# BNK48: FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS IN THAILAND

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**BNK48: FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS IN THAILAND**

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M.M. (MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT)

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, music companies have been forced to reform their business to survive against high levels of competition. Music industry has tried to enlarge their scope of work more than producing music because their songs can be accessed, copied and downloaded easily. However, BNK48 is a new idol group, was debuted in 2017 but they are very famous in the way that no one can imagine that it could happen in Thailand, especially in the digital age. BNK48 is one of sister groups in 48group, franchiser of the idol group originated in Japan. BNK48 is different from the traditional way of music industry because they are not singers, they are called "idols" that do not perfectly sing or dance but can sell many CDs and also related items such as card and photobook.

This study is aimed to find out factors that have the positive impact on customer behavior and lead to success of BNK48. Qualitative method is applied in this paper by using in-depth interview, observation and secondary data analysis as the instruments. There are 5 respondents for in-depth interview. Besides, first-hand observation also uses for gaining the real experience at the event, together with secondary data analysis which mainly focused on AKB48 case. The result of this research shows that marketing mixes of BNK48 have a great impact on consumer decision. "The story of idol growth" is the product that offering the right value for target customers and the suitable marketing strategies can reach consumers in every touch points. Together with power of social media in digital ages that can create the multiple effects so that BNK48 can be successful within short time.

KEY WORDS: BNK48/ Idol Business/ Entertainment Business/ Music/ User-Generated
                        Content

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1  Background of the Study

In the digital age, surviving in music industry seems to be more difficult comparing with the past that music company can sold tape cassettes or CDs. Technology have changed the way consumers listen to music especially when MP3 and streaming services were developed. Technology offers convenience for consumers while the music industry was impacted and has to reform their business to survive. Therefore, music companies have been changed their strategy especially in digital platforms. (Supsinwiwat, 2017)

In current situation, music industry has tried to enlarge their scope of work more than producing music as most of artists can gain money from concert, event or being brand ambassador for brands because their songs can be accessed, copied and downloaded easily. Music business has to change the way of production by decreasing number of songs from 7-10 songs as 1 album to be only 1 song to test the market and get the feedback for further decision so that they can save the costs and reduce their risks. Besides, there are also high levels of competition in music industry because internet can be used for mainstream channel to promote normal people to be famous so that everyone has opportunity to show their talents in public and also require less effort to prepare equipment for recording and uploading. In the same way as music companies, there are many new companies in the market offering more choices for consumers. Music industry in Thailand has been changed in the same way as international market. Consumers have more choices and international artists become more popular in the mass market of music industry as we can see a growing in numbers of international artists choose Thailand to be one of their concert tour list. Marketing communication of music business also has been changed in order to match with digital age. Instead of promoting via radio stations, digital channels in the main tool for communicating with the target, especially social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LINE and

YouTube. These social media can be used for promoting by music company and artists' personal accounts. According to changing in consumer behavior, there are many related business that growing in popularity such as singing talent show, original soundtrack and concert/music festival.

In Thailand music industry, the life time of individual and band seem to be longer than boy band and girl group which is around 2-3 years. Because they have to face with problems of being groups while other Asian boy bands and girl groups seem to have a longer life time, especially Korean and Japanese group. The main problem is managing the artists. Most of members are teenagers who come from good financial status so that after being famous for 1-2 albums, most of them decided to go to study aboard or changed their career path to be an actor/actress. Besides, the traditional boy bands and girl groups focus on the members so any bad rumors about members can ruin the group.

However, there is a new pattern of girl group that is different from the traditional way of music industry. BNK48 is a new idol group, was debuted for less than 1 year but they are very famous in the way that no one can imagine that it could happen in Thailand, especially in the digital age. Because BNK48 is not a band and they are not singers, they are called "idols" that do not perfectly sing or dance. However, BNK can sell CDs and also related items such as card and photobook. One of interesting point is most of BNK48 fans are Thai men who are perceived as the gender that might not show their part of obsession into the public. BNK48 is stand for Bangkok48 which relates to girl idol group AKB48 from the Akihabara area in Tokyo, where the group's theater is located and other groups in Asian countries such as JKT48-Jakarta(Indonesia), MNL48-Manila (Philippine) and TPE48-Taipei (Taiwan)). AKB48 and other international groups (sister groups) are called the 48group created by Yasushi Akimoto. Yasushi Akimoto is the founder of AKB48, SKE48 (Nagoya, Japan), SDN48 (Akihabara, Tokyo, Japan), NMB48 (Osaka, Japan), HKT48 (Fukuoka, Japan), NGT48 (Niigata, Japan) and STU48 (Setouchi, Japan) and also sells the franchise to other countries. The 48group uses the same concept as "Idols you can meet" which means they are idols that not only entertain and perform only in traditional ways such as concert and television but idols of the 48group perform in many channels. Idol groups of 48group mainly show at their own theater by daily so their fans could frequently see them live. The structure of members is also

