



K-Pop Marketing Strategy: BTS

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Abstract

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<p>Korean popular music, shortened as K-pop, has spread globally in the recent years. One of the biggest K-pop act that has played part in the popularization of it has been BTS.</p> <p>The aim of this thesis is to understand BTS' rise in popularity and explore their marketing strategy. Through this thesis, an understanding of different marketing channels and ways used by BTS and their management are explored. Within the marketing strategy the thesis touches upon use of social media marketing along with fan loyalty and consumerism. BTS fans were also questioned and studied globally to gain a deeper understanding on the fascination of BTS.</p> <p>The research was split into two phases. The first phase, the researcher conducted a secondary research with qualitative data that focused on gathering different information relating to the topic. The information was then analyzed, and a conclusion could be delivered: growing a strong fan loyalty. The research found that fan loyalty can be built by communicating with fans through social media and other communicating platform. Sharing personal photo and video contents has also shown to be crucial as this makes fans feel closer to BTS.</p> <p>The second phase, the researcher conducted an online survey. This was done to gain an in-depth understanding of why and how BTS have become successful and to support the study made in phase 1. The result shows that BTS are a diverse fandom though female, aged 18-24 and living in United States of America seems to gather the most response, and many seemed to become a fan of BTS due to their music, personality and dancing. It also shows that BTS fans are loyal as they seem to consume BTS contents and products.</p> <p>BTS' marketing strategy foundation seems to be creating super fans that are loyal. BTS have also embraced new opportunities instead of following old tradition which has made them as successful as they are now.</p>
Keywords Marketing, K-Pop, BTS, social media

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1 Introduction

This is a research type of bachelor's thesis for the Degree Programme in International Business in the major specialization of marketing in the Haaga-Helia University of Applied Sciences. This thesis discusses on the topic of the phenomenally successful Korean pop band BTS marketing strategy and to understand what they have done to become a global phenomenon. This will be done by exploring their global marketing strategy, social media use, PR and other possible activities used in their marketing strategy.

1.1 Background

K-pop has become in the recent times more popular than ever. It has grown from attracting fans from Asia to the Western world. This and their achievements have caught the attention of the Western media, alongside their marketing strategies. With the fierce competition and pressure to keep fans loyal, companies have had to create effective marketing strategies to stand out from other groups and to satisfy fans.

The researcher will be investigating the different marketing strategies done by BTS and their management HYBE on how they have been able to successfully expand to the Western market, coming from a market predominantly aimed at East Asia. In recent years, due to rapid globalization, companies have had to adapt to changing markets in order to attract a more diverse pool of consumers. In this regard as the K-Pop industry has been a forerunner in entertainment and with BTS being synonymous to being the face of K-Pop, especially in the west; understanding on how they execute their marketing strategies could benefit companies, especially those in the entertainment industry. Thanks to the expanding technologies markets, it has made social media more prevalent which has made it easier for artists to connect with fans. Authors Gu Suh, Davies and Burnasheva (2021) has explained in their article referencing to Drèze (2005, 443-448), through the growth of internet use, businesses market themselves differently and interact with their customers differently. As later on in the thesis will be explored, K-pop's marketing strategy includes communicating with fans in a deeper level which is done through social media and other contents.

Within the topic of BTS this thesis will issue the rise and importance of social media marketing that the researcher will expand more later on in the thesis. With the rise of social media users, it is important to take advantage of it and market products through social media. According to Dixon in Statista (2022) since 2017 there were 2.73 billion social media users and now in 2022 there are 4.59 billion social media users. In just within 5 years the numbers have grown by 1.86 billion which highlights the importance of using social media marketing more than ever.

The goal of this thesis is to understand BTS' marketing strategy and what they have done to succeed. It will be done by exploring the global marketing strategy of BTS by evaluating articles and other secondary resources related to the topic.

1.2 Research Question

This thesis aims to understand the marketing strategy of BTS and how they have successfully grown and marketed themselves. The outcome of this thesis is to expand and explore our knowledge on marketing strategies in a more global sense and touching on an industry that has boomed in the past couple of years.

The international aspect required by the degree programme of all theses is covered by BTS being a South-Korean boy band while the researcher is a Finnish-Indonesian nationality.

The research question (RQ) of this thesis is: **What is BTS' marketing strategy and what made their global marketing strategy so successful?**

The research question was divided into investigative questions (IQ) as follows:

IQ 1. What is the global marketing strategy of the Korean pop music band BTS?

IQ 2. How does BTS use social media for marketing purposes?

IQ 3. How does BTS utilize other marketing and PR activities?

IQ 4. What in particular attracts the fans in BTS' marketing and PR activities?

Table 1 below presents the investigative questions, theoretical framework components, research methods and results chapters for each investigative question.

Table 1. Overlay matrix

Investigative question	Knowledge base	Research Methods	Results (chapter) / Survey questions
IQ 1. What is the global marketing strategy of the Korean pop music band BTS?	BTS company briefing videos Articles/literatures	Secondary research and analysis Qualitative	4.1
IQ 2. How does BTS use social media for marketing purposes?	Social media accounts	Research by looking at their social media and analyzing Qualitative	4.1
IQ 3. What are the other marketing and PR activities BTS utilizes in addition to social media?	Web articles and BTS videos (concert videos, UN etc.)	Secondary research with analyzing Qualitative	4.1
IQ 4. What in particular attracts the fans in BTS' marketing and PR activities?	Survey (fan websites like twitter)	Surveys and supportive research Quantitative and qualitative	4.3

1.3 Demarcation

This thesis focuses on the marketing strategy in a global aspect and the overall popularization of BTS.

BTS has gained popularity in the West and in South-Korea tremendously in the past couple of years, and to better understand it this thesis will explore their marketing strategy, social media, PR and other activities.

As the researcher is focusing on the marketing aspect, the K-Pop industry itself like their treatment, slave contracts etc. will not be included as it is not deemed relevant to the topic. The aim of this topic is to understand the marketing methods and adding controversy topics such as K-Pop's slave contract and treatment, it is not only too large to cover but it does not add value or relevancy to the topic.

The researcher will only be focusing on BTS and no other K-Pop groups, as it would be too many to cover with many K-pop group existing. Covering the whole K-Pop industry would be too large to

cover, and due to the limitation of time and thesis length, it is not possible. The same reasons also apply to comparing other K-Pop groups marketing strategy to BTS'.

Table 2. Project scope on what includes and excludes in the thesis

Includes	Excludes
Marketing	K-Pop idol's treatment
Social media	Slave contracts and K-Pop management
BTS	Other K-Pop groups
BTS' marketing strategy	Other K-Pop groups' marketing strategy

1.4 Benefits

People from the music industry globally can benefit from this thesis by understanding more on BTS' marketing strategy on becoming a popular idol group. They can implement strategies that worked for BTS and use it for their own business or use them as inspiration. Brands and other businesses could also benefit from this thesis in a more surface-level by expanding their knowledge on marketing strategy coming from a South-Korean boy band.

BTS and their team could also benefit from this research-based thesis by getting a better understanding and an overall view of their marketing activities. It can help them pinpoint on what activity has been successful which thus could be helpful when creating future marketing activities.

Overall, exploring ways that someone has successfully marketed themselves gives us new insight and ways to promote other businesses. BTS are a South-Korean boy band who has successfully marketed in a way that many has not been able to achieve, especially as an Asian act. The way they have handled their marketing might as well change or revolutionize the way we market businesses now as they have made such a big impact. This is not at all out of reach theory as marketing changes all the time, and with this thesis it is possible to be one step ahead of everyone in the game.

The researcher would benefit from this thesis by understanding more on how to create better marketing strategies, strong customer loyalty and expanding knowledge on marketing in a more global sense.

1.5 Key Concepts

K-pop means Korean popular music. It is part of the South-Korean culture that has spread globally since the 2010's with the spread of the Korean wave. (Lie 2012.)

Korean wave also known as 'hallyu' in Korean means the spread of Korean culture to America, Middle East and Europe that started in the 1990s according to Lee (2011, in Ravina 2008,1, 86).

BTS is a K-Pop band which consist of seven South-Korean members debuted in 2013 but began their formation in 2010. They're apart of the management BigHit Entertainment – now known as HYBE. (Gu Suh, Davies & Burnasheva 2021.). BTS is an acronym from the word 'Bangtan Sonyeondan' which in Korean means Bulletproof Boy Scouts, but in 2017 due to the rise of their popularity they have made an English name 'Beyond the Scene'. BTS debuted in South-Korea June 2013 with the members RM, Jin, SUGA, j-hope, Jimin, V and Jungkook. (HYBE 2021.)

Korean Idol or just an 'idol' simply means celebrity in Korea who can dance, sing, act, and model, and are usually placed in a boy- or girl band to become a K-Pop star according to Euodias told to Chong (2020).

Marketing strategy described by Professor Philip Kotler is a plan to attain business goals (Kamola 2021).

2 BTS Marketing

This chapter explains the theoretical frame for K-Pop marketing strategy of BTS by researching their social media and other marketing and PR activities. The researcher will be analyzing BTS marketing strategy by analyzing BTS' management videos, articles, and literatures. BTS social media will be analyzed and looked into to understand the way they engage with fans, and same goes for their marketing and PR activities. In the end, the researcher will create a fan survey to get actual data from fans. The theoretical background of this thesis is based on the following theories: Baker (2014, 5), Chaffey (2019, 263) and Funk (2013).



Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the thesis

The theoretical study of this background is based on Baker's (2014, 5) theory of undifferentiated strategy. This theory firstly explains that there is a demand in the market which starts with introduction of the innovation. This can be applied in BTS as the K-Pop phenomena, that came with the rise of Hallyu, was introduced to the global market in 2010s. Secondly, the strategy theory the maturity stage of the product. In BTS' case this means that the band was mature enough in K-Pop to enter the global music market. Lastly, the theory explains the requirement to meet the economist's model of competition. In BTS' case it can be seen as they compete not only K-Pop bands but other artists globally.

