SEVENTEEN FANS WEAVING PARASOCIAL WEB THROUGH MEDIA MULTIPLEXITY

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Abstract. The South Korean entertainment industry, particularly K-Pop, uses social media to connect the idols to their fans worldwide. This strategy is also used by Seventeen. K-Pop idols Seventeen through their agencies manage continuous interactions, making fans believe they are close and know their idol well. The use of platforms also emphasizes the media multiplexity to connect with their mediated parasocial interaction. This phenomenon raises the question of how fandom Carat, the group of fans of Seventeen, weaves the parasocial interaction on Seventeen's Youtube and Weverse. This research investigates the parasocial interaction done by Carat on Seventeen's Youtube and Weverse and the web of media or known as media multiplexity which emerges within the activity of idolization. This research uses a quasi-qualitative approach. Data collection techniques used in this study are interviews and document study. Based on the results, we found that Carat became their identity presented in parasocial interactions. Carat conducted mediated parasocial interactions on Youtube and Weverse. Through the media multiplexity Carat created a sense of comfort and familiarity coming from repeated exposure to Seventeen's media and content. The next finding is that Carat felt that they were not close to Seventeen if they didn't actively weave and connect their parasocial interaction.

Keywords: Media Multiplexity; Parasocial Interaction; Fandom; Fans; K-Pop

Abstrak. Industri hiburan Korea Selatan, khususnya K-Pop, menggunakan media sosial untuk menghubungkan para idola dengan penggemar mereka di seluruh dunia. Strategi ini juga digunakan oleh Seventeen. Idola K-Pop Seventeen melalui agensinya mengelola interaksi yang berkelanjutan, membuat penggemar merasa dekat dan seolah-olah mengenal idola mereka secara pribadi. Penggunaan berbagai platform juga menekankan konsep media multiplexity untuk membangun interaksi parasosial yang dimediasi. Fenomena ini memunculkan pertanyaan mengenai bagaimana fandom Carat, kelompok penggemar Seventeen, menjalin interaksi parasosial melalui Youtube dan Weverse milik Seventeen. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi interaksi parasosial yang dilakukan oleh Carat di Youtube dan Weverse Seventeen serta jejaring media atau yang dikenal sebagai media multiplexity yang muncul dalam aktivitas idolisasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuasi-kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan adalah wawancara dan studi dokumen. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, ditemukan bahwa Carat membentuk identitas mereka melalui interaksi parasosial. Carat melakukan interaksi parasosial yang dimediasi melalui Youtube dan Weverse. Melalui media multiplexity, Carat menciptakan rasa nyaman dan kedekatan yang muncul dari paparan berulang terhadap media dan konten Seventeen. Temuan selanjutnya adalah bahwa Carat merasa tidak dekat dengan Seventeen jika mereka tidak secara aktif menjalin dan menghubungkan interaksi parasosial tersebut.

Kata Kunci: Media Multiplexity; Interaksi Parasosial; Fandom; Penggemar; K-Pop

INTRODUCTION

Technological developments in the era of globalization have led to a very rapid progress and exchange of information. This makes South Korea known throughout the world, especially for its popular culture. The spread of South Korean popular culture globally is often called the Korean Wave or the Hallyu phenomenon (Hanryu in Korean). Popular culture from South Korea such as television dramas, films, pop songs, and celebrities initially became very popular in Asian countries such as China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and other countries in East and Southeast Asia (Shim, 2006).

One of South Korea's popular culture products that is famous in Indonesia is Korean Pop or K-Pop. K-Pop is pop music that combines existing musical genres. What makes K-Pop different from other pop culture is that K-Pop also displays high-quality performances in the form of singing while dancing, performances such as music videos, fashion, aesthetic stages, and music produced by combining various genres or musical styles in one song (Romano, 2018). Popular culture is synonymous with the formation of fan groups or communities called fandom (fan kingdom). Within the K-Pop fandom, a culture of communication between fans and idols has been formed. One of them is that idols call their fans by their fandom names to create an attachment between fans and their idols. Then the interactions that occur at fan meetings, fansigns (album signing events), concerts, and so on, can create a sense of loyalty in fans because it triggers their emotional feelings and empathy (Johana, 2022).

