



The Fan Community of Korean Celebrities in Peru, as an Advertising Tool to Promote Various Brands, BTS Case

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Abstract. The objective of this research is to analyze the fan community of Korean celebrities in Peru, in its use as an advertising tool to promote various Peruvian brands. Such is the case of the musical group BTS, which has achieved great popularity worldwide, highlighting the influence of its fan community in Latin America. For this purpose, qualitative research methodology was used through semi-structured in depth interviews. The main results obtained were that the fan community in Peru of the musical group BTS has proven to be a key driver for the growth and commercial success of the alliances between BTS and the brands. This is mainly due to two factors: the accelerated purchase of products from these alliances, which sell out in a matter of hours, and the massive dissemination of this commercial movement on social networks. In short, Peruvian BTS fans are generating a significant impact on brands, both through their quick purchases and the online viralization of these commercial alliances. Therefore, it is important for Peruvian brands to recognize the potential of collaborating with these fan communities, as is the case of BTS, and to establish strategic alliances in the future.

Keywords: Korean Celebrities · Hallyu Wave · Fans

1 Introduction

Globalization has driven new cultural trends in South Korea, thanks to the use of mass media and the Internet. Likewise, its nation branding strategy has become a tool to improve South Korea's image and generate positioning and investment opportunities abroad [1]. The Hallyu Wave, so called the Korean wave, emerged from this strategy, becoming a global phenomenon with great power of influence, thanks to the expansion of Korean pop culture, through television dramas, movies, pop songs, celebrities, idols, food, among others [2].

The popularity of the Hallyu Wave has allowed South Korea to present itself to the world with the slogan "Imagine Your Korea," and showcase the natural beauty of its cities, arts, music, movies, traditional crafts, among others [3]. This success is due to the ability of Korean culture and media to first gain entry into American culture to

achieve worldwide acceptance [4]. In Latin America, the Hallyu Wave began to have a great reception in the 2000s thanks to the dissemination of products such as Korean pop music, called “K-pop”, doramas or Korean dramas, which would be drama genre television series [5]. Mexico, Peru, Argentina and Brazil being key countries in the arrival of the Hallyu phenomenon in Latin America [6]. It is noteworthy that Korean products had a great acceptance in these countries, especially television dramas, which generated a growing fondness for this culture [4].

This has led world famous brands to take advantage of the popularity of the Hallyu Wave and generate commercial alliances with Korean celebrities. For example, the fast food restaurant McDonald’s partnered with the musical band BTS to create the “BTS meal” combo in Mexico, which was a resounding success in sales [7]. Alliances between Korean brands and celebrities were booming thanks to the fanaticism of K-pop fans, who wanted everything related to their idols, even if they did not consume the promoted product [8]. This fanaticism has become a source of income, to obtain products related to celebrities and copy their attitudes, which allowed them to temporarily or durably build their identity [4].

In that sense, the subject of this research takes on great importance in the advertising industry, firstly, as indicated by Zarco [6] it is evident the popularity of the Hallyu Wave worldwide, as well as in the Latin American scope. Secondly, as indicated by Alves and Tellis [9] it is a phenomenon whose influence is just emerging. Therefore, it becomes relevant to delve into the use of the BTS fan community in Peru as an advertising tool to promote various Peruvian brands. The main question of this research is: How the community of fans of Korean celebrities in Peru, made up of women between 18 and 28 years old, residents of Metropolitan Lima and belonging to the BTS fan community, can become an advertising tool to promote various Peruvian brands?

2 State of the Art

2.1 Fans as an Advertising Tool

Fan culture refers to the followers and admirers of musical groups, athletes, celebrities, among others [10]. These fans are seen as obsessive and lonely due to their demand for full participation [11]. However, thanks to social media, their visibility and social respect are improving [12]. Despite being affected by media persuasion and irrationality, fan culture provides an ideology that allows individuals to forge their own identity and achieve a position in society [13]. Fans are both consumers and producers of content, and devote much of their time to social activities related to their idols [14, 15]. On the other hand, there are fandoms, which are groups of people passionate about popular culture, who gather to exchange information and connect with other fans [16].

