Communicative Functions of #BTSLoveMyself on Twitter

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämä kandidaatintutkielma käsittelee niitä kommunikatiivisia keinoja, jotka ovat tunnistettavissa faniyhteisö ARMY:n käyttäessä (#)BTSLoveMyself hashtagia. Hashtag on osa UNICEF:in ja eteläkorealaisyhtye BTS:n yhteistä LOVE MYSELF- kampanjaa, joka tukee nuoria ja pyrkii yhdistämään heitä yhteiseen keskusteluun ympäri maailmaa, levittäen sanomaa itsensä rakastamisen tärkeydestä.

Tarkastelussa ovat faniyhteisön yhteisöllisyyden rakentuminen, kielen keinot toteuttaa hashtagille asetettuja käyttötavoitteita, sekä kampanjan sanoman toteutuminen faniyhteisön twiiteissä. Tutkimus keskittyy LOVE MYSELF-Twitter tilin, sekä faniyhteisön twiitteihin tilillä. 66 twiittiä valikoitui tarkempaan analyysiin.

Tutkimus sovelsi menetelmiä aikaisempien tutkimusten valossa, yhdistäen diskurssintutkimusta ja SFL-teoriaa (Systemic Functional Linguistics), sekä hyödyntäen Michele Zappavignan (2011, 2015) ja Peter Wikströmin (2014) tutkimuksia hashtagien käytöstä. Tutkimus totesi hashtagin käytön korreloivan yhteisöllisyyden tunteen lisäämiseen faniyhteisössä, ja kykeni erittelemään keinoja, joilla tämä saavutettiin niin fanien itsensä toimesta kuin LOVE MYSELF- tilin keinoista aktivoida käyttäjiä hashtagin käyttöön. Kommunikatiivisia keinoja tunnistetiin pääosin yhteisö- mutta myös yksilötasolla, yhdistäen näiden kohtaamisen eri konteksteissa.

Säilytyspaikka - Depository JYX

Muita tietoja - Additional information

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1. Introduction

This study will investigate some of the communicative functions of the hashtag (#) BTSLoveMyself on the social media platform Twitter. Besides the linguistic functions that the hashtag performs, its link to the community in which it is used will be discussed, and for which purpose it was created in relation to BTS's fan community, ARMY. Twitter as a platform offers an interesting environment for research on hashtags, since it is considered their original birthplace (DeMasi, Mason, Ma, 2016: 102), and because the platform hosts a multitude of different online communities. For them, hashtags are a tool to not only find each other, but to interact and create engagement within a shared common interest. The study is focused on how the fan community interacts in the comments of tweets under the official LOVE MYSELF- account on Twitter, particularly when the hashtag is involved.

Hashtags serve a variety of linguistic and communicative functions that add to how Twitter links topics together. They are the core in categorizing and organizing discussions, communities, and causes, but are also used in other communicative ways. They link together searchable data, topics, and global phenomena (Wikström, 2014: 127-128). Much of the hashtag's structure and choice of words determine its audience as they bring communities together easily when structured right. This will be examined in the discussion section.

The community interaction aspect is especially important to note in the case of #BTSLoveMyself. The hashtag was created as part of the LOVE MYSELF- campaign, which was launched in partnership with UNICEF and BTS, to campaign alongside the End Violence- campaign, which raises awareness on violence towards children and teens all around the world (Love Myself, 2021). Love Myself strives to a similar direction, with an added twist from BTS's artistry and their fan community, ARMY, in their words "hoping to make the world a better place through music." On the official Love Myself page there is a visible counter, though not a real-time one, that shows the number of times #BTSLoveMyself has been used overall on the internet. As the official hashtag of the campaign, it can be used in relation to anything users want to post about the campaign and its message. I will discuss the community aspect further in the analysis and discussion sections of this study to draw a link between the hashtag and its users.

The aim of this study is to investigate the communicative functions that #BTSLoveMyself performs from a linguistic perspective. The brief analysis of its structure and functionality will guide the

analysis of its use within the fan community, forming an understanding of the hashtag's linguistic versatility focusing on the community aspect it is linked to.

From here on this study continues with a background chapter on the key terms and concepts used, and a presentation of theories relevant for the study. Thereafter, I will explain the chosen method, data, and aims of this study. Then in the analysis section, I will look back at the theories and already existing research to support a framework that will assist in analysing and discussing the data. Finally, a summary of the study and findings will conclude this paper.

