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**The Korean Wave Phenomenon and Its
Implications for Thailand's Soft Power Strategy**

韓流現象及其對泰國軟實力發展策略之意涵

Sunisa Teptarakunkarn

Advisor: Alex Chiang (姜家雄), PH. D.

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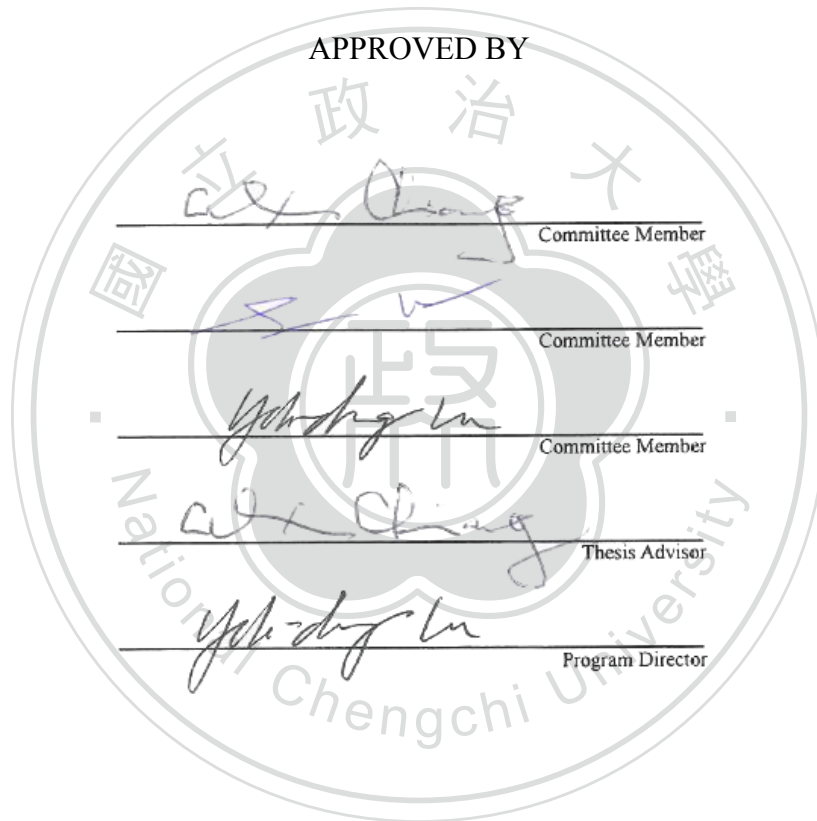
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by

SUNISA TEPTARAKUNKARN

黃懿臻

APPROVED BY



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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Hallyu, Korean drama, Korean film, K-pop, Korean wave, popular culture, South Korea, soft power, Thailand.

This study has critically and systemically reviewed important literature and secondary resources in the topic of the Korean wave in order to provide the overall picture of the structural and contextual dynamics in which this phenomenon has developed, sustained and succeeded and to link the dissemination of South Korea's popular culture: Korean films, dramas, and K-pop, with its potentiality as soft power assets capable of expanding the country's sphere of influence in the Asia-pacific region, so as to gauge to possibility for Thailand to emulate South Korea's success by learning from the latter's experience and devising the strategies applicable in its own context.

Upon the analysis, it is found that it is vital to incorporate political, cultural and economic environment, as well as the internal and external factors leading to the development of Korean entertainment industry in the research, and measure the impacts of such cultural flow in the recipient countries in order to construct the overall picture of this phenomenon and to develop a holistic understanding of South Korea's experience. From this embarking point, the case of the Korea wave can be used as a reference point for Thailand to emulate and create its own outbound cultural flow.

摘 要

關鍵詞： 韓國、泰國、韓流、韓劇、韓國電影、K- POP、
流行文化、軟實力

此研究以嚴謹性和系統性地探討韓流話題的重要文獻及二手資料，並透過結構及語境動態來描述此現象的發展，支持關於韓國的流行文化散播。韓國電影、戲劇、韓語流行樂在亞太地區有潛在的軟實力，其為影響的工具，無形地施展國家勢力。如此來衡量泰國有可能效仿韓國的成功例子，並從案例經驗中制定適用的策略。

經分析後發現，對於韓國娛樂產業的發展必須融入政治、文化和經濟，加上內外部因素來評估對接受度高的國家之這類文化性的影響，以全面性地瞭解此現象及韓國的發展歷程。從這點來看，韓流的案例可成為泰國效仿並創建向外界宣揚泰國文化的參考。



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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter offers an overview of this study. In the first section, research motivation and rationale for the case selection, as well as the research objectives and research questions will be discussed. The section that follows will discuss the relevant theories and literature, before concluding with the research methodology, scopes and limitations of the research, and the outline of each chapter.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Research motivation and rationale for the case selection. According to Nye (2004b), power is not merely limited to command and coercion. In contrast, the most effective manifestation of power is when a country can influence others to act as it desires without commanding it, and when it obtains the desirable outcomes because other countries admire its achievement and value, or are inspired to emulate its success. This is the second face of power or the so-called soft power, which has recently become a highly important dimension in achieving strategic imperatives in international relations.

Over the past few decades, the nature of power has changed, and it has become vital for political leaders to understand the way to incorporate the soft dimensions into their policymaking and diplomatic efforts. A number of countries realize that soft power is the more

effective tool to engage in competitive politics of attraction, legitimacy, and credibility, and that soft power is no less important than hard power when it comes to the efficiency in achieving the nations' desired objectives (Melissen, 2011).

In the western world, the United States has constantly been attempting to bolster its soft power and finding a remedy for the rise of anti-American sentiments caused by the unpopular foreign policies of the Bush administration. The similar trend can be observed in East Asia. As China and South Korea also began to recognize the strategic value of soft power, and become the first few nations in this region to invest heavily to develop soft power. For the government of People's Republic of China, soft power has been viewed as an important stepping stone that would assure China's smooth ascendance to great power status and alleviate threatening and aggressive dimensions of China's domestic and foreign policies. South Korea, on the other hand, perceives soft power as the strategy appropriate for its middle power status that would help to increase its political and economic influence. The success of the Korean wave in recent years has further highlighted the possibility of leveraging South Korea's popular cultural flow to bolster its soft power (S. J. Lee, 2011).

The development of South Korea cultural industry in the 1990s was triggered by political, cultural and socioeconomic factors. In the aspects of politics and culture, South Korea as a middle power could never compete with the two giants – China and Japan – in terms of hard power, it thus perceives cultural assets which is the source of soft power as an alternative

source of power that would enlarge South Korea's footprint in the world (S. J. Lee, 2011). Also, dynamics of globalization and the country's turbo-speed modernization have inspired players in cultural industries to enhance the overall quality of cultural goods. In economic facet, Asian financial crisis in 1997 has pushed South Korea, which is restrained by its limited natural resources, to re-examine its economic schemes, shifting its development strategy to fostering overseas marketing of culture and pursuing proactive cultural policies. All these factors have pushed the country's cultural industries to enhance its production quality and to adopt export-oriented strategies. Since then, South Korea has looked to arts and culture to boost economic growth and promote the country's image overseas (Y. Kim, 2013). This is the beginning of the Korean wave, AKA 'Hallyu'.

With favorable socioeconomic and cultural environment in the Asia-Pacific region and the rapid development of South Korea's entertainment industry, this cultural flow has subsequently become a phenomenal success that envelops many nations, not only in neighboring countries but also globally. South Korea has emerged as a major exporter of popular culture, as Korean films, dramas and Korean pop music (K-Pop) are being sold and marketed worldwide. Among Hallyu's most famous achievements are Korean singer Psy's most-watched-ever *Gangnam Style* music video that has been viewed more than 2.15 billion times on YouTube (BBC, 2014) as well as the drama *Dae Jang Geum (Jewel in the Palace)* that was exported to over ninety countries all over the world (Inchan, 2012). This rise of

popularity of Korean culture has arguably led to positive changes in the perceptions of South Korea in the eyes of people who were touched by the wave. For this reason, the Korean wave has become a widely discussed topic and inspired many policy-makers and scholars to understand its development and success.

As a prime case of soft power, South Korea is one of the major cultural goods exporters in the Asia-Pacific region and has been highly successful in promoting its popular culture, and this success has helped to enhance the perceptions of South Korea among overseas audiences. For this reason, the country has become a prime and practical example for the countries seeking a know-how for leveraging a country's culture and strength in its entertainment industry to enhance its profile internationally.

In addition to the recognition of hard power, Thailand, the place known to the world for its exotic culture, hospitality, scrumptious cuisine and turquoise sea, should place greater value on soft power that comes from its culture, particularly as it is making an effort to move away from a developing-nation status and no longer operates as a source of cheap labor for the region. Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul, prominent entrepreneur and Minister of Sports and Tourism of Thailand, has made an interesting remark during "The Soft Power behind Smiles" panel in the World Economic Forum on East Asia in 2012 that many Japanese businessmen had chosen to conduct their business in Thailand, not merely because of the business opportunities, but also because of the generosity and hospitality of Thai people, as well as its rich culture and cuisine.

This observation has highlighted how important it is for Thailand to leverage its rich source of soft power and maximize this potentiality to boost the country's profile, promote economic development and prosper holistically (Wattanavrangkul, 2012).

Apart from the importance of soft power in promoting economic development and prosperity, Thailand as a country constantly facing political instability and regime changes – with a total of 19 military coups d'état since the country became a constitutional monarchy in 1932, raising grave concerns about its human rights protection, democratic governance and economic development – has to consider exercising its soft power to neutralize the negative images and sentiments arising from such turmoil. More importantly, the exercise of soft power could eventually lead to the achievement of security and foreign policy goals, namely improving external security environment and preventing external intervention by portraying a peaceful and attractive image of a country, nurturing international support for the policies of Thai government and increasing the international as well as domestic recognition of its achievements (Nuttavuthisit, 2007).

It is also possible to argue that Thailand has a potentiality to emulate the South Korea's success for a reason that the country possesses a strong entertainment industry that is capable of producing high-quality masterpieces to compete, even in the highly competitive international market. Various examples of exceedingly successful Thai films and Thai renowned directors can be observed. For examples, Apichart Weerasetapong's *Uncle Boonmee*

Who Can Recall His Past Life has won numerous international awards including the Palme d'Or at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival, becoming the first Asian film to win the award since 1997. Youngster coming-of-age theme TV drama *Hormones the Series* is highly popular among Indonesian teenagers. Martial arts film *Tom-Yum-Goong* was also ranked number four in the U.S. box office in its first week of screening on 8 September, 2006 (Chongkittavorn, 2014).

In a nutshell, the success of the Korean wave and the undeniable importance of soft power, as well as Thailand's potentiality in terms of creating and strengthening its soft power have made it vital to understand the South Korea's experience and to analyze the possibilities and limitations of applying the model in Thailand's context.

1.1.2 Research objectives. As discussed in the previous section, it is important to learn from South Korea's experience in order to understand the factors leading to the creation and success of the Korean wave in order to apply this body of knowledge to assist Thailand in discovering and leveraging its rich sources of soft power and devising its own strategy that is based on the promotion and exportation of popular culture.

Furthermore, this research is also conducted with the goal to provide more insights about the use of popular culture in promoting a country's image and increasing its power of attraction, with the aim to make contribution to the body of knowledge in the field of soft power.

1.1.3 Research questions. The research questions in this study are: (1) what factors lead to the emergence of the Korean wave and its success, (2) how the Korean wave is relevant

to South Korea's soft power, and lastly, (3) would it be feasible for Thailand to adapt South Korea's cultural promotion and exportation model to expand its soft power.

1.2 Literature Review

In order to develop an in-depth and profound understanding towards the Korean wave phenomenon and its background, as well as to gain insights about Thailand's current status and its potentiality of adopting South Korea's model, it is important to consider the relevant literature on the subject of the Korean wave and the related concepts. The literature to be reviewed will be categorized as following: (1) the emergence of the Korean wave and factors behind its success, (2) the Korean wave and South Korea's soft power, and (3) potentiality of Thailand's soft power. After relevant literature is analyzed and synthesized, evaluation will be conducted, so as to present the significance of this research and its relation with existing literature.

1.2.1 The emergence of the Korean wave and factors behind its success. The “Korean wave”, AKA Hallyu (한류) in Korean or Han-liu (韓流) in Chinese, literally means “the flow of Korea”. This term is first coined by the Chinese news media to describe the popularity of Korean culture in the late 1990s, indicating the craze and cravings for Korean culture products such as Korean dramas, popular music (K-pop), films, animations, online games, electronic products, fashion, cosmetics, food and lifestyles among teenagers and young adults in Chinese-speaking countries (Y. Kim 2013).

The first wave of Korean culture flow emerged mainly in the neighboring Asian countries such as Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, before evolving from regional phenomenon into global phenomenon and spreading into the western world. Some products such as Korean films, K-pop and Korean dramas have reached as far as Egypt, Iraq, and the United States, and its popularity has even penetrated into the European markets such as England and France. This phenomenon is considered to be “the first instance of a major global circulation of Korean popular culture in history” (Y. Kim, 2013, p. 290) and has made South Korea “Asia’s foremost trendsetter” (The Economist, 9 August 2014).

A number of studies have discussed the emergence and success factors of the South Korea’s efforts to distribute and promote its culture worldwide, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, and the three primary factors that are commonly being analyzed are (1) governmental support and establishment of formal cultural agencies, (2) customized and well-developed content, and (3) the Korean’s national traits.

The first factor is governmental support and establishment of formal cultural agencies. According to Noipayak (2008), the Korean wave is driven by private sectors but fostered and boosted by the South Korea government who plays a key role in providing funds, implementing national cultural schemes, and setting up systemic cultural infrastructure. In 2010, Korea’s central government spent approximately 5.7 per cent of its Gross Domestic Products (GDP) on

cultural industry, and as recent as December 2014, the government also declares its intention to spend 400 million US Dollars to strengthen the competitiveness of Korea's innovative industries in 2015 (Limb, 2015). Apart from its financial support, the government also creates formal cultural agencies such as Arts Council Korea (ARKO) and Korea Culture and Content Agency (KOCCA) and establishes legal foundation for cultural schemes with a robust set of more than 100 culture-related policies covering public art, tax incentives for businesses and individuals, along with artist welfare and various state-funded arts council and funding agencies (Deecharoen, 2014).

The second factor is customized and well-developed content. The contents of Korean popular media, especially dramas, have been adapted to suit the tastes and preferences of audiences from different social and cultural backgrounds (Deecharoen 2014). As suggested by Joseph Nye, “popular culture is more likely to attract people and produce soft power... where cultures are somewhat similar rather than dissimilar” (Nye, 2004b, p. 15). Popular culture by itself has an ability to attract mass audience since its content is simple and easy to grasp, and Korean popular culture takes it to another step by touching the right chord of the audiences’ sentiments, while at the same time fulfilling the audiences’ emotional needs (D. Shim, 2008).

Euny Hong (2014) has illustrated how Korean popular culture is winning the heart of Japanese audiences by giving the example of Korean television drama *Winter Sonata*, which was aired in 2002-2003 and became psychotically popular (Hong, 2014). This drama has been

credited for \$2.3 billion (40 per cent) rise in new business ventures between Japan and South Korea during the year 2003-2004 and also an increase in popularity of South Korea as a tourist destination (Y. Kim, 2013, p. 415). The reason behind its tremendous success is the ingenuity in utilizing cultural stereotyping in the characteristics of the main male protagonist that resonates with the perceptions that Japanese women have for Korean men – warm, reliable, and romantic. Youna Kim (2013) and Dooboo Shim (2008) also points out how the drama portrays the delicate, faithful and unconditional love that fulfills the women’s emotional needs, capturing the heart of Japanese women in their 30s-50s. Ravina (2009; cited in Y. Kim, 2013, p. 410) also indicates how intense romantic feeling that is conveyed without the overt use of sexuality resonates with the culture and norms of Islamic audiences in Middle Eastern region and makes the drama become highly popular as it fits well with the audiences’ particularities. Inchan (2012), Deecharoen (2013) and Hong Koo Kim (2011) also express similar view using the examples of Korean dramas aired in Thailand, such as *Coffee Prince* and *Dae Jang Geum (Jewel in the Palace)*, which emphasizes on the Asian’s shared moralities such as good-always-wins-over-evil rationality, collectivism and filial piety.

The third factor is the Korean’s national traits. The first trait is known as “Han”. “Han” or “Hann” (한), which means suffering, is a cultural trait that is commonly understood as a sentiment of vengeance, isolation, shame and anger resulting from Korea’s frequent exposures to foreign power’s invasion and oppression. This vengeful sentiment has been considered one

of the most important factors in South Korea's success, not only in terms of cultural exports, but also in terms of its economic success and rapid development. Hong (2014) discusses this issue and gives an example of South Korea's Samsung seemingly far-fetched ambition and its shocking success at beating Japan's once most respected digital and electrical appliance manufacturer Sony. The Koreans' "Han" towards the Japanese stems from historical grievance of being invaded, colonized and oppressed by Japan from 1910-1945, and this hatred has motivated South Korea to make an effort to defeat Japan, both in economic and cultural dimensions.

Other traits that are frequently discussed are seriousness, endurance and ruthlessness in pursuing their goals. These traits are stemming from South Korean's education and working culture, which is deeply rooted in Confucianism. Korean companies similarly emphasize respect for seniority and determination in achieving excellence, sometimes known as "can-do spirit", and this is the reason why young talents that are being recruited into the entertainment companies are able to endure many years of rigorous training in order to become a versatile performer who has a wide range of ability from singing, acting, synchronized dancing and speaking foreign language to performing in highly polished and professionalized shows (Y. Kim, 2013; H. K. Kim, 2011; Independent, 2011 and Jakarta Post, 2011).

There are also other factors that are being mentioned including the high-quality and affordability of Korean's cultural products, the humble and approachable nature of Korean

celebrities and pop stars, the culture of fandom, technological advancement in digital age, the growth of Asian media market and the globalized consumer culture (Deecharoen, 2013; H.K. Kim, 2011; Y. Kim, 2013).

