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Analysis of Social Media Space: Use of Weverse Features as a Means of Communication for the NCT Dream Community

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Abstract: This study explores how the Weverse platform facilitates virtual communication between the South Korean boy group NCT Dream and their global fans, emphasizing aspects of positiveness and equality within online fandom interactions. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, the research analyzes the communicative patterns, emotional expressions, and sense of community formed through Weverse's interactive features such as feeds, artist posts, live streaming, and translation tools. The findings reveal that Weverse serves as an inclusive digital space that enables fans to build strong parasocial relationships, share emotions, and engage in collaborative cultural participation despite linguistic and geographical barriers. The communication that occurs reflects openness, empathy, and equality, demonstrating how digital platforms can strengthen the emotional connection between idols and fans. Overall, the study concludes that Weverse has transformed into a dynamic ecosystem of emotional exchange and collective identity, illustrating the power of digital communication in shaping positive, supportive, and globally connected fan communities.

Keywords: Weverse, Social Media Space, Virtual Community, K-Pop Fandom, NCT Dream, Parasocial Interaction, Communication Features

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent social phenomena emerging alongside the rise of digital media is the virtual community. As technological advancements continue to shape human interaction, virtual communities have evolved into dynamic digital environments where individuals with shared interests connect and engage (Pakaya et al., 2022). These online communities allow users to express their personal identities, exchange information, and develop emotional and social bonds within a supportive virtual space (Armaya et al., 2023). Social media platforms have become crucial spaces for such communities, facilitating real-time interaction, collaboration, and friendship across geographic boundaries. Individuals join virtual communities primarily due to shared interests, emotional support, and the need for

belonging. This consistent communication builds a sense of companionship and belonging that transcends mere online interaction (Caleb T. Carr, 2021). In Indonesia, online communities have become important spaces for interpersonal connection, information exchange, and social development (Armaya et al., 2023).

Within this context, K-pop fandoms have emerged as one of the most influential examples of virtual communities. Originating from the global spread of the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), K-pop fandoms demonstrate how digital culture and media technology foster emotional and cultural engagement. Fans form communities to share experiences, discuss idols, and express admiration through digital participation (Wardani & Kusuma, 2021). Social media plays a central role in this process, enabling fans to access information, share opinions, and interact both with idols and fellow fans (Sagita & Kadewardana, 2018).

Among the numerous platforms that facilitate fan interaction, Weverse—developed by Hybe Corporation—has become one of the most significant. Launched in 2019, Weverse functions as a dedicated digital space where fans and idols can communicate directly through posts, comments, and multimedia content (Saldyni, 2021; Tofani, 2023). Unlike general social networks such as Twitter or Instagram, Weverse integrates interactive features—such as translation tools, direct messaging, and live streaming—that create a more personal and immersive fan experience (Purba & Solekka, 2019; Agafanthi et al., 2024).

This platform also allows users to form communities based on their favorite idol groups, such as BTS (ARMY), SEVENTEEN (CARAT), AESPA (MY), and NCT Dream (NCTzen) (Agustiana & Kusuma, 2023). Through Weverse, fans not only receive updates about their idols but also engage in discussions, share emotions, and develop social relationships. These interactions often foster emotional closeness, as fans feel recognized and appreciated when idols respond to their messages or posts (Putra & Febriana, 2022). Such engagement creates a sense of shared experience and belonging within the fandom (Indriani & Kusuma, 2022).

The NCT Dream fan community (NCTzen) serves as a compelling case for studying communication within digital fandoms. Since NCT Dream's debut in 2016, the group's fanbase has expanded rapidly, and Weverse has become a central hub for communication between fans and idols. The interactive features of Weverse—such as comment sections, multimedia sharing, and live sessions—enhance the sense of emotional connection between idols and fans. Moreover, idols often express positive affirmations and encouragement to their fans, further reinforcing emotional bonds (Bidin A., 2017).

In this digital era, communication has transcended traditional boundaries, becoming multidirectional and mediated through technology. Media platforms such as Weverse not only serve as communication tools but also as spaces for self-expression, emotional release, and cultural participation (Hasanah, 2016; Hirwiza & Lubis, 2023).

