

GOING BEYOND GEO-CULTURAL PROXIMITIES: DISCOVERY OF CULTURE PATTERNS AND MALAYSIAN BTS FANDOM

Yuslinda Mat Yassin¹, Baby Anusha Nur Mohamed Thaheer², Abdul Aziz Azizam³, Melina Mahpuz⁴

Abstract: The recent global success of K-pop can be attributed to innovative communication strategies, characterized as fan-based, new media-driven, transnational flow approaches reaching out to fans. This study analyzes textual communication and interactions within the online communication of BTS' fans through Malaysia's ARMY official Twitter account @BTSMY_ARMY. It also aims to discover fandom activities emerging from this online communication. Through virtual ethnography and quantitative content analysis of 401 tweets, this research identified five distinct cultural patterns that unite Malaysian BTS fans: 1) Fan Account and Fandom Culture, 2) Streaming Parties and Charting Activities, 3) Creation of Fanart and Graphic Edits, 4) Bilingual Communication and 5) Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives. It can be concluded that these culture patterns are used as a basis for online interaction, engagement, and knowledge sharing among Malaysian BTS fandom, despite linguistic and cultural differences, transcending geographical divides and going beyond geo-cultural proximities.

Keywords: cultural pattern, geo-cultural, fandom, virtual ethnography, Twitter, @BTSMY_ARMY

INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communications technology has had a significant impact on the interconnection of cultures around the world. The effects of globalization have successfully

¹ First Author: Yuslinda Mat Yassin, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: yuslinda908@uitm.edu.my

² Second Author: Baby Anusha Nur Mohamed Thaheer, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: babyanusha@uitm.edu.my

³ Third Author: Abdul Aziz Azizam, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: abdulazizazizam@uitm.edu.my

⁴ Fourth and Corresponding Author: Melina Mahpuz, Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 40450 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia. Email: melina@uitm.edu.my

altered knowledge, values, and ways of thinking. Twitter (now known as X) is renowned for being a rapidly expanding network that connects users from all over the world. The sharing of various media content might happen faster and within seconds with the aid of the internet. As a result, this has a variety of repercussions on individuals and enables them to create multiple online personas. Geographical issues are no longer a barrier to the popular culture that is currently in circulation and being purposefully disseminated to the public. The spread and consumption of popular culture are accelerated by advancements in communication and information technologies. The eccentricity of local popular culture can now be known by the global community and incorporated into global cultural goods thanks to the widespread dissemination of popular culture throughout the world.⁵

Then there's "Hallyu". The term "Hallyu" or Korean Wave refers to Korean popular culture products such as drama, music, and movies, as well as food, cosmetics, and animations.⁶ Adding on to this list is the now infamous South Korean pop music genre, better known as K-pop, which has successfully found its way transnationally and captured the hearts of global fans. This phenomenon created a K-Pop fandom that has expanded quickly on a global scale and continues to receive spotlight from different corners of the world, showing no signs of slowing down.⁷ Cross-border fandom activities on social media emerged showing support from fans through record purchase, online discussions (including those of their personal lives), attending live music concerts and supporting mutual social causes in the name of the idols.⁸

In order to create virtual proximate cultural settings, the engaged global audiences are now flexibly reconstructing the cultural relevance and proximity in the digitized symbolic forms of expressions.⁹¹⁰¹¹¹² Audiences are interacting with Korean popular culture through a variety of

⁵ Utami, Lusita Savitri S., and Septia Winduwati. 2020. "Fandom and Voluntary 'ARMY': Case Study on BTS Fans in Indonesia." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 478, no. - (.): 667-673. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/ticash-20/125948180>

⁶ Ganghariya, Garima, and Rubal Kanozia. 2020. "Proliferation of Hallyu Wave And Korean Popular Culture Across The World: A Systematic Literature Review From 2000-2019." *Journal of Content, Community & Communication* 11, no. 6 (June): 177-207. 10.31620/JCCC.06.20/14

⁷ Razi, Siti Aishah, Sharifah Sofiah Syed Zainudin, and Mastura Mahamed. 2021. "Cultural Understanding Through BTS Non-musical Programs." ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355410951_Cultural_Understanding_Through_BTS_Non-musical_Programs_Proceeding_of_the_7th_Malaysia_International_Conference_on_Foreign_Languages_MICFL2021_Faculty_of_Modern_Languages_and_Communication_Universiti_

⁸ Lista, Ayu Saraswati, and . Nurbaity. 2020. "BTS ARMY's #BTSLOVEYOURSELF: A Worldwide K-Pop Fandom Participatory Culture on Twitter." *KnE Social Sciences* 4, no. 14 (November): 423-432. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i14.7899>

⁹ Dal, Yong Jin. 2023. "Transnational Proximity of the Korean Wave in the Global Cultural Sphere." *International Journal of Communication* 17, no. . (.): 9-28. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/18469/3982>

¹⁰ Ganghariya, Garima, and Rubal Kanozia. 2020. "Proliferation of Hallyu Wave And Korean Popular Culture Across The World: A Systematic Literature Review From 2000-2019." *Journal of Content, Community & Communication* 11, no. 6 (June): 177-207. 10.31620/JCCC.06.20/14

¹¹ <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X19882530> Shao, Lingwei. 2020. "The returning of Hallyu in China: transnational reception of the Korean drama My Love from the Star." *Media International Australia: Special Issue: Australia in the field of Trans-Asian Media Flows* 175, no. 1 (May): 79-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X19882530>

¹² Lu, Jia, Xinchuan Lu, and Yaoyao Chang. 2019. "Cultural Proximity and Genre Proximity: How Do Chinese Viewers Enjoy American and Korean TV Dramas?" *Sage Open* 9, no. 1 (January): 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018825027>

channels, most notably over-the-top (OTT) platforms, as the world moves toward a trans-media landscape.¹³

BTS also known as “Bangtan Sonyeondan” is a South Korean boy band that debuted in 2013 under Big Hit Entertainment (now known as HYBE Corporation). The group consists of seven members: RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook. They gained international recognition for their music, energetic performances, and socially conscious themes.

BTS has had a tremendous influence on the Malaysian entertainment landscape. Fans, dubbed "ARMY," have adopted BTS with devotedness, making their concerts in the country highly anticipated. ARMY (Adorable Representative MC for Youth), are dedicated, strategic and collaborative in supporting their idols on social media and elevating the band's visibility by casting millions of online votes in music charts and awards. The power of digital fandom is a driving force behind the success and attractiveness of BTS.¹⁴

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Several globalization scholars point out that globalization can lead to the threat of cultural hegemony. It came to the attention of globalization theorists that the threat of cultural hegemony due to globalization will open the entrance of various ideologies, lifestyles, and foreign cultures, especially through media channels, which have come to the attention of the theorists of globalization.¹⁵

According to the 2022 Analysis of Global Hallyu Status report, the numbers of both Hallyu communities and community members worldwide increased in 2022 achieving a numerical growth of about 15% each.¹⁶ The report added that the number of fan communities specifically for K-pop increased from 966 in 2021 to 1136 in 2026, which was not only absolute in size but also a greater percentage of the entire Hallyu fan base. Fan clubs are formed around individual celebrities or groups, rather than the genre itself, and they tend to feel a bond through direct communication with celebrities.¹⁷

Specifically, in regards to BTS's influence, it was and still is said to be highly attributed to its catchy songs, savvy use of social media platforms and a dedicated fan base across the globe.¹⁸

¹³ Dal, Yong Jin. 2023. “Transnational Proximity of the Korean Wave in the Global Cultural Sphere.” *International Journal of Communication* 17, no. . (:): 9-28. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/18469/3982>

¹⁴ Herman, Tamar. 2022. “10 Years On, Twitter Is Shaping The Spread Of K-Pop.” *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarherman/2020/09/21/10-years-on-twitter-is-shaping-the-spread-of-k-pop/?sh=2e292e2899a7>

¹⁵ Kusuma, Ade, Putri Purbanita Adiasri, Vina Nahdiyah, and Ucik Uswatun khasanah. 2020. “A Virtual Ethnography Study: Fandom and Social Impact in the Digital Era.” *ETNOSIA : Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia* 5, no. 2 (October): 238-251. <https://doi.org/10.31947/etnosia.v5i2.10898>

¹⁶ Korean Foundation. 2023. “2022 Analysis of Global Hallyu Status.” . https://issuu.com/the_korea_foundation/docs/2022_analysis_of_global_hallyu_status/s/21163619

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Razi, Siti Aishah, Sharifah Sofiah Syed Zainudin, and Mastura Mahamed. 2021. “Cultural Understanding Through BTS Non-musical Programs.” *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355410951_Cultural_Understanding_Through_BTS_Non-

BTS is known globally, not only through their music, but also the optimistic messages delivered through their songs, mostly surrounding ideas about positive mental health¹⁹, love stories, school systems, society etc.²⁰

The band's impact goes beyond music, as they have inspired numerous Malaysian youths to explore their creativity, pursue their dreams, and engage in various forms of artistic expression, all of which are inspired by not only the band members' but through their songs. BTS's messages of self-acceptance, mental health awareness, and social responsibility have resonated with many in Malaysia, leading to discussions and initiatives that address these important issues. The Times Magazine in an article in 2018, quoted one of the band members as saying that they began telling people stories of real life experiences that the fans wanted to hear and were ready to hear as well as stories that other people could not or would not tell.²¹ The band conveyed these messages through their music videos, packed with metaphors and cultural references, spoke through their social media updates and embedded these feelings in the lyrics of their music, which fans translate and analyze on message boards, group chats and podcasts.²² Problems arise when fans begin to contend with one another, attempting to use their knowledge to legitimize their existence and present an authentic image.²³

K-pop fans set themselves apart from other online fandoms on Twitter as they use different names and terms that are limited to their knowledge only.^{24,25} With advances in several technologies, it becomes harder to differentiate their offline identity from their online identity. As a result, it is possible to influence how K-pop fans interact with one another in fandom activities around the world. This is complicated further by the fact that Twitter (now known as X) only allows 280 characters in a single post, which limits the way messages are communicated.²⁶

This study examines the ways Malaysian BTS fans become, and feel about being (geographically and culturally distant from K-pop's place of origin) and how the fans unite and

musical_Programs_Proceeding_of_the_7th_Malaysia_International_Conference_on_Foreign_Languages_MICFL20
21_Faculty_of_Modern_Languages_and_Communication_Universiti_.

