

Research Article

Customer Advocacy as A Result of the Relationship between Idol Attachment and Customer Loyalty in K-Pop Industry

Revalia Noer Hanifah^{*1}, Anas Hidayat¹ and Ratna Roostika¹¹Faculty of Business and Economics, Universitas Islam Indonesia**Article History**

Received: 08.02.2020

Accepted: 21.02.2020

Published: 29.02.2020

Journal homepage:<https://www.easpublisher.com/easjebm>**Quick Response Code**

Abstract: In these past years, Korean pop or commonly called as K-Pop becomes the most trending topic in the Internet. Starting from its first presence, K-Pop never subsided reported. As everyone is talking about this genre, K-Pop fans are known as their loyalty. Whereupon, this research examined the factors that driven fans become loyal. Adopted from the previous research, it was found that vanity trait, peer norm and variety seeking were the causes which influenced the loyalty. While in this research, the researcher assessed the possible next stage after loyalty which was customer advocacy. A total of 400 valid questionnaires were analyzed and it was filled in by respondents aged 15 to 24 widely spread in Indonesia. By using the SPSS and AMOS software, this research found that vanity trait and peer norm positively affected the customer loyalty. Afterward, the loyal customer would spread their positive experience to the society and this was called customer advocacy.

Keywords: Korean pop, Customer loyalty, Customer advocacy, Vanity trait, Peer Norm, Variety seeking.

Copyright @ 2020: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution license which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non commercial use (NonCommercial, or CC-BY-NC) provided the original author and source are credited.

INTRODUCTION:

In the year of 2019 might be the year for K-Pop for step up even more popular. BTS, EXO, IKON or BLACKPINK are only a few examples of the most successful K-Pop group in the music industry these days. Korean pop which commonly called as K-Pop is not a new phenomenon in the music industry, back in 2012, Korean pop music was being raised up by Psy's "Gangnam Style" which his music was a supercharged beat paired with shockingly stylized visuals, and it cracked the U.S industry for becoming the first video to top a billion streams on YouTube (Billboard, 2018). In fact, there are several reasons behind the popularity of K-Pop such as vanity traits, variety seeking, peer norms, idol attachment, customer loyalty and customer advocacy. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to prove the relationship of idol attachment and customer loyalty that produces customer advocacy among Indonesian young adults with the range of age 15-24.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Korean Pop

Korean culture was firstly known because of their Korean Drama in around 2002 and it was presumed to be signaled for many the beginning of the Korean Wave. Whereas, Psy was the first Korean artist that debut his career as the global pop star with his hit single Gangnam Style in 2012 (Billboard, 2018). K-Pop

is one of the music that can make everyone dance and bounce every time they listening to the music. Apart from its lyrics which are mostly in Korean but that does not stop fans to loving this genre because music is universal language as long as it sounds catchy and people can enjoy the music not only focusing on the lyrics. Like any other music genre, Korean pop music is a musical genre created with South Korean culture that is offered by a variety of audiovisual elements and also influenced by comprises dance-pop, pop ballad electronic, rock, hip-hop, modern blues and R&B. In order to make it different, the Music creator is constantly keeping the authentic culture of Korea.

Relationship Marketing

Relationship marketing stands for all activities in marketing that will be directed toward establishing, developing, and maintaining successful relational exchanges (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Basically, the strategies intended to build customer relationships, enhance sales and profit over time (Kumar *et al*, 2011). According to Berry & Parasuraman (1991) and Kotler (1994), the aim of relationship marketing is to create customer loyalty on the basis of customer satisfaction, thus, mutual benefits for both company and customer are possible.

Vanity Traits and Idol Attachment

Vanity traits, can be included in the need for competence, refer to an excessive concern with or view of one's own physical appearance and personal achievements (Netemeyer *et al.*, 1995). In this phenomenon, young adults are usually attracted to the appearance of celebrities in Television commercial, magazine and music video. Typically, the first thing that will come up in the young adults' mind is the idol's physical appearance such as the idol styles or fashion, their fan-service toward fans, and how charming they are when the camera shoots their face. It is likely easy for new people to like one artist based on what they see. Later, in the next stage these young adults will tend to imitate the idol based on their style (e.g. what shoes they wear) and they are trying to look the same with the idol's appearance. The other factor in vanity traits is the idol's achievement that were built over the idol's career can also attracted the people to worship them. Those achievements can have amazed the worshiper to act more toward the idol.