Fans who actively participate in fandoms demonstrate greater loyalty to products and generate a positive perception of them in the long term [17]. This is how many companies seek to create stable alliances with them and their consumers, in order to generate a sense of belonging and loyalty in the long term [5, 14]. Building ties with consumers is a priority to achieve a good positioning in a competitive market [18]. Therefore, in the case of sports clubs, they invest in membership programs to create

strong bonds with their fans and increase their revenues [19]. Getting consumers to seek the products of their favorite sports clubs to feel part of them [20].

2.2 The Hallyu Wave

As part of the strategy to promote South Korea, the popularity of pop culture, a phenomenon also called Hallyu Wave, was encouraged. That starts with the success of Korean dramas in China, which allowed the global expansion of the music industry, called K-pop [21]. Thanks to this strategy, the national image was boosted, and economic growth was generated, which allowed further expansion in bilateral relations [22]. And it became not only limited to music, but also expanded to areas of makeup, gastronomy, tourism, and others [23]. Since the 1990s, the Hallyu Wave has gained momentum and K-pop, has become a global cultural phenomenon [24]. The band Seo Taiji and Boy was the first to achieve global success in 1992, paving the way for future K-pop stars and expanding the popularity of South Korean music agencies and discographies [25, 26]. The most representative band of this new K-pop music genre, was Boys Band named and known as “BTS” [27]. It is essential to note that the success of K-pop is largely due to the dedication and support of fans and fandoms that are always backing the artists [28]. K-pop fandoms exemplify the power and dedication they have toward their favorite bands [29]. These fandoms actively engage in campaigns to boost the ranking of new songs in music charts, as well as to get nominations and awards in annual music events [30]. Similarly, these fandoms on social media tend to share content from brands they feel emotionally connected to, which can increase their level of loyalty to them [31]. On the other hand, K-pop fandoms are known to strategically collaborate with other fandoms, which increases their economic value and enhances the image of both the band and the agency [32].

3 Methodology

The present study proposed research that aims to analyze and deepen the use of the fan community of Korean celebrities in Peru as an advertising tool to promote different Peruvian brands, in the case of the South Korean band BTS. The specific objectives of the study are the following: To know what motivations the fan community in Peru generates, to know how these communities are perceived for their use in the promotion of Peruvian brands, and to know how the BTS fan community in Peru can be used to promote different Peruvian brands. And therefore answer the main question of this study: How the fan community of Korean celebrities in Peru can become an advertising tool to promote various Peruvian brands?

Regarding the sample, we considered 20 women between 18 and 28 years old, living in Metropolitan Lima, especially in districts of zone 5 (Ate, Chaclacayo, Lurigancho, Santa Anita, San Luis, El Agustino), zone 6 (Jesús María, Lince, Pueblo Libre, Magdalena, San Miguel) and zone 7 (Miraflores, San Isidro, San Borja, Surco, La Molina). And belong to the BTS fan community in Peru for a minimum of 2 years.

To carry out the data collection, the semi-structured interview technique was used with the objective of deepening the answers obtained through the possibility of adding

