
CULTURE PATTERNS OF BTS FANS IN THE DIGITAL ERA ON THE @INDOMY TWITTER

Desmiati¹

¹Program Studi Ilmu Komunikasi, Universitas Widya Mataram, KT III/237, Jalan Dalem Mangkubumen, Kadipaten, Kecamatan Kraton, Kota Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55132

E-mail: desmidesmiati03@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO:

Submitted:
2 Januari 2023
Revised:
15 February 2023
Accepted:
25 March 2023
Available Online:
31 March 2023

ABSTRACT:

This article aims to examine the ARMY fandom and see how the new fan culture in the digital era is implemented on the social media Twitter account @INDOMY. This research used the method of virtual ethnography by Christine Hine (2015). Two data collection techniques are used: exploring field sites on the Twitter account @INDOMY and a literature review of previous research as additional data to complete research information needs. The results show that fan culture can be seen from four things in fandom on the internet: 1) communication, showing that fans use virtual identities to communicate and produce fan speaking and fan jokes; 2) creativity, fans generate various forms of creative production, i.e., memes, fan edits, fan covers, and fan fiction; 3) knowledge, in this area, the fan base is responsible for providing information to fandom members, and; 4) civic power or organization, fans success through fan projects consisting of fan streaming, fan voting, birthday projects, and charity activities through donations made by fans.

Keywords: Fandom, Fans Culture, Twitter, ARMY

INTRODUCTION

Korean Pop Culture (K-Pop) has succeeded in spreading its cultural products popularly to the international world. This process is known as the “Korean Wave” or “Hallyu”. Korean Wave is a term for spreading Korean popular culture through industrial products such as music, style, drama, fashion, etc. The process of its spread cannot be separated from technological advances and the existence of social media such as Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube, and so on, so it can be said that social media is the primary channel for the emergence of the Korean Wave phenomenon (Purwanti, 2013). With social media,

disseminating information about the Korean Wave makes it easier for anyone to access information about this (Rinata & Dewi, 2019) so that it attracts many fans and takes an interest in K-Pop culture itself.

One of the Korean Wave products in great demand, especially for millennials, is pop music or K-Pop. One of the most popular entertainment products has lifted the economy of South Korea. Because the South Korean government itself pays special attention to the K-Pop industry, which can be seen from the phenomenon in the late 1990s, when most countries in Asia experienced a financial crisis, but South Korea formed the Ministry of Culture with a special K-Pop department (Putri, 2019). K-pop became a sensation in Indonesia and became popular in the 2000s. Many boy groups and girl groups are becoming known in Indonesia. In this way, K-pop's prominence in Indonesia has formed a large and solid fan base. Fandom itself is formed because of relationships between people who like the same thing, even formed without intense fan culture and behavior or even not knowing each other (Lewis, 2002).

The country of Indonesia is one of the homes for millions of K-pop lovers (K-Popers), with the fourth largest population in the world after the United States of America (CNN Indonesia, 2022). The Twitter account announced a list of countries that tweeted the most about K-Pop artists throughout 2019. Indonesia was ranked 3rd after Thailand and South Korea (egsaugm, 2021). Apart from that, for viewing Youtube videos about K-Pop by country, Indonesia also occupies the second position with a percentage of 9.9% (Won So, 2020).

Fans or fans are understood as a term to refer to a community or group that has the same passion for popular culture. Fans are usually associated with fanaticism or excessive liking. Referring to Stuart Hall's thought that fans have the autonomy (independence) to give meaning to every text they consume. Instead of assuming that fans are passive parties, Stuart Hall's theory positions fans in the opposite direction, namely, seeing fans as involved parties in producing meaning. However, this does not require the possibility that the younger generation will develop some overly fanatical attitudes toward their idols, so this fanaticism will affect the lifestyle of their fan culture (K.A Putri et al., 2019). Quoting from the Kumparan survey with data, 56% of K-Pop fans spend 1-5 hours using their social media to access information about their favorite idol, even up to 28% spend six more hours using their social media to see various activities of their idols (Kumparan, 2017).

