

Discussing the Fashion Style of K-Pop Artist in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT: This research stems from the author's concerns about seeing the phenomenon of local fashion styles in photos uploaded to Taeyong NCT's Instagram when he was in Indonesia. The aim of this research is to reveal Taeyong NCT's local fashion style which represents Indonesian culture. This research uses qualitative research methods with Peirce's semiotic approach. The findings from this research are that the fashion worn by Taeyong represents culture, while the style displayed is the style of a photo model. So, his fashion style interprets that Taeyong is "playing a role" as someone with Indonesian culture. The image of being a lover of Indonesian culture could be attached to Taeyong after uploading the photo on his Instagram which could have positive impacts on him.

KEYWORDS: K-Pop Artist; Fashion; Style; Representation

I. INTRODUCTION

The high enthusiasm of the Indonesian people for K-Pop encourages K-Pop artists to come to Indonesia. Apart from that, the presence of K-Pop artists is predicted to contribute to marketing and building the company's image, as has been done by Mc Donalds fast food restaurants in Indonesia. By collaborating with K-Pop artist BTS to collaborate on "BTS Meal", Mc Donalds succeeded in increasing the number of consumers, increasing sales, and succeeded in changing customers to be dominated by teenagers (Gede et al., 2023). K-Pop artist Stray Kids as the brand ambassador of a marketplace in Indonesia (Shopee) apparently also has a significant impact on consumer loyalty, namely Shopee application users. K-Pop artist Stray Kids, in this case, has an influence on consumer loyalty, especially Stray Kids fans. The implication is that there is a response in the form of enthusiasm from Stray Kids fans to use or shop at Shopee (Maulida & Kamila, 2021).

Recently, what made the Korean Wave exciting was the arrival of NCT's Taeyong in July 2023 to Indonesia. Taeyong (leader of boyband NCT- Neo Culture Technology). One of the interesting things about Taeyong NCT's arrival to Indonesia is the photo he uploaded on his personal Instagram, namely @taeoxo_nct. Instagram is a social media that can be connected to a smartphone, so someone can easily upload every moment they want to Instagram social media. Photos uploaded by someone on Instagram cannot be separated from someone's political interests regarding how they represent themselves through Instagram. So, it can be said that there is a certain "political" character in self-representation on Instagram (Caldeira et al., 2018). On the other hand, indirect self-representation can also be seen from someone's uploads about what they like, such as family photos, pet photos, food photos, and vacation photos (Enli & Thumim, 2012).

In the photo uploaded by NCT's Taeyong, he is wearing a batik top with a sarong on his bottom, and a *peci* (the head covering is made of cloth and so on, tapered at both ends) on his head, styled like a photo model. This is interesting to study since Taeyong NCT is considered "local" in Indonesia. The same thing was also conveyed by online news portals Wolipop (2023) that Taeyong NCT's style is local when in Jakarta because he wears a *peci* and sarong. It is a matter of pride for K-Pop fans that famous K-Pop artists wear clothes that are usually worn by Indonesian Muslims and document it on their Instagram accounts which can be accessed by fans all over the world. In Indonesia, batik, sarong and *peci* are outfits that are often worn by Muslim men in Indonesia when attending celebrations or worship. Therefore, the concept of "Indonesia" emerged as Taeyong NCT's fashion style. Fashion is one of the media for someone to build an identity (Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013). In the modern era, fashion cannot be separated from a person's identity (Cheng et al., 2021). Fashion is said to help determine how a person can be understood and accepted in society because it offers choices of style, image and clothing that produce individual identity (Ibrahim, 2011). Besides, clothing as part of fashion can also communicate with the wearer and with the environment outside (Cochrane et al., 2011) or it could be said that clothing functions as a means of communication (Ibrahim, 2011).

This research is interesting since Taeyong NCT here as a Korean citizen is seen trying to convey Indonesian culture (which tends more towards Javanese culture) in his clothes. Not only from the dominant clothing, but Javanese is also classified as the dominant

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language in Indonesia because it has the largest number of speakers in Indonesia (Mineri Nathania Chelsea & Dwi, 2013). Hence, this Indonesian culture has been quite successful in making foreign citizens, even K-Pop artists, interested in introducing Indonesian culture through their personal Instagram. This research will analyze local fashion styles in photos displayed by Taeyong NCT, about how local fashion styles represent Indonesian culture. So, the aim to be achieved in this research is to reveal Taeyong NCT's local fashion style which represents Indonesian culture. It is hoped that by revealing the representation of Indonesian culture from this photo, we can find out the meaning of NCT's Taeyong in taking selfies through his fashion style. This is important to study because K-Pop artists have a big influence on their fans' behaviour because of their fans' fanaticism.

