
HYPERREALITY AND FANDOM CAPITALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF DAY6'S FANDOM CONSUMPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN PURCHASING MERCHANDISE AS AN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

Elsa Ananda Meylanisa¹, Edi Nurwahyu Julianto, S.Sos., M.I.Kom², Ami Saptiyono, S.I.Kom., M.I.Kom³

¹ University of Semarang, Indonesia; elsaanandameylanisa11@gmail.com

² University of Semarang, Indonesia; edi@usm.ac.id

³ University of Semarang, Indonesia; ami.s@usm.ac.id

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Abstract

He phenomenon of fanaticism communities (fandom) of K-POP in Indonesia is not merely related to music, but also involved merchandise consumption practice that has symbolic meaning. This research aims to explore the role of hyperreality and fandom capitalism in constructing consumptive behavior of DAY6's fandom. This research located in Semarang, particularly through purchasing activity of DAY6 merchandise as the part of identity construction. This research using qualitative phenomenological approach through in-depth interview method toward DAY6's fans who actively participate in the community and has high intensity of merchandise purchasing. The analysis is conducted through thematic analysis for identified meaning pattern that appears from informant's experience. The results show three key findings. First, merchandise plays a role as a simulation of the idol's presence. Second, merchandise consumption contributes to shape the identity of fans as "MY DAY", the name of DAY6's fandom. Third, merchandise ownership is related to social recognition within the DAY6 community. The research concludes that DAY6's fans consumptive behavior cannot be viewed simply as an economic activity, but rather as a symbolic meaning that shapes emotional closeness, fandom identity, and social relations within fandom hyperreality and capitalism.

Keywords

Corresponding Author

Elsa Ananda Meylanisa

Faculty of Information and Communication Technology, Indonesia; elsaanandameylanisa11@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the phenomenon of fan culture becomes one of important aspects in global music industry, including Indonesia. One of the biggest fan culture is K-Pop (Korean Pop), originally from South Korea. K-Pop has drawn the attention of people around the world and successfully demonstrated its existence in international stage. K-Pop proved the capability to displace domination of American pop or other western music that formerly widely



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recognized (Chusna & Hakim, 2023). In its dissemination, K-Pop has grown and developed globally resulting in the establishment of community by the fans within their respective regions (Utami & Marnelly, 2025). Fandom is not only limited to small group of fans who meet physically, but also become part of pop culture that integrate individual with different background from various countries as the result of similar interest. Beside engage with the music from their idol, fans also involve in some activities to show up their support for their idol through buying official merchandise such as albums, clothes, accessories, doll, and other items. DAY6 is one of famous band from South Korean managed by JYP Entertainment. This band has loyal and active fandom called "MY DAY". According to, Handoko et al. (2024), K-Pop fandom actively support their idol through purchasing merchandise or album.. Comsumptive behavior of DAY6's fans of collecting merchandise not only form of appretiation toward the music, but also a strategy to construct self identity within the fandom. The involvement in a fandom provides a comfort zone for those to express themselves. Activities such as creating content, attending events, and following trends become forms of identity articulation. The community offer emotional and social support which frequently lacking in the other environtment. The emotional bond that are fostered can strengthen a sense of belonging to the community (Hesti Amelia Mawardani & Arief Sudrajat, 2025).

Based on data from Twitter in 2021, K-Pop dominated global topic that reach 7.5 billion tweet and Indonesia ranked first as a country with the highest volume of *unique authors* engaged in discussions about K-Pop (Kim, 2022).



Figure 1 Countries that talked about K-POP the most on Twitter in 2021

(Sumber: X blog)

This phenomenon reflects the high level of engagement of Indonesia fan communities with Korean Pop Culture which lead to the increase of merchandise transactions such as *photocard*, album, *lightstick*, or others. Furthermore, Indonesia emerge as one of the country with the highest volume of internet user. This condition makes Indonesia becoming the global musician's target market, especially K-Pop. Regarding to GoodStats data of 2024, Indonesia held the top position as the country with the largest K-Pop music consumption in the world, with precentage of 18.47%. This percentage surpasses the United States, which is in second place with 10.24%, and the Philippines in third place with 8.95%. This data demonstrates K-Pop's dominance in Indonesia's digital music market and confirms that Indonesia is one of the most strategic markets for the Korean entertainment industry.