different. First, the number of members is flexible because admission new members (audition), quitting from the group (is called as "graduate") and transferring between sister groups can be occurred anytime. Second, rotation within team is normal because there are 2 statuses of members, main member and under girl. Under girls are the members who are set as second priority and perform in the second row of the show. In case that there are some of main members cannot join the show, under girls have to perform instead of those main members. Besides, all members can be moved into other team and changed in status based on their performance. Therefore, all members have to maintain and develop their performance in order to be in the front row and get popularity from fans. The one who is the best performer of each song is selected to be "Center" and moved to the position of the center of first row, also has a chance to perform outstandingly. As the concept of the 48group is to let fans feel like they know idols in person, the 48group have many rules and traditions in order to keep relationship with fans. For example, members cannot have boyfriend and let fans take a selfie by personal. Moreover, members cannot have their own personal social network accounts but can post pictures or messages just for communicating with fans through official accounts only. Marketing strategies of the 48group, especially BNK48 are very outstanding and different from the way of traditional music industry promotion in Thailand. BNK48 uses many ways to communicate with consumers including traditional ways (such as studio, TV show, events and theater) and social media (such as Live via applications, Instagram and Facebook). Moreover, the 48group also has gimmicks to manage marketing campaigns and gain more revenue. For example, they sell CD together with handshake card and random photo card so that fans would buy CD for getting handshake card that letting fans meet their favorite member at the event.

## 1.2  Research Questions and Objectives

The objective paper is to find out factors that have the positive impact on customer behavior and lead to success of BNK48 in order to be one of interesting case study of entertainment business in Thailand. Making these clear will benefit Thai entertainment industry to adapt their strategies by offering consumers the right experience matching with customer preferences which also benefit customers.

## 1.3  Research Scope

Qualitative method is applied in this paper by using in-depth interview, observation and secondary data analysis as the instruments. There are 5 respondents for in-depth interview which can be divided into 4 fans of BNK48 and 1 expert from well-known music company. Besides, first-hand observation also uses for gaining the real experience at the event, together with secondary data analysis which mainly focused on AKB48 case.

Collecting data from interview and observation while also considering AKB48 case as the same business model with the different market so that this paper would provide several dimension of the key factors affecting consumer behavior that lead to the success of BNK48 in Thailand. This paper had been conducted during February-April 2018.

## 1.4  Expected Benefits

This paper is mainly focused on BNK48 and their success among changing in Thai music industry so that understanding the key factors affecting their success would be benefit for music business and also other business because understanding consumer insights is the key success for every business. Besides, the recommendations at the end of this paper are practical and can be useful for adapting to online strategy.

# CHAPTER II
# LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of 2 sections. First section is definitions of related terms. Second section mentions about Consumer Behavior Theory that will be used as the framework of this paper.

## 2.1 Definition of related terms

1. Idol is counted as the entertainer who were trained to has variety of talents such as singing, dancing and MCing. Therefore, idol does not mainly focus on the skills of singing and dancing which is different from the artists. Besides, idols are also the role model for teenagers so that they are expected to have positive reputation. (Jpninfo, 2015)

2. Business model is the description of methods a firm/organization making money by creating, delivering and capturing value (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2009).

3. User-generated content (UGC) is the creative content that is created by consumers who are willing to do through an online platform without professional practices. (McKenzie, et al., 2012)

## 2.2 Consumer Behavior Theory

Jisana T. K. (2014) identifies "consumers" as the individuals who buy somethings for personal use or to meet their household needs. "Consumer behavior" means how individuals decide to spend their resources for consuming products and services including their reason for buying, time that they buy, frequency of using and buying that products and services. Consumer behavior is an important aspect of Marketing because understanding consumer behavior will help companies understand the market and identify opportunities in order to plan for marketing strategies.

From above definition, it implies that consumer behavior is the result of decision making to consume products and services. Because their consumption requires resources, consumers have to choose what to consume as resources are limited. According to consumer behavior theory, the stimuli deliver into Buyer's Black Box which is hard to understand because Buyer's Black Box is the result from buyer's characteristic. After buyers making decision, they will response as buyer's purchase decision. Therefore, studying consumer behavior and finding what is inside of the "Buyer's Black Box" requires the understanding of the related factors and stimuli about how it could change consumer decision into responses.

The next session will discuss more about the models that relate to consumer decision process and factors influencing consumer behavior including internal and external factors.



**Figure 2.1  Stimulus-Response Model**

Stimulus-Response model indicated that consumer buying decision is influenced by many factors. "Consumer's Black Box" is hard to understand so marketers have to figure out what is inside of the buyer's "black box" and how stimuli are changed to responses. Marketing stimuli consists of the 4Ps: product, price, place, and promotion. Other stimuli include: economic, technological, political, and cultural. When consumers perceive all these factors and get into stage of the consumer's black box, consumer will response in terms of product choice, brand choice, dealer choice, purchase timing, purchase amount and purchase frequency.