Representation is closely related to the production of meaning through language. Representation connects concepts and Language to refer to real and fictional objects, people, or events (Hall, 1997b). According to Hall (1997), concepts and ideas can be correlated with written text, spoken sounds, or visual images. Written texts, spoken sounds, and visual images that contain meaning are called signs. These signs represent concepts and conceptual relationships that form a system of cultural meaning. The sign in this case is set to Language. Language then translates concepts into words, sounds, and images, and uses them to express meaning and communicate thoughts to others.

Meaning and representation shape the social practices that can be represented. In this context, ideology is always related to social practice or it could be said that there is no social practice outside ideology (Hall, 1985). This ideology also runs through plural (not singular) ideas and in a discursive chain. Photos represent meaning that is clearly visible in the image (Pilcher et al., 2016). However, the meaning contained in a photo depends on who sees it and in what context. Hence, Pilcher et al., (2016) stated that the interpretation of a photo will vary depending on the individual interpreting it. There is an element of intention behind an image in how someone constructs meaning through what they want to depict. So, it can be said that the context of image production forms an understanding (Pilcher et al., 2016).

There have been many studies highlighting themes related to K-Pop artists. These various studies discuss matters related to K-Pop artists in the media, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods (Kim et al., 2021; Lainsyampatty, 2021; Yusanta et al., 2019). From these studies, there are still research gaps that can be carried out. This gap is that previous research only focused on the concept and identity of K-Pop artists when appearing in the media as artists. Thus, research that examines the fashion styles of K-Pop artists which represent Indonesian cultural concepts still needs to be carried out. To the best of the author's knowledge, there has been no research that examines the local fashion styles of K-Pop artists who represent Indonesian culture. Thus, this research provides a new nuance to socio-cultural phenomena in our society.

II. METHOD

This type of research is qualitative research with Peirce's Semiotics approach. Peirce's semiotic approach is considered appropriate because it can reveal the signs behind the fashion styles of K-Pop artists which show representations of Indonesian culture. Peirce's semiotics is able to identify the signs behind the fashion styles of K-Pop artists. The data sources used in this research are data sources obtained from pictures/photos of Taeyong NCT on his Instagram account @taeoxo_nct and also obtained from journals, online media, and the results of related previous research. Data collection techniques were chosen purposively. The data used for analysis is a photo uploaded by Taeyong NCT on July 10 2023 on his personal Instagram account @taeoxo_nct which indicates that there is a representation of Indonesian culture in the photo. So, there is one photo that will be analyzed. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique uses Peirce's Semiotics. The following is Peirce's semiotic analysis technique model:

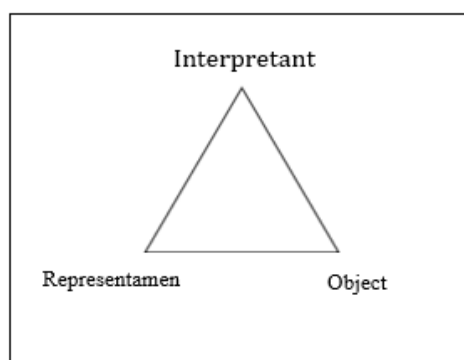


Figure 1. Peirce's Semiotic Analysis Model

Source: Budiman (2011)

The analysis model above is called a triadic structure, which consists of object, representation and interpretant. Signs or representations have a direct triadic relationship to the interpretant and the object (Budiman, 2011). A sign or representation is something that represents something else. This other thing is called an Interpretant. Meanwhile, the first sign refers to the Object.

