

Becoming the Idol: Content Analysis of KPopfication in Clash of Champion Casts

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisis fenomena KPopfication dalam Clash of Champion, kompetisi mahasiswa Ruang Guru, menggunakan metode kuantitatif analisis isi. Studi ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana audiens media sosial menerapkan istilah dan norma budaya K-Pop dalam menilai peserta, meskipun mereka bukan bagian dari industri K-Pop. Analisis 300 kiriman di aplikasi X menemukan bahwa kata "Trainee" paling sering muncul (10,33%), diikuti oleh "PDNim" (8,67%), "Bubble" dan "Maknae" (8,33%), serta "Disband" (7,33%) dan "Bias" (5,67%). Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa audiens membentuk identitas sosial peserta melalui kerangka budaya K-Pop, menciptakan ekspektasi yang mungkin tidak sesuai dengan identitas asli mereka. Dengan perspektif Social Identity Theory, studi ini mengungkap bagaimana identitas sosial dapat dibentuk oleh audiens digital, berkontribusi pada kajian media sosial dan pembentukan identitas dalam budaya populer.

Kata Kunci: Analisis isi; budaya populer; K-Pop; kpopfication; social identity theory

Abstract

This study employs quantitative content analysis to examine KPopfication in Clash of Champion, a student competition by Ruang Guru. It explores how social media audiences apply K-Pop cultural terms and norms in judging participants outside the K-Pop industry. Analyzing 300 posts on X, the study found "Trainee" was the most frequent keyword (10.33%), followed by "PDNim" (8.67%), "Bubble" and "Maknae" (8.33% each), "Disband" (7.33%), and "Bias" (5.67%). Findings reveal that audiences shape participants' social identities through a K-Pop cultural lens, creating expectations that may not align with their actual identities. KPopfication extends beyond K-Pop fans, influencing a broader audience in evaluating individuals. From a Social Identity Theory perspective, this study highlights how digital audiences externally shape social identity. It contributes to communication studies, particularly on social media and identity formation in popular culture.

Keywords: Content analysis; K-Pop; kpopfication; pop culture; social identity theory

INTRODUCTION

Clash of Champion is a competition organized on the Ruang Guru platform, where casts from various academic backgrounds can participate. The following event has a game show format that is participated by 40 outstanding students from various well-known campuses. Clash of champions carries a concept similar to University War from South Korea. This competition provides an opportunity for Indonesian students to showcase their abilities in various fields of knowledge and skills (Ruangguru, 2024; Samodra, 2024). Ruang Guru as an education platform provides an ideal platform to facilitate this competition, allowing casts

to compete fairly and stimulatingly in an atmosphere that supports collaborative learning. Through Clash of Champion, casts can not only hone their academic abilities but also develop communication, creativity, and leadership skills in a competitive yet inclusive context.

The development and popularity of K-Pop has become a significant global phenomenon in recent decades, influencing popular culture in different parts of the world at large (Wicaksono et al., 2021). From music to fashion to social media trends, K-Pop has set new standards in the international entertainment industry. K-Pop music groups are not only known for their high-quality music production and complex choreography, but also for their ability to build a strong and dedicated fan base outside of South Korea (Trinh, 2023). This phenomenon has not only changed the global music landscape, but also stimulated intense cultural exchanges between fans around the world, shaping new social identities (Abd-Rahim, 2019), and challenging traditional conventions in the entertainment industry, from young Koreans aspiring to be K-Pop idols, to the South Korean government actively promoting Hallyu and K-Pop as an attempt to redirect the entire Korean economy towards the entertainment industry (Oh & Lee, 2014).

Social Identity Theory is a relevant conceptual framework for understanding how Clash of Champion casts' use of K-Pop may influence their social identity formation. The theory emphasizes that individuals define themselves through membership in a particular social group and the values and emotional meanings attached to that group membership (Tajfel, 1974) such as the K-Pop fan community. K-Pop as a pop culture product, encouraging individuals to form virtual groups is the common interest in developing shared information, knowledge, and mobility (Khairunnisa & Pithaloka, 2023). In the context of Clash of Champion, viewers of the show adopt elements of K-Pop culture to give Clash of Champion casts an identity as they admire K-Pop idols. The use of K-Pop in this context is not only a cultural expression, but also a way to solidify the connection between the Clash of Champion audience and the identity of the casts in the Clash of Champion community.