Various literature also point out the economic benefits that the Korean wave has brought about through an increase in tourism and brand recognition. In the early 2000s Korea's cultural content exports hovered around \$500 million. By 2020, Korea's Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism estimated Hallyu's economic asset value to reach \$57 billion. Take *Dae Jang Guem*, the drama that tells a story of an orphaned cook who later became the king's first female physician, for an example. According to Tada-amnuaychai (2006), the drama was produced with intention to export overseas and the marketing team has carefully studied audiences in each market, aiming to understand and to customize the content to suit their tastes and demands. With carefully-targeted audiences, well thought-out marketing strategies and high production quality, after the drama ended its shooting locations turned into a famous travel destination *Dae Jang Guem Theme Park*, giving birth to a new tourism campaign known as "Korean TV drama tour". Actors' costumes and accessories as well as Korean traditional cuisine and the drama's theme songs have all become tie-in merchandises (Y. Kim, 2013; Tada-amnuaychai, 2006). Another example would be the drama *You Who Came from the Star*, AKA *My Love from the Star*, that is aired in 2004 and made Chi-Mc or Chimaek (치맥), a Korean style set meal that offers a combination of roasted or fried chicken and beer, become tremendously popular in

China, because the heroine *Cheon Song-I* (starred by *Jeon Ji-Hyun*) loves to eat Chimaek. The lead actress *Jeon Ji-Hyun*, has also been accounted for boosting the sales of cosmetics, fashion attires and accessories she wore on the screen (Wall Street Journal, 2014).

Thus, it could be observed that the popularity of the Korean wave not only contributes to cultural industry development, but also helps to boost growth in other industries e.g. cosmetic product, cuisine and tourism, since South Korea's brand identity has become more recognized and admired. It has also been observed the rising popularity of K-pop music and K-drama helps to ignite interest in Korean language and culture overseas (Deechareon 2013; D. Shim, 2008).

1.2.2 The Korean wave and South Korea's soft power. "Soft power" is the term first coined by Joseph Nye in 1990 to describe the ability or power to attract and persuade others to act as we desire. Nye, the originator of the term, has categorized the so-called power into two types. First is "hard power", which is usually originated from economic and military prowess. Hard power could either materialize in form of inducements –such as monetary incentives, payments or economic benefits—or in form of coercion by means of military and security threats or economic sanctions. "Soft power", in contrast, is the power of attraction, the means to shape the preferences of the others and persuade them to want the outcomes that we desire, without any coercion or payoffs. It is also important to note that soft power is not merely limited the capacity to make others comply, but also the ability to entice and exert attraction on others

to gain their respect and admiration (Nye, 2004b).

Nye also reiterates in his book *The Future of Power* (2011) that soft power is not the end in itself, but rather a means to achieve higher goals –for an example, foreign policy goals or security goals – and even the depraved ones. According to Nye (2004b), there are three primary sources of soft power, including attractive culture (either high culture for niche audiences or popular culture for mass audiences), political values, and foreign policies of a nation.

In soft power ranking and survey 2014-2015 conducted by English magazine *Monocle*, and also in recent *Soft Power 30* index published in July 2015 by *Portland*, a media and communications consultancy based in London, South Korea is ranked highly (13th and 20th respectively) in terms of the strength of its soft power in international community, and it is also the only Asian country apart from Japan that ranks in the top twenty on the list, while the rest on the list are mostly European countries such as the Great Britain, Germany and the United States. In addition, South Korea also performs pretty well in terms of digital and enterprise sub-index as well as cultural power sub-index, in which it is ranked 6th and 13th respectively in the *Soft Index 30* survey (Portland, 2015; Monocle 2015). South Korea is one of the pioneering countries among Asian nations that adopt and invest heavily in the invention, creation and expansion of its soft power, especially in its culture and creative industries, demonstrating the strength of its soft power potentiality, and also its government's effort to bolster this capability

(Fensom, 2015).

Various studies cite the reasons why South Korea takes soft power as the strategy that a middle power should nurture. Nye and Kim (2013), for example, say that South Korea's cultural diplomacy is weak, comparing with its economic status (13th largest economy globally) and military prowess (15th strongest in the world), and it does not possess its own unique brand or identity. It is thus important for South Korea to balance its hard power that is far outweighing its soft power. Secondly, South Korea as a middle power could never compete with China and Japan in terms of hard power, so soft power is increasingly seen as an alternative source of power that will reinforce awareness about and highlight the importance of South Korea in international community (S. J. Lee, 2011; Y. Kim, 2013). In addition, South Korea's position as a middle power also offers the opportunity for the country to become a bridge linking between the developed and developing nations (T. Kim, 2012). Lastly, South Korea has high potentiality to build and nurture its soft power, not only because of its economic success, its mature democratic system, but also because of the attractiveness of South Korean culture, both traditional and popular ones (Nye & Kim, 2013)

Up until present, Korean popular culture has been playing important roles in building the country's soft power. For instances, K-pop music has branded Korea as a cool and fun nation with beautiful people and savvy technology. It has even been mentioned that Korean pop stars have contributed to improving South Korean foreign relations, since some celebrities

have become so popular that the people of other nations have labelled them as their own “national stars” (i.e. Jang Dong-gun in Vietnam and Bae Yong-jun in Japan), and some stars were even invited to high-profile events (for example, BoA that was invited to Japan-Korea summit conference in 2003 in Tokyo) (D. Shim, 2008). The success of the Korean wave also helps to promote the recognition and acceptance of Korean brands, and ignites interest in Korean studies and Korean languages, as well as give boost to South Korea’s trade and tourism.

Therefore, it could be said that popular culture has potentiality to become an important source of soft power, and it may have significant and complex impacts on South Korea’s economy, tourism, education, as most importantly, foreign affairs.

Nevertheless, there are limitations, both in the nature of soft power itself, and in using popular culture as a means to enhance soft power. Melissen (2011) has pointed out the difficulties in measuring the effectiveness of soft power and any public diplomacy efforts, and also a formidable challenge in attributing any positive or negative changes in specific international relationship to a certain policy. Ian Hall and Frank Smith (2013) offer a similar argument and elaborate that common causes for this difficulty are (1) public diplomacy or soft power building strategies involve not only short-term goals and immediate effects, but also medium- as well as long-term efforts and objectives, which are particularly difficult to gauge and capture and (2) national image and soft power of a particular state can be shaped, altered and influenced by various factors, for instances, the country’s economic prowess, ongoing

foreign policies or international engagement and many other related factors. It is thus difficult to attribute the changes occurred in its national image or soft power to any particular scheme or initiative.

Nye and Kim (2013) emphasize on problems arising from the hybridized and consumer-oriented nature of popular culture. Take the distribution of Korean popular culture in European countries as an example. Despite the fact that K-pop music and films have become tremendously popular in European nations such as the Great Britain and France, it is observed that the knowledge about popular culture does not lead to deeper understanding about South Korea's traditional culture, history, or its actual sociopolitical conditions. Lie (2012) and Kazuo (2006) also point this out and further describe how the polished, cosmopolitan image portrayed visually through Korean celebrities and idol groups could create distorted image that does not resonate with actual social and cultural conditions of South Korea. Furthermore, there are also ongoing debates with regards to how Korean popular culture that is being exported and distributed all over the world does not stem from Korean traditional culture but rather a complex hybridization and fusion of local, regional and Western cultures, forms, styles, narratives and identities. For an example, it is not uncommon to see linguistic hybridization in K-pop music, i.e. Korean song with English title, English phrases, and also semi-English lyrics. This "mugukjoek" (무국적), which means having no nationality, has become an inherent part of Korean popular culture (Jung, 2011), partly due to the globalization, and also because it

needs to resonate with global consumer culture (Lie, 2012).

Another issue with this rapid flow of popular culture is its asymmetrical nature. The Korean wave phenomenon primarily emerged from the government's effort to export its culture to another country, it is thus imbued with one's own nationalistic discourses and could be seen as a form of cultural invasion. This is why some audiences are able to negotiate and embrace this asymmetric flow of culture, whereas others perceive it as a form of cultural imperialism in the region, as can be observed for anti-Korean wave sentiments in China, Taiwan and Japan (Ye, 2014). Some scholars also argue that linking nation-state efforts to culture may have inherent risk of obstructing cultural activities and mutual understanding, rather than promoting it, and also that cultural diplomacy is more effective in establishing mutual understanding when the flow of culture is reciprocal (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008).

There are also scholars that examine the Korean wave within the context of the cultural globalization and cultural imperialism theories. While various publications consider the Korean wave to be antithesis to western-dominated globalization and that this cultural flow offers unique cultural and aesthetic styles that enhance cultural diversity. Siho Nam (2013), on the other hand, argues that the Korean wave is a classic case of cultural globalization where the government intervenes to realign media and cultural industries in a country in order to bolster the country's economic competitiveness, and this cultural wave that is created for economic gains has highly complex impacts on Asian regional cooperation and cultural diversity, and it

might not necessarily be antithetical to US- centric globalization and cultural imperialism.

1.2.3 Potentiality of Thailand's soft power. Several studies discuss the potentiality of Thailand's soft power, Hong-Koo Kim (2011) discusses the potentiality of exporting Thai culture and create the Thai Wave in South Korea, and elaborates that Thailand has potentiality in building its soft power in South Korea for the reasons that (1) two countries have close and positive bilateral relations since the 1950s, (2) Thailand is one of the favorite travel destinations for South Koreans, South Korea even ranked third in the number of tourists visiting Thailand in 2005, (3) Thai films and music are rather well-received in South Korea and have a potentiality to become even more popular, especially for Thai horror films such as *The Eye* as well as actions films and comedy films. For the reasons that it offers exotic experience and portrays the uniqueness of Thai culture, particularly in terms of religious and supernatural beliefs. Another factors such as the popularity of Thai traditional massage and Thai cuisine are also mentioned.

Potipan and Worrawutteerakul (2010) discusses the limitations in the possibility of creating Thai Wave from the marketing and communication perspective. The main argument is that despite the fact that Thailand has many beautiful tourist attractions and exotic culture, as well as well-developed and competitive entertainment and entertainment industry, the country still faces formidable challenges in establishing effective cultural promotion scheme for the following reasons: (1) political instability, frequent occurrence of coups d'état, and weak,

immature democratic institutions, all of which make it impossible to implement long-term cultural promotion schemes, and (2) the individualist, self-interest nature of Thai entertainment industry impedes efficient collaboration among the companies, making it impossible for each major entertainment company to work together to create an even stronger and more competitive creative and cultural products creation and promotion system.

1.2.4 Conclusion. It could be observed that a number of studies have discussed the emergence and success factors of the Korean wave, as well as its impacts on South Korea's soft power. However, not many literature have observed this phenomenon with the specific focus on the impact on countries in the Asia-Pacific region. There is no comparative study of Thailand and South Korea in terms of soft power. In addition, the number of studies about Thailand's soft power potentiality is still limited. This research is thus aiming to provide more insights about the use of popular culture in promoting a country's image and increasing its power of attraction in countries with close cultural proximity, and also to learn from South Korea's experience to assist Thailand in discovering and leveraging its sources of soft power and devising its own strategy that is based on the exportation and promotion of popular culture.

1.3 Research Methodology

This research is conducted with a qualitative research approach, and the methodology applied is primarily literature-based, complemented in part with secondary data analysis. The breakdown of research methodology is as following:

1.3.1 Literature analysis. This research intends to understand the emergence and success factors of the Korean wave, as well as its relationship with South Korea's soft power in order to determine its applicability in the context of Thailand. In this methodology, relevant literature will be systemically examined, analyzed and synthesized in order to reach the conclusion for the determined questions.

1.3.2 Secondary data analysis. In addition to the analysis of relevant studies, the contents and presences of three main elements of the Korean wave, namely Korean dramas, K-Pop and Korean films in the countries in the Asia-Pacific region such as Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam will be studied in order to understand the factors leading to the popularity and widespread acceptance of Korean pop culture.

In addition, due to the shortage of literature concerning the soft power of Thailand, apart from the data derived from the relevant literature and theories, the secondary data derived from multiple articles, interview records, news articles, and commentaries from reliable sources as well as official documents will be collected and analyzed, in order to further understand Thailand's soft power potentialities and shortcomings, and the probability of successfully applying South Korea's strategy in Thai context.

1.4 Scope and Limitation of the Research

1.4.1 Scope of the research.

1.4.1.1 Spatial scope of the research. The influence and presence of Korean popular

culture is highly widespread, Korean dramas, songs, films, video games as well as other forms of contents are being exported worldwide. However, it is not possible to include the distribution of the Korean wave in every country in this study, it is thus more feasible to focus the spatial scope to the countries in Southeast Asia and East Asia including Japan, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, for the reason that these countries are the major importers of the Korean wave cultural products.

1.4.1.2 Temporal scope of the research. South Korea has become a major cultural exporter since the late 1990s. However, the author believes that the development of cultural industry in South Korea began from the late 1980s when the country faced various changes ranging from democratization, economic deregulation to media liberalization. Therefore, the timeframe for studying the emergence of the Korean wave would be from the late 1980s until present (2016).

1.4.1.3 The Korean wave study scope of the research. The Korean wave comprises of various elements, from Korean dramas, K-pop, films, video games, cuisines, fashion, lifestyles, to consumer products such as Samsung, LG and Hyundai. However, the study scope of this research will mainly focus on the development and influence of Korean dramas, K-pop and films—with Korean dramas as the main focus—for the reasons that Korean drama is the cultural product that ignites the interest in other Korean cultural goods in most recipient countries, and that these three industries are the main attributes of the Korean wave.

1.4.2 Limitations of the research. The primary deficiency of this research would be an inability to consult materials in Korean language. However, there still are a massive amount of relevant literature and studies in English, Chinese and Thai, all of which could make up for this deficiency. Another shortcoming would be the lack of relevant academic resources concerning soft power of Thailand, since the concept is rather new and not yet widely spread. Nevertheless, interview records, news articles and commentaries from reliable sources and official publications can be utilized to remedy this lack of resources.

1.5 Organization of Thesis Chapters

This research comprises five chapters. **Chapter one Introduction** contains five sections that offer a brief overview of the study: (1) background of the study, which includes research motivation and rationale for the case selection, research objectives and research questions, (2) literature review, which analyzes and evaluates the relevant theories and literature, as well as indicates the contributions of this research, (3) research methodology, which describes the methodology used in the research, (4) scope and limitation of the research, which indicates the temporal scope, spatial scope, and research framework as well as limitations of this study and (5) organization of thesis chapters, which provides an outline of each chapter. **Chapter two The Korean Wave as a Case of Soft Power** aims to explore the first research question, which is to determine factors lead to the emergence of the Korean wave and its phenomenal success. This chapter will be divided into three subsections, including (1)

cases of soft power in East Asia (2) the emergence of the Korean wave, and (3) the factors leading to the success of the Korean wave. **Chapter three The Korean Wave and Soft Power of South Korea** will mainly explore the second research question, which is the relationship between the Korean wave and South Korea's soft power. This chapter will be divided into three subsections, including (1) overview of South Korea's soft power, (2) the Korean wave and perceptions of South Korea, and (3) backlash, potentiality and limitation of the Korean wave as soft power resource. **Chapter four Thailand's Soft Power Strategy and the Korean Wave** mainly explores the feasibility of adopting South Korea's cultural promotion and exportation model in Thailand, and this chapter will be divided into three subsections, including (1) overview of Thailand's soft power, (2) overview of Thailand's entertainment industry, and (3) implications of Korean wave phenomenon for Thailand's soft power strategy. **Chapter five Conclusion** concludes the result of the study and provides the summary of research findings.

CHAPTER TWO

THE KOREAN WAVE AS A CASE OF SOFT POWER

“Soft power” is the term first coined by Joseph Nye in 1990 to describe the ability or power to attract and persuade others to act as we desire. Nye, the originator of the term, has categorized power into two types. First is “hard power”, which is usually originated from economic and military prowess. Hard power could either materialize in form of inducements – such as monetary incentives, payments or economic benefits—or in form of coercion by means of military and security threats or economic sanctions. “Soft power”, in contrast, is the power of attraction, the means to shape the preferences of the others and persuade them to want the outcomes that we desire, without any coercion or payoffs. According to Nye (2004b), there are three primary sources of soft power, including attractive culture (either high culture for niche audiences or popular culture for mass audiences), political values, and foreign policies of a nation.

Over the past several decades, the nature of power has changed, and it has become vital for political leaders to understand the way to incorporate the soft dimensions into their policymaking and diplomatic efforts. A number of countries realize that soft power is the more effective tool to engage in competitive politics of attraction, legitimacy, and credibility, and that soft power is no less important than hard power when it comes to the efficiency in

achieving the nations' desired objectives (S. J. Lee, 2011). In this chapter, the overview of nations with apparent soft power is East Asia including the United States, Japan and China, will be discussed. Then, the emergence and factors leading to the popularity of the Korean wave will be discussed, with the aim to develop a comprehensive understanding about the structural and economic context in which this cultural wave has emerged and become relevant to the country's soft power in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.1 Cases of Soft Power in East Asia

The United States is one of the most powerful actors in international relations, it possesses strong military and economic power, and also abundant resources of soft power (Nye, 2004b, p. 13). In addition to the attractiveness arising from its stature as world's largest economy in terms of nominal GDP and its major roles in human rights and humanitarian assistance, it is said that both high and popular cultures have produced tremendous soft power for the country. Riding the wave of media liberalization and market deregulation, American audiovisual industry has dominated global market. According to Nye (2004b) the country has become "a far and away number one films and television programs exporter in the world", and American pop culture has established an image of the U.S. as "exciting, rich, powerful, trend-setting –the cutting edge of modernity and innovation" in the eyes of global audience. It is argued that the favorable image of the U.S. in European countries is partly a result of American pop culture's soft power that acts as a means to promulgate American values and attracts the

public, as European countries are among the biggest importers of American cultural goods. For instance, roughly 90 per cent of imported fiction programs and feature films in the United Kingdom in 2001 is either American or American co-produced (Luguusharav, 2011, pp. 15-16). Similarly in Asia, the U.S. has helped to develop media infrastructure, such as television stations in Taiwan and South Korea, and film studios in Hong Kong for propaganda purposes (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). However, in recent years the U.S. has faced strong anti-Americanism, particularly in Muslim countries that continue to hold overwhelmingly negative opinions of the U.S. due to their disapproval of the war on terrorism and its unpopular foreign policies. It is said that the United States' favorability suffered a dramatic decline from its war in Iraq, and pluralities in 29 countries have indicated that their perceptions of the U.S. is unfavorably influenced by its foreign policies (Nye, 2004a).

Among East Asian countries, Japan and China are recognized for their efforts in strengthening soft power, and are among the first few nations in this region to invest heavily to develop this alternative source of power.

