

‘18 한류 백서

Hallyu White Paper, 2018

KOFICE

Hallyu White Paper, 2018

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Introduction to the Hallyu(The Korean Wave) White Paper, 2018

1. Hallyu in Broadcast Programmes

Need to change strategies for sustainable Hallyu in broadcast programmes

The exports of broadcasting contents in 2018 were driven by programme providers and production companies. While the number of exports for terrestrial broadcasting stations decreased by an annual average of 7.9% (approximately KRW 197.97888 billion between 2013 and 2017), that for programme providers increased by 20.6% (approximately KRW 126.23424 billion) and independent programme productions by 31.7% (approximately KRW 87.18336 billion) in the same period. This indicates that while terrestrial broadcasting stations had accounted for most of the exports of broadcasting contents, the proportion has been recently decreasing.

Hallyu in broadcast programmes in 2018 is characterized by the promotion of exports in formats. Season 2 of KBS drama *Good Doctor* was remade by Fuji TV in Japan and received high ratings. This remake was even reimported to South Korea and aired on PP channels and OTT (Pooq and Naver TV). MBC's *The King of Mask Singer* was remade by FOX TV in the United States and was sold to four more countries immediately after the American version had been aired. The format options of tvN's *A Battle of One Voice: 300* and *Candy in My Ear* were also sold to the United

States. Mnet's *I Can See Your Voice* was sold to nine countries worldwide, such as China, Thailand, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Malaysia, Philippines, Romania, Cambodia, and Slovakia.

In the global market, South Korean broadcasting contents are mostly distributed on Netflix and VIKI. They are sold through Drama Fever, VIKI, Amazon, and Hulu in the Americas, and iflix, Viu, and HOOQ in Southeast Asia. South Korean broadcasting contents are mainly exported to Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Taiwan, as well as the United States, while rarely exported to European countries except Turkey. Hallyu in broadcast programmes has the potential for growth due to the increasing channels and use of VODs, but it may probably decline due to the growing political issues and intensifying competition in Southeast Asia.

2. Hallyu in Films

Time to discover new talents and revise strategies to expand into Asia

The total film exports in 2017 were \$80.364209 million (approximately KRW 90.14453 billion), showing a 32.3% decrease year on year. This is because technical service exports decreased by more than 50% despite the 2.2% increase (\$41.607247 million, approximately KRW 46.66668 billion)

of the finished works. South Korean film exports, which had grown constantly based on the strong foundation of technical service exports despite the occasional struggle for finished works, are now facing warning signs ahead.

China was the only country that remained unaffected by the box-office smash *Along With the Gods* that hit entire Asia. Due to China's ban on Hallyu triggered by the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD), South Korean films have not been officially released in Chinese theatres for the last three years. The export outlet of South Korean films that is blocked in China opened instead in Taiwan and Hong Kong. These two countries, which compose most of Greater China, are ranked first and second among the target export markets for the first time since collecting statistical data on the overseas exports of South Korean films. Japan and China, which had been the main importers of South Korean films, dropped to the third and fourth ranks. The Asian countries accounted for 67.1% (\$27.924327 million, approximately KRW 3.137018 billion) of all South Korean film exports, and sales in Europe also increased year on year by 6.7% (\$4.057565 million, approximately KRW 4.6979 billion).

Many films did not receive global attention in 2018 except *Burning* that competed for Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. However, many animated films were sold unexpectedly, leading the market that had been faltering. It is noteworthy that the steady-selling series *Pororo* was sold to Spain and *Red Shoes & the 7 Dwarfs* was sold to the former

Soviet Union and the Czech Republic.

The purchase of finished works by streaming services such as Netflix, which are commonly referred to as Over the Top (OTT), lured in 2018. Except for *Psychokinesis*, *Illang: The Wolf Brigade*, and the *Along With the Gods* series that had been sold and began service in 2017, there was nothing notable other than *The Drug King*. In particular, the increase of market potential for South Korean films was supported by the active participation in the major hub markets of Asia such as Hong Kong Filmart, Tokyo's TIFFCOM, and Screen Singapore.

To bring out the potential of South Korean films, it is necessary to draw attention to the global art house film market. The net production cost of director Lee Chang-dong's *Burning*, which was the only film to receive global attention in 2018 in the art house market, was as much as KRW 8 billion. This is approximately the same as the average production costs of major comparable competitions in global film festivals. Even though the technical service of South Korean films has achieved a remarkable growth thanks to China's demand for VFX, the industry has long been aware of the fact that this growth method has ceased to be effective. With the decreasing demand from China, it is necessary to develop new technology and markets and provide comprehensive services in various fields such as visual effects, sounds, special effects, and stunts in order to expand sales that meet the global level.

3. Hallyu in Music

BTS conquers the world

The key market of K-pop was, as always, Northeast Asia focused on Japan and China, but sales growth was significantly higher in other regions. Exports in North America nearly doubled due to the 94% increase year on year, which indicates that the success of BTS fully accelerated the growth of K-pop in the North American market. Furthermore, sales showed an impressive growth of 25.5% in Europe and 37.8% in Southeast Asia. There was a growth of 18% in other regions focusing on South America, which is higher than in Japan and China.

Mnet's *Produce 101* which launched its first season in 2016 and has positioned itself as a successful survival audition programme that produced I.O.I. and Wanna One, made a new attempt in 2018 under the title *Produce 48*. This programme collaborated with the famous Japanese female idol group AKB48, drawing attention from local consumers. China's *Idol Producer* (偶像练习生) and *Creation 101* (创造101) were suspected of plagiarizing the format of *Produce 101* which shows that there is not only potential but also limitation for growth because a certain part of the music industry overlaps in South Korea, China, and Japan.

In East Asia, Blackpink with Thai member Lisa was a huge success, and music was mainly consumed on YouTube

and SNS*. Expansion into markets aside from East Asia was also dependent on two-way communication such as YouTube and V LIVE.

The major talking point of Hallyu in music is ‘how to create yet another BTS’. The industry is relatively cautious about the possibility of ‘another BTS’. In particular, markets in North America, South America, and Europe are considered inefficient markets that produce a great loss in terms of return on investment, which makes it difficult for the industry to aggressively expand into those markets. Moreover, the issue of managerial control over digital music charts is also yet to be resolved. The Gaon Chart, which has emerged as the official music chart in 2011, has not yet secured as much influence and awareness as the Melon Chart. There is a need for policies to prevent music consumers in South Korea and overseas from intervening in the charts of digital music websites using illegal means.

4. Hallyu in Performance Art

Diversification

In 2018, “touring” emerged as a major topic for the performance art scene. A growing number of teams are seeking a long-term strategy to enter the overseas market through local agencies or production. A case in point is Park Jiha, a

* SNS: Social Network Services

musician who founded the group Sum that performed over ten concerts in the United States and Europe through two tours and one invitation performance. Black String, a crossover band that performs with traditional Korean instruments, goes on overseas tours arranged by a local agency, Sori, based in North America.

Musicians who were active in the underground music scene in Korea continued to advance overseas. The rock band Say Sue Me performed 63 concerts in 50 cities in 12 countries, including Japan and various European nations in 2018. DJ Peggy Gou performed about 130 times in 44 countries in 2018 alone, with her January 2018 release *It Makes You Forget*, which established her as a rising star in the global techno scene. Yaeji, a Korean-American electronic music artist based in Brooklyn, New York, also performed 35 concerts in 15 countries last year, and received lots of attention.

Most remarkably, Korean performing arts are advancing into overseas markets on various continents. In addition to the Western European market, co-production and distribution have been expanding in the Asian region, and particularly, in the Latin American market. Black String's tour in Chile; the invitation of Korea's indie bands such as Dead Buttons, NST, The Soul Sauce, and Kim Yulhee to Chile's En Orbita Festival's Korean special stage; Noreum Machi and Heo Trio's performances at the Festival de Musica de Morelia Miguel Bernal Jimenez in Mexico; and the Peru tour

of Mokwha Repertory Company were all arranged by Centre Stage Korea. Also, Nettle Theatre Company, Universal Ballet, the contemporary dance company Modern Table, Melancholy Dance Company, and Lee Jung-yeon Dance Project performed in Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and Brazil, respectively. These performances were the result of the International Art Exchange Project sponsored by the Arts Council Korea.

Appearances at local market events and participation in overseas markets are the main drivers of international demand. Therefore, the role of booking agents (contractor in charge of contracts) and public relations companies are attracting attention in the process required for entering the global market. Seoul International Music Fair, MU:CON, invited the world's renowned agents including Paradigm Talent Agency, Coda Agency, and APA Agency, as well as 22 festival promoters, while Zandari Festa, Korea's premier independent music showcase festival, selected ten local booking agents out of 55 overseas music business experts.

It is essential to collect information related to overseas markets and make it available through a database to inform performance teams of relevant new opportunities overseas. In addition, the foundation for overseas expansion must be established by nurturing international exchange experts and promoting cultural exchanges through diplomatic events.

5. Hallyu in Games

The Present and Future of Korea's Game Industry, Not a Completely Rosy Picture

In 2017, Korean game exports totalled USD 5,923 million (KRW 6,698 billion), about an 80.7% increase from the previous year's values. Mobile platforms scored the largest share of game exports at USD 3,274.84 million (about KRW 3.703 trillion), followed by PC games at USD 2,615.52 million (about KRW 2.958 trillion). Compared to the previous year, all platforms exhibited great growth. Especially mobile game export totals have increased by USD 1,636.9 million (about KRW 1.851 trillion) since 2016, driving export growth across all other segments in the game industry.

Battleground continued to be popular in 2018, earning USD 1,028 million (about KRW 1.15 trillion) over the year and topping the list of best-selling games worldwide. The e-sports industry has witnessed a hotter year than ever, as e-sports has been adopted as a demonstration sport in the Jakarta-Palembang Asian Games held in August 2018. Korea made it to the finals in the *League of Legends* and *StarCraft II* in the first Asian Games in 2018. The *League of Legends* Team (Lee Sang-hyuk, Kim Ki-in, Ko Dong-bin, Han Wang-ho, Park Jae-hyuk and Cho Yong-in) won a silver medal, and Cho Sang-joon won a gold medal in *StarCraft II*. Despite the good news which opened up a new horizon for the Korean

game industry, the Game Addiction Act, which had terrified the industry, showed signs of revival. As the World Health Organization (WHO) included “gaming disorder” to its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), the identity of the players and those engaged in the game industry are being threatened. In addition, controversy over the regulation of “stochastic items” and the polarization of wealth in the game industry profits were reinforced.

The percentage of exports of Korean games by major countries is as follows. The largest importer was Greater China (China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) with 60.5%, followed by Southeast Asia (12.6%), Japan (12.2%), North America (6.6%), and Europe. Greater China’s share increased by 22.9% since 2016, and the shares of the rest of the countries proportionately decreased. It is remarkable that China has emerged as not only the largest importer of Korean games but also a production competitor. No Korean games could obtain the relevant license from the Chinese government since March 2017, while the penetration of Chinese games into the Korean market is accelerating, showing signs of future changes in the trading of games between the two countries.

The Korean game market is likely to go through a transformation. The “Big Three N” of the game industry, Nexon, Netmarble, and NCsoft, which have made Korean gaming history for the last two decades, suffered one failure after another in China, and produced no new hit games. Meanwhile, diverse changes are expected to occur in the

e-sports industry. Apparently, growing interest in e-sports will positively influence the growth of e-sports broadcasting and promote the development of e-sports as a new marketing tool. It is also expected that players will be able to enjoy more powerful gaming experiences through “v-sports” based on virtual reality (VR).

6. Hallyu in Comics

Technological Innovation of Intelligent Webtoons for Diverse Global Platforms

As announced in 2018, the export value of the Korean comics industry in 2016 increased by 10.7% from the previous year to USD 32.48 million (about KRW 36.543 billion) and increased by 12.7% annually from 2014 to 2016. Digital comics based on web or mobile platforms take a smaller share in the global market but they are growing at a fast pace both in content and platforms in the Korean market where digital comics market is stabilised. Several local webtoon platforms such as Line Webtoon, Kakao Page, and Lezhin Comics have successfully entered the global market; and as webtoon IP(Intellectual property)s are exported and contracts for movie and TV show rights are concluded.

It is especially noteworthy that webtoon-based movies and serialised dramas are successfully exported. In

2017, a webtoon-based movie, *Along with the Gods: The Two Worlds*, became an instant hit with a total of 14 million viewers. Its 2018 sequel, *Along with the Gods: The Last 49 Days*, showed similar results. On the other hand, the TV series, *What's Wrong with Secretary Kim* and *Gangnam Beauty*, gained popularity. *Countdown 7 O'clock*, a webtoon at the online comics and webtoon platform Mr. Blue sold TV broadcasting rights to China in 2018. Korean comics fared pretty well in the US market as well. Lezhin Comics ranked first in the US Google Play cartoon category in sales during the first two quarters of 2018, surpassing Marvel Comics and DC Comics. Naver Webtoon brought in Warren Ellis, author of the movie *Red*, and Fabian Nicieza, author of the popular American comics, *Deadpool*, as a localization strategy to appeal to North American viewers.

Due to the influence of the restrictions imposed by Beijing after last year's diplomatic row over a US-backed anti-missile system (THAAD) deployed by Seoul, it's been difficult to export Korea's webtoon IPs to China. Even under these circumstances, Kakao Friends novel comics launched an exclusive paid service at China's largest webtoon platform Kuaikan. Indonesia emerged as a new market with the highest growth potential. Line Webtoon successfully adopted a localization strategy to have digital comics take the lion's share in the Indonesian comics market whose growth is mainly driven by Japanese comics and comic books. Aware of the high potential of the Indonesian market, in December 2018,

Kakao Page acquired Neobazar, an online comics and novel platform in Indonesia, and has been gaining ground in the local market.

As webtoons make inroads into the global market, the expansion of mobile comics will be remarkable. Dozens of digital comics applications are created in Japan. Korea's applications such as Line Webtoon and Kakao, and Japan's Piccoma are becoming popular. With the commercialization of foldable phones, page-style webtoons will become more widespread instead of scroll or cut-styles. Also, a heightened interest in Korea's webtoon platform business model in the global market is forecast to have a positive effect. In particular, the "sell out" model, which is considered to have played a key role in the success of Lezhin Comics, is pointed out as the most powerful profit-making model. A wide array of global webtoon platforms grow by referring to the profit model in the Korean webtoon business; the first creator of webtoon platforms.

7. Hallyu in Publication

Korean Literature Expands its Reader Base

Korean literature lies at the core of Hallyu publication. Between 2000 and 2003, Korean literary works started to make inroads into Asian markets including Thailand,

Indonesia, and Vietnam following Japan, Taiwan, and China. In earlier years, primarily works other than literature were being exported until Kim Young-ha's novel *I Have the Right to Destroy Myself*. The novel was exported to the United States in 2005, demonstrating the potential of exporting Korean literature, and other publications for that matter, to the United States and Britain. Shin Kyung-sook's novel *Please Look After Mom*—exported in 2009, published in the United States in early April in 2011, and ranked on the New York Times best-seller list for hardcover fiction—also reinforced the potential of Korean literature in overseas markets. Furthermore, the US production company Blue Jar Pictures signed a deal to turn the South Korean best-selling novel into a TV series—a first in the history of Korean literature. Also, novelist Pyun Hye-young was the first Korean writer to win the Shirley Jackson Award in 2017, and Jeong You-jeong's *The Good Son* was published on June 5th, 2018 by Penguin Books, the largest US publisher.

China took initiative in securing copyrights for Korean publications around 2005; however, it seems to be gradually losing interest in the Korean market. During the sanctions between late 2016 and 2018, South Korea targeted Taiwan (traditional Chinese version) as an alternative to the Chinese market (simplified Chinese version), but this was not sufficient to make up for the loss due to the restrictions imposed by the Chinese government. Against this backdrop, Southeast Asia emerged as a new market. Among other South Asian countries, Thailand is the biggest market for Korean

publication content, following the Greater Chinese market. Recently, Thai readers have become interested in educational content for infants and elementary schoolers, as well as young adult literature. A case in point is Tablo's books (*Epik High*), *Pieces of You* and *Blonote*, which enjoyed continuous popularity among local readers in 2017 and 2018.

In the Vietnamese market, books on health—*Health Care survival Juice 101* (Gilbut), *Food Addiction* (Gimmyoung Publishers), *Hand Acupuncture* (Nexus), self-help, and Korean language learning are attracting attentions of the readers. As for children's books, there are five in the "Survival Series" of Aiseum, recently released by Nha Nam Publishing, Vietnam. Educational content is published mostly by state-run publishers in Vietnam, so it is likely that the intentions of the current local administration will be reflected in the publishing industry.

To secure the diversity of Korean literature in the global publishing market, three major efforts are required. First, competent translators should be recruited. Second, these translators should be interested in translating various kinds of publications such as children's literature, juvenile literature, SF fantasy, and general non-fiction, as well as literary translation. Third, the focus should be on the translation and export of popular literary genres (Sci-fi) which are popular in the Asian publishing market, especially in Southeast Asia.

8. Hallyu in Fashion

Emerging as Key Convergence Content, Korean Fashion

Slowing domestic demand in the fashion industry turned businesses attention to overseas markets. According to the 2018 “Current Status of the Designer Fashion Industry in the Global Market and Measures to Nurture Global Brands” research, the largest number of Korean fashion designer brands entered the Chinese market at 78%, followed by Europe (34%), Japan (31%), the United States (28%), and Southeast Asia (27%). Further, most brands achieved good results in China (61%), and not surprisingly, prefer China the most (43%).

Despite these rosy figures, fashion business in China has not been that easy. There are obstacles such as the growth of local designer brands, other global brands competing in the Chinese market, and restrictions on Dai Gong (peddlers) according to the revision of the Electronic Commerce Law in China since the THAAD issue between China and Korea. Therefore, Korea needs separate strategies for the post-China market while seeking sustainability in the Chinese market.

Korean fashion designer brands are distributed primarily (68%) through street shops, such as multi-shops, and online shops following at 58.9%. For example, Samsung C&T Corporation introduced their brands Beaker and ANOTHER # through online and offline multi-shops, while extending the role of the sales lab to handle wholesale business. The

HANDSOME's Tom Grey Hound opened a shop in Paris in 2014 to sell the brand products overseas. Also, KOLON FnC launched “Series” shops, which purchase and sell global brands, and extended it into a “Series Corner,” where domestic and overseas brands are presented together. ALAND, a multi-brand store introducing customers to new Korean fashion designers, opened its first Hong Kong flagship in 2012, expanded to the Southeast Asian market including Thailand, and opened a New York shop in 2018.

Fashion industry business models are expected to change, led by “influencers” with huge followings through blog markets, personal shopping sites, and Instagram markets. At the same time, the fashion industry that is based on creative sensibility, is embracing latest technologies including artificial intelligence and virtual reality, and creating an environment which enables skipping unnecessary business processes for both consumers and brands. In particular, a global business model and platforms combined with IT markets must be established. Also, L'Oréal, the world's largest cosmetics company, acquired 100% of Nanda, the Korean lifestyle make-up and fashion company, an affiliate company of the online shopping site Stylenanda, and MUSINSA, Korea's leading online fashion platform boasting 3,500 domestic and international brands and 3 million members as of November 2018. Based on the experience of Stylenanda and MUSINSA, chances are that global online platforms such as the e-commerce platform Farfetch and the giant shopping site

Net-A-Porter will emerge.

9. Hallyu in Beauty

Korea's High-flying Beauty Industry Faces Impending Crisis

According to the UN statistics in 2018, South Korea (otherwise not ranked in the global top ten) ranked fourth in cosmetics exports in 2017, following France, the United States, and Germany—the traditional cosmetics powerhouses. Korea showed an annual growth rate of 40.3% for the past five years, more than double that of Japan which is the second-fastest growing country in the cosmetics industry with a rate at 23.2%.

Crisis signals came from China in 2018. Etude House, The Face Shop, and Tony Moly who had established themselves as icons of “Masstige,” touting high-quality and cost-efficiency in China, in 2010, withdrew from the local market. Korean brands started to be pushed out of the mainstream Chinese market in nine years after the withdrawal of major road shops. This is partly explained by the premium market's-maintained growth rate of more than 10% due to the expansion of the middle class in China, the active consumption patterns of the millennials, and the “face” culture of China. Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) to suppress foreign product imports

and protect local industries in ways other than tariffs also had a great influence.

The analysis of exports of major countries showed that the largest importer was Greater China (China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) with a share of 63.4%, followed by the US (8.6%) which is pointed out as a potential substitute for the Chinese market. Japan accounted for 4.8%, and the newly emerging Vietnam market was recorded at 2.7%, ranking fourth for the first time in 2018. By region, Greater China had the largest share at 65.9%, followed by Southeast Asia (10.8%) and North America (9.1%), showing proportionately high popularity of Korean beauty products as well as steep growth in Southeast Asia. The latest three-year trend of exports displayed a downward curve for Greater China, as observed in Taiwan and Hong Kong cases, while markets for the US, Japan, Vietnam, and Russia are clearly on an upward trajectory.

Market reorganization and distribution will accelerate due to intensifying competition given the various new fast-growing local brands and global brands. Meanwhile, indie brands are expected to grow as active collaboration between brands and influencers, or brand launches, are becoming more common. In addition, global companies are more likely to acquire domestic brands as they prefer acquiring brands to launching brand new ones.

10. Hallyu in Food

Korean Food Tempts Global Consumers

In 2018, Korea's agricultural, marine, and fishery exports amounted to USD 9.35 billion (about KRW 10.5 trillion), marking record highs for the third consecutive year—a 1.7% increase from the previous year's USD 9.1 billion (about KRW 10.27 trillion). Exported items included beverage, mackerel, beer, ramen, ginseng, and chicken. The export portion of agriculture, forestry, and fishery products by country was highest in the Greater China region (24.7%) comprised of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Greater China was followed by Japan (22.4%), Southeast Asia (18.9%), North America (12.9%), the Middle East (9.6%), Europe (6.3%), Oceania (2.6%), Russia (2.3%), Central and South America (1.9%), Africa (1.7%), and India (0.5%).

While agricultural and marine product exports have been steadily improving, Korean food (Hansik) in the global food market has a long way to go. According to the 2018 Global Korean Food Dining Industrial Survey report (9,600 respondents from the world's 16 cities) released by the Korean Food Promotion Institute (KFPI), Korean food recognition was recorded at 54% in 2018—a 10% fall from the previous year's 64.1%. While Hansik enjoys high recognition in the Asian region, it is still not well-known in major European cities. Based on the top 3 (5+6+7 points), Dubai (79.8%)

scored most-wide recognition, followed by Jakarta (75.3%), Beijing (74.5%), Shanghai (70%) and Los Angeles (64.2%). Recognition level was the lowest in Tokyo (28.2%), followed by Rome (33.2%), Paris (35.5%), Rio de Janeiro (37.7%), and London (42.3%). The recognition of Hansik was also examined by age group in major cities, and the highest rate was found to be 58.1% among those in their 20s and 30s. It was 50.9% and 43.9% in the 40s and 50s group, respectively.

In 2018, Korea's distribution industry suffered at home due to tightening government regulations and shrinking consumer confidence; large distribution companies turned their eyes toward the global market. Shinsegae Group's E-Mart announced it will acquire Good Food Holdings, a US-based company, in December 2018. It has become the first domestic distribution specialist to enter the US market in earnest. Lotte is expanding its overseas business in Vietnam and Indonesia, and is expanding its business with Lotte Mart's representative PB products Only Price, Yorihada and Choice L in the vanguard. CJ Cheiljedang acquired Schwans, the second largest frozen pizza maker in the United States, securing a bridgehead for Korean food in the US, Canada, and Mexico markets. CJ expects that the Korean-style fast-food meal, its staple item, will succeed in the local market as well. Convenience store brands also started to target the Asian market. GS25 established a joint-venture company with a 3-to-7 stake with the local company Sonkim Group, and opened 29 convenience stores with the first store established in Ho Chi

Minh in January 2018.

A buzzword in global food trends is “health.” For the world’s best chefs who seek uniqueness and excellence, fermented food has become a trend. Given these trend keywords, Hansik has great potential in the competition with other ethnic food in the international market. Washoku (Japanese food) that integrates the “Mediterranean Diet,” emerges as a healthy alternative, emphasizing craftsmanship, simplicity, and a moderate way of living. It is a good reference point for Hansik to position itself in the global arena.

11. Hallyu in Tourism

Hallyu Tourism is Undergoing a Radical Reform

The number of foreign tourists visiting Korea has increased by 15.1% to 15.35 million (Korea Tourism Organization, 2019). The figure is 11% lower than the all-time high of 17.24 million in 2016, but it is still an encouraging sign of recovery just a year after the THAAD issue. The share of tourists visiting Korea by nation in 2018 is as follows: China (31%), Japan (19%), Taiwan (7%), the United States (6%), Hong Kong (4%), Thailand (4%), and Malaysia (3%). Chinese tourist figures sharply declined in the wake of the THAAD issue which broke out in 2017 (4.17 million, a 48.3% decrease since the previous year). However, since the fourth

quarter of 2017, China's sanctions on group tourism have gradually eased, and individual Chinese tourists continued visiting Korea in 2018, increasing the number of Chinese tourists by 14.9% year-on-year to 4.79 million.