By studying the theoretical framework (diagram 1) of the thesis, it can be noticed that by studying BTS' marketing strategy and additionally their social media, marketing, and PR activities, and by conducting a fan survey that the success of BTS follows closely to the strategy theory.

According to Chaffey (2019, 263), online customers may form customer satisfaction and loyalty through online engagement. The satisfaction indicates the customer's happiness with the product. The customer loyalty can be further defined as emotional loyalty and behavioral loyalty. In this thesis this theory has an important role, as the qualitative study will measure the customer satisfaction and the level of emotional and behavioral loyalty. In the quantitative data, the fan survey will help show customer satisfaction, emotional and behavioral loyalty the fans have towards BTS. Also, according to Funk (2013) authentic consumer creates sales as social media followers are more engaged than other customers. In the theoretical framework it can be seen in the social media and marketing and PR activities as BTS' engagement in those areas creates emotional and behavior loyalty amongst their fans.

2.1 Marketing Strategy

We first need to understand what exactly is marketing strategy. Marketing strategy is organization's crucial decisions on marketing activities and product choices – customer facing decisions that offers a value to the customer in exchange for the organization to achieve their established objectives. In-essence marketing strategy is a future-oriented decision-making strategy with a goal to achieve established targets. (Varadajaran 2010, p. 119.) Firstly, the company would need to know who their customers are based on segmentation and targeting results, and how by differentiating and positioning their company from others. As these segments become clearer, the 4Ps of marketing mix – price, product, place and promotion – will be integrated into the marketing strategy to further adjust the product to the target market. The end goal for marketing strategy is creating customer value while creating profitable customer relationship. (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 74.)

BTS' management HYBE have planned BTS' marketing strategy since before the formation of the group. In 2005 Bang Si-hyuk left JYP, a top 3 South-Korea entertainment company, and founded his own – BigHit Entertainment. While building his company, he started looking for people to create a Hip-Hop crew. It started with RM, real name Kim Namjoon, who is now recognized as the leader of the group which then two members J-Hope, real name Jung Hoseok and SUGA, real name Min Yoongi joined. Them and some others were lined up to be in a Hip-Hop crew but in the 2010s there was a decline in physical album and instead there was a rise on live performance. Due to these

reasoning Bang Si-hyuk decided to forgo the Hip-Hop group and instead build a K-Pop group as they're known to have live performances and having loyal fan bases. With this decision Bang Si-hyuk recruited the rest of the members. (Bruner 2019.)

When the idol group was created Bang Si-hyuk highlighted the importance on the quality of the music in the album and letting the members create the music they wanted. He believes this played a big part of BTS' success as at the time the music BTS created were sincere and relatable, attracting many and creating big difference from the usual manufactured K-Pop music genre. (BangtanSubs 2018, min. 38:34-39:44). The importance on the quality of music has been highlighted since day one as when BigHit and Bang Si-hyuk recruited trainees they wanted people who are genuinely interested and have a passion for music. (Cha 2018.) This gives artistry and vulnerability in their music that can only be achieved when one writes their own music.

Another point that made BTS stand out from other K-Pop groups is how they handled social media. Back in the early K-pop days, K-pop trainees were isolated to the point phones and any sort of entertainment were taken away to make them focus on debuting and working. Social media were also seen as risky as accidental scandal can rise, even in the future. But while HYBE had a lot of conflict regarding if they should let BTS handle their social media, in the end they gave them the rights to handle their own social media. Bang Si-hyuk expressed he viewed his company as more liberal than other artists and instead teach them on mannerism and providing guidance. (Bruner 2019.) Giving BTS the freedom to have their own social media and connect with them gave them a head start in creating a fan-idol interaction.

Eventually when BTS got their foot into the Western industry they did not shy away and instead made connection within the industry, did many western interviews, performed in big named music shows and essentially showed themselves outside South-Korea. It can be said, due to these reasonings BTS entered the global market differently than the rest of the K-pop industry. (Bruner 2022.)

Essentially BTS marketing strategy has been different than other K-pop artists due to taking calculated risks and embracing opportunities that have come in their way.

2.1.1 Brand Ambassadors and Collaborations

Brand ambassadors, also interlinked with the term celebrity enforcement, is defined as signing a celebrity to represent the brand for marketing purposes. This can be seen in not only in traditional marketing – advertisement, cover page etc. but also celebrities wearing or using the brand's

products. As these celebrities often have followers, they are bringing awareness to the brand, influencing people to buy from the brand and even change the brand image to the desired customers. (Lea-Greenwood 203, 75.)

BTS are ambassadors for many brands but the biggest brands that BTS are working with are Samsung, Hyundai, and Louis Vuitton. To show BTS' influence, Louis Vuitton announced BTS being their brand ambassador in April 2021, and in July BTS appeared in the Men's Fall Winter 2021 Fashion show. (Chan 2021; McIntyre 2021.) The fashion show was a success as it garnered 36.8 million views and 1.3 million engagements making it the most viewed and talked about fashion show (Twitter Marketing 2022a). The same trend seems to be for the other brands with BTS influencing their fans towards the brands products.

Alongside with being brand ambassadors they also do collaborations. In 2021 they did a collaboration with McDonalds for a limited time. BTS and McDonald's created their own McDonald's meal called 'The BTS Meal' consisting of a beverage, fries, chicken McNuggets and two of Korea McDonald's dipping sauces: sweet chili sauce and cajun sauce. Though it was available to only certain of countries it created a big hype. For example, in Indonesia McDonald's had long lines with having to close their store due to too many people which violated the COVID violation measures (Bengali 2021). Within this limited time, May to June, the BTS Meal earned both BTS and McDonald's 8.5 million dollars (Chung 2021).

Brands that have BTS as either their endorser, ambassador or just as a collaboration brings them a lot of profit despite BTS' high cost to hire them. BTS are the highest paid commercial film stars according to 'Entertainment Company Live' (Ha 2021). As Chosun Biz expressed, a fashion insider claims brands hopes BTS wears their clothing brands (Koreaboo 2019). The researcher theorizes that the reason why BTS are hired as ambassadors, endorsers and collaborations is due to fan loyalty and the fans' consumer behavior. These topics will be talked more in-depth later on in the thesis.

2.1.2 Music Shows and Awards

In 2017 BBMAS, shortened for Billboard music awards, BTS were nominated for Top Social Award rivaling Ariana Grande, Selena Gomez, Shawn Mendes and Justin Bieber who are very known celebrities. Still, BTS won it ending Justin Bieber's 6 years streak. (Lipshutz 2017). This was in fact a significant moment as this was a Korean act who has been nominated since 2013 from Psy 'Gangnam Style' top streaming music video. (Jie 2019).

Not only are music awards important for artists, but it is also especially significant for Korean artists to win these awards, especially Western award ones. As Seong Il-Jong reported in Hankookilbo news BTS winning a Billboard award has an economic effect of 1.7 trillion won, equivalent with today's currency of around 1.2 billion euros. To compare, the economic effect of Olympic gold medal is only 259 billion won, 194 million euro. (Lee 2022.)

In Korea, things are a bit different as they have music shows as well as end of year award shows. Music shows are important for any K-Pop stars, especially for debut shows. In these shows the artists are able to showcase their new music to the audience. Despite the cost and low ratings, appearing in music shows and winning first place is seen as taking a strong stand in the music industry and having a long career. (Park 2019.) Music awards are also seen important for the Korean entertainment industry, and these usually are presented at the end of the year.

BTS are not different from this. BTS' first music show win was for 'I Need U' which then became one of the biggest milestones for BTS and the one that triggered their success and fame (Herman 2019). Another trigger and sign of success was when BTS won a 'Daesang', meaning the biggest award of the music award, for the category 'Best Album Of The Year' on 2016 Melon Music Awards for their 'The Most Beautiful Moment in Life: Young Forever' Album which also includes 'I Need U'. (Jeong 2016). Not long after this BTS were nominated in BBMAS 2017.

These music shows are important to not only show their achievements but to also bring their name out there and to promote their own songs for people to familiarize.

2.2 Social Media

Social media is the new way for business to promote and market themselves. It also gives them the opportunity to promote themselves globally by reaching a more expansive audience due to large usage of social media platforms or help you target a specific audience. By posting video and picture contents, businesses can reach their target audience which thus helps them reach their business goals. (Wixted 2022.)

Nowadays social media marketing is essential if you want to gain recognition and stay relevant due to the digitalization of the world. As the researcher mentioned earlier in this thesis, most people nowadays spend their time on the internet and more specifically on social media. So, it is no surprise that the traditional word-of-word marketing strategy has now turned into people hearing and discovering products and services through social media. In fact, Olenski (2012) has done research that 81% of people get influenced by the posts their friends have uploaded on social

media. This means social media nowadays has become a very important part of marketing strategy. Within that marketing strategy the action plan for social media would be focusing on goals, target audience, social media choice, resources, policies, monitoring and lastly activity plan. These strategies are made for the businesses to understand their customers and cater their need while fully utilizing social media marketing. (Mahoney & Tang 2016, 183.)

Though it is not only companies who are taking advantage of social media, but celebrities too. Celebrities are using social media to market themselves just like companies; they post pictures and videos to gain recognition, stay relevant, promote their music or movies. (Cohen 2013).

The biggest difference between business and celebrity social media marketing is that while businesses mainly uses social media to promote their products, celebrities get closer to their fans and interacts with them. This is exactly what BTS have done. Before their debut in June 2013, they were given a twitter account to interact with fans thus already creating relationship with the fans. It was also something new and intimate especially in the K-pop industry as usually the members do not have access to their own social media accounts thus lacking in that friendship department. Due to BTS and the industry seeing the marketing success of it, nowadays many K-Pop groups have at least some or complete control of their social media to create a bond between the artists and the fans.

