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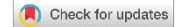


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Love vs. principle: Fans' dilemma over idols promoting or collaborating with boycotted products

Cinta vs. prinsip: Dilema penggemar idola yang mempromosikan atau berkolaborasi dengan produk yang diboikot

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Abstract: This study explores the attitudes of K-pop fans when faced with the dilemma of their idols collaborating with boycotted products. The research was conducted qualitatively by combining digital ethnography and audiovisual analysis methods. Data were collected through observations of K-pop fans' activities on TikTok and Twitter (X). The findings reveal that K-pop fans display three main attitudes in response to their idols' collaboration with boycotted products. The first attitude is to continue to be a fan and support the idol. However, this support is expressed through various reasons and actions, such as making donations that reflect conditional loyalty and ambiguous participation. The second attitude is active rejection, carried out through participation in cancel culture. This is expressed by unfollowing the idol's social media accounts and deleting fan pages. The third attitude is leaving the fandom and becoming haters. Although not all fans who leave the fandom become haters, feelings of disappointment and betrayal by the idol are the main reasons behind this response.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi sikap penggemar K-Pop ketika menghadapi dilema saat idolanya kolaborasi dengan produk yang diboikot. Penelitian ini dilakukan secara kualitatif dengan menggabungkan metode etnografi digital dan analisis audiovisual. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi aktivitas penggemar K-Pop di TikTok dan Twitter (X). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggemar K-Pop menunjukkan tiga sikap utama sebagai tanggapan terhadap kolaborasi idolanya dengan produk yang diboikot. Sikap pertama adalah tetap menjadi penggemar dan mendukung sang idola, tetapi sikap ini dilakukan dengan berbagai alasan dan tindakan, seperti melakukan donasi yang mencerminkan loyalitas bersyarat dan partisipasi ambigu. Sikap kedua adalah penolakan aktif yang dilakukan melalui partisipasi dalam budaya pembatalan. Budaya pembatalan ini diekspresikan dengan cara berhenti mengikuti akun media sosial sang idola hingga menghapus halaman penggemar. Sikap ketiga adalah meninggalkan *fandom* dan berubah menjadi *haters*. Meskipun tidak semua penggemar yang meninggalkan *fandom* menjadi *haters*, perasaan kecewa dan merasa dikhianati oleh idola menjadi alasan utama sikap ini.

INTRODUCTION

The long-standing conflict between Palestine and Israel has sparked global reactions, including in Indonesia, where public sentiment often leans toward supporting the Palestinian struggle due to religious, ethical, and political considerations. Many Indonesians actively participate in boycott campaigns targeting products affiliated with Israel, viewing such actions as a way to demonstrate solidarity with Palestine. As a form of collective action, boycotting involves withdrawing support from certain entities to achieve social, political, or economic goals (Zayyadi & Ubaidillah, 2024). In the Indonesian context, this boycott is closely tied to adherence to Islamic teachings and a spirit of nationalism that emphasizes justice and resistance to perceived oppression.

In recent years, the emergence of digital platforms has expanded the reach and impact of boycott campaigns, enabling grassroots movements to act quickly and efficiently (Sen et al., 2001). Social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter (X), and Facebook have become crucial tools for organizing and amplifying boycotts, allowing individuals to share information, voice motivations, and coordinate actions globally (Liao & Xia, 2022). This digital transformation has also empowered specific communities, such as K-pop fan bases, to participate actively in social activism. Many factors drive individuals to participate in boycotts, including moral, ethical, social, political, environmental, and religious considerations (Buheji & Ahmed, 2023). Although participation has become easier, boycotting in the digital age is a complex phenomenon influenced by various motivations and responses. Active involvement in boycotts symbolizes personal values and identity, and deciding to join is deeply embedded in psychological

values (Buheji & Ahmed, 2023), moral identity, belief in the effectiveness of boycotts (Salas et al., 2019), and concerns about personal losses (Ackermann & Gundelach, 2020). These values ultimately guide individuals in distinguishing right from wrong. Sen et al. (2001) noted that boycotting differs from personal decisions to avoid certain goods, as it is an organized collective rejection without formal sanctions for non-compliance.

