CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Audience has always been an integral part of the popularization of the products from the entertainment industry. Through the help of mass media, audience can easily enjoy various products of entertainment industry, such as movies, music, books, TV series, and many others. While acting as the receiver of the products, audience plays an active role in consuming the products as well. In this sense, the use of media by the audience is based upon the individual's goals and needs (West & Turner, 2018a).

Furthermore, audience voluntarily selects the various types of media and is aware on the reasons behind selecting the media (Sullivan, 2019a). As audience members have the freedom to determine their preference use of media based upon their needs and goals, some of them may have developed connection and interest with the products of the entertainment industry. The moment an audience develops a strong emotional and intellectual connection towards a particular product of the entertainment industry, the individual has developed into a fan (Jenkins, 1992a).

Being a fan means that an individual will express his or her devotion and admiration towards the products of the entertainment industry by looking into the details of their favourite products, analysing them, and discussing them with fellow fans (Sullivan, 2019a). Not only that, but fans also participate in producing their own products or contents that are inspired from their favourite products of the

entertainment industry (Smutradontri & Gadavanij, 2020). Such as fan fiction, fan art, and many others.

Through the shared practices that fans experienced, they will create their identity based on their favourite products of the entertainment industry (Cheung, 2002). The identity created by the fans are often used to distinguish themselves from regular media audience (Smutradontri & Gadavanij, 2020). When constructing their identity, fans have the liberty to choose whether to disclose their identity as a fan or not. Some fans will try to hide their fan identity publicly, but still giving attention to their favourite idols privately. While other fans may explicitly express their identity as a fan (Cheung, 2002).

It is not a surprising thing to know that some fans tend to hide their identity, as fans are often characterized with negative imagery. Most of the times, fans are being labelled as individuals that show excessive and obsessed behaviour towards their interests (Lewis, 2003). Not only that, but fans are also described as "emotionally unstable, socially maladjusted, and dangerously out of sync with reality" (Jenkins, 1992b, p. 13). However, we should also see how fans as a community can bring positive impact to the society.

Nowadays, fans have developed into progressive individuals, as well as a community. Through the help of the social media, fans from all over the world can now easily connect and interact with one another without having to worry about their location and time differences (Trzcińska & Nożewski, 2016). In addition to that, social media enables fans to form meaningful social connections amongst

other fans as they interact, share information, and work together (Good Rebels & Morrison, 2021).

The advantage of social media that enables fan to create networked publics has motivate them to make great use of social media by actively participating on voicing their concerns toward social and political issues (Click et al., 2015; Brough & Shresthova, 2012). This side of fan practice is often known as fan activism. Fan activism is defined as a situation in which fans work collectively to seek for a change by making use of their preference of popular culture topic (Brough & Shresthova, 2012). Through social media, fans are more motivated to engage in activism as it enables them to broaden their reach and strengthen their unity as a group (Chang & Park, 2018).

As an example, the global online K-pop fandom took part on the #BlackLivesMatter movement early on the second quarter of 2020. As a movement that was originated from the United States, K-pop fandom actively participated on the movement by spamming tweets that contained #BlueLivesMatter, #AllLivesMatter, and #WhiteLivesMatter with K-pop related contents. This effort was made to buried sensitive tweets that are related to the three provocative and controversial hashtags (Reddy, 2020). Besides that, One in an ARMY, a BTS fandom that specializes in organizing fundraising, created a fundraising initiative called #MatchAMillion for #BlackLivesMatter movement. As reported by the TIME magazine, BTS ARMY has successfully raised more than $1 million through #MatchAMillion campaign (Bruner, 2020).

1.2 Problem Identification

The K-pop fandom is often seen in a negative manner, as people mostly identify them as fanatics (Kim & Chung, 2019). Furthermore, within the K-pop fandom itself, negative fan practices are also present, such as fan wars (Kanozia & Ganghariya, 2021). This fan war can happen when a fan or fandom might have been accidentally or not accidentally post sensitive comments toward other fan's favourite K-pop idol group, in which these fans might react to it and cause dispute amongst K-pop fans (Guevarra, personal communication, December 10, 2021).

