

BNK48: EFFECT OF THE FANS DURING COVID-19

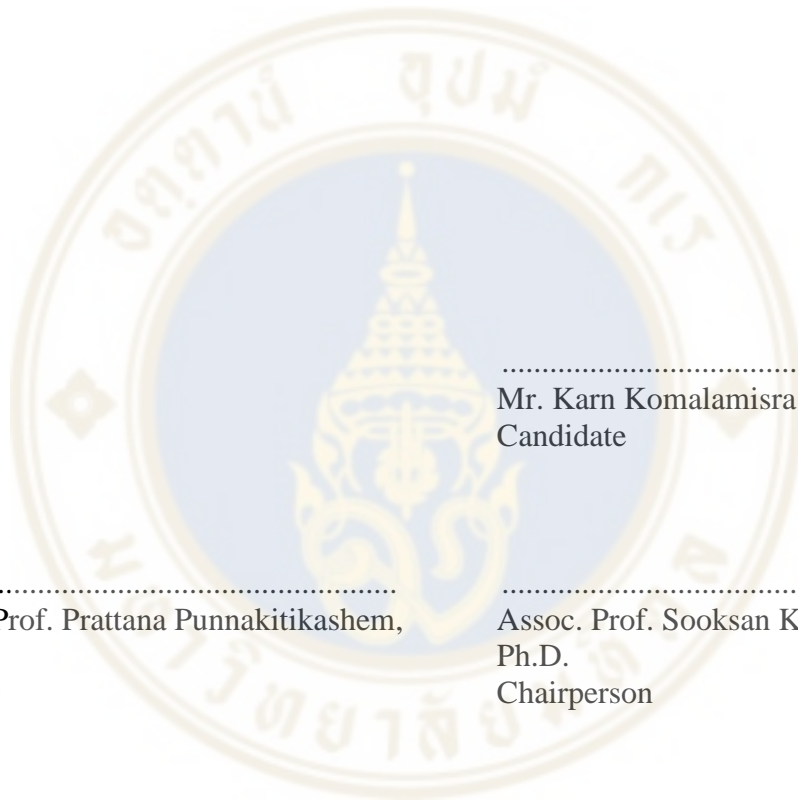


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BNK48: EFFECT OF THE FANS DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

BNK48 is an idol group that come to Thailand in 2017. In the same year the 2nd single of them “Koisuru Fortune Cookie” become a famous popular which led to the awareness of BNK48. The idol group was under iAM (Independent Artist Management). Fans are very important to this company because most of the income was from merchandise, concert, and digital content. Without fans, the company will not get a lot of revenue and would not become successful. Since early 2020 the Covid-19 happened this cause an effect company, BNK48 members, and fans. The fan's behavior is not the same as before Covid-19 which is cause their purchase intention changed and this would affect the company. To know more about the behavior of the fans during Covid-19, qualitative method with in-depth interview will be able to find the result of 3 research objectives and research questions. The result showed that the fans still support BNK48 but some start buying fewer products because of differences in purchasing power due to differences in their income which causes different intentions to purchase. In terms of the event there are satisfied with the safety regulation of handshake events during Covid-19 and satisfied with the idea of online activity but still have some improvement as well.

KEY WORDS: BNK48 / Idol Group / Entertainment Business / Consumer Behavior/ Covid-19

36 pages

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the last few years, the music industry around the world is successful in many countries. The reason could be such as to entertain, to help people relax, and to have an emotional connection. This could be said that nowadays music become part of people's daily lives. In Asia, Japan and South Korea are two countries that are very successful in their music industry. South Korea was famous for K-Pop which stands for Korean Popular music. Japan is also famous for the Japanese Idol group.

The world "Idol" from Japanese Idol defines as a celebrity in music, film, TV that have charming (Richardson2016) character on their stage performance. Moreover, not just only charming performances on the stage but they should be a role model or have their story that could inspiration to other people or fans. AKB48 is a Japanese Idol group that stands for Akihabara 48 which start in 2005. For the business model, this model was called 48 group which is an idol group that start from AKB48 and expand the group to other cities in Japan and a sister group (Dreisbach 2018) in other countries such as in Thailand have BNK48 which is based in Bangkok and CGM48 based in Chiangmai. MNL48 is based in Manila the Philippines. AKB48 doesn't have a fixed member because they always recruit a new member due to the expansion of the business and there always have some members that resign. In this business, the member that resigns from the group will use the word graduate. For the performance, this idol group has their own theater that member usually performs every week. They also have a single to release and every single not member will be picked to be a part of each single only 16 members will be picked, and the most focused person or leader singing will be called "Center" (Chalayonnavin 2018). In term of event, the Idol group have their event to be a relationship between members itself and fans such as handshake event, 2 shot event (Photograph), and sports days. AKB48 is a very successful business and sold its business model to other countries.

BNK48 is an idol girl group located in Bangkok Thailand. This is a sister group of AKB48. BNK48 was managed by independent Artist Management (iAM). Due to BNK48 being a sister group of AKB48 they must follow the rules of AKB48 strictly such as members are not allowed to take photos with their fans and give a signature to fans. (Bangkok bit news 2018) They must use a song that was originated from AKB48. This means that they must use AKB48 songs that already have and are translated into the Thai language. Produce a song that is not from AKB48 they must get approval from the company in Japan first. BNK48 have launched in 2017 and is very successful. The second single “Koisuru Fortune Cookie” (Kraipakorn 2018) is a single that make BNK48 become known in Thailand and this single was create awareness of the brand BNK48. Nowadays This single already has more than 190 million viewers on YouTube. (Koisuru Fortune Cookie YouTube) Nowadays, BNK48 has 56 current members and 20 graduate members. In term of song, BNK48 have 10 singles and 3 albums.