Figure 2: 10 Countries with the Largest K-Pop Music Market Share in 2024
(Sumber: GoodStats)

The phenomenon of K-Pop's domination in Indonesia is further highlighted in comparison with other music genres. GoodStats data of 2024 demonstrate that currently occupied the third rank as the favorite music genre in Indonesia with a percentage of 31%, after pop (71%) and dangdut (34%). Meanwhile, J-Pop only ranks 10th with a percentage of 19%. This comparison shows how K-Pop is more capable of attracting fans in Indonesia than JPop, both in terms of number of listeners and level of fandom engagement

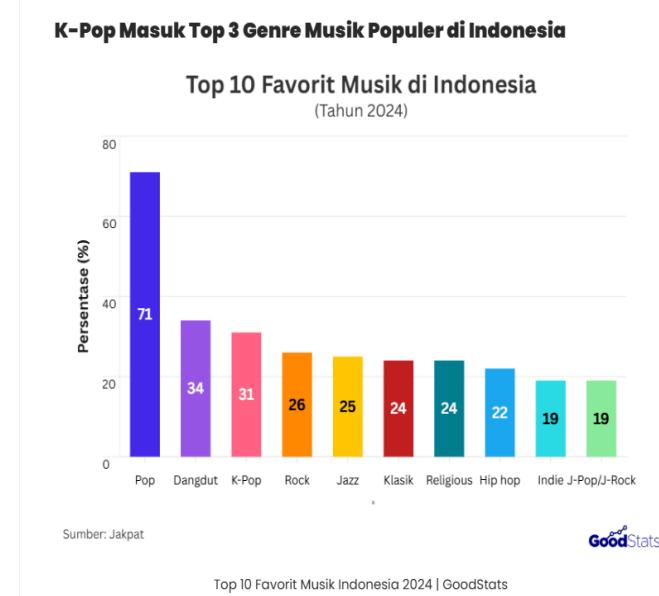


Figure 3 Top 10 favorite music in Indonesia 2024
(Sumber: GoodStats)

As it is shown from the followers in various digital platforms, DAY6 holds a prominent position among other K-Brand, despite not consistently holding the top position. Until 2024, DAY6 recorded gaining 2,2 million listeners on Spotify, 2.8 million followers on Instagram, 2,265,164 followers on X, and 2.24 million subscribers on YouTube

Table 1 Comparison of K-Band Followers on Various Digital Platform (2024)

K-Band	Spotify (Listener)	Instagram (Followers)	X (Followers)	Youtube (Subscribers)
DAY6	2,2 Million	2,8 Million	2.265.164	2,24 Million
CNBLUE	413,6 Million	234 Million	1.273.251	1,16 Million
Xdinary Heroes	681,3 Million	2 Million	453.072	1,17 Million
Wave To Earth	7,4 Million	1,9 Million	90.355	991 Million
The Rose	1,5 Million	1,8 Million	348.934	1,73 Million

The data above shows DAY6 has widely distributed and steady fans across various digital platforms. Despite the spotify's listener of DAY6 is less significant than Wave To Earth, this band shows outstanding in terms of involvement in social media, particularly Instagram and X. It proves that fans loyalty not only reflected through music consumption, but also the interaction and support in social media. In comparison, CNBLUE has a relatively smaller Spotify listeners and social media followers, while Xdinary Heroes, as a new group, has shown

significant growth with 2 million Instagram followers. The Rose and Wave To Earth are prominent on Spotify, but their fandom engagement on social media is still lower than DAY6's.

