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**Online Digital Media Practices on Twitter
By Korean Pop Idol BTS and Fans:
A Case on BTS (방탄소년단) and their Fans**

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Abstract

The research conducted focused on the media practices by a South Korean band « BTS » and the named fandom « A.R.M.Y ». Through the use of Twitter, the research consisted in making use of BTS's Twitter posts to study what they are doing on social media in order to engage fans, as well as the type of practices that are being executed. The second part of the study investigated the fandoms' interaction, participation, and online engagement in regard to the media content tweeted by the south Korean band. Mix methods were used in order to answer the three research questions that were presented for this research. An analysis of media practices was conducted through a content analysis then followed by an online survey. The analysis highlighted that shared practices and regular media use were an important factor in the creation of a participatory culture. Culture was also shown to be an important component to the generation of fan engagement and artist interaction with their respective fandom. In addition, through fans high participation in online activities, the investigation was able to demonstrate that fans developed shared practices and shared identities, which were emerged from their activities. Furthermore, BTS members have shown that their cultural habits were important for engaging fans.

Overall, the results of this study concluded that media practices are various and are executed in ways that allow the South Korean band to keep an online relationship with their fans through diverse media content that is published on their own personal managed Twitter account. In response to that, fans have shown a constant interactions and engagements by liking, retweeting, commenting to the bands' tweets, along with other different activities that have been demonstrated in the analysis chapter.

Keywords: Social Media, K-pop, Fandom, Digital media practices, Participatory culture, engagement and interaction, Twitter

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Preface

I would like to thank Uppsala university for allowing me to devote myself to a research subject that has been important part of my life for a long time. Since, I was in middle school I was always confronted with new technologies and devices that I was grateful to have, but I didn't realise its importance until I reached university. That's why I would like to thank my professors that have allowed me to freely choose my topics freely along my studies and challenge myself and have some self-development.

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1 Introduction

Digital media is a fast-growing field that has been showing its constant development over the years. The South Korean government has made significant investment in the development of ICT (*Information and Communications Technology*), as the amount of investment represented \$5 billion (Lee, 2003). From that, multiple projects have been developed by enabling 29% of the population which included students, teachers, etc (Lee, 2003). Looking at the Korean pop music scene on the global level, it has rapidly spread through the different media platforms that were integrated in the 2000s, specifically “YouTube”; therefore, audiences can no longer purchase physical album but rather consume music online (Park & Oh, 2013). Social media has facilitated an easy access to K-pop as it is considered a significant factor for cultural music consumption for fans (Yoon, 2019).

The overall purpose of this research study is to understand and analyse what is the south Korean band “BTS” doing on social media through their online activities and what are fans doing in order to engage with the band’s content posted on Twitter. Thus, it will investigate and understand digital media practices and participatory culture of the artist and fans.

As a fan of Korean pop music, a frequent Twitter user, and through the exchange I have conducted in the Netherlands, Groningen in the faculty of art, I have come across multiple scholars that have developed ideas and research on digital media, I wanted to make use of the concepts by Jenkins (2006), Baym (2015), and Couldry (2012) in order to explore the music and fandom field.

In the next sections, an introduction to the importance of social media in the Korean pop music scene will be laid while representing its global impact. Social media use has been very popular in the Korean society, and the fandom culture has been growing locally and globally since the integration of ICT in the country. Yet, no particular studies have been done on specific K-pop bands in the last few years. For that reason, to understand how ‘media practice’ is defined, it is essential for this thesis to clearly use the right concepts in order to better understand online engagement and its entailment.

¹ BTS is Korean idol group that has made their debut in June 2013. The name of the Boyband will be defined in the next section.

1.1 Background

The Korean music culture started to spread globally, through Korean dramas (TV series) and the activity of fans on social media platforms (Kim, 2018). The fast growth of such a Korean culture has been getting more famous thanks to digital technologies. The Korean society has worked on developing their own products both on focusing on gaming and music, and that is when the term '*hallyu*' was trending (Kim, 2018). '*Hallyu*' or '*Korean Wave*' stands for the spread of a new culture abroad, as an example Korean drama, Korean products, Korean music, Korean fashion, are part of the South Korean phenomena (Kim, 2018). Korean pop music started spreading to different countries through new media and not by broadcast media as most non-western artists do (Yoon, 2019).

According to Yoon (2017), social media allowed the development of a global phenomenon through YouTube, Facebook, Etc. Neighbouring countries to South Korea such as China and Japan were paying more attention to the Korean wave that was taking place, especially when it came to the use of digital technologies and the way these societies were using media platforms to their advantages (Yoon, 2017). Technological implementation was defined as a culture and then as a subculture that incrustated itself into the western world (Yoon, 2017). Looking at the power of social media, it had a certain way of affecting the participation of people online. Several online surveys conducted by Yoon (2017) have in fact shown that most people are exposed to new information and content by accident, due to their network environment (Yoon, 2017). Adding to that, social media exposes the individual to more information, meaning by that spending more time online can uncover new information (Boulianne, 2015). As an individual, social media has led me to discover Korean musicians through social networks such as YouTube and Facebook in the first place.

During these pasts few years BTS have won multiple social awards thanks to online voting in the United States (Billborad, 2019). Billboard is known to be a very important recognition attribution for multiple artists and winning an award from that organisation gives a certain value to the artist's work. However, BTS have not yet won an award in relation to their music in America but have indeed won fan voted awards such as "Top social Artist award" which is one of two favourites fan-voted awards (Billboard, 2017). The K-pop idol group won over 300,000,000 votes in this specific category leaving other famous artists such as Justin Bieber, Selena Gomez, and others losing this award (Aisyah, 2017).

Clearly, this shows how much their fans are dedicated online and how much they are supporting their artists, as this became a first achievement for a south Korean band in the music

industry. Digital media has allowed people to make full use of it in different ways in order to attain their personal objectives by exploring different media practices.

1.1.1 Profile of “BTS”

BTS is a South Korean idol group composed of 7 members that has debuted in June 2013 by the entertainment agency Big Hit. BTS is an English abbreviation name which stands for ‘bulletproof boys scouts’ corresponding to the South Korean equivalent “*Bangtan Sonyonda*”¹ (BTS, 2019). The meaning behind the band’s name is also reflected on overcoming societal pressure and stereotypes about teenagers. The concept of the K-pop idol group embodies the idea of reaching one’s dream.

As for the meaning of the fandom name known as “A.R.M.Y”, which stand for “*Adorable Representative Master of ceremonies or emcee for Youth in Korean*” and “*military*” in English, is indeed used as the official fandom name of the South Korean boyband as they create a link between both meanings (Koreaboo, 2018). The seven members are Jimin, J-hope, RM, Jin, V, Jongkook and Suga, and they all come from different parts of Seoul. In order to attract fans from different parts of the world they try to keep an online presence by creating a bond with their fans through social media platforms (BTS, 2019)².

1.2 Cultural participation online

Cultural participation on social media has in fact played an important role in the popularity of BTS, yet many people are unaware. The popularity of BTS, has brought up the attention of media figures and agencies into looking at how K-pop groups and entertainment companies in general are making use of social media in order to distribute music and build fanbases from all over the world. Fandom studies have also allowed the development of understanding the behaviour and practices of this subculture that has taken over the media space. Social media in general has presented its efficiency and feature during the past years (Herman, 2018). In order to analyse social media, a need for a better understanding of digital media practices by musicians and communities is required. South Korea’s music industry has always been inspired by the United States as most artists in the Korean industry has a strong musical influence by American artists (William, 2014).

As a matter of fact, the United States is known as one of the largest music consumption societies and it is very challenging for artists to succeed in this industry. However, it is even

² <https://bts.fandom.com/wiki/BTS>

harder for foreign singers to enter the market with their music because of language barriers and different music tastes. But in recent years K-pop idols have been slowly achieving the “American Dream”, and that has been seen with the start of PSY (*a famous Korean musician*), the first artist to perform at the American music awards show, where his music video become one of the most viewed videos on YouTube (Billboard, 2017).

Participatory culture and online media have played an important role in shaping and spreading the South Korean culture across different social networking platforms. An increase of online communities has grown very fast rapidly in the last few years across Twitter, Facebook, Vlive (Korean app), Reddit, etc (Yoon, 2019). Myself, as a fan, I cannot deny that cultural participation through social media has affected my online activities in the K-pop community.

Fans construct their social identities based on the interests they have or develop while being an active participant in that space (Booth, 2010). As a matter of fact, fans have evolved through the integration of digital platforms in terms of online participation on specific social media network. As described by Booth (2010), everyone can be a fan of a particular culture or object as he defines it “Fan of something” (Booth, 2010, p.20).

1.3 Challenges in the Korean music industry

When it comes to non-western music “Asian”, it is still quite difficult to outshine easily in the global market and global media. People are still not quite fully accepting or well-receiving society, and this can be noticed from everyday life, especially in the entertainment industry (Force, 2018). For instance, ‘Asian’ and ‘Black’ artists are still disregarded by the music awarding institutions, and several examples can be mentioned such as the Grammy award show, where Macklemore won best rap album over Kendrick Lamar (2013) as well as other Afro-American artists such as Jay Z, Drake, and Kanye West were present in the same category (Variety, 2019). That is why social media is used by many foreign and non-western artists in order to reach more online audiences’ “fans” and create strong fan bases based on their everyday content and not subject to academic recognition organisations.

However, it is important to be aware of the existence of Korean pop idols, as they still promote themselves by using western platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, SoundCloud. Rather than rely on official music platforms such as Apple Music and Spotify.

From another perspective, one could understand the meaning of social media for fans as it helps creating relationships with their artists (Baym, 2015). By active participation on social media, it also gives them a feeling of belonging to a certain community (Baym, 2015).

These fandoms contribute in a way by sharing and engaging in content related to their artists, yet this is still to be proven, as it is only an assumption.

1.4 Importance of this study

Investigating non-western media practices is important because research in social media has shown how it can be efficient and effective along different fields, but not necessarily in K-pop. However, studies conducted by Baym (2015) have stated that sociological ‘ethnographic’ or ‘netnographic’ research has enabled the understanding of the power of relationship creation between the artist and the fan through shared practices on social media. Jenkins (2007) has also highlighted in many of his studies how media, television, and newspaper were the start of a big revolution. That is why this study could be the start of an emerging topic about media practices by Asian artists and their fans. Furthermore, this could be a small part of a more developed cross-cultural study for future research topics.

1.5 Aim of the Study

The subject of this thesis is to understand the use of social media by Korean pop idols and fans, as it aims to a deeper understanding of what can be entailed from the different online media practices. The research questions formulated are as such:

- **RQ1:** What are BTS members doing in order to engage fans through their social media platform account?
- **RQ2:** What are the fans doing in order to engage with BTS’s posts online?
- **RQ3:** What kind of participatory culture and online social identity is emerging through media practices?

The aim of this master thesis will be to understand and analyse what type of online digital media practices are generated from a frequent use of social media by the Korean pop idol group BTS. These research questions were constructed in the objective of investigating how daily use of digital media by BTS the Korean Band and the European fans can create a participatory culture and online social identity. Online media practices will be analysed based on the types of activities that both parties are conducting through social network platforms with a focus on the engagement of fans.

RQ1 aims to investigate the first part of the thesis which consists in analysing the south Korean band media practices in order to engage fans with their online content through the personal use of Twitter account. **RQ2** aims at analysing the practices of the fans in relation to the Twitter posts generated by BTS.

Finally, **RQ3** aims at explaining what kind of participatory culture and social identity that is emerged from online media practices based on RQ1 and RQ2. This will lead to interpreting how the use of social media practices may create a strong engagement and lead to a form of communication between the artist and the fan.

By also studying the active participation of fan's engagement through online activities, it will help in creating a deeper understanding around the European fandom's shared practices and identities. As a result, these research questions will enable me to determine if digital media practices and the strong engagement from fans and musicians, will contribute to the success of creating online engagement, which will lead to a specific participatory culture.

1.6 Thesis structure

The thesis structure will investigate **RQ1, RQ2, and RQ 3** that will allow me to look into online digital media practices by BTS and their fans, followed by **Chapter II**, a literature review that describes in a chronological order the different types of previous research done using same or similar theoretical concepts. **Chapter III** includes the theoretical background describing the relevant theories and concepts used by the scholars that I have made use of in my analysis. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the different concepts about online media practices, shared practices in communities, and participatory cultures that will allow a discussion in regard to the data collected and analysed in **Chapter V**. Furthermore, **Chapter IV** introduces the methodology of the thesis. This chapter focuses on presenting the used methodology and the process of collecting the data, with the help of social scientific methods. Then, I mainly present the how I selected data and selected the online communities on Twitter, then introduced the analysis step. I also, finished by explaining the different problems, challenges, and ethical measures for conducting this research. **Chapter V**, presents the analysis of the data retrieved from Twitter. The analysis contains two main parts: The first part includes an analysis about the most engaged post published by BTS on their personal account. A deep qualitative analysis was conducted in order to look into the type of content that was generated and attractive for fans to engage with based on the three main Twitter variables: Liking, Retweeting, and Commenting, followed by a second quantitative analysis on investigating the relationships between the function and see if there is any correlation between the variables.

The second part of the thesis investigated the second research question, about fans participation and activity online. This part studies what type of participation and what are their media practices on Twitter. The third and final part of the analysis, make use of RQ1 and RQ2 in order to explain what can be emerged from online media practices.

2 Literature Review

The articles chosen for this chapter present different study frameworks that have been used to understand fan participation and what can be emerged from digital media integration around the entertainment sector. These researches will help in introducing an outline of how media can be a contributor to its practice dimension. Although, not all the frameworks have a specific focus within the media and communication field, they showed how mediated platforms and integration shaped the industry in fandom and cultural studies. Some of the existing research mentioned in this chapter, have been conducted in the context of Korean pop culture and the impact of new media in this field. Social media practices in K-pop have been conducted in regard to the business field but not the sociological and communication. Some critics could be addressed to these studies as the focus for choosing the articles may seem biased to the reader.

As I mentioned, not much research has been conducted in the South Korean society and its music scene, but since the interest of this thesis lies in understanding the practices of media from artists and European fans in the Korean pop culture, I will use existing research that have different focus in order to set a scene for the next chapter. Furthermore, *participation*³, *shared identities and practices*⁴, and *participatory culture*⁵ were key themes and concepts for the literature review.

2.1 Digital media in the Entertainment industry

Digital media has played an important part in the exploitation and discovery of new trends of music that are emerging from different cultures (Booth, 2010). As technology integration has been integrated in the different societies, it has allowed the improvement and advancement of technological devices. With that evolvement in the digital sector, the entertainment has also shown a certain extent of popularity (Booth, 2010). Back in 2011, YouTube has added the specific genre of music K-pop and that was the start on the internet and social media exploitation by music companies in South Korea. As an example, artists and channels on YouTube have attracted as stated “2.9 Billion hits from Asia, which was a feat in the music industry” (Ahn, Oh, & Kim, 2013).

Social media is an important part of marketing especially in the business field since most people perceive it as a reliable and credible source that is easily reachable.

^{3,4,5} These are concepts that will be discussed in the theoretical framework chapter.

Entertainment companies in south Korea have been using social media tools for different purposes through YouTube channels as they have been doing that by either promoting, products, albums, charity campaigns, etc (Ahn, Oh, & Kim, 2013).

With this increase popularity of social media integration into practice, business models have been constantly affected in terms of revenues (Ahn et al., 2013). From the survey conducted in this business research, the three major or most popular entertainment companies have been taken as a sample among others, since they occupy a big part of the market share (Ahn et al., 2013). The findings showed that “B2B revenue of SM Entertainment contributed 80% of total sales in 2010 and YG Entertainment’s B2B revenue also increased from 12% in 2006 to 40% in 2010” (Ahn et al., 2013, p.4). Looking at the media platforms of the big three corporation: “YG”, “SM”, and “JYP” (*Brand names of the most famous entertainment companies*), each of them have a minimum of one social media account, the first entry to this type of strategy was by SM back in 2006 compared to the other that following in the same footsteps as a result of seeing the success generated from it (Ahn, Oh, & Kim, 2013).

In line with what has been mentioned, digital media has been part of many celebrities’ lives (Stever & Lawson, 2013). According to Stever and Lawson (2013) article conducted by the empire state college, it shows that Twitter has an impactful way as they use it for many types of interactions. Social media platforms like Myspace, Facebook, etc, are platforms for users to share about their daily activities by posting it online (Stever & Lawson, 2013). These platforms have enabled people to participate in instant interactions with other individuals especially the communication process between celebrities and fans. Twitter especially has become one of the most used and efficient platforms for artists to reach their respective fans and admirers online (Stever & Lawson, 2013). This platform has been found to be a good start for famous people to reach a wider audience and converse with them. Twitter as a platform has in fact shown its efficiency as fans could nowadays send personal messages to their celebrities and it offers a secure space for interaction (Stever & Lawson, 2013).

