

Emoji Functions in TikTok Comments on Azarine's Brand Ambassador, Lee Min Ho

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the emojis used in Azarine's TikTok comments for Lee Min Ho as a brand ambassador, guided by the eight-taxonomy proposed by Yus (2014). The theory classifies the functions as: attitude signal, attitude intensity enhancer, illocutionary force modifier, humor, irony, emotion signal, parallel emotion signal, and emotion intensity enhancer. The study used 50 comments from the comments section. By using qualitative analysis, the study found that all eight emoji functions appeared in comments for Lee Min Ho. This finding suggests that fans' responses and engagement may vary depending on how they perceive their idol or celebrity. This study highlights the importance of emojis in reflecting the audience's attitudes toward celebrity figures on social media. Future studies could explore emoji use across other platforms, celebrity types, or cultural contexts to better understand how emojis function in different online communication settings.

Keywords: brand ambassador, emojis, function of emojis, TikTok comments.

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how emojis are used in TikTok comments on videos featuring Lee Min Ho, a Korean actor, as Azarine's brand ambassador promoting a local Indonesian skincare brand product. A study done by Ko et al. (2022) on the influence of emojis on user engagement, proves that having emojis will likely increase consumer's engagement. This research uses Yus' (2014) theory as the base for the analysis, which offers eight functions an emoji can be categorized into: attitude signal, attitude intensity enhancer, illocutionary force modifier, humor, irony, emotion signal, parallel emotion signal, and emotion intensity enhancer.

The theory was used to categorize the emojis used by commenters to react to Lee Min Ho's video. By looking at the use of emoji, the study aims to reveal more about how people react to a male Korean brand ambassador promoting Indonesian cosmetic products as Elfi (2023) noted that the majority of Indonesian people still sees men who use skincare as less masculine, macho and even defiant.

METHOD

For this study, the data was sourced from comments with emojis on Azarine's TikTok video featuring Lee Min Ho as the brand ambassador that had the most comments to ensure a high level of engagement and in return, a high level of emoji use. In the video, Lee Min Ho introduced a new set of skin care made for his collaboration as advertisement for the brand as well.

Data collection was conducted by taking screenshots of comments including emojis directed towards Lee Min Ho on the comment section. The video only took 14 seconds. The screenshots took only the first fifty comments from the top of the comments section to ensure fairness in selecting data. Such comments or responses or reactions from fans and casual watchers provided a great representation of the TikTok users' emotional engagement. To

analyze the data, the writer applied Yus' (2014) framework. Yus' (2014) theory provides a structured approach to understand the emoji reactions in relation to Lee Min Ho.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Lee Min Ho's TikTok video reeled in comments with emojis that functions as attitude signal, attitude enhancer, illocutionary force modifier, humor, irony, emotion signal, emotion parallel, and emotion intensity enhancer. Each function is discussed below.

Attitude Signal

Emojis can be used to help indicate the propositional attitude that underlies a speech or utterance, making it easier to identify (Yus, 2014). In the TikTok comments directed at Lee Min Ho, some emojis demonstrate the function of signaling attitude. Here is one of the examples.

Data L.4

“Aduhh babang azarine lewat mulu 😊”

(Oh dear, this Azarine guy keeps on showing up 😊)

In TikTok, users scroll through their for-you-page and see TikTok videos catered towards their personal preferences and interests. Occasionally, an advertisement will show up after the users scroll through a video. In Data L.4, the commenter is saying that they keep on getting Lee Min Ho's Azarine advertisement as they scroll through their for-you-page.

The name of the emoji used is the smiling face with hearts emoji, normally used to express a feeling of affection and love. Without the emoji (Data L.4.1), it is not clear if the comment itself has a negative or positive attitude, as it can be seen both negatively and positively. However, as the commenter uses the smiling face with hearts emoji, the comment shows a positive attitude towards Lee Min Ho. The emoji implies that the commenter is happy that they keep on seeing Lee Min Ho in their for-you-page, hence making this comment have a positive attitude.

Attitude Intensity Enhancer

Emoticons can be used to intensify the already existing or conveyed attitude of the utterance. It can intensify the attitude by adding another level (Yus, 2014). Various emojis illustrate the purpose of intensifying attitude in the TikTok comments aimed at Lee Min Ho. The following is an example.

