

Research Article

Hallyu (Korean Wave): Decoding the Soaring Popularity of South Korean Culture

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Abstract

Popular culture is the set of practices, beliefs, and objects that embody the most broadly shared meanings of a social system and it appeals to people because it provides opportunities for both individual happiness and communal bonding. Culture is very important in the formation of certain group identities and technology becomes a tool in transforming cultural identity. South Korea has become the powerhouse of popular culture, especially in Asia. The Hallyu has huge effects on societies and people. The Korean Wave (Hallyu) refers to the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy exporting pop culture, entertainment, music, TV dramas, and movies. Korean pop popularly referred to as K-pop is a term that has been in use since the early years of the 21st century. South Korea is rising not only in the entertainment industry but also in all fields and begins to take a significant place in the world. Over the past few years, it has been observed that more and more Indian youth have been getting into Korean Pop Culture. From K-dramas, and K-pop to K-culture, no phenomenon has ever seen such mass fan participation, liking, and acceptance. Thus, this study aims to decode and understand what causes this undeniable affinity to cultural products of the Korean wave and to find the key reasons behind the popularity of Korean Pop Culture. It also examines the significant factors that entice people to pop culture.

Keywords

South Korea, Popular Culture, Hallyu, Korean Wave, K-pop

1. Introduction

The word "popular culture" refers to the things and ways of expressing oneself and one's identity that is widely recognized or acknowledged, admired or preferred by the majority of people, and characteristic of a certain society during a particular time period. A society's populace is said to be representative of its members in the ways that they behave, the things they believe, the routines they follow, and the things they like to do. Popular culture encompasses all of these aspects. According to Oliver, "popular culture" is "those things

that we all share in common, through the mass media exposure notably on the internet and through television." The expressions of popular culture may be found in a variety of mediums, such as print culture, cyberculture, popular music, sports culture, entertainment culture, leisure culture, fads, advertising, and television. Imagine trying to live in a world where there is no pop culture at all. It is almost impossible. Trends in clothes, usage of language, greeting practises, and preferences in cuisine are all examples of popular culture.

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The Korean way of life and culture, often known as Hallyu or the Korean Wave, has grown extremely popular and has extended to a number of other nations, including India [1]. The phenomenon known as the Hallyu wave, which quite literally translates as "flow of Korea," has completely engulfed India. The K-craze has taken hold in millennials all throughout the country, and the culture that is presently forming is prevalent among youngsters. This culture has the potential to be embraced by society, and it has the potential to generate a phenomenon known as the Korean wave fever. Not only does K-Pop involve music and theatre, but it also involves many aspects of Korean culture [2].

This trend is referred to as the Korean Wave or Hallyu as a distinct influence of Korean cultural items such as Korean dramas, K-pop music, and Korean skincare. Indian spectators, particularly adolescent Korean fans who still have a tendency to have easily affected qualities and emulate their role models, feel a sense of addiction due to the popularity of Korean dramas. The study investigates the influence that addiction to K-products has on the mimicry behavior of adolescents and what made them like Korean culture the most. "Hallyu! The Korean Wave" is an examination of the rising cultural effect that South Korea is having all over the world.

Magazines that are published for the media and entertainment industries have begun using the phrase "Korean Fever" quite lately. The majority of the research that has been done on the Korean Wave has been on various aspects of business, art, tourism, national policy, and the reasons people wish to learn Korean. K-Drama and K-pop were at the centre of the early phases of Hallyu; but, in more recent times, it has grown to encompass industries such as cinema, gaming, dance, food, and fashion. The representation of family values and respect for the elderly are two examples of the cultural characteristics that are highlighted in the Korean Wave that are appealing to people of other cultures. The purpose of this study is to throw some light on this topic by concentrating on the factors that lead participants to consume Korean Wave [3] items and the ways in which they are connected to the phenomenon. In the end, the whole inquiry was predicated on the following three inquiries:

- 1) To begin, what are some of the characteristics that make people interested in the Korean wave?
- 2) What kind of connections do individuals have with the Korean wave?
- 3) What kind of influence does the Korean wave have on people's opinions of Korea and the culture of that country?

