

Korean Wave in the Formation of Youth Identity Carat Medan Fandom: Analysis of Youth's Meaning of Korean Pop Music (K-Pop) on the YouTube Channel @Pledis17

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the acceptance, meaning, and role of K-Pop values from the group SEVENTEEN towards the formation of the identity of Carat fandom members in Medan through the YouTube channel @Pledis17. This study is based on the constructivism paradigm, using concepts and theories, new media, symbolic interactionism, identification, fandom, reception, popular culture, and the formation of adolescent identity. This study uses a qualitative approach, involving five Carat Medan fandom teenagers as the main informants, two parents as additional informants, and two psychologists as source triangulation. The results of the study show that the five informants receive content on the YouTube channel @Pledis17, especially music videos (MV) and variety shows GOING SEVENTEEN, which are used to follow the development of idols and interact with the fandom. Four informants interpret SEVENTEEN as entertainment, but they admit that there are positive values that they receive during the process of enjoying the content. One informant specifically interprets SEVENTEEN as shaping his youth. All informants found entertainment and positive values that inspired them, and built an emotional bond with SEVENTEEN and the Carat Medan fandom. Although they appreciated SEVENTEEN, they also showed a critical attitude (negotiated reading) towards the K-Pop industry. and awareness of cultural differences. Korean Wave SEVENTEEN and the Carat fandom, play a role in formation of adolescent identity

INTRODUCTION

Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu, refers to the phenomenon of the global popularity of South Korean culture that encompasses various cultural elements, ranging from Korean pop music (K-pop), Korean dramas, films, fashion, beauty trends, to food. The increase in the global popularity of South Korean pop culture began in the late 1990s and continues to grow to this day (Jin & Yi, 2020). South Korea has succeeded in enhancing its international reputation and fostering positive perceptions among foreign audiences through its culture. This phenomenon not only enhances South Korea's global image but also shapes consumer behavior and cultural identity in a diverse society, especially among teenagers (Suratmi, 2023).

Research conducted by Wirna Milda Alam, Cindy Lestari Sandung, and A. Octamaya Tenri Awar (2023) shows that the Korean Wave has influenced multicultural dynamics among Indonesian teenagers, there has been an increase in understanding of Korean culture among teenagers. Indonesian teenagers are starting to adopt fashion trends, lifestyles, and are active in K-pop fan communities. The Korean Wave, especially K-Pop, has caused a process of cultural integration among Indonesian teenagers, where they adopt elements of Korean culture, starting from music trends, clothing styles, and attitudes inspired by K-pop idols (Alam et al., 2023; Rahardjo & Hasfi, 2024; Widiarti et al., 2023).

One of the most prominent elements of the Korean Wave is Korean pop music (K-Pop). Indonesia is a country with a high youth population, making it one of the countries with a giant market potential for K-Pop. K-Pop-related products such as albums, merchandise, digital content to K-Pop concerts in Indonesia always sell well in the market (Prasastisiwi, 2024). Although not at the top, K-pop's popularity continues to increase, indicating a strong influence among other popular music genres (Irhamni, 2024).

Social media also provides space for fans to express their creativity through the production and distribution of content such as artwork, music, and writing that also enriches the K-Pop fandom culture. In general, fandom refers to a cultural phenomenon in which individuals form communities based on shared interests in certain characters, stories, or genres (Maharani et al., 2024; Nugraha & Komsiah, 2023; Oh, 2023). With high video and audio quality and professional production, YouTube provides an optimal viewing experience for fans. Not only that, the diversity of K-Pop content on YouTube, ranging from music content, entertainment, to fan-idol interactions meet the various interests of fans, making it a complete digital center for the global K-Pop community (Damayanthi & Wahyunengsih, 2023).

Based on the basic concept of Stuart Hall's reception theory (1973), encoding, where producers "encode" meaning in the process of producing messages. This process is influenced by the producer's frame of reference, including the ideology, values, and cultural assumptions they adhere to (Mineri & Purnomo, 2023).