Therefore, the marketer wants to understand how the stimuli are changed responses inside the consumer's black box, which depends on 2 parts, buyer's characteristics

and buyer's decision process. Their characteristics influence the way they perceive and respond to marketing and other stimuli while their decision process has an impact on behavior. (Thiyyakkandy, 2014)

### 2.2.1 Marketing Stimuli or Marketing Mix (4Ps)

Marketing Stimuli or Marketing Mix (4Ps) is the marketing concept for differentiating products from competitors. 4Ps including product, price, place and promotion.

2.2.1.1 Product is what to be sold to target market.

2.2.1.2 Price is based on company's strategies and also value offering to consumers.

2.2.1.3 Place is the place or channel that consumer can buy products and services.

2.2.1.4 Promotion is about how to let people know about products and services and want to buy.

### 2.2.2 Other Stimuli

Other Stimuli are external factors that out of company's control which can be divided into Economical, Cultural, Technological and Political factors.

### 2.2.3 Buyers Characteristics

2.2.3.1 Cultural factors: Culture is the set of basic values, perceptions, wants and behaviors of society. Culture is different based on the country and society. Culture also includes subculture and social class as each culture contains different subcultures such as religions and nationalities while social class is an important determinant of consumer behavior as it affects consumption patterns, lifestyle, media patterns, activities and interests of consumers. Social factors also impact the buying behavior of consumers.

2.2.3.2 Social factors: Social is the factor affecting consumer decision as it relates consumers with the relationship between consumer and others including reference groups, family, roles and status. Reference groups are those groups that have a direct or indirect influence on the person's attitudes or behavior. These social groups have an impact on consumer behavior by being reference points for learning attitudes,

beliefs and behavior, and adapt these in their life. While roles and status is set based on where consumers belong to. Each person has more than one role and status in the society. The different roles and status influences different consumer behavior and their buying decisions.

2.2.3.3 Personal Factors: Personal factors are internal factors that play important role on influencing the consumer behavior. Examples of personal factors are lifestyle, economic situation, occupation, age, personality and self-concept.

2.2.3.4 Psychological factors: There are four important psychological factors affecting the consumer buying behavior. These are: perception, motivation, learning, beliefs and attitudes.

- Motivation: Everyone have their basic needs such as physiological, biological and social needs so they have a motive to satisfy themselves in many ways. Therefore, Motivation is the stage that persuades consumer to act in order to reach the goal that they want. Motivation is the start point that lead consumer to act.

- Perception: Perception is the way to select, organize and interpreting sensory information from our environment and use that information in order to interact with our environment. (Thiyyakkandy, 2014)

- Attitude: Kooptipongkul, 2017 defined "Attitude" as both of positive and negative beliefs which also express readiness of that person to interact with others' attitude and it also uses for determining their behavior.

There are three components of attitude aspects. First, Cognitive component is the belief of the consumer while involving with things that they have a positive idea or knowledge. The second, Affective component is the feeling that varying according to the personality of the person. The third, Behavioral component is the action that is the result from the previous components. If they satisfy with the product, there will be opportunity to repurchase and lead to loyalty.


### 2.2.4 Buyers Decision Process

Buyers Decision Process is one part of Buyers Black Box including pre-purchase process and post-purchase process.

### 2.2.5 Buyers' Decision Response

Buyers' Decision Response can be divided into product and brand choice, purchase timing and amount.

# CHAPTER III
# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research design

The objective of this thematic paper is to find out factors that affecting the success of BNK48 in Thailand by focusing on the positive impacts on customer behavior from internal and external factors. Therefore, qualitative research is suitable for understanding in-depth consumer insight and marketing situation. Besides, qualitative research is not limit the scope of the answer and leaves room for unexpected answers. This research uses depth interview and observation as research approach in order to gain customer insight and experience in reality. Besides, reviewing secondary data sources is also additional method in order to confirm the result of interview and observation.

## 3.2 Data Collection and Methodology

For in-depth interview, there will be 5 respondents as the sample sizes by dividing into 2 groups, fans of BNK48 and the expert who works in scope of music industry. While the aims of observation are to experience the real situation, get first-hand experience by discovering and understanding the environment and people interaction. It also provides a chance to learn things that people may be unwilling to discuss in an interview and also experiences the atmosphere and feeling in the same way as BNK48 fans. The main purposes are about finding the linkages between factors (Cultural, Social, Personal, Psychological factors and Marketing stimuli (4Ps)) and consumer behavior. For BNK48 fans, general questions used for finding out the points of BNK48 that attracts them to be the fans and their opinions about BNK48's marketing tools. The expert was asked mainly about BNK48's marketing strategies against Thai entertainment industry. By asking questions within mentioned scope, we can summarize the significant factors that lead BNK48 to be successful in Thailand.

