

Perilaku Konsumtif Penggemar AKB48: Studi Kasus Mahasiswa Bahasa dan Sastra Jepang Universitas Airlangga

Consumptive Behavior of AKB48's Fans: Case Study of Japanese Language and Literature Students at Airlangga University

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Abstrak

Penggemar idol Jepang di Indonesia dapat dikatakan cukup banyak terutama untuk kalangan remaja dewasa dengan rentang usia 18-29 tahun. Penelitian ini menganalisis bagaimana perilaku konsumtif penggemar grup idola AKB48 dengan studi kasus mahasiswa Bahasa dan Sastra Jepang Universitas Airlangga. Mahasiswa Bahasa dan Sastra Jepang relevan untuk diteliti karena usia mereka rata-rata antara 18-29 tahun. Peneliti mengasumsikan bahwa mahasiswa Bahasa dan Sastra Jepang dapat mewakili sekelompok remaja dewasa awal yang memiliki ketertarikan atas budaya populer Jepang. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Penentuan informan sendiri menggunakan teknik snowball sampling dan didapatkan empat informan. Teknik Pengumpulan data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan teknik wawancara mendalam. Data yang ditemukan, dianalisis melalui teori konsumerisme Jean Baudrillard. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada perilaku konsumtif yang dilakukan oleh keempat mahasiswa Bahasa dan Sastra Jepang penggemar AKB48. Perilaku konsumtif yang tampak meliputi membeli produk-produk yang dipromosikan oleh anggota AKB48, mengoleksi barang-barang dan pernak-pernik dari AKB48, mengoleksi



DVD/CD, menonton konser yang diadakan baik secara online maupun offline, mengikuti acara temu penggemar, mengadakan perayaan ulang tahun untuk member AKB48 dan lain-lain.

Keywords: AKB48, Budaya Penggemar, Jean Baudrillard, Konsumtif, Konsumerisme

Abstract

It can be said that there are quite a lot of Japanese idol fans in Indonesia, especially among young adults aged 18-29 years. This research analyzes the consumer behavior of fans of the idol group AKB48 using a case study of Japanese Language and Literature students at Airlangga University. Japanese Language and Literature students are relevant to research because their average age is 18-29 years. The researcher assumes that Japanese Language and Literature students can represent a group of young adults who have an interest in Japanese popular culture. This research is qualitative research with a case study approach. Determining the informants themselves used snowball sampling and four informants were obtained. Data collection techniques in this research used in-depth interviews. The data found was analyzed through Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism. The results of the research show that there is consumptive behavior carried out by the four Japanese Language and Literature students who are fans of AKB48. Visible consumer behavior includes buying products promoted by AKB48 members, collecting goods and knick-knacks from AKB48, collecting DVDs/CDs, watching online and offline concerts, attending fan meetings, and holding birthday celebrations for AKB48 members and others.

Keywords: AKB48, Consumptive, Consumerism, Fan Culture, Jean Baudrillard

INTRODUCTION

In Japan, "Popular Culture" refers to all culture enjoyed by the general public, but the term is also used for "something that is particularly attractive and shows a truly modern Japan". The term specifically refers to *manga*, *anime*, movies, *games*, novels, popular music, television shows, and not only the wide variety of works introduced to the world, but also events held in various countries to convey Japan's appeal (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2016). One of the Japanese popular cultures that attracts many people is idols or in Japanese "アイドル/*aidoru*". This term is generally used to refer to an adored singer or actor. Usually, a young person who is physically beautiful or good-looking, good at singing and dancing (has a cute and innocent impression). Sapphira & Rosa (2012) state that idols have many fans of the opposite sex who enthusiastically support them with feelings comparable to love. Meanwhile, there is a perception that an idol in Japan is required to master talents such as singing, dancing, acting, and so on (Rachmasari, 2020).

