

# The Influence of BT21 Character Illustrations on Products on Fans' Pragmatic Consumption Patterns

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze and test the relationship between the application of BT21 character illustrations in a product and its effect on the pragmatic consumption patterns of fans. This study uses a quantitative approach. The sample collection technique used was Purposive Sampling with 284 respondents. The respondents' criteria were K-pop fan groups and not having bought products with BT21 characters at least once a year, with an age range of 16-35 years. Primary data was obtained through an online questionnaire (Google Form) and secondary data through structured interviews. The data obtained was analyzed using SPSS 25, and the hypothesis was tested by bootstrapping regression. The results showed that the illustration of the BT21 character on the product significantly affected the pragmatic consumption pattern among K-pop fans, namely in the ARMY and K-poppers group ( $p < 0.05$ ). However, the illustration of the BT21 character did not significantly affect the pragmatic consumption pattern in the 'Non K-poppers' group ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## KEYWORDS

Character Illustration, BT21, Product Design, Consumption Patterns, Pragmatic

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## INTRODUCTION

Fans tend to buy everything related to their idols, buying items ranging from cheap to very expensive (Apriliani, 2021). Fans of the boy band BTS, commonly known as ARMY (Adorable Representative MC for Youth), are one of the world's largest fan groups, with one of which is in Indonesia. ARMY was officially formed on July 9, 2013, just a month after BTS debuted in June 2013. Fan groups like ARMY, a BTS fan group, reflect cultural identities bordering on dominant discourse and create economic value by consuming goods related to their favorite idols.

In 2017, BTS teamed up with LINE Friends to create fictional characters, representing each member's personality with different characteristics called BT21. BT21 consists of eight characters, namely Tata created by V, Mang created by JHope, Chimmy created by Jimin, RJ created by Jin, Koya created by RM, Cooky created by Jungkook, Shooky created by Suga, and Van created by LINE Friends. Until now, the characters from BT21 continue to develop into independent characters and have their fan base. BT21 Character has expanded its scope with various products, such as merchandise, games, and worldwide events.

A character must have a bio. The biodata will provide an overview of the character, how it looks, what it likes and hates, how it behaves, what the distinguishing features are, and how the character's emotions are (Tillman, 2019). Character design is a visual category that refers to the depiction of appearance, the personality of a character illustrated in the form of a character, and his ability to present in the form of an object. The following is a description of BT21's character bio.

**Table 1. BT21 Characters**

Character BT21	Description
	Koya, made by RM. Koya is a light blue koala with white inner ears, a purple nose, and white belly markings.
	RJ, made by Jin. RJ is a humanoid alpaca with long white fur and small limbs of a neutral gender.
	Chimmy, made by Jimin, is a white puppy with black ears. He usually poses with his tongue outstretched and wears a yellow hoodie with orange straps.
	Cooky is a pink rabbit with the right ear bent down. The left triangular eyebrows are thickly shaped, while the right eyebrows are normal-shaped thin.
	Tata, created by V. Tata, is the leader of BT21. Tata has a heart-shaped head with yellow lips and a blue body with yellow spots.
	Shooky, made by Suga. Shooky is shaped like a light chocolate cake with brown arms and legs.
	Mang, made by Jhope. Mang wears a light blue horse mask with a pink heart-shaped nose, purple hair, and a long string with a short tail attached to the underside of the hair.
	Van, made by LINE Friends. A van is a humanoid robot with a pointed cone-shaped head. The van has two different colors on both sides of its body, gray on the left and white on the right side, and the eyes show an "X" on the left side and an "O" on the right side.

A color can affect a person's emotions, but everyone can associate it with several emotions (Zahra & Mansoor, 2024). BT21's characters also use colors that have the potential to evoke various feelings among their fans. For example, the blue color in Koya and Mang can be soothing and provide a sense of security, while the yellow color in Chimmy and Tata can evoke a feeling of warmth, cheerfulness, and full of energy. Thus, BT21's character serves as an interesting visual element and a medium to evoke the diverse emotions connected to each character, in accordance with the understanding of the influence of color on human emotions. The colors, along with the character designs, not only provide visual depth but also reinforce the personality characteristics of each character, allowing fans to feel a stronger bond through an identity that they can understand and enjoy.