Dwyer and Fraser (2017) research focus on celebrities use of social media Twitter as a form of addiction for celebrities. However, this article also highlights how SNS⁶ platform “Twitter” is used by public figures in the entertainment industry and how important is Twitter to online participation. The study uses concepts developed by Jenkins (2006) and other relevant scholar in order to understand celebrities use of Twitter in a particular framework. In fact, the author makes use of the statement used by Jenkins and Braun where they mention that Twitter

⁶ SNS refers to the social media platforms.

allows for ‘participatory culture’ in which participants become producers in the cultural online space provided by the digital media platform (Dwyer & Fraser, 2017). The research demonstrates how celebrities use Twitter, as this particular platform showed that “320 million people actively using the platform each month” (Dwyer & Fraser, 2017).

Celebrities have been proved to be one of the earliest users on this platform when it first launched. Also, they have been identified as one of the most common users when practicing online on platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, etc, especially on Twitter where scholars have made use of this information to conduct research each month (Dwyer & Fraser, 2017). Through the main interest of this study, it has showed that celebrities make use mediated platforms for different purposes. This is interesting to look through, because the author looks into a specific practice side of a social media platform which is interesting to look at from the perspective of the activity of a public figure on social media (Dwyer & Fraser, 2017).

Even though these conducted research have been developed depending on a specific objective, some of them have demonstrated how media can be a tool for self-practice.

2.2 Communities’ formation and Participatory culture

Participatory culture and media participation have allowed fans to access a virtual community in which they are able to form their own digital spaces with their society. Postigo (2012) discusses the importance of digital media use in a participatory culture and its consumption. In fact, digital technologies have enabled online users to be a part of media production as well as media distributors on many platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, etc.

Focusing on the frameworks of people’s participation in relation to the media practices, Postigo highlights people’s active participation allows them to be pro-active. The researcher focuses on the concept of “participatory culture” using Jenkins idea on how a high consumption of mass media allows the creation of a form of cultural convergence, helping him to understand the movement’s idea (Postigo, 2012). The constant use of media creates in a way a participatory culture that leads to a form of practicing and using the mediated platforms (Postigo, 2012). The research discusses how culture is an important aspect of media practices since it creates in its own way it’s appropriate participatory culture (Postigo, 2012). Also, technology has its own contribution to the online consumption of cultural product that leads to a formation of a particular framework of a culture (Postigo, 2012).

Additionally, online platforms enable people to develop their own practices and online consumption such as using social networking platform to meet people, create mashups, produce

online video making, etc (Postigo, 2012). These participatory actions would have not been existent if it wasn't for technological advancement and the creation of participatory culture within a group. Moreover, the author explicitly mentions that technology has always been an important factor in the construction initiating participation in a culture. Online activists see that digital integration facilitates the participation in cultures and that participation is needs to be understood when it is practiced in a specific framework (Postigo, 2012).

Marinescu and Balica (2013) found that traditional media is considered to still be part of a common media practice that has allowed an easy integration of a different culture to a European society through the media consumption. Korean dramas have been heavily entering the Romanian market and influencing the viewers. Many mediums have advertised about the different Korean products, such as Music, Dramas, or other products. From this, many online communities have established online due to the popularity of the Korean products (Dramas, Music, tangible products) (Marinescu & Balica, 2013). The researcher suggests in this study that online community's formation started following the traditional media practices by the Romanian medias. Also, following the increase rate through first contact with Korean production on fan sites, Romanian have started to diffuse and introduce Korean pop music in their local media space (Marinescu & Balica, 2013).

In addition, the researchers used a standardized questionnaire and also made use of sending out the questionnaire through different websites (made use of sociological methods for the design of this specific methods). The investigation conducted shows how the evolution of community formation has been executed depending on the different media practices that influenced the Romanian region (Marinescu & Balica, 2013). From this concept of media practices, fans have been proven to be a critical part of the spread of the culture as they maintain constant online practices on mediated platforms. The study investigated the characteristics of fans and their relationship with K-pop interest. For my point, I noticed a common thing patter of shared practices and shared identities that K-pop fans have all together. Even though, it is not explicitly mentioned I would say that it is one of the themes that have been highlighted in the study. For that reason, this was one of the motivations to use this article, as I would like to feel the gap in my research by pointing out the shared practices and demonstrate it in my own thesis.

Fandom growth has been growing due to the development of the media practices on the national level. It describes how the first Korean tv series has made an impact by its demand from the Romanian fandom. Over the last few years in Romania, people have been gaining interest in the foreign culture of south Korea as its exposure have increased in the national

media space (Yoon, 2016). The focus of this studies was about an ethnographic study on into media practices while studying the concept of power. The extensive popularity of the Asian culture in Europe has affected people's practices on the media space (Yoon, 2016).

In fact, Korean media fans are passionate and ambitious when it comes to getting involved in the subculture of fandoms in South Korea. Most Korean media fans show empathy to the TV series, and anything related to South Korean as they try to relate to some of their social issues to their original country (Yoon, 2016). Another point to understand from this research is that Europeans are active online participants when it comes to consuming the Korean culture, since the Romanian society has been projecting how media was being used in the South Korean country compared to Romania (Yoon, 2016).

Another important study to mention is participatory communication an additional form of interactivity emerged from participatory culture in the digital era. In fact, social media has enabled individuals to participate in production of media content online (Plenković & Mustić, 2016). Digital media production allows many communities to manage content online and share it among different groups. Through this type of participation and media practices on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Tumblr, Twitter, etc, it enhances the cultural consumptions for individuals that are exposed to various sub-cultures. In this particular study, communication has been shown as a form of participation that has been extracted from participatory culture (Plenković & Mustić, 2016). By making use of the features that such platforms offer, people can adapt to a certain way of use of these resources as they practice and increase their activeness online. Opportunities arise from networking platforms as it creates spaces this 'co-created' concept by other users that share same interests.

In addition, such platforms allow people to connect to others while building more opportunities to engage and interact within a respective community (Plenković & Mustić, 2016). The internet has allowed individuals and groups the chance to build an online identity while consuming information as they stay proactive. By having access to media platforms and allowing oneself to express their interest or opinion online, it is seen as a cultural factor. Moreover, culture has been an important component that led people to use the media in a certain way and make use of it for different purposes. Digital media users have enhanced the way people communicate, as its stimulated SNS (*social network systems*) functions. According to Plenković and Mustić (2016), communication is defined based on many factors such as the cultural and social aspect of it (Plenković & Mustić, 2016).

The research article investigates the popularity of K-pop in Latin America through the use of digital media in their society. Statements around "PSY" as the first Korean artist to break

YouTube records, known as “YouTube phenomena”, was demonstrated by the number of views in millions and online discussion that were happening at the time (Han, 2017). The use of digital platforms in Latin America has shown an interest among people, as it was due to the fact that fans did not have the possibility to travel to concerts (Han, 2017). The K-pop movement that spread in the country has led to the emergence of various topics and activities conducted by corporation, fans, governments, etc, (Han, 2017). However, the focus from this study was to look into the fandom itself and understanding its involvement and engagement in the K-pop culture.

By having access to the required digital resources, meaning by that “Social Media” and online platforms in general, fans were able to participate in different activities. Those activities included the creation and management of their own streaming radio platform, sharing news about their favourite artist and consuming Korean tv series online (Han, 2017). In fact, the tv media space for some participants was the only resource of access to the tv series, for others the internet was a very helpful way of letting them watch music videos, interacting with other fans, etc (Han, 2017).

Furthermore, fans used Facebook, Twitter, especially for participating in voting process in south Korean for award and live shows (Han, 2017). The advancement of internet and technology across the continents has definitely allowed people to get in touch with different content and get easily engaged (Han, 2017). The author stated that Latin America was known for its lack of innovation in the technology sector even though obstacles were present, emphasising fans have succeeded in creating a participatory culture (Han, 2017). The growth of the Korean culture in Latin America has greatly influenced the participatory dimension, through their engagement online. Social media such as Facebook, YouTube, are one of the first platforms that affected the digital communities and helped them construct their shared identities and practices (Han, 2017). This article seeks in understanding how identities are formed simultaneously in the community.

According to Han (2017), these communities were defined as “Digital Fandoms” that were attached to this specific subculture on the mainstream media. Thus, the K-pop fandom have grown in Latin America thanks to the mediated platforms that led to an active participatory activity (Han, 2017).

An interesting study to this thesis is conducted by Bury (2017). He focused his paper by looking into the online community that have shown strong engagement to digital platforms. He focused on how the internet has been able to afford communities to create participatory culture

⁷ The theory by Jenkins focuses on describing how participatory is formed and thus this will be presented in the theoretical framework.

by practicing media activities online, which related to one of the theories that I have chosen by Jenkins⁷ (2006).

The integration of ICT and the development of digital media platforms have allowed fans to devote themselves more into the different cultures. Some examples could be mentioned which were the most highlighted ones in for early adopters such as start-treck, Blake7, etc (Bury, 2017).

Facebook, Twitter and Tumblr have been shown that Facebook was a common SNS platform that was used among people, unlike the other platforms, however they remain as important as many others. Based on this study participatory culture has been an important factor when it comes to forming connections through social spaces (Bury, 2017).

What was appealing concerning Twitter as platform was the fact that it allowed fans interaction between each other however, opinions between participants were quite divided as seen the respective research. Moving on to Tumblr, was the least used for fans interaction and fans activities online, yet it showed some interest amongst participants which led to a conclusion that Twitter and Tumblr were not the adequate platforms for community formation (Bury, 2017).

2.3 Summary

Some of these previously mentioned studies, have been conducted in the field of Korean pop culture and the impact of new media in this field. Social media practices in K-pop have been conducted in regard to the business field but not the sociological and communication. One of the researches conducted showed a study of how social media strategy is implemented by big three entertainment agencies in South Korea; “Korean pop takes off! Social media strategy of Korean entertainment industry” (Ahn, Oh, & Kim, 2013).

When it comes to participation, some research has been done by Valentina Marinescu and Ecaterina Balica (2013) with the help of the academy of Korean studies. The study showed findings about “Korean Cultural Products in Eastern Europe: A Case Study of the K-Pop Impact in Romania” (Marinescu & Balica, 2013), which gives us an idea how fandoms are interrelated. The next interesting study is the study done by Yoon (2016), “East to East: Cultural politics and fandom of Korean popular culture in Eastern Europe””, where it is a study that studies the popularity of K-pop and people’s participation using South Korea media. This study uncover that Europeans are reaching out to media in order to regain “cultural community” (Yoon, 2016).

Another study that was conducted in Latin America by Han (2017) is *“K-Pop in Latin America: Transcultural Fandom and Digital Mediation”* focuses on understanding the Korean wave. This research aim is to prove that K-pop is a subculture that is transformed overtime thanks to digital media (Han, 2017). The last research study was by Bury (2017), which was one of the studies that heavily focused on participatory culture, “Technology, fandom and community in the second media age”. The topic of this study examines online communities and is focused on uncovering how online communities were formed and focused on participatory culture and social media (Bury, 2017). The findings in these studies will help me support my analysis and findings along the process. The findings in these research studies, could be linked to Jenkins’ (2006) and Baym’s (2015) theories when understanding online space and participation, which will be used in the next chapter to understand online communities and participatory culture that was created through media practices.

On one hand these findings do reflect how digital media is changing the societies in many ways and shows how communities, companies, and media is using it in order to transfer cultures on a global level (Bury, 2017). On the other hand, I would not say that it really reflects their aim, but I would rather say that it is a main support for these researchers to continue on the further projects that investigates digital media, fandom, and cultural studies. Meaning by this that given the empirical findings in the above studies, there is not enough evidence in relation to non-western studies, that’s why incorporating the participatory dimension of online digital media practices allowed me to investigate this aspect of media practices from fans and idols.

It is clear from the literature review that many of these studies looked into one aspect of media however, most of them tend to utilize another aspect that they focus on. Some gaps have been identified while studying these researches, which will be clearly presented and developed in the theoretical framework chapter.

3 Theoretical framework

In this section of my thesis, I will present and discuss the concepts that I make use of in the analysis Chapter V. I will describe my theoretical framework that consists of presenting ‘Media Practices’. The focus however will lie in relation to two main key words: ‘media’ and ‘participation’ – the concepts presented will be used and implemented in relation to this specific study.

In order for me as researcher to analyse my data, clear concepts and theories need to be well understood. The reason for choosing to use these theories would allow me to create a clear focus on the practice aspect of media. As previously mentioned, no particular studies have been previously done on one specific K-pop group in terms of studying their media practices along with their fans. This is in fact, challenging for me as I am examining the dynamics of artist to fans and fans to artist interaction process. I have in fact selected these theories by looking into the fields of expertise for each of the scholars. The main concept was deduced from the implementation and usage of digital media in the music and fandom studies.

I first looked into the work conducted by Couldry (2013) as he describes the social theory and media practices. Following upon Couldry’s concept of digital practices, Baym (2015) also tries to make sense of online communities through the use of new media and studies, more precisely the communities’ networks. Through that she was able to understand how relationships are created online and how digital media affects that through the shared practices and identities online (Baym, 2015). Finally, I will elaborate on Jenkins (2007) and Bennett (2014) work that focus on participatory culture of fans, which led me to analyse the data of the second part of the thesis.

3.1 Digital media practice

To be able to analyse the social media field, as Couldry (2012) describes social theory and digital media as a practice that aims at providing a clear understanding on how media functions in society and what ways it is impactful. According to Couldry (2012), digital revolution affected societies by impacting people’s practices in the media field. As he defines, media practice theory is rather focused on analysing how people are incorporating media into their daily life. However, the meaning of daily life and activities have different meanings for people in society, so there might be no clear meaning or definition to such expressions.

Moreover, Couldry (2012) explains that media practices are related to what can the internet enable for the users. By making use of media platforms, which is either by searching

news online, commenting, etc, this leads to an understanding how media is consumed or produced (Couldry, 2004). The practice theory is generated from a social theory rather than media studies, as it focuses more on the practice dimension. For that reason, using Couldry (2012) allowed me primarily to focus on what can be emerged from digital media, which is through cultural consumption and production (Couldry, 2012).

Furthermore, Couldry (2012) explains that media practices are human actions and there are three important points that need to be understood. The first point he relates this concept is that it related to 'Regularity of Action', meaning by this is that with the evolvement of technologies and the easy access to media related content this is combined as part of one person's daily action or lifestyle. The second point is the 'social aspect' which represents the language part of media. This point explains how the social dimension is related to regular things a human would as define by Wittgenstein (Couldry, 2012). The social aspect is related to the capacities of a person and to the power he provides when executing something. The next point is the humans needs and the practice points to it in terms of coordination, interaction, and community. Also, the link of practice has showing its meanings to media and how people are using it in different ways. The practice approach shows how that it starts with the idea of looking into what are people using their mediated platform for and how they are doing that through their accounts.

As shown by Couldry (2012), practice is one important aspect from the social theory that he develops and analyses in his previous research. Practice has been mainly investigated from several point of sociological aspect over the years, however two main scholars used by Couldry (2012), explain this concept starting from Bourdieu where he rejects his ideology and view on this dimension. The second scholar that follows is Theodor Schatzki where several elements such as 'understanding, explicit rules, projects, and beliefs' are contributor the context of practice (Couldry, 2012). Furthermore, Couldry (2012) states that the practice theory is related to a bigger thing which is the digital revolution (Couldry, 2012).

However, while these concepts are only social evidences that are based on few researches related to mediated platforms, it remains hard quite difficult to say that is should be solely true and not question some of these concepts.

As an example, to what has been previously mentioned, these concepts can be applied and studied on Twitter as social media platform that contains the practice aspect. Twitter has shown its validation for the different practices conducted by different people and how it is spread on a large geographical map. Twitter is a platform that has got many advantages when using what type of media that could be published – Pictures, videos, text (Couldry, 2012).

3.2 Online communities' practices

Baym's (2015) theory on online communities and online spaces, which claims that the internet creates a personal online space between communities and artists, lead to a formation of a relationship (Baym, 2015). Communities are groups of individuals that share a common interest in a field. Communities can seek to develop a special language and behaviour on online spaces which is defined as "speech community" (Baym, 2015). Through digital media, communities are able to create their own 'words' and 'terms' when interacting with each other when discussing in groups. Through the different project Baym has conducted over the years, social media platforms such as Twitter and others, are considered spaces in which shared practices are developed (Baym, 2015). Certain ways of interaction between the users set a specific way of developing relationships online and forming ties, which lead to identities constructions (Baym, 2015). These different shared practices allow people to create a flow of communication between users and set a designated framework for the group community to easily interact (Baym, 2015). The active interactions and engagement in different communities that are done through the content spread online between the members entail different results (Baym, 2015).

As a matter of fact, values are developed through these communities, as an example 'r.a.t.s'⁸ which is a community that shares friendliness as form of a collectiveness value. As Baym (2015) mentions in her view about communities' practices are projected through the members behaviours and they are emerged from their actions in the community. From these different practices, a culture can be emerged from it, the same example again the 'r.a.t.s' communities where people post and share content that contains humour, thoughts, etc, corresponding to the authenticity of the community (Baym, 2015, p.93). The name 'R.a.t.s' is a group of participants that shares about soap operas, through different posts, opinions, and is considered as a space of self-identifications (Jones, 1988).