To reach their fans, media figures such as K-pop idols use social media. However, media figures somewhile were not allowed by their agencies to own and use personal social media accounts, so a forum platform called a fancafe was used (Miley,

2020). Fan cafes like Daum Café are used for fans to communicate with their media figures and other fans, and get the latest news about their media figures. However, Daum Café is not accessible to fans outside South Korea and the language provided is only Korean. Therefore, to reach wider fans, media such as Weverse and YouTube are used. Weverse is a media created by beNX, a subsidiary of Hybe Corporation, for the global fan community so that fans can enjoy content and communicate with idol artists. This platform has a concept like Daum Café (Kompas.com, 2021). One of the renowned K-pop idols as discussed here is Seventeen. Seventeen presents within the form of a boy group who performs internationally.

In fact, Seventeen's career began in 2012, when Seventeen had not yet officially formed and debuted. Pledis Entertainment uploaded a live broadcast program on YouTube called Seventeen TV in 2015 showing their practice process which they broadcasted on an internet live broadcast website called Ustream. This program is a form of indication that Pledis Entertainment would have released a new boy band. Seventeen's YouTube account is also used to upload the Seventeen Project program, a survival concept program where in order for them to debut, they have to win the given challenges. After that, Seventeen finally debuted with the song Adore You whose music video was uploaded on the same YouTube account as Seventeen TV and Seventeen Project were uploaded. Seventeen's YouTube account is not only used to upload music videos, dance practices, or performance videos related to their music. Seventeen also uploads videos showing behind the scenes from the making of their music videos, special performances with various concepts, song cover videos, and teasers for their latest music and variety shows. However, in 2017, Seventeen's YouTube account began to be active by

uploading content outside of their music career. The program is called Going Seventeen, the name is taken from the name of their third mini album. Initially the program showed behind the scenes from their concerts, videos of their performances, entertaining scripted content, and even showed Seventeen's daily life. Until 2019, Seventeen released a new program called Inside Seventeen. This program is a fragment of the Going Seventeen program, where Inside Seventeen focuses more on behind the scenes activities carried out by Seventeen such as making albums, practicing choreography, and so on, meanwhile Going Seventeen on variety show content.
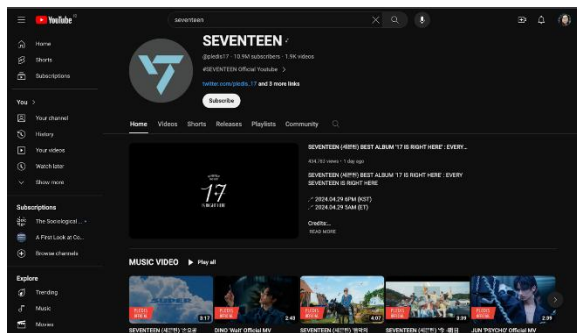

Figure 1. Seventeen on Youtube

There is no doubt about its popularity, Seventeen is one of the big idol groups in the K-Pop world. Seventeen also gained success due to their achievements. Seventeen's success can be considered so great that their ninth mini album managed to achieve sales of 2.2 million albums, occupying third place on the Global Album Sales Chart for 2021 by the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (Global Music Report, 2022). Even on their fourth album, Seventeen managed to become the best-selling artist in K-Pop history, selling 2 million albums in just one week. Seventeen ranks just below the boy band idol BTS (Soompi, 2022). Unlike other boy bands in South Korea, they have quite a lot of

members compared to other idol groups, Seventeen consists of 13 members.

Seventeen is also divided into three sub-units, they are Hip-Hop Team, Performance Team, and Vocal Team. Seventeen has three leaders in each sub-unit. Scoups as the leader of The Hip-Hop Team is also the leader of Seventeen as a whole, Hoshi as the leader of The Performance Team, and Woozi as the leader of the Vocal Team. Hip-Hop Team consists of Scoups, Wonwoo, Mingyu, and Vernon. The Performance Team consists of Hoshi, Jun, The8, and Dino. The Vocal Team consists of Woozi, DK, Seungkwan, Joshua, and Jeonghan. These sub-units aim to divide them based on their talents. Hip-Hop Team for those who are talented in rap, Performance Team for those who are talented in dancing, and Vocal Team for those who are talented in singing. Seventeen is also nicknamed Self-Producing Idol, which means they are idols who produce their own work. Seventeen members are directly involved in the production process of songs, albums, choreography, concerts and merchandise (Bacin, 2018).