To find out the factors affecting success of BNK48 in Thailand, asking their fans would be a good way to know what motivates them to support BNK48 and make BNK48 become successful as today. The number of interviewees is 5 people, 4 fans and 1 expert, who have different background and have their own stories with BNK48. Their in-brief personal backgrounds have the details as below;

### 3.2.1 Selected fans

| | |
|---|---|
| Sample 1: | Ing (Female) |
| Interview date: | February 22, 2018 |
| Location: | restaurant near BTS Ratchatewi |
| Duration: | around 1 hour |
| Personal information: | Ing is 24 years old woman, live in Bangkok. She works as office worker. Before knowing BNK48, she is a fan of K-pop (Korean pop music). She heard about BNK48 for a long time ago but does not interested. Ing used to be a fan of many Korean girl groups but she does not like any Thai girl group. She uses social media as the main channel for following her favorite. She mainly uses Twitter and Facebook &Instagram are the secondary. |
| Sample 2: | Earth (Male) |
| Interview date: | February 22, 2018 |
| Location: | restaurant near BTS Ratchatewi |
| Duration: | around 1 hour |
| Personal information: | Earth is 26 years old guy, live in Bangkok. He works as office worker in Silom. He is a fan of "Twice[1]", Korean girl group. He uses social media, Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, as the main channel for following his favorite idol. |

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[1] Twice is South Korean girl group formed by JYP Entertainment.

Sample 3:            Guy (Male)

Interview date:        March 1, 2018

Location:             on the phone

Duration:            around 1 hour

Personal information:   Guy is an admin of "Panda48" page, BNK48 fan page on Facebook and Instagram. Guy is 29 years old who works a freelance. Before knowing BNK48, he was a fan of Girl Generation[2]. He said that he used to be one of admins for Girl Generation fan page and joined their concert in Thailand. He also bought Girl Generation's CD and photobook.

Sample 4:            Juk (Male)

Interview date:        February 25, 2018

Location:             Future Park Rangsit

Duration:            around 15 minutes

Personal information:   Juk works as an office worker in the factory in Phathum Thani. The observation day is the first day for him seeing BNK48 at the event. He knew BNK48 from Facebook fan page. He said that he has never been a fan for any girl group. But he used to be a fan of Raptor[3] (Thai boy duo) when he was very young (90's era).

### 3.2.2 Selected experts

Expert:               Em (Male)

Interview date:        February 25, 2018

Location:             on the phone

Duration:            around 30 minutes

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[2] Girls' Generation, also known as SNSD, is a South Korean girl group formed by S.M. Entertainment.
[3] Raptor is Thai pop music duo during 1994-1998 that was formed by RS Public Company Limited.

Personal information:   Em works in well-known music company in Thailand. He used to manage Thai girl group so he has knowledge and interesting opinion about Thai music industry. He said that Thai market still has the empty space for newcomer to join and BNK48 has caught that one now.

## 3.3 Instruments

### 3.3.1 Interview questions

**Table 3.1 Interview questions**

| Topic | Question |
|---|---|
| **Interviewees' Background** | 1. Have you ever become a fan of other girl group before?<br>2. Why did you like them?<br>3. How did you become a fan of BNK48?<br>4. Where did you heard about BNK48 for the first time?<br>5. Why do you like BNK?<br>6. How BNK48 is different from other group<br>(Thai and International) |
| **Factors affecting motivation** | 1. Does Japanese culture of BNK48 attract you to be a fan?<br>2. Which channel do you use for following?<br>3. Have you ever join the activities or pay money for BNK48 things?<br>4. Who is your favorite and why do you like her?<br>5. Do you still be a fan of BNK48, if your favorite quit from the group?<br>6. What do you think about rules of BNK48? |

**Table 3.1  Interview questions (cont.)**

| Topic | Question |
|---|---|
| **Questions for the expert** | 1.  What do you think about Thai music industry? <br> 2.  What do you think about Thai boy band or girl group? Why they did not succeed? <br> 3.  What do you think about current Thai music industry? How has it changed? (consumer & industry) <br> 4.  What are the differences between BNK48 and girl group in the past? What is their key selling point? <br> 5.  What do you think about marketing strategies of BNK48 Office Company? |

### 3.3.2  Observation Plan

- Event name: All New SUZUKI SWIFT event
- Observation date: February 25, 2018
- Location: Future Park Rangsit
- Duration: about 30 minutes
- Objectives:

1. To understand consumer behavior in the real situation.

2. To find things that the fans have in common such as their demographic and mutual interests.

3. To understand their culture and how they interact among the group of fans.

4. To find other related factors that might matters.

- Main key points:

1. Number: How much people joining the event?

2. Characteristic: Who are they? Who are the main target customers? What do they have in common?

3. Actions: How they interact with other fans (group interaction) and BNK48 show? What are the values and norm of the group of fans?

4. Environment: How other people interact when seeing the fans?

5. Other unexpected findings

### 3.3.3  Secondary data source

Ignition, 2015 published the article, "Japanese Idols Will Transform The World Entertainment Business!" which mainly discussed about the structure and strategies of AKB48 and 48group by using business concept to explain. This article indicated that the idol groups changed the Japanese entertainment industry as they reform business model and mainly use the story of idol growth as the key to engage with fans and create value for physical product. Besides, AKB48 can maintain high level of passion from fans by offering different characters of members and also encouraging the competition between members as letting fans to vote for the member that you would like them to be Senbatsu for upcoming songs. Therefore, fans will pay for other products in order to get voting ticket and can support their favorite. This article also mentioned about expansion of 48group in other countries. Forming local idol groups can create local consumption and the restriction of location can create the endless expansion of Japanese culture.

