach in examining the process of celebrification that leads to demotic turn in singers who took part in the ASQ. In addition, its outcome that contributes to the making of new artists in the local C-pop industry was documented. In what follow, a literature review was reported as the first taken in this study.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, past studies and popular music studies that looked into theories of demotic turn and reality television programs were reviewed. In addition, studies on the development on Chinese popular music in Malaysia are also examined.

In an earlier study, Turner (2004) stated that media constructed the connections within the public. Now, this phenomenon has transformed into the other form other than the fourth estate. Yet, Turner (2010) in his later writing also mentioned that,

There is yet sign that the influence of celebrity culture has reached its limits. Rather, celebrity content has become fundamental to the news media in the twenty-first century. From mass market magazines to nightly television programmes to online editions of newspapers, celebrity news has proved its capacity to attract attention and to drive consumption. (2010, p.11)

The celebrity culture is expanding so rapidly, that the audiences nowadays are more attracted to news and content related to celebrity world (Turner, 2010). This culture will generate new methods to represent, consume and produce celebrity in different way. Different platform is gradually developed to endorse the celebrity culture, especially on television programs such as televised idol program. Additionally, Turner also assumed that the demotic turn will surge the new relationship between culture and media. Therefore, Turner coined this term to inspect the influences for media in constructing the celebrification or stardom, and the identity that have been constructed for the celebrity

after the televised program in 20th century. In this chapter, as the topic involved Chinese popular music, television reality shows and theoretical concepts involving demotic turn, literatures in these sub-categories were reviewed prior to research.

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2.2 CHINESE POPULAR MUSIC AND MALAYSIA

Chinese popular music or C-pop is defined as a musical genre by artists originating from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan (Fung, 2007). The development of Chinese was popular music initially influenced by Western culture and Japanese enka (Friedlander, 1991; Ho, 2000; Ge, 2009; Moskowitz, 2009; Rupke & Blank, 2009; Shin & Ho, 2009; Li, 2011). Famous *shidaiqu* or songs of the times had its origin from the old Shanghai days (Loo & Loo, 2014). The Cultural Revolution in China contributed the dramatic changes in economy and culture of China (Rupke & Blank, 2009; Shin & Ho, 2011; Bai, 2014). The form of Chinese popular music is very different from western countries due to the different political structures, cultural and social values (Peters, 1991; De Kloet, 2005; Chik, 2010; Oi, 2016).

Additionally, the linkage between European and U.S. music industry develop the recorded music in early 1900s (Li, 2011; Ge, 2009). These music industries emerge the growth of recorded music in China during mid of 1900s. In 1914, the first recording-pressing plant and recording studio in the Shanghai French Concession. It originally recorded Peking opera, but later expanded to Mandarin popular music (Li, 2011). During the beginning of the 20th century, phonograph were primarily used as recording tool for China's popular music (Li, 2011). From 1920 to 1950, '*shidaiqu*' defined as contemporary music sung in Mandarin or other Chinese dialects being introduced in Chinese society (Shin & Ho, 2009).

According to Rupke and Blank (2009), they stated that,

This “opening” to the West has included major exportation of goods, but western products and ideas have been coming into China as well. Particularly interesting is the influx of popular culture, and, more specifically, American music, and the ways that it is received in Chinese society. Rather than consuming only music that is current or popular in the West, Chinese seem to select American music according to their own tastes, choosing songs that affirm their historical values and contemporary life experiences. (2009, p.128)

Rupke and Blank (2009) stated that the Western culture were adapted into the Eastern countries. The alteration has suited into their current historical value and daily practices. Li Jin Hui is known as the father of popular music. This song was released on 1929 by EMI, the largest record company in Shanghai and sang by his daughter, Li Ming Hui. “The Drizzle” was composed in child-like girlish tone and folk music form to promote Mandarin through mass media. According to Shin & Ho (2009), they stated that

the music genre of Anglo-American disseminated to different countries in order to create a new style of music-making and subsequently revolutionized modern convention in local music. Jazz and Chinese folk music element were incorporated in Li Jin Hui's music where the tune is in traditional pentatonic folk melody, combined with American jazz orchestration. Li turned his attention to romantic Jazz music after gained tremendous attention from public (Chen, 2005).

During the period of colonization of Japanese on Manchuria, pop music was being left out. But soon after, Chinese pop music was being marketed, reformed and branded regionally after the Second Sino-Japanese War and World War II. The first Shanghai recorded music industry that established in 1903 then had promoted Chinese pop music to Hong Kong (Rupke & Blank, 2009).

The Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1970 noted a substantial impact on China's economy and culture (Bai, 2014). In 1960s, development of local Chinese recording industry began to emerge in South East Asia. Some popular local singers in Singapore and Malaysia achieved some success outside the region. There is notable popularity achievement of Poon Sow Keng (Malaysian) and Zhang Xiaoying (Singaporean) in this era (Lockard, 1998).

During 1980s, Chinese "rock and roll" music grow rapidly (Ho, 2000). Shuker (2005) stated that "Television helped popularize the new music, and established several of its performers, most notably Elvis Presley, as youth icons" (p.269). Therefore, it promoted numerous Chinese version cover song of American and English pop song being interpreted (Friedlander, 1991). In this era, a representative Chinese rock musician, Cui Jian has provoked Chinese authorities and democratic principles paradoxes in China. He

also recognized himself as the first rock performer in China in the mid-1980s (Peters, 1991). Then, the surging of *dakou* culture in the mid of 1990 mark the new generation of Chinese Rock Music. De Kloet (2005) argue that “*dakou* culture not only illustrates the continuous importance of popular music in Chinese youth culture, but it also signals an increasing involvement with the West, which does not rule out the possibility of voicing out discontent” (p.610). Likewise, the growth of *dakou* culture in Chinese culture had increase the marketization and globalization between east and west. Towards the end of 90s, singers prefer to perform in R&B and hip-hop genre that interrelated with the culture (Moskowitz, 2009). The evolution of Chinese pop witnessed a transformation from the once heterophonic folk song to a much Western influence with homophonic texture, harmony, and repetitive riff and hook as in Chin and Loo’s study of repetitive motifs (2015). At the same time, a revival of Chinese-ness in C-pop via the wave of China Wind (Chow & de Kloet, 2010) was present in some singers such as Lee Hom and Jay Chou.

In Malaysia, due to the population of Chinese as minority, the C-pop industry is not as big as compared to the Malay pop industry. Thus, literature concerning C-pop in Malaysia is rare and a majority of scholars studied Malay popular music as Malaysian popular music. The neglected area of Chinese popular music, however, attracts attention of a few scholars such as Tan (1984), Loo and Loo (2012, 2013, 2014), Tee and Loo (2014), and Matusky and Tan (2017). Tan study the culture of *Ko-Tai* as in song stage with various performances including Chinese *shidaiqu* where it was active during the pre- and post- second World War period. In the study of Matusky and Tan (2017), the origin of Chinese popular music in Malaysia through the pop yeh yeh phenomenon was discussed.

In addition, Loo and Loo (2012, 2013, 2014) along with Tee and Loo (2014) highlighted the use of Chinese popular music genre in local musical theatre that includes recontextualized *shidaiqu* performances in a modern setting, re-arrangement of *huangmei* ditties in a Chinese popular song context and Buddhist musical that adapt to popular music genre. In a way, these works reflected the phenomenon of China Wind, as a revival of Chinese-ness and at the same time, reflecting modernity or Westernized concepts. However, there is a lack of study in Malaysia that follow up with the wave of Television reality show and popular singing competition such as Punathambekar (2010) on Indian Idol, Meizel (2011) and Ciulla, Mocanu, Baronchelli, Gonçalves, Perra and Vespignani (2012) on American Idol.

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF REALITY TELEVISION

Historically, the origin of reality TV is a production a television series, Candid Camera that captured the daily life of people, whom founded by Allan Funt. This TV program examines a range of programs which entitled a privileged relation to the reality and facts. As time goes by, reality TV had developed into another form of presence on screen, which incorporated with another type of existing television production and added in the genre of hybridity. The urge of reality TV also boosted the contribution of cultural studies.

Laughey (2007) stated that the capability of media advertisement on television is to capture the public mood. Moreover, broadcasting media were able to increase the tension towards the total experience of public through the content of the play. In general, some scholars such as Williams (2003) summarized a triangulation of production,

audience and text as media theory. In 1950s, television took an important role to distribute, promote and develop music industry (Shuker, 2008). Entertainment program were broadcasted through television which includes popular music programs (MTV), light entertainment related musicians, music documentaries, and musical performance. There are many genres of music being advertised on television. The rock tradition during 90s has emerged the development on rock music and public's appearance. Television aided to promote the popular music. The total experience (or context) of listening to the broadcast added to the tension caused by the content of the play. Shuker (2008) stated that,

'Reality television' is used to describe a variety of programming ranging from crime and emergency-style shows, to talk shows, docusoaps, and some forms of access-style programming. Emerging in the 1980s in the United States, it established itself as a central part of mainstream, popular television by the mid-1990s. In the 2000s, reality television has become the leading program format, with many shows internationally franchised (e.g. Survivor; Big Brother). A hybrid genre, reality television draws on and reworks generic codes and conventions from a variety of sources, using new technology (e.g. camcorders) to convey a sense of immediacy and authenticity to viewers. (2008, p.270-271)

In 2000s, idol concept was brought into Asia popular music industry (Oi, 2016). According to Jerslev (2014), celebrities were able to attract public's attention on global injustices. It conveys both positive and negative impact on public through media, which depends on their personification. In this era, English took place in the mainstream and alternative music, which also indicate declination of Cantopop (Chik, 2010). Similar type

of research toward demotic term and celebrification has been carried out in many countries, except Singapore and Malaysia.

Recently, reality television has substantiated the transformation of global popular music. With the media visibility on television, it formed the image of pop idol and pop star. Because of that, the localized reality TV program also being introduced in many Asian countries. Thus, there are plenty of scholars who took initiatives to discover the uniqueness of localized reality TV programs (Juliana Abdul Wahab, 2010; Baltruschat, 2009; Coutas, 2006; Fairchild, 2007; Jensen, 2012; Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak, 2011). The adaptation of imported popular culture had increased the number of audience of own country and other countries. The influences of Korean pop were deliberately replaced English pop since 1990s (Howard, 2006). The unprecedented success of Korean TV dramas around Asia has been termed as Hallyu in Korean and Korean Wave in English, which has led to scholarly interest. (Jung, 2010; Kim, 2016). The K-pop movement became a model for current era superstar to encounter the conventional musical styles. The Korean culture and entertainment industry had been conquering the world, including the daily appearance and pop music (Leong, 2014).

Additionally, the idol concept began to rely on musical talent quests. Some shows utilized audience votes in the judging system, associated with judging panels. In several competitions, pop stars and idol have been constructed through musical talent quest. For instance, Kelly Clarkson from American Idol.

According to Hartley (2009), he stated that popular media contributes to the disreputable tradition of moralizing critiques that urge the importance of cultural studies. Meanwhile, Turner (2010) expressed concerned about the essential alteration of the performance on media, yet he concentrates on the recognition of selected amateur in media and the ultimate reflection within media and performers and producers.

These shows operate on the display value of the confession, which . . . often deals with the pathologization of the nuclear family. The normal American family is a family of dark, hidden secrets... Trash television, as the new postmodern theater of public confession, now has the power to incriminate the entire public as it reflects a perverse and already widespread normalcy. (McLaren & Hammer, 1996, p.111)

Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, and Peters (2013) stated that emerge of “trash television” had gained the attention of audience although the content of the shows may not be real. Originally, reality TV revealed the truth of people’s reaction on screen with the exposure of their daily life. But, the paradoxes among audience in watching the reality TV happened when most part of people desired to be entertained by the reality TV. Audience desired to find the excitement of their daily life rather than a dull reality. Therefore, McLaren concluded that “as "reality increasingly becomes confused with the image, and the mediascape becomes the driving force of our time... we are entering an age of everyday history and shared popular memory” (p.84). People desired to comment on celebrity’s life for personal enjoyment and entertainment. The culture for reality TV has changed to an “audience based” reality television program. The boundary between ‘reality’ and ‘illusion’ was unclear.

Besides that, Algeo and Algeo (1990) mentioned that,

A notable development in the entertainment industry has been an increase in violence, vulgarity, grotesquerie, and purported realism on television and radio shows, with a corresponding decrease in taste and manners... The low level of taste in the programs of this form of broadcasting is reflected in the terms junk TV show, trash TV, and the related trash-sport event, as well as the highly productive shock (artist, cabaret, jock, jocking, photojournalism, radio, TV, video). Me TV emphasizes self-centeredness and lack of external standards. (Algeo&Algeo, 1990, p.70)

The development and transformation of the reality TV had brought down the quality of reality TV. This phenomenon probably affected by the rating on TV show. In recent years, the rating of TV programs is based on the viewing rate by audience. Audiences nowadays prefer the new idea in reality show where the emotion of public tends to get influenced by the scene of reaction of the live audience. There was news being reported on 'professional' audience being hired to manipulate the public's sympathy on some reality TV. The hired audience was required to react and communicate with the live performance on stage. The better performance of the audience got paid around RMB 700 and RMB 800. The producers utilized audience's 'performance' to increase the rating of their TV channel (Epochtimes, 2017; Oriental Daily, 2017; China Press, 2017).

Audiences derive pleasure from witnessing disorderly scenes through the contained safety of the television screen. Complementing this has been the popularization of a therapeutic discourse of self-improvement and self-help which has been harnessed by television's reality programming sector (talk shows, talent quests and contests), in which anything from spare rooms to step-families can be clinically investigated, made-over, and improved - all before the watchful eye of the 'fly on the wall' camera. Via the 'screen testimonies' broadcast daily on these reality television programs, audiences and contestants are simultaneously entertained and validated by personal stories told in public; unruly reality constrained by expertise, conventions, and technology (Hamilton, 2009, p.32).

With the rapid development of telecommunications technologies today, Hamilton (2009) stated that the means of ordinary individuals to gain popularity through social media are getting easier and more common. The reality TV had emphasized public audience's preference and expectation to improve the rating of their TV show. In 2016, Astro Star Quest had modulated the format of the show. They had inserted the e-voting system and weekly FB live to increase the popularity of the contestants (Astro Star Quest, 2016). This new format had successfully attracted the younger audiences during the final. In addition, Hamilton (2009) was writing about the psychological status of Egan in producing reality TV programs. He noticed the conflict and trauma of being a producer in 'hunting' the psychology of audience to increase the rating of his program. The tragic condition of reality TV reflects the modulation and transformation of contemporary culture.

Dibble (2007) argued that the evolution of musical entrepreneurship during the nineteenth century has urged the idea of money making, although “money-making” was not the prime goal in musical entrepreneurship. Yet, the intermingle of both cultural and economic values should be maintained throughout the development of companies, concert tours, instrument making and so on. Hence, reality TV program was an effective tool in musical entrepreneurship. Thompson (2007) stated that the relations between commercialism and criticism in reality TV. The commercialism in reality TV would increase the program rating indirectly. The commercialism in cultural value urged Therefore, the producer of certain idol singing competition will utilize the audience and judges’ activity to surge the program rating.