Even though there might be fan wars circling the K-pop fandom, the world is also stunned by how the K-pop fandom can unite and work collaboratively to address real-world issues to the public. Starting from participating on addressing racial injustice in the United States, to creating petitions to save forests through social media (Yi, 2021), the K-pop fandom has become the epitome of fan activism. Therefore, the fan activism has become an important part of the fandom culture; as consuming K-pop itself is an active cultural practice (Kim, 2017).

The choice of social media that is often used by K-pop fans to show their activism is Twitter. Twitter is popular amongst online fandoms for its capability to influence the mass, as it enables its users to exchange real-time information in real-life situation (Benhabib, 2011; Castells, 2015; Becker et al., 2021). Not only that, but Twitter also becomes a medium that facilitates networked public sphere and enhanced global networking amongst its users (Bruns et al., 2010; Benhabib, 2011). Through this, this study is closely related to the field of communication as it tries

to show the powerful side of social media that can influence the masses, particularly K-pop fans.

One K-pop fandom that uses Twitter as their mean for activism is KPOP 4 Planet. KPOP 4 Planet is a digital movement created by various K-pop fandoms that focuses on climate activism. Through KPOP 4 Planet's Twitter account, KPOP 4 Planet can educate other K-pop fans about climate crisis through sharing information that is related to the issue, hoping that other K-pop fans will unite and participate on raising and solving the issue of climate crisis. First and foremost, the presence of KPOP 4 Planet on Twitter has become a platform for K-pop fans from all over the world to connect, collaborate, and share their concerns towards the issue.

KPOP 4 Planet's activity on Twitter sets a clear example on how fans can take the role of producers and consumers of social media content. This situation is closely associated to the field of communication, as KPOP 4 Planet represents fan activism as a part of participatory culture in the era of new media. As participatory culture itself is a concept that highly focuses on how users of the Internet are both consumers and producers of content, making the Internet as a place that is filled with user-generated contents (UGC) (Jenkins et al., 2009a; Flew, 2014). Therefore, KPOP 4 Planet is the perfect choice to understand better on how K-pop fans can work collaboratively to raise the awareness of climate activism in the era of new media as the manifestation of participatory culture.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study and problem identification that have been mentioned above, therefore the research question that is being raised is: How KPOP 4 Planet organizers work collaboratively to raise the awareness of climate activism in the era of new media as the manifestation of participatory culture?

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to be able to describe and analyse how K-pop fans, particularly KPOP 4 Planet can work collaboratively to raise the awareness of climate activism in the era of new media as the manifestation of participatory culture.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significances of the study are as follows:

1) For academic purposes, this study hopes to contribute on academic research concerning participatory culture, communication studies, and fan/. studies.

2) For practical purposes, this study hopes to inspire other K-pop fandom on Twitter to use their skills for activism concerning real-world issues, particularly climate change.

1.6 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into six chapters, including:

1) **Chapter 1: Introduction**

   Introduction is a chapter that explains the background of the problem, identification of the problem, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and organization of the study.

2) **Chapter 2: Research Objects and Subjects**

   Research Objects and Subjects is a chapter that describes the object and subject of the study.

3) **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

   Literature Review is a chapter that explains the theoretical background, previous studies that are related to this study, and theoretical framework.

4) **Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

   Research Methodology is a chapter that describes the approached and design used in this study, the data collection techniques, unit of analysis, data validity test, and the data analysis method.

5) **Chapter 5: Research Findings and Discussion**

   Research Findings and Discussion is a chapter that shows the findings of the research and how the findings are being discussed and interpreted by the researcher.

6) **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Suggestion**

   Conclusion and Suggestion is a chapter that shows the conclusions obtained from the study and suggestions for further research.