This article will be used as the reference for discussing about Marketing Mix and also for comparing with the data collecting from interview and observation whether the results match with Japanese fans or not.

# CHAPTER IV
# FINDINGS ANALYSIS

After interview and observation sessions, there are many interesting points that have to be categorized and discuss in order to find out the factors that significantly affect the success of BNK48 in Thailand. Below is the analysis that gathering from the finding diving by external and internal factors that could affect to consumer behavior that is the key to success of BNK48.

## 4.1 Marketing Stimuli (Marketing Mixes (4Ps))

### 4.1.1 Product

For traditional music industry, Music is the product that company wants to sell in order to gain revenue. However, the scope of music has been expanded to other industries as other industries which are have been used music to relate with their product or services. (Lekhyananda, 2015) In the same way as BNK48, their core product is "the story of idol growth" while music is another tool for training as idols have to be able to do many things within entertainment industry. According to concept of 48group, their training period is used for generating income by setting low-cost show on stage and selling the tickets instead of traditional way of entertainment business that starting with auditions, training, releasing and promoting the products which are costly process. (Ignition, 2015) Besides, these can be other steps for idols to gain more reputation which could increase their value. Therefore, BNK48 follows this concept by creating story of growth as a product that can be sold in many ways and was produced by lower cost.

In order to sell the product well, specification of the product has to be prepared for offering customer's benefit and persuading them to buy. The stories of members as a product have some key issues that can be concluded as the outstanding product.

### 4.1.1.1 Different stories

Because large number of members and their different characters, together with many activities among their own members that can create more stories between members and others such as live event at Digital studio that letting members share their stories based on the theme of each day. These activities are the opportunities for members to present their characters and talents. Besides, the structure of BNK48 is not limited by numbers and each member because new member's audition can be happened any time so the stories will not be the same.

### 4.1.1.2 Reach mass market

Refer to AKB48, the sister group of BNK48, they are able to reach larger audiences because the selected members who appear on TV and other mass media are carefully chosen by the fans and staffs based on unique talents of each member so that the group can attracts all different types of consumers. (Ignition, 2015) BNK48 also uses the same concept as choosing the different members including appearance, character and personality in order to match with all ideal types of the mass market.

### 4.1.1.3 Offer values for consumers

Company provides product bundles as a gimmick to add value for products that seem to be out of date. For example, there is one card for attending hand shake event in CD and member photoset that containing 3 random pictures per set. This gimmick persuades consumers to buy related products based on the main product, the story of idol growth. Therefore, consumers are willing to pay for meet their favorites and can be the way to support their favorite's dream also.

### 4.1.1.4 Strong brand positioning

Em (the expert) mentioned that the form of 48group is called "World music" which has been used this business model in many countries so that their brand has a strong reputation and that is why there are no questions or resistance about their rules and activity. Comparing with Sweat16[1], Thai idol group, they seem to have better performance of singing and dancing as Guy (sample3) mentioned but their strategy is unclear so that Guy (sample3) does not feel any special with Sweat16 because he did

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[1] Sweat16 is Thai idol group managing by the collaboration between LoveIs, Thai music company and Yoshimoto Entertainment (Thailand). Sweat16 represents different style of singing and dancing that mixing with exercising.

not know any story or character of each member. Therefore, strong brand and strategies are important for differentiating the product in the market.

### 4.1.2 Price

Because the product in this case is not physical product, the price of the story is used for creating value of related product as mentioned above. In order to be a part of the story of idol growth, consumers have to pay for related products such as paying for CD to get a chance to meet BNK48 and then they can talk and touch so that fans can have their own special stories with BNK48. Besides, the price of initial products selling by company do not high but the market price between fans is very high as their high level of perceived value.

Besides, controlling the story of idol growth is important in order to keep the market price in the high level so that is why 48group has many rules such as members cannot have boyfriend and let fans take a selfie in personal. Em (the expert) mentioned that it is normal way to keep value of the artist because there is the fact that what is difficult to reach and has high demand can be charged a high price.

### 4.1.3 Place

For typical product, place is the channel where consumers can buy products. In this case, the stories can be consume directly in any places because the stories can be produced into many forms such as digital content, live event and TV show. It also can be produced by various types of person including the company, idols and the fans. The content that produced by fans is called user-generated content (UGC) which can reach more fans and create the community that can boost more engagement.