Saye (2004) stated that,

The model, the sign, the image becomes the determinant of our perception of reality. Thus, the boundary between the image, or simulation, and reality implodes or breaks down. This creates a world of hyperreality in which the distinctions between real and unreal become blurred. (p.13)

He mentioned that the spectacle of reality TV had altered to simulacrum and death of real. All the elements of a reality TV being fabricated into audience’s perception. The social force had constructed a new trend of reality TV instead. The simultaneous conclusions being made by some other scholars (Best & Kellner, 1997; Tan, 2005; Williams, 2005; Fishkin & Luskin, 2005; Sweeny, 2006). Compared with case studies being conducted in foreign countries, the lack of studies of reality TV program in Malaysia is noticeably lacking. Due to the lack studies in Malaysia context, this research was needed to complement the inadequate amount of reality TV studies.

2.4 DEMOTIC TURN AND CELEBRIFICATION IN REALITY TV PROGRAMS

According to Turner (2004), he coined 'the demotic turn' as "the increasing visibility of the 'ordinary person' as they have turned themselves into media content through celebrity culture, reality TV, DIY web-sites, talk radio and the like" (p. 2). Turner (2006) later in his writing, also stated that "If celebrity is understood as a natural attribute of the self, rather than a mode of production and consumption, then of course it was. I think more might be done with the idea of the 'demotic turn', partly because of its implication in a new field of relations between media and culture" (p.154). He believed that a transformation of celebrity is depends on media visibility and culture.

According to Meizel (2011), she carried a research on the ideologies and identities of American Idol in 2005. She found out that audience of American Idol (AI) had high expectation on the contestants, treating them as a celebrity during the AI final. The producer broadcasted not only contestants and juries but audience that involved in AI final. She pointed that AI create celebrification of contestants by the perspective on audience in specific location (Los Angeles) either by broadcasting or live performance. Similar studies were being carried out on the role of the audience or public in creating stardom or celebrification (Gamson, 1994; Hill, 2007).

According to Jersley (2014), celebrities are capable to attract the public's attention. Due to the powerful contribution to media industry, celebrity may achieve success easier than ordinary people (Bell, 2010). Marshall (2010) also argued that celebrities have the discourse power in social and political field. But, there are scholar

mentioned that the purpose of production and reproduction for celebrification is to build them up as humanitarians (Turner, 2006). Jerslev (2014) revealed the role of celebrities in providing goodwill for public. Therefore, the impact of celebrification may not only provide them the power in entertainment field, but in other field like charity. Similar studies being carried out by several scholars on the achievement beyond the celebrification (Hall-Patton, 2014; Jerslev & Mortensen, 2015; Jerslev, 2016).

Broomley (2010) mentioned that,

Whatever reservations one has about these projects, they are, however contradictory in both conception and effect, efforts to deprivilege elite cultural forms and to demonstrate that talent goes much deeper socially than our romantic and class preconceptions would suggest, and on the surface, at least, has nothing whatsoever to do with programmes such as Pop Idol which are centrally concerned, not really with talent, but with elimination and the winner/loser culture of neoliberalism. (Bromley, 2010, p.16)

Bromley stated that the images of a contestant in idol singing competition no longer focused on talent only, but the image being imagined by the current society. The commercialism of reality TV is more important than the realism of a person on screen. The producers utilized the form of reality TV and celebrity's behavior to gain the attention of audiences (Couldry, 2006). Besides that, the interaction between the audience and celebrity is a major factor in reality TV (Andrejevic, 2004). The public discourse has contributed the image of a celebrity. Therefore, some scholars believed the image formed by a celebrity is based on the social perspectives and geographical culture factor.

In the course of time, the theory or histories of celebrity are being established around the world. The development of Chinese popular music conveyed the civilization of music industry in Asia. In 2002, American Idol debuted, as American Idol: The Search for a Superstar on the FOX Network. This televised idol show successfully introduces the wave of pop idols franchise around the world (Meizel, 2011). In past and present televised pop idol show, they had developed forty programs, worldwide. Meizel (2011) also mentioned in her book that,

Producers, performers, and the audience all fulfill triple duties: collaboratively manipulating the narrative of the show, maintaining a presence on camera, and watching each season unfold. Together they weave a traditional set of American identities, reiterated through music and image and rhetoric. (Meizel, 2011, p.3)

The three duties that fulfilled by the performers, producers and the audience have constructed the identity of an American. Through the network of visual and aural indication, the identity of an American are being reflected and reinforced to express the current culture in America. This televised idol program is giving the audience power to vote the contestants they admired. The voting system promoted the preference of audience in current era. Nevertheless, the images of the contestants are constructed through the priority of the audience's voting. Therefore, the pop culture will also utilize the image of the celebrity in promoting certain products, such as American Idol sponsored vendors for Coca-Cola, "the real thing" (Meizel, 2011). The exposure of the contestants on reality television had become a stepping stone for them to achieve celebrification and stardom.

In this televised idol program, the producers utilized the same method the beauty pageant contestant or political candidates, American Idol winners represent the image of American. The winners are supposed to perform in two different identity on stage, which is the recognizable ethnic, racial, religious, or regional trope, and their unique image. The winning votes mainly depends on the uniqueness of their stage image (Meizel, 2011). In this idol program, it happens some paradoxes among the scholars where some mentioned that the result of the competition is bias due to the humiliation and racist issue (Boyd, 2010; Braun, 2015; Mulyani, 2011).

Additionally, there are some other research being carried out to inspect the influences of celebrity image to the public. Méndez (2015) mentioned that,

Charytin Goyco's televisual image, from the point of view of Dominican culture, is a rather fascinating and paradoxical object: she and her agents have created an image for her that is at once recognizably Dominican and, at the same time, detached from any specifically localized and identifiable engagements with the Dominican Republic. (Méndez, 2015, p.28)

Charytin Goyco's image was shaped as a silly *ingénue* on Puerto Rican television show, and subsequently this image has catapulted her to reach *stardom* status during 1970s. She even hosted her own television show that was tailored to her celebrity image. She was then incorporated some style of Marilyn Monroe in her casting show towards some different appearance, for instance stereotypically ditsy figure.

According to Thompson (2007), he mentioned that Reality TV is an essential tool in learning the way to perform better on stage. In his research, he explained the use of viewing this idol program in helping students to develop a good music listener and able to improve their criticism in singing aspects. Therefore, there are some vocal teachers used these kinds of TV programs as a teaching tool. The vocal teacher who had participated in some idol show made them as a priority choice for parents who wish to send their children for vocal lesson. In public perception, televised idol program had increased the professionalism of vocal teacher in teaching stage performance.

Ouellette (2012) stated that Sarah Palin who is notoriously active in social media, for instance Facebook and Twitter had increased her popularity world widely. Her fame on social media had increased the sales on her books and increased her exposure on TV appearance and documentary film. Additionally, Ouellette also discovered that the self-branding on social media had brought to the alteration of career path.

At a time when broad casting was dominated by three national networks, specialized cable channels didn't exist, and social media was the stuff of science fiction, the infrastructure for establishing branded interfaces among right-wing politicians, commercial media, and citizens simply didn't exist. Palin, in contrast, unabashedly channels her ideologically charged conflict with the old-school elites who control the commercial media into her self-branding as an authoritarian populist political figure. Her ability to sell this narrative to media consumers owes less to any innate quality than to the transformation of media culture since the 1960s (Ouellette, 2012, p.187).

There are scholars discovered that self-branding contributed to the peak of career no matter in political or entertainment field (Spigel, 2004; Turner, 2009; Holt, 2011). Self-branding phenomenon had urge the new form of celebrity. The improvement of self-presentation on social media increased the individual achievement indirectly (Ouellette, 2012). Just like some idol singing competition had utilized the presentation on social media, such as FB live to increase the popularity of contestants. The appearance will automatically categorize the contestants into certain categories.

In this research, both terms 'demotic turn' and 'celebrification' were suitable in this research as 'demotic turn' were focused on the contestants of ASQ during the the process of this singing competition and 'celebrification' will be used to elaborate the achievement of the contestant during and after the participation in this idol singing competition. Yet, the term of 'demotic turn' will be focus in this singing competition as the researcher were analyzing the process of the singing competition that lead to celebrification.

2.5 PERFORMERS' IDENTITY IN POPULAR MUSIC

In the study of popular culture, the sense of identity in music could be constructed through the body, time and sociability of a person (Frith, 1996). A person could experience his or her cultural identity and its discourse of music through in the imaginative cultural narratives. Shumway (2007) stated that "Stars are performers, and to perform is to step into a role that is not one's self" (p.530). A 'star' is not merely giving

an opportunity to present himself or herself as a real person on the screen, but to transmit a strong positive impact to the public via a performance.

In an earlier study, Goffman (1974) suggested that the performance should be divided into two teams which are performers and audience. A successful performance can be concluded as an effective interaction between the audience and the performers by reaching a satisfactory during the interactions. In addition, Cook (2001) also suggested that the musical work provides the designs that determines performance. He added that a musical performance was an important element to build a social interaction among the musicians to represent a vision of a daily life. Small (2011) summarized the performers' identity was the message delivery of musicians on stage to build an interaction with the audience. There was no direct communication between the performers and audience, but the presentation of the musicians would drive to the response of some overly enthusiastic audience, such as singing along.

In a contrary, Frith (1996) suggested that performer's image has always been essential to the more popular 'realms' of popular music. Therefore, the discovery of the three enactments: real personality, song personality, and star personality is crucial to win the competition. For him, the fulfillment in three enactments were essential to a performer in this era to provide the realm of celebrity artists. The enactments of performers being supported by some other scholars. Similar statements being suggested by Auslander. Auslander (2004) stated that "there is no simple answer as to why some musicians are able to pull off transformations of persona while others are not—one would have to look very closely at all the personal, industrial, and cultural factors involved." (p.113). He

argued that the musical personae should apply the principle in the three enactments in all cultural contexts and musical practices. He proposed that both musical works and persona should be the most important quality of a performer. Yet, Graver (2003) suggested that the 'real person' in portraying the character on stage among the performers was important, but was not their real character behind the scene. In some studies, the performers' identity was unimportant in giving the impact for the public.

In more recent studies, Achacoso (2014) argued that the creation of brand identity was needed among the performers' image or new artist on the screen. The brand identity was to give the new artists or performers an extra touch of professionalism in music industry. The crucial aspect of brand identity increased the audience's first impression on media. Similar study was being done by Jarzabkowski and Feldman (2012) which stated that a successful branding of performers whom fulfilled with five performative–ostensive cycles had raised the popularity of the artists and the album's selling.

Based on the theoretical insights from scholars such as Frith, Auslander and Achacoso, this study employed the three enactments of Frith and Auslander as its theoretical framework in studying the process of celebrification among the contestant of ASQ.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In current era, there are some scholars focused on the production of celebrity on media and they came out with the similar results that the celebrity appearance on reality TV gained more attention of audience (Turner, 2010, 2011; Wood & Skeggs, 2011).

Several studies were successfully conducted for the achievements beyond celebrification, mostly focused on the celebrity's status in political, social and cultural field (Bell, 2010; Marshall, 2010; Jerslev, 2014). The relevant studies on celebrity culture were also became the concern of the scholars. Current celebrity culture manipulated the market's need of glamorous appearance on screen (Turner, 2011). Nevertheless, the creation of celebrity in charity is being concerned by public, to contribute goodwill to the society (Jerslev, 2016; Hall-Patton, 2014; Jerslev & Mortensen, 2015).

Televised idol show had raised the pop culture in respective countries. Different cultural identity has created the different celebrity image (Boyd, 2011). In some studies, they revealed the presence of idol is mainly depending on the audience's voting system (Meizel, 2011) and the paradoxes happened in the voting system (Boyd, 2010; Braun, 2015; Mulyani, 2015). The importance of local singing competition had led to international reputation (Juliana Abdul Wahab, 2010; Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak, 2011). There are also many scholars mentioned on the cultural and social need in the perspective of building up the images of celebrity. The musical process of localized Chinese idol singing competition needs to be discover in order to explore the current trend of local or overseas celebrity and artist (Kim, 2016; Writer, 2013). Thus, there is a gap in the literature where there is a lack of studies on celebrification in a Malaysian setting, Chinese televised idol program was not being analyzed in Malaysian studies. Therefore, this study

aims to investigate the approaches of ASQ by using the three enactments for reaching
celebrification in Malaysia and the contestants' career prospect in music industry.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research tends to utilize inductive data analysis, by means unfold the data out of the critical themes (Patton, 1990). More of a naturalistic inquiry, the study includes ethnographic technique such as participant observation, observation and interview in this study. Ethnographic traditions obligated to the firsthand experience and exploration of a specific social or cultural setting which based on participant observation (Atkinson, 2001). Participant observation do remain the characteristic features of this approach. The analytical focus in this study is a discursive analysis of this appointed idol singing competition in Malaysia. Therefore, this research was being conducted with participant observation (Howell, 1972; Emerson et al., 2001; Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994).

In addition, individual in-depth interview was used as the main method to inspect the demotic turn among the contestants. This interview was conducted in both Chinese and English languages for deeper investigation into the topic. The purpose of using qualitative interview is to allow the researcher identify the differences according to the research questions and disciplinary prospect (Dicicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). In order to discover shared understandings of a specific group individual, in-depth interviews were used to probe more deeply into different features of the research. Semi-structured interview has being carried out in this study. Semi structured questions have led the researcher to probe deeper into social and personal matter and allows researcher to get a wider range of understanding for the musical process in ASQ and three enactments among

the finalist. During the interview session, five ASQ finalists from nineteen previous seasons were targeted as the informants, to compare with the current season finalists. The process of interview was conducted to fulfill the objectives of this research.

3.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION AND OBSERVATION

This research will be using the method of participation observation in order to inspect Frith's three different identities for performers' enactment during the musical process. According to Emerson (2001), he explained participation observation as a scale of well-defined research through different methods, which includes direct observation, participation in life of the group, informal interview, collective discussions, analysis of personal documents that formed within the group, self-analysis, results from off or online, and life histories. Reflecting the author's own participation in 2008, contestants of ASQ was required to submit an agreement of image reconstruct, exposure on media and restrictions on song selections during the audition. The three enactments for performers coined by Frith can be seen clearly through my participation in this singing competition.

In order to establish the rapport with the informants and identify the concept of Frith and Auslander in this research, this phase will be conduct through the analysis of television program which is the official compilations summarizing specific idol seasons released on their official website. Available episodes were randomly selected from various previous years of ASQ to confirm that the findings are systemic to the series as a whole. Additionally, analysis of existing interviews for finalist from the official fan page in Facebook (Astro Star Quest/ Astro 新秀大赛).

The second phase, “In the field” was being carried out with attending and observing the live performance on ASQ 2016 final at Desa Park City, held on 31st December 2016. In this phase, double enactment (song personality and star personality) in Frith’s performer enactment was observed on the field. The competition has begun from 8p.m. Due to the involvement of previous champions for the performing section, the program lasted till around 1: 30a.m. late. Dewalt & Dewalt (2011) stated this procedure as “talking the talk” and “walking the walk”. The participation need to be strive by researcher in order to fit in the population of study.