It is one of the ways BTS distinguished themselves amongst many other K-Pop groups is by controlling over their own social media – at this time more specifically Twitter. Many K-Pop group's social media account was run by their managers of their company but BTS' company CEO, Bang Si-hyuk, has admitted that he gave freedom for BTS to take control over their own social media (Bruner 2019).

2.2.1 Twitter

Twitter is one of the most popular social media places especially for celebrities, politicians and other influencers to speak their opinion and interact with fans. It is also the most favorable place for celebrities and fans alike due to the community that can be built, hashtag system to create awareness or buzz on certain topics and engage with fans more personally. (Cohen 2013.) Due to the nature of twitter and the ability celebrities and fans can communicate, it's a platform where emotional relationship can be built and people becoming more loyal to the person they look up to (Orexis 2021).

As Twitter also create communities for different fanbases, it has become a popular place for fandoms to talk to other fans alike and to their idol (Twitter Marketing 2022b). As can be seen in the case for Louis Vuitton and BTS' partnership, Louis Vuitton mentioned how Twitter was an essential platform to carry out their campaign that turned out to be successful due to the fan engagement (Twitter Marketing 2022a).

BTS used their Twitter account even before debuting. It has been their way of communicating with fans and a platform for fans to keep up with BTS personally and feel closer to them. It is one of their main platform to communicate with fans, especially international ones as it's available and used globally. It's also a place for them to interact and possibly even contact with other celebrities. The engagement rate for BTS are also high with the average likes per tweet is 1,2 million and 331 thousand retweets per tweet (Socialtracker 2022a). The pictures below shows an example of BTS' engagements and how they engage with their fans – in figure 2 one of the member V posts a video of him with a snippet of his song with 2,1 million likes and on figure 3 BTS member Suga posting a picture of himself after a concert with 2,3 million likes (BTS_twt 10 May 2022; BTS_twt 10 March 2022).

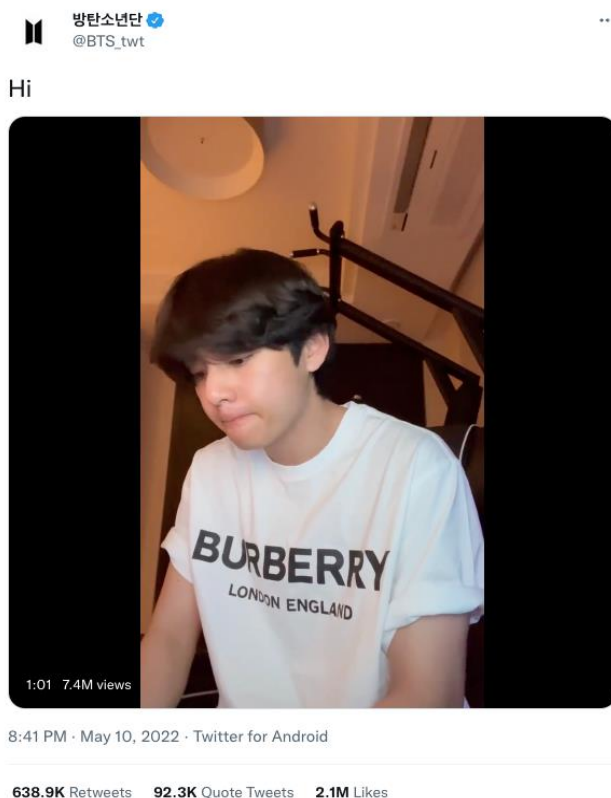


Figure 2. BTS V tweet (BTS_twt 10 May 2022).



Figure 3. BTS Suga tweet (BTS_twt 10 March 2022).

As mentioned before, BTS having an account of their own for them to handle is quite rare in the K-Pop industry as managements are worried a post could ruin one's idol image, but BTS and their management took that risk. It has served them well as the members and fans connected and later on awarded with BBMAS 'Top Social Artist' Award in 2017, as voting was through Twitter, which gave them a kickstart for a career in the U.S and the western world. It was a huge impact as after this, other managements gave idol groups their own accounts to handle and post for fans.

2.2.2 Instagram

In December 2021 BTS created their own individual Instagram accounts (Bowenbank 2021). They have decided on creating individual Instagram accounts to show their own daily lives, unlike BTS' Twitter account where they share one account together. One of the member Kim Namjoon had

mentioned in a livestream how he uses Instagram to show what he does in his free time, which we can assume is a more personal message than any other platform he handles. Looking at each of their Instagram stories and posts we can assume the other members feel the same way. Fans loves this as they get to interact with their idols which can be seen in their number of followers and post interaction. As an example, one of the member V has 50 million followers with an average like per post of 12 million. Comments are turned off for all BTS members so there are no public comments, but the average engagement rate is 25%. (Instagram 24 August 2022a; Socialtracker 2022b.) Another member RM have around 37 million followers on Instagram with an average likes per post of 6.8 million and an engagement rate of 18.50% (Instagram 24 August 2022b; Socialtracker 2022c). The rest of the BTS members are rounding around the same numbers as these two.

Twitter has in the recent years becoming more of a professional accounts of the idol group which thus interaction and showing fans their daily lives have become less frequent. By creating Instagram accounts, they now have the opportunity to do that as Instagram is solely based as a photo and video sharing platform.

2.2.3 YouTube

BTS have one YouTube account called BANGTANTV with over 70 million subscribers. The account is for releasing music videos, events and videos of their daily lives. The videos of their daily lives have different names and concept – as an example seen in figure 4 Jimin has shared a vlog of him doing an activity with captions written by himself. The vlog so far has over 7 million views. These videos can last from few minutes to an hour depending on the content.



Figure 4. [BTS VLOG] Jimin | Bracelet workshop VLOG (BANTANTV 23 July 2022).

As these are uploaded on YouTube, they're free content and anyone have access to them. They're also provided with subtitles with English and other languages to reach a wider audience.

It can be said that these YouTube videos create a sense of closeness and 'friend' feelings between the fan and BTS as it shows BTS' personalities off-celebrity style.

2.2.4 Weverse and Vlive

A communication application that is known mostly only in the Korean pop culture is 'Vlive'. It is a place where idols livestreams, upload content or even communicate with fans via posts. Vlive has been an important part of K-Pop group's marketing and communication platform but now it is shifting to an application called Weverse. Weverse has now all of the features Vlive has as Vlive is planned to be integrated into Weverse 2.0 (Brunei 2022).

Weverse was launched in 2019 by HYBE first for their own artists which included BTS but now has many other artists outside of the company and even has Western artists. Fans can choose which artists they subscribe to and get notifications from thus creating a fan community. It's a platform where artists posts and comment on fans posts, interact, go on live, videos are uploaded, concerts streamed and everything else in-between. In short, HYBE has made a platform for easier interaction between fans and artists, and for fans to be able to do all fan related stuff in one platform. The interaction with fans and creating a fan community creates a artist-fan relationship which in turn turns normal fans into loyal super fans. (Devoe 2021; Brunei 2022.)

2.3 Fan Culture, Loyalty, and Consumer Behavior

Fan culture and fan loyalty ties with consumerism. This has always been part of pop culture, whether it's on musicians, sports, tv shows or movies. This can also be called a 'fandom'. Fandom as Mark Duffett quoted from Matt Hills (2013, p. 17-18) consist of fans who are devoted to their idols and view and interpret them differently than non-fans. They also differ from regular fans by identifying and having a social role within the fandom. Due to their devotion to their idols, these fans will be buying everything and anything their idols come out or collaborate with. These fans are not here for the particular brand or item itself but for the idol they look up to and creating emotional attachment to these items due to the idols. In theory fans will always be more than just consumers; they're collectors, networkers, and many more.

As mentioned by Fany, Rauf & Dianrama (2022) K-pop groups including BTS are financially dependent on their fans which is why looking at the business point of view having loyal fans are quite important. A way they have achieved this is by fans and BTS having a close relationship and giving paying content to the fans to feel further closer to BTS. This is called 'parasocial interaction' where a bond is created for the fan through media content. As fans are emotionally attached to BTS, they are emotionally and financially attached to their fans 'ARMY'. Fans will be buying BTS' merch, concert tickets, video content and much more to support their idols and to satisfy themselves.

The pandemic has also affected the popularity and fan's power decision to buy merch and content due to the boredom and limited entertainment the quarantine created. As BTS members RM and Suga says in Brunei's interview (2022) during the pandemic technology helped the fans and artists to interact with each other; HYBE did online concerts that fans pay tickets for and creating fan communities. It is most likely for fans to buy tickets and being active in the fan communities as pandemic gave them the time and boredom to watch and do something.

Through fan loyalty BTS are able to financially become dependent on their fans, creating consumerism within the fandom.

2.3.1 Music and Albums

BTS are nowadays called this generation's Beatles, and it's not surprising with how much effort they put into their music and albums. They have released 16 different albums since 2013 alongside with many singles and mixtapes from different members.

BTS' and their management BigHit, now named HYBE, has been focusing much on their music not only on quality but also on creating a storyline for their music. Their biggest storyline that has been they have created and integrated into the meaning of their songs and music video is HYYH. HYYH a deprivation for Hwa Yong Yeon Hwa meaning the most beautiful moment in one's life, which was created during when BTS was creating The Most Beautiful Moment in Life Part 1 album. It tells a story of the struggles of youth and life. This is without a doubt one of the biggest projects of BTS and HYBE had done at the time. (Channel Korea 2019.) Fans have made theories from music videos which kept them entertained as many could relate to the stories.

BTS are artists so it is no surprise that their fans biggest consumption are their music. Their music is played on music platforms like Spotify and Apple Music. At the time the researcher is writing this, BTS have 37,687,534 monthly listeners. To compare them with other artists to understand the significance, The Beatles have 25,174,345 monthly listeners and EXO, another K-Pop group once deemed as BTS' rival, only has 4,399,893 monthly listeners.

