

INTERMEDIALITY IN FANDOM CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF BTS ON KOREAN LITERATURE READING HABITS: FOCUSING ON INDONESIAN ARMY

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Abstract: Fandom forms cultural spaces where audiences unite. This article introduces fan activities influenced by idols, discussed and shared in affinity spaces. It offers a theoretical framework, focusing on BTS fandom (ARMY) reading habits in Korean literature. This model highlights content intermediality's importance in analyzing media content within fandom culture. Using content analysis and digital ethnography methods, this study examines Indonesian ARMY fandom through the @IARC_twt twitter account. Results reveal productive reading activities within the Indonesian BTS ARMY fandom, including build reading habit through sub-community in twitter, transmedia storytelling through idol reading lists, and hashtag-sharing. These activities also promote books related to BTS album themes and Korean literature to the public. Furthermore, the article explores the positive impact within fandom culture and conceptualizes a productive fandom model.

Keyword: fandom culture, intermediality, BTS, reading habits, korean literature, ARMY Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

With the pervasive influence of pop culture, the phenomenon of idolization has taken on new dimensions. Icons from the realms of music, movies, and sports have emerged as powerful influencers through social media, shaping the beliefs, aspirations, and lifestyle choices of their devoted fans. The advent of the internet has given fans the ability to shift from mere recipients of media content to engaged contributors in recreating and sharing new content³. As fans immerse themselves in the live of their favorite idol, they may start imitating the idol's behavior, fashion preferences, and even adopting their ideologies.

Due to this behavior of fans where they disregard their own value, fandom activities are often viewed negatively by the general public. The word 'fan' itself originally derived from 'fanatics', and so is the public image of fandom and its activity is all about fanaticism. Connection between fandom and idol can lead to what is known as 'celebrity worship behavior'⁴, where fans become excessively fixated on their idols, disregarding other aspects of their lives and losing their own sense of individual value. The strongest public image, however, is probably that fans going into fits of weeping when groups declare their break-up, or else of hysterically screeching fans at concerts or other so-called teenie bands. These rather negative

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³Jean Burgess & Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*. (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

⁴Nuria Astagini, Veronica Kaihatu, and Yugo Dwi Prasetyo. "Parasocial Interaction and Relationship in Indonesian Celebrity Social Media Accounts". *Communicology: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 5, no.1, (2017):67-93.

images are carried by the media and mark the notions of many of what it means to be a fan: intense idolization and fan hysteria⁵.

However, in the case of BTS and its fandom ‘ARMY’, there is a phenomenon of fandom activities that have shown a mutual healthy relationship. Interestingly, study highlights that BTS fans, particularly those who are students, exhibit high levels of social media using time without a corresponding increase in their celebrity worship tendencies⁶. ‘이제 그만 보고 시험공부 해, 네 부모님과 부장님 날 미워해 (*Now stop watching and study/ Your parents and bosses hate me*)’ says the lyrics in the first verse of BTS RM’s rap, referring to the time that fans spend absorbing their idol related content and how it distracts from their daily lives. This lyrics is a part of the band song called ‘Pied Piper’ in their album ‘Her’, which is also become most subversive song of fandom culture in their career. While some critics argue that idol-fans most likely formed celebrity worship behavior and give negative effects, BTS and ARMY have exemplified how this admiration can foster positive transformations in people's lives. The relationship between BTS and ARMY goes beyond the conventional idol-fans dynamic. BTS' status as role models is not solely derived from their fame, but from the genuine impact they have on their fans' lives. Their empowering music and dedication to spreading positivity have transformed them into beacons of hope for ARMY, who in turn draw inspiration from their idols' journeys, resilience, and personal growth. This mutual respect and admiration between BTS and ARMY exemplifies a positive dynamic that extends beyond the realm of mere celebrity worship, turning it into a powerful bond built on support, understanding, and the shared belief in the transformative power of music and compassion.

Over the past 10 years of their career, BTS and ARMY have represented a supportive ecosystem of partnership between idol and fans. Participatory practice of global BTS fans and whose affective commitments to the idol group create additional values⁷. The existence of BTS and its music has been a source of inspiration for ARMY, which has led to the establishment of numerous smaller communities within the fandom. BTS has been shown a series of positive influences towards fandom and youth in general along with their campaign ‘Love Yourself’ narrative paired with their work with the U.N. Apart from the stage and work, BTS members also show inspiring personalities. This inspiration is captured by fans to grow into better individuals as well. Recently, one interesting issue is how BTS has formed an ecosystem of literacy which of course is followed by its fans enthusiastically. With their impact, BTS bridging Korean literature to the world. Fans are not just uncovering fresh literary works; they are also delving deeper into the history and culture of South Korea⁸. The persistence of 'literature everywhere' is reflected in BTS' works for over the past 10 years. From the books that inspired BTS' music to the books the members read, 160 books have been made into best sellers, with a variety of interests such as philosophy, fiction, and art⁹. Among those books, there are books which is write by Korean author and simply got endorsed from BTS members to reach new audience and reader, the ARMY.

⁵ Stefanie Rhein, “Being a Fan is More than That: Fan-Specific Involvement with Music” *The World of Music* 42, no.1, (2000): 95–109.

⁶Dinda Juwita Ratu Hapsari, Indri Utami Sumaryanti, “The Relationship between Celebrity Worship and Problematic Social Media Use among BTS Fans in Bandung,” *Bandung Conference Series: Psychology* 1, no.1, (2021): 92-98.

⁷Park Boram, 11 December 2019, “BTS Symbolizes Cross-border Pop Culture in New Media Era: Scholars”, Yonhap News, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20191211009900315>.

⁸Namjoon’s Library, 01 August, 2022, “When the World's Biggest Band Ignites a Love of Reading”, *Korean Literature Now*, <https://kln.or.kr/strings/columnsView.do?bbsIdx=1818>.