The K-Pop industry, with its agencies as the main actors, plays a crucial role in delivering Korean Pop music to global popularity. As the engine of popular culture production, K-Pop agencies are not only responsible for creating music but also actively shaping the image and persona of idols through a systematic process that includes intensive training, talent development, and planned promotional strategies (Dian et al., 2021; Suratmi, 2023; Ritonga et al., 2024). SEVENTEEN, a boy group that debuted in 2015, has released many successful albums. One of their greatest achievements is the album "FML" which was named the world's best-selling album in 2023 by the Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) (Restu, 2024; Ritonga et al., 2024).

SEVENTEEN's popularity is also clearly visible through their official social media accounts. The group actively uses social media platforms to interact with fans while building their positive public image. Their number of followers on various platforms, namely X (Twitter) @pledis_17 has 13,152,630 followers, YouTube @pledis17 has 13.8 million subscribers, Instagram @saythename_17 has 15.8 million followers, and Tik Tok @seventeen17_official has 14.6 million followers. Every content they upload always gets a lot of attention from fans, as seen from the number of viewers and high interactions.

Based on research conducted by Rosseta Septia Menawati and Addin Kurnia Putri (2023), it is stated that agencies produce K-Pop idols as products that embody certain values and concepts. These idols are marketed to fans, creating a sense of identity that can be adopted and connected to by fans. According to Soetjningsih (2010), there are two main sources in the formation of adolescent identity, significant others and reference groups.

This study highlights the unique phenomenon of the Carat Medan fandom, which has not been widely explored by previous researchers. Using a qualitative approach with a constructivism paradigm, this study explores the subjective experiences of Carat Medan fandom teenagers when interacting with the YouTube channel @Pledis17. This study not only sees K-Pop as mere entertainment, but also analyzes the values that can be found in K-Pop through the acceptance and interpretation of K-Pop content on the @Pledis17 channel.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication psychology is a field of study that connects individual psychological aspects with the communication process that occurs in various contexts. Communication is not only understood as an exchange of information, but also involves cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects of individuals that influence the effectiveness of the message delivered (DeVito, 2019). Communication psychology can be defined as the study of how individual psychological processes, including perception, emotion, motivation, and cognition, influence and are influenced by communication interactions (Littlejohn & Foss, 2016). Communication psychology also highlights how humans process, understand, and respond to messages in interpersonal, group, and mass communication (West & Turner, 2021).

New media refers to digital communication technology that emerged in the era of the internet and information technology. New media has different characteristics from traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers (X. Chen, 2023; Sikumbang et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the theory of symbolic interactionism was first introduced by George Herbert Mead and later developed by Herbert Blumer. This theory emphasizes that humans act based on the meanings they give to objects, events, and other people, and that these meanings are formed and modified through social interaction. Symbolic interactionism sees humans as active beings in interpreting and responding to the world around them, not just as passive recipients of social stimuli (Mardon et al., 2021). Kenneth Burke suggests that individuals can connect with each other through symbols, language, and shared experiences (Ohorella et al., 2024). These relationships can lead to a sense of unity or community among people, even if they have different views. Burke's concept emphasizes that identification is not just about agreement but about finding common ground in shared experiences or symbols (Overall, 2017; Harianto et al., 2023).

John Fiske (1992) defines fandom as a popular cultural phenomenon in industrial society in which a group of people specifically select a number of cultural products, such as narratives, idol stars, or genres, from the mass production of the culture industry, then form a community with its own culture that revolves around the object of fandom. Fandom is not just passive consumption, it is a form of popular culture that is reinforced and becomes an intense and significant form of cultural production.

Reception theory was proposed by Stuart Hall in 1996. This theory emphasizes the importance of the role of the audience in shaping the meaning of media texts. Stuart Hall emphasized that the process of interpreting media texts is not fixed but can vary based on the context and experience of the audience. This means that the meaning of media texts is not rigidly determined by their creators, but is shaped by how the audience interprets and responds to the media. Audiences are not passive recipients of messages, but are active in constructing meaning based on their social, cultural, and experiential backgrounds (Nasrullah, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This study is a study that uses a qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2014), a qualitative approach is very effective in exploring and understanding complex social and cultural contexts. The focus of this study is not only looking at Korean pop music (K-Pop) limited to entertainment consumption, but also includes how teenagers express themselves and form identities through interactions with Korean pop music (K-Pop) on social media. The subjects in this study were teenagers who were members of the Carat Medan fandom. According to the National Family Planning Coordinating Agency (BKKBN), teenagers are aged 10-24 years, but are not married in that age range (Bulan, 2023). This study uses the main data collection techniques, namely participant observation and in-depth interviews. The observation used in this study is participant observation. The first observation made was observing the YouTube channel @Pledis17. Researchers will analyze the uploaded content, and