So that with this phenomenon, most people or non-fans think K-Popers are always excessive, crazy, hysterical, obsessive, consumptive, or even too generous towards their idols because they like to waste their money on buying something related to their idols. Such as merchandise ranging from albums, photo cards, and lightsticks, or even chasing their idols wherever their idols go (Meivita, 2013). For example, the

Super Junior group has the fandom name Elf, the Bigbang group has the fandom name V.I.P., and IKON has the fandom name IKONIC. However, among the many K-Pop idols currently widely known, B.T.S. can still survive as a boy group with immense fandom worldwide. A K-Pop group that has achieved success on the international music scene. Currently, they have fans or supporters who are strong and have a considerable influence, which is called ARMY (Adorable Representattive M.C. For Youth).

BTS was founded in 2013 by BigHit Entertainment Agency. BTS began to be in demand after getting the achievements after releasing several albums that could climb the billboard charts, starting with the album Love Yourself, followed by other songs such as dynamite, Butter, and many more. Furthermore, it is increasingly being looked at after the "Love Myself" campaign with UNICEF, which has the aim of helping end all acts of violence and fostering self-confidence and more compassion for oneself and others (Rani, 2021). So that they can invite their audience, especially their followers, to be aware of mental health issues. This success is inseparable from the influence and support of its fandom, namely the ARMY. Thanks to their supporters, BTS also won international awards, which made BTS even more recognized, such as the Favorite Social Artist American Music Award 2018 and the Top Social Media Artist 2018 Billboard Music Award. The fandom even won the Best Fan category award at the 2018 Kids Choice Award and the most fans at the MTV Europe Music Award. In 2019, at the American Music Awards, BTS was named the winner of Favorite Duo or Group Pop/Rock twice in a row and Tour of the years (suara.com, 2021).

Changes in fandom culture and behavior in the digital era have made fans use the internet to connect with fans even though they are in different spheres, known as cyber fandom, by sharing information that anyone can access anywhere (Yulistiana, 2004). Cyberfandom is a fan group created virtually via the internet or social media, making it easier for fans to connect with each other and share or access information related to their idols.

As part of the fandom of BTS, ARMY uses social media to carry out its activities to interact with other ARMY. One of the social media is Twitter. One Indonesian ARMY fanbase account, namely @INDOMY, was created in November 2017 with 200,392 followers and 32,916 thousand tweets. Seeing this indicates that activities for mutual interaction are very often carried out between ARMY. In his account, we can see how the admin provides information about BTS, such as new song releases, concert schedules, voting at award events, or other activities carried out by BTS members. So fans can interact with each other.

Fanbase accounts aim to make a more comprehensive community that can recognize their favorite idols and are more popular on the international stage. With a fanbase account, audiences will find it easier to find the latest information about their idol's activities, such as new album releases, the information of

music video teaser releases, concert schedule information, or even voting information when their idol is nominated in an award event, so fans will try to vote. In various ways so that they are in the first position and win the award. Seeing this phenomenon with various virtual activities carried out by ARMY and technological advances, the authors are interested in researching the ARMY fandom to see how fan culture is in the digital era on the @INDOMY Twitter fanbase account. This is reflected through various response activities, and the production of messages online on social media Twitter @INDOMY.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a virtual ethnographic method. Using this method, researchers become part of the subject by following fans' activities in cyberspace. Moreover, researchers are part of the ARMY @INDOMY fanbase account followers on Twitter media. According to Rusli (2014), virtual ethnography is a method used to view users' social or cultural phenomena in cyberspace. Even Bell (2001) states that this ethnographic method is leading and essential for viewing online cyberculture phenomena. Christine Hine in Nasrullah (2017: 9) states that virtual ethnography is a methodology used to investigate the internet and explore identity (users) when using the internet.

