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FANDOM EFFECT ON FANS PURCHASE DECISION TOWARDS BTS ALBUM: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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Abstract:

Currently, South Korea is very popular for its pop music, which is Korean Pop or “K-Pop”. There are a lot of K-Pop groups and one of them is BTS. BTS’ albums are known to be one of the best-selling in K-Pop, with a total of more than 20 million albums sold in 2020. BTS also has a large number of fans, with Indonesia being one of the top 10 countries that have the highest number of BTS fans. Indonesia also has a BTS fan community that connects BTS fans in the country. However, Indonesia does not seem to contribute a high share in the selling of BTS’ albums, be it physical or digital. Therefore, this conceptual study intends to develop a research framework on the factor affecting purchase decisions on BTS albums. The literature that is used in this conceptual study is limited to literature that is published in 2010 or above. This study contributes to the future researcher to make further research regarding the effect of fan community towards its members’ purchase decision of BTS’ album.

Keywords:

Album; BTS; Community; Fandom; Purchase Decision

Introduction

South Korea is very popular for its pop music that originated there, which Korean Pop, or most of the time is known as “K-Pop”. Currently, K-Pop is identical with its boy groups and girl groups which bring a typical genre of music such as R&B, hip-hop, and electronic music (Oh, 2014; Ranker Music, 2019). Boy groups and girl groups are a group of performers, whose stage appearance usually focuses not only on singing, but also on dancing. As the number of boy

groups and girl groups in the K-Pop music industry is becoming higher as years pass, the awareness of these groups are becoming larger to countries outside South Korea, even outside Asia (Farrar, 2010; Simbar, 2016). One of the best-selling and high-paid K-Pop boy groups in the current moment is BTS, which stands for Bangtan Sonyeondan (Korean hangul: 방탄소년단), is a boy group that is built under BigHit Entertainment label which consists of 7 members namely Jin, Suga, J-Hope, RM, Jimin, V, and Jungkook (Mercuri, 2019; BigHit Entertainment, 2021).

Counting from their debut year, June 2013, until June 2021, BTS has released in total 34 albums which consist of 9 studio albums, 5 compilation albums, 6 extended plays (EP), 1 soundtrack album, 2 reissues, and 11 single albums (BigHit Entertainment, 2021; Field, 2021). BTS' album sales on release week are known to always rise whenever they release new albums. In the year of 2018, BTS' music albums were sold in 5.15 million copies, and the accumulated number of BTS' music albums sold in South Korea managed to rise steadily from 2013 to 2018 (Waldeck, 2020).

BTS' achievement to reach such a high album selling cannot be separated from their fandom's intervention. Fandom itself is a group of fans that form social networks based on their shared interests (Gooch, 2008). Public used to perceive fandom as something that is not cool and later this influenced the culture and development of fandoms itself to transform them into the huge phenomenon that they are today. Nowadays, fandoms are known as places where different people from different parts of the world feel the sense of belonging (Todd & Soule, 2017). As a boy group whose name has skyrocketed, it is certain that BTS has a large fandom. BTS' fandom, or also known as ARMY, which stands for Adorable Representative M.C for Youth, was first created on 13 July 2013.

Currently, ARMY is known to be one of the largest K-Pop group's fandoms. ARMY is spread in so many countries and there is no exact total number of ARMY, however, according to Tokopedia (2021) currently there are approximately 18 million of ARMY exists in all over the world. Philippine is the country with the largest number of ARMYs, which is 21%, followed by South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Mexico, Taiwan, United States, Brazil, and Malaysia (Koreaboo, 2018).

As one of the countries that has the biggest number of ARMY, Indonesia also has ARMY communities or fan base group which will connect ARMYs in the country. However, even though Indonesia has a large number of ARMY and fan base groups, it turned out that the sales of BTS' albums in Indonesia, both physical and digital, are not as much as the number of sales in other countries that have smaller number of ARMY. According to K-Pop Craze on YouTube (2020), Indonesia is indeed one of the top countries that contribute in the selling of BTS' digital singles, but it only sold 245,000 for "Dynamite" and 35,000 for "Life Goes On". This figure is very far from the sales in other countries such as US that managed to sell 3,170,000 for "Dynamite" and China that managed to sell 900,000 for "Life Goes On".