Figure 2. All members of K-pop Boy Group Seventeen

Seventeen calls their fans Carats, they give their fans the name Carat because the song Shining Diamond from their debut album, 17 Carat, which they describe their fans as diamonds and carats are the unit of diamond. Seventeen has many fans in South Korea, as well as internationally. As evidenced by data taken by Twitter, Seventeen is in the top 10 positions as the K-Pop artists most frequently discussed on Twitter globally (CNN Indonesia, 2022). Seventeen is also ranked 10th among K-Pop idols with the most subscribers with 7.3 million subscribers in December 2021 (IDN Times, 2021).

The last media that is the focus of this research is Weverse. Weverse is an application created by Hybe Corporation for idols, especially idols under its auspices, to create a global fan community platform so that fans can enjoy content and communicate with idol artists. Weverse is a fancafe in the form of a mobile application and website. With this platform, Seventeen can communicate more intimately with their fans, Carat. Compared to other fancafes, Weverse is very easy to use. The difference between Weverse and other applications is the feature where information about idols, posts from fans, and posts from idols are separated on different pages.

This makes virtual communication less complicated and lenient for the idols and their fans, thus Carat can directly interact with Seventeen. Another feature that is beneficial for international fans to use is the live translation feature, so that communication with fans abroad can be easier. Seventeen members upload almost every day on Weverse. The uploads made by Seventeen members to their fans are in the form of text, images, and videos. On Weverse, Seventeen can directly type and send images and at that time they upload them. When Seventeen uploads the message to Weverse, fans who follow Seventeen will get a notification if there is an update from the personnel. Fans can also reply to uploaded postings from Seventeen via the comment column and their comments have the opportunity to be read and replied to by Seventeen, otherwise fans can also upload messages on the feature provided by Weverse. These features are to create two-way communication between fans and their idols. From this background, the main focus of this research is to explain how Carat weaves their parasocial web with their idol through the multiplexity media they possess and operate.
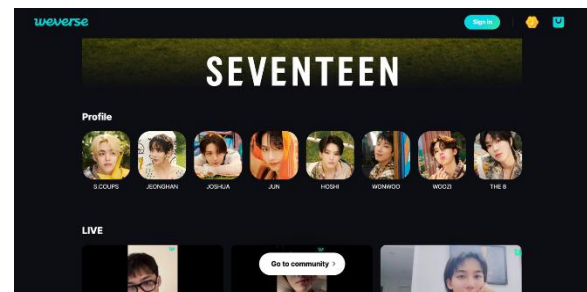

Figure 3. Seventeen on Weverse

Fandom (Fan Kingdom). Fandom comes from the mixing of words "fan and kingdom", fandom is a group of fans with relatively deep and positive emotional beliefs about someone or something famous, usually expressed through recognition of style or creativity (Duffet, 2013). Fans within fandoms are also encouraged to explore and participate in fan practices. Fans find identity in the pleasures associated with popular culture. Fans are conceptualized as active viewers who are engaged in an ongoing process of consuming and dedicating themselves to fandom in their daily lives. However, these processes relate to the historical and cultural contexts of their fandom development, and to the community and identity contexts in which fandoms are consumed and made meaningful (Click & Scott, 2017). In connecting between fans and idols, almost all forms of communication are

mediated. Mediated either through information provided by legacy media or through seemingly more direct but often orchestrated social media communications creating fans emotional bonds with their idols (Click & Scott, 2017).

Abercrombie and Longhurst (as cited by Click & Scott, 2017) differentiate fan types along several dimensions: the type of fan object, the extent to which fans focus on media use in an organized manner, the level of textual productivity and performativity, the existence of fan communities with differences and internal power hierarchies; and various skills such as technical, analytical, interpretive. According to Sagita and Kadewanda (2017), some fandom activities on social media are in the form of seeking information and being a source about idols, such as news, events, the latest songs, etc. The fandom also does fan projects. A fan project with the aim of supporting idols and strengthening the existence of fandom.

Parasocial Interaction. Parasocial interactions are interactions that show intimacy from a distance in a one-way and mediated manner (Cohen, 2014). Parasocial interactions can occur when the audience responds in some way to a mediated performance by responding to the screen or book, laughing, feeling tense or afraid. Parasocial relationships can even change the balance of our emotional attachment to other people around us. Rojek (2016) stated that media such as television producers and directors use parasocial relationships as an emotional model by encouraging television figures to become individuals by adopting forms of behavior and exchanges that are engineered to be in domestic conditions or that are more relevant to the audience. Things like bespoke presentations are introduced and delivered using stylized language; such as with words of wisdom, catchphrases, jokes,

off-the-cuff comments, self-deprecation, sharing of personal thoughts; and in some cases stating surprising facts on the screen or engaging in the disclosure of hidden emotions.