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III. DISCUSSION

A. Photos as Self-Representation

It is a common thing for someone to do if someone visits a place and documents their photos on Instagram. Several K-Pop artists also did the same thing when they visited Indonesia, including NCT's Taeyong. Uniquely, this photo uploaded by Taeyong shows a typical Indonesian fashion style. In the photo, Taeyong appears to be posing like a photo model by wearing a top in the form of a batik shirt, bottoms in the form of a sarong, and a cap placed on his head. The photo interprets that Taeyong is proud of the clothes that are often worn by Indonesian people, especially Javanese people. Taeyong wants to show his fans that Taeyong also wears the clothes that "you" or "your father" wear (you=fans). Apart from that, Taeyong also wants to show that this clothing can be packaged more fashionably. Taeyong promoted Javanese characters because he knew that the majority of his fans in Indonesia were Javanese. So, this is in accordance with what was stated by (Caldeira et al., 2018) that there is a certain "political" character in self-representation on Instagram. Taeyong's self-representation shows that he likes Indonesian culture as intended by Enli & Thumim (2012) that self-representation can indirectly be seen from someone's posts about what they like. The "political" character in the case of Taeyong's photo is a character who wants to give a sense of satisfaction and pride that he wants to instill in his fans. If the fan feels satisfied and proud of the artist, there is potential for the artist to gain a positive image in the eyes of his fans. Taeyong could have gotten the impression of a K-Pop artist who is aware of Indonesian culture through the uploaded photo. Of course this will have a positive impact on Taeyong himself.

Taeyong needs a positive image to maintain his "market" in Indonesia. According to the author's observations, the group band called NCT has collaborated with brands in Indonesia in product marketing. At least NCT has appeared in NU Green Tea (drink) advertisements in 2020. Blibli (e-commerce) in 2022, and Tos Tos (snacks) in 2023. It can be said that NCT's presence every year almost always graces the world of Indonesian advertising. NCT is presented as a character who uses/consumes NU Green Tea, Blibli, and Tos Tos. The hope of course is that this product can be accepted by the public and receive a positive response from communities like Shopee (Gede et al., 2023) and Mc Donalds (Maulida & Kamila, 2021).

B. Taeyong NCT's fashion Style as a Representation of Indonesian Culture?

The clothing concept used by Taeyong NCT in photos uploaded on Instagram is a form of representation of Indonesian culture. This can be seen from the elements of the clothing he wears. This fashion is called local (Wolipop, 2023) since it promotes local Indonesian cultural clothing. There is a cap on his head, a batik shirt attached to his body, and a sarong he is wearing. Clothing like this is worn by men and is often found at certain events in Indonesia, for example *kenduri* events (banquets to commemorate certain events) and congregational prayers at mosques. Generally, batik shirts are used as a substitute for *koko* clothes (clothing that comes from tui-khim which is the daily clothing of Chinese men) when praying at the mosque. At least these two events have become cultural in Indonesia, especially for followers of the Islamic religion. This clothing combination is considered suitable for use as an outfit for cultural and religious events because it can combine cultural and religious elements in one clothing. Peci and sarongs are accessories for carrying out worship rituals, while batik shirts are typical clothing and original products of Indonesian culture.



Figure 2. Clothing for the Kenduri event uses a batik shirt, sarong, and Peci

Source: *Kata-Kata Untuk Mengundang Kenduri [Atur-Atur Ulem Kenduri] Secara Singkat* (2023)



Figure 3: Clothing when performing congregational prayers at the mosque

Source: Manap (2022)

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If the clothing concept used by Taeyong refers to Indonesian culture, then the body language or style he displays refers more to a photo model. This body language or style is often used by photo models who want to show their appearance. There are certain sides that a model wants to highlight through his pose, for example the hands, feet, head, and so on. In picture 2 you can see Taeyong's style with his hand holding the cap and placing it on top of his head with the peci not touching his head. Taeyong chose to show his hair completely by placing the cap away from his head, as if he also wanted to emphasize that he was not a Muslim. The way of wearing batik sarongs and shirts is far from Indonesian cultural customs. The sarong worn by Taeyong emphasizes his trousers which are decorated with a belt. Meanwhile, the batik shirt he wore also featured a white t-shirt inside or it could be called a batik shirt as the outer. Taeyong's style concept in the photo is also not far from the concept of feminine and masculine which are present at the same time. If research conducted by Yusanta et al., (2019) shows that K-Pop boy bands when shown in the media are men who are both dashing and cute and feminine, then in the case of Taeyong's photo it also shows the same thing. Taeyong's six-pack body shape is visible under the white undershirt he is wearing, which indicates a masculine concept. Apart from that, Taeyong's straight, light-colored hair style is also shown in the photo which indicates a feminine concept.

