

**FANBASE ACCOUNTS AND CUSTOMER ADVOCACY
TOWARD ALBUMS CONSUMPTION IN THAILAND**



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Aunyaphat

Miss Aunyaphat Lerdsittiwong
Candidate

Winai W

Assoc. Prof. Winai Wongsurawat,
Ph.D.
Advisor

Nathasit Gerdsri

Assoc. Prof. Nathasit Gerdsri,
Ph.D.
Chairperson

Vichita Ractham

Assoc. Prof. Vichita Ractham,
Ph.D.
Dean
College of Management
Mahidol University

P. S.M.

Pabhawan Suttiprasit,
Ph.D.
Committee member

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Aunyaphat Lerdsittiwong

FANBASE ACCOUNTS AND CUSTOMER ADVOCACY TOWARD ALBUMS CONSUMPTION IN THAILAND

AUNYAPHAT LERDSITTIWONG 6349169

M.M. (MARKETING AND MANAGEMENT)

THEMATIC PAPER ADVISORY COMMITTEE: ASSOC. PROF. WINAI WONGSURAWAT, Ph.D., ASSOC. PROF. NATHASIT GERDSRI, Ph.D., PABHAWAN SUTTIPRASIT, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

K-pop, also known as the “Korean wave”, has recently become extremely famous and has dominated several countries, especially the easily accessible entertainment industry. Thailand is also one of the countries that is heavily immersed in K-pop music and is growing enormous K-pop fandoms days by days. They are widely recognized as the most royal fans in terms of purchasing goods to show their support to their beloved K-pop idols. Thus, K-pop Fanpage accounts are formed to assist K-pop fans in accessing related news or information that are able to connect them with the K-pop groups. This paper particularly focus on BTS, the hottest K-pop boy band, fanbase accounts in Thailand and will study the customer advocacy through these K-pop fanbases to explore how customer advocacy has an influence toward albums consumption in Thai K-pop fans. The findings reveals that there are idol attachment and motivation elements that contribute in influencing customer’s purchase intention.

KEY WORDS: Customer Advocacy / Idol Attachment / Purchase Intention, Motivation

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this current era, it's hard to deny the popularity of K-pop that has been spread across the globe. After the end of the 1990s, a result of the Korean government's effort to sell their culture was ready to harvest. Millions of people are fond of and influenced by their culture. The term "Hallyu" or "Korean wave" is formed to describe the phenomenon of Korean popular culture (MartinRoll, 2021) and it is a tool of soft power that was intended to improve their economy (The Economist, 2010). The Hallyu has not only dispatched Korean cultural products but also promoted Korean society over the world (C. N. Kim, 2012). Therefore, Hallyu consists of many genres of media including Korean entertainment, music, TV shows, dramas, and movies that consistently involve promoting pop culture. It indeed influences people to overwhelming consume Korean products such as cosmetics, electronic products, fashion, and food which are presented by favorite actors/singers or used in drama scenes. As a result of the successful Korean wave of exporting its culture, it has dramatically affected an increase in Korea's GDP which contributes to 0.2% of their total GDP in 2004, or approximately \$1.87 billion. Hence, the effect of Hallyu in 2019 had an estimated \$12.3 billion to escalate The Korean economy (Guo et al., 2022).

South Korean pop music is playing an important role under the umbrella terms of "Korean wave" and becoming a mainstream genre in the music industry, earning an all-time high sales revenue of over 6.8 trillion Korean won in 2019 and generating about \$10 billion for the country each year (Statista Research Department, 2022 & GUO et al., 2022). According to Kim (2018) and Ardhiyansyah et al (2021), K-pop generally refers to a popular music genre initiated in South Korea and produced in a variety of styles such as pop, dance, electropop, hip hop, R&B, and electric. Fhur (2015, p.82) also added that K-pop music does not only represent a song but rather a genre to fulfill both the eyes and ears, like a musical production. Moreover, K-Pop is a kind of dance-pop genre that is characterized as pop music with charming faces and

dancing talent, and combined Korean lyrics and western in certain parts of songs (Nastiti, 2010). K-pop hit songs are likely to contain “upbeat tunes, family-friendly lyrics, and fiendishly catchy hooks” (“What is K-pop...,” 2016). K-pop songs are normally tied up with high-budget music videos in which completely groomed girl or boy bands perform flawlessly and with synchronized choreography (Kim et al., 2018). As a result, these elements have a significant effect to make the music popular among international fans and receive a positive reaction over the world. Throughout these years, the K-pop industry has produced several remarkable groups that gradually increase the reputation of Korean pop music such as TVXQ, Super Junior, Big Bang, Girl’s generation, PSY, Rain, and more. Speaking of the K-pop industry, the term “fandom” is tightly attached to the K-pop culture originating in Korea since the beginning of the K-pop establishment; furthermore, the fandom is basically a pack of fan clubs who have the same interest in a particular K-pop group and they are willing to support the group activities including; music streaming on various platforms, buying physical and digital albums, voting for awards, attending concerts, buying public advertisements, and purchasing all types of group-related goods from official such as cheering sticks, clothes, key chains, photo cards, and other miscellaneous goods. These fan clubs are the key forces behind K-pop groups' deliberate continued presence in the music industry.

