

Beyond Tweets: Mass and Group Convergence Communication in Yogyakarta Fandom

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ABSTRACT

Social media has revolutionized communication, creating new spaces for interaction and expression. This study examines the Stray Kids Yogyakarta community on Twitter (@straykids_YK), a fanbase for the South Korean idol group Stray Kids, established in December 2017. Although interaction on Twitter is limited, community organizers try to increase engagement by providing information about upcoming events and joint projects with other fanbase accounts, hoping to increase community awareness. This research, based on qualitative and case study methods, explores the role of the Stray Kids Yogyakarta community through interviews with administrators and community members. The study revealed that the Stray Kids Yogyakarta community thrives through active communication on WhatsApp, Instagram, and in-person meetings, despite limited Twitter engagement. Interviews highlighted that while Twitter needs improvement, the community is vibrant and well-connected, showing strong adaptability and dedication among fans. This indicates the community's ability to maintain robust connections and engagement across multiple platforms.

Keywords: Mass Communication; Group Communication; Convergence Communication, Fanbase; K-Pop

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of communication theory categories helps in predicting future events and fosters environmental order. Every communication phenomenon that occurs is explained through categories that correspond to its useful part (Reardon & Rogers, 1988). Previously, there were six levels of communication that have their own parts and theories in solving the problems of communication phenomena that occur. Communication phenomena can only be explained using one of these communication levels.

The presence of the internet is the background for changes in communication technology that were originally conventional to develop into modern, digital, and very fast (Sari et al., 2018). The development of science and technology is growing more rapidly. This is characterized by advances in the field of information media and media technology. The positive and negative impacts of advances in information media technology have been felt by almost all levels of society (Ameliola & Nugraha, 2013).. One of them has an impact on the freedom

and ease with which a person can obtain and convey information to others. Information that moves freely across the traditional boundaries of the country makes the number of mass media increasingly develop following the rapid flow of information (Machmud, 2012) (Machmud, 2012).

The emergence of social media has had a major impact on people's efforts to accelerate message distribution. Social media is considered a new public space for young people to share and discuss issues and demands for revolution. This is because social media can increase the freedom of two-way interaction between communicators and audiences. Previously, communication that occurred in the mass media was only one-way communication, where the audience could not provide feedback to the communicator. Freedom of opinion, expression, and dissemination of information to the public makes social media popular with a wide audience because it has opened up a space that has not been provided by conventional mass media (Dewantara & Widhyarto, 2016).

The freedom of the audience in expressing their expression on a particular issue has led some people who have the same goal to form virtual communities online. A virtual community is a collection of social media account users with real or imagined identities formed online to interact intensely through the internet network (Nasrullah, 2012). All messages sent by community groups to social media can also be directly seen by a wide audience. So that the communication that occurs between members of the community is no longer between members but also from the community to the audience. The communication that occurs is also two-way, so that anyone can provide feedback from the messages conveyed by the community. One of them happens on social media Twitter, the freedom of social media is a good ecosystem for virtual communities to become more heterogeneous and more fertile to give rise to new communities such as the K-Pop community.

Korean Pop (K-Pop) consists of many different artists. Artists are usually divided between male groups and female groups, although there are mixed groups and soloists as well. K-pop stars are also called idols (Trazo, 2022). K-Pop itself is a pop music genre originating from South Korea. In the era of globalization, K-pop has a uniqueness that makes the K-pop industry highly controlled and image-oriented. The development of K-pop from the beginning was to spread Korean popular culture. The majority of the song lyrics are written in Korean and there are some English phrases often added to the lyrics and song titles. K-Pop idols are also encouraged and taught to speak English and other languages to increase their global appeal (Leung, 2012).