Thus, the researcher argues that social identity theory provides a strong theoretical foundation to explore how popular culture such as K-Pop can influence and shape the social identity of casts in the context of academic competitions such as Clash of Champion as previous research conducted by Kim & Kim (2020) and Laffan (2020) which explains that pop culture contributes to the advancement of the implications of the application of Social Identity Theory, especially in the context of K-Pop. Furthermore, the following research does not only

focus on K-Pop, but how entertainment events have been identified as KPopfication, which is a new contribution to the study of Social Identity Theory.

Kurniasih et al., (2024) suggested that there is a phenomenon that shows a tendency to include elements of K-Pop culture in various aspects of life. Although the term "Kpopfication" is not a standard term in academic research, but a colloquial term describing the global influence and popularity of music, several studies have looked at how "Kpopfication" can refer to the spread of K-Pop music and culture around the world, the adoption of K-Pop aesthetics and styles in other cultures. While Nazma, 2024; Kurniasih et al., 2024; Yurcel et al., 2024 relate KPopfication to the context of political communication, the following research will look at how KPopfication is adapted to the entertainment context.

In the context of Clash of Champion casts in Ruang Guru, KPopfication can manifest in various ways. These include how Clash of Champion audiences treat Clash of Champion casts like K-Pop idols, such as the formation of parasocial relationships between casts and audiences like K-Pop fans and K-Pop idols. The writing of Alternate Universe (AU) or fan fiction with Clash of Champion casts as the face claim in the fan fiction, the use of WhatsApp channels like the Bubble platform (a chat application between K-Pop Idols and fans), treating Clash of Champion casts like K-Pop survival show casts, to acting like Sasaeng (obsessive fans) who dig up Clash of Champion casts' personal information such as birth dates, to personal phone numbers. More than just imitation, KPopfication often involves internalizing the values portrayed by K-Pop idols, such as dedication, hard work, and passion from fans in supporting K-Pop idols (Mulyana & Wijayanti, 2024). Thus, KPopfication is not only about the adoption of visual or behavioral styles, but also about the appreciation of and adjustment to the social and cultural norms associated with the K-Pop phenomenon.

Previous studies have extensively investigated the influence of K-Pop on the social identity and behavior of fans around the world. Laffan (2020) found that the love of K-Pop fans was significantly predicted by several demographic characteristics and K-Pop fandom and became a significant predictor of increased happiness, self-esteem, and social relationships. Mohd Jenol & Ahmad Pazil (2020) mentioned that K-Pop has provided benefits for fans, especially for emotional well-being. Commitment and attachment as part of the fandom community provide a meaningful sense and intimacy. Meanwhile, (Azizah et al., 2023; Nabila et al., 2024) in their study explained that the behavior of imitating K-Pop idols is one of the factors that influence the determination of self-identity in K-Pop fans.

These studies often highlight how popular cultures such as K-Pop not only influence music preferences and lifestyles, but also shape fans' social identity patterns and social interactions. Some research suggests that K-Pop fans identify themselves more strongly with their fan community than their local or national identity (Nabila et al., 2024). In addition, K-Pop is also associated with increases in expressive creativity (Auh, 2024) tolerance for differences (Wulandari, 2023), friendship formation (Cicchelli et al., 2023), and extensive social networks among fans (Kang et al., 2019). Thus, previous research highlights the important role of K-Pop in influencing not only global popular culture but also in shaping the identity and social interactions of individuals in different parts of the world.

The main objective of this study is to conduct quantitative content analysis of KPopfication among Clash of Champion casts in Ruang Guru. This research aims to identify and measure the extent to which the audience of Clash of Champion adopts elements of K-Pop culture in the behavior, lifestyle, identity, and interaction between the audience and Clash of Champion casts. By focusing on quantitative aspects, this research will provide a deeper understanding of the emerging patterns of KPopfication among casts, as well as how this phenomenon contributes to the formation of their social identity in the context of academic competition. Content analysis research enables the identification of trends, dominant patterns, and variations of a topic (White & Marsh, 2006). In the context of this study, the researcher will identify trends, dominant patterns, and variations in the adoption of K-Pop culture by the Clash of Champion audience. Through quantitative content analysis research, it is expected to provide new insights that are useful for academic and further research on the influence of popular culture in the context of education objectively.

