

Social media and music consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic: The case of *BTS*

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*Life is tough, and things don't always work out well,
but we should be brave and go on with our lives.
-Min YoonGi*

Acknowledgement

I would like to start by saying thank you for the ones that have supported me through these last 5 years, specially to my family and friends for the constant support when it comes to not letting me give up on my dream. I want to say thank you to my little sister, Madalena, for making me smile and for giving me a reason to support the effects of the pandemic by thinking that this would pass and that we can see each other again. I didn't give up on my dream with the purpose of showing her that one day I will teach her not to give up on her dreams like I didn't, I want her to be proud of me and I wish I can be her inspiration someday. I want to say a big thank you to my best friend, Cátia, for always be there for me when I needed the most, for never letting me give up on my dreams, but also for giving me courage to think forward by believing in myself and in what I want to achieve in the future.

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Resumo

Em 2019, o mundo sofreu uma reviravolta devido ao aparecimento de uma pandemia a qual nos fez recorrer ao uso das redes sociais *online*. Com esta dissertação procurámos saber se terão sido as redes sociais *online* mais usadas durante a pandemia pelos consumidores de música, em particular fãs de *BTS*. Procurámos ainda saber se será o consumo de música pelo meio digital uma maneira de criar um sentimento de pertença a uma comunidade e se a pandemia modificou a maneira que os fãs de *BTS* consomem música.

Para tentar obter as respostas para estas questões, foi feita uma revisão da literatura sobre o tema em estudo, e abordada uma alternativa para explicar o mesmo, neste caso a realização de um questionário online, para que se percebesse a perspetiva de fãs através da realização de um inquérito por questionário, e cujas respostas parecem confirmar que as redes sociais foram importantes durante este período e que a música foi fundamental durante a pandemia.

Palavras-chave: Redes sociais; Entretenimento; Música; K-pop; *BTS*; Pandemia; COVID-19

Abstract

In 2019, the world has suffered a twist due to the emergence of a pandemic that made us resort to the use of social networks. With this dissertation we tried to know if social networks were more used during the pandemic by music consumers, in particular by *BTS* fans. We also tried to know if the digital consumption of music was a way of creating a feeling of belonging to a community and if the pandemic modifies the way *BTS* fans consume music.

To get the answers for these questions, a review of the literature on the subject under study was made, and an alternative was addressed to explain it, in this case, conducting an online questionnaire, in so that the perspective of fans can be perceived by conducting a survey, and whose answers seem to confirm that social networks were important during this period and that music was fundamental during the pandemic.

Keywords: social media; Entertainment; Music; K-pop; *BTS*; Pandemic; COVID-19

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Introduction

The internet and in particular, social media, has an important role in our lives, it is through that that we have access to different contents, to different people and different cultures, social media has become a space of interaction and communication and it made our world feel smaller with the facility of having access to everything in an easier way. It is through social media that people can contact the ones that are far from them, and they can be in touch with different industries, like the music industry for example.

Music was always in our life, and we spend a lot of time listening to it, because of that it became a constant factor in our days. There is music playing everywhere and it is essential for us to feel better, to entertain ourselves, to escape the reality of everyday life, to relieve anxiety, to explore possible identities, between other reasons (Lonsdale & North, 2011, p.112). This industry is always growing with new artists appearing and with new genres of music that come to us with the help of globalization. With globalization, it was possible for people from different countries and cultures to be in touch with each other, which made us get to know different types of music, allowing us to understand that even with social and demographic barriers in our society, there is something that can connect us somehow (Feld *et al.*, 2011). Music used to be consumed through physical formats, but since the society had adapted to the technology, this industry adapted with it and people start having new habits of music consumption (Lozić, 2019, p.3). Streaming become a reality and people consume music through online platforms with more frequency than ever, by just clicking on a song that can be on their Spotify playlist for example: “Revenues from streaming grew from year to year, while revenues from the sale of digital content continued to fall. In 2019, streaming revenue accounted for 55.9% of the global music industry’s total revenue” (Lozić, 2019, p.2). Music started to be consumed in a different way through different platforms, such as the digital ones, but it didn’t lose the purpose of entertaining people and make them feel connected with what they like, allowing them to know new artists with an easier access to them.

K-pop is a type of music, originally from South Korea, and has seen its rise nowadays with the search of people for it. It is a phenomenon that no one was expecting, since it is music from a country that was not originally a developed country, but contrary to what people expected, K-pop has seen its rise after the economic crises of South Korea in 1997, when the government decided to bet in their culture trying to spread it through the whole world. Several were the

artists that tried their opportunity to give recognition to the country and some of them find it hard to make it, but they have given importance to the K-pop in general, since nowadays in South Korea, “television entertainment programs cannot survive without K-pop idols” (Oh & Lee, 2013, p.120). In 2013, a group of seven boys called *BTS*, was created at *Big Hit Entertainment*, and what was a small company, become one of the biggest of the country, making the revenue of it fundamental for the economy of the country itself. The group didn't see their work being recognized right away, they had to work hard to become one of the biggest groups of all times in South Korea, with it, they had spread their music to the world bringing recognition to their country and making people interested in their music and in their work at the society. During the COVID-19 pandemic they have seen their work being stopped and they did find a way to keep doing what they do best by making online concerts, which will be presented on this study, and with it it's possible to see their help to the fans.

COVID-19 is affecting the society as we know it. A pandemic has been declared by the world health organization in March of 2020 (Lusa, 2020), some measures have been taken and people couldn't live their lives like they were used to; they had to adapt to a virtual way of living their lives to stop the spreading of the corona virus: “*The pandemic has changed how we work, learn and interact as social distancing guidelines have led to a more virtual existence, both personally and professionally.*” (Cleveland Clinic, 2020, para. 2). In a study made by some authors, it is possible to understand that with the pandemic some people lost their jobs, they become dependent of some type of help: problems in education, health, mental health, and economy endured an enormous impact (Magalhães *et al.*, 2020, pp. 2-3).

In a time of uncertainty like a pandemic, social media was something very important for people to be in touch with things they like and something that might made them cope with their well-being using it more during this period to spend some quality time while they're at home and to be in touch with people. During this time these platforms kept working and they provided to people a way of communication and interaction between different individuals. But the reality is that when we use social media for a bigger period of time, the effects can start to be negative and instead of helping, it can be a factor to aggravate the negative ideas people get in their head: “(...) frequent exposure to social media/news relating to COVID-19 as a cause of anxiety and stress symptoms” (Xiong *et al.*, 2020, pp. 55-64) and “The uncertainties and fears associated with the virus outbreak, along with mass lockdowns and economic recession are predicted to lead to increases in suicide as well as mental disorders associated with suicide” (Xiong *et al.*, 2020, pp. 55-64).

This effect of the well-being on people can lead to serious problems in the future, so it is important to control the effects as soon as they appear. A measure to control that is to solve it since the beginning trying to approach people to what they like to make them forget somehow the bad thoughts that are on their mind. Since we spend so much time on social media, this is a good way for us to communicate with others and to control these effects somehow. By watching online concerts of artists people like, they feel an empathy with something that make them happy, which will help them to control the effects of anxiety and depression caused by a pandemic, so, it become important to put it on this research to understand the benefits of it on *BTS* fans and how an artist can help by just making music and by approaching to their fans in a delicate moment for everyone.

This dissertation has the main point to understand the impact of music consumption through social media during the COVID-19 pandemic on *BTS* fans and by that, the main question of this work was “What role did music consumption over social media play during the COVID-19 pandemic?”, in order to understand this, it was tried to answer to some questions that restrict the theme of the dissertation to narrow our research around this theme:

- Were social networks more used during the pandemic by music consumers, in particular by *BTS* fans?
- Is the digital consumption of music a way of creating a feeling of belonging to a community?
- Did the pandemic modify the way *BTS* fans consume music?

This study makes us understand if social media was more used during the pandemic and how that was important for *BTS* fans; how music consumption has changed during this time and how it has changed the lives of the fans; and if music had a special role on people’s well-being during this time trying to explain the communication that could have occurred during the pandemic between different fans and with artists. To answer to these questions, it was made a literature review around the topics such as social media and society, the cultural and creative sector, the music industry, the Korean pop music industry, more specifically surrounding the group *BTS* and their work, and the topic around the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect on the music industry. After the literature review, it was made an approach explaining the methodology that is being used to better understand the theme and at the end it was made an online survey for *BTS* fans to answer trying to explain the change and the importance of music consumption during the pandemic on them. It’s a theme that it can be inserted into the master of World Internet Studies, since approach how people used social media during this time, but it also makes us study the community itself around this type of industry that is the K-pop.

Chapter 1- Literature review

1.1. Social media and society

The concept of social media had, for several years, a problem of definition, several were the authors who tried to get to a proper definition and nowadays is still hard to find a final explanation for this concept. In a study made by some authors, it was possible to make an analysis of several definitions of social media by different researchers and all the studies had something in common, we can understand that social media was created and is used by people, it has the purpose of sharing content and information and is present on online platforms (Ouiridi *et al.*, 2014). At the same work we can read:

“Social media aim primarily to create, cocreate, exchange, share, discuss, modify, consume, communicate and disseminate user-generated content. Social media are also designed to form communities that engage in social interactions. Some authors combine both standpoints and suggest that social media tools enable the exchange, transmission and discussion of information through conversation and interaction. Other social media functions include promoting collaboration and joint learning, playing and engaging in commerce” (Ouiridi *et al.*, 2014, p.117).

Before the 2000s the concept of social media wasn't commonly used and since then it is being employed to describe certain digital platforms and its impacts on the society. We see social media as something that provide us with a lot of information in an easier way and we tend to accept almost everything that arrives to us from it. Several studies try to understand who is most likely to be influenced by social media and the results points out that a lot of people see the information provided through it a fact they need to accept and follow (Gruzd *et al.*, 2017, p. 647). Social media is having an important and fundamental role in our daily life and in a study made to north american teens in 2018, it became possible to see that 31% said that social media plays an important role in their life's and 45% said that it doesn't have neither positive nor negative impact on them, being this many of the respondents. Most of them, 95%, also said they have smartphones and the majority affirm they're online almost all the time (Anderson & Jiang, 2018, p.1).

The world we live in is in constant change, because of which society also needs to change to adapt to the challenges that may appear. Technology has been seen as a revolution and today we use it with a lot more frequency than before: the access we have to the different content, practices and services through technology and the internet is important for the development of our society (Leiner *et al.*, 1997). Living in a society where almost everything is connected through the internet can be very challenging: it not only can be a benefit but also a disadvantage.

It is true that we use technology for almost everything in our life but on the other side, we are becoming very dependent on it: “The Internet has turned our existence upside down. It has revolutionized communications, to the extent that it is now our preferred medium of everyday communication. In almost everything we do, we use the Internet” (Dentzel, 2013, p. 1).

The impact of communication technology in our life can also be explained by globalization, “the term that has been given to a range of economic, technological, cultural, social, and political forces and processes that are said to have collectively produced the characteristic conditions of contemporary life” (Yeates, 2001, p. 630). This means that globalization is affecting several sectors in our society and people get used to living in a society where everything comes faster than before. Globalization contributes for a society where everything can be connected and it is expressed in some fields such as trade, immigration, communication, media and entertainment, culture, and human rights (Spacey, *apud* Simplicable, 2018). Living in a globalized world can be a benefit and it allow to meet different people and several cultures, to be open minded and to not become standardized.

Another transformation that occurred with the help of technology was the appearance of social media platforms, which emerge to help people communicate and allows them to be in constant touch with others:

“Social media on the web (...) have increased the importance of the social interactional component of this communication. (...) On these social platforms the boundaries between news and entertainment, between private and public communication and between solidaristic and commercial practices tend to blur, transforming the web into a complex mix of social and commercial aggregations (...) bounded by interests and passions more than geographical proximity” (Mandelli & Vianello, *apud* Cardoso, 2009, pp. 413-416).

On these platforms people can get access to news, communicate with others and be in touch with things they like. Social media came to change the way we interact and the way we have access to things we like: as the author Zachary Evans said “Social media has completely changed the way people interact with each other. We are all connected in ways that were never possible before. This doesn’t just affect our personal lives, but also how businesses engage with customers and market their goods and services” (Evans, 2015, para.1).

1.1.1. Social media use, motivations and gratifications

When we want to talk about the motivations of people when they’re using social media, some examples that appear are “entertainment, personal utility, information seeking, convenience and

altruism” (Al-Menayes, 2015, p.6). These are just some examples, but people can be motivated by a lot of things: each person has her/his interests, so we can't say that people use social media for just one thing.

Researchers are studying the way we consume almost everything through technology, and they understand that technology can aggravate mental health issues such as depression, self-esteem, addiction and it also can affect relationships (Brown, *apud* BBC, 2018), but it is also important to understand the good side of it: social media have provided us the opportunity to consume different contents given to us by the cultural and creative sector, for example.

The uses and gratifications theory appear in the work of Blumler and Katz around 1970, but in 1941 a study made by Herzog already approached the uses and gratification theory being then the first author to talk about it. The study by Herzog was published in her work called *On Borrowed Experience* and the authors that came after say that the work is inserted into the Columbia School, which is composed by a group of linguistics that believe that communication is the main objective of the language (Katz *et al.*, 2002). The work was made to study why people spend so much time listening to the radio soap opera in the American continent, the results made the author understand that the public get gratification by listening to it and it help them with the social interaction, support, acquisition of information and they were happy after listening to it (Herzog, 1941). Since the results were what the author expected, it was possible to understand that uses and gratification are related, mostly when we consume some cultural product to get a benefit from it, like the growing of the well-being in a person after consuming it.