If we refer to Hall's statement (Hall, 1997a) which emphasizes that representation connects concepts and language to refer to an object, it can be concluded that Taeyong's photo represents Indonesian culture as carried by a photo model. This Indonesian culture does not necessarily appear independently, but is more "acted out". This indicates that Taeyong is still a South Korean citizen who cannot fully enter into Indonesian culture. It is possible that if he visits another country, he will also wear clothes typical of that country's culture. For example, when Taeyong visits Japan, he will wear a Kimono. In this case, Taeyong can only "play" as an Indonesian citizen who loves his culture. This is in line with what Hall (1997a) said that signs represent concepts and conceptual relationships that form a system of cultural meaning.

Furthermore, in line with the thoughts of Hall (1985) which explains the relationship between social practice and ideology, Taeyong's photo is also the result of social practice related to ideology. The ideology that Taeyong tries to instill through uploading his photos cannot be separated from his role as a K-Pop artist who has a lot of fans in the Asian region, especially Indonesia. So, efforts are needed to maintain good relations with fans through these photos. The photo uploaded by Taeyong was an intentional form that Taeyong wanted to show his fans. This is in line with what was explained by (Pilcher et al., 2016; Rose, 2001) that the context of image production forms an understanding and photos also represent meaning that is clearly visible in the image (Pilcher et al., 2016).

C. Taeyong NCT's Fashion as a Communicator

A person's self-identity is an important aspect in the current era of pop culture. People compete to build their own identities. If Veenstra & Kuipers (2013) state that identity can be built through fashion that is attached to a person, then Taeyong also does this. The fashion displayed in Taeyong's photos on Instagram builds an identity for him that is different from his usual habits. Taeyong seems to want to build a different identity through his fashion. If the fashion that is often displayed on his personal Instagram tends to be glamorous like other K-Pop artists, then in this photo Taeyong presents a new identity. The identity he is trying to construct through fashion can be seen from the clothes he wears, namely his identity as a lover of Indonesian culture. This also strengthens the statement from Cheng et al., (2021) and Ibrahim (2011) which states that in this modern era fashion cannot be separated from a person's identity.

The position of fashion in Taeyong's formation of a new identity has a crucial role. As stated by Ibrahim (2011) that fashion is predicted to help determine how a person can be understood and accepted in society because it offers style, image and clothing that produces individual identity, so through fashion with Indonesian cultural themes, Taeyong can be accepted by his fans in Indonesia. "Closeness" to his fans is an offer that results from the fashion worn by Taeyong. If someone wears the same fashion as someone else, then that person can be said to have something in common. This will then create a "close" feeling between Taeyong and his fans. If Lainsyamputty's research (Lainsyamputty, 2021) shows that similarity is one of the determining factors in forming interpersonal relationships between K-Pop artist role players, then in this study similarity can create good relationships between K-Pop artists and their fans. The fashion worn by Taeyong in this case can be used as a means of communication or communicator between Taeyong and his fans. This case is in accordance with what was stated by Cochrane et al., (2011) that fashion can communicate with the wearer and with the external environment. This is what is called clothing which functions as a means of communication (Ibrahim, 2011).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The arrival of K-Pop artist Taeyong NCT to Indonesia is a matter of pride for his fans in Indonesia. Taeyong's arrival enlivened Indonesian television media and online media YouTube. Taeyong was present at an event that was broadcast live on Indonesian television and as a guest star on the artists' YouTube accounts. On his arrival to Indonesia, Taeyong uploaded a photo that was identical to Indonesian culture, namely a photo wearing a sarong, cap and batik shirt while acting like a photo model. The fashion worn by Taeyong represents Indonesian culture, while the style displayed is the style of a photo model. So, his fashion style interprets that Taeyong is "playing a role" as someone with Indonesian culture. The image of being a lover of Indonesian culture could have stuck with Taeyong after uploading the photo on his Instagram. Of course, this will have positive impacts for him, such as

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maintaining good relations with his fans in Indonesia, maintaining good relations with his business partners in Indonesia (who have collaborated with him in product marketing), as well as promoting himself to be able to guide other business people so that in the future they can also work together with him or his band. It is hoped that with this research, researchers in the field of Cultural Studies will be able to develop more broadly the related phenomena behind the behavior of foreign artists who use Indonesian cultural identity. Practically, this research can be used as a reference for Indonesian artists who are global and have fans abroad to use the strategy implemented by NCT's Taeyong.

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