⁹Kim Seulgi, 18 May 2020, “From Classics to Philosophical Books... 'BTS Seller' Shaking Bookstores (고전부터 철학책까지...서점가 흔드는 `BTS셀러`)", *MK News*, <https://www.mk.co.kr/news/culture/9344769>.

In the composition of lyrical and narrative content for their musical works, BTS strategically incorporates references from various literary works. The practice of intermediality within BTS extends to literature, encompassing elements from novels, poetry, and analogous textual sources. Moreover, BTS members actively show reading habits through their engagements across social media, variety shows, and documentaries. This consistent integration of literary influence underscores the intermediality inherent in BTS's artistic works over time.

Furthermore, by seamlessly integrating elements of literature into their musical works, BTS has cultivated a symbiotic relationship between literature and a expand culture of reading among their fanbase. Notably, the phenomenon of BTS aligning with literature has prompted fans, known as the ARMY, to emulate their idols' reading practices and disseminate literary materials to a broader audience. This practice of intermediality in fandom culture, within the BTS into ARMY community and subsequently transposed into wider audience, holds the potential to extend the influence of literary habits of the idol beyond the idol's works, but also to the fandom, even reaching a wider local and public reader in general.

INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN FAN STUDIES AND INTERMEDIALITY

In the context of fandom culture, the assumption is often made that the word 'fan' refers to the individual, while 'fandom' pertains to the community. However, media studies do not strictly differentiate between fans and fandom. Instead, 'fan researchers' aim to portray fandom positively and typically explore fan communities and their practices¹⁰. The term 'fan' is derived from 'fanatic' and was initially used in late 19th-century British newspapers to describe individuals who passionately followed sports teams. In the past, popular culture viewed fans as problematic¹¹. Nevertheless, Jenkins played a key role in adopting a favorable perception of fans through his study of fan activities and communities related to various media.

Shared goals, common interests, shared activities and governance, mutual satisfaction of needs, cooperation, enjoyment, pleasure and location as common understandings of community¹². Fandom as a community is viewed as a network of networks, or a loose affiliation of sub-subcultures, all specializing in different modes of fan activity¹³. These modes of fan activity are built within participatory cultures. In participatory cultures, fans actively act as producers and creators of some form of creative media. Jenkins¹⁴ define a participatory culture more specifically and mention how contributions matter in this form of subculture. Members of the community in fandom feel social connection within each other and express themselves in participatory culture through works they are specifically interested in. In doing so, they create spaces where they can actively express their contribution while still preserving the same values their idol promoted.

This form of fan activity is a mold of their interconnection between fan and idol. Therefore, fan cultural practices can be understood through the concept of intermediality. Here,

¹⁰Mark Duffet, *Understanding Fandom: An Introduction to the Study of Fan Culture*, (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013).

¹¹Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture*, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992).

¹²Jenny Preece, "Online Communities: Designing Usability, Supporting Sociability", *Industrial Management & Data Systems* 100, no. 9, (2000): 459-460.

¹³Matt Hills, "From Fan Culture/Community to the Fan World: Possible *Pathways and Ways of Having Done Fandom*." *Palabra Clave* 20, no.4, (2017): 856-883.

¹⁴Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

the definition of intermediality in this study is a form of transfer or combination of forms and/or content that connects a text/narrative medium to another medium¹⁵, where the music realm plays a role as bridge of the literature and a reading habit of fans.

Intermediality is the concept of transfer or ‘transmediality’ which is when content flows across unique media and media platforms. In some cases, narratives from one medium can be extended to another through spin-offs and can be associated with specific genres. At the same time, these transfers can also be thematic as they mediate certain aesthetics or textual cues that are considered to be of one mind. Within the field of media and communication studies, there exists a historical inclination towards an aesthetic and broadly discursive approach to analyzing media, which can be traced back to the foundations of the humanities. In this context, the humanities traditionally viewed media as ‘texts’ – distinct objects of analysis and interpretation, sources of reflection and enlightenment, often considered as unique artistic creations that arguably transcend the boundaries of historical time. As the 20th century progressed, humanistic scholarship gradually broadened its perspective, acknowledging that ‘texts’ could encompass a wider range of vehicles for conveying meaning, including images, conversations, and even everyday artifacts. This shift in perspective was, in part, a response to the evolving social landscape of culture and communication. While it was once acceptable to focus exclusively on a limited number of canonical or prototypical works as legitimate subjects of analysis, this approach became increasingly impractical in the era of global mass media and networked forms of communication. In this contemporary landscape, the relationships between various forms of media, often referred to as "intermediality," have become notably central.

The concept of intermediality was preceded by the notion of ‘intertextuality’, which posits that texts are temporary manifestations of a broader ‘textuality’¹⁶. Texts are seen as selective expressions of a cultural heritage, and culture itself can be viewed as the most intricate embodiment of textuality and intertextuality. The Latin root of the word ‘text’ (from the verb ‘texere’) signifies the act of weaving, whether it involves fabric or narrative. This term underscores the process through which ideas are shaped and given form – informed. For centuries, the traditions of rhetoric and hermeneutics regarded texts as intricate structures of meaning, organized in layers, webs, and interconnected circles. What theories of intertextuality began to highlight was the idea that texts are neither permanent nor stable in their meanings; instead, they are contingent and ephemeral. This perspective contrasts with the notion that texts possess inherent, unchanging content or form. According to these theories, whether in the realm of literary works or other types of messages, the meanings of texts are not self-contained but are constructed in relation to other texts.