Of the many Indonesian ARMY fanbase accounts, the researcher chose the Twitter account @INDOMY as the research subject for approximately three months, from November 20, 2022, to January 10, 2023. This account is said to be an Indonesian ARMY fanbase account because of the username used and posts containing various information about BTS and ARMY, with 200.392 thousand followers and tweet posts that have reached 32,916 thousand tweets. This research focuses on all texts and media fans post on the @INDOMY Twitter fanbase account when carrying out fan culture. Two data collection techniques are used, namely observing the @INDOMY fanbase account and literature review of previous research as additional data to complement research information needs.

RESULTS OF RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

Based on the formulation of the problem above, the researcher wants to know how the fan culture of the ARMY fandom is presented through Twitter media in the digital era on the @INDOMY account, with various activities, ranging from mutual commentary responses, replying to each other's uploads made by the ARMY fandom, research finds various forms of culture Fandom can be seen from four forms, namely communication, knowledge creativity, and civic organization or power (Lucy Banneth, 2004: 2).

The ARMY fandom communicates virtually through social media, Twitter, with the same identity, namely ARMY. Where they are put together in the fanbase account, their virtual identity can be seen from their name, profile photo, id name, photo background, and bio of each account.



Figure 1. ARMY's comments on Twitter @INDOMY

Source: @INDOMY'S twitter post

The picture above shows BTS fans, namely the ARMY, showing their identity as a fandom, one of which uses attributes related to their idol. It can be seen that most of them use profile photos of BTS members, not their photos, and the username shows that they also use the modified BT member's name as their account. This behavior is in line with what was conveyed by Pertiwi (2017: 9), where a person's identity in cyberspace may be different from the original. In the world of fandom, communication made within the scope of fandom is usually only understood by the members of the fandom itself, which is referred to as fan speaking. This fan can be in writing or symbols, which can be understood by the fandom itself, even in the virtual world, like "love purple", where this sentence is interpreted as a purple heart, a feeling of love and strength between BTS members and ARMY.

In the field of creativity, it can change people's mindset in viewing fans, especially K-pop fans. If previously fans were called hysterical people, too fanatical about their idols, and even called crazy, with this creativity, fans also have positive things in them. Because fans also act as an active audience in interpreting a text, creative ideas are created in it. Because fans become audiences, who consume what is presented by the media and through the textual meanings of media content, they are also actively involved in producing meanings that they implement through their works. These fan works are called fan production or a product fans produce. Fans, as audiences, will take imitative actions and produce culture

after consuming cultural texts left by the media (Jenkins, 2008). Fan production, created by fans, is diverse, including memes, fan edits, fan fiction, and many more. One form of creativity that fans produce is "editing," which makes it more interesting. Fans do this for fun and to generate interaction between fans on the account.