¹⁹ Rachmawati, Iin. 2022. "The Magic Role of Kim Nam Joon as a Leader of BTS in Conquering the American Market." *Rubikon: Journal of Transnational American Studies* 9, no. 2 (October): 230-243.
<https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v9i2.75588>

²⁰ Jin, Ha Lee, and Tu Nguyen Anh. 2020. "How Music Fans Shape Commercial Music Services: A Case Study of BTS and ARMY." *Proceedings of the International Society for Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR)* 21, no. . (october): 837 -845. <https://archives.ismir.net/ismir2020/paper/000147.pdf>

²¹ Bruner, Raisa. 2019. "How BTS Is Taking Over the World." Time Magazine. <https://time.com/collection/next-generation-leaders/5414052/bts-next-generation-leaders/>.

²² Ibid

²³ Abd-Rahim, Atiqah. 2019. "Online Fandom: Social Identity and Social Hierarchy of Hallyu Fans." *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. <https://doi.org/10.15273/jue.v9i1.8885>

²⁴ Ezani, Nasuha. 2019. "Identity Construction of Kpop Fandom on Twitter." IUM. <https://www.iium.edu.my/media/62028/IDENTITY%20CONSTRUCTION%20OF%20KPOP%20FANDOM%20ON%20TWITTER%20-%20NASUHA%20BINTI%20EZANI%20-%202020.pdf>

²⁵ Vos, Lola, and Greta Gerwig. 2018. "The K-Pop fandom on Twitter | Diggitt Magazine." | Diggitt Magazine. <https://www.diggittmagazine.com/articles/k-pop-fandom-twitter>.

²⁶ Ezani, Nasuha. 2019. "Identity Construction of Kpop Fandom on Twitter." IUM. <https://www.iium.edu.my/media/62028/IDENTITY%20CONSTRUCTION%20OF%20KPOP%20FANDOM%20ON%20TWITTER%20-%20NASUHA%20BINTI%20EZANI%20-%202020.pdf>

navigate their messages and information regarding BTS online via Twitter. This study intends to analyze textual communication and interactions within the online communication of BTS' fans through Malaysia's ARMY official Twitter account @BTSMY_ARMY. It also aims to discover fandom activities emerging from these online communications and ultimately categorize these fandom activities into cultural patterns used to unite Malaysian BTS fans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

K-pop involves evident linguistic, geographic, and cultural barriers when it inflows into Western contexts, and has increasingly been recognized beyond Asia, especially since the 2010s.²⁷

Media fandom is a phenomenon that encourages individuals to collectively and socially unite within a subculture based on shared interests or appreciation of a media world or product.²⁸ With time, members of fan communities develop a sense of social identity, and this has been supported across many contexts, such as sports, music, literature, TV and video games. Fandom has an important home in entertainment scholarship because entertainment often serves as the source of the cultural and ritualistic practices of fans, and the formation of such subcultures has implications for shaping social identities, a sense of community, social prestige, and self-esteem.²⁹

Typical activities embraced by these fans, known as "Trekkies," encompass attending academic fan conventions, visiting locations featured in books and movies, establishing online fan communities, engaging in interactive games, and hosting festive gatherings leading up to the release of a new book or film.

Digital fandom is traditionally connected to the concept of "participatory culture"³⁰ and framed as a novelty developed thanks to the so-called "Internet turn".³¹ The increasing availability of K-pop on social media was a particularly significant factor allowing the fans to freely access K-pop. The K-pop fans in this study tended to be exposed to K-pop via their friends and/or social media. K-pop music videos, circulated and linked through social media, 'hooked' the fans. The emergence of new media has played a role in enabling the global circulation of media content, providing local audiences with opportunities to contemplate their own societal structures.³² The

²⁷ Yoon, Kyong. 2018. "Transnational fandom in the making: K-pop fans in Vancouver." *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 2 (October): 176-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518802964>

²⁸ Vogel, Mina T., and Meghan M. Sanders. 2015. "Fandom and the Search for Meaning: Examining Communal Involvement With Popular Media Beyond Pleasure." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 6, no. 1 (April): 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000085>

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge.

³¹ Benecchi, Eleonora, and Erika Wang. 2021. "Fandom: Historicized Fandom and the Conversation between East and West Perspectives." Edited by Gabriele Balbi, Nelson Ribeiro, Valérie Schafer, Christian Schwarzenegger, and De Gruyter Oldenbourg. In *Digital Roots: Historicizing Media and Communication Concepts of the Digital Age*, 281-298. Berlin, Boston: n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740202-016>

³² Yoon, Kyong. 2018. "Transnational fandom in the making: K-pop fans in Vancouver." *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 2 (October): 176-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518802964>.

involvement of fans with transnational media, however, may be influenced by structural factors, including how the distinctiveness of transnational texts is socially shaped.³³

WHAT IS FANDOM?

The definition of “fandom” and the term “fandom” has been a subject of historical disagreement among Western researchers with conflicting perspectives³⁴ and that the characterization of fandom varies based on the level of connection it shares with its cult object³⁵³⁶³⁷. Fandoms play a crucial role in creating a collective identity and consciousness among its members by fostering strong interpersonal links akin to familial ties.³⁸³⁹ It is also alternatively viewed as an interpretative and occasionally productive community by many other scholars.⁴⁰⁴¹⁴² Additionally, it is considered a cultural identity formed through a specific form of attachment to a media text. A fandom is a subculture rooted in collective identification among individuals who unite around their common interests in a media entity. In the realm of fan culture literature, the terms 'fan' and 'fandom' have exhibited inconsistency across studies, with frequent overlap in their meanings.⁴³⁴⁴ Making a deep emotional commitment to a fandom object does not necessarily integrate an individual into a broader fan community. Rather, fandom typically involves shared and collective fan activities, but at times, it may also pertain to the actions of an individual fan.⁴⁵

Pioneering a departure from the prevailing portrayal of fans as either isolated and fixated individuals or as part of an extensive cultural phenomenon, sociologist Joli Jensen was among the first scholars to recognize fandom as a respectable and observable social phenomenon, manifesting

³³ Ibid

³⁴ James, Paul, and John Tulloch. 2010. *Globalization and Culture*. Vol. 1. Melbourne, Melbourne: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446261842>

³⁵ Joli, Jensen. 1992. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Edited by Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge.

³⁶ Abercrombie, Nick, Nicholas Abercrombie, and Brian Longhurst. 1998. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: SAGE Publications.

³⁷ Guern, Phillipe L. 2002. “Les cultes médiatiques: Culture fan et oeuvres cultes.” Presses Universitaires de Rennes. <https://books.openedition.org/pur/24174?lang=en>.

³⁸ Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press.

³⁹ Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge.

⁴⁰ Baym, Nancy K. 2000. *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, Fandom, and Online Community*. United States of America: SAGE Publications.

⁴¹ Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.

⁴² Booth, Paul. 2010. *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies*. New York: Peter Lang.

⁴³ Vogel, Mina T., and Meghan M. Sanders. 2015. “Fandom and the Search for Meaning: Examining Communal Involvement With Popular Media Beyond Pleasure.” *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 6, no. 1 (April): 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000085>

⁴⁴ Baoill, Andrew Ó. 2008. “Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture.” Edited by Michael D. Ayers. *Sage Journal* 10, no. 1 (February): 167-169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807085384>

⁴⁵ Abd-Rahim, Atiqah. 2019. “Online Fandom: Social Identity and Social Hierarchy of Hallyu Fans.” *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. <https://doi.org/10.15273/jue.v9i1.8885>

whenever someone displays a profound interest in something.⁴⁶⁴⁷ Moreover, according to the authors, early scholars in the field, including Fiske and Bacon-Smith, further endeavored to highlight the creative and productive dimensions of fandom. In doing so, they not only challenged the negative stereotypes associated with fandom but also drew connections between fan practices and the concept of "participatory culture," as introduced by Henry Jenkins to elucidate the culture and rationale of fan communities. Consequently, the notion of fan productivity emerged as a distinctive hallmark of fan practices.⁴⁸⁴⁹⁵⁰

From a single fan, fans can develop into a fan group or commonly refer to as fandom in the context of fans. Fandom appears as a reaction to the phenomenon of cultural consumption activities used as objects of pleasure.⁵¹ In line with this, a few other scholars mentioned that when an individual likes cultural products and finds similarities with others, fandom is formed.⁵²⁵³⁵⁴ In this fandom, they increasingly established themselves as fans. By identifying themselves as part of fandom, fans often get strength and encouragement from fandoms who share the same pleasures and face the same problems.⁵⁵ Fandom has become a culture of participation that transforms media consumption experiences into new text production, even new cultures and new communities.⁵⁶

Fandom emerges as a social phenomenon deeply intertwined with contemporary capitalist cultures, electronic media, mass culture, and public performances. Fandom constitutes a pervasive

⁴⁶ Benecchi, Eleonora, and Erika Wang. 2021. "Fandom: Historicized Fandom and the Conversation between East and West Perspectives." Edited by Gabriele Balbi, Nelson Ribeiro, Valérie Schafer, Christian Schwarzenegger, and De Gruyter Oldenbourg. In *Digital Roots: Historicizing Media and Communication Concepts of the Digital Age*, 281-298. Berlin, Boston: n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740202-016>

⁴⁷ Joli, Jensen. 1992. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Edited by Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge

⁴⁸ Fiske, John. 2010. *Understanding Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. Washington, Washington: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203837177>

⁴⁹ Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press

⁵⁰ Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge

⁵¹ Lista, Ayu Saraswati, and . Nurbaity. 2020. "BTS ARMY's #BTSLOVEYOURSELF: A Worldwide K-Pop Fandom Participatory Culture on Twitter." *KnE Social Sciences* 4, no. 14 (November): 423-432. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i14.7899>

⁵² Utami, Lusita Savitri S., and Septia Winduwati. 2020. "Fandom and Voluntary 'ARMY': Case Study on BTS Fans in Indonesia." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 478, no. - (.): 667-673. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/ticash-20/125948180>

⁵³ Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge

⁵⁴ Abd-Rahim, Atiqah. 2019. "Online Fandom: Social Identity and Social Hierarchy of Hallyu Fans." *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. <https://doi.org/10.15273/jue.v9i1.8885>

⁵⁵ Utami, Lusita Savitri S., and Septia Winduwati. 2020. "Fandom and Voluntary 'ARMY': Case Study on BTS Fans in Indonesia." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 478, no. - (.): 667-673. <https://www.atlantis-press.com/proceedings/ticash-20/125948180>

⁵⁶ Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge

element within the popular culture of industrial nations.⁵⁷⁵⁸ Some scholars even view the phenomenon of fandom as connected to the "sacralization element of our culture" and the formation of a communal identity.⁵⁹⁶⁰

An integral characteristic of fandom lies in its ability to transform individual reactions into interpersonal engagement and shift from a spectatorial culture to a participatory one; becoming a "fan" of a specific program transcends mere frequent viewing; instead, it involves integrating that viewing experience into cultural activities, discussing the program's content with peers, and joining a "community" of like-minded fans who share similar interests.⁶¹⁶²⁶³ Consequently, the emergence of new pop culture genres offers expanded opportunities for the formation of fandom.