2. Background

I will introduce the basic concepts and key terms in this chapter. As some of the key terms vary between researchers, I will attempt to explain in my own words how I define these terms for the purposes of the study, with support from some of the already existing definitions. Concepts will be explained to the extend relevant for the analysis and discussion.

2.1. Key terms and definitions

This part of the background section will explain the key terms of this study. These terms are Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) and communicative functions.

2.1.1. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics was developed by M.A.K Halliday in the 1960s. It is based on the previous works of B. Malinowski and J.R. Firth. The basic frame of SFL in Halliday's tradition is the function of language through the manner in which it is applied to in social settings, both in written and oral contexts. It has been widely used in discourse studies, as it tries to seek out specific discourses that language produces. (Almurashi, 2016: 71). Li (2011: 203) adds how SFL takes these meaning-systems and analyses them through the grammatical functions that are present. This does not necessarily mean grammar in its traditional sense, but rather the ideational, textual, and interpersonal functions that reveal meaning-making of shared and individual experiences and views that language users display through their language choices. SFL takes this system of meanings and seeks to find structures of information in different discourses. These discursive approaches to analysis are present in discourse studies and have guided ideology-oriented analysis in the field (Li: 204).

Zappavigna (2015) puts the theory in use with hashtags, looking at what meanings can be realised from studying them, and in what linguistic contexts hashtags are used in. They quote Malinowski (1935: 11), who argues for the importance of context in every aspect of language use. This "meaning in context" idea is what creates the functions that will be discussed in the next section. In addition to this, Zappavigna (2011) studied meaning making online to understand community building, using the term "ambient affiliation" to describe the user's sociality in online contexts. Here, SFL is a tool to investigate whether language is a defining factor in the way people create social bonds and form communities, being one of the first works to study a linguistic model such as SFL online.

2.1.2. Communicative functions

The analysis of communicative functions of hashtags has been studied notably by Zappavigna (2011, 2015) and Wikström (2014), as mentioned in the previous section. Their research has provided ideas for the analysis of this study, which recognised similar functions in the studied hashtag. Communicative functions in the case of hashtags refers to what kind of markers hashtags can be. This refers to online social interactions, why and what content is being shared through the hashtag, all while considering the context in which hashtags appear. In all cases, finding what meanings are being produced in specific contexts is the main factor. In recognising these functions, both Zappavigna and Wikström have recognised the traditional functionality of hashtags as topic markers and tools for categorization.

Wikström (2014) has studied hashtags on Twitter from a pragmatic perspective, drawing to their multifunctional aspects that reveal the complex nature of not only such data but language as a system of meaning. He discusses aspects of communicative functions that go beyond how platforms operate, for example using hashtags as substitutes for textual markers like bolding or italicizing (Wikström: 148). This takes into consideration the limitations of what meaning can be produced in limited spaces and words and reveals how online users navigate past these instances while creating new structures of meaning. Connections between Wikström and Zappavigna's studies will be discussed later in relation to the present study.

2.2. Twitter and related terms

Twitter is a social media platform which allows users to post "tweets" within a 280-character limit, including tags, photos, video, audio, and hyperlinks in the same tweet. As a microblogging service

for news and networking, it allows users to like, comment and share content, as well as "retweet" and "quote tweet" tweets shared by other users. This means to repost the tweet's content as it is or to quote it with a comment. Although bound with character restrictions, Twitter is known for its unique use of hashtags (Murthy, 2013: 3), which are a type of topic or category indicators (Page, 2014: 177). The platform operates in larger themes that connect groups of people and enables content to be categorized. By nature, the way tweets are shown for individual users on their personalised feed or "timeline", a stream of tweets made by other users, is notably sparse. The timeline is a collection of tweets that are in no relation to each other without active engagement. Even when searched under one hashtag, the search will show a stream of tweets that are under the same general topic area, but people are having different conversations under each tweet.