Therefore, the participation in the final of ASQ 2016 is imperative to build a connection with the population in this study. The participation in the final of ASQ 2016 helped researcher to find out the popularity of the contestants and to compare the popularity of winners in ASQ from past 20 seasons. The data collected during the participation observation will be interpreted in order to fulfill the first two research objectives stated in Chapter 1.

3.3 INDIVIDUAL IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW

In order to collect the information on ‘demotic turn’ among the contestants, individual in-depth interviews were being carried out to achieve the next phase of participant observation, “recording observations and data”. This individual in-depth interview was conducted through telephone, an online chat, and face to face individual interview. At this moment, three interviews had been conducted out of ten interviewees. The interviewees are Fayse Goh, Miko Chu and Fish Oh. The remaining interviewees who are KienYing and Danny Khoo were unable to complete the interview due to their

personal reason and working privacy. Due to contestants' contract policy and Astro company privacy issue, I was not given an opportunity to interview finalists from the latest season as stated. Therefore, the analysis will be replaced with the further exploration on news media sources and existing interviews.

In addition, three informants who chose to remain anonymous were interviewed in this study. According to Sieber (1992) and Baez (2002), the confidentiality of informants is important as to prevent contradiction and harm. Thus, consent was signed where the informants remained anonymous and some sensitive issues surrounding ASQ were reported and discussed in Chapter 4.

3.4 PARTICIPANT

In this research, ten among the finalists has been chosen in this empirical study in order to inspect the different process of the competition, two finalists from each status (champion, 1st runner up, 2nd runner up, third runner up and 4th runner up) being chosen. The purposive informants included; (a) five finalists for the current season, who is Wengdyy Oi, William Tan, Brian Chew, Steve Yu and Eugene Wen (see <https://www.facebook.com/AstroStarQuest/photos/a.84247077607.80193.53975537607/10154919452622608/?type=3&theater>); (b) five finalists randomly chosen from the previous seasons (1996-2015), Fayse (see figure 1a), KienYing (see <https://www.facebook.com/JieYingThaKY/>), Miko Chu (see figure 1b), Fish Oh (see figure 1c) and Danny Koo (see <https://www.facebook.com/Danny Ahboy/>).

The purpose for the selective finalists was to compare to differences of musical process in different season and to inspect the use of three enactments among the finalists. During the analysis, there were some questions set up to identify the focus and the winning factors for ASQ. The career prospect will be analyzed through the existing interview and personal interview. The purposive informants were selected based on personal connection with researcher. Thus, getting information from them were easier.



Figure 1 (a) Fayse Goh (champion for 2004), Retrieved from Fayse Goh's personal Facebook



Figure 1 (b) Miko Chu (2nd runner up for 2011), retrieved from Miko Chu's personal Facebook



Figure 1 (c) Fish Oh (finalist for 2010), retrieved from Fish Oh's personal Facebook

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis has been done with the data collected from individual in-depth interviews and various sources such as news media, Facebook comments, ASQ Facebook Official Page, and YouTube comments.

In order to compare the differences in the demotic turn of current and previous finalists, the conversation during the individual in-depth interviews will be recorded down and transcript into a rich data. Wray, et. al (2007) stated that “Data collection and preliminary data analysis were conducted concurrently, allowing us to cease recruitment on achieving data saturation and to modify interview guidelines for subsequent in-depth interviews to incorporate emerging themes” (p. 1394).

The raw data was then break down into different chunks, in order to develop an audit trail as an outline for identification of data amounts according to the respondents and context (Simon, 2011). The similar raw data tracked from the conversation will be coding down and emerge into numerous themes. The process of data saturation was then developed from data coding to reveal the validity of content (Francis, et. al., 2010). The noticeable themes categorized into individual transcripts and examines repeatedly across and within the field notes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). A summary of fieldwork had been transcript according to the themes.

3.6 CONCLUSION

To summarize, there are two different methodologies being employed to gather research data, which are participation observation and individual in-depth interviews. Although data from interview may be limited, however, data from different sources were gathered and analyzed in ensuring triangulation was performed and data reliability.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This research aims at looking at the process of demotic turn in the contestants of ASQ and how ASQ plays its role in landing the upcoming Malaysian idol, that in a way, mark a historical record of the formation of artists in local C-pop industry. In this chapter, data collected were analyzed to find out if there is a modelling pattern of the reality TV competition that contributes to the formation of artists in the Malaysian Chinese popular music industry. Data were collected from news media, personal interview and fieldwork observations, while video analysis was done on videos uploaded on YouTube Channel and ASQ Facebook Official Page. Primary data from observation were triangulated along with the author's own reflexive account as a contestant in along with her observation of ASQ prior to research, since its inception in 1996 till now in generating findings for this study. For the news media, data collected from online news, ASQ forum and comments on YouTube were analyzed. In the timeline of this research as part of the requirement of a mix-mode Master's program, a detailed personal observation of ASQ 2016 final was carried out at Desa Park on 31st of December 2016 as a case study report for this research. Interviews with the artists, whom how ASQ contributed to their demotic turn were also generated some data for analysis and discussion in this chapter.

4.2 ASQ REALITY TV COMPETITION AND PROCESS CHANGES

Astro Talent Quest (currently known as Astro Star Quest) had begun the first season on year 1997 with the alteration format of TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship (全球华人新秀大赛). The champions of the ATQ (now known as ASQ) will represent Malaysia in participating TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship (ICNTSC). This reality show had big involvement in development of Chinese popular music industry in Malaysia. Since 1996, Canto pop and Taiwan pop were the songs selections by the contestants. Therefore, pop music trend in Hong Kong and Taiwan had gradually made its way towards the young people in Malaysia too.

The formatting and the setting of ATQ was similar to the format of TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship due to the cooperation with the management of ICNTSC. Compared with other singing competitions, such as Idol series reality shows, public's voting system was not employed at that time. However, the show was not popular to the public initially due to lack of audience involvement, and sponsorship was insufficient to cover expenses. In year 2006, ASQ had introduced the new scoring format and inserted the SMS voting and Facebook voting as a means of audience involvement on competition. This method attracted more people to watch the show via television, hence the gradual increment of the show's popularity.

In year 2006, ATQ had changed their name into ASQ and this idol singing competition had attracted more contestants with the new format and training provided. In recent year, ASQ uses the similar format as Sing! China and Top Million Star. The battle between the contestants and students (introduced in 2011) had set tougher challenges for contestants. As a conclusion, this idol singing competition adopted several international

idol singing competition in the past 20 seasons to improve the quality and view rates of ASQ.

4.2.1 MUSICAL PROCESS IN ASQ

The development of ASQ since 2006 to 2016 gone through various changes (see Figure 3). As of 2006, Astro Talent Quest was evolved into the new format of today. It then renamed it as Astro Star Quest. Via analyzing data from personal interviews, media sources and own participation, the musical process in Astro Star Quest being improved in order to standardize the format of international singing competitions and localized singing competition. According to Goh (2017), champion of the 2004 competition, he mentioned the intention of Astro company in producing a star and eliminate the previous concept in producing a talented singer. Therefore, they modulated the format to meet the current trend.

Before 2006, the competition format was very simple and straightforward. The requirement of the competition is to present few songs and talent (Goh, 2017, Interview). Goh stated that the appearance on the TV channel was less than five times for the whole competition. Therefore, the popularity for the previous contestants was not notable. In year 2004, the contestants were required to send in the tapes with voice recording and music accompaniment. Goh was doing his recording in local studio without editing. He got into the face to face audition after the filtration of the best 80 recordings.

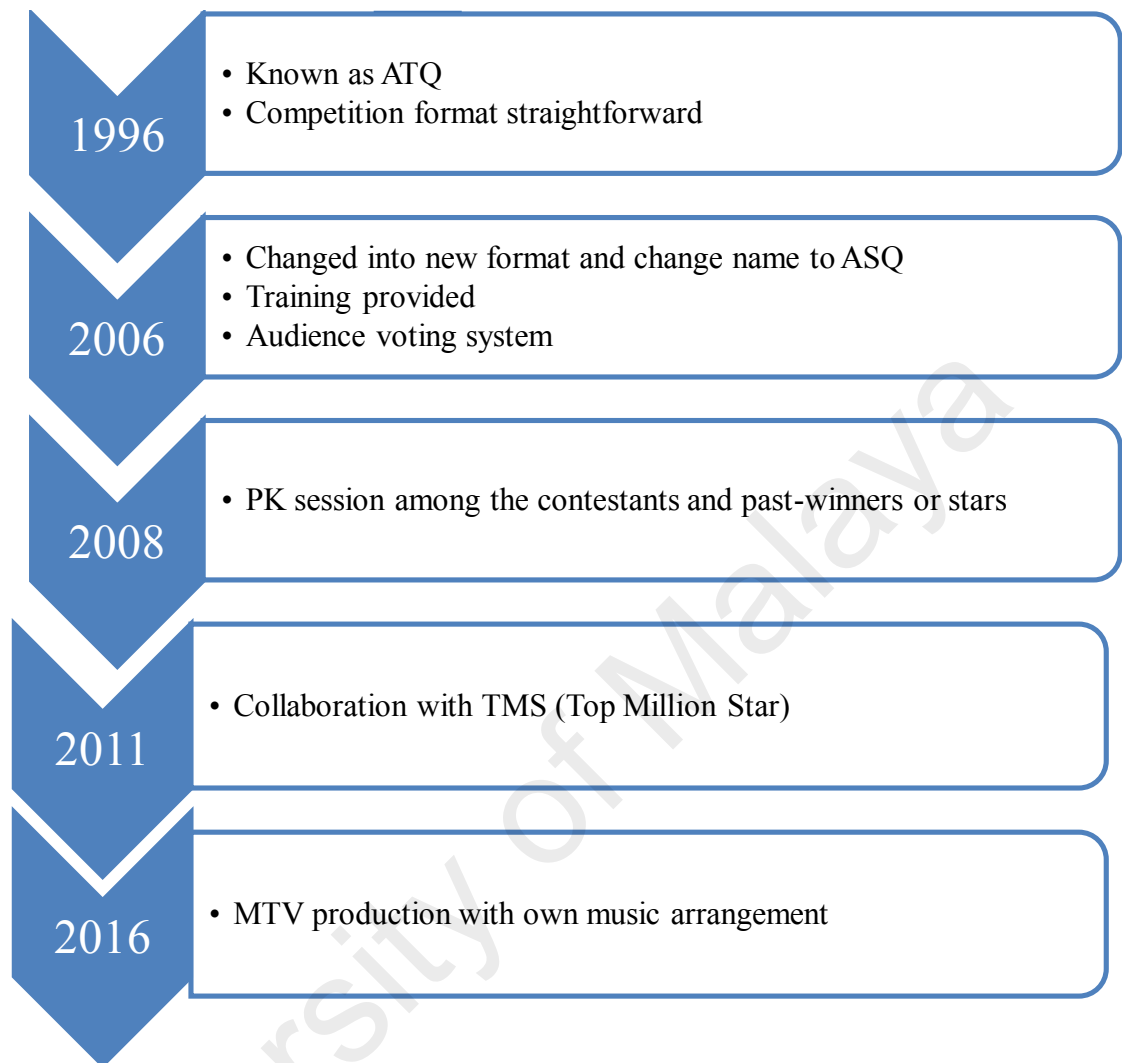


Figure 2 The development of musical process in ASQ

During the competition, the voting system by audience was yet to be introduced. The format of singing competition was very conventional such as Malaysian Idol. Daniel Tan, who was the champion of Malaysian Idol the same year with Goh, gained more supporters and fans than him as Malaysian Idol, the franchise of American Idol where Malaysians of different races participated, was more popular. Back then in ASQ, the accumulative scores did not include the best public voting due to the few subscriptions of audience. In 2004, the selected two finalists were required to represent Malaysia in

participating in Hong Kong's TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship.

In year 2006 onwards, ASQ took change with a new format. The contestants were required to undergo training sessions in order to perform better. Probably as a gimmick in gaining more reception, the contestants from year 2008 onwards were facing more challenges with the introduction of a PK session with past winners, secondary school students and stars (Astro Star Quest, 2016). PK is an internet slang and an abbreviation for 'Player Kill' made famous from Super Girl singing competition in China (Li & Li, 2013). In live competition, PK is commonly seen as a short moment of rivalry between two singers. Since the addition of PK session, audience excitement and popularity of the show increased.

In 2011, Astro first cooperated with Top Million Star (TMS) from Taiwan, the five finalists are nominated to attend the audition of TMS. The intention of the collaboration with TMS was to increase the viewing rate of ASQ by increasing the publicity in Taiwan, as well as showing ASQ's inclination towards Taiwanese pop. Nevertheless, Astro Company also altered the audition method. The online audition was started in 2011 and this avoided the congested condition at Astro main branch. According to an interview with Chu, she mentioned that the collaboration within the two programs had also sponsored them the flight ticket to Taiwan. The format in TMS is similar to ASQ. In thematic segments, they were tasked to perform with a theme assigned by the organizer were included in the competition, for instance, pop rock segment, ballad segment and classical melody segment (Chu, 2017, Interview). The similar PK segment being utilized in ASQ since the collaboration with TMS. Chu (2017) also expressed that upon her

participation in TMS, has noticed a significant improvement in her own mental and physical ability.

According to Shuker (2008), emergence of MTV as part of television broadcast landed an important role in promoting the popular music industry. Thus, in the latest season of Astro Star Quest, the contestants were required to produce MTV as one of the competition segments. In the MTV production, the contestants were obligated to cover the selected songs with new improvisation and different interpretation, with an aim in their unique portrayal as a new artist. In ASQ, the production teams and the contestants went overseas to do the MTV recording after the voice recording at local studio (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2016). According to a press interview with the ASQ 2016 finalist Brian, he found that this competition and its requirement was very different from other singing competition (Sabah Sinchew Daily, 2017). ASQ was the first Malaysian idol singing competition where MTV production were added, in year 2016. Brian Chew also mentioned that the new segment increased difficulty greatly and made this competition more challenging. However, he was able to cope it with the moral support by his family and vocal teacher. Besides that, the stress level of the contestants had increased simultaneously (Sabah Sinchew Daily, 2017).

In terms of musical requirement, ASQ also required competitors to be versatile in all musical styles, probably to meet the demanding popular music industry and producers' requirement. According to a local radio station interview with the ASQ 2016 finalist, Wengdy mentioned that the contestants were expected to be multitalented stars with embedded strong star personality compared to other singing competition in Malaysia and even other countries (MY FM, 2017). Wengdy, for instance, faced hurdles with her acting skill and instant music arrangement skill, admitted challenges are tough and ASQ

format is more unique compared with other singing competitions in Malaysia. The new format added that includes MTV brought in real-life experience of an artist among the contestant. Thus, this segment is in a way, testing the contestants' endurance and ability in taking the job as a real artist. The MTV production had brought to the higher rating of this reality show compared to the previous format (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2017).