The audience is most likely to create a relationship with the persona because the informal nature makes it possible to invite the audience to feel comfortable and familiar with the media figure, and constant and repeated exposure creates the illusion of intimacy (Cohen, 2014). Media figures consciously invite their viewers to be emotionally involved, not only with broadcast content but by recognizing them as individuals (Rojek, 2016). According to Cohen (2014), the characteristics of parasocial interactions include: 1) the feeling of knowing someone well 2) enjoy watching or listening to them 3) feel like we are with a friend when we watch or listen to them 4) missing them when they are not around. Setyanto, et al. (2017) explained that there are five dimensions in parasocial interaction:

1. Imagination friends. Viewers see their media figures as being the same as themselves or their friends and fantasize that their media figures could be good friends when they meet one day.
2. Finding "friends". Viewers are willing to spend time watching shows and looking for programs where their media figures are present.
3. Empathy towards media figures. Viewers feel what their media figures feel.
4. The reality of the relationship. Viewers think about their media figures when watching their media figures, but also try to get closer or reach out to their media figures.
5. Competence of media figures. Media figures have a role in parasocial interactions, so the competence of media figures can influence these parasocial relationships.

As a result, these parasocial interactions have the following effects on the audience. First effect comes in the sense of togetherness (companionship). Someone has empathy or feels relevant to a media figure. Viewers feel satisfaction in their social interaction needs when they feel accompanied by their media figures, thus creating special feelings towards the media figures. Idols and their fans also build the pseudo-friendship, a false sense of camaraderie emerges between media figures and audiences. Fans as viewers on their idol media platforms imitate positive things and take their idol gestures as guidelines for behavior. Fans interpret and understand their personal identities from the behavior of media figures. Last effect is the emergence of a pathological audience in which fans can imitate the bad behavior of media figures. Setyanto, et al. (2017) on their research found out that young teenage girls aged 11 to 15 years behave in the media towards their idols and made a contribution to parasocial behavior with their idols. The idols used in this research are a boy band from the UK, One Direction. Besides One Direction, parasocial interaction activities was once studied by conducting qualitative descriptive study towards JKT48 fans in Jabodetabek, Indonesia. Pratama and Winduwati (2021) aimed their study to explain how JKT48 fans carried out parasocial interaction in which they were usually referred as Wota for male fans and Woti for female fans. The last previous research made by Sagita and Kadewandana (2017) talking about emotional involvement was intertwined in the parasocial relationships carried out by the Army fandom, the fans of K-pop idol BTS.

Media Multiplexity. Media multiplexity states that our social networks will be strongly influenced by the media we use and pay attention to the number of media used to communicate interpersonally. In this theory, human relationships are classified into two either weak ties and strong ties (Griffin et al. (eds), 2018). The strength of the bond depends on the amount of time together, emotional intensity, intimacy, and willingness to exchange resources. The greater the amount of time together, the more intense the emotions expressed, the more intimate, and the greater the willingness to exchange resources, the relationship is classified as a strong bond and the other way around. The basic claim of media multiplexity theory is the strength of relationship ties will encourage the use of multiple media, so strong ties will be encouraged to use a greater number of media. Griffin et al. (eds, 2018) summarizes the media multiplexity into three statements:

1. Communicating content varies based on the strength of the bond, not based on the medium. Someone with a strong bond will use any medium to discuss the topic of conversation they want. The topic of conversation will depend on how strong the relationship is.

2. Hierarchy of media use depends on group norms. The allocation to different channels for relationships with different ties forms a hierarchy of media use expectations. A person will have a medium that is public and open to communicate to relationships with all ties. However, relationships with strong ties will usually require a more private medium to maintain their relationship.

3. Adding and reducing media access affects relationships with weak ties. A person with a weak bond relationship uses a limited number of media, especially a person with a weak bond relationship does not use more private media in communicating. When someone does not use a particular medium to communicate, it is possible that there will be no further communication because the medium used to communicate is a specific medium.

It is said that relationships with strong ties use more media than relationships with weak ties. However, the strength of the bond between the relationship and the medium depends on other factors that influence how the strength of the bond between the relationship and the medium becomes related to each other. Another factor is satisfaction with the medium. Those who are satisfied with the medium used will predict a closer relationship and vice versa. However, this also depends on the person one is talking to. someone will still feel connected even if they don't use their preferred media, because media preferences will depend on who we are talking to. Developments in the field of digital media and in the field of information technology in the 1990s created new media.