The quantitative content analysis method is one of the most commonly used methods in communication contexts and tends to follow the rules of the scientific method, including observing standards of objectivity/intersubjectivity, reliability, validity, and generalizability (Neuendorf & Kumar, 2016). The following study conducted systematic and objective data collection from various text sources, such as posts, comments, and interactions (Riffe et al., 2014) between either casts or viewers and casts of Clash of Champions. Quantitative content analysis provides a clear picture of the frequency and patterns of occurrence of K-Pop cultural elements in casts' behavior and interactions, thus identifying trends and measuring the extent of KPopfication. This approach allowed the research to be conducted effectively and efficiently, providing measurable and structured results in exploring the phenomenon of KPopfication in an educational context.

This research has great significance in the context of providing new insights into the influence of popular culture such as K-Pop on social identity formation in an educational setting. By focusing on a quantitative content analysis of KPopfication among Clash of Champion casts in Ruang Guru, this study is expected to reveal how exposure to a particular popular culture, especially K-Pop, can portray self-perception and social interaction in casts of an academic game show with no connection to K-Pop. The implications of the findings may help in designing more inclusive and culturally-oriented educational approaches, as well as enrich our understanding of how elements of global culture may contribute to students' identity development and learning in this digital age.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative design with content analysis method to explore the phenomenon of KPopfication among Clash of Champion casts in Ruang Guru. Quantitative content analysis was chosen because it allows for the systematic and objective collection and analysis of data from various text sources, such as posts, comments, and cast interactions on the platform (Riffe et al., 2014). This approach provides a clear picture of the frequency and patterns (Malhotra & Dash, 2016) of the occurrence of K-Pop cultural elements in casts' behaviors and interactions, thus identifying trends and measuring the extent of KPopfication in the context of academic competitions.

The data sources in this study come from various digital activities of the Clash of Champion audience on social media X, especially in the 'Clash of Champion' community. Researchers specifically chose social media X because social media X is the most massive social media used to engage by fellow fans, especially KPop (Aisyah, 2017). Social media X is an ideal platform to observe audience behavior and community interactions, since it has the large K-Pop fanbase accounts growing in X (Cardoso & Castanho, 2021). This high level of engagement provides a rich context for analyzing digital fandom dynamics. The main data consisted of posts, comments, and interactions made by fans in the community during the competition period. Data were collected and ensured that all interactions relevant to the study were identified and analyzed. The data came from the population, which is all social media audiences who watched and interacted with Clash of Champion-related content. This includes social media users who made posts and/or commented in discussions related to Clash of Champion casts featuring elements of K-Pop culture.

As there are no strata in the Clash of Champion audience who are active on social media, the researcher decided to take a probability sample where each element in the population has a known and equal selection. Each element is selected independently of every other element and the sample is drawn by a random procedure from the sampling frame (Malhotra & Dash, 2016). The population in this study consists of all tweets related to the 'Clash of Champions' event, spanning from June to the final chapter in August. The sampling frame specifically includes tweets related to K-pop, as they represent a key group within the broader Clash of Champions community. To obtain a representative probability sample, the researcher used Simple Random Sampling, where each tweet has an equal and independent chance of being selected from the total population of tweets.

Researchers will take 300 samples of both comments and posts from the X social media audience, especially in the Clash of Champion community that discusses the KPopfication of Clash of Champion. Sampling 300 comments and posts is based on adequate representation, limited resources, data diversity, exploratory approach, and alignment with applicable research standards. This allowed the researcher to conduct a meaningful and in-depth analysis within realistic constraints. The data collection process involves several important stages. The sample of 300 comments and posts was selected to ensure adequate representation of the broader online engagement with the 'Clash of Champions' event. This sample size was chosen considering the limitations of resources and the need for data diversity, while still allowing for meaningful analysis within the exploratory framework of this study. These 300 comments and posts represent a wide range of fan interactions across various times and contexts during the event, from June through August, ensuring that key moments and diverse fan reactions are captured. Additionally, this sample size aligns with standard research practices in similar studies, balancing feasibility with the requirement for sufficient data to draw insights. To evaluate the appropriateness and representativeness of the sample, the researcher considered the volume of posts during the event period and ensured that the selected posts reflect varying levels of engagement across different fan groups, including active and passive participants in the 'Clash of Champions' X community.