The Facebook Official Page of ASQ has been established in year 2009. Initially, the viewing rate from 2009 till 2015 were very low even with videos being actively posted on Facebook pages. The viewing rate that is less than 1000, will not be able to show in the videos' detail (see figure 3,4 and 5). In 2009, the average viewing rate for users to view on posted videos were less than 10 views (see figure 3). Then the viewing rate increased in 2011 which the highest viewing rate was 503 views. The viewing rate in 2013 were decreased due to excessive videos on online audition. The lowest viewing rate had dropped till 60 views (see figure 4). In the following year, only the top 20 chosen audition videos were posted in the Facebook page. Therefore, the highest view rating for the previous seasons was 6 257 views in 2015, the lowest viewing rate was less than 1000 (see figure 5). Meanwhile, the viewing rate for audience was increased tremendously with the additional segment on MTV production by contestants. The highest viewing rate was 166 050 views, lowest was more than 3000 views (see figure 6). Besides that, the comments for the MTV were fairly positive.



Figure 3 Average viewing rate less than 10 views in 2009



Figure 4 Excessive audition videos in 2013 had decreased the overall viewing rate



Figure 5 Lower viewing rate of the previous seasons of ASQ 2015



Figure 6 Increased viewing rate of ASQ 2016 with MTV production

Additionally, collaboration with well-known artists and popular YouTuber had increased the popularity and viewing rate of the Music video, for instance, famous YouTuber ChangYong, famous model Leng Yein, and post ASQ winners (Uriah See, Danny Koo, Apple Khoo, and Nicole Lai).

Besides that, some outrageous contents had inserted into the MTV in order to increase the program's viewing rate and formation of pop star image (Coutas, 2006; Shuker, 2008; Jensen, 2012). The imitation of western MTV production can be seen in their music video too. For example, bikini pool party content had been inserted in the MTV produced by William. In the video, William was playing guitar and playing with the bikini ladies at pool side uncommon to the popular music scene in Malaysia, which is an Islamic country (YouTube, 2016a). Nevertheless, the viewing rate had reach more than 5000 in YouTube and more than 54 000 in their official Facebook page.

The MTV production by the contestants successfully grabbed the attention of public and contributed to better star personality of the contestants. Although the MTV production was assisted by Astro production team, the contestants were able to go through the valuable experience in making their own MTV.

Another strategy to make the show more attractive is a group dancing session introduced in 1997. All finalists were required to perform the group dancing during the start of the competition opening (Goh, 2017, Interview). Then, most importantly, all contestants were required to present a finale song of their own choices that at venue, where out of Astro company studio. The segments during final had changed to a more complicated process (Oh, 2017, Interview). The relation within the audience was closer than previous years.

During the author's observation, the 2016 ASQ live was overwhelmed with supporters and lighting board to support their 'idol' and to boost morale (fieldwork, 2016). Moreover, the supporters for this season's idol has even overwhelmed the previous year's champions with their live performances that day. Many live cameras were focusing on the audiences too. There was live play back on giant screen on the stage, the setup was somewhat similar to a live concert. The atmosphere at Desa Park City were amazing and the supporters were so excited and yelling for their 'idol' during their performances. Also, Goh (2017) commented that the crowd at Desa Park was astonishing and far more supporters attended the final compared to the season where he was a contestant.

In ASQ, the judging system and the selections of finalist is modified from the televised idol program in Western countries, such as American Idol where America and Europe were the key players in the distribution of reality TV (Killborn, 2002). In American Idol singing competition, a participatory viewer-voting system is being utilized, contributed to half portion of the total marks for the competition scoring. This voting system is to appeal the semi-democratic process in America (Meizel, 2011). Meanwhile, there are some contradiction between these two idol singing competitions where the participatory viewer-voting system were not being used in ASQ as the mark portion of the judges still took the main concern in the final marks. In order to make this competition more valid, the producer had utilized the fame of the judges to attract the audience (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2017). The panel judges for the final consist of Taiwanese singer Bii, Nicholas Teo, champion for ATQ 2002, Eric Kwok from Hong Kong, and Royal pirates from Korea. The panel was well recognized worldwide as a successful musician in Chinese Pop Music Industry. The panel judges the different criteria of this competition based on their own expertise in music. The judges may be subjective

in their judging each contestant, but the result is highly credible with the panel judges' recognitions in music industry.

Therefore, the introduction of new formatting of ASQ had attracted the bigger crowd of audience from 2006 onwards. This recent version of ASQ manipulated the better way in producing contestants with better star, song and real personality.

4.2.2 TRAINING OF THE FUTURE CELEBRITY

In ASQ 2006, a new training segment was added to the competition and obviously, a training session may accelerate the process of demotic turn during the process of ASQ. (see figure 7). In the year of 2006, the old format was replaced by the new content with training provided by the Astro company. According to Oh and Chu (2017), they mentioned that the training included vocal training, body gesture training, hosting training, speech management training and dancing class. During the training, the twenty chosen contestants were required to stay in the hostel provided. The daily meal was also provided, and they were not allowed to leave the hostel without any notification for management. During the vocal training, all the contestants were having group class training, one to one vocal training was not conducted in the training.

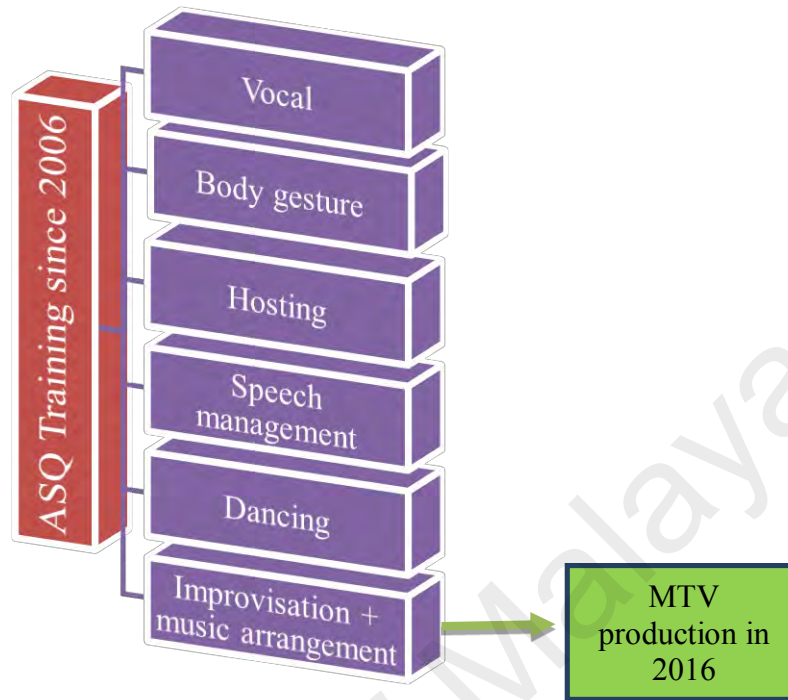


Figure 7 Training provided since 2006 to increase the celebrification of the contestants

In the dancing segment, the contestants were required to perform a song with personal designated choreography. In past studies, scholars found that suitable music synchronised with movement is important in terms of the audience's perception of the performance (see Loo, Loo & Chua, 2013; Loo & Loo, 2017). In order to impress the audience with better dance movements, one to one dance training was provided for the contestants. For the other talent classes, the contestants compulsorily attended at least one class to improve their social techniques. Therefore, all the contestants were able to communicate and response confidently in front of public and media.

In order to produce a multitalented star and adoption of different culture worldwide, Astro company sent the contestants to Singapore, Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong for vocal and dance training. At the same time, the contestants went through a video shooting for MTV as a requirement one of the competition segments. Some scenes for overseas training being inserted in the Facebook page to raise the viewing rate of this program. The latest season gained the highest viewing rate as mentioned.

Previously, the music improvisation was not known as a training in the training camp (Chu, 2017, Interview). Chu stated that the music arrangement of the live band during final was arranged by the music producer with the discussion with contestants. Therefore, the ability of music improvisation was not trained in the camp. Meanwhile, the ability of music improvisation was being focused in the camp in the latest season. According to a local radio station interview with the ASQ 2016 finalist William and Wengdyy, the contestants were stressed during the production of music arrangement in MTV production (MY FM, 2017). Wengdyy also mentioned that impromptu improvisation was one of the toughest training in the training camp. She mentioned that the contestants were once ordered to hand in the music improvisation within 24 hours. In order to develop celebrification among the contestants, ASQ had exerted the training to produce a multitalented artist during the training camp.

To conclude, the musical process of ASQ had altered to a new format since 2006. The outcome shows the process of demotic turn among the contestants in interaction the entertainment media, dancing skill and vocal techniques. The musical process had also increased the celebrification among the contestants. Therefore, the viewing rate of this televised idol program being increased tremendously after the training content was

introduced since 2006 (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2017). Therefore, the research objective 1 being answered via the outcome of this research.

4.3 ENTANGLEMENT BETWEEN REAL, SONG AND STAR PERSONALITIES IN ASQ

By examining ASQ’s three enactments via the theories of Frith and Auslander, the outcome reveals a proportion of ‘personalities’ and its emphasis (see Figure8).

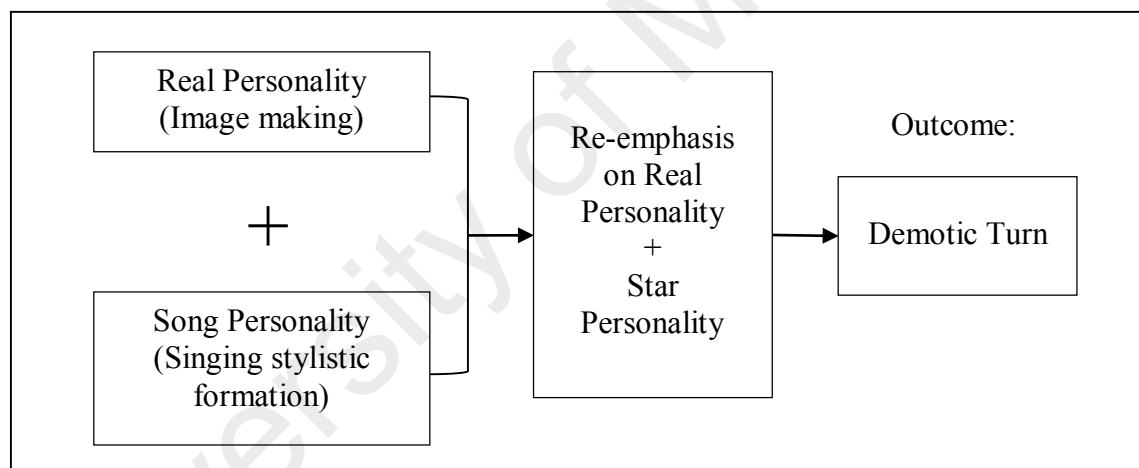


Figure 8 Celebrification and the three enactments in ASQ 2016

Analyzing data gathered from media sources, existing and personal interviews, and analysis during the live 2016 ASQ performance on December 2016, the process of contestant going through the three enactments in delivering themselves as a ‘star’ or celebrity show different emphasis. The whole process can be divided into three phases: beginning, a re-emphasis on real personality to the final ‘star personality.’

At the beginning, the trend of the singing style and restrictions on image making were being analyzed to understand the stage image created for the contestants throughout the whole process of ASQ. Both song and real personality being emphasized during the process of demotic turn among the 20 contestants in the preliminary rounds.

In the next phase, the re-emphasis of real personality and emphasis of star personality among the 5 finalists will be concerned as ASQ is the reality program that producing quality singers in Malaysian Chinese industry. Then, the outcome of ASQ is the demotic turn among the finalists during the process of ASQ. This phenomenon was resulted in the crowd during the final of ASQ. For example, the crowd in final of ASQ 2016 had reached more than 10k audience at Desa Park City (see figure 9) comparing to the crowd in final ATQ 2002 (YouTube, 2013), and this grand occasion had resulted the success of demotic turn among the contestants.



Figure 9 Bigger crowd with more than 10k audience in ASQ 2016 Final

Comparing the data collected from interviews and experience of personally participation in ASQ, there was no restrictions on image making for contestants were

imposed but the stage image was mainly depending on the real personality and the song personality. During the conversation with the interviewees, they have mentioned that the producer did not restrict any specific star personality on them. Goh (2017) mentioned that the final for singing competition was very straightforward and less sponsorship during his year of participation, compared with most recent years. Therefore, both song and real personality was less emphasized in 2001. The stage image was no restricted by Astro company but the outfits were on own expenses. Meanwhile, Goh also stated that the combination countdown activities and ASQ final had brought to the bigger crowd compared to the previous year. Reflecting the author's own participation in 2008, contestants were required to buy their own outfits to suit the songs and the clothes were required to be presentable and approved by the management. The less decent image of the contestants were shown on screen for the previous years of competition comparing to the contestants in the recent year (YouTube, 2013). Therefore the real personality and song personality were less concerned before the introduction of new format.

From 2006 onwards, the production team had introduced the concept of creating star value of the contestants. Therefore, they were seeking for the professional sponsorship in upgrading the celebrity image of the contestants. According to Chu, she mentioned that the stage image was relied on her real personality and song personality (Chu, 2017, Interview). The appointed image stylist set up the contestants' image through the daily conversation and the individual real personality (see figure 10). Similar statements were made by Oh. Meanwhile, the image was set appropriately according to the genre of song. Therefore, she mentioned the image stylist were indeed skillful and experienced in observation on the contestant's suitable image. She also mentioned that all the image setup and clothing was being sponsored by the sponsorship and the

contestants had no option to object. Chu mentioned that her hair was cut till shoulder length without prior consent, and no objection was entertained. She was told that the hairstyle and outer appearance created was to create a decent image on screen. Thus, the image set up was depends on the image stylist after the new introduction in 2006.



Figure 10 The sponsored hairdo by the image stylist. Retrieved from Miko Chu personal Facebook account

Comparing the data collected from various sources, the trend of the singing style in 90s and after 2006 being analyzed (see Figure 11). From the figure, the trend of singing style is noticeably changed after the introduction of new format. As from 2006, a new format was introduced where all contestants were required to undergo a series of trainings which focused on vocal and dance trainings, in order to improve their capabilities in overcoming respective challenges to reach the finals. According to Goh (2017), he believed that his family during his upbringing, has influenced the most in shaping his singing style. For instance, he grew up by listening to English songs, as his family

frequently played, thus adopted western pop in his singing styles. On the other side, Chu (2017) mentioned that her singing styles were being explored through ASQ when she was having her training with the trainer.

