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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Technology acceptance and habitual social media use: A quantitative study of Malaysian Korean pop fans

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Abstract - Korean popular music (K-pop) is a kind of fandom that has gone global, with Malaysia being an active hub. This study investigates the concept of habit-as-repeated, automatic behavior across demographic factors such as age, gender, and years of experience among Malaysian K-pop fans. This quantitative survey inquired of 950 participants about their responses, and descriptive analyses were conducted using frequency distribution and cross-tabulation to discern patterns of engagement. The sample included mostly females, 84.84% (n = 806), compared to males, 15.16% (n = 144). By age, 47.16% (n = 448) were 18–24 years old, and 52.84% (n = 502) were 25–34 years old. Regarding fandom experience, the 6–10-year range was most common: 33.33% of females and 32.14% of males in the younger group, and 28.07% of females and 60.87% of males in the older group. Among older females, 42.11% reported 11–15 years of fandom experience, showing long-term and sustained engagement. This research represents one of the first exploratory studies attempting to understand Malaysian K-pop fandom and habit across a set of demographics, while also extending previous research applications of UTAUT theory towards a hedonic and a communal online environment.

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1. Introduction

Korean popular music, or K-pop, has gained immense popularity worldwide. It has transformed how fans interact with media and technology. This global growth is backed by social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, and Weverse. These platforms let fans communicate and stay connected. K-pop fandom has grown into an active and participatory culture through these platforms. Fans share content, set up streaming events, and join online communities. Fans are no longer just passive listeners; they are now active participants who help promote and support their favourite artists through the years [1]. K-pop fandom has grown quickly in Malaysia and is now known as one of the most active in Southeast Asia [2]. Malaysian fans rely heavily on social media not only to follow their idols but also to communicate, collaborate, and maintain strong connections with other fans [3].

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), introduced by Venkatesh et al. [4], is widely used to understand how people decide to adopt and continue using technology. This model concentrates on important elements that have been thoroughly studied in earlier studies, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions. However, habit, especially in fan-related contexts, has received less attention as a factor explaining constant and repeated technology use. Habits are behaviors that become automatic because of repeated actions and prior experiences [5], [6]. This concept is particularly important to K-pop fandom, where fans frequently engage in activities like streaming content, voting for idols, and posting updates. These repeated behaviors eventually become embedded in fans' daily routines and are performed naturally rather than because of intentional or thoughtful choices [7], [8].

Even though habit is important for fan engagement, little is known about how habitual behavior varies depending on demographic characteristics like age, gender, and years of fandom experience. A lot of research on K-pop fandom has mostly concentrated on motivations, cultural influence, or emotional attachment [9]-[14], with less focus on how habits develop and remain stable through frequent use of technology. This lack of focus is significant because demographic variables may play a role in how habits are formed and maintained within fan cultures. For instance, younger and older fans may be active at different levels on the internet, whereas male and female fans may participate at different levels. By gaining a deeper understanding of these demographic differences, researchers and practitioners might explain far better how habits can support long-term individual involvement in the sustenance of fan activities in the form of streaming campaigns and online mobilization.

This research is intended to examine the association between age, gender, and the length of involvement in K-pop fandom through the habituated behavior that Malaysian K-pop fans practice, as well as the relationship between these aspects and involvement in social media fandom activities. Instead of observational analysis regarding cause and effect, this research is conducted more through pattern observation to determine the relationship between certain variables and habituated levels of practice. Thus, through the chosen method, more information regarding how each group distinguishes and maintains involvement in social media is discerned. As such, this research is deemed relevant as it adds insights into how habit, as an aspect, could clarify information regarding long-term social media practices in terms of fandom communities such as K-pop fandom.

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The rest of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the related works, focusing on habit, social media engagement, and fandom research. Section 3 describes the methodology used to collect and classify demographic and usage data. Section 4 presents and analyses the results, pointing out patterns of daily social media hours across genders and ages. Lastly, Section 5 concludes the study by summarizing the key findings and suggesting directions for future research.