In 2018, a hot issue of Hallyu tourism was the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. It is a major global event attended by 2,920 athletes from 92 countries—the largest in the history of the Winter Olympics. In addition, Sunshine Land, the studio that filmed the TV drama *Mr. Sunshine* that aired from July to September in 2018, was under the spotlight as a new tourist attraction. Sunshine Land, composed of survival and military experience centres, is a barracks-themed park incorporating Hallyu culture. It has accommodated about 400,000 tourists in just two months since its opening. Meanwhile, Korea Tourism Organization invited the popular Japanese drama *The Solitary Gourmet Season 7* to the Korean location in association with Korean tourism content. It was an attempt to reverse the frozen market atmosphere of Korean tourism in Japan due to persistent controversies over the distortions of history, and diplomacy and security matters related to North Korean nuclear issues.

The following are the characteristics of the tourists visiting Korea, by country. In the case of Japan, a new Hallyu phenomenon, the Korean-style makeup (Ulzzang makeup) and fashion, is popular among young people. As such, new needs for Korea's inbound tourism are generated, centred on healing and beauty, such as aesthetic and spa products. With the long-

standing popularity of Hallyu and the expansion of various transportation routes, Chinese people in Taiwan visiting Korea have increased by 20.5% year-on-year in 2018, exceeding one million for the first time. Most of the Korean tourist products targeting Hallyu fans in Taiwan, offer visits to the drama shooting sites. In the case of K-pop concerts and fan meetings in Taiwan, similar to those in Japan, the agency company affiliated with a local fan club is what usually attracts the audience.

According to Korea Tourism Organization's Travel Demand Survey for Individual Tourists in the Winter (2017), one of two foreign tourists visiting Korea decided to visit by "watching Korean TV dramas and movies" (55.6%, multiple answers allowed), followed by "TV shows introducing travel sites" (36.8%), "travel reviews from SNS or blogs" (28.4%), "recommendation of friends and acquaintances" (26.5%), and upon the "introduction of travel sites, and reviews from travelling sites" (24.4%). In other words, rather than simply listing and delivering tourist information, storytelling promotion that showed the image of tourist sites naturally following the movement and emotions of the characters, was the most effective in attracting visitors to Korea.

It is necessary to diversify Korea's inbound tourism market to promote tourism industry. As a part of such efforts, multi-visa (C-3) applications have been expanded to accommodate citizens of new southern countries, who are expected to visit Korea in growing numbers, since December

2018. Simplification of the visa issuance process is expected to lead to an immediate increase in the number of tourists visiting the country. This inflow is of great economic value, but the problem of illegal immigrants follows. The realization of the “20-Million Foreign Visitors to Korea” also requires the policy of regional dispersion of foreign tourists. Currently, there are eight international airports in Korea, but only five major airports (in Incheon, Gimpo, Gimhae, Daegu, and Jeju) are actively operating international routes. This is far behind Japan, which has as many as 28 airports offering direct flights to Korea. An overhaul and expansion of the transportation infrastructure should be considered for expansion and local distribution of foreign visitors in the future.

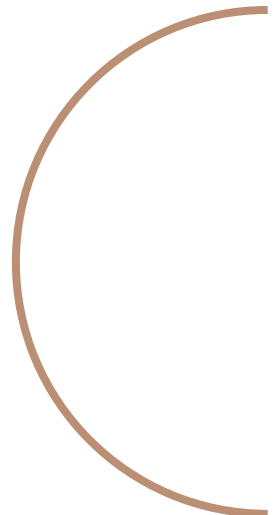
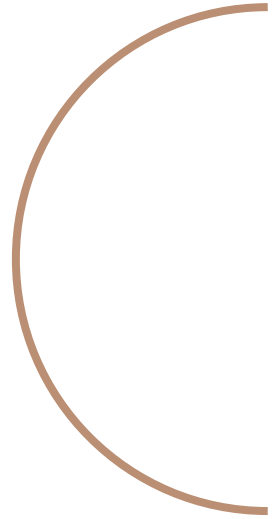
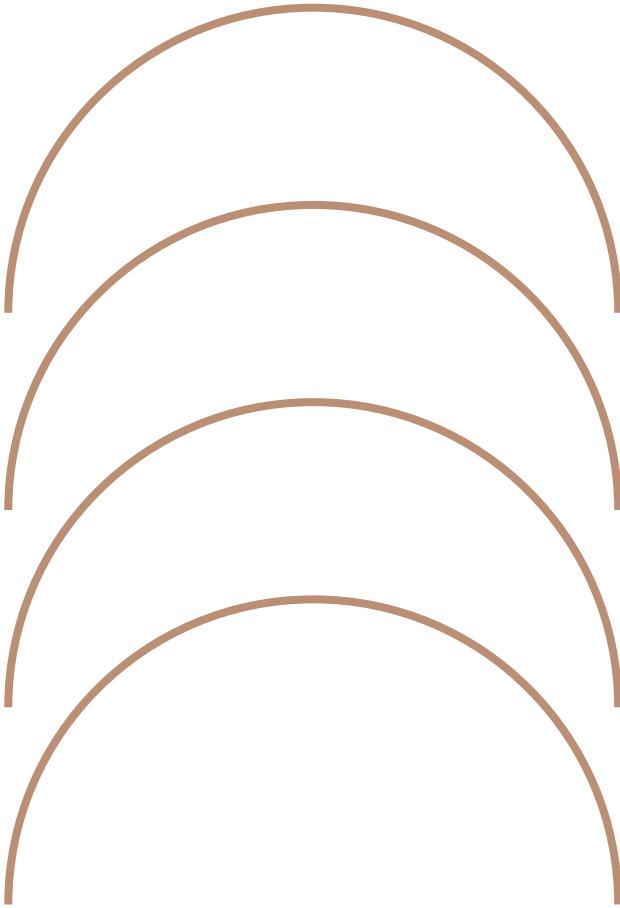
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Hallyu, Again at the starting point*

* This is the manuscript of Part II and 2nd articles of Part III, “Hallyu’s significance for us,” of the book Hallyu, Again at the Starting Point, published in May 2019.

The Korean original (PDF) is available at KOFICE’s webpage (http://kofice.or.kr/b20industry/b20_industry_01_view.asp?seq=1002&page=1&find=&search=).

1) Korean Wave and the social imaginary in the age of digital technology



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1. Period between Uruguay Round and BTS

The social imaginary underlies every social group (Taylor, 2004). For instance, all Koreans have a shared imaginary that makes them ask themselves, “What would be our country’s position in the world?” The same goes for the question, “What would people living outside our country look like?” Such questioning arises from our social imaginary. We can hardly survive in this world without the social imaginary about our living conditions as members of a social group. It is thus almost impossible to live without imagining ourselves as Koreans living in Korea in a love-hate relationship with the nation over the vicissitudes of history. This relationship goes beyond the national identity. We form thoughts and opinions about the issues surrounding us based on our social imaginary and arrange our social life accordingly. The importance of social imaginary has been highlighted by several scholars such as Louis Althusser, Benedict Anderson, and Charles Taylor, who analysed it from the ideological, nationalist, and modern political perspectives, respectively. All of them agree, if not explicitly, that the social imaginary is the backbone of a community.

The social imaginary changes over time. The change takes either an expansive or a contractive direction. For example, the social imaginary of the current young generation familiar with the global popularity of Korean

pop music (K-pop) cannot be the same as that of the older generations who would sing Anglo-American pop songs and try to memorize the lyrics. The rationale for highlighting this change is that neither is the social imaginary a mere notion, nor should it be dismissed as a generational gap. It leads to social action and, thus, has a tangible impact on society. It has the power to organize social solidarity and to determine society's image. Althusser even noted that the imaginary is a materialistic entity. The changes in the social imaginary even change citizens' attitudes and behaviours, inducing them to take new steps on specific issues.

Let us take the phenomenon of globalization as an example. We are directly exposed to globalization in our daily lives through media coverage, changes in the streetscape, and an increase in the number of foreign students on the school campus. Not long ago, however, globalization seemed like a stranger approaching us, chanting political slogans. The storm of globalization hit Korea during the Kim Young-sam administration that came to power in 1993. The government issued a series of pompous slogans for globalization as the government policy direction. "Who is your global competitor?" was one of the such slogans. In contrast to its seemingly aggressive approach, this slogan was indicative of an extremely passive and defensive attitude. The promise to protect the domestic rice market by responding wisely to the Uruguay Round underlay the slogan. With the benefit of hindsight, it may be said that the mainstream imaginary about

the world was built around the frame of “protecting Korea in a grand offensive.” The Kim Young-sam administration had maintained this stance throughout the presidential term until it collapsed. The social imaginary associated with globalization at that time is quite different from the current one. The slogans issued by the Kim Young-sam administration, which did not transcend political issues for lack of realistic implications, represented its political commitment to protect the Korean economy from the tsunami of global competition, which in turn determined the scope of the imaginary. The perception of globalization, the imaginary arising from it, and the attitudes and behaviours towards the world now are distinctively different from those prevailing at that time.

Now that Bangtan Sonyeondan (Bulletproof Boy Scouts; hereinafter “BTS”) has spoken to the world at a United Nations (UN) General Assembly event, the social imaginary and attitudes have completely changed. Koreans have changed their tone towards the world, and their gaze at the world has gained more self-assurance. The changed attitudes apply also to domestic affairs because most citizens view and rate domestic events within the global framework. They walk through the world with more confident footsteps. Thus, the social imaginary is not a notion but a potential shape of a set of habits, intentions, and actions common to the members of a social group. There is no dearth of fans, both at home and abroad, who are eager to fly to the United States (US) to cheer BTS and wait overnight in front of the UN building to meet

and congratulate the band. Over the last decades, the social imaginary has changed along with growing in magnitude. Such changes in the social imaginary have changed the attitudes and behaviours of the members of society, which in turn has changed the colour, atmosphere, and communication style of the society as a whole.

The social imaginary embodied in behaviours and actions keeps changing according to the temporal and spatial conditions. It has, of course, intergenerational and interregional differences. Teenagers living in one region have an imaginary different from that of their contemporaries living in another region because the social imaginary is created from a fusion of various conditions of life in a given region. For this reason, it is socially meaningful to identify the main causes of change in the imaginary and the accompanying changes in attitudes and of behaviours. This is a difficult task given its significance. That being said, it would also be a dangerous attempt at making an erroneous description of relationship formation. Althusser proposed a concept of “over-determination,” arguing that the social imaginary shared by society is a harmonized whole of various strata of society consisting of economic, political, and cultural elements. It is obvious that our new social imaginary, which formed as a result of a matured capitalism, a functioning democracy albeit in a formal sense, and the eradication of superstition and dominion of reason over irrationality achieved through education and has become the foundation of interpersonal communication, is

different from the earlier social imaginary. What conditions, in particular, have then caused this dramatic change in our social imaginary over the last 25 years? What happened in the period between the phase of globalization fabricated around the time of the Uruguay Round and the current phase of globalization as manifested by the phenomenon in which BTS is making news every day on the world stage together with its global fandom Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth (ARMY)?

2. Digital Globalization

It was the government that asked “Who is your global competitor?” during the Kim Young-sam administration, and newspapers, the television, the radio, and academics circulated the slogan. The press was cooperative with the government, and the academia was also favourable to the globalization slogans issued by the Kim Young-sam administration, the first civilian government in Korea’s constitutional history. At that time, globalization was embraced without a proper understanding of the US national development strategy. In 1995, the US government stepped up its effort to launch the World Trade Organization (WTO) in an attempt to unite the world market. In 1994, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was launched as a counterattack to the European Union (EU), which was formed in 1993 as an economic trading bloc. The Korean

government, which misinterpreted a series of measures for expanding the world market as an international trend without thoroughly examining them, issued globalization slogans as the key national policy choice. The Kim Young-sam administration relied on the power of the media to put in place a series of impromptu policy measures it pursued without sufficient preparation. As regulations on the capital, foreign exchange, and financial markets were loosened, short-term foreign capital flowed into Korea and the volume of foreign currencies increased. Although the current account balance was still negative, Koreans enjoyed traveling abroad and purchasing luxury items in the wake of a large inflow of foreign currencies. There was a boom in the news media and news industry also as the number of ads increased and its sub-industries, such as local private broadcasting, cable television, and satellite broadcasting, started their businesses. It was the greatest boom since Tangun (the legendary founder of the first Korean kingdom, 2333 BC), and Korea raised the flag of globalization higher by joining the OECD, declaring its willingness to engage with the world powers. The media and the academia, instead of sounding a warning against an imminent economic crisis, enjoyed the trend at full throttle, landing more ads and conducting globalization-related research, and became the main actors in the globalization discourse.

The main strategies set out by the government in pursuit of realizing its globalization slogans were the

“solidification” of the national economy and Korean-style responses to global trends. The mainstream newspaper companies, which were at the forefront of the process of creating a nation-state, also played an important role in creating the globalization discourse. The broadcasting industry also supported the government’s globalization policy under conditions that left no other choice. While discussing globalization, the newspaper and broadcasting industries created a globalization discourse, steering its direction towards a nation-state-centred perspective, and enjoyed the booming national economy built on sand. The big hand that led the social imaginary at the time was the mass media centred on the newspaper and broadcasting industries. As Korea was entering the modern era, the newspaper and broadcasting companies, products of the modern age themselves and agents of modernity, brandished the sword of media power. Thus, enjoying their power, they neglected their inherent role of monitoring the conditions and offering constructive criticism. They indulged in ineffective practices and displayed weak attitudes unaware of their own destiny. Yet, they were the mainstream media that created public opinions and influenced the social imaginary.

It was the Internet that best explained the message in the BTS speech analyzing each word, shared its implications, and faithfully forwarded the reactions of ARMY (BTS fan club) all over the world. Newspapers and the television also reported the news and treated it as an event with high news

value but did not dive into its content, such as the meaning of the message, the artists' personal circumstances, and the reactions of the global fandom. However, the Internet did what the mainstream media failed to do or missed. The new media, including YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, and V LIVE, propagated all the related details. The content makers were, of course, Internet users, not professional producers employed by legacy media. They created, distributed, and enjoyed intertextual content intermingled to the point where the original content was unrecognizable.

Entering the new millennium, the Internet became the new media star, pushing aside traditional mass media, such as newspapers and the TV as legacy media. The IT industry gained a foothold as the country's new hope, driven by the national policy that defined it as a new industry to end the International Monetary Fund (IMF)-regulated economy. As the dot-com and venture boom ensued, the information industry began to grow to the extent of impregnating the character of Korean capitalism. Its growth over the past two decades is greater, more dynamic, and pan-national as compared with the centennial history of the newspaper and broadcasting industries. The shift from newspapers, the television/radio, and magazines to the Internet has a significance that goes beyond the transformation within the media. By accessing the Internet and playing YouTube, a plethora of related information at home and abroad appears on the timeline teeming with BTS's activities in the UN and Americas, television talk shows,

surprise meetings with fans, reaction videos, concert ticket surprise gift videos, and many other items. A long list of comments basically accompanies each video. Secondary source videos parodying, criticizing, or linking primary source videos are also posted. Such intertextuality multiplies information by infinity. Besides crossing borders, multinational fans encounter each other through YouTube posts and enjoy BTS content through collaborations. This was beyond imagination in the pre-2000s period when no broadband network was available. In the past, it would have been limited to television features presented in *VJ Commando* as a surprise. Now, such imaginary is integrated into our daily lives as the first thing that catches our eye in the media every morning. This new type of media can be regarded as the imagination and action of the public because it is possible only through the participation of the public.

The reason for paying attention to the changes that occurred in Korean media in the period between the Uruguay Round and BTS is simple. It is due to the fact that Korea witnessed a rapid and dramatic change in its media, unprecedented in any society. This dramatic change has taken place since the commercialization of asymmetric digital subscriber line (ADSL), a broadband Internet service, in 1998. According to the June 2009 report of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Internet penetration rate among Korean households has been increasing continuously: 49.8 % in 2000, 63.2 % in 2001, 70.2 % in 2002, 74.8 % in 2005,

78.4 % in 2006, and 80.6 % in 2009. By 2010, it rose to 95 %.

According to the OECD Broadband Statistics Update, Korea's high-speed wireless Internet penetration rate was 100.6 % in 2011, the highest among the member countries. This is nearly double the OECD country average of 54.3 %. As of the end of the same year, the number of mobile phone subscribers in Korea exceeded by 100 %, at 52.5 million. It is no exaggeration to say that Korean society as a whole is linked to the Internet, with account taken of wired and wireless Internet use at home and Internet use through mobile devices. Korea, which launched the 5G service in April 2019, is the society that has achieved the fastest and broadest digitization in the new millennium. This suggests that it is a community that has shifted the imaginary about its own and outside worlds more quickly than any other community.

Imagining the world and living conditions through the Internet is not a phenomenon limited to Korea. Something that should not escape our attention about the globalization trend is that hardly any society has steered away from globalization. It needs to be kept in mind that similar things are happening outside of Korea, where the Internet has become ubiquitous as the basic infrastructure for imagining the living conditions. Discussions on the success of Korean Wave often end with an examination of Korean factors. Such a discussion is partial discussion. Korean Wave cannot succeed with excellent cultural industry alone and without the conditions supporting its distribution and appreciation.

The conditions that enable Korean Wave to land on its feet should be discussed as a basic criterion. The imaginary of the members of Korean society consuming new media about the living conditions may be different from that of the Koreans in previous generations but similar to that of the same generation living in other countries. This can be ascribed to the Internet, as demonstrated by YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. When it is verified that there is no significant gap between the imaginary of Koreans and non-Koreans belonging to the same generation, the imaginary is consolidated. It meets with sympathy and is led to another imaginary based on this recognition. This means that communication with the outside world through the network connected by global digital technology can engender a social imaginary different from previous ones.

If we attribute the changes in Korean society and its imaginary to digital technology alone, we confine ourselves to the so-called technocratic discussion. Care should be taken to not simplify the relationship between society and technology as a cause-effect phenomenon. If it is understood as technology that Korea accepted promptly in the process in which changes in society and its imaginary take place, the introduction of digital technology could have been the outcome of the changes in society and its imaginary. This gives room for the narrative that digital technology has not arisen from the analogue-to-digital evolution but that the world has chosen it as the technology that suits its lifestyle and that digital technology

meets that requirement as a consequence of which the Internet has taken centre stage in the social imaginary. In contrast, newspapers and the television, which continue to evoke the standpoints of the members of the nation-state, have become entities that cannot respond to those members of society who possess a completely different imaginary.

Although digital technology allows us to imagine the world from angles different from those previously possible, the resulting imaginary often appears to be articulated to unexpected paths. For example, the surge of nationalism and hate towards migrants occurs as a reaction associated with an imaginary about the world. This is manifested as an increase in hate speech on SNS and the so-called Gukppong (a portmanteau word combining Guk [Korean for nation] and philopon [a brand name of liquid methamphetamine]; nationalist rhetoric or racist remarks), which can even escalate into dangerous attacks. Similar things are happening in Japan, China, Europe, and the Americas. Such information is also disseminated on the Internet, not through newspapers and the television, and the negative content gives rise to a new social imaginary. Online hate speech creates the awareness that the targets of hate speech are accessible through digital platforms, and those who indulge in such speech communicate through conditions different from those in the past.

3. Population mobility and social imaginary

If digital technology has, in addition to influencing the changes in society and its imaginary been influenced by such changes, society has experienced events to which such mutual influence can be attributed. The conditions that required digital technology and its corresponding events have induced changes in society and its imaginary, at times separately, at times together. One of such events is population mobility. Arjun Appadurai, who identified globalization as an irreversible flow, attributed the imaginary of globalization to media and global mobility of people. That is, he interpreted the imaginary of globalization as the resonance effect of globalization communicated as media information being manifested as population mobility. An increase in the nomadic lifestyle, which began with digital technology and requires it now more than ever, has many faces. Not only has the number of migrants increased but the countries involved have also diversified as have the reasons for migration.

As of August 2018, there were 2.1 million foreign residents in Korea. It is an increase of half a million as compared with the figures in 2013. Tourists are in every corner of the city, and foreign residents have increased not only in numbers but also in diversity of nationality and reason for stay: chefs, university students, exchange students, researchers, pop idols, professional sports players, celebrities with a good command over Korean, and factory workers. The

number of migrants as perceived by people is multiplied if migrants are seen repeatedly in legacy media coverage and the SNS*. In particular, the urban population is more likely to experience the resonance effect.

The resonance effect provides new experiences. In the past, foreigners held the status of awe-inspiring beings and eye-catchers for Koreans or observers of Koreans. Now, the gaze is difficult to characterize. Migrants have integrated in our daily lives and are mere neighbours to the extent that it strikes us as odd to see a foreigner on TV speaking poor Korean. It is difficult to distinguish the foreigners in pop idol groups unless they disclose their nationality. Korean/non-Korean relationships have become natural encounters that can occur in everyday life. This change is not limited to Korea. The changing attitudes of the world towards Asians can be experienced through the frequent appearance of Asians in the Western media. In the past, Asians used to play the roles of assistants of White people and mean killers, but now they often play the central characters in entertainment videos. On YouTube, there is an increasing number of vlogs that introduce and proudly present interracial couples. It is difficult to deny the positive impact of the physical movement of people on perceived differences and the reasons to get together. There has emerged a virtuous cycle of physical movement accompanied by the Internet and the Internet increasing physical mobility as a communication channel.

The overseas activities of BTS provide a good

* SNS: Social Network Services

example. The global popularity of K-pop can be explained adequately only by understanding the situations in the countries where it has audiences. The popularity of BTS cannot be discussed properly without first discussing digital connectivity. The presence of its fan club ARMY, the constant tweeting of individual BTS members, communication through reaction videos, the sharing of viral videos through cover groups (groups that imitate specific idol groups), and the like—all this would not have been possible without SNS* platforms that bring together the devoted fans who closely follow every move of the band members. Above all, the translations of the lyrics by Korean fans living in other language zones and the posting of these are an essential part the popularity process. When discussing the popularity of BTS, we cannot exclude the existence of the digitally networked fans and diaspora groups that provide them with amenities. Also to be remembered are the efforts of foreigners residing in Korea who translate the lyrics in their native languages. The so-called fan-sub is a device that transliterates K-pop lyrics into ‘other languages’ to help those foreigners who want to memorize these. As demonstrated in these examples, the increase in migrants is an event sufficiently contributing to the changing mutual imaginary and its effect is maximised through digital technology.

The fragrances and flavours of lamb skewer, baguette, sushi, rice noodle, nasi goreng, curry, nan, gyro and paella began to be integrated into the daily life of Koreans. An

* SNS: Social Network Services

increasing number of Koreans seek to explore their original taste and are often observed evaluating the conformity to the original taste through SNS*. Korea's changed ethnoscape along with its Internet landscape has changed the global imaginary of Koreans. The appearance of foreign professional and amateur street performers contributed to the popularity of the YouTube genre. At the same time, it also influenced the Korean music scene. The social imaginary has changed apace through new media and by the influx of a migrating population.

4. Postmodernity

Along with these changes, everyday life in the new millennium has also changed. The boundaries that had long been believed to be impregnable began to disappear. As a result, the events that should be explained with the words beginning with “de-” and equivalent prefixes meaning “away from” occurred everywhere in the new millennium. Thus, routinization of “debordering” did not come as a surprise. The movement to wrap the global achievements attained by BTS in nationalism was promptly criticized as Gukppong. The football leagues of different countries, such as Premier League (UK), Bundesliga (Germany), and La Liga (Spain), and Major League Baseball are also hot topics of everyday life in Korea, and not just because Korean players are playing

* SNS: Social Network Services

there. The boundary between the reality and the media is blurring. Due to the competition in cyberspace, the so-called “hyeonpi” (continuing online fights offline) happens on a daily basis. Since cyberspace is already connected with reality in augmented reality (AR), it seems unreasonable to differentiate material and nonmaterial characters.

It is common nowadays for people who 'are' connected offline. The rigid boundary between public and personal realms is also blurred, and the slogan that the “personal is political” is heard all over. After a long time, the responsibility for marriage, childbirth, and employment is no longer a personal but social matter. As a result, family problems are now considered social problems. The problems of a low birth rate, high percentage of unmarried population, child-rearing, and aging are no longer personal but public problems that determine the survival or extinction of society as a whole. The winds of globalization are blowing over the marriage landscape. “International marriage,” which used to 'be' a topic for gossip in the past, has now become a common event. Korean society is responding to change in the name of multiculturalism.

Many communication-related habits have also undergone changes; for example, confidential content is received as content open to disclosure. Photos used to be extremely private things, except for ID photos. A photo album had the status of “top secret,” which was shown to select persons, such as a future husband or wife, when they were

introduced to the family. Nowadays, however, the perception of photos or photo albums has completely changed. Photos have become objects for display in the public domain, and publishing pictures with confidential content has become an act of occupying our physical places in cyberspace. Furthermore, photos have become more than personal records, gaining the character of self-expression for establishing relationships with others. Consequently, photos have become objects with both private and public faces.