Table 1. Topics and guiding questions for in-depth interviews

| Topics | Semi-structured questions |
|---|--|
| <p>To understand the motivations generated by the fan community in Peru.</p> <p>To learn about the perception of these communities for use in the promotion of Peruvian brands.</p> <p>To learn how the BTS fan community in Peru can be used to promote various Peruvian brands.</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.What is a fan community for you? 2.What were your first expectations when you joined a fan community? 3.What do you dislike about a fan community - why? 4.What activities do you develop in a fan community? 5.How do you express the loyalty you feel for the celebrity(ies) you follow, what do you do for them? 6.What is your perception of celebrity-brand partnerships - why? 7.Do you think these alliances generate benefits for fans? Why? 8.What do you feel and think when purchasing a product or service that has been promoted or influenced by celebrities? Why? 9.What products or services have you purchased thanks to the promotion or influence of a celebrity? Why? 10.What media do you use to find new products and services promoted or influenced by celebrities? Why? 11.Have you ever helped foster partnerships between brands and BTS or other celebrities through social media? (Explain how). 12.How much are you willing to pay for any product or service related to BTS, why? 13.Do you feel that different Peruvian brands should start to partner with BTS, as was the case with the McDonald's partnership in Mexico, and they are not taking advantage of this great popularity? Why? 14.What would be your impression if a Peruvian brand were to form an alliance with BTS? Do you think these alliances would be a success, and why? 15.If any Peruvian brand were to partner with BTS, what would you be willing to do on social media to make sure it is a success? 16. Do you think that alliances between Peruvian brands and BTS would be successful? Why? 17.What Peruvian products or services would you like to be aliased with BTS, why? 18.What social media do you think is necessary to better engage these BTS partnerships? 19.Do you think the BTS fan community feels a responsibility to contribute to the band's success and help promote different brands? Why? |

Source: Own elaboration

additional questions to the previously established guide [33]. The process of elaboration of the semi-structured interviews was carried out independently, without adapting previous proposals to the Peruvian context. In this sense, the main tool was a guide of 19 questions, applied in an interview that lasted 45 min, which was recorded by audio and video, using the Zoom platform. For the development of such a guide, several relevant theoretical bases in the field of study were used, such as [25, 27, 29], and [8]. These references provided key insights into the cultural influence of K-pop, the dynamics of fan communities, and the impact of celebrity-brand alliances on the industry. These theoretical foundations strongly supported the formulation of the research questions.

Additionally, a notebook was used to write down key data given in the interviewees answers. It is important to note that the development of this research did not involve any economic expenses, since all the tools used were digital and free of charge. This way, it was possible to carry out the study in an effective and affordable way, without incurring in any expense in local currency (Peruvian soles) (Table 1).

4 Analysis of Results and Discussion

4.1 To Understand the Motivations Generated by the Fan Community in Peru

The interviewees highlighted that a fan community provided them with a sense of togetherness, respect, belonging, engagement, and happiness. These psychological and emotional benefits are consistent with Chen et al.'s [17] social identity theory, which suggests that belonging to a group can enhance self-esteem and provide a source of positive identity. While Wang and Wang [24], emphasize the role of parasocial interaction in the formation of online fan communities and its influence on fans' social identity. On the other hand, to express their loyalty, younger female interviewees mentioned that they go to all movie screenings, celebrate their artists' birthdays, practice the choreographies of K-pop groups, go to events, buy their merchandising, stream on Spotify, and follow them on social media, among others. On the other hand, the more adult interviewees indicated that since they do not have much time, due to their jobs, they express their loyalty by buying as much merchandising as possible, following them on social media and, sometimes, streaming on Spotify. This coincides with what Schmid [13] mentioned, who explains that people can have different levels of participation in fan communities, from active to passive participation, depending on their circumstances and time availability. However, for Jenkins [22], participation in fan communities tend to be inherently active and productive.

4.2 To Learn About the Perception of These Communities for Use in the Promotion of Peruvian Brands

The interviewees agree that alliances between celebrities and brands can improve the image of both parties, as long as there is a proper alignment between them. In addition, they indicate that it is important that the brand and the celebrity share the same philosophy for the collaboration to work effectively. In this regard, Yoo et al. (2020), point out that when consumers perceive that the associations between the brand and the

celebrity are incompatible, they may feel confused or disillusioned, which may result in a negative reaction toward the brand. Similarly, Wang et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of authenticity in collaborations, as this can have a positive impact on consumers' perception of the brand.