Japan is a major rival of the U.S. in terms of soft power. According to Nye (2004b) Japan is a cultural powerhouse especially in Asia and it exercises a substantial amount of soft power through the proliferation of its culture in global market. Since Japan was defeated in the World War II, the Japanese government has been focusing on revitalizing its economy and repairing diplomatic ties. It has channeled a significant share of national budget and resources

to implement its soft power diplomacy, the establishment of Japan Foundation for Global Outreach can be perceived as a prime example of this effort (Lam, 2007). Apart from its economic prowess as the third largest economy in terms of nominal GDP and its efforts in assisting humanitarian and peacekeeping operations (Luguusharav, 2011, pp. 17-20), Japanese traditional arts, design, cuisine, and even martial arts and spiritual disciplines such as Zen Buddhism also attract admirations from global audiences. Additionally, its popular culture such as J-pop music, manga, and video games, which are said to promote the fun and cool image for the country, is also one of its most powerful soft power assets. As of 2013, the Japanese government set up a \$300 million “Cool Japan” fund, aiming to promote a broad range of cultural goods and services, including animation, fashion, and food, to project soft power and help drive economic growth (Ministry of Economy Trade and Industry (Japan), 2014; Nagata, 2012). It is argued that the most challenging obstacle for Japan’s soft power accumulation is the negative memories of its cruelty during the World War II that makes the Chinese and the Korean relatively reluctant to wholeheartedly accept the favorable image of Japan (Lam, 2007).

For the government of the People’s Republic of China, soft power has been viewed as an important stepping stone that would assure China’s smooth ascendance to major power status and alleviate threatening and aggressive dimensions of China’s domestic and foreign policies. As of 2015, China is the second largest economy in the world with the total value of \$10.35 trillion, and its economy has been growing at around 7 per cent in the recent years. With

the stature of Asia's economic powerhouse, it is now looking forward to actively participating in major regional initiatives such as ASEAN+3, ASEAN Regional Forum, and East Asian Summit, as well as establishing itself as the future leader of Asia (Luguusharav, 2011, pp. 24-26). Since 2013, it has become the world's leading exporters of cultural goods totaled \$60.1 billion, more than double that of the United States' \$27.9 billion (China Daily Asia, 2016; Wheatley, 2014). The dragon is rising fast, but its growing power tends to trigger the sense of uneasiness rather than a warm welcome from other major actors (S. J. Lee, 2011). According to the six-nation survey result conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, most major actors in the region, i.e. the United States, Japan and South Korea, are feeling uncomfortable with the idea of China being the leader of Asia (Whitney, 2009). With this in mind, the Chinese government has set their goal to strengthen the country's soft power and portrayed its rapid rise as a peaceful development. According to Lai (2006), Apart from its increasing participation in the United Nations peacekeeping mission, China also aims to utilize its rich tradition and culture to increase its attractiveness in the eyes of international audiences. Chinese language and culture, for example, has been enthusiastically promoted through the Confucius Institute, the PRC's equivalent to the United Kingdom's British Council and France's French Institute Alliance Française. As of 2016, there are 500 Confucius Institutes spreading in Asia (110), Africa (46), America (157), Europe (169), and Oceania (18). Furthermore, Xi Jin-Ping's government has also employed Chinese diaspora engagement policies, using communities of

foreign citizens of Chinese ancestry and Chinese citizens living abroad to wield Chinese soft power and communicate China's ideas to the outside world (Ding, 2015). Nevertheless, it is observed that China's effort to bolster its soft power has not been effective as it had expected. This is partly due to the differences in political values and the perception that the Chinese government allows human rights violations in its own territory, since freedom of information, speech, movements and religions of its people is restricted. Nye (2004b) also suggests that China's cultural industries, popular culture in particular, are still lacking. This is due to that fact that the country has yet to establish blockbuster-creator like the American's Hollywood, or characters beloved by children all over the world like the Japanese animation. More importantly, China's efforts to strengthen international publicity and media capacity can merely improve China's national image in the short term, as the most effective means to build positive national image is the actual political reform that will establish sufficient credibility to develop a long-lasting appeal of soft power (Ding, 2011).

In a nutshell, it could be observed that while traditional powers such as the United States and Japan are constantly utilizing popular cultures, among other means, to expand their spheres of influence around the globe, the rising power such as China is also ambitiously aiming to become a leader of Asia with its strong presence as well as cultural, economic and military strengths. Against this backdrop of fierce competition, South Korea is also emerging as one of eye-catching actors, as its popular culture has started to take on the wave and highlighted its

positive presences in the eyes of global audiences.

2.2 The Emergence of the Korean wave

The term “*Korean wave*” (or “*Hallyu*” (한류) in Korean and “*Han Liu*” (韓流) in Chinese) is coined by Chinese news media to indicate the craze for Korean popular culture occurred in the late 1990s. At that time, Korean cultural products including Korean films, dramas and pop music (K-Pop) have become tremendously popular in Chinese-speaking countries (Y. Kim, 2013). The Korean wave started with the television drama *What is Love* (1997) that became a huge success in China, following by *Winter Sonata* (2004) craze in Japan and *Dae Jang Guem* (2004) fever in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and other countries. Later on, the success of dramas paved way for the new Korean wave spear-headed by K-pop artists such as *Girl's Generation (SNSD)*, *Kara*, *BoA* and *Dong Bang Shin Ki (DBSK)* that dominated Japanese music market (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011). As of present, its popularity continues to expand in Asia and reaches even the Western audiences in the United States and Europe (Tuk, 2012). Within a few decades, South Korea has transformed itself from a war-ridden, impoverished nation into one of the most savvy culture exporters of Asia (The Economist, 9 August 2014).

In order to understand how this phenomenal wave has developed, its emergence will be systemically discussed from a historical perspective by looking into sociopolitical, cultural and economic backgrounds leading to the beginning of Hallyu.

2.2.1 Sociopolitical factor. South Korea in the 1980s was characterized by an authoritarian political system and rapid economic development. Under the rule of Army General Chun Doo-Hwan's authoritarian government (1979-1988), the government made an effort to divert attention of their citizens from tumultuous politics to other more leisure activities, and thus introduced the cultural policy aiming at promoting sports and controlling broadcasting networks. This cultural policy was dubbed by the media as "3S" (Sport, Sex and Screen) Policy. For sports, the government promoted baseball as a national sport, established Korean Professional Baseball League (KBL), and underwent a clamorous preparation for 1988 Seoul Olympics—officially known as the Games of the XXIV Olympiad (K. Lee, 2008).

Other 2S, namely Sex and Screen, were a policy regulating broadcasting industry and filtering political-related contents. During the 1980s, the government hold a tight control over all broadcasting networks, and only two television networks, namely Korean Broadcasting System (KBS) and Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) remained. Politics-related contents were strictly censored, whereas sexual-oriented and entertainment contents were allowed. During this period, the contents of Korea's television were filled with pornographic films, romantic and historical dramas, and ballad song performances, for a reason that these contents were politically irrelevant (S. H. Park, 2002).

Under such sociopolitical climate that television dramas have become a favorite pastime for Korean viewers. Historical and romantic dramas were the two most popular themes

for the production companies and also for the audiences, and its popularity has sustained since the eighties until now. The evidence can be observed from the viewing rates of ten most-watched television programs illustrated in table 2-1 below, which clearly indicate the importance of drama in broadcasting industry, as eight out of ten most popular programs are dramas, as well as the ten highest-rated Korean dramas of all time (1995-present) as shown in table 2-2, which clearly show the popularity of historical and romance dramas.

Table 2-1

Viewership of ten highest-rated television programs in South Korea, May 2016 (per week)

Ranking	Program name	Channel	Viewing Rate	Category
1.	All about my Mom	KBS2	34.5%	Weekend Drama
2.	My Daughter, Geum Sa Wol	MBC	33.1%	Weekend Drama
3.	Sweet Home, Sweet Honey	KBS1	26.4%	Daily Drama
4.	Five Children	KBS2	25.2%	Weekend Drama
5.	Mom	MBC	21.6%	Daily Drama
6.	KBS 9 o'clock news	KBS1	17.7%	Factual
7.	Remember: War of the Son	SBS	17.7%	Daily Drama
8.	Happy Home	MBC	16.2%	Daily Drama
9.	Six Flying Dragons	SBS	15.1%	Special Drama
10.	Infinity Challenge	MBC	15%	Entertainment

Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research, <http://www.nielsenkorea.co.kr/> (accessed 2 May 2016)

Table 2-2

Viewership of ten highest-rated dramas in South Korea during the year 1995-present

Ranking	Drama	Viewer Rating	Year	Genre
1.	First Love	65.8%	1997	Romance
2.	What is Love	64.9%	1992	Romance
3.	Sandglass	64.5%	1995	Romance
4.	Heo Joon	63.7%	2000	Historical
5.	Sunny Place of Youth	62.7%	1995	Romance
6.	You and I	62.4%	1998	Romance
7.	The Son and the Daughter	61.1%	1993	Romance
8.	Taejo Wang Geon	60.2%	2001	Historical
9.	Eyes of Dawn	58.4%	1992	Historical
10.	Dae Jang Geum	57.8%	2004	Historical

Source: AGB Nielsen Media Research, <http://www.nielsenkorea.co.kr/> (accessed 2 May 2016)

Even though the domestic taste for entertainment has not changed, the switch from authoritarian regime to a democratic one in the 1990s has transformed the cultural industry.

Firstly, the freer and more optimistic atmosphere under a democratic government enabled a long-repressed broadcasting industry to express itself more freely and create more diverse cultural artifacts. Secondly, when the audiovisual market is no longer monopolized by state-owned MBC and KBS, a fierce competition for viewership has led to an improvement in the quality of television program (see detailed discussion in section 2.2.3). Also, since South Korea was relatively early in breaking away from the government's tight control, it could enjoy the first-mover advantage in the rapidly expanding Asian television program markets at that time (Jeon, 2013).

A good example to illustrate a freer and more diverse plot in Korean dramas is *Sandglass* (1995). Often considered the first modern Korean drama, it told a story of two best friends, Tae Soo and Woo Suk, during a politically tumultuous period in Korean history from the late 1960s through the 1980s. Before 1992, it would never be possible for Korean production companies to film dramas with such politically-sensitive plot (Tuk, 2012).

The development of music industry could similarly be traced back to the same period. Since the only two broadcasting networks, KBS and MBC, were state-owned and the contents that were allowed to be aired were highly limited, there was a tremendous air time gap to be filled. Music shows which were entertaining and required relatively low cost to produce became a prime choice for the television networks. During that time, there was no independent music industry, singers performed along with in-house bands and dancers of the broadcasting

stations, and it was the only viable option for promoting their songs, making music and television industry mutually dependent and influencing Korean musical styles to fit into the specifications of the television medium. Therefore, idol groups that are visually attractive and suitable for broadcasting on the television have gained advantages in South Korea's entertainment market (D. Shim, 2006; Lie, 2014). It was under this environment that K-pop, the entertainment form that heavily relies on visual elements and collective effort of each member, were fostered. Even after the music industry was developed and became a full-fledged independent industry, major music companies such as SM Entertainment and JYP entertainment continue to promote the debut, comeback, live performance and concert of their artists on the television (Y. S. Park, 2011). It can also be observed that South Korea television and music industries remain closely-connected to one another, as most K-Pop stars are not mere singers, they also act in dramas and appear on variety shows. It could be said that for K-pop, it is not merely about melody and chord, but also about visual, styles and personal charms (Li, 2013). This fact is apparent in the structure of K-pop group, each member has their own role on the stage, it could be a rapper, a main vocal or a dancer, but one role that could not be absent is "visual", which refers to the most aesthetically beautiful or handsome members of their respective groups (Lie, 2012; Lie, 2014).

2.2.2 Cultural factor. Literature relating to the emergence of Korean wave usually cite cultural context of South Korea as one of the elements that drove the development of its entertainment industry and shaped its “hybridized” popular culture during the period of globalization and economic liberalization in the 1990s. According to Cai (2008), the Korean wave is the combination of Confucianism and Western industrial culture. The Koreans have borrowed the elements of Western popular culture while retaining a certain amount of Asian sense of aesthetics, recreating its own unique pop culture. In this part, the development of Korean music industry during the late 1980s-2000s will be described to explain the process of cultural hybridization occurred in South Korea.

As discussed in the previous subsection, the Korean music market was not imminent during the 1980s. It was only after the government compromised its restrictions on foreign media in the early 1990s that the Korean audiences finally became more exposed to global music trends. As the listeners were scavenging for new tunes from local music industry, musicians also appropriated new, foreign music styles into their own sound (Howard, 2002).

Within this cultural dynamics, the music band *Seo Taiji and Boys* emerged, and released the ground-breaking single ‘*I Know*’ –possibly the first rap track in Korea— that became an instant hit. According to D. Shim (2006), *Seo Taiji and Boys* should be credited for transforming Korea pop music industry for four main reasons. Firstly, the band invented a new music form using the combination of dynamic dance moves and music from rap, soul, rock and roll, electrical,

punk, hardcore or even Korean traditional music *ppongjjak*. They also did experimental music by combining the sound of traditional percussion instrument with modern jazz saxophones, and used the wide range of subjects in their lyric composition, from coming-of-age frustration to social criticism. Adding vibrancy to Korean music industry that has long been dominated by sad ballad love songs. Secondly, *Seo Taiji* changed the perception that Korean parents had about stardom by showing that being an artist could be an alternative path of success. In the period that follows, many parents even set a path for their children to become a star (Ho, 2012). Thirdly, as a result of their success, K-pop music industry not only expanded in scope, but also in scale. It is reported that the band earned \$8.5 million from record sales and commercial activities. More importantly, with the endless expansion of bands imitating *Seo Taiji and Boys*, sales of local pop music has outshined the imported music, as more than 75 per cent of market share belongs to Korean pop (Tuk, 2012). Lastly, the band challenged the broadcasting network-dependent music market by having their own dancers (two members of the band were chosen for their choreographic ability). In this way, they became the first artists to be independent from broadcasting network's direction. As the influence of television networks weakened, a gap was opened for expanding roles of record companies and talent agencies.

To conclude, the influx of foreign media and process of globalization in Korea have led to the cultural hybridization that occurred as local cultural agents interact and negotiate with global dynamics, using the influx of foreign elements as resources through which they

construct their own cultural spaces, giving birth to a creative form of hybridized culture that retains local identities while at the same time sustains in the global context (D. Shim, 2006).

By opening media market to the Western influence, Korea's culture industry has been unintentionally benefited, new vitality has been added to increase the competitiveness of its cultural products in the growing Asian media market. With the skillful blending of Western and Asian values, South Korea has created a form of unique entertainment that could be served as a model for many, both in cultural and economic terms (Choe, 2001).

2.2.3 Economic factor. In late 1980s, South Korea was democratized and the government had to liberate its economy and bring about various changes to fulfill the people's thirst for more freedom of expression. The country was also pressured to open their media market to foreign films as a part of global economic dynamics in the era of globalization. As a result of the media liberalization and a fierce competition with the influx of foreign films, relatively competitive domestic entertainment industry was cultivated and later equipped with business know-how and export-oriented productions. By the 1990s, The Korean entertainment industry has been transformed, making it possible for its television dramas, films and pop music to penetrate into neighboring countries and become a phenomenal cultural wave in Asia.

In this part, domestic conglomerates' roles and the government policies relating to the growth of Korean popular culture, particularly films, dramas and K-Pop, will be discussed against the backdrop of global economic liberalization during the late 1980s to the mid-1990s,

in order to understand how South Korea's entertainment industry has developed into an export industry and unexpectedly become a well-received and widely-consumed cultural products for audiences in the Asia-Pacific region.

2.2.3.1 The transformation of Korean film industry. The period from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s was a turning point for South Korea's entertainment industry. After the government was pressured by the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA) in 1986 to compromise its restriction on foreign media importation and distribution, the films from Hollywood studio quickly flooded the market, causing the number of local films produced annually to decrease by half, from 121 in 1991 to a mere 63 in 1994. Hollywood's market share in South Korea also surged to 80 per cent in 1987 (D. Shim, 2008; S. Shim, 2008; Choi, 2010). The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)'s transformation into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 further worsened the situation, since South Korea as a former contracting party of GATT were obliged to open their markets in media communications and culture, forcing it to face with intense foreign competition (Juknevičiūtė, 2011). Analysts pointed out that South Korea was endangered by foreign media domination and predicted the gloom future for its cultural industry. However, the business moves made by the huge, family-owned business groups, AKA Chaebol, and the government's attempt to encourage new players to invest in the film industry have turned this crisis into opportunity.

Domestic conglomerates' business investments have been credited for the growth of

Korean popular culture, especially the film industry that has been radically developed in the 1990s (Parc & Hwy-Chang, 2013). As Korean film producers struggled for financial aids to compete with foreign blockbusters, Korean conglomerates such as Samsung, Hyundai and Daewoo also began to see the business potentials in cultural industry and decided to invest heavily, for they had seen the unexpected success of the Korean film *Seopyeonje* (1993) and the successful example of Japanese Sony Electronics' acquisition of Columbia Pictures and CBS Records in the late 1980s. With chaebols' contribution, Korean film industry enjoyed a fleeting boom in the mid-1990s, before the Asian financial crisis strike and caused the big conglomerates to discontinue their support for media business in 1997 (Leong, 2002; D. Shim 2006; D. Shim, 2008; Y. Kim, 2013).

According to D. Shim (2008), despite the fact that chaebols' support was short-lived, the impact of their intense promotion and immense investment during that period has remained in the industry. The entertainment industry has learned modern business strategies and developed the sophisticated know-how in marketing, audience research and consumer logic. Many fresh and promising talents graduated from top universities that chaebols had recruited and paid for their education during their period of ownership have also remained in the industry. Later on, these talents and their experience contribute largely to the Korean film business in the 21st century.

The void left by the discontinuation of chaebols' investment was quickly filled, partly

with the incentives from the revised Motion Picture Promotion Law (1999) that made it possible for venture capitalists to finance film productions, and also because of the success of *Shiri* (1999) has again shown the business potentiality of Korean entertainment industry. From that point on, venture capitalists continued to invest heavily in film projects. By 2000, venture capitalist funds were accounted for 23 out of 58 local films produced in that year (D. Shim, 2002). The influx of capital boosted the production quality and increased Korea films' share in domestic market until it eventually reached the height of 59.3 per cent in 2004, showing a remarkable increase from the year 1993, when its share was as low as 15.9 per cent (Y. Kim, 2013). The marked development of Korea's film industry during the 2000s can be observed from a remarkable lift in Korean film export sales as illustrated in table 2-3 as well as its domestic market shares in figure 2-1 below.

