



The Social Reality of Korean Pop Culture Enthusiasts Among Teenagers in Bandar Lampung: A Case Study of Moments of Alwaysness (MOA) Community

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the social reality of teenagers who are fans of Korean popular culture, particularly those involved in the Moments of Alwaysness (MOA) fandom community in Bandar Lampung. Using a qualitative approach and a case study method, the research focuses on how communication practices, group dynamics, and identity construction emerge within this fandom. The study employs five theoretical frameworks: social reality theory, representation theory, social identity theory, interpersonal communication theory, and group communication theory. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of social media interactions. The findings reveal that teenagers use K-Pop fandom not only as a space for entertainment but also as a medium for identity exploration, social bonding, and self-expression, both online and offline. The community serves as a cultural and social platform where members internalize values, norms, and collective meanings, shaping a shared reality within the local context. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of youth behavior in the digital era and highlights how global popular culture influences local social dynamics among adolescents.

Keywords: Fandom, Teenagers, Social Identity, Korean Popular Culture, MOA Lampung, Communication, Social Reality

Introduction

In the era of globalization, the rapid advancement of digital media technologies has transformed how individuals access and engage with global culture. Through platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and streaming services like Spotify and Netflix, transnational cultural flows have become increasingly accessible and influential. Among the most significant developments is the global dissemination of popular culture, which includes music, television, fashion, language, and lifestyle trends (Appadurai, 1996; M. D. Putri et al., 2024; Tomlinson, 1999). For youth in particular an age group marked by identity exploration and heightened social sensitivity popular culture serves as a powerful medium for self-expression, community formation, and symbolic engagement with the world (Azhar et al., 2025; Buckingham, 2007).

Indonesia, as part of this global cultural network, has experienced an extensive reception of Korean popular culture, often referred to as the Korean Wave or *Hallyu*. Initially entering the Indonesian media space in the early 2000s through televised Korean dramas such as *Winter Sonata* and *Endless Love*, Korean culture gained widespread popularity,

eventually catalyzed by the rise of K-Pop acts such as BoA, TVXQ, and Super Junior (Heriyanto, 2012; Mahardika et al., 2022; Rohima et al., 2024). In subsequent years, global icons like Girls' Generation, BIGBANG, BTS, EXO, and BLACKPINK significantly broadened the reach and impact of K-Pop in Indonesia. According to data from (GoodStats, 2024), Indonesia ranks third globally in K-Pop music streaming, with over 7.4 billion plays recorded, demonstrating how deeply embedded this cultural form has become in the daily lives of Indonesian youth.

This phenomenon represents not just a shift in entertainment preferences, but a broader cultural transformation. Cultural assimilation the process by which foreign cultural elements are adopted into local practices is clearly visible in how Indonesian youth embrace Korean fashion, language, music, and social norms. (Simbar, 2016) documented how adolescents in Manado began imitating Korean pop culture through television, with observable changes in lifestyle and a gradual distancing from local cultural practices. Such cultural integration reflects a dual-edged process; while it facilitates global cultural literacy and identity pluralism, it also introduces the risk of cultural erosion, especially when local traditions are displaced or devalued.

Nevertheless, the assimilation of global popular culture is not inherently negative. Cultural theorists argue that globalization fosters hybrid identities and new forms of cultural expression. (Heryanto, 2012) emphasizes that popular culture, if locally contextualized, can serve as a site of creative negotiation, allowing local creators to merge global aesthetics with indigenous values. Scholars such as (Iwabuchi, 2002) and (Kraidy, 2006) also argue that cultural hybridity encourages multidirectional flows of influence, disrupting the notion of cultural imperialism and enabling more complex cultural engagements.