The large number of fans is also reflected through the habit of purchasing various kind of merchandise. Consumptive behavior within fandom then utilized by the agency to gain profit (Bernita, n.d.). This is observed by the growing number of seller such as GO (*group order*), jastip, or even people who conduct WTS (*want to sell*) K-Pop merchandise K-Pop for example *photocard*, *album*, *lightstick*, and others. One of merchandise which sold at high price is DAY6 doll. There are so many fans still waiting to buy and collect the doll. It shows that the consumptive behavior of DAY6 fans is no longer simply a form of appreciation, but as the part to build self-identity and existence within the community. Referring to Jean Baudrillard's simulation theory (Baudrillard, 2019), he explains that simulation is defined as the process of representing an object as a reference that ultimately considered to replace the original object which becomes real than the original one. Furthermore, the simulation builds a representational object with a sign system which does not merely imitate or duplicate the original object but also becomes a substitute for the actual sign (Oktavianingtyas et al., 2021). Not only represent the members, DAY6 doll signify an emotional closeness that felt more real. The doll is not just a replica, but a symbol of identity and emotional closeness that can replace the presence of the idol in the fan's minds. As it is known, K-Pop culture provides many symbolic frameworks to build identity. This process shows strong correlation between popular culture and identity construction (Hesti Amelia Mawardani & Arief Sudrajat, 2025).

Merchandise consumption also serves as a form of identify articulation and sign of social status within the community. The more numerous and exclusive items owned by the fans, the more social recognitions obtained from the other fans. In this case, comsumption becomes a way to constructs one's self-image as "true fans", while simultaneously obataining a certain social position within the fandom.

The previous studies discussed some aspect related to the involvement of K-Pop fandom in Indonesia. Handoko et al. (2024) highlights the relation between celebrity worship and fandom identity, which suggests that fans who feel a sense of oneness with their idols also tend to feel connected to their fandom community. Moreover, Tanliana & Utami (2022) discussed the phenomenon of K-Pop fans who collect photocard in Twitter, and they found that collection activity encourages repeat purchase frequency which leads to consumptive

behavior. However, these studies have not specifically discussed how the phenomenon of hyperreality in fandom, where the boundaries between reality and symbolic representation of idols become blurred, influences fan consumptive behavior, especially in DAY6 fan community. While, this study presents a novelty by examining the role of hyperreality and fandom capitalism in shaping DAY6 fans' consumptive behavior. This study is also revealing the symbolic meaning of merchandise consumption as part of the formation identity and social relation within the fandom community. Fans's consumptive behavior inseparable to the logic of fandom capitalism. Fandom capitalism is a form of cultural capitalism that systematically transforms fans's emotional attachments into economic opportunities. The entertainment industry not only sells music but also creates stuffs such as merchandise as symbolic items. The desire to purchase is shaped through media strategies, exclusive narratives, and framings of meaning that make merchandise feel essential to fans's identities and existence.

The marketing strategies implemented by agencies such as JYP Entertainment is to create merchandise as a manifestation of personal closeness with idols. Through pre-order and limited edition system, JYP Entertainment creates an intense consumptive pressure. Products such as photo card, official dolls, and light band valued not only for their functional, but also for the symbolic meaning. These items serve as signs of loyalty and social validation.

This situation demonstrates a shift meaning of merchandise from the object to a symbol of social identity. Consumption within a fandom related to the efforts to build self-image, enhance social connection, and show emotional commitment toward the idol. The fans purchase stuffs is not because they need it, but as a conceptual meaning and symbolism alongside the fandom environment.

This research applied the concept of hyperreality to understand how consumptive behavior of DAY6's fans is formed in this modern pop culture. Jean Baudrillard states that in pascamodern society, the boundaries between reality and fantasy are blurred due to symbols, images, and media representation. When a reality is manipulated through representation, the hyperreality arises as a form of reality that is more believable than reality itself (Baudrillard, 2019). The phenomenon of hyperreality is seen in the way fans perceive merchandise as a substitute for the presence of real idols. Merchandise such as official dolls, photo card, or lightband are no longer seen as ordinary objects, but as part of an emotional symbolic shaped by the industry. The idol images constructed by the media and agencies as the representation

that is detached from its original reference, but is perceived as “more real”. This concept is used in this research to analyze how DAY6 merchandise has become objects with high symbolic meaning that attached the fans.