2. Related Work

2.1 Habit and Technology Use

Habit can also be perceived as a behaviour that has developed over time through practice, involving very minimal cognitive processing [5], [6], [15]. Therefore, in contrast to behaviours that require careful cognitive processing, habitual behaviours can be activated through the situation that is prevailing in that environment. This can also be well observed within technology environments, where platforms for social media have features that include algorithmic feeds, instant messages, or interactive features [16]-[24]. According to their frequent use, users find themselves engaging with these platforms through minimal cognitive processing, thereby qualifying habit as an element in technology use.

In technology adoption research, habit has been viewed as an influential factor in further explaining the long-term use of a technology. Rather than belief-based factors like performance expectancy or effort expectancy, habit emphasizes how repeated behaviour sustains use over time [5], [25]. Due to such repetitions, users may continue logging into their social media platform even when they no longer find it very useful [26]; the behaviour becomes routine. Such behaviour indicates that habit is not just a consequence of early use but also one of the leading causes for continuous interaction, and hence, an area of relevance within the context of studies on online communities and activities relating to fandom.

2.2 Behavioral Intention in UTAUT Studies

The UTAUT model considers behavioural intention as the key predictor of technology use [5]. Because of this, there have been many applications of the model to topics such as e-learning [27], [28], mobile banking [29], [30], and e-commerce [31], [32], since the use of technology has been influenced by factors such as enjoyment, social influence, and performance expectancy. Although these factors help explain the influence on behavioural intention, their focus is on motivation and decision-making. Because of this focus on motivation and decision-making, these factors may not emphasize the repeated behaviour responsible for sustained technology use through automation.

Habit satisfies this demand by providing reasons why people remain loyal to the adoption and usage of technology. Based on this concept, research has indicated that habit is able to directly affect intention and at times is more influential than personal motives as far as motivation is concerned [33]. As observed in fandom environments, carried-out acts include music streaming, posting, and voting in polls, which are always repeated and consequently have more intention along the lines of habit than personal choice. Therefore, habit becomes an important element to consider in technology adoption research.

2.3 Social Media Use in K-pop Fandom

K-pop fandom is a specific cultural and online space; social media, especially X, TikTok, and Weverse, can be considered the central hub for interaction, coordination, and content sharing. Through these platforms, fans update, promote hashtags, join group streaming projects, and connect with others worldwide [1], [34], [35]. These activities are not one-time events, but are usually repeated on a regular basis, even within their daily routines. When repeated over some period, this could help form habits which will influence how fans participate in or experience the activities of a fandom.

K-pop fandom, on the other hand, not only includes the act of using social media but also the community aspect. In this regard, it has been observed that fandom culture promotes teamwork and engagement with emotions, which can ultimately lead to the development of habitual behaviour [36], [37]. This can be observed from the daily tasks, such as the act of voting for the best idol or the act of publishing promotional content, which become habitual to support the sense of community among fans [38]. In this regard, the concept of habit not only describes the action of individuals but also aids in the sustenance of the relationship among the community, which can be observed when the concept of habit is applied to fandom [39].

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Research Design

The quantitative descriptive study was employed in this research as it enables the description of numerical data to be carried out in an ordered fashion that can establish clear demographic and behavioural patterns among the supporters of K-pop. The study specifically selected the descriptive research type as it did not require the description of cause-and-effect relationships to be established, since the general picture of support habits in Malaysia was required.

The research also adopted the UTAUT model as a conceptual framework, which centered on the habit construct, which is described in UTAUT as “the degree to which behaviours are performed automatically as a result of learning and repetition” [40]. The habit construct is very important when examining a setting where K-pop fans regularly repeat activities on social media, like streaming, posting, and participating in online events. By using this framework, this topic has been researched by scrutinizing how age, gender, and years of experience as a fan affect fan behaviour on social media platforms through habit.

3.2 Participants

Based on our previous study that identified the largest fan communities of the Korean wave in Malaysia [41], the target population of this research was Malaysian K-pop fans who use social media actively. Fans were considered eligible if they took part in any type of online fandom activity: following, creating, and sharing content; organizing online events; or participating in online campaigns promoting or streaming their favourite artists.