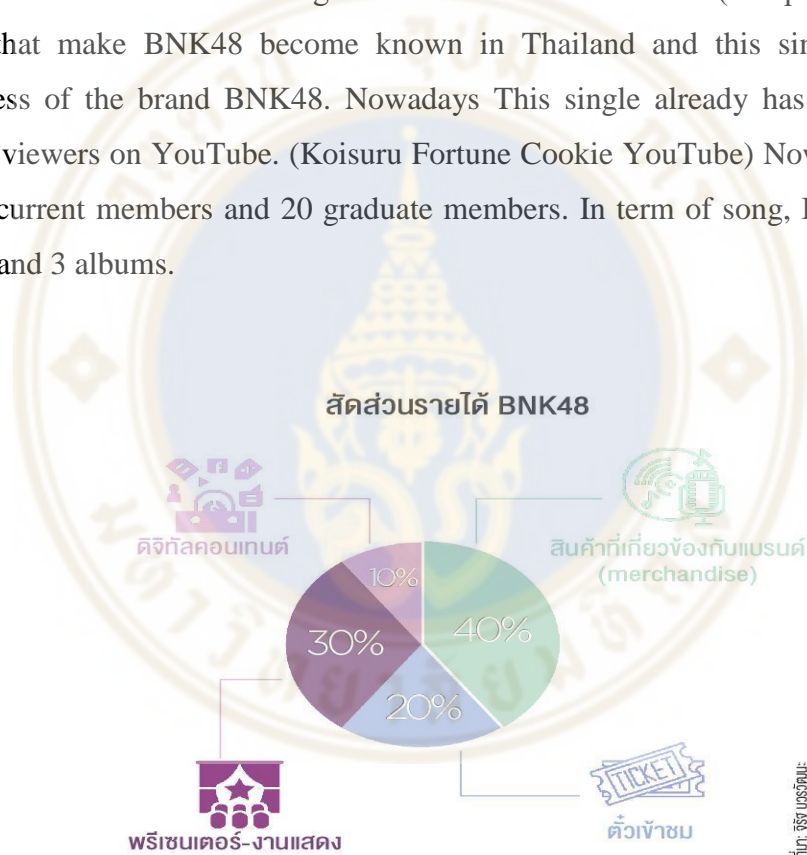


Figure1.1 BNK48 income channel

Figure 1.1 shows 4 main channels that BNK48 receives an income which are merchandise, ticket, presenter and acting job, and the content via a digital platform. Merchandise is 40 percent of their income; this could be said that it is huge. The company sells its merchandise via an online platform called “Shopee” so the fans will buy the merchandise via this platform. Also, in any event of BNK48 the company

also has an offline store to sell the merchandise as well. There are many types of merchandise that are usually sold such as CD of each single, DVD of each album, t-shirt, sticker, and photoset of BNK48 members. CD, DVD, and photoset are very most famous and attractive to fans because if you buy CD, it bundles together with a handshake event this means that you will get CD to listen to the song and bring a ticket to attend handshake event. Handshake event is an event for Fans who brought a CD that combine a ticket of this event to come to have a handshake with members of BNK48. Each ticket allows fans to have a handshake for 8 seconds. (Chaiwanitpol 2018) To have handshake time more the fans need to order more CDs and DVDs of each album bundle together with 2-shot even or another word it calls photography event which is an event that you can have photographs with BNK48 member. Photoset is another item that people because the fans or buyer are not allowed to pick their favorite member it sells together with 5 members randomly. Also, in some photographs, there is a signature from the member, and it is a rare item the fans who get a photograph with a signature are lucky people. This strategy of selling these items was very famous because it is a new thing in Thailand that has a big event like a handshake, 2 shot. According to the rule of 48 group members are not allowed to take a photo and give a handshake and signature with a fan during their free time which is totally opposite from other celebrities that when you met them you may allow to ask them to take a photo together and give a signature and handshake, but this is not for the BNK48. If the fans of BNK48 want this, they need to buy the merchandise and attend these events only. Apart from merchandise, an event like theater, sports day and the general election is also big event that the company receives a lot of money from selling tickets and from fans who vote for their favorite member to win an election event. Live via the digital platform is another way the company receives income. Each member will live via the smartphone application called “iAM48” and the fans need to download this to watch the member's lives. Different members will live individually and will share their stories differently with their fans. The fans mostly who watch members' lives will support member by buying cookie via this application and sending it to members that they like if buy and send a lot the company also gain a lot. This application is not just only allowed fans to watch and send cookies to members, but

the fans can buy theater package and watch it via this smartphone application and do not need to go to the theater.

All this marketing strategy is showing the way the company receives its income and the fans also have an impact on the brand or company a lot. Without this strategy and fans may create negative effects. This can be concluded that the fans create a big impact on this business.