identify the values found and become an inspiration for teenagers in forming their identities. Second, researchers will attend activities held by the Carat Medan fandom during the data collection period. During field observations, researchers will record interactions between Carat teenagers, how they express their identities as fans. The data analysis technique used in this study follows the approach of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana offer an influential framework for qualitative data analysis, which emphasizes systematic and inclusive procedures. This approach includes four main stages, namely data collection, data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Each stage is interrelated, forming a continuous cycle that increases the reliability and depth of qualitative analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Carat Medan Fandom Teenagers' Acceptance of Korean Pop Music (K-Pop) on the YouTube Channel @Pledis17

The acceptance of Carat Medan fandom teenagers towards K-Pop, especially the group SEVENTEEN through the YouTube channel @Pledis17 managed by Pledis Entertainment, shows an interesting social phenomenon. The YouTube channel @Pledis17 produces various official SEVENTEEN content, including music videos (MVs), behind-the-scenes videos, stage performances, reality shows, and various other exclusive content. In line with the encoding process in the reception theory by Stuart Hall (1996), referring to the production of media messages (Ida, 2016). Pledis Entertainment, as an encoder, packages messages through various content, ranging from meaningful music videos to entertaining variety shows.

Pledis Entertainment through the YouTube channel @Pledis17 has a specific purpose in producing and distributing content on YouTube and offering these messages through various elements, such as visuals, music, lyrics, narratives, and language used to be received by fans. The YouTube content produced by @Pledis17 acts as the main source in building fan interaction and discussion both within the fandom. The role of social media in the K-Pop fandom based on research conducted by Nugraha and Komisiah (2023) shows a similar pattern where digital platforms become an important space for fans to interact with idols and fellow fans (Humaizi et al., 2024).

The findings state that all informants started actively watching YouTube @Pledis17 after becoming SEVENTEEN fans, confirming the role of YouTube as a space for interaction between SEVENTEEN and its fans (Carat) through the content produced. YouTube, as a new media, offers high accessibility and interactivity. The need to keep up with idols, as shown by informants Sevrina and Caca, shows how YouTube facilitates real-time connections between fans and idols. Furthermore, Anas, who got to know SEVENTEEN through GOING SEVENTEEN on YouTube, showed the potential of this platform in attracting new fans and expanding the reach of the fandom. This is in accordance with the characteristics of new media which offers various conveniences for fans in accessing information about their idols (Padang et al., 2024).

Some of the reasons why informants choose YouTube based on research findings are because of the accessibility of official and free content. Research on the use of social media in fandom conducted by (Maros & Basek, 2022) shows that access to information and connection with the community are important factors. The use of YouTube features such as playlists and shares by Sevrina, May, and Abiyah shows how new media facilitates the curation and distribution of content by fans. This is in line with the fandom theory by John Fiske (1992) which emphasizes the activeness of fans in interpreting and producing meaning from popular culture texts. The intensity of watching YouTube content @Pledis17 based on informants also varies, depending on what content they watch. May, showed the highest intensity by watching content, namely every day when he was doing assignments, relaxing, and in his spare time. Anas also showed high intensity by making SEVENTEEN's discography his main playlist and routinely watching GOING SEVENTEEN every week. Abiyah also routinely listens to SEVENTEEN songs as a daily playlist and watches GOING SEVENTEEN regularly every week, and other content when she has free time. Meanwhile, Caca and Sevrina routinely always wait and watch the latest content on YouTube @Pledis17. In line with the reception theory, the intensity of watching shows that informants do not receive messages passively, but actively interpret and give meaning to them according to their personal context (Nasrullah, 2019).