Miczo et al. (2011) examined geographically close relationships (GCR) involving CMC (computer mediated communication) which is manifested in everyday relational maintenance. One of the main things studied is friendship relations. In this case, researchers tested how friendship impacts communication motives when respondents use multiple online media to build their close relationships. The presence of CMC here is also connected to the concept of media multiplexity, because it emphasizes strong and weak ties. The stronger the ties between dyads, the more communication motives that emerge, their function is to maintain GCR. This communication motive paradigm departs from uses and gratification which proposes the premise of using media for its own purposes. Participants in this research were 350 undergraduate students from medium-capacity Communication Sciences classes at Midwestern University. The research results show that two strategies are needed, namely strategies with high intensity and routines that are taken-for-granted. The communication motives sought are help, comfort, reinforcement, and attention; This kind of solidarity is present in the close ties of participants who use CMC to regulate the distance from their GCR, more motive variations emerge from strong ties than weak ties.

Littlejohn and Foss (2009) said that new media will emerge that can replace broadcast mass culture. The internet will become a medium to provide an alternative to the one-way communication that has been carried out by broadcast mass culture. Audiences in this era are no longer traditional audiences, where audiences will accept whatever is given to them, but audiences with personalized content, where audiences can choose whatever content they want. New media has several characteristics, here are five characteristics in new media

1. New media is easy to manipulate. New media makes it possible for everyone to manipulate and change their data and information freely.
2. New media is easy to connect with. New media allows users to connect quickly and connect everyone regardless of distance and time. New media is easy to distribute and exchange with fellow users via the internet.
3. New media is compressible. Users can find it easy to store and share content on new media because the content on new media is compressible, can be reduced in size so that its capacity can be reduced.
4. New media is dense. The use of new media does not require large space such as a television or using disks to store various files. Like now a person can use just his device to store music, photos, videos and games in the same device. Proving that new media only requires a small amount of space to store various content.
5. New media is impartial. Media capitalization no longer applies to new media because new media is not controlled by just a few parties and does not side with anyone. Everyone can be a

producer and consumer of new media at the same time. Therefore, new media is often said to be very democratic media.

METHODOLOGY

This research is quasi-qualitative research. Quasi-qualitative is a research method that is not completely qualitative because it is influenced by quantitative positivist thinking (Bungin, 2020). Quasi-qualitative focuses on using theory to solve problems, phenomena, or social contexts, it emphasizes descriptive research, causing quasi-qualitative to tend to analyze the data displayed rather than the meaning of the data. This research focuses on parasocial interactions and provides a description of the parasocial interactions that occur between the Carat fandom and Seventeen. The data source for this research uses informants. The research informants who will be interviewed consist of fans, fandom managers on social media, and experts. The criteria for informants consist of active Seventeen fans as part of the Carat fandom, informants following YouTube and Weverse accounts, and always updating information from these platforms. Meanwhile, fandom management informants have been managing fandom accounts on social media for at least two years, in addition to their main activity as Carats. Then the experts in this research were drawn from figures who are experienced in the field of communications, familiar with the K-Pop industry, and also understand the forms of CMC. This research is limited to the time period July 2022 to December 2022. During this time period, Seventeen was active on YouTube and Weverse to keep in touch with their fans while carrying out the Be The Sun World Tour in 2022. Researchers also used media texts from official accounts Seventeen's YouTube and Weverse were obtained during that time period as research support. In collecting data, the researcher used a semi-structured interview method, which is an interview conducted with an interview guide, but the researcher had the freedom to ask questions and organize the flow and setting of the conversation (Herdiansyah, 2015). Then as supporting data, researchers used personal document studies obtained from research subjects and archives obtained from Seventeen's YouTube and Weverse. The steps taken by researchers to analyze data are data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusions or verification (Herdiansyah, 2010).

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Fandom of Carat. The fandom studied here is Carat, the group of Seventeen's fans. In this research it can be seen that Carat's favorite object is Seventeen, more specifically visuals in the form of their appearance, sound in their music, characters displayed by Seventeen, and contents created by Seventeen's agency. Then Carat focuses on media and uses media in an organized manner for matters related to Seventeen by using YouTube and Weverse regularly to always follow Seventeen's latest updates, streaming and voting, and gathering with other fans through existing media. Carat also creates and manages fandom accounts on social media to become searchers and acts as messenger of information with activities of updating information related to Seventeen and carrying out fan projects in paid promotions and media partners. Carat performs textual productivity and performativity.