The propagation of Korean pop culture around the globe is referred to as the "Hallyu" or "Korean Wave." The word "Hallyu" literally means "to flow." The term "Hallyu" refers to the circulation and dissemination of Korean popular culture, which may include K-drama and films (version 1.0), K-pop music (version 2.0), K-culture (version 3.0), and K-style clothing and food (version 4.0). Since the year 2000, the phenomenon known as the Korean Wave has been growing in

popularity; Korean Wave 1.0 led to K-pop 2.0, which stimulated interest in Korean culture.

Recently, the number of viewers or lovers of the Korean wave, also known as Hallyu, has been fast expanding. The influence has been so significant that people in India have begun to buy products from Korea such as food, cosmetics, greeting cards, and posters of Korean music band groups. The term "Hallyu wave" refers to a cultural phenomenon that is not restricted to simply soap operas, pop music, or films; rather, it has extended to include mobile applications, games, language, cartoons, comics, fashion trends, cuisines, cosmetics, tourism, and other fields. An international Korean craze that began in the 1990s in Japan, China, and Taiwan and spread to Latin America, the Middle East, the United States, and parts of Europe is still going strong today [4]. Now, as a result of the unstoppable success of the boy band BTS, which defied all prejudices, the frenzy is rapidly spreading.

Fans of Korean popular culture are also known for their devotion to the country's clothing and fashion patterns. Because there is such a huge demand for Korean-style garments among fans of Korean popular culture, a growing number of retail establishments, both online and in shopping malls, are stocking collections of Korean-inspired clothes [5]. In addition, the South Korean Ambassador has been motivated in recent years to arrange a few events such as a musical concert and a K-pop competition by the rapidly expanding popularity of Korean music, cinema, and drama among the youngsters of India.

2. Neo-Korean Wave

The evolution of internet technology has resulted in about a turning point in the Hallyu phenomenon, which has led to the formation of the "Neo-Korean Wave." K-Pop and music videos have been digitized, which has made it possible for the genre to reach a wider audience. The popularity of global K-pop has been most prominent in Asia, but it has also extended to the rest of the world in recent years.

The Korean Wave has raised the value of Korean brand products. Since 2011, the influence of the Korean Wave has been steadily growing in terms of its economic repercussions [6]. In particular, the medical tourism industry, the cosmetics industry, and the beauty industry have all been directly impacted by the issue. Their fashion and style goods are being sold throughout Asia, which is where the Korean Wave has the most influence, and Korean celebrities are setting the trend for customers to follow.

A growing number of people are showing an interest in the Korean language and culture as a result of the popularity of K-pop, K-dramas, and K-movies. According to Fukunaga (2006), those who have a significant interest in the popular culture of other countries are more likely to develop critical mindsets, cultural awareness, and proficiency in the language of that country. Youngsters in India are showing an interest in Korean culture, which has contributed to the rise in the pop-

ularity of the Korean language. Regarding India, the Korean Wave has made it easier for Korean cosmetics, apparel, and food to get ingrained into Indian society, particularly among younger people. This is especially true of India's youth. This is due, in part, to the fact that Indian K-pop fans have a strong desire to emulate the outward look of the Korean celebrities whom they like the most. The number of foreign tourists arriving in Korea rose from 5.32 million in the year 2000 to 13.34 million in the year 2022. Because of the success of Korean dramas and movies, as well as the proliferation of K-pop concerts all throughout the country, Korea has become a popular destination for visitors from other countries.

When it comes to the subject of the Hallyu wave, the concept of originality, also known as *goyuseyong*, is another driving factor. Despite the fact that Korean culture is largely impacted by the cultures of other countries, which the Korean people have a tendency to imitate, the Korean people nonetheless manage to produce works of art that are widely acclaimed, such as *Jewel in the Palace* and *Winter Sonata*, amongst others.

3. K-Drama

Only K-pop music and Korean dramas will be available during the initial wave. The availability of video streaming services such as YouTube, Netflix, and others has enabled a large number of individuals to spend their leisure time viewing music videos and dramas online. These are the mediums that have given K-pop and K-dramas the opportunity to spread around the globe and become a sensation. People who seek amusement on a regular basis are finding that their everyday lives are increasingly dominated by Hanguk dramas, often known as K-dramas, which are typically presented in the form of mini-series.