To emphasize how K-pop conquers the world, there is no better example than a K-pop group called ‘BTS’, which is currently the biggest boyband group making a huge financial impact on their homeland. BTS alone generated an estimated amount of 4 trillion Korean won or equal to \$3.54 billion as economic value to Korea per year and \$1.26 billion as added value per year in 2018. Thus, BTS’s contribution to South Korea’s GDP is nearly equivalent to Korean Air in the same year (Shadow, 2022; Buchholz & Richter, 2019), They are the representative of K-pop music for this generation which has written a new historical achievement for South Korea and became the first in many meaningful ways. They are the first Korean artist who receive the most wins of 12 awards at the Billboard Music Awards in 2022 and performed at the 64th Annual GRAMMY Award in the same year. They also won ‘Artist of The Year’; the most honorable award at the American Music Awards last year. Plus, BTS is the first Korean artist who gave a speech at the UN in 2018 promoting the ‘Love Yourself’

campaign. In May 2022, they are the first Korean group to visit the White House and meet with President Joe Biden to address the anti-Asian hate crimes and disinformations. According to the official company website (BigHit Entertainment, 2022), BTS is an acronym for Bangtan Sonyeondan in Korean or “Beyond The Scene” in English which consists of 7 males members, Kim Num Joon (Stage name: RM), Kim Seok Jin (Stage name: Jin), Min Yoongi (Stage name: Suga), Jung Ho Seok (Stage name: J-hope), Park Jimin, Kim Taehyung (Stage name: V), and Jeon Jungkook. BTS has perceived themselves as “21st century Pop Icons” presenting their authentic image and self-produced music, excellent performance, and the way they communicate with fans. The group was formed under the Big Hit Entertainment company and debuted in June 2013, with the debut album “2 COOL 4 SKOOL”. BTS has released a total of 35 albums starting from their debut year until 2022 and the sales keep rising whenever a new album is released. In March 2022, BTS has a total sales of 33,990,968 physical album copies counted by Circle Chart, a Korean national chart provided by the Korean Music Content Association (Circle Chart, 2022;). Furthermore, BTS has obtained an enormous fandom around the world or also known as “ARMY” which is abbreviated from Adorable Representative M.C for Youth and was first created on 13 July 2013 after BTS debuted. They are an important part of creating history together with BTS as they paved the way for BTS to get to this stage of fame by streaming their music, increasing engagement on social media, translating news or content into many foreign languages, and purchasing BTS’s merchandise. As a result of having enormous fans, they gathered and formed fanbase accounts to translate and report every related information about BTS on social media to publicize news for fans and non-fans. The more fans BTS got the more fanbases rooted in many countries communicating in their language including, translating various content for better understanding within the fan community.

Thailand is one of the many countries that are intensely immersed in Korean pop culture. Especially K-pop music that gains massive recognition among teenagers and early-aged adults who grew up listening to K-pop music since the early stage of K-pop settlement in Thailand. Several K-pop groups consistently visited Thailand from time to time in order to expand their fanbase internationally and further support activities, so the K-pop music trend has developed a deep connection with the Thai people over these years. Due to its strong influence, it’s easy to notice many banners or

billboard advertisements of K-pop idols around famous locations or media in Thailand for example, Blackpink promotes soft drinks (Pepsi), and BTS promotes home products (Coway) on the Skytrain. There are even bars that only play K-pop music. As a matter of fact, it indicates a large number of K-pop fans in Thailand who are willing to spend an intense consumption of K-pop idol products. To express their love and support, K-pop fans in Thailand are using social media to connect fans together by sharing their's idol schedule and translating news into Thai languages among others. In addition, there are several fanbase accounts in Thailand that act as a representative for BTS as well. They are willing to sacrifice their time and knowledge to update all BTS activities to their followers for free.

The primary objective of this paper is to explore the potential of the BTS fanbase accounts as customer advocacy toward purchasing intention of BTS fans in Thailand. As a long K-pop fan, the existence of the fanbase account is necessary for timely and reliable news updates regarding the activities of the idols within the K-pop community. Thus, this paper will study BTS fanbase accounts' motivation behind their contribution in doing free labor within the community for their beloved idols. The expected benefits of this paper can be further studied for marketers to understand how to maximize customer purchase intention by applying customer advocacy to create faithful consumers towards a product. Furthermore, they can develop a greater understanding of how fanbase accounts have an influence on the fan clubs in consuming the goods of K-pop groups.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 K-pop fandom

Fandom is a term used to describe a group or subculture that is captivated by specific objects or persons in any form of human interests or activities with distinctive characteristics, including the use of experiential products (Lu Wang, 2017). The term “fandom” in Korea has existed since the beginning of the establishment of the entertainment industries, including the movie and music industries which are known as strong cultural phenomena in K-pop music. According to Jung and Lee (2009), they stated that the Korean fandom culture began in the mid-1990s when young idols formed by major entertainment companies started to appear on media channels, and fandom has been actively pleased by teenage girls or and women in their twenties. Fandom can be considered a type of social phenomenon and cultural practice in the field of cultural studies. Besides, Yoshida et al. (2015) supported that fandom refers to the intrinsic connection that only the fan community members who share the same common sense of interests can comprehend. As the number of K-pop fans keeps rising due to massive popularity, it is normal among K-pop fans to interact with other fans through social media, share information, report daily activities, purchase products related to their idol, and exchange opinions about their favorite idol groups within the community (Lee, 2019).

2.2 The evolution of K-pop fandom

The emergence of the digital media platforms allows K-pop fans to extensively use photos and videos of their preferred idols in order to gain accession to consuming more video clips and pictures, as well as, interact with their idol through online platforms (Atiqah Abd Rahim, 2019). Leung (2012) and Duffett (2013) agreed that K-pop fans are the most enthusiastic and loyal fans who are willing to purchase any

product associated with their adorable idols. Atiqah Abd Rahim (2019) further stated that the K-pop fandom is intend to devote a huge amount of money to spending on albums, concert tickets, and goods to support the idols. The author also provided the reason behind the heavy spending on each album released in the K-pop community. The answer is that these fans want to keep their idol to be at the top of the music shows and weekly charts such as M Countdown (Mnet channel), Inkigayo (SBS channel), and Music Bank (KBS channel). Furthermore, K-pop fandom highlighted the significance of social media for socializing and sharing content about the idols that some of them devoted their time to translating videos, interviews, news, variety shows, or wherever platform channels their idols were mentioned into several languages depending on their native language. Then, they uploaded the content on social platforms which help enhance a sense of commonality among diverse fans (Atiqah Abd Rahim, 2019 & William, 2016). In Atiqah Abd Rahim's study, Twitter and Facebook are the most used social medium by the K-pop fandom that involve high engagement within the community.