Baym (2015) clearly make use of the 'Shared practice', 'Shared identities' and 'Space' concepts, in order to explain the way people are using digital media, such examples can be seen through her previous research such as the Swedish platform '*The Pirate Bay*', r.a.t.s, etc. She also highlights in some of her other work that it's been quite a long period of time that fans have taken control of the internet by fandom creation online and establishing strong relationships (Baym, 2015). By looking into these practices of the shared community, a certain type of

⁸ 'r.a.t.s' refers to a specific community that discusses soap operas, taken as an example by Baym make in order to explain the culture inside this group through the participants.

participation emerges from it, thus it leads to a deeper understanding of fan participation with the help of Jenkins (2013).

Online communities represent an important subject to discuss and investigate as these groups' norms, values, and norms are varied across different societies. In a sense, practices within a group can be interpreted and understood in different ways, that is why the next section will help me as a research to understand in a deeper way what kind of culture can be emerged from these online communities.

3.3 Participatory culture

Another theoretical concept used for this thesis is Jenkins's (2006) idea on "Participatory Culture", which shows that different communities are becoming an important part in spreading culture and make use of media platforms in order to participate in different activities (Jenkins, 2006). In fact, Jenkins (2006), elaborates on the idea that fans are becoming more important in today's society especially on the mainstream platforms, investing their time by participating on media platforms which has become one of the most powerful aspect of cultural participation in digital media (2006). With the involvement of new technologies, fans have been involved around media. The integration of media and technologies allowed fans to be more active online and produce cultural content or any type of content that is important to them or they relate to. Fans are considered as part of audience participation theories and this falls under the category of 'online participation' (Jenkins, 2006).

Participatory culture as presented by Jenkins (2006), argues that with technologies fans are enabled to make use of digital platforms for specific purposes. Online communities and participatory culture are becoming more intertwined, as it is becoming a centre of attention for media scholars (Jenkins, 2006). The emergence of many online communities such as gaming, book lovers, tv series, etc, a deeper exploration of fan culture and online behaviour was exploited by Jenkins (Jenkins, 2006). As seen by Jenkins (2006), different practices by fans, increase the strengths of relationships between the users within the respective community, that also applied to media attachment they have for the series or book storyline (Jenkins, 2006).

In the chapter 'Going Digital' Jenkins (2006) investigates how the digital realm leads fans to understand the use of new madidate platforms (Jenkins, 2006). This allows fans to put into practice their media use into the online content production through different actions (Jenkins, 2006). Moreover, through their constant active participation in their respective communities, fans have revolutionised the 'cyberculture' and reshaped it (Jenkins, 2006). By producing media content through the use of mediated tools and features, this has enabled fans

to express themselves in different ways, which is through blogging, video creation or making, etc, (Jenkins, 2006).

In fact, looking at the content that is displayed on YouTube many filmmaking creations have been created, known as fan projects where a compilation of scenes or pictures are designed (Jenkins, 2006). As an example, the most popular ways of expressing fans loves for a specific culture, subculture or series is this multi-couples video making; what is meant by that is that fans express their love for a specific ship for characters. That is what Jenkins (2006) is trying to say by media distribution through digital tools. Investigation the famously known series *Twin peaks* by Jenkins (2006), mentions that he only discovered what the internet was only through online discussion of his favourite tv series, and he decided to study the instructiveness of such a community online through an ethnographic research in order to explore their practices (Jenkins, 2006).

In particular, Jenkins (2006) describes the participation of this community where fans send multiple messages in the group chat. He states that the online conversations make it possible for him to look at how their practices are done, and digital conversations can let us know a lot about the behaviour and interprets part of audiences (Jenkins, 2006). *Twin peaks* has been identified as one of the most actives series ever upon its airing on digital mediated platforms. The type of media production content that was done was that one fan wrote down a whole description of one episode's event, while someone else created a music library for each episode, and others gathered favourites quotes or moments displayed in the episodes (Jenkins, 2006). On the other hand, fans have made sure to share and prepare materials related to interview conducted by the production, actors, and scriptwriters to the community in order to be updated. Other types of participatory activities done by this community was translating material for other fans.

In addition, theories formulated about the potential scenarios that would have happened has allowed fans to get together online and discuss their views on a certain scene or even predict what could happen based on significant scenes that were not explained in an explicit way or even based on dialogues between characters (Jenkins, 2006). By analysing this community Jenkins has distinguished how media practices from fans can created a dynamic among the group and show how much of an advantage this can be for writers. Looking at the *twin peak* fans, Jenkins seeks to a conclusion on how digital technologies has empowered them to engage easily and participate in participatory activities in a collective way (Jenkins, 2006).

Furthermore, Jenkins (2007), discuss how users are defined as “communities” and not “fans” and how they are shaping the media is practiced as they create their own blogs, and

social media platforms and participate in cultural activities online. To Jenkins these fans are called ‘media actives’ as they are individuals that are constantly making use of mediated platforms. In fact, these media practitioners are shaping the media and the way it functions by sharing and circulating content, that is why other people like to call them connectors, influencers as they have a more of an active role in media space. Referring to this concept of defining fans based on their participation online, Eric Von Hippel states that fans are the future leaders of media production as they are part of this technological evolution and production metatext (Jenkins, 2007). These fans are called ‘multipliers’ as they have a real impact on the economy by practicing media in community and producing content related to a certain sub culture of gaming, series, or musical ones (Jenkins, 2007). Fan practices are defined based on their impact on the different industries and the new emerging generation which is not only being pro-active online due to accessibility they have for internet and media in general, but due to the impact they can make by spreading content to the public (Jenkins, 2007).

Jenkins’ (2007) tries to idealise the fandom community as he speculates in this idea of new media is allowing fans to freely express themselves and be cultural consumer of an equal level. However, Carpentier (2011) see participation and defines it on various levels, which Jenkins’ ignores in the aspect of participation. Participatory culture has been well defined and demonstrated by Jenkins’ (2007), yet there is always a neglections towards the critics toward participatory culture.

Carpentier on the other hand focus on ‘democracy’ and ‘power’ when discussing about “Participation” (2011). In fact, Carpentier (2011) focuses on media and participation, where he states that participation of audience is very important, and he explains it as part of the audience theory which is part of the interaction/participation dimension (Carpentier, 2011). In fact, he defines and discusses the active and passive dimension of audience on the media process, “where audience is part of the interaction dimension and that audience activity can be understood by participation in the media and through the media” (Carpentier, 2011, p.64). Being involved in text production, according to Carpentier (2011) is considered as being part of audience activity. He explains in this aspect that the interaction concept is a crucial part of cultural communication and that is it part of media and its interactive aspect (Carpentier, 2011).

In line with Jenkins (2007), Bennett (2014) emphasises that fans have been recognised from previous research that they are the most suitable audiences that can be engaging by participatory culture especially with the emergence and entry of new technologies (Bennett, 2014). In fact, Bennett work is a contemporary follow up upon the work published by Jenkins (2012), and she emphasis in her research that fans have more resources within the digital sphere.

She discusses the importance of communication when it comes to social media and how both fans and celebrities can make use of it in order to share private information or content directly with fans through their social media pages (Bennett, 2014).

Internet was highlighted as the first path of entry to the digital sphere, allowing fans to participate in online activities and leading it to the creation of specific communities that have been surrounded by the same culture. Digital technologies according to Bennett (2014), enabled fans to develop themselves and participate in specific practices online such as forums, blogs, social media, translation, etc (Bennett, 2014). From that transmedia practices and participatory cultures has emerged from that. The entrance of social media has in fact influenced the more of younger generation in the beginning of the 2000's that were able to create and keep communication between users ongoing despite the intensity of offline practices.

According to Bennett (2014), digital media platforms have influenced and shaped the practices in different areas and as she mentions: *"I would argue that these technological advances have impacted on and shaped four key, often interconnected, areas of fandom and enquiry within the field: communication, creativity, knowledge, and organisational and civic power"* (Bennett, 2014, p.3). Digital media has been impacted by the development of communities' growth and their online participation through the different practices. For example: Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram, have been a primary way for fans to share, like, retweet, instant information posted online (Bennett, 2014). Each of these platforms has its own advantages and specific way of expression when engaging with a post or an online discussion. These mediums have different functions that influences media practices of users. Compared to offline participation, online participation has made it even faster and easier for fans to send messages to their favourite artists or celebrities and we can see this frequently done on Facebook and Twitter.

Moreover, Bennett (2014) explains that celebrities and public figures can easily share their personal lives on social media by sharing sensitive information about their daily events, activities, and directly interacting with their fans without any management company (Bennett, 2014). The second component represents different practices that goes from creating fanfictions to collecting a post of artists. Bennett (2014) describes the different practices that fan conduct online such as video making, mashups of songs on YouTube and blog writing on Tumblr, etc. Bennett states that social media has encouraged online participation by using such platforms to share, and each of these digital media platforms has its own powerful impact. For example, Tumblr is mainly about sharing images and focuses on visual representation, while Twitter for

example allows a way for fan culture to develop in a more interactive and explicit way by sending tweets to other similar users.

In addition, Bennett (2014) states that the online interaction between the celebrity and the fandom is a process that is being facilitated by the ongoing online interaction and engagement. She emphasises that fans now are being more exposed to their artist due their online practices, meaning by this is that now fans are being part of special projects. As an example, she mentions that: “*British independent musician Imogen Heap’s strategy of allowing her fans to participate in the creation of her album Ellipse (2010) and ongoing project Heapsongs (2011-) through social media platforms is a rich example of this practice*” (Bennett, 2014, p.4).

Making use of Jenkins’ (2006) idea on participatory culture and his previous work on textual poachers, the third component shows that online digital media practices has contributed to the spread of fast information and easy access to information that an individual has been avoiding, however due to the spread of textual and visual messages online, it is unavoidable to see it, this is all due to the fans that create the ‘spoilers’ especially in the music fandom (Bennett, 2014). The last and fourth component that she tries to emphasise on is this concept of activism, where fans have created a strong online community in order to strive for what they would like to accomplish. In this sense celebrities can directly share the idea of a project that is working for a better outcome such as human, animal, charity, donations or projects, thus their fandoms can spread this through social media platforms (Bennett, 2014). Bennett’s (2014) work and research has been influenced by Jenkins’ work and she concludes that with fan online practices, they are shaping the and impacting the interaction aspect. There is still a relationship between offline and online practices as they continue to bring ideas to communities that share and create visual and textual content online (Bennett, 2014).

3.4 Summary and Relevance of theories

The motivation for using these theories was based on the main concept of the practice dimension. The relation that these three theories and concepts have is that they are coming from the same field of research media and communication, and while reading upon their work and theories, common points were able to be pointed out when looking primarily at online digital media practices. These theories and concepts focused on online digital media practices and use it in order to analyse the data collected for the analysis. Since the focus of the thesis is to explore this dimension ‘Digital media practices’ by both fans and musicians use of social media more precisely ‘Twitter’. Couldry’s (2013) concept of media practices will be used for analysing the

material of Twitter account of BTS and explore the content generated and what media type is implemented in their daily activity (Couldry, 2004).

Moreover, a focus on the online communities and shared practices of these fan groups in order to analyse how they interact of BTS's posts as Baym (2015) explains in her concept of fan communities and their engagement online. Adding to that, the participatory culture will be deduced from the activities of fans and the common practices used online, specifically on social media. Jenkins (2012), idea on fan participation is mainly studied from the dimension of social activity on digital media and online participation.

These three theories connect on the practice dimension in digital media. As for Bennett (2014), she exploits upon the fandom field where she makes use of Jenkins' previous work and states that with the integration of the internet and the development it has brought, it enabled fans to grow stronger within the digital media field. She explains that social media has allowed the transition of offline practices to online activities. Bennett also describes how social media platforms has allowed the communication process between fans and musicians as they could communicate easily online.

The relevance of these concepts mentioned above will lead to a deeper understanding of the online activities of musicians and fans on social media. Throughout the main concept of 'Media Practice', this will allow me to analyse how these practices enable the emergence of a participatory culture by communities. These theoretical ideas and concepts will be used to understand mainly the media practice dimension and what can be emerged from it as I will look into the empirical data.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I made use of a mix-method approach as part of this study. A qualitative methodological approach as well as a quantitative approach were implemented for the analysis of the data. For this chapter, I start by introducing why qualitative and quantitative approaches known as mix-methods are important for research and how will it help in understanding the concept of media practices.

Furthermore, I explain the use of qualitative method by defining ‘content analysis’ as it has enabled me to understand what kind of practices the band BTS is executing through their posts. Then, the quantitative method ‘online survey’ is further explained for the purpose of understanding how fans are participating online. Also, detailed information about the Twitter account and community selection are motivated by clear justifications. As well as the objectives of these two methods are shown in respective to the empirical data. Finally, I finish by presenting the method of data analysis and the limitation of qualitative and quantitative method as well as the ethical aspect used in this thesis.

4.1 Methodological approach

My thesis was dependent on a mix-method methodological approaches as this was the most logical way of understanding my data. Mix-methods helped in understanding both idol and fans perspective, especially looking upon John W. Creswell’s approach on the use of mixed method “Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches” (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In this aspect, qualitative research matches my aim of study as it contains an interpretivist aspect to it and provides a way of understanding meaning. Adding to that, qualitative research showed that qualitative content analysis provides a deeper understanding when it comes to “social construction of events” (Bryman, p.661, 2012).

According to Bryman (2012), some researchers state that qualitative and quantitative research are not justified and are often not well associated, yet there is still a strong relation that comes from both methods. For that reason, a clear establishment was made based on their epistemological and ontological position.

Concerning quantitative research, it is associated to meaning and behaviour, but some scholars still find that the use of surveys are still poor (Bryman, 2012). By using a mix method, this choice matches perfectly the process of using the data in relation to the aim of my research questions, since as I am focusing on studying media practices on social media. Also, mix approach has allowed me to interpret what are BTS the boyband and fans are doing mutually in order to reach their goals through media practices (Bryman, p.620, 2012). Through

quantitative research an analysis of the variables gave me a clear answer on the connection and relation that can be established from the data collected of the band and the fans. This type of method has always been viewed as a generalization in some studies, and this was often deduced in studies that make use of social surveys that used a representative sample.

Similarly, to other methodological approaches, this thesis was inspired by digital research designs “Digital ethnography” by Sarah pink (2016). However, this method is not implemented for this research study as it is only considered as an inspirational aspect of digital research. Tackling various topics can be done differently in research with the use of digital platforms, as many components are considered to be part of such a methodology.

According to Pink (2016), a deeper understanding of people’s media practices is needed in order to understand everyday routines. By making use of digital media content this will allow the researcher to analyse new aspects of media practices. Based on the different researches that social media has an effect on, the engagement and interaction within the mediated platforms, and the reason for using such approaches are important for this particular study that investigates online digital media practices done by the participants (Pink et al., 2016). For this study, I have chosen to conduct a descriptive quantitative study: first by using “Twitter” as a social media platform and second by using an online questionnaire that has been self-administrated and distributed through an online based community.

4.1.1 Content Analysis

Content Analysis is method commonly used in communication studies and it is defined as such “*Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication. (Berelson 1952: 18)*” (Bryman, p.332, 2012). Content analysis has been commonly used for text, Visual images Speeches, lyrics, etc, while this has been always associated to such materials, many other studies on mass media has been done like British mass media. Social media analysis has now become a huge word that implies many types of media either traditional or digital media and all them present the same goal of research. This type of method seeks to understand the meanings of words or processes in a well-defined manner which is either through pre-determined categories of else.

In addition, content analysis research tends to help the researcher to codes its material or sample according to themes, words, counts, subjects, etc, and this can be done through different types of material (qualitatively or quantitatively). At a certain point of time this methodology allows the researcher to ask multiple questions that would help him understand what is happening in his material, which leads to a generation of multiple codes or categories,

but there is not a defined set number of categories or codes needed (Bryman, 2012). Advantages of this method is represented in its strong link to the main theoretical framework, and content that has been previously produced, as it is often archived, therefore it is possible to go back to the data and conduct another study (Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2014).

In this thesis, content analysis aimed at understanding the Twitter posts of BTS enabled me to understand the context of the tweets. The content analysis conducted in order to describe the type of messages by BTS presented three aspects from which codes were generated. Throughout the tweets' content analysis, it has allowed me to create three main codes: "Daily activities", "Event", and "Wishes". These different codes showed what was making fans interact with the posts and why it was interesting to them. These codes were analysed and elaborated in detail in Chapter 5.