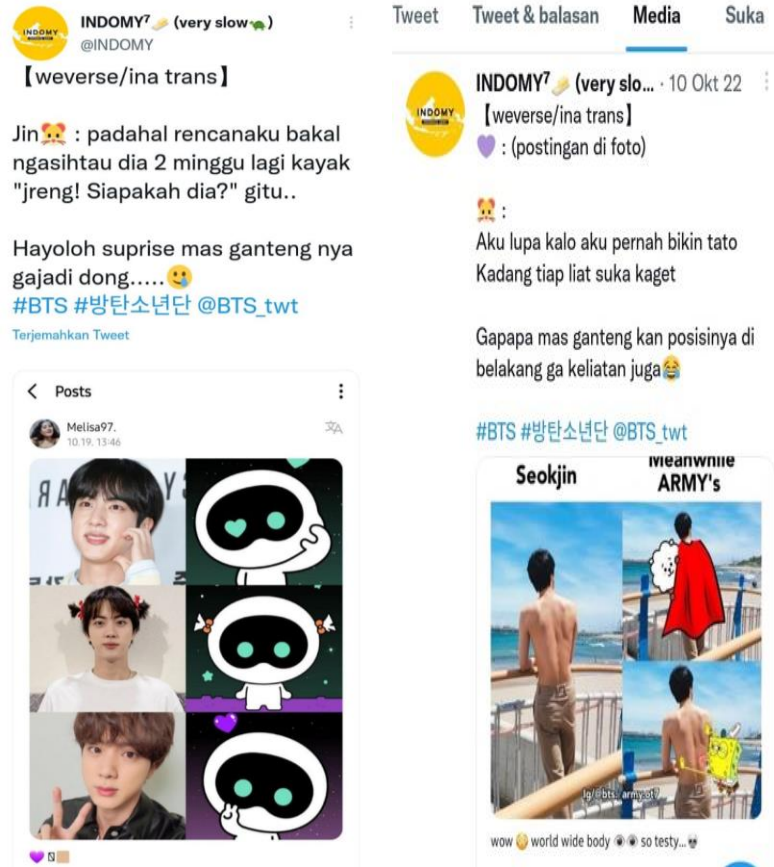


Figure 2. ARMY's comments on Twitter @INDOMY
Source: @INDOMY'S twitter post

In the field of knowledge, the fanbase account is responsible for providing information carried out by BTS to ARMY. Because fandoms usually have special forums for sharing activities or strategies, they will carry out in the future through fanbases on social media. Such include information about song or music video (MV) releases, voting when BTS is nominated for an award show, advertisement releases, information on collaborations between BTS members and other artists, or even a schedule of concert activities that BTS will carry out so that the ARMY or even the wider community knows about the activities and achievements that BTS got.

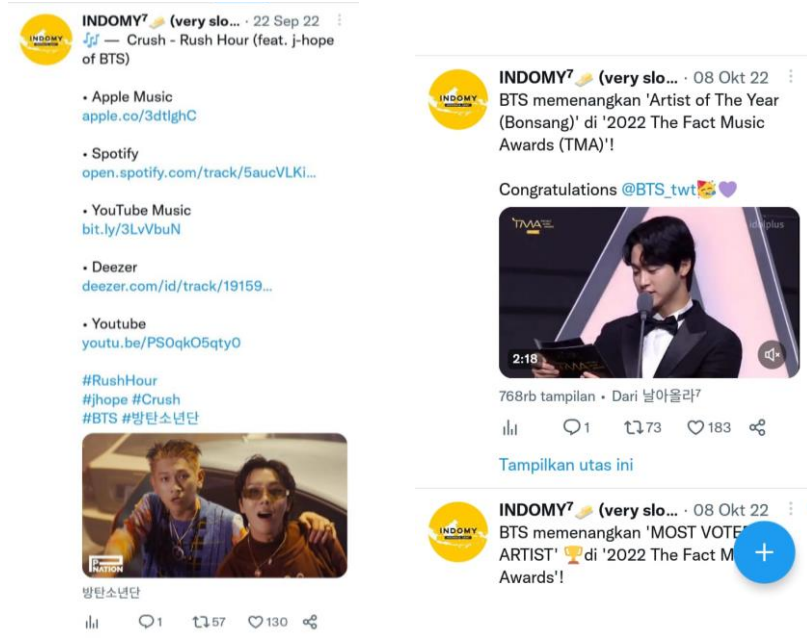


Figure 3. ARMY's comments on Twitter @INDOMY7
Source: @INDOMY'S twitter post

Furthermore, in civil power, fans who resonate with the fandom try to complete missions or projects (fan projects). Fandom tries to show their active and positive efforts in achieving a goal (Banneth, 2014). A fan project is a project carried out by a fandom to support their idols and stream to increase their idol's MV viewers, so they enhance each other for streaming because usually, in a fandom, they have goals when their idol releases the latest MV. They also carry out digital activities to celebrate their birthdays, such as fundraising, called fan donations, which are intended for underprivileged or disaster-affected communities using social media. This creates a new culture in fandom in activities or fandom activities that are carried out in a coordinated manner in a fan project so that the fanbase account is significant in the world of fandom, which aims to provide various information so that communication, interaction between fans is created in the fanbase account.

CONCLUSION

With the development of internet technology in fandom activities, social media plays a role in disseminating information about the Korean Wave, making it easier for anyone to access information about their idols.