K-pop fans are known for their intense emotional engagement and loyalty to their idols, often extending their involvement beyond music to socio-political issues. For example, ARMY, the fanbase of BTS, has demonstrated its influence by supporting movements like Black Lives Matter and organizing boycotts against political figures, such as during the failed rally for Donald Trump in June 2020 (Pacheco & Conrado Moreira da Silva, 2022). K-pop fans have also engaged in social activism in Indonesia, leveraging their collective power to protest issues like the controversial Omnibus Law (Fitria, 2022a). These examples highlight the potential of K-pop fandoms to act as agents of change through organized collective action. However, the intersection of K-pop fandom and boycott movements becomes more complex when idols become entangled in controversies related to boycotted brands. For instance, in June 2024, the boy group NCT collaborated with brands like Starbucks and McDonald's, both of which have been targets of boycotts due to alleged ties with Israel. Similarly, BTS member V faced criticism for posting a photo featuring McDonald's, while groups like NewJeans and IVE were criticized for promoting Coca-Cola and Pepsi, respectively, amid Israel's military aggression in Gaza. These incidents place fans in a moral dilemma: should they prioritize loyalty to their idols or remain

steadfast in their values and principles of boycotting? This dilemma is particularly significant in Indonesia, where religious beliefs often guide social and political actions (Buheji & Ahmed, 2023). For many K-pop fans in Indonesia, supporting Palestine is not just a political stance but also a religious obligation rooted in Islamic teachings that emphasize justice and compassion. At the same time, their loyalty to idols is highly emotional, often expressed through collective actions like streaming parties, merchandise purchases, and social media campaigns (Kim, 2018). The tension between these two commitments—religious values and fandom loyalty—creates a unique conflict worthy of further study.

The relationship between K-pop fans and social activism, particularly collective action through social media, is evident. Charles Tilly (2004) viewed collective action from a sociopolitical perspective, focusing on how social movements and protests are organized forms of collective action aimed at challenging authority or advocating for rights. Collective action is characterized by free, imaginative, collaborative, and consumer-driven interactions (Huang, 2012; Jenkins, 2006b). In collective action, group harmony, tasks, and obligations take precedence (Hsu, 2007). Jenkins (2006a) argued that in the digital age, fans are no longer passive consumers but active participants capable of influencing media culture and holding idols and companies accountable. As "prosumers," K-pop fans engage in content creation, advocacy, and critique, using their platforms to voice opinions and shape narratives. This dual role as supporters and critics place K-pop fans at the center of debates surrounding boycotts and idol endorsements of brands. Their responses to such controversies

reveal the complexities of navigating personal values, collective identity, and emotional bonds in the context of global socio-political issues.

Although numerous studies have been conducted on the boycott of pro-Israel products in Indonesia, most have primarily focused on their impact, effectiveness, and public responses. For instance, research has examined the social implications of boycotting pro-Israel products (Ibtisamah Laila et al., 2024), the influence of boycott campaigns on consumer purchasing decisions (Kurniawan et al., 2024), and shifts in public perception following the issuance of the MUI fatwa against pro-Israel products, analyzed using the Naïve Bayes classification method (Jumiati et al., 2024). Unlike these existing studies, this research introduces a novel perspective by exploring the psychological and emotional dilemmas faced by K-Pop fans when their idols collaborate with pro-Israel brands. This aspect has been largely overlooked, as prior studies have predominantly emphasized economic, social, or policy-related effects rather than the internal conflicts experienced by individuals, particularly within global fan communities such as K-Pop. Consequently, this study offers a fresh perspective on how geopolitical issues influence the dynamics between fans, idols, and global brands.

