

## Viral Advertising on Social Media Twitter through Hype and Fandom (Case: Mcnuggets X BTS Collaboration)

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### Abstract

*The McDonald's x BTS collaboration through BTS meal menu on June 9th 2021 has had a massive impact on conversations in cyberspace. #BTSM meal managed to occupy the first position in Indonesia's trending twitter topic on the day of its launch. The army's love for the K-pop group BTS brought #BTSM meal to successfully become a topic of conversation throughout the world through social media channels. This creates a moment of hype resulting in consequences. McDonald's got the opportunity to mass advertise for free through its virality that day. However, it is also interesting to see how viral advertising occurs through the BTS meal program. This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach. Data collection was carried out using digital ethnography using document studies and Twitter social media observations. Specifically, this study only observed the #BTSM meal search results on twitter within the period of June 9, 2021, using Indonesian-language tweets. Based on the results of the study, fandom towards BTS gives strength to the creation of a larger movement, which gives benefits to McDonald's in marketing its nugget menu, as well as McDonald's by brand. Thus, a viral advertising strategy that utilizes hype and fandom against a group has potential, but also consequences that can actually be detrimental.*

### Keywords

viral advertising; hype; fandom; social media; twitter



## I. Introduction

In today's 4.0 era, the dissemination of information can occur so easily from one individual to another, to a community scope. The development of digital communication technology helps us to recreate the world, not only by creating certain tools, but also by shaping an environment in which people transmit information and knowledge (Lacasa, Mendez & de la Fuente Prieto, 2016).

In this case, social media is one of the tools or means of accelerating information that not only provides information, but also allows the formation of relationships between users from different backgrounds to produce a strong social structure (Kapoor, et al, 2017). It is also inseparable from the ability to accelerate the dissemination of information in social media, which was conceptualized by González, Borge & Moreno (2013) as cascading, which is a process in which a particular message is passed to the first group of recipients who then forward it to the next recipient, and so on until a wide network is formed (Zhang & Vos, 2015).

The latest issue that is quite interesting for us to see using the concept is the collaboration of McDonald's (McD) with k-pop boyband Bangtan Boys (BTS) through a product called BTS meal. On the day of the launch of this program on June 9, 2021, social media was very quickly enlivened by talk about BTS meals that to get it, buyers had to wait up to hours, some even ended up unable to get this BTS meal. Not only that, from the monitoring of #BTSM meal on Twitter, many also found posts of some twitter users who perpetuated the BTS meal order they managed to get. BTS meal itself is a global McD collaboration menu that runs in more than 50 countries with Korean music group BTS. In Indonesia, this collaboration menu is packaged in purple paper containers (BTS's signature color) with the McD and BTS logos, containing 9 pieces of chicken McNuggets, medium-sized potatoes, medium-sized coca-cola soft soda drinks and two special sauces, namely cajun sauce and sweet chili which are declared as the favorite sauces of BTS members (Tiofani, 2021).

The interesting thing about this issue or collaboration is that in the end the discussion related to BTS meal spread quickly from one individual to another, it can even be said to have become something viral. From the monitoring of #BTSM meal on twitter on June 9, #BTSM meal ranked third trending topic worldwide with a total of 21,000 tweets (Nafasya, 2021). It can be said that the hashtag is not only used by bts fan communities known as army, but also enlivened by twitter users who are not included in the army. This can be seen from the contents of the tweets found through the #BTSM meal. This issue has become very widespread in scope, because by using #BTSM meal alone, we can see various texts using the hashtag.

Using #BTSM meal in the search column feature on twitter, we can find various posts such as the happiness of the para-army who finally managed to get the menu of his idol collaboration with McD, the role of online motorcycle taxis who waited and queued long at McD outlets on the day of bts's launch meal, to several tweets complaining about the closure of several McD outlets that day. There are even some twitter users who offer and sell menu packaging #BTSM meal at a fairly attractive price. This is quite interesting to research, considering that there are several concepts that can be studied from the perspective of communication technology science. According to Pramusinto (2020) the power of technology including digitalization and automation continues to grow and change the pattern of production, distribution, and consumption. As with other areas of life, technology is used to make changes, so also with the legal system as technology in making changes (Hartanto, 2020). Meanwhile, the use of information technology is the benefit expected by users of information systems in carrying out their duties where the measurement is based on the intensity of utilization, the frequency of use and the number of applications or software used (Marlizar, 2021).