2.3.   Hashtags and how they are studied

From the point of view of linguistics, hashtags perform in various communicative contexts. They are studied in relation to social media and digital environments in such discourses, that connect them with social semiotics and their structural features, as well as with their impact on communication. The main function of hashtags by default from a traditional viewpoint, is to categorize and organize searchable data. Hashtag is a type of hyperlink that is noticeable by a hash symbol (#). Linking content with a hashtag ties it to a larger group of posts about the same topic which the hashtag responds to (Wikström, 2014: 128-129). In Ambient Affiliation: A linguistic perspective on Twitter (2011) Zappavigna puts emphasis on the "findability" or what they have coined the term "searchable talk" for, to demonstrate the searchable nature of hashtags.

Wikström (2014: 128-129) points out how hashtags function in other ways besides categorizing communication. Diverging from that default, hashtags that are in daily use aim at a conversational "tagging" and other communicative uses, instead of only topic-tagging. In their data analysis, Huang, Thornton and Eftimiadis (2010) bring up the conversational tagging as part of the nature of hashtags and as a substitute for categorization.

For Twitter, hashtags are one of the main search tools and links between conversations and people. Their communicative function on the platform facilitates spontaneous conversations and small interactions between users (Murthy, 2013: 3). However, it is important to note that communication between people using hashtags is not linear, but comparable to a game of broken phone. Being under the hashtag does not mean a traditional sense of conversing with each other, as Murthy (2013: 3-4) points out.

2.4.   Love Myself campaign

The hashtag #BTSLoveMyself is a part of the LOVE MYSELF- campaign, which was officially launched in late 2017 by BTS, a **Korean boy band** (Korean: 방탄소년단; RR: *Bangtan Sonyeondan*), in partnership with UNICEF, as the group began to promote and sponsor the organization's End Violence campaign. Being aimed at young people's well-being, the campaign strives to be a force in ending violence towards young people around the world (Love Myself 2022). According to UNICEF's press release on 4th March 2021, BTS and UNICEF renewed their partnership and commitment to the campaign, with BTS and their label Big Hit donating over US$1 million to UNICEF, in addition to donating a portion of sales from their LOVE YOURSELF album series and related merchandise. The partnership has put emphasis on shining light on the importance of loving oneself and has helped UNICEF in responding to the needs of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic on a global scale. The message of the LOVE MYSELF campaign is present in the message BTS delivers to their fans and people around the world through their music, and it is present in the theme of getting through difficult times together with love and kindness. Hashtags such as the #BTSLoveMyself have given young people an outlet to open up about their experiences and feel more connected to each other.

2.5.   Artist and fan community

The fan community this study refers to is the BTS ARMY. The name itself is an acronym for Adorable Representative MC for Youth (Lee, 2019). ARMY is present in all online platforms, as it is one of the biggest fandom communities. Their presence is especially notable on Twitter, which as a platform offers some of the best tools for fandom communication. Fans are able to build their online fan identity through the creation of interest-specific profiles, by forming group chats, and by curating their Twitter timeline to see and engage with content that aligns with their interest, in this case BTS. This shared interest between the fans creates an imagined community when communication between fans continues for an extensive period of time (Atiqah, 2019: 66). They accommodate communication and content sharing among other activities, forming a sense of belonging to its members.

The flexibility of Twitter offers fandoms options to curate their profile to connect with their other community members. ARMY on Twitter can be identified through these aspects by looking at their profiles. Fan accounts typically display an image of their idol as their profile picture and include

them in their usernames. Display names in the ARMY community changed drastically in 2020, when BTS's album Map of the Soul: 7 was released. Fans organized themselves for the release and decided to include the number seven in their display names as a superscript number. To this day, this *"little seven"*, as the fans call it, has remained in many of the profiles as an indicator of belonging to the fandom and showing love for all seven members of BTS. Something that is present in the community's tweets in addition to these points, is the use of the purple heart emoji. The colour has carried symbolic meaning to the community since late 2016, when the BTS member Kim Tae-hyung (stage name V) explained the meaning of the colour in a concert, stating that it means to "trust you and love you for a long time". Purple hearts can be seen in profiles and tweets made by ARMY, and its use has widespread to other platforms as well. Not only are these identificators ways to show love and support for BTS, but a way to create community and a sense of belonging within the fandom itself. (Ezani, 2019).

3. Present study

The aim of this study is to investigate and explain the communicative functions of #BTSLoveMyself and how its structure and purpose play into its usage in the fan community. Research was based on the LOVE MYSELF- account and tweets, to limit the scope of this study. The use of the hashtag is investigated as it appears in the comment sections of the account's tweets, both original and retweets. This section will introduce the research question, data collections and chosen methods.