2.3 Idol attachment

The theory of attachment was studied by a psychoanalyst named John Bowlby in the 1960s. He defined attachment as a bond of emotion between an individual and a particular object or person. It is a natural connection in the human system which forces an individual to seek connectivity with others under threat and to be able to form intimacy, persistence, and affection bond. He further added that this bond could be developed from the early beginning of childhood (Hanifah, 2019). In terms of marketing, it is stated that consumers are able to create a connection and affectionate feeling in various kinds of things such as brands which later become a brand attachment. Huang et al (2017) and Thomson et al (2005) have mentioned that "brand attachment is involved with strong emotions like passion (e.g., feeling delighted, passionate, and captivated), connection (e.g. feeling bonded, connected, and attached), and affection (e.g. feeling loved, friendly, affectionate, and peaceful)." Apart from personal experience toward the brand, brand attachment grows and develops over time (Thomson et al., 2005).

In this literature, attachment refers to K-pop fans toward their idols that they form close and deep emotional connections and feelings belonging to the idol (Su et al., 2011). It can be concluded that idol attachment occurs when fans build a solid bond with the idol. This bond will influence the action and attitude of fans to participate or support in any activities related to their idols.

2.4 Customer advocacy

According to Bendapudi and Berry (1997), customer advocacy is identified as a behavior to promote or defend a company, product, or brand by a customer to another. The term advocacy is the act of endorsing or recommending a particular cause to the public which is done intentionally. Besides, customer advocacy is the ultimate goal of a customer relationship that a business can have with them (Cross and Smith, 1995). Advocacy can be seen as an outcome of a strong relationship between customers and a particular brand that a customer is willing to spread positive word-of-mouth about the brand (Gremler, 1995; Anderson, 1998). Hill et al (2006) further supported that customer advocacy serves to promote a product or service by giving positive references to other customers. In general, most customers tend to listen to the advocate and get influenced due to their honest opinions.

For this paper, customer advocacy indicates fanbase accounts that constantly publicize positive information about BTS with photos or videos in order to effectively lessen the negative opinions and convey a more positive image throughout the community and outside the community. Therefore, fanbase accounts are often seen as overly protective fans that are more than willing to defend any false information or fake news causing a bad reputation for BTS. Moreover, they even use their platform to promote new BTS activities within the fandom so that BTS is able to gain more support from the fans.

2.5 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention can be described as the emotional intensity, desire, or planned act of an individual to putting an effort to purchase something, and it is most

likely to lead to an actual purchase in action in a short amount of time. Plus, purchase intention can be used to evaluate the actual behavior of consumers (Ajzen, 2020; Angkouw & Rumokoy, 2016). Moreover, Rezvani et al. (2012) pointed out that purchase intention also describes the emotions or perceived probability of purchasing the advertised goods and represents the degree of commitment to the products. Intentions, in this context, act as motivation referring to a powerful stimulation that motivates action in order to enhance positive feelings towards a particular product. Most of the time, consumers first have a certain level of interest before deciding to make a purchase. Thus, interest becomes one of the elements that influenced buying decisions (Amari & Prihandono 2019; Fatmala, 2019). Furthermore, Alalwan et al. (2017) added that purchase intention has the potential to increase the likelihood of customers purchasing products or services.

According to Belk (2015), purchase intention has been classified into 3 types: unplanned purchase, half-planned purchase, and planned purchase.

1. Unplanned purchase intention can be considered as consumer decisions to purchase a specific product or brand at the actual place.
2. Half-planned purchase intention is dependent upon a particular brand, a situation in which consumers know what products they want to purchase but are undecided about which brand to buy.
3. Planned intention occurs when consumers assure about which and what brand they want to buy.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

The main objective of this thematic paper is to discover the influence of the BTS fanbase accounts in Thailand on album consumption toward BTS's fan club and the purpose of devoting time and knowledge to BTS. As a result, the qualitative interviews will be conducted to gain in-depth information and insight perspectives from the targeted interviewees. The questions were based on open-ended questions which allow interviewees to answer their honest opinions with their own choice of words. Plus, they are able to elaborate or reveal deep answers to the question where some unexpected answers can be further discovered. Apart from qualitative research, secondary sources are also included in this paper.

3.2 Data collection

In total, there are 6 respondents who are willing to participate in a one-on-one interview. The main target of the interviewees must own a fandom account for BTS on the Twitter platform which, in fact, turned out to be a very less number of fanbase accounts than I expected. Since Twitter is the only platform that many fanbases choose to open accounts to socialize with fans, some of them only allow fans to reply under their tweets and don't leave any contact information. Furthermore, some of them are already closed their account or are currently under a rest status meaning they are no longer active online at the moment. Therefore, All respondents who agreed on participating in this interview allowed others to contact them via their personal direct message or attached email on the profile account. All respondents were contacted via direct message on Twitter and the official email that was described on their profile accounts. To collect the data, the interview was mostly conducted through an online chatting application due to their preference, yet only two fanbase accounts agreed to

have a verbal interview via Google meet. In addition, the interview period took approximately one week to gather all the information from them. The respondent's brief introduction is listed in the section below.

Selected fanbase accounts

Sample 1: Bae (Female)

Fanbase Account Name: Baantantawan

Number of Followers: 93.7K

Interview Date: June 14, 2022

Duration: 30 minutes

Interview Channel: Google Meet

Personal Information: Bae is 23 years old female, currently graduated from university. She is the only admin of the "Baantantawan" account, BTS's fanbase account for updating music charts, voting, inviting fans to stream music on various platforms, and translating news/interviews. She followed BTS since 2015 due to their songs and stage performances. She usually spends around 16 hours per day updating the fanbase account. She has been running the account for more than 1 year by herself after the prior admin resigned. She was a former fan of Girl's generation and EXO before becoming a BTS fan.

Sample 2: Noon (Female)

Fanbase Account Name: MafiaSuga:D

Number of Followers: 58.1K

Interview Date: June 14, 2022

Duration: June 14-19, 2022

Interview Channel: Line application

Personal Information: Noon is 29 years old, running her own business. She was first introduced to BTS in 2016 after 3 years of BTS's debut, and BTS is her first K-pop idol group that she supports till the present. The account updates daily BTS activities and related news in the Thai language, and motivates fans to stream BTS songs. Moreover, she also publishes positive stories about BTS such as member donations. She often takes 2-4 hours daily in translating and updating BTS's related news and interviews.