First, the researcher identified the specific time period during which the Clash of Champions competition took place and determined keywords relevant (Riffe et al., 2014) to K-Pop culture and the competition. Second, the data collected from scraping were manually coded to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content being analyzed. Manual coding involves reading through the data and assigning predefined codes or themes to specific aspects,

such as sentiment, engagement, and key topics. The researcher applied these codes in several phases, first to identify broad themes, then refining them to ensure consistency and accuracy in the analysis (Neuman, 2014). These codes were then grouped into categories that reflected elements of KPopfication, such as clothing styles, behaviors, and values associated with K-Pop that were analyzed for exploratory purposes. The following study focuses on an initial, in-depth understanding of how social media audiences shape the identities of Clash of Champions casts through interactions with K-Pop content in the context of Clash of Champions. The researcher looks for new patterns, themes and insights that may form the basis for further research that may be more descriptive or explanatory in the future.

Once the coding process was complete, data analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel to calculate the frequency of occurrence of each category and identify dominant patterns. The compilation process involved inputting the coded data into Excel spreadsheets, where each category was assigned a numerical value. Excel's built-in functions, such as pivot tables and frequency distributions, were then used to analyze the data and identify trends, providing insights into fan engagement and sentiment. The results of this analysis were then used to measure the extent to which KPopfication occurs among Clash of Champion casts and how elements of K-Pop culture influence their social identity in the context of academic competition.

Reliability and validity of the data were maintained by cross-checking between researchers, namely coder reliability tests (Riffe, et al., 2014) and using data triangulation from various text sources, namely researchers collecting data from various different platforms to ensure the researcher's findings are not biased by a single source or a particular situation. With this approach, the research is expected to provide measurable and structured insights into the phenomenon of KPopfication and its impact on Clash of Champion casts in Ruang Guru. The demographic characteristics of the research target group, owners of the 300 tweets selected for analysis, were also clearly identified. These characteristics included age, gender, and engagement level. Age referred to the participants' range, identifying that the tweets came from younger users, while gender distribution was analyzed without distinguishing between female and male participants, assuming that engagement patterns would not differ based on gender. Engagement level was evaluated based on tweet frequency, retweets, and interactions, distinguishing between active and passive participants. This approach ensured that the sample was representative and provided a robust basis for analyzing fan engagement.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In order to understand the terminology commonly used in KPop discussions, we cite several previous sources that have collected translation datasets of terminology for KPop fandom. Kim et al., (2024) collected Korean monolingual data from fan community sites and translated by including fandom terms in English, as well as translating and including internet slang as a standard language variation. Like the use of the word 'Idol', which is popularly used by KPop fandom terminology (Kim, 2017), the researcher conducted a keyword filter on terms that are popularly used by KPop, even though it is not the first time found in KPop fandom. The concept of KPopfication has recently become a concern in academia, where there is an adaptation of a fandom that mimics the structure and dynamics of the KPop fandom, showing how successful strategies in the entertainment world can be applied in other domains, creating a loyal and organized fan base (Kurniasih et al., 2024).

After I collected the dataset and classified it into 21 keywords, I conducted an intra-coder reliability test to ensure the consistency of the coding of the collected data. A total of 30 posts were randomly selected from the total dataset as samples for reliability testing (Riffe, et al., 2014). The 30 posts constitute 10% of the total dataset of 300 posts. Of the 30 tweets, 27 tweets were coded the same way in both coding sessions. This resulted in a percent agreement of 90%, indicating that the researcher's coding was consistent and reliable. The first coding was done on August 18, 2024, then to not give biased results from the first coding, the researcher re-coded on August 27, 2024 with the following results

Table 1. Coding Categories

No.	Tweet	First Coding Category	Recoding Categories
1		Akgae	Akgae

2

 **cal** @maxwellbangkit · Aug 6 ...
1st coc's fans fanwar:

meributkan merchandise KERTAS antara kubu sipaling KAPITALISME & sipaling PENGEN ALL MEMBER ADA PC NYA.....

 **cal** @maxwellbangkit · Aug 5
soalnya belum ada fanwar antar unit, antar shipper. ga ada faker, nyolong fancam, giveaway bodong, dan lain lain.....
x.com/dailymaira/st...