A total of 950 valid replies were gathered. Most of the respondents were female, followed by a significant but smaller number of males. Respondents were categorized into two broad age groups:

i) 18–24 years (younger fans, often university students or early professionals)
ii) 25–34 years (older fans, with more stable social or professional lives)

Furthermore, the years of fandom experience of the respondents were assessed by grouping the data into six categories: less than 1 year, between 2-5 years, between 6-10 years, between 11-15 years, between 16-20 years, and more than 21 years. These categories enabled a more refined level of fan engagement. The large sample size, spanning diverse age groups and experience levels, allowed for a reliable description of patterns in habitual social media usage among Malaysian K-pop fans.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

The data were gathered using an online survey, which is easily accessible and enables researchers to get in contact with a vast number of people in Malaysia. The online survey was designed using Google Forms and was distributed on various platforms where K-pop fans are most active, including Twitter/X, TikTok, Instagram, and Weverse. To ensure that a vast number of people are targeted, the link to the online survey was initially distributed to various fandoms, and people were requested to share the link with their friends, which was effective given that K-pop fans are well-linked and tend to share news very fast using online platforms.

Taking the survey was voluntary, and the respondents were made aware of the reason for conducting the study, that their information would remain confidential, and that they could withdraw at any point. No personally identifiable information was requested, and the study had already been approved by an ethics committee to make sure it adhered to the regulations when conducting research on human subjects.

3.4 Research Instrument

The survey instrument consisted of three main sections:

a) Demographic Information:
   i) Gender (male/female)
   ii) Age (categorised into 18–24 years and 25–34 years)
   iii) Years of fandom experience (less than 1 year, 2–5 years, 6–10 years, 11–15 years, 16–20 years, and more than 21 years)
b) Fandom Engagement Indicators: Habit has been considered from a different perspective through demographic and behavioural patterns. For instance, regular use of social media as a fan over a long period of time indicates habit.
c) Social Media Usage Patterns: Further questions were asked about the things the participant normally does, like streaming, posting, or taking part in events. Responses to these questions offered clarification on how the behaviours of the fans are exhibited in the daily activities of these individuals.

3.5 Data Analysis

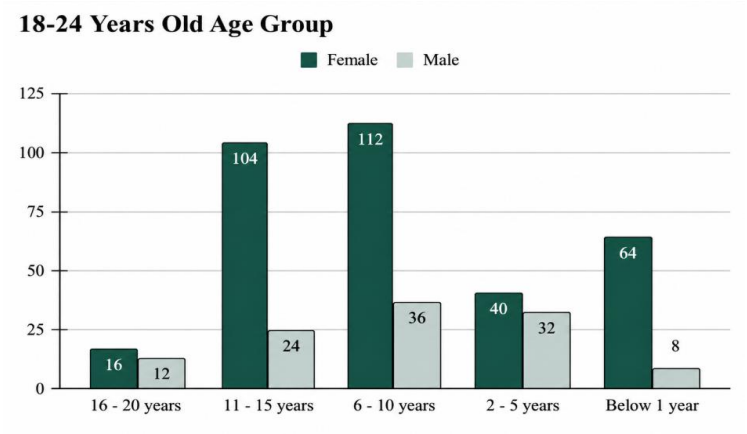
The data were analysed using descriptive statistical analysis to create a clear understanding of the target respondents. The frequencies and percentages of the data were estimated to present the distribution of the data with respect to the variables of gender, age, and the number of years of experience in fandom. Cross-tabulations were also applied to see the patterns, for example, the distribution of gender across age groups and the number of years of experience in fandom across several demographics.

The data were presented in a tabular and graphical form to make it easily comprehensible. However, this analysis did not aim to determine the significance of the data, which is different from hypothesis-testing studies. Thus, with the use of this method, the study provides a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the relationship between demographic and experience variables and habitual usage of social media among Malaysian K-pop fans.