Sample 3: Ms. F (Female)

Fanbase Account Name: FOR JUNGKOOK

Number of Followers: 9,620

Interview Date: June 15, 2022

Duration: June 15-16, 2022

Interview Channel: Direct Message

Personal Information: Ms. F is unable to provide her personal identity through this interview due to confidential information. She became a fan in 2014 due to their music and the attractive image of BTS members. The account was formed in 2021 for a specific member named Jungkook. The purpose of this fanbase account is mostly related to promoting vote schedules and translating interviews or messages from the idol's official social media. She is the only admin for this account and the account is currently under a rest mode. However, she used to spend 2-3 hours with the account updating those activities.

Sample 4: Ms. B (Female)

Fanbase Account Name: BANGTANWorld

Number of Followers: 26.7K

Interview Date: June 19, 2022

Duration: answer received approximately 3 hours

Interview Channel: Email

Personal Information: Ms. B is 27 years old female who formed a fanbase account in 2014 with a few friends who also share common affection toward BTS. This fanbase account is purposely to share photos and news about BTS since there were not many BTS fanbase accounts at that time. The account mostly updates and translates every BTS's released content from members' official personal platforms and the official BTS account. She gave a reason for running this account that she wanted to express BTS's authenticity among Thai fans in order to expand the number of fans since BTS came from a small company with a low promoting budget.

Sample 5: Aor (Female)

Fanbase Account Name: SPRINGDAY

Number of Followers: 11.8K

Interview Date: June 19, 2022

Duration: June 19-20, 2022

Interview Channel: Direct Message

Personal Information: Aor is 26 years old female, working as an accountant. Before becoming a BTS fan, she was a regular listener of K-pop songs with no particular favorite group since 14 years old. She likes BTS's strong choreography and aggressive Hip-Hop songs. She opened her fan account in 2020 to translate interviews, video content, company policy, and successful news about BTS for fans. Plus, she promotes the correct method of voting and streaming songs for new fans. She also provides music video interpretation by applying Carl Jung's theory for a deeper understanding of BTS songs. She frequently donates almost half of the day translating and updating activities of BTS.

Sample 6: Nichaya (Female)

Fanbase Account Name: CANDYCLOVER

Number of Followers: 375.9K

Interview Date: June 20, 2022

Duration: 40 minutes

Interview Channel: Google Meet

Personal Information: Nichaya is a 31 years old female, working in a graphic company and a freelance. She and her friends created the fanbase account in 2013 the day after visiting the first BTS free concert in Thailand. They will celebrate their 10th anniversary in July. This fanbase account is considered one of the hub fanbases in Thailand. The purpose is to pass on BTS messages in the Thai language and update all-around news about BTS such as articles, interviews, and video content from official channels.

Table 3.1 Interview Questions

Topic	Question
Interview's background	1. Is BTS your first favorite K-pop group? 2. When was your first introduced to BTS? 3. What is the first moment you start becoming a BTS fan and why? 4. How is BTS different from other groups or what is their specialty/uniqueness?
	1. What makes you decide to create a fanbase account for BTS and when do you start? 2. How do you start this fanbase account? 3. Do you work alone or have a partner to run this account? 4. What is your purpose in opening this account for Thai fan clubs? 5. What kind of things do you do for this account? 6. What is your motivation for doing this work and why do you do this work for free? 7. How much time do you spend providing such free service? 8. What do you get in return? 9. Do you find it's worth continuing to do this work and why is that? 10. What do you expect from your followers? 11. Do you think your fanbase account takes part in building a positive image for BTS and why? 12. Have you ever used your account to promote your followers to purchase a BTS album? 13. In your opinion, how do you think your account impact Thai fans in purchasing a BTS album?

The methods that were used to conduct the interview are verbal and written interviews via online channels such as Google Meet, Line chat, Email, and Direct Message on Twitter. Due to the inconvenient schedule, 4 out of 6 agreed to participate in the interview only through chat application and the rest were comfortable having an actual verbal interview through Google Meet. There are different advantages and disadvantages aspects of verbal and writing interviews.

The advantages of a verbal interview:

- Able to control the time of the interview as promised to the interviewees.
- Able to acknowledge the tone of voice while interviewing.
- Able to ask more questions that aren't listed on the question list.

The disadvantages of a verbal interview:

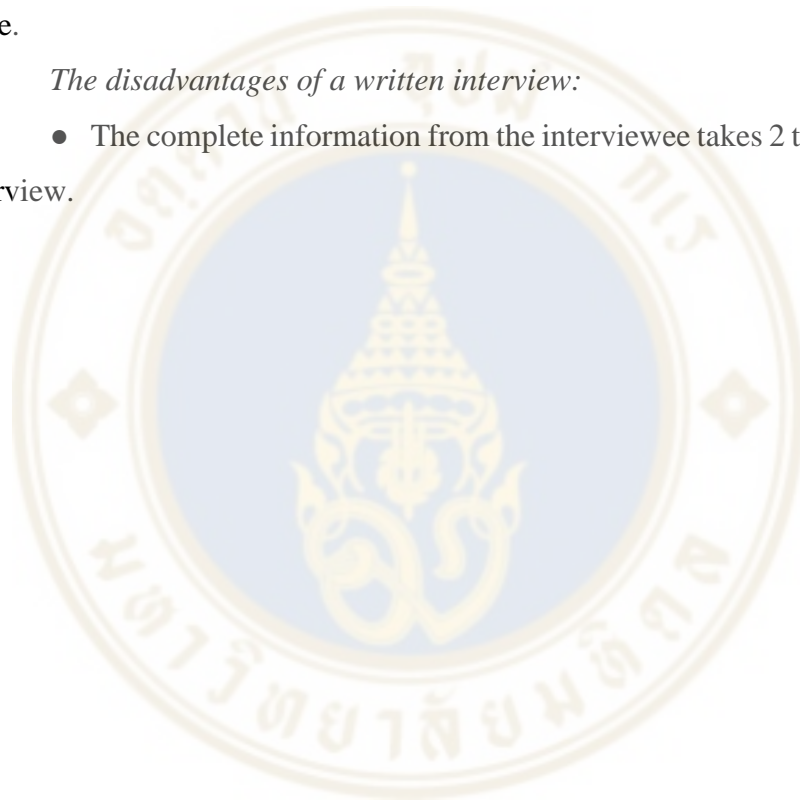
- The interviewee may be unable to process the question thoroughly before giving an answer.
- Difficult to find the available schedule for the interviewees.