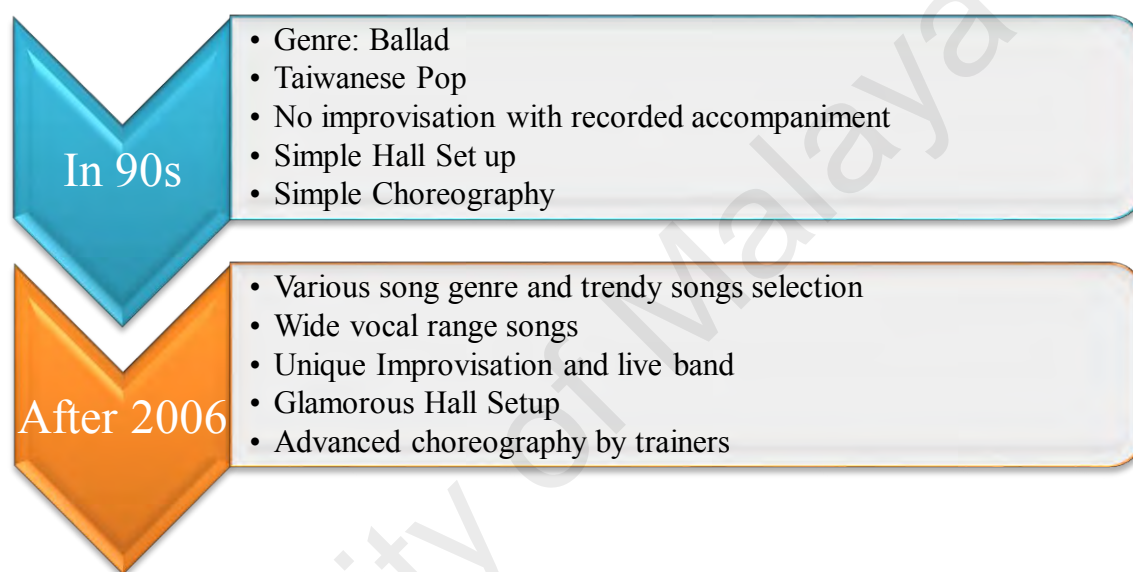


Figure 11 The Singing Stylistic Formation Since 1996

The vocalization and dancing classes had helped her in discovering a suitable singing style. In 90s, ATQ utilized the trend of popularized Taiwanese pop's ballad as the one of the winning factor in ASQ. Songs chosen by past winners such as *liusha* (流沙), Your Backpack (你的背包), 3a.m. in the midnight (凌晨三点钟) and many more (Goh, 2017, Interview). Therefore, this trend had utilized Malaysia's Chinese pop music genre. Recently, the singing styles and song selections are also preferred to trending pop music. The wide vocal range songs are being selected in ASQ in order to win the votes from the audience and judges.

The different singing styles were being identified in the ASQ 2016's preliminary rounds. All five finalists of ASQ 2016 have unique real personality, therefore the song personality were also affected. Firstly, ballad songs were being selected by contestants who have introvert personality. For example, Wengdyy, Eugene and Steve possess softer voices and unique voice quality. In researcher's opinion, Wengdyy's live performance was lacking stability (fieldwork, 2016). For the video, she made the wrong decision in choosing the song. Her strength is singing Jazz, ballad and soul. Her voice is too thin to handle the song, "Alien Show" by A Mei. In the beginning of the song, she presented a stable low voice and 'languid' singing style. However, the voice volume was somehow enshrouded by the additional bass instruments during chorus section. Even though the hall set up had helped her performance in reaching the climax, but the artistic conception of the song was not achieved due to her thin voice (YouTube, 2017a). In the song 'Your Sweetness', she showed less star personality in carrying the mood of the song, the movements for Wengdyy was stiff (YouTube, 2017b). Even though she appeared less frequent in the MTV, the eye contact and the body language of Wengdyy was less matured compared to the other contestants. However, her unique voice quality and interpretation had attracted a big amount of viewing rate (26,150 times). Overall, the performance of Wengdyy in singing rock and pop were less pleasant and less impressed. According to the local radio station interview with Wengdyy and William, she mentioned that she is introvert in daily life. Her real personality on stage was too strong and hardly being covered by the song personality (MY FM, 2017). Therefore, the song style restrictions for Wengdyy were pop and rock music.

In the prerecorded semifinal, Eugene possessed the most “clean” and exquisite tone among all the finalists. During the competition, he chose most of the ballad songs for semifinals. Throughout the performance by Eugene, it can be concluded that he is more suitable in singing R&B and ballad than singing pop and rock genre (see <https://web.facebook.com/AstroStarQuest/videos/10154936021707608/>). Therefore, the confined singing style of Eugene had against the aspiration of ASQ in producing multitalented stars. Besides that, the improvisation of some cover songs was impressed due to the alteration of music instruments and music style. For example, Eugene had changed the mood of the “March” by Taiwanese singer “Amei”. Originally, the composition was in ballad and less instruments being inserted in this music. But Eugene had changed the song into another mood, which is in country, folk and soft rock style. Therefore, a different interpretation was discovered by Eugene and Eugene’s version was preferred by judges than Amei’s version. According the new interpretation of “March”, it contributed the ideal viewing rate in this MTV. The song personality in Eugene’s presentation was distinct and, and thus the feedback gained were mostly positive (ASQ Official Page, 2016).

Secondly, funk and pop rock songs are more commonly selected by the extrovert contestants. For example, William possesses bright and agile voice and outgoing personality, therefore the ballad songs were less favored by him. Due to his abundant experience in performing live show, William showed the most relaxed and steady condition during the performance (see <https://web.facebook.com/AstroStarQuest/videos/10154920283137608/>). William is keen in performing R&B, soul, jazz, funk, pop and rock. Because of his extrovert personality, the songs chosen were mainly in fast tempo and lively. He performed very well in the song before the first chorus ended. However,

he was getting off mic sometimes when he left his guitar behind and performed with movement. There was also some pitching issue in the chorus. Therefore, the three enactments of performing were being utilized by William throughout the performance.

Live audience and judges were appealed by the performance of William. Despite the song were performed by William without additional dancer and stage effect, the audiences and judges were got drawn and started to move with the rhythm created by William (see <https://web.facebook.com/AstroStarQuest/videos/10154920283137608/>). Throughout his performance, the star personality and song personality being well demonstrated by William which was rarely seen among the contestants during the preliminary rounds.

Thirdly, urban soul, pop rock and slow rock style songs were selected by contestants who own the unique and powerful voices. For instance, Brian had succeeded in interpreting his chosen song with his powerful voice. According to researcher's observation, Brian earned the most distinct star personality among all the finalists, even before the reemphasis of star personality in second phase. He was able to handle any style of the songs. According to the suggestions from judges, he was able to handle soft rock music easily. In his interview with Morris Pang, he mentioned that he gained the knowledge in doing choreography for pop and rock songs. In order to reinterpret "Bleeding Heart" by Elephant Dee in different style, he inserted the chorus part of "Opera II" into the bridge of "Bleeding Heart" (YouTube, 2016b). In the song, he performed excellent techniques in register changing and falsetto singing. Brian showed a stable technique in singing this song but the arouse interpretation can be done to increase the intensity of the climax. Right after the short breath management of "Opera II", researcher had noticed the cracking voice in his first two notes of second verse. Although the

imperfection in his performance has hampered the scores of his performance, the mistake displayed had supported claim of the honesty this reality show, where the actual content by contestant were delivered to audience without further manipulation. Unlike the reality shows in China, there were news reported that the prerecorded competition was being edited, therefore the performance was perfect during playback (Epochtimes, 2017). With the introduction of new formatting in ASQ, the real and song personality being diversified, yet the ability in music arrangement and composition of the finalists were also noticeably improving.

Reflecting the author's own involvement in 2008, the contestants were made compulsory to sign a contract prior the audition. In the contract, it mentioned that the song chosen must be composed within ten years. The term would ensure the program was up to date and synchronized with the latest trend. In Chu's experience during her participation in competition, they were provided with a list of songs around 100 songs they were required choose from (Chu, 2017, Interview). They needed to decide their selection at the soonest for their own advantage due a clause where the quote for each song is only for one contestant, which was in first come first served basis. This was done to prevent identical songs during competition. According to her experience in TMS, she mentioned that the experience in participating the audition was more competitive and tense. The contestants were less pleasant in hastily choosing the song, fearing the song might be selected away. Although the formatting was similar, but the experience was far more different and stressful compared to ASQ. In TMS, the contestants were not guided to perform the song interpretation according to song personality as in ASQ. The song personality and real personality were being emphasized in ASQ during the training do helped to produce the better star personality among the contestants. Therefore, the

emphasis of real and song personality had also lead to the better confidence among the contestants.

In the second phase which is the emphasis on real personality and star personality, the certain action was taken to lead the finalists for a demotic turn. In 2016, the additional segment was added in to the accumulative scores during the competition: each contestant was required to record and produce a Music Television (MTV) with one song of their choice. In order to generate the star personality and increase the popularity of the contestants, MTV production by the contestants were regarded as the most important element in the semifinals. This segment was unfamiliar to most of the contestants. Some contestants refused to engage in acting in the MTV due to their introvert personality. According to an interview with Wengdy, she mentioned that she was the one who was the least confident because of her gentle personality. Even though the judges had given encouragement on her final performance, the sense of inferiority still can be seen during the interview among the ASQ 2016 winners (MY FM, 2017). Therefore, some of the contestants were inviting some other actors in the MTV to increase the audience rating.

Moving into 21st century, the trends of creating star personality has noticeably shifted by influences from Korea and Japan (Howard, 2006; Jung, 2010; Leong, 2014; Kim, 2016). The images of the participants possess the factor of K pop stars. Malaysia, a Muslim nation, was comparatively more conservative in participants' styling and images. In this idol singing competition, the finalists were not allowed to wear outfits that are eroticism such as shorts, plunging neckline or corset-looking. The similar result revealed in other studies in localized idol singing competition such as Malaysian Idol (Juliana Abdul Wahab, 2010; Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak, 2011). Therefore, the outfit were more

conservative comparing to other idol singing competition, such as American Idol in order to please the Muslim audience during finals.

The image set up was imitating the latest trend of stars from Korea (YouTube, 2017c). The image was similar to the Korean singer, G Dragon during the Jakarta World Tour Concert (see <http://www.kpopstarz.com/articles/31535/20130617/big-bang-g-dragon-successfully-finishes-jakarta-concert-for-world-tour.htm>). The influence of *hallyu* (Korean wave) was clearly identified in this idol singing competition. The star personality was remarkable from their image on stage.

Besides than imitating the star personality of other singers, the images created for every finalist was also depends on their real personality (Oh, 2017, Interview; Chu, 2017, Interview). For Steve, they created a boyish image for her during the final (see <https://web.facebook.com/AstroStarQuest/photos/a.84247077607.80193.53975537607/10154963072262608/?type=3&theater>). The images were suited into both of her song and real personality. I observed that every finalist got a glamorous image over one of the songs. The remaining outfits was casual and suited into their song. Therefore, the song chosen and the image on stage was interrelated.

Referring to data collected during ASQ 2016 final, the entanglement of real, song and star personality can be evidently observed in their song selection, stage setup and image making. The song personality in “Zebra”, the image stylist had donned Wengdyy’s outfit with black and white midi dress (YouTube, 2017d). Her chosen song was in ballad style and thus the image created was elegant and feminine. This outfit was the grandest among all the five final songs.

Apart from that, William sang most of funk, pop and rock songs (fieldwork, 2016). Therefore, the image created was casual, easygoing, and not exaggerating. William was playing the electric guitar in this song. The simple red long-sleeved jacket and the loose slim cut pants had suited the song, “Move Like Jagger” (YouTube, 2017e). The image created for him was also essential for his guitar playing in the song.

In order to match the dancers’ outfit, Eugene was wearing the red sportswear like top and bottoms with black leggings during the final. As a result, his outfit was matching his lively dance movement in the song (hip hop song). He successfully showcased the intense dance movements and singing in this song. Briefly, the stage images of the finalists were being emphasized through the enforcement of double enactment.

Throughout the ASQ 2016 final, each finalist was required to perform a total of five different songs, which included PK segment and duet segment with the chosen singers (Brian Chew, 2017, Interview). The finalists improvised the songs into different style, different from the original composition. The dancers and the hall set up was an important element to increase the excitement of the competition. For instance, Brian improvised the intro music of “Party Animal” and he froze after a short intro being played. The dancers were freezing and the background lighting was focused on Brian. The audiences were also freeze and silent due to the ‘freezing’ movement made by the performers on stage. The new interpretation of different style and tempo manipulated the mood of audience. The song personality in Brian was fairly strong compared to other finalists.

In Brian's performance, the musical arrangement was different from the other finalists. He utilized the elements of the audience's view and musical knowledge in capturing the attention from judges and audience (fieldwork, 2016). In terms of technical skill in singing rock song, breathing control was his weakness. The intonation was interrupted when he was singing rock or fast tempo songs. The stability of intonation was insecure. Despite this, the overall performance of all five songs was considered distinct and the musical process was enjoyable to watch.

In regards of star personality among the contestants in most recent years, the supporters and the social network's follower were far lesser for previous years' contestants. The star personality was mainly built after their participation in entertainment industry (Goh, 2017, Interview). For instance, Danny Koo who was the 4th runner up in 2008, got famous due to his effort in building and managing his social media, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. His popularity had also gained the attention from sponsorship after his few years of participation in ASQ.

By analyzing data from media sources, personal in-depth interviews and observation from 1997 to 2016, there are four factors identified with the entanglement of three enactments to contribute winning factor in ASQ. Firstly, the multitalented skills in music. The multitalented skills in music including the ability of playing various types of music instruments, composition, improvisation and great singing skills. According to an interview with Oh, the star personality of previous season was different from the current season (Goh, 2017, Interview). Contestants in current era need to possess the skills in composing, improvising music, music production, excellent singing skill, and excellent dance skill. Also, Wengdy mentioned that the ability in composing music arrangement was one of the major factor to contribute a good marks in this competition (MY FM, 2017).

Wengdydy claimed that she was nervous and tense when the producer required her to produce a new music arrangement with different genre for her semifinal song. With the help of William and his friend, she was able to produce a new arrangement of that song. During the interview, both William and Wengdydy agreed that the capability of multipurposes artist is very important in this era. Therefore, the talent in composing skill, dancing skill, recognizable tone quality was the key in gaining the popularity in Malaysia.

Secondly, the popular music trend was a rather significant factor in competition scoring with the introduction of new formatting of ASQ. Reflecting the own participation of author, the contestants were required to choose songs that was currently trending and song must be published within ten years. The popularity of the songs must be significant to resonate among the audience. Also, Chu (2017) mentioned that the song lists provided in TMS was popular at that time. Besides that, Goh (2017) mentioned that the previous winners who chose ballad genre will earn the preference of the judges. Therefore, the previous shows were more judge-centered. He also mentioned that the criteria in judging have changed since the perception of the audience were being factored in this competition. The songs with distinct improvisation wins the votes from judges and audience. Therefore, the song selections of contestants were the key in winning this competition.

Since sponsorship was one of the most important element is running the show, the audience voting system and public perception the third winning factor of ASQ in order to raise the show's viewing rate. In order to raise the view rate of ASQ, the selected songs were being improvised and the genre of song is diversified (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2016). The different genre of songs must be mastered for all the contestants in order to gain the votes from the audience and judges.

Lastly, the real personality was the forth key of winning in ASQ. According to an interview with Chu, she stated that real personality was one of the most important winning factor in ASQ (Chu, 2017, Interview). She mentioned that the producer reminded them the real personality will bring the successful career for an artist. There was also one informant who mentioned that the champion from one of the season in ASQ being replaced due to one's arrogant and unyielding attitude towards the production team and other contestants (Anonymous, 2017, Interview). In case this is the truth reflecting ASQ, the real personalities among the contestants could perhaps be a more important criteria of winning the competition as the winner may be an artist employed by Astro and thus a positive working attitude is important.