This study aims to examine how K-pop fans navigate this conflict, particularly in Indonesia, where religious sentiment and nationalism intersect with fandom culture. By exploring the attitudes and behaviors of K-pop fans when their idols are associated with boycotted brands, this study seeks to provide insights into the dynamics of loyalty, activism, and identity within digital-age fandom. Ultimately, understanding this phenomenon can offer perspectives on how collective action and

individual values interact in the era of social media and global interconnectedness. This study will focus on how K-pop fans express their attitudes on social media when their idols become brand ambassadors or post about consuming products affiliated with Israel, aiming to analyze the conflict between upholding principles and supporting beloved idols. Twitter (X) and TikTok were chosen as research fields due to their unique roles in shaping modern communication, fostering collective discussions, and amplifying fan-driven movements. As a short video platform, TikTok has emerged as a dominant space for K-pop fandom to engage with content creatively and collaboratively. Its algorithm, which prioritizes virality (Kulaga, 2024), allows niche topics—such as boycott movements—to gain widespread visibility within hours. On the other hand, Twitter (X) remains a key hub for real-time discourse and debate. Twitter (X) enables users to engage in threaded conversations, share news updates, and critique corporate actions or idol endorsements almost instantly. Retweeting is a fundamental feature that allows users to share tweets with their followers, significantly amplifying the reach of information (Oliveira et al., 2020). Its brevity and accessibility make the platform an ideal space for fans to succinctly express their stances while participating in broader discussions about ethics, politics, and fandom loyalty.

Additionally, the algorithm considers the history of retweets and the influence of users who retweet to predict the popularity of tweets (Maleewong, 2016), making it a powerful tool for amplifying fan activism. By focusing on TikTok and X, this study aims to capture the various ways K-pop fans navigate and express their dilemmas across different types of digital ecosystems. These

platforms offer complementary insights into how fandom balances love for idols with ethical beliefs, especially in responding to sensitive geopolitical issues like the Israel-Palestine conflict.

METHOD

This research focuses on K-pop fans, particularly fanbase pages on Twitter (X) and TikTok. The study employs a qualitative approach combining digital ethnography (Hine, 2017) and audiovisual content analysis (Bell et al., 2001). This combination is intended to provide a deeper understanding of the dilemmas faced by K-pop fans when they must choose between their beloved idols and their principles concerning the idols' collaboration with products suspected of having affiliations with Israel.

Digital ethnography was chosen because it allows for studying new social practices facilitated by online communication and explores the transformation of existing social relationship networks (Hine, 2017). Digital ethnography was used to analyze popular posts by K-pop fans using hashtags such as #boycott, #boycottNCT, #boycottidolkpop, and #boycottkpop. The researcher systematically examined content posted under these hashtags to identify the most visited, liked, and followed posts and K-pop fan accounts. Data from these posts were collected and categorized based on their types and sources. The digital ethnographic observation was conducted from July 1 to July 30, 2024.

The next step of this research involved audiovisual content analysis (Bell et al., 2001), which considers various aspects, such as analyzing the songs or sounds used in videos. These songs and sounds are often repurposed to create new meanings (Abidin & Kaye, 2021). Additionally, the researcher examined

interactions on the posts, such as the number of likes, comments, and replies. The use of specific words or phrases was also noted during this analysis.

Twitter (X) and TikTok were selected as the social media platforms studied for several reasons. First, both are extremely popular platforms among K-pop fans. Second, easy access to data in text, images, and videos on Twitter (X) and TikTok enables efficient data collection and analysis. Third, the distinct characteristics of Twitter (X) and TikTok enable rich dynamics in fan interactions, including discussions, debates, and collective actions. These dynamics provide valuable insights into how fan attitudes are shaped and expressed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the digital era, where social media increasingly dominates daily life, online platforms have mediated all aspects of human interaction, including the evolving relationship between fans and idols. Fans in this digital age are no longer merely consumers of media texts; they are also actively involved in producing and distributing content (Jenkins, 2006b). Through collective action, fans transform into active audiences, providing direct feedback on their idols' works and performances and offering support through praise, suggestions, and criticism. These fan activities aim to aid the idol's development, enhance the quality of their work, and prevent future mistakes. Fans often react strongly when their idol is involved in controversy, such as becoming a brand ambassador for boycotted products. Such situations spark debate because fans believe that, as influential figures, K-pop idols should be socially aware and sensitive to global issues, including the plight of the Palestinian

people and the ongoing struggle supported by many advocates of Palestine.