Speaking of the army group and its love of BTS, there is a concept known as fandom. Fandom can be defined as an alternative social community whose member practices are associated with collective acceptance and construction of shared meaning; Members are active and create their own culture (Lacasa, Mendez & de la Fuente Prieto, 2016). The study of fandom defines a fan as a person with deep and positive feelings for someone or something famous, usually expressed through recognition of style or creativity, driven to explore and participate in activities related to his idol because through such practice fans find their identity through the pleasure gained from the connection to popular culture (Duffet, 2013 in Fuschillo, 2018). In the economic context, fandom can be seen as a social and cultural phenomenon that is increasingly widespread in filling and instilling many aspects of the current situation of society, as well as the culture of society as consumers (Fuschillo, 2018). Fans who actively consume and process text act as textual hunters, where they deliberately

manipulate content for their own creations, so that it often becomes a product of capitalist culture that benefits a brand or is commercialized by a company (Jenkins, 1992; Fuschillo, 2018).

Hype can be understood through several meanings. In the study of communication literature, Vasterman less advocated the definition of hype as "exaggeration" but rather as media-hype i.e. it can only be based on the specific dynamics of the news wave, without a priori to denounce the phenomenon; Hype occurs when the media "makes news" instead of reporting events," or "reporting comparable incidents and linking them" and "reporting thematically related news such as features, analysis, and opinions" (Vasterman, 2005 in Powers, 2012).

The emergence of social media platforms has markedly changed the general media landscape along with the advertising model, as audiences have shifted from their roles as content recipients to content creators, distributors, and commentators (Keller, 2009; Scott, 2015 in Himelboim & Golan, 2019). The Internet has become a facilitator of the impression management movement, as it provides an accessible pathway for an individual in creating and displaying self-representation in cyberspace (Boyd and Ellison, 2008 in Mudrick, Miller, Atkin, 2016). Recognizing the potential for increased distribution of free content through the internet, marketers believe that through highly attractive advertising content can expand the reach of potential, cheaper and more credible tactics compared to traditional paid advertising methods (Cho, Huh, & Faber, 2014; Golan & Zaidner, 2008 in Himelboim & Golan, 2019). Porter and Golan (2006) in Himelboim & Golan (2019) define viral advertising as unpaid provocative content communication carried out by peer-to-peer, who comes from a sponsor or company and is identified as using the Internet to persuade or influence an audience to convey the content of its message to others.

## II. Research Methods

The research method used in this research is a qualitative method, using a case study approach model which is the most widely used method in qualitative research (Baskarada, 2014). Neuman (2014) explains three qualitative research processing processes in terms of time, data and how to connect, namely:

- (1) time; qualitative research takes measurements during the data collection process,
- (2) data; qualitative research produces data that does not have a certain standard, can be speech, actions, sounds, symbols,
- (3) how to connect; Qualitative research connects or reflects data interactively during the data collection process. Qualitative case studies are research methodologies that assist in the exploration of phenomena in certain contexts through various data sources, and conduct exploration through various lenses to reveal some aspects of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008 in Rashid, et al., 2019).

The data collection technique used in this study is to use digital ethnography which specifically uses document studies and social media observations. Digital ethnography is also known as a method used to answer social questions in digital spaces or virtual spaces, new media ethnography, online ethnography, and new social media ethnography (Kaur Gill & Dutta, 2017). Digital ethnography itself can be defined as a research method that provides an overview or represents real-life culture, through the incorporation of the characteristics of digital media with elements of the story (Underberg & Zorn, 2013). Ethnographic research in the digital field is a method to improve understanding of meaning, and the utilization of technology and cultural experiences that enable and are enabled by digital media, utilizing digital medium sources such as certain chat rooms, discussion groups, virtual observing (virtual observing) as well as text and graphics that are within the scope of the internet (Hine,

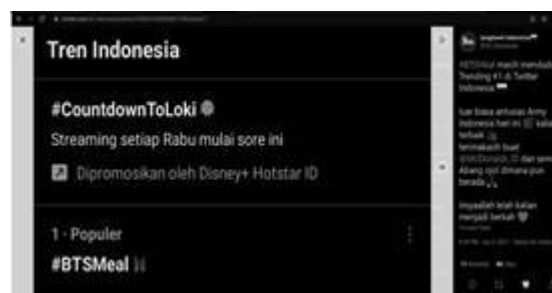
2000 in Kaur Gill & Dutta, 2017). Social media observations were made on twitter users who were caught in the hashtag #BTSM meal on June 9, 2021, and wrote tweets only in Indonesian, and included the official McDonald's (@McDonalds\_ID) twitter account.