H1. Physical vanity traits have positive effect on idol attachment.

H2. Achievement vanity traits have positive effect on idol attachment.

Variety Seeking and Idol Attachment

Variety seeking, a proxy for autonomous need is the tendency of individuals to seek diversity in their choice of services or goods (Khan, 1995). Variety seeking represents a young adult's desire to explore and adopt a new human brand for the purpose of decreasing boredom or obtaining a change of pace (Steenkamp *et al.*, 1992). There are types of people who are easily attracted to someone and switch to other, while the other are the one who always stick with one thing or/and person. Basically, customer who has high level of variety seeking will easily get bored into one specific brand and later will switch to the new brand. Some situations such as when the Idol cannot meet the fans' expectation will also likely arise the act of variety seeking. However, variety seeking and idol attachment should have a negative relation.

H3. Variety seeking has negative effect on idol attachment

Peer Norm and Idol Attachment

Peer norms, as a stand-in for need for relatedness, are defined as those perceptions, attitudes and behaviors that are approved by the peer group and expected by its members (Fisher and Ackerman, 1998). For instance, if you want to be friends with specific group you have to act exactly like them, have a similar interest, later, you will be able to discussed the same topic with the group. In addition, peer group approval may also increase referents' support towards young people's attachment relationships with idols. In the music industry, usually there are bunch of fans that named themselves following the Idol's name and these group have different requirement if there are new worshiper that would like to joining their group such as

member club. In conclusion, young people with high peer norms are more motivated to increase efforts towards social comparison processes based on the behaviors in performing a certain act on worshipping an idol.

H4. Peer norm have positive effect on idol attachment.

Idol Attachment and Customer Loyalty

Some expert believes that human brand can assure to force driving behind the demand for an entertainment product. Besides, human brand is proven to have a strong relationship with idol attachment. Theory of attachment itself was developed by Bowlby in 1982, which is the intensity of an individual's target-specific that create an emotional bond. Therefore, the Idol attachment is defined as someone (e.g. idol worship) that have a strong emotional bond with specific individual (e.g. celebrities). Thus, the connection between the fans and the idol can lead the fans become a loyal customer.

H5. Idol attachment has positive effect on customer loyalty in the future.

Customer Loyalty and Customer Advocacy

Customers who are already loyal to one specific brand will unconsciously spread a message about their feeling to the brand, they likely tell their friends about the positive or negative experience that make them felt satisfied. This situation is known as word of mouth, whereas, customer advocacy occurred when a customer becomes connected to a brand, this connection can lead to advocacy for the brand where the customer are voluntarily spreads positive word-of-mouth about the brand (Anderson, 1998). This kind of customer would be willing to pay for higher prices and then recommend the product to others.

H6. Customer loyalty has positive effect on customer advocacy

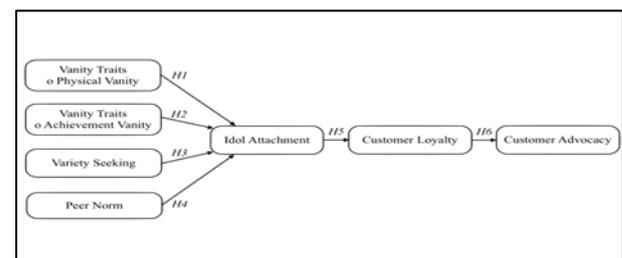


Figure 1: Research Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used quantitative methods in order to generalize the larger number of sample population, besides it was compatible to quantify attitudes, opinions, behaviors, and other defined variables. There were 6 variables that were tested by the respondents such as vanity traits, variety seeking, peer norm, idol attachment, customer loyalty and customer advocacy. The questionnaires were distributed via online using Google Form and the respondents were

given five-point Likert scales to express their agreement or disagreement, 1 stands for strongly disagree and up to 5 stands for strongly agree. In total, 400 respondents who claimed their self as K-Poppers were collected from the questionnaires. The sample ranged of the respondents was from 15-24 years old living in Indonesia.