In addition to hyperreality, this research also draws on the concept of fandom capitalism, a form of cultural capitalism in which the relationship between fans and idols is monetized through the merchandise sales. In this system, the industry not only provides music as a product but also creates demand through product exclusivity and narratives of personal closeness between fans and idols. Fandom capitalism operates by shaping desire through symbols and framing consumption as a form of support, closeness, or active participation in the community.

Official merchandise sold by the agency often released in limited edition, through pre-order system, bundling or special editions. This causes the products to have not only economic value, but also symbolic and collectible value. This shift reinforces the fact that in fandom culture, consumption is not solely rational or functional, but rather operates within the realm of symbols and the construction of meaning. Therefore, this study positions merchandise consumption as a meaningful social practice, not simply an economic transaction.

In term of communication science, the process of merchandise can be understood as symbolic communication. Symbolic communication is the process of exchanging meaning through the use of symbols agreed upon in society. This concept emphasizes that meaning is not intrinsic to symbols, but is formed through social interaction and individual interpretation (Valentiyo et al., n.d.). According to Deddy Mulyana, in his book entitled “Pengantar Ilmu Komunikasi,” he explains that ansymbol is something used to designate something else based on an agreement of a group of people. Symbols are one category of signs. The relationship between a sign and an object can be represented by icons and indices, but icons and indices do not require agreement. An icon is a physical object (two or three dimensions) that resembles what is represented. This representation is characterized by similarity (Mulyana, 2015). In DAY6 fandom, several types of merchandise serves as icons, for example dolls. They’re made to resemble each DAY6 member. This resemblance allows fans to instantly recognize and associate the merchandise with the idols.

Practically, DAY6 merchandise serves not only as an icon but also as a symbol because its meaning lies on how it constructed through collective agreements and interpretations among

fans. Merchandise functions as a symbol to express fan's closeness to their idols and affirm their identity as "My Day". Through ownership and interpretation of these symbols, fans not only interact with objects but also build meaningful relationships with idols and fellow fans within the fandom community.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the role of hyperreality and fandom capitalism in shaping the consumptive behaviour of DAY6 fans in Semarang. This research focuses in the activity of purchasing and collecting merchandise as part of the symbolic communication process in the formation of fans identity in the fandom community. Furthermore, this study also aims to uncover the emotional motivations and symbolic meanings that fans attach to merchandise, as well as how these meanings are communicated and shared in interactions between fans.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative phenomenological method. According to Sugiyono, qualitative research methods are used to understand the phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, actions, and so on (Hariri & Rohman, 2022). Meanwhile, phenomenology is individual research in which the individual has experienced a phenomenon not experienced by other individuals, or even the phenomenon is experienced by a group of people (Fiantika et al., 2022). This method was chosen to explore in-depth meaning related to the consumptive behavior of DAY6 fans in Semarang especially purchasing merchandise and how these consumption practices are shaped by the phenomena of hyperreality and fandom capitalism.

The subjects of this study were DAY6 fans in Semarang who are members of the "Enamharu" community. Enamharu is a K-Pop fanbase in Semarang that is active in various fandom activities, including those related to the group DAY6. Informants were selected using the purposive sampling, considering that the informants have relevant experience with the research focus. Data collection techniques were carried out in two ways. First, a short questionnaire was distributed to map the general description of fans, such as the length of time they have been fans, frequency of merchandise purchases, types of merchandise owned, and the purpose of using the merchandise, whether for collection, fandom identity, gifts, or simply as a form of support for the idol. This questionnaire was not the primary data, but rather

supplementary data to enrich the description. Second, this study relied on in-depth interviews as the primary source of data. Interviews were conducted semi-structured with five informants who are DAY6 fans and active in the fandom community. Through these interviews, Researchers seek to understand how fans interpret merchandise, how this consumption is related to personal identity and collective identity as members of a community, and how they negotiate closeness to idols through consumption practices.