AKB48, as one of the famous idol groups in Japan, has a fan base spread across various countries, including Indonesia. The popularity of this group cannot be separated from the marketing strategy that uses the concept of "idols that can be met", interacting directly with fans, as well as various exclusive *merchandise* offered (Shimazaki & Chikada, 2019). Some types of AKB48 collectibles produced and sold to fans are CDs and DVDs, official *merchandise* such as *t-shirts*, posters, calendars, towels, pins,

photobooks and photos of members, and *official trading cards* featuring images and information of group members (Galbraith & Karlin, 2019). The mindset instilled in fans by the management of these idol groups is that by purchasing *merchandise* officially released or advertised by the idol group, fans have given support to their idols (Ogasawara & Fukai, 2015). The mindset instilled by AKB48 management has successfully influenced the subconscious of fans to buy AKB48's collection of goods and they are willing to spend a considerable amount of money (Galbraith & Karlin, 2019). On the one hand, the purchase of *merchandise* by fans fulfills their desire to own items related to their idols. However, there is another aspect that needs to be considered. If this purchasing behavior continues, it may indicate consumptive behavior (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989). Sumartono (2002) states that consumptive behavior refers to a person's tendency to spend money on the continuous purchase of goods and services that are not actually needed. This behavior is often impulsive because it is dominated by emotional feelings to support the idol.

Some previous studies that discuss the consumptive behavior of idol fans (Stevens, 2005, 2010; Permana, 2014; Yamato, 2016; Rachmasari et al., 2024) show that fans not only pursue pleasure, but also build identity and social networks. Through their research, Rachmasari et al. (2024) revealed that Arashi fans in Indonesia not only consume idol-related products, but also create a unique fan culture through *fanworks* and communities. Overall, these studies highlight that consumptive behavior in idol fans is not just about satisfying one's impulsive side, but also reflects complex social, economic, and psychological dynamics.

This study aims to analyze the consumptive behavior of AKB48 fans, especially among university students. Students as part of the younger generation are a significant segment in the phenomenon of consumptive culture. In particular, students who have a high involvement in Japanese popular culture, including AKB48. Their involvement as fans is not only limited to entertainment consumption, but also includes the purchase of *merchandise*, event tickets, and exclusive digital content.

Specifically, this research will analyze the consumptive behavior of AKB48 fans among students of Japanese Language and Literature Study Program of Universitas Airlangga. The results of this research are expected to contribute to understanding the phenomenon of Japanese popular culture in Indonesia.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied, with attention to the underlying context (Creswell, 2007). The research was conducted at Universitas Airlangga, especially the Japanese Language and Literature study program.

The research subjects were students who are AKB48 fans. The technique of determining informants in this study used *snowball sampling* technique. This technique allows existing subjects to provide referrals to recruit the necessary samples for a study (Podesva & Sharma, 2014). In the initial stage of determining informants, researchers made observations and found Japanese Language and Literature students who were AKB48 fans. The results of these observations led researchers to find other students who were also AKB48 fans. Based on the results of informant participation at the beginning, researchers found 4 students. This is interesting to study because based on the

researcher's initial conversation with these students, it seems that they tend to be consumptive. These four students also have similarities, including: (1) idolizing AKB48 for more than 3 years, and (2) often doing consumption activities of goods related to AKB48.

Informant Name	Age	Longtime idolizer of AKB48	Additional Information
Eki*	20	Since 2012	First informant
Weli*	20	Since 2010	Referral from Eki*
Hadi*	20	Since 2015	Referral from Weli*
Heru*	23	Since 2010	Reference from Hadi*

Table 1. Informant Details

*Informant names listed are not real names

The data collection technique in this research was *in-depth* interviews with four informants (see Table 1). In addition, data collection was also supported by secondary data in the form of literature studies. The interview technique used is semi-structured interview, where the researcher only records the questions that are really needed, and is more free to improvise. This technique requires a degree of flexibility and careful listening skills to ask further questions about specific responses of interest (Podesva & Sharma, 2014).

