

The Korean Wave: Cultural Export and Implications

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HIST484: Globalization Capstone
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Spring 2014

Globalization has allowed for South Korea's economy to blossom over the past 30 years to lift it out of poverty and turn it into an Asian Tiger economy. In addition to having well-known technological products and heavy industry, South Korea has transformed its modern pop culture for export, known as the Korean Wave. The Korean film industry, music industry and online gaming have become very popular in many Asian countries, and its popularity has spread to other continents as well. The term *hallyu* coined by the Taiwanese press for the Korean wave defined it as "the Korean [cold] spell", which best describes its feverish surge in popularity over the last 15 years.¹ The Korean Wave is also summarized as "K-pop" by their fans when referring to South Korea's pop music.² Although this export was only meant to be temporary relief from the 1997 Financial Crisis, the Korean Wave would grow to be South Korea's major contribution to globalized culture. South Korea continues to use *hallyu* as a way to spread its culture abroad and improve its international reputation.

The Korean Wave is rooted in the liberalization of Korean culture in the late 1980s through early 1990s. Social and economic reforms by president Kim Young Sam in the early 1990s threw off the old military regime in favor of popular freedom at home, a diplomatic style of foreign policy and economic reconstruction.³ New social and economic freedoms gave the Korean entertainment industry more artistic capabilities that were previously restricted under past military regimes. South Korea opened up to

¹ Hong Chan-sik, "Korean Wave backlash in Taiwan." *Dong-A*, January 02, 2012. <http://english.donga.com/srv/service.php3?biid=2012010279568> (accessed March 31, 2014).

² Doobo Shim. "Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia." *Media, Culture & Society*. no. 25 (2006): 25-44. <http://ruraleconomics.fib.ugm.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/Doobo-Shim-Hybridity-and-the-rise-of-Korean-popular-culture-in-Asia.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2014).

³ Takuji Katawa, and Yoshiharu Asano. "1994 a big year for South Korea's Kim." *The Daily Yomiuri*, February 24, 1994. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/> (accessed March 29, 2014).

globalization and developed tastes for pop culture during this time.⁴ A liberalization of culture allowed for experimental music and cinema to emerge with a new generation of Korean entertainers.

However, the liberalization of economic policies strained the economy to the point of near collapse in the 1997 Financial Crisis. South Korean society was forced away from a stringent conservative society; as a US investment banker put it at the time of the crisis, “[South Korea] will need a cultural revolution to survive.”⁵ Decades of industrialization and prosperity were halted so suddenly that most Koreans panicked and struggled to adapt to the new economic landscape. Previously, white-collar jobs at big corporations were seen as a ticket to job security. The economic collapse forced Koreans to forgo their rigid Confucian class structure and take lower paying jobs when many were laid off. The foundations of the Korean Wave are found in this panic when South Korea was forced to thoroughly reevaluate its existing corporate culture. In response, Koreans gave their own culture more value and shifted away from manufacturers’ culture.⁶ The abandonment of rigid corporate culture was linked to sustainable modernization that would encourage creativity and entrepreneurship. Small business owners during the economic transition such as Kim Hyoung Hawn felt that “Korean society was headed in the wrong direction [...] this is a healthy correction.”⁷ This revival of Korean culture

⁴ Jae-cheol Moon. "The Meaning of Newness in Korean Cinema: Korean New Wave and After." *Korea Journal* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 36-59. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed April 7, 2014).

⁵ John Burton. "A wounded tiger reluctant to change its stripes: John Burton explains the cultural barriers to economic reform in crisis-torn South Korea." *Financial Times*, November 29, 1997. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/Inacademic/> (accessed March 30, 2014).

⁶ Jonghoe Yang. "The Korean Wave (Hallyu) in East Asia: A Comparison of Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese Audiences Who Watch Korean TV Dramas." *Development and Society*. no. 1 (2012): 103-147. http://isdpr.org/isdpr/publication/journal/41_1/05.pdf (accessed March 30, 2014).

⁷ Donald Macintyre. "Korea Thinks Small." *Time*, April 19, 1999. <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,990777-2,00.html> (accessed April 19, 2014).

allowed for South Korea to develop its own modern culture that was unique from anything that was available in Japan or the West. Differentiating its own culture made Korean pop culture a competitor to other industrialized societies in East Asia. Although Korean culture borrowed some aspects of Western and Japanese pop culture, it was able to forge its own identity as a result of economic crisis.

In addition to being an economic export, the Korean Wave was also meant to preserve Korean culture from the demands of the International Monetary Fund's bailout. The IMF bailout forced South Korea to liberalize imports from Japan after the 1997 Financial Crisis, raising colonial-era fears that the Japanese would flood its products and cultural onto South Korean society.⁸ These fears never materialized or had much effect on Korean society, but led Korea's Cultural Ministry to invest heavily on its entertainment industry. A large array of cultural technology departments were created in South Korea, with 300 departments formed that offered programs and scholarships to eligible students.⁹ These departments were established at existing South Korean universities to tailor its own pop culture for export. The Ministry emphasized cultural export as a primary aspect of economic development. Even in the early days of the Korean Wave, efforts were made to make South Korean culture an international product. In 1999, the two popular pop groups SES and H.O.T. performed alongside Michael Jackson at a charity concert in Seoul that was broadcasted throughout Asia. Both groups were selected by Korea's largest ad company Cheil Communications due to their

⁸ John Burton. "South Korea to end Japanese import ban." *Financial Times*, June 30, 1999. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopic/academic. (accessed April 7, 2014).