The advantages of a written interview:

- The interviewees are more responsive.
- The interviewees are able to process the questions deeply.
- The interviewees can provide long answers to each question with evidence.

The disadvantages of a written interview:

- The complete information from the interviewee takes 2 to 4 days to finish the interview.



CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS ANALYSIS

After conducting interviews and reviewing secondary sources, there are several fascinating points to discuss further to discover the significant values that K-pop fanbases hold towards their idols. The fanbase accounts seem to share their common interests from several perspectives.

4.1 Being different is the only way to survive

Due to the huge phenomenon of K-pop music, the number of debuted K-pop groups has been dramatically increasing each year which leads to intense competition among idol groups to outstanding in this industry. It can take a couple of years or more to build a fandom and gain recognition from the public by attending several music shows or variety shows with hit songs. However, there is a shortcut to being a successful group in a short period if a certain group was formed by the “Big 3” company, the most powerful company in the Korean music industry, which includes YG Entertainment, JYP Entertainment, and SM Entertainment. Those companies have been successfully debuting many iconic idol groups over the years with the most profit-making in the industry such as Big Bang, Rain, 2PM, Wondergirls, BoA, Girl’s generation, TVXQ, and more. Millions of fans have been loyal to the groups and are willing to support a new debut group from those companies as they think this is a kind of sibling idol group from the same companies. Besides debuting from labeled companies, the possibility of receiving attention from the public media is also high that the media will write news prior to their debut date, gaining acknowledgment from fans. Indeed, they tend to earn more air time on the shows, and several offers to appear on famous variety shows accordingly. On the other hand, those idol groups who are from small companies with less bargaining power, are likely to encounter low support from fans at the beginning of their debut career. Fewer air-time broadcasting due to the low

media engagement is considered normal in the industry. In the worse scenario, the idol group may get disbanded in a flash without the public noticing. To prevent this case from happening, many small to medium agencies often come up with the various unique concept of idols starting from group debut concepts (e.g. superpower concept, AI concept, constellations concept), group name (e.g. TXT as Tomorrow X Together, BTS as Bangtan Sonyoendan, B2ST as Beast, H1-Key as High Key), fashion concepts (e.g. hip-hop, school uniform, military with unique hairstyle), a number of members (e.g. 13 members or 12 members in 1 group), till the greeting slogan of a group (e.g. Twice: “1 in a million! Hello, we are Twice”, VIXX: “Hello, we are Real V! V-I-X-X, VIXX”, and BTS: “2,3, Bangtan! Hello we are Bangtan Boys!”)

According to Kotler & Keller (2015), they identified that “Branding is endowing products and services with the power of a brand” that helps the specific products or service to distinguish themselves from major competitors as soon as a product or service is created and introduced to the market. Thus, the complete set of brand elements consisting of brand name, packaging, logo, jingle, product description, slogan, character, etc. makes up the brand identity (Keller 2013, 147). It can be interpreted that the more brand elements are persistent, the more brand identity is cohesive. On the contrary, a brand may indicate a cognitive representation in the minds of consumers. Consumers form an idea, image, or emotion toward a certain brand through their consuming journey. In addition, branding refers to the possibility that consumers can remember or recognize a brand or simply know about the brand (Keller 2013). Inevitably, a brand can influence customers’ psychological and cognitive thinking in such a way that it influences their decisions before having any intention of making a purchase by building significant brand awareness.

As per the interview statement, many fanbase accounts such as CandyClover, Springday, and MafiaSuga:D have a common agreement on BTS branding strategy that they portray the greatest example to differentiate themselves from other k-pop groups with the storytelling concept, music genre, and message convey when they first debuted. From 2013-2015s, Korean music reached its peak in the industry with pop music genres such as Gangnam Style, an electronic dance-pop song that became a mega-hit song across the world. It was a golden time that made several K-pop groups also release more popish songs into the market. Therefore, there is a limited chance of other

genres outshining. Having said that, BTS debuted the concept of hip hop at the same time as pop song takeover. Springday gave her opinion toward the majority of idol groups “Personally, most of the K-pop groups that debut around that time chose to a debut song with a cheerful, love related, or love confession songs to appease teenagers. Candylover further added that most Korean or English songs are likely to convey love, but BTS will send a message through songs regarding politics, mental health, or life experience in hip-hop style. Unlike the other groups, BTS drew praise for their albums’ concepts, not just the group’s concept as a debut, the group has enchanted fans with storytelling which creates a differentiated identity. Springday, who has been analyzing BTS’s concept since their debut date, mentioned that the difference between BTS and other K-pop groups is the sequence of releasing music. Their schedules have been linked from their debut song till the present. Starting from a school-themed trilogy, then a youth-themed trilogy, and the "Love Yourself" series. The songs and music videos involve several references to psychological concepts and literature. Therefore, MafiaSuga:D added that Bangtan's specialty is the conceptual dimensions they convey in the song. Bangtan's lyrics are like a memoir of an ordinary person's journey. It's real, unpretentious, and doesn't care about idols' images. Some songs are confessions and reflect the imperfections of a human being which is like a mirror that reflects the imperfections of the listener that exists in the depths. “This is part of BTS, a group of 7 young teenagers who have made a song to talk about and reflect on the social issues they encounter. From the examples I gave, it's how we see BTS as different from other artists. They talk about social issues that they are sometimes perceived as aggressive idols” - Springday.