The uses and gratification theory, was originally created to “understand how, why, and with what purpose people use media in their everyday lives” (Quan-Haase & Young, *apud* Fortner & Fackler, 2014, p.269), it varies from people to people since different individuals will use different platforms. There are also different specific motives to consume: to listen to music; to get their work done; to be entertained or feel better in a period. What can be taken from here is that the uses and gratification theory explain why we consume media and with what purpose. People don't consume the cultural products without any motive, they consume it because there is a purpose behind, even if it is for self-care and entertainment. For this reason, social media is used for people in general and people have a motive to do it, which make us understand that this theory is an important factor in our daily life because it can adapt to different categories since people will always have a motive to consume anything and they will take gratification out of it.

This theory intertwined with this study since there is several reasons for people to listen to music such as to feel better, to relieve boredom, to spend time with close people, and many other reasons (Lonsdale & North, 2011, p.112), with this we see a relation between music and this theory since we don't listen to music as passive recipients, we somehow feel something when listening to it, that's the gratification we take from it (Lonsdale & North, 2011, p.109). What will be seen ahead is that the online concerts were a solution that artists find themselves during the pandemic, for them to keep their work done, with it, people consume this content provided through social media and they took a gratification out of it, since the fans could feel connected with others, they felt better after watching the online concerts and it made their well-being being established during the pandemic. The uses and gratification theory is here explained by the positive effects on the fans when consuming music through a digital platform, showing that music is important for people to feel better and is present in our everyday life (Lonsdale & North, 2011, p.110).

1.2. The cultural and creative sector

Cultural activity is described by the International Federation of Actors (FIA) as the “one that traditionally relies heavy on public funding for the core activities and institutions of the sector. There is a general recognition that public funding of culture is desirable to ensure cultural diversity, access to culture and a diverse and flourishing sector” (FIA, 2021, p.2). Creative industries are described by the UK Government’s Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) as “those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (Parrish, n.d.). Since both sectors are connected, a new term has surfaced being this the cultural and creative sector, which include:

“all the sectors whose activities are based on cultural values, or artistic, creative expressions, market or non-market oriented. It includes architecture, archives, libraries and museums, artistic crafts, audio-visual tangible and intangible cultural heritage, design, festivals, music, literature, performing arts, publishing, radio, and visual arts” (KEA, 2020, p.2).

Society is adapting to online platforms and this sector is no exception: people were getting used to have everything on the internet and the content provided by the cultural and creative sector was also on it- it became easier to be in touch with everything by using social media platforms. During the pandemic social media made it possible to relate to sectors we didn’t have physical access to and to feel closer to people: people used the internet and social media more (Kemp, *apud* DataReportal, 2021, slide 9).

The cultural and creative sector was also important during this time by keeping people entertained and by maintaining the well-being of the society during this difficult time (KEA, 2020, p.2): It is very important for people to be in touch with things they like during a lockdown, and it also can help the people involved in it, like musicians, actors, companies of production, among others, including having people who share their opinions about some artists, making others interested and eventually promoting them and contributing to the rise of this sector.

The internet has played a role in changing how we consume the cultural and creative sector’s contents namely through social media, adding cultural value to a society (KEA, 2020, p.2). These social networks that now exist allow us to watch movies and series and to listen to music online.

1.3. The music industry

According to Boer, “Music plays a significant role in most people’s lives independent of their cultural origin” (Boer, 2009, p. 18). Music is present in most societies, and it’s presented in different forms. Technology also had an impact on the music industry in so much it is provided to us in different ways and via different platforms: social media have also been changing the access we have to it and the way we consume it. To understand the changes that have occurred within the music industry, it is important to keep in mind that the consumption of music on digital platforms has been on rise since 1990, when people started downloading songs illegally:

“With the development of the internet and the growing pressures from consumers to be better, faster, and smaller, it only seemed logical that the music industry would see this new option of consumption. Because of its ease of use, duplicative abilities, range of selection, and accessibility, the MP3 was attractive in the eyes of consumers” (Fly, 2016, p. 10).

The way we consume music is becoming very different, a few years ago, we used to consume music using CD’s, vinyl, tapes, between others, nowadays we still consume through these formats, but the consumption is being made mostly through digital platforms. In a time where people started to consume more music, they faced some problems since the music was not available for everyone through physical formats and for that reason, people started to consume it through illegal websites which become bad for the producers since they didn’t see their revenues increasing because they were not selling music to people.

“The increase of unlicensed music consumption is worrisome because it could lead to a decrease in music producers’ revenues and consequently to a possible reduction in the supply of innovative music. For this claim to hold true, however, licensed and unlicensed consumption of music must be reasonably close substitutes. In this case, songs obtained via unauthorized channels effectively depress sales since they would otherwise have been purchased” (Aguiar & Martens, 2016, p.27).

Unlicensed music become more frequent, and this shows the inequality that exist in our society, even affecting people when it comes to their music consumption. With an easier access to digital platforms for consuming music, it is visible some changes on the consumption: “While total revenue from recorded music have strongly declined since 1999, revenues from digital music have increased more than 1000% during the period 2004–2010” (Aguiar & Martens, 2016, p. 42).

Music consumption has seen a change in the society, mostly because people has changed the way they consume music and how it’s spread on the internet and for that reason they had to

adapt their music consumption to the digital platforms to always be active and get an easier access to new music and new artists.

By the *IFPI* industry data approaching the music industry, we can see some changes that occurred in the music industry in the past years. In the report of 2019, we can see that recorded music revenues increased 8,2% comparing to the previous year, and in 2020 there was an increase of 18,5%. Most of the music revenues comes from streaming, with a number of 62,1% and only 19,5% is based on physical formats. There are other ways of music revenue like performance rights, downloads and other digital, which explains the rest of the music revenue in 2019 (IFPI, n.d). Music is being consumed through different platforms, but it is certain that there is a change:

“Digital revenues have increased steadily over the past few years and streaming revenues alone now account for more than half (56.1%) of the global recorded music market after increasing by 22.9% in 2019. By the end of that year, there were 341 million users of subscription streaming accounts globally” (IFPI, n.d).

1.3.1. Community VS Online Community

When we want to talk about the music industry, it is important to talk about who is sharing and listening to music to explain the difference between the traditional concept of a community and the concept of an online community. The concept of community can be described as “(...) a group of people that interact and support each other, and are bounded by shared experiences or characteristics, a sense of belonging, and often by their physical proximity” (Cobigo *et al.*, 2016, p.17). Tönnies also describes the concept of community by saying:

“The true cement of unity and, consequently, of the possibility of a community lays, firstly, on the narrowness of the con- sanguineous relation and blood mixing; secondly, on the physical proximity and lastly – to human beings – on the intellectual proximity. One must seek the sources of all kind of understanding in this gradation” (Tönnies, 1979, *apud* Serra, 2007, p.106).

“The community presents characteristics such as the following: i) It involves a tacit agreement or understanding (*Verständnis*) which displays language as its “real organ”; ii) It implies its own territory, a “homeland” (*Heimat*); iii) In the spiritual sense, it identifies itself with a people’s religion” (Tönnies, 1979, *apud* Serra, 2007, p.107).

The concept itself is evolving as society is changing and is now frequently addressed when talking about an online community. It became important for a society that is becoming more connected through the internet to find a concept that is broader to explain group gatherings in

stages like the digital platforms. Described as “a group of people with a shared interest or purpose who use the internet to communicate with each other, an online community has its own set of guidelines and needs, like online community engagement, moderation, and management” (Bond, *apud* Higher Logic, 2020).

These online communities encompass a potentially bigger number of people and, just as other communities do, they’re based mostly on their interests; factors like their nationality are sometimes not as important for people to communicate with each other and to feel included. Social media boosted online communities: they made it easier for people to be in touch with things they like, and to join individuals coming from different places and cultures. The music industry provides a good illustration: apart from the fact that fans couldn’t see artists they like because of the pandemic, they also couldn’t physically meet other fans so the community could have been affected if it weren’t for the digital platforms. As Lim states:

“The role of Internet-based fan culture has grown during the pandemic but is still not a replacement for offline fan life. However, fans’ focus is not solely on the virtual world. The fact that they cannot meet with other fans during the pandemic helped them to establish a new space, one different from the offline world, and a new way to connect” (Lim, 2021, para. 4).

The role of the internet is becoming important to maintain the fan culture nowadays. During the pandemic the fans used the internet a lot more to communicate and the internet-based fan culture is explained by the role of fans on social media. On it everything is easier, fans can pretend to be someone else, they can give their opinion about anything, and they don’t need to hide from telling others what they like, social media is a place where everyone can be what they want to be. As Trzcńska and Nożewski state: “(...) with such a powerful tool as the Internet, fans have gained a way to express their desires and hopes and their voice cannot be disregarded, because it often means “to be or not to be” for many companies” (Trzcńska *et al.*, 2016, p.15)

For this reason, the internet-based fan culture has its origins on the online community created through social media to communicate with others with the same interests as us. The same authors state: “Social media as a communication space facilitate processes of people grouping around particular subject, but it does not mean that these platforms change the basis of social perception” (Trzcńska *et al.*, 2016, p.32)

The internet-based fan culture explains how people adapt their life as a fan to social media and how that have changed the way we consume music, since the consumption of it has changed and becomes easier to get access to it and to comment and share it with others. This does not mean that the traditional fan culture has changed because people still gather somehow to talk

about what they like, but they have adapted to the new reality, which is the technology and how this has changed our daily life.

Some concepts help communities feel closer to the music industry. Described as a space of communication between groups of individuals that have something in common (Barreiros, 2010, p. 91), media help people to connect with each other to maintain a community together thanks to the things they like. According to Barreiros, the public is “the relation between the interest of a particular subject or event; refers to the set of people who is interested in a certain work, performance, medium, product or event” (Barreiros, 2010, p.111-112). In the work of Babo, we can see the definition of a public: collective entity; they are active and formed by provisory communities; there is diversity of readings, reactions, and identities; there is a heterogeny of the public (Babo, 2013, p. 222). At the same work we can read that a public is, “a group of people who have something in common” (Esquenazi, 2006, *in* Babo, 2013, p. 219). We can see by this that to form a public, it is fundamental for people to have something in common to create a community that have the same interests. For Babo, the public need three fundamental factors in order to be established, there has to be a reception, in which people will get to know different things they could have an interest in, our society present us with several cultural products and since we get to know them, it will make us to have an interest in something, so it is very important the reception we have with the different products in our society for us to establish our interests; the second factor is the passivity and the activity of the publics, this means that the public is never passive since there is always interactivity between people or with the product they have interest in, for that reason, the public is always active because inside a public there is always communication and affection with others and with what they like. The last factor is explained by the communication and the emergence of the publics, and this explains the last part of the establishment of a public, since we will communicate with people who have the same interest as us, we will want to share more content with others in order to get to a bigger public and that’s when the communication is important leading to the emergence of a public (Babo, 2013). For another side, there is the audience who is described as “the collective entity which resulted of the aggregation of the set of people that coincide in accessing a given event or media” (Barreiros, 2010, p.111), it differs from the public, since it is reactive, which means, they react to something that is given to them and the audience is seen as something that people could see from behind and they don’t need to be inserted into the product, like it is fundamental for the public. The public likes the product and interact with other people to start liking the same as them, the audience just see the product, but doesn’t need to like what they see (Babo, 2013).

Besides these three different concepts, that are very important to explain how the music industry works nowadays, there is another concept used today:

“Fans occupy an interesting position in society. They participate in many of the same types of social and textual activities that most media audiences engage in, but they have traditionally existed more on the fringe of mainstream culture. Fan-related activities are built largely around a close affiliation with the popular texts at the center of the enthusiasm” (Sullivan, 2013, p. 195).

Fans are then a group of people who identify themselves with something they like, and they share that with others to extend the amount of people who like an artist, a movie, a personality, among others. A group of people who like something in common may gather on social media and in person to speak about the artists they like leading to the promotion and growth of that sector and the artist in question. Social media is, thus, having a major impact on the music industry thanks to the fan bases created on them to support the artists just as artists themselves use social media to communicate with their fans and to promote their music, since it is through it that people meet new things and try to be in touch with them.

1.4. The Korean pop music industry: The K-pop group *BTS*

The Korean Wave, also called *Hallyu* in Korean (Lee, 2011, p. 86), surfaced in South Korea after the economic crisis of 1997. So as to overcome it the South Korean government favored the country's cultural sector, trying to promote their music and movies around the world (Trunfio, n.d., p.3). As a result, the economy of South Korea has been growing: “the Korean wave has fundamentally changed the national image of Korea in a positive way” (Lee, 2011, p.86).

Specifically, regarding the music industry there are several K-pop groups, but not all of them could have an impact in the economy: according to Boman, “While several K-pop acts such as Big Bang, TVXQ, Girls' Generation, Super Junior, and EXO have reached local (South Korea) and regional (East Asia) success, these acts have failed to penetrate the major music markets of the US and UK” (Boman, 2019, p. 2). Without recognition in the UK and in the USA, it became difficult for the South Korean culture to spread around the world or for an artist to promote her/his career. But these K-pop groups face another difficulty which is the language- K-pop artists sing in Korean, and few societies were ready to receive and share something in an idiom they were not comfortable with. In Portugal, one of the first South Korean artists to be spoken about was *PSY* when he released ‘*Gangnam Style*’ in 2012, and everyone started to listen to this song since it was being spread around the rest of the world, which led this song to become viral (Cho & Lee, 2012, p.1).