⁹ Norimitsu Onishi. "South Korea adds culture to its export power." June 29, 2005. <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/28/world/asia/28iht-korea.html> (accessed May 1, 2014).

“potential [...] to launch themselves into the international ranks of top popstars.”¹⁰ The global promotion of Korean pop culture was an intentional effort led by the Korean Cultural Ministry and Korean entertainment companies to export programming.

South Korea’s music industry flourished amidst the crisis. Many of South Korea’s most popular pop performing artists emerged during these years. The pop dance groups SES and H.O.T. were formed in 1997 and were extremely popular with teenage Korean youth when they first began performing. H.O.T.’s first album *High Five of Teenagers* sold a record 1.5 million copies.¹¹ Their performance was known for its style of dance music that was about love and compassion. Korean pop music groups centered on large dance groups that acted as performers in addition to singers, captivating their audience with complex dancing routines. This style of performance would set the template for the future of K-pop that distinguished it from other modern pop cultures. The style of music was distinct to anything found in the modernized world and was uniquely Korean.

K-pop industry capitalized on these images for their domestic “tween” demographic, marketing everything from H.O.T. perfumes for teens and H.O.T. beverages in ways similar to the marketing of Western pop artists overseas.¹² The ability to market these pop artists outside of music sales transformed K-pop into a versatile lifestyle product. The success of the Korean Wave also helped revitalize other aspects of the entertainment industry that were affected by the economic crisis such as cable TV. MTV’s partnership with South Korean music channel M.Net helped tailor MTV

¹⁰ S.D. Kortim. “S.E.S. and H.O.T. to Star with Michael Jackson.” *The Korea Times*, June 6, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>? (accessed March 29, 2014).

¹¹ Keith Howard. “It’s all good clean fun.” *The Times Educational Supplement*, October 1, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>? (accessed March 31, 2014).

¹² “Tweens Marketing’ Opens Yet Another Niche Market.” *The Korea Times*, November 29, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>? (accessed 2014/04/02).

television programming to South Korean tastes. The deal allowed for MTV to market South Korean artists overseas to other Asian countries, which would turn the Korean Wave into an international product with a large distribution network.¹³ The arrangement between MTV and M.Net became so popular that by 2000, M.Net made its own ventures in these lucrative MTV Asia markets and no longer needed MTV's partnership to help promote the Korean Wave.¹⁴ The Korean entertainment industry's ability to branch itself outside of MTV reflected the growing ability of Korean programming to independently promote itself. Having autonomy from foreign media networks allowed Korea to strengthen the reach of its own broadcasting networks as competitors.

The Korean Wave ushered in a new era for the Korean film industry. Before the 1990s, Korean films were made as political statements against the military regime (Moon 2006). Films such as *Berlin Report* and *Black Republic* were filmed to be sobering depictions of atrocities committed by the South Korean government. By 1990s, a new style of Korean cinema emerged with a new generations of directors that made films that were precipitously different from the typical political statement making style that was previously common. Korean directors began making movies that "reflected the indigenous culture" to target both the domestic and international markets.¹⁵ The film *Sopyonje* (1993) examined the impact of foreign influences in modern Korea and *Marriage Story* (1992) examined South Korea's yuppie culture.¹⁶ These films had topics

¹³ Edward Kim. "MTV, m.net set out together to infuse vitality in ailing cable TV industry." *The Korean Herald* January 22, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>? (accessed March 29, 2014)

¹⁴ Sutton, 2006.

¹⁵ Paul Harris. "It's Korean film making waves now." *The Age*, December 6, 1994, sec. Late Edition. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>? (accessed March 31, 2014).

¹⁶ Ibid.

that were more pertinent to South Korean daily life in comparison to the political statements previous films were trying to make.

These movies also tried to incorporate newer filming practices that coincided with South Korea's advances in the technology and electronics industry. Films such as *The Quiet Family* (1998) by director Kim Jee-woon used more lighting, set design and visual effects than previous South Korean films and balanced different genres of film in a single movie.¹⁷ South Korean cinema broke away from the realistic indie style of film making and shifted towards new themes that encouraged the use of modern techniques and experimentation. This era of "New Korean Cinema" after 1997 popularized many South Korean movie directors such as Lee Chang-dong, Kim Jee-woon and Bong Joon-ho for their unique modern styles of directing.¹⁸

By 1999, economic fallout caused by the 1997 Financial Crisis forced Asian countries to turn to other entertainment sources that were cheaper alternatives to pricey Japanese and American programs.¹⁹ South Korean programming was favored due to its substantially lower costs but were still of similar quality in comparison to other Western/Japanese programs. In China, the importation of Korean drama was seen as diversifying their content away from Japanese sources that were Asia's primary sources prior to the crisis. In 1997, Korean soap operas made up only 5.8 percent of Chinese soap opera imports; by 1999, this figured swelled up to 29.5 percent of all content, making it

¹⁷ Darcy Paquet. *New Korean Cinema: Breaking the Waves*. London: Wallflower, 2009.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Doobo Shim. "Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia." *Media, Culture & Society*. no. 25 (2006): 25-44. <http://ruraleconomics.fib.ugm.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/Doobo-Shim-Hybridity-and-the-rise-of-Korean-popular-culture-in-Asia.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2014).

the leading country of importation.²⁰ Korean soap operas were also easier on their copyright restrictions that made their content more accessible in comparison to Japanese vendors. Even though there were some examples of Korean pop culture abroad before 1997, the economic crisis propelled the popularity of South Korean programming across East Asia.