The data obtained then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning that emerged from fan's purchasing of DAY6 merchandise. The analysis was carried out by grouping the data based on similar meanings, then grouping them into main themes relevant to the concepts of hyperreality, fandom capitalism, and identity construction.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The aims of this research to understand the role of hyperreality and fandom capitalism in shaping the consumptive behavior of DAY6 fans in Semarang, particularly in the consumption of merchandise as a identity construction and symbolism meaning within fandom community.

Through a qualitative approach with in-depth interviews applied toward five informants who active as a part of DAY6 fandom community in Semarang, this research focuses on the purchasing activity that spent more than one million rupiah over the past six months. This research finds that DAY6 merchandise purchasing encourages the consumptive behaviour along with symbolism meaning. For the fans, DAY6 merchandise is considered as a form of DAY6's presence. This research results in three key findings: (1) Merchandise as a simulation of the idol's presence, (2) Merchandise consumption as a construction of fandom identity, and (3) Merchandise is used as social recognition in the fandom. Thus, the results of this study indicate that purchasing DAY6 merchandise not only encourages consumptive behavior, but also contains symbolic meaning that forms the perception of closeness to the idol as well as the formation of identity and social recognition of fans in the fandom.

a. Merchandise reflected as the presence of idols

The finding suggests that DAY6 merchandise is interpreted as the form of idol's presence for the fans's life. Merchandise is not interpreted by the informants solely as collectible items,

but as representation of DAY6 than can be manifested personally. Merchandise ownership allows the fans to feel the presence of their idol although they are physically out of reach. This interpretation occurs because merchandise is considered has ability to replace the limitations of direct interaction between fans and idols. Through items such as photocards, albums, or other official merchandise, the fans can feel as if they bring DAY6 into their daily life. This presence is symbolic, nevertheless it is experienced emotionally, so the the physical distance between fans and idols is no longer a major obstacle to building a sense of closeness

“DAY6 merchandise also represents them in other ways, like objects. Although they’re far away, the merchandise makes it feel like they’re here.” (Interview Result, 2025)

Following the quotation above from the informant, indicate that fans interpret merchandise as simulation of their idol’s presence. This representation displaces the idol’s physical presence, which cannot be experienced directly. The idol’s presence is no longer perceived as something tangible, but presented through symbols with personal meaning. This phenomenon is related to the concept of hyperreality, where symbols not only represent reality but also create an experience of presence that feels emotionally real for the individual.

The interpretation of merchandise also demonstrates a symbolic communication process, where fans use physical objects to represent emotional closeness with their idols. Through these symbols, fans construct a sense of closeness without direct interaction, fostering a relationship between fans and idols through the exchange of symbolic meanings. Thus, merchandise not only conveys a sense of the idol’s presence but also serves as a communication medium that allows fans to feel an emotional connection in their daily lives.

b. Merchandise Consumption as a form of Fan Identity

DAY6 merchandise consumption also related to the fans’s identity construct within the fandom. Merchandise ownership is perceived as a sign of membership of “My Day” community. As reported by the informant, merchandise is not only demonstrates their interest to DAY6, but also becomes their self-affirmation that they are part of the fandom. Their identity as a fans is established through their ownership of symbols that are collectively recognized in their fandom. Merchandise has function as a sign that distinguish DAY6’s fans

with non fans, also to clarify the position of individu within community. Through the merchandise they have, fans feel that their identity as a "My Day" is stronger and clearer.

"It's more about the fandom status, because with the merchandise, it means I've become My Day" (Interview Result, 2025)

It shows that merchandise consumption not only related to purchasing activity, but also the process of identity construction among the fans. Merchandise is interpreted as a symbol that helps individuals understand and affirm their position as part of the DAY6 fandom. Identity as My Day is constructed through ownership as interpretation of merchandise, which is considered to represent attachment and loyalty to the idol.