The emotions felt by fans are not limited to anger and disappointment when they learn that their idols are collaborating with boycotted products. Many K-pop fans face a significant dilemma, torn between their affection for their beloved idols and their personal principles and values. This dilemma reflects the tension between personal identity, political and moral values, and emotional engagement with their idols. Moreover, this dilemma exemplifies how popular culture and politics often interact, influencing how individuals perceive the world and make decisions. Based on observations of K-pop fans on TikTok and Twitter (X), three general attitudes emerge when an idol becomes a brand ambassador for a product allegedly associated with Israel. These attitudes are: continuing to support the idol; engaging in cancel culture against the idol; and leaving the fandom and becoming haters. These three responses are driven by the voluntary nature of participation in boycott actions, with no coercion involved (Sen et al., 2001). These differing responses underscore the complex relationship between fans, their idols, and the broader socio-political context. They highlight how fans navigate their identities and values within the realm of popular culture, demonstrating the significant impact of digital media on social and cultural practices.

Continued Support for the Idol

Amid the dilemma of their idol collaborating with a brand boycotted for alleged affiliations with Israel, many fans continue to support their idol. For instance, when Kim Tae-hyung, also known as V of BTS, posted a photo featuring French fries with the McDonald's logo, it sparked

controversy and debate. Despite this, many BTS fans, known as ARMY, responded with comments such as "I still eat this" or "I also eat this," signaling their continued support for the idol. This collective support also represents a form of fan activism aimed at protecting the idol (Jenkins, 1992). The support for V was further justified by the long-standing collaboration between BTS and McDonald's, dating back to 2021 with the popular BTS Meal, which many K-pop fans eagerly purchased. These reactions demonstrate how loyalty and support for idols can sometimes overshadow controversies associated with certain brands. Moreover, they illustrate the strength of the relationship between idols and their fans, which can sometimes take precedence over sensitive issues that might otherwise shape public perception.

Continuing to support the idol despite controversies suggests that fans tend to remain loyal. This phenomenon reflects a deep emotional connection between fans and their idols, where such bonds significantly influence how they respond to controversies or issues involving the idol (Hills, 2002). According to Fiske (1992), emotional connections of this nature often form strong relationships, leading fans to either overlook or rationalize negative aspects to maintain a positive perception of the idol. However, it is important to note that this emotional bond does not necessarily mean fans will defend their idol blindly or without criticism. On the contrary, many fans employ rational arguments based on the context of the entertainment industry as a means to reassure themselves and others about their decision to continue supporting the idol.

Fans often argue that their idols do not have full autonomy to reject collaborations with boycotted brands. This belief stems from the understanding that idols are under exclusive contracts with

their agencies, which include strict clauses mandating compliance with all business decisions. Consequently, fans believe their idols are "forced" to endorse such brands to fulfill their professional obligations. Beyond contractual constraints that limit idols' ability to choose their projects, fans also emphasize that idols must frequently remain neutral on political issues to maintain their global image. Agencies implement this strategy to appeal to diverse cultural and political audiences. In this way, fans attempt to clarify that their idols do not personally support Israel but are merely carrying out professional duties assigned by their agencies.

Fans also adopt critical approaches in supporting their idols through various activities. Rather than merely expressing loyalty, they actively engage in social activism to demonstrate their concern for global issues. For instance, NCTzens organized a donation campaign for Palestine as an act of solidarity while continuing to support their idols. Through social media platforms such as Twitter (X) and TikTok, fans share educational content about boycotts, emphasizing that participation in boycotts is a personal choice and not an attack on the idol. In this way, fans demonstrate their ability to critically support their idols without compromising their values.