13 52 461 9.7K

Fanwar

Fanwar

3

 **hi25** @nnaystoire · Aug 17 ...
Replying to @ocsien
san tolong di trainee menjadi idol ya kevin nya 🙏🙏

676

Idol

Trainee

4

 **@peabuthome** · Aug 2 ...
Kalo tgl 17 nanti aku bawa freebies ginian ada yg mau gak ya??
Takut bikin kebanyakan. Terus gak ada yg nerima. 🙄🙄
Ini handmirror. Nanti ada stiker custom jg. Tp belum jadi.
Boleh bantu Retweetnya 🙏🙏🙏 #timsekop



6 9 26 6.7K

Freebies

Freebies

5

 **HASA★** @maxellots · Aug 5 ...
mari dinikmati main idol idol an ini sebelum disband tgl 17 nanti 🙄

102 664 3.6K 56K

Disband

Disband

6

 **oca | rest.** @pndnarvt · Jul 14 ...
🙄🙄 plis sekali lagi mereka bukan idol guys... mereka gaada ngelewatn masa trainee buat entertain people, mereka cuma mahasiswa biasa dengan prestasj segudang yang diundang buat ikut perlombaan 🙄🙄

 **Kats** @hamsterdanjang · Jul 14
Mau galak dikit.
Anak2 CoC itu bukan entertainer. Mereka mahasiswa tok!
Mereka gapunya tanggung jawab utk ngehibur kalian. Mereka gaada ...
[Show more](#)

3 215

Idol

Trainee

7

Fancam Fancam



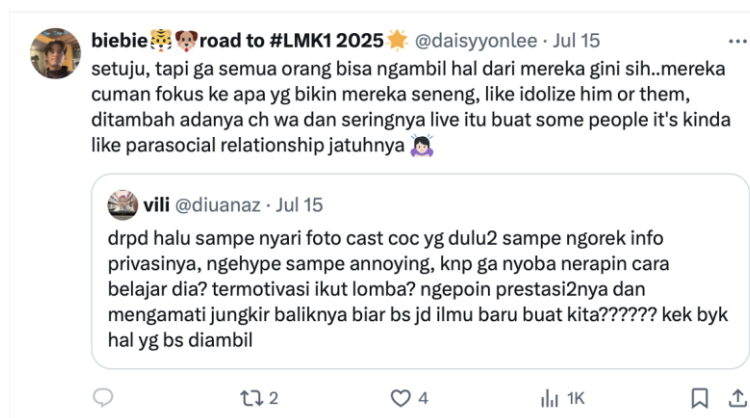
8

Kpop Agency



9

Parasocial Parasocial








10

Disband Disband



11

Freebies Freebies

12		Bubble	Bubble
13		Bias	Bias
14		Stan	Stan
15		KPop	KPop
16		All Rounder	All Rounder
17		PDNim	PDNim
18		AU	AU

19



chocochiz @haiiniakuu_ · Jul 3
coc stan, ayokk mutualan 😊👉

35 6 3.1K

Stan

Stan

20



gea sahabat mixwil @geaanakbaik · Aug 18
sebut 10 bias terakhir kalian di coc dong, I'll go first yaa :

1. max
2. sen
3. kev
4. xel
5. ysy
6. nbl
7. kenji
8. alfie
9. agas...

Show more

259 615 817 215K

Bias

Bias

21



biru @lemonadepinky · Aug 17
FANCAM FINAL CHAPTER CLASH OF CHAMPIONS (CoC)
[17 Agustus 2024]
Balai Sarbini, Jakarta
#FinalChapterCoC
#ThankYouCoC

- a thread

10 1.8K 7.8K 525K

Fancam

Fancam

22



nisriina @leehannedoor · Jul 28
Replying to @wrixleowcy
Malah di blg nya RG itu kaya agency KPop yang meres duit fans nya, konsen mereka pada ke 2 juta nya. eh ada yang 275k malah masih di bilang kemahalan, miskin miskin aja sih. pake banding2in segala 2 juta PP ke malay 😂

3 1 9 543

Agency

Agency

23



sabil danusan era @lillsunlight · Jul 15
Replying to @carloshainz
YA ALLAH MAXWELL PADAHAL DIA BENER BENER BIAS AKU DI COC 😞