As a result, the entanglement of real, song and star personalities for the finalists was closely related due to the three enactments stated by Frith and Auslander. The similar result was being discovered in other studies in Malaysian context (Juliana Abdul Wahab, 2010; Siti Zanariah Ahmad Ishak, 2011). Throughout the process of the competition that lasted six months, the producer was able to identify the image that is suitable for each finalist. The result shown that the real personality will affect the star personality shown on the stage. The producer and fashion stylist will manipulate the real personality of the finalists and designed an image that is relevant to their personality. Nevertheless, the song personality of every finalists was being seized with their technical skill on singing, stage arrangement, the song improvisation and the dance choreography. The winning factor has also included the public's perception on ASQ and entanglement of three enactments stated by Frith and Auslander, which are song personality, star personality and real personality.

4.4 ENGAGING AUDIENCE AS A GIMMICK IN ASQ

Via analyzing different sources from interview and observation, ASQ had engaged audience to attract sponsorship and promotion for its program. The different communication methods were listed below (see Figure 12).

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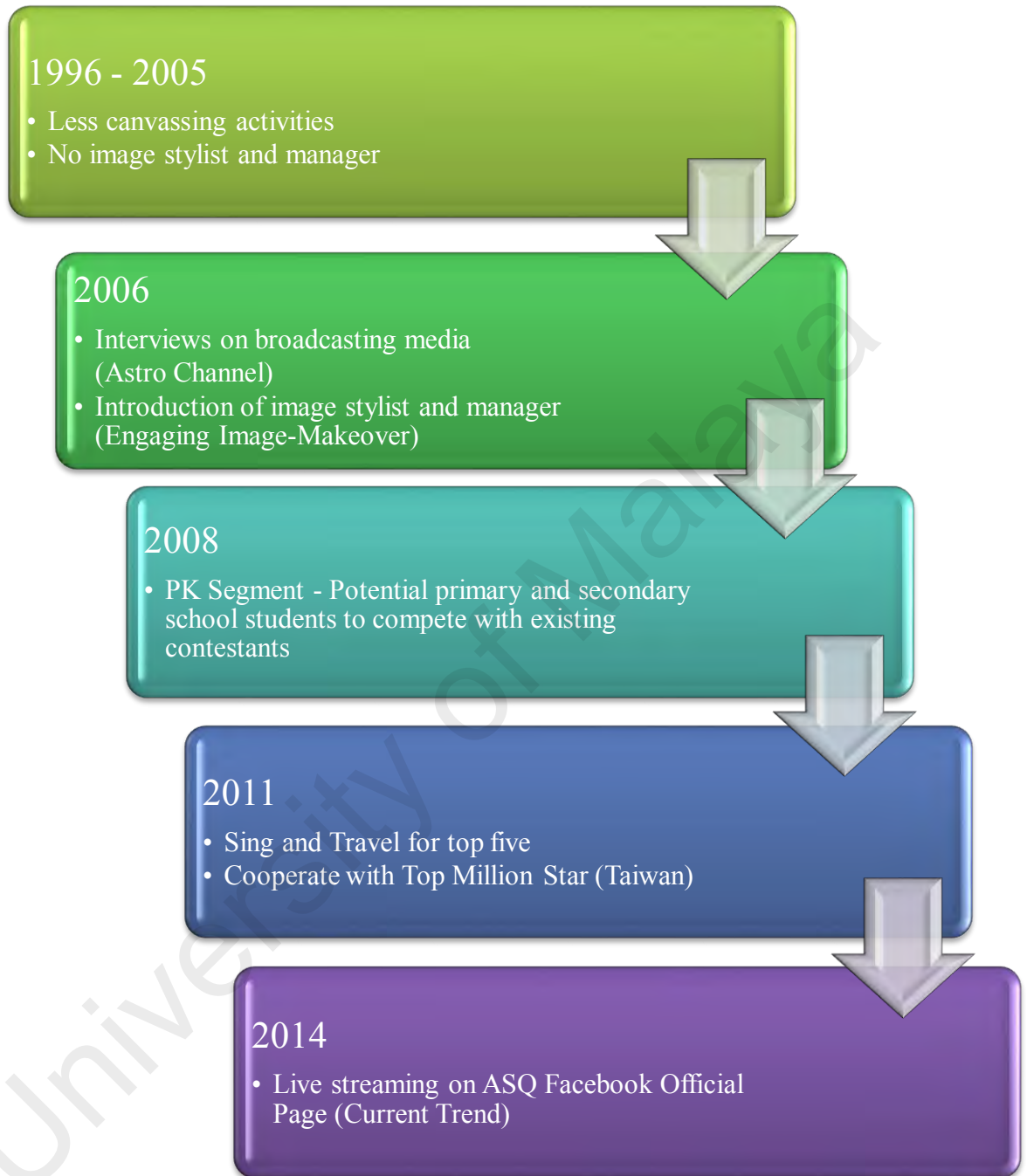


Figure 12 Communication method with audience

Back in year 1996, the canvassing activities were very less comparing to the recent years. The image construction was not emphasized in this idol singing competition due to the less sponsorship and lower popularity among Malaysian. According to the personal interview with Goh, he mentioned that there was no direct interaction with audience and less canvassing activities held during the competition (Goh, 2017, Interview). Similar statements were by Oh (Oh, 2017, Interview). However, Chu mentioned that the introduction of ‘Sing and Travel for Top Five’ (五强唱游记) being introduced in 2011. Therefore, the interaction between the finalists and audience had increased. So, the interaction with audience had changed in 2011.

Due to the introduction of new format in 2006, the training provided had helped contestants to improve their public communication skills. Besides that, the hired image stylist and manager had improved the stage image among contestants to present a better image in front of the public (Chu, 2017, Interview). Therefore, we noticed that communication between the audience and contestants had improved compared to the previous years.

Besides that, this idol televised singing competition had also inserted a new segment, known as PK segment in year 2008. The PK segment was designed to bring in the public with talented skill in singing to compete with the existing contestants. This segment were aimed to present different challenges to the contestants in order by competing with non-competition contestants, such as younger and potential students during preliminary rounds. Throughout the new segment added into that season, the interaction between this program and audience had increased and the viewing rate had increased after that, due to new element of excitement. The interaction between the finalists and the general public had changed in 2011. The introduction of “Sing and

Travel for Top Five”(五强唱游记) had increased the fans number of the contestants (Chu, 2017, Interview). During the canvassing activities, the finalists were giving out the finale show ticket to the supporters. Therefore, the finale show was impressive.

In order to boost the interaction with the audience, Astro had changed their policy during the semifinals. On earlier season's semifinals, only immediate family of the contestants was allowed to attend as supporters (Goh, 2017, Interview). But this policy has changed on last year's semifinals onward by Astro where general public can freely attend as supporters too. This policy has resulted a major boost of supporters to boost the morale of the contestants and the show atmosphere.

Besides that, ASQ producer had utilized media sources to increase the popularity of the contestants to gain more sponsorship and greater viewing rate. In year 2016, the producer introduced the weekly interaction on ASQ Facebook official page with live streaming on Wednesdays, 8p.m. till 10p.m. The viewing rate of this page had increased tremendously as the audience were given chance to play games and listen to their live playing on their official page. Moreover, ASQ had also introduced the new mobile application on Google Play and apple store for the audience to update the latest news, flashback and preview of ASQ's competition.

On the other hand, in order to gain more attention from audience and to build up the better star personality in the finalists, Astro company had appointed the image stylist and manager to manage their external appearance.

Goh (2017) stated that,

“They are labelled as “star”, they will get a hairstylist, they will also get new clothes from sponsors, and getting advice to improve their outer appearance, or more importantly as if they are a superstar. I believed since 2006, image stylists were brought in to improve contestant’s appearance. I was hosting the show, Andrew Chia that season. I noticed they started to change, so it became more likely a reality show” (Goh, 2017, Interview).

From the statement, the changes in star personality are found to be able to increase the interaction with the audience. Due to the trend today, audience prefer the glamorous image than a talented singer. The increasing amount of followers gained the more attention of sponsorship. Therefore, the fame garnered among the finalists was being emphasized in order to capture more sponsorship and supporters for this show.

In addition, another gimmick in ASQ was to engage the current trends in popular music. ASQ adopted *hallyu* in their image making. According to the statement of two interviewees, Goh and Chu, they agreed that the current trend is more inclined towards Korean pop. Korean pop culture has a very significant influence on the latest year’s singing competition. The image stylist and the hair stylist were all referring towards trending korean pop star image in styling current contestants, noticeable by face makeup and dyed hair. As a result, the finalists of the latest season possessed a strong image of Korean pop stars on stage. Brian’s stage image was similar to the korean pop stars’s movement in the dancing style. The result was similar to the studies done by several researcher. (Howard, 2006; Jung, 2010; Leong, 2014; Kim, 2016) Therefore, the imitation of korean pop was the current trend for the contestants in ASQ.

4.5 THE RECEPTION OF ASQ AND ARTIST'S CAREER PROSPECT

The reception of ASQ had changed tremendously over the year and two patterns were observed. The years before 2006 showed a lesser opportunity in entertainment industry for local artists, the popularity is barely unsustainable due to the low popularity in Malaysia and other countries (see figure 13). The years after 2006 show an increase of opportunity in entertainment industry due to the higher popularity and sponsorship for the contestants (see figure 14).

In this study, the reception of ASQ shows a close relation to the career prospect of the ASQ winners. Data analysis of the media sources show that there are four main factors in the influence of the reception that deliver promising factors for the ASQ winners' career prospect: (a) viewing rate of ASQ, (b) contestants' popularity, (c) sponsorship in ASQ, (d) opportunity in entertainment industry.

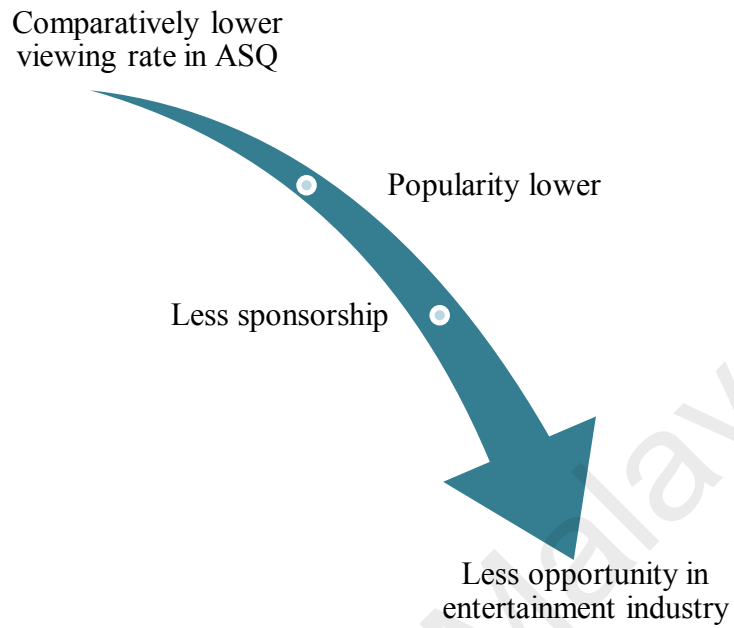


Figure 13 Relationship between Reception of ASQ and Career Prospect before 2006

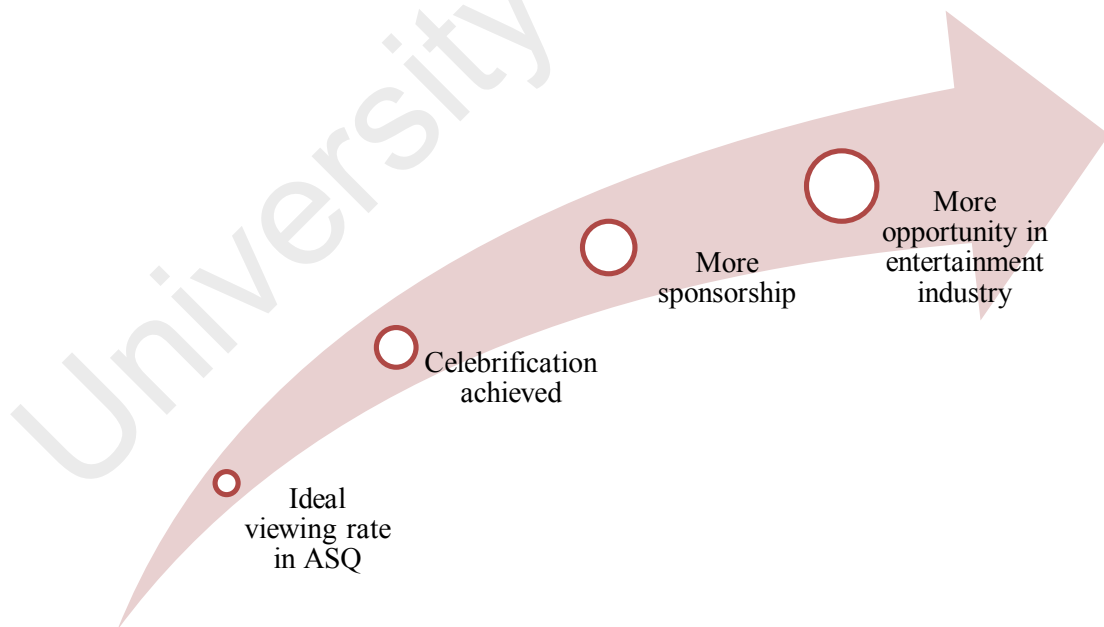


Figure 14 Relationship between Reception of ASQ and Career Prospect after 2006

In terms of viewing rate of ASQ, the constant ongoing media broadcast allows audience to pay closer attention on the contestants and this reality show. This attracted a

lot of attention from the viewers and supporters in Malaysia. Phenomenally, a large group of viewers were regularly commenting and mentioning the contestants on Facebook and YouTube. The repetitive and constant mentioning of ASQ and its contestant contributed in attention and popularity. The sponsorship persists to invest and doing propaganda in this reality program via advertisements. In addition, sponsorship will seek the finalists to be ambassador for certain product and it also increase the opportunity in other industry indirectly.

In this singing competition, perception of the audience was equally important to the judgement of the panels. The roles of audience had impacted overall television viewing rate of this show and attract more sponsorship (Turner, 2004; Meizel, 2011). Therefore, the perception of the audience being concerned towards the climax of ASQ and celebrification among the contestants. ASQ utilized the similar method to impose the visibility on media and the achievement of the contestants. According to Ouellette (2012), the self-presentation on social media reveals the individual achievement indirectly. Therefore, the data on existing interview and the public comments on Facebook and Instagram being analyzed for the purpose of analysis on public reception for ASQ 2016. Besides that, the motion of their fan page and Astro Star Quest official page being analyzed (see table 1). From their official fan page, Brian Chew gained the most amount of fans (more than 15 thousands of fans). Therefore, comments granted to Brian were generally positive.