3.1. Data and methods

The #BTSLoveMyself and tweets relevant to the study with the use of the hashtag are what analysis will be based on. The data consists of tweets from the LOVE MYSELF- account, which has six (6) million followers as the data collection took place. First, 6 tweets, either original made by the LOVE MYSELF account or ones it has retweeted, were selected. From under each of those 6 tweets, 10 comment tweets were selected, accounting to 66 tweets in total for further analysis.

Both the original tweets and the comment tweets were selected to qualify if they included #BTSLoveMyself and were written in English. The account operates in both Korean and English and tweets are identical in both languages. Only tweets in English were collected for this study. Comment tweets under the original tweets were selected in order of appearance when data

collection took place. In terms of how users were identified as being part of the fan community, the main characteristics of such accounts were introduced in the background chapter "Artist and fan community." This information of the profiles was true during the course of data collection, and it is worth mentioning that they are prone to change as individual profiles can be edited at any point. This was taken into consideration for data collection. Oldest tweets are from 9th of November 2017 and newest from 1st of November 2021.

This study is an explanatory discourse analysis that takes a qualitative research approach on the linguistic practises that take place when the #BTSLoveMyself is used by the ARMY fan community. This explanatory nature of research is introduced by Page, as they explain the basic concepts of research design (2014: 46). Linguistic practises refer to the communicative functions that were explained in section 2.1.2. This study, as in the examples given by Page, seeks to explain the hashtags functions in its social context.

The discursive nature of this study is relevant as discourse analysis offers useful tools to understanding social media contexts (Page, 2014: 101), and for the purposes of this study it will be used through SFL, which was introduced in section 2.1.1. Meaning making and the structures of language that hashtags create fits into studying the social meaning of language in discourse studies. It is especially important to understand the role language plays in wording, nature of texts as suggestive or encouraging, to then being able to study their social meaning. These factors add into the knowledge that is needed to understand context, which will need to be discussed in relation to community use of the #BTSLoveMyself. (Page: 94).

3.2. Research question

As the hashtag is the main reason behind what communication takes place when using it, this study aims to answer the following:

> What communicative functions does #BTSLoveMyself have in the comment sections of tweets when used by members of the fan community?

The effects these functions have on the fan community will also be investigated, as hashtag use is a linguistic practise on its own. The analysis on the functions will explain this in relation to the LOVE MYSELF- campaign. The discussion and conclusion section will briefly go over whether or not the hashtag fills its original purpose in terms of the LOVE MYSELF- account's tweets.

4. Findings and analysis

Of the 6 original tweets from the LOVE MYSELF- account, 4 were written in a way that would influence and encourage the use of #BTSLoveMyself. Encouraging the fan community to share their thoughts, tips, and plans were present in these instances. The first example of this is an original tweet made by the LOVE MYSELF- account, where fans are thanked for the action they have taken, and steps to a new year are made by sharing a link to what the campaign achieved during 2019. Fans are encouraged to share their plans for the new year by using the hashtag.

> (1) Thank you for your effort to put "LOVE MYSELF" into action. Love yourself more in 2020 *(red heart emoji)* Check out the journey of LOVE MYSELF Campaign in 2019 and tell us your New Year's plans with #BTSLoveMyself *(link to campaign website)* #EndViolence
>
> *posted 31st of December 2019*

This instance of putting the hashtag into action gives it one of its functions. By using the hashtag fans get to share their plans with others, while strengthening their sense of community with those who share similar values. Another example of this is the following tweet by the LOVE MYSELF-account.

> (2) "It's okay to stop. There's no need to run without knowing why."
> This summer has been a whirlwind. Why don't we take a pause?
> Share your own tips on resting and recharging while sticking to our social distancing!
> #BTSLoveMyself #ENDViolence
>
> *posted 28th of August 2020*

The first line is a reference to the chorus of BTS's song *Paradise* (English translation), encouraging people to live life their way and while following their own path instead of the dreams of someone else. This is only one of the examples where BTS's lyrics are used to convey a message related to the campaign, and what the fans are expected to share with the hashtag.