3 8 585 68K

Bias

Bias

24



ivvy @sanxelshine · Aug 6
sebenarnya fans coc tuh mostly fangirls yg udah capek sama dunia kpop (contohnya aku) jadi kayak fresh aja gitu ngehype coc, bikin excited lagi buat fangirlingan, ada yg relate gak 😞

113 641 2.1K 59K

KPop

KPop

25

Idol

Idol



26

Photocard

Photocard



27

All
Rounder

All
Rounder



28



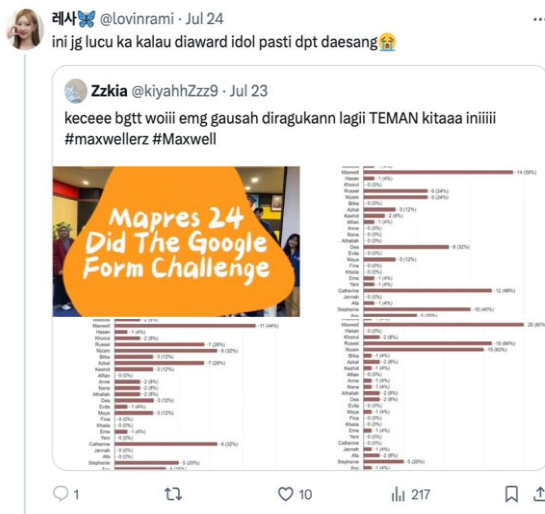
PDNim PDNim

29



Photocard Photocard

30



Idol Idol

Source: X (2014)

This level of agreement exceeds the generally accepted threshold in content analysis research of 80% (Riffe et al., 2014) and shows that the researcher's coding process was systematic and consistent, even though it was conducted at different times. Therefore, the data we generated can be considered reliable, providing a strong basis for the analysis and conclusions to be drawn in this study.

Then on August 28, 2024, researchers conducted an analysis based on the dataset that had been collected. This study analyzed 300 posts related to the KPopfication phenomenon in

the context of casts in Clash of Champion, a competition held by Ruang Guru. Casts in this competition are students who do not have a background as K-Pop idols, but interactions on social media show a pattern of KPopfication, where these casts are treated or considered to have characteristics similar to K-Pop idols. This dataset consists of tweets that include various keywords related to terms commonly used in the K-Pop fandom community, such as "Trainee," "Maknae," and "Disband." Each tweet was analyzed to identify the frequency of occurrence of these keywords, which provides an insight into how social media audiences shape and perceive the casts' identities through the lens of K-Pop culture. This analysis aimed to better understand how the KPopfication process occurs and how this affects audience perceptions of casts who are not actually K-Pop idols. Based on the analysis of the 300 posts, the following results were found

Table 2. Result Analysis

Keywords	Number	Percentage
Trainee	31	10.33%
PDNim	26	8.67%
Bubble	25	8.33%
Maknae	25	8.33%
Disband	22	7.33%
Bias	17	5.67%
AU	16	5.33%
Freebies	16	5.33%
Photocard/PC	15	5%
Agency	15	5%
Stan	12	4%
Parasocial	12	4%
Fanwar	11	3.67%
All rounder	10	3.33%
Concert	10	3.33%
Akgae	8	2.67%
Idol	8	2.67%
KPop	6	2%
Debut	6	2%

Fancam	5	1.67%
Pre Debut	4	1.33%
Total	300	100%

Source: Author's analysis (2024)

In the analysis of 300 tweets related to KPopfication in the context of Clash of Champion casts, the frequency of occurrence of various keywords commonly used in the K-Pop community was identified. The keyword "Trainee" appeared most frequently, with a total of 31 occurrences, representing 10.33% of the total dataset. Other keywords such as "PDNim" appeared 26 times (8.67%), "Bubble" and "Maknae" appeared 25 times each (8.33%). Meanwhile, "Disband" appeared in 22 tweets (7.33%), and "Bias" in 17 tweets (5.67%). The frequency of occurrence of these keywords gives an idea of how terms related to K-Pop culture are used by audiences to discuss and frame the identities of the Clash of Champion casts, even though they are not K-Pop idols. Other keywords such as "Photocard/PC" and "Agency" also appeared quite frequently, each with 15 times (5%), showing how other K-Pop attributes and concepts were also applied in discussions about the competition casts.