BT21's products and characters became popular and attracted public attention, due to the influence of BTS's popularity, which made fans interested in everything released by their idols. BTS acts as a brand ambassador and influencer because they are the ones who create the character, and BTS can influence public attention to BT21 products, and for this reason, BT21 products can be widely known among the public (Wijaya & Virginia, 2020). Buying products related to BT21 also reflects the growing trend where fans are not only buying an item, but also looking for a more personal and meaningful experience. Based on the results of observations made on September 23, 2024, which were carried out through internet media or digital platforms, in Indonesia, BT21 has collaborated with various local products, such as Sneakon (Shoes), Azarine (Skincare), Colorbox (Clothing), and Alfamart (Retail). Fans always enthusiastically welcome the collaboration of local products with BT21, as evidenced by the products that are always sold out. The growing popularity of BT21 Character Design in Indonesia has led to several Indonesian products that collaborate with these characters becoming more popular. The collaboration product with BT21 had many enthusiasts during

the collaboration period, from ARMY, K-popers (non-ARMY), to Non-fans. Also, the potential possessed by a character design is very limitless.

The high level of loyalty to purchase merchandise or products related to BT21 is an interesting aspect to be researched further. Purchasing products with BT21 illusions is not only seen as a consumptive act. However, it has also become an integral part of the consumption patterns of fans, making the character of BT21 more than just a commercial product, but an important element in the identity of its loyal fans. In addition, the high interest of fans in collaboration products with BT21 characters shows that there is a relationship between BT21 and pragmatic consumption patterns. This relationship influences purchasing decisions and strengthens fans' emotional attachment to the brand, making it a symbol of more than just an object of consumption. This study aims to analyze and empirically test the relationship between the application of BT21 character illustration in a product and its effect on pragmatic consumption patterns among fans. In particular, this study aims to understand the extent to which symbolic visual elements such as BT21's character illustrations representing the identity of BTS members can influence purchasing decisions based on rational and functional considerations. By focusing on consumer segmentation based on the level of attachment to K-pop culture, this study also seeks to uncover the dynamics of differences in consumption patterns between groups that have an emotional affinity for the character (ARMY and K-popers) and groups that do not (Non K-popers).

## METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach, with the main data collection using an online Google Form questionnaire. The sample obtained was using Purposive Sampling with a sample of 284 respondents. Meanwhile, secondary data was collected from structured interviews, taken from 20 respondents who had completed questionnaires. Respondents in the study were the ARMY fan group, the K-popers fan group (non-ARMY), and Non K-popers (non K-pop fans). The criteria are to have purchased products that work with BT21 Characters at least once a year.

Meanwhile, the objects in this study are products with BT21 character designs in Indonesia. The research was carried out in 4 (four) stages, namely: (1) Initial survey and preparation of research instruments, (2) Primary data collection, statistical tests, and data analysis, (3) Secondary data collection with interviews, and data analysis, (4) Interpretation of research results. The independent variable in the study illustrates BT21 character, and the bound variable (Dependent) is a pragmatic consumption pattern. The primary data obtained from the questionnaire is then processed using SPSS 25. The stages of data testing are the Spearman's Rho correlation test and the Bootstrapping regression test. The following are the stages of the research conducted:

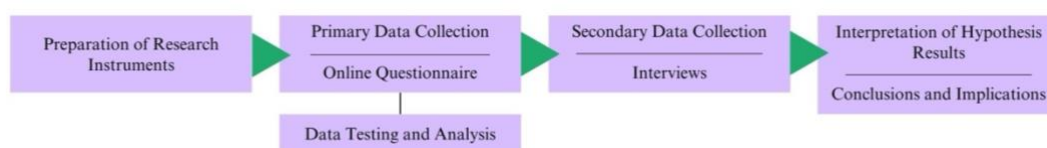


Figure 1. Research process

Hypotheses are accepted or rejected based on the following criteria:

- Accept  $H_0$  if  $p\text{-value} > 0,05$   
 $H_0$  : There was no significant effect of the application of BT21 character illustration on the product on pragmatic consumption patterns.
- Accept  $H_1$  if  $p\text{-value} < 0,05$   
 $H_1$  : The application of BT21 character illustration on products significantly affects pragmatic consumption patterns.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the effect of the application of BT21 illustrations on products with pragmatic consumption patterns of fans. The results obtained were the existence of three groups

of respondents who had bought a product with the illustration BT21, the type of product that was most preferred as a consideration for buying the product, the existence of certain factors selected before buying the product, the results of statistical tests (Spearman's Rho correlation test, bootscoping regression test). The following is a table of the distribution of the three groups of respondents in the study:

**Table 2.** Three groups of respondents in the study

Respondents	N	%
ARMY	151	53,2%
K-popers	83	29,2%
Non K-popers	50	17,6%

Based on data from 284 respondents, 53.2% of respondents claimed to be fans and had bought products with BT21 illustrations were ARMY (BTS fans), 29.2% as K-popers (non-ARMY), and 17.6% Non K-popers (not K-pop fans). This finding indicates that products with BT21 character illustrations are most in demand by the ARMY group, because BT21 character illustrations are characters created by BTS group members, and BT21 characters are a form of identity for the ARMY. The existence of various consumers who buy products with BT21 characters, not only from ARMY, shows that BT21's brand image is powerful. As stated by Keller (2013), brand image is built through several elements, namely: (1) Brand identity, (2) brand personality, (3) brand association, (4) brand attitudes and behaviors, and (5) brand benefits and advantages. The following is a table of the data results of the types of products that respondents bought the most in the study:

**Table 3.** Types of Products Ever Purchased

Respondents	Previously purchased (Product type)	Responses	
		N	%
ARMY	Clothes	83	17,3%
	Accessories	113	23,5%
	Stationery	61	12,7%
	Household	36	7,5%
	Electronics	23	4,8%
	Toy	65	13,5%
	Beauty	88	18,3%
	Food and Beverage	12	2,5%
	Total	481	100,0%
K-popers	Clothes	29	13,7%
	Accessories	50	23,7%
	Stationery	21	10,0%
	Household	15	7,1%
	Electronics	10	4,7%
	Toy	26	12,3%
	Beauty	51	24,2%
	Food and Beverage	9	4,3%
	Total	211	100,0%
Non K-popers	Clothes	10	8,2%
	Aksesoris	27	22,1%
	Stationery	23	18,9%
	Household	7	5,7%
	Electronics	2	1,6%
	Toy	22	18,0%
	Beauty	20	16,4%
	Food and Beverage	11	9,0%
	Total	122	100,0%

In the ARMY group, the most purchased products were accessories products (23.5%), followed by beauty products (18.3%), clothing products (17.3%), toy products (13.5%), and stationery products (12.7%). For the K-popers group, beauty products dominated the most purchased

products (24.2%), followed by accessory products (23.7%), clothing products (13.7%), and toy products (12.3%). The Non-K-popers group showed a similar pattern, with accessory products being the most purchased at 22.1%, followed by stationery products (18.9%), toy products (18.0%), and beauty products (16.4%). Overall, accessories, beauty products, and clothing were the most purchased categories by ARMY and K-pop respondents, and accessories, stationery, toys, and beauty products were the most purchased by the Non-K-pop group. In addition to the illustration of BT21's character that attracts attention, the function and usefulness of the product are considerations for buying the product. Therefore, the collaboration of brands such as Miniso and Senka with BT21 is considered to have succeeded in presenting a product that is balanced between utility and symbolic value, which ultimately encourages buying interest and consumer loyalty, especially among K-pop fans.