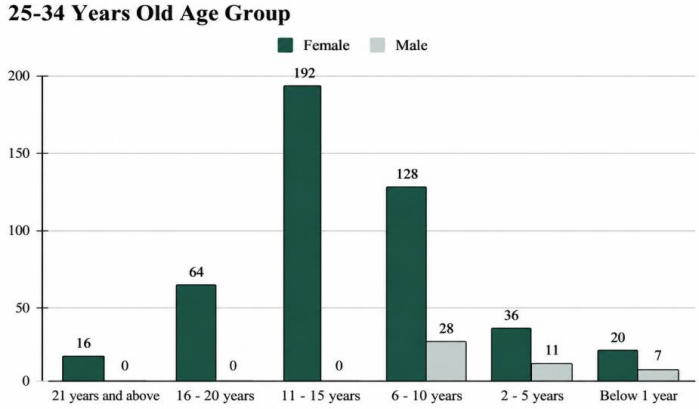
4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demography

Details regarding the demographic information of the sample population, such as gender, age, and years as K-pop fans, are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1. The two main age groups in this sample include those aged 18–24 years, which comprises 47.16% (n = 448) of the sample, and those aged 25–34 years, which makes up 52.84% (n = 502) of the sample population.



(a)



(b)

Figure 1. Total distribution based on years of experience involved in K-pop fandom, age, and gender group

4.1.1 18–24 Years Old Age Group (448 participants, 47.16% of total population)

Among those aged 18 to 24 years, most of the participants were females, with a total of 336 people (75.00%), accounting for 35.37%. Their time as K-pop fans varied: 33.33% (n = 112) had been fans for 6–10 years, 30.95% (n = 104) for 11–15 years, 19.05% (n = 64) for less than 1 year, 11.90% (n = 40) for 2–5 years, and 4.76% (n = 16) for 16–20 years. This shows that a large number of young female fans have been part of the fandom for a long time.

In the same age group, male respondents numbered 112 (25.00%), representing 11.79% of the total sample. Among them, 32.14% (n = 36) had 6–10 years of fandom experience, 28.57% (n = 32) had 2–5 years, 21.43% (n = 24) had 11–15 years, 7.14% (n = 8) had less than 1 year, and 10.71% (n = 12) had 16–20 years of experience. These results suggest that while many young male fans have a moderate level of involvement, a significant number have also been active in the K-pop fandom for many years.

4.1.2 25–34 Years Old Age Group (502 participants, 52.84% of total population)

Among participants aged 25–34, most were female, with 456 individuals (90.84%), making up 48.00% of the total sample. Their time as K-pop fans was varied: 42.11% (n = 192) had been fans for 11–15 years, 28.07% (n = 128) for 6–10 years, 14.04% (n = 64) for 16–20 years, 7.89% (n = 36) for 2–5 years, and 4.39% (n = 20) for less than 1 year. A small portion, 3.51% (n = 16), had been fans for more than 21 years. These figures indicate that this age group is generally quite long-time and experienced K-pop fans, particularly if narrowing down to the 11–15-year range.

However, compared to females, the number of male participants who belonged to the same age category was 46 (9.16%), which constituted 4.84% of the total participants. The majority of the group (60.87%, n=28) had experience ranging from 6-10 years, followed by 2-5 years (23.91%, n=11), and the last group had experience of less than 1 year (15.22%, n=7), indicating that they have a moderate involvement in K-pop fandom compared to females.

4.1.3 Overall Observations

i) The data reveals that there is a substantial majority of female representation in both age categories. In the 18-24 years category, females comprise 75.00%, and males merely 25.00%. The gender ratio is more skewed in the 25-34 years category, where 90.84% are female, and just 9.16% are male, thereby highlighting that a majority of individuals in this sample are female.

ii) Focusing on the Age category, people aged 25-34 represent a slightly larger proportion of the respondents at 52.84%, relative to 47.16% who are 18-24 years old. Though this margin is small, there is evidence that older respondents are slightly more represented in the research.

iii) Considering the length of time that participants have identified themselves as K-pop fans, the most prevalent range for the entire sample was 6–10 years. Within the age group of 18–24 years old, this was also the most typical for females at 33.33% and males at 32.14%. Likewise, within the 25–34 group, 28.07% of females and 60.87% of males had been fans for 6–10 years. This shows that being a K-pop fan for 6–10 years is normal among participants regardless of their age or gender.