It has been reported that the global music market is worth \$26 billion in 2021 which is the highest since the 1990s. One of the contributors of this is BTS by being the top-selling artists for 2 years in a row, topping Taylor Swift and Adele. This criterion is by adding up sales, streams and downloads calculated by IFPI – representing the music industry worldwide. Frances Moore, chief executive of IFPI, said this is due to BTS' creativity, hard work and commitment to the music by delivering music in three different languages which brings global appeal and creating a strong fanbase. (Savage 2022.)

Bang Si-hyuk and BTS themselves have theorized the reason why BTS have done well in the beginning despite lack of name in the industry was due to BTS writing their songs based on how they feel which resonated to other youths that could relate to the feels and struggles BTS talks in their music (Bruner 2019).

As discussed previously about fan consumer behavior, it is no surprise fan consumerism has also been indulged in the album and music section. Most of BTS' albums have more than one version which contains the same music but different concepts. For example, for one of their albums, Map Of the Soul: 7, has four different album concept. Fans have also a sense of buying all versions as in the K-pop industry albums also contains a 'photocard' which is essentially a card with different concept and pictures of the members. These can also be viewed as collector cards which means some fans keep buying albums to get the card they want. In essence, the album packages has been designed to not only contain songs but a commercial value. (Assis 2020.)

There are also fan sign events where certain people are luckily picked and these people are picked from those who buy album in certain places. Fans who want to attend these fan sign events buy bulks of albums to increase their chance to be chosen (Herman 2021). Though it is noted that BTS have not had a fan sign event since 2019.

2.3.2 Concerts

Many artists' biggest events and revenues come from concerts. For many artists themselves, concerts are not just about revenues but the experience with the fans and sharing their music live, which many find it an important part of their job aspect. BTS are not an exception of this. They have had multiple world tours with multiple concert dates all over the world. COVID-19 was definitely a hard hit to everyone but especially artists as they had to cancel all their events, concerts included. BTS had set a world tour, one of the biggest one yet, in 2020 though all got cancelled due to the pandemic. Though this did not stop them from holding concerts virtually with over millions of attendees during the height of the pandemic.

It is famously known that BTS concert tickets are hard to get. They sell out quickly even for stadiums like Wembley (Kelley 2019). This shows the popularity BTS have achieved in just some years with high demands for concert tickets.

2.3.3 Asian Identification

The Asian identification that BTS has brought to Asian people is creating a positive impact. As RM, real name Kim Namjoon, from BTS stated in UNICEF Generation Unlimited speech (2018), "Tell me your story. I want to hear your voice, and I want to hear your conviction. No matter who you are, where you're from, your skin colour, gender identity: speak yourself". By this speech we can already tell the encouragement from BTS themselves to embrace your own identity, culture and ultimately yourself.

BTS have not been one to shy as to show their struggle as being Asian in a Western music industry, but they are also not one to shy away showing off and embracing their culture. In their music video and performance 'Idol' they're seen wearing hanbok, a Korean traditional clothing, and using Korean music instruments in their song (HYBE LABELS 24 August 2018). For American Music Awards, AMAs, they brought Korea to America by hiring a Korean designer who designed for BTS suits inspired by hanbok (Allaire 2021). In all, BTS have embraced their identity and culture despite being surrounded by western media culture.

With BTS' fans, ARMY, majority of them being girls and people of color the Asian representation BTS represents is important for especially today's Asian identification (Tizzard 2021). As Yuen (2019) mentioned, media lowers the self-esteem for both girls and black boys due to the lack of media representation. With this observation it can be said that media is a powerful way to create an image for certain representation and the lack or negative view of representation affects people's brain on how they view themselves or others. For Asian people the rise of Korean wave and K-Pop has helped with this representation. In the case of BTS, seeing them perform with their culture's clothing, speaking, singing and performing in their native language is a big deal for many Asian people and other people of color as they have gotten a representation of a non-white person succeeding and performing in huge stages. It shows them a new image and perspective on what people of color can achieve and do.

Though this has not all been sunshine as the researcher has previously mentioned, BTS are still experiencing xenophobia in their life from different group of people. People have certain image of what Asian people should look like, calling BTS little Asian men and COVID-19 virus jokes. (Li 2021.)

There is still a long way to go for Asian representation and xenophobia but as RM has said, he hopes BTS helps remove the xenophobic views and simultaneously give strength and hope for those needing it (Hiatt 2021).

3 Research Methods

In this chapter the researcher provides an overview and understanding of the research methods used in this thesis as well as explaining the data collection, sample, and analysis. It will also discuss the justifications and validity of this research. It will be chaptered as research design, population and sampling, data collection and analysis split into qualitative and quantitative research and lastly finish off with reliability, validity, and relevance.

3.1 Key Findings

The research methods used in this thesis is mixed methods. The researcher will be using mostly qualitative data as most data can be found online and analyzed. Quantitative data will also be applied in the form of the survey result.

The aim of this thesis is to research and gain understanding of BTS' marketing strategy which is why most of the research was done in a qualitative matter with articles, literature, BTS related videos and as proven in chapter 2.

In phase 1 the researcher collected data sources relevant to the topic and subchapters of the thesis thus doing secondary research. These data sources were taken in as qualitative research as research was done to understand concept through texts and videos and gain more understanding on the topic. Due to the thesis topic being extensive, the researcher had to use many different sources taken from social media, articles, videos and literature. Through the secondary research the researcher was able to understand the different ways BTS have marketed themselves that impacted their rise in popularity within South-Korea and abroad. The key findings of phase 1 the researcher detected that the base of the marketing strategy is fan loyalty. They built fan loyalty through social media and other media contents, creating opportunities, like collaborations, to further market themselves. This secondary research had a relationship with the investigative questions seen in table 1.

Phase 2 was done through sending out surveys for all BTS fans. Survey (appendix 1) was spread on social media such as Twitter, Instagram and K-pop platform called 'Amino'. Word-of-word were also used as the researcher had connections to other BTS fans. The data in the survey was to understand more of BTS' fans insights that could be related back to their marketing strategy. The survey was to understand why the fans are attracted to BTS. This survey was to support the conclusions and analyzes made in phase 1 along with answering investigative question 4 in table 1. As this survey was to support investigative question 4 (table 1), the researcher generated

questions focusing more on the fans supporting BTS and their relationship with them rather than focusing on just BTS. While the main object was to understand why fans are attracted to BTS, it does support research made in phase 1 and seen in chapter 2 as BTS' marketing and fans are interchangeable. Through asking questions from fans what made them a fan, what do they like most about BTS etc. we can understand what BTS does to keep fans interested and what in their marketing strategy was the most effective.

The researcher has also used questions that are easy and comfortable to answer but also effective to not discourage respondents to exit and not do the survey. They have also put personal questions to the last part to attract respondents with BTS questions.

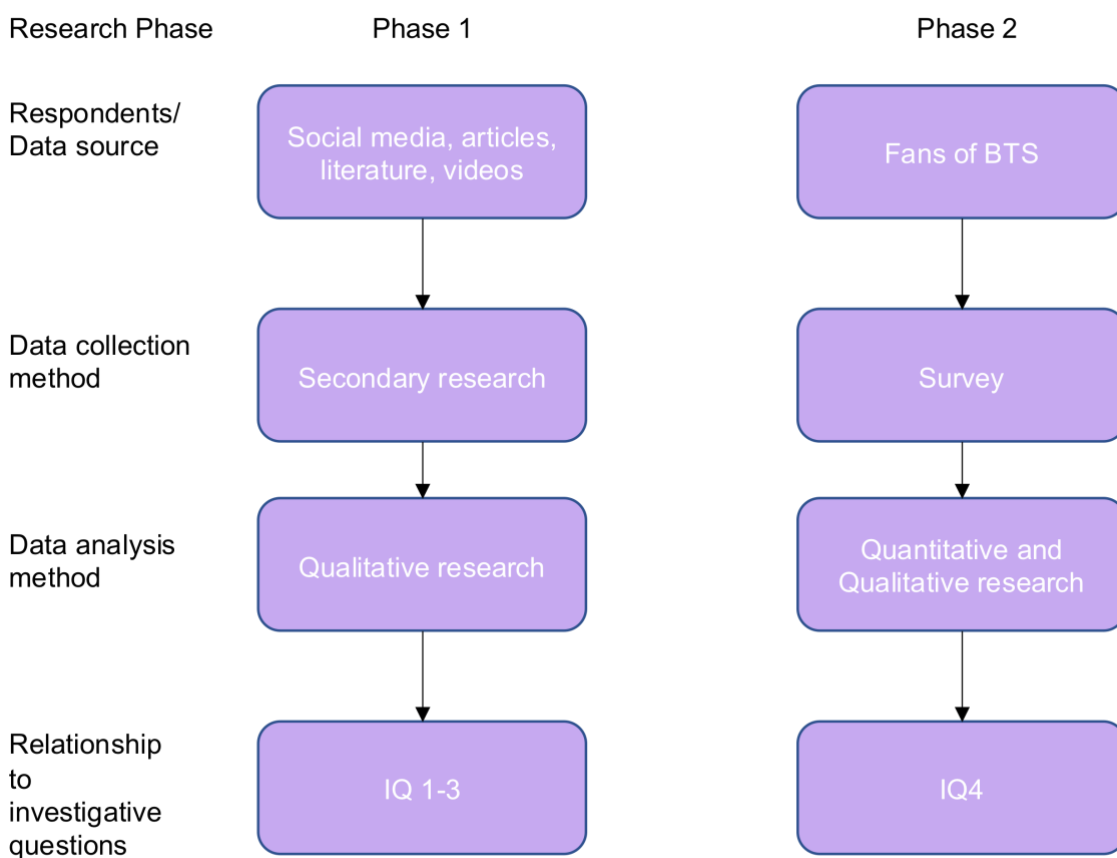


Figure 5. Research design of the thesis

3.2 Population and Sample

The survey was distributed through a link from social media and texts and accessed for everyone globally. The survey was open from May 13th 2022 until June 6th 2022. The survey's research population and sampling are BTS fans. There are 17 questions in the survey asking questions related to how and why fans like BTS and also how loyal the fans are. Questions were also asked

regarding the respondents' gender, age and where they are from. Questions of the survey can be seen in appendix 1. A total of 574 respondents answered the survey.