This is beyond seeing the hashtag as merely a self-love hashtag, as it offers a way for the community to act together, or as Zappavigna (2011) writes, they engage in a form of collaborative tagging. They also point out how through affiliation, people intentionally bond themselves with others, or what is known as "coupling" in the Systemic Functional Linguistic approach (SFL) (Zappavigna, 2011: 6-8). Zappavigna also introduces the three functions that can be used when analysing linguistic meaning, known as metafunctions: interpersonal and relationship function,

organization of text, and experience enacting (Zappavigna, 2015:1). Through this, emotional language can be identified in the comment tweets. This can be seen in one such tweet as a response to the above example (1).

(3) #BTSLoveMyself For 2020 I'm going to focus on my well being and mental health , to Love myself more and to not care what anyone says About me and do my own thing as well as following my own path. Thank you BTS for coming to me when I needed you the most *(purple heart emoji)*

posted 31ˢᵗ of December 2019

Under the same original tweet there were also those who commented something other than suggested.

(4) Thank you for this beautiful campaign! Though I'm still a work in progress, I want to do new things that will take care of myself. #BTSLoveMyself #EndViolence

posted 31ˢᵗ of December 2019

Importantly, the hashtag performs not only in specific contexts as shown in the above examples, but it functions as an addition to the general topic area that concerns the campaign as a whole. This goes beyond the tweets of the LOVE MYSELF- account, but it can be illustrated through it as well. One of the account's tweets says:

(5) There are many ways to participate in LOVE MYSELF campaign. The easiest is to hashtag #BTSLoveMyself and upload it your social and share the news with your friends.

posted 9ᵗʰ of November 2017

One fan comments the following in response:

(6) make it a habit #ARMY to use the hashtag #BTSLoveMyself along with tagging @BTS_twt in EVERY tweet. *(two joint hands emojis, a blue heart emoji)*

posted 9ᵗʰ of November 2017

Not only has this user's comment acted through suggestion from the original tweet, but they are also addressing the community as a whole by using *#ARMY*. Beyond the use of the hashtag in comment sections, this is an attempt to increase its visibility in Twitter's trending page and searches. This is unlike the emotive usage presented in the previous examples, but still an attempt to bring the community together to act for the cause. As BTS is heavily involved in the campaign, the

fan community carries responsibility in participating in it, and the participatory culture reflects this responsibility (Bangun, 2019). The fans adopt what they are being given and share the hashtag to show support to the cause.

Another example is how the fan community takes the campaign's message and explores BTS's artistry through it. The bands involvement becomes apparent in the tweets, when fans show their support by quoting parts of their songs. The first line of the following example is from the chorus of *Answer: Love Myself*, a song that was released in the *Love Yourself: Answer*- album in 2018. Both the song and album express the importance of loving oneself, which at the time of release fit right in with the LOVE MYSELF- campaign's message. The entire *Love Yourself*- series carried this theme throughout the three released albums.

> (7) you've shown me reasons I should love myself
> thankyou our universe @BTS_twt for always inspiring us to love ourself *(purple heart emoji)* #BTSLoveMyself
>
> *posted 6th of October 2021*

The above tweet was a comment under UNICEF's tweet which said the following.

> (8) The lesson @BTS_twt wants you to learn?
> To love yourself. #BTSLoveMyself
>
> *posted 6th of October 2021*

Although the album series had been wrapped up already in 2018, the message still carries on, as shown in tweet (7). As for why fans use the lyrics in relation to the campaign, a clear line can be drawn. BTS expresses gratitude to ARMY for making them realise how important self-love is and wanted their fans to realise the same, which is present in songs they dedicate to their fans. The direct line in the example is the proof of that, as the fan and artist relationship is a two-way street. BTS is known to release songs dedicated to their fans, and in return ARMY often sings these songs back to them, showing gratitude both ways. In this sense, the above tweet is an example of that happening in online format, as it is a straightforward way of showing support directly through the hashtag. Another example of this is illustrated in the next tweet, in which multiple of these interrelated aspects are linked together. They have connected the campaign, BTS's songs, speeches and all their combined meanings into one.

(9) The Love Myself campaign media, song lyrics, speeches, all of it means so much to so many. I'm so thankful for @BTS_twt being the light at the end of the tunnel when dark days threaten to take over. #BTSLoveMyself

posted 6th of October 2021

An important function for the hashtag is indeed the community aspect. Its relevance can be seen in the following tweets.

