

CHAPTER I




INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Emoji are pictorial symbols have become an important part of digital communication. At first, emojis were used only to convey linguistic aspect that were used to express feelings or ideas in the abstract. However, they have now become a universal form of communication and people used emojis in writing to show emotions and nonverbal meanings in digital conversations. As stated by Arafah and Hasyim (2019), the phenomenon of emoji use on social media is not limited to functioning as a visual language to convey emotions and thoughts, but also as an integral part of text structure. Nowadays, emojis are increasingly employed in global communication exchanges and have evolved into a language of their own. In the digital era, the use of emojis represents a significant transformation in communication, particularly in areas such as non-verbal communication studies, cultural studies, and the representation of symbolic meaning.

On social media, especially Twitter or X stands out as a unique space where users can express themselves through a combination of text and media, especially the use of emoji symbols in usernames on Twitter. In the context of social media, a username serves as a symbolic representation of identity, distinguishing one user from another. Currently, many users often create their social media usernames using a combination of, letters, numbers, symbolic, and usually add emojis to their usernames to express personal interest, group affiliation, emotions or social identity. The communication technology including the Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) changes along with the process of human contact. The digital technology has extended from having face- to-face interaction. Emoji are a feature that exists

in digital discourse and has become a feature that is used in online interactions. The choice of certain emojis by users often reflects personal preferences, as well as indexical meanings related to aspects such as social identity, culture, skin color, gender, and other identity markers (Marko, 2023).

This study highlights the meaning of what emoji symbols are used and what is shown to the viewer. In this case social media is used to build identity and social relationships, particularly in the context of K-pop fandom namely is NCT Dream. K-pop fandoms are one of the most active communities on social media. Among them, NCT and its sub-units, including NCT Dream, maintain a massive global fanbase known as NCTzens. Fans frequently employ creative strategies to display their group loyalty and shared identity. The community often add emojis to their social media usernames, especially on Twitter (X). For instance, NCT Dream fans often include emojis to their social media usernames such as the emoji green heart  for example, usernames @@Nomin. In general, the green heart emoji is one of the symbols used to express love. In the context of NCT fans, the emoji represent about the feeling of NCTzens giving their full support and love to the fandom NCT fans community. The use of these emojis is not just a decoration, but rather a way to express what their identity and affiliation to their favored groups.

The social identity of the fans believing their membership in fandom can be summarized as characteristics of fandom members. The communication and interaction between fans are based on the formation of a common understanding of language symbols. Since the user of language is human, language and identity are always in mutual influence and constraint relationship, and the reason why fans gather in the community is to obtain social identity (Zhang & Dong, 2023).

In this context, the use of emojis in usernames across fandom communities—

particularly on Twitter, with its 280-character limitation—serves as a meaningful marker. K-pop fans strategically use emojis in their usernames and bios to express group affiliation, display loyalty to their idols, and project aspects of their personality. Thus, emojis in usernames are not merely decorative symbols, but also indexical markers of social identity within online fan communities.

1.2 Research Questions

As mention before, this research deals with the social identity base on the using emoji in twitter usernames. By understanding the significant of the issue, the main problem of this research is formulated as follows.

1. What are the emojis used in K-pop NCT fans Usernames?
2. What identity they want to display by choosing that emoji?

1.3 Objective of the Research

This research analyzes the use emojis in twitter usernames for build social identity in social media using CMDA (Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis) theory by Susan C. Herring. Base on the research questions above, the purpose of this study can be concluded as follows:

1. To identify these emojis used in K-pop NCT fans Usernames.
2. To explain the identity, they want to display by choosing that emoji.

1.4 Focus of the Research

This study aims to explore how the use of emoji in Twitter as identity marker and how K-pop fan's identity themselves to community society, serving to communicate emotional support, fandom loyalty, and shared cultural practices among K-pop fans. This analysis uses the theory by Susan C. Herring (2004), Social Identity by Tajfel & Turner (1979), and Indexicality theory by Bucholtz & Hall (2005). Focused on the identity K-pop fans in digital communication. This study

will also be beneficial for social media users to use social media mindfully as this study will uncover the effect of social media construction and change the way people communicate.

1.5 Method of the Research

This research using the theory of social identity and computer media communication which is proposed to determine the study of problems in digital communication is used by people who use emojis in their Twitter usernames. The study uses qualitative approach which focuses on understand social phenomena and human behavior by examining meanings, pattern, and context in online interaction. The writer collected all the data from Twitter users who use emojis in their usernames. This sociolinguistic research employs a qualitative method to investigate how emojis in Twitter usernames function as social identity markers in the NCT fan community or Nctzen as a KPOP fandom. Examining how fans use emojis in their Twitter usernames will illustrate their form of support for fandom to signify group affiliation, emotional support, and personal identity.

1.5.1 Data Collection

The data consist of Twitter usernames containing emojis that appear in the comment section of NCT official account. Based on this data we can analyze the fonts in the K-pop fans' Twitter usernames. The source of the data consists of several twitter accounts that posted comments using hashtag #Nctzens. The source of the data in this research is Emoji or emoticons on Twitter that are used on their fandom twitter usernames. Thus, there were steps of collecting the data in order to complete this study:

1. Downloading Twitter or X on the Play Store website. The writer logs in using an email or google account

2. Following the official group Twitter account for as a target sample, @NCT on Twitter, look at the official group comments column whose account usernames use emojis.
3. Collecting usernames consisting of emoji whose certain official account post comments using usernames on the official K- Pop group account.
4. Checking usernames determine they belong to stands as an NCT fan.

1.5.2 Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of several stages how to analyze Twitter usernames that contain emoji symbols. This research study using qualitative methods by using CMDA (Computer Mediated Discourse Analysis) theory. In this theory CMDA explains about which includes several forms of communication in social media interactions how emojis contribute to digital fan identity in K-pop group idols NCT. CMDA is an analysis that focuses on examining the use of language in an online environment and how technology affects the language of discourse in the delivery of an expression on a digital platform.

This study uses qualitative data analysis based on the theory of (Herring, 2004) which explains the linguistics of communication in rhetoric in the analysis of computer-mediated communication that focusses on language use in digital setting. In addition, CMDA theory highlight how emoji represent an interpersonal relationship connection in online environment.

1.6 Definition of key terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding about the terms of which are used in study, it is important to give the definition of the key terms. Some terms defined as follow:

- **Twitter:** Twitter is one of the major social media platforms that allows users to post and interact online with many people through messages, writing, or images.
- **Emoji as a social Identity:** Emoji serve as visual symbols that convey emoticons and affiliations, allowing fans to express their identity. In K- pop fandoms, emojis can represent specific groups, members, or shared experience of community among fans.
- **Social Identity:** Social identity is a concept in social psychology that explains how people define themselves in relation to the social groups they belong to. Instead of only seeing themselves as unique individuals' *personal identity*, people also derive a sense of *who they are* from their group memberships.
- **Speech Community:** Refers to a group of people who share a common language or dialect and who use it to communicate with one another.
- **Computer Media Communication:** emphasizes the importance of context in understanding online discourse, including both technological and social factors that online communication,
- **Fandoms:** In K-pop, communication and connection between people are considered important as they can influence and attract more fans to join the fandom. The first area of fandom is communication.