K-Pop itself began to be recognized in Indonesia since the 2000s, until now these Korean boy bands and girl bands have had a large and strong fandom in Indonesia (Sa'diyah, 2015). The K-Pop community in Indonesia, for most laypeople, is considered excessive, consumptive, and obsessive towards their idols because they like to spend their money to buy merchandise and follow their idols wherever their idols go. In fact, fandom activities are not only limited to the culture of fan behavior, but fans are also active in producing a message (Sa'diyah, 2015).

Stray Kids is a South Korean idol group sheltered by entertainment agency JYP, including the fourth generation because it debuted in 2018. Stray Kids is favored by fans around the world including in Indonesia. On November 12-13, 2022, the Stray Kids concert in Jakarta, Indonesia was attended by approximately 15,000 spectators from all over Indonesia. The number of Stray Kids fans throughout Indonesia has led each region to have an online fan community to increase bonding among fans. The purpose of this research is to find out how the role of the Stray Kids Yogyakarta community in increasing fanclub activity on Twitter.

The twitter account of @straykids_YK is a fan community of the idol group Stray Kids in South Korea. This community is located in Yogyakarta and has joined twitter since December 2017, until now its followers number 821. The city of Yogyakarta itself has a lot of

events that often invite K-Pop fanbases, because of the large number of K-Pop communities in Yogyakarta. This community is active in organizing events to increase togetherness between Stray Kids fans in Yogyakarta and surrounding areas. The role of community leaders and administrators in driving engagement and organizing events has not been sufficiently studied. Additionally, there is an absence of comparative analysis on how fan engagement differs across various social media platforms. This research will examine their influence on the community's overall activity and engagement, and investigate the differences in engagement between Twitter and other platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Bittner (1980) defines mass communication as messages transmitted through mass media to a large audience. This type of communication is characterized by its complexity, broad audience reach, rapid information dissemination, simultaneous distribution, and one-way nature, making direct interaction and feedback challenging (Kustiawan et al., 2022). According to (Romli, 2016), communication that occurs at a large meeting with an audience of hundreds to thousands cannot be said to be mass communication because it is not conveyed through mass media. The audience can be referred to as a population that represents various layers of society, so that the content of the message is addressed not only to certain groups of people but to everyone (Freidson, 1953). The communication messages delivered continue to be produced and distributed to the audience continuously (Gerbner, 1967).

Group communication involves interactions among more than two individuals with a common goal (Shaw, 1976). This form of communication is face-to-face, allowing members to influence each other, share roles, and make decisions together. The main elements include communicators, messages, media, and effects, all aimed at achieving group benefits (Jayanti, 2015; Tutiasri, 2016). According to Hariadi Samsi (2011), groups are characterized by interactions between members of two or more people, have common goals, have structures and patterns of communication relationships that exist between members, there are roles, norms, relationships between members, and group ownership to become a single unit.

Mass communication has only been defined as a means of transmitting messages using mass media (press, radio, television) to reach a large audience (Rogers, 1983), so that there is very little feedback from mass communication and one-way communication occurs. The fundamental difference between group communication and mass communication is in the communicator, the content of the message conveyed, feedback, and the media used to convey communication messages.

Convergence refers to the merging of different technologies and media platforms into one, primarily through digitization (Alisty, 2022). The internet has facilitated this convergence by integrating mass media with social media, enabling simultaneous message transmission and two-way communication. This convergence allows for user-generated content, enhancing interaction and feedback, and positively impacting information dissemination (Rachmaria & Dewi, 2018; Harahap et al., 2021). The ability of social media to send communication messages simultaneously, and at the same time two-way communication where all social media users can send feedback directly, made the mass media begin to move into social media. The emergence of convergence has a positive impact on people's information needs (Harahap et al., 2021).