The concept of intermediality is similar to adaptation, which is the process that occurs when a narrative is repeated or reused for different media¹⁷. Redirection does not necessarily imply a thorough adaptation of the entire text. This process can also be limited to references, such as excerpts of dialog and movie scenes, a piece of rhyme in a poem, and a chapter in a novel. Critically, it is important to note that media texts not only mediate narrative content to each other but can also transfer the aesthetic conventions of a medium. Moreover, Henry Jenkins has also suggested the concept of transmedia storytelling, in which a narrative is told across different media such as comic books or movies¹⁸. It is a part of cultural development

¹⁵Nicolle Lamerichs, “Shared Narratives: Intermediality in Fandom.” in *Productive Fandom: Intermediality and Affective Reception in Fan Cultures* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2018): 11–34.

¹⁶Klaus Bruhn Jensen, “Intermediality”, in W. Donsbach (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Communication Vol.6*, (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008): 2385-2387.

¹⁷Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*. (New York Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2006).

¹⁸Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

where the consumers are encouraged to seek out new information and make connections among dispersed media content. The theory of planned behavior¹⁹ provides a comprehensive understanding of how someone's attitudes impact behavior by focusing on intention, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes to behavior. Below is a schematic representation of the theory of planned behavior.

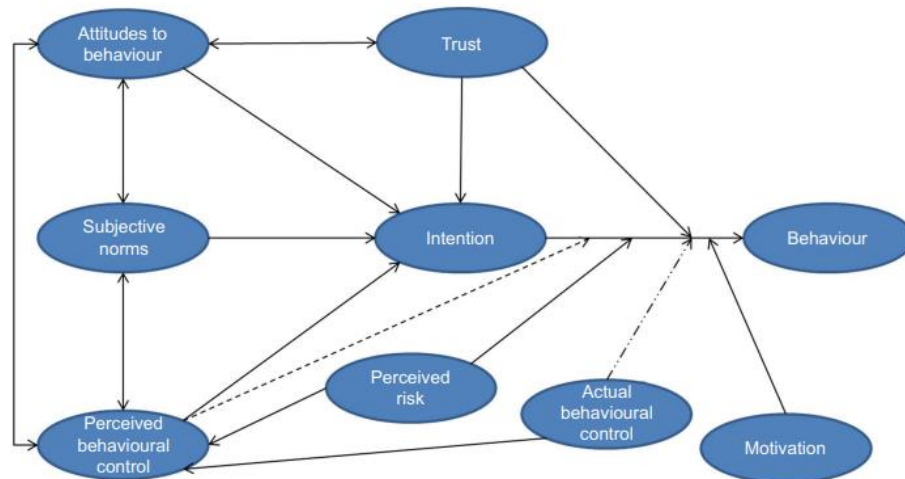


Figure 1. Theory of planned behaviour (Cairns et al., 2014)

The theory of planned behavior serves as a comprehensive framework centered on an individual's intention to partake in specific behaviors, emphasizing the critical role intentions play in behavior execution. This theoretical foundation becomes even more relevant when considering the interrelationship between intermediality, adaptation, and planned behavior, offering insights into how media content, narrative structures, and human responses intricately weave together to mold our cultural landscape. Illustrated in Figure 1, the theory of planned behavior seamlessly complements this understanding by exploring how attitudes shape behavior through intention, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and attitudes toward behavior. This multi-dimensional approach aligns harmoniously with the dynamic and contingent nature of intermediality, casting light on the intricate dynamics between intention and action within diverse media contexts. Expanding upon this, the theory's application to habit formation underscores the complexity involved, highlighting the interplay of personal beliefs, societal norms, attitudes, and the individual's capacity for self-control in shaping enduring habits. Thus, this holistic perspective contributes to a nuanced comprehension of how intentions manifest into lasting behaviors within the ever-evolving landscape of media and cultural influences.

FANDOM PRODUCTIVITY AND TWITTER AS A HUB

In contemporary times, fandom as a community has witnessed a transformation in how they engage in productive activities, largely facilitated by the widespread accessibility of the internet and social media platforms. Although many fandom activities have developed offline such as fan gatherings, these days, online fandom communities are also moving forward. Building upon

¹⁹Cairns, Kate et al., "Psychological Factors to Motivate Sustainable Behaviors," *Proceedings of the ICE - Urban Design and Planning* 167, no. 4, (2014): 165-174.

the theory of planned behavior, these digital platforms play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' intentions and subsequently influencing their habits within fan communities. The online environment provides a space for fans to exchange beliefs, establish subjective norms, and shape attitudes towards their favorite interests. Moreover, the perceived risks and actual behavioral control associated with fan-related activities can be readily discussed and evaluated within these digital spaces. As fans navigate these virtual communities, they encounter motivations and shared values that further contribute to the formation of habits. The dynamic interplay between the theory of planned behavior and the digital landscape underscores how the evolution of technology has not only transformed the nature of fandom but has also become a significant factor in the formation and reinforcement of fan habits. The internet has emerged as a dynamic hub, empowering individuals with tools and resources to connect and collaborate seamlessly and effectively reach a larger scale. One noteworthy example of such an active community is found on Twitter.

Twitter, founded in 2006, has proven to be an indispensable platform for fostering meaningful interactions among like-minded individuals. Fans from diverse backgrounds can unite effortlessly around shared interests. The platform's real-time nature allows for immediate communication and updates, enabling fans to stay informed about the latest news, events, and releases. Moreover, the ease of sharing multimedia content, such as fan art, fan fiction, and fan theories, further strengthens the bond among community members. By serving as a digital nexus for fandoms, Twitter has revolutionized the way modern communities operate, facilitating productive and creative endeavors. Twitter's distinctive 'following' system, which doesn't mandate mutual connections, makes it an ideal platform for studying online interactions and behavior²⁰. Due to its simplicity, Twitter is frequently used to report real-time events and updates.