From table 2 above, it can be seen that the keyword "Trainee" has the highest frequency of occurrence with 31 tweets, which is 10.33% of the total dataset. This shows that the concept of "Trainee" is very dominant in conversations about Clash of Champion casts, which is related to the fact that audiences tend to see casts as individuals who are in the early stages or training, similar to trainees in the K-Pop world who conduct competitive training to prepare trainees to enter the industry (Padget, 2017). Other keywords such as "PDNim" (8.67%), the term "PDNim," which usually refers to a producer or authority figure in a program, whether in reality shows, external K-Pop producers associated with the process of identity formation in K-Pop.

"Bubble" (8.33%) is frequently used in the context of fan messenger communities, where Clash of Champion casts utilize WhatsApp channels as well as the Idol and fan app "Bubble", indicating that audiences see casts as part of an exclusive community. This is because K-Pop idols have social media accounts for fans to access their activities. So that the activities of K-Pop idols can be followed by their fans (Husna, 2024). Seeing the similarity of WhatsApp channels of Clash of Champion casts and K-Pop idols on the Bubble platform further strengthens the social identity formed around them.

"Maknae" (8.33%) also appeared quite frequently, indicating that audiences may associate casts with the age structure and hierarchy usually found in K-Pop culture, where maknae means the youngest member in a group (Inayah et al., 2022). The keyword "Disband" (7.33%) indicates concern or speculation about the casts' public appearance after the competition ends, while "Bias" (5.67%) indicates a preference or favoritism towards certain casts (Guerra & Sousa, 2021). Overall, this keyword distribution reflects how audiences adopt K-Pop terms in talking about Clash of Champion casts, even though these casts are not K-Pop idols. This confirms the KPopfication process where the casts' identities are shaped through the lens of K-Pop culture, which can be explained through Social Identity Theory.

Social Identity Theory argues that individuals categorize themselves and others into various social groups, and their identities are largely formed from membership in these groups (Tajfel, 1974). In this context, Clash of Champion casts, although not K-Pop idols, were identified by the audience as belonging to a "group" that shared similar traits with K-Pop idols. This suggests that a strong social identification is taking place, where audiences begin to see Clash of Champion casts not just as contestants, but as figures who have emotional and social value within their community Mercer (2014). Thus, the frequency with which these keywords appear suggests that social media audiences are not only consuming content, but are also active in shaping the social identities (Gündüz, 2017) of Clash of Champion casts through the KPopfication process. This is in line with Social Identity Theory, where social identities are formed through group interactions (Harwood, 2020), and in this case, the group is the K-Pop fan community who apply their cultural framework to the casts of this competition.

This identity is shaped through discussions on social media, where audiences use K-Pop-specific language and terminology to describe and frame Clash of Champion casts. Through this process, casts become "idolized," and their identities are gradually shaped by the audience's collective perceptions influenced by K-Pop culture (Ismail & Khan, 2023). These discussions create a narrative that connects casts to the K-Pop identity, even though they are not part of the industry, thus reinforcing the KPopfication process.

There are significant implications, especially in terms of how the K-Pop identity projected by the audience can affect the views and expectations of casts who are not actually K-Pop idols. The KPopfication process creates strong expectations and certain standards that casts must meet, even though they come from different backgrounds and were never meant to be part of the K-Pop industry, namely: 1) the K-Pop identity projected onto casts can create pressure to meet the aesthetic, behavioral, and performance standards typically associated with

K-Pop idols. Audiences may begin to judge casts based on criteria they apply to K-Pop idols, such as physical appearance, artistic skills, and how they interact with fans; 2) K-Pop fans tend to have expectations about their idols in terms of popularity and public image (Kim et al., 2022), through KPopfication on Clash of Champion casts can also strengthen audience expectations. In K-Pop culture, idols are often perceived as public figures who must adhere to certain norms (Kim & Hutt, 2021) to maintain their image in the eyes of fans. With the audience viewing casts through the lens of K-Pop, casts may feel compelled to form a publicly favorable image, which may be at odds with their personalities or personal values. This may create tension between the cast's true identity and the identity projected by the audience; 3) Finally, KPopfication may also affect the way casts are treated in public spaces and social media. Casts may experience fanaticism, close scrutiny, sharp criticism from their viewing audience, even to the point of fostering their idols, including their public image, scope of work, and idols' private lives (Yan & Yang, 2021) through the framework of K-Pop. This can create an intense parasocial dynamic, where the audience feels they have the right to regulate or judge the cast's personal life, which can negatively impact the cast's privacy and autonomy. On the fan side, there are also adverse effects on habits, namely the emergence of behaviors that sacrifice sleep and do not focus on academic life. In addition, spending on merchandise and the toxic environment on the Twitter app (now X) were identified as negative aspects of parasocial relationships (Ascue et al., 2023).