The popularity of the Korean wave is greatly influenced by culture. Popular culture in Korea offers a fusion of western and Asian ideals, increasing its likelihood of acceptance in nations with comparable values and a penchant for western culture [7]. As a result, sharing in contemporary modernity is a new interpretation of cultural closeness. Korean plays depict their cultural values, way of life, and cultural beliefs. They exhibit family bonds through showing affection for their siblings, caring for their young offspring, and caring for their elderly parents. One can also notice the significance Koreans place on loyalty and respect for their elders in Korean operas.

The dramas also highlight the value of education in Korea and how demanding Korean parents are about their children's academic performance. For the enjoyment of the viewers, Korean dramas also provide a variety of high-quality romantic love stories. The development of techniques by Korean media to draw in global audiences by modernising cultural values and ideas is intriguing and distinctive. They remain true to the realities of life, such as love, respect, and links to family. One of the elements that draws viewers to Korean drama production and set Korean drama apart from Western and Indian

drama is this [8]. Dramas emphasize human nature and encourage audience realism. Indian consumers are drawn to the hybridity of Korean popular culture because it incorporates components of Western society as well as their own cultural ethos, which they can relate to. In their products, Korean Wave perfectly blends western and traditional Korean culture, demonstrating the globalization process. In the instance of India, it is evident from the gathered interviews that the people of India are also contributing to the globalization process in South Korea. For Koreans, the family is of utmost significance, and Korean dramas do a good job of illustrating this.

4. K-Pop

When Korean dramas became popular, Korean music also started to flow. A new age of K-pop was begun in 1995 with the debut of Seo Taiji & Boys [9]. In the same year, major entertainment firms such as SM and YG entertainment as well as numerous smaller businesses were created, and the whole K-music industry began to experience a revolutionary outbreak. They have all contributed to the formation of an entirely new musical subgenre by producing a large number of idol groups.

People began to take notice of K-pop artists as the genre made its way gradually onto the Billboard Chart, which lists the most popular songs from across the world on a weekly basis and makes it simpler to locate popular music. There is no question that Psy's "Gangnam Style," which was released in 2012, marked the beginning of this one-of-a-kind era that the globe is currently experiencing [10]. This song was inspired by the way of life in one of the more affluent cities in South Korea, and it included an original and catchy rhythm to go along with the dance that went along with it. People all over the world started to find out about music groups like *BIG BANG*, *GIRL'S GENERATION*, *SUPER JUNIOR*, *EXO*, *TXT*, *WANNA ONE*, *NCT*, *GOT 7*, *SEVENTEEN*, *STRAY KIDS*, *MONSTA X*, *ASTRO*, *WINNER*, *ENHYPEN*, *SHINEE*, *PENTAGON*, *IKON*, *BTOb* to the latest worldwide hottest trend "*Bangtan Sonyeondan*" as "*BTS*" who even left [11] the European artists behind with their stardom nowadays. Psy's success led to an interest in the performances of other artists, and it was this interest that led to an interest in other artists.

The success of K-pop can be attributed to a number of factors, including the incredible catchiness of its songs, the allure of its performers, the quality of their vocal performances and their incredible on-stage dance moves, their use of makeup and accessories, and the label of the clothing they wear. This made the audience to dwell in the Hallyu wave [13]. The second wave includes a variety of computer games, fashion statements, and movies from Korea, among other things. *Train to Busan* (2016), *My Sassy Girl* (2001), *A millionaire's first love* (2006), *The king and the clowns* (2005), *Parasite* (2019), *The Handmaiden* (2016), and so on are only a few of the well-known Korean films that have taken the rest of the globe by storm. The third and final wave consists of

things like Korean cuisine, tourism, Korean products, Korean customs and traditions, and other such things.

The success of the K-beauty trend is extremely important to the success of the Hallyu movement. Most people have been captivated by the immaculate beauty of Korean women and Korean idols, and as a result, most people have been inspired to follow their beauty routine and purchase the beauty products that they use. People, particularly the young generation who have access to YouTube, look for Korean beauty instructions on a regular basis or immediately after the release of a new music video by their favorite girl group. The word "cosmetic surgery" is often connected with the K-beauty trend as well as the skincare products and cosmetics that are associated with the K-beauty movement. Everyone in Korea, regardless of gender, aspires to have an appearance that is eternally youthful, luminous, dewy, natural, fresh, and uncomplicated—or, to put it another way, that of legendary perfect beauty [14]. People from all over the world have always been drawn to this fashion trend, so it's not surprising that they've adopted it so rapidly. It's always been intriguing to them.