DATA ANALYSIS

Reliability and validity analysis were conducted to examine whether the research instrument had already met the criteria of valid and reliable. In total, there were 18 lists of statement that were asked to the 400 respondents. Each of statement was tested for different variables using the software, AMOS version 21. In order to evaluate the goodness of the proposed models in the social science research, the researcher using Structural Equation Modelling or commonly called as SEM, whereas the hypotheses were tested using the standard in goodness of fit indices. Thus, the following are the result of goodness of fit;

Table 1: Goodness of Fit Result

| Model | Constructs |
|----------|------------|
| χ^2 | 430.661 |
| RSMEA | 0.045 |
| GFI | 0.920 |
| TLI | 0.918 |
| CFI | 0.929 |
| Status | Good Fit |

Source: Primary Data (Processed), 2019

Hypothesis Testing

H1—The first hypothesis tested the relationship between Idol Attachment and Physical Vanity. The table shows the positive value of this relationship. It was proven from the result of probability value of 0.006 ($p < 0.05$) and the path estimate of 0.232. From the implied result, it can be concluded that the first hypothesis (H1) was accepted.

H2—The second hypothesis showed the positive relationship between Idol Attachment and Achievement Vanity. It was supported with the result of probability value of 0.000 and path estimate of 0.362. This indicated that the second hypothesis (H2) was accepted.

H3—Unlike the other hypothesis, the result of the third hypothesis was negative. Compared to 3 other variables (physical vanity, achievement vanity and peer norms), the variety seeking tend to show the higher result which was -0.468. The negative result means the negative relationship among the variables. It proved that Idol attachment and variety seeking had negative relationship. Whereas, it can be concluded that the third hypothesis (H3) was accepted.

H4—The fourth hypothesis tested the relationship between idol attachment and peer norm. From the table, the path estimate was 0.224 and the probability value

was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This indicated that the hypothesis showed positive relationship. From the implied result, it can be concluded that the fourth hypothesis (H4) of this research was accepted.

H5—The relationship between customer loyalty and idol attachment was examined in the fifth hypothesis. Table 4.15 presented the number of probability of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and path estimate of 0.954. The result indicated the positive relationship between the variables. In other word, this fifth hypothesis (H5) was accepted.

H6—Finally, the sixth hypothesis examined the relationship between customer loyalty and customer advocacy. In Table 4.15, the testing of this relationship is proven to be significant because the probability value was 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and the path estimate was 0.907. This means that the higher the perceived value, the higher the word-of-mouth. It can be concluded that the fourth hypothesis (H6) of this research was accepted.

RESULT DISCUSSION

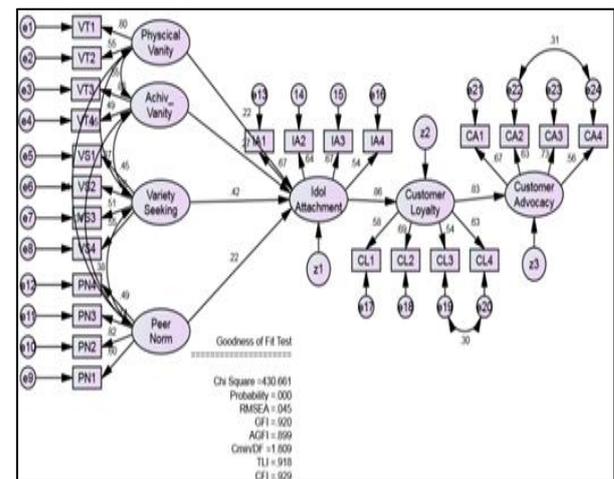


Figure 2. Result of Research Model
Sources: Primary Data (Processed), 2019

The study revealed that the physical of vanity positively linked to the customer’s idol attachment to their favorite idols. Idol’s physical appearance was proven to strengthen the bond between the fans and the idol. From the research also found that the fans more likely see their idol from their appearance. The idol’s fashion styles enhanced their attractiveness and lead to the strong idol attachment. These results were also supported by the finding from Huang *et al.* (2015), stated that young people are more likely to see their idols as their reference for self-conception when the idol attractiveness level is high. Therefore, the role of the idol attractiveness was used as an important moderator between vanity traits and Idol attachment. The research results also indicated that youth will probably be act as their idols, which will lead to a stronger link between vanity traits and idol attachment.