Based on these dynamics, this study focuses on analyzing Weverse as a media space and communication platform within the NCT Dream fan community (NCTzen). The research aims to explore how Weverse's features facilitate communication, interaction, and emotional engagement among fans, as well as how these interactions shape the structure and culture of digital fandoms in contemporary society.

Conceptual Review

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) refers to the use of technological applications that enable two or more individuals to interact without the constraints of time, place, or distance. CMC involves communication processes that occur through computer-based networks using internet protocols to transmit data. In essence, CMC represents a form of human communication facilitated by interconnected computers, a practice that has existed

since the early development of electronic computing. Scholars such as McQuail and December have described CMC as all types of communication conducted via personal computers among multiple users.

In the digital era, CMC has evolved into a dominant form of social interaction and a vital behavioral pattern in modern communication practices. It supports the creation of virtual communities where individuals with shared interests—such as health, business, or career development—can exchange information and experiences online. This digital interaction reduces the need for physical engagement while fostering virtual socialization. In fan-based platforms such as **Weverse**, CMC enables users to communicate, share opinions, and build emotional connections through technological mediation.

Cyber Media Analysis (CMA)

Cyber Media Analysis (CMA) is a methodological approach that integrates virtual ethnography to analyze online communication phenomena. Virtual ethnography, as described by Nasrullah, examines how individuals interact within the internet environment and explores the cultural implications of computer-mediated interactions. CMA allows researchers to observe both macro and micro levels of online culture through the analysis of *texts* and *contexts*.

Nasrullah divides CMA into four analytical levels: **Media Space**, **Media Archive**, **Media Object**, and **Experiential Stories**. Among these, the **Media Space** level focuses on the technical structure, interface, and design of media platforms—essentially, how media environments are constructed online. This level examines the digital setting in which communities engage and participate.

In this study, the researcher positions themselves as both observer and participant, analyzing **Weverse** as a media space used by fans of **NCT Dream**. The analysis includes the procedural use of Weverse's features, content creation processes, and the visual and technical aspects of the platform that facilitate fan communication and interaction.

Virtual Communication

Virtual communication refers to the exchange of messages between two or more individuals through computer-based programs such as the internet. It encompasses the process of sending and receiving interactive messages within digital environments. As technology advances, virtual communication has become an integral component of daily human interaction, allowing people to connect and communicate from any location and at any time.

Virtual communication is supported by several key concepts:

1. Cyberspace, the virtual environment that enables human communication through computer networks;
2. Online Communities, groups that form and develop through shared interests and social connections within internet platforms;
3. Interactivity, emphasizing mutual engagement between participants in digital communication;
4. Hypertext, the non-linear structure of writing that allows users to navigate through hyperlinks;
5. Multimedia, the integration of text, graphics, audio, video, and animation within communication systems; and
6. Chat Rooms and Bots, which facilitate real-time interaction among users through virtual environments.

Virtual Communities

Virtual communities, often referred to as online communities, consist of individuals who share common interests and interact regularly through digital platforms. These communities allow users to express personal identities and build social connections in virtual environments. As highlighted by Nasrullah, the rise of virtual communities is closely tied to technological progress and the growth of the internet as a major communication channel.

Virtual communities enable individuals to collaborate, exchange information, and engage emotionally in cyberspace, creating new forms of social relationships that transcend physical boundaries. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have become central spaces for these interactions. The existence of virtual communities also reflects a broader transformation in human communication—shifting from traditional face-to-face interaction toward mediated, network-based socialization.

Fan Culture on Social Media

The phenomenon of fan culture on social media is deeply rooted in globalization and the diffusion of popular culture across borders. The media play a crucial role in spreading cultural content and shaping audience engagement with global entertainment trends. South Korea has been notably successful in promoting its culture worldwide through what is known as the Korean Wave (Hallyu)—a global surge of interest in Korean entertainment, particularly K-pop.