In the form of performativity, Carat creates fan projects such as giveaways or birthday projects as in Figure 1 below. In textual productivity, Carat gives likes and comments on Seventeen contents, as well as creates Twitter threads and fanfictions. Regarding Carat's skills, Carat has analytical abilities to analyze aspects of Seventeen's

appearance. Carat also has other technical skills such as graphic design, photo editing, video editing, and creating customized fan art. These skills can be expressed because Carats now have a medium to deliver their abilities. However, there are Carats who feel they don't have certain skills. With the existence of Carat with differences and internal power hierarchies within the fandom, this research found that fans who do not reach the level of fanatics like sasaengs (stalkers), but there are fans who are called top spenders. Carat who are top spenders are usually those who are generous and willing to spend their money on Seventeen. The publicity that Carats do to other Carats creates this hierarchy. This is one way Carat maintains a sense of closeness with Seventeen by purchasing products related to idols. Carat who spends money on Seventeen's merchandise, album, other things usually create content or resell purchased items in group orders.

Parasocial Interaction on Weverse and Youtube. New media creates social engagement (Hartmann, 2008). YouTube and Weverse are new media, these platforms create social engagement between fellow Carat and Seventeen.

"Actually, this is a branding technique too because when you give a persona to a group of people that you are a part of... The example is Carat. These fans will feel close to their idols, they feel like they are one with their idols... If it comes from the agency, it is more profitable because the fans will like them more, love their idols more. When they put out anything, they want to buy it. This is a form of strategy when you give someone your identity. Then a person feels more alive" (VA, data obtained by interview, 2022).

Seventeen has an official YouTube account to provide video content for Carat. Carat's interaction with Seventeen is done by giving likes, comments, and sharing Seventeen's YouTube content; one of which is Going Seventeen to fellow Carat and people who don't know Seventeen. There is no interaction with Seventeen directly because Seventeen's YouTube is managed by the agency staff, however Seventeen sometimes greets and mentions Carat in their contents. Unlike YouTube, Weverse is managed by Seventeen themselves when they upload on their behalf. So, Carat tries to interact with Seventeen by commenting on uploads and comments left by Seventeen, as well as uploading posts in the feed section when Seventeen was active on Weverse.

Parasocial interactions form parasocial relationships which make fans/viewers curious about their idols and try to reach them in several ways (Cohen, 2014). With the interactions shown via YouTube and Weverse, Carat feels close to Seventeen. Carat continues to follow and wants to find out about Seventeen through social media. A sense of closeness is created because Seventeen's content is open, it shows their personality and is informal. For instance, behind the scenes content involves Carat on YouTube and Weverse. This causes Carat to feel comfortable and familiar with Seventeen and describes Seventeen as their friend. Carat feels closer to TMI (Too Much Information) content, one of which is Seventeen telling their personal experiences with their members. At this point, media figures or idols in this study make it possible to invite the audience to feel comfortable and familiar with and constant and repeated exposure creates the illusion of intimacy. This feeling of closeness also makes Carat feel homesick when Seventeen is not actively uploading content on YouTube or Weverse.

Parasocial interactions can create the illusion of intimacy with constant and repeated exposure (Cohen, 2014). So, when Carat is exposed to continuous interaction it

will create the illusion of intimacy. The strength of the bond depends on the amount of time together, emotional intensity, intimacy, and willingness to exchange resources (Griffin et al. (eds), 2018). So, the more time you spend together using media, the stronger the bond will be or the closer you will be. The intensity of the informants in using YouTube is different. VV uses YouTube around 2 hours on weekdays and 4 hours on weekends, MM uses YouTube around 3 hours per day, and FF uses YouTube once every 2-3 days when she goes to sleep (range from 9-10 pm to 12 pm) or when she wants to stay up late (using YouTube until 4 am). This data shows that the three fans enjoy using YouTube and are often exposed to YouTube media.

Weaving Parasocial Interaction through Carat's Media Multiplexity. The basic claim of this theory is the strength of relationship ties will encourage the use of several media, indicating that the stronger the relationship ties, the greater the use of media to communicate (Griffin et al. (eds), 2018). It was found that Carat feels close to Seventeen when following all of official Seventeen's social media. The informant stated that Carat was obliged to follow all of Seventeen's social media to feel this closeness. Griffin et al. (eds). (2018) explains that media selection will not adapt the medium to the message, but rather the medium to the person. So someone will still feel connected because media preferences will depend on who we are talking to, even if that person does not prefer the media.