The South Korean economy is being positive affected by the music industry that is being produced in the country, “the South Korean music industry had a sales revenue of around 6.1 trillion South Korean won – and an export value of about 562.24 million U.S. dollars. The export value has been increasing steadily ever since 2009 when K-pop began to become a global phenomenon” (Statista Research Department, 2021). K-pop is a helping factor in the economy of the country, we can see that “According to Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange, the “Korean Wave” of K-Pop, TV dramas, and games contributed USD 9.5 billion to the Korean economy in 2018” (Sajnach, *apud* Asia Scotland Institute, 2021).

Seeing the South Korean economy being affected by culture, it can appear a certain diplomatic soft power, since the music, movies, series and all the other cultural products are being spread through the world, that becomes a benefit for the economy of the country, since it shares South Korean culture for other countries and that will lead to a financial benefit in return. One example to obtain this diplomatic soft power was an idea created by *Big Hit Entertainment* to create some textbooks featuring *BTS* in order for fans to learn how to speak Korean, the idea

had the help of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, and, with that, more people could be in touch with the Korean language, which made the economy of the country grow with it, allowing the diplomatic soft power to appear thanks to the *Hallyu* culture (Gibson, 2020).

Years later, the world started to listen to different names in the K-pop industry and one of the most known is *Bangtan Sonyeondan*¹, also known as *BTS*² (Bruner, *apud* TIME, 2018, para. 3). Created by Bang Si-Hyuk, the owner of a small company called *Big Hit Entertainment*, the group has 7 members³: they made their debut in 2013 and have been receiving several awards; the owner's company became one of the biggest nowadays even changing its name to *HYBE*, but the "Big Hit's record label will maintain its identity as a label called Big Hit Music under HYBE" (Stassen, *apud* MusicBusiness Worldwide, 2021). These South Korean boys have a strong fan base called *ARMY*⁴.

Social media is pivotal in the connection between the group and their fans: "This means *BTS* members and fans are constantly communicating globally through online official accounts" (Choi *et al.*, 2019, p.6). Their fans are from all over the world, showing that, in this case, language is not a barrier to feel connected to their songs, the lyrics and the message they want to share, trying to approach problems in our society and that someone understands them.

Having been nominated for Best Pop Duo/Group performance in the *Grammys* (Countryman, *apud* Variety, 2020, para. 2), the group itself decided to celebrate with their fans on their official twitter account by sharing their reactions when they saw the nomination. *BTS* were invited to perform on the *Grammys'* stage, which the fans saw as a way of breaking barriers in the music industry when it comes to artists that sing in Korean (Aswad, *apud* Variety, 2021, para.1).

As a result of a considerable list of other worldwide achievements⁵, several were the articles in different magazines showing the impact of this South Korean boy group in the music

¹ means Bulletproof Boy Scouts

² stands for Beyond the Scene in English

³ RM, Jin, Suga, J-Hope, Jimin, V and Jungkook. RM is the leader of the group and the one who speaks the most in the interviews in English. The oldest member is Jin and the youngest is Jungkook. The group is divided into rappers and vocalists, the rappers are RM, Suga and J-hope and the vocalists are Jin, Jimin, V and Jungkook.

⁴ which means Adorable Representative M.C for Youth (Moon, *apud* TIME, 2020, para.5)

⁵ In 2020, the group saw their music called '*Dynamite*', the first all English song they have, being in the first place for several weeks and they saw their music called '*Life Goes On*' at the first place of the Billboard Hot100 and this was an important step for them, since the song is in Korean (Billboard, 2020). The group was also chosen as Entertainers of the year 2020 by the magazine *TIME* (Bruner,

industry: an article posted by *Billboard* stated, “BTS isn’t just the biggest K-pop act on the charts. They’ve become the biggest band in the world—full stop. Between releasing multiple albums, breaking every type of record, and appearing in these extemporaneous livestreams in 2020, *BTS* ascended to the zenith of pop stardom” (Bruner, *apud* TIME, 2020, para. 3).

BTS are also concerned about the society and become involved in initiatives on social media. They have participated in the ‘*Dear Class of 2020*’ performing and giving an amazing speech for the fans to support artists they like during a difficult time like a pandemic (Variety, 2020). Along with *UNICEF* they conceived the ‘#*ENDviolence*’ campaign, to “ensuring children and teens in the world lead safe and healthy lives without the fear of violence” (UNICEF, 2017, para. 2). As well as the ‘*Love Myself*’ campaign with the purpose of “pursuing love and a better place to live for all” (UNICEF, 2017, para. 2).⁶

The *ARMY* also had an important role when it comes to helping others: the ‘*Black Lives Matter*’, a social movement of support to the victims of racism and police brutality, received a donation of one million dollars from *BTS*, and their fans, upon knowing this, decided to gather money in 24 hours in the same amount, to support it (Zaveri, *apud* The New York Times, 2020). Such activism is becoming both necessary and frequent in our society: people needed help to control and to survive the effects of the pandemic and groups of people gathered and intervened. The connection between artists and their fans can make a difference when an artist tries to help someone, normally their fans feel inspired and decide to follow their example.

apud TIME, 2020) and the Greatest Pop Stars of 2020 by *Billboard* (Nazareno, *apud* *Billboard*, 2021). The *IFPI* (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry), released their winners in several categories and *BTS* stayed at number one as the best global recording artists of 2020, they also had their album ‘*Map of the Soul: 7*’ rewarded as the best global album all format chart of 2020 and their album ‘*BE*’ in fourth place in the same category, their song ‘*Dynamite*’ stayed at number ten of Global Digital Single Chart and lastly in the category of Global Albums Sales Chart, they had three albums, in the first place there is ‘*Map of the Soul: 7*’, following by ‘*BE*’ in second place and in the eighth place there is their Japanese album called ‘*Map of the soul: 7~ The Journey~*’ (IFPI, 2021).

⁶ In 2021, the group decided to renew their partnership with *UNICEF* alongside with the ‘*Love Myself*’ campaign in order to help more children and young people to love themselves even if they’re having a hard time. (UNICEF, 2021). The group itself donated to this campaign and a part of the sales made during their ‘*Love Myself*’ Tour was given to *UNICEF*.

1.5. The COVID-19 pandemic and the effect on the music industry

The music industry has suffered the impact of the pandemic, since the concerts had to be cancelled:

“The closure of businesses including concert venues had occurred as a result of the bans on large gatherings in an attempt to curb the spread of contagion. It was unclear how many concert venues would survive these shutdowns, and musicians were aware of the situation. Similar circumstances appeared to be prevalent across the music industry regardless of country, as the global COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in similar quarantines and closings of non-essential businesses worldwide” (Messick, 2020, p.31).

Since the events were cancelled by the governments to control the pandemic, the artists saw tours cancelled, which is something that happened with *BTS*; so, they had to take measures to keep in touch with their fans and to promote their music (Assaraf *et al.*, *apud* Capgemini 2020: 15). It is not easy for artists used to make concerts to adapt their career to the virtual world, but social media was useful because it allows the artists to communicate with their fans, but it wasn't enough: they decided to make online concerts so that they can show the fans how they wanted the concerts of their world tour to be. *BTS* decided to make some online concerts, the first one was called ‘*Bang Bang Con: The Live*’ which had several viewers from different countries:

“According to Big Hit metrics, the show reached a peak of 756,000 concurrent viewers in 107 countries and territories. Attendance was the equivalent of 15 shows at a 50,000-seat stadium and was the biggest audience for a paid virtual concert. Big Hit added that the concert also helped grow *BTS*' fan club, known as the ARMY, by 10,000 members” (Frater, *apud* Variety, 2020: 1).

BTS had another online concert called ‘*Map of the Soul ON: E*’ in October 2020 (Lim, 2021: 1) in which they were able to see their fans through the screens around the arena where the concert was made, maintaining interaction with their fans even if they were not making a physical concert due to the situation. They released an album called ‘*BE*’, addressing the effects of the pandemic and how they are battling this- their song called ‘*Blue & Grey*’ talks about melancholy and anxiety felt by some of the members of the group *BTS* during this time (Oh, 2021: 1).

Chapter 2- Methodology

This study aims to understand the use of social media and the consumption of music during the COVID-19 pandemic particularly how *BTS* fans consumed music through digital platforms, to understand if it has a positive or negative impact on them and if it has changed during this period. The research question that started this study was: “What role did music consumption over social media play during the COVID-19 pandemic?”. Online surveys allow us to have a bigger number of people answering to it and the answers allow us to see diverse perspectives about this theme. The online survey was made through *Qualtrics XM* to export the data to make an easy and better analysis of it.

The choice for this methodology is based on having more people answering, and the fact that an online survey provides anonymity to people, while at the same time allowing us to give people around the world the opportunity to answer and to share it through digital platforms. They are normally made for people to answer in a short period of time and since it can be anonymous, people tend to answer to them with more honesty (Evans *et al.*, 2005: 4). There are also other advantages when choosing online surveys: “*access to unique populations*”, since we can specify the online survey to the main target we are making the questions, “*time*” since it is possible to reach a lot of people in a short period of time with the help of the internet and “*cost*”, mostly because when it’s spread on social media, it is easier to share it with others without involving money on it (Wright, 2017). But on other side, online surveys can also have disadvantages like the lack of responses; it can also be seen as something impersonal since we don’t know who is answering; and it can also be a problem if the person who is answering has technological difficulties or doesn’t have a lot of experience working with the internet (Evans *et al.*, 2005: 4). In this case, this last possible problem shouldn’t be a real problem since people who answered to it are fans of the group *BTS* and use the internet a lot. Another problem that comes with the online surveys is the sincerity: we never know if people are answering with honesty- for example, when we ask the age and the country, we will never know if people are saying the truth.

It was decided to make it in English so that more people could answer to it. Attention was also given to the vocabulary that was being used to get more people answering to it by understanding the concept that was being presented. The target audience was chosen by asking people to answer to it only if they saw an online concert by *BTS* during the COVID-19 pandemic and they should be *BTS* fans. The people who were given the online survey were found on

social media platforms like *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *Weverse*. On *Facebook* it was spread in some groups in which *BTS* fans are; on *Twitter* it was spread through pages that are followed by a lot of fans; and on *Weverse* by asking other fans to answer to it.

It was important to have sub-research questions to really specify the theme itself, they were: “Were social networks more used during the pandemic by music consumers, in particular by *BTS* fans?”; “Is the digital consumption of music a way of creating a feeling of belonging to a community?”; “Did the pandemic modify the way *BTS* fans consume music?”. By thinking about these questions, the literature review gives a first approach to the theme. The questions for the online survey were set as soon as the literature review was made to understand the consumer point of view to see how fans spent their time in connection with artists they like during the pandemic, and it was possible to understand the importance of it. There are no missing values on this online survey since the answers that were not complete, were not counted, being them excluded right away.

Chapter 3- Presentation and discussion of the results

On this chapter it is possible to understand the results of the online survey to make an analysis of the use of social media and the consumption of music by *BTS* fans during the pandemic. The online survey was open from June 18th, 2021 until August 18th, 2021, and it had 37 questions plus 3 for demographic study, so in total it has 40 questions. It was a goal to obtain at least 200 answers, knowing since the beginning that it would never be a representative sample of our population and, at the end, 259 people answered to it.

3.1. Socio-demographical analysis

The first question was about gender, and we tried to be the most inclusive possible, not restricting answers to just two options, thus allowing people to choose between ‘masculine’, ‘feminine’, ‘other’ or ‘I prefer not to answer’. Out of 259 people that answer to the survey, 240 identified themselves as feminine (93%), followed by the option ‘I prefer not to answer’ with 12 people (4%);

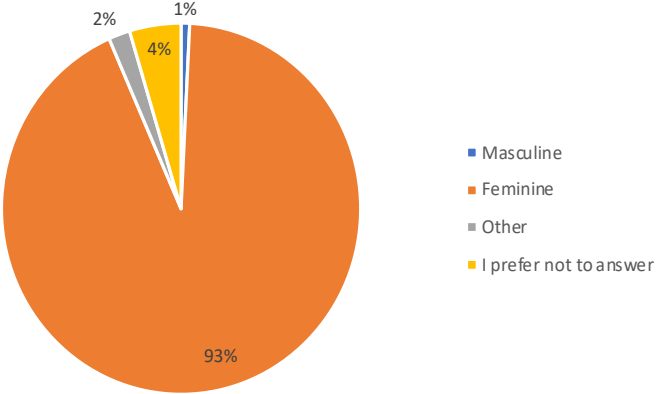


Figure 1: Sample distribution by gender. Source: Self elaboration.

there are also 5 people (2%) who choose ‘other’ as their option about their gender, not identifying themselves with the options above and only 2 people (1%) affirm they have masculine gender as an identity. By making an analyze of this data, it’s possible to identify most people as the feminine gender as a way of identification and it make us think that most of the time, fans are normally associated by being girls and with this data it’s possible to understand that in 259 people that answer to the survey, majority of them are indeed girls.

The second question that appeared in the demographic part of the survey was about the country in which people could say the country they came from. Several were the answers to these questions, and several are the countries that the respondents came from.