Contestants	Number of followers on Facebook (person)
Brian Chew	15 720
Steve Yu	5 316
William Tan	5 415
Eugene Wen	5 061
Wengdyy Oi	3 206

Table 1 Comparison number of followers among five finalists on Facebook (updated by April 2018)

In 2016, Astro Star Quest have utilized social media to connect and enhance interaction with more audience and public. Therefore, the producer had set up an Astro Star Quest 2016 Facebook Official Page to attract the attention of public and enhance the popularity of the contestants. Chu (2017) mentioned that her followers number had increased tremendously after the participation in ASQ. Her followers on Facebook had increased from around 2000 to more than 9000 followers. This surging increase of follower increase her exposure in social media in promoting her artist personality. However, her followers reduced gradually after the participation. The popularity of the finalists usually does not last optimistically for up to five years except the those that who have expanded their music career overseas. For instance, Nicholas Teo has successfully developed his musical career in Taiwan's chinese music industry, and subsequently given an exposure in pop drama and stage show, even as lead actor. As a conclusion, the artist career can be expanded if the contestants were gaining great amount of followers on social media.

There were some suggestions of the public to this Reality TV program on their official page. Some of the audience questioned the fairness of evaluation made by judges, and they suspected the result has pre-arranged somehow. There were some errors of judgement on the talented contestants during the final (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2017). However, there were other audiences who supported the decision of the judges and believed that the ASQ managed to organize a better competition than some other competition, for instance TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship (全球华人新秀大赛).

“Brian should get champion in Malaysia, he may not be the one who chosen by Astro. But he made it in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the champion of ASQ can only make it to the semifinals, better just go for cover song than singing live. Hope there were recording company that wish to sign contract with Brian, please don't stay in Astro company, Astro company will only fame certain singer such as Nicole, Geraldine and Uriah. ” (Eddie Low, 2017)

“Is there anyone feel that Astro made the better management than TVB, the organiser failed to make the final looks competitive. The band kept on dragging the beat of the song and made the contestant failed to present better in the competition. The judges were able to give comments based on one minute performance? God bless Brian and Wengdy. ” (Joey Teh, 2017)

The comments given by the public and audience towards the management of this televised program were slightly more positive. However, there were also many audiences commented on the error judgement for the finalist. The public voiced out that there were rumors that the champion of ASQ were being judged unfairly in Malaysia over the years.

Meanwhile, the first runner up of this competition would be able to reach the highest achievement during the final of international competitions, for example, TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship and Top Million Star.

Astro Star Quest had modified the previous format from one way communication into two way communication, within audiences and contestants. There were plenty of negative comments on the decision of judges. The champion of ASQ 2016 was won by Wengdy, but the most of the audience disagreed with the result. The public had a lot of negative feedback on her singing skill and her showmanship.

The comments stated below had fully displayed the unsatisfactory of the public on the champion chosen.

First time I disagree with the champion in ASQ over these 20 years. Brian, you are supposed to be the champion, you are the champion for us. (Selane Tan, 2017)

Thanks to Astro for appointing a wrong champion with worst, ugly and off pitch champion. (Yunice Chin, 2017)

It was the first time I've been viewing the full season of this televised program, I wish to support the contestants behind the screen. The champion is not as bad as others say, but her quality of tone was not suitable in singing rock song. Once the strumming electric guitar or drum kit added in, her voice totally being covered by the background music. Her voice is not powerful enough to sing this kind of song.

But, suprisingly Brian managed to cope with any genre of the music. Although his quality of voice is not special but he is able to attract audiences to listen his song. His voice is very clean and potentially to expand more in future. I think you will be a successful singer in future, keep it up! I have forgotten your look but your voice is marked in my memory. (Colt Milk, 2017)

Brian sang very well, I can't understand why he can't be the winner? I'm puzzled by the fact that she is the champion. She got nothing than a special quality of tone. Please give Brian the champion then! (Queenie Chua, 2017)

According to the comments given on their official web page, the results of ASQ 2016 were not parallel with the public's expectations and the judgements made by panel judges were being doubted. Due to the stage performance and musicianship issue, Brian who was the 1st runner up, actually gained more recognition than the champion. This issue had been raised by the public, casting doubt on clarity and fairness in the result of judgement.

In addition, the comments that Brian received was mainly positive and the supportive comments contradicts with the result of ASQ 2016. There were conflicts among the fans of champion and 1st runner up (ASQ Official Facebook Page, 2017). The supportive comments more goes to Brian, meanwhile there were a lot of negative review on her performance for finale.

According to an interview with Brian Chew, he mentioned that he was not satisfied with the result although he felt that he had did his best during the final (988, 2017). But he also mentioned that he accepted the decision made by the panel of judges. The radio presenter then asked for the opinion on the ASQ final result from Morris Pang. Morris Pang mentioned that the performance for the Wengdyy, the champion was not as steady as Brian, and he implied that the decision made was unfair. He mentioned that Wengdyy got a better star personality than Brian, he implies that star personality in ASQ is more important than song personality.

Wengdyy's voice was not powerful enough and the song style that have chosen was not so suitable for her tone quality (YouTube, 2017a). In term of singing quality, her singing skill was not as matured as Brian, but her identical tone quality had lead to her winning in ASQ. Nevertheless, ASQ is a singing competition that aimed to promote and produce a talented singer rather than a singer who was already famous. The similar outcome could be discovered in American Idol (Broomley, 2010). As a conclusion, star personality was the main factor to gain the popularity and supporter on social media.

The discography and filmography for winners and finalists of 20 seasons was being analyzed in order to investigate the successfulness of artists career in Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan or Hong Kong (see Table 2 and Table 3).

Name	ASQ	Discography and Filmography	Career
Crystal Liew	1997	7 Albums	Local artist (active 1997-2012) Recording company: Eastern Records
Christopher Lay	1998	13 Albums 2 Musicals	Local artist (active 1998 till now) Recording company: Star Dawn Production Music Instructor Region: Malaysia, Taiwan
Lee Yih Ching	1999	**Untraceable	Independent artist (active 1999 till 2017) Region: Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan
Winnie Ho	2000	4 Albums 2 OSTs 2 Musicals 1 EPs 4 Featuring EP	Independent artist (active 2000-2016) Voice Producer/ Instructor (since 2008)
Eric Lim	2001	4 Albums 2 TV series 6 Movies	Local artist and actor (active 2008-2018) Label: Awesome Productions Region: Malaysia, Taiwan
Nicholas Teo	2002	5 Albums 5 EPs 10 OSTs 6 TV series 4 Movies	Artist and Actor (active 2003 – 2018) Author (2018) Labels: Warner (current), Honto Production (current- author), Universal Music Group, Emperor Entertainment Group, Seed Music Co. Ltd, Virgin Record, Gold Typhoon, EQ Music, Music Street, BMA Investment Group Region: Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong
Kenny Koh Jian Yi	2003	3 Albums 11 Local and overseas composition 1 Musical	Composer (active 2003-2007) Independent composer/artist (active since 2009) Label: Warner, K music (own label) Music director (musical) (2012) Music Tutor (since 2015) Region: Malaysia, Singapore

Fayse Goh Kok Hooi	2004	1 Albums 2 Musicals	Independent artist (active 2005-2017) Songwriter, music producer (own label) Region: Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Korea
Tate Chan Kwok Fai	2005	3 Albums 2 Compilation albums	Local artist (active 2006-2018) Label: Universal Music Malaysia, Secret Garden Entertainment
Anthony Chang Wee Kuong	2006	1 Album	Local artist (active 2006-2007) Labels: HIM International Music, RAM Entertainment
Zax Lee	2007	**untraceable	Independent artist (active 2007-2017) Vocal instructor Café singer
Alexis Wan Chean	2008	1 Album 8 Compilation Albums 1 OST	Independent Artist in UK(active 2009- 2016)
Eng Yee Min	2009	5 OSTs 2 Solos 1 Movie	Artist (active 2003 till now) TV host/ DJ (active since 2017) Label: ASTRO company
Peace Teo	2010	3 Albums 1 OST	Independent artist (active 2010 till 2017)
Geraldine Gan	2011	4 EPs 6 OSTs 2 Movies 6 Compilation Album	Artist (active 2012 till now) Labels: ASTRO Company
Nicole Lai Chung Fung	2012	2 Mini albums 5 OST 10 Compilation Albums	Artist (active 2013 till now) Labels: ASTRO Company
Esther Thian Eik Cher	2013	1 Single 1 Compilation Album	Artist (active 2014 till now) Labels: ASTRO Company

Uriah See Khai	2014	1 EP 1 Compilation Album 1 Movie	Independent artist (active 2015 till now) Label: ASTRO Company
Apple Kho Sock Ling	2015	1 Compilation Album 1 Single	Artist (active 2015 till now) Labels: ASTRO Company, Media Asia Music
Wengdy Oi	2016	2 Single	Artist (active 2017 till now) Labels: ASTRO Company

Table 2 Discography, filmography and career of 20 post ASQ winner

Name	ASQ	Discography and Filmography	Career
Gary Chaw	1999	14 Albums 4 Movie 32 Published Compositions 10 Reality Shows	Artist (active 2000 till now) Labels: Joe's Music (current), Warner, Seed Music, Rock Records and Tapes, Show City Times, Sony Music Grp, BMA Investment Group Ltd. Region: Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong. Taiwan, China
Vincent Chong Ying-cern	2002	5 Albums	Local artist (active 2003 till 2008) Labels: EMI Malaysia
Jack Yap	2002	1 Single 1 OST	Independent artist (active 2003 till 2014) MY FM DJ
Tan Vui Chuan	2003	4 Albums 2 Eps 84 Published Compositions and Production 7 Albums' Production	Artist (active 2005 till now) Labels: Wonderful Music Co. Ltd (Current), hEha Music (current, Hong Kong Area), Rock Records and Tapes Region: Taiwan, Hong Kong
Meeia Foo	2005	3 Albums 2 EP 1 Compilation Album 10 OST 2 Musicals	Artist (active 2005 till now) Labels: J.M. Global Entertainment (Current), Jason's Entertainment Co. Ltd Region: Taiwan, Malaysia

Winson Woon	2005	1 Album 3 TV Series	Independent artist (active 2005 till now)
Andrew Tan Say Aun	2006	5 Albums 3 Compilation Albums 5 OSTs 1 Musical 1 Movie 2 Drama Series	Artist and actor (active 2006 till now) Labels: Linfair Records, World Cat Identities, Eagle Music Production, Star Academy, ASTRO Company Region: Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia
Chu Hou Ren	2008	3 Albums 5 Single 25 Published Composition 5 Movies 4 OSTs	Artist (active 2008 till now) TV Host DJ Labels: ASTRO Company Region: Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan
Danny Koo Kar Lin	2008	5 Compilation Albums 1 TV Series 48 Participation in Reality Shows (Malaysia, China) 15 Magazine Cover	Local Artist (active 2009 till now) TV Host Label: ASTRO Company Ambassador (Adidas Neo Label Malaysia) Region: Malaysia, Taiwan, China
Chen Keat Yoke	2009	1 OST 11 Compilation Album 3 drama	Local Artist (active 2009 till now) TV Host Label: ASTRO Company Ambassador (Beauxlim)
Tha Kie Ying	2011	9 Compilation Album 2 Single 1 Movie	Local Artist (active 2011 till now) Label: ASTRO Company
Rex Teh Soon Zin	2013	2 OST 4 Compilation Albums	Local Artist (active 2013 till now) Label: ASTRO Company
Justin Ng Chong Han	2013	1 Compilation Albums 1 Single 2 OSTs 1 TV series 1 Micro Movie	Local Artist (active 2013 till now) Label: ASTRO Company Ambassador Doraemon 100 (2013)

Amy Boon Siew Hui	2013	2 Compilation Albums	Local Artist (active 2013 till now) TV Host Label: ASTRO Company
Sean Khor	2014	1 EP	Local Artist (active 2014 till now) Label: ASTRO Company
Kan Chok Chen	2015	1 Single	Local Artist (active 2015 till now) Label: ASTRO Company
William Tan	2016	1 EP 5 Published Composition 4 Musical 1 TV Series	Local Artist (active 2015 till now) Label: ASTRO Company

Table 3 Discography, filmography and career of post ASQ finalists

According to the information stated above, the possible career that achieved by the contestants were artist, actor, vocal instructor, composers, host, and DJ. The achievement in entertainment industry were closely related to their number of followers in Facebook or Instagram. The better opportunity goes to the artist who have higher number of followers in social media. These outstanding composers has accumulated a great number of Instagram and Facebook followers during the contest, such as Fayse Goh, Nicholas Teo, Justin Ng, Peace Teo, Eric Lim, and many others.

In the 20 post winners, the post competition achievement were comparatively better than winners from other Malaysian Chinese Reality TV programs. There were only two discography and filmography are untraceable due to their backstage duty and personal achievement in other singing competition in entertainment industry. For example, Lee Yih Ching was attending many other reality TV's competition and

performance after her participation in ATQ in 1997 (YouTube, 2018; YouTube, 2011). In addition, Zax Lee was constantly work as a café singer since his participation in ASQ in 2007 (YouTube, 2015). Some of the local composers had also distributed their own composition album or composed for famous artists overseas. For example, Winner Ho had contributed her own composition in her albums. Faysé Goh also composed songs for Fuying & Sam who are the famous pop group singer in Malaysia and his newly composed song was selected as the best song in 17th Global Chinese Music Award 2017. Also, there were plenty famous singers and actors being produced in ASQ. For instance, Nicholas Teo had been acting for many Taiwan pop drama such as *Smiley Pasta*, *Ultimate Cousin San* and many more.

The album sale and the movie or drama ratings for the past winners were positive for the ones who made a name not only in Malaysia but in Taiwan, for example. With an inclusion to play a leading role in TV drama *Smiley Pasta*, Nicholas Teo received an average rating of 5.16 for 17 episodes. Meanwhile, Nicholas Teo's latest album, "The Best Is Yet to Come" (最好的快要发生) distributed in March 2018 had reached a good sale at 45.16% within a week (Five Music, 2018). His EP sale won the first place of Five Music's rating for two consecutive weeks. Also, Andrew Tan had distributed his first digital EP on KK Box, "Imperial" (天后), won the first place of rating and gained more than 100k views on YouTube Channel in a week. As to the date of the present study's data collection, "Imperial" had reached more than 700k views on YouTube Channel.

Moreover, the post finalists of ASQ/ATQ had also achieved glorious career in entertainment industry. With the great number of followers in Instagram, Danny Koo was chosen as the only Malaysian Master of Ceremony in China's CCTV New Year's Gala 2017 and also invited to participate in many other China's reality shows such as Perfect Dating in 2016 and Come Sing in 2017. Another few examples can be identified in other finalists in this competition. For instance, Andrew Tan had distributed 5 albums in Taiwan and some representative songs were 'Empress of Heaven' which being covered and recomposed by other singers, 3 compilation albums of 'imperative' with Bii (필서진) had also made a wave in Taiwan, Malaysia and Korean. Therefore, most of the finalists of ASQ were able to achieve celebrification in Malaysia or even internationally after the demotic turn in ASQ. The successful demotic turning among the contestants brought better achievement in entertainment industry. The similar results were being obtained in other studies as well (Hill, 2007; Marshall, 2010; Meizel, 2011, Jerslev, 2016).

In researcher's investigation of this televised idol program towards the career prospect among the contestants, each contestant experienced different impact from the contest experience. For example, Goh mentioned that his composing ability was ignited during the process of the competition.