METHOD

This research is a qualitative research using case study methodology. The case study research method is used in this research to explore a group that aims to obtain an in-depth description of the subject of this research. The population of this research consists of account owners and members of the @straykids_YK twitter account community. Sampling of respondents in this study was determined using purposive sampling method. One of the sampling techniques from a population that uses several criteria that respondents must have, namely: (1) are followers of the @straykids_YK Twitter account for at least 2 months, and (2) actively participate in community activities. The above criteria refer to admin respondents, and 4 followers of the @straykids_YK community Twitter account. Requiring followers to have been part of the @straykids_YK Twitter community for at least 2 months ensures that respondents have had sufficient time to engage meaningfully with the community, thereby enhancing the reliability and depth of the data collected.

Interviews were conducted using question guidelines and some questions were developed so as to obtain complete interview results. Interviews with admins were conducted face-to-face, while with followers were conducted online due to the limited distance traveled by respondents. Source triangulation validity was carried out to compare and confirm the results of interviews obtained from one respondent with another and the results of researcher observations. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman interactive analysis technique. The following are the stages of data analysis, (1) collecting research data from interviews and observations, (2) interview results go through a data reduction process with interview coding, (3) presenting interview data, (4) drawing conclusions from data that has been obtained from interviews and observations and verifying data.

DISCUSSION

K-Pop has garnered a vast fanbase due to its spectacular and energetic dance performances, easy listening songs, and the charming visuals of its idols. The genre has evolved through four generations, with the latest generation, including groups like Stray Kids, emerging in the 2020s. Stray Kids, in particular, has gained popularity in Indonesia due to their inspiring music and meaningful lyrics, which resonate with listeners by addressing life's difficulties and boosting self-esteem. Additionally, the fact that Stray Kids members create most of their songs sets them apart from other K-Pop groups.

The StrayKids_YK Twitter account plays a crucial role in disseminating information about upcoming events, collaborative projects with other fan communities, fandom exhibitions, and past activities. This platform enables swift and widespread communication, making it easy for followers and non-followers to access information due to the interactive nature of social media. Stray Kids is favored by fans in Indonesia because of its inspiring music, the lyrics of Stray Kids songs talk about many difficulties experienced in life, are full of meaning, are able to inspire listeners, and can increase the self-esteem of the listeners (Sudarwati, 2022).

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1. Engagement Levels on Twitter: Despite the platform's potential for rapid information dissemination, the StrayKids_YK community exhibits low interaction levels on Twitter.

This is evidenced by the limited number of retweets, likes, replies, and shares that the tweets receive. This suggests a discrepancy between the community's efforts and the actual engagement from followers.

2. **Role of Administrators:** The community administrators play a pivotal role in the attempt to enhance engagement by organising a variety of activities. Such activities include the sharing of event details, the collaboration on joint projects with other fan bases, and the promotion of social initiatives such as disaster relief funds. The administrators' efforts serve to illustrate their considerable influence on the community's overall activity and engagement levels.
3. **Alternative Platforms for Communication:** While Twitter communication is less active, the community maintains robust interaction through WhatsApp groups, face-to-face meetings, and Instagram. These platforms offer more personal and direct communication channels, fostering closer relationships among members who share common interests. The active participation in WhatsApp groups and face-to-face meetings underscores the importance of multi-platform engagement strategies for virtual communities.

Although communication on Twitter social media is less active, active communication is established in Whatsapp groups, when there are face-to-face meetings, and Instagram social media in this community. Interaction between community members is well established and tends to be close to each other because they have the same interests.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Stray Kids' appeal in Indonesia stems from their unique, self-created music and relatable, inspiring lyrics. The StrayKids_YK Twitter account serves as a vital tool for communication, although it struggles with low interaction levels. The community compensates for this with more active engagement on other platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram. Future research should delve deeper into the convergence of group and mass communication in the digital age. Additionally, comparative case studies of social media accounts with higher community interaction could provide more comprehensive data and insights aligned with research expectations. Suggestions in future research, to be able to discuss more deeply about the convergence between group communication and mass communication that occurs in this modern era. In addition, it can take case studies on several social media accounts belonging to the same company with greater community interaction and then compare several social media accounts, so that the data obtained becomes more and get the analysis that is in line with expectations.

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