The Korean Wave eventually made its way throughout Asia and was favored over Western and Japanese programming due to its cultural appeal to traditional East Asian countries. They were better at respecting the cultural norms in Asian countries and tailored their content to East Asian consumers. The Korean pop stars differed from Western pop stars in the way they acted and dressed, which often was much more conservative in comparison to their Western peers. Lee Soo-man, founder of Korea's largest entertainment industry SM Entertainment, described how "to be successful, you need two factors. One is uniqueness and the other is universality."²¹ The Korean entertainment industries made Korean pop appealing to a wide variety of people worldwide, particularly in Asia. The content was unique enough to be popular in Asian countries, yet universal enough to not upset more conservative Asian societies.

In the early days of K-pop, companies pushed performers to look and sound innocent, such as banning tattoos, necklaces and earrings for men and no suggestive styles of dancing.²² This image was modern enough to appeal to the youth, but conservative enough to gain the support of adults. Violation of the rules could have led to

²⁰ Eun-mi , Byun. "Korean soap operas gaining popularity in Asia." *The Korean Herald*, July 21, 1999. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.. (accessed April 30, 2014).

²¹ Chung Min-uck. "Lee reveals know-how of hallyu." *The Korea Times*, January 12, 2011. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2014/04/201_88764.html (accessed April 29, 2014).

²² Keith Howard. "It's all good clean fun." *The Times Educational Supplement*, October 1, 1999. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/?> (accessed March 31, 2014).

blacklisting of the artists from the industry. The conservative styles of Korean pop stars were favored in Korean television programming as well. In the mid-1990s, Korean dramas in China featured talented acting with attractive, likable actors and actresses.²³ They were set in modern societies and appealed to very general themes, which made them easy to relate with Chinese audiences. In comparison, Western programming and Japanese programming were more focused on taboo Asian subjects such as sex and violence, which alienated more traditional Asian societies due to its explicit content.

The Korean Wave received government subsidies that promoted its development. Hallyu's popularity exploded across Asia in the 2000s, with many pop cultures in nearby Asian countries emulating South Korea's. The Korean television programming exports rose from \$12.7 million in 1999 to \$37.5 million in 2003.²⁴ In 2004, the hit Korean drama *Winter Sonata* became very popular in Japan, the first modernized country embrace Korean pop culture.²⁵ Hallyu's popularity in Japan attested to the speed by which the Korean Wave proliferated. Before the release of *Winter Sonata*, Korean programs were largely unknown in Japan; within 2 years, it became the largest, most profitable market for Korean pop artists.²⁶

The ability to secure a market in a modernized country made hallyu a truly global phenomenon. Its appeal to modernized countries gave it a new market in addition to

²³ Kim, H. Hyun-key (2013). The Korean Wave: An Asian Reaction to Western-Dominated Globalization. *Perspectives On Global Development & Technology*, 12(1/2), 135-151. doi:10.1163/15691497-12341247

²⁴ Doobo Shim. "Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia." *Media, Culture & Society*. no. 25 (2006): 25-44. <http://ruraleconomics.fib.ugm.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/Doobo-Shim-Hybridity-and-the-rise-of-Korean-popular-culture-in-Asia.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2014).

²⁵ Jonghoe Yang. "The Korean Wave (Hallyu) in East Asia: A Comparison of Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese Audiences Who Watch Korean TV Dramas." *Development and Society*. no. 1 (2012): 103-147. http://isdpr.org/isdpr/publication/journal/41_1/05.pdf (accessed March 30, 2014).

²⁶ Anthony Fiola. "Japanese Women Catch the 'Korean Wave'." *Washington Post*, August 31, 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/30/AR2006083002985.html><http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/30/AR2006083002985.html> (accessed April 28, 2014).

strongholds it already held in developing countries. The Japanese music market is the largest market after the United States, accounting for 22% of all global music sales.²⁷ The Korean music industry tailored their business strategy specifically to conquer the Japanese market, such as by singing in Japanese in order to appeal to the country's listeners and commercial endorsements. Japanese fans of K-pop enjoy the overall sophisticated and adult feel of Korean performers, with fan Kaori Kitakata stating that "Korean girl bands look more professional. Japanese singers are more like the girl next door [...] but Korean singers are better trained and more sophisticated."²⁸ The popularity of Korean programming in Japan has changed long-standing stereotypes about Koreans among Japanese hallyu fans. Before hallyu took hold in Japan, Koreans were historically looked down upon in Japanese society. With the popularity of hallyu, Japanese fans such as 26-year old woman Kazumi Yoshimura felt "South Koreans are so romantic, not at all like Japanese guys..."²⁹ Positive depictions of Koreans help boost Korea's image abroad. Being popular in a modernize country means that the Korean Wave was able to compete alongside existing foreign competitors and find a niche in the existing pop culture.

The direction of hallyu heavily depends on the large entertainment companies that exist in South Korean business. In K-pop, the large majority of pop stars are promoted by one of the "Big 3" Korean entertainment companies: SM Entertainment, JYG

²⁷ , Justin McCurry. "Girls' Generation lead K-pop invasion of Japan." *The Guardian*, September 30, 2011. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/sep/30/japanese-pop-girls-generation>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Anthony Fiola. "Japanese Women Catch the 'Korean Wave'." *Washington Post*, August 31, 2006. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/30/AR2006083002985.html><http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/30/AR2006083002985.html> (accessed April 28, 2014).