There are three stages in data analysis in this study. The data analysis technique used by researchers is the first data reduction. First, researchers categorize data and select relevant data and simplify data derived from interview notes. The goal is to facilitate the researcher's understanding of the data that has been collected. Second, data presentation, researchers compiled the collected information and then analyzed it with Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism (Baudrillard, 1983; 1998; 2004). In addition, to support primary data, researchers used literature studies to obtain references related to the research being conducted. Data is presented through a general description of the results of direct observation and a description of the consumptive behavior of 4 Japanese Language and Literature students who are AKB48 fans. Third, drawing conclusions, researchers look for the meaning behind the phenomena that occur and make conclusions based on the data found.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Consumption Activity of Informant "Eki"

The first informant is Eki who has been a fan of AKB48 since 2012. Eki admitted that she has spent millions to buy AKB48's collection of goods and that she spends around 800,000 per month. However, in reality, the specific budget allocated can increase significantly when there are additional activities, such as concerts, buying *merchandise* or participating in other events. Eki's consumption activities include collecting official AKB48 *merchandise* such as CDs, DVDs, photos of members, posters, t-shirts, trinkets, buying products recommended by AKB48 members. In addition, Eki is also willing to spend money to meet AKB48 members through *fanmeeting* events, support AKB48's latest *single* by *voting*, active in *online* communities, such as forums, Facebook groups or other social media platforms.

“For overall merchandise in physical form, there are all CDs and photo packs, then t-shirts, hats, pins bought on the original AKB48 website, usually using amazon or rakuten for shipping. I bought it originally from Japan. I’ve also bought pocari sweat and glico, at that time I saw the AKB48 ad. So I wanted to be the same as them so I tried them. It’s cheap and delicious.” (Eki, 2023)

In addition, in May 2012 informant Eki said that he had come to an AKB48 concert in Senayan, Jakarta. At that time Eki was invited by her brother to watch the AKB48 concert. The concert became a historic moment for Eki as an AKB48 fan in Indonesia, because Eki could witness the live performance of AKB48 members and feel the energy of the concert presented by the group. According to Fiske (1992), a fan not only encourages the idol in his activities, but also participates in these activities, one of which is by watching a concert.

“I once watched an AKB48 concert with my brother in Senayan, Jakarta, we used to take the bus to get there. At that time I was 12 years old, while my brother was in his 20s. When I first got to know AKB48, it was because my brother invited me to watch it, and now I’m still a fan of AKB48. It feels really good to be able to watch it live.” (Eki, 2023)

Based on Eki’s informant statements above, the consumption activities carried out are in line with the theory of consumerism initiated by Jean Baudrillard. First, Eki uses AKB48 *merchandise* as a sign of her value and identity. She collects CDs, DVDs, photos of members, posters, t-shirts, hats, pins and other trinkets as a way to show her support and affiliation with the group. The collection of these items became a representation of the values associated with her identity as an AKB48 fan. This is in line with what Baudrillard (1998: p. 76-77) said that consumption is determined by the desire for respect, dignity, status and identity construction.

Secondly, Eki also felt excitement and satisfaction through the consumption of AKB48 goods and also felt the sensation and energy of the concert presented by the group when she attended the concert in Senayan. Baudrillard (1983) assumes that the need for consumption from society will continue and will not stop until the so-called “needs” can be fulfilled and satisfied. This is also the case with informant Eki who continues to consume AKB48 goods because by consuming them he feels satisfied. For Eki, AKB48 consumption activities are not only limited to buying goods, but also involve participation in various events such as *fan-meeting*, *voting*, and being active in the *online* community. It has become an important part of her lifestyle that involves sacrificing time, money and energy.

Third, Eki is influenced by AKB48 advertisements and promotions, such as advertisements for Pocari Sweat drinks and Glico food recommended by AKB48 members. These advertisements create a desire to own the product which then influences Eki’s purchasing decision. *Idols* and celebrities are very effective in mobilizing fans to consume a product (Karlin, 2012). Therefore, it is not surprising that more than 70% of advertisements in Japan use celebrities as their stars (Reijman, 2011). This phenomenon also shows that the logic of public consumption that was previously based on “*use value*” or “*exchange value*” has shifted to a new value called “*symbolic value*”. This means that people who initially consume something based on use value or exchange value have

shifted to consuming something based on the value of signs or symbols whose value is abstract and constructed (Baudrillard, 1998).