Music videos (MV) and variety shows GOING SEVENTEEN (GOSE) are the content that research informants are most interested in. Music videos (MV), watching MVs, especially during comebacks, are mandatory activities for most informants. Caca and Abiyah consider this an integral part of following the development of idols. Sevrina highlighted the lyrics of SEVENTEEN's MV which have themes of youth, struggle, and motivation, distinguishing them from other K-Pop groups that often focus on themes of romance. This shows how the quality and message in SEVENTEEN's MV are appreciated by fans. One of them is Abiyah who appreciates the deep messages in SEVENTEEN's songs that relate to life. Watching MVs, especially during comebacks, is a priority for all informants.

Carat Medan Fandom Teenagers' Interpretation of Korean Pop Music (K-Pop) on the YouTube Channel @Pledis17

Carat Medan fandom teenagers interpret K-Pop content on the YouTube channel @Pledis17 not only as entertainment, but also as a source of inspiration and positive values that are relevant to their lives. This interpretation shows how K-Pop content can have a deeper impact, beyond just passive media consumption. In line with the reception theory by Stuart Hall (1996), rather than being passive recipients, the audience actively interprets and constructs meaning based on their background, experiences, and values (Nasrullah, 2019). Then, it is also in line with the fandom theory by John Fiske (1992) which emphasizes how fans have the power to interpret and use cultural products in their own way, regardless of the producer's intentions. This means that Carat Medan fandom teenagers do not passively receive messages from agencies or the K-Pop industry, but actively shape their own meaning and values from the content.

Most informants, such as Caca, May, Anas, and Abiyah, stated that the YouTube content of @Pledis17 is meaningful as entertainment. However, they also acknowledged the values they received during the process of enjoying the content. As with the results of observations conducted by analyzing the YouTube channel @Pledis17, the production of YouTube content @Pledis17 provides values that create a strong emotional bond between SEVENTEEN and its fans. May, for example, found inspiration from SEVENTEEN's tenacity and dedication shown in the behind-the-scenes content of concerts and rehearsals. In accordance with research conducted by Rosseta Septia Menawati and Addin Kurnia Putri (2023), K-Pop agencies, in this case Pledis Entertainment, produce idols as products that embody certain values and concepts.

One informant, Sevrina, specifically interpreted the content of @Pledis17 as a part of forming her youth. In line with the theory of symbolic interactionism, meaning is formed through social interaction, and individuals give meaning to objects, events, or experiences based on their interactions with the social environment and the symbols in it (West & Turner, 2021). Sevrina does not only consume content from @Pledis17 and YouTube @Pledis19 passively, but actively gives personal and emotional meaning to the content, especially because of her long-term attachment to the group SEVENTEEN. For Sevrina, these contents are not just entertainment, but become symbols that represent the values, aspirations, and spirits that she internalized during her youth. Overall, the informants found various positive values in the content of YouTube @Pledis17.

This finding shows the process of constructing meaning that is formed through the interaction between SEVENTEEN as idols and their fans through the digital platform. This is in line with the theory of symbolic interactionism, which views humans as active individuals in interpreting and responding to their social environment, not just passive recipients of social stimuli (Mardon et al., 2021). In this context, all informants actively interpret the content they consume, by interpreting certain values that they find in the videos uploaded by @Pledis17.

The interpretation carried out in this study is based on the reception theory by Stuart Hall (1996), the audience is not passive in receiving media messages, but actively interprets them. This interpretation process is divided into three positions: dominant-hegemony, negotiation, and opposition (Pujileksono, 2016). In this context, the meaning of the informants towards SEVENTEEN is mostly in the dominant-hegemony and negotiation positions. Informants such as Caca, Sevrina, May, and Abiyah tend to accept the values that are implicitly communicated by SEVENTEEN, namely independence, hard work, teamwork, friendship, togetherness, and family. This shows that the positive messages presented by SEVENTEEN have been successfully received and internalized by fans according to what the producers might have intended.

