

You Make Stray Kids Stay: How Boy Bands Build Communities

By Moss Parrott

The K-Pop fandom exploded in worldwide popularity in 2012 and has remained in the public consciousness ever since. Operating in the digital sphere, the K-Pop fandom brings together people from all over the world, creating an entirely new community and culture with distinct behaviors, beliefs, and rituals.

One such fandom is the STAY community, forming around the K-Pop band Stray Kids. Through examining STAY rituals and language, we are also able to examine our perception of the divides between secular and religious; as well as between digital and physical.

This study argues that there is no functional difference between digital communities and physical communities by identifying ritual, community relationships, and shared behaviors and beliefs.

How does ritual function in digital spaces? How do communities operate in digital spaces?

Key Concepts:

- Ritual
- Digital Religion
- K-Pop Fandom
- Community Bonding

Methods:

This study used content analysis to analyze comments left on 2 Stray Kids music videos: *DO IT* and *CEREMONY*, on the YouTube platform. Every 10th comment was used, as there are over 100,000 comments on each music video. I looked for all nouns, adjectives, and adverbs used in these comments to form a comprehensive image of STAY behavior.

Notable Findings:

STAYs participate in an event I call the Comeback Ritual, occurring upon the release of a music video corresponding with an album release. My research shows examples of ritualization and communitas resulting from this ritual. The STAY community is not geographically bound, including members from all over the world. This community is formed entirely based on shared love for Stray Kids.

Conclusions:

I found that there is no functional difference between digital communities and physical communities, and that culture and communities can indeed be cultivated through the internet. I believe that we should stop placing importance on the perceived differences between digital environments and physical environments, especially as digital environment become increasingly more prevalent in our daily lives.

Theory Used:

Ritualization - *Ritual Theory, Ritual Power* by Catherine Bell
Communitas – Communitas: The Anthropology of Collective Joy by Edith Turner

Languages in YouTube Comments