Data L.21

“Ihh jadi pengen beli abang yang iklaninnya 😊”

(Aww, it is making me want to buy the man advertising it 😊)

Data L.21.1 belongs to the second function, which is to enhance the intensity of the already present and expressed attitude. Reading Data L.21 itself without the emoji, it is visibly clear that the comment has a positive attitude towards Lee Min Ho. The commenter says that they want to buy Lee Min Ho instead of the product he is advertising in the video after looking at him from the TikTok advertisement. As the meaning of the comment is positive, the attitude is shown clearly and is already expressed in the comment. Data L.21.1 is called the smiling face with hearts emoji and it is commonly used to express love, which means that Data L.21.1 only enhances the positive attitude shown by the comment.

Illocutionary Force Modifier

Emoticons can be used to reduce or increase the force of a speaking act. It has the power to boost or lower the impact and force of the act inside the utterance (Yus, 2014). Various emojis illustrate the purpose of modifying the force in the TikTok comments aimed at Lee Min Ho. The following is an example.

Data L.40

“Gara gara Minho jadi ba azarine gua selalu kehabisan anj 🥹🙏”
(Because Minho is the BA of Azarine, I keep on missing out 🥹🙏)

Data L.40.1 belongs to the third function, to modify the force of an act. When read by itself, Data L.40 leans more on the negative attitude as they can be seen as complaining that they never get the product that they want since Lee Min Ho is making people, especially his fans, buy all the product that he is advertising until it is sold out. Hence why, the emoji helps modify the force of the act by showing that they are not complaining aggressively, but merely a slight comment that they cannot get the product that they wanted.

Data L.40.1 is the loudly crying face emoji and it can be used to express grief or sadness. As such, even when the emoji itself still amplifies the feelings of frustration, the emoji still helps lessen the force of the comment by turning the attitude from serious into a little bit of humor as the frustration is exaggerated.

Humor

Emoticons can be used to show humor by contradicting the explicit content of the utterance. It indicates that the statement can be taken as a joke rather than to be taken seriously (Yus, 2014). A range of emojis in the TikTok comments about Lee Min Ho functions to show humor. The following is an example.

Data L.13

“Akhirnya suamiku pakai produk yang aku pakai juga 😁”
(Finally, my husband is using the same product the I use as well 😁)

In Data L.13, the commenter is saying they are glad that their husband is finally using the same skincare product as them. The husband in this context is Lee Min Ho, so the commenter is saying that they have been using Azarine's products and they are happy that Lee Min Ho has become the brand ambassador of a brand they like and are currently using. However, the commenter conveys this message by using humor with the help of an emoji. Data L.13.1 is called the grinning face with sweat emoji normally used to express that something is a close call. This emoji might be used to show that the commenter is joking about saying that Lee Min Ho is their husband and that those who read this comment should not take it seriously, as well as implying that there is humor.

Irony

Emoticons can be used to convey a distinct meaning that is the opposite from the actual explicit content of the utterance, it can also show sarcastic content (Yus, 2014). Different emojis in the TikTok comments about Lee Min Ho show irony. The following is an example.

Data L.9

“Udah glow dari sononya 🤩”
Q2(His skin is already glowing since the past 🤩)

Data L.9.1 is called the Moai emoji, which is an emoji of the famous giant stone statues of human figures, it is normally used for expressing a stoic or deadpan expression as well as silliness. Data L.9 is saying that even before becoming a brand ambassador of Azarine, he already had good skin. Although this comment is not necessarily hating on Lee Min Ho with this comment, the commenter does use sarcasm to show irony. The emoji shows irony as the commenter implies that Lee Min Ho does not seem to need the product/brand that he is promoting, which is skin care. Furthermore, according to Filik et al. (2019), sarcasm is one of a way to show irony or is a form of irony itself.

Emotion Signal

Emoticons can be used as a representation to show a person's feelings towards the subject of the utterance or speech (Yus, 2014). Several emojis suggest that the TikTok comments directed towards Lee Min Ho are meant to signal emotion. Below is an example.

Data L.11



“Maa looopppph ”
(My loveeeee )

Data L.11.1, the red heart emoji normally used to express love functions as a way to signal the commenter's emotions. The comment (Data L.11) calls Lee Min Ho as their love, or lover. The emoji is the representation of the commenter's feelings towards the subject of the comment, which is Lee Min Ho himself. So, the red heart emoji represents the love that the commenter feels towards Lee Min Ho. Data L.11.1 does not belong to the eighth function, which is to enhance the already expressed emotion, because in the comment, the feeling of love has not been explicitly expressed by the commenter. The term my love is an endearing nickname used in a relationship and it does not literally mean saying I love you to someone, hence why the red heart emojis here serve as an emotional signal of the commenter.

Parallel Emotion Signal

Emoticons can be used as a representative of someone's emotion or feelings during the event of the utterance or speech (Yus, 2014). Many emojis in Lee Min Ho's TikTok comments reflect the emotions the commenter felt when writing them. Below is an example.