Entertainment and YG Entertainment.³⁰ These companies act as intermediaries to produce talent, with their large budgets often leading the direction of K-pop. The Big 3 are very profitable overall and use their economic power to dominate the Korean music industry. SM Entertainment is the largest and most profitable of these three companies. In 2013, its market capitalization was \$660 million dollars with \$225 million dollars in revenue, an 82% increase over the last year.³¹ These companies choose which individuals to promote as pop artists and provide the training and funding for new stars. The big entertainment companies are part of South Korea's system of chaebols, Korea's system of business conglomerates that largely run the South Korean economy. Being endorsed by one of these companies is usually a necessary factor in becoming popular in K-pop due to the significant financial and promotional backing artists receive.

Korea's Big 3 entertainment companies recruit young potential pop stars from all over the world. These companies are highly selective with the acts that they want to promote and expect exceptional abilities from potential candidates. They usually select young girls between ages 12 to 19 with expectations that they will be able to master foreign languages, learn complex dance routines and be physically beautiful.³² The Korean entertainment industry's global recruitment philosophy has brought in international performers that form groups with other Koreans, particularly Koreans living overseas. The Korean Wave's formation of the internationally acclaimed girl group *Girls'*

³⁰ Solee Shin and Lanu Kim. "Organizing K-Pop: Emergence and Market Making of Large Korean Entertainment Houses, 1980–2010." *East Asia: An International Quarterly*. no. 4 (2013): 255-272. 10.1007/s12140-013-9200-0 (accessed April 7, 2014).

³¹ "Korea's S.M. Entertainment: The Company That Created K-Pop," *Forbes Asia*. July 31, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesasia/2013/07/31/koreas-s-m-entertainment-the-company-that-created-k-pop/> (accessed April 16, 2014).

³² Seabrook, John. "Factory Girls: Cultural technology and the making of K-pop." *The New Yorker*, October 8, 2012. http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/10/08/121008fa_fact_seabrook?currentPage=all (accessed April 30, 2014).

Generation included two Korean American singers who were born and raised in California.³³ Integration of Chinese performers has been popular as well, with popular boy group *Super Junior* having a Chinese member in the group.³⁴ Global recruitment gives the Big 3 companies access to a large talent pool that can be tailored to the international market. These companies' willingness to promote foreign talent gives the Korean Wave an international flair that can appeal to many different countries.

In the context of globalization, South Korea has been able to use this popularity as a diplomatic and economic tool. The popularity of Korean superstars in foreign countries helps them promote South Korean global brands like Samsung and LG.³⁵ In terms of diplomatic relations, these pop stars have been used as cultural exchanges of good will between South Korea and countries where Korean Wave is most popular. In Vietnam, it has given the Vietnamese people a model for economic prosperity. The Vietnamese see historical similarities with Korea as being smaller countries that were culturally reliant to China. South Korea's rapid development from poverty to modernity over the last four decades inspires Vietnam to be able to mirror its economic prosperity.³⁶

The Korean Wave's popularity is greatest among teenagers and young adults in Vietnam and has spawned a large fan base, particularly in urban areas. Hoang Kim Phuong, a 25 year-old Vietnamese woman from Hanoi attributed the Korean Wave's success to cultural similarities: "What makes Korean culture so special to the Vietnamese

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Priscilla Wu. "7 Korean Idols Who Aren't That Korean." Ningin.com. <http://blog.ningin.com/2012/04/08/7-korean-idols-who-arent-all-that-korean/> (accessed April 23, 2014).

³⁵ Seunghwa Han. "The Rise of K-Pop and Korea's Obsession With Plastic Surgery." *Highbrow Magazine*, January 10, 2013. <http://highbrowmagazine.com/1936-rise-k-pop-and-koreas-obsession-plastic-surgery> (accessed March 5, 2014).

³⁶ Nguyen Ngoc. "HALLYU AND MODERN VIETNAMESE CULTURE." (2013). <http://qlkh.hcmussh.edu.vn/3cms/?cmd=130&art=1365144852314&cat=1363567554946> (accessed March 5, 2014).

is that it's similar to ours. It's not too crazy or out there. It's more adaptable, more practical."³⁷ Korean pop culture is generally seen as more applicable to Vietnamese culture in comparison to other cultural imports from other nations. The similarities have led to cooperation between both countries' large-scale film industries to create new content that appeals to both countries. The film *Bride from Hanoi* by South Korean television network SBS and Vietnamese cast soap opera *Mui Ggo Gai* by large Korean media companies FNC and CJ Entertainment were joint developments that were popular in both countries.³⁸ This positive view of Korean culture by the Vietnamese public has spawned economic and political ties between South Korean and Vietnam. In 2008, South Korea was Vietnam's leading direct foreign investor and international marriage destination, with one in six rural Korean men married to a Vietnamese woman.³⁹

The Vietnamese have been very receptive to Korean pop music well. Vietnamese teenagers have created fanatical followings of K-pop groups such as *Big Bang* and *Super Junior*, Korean dance groups that have gone platinum in Korea and abroad. Vietnamese youth are so enthusiastic about Korean pop stars that when Korea sent an envoy of popular K-pop dance groups in 2012, many teenagers fainted and cried when they arrived off of the plane.⁴⁰ Despite the strong support of Vietnam's most passionate fans, live concerts in Vietnam are still lacking in comparison to other Southeast Asian countries. Vietnam is still a relatively poor country that makes it difficult to sell out event tickets to high-priced Korean pop stars. SM Entertainment stated that "[Did] not see business

³⁷ Aviva West. "The Korean Wave 'will never die' in Vietnam." *The Korean Herald*, February 14, 2008. <http://www.avivawest.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/10/korea-herald.pdf> (accessed April 13, 2014).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Thanh Van. "Kpop 'intrudes' Vietnam's culture in 2012." *Vietnam Net Bridge*, July 12, 2012. <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/special-reports/55561/kpop--intrudes--vietnam-sculture-in-2012.html>. (accessed April 30, 2014).