The regulations on the public sphere are also destabilizing. The conventional understanding of the public sphere is a place where formal public discussions take place. It has become difficult to distinguish between the inside and the outside of the public sphere. It is evident in the way we treat the comments on a hobby site and parodies crafted in a haphazard way. At times, we even regard them as a new style of presenting political debates. There are many public spheres that are not shrouded in solemnity. The numerous comments posted by viewers under YouTube videos and lively debates that sometimes break out among those who comment suggests that YouTube—and new media in general—is evolving into a new public sphere. A public sphere that offers a playful space might not have been treated as a public sphere in the past but no longer so now. It amply qualifies to be called a public sphere. It attracts more people than one where professionals debate with a serious look and solemn attitude and has a high potential to get people involved.

The boundaries between the mainstream and the underground, the dominant and the marginal, the normal and the abnormal, and the private and the public have become fluid. Everything in the digital world of the new millennium is being treated as homogeneous information. Even fake news (bad as it is) is treated to have information values. Everything that jumps on to a “derailed bandwagon” to take advantage of this reality goes digital. In the opposing camp, others are stubbornly insisting on the boundaries of the past. There are also increasing protests against the exclusive use of new digital technology. As if challenging the marriage of digital technology with K-pop, some amateurs go digital with versions of pumba (a traditional Korean performance art playing nomadic beggars who sing and dance in a marketplace until they are given food), creating a syndrome. In the digital world, this is also treated as meaningful information generation.

Refusing to link the influx of migrants to globalization, some people try to funnel it into a narrow-minded nationalist imaginary. Some take stances such as maintaining the purity of Korean society, warning against disappearing jobs and the increasing crime rates. Others commit acts of self-destruction by refusing to draw on the changing imaginary. Digital technology and migration are not necessary and sufficient conditions for renewing social imaginary. They have a potential to be used as a (conservative) means to maintain minimal fluidity and entropy and are

actually being used for that purpose. Thus, instead of being given wings and flying higher, the new social imaginary is suffering the polarization of opinions and imaginaries and debates between the two poles end up with endless exhaustive commotion. Even such commotion contributes to highlighting the struggles surrounding the boundaries of the social imaginary. In fact, it is a chance to perceive the blurring boundaries by itself because the two camps must heed attention to what they have overlooked and explain their positions to gain the sympathy of the public.

The term “implosion” is used to describe a situation in which the once solid boundaries of dichotomy are not solid any longer and it has become difficult to discern the right from the wrong. This necessitates an end to the stereotype that only public issues can be politicized and personal matters should be concealed. Private matters are becoming political and emerging as more important political agendas. Given that an individual represents both information and a physical being in this era, when the individual, who is regarded as the undividable smallest unit of society, is being circulated as a dividable unit within the society, i.e., as the dividual, the once solid subject cannot but become destabilised. Digital communication that connects me to the world out there sometimes makes me cosmopolitan but at other times earns me the epithet of nationalist. This destabilization of identity is happening at a global level, which is unprecedented to date.

Communicating within society as an “imploded”

being at a global level has already become commonplace. The imaginary towards the world firmly based on dichotomized boundaries belongs to the past now, albeit to a greater or lesser extent. Having achieved globalization implies that a certain degree of homogeneity has been reached in the imaginary. So, there is no such thing as cultural barriers that seemed to be considerable in intercommunication in the past. The phenomena of implosion, blurring boundaries, and emergence of new values are referred to by the overarching term “postmodernity” based on the idea that the solid boundaries were built during the process of modernity and that they began to crack in the postmodern society. Although there are societies in every corner of the world that are still stuck in modernity, it should not be assumed that they are also stuck in the imaginary of modernity. After learning about the changes in the labour market in Korea and the declining population, Nigerian workers decided to migrate in search of work. While living in a recently modernised society, the imaginary of Nigerians has a postmodern feature.

5. The social imaginary and the future of Korean Wave

Discussing the emergence of television and its explosive popularity, Raymond Williams (1974) summarised the relationship between technology and social change as

follows: The public living in a society with unprecedented mobility needed a buffer system for adaptation. In the face of the increasing mobility, they sought protection in an institution. The device that was intended to meet that demand was television, which could bring the public sphere into the private sphere, connecting the public and private spheres at a mitigated speed. In other words, television is a technology that entered the living room in the wake of the sudden change in the world. It was a device that helped the public live in a balance between the public and the private, i.e., live a busy life in a well-organised environment without being caught in turmoil.

Relationships other than that between technology and social change can be explained in the same way. Korean Wave, as mentioned in this article several times, is one of such devices. We cannot say that Korean Wave has a direct impact on the Korean Wave audience by the mere fact that they have built a global imaginary through Korean Wave. Inversely, it is also possible that a cultural phenomenon such as Korean Wave was called forth by its audience. With the emergence of digital media technology accompanied by the experience of population migration and the surge of postmodernity, there was a need for a social device to match these trends so that people could adapt themselves to the changing environment and create a new social imaginary. Korean Wave, which emerged at that juncture, quenched the audience's thirst for global cultural experiences.

In the mid-1990s, the transmission of Korean Wave through television was primarily due to industrial endeavours to meet the content needs of China, Taiwan, and Southeast Asia. Since the late-1990s, however, Korean Wave has been transmitted for totally different reasons. Acceptance far beyond the Asian region cannot be explained simply by the changed cultural industry or Korea's production excellence. The world was undergoing universal social changes and it needed a buffer that would mitigate the impact of that experience. It is by this process that Korean Wave, which had content and form appropriate for rousing curiosity, was chosen as the cultural content for building a new global imaginary. In that sense, Korean Wave cannot be attributed solely to Korea's power. It is a global social device tailored to the immense wave of changes called globalization and a global cultural phenomenon best suited for the period of global social change. Of course, it was also a choice to embrace the social fluctuations in a way best suited for the audiences.

The secret of the popularity of BTS lies in their great chemistry (emotional connection) with the place where their music is consumed. BTS has given performances that harmonize well with the characteristics of the regions in which their events take place. This is possible because Korean Wave embraces both universality that can be accommodated in many different regions and distinctiveness that is different from their local pop culture. The musical elements of K-pop include the characteristics of Western pop music, but it is hard to define

K-pop as its copy. Given that Korean pop music dates back to the Japanese occupation period, it cannot be free from its influence. Post-liberation as well, the musical ties have continued and the music industries of the two countries have exchanged popular trends. It is due to this fact that people hybridity is associated with Korean Wave including K-pop. It is argued that whereas Korean Wave has globally universal popular content aimed at commercial success, it assumes a unique Korean colour originating from the collective memory of historical vicissitudes during the colonial rule, war, and military dictatorship under the influence of Japan, China, and the US.

The Shinpa (sentimentality) in Korean melodramas, also known as K-dramas, is a typical example of hybridity. Although it is a colonial legacy, it has evolved into a new genre, gaining uniquely Korean traits throughout its history of colonialism, war, and rapid industrialization. Critics express dissatisfaction about frequently resorting to the secret of birth, tangled family relationships, and preposterous providential coincidence in K-dramas, but these are their unique traits difficult to find in other cultures. A K-drama usually has a happy ending and does not lose the thread of universality, without forgetting to attract popularity with its uniqueness. Foreign K-drama fans are attracted to the particularity in universality they find in K-dramas. Universality and particularity face each other in friction and conflict, but they often derive surprisingly attractive

harmony depending on how they are woven into the fabric of story. Korean Wave is a cultural device that conveys the universality and particularity of Korean popular culture to the global audiences interwoven with digital media technology, population migration, and postmodernity. Korean Wave makes them experience the expanded world without being swept away with the increasingly fast-paced globalization (enjoying the universality aspect) amidst diversified social changes (feeling the particularity aspect). In the same vein, digital technology, population migration, postmodernity, a changing social imaginary, and Korean Wave are constituent parts of an integrated whole rather than independent entities impacting one another.

Western European modernity spread to central and eastern Europe and further to Asia. This is the reason why modernity is often equated with Westernization. Whereas its flow is universal, universal acceptance did not occur in the process of its spread in Asia. It is also associated with creative and contradictory changes. Korean Wave is one of such cases. As cultural content travels rapidly around the world along with destabilizing modernity, debordering, and digital technology, Korean Wave appeals to people with seeming universality charged with its own aesthetics and attracts the attention of the entire world. It serves as a resource for the social imaginary matching the era of globalization. People across the globe experience this rapidly changing world in a well-balanced way through Korean Wave. The world is gradually contracting in

both temporal and spatial senses. The content circulated in the West flows to Asia and is circulated in a localised form, making people realize their spatiotemporal position. If we wish to understand the significance of Korean Wave, it would seem meaningful to imagine what its new role would be in this recurring process.

Correcting the notion that the West has been and will continue to be the centre of human history, stressing the imperative of establishing sustainable coexistence in peaceful, not competitive, relationships, and demonstrating the need to show respect for all particularities, the possibility of a sympathy for cross-border solidarity, and creative productivity of universally appealing cultural content in a sorrowful and difficult historical process—these may seem to impose too heavy a task on one popular cultural phenomenon that is only a pastime. However, considering the achievements of Korean Wave thus far, namely boosting national prestige, contributing to the national economy, and demonstrating the superiority of the Korean people, it is a rather light order. It cannot be insisted that this order be accepted independently of the universal quest of the popular cultural industry to export more Korean Wave and maintain its sustainability. It should be kept in mind that the success history of Korean Wave is ascribable to its particularity in universality. If the Korean cultural industry takes on a special role found nowhere else, this universal quest may be solved automatically.

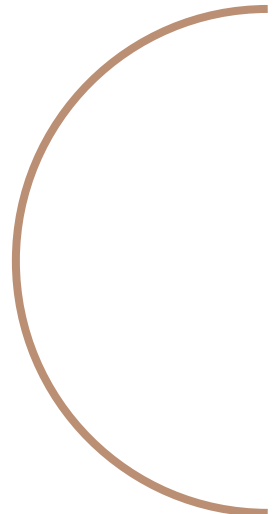
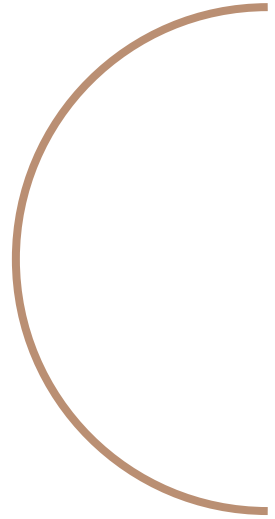
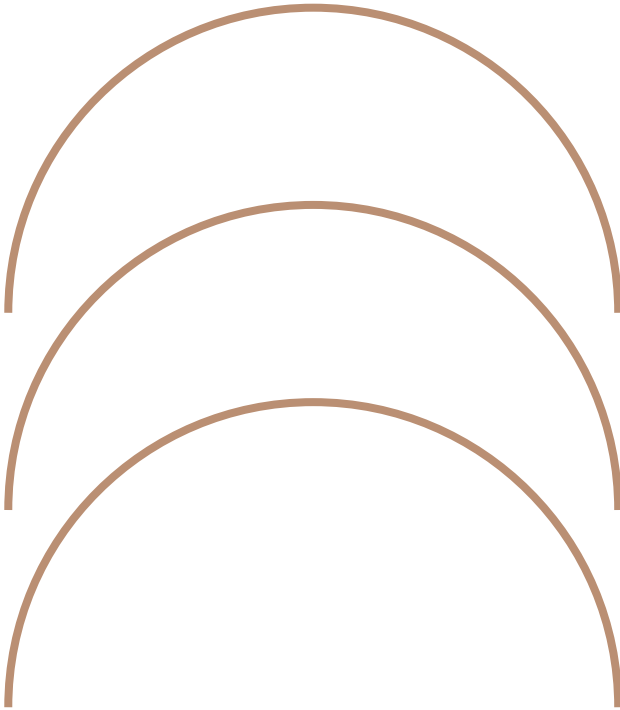
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2) Efficacy of Korean Wave: beyond industry, beyond superpower



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In March 2019, following the outbreak of the so-called “Burning Sun Gate,” the Korean media worried about the contraction or collapse of Korean Wave. For example, after Seungri announced his retirement on March 11, *Joongang Ilbo* reported that YG Entertainment’s market capitalization fell to 110.9 billion won (US\$ 94.2 million) overnight and projected a further decrease in the year-on-year sales in 2019, which had already reduced by 18.3 % (KRW 285.8 billion) in 2018. It claimed that the Korean Wave agency, which had grown into a world-class agency after 20 years of endeavour, had collapsed within a month (Min Kyung-won, 2019). The Asia Business Daily expressed worrisome thoughts about the future of the K-pop industry under the headline “5-trillion KRW K-pop industry is rocking” (Choi & Kim, 2019). On the other hand, the popular culture journal *Ten Asia Magazine* called for caution against a blanket criticism of the entertainment industry lest the industry itself should be intimidated, citing an insider, “The entire entertainment industry should not be made accountable for the crime and deviance committed by some” (Noh, 2019).

Common sense dictates that the sex crimes, drug distribution, tax evasion, and the illegal hidden cameras, filming, and distribution exposed by the *Burning Sun Gate* should be thoroughly investigated in relation to the entertainment industry. It is also an occasion for re-examining the patriarchal gender violence issue associated with this scandal and emphasizing the public responsibility of

celebrities. Expressing, above all, worries about the erosion of the entertainment industry instead depicts the reality that our society regards Korean Wave first and foremost as an economic tool. Is Korean Wave then just an industry that brings in economic benefits? Reflections on what Korean Wave is are valid even now, more than two decades after it came into being.

1. Hypothesis of Korean Wave extinction and countermeasures

Many people trace Korean Wave back to the 1997 screening of the Korean drama “What is Love All About” by China Central Television (CCTV), which gained wide popularity. It was re-aired in 1998 on the request of Chinese viewers, which was a rare occasion for foreign dramas. Around that time, Korean pop music (in those days, the term “K-pop” was not used) became popular in Taiwan and Hong Kong as well as in Mainland China. Korean popular culture, including dramas and music, began to attract attention as a new social phenomenon in Greater China Region. The Chinese media began to refer to the influx and popularity of Korean popular culture as Korean Wave (韓流, Korean current; hallyu in Korean) in a sarcastic association with a cold current (寒流, also pronounced as hallyu [“韓” (Korea) and “寒” (cold) are homonyms]), which hinted at their hope that it

was a temporary phenomenon. In fact, the Chinese authorities warned against the influence of foreign culture on their way of thinking and lifestyle. China, which had gradually opened up since the late 1970s, was friendlier towards Korean culture for being relatively conservative as compared with American and Japanese cultures but did not loosen control over it as it was a foreign culture.

The expectations that Korean Wave would fade out in China led to the prediction of its extinction in Singapore and Japan. In the early 2000s, scholars and industry insiders in these countries issued a diagnosis that Korean Wave would soon fade out because Korean pop culture, which had a weak base, fared poorly in international competitiveness. They did not hide their contempt and prejudice against Korean society and culture through the claim of “Korean Wave will be end up as a temporary phenomenon just as all waves fade out.”

Even in Korea, the opinion emerged that Korean Wave would soon fade out for various reasons. However, as demonstrated by the expression “the best event ever in our 5000 years of history,” the economic and cultural ripple effects of Korean Wave were highly appreciated. The central and local governments, which did not want to miss the precious opportunity offered by Korean Wave, came up with one plan after another to promote Korean Wave in the same way they had promoted the economic plans in the 1960s and 1970s to prevent Korean Wave from fading out.

This social atmosphere also influenced the academic

discourse surrounding Korean Wave, which promoted administrative or policy-related research on Korean Wave rather than critical or philosophical studies. Media scholar Vincent Mosco declared in his book *Political Economy of Communication* that the essential cause of communication research in political economy is to raise the ethical concern for justice (Mosco, 1998). According to Mosco, the role of communication research is to raise fundamental questions about culture and media through philosophical reflections on and critical discussions about the private ownership of the public sphere. From this it can be concluded that many of these studies on political economy, though equipped with the form of qualitative evaluation based on the change of quantitative indicators, are only pseudo-political economy research in terms of content (Choi, 2015). What is more, the methodological approaches of these studies highly rely on the reports and control data released by the government. This led to an analysis of the Korean Wave phenomenon using the top-down approach, which resulted in the strengthening of the foreign trend of misunderstanding Korean Wave as a “control phenomenon.”

Considering these circumstances, there is an urgent need for research on the understanding of Korean Wave’s current landscape from multiple perspectives based on the observations and analyses of its bottom-up processes, such as the activities of its audiences. This can be done by various qualitative research approaches and in situ surveys

in the regions where Korean Wave is spreading. The view that regards Korean Wave first and foremost as an industry has been propagated by the biased concentration in the big market countries. It is high time that we paid more attention to the status of Korean Wave in the regions that have been rather neglected to date, i.e., in various localities across the globe other than the US, China, and Japan, to explore Korean Wave's acceptance in those areas and its encounters with the local situations and the significance of Korean Wave and its implications for those regions. I term this as Korean Wave's glocality. Korean Wave, which has been formed by the mutual exchange in different parts across the globe, is generating new meanings in interaction with other localities. If Korean Wave is a flow, it will bring to Korea the meanings generated in each of the locations where it is consumed. Korean Wave spreading in every corner of the world will be an occasion for Koreans, who have long enclosed themselves in the one-dimensional worldview centred on the US, to attain a higher international sensitivity. Looking into the glocality of Korean Wave and reflecting on its meaning would lead to mining the knowledge resources that Korean Wave has germinated. What new knowledge will Korean Wave allow us to harvest?

2. "Glocality" of Korean Wave

Let us take a look at some examples of Korean Wave

observed in many parts of the world based on the problem consciousness raised in the previous section of this article. In particular, why did the girl group Twice Tzuyu release the video apology? What does the *Gangnam Style* flash mob in Bangladesh mean? What can we learn from the popularity of Korean Studies spreading in Northern Europe?

To begin with, the incident of the YouTube video of Tzuyu, a Taiwanese member of Twice, in January 2016 provided a new awareness of the international political situation of Northeast Asia. Admittedly, Korean fans are mainly exposed to the images of K-pop artists performing on the international stage and enthusiastically welcomed by international fans. All of a sudden, however, a K-pop singer, albeit of a foreign nationality, a teenage girl who had just debuted, had to apologize to the world. What on earth happened? The following account is a summary of the happenings.

In November 2015, Tzuyu appeared on “My Little Television,” a live entertainment broadcast by MBC on the Internet, together with her fellow foreign members Momo, Mina, and Sana. They had their respective national flags prepared by the production team, and Tzuyu waved a Taiwanese flag. This footage was edited out later and not aired, and it seemed to fade into oblivion.

However, the local media began to feature every move of Tzuyu, who was already a pop star in Taiwan and called “Taiwan’s Light.” In January 2016, a Taiwanese

broadcaster aired the scene and praised Tzuyu's patriotism. A few days later, Huang An, a China-based Taiwanese singer, accused Tzuyu of being a Taiwanese independence activist. There was a surge of condemnations and attacks by the Chinese who regarded Taiwan as a part of China. In the face of this public opinion, Huawei, which employed Tzuyu as a model for a smart phone commercial, removed the commercial. Anhui TV cancelled the performance of Twice scheduled for its Spring Festival Gala (Jung, 2017). Furthermore, Chinese netizens boycotted the scheduled performances of JYP Entertainment's artists, including 2PM and GOT7, and JYP's stock price declined.

Eventually, on January 14, 2016, JYP issued two apologies, announcing that it would temporarily suspend all activities of Tzuyu in China, and on the following day (January 15), a video in that featured Tzuyu apologizing was posted on JYP's official Weibo and YouTube, in which she stated, "There is only one China. Both sides of the Strait constitute a single nation. I am proud to be a Chinese." Immediately thereafter, on January 16, the *Global Times* (環球時報), a tabloid affiliated to the Chinese Communist Party's official newspaper *People's Daily* issued a warning against malicious comments or bad actions against Tzuyu, saying "Today we have gained a promising Chinese beauty" and giving her the epithet of "China's Light," as though generously embracing and rewarding a repentant traitor (Korea Herald Biz, 2016). On the other hand, Tzuyu's apology video infuriated the public

in Taiwan. They condemned it as a violation of human rights to instigate young Tzuyu to issue the humiliating apology and demonstrated their rage at the denial of Taiwan's sovereignty. The rage was vented on the Chinese government, netizens, and Taiwanese politicians who could not properly protect their own people and JYP.

As it happened, the Taiwan presidential election was held on January 16. In the face of the agitated public opinion, even the traditional pro-Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) had taken the position that the Taiwanese should not be forced to apologize for waving the Taiwanese national flag, referring to the case of Tzuyu. Nonetheless, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), who had been pursuing the independence of Taiwan, won a landslide victory with, by far, the biggest margin. After winning the presidential election, President Tsai Ing-wen declared, "No Taiwanese shall ever apologize for expressing his or her nationality during my presidency." This demonstrates the immense ripple effect of Tzuyu's apology (Cheon, 2016).

Overseas markets are very important to K-pop producers who work in the narrow domestic market conditions. JYP Entertainment selected Tzuyu, targeting the Greater Chinese market. However, JYP overlooked the political conflicts and confrontations within Greater China Region, with an exclusive focus on Mainland China. In his apology letter posted on JYP Entertainment's Weibo, its market-oriented CEO Park Jin-young apologized to the

gigantic Chinese market, declaring “First, I would like to sincerely apologize to the Chinese fans who felt hurt. ... We will do our best to make sure this doesn’t happen again.” He then displayed his insensitivity to the wrath of the Taiwanese people and mirrored the culture of patriarchal control rampant in the K-pop production agencies, saying “Tzuyu has learned a lot in the past few days and is very remorseful. ... At fault are myself and our company who could not teach her properly in place of her parents” (Kim Y.R, 2016)

A positive effect of this incident was the intensive coverage received by the “forgotten nation” Taiwan and the cross-strait relations in the Korean press, which in turn contributed to better understanding of the international relations surrounding the peninsula. This incident, which occurred in the context of Korean Wave, provided a new way of looking at Asia and the world for Koreans, who have a narrow sensitivity to international cognition as a people trapped in one half of the peninsula unable to go anywhere via land routes. In particular, this case draws our attention to the imperialist face of China, which had been primarily a “market” for Koreans.

On the other hand, the Chinese who demanded that Tzuyu express her views on sovereignty put pressure on Yoona, a member of Korean girl group Girls’ Generation, in the same way that summer. In July 2016, a fierce territorial dispute broke out between China and the Southeast Asian nations on the South China Sea. At that time, Chinese Korean

Wave stars (Victoria of f(x), Lay of Exo, Fei and Jia of Miss A, Cao Lu of Fiestar, and Zhou Mi of Super Junior-M) declared their support for China's arguments by posting a phrase “中國一點都不能少”^{*} on SNS. Around the same time, Chinese netizens asked Yoona to declare her position, asking “What does the South China Sea problem mean to you who is earning money in China?” (Kim Y.J., 2016). On the opposite camp, Southeast Asian fans from Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines posted online, “We love Yoona very much. Please do not support China. Then, we would be very sad.” China's Korean Wave ban (限韓令) issued a few weeks after this incident made it clear that Korean Wave cannot spread irrespective of international politics.

Let us now shift our focus to Bangladesh. The emergence of Korean Wave sparked a domestic debate on what the Korean style was, which spread the strange notion of hybridity. On a related note, Psy's *Gangnam Style* was an occasion for the Bangladesh people to reconsider their history, tradition, and identity. The story goes like this. In the summer of 2012, a group of youngsters demonstrated a *Gangnam Style* flash mob at the traditional Kawran Bazar area at downtown Dhaka, Bangladesh. Through this event, recorded as the first flash mob in Bangladesh history, these youngsters expressed their wish to participate in the trend shared by young people across the globe. They may have been symbolically satisfying their desire to overcome the limits of the Third World by consuming the global capitalist culture.

* Not even the slightest bit can be taken away from China.

They conducted the event without obtaining prior permission from the Bangladesh police. It was the implementation of the least resistance that the weak could show against the oppressive strong. They temporarily achieved the freedom of expression by performing unauthorised gestures and transformed the space under government control into a true public sphere. This newly opened physical space led to the expansion of the public sphere. At first, the Bangladesh public, full of conservative pride about tradition, regarded the young people that performed the *Gangnam Style* flash mob as Western vassals. The public blamed and attacked them, and only a small minority defended them. However, as the debate unfolded, people began to reflect on the identity issue. Yoon (2018) evaluated that the *Gangnam Style* flash mob was an occasion for Bangladeshis to view themselves and the world from a new perspective by confusing and disturbing their perception of tradition and Asian values they had taken for granted thitherto.

However, the fact that *Gangnam Style* was regarded as Western music in Bangladesh leads to another food-for-thought. Bangladeshis made that judgment based on the facts that *Gangnam Style* was a Western-style music, it became popular worldwide via YouTube, and its singer Psy belonged to Korea, a developed country. In other words, they viewed *Gangnam Style* as a culture of a strong “other” that could contaminate them. Thus, their dichotomy of the East and the West is not based on a simple geographic consideration.