One of the most tangible manifestations of cultural globalization and identity reconfiguration is the emergence of fandom communities. These groups are composed of individuals who collectively admire and support specific celebrities, music groups, or cultural products. (Jenkins, 2006, 2012) characterizes fandoms as participatory cultures in which fans are not mere consumers but active participants in cultural meaning-making, constructing shared narratives, symbols, and social networks. In Indonesia, K-Pop fandoms have grown significantly, forming tight-knit communities both online and offline. The MOA (Moments of Alwaysness) Lampung community, composed primarily of teenage fans of the South Korean group TXT, exemplifies this phenomenon. Established in 2019, MOA Lampung organizes various collective activities such as online promotions, birthday events, fan gatherings, and even social campaigns, illustrating how fandom extends beyond entertainment into realms of civic participation and identity construction.

These communities play a pivotal role in shaping youth identity, fostering a sense of belonging, emotional solidarity, and mutual support. (Hidayat et al., 2022) assert that K-Pop fan communities in Indonesia facilitate interpersonal connection and social identity development, often functioning as alternative social institutions where youth can engage, collaborate, and express themselves. Similar findings by (Baym, 2015) suggest that such communities enhance communication skills, social cohesion, and emotional intelligence.

Furthermore, excessive emotional attachment to idols may lead to distorted perceptions of reality and increased psychological dependency. (Fitriana, 2019) argues that parasocial relationships between fans and celebrities can significantly influence a fan's worldview, values, and real-world interactions. This underscores the importance of critically examining fan communities not just as entertainment-related phenomena, but as socio-cultural ecosystems embedded in broader power dynamics and media discourses.

Against this backdrop, the role of communication theory becomes essential in analyzing how popular culture operates in shaping youth identity and social structures. Through symbols, media narratives, and interpersonal interactions, communication functions as the bridge between global media flows and localized identity formation. Social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 2001) offer useful lenses to understand the ways in which individuals align with collective identities through media consumption. In the case of MOA Lampung, members use fandom symbols (e.g., merchandise, hashtags, choreography, digital art) as markers of belonging, while simultaneously engaging in rituals and group norms that further consolidate their social bonds.

In conclusion, the widespread adoption of Korean popular culture among Indonesian youth, as illustrated by the activities of MOA Lampung, reflects a deeper negotiation between global influence and local identity. While this cultural exchange has enriched youth culture and stimulated new forms of self-expression and social organization, it also necessitates a critical awareness of its implications for cultural sustainability and youth development. Popular culture, when engaged with reflectively, can serve not only as a source of entertainment but also as a tool for cultural dialogue, empowerment, and creative hybridity in the context of a rapidly globalizing world.

Literature Review

1. Social Reality

The social construction theory proposed by (Berger & Luckmann, 2016) explains that social reality is built through the continuous processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization. In the context of K-pop fandom communities such as MOA Lampung, youth are not merely cultural consumers but active agents who construct meaning and social identity through symbols, interactions, and group communication. Items such as fandom merchandise, specific jargon, and shared rituals become symbolic elements of a collectively constructed reality.

(Hestiningrum, 2020) found that Indonesian K-pop fans use digital media to communicate and express their cultural affiliation, forming new social identities rooted in fandom lifestyles. The constructed reality is not neutral; it is shaped by ongoing symbolic interaction among members of the community.

2. Representation in Popular Culture

(Hall et al., 2024) argues that representation is not simply the reflection of reality, but a productive process that generates meaning. Language, symbols, and images function as tools of power and interpretation. In fan communities like MOA Lampung, symbols such as dance covers, fandom slogans, Korean language use, and

idol-style aesthetics act as representational practices that shape identity and solidarity.

(Andriani & Putri, 2023) in their study on Citayam Fashion Week, and (Ayuanda et al., 2024) in their analysis of Javanese cultural representation in film, highlight how media representations are not neutral, but ideologically driven. Similarly, K-pop fans in Indonesia do not simply copy Korean culture; they re-interpret and localize it in meaningful ways.

3. Social Identity Theory

(Tajfel et al., 2001) Social Identity Theory emphasizes that an individual's identity is shaped not only by personal traits but also by group affiliations. In fandoms, individuals define themselves through their group membership, strengthening in-group solidarity while differentiating themselves from outsiders.