**Figure 2.** BT21 collaboration products with Miniso and Senka in Indonesia

Miniso and Senka are one of the major brands collaborating with BT21, where the products offered are widely purchased and in demand by respondents. Based on the results of interviews with respondents, some prefer items commonly used for daily needs, but also provide emotional satisfaction through the representation of favorite characters. The respondents showed a preference for products that can not only be collected, but also used regularly, so that the presence of BT21's character becomes more meaningful in daily life.

*"I bought a perfume with a picture of BTS characters because besides perfume as my needs, it is also a form of my support for BTS"* – Atis, K-popers (Bandung, May 26, 2025).

*"if there is a product like the BT21 charging cable in miniso, it will be preferred over a keychain"* – Eliz, ARMY (Bandung, May 26, 2025).

The findings of this study are consistent with the theory of the emotional design approach proposed by Jordan (2000). The theory states that user satisfaction can be optimized through three benefit dimensions, namely: (1) hedonistic benefits that are realized when respondents are interested in buying products because of the aesthetic appeal of BT21's character; (2) the practical benefits where the product is selected based on considerations of its functionality and usefulness in meeting daily needs; and (3) the emotional benefits that arise when consumers feel satisfaction due to the quality of products that meet expectations. The following is a table of data results of the factors influencing respondents to purchase products with BT21 characters in the study.

**Table 4.** Factors of buying products with BT21 characters

Respondents	Buying factors	Responses	
		N	%
ARMY	Quality	119	18,4%
	Price	69	10,7%
	Support for BTS	110	17,0%
	Limited edition	46	7,1%

Respondents	Buying factors	Responses	
		N	%
	BT21 character illustration	147	22,8%
	Product Function	87	13,5%
	Product type	67	10,4%
	Accidental buying	1	0,2%
	Total	646	100,0%
	Quality	67	20,3%
	Price	46	13,9%
	Support for BTS	27	8,2%
	Limited edition	17	5,8%
	BT21 character illustration	64	19,4%
K-popers	Product Function	59	17,9%
	Product type	48	14,5%
	Accidental buying	0	0,0%
	Total	330	100,0%
	Quality	36	17,0%
	Price	34	16,0%
	Support for BTS	10	4,7%
	Limited edition	17	8,0%
	BT21 character illustration	32	15,1%
	Product Function	40	18,9%
Non K-popers	Product type	39	18,4%
	Accidental buying	2	0,9%
	Child	2	0,9%
	Total	212	100,0%

In the ARMY group, the main factor they bought the product with the highest BT21 character was because of BT21 illustrations (22.8%), followed by quality (18.4%), support (17.0%), and function (13.5%). Meanwhile, for the K-popers group, the main factor for most respondents to buy the product was because of the quality (20.3%), followed by the illustration of BT21 (19.4%), function (17.9%), product type (14.5%), and price (13.9%). Then, in the Non K-popers group, the main factor they bought products with BT21 characters was because of function (18.9%), followed by product type (18.4%), quality (17.0%), and price (16.0%). Norman (2004) said that a product generally involves three hierarchical levels, namely the visceral level where the aesthetics of a product form the initial perception, the behavioral level which is related to the function, performance and usability of a product, and the reflective level where this level is motivated by cultural factors, life experiences, education level and personal taste. Based on the interviews, respondents said that their interest in BT21 products is not only based on the visual aspect, but also concerns the pleasant user experience and personal meaning inherent in the product.

*"I like products with BT21 characters because the products are good, funny, cute, and made by their members, have an interesting character, have a fun appearance, trends that are not outdated, collaborations with well-known and big brands to add value to the product"* – Wawan, K-popers (Bandung, June 4, 2025).

In general, respondents purchased BT21 products for four main reasons: (1) visually appealing (visceral/emotional) illustrations of BT21, (2) desire to support BTS members (reflective), (3) behavioral product quality considerations, (4) behavioral functions, and (5) product price considerations (reflective). The purchase of these products refers to pragmatic consumption patterns, emphasizing the functional aspects of the product, and rational. It is also, as mentioned by Keraf (1987), that a pragmatic pattern is an action. It refers to a person's tendency to decide to buy due to functional, rational, and utilitarian aspects, in contrast to hedonists who focus more on pleasure.