This confirms that classification itself can be fluid depending on the context. Without exchanges, we cannot but confine ourselves to a particular context and look at the world from that confining perspective. On this note, it can be observed that Korean Wave flows in various directions and generates new meanings by taking an unexpected path. When Psy's *Gangnam Style* hit the world in 2012, we derived one meaning out of the phenomenon. It was a shout of joy about the success of Korean music "at last in the West", known in Southeast Asia as K-pop until then under the aura of Korean Wave. As can be seen in the Bangladesh case, however, *Gangnam Style* functions as a text that creates a different meaning in the interface with a new situation in an unexpected region.

Finally, it is worth noting that Korean Wave, which started as a commercial mass culture, is contributing to the growth of Korean Studies. In the early and mid-2000s, the departments of Korean Studies in major Western universities were at the brink of extinction. Not as well supported by the government or industry as sinology or Japanese Studies, graduate students and researchers of Korean Studies often switched to sinology or Japanese Studies in search of more comfortable research environments. The National University of Singapore even rejected the proposal of the Korea Research Foundation to function as a research university for Korean Studies outside of Korea.

However, as young people who grew up as Korean Wave fans entered university, things started to change. Those

who became interested in Korea through K-drama and K-pop wanted to pursue serious study of Korean culture and history at the university level. An increasing number of universities recruited Korean Studies scholars in the disciplines of Korean culture, history, political science, and economics as professors, and the number of those studying Korean Studies at the graduate level has also increased. As the historian Park No-ja confesses, researchers of Korean Studies all over the world now regard Korean Wave fans as their potential students and study Korean popular culture irrespective of their fields of expertise, be it Korean ancient history or Korean literature, and start relevant programmes for them.

According to the observations of Park No-ja, who teaches Korean Studies at the University of Oslo in Norway, Northern European Korean Wave fans are critical thinkers. They call themselves Koreaboo (meaning “enthusiastic Korean Wave fans” or “those who regard themselves as honorary Koreans based on the Korean Wave fandom”) and have a solid knowledge of the K-pop production structure, going beyond actively accepting K-pop melodies, which are Asian and global at the same time, and dynamic and colourful choreography. These Northern European fans who possess progressive social ideas specific to Northern Europe have recently raised critical awareness about the regressive social awareness and patriarchal female representations hidden in recent K-pop trends. They also critically point out the practices of infringing on the basic human rights of pop idols as well

as temporary workers at K-pop, drama, and film production sites. Nothing can remain concealed in today's superconnected society where everything is open and relayed. The boundaries between Korea and foreign countries are blurring, and the knowledge gap between domestic and foreign fans has almost disappeared. It is high time we discussed the awareness and perception of multiculturalism, gender, and human rights at a universal level. Our practices should be improved.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, if the Korean pop culture industry targeting the global market is to keep growing, it must solve the problems of unstable work environments at production sites, the violation of human rights in the ill treatment of trainees and artists, and an outdated gender susceptibility. In the broadcasting industry, it is a traditional down practice to regard those in their early and mid-teenage years as the audience. However, Korean popular culture has become an industry serving a variety of fan base around the world with various backgrounds and social awareness levels. Furthermore, the current crop of Korean students in their early and mid-teenage years cannot be equated with those in the economic development period. They have a considerable level of information literacy and a high level of human rights awareness. Consequently, more rigorous standards should be

applied to improve production practices. The media, critics, and academics should take responsibility for the structural problems in the Korean entertainment industry as recently revealed by the *Burning Sun Gate*. Those who should contribute to maintaining healthy cultural ecosystems should critically reflect on whether they have sufficiently pointed out problems and urged improvement or contributed to steering Korean Wave from the market-oriented viewpoint only.

By the same token, it is worth recalling the incident of Tzuyu's apology. In fact, after Korea severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan in 1992, anti-Korean sentiment has persisted in Taiwan. Korean Wave had contributed to restoring the friendly relationship between the two countries, but the incident of Tzuyu's apology allegedly forced by the agency rekindled the anti-Korean sentiment in Taiwan. JYP, which approached the Greater China market on the extension line of export-first policy handed down from the economic development period in pursuit of economic benefits without a sufficient understanding of the history and culture of the targeted counties and areas represents the microcosm formed by the domestic Korean Wave policy.

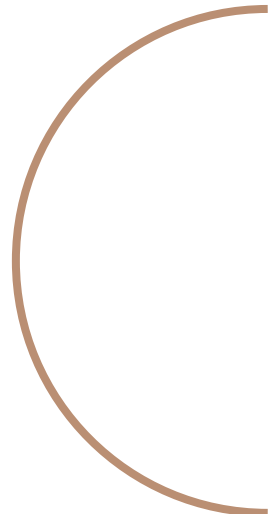
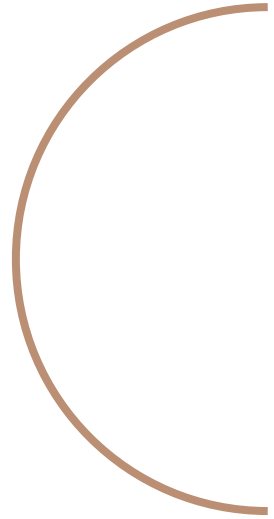
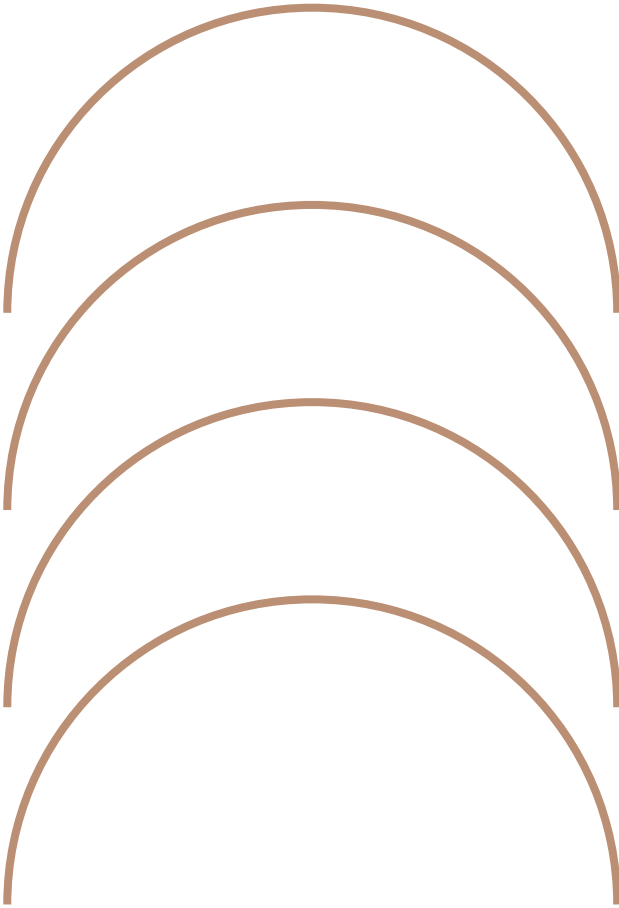
In the meantime, there is a need for critical self-reflection on whether or not we have viewed Korean Wave from a one-dimensional perspective. Korean Wave was an unexpected gift for us, who had been thirsty for international recognition. Coming at the end of the dark tunnel of the 1997 financial crisis, Korean Wave has boosted the national pride for

the past two decades along with the international achievements of athletes such as Chan-ho Park, Se-ri Pak, and Ji-sung Park, and the reputation of being an IT superpower. As a shimmer of hope, which shone through a society that had struggled through a long tunnel of gloomy financial crisis, Korean Wave has steadily contributed to boosting the export index of related industries, such as tourism and consumer goods. Recalling how the main character Joon-sang Kang of the K-drama *SKY Castle*, who had done everything without scruples to reach the top of the pyramid, regretted belatedly, wishing “only if I had not looked only up, but also sideways and back ...” in the second half of the drama, we too should look at the various sides of Korean Wave before it is too late. If Korean Wave is a text, it is a polysemic text that can be interpreted according to the context in which it is set, as demonstrated in some cases presented in this chapter. In this context, it is all the more important to carry out reflective research of Korean Wave. If we pay attention to the possibility of Korean Wave as a knowledge resource, away from treating it from a market-oriented perspective, we will improve our understanding of others’ as well as our sensitivity to international relations.

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3) Universality and particularity of K-pop as a glocal culture



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1. Introduction

The global success of Bangtan Sonyeondan (Bulletproof Boy Scouts; hereinafter “BTS”) and their global fan frenzy made headlines every day in 2018. The epithet “the first Korean band” has been heard in combination with each of their achievements unprecedented in the history of Korean popular culture, setting records on the Billboard chart, the number of albums sold abroad, the number of YouTube views and subscribers, and the fandom size. The most iconic event was when BTS won the Top Social Artist Award at the Billboard Music Awards for two consecutive years after it broke Justin Bieber’s winning streak (six consecutive wins) in 2017. The fact that BTS is not associated with the top three entertainment agencies of Korea amplified public interest. The Korean government, the cultural industry, export companies, and the media are also paying close attention to the BTS effect.

In line with this fever, media culture research needs to regard BTS as a “cultural event,” away from the attitude of enumerating the records set by BTS in the form of news or repeating BTS-related information that has become general knowledge now. Regarding the success of BTS as a cultural event has to do with the penetration and acceptance of American culture around the world after World War II. American culture has dominated popular culture worldwide to the extent that global culture has been equated with American

culture. This pattern of unidirectional cultural distribution has been cracked by BTS. This phenomenon began in the early 1990s when Latin American pop culture (typically “telenovela” dramas) became popular not only in the Central and South Americas but also in the United States; yet, North America has upheld its cultural dominance. Entering the new millennium, Korean dramas (K-dramas) and Korean pop music (K-pop) emerged in the form of the so-called Korean Wave (hallyu) fever as an example of the globalization of local culture, this time of course more strongly than the Latin American example. However, its position was insignificant in the North American and European markets, which were holding the global cultural hegemony. BTS emerged on this global stage and succeeded in adding qualitative metamorphosis to quantitative growth and began to be enthusiastically accepted in every corner of the world, occupying the position of the representative of the 21st century global culture.

Can we be sure that BTS is the result of the local popular culture of Korea internalizing the emotions and lifestyle of Koreans? Or is it an exceptional entity that happens to be a “made in Korea” product but originally a global culture equipped with global sentiment and style enough to attract even the United States? How was this cultural event possible in the first place, and what does this cultural event mean? This article will argue that K-pop is a local culture created under the cultural sentiment and production method of Korean society and, at the same time, a global culture embodying the

newly forming global cultural sentiment and desire. In order to explain the simultaneous implementation of local and global cultures, I will use the term “glocal” culture proposed by Roland Robertson (Robertson, 1995).

To support this argument, there is a need to determine the historical and sociocultural context and nature of K-pop as the incubator of BTS, which cannot be achieved by a mere observation of the activities and styles of BTS. This work enables us to capture the characteristics and emotions of the epoch, going beyond the narrow scope of the success or conditions of success of BTS, and helps us understand the conditions that made the success of BTS possible without dealing directly with BTS. Using the research findings regarding fandom and K-pop as the basic resources,* this article aims to explore the particularity of K-pop as a local culture and its universality as a global culture by delving into the question, “What are the unique characteristics of K-pop, and how could it operate with the global cultural codes?”**

The discussion in this article is divided into three strands: (i) the cultural characteristics of K-pop are reviewed as discussed in the research on Korean Wave and K-pop culture conducted to date in order to broaden the understanding of this topic and assess the position of this

* Sections 2 and 4 of this article partially rely on the paper of Sujeong Kim and Soo-Ah Kim (2015b). For detailed examples and explanations, please refer to the paper. This article expands the discussion in Sujeong Kim and Soo-Ah Kim (2015b) to the dimension of global culture.

** In this article, the term universality is not used in the sense of universal truth that transcends time and space but refers to a

dominant general state arising from a given context of the current epoch. In explaining the phenomenon of K-pop communication across the boundaries of the state, culture, language, and generation, “universal” or “universality” was considered more suitable than “general,” which means the majority, and “dominant,” which emphasizes the hierarchy of power.

study; (ii) the social conditions of the 21st century and the K-pop generation sharing youthful emotions born in this context in order to capture the universal cultural flow; and (iii) the particularity of K-pop in the three aspects of text, production, and consumption connected by the media and the operation mode of this particularity as a global culture.

2. Controversy over K-pop's local cultural identity

Over the past decade, the popularity of K-pop has rapidly expanded in terms of regional coverage and fandom size and active discussions have been underway in the media and academia to identify the factors leading to the success of K-pop. A major factor of the success of K-pop frequently mentioned is cultural hybridity, which enables it to communicate with other cultures. Discussions about hybridity have prompted some popular culture scholars and researchers to raise questions about the cultural identity of K-pop. K-pop's cultural hybridity has been mainly associated with its Western pop music forms and styles reflecting the global pop trend by mixing rock, electronic, R&B, and hip-hop. Other factors often mentioned with regard to K-pop's hybridity are mixing English lyrics with Korean lyrics, composing K-pop girl and boy groups with multinational members taking account of each local market, and involving famous European and

American composers and choreographers in the production of K-pop. Consequently, the question has been raised whether or not K-pop is purely Korean.

The question about the cultural identity of K-pop is raised in relation to the question about its representativeness, given that the “K” in K-pop stands for Korea. For example, pop music researcher Hyun-joon Shin declares that “K-pop was a genre of pop music produced in Korea for other countries,” pointing out that K-pop was thus named when referring to Korean pop music by a Hong Kong-based satellite broadcaster and that K-pop represents only a part of Korean pop music (Shin, 2013, p. 31). However, this is an interpretation that disregards the fact that Koreans accept and use the name regardless of who named it and that the girl and boy groups’ dance music referred to by K-pop is the mainstream of Korean pop music enjoyed not only by its fans but also the general pop music consumers in Korea. In Korea, reactions to K-pop widely vary—some question whether the K-pop girl and boy groups’ music represents the entire pop music landscape of Korea, as discussed earlier, and others insist compulsively on cultural nationality that can justify the use of “K” in naming this genre of music (Jo-Han, 2013). These issues of K-pop’s nationality and cultural identity are associated not only with the characterizing of K-pop as Korean pop culture but also with the perception of popular culture itself and the relationship between local and global cultures.

Sujeong Kim and Soo-ah Kim (2015b) critically

examine the discussions surrounding the cultural identity of K-pop by largely dividing them into three positions. The first position is that not only is the question of cultural identity meaningless in itself, given that K-pop is a stateless “hybridized culture,” it is also a discriminatory question because the question of identity is not raised with regard to Western music (Jung, 2011). In addition, there is a strong tendency to discriminate between the two. This argument has the effect of forestalling the patriotic discourse of the government or the media to monopolize the success of K-pop as the success of the nation by dismissing the question of nationality of K-pop and criticizing the West-centredness of the question. However, it contains a conceptual error by equating textual hybridity directly with statelessness (Kim S.J., 2012). Another problem with this position is dismissing the quest for Korean sociocultural characteristics as the local culture imbedded in the hybridized culture by dismissing the question of identity itself.

The second position puts forth the argument that K-pop’s hybridity deprives it of its nationality. This argument has actually been derived from two different views. One of them stems from the view that Korean music should be the one carrying traditional features, such as Korean pentatonic scale, Korean classical beauty, and virtuous attitudes, and Confucian values (Lie, 2012). This view, which is advocated by some foreign researchers, is based on the cultural essentialism that perceives culture in its petrified form. The problem with this

view is that it overlooks the dynamics and changes in culture, evaluating the present using the criteria of the past in total oblivion of the values and lifestyle experience by the public “here and now.”

The other view underlying the second position, i.e. the denial of K-pop’s nationality, is regarding K-pop as a global product fabricated by entertainment agencies that imitate the trends in Western pop culture to facilitate its export instead of regarding it as Korean popular culture (Shin, 2013; Lee, 2006, 2012). This has the advantage of highlighting K-pop as a cross-border cultural capital beyond the realm of music but presents limitations in that it overlooks the characteristics of K-pop as culture and its relative autonomy by perceiving culture as a product completely overpowered by and dependent upon the economy.

The third position is that K-pop has a Korean cultural identity despite its hybridity. This position is divided into two distinctive stances. One is the research direction of seeking the Korean nature of K-pop in its production method and not in its cultural value or sentiment expressed by it. For example, Sori Shin and Ranu Kim argue that the in-house production system of K-pop entertainment agencies represents a Korean style in that it is operated by the same organizational principles pursued by Korean conglomerates such as Samsung, namely vertical integration, brand identity building, and global market orientation (Shin & Kim, 2013). Hyun-joon Shin (2013) and Dong-yeon Lee (2011) agree to this view in that

K-pop production is specific to Korean culture. This argument has extended the scope of discussion of cultural identity, which used to focus on the apparent musical characteristics, to the level of music production and is persuasive to a certain degree. However, this view is challenged by the argument that the K-pop production method was inspired by and actually very similar to the Motown Records' production method, namely factory-like division of labour, family-like solidarity, and a branding strategy for widespread distribution (Lee G.T., 2014). This example shows that there is a serious limitation in discussing Korean characteristics in the K-pop production process only at the organizational level.

The other stance of the third position is a holistic view suggested by Sujeong Kim and Soo-Ah Kim (2015b). They argue that the Korean cultural identity of K-pop can be explained from a multidimensional perspective encompassing the dimensions of the production process, including the training method, the dimension of content fusing music and performance, and the dimension of consumption including fans' reactions and voluntary activities, going much beyond the mere organizational dimension of K-pop production. Detailed discussions will be presented in Section 4. In a nutshell, these authors' argument can be boiled down to the "moralism" as the value and sentiment of Korean culture that permeates the production, text, and consumption of K-pop is its cultural identity, i.e., its locality.

The current study also holds the position taken

by Sujeong Kim and Soo-Ah Kim (2015b), in which the key feature is to explain how K-pop with local cultural characteristics could surge as a global culture and be accepted by global fans. This requires reflections on the characteristics and trends of the global culture of the present time instead of oversimplifying Western music styles as characterizing global culture. It is by placing K-pop in the context of this macroscopic cultural trend that we can gain a deeper understanding of the process by which K-pop's cultural style could become a global culture and the superimposition of local and global cultures as well as the internal and external leaps.

3. Conditions of the digital global age and characteristics of millennials

1) Fandom as a consumer model in the digital age

The rapid development of technology is transforming the attributes of media consumers along with their consumption patterns and scope, increasingly boosting mutual accessibility and interactivity. Media consumers have now become prosumers that generate information and content ad infinitum; that is, they are no long passive consumers. Fandom is a representative case of this phenomenon. In the pre-digital 20th century too, fans of specific movies or rock

stars or TV programmes created and distributed fan magazines (fanzines) and fan fiction and indicated the presence of fandom characterized by participatory culture or “community culture” (Jenkins, 1992).

Advances in Internet technology have further expanded and strengthened the characteristics of the fandom portrayed by Jenkins, which has now evolved into everyday practice. Fan activities have engendered a “convergence culture” in which committed fans find new information and create networks connecting dispersed media content, converting legacy media to new media through personal communication, such as emails and blogs/vlogs, and the SNS (Jenkins, 2006, p. 18). Furthermore, “collective intelligence,” which is the ability of a virtual community to combine and utilize expertise through close interactions among fans, and “participatory culture” formed by active involvement have become common characteristics of not only fans but also general media consumers. The shift of fan model from passively consuming fans interpreting and appropriating content to actively committed fans participating, connecting, and implementing content generation has triggered a paradigm shift from the interpreting to the performative audience (Kim S.J. & Kim S.A, 2015a).

Fandom has characteristics of strong emotional attachment, loyalty, and devoted behaviour towards the fan object. Most industries in the new media ecosystems leverage these fan characteristics to their advantages by turning

consumers into fans of their products and brands. Regardless of whether the specific fan object is a K-pop star or a specific consumer item or a brand (e.g., Starbucks), each fandom boosts the brand value by actively producing its own content from product reviews to related parody videos and plays the role of ideal consumers carrying out multiple functions, such as purchaser/marketers, supporters, and idea providers. The boundaries between consumption and production are blurred, and the importance and value of fandom become increasingly high in the industry.

The behaviour of all media consumers and audiences as producers leads to an explosion of information that circulates through a large number of digital media, and value generation attracts “attention.” Within the constraints of 24 hours in a day, the scarcity of “attention” makes it a resource of the “attention economy” system that assigns value to infinitely proliferating information (Kim Y.R., 2012, p. 170). The market has now become an arena of competition for attention (Webster, 2014). The products posted on YouTube by numerous fans operate in this attention economy. Su-cheol Kim and Jeong-won Kang (2013) point out that Psy’s *Gangnam Style*, a non-mainstream marginal culture could achieve global success thanks to the proliferation of meme videos generated by fans active on the YouTube platform. Meme video is an overarching term for fan-created videos transforming the original video, including cover dance videos, reaction videos, and parody videos. Such creative media

content generated by fans' affection, sense of humour, and loyalty constitutes an important axis explaining K-pop's global success in the attention economy.

It is obvious that fans' committed participation in practicing convergence culture and collective intelligence is in effect "free labour" in the digital economy (Terranova, 2000). Production activities, such as chats, real stories, bulletin comments, mailing lists, and blog/vlog activities, are the outputs of cultural, emotional, and nonmaterial labour that puts and keeps the Internet in motion. They are mostly provided free of charge and subsumed by capital. However, the free labour of fans has the aspect of a "gift economy," which operates on the ethics and principles of gratitude, recognition, and exchange among fellow fans as well as the pleasure of creating and sharing fan products. Despite the criticism that it has only a mythical function of dressing up the phenomenon of free labour, the mutual reciprocity of the gift economy operates as the fans' obligations and rights related to these community activities and the ethics of the gift economy is a non-profit cultural practice that fans want to hold on. The sense of belonging among the fan community is a source of fan identity that gives rise to emotional solidarity (Booth, 2010).

The nature of the fandom community as a gift economy leads us to rethink the relationship between technology and fandom activities in the direction of attributing the development and implementation of new

technologies to the specific desire and ethics of audiences/fans of the new millennium rather than the other way around, i.e., attributing the various functions played by fans as prosumers to the technological possibility provided by new technologies. These epistemological transitions further draw our attention to the three-way interactions among the overall change in socioeconomic conditions, technology, and audiences/performers' existential exploration, which in turn enables the discovery of the emergence of new desires and personalities. In this vein, the next section will be dedicated to contemplating on the desire and cultural sensitivity of young people as universal characteristics shared in the context of the 21st century.

2) Age of neoliberal “individualization” and the millennial generation

Pop music consumers worldwide are generally young adults in their teenage and twenties, and they are said to be the core fan base of K-pop. Broadly defined, they are the millennials (millennial generation or Generation Y) born after 1985, and narrowly defined, the Z generation born after 1995, or the so-called digital natives. They are Internet-based prosumers and the “participatory culture” generation. Even after admitting large differences in their personal skills, the economic levels of their respective countries, gender, and

local culture, from the millennial generation's sensitivity and behavioural patterns as "universal trends" considering the dominant social situations they are in, three characteristics can be inferred.

First, millennials born in the developed countries of the West is the generation that has grown up in the late modernity period and deeply impregnated by the "individualization" of the neoliberal system. They internalize the culture of self-awareness and self-subjectification as self-development and human capital determined by active choice. According to Michel Foucault (2004), this generation is familiar with the principle of competition applied to the operation principle of the entire society and is required to exercise freedom of choice except for the freedom not to choose, with the personal responsibility for one's choice emphasized more strongly than any other generation. Under neoliberal education, in which each individual is regarded as human capital, the dominating self-image is a self-managing subject seeking to raise one's own human value in the same fashion as corporate management. It is a society that requires individuals to constantly move ahead and prove themselves in a self-development culture and to operate by the principle of self-government to enhance competitiveness and economic feasibility allowing the maximum benefit-cost ratio (Kim S.J, 2010). It is the first generation to execute one-person creator jobs, such as YouTube personal broadcasting, left with no other choice in a flexible economy and an unstable labour

market where contracts and irregular work are common forms of employment. The spread of one-person broadcasting is tantamount to the implementation of an individualised economic and cultural practice that creates value through self-branding in uncertainty, going beyond the emergence of prosumers enabled by technology.

In superimposition with this neoliberalism, the process of individualization is underway as a phenomenon of fluidization of the late modern social structure. In the process of individualization, an individual is separated from the traditional class, gender role, and nuclear family-centred industrial lifestyle and has to become a planner and director of one's own life history and live a life of one's own, coping with uncertainty (Beck, 1997). The individualization theorist Ulrich Beck (1997) identifies the elements of individualization manifested in the labour market, the political process, and the traditional gender role. Examples of an individualizing society is that of marriage becoming a matter of choice and a single-family household becoming a common thing, both contributing to decreasing birth rates. Beck argues that individualization has the dual nature of liberating individuals from class relations and individualizing social risks. In the process of individualization, individuals experience changes in the value system, whereby individuals gauge professional success or labour and economic rewards from different standpoints and become more value-oriented. Moreover, individuals tend more strongly to collectively pursue a more self-determined and

individualistic lifestyle (Lee, 2014, p. 27). These conditions of neoliberalism in the process of individualization inevitably change individual value and lifestyle, which is of course most evident in the millennials.