The purpose of the survey was to gain understanding and insight of the fans and the reason what or why are the reason they are attracted to BTS. The survey was conducted worldwide of all ages and nationalities. Ages and nationalities were asked in the survey to see how diverse the BTS fans are.

3.3 Data Collection

In this chapter the researcher will explain the data collection in more detail; the design of the data collection and how and what data was collected.

The researcher did qualitative research through secondary research from articles and videos relevant to BTS and researcher's IQ's. Secondary research based on Future Learn (2022) draws conclusions, analyzes and making new theories and perspective from an already existing research. The researcher has used this to draw data for IQ 1-3. The researcher started the data collection method by using Google, Google scholar, literature books and videos from YouTube, Vlive and Weverse relevant to the topic.

A mixed method, mainly quantitative, online survey was created by the researcher (Appendix 1) on Webropol for BTS fans worldwide. The survey was distributed via weblink that was then shared to social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram and Amino and word-of-word from researcher's own BTS fan friends via link sharing. Quantitative research was mainly used in the survey as the researcher wanted to test the hypothesis of the theories presented in the theoretical framework chapter. Quantitative research is also easier to collect when there are hundreds of respondents for questions where it is more likely for respondents to answer with one-word answers (Streefkerk 2019).

The survey was mainly done with multiple choice questions with some ability to write their own answer in case options presented weren't applicable to them due to many possible answers. Scale of 1-5 (1=Not satisfied to 5=Very unsatisfied) were also used to better understand the thoughts and opinions of the respondents. Qualitative research was presented with the option to express their opinion on the artists and company, though it was not necessary to answer in worry of the researcher for many backing out from completing the survey.

3.4 Reliability, Validity and Relevance

As the thesis is independent and talks around a topic that cannot be easily erased, the threat of cancellation is minimal. The researcher has also taken all information from released public information, so confidentiality issues are minimal.

As the topic of the thesis is new, there is a small risk of not getting enough data but as the topic is flexible, using theories to draw a conclusion is possible and BTS being active during the writing process of this thesis gave the researcher data and topic to be discussed. But as the topic is new for the west and the researcher cannot speak Korean, more time was needed in researching and making theory-based conclusion in the theory framework.

The researcher not understanding the Korean language and not being Korean raises the risk of cultural misunderstanding or mistranslation. These risks were minimized with the researcher being half Asian and have lived in Korea for over 6 months giving them an understanding of Korean culture and a little bit of Korean language understanding. The researcher has also checked news and information from more than one source to minimize the risk of mistranslation of an article.

There is a threat of BTS breaking up or going on a hiatus, which happened in June, but as the topic is surrounded by its marketing it does not harm the thesis writing process.

The validation and reliability of the research will be shown through the sources written in the thesis and being transparent with the survey. The questions asked in the survey and the number of participants will be shown in the thesis.

3.5 Data Analysis

The survey results were collected from Webropol's collection method with SPSS and Excel. SPSS was used to analyze the quantitative data like multiple-choice and Likert scale questions. Questions where participants had to write their own answer were not analyzed in SPSS. Excel was used for charts, figures and qualitative analyzing.

Responses were analyzed with frequencies and percentage. This gave the researcher for general overview of the responses and insights of the response and gave a general understanding. With this understanding the researcher was able to provide backbone for secondary research and gave an insight view of IQ 4.

For qualitative data the researcher went through all of the responses and categorized it individually to see the general and popular response. It was then used to understand the insight of the question.

4 Research Results

In the previous chapter the researcher explained the data collection method. This chapter will dive into the research result that came out from the data collection. It will involve analyzing from the survey and secondary research along with hypothesis, theories and conclusions.

4.1 Importance of Fan Loyalty and Marketing

The result from the secondary research gave an understanding to the researcher on BTS' marketing strategy and why it is successful. The researcher has searched from different sources, see references, to make an overall conclusion that BTS' core marketing strategy is communicating with fans, from social media to video contents, showing different sides of themselves to also be seen down-to-earth and relatable to increase the fan loyalty base and forming an emotional relationship with their fans, that they call A.R.M.Y.

As we have gone through in chapter 2 BTS' success cannot be pointed at one particular marketing channel. BTS and their management have been active in marketing themselves in many different ways by collaborating and being ambassadors to different brands to being active on multiple social media platforms and growing their fanbase along with their loyalty. They have also included story telling in their music which makes them more appealing and stand out from other artists.

4.2 Survey Respondents Background

In this chapter the researcher will present the result of the survey from appendix 1. As explained before in the previous chapter, the survey was distributed worldwide to gain the insight of the fans generally without limitation.

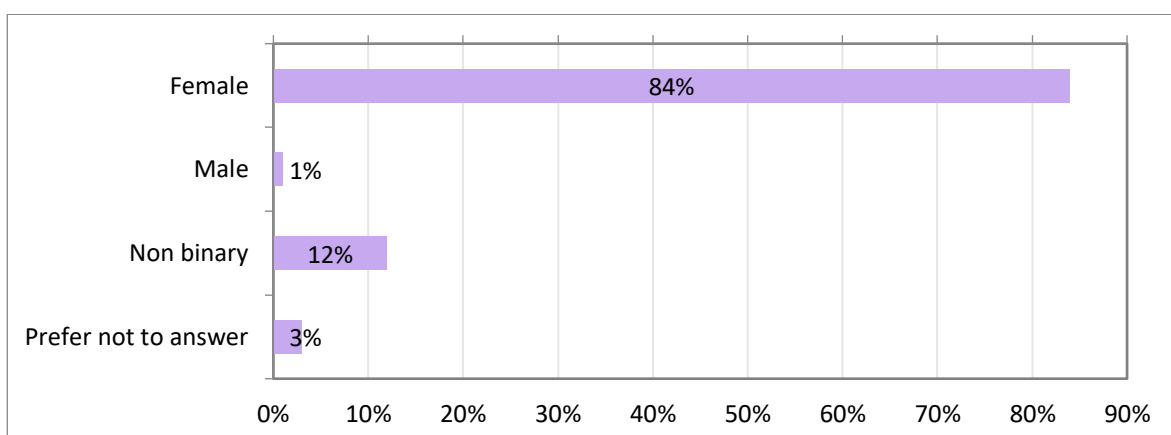


Figure 6. What is your gender?

The respondents were asked their nationalities, age and gender to better understand in which category BTS are the most popular in. As seen in the figure 6, 84% of the respondents are female while 12% are non-binary. Male only made up 1% of the respondents while 3% were not comfortable sharing their gender.

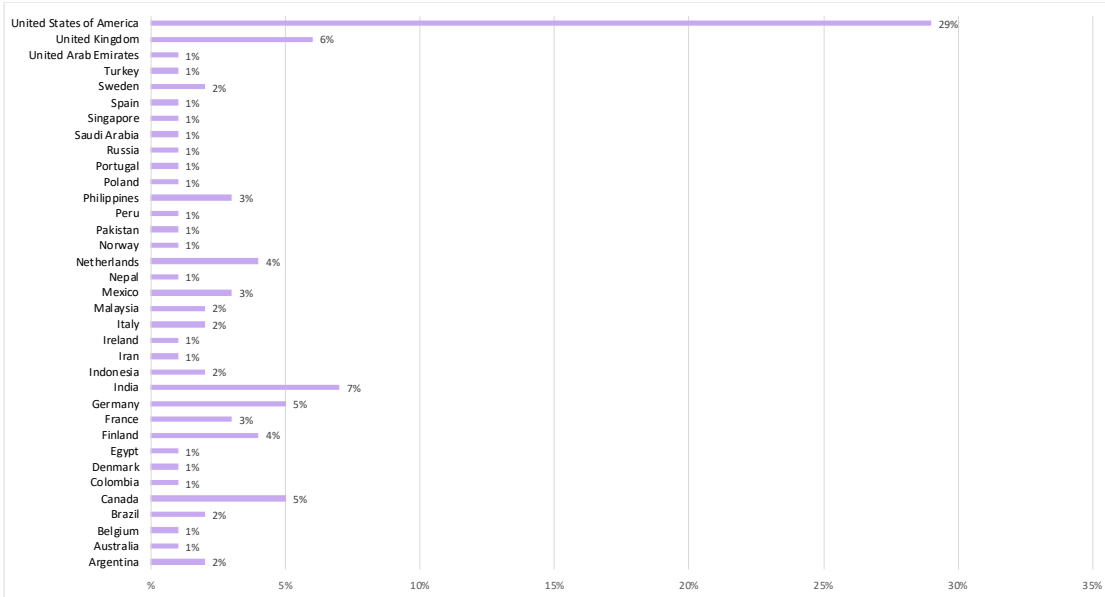


Figure 7. Where do you currently live?

The survey was distributed globally within the BTS fandom platforms. The survey within that reached the most in The United States of America with 29% of the respondents being from there. United Kingdom totaled up to 6% of the respondents, India 7%, Finland 4% and Germany and Canada 5% each respectfully.