4.1.2 Online Survey

A Survey is a set of questions that is distributed through a specific channel in order to ask people about a topic of interest and investigate it (Bryman, 2012). A survey usually starts with broader questions and then becomes specific at a certain point of time. Usually a survey is related to a purpose of a specific social theory related to a specific area and a research question as it targeted to a specific population (Bryman, 2012). As a matter of fact, several types of research survey can be designed, the commonly known ones are structured interview and self-completion questionnaire. The administration of surveys can be face-to-face, telephone, supervised, postal, or internet. In this case I administrated it through internet (Bryman, 2012).

The use of survey has become a common tool to make use of in quantitative research in social sciences studies. The use of this methodological tool is due to the fact that it is not costly and cheap compared to other methods. Online research has been deduced as being one of the least expensive method for various countries in the different continents such as Europe, Asia, United States, and many others (Nardi, 2018).

Adding to that, survey enables the research to reach a large population and get information on real time (Nardi, 2018). Other reasons for using the survey in the social science world is the fast development to internet and the easy access for most people that have the access. Also, this methodological approach allows research to implement a mix method analysis and have a reliable longitudinal and probability type of research. The main purpose of using survey research, is to study social issues or topics that are of interest to the respective field of research.

The survey conducted for this thesis was to examine the second research question, being more precise it investigated the participative dimension and media practices by the fans on Twitter when interacting with BTS posts. Then, a total of 19 questions were designed in order to look at the form of participation and online activity on fans in relation to their idol's posts. Some of the question were selected as not all the question aimed at measuring the most interesting variables.

4.1.2.1 Survey Design and Questions

The survey was designed after collecting tweets from BTS's account and through the content and interactions the questions were constructed. Making use of the online survey helped in collecting responses that allowed me to understand how much of participatory culture is represented on Twitter or social media from a fan's perspective. The questions asked were in relation to social media use and online participation. The type of questions asked were multiple choices and structured questions. The survey was distributed to a specific community on Twitter based in Europe, which will be further explained in the next section (4.2.1). An initial contact was made with the administrator of the community on the 5th of January explaining the purpose of the survey so that the admin could tweet it to his followers. A second contact was done on March 9th and 11th for the start of lunch of the survey. The distribution or administration was done on the 11th of March and the sample for this survey was a total of **n= 241** which **n=180** of European, however only 180 will be used for this study.

Table 1.2. Result of Sample groups defined by Country

<u>Country</u>	<u>Sample</u>
European	180
Asia	28
MENA Region	7
America	23
Other	2

Table 1.2 presents how the sample is divided, so for this thesis selecting 180 cases was the right choice to do as this specific study investigate the European aspect of fans and their participation, while excluding the other groups.

The questions were designed based on three criteria: 1) Relationship with the boyband on Twitter, 2) Online activities, and 3) the reach of fans through Twitter. Furthermore, the

quantitative part will be mainly to make use of numerical inferences in order to answer my research question (RQ 2). The questions consisted in different types of scales, however almost 100% of the survey was a multiple-choice question with an addition of the ‘other’ as an open-ended question in order to understand the reason why they answered the respective question. In fact, two questions were designed to ask about the demographics and help us understand the cultural demographical aspect of the fans. A total of nine questions were asked in order to introduce the fans to survey and for me to understand their behaviour in the following questions. Second, a set of five questions were designed in order to understand the behaviour of their online activities and participation in relation the BTS posts. Third, two subjective questions were asked at the end in order to look at how fans would rate themselves in terms of participation, I needed another point of view and this was the only solution that could have been developed.

A use of different types of scales in order to measure the participatory aspect of media practices executed by the fans such as Likert scales, Dichotomous Scales, Rating Scales, or to be more statistically: interval scales, ordinal scales, nominal scales. The Survey was administrated through self-administrated questionnaires and distributed through the internet on an online community. The sampling method used for this survey was stratified sampling where a focus was drawn upon the European sample rather than the whole population gathered for this specific study. Also, it was important for this study to choose the correct type of analysis as the data was thoroughly studied, as it is extremally important to distinguish the type of measurements and analysis that the researcher wants to conduct from the data gathered from the survey (Greasley, 2007).

4.2 Data Selection

4.2.1 Online Community Selection

The selection of the fan community that was chosen in order to distribute the survey was selected based on two specific search terms: ‘BTS’ and ‘Europe’. The accounts gathered were then compared based on the number of their number of followers and tweets. I compared the different accounts and selected the most followed Twitter European fan community. Indeed, 29 accounts have been identified based on the two defined search terms of “BTS & Europe” seen in Table 2. However, for my Twitter search for fans, I excluded all accounts that are fan bases account per country such as BTS France or BTS Netherlands, etc, as it would take much time to go through the data considering my time limit for this study. I focused on the account name rather than the fan bases account that were established by country, as I am looking for an

account that has a European diverse community. So here were the criteria of the account selection:

- Name 'BTS' and 'Europe'
- Number of followers
- Number of Tweets

4.2.2 Twitter account selection (BTS)

For this specific study Twitter was chosen as the main social media platform. By comparing Twitter to the other social media platforms such as Instagram which is managed mainly by the company, as for Facebook it has with 8M followers and is represented as the least active account, The YouTube channel "BANGTANTV" had a total of 15,293,844 subscribers, however BTS members only manage personally "방탄소년단"@BTS_twt" the Twitter account 18.2M followers. All the other accounts are managed partly or mainly by the company. Also, not having access to some social media platforms such as for kakaotalk ('Korean messenger mobile app'), fan cafes ('fans gathering palces'), Naver ('Music streaming app'), etc, which are platforms that are quite popular in South Korea, Twitter was the best choice. The period for data collection was manually conducted from the 20th of January till the 16th of February. The tweets collected were from posts corresponding to the month of January and February in 2019.

4.3 Data collection

The data that was collected for this study was divided in three steps. A sample collection of samples **n=100** tweets were used for this thesis. These tweets were collected during the two first weeks of February and have been thoroughly studied in relation to three tweeter functions: Likes, Retweets, and comments (Table 1). Among these 100 tweets a selection of top 6 tweets were chosen (Table 1.1). These top tweets represent the most engaging pots and interacted tweets-based of the Twitter features that will be introduced in the next sections. Also, tweets and comments were manually counted and selected. The sample of tweets corresponds to 100 tweets and the reason for this was due to the time constraint of this study, therefore this analysis will only present results based for a specific time of period and it may not be generalizable. After the collection, the tweets were coded inductively and categorised into three main themes: Daily activities, Wishes, and events. They were coded were based on key words as they showed similar patterns of content. The codes were developed based on the open coding process categorised by themes (Bryman, 2012).

Since the analysis started in March this gave me time to collect the material and start coding and analysing the tweets. Also, due to the fact that I had three research questions that needed to be investigated I thought it would be appropriate to get familiar with the data. The survey was designed in February and was distributed through the online Twitter community and shared mid-February. I got in touch with the administrator that enabled the distribution of the survey. The first part, with the content analysis was to examine what was the band doing in terms of engagement through their tweets and what type of content is attractive for fans. The second for the thesis was to choose the fan perspective and look at the most engaged after collecting the BTS tweets and see how they are interacting to the posts. Thus, a survey was created in order to look at the participative dimension of media practice from the fans angle perspective and study their online practices. Third, use the theoretical concepts to understand the emerged participatory culture and online identity from the different practices.

4.4 Method of data analysis

In order to investigate my empirical data, I start analysing my tweets with a short presentation of the three main codes generated from the tweets. Using, qualitative content analysis enabled me to content of the posts in relation to my research question aim, and also allowed to continue in analysing the tweets with a focus on the three main variables of twitter. The analysis primarily investigated the online activities of BTS through the content of their tweets and look at what are they doing to engage European fans, then by looking at the practices done by the fans. Then, an examination was done by understanding and interpreting the outcomes of media practices and look at their implication. 1) The first step was to focus the analysis of defining the three variables 'liking', 'retweeting', and 'commenting'. By using the self-designed diagram (figure A), I decided that I would look at the data and analyse it based on the most interesting and engaging ones. I looked at the most popular posts qualitatively (the content) and then try to understand BTS's practices on their Twitter throughout these tweets. The next step consisted into looking at what type of content fans were most engaging with on the band's personal Twitter account. The second part of the analysis was mainly focused that was conducted by the fans online in regard to the specific community chosen for the study and their practices regarding the posts. Followed by a final part that took into consideration the theories and concepts answering the last research question for this study.

4.5 Twitter as a form of “Engagement”

Social media is suggested to allow people to engage within a specific organisation, leading to its success by its respective audiences means that it shows positive results in terms of online visibility – for this case a BTS (Neiger et al, 2003). However, engagement in this case needs to be explained and supported by previous studies, in order to measure it. High engagement needs to be a two-way communication rather than one way, by engaging audiences. In fact, by creating content, sharing experiences participating in online posts or tweets express a form of participation. As presented by Neiger et al (2013), in order to measure the engagement whether its positive or negative some standards need to be applied and kept in perspective. Also, it was suggested that engagement should include three main levels: low, medium, and high (Neiger et al, 2003). These components that are to be measured are the likes, followers, comments, retweets, and shares, as these are first steps for the measurement of engagement (Neiger et al, 2003). These different stages show that engagement done first by starts by a focus on the sender and in this case BTS’s account that is used for the data collection and analysis. Retention of followers is important for the sender’s account as they only need to send information to the followers – and this categorised as the ‘Action’ phase (Neiger et al, 2003). The second point consists in developing valuable content that is attractive for the followers to retweet or reshare as this valuable information could be a particular event or exclusive content shared online (Neiger et al, 2003). Retweets are shown to be categorised a type of medium engagement as it measures the number of users that share the tweet. The engagement of Twitter also consists by online and offline participation, if it has a direct relation to the organisation and in this group BTS (Neiger et al, 2003).

4.5.1 Variables description

“Like”: The like function is in fact an indicator form of loving a post that has information that the individual agrees upon. This function expresses a form of appreciation and contentment with the user. “Retweet”: This function shows that when retweeting a post is that the individual wants to share with his personal community the same message and show a form of appreciation to the user that produced the post. “Comment”: This function presents the most important function as it takes more effort and time for the users to conduct on Twitter. This allows the user to enter a defined number of characters and this express a more way of engagement with the main writer. The material collected for this study was analysed in different steps. Concerning the Twitter posts by BTS and how fans engaged with the posts. For each tweet I looked at what type of content this would have and got familiar with the data collected.

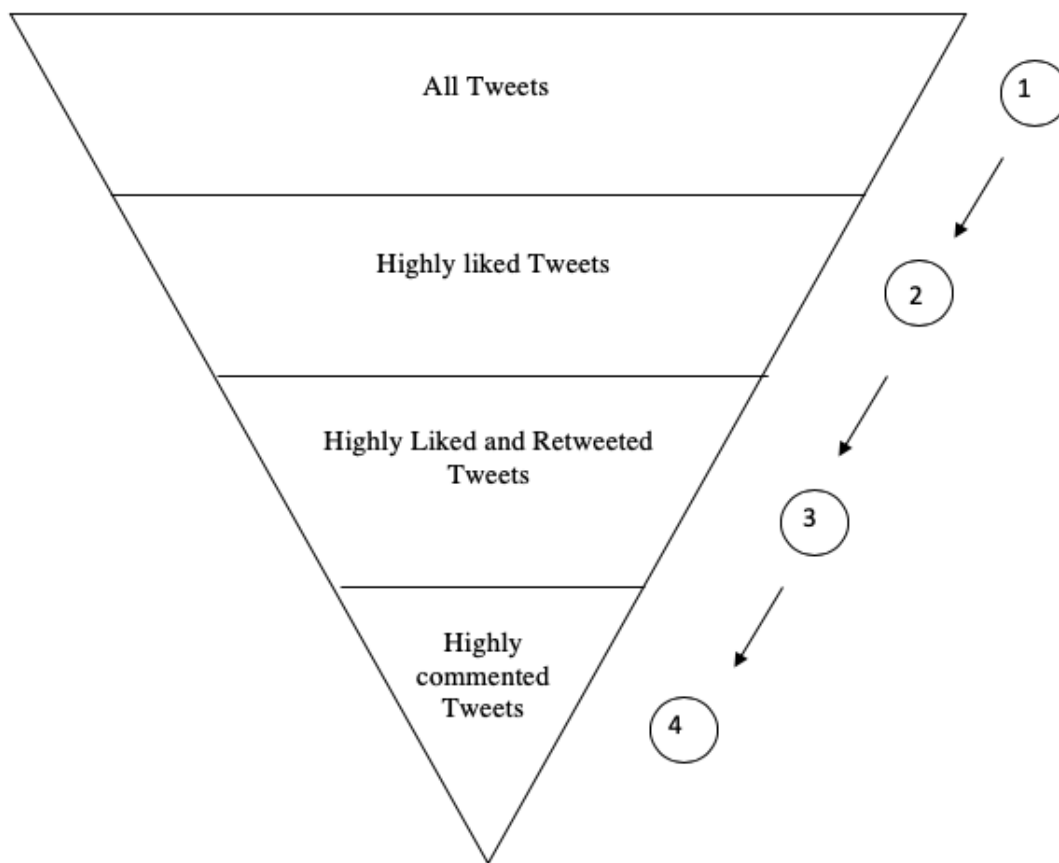


Figure A. schema of selecting BTS tweets

Afterwards, a generation of codes and sub-codes was done on a basis of opening coding, so I decided to set 3 main codes/categories in addition to a sub code. The tweets were analysed according to the level of engagement of these three parts. One hand, the posts of BTS were manually analysed based on the Twitter functions: likes, retweets, and comments. The choice of the tweets was chosen from BTS's account that were based on the popularity of number of likes, comments, and retweets. These tweets were classified on in a table based on a chronological order and then coded based on the type of media type and content shared in the tweet (Table 1, appendix A).

On the other hand, while looking at the number of likes, retweets, and comments, this showed what type of participation was being executed from the fan side. By looking at these numbers a deduction could be made as to what was the most interactive posts and content done by BTS and in return what was initiating fans to participate which was either by liking, commenting, or retweeting. A classification of some tweets was executed based on the of tables was conducted based on three variable of Twitter features which are: Liking variable, commenting variable, and Retweeting variable (Appendix, Figure 1). The reason for doing this was to explore media practices through their participation and analyse it according to Jenkins (2013). The purpose of

analysing these tweets by looking at the high numbers of the variables was to show what type of content was the most engaging, the relationship between the three variables, and deduce what kind of action is BTS using to engage fans. The classifications and codes of tweets allowed me to deduct which posts are most interactive based on the likes, retweets, and comments (RQ1). Instead of choosing to select two main threads that hold thousands of comments, I decided to make use of this self-designed diagram in order to deduct the first research question. This self-designed diagram presents the focus of my analysis. I first started by looking at the tweets and codes, and then created the table 1.1 that contains the most engaged and tweets from BTS Twitter account. I started by looking at the number of likes and see what tweets had the most engagement. Second, looking at the retweets of the most liked posts I found them going in a linear way together, so I combined these two variables and decided to merge them as they were the most interesting compared to the other tweets in table 1. Finally, since the comment function is an important and the most intense variable, an analysis of the content of the tweets that was the most interacted has been conducted. The focus of the first part of the analysis was to focus only of highly engaged posts as they were the most interesting for me to investigate. Explaining more the coding process, three categories were developed. All of the items collected fall under three categories as the content of the posts had similar themes. The coding was filtered based on three types of activities, thus quantitative coding was done. In addition, two sub-codes were distinguished from the categories: 'Grammy' and 'newyear's'wish' quantitative codes. This was mainly deduced based on the content of activity. The relation of these codes relates back to Couldry (2013), as he describes how regular activities of individuals are forms of practices that individuals would be doing on a daily basis.

In this sense, event is a non-daily activity and it is not part of a routine are the wishes are also part of a special event interview. In this case, events are actually considered to be special activities and not daily activities. As well as 'wishes' which are not any kind of activity but an expression of the idols emotions towards their fans. These codes would be used as a set of 3 variables - V1: Daily activities, V2: Wishes, V3: Events where V1 represents the routine of the band's daily activity, V2 expresses the emotion of the idols, and V3 a moment to share with their loved ones.

4.6 Challenges, problems, and solutions

During this research, by making use of mix method to approach my research questions, some challenges have been highlighted. On one hand, the coding process for BTS posts was time

consuming. On the other hand, the online survey showed some difficulties when trying to get in touch with the platform of online community on Twitter.

Moreover, the data collection of the tweets corresponding to the two-period month, was decided upon the start date of this research thesis. This choice can be regarded as unusual to the readers but due to the submitting date of this thesis, some considerations needed to be taken into account. Some might argue that this research could have been studied over a longer period which was my first intent, yet as a researcher I wanted to look into how the band behaves on social media as the new year began in 2019. The categories generated from the coding was unintended, as it matched the same time of popular events that the band were involved in professionally and culturally. As a researcher having a timeframe of four months to work on my thesis, I needed to take into consideration the data collection and the analyses period in order to finalise my work. Also, this could be a starting point for possible future research.

Another important point to mention is that these tweets only represent their type of activities during the two months of January and February. As previously explained engaging has been shown through the result of the variables numbers. However, we cannot state that these are the most like tweets since the launch of their Twitter account. Also, these tweets collected have showed three main categories that talked about daily activities, evens and wishes. However, to point out to the reader, these post they fall under the context of music as most of their posts are about their lives as musicians.