Data L.50

“Bingung mau nikah di Indonesia apa korea soalnya sunscreen samaan sama ayang ”
(Confused on where to get married, Indonesia or Korea, because my sunscreen is matching with my boyfriend )

The comment is very clear at showing that the commenter loves Lee Min Ho, even going as far to talk about marriage with him. Without the emoji, the comment is a normal comment from a fan that they want to marry Lee Min Ho, especially now that they know they use the same sunscreen as him. However, the emoji further tells what the commenter was feeling when they wrote this comment.

The emoji (Data L.50) is called the flushed face emoji, which is normally used to show embarrassment, flattery, affection, admiration, excitement, and many others. However, in this case, the flushed face emoji can mean both excitement or embarrassment, which both are felt by the commenter when writing the comment. The emoji represents the commenter's mixed emotions while writing the comment. It conveys both excitement at using the same skincare as Lee Min Ho and playful embarrassment at joking about marriage with him.

Emotion Intensity Enhancer

Emoticons can be used to further intensify an emotion or feeling that is already expressed in the utterance or speech (Yus, 2014). Several emojis imply that the remarks made on Lee Min Ho's TikTok account are intended to intensify the emotion expressed in the utterance. Here is an example.

Data L.31

“Alhamdulillah akhirnya aku bisa kembaran sunscreen sama ahjussi 🥰🥰😭😭🙏”
(Alhamdulillah finally I can get the same sunscreen as him 🥰🥰😭😭🙏)

The commenter said that they are glad they can finally have the same sunscreen as Lee Min Ho, very glad that they use the phrase Alhamdulillah in their comment. Alhamdulillah means praise God, or thanking God, usually when they appreciate something or imply gratitude. The emoji (Data L.31.3) is called folded hands emoji, usually used when representing prayer, a respectful greeting, and it is mostly used as a thank you emoji. The feeling of thankfulness coincides with the phrase Alhamdulillah, in which the commenter used this phrase to express that they are thankful that they can finally have the same sunscreen as Lee Min Ho. The use of this folded hands emoji intensifies the already mentioned emotion of gratefulness and thankfulness with the use of the phrase Alhamdulillah, hence why Data L.31.3 belongs to the eighth function, to enhance an explicitly said emotion's intensity.

CONCLUSION

This report examines the functions of emojis in TikTok comments on the video of Lee Min Ho as Azarine's brand ambassador by using Yus' (2014) eight-function framework: attitude signal, attitude intensity enhancer, illocutionary force modifier, humor, irony, emotion signal, parallel emotion signal, and emotion intensity enhancer. The study involved collecting 50 comments containing emojis from TikTok video directed towards Lee Min Ho. The TikTok comments were chosen from top to bottom to ensure fairness. The findings show how emojis can help express support and emotions to celebrities.

In the comments section for Lee Min Ho's TikTok video, the emojis were used for attitude signaling, attitude intensity enhancement, illocutionary force modifying, humor, irony, emotion signaling, parallel emotion signaling, and emotion intensity enhancement. The appearance of all the functions proposed by Yus (2014) suggests that fans of Lee Min Ho are very diverse.

In this study, emojis such as 😂, 😏, and 🤔 appeared in comments about Lee Min Ho. These emojis were used to create jokes, sarcasm, or to change the strength of the message. While the demographics of the commenters such as age or location were not measured in this study, the use of these emojis suggests that many TikTok users felt more comfortable using playful or humorous tones when commenting on Lee Min Ho. This idea supports Marko's (2022) explanation that people often adjust their language and emoji use based on who they are talking to. This is a process called linguistic accommodation (Marko, 2022). Since Lee Min Ho is a well-known male actor with a long and established career, fans may see him as a familiar or 'safe' figure, making them feel more comfortable using humor, irony, or sarcasm in their comments.

Emojis related to irony and illocutionary force modifier implies that the stigma of men being involved with feminine products still exists in Indonesia. The use emotion and attitude-related emojis adds another layer of support by reinforcing the positive attitude or

emotion. Such various responses showcase how Indonesian people react to a Korean male brand ambassador advertising a local beauty product. Since skincare is usually seen as a product for women, using a male figure like Lee Min Ho might make the advertisement feel more unique, relaxed, or playful to the audience.

Future research can look at how people use emojis in other online platforms like Instagram or YouTube, or how different types of celebrities (like singers, actors, or influencers) affect the emoji use of their supporters and casual watchers. It may also be interesting to compare how fans from different countries or cultures use emojis, to see how language and social norms influence their choices.

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