Characterizing the expansion of the K-pop fandom proves challenging, as it does not follow a uniform trajectory.⁶⁴ The fan bases of K-pop are dispersed across various geo-cultural regions, interconnected yet distinct. The manner in which fans engage with K-pop exhibits diversity, influenced by region-specific limitations that impede transnational media flows and the resources accessible to fans for the consumption and incorporation of K-pop. Four important elements entailed in fan engagement. In their theory of "sense of community," fans must (a) perceive themselves as members of the group (feeling a sense of belonging, identification, and personal investment), (b) feel that they have influence in their group and vice versa in order to establish group cohesion, (c) feel rewarded for their participation in the community, and (d) have shared emotional connection, history, and participation. Fan participation is associated with a variety of affective, cognitive, and behavioral audience responses.⁶⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁷ Bangun, Cendera R. 2019. "Participatory Culture: A Study on Bangtan Boys Fandom Indonesia." *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (October): 219-228

⁵⁸ Duffett, Mark. 2015. *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic

⁵⁹ Bangun, Cendera R. 2019. "Participatory Culture: A Study on Bangtan Boys Fandom Indonesia." *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (October): 219-228

⁶⁰ Jindra, Michael. 1994. "Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon." *Association for the Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 1 (Spring): 27-51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3712174>

⁶¹ Vogel, Mina T., and Meghan M. Sanders. 2015. "Fandom and the Search for Meaning: Examining Communal Involvement With Popular Media Beyond Pleasure." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 6, no. 1 (April): 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000085>.

⁶² Baoill, Andrew Ó. 2008. "Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture." Edited by Michael D. Ayers. *Sage Journal* 10, no. 1 (February): 167-169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807085384>.

⁶³ Jenkins, Henry. 2006. "Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide." Edited by Baoill O. Andrew. Sage Journals. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0894439307306088?journalCode=ssce>.

⁶⁴ Yoon, Kyong. 2018. "Transnational fandom in the making: K-pop fans in Vancouver." *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 2 (October): 176-192. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518802964>

⁶⁵ Vogel, Mina T., and Meghan M. Sanders. 2015. "Fandom and the Search for Meaning: Examining Communal Involvement With Popular Media Beyond Pleasure." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 6, no. 1 (April): 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000085>

⁶⁶ McMillan, David W., and David M. Chavis. 1986. "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory." *Journal of Community Psychology* 14, no. 1 (January): 6-23. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235356904_Sense_of_Community_A_Definition_and_Theory.

The majority of ARMYs perceived the fandom as a loosely structured community centered around key accounts. They conveyed a sense of shared trust and strong team cohesion, serving as a bridge between their overall psychological comfort and elevated effectiveness.⁶⁷

TWITTER AS CULTURAL INTERMEDIARIES

Twitter is a powerful tool that can be used to shape and distribute cultural content. The platform can be used to connect people with different cultural backgrounds and to promote new forms of cultural expression. Twitter can be considered a cultural intermediary source as it helps to shape and distribute cultural content. Twitter users can share news, articles, videos, and other forms of cultural content with their followers. This content can then be further shared and discussed by other users, which helps to create a dialogue around the content. The internet has developed into a social hierarchy where fans compete over fan knowledge, access to the object of fandom, and status while also sharing a common interest.

Particularly since it developed into a potent tool for the real-time exchange of information on actual events. K-pop global expansion has integrated production and promotion of stars through digital technologies and social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, as well as smartphones.⁶⁸⁶⁹⁷⁰ K-pop has established successfully within global context in connecting with audiences via social media and streaming services that are less controlled by gatekeepers. Twitter is a free social networking platform where users may publish brief updates called tweets. These tweets may include text, videos, images, or links. There are only 280 characters or less allowed in each tweet. Other than that, Twitter offers other features like retweets, likes, hashtags, and direct messages that help users find more news and material.

Twitter became a medium that digital fandoms mostly utilized.⁷¹ Twitter's use of hashtags and trending topics is an important feature that highlights the cohesiveness of online communities, aids in bringing attention to the issues they are pushing, and helps followers "spread their relations with their idols".⁷² Hence, these qualities make it easier to locate other fandoms that have similar

⁶⁷ Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." *CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21)*, -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>.

⁶⁸ Lee, Sangjoon, and Abé M. Nornes. 2015. *Hallyu 2.0: The Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media*. Edited by Sangjoon Lee and Abé M. Nornes. US: University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.7651262>.

⁶⁹ Jin, Dal. 2016. *New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of Social Media*. United States: University of Illinois Press. 10.5406/illinois/9780252039973.001.0001.

⁷⁰ Herman, Tamar. 2022. "10 Years On, Twitter Is Shaping The Spread Of K-Pop." *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarherman/2020/09/21/10-years-on-twitter-is-shaping-the-spread-of-k-pop/?sh=2e292e2899a7>.

⁷¹ Becker, Hila, Mor Naaman, and Luis Gravano. 2021. "Beyond Trending Topics: Real-World Event Identification on Twitter." *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*. <https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/14146>.

⁷² Jin, Dal Y. 2021. "The BTS sphere: Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth's transnational cyber-nationalism on social media." *Communication and the Public* 6, no. 1-4 (September): 33-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473211046733>.

interests and enable K-pop lovers to locate their community. The emergence of diverse popular culture in borderless online spaces has reconstructed online identities, and their online archives have been extended within communities that have shared interests.⁷³ Twitter revealed that k-pop was the most tweeted about music genre with more than 6.1 billion tweets in 2019.⁷⁴ As of May 2023, BTS was the most followed k-pop artist on Twitter with the amount of 48.4 million followers.⁷⁵

It is common among celebrities, regardless of being western or non-western, to use social media for connection and communication with the public. However, BTS and ARMY share a culture of learning, which makes their relationship different from other boy bands and their fandom. BTS reshaped the pop industry's understanding of social media including human connection and digital intimacy, as the ultimate digital celebrities.⁷⁶⁷⁷⁷⁸

Social media has played a major role in the formation and growth of ARMY. BTS and ARMY are very active on Twitter, and they use the platform to connect with each other, share fan art and videos, and discuss BTS's music and message. Specifically, for fans in Malaysia, the official Twitter fan page is @BTSMY_ARMY. This official page was first set up in March 2018 and to date has over 19,000 followers. ARMY from all over the world has also used Twitter to organize events and campaigns, such as the top three notable ones are #BTSLoveMyself, #LoveMyselfChallenge and #MatchAMillion campaign.

In 2020, ARMY in Malaysia raised over RM100,000 for UNICEF in support of BTS's Love Myself campaign. BTS won the UNICEF Inspire Award for this specific online campaign against youth violence.⁷⁹ In 2021, ARMY in Malaysia again trended in Twitter through the hashtag #BTSxBBMAs. The hashtag was used to show support for BTS as they were nominated for several awards at the Billboard Music Awards.

COMMON CULTURAL PATTERNS AMONG MALAYSIAN BTS FANS ON TWITTER

⁷³ Abd-Rahim, Atiqah. 2019. "Online Fandom: Social Identity and Social Hierarchy of Hallyu Fans." *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. <https://doi.org/10.15273/jue.v9i1.8885>

⁷⁴ Herman, Tamar. 2022. "10 Years On, Twitter Is Shaping The Spread Of K-Pop." *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarherman/2020/09/21/10-years-on-twitter-is-shaping-the-spread-of-k-pop/?sh=2e292e2899a7>.

⁷⁵ Statista. 2023. "Social media usage in South Korea." Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1300863/south-korea-most-followed-kpop-acts-on-twitter-by-followers/>.

⁷⁶ Chung, Ye R. 2022. "BTS & ARMY: A South Korean Music Group and their Fandom Create a New Grassroots Movement for Social Change." *ScholarWorks@GVSU*. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/1041>

⁷⁷ Bruner, Raisa. 2019. "How BTS Is Taking Over the World." *Time Magazine*. <https://time.com/collection/next-generation-leaders/5414052/bts-next-generation-leaders/>

⁷⁸ Kang, Haeryun. 2020. "Hitman' Bang Si-hyuk, The Brand-New Billionaire Behind BTS." *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/2020/11/18/935848354/hitman-bang-si-hyuk-the-brand-new-billionaire-behind-bts?fbclid=IwAR1XJomDHg04EoTs_uy_u5Kwb7zY1bNMogsQTM6MWs7pT8qcln1M

⁷⁹ Lim, Vivien. 2020. "BTS wins Unicef Inspire Award for its campaign against youth violence." *The Star*, June 23, 2020.

In Malaysia, it seems well established that the Korean or Hallyu wave has flourished in a lot of aspects of Malaysian lives, and this depicted the surging of Malaysian acceptance of Korean popular culture in society.⁸⁰

Fans are more than just consumers of popular music; being a fan has inspired them to take positive action for a good cause. Fans are not just media consumers who watch and listen to media; they are also motivated to participate in fan works such as fan literature, fan art, dance covers, song covers, and even fan-events. In other words, fans are also active creators and a part of participatory culture.⁸¹

FAN ACCOUNTS AND FANDOM CULTURE

Malaysian BTS fans on twitter often communicate in a mixture of English, Malay and occasionally Korean. This multilingual approach helps them connect with both local and international fans, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration with the fandom. Given that K-pop has been culturally and linguistically hybridized, and because there are many English words in the lyrics, K-pop enthusiasts, including BTS fans, do not care about linguistic hurdles. As previously mentioned, language has been one of the key components of the theory of cultural proximity; yet, the Korean Wave shows that linguistic barriers shouldn't be a significant barrier for many international audiences. The first song to reach No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 that was primarily sung in Korean was Life Goes On (Rowley 2020)⁸², which made history and amply demonstrated that language barriers were no longer an issue.

In online spaces, ARMYs participate in BTS related promotion through discussions on social media platforms. ARMY was officially recognized as BTS's official fandom in 2013 not long after the band's debut and ARMY is considered as the most influential fanbase globally, highlighting their unwavering dedication to engaging with every idol's platform to show support for BTS.⁸³ Additionally, many K-pop fans also donate to various social, environmental, and wildlife-protecting causes for their favorite artists' birthdays, accrediting these acts of benevolence to their favorites⁸⁴. These behaviors illustrate the social consciousness of K-pop fandom, showcasing their tangible efforts to alleviate injustices and alleviate suffering worldwide, including issues that directly impact their communities.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Mohd Jenol, Nur Ayuni, and Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil. 2020. "Escapism and motivation: Understanding K-pop fans' well-being and identity." *Geografia - Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 16, no. 4 (November): 336-347. <https://ejournal.ukm.my/gmjss/article/view/44476>

⁸¹ Ibid

⁸² Rowley, Glenn. 2020. "BTS React To 'Life Goes On' No 1 – Billboard." *Billboard*, December 1, 2020. <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/bts-react-life-goes-on-no-1-9491783/>.