First, the collection of the BTS was time consuming as I had to wait to gather the tweets for the months of January and February. The coding process was a bit challenging as I had to decide on the type coding since I initially wanted to do a qualitative analysis. Second, through this study I wanted to show the European aspect and the cross-cultural aspect of K-pop through the use of social media and its practices. However, by selecting the 'BTS Europe' Twitter account, the results showed that there were people that were not all European but other countries were also included and participating in the survey. Also, I think that without the permission of the platform to publish my survey I would have not gotten any responses as I primarily posted it on my personal Twitter. What was decided by the administrator is that I had to share the link on my account and then they would tweet it. Thus, I could have not gathered a total of 240 responses on my own administration.

Third, the last issue was the entry of data in SPSS as I had to recode and define the variables based on my personal statistical skills. As for the survey, since it was used in SPSS, some questions in the survey could have been formulated differently to make the process easier rather than challenging to analyse the dataset in a quantitative manner. But even though these

issues occurred, I had the possibility to solve them thanks to my ongoing online research and previous documents used in previous courses.

4.7 Ethics

Ethical measures were taken into consideration for this study. Anonymity of participants were implemented in order to protect these individuals. Permission from the administrator was done through private messaging as they allowed me to send in the survey and re-share it on their platform. During the process of getting in touch with the admin on the online community, I stated clearly in a written way that I would not expose the people in the survey and keep it anonymous. This was also explicitly mentioned in the online survey as people were doing it that everything will be kept private.

For this survey, I made sure that no participant would be exposed as I thought that this was sensitive information to share such as the pseudonyms on Twitter and the links to their profiles. Being in line with the internet research, I made use of the public information that was shared by the band BTS, and only right information has been used for this study. No intent of deformation or misinterpretation has been reported from the data collected. Based on the Swedish ethical Swedish ethical guidelines for Internet research codex, ethical measure was conducted based on the Act on ethical review; The Act (SFS 2003:460) (Codex, 2018). Also, making use of the guidelines by the association of internet researchers, I tried to the information correctly and the data has only been used was only used by myself the researcher (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

5 Results and Analysis

From the methodology, the data collection of the tweets, participants answers, and process of selections and collection, all the empirical data has been pointed out. In this chapter, an analysis of the empirical material collected will be presented. Basing my analysis on the theoretical framework of Couldry (2012), Jenkins (2007), Baym (2015), and Bennett (2014), which have been introduced in Chapter III, are applied to the results in this section. I am making use of the empirical data collected in order to understand the media practice dimension in digital practices. The analysis is divided into three sections: the first one, is focused on a comprehensive description of the artists online media practices based on Couldry's (2013) concept. Second, the fans media practices based on Baym and Jenkins concept. The third one, goes back to my theoretical framework by understanding the overall practices generated and what can be understood from it. In each section, I start by presenting the results, then by an interpretation. As for the last section, I finish by an analysis that makes use of the concepts presented in Chapter III.

5.1 Artist online media practices

By using the hundred tweets that have been collected in table 1 (appendix A), they represent all the tweets collected over the posting period of January and February, three main activities were concluded from the coding process. The codes generated in table 1.1, helped the process of analysing the content that is being shared with the fans online. These tweets led to an understanding of what type of daily activities the south Korean boy band is using as they try to interact and engage with fans. The material collected for this study was analysed in different steps. Concerning the Twitter posts by BTS, each tweet looked at explained what type of content this would have, how many likes, retweets, and comments it entailed, and this can be seen in table 1 (appendix A). Furthermore, generation of multiple codes was done, so a set of three codes in addition to sub-codes were developed accordingly.

Table 1.1. Quantitative Coding Table

<u>Codes</u>	<u>Sub Codes</u>	<u>Number of posts</u>	<u>Description</u>
Daily Activities	-	50 (50%)	This code was developed based on the type of content inside the Twitter posts. Activities that regular people would do in their daily life such as waking up, greeting, outing, etc.
Wishes	Wishes (New year)	21 (21%)	This code was developed based on the content the tweet where members were posting about wishes such as the Korean new year, or new year period.
Event	Event (Grammy)	29 (29%)	Event has been developed based on the content regarding special events in Grammys, or music shows awards, etc.

Table 1 (Appendix A) of presents the different content posted and shared during January and February. Each of the content has a different type of material that varies from picture, to text, to video, etc. The different functions of twitter led people to practice various actions on social media and this can be seen from this study that will analysed in the next section. I started by analysing the high like tweet, retweet and comment pot by them. Adding to that, the table 1.2 presents the top 6 tweets that were the most engaging in the two-month period for the fans.

Table 1.2. Top 6 most engaged tweets

Tweets	Like	Retweets	Comments	Date	Type	Code
Most liked and Retweeted						
Tweet 1:	1,8 Million	652K	152K	30 January	Video	Daily activity
Tweet 2:	1,7 Million	593K	114K	13 January	Video	Special event
Tweet 3:	1,7 Million	590K	148K	February 3rd	Video	Daily activity
Tweet 4:	1,6 Million	552K	92K	February 14th	Video	Special Event (Grammy)
Most Commented only						
Tweet 5:	1,6 Million	492K	157K	January 25th	Pictures	Wishes
Tweet 6:	1,6 Million	541K	225K	February 2 nd	Pictures	Wishes (New year)

As seen in the table the top engaging posts were classified based on the interaction done on Twitter ('likes', 'Retweets', and 'Comments'). The quantitative part of this selection was used and shown in the 'code' column. Starting by the first tweet in figure 1, which was the most liked and retweeted post for January represents a high level of engagement with a total of 1,800,000 million likes and the highest retweets of 652K.

Figure 1. Most engaged Tweet



This tweet represents a video type of content, where one of the members lip-syncing in a playful way to one of his bandmates solo release song. This type of tweet shows a normal action that any normal human being would do for a friend or someone they know. However, this was posted during the period of song release so that is the reason why fans are more engaged and showing their gratitude and appreciation while reading the comments of the post. In fact, what was engaging in this was the fact that this was done in a sarcastic way by imitating someone else.

Figure 2. Second most engaged tweet



The second tweet (figure 2), shows also a high level of engagement in terms of likes and retweets for the month of January. Looking at the content and its variables it has got 1,700,000 million likes and most retweeted post for that month. This post contains a video type of material that by one of its members. The video expresses a thankful message for a special event of a solo song that has been release. The video lasted for about 12 seconds and it showed one of the members just filming themselves from a backstage concert which made it more special for the followers. In fact, fans have a limited access to backstage content and having to see this video was special for them as not every famous Korean group member really does that. For some reason this was highly engaged in by likes as it was a visual content rather than text or image. This post had one of the most retweets 593K and 114K of comments.

Figure 3. Third most engaged tweet

The third tweet, showed also a high level of engagement and interaction as it was the most highly liked was the one for February was a total of 1,700,000 million likes showing a video lasting for 0:29 seconds showing a daily activity of one of the members eating food with a total view of 7.70 views. This video actually shows a way for that artist to share the most normal moments to their fans through these types of posts however this was the most engaged one. A total of 590K retweets were also dedicated to this tweet.

Figure 4. Fourth most engaged tweet

Figure 5. Most commented Tweet**Figure 6.** Most second commented tweet

The fourth tweet figure 4, was also highly engaged in terms of likes for the second month of February in terms of likes and retweets. The post also showed the video type of content where the member filmed themselves at the Grammy's in the states showing and expressing their enjoyment before presenting the award for the night. The Grammy's was an along awaited event for both BTS and fans during that period, as they are the first Korean band to ever attend that event (Variety, 2019). This video showed a total view of 4,84 million views and retweet of 552K during the month of February.

As for the most commented tweet the fifth tweet (figure 5) showed a high engagement when it came to comments representing the most commented post for February (Appendix A). The post showed a total of 4 pictures with one of the members holding his dog wishing a happy Lunar Korean new year's (Appendix D). The comments for the particular post showed appreciation and high engagement of wishing a good year for their artists. This type of wishes showed deep appreciation which led to a massive response. The last tweet (figure 6) showed a personal picture of one the members that is wishing to not catch a cold. This tweet presents a quite engaged types of comment showing their concern for the idol. The type that these tweets show members wishing to their fans very simple wishes like normal caring messages, wishes of special days, or just a simple message while doing something.

Interpretation

Media practices have shown that based on Couldry's human behaviour on digital media, posting on a regular basis and differentiating the material to the audience will make it even more attractive and engaging (Couldry, 2012). It is important to understand that media practices are various, and many individuals have different ways of making use of it (Couldry, 2012). As Couldry explains, that media practices have different levels of involvement and execution and each of these actions need to be distinguished (Couldry, 2012).

The main access for the south Korean band BTS to communicate and engage with fans that are not based in their home country and cannot attend their regular concert, find Twitter as an efficient way of keeping them updated. The internet has been shown to be a key practice for people to share about lives and their personal content. Posts can be easily liked and shared through the retweets on social media (Couldry, 2012). What BTS was doing, was that they were trying to connect with their fans through their own personal account and looking more closely to this particular tweet (appendix A) some tweets are more engaging than others. Relating this to Couldry (2012), the digital space allows the human to perform actions that have different purposes as it could be for memory by posting posts, imaginative, etc, but in this case it is about the 'visual tracking'.

In this sense, fans are able to track their stars activities since they do not have the mean to be able to get direct contact with the south Korean band, especially for European fans. From these posts we can see that the type of media that BTS posts are quite various: pictures, videos, text, etc, and for they try to manage their online presence. The term that was used by Couldry (2012) 'Presencing' is the term that exploits the how the user is making use of the digital social space to interact with specific groups. Twitter the social networking website, allows for most celebrities to get in touch with their fans and keep the contact. In fact, the culture is a decider factor for using specific platforms for users, whether it is a famous person or not, as it all depends on the conformity of the culture when it comes to practices. Some previous research done a social network site by a Japanese researcher proves that there is a presence of an association between distant people and external network.

By using the practice aspect of digital spaces users are able to keep a public presence and this can be seen in BTS practices online. BTS has in fact made great use of Twitter and social media in particular, as they try to keep an online presence as well as a public presence, this is proven through the popularity of their posts in table 1. In japan, media use has been extensively poplar in order to keep relationships with people that do not live nearby, as well in south Korea, but it is more intense. Like Couldry mentions in Chapter 2, section 3: "In South

Korea where, like Japan, internet-enabled mobile phones came early, the ‘minihompy’ (or mobile-device-enabled personal homepage) has become a crucial means for individuals to be ‘present’ to each other: 85 per cent of South Koreans use the internet for this purpose.” (Couldry, 2012, Chapter 2, Section 3, para. 2), from this quote we can explain the use of media planforms by the south Korean band as it is also part of a cultural practice. These tweets are differentiable from one another because they have been posted on specific days.

However, while analysing the type of content, videos were more engaging in terms of likes, retweets, and comments. In fact, as seen in the previous figures content mostly contained more than text. The other posts were less engaging for a reason, and that is the period of time. The action performed/used by the band relate to regular people activities, since everyone wished for good prospect and share the moment on their social media. BTS’s Twitter posts show a variety of content and each content has in fact different direction, where some of these posts could relate to more than one person. In a sense, BTS tries to vary their content and perform various things for their fans on Twitter. They even share recommendation of music of other artists with links or pictures of the album, which makes it more attractive for fans.

To answer our RQ1: what are BTS members doing in order to engage fans through their social media platform accounts?, BTS are varying the type of content they are posting about their group and individual activities and they try to keep an online presence for their fans, thus fans are interacting with their idol group as they express that through the likes pressing and the retweets they share and finally the comments the leave for their favourite band. The online media practices have shaped how musicians and fandom interact with each other. Also, the aspect of culture is present in digital media practices for south Korean people, as it is used by a majority of people.

5.2 Fan online media practices

Since the second aim of this thesis at analysing the fans media practices as they engage with the posts. For that a selection of questions has been done in order to measure the level of engagement that would help me understand how fans are engaging with the post. The table below presents the selected questions that allowed me to analyse the results and demonstrate inferences based on the outcomes of participants that took part in the survey.

Table A. General information about the relevant selected survey questions

Variable studied	Questions	Media practice types	
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Social media platform	Which social media platform do you use the most in order to follow BTS? (Q9)	Social media use	Online participation Through activities Actions, practices on media platforms.
Social media platform	How often do you make use of social media in order to listen to BTS? (Q11)	Frequency of practicing a specific activity on social media when it comes to BTS.	
Liking BTS posts (16)	How often do you check any of these actions? (Q16)	Activity/ actions in regards to media practices	
Retweeting BTS posts (16)	How often do you check any of these actions? (Q16)		
Commenting BTS posts	How often do you check any of these actions? (Q16)		
Online type of activities (13)	Tick what applies: (Q13)	Different types of actions fans practice online in regard to the south Korean band	
Most engaged account by fans (15)	Which of these accounts do you to interact the most on Twitter (Q15)	This is to show that through the different activities they practice, they make use of the Twitter account of BTS to engage.	
Reasons for engaging with BTS	Choose below what applies: (Q14)	By executing different activities on social media, this question looks into the reasons behind the practices of fans (ARMY).	

To understand the sample of participants from the Europe and their involvement within the K-pop culture, they have shown interest in this pop culture prior to becoming a fan of BTS. Graph A (appendix D) show how these fans have been fans of K-pop prior to BTS as 72,2% were involved into the culture.

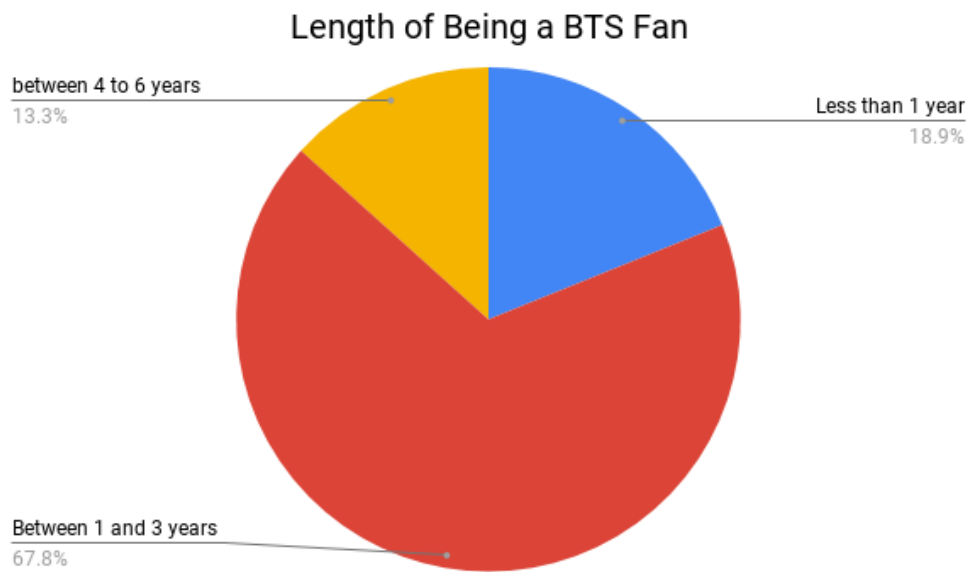
Figure B. Length of being a BTS fan.

Figure B, shows that 67,8% of the European participants were fans of BTS ranging between 1 to 3 years, 18,9% were fans for less than a year and 13,3% were fans of the by band for about 4 to years. The concentration of the participants that are fans of BTS represent a majority.

In the survey conducted one of the questions highlighted, confirmed how fans discovered BTS “*How did you discover BTS ?*”. In fact, 54% (n=127) of the participants say that YouTube was the main first contact, followed by people they know with 25% then by Twitter with 8.1 %, as presented in table I.

Table I. Popular Social media platform used to discover BTS

How fans discovered BTS				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Discovered BTS SM ^a	Facebook	1	0,4%	0,6%
	Twitter	19	8,1%	11,0%
	Youtube	127	54,3%	73,8%
	Instagram	12	5,1%	7,0%
	Tumblr	8	3,4%	4,7%
	Blogs	1	0,4%	0,6%
	Vlive	1	0,4%	0,6%
	Television	5	2,1%	2,9%
	Friends or People you know	60	25,6%	34,9%
Total		234	100,0%	136,0%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Digital development and improvement have made it easier for basic media practices to be executed by fans and this is in fact shown in tables 1. In the survey conducted one of the many questions highlighted, confirmed how fans discovered BTS “*How did you discover BTS ?*”.