### 4.1.4 Promotion

In digital age, promotion via online seems to be the typical way that everyone does. However, BNK48 does not focus only promoting online by using social media, live application and main stream channel such as free TV channel but they are also focusing on the events that letting fans meet them in person including the events that are BNK's routine, Digital live studio (at least 3 times per month), the show at theater that will be launch soon. and the events for promoting other products as the brand ambassadors

or the influencers. Because BNK48 has been used many channels to communicate with fans, they can reach their targets well. As Em (the expert) mentioned that BNK48's target customers mainly use social media more than traditional channels such as TV but they also communicate via traditional and digital ways because they would like to communicate directly and indirectly to target customers. Using social media is personal media that uses for communicating directly while traditional channels are used to communicate with the press. Therefore, all marketing promotions can provide customers' touch points that still support the main product and generate customer experiences with more frequency and can reach more people.

From above discussion, the company provides the outstanding product and communication to persuade consumer. However, the effectiveness of this Marketing Mix (4Ps) has to be evaluated by consumers. Therefore, considering related factors based on perspective of fans, together with secondary data would lead to the evaluation of marketing mix of BNK48.

## 4.2 Buyers Characteristics

In term of buyers Characteristic is influenced by both of external and internal factors so discussing in details of BNK48 fans and their significant factors affecting behavior could answer the objectives of this paper.

### 4.2.1 Cultural factors

According to the interviews, there is general question that asking interviewees about their previous favorite boy band or girl group and also their opinion about Japanese culture whether it affects their decision to be a fan of BNK48 or not. 3 of 4 interviewees said that they used to be a fan of Korean pop music before knowing BNK48 but none of them was fans of Japanese pop music. Therefore, Japanese culture does not affect consumer behavior. However, we cannot deny that there are some overlap between Korean and Japanese culture in term of pop music and pattern of boy band/girl group. In the same way as expert's opinion, he said that Thai boy band and girl group used to be successful but trend of music that has changed to J-pop and K-pop so that popularity of

Thai boy band and girl group is decreased. In overall, Asian culture has some influences for Thai people especially entertainment business.

Moreover, sub culture seems to be another important factor especially for hard core fans. "Subculture" is defined as a group of people who has common interests which can be called as a social group that are different from the rest of that society (Herzog Amy, 1999). Therefore, we can summarize those hard core fans as Guy (sample4) is influenced by sub culture of the group of fan club that used to be Girl Generation's fan club as he said that he knew updated news from his friends who were the fans of Girl Generation and become BNK48's fans like him. He also added that he bought many sets of BNK48's pictures after he traded it with friends in order to get the picture of his favorite (fans call the status that you get 3 pictures of your favorite as "Compt." which is stand for "complete"). While other interviewees did not buy any pictures of BNK48 but prefer spending money for CDs and concert tickets in order to meet with their favorites. Moreover, group of BNK48 fans also has informal agreement to support only copyrighted products that is why there was no copied material for cheering up BNK48 at the event on observation day while there are many copied material such as poster or LED board in other girl group's event. Guy (sample4) told that if some of fans break this rule, they will be punished by blaming and psychologically driving out from the group. So, subculture is one of significant factor that affecting consumer behavior, especially for hardcore group of fans.

### 4.2.2 Social factors

Reference groups are considered as influencers of all interviewees. Main reference groups are their friends, especially Guy (sample4) who has their own group containing people who have same interests and share information within their group. Besides, he also bought photo cards more because of their friends as he said that after getting pictures, he shown and trade it with friends in order to get the picture of his favorite (fans call the stage that you get 3 pictures of your favorite as "Compt." which is stand for "complete"). For the rest of interviewees, they are all said that they know BNK48 from social network. For example, Earth (sample2) said that BNK48 now is like the trend so that he cannot ignore the posts about BNK48 and after that he just realized that he was already the fan of BNK48. In the same way as Guy (sample4) who said

that famous actors/actresses who are interested and posted about BNK48 on their social network. So, social factors especially influencers who have closed relationship can affect consumer behavior. Influencers can be both of closed people in their real life and also the person who has reputation and positive perception in consumer's mind such as famous actor, actress. Therefore, expressing how influencers like BNK48 will lead to changes in consumer behavior for sure.

### 4.2.3 Personal Factors

Personal factors can also affect the consumer behavior. In this paper, personal questions mainly focus on ideal personality and characteristic of their girlfriends or their ideal type whether it relates to character of BNK48's members or not. By asking about their ideal types and what they like about the members, it was surprising that there is some a relation between member's characters and ideal types of men.

Earth (sample 2) said that "Cherprang", the captain of BNK48, is his favorite member because her character and thought that seem like a grown-up which is his type. Besides, he likes a girl with small eyes and has fair skin which is also match with Cherprang's appearance. For Guy (sample3), he likes "Noey" because of her character as well-behave, adorable and need for protection look which is his type also. Women who can cook well is another ideal type of girlfriend in Juk(sample4)'s mind. This is the reason why he likes "Kaimook" and always follows her video clips about cooking on social network.

### 4.2.4 Psychological factors

There are three important psychological factors affecting the consumer buying behavior. These are: perception, motivation, and attitudes.