In addition, Koreans prefer to employ substances that are obviously safe for the skin, and their beauty products tend to be quite effective. Because the product packaging concept is so enticing, these cosmetic items were able to break into the international market with relative ease. The following of beauty and fashion trends, which is the beginning of cultural fusion, is another significant effect of the Korean wave in India. The young are incorporating elements of their own cultural attire into the Korean fashion trend. As a consequence, they are developing a distinctive fashion trend while maintaining their own deeply ingrained cultural character. The Korean wave has a significant impact on the idea of fashion and beauty. Every Korean pop music idol wears stylish clothing to go out and perform in live events, and the actors in Korean dramas have excellent fashion sense. The young folks are drawn to their fashion sense. They are also highly sensitive of their appearance. To keep their skin looking young and healthy, Korean stars, idols, and regular Koreans adhere to a stringent skin care regimen [15]. Every day, they adhere to a 10-step beautification regimen. Both men and women use skincare and cosmetics to look attractive, but women are tighter about sticking to the routine. Korean skincare and cosmetics are renowned for having high-quality products.

5. Korean Food

Korean foods are taking over India like never seen before. Popular Korean dishes include kimchi, jjajangmyeon, ramyun, dak galbi, tofu, and bibimbap, Samgyeopsal, Sundubu Jjigae, Bulgogi, Japchae, Haemul Pajeon, Tteokbokki, which have been featured in Korean television dramas, are increasingly being offered at Korean-style restaurants in India [16]. These restaurants can be found all throughout the city. They are receiving news coverage from a variety of social media

platforms, and as a direct result, a new business section has been opened. The Korean media now has a significant impact not only on the food business but also on the fashion industry, and the majority of those who are most impacted by this wave are teens.

The level of enthusiasm with which Indian fans follow the Hallyu wave is likewise quite high. *From Winter Sonata, My Love from Another Star, Descendants of the Sun, Vincenzo, Sweet Home, Love Alarm, Squid Game, [12] All of us are dead, Crash Landing on you, Hometown Cha Cha Cha, Coffee Prince, True Beauty, Weight Lifting Fairy Kim Bok Jo, Our Beloved Summer, Run on, Start Up, Nevertheless, Memories of the Alhambra, Goblin, Legend of the Blue Sea, Alchemy of souls, Two World, Sky Castle, It's okay to not to be okay*, and so on – each and every successful drama is dazzling the viewers and generating a vast consumer base all by themselves in a single country. The viewers in India have a great deal of admiration for Korean artists, actresses, and family-centered soap operas. These things may be traced back to Confucian principles, which serve as the cultural foundation for both nations.

The younger generation in India is becoming increasingly dependent on coffee shops that are styled after those in South Korea. Even abilities in plastic surgery are seeing a larger demand in today's market as a direct result of the Hallyu trend. Boy bands like *EXO, TXT, BTOB, BTS, TVXQ, and Super Junior* have had significant followings in India of their own. These things unquestionably have a societal and economic impact, as well as on Indian culture. The phenomenon known as Hallyu was successful because of cultural closeness, which may also be referred to as a shared historical and cultural inheritance. In East Asia, the concept of cultural closeness has been rethought to mean the mutual adoption of contemporary modernity. Because it provides a fusion of western culture and Asian values.

6. Korean Language

Language constitutes yet another significant component that has had a significant impact. Everyone who has been afflicted by the Hallyu fever has stated that they have more or less embraced the Korean language in their day-to-day existence. This has been the consensus among those who have been affected.

People admitted to incorporating adopted Korean words into their everyday English, making inside jokes about the lives of Korean idols and k-dramas, and using Korean expressions such as *fighting* to encourage one another or *aigoo* [17] to express sadness or *aish* to express annoyance, *Unni*, what female calls an older female, Women in Korea typically refer to their older brothers as *Oppa*. *Hyung*, what a male calls an older male, *Ga-ji-ma* for don't go, *Saranghae* for expressing her love, *Joahae*, to express his liking for beloved one, *Bogosipeoyo*, to express missing her loved one, *gamsahabnida*, thanking someone, *Hajima*, when people feel

pissed up and so on. Some Korean terms are created to be more intelligent, while others are condensed to create new meanings or just for the fun of it. Lexis refers to any fandom's usage of a particular vocabulary and syntax that is hard for outsiders to grasp.