Korean Wave through K-Pop in the Formation of Carat Medan Fandom Youth Identity

The Korean Wave or Hallyu has become an influential global cultural phenomenon, permeating various aspects of life, including music, drama, film, and lifestyle. K-Pop, as one of the main pillars of Hallyu, has achieved extraordinary popularity among teenagers around the world, including Indonesia (Wahdani & Aufa, 2021). K-Pop, as a popular cultural product that is mass-produced and distributed globally, meets these criteria. Its success lies not only in its attractive music and visuals, but also in the industry's ability to build narratives about hard work, perfection, and aspiration, which are then packaged through sophisticated marketing strategies and effective use of social media (Huth, 2021).

The idol group SEVENTEEN, through the YouTube platform, especially the official channel @Pledis17, facilitates the process of negotiating meaning and constructing a dynamic identity for Carat Medan fandom teenagers. YouTube @Pledis17 becomes a space for interaction in the formation of their identities influenced by the Korean Wave. Based on the theory of symbolic interactionism (West & Turner, 2021), @Pledis17 content, such as SEVENTEEN's music, videos, and performances, function as symbols that are interpreted and given meaning by teenagers. The identification process, as explained by Kenneth Burke in Morissan (2024), occurs when individuals find similarities and connections with other figures, in this case SEVENTEEN, and internalize their values and perspectives. Carat Medan fandom teenagers identify and adopt SEVENTEEN values that suit themselves, forming an identity narrative through this symbolic interaction process. Based on the results of observations, the values found in SEVENTEEN via YouTube @Pledis17 and the Carat Medan fandom are related to each other, where these values create an emotional feeling in all research informants. The identity narrative formed in the findings of this study shows that the values of SEVENTEEN and the Carat Medan fandom are an inspiration for Carat Medan fandom teenagers in forming their identities. Referring to Soetjiningsih (2010), there are two sources of identity formation, significant other and reference group. In this context, SEVENTEEN acts as a significant other, a source of personal inspiration, while the Carat Medan fandom acts as a reference group, providing social influence in the formation of the identity of Carat Medan fandom teenagers.

Soetjiningsih (2010) explains significant other as an ideal figure who is used as a model or example in the identification process. Teenagers will embrace and internalize the values of their idols into themselves. SEVENTEEN acts as a significant other in the formation of the identity of Carat Medan fandom teenagers, a concept that refers to influential figures who are sources of inspiration and role models in the formation of their identity. The research findings show how adolescents' interactions with SEVENTEEN content on @Pledis17 are more than just entertainment and have become important influences in their lives. Identification theory explains this phenomenon, where individuals build emotional relationships with media figures and internalize the values presented (P. J. Burke & Stets, 2023).

SEVENTEEN as significant others has an influence in shaping the personality and life principles of informants, such as Caca who shifted from the "YOLO" principle to being more mature, Sevrina who found the motivation for success, May who transformed from being insecure to being brave enough to speak up, Anas who adopted the principle of calmness in life, and Abiyah who internalized the values of hard work and never giving up. This shows how identification with idols can encourage constructive self-development. These changes not only occur at the cognitive level, but also affect real behavior, such as clothing style and increased self-confidence observed by Anas and Abiyah's parents.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All research informants interpreted the content of YouTube @Pledis17, where they found entertainment, inspiration, motivation, and positive values such as hard work, dedication, togetherness, friendship, and others on the YouTube channel @Pledis17. SEVENTEEN's music and lyrics provide emotional impact, while the members become role models. However, they are also critical of the K-Pop industry, cultural differences, and negative fan behavior, showing a negotiated reading position by accepting the positive and rejecting the negative, showing a balance between identification with idols and critical thinking skills. Korean Wave through K-Pop, SEVENTEEN and Carat Medan fandom, plays a role in the formation of research informants' identities. SEVENTEEN, as a significant other, inspires changes in values and life principles, while Carat Medan fandom, as a reference group, provides a sense of togetherness and support. Interaction with @Pledis17 content and fellow fans facilitates negotiation of meaning and identity construction, where the "Carat" identity is expressed in various ways, although some teenagers experience conflict in integrating this identity with other aspects of their lives. This is in line with the theory of symbolic interactionism, identification, and fandom, which explains how teenagers actively form their identities through interactions with symbols, figures, and communities.

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