Table 2-3

Export sales of Korean film during the year 1995-2005 (in US Dollar)

Year	Export Sales	Increase Rate	Number of Exported Film
1995	208,679		15
1996	404,000	48%	30
1997	492,000	22%	36
1998	3,073,750	525%	33
1999	5,969,219	94%	75
2000	7,053,745	18%	38
2001	11,249,573	59%	102
2002	14,952,089	33%	133
2003	30,979,000	107%	164
2004	58,284,600	88%	194
2005	75,994,580	145%	202

Source: Korean Film Council, <http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/jsp/index.jsp> (accessed 7 May 2016)

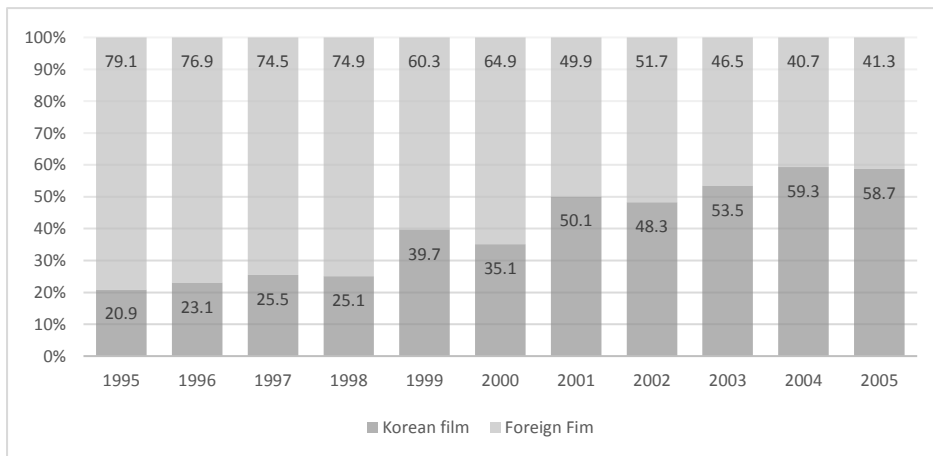


Figure 2-1. Domestic market share of Korean film in comparison to foreign film from 1995-2005

Source: Korean Film Council, <http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/jsp/index.jsp> (accessed, 7 May 2016)

In terms of production quality, the evidence of positive change in South Korea's Film industry can be observed in the number of Korean films that has competed and won international film festivals worldwide during the 2000s. To name a few, South Korean renowned director *Im Kwon-taek* won the Best Director Award at the 2002 Cannes Film Festival for his film *Painted Fire* and won Honorary Golden Berlin Bear in the 2005 Berlin International Film Festival. *Lee Chang Dong's* film *Oasis*, received the Best Actress and Best Director awards at the 2002 Venice International Film Festival, and his another film *Secret Sunshine* was invited to the 2007 Cannes Film Festival. In 2010, *Hong Sang Soo*, the director known by the name 'Man of Cannes' received the Prix Un Certain Regard at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival for his film *Hahaha*. Hong's later works such as *The Day He Arrives* (2011) and *In Another Country* (2011) were also invited to the Cannes. He also won Silver Leopard Award for Best Director at the 2013 Locarno International Film Festival for *Our Sunhi*, and the top

prize Golden Leopard at the 2015 Locarno International Film Festival for *Right Now, Wrong Then* (Yoo, 2015). In 2002-2012, South Korea has won thirteen awards from four major international film festival, namely *Cannes Film Festival*, *the Berlin International Film Festival*, *the Venice Film Festival*, and *the Moscow International Film Festival*, while Japan earned six awards, China and Hong Kong thirteen awards, and Taiwan two awards. Considering market sizes and funds, Korean film industry is relatively competitive in terms of its quality (Parc & Hwy-Chang, 2013).

2.2.3.2 The transformation of Korean broadcasting industry. Against the same backdrop of democratization and media liberalization, as the South Korea government had to fulfill citizens' demands for a more liberal public communication environment, television industry was transformed into a competitive, export-oriented business in the period that followed. The oligopoly of two state-owned broadcasting networks (KBS and MBC), which was established since the 1980s, had ended, and South Korea entered the new era of a commercial, multi-channel television (Tuk, 2012; Jeon, 2013). During that time, Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) was the first commercial station established and it spearheaded the fierce competition for advertising revenue and viewership. In this multi-channel era, ratings became the primary concern for broadcasters and investors alike, every channel competed to capture audiences' eyes and stepped into the "drama war"—wars that were fought to win over viewer ratings for television drama (Huang, 2011).

These competitions led to a leaping improvement in drama productions and commercialization. The plots have become more diversified and sophisticated, shooting locations also include foreign countries, the storylines have been improved with better scripts and filming techniques, and more capital have been poured into the industry. All these have led to the enhancement of overall entertainment quality of Korea's television dramas, and made it possible for such media products to be exported and competed with its counterpart from neighboring countries, such as Japan (Jeon, 2013).

South Korea began to export television dramas in the 1990s, and when *What is Love* (1997) hit China market, it became a massive hit, got rebroadcasted in 1998 in prime time hour of China's state-owned China Central Television (CCTV) and obtained the second-highest ratings ever recorded in Chinese television history (D. Shim, 2009). This rising popularity of Korean dramas established a foundation for awareness and favorability of other products. Not long after the exportation of dramas, Korean films such as *Shiri* (1999), *Joint Security Area* (2000) and *My Sassy Girl* (2001), and idol groups such as *H.O.T.* (1996) and *BoA* (2000) became well-known among fans in the Asia-Pacific region. Since then, Korean popular culture has become known among audiences in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and neighboring countries across Central and South East Asia. The evidence can be observed from a boost in export sales of Korean broadcasting programs in figure 2-2 below. In 1995, sales of exported programs were as low as \$5.5 million, however the amount increased significantly to the point that export sales

tripled the import sales in 2005. This was when the journalists and commentators in the region started spreading the buzz about the so-called Hallyu (D. Shim 2008).



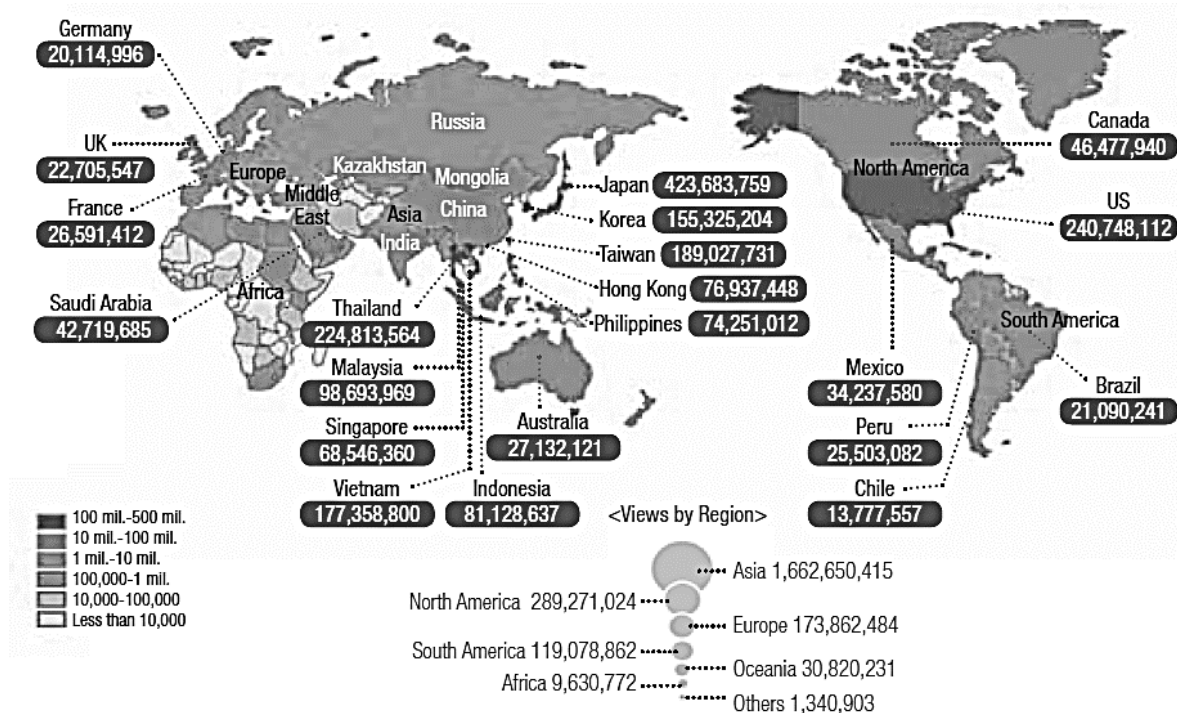
Figure 2-2. Import and export sales of broadcasting programs in South Korea 1995-2005 (USD million)

Source: White Paper on Cultural Industries 2005, Ministry of Culture and Tourism

As recent as 2014, Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning, and the Korea Communications Commission indicated that Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs reached the new height of \$256.28 million, a 7 per cent increase from the previous year's \$239.43 million. Over 94 per cent of the total export values came from Asian countries. Japan stood at \$79.02 million, China \$56.93 million, Hong Kong \$52.7 million, Thailand \$14.69 million, Taiwan \$14.11 million, and Vietnam \$9.04 million. Besides these countries, the broadcasting programs were also exported to other Asian countries including Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan (The Korea Times, 2016).

2.2.3.3 The transformation of Korean popular music (K-POP) industry. As previously mentioned, in the beginning Korean music industry was highly dependent on broadcasting

companies (Lie, 2012). Until the early 1990s, South Korea enjoyed a rapid economic growth and brought about the establishment of full-fledged independent music industry. The distribution of K-Pop stemmed from the success of Korean dramas and films, and when the first few pop bands such as the dance music duo *Clon* (1996-2005) and *H.O.T.* (1996-2001) started to gain popularities in China and Taiwan, the market became more conscious and receptive to other K-Pop artists such as *Rain (Bi)*, *BoA*, *Shinhwa*, *Wonder Girls* and *Super Junior*. Its growth has also been facilitated by the changing behaviors of consumers in digitized era, Social Networking Services (SNS) such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter and online platforms have made it possible for consumers to access and discuss the works of K-Pop artists in a real-time manner and spurred the culture of fandom that helps to boost and sustain the industry (Seo, 2012). As of present, Korean music industry enjoys satisfactory growth. In 2012 South Korea was ranked as the 11th largest recorded music market in the world, and impressive leap from 33rd place in 2005, and its value increased from roughly \$148.5 million in 2008 to around \$195.8 million in 2011 (IFPI, 2016). The figure 2-3 below illustrates the distribution of K-POP on YouTube and demonstrates how this media are being consumed all over the world, particularly in Asian countries such as Japan, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam where the views of K-Pop videos are even higher than that of South Korea.



Note: GDP based on Purchasing Power Parity per capita.
 Source: JoongAng Ilbo. "The number of views of K-POP videos on YouTube reached 2.3 billion in 235 countries last year." (January 2, 2011).

Figure 2-3. Number of views of K-Pop videos on YouTube (2011)

Source: Seo (2012, p. 62)

The phenomenal reception of Korean popular culture was possible for a number of reasons. Cultural proximity, favorable international market conditions, and structural context of sociopolitical and economic dynamics in East Asia and other Asian countries during that time are among the most commonly cited in related literature. These variables along with other factors will be further discussed in section 2.3.

2.3 The Factors Leading to the Success of the Korean Wave

Ensuing the discussion in section 2.2, the factors leading to the success of the Korean wave will be analyzed, with the aim to understand why Korean cultural products could become popular among its audiences in the Asia-Pacific region and why this phenomenon happens in South Korea and not some other places, in order to consider whether it is possible for other

countries to emulate its success. Internal factors such as relating government policies and the role of cultural industry, as well as external factors such as regional economic and cultural dynamics will be discussed to provide a complete overview of the context in which the Korean wave has developed, succeeded and sustained.

2.3.1 Internal factors. Internal factors including the role of government, the role of conglomerates and cultural industry, as well as the competitiveness of Korean cultural products will be discussed as follows:

2.3.1.1 Role of the government. Various studies suggest that the Korean government's policies are instrumental in the development of its cultural industry (Huang, 2011; Jin, 2006; Ryoo, 2008). In this part, relating literature will be analyzed to illustrate that contrary to many existing studies, protective and nationalist policies have not played a significant role in its success. Rather, the underlying industrial and commercial factors such as pro-competition provisions, investment incentive and market-oriented policies are the keys leading to the enrichment and advancement of South Korea's audiovisual industry.

Euny Hong (2014) and Youna Kim (2013) argue that the Korean government enacted various measures to protect its domestic film industry, for example, imposing screen quotas to mandate the number of days for screening Korean film. It was said that without this 'draconian' law (Hong, 2014, p. 92), it would not be possible for South Korea's film industry to advance its film, music and video production, both in their scales and qualities to the point that it won

many international awards and recognition.

D. Shim (2008) suggests that the government has recognized the economic potential of popular culture after it had seen the success of Hollywood films such as *Jurassic Park* (1993) and it triggered a surprising ‘paradigm shift’, shifting from heavy manufacturing industries such as automobile, construction, chemical and electronics to arts, and culture. Beginning from the establishment of the Cultural Industry Bureau within the Ministry of Culture and Sports in 1994, following by the Motion Picture Promotion Law which was enacted in 1995 to provide incentive for investing in film industry and revised in 1999 to further facilitate the venture capital’s and netizen’s funding. With the enactment of the Motion Picture Promotion Law (1999), it was possible for individuals to finance film production. The so-called *netizen fund* was established and became a funding source for many film projects (Seog & Hyun, 2009). A film studio called *Bom*, for example, was successful in raising \$85,000 capital from netizens, and later paying 200 per cent return to the recruited 200 individual investors (D. Shim, 2008). It is also important to note that the recruitment of netizen funds was partly possible due to South Korea’s developed broadband facilities provided by the government. Apart from investment incentives, from the late 1990s until present the Korean government has also provided various small-scale measures to support the exportation of broadcasting programs, for examples providing post-production service and foreign language subtitles and dubbing, offering information related to the overseas market, and organizing the international television

program market.

Another fact worth mentioning is the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) avid support for the so-called “Drama Tour”—drama and film-induced tourism. As can be observed from the KTO’s official website, there is a section entitled “Filming Locations” that is entirely dedicated to drama and film tour, featuring detailed information about drama sets and film sets, as well as the synopsis and introduction of over 80 dramas and 20 films (as illustrated in figure 2-4). For some dramas, there are even a detailed description of the scene being shot at the specific location and the related merchandise available. The same also applied for music programs and concert venues in South Korea, the website provides a full description in English about access and ticket purchase information. This illustrates how the government recognizes the capabilities of Korean dramas, films and music in boosting tourism, and thus integrates the two industries to optimize the impact as well as facilitates the visit of foreign holidaymakers (Korean Tourism Organization, 2016).

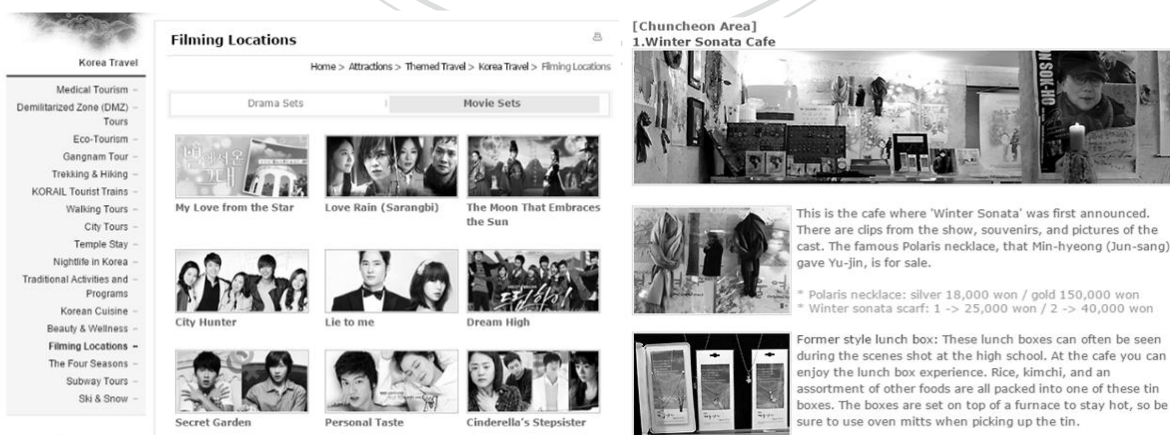
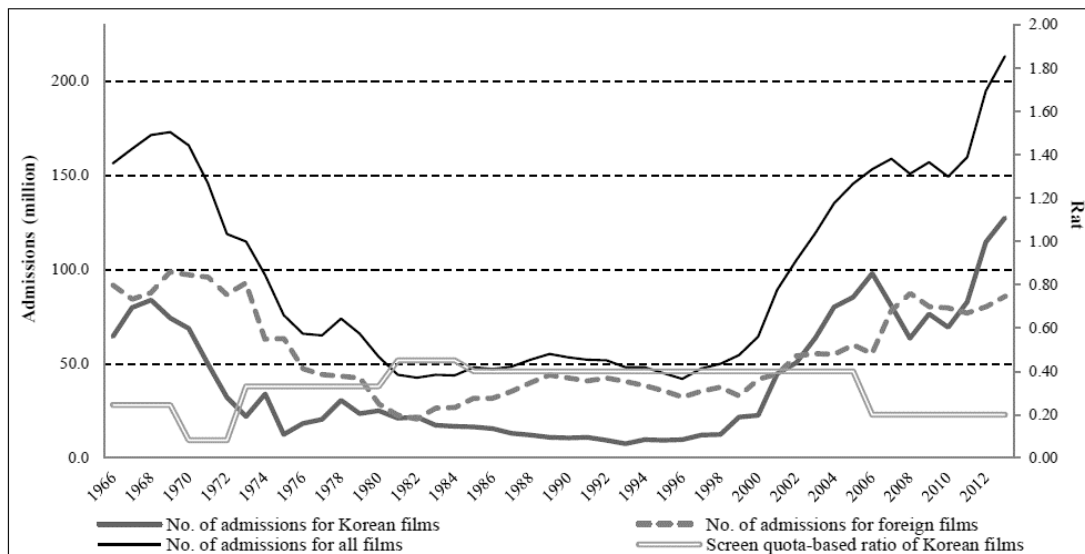


Figure 2-4. 'Filming Locations' section in Korea Tourism Organization official site

Source: Korean Tourism Organization official Site, <http://english.visitkorea.or.kr/> (accessed 19 December 2015)

However, many scholars seem to suggest otherwise. Parc (2014) argues that the Korean government's protective cultural policies, for example the screen quota policy (1966-present) that mandates the number of days that theatres are required to exhibit Korean films, do not significantly contribute to the success of Korean film industry. Statistical data was analyzed to explain that such policy does not encourage the production companies to supply a better quality film nor motivates the local audiences to watch films that are produced domestically, since there are very few incentives to compete in such oligopolistic situation. Only when South Korea was forced to open its market to foreign competitors in the late 1980s-1990s that domestic film companies were forced into intense competition with Hollywood films and the changing business environment. The old structure of Korean film industry was disintegrated, chaebols entered the film industry, transformed its structure into a more modern and market-driven one, and thus made it possible for the film industry to go through the renaissance period in the time after. The data collected and calculated by the author clearly illustrates this argument, as shown in figure 2-5, which indicates that the screen quotas are irrelevant in terms of admission, this is due to the low quality of domestic films produced during the period of highly protective measures. By contrast, Korean films showed improving trends only in the late 1990s when the market was deregulated and the Korean blockbusters with heavy investment such as *Shiri* (1999) and *Joint Security Area* (2000) hit the theatre. The fact that foreign films' admission eventually became smaller than those of Korean films in 1999 signals that imported films began to face

the fierce competition from their Korean counterparts.