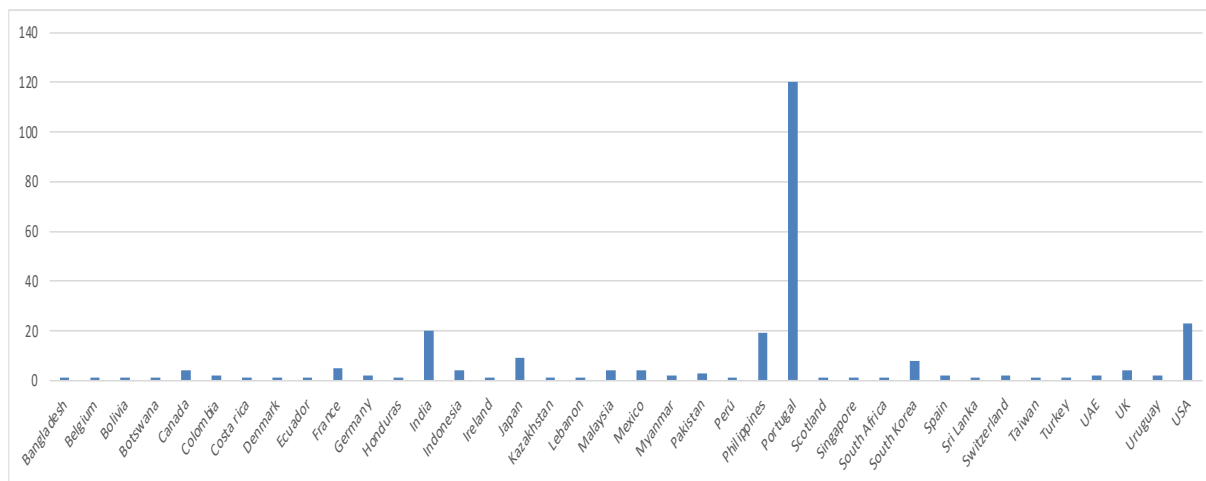


Figure 2: Sample distribution by country. Source: Self elaboration.

Like it's shown in the figure 2 we can see a lot of people from different countries, there are a lot of countries that only get 1 person per country answering to the survey like it was the example of countries like Bangladesh, Belgium, Bolivia, Botswana, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Honduras, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, Perú, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Turkey. Followed by 2 persons per country were Colombia, Germany, Myanmar, Spain, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Uruguay; Pakistan was the country that counts with 3 persons answering to the survey; With a number of 4 people per country were Canada, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico and United Kingdom (U.K); 5 people answered to the survey in France; Starting with a lot more people were countries like South Korea which counts with a number of 8 people and Japan with the number of 9 people. Being visible in figure 2, the countries with a bigger number of people answering the survey were Philippines with the count of 19, India counts with 20 people followed by the United States of America (U.S.A) with 23 people answering. Having the major number of people from this country that answered to the survey, was Portugal with a total of 120 people answering to it. When the survey was made, it was given attention to the language, in order to get more answers from people of different countries and it was noticed that there is a diversity of countries that people came from. Since the online survey was delivered through social media platforms, it became easier to connect with people from different countries and make these results a possibility, showing that there is diversity when it comes to the *BTS* fan base.

Still in the demographic analysis it was asked the age of each person to understand if the fan base is composed only by young people or if it has people from different age groups.

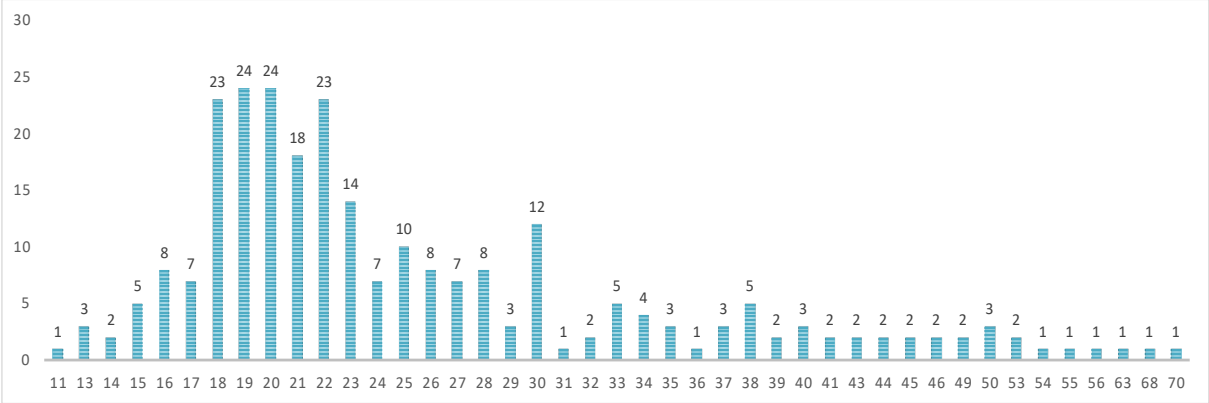


Figure 3: Sample distribution by age. Source: Self elaboration.

As seen in figure 3 there are people with different ages among the people who answered to the online survey, the youngest has eleven years old and it's important to remember that all the data is anonymous being used only for academic purposes, which means that people below eighteen years old were able to answer to the survey; what is also possible to see is that the oldest is seventy years old, showing that there is a huge age gap between the respondents. There are a lot of diverse ages among the respondents and it's possible to understand that they are mostly between the ages of eighteen years old and thirty years old showing that people in their twenties are mostly likely to like the group, but that doesn't mean that people with different ages are not allowed to like them, being the results a proof of that. On the ages of eighteen and thirty years old are 181 people so it shows that in 259 people that answer to the survey, most of them are inside this group of ages. It became important not to separate the ages of people into age groups when the online survey was made, since like this, is possible to make a better approach to the point of showing the different ages of people that answer to it, showing that the *BTS* fan base is likely composed by people from different countries and ages. This means that when it comes to music, factors like age or country are not a barrier, proving what was said before in the literature review that in music there are no barriers.

3.2. Social media and society

The online survey was divided into 5 distinct topics to get the answers in need to prove the importance of this subject in study. The first topic that was approached was social media and society and in the questions that were asked it is possible to see the relationship between people and social media and how they feel connected to it.

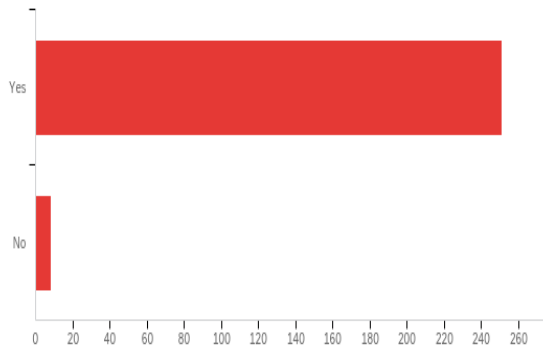


Figure 4: importance of internet during the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

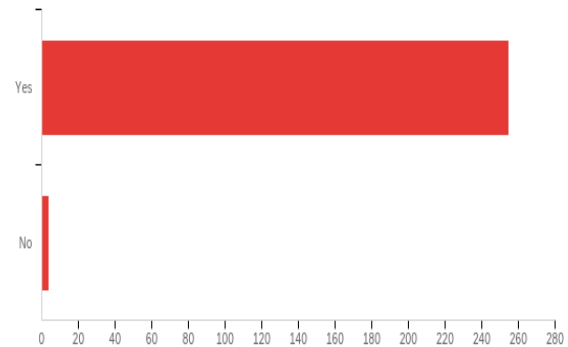


Figure 5: relationship between globalization and our playlist. Source: Self elaboration.

The aim of the first question of the survey was to understand if people stay in touch with others who are close to them during the pandemic which was possible by the answers, seen in figure 4, to see that 251 people (96,91%) answered ‘yes’ and only 8 people (3,09%) answered ‘no’. This means that in this case, people think of social media as a way of helping them to stay in touch with people during a time they had to stay at home, not being able to go out and meet people. There are still 8 people who affirm they don’t think the internet had approach them to other people during the pandemic and that can be explained by the fact that they didn’t feel far from who are close to them during this period.

Globalization appeared as a helping factor to join people and cultures and nowadays is something that is very present, being a factor that explain the mix of cultures and the connection that people can have on social media, explaining the knowledge of different artists and music. Seen in figure 5 is the results of the question ‘In your opinion, did globalization help the international artists to become a part of our playlists?’, most people answer ‘yes’ (98,46%) and only 4 people answered ‘no’ (1,54%). Being 255 people a representative number out of 259 people that answer to the survey, it’s possible to understand that globalization was a helping factor into connecting us with artists that are in the other side of the world, being social media fundamental to it since it allows us to listen to their music and eventually becoming part of our playlists.

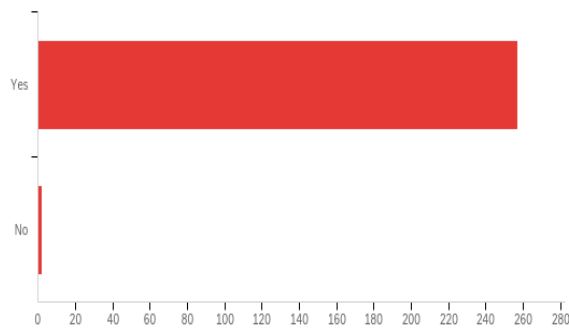


Figure 6: importance of globalization connecting cultures. Source: Self elaboration.

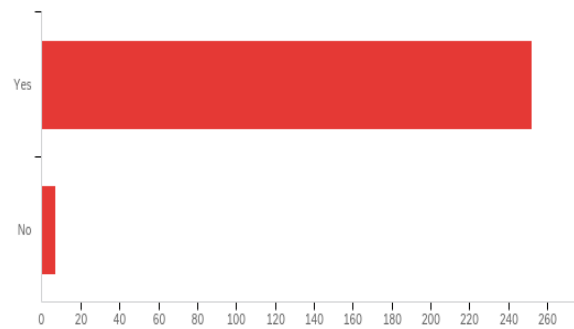


Figure 7: importance of social media during the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

On figure 6 we can see the answers given to the question ‘Was globalization a helping factor in connecting people from different cultures?’, like it was said before, globalization allow us to join people and cultures and making an analysis of the answers of 259 people, the majority answered ‘yes’ being 257 people the result of it (99,2%) and only 2 people answered ‘no’ (0,7%). This means that most people on this survey think globalization is important for us today, because it allow us to mix cultures which is an advantage for our world, since everything is starting to be connected, including our cultures.

When asked ‘Was social media (digital platforms of communication) important during the pandemic to control the effects of the lockdown?’, it was expected different answers given by people, mostly because the respondents could have different ways of dealing with the pandemic and that is a motive of different answers on this question. On figure 7 is possible to see that most people said that social media was important to control the effects of the pandemic, being ‘yes’, the question most choose with 252 respondents (97,3%), but also it’s possible to understand that 7 people answered ‘no’ (2,7%), which can mean that even with social media people could not escape from the reality of the pandemic. Some people see social media as a way of distraction to control the effects of the pandemic and that is good because they find themselves a solution to be entertained and not to think about the pandemic all the time, but the reality is that some people, in this case, the ones who answered ‘no’ think that even with social media, the pandemic has a big impact on them and even social media couldn’t do anything for them to forget about the situation they were living.

The following questions are going to approach the dependency of people with social media, and it was possible to see that people use social media with different purposes, and it has

different effects on them, they were made to understand the diverse situations that people could have experienced during this period and how they have consumed social media.

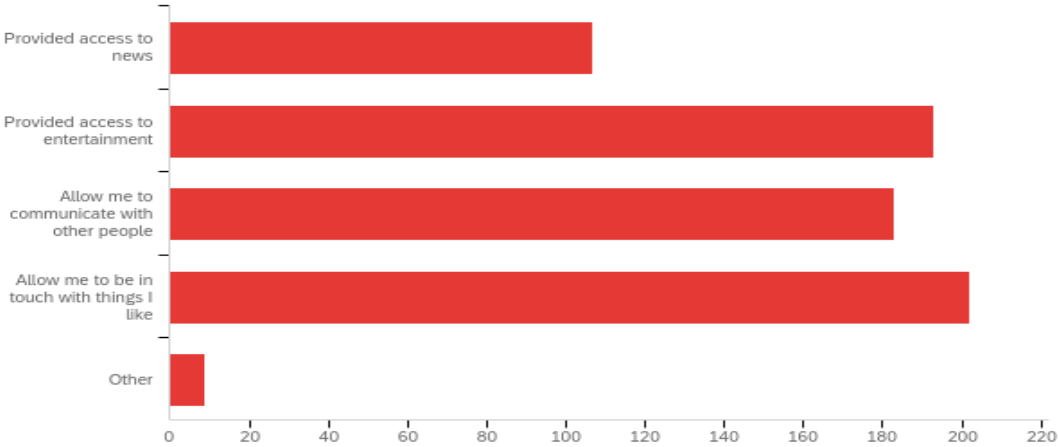


Figure 8: social media and how to control the effects of the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

The fifth question was ‘Choose the options that best suits how important was social media to control the effects of the lockdown (anxiety, loneliness, sadness, etc.)’, in this question it was expected for people to choose more than one option according to what they think about their use of social media and the purpose of choosing more than one option is because people could use social media with different purposes and for that reason it became important to understand the use they give to it. According to the data that was provided to us through the online survey, 107 people (15,4%) choose the option ‘provided access to news’ as a way of use of social media; 193 people (27,8%) also choose the option ‘provided access to entertainment’ as their use of social media and these numbers already represent a good number of the respondents meaning that people used social media a lot for seeing entertainment, which means that entertainment was important for people during this time and for that reason they tried to be in touch with it; 183 people (26,3%) pick ‘allow me to communicate with other people’ being also a good number of respondents choosing this option showing the importance of the contact with others during a time like a pandemic; being the most choose option with 202 people (29,1%) picking it, there is ‘allow me to be in touch with things I like’ and this shows that people feel the need to be in touch with the things they like for them to feel better during the pandemic and to control the effects of it on them. There was also 9 people who choose the option ‘other’ giving answers such as ‘all of the above’, ‘used for work purposes’, ‘contact governmental institutions’, ‘study material’, which means that each person could give other types of uses to social media itself depending on their needs during the pandemic. By understanding the answers, it’s possible to

see that each person may have choose 2/3 options (average of 2,68%) and for that reason it means they can identify with different purposes by using social media during the pandemic.