Second, the result of this research was proved that achievement vanity had positive and significant effect on idol attachment. Based on the result, the fans stated their Idol's vocal and dance skill were their biggest obsession. Compared to the physical vanity, the fans were tended to concern about the achievement vanity. These results had also been supported by the finding from Netemeyer *et al.* (1995), both of physical vanity and achievement vanity take a huge role in influencing the bond between the fans and the idol. The achievement vanity was evidently strengthening the connection toward idol attachment in this research. Youth generation were attracted by how good their idol performed and accomplished the goal. Overall, it may be said that the high level of achievement vanity can lead to high level of idol attachment.

The third findings were variety seeking had negative relationship on Idol attachment meaning that the desire of human to seek other idol will weaken the connection on Idol attachment. They could select an alternative idol they already know or an alternative they had never had before, this possibly happened because of the basic human behaviors that always seek for satisfaction. Kim (2009) stated that consumers with high levels of variety seeking can find new encouragement and switch quickly to other brands. This finding above also supported the result of this research, the fans showed decreasing connection when it came to the variety seeking. Some cases such as when the idol was on hiatus, there was rarely interaction between the fans and the idol, this was likely creating the gap and lead into variety seeking behavior. In other words, those who would like to switch their music would weaken their engagement toward their favorite idol.

Fourth, the result of this research revealed the positive relationship between peer norm and idol attachment meaning that the group approval could reinforce the connection between themselves and the idol. The approval was in the form of freedom to conduct an action toward the favorite idol, thus, the person was feeling comfortable and acceptable being in the peer group. These findings were also supported by the previous research from Chan and Prendergast (2008), they stated that peer norms positively influenced the social comparison engagement of respondents that triggered the desire to imitate the quality of life and material possessions of their idols. Whereas the person would not behave contrary to what the peer group believes.

Fifth, the relationship between customer loyalty and idol attachment had significant and positive influence in this research. The higher level of loyalty means the higher level of the bond toward idol and it was proven that the attachment resulted into commitment, trust, love, and loyalty. This implied that the higher level of attachment can stimulate the person

to willingly do anything that can make this attachment stronger. Supported by Merisavo and Raulas (2004), the loyalty indicator was used when there was intention (and behaviors) to make a conscious decision for continuing purchasing the same brand. Associated with the previous result above, there were some factors that can lead to the loyalty. Vanity traits and peer norms were two of them that could later affect the bond of attachment. In other word, the customer loyalty was proved to have positive and significant effect on the bond between the idol and fans—idol attachment.

Finally, the research revealed that the relationship between customer loyalty and customer advocacy were positive. The respondents agreed with the situation when the loyal customer had high level of loyalty would unconsciously spread the advocacy related to the brand. This result of customer advocacy was the final stages among the other behavioral stages.

Supported by the findings Susanta *et al.* (2013), advocacy was comprehended as a loyalty outcome. The finding above was also found in this research where customer loyalty and customer advocacy had significant and positive effect in this research. In fact, the act of customer advocacy is done voluntarily since they are already become loyal to the idol.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the results of data analysis, the six hypotheses proposed in this research were all accepted. Meaning that, the variables such as vanity traits, variety seeking and peer norms indirectly affected the level of customer of advocacy. It was also found that physical vanity and achievement vanity motivated the fans to reinforce the bond toward the idol. The approval of peer group also caused the higher connection to Idol attachment. Later, these behavioral led them to become loyal to one brand or in this case were the idol. Considering all of these factors, the loyal customer finally resulted the customer advocacy. The high level of loyal customer could provoke the customer advocacy into unlimited willingness to spread the positive word about the brand. Later, this continual process can be an advantage in long-term and growth more loyal customer.