Note: based on author's calculations.

Data sources: Koreanfilm.org, <http://www.koreanfilm.org> (for 1966-2002), Korean Film Commission (various issues) (for 1999-2002), and Korea Film Council (various issues) (for 1998-2013).

Figure 2-5. The screen quota in South Korea during the 1970s-2013

Source: Jimmyn (2014, p. 13)

The same situation applied in broadcasting industry. It has been pointed out by Jeong-Min, Ko (2005), that the government was actually trying to jump on the bandwagon after some dramas such as *Dae Jang Geum* (2003) and *Winter Sonata* (2004) became successful abroad, thus the phenomenon was rather unexpected for the government and they did not take active role in the beginning stage.

S. Shim (2008) has also pointed out that the success of Korean drama exports cannot be attributed to government cultural policies alone. Its success is in fact more relevant to the special stature of this type of entertainment in South Korea as a main attraction for television viewers, fierce competition among major terrestrial broadcasting networks (as discussed in section 2.1.3) and the fact that South Korea has Japan, the second largest market in the world

as its neighbor, and its audiovisual products could easily be distributed due to the low cultural barriers.

Jeon (2013) goes even further and points out that government cultural policies actually have detrimental effects for the industry. She argues that even though the top-down structure of relations between the government and broadcasting industry can be perceived as one of the factors stimulating the entry of Korean television dramas into the international market and enabling it to enjoy benefits of being “first-mover” in the expanding Asian broadcasting market at that time, the enthusiastic offers and supports from the government are not necessarily able to provide effective assistance. This is partly because the government’s vision is different from that of broadcasting industry. While the government cultural policies are still focusing on traditional cultural content, most Korean dramas that have become popular overseas do not highlight nor present traditional culture. She suggests that the drama production and exportation of South Korea will only become increasingly commercialized and hybridized in the future. The current challenge, she argues, is for the government to resolve the conceptual confusion, reconsider its overemphasis on high culture and nationalism, and find the most appropriate role to provide the real practical support.

Guo (2013) also points out that the government support is still lacking, there is a need for a fairer and more systematic resource distribution, better resource management, more abundant human resources and talents, and stronger anti-piracy law.

Upon the analysis of these relevant literature, it could be concluded that Korean government undoubtedly recognizes an impact of the Hallyu phenomenon, and has made various attempts to support its development. However, their ardent involvement is not always favorable. Players in the entertainment industry usually consider the government's support to be either ineffective or detrimental, since its vision is unclear and still plagued with cultural nationalism. While the government might be credited for implementing policies that drew new players and funding sources into the entertainment industry, and for establishing strong information technology and communication infrastructure for the country, the stakeholders more often than not disregard its contribution in engendering the Korean wave. The greater credit is usually given to the conglomerates, industry players, dedicated staff, avid fans, as well as the favorable global economic environment.

2.3.1.2 Role of the conglomerates and cultural industry. A number of studies emphasize the role of conglomerates and business-oriented strategies of cultural industry in enhancing international competitiveness of Korean popular culture. As described in the previous section, the chaebols' investment during 1990-1997 has laid a foundation for South Korea media renaissance. During the period of their involvement in film and other entertainment industries, chaebols transplanted their advanced business know-how, including systemic planning, marketing, and financial management to the entertainment industry, deconstructing the old structure plagued with pre-modern, tradition-oriented business practices

and replacing it with a more business-oriented infrastructure (Ryoo, 2008). The technical and business sophistication stemming from chaebol's era brought the potentiality of audiovisual industry as imported goods to light, incentivized the venture capitalists to pour in capital and eventually a number of private equity funds were established to produce films and dramas (Parc & Hwy-Chang, 2013). As of 2004, the average cost of film production rose to \$36 million from a mere \$769,500 in 1995, and the venture capitalists funded over a half of Korean films produced during the 2000s (D. Shim, 2008). From that point on, the entertainment industry began to flourish and its well-planned business structure has become a model to be followed (Seo, 2012).

More specifically, the success of the Korean wave is partly due to methodical business planning and execution of the Korean entertainment companies. Korean pop music industry is a prime example of how the industry utilizes business-oriented strategies and becomes successful.

Lie (2014) has indicated how SM Entertainment, one of the three most important K-Pop agencies, operates within the logic of export imperative and profit motive rather than pursuing a more profound artistic vision. Lee Soo-man, Chairman of SM Entertainment, positions the company as export-oriented and progressive. He also constantly seeks the strategies that would be applicable for the music industry. For example, following the tremendous success of *New Kids on the Block (1984)* and *Backstreet Boys (1993)* in the US

music market, Lee immediately applied the boyband formula to produce *S.E.S. (1997)*, *SHINHWA (1998)*, and *Fly to the Sky (1998)*, all of which later became a great success in domestic as well as overseas markets. Localization strategy has also been widely applied and is one of the main elements of K-pop success. Artists and actors are offered lessons in foreign languages as well as appropriate courses on etiquette for each country, and products are adapted to the particularities of the specific market. For example, the products for Japanese market will come with elaborate packaging and various gifts added to the packaged CDs or DVDs. Musically, K-pop has assembled all ingredients to draw international fans, simple melodies, catchy English chorus, and western-style pop conventions (S. Lee, 2004). Visually, K-pop band always comes up with new concepts with changing fashions and styles to keep its performers fresh and appealing, and the artists usually have energetic choreography that catches the eyes and sustains interest (Li, 2013).

Youna Kim (2013) also discusses the issue and points out that K-Pop relies much on collective effort and perfect mixture of the group structure in its commercialization. Take SM entertainment's renowned girl band *So Nyeo Shi Dae (SNSD/Girl's Generation)* as an example, each member has different facial features, personal traits and individual talents to suit the particular taste of the audience (Li, 2013). They also have different language skills (Chinese, English or Japanese) to help overseas promotion. In addition, the group structure allows a K-Pop act to continue to thrive even though one or more of its members are absent for other

arrangements such as filming television drama or appearing on game show. Even in a case where one of the members drops out, it is still possible to find a replacement, giving the group an opportunity to continue to grow. All of these advantages are absent for solo singer, and it is one of the reasons why it is less common to see soloists in K-Pop music industry. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the group structure of K-Pop is created under the commercial logic, since it is more profitable and more advantageous in terms of commercial gains and sustainability.

Furthermore, the entertainment companies also invest heavily in finding, recruiting and training new talents. It has been reported that among roughly 300,000 participants auditioning for SM Entertainment in 2010, only 100 of them make it as trainees, AKA SM rookies. Rookies usually undergo 2-5 years of highly rigorous training, and not all of them make it all the way to debuting. These trainees will be trained and “perfected” both in their physical appearances and personalities by the company. SM Entertainment, for example, spent around \$2.5 million to train and perfect each of nine SNSD members before they debuted (Ho, 2012).

In a nutshell, The rigorous recruiting, training, as well as careful planning and marketing help to ensure that only the cream of crops will reach eyes and ears of the public, further enhancing the competitiveness of K-Pop.

2.3.1.3 Competitiveness of Korean cultural products. Parc and Hwy-Chang (2013)

incorporated various variables to explain the competitiveness of Korean entertainment industry,

particularly films and dramas. Based on their evaluation, (1) the attractive appearance of actors and actresses (evaluated by their height and age, comparing to their counterparts in China and Japan); (2) the higher performance quality (evaluated by the number of international awards granted); (3) relatively large size of Korean entertainment industry (rank 11th in the world, calculated by taking the size of population into consideration); (4) the sophistication of Korean consumers; (5) higher investment for producing dramas (comparing with Japanese dramas); (6) business strategies; and (7) fierce domestic competition (comparing viewer ratings of dramas with Japan) are cited as factors leading to the competitiveness of Korean cultural products in international market.

The study conducted by Seo (2012) explains the competitiveness of K-pop industry using a four-pointed “cultural almond model” to determine four factors that drove K-pop to its success: preparation, delivery, consumers, and content. During preparation, artist trainees are carefully selected and rigorously trained, only the best reaches eyes and ears of the public. In production stage, companies work with top experts from related field (e.g. music and choreography) for the best-quality productions, then networking with entertainment companies worldwide to plan overseas marketing from the very early stages. Products are being customized to fit the particularities of each market. For delivery and consumers, SNS and IT facilitate their work and help to sustain the culture of fandom. From the content perspective, K-pop synthesizes all ingredients, hybridized music, visually attractive members and latest

fashions. All these elements lead to a groundbreaking success of K-pop.

2.3.2 External Factors. External factors will be briefly discussed to develop understanding of economic and cultural landscapes of the region that act favorably to Korean popular culture exports.

2.3.2.1 Role of social media. The development of social networking services (SNS) is very vital to Korean audiovisual industry. Take K-pop for an example, SNS such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is highly significant for its delivery. Worldwide exposure is possible within a click, the speed at which K-pop clips, music videos and live performances can go viral has dramatically plunged. Time and expense required to build awareness and engagement in foreign markets are also reduced. The impact is obvious especially when comparing to the pre-SNS period. According to Seo (2012), K-pop artist *BoA* from SM Entertainment took five years to establish herself in Japan, while *Dong Bang Shin Ki*, boyband from the same company took four years. In a stark contrast, *So Nyeo Shi Dae*, also from the same agency, rose to the top of Oricon Chart on the very first day their first Japanese album released in 2011, thanks to the power of SNS. It is also noteworthy how the visual-oriented K-pop is highly suitable for SNS distribution. As the attractiveness of the artists and sophisticated stage production are the outstanding features of Korean music industry, and SNS allows these special qualities to truly shine. Additionally, South Korea has one of the best Internet infrastructure in the world (J.Y. Lee, 2009).

SNS not only contributes to delivery process, it is also an important component of consumer behavior in the new era. The impact is particularly apparent for K-Pop as its target audience is young people who are highly adapted to IT and SNS. Young ardent supporters of K-pop not only follow news updates and watch K-pop online, they also form a cult-like Internet fan clubs of their favorite artists or bands to share their passion, provide feedback, and create their own K-pop inspired environment—for example, recording videos of themselves doing the cover of their favorite K-pop songs or dance moves. In this manner, consumer-produced viral transmission of K-pop will spread even further, and ardent consumers unconsciously become a part of marketing efforts of the entertainment companies.

2.3.2.2 Cultural proximity. One of the most important reasons South Korea is so successful in exporting its cultural products to its neighboring countries is ‘audience-content relevancy’. As suggested by Joseph Nye in his book ‘Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics’ that ‘popular culture is more likely to attract people... where cultures are somewhat similar rather than dissimilar’ (Nye 2004b, p. 15). Most scholars agree that Hallyu started from the success of Korean dramas, and Asian audiences are highly receptive to this kind of entertainment for the reason that it very well grasps their values, tastes, and interests, employing worldviews that are shared among the people of Asia-Pacific region (Hou, Tsai, & Chen, 2011).

Sung (2010), explains the success of Korean dramas and films among the audiences in

Asia-Pacific countries by indicating how these products touch the right chord of the oriental sentiments. *Dae Jang Geum* (2003), for example, is tremendously successful in China and Taiwan, for it employs family values and moralities, which are derived from Confucianism that is a shared sentiment of East Asian societies. Settings and costumes appearing on the screen are arranged in the way that suits oriental senses of beauty. For audiences in the developing countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, ways of living and mindsets presented in Korean dramas retain a certain amount of traditional values, while achieve technological and artistic sophistication. Elaborate and stylish costumes appeared in Korean dramas are usually praised and iconized by young, middle-class audiences in Thailand (S.-S. Kim & Kim, 2009). While most of the scenes in the dramas are showing daily routines such as having meals, cooking, sleeping, as well as modern Asian lifestyles, all of which are very familiar to and easy to understand for Thai audience.

2.3.2.3 Favorable Sociopolitical and Economic Environment in Asia. It has been suggested by many scholars that the Korean wave was possibly not a result of a carefully-planned strategies or far-sighted vision of the government or the broadcasters in South Korea. Rather, it is the favorable global economic conditions that allowed Korea's cultural exports to go so smoothly and successfully (J. M. Ko, 2005). As suggested by D. Shim (2008), in the late 1990s when Hallyu started to emerge, the popularity of Japanese drama in Taiwan started to fade, and the Taiwanese importers began to import Korean dramas which are cheaper by a

quarter to fill this void. This change in Taiwanese market also helped Korean dramas to penetrate into other Chinese-speaking markets such as Hong Kong and Mainland China.

It is also important to take into account the structural context of market deregulation, media liberalization and rapid economic development that most Asian countries enjoyed in the 1990s (Zhao, 2012). Up until that point, Asian governments had been highly protective when it came to cultural influences from foreign countries. However, in the name of globalization, their broadcasting program markets were forced open while the economic development they were currently enjoying made it possible for their citizens to enjoy some leisure time to consume these cultural products. South Korea's entertainment industry was relatively early in breaking away from the government's tight grip comparing to its counterparts in the region, for its authoritarian strict control over broadcasting program (including imposing a strict control over drama production as discussed in section 2.1) significantly decreased in 1992, just in time for the new global trend of media commercialization. It follows that its cultural goods exportation was jumped start faster and earlier, South Korea therefore could enjoy the 'first-mover' advantage in the rapidly expanding Asian television program markets that were looking for substitutes for pricy American and Japanese entertainment products. Also, the more optimistic atmosphere under a democratic civilian government encouraged a rapid development in drama industry and made its cultural artifacts more competitive (Jeon, 2013; D. Shim, 2008).

To conclude, Hallyu is a relatively new, fancy, and complicated phenomenon, many

scholars are arguing over the factors underlying its unprecedented success. In this chapter, existing studies are critically reviewed and important variables are systemically drawn to explain how the Korean wave has emerged and what factors underlie its success. It has been found that the role of the government is not as vital to the development of Korean entertainment industry as many would believe. There are conceptual and practical gaps that are needed to be filled before the government could actually come to terms with the industry players and provide meaningful assistance. However, the government's contribution in incentivizing investments and engendering Hallyu should not be overlooked. From business perspective, the role, vision and strategy of entertainment industry are highly critical in improving its exports and the competitiveness of its products overseas. External factors, though not easily controlled, should similarly not be dismissed. As cultural proximity and favorable economic conditions are both significant for successful distribution of cultural products.

Youna Kim (2013) states in her book "The Korean wave: Korean Media Go Global" that the Korean wave is the first instance of a major global circulation of Korean popular culture in history. Although it is still arguable whether its popularity is actually capable of penetrating into "difficult" markets in the western world, there is no doubt that the Korean wave is the latest cultural sign after the Cool Japan that audiences are becoming transnational, and it has the potentiality to become an instrument of peace that enhances South Korea's soft power, encourages cooperation, and calms its old enmities with its neighboring countries.

CHAPTER THREE

THE KOREAN WAVE AND SOFT POWER OF SOUTH KOREA

In this chapter, the overview of South Korea's soft power and the relationship between the Korean wave and South Korea's soft power will be discussed to provide contextual understanding of its current stature in world politics, and to develop insights about the potentialities, limitations and backlashes of using the popular culture to promote a positive perception of the country.

3.1 Overview of South Korea's Soft Power

Among the fierce competition for soft power, South Korea is considered a rookie since it emerged merely recently as a result of its increasing cultural impact in East and South East Asia region (Fensom, 2015). Even though Korea's hard power ranks lower in comparison to major powers such as the United States, Japan and China, its global presence and soft power are growing. According to data from Elcano Global Presence Index, an index examining the global presence of countries all over the world. South Korea ranks 15th with 151.3 value points in 2015, and 48.9 per cent increase from 2005 (74 points), which is relatively impressive considering China that swiftly takes the 2nd rank with the value points of 414.0 has the highest jump of 58.5 per cent (242.1 points) from 2005. The U.S. ranks number one with 26.8 per cent increase (Olivié & Gracia, 2016).

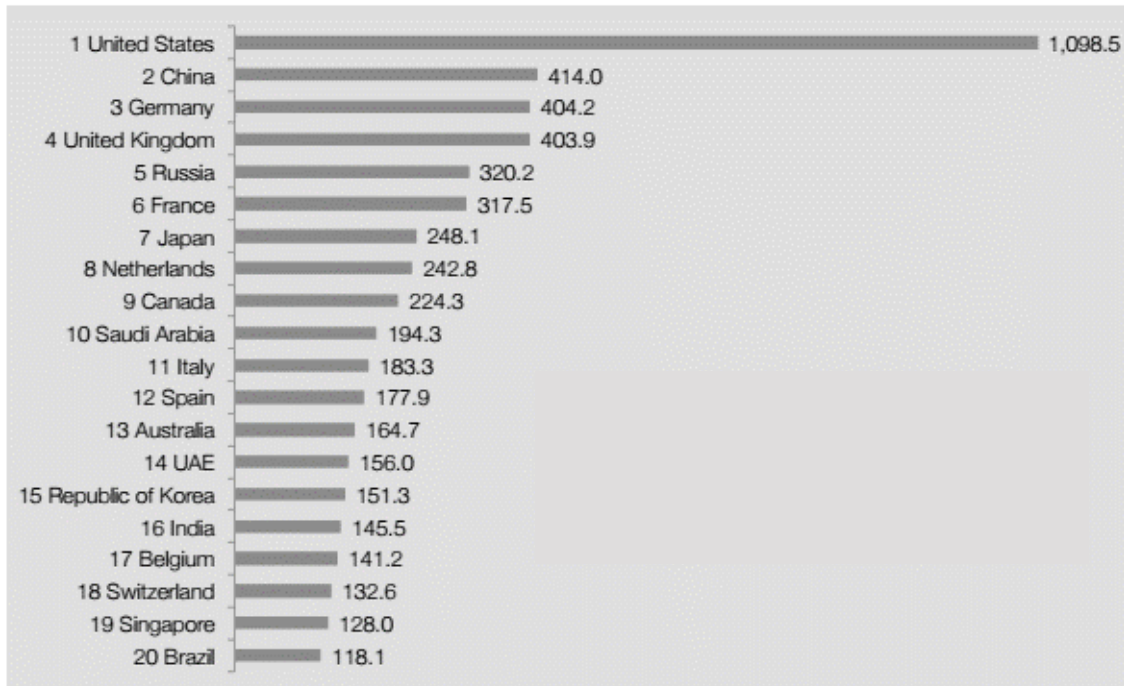


Figure 3-1. 2015 Global Presence Ranking Top 20

Source: Elcano Global Presence Report 2016 (p. 15)

However, in terms of soft power, South Korea ranks 13th globally and ranks third in Asia, while its close neighbor China ranks the 5th globally and the first in Asia, and Japan closely follows with rank 6th and the second respectively (Olivie & Gracia, 2016, p. 53).