Second, technological development is used as an important means to enhance individual human values and, at the same time, as an important means to express an individualistic lifestyle. As consumption and leisure are playing a more important role in living an individualized life than labour and success, particular importance is attached to entertainment and expression as well as individual experience and acceptance of emotions, materials, and senses. Millennials, who are also a generation extended by online games, use media technologies to express their multi-sensory, affective, and physicality as their daily activities. A surge of ASMR content or personal broadcasting (e.g., eating videos) among young people is also one of the production and consumption patterns of physical sensations and various accompanying effects of pleasure. They implement posts, comments, emoticons, likes, and videos on various platforms and media, including blogs, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, verify their presence through continuous lively actions, and seek recognition through content sharing with others. The young fandom generation of K-pop is a generation with these sensitivities.

Third, in the technologically mediated environment of an extended virtual world, such as forums and blogs,

individuals are paradoxically led to pursue certainty. As the boundaries between real and virtual worlds become more and more tenuous, people's desire for "real" becomes more intense and the value of integrity increases. In a culture that constantly calls for choices and emphasizes respect for each other's taste, individuals seek recommendations and imitate others' tastes for lack of rationale for their own choice. Big data, including the amount of recommended content on YouTube and countless individual behaviour data, systematize individual approaches and tastes. In a society dominated by uncertainty, instability, and fluidity, individuals' pursuit of certainty enhances their involvement in communication itself, constantly updating and uploading their images and texts within communication networks, thus transforming digital networks into networked affect. At the same time, this active involvement implies passivity in that it is almost automated (Dean, 2010). In conclusion, living in conditions in which an individual is an ultimate social unit and individual taste is emphasized, millennials are paradoxically more engrossed in communication and seeking connections with others in pursuit of empathy, recognition, and integrity within a community.

Of course, such epochal diagnoses and forms of generational affect lead to the acceptance of middle-class young people in Western societies or countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as models. However, there are increasingly fewer societies that can escape the globalization of consumption

and culture, the neoliberal economic system protected by the State, the structural changes to individualization, and the commonplace practice of digital network culture. Moreover, despite the intercountry and interpersonal differences in the economic levels and circumstances, the above-mentioned sensitivities are becoming senses common to millennials. In this age that requires individual differentiation, the tendency to pursue differentiated tastes consistently and continuously offers a gap through which marginal things can pass. The fragmentation of individual attention is outpaced by centralization through the number of views and recommendations, and the playfulness and earnestness of pleasure are sought synchronously. The pursuit of an individualized autonomous life leads to the formation of a community in which emotional resources of anger and empathy towards a specific object or phenomenon are formed through networks of affect. This sensitivity specific to this age seems to be increasingly widely shared, which is presumably the sensitivity of millennials and Generation Z that are and will be enjoying K-pop.

In the next section, we will present a detailed analysis of the particularity of K-pop by dividing it into the dimensions of public-generated content (text), consumption, and production. The role of media acting on these three dimensions and mediating them will also be discussed. To begin with, the K-pop singers will be analysed as the product of media as a form of content culture.

4. Particularity of K-pop

1) K-pop as the total content package

Many diagnoses and explanations have been presented about the reasons for the surge of K-pop as a global culture from its marginal existence. The initially dominant explanation was K-pop's imitation of the Western trend and the resultant hybridity and blurred nationality (Jung, 2013). However, it is a rather post hoc inference of replacing the description of K-pop with its explanation. Moreover, hybridity cannot be equated with statelessness nor is there a guarantee that statelessness has a positive appeal for the audience (Kim SJ, 2012).

Rather, reactions of the audience in each country that find K-pop's appeal in its visible characteristics are more convincing although it may appear a clichéd approach. In 2016 and 2017 KOFICE surveys, the respondents were asked to select two most important popularity factors of K-pop (Question: What do you think are the popularity factors of K-pop?). As presented in the survey results in Figure 1, the K-pop audiences attributed the popularity of K-pop to various characteristics: attractive appearance and style of singers/groups (14.8 %), refrain with catchy melody and rhythm (14.7 %), excellent performance of singers/groups (12.5 %), latest Korean fashion and beauty trends (11.9 %), unique pronunciation of the Korean lyrics (11.6 %) (KOFICE, 2018,

p. 57). The success factor and popularity factor are not, of course, synonymous because the latter’s explanatory power is limited to the dimension of the audience’s appreciation of content. However, K-pop dance music, as the end product presented to the audience, is the key link between K-pop production and consumption.

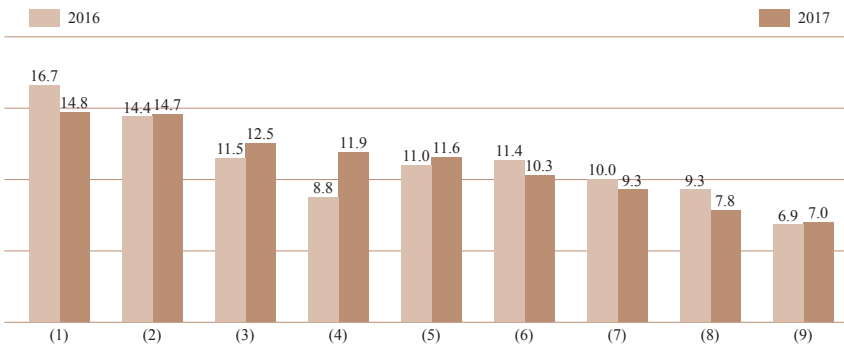


Figure 1.

K-pop popularity factors: (1) Attractive appearance and style of idol singers/groups; (2) Refrain with catchy melody and rhythm; (3) Excellent performance of singers/groups; (4) Latest Korean fashion and beauty trends; (5) Unique pronunciation of Korean lyrics; (6) Differentiated concepts of singers/groups; (7) Easy refrain sing-along and rhythm; (8) Combination of Korean and English lyrics; (9) Good fan service of singers/groups.

(Source: Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange [KOFICE], 2018, p. 57)

The salient feature of K-pop as a popular culture is that it is an “idol group” as a total content package. In Korea, “idol”* refers to a dance music group, usually trained and

* The term idol began to be used in Japan in the 1970s. Although its meaning has gradually changed since then, it basically means a popular entertainer who has debuted in his/her teenage years and early twenties

and attracted the public’s attention. The term was initially used to refer to such singers/groups but is now used in various activity areas.

stylized by an entertainment agency, made up of attractive artists in their teenage and early twenties.* This type of idol music is called K-pop in foreign countries. K-pop induces its audiences to actively accept it with intuitive and multisensorial physical reactions through its particularity of presenting a performance-based total package of idols and, thus, embodies the universality of providing an emotional connection. Let us proceed to the contextualization and analysis of the characteristics of K-pop, which we are already familiar with, from the vantage point of objective distance.

—— Particularity of attractive look

The idol groups' attractive look has now become a commonplace expression, but it is such an important local cultural feature of K-pop idol groups that its mention is inevitable. Their physical attraction, from beautiful faces and well-proportioned and perfectly trimmed bodies (including well-formed long legs for girl group idols) to fashionable and eye-catching costumes and trinkets, gives the audience visual satisfaction and aesthetic pleasure. The physical appeal of celebrities is a universal phenomenon in the entertainment industry. However, it is an absolute prerequisite for K-drama stars and K-pop idols, which know no exception, and foreign audiences intuitively perceive such physical attraction as a feature specific to K-dramas and K-pop. Moreover, girl groups

* Japan and Korea, where the idol industry started, are basically common in this respect. However, whereas the performance level is not an important factor in Japan, singing and dancing skills as well as beauty are prior conditions for becoming idols in the Korean pop music scene. Furthermore, Koreans call

only an active singer/group idol. An idol who has become an actor and no longer sings is called a former-idol actor. Whereas an idol continues to be called an idol in his/her forties in Japan, Korean idols cease to be called idols when they enter their thirties.

were very rare in North American and European pop culture, and after the retirement or disbanding of the charming and handsome boy bands whose popularities peaked in the 1990s, the empty space of visual gratification was filled by the K-pop groups with overwhelming physical appeal.

The physical appeal of idols reflects the “lookism” culture deeply internalized in all Koreans, let alone entertainers. This is different from the cases of foreign entertainers who seek to enhance their competitiveness with physical appeal “in addition to” their music or acting skills. Attractive appearance is a prerequisite for K-pop idols to be equipped with, even with the aid of cosmetic surgery.*

—— Particularity of the group dance transferring physicality

Second, a typical idol group dance is dazzling and dynamic, clear-cut group performance possible only by mastering highly technical skills. The refrains with catchy melody and rhythm easy to sing along with by the audience and the perfectly choreographed and executed group performance of the idols mutually strengthen their auditory and visual senses as if the former is guided by the latter and vice versa. Choreography is created in a way to maximize the performance right from the outset instead of being created to

* Lookism expressed through K-pop idols has the following sociocultural implications. First, for female idols, it means accentuating the male-centred thinking that women “must” be pretty, whereas male idols’ emphasis on “beauty” has the sociocultural effect of breaking the traditional male image. Second, as pointed out by Seok-kyung Hong (2013),

the popularity of Korean male idols among American and European fans has the effect of potentially subverting or complicating the racist perception about Westerners and Asians and the sexual construct of subject-object relationship between Caucasian men and Asian women.

accompany the music (Weiv, July 1, 2013).

The lineage of the dance group genre can be traced back to “New Kids on the Block” (NKOTB), a US boy band that appeared in the mid-1980s and enjoyed global popularity, followed by “Backstreet Boys” and NSYNC in the 1990s (their girl-group counterpart was “Spice Girls” in the UK in the mid-1990s). Interestingly, they were all five-member groups. All the once famous boy bands disappeared from the global pop music scene in the 2000s. They ended their activities one after another between 2000 and 2002, leaving the dance group out of the global pop music scene of the 2000s. The emergence of the Korean Idol Dance Group is one of the reasons for the absence of such dance groups. The Korean male and female idol dance groups just propped up to fill the void.

With respect to dancing, however, the Anglo-American boy groups of the 20th century cannot be compared with the dazzling, powerful, and elaborate dance moves of Korean idol group dance. In addition, Korean idol dance groups have more members, often more than 10. SM Entertainment alone have created the 11-member boy group Super Junior, and the 9-member girl group Girl’s Generation, and the boy group EXO. Regardless of their size, all K-pop idol groups execute their choreographies with brilliant accuracy and technique. They dance perfectly in sync and their group dance has the epithet of *kalgunmu* (*kal* means “knife,” *gunmu* means “group dance”). The dynamically flowing stunning movements of dancing their respective parts

separately and reuniting to dance in an organic whole capture the audience's undivided attention.

What is more, the audiences temporarily experience solemnly elevated emotions as part of a whole not only as spectators of a live performance but also while watching music videos. This emotion reminds us of the concept of “collective effervescence” used by Emile Durkheim, the father of sociology, referring to the experience of collective consciousness and bond through religious rituals. The choreographed movements of idols who dance across the stage fantastically expressing the music theme convey the dynamic materiality and the physical waves to the audience, attending the scene like quick cuts of a K-pop music video. The choreographies of BTS require highly developed skills and aesthetic display, which cannot be easily imitated, to the point of being nicknamed “beat-splitting” dance. The theme of the lyrics makes the audience experience the so-called “physical affect” resulting from the vibrations of the vocal chords passing through the body, fusing with the performance and connecting each part. In other word, K-pop idol dance music does not end with the visual spectacle but transfers the K-pop-specific collectiveness, physicality, and elevated emotion that people cannot easily feel nowadays and seek all the more. This is consistent with the aforementioned universal tendency of the affect and taste pursued by Millennials.

Personality, familiarity, and authenticity

There is something special in Korean idols' manners towards their fans, which is unprecedented among worldwide celebrities. It is their humility and effort showing their personality, familiarity, and authenticity. Humility and effort are cultural norms to which Korean society attach great importance and which are particularly expected of celebrities and by which the public evaluates them. Thus, it applies not only to K-pop idols but to all famous entertainers. In the early and mid-2000s, when the Korean Wave fever began to surge, foreign fans were touched by the humbleness and familiarity of Korean stars (Yong-joon Bae being the representative case) and often expressed their impressions. Personality, familiarity, and authenticity of humility and effort are interrelated and strengthen one another, but are culminated by the different aspects of performance.

First, "humility" is shown through the attitudes of successful artists attributing their success to fans and always thanking them, promising to strive harder instead of becoming arrogant, prioritizing the group's interest over their own, and the consideration they show to their fellow members. This can be easily seen on the stage when they greet fans or give acceptance speeches and in fan meetings as well as in their everyday attitudes towards fans. "Effort" is also an important virtue of idols that is routinely carried out backstage, such as practicing into the late hours of the night to improve their performance skills. This routine of effort is formed throughout

their lives, beginning even before they become “idol trainees.” After passing a fierce competition to become trainees and years of hard training, they have to go through the competition to be selected as debuting members. They develop their own methods to overcome the anxiety and uncertainty of a trainee’s existence. They cannot ease the effort levels even when they become celebrated idols because *kalgunmu* (dancing in perfect sync), a K-pop hallmark, requires continuous effort. These idols’ moral attitudes of humility and effort are the combined results of continuous training throughout the course of idol production and interactions with fans and the public, as will be discussed in detail in the section dealing with fandom. In other words, the “morality” of humility and effort rooted in K-pop idols, which can hardly be found in Western stars, can be said to be a particularity of K-pop (Kim S.J. & Kim S.A, 2015b). The moral character of K-pop idols makes foreign fans feel “something new” and easily persuades parents of teenaged fans into supporting their children’s fan activities. BTS is no exception in this respect.*

Second, K-pop idols have a unique way of building familiarity with fans, employing an approach and commitment that is difficult to see in the West. To begin with, idols display their unembellished charisma in TV reality shows or variety

* Unlike the idol training system of other entertainment agencies, BTS has an autonomous training system by which they realize the importance of morality and practice it on their own accord. The discipline of Twitter operation that BTS members set and have adhered to for six years is a good example. The code of ethics they set demonstrate how much they value

morality:

1. Be as honest as possible; 2. Do not swear;
3. Do not create a personal account; 4. Do not post exposure photos; 5. Ask for consent before posting exposure of others; 6. Do not tweet while drinking. It is filled with moral content! Retrieved February 22, 2018 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOrK-AUrEfg>.

talk shows, not in concerts.* Additionally, they provide fans with opportunities to meet them in person in events. Lastly, they open a window for direct communication with fans on SNS and share details of their everyday lives, providing proximity for their fans and deepening familiarity with their fans. This way of building a close relationship with fans by displaying their insufficiencies as human beings and constantly being connected with fans through SNS can be replicated by celebrities in other societies. However, the intensity and persistence shown by Korean idols can hardly be found elsewhere.

Third, “authenticity” used to be the most vulnerable feature of K-pop, but BTS and other idol groups added this to K-pop’s moralism and familiarity. In general, the most important thing fans seek in their idols is the authenticity discourse (Marshall, 1997). However, idol groups are vulnerable to the authenticity aspect because their concept, style, lyrics, and compositions are all planned by their agencies. Until the mid-2000s, there had been widespread prejudice in Korea and the public played down the musical levels of idols, which was not irrelevant to the nature of idol production and planning. At that time, singers who expressed their own music world by participating in compositions were called “artists,” a term differentiating them from “idols.” It was in the mid-2010s that the prejudice against idols was

* The transformation of idols from pop singers to versatile entertainers is associated with the structural shift from the records industry based on records sales (e.g., CDs) to the digital music industry driven by the development of digital technologies, which plummeted records sales and decimated the

entire pop music industry. In the pre-2010 Korean music industry, performing arts were small in size and sluggish in activity, and it was hence important to appear on television and become popular to land contracts for commercials and ad sponsorship (Kim S.J. & Kim S.A, 2013; Jung, 2013)

largely overcome as the public perceived anew idol singers' skills through TV music programmes.*

However, “having skills” in singing and dancing is one thing and “having authenticity” is another. Although the emergence of idols participating in the composing and producing processes, such as the Big Bang’s G-Dragon, contributed to displaying the potential of idols to become artists and narrowing the archetypal difference between idols and artists, the dichotomy remained. Admittedly, pop music is more concerned with the qualities and functions as commodities that produce pleasures rather than artistic authenticity. However, there is no reason why pop music products cannot be authentic. To be authentic, a pop musician needs to have his or her own unique style and brand. The most straightforward and common way is, of course, to participate in songwriting and composition, but the authenticity of an artist is not revealed by the ability to write lyrics and compose music but by the integrity of conveying candid stories and feelings. In this regard, BTS added authenticity to the K-pop landscape by singing their own experiences and worldviews, showing their own styles, and conveying their messages “very sincerely.”** Furthermore, based on the hip-hop genre, BTS has established its authenticity, featuring socially conscious hip-hop without imitating the original American-style

* Kim Kyung-bin (January 9, 2019) “Nine idol masked singers that broke the prejudice that idols are not good singers. <https://www.insight.co.kr/newsRead.php?ArtNo=47329>

** BTS consistently convey their authenticity to fans through various channels, producing their own narratives in a serial format with their own growth stories and

personal experiences, distributing mix tapes produced by themselves, providing content free of charge on BTS blogs, and uploading “Run BTS!” series on V LIVE. These sincere efforts are being communicated as “authenticity” transcending the dimension of their brand image creation or commercial interests.

“gangster rap” and maintaining the soundness of lyrics shared by the K-pop idol music.

As examined so far, K-pop idols are versatile entertainers centring on visual performance, i.e., a total package of cultural format (practice of multi-functional aspects of morality, familiarity, and authenticity as musicians, performers, actors, models, and fashionistas). The originality of K-pop lies in this dominant mode of Korean idol pop music industry. This is, of course, made up of the Korea-specific fandom culture to be discussed later in conjunction with the unique production method of Korean entertainment agencies.

2) Particularity of Korean fandom

—— Role and prestige of Korean idol fans

K-pop’s domestic fandom has a unique Korean character in the interface between its relations with the idol industry and its implementation. However, as revealed by the superfandom at a global level, it displays particular modalities of sharing the universal character of millennials. Entering the new millennium, when K-pop idol production was well underway, Korea took a leading role in popularizing digital Web technology. Young Koreans in their teenage and twenties emerged as the main consumers of idol culture, showing the traits of Generation Z at full throttle as digital natives.

First, the universal nature of the K-pop fandom

surfaced under Korea-specific industrial conditions and contexts. As mentioned previously, the small-sized records market was decimated by the digitization of content and idols had to subsist as versatile entertainers, selling their images rather than albums or doing stage performances. Under these circumstances, fandom expanded their scope of influence as direct purchasers of idol albums and concert tickets, and as multiplayers of star marketers, managers, evaluators, and protectors. In other words, the Korean idol fandom of the 2000s began to be positioned as “prior conditions for the production system of the entertainment industry,” going far beyond the role of active agents or ardent consumers (Jung & Lee, 2009, p. 236). If the agency was the official sector responsible for the operation and maintenance of the idol system, fandom was the informal sector consisting of voluntary structural helpers contributing to idols’ success (Kim H.Y. & Yoon, 2012).

Of course, the relationship between fandom and agency is not always a cooperative one. The moment any of their idols receives unfair treatment from the agency or is in conflict with the agency, organised fans wage war against the agency to protect their star. Unlike the fans of 1990s characterized by loyalty to their respective idol groups, the fans of Generation Z show more flexibility and fluidity; they manage idols, follow multiple idol groups at the same time, choose to conduct fan activities for a certain member of an idol group, or change their favourite idol group if disappointed

with one (Jung & Lee, 2009). In other words, fans show devotion and love for idols out of self-assurance, but in a moment of doubt, they also show the self-determination to declare severance. Conclusively, the Korean fandom of idols in the 2000s stopped being followers and empowered themselves as nurturers and supporters of idols, thus overthrowing the traditional hierarchy between stars and fans.

In this process, the Korean fandom achieved a capacity that showed strong community traits characterized by systematic organizational power, trust-based bond, network mobilization power, material and nonmaterial devotion, and the ability to create agenda, surpassing typical civic organizations. From paying “fan tribute,” which is an act of voluntary fundraising among fans to send gifts to a star on days of special ceremony or specific activity, such as birthday, comeback, drama shooting, and musical performance, producing goods matching the image of a certain idol, and donating to a charitable project or public objective in the name of an idol to sending a snack car serving people that can influence their idol’s activities and image (programme directors, fellow actors, staff, etc.), the types and scope of fandom activities are many and diversified. All of these activities are carried out in a systematic manner within the fan community, from planning to participation, gift delivery, and payment (Hong, 2014, p. 69), strengthening collective trust and community solidarity among the fans. Korean idol fandom may provide a model of private league tailored to an

individualised society characterized by unpredictability and uncertainty.

Not only does the organizational practice of Korean idol fandom serve as a model for international fandom but also contributes greatly to the globalization of K-pop. The Korean fandom practice was introduced to the Chinese fandom almost simultaneously and became a model for the fans of Southeast Asia and the West. Although there are many voluntary fan communities, the official fan page run by an agency also demonstrates the status of K-pop's global superfandom and propagates the brand of the specific idol group.

These activities of the Korean idol fandom combine with the global K-pop fan activities on YouTube. Korean and international fans are not only purchasers of albums and goods but also play the role of prosumers by providing subtitles to transnational videos circulating via channels such as YouTube. In this process, K-pop fans participate in the cultural production of transmedia storytelling, which unlocks and amplifies not only the worldview contained in their idols' songs and actions but also their everyday lives through diverse narratives crossing over media boundaries. This work is in itself a process of experiencing the individual existential value in an amusement community that produces pleasure. At the same time, the fans derive rewards and recognition for their own actions in the form of creating idol brands and harvesting success. That is, the originality of fandom is that it is a total package that commences with the presence of idols and is

strengthened by the physical, sensual, emotional, and aesthetic pleasure they receive from the performance of their idols and the fandom community. The trans-individual dynamic activities of K-pop fandom communities through digital networks show the universal desire of this age and the general mode of behaviour of fandom in pursuit of the experience of empathy and collective efficacy in the era of individualization characterized by uncertainty.

——— **Korean fandom’s “collective moralism”**

What is peculiar in Koreans in general and the Korean idol fandom in particular is that they demand from idols a high level of moral attitudes and behaviours. Idols’ behaviours and personality are closely observed and monitored in a wide range of aspects. As noted by Sujeong Kim and Soo-Ah Kim (2015b), the qualifications required of idols include not only virtues of civic ethics, such as patriotism, historical consciousness, and voting (e.g., voting shots of famous idols including BTS), but also moral excellence during their school years, given that most K-pop idols debut as minors. As a matter of fact, one idol member had to cease his activities because of a photo showing him drinking alcohol with a friend during his high school days (Today Korea, January 21, 2008). If a photo of an idol smoking is seen or it is rumoured that an idol used to be a school gang member, that idol is instantly stigmatised and fans turn their backs on him/her. Rumours that spread in cyberspace inflict a huge blow on the image

of the idol, and tabloid journalism further fuels public rage. It is only natural that idols' morality is a sensitive issue for entertainment agencies. Whenever controversy arises, the related agency promptly announces clarification and issues an official apology, trying to calm the situation down.

Sujeong Kim and Soo-Ah Kim(2015) use the term "collective moralism" to describe this popular cultural attitude of applying a rigorous moral standard to celebrities in Korean society. This moralism is imposed on celebrities like a privilege of the public, especially on female idols. Trapped in this culture, even fervent fans expect and demand their stars to be morally impeccable as much as they like and support them instead of unconditionally defending them. Going a step further, such fans follow every move of their stars and exercise powerful influence under the pretext of preventing their idols from committing mistakes and protecting them from public criticism.

Fans' moralism towards their idols dictates "humility" and "effort" as virtues as less important than their musical quality. Idols equipped with these virtues prompt a typical fan reaction that they are "praiseworthy." Thus, Korean idol stars are "trained" by domestic fans to internalize the virtues of humility and effort to a degree incomparable to any celebrities or stars abroad.

These moral requirements set by fans for idols' behaviour and personality are closely associated with a complex background consisting of the influence of

the Confucian culture deep-rooted in the minds of most Koreans, the collectivist cultural orientation that does not tolerate individual differences, and the egalitarian resistance psychology formed by competitive neoliberalism. Whereas such moralism poses the problem of idols' human rights and privacy infringement, it has the effect of making them moral beings and presenting a totally new type of stars to international K-pop fans, which in turn has various implications worldwide. Specifically, for young adults in their teenage and early twenties around the world who are required to nurture subjectivity in this age of neoliberalism and individualization, the moral excellence of K-pop idols provides vicarious gratification and comfort to the uneasy self and shows the authenticity of idols as fellow humans behind the dazzling stage, thus striking a chord with the sensitivity of millennials and being naturally accepted.

3) Particularity of K-pop production

—— K-pop's in-house production system and principles of moralism

Another aspect of the particularity of K-pop is seen in the production mode of Korean entertainment agencies. An idol group is the output of the systematic production method called "in-house system" of entertainment agencies. It is an all-encompassing system combining specialization

and central management consisting of casting based on systematic audition process, a trainee period of three-to-five years, education in various aspects, music production, art and performance, idol and fan management, distribution, and marketing. This system is a model employed by all Korean entertainment agencies, including the Big Three labels (SM, YG, and JYP).* The in-house system was created by the CEO of SM, Lee Soo-man, by creatively combining the methodical US entertainment agency system characterized by professionalism and specialization and the management, distribution, and marketing methods of Japanese entertainment agencies that initiated the idol industry (Kim H.P., 2013).