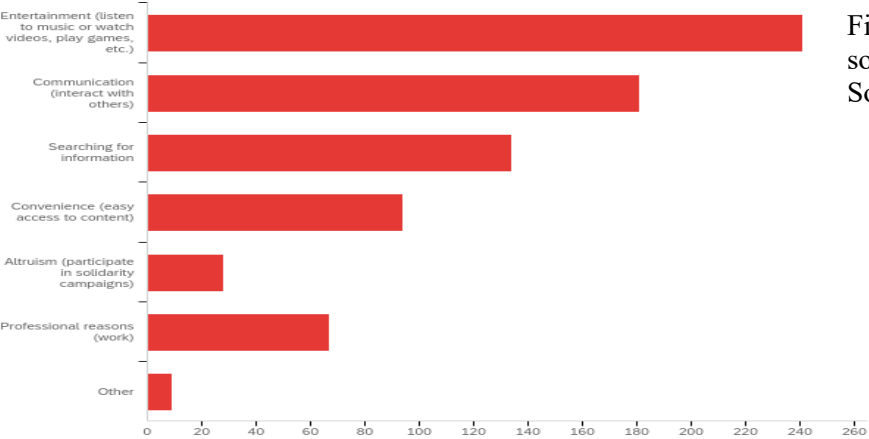


Figure 9: Motives to use social media.
Source: Self elaboration.

Seen in figure 9 is what motivates people to use social media, this question was asked with the purpose of understanding the different perspectives of people when using social media and it was allowed for people to choose more than one option. As a result of that, most people choose ‘entertainment’ as the main purpose with 241 people (31,9%) choosing it, representing the importance of it when using social media; followed by ‘communication’ with 181 people (24%) and ‘searching for information’ with a total of 134 people (17,7%); ‘convenience’ was chosen by 94 people (12,4%) and 67 respondents (8,8%) choose ‘professional reasons’. A smaller number of respondents choose the option ‘altruism’, being only 28 people (3,7%) the total of respondents for this option. In this question there was also the option ‘other’ in which people could answer other options to explain their use of social media and there were 9 people choosing it, giving answers such as ‘all of the above’ and ‘keep in touch with my family’. By these answers it’s also possible to understand that respondents choose an average of 2/3 options (average of 2,91%) when answering to it, which shows that they have different motives for using social media.

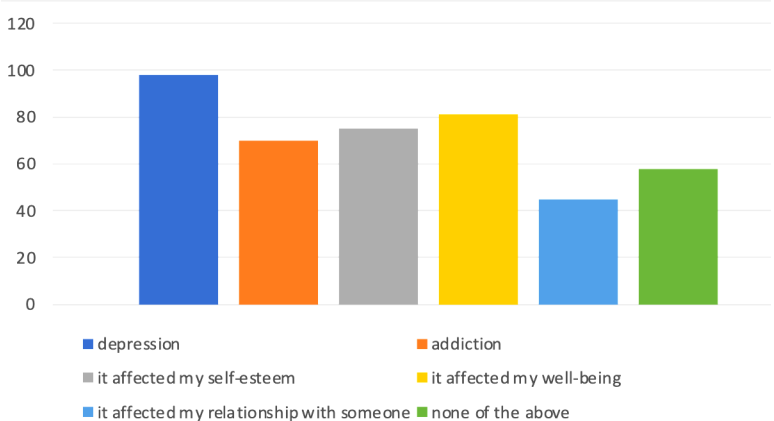


Figure 10: effects on people aggravated by social media during the pandemic.
Source: Self elaboration.

In the seventh question some options were presented to the respondents for them so choose the ones that best suits the problem they might have felt during the pandemic thanks to social media, the results of this answers were very unanimous because they were divided into different options. The option ‘depression’ was chosen by 98 people (22,9%), followed by 81 people (18,9%) choosing the option ‘it affected my well-being’; when it comes to choose the option ‘it affected my self-esteem’, 75 people (17,5%) agree that it was the motive that represents the problem they felt thanks to social media during the pandemic; 70 people (16,3%) choose the option ‘addiction’ as a motive for their problem and only 45 people (10,5%) answered ‘it affected my relationship with someone’. There were also 58 people (13,5%) that pick the option ‘none of the above’ since they didn’t feel any of these problems during the pandemic and all the results show that most people had suffered a problem during the pandemic thanks to social media, so, for some people, social media was a disadvantage for them because it has affected them somehow. It is also important to notice that 58 people think that social media didn’t aggravate the symptoms that they might have felt during this time, meaning that it was important for them. Excluding this 58 people, it’s possible to understand that the respondents pick an average of 1/2 options (average of 1,42%) for explaining the problems they might have felt during the pandemic thanks to social media.

3.3. The cultural and creative sector

In the second topic of the online survey was the approach to the cultural and creative sector, this topic is composed by 5 questions in which we try to approach to the consumption of the products given to us by the cultural and creative sector during the pandemic.

The first question made the respondents think about the way they consume the products like music and literature, for example, and it’s possible to see that 228 people (88%) answered they ‘consume through social media platforms’ and 31 people (12%) answer that they ‘keep with the traditional consumption’. It is noticeable that social media platforms started to become important and for that reason people started using it more to consume products like music and literature.

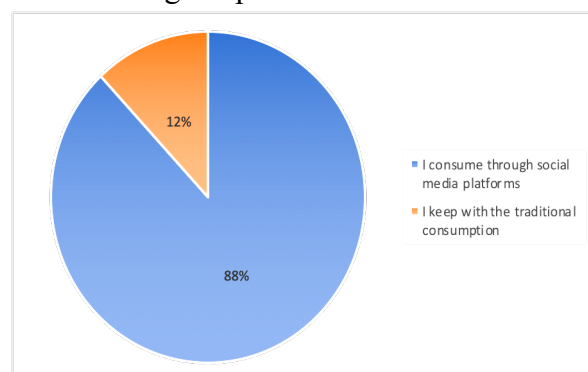


Figure 11: consumption of the creative and cultural sector. Source: Self elaboration.

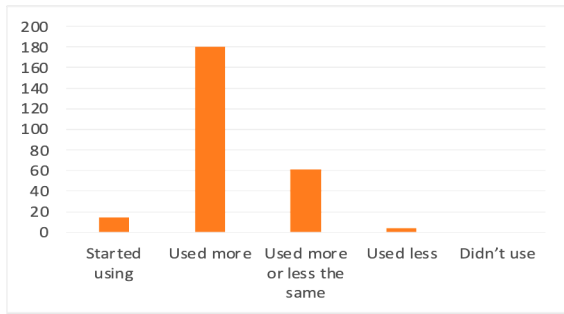


Figure 12: use of social networks during the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

(5,4%) answered that they ‘started using’ social networks during this time and 61 people (23,5%) said they ‘used more or less the same’. There was 4 people (1,5%) who said they ‘used less’ social networks during this time and this is important to notice since people stayed at home during this time and it was expected for them to use what they could to be entertained and social media was a good resource to it and these 4 people said they used less, meaning that they tried to stay away from it. However, out of 259 people, there was not a single person who ‘didn’t use’ social networks.

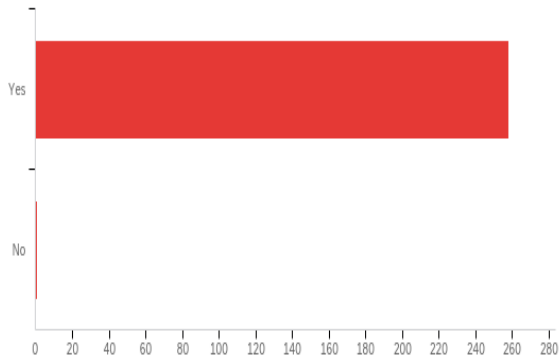


Figure 13: help of music through social networks. Source: Self elaboration.

When asked ‘To what extent the pandemic change your use of social network sites compared to the pre-COVID era?’ we see different results, but also a very chosen option between the answers. Most of the respondents said they ‘used more’ social networks during the pandemic being 180 (69,5%) the number of respondents that pick this. Only 14 people

By making an analysis of figure 13, we can see the results of the question ‘Did the consumption of music through social networks help you during the pandemic?’ and as seen with this data 258 people (99,6%) answered ‘yes’ being this the representative number of this question and only 1 person (0,4%) said ‘no’. This can mean that music really helps people during a time such as a pandemic and that it was a benefit for us to have it with us during such a different time.

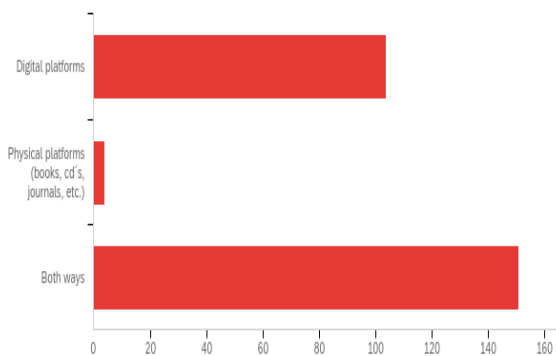


Figure 14: Consumption of media. Source: Self elaboration.

In terms of consumption of media, 104 people (40,1%) said they only consume it through ‘digital platforms’, only 4 people (1,5%) said ‘physical platforms’ and the majority answered ‘both ways’ with a total of 151 people (58,3%). It is noticeable that people started

consuming more through digital platforms but at the same time they still consume it a lot through physical platforms.

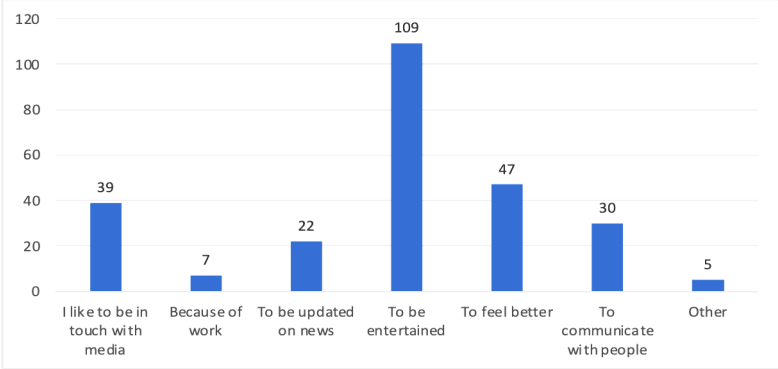


Figure 15: purposes of consuming media. Source: Self elaboration.

After understanding the motives to use social media, like using it to see entertainment, to communicate, between others, it became important to understand the purposes of using it. It was given 7 possible answers for people to choose just one option that best suits their purpose, most people answer ‘to be entertained’ as the main chosen option with 109 people (42%); 47 people (18,1%) answer they consume media because they want ‘to feel better’, 39 people (15%) said ‘I like to be in touch with media’ and 30 people (11,5%) said they use it to ‘communicate with people’. In other side there are two more motives that make people consuming media and they are ‘because of work’ and 7 people (2,7%) choose this option and ‘to be updated on news’ with 22 people (8,4%) choosing it. Most people choose between these 6 options that were given to them and only 5 people (1,9%) decided to go with the option ‘other’ giving answers such as ‘all of the above’. Seen in figure 15 is the data exported from the online survey showing that people choose between different options trying to approach to what is their real purpose when consuming media.

3.4. The music industry

The third topic that was approached was the music industry and it became important to understand the impact of it in the lives of different people, mostly to understand the changes that may have occurred during the pandemic.

The first question of this part was ‘Please rate the importance of music consumption in your life’ and it had a scale from 0 to 10 in which 0 means ‘it is not

	Frequency	Percentage
Detractor	9	3.5
Passive	73	28.2
Promoter	177	68.3

Figure 16: importance of music consumption. Source: Self elaboration.

important for me’, 5 means ‘it is moderately important for me’ and 10 means ‘it is fundamental for me’. By looking at the results on figure 16, it’s possible to see that most people answer in a positive way to the question, in this case on a scale from 0 to 10, the results of the detractor were in the scale a 5/6 in which 9 people (3,5%) choose it meaning that music is moderately important to them, passive in this case were people who answer with a 7/8 in the scale, 73 people (28,2%) choose this option meaning that music is in between of moderately important and fundamental for them. As for the promoter which means a 9/10 in the scale, 177 people (68,3%) choose it and they think music as something fundamental for them. We can see by the results that not even one person chooses below 5 on the scale meaning that music is somehow always important for them.

After understanding the importance of music in people’s lives it become important to understand if that changed during the pandemic, for that reason, it was asked if ‘music gained importance during the pandemic’ and most people, 238 people (92%) said that music had a special role in them during this time, but what is important to notice is that, still 21 people (8%) said music did not gain importance during this time. These answers can be justified by the fact that music was already in their lives and for that reason people did not see it as a change, or this can mean that they had other things that become important for them during the pandemic and not music specially.

