

A VIRTUAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY: MEMES BY ARMY AND COMMUNICATION STYLE THROUGH TWITTER PLATFORM

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ABSTRACT

Humor has been used as a tool against oppression for a long time. With the advent of digital technology, memes have become a popular object in social media, especially in Twitter platform. Meme is an image which is communicated through social media that makes fun of or brings to light a social or cultural issue. This research aims to explore a meme by ARMY and communication style that used through Twitter platform. The method of this research is descriptive qualitative research. This research was obtained the data by ARMY members on the direct message on Twitter. The result of this research showed that meme by ARMY members give a message which is implied, they use some of meme for entertain for themselves and they also support for their idol, BTS. In this meme, ARMY depicts an exaggerated expression of BTS members, where they are very fanatical about their idols, the communication style applied through memes also affects the response of their followers because these memes contain entertainment and always support BTS members. Therefore, virtual ethnography also can be a powerful methodology for understanding online social communities and subcultures, such as a popular and widespread medium for internet-based interactions

Keywords: *ARMY, BTS, Memes, Ethnography, Twitter*

ABSTRAK

Humor telah digunakan sebagai alat melawan penindasan sejak lama. Dengan munculnya teknologi digital, meme menjadi objek yang populer di media sosial, terutama di platform Twitter. Meme adalah gambar yang dikomunikasikan melalui media sosial yang mengolok-olok mengangkat isu sosial atau budaya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi meme oleh ARMY dan gaya komunikasi yang digunakan melalui platform Twitter. Metode penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Penelitian ini diperoleh dari data anggota ARMY pada pesan langsung di Twitter. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa meme yang dibuat oleh anggota ARMY memberikan pesan yang tersirat, mereka menggunakan beberapa meme untuk menghibur diri mereka sendiri dan mereka juga mendukung idola mereka, BTS. Dalam meme ini ARMY menggambarkan ekspresi yang

berlebihan dari anggota BTS, dimana mereka sangat fanatik terhadap idolanya, gaya komunikasi yang diterapkan melalui meme juga mempengaruhi respon dari para pengikutnya karena meme tersebut mengandung hiburan dan selalu mendukung anggota BTS. Oleh karena itu, etnografi virtual juga dapat menjadi metodologi yang kuat untuk memahami komunitas dan subkultur sosial online, seperti media yang populer dan tersebar luas untuk interaksi berbasis internet.

Kata kunci: ARMY, BTS, Meme, Etnografi, Twitter

A. INTRODUCTION

In the era of information technology development, it has an impact on human life. With the development of information technology, it is increasingly easier for the public to find and get information using their devices, such as laptop or mobile phones. The impact of the development of information and communication technology forms a digital era, where information and messages are easier to access because they are available in digital form. Of course this is inseparable from the development of Internet technology which supports the digital era.

The impact of Internet technology has led to the emergence of social media that make it easier for audiences to interact. So that the communication process, which is usually done face-to-face can be done anywhere and anytime without any restrictions supported by existing social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media.

The characteristics of virtual social media often produce booming phenomena both among social media users and the wider audience. There are phenomena that arise from social media such as *trending hashtags*, and *memes* and other phenomena. A phenomenon that often appears on social media is a *meme*. Memes usually develop through comments, imitations, parodies or even the results of coverage in the media. Memes that more used on social media especially in twitter is K-pop.

K-pop (Korean Pop) is music culture from South Korea that has attracted sympathy among young people around the world. K-Pop has a characteristic music that can provide its own enjoyment for its connoisseurs, so that this type of music is increasingly favored and consumed by many people every day. Consumption of K-Pop will ultimately generate fan groups who are the most visible part of audiences' cultural texts and practices (Storey, 2006). Fan groups that appear in K-Pop culture are called K-Popers (K-pop Lovers) or the K-Pop community who hunt for all information about K-Pop idols they like, such as groups of Korean singers and music groups commonly called Boy Bands and Girl Band.

BTS or known as Bangtan Boys is a boy band which come from South Korea, they are popular boy band in South Korea. This boy band started debuted in 2013 under Big Hit Entertainment. This group consists of seven members, they are RM, Jin, Suga, -Hope, Jimin, V, and Jungkook. Fan group of BTS called ARMY. ARMY is a peace fandom therefore there are many of fan base of BTS that spread in the world not only in Indonesia.

In this research, the researcher will observe an analysis of the meme ARMY and communication style through Twitter Platform. The reason take a social media Twitter is because there are many account which become a fandom of ARMY, and also Twitter usually to share a photo or video to respond or reply other account which support this BTS.

The booming phenomenon of memes on social media cannot be separated from the role of social media users themselves in disseminating information related to popular memes. One of them is that if the user feels interested in the topic and meme images seen on Twitter, the user will repost or re-upload the meme post to his personal account. So that other users who are also interested in certain memes will do the same. Therefore, there are many types and forms of memes that have spread not only among social media users but have begun to spread among the public.