In addition, according to MJD (2020), BTS' physical album sales in Asia are dominated by Japan and South Korea. For example, in the 2,985,000 selling of Map of the Soul: Persona physical album, 385,000 of it are from Japan's sales and 1,900,000 of it are from South Korea. While the rest of the sales are from other Asian countries. It means that other countries in Asia, including Indonesia, only contributes an approximate 700,000 sales. Another example is in the

3,257,500 selling of Map of the Soul: 7 physical album, 460,000 of it are from Japan's sales, 2,050,000 of it are from South Korea's sales, and the rest 747,500 are from the sales in other countries in Asia, including Indonesia. This is a fairly small number if compared to other countries that have smaller number of ARMY.

Therefore, based on this problem, this conceptual study aims to develop a research framework on the factor affecting purchase decision on BTS Album.

Literature Review

Fandom

Fandom is a subculture focused on community identity amongst people who build on a media object based on their common interests, such as on a band or a music group (Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2015; Zubernis, 2015). Furthermore, Yoshida et al. (2015) stated that fandom is defined as the intrinsic connection between fan community members and the common sense of difference from those who are not in the fan community. As the use of the Internet is getting higher and the involvement of the users is also getting wider, these days there are many fan communities that use the Internet to disseminate information and exchange opinions (Lexhagen et al., 2013). These communities later are called as virtual or online community. Nowadays, these virtual or online fan communities become a necessary mediating factor between fans themselves (Th  berge, 2021).

The rise in the number of K-pop fans among both teenagers and adults has led some individuals to form a fan community or a fandom. In favoring K-pop idols, there are related hobbies which have led to the emergence of communities acting on their behalf as K-pop lover groups (Nugroho, 2015). One of the K-pop communities that widely exist in Indonesia is ARMY. This community is formed as a medium to share information about their idol, BTS. ARMY certainly has related meanings in its community, and has a different perspective of life from the mainstream culture that has been created and carried out in the lives of members of the community (Sari, 2017).

Fandom Participation

Participation includes any form of collective experience. People participate in something, some kind of community, a joint activity (Mustikaningtyas, 2021). While, community participation implies some form of participation by individuals, with common needs and priorities, in decisions affecting their lives (McGill, 2021). Higher community participation means a higher level of community involvement (Fadhillah, 2020). When an individual decides to participate in a community, it means they become a part of that community and willing to take responsibility for it. Furthermore, according to Groene and Hettinger (2015), participation in a fandom is associated with the adoption of such fan-appropriate looks and attitudes, with fans modifying aspects of their self-expression, including but not limited to: wardrobe choices, hairstyles, and accessories, in an effort to create a social identity reflective of their subscription to a specific media fandom.

Motivation

Motivation extends to influences that underlie conduct that is characterized by willingness and desire. A constellation of attitudes, opinions, principles, desires, and behavior are all closely linked to motivation (Lai, 2011). Motivation is the mechanism that initiates, drives, and

maintains goal-oriented attitude, and it is also what causes people to decide to do certain actions (Cherry, 2020). Same thing also goes for fandom participation. When someone or a fan decides to join a fandom, there must be a motivation underlying in them which guides them to join the fandom. Furthermore, according to Taylor and Gil-Lopez (2020), the latest scholarship on motivations and interactions for entertainment emphasizes two forms of experience which are hedonic and eudaimonic. Fandom is driven by both hedonic and eudaimonic motivations as those theories are still relevant and useful for studies in which researchers are trying to comprehend the conceptual and philosophical attitude of people pursuing their happiness and well-being (Taylor & Gil-Lopez, 2020).

Fanaticism

A fan is a person who is enthusiastically devoted to something or somebody, such as a band or a music group, which is a simplified form of the word fanatic. Fanaticism itself is a belief in a fanatical object associated with something extravagant in an object. This fanatical attitude is illustrated by behavior, intense excitement, emotional commitment and a long-lasting sense of love and excessive interest (Sanitnarathorn, 2018). According to Sanitnarathorn (2018), fanaticism is also often associated with idolatry, which is worship or an emotional attachment and psychological identification with an idol figure, most likely a celebrity.