Table 1. Summary of respondents

Group		Years of Experience (E)				Gender (G)			Age (A)		Total	
A (years)	G	E (years)	Freq. E (*f*)	% E (*f*/*f*n* 100)	%Pop. E (*f*/Σ*f*n* 100)	Freq. G (*f*n)	% G (*f*n/Σ*f*n* 100)	%Pop. G (fn/Σ*f* * 100)	Freq. A (Σ*f*n)	%Pop. A (Σ*f*n/Σ*f* * 100)	Total Pop. (Σ*f*)	%Pop.
18 - 24	Female	16 - 20	16	4.76	3.57							
		11 - 15	104	30.95	23.21							
		6 - 10	112	33.33	25.00							
		2 - 5	40	11.90	8.93							
		< 1	64	19.05	14.29							
		Female Total (*f*A)				336	75.00	35.37				
	Male	16 - 20	12	10.71	2.68							
		11 - 15	24	21.43	5.36							
		6 - 10	36	32.14	8.04							
		2 - 5	32	28.57	7.14							
		< 1	8	7.14	1.79							
		Male Total (*f*B)				112	25.00	11.79				
	Total Age Frequency (Σ*f*n=*f*A + *f*B)								448	47.16		
25 - 34	Female	> 21	16	3.51	3.19							
		16 - 20	64	14.04	12.75							
		11 - 15	192	42.11	38.25							
		6 - 10	128	28.07	25.50							
		2 - 5	36	7.89	7.17							
		< 1	20	4.39	3.98							
		Female Total (*f*A)				456	90.84	48.00				
	Male	6 - 10	28	60.87	5.58							
		2 - 5	11	23.91	2.19							
		< 1	7	15.22	1.39							
		Male Total (*f*B)				46	9.16	4.84				
	Total Age Frequency (Σ*f*n=*f*A + *f*B)								502	52.84		
Total Population (Σ*f*)											950	100.00

Note(s): Freq=Frequency; Pop=Population

4.2 Total Hours Spent Daily Based on Gender Distribution

Table 2 and Figure 2 present daily social media usage in hours, broken down by gender and shown both within each gender group and for the full sample of 950 participants. Among female respondents (n = 806), nearly half (49.26%, or 397 individuals) reported using social media for 0–4 hours per day, which represents 41.79% of the total sample. The next most common category for females was 5–9 hours, reported by 278 participants (34.49% of females, 29.26% of the total). Fewer females reported higher usage: 93 (11.54%, or 9.79% of the total) spent 10–14 hours, 32 (3.97%, or 3.37%) spent 15–19 hours, and only 6 females (0.74%, or 0.63%) used social media for 20–24 hours per day.

Among male respondents (n = 144), most—75 individuals (52.08%)—used social media for 0–4 hours per day, representing 7.89% of the total sample. Another 49 males (34.03%, or 5.16% of the total) reported using social media for 5–9 hours daily. The 10–14-hour category included 12 males (8.33%, or 1.26% of the total), while 8 males (5.56%, or 0.84%) used social media for 15–19 hours per day. No male respondents reported spending 20–24 hours on social media each day.