1.1 Problem Statement

Since 2020, it was a period of Covid pandemic which creates an effect on many businesses or organizations. BNK48 also get an effect on the impact too because many of their works or events were postponed and some of the events must be with very strict procedures due to this pandemic and some of it must be online instead. This makes the members, and the fans cannot meet each other. In terms of buying merchandise, many fans were not able to support it much as before the pandemic because the pandemic also create an effect on their jobs and cause their consumer behavior to change. From October to November 2020, it was a time that Covid-19 first wave got recovered and the second wave did not arrive yet. There were two handshake events with the strict procedure and the fans joining these two events were much less than the handshake event before Covid-19. This needs to be found out about the consumer behavior of the fans during the Covid-19 pandemic because the purchasing power of the fans has an impact on BNK48.

1.2 Research Question

- 1) How did the fans support BNK48 or their favorite member during Covid-19?
- 2) What is the fan's behavior in terms of purchasing power, intention to purchase, satisfaction and loyalty?
- 3) How does this event or activities during Covid-19 make the fans satisfied?

1.3 Research Objective

- 1) To explore the ability of the fans to support BNK48 or their favorite member during Covid-19.
- 2) To explore the fan's behavior in terms of purchasing power, intention to purchase, satisfaction and loyalty?
- 3) To explore the event or activities that satisfy the fans during Covid-19.

1.4 Scope of Study

This study will focus on a consumer who is a fan of BNK48 that have experience in many events and activities and purchase merchandise related to this brand.

1.5 Expected Benefits

The researcher expected to see fans talk about what Covid-19 affects them in terms of ability to support and any satisfaction to the activity during that time and what BNK48 is important to them. The result of this research is expected to tell independent Artist Management or iAM who own BNK48 about what the fans think of these factors and to help them improve for the future and create more satisfaction which could lead to more loyalty.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is like to discuss consumer behavior and the variable of this research, Purchase intention, satisfaction is independent variables and loyalty are dependent variables.

2.1 Consumer Behavior

Consumer Behavior defines as the behavior of people on deciding on things or products which can be referred to as buying or selecting a product or what they usually consume. Also, in terms of buying or selecting, price (Nelson 1970) has an effect, and it triggers people whether they should pick or buy these products or not.

Different people have different behavior in their consumption due to different places and locations. Also, different events or situations cause people to behave differently such as world war which cause many people who lived in that time must be economized due to a shortage of products. (Sheth 2000) In the period of Covid-19, consumer behavior was changed from normal situation buy people likely to spend money to buy just an important or a necessity item and likely to purchase via online platform due to the economy in this situation are getting worse. Also, people were less likely to do activities outside their house due to their safety concerns and strict rule and regulation of the Covid-19. (Arora, Charm, Grimmelt, Ortega, Robinson, Sexauer, & Yamakawa 2020).

In this research, would like to find out more about the behavior of BNK48 fans during the Covid-19 on their purchase intention, satisfaction, and loyalty to measure the difference in their behavior between pre-Covid-19 and during Covid-19.

2.1.1 Purchase intention

Purchase intentions refer to an intention of people to buy a product because of perceived value (Chang and Wildt 1994) or it can be said that you buy this product about it create value to you. Moreover, after people have bought products, if they like them or satisfy with them, this is likely to create more intention to buy and lead to re-purchasing (Chen and Chang 2018) products and create more satisfaction on their wants and needs.

Purchase intention is not just only about buying a product because of its value or satisfying wants and needs but in market research, it helps to study the behavior of purchasing a product of an individual person. Also, it helps the company to study and predict the behavior (Morwitz 1991) that might happen in the future for the company to prepare and be ready to make people satisfy their needs in the future.

In this case, it refers to the fans of BNK48 having a purchase intention to buy merchandise such as CD for listening to music and attending the handshake event. Purchase t-shirts to promote themselves about how they love BNK48 and photoset of members because it values for them and looking at this picture will motivate them.

2.1.2 Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is frequently used in terms of marketing. Moreover, the term customer satisfaction has been discussed that to make people or customers to be satisfied, the quality of the service (Simpson 2006) must meet their expectations. Otherwise, satisfaction will not happen.

Price and quality of products match are likely to create satisfaction to consumers because they know the money that they have spent can make them satisfied. If the price is high (Kondo 2001) but the quality of products was lower than expected, then this could lead to complaining and create customer dissatisfaction.

Negative Word of Mouth (WOM) and complaining behavior (Szymanski, D. M., & Henard, D. H. 2001) are two factors that also help to create satisfaction because these two actions are the way that customer express their feeling about their dissatisfaction or disappointment experience to make other people know it. This expression also aims for the company to know this and be able to act immediately. This would be a kind of motivation for a company to improve their product and

services and lead to satisfaction. Without this behavior, the company may not know about the problem and will be to act to respond. So, it will create more dissatisfaction than satisfaction.

In terms of measurement, after measuring customer satisfaction it can measure their inside behavior whether they satisfy their need or not. This is also can see that what or why it makes customer become satisfied or dissatisfaction of product, services, or brand and this help the business or company to know and understand the problem and provide a solution to improve it. This can help a business to have more profit (Hill, Brierley& MacDougall 2017) and can make a customer be able to reach from satisfaction stage to the loyalty stage. Without, satisfaction customers won't become loyal.

In this case, the researcher would like to find out that in the period of Covid-19, the fans of BNK48 are still satisfied with the product that they purchase, the event or activities that the company made for the fans, and the attitude of fans toward BNK48.