BRIDGING LITERATURE EMANCIPATION THROUGH MUSIC: EXPLORE LITERATURE THROUGH BTS

BTS, also recognized as the Bangtan Boys or Bangtansonyeondan (방탄소년단), is a South Korean boygroup under the management of Big Hit Entertainment. Their debut was on June 13, 2013, consisted by seven members—RM (formerly Rap Monster), Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook. The group has gained renown for their diverse musical repertoire, spanning genres like K-pop, hip-hop, and pop. BTS has attained widespread international acclaim and prominence, solidifying their position as one of the most prominent and impactful musical groups on a global scale. Their music, characterized by profound lyrics and conscientious themes, has cultivated a devoted fanbase referred to as the 'ARMY'. The group has received numerous prestigious awards and commendations, significantly contributing to the propagation of Korean culture and music across the world. The Korean government is set to honor BTS with the Order of Cultural Merit, acknowledging the idol group's significant role in advancing Korean culture and language on a global scale²¹.

Through their albums, BTS constructs a compelling narrative rooted in their distinctive BU (BTS Universe). For example *Demian: The Story of Emil Sinclair's Youth*, which is a novel centers around the coming-of-age journey of a young boy named Emil Sinclair. BTS draws

²⁰Martin Grandjean, "A Social Network Analysis of Twitter: Mapping the Digital Humanities Community" *Arts & Humanities* 3, (2016): 1-14.

²¹Kang Aa Young, 9 October 2018, "BTS becomes the youngest to receive Order of Cultural Merit", *The KoreaTimes*, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/art/2023/09/398_256678.html.

upon this novel as a source of inspiration for their album titled *WINGS*²². This archetype from the novel serves as a literary device utilized by both the novel's author and BTS to underscore the challenging process of self-discovery, specifically the exploration of uncharted and subconscious facets of the individual's psyche. The ARMY actively engages with BTS's creative output, delving into must-read books recommended by the group, deciphering hidden hints within music videos and lyrics, and enthusiastically sharing their interpretations with fellow fans. This immersive experience further strengthens the bond between BTS and ARMY, elevating their influence within the world of literature and entertainment.

The utilization of literature as a narrative element in BTS' musical works has engendered a form of literary emancipation. The group has effectively bridged the divide between the realm of reading habits and literary culture, heretofore perceived as disparate spheres from the youngsters. Employing intermediality within their creative expressions, BTS effectively interacts and communicates with their fandom, yielding numerous advantages such as conflict resolution for younger generations, empowerment of marginalized youths, mediation for individuals in discord, and more. BTS' messages touch upon universal conflicts that resonate with youths of diverse backgrounds, fostering deep sympathy and emotional connections with their work. Consequently, fans display a heightened willingness to explore further content emanating from BTS' creative outputs, which surpasses their roles solely as idol musicians, positioning them as influential mentors in the realm of reading. This remarkable phenomenon serves as compelling evidence of positive fan engagement and activity.

Giving their impact on spreading Korean culture internationally, BTS stands out among idols due to their significant impact on the publishing industry, attributed to their identity as worldview idols. Among the members, RM is the member who has shown the most interest in literature and is actively reshaping the Korean literary landscape. For example, fans' enthusiasm on RM reading material led to the reprinting of *Early Death* by Cho Yonghoon, which was previously out-of-print work²³. This book had been unavailable for a decade but regain its popularity through BTS and ARMY. Another example, *The Other Side of Things* by Ahn Kyuchul was posted on Weverse²⁴ by BTS' RM on 2021 and become a sensation among fans. RM reflected on these quotes because during the pandemic, he learned how to accept solitude. Social distancing and lockdowns made him hard to connect with ARMYs as often as he used to. The quote was also uploaded back by ARMY on Twitter. The Korean version of *The Other Side of Things* book was sold out in no time. This books also latter be translated into some foreign language, including the Indonesian version on 2022 by Shira Media Publisher. The publisher on press release said the book is selling well in South Korea²⁵ and quoting it on its promotion through the publisher's Twitter platform. Although RM is the member who most often shows his reading habits and current-reading-books, the same phenomenon is also shown by other BTS members, as the books sell well after the members are seen reading them. Giving this, the ARMY is exploring new literature material after the member of BTS casually promoting the books. BTS Jungkook was spotted with *I Decided to Live as Me* by Kim Soo Hyun on the reality show *Bon Voyage* Season 3 in 2019, Suga, RM, and J-Hope were spotted

²²WINGS is BTS album released on October 10. It is an album about the experiences of young boys who are confronted with temptation for the first time, compelling them to reflect and grapple with its implications (BTS, "WINGS", <https://ibighit.com/bts/eng/discography/detail/wings.html>)

²³The Straits Times, "BTS Leader RM Resurrects Out-of-print Book on Early Death", 02 September 2021, <https://www.straitstimes.com/life/entertainment/bts-leader-rm-resurrects-out-of-print-book-on-early-death>.



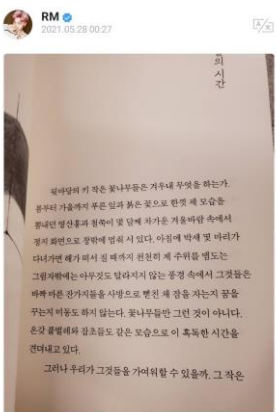
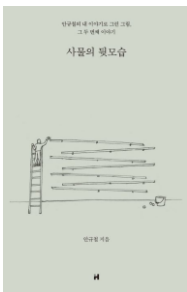
²⁴Weverse is the official fan community where fans and artists interact. This web platform created by South Korean entertainment company Hybe Corporation (Weverse, "About Weverse", <https://about.weverse.io/en.html>).