The selection of observations on that date because on June 9, 2021 hastag #BTSM meal managed to become the number 1 trending topic in Indonesia's trending topics. While the study of documents is obtained through analysis in articles or research literature related to viral advertising, the concept of hype and fandom that has been done before, as well as several online news articles related to BTS meal. Document analysis itself can be understood as a systematic procedure by reviewing or evaluating documents, both printed and electronic material (computer-based and transmitted over the Internet), which are examined and interpreted to acquire meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Rapley, 2007 in Bowen, 2009). The sources of document study can include advertisements; agenda, attendance list, and meeting minutes; manual; background paper; books and brochures; diaries and journals; event program; letters and memos; maps and graphs; newspaper (clippings/articles); press release; program proposals, application forms, and summaries; scripts of radio and television programs; organizational or institutional reports; survey data; and various public records (Bowen, 2009).

### III. Discussion

From the observations through the hashtag #BTSM meal on June 9, 2020 on Twitter, it can be said that McDonald's through #BTSM meal has received viral advertising on social media twitter, which in this case cannot be separated from the role of fandom in the BTS fan group known as army. This can be seen from the massive impact in the form of #BTSM meal become a trending topic in Indonesia and global twitter. Reporting from the fanbase account of one of Jungkook's BTS members, @JK\_Indonesian (Jungkook Indonesia), on June 9, 2021 at 8:39 p.m., #BTSM meal occupied Indonesia's trending topic 1 position on Twitter.

Based on data sourced from detikNET monitoring on Wednesday, June 9, 2021 at noon, the hashtag #BTSM meal penetrated up to 94,300 tweets followed by #WePurpleYouMcd with a total of 79,400 tweets (Ramadhanny, 2021). The acceleration of the spread of information related to #BTSM meal in social media in this case has described the occurrence of viral advertising of McD and McDonads products themselves as a brand. Viral advertising itself is characteristically the most important tool or means in the viral marketing toolkit which is the key to successful marketing in the 21st century by offering the advantages of communication and interaction of individuals and brands on the network platform orally (Petruscu, 2014; Yilmaz, 2018). Tweets obtained on June 9 using the hashtag #BTSM meal also consist of various forms of messages.



**Figure 1.** #BTSM meal Trending Topic 1 in United Kingdom  
Source: @JK\_Indonesian Twitter account



From the observations made, most of the tweets can be said to be expressions of satisfaction and happiness of the Indonesian army who managed to get a menu of McD collaborations with k-pop idols. They tweeted text in the form of a photo of the #BTSM meal menu complete with purple packaging tailored to BTS's identity, and equipped with a positive narrative such as thanking McD Indonesia which led to a depiction of satisfaction and pleasure for successfully getting the menu. Some of these tweets are depicted by @greniekoo and @taesgkook accounts in figure 2.

It can be said that this is an interesting finding, that twitter users or soldiers who participated in enlivening the hashtag #BTSM meal on that day not only explained all the attributes obtained, but also included a thank you to the official McD Indonesia (McDonalds\_ID) twitter account. The result is that with the number 1 trending status on Twitter Indonesia, and through the hashtag #BTSM meal with all the tweets caught in it has made McD also a massive talking point on the day. This is in line with the definition of viral advertising as a tool of viral marketing, which is a word of mouth marketing technique used in relation to brands, products, or services similar to the spread of viruses in social networks on electronic media (Dahan, 2012 in Akyol, 2013).



**Figure 2. Positive Tweets #BTSM meal by the Army against McD**  
Source: Twitter accounts @greniekoo and @taesgkook

In other words, in this case the BTS meal-related talk that occurs on twitter, is basically a form of word-of-mouth marketing to the brand and products of McD itself. In this case, McD is well aware of the power that fandom has in BTS fans, and uses it for the benefit of the company.