Through these narratives, fans assert that continuing to support idols who become brand ambassadors or consume products allegedly linked to Israel does not equate to being pro-Israel or indifferent to Palestinian suffering. Rather, they argue that idols lack the autonomy to reject agency decisions, as agencies hold full authority over business strategies, including brand collaborations. Fans believe that compliance with these decisions is a professional obligation and that refusing them could harm an idol's career. Fan support extends beyond

rational arguments about the K-pop industry; it also manifests through social activism and educational efforts on boycott actions.

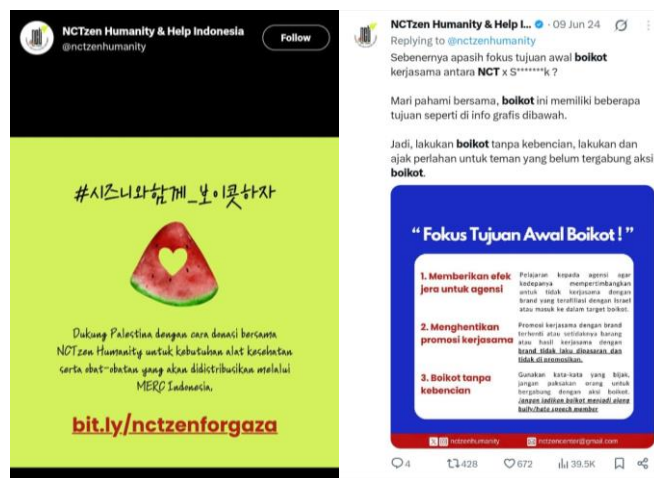
This activism is not only conducted in the name of fans but also on behalf of idols themselves. For instance, NCTzens Indonesia organized a donation campaign for Palestine on Twitter (X) and TikTok after NCT faced backlash over its collaboration with Starbucks Korea. Through this initiative, fans sought both to support Palestinian causes and to restore their idols' reputations amid controversy. Another key action taken by fans is educating others about boycotts through TikTok and Twitter (X). They emphasize that participation—or non-participation—in boycotts is a personal choice and advocate for mutual respect regarding individual decisions. This educational approach aims to prevent division within the fandom while promoting solidarity and tolerance.

Fans use these platforms to provide detailed explanations of the structural pressures idols face, highlighting how agencies prioritize business interests over

personal beliefs. This context helps fans reconcile their loyalty to idols with a critical stance on brand affiliations. In this way, fans support their idols through social actions and raise broader collective awareness about global issues and the importance of respecting differences in handling controversies. This demonstrates that fandoms can function as agents of positive change, advocating not only for their idols but also for communities and broader social issues (Jenkins, 2006b).

While these fans choose to continue supporting their idols despite ongoing controversies, they initially experience anxiety due to the dilemmas they face. This internal conflict is expressed through various videos and posts shared on Twitter (X) and TikTok. Many fans describe feelings of vulnerability, stating that their primary source of comfort is now subject to a boycott, and they plan to resume their support once the collaboration ends fully. This suggests that, even while maintaining their support, fans strive to uphold their values and principles by temporarily participating in boycotts.

Figure 1
A campaign for donations and educational efforts concerning boycott activities



Source: Twitter @nctzenhumanity, this image was captured on July 8, 2024.

The decision by fans to continue supporting K-pop idols who engage in collaborations or even consume products suspected of having ties with Israel, accompanied by various justifications and supportive activities, places K-pop fans in a position of ambiguous engagement. This term refers to a form of online involvement or participation that is ambiguous, unclear, or difficult to categorize as wholly positive or negative. Such engagement reflects the complexity of the relationship between fans and their idols, where emotional loyalty and support for the idol often clash with the personal values and social concerns held by the fans. On the other hand, this attitude also shows conditional loyalty because fans continue to support their idol with various conditions and justifications that validate their stance. In these situations, fans attempt to balance their love for the idol as an inspirational figure with their moral responsibility toward global issues, such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. However, these efforts often result in an ambiguous stance, where fans continue supporting the idol without explicitly stating their political position. This creates tension both within the fandom community and with activist groups that are more critical of geopolitical issues. Ultimately, this ambiguous engagement highlights the nuanced and sometimes conflicting ways fans navigate their devotion to their idols while grappling with broader ethical and social dilemmas.