We consume music in different ways, some of us consume it through digital platforms, some by traditional formats and there is even people who consume it in both ways, for this reason it was asked to the respondents how they consume music, the majority said they consume it by digital platforms, a number of 207 people (79,9%) choose this option; 5 people (1,9%) said they consume it only through traditional formats and a number of 47 people (18,1%) said they consume it by using both ways. In a digital world like ours is important to see that out of 259 people, there are still 47 people who said they consume it through traditional formats like cd’s, and this

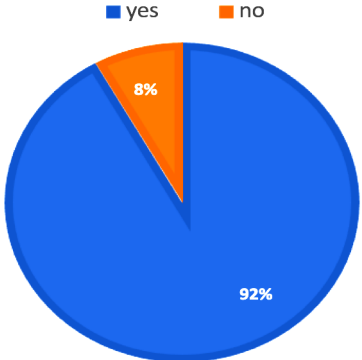


Figure 17: importance of music during the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

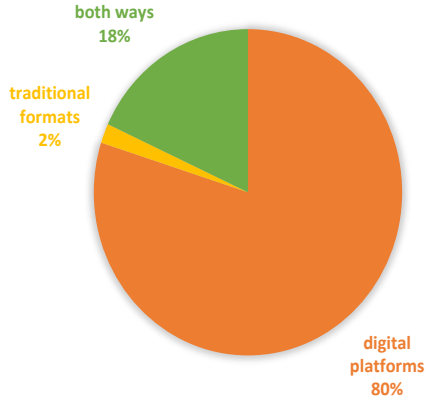


Figure 18: How to consume music. Source: Self elaboration.

means that even with some changes that are occurring in the consumption of music, there are still people who prefer to consume it like it was before.

In the literature review it was said that music approaches people and communities and even transform different people into communities that can be created based on their interests. For understanding if people are inserted on any online community it was asked ‘Do you belong or

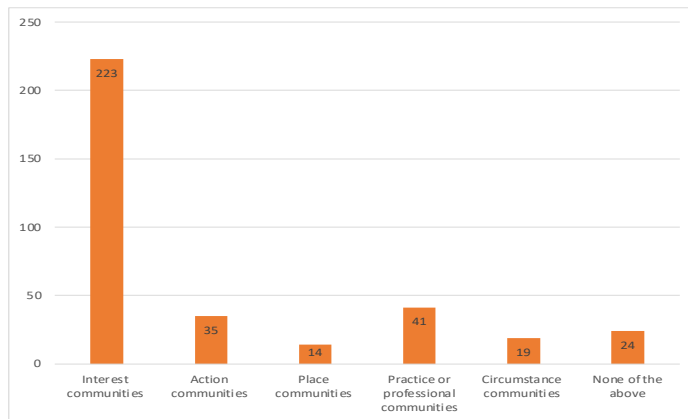


Figure 19: Belonging to an online community.
Source: Self elaboration.

are involved to any of this type of online communities?’ and it was given some options for people to decide whether they are or not on an online community. 223 people (62,6%) said they are into an interest community, which means they feel they are a part of a community based on their interests by having them in common, most people choose this option which can

mean that when a person join to a community, they can do it to speak about their interests. 35 people (9,8%) said they belong to action communities, which means they join to support causes and they want to change something they don’t agree with, nowadays this is a very common action mostly because of initiatives to create a better world and thinking about environment causes, for example. There are 14 people (3,9%) who said they belong to place communities, and this is also a very common community, since people are brought together according to the place they might live. 41 people (11,5%) are inserted in practice or professional communities; 19 people (5,3%) said they belong to circumstances communities, which are communities where people are brought together when something unexpected happen, like it is the example of the pandemic, who brought people together to help each other in such a difficult time. What was not expected was the 24 people (6,7%) who said they don’t belong to any type of community and that can mean that they can be together with other people and still don’t have a thing in common that makes them think that they are a part of something bigger. Excluding the option ‘none of the above’, the average of answers that were chosen was 1,28% which means that in general people only choose around one option per person.

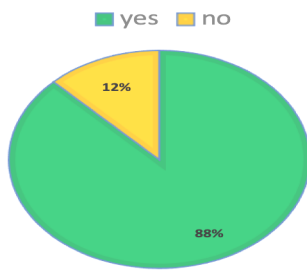


Figure 20: internet and the belonging to a community. Source: Self elaboration.

Since we understand now that people belong to different communities, it was asked ‘Was the internet important to make you feel that you are a part of a community during the pandemic?’ and mostly said ‘yes’ with a number of 227 people (88%) and a smaller number, with 32 people (12%) said ‘no’, which means that people still feel a part of a community on a pandemic without the help of internet.

For the last questions on this topic, it was possible to ask if the respondents feel that they are a part of a fandom, in which 254 people (98%) said ‘yes’ and only 5 people (2%) said ‘no’. It was expected the answer of these 254 people since the online survey was made for *BTS* fans to answer to it, but it was not expected the 5 people who said they don’t belong to any fandom, meaning that they see themselves as

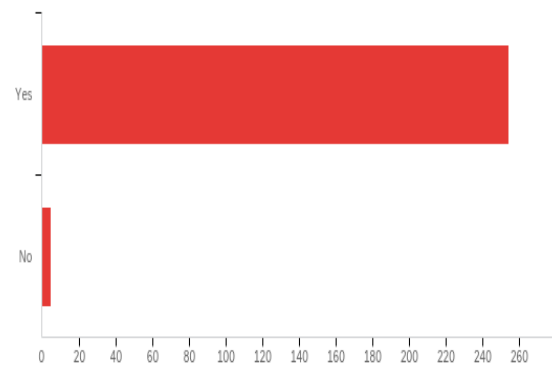


Figure 21: Belonging to a fandom. Source: Self elaboration.

BTS fans, but they don’t think they belong to something bigger like a fandom with people joining together to form a community based on their interests.

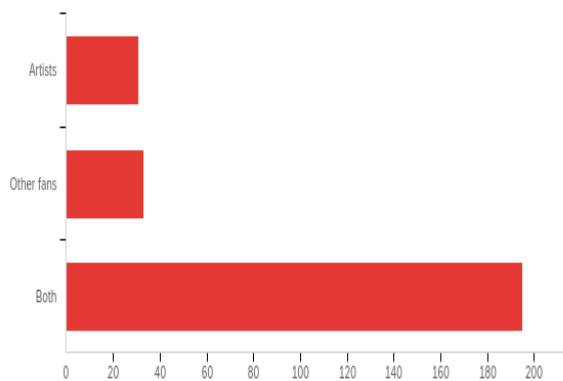


Figure 22: the use of social media to communicate. Source: Self elaboration.

It was also asked ‘Did you use social media, during the pandemic, to communicate with’ and the respondents could choose between ‘artists’, ‘other fans’ and ‘both’, the results were very diversified and what is good to see is that people use it for different purposes, 31 people (11,9%) said they use social media to communicate with artists, 33 people (12,7%) use it to communicate with other fans and the majority, 125 people said that they use it for both things, making this a

very good result because it give us a perspective on the purpose of people when using social media. From 259 people who answer to the survey, it is important to see that 125 people use social media to stay in touch not only with artists but also with other fans, which makes us understand the purpose of social media, giving us a perspective of the benefit of having social media nowadays.

3.5. The Korean pop music industry: the K-pop group *BTS*

The fourth topic of the survey made us think about the consumption of music and the interaction by *BTS* fans with the artists itself, but also the importance of their music for their fans during the pandemic.

Before making an analyze of the group itself and their fans, it become important to ask about the K-pop in general before approaching to a specific group, so, for it, it was asked if the respondents know what K-pop is and 259 people (100%) said they know what K-pop is, being possible to make an analyze of all the data from the respondents since they have what it takes to make an analyze of *BTS* fans being that the main point.

To have a perspective when people started listening to K-pop, it was asked to the respondents to say the year they started listening to it and the result was a diverse number of years, and this is somehow expected by the different ages that also exist within the respondents. Out of 259 people, one of them started listening in 1988 and this can be explained by the fact that if someone is from South Korea, they could have listened to it sooner than the rest of the world. By the data provided to us on figure 24, it's possible to see that most people started consuming from 2014 and it only gets more people listening to it until the year of 2021, between these years a total of 216 people started listening to it and this is most of the respondents. It is also possible to see that a big part of the respondents started listening to K-pop in 2020, being 56 people (21,6%) the biggest number of people starting listen to K-pop out of all this years, and it's curious to see that, because in 2020 we were already living with the pandemic, which can show that people started to consume different music, that they were not used to, during the time they stay at home, without concerts to go.

People could get more curious about trying to listen to different genres of music and new artists and since they had more time to search for it, they did it with the help of internet and social media.

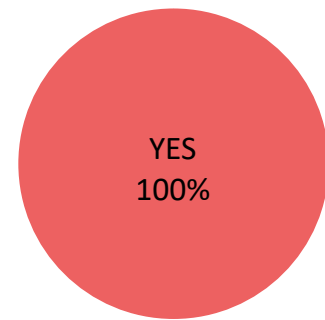


Figure 23: Acquaintance of K-pop.
Source: Self elaboration.

	Frequency	Percentage
1988	1	.4
1995	1	.4
1997	1	.4
2000	2	.8
2007	2	.8
2008	4	1.5
2009	5	1.9
2010	8	3.1
2011	3	1.2
2012	8	3.1
2013	8	3.1
2014	15	5.8
2015	9	3.5
2016	26	10.0
2017	34	13.1
2018	30	11.6
2019	31	12.0
2020	56	21.6
2021	15	5.8

Figure 24: Year of starting to listen to K-pop.
Source: Self elaboration.

The internet has a special role when it comes to present us to new contents, and this can be seen here by the number of respondents that started to listen to K-pop during the pandemic. It is also important to notice that the data from 2021 is about the period until the ending of the online survey, being possible that until the end of the year more fans can start listening to K-pop, including others that did not answer to this online survey.

Starting to approach to a more specific context of study, it became important to see when the respondents started listening to *BTS*, this because, the main point of the research is to make an analyze of *BTS* fans, so it is very important to understand when they started to consume their music. *BTS* made their debut in 2013 and that's the reason the data here started at that particular

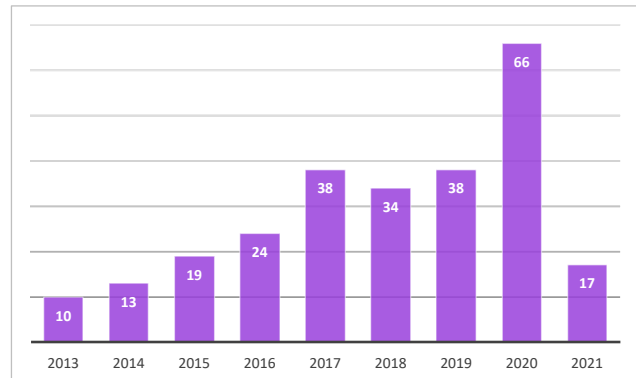


Figure 25: Year of starting to listen to *BTS*. Source: Self elaboration.

year, we can see that out of 259 people, there is 10 people (3,8%) that said they are with the group since the beginning; all the data here also shows that the results are very similar, since in all these years, there are fans who started to listen to their music. It is important to notice that since 2016, there are more people who started joining them and the major difference that we can see is that a bigger number of respondents, in this case 66 people (25,4%) started listening to *BTS* during the pandemic, which shows once again that social media and the internet had a special role when it comes to meet new artists and their music. Besides that, comparing the number of people who started listening to *BTS* and K-pop in general in the years from 2019 until 2021, most of the people who started listening to K-pop, started to listen to *BTS* in those years.

When asked 'Do you consider yourself a member of *ARMY* (official fandom name of *BTS*)?', 258 people (99,6%) answered 'yes' and only 1 people (0,4%) said 'no', being this answer from one respondent who said that like to listen to their music but doesn't identify by being an *ARMY*. These results

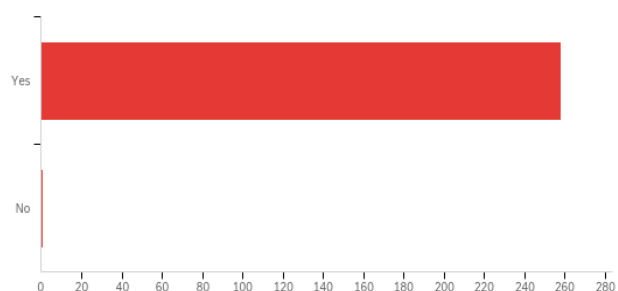


Figure 26: Members of *ARMY* (official fandom name of *BTS*). Source: Self elaboration.

were expected since the online survey was made for *ARMY* to answer, but what was different from what was expected is that these answers are different from the ones about the fandom in which 5 people said they don't belong to any fandom and here they say that they are *ARMY*,

and this can only be explain if this 5 people don't think *ARMY* is a fandom or they don't know what is exactly the definition of a fandom, but this is something that can be explored in future studies about this theme.

After understanding how many *ARMY* answer to this survey, it was asked if they feel part of a community by being an *ARMY* in which 251 people (96,91%) said 'yes' and 8 people (3,09%) said 'no'. In this case, each person has their own opinion about belonging to a community by being *BTS* fans and the 8 people who said 'no' may be *ARMY* but they don't feel like they belong to something big like a community.

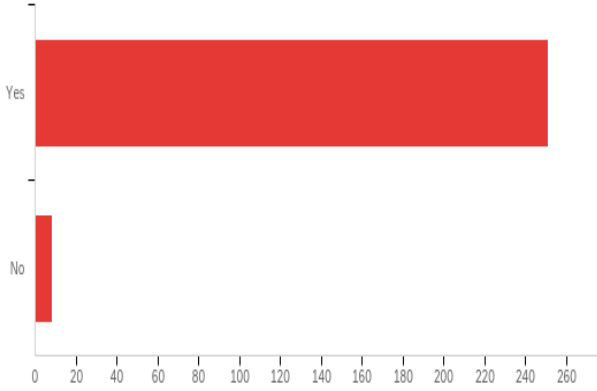


Figure 27: Relation of *ARMY* and a community. Source: Self elaboration.