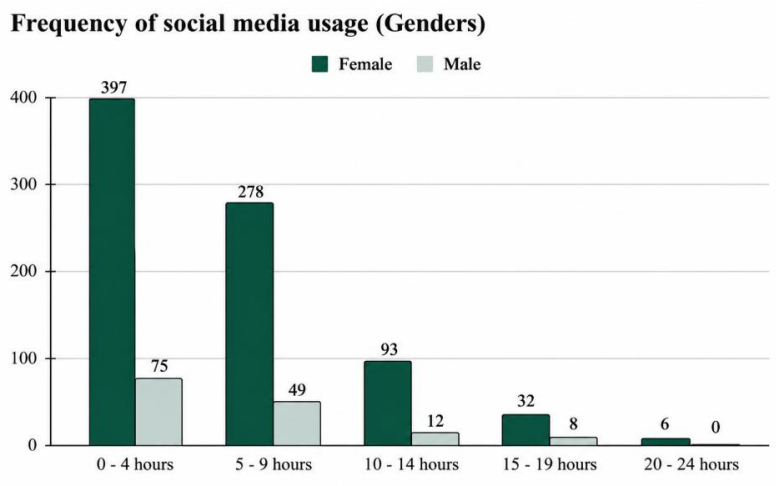


Figure 2. The frequency of social media usage by genders

Table 2. Total hours spent daily based on gender distribution

	Female (F)			Male (M)			Total	
Total Spent (Hours)	Freq. F (*f*F)	%F	%F Pop. (B)	Freq. M (*f*M)	%M	%M Pop. (B)	Total Pop. (*f*F + *f*M)	%Pop.
0 - 4	397	49.26	41.79	75	52.08	7.89	472	49.68
5 - 9	278	34.49	29.26	49	34.03	5.16	327	34.42
10 - 14	93	11.54	9.79	12	8.33	1.26	105	11.05
15 - 19	32	3.97	3.37	8	5.56	0.84	40	4.21
20 - 24	6	0.74	0.63	0	0.00	0.00	6	0.63
(A) Total Pop. (fF + fM)	806			144			950	
(B) % Gender Pop.		100.00			100.00			
(C) %Pop.			84.84			15.16		100.00

Note(s): Freq=Frequency; Pop=Population

Considering the distribution of both males and females, it can be observed that overall, the majority of the participants use social media for a maximum of 0 to 4 hours daily, consisting of a total of 472 participants, which constitutes roughly 49.68%. After this, the next category consists of participants who are social media users for a maximum of 5 to 9 hours, represented by 327 participants, or around 34.42%. Then, the third category consists of participants who are social media users for a maximum of 10 to 14 hours, represented by 105 participants, or around 11.05%. In conclusion, the number of females is greater than that of males in all categories of social media, since they comprise 84.84% of all the participants, with males making up just 15.16%. This is followed by a significantly smaller percentage of males in all time categories.

4.3 Total Hours Spent Daily Based on Age Distribution

Table 3 shows the daily time Malaysian K-pop fans spend on social media for K-pop content, divided into two age groups: 18–24 years and 25–34 years. The total sample includes 950 participants, with 494 in the 18–24 group (52%) and 456 in the 25–34 group (48%). The results indicate that the most common daily usage for both groups is 5–9 hours, with 228 younger participants (46.15%) and 177 older participants (38.82%) in this range. Overall, this category represents 42.63% of the total sample, making it the typical daily usage among Malaysian K-pop fans.

The second most common daily usage range is 0–4 hours, which is especially noticeable among the older age group (25–34 years), where 203 participants (44.52%) reported this level of use. In comparison, only 89 individuals (18.02%) in the 18–24 group reported spending this little time on social media. This indicates that older fans, who may have full-time jobs, families, or other responsibilities, generally spend less time on social media. Higher social media usage (10–14 hours per day) is more common among the younger group, with 127 participants (25.71%) compared to 63 participants (13.82%) in the older group. Very high usage, such as 15–19 hours or 20–24 hours per day, is almost entirely reported by the younger participants. Only 12 people in the sample use social media for 20–24 hours daily, and all of them are in the 18–24 age group.

Table 3. Total hours spent daily based on age distribution

	18 – 24 Years Old (X)			25 – 34 Years Old (Y)			Total	
Total Spent (Hours)	Freq. X (*f*X)	%X	%X Pop. (B)	Freq. Y (*f*Y)	%Y	%M Pop. (B)	Total Pop. (*f*X + *f*Y)	%Pop.
0 - 4	89	18.02	9.37	203	44.52	21.37	292	30.74
5 - 9	228	46.15	24.00	177	38.82	18.63	405	42.63
10 - 14	127	25.71	13.37	63	13.82	6.63	190	20.00
15 - 19	38	7.69	4.00	13	2.85	1.37	51	5.37
20 - 24	12	2.43	1.26	0	0.00	0.00	12	1.26
(A) Total Age (*f*X+*f*Y)	494			456			950	
(B) % Age Pop.		100.00			100.00			100.00
(C) %Pop.			52.00			48.00		100.00

Note(s): Freq=Frequency; Pop=Population.