Active Rejection Through Engaging in Cancel Culture

Another response demonstrated by K-pop fans when their idol collaborates with a brand perceived as pro-Israeli engagement in cancel culture. Cancel culture refers to the collective action of consumers withdrawing support from

influential individuals and brands associated with behaviors or activities deemed unacceptable, primarily through social media platforms (Saldanha et al., 2023). K-pop fans engage in cancel culture through various methods. A common initial step is mass unfollowing the idols' and agencies' social media accounts as a form of protest. For example, V BTS reportedly lost 100,000 followers after posting a photo featuring McDonald's fries (KCN, 2024). This mass unfollowing not only reduces the idol's follower count but also serves as a symbolic act of declining support. Fans utilize this method to express their disapproval, aiming to make both the agency and the idol aware of their impact. In addition to mass unfollowing, fans often organize online campaigns using specific hashtags to raise awareness and rally support for the boycott. For example, searching for #boycottNCT on Twitter (X) reveals numerous posts advocating for a boycott of NCT, who are perceived as supporting Israel. Researchers also used these hashtags to collect data on Twitter (X) and TikTok.

Another method of engaging in cancel culture is boycotting products associated with the idol, a practice K-pop fans refer to as "stopping the hype." This entails refraining from supporting the idol's latest projects, such as avoiding album purchases, merchandise, or concert tickets. This response was evident when NCT collaborated with Starbucks Korea; many NCT fans, particularly in Indonesia, opted not to watch the latest music video and unfollowed NCT members en masse. By discontinuing purchases and content consumption related to the idol, fans can exert substantial economic pressure on the idol and their agency. Furthermore, K-pop fans exhibit their collective power in cancel culture by shutting down fan pages they

manage. Within the fandom community, many fans establish fan pages to share updates and activities related to their idols. These pages also function as discussion forums for fans. However, in response to the idol's controversial actions, fans may shut down these pages as a form of protest. For example, a V BTS fan page from Saudi Arabia, which had been active for 11 years, was closed after V posted about McDonald's on his Instagram.

This closure represents a tangible expression of K-pop fans' disappointment in their idol. The decision to deactivate fan pages highlights the significant impact an idol's actions can have on their fans' loyalty and support. When an idol's behavior is perceived as violating norms or diverging

from fans' expectations, fans may respond strongly, including by ceasing all activities related to the idol. Deactivating fan pages is not merely about eliminating a platform for information sharing; it also serves as a powerful message of disappointment directed at the idol, aimed at prompting change or remorse. In the case of V BTS, the decision to deactivate the fan page reflects deep dissatisfaction and a reassessment of the support previously given. It demonstrates that fans evaluate idols not only based on their achievements or performances but also on their personal conduct, particularly actions that align with fans' values. Engagement in cancel culture, as demonstrated by K-pop fans amid their dilemma, does not end here.

Figure 2

Collective action by K-pop fans involving unfollowing and event cancellations



Source: This image was captured on July 12, 2024. The right side was sourced from Twitter (X) @lastnameey, the middle section from Twitter (X) @nominproject, and the left side from TikTok @vzncouvely.

Many K-pop fans also cancel planned events or activities as part of their response. For instance, NCTzen Indonesia announced on Twitter (X) the cancellation

of a planned birthday celebration for an NCT member due to the boycott of NCT's collaboration with Starbucks Korea. For K-pop fans, celebrating an idol's birthday is a

significant occasion, often marked by various activities, including charity events. By canceling the event, NCTzen Indonesia demonstrates not only their commitment to their principles and values but also their disappointment with their idol's actions. This action highlights the collective power of fandom as a significant social force supporting shared values and principles (Chang & Lim, 2002). Canceling the birthday celebration also symbolizes the solidarity fans show towards ongoing social issues (Lee & Kao, 2021). Thus, this act is not merely a form of protest but also a clear message to the idol and agency about the profound impact of their decisions on the fan community. Through this decision, fans show that their dissatisfaction extends beyond social media, taking tangible actions and making collective choices that reflect their values. This demonstrates fandom's power and influence in shaping relationships with idols, emphasizing the importance of aligning idols' actions with fans' expectations.