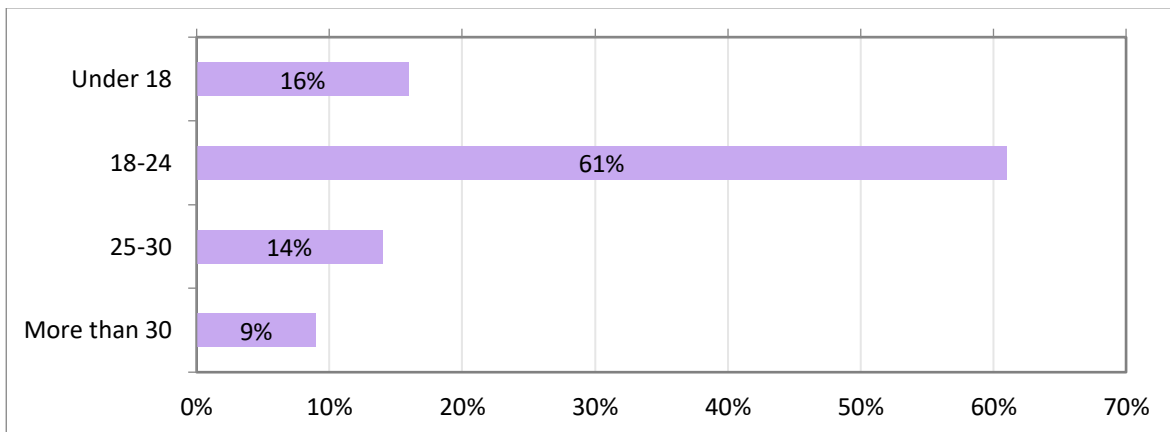


Figure 8. How old are you?

To better understand the age group the researcher asked for the respondent's age. This is crucial as most people under 18 does not have a lot of control of their finances and relies on their parents which can affect the buying power.

The largest age group in the survey were people between 18-24. Second came in age group under 18 which is 16% of the respondents. Age group between 25-30 was 14% and those over 30 were only 9%.

Within this survey it seems to be diverse though BTS' fanbase consist most of female aged 18-24 and living in the United States of America.

4.3 Why BTS is popular

As the survey's purpose is to understand BTS fans and why and what made them become a fan, the researcher started off with questions to understand what level of a fan they are. The first question was to understand how long of a fan they have been of BTS.

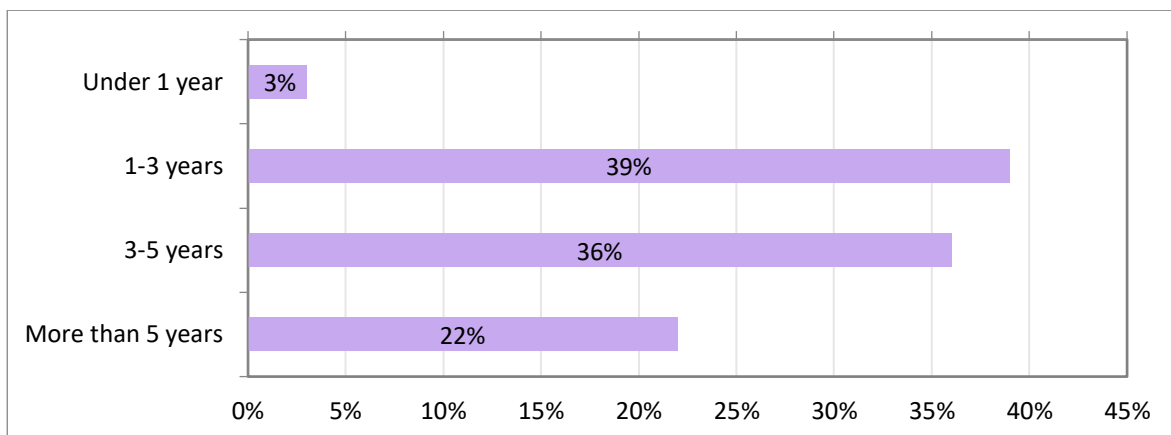


Figure 9. How long have you been a BTS fan?

As can be seen from figure 9 most fans are within the 5-year mark with 1-3 years being a fan winning 3-5 years by just 3%. Least was under 1 year and 22% of the respondent has been a fan for more than 5 years.

BTS got their big western exposure in 2017 BBMAS award show. This survey was conducted in 2022 which is 5 years since their appearance in the BBMAS in 2017 and looking at the statistic from this survey the amount of fan has grown within those 5 years. The researcher can argue that the appearance and win in the 2017 BBMAS have somehow affected their popularity by bringing awareness to the BTS name.

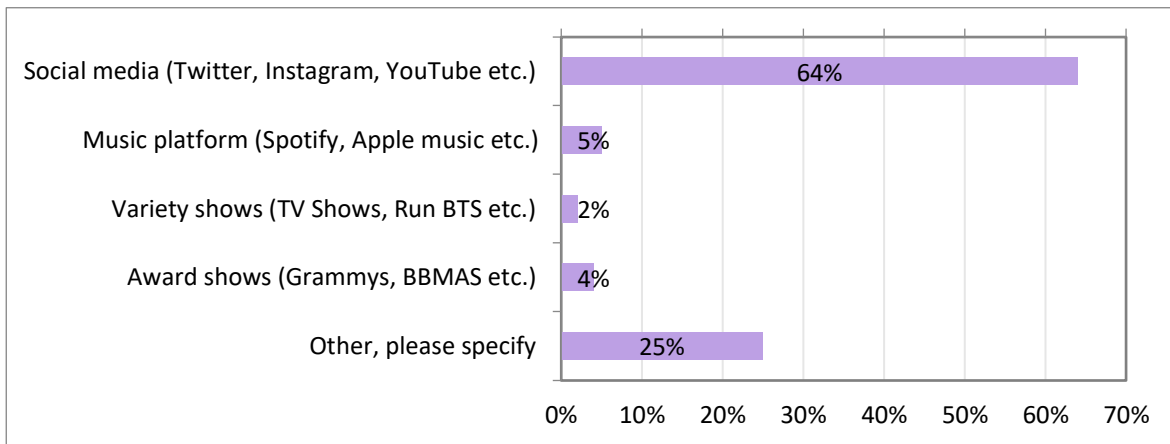


Figure 10. Where did you discover BTS?

In figure 10, 64% of the respondents discovered BTS in social media. The researcher has a theory of this happening due to people and older fans talking about BTS and their win of BBMAS 2017 in social media platforms which made people first aware of BTS this way rather than the actual show. As seen in figure 11 below it isn't entirely impossible as 59% of fans watch the entire music award shows they attend on and 25% still tunes in to their performance live. Essentially the talk and hype of BTS winning created a talk in the social media platforms. 25% of the respondents answered other and most of the answer that was written was due word-to-word, most commonly hearing about BTS from their friends.

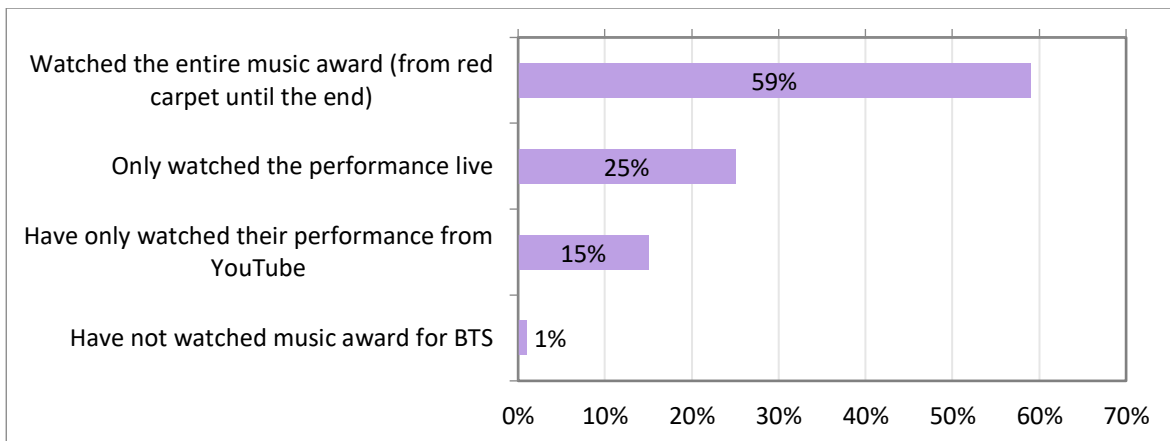


Figure 11. How have you perceived BTS in music awards?

The researcher asked about how fans perceive BTS in music awards as it shows their dedication for BTS. Through the numbers the researcher can see from 574 respondents how many of them are classified as loyal fans. Looking at the numbers in figure 11, 59% of the respondents would be classified as loyal fans as loyal fans as they'd be willing to wait for BTS to come out for the red carpet and wait hours before BTS' performance, assuming to get a glimpse of BTS shown on the

TV screen. 25% are also somehow loyal fans as they'd be willing to watch it live rather than watching it later from another platform like YouTube. The researcher can conclude from this that BTS' fan loyalty is strong.