Merchandise ownership within the DAY6 fandom plays the role as symbol of identity that fans use to communicate their membership status to themselves and the other fans. Through the use and ownership of these symbols, fans convey messages regarding their level of involvement, loyalty, and position as My Day within the community. Apriyanti stated that the formation of this identity is inseparable from the role of the community, because the community can shape the self-concept of its members in various aspects, including social and psychological aspects (Ardiansyah & Tiara, 2025).

This finding aligns with research conducted by, Tanliana & Utami (2022), who stated the fans's collecting activity will stimulate the consumptive behavior of the fans. In contrast, this research shows that DAY6 merchandise consumption also interpreted as the way to emphasize fans identity and involvement within fandom comunnity.

c. Merchandise and Social Recognition in Fandom

Based on the in-depth interview, DAY6 merchandise ownership is related to social recognition within the fandom community. Informants revealed that the quantity and completeness of merchandise owned can influence how other fans perceive them as part of My Day. The more extensive and complete the merchandise collection, the higher the level of recognition given by the other fans. Through merchandise ownership, fans not only demonstrate personal identity but also construct meaning in each other interactions.

Ownership merchandise becomes an benchmark for assessing the extent of one's involvement and loyalty within the fandom.

"The more merchandise we have, it's usually thought "wow, she is My Day". Every collection is existed." (*Interview Result, 2025*)

Regarding these findings, merchandise can influence how fans judge someone within the fandom. Merchandise ownership often seen as a sign of true involvement as My Day. This recognition isn't always expressed directly, but is reflected through the responses of fellow fans. Thus, consuming DAY6 merchandise is not only related to the relationship between fans and idols but also influences social relationships among fans within the fandom community .

The social recognition that arises from merchandise ownership is the result of a symbolic communication process between fans, where consumption symbols function as an unwritten language in assessing one's involvement and loyalty. Through these symbols, fans can assess the position and involvement of fellow fans within the fandom. Overall, this study shows that DAY6 merchandise consumption cannot be understood solely as a consumptive behavior, but also as a symbolic meaning-making process that shapes emotional closeness, fandom identity, and social relations between fans. Future research can expand the study to other fandoms or in different digital contexts to examine the dynamics of more diverse consumption meaning

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to examine the role of hyperreality and fandom capitalism in constructing the consumptive behavior of DAY6 fans in Semarang, especially through the activity or purchasing and collecting merchandise as part of identity formation within the fandom community. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that DAY6 fans's consumptive behavior considered to have relation with the meaning and emotional attachment of merchandise.

The results suggests that DAY6 merchandise is interpreted by the fans as a form of idol's presence in their life. Despite the fans can not directly interact with DAY6, merchandise serves as a symbol that giving personal emotional closeness for the fans. Through the symbols

of the merchandise, fans feel that the merchandise is able to bring DAY6 into their daily lives. This shows that the symbols and representations contained in the merchandise not only reflect reality but also shape the emotional experiences of fans.

Furthermore, this research demonstrates that fandom capitalism drives fans to continuously purchase and collect merchandise. It happens as a result of connection feeling of the fans to their idol. Merchandise ownership is interpreted as a symbol that indicates one's membership of My Day. As a result, it helps the fans to assert their identity within the community.

This research also shows that fan identity within the DAY6 fandom is continuous process of building and strengthening through symbolic communication between fans. Through the consumption and ownership of merchandise, fans not only build emotional connections with their idols but also socialize with other fans. Merchandise serves as a symbolic communication medium used to demonstrate fan involvement, loyalty, and position within the fandom community, both in direct interactions and through digital media.

To sum up, this study confirms that DAY6 merchandise consumption is part of a symbolic communication process that shapes meaning, fandom identity, and fan's social relations. This phenomenon indicates that consumer behavior within fandom cannot be separated from the dynamics of meaning and communication that develop between fans and the entertainment industry.

However, this study has limitations because it only involved informants from the DAY6 community in Semarang and used a qualitative approach. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine other fandoms, compare fan consumption behaviors across regions, or use mixed methods to examine the relationship between fanaticism, emotional motivation, and consumer behavior more broadly. Future research can also highlight the role of social media and digital platforms in shaping fan consumption patterns and fan identities.

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