Although the in-house system of K-pop production was inspired by the US and Japanese systems, there is a qualitative difference, i.e., uniqueness, which makes it distinctive from the US and Japanese systems. The first unique facet of K-pop production culture is perfectionism.* The achievement of perfection is dependent primarily on a long and rigorous trainee system. A period of three-to-five years of harsh trainee life cannot even be imagined in the US that has deep-rooted individualism respecting privacy. Nor is it practicable in Japanese pop culture, which attaches great importance to the idol's "growth culture" where performance

* This does not mean that all entertainment agencies are operated by uniform factory-like methods. They share and implement the same archetype of the in-house system, but each agency is doing its best to build its own differentiated brand. The atmosphere and the musical taste of the founders, mostly musicians, are reflected in the agency's brand and different strategies are taken accordingly. Big Hit Entertainment

(hereinafter "Big Hit"), which gave birth to BTS, also has established differentiated strategies and styles based on the in-house production model.

** K-pop's in-house system differs from agency to agency in organization and scope, depending on their respective capital capabilities. Here, we discuss the system as employed by the Big Three labels (SM, YG, and JYP).

skills are not necessarily a prerequisite.

A long trainee period means that the perfection of an idol is an important criterion for production. Perfection covers a wide range of facets encompassing looks, manners, and acting skills in addition to singing and dancing. Perfection in all these aspects is the condition that must be met in order to realize the commodity value of the total package that is the idol. The perfectly synchronized group dance, visual attractiveness, and fashion, which are often mentioned as the key characteristics of K-pop, are by no means idols' innate talent or character.*

The second unique facet of K-pop production is the production culture that emphasizes “personality” to idols. This culture of moralism occupies an important position not only in fandom but also in the discipline of entertainment agencies. The CEOs of SM, YG, and JYP reaffirmed in each interview that they prioritize “good character” and attach greatest importance to “personality over anything else” (Kim S.J. & Kim S.A, 2015b). It is thanks to a strong moral personality manifested in “effort” and “sincerity” that teenagers give up their normal life as adolescents in anxiety and uncertainty about unguaranteed debut and success and endure three-to-five years of the trainee period full of hard work. That is, education and management based on personality-centred

* The total planning method of this trainee system has, of course, its shadowy sides. To make an autonomous human being a cultural commodity and cultural style of K-pop not only carries the risk of infringement on trainees' human rights but also results in limited freedom and a suppressed personality. The life of the trainees who

want to be successful is too miserable to be embellished by the phrase “teens full of dreams,” given the huge number of trainee aspirants estimated at one million. For more details, see the interviews by Jong-im Lee (2018) conducted to investigate the lives of trainees.

moralism, which is important in the in-house system, is the working mechanism that ensures the subsistence of the K-pop in-house system itself and the main tool to satisfy Korean consumers, who highly value moral attitudes of their idols, and to maintain the appeal of the star image (Kim S.J. & Kim S.A, 2015b). The perfection of the idol goods is intertwined with the moralistic personality discipline system of the trainee. The perfectionism of idol products is closely associated with the discipline system of moral personality during the trainee period.*

The third unique facet of K-pop production is the Korean family cultural character. Kyu-tak Lee (2014) points out that Motown, a US records label in the 1970s, which was the inspiration for the K-pop production method, maintained strong family-like bonds as well as racial ties with Black people. This comparison is possible because family is a community that is the foundation of human trust and affection in any society. What is peculiar in Korean familyism, however, is deeply related to the age order and position within the family above and beyond the affection among family members because it is embedded in our deeply internalized cultural value of respect for age and seniority. In this vein, the CEO of each entertainment agency is positioned not only as the head of an organization but also as a great musical master and

* Given that moralistic personality education has the status of manufacturing mechanism above and beyond the level of teaching good manners, it would be a matter of interest in terms of interregional cultural interactions whether the particularity of Korean culture can be transplanted in other societies or whether it would go through a

cultural translation.

** This leads to the issue of human rights violations in the case of small and medium-sized agencies that exercise parental authority without assuming the role of parents to protect and discipline their trainees.

object of parent-like authority and respect.**

A significant factor behind the success stories of the familial culture of SM, YG, and JYP in addition to the capital, musical sense, production strategy, and the first-mover advantage is that the founders and actual representatives of the three agencies have a background in singing or songwriting. All three founders tend to recruit and work with musicians who are younger and can address them “hyung” (older brother), which automatically establishes a familial hierarchy, and treat idols as musicians rather than commodities for profit generation, creating a family culture of trust, authority, and bond. In the production of K-pop, the particularity of familial culture can also be found in Big Hit Entertainment, which gave birth to BTS. From the fact that its founder is a famous composer, we can easily anticipate a familial cultural aspect.

—— Simultaneous formation of idol and fandom through reality shows

The idol competitions orchestrated by major entertainment agencies that started in the mid-2000s made the industry aware of the importance of fandom. They came to adopt project formats that allowed the simultaneous creation of idols and fandom instead of idols followed by fandom. The so-called idol reality shows aired on cable broadcasters under the directorship of idol production agencies contributed not only to presenting the debut process of idol groups but also to strengthening their characters after the debut and widening

their fan base. The first case was “Real Documentary: Big Bang” aired in 2006 on Gom TV in which the story of the formation and growth of the world-class boy band Big Bang (YG) was depicted. As a result, Big Bang already had a dedicated fandom before debut and enjoyed enthusiastic fandom support at the debut stage. From then on, reality shows have remained a common strategy to widen the fandom around debuting of many famous idol groups of the Big Three labels, such as 2PM, 2NE1, Girls’ Generation, Winner, Twice, EXO, and Red Velvet.*

The idol reality show format, a broadcasting strategy of Korean idol labels, which is unprecedented worldwide in the entertainment industry, generally presents the pre-debut training process, the group formation process, and the post-debut everyday life of an idol group, which entails the following achievements. First, the viewers participate in the process of idol group formation through views, comments, and text voting such that fans play an active role in the birth of stars and become interested in their growth driven by the parental protection instinct.

Second, idol reality shows aim to build a brand image that differentiates an idol group from others. The problem facing idol labels is the loss of discriminatory power among overproduced idol groups. The number of idol groups that debuted over the past 10 years since 2006 (the first year of idol reality shows) was 436, with the annual number of debuting idol groups ranging between 11(in 2008) and 63(in

* One Direction, the British boy band that debuted in the UK in 2011 and enjoyed global popularity, was formed through a

reality show, thus forming a fandom before their debut, presumably under the influence of the K-pop idol production method.

2012), but only one or two teams are remembered (Chosun Ilbo, July 22, 2017).^{*} Under these circumstances, reality programmes fulfil an important function of creating a brand as the unique image of the group members and the group as a whole (branding) through viewers' participation. This has the effect of not only building and promoting the brand identity of the idol group but also establishing the fandom identity differentiating it from other fandoms (Kim S.J. & Kim S.A., 2013).

Third, the genre of reality show provides visuals of idols' daily lives, thus creating familiarity and authenticity in the relationship with idols. Reality shows unfold on blurred boundaries between "real" and "acting," but idols do present ordinary and clumsy images as young adults in front of the ubiquitous observation camera. Fans consume the extravagant presence of their idols when exposed to their physical appeal and fascination, and, at the same time, build familiarity with idols that connects them in their ordinary attitudes and reactions. Furthermore, fans' belief that they are witnessing the ordinary side of their idols' personality behind the stage provides them with opportunities to experience the authenticity of their real lives. Above all, idol reality shows bring a lot of visual pleasure and behind-the-story information through the constant observation of idols, which cannot be provided by the one-time experience of performance and music videos. This allows fans to respond constantly, distribute them as

^{*} A group that can debut through a reality show programme is considered extremely lucky. As of 2016, there are as many as 1952 officially verified popular culture agencies and the number of trainees is 1079.

Adding the number of agencies and private aspirants not covered by the statistics, which is estimated at one million, debuting is a dream-come-true granted to 0.1% (Herald Economy, February 10, 2019).

clips, compose subtitles, and procure materials to share. In this process, these fans undergo the emotional experience that they are connected to their idol stars in everyday life.

Whereas the reality programme broadcasting strategy of Korean idol group agencies has mainly been led by large entertainment agencies, the emergence of diversified platforms, such as V LIVE and YouTube, made it possible for all small agencies in Korea to implement this strategy. BTS is an exemplary case that has effectively used these channels and evolved apace in the national and global contexts. BTS contents uploaded to BTS Blog, V LIVE, and YouTube channels are constantly captivating fans, attracting millions of views.

Even though all idol groups use the same strategy, BTS stands out with an overwhelming margin, presumably because BTS members produce their content themselves in a self-directed manner unlike other idol group reality shows that are strategically orchestrated by their agencies. Consequently, all content posted by BTS members displays their consistent attitudes and worldviews and creates spaces shared with their fans. Fans can easily see the effort and patience poured into their work in this process, which makes BTS an epitome of utmost authenticity replaceable by no one. The strategic uniqueness of the idol reality show that came into being in response to the special situation facing the K-pop industry, namely fierce competition among idol groups, is that it responds to the fans' drive to be connected with the attention economy, group participation, and effect of authenticity.

K-pop's audience-centred approach

The Korean entertainment agencies producing K-pop idol groups wanted to overcome the problem of the narrow domestic music market. Instead of relying on album sales in the domestic records market, they wanted to expand the fan base by incubating idol groups as versatile entertainers. Furthermore, by promoting overseas expansion early on, they induced K-pop to capture the global emotional chords and codes and to win fandom. Basically, the strategies employed by the agencies to satisfy domestic viewers and advance, at the same time, into mainstream markets (primarily the US, China, and Japan) are now explained.

First, they made agency-produced K-pop videos freely available to new media consumers via YouTube. Instead of trying to protect copyrighted content from free downloads, they freely distributed high-quality music content through their YouTube channels, prioritizing fan base expansion and other revenue sources over album sales. This was a strategy that the Western or Japanese music labels did not dare to attempt lest their copyrights were violated and they lost profits from album sales. BTS went a step further, posting every content produced by the group and individual members, including entire albums, music videos, and mix tapes, on new media. This brave step was not taken at the agency level but by the BTS members themselves, and this gesture was taken by their fans as a token of BTS' gratitude to their fans and not as a calculated strategy for success. Fans were, of course, touched by the authenticity of BTS.

Second, idols were encouraged to use SNS and establish and maintain familiarity with their fandom. Twitter, Instagram, and V LIVE activities, which give the illusion of one-on-one communication, may appear to be commercializing privacy or giving it up for the idols. However, SNS has become a very important platform to constantly attract fans' attention in this age of "micro-celebrity" (Marwick, 2015) where ordinary users emerge as YouTuber stars. Moreover, it has now become a universal trend among all celebrities, not just K-pop stars, living in the new media environment, to use SNS as a means to keep feeding fans with information for fan production as prosumers and to narrow the gap between the star and the fandom.

Third, in the process of producing idol groups, strategies to insure diversity, locality, and mainstream trends have helped to expand the fan base in more and more regions, which include the well-established multinational member composition, unit composition tailored to local characteristic, songs and choreographies that reflect Western trends. Although the success of BTS has made these strategies look useless all at once, they can still be viable strategies when considering other markets such as China, Greater China Region, and Japan, which are more important than the US market. Irrespective of the industrial intentions of the agency, production customized to local characteristics can contribute to cultural fusion, communication, and mutual understanding.

Rather than being an exception, BTS attempted

an approach by which they differentiated themselves from the mainstream idol groups. The originality of BTS in the K-pop idol industry lies in the fact that BTS members were encouraged to develop their potential on their own accord, which was an untrodden terrain in the mainstream idol industry. This innovative brand differentiation was, of course, possible on the groundwork of the accumulated knowhow of the K-pop system established as a result of trial-and-error learning. In addition to the role as versatile entertainers, BTS members were allowed to reveal their own colours in a self-directed manner and were free to even integrate Korean traditional culture into their music, which had never been attempted to that extent before. Their reflections on “who am I” lay the socio-cultural context and culture of Korea bare.

However, it should not be understood simply as an enhancement of Korean identity. In contrast to earlier trends of avidly hybridizing foreign things, K-pop idols now are concerned with actively and consciously mixing Korean-style images and narratives in their music at the forefront of global popularity. This also displays the confidence that BTS draws from their global popularity. It is not because the Korean-style attraction helps spur the popularity of BTS but because BTS’ popularity helps spur the Korean-style attraction. On the one hand, there is a music video, “Idol,” which is reminiscent of Korean traditional mask dance and fairy tales, such as *Moon and Rabbit*, and on the other hand, there is *Blood Sweat & Tears*, which embraces both trendy and differentiating features

by introducing moombahton trap with house-reggaeton fusion, and *DNA* in which refrain is replaced with EDM. Such musical experiments reaffirm that BTS is trying to reflect and evolve various trends through hybridization as does K-pop's global strategy (Kim S.C, uploaded to YouTube on April 25, 2018). The result is the simultaneous implementation of freshness (differentiation) and familiar elegance (global popularity factor) sought by the 21-century millennials.

5. Conclusion

This article begins by posing a question on the kind of particularities in K-pop. I answered it by demonstrating that the originality of K-pop as a product of local culture worked in a way that embodies global cultural characteristics. To this end, I first examined the ongoing academic debates surrounding the question of what Korean cultural identity K-pop can find as a hybridized pop culture. Then, I assumed that the consumers living in the 21st-century global digital environment would form a fandom that implements the convergence culture characterized by participation and collective intelligence and that K-pop's global fan base would undergo differentiation competition in which they have to plan their own lives characterized by uncertainty and fluidity in the epochal conditions of neoliberalism and individualization. In this context, millennials (Generation Y) attempted a

macroscopic reasoning of desiring recognition, bond, and authenticity by connecting to other individuals and imitating others while expressing individual emotions, physicality, material, multi-sensorial experience, playfulness and affective manifestation as shared affect.

In order to understand the nature of K-pop, I examined K-pop idol groups, who are performance-centred versatile entertainers in terms of content, consumption dimension of domestic fandom, and the production dimension of the in-house system engineered by entertainment agencies, thereby presenting various facets of particularity of K-pop as a Korean sociocultural product. As one of the interpretations, I pointed out “moralism” internalized in the historical-cultural process of Korean society, not resulting from any intentional effort. To put it simply, normative moralism, which emphasizes humility, effort, and personality, functions as the principle penetrating these three dimensions and interactively strengthening them. I presented this moralism as a particularity of the Korean idol industry, which is a rare phenomenon worldwide.

However, the assertion of the Korean-style particularity is by no means an attempt to position the local cultural characteristics of K-pop on the opposite pole of the global culture or as the articulation of two independent cultures. It represents the view that K-pop, as a product of Korean local culture, embodies the global sensitivity as a universal cultural trend in its own particularity.

The history of K-pop over the past two decades abounds in challenges and attempts to accommodate the cultural desires of fans at home and abroad and to form a reverse flow. At this juncture, K-pop is facing a transition phase of reaffirming the status and character of global culture. The success of BTS can also be understood in this context. In other words, BTS has paved the way for a qualitative leap forward while embodying global culture in local culture synchronously and fully displaying the salient features of K-pop as glocal culture.

K-pop will continue to evolve, and fans will evolve. With it, our views and explanations will also evolve as will our cultural understanding. In fact, it is quite a challenge to identify the nature of the emotions, values, and games of the contemporary culture we are living in and enjoying and to explain its driving force and working mechanism. We are also facing the tough task of inducing reflections on the landscape of the current age by explaining the characteristics of K-pop and upgrading the reflections to the level of knowledge and theory. I hope that this article will help us move closer to such reflections and inspire researchers to bring forth more explanations and interpretations of K-pop.

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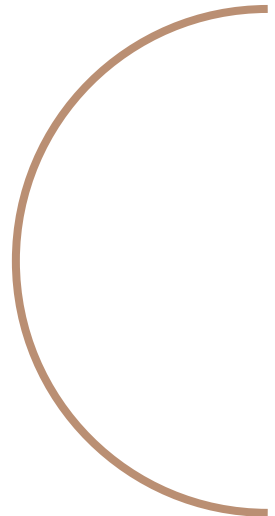
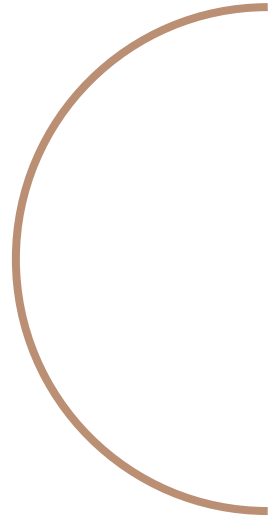
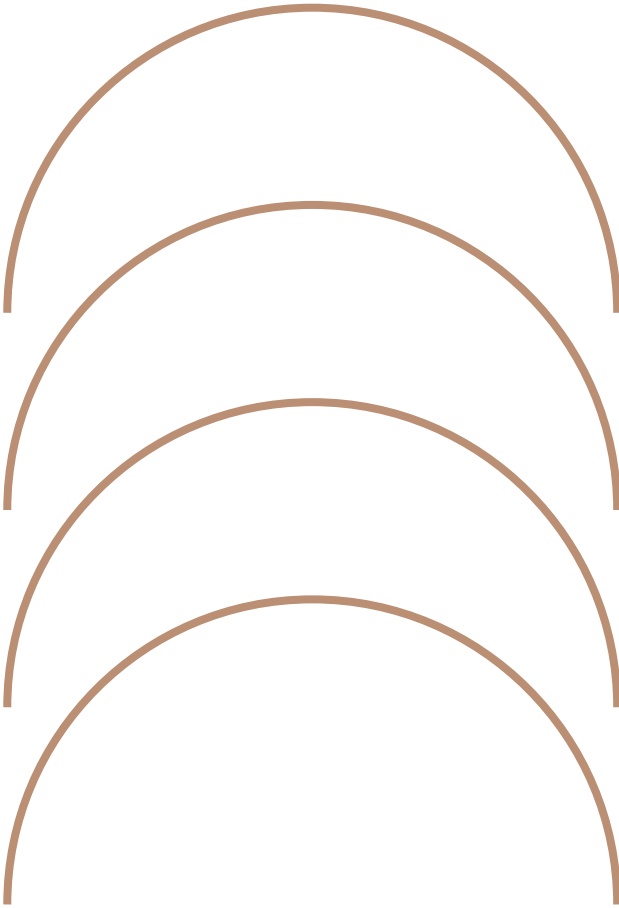
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4) New media and K-pop



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(Kakao M PD)

1. Era of watching and sharing music

We are living in the age of watching and sharing music. You only have to log in to the Melon music streaming site on a mobile device and touch the video tab next to the music tab in the top bar to enjoy countless music videos. Users touch this video tab to enjoy various music videos and add their favourite videos to their playlists. Then they log in to YouTube and retrieve more music videos and enjoy them. They subscribe to the channels they like and share them with their friends via Facebook or Kakao Talk. They also shoot concert videos or their own performances with their smartphones and upload them to SNS. Enjoying music with their eyes and ears and sharing it—this is how today’s consumers communicate with music. In this process, people are exposed to new music, and new musicians can become stars. This is the current landscape of the music industry brought about by the changes in the nature of music consumption.

One question arises in this context. Was music originally made only for listening? It is hard to say yes to this question. In the beginning, music was in the realm of performance, not recording. Before the invention of radio and TV, not to mention smartphone, people gathered together in a place and listened to music, watching live performances of musicians. Music at that time was a form of art with tangible aspects that went beyond listening, and were perceptible to eyes and ears. Of course, we have lived through a long period

of “listening to music.” Strictly speaking, however, it was as late as the 20th century when we began to listen to recorded music. It was with the development of recording technology that music became a popular form of art and an important industry. Its rapid growth has formed the huge music market.

Records emerged as a medium for popularizing music. Playing records is now a common and natural way of enjoying music. However, music distribution through records started less than a century ago. The phonograph, the earliest sound-recording device, was invented in France in 1857 and the first microphone was invented in 1926. Before the development of sound recording technology in the USA, music was offered to the public through live performances and scores. Music began to be popularized through sound recording and reproduction in audio formats such as LP, cassette tape, and CD. The market principle of music distribution through records defined the music industry paradigm in the last century.

The distribution format also determined the form of art. Consumers became accustomed to listening to music by the unit of album instead of single pieces, and music albums earned the status of art objects with their own narrative like literary works. This also raised the status of popular musicians. In addition, the recording industry made record producers prosperous. The market was consolidated with the addition of fandom culture, giving birth to “idols” like the Beatles. They sold hundreds of millions of albums, and their music

had religion-like influence. The phenomenon of huge fandom that arose at this time still constitutes a big axis of the music industry.

Enjoying music in the era of recorded music was a very personal experience. Even in the 20th century, it was common to listen to music alone at home or through earphones using a Walkman. With the advent of the Internet and MP3 files, however, music began to be shared in the form of sound files. Since then, a movement of sharing music in large quantities with an unspecified number of people has been underway. The perception that music is something to own began to fade. This movement, which began in the form of infringing acts in illegal markets, has evolved into a legitimate platform of streaming sites. These streaming sites have gained a firm foothold with the advent of smartphone, prompting revolutionary changes in music distribution. This platform change toppled the traditional delivery routes, completely changing the consumption structure, which in turn changed the form of music.

With the formation of the music market relying on streaming sites and mobile devices, music companies started producing contents adapted to the changed the music consumption landscape. As the volume of record sales was plummeting, music companies preferred EPs and singles to full-length albums that require high production budgets. With the perception of music consumption increasingly losing weight, the music itself became increasingly lightweight.

Instead of serious, message-laden music, sweet and light music began to land on the charts. Also noteworthy is the increasing power of teenage consumers familiar with smart devices.

With the advent of YouTube, music distribution underwent another revolution. YouTube provided musicians with a new window to legally distribute their music without resorting to the services of legitimate distribution market consisting of streaming sites. With the emergence of many other platforms in addition to YouTube, the music industry faced another stage of change. The musicians that soared to stardom via the new platform were different from the traditional types of stars.

2. New platform, new stars

1) BTS: conquer the new media, and conquer the world

For the first time in Korean music history, BTS (Bangtan Sonyeondan in Korean, meaning bulletproof boy scouts) is setting one record after another as a true global star. Before BTS, many K-pop groups enjoyed great popularity in Asia. Many of them topped the Japanese Oricon Singles Chart and completed Asian tours. However, the global popularity BTS is enjoying in Western as well as Asian markets is unprecedented. BTS is breaking new grounds in untrodden realms as international artists—it topped the Billboard 200, won the Favorite Social Artist award at 2018 American

Music Awards, delivered speech at a UN General Assembly event, and presented at the 2019 Grammy Awards. These achievements are a first even in Asia, let alone Korea. Whereas earlier attempts of K-pop groups in the US market appealed to a small number of K-pop fans, BTS rose to international fame recognised by US record labels.

What is the secret behind the worldwide popularity of BTS? Much research has already been conducted on this topic. This article will also present some factors. In fact, before BTS debuted (June 2013), there was a potential K-pop group fandom worldwide as a result of tenacious efforts of K-pop groups belonging to Big 3 Korean labels, namely SM, JYP, and YG, and other large entertainment agencies over the past two decades, beginning with the official release of H.O.T.'s album *Happiness* in May 1998 in China. It is not only K-pop that has been exported through the marketing channels developed by them. The loyal “fandom culture” by which Korean pop music fans enjoy K-pop has also been transferred to international K-pop fans. The K-pop phenomenon we are witnessing now is hence the result of the simultaneous export of music and fandom culture (intentionally or incidentally). The potential K-pop consumer base thus accumulated gathered together to form a huge fandom under the name ARMY. The worldviews expressed in the music of BTS consolidated the ARMY fan club into an organic whole. Given that BTS sings in Korean, it is all the more surprising that BTS' fans around the globe share solidarity and feel close to one another through

the messages conveyed by the lyrics. Just as Korean music fans learned the lyrics of the songs of foreign rock stars to enjoy their music in the past, BTS' fans learn the Korean lyrics to understand the messages contained in them.

In addition to interpreting and sharing the messages of BTS' music, individual ARMYs closely watch and react to every move of BTS and each of its members. The platforms BTS uses to communicate with ARMY are not public TV channels. Rather, BTS actively uses new media platforms such as YouTube to deliver content to the public. As is well-known, BTS did not have a smooth beginning. Before the BTS debut, the most effective channel for a pop group to attract public attention was TV. At that time, the mainstream of group marketing involved reality programme jointly produced by entertainment agencies and TV stations. However, the Big Hit Entertainment, to which BTS belongs, was a small company and TV marketing was beyond their means. Thus, BTS knocked on the door of new media instead of legacy media.

If you search for "BTS" on YouTube, you will find that a ton of videos are offered for viewing. The BTS members started communicating with their fans through SNS such as Twitter even before their debut, and they are constantly uploading new content. There is an endless collection of BTS fan stuff out there, and BTS is nicknamed the "ultimate king of content" in the media world. BTS currently has the largest number of followers on Twitter, YouTube and Naver V Live in Korea. As the second Korean artists after Psy, BTS

was awarded the Diamond Play Button by YouTube in July 2018 for achieving over 10 million subscribers on its official YouTube channel. BTS has 16 YouTube videos that reached 100 million views, highest among Korean artists.