Fan communities, or fandoms, emerge as collective groups of individuals who share enthusiasm for particular idols or cultural products. These fandoms often create online fanbases to connect with other fans, share information, and engage in discussions about their favorite artists. Social media provides an interactive space where fans not only consume content but also co-create and disseminate it, thereby shaping fan identity and online participation.

K-Pop Fans

K-pop fans, often referred to as K-poppers, are highly engaged followers of Korean pop music. This subculture primarily includes adolescents and young adults who are drawn to the aesthetic, musical, and performative elements of K-pop. Since the 2000s, K-pop has gained massive popularity in Indonesia, fostering communities that revolve around shared admiration for Korean idols.

These fan communities demonstrate strong social cohesion built upon common identity, loyalty, and emotional connection to their idols. Through digital platforms, fans participate in collective activities such as streaming, voting, and organizing events, thereby transforming fandom into a participatory digital culture. The K-pop fandom thus represents not merely a form of entertainment consumption but a dynamic cultural phenomenon that illustrates the power of virtual communication and online communities in shaping modern social identities.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions is “How does the NCT Dream community use Weverse features as a means of communication?”

METHOD

This research adopted a descriptive qualitative research design. The qualitative approach is utilized to explore the complex, non-numerical, and subjective communication patterns, meanings, and social dynamics within the specific virtual environment (Subandi, 2011). The

descriptive nature aims to thoroughly document and interpret the use and function of Weverse's features by the target community.

The research setting was the NCT Dream Weverse community platform. The unit of analysis was the digital content (posts, comments, official announcements) and the interaction patterns observed within this dedicated social media space.

The primary data consisted of digital content from the NCT Dream Weverse account, collected over a six-week period.

1. Official Artist Content: All posts made by NCT Dream members, categorized by feature used (Post, Moment, Live) and content type (Text, Photo, Video).
2. Fan Interaction Content: A purposive sample of fan posts with high engagement (high likes/comments) and fan posts that received a direct comment or reply from an artist.
3. Community-Driven Content: Analysis of the most frequent discussion topics initiated by NCTzens, focusing on themes of emotional support, information sharing, and cultural exchange (Armaya et al., 2023).

The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, focusing specifically on periods of high activity (e.g., immediately before or after a new album release or concert announcement), as these periods offer the richest data on the platform's function during peak community mobilization.

Data was collected through two main techniques:

1. Digital Ethnographic Observation and Documentation: The researcher engaged in passive observation of the NCT Dream Weverse space. Content, including the use of translation features and emoji reactions, was documented and archived systematically. A coding system was established to categorize interactions based on the level of perceived intimacy (e.g., general fan chat vs. direct artist reply).
2. Literature Review and Contextualization: Extensive review of academic literature on K-Pop fandom, virtual communities (Pakaya et al., 2022), and platform-specific research (Tofani, 2023) provided the necessary theoretical lens for analysis.

The data analysis followed a thematic approach suited for qualitative communication research:

1. Data Reduction: The high volume of fan posts was filtered to retain only the most representative examples of interaction, focusing on evidence directly illustrating the use of Weverse features (e.g., posts that explicitly use the "Moments" feature or discussions about the automated translation).
2. Data Display: Key interaction patterns were organized into descriptive categories and narratives. Examples of data display included matrices mapping the Weverse Feature (e.g., Translation) to its Observed Function (e.g., Bridging cultural gap) and its Theoretical Implication (e.g., Enhancing social presence).
3. Conclusion Drawing and Verification: Themes relating to exclusivity, immediacy, and reciprocity were identified. These themes were verified by triangulating the observed behavior (fan reactions) with the platform's technical affordances and the established theories of PSI and virtual communities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Media Space Structure of Weverse

At this stage, the study explains the structural framework of the Weverse platform, including the process of creating an account, uploading content (text, images, or videos), and utilizing other available features. From a media-space perspective, Weverse operates as a digital infrastructure that enables users to connect, communicate, and interact through specific online protocols.

Based on the researcher's observations, users must first download the Weverse application via PlayStore or App Store, create an account using X (formerly Twitter), Gmail, or Apple ID, and verify their email to complete the registration. Once logged in, users can join specific K-pop communities, such as NCT Dream, where the homepage interface adapts to the group's visual identity (color schemes, images, and follower statistics).