In the past decades, South Korea has been employing various policies to strengthen its soft presence in the world. The country's economic success allows South Korea to implement various attractive foreign policy programs to boost its reputation, especially in the developing countries. In 1991, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) was established to grant financial assistance and comprehensive aids to the less developed countries. According to the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of 2015, KOICA is implementing 213 projects in 54 countries. Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounted to \$1,850.7 million. In addition, South Korea's troops have also contributed largely to assist the

United Nation's Peacekeeping Operation (PKO). It is reported that the country has sent approximately 30,000 soldiers to 18 countries and 21 missions since 1993. Meanwhile, South Korea has also highlighted its international visibility by hosting major international events such as Olympic Games in 1988 and FIFA World Cup with Japan in 2002. It has also expanded its international engagement by taking active role in major multinational organizations such as ASEAN+3. UN secretary general Ban Kimoon's Korean nationality has also helped raised his country's profile and is also another indication of its increasing soft power.

Various literature cite the reasons why South Korea takes soft power as the strategy that it should nurture. Firstly, South Korea's cultural diplomacy is weak, comparing with its economic status (13th largest economy globally) and military prowess (15th strongest in the world). It is thus important for South Korea to balance its hard power that is far outweighing its soft power (Nye & Kim, 2013). Secondly, South Korea as a "middle power" could never compete with China and Japan in terms of hard power, so soft power is increasingly seen as an alternative source of power that will reinforce awareness about and highlight the importance of South Korea in international community (Hou et al., 2011; S. J. Lee, 2011). In addition, South Korea's position as a middle power also offers the opportunity for the country to become a bridge linking the developed and developing nations. Lastly, South Korea has high potentiality to build and nurture its soft power, not only because of its economic success and its mature democratic system, but also the attractiveness of South Korean culture, both

traditional and popular ones (Nye & Kim, 2013).

Apart from its efforts in providing development aids and engaging in international activities, South Korean popular culture also plays an important role as one of the country's soft power assets, and the success of the Korean wave that engulfs many East and South East Asia nations from the late 1990s onwards has further highlighted the possibility of leveraging South Korea's popular cultural flow to improve perceptions of the country and increase its attractiveness (S. J. Lee, 2011). D. Shim (2008) suggests that Korean pop stars have contributed to improving South Korea's images and international relations. In one instance, Korean celebrities Jang Dong-gun and Kim Nam-ju were so popular in Vietnam to the point that the Vietnamese labelled them their national stars. Kim Dae-jung, the Korean President at that time even invited the celebrity pair to the dinner hosted for Vietnamese President Tran Duc Luong when the latter visited South Korea in 2001. BoA, who enjoyed tremendous success in Japan and made the cover of the French *Le Monde* in July 2002 as an icon of South Korea-Japan cultural exchange, was also invited to the summit conference of the two countries in June 2003 in Tokyo. Seo (2012) also mentions that Korean stars' stature now transcends economic terms; it has become a strategic asset with halo effects on Korea's brand. Furthermore, it is argued that the success of the Korean wave has spilled over to other industries such as business, tourism and education, driving the awareness, recognition and acceptance of Korean brands, igniting interest in Korean studies and Korean language, as well as giving boost to Korea's

tourism (Y. Kim, 2007). According to the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) and the Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange (KOFICE), cultural exports from Korean Wave totaled \$7.03 billion in 2015, a year-on-year increase of 2.2 per cent. Cultural and entertainment contents consisting of Korean music, Korean dramas and TV programs, films, animation and games have earned \$2.82 billion, while consumer goods and tourism due to the Korean Wave totaled \$4.21 billion (Hicap, 2016). It could be observed from figure 3-2 below that the export sales of Korean cultural products shows a significant increase during a past decades.



Figure 3-2. Export sales of Korean cultural products during the year 2000-2015 (billion USD)

Source: Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), <http://eng.kocca.kr/en/contents.do?menuNo=201450> (accessed 20 May 2016)

In subsequent sections, the influences of the Korean Wave on perceptions of South Korea in the Korean wave recipient countries will be examined and its capabilities and limitations of being the government's instrument of soft power will be discussed.

3.2 The Korean Wave and Perceptions of South Korea

People in different countries react differently to Korean popular culture, core audiences

of each category of Korean cultural products are also different. In this section, the receptions of Korean Wave with the emphasis on Korean dramas and its viewers in the five countries: Japan, China and Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam—the first three as the largest importers of Korean broadcasting programs in East Asia and the last two as the largest importers in Southeast Asia as illustrated in table 3-1 (Yang, 2012)—will be discussed to illustrate the impacts Hallyu have on the cultural, economic, and political fronts of these countries.

Table 3-1

Export of Korean broadcasting programs by destination 2005-10 (1,000 USD, per cent)

Destination	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Japan	65,511 (61.9)	47,932 (48.2)	53,494 (57.4)	79,113 (68.7)	74,791 (63.1)	81,615 (53.9)
China	12,822 (12.1)	12,442 (12.6)	8,328 (8.9)	9,300 (8.0)	12,171 (10.0)	18,216 (12.0)
Taiwan	11,942 (11.3)	20,473 (20.7)	17,131 (18.4)	7,769 (6.7)	11,616 (9.9)	20,011 (13.2)
Southeast Asia	8,584 (8.1)	12,686 (12.8)	8,271 (8.9)	4,533 (8.2)	11,857 (10.6)	13,771 (9.1)
Unites States	2,281 (2.2)	733 (0.7)	792 (0.8)	6,025 (4.8)	3,996 (3.4)	1,996 (1.3)
Others	4,745 (4.5)	4,878 (4.9)	5,249 (5.6)	3,954 (3.4)	4,065 (3.4)	15,789 (10.4)
Total	105,885	98,844	93,265	115,694	118,496	151,398

Source: Yang (2012, p. 134)

3.2.1 The Korean wave and perceptions of South Korea in Japan. The Korean Wave

in Japan began with the success of television drama *Winter Sonata*, which was broadcasted by NHK satellite in 2004, and got rebroadcasted by NHK free-to-air station in 2004 due to overwhelming audience ratings. The majority of K-drama consumers are women in their 50s who find the concept of pure and cherished love in the drama appealing. According to Ministry

of Science, ICT and Future Planning of Korea (MSIP), South Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs to Japan hovered around \$79.02 million in 2014, ranked first in Asia. Its success opened the gate for other cultural products such as Korean films and K-pop. In the year 2004, 29 Korean films were screened in Japan and 70 Korean dramas were broadcasted in 63 terrestrial broadcasting stations in Japan (Yang, 2012). K-pop artist such as *BoA*, *Dong Bang Shin Ki*, *KARA*, *Girl's Generation* and *Wonder Girls* also established themselves in Japan and released Japanese language records and singles. *Girl's Generation*, for example, rose to the top of Oricon Chart on the first day their first Japanese album was released in 2011 (Seo, 2012). Up until present, K-pop artists are still popular in Japanese market and also rank relatively high in terms of total album and DVD sales as shown in the tables below.

Table 3-2

K-pop artists on Oricon best-selling albums yearly ranking 2015

Ranking	Artist Name	Album Name	Release date
#15	TVXQ	With	2014/12/17
#58	D & E	Present	2015/04/01
#59	2PM	2PM	2015/04/15
#75	EXO	EXODUS	2015/04/01
#79	MYNAME	I.M.G. ~without you~	2015/03/10
#85	BIGBANG	The Best Of BIGBANG	2014/11/26
#88	Junho (2PM)	So Good	2015/07/15

Source: Oricon official site, www.oricon.co.jp/ (accessed 20 May 2016)

Table 3-3

K-pop artists on Oricon best-selling DVD yearly ranking 2015

Ranking	Artist Name	Album Name	Number of Sales	Release date
#13	TVXQ	Live Tour 2015 With	80,968	2015/08/19
#14	BIGBANG	Japan Dome Tour 2014~2015 "X"	76,387	2015/03/25
#26	EXO	EXO Planet #1 The Lost Planet	34,154	2015/03/18
#34	SNSD	~LOVE & PEACE~ Japan 3rd Tour	26,600	2014/12/24
#43	SNSD	THE BEST Live at Tokyo Dome	18,826	2015/04/01
#48	Super Junior	World Tour Super Show 6 in Japan	16,740	2015/03/11
#49	2PM	Arena Tour 2014 "Genesis of 2PM"	16,138	2014/1/31

Source: Oricon official site, www.oricon.co.jp/ (accessed 20 May 2016)

It is argued that Korean cultural products, dramas in particular, received a warm

welcome from the middle-aged Japanese audience due to the nostalgic feeling emanating from the social and cultural atmosphere of past decades in Korean dramas. According to Chua and Iwabuchi (2008), the Japanese audience in general have a tendency to feel nostalgic upon seeing the popular culture of other Asian countries, since Japan's level of development is higher than the rest of Asia.

S. S. Kim, Agrusa, Lee, and Chon (2007) have conducted an in-depth analysis to see how Korean dramas have affected the perceived images of South Korea in the eyes of the Japanese, particularly as a tourist destination. Korean drama *Winter Sonata* (2004) is chosen as a case study. The study found that the television series has produced positive economic effects to South Korea in forms of an increase in the number of tourists and sales of related products. In the year that the drama was broadcasted, Nami Island, a featured location in the drama, received 1.44 million foreign tourists, an increase of 40.4 per cent from the previous year, most of them came from Japan, China, and Taiwan. More than 1.12 million copies of Japanese translated books of the drama were sold, and the sales of related merchandise including DVDs, CDs, and photo books exceeded \$370 million (KBS News, 2006). In the sociocultural front, the survey conducted by NHK Broadcasting Culture Institute indicates that 38 per cent of Japanese household watched the drama, and half of the respondents stated that watching the romance series made them more familiar with Korean culture, and around 25 per cent of the respondents answered that their image of South Korea was changed, and they became more

interested in the country. Korea Times (2004) similarly reported that this TV program helps to promote the friendlier and more attractive image of Korea. Additionally, the number of universities offering Korean language course in Japan increased from 143 in 1995 to 335 in 2004 (Hyundai Economic Research Institute, 2004). Various newspaper similarly reported that the leading actor *Bae Yong-Joon* AKA *Yon-sama* became one of the most famous people in Japan, and his popularity even outdid Japanese and Western celebrities (Korea Times, 2004; New York Times, 2005).

3.2.2 The Korean wave and perceptions of South Korea in China and Hong Kong.

Hallyu in the PRC was sparked by the popularity of television drama *What is Love* (1997) that was broadcasted by China Central Television (CCTV) and obtained the second-highest ratings ever recorded in Chinese television history (D. Shim, 2009). Ahn Jae-wook, Korean actor who had a lead role in a successful K-drama *Star in My Heart* has become a cultural icon in China, as evidenced by his number one position in the most popular celebrities poll in 2001, surpassing even Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio who was still at the height of his global popularity (D. Shim, 2006). After the success of Korean dramas, the Chinese consumers ardently embraced the influx of Korean films and K-pop. The idol group H.O.T., for instance, became a trendsetter for Chinese youngsters in 1999 (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011). According to MSIP of Korea, South Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs to China hovered around \$56.93 million in 2014, ranked second in Asia.

The core consumers of Korean cultural products in China are young Chinese (less than 30 years of age), mostly with high socio-economic status. According to Leung (2008) and Yang (2012), Korean popular culture is capable of fulfilling their desire to fill the gap between their yearning for modern cultural products and the relative inability of the China's culture industry to meet their demands. Another reason is possibly because the Western and Japanese popular culture is ideologically threatening and emotionally unacceptable for them while Korean pop culture has been hybridized and thus strikes the balance between modernity and tradition.

It is reported that the popularity of the Korean wave in China has spilled over to other sectors, i.e. tourism and consumer products. Tang (2014) stated in CNBC news article that Korean Tourism organization (KTO) has credited K-drama *My love from the Star*, which was aired in the first quarter of 2014 and became a massive hit with more than 2.5 billion views in Mainland China, for a sudden increase in the number of Chinese tourists. As a theme park called Petite France, one of its filming locations, saw seven-fold increase in its number of visitors, with Chinese holidaymakers accounted for 60 per cent. The luxury brands and even the food relating to the hero and heroine have also become highly sought after by fans. Daily Mail (2014) and Korean Herald (2014) have similarly reported that the meteoric success of the drama contributes to an impressive increase in sales of luxury items and cosmetics adorned by, and even the favorite food of, the leading actress Gianna Jun. South Korea's largest cosmetic manufacturer Amore Pacific, an official sponsor of the drama, had many of their products

displayed on the screen, and subsequently enjoyed a skyrocketed increase of 75 per cent in the sales of their skincare products and 400 per cent rise in the sales of a neon orange lipstick worn by Jun. It is possible to say that this phenomenon has demonstrate how popular culture could influence a favorability for other facets of the country of origin, i.e. its attractiveness as tourist destinations or its position as a trend setter. As of 2015, South Korea is number one travel destination for the Chinese, even though the total number drops slightly due to the outbreak of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS), and the number of Chinese holidaymakers travelling to South Korea increases yearly as illustrated in figure 3-3.

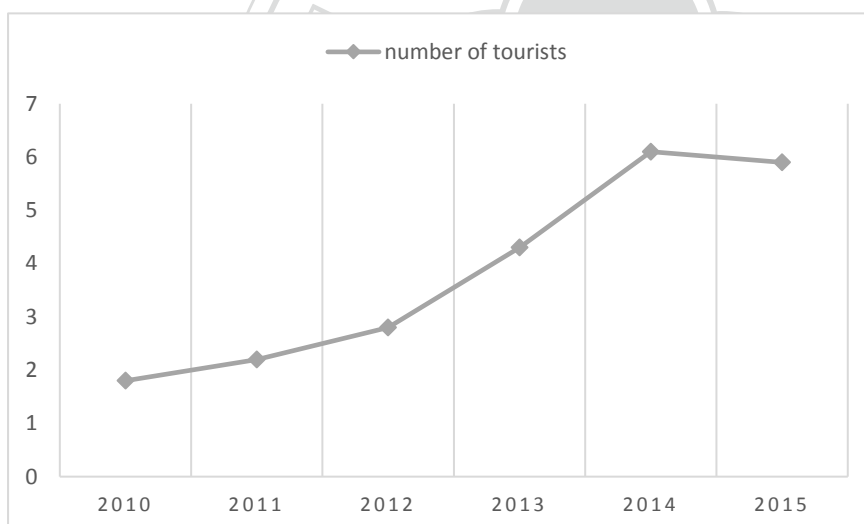


Figure 3-3. The number of Chinese tourists visiting South Korea in 2010-2015 (million people)

Source: Korean Tourism Organization, <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng.kto> (accessed 20 May 2016)

As for Hong Kong, South Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs to Hong Kong hovered around \$52.7 million in 2014, ranked third in Asia. The most popular Korean drama series for the Hongkongers is *Dae Jang Guem*. With the viewership of 47 per cent, it became the highest-rated television program for the past 25 years of Hong Kong television industry

(Chien, 2006). Lee Young-Ae, the leading actress of the drama was voted 'Woman of the Year 2005' by Hongkongers in a mail survey conducted by RTHK channel (China Daily, 2006), with an overwhelming vote of 49 per cent.

On sociocultural front, S. S. Kim, Agrusa, Chon, and Cho (2008) and Lin and Huang (2008) argue that the importation of Korean television drama has enhanced the Hong Kong residents' understanding of Korean culture and piqued their curiosity about South Korea. From 440 valid respondents in the study conducted by S. S. Kim and his team, 72 per cent answered that their image of South Korea was positively changed after they had experienced Korean pop culture, and around 65 per cent said that experiencing Korean culture increased their intention to visit Korea. The growing number of Hong Kong tourists after the massive success of *Dae Jang Geum* also confirmed this fact. According to Korean Tourism Organization (KTO), 16,664 Hong Kong holidaymakers visited South Korea in July 2005, two months after the drama was broadcasted, 33.5 per cent increase comparing to July 2004. Subsequently, in the year after, the number of Hong Kong tourists visiting South Korea also increased by 10 per cent, and most of them went to the shooting sites of *Dae Jang Geum* (South China Morning Post, 2005). It is also said that the drama has formally given birth to a new tourism campaign known as 'Korean TV drama tour' (Inchan, 2012). As of present, South Korea remains a favorite travel destination for the Hongkongers, as the number of Hong Kong tourists visiting South Korea that increases every year, although the number slightly drops in 2015 due to MERS outbreak.

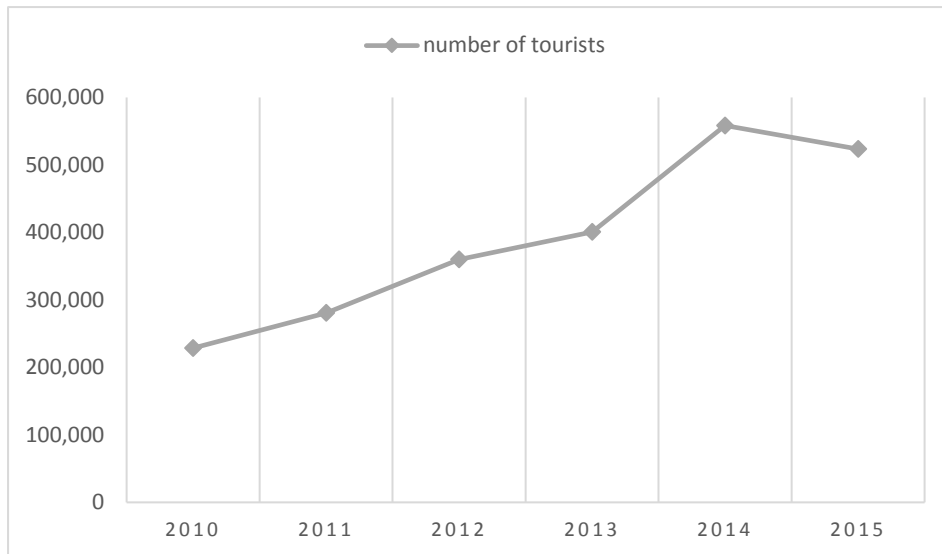


Figure 3-4. The number of Hong Kong tourists visiting South Korea 2010-2015

Source: Korean Tourism Organization, <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng.kto> (accessed 20 May 2016)

3.2.3 The Korean wave and perceptions of South Korea in Taiwan. The first K-drama that was aired in Taiwan is *Fireworks* (2000), which also became a huge success. It opened a window of opportunity for other K-dramas such as *Autumn in My Heart*, a romantic love story that later became the most-watched television program in Taiwan and *Dae Jang Guem*, which achieved a high viewership (for Taiwanese television program standard) of 6.27 per cent. According to MSIP of Korea, South Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs to Taiwan valued \$14.11 million in 2014, ranked fifth in Asia. K-pop also appealed younger audience in Taiwan, masculine boybands such as *CLON*, *H.O.T.*, *Shinhwa* and *Super Junior* have achieved a sensational success, while idol groups like *Girl's Generation* and *Wonder Girls* also do well in Taiwan music market (Sung, 2010).