Self-Image

Self-image is the way people see themselves. Self-image involves what people think they look like, how people see their personality, what kind of person they think they are, what they believe others think of them, how much they like themselves or they think others like them, and the status or position they feel they have (Nair, 2016). Self-image is also one of the components that build self-concept. Self-concept itself is usually called a mental image of who an individual is as an entity as individual views of their skills, actions, and particular characteristics (Cherry, 2020).

Loyalty

Loyalty is a biased behavioral response conveyed over time by some unit of decision making in relation to one or more alternative brands from a set of such brands and is a function of evaluative processes of psychological decision-making (Pourian & Bakhsh, 2015). The loyalty felt and conveyed by a fan towards the target of his/her fanaticism is fan loyalty. Fan loyalties can vary from passive support to militant allegiance, and loyalty expressions can take shape and be expressed across different channels in several ways (Fouvy et al., 2011).

Purchase Intention

Purchase intention can be characterized as the deliberate plan of an individual to make an effort to purchase a brand, and it is used as a significant index for evaluating consumer behavior (Angkouw & Rumokoy, 2016). Intentions as motivation, that is, powerful internal stimuli that motivate action, which are impaired by the stimulus, improve positive feelings towards the product. Also, consumers most of the time have an interest (behavioral intention) first before coming into the purchase decision. Therefore, interest becomes one of the factors of purchase decision (Amri & Prihandono, 2019; Fatmala, 2019).

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the willingness and possibility to purchase a specific product or service in the future. Consumers might purchase products on the basis of their personal experience,

knowledge, and product preferences (Jun, 2016). In this stage, the purchase will actually happen. Consumers' consideration in making purchase decisions is different between one another (Herawati et al., 2019). Thus, the consideration of ordinary consumers in purchasing basic goods is also different from the consideration of consumer fans in purchasing idol's albums. According to Zhuang (2019), there is no question that during their purchasing decisions, the idol influence is the main reason for consumer fans. By constantly releasing associated products, the idol effect impacts fans as fans are extremely keen on their idols, which enable fans to express their deep love through purchasing decision. Fans are also willing to devote a significant amount of time and effort to their idols in order to fulfill their own emotional demands. The purchasing behaviors of fans for their idols reflect a kind of self-identity on their attribute as a fan, which gives them not only a sense of belonging to the fan community, but also a sense of fulfillment in this process as they would acquire spiritual pleasure (Zhuang, 2019).

Hypotheses Development

Fandom Participation towards Purchase Intention

Fandom or fan community creates a social environment of friendship between fans. By joining fandoms, fans can exchange information about their idols and they can also form emotional relationships between fans (Ghazwani, 2019). Furthermore, a fan that is part of a fandom will tend to be consumptive in shopping as they do not hesitate to spend a lot of money to buy their idol's merchandise (Fatmala, 2019). Based on a previous research that is conducted by Fadhillah (2020), it is shown that community participation has a significant influence on its members' purchase intention.

Motivation towards Fandom Participation

Fandom is driven by both hedonic and eudaimonic motivations as those theories are still relevant and useful for studies in which researchers are trying to comprehend the conceptual and philosophical attitude of people pursuing their happiness and well-being (Delmar et al., 2016).

Hedonic Motivation towards Fandom Participation

Hedonic motivation is the desire to initiate activities or actions that boost positive (pleasant or good) experiences and behaviors that minimize negative experiences (Kaczmarek, 2017). Those whose hedonic motivations drive the use of entertainment media pursue (and anticipate) a positive affective reaction to entertainment, often characterized as pleasure, enjoyment or entertainment (Taylor & Gil-Lopez, 2020). During the activity that they do, people with hedonic motivation will feel good and pleasure. Same thing goes when they decide to participate in a fandom. People with hedonic motivation decide to join a fandom to find pleasure and enjoyment. Based on a previous research that is conducted by Fadhillah (2020), it is shown that hedonic motivations have significant influence to virtual community participation.

Eudaimonic Motivation towards Fandom Participation

Eudaimonic experiences include understanding essential questions about what it means to be human (Taylor & Gil-Lopez, 2020). The ultimate purpose of eudaimonic motivation is the thriving condition that marks the complete creation of the best potential (Kaczmarek, 2017). Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2015) stated that eudaimonic motivations are strongly related to fan

community membership as when one is joining a community, they are actually searching for an outlet that helps them to make sense of life and the world around them (non-mediated and mediated), but they do so in a way that connects them with others. Based on a previous research that is conducted by Tsay-Vogel and Sanders (2015), it is shown that eudaimonic motivations are strongly related to fandom.