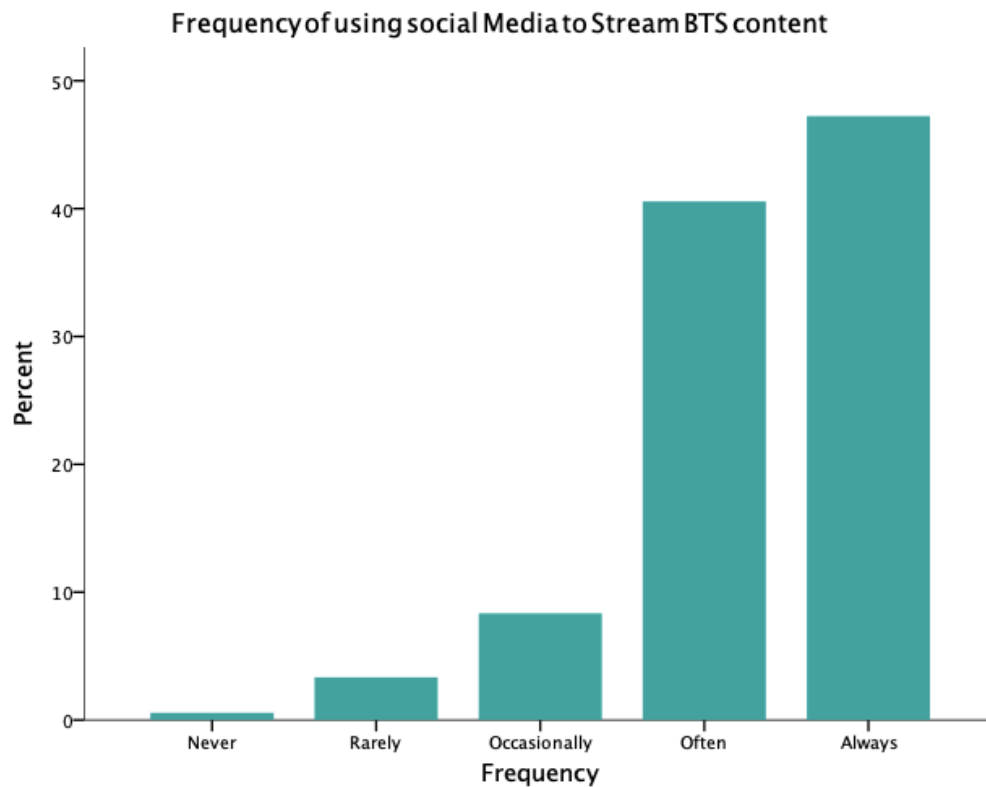
Table I, shows that 54% (n=127) of the participants say that YouTube was the main first contact when it came to discover the south Korean band, followed by people they know with 25% (n=60) then by Twitter with 8.1 %. Other participants in the survey said that they TV was their first contact as traditional mean of media 2,1% (n=5), followed by Vlive app (Korean online platform) and blogs and Facebook which was by 0,4 (n=1).

This kind of question measured how fans had a primary access to a digital media platform that was in a way a first step into practicing online activities online. By having a similar interest as a group of people with a common platform access this allowed fans to navigate through the different platforms available online and develop their own practices as a community.

Table II. Most followed BTS Twitter account

Most Interacted BTS account				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid "BTSofficial@bts_bighit"	2	1,1	1,1	1,1
"방탄소년단 @BTS_twt"	172	95,6	95,6	96,7
Neither	5	2,8	2,8	99,4
Other	1	,6	,6	100,0
Total	180	100,0	100,0	

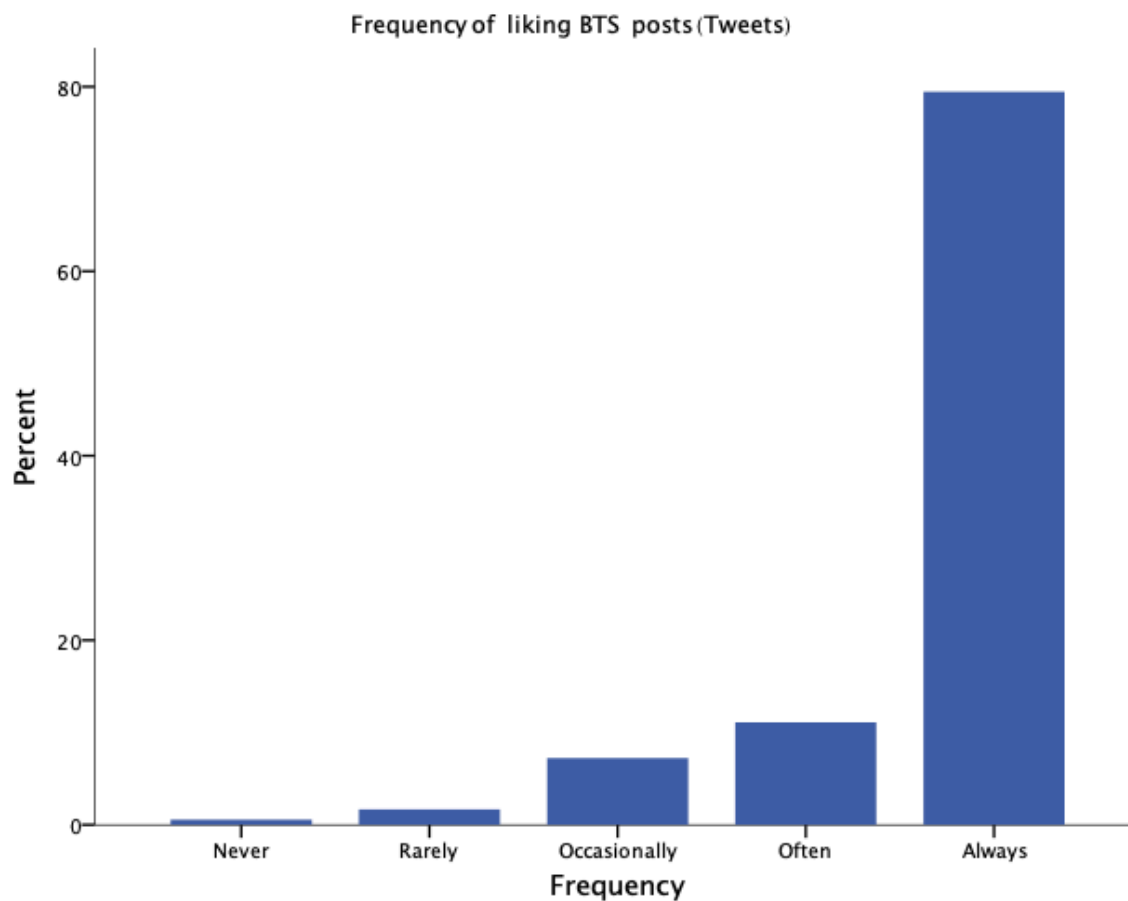
Reading upon the other asked questions asked, a general preliminary description helped in understanding the way this community has access to social media and what is the main account followed on Twitter when it comes to the band as 95,6% (n=172) follow the BTS personal account, as seen in table VI. Other accounts have not shown interest in other accounts. Therefore, the personal account was the first step for these fans to engage in the Twitter posts and this explains how this specific account showed more engagement and interaction throughout their posts.

Graph I. Frequency of using social media

The next question that tried to measure the frequency of social media use by these fans to engage with their idols “*How often do you make use of social media in order to listen to BTS?*” The graph I, presents that percent of the participants show a strong involvement of streaming online music of BTS on media platforms. Also, 40% of the participants say that they often make use of social media to stream BTS songs on a quite regular basis by selecting “often”. As we noticed from the graph I, a high percentage of people have a frequent use of social media when it comes to streaming their artists music. Also, the graph shows a distribution that is left skewed, that shows a positive skewness. There is no doubt, that the fans are very engaged online and show a strong use of social media regardless of the platform, but in this case, it is mainly on Twitter and YouTube. For some fans, this might not be the case, and this is clearly shown on the other categories of “rarely”, “occasionally”, and “never” that are below 10%. Looking at the graph I results most participants use social media on a frequent daily basis to listen to BTS.

Graph II. Fans frequency of liking BTS posts**Frequency of liking BTS posts (Tweets)**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	1	,6	,6	80,0
	Rarely	3	1,7	1,7	100,0
	Occasionally	13	7,2	7,2	87,2
	Often	20	11,1	11,1	98,3
	Always	143	79,4	79,4	79,4
	Total	180	100,0	100,0	

Table III. Fans frequency of liking BTS posts

The next section represents the results on fans frequency on online practices executing and practicing the first function of Twitter which is “like”. This survey question in particular asked about the frequency of executing specific Twitter actions. “*Like BTS personal posts, Retweets, Comment, buy BTS merchandise*”. In fact, Graph II shows that almost 80% (n=143) of the fans answered always as one of the most common function they use for engaging with the band (Table III). Furthermore, the graph shows a distribution that is left skewed, which shows a positive skewness. Table II shows that participants that answered often 7,2% (n=13) have a more or less active participation compared to the other categories that have shown on the contrary a percentage less than 10%. From the graph II and table II, the result shows that fans have really a high level of engagement and participation when it comes to liking the posts of BTS. This also, can be confirmed from the numbers of likes for each post tweeted during the two months.

Graph III. Fans frequency of retweeting BTS posts.

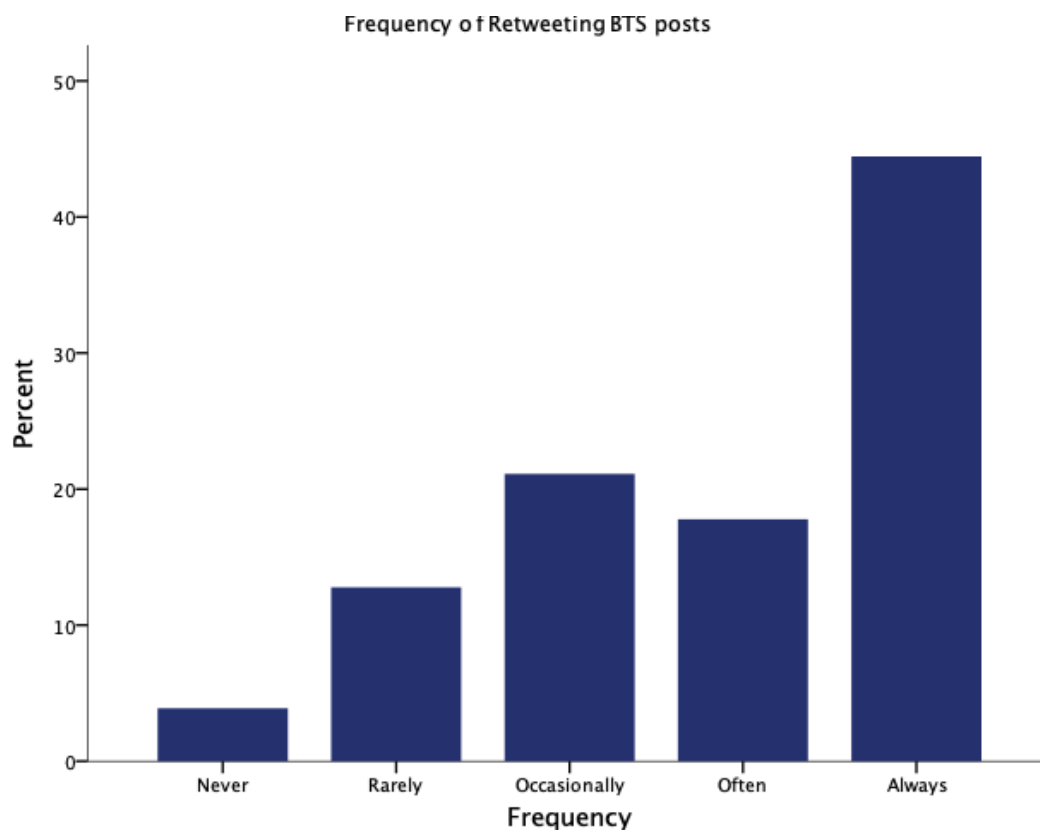
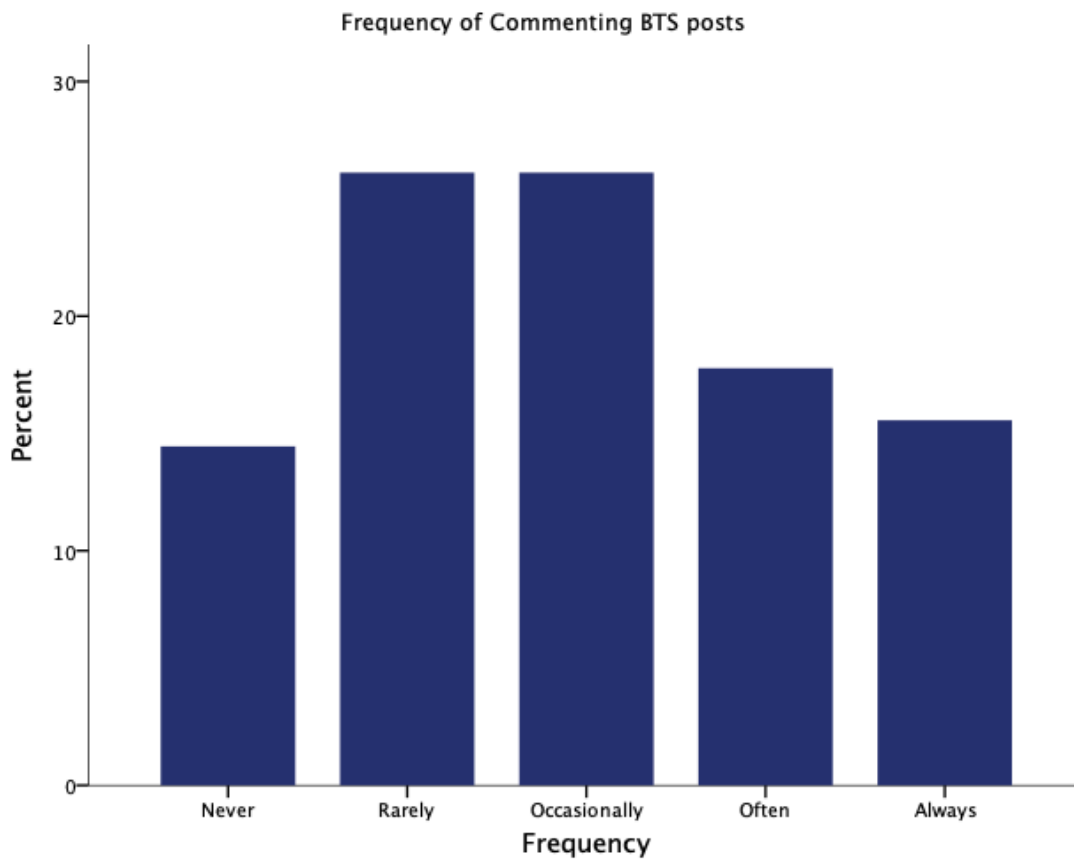


Table IV. Fans frequency of Retweeting BTS posts.

Frequency of Retweeting BTS posts					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	7	3,9	3,9	48,3
	Rarely	23	12,8	12,8	100,0
	Occasionally	38	21,1	21,1	69,4
	Often	32	17,8	17,8	87,2
	Always	80	44,4	44,4	44,4
	Total	180	100,0	100,0	

Graph III, shows a distribution that is left skewed, which shows a positive skewness, where 44,4% (n=80) of the fans retweet the tweets posted by the south Korean band is the most practiced active action. Some fans have responded to have only occasionally done so by 21,1% (n=38), “often” by 17,8% (n=32), “rarely” by 12,8% (n=23), and “never” only by three people. The results presented in table IV, show that some fans are less engaged than others and we could see that from the activity for the function of retweeting. These two functions ‘liking’ and ‘retweeting’ show high numerical outcomes representing of 79,4% and 44,4% of fans that engage with the artist content of social media, and we see that in the high number of likes in the table II, followed by the number of retweets in table IV. However, when it comes to the last Twitter function “Comments”, it was seen as not one of the most used ones as the fans in the community occasionally and rarely comment on the tweets. In fact, for the Graph IV, fans are divided when it comes to commenting and engaging with the posts, as we can see a Bimodal distribution from the graph. To conclude, graph II and III showed that most fans have a high rate of participation when executing the like and retweet function of Twitter and that can also be confirmed in the table 1 in appendix A.

Graph IV. Fans frequency of commenting BTS posts.**Table V.** Fans frequency of Commenting BTS posts.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	26	14,4	14,4	30,0
	Rarely	47	26,1	26,1	100,0
	Occasionally	47	26,1	26,1	56,1
	Often	32	17,8	17,8	73,9
	Always	28	15,6	15,6	15,6
Total		180	100,0	100,0	

Graph IV, shows a binomial distribution with two peaks in the graph for the categories “occasionally” and “rarely”. Table V demonstrates that fans have responded to only commenting by different distributions as some of them do it ‘occasionally’ with 26,1% (n=47) and ‘rarely’ with 26,1% (n=47). The other frequencies were quite close as 28 respondents said they would always comment with 15,6 %, others do quite often respond with a percentage of 17,8% and finally n=26 respondents with 14,4% showed that they never do comment.

As a result, fans have in fact different ways of engaging on social media, this can be seen from the different ways of how participants responded to the survey questions. According to some of the participants access to social media has allowed them to develop their online skills and level of engagement as they increase their frequency of use.