⁸³ Saraswati, Listya A., and Nurbaity. 2020. "BTS ARMY's #BTSLOVEYOURSELF: A WorldwideK-Pop Fandom Participatory Culture on Twitter." Knowledge E. https://knepublishing.com/index.php/KnE-Social/article/view/7899/13680#content/contributor_reference_2

⁸⁴ Kim, Priscilla, and Dr. Ethan Hutt. 2021. "K-pop as a Social Movement: Case Study of BTS and Their Fandom ARMY." *Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 3 (November): 1-15. <https://www.jsr.org/hs/index.php/path/article/view/1772>.

⁸⁵ Ibid

STREAMING AND CHARTING

Understanding users' motivations, needs, and behavior related to music is fundamental in designing commercial music services that will be well-received by users, such as their information needs and searching behavior, perception of music genres and moods and social music behavior.⁸⁶ Moreover, K-pop fans singularly express joint organizational power when they systematically "stream" on online music services to break records and increase the standing of their favorites.⁸⁷⁸⁸⁸⁹

The 'BTS' (a K-pop boy group) can be one of the representative examples that reveals the success of K-pop in the global music market, especially in the US mainstream music industry. They ranked at #1 in the Billboard 200 Charts twice in 2018, and received the Top Social Artist Award at the Billboard Music Awards in both 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022, which recognizes the most influential artist in social media. According to Brandwatch.com, social data between January 2013 and December 31 2022, there were close to 2 billion mentions of BTS.⁹⁰ That's an average of 547,945 mentions daily; a lot of social conversation, and 36.96 million unique authors initiated conversations about BTS on Twitter.⁹¹

The supporting fandom activities are useful for holding up their favorite bands. However, excessive exclusivism toward other bands while obsessively idolizing a favorite band should be considered as a form of "fake love," and avoided at all costs. There exists cultural diversity, and people also have different tastes and opinions⁹². There is an ongoing discussion on how the BTS and ARMY movement is not only revolutionary to the traditional norms of achieving musical success, but it created something extraordinary: an alternative global culture and social movement redefining processes, networking, relationships, and systems, especially in academia and social innovation, hence it makes BTS become the biggest music group in the world solely based on social capital—their fans—, and not on financial capital or marketing methods.⁹³

⁸⁶ Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>

⁸⁷ Kim, Priscilla, and Dr. Ethan Hutt. 2021. "K-pop as a Social Movement: Case Study of BTS and Their Fandom ARMY." *Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 3 (November): 1-15. <https://www.jsr.org/hs/index.php/path/article/view/1772>.

⁸⁸ Jeong, Areum. 2017. "K-Pop: Stream Like You Breathe." *KOREA EXPOSÉ*. <https://www.koreaexpose.com/k-pop-stream-breathe/>.

⁸⁹ Hee, Yang S. 2019. "Researcher reveals BTS' global success is down to its ARMY." *Korea JoongAng Daily*. <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2019/08/01/people/Researcher-reveals-BTS-global-success-is-down-to-its-ARMY/3066245.html>.

⁹⁰ Newton, Ksenia. 2023. "10 Mind-Blowing BTS Facts and Statistics." Brandwatch. <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/bts-facts-and-statistics/>.

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Parc, Jimmyn, and Yeogeun Y. Kim. 2020. "Analyzing the Reasons for the Global Popularity of BTS: A New Approach from a Business Perspective." *Journal of International Business and Economy* 21, no. 1 (November): 15-36. DOI: 10.51240/jibe.2020.1.2.

⁹³ Chung, Ye R. 2022. "BTS & ARMY: A South Korean Music Group and their Fandom Create a New Grassroots Movement for Social Change." *ScholarWorks@GVSU*. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/1041>.

FANART AND EDITS

Fanart refers to artwork created by fans as a way to express their admiration, love, and support for a particular celebrity, band, movie, show, or any other fandom. In the context of BTS and ARMY, fanart would involve artistic creations like drawings, paintings, digital art, or even sculptures depicting the members of BTS. ARMY members often showcase their creativity by producing intricate and stunning fanart pieces that capture the essence of each BTS member's personality and style. Fanart serves as a way for fans to connect with their idols and fellow fans, and it's a form of visual expression that allows fans to display their artistic talents and devotion.

Due to the widespread availability of digital media and the blurring lines between cultural and political spheres, the concept of fan activism has undergone a significant transformation. Leveraging existing fan structures and practices—such as remixing online content and networking based on shared interests—alongside newer modes of communication like social media, spreadable videos, and memes, fan communities have purposefully and creatively mobilized around real-world civic and political issues. It's important to note that fans' engagement with commercial popular culture doesn't necessarily diminish the quality of their civic participation. Instead, they adeptly utilize metaphors derived from popular culture to address and engage with real-world societal concerns, showcasing a dynamic relationship between fandom and civic involvement.⁹⁴

Expression within participatory culture encompasses various forms through which individuals articulate themselves. Within the realm of available online media, individuals can foster new realms of creativity. Examples of these mediums include Skinning and Modding, Fan Videos, Fan Fiction, and Mash-ups. These expressions find their platforms across several online mediums such as Youtube, Wattpad, Blogspot, Twitter, and AO3, which is accessible through membership on the official BTS website. Vlive allows direct interaction with idols in real-time, offering a space for fans to engage and express themselves more intimately with their favorite artists.⁹⁵ Hence the edits of graphics involve manipulating and enhancing existing images or creating new visual content using graphic design software or apps. In the context of BTS and ARMY, graphics edits can take many forms, including edits of photos, collages, banners, wallpapers, GIFs, and more. ARMY members often create graphics edits using photos of BTS members, adding text, effects, filters, and other design elements to create visually appealing content. These edits are then shared on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr, allowing ARMY to display their creativity and share their love for BTS in a visually striking way.

⁹⁴ Ho-Chun, Herbert Chang, Becky Pham, and Emilio Ferrara. 2023. "Parasocial diffusion: K-pop fandoms help drive COVID-19 public health messaging on social media." *Online Social Networks and Media* 37-38 (September): 2- 12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.osnem.2023.100267>

⁹⁵ Bangun, Cendera R. 2019. "Participatory Culture: A Study on Bangtan Boys Fandom Indonesia." *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (October): 219-228.

FAN PROJECTS AND SUPPORTIVE INITIATIVES

Music fans strategically support their artists. Their collective efforts can extend to social causes as well.⁹⁶ Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives such as sharing positive messages, providing mental health support, and encouraging social activism. A fan project is an initiative undertaken by a fandom to promote its idols and streams with the aim of increasing the number of people who watch their idol's music videos (MVs). As a result, they encourage one another to stream because, often in a fandom, they have goals when their idol publishes the most recent MV. They also carry out digital activities to celebrate their birthdays, such as fundraising, called fan donations, which are intended for underprivileged or disaster-affected communities using social media. This creates a new culture in fandom through fandom activities that are carried out in a coordinated manner in a fan project, so that the fanbase account is significant in the world of fandom and aims to provide various information so that communication and interaction between fans are created in the fanbase account.

A fandom can be both a big consumer of and a cooperator with cultural industries. Usually, popular cultural industries are likely to see fandom as a target group for making profits. Recently, active fandom participation has suggested industries re-consider a fandom as a cooperator and manager beyond the consumer role. In the case of the K-pop global fans, they are expanding their participation from promoting their idols to managing a concert that the K-pop industry seldom offers due to low net profit.⁹⁷

As we have seen musicians like Lady Gaga support gay rights and U2 support anti-poverty initiatives, there have been many notable instances of fan action by music fans throughout the years. It is also common among K-pop (Korean popular music) fans, who long provoked criticism in Korean society due to their fanatical behaviors.⁹⁸

These initiatives, including fundraising and philanthropic work launched for civic engagement and used to promote the musicians they support, are now common in K-pop culture. While some people might dismiss fandoms' charitable efforts on the basis that they are just done "to promote their singer or that it's a shallow fad," fandoms like ARMY are proving that "self-initiated actions, lead to factual aid regardless of motive" and can grow. ARMYs have organized and engaged in more than 600 fan-driven campaigns, donating more than two million USD despite BTS never asking them directly to participate in any of these efforts.⁹⁹

TRENDING HASHTAGS AND FAN CAMPAIGNS

⁹⁶ Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>.

⁹⁷ Jang, Wonho, and Eun Song Jung. 2017. "The Influences of K-pop Fandom on Increasing Cultural Contact: With the Case of Philippine Kpop Convention, Inc." Barnett Center, Ohio State University. https://barnettcenter.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2019-08/the_influences_of_k-pop_fandom.pdf.

⁹⁸ Ju, Oak Kim. 2015. "Reshaped, Reconnected and Redefined: Media Portrayals of Korean Pop Idol Fandom in Korea." *The Journal of Fandom Studies* 3, no. 3 (March). https://doi.org/10.1386/jfs.3.1.79_1

⁹⁹ Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>.

Twitter especially became a predominantly used platform by digital fandoms, as it emerged as a powerful tool permitting real-time exchange of information on real-world happenings.¹⁰⁰ Use of hashtags and the act of trending are significant aspects of Twitter that showcase online groups' cohesion, helping to bring visibility to the topics they are promoting and "spread their relations with their idols".¹⁰¹ Previously, Guinness World Records revealed that BTS had earned a spot in their 2018 edition for "having the world's most Twitter engagements for a music group".¹⁰²

Another relevant case study is the #MatchAMillion initiative, which looks at how the ARMY uses fan culture and community cohesiveness to respond to social issues. The #MatchAMillion campaign, which is linked to the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrates how a community can organize without leadership. In June 2020, the media reported that BTS had donated US\$1 million to the cause¹⁰³, and ARMY used Twitter to match and surpass that donation within 48 hours.¹⁰⁴ This total donation was accumulated by sharing the hashtag #MatchAMillion and encouraging the community to match the band's donation. The hashtag had been used hundreds of thousands of times within 48 hours¹⁰⁵, demonstrating the size and scope of the engaged ARMY community.

BTS FAN MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Hallyu is no longer just for fans, so it is important to advance various strategies, such as transnational proximity, that can be applied to general audiences, or at the very least (fan-)audiences, in order to pinpoint the main factors that contribute to audiences around the world

¹⁰⁰ Becker, Hila, Mor Naaman, and Luis Gravano. 2021. "Beyond Trending Topics: Real-World Event Identification on Twitter." Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media.

<https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/14146>

¹⁰¹ Lee, Jin Ha, and Anh Thu Nguyen. 2020. How Music Fans Shape Commercial Music Services: A Case Study of BTS And Army. Montreal, Canada: 21 st International Society for Music Information Retrieval Conference, Montréal, Canada, 2020. <https://archives.ismir.net/ismir2020/paper/000147.pdf>.