4.3 To Learn How the BTS Fan Community in Peru Can Be Used to Promote Various Peruvian Brands

The alliances between BTS and brands generate a high purchase motivation among the band's fans, according to all the interviewees. They also point out that most of the products generated by these alliances tend to sell out quickly, as fans want to have everything the band uses and promotes. This corresponds with Kim and Sung [12], who found that products promoted by Korean artists often sell out within minutes due to high demand. However, it is important to note that not all collaborations between celebrities and brands are successful. In fact, as pointed out by Pham and Johar [11], congruence between the celebrity and brand image is critical to ensure a successful collaboration. On the other hand, all the interviewees claimed to have helped incentivize these alliances through social networks, sharing news and recommendations with friends and followers. This aligns with what Muniz and Schau [31] mention, where they show that consumers share content on social networks, creating an emotional connection with the brand and strengthening their loyalty. However, Kozinets [23], argues that emotional connection and loyalty are not enough to guarantee consumer satisfaction and continuity of the relationship with the brand. The interviewees stated that they are willing to spend an average of 300 U.S. dollars or even more, depending on the product related to BTS. Also, most of them stated that if the product is worthwhile, they will not have an estimated budget to obtain it and would be willing to buy it regardless of the price. This is supported by the research of Yang and Lee [32], who state that fans of K-pop are more likely to buy products related to them, even if the products are expensive. However, it is important to mention that fans may be critical of products that promote their idols, and may reject those that they do not perceive as authentic or in line with their idol's image, as noted by Jung et al. [26]. Thus, authenticity and emotional connection between idol and fans are essential elements in product promotion, and can influence consumer loyalty and satisfaction, as noted by Kim and Sung [12].

Regarding which brands they would like to form an alliance with BTS in the Peruvian market, the interviewees indicated that they should be big brands, with national and international backing, and with a sufficient budget to hire them. They indicated that they would like it to be a brand like Inca Kola, or brands that produce alpaca and vicuña clothing from Peru, such as the Kuna brand. This is corroborated by Gómez [28], where it is evident that consumers tend to prefer brands that represent their cultural identity and are associated with their country or region. Likewise, Villacreses [15], complements this, pointing out how cultural identity influences the choice of brands and consumer behavior. Another issue to highlight are the duties of BTS fans, which not only include supporting and listening to their music, but also buying their albums, investing in merchandising and supporting the music rankings on Spotify, to increase digital sales of the songs. According to the interviewees, this is a way to compensate for all the emotional support they have received from the band during difficult times they

have gone through. This is in line with Kang's study, which discusses fans' motivation to consume K-pop music and how it relates to parasocial interaction with the artists. Likewise, Cho and Cheon, conclude that fan support is crucial to the success of K-pop artists as they influence music rankings and digital song sales.

5 Conclusions

In relation to how the community of fans of Korean celebrities in Peru can become an advertising tool to promote various Peruvian brands, it has been observed that it drives the growth and success of brands at a commercial level. Mainly in two ways: through the motivation to purchase the products generated by these alliances, encouraging them to be sold out in a few hours and viralizing these commercial alliances, which then encourages a massive feeling towards the acquisition of these products through social networks.

In the fan community, at an emotional level, this provides a series of psychological benefits that generate belonging to a group and therefore improve self-esteem. It is important to note that this derives in a series of duties that fans must fulfill, in order to compensate for the emotional help they have received with the band's music in their difficult moments. Therefore, in addition to listening to the music, they must support the purchase of albums, merchandising, among other purchases.

In this sense, loyalty is very relevant in these fan communities, since it generates a great motivation to follow their musical groups. Incentivizing the desire to obtain information and interact with other members of the fan community. At the same time, the acquisition of products related to the musical group becomes very relevant to show and demonstrate their support and connection with the band.

Concerning alliances between celebrities and brands, this can improve the image of both parties as long as both are aligned and share the same philosophy. It is important that fans perceive that the alliance between the brand and the celebrity is compatible. Otherwise, this alliance can confuse and generate a disillusionment that ends in a negative reaction towards the brand.

Regarding the strong connection of the musical group BTS with its young audience, it is worth noting that this has led several brands to create an alliance with them, in order to connect with this audience and ensure a lasting relationship. It is essential to highlight, in this case, the significant role of social media, which have allowed to provide constant information on the activities related to the musical group and therefore also reinforce the positioning of the allied brands.

Finally, it is recommended to delve deeper into the behavior of the members of the fan community of these musical groups. In order to better understand the factors that motivate the following of these fan communities and the decision to purchase products that are sponsored by various brands.

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