4.2.4.1 Perception

Jisana T. K. (2014) indicated that "Perception" is what a person thinks about product or service which is different from others so that people with the same needs might not purchase the same products. While Yolanda (2018) defined "Perception" as recognition and interpretation of people from the sensory information. After that, people response by making the information into meaningfulness.

From the interviews, most of interviewees perceive BNK48 as the young idols, not singers or entertainers. So, they do not expect them to be "perfect" in the way that traditional girl group should have such as high level of singing skills. As Earth (sample2) mentioned that he likes to monitor the progress of member's skills and he does not expect the best performance from BNK48. It could say that because he knows BNK48 well enough so that he does not expect or blame the members about their performance. While Ing (Sample2) cried with "Mobile", her favorite member when she was announced to be the center of Koisuru Fortune Cookies song because she knows that how much Mobile has tried to move from under girl to be one of Senbatsu[2] and finally she can be the center of this famous song. For Guy (Sample3), BNK48 members are all good girls who intend to study and work. Everyone has their own stories and different backgrounds. Therefore, he would like to follow and support them. In the same way as Juk (sample 4), he thinks that BNK48 members have ability and good performance, not only entertaining but also have a good academic background. He said that they are better than bad net idol that does not have any ability or special skills.

As all interviewees mentioned about the attractiveness of "BNK48 imperfection", they are all admire BNK48 as girls who do not give up on their dreams and put the effort in every little steps. Therefore, all fans have been monitored their progress and hoped to see their success. That is why fans are willing to support BNK48. Besides, BNK48 does not seem to be superstars that are difficult to approach but they are just normal people, maybe some fans feel like they are little sisters that everyone in family care about and would like to support in every way they could do.

4.2.4.2  Motivation

Motivation is the status in mind that stimulates people to act in order to achieve their goals. (Juneja, 2018) In this paper, we will focus on the motivation of fans to decide to follow and support BNK48 so that BNK48 become successful in Thailand, where Thai girl groups in the past did not work well. Therefore, focusing on the first time they knew BNK48 and reasons of being fans will be discussed. The first thing that they were pointed in common is "different characteristic of members". As BNK48 and 48group have been planned to have more number of members for competition,

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[2] Senbatsu is a term used by 48group to refer to the members that are selected to be featured in the A-side of a single and also can be used for selected members for performances, events, and concerts as well.

in order to persuade fans of each members to support their favorites, characteristic of each member has to be different so that they can attract mass market.

The second thing that can motivate people to become a fan is "The story of members". Ing (sample 1) told that she became a fan of BNK48 because she watched the VDO clip about the story before BNK48 debut. She said that it is not easy for these little girls to become the idol. Many members did not have the basic skills for being an idol, like dancing or singing. So, what she likes about BNK48 are these girls who do not give up and always show their progress. Guy (sample 3) also was attracted by stories of members. He said that even Sweat16, another Thai idol group, seems to have better performance of singing and dancing but grand opening day of Sweat16 focused on promoting sponsor more than introducing Sweat16. So, Guy (sample 3) does not feel any special with Sweat16 because he did not know any story or character of each member. While Girl Generation, his previous favorite girl group, performs very well in both of singing and dancing. Besides, characters of all members also were communicated clearly by using reality TV show and that made him would like keep following Girl Generation from that day.

Letting fans monitor members' story in social media is an opportunity for fans to know more about their favorite in a person so the fans will like the way their favorites think, behave and perform. Moreover, the fans can interact directly by clicking like, commenting and sharing that post. Therefore, these motivate fans to engage and keep monitoring. Guy (sample 3) said that the reputation of BNK48 in current can be explained by the power of fans. He said that the frequency of promotion and communication from official channel was low so increasing in number of fans nowadays is the result from fan's contents that can generate number of sharing on social media. He is proud of himself that he can be a part of promoter and supporter for BNK48 to be popular in Thailand mass market. This can support the quote that described user-generated content (UGC) as "the lifeblood of the social media organism" (Obar & Wildman, 2015). Moreover, what Guy (sample 4) said is also support the opinion of Em (the expert) as he said that BNK48 might target the mass market but there were just only some groups of fan, called "Wota" for the beginning of BNK48. Em said that "Wota" is main target that the company can use for spreading the reputation of BNK48 into mass market. Therefore, "Power of fans" is the key point that can create multiple effect of reputation

by mainly using social media to create the trend. As Earth (sample2) said that BNK48 now is like the trend so that he cannot ignore the post about BNK48 and after that he just realized that he was already fan of BNK48.

4.2.4.3  Attitude

Kooptipongkul (2017) explained "Attitude" as a belief of individuals about their positive and negative sense that can lead to behavior. Therefore, attitude can be one of factors that affect to behavior of Thai fans and also the reputation of BNK48. According to interviews, all fans have positive attitude obviously because they have all of 3 components of attitude which include:

- Cognitive Component

Interviewees have clearly opinion about characters of members. Because they knew BNK48 from many channels, especially social network and TV show that represent the concept and the journey before BNK48 debut. All interviewees have a feeling of involvement with BNK48 as they joined the related activities including online and offline channels. So, interviewees perceived that all members are good girls who just have been fought for their dreams.