As a matter of fact, a follow up question that would have been adequate to further investigate, would have been to ask: “*why is commenting your least preferred option?*”, as some assumptions could have been made regarding this aspect of engagement of commenting. As a deduction it is easier for fans to press likes and retweets in order to show their commitment and engagement with the posts through the primary function of likes, then by the retweet. The level of engagement and interactions with the tweets is quite impressive as fans are really dedicated to express their support via online practices. As seen nowadays and in this survey most fans of BTS use Twitter as shown in the inferences of this particular question.

Another important question used to measure the type of digital practices conducted by fans was to ask what kind of practices fans use on media platforms. Measuring the online practices of fans, in addition to three main functions of Twitter “Like”, Retweet”, and “comment”, a variety of actions have been shown in the table V below.

Table VI. Activities of fans

Online fan participation Frequencies

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
actions of fans online ^a	Participated in atleast in a voting system MNET/MAMAawards	160	14,1%	88,9%
	I have created at least more than one account to vote for BTS	56	4,9%	31,1%
	I have sent private messages about supporting BTS to people	55	4,8%	30,6%
	I do participate in translating content presented by BTS	12	1,1%	6,7%
	I produce text translation	1	0,1%	0,6%
	I am part of a translating team group that translates from Korean	1	0,1%	0,6%
	I participate in fan communities discussions on SM	80	7,0%	44,4%
	I use BTS posts in order to develop fanfiction	20	1,8%	11,1%
	I reply to other users comment in BTS posts	68	6,0%	37,8%
	I comment on tweets posted by BTS	106	9,3%	58,9%
	I press like to the BTS posts	169	14,9%	93,9%
	I do retweet BTS posts	149	13,1%	82,8%
	I activated the ring notification for BTS social media channels	157	13,8%	87,2%
	I prefer online participation than offline participation	68	6,0%	37,8%
	I do participate in both Online and Offline participation	34	3,0%	18,9%
Total		1136	100,0%	631,1%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The table VI, shows that the most common method for fan engagement is first through pressing likes with 14,9% (n=169), second through online voting 14,1% (n=160), third by activating the ring notification on BTS social media platforms with 13,8% (n=157), fourth through retweets 13,1% , and finally by commenting which is represented by 9,3% (n=106). The other activities shown in table VI, represent non-significant percentages as most of the main interesting activities that have highlighted follow up upon what has been leading the us to answer our research question. These activities led the fans to have a higher level of interaction seeing the success it had and the activities of other fans that were doing similar activities as others.

As well as the next question, which represented a following up, the next step was keep looking into the reasons of participation in such activities online as a community. In fact, most participants expressed their purpose for doing such action was due to the fact that it gives them a sense of belonging to the K-pop culture and to the fandom ARMY of BTS as 71% (n=128) expressed so, as seen in the results of table VII. Other expressed that they are do perform these actions because they create an online relationship with the band (12%; n=22) and the rest expressed different reasons for being involved in the online activities.

Table VII. Fans reasons for supporting the artist BTS online

Reason for participating Online Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
Reason for participating online ^a	By doing of these actions it gives me a sense of Belonging	128	71,1%	73,6%
	I feel like creating an online relationship withthe brand	22	12,2%	12,6%
	By commenting or liking or Retweeting BTS posts I etsabllish a relationship	9	5,0%	5,2%
	By doing these actions I feel I will get closer to my idol group	12	6,7%	6,9%
	Ohter Comments	9	5,0%	5,2%
Total		180	100,0%	103,4%

a. Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

Interpretation

The results presented in the previous sections helped in understanding what kind of activities fans are doing on social media and precisely what are they doing to engage with their artist. In fact, the empirical data demonstrated fans evolvement in the process of their online activities. Some common digital practices by the European ARMY community that most of the

fans share similar opinions and practices when it comes to following BTS content on Twitter. In fact, by asking “*How often do you Check BTS personal account?*”, most fans showed a strong similar frequency of media practice by answering “always” with 53,3% (n=96) representing more than half of the sample. Keeping in mind fan culture, most of these individuals share the same practices and identity in a sense. Through these questions’ fans have proven to have similarities in terms of practice and culture when it came to same interests. To answer our second research, question the kind of media practices executed by the fans, demonstrated that in order to engage with their idol group BTS, fans participate in similar online practices. This have been shown in the different quantified answers that have been analysed and described in the previous sections. This particular European fandom share a common mediated culture when it comes to the south Korean band BTS, as they practice the same actions such as liking, voting, retweeting, commenting, subscribing to the band’s personal account and frequently doing these actions on daily, weekly basis, etc. Fans have been actively trying to support and engage with their artist by voting, sharing, and discussing the posts that have been tweeted from the band’s side.

Based on the results of the survey, I could see that there is an emerging culture that comes from the fans engagement on social media. European fans have shown that their online activities in regard to the band BTS has shaped a community culture that is shared and practiced in a collective way. This has been demonstrated through their online practices when it comes to voting, liking, retweeting, etc. From the 180 participants a pattern of similarities was detected and those are proven through the outcome of the selected question for this study. The survey was solely based on the European individuals, and their activities online have demonstrated that in the analysis chapter. Since this is only a small-scale study more research could be done regarding this subject. For this thesis I had primarily developed a question asking about their alignment with other K-pop idol groups, but that was not a significant question for this study as I needed to understand particularly the engagement of fans in reaction to the Twitter posts by BTS.

In this sense, Baym’s idea on shared practices comes to light when looking at the frequency of using social media platforms (Baym, 2015). Fans do start unconsciously to execute some online practices that are developed through hazardous practices within one group and then evolves into a culture. This has been seen in the similarities that fans have answered in the questions analysed above. K-pop culture has been developed and shaped thanks to the technological advancement integrated in social platforms.

5.3 Participatory culture and Shared practices

The analysis done from the first and second part have helped in understanding the use of artists and fans media practices. Artists have shown a cultural participatory culture by their online practices which have led the fans to react to it. In line with the media practice dimension, BTS has shown that they practice and produce various media content.

Baym (2015) concept on community formation, shared practices and identities has been quite an important aspect for analysing the second part of the thesis. In fact, looking at some basic practices regarding the community formation, it all started with the access to social media and online platforms. Social media has been a key to the discovery of new information as Couldry mentions. In line with what Baym (2015) and Jenkins (2006) describes, internet and mass media was the first step for individuals to develop themselves and their online practices through the frequent use and access to social media.

Constant online interactions on the media platforms that are related to a specific cultural consumption, create the concept of participatory culture according to Jenkins (2006). As a matter of fact, a participatory culture has been created through fans online activities when it comes the online production of the band's products for this study. Meaning by this, is that music the band shares online, pictures, videos, even small posts about basic activities becomes a habitual circle that leads to an online participation space for both the fans and the artist. For this case participatory culture that has been created started off from the artists practices. In fact, based on BTS's activities fans have made use of their online presence and frequent posts in order to engage with them through their own practices. According to Couldry (2012), there is the presence of "Celebrity culture" that is linked to how celebrities are keeping themselves in the media spaces that is either through external entities or online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, etc (Couldry, 2012).

Another important part of social media is that it helped fans express themselves through different online activities and we have seen that in the executions of their action mainly in liking, retweeting, and commenting. The participation leads to practice, which allowed fans develop and increase their online interactions in the community, thus, to support their fans. Also, by shared behaviour lead to the contribution if a participatory culture within one community. These shared practices have been highlighted as such in having similar communicative practices amongst the fans. To answer our third research question, a sense of shared identity has been inferred from this study. According to Baym (2015), similar social identities come from individuals that share the same values or norms within a certain society or group of people, in this case the ARMY – fandom name of BTS. The collectiveness that the

fandom creates, allows the building of a ‘collective identity’ that the group of fans can relate to within the K-pop culture. While executing these activities online as shown in table VI and VII, fans from the community feel that they create a sense of belongingness.

Also, fan online activities can be relatable to others through the various actions they perform online, thus it attracts more people to join the specific group of people. Baym (2015) mentions that SNS platform, have an important part in shaping the identities that are created digitally. In fact, she explains that through the different metrics each platform has, it forges the identities through different media practices and that can be seen from Facebook and Twitter. Concerning, Twitter the ‘likes’ and ‘retweets’ are extremely important when it comes digital practices as it will lead to digital cultural space.

Furthermore, participatory culture as shown by Jenkins (2006) is one of the cultures that is created through fans’ media and cultural consumption, as that could be seen in the previous analysis (Jenkins, 2006). Sharing and connecting on a particular space has allowed fans to engage in a routine type of culture that leads the online community to create their own values. By many individual’s contribution, the formation of communities comes together as everyone is considered as a producer. As seen in the media practices of these fans of BTS creativity and freedom is present in the community as well as active participation. To support this, Twitter is a platform that allows freedom of expression for users. The creativity is represented in the production of fanfiction as some of these individuals have shown. Also, their active participation is shown through their the action and interest they take online by voting, translating, liking, retweeting, etc, as there are no restriction to that on Twitter except for the number of characters but that is not regarded as an issue since people can tweet as much no limitation is imposed when tweeting.

The active participation has been demonstrated through the frequency of using Twitter or other social media platforms, Jenkins’ (2006) concept was very important for the analysis to understand the participatory culture. The process of participatory emergence has been created thanks to their expression, collaboration, and circulations. Also, the active engagement with a specific popular culture leads to a learning space for other individuals that are starting to be immersed into the respective culture (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robison, & Weigel, 2009).

6 Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this thesis was to understand the media practices of artists and fans in a deeper way. First, through the content BTS shared on Twitter, second fans engagement with the tweets and third understand if a participatory culture was emerged from their online practices. For that purpose, three questions were formulated:

RQ1: What are BTS members doing in order to engage fans through their social media platform account?

To answer this first question, the content produced by BTS was demonstrated to be diverse in terms of type of media when sharing and posting about their group and individual activities on the platform. For each tweet, the band's members expressed different types of emotions, activities, events, etc. As they tweet and share content with their fans on a regular basis, high engagement was expressed during January and February in terms of likes, retweets, comments, and other activities. The band also tries to keep an online presence on social media; thus, fans are interacting with their tweets. Online media practices have shaped how BTS and the fandom "A.R.M.Y" interact with each other. In fact, a pattern has been highlighted while doing the analysis of the posts. As a researcher investigating the media practices of BTS enabled me to deduce a presence of a communication pattern.

As a matter of fact, the more interaction BTS members get through their posts, the more they try to engage with their fans. One last point is the aspect of culture which has been highlighted through the data analysis showing that culture is an important part of the use of mediated platforms. As seen by Couldry, South Korean individuals including celebrities have a regular and common use of social network services (Couldry, 2012).

RQ2: What are fans doing in order to engage with BTS's posts online?

Fans have executed different types of media practices by showing their support and engagement through a collective cultural participation, as they participate in similar online practices. This particular European fandom shares a common mediated culture when it comes to BTS, as fans execute similar actions such as liking, voting, retweeting, commenting, subscribing to the band's personal account and frequently repeat these actions on a daily and weekly basis.

There is an emerging culture that comes from the fan's engagement on social media. European fans have shown that their online activities in regard to the band BTS has shaped a community culture that is shared and practiced in a collective way. In this sense, Baym's (2015) idea on shared practices comes to light when looking at the frequency of using social media platforms. In addition, fans start unconsciously to execute some online activities that are developed through hazardous practices within one group and then evolves into a culture.

RQ3: What kind of participatory culture and online social identity is emerging through media practices?

Finally, through the regular use of social media features and online daily basis practices a participatory culture is emerged. In addition to that, shared practices and identities as introduced by Baym (2015) and Jenkins (2013), show that dedicated communities sharing similar interests create certain values and norms that are included in the community, where social identity has been developed.

Through the analysis of the three-research questions, fans were able to express their engagement in terms of a positive or a negative activity. As a fan myself, I also have engaged with the few posts that were used for the research. Most of these tweets have expressed a sense of intimacy when sharing a video, for that reason I showed my support by liking is the tweets. BTS was also able to produce attractive content, in order to keep fans interested in their work as artists. In fact, this type of engagement has been related to the development of new media technologies (Jenkins, 2006), through that fans were able to develop themselves showing drastic change over the years. The participatory culture was demonstrated through their constant online activities as consumers and producers of the culture (Jenkins, 2006). Another important inference to mention is how these communities have executed similar activities online, which created a space in which they were able to identify themselves with other K-pop fans (Baym, 2015).

6.1 Discussion and Reflection

In this thesis, I aimed at investigating how in particular how BTS members in particular and their European fans interact through the media content shared on Twitter. The purpose was to understand and analyse what are both parties doing on social media. For that reason, engagement and interaction were measured throughout the analysis in order to look into the type of media practices they execute.

Regarding this thesis, there are still some limitations. First, the sample collected is not representative which is the case, since it only represents a part of the population “European fans”. Second, BTS posts showed that there is a little mention of music, but all of these tweets were conducted in the setting of music daily activities and events. However, only the “wish” category was partially unrelated to the music context. Third, the research on BTS only reflects the positive parts of engagement and not the negative, this is why there are some limitation regarding the critical reflections.

As seen in the conclusion BTS members’ online practices are various when it comes to daily activities. To explain this better, daily activities in this case include: sharing simple everyday actions such as eating while making a video to the fans, singing and tweeting about it, backstage footage from a TV show they are filming, travelling for business and non-business activities, dinner gathering, and dance practices. Since they are artists, these types of activities are considered as part of their daily routine.

Furthermore, to explain how media practices are used in various ways from the perspective of musicians and fans, it also is important for the field of media and communication to understand it better. Baym (2015) exploits how fans and musicians create a special relationship thanks to the internet and the development of social media platforms. On one hand, she looks into the new forms of media, and on the other hand she uses that to look into the communities and their respective online network and what can be entailed from it (Baym, 2015). Jenkins (2006) also describes how through the use of media, fans create a certain participatory culture when it comes to shared interests. Finally, Couldry develops the idea of media practices that have been developed throughout the years (Couldry, 2012).

For this thesis a sample of 100 tweets has been used, but some could argue that it might not be representative, which is true. In addition, BTS posts do not reflect the band’s activities in terms of practices throughout the year. The actions and practices highlighted from this investigation are not generalisable and do not prove that these are the only activities executed by the band. As a researcher, there are things that require a use of other methods in order to understand the phenomena and complexity of Twitter. Thus, while doing this study, I have

come across some conclusions that explain a high level of engagement and interaction, yet there is still this uncertainty of stating if these tweets are the most liked ones. These tweets have shown their high level of engagement and interaction among the sample collected which was demonstrated by the number of each post and their codes (Table 1, Appendix A).

The first research question (RQ1) enabled me to discover what practices are used by BTS and what kind of content is popular amongst fans and the second research (RQ2) allowed me to look into how fans are interacting through their online practices with BTS posts. The data analysis I have conducted for the first research question, entailed these results:

BTS, the South Korean band has a strong use of social media in particular Twitter, which is the main platform to engage with fans. I have deduced that BTS tries to differentiate in their media type of content in order to have strong engagement, as some content was more engaging than others (Videos). Furthermore, the band has shown that through different content they are able to form a successful interaction with their fans and establish an online relationship with their respective fandom.

The analysis conducted for the second research question (RQ2) has enabled me to explain what are fans doing in order to support their band. The results showed that through multiple activities and actions done on Twitter and online demonstrated its efficient in expressing themselves. In addition, while sharing, retweeting, liking, voting, producing media content, they are also able to create a participatory culture in a mediated space. Thanks to the use of social media features, fans were able to explore and develop their practices in groups as well as individuals. The last analysis for the last research question (RQ3) has allowed me to look at the two previous analytical parts and use the theoretical concepts in order to understand the participatory culture emerged from the different practices done by the South Korean band BTS and the fandom.

Through this study, I believe I have achieved my objective in understanding how BTS members are using social media in order to increase fans' reach and through engagement. Furthermore, this study also allowed me to understand how fans share the same thoughts and activities in the Korean pop culture scene, even though they were not Asians. The fandom of BTS has been growing for a while now and that has been seen in the responses of the participants of the inquest.

6.2 Limitation

The two main methods used for this thesis have in fact enabled me to reach the aim of the study. However, there were some challenges to each of them. The content analysis has been time consuming and lengthily when it came to each tweet. Maybe by using a different aim for the thesis it would have been easier to conduct more a full quantitative study. The material was not large enough for this method as it was time consuming in terms of coding and analysis. The weaknesses of the qualitative method consisted in the timeframe of the investigation. I think using these methods for this thesis was quite suitable, but the outcomes from each method did not allow a generalisation on the all musicians and fandoms in terms of media practices.

The three implication that could be deduced from this study is that this gives a deeper understanding on how non-western musicians use the social media in order to engage with their fans and the media practices they are performing online on a global scale.

The second implication results in understanding the culture of non-western artists and their use of social media when communicating with fans. The third implication is represented in showing that media practices lead to a creation of a specific participatory culture, as seen by Jenkins' (2006).