(Pujirahayu & Noorizki, 2024) explain that strong group identity in fan communities leads to high conformity and commitment, often marked by the use of shared attributes and active participation. (K. Y. S. Putri & Fazli, 2024) add that social identity within fandoms also acts as a buffer against external stigma, fostering symbolic protection and resilience among members.

4. Interpersonal Communication

According to DeVito, (Rizky Islami, 2025), interpersonal communication involves message exchange between individuals that allows mutual understanding, emotional expression, and the building of relationships. In MOA Lampung, interpersonal communication plays a key role in providing emotional support, enhancing loyalty, and developing member intimacy.

(Wardani & Kusuma, 2021) found that interpersonal communication in fan communities blends with parasocial interaction, where fans emotionally bond not only with each other but also with shared representations of their idols. These interactions foster a sense of belonging and reinforce the group's symbolic identity.

5. Group Communication

Group communication theory examines how interaction patterns influence group decision-making, cohesion, and collective identity. Bales, as cited in (Nisa et al., 2024), highlights that group dynamics are shaped by roles, norms, and communication structures. In the MOA fandom, communication patterns such as project coordination, idea sharing, or managing conflicts are part of the internal mechanisms that sustain the group's existence and solidarity.

Methodology

1. Type and Approach of Research

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, aiming to deeply understand the social reality, communication patterns, and identity formation of teenagers in the MOA Lampung K-pop fandom community.

2. Research Location and Time

This research was conducted in Bandar Lampung, specifically within the MOA (Moments of Alwaysness) Lampung community, a fandom of the K-pop group Tomorrow X Together (TXT). Data collection was carried out from March to April

2025 through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and digital documentation.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques in this study included in-depth interviews with six key informants actively involved in the MOA Lampung community, participant observation during community activities such as fan gatherings and digital interactions, and documentation from the community's social media accounts to support the analysis of communication patterns and member interactions.

4. Data Validity

Data validity in this study was ensured through source and methodological triangulation, by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to maintain consistency of findings. Validity was also reinforced by the researcher's direct involvement in community activities and by conducting data cross-checks with the informants.

5. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive model by Miles and Huberman, which includes three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection through to the end of the research, in order to identify communication patterns, symbolic meanings, and identity construction within the MOA Lampung community.

Result and Discussion

1. The Social Reality of K-Pop Fans in the MOA Lampung Community

The social reality of teenagers in the MOA Lampung community is shaped through continuous interaction in their daily lives, both online and offline. According to the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann, social reality is not natural it is created through the processes of externalization (expression of meaning), objectivation (institutionalization of values), and internalization (personal adoption of those values). In this context, the fandom serves not only as entertainment but as a meaningful social space where young people find emotional connection, shared identity, and a sense of belonging.

The externalization process is reflected when teens join the community to express their admiration for K-Pop and connect with peers who share similar interests. Objectivation takes place as the community develops its own culture jargon, rules, communication norms, and collective behavior. Internalization is visible when members begin to see the community as an important part of their lives, feeling emotionally attached, comfortable, and loyal. Activities such as birthday cafés and fan projects function as symbolic rituals that strengthen group identity. This illustrates how fandom becomes a platform for social meaning-making and self-actualization for teenagers.

Table 1: Dimensions of Social Reality of K-Pop Fans in MOA Lampung Community

No.	Dimensions of Social Reality (Berger & Luckmann)	Practices in MOA Lampung Community
1.	Externalization	Joining to express interest and build social bonds
2.	Objectivation	Formation of symbols, norms, and structure (lightsticks, jargon, group rules)
3.	Internalization	Sense of belonging, comfort, and loyalty to the community
4.	Symbolic Representation	Use of fandom attributes during community events
5.	Digital Interaction	Intensive communication via WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter
6.	Collective Activities	Birthday café, fan gathering, TXT comeback projects

2. Interpersonal and Group Communication in the MOA Lampung Community

Communication plays a central role in sustaining the MOA Lampung community. On an interpersonal level, members develop strong emotional ties through everyday conversations, private chats, and mutual support, especially via WhatsApp and in-person events. Joseph DeVito's theory emphasizes that effective interpersonal communication involves openness, empathy, and emotional support all of which are strongly evident in the MOA community.