potential in Vietnam” after ticket sales were below expectation despite deep discounts.⁴¹ The concerts may not have been popular due to Vietnam’s relatively low income, but the Korean presence served as a cultural envoy to Vietnam. The Korean Cultural Ministry does not aim to make a direct profit off of ticket sales – it is meant as an act of diplomacy to promote Korean-Vietnamese ties and boost the Korean image within Vietnam. A positive Korean image maintains Vietnamese public support for Korean economic investments, which amounted to \$33 billion in 2013.⁴² Such cultural ties reinforce the relationship the two countries share as a result of South Korea’s cultural export. The relationship that Korea and Vietnam share allows for Korea to improve on its reputation in the region as a peaceful economic power despite South Korea’s involvement in the Vietnam War.

The Korean Wave has developed other sectors of South Korea’s economy that are indirectly related to the entertainment industry. The emphasis on vanity has spawned fast growing Korean cosmetic companies to meet the demand of Asian consumers who want to look like their favorite K-pop stars. Cosmetic company The Face Shop started out as one store in 2003 to market low cost makeup to Korean Wave consumers; by early 2006, it had grown into South Korea’s third largest cosmetics company with branches throughout Asia and Asian American enclaves in the United States.⁴³

The Face Shop appealed to many Asian women by aggressively marketing their products with Korean movies stars such as Kwon Sang-woo, who helped promote their

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Doanh Nhan. "The South Korean wave in Vietnam." *Vietnam Net Bridge*, September 27, 2013. <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/business/85320/the-south-korean-wave-in-vietnam.html> (accessed April 29, 2014).

⁴³ "Face Shop to export Korean beauty." *Financial Times* (London, England). April 7, 2006. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic Date Accessed: 2014/04/19

products even though he was an actor that did not use these feminine cosmetic products. By 2012, the number of cosmetic exports reached \$1.1 billion and surpassed imports.⁴⁴ The rapid development also improved the quality of their cosmetics while keeping their prices low in comparison to the improvement in quality.

Popularity of Korean entertainment stars among those who follow the Korean Wave allows these stars to promote Korean products for sales overseas beyond the language barrier. The popularity of the Korean Wave overseas allows for these companies to expand into markets for further growth, as the domestic market's size pales in comparison to countries with the strongest K-wave presence like Taiwan, China and Southeast Asia. Cultural exports that were directly linked to the Korean entertainment industry amounted to \$4.2 billion dollars in 2011, up from \$2.6 billion dollars in 2009.⁴⁵ Continued success of hallyu at promoting Korean products has led to greater global brand recognition of Korean companies outside of the entertainment industry. Samsung has used these promotions to bring up its brand value to second place globally, behind only Apple.⁴⁶ Trends that are started by South Korean entertainers are copied globally where the Korean Wave is most popular.

The Korean Wave has helped expand South Korea's tourism industry, with many international fans of Korean dramas and pop music flocking to Korea to see the studios and cultural sites. In 2013, tourism contributed 5.8 percent to South Korea's economy,

⁴⁴ Kim Ji-soo. "N. America out of reach for hallyu." March 12, 2014. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2014/03/386_153219.html (accessed April 2, 2014).

⁴⁵ Oliver, Christian. "K-pop woos the west; South Korea; Seoul's entertainment industry is raising its cultural profile and boosting export earnings." *Financial Times (London, England)*. February 11, 2012 Saturday . Date Accessed: 2014/04/22. www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic.

⁴⁶ Anthony Fensom. "'Korean Wave' Just The Start For Asian Brands." *The Diplomat*, March 15, 2014. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/03/korean-wave-just-the-start-for-asian-brands/> (accessed April 20, 2014).

taking in \$68 billion.⁴⁷ The expansion of tourism is expected to continue over the next decade and is linked to the growth of the middle class in Asian countries where the Korean Wave is popular. Many of these tourists are from China, which overtook Japan last year in the number of travelers to Korea. South Korea has set up a VIP rewards program that allows for multiple visa entries as long as the Chinese citizen has spent \$30,000 on Korean goods or has \$46,000 dollars in a Korean bank account.⁴⁸ These incentives are meant to encourage Chinese tourists to spend money in South Korea with frequent visits to entice high-spending tourists to come back. Many of these purchased products are popularized by Korean entertainers, creating enthusiasm among Chinese fans for these products.

Hallyu has allowed for South Korea's culture to seep into North Korea despite efforts to prevent the spread of pop and film by that country. It represents South Korea's growing influence in East Asia in comparison to the poverty experienced by most of North Korea's people. The influence of modern Korean culture threatens to undermine the North Korean government's hold over its people, which is "terrified of the ideas North Koreans are getting about the outside world."⁴⁹ These DVDs also fetch comparatively high prices in comparison to American DVDs due to the high risk of being executed if caught selling the DVD. However, efforts to reduce the spread of viewers within North Korea have been less successful. The prison time for watching South

⁴⁷ "World Travel & Tourism Council." WTTC. <http://www.wttc.org/news-media/news-archive/2014/south-koreas-travel-tourism-sector-set-outperform-economy-over-n/> (accessed April 30, 2014).

⁴⁸ Jason Chow. "Korea to Chinese Tourists: Shop Here, Get a Visa." *The Wall Street Journal*, February 6, 2014. <http://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2014/02/06/korea-to-chinese-tourists-shop-here-get-a-visa/> (accessed April 30, 2014).