²⁵Tia Agnes, "Dibaca RM BTS, Buku The Other Side of Things Versi Indonesia Segera Terbit," Detik.com, 9 February 2022, <https://hot.detik.com/book/d-5935109/dibaca-rm-bts-buku-the-other-side-of-things-versi-indonesia-segera-terbit>.

with *Almond* by Sohn Won Pyung on the reality show *In the Soop* in 2021, V in early 2019 was spotted at the airport holding the book *The Power of Words* by Shin Dohyun and Yoon Naru and all the books started skyrocketing their popularity.

As of this study conducted, there wasn't any official or comprehensive list of Korean literature that each BTS member had publicly disclosed. However, some members have mentioned their interest in reading and have recommended books in interviews and social media posts. In order to get to know their idols better and dive deeper into the stories that BTS wants to tell through their music, ARMY with the power of fandom meticulously searched and listed book titles that have been mentioned by BTS members in person or seen in between the group's scheduled activities, reality shows, and live streams. List of reading recommendations BTS members had shared spanning across genres and countries of origin.

In Indonesia, the books read by BTS received more attention by ARMY Indonesia. A number of books read by BTS have recorded high sales. For example, as reported by the online shopping site *shopee.co.id*, until this article was written the number of sales of *Almond* was 4,2 thousand²⁶, and *The Power of Language* was 7,4 thousand²⁷. This count of course does not even include sales on other online shopping sites and offline sales. But however, these example shows on how BTS give an impact on literature and publishing industry.

Source Media		Type of Media	Promoted Book	
	BTS Memories of 2020	Documentary Film		<i>Early Death</i> by Cho Yonghoon
	Weverse Post	Social Media		<i>The Other Side of Things</i> by Ahn Kyuchul

²⁶Gramedia Pustaka, “Almond (Sohn Won - Pyung),” [https://shopee.co.id/Almond-\(Sohn-Won-Pyung\)-i.63842097.3647932147?sp_atk=35d37430-6fe2-4163-9fa9-4b4ec678e60d&xptdk=35d37430-6fe2-4163-9fa9-4b4ec678e60d](https://shopee.co.id/Almond-(Sohn-Won-Pyung)-i.63842097.3647932147?sp_atk=35d37430-6fe2-4163-9fa9-4b4ec678e60d&xptdk=35d37430-6fe2-4163-9fa9-4b4ec678e60d).

²⁷Penerbit Haru Official Shop “The Power of Language,” https://shopee.co.id/The-Power-of-Language-i.7252083.5027024778?sp_atk=7b925ae6-32b2-4785-8b0f-044aae2cbf8f&xptdk=7b925ae6-32b2-4785-8b0f-044aae2cbf8f.





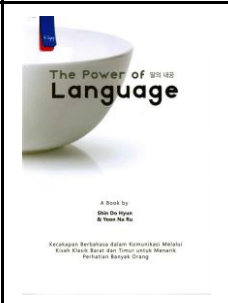
	<p>Bon Voyage Season 3</p>	<p>Reality Series</p>		<p><i>I Decided to Live As Me</i> by Kim Soo Hyun</p>
	<p>In the Soop</p>	<p>Reality Series</p>		<p><i>Almond</i> by Sohn Won Pyung</p>
	<p>Press and media (the book carried along during his way to airport)</p>	<p>News</p>		<p><i>The Power of Words</i> by Shin Dohyun and Yoon Naru</p>

Table 1. Sample of some books read by BTS

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

This article introduces fan activities influenced by idols, discussed and shared in affinity spaces. This examination employs the framework of intermediality and planned behavior as a conceptual basis. The framework model highlights content intermediality's importance in analyzing media content within fandom culture. While simultaneously assessing the impact of idols in transmitting behavioral patterns to their followers focusing on the reading habits of BTS fandom (ARMY) in Korean literature, the question is how do fandoms embody the adaptation of idols' habits into their own? With the power of social media, fans can produce content similar to their idols, so how do Indonesian ARMYs utilize social media platforms to promote the habit of reading and exploring Korean literature like BTS? Furthermore, can BTS's influence on the reading habits of ARMYs in Indonesia also contribute to the realm of literacy within Indonesia on a broader scale?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study examines Indonesian ARMY fandom through the Twitter account. The aim is to contribute insights into the specific behaviors, interactions, and cultural dynamics inherent in the Twitter-based fan community. Twitter is recognized as a focal digital space due to the platform's expansive user base and the distinctive characteristics it possesses as a significant

communal hub for enthusiasts engaged in the realms of K-pop and K-contents²⁸. Twitter's official 2021 survey listed Indonesia as the country with the most K-Pop related content uploads in the world²⁹, giving the point that K-pop fandom community of Indonesia are mainly active through the platform. In the same survey, it was noted that the most talked about K-Pop artist was BTS (@BTS_twt). In addition, as of 2023, Indonesia is the sixth country with the highest number of twitter users in the world (Kepios, 2023). Considering some of these facts, the digital space of twitter is representable to the topic of this study.