4.2 Idol attachment becomes free labor translators in the K-pop community

Based on the interview, every single fanbase account has a similar story of how they started to become a fan of BTS. For Baantantawan, she first noticed BTS because she appreciated the music, later she started to watch all variety shows where BTS appeared and read related interviews. She later got interested in the “authentic” members’ personalities and the chemistry between the members. Similar to the

BANGTANWorld fanbase, her statement mentioned sincerity and a natural character of BTS toward fans from the beginning of their debut, including various content that has been released consistently. She wrote, “there is always new content I need to follow. I hardly have time to follow other brands.” Candyclover also mentioned that BTS’s strength is their honesty to themselves and their fans and that they always express their true self through music. She talked about the first moment she was introduced to BTS when they visited Thailand to perform their first showcase in 2013 and she began to follow BTS since then. Moreover, she said, “The more I watched BTS on music shows or variety shows, the more I fell in love with them.” Besides, MafiaSuga:D, who has been fangirling for 7 years, pointed out an interesting answer about how she ended up liking BTS “I actually can’t remember the exact moment that made me become a fan because it happened naturally and unconscious from searching, reading the information, and watching miscellaneous BTS clips.” Apparently, it is inevitable to reject the fact that the more consumption of a specific K-pop group, the stronger level of affection contributes to the group over time as the least years of being a fan of these fanbase accounts are 7 years.

Consequently, the strong bond between idols and fans will influence the action and attitude of fans in participating in or supporting any activities related to their idols. An individual’s attachment can be described as a strong, profound emotion that is relatively long-lasting. It results from the interaction and memory of persons and objects, conveys a strong link between the two, and initiates individuals to act in accordance with that relationship (Giles and Maltby, 2004). Thus, Bowlby (2008) provided more support about attachment that consumers tend to be more willing to spend extra money to purchase a product or invest in the person they are emotionally attached to. Due to the overwhelming attachment, half of the fanbase accounts have spent more than half a day dedicating their time to updating daily activity and translating content such as news, articles, interviews, and official messages for free. For Baantantawan, she chooses to standby on Twitter in case she can update any news or music charts in real-time in the Thai language. For the Springday account, she spent 10 hours per day reading news or article in English relating to BTS and translating them into Thai as she kept checking new updates on Twitter during working hours. Moreover, candyclover choose to wake up early than her working time to check on Twitter if there

is any news or content released so that she can translate them before starting her work. She said, “I usually post my translation before I start my work or during work time if my work is light, so I probably spend more time on my fanbase account than working hours every day.” Therefore, each fanbase has a shared objective in devoting themselves for being free labor for the fandom. BANGTANWorld’s objective is to pass on the information and true identity of BTS to outsiders to acknowledge and appreciate more since they were not a group from a big label with little fame at that time. Similar to Candylover’s answer that she wants to share the correct message of BTS to Thai fans in order to understand them better. For Springday’s statement, she said “I want to translate and spread the news to everyone to see about BTS abilities. I want to support some ARMYs who don't have time to follow the news, so I’ve summarized it for them to make it easier to read. I personally like to do the research to let Thai ARMYs know about the artist's all-around information and not just success facts, but it could be personal information or information related to BTS such as information about the company’s policy. I want to let Thai ARMYs know a variety of information.” On the other hand, MafiaSuga:D account has given the most fascinating answer to her dedication in translation that when she started to follow BTS, in fact, she mostly focused on searching for more information, reading news, and enjoying watching clips. But after she had been doing that for a while, she started to feel she wanted to translate the good stories of her bias and BTS including news and statistics. She gave the reason that BTS has already built the history page since they visited Billboard in America in 2017 and a lot of news came out mentioning BTS. Also, that was the point that prompted her to translate more about BTS as it was exciting and fun to read the news at the same time. Besides her thread about her favorite member, she also translated more good stories for the benefit of the next generation of ARMYs. As she continued to do it, it became her habit and she felt that she had the benefit of doing something for them. She basically likes to translate and talk about BTS with her followers. For the effort that they dedicated to BTS, they couldn’t ask for more than an appreciation or a compliment for their hard work in translation and news updating.

4.3 Motivation to win + hierarchy in K-pop

K-pop fans these days have various ways to express their love and support for their favorite idol groups such as voting on award shows or music shows, streaming music videos, purchasing digital and physical albums, putting hashtags on social media, and collecting money among fan clubs to donate under the name of the idol group or to buy expensive presents for them. This not only positively affects the reputation of a particular group, but every fan's effort represents the count and number of awards that the group will receive. In another word, it can be interpreted that the more successful the group received, the higher status of the fandom and idol group will rise alongside. This is how the hierarchy in the K-pop community is created and it is also the reason why many K-pop fandoms have dedicated themselves to carrying the effort to break the record in the music charts for their supported group. The larger fandom is perceived to gain a huge power to stay at the top of the hierarchy as they can pull other fans in the same fandom to support the group in order to conquer those charts or award votes. Therefore, the music shows and music award ceremonies own different criteria to receive the awards. Below is the table of different music programs showing the criteria for winning the award.

Table 4.1 Score Criteria Summary (<https://kjh-windpark.com/kjh-music-show-score/>)

Program	Digital Stream	Spotify & Apple Music	Physical Album	MV Views	Broadcast	Viewer Choice	Pre Vote	Live Vote
The Show	40%	-	10%	20%	15%	-	5%	10%
Show Champion	35%	-	15%	10%	20%	-	20%	-
M! Countdown	36%	9%	14%	9%	9%	-	14%	9%
Music Bank	65%	-	5%	-	20%	10%	-	-
Show! Music Core	50%	-	10%	10%	5%	10%	5%	10%
Inkigayo	48%	-	9%	26%	9%	-	4%	4%

For the fandom that put their soul and effort into supporting their idols through heavily purchasing albums, continuously streaming to raise the view counts, and successfully reaching the goals, they are considered the highest status in the hierarchy of the fandom. Thus, this is the obvious method for the fandom to express their dedication toward their idols and it is also a method of distinguishing a certain fandom from others. Besides, it shows the high loyalty and support in the fandom hierarchy.