⁴⁹ Geoffery Cain. "Soap-Opera Diplomacy: North Koreans Crave Banned Videos." *Time*, October 29, 2009. [orld/article/0,8599,1933096,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1933096,00.html) (accessed April 13, 2014).

Korean content had to be reduced from five years in a prison camp to two months of unpaid labor because the sheer number of offenders made it difficult to fully prosecute them.⁵⁰ This may potentially bring about long-term political change in the country if the depictions of wealth in South Korean television dramas cause North Koreans to question their poor living standards and oppressive government. Some North Koreans that see South Korea's wealth in soap operas have defected in hopes of a better life in South Korea, such as 33 defectors who were convinced to defect after seeing South Korea's affluence in the series *Winter Sonata*.⁵¹

Over the last few years, the Korean Wave is beginning to make strides in popularity outside of East Asia. South Korea's pop cultural export is best depicted in the surge of the song "Gangnam Style" by K-pop artist Psy. When it was released in late 2012, it managed to be the most viewed video on YouTube, with a record 1 billion views by the end of that year.⁵² Hallyu's ability to extend its reach beyond Asia is a significant leap that makes Korean pop culture in competition with Western culture overseas. Promotion of K-pop has been particularly strong in the United States. Korean entertainment companies have prioritized breaking into the US market. The popularity of the Korean Wave in Western countries has been strong enough to launch concerts that feature current K-pop stars. Recent efforts by the Korean entertainment industry to branch out to other countries include trips to Western countries, such as a concert that

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kanga Kang. "Chinese Overtake Americans as Top Medical Tourists in Korea." *The Wall Street Journal*. <http://blogs.wsj.com/korearealtime/2014/02/19/chinese-overtake-americans-as-top-medical-tourists-in-korea/> (accessed April 24, 2014).

⁵² Misty Harris. "The year in viral video, from Kony to K-pop; Gangnam Style, on pace to hit one billion views, tops YouTube's roundup for 2012." *The Gazette (Montreal)*, Final edition, sec. Postmedia News, December 26, 2012. <http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/>? (accessed March 4, 2014).

featured K-pop's biggest artists and attracted 40,000 fans to Times Square.⁵³ The popular dance group *Girls' Generation* even appeared on The Late Show with David Letterman in 2012 and performed their hit single "The Boys" to promote their new album.⁵⁴ They also appeared on the Kelly Ripa Show, becoming one of the few Korean singers to make national US television. These appearances help promote the worldwide popularity of Korean culture to the United States, which is often reluctant to adopt foreign pop culture.

The Korean Wave has expanded overseas the last few years via cultural interest groups in non-Asian countries. In Canada, hallyu's popularity has caught on with many Korean interest groups such as "6 Kanadians Girls", where most of the members are not Korean.⁵⁵ Group leader Pricilla Miranda described her group as "...the K-pop dance group that has no Asians", with the "K" in "Kanadian" representing the group's interest in Korean culture⁵⁶. Enthusiasm for Korean pop music is particularly strong in Latin America among teenagers. K-pop is seen as unique and uplifting in comparison to Latin pop music. Colombian K-pop fan Jenii Ramirez felt that its appeal came from singers' "dedication and are taught how to fight in life, understanding that dreams are attainable."⁵⁷ The Korean music industry has also capitalized on the popularity by

⁵³ David. "THE KOREAN INVASION New Yorkers are screaming for the new wave of pop stars." *Daily News (New York)*, sec. Your New York, October 23, 2011. <http://www.nydailynews.com/entertainment/music-arts/korean-invasion-new-yorkers-screaming-new-wave-pop-stars-article-1.965706> (accessed March 4, 2014).

⁵⁴ Jeff Benjamin. "Girls' Generation Makes Big U.S. Debut on 'Letterman': Watch." *Billboard.com*. <http://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/viral-videos/508237/girls-generation-makes-big-us-debut-on-letterman-watch> (accessed April 20, 2014).

⁵⁵ Aileen Donnelly. "Riding the Korean Wave; Latest cultural trend driving Kanadians crazy for music, dance moves." *National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)*. April 7, 2012 www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic. Accessed: 2014/04/07.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Anjani Trivedi. "Forget Politics, Let's Dance: Why K-Pop Is a Latin American Smash." *Time*, August 1, 2013. <http://world.time.com/2013/08/01/forget-politics-lets-dance-why-k-pop-is-a-latin-american-smash/> (accessed April 20, 2014).

scheduling concerts in Latin America, such as the visits by the *Big Bang* and *Super Junior* dance groups.⁵⁸

These Korean interest groups have grown especially popular with East Asians overseas who have embraced hallyu in similar fashion to how hallyu became popular in East Asia. Asians living in Western countries see the Korean Wave as representative of their Asian identities. In Vienna, a study showed that Taiwanese, Chinese and Japanese citizens living in Europe viewed the consumption of hallyu's products was a way to "nourish their cultural roots by consuming Korean pop culture."⁵⁹ The Korean Wave represents a transnational pan-Asian identity for Asians living in Europe and North America. This construction of identity unites Asian expatriates and overseas Asian communities despite cultural differences among the many Asian cultures.