The field of research covered a community on Twitter named 'Indonesia Army Reading Club (@IARC_twt)' along with keywords searching such as 'BTS baca (reading BTS)', 'BTS literasi (literature BTS)'. @IARC_twt is a reading community that run by Indonesian ARMY to Indonesia ARMY and public who wish to read BTS related literature contents. This sub-community is proactive in interacting with followers and community members. This account was established in December 2020, and as of the writing of this article, it has 2,756 followers. The study involved participating in the community by following the Twitter account @IARC and observing the timeline and content schedule. Specific Indonesian keywords were deliberately utilized to collect and analyze data, ensuring a more focused clustering of information pertaining to Indonesian ARMY. Data mining predominantly relied on community boards within Twitter, particularly those where fans actively engage with @IARC reading activities. Additionally, the research sheds light on various forms of intermediation within fandom culture, elucidating how reading practices become an integral aspect of the close-knit culture for fans.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a digital ethnography approach, utilizing online observation to gather data and gain insights into the norms, culture, and behavioral patterns of participants in the Indonesian ARMY fandom. Digital ethnography aims to provide in-depth understanding and contextual knowledge of cultural practices within online spaces, employing diverse qualitative research methods. The primary focus was on participatory observation, examining message board postings within internet communities and conversations on social media platforms, particularly the tweets published by the @IARC_twt community. This approach offered a concrete socio-cultural context to comprehend the current state of fan groups in Indonesia. Additionally, media reports from prominent news organizations were examined to analyze how Indonesian society interprets the rise of Korean literature and the role of BTS in promoting it. The combination of data from online observations and media reports aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon linked between Indonesian ARMY fandom on Twitter, BTS, and Korean literature. This research obtained interactions in @IARC_twt account on Twitter between December 2020 to December 2022. The tweets were downloaded manually and noted in research note including content, date of post, and number of interaction (reply, retweet, and like). After that the researcher read through the data line by line. Although this process took time, it helped identify patterns easily. By coding the data manually, the researcher gained a clear understanding of the phenomena and reduced data repetition. Next, the researcher connects the patterns observed on the @IARC_twt Twitter account and relates them to a theory. Finally, a new model framework constructed based on Figure 1 to illustrate the interconnected relationship between fandom culture and intermediality, specifically

²⁸Kan Hyeong Woo, "K-content Tweets Increase 546% Over 10 Years", *Korean Herald*, 24 August, 2022, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20220824000609>.

²⁹CNN Indonesia, "Indonesia Jadi Negara dengan K-Poper Terbesar di Twitter", *CNN Indonesia*, 26 January 2022, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/hiburan/20220126202028-227-751687/indonesia-jadi-negara-dengan-k-poper-terbesar-di-twitter>.

focusing on how this dynamic influences fans' commitment to adopting the values of their idols as a habit.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

BUILD READING HABIT THROUGH SUB-COMMUNITY

The Indonesia Army Reading Club (IARC), employs affinity spaces much like BTS engages its ARMY community. In this context, IARC gathers BTS fans who share a love for reading books. They utilize BTS's image as a prominent figure, aligning with the idol's reputation for literary interests. This effectively merges the idol world with fan culture, embodying principles of intermediality involving transformation and adaptation.

Furthermore, IARC embraces this ethos of productivity by promoting positive fan engagement built on trust between fans and idols. Their activities are firmly grounded in this principle, fostering unwavering dedication among both enthusiasts and community members. This sub-community of fans engages in activities that emulate their idol's actions, making them so familiar that these behaviors symbolize the fandom's identity. The goal is to establish equivalence in values and identity between the idol and their fans.

IARC represents a form of digital activism utilizing the internet and social media for information dissemination and action amplification. They adopt an intermediality approach that intertwines literacy and BTS. Twitter serves as a platform to encourage participation beyond formal organizations, enabling education, discussions, and advocacy for social issues, emphasizing togetherness, mental health, and the 'love yourself' concept, integral to the BTS narrative. Twitter's convenience facilitates the amplification of their reactions to issues resonating with the BTS narrative, influencing mainstream media coverage.

Based on the map of interconnection and planned behaviour, the practice of fandom intermediality discussed in this study is how the idol's characteristic value of 'literature everywhere' is transferred into the fans' habit to be familiar with literature and foster a reading culture by using transmedia storytelling with the medium of music, to bridge the intersection from literature as part of the idol's work, to literature as part of their fandom lifestyle.

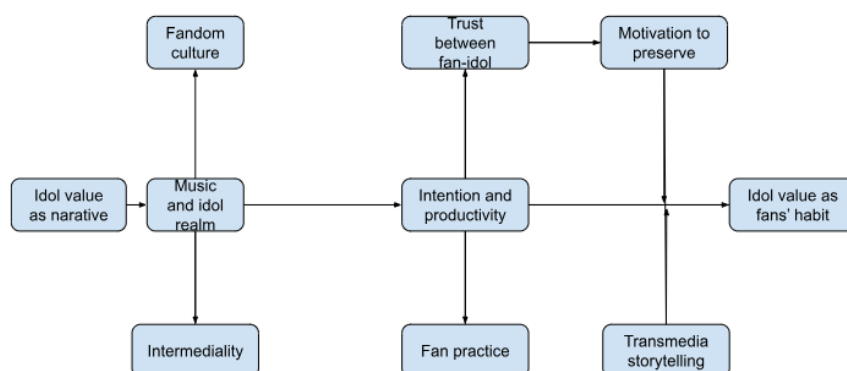


Figure 2. Interconnection between fandom culture and intermediality on preserving an BTS literary interest to be ARMY's reading habit

Aligned with the conceptual model presented in Figure 2, ARMY perceives BTS as a guiding force in fostering a literary inclination, profoundly impacting their creative engagement within the fandom. This trust in BTS as a source of valuable influence and recommendations motivates the community to actively propagate the notion of literary emancipation, displaying intentionality and productivity in their endeavors. By emulating the values upheld by BTS (and its members), ARMY employs storytelling as a medium through the Twitter community, acting as a conduit to disseminate similar perspectives. Consequently,

this communal effort effectively extends BTS' message, promoting a positive and uplifting discourse concerning fandom culture and activities, ultimately amplifying awareness of literary enrichment within the ARMY community.

IARC represents a noteworthy example of a sub-community within the broader K-pop fandom in twitter. Founded by four passionate ARMYs who are avid readers, this community aimed to address the low literacy levels in Indonesia while fostering a deeper appreciation for books among fellow ARMYs. This community leverages Twitter as a central platform for its operations, utilizing it as a medium to facilitate productive engagements within the fandom. The functionalities and attributes of Twitter are harnessed to efficiently distribute information pertaining to BTS-related literary works. This dissemination occurs through the posting of informative tweets and threads, incorporation of relevant hashtags, and the amplification of pertinent information by retweeting content from other Twitter accounts aligned with the community's objectives and subject matter.