Consumption Activity of Informant “Weli”

The second informant, Weli, also engages in similar consumption as Eki. Weli admitted to using money for consumption activities from her work. During the month Weli has a budget to buy a collection of AKB48 goods amounting to Rp 500,000. Weli’s consumption activities are not much different from Eko, but Weli has never watched a concert *offline*, but Weli often watches it through *online streaming* on YouTube.

“I liked AKB48 from the 2010s, actually because Jurina appeared in the Ōgoe Diamond album, and since then I also started to like Jurina Matsui. I like to collect albums and photopacks too, there are t-shirts, fans, a lot of things at home. I’ve never been to a concert offline, but I stream a lot.” (Weli, 2023)

In addition, Weli also has a TikTok account which usually contains AKB48 *dance* content. Weli does *dance covers* because she wants to express her love for the idol group. Through the dances she learns, she tries to imitate the movements and performance styles of her idols as a form of appreciation. Weli said that AKB48 motivated her to learn to *dance* and sing.

“I used to be unable to dance and sing, but since I became an AKB48 fan, I joined the community, where we sometimes do dance covers. I often cover dances from several AKB48 songs. AKB48 dances that I have covered are Heavy rotation (2018), River (2020), Koisuru Fortune Cookies (2021) Aitakatta (2022), Gomen neSummer (2022), Manatsu no Sounds Good (2022), Shonichi (2023), it’s really fun together and this also adds to my skills.” (Weli, 2023)

Based on informant Weli’s statements above, her consumption activities can be analyzed using Jean Baudrillard’s theory of consumerism. First, Weli uses AKB48 *merchandise* as a sign of value and identity. Weli collects albums, *photopacks*, t-shirts, fans and other items related to AKB48. These items symbolize the values associated with her identity as an AKB48 fan. This is in line with what Baudrillard (1998: 76-77) revealed that consumption is determined by the desire to gain respect, dignity, status and identity construction.

Second, Weli’s *online streaming* of AKB48 concerts on YouTube can be considered a form of simulation. Baudrillard (1983) reveals that at this time reality and simulation are mixed which then creates a hyperreality in social life. Hyperreality in society will make the existing reality blurred and pseudo, so that people will find it difficult to distinguish what is real and what is not real. This phenomenon was experienced by Windy. Although she has never attended a live concert, she still feels the experience like watching a live concert. She gets the energy and fun presented by AKB48 through an *online* platform, which means that this eliminates the barriers between real and unreal.

Third, Weli is involved in an AKB48 fan community where they share common interests. Through her TikTok account, she shares AKB48 *cover dance* content and engages in *cover dance* activities with her community. These interactions allow her to

connect with people who share similar interests and strengthen social bonds within the community. Weli enjoys *cover dancing* as a form of entertainment and self-expression. Through *cover* dance, she can express her love and appreciation for AKB48, as well as develop her dance and singing skills. It also gives her the opportunity to actively participate in the community and feel motivated to learn and hone her skills. AKB48 influenced Weli to learn to dance and sing. AKB48 encouraged her to learn the movements and performance style of her idols. In this case, AKB48 content consumption activities play an important role in shaping Weli's behavior as a fan, such as motivating and directing her to follow in the footsteps and imitate her idols through *cover dance* activities. This is in line with Jonsdottir's (2013) statement which reveals that an *idol* can have a big influence on the lives of their fans, such as motivating them to achieve their dreams and helping them through very difficult times.

Consumption Activity of Informant "Hadi"

The third informant, Hadi, claimed to spend around Rp 500,000 per month to buy a collection of AKB48 goods. Hadi's consumption activities include buying official *merchandise* such as CDs, DVDs, photos of members, posters, t-shirts related to AKB48. In addition, he also buys and consumes products advertised by AKB48 members.