According to a survey conducted by Yang (2012), Taiwanese K-drama lovers are younger than the Japanese and older than the Chinese, they are mostly in 30-39 and 40-49 age

group. When it comes to their reasons for consuming Korean cultural products, Taiwanese fans are relatively similar to both the Chinese and the Japanese. They prefer the modern, advanced, but culturally proximate and politically neutral cultural products, and in comparison to the Western and Japanese, popular culture from South Korea is more acceptable emotionally and ideologically (Huang, 2011; Yang, 2012). They resemble Hallyu fans in Japan in the sense that they do not see Korean culture as superior vis-a-vis their own, and they find certain cultural commonality in the two nations. In addition, the Taiwanese are also fascinated by the pride and confidence that the Korean have for their own culture, and the apparent existence of the Korean Wave has inspired them to examine their own cultural identity and tried to emulate such success (Wang, 2014; Wu, 2004)

Sung (2010) elaborately discusses how Hallyu has contributed to rebuild the image of South Korea in Taiwan. According to him, although South Korea and Taiwan are relatively common in the sense that they were once colonized by Japan, Taiwanese did not look at South Korea with admiration, and when South Korea decided to break off a formal diplomatic tie, their perceptions of South Korea took turn for the worse. He then argues that the influx of Korean pop culture during the 2000s to present has transformed this negative perception. Upon his analysis of personal interviews of around 40 individuals from 2002-2009, Sung has reached the conclusion that the popularity of Korean cultural products has positively impacted South Korea's image in Taiwan. Before Hallyu strikes, the Taiwanese have been relatively ignorant

about South Korea and its existence, but upon the exposition to Korean pop culture, they began to be curious about South Korea and the secret behind its success. More people take interest in Korean language, culture, history and economy. Apple Daily (2012) reported that the sales of Korean language learning magazine ‘EZ Korea’ increased by 20 per cent, two times higher than ‘EZ Japan’— its counterpart in Japanese language. Additionally, the number of Korean language publications also increased by 10 per cent, with 20 per cent sales growth year-on-year. There is also an increase in the number of Taiwanese traveling to South Korea during their holidays. A month after *Dae Jang Guem* was aired in May 2004, for example, the number of Taiwanese tourists visiting South Korea skyrocketed to 31,000, an increase of 270% from the same period in 2003 (Korean Tourism Organization, 2016). All these developments lead to a booming mutual understanding, and the Taiwanese perception of South Korea as an “impoverished country” has been replaced with images represented in modern dramas and beautiful visual imaginary music videos with fast and cheerful tempo. Nowadays, South Korea is the picture of “material brilliance” and “simultaneity desires” (Sung, 2010, p. 43).

Similarly to other countries, the number of Taiwanese holidaymakers visiting South Korea steadily increases yearly. However, slight fluctuation can be observed. In 2014, one of the most popular K-dramas *You Who Came from the Star* was aired in Taiwan and the number of tourists surged, then MERS outbreak caused the number to drop in 2015.

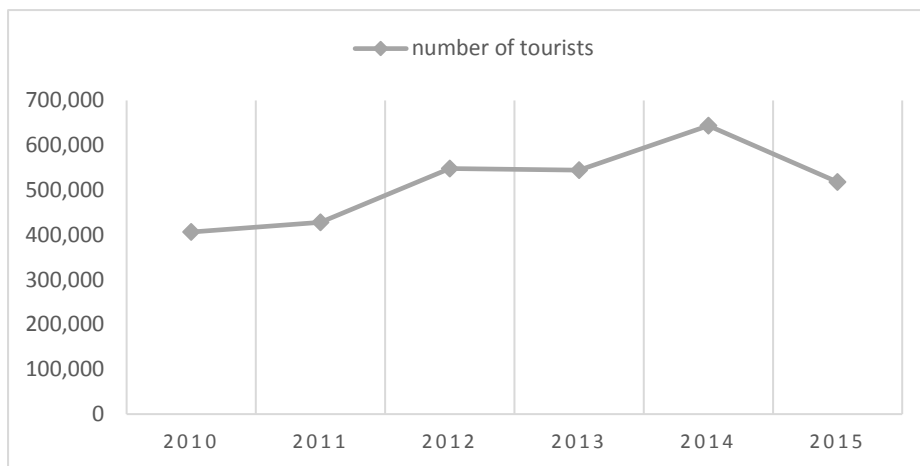


Figure 3-5. The number of Taiwanese tourists visiting South Korea in 2010-2015

Source: Korean Tourism Organization, <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng.kto> (accessed 20 May 2016)

3.2.4 The Korean wave and perceptions of South Korea in Thailand. The success of Hallyu in Thailand is evidently tremendous: over the period of 2000 – 2009, more than two hundred Korean dramas were aired on local television, with *Coffee Prince*, *Full House* and *Dae Jang Geum* being ones among the most popular. In virtually every media outlet – billboards, TV commercials, TV series, pop music industry, among others – one can always find popular Korean idols. Korean singers, boy bands and girl groups travel frequently to Bangkok to hold live concerts, and their concerts are always fully booked within a few minutes. What is more noteworthy is that K-pop video views on YouTube are higher in Thailand than in Korea, with 224 million views in 2011, ranking third worldwide, while the first and the second rank belong to Japan and the United States respectively (Inchan, 2012; Pitsuwan 2011). According to MSIP, South Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs to Thailand hovered around \$14.69 million in 2014, ranked fifth in Asia.

According to survey conducted by Inchan (2012), the majority of K-drama audience in

Thailand are female in their 15-27, most of them are college graduates working in private companies. For Thai audiences, Korean dramas represent the mixture of modern lifestyles they are aspired to follow and traditional oriental aesthetics they are familiar with. Additionally, fairytale-like love, impossible love between different classes, and the action of destiny are the themes commonly found in both Thai and Korean television dramas, but the production of the latter is high-quality and more sophisticated vis-a-vis the former. In this aspect, Thai viewers are relatively similar to the Chinese, in that they find K-drama fascinating for it fulfills their desire for modernity and the relative inability of the local culture industry to meet this need.

As Korea's popular culture is being enthusiastically consumed, everything Korean has also become more recognized and admired – the export of Korean cosmetics to Thailand has increased six-fold in the last decade, and it is reported that 78.25 per cent of middle-income female white-collar workers use Korean cosmetic products (Inchan, 2012). The number of Thai tourists traveling to South Korea in 2015 is 466,783, an increase of 25.2 per cent year-on-year, accounting for 3.6 per cent of total foreign tourists in South Korea (Korean Tourism Organization, 2016). The number of Thai tourists visiting South Korea also shows similar trend to other countries mentioned in this section as shown in figure 3-6. In education facet, the number of universities offering course in Korean language increase, with more than ten universities offering Bachelors' degree in Korean language, 70 schools offering Korean language course, and over 25,000 secondary students studying Korean language. The number

clearly indicates rising popularity of Korean language and culture (Royal Thai Government, 2016).

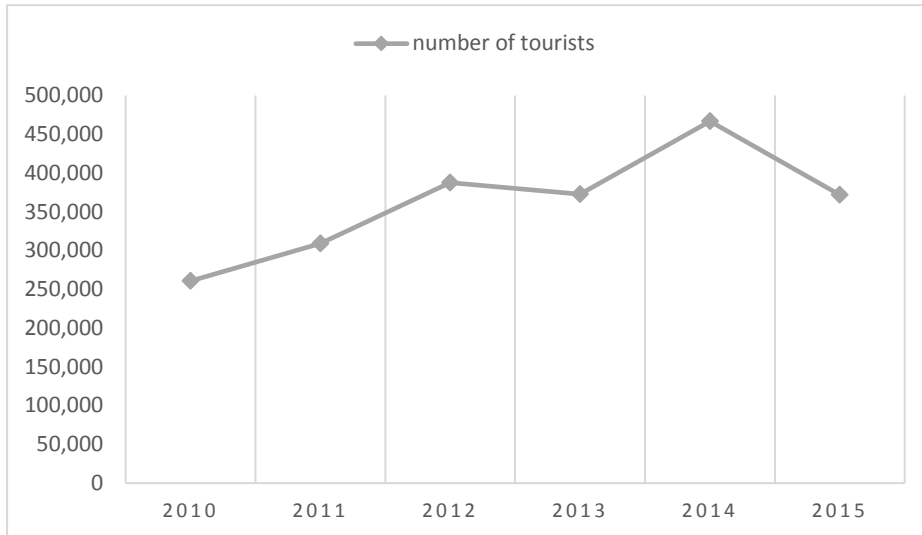


Figure 3-6. The number of Thai tourists visiting South Korea in 2010-2015

Source: Korean Tourism Organization, <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng.kto> (accessed 20 May 2016)

During Changing Security Paradigm and Korea's New Asia Policy: Vision for 2030 Forum held by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Mr. Fuadi Pitsuwan, a representative from Thailand, clearly expressed his optimism with regards to the impact of Korean pop culture on Thailand-South Korea relations. According to his statement, the evidence of Korean cultural influence in Thai society is ubiquitous, and this strong cultural presence cultivated over the last few years has generated tremendous goodwill for Korea among the general Thai population. The Korean wave has introduced and transferred Korean popular culture to Thailand, and subsequently modified the belief and perception the Thai have of South Korea. Against this backdrop, the Korean wave could become a strong foundation for the country to engage Thailand on other fronts, including political and economic facets.

However, he also noted that one thing that the Korean government should be cautious about is even though Thailand ardently embraces its influence, history shows that foreign cultural crazes in Thailand do not last long. As witnessed in the rise and fall of the popularity of Cantonese films, Taiwanese soap operas and Japanese pop culture in Thailand of earlier decades, the popularity of Korean pop culture would also fade with time. As such, the Korean government should strike the iron while it is still hot, using the Thai's fondness of South Korea and its culture as a foundation for a closer bilateral political and economic engagement before the Korean wave begins to lose steam. For example, with the already-positive perception that Thai citizens have of Korea, Korean products and services would become more attractive for Thai consumers, and even the government-to-government relations can also be strengthened through this optimism.

3.2.5 The Korean wave and perceptions of South Korea in Vietnam. It is said that Hallyu in Vietnam started when the first Korean drama series *Medical Brothers* was shown in 1998 and became a talk-of-the-town, and other K-dramas follow its path of success. According to MSIP of Korea, South Korea's total exports of broadcasting programs to Vietnam hovered around \$9.04 million in 2014, ranked sixth in Asia. After the wave strikes, Korean culture has heavily influenced youth culture in Vietnam. The Vietnamese youngsters come to love everything Korean, from its food like Kimbap (Seaweed rice roll) and Chimaek (Chicken and beer) to its fashion and music. The idol bands such as *Girl's Generation* and *Super Junior* from

SM Entertainment are huge stars in the country. In a survey of 1,114 students in Ho Chi Minh City, 59 per cent answered that they liked Korean dramas, and nearly 50 per cent said they liked K-pop. It could be said that Hallyu has built a very attractive national brand for South Korea in the eyes of Vietnamese youngsters (Duong, 2016; Minh, 2015; Tho, 2012).

Modernity, cultural proximity and the quality of Korean cultural products play important roles in enhancing its popularity among the Vietnamese. Audiences in Vietnam are attracted to Korean drama for its attractive culinary culture and beautiful Korean stars, and also because it represents modernity while at the same time retains cultural commonality such as strict hierarchical order (Tho, 2012). Undoubtedly, its popularity is not without negative consequences. It is argued that Hallyu in Vietnam has invoked mild resistances from the Vietnamese because the overenthusiastic young fans went overboard to emulate violent scenes in the dramas or excessively expressed their love for their idols, and the concerns about cultural imperialism have also been raised (Duong, 2016).

Similarly to the cases of holidaymakers in other countries, KTO indicates that more than 130,000 Vietnamese visited South Korea in 2014, a 20 per cent year-on-year increase. The survey result collected from 303 valid respondents by Van (2014) to investigate relationship between Korean celebrity involvement and Vietnamese fans destination perception helps to confirm that this could possibly a result of fascination for K-drama. In addition to Van's work, Chan (2007), S. Kim (2012) and Ogle and Ying (2013), also confirm that admiration for Korean

cultural products positively affects the consumer's destination cognitive image perception and the intention to visit a destination. The increasing number of Vietnamese tourists visiting South Korea also confirms their arguments as shown in figure 3-7.

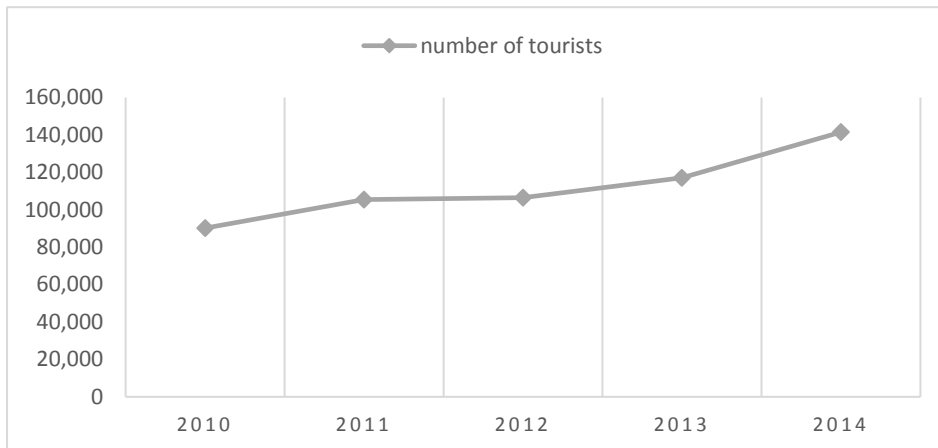


Figure 3-7. The number of Vietnam tourists visiting South Korea in 2010-2014

Source: Korean Tourism Organization, <http://kto.visitkorea.or.kr/eng.kto> (accessed 20 May 2016)

However, it has been pointed out that South Korea must not solely rely upon Hallyu as the basis of its bilateral relations with Vietnam. Korean popular culture might help to foster a moderate level of goodwill for Korea among the Vietnamese teenagers, but concrete actions are still required to address key problems plaguing relations between the two countries. For examples, unrest among Vietnamese workers at Korean enterprises and the abuse of Vietnamese migrant brides in South Korea. These obstacles must be overcome to further strengthen Vietnam–South Korea relations (Minh, 2015).

From the brief overview of how five nations in Asia consumed and reacted to Korean pop culture, similar trends could be observed and concluded as following:

Firstly, the consumption of Korean pop culture tends to increase the attractiveness of as

well as the positive sentiments towards the country of origin, South Korea. It is also argued that exposition to Korean cultural products help to foster the interest and curiosity about other aspects of the country, i.e. language, society, and fashion.

Secondly, the popularity of Korean pop culture could help to increase awareness of Korean brands and products, as well as consumers' intention to purchase, as illustrated in the case of Korean cosmetic exports to China and Thailand.

Thirdly, while different categories of cultural products appeal to different groups of audience – i.e. dramas are more popular among middle-aged women, K-pop are more for the teenagers, *What Love is Love* created a buzz in China, whereas it was *Winter Sonata* for the Japanese and *Medical Brothers* for the Vietnamese – the sentiments of positivity and curiosity emerging from their consumption are relatively similar, and it signifies that South Korea possesses quite a wide variety of soft power resources.

Fifth, there has been a convergence of the Korean wave across the countries and the genres. For instance, the popularities of *Dae Jang Guem* is not limited to Hong Kong, but also in Mainland China, Thailand, and Taiwan. The same is true with impressive receptions of K-pop stemming from the success of K-drama. This phenomenon perhaps signifies the construction of cultural networks around the audience in Asian region, which would not only help to facilitate the distribution of additional Korean cultural content in the future and ensure its longevity, but also increase the possibility of cultural-sharing and hybridization in Asia.

Lastly, while it is true that the audiences in different countries have different reasons for their preferences of Korean pop culture, the main factors that could help to broadly explain the flow of Korean popular cultural products are: structural and economic background, globalization, hybridization, modernity, proximity, and product quality¹. These factors have contributed to the understanding of this phenomenon, and should be examined together to get the fuller picture of the Korean Wave.

3.3 Backlash, Potentiality and Limitation of the Korean Wave as Soft Power Resource

Undoubtedly, as South Korea is emerging as a dominant cultural force in the region, there has been a serious counter effect in the form of “anti-Korean Wave” movements and slogans in China, Japan and Taiwan. While these blowbacks are an evidence of the Korean wave’s success in those countries, they also signify that this flow of culture is increasingly unidirectional. Concerns have grown as the overwhelming influx of Korean pop culture threatens the cultural institutions in those recipient countries. Some people regard Hallyu as Korean mode of cultural imperialism (Cai, 2008; Duong, 2016; Maliangkay, 2006). China’s State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, for example, seeks to undermine the Korean wave to protect their own audiovisual industry by reducing the air time of Korean dramas by half. Anti-Korean pop culture sentiment was also growing in Taiwan. At Hallyu’s peak of popularity, at least four and five K-dramas were being broadcasted every night,

¹ Structural and institutional backgrounds as well as globalization factors are explained in chapter two of this study.

sparkling animosity from local people towards Korean pop culture (Zhang, 2010). At one time Taiwan's Government Information Office (GIO) even considered banning foreign soap operas from television during prime time (S. L. Ko, 2006). As for Japan, blogs and manga began to express frustration over the Korean Wave's cultural imperialism. One manga entitled '*Hyom-Hallyu*' (translated as Anti-Korean wave), which told the story about Japanese high schooler who comes to realize the true ugly nature of South Korea has over 300,000 copies sold (Ryoo, 2009). Interestingly, BoA, a Korean female vocalist who has also had enormous success in Japan—as the only foreign artist to have three albums selling more than one million copies in Japan and is one of only two artists to have six consecutive number-one studio albums on the Oricon charts—hasn't become the focus of criticism, perhaps due to her ability to speak Japanese (Maliangkay, 2006).