The researcher views that the meme phenomenon among social media users has social meaning and reality, so the paradigm used by researchers is the constructivism paradigm. In this paradigm it is stated that individuals interpret and act according to various conceptuels in their minds (Ardianto, Elvinaro and Bambang, 2007).

The reason researchers take the meme phenomenon is because memes can be said to be the process of delivering messages in new forms. Where memes are images or photos that are given text or language to produce a new meaning. In other words, the image in the meme tells its own story, to be interpreted by other users. It can be said that this meme phenomenon arose because of wanting to convey a message through a new form. One example is by combining nonverbal communication (expression) with verbal communication (language), so as to produce a meaning or message. Internet memes are not only present as a parody of social conditions such as jokes by students or other things that are mere jokes, but memes have developed into a new style of communication that is capable of containing political content or a means of criticizing the policies of the state elite (Murfianti, 2020). Therefore, to analysis a community on the internet or cyberspace, the researcher will use a virtual ethnography study in the research and also wants to explore the communication style on the meme by ARMY fan base.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication style is the communication behavior carried out by a person in an organization which aims to get feedback from others on the organizational message conveyed (S.Djuarsa Sendjaja, 1996). Each communication style consists of a set of communication behaviors that are used to get certain responses or responses in certain situations as well. The suitability of a communication style used also depends on the intent of the sender and the expectations of the receiver.

Virtual Ethnography study means Virtual ethnographic study is an ethnographic method used to observe social phenomena and/or user culture in cyberspace. Cyberspace for virtual ethnographic researchers can approaching some object or phenomenon on the internet (Nasrullah, 2014). Ethnographic method is

the main and important method for seeing the phenomenon of cyber culture on the internet (Bell, 2001).

Some of previous study analyze a virtual ethnography about meme that conducted by (Nugraha, Hasanah Sudrajat and Primadani Satria Putri, 2015) shows that there are five motives of Instagram users in performing their activities of posting memes, such as curiosity, entertainment, love, expression, and self-esteem. But, the researchers found three main points, namely feel being cared, they have provided information to followers, and those who gain new experiences. The second study conducted by (Polishchuk *et al.*, 2020) explores that the role of internet memes in the newest information space and their specific features as a special information product of the modern digital culture. Another study also explores about meme that examined by (Benaim, 2018) explore Internet-memes that represent iconic productions of the Internet 'lead culture', which embed significant symbolic values. Based on the explanation above, the researcher will explore a meme by ARMY and communication style through Twitter platform.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of this research is use descriptive qualitative methods. This research is the qualitative method with the virtual ethnography study. By using the virtual ethnography method, the researcher is able to explain the phenomenon in depth because the researcher becomes part of the subject under study by following fan activity in the virtual world. Researchers are part of the followers of ARMY's fanbase account on Twitter media. It means that where the intent is to provide a detailed, in-depth description of everyday life and practice. Given that memes are a representation of the goings on of everyday life that applied through Twitter.

The data were obtained from Twitter application that consist of ARMY member. In order to access all the activities of the member and to fulfill data collection, therefore, the researchers followed a several fan base account that have many followers on Twitter and the last, the data collection were conducted through an interview of ARMY members in Twitter's Direct Message from several fan base accounts to get in-depth description.

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the observes and interviews that have been conducted with ARMY's member in this research through online interviews, the researchers obtained data that support this research on how the meme phenomenon among Twitter platform users is related to what will be discussed in this research.

Meme 1



The meaning contained in the meme 1 is that he is a member of BTS Jungkook who applies hair gel to his hair, in this case there are two photos that compare before he uses hair gel and after using hair gel. So that the meme gives a message to readers about Jungkook's hair change after using hair gel. The words "What I think I look like" means that Jungkook picture fans expectations, the words "what I actually look like" means that the reality which explains the ARMY facts.

Meme 2



The meaning contained in the meme 2 is a conversation between BTS members who asked about their sadness because there was the words "She said I Love U". In this case this member doesn't seem to like the statement because the name of this BTS member is "V" not "U" so he says "but my name is V". In ARMY's view, this meme is an entertainer and makes fun of reading the meme.

Meme 3



In meme 3 contains the meaning of a female meme and a member of BTS, in this case, the female meme states "thank you for changing my life" and BTS members say "we were literally the reason you don't study". In this case it shows that the reason BTS members don't need to study anymore is because female memes already say that they have changed their lives. In this case, the meme has a humorous meaning.

Meme 4

Notification : The school will reopen next week
Me : *No reaction*
Notification : You will be having your monthly
assessment as soon as school starts



Meme 4 shows that a BTS member reacted when there was a notification that the school would reopen next week. The words "the school will reopen next week" it referred to the ARMY who in the range age of 15-20, means that the school is open. The words "you will have your monthly assessment as soon as school starts" means that the student gets many homework when the school is started open. In this case the meme describes *Screaming in Hope* which means that the screams from J-Hope, because there is a BTS member named J-Hope.