As a result, the eagerness of wanting their idol to be at the top of the music industry can be identified as motivation. Lei (2011) mentioned that motivation, in another word, can extend to influences that highlight actions that exhibit willingness and desire. Motivation is intimately correlated with a combination of attitudes, opinions, principles, goals, and behaviors. Cherry (2020) also added a supporting statement that motivation is the mechanism that forms, drives, and maintains a goal-oriented attitude, and it is also the factor that influences people's decisions to take particular actions. This consequence also happens to fandom participation in order to win many awards as possible, climbing to the top of the hierarchy. Therefore, it directly impacts the positive feelings within the fan community that motivates them to continue streaming or purchasing any goods related to a specific group that they support. In actual fact, the K-pop fandoms are perceived as the most loyal and supportive fans in many aspects that are willing to give endless support for their beloved idol groups to be successful in the intense industry.

Although, winning awards for the favorite idols in domestic fandom alone is tough work if that idol group is not a group that normal Korean people heard of or already has a lot of loyal fans. Therefore, the fanbase accounts in various countries, including Thailand, have encouraged their native fans to help drive the score by voting, purchasing albums, and streaming a music video in order to win. Additionally, it relates to what CandyClover said in the conversation that she wanted to be the first fanbase account that translate BTS's message to the Thai language and support the album sales. She also actively promotes BTS's activities during their comeback such as sharing the official link, translating lyrics, and retweeting from fanbases that specialize in music streaming, so that her followers can see and participate in increasing the stream numbers. Baantantawan stated her strong attitude towards supporting BTS "I believe

that people can create work or continue to do it. It needs to be supported by other people as well, to get compliments, or even to get good feedback. Thus, what I do here can help BTS's work can get better feedback, and it's something that I can pay back for their creations." She further stated that her account supports BTS in a way by updating the music charts, promoting the vote schedules, and streaming hashtags on special occasions. For the Springday account, she mentioned that her account support BTS in many ways such as transmitting the voting data for different awards with accurate voting and music information to the ARMYs who don't yet understand the correct information, buying streaming accounts to give away to ARMYs within a budget, making theories based on BTS' MV by providing in-depth information that BTS is trying to convey through links from Carl Jung's Map of the Soul theory and other stories for ARMYs understanding, creating educational graphics about streaming or other things to know about the voting process and stream in visual form to attract ARMYs which able to easily published in other platforms, and sharing a link to news about BTS's works and each member for easy viewing and accessibility of other ARMYs. Lastly, 'For Jungkook' is the fanbase account that clearly stated her motivation for winning because, for every vote, there will be a reward for the winning artist such as billboards, articles, etc. It is her motivation that wants Jungkook, a member of BTS, to be the winner of every vote. In addition, her account provides additional information on voting, and music streaming is encouraged. She believes that all benefits affect Jungkook and BTS both directly and indirectly ways. It is a reason to voluntarily do this part without the need for money to be involved in it.

4.4 Customer advocacy is a winner

After a long period of building a strong bond between fans and the idol group. The fans will naturally develop an emotional attachment towards their idol that eventually the fanbase accounts are established in terms of spreading the news or reporting the idol's activities. Many fanbase accounts in Thailand are considered their position as a representative to pass on messages and news to Thai fan clubs for shortening the language barrier. Moreover, they purposely support the artists with all means to drive sales in any aspect. They also have an expectation toward their followers

in terms of supporting the idol group within the community as they believe that their idols should receive something in return for their hard work. According to MafiaSuga:D, she expect that the fans will continue to support BTS and take part in the voting and give lots of love to the group. Plus, she want to motivate their followers to stream music, buy albums, enjoy content consumption so that the artist's engagement will increase online, promote artists on the agenda, and drive the fandom in Thailand to be powerful in all dimensions to be the influence for the artists to continue working. Apart from hyping the fandom to support the K-pop group, these fanbase accounts take an important part in building a positive image among fans and non-fans. From the viewpoint of MafiaSuga:D, translating news, articles, or stories from Korean into Thai language helps Thai fans to get closer to the artist's identity and understand the artist's thoughts. Besides the songs, the direct communication from the artist had a huge impact on the feelings of the fans because fans will be able to connect perceptions that come in many dimensions, such as songs, interviews, and many activities. As a consequence, this leads to the awareness that what purpose of the artist and what kind of message they want to send to the fans. CandyClover also shares the same opinion that fanbase accounts play a part in positively changing people's perspectives as they help convey accurate information, good deeds, and the right things about their idols that some fans feel closer to their favorite idols. More importantly, these fanbases are well aware of false information that may affect the image of the idol, therefore, they pay attention to the source of the news before translating it into Thai language as many people can interpret different directions and may end up widespread misunderstanding to public. For Springday, she will wait for the official website or some places from reliable news sites such as <http://n.news.naver.com>. As a matter of fact, these fanbases demonstrate the trust that their followers have in the accuracy of the translation works in order to receive BTS new updates, as shown in the examples below.

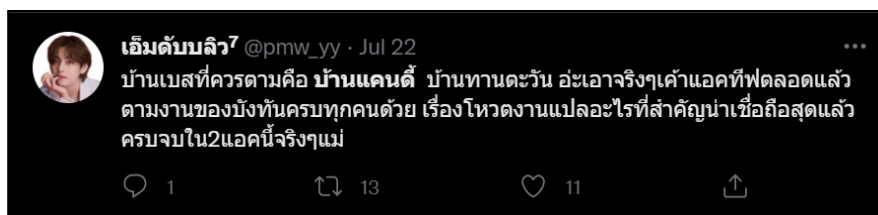


Figure 4.1 The tweet from @pmw_yy mentions Cancyclover and Baantantan for reliable and active translation to follow BTS news

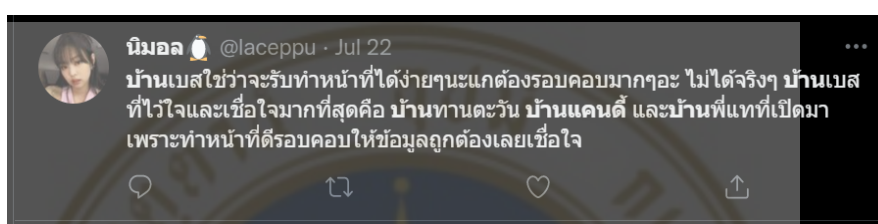


Figure 4.2 The tweet from @laceppu mentions Candylover and Baantantawan for reliable and trusted information