"I like AKB48 since 2015, I have collected several AKB48 albums including Koko ga Rhodes da, Koko de Tobe, Thumbnail, Bokutachi wa, Ano Hi no Yoake o Shitteiru, No Way Man, Teacher Teacher and the last one in 2021 is Sustainable. Then, I've bought Japanese food online such as Maruchan instant noodles that were endorsed by AKB48, and ghana chocolate from lotte. I kept the packaging, bought the food because I just wanted to try the taste." (Hadi, 2023)

Outside of consumption activities, Hadi joins the AKB48 fan community and usually celebrates AKB48 members' birthdays together by renting a venue and buying trinkets to *give away for free* to other fans. According to Hadi, celebrating AKB48 members' birthdays is a way for him and the community to express their gratitude and appreciation towards AKB48 members who have provided entertainment and inspiration in their lives. It can also be a moment to remember and celebrate the *idol's* achievements and career journey. This birthday celebration can also strengthen the sense of solidarity and friendship among fans.

"My community friends and I like to celebrate the birthdays of AKB48 members, sometimes we have to contribute to rent a place and then make cash per week to buy birthday essentials such as cakes, souvenirs containing photocards, snacks, and others. Besides that, we also hold games for fun. For me, they are like a second home. I feel really happy and a little touched." (Hadi, 2023)

When looking at Hadi's informant statements in the context of Jean Baudrillard's consumerism theory, it can be observed that Hadi's consumption activities related to AKB48 reflect several aspects. First, Hadi's consumption activities, such as buying official AKB48 *merchandise* in the form of CDs, DVDs and photos of members, reflect an effort to own symbols that represent and represent his love and identity as an AKB48 fan. These items have symbolic value that goes beyond practical functions and they play

a role in creating an emotional bond between fans and idols. Baudrillard (1998: 76-77) reveals that consumption is determined by the desire for respect, dignity, status and identity construction.

Secondly, Hadi mentioned that he had bought Japanese food such as *Maruchan* instant noodles that had been advertised by AKB48, as well as *Ghana* chocolate from *Lotte* which had also involved AKB48 in promotions. This behavior illustrates the influence of *endorsement* on consumer purchasing decisions, where the presence of AKB48 as a brand ambassador can influence fan preferences and purchasing decisions. Karlin (2012) revealed that *Idols* and celebrities are very effective in mobilizing fans to consume a product. This fosters a sense of closeness between fans and their idols by consuming the same goods. Therefore, it is not surprising that more than 70% of advertisements in Japan use celebrities as their stars (Reijman, 2011). In addition, this phenomenon shows that the logic of consumption that was previously based on “*use value*” or “*exchange value*” has shifted to a new value called “*symbolic value*”. This means that people who initially consume something based on use value or exchange value have shifted to consuming something based on the value of signs or symbols whose value is abstract and constructed (Baudrillard, 1998).

Third, Hadi and her community celebrate AKB48 members’ birthdays as a way to strengthen social bonds and celebrate their collective identity as fans. Through this celebration, they fulfill their need for togetherness, friendship and recognition among fellow fans. This reflects the urge to engage in consumption activities as a means of building and maintaining social relationships. According to Baudrillard (2004), consumption is a view, a moral, a communication system, or even an ideology that can carry signs and can even unite groups. From the theory put forward by Baudrillard, people are indirectly consuming the same sign and people are also unconsciously competing to consume similar signs. Furthermore, Baudrillard (1983) also assumes that consumption is a system where the system regulates a sign, and consumption can also combine groups.

Consumption Activity of Informant “Heru”

The fourth informant, Heru, admitted to spending approximately Rp 600,000 in a month to buy items related to AKB48. Heru’s consumption activities are buying original *merchandise* such as posters or photos of members, DVDs, hats, key chains, clothes and others.