In interviews with fans as our informants, researchers found that on average fans reached Seventeen on Twitter, YouTube, and Weverse. VV said that initially she followed Seventeen on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Now, VV also uses Weverse to reach Seventeen. MM and FF also initially followed Seventeen on

YouTube. MM then followed Seventeen on Weverse first, preceded by Instagram and Twitter. MM also said that she follows Seventeen on all platforms that Seventeen has. Meanwhile, after following Seventeen on YouTube, FF followed Seventeen on Twitter. FF also reached out to Seventeen by joining a fan cafe (Daum Fancafe) and succeeded in getting membership in that media. However, because Seventeen's fan cafe in the media was closed and moved to Weverse, until now FF follows Seventeen on Weverse. It can be seen that fans are reaching out to Seventeen in various media.

"In the past, he was often on Twitter. Continue on Facebook most. Same with YouTube... now with the addition of Weverse, OK? So there is Weverse and YouTube. Three at most." (VV, data obtained by interview, 2023)

This feeling of closeness makes Carat need a more private medium to communicate with Seventeen. Even though Seventeen has various social media, Carat feels that Weverse is needed to communicate with Seventeen. The interactions that occur on Weverse can be two-way, and the topics of conversation can be personal and informal, making the nature of Weverse media private, where only fans can see Seventeen's uploads making Carat feel special. Interactions that occur only through CMC such as YouTube and Weverse can influence Carat's feelings of closeness to Seventeen. In accordance with the statement regarding media multiplexity, reducing media access affects relationships with weak ties, concluding that weak tie relationships will use fewer media to communicate (Griffin et al. (eds), 2018). According to fans, when they were not active on Seventeen's social media, they felt they were not close to Seventeen and felt left behind. All these communicative motives can be found in the paradigm of uses and gratification put in CMC where fans like

Carat did the parasocial interaction through the multiple media (Miczo et al., 2011).

It is shown that Carat is satisfied with using YouTube and Weverse media. This makes Carats more comfortable in using this media, so they are exposed to Seventeen content more often and feel their closeness to Seventeen. Even though Carat expressed dissatisfaction with Weverse's existing features, such as an interface that changes so it is considered quite complicated, Carat still uses Weverse for content from Seventeen. Carat accepts things that Carat doesn't like about Weverse to fulfill Carat's need to know information about Seventeen. The varieties of communication motives in their CMC activities goes along with the strong parasocial ties that Carat feels (Miczo et al., 2011).

Next finding is a fan favorite topic of conversation on Weverse. VV likes topics of conversation that are Too Much Information (TMI), when Seventeen talks to each other, and when Seventeen fights alone. VV explained that even though Seventeen could be in the same place, they did this for Carat to see. Discussing Too Much Information (TMI) content, RR said that Carat likes TMI content, even though it is trivial matters, all Carat will remember it. MM likes it when Seventeen provides topics of conversation about random things such as giving news and Seventeen members telling about their activities. FF are keen when Seventeen pays attention and shares things that Carat feels safe to know as if Seventeen uses Weverse as their safe place to freely discuss anything. This is in accordance with what was stated regarding how idols use informality to invite audiences (Cohen, 2014). Providing and giving news is one of familiar topics such as giving news is one of the informal traits that Seventeen uses with Carat when interacting on TMI content. The next characteristic of parasocial interaction is feeling like we are with a friend when we watch or listen to them. In this research, when consuming Seventeen content, it feels like Carat belongs to Seventeen's friends. All informants felt like their idols friends when interacting with Seventeen. Setyanto, et al. (2017) stated that one of the dimensions of parasocial interaction is imaginary friends.

FF said that she felt close like a friend when consuming Seventeen content on Weverse. This was explained by VV as an expert. According to VV, this can happen because of the secluded nature of Weverse. This finding relates to how those who have close relationships or strong ties will need more private media (Griffin et al. (eds), 2018). VV also realized that on Weverse idols can upload things that are personal and free, such as idols' feelings and their daily activities. Rojek (2016) explained that media personalities like idols usually convey messages using stylized language, in the research found that they use spontaneous comments and Seventeen's personal thoughts and are involved in expressing hidden emotions, this results in fans having a close feeling. VV also noticed that idols use informal language and call their fans affectionately. This calling is one of the dimensions proposed by Sagita and Kadewanda (2017), namely personal identity. Carat forms a personal identity caused by Seventeen's behavior which is used to interpret and understand his life.