Group communication is also highly active and structured. Through group chats and offline meetings, members coordinate tasks, discuss upcoming events, and make collective decisions. The communication style is participatory and non-hierarchical, ensuring all voices are heard. This aligns with Bales' theory of effective group interaction, which highlights the balance between task orientation and relational harmony. Such practices not only enhance group cohesion but also foster a strong sense of shared responsibility and inclusiveness.

Table 2: Forms of Communication in the MOA Lampung Community

No	Communication Type	Medium	Example of Interaction	Social Impact
1	Interpersonal	WhatsApp, Offline Events	Personal chats, emotional conversations	Builds closeness and trust
2	Group	WhatsApp Groups, Meetups	Task division, idea exchange, collaboration	Strengthens group identity and commitment
3	Digital Communication	Instagram, Twitter	Content sharing, community updates	Maintains online presence and digital bonding
4	Collective Activities	Fan Projects	Event planning, celebrations	Enhances member involvement and pride

3. Formation and Representation of Teenagers' Social Identity in Korean Popular Culture

The social identity of teens in this fandom is formed through strong cultural affiliation with K-Pop and the internalization of fandom values. MOA Lampung members express their identities using cultural markers such as K-Pop-inspired outfits, merchandise, lightsticks, and content creation on social media. Stuart Hall's theory of representation suggests that identity is not fixed, but constructed and performed through symbolic practices. In this case, digital platforms become vital spaces where identity is shaped, expressed, and collectively reinforced.

Through their involvement in community activities, fans not only show their admiration for their idols but also gain emotional support, shared values, and creative freedom. Their identity is both individual and collective MOA is not just a fandom label, but a source of self-confidence, connection, and belonging. The community provides a cultural space where young people feel understood, seen, and empowered.

Table 4.3. Dimensions of Social Identity in the MOA Lampung Community

No	Dimension of Social Identity	Form of Representation	Visible Impact
1	Internalization of Fandom Values	Loyalty to TXT, active participation in MOA	Emergence of pride, belonging, and emotional attachment
2	Symbolism and Self-Expression	Fashion, lightsticks, merch, Korean language	Visual transformation, cultural affiliation
3	Role of Social Media	Fanart, TikTok videos, event documentation	Reinforces identity through visibility and creative engagement
4	Social Relationships and Shared Values	Emotional bonding, peer support, mutual respect	Community serves as a safe, affirming space for identity exploration

4. Collective Activities and Social Transformation

Participation in collective activities within the MOA Lampung community offers adolescents opportunities to grow socially, emotionally, and intellectually. These activities include organizing fan gatherings, charity events, birthday café campaigns, and collaborative projects with other K-pop fan communities. Through these events, members not only express admiration for their idols but also engage in team-based coordination, decision-making, and event execution.

These activities function as non-formal educational platforms that foster personal growth. Youth learn to handle responsibilities, divide tasks, manage deadlines, and resolve interpersonal conflicts constructively. For example, in organizing a birthday café event, members must plan budgets, design promotional content, and liaise with venues all of which require real-world organizational skills. The community environment enables them to practice leadership and collaboration, while still grounded in a space that feels safe and supportive.

Moreover, collective participation strengthens members' commitment to the group and promotes values such as empathy, solidarity, and shared accountability. These experiences contribute to a form of character development that goes beyond

entertainment and directly benefits members' interpersonal maturity and self-discipline. In this way, fandom activities are redefined as meaningful avenues for youth empowerment and social transformation.

5. Social Perception and Community Acceptance

Historically, K-pop fandoms have often been misperceived by society as unproductive, overly fanatical, or detached from reality. However, in recent years especially in local contexts such as Bandar Lampung there has been a gradual shift in perception. The MOA Lampung community, through its structured, respectful, and socially aware engagements, is slowly challenging these stereotypes.