¹⁰² Ramli, Bibi N. 2017. "K-Pop kings BTS earns a spot in Guinness World Records 2018 for most Twitter engagements." New Straits Times, November 20, 2017. <https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/groove/2017/11/305636/k-pop-kings-bts-earns-spot-guinness-world-records-2018-most-twitter>.

¹⁰³ Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>.

¹⁰⁴ Madden, Emma. 2020. "The BTS Army and the Transformative Power of Fandom As Activism." The Ringer. <https://www.theringer.com/music/2020/6/11/21287283/bts-army-black-lives-matter-fandom-activism>.

¹⁰⁵ Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21), -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>.

who have various linguistic and cultural backgrounds as well as different preferences in Korean popular culture.¹⁰⁶

Connecting to today, Big Hit Entertainment's CEO Mr. Bang Si-Hyuk spoke about how millions can access music at their fingertips which helped leverage a group like BTS. When being interviewed by an online news portal Billboard Pro, Bang said that the experience of global citizens watching the same performance at the same time has been transformed now to one where global citizens can communicate real time with anyone around the world, in their own palms, through various channels. The interview included the following statement by Bang Sing Yuk:

“We exchange the same contents, sensations and enthusiasm. Through that very same technology, BTS, which came from a small production company here in a country in eastern Asia, has resonated with the world. Global audiences have become fanatical about the music videos where Korean singers sing in Korean language and dance. Globally, the lyrics, dialogues and messages of BTS are translated and shared worldwide, which has made BTS into_The Beatles of the YouTube generation and a hero at the periphery. Conversely, the success of BTS has proved the existence and value of YouTube technology.¹⁰⁷

GEO-CULTURAL

Geo-cultural proximity is a concept that refers to the degree of similarity between two cultures, based on factors such as geography, history, language, religion, and values. When two cultures are geo-culturally proximate, they are more likely to share common values and beliefs, which can make it easier for people from those cultures to understand each other.

Geo-cultural proximity can play a role in the success of cultural products, such as music, movies, and television shows. For example, a Korean pop group like BTS may be more likely to be successful in countries that are geo-culturally proximate to South Korea, such as Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. This is because the cultures of these countries are more similar to Korean culture, which makes it easier for fans to relate to the music and the artists.

More intriguing and unique to the K-pop fandom are the inherent structural barriers to access K-pop primarily faced by international fans, i.e., not being fluent in the primary language (Korean) or being unable to attend events held in Korea because they live in another country. Interestingly, most of the fans involved in the significant political events of 2020 consist of international backgrounds, especially American fans. K-pop fans' devotion for their favorite groups transcends limits and arguably adds to their longing to reconcile that additional distance.

¹⁰⁶ Jin, Dal Y. 2021. “The BTS sphere: Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth's transnational cyber-nationalism on social media.” *Communication and the Public* 6, no. 1-4 (September): 33-47.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473211046733>.

¹⁰⁷ Benjamin, Jeff. 2019. “Big Hit Entertainment CEO Bang Si-Hyuk Explains What Makes BTS 'The Beatles of the YouTube Generation' at Korean Culture Summit.” *Billboard*, November 25, 2019.
<https://www.billboard.com/pro/bang-si-hyuk-bts-beatles-of-youtube-generation-asean-rok-culture-summit/>

Despite societal barriers, similarities connect fans across cultures in ways that overcome mass media culture, and audiences from different backgrounds often share common universal values that enable music to flow across cultural boundaries.¹⁰⁸¹⁰⁹ Such unique nuances and dimensions among the K-pop fandom contribute to their robust collective identity that helps them achieve specific goals that extend to political efforts and solidify Fiske's understanding of fandom as largely political and subversive by design, because it blurs national and cultural lines.¹¹⁰

Geo-cultural proximity can also play a role in the spread of ideas and information. For example, a news story about a political event in one country may be more likely to be shared and discussed in other countries that are geo-culturally proximate. This is because people from those countries are more likely to be interested in the event and to understand the context in which it occurred.

It is important to note that geo-cultural proximity is not always a perfect predictor of cultural similarity. There are many cases where countries that are not geo-culturally proximate are still quite similar for example Canada and Australia that are far apart but have similar parliamentary systems of government, a similar legal framework, and a high standard of living. There are also cases where countries that are geo-culturally proximate are quite different, just like North Korea and South Korea that have evolved into two dramatically different nations with contrasting political systems, economies, and societies. However, geo-cultural proximity is a useful concept for understanding the factors that can influence cultural similarity and difference.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to investigate and analyze cultural patterns within textual communication and interactions. To achieve this, content analysis will be employed as a methodological approach. Content analysis is particularly well-suited for this study as it allows for the systematic examination of recurring trends, themes, and patterns in text-based communication. By focusing on cultural patterns, the study seeks to understand how individuals from different cultural backgrounds express themselves and convey cultural nuances through written communication. Through the systematic application of content analysis, this research uncovers and quantifies recurring cultural patterns within the interaction. By understanding these patterns, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how cultural nuances are expressed and transmitted through written interactions, offering insights into the complexities of cross-cultural communications.

¹⁰⁸ Kim, Priscilla, and Dr. Ethan Hutt. 2021. "K-pop as a Social Movement: Case Study of BTS and Their Fandom ARMY." *Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 3 (November): 1-15.

<https://www.jsr.org/hs/index.php/path/article/view/1772>

¹⁰⁹ Yoon, Kyong. 2017. "Global Imagination of K-Pop: Pop Music Fans' Lived Experiences of Cultural Hybridity." *Popular, Music and Society* 41, no. 4 (March): 373-389. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2017.1292819>

¹¹⁰ Kim, Priscilla, and Dr. Ethan Hutt. 2021. "K-pop as a Social Movement: Case Study of BTS and Their Fandom ARMY." *Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 3 (November): 1-15.

<https://www.jsr.org/hs/index.php/path/article/view/1772>.

DATA COLLECTION / DATA SOURCE

The sample for this study is drawn from virtual ethnography. Virtual ethnography involves the observation and analysis of digital spaces where the interaction or discourse occurs, such as social media platforms, online forums, and blogs. The advantage of virtual ethnography is that it allows us to engage with the discourse in its natural context, capturing the depth and breadth of discussions as they unfold in real-time. To create our sample, I employ a purposeful sampling technique. The textual data for this study was collected and monitored from the Twitter platform. The specific focus will be on interactions related to BTS, the popular South Korean music group, within the context of Malaysia. The data collection encompassed the period from April 21, 2023, to May 31, 2023, lasting 41 days, consisting of 399 interactions. This timeframe is chosen to provide an overview of the communication and cultural interactions related to BTS within the Malaysian context.

DATA CODING

The data coding in this study encompasses categories such as cultural references, language usage, sentiment, interaction types, and engagement metrics, tailored to the research objectives to understand the cultural pattern of BTS fans in Malaysia on Twitter. Therefore, every interaction is analyzed and grouped according to the categories that have been formed as follows:

No	Category	Acronym	Explanation
1.	Fan Accounts and Fandom Culture	FA FC	Malaysian BTS fans on Twitter often create dedicated fan accounts to connect with fellow fans, share content related to BTS, and express their support for the group. These accounts usually have BTS-related usernames, display names, and profile pictures. Fans often use fan-specific language and inside jokes, forming a unique fandom culture.
2	Streaming and Charting	S & C	Malaysian BTS fans actively engage in streaming and charting activities on Twitter. They organize streaming parties, where fans come together to watch BTS music videos or listen to their songs simultaneously to increase views and streams. Fans also collaborate to promote BTS's music on various platforms, aiming to achieve high chart positions in music rankings.
3	Fanart and Edits	F & E	Malaysian BTS fans showcase their creativity by creating fanart, edits, and graphics featuring BTS members. They share their artwork on Twitter, often using hashtags to gain visibility and appreciation from other fans. Fanart and edits are a significant part of the BTS fandom culture and serve as a means of expressing admiration for the group.

4	Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives	FP SI	Malaysian BTS fans on Twitter frequently organize fan projects to celebrate BTS milestones, such as birthdays or album releases. These projects may include raising funds for charity, creating fan videos, or organizing surprise events. Fans also engage in supportive initiatives, such as sharing positive messages, providing mental health support, and encouraging social activism.
5	Trending Hashtags and Fan Campaigns	TH FC	Malaysian BTS fans actively participate in Twitter trends and fan campaigns. They create hashtags related to BTS, specific members, or ongoing events to make them trend worldwide. These campaigns often aim to promote BTS, celebrate achievements, or raise awareness about social issues the group supports.
6	Fan Meetings and Events	FM&E	Malaysian BTS fans eagerly anticipate opportunities to meet BTS members during fan meetings, concerts, or public appearances. They discuss ticketing information, share experiences from previous events, and plan meetups with other fans. Twitter serves as a platform for fans to exchange information and excitement regarding upcoming events.

Table 1: Coding procedure. **Note:** Multilingual Communication: Malaysian BTS fans on Twitter often communicate in a mixture of English, Malay, and occasionally Korean. This multilingual approach helps them connect with both local and international fans, fostering a sense of unity and collaboration within the fandom.

QUANTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

In this study, we employ quantitative content analysis to systematically examine the collected dataset, comprising interactions related to BTS fandom in Malaysia on Twitter. Through the development of a comprehensive coding scheme encompassing categories aligned with the theory discussed, such as sentiment, interaction types, and frequency of specific terms, we meticulously assign relevant codes to corresponding data segments. Utilizing quantification techniques, we calculate frequencies, percentages, and averages for each code within designated categories, enabling the generation of numerical insights. Employing statistical analyses, we identify patterns and relationships inherent in the quantitative data, unveiling trends across interaction types, sentiment levels, and other variables.

ANALYSIS AND RESULT

The following presents the outcomes of the analysis conducted in this study. The analysis comprises two distinct components: descriptive results and hypothesis testing. These components are essential in unraveling the complex relationships and patterns inherent in the dataset. By sequentially examining the data through descriptive statistics and subsequently subjecting it to hypothesis testing, a comprehensive understanding of the research questions and objectives can be attained.