## 1. Normality Test

Because the sample consists of 284 respondents, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test is best used to test normality. The data can be declared normally distributed if the p-value is  $>0.05$ . Normality tests were performed to ensure that the data on each variable met the normal distribution assumptions before parametric statistical analysis was carried out.

**Table 5.** Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality Test

Respondents	Variabels	Statistics	Df	Sig.
ARMY	BT21 Illustration	0,221	151	$<0,001^{n-s}$
	Pragmatic	0,131	151	$<0,001^{n-s}$
K-popers	BT21 Illustration	0,191	83	$<0,001^{n-s}$
	Pragmatic	0,123	83	$0,003^{n-s}$
Non K-popers	BT21 Illustration	0,163	50	$0,002^{n-s}$
	Pragmatic	0,168	50	$0,001^{n-s}$

\* : Normal distributed data; n-s : Data not distributed normally

Table 5 shows the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test for the BT21 illustration variable and pragmatic consumption patterns in the three groups of respondents. The significance value (Sig.) for all variables was below the significance level of 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which indicates that the data is not normally distributed. Based on these findings, Spearman's Rho correlation analysis was chosen as a more appropriate method for analyzing data that did not meet the normality assumption. In addition, Spearman's Rho test does not require the assumption of variance homogeneity. It can be applied to data with ordinal or interval scales, providing flexibility in testing relationships between variables. In conclusion, using Spearman's Rho test allows for an analysis that is more in line with the characteristics of the existing data, thereby increasing the reliability of the research results.

## 2. Spearman's Rho Non-Parametric Correlation Test

The Spearman's Rho correlation test was performed to determine how much correlation there is between the variables of the BT21 illustration and the pragmatic consumption pattern. The following is a table of the results of the Spearman's Rho non-parametric correlation test showing the correlation between independent and dependent variables in each group of respondents:

**Table 6.** Spearman's Rho Correlation Test

Respondents	Variabel	Spearman's rho	Pragmatic Consumption Patterns
ARMY	BT21 Illustration	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	0,301
		<i>Sig.</i>	$<0,001^*$
K-popers	BT21 Illustration	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	0,577
		<i>Sig.</i>	$<0,001^*$
Non K-popers	BT21 Illustration	<i>Correlation Coefficient</i>	0,581
		<i>Sig.</i>	$<0,001^*$

\* : Sig  $<0,001$

The table of results of the Spearman's Rho correlation test shows a positive relationship between the illustrations BT21 character with pragmatic consumption patterns in all three groups of respondents. In the ARMY group, a positive correlation was found with moderate strength ( $r = 0.301$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Meanwhile, the K-popers ( $r = 0.577$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and Non K-popers ( $r = 0.581$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) showed a positive correlation with stronger strength, but were still in the moderate category. These findings indicate that the higher the level of interest in BT21 character illustrations on products, the higher the tendency for pragmatic consumption patterns in all respondent groups. The results of this data align with Sanders' theory (1992), which states that consumers buy products based on

functionality, ease of use, and need for the product. These consistent results reinforce the hypothesis that a relationship between visual preference for popular characters and pragmatic consumption behaviors exists. In addition, the visual identity of the BT21 character is powerful, not only as an aesthetic element but also as an effective brand differentiation tool. Visual identity is an identifier that distinguishes one brand from another (Cuaca et al., 2023), in the context of BT21, the combination of colors, shapes, and unique attributes such as facial expressions and costumes succeeded in creating iconography that is easy to remember and associated with specific values. Overall, these results suggest that engaging visual elements, such as BT21's character, can influence consumption patterns and be an important factor in purchasing decisions, especially among K-pop fans and individuals who have an emotional attachment to the character.