Fandom Participation towards Fanaticism

Fanaticism is indiscrete and continuous interest. Compared to being a fan, fanaticism is a term generated for an area to demonstrate a much higher level of interest in that region (ERCİŞ et al., 2016). Like other fan communities, ARMY also does various contributions to show their love and support for idols. As stated by Ghazwani (2019) on the previous research towards Surabaya ARMY, they like to carry out various activities such as mass voting, attending events, press conferences, and gathering. With these various fan activities as an implementation of their love and support for their idols, it is possible to encourage the growth of fanaticism. Based on a previous research that is conducted by Cheung and Yue (2018), it is shown that fandom participation has a positive influence towards idolatry or fanaticism.

Fanaticism towards Purchase Intention

Fanatic customers ask for equipment intended for their field of interests. They buy innovative equipment and they do not want to rent or borrow from anyone. Several reports on fanaticism have shown that it was also linked to fanatical activities and consumption to collect such items (ERCİŞ et al., 2016). Based on the research of Rinata and Dewi (2019), there are a variety of K-Pop fans who have stories of unusual fanaticism, as quoted on CNN Indonesia's online media, including K-Pop fans, ranging from chasing idols to willing to stay in one hotel, until willing to spend hundreds of millions to buy albums for the opportunity to get idols' autograph. Other K-Pop fans' fanaticism has been covered in the news, be it in Indonesia or in other countries, ranging from waiting hours to greet an idol, to injuring him/herself when his/her favorite idol dies (CNN Indonesia, 2019). Based on a previous research that is conducted by Sanitnarathorn (2018), it is shown that idolatry or fanaticism directly affects purchase intention.

Fandom Participation towards Self-Image

Self-concept might be changed because of certain aspects happening in human life, such as the way they interpret or assign meaning to something in their lives. K-Pop has a very strong influence that it can transform fans self-concepts, and even attitudes. It is also affected by the sense of K-Pop for the K-Pop fans (Sobur et al., 2018). Fandom, anchored by self-categorization and benefits of group membership, is one of the aspects of an overall fan identity. In the sense of a concrete proof of psychological concept, the K-Pop fan identity can be explored, as evidenced by how group memberships and affiliations alter self-concept (Laffan, 2020). In addition, based on a previous research that is conducted by Kampersal (2017), it is shown that there is a correlation between fandom and the formation of fans' identity.

Self-Image towards Purchase Intention

Self-image forms the character of a person, starting with how they act, look, and make choices. In this case, it can be seen that fans will show how they present their own appearance like a fan of a boy group or girl group (Kartika, 2018). Fans need an identity that shows love or admiration for their idol, thus often fans buy attributes to show their favorite things (Ruthllianie & Candraningrum, 2020). This self-image of how they see themselves as a fan also creates an

identity of fan where they think it is an obligation to consume albums and merchandise no matter how much money has been spent (Veronica et al., 2019). In addition, based on a previous research that is conducted by Veronica et al. (2019), it is shown that fans' self-concept and identity have a positive impact on fans' purchase intention towards K-Pop albums.

Fandom Participation towards Loyalty

The loyalty felt and conveyed by a fan towards the target of his/her fanaticism is fan loyalty (Fouvy et al., 2011). Fan loyalty can be formed through their participation in fan community or fandom (Veronica et al., 2019). According to Lee and Yoo (2015), fandom categories have an impact on loyalty to pop-stars and loyalty to destinations. The higher level of fandom demonstrated, then the greater level of loyalty to a pop-star event and the destination. Based on a previous research that is conducted by Lee and Yoo (2015), it is shown that fandom has a positive impact towards fan loyalty.

Loyalty towards Purchase Intention

Fans are loyal and avoid the urge to switch during a disappointing season to a more promising group or support a new favorite group while their current favorite struggles for form (Fouvy et al., 2011). Fans need certain objects or activities to complete their identity and lifestyle as fans. Ownership or activities related to the idol is understood as part of loyalty to the idol. The loyalty is then expressed through spending on items or events related to idols (Riona & Krisdinanto, 2021). According to Veronica et al. (2019), as a sense of gratification for himself/herself and also to assist with the idol's album sales, a K-Pop fan who already has an overwhelming passion and loyalty for his/her idol can purchase albums in large amounts and with different versions. In addition, based on a previous research that is conducted by Danish et al. (2018), it is shown that there is a relationship between brand loyalty and purchase intention.