2.1.3 Loyalty (dependent)

Loyalty or brand loyalty which a positive experience of the brand that people satisfy and lead to purchase or re-purchase because of trust and passion. Any customer who had a high level of passion usually has a higher level of trust (Hemsley-Brown, & Alnawas 2016) which has more chance to be loyalty level. To become brand loyal these people not just only be satisfied but they need to feel that they are part of the brand, community, or organization with a positive attitude and behavior (Qu 2012) toward it.

Not just only positive attitude from the buyer which led to re-purchase is called loyalty. But the customer must feel that the quality of the service that they receive must good enough to make them satisfied and likely to use and buy this product or brand for a long time without changing or switching to other brands. (Boonlertvanich 2019)

People who reach the loyalty stage or already become brand loyalty will likely show off other people about the brand or product that they like and express themselves (Bilgin 2018) how much they are loyal or love these brands. Some also

like to show because this may be able to persuade or influence other people to follow them.

In this case, to be loyal to the brand of BNK48 they must have awareness of BNK48 and like it and support members by attendance to the event or online activity, purchasing merchandise, and being satisfied with a brand that made them become loyal. Since becoming the loyalty stage they are willing to repurchase or support again.



CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The objective of this research is to find out the effect of the BNK48 fans during covid-19 and to explore the fan's behavior in terms of purchasing power, intention to purchase, satisfaction and loyalty. The fans of BNK48 will be the group that knows that situation so, in this case, the qualitative method is suitable for this research to find out in a deeper interview. Moreover, qualitative is open answer question and the fans will be able to give their opinion without anything fixed. Also, they would be able to give a reason or explain how and why on each question that has been asked. Answer in deep detail will be able to understand problems more its detail. After collecting data, the answer can be analyzed and would help a company to understand more about the problem and the suggestion from this research.

3.2 Methodology

In this qualitative method, the researcher had interviewed 21 consumers which are fans of BNK48 and have experience with purchasing merchandise and attended many events or activities of BNK48. In term of question will be an in-depth interview to explore why they become fans and like BNK48 and how BNK48 make you satisfied. Also, in this interview plan to ask questions about their experience toward BNK48 during Covid-19 to see how and why their consumer behavior has changed. The key variables that our research would like to explore are purchase intention satisfaction and loyalty to measure how these affect their fans in the Covid-19. These fans will be able to tell their experience and how Covid-19 changes their behavior. So, the qualitative method with in-depth interview questions is the most suitable method for the researcher to find the result.

3.3 Data Collection Process

The researcher had interviewed all 21 participants through different applications depending on each participant have selected. Mostly had interviews by using Line Application but some also had an interview by Messenger call and Google Meet. During the interview, the researcher asks the screening question first to make sure that all 21 participants are real fans of BNK48. After asking the screening question then the interviewer asks the participant to take about the experience and explain the reasons for the question that the researcher asked. The interview time, ranged between 20-30 minutes due to some of the participants taking more time on explaining or expressing their thought.

After collecting data, the research will analyze data from what all participants had answered to see their experience and the effect of their behavior.

3.4 Interview Question

Table 3.1 Interview question

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Question</u>
<u>Screening Question</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Are you a fan of BNK48? 2) Who is your favorite and why?
<u>Purchase Intention</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which factors make you have an intention to buy product of BNK48? 2) Is the price effect your purchase intention? 3) Do you have any specific reasons for purchase each product? 4) Does Covid-19 make your purchase intention changes? 5) How Covid-19 effect your purchase intention?

Table 3.1 Interview question (cont.)

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Question</u>
<u>Purchase Intention</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6) Is the price of product in this period effect your intention to purchase? 7) How does your purchasing power change? 8) How does your purchasing power in the Covid-19 effect your intention to purchase? 9) Are ways that you support between pre-Covid and during Covid-19 the same? How?
<u>Satisfaction</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Which factor do you think it make you satisfy with this idol group? 2) How does the merchandise or event, activities made you satisfy? 3) During Covid-19 the rules and the activities have changed and how do you feel about that? 4) Does BNK48 members still make you feel satisfy as before Covid-19? How? 5) Does the handshake event during Covid-19 make you satisfy? How?

Table 3.1 Interview question (cont.)

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Question</u>
<u>Satisfaction</u>	<p>6) Do online activities like greeting you and meeting you online make you satisfy? How?</p> <p>7) Are you satisfied with the price of the product during Covid-19?</p> <p>8) Are there any dissatisfaction points especially during Covid-19 period that you want to tell iAM and why?</p>
<u>Loyalty</u>	<p>1) During Covid-19 many of fans didn't continue to support but why do you still support BNK48?</p> <p>2) Why BNK48 is important to you?</p> <p>3) During Covid-19 how BNK48 important to you?</p> <p>4) If there any event in the future, will you still support BNK48? Why?</p> <p>5) How will you support BNK48 in the future?</p>
<u>Demographic</u>	<p>1) Could you tell me about your age, gender, how long you become a fan and your income?</p>

3.5 Data Analysis

To analyze all data from the interviewee, the researcher had read all the answers from all interviewees and put the similar answer from the interviewee into a keyword. Moreover, also find out which keyword was repeatedly said and linked to the research question and research objective will be explained more in detail and be able to conclude about the effect of BNK48 fans in the covid pandemic time.



CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDING

This chapter will be talk about the research finding and the information will come from 21interviewees which is the fans of BNK48 the focus group of this research. The answer from the interviews will be analyze and discuss for answer three research question. 1) How did the fans support BNK48 or their favorite member during Covid-19? 2) What are the fans behaviors in terms of purchasing power, intention to purchase, satisfaction and loyalty? 3) How do the events or activities during Covid-19 make the fans satisfy?

4.1 Interviewee Background

Table 4.1 Interviewees information

<u>Persons</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Number of Years that become a fan</u>	<u>Income range (Thai baht)</u>
Interviewee 1	Male	30	4	>30,000
Interviewee 2	Male	28	3	15,000-30,000
Interviewee 3	Male	27	2	>30,000
Interviewee 4	Male	26	4	>30,000
Interviewee 5	Male	25	3	15,000-30,000
Interviewee 6	Male	19	4	< 15,000
Interviewee 7	Male	26	4	>30,000
Interviewee 8	Male	40	4	>30,000
Interviewee 9	Male	40	4	>30,000
Interviewee 10	Male	24	4	15,000-30,000

Table 4.1 Interviewees information (cont.)

<u>Persons</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Number of Years that become a fan</u>	<u>Income range (Thai baht)</u>
Interviewee 11	Male	25	4	15,000-30,000
Interviewee 12	Female	17	3	< 15,000
Interviewee 13	Female	31	4	>30,000
Interviewee 14	Male	35	4	>30,000
Interviewee 15	Female	28	4	>30,000
Interviewee 16	Male	36	4	>30,000
Interviewee 17	Male	40	4	>30,000
Interviewee 18	Female	32	4	>30,000
Interviewee 19	Male	32	4	>30,000
Interviewee 20	Male	17	3	< 15,000
Interviewee 21	Male	16	2	< 15,000

Table 4.1 illustrates that 21 interviewees are fans of BNK48 which consists of 17 males and 4 females. For the age range, 9 of them are 30-40 years and 12 of them are less than 30 years. 16 interviewees became a fan for 4 years and the other 5 were less than 4 years. For the income range, 13 interviewees earn more than 30,000 baht per month while the other 8 interviewees earn 30,000 baht or lower.

4.2 The Fans Support During Covid-19

After asking all questions to all interviewees, the fans support BNK48 or their favorite member during Covid-19 by the following actions.

4.2.1 Online purchasing

Most of the interviewees have talked about online purchasing as the way to support BNK48 during Covid-19 due to many of the events and concerts being postponed. Many activities are in the online format and some of the events like the

handshake event in 2020 are held in October and November which is Covid-19 second wave hasn't arrived in Thailand yet. But since the second wave, there are onsite events was being held. So, buying merchandise online is one way that fans can support BNK48 and their favorite member and many of them are willing to do.

BNK48 official shop is in an application called Shopee. Anyone who wants to buy merchandise of BNK48 must download this Shopee application to select the product that they want and buy through this application. After payment was completed, the product will be delivered to the buyer's address. For some products, it takes a few weeks after the completed order and payment but for some, it takes more than a month.

“During Covid-19 official of BNK48 had to launch tea for sell which is a good product because it drinkable and I also buy other merchandise as well at the time because this is a few ways that I can support BNK48 and members in this time” (Interviewee 7)

“If there any t-shirt about BNK48 that I need it I will order it. This not just only because t-shirt it usable, but I pay this because I want to spend money on support member” (Interviewee 8)

4.3 Fans Behavior in Terms of Purchasing Power, Intention to Purchase, Satisfaction, and Loyalty

4.3.1 Product

Products or merchandise of BNK48 has many types such as photoset, CD, water bottle-shirt, keyring, and tea. The idea of each product that fans can keep as part of their collection and feel warm heart if each product has their favorite member in it. Also, some products can use as a part of daily lives and be able to show their pride in being fans of BNK48. Different fans have different purchasing power depending on their income per month which is cause the difference in their purchase intention. Different people have different tastes, or like which is another factor that causes the different purchase intentions in each different product. Moreover, because different people have different tastes or like it also causes different satisfaction.

“I think company doing a good idea for selling tea with a logo of member because I can drink it and taste is nice.” (Interviewee 7)

“During Covid-19 when I’m tired from my work, I look at my product that has BNK48 member and make me more relaxed and ready for the next day.” (Interviewee 13)

“Every time that I try from my studied it is tried because study master’s degree online is not an easy thing but when I look at the photoset of BNK48 it makes me smile and feel better” (Interviewee2)

“I didn’t buy much product this time because I didn’t get less money from my parents, so I buy less but the product that I buy always makes me feel happy (Interviewee 20)

The example shows how the interviewee is satisfied with the product. However, there are still some points that the researcher got that they have an unsatisfied point about the product as well.