As previously stated, fanbase accounts refer to a factor called advocacy that positively influences the purchase decision of other fans in the community. 4 out of 6 interviewers have used their accounts to persuade their followers to purchase BTS albums for supporting them. MafiaSuga:D said, “ I always support and promote my followers to keep up to date with the latest movements and projects such as music streaming, comeback promotion, album purchase, pushing digital scores, concert news, Even the products that BTS is the presenter. I do everything.” Candylover and Baantantawan, both stated that they believe if the fanbase accounts speak about purchasing the albums, it can motivate fans to support more. Especially candylover, she used to organize a group order under her account and cooperate with a Korean fanbase account to purchase the albums, and stream packages as the fans had to build a high number of albums due to a small number of BTS fans at that time. Similar to figure 3, Springday stated that “The thread included the motivational reasons why we need to buy the album Anthology, a concept that captures BTS' past, present, and future moments.” She persuades fans to buy the album in a form of an invitation thread to see what they will receive and how much it is worth to stimulate the needs of ARMYs.

Consequently, the fan responses display that fanbase advocacy has an influence on purchase intention to buy BTS albums as listed below.



Figure 4.3 The thread of explanation to purchase an album made by @Springday_9597

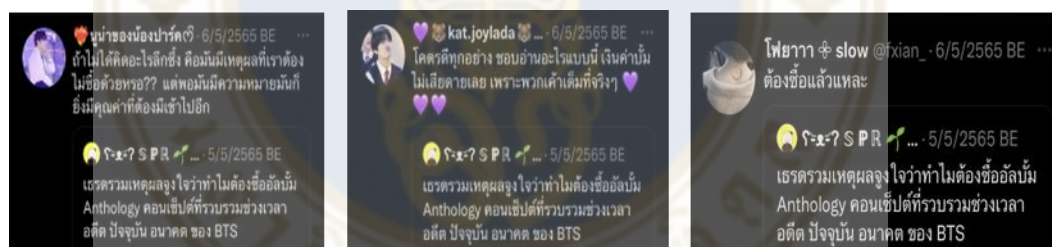


Figure 4.4 BTS fans quoted @Springday_9597's explanation thread mentioning they want to buy a BTS album due to its valuable, quality, and need

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

According to the literature review and the interviewees' analysis, several factors have influenced customers' desire to consume BTS albums. The findings further emphasize customer advocacy that links purchase intention in establishing a solid connection between fanbase accounts and BTS fans.

To conclude, Idol attachment is the first fundamental factor that directly affects the dedication of the BTS fanbase accounts in actively spreading information to the Thai fan community on the online social platforms for free in order to express their fondness for BTS. The attachment factor basically consumes time to connect with fans and BTS, until the fans are emotionally attached to BTS and willing to spend countless times supporting them. Furthermore, the storytelling of BTS is another adding advantage that catches the attention of K-pop fans to find more about them and gradually develops deeper affection in fans. The longer the attachment, the greater urge to contribute support to the favorite idol for the fandom. Additionally, the motivation to win is also a crucial factor that drives BTS fans to purchase a great amount of BTS albums in order to display the power of their fandom to other K-pop fandoms. Due to fandom culture, these fanbase accounts are motivated to push their favorite idol to be the winner in the music industry as they think it's an appropriate way to repay BTS's hardship in creating their work and prove the status of the fandom at the same time. It further results in developing the level of affection to the point that a fan decided to form a fanbase account in supporting BTS activities within the Thai k-pop fan community for accurate news of BTS. Their affection is represented through various kinds of activities such as fast translation when BTS releases new songs, free streaming account giveaways, and giving guidance to fans on how to properly stream music. Due to their quick updates and translation effort, these fanbase accounts grew rapidly over time and gain massive followers that they become the main source for BTS fans in Thailand. As

a result, customer advocacy develops among fans, which is a significant factor in increasing the number of faithful fans spending money to purchase BTS albums. As Candyclover stated that she used her fanbase account which has many followers to gather a massive order of BTS albums in order to support BTS financially and statistically. Furthermore, customer advocacy has a huge impact on altering the image of BTS in a positive way within the aspect of BTS fandom and other fandoms. These fanbase accounts are an obvious example that represents customer advocacy best since they are willing to spread good news using their platform as a tool to immerse in the good side of BTS and they will also prevent any false information that can cause confusion or negative images to their idols. Thus, the fanbase account as customer advocacy is a strong factor that drives fans to participate in supporting BTS directly.

5.2 Limitations

The purpose of this paper is to analyze customer advocacy and related factors that affect customer purchase intention toward BTS album consumption within the K-pop community in Thailand. However, this paper only studied from the perspective of fanbase accounts which may not fully convey the potential of fanbase accounts as customer advocacy. Therefore, if this paper were in a form of a thesis level, it would include the perspective of experts in marketing within the entertainment industry for in-depth information to strengthen the analysis of this study. Moreover, the opinion of BTS fans should be included in order to support the objective of how BTS fanbase accounts influence fans in buying decisions. As a result, this paper would contain an all-around aspect in illustrating the effectiveness of customer advocacy and it would be beneficial for persons who study marketing or persons who want to apply this factor in other studies for further exploration.

5.3 Recommendation

Generally speaking, the terms attachment and customer advocacy can be used to influence customers' purchase intention, and they are linked to not only the K-pop fandom but also other related industries. According to the result, these factors are

very useful to create loyal solid customers for a product or a person. Marketers can consider as a great opportunity to expand the market. For instance, this model can apply to the Thai entertainment industry in terms of creating a fandom for T-pop idols, singers, and celebrities. The industry can come up with a branding strategy to differentiate and draw the attention of the public by releasing content constantly via social media to create attachments for fans to grow emotional bonding. Plus, the content should launch as many as possible to not let the fans have free time. At this point in time, the fans will start to establish advocacy for the idol group, therefore, customer advocacy can be an excellent approach to interact with other fans and promote the brand with less to no cost.



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