Overall, the KPopfication of Clash of Champion casts demonstrates how social identities can be shaped and manipulated by dominant popular culture (Khotimah, 2021), and how this can create challenges and pressures for individuals projected into such roles. The K-Pop identities projected by audiences not only affect the way casts are seen, but can also shape audience expectations and behaviors, which in turn affect casts' social experiences in a broader context.

The research findings on KPopfication among Clash of Champion casts on social media show patterns that are in line with, but also have significant differences from previous research related to KPopfication, Social Identity Theory, and social interaction on social media. It looks at how audiences adopt K-Pop terminology and norms to describe and judge individuals outside the context of the K-Pop industry. Several previous studies have shown that KPopfication involves a process in which individuals or groups are identified and labeled based on K-Pop cultural norms, even though they have no direct connection to the industry (Kurniasih et al., 2024; Yurcel, et al., 2024). This research is consistent with such findings,

where Clash of Champion casts who are not K-Pop idols are treated and expected to behave like idols by their audience. This suggests that social media audiences actively categorize individuals based on their familiar social and cultural frameworks, which is consistent with the tenets of Social Identity Theory. Previous research has also found that social media reinforces and extends this social identification process through parasociality between idols and fans (Kim & Kim, 2020), creating strong communities around specific cultures, such as K-Pop.

However, significant differences arise in the context of how social identity is formed through KPopfication in this study compared to previous studies. Many previous studies on KPop have focused on how K-Pop fans actively shape their own social identities through interactions with idols and fellow fans (Sun, 2020), often in the context of fans who are aware and directly involved in K-Pop culture. In this study, KPopfication occurs in casts who are not part of the K-Pop community, but still experience the process of identity formation through audience perceptions and expectations. The reason behind this difference relates to the difference in research focus. While previous studies have often focused on established K-Pop fans and fan communities, this study highlights how general audiences who are not directly involved with K-Pop can adopt and apply K-Pop frameworks to individuals outside of that context. This suggests that KPopfication is not just limited to K-Pop fans, but can also happen to a wider audience when they consume and interpret content that has K-Pop elements.

In addition, this study shows that KPopfication can occur through external influences, where social media audiences impose K-Pop norms on individuals previously unrelated to the culture. This is in contrast to previous research which more often shows how K-Pop fans form their own social identities organically from within the fan community. This difference may be explained by differences in the current social and digital context, where K-Pop culture has become increasingly globalized and integrated into various media spaces (Parc & Kim, 2020), allowing a wider audience to apply K-Pop frameworks to individuals in various contexts. Overall, the findings of this study expand the understanding of KPopfication and Social Identity Theory by showing how the process of social identification through popular culture can occur outside of the fan community directly associated with the culture, as well as highlighting potential shifts in social identity dynamics in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study highlights how the KPopfication process can influence the perception and social identity of Clash of Champion casts, even though they are not K-Pop idols. Through the analysis of 300 tweets, this study shows that social media audiences tend to apply K-Pop cultural terms and norms to the competition casts. This research also reveals that KPopfication is not only limited to K-Pop fans who interact directly with idols, but can also occur in a broader context, where a more general audience adopts a K-Pop framework to judge individuals who are not directly associated with the culture. This is in line with Social Identity Theory, which states that social identity is shaped by membership in a particular social group, although in this case, the identity is applied externally by the social media audience.

The findings enrich the understanding of how social identities can be formed through the influence of popular culture such as K-Pop, and how these dynamics can affect individuals who are projected into roles they may not choose. As such, this research makes an important contribution to the field of communication studies, particularly in the context of social media and identity formation, by demonstrating that KPopfication can occur outside of the traditional K-Pop fan community, creating new expectations and pressures for individuals who are idolized by a wider audience.

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