“I still buy a product because BNK48 product makes me think of members and usually remind me happiness but after product delivery to me I have found some didn’t have good quality so I think I should be less because of the quality and my spending behavior of this time also changed.” (Interviewee 5)

“I love the idea of each purpose, so I buy it and I need to wait for a long time to arrive. After the product was delivered to my house when I open and touch it the quality was lower than I expected. So, I would consider buying less.” (Interviewee 15)

4.3.2 Price

Price had an impact on their purchase intention, especially the covid-19 period in which most people need to save money for an emergency case or buy more important products in this period. Different people have different purchasing power because of different incomes per month. This difference in purchasing power causes each fan to have a different purchase intention. Many fans will buy the product that they need at a reasonable price. During covid, most of the interviewees still buy merchandise of BNK48 but buy less than pre-Covid-19 because of the effect on their income and prefer to buy more important products and services. that help necessary

for them. The price of the product was sold at a different price some is reasonable and make them satisfied with it but some it too expensive. However, many fans still buy some products even the price may be too high, but the main reasons are to support BNK48 and their favorite members.

“Many merchandises from BNK48 the price is quite expensive so during covid I decide to buy just only item that I want it and prefer to save money for an emergency instead.” (Interviewee 4)

“I had but many t-shirts of BNK48 since before Covid-19 the price is 480baht but the quality like less than 300 baht so during Covid-19 I decide not to buy a t-shirt, I prefer to buy the product that related to my favorite member-only and save money for necessary items instead.” (Interviewee 6)

“During Covid-19 I take more time thinking on buy merchandise of BNK48 especially the product that sold more than 1000 baht because it is expensive. Even it sold less than 1000 baht I still think many times first before I buy.” (Interviewee 10)

“The price in some products is too high for me so I prefer to buy with other people instead of BNK48 official store because I can get it at a cheaper price.” (Interviewee 21)

4.3.3 Motivation

One of the main reasons why the fans are still loyal to BNK48 the answer from most of our interviewees said it is motivation. Many of the interviewees were fans of BNK48 for 4 years or too said in other words they become a fan since BNK48 were established. Over the past 4 years members of BNK48 not just only singing or entertaining fans but they always share their own stories to inspire people such as education and what they have been doing to become members of BNK48. This is making many fans feel it is not easy and motivating them to do better. Also, during the Covid-19 pandemic members always talk and post messages to their fans on their social media to make sure that they will be motivated and do something to achieve goals. Most of the interviewees said that they feel motivated because they have seen that members always work hard especially during Covid-19. This is making fans feel inspired and want to work hard and not give up something because they feel that

BNK48 members have an attitude of can do it so this is causing the attitude of the fans to get the effect and have a more positive attitude because of the inspiration and motivation from the member which they can feel it.

“When I wake up, I always look at BNK48 members first because it motivated me before start the day and it happen like this for 4 years already”
(Interviewee 10)

“I have seen members have improved on their performance and it much better than 4 years ago and I can see that. This has motivated me a lot and I always share the story of members on my Facebook page to inspire other people too”
(Interviewee 19)

“I feel bad many times during Covid-19 period but when I come back to listen to the story of member it inspires and motivates me to make my feeling get better and getting motivated from a member is very important for me especially in this period” (Interviewee 1)

4.4 Events or Activities Those Satisfy the Fans During Covid-19

4.4.1 Events with safety regulation

During Covid-19 not many events can be held due to the rules and regulations of the Thai government but there are two handshake events was being held last year which strict rules and regulations which are people who have a temperature higher than 37.5 Celsius will not allow entering events and during waiting line in an event that will be a point for you to stand in line waiting due to social distancing rules. Members of BNK48 must wear a mask and glove and the fans must wear a mask. Also, there will be staff stand in every line of each member to make sure that members and fans are following the rule strictly and they give every alcohol gel to every fan before shaking hands with members.



Figure 4.1 BNK48 handshake event before Covid-19

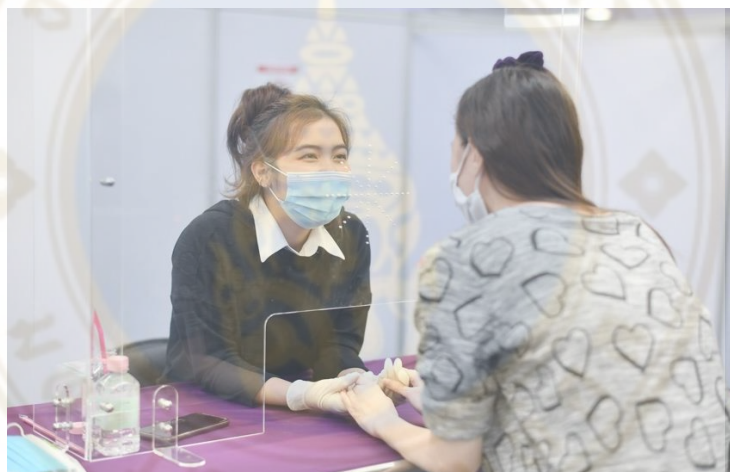


Figure 4.2 BNK48 handshake event during Covid-19

Two figure above show how different on the handshake event before Covid-19 and during Covid-19. Figure show clearly on how handshake last year look like and show what it looks like to make sure that members are fans is safety or well-protected.

76% of our interviewees went to the handshake event during Covid-19 and were very satisfied with the rule and regulations of this event. Another 24% of our interviewees didn't attend the event not because they don't satisfy but because they can't attend. However, these 5 are satisfied with the rules and feel safe as well.