### 3. Bootstrapping Regression Test: Non-Parametric

The results of the bootstrapping regression test were carried out to provide a deeper understanding of the significance of the relationship between the BT21 illustration and pragmatic consumption patterns in the respondent group, with a significance value of  $p < 0.05$ . The following is a table of the results of the bootstrapping regression test, which shows the significant influence of independent and dependent variables on each group of respondents:

**Table 7.** Bootstrapping Regression Test

Respondents	B	Bias	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
ARMY	0,344	0,005	0,119	0,002*	0,106	0,578
K-popers	0,272	0,017	0,117	0,016*	0,064	0,523
Non K-popers	0,163	0,003	0,105	0,106 <sup>n-s</sup>	-0,023	0,387

\* : Significant  $<0,05$

n-s : Insignificant

Based on bootstrapping regression analysis in three groups of respondents (ARMY, K-popers, and Non K-popers), the findings showed that the influence of BT21 illustrations on pragmatic consumption patterns varied according to the level of attachment of respondents to K-pop fandom. The ARMY group showed that the illustration of BT21 significantly affected pragmatic consumption patterns ( $p < 0.05$ ), as well as the K-popers group, the illustration significantly affected pragmatic consumption patterns ( $p < 0.05$ ). In contrast, in the Non K-popers group, the illustration of BT21 did not significantly affect pragmatic consumption patterns ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings are consistent with the results of the purchasing factor analysis in Table 5, where K-pop fan groups (ARMY and K-popers) prioritize BT21 illustrations as the primary consideration in purchases, followed by product functional factors. Meanwhile, the Non K-popers group considers functional aspects such as the type and usefulness of the product as the main factor in decision-making. This result is also in line with what Sheth et al. (1991) stated, that five consumption values affect consumer behavior in using or not using products. These values are functional, social values, emotional values, epistemic values, and conditional values. As Keraf (1987) mentioned, a pragmatic pattern is an action. It refers to a person's tendency to decide to buy due to functional, rational, and utilitarian aspects, in contrast to hedonists who focus more on pleasure. In the context of this study, functional values and emotional values are the main factors influencing pragmatic consumption patterns in the ARMY and K-popers groups. These two groups, the most strongly have a strong emotional attachment to BT21's characters, tend to prefer products that not only meet practical needs, but also that can represent the identity of K-pop fans. Therefore, the illustration of the BT21 is an important element that influences the purchase decision. In contrast, the Non K-popers group, who had no emotional attachment to BT21, based their decisions more on the functional value of the product, such as quality and usability, which reflected more rational and practical consumption behaviors, and tended to be more pragmatic, with primary consideration on the utility and quality of the product.

As a means of communication, the art merchandise approach aims to bring artworks from

exclusive gallery spaces into everyday life through wearable forms, expanding the reach of artworks, creating creative economic opportunities, and allowing audiences to own some of the artist's work in a more affordable and functional form (Silmi Zakiyah, 2025). In this context, the success of a product does not depend solely on its functional value, but also on its ability to build an emotional bond with consumers. This phenomenon is increasingly relevant in a fan group dynamics and loyalty-driven market.

## CONCLUSION

The types of products that the ARMY and K-popers respondent groups purchased were clothing, accessories, and beauty products. Meanwhile, the Non K-popers group purchases products, such as accessories, stationery, toys, and beauty. The decision to purchase products with BT21 characters is due to the BT21 character, considering product functions, product quality, support for BTS members, product types, and product prices. The high interest in these products indicates that respondents prioritize products that can be used daily, support appearance, and express self-identity. Respondents' purchasing preferences tend to focus on products with functional and expressive value. The ARMY group showed that the illustration of BT21 significantly affected pragmatic consumption patterns ( $p < 0.05$ ), as well as the K-popers group, the illustration significantly affected pragmatic consumption patterns ( $p < 0.05$ ). In contrast, in the Non K-popers group, the illustration of BT21 did not significantly affect pragmatic consumption patterns ( $p > 0.05$ ). These findings underscore that visual elements influence pragmatic consumption patterns, particularly in K-pop groups.

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