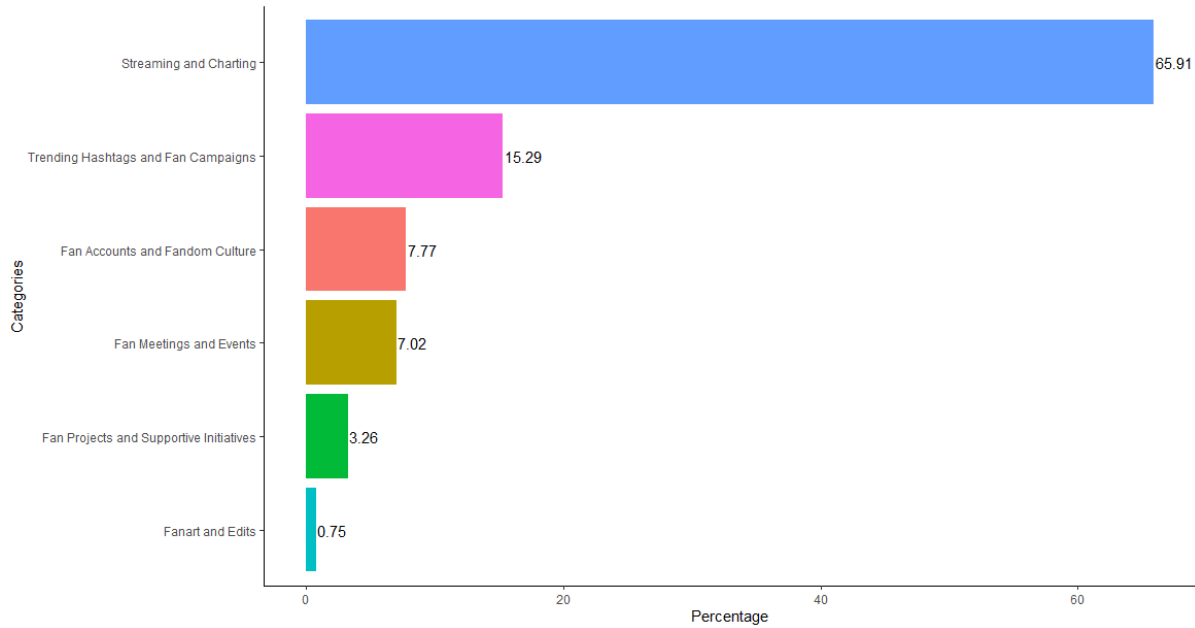


Figure 1: Categories distribution from overall conversation

No	Variable	Freq	Percentage
1	Fan Accounts and Fandom Culture	31	7.769424
2	Fan Meetings and Events	28	7.017544
3	Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives	13	3.258145
4	Fanart and Edits	3	0.75188
5	Streaming and Charting	263	65.91479
6	Trending Hashtags and Fan Campaigns	61	15.28822

Table 1: Categories distribution from overall conversation

The graph illustrates the distribution of observations across multiple categories: "Fan Accounts and Fandom Culture, Streaming and Charting, Fanart and Edits, Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives, Trending Hashtags and Fan Campaigns, and Fan Meetings and Events. Among these categories, "Streaming and Charting" constitutes the most prevalent segment, accounting for the majority at 65.91%. Following behind, "Trending Hashtags and Fan Campaigns " comprises 15.29%, signifying a noteworthy but lesser portion. The categories " Fan Accounts and Fandom Culture " and " Fan Meetings and Events" both make up smaller yet comparable proportions at 7.77% and 7.02%, respectively. The category "Fan Projects and Supportive

Initiatives" captures a relatively modest 3.26%, while the least frequent is "Fanart and Edits" with a minimal representation of 0.76%. The graph succinctly captures the varying degrees of prevalence among these categories, providing a visual representation of their distribution within the dataset.

From the result obtained, we realize that the main dominance interaction in the sample is from the BTSArmy source. To capture solely the public interaction, we removed sources and generate the following result;

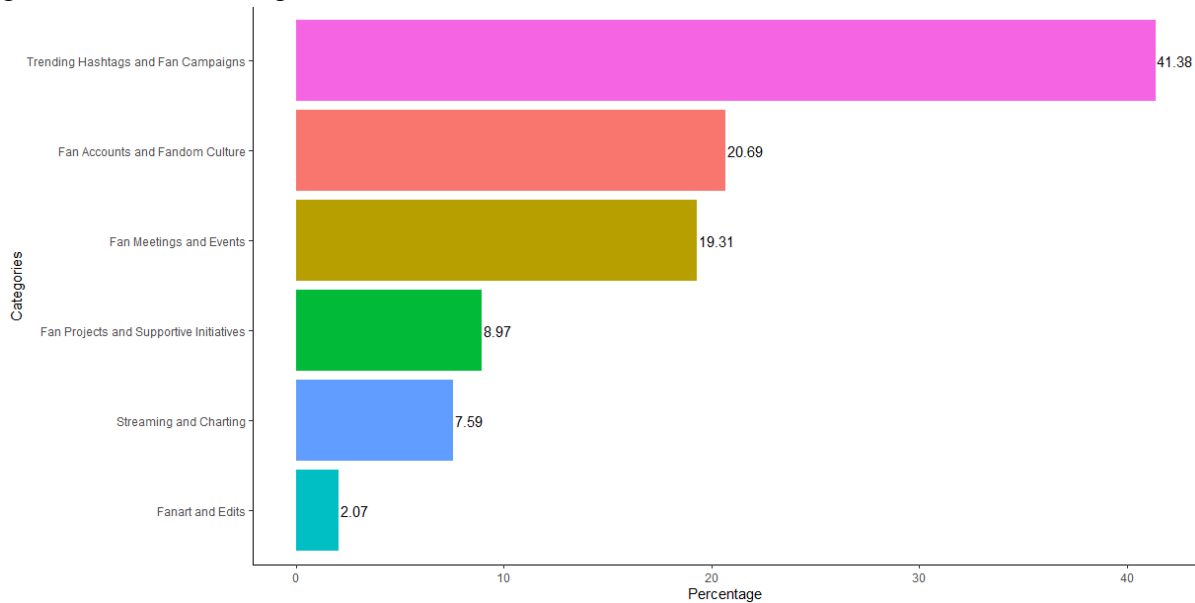


Figure 2: Interaction – Public

<i>No Var1</i>	<i>Freq</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1 Fan Accounts and Fandom Culture	30	20.68966
2 Fan Meetings and Events	28	19.31034
3 Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives	13	8.965517
4 Fanart and Edits	3	2.068966
5 Streaming and Charting	11	7.586207
6 Trending Hashtags and Fan Campaigns	60	41.37931

Table 2: Interaction – Public

The graph visually encapsulates the distribution of engagement within distinct categories related to fan involvement and fandom culture. Notably, "Trending Hashtags and Fan Campaigns" command a substantial presence, constituting a significant majority at 41.38%. This highlights the central role of fan-driven online campaigns and trends. Following suit, "Fan Meetings and Events" maintain a considerable share, contributing 19.31% to the overall engagement landscape,

underlining the significance of in-person interactions. Moreover, the category of "Fan Accounts and Fandom Culture" captures a noteworthy 20.69%, elucidating the extensive involvement of fans in shaping and nurturing their respective communities. Additionally, "Streaming and Charting" holds a modest yet distinct portion at 7.59%, reflecting the significance of fan-driven efforts in chart performance. The categories "Fan Projects and Supportive Initiatives" and "Fanart and Edits" contribute 8.97% and 2.07%, respectively, collectively illustrating the multifaceted nature of fan engagement.

HYPOTHESIS TEST

In addition to the categorical data presented above, we conducted hypothesis testing to delve deeper into the dynamics of the cultural patterns at play. In this hypothesis testing, the chi-square goodness of fit analysis is used to examine the association between different categorical variables. We are utilizing two distinct sets of data to conduct this analysis (the overall data and the only-public reply data). The chi-square test allows us to determine whether there is a significant relationship between these categories, shedding light on the potential connections or patterns that exist.

For the overall data, the obtained chi-square result, with an X-squared value of 726.01 and degrees of freedom set at 5, reflects a highly significant relationship among the categorical variables under examination. The associated p-value, which is remarkably lower than $2.2e-16$, further accentuates the statistical importance of these findings. While for the public reply dataset, the chi-square analysis yielded a compelling result, with an X-squared value of 86.021 and degrees of freedom set at 5. Both dataset reject the null hypothesis.

Both results highlight a significant difference among the examined categorical variables. Notably, the associated p-value is strikingly less than .05, emphasizing the statistical significance of these findings. This outcome strongly indicates that the observed distribution across the fan engagement categories is highly unlikely to be attributed to random chance. Such a distinct pattern underscores the dynamic nature of the cultural dynamics at play within these categories. The evident fluctuations and interactions among these categories suggest a constantly evolving cultural landscape, characterized by intricate shifts and influences.

This finding encourages further exploration into the underlying mechanisms that shape these dynamic patterns, ultimately contributing to a deeper comprehension of the multifaceted nature of fan engagement and cultural trends.

WORD-CORRELATIONAL INTERACTION ANALYSIS

To further analyze the data, we applied the word-correlational analysis which involves investigating the associations between words within the whole text. The word-correlational analysis using RStudio involves investigating the associations between words within the text collection using correlational techniques. This method seeks to unveil patterns of co-occurrence and potential semantic links between word pairs. This co-occurrence quantifies the strength and nature of these word relationships, hence it provides another perspective to understand the interaction pattern occurred.

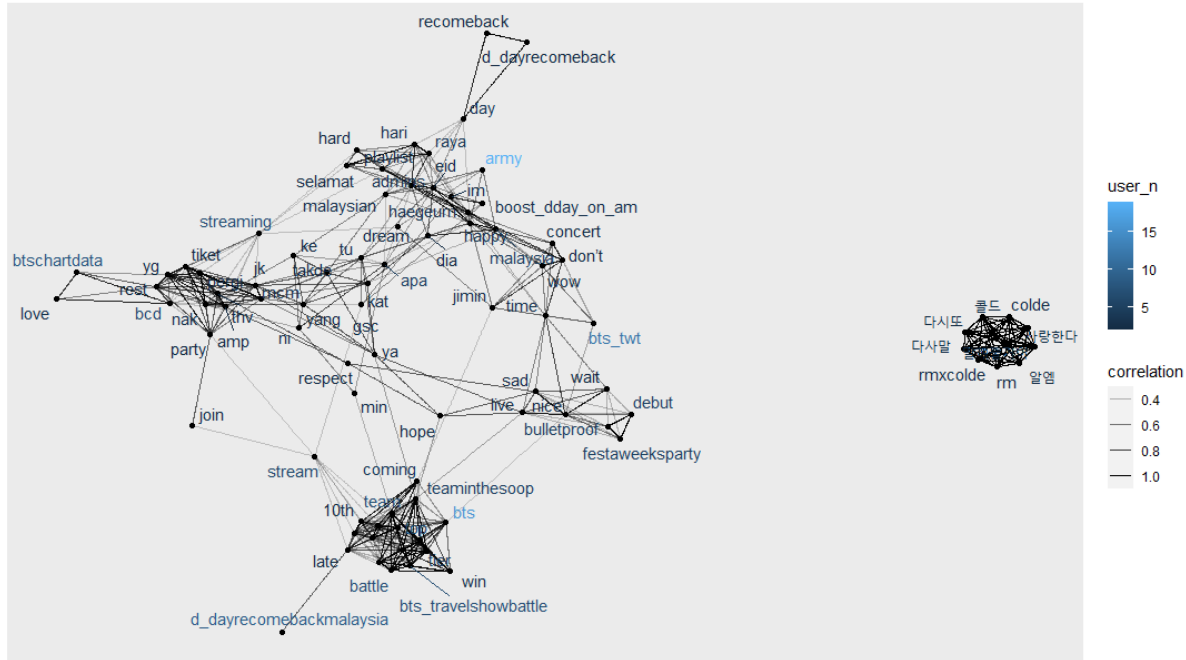


Figure 4: Word-network at 0.4 correlation

From the correlational network, we can clearly see that the dynamic pattern of interaction within the global community of BTS enthusiasts transcends cultural boundaries and seamlessly weaves together a tapestry of diverse perspectives. These interactions often revolve around the profound impact of BTS's music, acting as a universal language that resonates with fans worldwide. Regardless of their unique cultural backgrounds, fans come together in close-knit groups, forming a vibrant community that finds common ground under the umbrella of BTS. This convergence of different worldviews creates a rich tapestry of conversations that celebrate the group's music, cultural, fostering a shared understanding and appreciation of BTS's artistry. In these moments, the global BTS community exemplifies the power of music to unite people across borders and bridge cultural gaps.