This feeling of longing also occurs to Carat when Seventeen was inactive. This feeling of longing emerges in connection with the reality of parasocial interaction according to Setyanto, et al. (2017). The reality of relationships is how fans not only think about the content they watch, but also think about how fans can reach media figures to maintain audience relationships with the idols. In this research, it was found that media multiplexity influenced how Carat interacted with Seventeen. The strength of the bond between Carat and Seventeen is one-way, as

seen from Carat's side of their relationship with Seventeen because Carat wants to be more updated and get more information about his idols, thereby creating a sense of closeness that makes fans feel like they know Seventeen well. This relates to how Carat with strong ties will reach out to Seventeen in various media. So, the strength of the bond between Carat and Seventeen can be said to have a strong bond. This is assessed based on the number of media that Carat follows. However, it was discovered that Carat never felt close to Seventeen and did not interact with Seventeen by reducing Seventeen's social media access. Carat felt left behind when he didn't really follow Seventeen's updates on Weverse and YouTube. The interval between Carat's inactivity in accessing Seventeen's social media is around 1-3 days, or 1-2 weeks.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion should be concise and meet the objective(s) of the study. Korean popular culture, especially K-Pop, can be consumed by countries other than South Korea due to globalization. Now, this South Korean idol group uses many media to promote themselves and reach fans from all over the world. Due to the variety of media used, idol groups find ways to simultaneously interact with many fans at the same time. This creates mediated interactions and forms an illusion of intimacy called parasocial interaction between fans and their idols. In this research, it shows that Carat feels close to Seventeen through the content that Seventeen provides on YouTube and Weverse. Official accounts on YouTube and Weverse support Seventeen to reach their fans in CMC and media multiplexity, both through one-way and two-way mediated communication. By exposing Carat to informal Seventeen content, by showing their persona, Carat feels more about Seventeen as a person. Carat expresses

positive feelings regarding the parasocial interactions they had with Seventeen. Carat shows impacts such as imitating positive Seventeen's behavior, creating a feeling of empathy with Seventeen, having a special Seventeen para-relationship, and being a group of friends in Seventeen's daily life, yet creating a relationship that feels intimate virtually. Carat feels the need to carry out this constant parasocial interaction during their idolization period.

Carat fans are a type of fan who has a passion for Seventeen, uses media for things related to Seventeen in an organized manner, has textual productivity and performativity related to Seventeen, and has technical and analytical skills which are channeled to the media. Seventeen uses YouTube and Weverse to communicate with Carat. YouTube is a medium for uploading videos, whereas Weverse is an application dedicated to interacting with fans and idols. So there is direct parasocial interaction on Weverse between Carat and Seventeen, creating the possibility of two-way interaction with fans, meanwhile YouTube is a one-way interaction only.

The interactions carried out by Carat and Seventeen via YouTube and Weverse are new media that create parasocial engagement for Carat with fellow Carats and with Seventeen. It was found that Carat showed a feeling of knowing Seventeen well which was caused by Carat's curiosity and Carat reaching out to Seventeen in various media. Carat shows that Carat enjoys Seventeen content such as behind the scenes content, variety shows, and music videos on YouTube, and content that is open and related to daily life on Weverse. Carat feels like Seventeen's friend when consuming Seventeen content where Seventeen shows his informal nature which is shown in the form of unscripted content, uploading personal and free things, and calling his fans with affectionate nicknames like "Carat".

Carat feels missed when Seventeen is not active in the media that Seventeen owns. Content from Seventeen can encourage a sense of comfort and familiarity between Seventeen and Carat. A sense of comfort and familiarity between Seventeen and Carat can be created because the informal content provided by Seventeen is exposed to Carat repeatedly through YouTube and Weverse media. In addition, it was found that Carat followed Seventeen in various media to feel close to Seventeen. Carats will feel distant and left behind when they don't access Seventeen's media.

In this research, we find that our findings in media multiplexity in Carat and Seventeen parasocial interaction can be explored more. We suggest that the next research can focus on the internal power hierarchy within the fandom in which idolization comes in different levels. Carat distributes the levels onto the category of who are generous and willing to spend money on Seventeen and this is shown through content or reselling items purchased in group orders. It was stated that spending their money to buy products related to their idols was one of Carat's ways of maintaining their sense of closeness to Seventeen. Another idea is K-pop fandom needs to be researched further from a managerial perspective, such as the social media management strategy carried out by the South Korean entertainment industry to create close relationships between fans and their idols.

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