6.3 Further research and contribution

This study will contribute to the field of communication and media studies. Adding to that, this research is important for other people to read as it can entail many other aspects of media participation in the music and fan online engagement. Not many studies have been done in particular on Korean bands media practices as the fans were always the variables that was most interesting for researchers. Bennett (2014), mentions this in her own research that no particular studies have been done on the artist side, yet it is important to always look at the practices of fans regardless of the artist. This study will contribute to cross cultural studies and fandom studies, as the main sample in this investigation is only focused on a European representation of how fans are engaging and interacting online through their different media practices.

Further research is important because studies in social media need to be more investigated, especially in the music industry. Social media has shown its efficiency and effectiveness in many different fields but not necessarily in K-pop. That is why this study on social media use and fandom online participation is interesting to look at from the angle of the digital media participation.

The conclusion that this study demonstrated is that though the media practices anyone can generate a culture online, if similar interests are shared (Baym, 2015). Most importantly, social

media use has enabled people to use its platforms in many different ways, through multiple activities. Also, digital spaces showed that shared practices lead to shared identities and basic online engagement leads to community formation and online engagement.

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8 Appendix A

The table Below represents the tweets that have been collected for the first part of the thesis.

Month	Likes	Retweets	Comments	hashtags #	# of Picture/post	Media Type	Date	Video Views/per post in Millions	Codes subcodes
JANUARY	1,600,000	490K	90K	Yes	3	Picture	1		74 Wishes (New Year)
	1,500,000	469K	74K	Yes	4	Picture	4		daily activity
	1,500,000	504K	78K	Yes	4	picture	4		daily activity
	1,500,000	476K	82K	Yes	2	picture	4		daily activity
	1,500,000	491K	101K	No	.	picture	5		Event
	1,500,000	467K	88K	Yes	.	picture	5		Wishes
	1,300,000	394K	42K	Yes	.	picture	6		Wishes
	1,400,000	437K	67K	No	.	picture	6		Wishes
	1,400,000	465K	66K	Yes	4	picture	6		Wishes
	1,400,000	443K	66K	No	.	picture	6		Wishes
	1,400,000	444K	73K	Yes	.	picture	6		Wishes
	1,600,000	504K	98K	No	.	picture	6		Wishes
	1,700,000	497K	74K	Yes	4	picture	7		Wishes
	1,500,000	462K	70K	Yes	4	picture	8		daily activity
	1,500,000	486K	87K	No	3	picture	9		Event
	1,500,000	464K	70K	Yes	2	picture	9		Event
	1,400,000	399K	30K	Yes	.	picture	9		Event
	1,600,000	519K	135K	No	.	picture	11		daily activity
	1,400,000	439K	59K	No	3	picture	12		daily activity
	1,100,000	333K	33K	No			12		daily activity
	1,500,000	469K	79K	No	4	picture	12		daily activity
	1,300,000	415K	55K	Yes	.	picture	13		Event
	1,400,000	436K	58K	No	.	picture	13		Event
	1,700,000	593K	114K	No	.	Video	13	5,830,000	Event
	1,400,000	444K	79K	No	2	picture	15		Wishes (New Year)
	1,300,000	440K	78K	No	2	picture	15		Wishes (New Year)
	1,400,000	430K	60K	Yes	2	picture	15		Wishes (New Year)
	1,300,000	448K	70K	Yes	2	picture	15		Wishes (New Year)
	1,400,000	455K	81K	Yes	2	picture	15		Wishes (New Year)
	1,800,000	525K	90K	Yes	.	Video	15	5,040,000	daily activity
	1,300,000	371K	59K	Yes	.	picture	15		daily activity
	1,300,000	406K	87k	Yes	.	picture	15		daily activity
	1,400,000	470K	97K	Yes	.	picture	16		daily activity
	1,500,000	489k	72k	No	4	picture	17		Event
	1,400,000	425k	62k	Yes		picture	17		daily activity
	1,400,000	425k	57K	Yes	4	picture	17		daily activity
	1,500,000	528k	90K	Yes	.	Video	18	4,920,000	daily activity
	1,100,000	334K	30K	Yes	.	picture	18		daily activity
	1,400,000	480K	56k	No	.	picture	19		Event
	1,300,000	416K	40K	Yes	.	picture	19		daily activity
	1,400,000	430K	56K	No	3	picture	19		Wishes

	1,300,000	411K	70k	Yes	.	Text only	19		Wishes
	1,200,000	362K	49k	No	.	Text only	19		daily activity
	1,400,000	449K	56K	Yes	.	picture	19		daily activity
	1,200,000	381K	69K	Yes	.	picture	21		daily activity
	1,300,000	428K	53K	No	.	Video	22	4,190,000	daily activity
	1,200,000	383K	55K	Yes	.	picture	22		Event
	1,200,000	379k	31K	Yes	.	picture	22		Event
	1,400,000	464K	53K	No	4	picture	22		daily activity
	1,400,000	434K	60K	Yes	3	picture	23		daily activity
	1,400,000	501K	89K	Yes	article	Link + Text	23		Event
	1,100,000	321K	20K	Yes	.	Text only	23	`	daily activity
	1,300,000	422K	38K	Yes	.	Video	23	4,000,000	daily activity
	1,500,000	500K	95K	No	.	Video	24	5,070,000	daily activity
	1,500,000	527K	114K	No	.	Video	24	6,660,000	Event
	1,600,000	484K	157K	No	.	picture	25		Wishes
	1,400,000	392K	60K	No	.	picture	26		daily activity
	1,300,000	376K	60K	Yes	.	picture	28		daily activity
	1,200,000	352K	61K	Yes	.	picture	28		Event
	1,200,000	337K	37K	No	.	picture	29		daily activity
	1,300,000	394K	50K	No	.	picture	30		Event
	1,400,000	456K	64k	Yes	2	picture	30		daily activity
	1,400,000	550K	134K	No	.	Link + Text	30		Event
	1,500,000	554K	88K	Yes	.	Video	30	5,020,000	Event
	1,500,000	556K	120K	No	.	Video	30	5,450,000	Event
	1,500,000	556K	85K	No	.	Video	30	4,730,000	Event
	1,800,000	618k	152k	No	.	Video	30	8,110,000	Event
	1,100,000	350k	38k	Yes	.	picture	30		daily activity
	1,400,000	456k	85k	Yes	4	picture	31		daily activity
February	1,600,000	530K	225K	No	4	picture	2		Wishes (New Year)
	1,500,000	462K	108K	Yes	.	picture	3		daily activity
	1,700,000	570k	148K	No	.	Video	3	7,000,000	Daily activity
	1,500,000	471K	109k	No	2	picture	3		Daily activity
	1,500,000	466K	122K	No	2	picture	4		Daily activity
	1,400,000	441k	109k	No	.	picture	5		Wishes (New Year)
	1,200,000	429k	112k	Yes	3	picture	5		Wishes (New Year)
	1,200,000	356k	110K	Yes	.	video	6	3,620,000	daily activity
	1,200,000	331K	30K	No	.	Video link	6		Daily activity
	1,200,000	324K	39k	Yes	1	Picture	9		daily activity
	1,500,000	567K	108k	No	.	video	9	5,670,000	Event (Grammy)

1,400,000	488K	90K	yes	4	picture	9		daily activity
1,400,000	459K	84K	No	2	picture	9		daily activity
1,500,000	523K	106k	No	2	picture	9		Wishes
1,400,000	475K	72k	No	.	picture	10		Event
1,400,000	453K	47k	No	.	picture	10		Event
1,400,000	484k	158k	No	.	picture	11		Event (Grammy)
1,400,000	484K	77k	Yes	.	video	11	3,120,000	Event (Grammy)
1,300,000	510K	106k	No	.	video	11	3,400,000	daily activity
1,200,000	412k	75K	Yes	2	picture	11		daily activity
1,200,000	427k	64k	No	.	picture	11		Event (Grammy)
1,300,000	455k	67K	Yes	4	picture	11		Event (Grammy)
1,400,000	495k	74K	No	.	video	11	4,420,000	daily activity
1,200,000	381K	52K	yes	.	picture	13		daily activity
1,300,000	465K	128K	yes	.	video	13	3,780,000	daily activity
1,200,000	417k	94K	yes	.	video	13	3,300,000	Daily activity
1,600,000	460K	92K	Yes	.	video	14	4,240,000	Event (Grammy)
1,300,000	492K	83K	no	.	video	14	3,790,000	Event
1,200,000	406K	112K	No	2	picture	15		Daily activity
1,400,000	435K	62K	No	2	Picture	15		Daily activity
1,600,000	529K	63K	Yes	.	Video	15	5,180,000	Daily activity

‘.’ = Absence of Pictures ; Eng = english ; Ko= Korean ; Eng+Ko = English + Korean

Table 1. BTS posts January and February

9 Appendix B

Table 2. Fan accounts based on the Terms : ‘BTS’ and ‘Europe’

Account name	Number followers	Number of tweets	Account Link
<i>BTS SPECIAL UNIT EUROPE</i>	315	451	https://twitter.com/BTS_Euofficial
<i>BTS Europa</i>	5110	7183	https://twitter.com/btseuropa
<i>BTS Europe [backup acc]</i>	4053	838	https://twitter.com/REAL_BTS_Europe
<i>BTS Europe</i>	265K	36.6K	https://twitter.com/BTS_Europe
<i>BTS Europe ARMY</i>	108K	30K	https://twitter.com/BTSEuropeARMY
<i>BTS Europe A.R.M.Y (1)</i>	65	Unactive 0	https://twitter.com/BTSEuropeARMY1
<i>Jimin & BTS Europe1661</i>	1661	1495	https://twitter.com/parkjimineurope
<i>BTS to Europe</i>	17.K	6131	https://twitter.com/BTStoEurope
<i>BTS TO EUROPE ♡</i>	25	279	https://twitter.com/BTSXDenmark
<i>BTS EUROPE</i>	37	40	https://twitter.com/BTSEUROPE1
<i>BTS Europe</i>	19	348	https://twitter.com/BTSEurope5
<i>BTS Charts • Europe •</i>	738	1225	https://twitter.com/BtschartsdataEu
<i>BTS Europe</i>	486	163	https://twitter.com/BTSEurope
<i>Thalia Festerling</i>	7	19	https://twitter.com/bts_europe_army
<i>Bangtan (BTS) Europe</i>	41	131	https://twitter.com/BangtanEurope
<i>BTS Europe Charts</i>	908	23	https://twitter.com/BTSEuropecharts
<i>BTS ARMY Europe</i>	20	874	https://twitter.com/BTS_ARMY_Europe
<i>k i t k a t</i>	1730	17.8K	https://twitter.com/snowykh
<i>BTS Stats Central Europe</i>	6	5	https://twitter.com/CentralStats
<i>❤️ BTS IN EUROPE</i>	57	unactive 0	https://twitter.com/BTS_IN_BR
<i>BTS Europe</i>	1	11	https://twitter.com/SashaLouis14
<i>Looking for two seated tickets for BTS in Europe</i>	1	15	https://twitter.com/Misakiii_13
<i>BTS Europe</i>	23	66	https://twitter.com/bts2europe
<i>ARMY_Europe</i>	14	2628	https://twitter.com/ARMY_BTS_Europe
<i>BTS EUROPE REVOLUTION</i>	1	81	https://twitter.com/BTSEUROPEREVOL1

<i>BTS EUROPE</i>	11	8	<u>https://twitter.com/BTS EUROPE</u> TWT
<i>Europe</i>	7	3	<u>https://twitter.com/Kimchi_BTS_R</u> M
<i>BTS_Army_:</i>)	8	13	<u>https://twitter.com/BTS_EuropeA</u>
<i>bts_europe</i>	9	12	<u>https://twitter.com/bts_europe</u>

10 Appendix C

Survey questions.

Questionnaire:

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your age? (multiple)
3. How long have you been into K-Pop? (context: Music) (multiple choice)
4. How long have you been a fan of BTS? (multiple choice)
5. How did you discover BTS? (multiple choice)
6. Do you consider yourself an A.R.M.Y? (Yes/No)
7. If yes, why?
8. If no, why?
9. Which social media platform do you use the most in order to follow BTS? (Multiple choice)
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - Instagram
 - Vlive
 - Naver
 - Other

If other mention:

10. On a scale from 1 to 10, how would you consider yourself to be an A.R.M.Y? (1=minimum, 10= Maximum) (likert scale)
11. How often do you make use of social media in order to listen to BTS?

Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Often, Always

12. How often do you participate in fan activities? (Multiple choice)

Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Often, Always

13. Tick what applies:

- I have at least participated in a voting system for BTS (MNET countdown, MAMA awards, KBS, etc, or any other similar voting).
- I have created more than one social medium account so that I could vote more than once for BTS
- I have sent private messages about supporting BTS to acquaintances.
- I do participate in translating content presented by BTS for other people.
- I produce text translation.
- I am part of a translating team/group that translates Korean to local language.
- I participate in fan communities' discussions on social media.
- I use BTS posts in order to develop fan fiction.
- I reply to other users comment in BTS posts.
- I comment on tweets posted by BTS.
- I press like to the BTS posts.
- I do retweet BTS posts.

- I activated the ring notification for BTS social media channels (like YouTube notification, twitter notification, etc).
- I prefer online participation than offline participation
- I do participate in both online and offline participation (Like fan meetings)

If Other mention:

14. Based on question 10, choose below what applies:

- By doing any of these actions it gives me a sense of belonging.
- I feel like creating an online relationship with the band.
- By commenting or liking or retweeting BTS posts I establish a special relationship with them.
- By doing these actions I feel like I will get closer to my idol group

If Other mention:

15. Which of these accounts do you to interact the most on Twitter?

- a. BTS personal account (“방탄소년단” @BTS_twt)
- b. BTS official twitter account
- c. neither
- d. Other

If Other mention:

16. How often do you check any of these actions? (this is a frequency question with 5 column options)

- Pressing like on BTS personal posts
- Retweet BTS personal posts
- Comment of BTS personal posts
- Buy BTS merchandise

17. From a scale of 0 to 10, do you consider yourself as an active participant in the community (fandom community)? (likertscale)

18. How would you define yourself in terms of participatory level?

Low

Middle

High

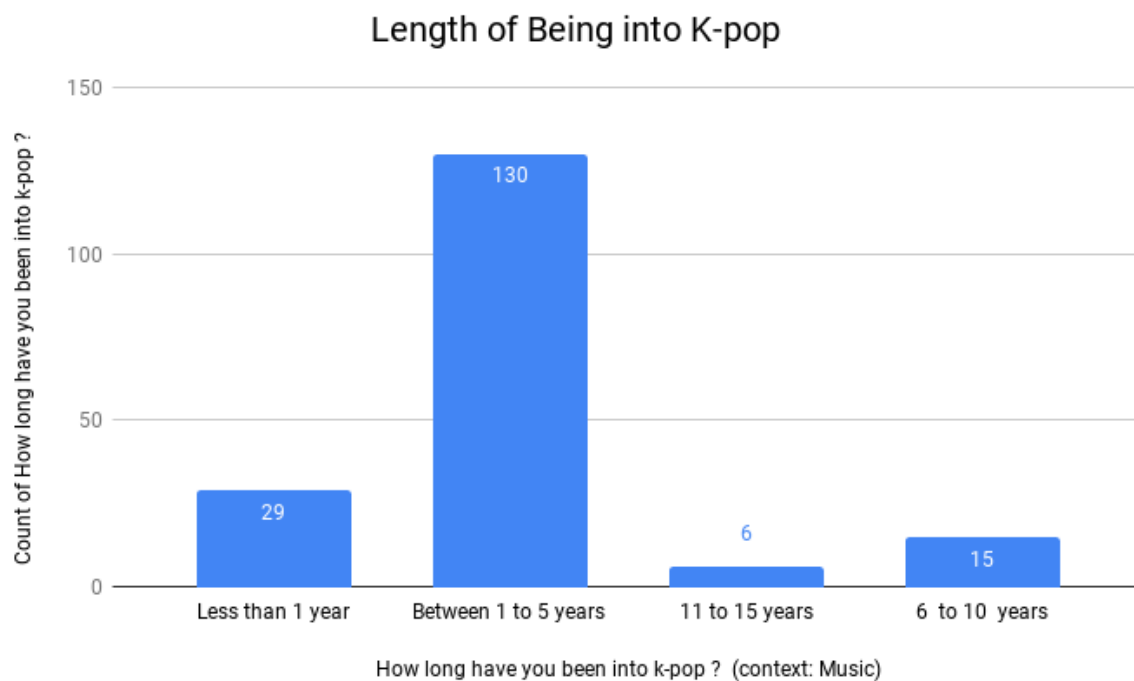
Not sure

19. If I were to do an interview in order to understand more your participation within the K-pop community would you accept to be contacted again? (Yes/No)

If yes, put your email, Facebook, etc, for further contact.

Other comments that you want to add:

11 Appendix D

Graph A. Length of being a K-pop Fan**Graph B.** Self-identity within the community