CONCLUSION

In the rapidly evolving landscape of global popular culture, the recent ascent of K-pop, epitomized by the unparalleled success of BTS, underscores the profound impact of innovative communication strategies. This study has delved into the intricate web of cultural proximities, with a particular focus on the online communication and fandom activities of Malaysian BTS fans. Utilizing content analysis as our methodological approach, we have systematically examined the textual communication within the Malaysian BTS fandom, revealing recurring trends, themes, and patterns. Through this lens, we have uncovered a vibrant tapestry of cultural patterns that transcend geographical boundaries, reflecting the universal language of BTS's music.

At the core of this phenomenon is the adoption of innovative communication strategies by BTS. In an age where the internet and social media facilitate direct artist-fan interactions, BTS has harnessed the power of immediacy and interactivity, fostering a deeply personal connection with their global fan base. Our case study, centered on Malaysia's ARMY official Twitter account @BTSMY_ARMY, serves as an illuminating microcosm of this broader trend.

Through the analysis, we have gained valuable insights into the ways in which fans express their love, support, and creativity within the virtual confines of social media platforms. These interactions have been categorized into five attributes, including fan culture, streaming parties, fan art, bilingual communication, and supportive initiatives. These activities extend far beyond mere pastimes; they represent the means through which fans construct their identities and cultivate a profound sense of belonging within the BTS fandom.

The application of content analysis as our chosen methodological approach was instrumental in uncovering the nuances and complexities of these cultural expressions. This rigorous examination allowed us to discern the dynamic nature of cultural dynamics within the fandom. Interactions among the five identified attributes revealed a constantly evolving cultural landscape, shaped by intricate shifts and influences. This dynamism underscores the flexible nature of fan culture and its responsiveness to various external factors, including the band's creative output and the broader sociocultural context.

However, what is most striking about our findings is the transcendence of cultural boundaries within the global community of BTS enthusiasts. These interactions seamlessly weave together a diverse array of perspectives, united by a shared passion for BTS's music and message. Despite linguistic and cultural differences, the unifying force of BTS's music serves as a bridge between individuals and communities, fostering connections and understanding that transcend geographical divides.

In essence, the universal language of BTS's music emerges as the most profound insight from this study. It is a testament to the power of art and culture to transcend boundaries, bringing people from diverse backgrounds together in a shared appreciation for the transformative impact of music. As we continue to explore cultural proximities in the realm of popular culture, BTS and their devoted fans stand as a shining example of the profound connections that can be forged across the globe. The global success of K-pop, epitomized by BTS, is not just a testament to their musical talent but also to their ability to unite a diverse and global fan base through innovative communication and shared cultural patterns.

REFERENCE

- Abd-Rahim, Atiqah. 2019. "Online Fandom: Social Identity and Social Hierarchy of Hallyu Fans." *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. <https://doi.org/10.15273/jue.v9i1.8885>.
- Abercrombie, Nick, Nicholas Abercrombie, and Brian Longhurst. 1998. *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Bacon-Smith, Camille. 1992. *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. United States of America: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Bangun, Cendera R. 2019. "Participatory Culture: A Study on Bangtan Boys Fandom Indonesia." *KOMUNIKA: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 13, no. 2 (October): 219-228.

- Baouill, Andrew Ó. 2008. "Cybersounds: Essays on Virtual Music Culture." Edited by Michael D. Ayers. *Sage Journal* 10, no. 1 (February): 167-169. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444807085384>.
- Baym, Nancy K. 2000. *Tune In, Log On: Soaps, Fandom, and Online Community*. United States of America: SAGE Publications.
- Becker, Hila, Mor Naaman, and Luis Gravano. 2021. "Beyond Trending Topics: Real-World Event Identification on Twitter." Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media. <https://ojs.aaai.org/index.php/ICWSM/article/view/14146>.
- Benecchi, Eleonora, and Erika Wang. 2021. "Fandom: Historicized Fandom and the Conversation between East and West Perspectives." Edited by Gabriele Balbi, Nelson Ribeiro, Valérie Schafer, Christian Schwarzenegger, and De Gruyter Oldenbourg. In *Digital Roots: Historicizing Media and Communication Concepts of the Digital Age*, 281-298. Berlin, Boston: n.p. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110740202-016>.
- Benjamin, Han. 2017. "K-Pop in Latin America: Transcultural Fandom and Digital Mediation." *International Journal of Communication* 11, no. 1 (May): 2250-2269. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/6304/2048>.
- Benjamin, Jeff. 2019. "Big Hit Entertainment CEO Bang Si-Hyuk Explains What Makes BTS 'The Beatles of the YouTube Generation' at Korean Culture Summit." Billboard. <https://www.billboard.com/pro/bang-si-hyuk-bts-beatles-of-youtube-generation-asean-rok-culture-summit/>.
- Booth, Paul. 2010. *Digital Fandom: New Media Studies*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Bruner, Raisa. 2019. "How BTS Is Taking Over the World." Time Magazine. <https://time.com/collection/next-generation-leaders/5414052/bts-next-generation-leaders/>.
- Chung, Ye R. 2022. "BTS & ARMY: A South Korean Music Group and their Fandom Create a New Grassroots Movement for Social Change." ScholarWorks@GVSU. <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/1041>.
- Dal, Yong Jin. 2023. "Transnational Proximity of the Korean Wave in the Global Cultural Sphere." *International Journal of Communication* 17, no. . (.): 9-28. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/18469/3982>.
- Duffett, Mark. 2015. *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ezani, Nasuha. 2019. "Identity Construction of Kpop Fandom on Twitter." IIUM. <https://www.iium.edu.my/media/62028/IDENTITY%20CONSTRUCTION%20OF%20KPOP%20FANDOM%20ON%20TWITTER%20-%20NASUHA%20BINTI%20EZANI%20-%202020.pdf>.
- Fiske, John. 2010. *Understanding Popular Culture*. 2nd ed. Washington, Washington: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203837177>.
- Ganghariya, Garima, and Rubal Kanozia. 2020. "'Proliferation of Hallyu Wave And Korean Popular Culture Across The World: A Systematic Literature Review From 2000-2019.'" *Journal of Content, Community & Communication* 11, no. 6 (June): 177-207. 10.31620/JCCC.06.20/14.
- Guern, Philippe L. 2002. "Les cultes médiatiques: Culture fan et oeuvres cultes." Presses Universitaires de Rennes. <https://books.openedition.org/pur/24174?lang=en>.

- Hee, Yang S. 2019. "Researcher reveals BTS' global success is down to its ARMY." Korea JoongAng Daily. <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2019/08/01/people/Researcher-reveals-BTS-global-success-is-down-to-its-ARMY/3066245.html>.
- Herman, Tamar. 2022. "10 Years On, Twitter Is Shaping The Spread Of K-Pop." Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarherman/2020/09/21/10-years-on-twitter-is-shaping-the-spread-of-k-pop/?sh=2e292e2899a7>.
- Hills, Matt. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.
- Ho-Chun, Herbert Chang, Becky Pham, and Emilio Ferrara. 2023. "Parasocial diffusion: K-pop fandoms help drive COVID-19 public health messaging on social media." *Online Social Networks and Media* 37-38 (September): 2- 12. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.osnem.2023.100267>.
- James, Paul, and John Tulloch. 2010. *Globalization and Culture*. Vol. 1. Melbourne, Melbourne: Sage. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446261842>.
- Jang, Wonho, and Eun Song Jung. 2017. "The Influences of K-pop Fandom on Increasing Cultural Contact: With the Case of Philippine Kpop Convention, Inc." Barnett Center, Ohio State University. https://barnettcenter.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2019-08/the_influences_of_k-pop_fandom.pdf.
- Jenkins, Henry. 1992. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Henry. 2006. "Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide." Edited by Baoill 0. Andrew. Sage Journals. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0894439307306088?journalCode=ssce>.
- Jeong, Areum. 2017. "K-Pop: Stream Like You Breathe." KOREA EXPOSÉ. <https://www.koreaexpose.com/k-pop-stream-breathe/>.
- Jin, Dal. 2016. *New Korean Wave: Transnational Cultural Power in the Age of Social Media*. United States: University of Illinois Press. 10.5406/illinois/9780252039973.001.0001.
- Jin, Dal Y. 2021. "The BTS sphere: Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth's transnational cyber-nationalism on social media." *Communication and the Public* 6, no. 1-4 (September): 33-47. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20570473211046733>.
- Jin, Ha Lee, and Tu Nguyen Anh. 2020. "How Music Fans Shape Commercial Music Services: A Case Study of BTS and ARMY." *Proceedings of the International Society for Music Information Retrieval (ISMIR)* 21, no. . (october): 837 -845. <https://archives.ismir.net/ismir2020/paper/000147.pdf>.
- Jindra, Michael. 1994. "Star Trek Fandom as a Religious Phenomenon." *Association for the Sociology of Religion* 55, no. 1 (Spring): 27-51. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3712174>.
- Joli, Jensen. 1992. *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*. Edited by Lisa A. Lewis. London: Routledge.
- Ju, Oak Kim. 2015. "Reshaped, Reconnected and Redefined: Media Portrayals of Korean Pop Idol Fandom in Korea." *The Journal of Fandom Studies* 3, no. 3 (March). https://doi.org/10.1386/jfs.3.1.79_1.
- Kang, Haeryun. 2020. "Hitman' Bang Si-hyuk, The Brand-New Billionaire Behind BTS." NPR. https://www.npr.org/2020/11/18/935848354/hitman-bang-si-hyuk-the-brand-new-billionaire-behind-bts?fbclid=IwAR1XJomDHg04EoTs_uy_u5Kwb7zYIbNMogsQTM6MWs7pT8qcln1M.