REFERENCES

- Benneth, Lucy. (2014). *Tracing Textual Poachers: Relections on the Develoment of Fn Studies and Digital Fandom*.
- Barker, Chris. 2004. *Cultural Studies Teori dan Praktik*. Yogyakarta: Kreasi Wacana
- CNN Indonesia. (2022). *10 Negara Paling Padat di Dunia, Salah satunya Indonesia*. Diakses dari <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/internasional/20220719113449-188-823271/10-negara-paling-padat-di-dunia-salah-satunya-indonesia> pada tanggal 30 Oktober 2022 Jam 13.48.
- Egsaugm. (2021). *Trend Budaya K-Pop di Kalangan Remaja Indonesia: BTS Meal Hinga Fanatisme*
- Fatonah, Tinwarotul. (2021). *8 Rekor BTS di Amerika, Terbaru Raih Penghargaan Artist of the Years*. Suara.com. diakses dari <https://www.suara.com/entertainment/2021/11/23/095450/8-rekor-bts-di-amerika-terbaru-raih-penghargaan-artist-of-the-year> pada tanggal 30 Oktober 2022 Jam 19:17.
- Hine, C. M. (2000). *Virtual Ethnography. Thousand Oaks. CA: Sage Publications Ltd*.
- Jenkins, Henry. (2013). *Textual Poachers: Television and Participatory Culture Studies in Culture and Communication*. New York: Routledge.
- Koentjaraningrat. (2015). *Pengantar Ilmu Antropologi*. Jakarta: PT Rineka Cipta.
- Lewis, Lisa A. (2002). *The Adoring Fans: Fan Cuulture and Populer Media*. London: Routledge.
- McQuil, D. (2011). *Teori Komunikasi Massa. (6th ed)*. Jakarta: Salemba Humanika.
- Meivita, Nursanti Ika. (2013). *Analisis Deskriptif Penggemar K-Pop sebagai Audiens Media dalam Mengkonsumsi dan Memaknai Teks Budaya*. Undergraduate Thesis. Semarang: Universitas Diponogoro.
- Putri, K, A., Amirudin, A., & Purnomo, M, H. (2019). Korean Wave dalam Fanatisme dan Kontruksi Gaya Hidup Generasi Z. *Nusa: Jurnalllmu Bahasa dan Sastra*. 14(1): 125-135.
- Putri, A. W. (2019). *BTS, 'Ikon Ekonomi' Anyar Korea Selatan*. Tirto.id. Di akses dari <https://tirto.id/bts-ikon-ekonomi-anyar-korea-selatan-egjM> pada tanggal 30 Oktober 2022 Jam 13.35.
- Rafiek, M. (2011). *Teori Sastra; Kajian Teori dan Praktik*. Bandung: Refika Aditama
- Riani Asnida. (2021). *Catatan Kampanye Love My Self UNICEF x BTS dalam 4 Tahun*. LIPUTAN6. Diakses dari <https://m.liputan6.com/lifestyle/read/4679416/catatan-kampanye-love-myself-unicf-love-myself-unicf-x-bts-dalam-4-tahun> pada tanggal 30 Oktober 2022 Jam 19.28.

Soekanto dan Sulistyowati. (2015). *Sosiologi Suatu Pengantar*. Jakarta: PT Raja Grafindo Persada.

Tasmuji, Dkk, (2011). *Ilmu Alamiah Dasar, Ilmu Sosial Dasar, Ilmu Budaya Dasar*. Surabaya: IAIN Sunan Ampel Press.

Won So. (2020). *Distribution of K-Pop Views on YouTube WordWide as of June 2019, by Country*. Statista. Diakses dari <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1106704/south-korea-kpop-youtube-views-by-country> pada tanggal 30 Oktober 2022 Jam 14.05.

Yulistiana, Farida, et al. (2014). Budaya Fangirling Boyband Korea di Dunia Virtual (Studi Etnografi Virtual pada Cyberfandom Boyband EXO di Media Sosial Twitter). *Jurnal Komunikasi*.