Leaving the Fandom and Becoming Haters

One significant consequence of an idol's collaboration with a boycotted product, as seen in the case of NCT, is the potential loss of fan loyalty. Hills (2002) reveals that when fan loyalty fades, the impact extends beyond economic decline, encompassing psychological and social consequences. The erosion of fan loyalty can disrupt the relationship between the idol and their fanbase (Sandvoss, 2005, p. 2). Ng (2022) states that the most knowledgeable and devoted fans may turn against a celebrity, expressing resentment and criticism when they perceive the idol as no longer aligning with their values or

beliefs. This shift in fan attitudes towards becoming haters is described by Gray (2003) as "disappointed anti-fandom," referring to haters who emerge due to fans' disillusionment with the celebrity or idol.

The deep emotional foundation—such as feelings of betrayal, disappointment, or the perception that personal values have been violated by the idol—distinguishes this phenomenon from cancel culture. Additionally, cancel culture is generally more organized, value-driven, and aimed at social change, whereas becoming a hater is often impulsive, emotional, and motivated by a desire to inflict harm without clear justification. Participants in cancel culture may simply distance themselves without harboring hostility, while haters actively express animosity. Therefore, not all fans who leave a fandom become haters, and not all instances of cancel culture result in hatred.

The transformation from fan to hater, driven by disappointment, underscores the profound emotional bond between fans and their idols (Duffett, 2013). When an idol deeply disappoints their fans, it can lead to feelings of betrayal. Consequently, fans who leave the fandom and become haters typically undergo a process influenced by emotional factors, personal values, moral beliefs, and complex social dynamics. This transformation often begins with profound disappointment, intensifying when the idol takes action or makes decisions that conflict with the fans' values or expectations, such as NCT's collaboration with Starbucks Korea. Many fans perceived this collaboration as negligence, interpreting it as a sign that NCT was indifferent to the situation.

Figure 3

Manifestations of K-Pop fans' disappointment and engagement in boycott activities.



Source: This image was captured on July 12, 2024. The right side is sourced from TikTok @leo, and the left is sourced from TikTok @AABUFAUAR.

This shift from fan to hater frequently occurs among the most loyal fans, who, in addition to feeling disappointed and betrayed, experience internal conflicts between their values and the idol's actions. This internal struggle makes it difficult to reconcile their loyalty to the idol with their dissatisfaction. During this period, fans often feel confused and conflicted as they attempt to decide how to respond. If they perceive no change in the idol's behavior or response to their concerns, they may eventually leave the fandom and even become haters. This decision typically follows a prolonged period of unresolved disappointment and grievances. In this context, fans who become haters may also direct hostility toward other fans, contributing to the

phenomenon of anti-fandom, particularly against those who continue to support the idol. Gray (2003) describes these haters (anti-fandom) as individuals who develop hostility toward the idol and fellow fans who continue to support the idol despite controversies. This can result in accusations of hypocrisy or double standards. The emergence of haters, whether as "disappointed anti-fans" or anti-fans targeting fellow fans, highlights the significant role of personal values within fandoms. However, it is crucial to recognize that cancel culture is not inherently equivalent to hatred; rather, it represents a spectrum of responses ranging from withdrawing support to active opposition.

The shift from love to hate often evolves into a broader phenomenon, such as fan wars, which are characterized by intense disputes and attacks on the idol (Fitria, 2022b). For fans, idols represent a significant part of their identity, and negative actions by the idol can trigger strong emotional reactions. Fan identity plays a critical role in the transformation from fan to hater. When an idol disappoints, fans may feel that their identity as supporters is disrupted, leading to emotional tension and a desire to distance themselves from the fandom to protect their self-integrity and public image. Although participation in boycott actions is voluntary, fans' underlying values and beliefs often shape their responses.