The Feed feature allows fans to post text, photos, or videos and engage with others by commenting or liking posts. Fans often use the feed to share expressions of support, experiences, or inquiries about their favorite idols. Conversely, idols primarily interact through comments, maintaining the sense of connection while preserving hierarchical communication boundaries.

Weverse also provides a Translate function that supports 15 languages, enabling fans from diverse linguistic backgrounds to interact comfortably. However, the translation system is not always accurate, sometimes resulting in misinterpretations of idol posts. For example, fans reported that Korean phrases were occasionally mistranslated into unrelated meanings, causing confusion. Such experiences highlight both the benefits and the linguistic limitations of automated translation in fostering cross-cultural communication.

Another significant feature is Artist, where idols exclusively upload their own content—texts, photos, or videos. Fans may engage by commenting but cannot post on this channel. Some of these posts, especially “stories,” are limited to premium (membership) users, indicating the platform's tiered access structure.

The Media feature organizes various types of exclusive and public content—such as behind-the-scenes clips, music videos, live replays, and fan-only content. Premium members enjoy full access, while non-members encounter blurred or restricted displays. This differentiation reinforces the commodification of fandom interaction.

In addition, the Live feature enables idols to communicate with fans in real time. Idols typically use this for informal interactions after concerts or on special occasions. Fans can react by liking, commenting, or sending virtual heart stickers—symbols of affection and emotional connection. The interface also allows viewers to hide comments for a more immersive experience and rewatch the stream through Live Replay, a feature not available on similar platforms like Instagram. Fans reported varying levels of understanding during live sessions depending on language familiarity, with many idols mixing Korean and English to enhance inclusivity.

Lastly, Weverse Shop serves as an integrated e-commerce feature where fans can purchase albums, official merchandise, and concert tickets. The purchasing process involves filling in personal and delivery information, selecting payment methods (e.g., PayPal, Visa, Alipay), and agreeing to transaction terms. This feature simplifies global fan access to official products, reflecting Weverse's dual function as both a communication and commercial platform.

Participant observation over six months revealed that interactions on Weverse—whether through feeds, artist posts, or live sessions—center around emotional engagement and communal exchange. Fans actively comment, express support, and share experiences, transforming Weverse into a participatory media space where digital intimacy between idols and fans is continually negotiated.

Utilization of Weverse as a Communication Platform

In today's digital era, platforms like Weverse provide a unique environment for fans to engage with idols and other fans globally. Weverse offers an interactive ecosystem that merges social media with fan community management. Fans gain direct updates about their idols' activities—both from the idols themselves and from their official agencies—creating a sense of proximity and belonging.

Interview results show that fans appreciate Weverse for its immersive and organized community design. One participant expressed that Weverse offers a “unique and memorable experience” compared to other platforms, emphasizing its ability to blend social networking with structured fan engagement.

Compared to platforms like Twitter or Instagram, Weverse is preferred by many K-pop fans due to its specialized features that cater to fan-idol interaction. The Live feature, in particular, fosters a sense of immediacy and authenticity, allowing fans to witness idols’ emotions and daily moments. Fans described feeling more connected when watching idols live, especially during concerts or personal updates.

Overall, the findings indicate that Weverse functions as a semi-private digital community that facilitates safe, direct, and meaningful communication between idols and fans. The platform bridges geographical and linguistic boundaries while simultaneously commercializing fan interaction through exclusive content and membership privileges. Thus, Weverse exemplifies the convergence of media, culture, and digital fandom in contemporary participatory communication spaces.

This study explores how members of the NCT Dream fan community utilize the features of Weverse as a medium of communication through the lens of media space analysis. The findings reveal that Weverse has become an essential digital environment that facilitates ongoing interaction between fans and idols, fostering a sense of belonging, equality, and shared emotional connection.

The rise of social media has revolutionized interpersonal communication by enabling instantaneous information exchange regardless of time and space (Indriani & Kusuma, 2022). Within this context, Weverse provides fans with a participatory platform where they can post, like, comment, and engage in discussions related to their idols. These online interactions mirror real-world social behaviors, transforming traditional fan communities into dynamic virtual communities (Nasrullah, 2013).