(10) You know ARMY comes from all ages,backgrounds, etc and the common thing we all learnt from BTS is to Love ourselves. Love myself first and then go out and do good things for the world, even if it's just helping one person at a time! #BTSLoveMyself

posted 6th of October 2021

(11) I think every ARMY loves herself / himself a little more since we know the group we stan chose to use their platform for such a beautiful and inspiring campaign. It feels good to be part of a loving family that supports you! *(red heart emoji)* #BTSLoveMyself @BTS_twt

posted 9th of November 2017

Page (2014: 28) lists what roles language has in communication, and one of them presents the idea of how identity is performed through language. This is present in how the fans share a sense of community, shared values, and goals. They use the personal pronoun *we* when referring to the entire community and feel a sense of family when it comes to its other members, as can be identified in examples (10) and (11). They also refer to themselves with their fandom name ARMY and use it in both text and hashtag format in the tweets, for example in tweet (6). The community is bound together by this shared fan identity.

In the case of the hashtag, the community aspect becomes relevant when examining its structure. #BTSLoveMyself is a simple hashtag, and it fills the characteristics of a good tag. It consists of two meaningful parts. If the hashtag is examined in these two sections, there are a few things to consider. For one, what separates #BTSLoveMyself from other self-love tags, for example *#selflove* or *#iloveme*, is that its audience and desired focus group is taken into consideration. The structure becomes community specific when *BTS* is added as its prefix, inviting those familiar with the band to interact with it. Although Twitter counts all written ways of the hashtag relevant when

searchability is considered, for example the format *#btslovemyself*, the stylized and capitalized version *#BTSLoveMyself* not only separates the words for readability but gains double meaning by relating Love Myself to the theme of the *Love Yourself-* series which was discussed earlier. The phrases *Love Myself* and *Love Yourself* go hand in hand in this campaign and in BTS's message, to which the latter part of the hashtag is a direct correlation to. In addition, it helps fans identify with it as they are already familiar with the series and its message. The fans are bound to get interested in the campaign due to BTS promoting it but structuring the hashtag in this way is a type of identity signal for them regardless (Page 2014: 31). This was presented earlier in the findings, on how posts would suggest and put fans into action by encouraging them to use the hashtag. It performs as a linguistic tool to the community, whilst grouping their interactions and experiences under one tag. Acting as a community member is evident in the next example:

> (12) I'm actually going to go through the merchandise to see if I can get anything for Christmas or gift anything to my little cousins #BTSLoveMyself #EndViolence
>
> *posted 9th of November 2017*

This was a response to tweet example (5), which used #BTSLoveMyself as an example for how to easily participate in the campaign. As seen in other examples, this suggestion was put into action in some of the comments, but tweet (12) offers more to the participation suggestion by tweeting out how they could buy the official merchandise to show support. Pairing this with both of the campaign's hashtags shows active participation and support. This also offers extra-situational context outside of social media, as explained by Page (2014: 33) on how social practises offline are shaped by demographic factors, such as values that relate to individual identities and communities people belong to online. In this case, tweet (12) illustrates a type of offline action that is taken due to the fan community's support of the LOVE MYSELF- campaign. In addition to this, as fans create a communal thread of comments about the campaign's topics as a community, they are simultaneously individualistic as each tweet is one personal voice that creates community. This individual and community voice is displayed in the following example.

> (13) I purple ARMYs, @bts_bighit , @BTS_twt , @UNICEF , and @unicefchief
> *(three purple heart emojis)* It makes me proud that #BTSLoveMyself was created for all of us to help make a difference in the world alongside BTS
>
> *posted 15th of June 2018*

As explained in section 2.5 "Artist and fan community", the use of purple hearts in common in the community. The phrase "I purple you" has replaced the word *love* with *purple.* Purple means to love and trust someone for a long time, and this is one example of its use in text. By saying this, the user is expressing their love for all the names included, showing their pride for the cause in fandom-specific code.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study focused on how #BTSLoveMyself was used in the ARMY fan community as data collection took place based on the official LOVE MYSELF- account. The analysis was able to identify its communicative functions based mainly on aspects of community use and individual experience sharing purposes. Functions based on the campaign could also be identified in how the fan community members came together to encourage others to support the cause, and in how the hashtag usage displayed willingness to take action, not only as individuals but as a community. This strong sense of community was present in most of the data, as users were seen using linguistic tools to identify themselves with their community, while sharing aspects related to their individual experiences.