It was hard for us to stay in touch with things we like during the pandemic and being in touch with artists was not an exception, by making an analyze of the relation of *ARMY* and *BTS* during the pandemic, it's possible to see that most respondents have chosen almost every option excluding the last one, 168 people (24,3%) said they 'feel connected to *BTS* through social media', 163 people (23,5%) said that 'being an *ARMY* had a good impact on me during the pandemic', 217

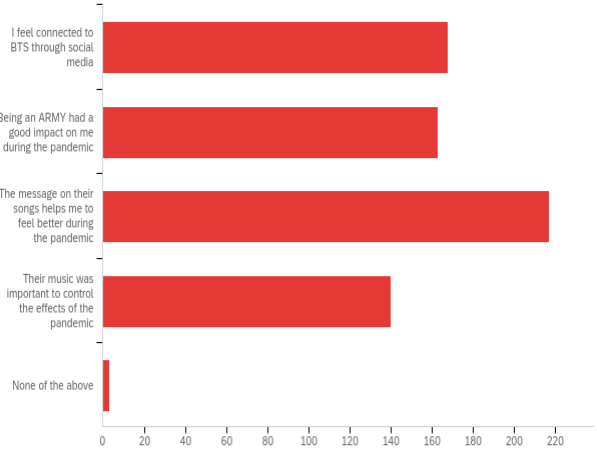


Figure 28: Relationship with *BTS* during the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

people (31,4%) pick the option 'the message on their songs helps me to feel better during the pandemic' and 140 people (20,2%) pick 'their music was important to control the effects on the pandemic'. By having a major part of people choosing these options, we can understand that the relationship of *ARMY* and *BTS* was very important for the fans during this time and that it has a special role when it comes to spend time and to control the effects of the pandemic. Only 3 people (0,43%) choose the option 'none of the above' because they don't identify with any of the options given. So, excluding the 3 people that choose the last option, the respondents choose an average of 2/3 options per person (average of 2,66%), being important to identify the option 'the message on their songs helps me to feel better during the pandemic' in which it has

the major number of respondents choosing it, meaning that music and lyrics made fans feel better during the pandemic.

Since music has a great impact on people and as we already see, music had a special role on *BTS* fans during the pandemic, we expect for music to be something even bigger. Music and artists help people, and it has a great influence on them and to prove that we ask the respondents ‘Do you think *BTS* makes you more compassionate about helping others?’ and most answers were ‘yes’ since 253 people (97,68%)

pick ‘yes’ as their answer and only 6 people (2,32%) said ‘no’. This data proves that artists can influence their fans to help others and to be a part of something bigger that can make a change. In the literature review it was said that *ARMY* always try to help others by donating to institutions in need to help more people and here we can see that somehow *BTS* makes people feel more compassionate about helping the ones around them, which can be the start of a change.

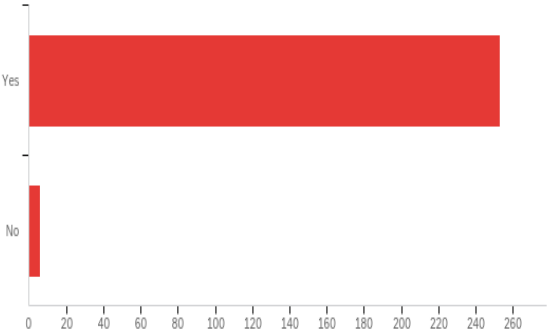


Figure 29: Influence of *BTS* to help others. Source: Self elaboration.

3.6. The COVID-19 pandemic and the effect on the music industry

The last topic of the survey had questions about the COVID-19 pandemic and the effect on the music industry, here becomes important to understand how the consumption of music have changed during the pandemic and how did people adapt to the experience of the online consumption of music.

To first understand the effects of the pandemic on people it was asked ‘In which ways did the pandemic affect your life?’, several were the answers given and some of them were not expected, it was given 4 options and they’re ‘work’, ‘family’, ‘relations with others’ and ‘other’, it was expected for the respondents to answer to the first three but the last option had a big number

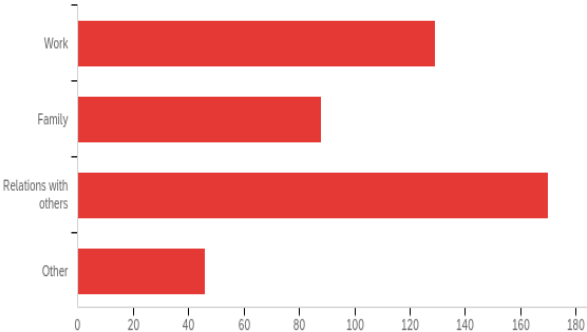


Figure 30: effects of the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

of respondents choosing it. The most chosen option was ‘relations with others’ with 170 respondents (39,26%) choosing it, followed by ‘work’ with 129 respondents (29,79%) and the option ‘family’ has 88 respondents (20,32%). The option that was not expected to have so many respondents was ‘other’ with 46 people (10,62%) choosing it, in which people could write the possible effects of the pandemic on them, several were the answers and some of them were ‘myself’, ‘mentally’, ‘school’ and ‘my whole life was affected’. What can be seen for the results is that most people answered to 1/2 options (average of 1,67%) showing that during the pandemic, people have suffered with any type of problem that eventually changed their life during this period.

During the pandemic some changes had occurred, and we had to change what we normally do adapting to the online experience of living, when asked ‘Did you have to adapt to the online experience of living?’, a number of 206 people (80%) said ‘yes’ and 53 people (20%) said ‘no’, it was expected for people to say yes since we had to change a lot of things we were used to do because of it, but what we can also see is that there are a big number of people who said they didn’t had to change their life because of the pandemic adapting them to the online experience of living.

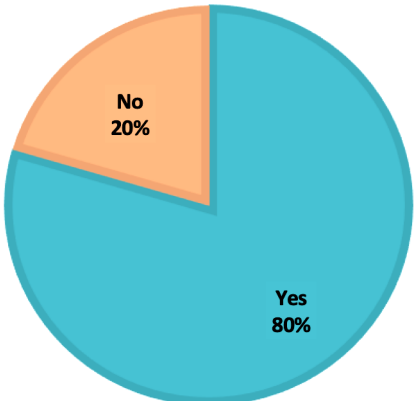


Figure 31: Adapting to the online experience of living.
Source: Self elaboration.

As we know the pandemic had some effects on us because we had to change our life somehow because we had to stay at home, we couldn’t be with other people because of the COVID-19 and seeing our life being changed by a virus could have some other effects on us. Trying to approach to the effects that the pandemic could have on mental health of people, it was asked ‘Do you feel that the pandemic had a negative impact on your mental health (anxiety, depression or PTSD) during this period?’, like it was

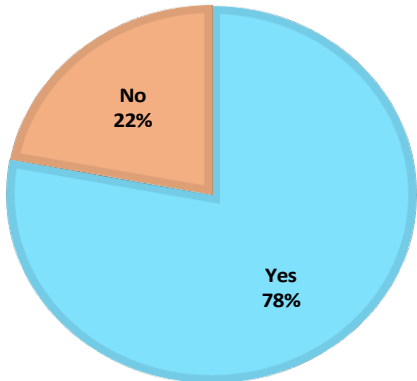


Figure 32: effects of the pandemic on mental health.
Source: Self elaboration.

expected 202 people (78%) said ‘yes’ showing that most of the respondents see their mental health being affected during this time, however there are still 57 people (22%) who said ‘no’ showing they weren’t affected by the pandemic when it comes to mental health. Besides the fact that there are 57 people who said they were not affected, it is important to notice and give

attention to the 202 people who said that they were affected, because out of 259 respondents this is most of them, and this data is concerning in terms of mental health issues.

Thinking about the changes that have occurred during the pandemic in terms of consumption of music, we get to see some changes in terms of concerts. During the pandemic we couldn't attend live concerts since the world tours of artists were cancelled due to the restrictions imposed by the pandemic, for this reason artists had to adapt their concerts allowing them to

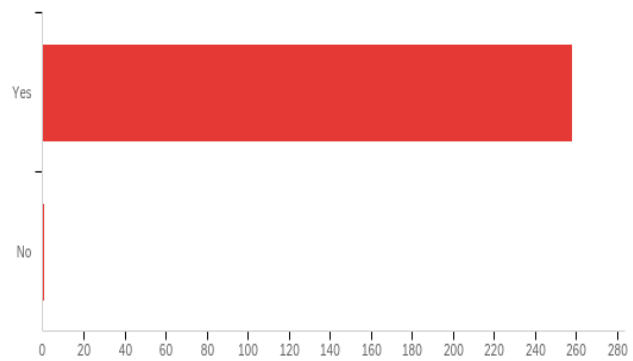


Figure 33: Streaming of online concerts of *BTS* by their fans. Source: Self elaboration.

keep in touch with their fans, it was asked to the respondents 'Did you see any online concert by *BTS* during the pandemic?' in order to understand the consumption of online concerts by *BTS* fans, like it was expected 258 people (99,61%) choose the option 'yes' meaning that they see an online concert by *BTS* during the pandemic and only 1 person (0,39%) affirm that they didn't see it. This also shows the main target of the survey since it was asked for people to answer to it if they saw an online concert made by the group.

After understanding that most of the respondents have watched an online concert of *BTS* during the pandemic, it was also important to understand what motivates them to do it and for that reason it was given some options for them to choose the motives and as a result, 61 people (8,44%) pick 'convenience' as a motive to watch their concert, 43 people (5,95%) choose

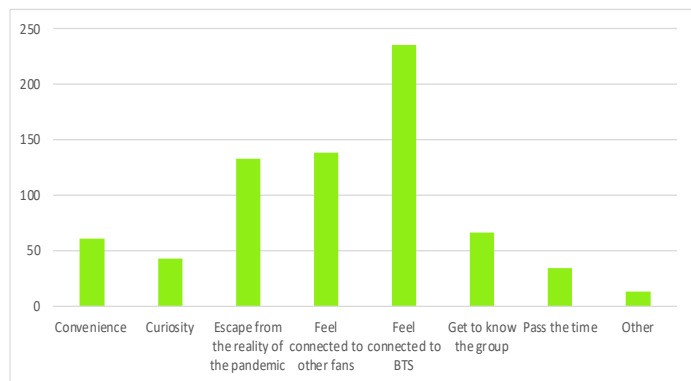


Figure 34: Motives to watch an online concert of *BTS*. Source: Self elaboration.

'curiosity'; 133 people (18,40%) pick 'escape from the reality of the pandemic'; 138 people (19,09%) choose 'feel connected to other fans'; 'feel connected to *BTS*' was the option with the most number of respondents choosing it with 235 people (32,50%) choosing it, meaning that it was important for fans to be connected with the artists itself during this time; 66 people (9,13%) choose the option 'get to know the group'; 34 people (4,70%) pick 'pass the time' as the answer for their motive to watch their concert and 13 respondents (1,80%) choose the option 'other' giving answers such as 'I like them before so I wanted to see their online concert', 'I have

never attended any concert so this was a new experience for me’, ‘to enjoy the performance with my family’, ‘support BTS and their crew who made it possible for us to see an online concert’, ‘wanted to hear and watch them after a long time. Also show them we are still supporting them because I know how hard the pandemic affected BTS’ and ‘I just love them, and I watched it because I feel good when I watch it’. We can see by the number of options that were chosen that the respondents choose around 2/3 options (average of 2,79%) and this means there were several motives for people to watch their concerts.

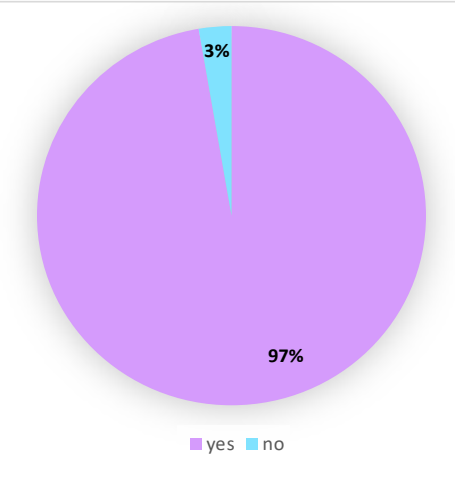


Figure 35: Experience of an online concert. Source: Self elaboration.

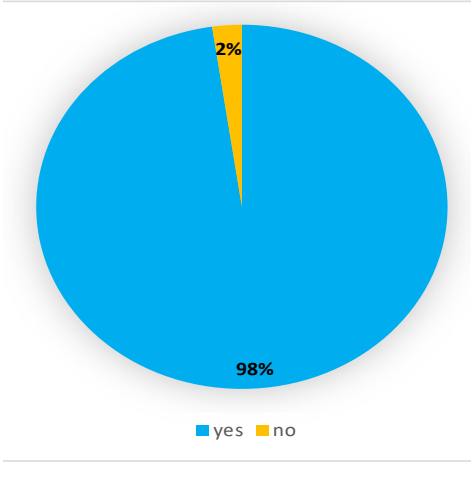


Figure 36: interaction of an online concert between artists and fans. Source: Self elaboration.

When asked ‘Did you feel closer to *BTS* after seeing an online concert?’, 252 people (97%) said ‘yes’ and only 7 people (3%) said ‘no’, meaning that most of the respondents think the online concerts were a benefit for them to feel closer to the group, but it is important to notice that are still 7 people who said no, meaning that somehow the experience of streaming an online concert is not the same experience as watching a live concert, for several factors, for example the communication between artists and their fans are different from a live concert than an online concert.