- Kim, Priscilla, and Dr. Ethan Hutt. 2021. "K-pop as a Social Movement: Case Study of BTS and Their Fandom ARMY." *Journal of Student Research* 10, no. 3 (November): 1-15. <https://www.jsr.org/hs/index.php/path/article/view/1772>.
- The Korean Foundation. 2023. "2022 Analysis of Global Hallyu Status." ISSUU Inc. https://issuu.com/the_korea_foundation/docs/2022_analysis_of_global_hallyu_status.
- Korean Foundation. 2023. "2022 Analysis of Global Hallyu Status." . https://issuu.com/the_korea_foundation/docs/2022_analysis_of_global_hallyu_status/s/21163619.
- Kusuma, Ade, Putri Purbanita Adiasri, Vina Nahdiyah, and Ucik Uswatun khasanah. 2020. "A Virtual Ethnography Study: Fandom and Social Impact in the Digital Era." *ETNOSIA: Jurnal Etnografi Indonesia* 5, no. 2 (October): 238-251. <https://doi.org/10.31947/etnosia.v5i2.10898>.
- Lee, Jin Ha, and Anh Thu Nguyen. 2020. *How Music Fans Shape Commercial Music Services: A Case Study of BTS and Army*. Montreal, Canada: 21 st International Society for Music Information Retrieval Conference, Montréal, Canada, 2020. <https://archives.ismir.net/ismir2020/paper/000147.pdf>.
- Lee, Sangjoon, and Abé M. Nornes. 2015. *Hallyu 2.0: The Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media*. Edited by Sangjoon Lee and Abé M. Nornes. US: University of Michigan Press. <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.7651262>.
- Lim, Vivien. 2020. "BTS wins Unicef Inspire Award for its campaign against youth violence." *The Star*, June 23, 2020. <https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/entertainment/2020/06/23/bts-wins-unicef-inspire-award-for-its-campaign-against-youth-violence>.
- Lista, Ayu Saraswati, Nurbaity. 2020. "BTS ARMY's #BTSLOVEYOURSELF: A Worldwide K-Pop Fandom Participatory Culture on Twitter." *KnE Social Sciences* 4, no. 14 (November): 423-432. <https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v4i14.7899>.
- Lotz, Griffin, Emma McIntyre, John Shearer, Michelle H. Kim, Regina Kim, Kristine Kwak, Maria Sherman, Maura Johnston, Joshua M. Kim, and Tamar Herman. 2023. "The 100 Best Korean Pop Songs of All Time." *Rolling Stone*, July 20, 2023. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/best-korean-pop-songs-1234727955/200-akmu-1234731566/>.
- Lu, Jia, Xinchuan Lu, and Yaoyao Chang. 2019. "Cultural Proximity and Genre Proximity: How Do Chinese Viewers Enjoy American and Korean TV Dramas?" *Sage Open* 9, no. 1 (January): 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018825027>.
- Madden, Emma. 2020. "The BTS Army and the Transformative Power of Fandom as Activism." *The Ringer*. <https://www.theringer.com/music/2020/6/11/21287283/bts-army-black-lives-matter-fandom-activism>.
- Mclaren, Courtney, and Dal Yong Jin. 2021. "You Can't Help but Love Them": BTS, Transcultural Fandom, and Affective Identities." *Korea Journal* 60, no. 1 (.): 100 - 127. https://summit.sfu.ca/_flysystem/fedora/2023-03/etd21613.pdf.
- McMillan, David W., and David M. Chavis. 1986. "Sense of Community: A Definition and Theory." *Journal of Community Psychology* 14, no. 1 (January): 6-23.

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235356904_Sense_of_Community_A_Definition_and_Theory.
- Melissa, M. Brough, and Sangita Shresthova. 2022. "Fandom Meets Activism: Rethinking Civic and Political Participation." - YouTube. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0303>.
- Mohd Jenol, Nur Ayuni, and Nur Hafeeza Ahmad Pazil. 2020. "Escapism and motivation: Understanding K-pop fans' well-being and identity." *Geografia - Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 16, no. 4 (November): 336-347. <https://ejournal.ukm.my/gmjss/article/view/44476>.
- News Straits Times. 2022. "Twitter to Release BTS Emojis to Mark the Band's 7th Anniversary Tomorrow." - YouTube, October 2, 2022. <https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/groove/2020/06/600001/showbiz-twitter-release-bts-emojis-mark-bands-7th-anniversary>.
- Newton, Ksenia. 2023. "10 Mind-Blowing BTS Facts and Statistics." Brandwatch. <https://www.brandwatch.com/blog/bts-facts-and-statistics/>.
- Oak, Kim J. 2021. "BTS as a Method: A Counter-Hegemonic Culture in the Network Society." *Media, Culture & Society* 43, no. 6 (.): 1061-1077. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443720986029>.
- Parc, Jimmyn, and Yeogeun Y. Kim. 2020. "Analyzing the Reasons for the Global Popularity of BTS: A New Approach from a Business Perspective." *Journal of International Business and Economy* 21, no. 1 (november): 15-36. DOI: 10.51240/jibe.2020.1.2.
- Park, So Y., Nicole Santero, Blair Kaneshiro, and Jin H. Lee. 2021. "Armed in ARMY: A Case Study of How BTS Fans Successfully Collaborated to #MatchAMillion for Black Lives Matter." *CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '21)*, -, no. - (May): 1-14. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1145/3411764.3445353>.
- Rachmawati, In. 2022. "The Magic Role of Kim Nam Joon as a Leader of BTS in Conquering the American Market." *Rubikon: Journal of Transnational American Studies* 9, no. 2 (October): 230-243. <https://doi.org/10.22146/rubikon.v9i2.75588>.
- Raisa, Bruner. 2018. "How BTS Is Taking Over the World." Time. <https://time.com/collection/next-generation-leaders/5414052/bts-next-generation-leaders/>.
- Ramli, Bibi N. 2017. "K-Pop kings BTS earns a spot in Guinness World Records 2018 for most Twitter engagements." *New Straits Times*, November 20, 2017. <https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/groove/2017/11/305636/k-pop-kings-bts-earns-spot-guinness-world-records-2018-most-twitter>.
- Razi, Siti Aishah, Sharifah Sofiah Syed Zainudin, and Mastura Mahamed. 2021. "Cultural Understanding Through BTS Non-musical Programs." ResearchGate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355410951_Cultural_Understanding_Through_BTS_Non-musical_Programs_Proceeding_of_the_7th_Malaysia_International_Conference_on_Foreign_Languages_MICFL2021_Faculty_of_Modern_Languages_and_Communication_Universiti.
- Recuero, Raquel, Adriana Amaral, and Camila Monteiro. 2012. "Fandoms, Trending Topics and Social Capital in Twitter." Association of Internet Researchers. <https://spir.aoir.org/ojs/index.php/spir/article/view/8217/pdf>.

- Rooks, Mariko F. 2022. "Novel Applications of Music and Digital Media In Global Health Intervention And Education Initiatives During The Covid-19 Pandemic: A Case Study Of BTS And Army." Public Health Thesis by Yale University: Eli Scholar. https://elischolar.library.yale.edu/ysphtdl/2196?utm_source=elischolar.library.yale.edu%2Fysphtdl%2F2196&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages.
- Rowley, Glenn. 2020. "BTS React to 'Life Goes On' No 1 – Billboard." *Billboard*, December 1, 2020. <https://www.billboard.com/music/music-news/bts-react-life-goes-on-no-1-9491783/>.
- S, Lynch K. 2022. "Fans as Transcultural Gatekeepers: The Hierarchy of BTS' Anglophone Reddit Fandom and the Digital East-West Media Flow." *New Media & Society* 24, no. 1 (September): 105 - 121. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820962109>.
- Saraswati, Listya A., and Nurbaity. 2020. "BTS ARMY's #BTSLOVEYOURSELF: A Worldwide K-Pop Fandom Participatory Culture on Twitter." Knowledge E. https://knepublishing.com/index.php/KnE-Social/article/view/7899/13680#content/contributor_reference_2.
- Shao, Lingwei. 2020. "The returning of Hallyu in China: transnational reception of the Korean Drama My Love from the Star." *Media International Australia: Special Issue: Australia in the field of Trans-Asian Media Flows* 175, no. 1 (May): 79-92. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X19882530>.
- Siciliano, Micheal L. 2023. "Intermediaries in the age of platformized gatekeeping: The case of YouTube "creators" and MCNs in the U.S." *Poetics* 97, no. - (April): -. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101748>.
- Statista. 2023. "Social media usage in South Korea." Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1300863/south-korea-most-followed-kpop-acts-on-twitter-by-followers/>.
- Sun, Jung. 2012. "Fan Activism, Cybervigilantism, and Othering Mechanisms in K-pop Fandom." In "Transformative Works and Fan Activism." *Transformative Works and Cultures.*, no. (.): 10. <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0300>.
- Tsay-vogel, Mina, and Meghan S. Sanders. 2017. "Fandom and the search for meaning: Examining communal involvement with popular media beyond pleasure." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 6, no. 1 (November): 32–47. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000085>.
- Utami, Lusya Savitri S., and Septia Winduwati. 2020. "Fandom and Voluntary 'ARMY': Case Study on BTS Fans in Indonesia." *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research* 478, no. - (.): 667-673. <https://www.atlantispress.com/proceedings/ticash-20/125948180>.
- Vogel, Mina T., and Meghan M. Sanders. 2015. "Fandom and the Search for Meaning: Examining Communal Involvement with Popular Media Beyond Pleasure." *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 6, no. 1 (April): 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/ppm0000085>.
- Vos, Lola, and Greta Gerwig. 2018. "The K-Pop fandom on Twitter | DiggIt Magazine." | DiggIt Magazine. <https://www.diggitmazine.com/articles/k-pop-fandom-twitter>.
- Yoon, Kyong. 2017. "Global Imagination of K-Pop: Pop Music Fans' Lived Experiences of Cultural Hybridity." *Popular, Music and Society* 41, no. 4 (March): 373-389. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2017.1292819>.

Yuslinda Mat Yassin, Baby Anusha Nur Mohamed Thaheer,
Abdul Aziz Azizam, Melina Mahpuz

Yoon, Kyong. 2018. "Transnational fandom in the making: K-pop fans in Vancouver." *International Communication Gazette* 81, no. 2 (October): 176-192.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048518802964>.