Managerial Implications

This research can be used to increase the awareness of the outcome of customer loyalty and customer advocacy. Marketers must consider this as an opportunity to grow the market because customer advocacy can be a great factor to engage with other consumers and market the business at little or no cost. Perchance, the industry player can consider to create one application or website whereas the customer can freely share their opinions about the music. Besides, this fans application can also bring together many fans and expand the growth of the artist fandom.

In additions, such things like boredom or satiation should be avoided in order to stay on the market. Marketing team should come with the interesting ideas to deliver the music content and as much as possible try not to give any space timing to the customer. In order to prevent the boredom, marketer should offer some alterations in appearance or achievement of their idols and by providing various merchandise or expanding idol's career to other fields, such as movie and TV variety show. In other word, do not make the customer wait too long because it can cause them switching to another brand that can fulfill their recent desires.

Lastly, in order to maintain the customer relationship, it would be better for the company to expand into other offline activities such as organizing concerts, showcase, fan signing, fan meeting. This kind of activities can help the existence of the idol. Idol and the fans can create the strong connection within this event because they are seeing each other.

Noteworthy that, an Idol with relatively weak customer relationships needs to creates and builds higher levels of trust and commitment. The purpose is to anticipate widespread voluntary cooperation of its customers to serve as marketing advocates. Advocate also needs to be controlled; managers can minimize such risks through aware monitoring of brand messages, on both traditional and social media

REFERENCES

1. Anderson, E. (1998), "Customer satisfaction and word-of- mouth", *Journal of Service Research*, 1 (1), 5-17
2. Berry, L.L. (1983), "Relationship marketing", in Berry, L.L., Shostock, G.L. and Upah, G.D. (Eds), *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing*, American Marketing Association, Chicago, IL, 25-8.
3. Billboard. (2018). *Essential BTS Collaborations You Should Hear: Steve Aoki, Nicki Minaj & More*. Retrieved from Billboard: K-TOWN: <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/8099508/bts-collaborations-songs-the-chainsmokers-steve-aoki-designer>
4. Bowlby, J. (1982), *Attachment and Loss: (Volume 1) Attachment*, Basic Books, New York, NY.
5. Chan, K. and Prendergast, G.P. (2008), "Social comparison, imitation of celebrity models and materialism among Chinese youth", *International Journal of Advertising*, 27 (5), 799-826.
6. Fisher, R.J. and Ackerman, D. (1998), "The effects of recognition and group need on volunteerism: a social norm perspective", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25(3), 262-275.
7. Huang, Y., Lin, C., Su, H., & Tung, M. (2015). I worship, so I download? Idol worship, music purchase and piracy by young customers in Taiwan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 27(1), 99-126.
8. Kahn, B.E. (1995), "Customer variety-seeking among goods and services", *Journal of Retailing and Customer Services*, 2 (3), 139-148.
9. Kim, H. (2009), "The moderating role of variety seeking in the effect of service satisfaction on repurchase intention", *Journal of Marketing Management Research*, 14 (2), 123-139.
10. Kotler, P. (1994). *Marketing management: Analysis, Planning, Implementation, Control*. Ed. 8, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
11. Kumar, N., Stern, L.W. and Achrol, R.S. (1992), "Assessing retailer performance from the perspective of the supplier", *Journal of Marketing Research*, 29 (2), 238-53.
12. Merisavo, M. and Raulas, M. (2004), "The impact of e-mail marketing on brand loyalty", *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 13 (7), 498-505.
13. Morgan, RM. and Hunt, S.D. (1994), "The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing", *Journal of Marketing*, 58, 20-38.
14. Netemeyer, R.G., Burton, S. and Lichtenstein, D.R. (1995), "Trait aspects of vanity: measurement and relevance to customer behavior", *Journal of Customer Research*, 21 (4), 612-626.
15. Steenkamp, J.-B.E.M. and Baumgartner, H. (1992), "The role of optimum stimulation level in exploratory customer behavior", *Journal of Customer Research*, 19 (3), 434-448.
16. Susanta, Alhabsji T, Idrus, MS Nimran U. (2013). The effect of relationship quality on Customer Advocacy: The mediating role of loyalty. *Journal of Business and Management*. 12(4): 41-52.