The NCT Dream community on Weverse exemplifies how shared interests and emotional attachment drive the formation of virtual collectives. With over 1.6 million members globally, the community unites fans who share enthusiasm for NCT Dream’s music and personality. Members interact through text-based and visual communication, cultivating a culture of positiveness—where mutual support, encouragement, and admiration dominate discourse. This positivity strengthens fans’ collective identity and enhances emotional well-being within the group.

From the perspective of computer-mediated communication (CMC) (McQuail, 2005; Assyfa Putri & Irwansyah, 2021), Weverse functions as a multi-layered communication space where fans and idols interact through various features. The Feed and Artist sections enable users to exchange posts and comments, while the Translate tool allows multilingual engagement, promoting equality and inclusivity across diverse linguistic backgrounds. Although the translation feature occasionally produces inaccuracies, it remains crucial for global fan interaction.

Meanwhile, the Live feature allows real-time communication between NCT Dream members and fans. Through this function, idols share moments from their daily lives, express gratitude, and respond directly to fan comments. Such interactions reinforce the perception of intimacy and accessibility, creating a para-social relationship between idols and fans.

Fans also communicate nonverbally through the creative use of emoticons and symbols, such as green heart emojis representing the official fandom color, or animal emoticons symbolizing each member (e.g., tiger for Mark, fox for Renjun, dolphin for Chenle). These nonverbal codes serve as emotional markers and strengthen group identity. Similarly, the affectionate nickname “sijeuni”—derived from “NCTzen”—illustrates the

personal bond between idols and fans, signifying warmth and equality within the fan community.

Beyond interactive communication, Weverse incorporates features that support fan participation in the broader K-pop ecosystem. Weverse Shop integrates e-commerce functions, allowing fans to purchase albums, concert tickets, and official merchandise. My Communities facilitates access to multiple fandom spaces without membership limits, while Media provides exclusive content such as behind-the-scenes clips. Premium membership users enjoy additional privileges like early ticket access, exclusive event raffles, and collectible rewards.

Despite its strengths, some features such as Weverse DM, Weverse Magazine, and Weverse Concerts are less utilized. The DM feature, though designed for direct idol-fan messaging, is available only for certain groups. Weverse Magazine focuses primarily on artists under HYBE Entertainment, limiting engagement from fans of other agencies. Weverse Concerts, while enabling online concert streaming, operates only during live events and thus has limited regular usage.

Overall, the research demonstrates that Weverse has redefined how fans communicate and interact within digital fandoms. The platform promotes positive engagement, linguistic equality, and emotional connectivity, functioning as both a communication and cultural space. Through Weverse, NCT Dream fans participate in a hybrid environment that blends social interaction, media consumption, and community belonging—reflecting the evolving nature of digital communication in contemporary fan culture.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study highlight that Weverse serves as a dynamic and inclusive communication space that fosters meaningful interaction between NCT Dream and their fans across the globe. The platform enables fans to build a strong sense of community, equality, and emotional connection, transcending geographical and linguistic boundaries.

Through various features—such as Feed, Artist posts, Live streaming, and Translation tools—fans engage in continuous two-way communication that reflects the principles of positiveness and digital equality. These interactions promote a supportive environment where fans express admiration, share creative content, and cultivate solidarity through shared symbols, emoticons, and collective identity markers like the nickname “sijeuni.”

The study also finds that computer-mediated communication within Weverse mirrors real-life social interaction, transforming fandom participation into a meaningful cultural experience. While some features like Weverse DM, Magazine, and Concerts are underutilized, the overall functionality of the platform successfully bridges the gap between idols and fans through accessible, inclusive, and emotionally engaging communication.

In conclusion, Weverse has evolved beyond a fan platform into a digital ecosystem of emotional exchange, cultural participation, and community empowerment. It embodies the ideals of modern fandom: connectedness, equality, and positivity—demonstrating how digital media can strengthen social bonds and redefine the relationship between celebrities and their audiences.

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