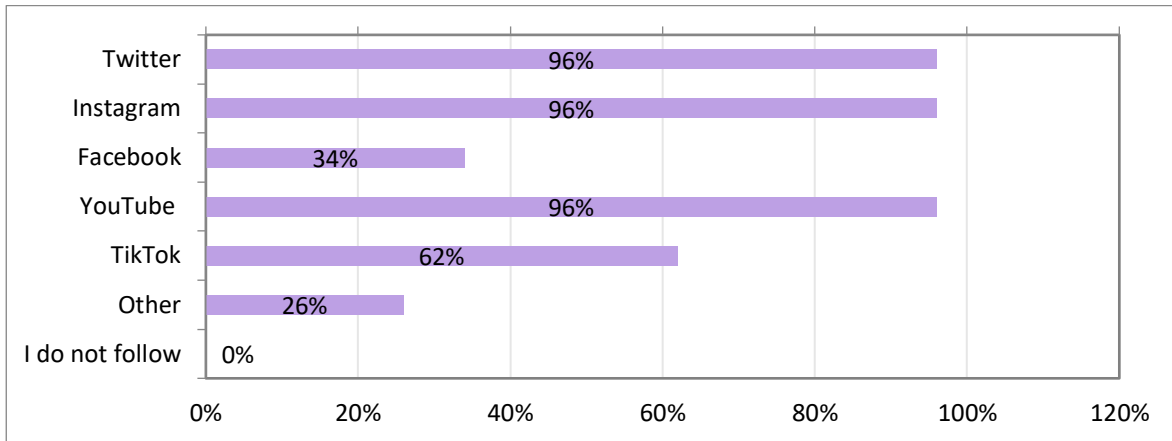


Figure 12. In which platforms do you follow BTS? (Including their individual ones)

As social media has a big impact on BTS' marketing and awareness, the researcher has asked questions regarding it. Social media does have a big impact as in one of the question's results as seen in figure 12 which shows only 0.3% does not follow BTS in any social media while 99.7% does follow. 96% of the respondent actually follows BTS on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This isn't surprising as Instagram and Twitter are platforms where fans can interact and follow BTS on a more personal level, while YouTube serve its purpose by uploading official content. Respondents are also satisfied with BTS' social media use as from the rating 1-5 with 1 being unsatisfied to 5 being very satisfied, it scored an average of 4.7 and most does not wish BTS to do more or do something different in their social media usage.

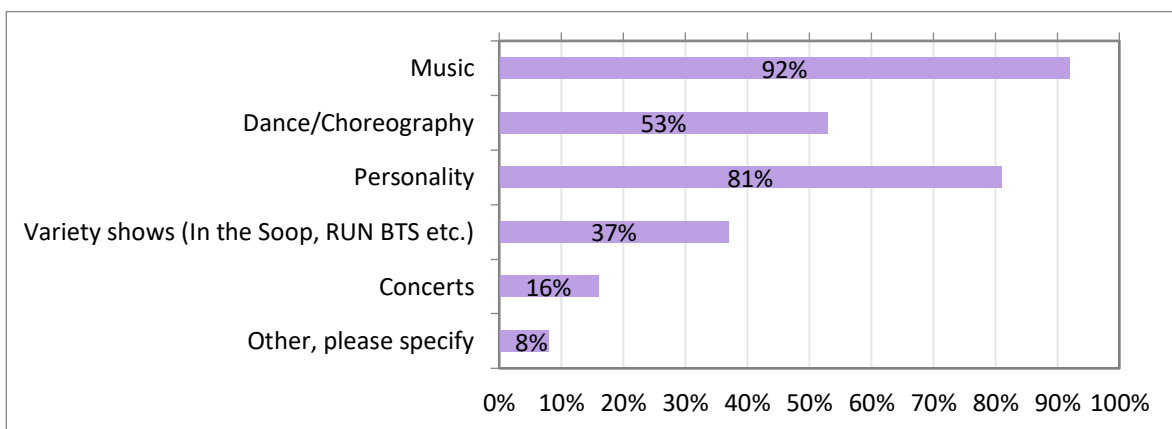


Figure 13. What made you a fan of BTS? Choose 1-3 options

92% of the respondents are a fan of BTS because of their music and 81% because of their personality but only 37% because of variety shows even though they both hand-in-hand. Considering dance and its choreography is important in K-pop and part of the K-pop culture, it is surprising to see dance and choreography being third in place well under personality with only 53%.

Merch, also known as merchandise, plays a big role on artists life whether it be an album or dolls. It is also one way for fans to show how devoted they are to their artists. The researcher wanted to find out how devoted BTS fans would be towards their favorite artists. Though as pointed out before, things like age and financial matters does affect the merch buying decision.

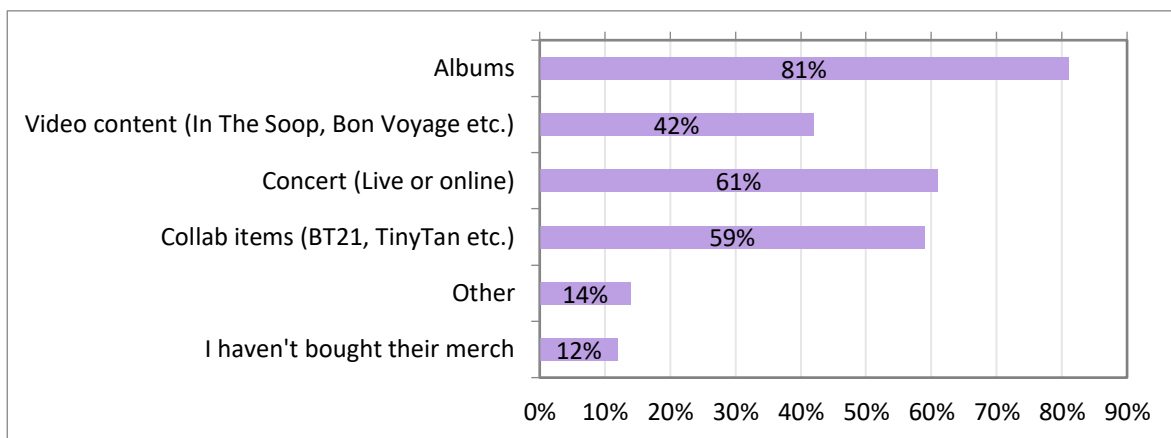


Figure 14. What merch/content have you bought from BTS?

Only 12% have not bought some kind of BTS merch. 81% have bought albums, 61% concert tickers, 59% collab merch with another company and 42% BTS' own video content. 14% answered others which contained such as merch sold in concert stands, 'light stick' meaning BTS' designed light stick for concerts and such and clothing.

As seen in the figure 15 below, albums were a favorite having 42% of their votes with concert coming in second with 32%. Even though in the previous question concert and collab item tied close with 2% difference, collab items only got 6% of the vote.

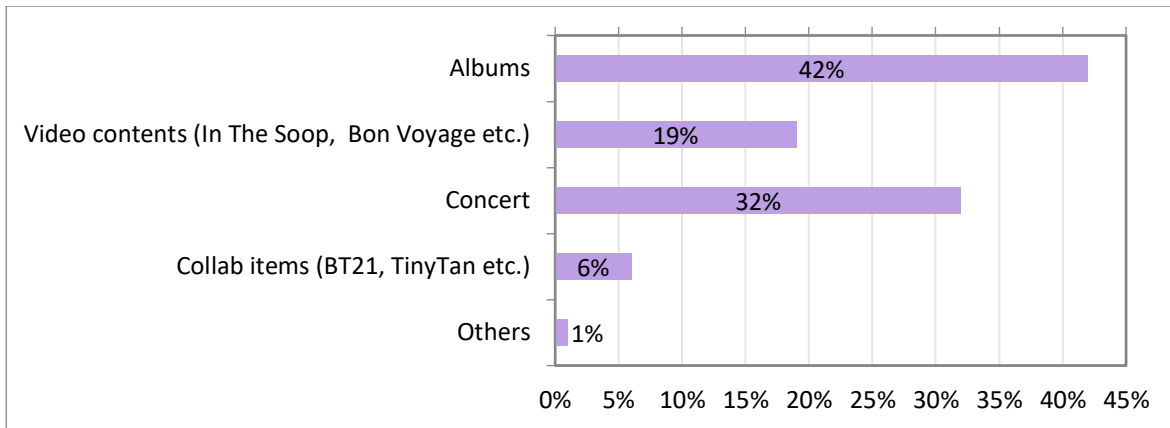


Figure 15. Which merch/content has been your favorite?

To follow up these two questions the researcher has asked what their favorite concept has been. In K-Pop, particularly BTS there are themes and concepts that they follow, and the researcher has asked about that not expecting much difference from their favorite content or merch. But as seen in the figure 16 below though albums still win with 42%, video contents are preferred over concert concepts by 20%. This effect could be due to fans being able to see and listen to their favorite artists but concept wise prefers their video contents as they have variety of choices.

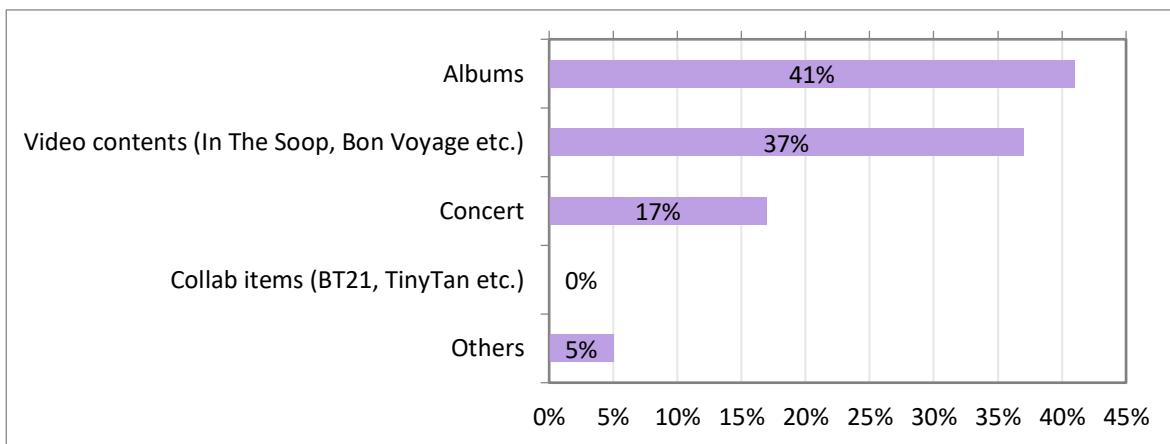


Figure 16. Which merch/content concept has been your favorite?

The respondents seem to be satisfied with BTS' merch and content as the average from 1-5, 1 being not satisfied and 5 being very unsatisfied, is 4.5.