“I liked AKB48 for a very long time in 2010, at that time I accidentally listened to a song from AKB48 called Aitakatta which made me immediately like AKB48. In addition, I also collect a lot of official AKB48 items such as photos or posters, hats, DVDs, key chains and also clothes.” (Heru, 2023)

Not only buying AKB48 *merchandise*, Heru also attended AKB48 concerts in 2012 and 2015. At the first concert in 2012 Heru watched the concert with only two of his friends. At the second concert in 2015 Heru returned to watch the AKB48 concert in collaboration with JKT48. This concert is a concert that cannot be forgotten because for Heru himself this is the first time he can feel the atmosphere of a very extraordinary concert.

“I have experienced watching AKB48 live concerts twice in 2012 and 2015. In 2012, I first watched an AKB48 concert with 2 of my friends from Surabaya. At the concert, to be honest, I felt very happy because I could see more closely and also get to know some of the AKB48 community. Then in 2015, I was really enthusiastic and looking forward to this concert, because in this concert AKB48 collaborated with JKT48. When this concert started, I was very happy because the euphoria of the event this year was very extraordinary and many fans from AKB48 and JKT48 could coexist with each other.” (Heru, 2023)

Outside of consumption activities, Heru is active in the AKB48 fan community both *online* and *offline*. He always takes the time to gather with friends of the AKB48 fan community. This gathering event with the AKB48 fan community is to establish closeness and also develop the AKB48 fan community itself. Heru and his friends have also attended *fanmeetings* with AKB48 members to strengthen the relationship between fans and AKB48 members. Not only that, these activities also aim to support *singles* or albums from AKB48 that will be released at that time.

“In the past, I also joined the AKB48 community and often participated in several series of events held by the AKB48 community. The community that I joined often held events such as gathering with other communities, providing support to AKB48 and also conducting fanmeets with AKB48 members. Joining this community is a memorable thing for me especially when doing fanmeet with AKB48 members.” (Heru, 2023)

When looking at Heru's informants' statements in the context of Jean Baudrillard's consumerism theory, it can be observed that Heru's consumption activities related to AKB48 reflect several aspects. First, Heru buys or uses *merchandise* from AKB48 as a sign of his value and identity as an AKB48 fan. He buys items such as photos, posters, DVDs, key chains, hats and clothing related to AKB48 to show his support for AKB48 members. These items also represent the values of her identity as a fan of AKB48. This kind of consumption behavior is determined by the desire for respect, dignity, status and identity construction (Baudrillard, 1998).

Second, Heru felt satisfaction and excitement when watching AKB48 concerts live. According to Fiske (1992), a fan not only encourages the idol in his activities, but also participates in these activities, one of which is by attending concerts. Even according to Maho (2010) coming to concerts is a form of fan roles and responsibilities towards their idols.

Third, Heru gathered with the AKB48 fan community to run a series of events to strengthen the relationship between AKB48 fans and also celebrate their identity as AKB48 fans. With this gathering of the AKB48 fan community, he can make many friends and can exchange ideas about AKB48. Heru and his community friends also attended *fan-meeting* with AKB48 members to strengthen the relationship between fans and idols. The activity also aims to support the *single* or album from AKB48 that will be released. This reflects the urge to engage in consumption activities as a means of building and maintaining social relationships. According to Baudrillard (2004), consumption is a view, a moral, a communication system, or even an ideology that can carry out signs and can even unite groups.

Interpretation of Research Results

Based on the interviews with the four informants, in the world of AKB48 fans, reality often appears blurred, oscillating between real and simulated experiences. Baudrillard describes this phenomenon as hyperreality, where the boundary between reality and representation becomes increasingly blurred. In this context, fans not only engage with AKB48 through physical or in-person interactions, but also through the symbolism they consume—merchandise, digital experiences, and fan communities formed around representations of idols. In the context of Baudrillard's hyperreality, people will consume something no longer because of economic needs but because of the influence of simulation models that make people's lifestyle change (Baudrillard, 1983: 2). This is in accordance with the four informants who reflect several aspects.