A similar marketing strategy has also been carried out previously by McD in September 2020. The shape is almost the same is a quarter-pounder burger food package, a sprite soda drink with a fried bag of barbeque sauce in collaboration with American rapper Travis Scott (Fauzia, 2021). From the sale of the collaboration food menu with Travis Scott, McD was able to overcome the company's 24% decline in performance in the two quarters of 2021, despite the collaboration fee to be paid to Travis Scott of 20 million dollars (Fauzia, 2021).

Looking at the viral context and hype that occurred in Indonesia, Ranny Rastati, a researcher at the Communication Center for Community and Cultural Research at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI), expressed four reasons why BTS meals are so hunted by the Indonesian army. Ranny explained that basically the enthusiasm shown by the

Indonesian Army is caused by 1) limited bts meal supplies, where there is a sense of joy and pride when a fan manages to get limited edition goods (considering that the sale will only last for 1 month), 2) June is BTS month because this month BTS celebrates the anniversary of its formation or anniversary, so buying BTS meal is a way for the Indonesian army to celebrate, 3) bts meal packaging is considered as part of BTS merchandise collection, moreover there are several BTS trademarks in the packaging in the form of BTS logo, purple which is bts's official color and borohae writing is a greeting during BTS concerts to its fans which means I love you until the end of the day (I love you till the end of the day), 4) because BTS meal is considered one of the stories from the history of BTS's career journey (Putri, 2021).

The findings presented by Ranny Rastati are also confirmed in several studies, namely that fan relations and fandom are often found also through the phenomenon of greater consumer fanaticism, namely where there is a level of investment that a person has or gives in his preferences or interests, towards certain groups, trends, works of art, or ideas" (Thorne and Bruner, 2006 in Fuschillo, 2018). The love of fans in the form of fandom finally also has meaning as a large family that will support and be loyal when other family members go through difficulties; members of fandom cultivate a sense of "we-ness" (we-ness), which is a strong relationship between members with each other (Jenkins, 1995; Mun iz and O'Guinn, 2001: 418 in Fuschillo, 2018). So, the trending topic achieved by #BTSM meal can be said to be a form of investment expression of a family's love poured by the Indonesian army towards BTS. The expression expressed in the form of tweets has unconsciously entered into a dialogue related to services or products of the individual's own will, which is observed in viral marketing activities through social media (Akyol, 2013).

This is what is utilized by McD, where through BTS meal, the company creates interesting content for something that aims to get it discussed and shared with each other, so that in the end this content spreads like a virus (Dahan, 2012 in Akyol, 2013). This becomes easy to achieve because of the basic nature of viral advertising itself where individuals will naturally communicate and share information that they find interesting or useful to the surroundings (Akyol, 2013). There is also in this case, social media plays a role in accommodating the massive talk that goes viral. Social Media can be defined as a term used for online tools and websites that offer opportunities for mutual interaction through information, opinions, interests, or simply forms of sharing (Akyol, 2013). As also stated in its definition, social media also carries out a mediation function in creating communities and a social network by encouraging participation and interest (Sayimer, 2008 in Akyol, 2013). On the other hand, viral advertising that seems to provide benefits for McD through fandom networks also provides another perspective that is not only profitable. In some tweets caught using the hashtag #BTSM meal on June 9, 2021, there were also tweets that showed crowds #BTSM meal of ojol's queuing at McD outlets. As a result, we can guess that the closure of some McD outlets is also inseparable from the risk of viral advertising obtained through #BTSM meal.

#### IV. Conclusion

Viral advertising that occurs in the case of trending topics #BTSM meal is viral advertising driven by the power of fandom. Fandom with all the characteristics of love and family foundation can be one of the strong marketing strategies for a brand to market a product, or just increase the company's profits in a fast time. The ease of dissemination of information facilitated by the internet, specifically social media, also supports the occurrence of viral advertising en masse. However, it is the closeness felt by BTS fans in Indonesia with BTS itself that supports the high enthusiasm for this collaboration program.

The data processing in this study has some limitations. Observations were limited to using the filter menu found on twitter, without specifically knowing the number of tweets on the hashtag #BTSM meal on June 9, 2021. In addition, researchers could not find data on the age of twitter users caught in the #BTSM meal. In the next study, research can be developed with primary data supporters such as the benefits obtained by McD from this collaboration menu, to analyze more deeply the sentiment generated from the hashtag #BTSM meal on the McD x BTS collaboration program. In addition to sentiment, in the next study it will be better if it can be equipped with data processing in the form of interviews.

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