Social media platforms like TikTok and Twitter (X) accelerate this transformation by allowing fans to express their opinions to a broad audience instantly. These platforms serve not only as communication tools but also as networks for collective action. Social media allows fans to rapidly disseminate dissatisfaction and interact with individuals who share similar views. Discussions on these platforms often reinforce negative feelings and amplify extreme reactions, such as hatred. Moreover, social media provides a sense of validation for fans' anger, encouraging the formation of more active and organized anti-fandom groups. However, it is important to distinguish between constructive criticism within cancel culture and aggressive behavior exhibited by haters. While cancel culture demands accountability, haters often focus on personal attacks and prolonged hostility. Thus, leaving a fandom and transforming from a fan to a hater is not merely about withdrawing support but also involves emotional shifts and profound changes in personal values.

The departure of fans who later transform into haters due to feelings of disappointment underscores the importance of loyalty, both from fans to idols and vice versa. Additionally, maintaining trust is essential to preventing disappointment and anger on both sides. When the relationship between fans and idols is disrupted, idols lose their support base, and fans not only withdraw their support but also adopt more aggressive attitudes as a form of protest and reaffirmation of the important principles. Therefore, fostering open and transparent communication is crucial in nurturing harmonious and mutually respectful relationships.

The transformation from fan to hater may lead fans to engage in dark participation, expressed through harsh criticism toward idols and fellow fans who remain supportive during controversies. This trend poses challenges for the entertainment industry in managing fan relationships and upholding public image. Social media's influence amplifies its impact on fandom dynamics and public opinion. Constructive avenues for expressing dissatisfaction should be encouraged, fostering mutual respect among fans, idols, and supporters (Jenkins, 2006b). Effective communication strategies are vital to minimize shifts from fan to hater and rebuild trust with disillusioned fans. Mishandling dissatisfaction risks further alienating supporters and damaging reputations.

CONCLUSION

Based on observations and analysis of K-pop fans on TikTok and Twitter (X), it was found that boycott actions, despite their good intentions as social movements, can create dilemmas and elicit varied responses. The dilemma arises when Korean idols collaborate as brand

ambassadors or openly present themselves as consumers of products allegedly affiliated with Israel. In such situations, K-pop fans face difficulty choosing between adhering to their social principles or supporting the idols they admire. Amid this tension, three main attitudes emerged among K-pop fans: continuing to support the idol, engaging in cancel culture against the idol, and, in extreme cases, leaving the fandom entirely to become haters.

Fans who choose to continue supporting the idol often remain loyal despite the controversy, arguing that idols typically lack full control over management decisions. These fans also engage in social actions, such as fundraising and educating others about the boycott, as ways to mitigate the situation and improve the idol's public image. On the other hand, engaging in cancel culture involves fans boycotting the idol through mass unfollowing, halting the purchase of related products, and closing fan pages as forms of protest. This demonstrates the collective power of fandoms in exerting economic and social pressure on idols and their agencies. The most extreme reaction is leaving the fandom and becoming haters,

often driven by deep disappointment and irreconcilable value conflicts. Social media accelerates this process by amplifying negative emotions and enabling anti-fandom groups to organize more effectively.

This study highlights the dynamics of K-pop fandoms in the digital era, where loyalty, personal values, and social interactions significantly shape fans' attitudes toward their idols, particularly during controversies. It also underscores how K-pop fans have evolved into active participants who consume content and influence their idols' works and careers through social media. This reflects the growing complexity of fan-idol relationships in the digital age. This research opens avenues for further exploration into how fandom behavior may evolve alongside shifting social values, trends in cancel culture, and the increasing dominance of digital platforms in shaping collective responses. Additionally, the findings invite more profound reflection on the interplay between ethics, entertainment, and digital activism, which are becoming increasingly central to the dynamics of modern society.

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