Similar to community in general, the endeavors within the sphere of IARC community of fandom exhibit a mutual interaction. Twitter account maintained by IARC engages with its community and followers through the monthly 'Twitter Spaces' discussions during the fourth week of each month. These discussions center around the books that the BTS members recommended or the books that community members are currently reading, mostly are translated Korean literature, encouraging dialogue and knowledge-sharing among ARMYs. IARC further engages in in-depth discussions about the incorporation of literary theories within BTS' songs and music videos. This practice exemplifies the intersection between K-pop fandom and academic analysis, showcasing how the community members appreciate both the artistic and intellectual aspects of BTS' work. Moreover, this community promotes literacy through regular activities by organizing regular silent reading sessions. These gatherings not only facilitate reading habits but also serve as opportunities for members to bond and share their thoughts on literature and its influence on BTS' creative expressions. In addition, the community also actively engages with other reading community accounts, indicative of its outreach extending beyond the ARMY demographic to potentially encompass a broader spectrum of communities and audiences.

TRANSMEDIA STORYTELLING: EXPLORING MY IDOL'S READING LIST

Twitter is an essential platform for ARMYs, serving as a place to exchange information within and beyond their personal circles. The act of tweeting, for example, entails generating content with the potential to educate, ignite discussions, or accomplish both objectives. In this context, Twitter plays a crucial role in distributing information related to literacy-related activities, book reading materials, and narratives endorsed within the BTS ARMY fandom, encouraging further exploration.

The integration of reading activities with the literary preferences of idols enhances the enjoyment for fans, fostering a newfound reading habit among those previously unacquainted with it. This affinity-based motivation for reading strengthens the bond between fans and their idols, leading to a more intimate relationship. Despite the foundation of this motivation being rooted in affinity, the influence remains positive, with reading becoming a transformative element of fandom activities. This departure from the traditional perception of fan communities as fanatical and neglectful of real-life responsibilities represents a breakthrough. BTS and their fandom culture exemplify the diversity and positivity inherent in fan activities, exemplified by their passion for reading.

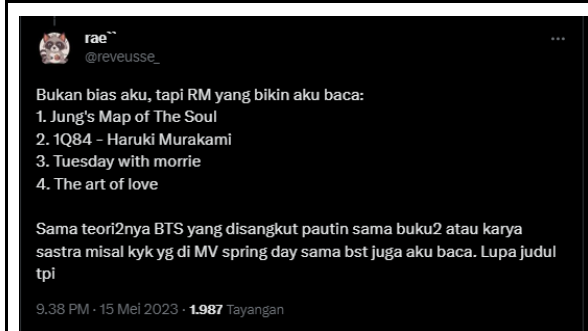
Fan culture centers around public performance, meaning production, and reading practices, whereby fans consume cultural texts collectively and individually as a means of

fostering interaction and communication within the community³⁰. Fans who read a book that their idol has recommended often take to their social media platforms to share their experiences and insights. This phenomenon is fueled by a deep sense of connection and affinity between the fans and their idols, as they perceive the act of reading the same literature material as a way to strengthen their bond. Re-telling their activities with the book becomes a form of communal engagement within the fandom, fostering interactions among like-minded individuals who have shared a similar literary experience. The act of sharing their thoughts, reflections, and interpretations not only showcases the fans' passion for the literature endorsed by their idol, but also serves as a means of expressing their creativity and deepening their connection with the larger fan community. Furthermore, this process of re-telling to the overall cultural significance of the book, as it becomes a subject of discourse and appreciation within the fandom, ultimately enriches the shared experience and sense of belonging among fans.



I was a reader from the beginning and my bias was Namjoon. I followed his daily life and became more and more influenced in my reading activities. I saw his vlogs and looked at his books, which were a lot and made me want to read and collect more. This is my last reading of Namjoon's reading list.

user @mastaetaee, May 2023



Although he is not my bias, RM made me read:

1. *Jung's Map of the Soul*
2. *IQ84 - Haruki Murakami*
3. *Tuesday with Morrie*
4. *The Art of Love*

Also the books of BTS theory which connected to books or other literary works like in their Spring Day and Blood Sweat and Tears MV, but I forgot the title.

user @reveusse_, May 2023

³⁰ John Storey. *Cultural Studies and Pop Culture Studies*, trans. Alfathri Adlin, Laily Rahmawati (Yogyakarta : Jalasutra, 2007).

<p>jean @alurpagihari · 12 Mei bulan ini seneng berhasil namatin almond 🥰❤️</p> <p>kisah yg diceritain di almond kerasa berat tapi karena dikemas dari sudut pandang anak laki2 yg tumbuh dari usia anak2 sampai remaja dan dewasa jadi mudah diikuti. sedihnya adalah jd saksi yoonjae struggling</p> <p>jean @alurpagihari · 12 Mei buat fit in di society sebagai manusia yg minim emosi. disalahkan atas apa yg dia ga mampu ngelakuin itu nyesek 😭 ya maunya dia juga ngerasain sedih marah kesal jengkel senang kaget tp karena keterbatasan jd semua yg bisa dirasa orang lain keliatan kemampuan super di mata yoonjae</p> <p>jean @alurpagihari baca almond tuh seakan pelengkap abis nonton MV amygdala plus docu-nya suga kemarin. bawang deh semua 😂 oh iya yg mau baca kemarin aku antri di ibi library. tinggal download aja di playstore terus buat akun disana. udah deh cari bukunya dan antri.</p> <p>2:28 PM · 12 Mei 2023 · 93 Tayangan</p>	<p><i>This month I'm happy to have finished Almond.</i></p> <p><i>The story told in almonds feels heavy but because it's told from the point of view of a boy who grew up from childhood to adolescence and adulthood, it's easy to follow. The sad part is witnessing yoonjae struggling to fit in in society as a human with minimal emotions. being blamed for what he's unable to do is painful ☐ I wish he also felt sad angry irritated happy surprised but because of limitations, everything that other people can feel seems super capable in yoonjae's eyes.</i></p> <p><i>Reading almonds is like a complement after watching MV amygdala plus suga's docu yesterday. This made me cry along. Anyway, for those who wants to read, I read it by queued up at ibi library. Just download it on playstore then create an account there. Go look for the book and queue.</i></p> <p>user @alurpagihari, May 2023</p>
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Tabel 2. Sample of Indonesia ARMY re-telling their exploration though BTS reading list