“I feel save when I went to two handshake events last year in October and November” (Interviewee 11)

“The rules and regulation of two Covid-19 is very strict but it shows that members and fans are safe and get enough protect which made me satisfy” (Interviewee 6)

“I can't attend two handshakes' events because I'm outside Thailand. But if I were in Thailand there is no reason for me not to go because the rules and regulations are protected member and myself and feel that both member and I will be safe.” (Interviewee3)

4.4.2 Member activities during Covid-19

The researcher asks all interviewees about their perspectives toward member duties during Covid-19. All of them are very satisfied with members and feel that members are taken care of and have services in mind to their fans even though this will be a difficult time for members due to their work had reduced.

iAM48 is an application that BNK48 members will use this app to post or update things to their fans. Moreover, this is an application that members will have a live video to fans and fans usually watch when their favorite member lives in this application and can by online gift and send it to their favorite member through this application as well. This is also an application that fans not just only know the update from members or watch members' lives. But the attended event like handshake event fans needs to download this app for keeping their tickets to attend this event.



BNK48 10th Single คือ:

6 tickets
 Union Hall, 6F Union Mall
 3-4 July 2021

Figure 4.3 shows an example of a handshake event ticket located in application iAM48



Figure 4.4 shows the logo of the application iAM48

Greeting You Online is an activity that create since Covid-19 first wave which is an activity for fans to use their handshake ticket to register to get a video or voice reply from BNK48 members. Fans need to register in this application by using their handshake event ticket and selected member and a script that they want a member of BNK48 to reply or talk to them. This activity is not live is a record from a member. Fans need to register during the registration period and members must record and reply within the period that the company set. This activity has a limited quota for each member so if fans didn't register fast enough then they may not be able to join this activity.

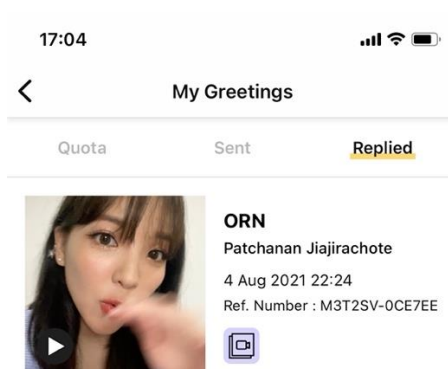


Figure 4.5 shows the picture of member video reply in Greeting You Online activity

Meeting You Online is an activity that will be lives calling between members and fans that become a top spending online gift for 16 members that participate in this activity. These 16 members will be able to talk to the fans who were in the top 40 spending ranking. During this activity, fans will have a chance to talk to members for 10-80 seconds depending on the spending ranking of the fans. For example, if this fan was ranked no.1 for spending a gift to member A, then he or she will have a chance to talk to the member for 80 seconds. But another fan for example was ranked no.40 for spending gift to member A then he or she will only have a chance to talk to the member for just 10 seconds.



Figure 4.6 shows an example of what Meeting You Online activity like

Digital lives studio is an activity for a member to live during weekdays evening and it takes place at MBK department store. The member who participates in this activity will be rotated. The fans are allowed to go to the studio to watch it. This

activity also lives on Facebook to make sure that fans who can't come to the studio will be able to watch it. During Covid-19 members must live from their own house and fans can watch on Facebook only.

“In the pandemic, the situation is making me feel depressed but when Noey lives taking to the fans via social media it stops my depress feeling immediately” (Interviewee 3)

“Since I become a fan of BNK48, members make me impress and during pandemic member still the same and know exactly on their duty and still make me satisfy.” (Interviewee 14)

“I have attended both Greeting You and Meeting You online, I can save videos that my favorite member reply and watch anytime that I want. For Meeting You Online I have only 10 seconds to have live talking with a member but it memorable for me” (Interviewee 2)

“BNK48 members is a normal person as fans but they do anything as they can to make fans happy. I can feel about it which make me feel very satisfied” (Interviewee 9)

The statement above can be analyzed that fans feel that members know what they should do and always make fans happy.



Figure 4.7 Shows example of digital lives studio activity

4.5 Any Suggestion

The researcher asks the interviewee to give suggestions about what needs to be improved and everyone has their own suggestion. Digital lives studio, Greeting You Online, quality of merchandise, and take caring member are the 4 main things which were repeatedly said by most of the interviewees.

Greeting You Online registration system was repeatedly said by the interviewee which needs to improve because they must wait for a long time to register. Also, the system itself error and don't provide detail about the limited number allowed. So, which causes too many people to try to register at the same time and causes a system failure. Many of the interviewees also suggested different registration dates for different members to prevent system failure and make the system run smoother than registration on the same date.

“During Covid-19, Greeting You Online is a good activity to make fans satisfied. However, the registration system has many errors and I wait a long time to get it done” (Interviewee 7)

“You know in Greeting You Online activity many of fans will register for this why you do not create a server that more effective so it will make the registration process smoother. (Interviewee 15)

“If the registration date for each member was separated and not the same date it will be much better and then fans will be more satisfied.” (Interviewee 3)

For the quality of the product, most of the interviewees want the product quality to be improved because of its lower expectation. Also, a product like a t-shirt that sold for 600 baht makes them feel like just only 300 baht qualities. Some of them have an experience which makes them need to exchange the product because when the product was delivered it arrived with a broken one and it took a while to get replace, this is very unsatisfied. The main reason that they still buy products or merchandise is because they still want to give money to a company to support BNK48 members.