However, progress in Western countries has been slow due to the strong pop cultures that already exist in these societies. South Korea's pop culture is also different from other Western societies because of its rapid rise to modernity. The culture that developed in South Korea over the last 40 years appeals more to other rapidly industrialization nations instead of the gradual transitions of Western countries.⁶⁰ This factor alienates Westerners away from hallyu, but attracts rapidly developing nations such as China and Vietnam due to similar cultural experiences. Big name Korean entertainment companies have struggled as a result of low popularity in Western countries. JYP Entertainment (one of K-pop's big three promoters) was forced to close

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Sang-Yeon Loise Sung. 2012. "The Role of Hallyu in the Construction of East Asian Regional Identity in Vienna." *European Journal Of East Asian Studies* 11, no. 1: 155-171. Academic Search Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed April 6, 2014).

⁶⁰ Kim Ji-soo. "N. America out of reach for hallyu." March 12, 2014. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2014/03/386_153219.html (accessed April 2, 2014).

down its US subsidiary JYP Creative when it was deemed unprofitable.⁶¹ The failure of K-pop to catch on with US consumers shows the difficulties that it faces outside its traditional East Asian market. JYP's leading girl group Wonder Girls was hugely popular overseas, but remained unpopular despite tie-ups with popular US pop artists such as Akon. The inability to gain strong followings among Western audiences signals the cultural difficulties that the Korean Wave continues to face.

Hallyu has created some tensions in some countries that have historical rivalries with Korea. Korea has had long-term animosity with its regional neighbors, particularly with Japan. Although hallyu content has lifted the perception of Koreans overall, animosity by the Japanese continues to exist despite attempts at cultural sharing.⁶² There have been protests against K-pop culture that sparked anti-Korean rallies across Japan every weekend. Some of these protests have even reached into the thousands, with a protest in 2011 that had 6,000 participants that protested what they saw as "biased programming" of Korean shows.⁶³ These protests were comparable in size to the outcry against the Fukushima nuclear disaster earlier that year, which shows how strong anti-hallyu sentiment is in Japan. One Korean film promoter described his business as being in "a moribund state" due to Japan's relatively sluggish economy and boycotts on Korean Wave programming.⁶⁴ Japanese nationalist groups criticize the Korean Wave as a cultural invasion on their country. South Korea's continued rise in economic and political

⁶¹ Jackson, Julie. "Park Jin-young reveals closure of U.S. operations." *Korean Herald*, March 24, 2013. <http://m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130324000279> (Accessed April 30, 2014).

⁶² Ingyu Oh. "New politico-cultural discourse in East Asia?." *Changing Power Relations in Northeast Asia: Implications for Relations Between Japan* (): 99-118.

⁶³ *The Chosun Ilbo*, "Japanese March Against Korean Soap Operas," August 22, 2011. http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/08/22/2011082200679.html

⁶⁴ Si-soo Park. "Anti-hallyu voices growing in Japan." *The Korea Times*, , sec. Culture, February 21, 2014. http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2014/02/386_152045.html (accessed March 5, 2014).

power has been met with suspicion. Popular Japanese actors have spoken out against the overabundance of Korean programming in Japanese society, with actor Sousuke Takaoka stating, “Japanese people want traditional Japanese programs.”⁶⁵ Japanese people who are against Korean influences are fueled by their jealousy towards Korea’s meteoric rise in worldwide prominence while Japanese power wanes, particularly in East Asia. Before South Korea became affluent in 2000s, the only two countries with significant cultural influence in East Asia were China and Japan. Since the beginning of the Korean Wave in the 1990s, Japanese pop cultural influence in Asia has declined with the overall trend.⁶⁶ The outcry against the Korean Wave by Japanese nationalists is part of the larger regional rivalry that exists between Japan and Korea.

The popularity of the Korean Wave has stifled the entertainment industries in other countries. Hallyu is accused of diluting the cultures it comes in contact with and is seen as an attack on their traditional societies. The demand for Korean entertainment is so high in these countries that their own programs cannot compete. The early 2014 success of the Korean soap opera *My Love From the Star* got 2.5 billion views online, which raised questions within the Chinese Communist Party of its inability to create similar successful programming.⁶⁷ Politburo standing committee member Wang Qishan accused Korean entertainment of “using TV dramas to disseminate Chinese traditional culture”

⁶⁵ "Anti-Korean Wave in Japan turns political." *CNN.com*. Cable News Network, 9 Apr. 2011. <http://travel.cnn.com/seoul/life/anti-korean-wave-japan-turns-political-141304>. (Accessed April 27, 2014).

⁶⁶ Jieh-Yung Lo. "South Korea, Japan: a reignited rivalry." March 28, 2013. <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Korea/KOR-01-280313.html> (accessed April 28, 2014).

⁶⁷ William Wan. "Chinese officials debate why China can't make a soap opera as good as South Korea's." *The Washington Post*, March 7, 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/chinese-officials-debate-why-china-cant-make-a-soap-opera-as-good-as-south-koreas/2014/03/07/94b86678-a5f3-11e3-84d4-e59b1709222c_story.html?tid=pm_world_pop (accessed April 20, 2014).

and branded it as “the exact sublimation of Chinese traditional culture.”⁶⁸ Harsh criticism by top officials shows animosity against South Korea as a result of China’s inability to create a rivaling entertainment industry to the Korean Wave. Similar responses can be found in different countries where the Korean Wave is popular, such as Cambodia. Although Cambodian youth have been very receptive to Korean content, some are still weary about the extreme styles of hallyu. A young Cambodian businesswoman said she “didn’t want to look like one of those Korean girls. They’re too fake.”⁶⁹ Cambodians criticize how Korean content has eclipsed Cambodian content with shallow pop culture with no respect for their existing traditions.