In their posts, Indonesian ARMYs share their current-reading books and BTS-related book titles they have read. In this finding, the book titles shared were not only Korean literature. Books by other foreign authors that were also read by BTS members or related to the background of BTS' work were also widely discussed by community members. However, this situation is reversed when looking at the condition of the official upload from IARC. In its tweets, the account tweets more about books by Korean authors. However, both are similar in campaigning in storytelling for a BTS-influenced reading culture.

FANDOM READING HABITS WITHIN HASHTAGS

K-pop fans are well known for their strong engagement with their idols. Fan culture revolves around active participation in supporting their favorite groups, which includes streaming music videos, buying albums, and organizing fan projects. In this article, we explore the changing landscape of fandom activism in the digital age. In this case, fandoms use the tools available on platforms like Twitter to engage in actions that may not have a specific goal or outcome, but have value in their own right. Metrics such as likes, retweets and mentions are recorded as a way to measure the impact of these actions and draw attention to important issues.

Furthermore, individual engagement in fandom activities can be more easily tracked through hashtags.

IARC demonstrates a commendable commitment to fostering a culture of intellectual growth and shared literary engagement. Through their active presence on social media platforms, the club regularly posts updates and highlights their literary activities, using hashtags such as #IndonesiaArmyReadingClub and #BuddyReadBarengARMY. When ARMYs use these hashtags, it brings their individual narratives together, creating a collective narrative. Hashtags can be created by any user as a quick way to make conversations more accessible to a wide audience. When ARMYs make a private tweet and add the hashtag, it automatically joins the group activity, without the need to engage in a tweet reply or re-tweet conversation. Here, this digital space allows community members to actively participate and contribute freely in the reading discourse, creating an inclusive and vibrant atmosphere for information exchange. It enables ARMY to openly express their views and thoughts on reading and literacy within the ARMY and BTS fandom.

CONCLUSION

Intermediality serves as a captivating framework for analyzing fan culture, unraveling the intricate ways in which fans intertwine texts across diverse media platforms. This phenomenon is evident in the devoted activities of fandoms revolving around their beloved idols, where fans seamlessly infuse their idols' values into their own media and cultural realms. A striking illustration of this phenomenon is found in the dynamic relationship between BTS and ARMY. BTS adeptly incorporates elements of literature into their artistic works, using it as a potent source of inspiration. In turn, the ARMY community embraces their idols' literary habits, thereby enriching their own media landscape.

This enriching practice takes the form of a digital social reading community, where fans enthusiastically share and discuss various literary texts. This dynamic engagement creates a profound sense of belonging and shared identity within the fandom. Significantly, this close interaction between BTS and the ARMY exemplifies a healthy idol-fan relationship, wherein BTS's positive influence is distinctly felt. Termed as the 'BTS effect', this phenomenon has even extended to the publishing world, where books mentioned by BTS or featured in their content are garnering increased attention from fans.

By exploring these intermedial practices, this study has provided invaluable insights into how fan culture is nurtured and sustained. The incorporation of literary pursuits from BTS into the lives of Indonesian ARMY fosters a deep sense of community and meaningful connections, further solidifying the enduring bond between idols and fans. Through the lens of intermediality, the impact of BTS on reading habits and the cultivation of a shared cultural identity within fandoms come to the fore, showcasing the power and influence of fan culture in contemporary society.

In conclusion, this study delved into the intriguing dynamics between idols and their fandoms, particularly examining how BTS, a globally influential K-pop group, has impacted the reading habits of their dedicated fan base known as ARMYs, specifically within the context of Korean literature. By exploring this phenomenon, we sought to understand how fans adapt and embody their idols' habits, particularly in the realm of literature, and how social media serves as a powerful tool for this transformation.

This research centered on Indonesian ARMYs and their utilization of social media platforms to promote reading and the exploration of Korean literature, aligning with BTS's interests and pursuits. This study's findings illuminate the multifaceted ways in which fandoms actively engage with their idols' passions, utilizing platforms like Twitter and hashtags to create a communal space for literary discussions and shared reading experiences. The ease with which

fans can emulate their idols' interests in a digital age has proven instrumental in fostering a vibrant reading culture within the ARMY community.

Moreover, our exploration extends beyond the confines of fandom to consider the potential broader implications of BTS's influence on literacy within Indonesia. While our research has primarily focused on ARMY, it has also explored the phenomenon of BTS-inspired reading habits extending beyond the fanbase and contributing to promoting literacy on a larger scale in Indonesia. The power of cultural icons to influence societal behaviors, such as reading, offers intriguing possibilities for promoting literacy and education in the region.

In conclusion, this research underscores the dynamic interplay between idols, fandoms, and social media in shaping cultural behaviors and interests. It also hints at the potential for idols like BTS to catalyze positive changes in society, including the promotion of literacy, which could have far-reaching implications beyond the realm of fandom. As such, this study not only has enriched our understanding of fan culture but also underscores the broader social influence of popular idols in the digital age.

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