There are several reasons why the Hallyu wave became well-known around the world. First and foremost, viewers may relate well to South-East Asians because of their shared social preferences. Their shared social concerns, mannerisms, quirks, and sense of humour are quite similar. Second, practically all of these people hold the same religious beliefs, and their opinions are typically reasonable and realistic. Because Korean dramas are heartfelt and pure, unlike western society, which is indifferent to vulgarity and violence, family-oriented individuals like watching them. Thirdly, the ideal rhythm and momentum can be found in both K-pop and K-drama. Pop music has quick, steady dancing routines that are entertaining to see and addictive.

Again, in drama, they are few in number, so their plot is succinct and focused, with just the right amount of emotion without being too sentimental. Fourthly, idols and artists with pale complexion, little makeup, and a contemporary fashion sense never fail to draw viewers' attention to them. It is reasonable to conclude that the majority of people are glued to the Korean wave simply because their favorite idols are attractive, and viewers feel as though they have just emerged from their favorite fairytale. Last but not least, young people's insatiable curiosity drives them to seek out the latest fashions via the media, and this wave is the quickest way for them to do so.

Themes of love and links to family are also present in their songs. In this instance, K-pop promotes ideals that are global rather than just those that are typical of certain geographical areas. Customers are increasingly drawn to Korean culture's hybridity, which combines English and Korean and uplifts the music. This also illustrates the identical values and contemporary presentation of the cultural proximity hypothesis. K-pop focuses on making the idols more likable to the younger generation by making them all-around entertainers who can perform several roles. Many of their songs refer to topics like friendship, love, willpower, and how to get over any form of despair, which appeals to young people not just in India but throughout the world.

7. Conclusion

This paper reveals that Korean popular culture is having a significant influence on Indian youth's everyday life and inspires them to adopt Korean culture. The effects of cultural hybridization may become more apparent if the rising popularity of Korean wave in India continues to develop in the future. A country has never previously in the history of popular culture been able to garner as much international attention for its music, drama, and films in such a short period of time. K-pop followers and Korean drama lovers can be seen

on every continent. Researchers, lawmakers, and the media have all become interested in this occurrence. In this paper, I've attempted to address the questions of who is responsible for the Korean wave's success and what they think of it. However, due to Korean dramas and k-pop, the Korean wave is still strong today. K-pop was successful in capturing the interest of the Korean public by placing an emphasis on performance, appearance, and image.

The Korean wave was mostly produced by SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment. These businesses were successful in creating a hybrid style of music that is appealing to many different cultural groups. As a result, Korean popular culture becomes more approachable to other civilizations that are remote from Korea in terms of culture. Asian dramas are really what people are looking for right now. As the world moves closer together and we rightly engage more with new cultures. Once we're receptive to all these unique tales, the media environment will change. The amount of non-English information will only increase, but the approach of concentrating on a single narrative [18] with those overarching themes is what actually connects us and demonstrates how much, despite seeming differences, we share across countries. What is emerging from South Korea is fresh and innovative, although Western culture will always predominate the media. People have gotten more curious and thirsty for various cultural stuff. Additionally, individuals today are easily bored. They only seek something unique, and Korea offers enough of that.

Abbreviations

BB	Big Bang
SNSD	Girls' Generation (So Nyeo Shi Dae)
SJ / SuJu	Super Junior
EXO	Exoplanet (stylized as EXO)
TXT	Tomorrow X Together
W1	Wanna One
NCT	Neo Culture Technology
G7	GOT7
SVT	Seventeen
SKZ	Stray Kids
MX / MonX	Monsta X
ASTRO	ASTRO
WINNER	WINNER
EN- / ENHYPEN	Enhypen
SHINee	SHINee
PTG	Pentagon
iKON	iKON
BTOB	Born To Beat
SM Ent.	SM Entertainment
YG Ent.	YG Entertainment
JYP Ent.	JYP Entertainment
HYBE	HYBE Corporation (includes BigHit Music, BELIFT LAB, Pledis Entertainment)

K-drama	Korean Drama
OST	Original Soundtrack
OTT	Over-The-Top Platform (e.g., Netflix, Viki, Disney+)

Author Contributions

Swathi Madhavan: Writing – original draft

Dhayalakrishnan Ramdoss: Methodology, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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