Family members, educators, and peers are beginning to recognize the positive outcomes of fandom participation. Many members have shown increased self-confidence, improved communication skills, and a greater sense of social responsibility after joining the community. Some even report stronger time management abilities and more consistent goal setting as a result of their involvement in collective fan projects.

In addition, community initiatives such as charity fundraisers, public clean-up events, and mental health awareness campaigns are helping to reshape public narratives about fandoms. These acts of social contribution demonstrate that fandoms are not merely entertainment-centered groups, but evolving communities capable of civic engagement and cultural collaboration.

This shift in public perception indicates a broader cultural acknowledgment of fandoms as valid and productive social spaces. It also reflects the ability of youth-led communities to negotiate their place within society, not only through digital influence but also through real-world action and values-driven participation.

Discussion

This study reveals how adolescents in the MOA Lampung fan community construct a unique social reality through shared symbols, collective practices, and communicative engagement. The findings reinforce Berger and Luckmann's (1991) social construction theory, showing that participation in fandom is not merely a form of entertainment consumption, but a symbolic and interactive process through which members create meaning, structure, and identity.

The dimensions of social reality externalization, objectivation, and internalization were observed in how members joined the fandom, adopted community norms, and emotionally attached themselves to the group identity. Through this process, the fandom became a vital part of their social lives, providing emotional security, belonging, and symbolic representation in both offline and online environments.

Furthermore, the study supports Hall's (1997) representation theory by demonstrating that K-pop symbols serve as tools of identity construction and cultural expression. Adolescents in the MOA community use fashion, media content, language, and shared rituals not only to imitate their idols but to reinterpret global culture into a localized

identity. In this sense, the fandom becomes a space for negotiating values, projecting identity, and resisting mainstream social norms.

The presence of strong interpersonal and group communication within the community confirms theories proposed by DeVito and Bales. Open communication practices—both digital and face-to-face enhance solidarity, empathy, and equal participation. The community becomes a supportive microsystem that cultivates trust, democratic values, and collective responsibility, essential for adolescent psychosocial development.

This research also aligns with Social Identity Theory by Tajfel and Turner, where individuals derive self-worth and group cohesion from belonging to a social category. In MOA Lampung, identity is performed and reinforced through symbolic boundaries, digital performances, and affective alignment with the group. These practices affirm that fan communities are not superficial affiliations, but emotionally charged social environments that shape individual and collective behavior.

Finally, the study contributes to the growing recognition of fandoms as informal educational spaces. Through organizing projects, negotiating roles, and contributing to social campaigns, members develop leadership, planning, and communication skills. The shift in public perception from stigma to acceptance also highlights how fan communities are becoming socially legitimate spaces for youth development and cultural agency in the digital era.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the MOA Lampung fan community plays a significant role in shaping the social reality, identity, and communication patterns of adolescents who are fans of Korean popular culture. The construction of social reality occurs through continuous and symbolic interaction, in line with Berger and Luckmann's theory of social construction. These adolescents are not merely passive consumers of K-pop, but active participants who interpret and recontextualize global culture into meaningful local experiences.

Fandom symbols such as lightsticks, fashion styles, community slogans, and digital content serve as instruments of identity representation. This aligns with Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory, where symbols are used to affirm group belonging, collective pride, and individual self-expression within the fan community.

Interpersonal and group communication within the community strengthens social bonds and encourages inclusive participation. Beyond expression, the community also functions as an informal learning space where members develop character, responsibility, and collaboration through collective activities such as fan projects, social campaigns, and community management.

Overall, the findings show that K-pop fandom is not merely a form of entertainment, but a productive and educative social space. The existence of such communities provides a safe, supportive, and empowering environment for youth to develop their potential and shape their identities in the digital era. This study also opens opportunities for future

research on the intersection of global popular culture and local youth social dynamics in Indonesia.

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