Purchase Intention towards Purchase Decision

Consumers sometimes do not plan to buy, but they often have the intention to make a purchase (Rahmaningtyas et al., 2017). Based on the previous research that has been conducted by Amri and Prihandono (2019), a rise in consumer's buying interest will then be followed by an increase in consumer purchasing decisions. Additionally, according to Veronica et al. (2019), fans usually buy albums and merchandise of their idol in large quantities and the frequency of purchases are very high. They do not care about price and do not hesitate to spend money on something they want to enjoy. In addition, based on a previous research that is conducted by Amri and Prihandono (2019), it is shown that purchase intention has a significant influence towards purchase decisions.

Conceptual Framework

The researcher uses framework (Figure 1) in this study which comprises variables that are correlated with fans' purchase decision on BTS' album after joining the fandom. From nine previous researches, the framework and variables are generated and combined.

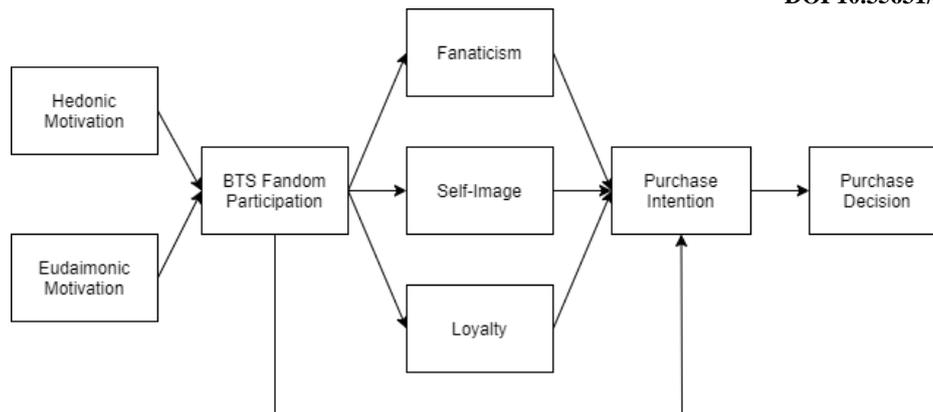


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

This framework refers from previous researches (Lee & Yoo, 2015; Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2015; Kampersal, 2017; Cheung & Yue, 2018; Danish et al., 2018; Sanitnarathorn, 2018; Amri & Prihandono, 2019; Veronica et al., 2019; Fadhillah, 2020).

According to the conceptual framework above, the hypotheses development for this research are as follow:

H1: Fandom participation significantly influences purchase intention.

H2: Motivation significantly influences fandom participation.

H2a: Hedonic motivation significantly influences fandom participation.

H2b: Eudaimonic motivation significantly influences fandom participation.

H3: Fandom participation significantly influences fanaticism.

H4: Fanaticism significantly influences purchase intention.

H5: Fandom participation significantly influences self-image.

H6: Self-image significantly influences purchase intention.

H7: Fandom participation significantly influences loyalty.

H8: Loyalty significantly influences purchase intention.

H9: Purchase intention significantly influences purchase decisions.

Conclusion

To sum up, there are eight variables that are used in this conceptual study, which are fandom participation, hedonic motivation, eudaimonic motivation, fanaticism, self-image, loyalty, purchase intention, and purchase decision. Those variables are important and chosen in this study because they are based on previous researches that study a similar topic. This study generates nine hypotheses that will be discussed and explored by the future researcher. The literatures that are used in this conceptual study are limited to literatures that are published in 2010 or above. Based on this study's result and findings, the researcher has some recommendations for future researcher to implement a better upcoming research which are to limit the population of the research to Indonesian fans of BTS who are a member of the fandom and have bought at least once BTS' albums in the past one year and to do the data analysis for quantitative approach with PLS-SEM through SmartPLS software because it is the most suitable method for a research that has a new framework that has not been existed yet before and have a little available theory (Wong, 2013).

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