“I still buy merchandise of BNK48 because I want to support them. However, the quality of the product is not good as it should be, and some product price doesn't match with quality at all. So, when Covid-19 arrived it easily for me to buy less merchandise than before” (Interviewee 4)

For the online content, most of the interviewees feel disappointed because in many episodes the content was a lower expectation and not enjoyed in many episodes. The fans have higher expectations for the online content because this is one of the activities that was allowed during Covid-19, so the fans have higher expectations to increase their enjoyment. However, there are still have some interesting online episodes as well which are the episode with a famous news reporter Jomquan Laopetch as a special guest. But overall, much of the content during Covid-19 needs to be improved.



Figure 4.8 Shows an online digital live from home with Jomquan Laopetch

“The Online content for digital lives studio didn’t interest as pre-covid someday I don’t want to watch it.” (Interviewee 17)

“During Covid 19 online content for digital lives studio should be interested because these are a few activities that iAM can do it. However, it doesn’t have much new content already makes some fans feel unsatisfied. Some fans still watch it because they love members and want to support them.” (Interviewee 18)

Lastly, most of the interview feel that the company need to take more action to protect member for example post the message on social media to show the fans that they protect member enough. When the company didn’t post the message on protecting members this made fans think the company does not take care of members enough. These fans were very unsatisfied with this and want to see a quick response from the company when a member was feeling depressed.

“Many members of BNK48 still high school and college student, when they have to study together with practices and working in this period make them feel

depressed. Some of the members live through social media telling their fans about this but myself as a fan didn't see the company take action or respond with it enough”
(Interviewee 8)

All quotes above can be indicated that during this pandemic the company tries to create as many activities or some events as they can to satisfy fans, but fans have found many factors that make them feel unsatisfied and need to be improved.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Conclusion

In this research, the qualitative method from the researcher is mainly to answer the research question and research objective. There are 3 research objectives which are to explore the ability of the fans to support BNK48 or their favorite member during Covid-19. To explore the behavior of the fans in terms of purchasing power, intention to purchase, satisfaction and loyalty and to explore the event or activities that satisfy the fans during Covid-19.

The fans still support BNK48 by buying merchandise through Shopee application. The ability of each fan was different depending on the difference in their income.

The fans have different purchasing power due to differences in their income and different taste. For this reason, it makes their intention to purchase each fan was different. Most of them want to buy many products of BNK48 because they love BNK48 especially their favorite member, so they want to support them. Not everyone can buy the product because it was sold at different prices which different people have different purchasing power, so they buy products that were reasonable price or have their favorite member only. Some also prefer to buy more important items to protect themselves from Covid-19, so they buy fewer products of BNK48.

During Covid-19 not many events or activities can be held due to the strict rule from the government of Thailand that required all organizations to follow. BNK48 has only two handshake events before the 2nd wave of Covid-19. Many fans are satisfied with the rule or regulations because it is safe and protect both members and fans. For the online activity, the fans were satisfied in terms of the idea and content of the activity and member also did their job very well to make the fans satisfied.

However, the fans also give a suggestion in terms of online content, quality of product, need to take care member more, and the registration system of Greeting You Online which mainly need to be improved.

5.2 Recommendation

After the result was analyzed, it can be said that Covid-19 had an impact BNK48 fans in terms of Intention to purchase, satisfaction and loyalty. So, the researcher would like to give 5 suggestions First, the company should set more promotions such as buy 2 get 1 free or minimum spend 1,000 baht to get a lucky draw to with some special gift. Price should reduce in some product in this time because if the price is chapter more people will be able to support or buy it and this seems to target more mass people than selling product at a higher price such as the current price of the t-shirt was sold between 480-600 baht depending on the type. If it sells between 300-450 this would increase the number of buyers. Second, the quality of the product is important because it creates more satisfaction to fans and creates more positive word of mouth which can create a stronger brand image. Third, online content or activity should get improved such as Greeting You Online registration system by setting different registration dates for each member because making server or registration more effective and increasing number of fans that allow participating will make fans feel like they meet members in-person event it just a short video message. Forth, online content in a digital studio should be improved or create new content because it will be more interesting to keep engagement between members and fans if this is the same so the engagement might be lower, and fans would be more unsatisfied. Last, the company should post a message on social media about protecting members in public because it can prove that the company is protecting members when they are depressed. If the company understands what research suggests this has made fans become more satisfy which led to loyalty and support BNK48 for a long time in the future.

5.3 Limitation

This paper mainly aims to find out the effect of BNK48 fans during Covid-19 so qualitative method is suitable due to the target group is a fan. However, due to this research project have limitation of time the researcher is to be able to interview just 21 fans and didn't have a chance to interview staff in independent Artist Management company to get a perspective from them to be able to company both company and fans perspective. Also, the research has asked a permission to 26 fans for this interview but only 21 are respond and allow the researcher to interview. Also, there are not many onsite events that occur in during this time so the researcher could not be able to observation more to compare about the safety regulation of each event and how they manage and make fans satisfy.

5.4 Future Research

The research about this topic in the future can be interview more people who are the fans of BNK48 and interview staff of the company to get different perspective and be able to understand more problem and be able to compare of both perspectives. Also, if some onsite event comeback the researcher will visit many events as much as possible to be able to observe in term of safety regulation of each event and how they manage and make fans satisfy. The researcher will ask some of the question to the fans in these events for more information as well.

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