Meme 5

When you are on a diet and your sibling eats delicious food in front of you, while showing off and making sounds



In meme 5 shows the words when you are on a diet and your brother eats delicious food in front of you with show off, and then the meme used to express the statement is a BTS member and expresses some of his annoyance by writing a few sentences in those meme with BTS's member photos.

Meme 6



This meme 6 shows that there are two pictures of BTS members comparing things. The first picture shows the statement "*missing an online class*" while the second picture shows the statement "*missing a BTS Vlive*". The meme above describes missing online classes or not attending online classes with an ordinary expression and not screaming or crying, while for the second picture he missed watching BTS Vlive which depicts a crying expression, screaming because he doesn't watch BTS live, so, there is an expression of regret rather than the first picture. This means that ARMY more chooses to seeing BTS Vlive than Online Class.

Meme 7



Meme 7 contains meaning when someone mentions anything about BTS, and then in the second picture show a face like BTS member, because the first picture, he does not exist his face but in second picture he shows his face when there is someone mention about BTS. This meme has a meaning like a humor, it means that the creator is fan base of BTS member.

Meme 8



In the meme 8 shows the statement “*if you’re handsome, you’re my oppa*”. In this case have a meaning if every K-Poper goes to Korea and he saw a lot of handsome boy, then in ARMY view, they called “*you’re my oppa*”. Because in their view, Korean people have a handsome face, either they are artist or not.

Meme 9

When your mom walks in your room when you're busy watching BTS videos (or should I say fangirling over BTS) :



In the meme 9 shows that when you are busy to watch BTS videos and then your mom walks in your room. Then the expressing of these meme cause many of statement that express their feeling, such as *wtf are you doing? Are you in animal, then said huh, hah? And then goes back watching BTS videos*. It means that the ARMY is dis not care about anyone's talking about.

Meme 10

"They say if someone is thinking about you or having dreams about you, you can't go to sleep" At this point, I'm seriously worried about BTS' sleep schedule 😬



Meme 10 show the statement "*they say if someone is thinking about you or having dreams about you, you can't go to sleep*" at this point, *I'm seriously worried about BTS sleep schedule*" from the statement above, it means that they worried about BTS condition because many of people become fan base of BTS and every day many of people think about BTS, therefore, if they think about BTS, they worried BTS can't go to sleep.

Based on the result above, there are many of message that spread in meme by ARMY member. As we know that the definition of meme is a virally-transmitted cultural symbol or social idea. Basically memes are images which are communicated through social media that make fun of bring to light a social or cultural issue which is relevant to current occurrences in pop culture in the current age.

In this research, in meme that the researcher has been observed through Twitter Platform, meme have a communication style that implied. The communication style implied in the meme contains entertaining meanings for ARMY members and very few memes contain elements of bad satire towards BTS members. This is because ARMY members and BTS have a very close and peaceful relationship. So that they support each other among their members, always maintain togetherness between ARMY members, and also find spirit in ARMY members.

The communication style in the meme that has been observed above, shows a norm and value of the community, namely the ARMY members themselves, where they must have a friendly attitude between members, not be rude and they love each other and entertain and support their idols as a culture of BTS. The communication is from ARMY fan base around the world; this means that the ARMY fan base is influent in English. From the memes above, many memes are come from English language.

In this meme, ARMY members also always post or upload on their respective social media, this is because they feel cared for by their followers. From the results of interviews that researchers have conducted with ARMY members, researchers found that ARMYs feel happy when posting memes about BTS gets responses from followers who in this case get likers and comments. There are ARMY members who also revealed that in posting memes they prefer to use photos rather than videos. Communication through meme photos will be better understood and implied by readers so that they find memes interesting, funny so they can be reposted on their respective social media.

E. CONCLUSION

Memes are images or photos that are given text or language to produce a new meaning. In other words, the image in the meme tells its own story, to be interpreted by other users. Based on the results and discussion above, the communication style applied to memes carried out by ARMY members is entertaining and mutually supportive of fellow members. In this meme, ARMY depicts an exaggerated expression of BTS members, where they are very fanatical about their idols, the communication style applied through memes also affects the response of their followers because these memes contain entertainment and always support BTS members. Representation of BTS member in a form of the meme is more favorable because it could be multi-interpretation and more attention-grabbing. Picture also paints thousand words because meme contains many meanings (issues).

Meme evolved into a new style of communication. In addition, the process of consumption, production and distribution of memes has formed a cyber-culture, which is not a real representation of culture but the result of the construction of virtual identities that combine to form a new culture or cyberculture. Virtual ethnography also can be a powerful methodology for understanding online social communities and subcultures, such as a popular and widespread medium for internet-based interactions. More development, research, and refinement are necessary in the future as more scholars enmesh themselves into online cultures.

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