- Affective Component

Because of their mentioned opinion, they feel related with BNK48 and if something happens, they will empathize with BNK48. Therefore, they can have many feeling in the same way as BNK48 feels like Ing (sample 1) that cried with "Mobile", her favorite member, when she was selected to be the center of famous song while the first launching event of BNK48 impressed Guy(sample3).

- Behavioral Component

As fans have knowledge and feeling toward BNK48, their attitudes influence them to behave as a fan by following BNK48's news and joining activities that relate to BNK48. In the same way as Guy (sample3) who spent money to buy 5 CDs and many sets of photo. He said that he wants shake hand cards to meet his favorites, "Noey" and "Pun". For photo sets, he bought it and get it immediately (did not pre-order). One set contains 5 random pictures of all members. After getting pictures, he shown and trade it with friends in order to get the picture of his favorite (fans call the stage that you get 3 pictures of your favorite as "Compt." which is stand for "complete").

# CHAPTER V
# CONCLUSIONS RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1  Conclusion

According to consumer behavior theory, consumer response is the result from the process of consumer decision which is affected from marketing stimuli, other stimuli and buyers characteristics. BNK48 is one of sister groups in 48group, franchiser of the idol group originated in Japan. Therefore, BNK48 has a strong positioning of all marketing mixes because they using the same business model with AKB48 and other sister groups.

BNK48 does not represent music as their main product but it is all about "the story of idol growth" which can generate wide range of product line and mix bundle with other products as they can offer various content such as the story before becoming BNK48 and the story of each members when travelling in Japan. So, this product will not be limited by opportunity of growth and it also encourages the fans to keep following the stories. This product will not be easy to be affected by external factors such as new technology impacted on music industry because this product is very flexible and requires lower cost rather than training the best girl group specializing in all skills. The structure of business offers wide range of products and tries to reduce the waste from product life cycle (do not have to take the risks of short lifetime of girl group) as the business model of BNK48 does not focus on permanent members but the number of members can be increased, decreased and replaced so the story of idol growth will not end and cannot be the same. The products are different and can match any of types of people because of different character of members can match different ideal types of mass market.

The clear concept of BNK48 and perfectly matching between target customers and products causes marketing tools implementation can enhance customer experiences perfectly, especially marketing events that offering a chance to meet members in real person. While promoting via social media is suitable in this era because it will generate user's generated content that can spread the multiple communication and customer

engagement. Therefore the relation between products that can communicate to consumer effectively can impact on consumer behavior by affecting to related factors of consumer characteristic. Because products as "the story of idol growth" are easy to empathize and it can encourage customers to monitor and would like to support such as providing contents that telling the story of them growing into young adults which letting consumers feel like a parent watching their kids grow. (Ignition, 2015)

"The story of idol growth", as the product, has played significant role on mass market attraction by the different products from different character of members including appearance, education background and personality that can reach more range of consumers. By the way, what they have in common is the image of Thai good girl that raise good attitude of men and also women toward BNK48 which might be different from old school girl groups that usually had bad rumors. These mentioned factors together with external factors including cultural and social factors can support and make BNK48 is the idol group for everyone. Moreover, Koisuru Fortune Cookies song is well-known song that everyone can sing and dance because it was designed to be easy to sing and dance in order to reach consumer brand awareness and create brand engagement. Therefore, after releasing this song it becomes successful and become the trend especially in social media so that everyone cannot ignore it. Therefore, their reputation is getting bigger and bigger.

In conclusion, well-prepared product that offering the right value for target customers and the suitable marketing strategies can reach consumers in every touch points. Together with power of social media in digital ages that can create the multiple effects so that BNK48 can be successful within short time.

## 5.2 Limitation in the scope of study

This paper aims to analyze the factors affecting the success of BNK48 in Thailand but most of result focusing on opinion of BNK48 fans. So, it might not reflect the effectiveness of marketing strategies. If I continue doing this paper at thesis level, I would focus more on marketing strategies based on the opinion of Marketers or the experts in Marketing within entertainment field because this paper focuses BNK48 within music industry. However, the product of BNK48 does not limit in music

industry so discussion more in bigger scope would be essential. The result would be interesting case study for marketer and marketing students to explore and adapt this successful case into other cases.

## 5.3 Recommendation

As mentioned that "the story of idol growth" is very flexible component, the company can use it for creating campaigns that still relate to the concept of BNK48. For instance, BNK48 can set up the big event for enhancing customer experience and create loyalty for only special fans (such as BNK48 Sport day).While an official account of BNK48 should provide more content in order to be the main source for creating user's engagement via social media so that fans can share it and engage more customers instead of depending on Fan page's content. Moreover, using "Real time marketing" as a strategy seems suitable for the product and target market that they are all new generation who love to interact immediately so it will make the fans feel special and get the engagement that could lead to loyalty.

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