BTS, for whom it was difficult to get a TV appearance, used new media in a memorable victory over legacy media. At the MBC Music Festival broadcasted on December 31, 2014, BTS delivered a perfectly synchronized dance performance, clad in navy uniform, with thirty back dancers. In response to an influx of fan requests to feature the stage again from the right angles immediately after the broadcast, the Big Hit Entertainment reproduced the performance from various angles and released this homemade video via its YouTube channel 1theK. This video, titled BTS MBC Music Festival Intro Performance Trailer, garnered huge international acclaim and spread at a tremendous speed among BTS' fans. This video is regarded as a catalyst for BTS to multiply its fandom worldwide. It is still considered the best fan stuff content among BTS' fans. BTS proved that new media could be much more effective in communicating with fans than legacy media.

In addition to SNS* platforms such as YouTube and Twitter, BTS has also communicated with ARMY via new media channels 1theK and V Live. The pre-BTS star groups were somewhat conservative in their use of new media. Large entertainment companies, eager to show only the glamorous side of their stars, tended to avoid new media given its

* SNS: Social Network Services

vulnerability to mishap in comparison with legacy media. A representative case is the “Wanna One’s waiting room remarks incident”: the scene in which the Wanna One members make inappropriate remarks in the waiting room was accidentally aired live on Mnet’s Star Live prior to the live broadcast of its comeback show in March 2018. Considering the risk of such broadcast accidents, it is surprising that BTS has not been involved in a single mishap or controversy despite their numerous live events via new media. It is no exaggeration to say that BTS is a crane in a flock of chickens (a Korean proverb equivalent to the English idiom “head and shoulders above the others”) among all K-pop groups in its ability to produce content without causing any controversy.

2) J.Fla: YouTube superpower born on YouTube

Following Psy and BTS, Hallyu stars such as Blackpink and Big Bang (both are YG Entertainment’s acts) have achieved 10 million YouTube subscribers. The fifth Korean artist awarded with the YouTube Diamond Play Button was J.Fla, a singer with an unfamiliar name. J.Fla, nicknamed “Cover Diva” by her fans, became the fifth Korean musician and the first Korean solo YouTuber to reach 10 million subscribers on November 16, 2018.

J.Fla is a professional YouTuber specializing in cover songs. The name J.Fla is little known among middle-

aged Koreans who are not familiar with YouTube. Among teenagers, however, she is more famous than many well-known singers. In terms of international fan base, she is a rare phenomenon among Korean YouTubers. Search results for J.Fla on Naver are overwhelming. Among the search results, you will find many fans asking what they could do to become like J.Fla. She holds splendid records: the only Korean YouTuber to reach 10 million subscribers; close to 2 billion views; annual revenue estimated at two billion KRW (US\$ 1.7 million). Her famous cover songs include *Shape of You* by Ed Sheeran (210 million views) and *Despacito* by Luis Fonsi (130 million views), and a large number of songs covered by her have attracted tens of millions of views. Even videos reprocessing J.Fla's covers are very popular. An Ed Sheeran and J.Fla duet video of *Shape of You* edited by a K-pop channel has attracted over 3 million views.

A key point in analyzing the J.Fla case is that it is a representative case of a YouTube-born and YouTube-grown artist. J.Fla was once a singer. She started her YouTube activity in 2011 and released her debut album in 2013 with a label like other professional singers. At that time, her label invested hundreds of thousands of won in the production and promotion of her debut album *A Silly Story* including TV appearances. However, this investment was not rewarded with commercial success. J.Fla then contacted several labels, but without landing a contract. She continued her activities as a YouTuber and eventually became the most successful singer

on YouTube.

J.Fla did not enjoy an instantaneous popularity on YouTube. She did not differentiate herself from other cover artists, singing while playing an instrument or showing solo a cappella and choreography on a split screen. Since 2016, however, when she began filming her profile, wearing ponytail and headphones while singing, from a fixed angle, her subscriber base has continuously increased. As the style was fixed, branding was set naturally. In other words, J.Fla taught herself how to survive in the YouTube space.

Despite J.Fla's worldwide reputation, she is regarded as a "mere" cover singer by many, who point out that she has not released a new song since the release of *Baby Baby Baby* in June 2016. Given that she has not become popular for her own songs, but with cover songs, it is open to debate whether to recognize her as an artist or not. One thing is clear, though: her style came under the spotlight on YouTube. J.Fla is sharing her cover songs regularly by uploading them to YouTube and other streaming sites without any further processing. These songs are being steadily consumed, and *Shape of You* ranked 115 in the top 1000 of the Melon daily chart. It is rumoured that J.Fla has concluded a contract with a British label and is preparing a new album. It will be interesting to see to what extent J.Fla, who is enjoying global popularity with cover songs, will succeed with her own songs.

3) Mommy Son, a variant in the YouTube period

Mommy Son, a masked rapper, was at the centre of a hot issue of 2018 among Korean hip-hop fans. Mommy Son, a well-known rapper disguised with a pink mask, rose to a sudden stardom after competing at Mnet's rap contest "Show Me the Money Triple Seven" (SMTM777). Although he was eliminated during the competition and thrown into a pit of flames, he drew more attention than the winner and became the real beneficiary of the current season of SMTM777. After rising to fame through TV appearances, Mommy Son continued his activities full throttle in the YouTube space. This stands in contrast to the usual route of making a name on YouTube and going to the mainstream. Currently, Mommy Son is enjoying his YouTube presence as a full-fledged rapper, delivering a variety of content difficult to attempt in legacy media. In other words, he has become the so-called YouTube star who is more successful than mainstream entertainers.

Mommy Son posted a music video *Boy Jump* on YouTube on September 14, 2018, immediately after his elimination from SMTM777. Generally, singers promote their songs through streaming sites on attracting interest through TV appearances. Climbing the charts by leveraging a trend is a traditional pattern in the popular music industry. However, instead of releasing his video through streaming sites, Mommy Son posted it on YouTube. This act is mirrored in the outcry in the lyrics of *Boy Jump* that he will go his way, boldly scoffing

at Korean hip-hop, and *Boy Jump* struck a chord with hip-hop fans and recorded 13 million views in 12 days after its release. It was not until two months after the YouTube release of *Boy Jump* that Mommy Son offered it to streaming sites (November 10), and the *Boy Jump* climbed up to number 26 on the Melon daily chart. If it was released with a label leveraging the initial popularity, it could have landed the number 1 position. But Mommy Son did not do it. Why?

Mommy Son was able to get a huge number of YouTube views because he did not release *Boy Jump* on streaming sites because YouTube was the only space where the fans could listen to it. In other words, he exchanged the music chart rankings for YouTube views. Increase in YouTube views leads to increase in the number of subscribers. Mommy Son's account attracted subscribers and he could thus prepare a foundation for future "business." If this was planned, it is a well-planned strategy. Later on, Mommy Son disclosed his YouTube income. In that disclosure video, he said that he had earned about 17 million KRW (~US\$ 15,000) from 20 million advertised views. This video also recorded millions of views, contributing to Mommy Son's income. Currently, Mommy Son is earning money by posting one sponsored video after another under the title of "Dirty Capitalism PPL." This is a new way for musicians to communicate with the public and make money in this age of new media.

4) BDR, BTS for middle-aged fans

Beodeuri is regarded as a middle-aged idol. She is little known to the younger generation, but very famous among Koreans in their fifties and over. They say that BDR (referring to Beodeuri) is to the aged what BTS is to teenagers. I came to know about her by chance. Some years ago, I took a taxi to go home after a night shift. The cab driver, who appeared to be in his seventies, realizing that I was working in the popular music sector, began to talk about Kim Yeon-ja's *Amor Party* and recent trend of trot music, and asked me if I knew Beodeuri. He was almost shocked that I did not know about her, asking me how I could work in the music industry without even knowing about Beodeuri. Then he stopped the car and retrieved a Beodeuri video on YouTube on his smartphone. The low-resolution video had recorded hundreds of thousands of views.

Beodeuri is called the “Pumba Diva” by her fans. Pumba refers to a traditional Korean performance art of beggars who used to move from one marketplace to another in rural areas and sing and dance until they were given food. Beodeuri is a veteran singer who has staged pumba performances over the past two decades. She made her name by numerous performances in local events. Her name became known nationwide with her performance videos uploaded to YouTube. She gained a foothold as an event queen, keeping abreast of mainstream singers. Her popularity has grown to

such an extent that she can now give a solo concert.

Beodeuri has an official YouTube channel called “Mt. Geumgang,” to which her event videos are steadily uploaded. Although Beodeuri became famous through YouTube, her case is far from being similar to common YouTube content creators like J.Fla, who create content tailored to the YouTube space and upload videos produced according to certain strategic patterns. In contrast, Beodeuri’s performance videos are taken at the event venues and uploaded directly to her YouTube channel without being processed based on any particular concept. Their quality is very coarse when compared with the videos of other YouTubers. However, the number of views is overwhelming. There is a long line of videos with more than one million views, and the fan loyalty expressed in comments is remarkable. Why?

Beodeuri’s content is very unique. It is not easy to classify it as a specific genre. It is positioned somewhere between the work of pumba performers, shamans, and trot singers. The energy in Beodeuri’s performances is extraordinary. She sings and dances while playing drums as if in a trance. She makes abundant use of derogatory words and strong sexual innuendo, but without causing uneasiness or displeasure among her audiences. Her exquisite performance and witty remarks and gestures make the audiences laugh and applaud. Many spectators insert bills around her belt, and she takes money gratefully with adulating words like a real pumba, and even waves the bunch of bills she receives while singing.

The concept of pumba is very unique in the YouTube space, and therefore, Beodeuri's content is irreplaceable among older adults. If Beodeuri appears on TV, how would the audience react?

Beodeuri uses the popularity she is gaining through YouTube to promote her performance events, which are a source of income. Like other popular YouTubers, she uploads sponsored videos, receiving sponsorship from local restaurants in exchange for publicizing their brands in her videos. It is a niche strategy targeting older adults. Beodeuri's performance and entertainment symbolize the "viewing music" market for older adults. She offers entertainment tailored to the taste of older adults in their own realm unknown to children.

Looking at how BTS, J.Fla, Mommy Son, and Beodeuri use new media, a question arises: how did the musicians before them use new media to their advantage? Let's go back to 2015, Year 1 of the explosion of new media.

3. Music era brought about by mobile content

In November 2015, a video of a high school girl covering the song *Hello* of world-class singer Adele sparked a huge sensation in South Korea. This video footage showing an enthusiastically singing teenage girl clad in her school uniform went viral and reached 10 million views on YouTube

within a week of its release through a SNS channel “Hair-raising Live Performances of Amateurs” (hereinafter “Ilsora” [Korean abbreviation]). This video attracted international attention, and the teenager Lee Ye-jin was invited to the Ellen DeGeneres Show, a famous NBC talk show. Lee was thrust into the spotlight of Korean media thirsty for a second Psy and became an overnight celebrity under the epithet “high school girl Adele.”

This case symbolizes the “explosion of new media.” In the past, singers relied on the power of broadcasting and media to distribute their music. However, new media has emerged as a game-changer. Now people spend more time looking at smartphones than at TV. This allows musicians to spare the effort of crossing the high threshold of public TV channels. Now, they only have to create a short mobile footage and upload it to Facebook to promote their music. The SNS channels, once dominated by snack related-content focusing on eating and cooking, have gradually become a platform for promoting music.

The year 2015 was South Korea’s Year 1 of the explosion of new media that focused on mobile content. New media’s influence has been growing since then. New media platforms such as YouTube and Africa TV existed in the pre-2015 period. What makes 2015 a special year for new media is that mobile content targeting the smartphone generation took centre stage in this year. Platforms targeting mobile devices, such as 1theK, Pikicast, Dingo Music, and V Live

have gained popularity, kindling and fuelling this trend. They stepped into limelight as new platforms to present homemade footage of various artists from idol singers to indie musicians. Entertainment agencies began to use these platforms as a means of promoting their artists.

These new media platforms have made a significant contribution in changing popular music trends. Their impact can be analysed by examining the aforementioned platforms (1theK, Pikicast, Dingo Music, and V Live). These four new media platforms played an important role in triggering a trend shift in different ways.

1theK is known as Korea's first K-pop new media platform created by LOEN (currently Kakao M), which also operated the streaming site Melon. In 2011, 1theK opened a YouTube channel and started posting music videos distributed by LOEN. Later on, it established its identity as a new media channel by producing its own K-pop videos. 1theK thus pioneered a new wave of music-centred new media in South Korea and has played a pivotal role in bringing K-pop contents to global K-pop fans. It has shown its strength in creating K-pop contents such as "Let's Dance," which is recognised as the first Korean dance content, "Run to You," which surprises fans by a surprise visit and performance, and "Ask in a Box," which is a talk show involving international fans. In May 2018, the number of its YouTube subscribers reached 10 million, making it the fifth Korean channel and the first mixed content channel to achieve this feat.

Pikicast has been leading the trend of new media content, presenting a variety of videos, animated photos, and card news through its own platform. It boasts of the largest user base with 16 million app downloads and 1.2 million daily users. Pikicast has self-produced many new media contents including Piki Live enabling live music production, music curation by Honey DJ, web entertainment “Do What You See” where celebrities imitate the actions shown in the photos, and “After Mom Went to Bed” that enjoyed great popularity by using the experience of autonomous sensory meridian response (ASMR).

Dingo Music is a brand of the multichannel mobile studio “Makeus,” which distributes self-produced videos through its Facebook pages because it does not have its own platform. The monthly average views on its Facebook pages are estimated at 300 million. Dingo Music has attracted much attention by producing music-based video content such as Topsy Live, Dew Live, and Karaoke Attack.

With 1theK, Pikicast, and Makeus emerging as celebrated new media platforms for K-pop channels, demonstrating their strengths on YouTube, independent platforms, and Facebook, respectively, Naver felt that its position was under threat and launched V Live, a live broadcast platform, in September 2015, targeting mobile devices. V Live has grown rapidly using the Naver network. With these four new media platforms competing for market share by producing increasingly diverse music content, users

are increasingly likely to engage with musicians on mobile devices.

4. Surprise number 1 created by new media

With the advent of the era of “viewing music,” singers began to use new media platforms to promote their songs. They sequentially release their content through 1theK, Pikicast, Dingo Music, and V Live in time for their debut. The impact of these new media platforms keeps growing, exerting impact on music charts and Naver search. Consequently, musicians who have difficulty appearing on TV are turning to new media. Kim Jun-su, a former TVXQ member and a current member of JYJ, is a representative case in which there is a ban on the artist’s public performances. Kim launched a ground-breaking promotion by releasing a live performance of *Just Yesterday*, the title track of his 2015 extended play record (EP) *Just Yesterday*, through Piki Live. This met with enthusiastic support from his fans thirsty for his new live performance video, and Pikicast ranked No. 1 on Naver real-time search.

The celebrated female duo group Red Cheek Puberty utilized new media properly before debuting. The Ahn Ji-young and Woo Ji-yoon made their first public appearance in a TV show “Superstar K6” in 2014. Their agency Shofar Music used a unique marketing strategy by introducing the

duo to the public. They released self-produced teaser trailers in the form of short dramatised footage on Facebook in the first half of 2016 prior to releasing the debut EP *Red Cake*. In these videos, Ahn Ji-young played out her own dramatised role. These videos, tailored to mobile content trends, showing pretty Ahn's actress side succeeded in attracting viewers' attention. Many fans admit that they became Red Cheek Puberty fans through these trailers. It is now a trend that singers use Facebook for marketing before their debut, but this marketing strategy was rather an exception at the time.

The first No. 1 spot on Melon daily chart in 2016 went to an unknown singer Kim Na-young. Kim's song *What Would It Have Been* entered top 30 on Melon daily chart immediately after its release at noon on December 30, 2015, and ranked first at 1 am the next day. This surprise number 1 from an unknown singer stirred the music world. Kim Na-young was a "Superstar K5" contestant and continued her music activities mainly through busking in the Hongdae area. Some suspected of hoarding in the face of this surprise number 1 of Kim Na-young who had not even released an album. The Topsy Live of Dingo Music was mentioned as one of the secrets behind Kim Na-young's song reaching number 1 on Melon. The Topsy Live version of *What Would It Have Been*, posted on the Facebook page at 7 pm on the 30th, greatly contributed to popularizing the song by achieving million views, 35,000 likes and 20,000 shares on the 31st.

New media has also helped a music video climb

back up the charts. The climbing back of Melomance's *Gift* on the charts was the most dramatic event in 2017 in the music world. Melmonace is a duo consisting of Kim Min-seok (vocal) and Jeong Dong-hwan (keyboard), who are excellent performers and composers. At that time, Melmonace was little known to the public, but was widely recognised in the indie scene. *Gift* reached number 37 on the Melon daily chart in July, the month of its release, but soon disappeared from the chart. Then it suddenly reappeared and climbed back up the chart to the first position. It stirred an immense sensation and many tried to explain its cause. Such a dramatic change is always ascribable to word of mouth. The entertainment programme "Off-Chart #1" produced by 1thK was mentioned as one of the factors that triggered word of mouth. Melomance sang *Gift* and covered several songs of famous singers in this programme. The video was edited into several short footages and distributed through multiple Facebook channels. What counts more on Facebook is the appeal of the content itself than the name behind it. It was due to this attribute of new media that the footages of Melomance could reach a large number of people at such a surprising speed. In other words, the climbing back of *Gift* on the charts was the result of the synergy between the appeal of the music itself and the fuelling power of new media.

As examined above, the main beneficiaries of new media were non-idol-type singers who had been marginalised by the broadcasting industry. The surprise number 1 artists,

such as Ten Centimeters, Urban Zakapa, and Han Dong-geun, are all musicians who used new media to their advantage. Urban Zakapa, who topped the charts with *I Do Not Love You*, waged a big promotion campaign through Dingo Music. *Trying To Rewrite the End of This Novel* by Han Dong-geun, who became the icon of climbing back in K-pop, entered the top 90 of the Melon daily chart via Ilsora. Apart from the Melon daily chart, many indie musicians have landed the number 1 spot in Melon real-time search through Pikicast and Dingo Music. These cases are significant in that they have demonstrated that not only idol singers with a strong fandom, but indie singers with good music can also top the charts.

In recent years, new media have been used more actively in creating stars. 1theK and Dingo Music have been pushing ahead with their win-win deals through collaboration with specific artists, promoting their channel brands and boosting artists' brand value at the same time. Solo singer Paul Kim, who emerged as the most successful singer in music chart rankings, has consistently received 1theK's marketing support. He got closer to the public through his appearances in 1theK's programmes including Live 1, Special Club, Songcumentary, and Off-Chart #1. These videos, distributed through 1theK, Facebook, and YouTube, contributed to boosting Paul Kim's brand value. Paul Kim is a singer who rose to fame with his songs distributed through new media, without appearing in TV shows.

Driven by the available data on the impact of new

media, the traditional mainstream song promotion has begun to change. As the first step to promote new albums, music managers used to meet PDs of broadcasting companies. New media have now created a new trend, and people have begun to pay attention to this new trend. As a result, an increasing number of artists, starting from popular idol groups and veteran singers to talented indie musicians, have been using 1theK, Pikicast, Dingo Music, and V Live.

The new media platforms have struggled for several years to establish themselves in the music industry. With the mobile content generated by their fierce competition becoming popular among the users, many sub-platforms have been created. In addition, more and more musicians have begun to create their own content tailored to mobile devices and upload them to their own channels. The age of viewing music has arrived. However, these artists are facing the challenge of generating revenue. If they fail to generate stable incomes, they will inevitably question the sustainability of the impact of new media.

5. Extra feature: anticipated change in the music industry due to smart speakers

The area that needs to be dealt with in order to examine the future of the music consumption structure is smart speakers. Recent years have witnessed the increasing

integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into music. AI's role in a smart speaker involves selecting and playing music according to the user's demand such as "Play a comforting song when I feel lonely" or "Play a lullaby for the baby." Commercialization of smart speakers that can understand and respond to commands is heralding the advent of AI music service.

Smart speakers are increasingly penetrating our lives. SK Telecom launched "Nugu" (meaning "who" in Korean) in September 2016, and Korea Telecom (KT) launched "Giga Genie" in January 2017, waging competition, which is accelerating with the launch of "Wave" by Naver and "Kakao Mini" by Kakao. These brands are attracting consumers with differentiated services.

Seeing such a fierce competition, a question arises: why have leading Korean companies entered the smart speaker market? About a decade ago, Apple launched the iPhone and created a touch screen culture. Since then, most of the functions in the realm of PC have moved to the realm of mobile devices. Now, with the emergence of smart speakers, the interface is about to evolve from touch to voice. It is anticipated that smart speakers will change multiple aspects of our lives, as did the iPhone. The current smart speakers are equipped with features and functions such as interactive AI secretary, Internet search, news verification, music service, weather forecast, and alarm service. Of these functions and features, "music" is the most attractive one to consumers.

As mentioned earlier, the nature of music consumption has changed with technological evolution. First, tracing back the genealogy of the music-related technology, since Edison invented the phonograph in 1877, several generations of sound storage media have appeared in the order of LP, cassette tape, CD, and MP3. Each time a new medium emerged, patterns of music production and consumption changed. When people listened to music from LP on turntables, they sat still in a room (there were also portable record players). When cassette tapes and Walkman were invented, people could listen to music anywhere. As a result, people spent more time enjoying music, which boosted the sales of music records and cassette tapes. Walkman was an icon symbolizing the culture of young people, beyond merely being a music-playing device. Accordingly, the proportion of music targeting young people increased in the music industry. With the advent of CDs, people could freely choose tracks they wished to listen to, skipping other tracks, and consumption became faster. With the advent of MP3 players, the value of music labels plummeted and the scale of the music industry diminished. As examined above, advances in technology brought about changes in the patterns (habits) of music consumption, and even in the music industry.

Then, how will smart speakers change the nature of music consumption? Some phenomena may provide clues about the future. According to KT, the types of music that consumers search through the streaming site Genie

and through the smart speaker Giga Genie are significantly different from each other. KT has reported that the streaming volumes of children's songs, prenatal education music, classical music, and jazz have increased after Giga Genie was launched in the market. This seems to reflect the increased search for children's songs and prenatal education music by housewives to have them played by a smart speaker. In fact, smart speakers are very popular among housewives. Kim (37), who is raising a three-year-old child, said, "As soon as I wake up in the morning, I start the day by commanding the smart speaker to turn on the radio. It is convenient to freely listen to any channel while doing housework." According to KT, the search for the singers popular among middle-aged people has also increased, such as Lee Seung-chul, Lee Mun-se, Lee Sun-hee, Kim Gun-mo, Kim Kwang-seok, Na Hun-ah, and Cho Yong-pil. Smart speakers also reflect the latest music trends. Kakao released the rankings of the artists who were searched through voice command to Kakao Mini: #1 BTS, #2 IU, #3 Twice, #4 Pinkfong, ... #7 Queen. The top 3 are currently hot artists, Pinkfong is the dominant artist for kids' content, and the high ranking of the British rock band Queen seems to reflect the *Bohemian Rhapsody* fever that has recently swept South Korea.

As shown in the above data and rankings, the emergence of smart speakers seems to diversify music consumers' age range. In the market for smartphone-based music consumption, the main consumers are younger

generations familiar with the mobile environment. As the penetration rate of smart speakers increases, however, the number of middle-aged music consumers, who have lower access to streaming sites, is expected to increase gradually.

The streaming (digital) music market and the actual (analogue, live) music market do not mirror each other. A singer landing the number 1 spot on a streaming site is not necessarily the most popular singer. A typical case is Na Hun-ah, who made his comeback on July 11, 2017 with a new album *Dream Again*. The comeback of this legendary singer was a big social issue reaching beyond the popular music world. The title track *A Man's Life* stopped at number 398 on the Melon daily chart. Does this ranking reflect Na Hun-ah's real popularity? A totally different result was obtained in the concert market. The 31,500 presale tickets for his concert on September 5 were sold out within minutes. His concert tickets in Seoul, Daegu, and Busan were sold out within 7, 10, and 12 minutes, respectively, and the grey market tickets were priced up to 600,000 KRW (~US\$ 500). Such popularity is comparable to the top idol groups. How can we explain this discrepancy in sales volume between the online and live music markets? It is simply because middle-aged and elderly people, who are the main consumers of Na's songs, are not familiar with music streaming sites. If the use of smart speakers was widespread among the older generations, Na's ranking on the charts would have been much higher.

Look at the music charts, the top 100 songs are

predominantly popular songs by idol singers and hip-hop, R&B, ballad, and OST musicians. However, what is consumed on streaming sites is by no means limited to the music of popular singers. Every morning, children's songs appear as search terms on Melon. Pinkfong, which is enjoying explosive popularity among children, appears on Melon search every morning. However, search trends are not directly associated with top 100 positions on music charts, because a track must be streamed by a large number of users to break into the top 100. Pinkfong's *Shark Family* has become the first content for kids in South Korea to reach one billion YouTube views. Pinkfong's music is frequently streamed on smart speakers. This allows us to draw a conclusion that once smart speakers become a common household device, such popular children's songs will likely break into the top 100 positions on streaming charts, changing chart rankings.