Since the answers above make us understand if *ARMY* feel closer to *BTS* with the online concerts they made, the following question of the survey was ‘Was the interaction created at their online concert with fans good for you to feel closer to them?’, trying to approach to the benefit of having online concerts and, in this case, 253 people (98%) said ‘yes’ and only 6 people (2%) said ‘no’ meaning that the respondents that said no in the question above were the same’s that said no in this one, meaning that once again people think the reality of an online concert and a live concert is very different, and that the interaction created at a live concert is better than an online concert.

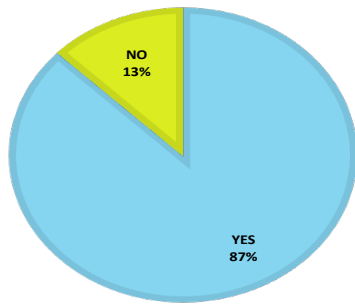


Figure 37: online concerts as an escape of the pandemic. Source: Self elaboration.

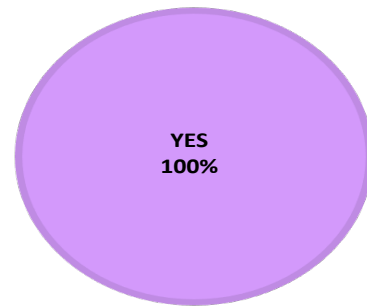


Figure 38: positive impact of online concerts on *BTS* fans. Source: Self elaboration.

In figure 37 we can see the results for the question ‘Were the online concerts an escape from the reality of the pandemic?’, expecting to have different results on this question, 226 people (87%) said ‘yes’ and 33 people (13%) said ‘no’ meaning that even if people are in touch with something they like, they still feel the effects of the pandemic. Like it was possible to see before, music and *BTS*, helped their fans to control the effects of the pandemic with the help of their music, but the pandemic affects people in every way, so the online concerts were not a solution for everything that was happening around people lives and the result of these answers are a proof to that.

Thinking about the well-being of *BTS* fans during the pandemic, it was possible to understand with the questions above that their music was a benefit for people that like their music and that the online concerts were something good that was created for people to be entertained during this time and in touch with something they like, for that reason it was asked ‘Did you feel better after watching an online concert by *BTS*?’ and all of the respondents, 259 people (100%) said ‘yes’ showing that the online concerts by *BTS* were good for people to feel better and increasing their well-being during a difficult time of their lives like a pandemic. These results are something good to see since it’s possible to understand that in a time such as a pandemic, there is something that can cheer people up just by watching an online concert of a group like *BTS*.

After understanding that the online concerts by *BTS* were something that makes people happy, it was asked for the respondents to classify on a scale from 0 to 10 their well-being after watching an online concert by *BTS* in which 0 is ‘it didn’t affect my well-being’, 5 is ‘it affected moderately my well-being’ and 10 means ‘it has affected a lot my well-being in a positive way’. By the results that were obtained, the detractors were people who answer to the options 5/6 on

the scale and a number of 7 people (2,7%) pick these options, the passive had the options of 7/8 in the scale as a chosen option and 57 people (22%) pick these options and as promoters were the options 9/10 in the scale, having a total of 195 people (75,3%) choosing these two options. What can be seen by these results is that in all the answers given, people said that the concerts online had always a positive impact on their well-being, being more frequent the options 9/10 meaning that it has affected a lot their well-being during this period.

	Frequency	Percentage
Detractor	7	2.7
Passive	57	22.0
Promoter	195	75.3

Figure 39: well-being after an online concert of *BTS*.
Source: Self elaboration.

For the last question of the survey, it was asked a question that approaches the respondents more to the artists and it was asked ‘Did you identify yourself with the lyrics of the album called *BE* when it comes to the effects of the pandemic?’, and 251 people (97%) said ‘yes’ and only 8 people (3%) said ‘no’. The album called *BE* has some songs that talk about the effects of the pandemic on people like anxiety, depression and the unknowing of the future, seeing that 251 people identify themselves with it, it’s possible to see that the artists try to express what they feel about the pandemic with music and their fans end up identifying themselves with it, being that a positive thing because the fans feel closer to them because of it since it shows that *BTS* understand what their fans are going through during this time and that they’re feeling the same way.

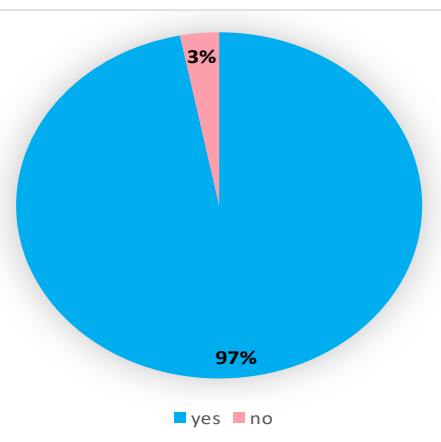


Figure 40: Identification with the album ‘*BE*’ by *BTS*.
Source: Self elaboration.

The online survey had several questions to better understand the music consumption and the changes that have occurred in people lives during the pandemic and with the results that were obtained with it, it became possible to see that *BTS* music and their concerts were a benefit for their fans by increasing their well-being and trying to control the effects of the pandemic, it was also possible to see that people started using the internet even more and for that reason they started searching for new products to consume such as music from artists they didn’t know before the pandemic. The pandemic had some negative impact on people’s lives but at the same time it connected people which helped some of them to feel better and eventually to surpass the time of the pandemic by being with others and in contact with things they like, such as music.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand the use of social media and the music consumption by *BTS* fans during the COVID-19 pandemic, and to do that, it became fundamental to make an online survey to understand the fans point of view about it and this methodology allowed us to get to a bigger number of people. As it will be explained ahead, some of the results were expected and others were not, but what could be seen is that social media really has an important role in people's lives and with the pandemic that become even more obvious the impact that it has on us. According to this study and with the results obtained, during the pandemic social media had an important role when it comes to join people and it allow them to get in touch with what they have interest in, like the music industry. With the pandemic, changes have occurred in the music industry and in the use of social media, the online concerts were something new for fans to be in touch with the artists, but it became something that work out by allowing the artists to keep going with their work by using a different platform.

Besides that, with the online survey, some were the answers that were expected, but there were unexpected answers as well and they can eventually become future studies around this theme, for example, it become a doubt why people affirm that the internet didn't approach them from others during the pandemic, they could have answered this because the physical communication is different from the digital one, but was that a significant explanation for them to say that? There were also people saying that social media didn't distract them from the pandemic, that can be another theme to be approached, since it can make us understand why that happen. There is also a possibility to make a future study more around the well-being of fans during the pandemic caused by the online concerts, trying to narrow the research to the well-being provided through it and not so much about the consumption of music in general and the use of social media.

By making this study, some were the limitations that appeared to it, like the number of respondents to get a representative sample, to get it, there were needed a lot more people, but with the results that were obtained from it, it already showed us the importance of studying this theme. Instead of making online surveys and for better understand the point of view of the fans about this subject, it was thought about making interviews, but since we are in a middle of a pandemic and to get to a bigger number of respondents, it was decided to make the online survey. Another limitation that tried to be surpassed was the language barrier, since the online survey was made in English and there are people who could not answer to it since they didn't

feel comfortable with the language. The survey was spread on social media platforms but there is also a possibility that not all the fans had the access to it, for that reason, in future studies it is important to spread the online survey with profile pages that have more followers to get to a better sample.

This dissertation tried to join all these topics together to understand the role of music in *BTS* fans during a time such as this, and with this study it was possible to understand that being a fan of a group allows fans to communicate with each other, they could feel inserted into a community and they could find an escape of a pandemic by watching an online concert, even if it's just for a short period of time. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to many doubts to people, it made us change our life and eventually it affected us somehow, but it also brought people together and make them approach to what they like to feel better, people started accepting what they like without thinking what others could think of them, which led for a community to grow together, in this case, around music.

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Appendix

Structure of the online survey

Q0. Dear participant,

The present study aims to understand the impact of a K-pop group called *BTS* in the well-being of their fans in the pandemic context. The focus of this survey is to know your opinion about the use of social media and the consumption of music during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is part of a master's dissertation in world internet studies at ISCTE-IUL. Your participation on this study is voluntary and all answers are anonymous and private, and the data will only be used for academic purposes. The completion of the survey will take around 10 minutes of your time. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. By pressing the continue button, your indicating that you understand this information and that you accept to participate in this study.

Q1. Was the internet important for you to stay in touch with people who are close to you during the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q2. In your opinion, did globalization help the international artists to become a part of our playlists?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q3. Was globalization a helping factor in connecting people from different cultures?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q4. Was social media (digital platforms of communication) important during the pandemic to control the effects of the lockdown?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q5. Choose the options that best suits how important was social media to control the effects of the lockdown (anxiety, loneliness, sadness, etc.)

- Provided access to news (1)
- Provided access to entertainment (2)
- Allow me to communicate with other people (3)
- Allow me to be in touch with things I like (4)
- Other (5) _____

Q6. What motivates you to use social media?

- Entertainment (listen to music or watch videos, play games, etc.) (1)
- Communication (interact with others) (2)
- Searching for information (3)
- Convenience (easy access to content) (4)
- Altruism (participate in solidarity campaigns) (5)
- Professional reasons (work) (6)
- Other (7) _____

Q7. Choose the options that best suits the problem you might have felt during the pandemic thanks to social media

- Depression (1)
- Addiction (2)
- It affected my self-esteem (3)
- It affected my well-being (4)
- It affected my relationship with someone (5)
- None of the above (6)

Q8. Do you mainly consume the products (ex. music, literature and publishing, etc.) that the cultural and creative sector give us through social media, or do you mainly keep with the traditional consumption?

- I consume through social media platforms (1)
- I keep with the traditional consumption (books, journals, cd's, etc.) (2)

Q9. To what extent the pandemic change your use of social network sites compared to the pre-COVID era?

- Started using (1)
- Used more (2)
- Used more or less the same (3)
- Used less (4)
- Didn't use (5)

Q10. Did the consumption of music through social networks help you during the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q11. What's your preference in terms of media consumption?

- Digital platforms (1)
- Physical platforms (books, cd's, journals, etc.) (2)
- Both ways (3)

Q12. What is your main purpose when consuming media?

- I like to be in touch with media (1)
- Because of work (2)
- To be updated on news (3)
- To be entertained (4)
- To feel better (5)
- To communicate with people (6)
- Other (7) _____

Q13. Please rate the importance of music consumption in your life

- 0 (0)
- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 (8)
- 9 (9)
- 10 (10)

Q14. Do you think music gained importance during the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q15. Where do you usually listen to music?

- Digital platforms (youtube, spotify, soundcloud, apple music, deezer, Google play music, etc.) (1)
- Traditional formats (cd's, vinyl, cassettes) (2)
- Both ways (3)

Q16. Do you belong or are involved to any of this type of online communities?

- Interest communities (with people who share the same interest) (1)
- Action communities (that support causes and try to bring change) (2)
- Place communities (people brought together by geography) (3)
- Practice or professional communities (4)
- Circumstance communities (people brought together by external events, ex: the pandemic) (5)
- None of the above (6)

Q17. Was the internet important to make you feel that you are a part of a community during the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q18. Are you involved in any fandom?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q19. Did you use social media, during the pandemic, to communicate with:

- Artists (1)
- Other fans (2)
- Both (3)

Q20. Are you acquainted with K-pop?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q21. What year did you start listening to K-pop?

Q22. Since which year do you listen to *BTS*?

- 2013 (1)
- 2014 (2)
- 2015 (3)
- 2016 (4)
- 2017 (5)
- 2018 (6)
- 2019 (7)

- 2020 (8)
- 2021 (9)

Q23. Do you consider yourself a member of *ARMY* (official fandom name of *BTS*)?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q24. Does that make you feel that you're a part of a community?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q25. Choose the options that you identify the most based on your relationship with *BTS* during the pandemic

- I feel connected to *BTS* through social media (1)
- Being an *ARMY* had a good impact on me during the pandemic (2)
- The message on their songs helps me to feel better during the pandemic (3)
- Their music was important to control the effects of the pandemic (4)
- None of the above (5)

Q26. Do you think *BTS* makes you more compassionate about helping others?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q27. In which ways did the pandemic affect your life?

- Work (1)
- Family (2)
- Relations with others (3)
- Other (4) _____

Q28. Did you have to adapt to the online experience of living?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q29. Do you feel that the pandemic had a negative impact on your mental health (anxiety, depression or PTSD) during this period?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q30. Did you see any online concert by *BTS* during the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q31. Choose the motives that made you watch an online concert by *BTS* during the pandemic

- Convenience (easy access at lower costs) (1)
- Curiosity (2)
- Escape from the reality of the pandemic (3)
- Feel connected to other fans (4)
- Feel connected to *BTS* (5)
- Get to know the group (6)
- Pass the time (7)
- Other (8) _____

Q32. Did you feel closer to *BTS* after seeing an online concert?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q33. Was the interaction created at their online concert with fans good for you to feel closer to them?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q34. Were the online concerts an escape from the reality of the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q35. Did you feel better after watching an online concert by *BTS*?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q36. Classify your well-being after watching an online concert made by *BTS* during the pandemic to understand the importance of the online concerts

- (0)
- (1)
- (2)
- (3)
- (4)
- (5)
- (6)
- (7)
- (8)
- (9)
- (10)

Q37. Did you identify yourself with the lyrics of the album called *BE* when it comes to the effects of the pandemic?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q38. Gender

- Masculine (1)
- Feminine (2)
- Other (3)
- I prefer not to answer (4)

Q39. Country

Q40. Age