First, the use of AKB48 *merchandise* as a sign of personal values and identity. In this case, AKB48 *merchandise* goes beyond its practical function and becomes a symbol of values associated with identity as a fan. Fans not only buy the *merchandise* for practical needs, but also as a way to express their affiliation with the idol group and to gain an identity as a fan. Hyperreality emerges when the symbols and images associated with AKB48 become more important than the practical function of the *merchandise*. AKB48 merchandise, for example, is not just an economic product purchased for its practical use, but also a symbol of identity. Fans buy these items because of their symbolic value that shows their affiliation as part of the fan community. A blurred reality emerges here as the symbolic value of merchandise blurs the line between economic and symbolic value. The items become an extension of their identity as fans, creating an experience that feels real even though it is not based on direct interaction.

Second, the consumption experience involves simulating the concert experience through a *digital* platform. In this context, fans can experience watching an AKB48 concert *online* that may not fully reflect the reality of the actual concert experience. Through technology, the concert experience can be replicated and presented virtually, thus allowing the public to "consume" the concert experience without the need to be physically present at the concert venue. This reflects hyperreality as the reality of the original concert and the simulated concert experience become blurred and people consume the experience in simulated form. This is proof that digital technology also plays a big role in creating hyperreality. AKB48 concerts attended virtually through streaming, for example, replace the live concert experience with a digital simulation that feels quite adequate as a substitute. Fans felt a deep sense of engagement despite only interacting with visual and sound representations through the screen. In this case, the virtual experience becomes a new reality that is accepted as real, despite not involving physical presence.

Third, involvement in fan communities as a way to build social bonds, friendships and strengthen collective identity. In this context, students who are AKB48 fans engage in fan communities where they can interact with fellow fans, share common interests and build social bonds. This fan community can be a place to strengthen collective identity as AKB48 fans. This reflects hyperreality as the identity and social bonds formed within the fan community are linked to representations and symbolism related to AKB48 which is a construction of hyperreality. Overall, in the context of Baudrillard's hyperreality, people's consumption is no longer based solely on economic needs, but is also influenced by the simulation of images, signs, and models that create a world consisting of representations that refer to each other. This concept implies that the original reality and

the representation of that reality begin to blur and society lives in a world of hyperreality dominated by images, symbolism and simulation. The fan community is also a space where this symbolism is reinforced. Through social media, songs, videos and merchandise, fans build bonds that go far beyond physical interaction. The collective identity they create is more symbolic, not entirely based on a direct relationship with the idol. Instead, the representations and images they consume become the foundation for their social reality.

The implications of this blurred reality create an experience that feels real despite its simulated origins. In a world of hyperreality, symbols, images and representations take over, making fans feel a strong sense of closeness to their idols through the signs and simulations they consume. As a result, AKB48 fans' reality is constructed through these signs, creating an experience that feels authentic despite not being fully sourced from physical reality.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of interviews conducted with the four informants, it appears that the informants are active in consumption activities related to AKB48. Consumption activities carried out by informants include purchasing official *merchandise*, such as CDs, DVDs, member photos, posters and so on. They are also involved in various community activities, such as *fan-meeting*, *voting* and celebrating AKB48 members' birthdays. Their consumption activities are in accordance with Jean Baudrillard's theory of consumerism. The goods they buy not only have practical value, but also symbolize their values and identity as AKB48 fans. Their joy and satisfaction are obtained through participation in concerts live or *online*. Through these activities they can feel the energy and sensation presented by their idol, AKB48.

In addition, the influence of *endorsements* also plays an important role in their purchasing decisions. Advertisements involving AKB48, such as beverage and food advertisements, create a desire to own these products and influence their preferences. These consumption activities also help strengthen social bonds and friendships between AKB48 fans. Through *online* and *offline* communities, they can connect with people who share similar interests and celebrate their collective identity as AKB48 fans. In addition, their consumption activities also play a role in self-development and creative expression. For example, performing AKB48 *dance covers* through platforms such as TikTok allows them to express their love for their idols and hone their dance and singing skills. Overall, the consumption activities undertaken by the informants reflect how AKB48 influences their lifestyles, directs their preferences and purchasing decisions, and strengthens their social ties and identities as fans.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

This study was approved by the institution.

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