The scope of this research could be expanded by looking at the hashtag outside of this context. Twitter search API softwares allow data to be collected for a larger scale study, making wider categorization possible. Through this, different themes, topics of discussion, and shared content could be analysed in more detail in relation to the campaign. This study took a brief look on the LOVE MYSELF- campaign, but in the future research could focus on examining the use of all the related hashtags that have been created and used for the campaign. Community use of #BTSLoveMyself in the context of this study cannot alone define its reach in the fan community, but it offers an understanding for what kind of engagement it generates.

Within this engagement, themes of community building, self-love, and spreading the campaign's message in various ways were most commonly found. This study finds that the hashtag's use does positively align to what seemed to be the campaign's purpose for its use, if looked at in the context of the LOVE MYSELF- account. There, tweets to suggest and encourage the spread of the hashtag, in ways that engages users, was identified in multiple occasions. The account's tweets encouraged or guided the hashtag's use, which evoked more reactions by the fan community as they engaged in sharing their thoughts, experiences, and ideas regarding the campaign. Selecting this account for

data collection provided the needed context to conduct a small scale study, as it offered access to investigate the fan community behaviour and displayed what the intended usage of the hashtag was all in one place. As mentioned before, it does however limit the scope of this study to only that of one of many accounts that the fan community engages with, and only parts of it interact there. It offered a compact data pool that is publicly available, but as a result cannot represent the entire fan community.

As Zappavigna's study on ambient affiliation on Twitter concluded that tweets invite users to engage in sharing content based on shared values (2011: 18), this study has found similar functions in the fan community, even when the focus was not based on the searchability of tweets via hashtags. However, the community use does group everything shared under the hashtag if searched, and the hashtag performs its categorizing role as one its functions. In grouping tweets under the same hashtag, the same general area of topics and themes is searchable data, through which a larger scale study could be conducted, like in the case of Zappavigna. Different discourses within the same hashtag can be investigated based on the functions it performs when all data related to it is available is one search.

Wikström's (2014) research on communicative functions of hashtags made categories for tweets that were, when compared to #BTSLoveMyself, more organically created and in use, as they were generally not created for a specific audience. Their category for "topic tags" is perhaps the closest to that of self-love tags. Topic tags categorise tweets by what is being discussed, for example "*#TED*" when referring to TED-talks, or "*#Golf*" (Wikström: 132). A specific topic is being discussed, similarly to #BTSLoveMyself being a category for shared experiences of the same topic.

Something that was revealed during the data collection, was how in many instances where the main account's tweets would include the hashtag but gave no incentive for people to use it, it would not get used as much as compared to tweets that gave it an action. Perhaps this is due to the fan community adopting the hashtag for the use they know fit through these given actions and they cannot adapt to use it by itself as an addition to more reactive tweets. This was true especially when comparing tweets made on the account, in comparison to those by UNICEF that got retweeted by the LOVE MYSELF account. Because of this retweet option, this study considered them as part of the account's tweets for data collection, because the account is an extension to UNICEF and their campaign.

A quantitative approach could reveal aspects about the hashtag beyond what the qualitative nature of this study could offer. However, I believe this approach offered tools for how social interaction, community, and the hashtag itself could be studied in this context, all which quantitative methods could only aid with. ARMY as a massive and diverse fandom cannot fully be investigated on Twitter only, as the hashtag exists outside of the platform as well. It would be worth investigating, whether different platforms and the fans there use the hashtag differently and in what context. Comparison between these platforms could reveal things about not only the hashtag, but also about the fan community in terms of how they function differently based on the platform and the technologies that are offered for them in terms of communicating and sharing content. Finally, the relevance of the self-love topic became apparent in many of the examples, which could be grounds for a larger discussion on the topic. Self-love talk within the hashtag is a topic that could be expanded on, as the theme arises not only from the fan community's tweets, but also from how they add BTS's lyrics and interpretations of them into their discussions. In focusing on just one fan community and one hashtag, this study has added knowledge on how ARMY as a fan community has used the different functions of #BTSLoveMyself while promoting the LOVE MYSELF-campaign.

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