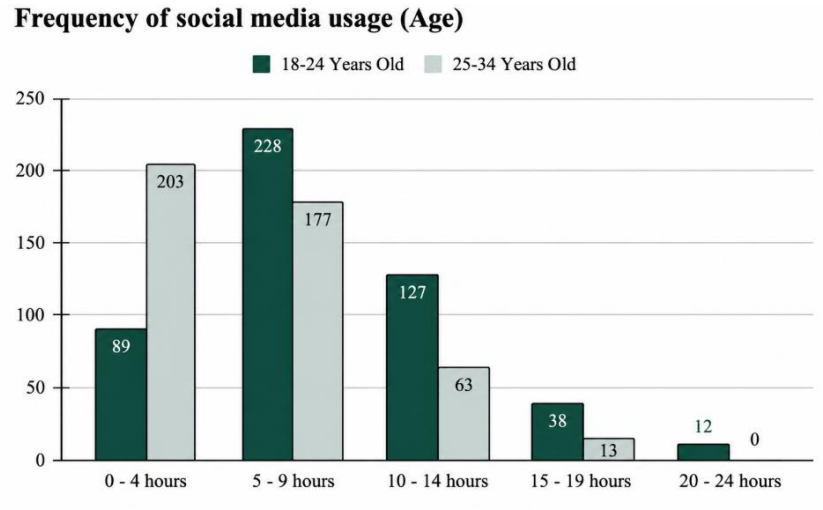


Figure 3. The frequency of social media usage divided by age

Table 3 and Figure 3 show a clear pattern: younger Malaysian K-pop fans are much more likely to spend long hours on social media engaging with K-pop content, while older fans tend to use social media more moderately. This difference likely reflects variations in lifestyle, responsibilities, and free time between the two age groups. The findings are consistent with what can be expected in Malaysia, where interest in K-pop spans generations, but the time spent online changes with age and life stage.

5. Conclusions

The study investigated habitual practices of K-pop fans in utilizing social media, specifically in terms of the number of hours they engage with these media every day. Findings of this study revealed that most fans, irrespective of their gender, fall within 0–9 hours of daily usage, with the largest percentage being females in all groups. Findings from this research revealed that K-pop fan media usage is neither occasional nor isolated but has become a habit for these users. The research, which provides descriptive statistics instead of inferential statistics, provides clarity on how fan behavior influences their habitual media usage.

This research contributes to existing research in multiple ways. Firstly, it broadens the application of the UTAUT model by concentrating on habit, which has a descriptive relationship with behavioral intention, yet has yet to be explored in fandom studies. Secondly, it refines understanding of K-pop fandom in terms of its role within popular culture, which has shifted from being conventional in physical realms, meaning activities in physical environments, to now embracing digital patterns, including fan participation in events, as revealed in streaming, posting, or arranging fan events. Finally, offering data on demographics and behavior, this research provides insight into fan practices differing according to gender and age groups.

Despite the usefulness of this study, there are limitations to it. Using the descriptive method, it is not possible to test hypotheses of cause-and-effect relationships and to see whether the data is statistically significant. Additionally, the sample mostly comprises female participants, and this makes it relatively difficult to generalize the study to fandoms, especially where there is an equal number of male and female fans. Moreover, this study uses self-reported data, and this data could be marred by bias because, in this study, participants could tend to underreport or overreport the number of hours they spend on social media.

For future research, this study can be extended by using inferential statistics to determine the strength of the effect that habit exerts on behavioral intention, as well as determining the significance of the effect. To get a more representative sample, future studies can be conducted using a more gender-balanced sample. To get a more comprehensive study, future research can include hours spent on social media, as well as qualitative information such as the meaning fans ascribe to their habitual behaviors, as well as the pleasure derived from these behaviors. Researchers could also apply this framework to other entertainment or cultural communities to understand how habit affects digital engagement in different contexts. Exploring these areas would help improve both theoretical and practical knowledge of habit in technology use.

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Authors Contribution
Roslan MAA: Conceptualisation; Methodology; Validation; Formal analysis; Data curation; Investigation; Writing - original draft; Writing - review & editing; Project administration.
Murad MAA: Validation; Writing - review & editing; Project administration; Supervision.
Nasharuddin NA: Validation; Writing - review & editing; Project administration; Supervision.

Conflict Of Interest
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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