Respondents were also asked 'Is there anything you wish BTS would do more or differently in social media?'. This question was asked for the researcher to see if BTS are handling their social media presence and thus see if it does play a big part of BTS' marketing strategy. To not discourage respondents on answering the survey, the researcher has also not made open questions mandatory thus only 374 out of 574 respondents answered to this question. Most of the

respondents answered 'no' to the question and are satisfied with BTS' social media presence with second majority wishing for more interaction and content from them; using Twitter more frequently, using TikTok, more lives etc.

Another open questions that were asked from the respondents is 'Is there anything you wish BTS to do/create?' with 309 responses. Most people are satisfied with the content and merch BTS have done and created, but there were a good number of answers wanting merch concepts that have been done before to come back, for example deco kits and clothing collabs, and content related to their music and album production – behind-the-scenes album making, mixtapes and more photocards.

To also see if fans are satisfied with how the management handles BTS, the researcher have also asked an open question 'Is there anything you wish HYBE to do for BTS?' with 309 responses. Interestingly in this question more criticism and feedback were given than BTS questions. While many were satisfied and wishes HYBE to continue supporting BTS there were also feedback on lowering prices related to BTS' merch, in particular shipping process. Along with this there were also many comments in improving their security on BTS and prioritizing BTS' health. Looking at the answers given by fans, the researcher can see the protectiveness and care they have towards BTS which as talked in chapter 2, BTS' marketing foundation is fan loyalty which can be seen well in this question. As management takes care of their artists the fans are mostly concerned about the safety, happiness, and overall thinking of BTS' health rather than asking the management to make BTS more content; however, there were also answers wanting to have new content like In the Soop and RUN BTS.

With these answers given by the respondents the researcher can theorize that BTS attracts people with different backgrounds though based on this survey most common seems to female at 18–24-year-olds. Most people have discovered BTS through social media which makes social media an essential part of BTS' marketing strategy along with the fact most fans do follow them on social media and expect interactions and contents from them. Though many does discover BTS from social media music, dance choreography along with their personality are the reason people did become a fan. As discussed in chapter 2, BTS' music is personal and relatable to many which makes fans feel closer to the artists while their choreographies are eye catching. With all these reasons fans becomes loyal and start to buy merchandise, concert tickets and albums. Overall, the particular marketing and PR activities that attracts the fans in BTS are social media and music which answers the investigative question 4 and supporting theory made in chapter 2.

5 Discussion

To conclude the thesis, this chapter will introduce the key findings of the study and gives recommendation for BTS, their management or for further studies. The researcher will also reflect on their learning and general thoughts from this thesis.

5.1 Key Findings

BTS and their management has done a good job in promoting and maintaining the idol group's fame. The primary research of this thesis was to investigate BTS' marketing strategy and what made them so successful. The study focused on different marketing strategies BTS have done – social media, collaborations, fan loyalty – and understanding what they have done that made it successful globally.

Using social media platforms to share pieces of their lives through videos, pictures and tweets have built a relationship between BTS and their fans seems to be the foundation of the marketing strategy. However, to capture people's attention BTS have put themselves out there and coming up with captivating concepts to attract potential fans. This could be seen in their music production having choreographies and story lines to attending and performing in Western award shows such as Billboard Music Awards and the Grammys.

In addition to learning about BTS and their marketing strategies, the researcher has also focused on the fans and asked through a survey why and what do they like about BTS to help support the secondary research and understand BTS' attraction on the fans point of view. Considering the survey was released from the researcher's own social media accounts, the respondents might be niche group of the researcher's own circle which could affect the age, gender, nationality and the overall responses made in the survey; however, the survey did gather 574 respondent which gives a variety of different point of views. The survey supported the theory that social media is a big reason for BTS' successful marketing and that fans do consumer different kinds of BTS merch and contents.

Overall, the researcher can conclude one of the biggest reasons why BTS are successful in their marketing strategy is due to their massive social media presence and emotional connection with their fans shared through social media that extends to other activities like collaborations.

5.2 Recommendations

As the core marketing strategy for BTS is fan loyalty, they could increase their communication with fans a bit more. Due to the increase of fame and the sudden break BTS have announced in June, the band have communicated with their fans less than before. Sharing content and impromptu appearances would help keep the fans loyal through the break and even their announced solo music.

The researcher would suggest based on also the feedback given in the survey (appendix1):

- Impromptu lives and videos sharing their daily lives and interacting with fans
- Documenting future music production process for fans to be more attached to the music and relate

Overall, while BTS are doing good in keeping their fans loyal it is crucial for them to keep up with the work they have done to upkeep their success.

5.3 Reliability, Validity and Relevance

Overall, the reliability of the secondary research and survey are reliable as the information given in the secondary research is based on their actions and documentations which can be seen online, while the survey is quite reliable with the amount of responses it has gotten and due to the survey focusing on the fans own journey with BTS. Though as the researcher distributed the survey, the age, gender and nationality might be biased as the survey most likely circled around the researcher's own population group despite the researcher's effort to reach diverse background by distributing on different social media channels.

The researcher successfully analyzed the result from the secondary research by answering the thesis question which is understanding BTS' marketing strategy and why they have become a phenomenon. The survey has also supported the analysis and hypothesis from the secondary research by asking the fans why and how they have come to support BTS.

BTS' achievements and doings can be seen throughout their career which makes this thesis reliable with valid and relevant information.

5.4 Further Research

BTS and the K-pop industry itself is a new concept in the West that just emerged in the recent years; however, it is an industry that's capturing the heart of millions of people worldwide. As BTS

are still an idol group they will achieve more and gain new ways to market themselves thus further research can be done.

A more in-depth understanding on the fans and why and what made them like BTS could be done and how deeply their admiration and loyalty towards BTS goes. In further research a study in how fans have helped BTS in achieving could be done to truly see the big picture of BTS success.

5.5 Reflection on Learning

The researcher has learned extensively while writing this thesis – academic writing, research, and project management. The researcher was starting a new marketing internship at the start of the thesis journey and thus had a hard time at the beginning with their time management.

The topic of this thesis has been an interest for the researcher thus the researcher already had prior knowledge on topic at hand, so writing the thesis was smooth. The thesis gave the researcher a look into BTS in a business point of view and gave a deeper understanding of marketing strategies in the K-pop industry. Through this the researcher understood the importance of loyal customer base.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Survey Questions

BTS Marketing

This purpose of this survey is to conduct research about BTS' marketing and its fans, and will be used in a thesis. The survey is anonymous and will be open until June 6th 2022. Thank you!

1. How long have you been a BTS fan?

- Under 1 year
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- More than 5 years

2. Where did you discover BTS?

- Social media (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube etc.)
- Music platform (Spotify, Apple music etc.)
- Variety shows (TV Shows, Run BTS etc.)
- Award shows (Grammys, BBMAS etc.)

Other, please specify

3. What made you a fan of BTS? Choose 1-3 options

- Music
- Dance/Choreography
- Personality
- Variety shows (In the Soop, RUN BTS etc.)
- Concerts

Other, please specify

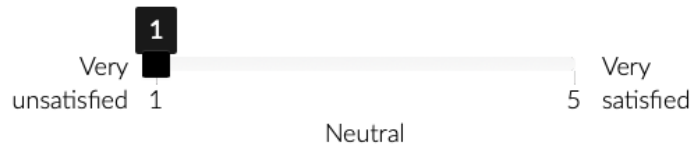
Next



4. In which platforms do you follow BTS? (Including their individual ones)

- Twitter
- Instagram
- Facebook
- YouTube
- TikTok
- Other
- I do not follow

5. How satisfied are you with BTS' presence in social media?



6. Is there anything you wish BTS would do more or differently in social media?

7. How have you perceived BTS in music awards?

- Watched the entire music award (from red carpet until the end)
- Only watched the performance live
- Have only watched their performance from YouTube
- Have not watched music award for BTS

8. For BTS award shows I would stay up/follow the award solely due to BTS participating

- Definitely
- Probably yes
- Probably no
- Definitely no

BTS Marketing

This purpose of this survey is to conduct research about BTS' marketing and its fans, and will be used in a thesis. The survey is anonymous and will be open until June 6th 2022. Thank you!

9. What merch/content have you bought from BTS?

- Albums
- Video content (In The Soop, Bon Voyage etc.)
- Concert (Live or online)
- Collab items (BT21, TinyTan etc.)
- Other
- I haven't bought their merch

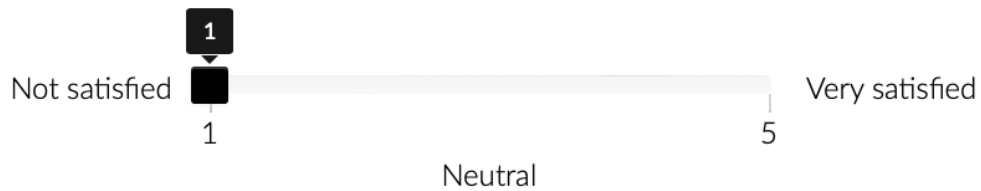
10. Which merch/content has been your favorite?

- Albums
- Video contents (In The Soop, Bon Voyage etc.)
- Concert
- Collab items (BT21, TinyTan etc.)
- Others

11. Which merch/content concept has been your favorite?

- Albums
- Video contents (In The Soop, Bon Voyage etc.)
- Concert
- Collab items (BT21, TinyTan etc.)
- Others

12. How content are you with BTS' merch/contents?



13. Is there anything you wish BTS to do/create?

14. Is there anything you wish HYBE to do for BTS?

BTS Marketing

This purpose of this survey is to conduct research about BTS' marketing and its fans, and will be used in a thesis. The survey is anonymous and will be open until June 6th 2022. Thank you!

15. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non binary
- Prefer not to answer

16. How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-30
- More than 30

17. Where do you currently live?

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