I didn't know I can write. One day, we need to perform our talent. I can't dance and I can't play instrument. So, maybe I can just use one of the songs I wrote, and ask someone to put it into music, then I sang la. So, that was the first time I perform with my own written song. And, I did it with techno kind and rap a bit. Then I noticed that I can write, then I started to write more and more. During the competition, they are giving me a head start to write and put things into music. I think it's fun then I try to write more then. (Goh, 2017, Interview)

In the musical process during the competition, Goh discovered that he was talented in composing music. He won the highest achievement in ASQ 2004 with his new style of singing in the era. In year 2014, he has also released his first music album with all his own compositions and own label.

Meanwhile, Chu expressed her gratitude towards the show's producer of that time, in advising and educating them (Chu, 2017, Interview). She was constantly reminded to be well mannered and be humble during the competition. The teaching had shaped her attitude and manners in her music career. Currently, she is organizing a music studio in Klang. She had passed on her former producer's teaching to her students, to develop positive moral values. "The producer kept reminding us to greet everyone and be polite to everyone we met. Maybe we are too young, he afraid that we may go into the wrong path in future (Chu, 2017, Interview). Therefore, she concluded that the whole experience during the competition had enlighten her to be a successful vocal teacher.

During the third interview with Oh, she mentioned that her current career was also being inspired during the competition. She had many followers and fans that were supporting her from semifinals. Therefore, she felt that the simplest way to keep contact with her fans was to continue her music dream as a music café singer. Previously, she was working as a part time singer at music café in Kuala Lumpur. After she graduated from her undergraduate, she and her music partner began the music business on recruiting talented young singers. Currently, they are opening classes to provide vocal training to improve the young singer's vocal skill and provide opportunities for talented amateur singers to perform singing at music café in KL area.

According to a local station interview with William, William claimed that he would like to enhance his singing skill and composing skill (MY FM, 2017). He realized that his vocal skill needs improvement after the participation. He wish to further his vocal training with a famous vocal teacher in Malaysia. Meanwhile, Brian Chew also claimed that he wish to further his vocal training in England through the same interview during the live call out (988, 2017). He wish to continue his dream on other international singing competitions in future. Besides that, Brian also claimed that his future career would be a vocal teacher (Sabah Sinchew Online, 2017). Currently, he is a tutor at his vocal teacher, Jinv Wong's Music Academy. He aimed to deliver the competition experience and singing skills to the young generation. In future, his willingness in music career is teaching, instead of becoming a superstar. Therefore, he will continue his current career and vocal training with Jinv Wong.

Also, Brian mentioned that he wishes to produce his own album with all his composition (988, 2017). Brian would like to produce a music album on pop and rock rather than ballad. Based on the experience on their vocal training, he wished to excavate his new talent in singing pop and rock. Therefore, the experience in vocal training and stage experience had assisted him to further his journey in music industry. Due to limited experience in composing and financial support, he mentioned that he hopes to further vocal training overseas and gain more experience in music production and composition other than teaching vocal. Therefore, the participation experience in Astro Star Quest had contributed him in building his career in Chinese music industry.

In order to sustain the music career in Malaysia or overseas, star personality and fair looking was the key constituent. According to researcher's observation, the star personality and the more attractive looking can be clearly seen in most of the winners. Meanwhile, the achievements of contestants with fair singing skill, fair looking and star personality was beyond the other contestants with great singing skills. For instance, Nicholas Teo had distributed his own album after the participation in ATQ and took the main casts in several pop drama in Taiwan. Also, Uriah See and Geraldine Gan had involved in cover headlines of several magazines such as Men's Uno and I feel Girl, other than only focusing on making EP album. The similar result in star personality towards sustainability of career was being concluded by other scholar (Ouellette, 2012; Méndez, 2015).

In surviving and thriving in Chinese music industry, the star personality and external appearances was more important than to win the ASQ competition. For instance, Danny Koo was just the finalist in ASQ 2008, yet he got the greater number of fans on Facebook and the better achievement in entertainment industry compared to the first three runner-up of same season. Also, William Tan was the 2nd runner-up in ASQ 2016, but his star personality is clearer seen through the videos of existing interviews. William was able to create humor during the conversation and the showmanship was stronger. In terms to fulfill the three enactments, William got the better star and song personality than two other winners. In year 2018, William was involved in Astro AEC localized comedy drama, JiuWuDaBa (九五搭八) as one of the main cast and he also involved in the production and composition of Chinese New Year album of U FM. Meanwhile, the popularity of Brian and Wengdy has declined recently due to the less involvement in social media and mass compared to William. According to all the data collected for the

winning factor in ASQ, a better showmanship and fair looking was the winning factor in idol singing competition and also the key to maintaining celebrification of a singer in music industry. Therefore, it was recognized that a star personality of a singer to sustain longer in entertainment industry. As to the more successful ones like Gary Chaw and Nicholas Teo, it may suggest that a male-dominated success may be still the scenario (see Loo & Wong, 2010; Loo, 2013).

As conclusion, Astro Star Quest televised idol program had successfully aroused the perception and notion among the youngsters towards their career prospect in music industry since it was launched. This televised idol singing competition doesn't only focused on developing contestant's song personality and star personality, extensively throughout the progress on the contest, contestants' real personality is improving significantly, which is proven useful in their future career, regardless of their path taken. Yet, the research outcome had proved that this idol singing competition had successfully created a better career path for post winners and the third research objective, concerning contestants' career prospect, has been answered positively.

4.6 CONSPIRACY IN THE PROCESS OF DEMOTIC TURNING

During research of the conspiracy of process of demotic turn, three informants who wished to remain anonymous mentioned conspiracies in the management of ASQ. They stated that to increase the program's viewing rate was by a manipulation of pseudo audience during the semifinals and finals was to bring in more sponsorship to sustain the quality of the program. In recent years, ASQ had advertised the brand of sponsorship during the broadcast to increase the marketing of ASTRO Company.

Secondly, the question of why ASQ champions failed to achieve the highest achievement in TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship surfaced where some speculated reasons such as manipulated judging system. For instance, Andrew Tan (1st runner-up), Yoke Chen (2nd runner-up) and Brian Chew (1st runner-up) had won in TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship but not the winner of ASQ. An informant pointed out that, the champion could have been altered by the panel due to the personality of the contestants.

Thirdly, ASQ had also introduced training as a gimmick in reaching celebrification among contestants. One of the training was speech training and the training was given to prevent the untold issue among the contestants and ASTRO Company being exposed on media. In addition, the researcher did face difficulty in collecting data from the latest season than from the previous season's finalists.

Lastly, the anonymous informant also questioned the two-year obligatory contract for the top ten finalists since 2006. While ASTRO produced albums for the first three finalists, however, the remaining finalists remained inactive with no profit from the contract other than participate in some official function that involved them as the top ten finalists. The remaining contestants were also not allowed to participate in any official functions organized by other company. There was a concern regarding this measure, which was to prevent any possibility that the achievement of remaining finalists to exceeds the achievement of the first three finalists post competition just like the past finalists Danny Koo and Gary Chaw, as it will give impressions that the ASQ results were not credible.

Since the statements given by limited informants who remained anonymous, credibility of the data may be questioned. However, based on the stated fact, this may invite a deeper thought into the strategies used by ASTRO in sustaining its competition and at the same time, managing its business as a producer of new singers. Similarly, Meizel's study did not leave out the politics in American Idol (2011). Meizel showed how the producers of American Idol worked on their strategies in gaining reception and making each round of the idol competition something different by altering the real and star personality of their contestants with an aim of marketing as its priority. For instance, gimmick playing around racial, genre and even world politics elements may be included (see *Ibid.*).

4.7 CONCLUSION

In answering research objective 1, the outcome showed that ASQ went through changes and development in its musical process from 1996. The additional segment from year 2006 added were aimed to improve the quality of the show and develop the better inner build up among the contestants. Besides that, the result shows that the formatting of ASQ considered the nation as a Muslim country where conservatism in outfit was maintained, in contrasts to the staging of Western reality show. In terms of competing with multilingual songs not restricted to only Chinese, the multiracialism of Malaysian identity was present.

However, in terms of career prospect and the overall direction, a strong inclination towards Taiwanese pop and Canto pop were clearly seen through the song selections for the contestants approved by ASTRO. While, the continuous program collaboration with TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship and Top Million Star revealed the same.

In answering research objective 2, the outcome showed that the musical process is constantly evolving in the formation of star personality among the contestants, similar to the study of Meizel (2011) where the choice of song, genre, identity, racial and even religious element was marketed in American idol. For instance, the image styling and the moral education during the competition had altered the three enactments from Frith and Auslander among the contestants. The three personalities were being developed through the training provided. The three enactments were the main key in winning this singing competition through the data collected from various sources. Throughout the process of ASQ, the contestants had developed the three enactments with the help of the trainers, encouragement of peer effect and self-motivation (MY FM, 2017). Thus, the alteration and the evolution of the competition format had also increased the program viewing rate and sponsorship in order to provide better exposure for the contestants.

ASQ had successfully maintained its activity and popularity for twenty years as the longest running Chinese idol competition in Malaysia. In order to answer research objective 3, this Chinese Idol Singing Competition had contributed largely in producing singers and composers alike in the Malaysian Chinese popular music industry. Therefore, the study showed ASQ's mission not only as a business, but contributed a platform for the 'ordinaries' as what Turner described (2010), and at the same time developed local artists for the Chinese popular music industry. With a platform and opportunity provided,

these 'ordinaries' are able to unearth their potential and the winners are able to land themselves a desired career in-line with their interest and ability. The evolution of the program showed its adaptation of strategies used in global reality show and has thus gradually attracted more individuals to participate. The study also showed how ASQ contributed to the demotic turn among the 'ordinaries' as finalists.

University of Malaya

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Based on the results attained in Chapter 4, a summary of the finding is then presented in this chapter. The findings from the study are used to discuss the achievement of research objectives. All research questions will be answered subsequently and finally the achievement of research objectives are determined. The demotic turn in ASQ was able to contribute celebrification among the contestants in different prospect. Finally, the contributions of the study are discussed based on methodological and practical approaches and end with suggestions for future research.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDING

In 1996, Astro Company had altered the format of TVB International Chinese New Talent Singing Championship and began the first Chinese reality TV program in Malaysia. The format of the program being improved since 2006 where the training such as vocal, body gesture, dance and so on were provided. The training was provided to increase the celebrification during the process of demotic turn among the contestants. With the global influence in entertainment field, several interesting and outrageous segments were being added in to consolidate the public image of the contestants. For instance, the PK segments, collaborations with other countries' idol singing competition and MTV production were being utilized to promote this idol singing competition beyond the star personality of the contestants.

In this study, the three enactments coined by Frith and Auslander were used as a guideline to investigate the method used by ASQ in order to develop the celebrification among the contestants. Comparing the winning factors of reality TV programs between Malaysia and other countries, the star personality was less emphasized among the contestants in American Idol, so do other western reality TV programs. The image making of the contestants was not important in gaining the voting from audience (Boyd, 2010). Meanwhile, the star personality and real personality were more emphasized in ASQ in order to reach celebrification among the contestants.

Via analyzing the data from interviews, observation and media sources, ASQ has revealed a strong inclination towards Taiwanese pop and Cantopop. The priority of song selections had brought up the trend of Taiwanese popular music and the preferable career region was also tendency to develop in Taiwan. As a result of *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) to be prevalent all over the world, the inclination of image making for male contestants was also towards Korea pop and Taiwanese pop.

Moreover, double enactment in reality TV program in Asian countries were emphasized in the show. Therefore, there were news mentioned that the reality show in China hired the “professional audience” to increase the viewing rate. But, the phenomenon of China’s reality show was not found in ASQ previous seasons. Yet, Astro Company had used the attendance of live audience to increase the show’s viewing rates. Therefore, this idol show was more sustainable than other local reality TV program (Malaysian Idol, Akademi Fantasia, I wanna sing, etc) in Malaysia.

Reviewing the current occupation and achievements stated in Chapter 4, the post winners achieve better opportunity in entertainment industry either in Malaysia or overseas. The opportunity in entertainment field for the post winners were wide, such as actors in Taiwan (Nicholas Teo), composer in Taiwan (Gary Chaw), host in China (Danny Koo), owner of vocal studio (Miko Chu), and many more. Due to the successful demotic turn in ASQ, the finalists from ASQ 2016 also achieved the better opportunity such as local actor, local singer, and musicians. For instance, William Tan had contributed his composing talents in some local and overseas composition and involved in local Chinese drama.

As a conclusion, this study reveals the musical process that contributed to the demotic turn and celebrification based on the Frith and Auslander's three enactments. Despite conspiracy judging issues, the successful demotic turn brought upon to the contestant had promoted a better opportunity in local or other countries' entertainment industry among the finalists. The case of demotic turn at ASQ contributed reception and fame where an ordinary singer was 'turned' or transformed into celebrity, and not only that, contribute new faces and figures in the local C-pop music industry.

However, via data analysis based on Frith and Auslander's three enactments, the star personality as revealed in ASQ weighted much on the stylistic pattern of Taiwan's pop industry, and with reflection of Hallyu. A Malaysian popular music identity remains faintly in the background. Successful future prospect of winners of ASQ, such as the case of Gary Chaw and Nicholas Teo, also relied very much to their faith if they are able to develop their career in Taiwan's music industry where the music industry in their home country, Malaysia, has only 23.2% population of Chinese. Thus, the C-pop market in Malaysia is generally not large enough.

5.3 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE STUDY

In order to investigate deeper content of Astro Star Quest, this study can be conducted from different perspectives from judges and producers. Therefore, this study shall be researched more thoroughly from different perspective. Furthermore, the perspective of the audience should be collected through questionnaire and surveys. The review and perspective from the audience should be reviewed for the sake of deeper understanding of this reality program.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Astro Star Quest contributed the different and upgraded musical process for the ASQ contestants in order to develop the demotic turn among the contestants so that the contestants were able to achieve celebrification through this idol singing competition. Therefore, the winners that successfully achieved celebrification were able to have better opportunity in entertainment industry.

The primary goal of this thesis is to find answers to five research questions. Firstly, what is the whole musical process of ASQ (Astro Star Quest) in contributing to celebrification? Secondly, in what way the contestant achieved a demotic turn negotiating between real personality, star image and song personality based on the concept of Frith and Auslander? Thirdly, which segment is deemed to be the most important and which has remained at the periphery of attention during the music and image-making processes in ASQ? Lastly, in what way the career prospect of the winner and finalist illustrates the impact of ASQ in the local C-pop music industry?

The outcome of this study revealed the music process of ASQ and its manner in generating a demotic turn among ordinary singers. The Malaysian C-pop industry remain small due to its population of Chinese, however, ASQ in a way plays an active role in developing the C-pop industry via television reality singing contest and at the same time, generating public viewing rate as part of an Astro programme. In addition, new artists developed via a demotic turn from their 'ordinariness' as how Turner (2010) described, mark new entry of singers in the local C-pop industry with their 'star' quality or personality were already formed before their first album release. The outcome of ASQ also landed contestants in various careers and opportunity such singers, actors, host, music teachers and composers. However, the study also shows that the future of these artists in the perspective of a larger market in the Asian Chinese community still depend very much in their capacity of developing their career in the bigger industry such as in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

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