The increase in the use of smart speakers is expected to have a significant impact on daily music consumption practices with regard to classical music, prenatal education music, and children's songs. Smart speakers are expected to play an important role in integrating the consumer groups unfamiliar with smart devices, such as children and older adults, into the digital music market, revitalizing the music markets targeting children and older adults. In other words, the biggest beneficiaries of smart speakers will likely be musicians like Pinkfong, Na Hun-ah, and Beodeuri.

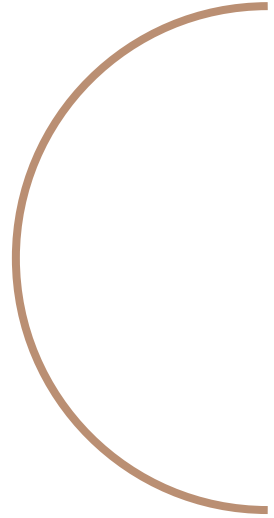
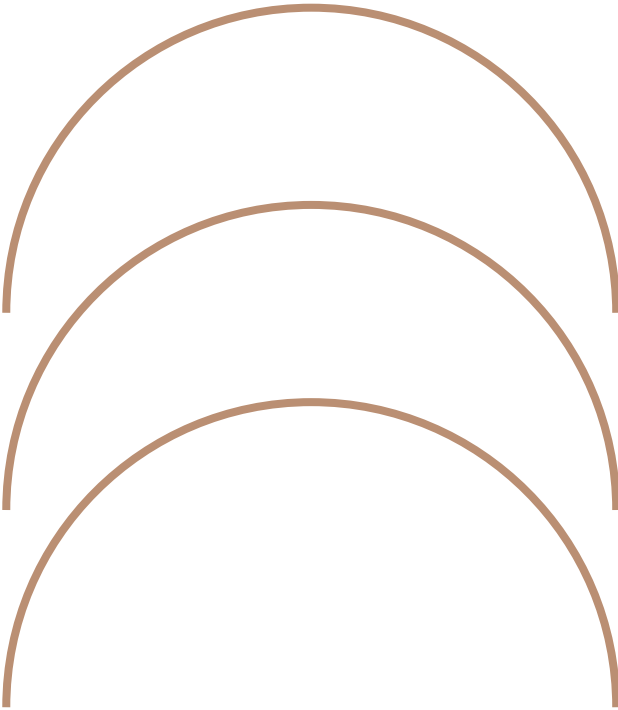
If all these predictions come true, smart speakers

will contribute to expanding music consumption, even though it remains to be seen whether it will boost or shrink the overall music industry. The shift of the mainstream of music consumption from record labels to streaming sites has largely diminished the overall scale of the music industry. It cannot be ruled out that the popularization of smart speakers will further erode the market share of record labels. Whether or not smart speakers will bring relief or disruption to the music industry will depend on how well this new music consumption method will be handled. In this regard, we can learn from the ups and downs in the fortunes of streaming sites in the past decade.

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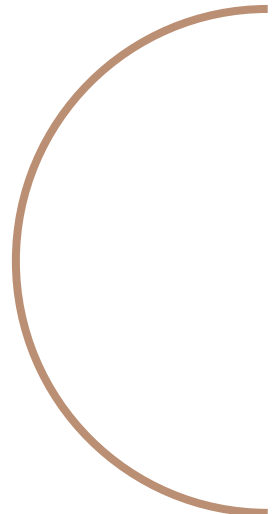
5) Q&A about Hallyu, the Second Story



Interviewee: Do Jong-hwan
(Poet and politician; member of the National
Assembly; former Minister of Culture, Sports
and Tourism*)

Interviewer: Kim Ah-young
(KOFICE research team)

* This interview was conducted in early
2019 during Do Jong-hwan's term of office
(June 2017–April 2019).



1. Hallyu, building the foundation of Korean culture

#1. A journey of 20 months – philosophy and achievements of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism

Q. You took office as the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism in June 2017. You have achieved a great deal since then; for example, the successful hosting of the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, which was hailed as the “Peace Olympics.” I would like to know about your experience at Ministry after taking office.

A. During the initial phase of my term, I was beset with many difficulties. To begin with, nothing was certain in the lead-up to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. Many people anticipated a failure, even to the point of voicing concerns about a budget deficit along the lines of “Minister Do will resign in March 2018, assuming the responsibility for the failed Olympics.” With the participation of North Korea, however, it became the Peace Olympics and provided an opportunity for the Korean Peninsula to change its fate. It was very fortunate that North and South could peacefully co-participate and exchange views.

The second crisis was the difficulties associated

with tourism and cultural export sectors in the wake of the THAAD conflict. The number of Chinese tourists had halved from 8 million in 2016 to 4 million in 2017. Music performances and TV drama broadcasts were cancelled, and game exports were hampered. Everything was facing interruption and blockade. Then the landscape for the tourism and entertainment industries suddenly changed in 2018. Thanks to the diversification of tourism market, the number of foreign tourists soared to 15.3 million. The target numbers for 2019 and 2020 are 1.8 and 20 million, respectively. In the entertainment industry, BTS has garnered explosive popularity among young people across the globe, landing number 1 albums on the Billboard 200. Further, the game “Battle Ground” ranked first in 100 countries, and videos on the Pinkfong YouTube channel have reached 10 billion views. Such a surge of popularity of Korean cultural content is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Lastly, I was faced with the challenge of restoring public trust in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (hereinafter the “MCST”) decimated by the blacklist affair, but I could address it by convening a Fact-Finding Committee. We introduced a bill for the “Act on Safeguarding Artists’ Status and Rights” and published a 10-volume white paper reporting the investigation results along with our pledge to prevent recurrence of such events. The 6600-pages-long white paper can be downloaded at the website of the MCST or the Fact-Finding Committee.

Q. What would be the main project of the year 2019?

A. First of all, it will be Year 1 of the concrete implementation of “Culture Vision 2030.” Culture Vision 2030 is not a project launched by the MCST staff; it has originated from arts and culture experts’ field work. They gathered the opinions of some 8000 regional artists across the country whom they met face to face. Culture Vision 2030 is based on three values: autonomy, diversity, and creativity. We have committed ourselves to advocating culture and art policies that respect first and foremost the autonomy of art and artists. This commitment was reinforced after the experience of the blacklist affair. We are also committed to policies that respect the diversity of community in order to reflect the opinions of various groups of artists in policies by gathering the opinions of women artists, local artists, and those who work in marginalised genres. Our third focus is on policies that encourage creativity in various social sectors. This focus is also associated with the burning issue of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Given that creative idea can directly lead to industrial applications, we call for the creation of an environment conducive to creative outputs. If such trends prevail in our society, new competitiveness will revitalize our cultural contents industry. The MCST will continue to implement these visions for the next three years.

Q. You have also announced an unprecedented scale of North-South exchange as part of “Culture Vision 2030.”

A. As I have already said, our target for 2020 is 20 million foreign tourists. The backbone of this plan is the DMZ (demilitarised zone) Peace Tourism. We are planning to create a pilgrimage trail, bike routes, 10 scenic spots, and 10 food tour destinations in the DMZ. Guard posts (GP) and general outposts (GOP) are currently being removed. Trails to those spots can be made available for hiking and cycling. Also planned are footbridges for the North-South joint efforts to recover the remains of soldiers missing in action during the Korean War, a walking detour to the Joint Security Area (JSA) and the use of GP remains, such as barbed wire, reinforcing bars, and concrete, in installation art or souvenir products for tourists. Besides, the DMZ is a treasure trove of ecosystems. I think it is necessary for the two Koreas to register it jointly as a UNESCO World Heritage site. It is a paradigm shift from security tour to peace tourism. Until now, it has been a site for security tour, consisting mainly of visits to Imjingak and the 3rd Tunnel. About 2.2 million people participate in such security tours every year. Now the target is 4.5 million peace tourists.

Q. The “Me Too” movement has spread like wildfire in the sports sector, too.

A. The case of Shim Suk-hee, a short-track skater, who was abused by her coach Cho Jae-beom, was a big social issue. This has compelled us to change the paradigm of the sports industry. Article 1 (Purposes) of the National Sports Promotion Act contains the phrase “contribute to the promotion of national prestige through sports.” To assist players properly with promoting national prestige, it is high time we changed the current practice of leaving sports human rights in a blind spot. To perform at one’s best, compete fairly, accept defeat gracefully, acknowledge and respect winners, and thus contribute to creating a healthy society—I think these objectives should be pursued during sports promotion. We will investigate and penalize those who commit physical abuse or sexual assault under the pretext of winning medals. A special institute called Sports Ethics Centre will be established for this purpose. It will be a dedicated organization composed of about 40 members. We plan to make 2019 the first year of sports innovation.

Q. May I interpret it as a determination to prioritize structural reform in the sports sector over winning medals in international competitions?

A. At the core of the media or people’s fury is the

recurrence of abuse. A similar scandal broke out a decade ago. We have put forward many troubleshooting ideas and plans, but have been criticized for imitating the strategies proposed at that time. What is certain is that winning gold medals using physical abuse or sexual harassment under the pretext of training is not an act that boosts national prestige—it only humiliates the nation. At the PyeongChang Winter Olympics, Japan’s Kodaira Nao (小平 奈緒) won the gold against Lee Sang-hwa for the first time. Lee, who failed to defend her gold medal, embraced and congratulated Kodaira. This scene was broadcast and hailed by people across the globe. Sports touch our hearts through such acts. Now we have to free our mindset from the training principle of “gold medals by all means” or “enduring even violence to reach the goal.” Sports performance backed up by violence is not permissible in an advanced sports nation.

Structural reform in the sports sector is not limited to solving the problem of violence. So far, gold medal winners have enjoyed various privileges including pension benefits, exemption from military service (in case of male athletes), and admission to universities. If talented young athletes become star players, their careers are guaranteed, and they usually go to training camps instead of school. However, such athletes are merely individuals fulfilling their duties. I would prefer training athletes who do not neglect their studies. Likewise, I would encourage students not to neglect sports. I would like to change the current high school curriculum, overemphasizing

core subjects such as Korean, English, and Math, limiting sports activities. I want to change this learning-centred culture. I intend to create a society where physical activity is embedded in citizens' daily life by promoting lifestyle physical activities and sports clubs. Specifically, we plan to abolish camp training and the national junior athletic competition, which is the hotbed of "medalism" and "performancism." I think this heralds a new beginning in sports reform.

Q. A large number of athletes have been granted exemption from military service for their performances in World Cup or Asian Games. People are asking why the BTS members are not given exemption from military service. What is your opinion?

A. The issue of military service exemption for Hallyu stars has sparked a nationwide interest and thus it is very important to form social consensus on it. This issue merits careful consideration and deliberation. To begin with, clear-cut criteria for Hallyu stars' military service exemption must be established. The MCST convened a joint task force with the Ministry of National Defense in October 2018 to improve the military service exemption system. The task force is led by the head of the Culture and Arts Policy Office. Some members of the National Assembly have already put forward relevant opinions. Kim Jae-won of the Liberty Korea Party, for

example has proposed an amendment to the Military Service Act intended to introduce a point accumulation scheme for military service exemption. Kim Byeong-ki of the Democratic Party has proposed to solve the problem of career interruption by introducing a flexible enlistment period or preparing an alternative service scheme. We will actively consider their opinions and consult with the Ministry of National Defense, the Military Manpower Administration, and other pertinent authorities to brainstorm a reasonable alternative.

#2. Hallyu – laying the groundwork

Q. I would like to hear your definition of Hallyu.

People are using the word Hallyu in almost every sector, such as “architectural Hallyu” and “medical Hallyu.”

A. I think Hallyu is a stream of culture flowing out of Korea. Hallyu is a word formed by combining Korea (Han) and wave (ryu). Ocean waves have flood and ebb currents. Hallyu can also ebb out from a country flooded by it. Therefore, mutual exchange is now very important. Hallyu began with various elements of popular culture such as Korean pop music and TV dramas, gradually forming a wave as a fandom of Korean pop culture began to form. A great challenge for Korean artists is promoting a wave of Korean

literature along with the wave of popular culture. It is argued that leveraging the momentum gained by the huge popularity of various elements of Korean popular culture such as K-pop among young people across the globe, we should upgrade Hallyu to include the traditional and classical Korean culture. Koreans have been exposed to Anglo-American, Franco-German, and Russian literature since childhood. We have studied, reviewed, and conducted in-depth research, and wrote theses and dissertations on foreign literature. Those who have studied foreign literature often play leading roles in Korean literature as well. Inversely, we may have the same influence on many other countries. This cannot be achieved in the near future because we have yet to accumulate more cultural assets. The achievements of BTS seem, of course, to go beyond the mere repetition of earlier K-pop groups' popularity. The BTS members compose their own songs. The lyrics they write strike a chord with European and American young adults. One of the messages of their lyrics is "we share your same concerns, pains, and conflicts. Their songs convey the feelings shared by all young people regardless of nationality and race, and that's the key to their success. BTS has a large fan base at home and abroad, and most fans are in their teens, twenties, and thirties. The current popularity of BTS is expected to last five to ten years, or even longer.

Q. Have you had any first-hand experience of the popularity of Hallyu?

A. When President Moon went to the Vatican to visit Pope Francis in October 2018, I was in the president's entourage. When we visited the Department of the Korean Language at Sapienza University of Rome, we were informed that 450 students were enrolled. However, that university was not an exception. The Department of the Korean Language of a Venetian university grants admission to 80 students, but over 400 students apply for admission. Competition is that high. The situation is not different in France, and many Southeast Asian students come to Korea to learn our language. This is unprecedented in the 5000 years of Korean history. It is certainly one aspect of the positive influence of Hallyu. During the recently held State Council meeting, I emphasized the need to spread the impact of Hallyu to other fields such as industry and diplomacy. President Moon Jae-in agreed with my suggestion. The President and the Prime Minister also tell that giving BTS albums to the children of heads of state has a greater diplomatic effect than anything else.

Q. I was deeply impressed by an interesting statement of a speaker I read in the proceedings of the 2016 symposium "Current status of literature journal support policy and related proposals":
The objective of the government to make Korea a cultural superpower through Hallyu cultural content seems to have no concrete basis. You participated in the Symposium as a speaker and panellist. I would

like to hear your comments on this statement.

A. It is not different from any other field. I think this is a commonly used process in promoting culture: sending genres appealing to the broader public abroad first to gain a foothold in foreign countries, followed by elite culture and literature leveraging the recognition and exposure already gained, conveying the image of Korea as a culturally advanced country. Cultural exchange across the elements of Korean culture on the foundation built by pop music, which is more easily enjoyable by foreigners than classical literature, is a long-term project. There is no need to hurry. It is more important to take time to enrich the cultural contents and promote Korean culture as a long-lasting asset. If masterpieces are created and an efficient master plan is set up to promote them, such a culturally upgraded Hallyu is not impossible after all.

Let me give an example. Novelist Han Kang won the Man Booker International prize for her novel *The Vegetarian* (2007) and was shortlisted in 2018 for *White Book* (2018). As is well known, she has written many works of fiction that received better reviews than these books did. Most literary critics rated *Human Acts* (2014), a novel centring on the 1980 Gwangju Uprising, much higher than *The Vegetarian*. Han Kang has written many masterpieces worthy of more prestigious awards, and there are many writers in Korea who can write similar masterpieces. It is now a well-known

fact. More importantly, it all depends on whether there will be translators like Deborah Smith who fell for Han Kang's novels.

The Chinese novelist Mo Yan (莫言), who won the 2012 Nobel Prize in Literature, published *Red Sorghum Clan* (Hong Gaoliang Jiazu, 紅高粱家族) in 1987. In the same year, filmmaker Zhang Yimou (張藝謀) made the novel into a film under the title *Red Sorghum* (Hong Gaoliang, 紅高粱) and won the Golden Bear at the 1988 Berlin International Film Festival. Foreigners who watched it began to read Mo Yan's novels, and soon a group of translators keen to translate and introduce all of his works to foreign readers was formed. Likewise, we should build a solid base in foreign countries so that foreigners can enjoy Korean culture and literature for decades to come. It is my hope that a certain kind of system will arise in which teenagers coming in contact with Korean literature as K-pop fans will learn Korean, study in Korea, and become translators of Korean literature. In this sense, I am very well aware of the importance of popular culture as the driving force behind the increasing influence of Hallyu.

Q. A large portion of Culture Vision 2030 is dedicated to inter-Korean cooperation and related content. Inter-Korean communication is as important as sending out Korean culture abroad. Recently, much effort was put into bringing the South Korean animated film *Underdog* (2018) to North Korea.

The Korean Film Council also founded the Special Council for Inter-Korean Film Exchange. What message would you like to give us with regard to the two keywords, “culture” and “inter-Korean exchange”?

A. The year 2019 marks the centenary of Korean cinema’s birth. Bidirectional proposals have been made to invite North Korean films to South Korean film festivals and to South Korean filmmakers and actors to North Korean film events. I hope this year will see this project being realised. In the climactic scene of *Underdog*, a hand grenade bursts, and flower petals soar into the sky and fall into the lands across the barbed wires of the DMZ, where stray dogs remove mines and make a peaceful space to live in. I think such a story can be interpreted positively in North Korea. It is a story of homeless stray dogs that can barely survive a day going northwards in search of a land where they can live freely. I watched the film in February with the First Lady. At that time, preparations were being made for its release in China. Director Oh Seong-yun was worried about whether or not *Underdog* would stand the competition from foreign animated films or how long it would be able to hold up. He was also considering relaunching or exporting it. He was even worried that the theme was too profound and only no-nonsense people would watch it (laughter). Because the *Underdog* production team is the same team that produced *Leafie, A Hen into the Wild* (2011), I think

it will appeal to audiences both at home and abroad. Anyway, I hope that inter-Korean exchanges will gain traction in the near future, and the MCST is ready to support such exchange projects.

Q. You once said, “While BTS was hitting No. 1 on the Billboard 200, the State didn’t do anything. Yet, the State has a role to play.” What do you mean by that?

A. We often talk about “mutual cultural exchange” or “bidirectional cultural exchange.” However, the meaning of “mutual” or “bidirectional” is already embedded in the word “exchange.” It is hence redundant. It can be interpreted as emphasizing the interactions that involve cultural exchange, triggering substantial changes that go beyond quantitative and formal levels. The export of K-pop, admittedly the core genre of Hallyu, shows a great regional preponderance. Over 97% of K-pop export goes to Asian countries including China and Japan, but 75% of music import is from Europe and North America, not from Asia. We need to reflect on our own Orientalism, asking ourselves whether we are justified in calling Asian countries our neighbours since the balance of cultural exchange is tilted in our favour.

Another important issue is safeguarding the rights of Korean cultural sector workers. In this regard, we are promoting artists’ mandatory employment insurance or

proposing amendments to the artists' welfare law. Not only the public sector such as the MCST, but also the private sector needs to make efforts to make use of the "standard form contract on popular culture services" to the extent possible. At the end of 2018, we released the "Basic Guidelines for the Creative Content Sector," adopting various improvements such as flexible work schedule, discretionary work system, and agreement on the hours worked outside the workplace.* I hope that these work options will be actively considered and implemented. If the Korean cultural contents industry wants to see its intellectual property respected around the world, the rights of the domestic cultural sector workers should also be safeguarded as much.

#3. Literature, reality and life

Q. You wrote an article titled "A Poem That Moves Me" in the *Silcheonmunhak*, in which you presented *Saneup-Ilji* by Shin Kyung-rim. What would be "a book that moved me"?

A. There are a large number of books that have moved me. The most recent one is *Homo Deus* (2017) by Yuval Harari. I was amazed by the author's insights. The

* "When difficulty arises in calculating the working hours spent outside the workplace in whole or in part for business trip or other reasons, a certain number of hours count towards working hours. If working hours exceed the working hours limit (overtime), the number of hours fixed

by a written agreement with the workers' representative is deemed to be the working hours." (Time for coffee break, smoking, or dinner with business partners... Confusing working hours?, The Hankyoreh, June 11, 2018).

book presents three biggest problems for humanity to solve throughout the human history of hundreds of thousands of years: war, famine, and plague. Although there has been no global war since WWII, there have been a series of local wars, causing massive casualties. Nowadays, however, suicide deaths exceed war death tolls. The author took South Korea as an example. South Korea has achieved dazzling economic success in a short period of time—its GDP increased from \$100 in 1960s to \$30,000 in 2019. Despite this extraordinary economic growth, South Korea’s suicide rate is the highest among OECD members. Our highest or second-highest global ranking for suicide-related deaths is an indicator of the intensity of our internal conflicts and contradictions. *Homo Deus* makes us stop and think about solving the problems of the people suffering inwardly in the shadow of quantitative growth.

Q. South Korea will also have to find a way out of war, famine, and plague.

A. Humanity has long argued that war should disappear. We are also trying to turn war into peace, aren’t we? We must steer away from the threat of war towards peaceful exchange and coexistence, and further towards a permanent peace system. The first of the three biggest problems mentioned by Harari can be overcome this way. As for how to end famine, the second problem, Harari points out that more

people die today from eating too much than from eating too little. That is, people dying of diseases such as diabetes or high blood pressure outnumber those dying of starvation. To quote Harari, Coca-Cola poses a far deadlier threat than al-Qaeda, the international terrorist organization. Talking about plague, Harari gave the example of the smallpox epidemic of 1520: one of the slaves in a Spanish flotilla carrying soldiers to Mexico, who was infected with smallpox, spread the smallpox epidemic throughout Mexico, resulting in 8 million deaths within a year. Two centuries later, the population of the Hawaiian Islands was reduced from half a million to eighty thousand due to the diseases introduced by European visitors. When a pestilence swept through Europe, tens of millions of people died. Most of these problems have been solved through the achievements in science and medicine, but new diseases are still emerging. In Buddhism, it is called the world of geoptak (jiezhuo, 劫濁; turbidity of kalpa, i.e., war and famine). The opposite of the geoptak is jeong (jing, 淨; clean) as in seobang jeongto (xifang jingtu; 西方淨土; western pure land). It is Buddha's teaching to free us from the turbid world, heading towards the pure land. This is where Buddha's message given to humanity 2500 years ago and humanity's problems pointed out by Harari meet. Thus, *Homo Deus* sees through humanity's problems, presenting various rationales and data. This book is a must-read for all of us who wish to pursue a healthy, peaceful, and abundant life.

Q. In a media interview, you said you would like your epitaph to read: Do Jong-hwan, who lived like an ivy. In the same breath, you said that the far right and left should be marginalised and the centre should be at the centre of a society.

A. Buddha told the humanity to avoid o'ak takse (五惡濁世; world filled with five types of turbidity). The first type of turbidity is the aforementioned turbidity of kalpa (war and famine). The second is the turbidity of views. The world is turbid as people hold wrong views. All insist on their own opinions. If an incident is reported, they hunt it, making malicious comments and spreading anger, disbelief, and disgust. This is our daily life. Far right and left stem from people's overconfidence in their one-sided opinions, and both sides bring turbidity to the world. Kim Ki-chun, the former Blue House Chief of Staff who is the centre figure in the blacklist affair, pursued this type of McCarthyism. Joseph McCarthy even banned Charlie Chaplin. He dichotomized the world into right and left representing good and evil. However, if one side is extreme, the opposite side is inevitably extreme. There is no meeting point between the two extremes. According to McCarthy, Charlie Chaplin should be banned from film studios. *Modern Times* (1936), Chaplin's masterpiece, should also be banned. What kind of society would this be? A barbarian society, of course. Picasso called himself a communist. He also painted *Massacre in Korea*

(1951), criticizing the Korean War. Should we then remove Picasso from an art textbook? Should we be prohibited from reading Jean Paul Sartre's books? The same goes for the New Left artist Bob Dylan and the music of the Beatles. What would then be left? Only barbarism, yes. We cannot take actions against extremists, but we can build a society in which extremists are marginalised and moderate and rational people communicating with each other form the mainstream. That is why I advocate for broadening the centre. I believe that is the only reasonable path to pursue.

Q. We also need to pursue a more cultural life in order to communicate well.

A. When we get familiar with culture, we broaden our inner space, becoming less irritable and gaining better control over anger. We need to sing, exercise, watch movies, and read books and poems. A life of anger is a life of dying slowly. A Brazilian poet said this. People who do not travel, do not listen to music, do not read books, and cannot find inner beauty are slowly dying. I would like to tell them this: let us not do it, let us become beautiful with culture.

MCST

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism is establishing a broad range of policies in culture, arts, sports, tourism, contents copyright, religion, media and other fields to realize the concept of 'Culture with the People.' It also promotes cultural exchange with various countries of the world and works to expand Korean culture, sports and tourism in the foreign market to enhance the international competitiveness of Korea.

KOFICE

KOFICE, founded in 2003 by Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, encourages international cultural exchange beyond borders through various cultural events, global networking, research and studies, and training programmes for rising experts in related fields.

With the vision "A network hub connecting Korea and the world through culture", the KOFICE will lay foundations for "win-win cultural development" by connecting people and exchanging cultures around the world.

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