More complications arise with South Korea’s rapid economic development, which have made hallyu a reflection of South Korea’s excessive consumer culture. Plastic surgery on eyelids for larger eyes has become popular with children as young as middle school, raising concerns over social self-image.⁷⁰ This was initially due to a highly competitive workforce after the 1997 Financial Crisis, which forced many to focus on appearance in order to secure employment. An emphasis on vanity and excess has caused suspicion over the social implications of hallyu and whether it is trending towards Westernizing Korean culture instead of developing a unique modern Korean identity.

The Korean Wave has made South Korea the country with the most plastic surgeries per capita, with roughly 1 out of 5 women in Seoul admitting to have undergone

⁶⁸ Darren Wee. "China’s anti-graft tsar has something to confess: ‘I watch popular Korean TV dramas’." *South China Morning Post*, March 6, 2014. <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1441841/chinas-anti-graft-tsar-has-something-confess-i-watch-popular-korean-tv> (accessed April 20, 2014).

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Cain. "Whatever happened to the Korean Wave?." *Global Post*, January 14, 2013. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/culture-lifestyle/entertainment/130111/korean-wave-k-pop-south-korea-psy-gangnam-style>

⁷⁰ Min Han. "The New Korean Wave catches a tailwind of popularity in China." *POSRI Chindia Quarterly*. (2012): 15-20. https://www.posri.re.kr/issue/download_ajax/file_id/4450 (accessed March 5, 2014).

cosmetic surgery.⁷¹ Korean women often go under the knife in order to look like Korean celebrities. However, the celebrities they are trying to emulate go for body features that make them appear more Westernized, such as double eyelids that widen eyes and V-shaped jawbones. The Internet and widespread proliferation of multimedia have caused celebrities to be extremely weary of their bodily imperfections and cause them to turn to cosmetic surgery to try to enhance their appearances.⁷² Foreigner characteristics are desired in order to emulate Caucasian women and comments to these women that they're "unique" instead of "Western" can be deemed offensive.⁷³ The Korean Wave has unintentionally created an identity crisis among Korean women who are increasingly weary of their natural looks and obsess on a Western standard of beauty that many Asian people cannot achieve naturally.

Its global influence has led to similar identity issues in Asian countries where Korean pop culture is widespread. Its popularity among upper class Chinese youth has helped launched South Korea's plastic surgery boom. Manager Lee Chang-mi at Regen Medical Group, a cosmetic surgery group, noted how "Chinese patients come prepared with an idealized set image" that "quickly follow the changing looks in drama, music and fashion."⁷⁴ Chinese consumers also see Korean plastic surgeons as better trained than their Chinese counterparts for the same surgeries, such as double eyelid surgery and nose enhancements similar to K-pop stars. Approximately 32,000 Chinese tourists traveled to

⁷¹ Choe Sang-Hun. "In South Korea, Plastic Surgery Comes Out of the Closet." November 3, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/04/world/asia/in-south-korea-plastic-surgery-comes-out-of-the-closet.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed April 15, 2014).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ *Seoul Fashion Week - K-Pop to Double Eyelid Surgery*. Film. Directed by Charlet Duboc. Montreal : Vice, 2012. <http://www.vice.com/fashion-week-internationale/seoul-fashion-week-part-3> (accessed April 30, 2014).

⁷⁴ Joel Lee. "Korea offers makeovers Chinese cannot resist." *The Korea Times*, April 13, 2014. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/04/116_155302.html (accessed April 20, 2014).

Korea in 2012, the most out of all foreign cosmetic surgery patients in Korea.⁷⁵ The self-image issues associated with hallyu in South Korea ripple to other countries where hallyu is hugely popular. Globalization of pop culture has caused issues that used to be confined to one country to spread to a range of associated countries.

The Korean Wave has raised some questions about excessively competitive culture that exists in Korean society. Although South Korea has had substantial economic success over the last 30 years, it has come with long work hours and disassociation with society. South Koreans averaged the most hours per capita out of all industrialized countries, with 2,357 hours per person.⁷⁶ The pressure to work long hours to be successful still exists despite initial cultural changes after the 1997 Financial Crisis. Korean youth are expected to adhere to strict standards set by society in academics and social life. Modern Korean society has placed undue pressure on individuals to be successful to the point that Korea now leads the world in suicides per capita, which is the leading cause of death for people age 10 to 30.⁷⁷ The Korean Wave can be seen as reflection of the extreme competitiveness in South Korean society, with the vanity and excessive consumer culture often exhibited in movies and pop music.

The Korean Wave's popularity over the last 17 years shows South Korea's ability to use its cultural influences internationally to boost its economy and reputation. It has effectively developed its own unique identity that distinguishes it from other East Asian countries. South Korea's ability to export its pop culture in addition to its technological

⁷⁵ Kang, Kanga, "Chinese Overtake Americans as Top Medical Tourists in Korea," *The Wall Street Journal*, 19 February 2014.

⁷⁶ Parmy Olsen. "The World's Hardest-Working Countries." *Forbes*, May 21, 2008. http://www.forbes.com/2008/05/21/labor-market-workforce-lead-citizen-cx_po_0521countries.html (accessed April 29, 2014).

⁷⁷ Kim, Young-ha. "South Korea's Struggle With Suicide." *The New York Times*, April 1, 2014, sec. Opinion Pages. <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/03/opinion/south-koreas-struggle-with-suicide.html> (accessed April 30, 2014).

exports makes South Korea a new global contender in East Asia that has considerable cultural and economic clout. Despite the tensions and difficulties the Korean Wave has faced, it is Korea's most significant cultural contribution to globalization and continues to shape societies around the world. South Korea's pop cultural export has shaped its reputation abroad as a modern state connected to the international community.

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