This is an important lesson for soft power thinkers. Core implication derived from such anti-Korean wave movements is that a country's soft power resources can become a double-edged sword when utilized unilaterally. Therefore, the related sectors should be aware that distributing Korean pop culture in a unidirectional manner based on commercial logic rather than a multidirectional cultural exchange potentially leads to resistance and animosity from local audiences. Ryoo (2009) also elaborates on this issue and suggests that one viable option is to pursue the even higher form of cultural hybridization, such as producing drama and cultural contents in recipient countries with local staffs and to supply such content directly to

local audiences. With this negotiated and hybridized form of culture, the Korean wave will be sustained and the foundation for a reciprocal and trustworthy relationship with local audiences will be established en route.

As discussed in section 3.3 of this chapter, the enthusiasm for Korean popular culture led to a mass consumption of symbols and ideas relating to Korea, thereby resulting in the crystallization of positive feelings and formation of specific perceptions of South Korea among the audiences in recipient countries. For this reason, the Korean wave possesses a potentiality as crucial resources of soft power, or “soft resources”, the term coined by Lee Geun (2009a), the author who formulates alternative soft power paradigm to examine South Korea’s soft power strategies in his article “A theory of soft power and South Korea’s soft power strategies”.

The Korean Wave itself is not a soft power, but is one of South Korea’s soft power resources, and possessing such resource does not guarantee its automated actualization of soft power (G. Lee, 2009b, p. 134). To convert soft power resources into soft power and achieve certain diplomatic and political goals, refined strategies are crucial. Jang and Won (2012); G. Lee (2009a); Ryoo (2009) have suggested mobilization strategies of these soft power resources as follows:

Firstly, create favorable image of South Korea using the popularity of Korean cultural artifacts and celebrities. This strategy is meant to increase the attractiveness and favorability for South Korea so that it would be less likely to face antagonistic security and military policies,

and that its citizens would tend not to face discrimination in the recipient countries of the Korean wave. This case is particularly true in Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam where the perceptions of South Korea have largely improved after the Korean wave, and their historical frictions have been alleviated. Many scholars attending the Korean wave panel at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in February 2007 also agreed that Hallyu could have some effects on international political affairs. One of the main speakers, Park Jung-Sook, has pointed out that Hallyu is "an instrument of peace" that has already calmed South Korea's old enmities with Japan, China, and North Korea. Other members also voiced similar opinions and indicated that the Korean wave encourages peaceful trade and cultural-sharing (Ireland, 2007).

Secondly, extending a network effect of Korean popular culture. As the distribution of Korean cultural products is usually accompanied by the spread of Korean standards, worldviews, fashion, cuisine, language, and lifestyles, there is a possibility that consumers in recipient countries would also accept the Korean values as positive. This will create a favorable environment for both Korean expats and Korean businesses, and an increase in the Korean and local citizens' interactions would perhaps lead to the expansion of invisible influence of South Korea upon other countries in the same manner that the U.S. did through its popular culture.

Thirdly, using celebrities as face of the nation. Korean celebrities and stars gain more attention from the media and public comparing to most government officials. Their visits, their behaviors and their messages also speak louder, and have more impact upon a large number of

people. If the Korean government can utilize their popularity and have them conveyed meaningful messages of goodwill—the same way with Leonardo DiCaprio and Emma Watson speaking for environment protection, it could positively affect ideas and behaviors of the people.

Fourthly, the Korean government should not take a front role in promoting the Korean wave. Not only that the government has less understanding about the consumers and their needs (Jeon, 2013) as discussed in the previous chapter, but the active engagement of national government could potentially lead to extreme blowbacks. As the deliberate diffusion of culture by the state could be negatively perceived as a cultural invasion.

Lastly, The Korean wave signifies an important change in regional cultural arena. The sign of regionalization of transnational cultural flow has emerged, as the phenomenon entails Asian countries' increasing acceptance of cultural communication from the neighbors who share economic and cultural commonalities rather than from the powerful others. Therefore, this phenomenon could be more of a cultural-sharing and less of the attempts to expand Korean cultural influence. The Korean wave can potentially be a communicative platform for building peaceful transnational community among many Asian countries, constructing a new bond of understanding across borders.

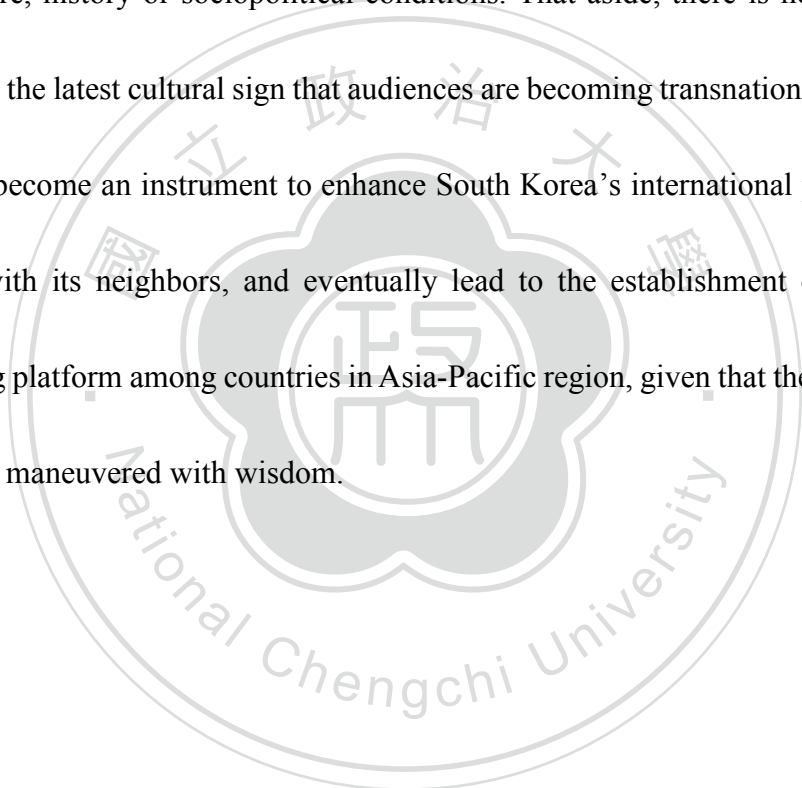
However, it is important to acknowledge the caveats of this soft power resource. Firstly, the tendency that cultural attraction could affect geopolitics or national governments is relatively low. It is not very likely that cultural attractiveness could solve problems arising from

nationalism and material economic interests. Problems such as unrest among Vietnamese workers at Korean enterprises, abuse of Vietnamese migrant brides in Korea, or the maritime disputes arising from Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the yellow sea between China and South Korea, for examples, are calling for concrete action and formal negotiation (Lai, 2006). The Korean wave should not be perceived as miraculous antidotes for international frictions, but a foundation that would lead to an increase in cultural exchange and mutual understanding.

Secondly, the current dissemination of Korean popular culture is highly market-oriented and aims to reach commercial goals, thus there is a possibility that the information communicated through this channel is flawed or distorted. As Jung (2010), Lie (2012) and Ryoo (2009) has pointed out, while it is true that the highly hybridized nature of Korean pop culture has made it popular, this hybridity also makes it “무국적 - mugukjoek” (translated as having no nationality), in a sense that it is still doubtful whether the consumption of these modernized cultural products could actually lead to a deeper understanding about South Korea’s traditional culture, history, or its actual sociopolitical conditions.

In conclusion, the Korean wave itself is not a soft power but one of South Korea’s soft power assets. Possessing such resource does not guarantee its automated actualization of soft power, and refined strategies are crucial for converting these assets into soft power and achieving diplomatic and political goals. In addition, one should always be aware of its caveats. For one, power of attraction generated from culture is not a miraculous remedy that could

virtually change perceptions of a country, as such power would only be truly effective in a long term when that country actually possesses good qualities that demonstrate how it deserves such reputation. Another limitation is that the dissemination of popular culture is highly commercialized. There is a possibility that information communicated through this medium is flawed, and thus does not guarantee the enhancement of actual understanding about the country's culture, history or sociopolitical conditions. That aside, there is no doubt that the Korean wave is the latest cultural sign that audiences are becoming transnational, and it has the potentiality to become an instrument to enhance South Korea's international profile, calm its old enmities with its neighbors, and eventually lead to the establishment of transnational cultural-sharing platform among countries in Asia-Pacific region, given that the flow of culture consumption is maneuvered with wisdom.



CHAPTER FOUR

THAILAND'S SOFT POWER STRATEGY AND THE KOREAN WAVE

This chapter will begin with the discussion about Thailand's current stature in the realm of soft power and the overview of Thai entertainment industry. After that, the author will continue by using the factors leading to the success of the Korean wave analyzed in chapter two of this study to illustrate the similarities and differences between the two cases, then conclude the shortcomings that Thailand must overcome in order to emulate South Korea's success and nurture the potentiality of Thai popular culture as one of its valuable soft power assets.

4.1 Overview of Thailand's Soft Power

In recent years, Thailand also starts to recognize the strategic importance of soft power. Minister of Culture Weera Rojjojanarat, Minister of Sports and Tourism Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul and Minister of Foreign Affairs Don Pramudwinai all have pointed out that soft power could become an important asset to boost Thailand's international profile (Yoon, 2015). However, various issues are placing Thailand at a significant disadvantage. Political instability, immature democracy, human rights violation, sex tourism have projected a negative image of Thailand and prevented the country from being embraced by the world as one of the prosperous and developed nations (Nuttavuthisit, 2007). Comprehensive strategies are thus

needed, both to solve the problems and to place an emphasis on positive aspects in order to suppress negative perceptions. In this vein, efforts to bolster its soft power have been made, both in the aspects of peacekeeping, tourism as well as culture.

In terms of peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance, Thailand has been committed to the cause of United Nations peacekeeping since 1958, and Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has also recently emphasized Thai commitment to the UN peacekeeping mission (Ganjanakhundee, 2016). According to Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations (2015) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2016), over 20,000 police and military personnel have joined over twenty United Nations missions worldwide, including in Cambodia, Timor-Leste, Burundi and Sudan. As of 2015, Thai peacekeepers are currently deployed in four peacekeeping missions, including UNAMID (Darfur), UNMOGIP (Kashmir), MINUSCA (Central African Republic) and UNMIL (Liberia). In development facet, Thailand plays important role as one of the world's leading food producer in global food security program. The country has worked closely with the World Food Program (WFP) to assist many countries, including Haiti, Myanmar, Nepal, Senegal and Sri Lanka.

In tourism front, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) was established since 1960 to be specifically responsible for the promotion of tourism, both domestically and internationally. As of 2016, there are 35 regional offices and 15 overseas offices in different parts of the world (Department of Tourism, 2016b). The government has been using the slogan

“Amazing Thailand” to promote Thailand as holidaymakers’ destination since 1998. From 2013 onwards, Thailand attracts over 20 million tourists a year, total revenue amounted to over \$34 billion, accounted for approximately ten per cent of the country’s GDP. Even during the massive demonstration and military coup d’état in 2014, the number of tourist was still hovering around 24 million, and it skyrocketed to 29.88 million again in 2015 (Department of Tourism, 2016b).

Beautiful and diverse natural sceneries also help to attract foreign productions. More than 400 foreign productions are shot in Thailand each year, and the number continues to increase. As of 2015, 585 foreign productions are filmed in Thailand, total revenue amounted to \$83.65 million, 38.39 per cent increase year-on-year (Department of Tourism, 2016a). China filmmakers, for examples, have their films *Lost in Thailand* (2015) and *Detective Chinatown* (2015) shot in Thailand, each of which generates staggering \$1 million for the country (CRI Thailand, 2016). International blockbusters such as *Star Wars Episode III*, *Alexander* and *The Beach* were also filmed in Thailand. TAT and relevant government agencies also recognize this positive trend and make various efforts to reinforce Thailand’s position as a premiere international film destination by holding various activities such as Thailand International Film Destination Festival (started in 2012-present) and Amazing Thailand Film Challenge that attracts young contestants from various countries around the world to participate in the competition to make the best short film in Thailand (Thailand International Film Destination

Festival, 2016), and also offering monetary incentives such as a cash rebate for foreign production at the rate of 15 per cent of every \$860,000 spent in the country. Additional ten per cent rebate could also be earned if the film promotes a positive image of Thailand, and a further five per cent if it also employs Thai crews (Manager Newspaper, 2016).

Culinary diplomacy, AKA gastrodiplomacy, is another important aspect of Thailand's soft power. The Thai government has formally supported this strategy by launching Thai Kitchen to the World campaign in 2002 to increase the number of Thai restaurants around the globe and to earn international reputations for Thai dishes like Thai style fried noodle (Pad-Thai) and stir-fried soy sauce noodle (Pad-si-eiw). This initiative not only aims to bolster Thailand's international profile, but also to brand a nation as a gastronomy destination and encourage trade and partnership for Thai culinary products. It is reported that the number of Thai restaurants in the United States surged to more than 8,000 in 2003, a year-on-year increase of almost 40 per cent (Ruddy, 2014; University of Southern California, 2015).

In terms of traditional culture, amulets, handicrafts and Thai boxing are very popular among foreigners. Amulets, for example, are highly sought after by the Chinese. It is reported that there are over 3,000 shops that actively trade Thai amulets on the Internet, especially on the popular Chinese e-commerce website TaoBao (Chongkittavorn, 2013). Thai boxing or Muay-Thai enjoys tremendous popularity especially among American and European sport lovers, and many Thai boxing coaches are invited to promote this fun and energetic sports

overseas (Bangkok Post, 2012).

In recent years, popular culture has also shown its potentialities to become soft power assets for Thailand. According to Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand (IEAT), the export value of entertainment industry hovered around \$4.2 billion, accounting for 1.24 per cent of total GDP in 2012. The study conducted by the Office of Industrial Economics (OIE) also predicted that the industry will grow by 8 per cent during the 2013-2017. Thai films, dramas, animations and music have been exported to many countries around the world and won many international awards (Keawmanee, 2014). The export values of entertainment industry in Thailand are illustrated in figure 4-1.

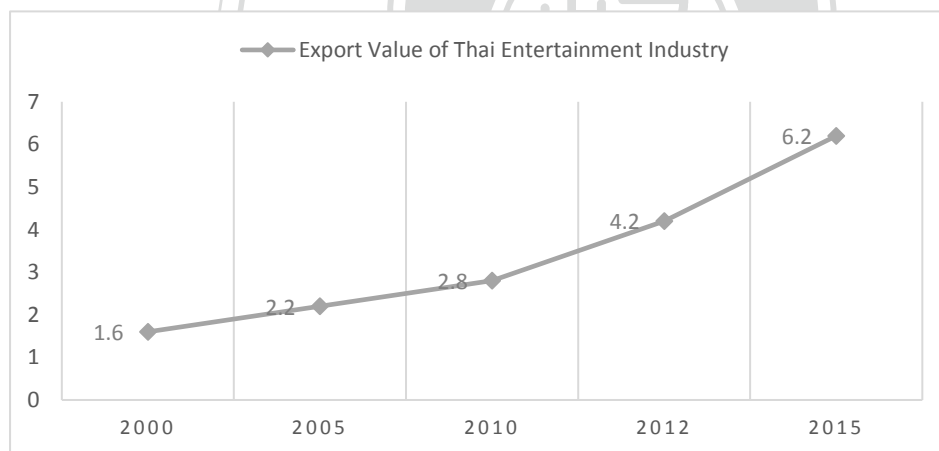


Figure 4-1. The export values of entertainment industry in Thailand in 2000-2015 (billion USD)

Source: Industrial Estate Authority of Thailand (IEAT), http://ce.nesdb.go.th/?mod=report&op=year_report/ (accessed 25 June 2016)

Examples of successful Thai films and Thai renowned directors are Apichart Weerasetapong and his film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Life* that won numerous international awards including the Palme d'Or at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival –the first Asian film to win the award since 1997. The film was also screened in more than 50 countries around

the world. His other film *Sud Pralad (Tropical Malady)* also won the Jury Prize at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. Arthid Assarat's *Wonderful Town* was invited to 50 film festivals and won various awards including the New Currents Award at Pusan International Film Festival 2007 (Chaiworaporn, 2014). Thai martial arts films *Tom-Yum-Goong* and *Ong-Bak I and II* also enjoyed success in the U.S. and Europe. Coming-of-age drama *Hormones the Series* and romantic-comedy drama *Kiss Me* also became a massive hit among Indonesian teenagers (Chongkittavorn, 2014). It could be said that the industry has demonstrated its capabilities to grow and become the 'Thai Wind' or 'T-Wind'—the term coined by Thai media to indicate the growing popularity of Thai films, dramas, music and idols in Asia (Jirathikorn, 2015; Manager Newspaper, 2012; Thai Rath, 2016a)

4.2 Overview of Thailand's Entertainment Industry

As discussed above, popular culture is one of the valuable assets with strong potentiality to become Thailand's soft power resources. According to IEAT, among the five categories of rapidly-growing entertainment industry—i.e. film, animation, broadcasting, games, music and publishing—film industry shows great potentiality as export goods, broadcasting industry is also promising as numerous dramas are being exported to various countries in Asia-Pacific region, and music industry is one of the sectors with highest growth rate (Chaiworaporn, 2014). In this section, current stature of film, broadcasting and music industry will be discussed to provide an overview of Thai entertainment sector in comparison to its counterpart in South

Korea.

4.2.1 Film industry in Thailand. According to Ministry of Commerce, in 2012 Thai film industry generated the total income of \$730 million, with export sales accounted for \$56 million (Keawmanee, 2014). Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP) predicted that the export sales will see 10 per cent growth during the year 2013-2016, with ASEAN countries, East Asian countries, Europe and the United States as major importers (Chaiworaporn, 2014).

Major commercial production studios in Thailand are Sahamongkol Film, GDH 559 (formerly GTH), M-39, Kantana Motion Pictures, Phranakorn Film, Logo Motion Pictures, and Five Stars Pictures. These studios mainly produce films for local audiences, but in recent years they have also expanded into international market. Most films produced by these studios are highly commercialized, and the most popular genres include action, horror, and romantic-comedy (Chaiworaporn, 2014; Potipan & Worrawutkeerakul, 2010).

Four major importers of Thai commercial films in the Asia-Pacific region include Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Taiwan. Each market has different tastes and preferences. Indonesia imports almost every Thai film from major studios, not only action and horror films which are two most popular ones among Asian audiences, but also adventure, romance, drama and comedy. The Singaporean's favorite Thai films are either horror or action-thriller, i.e. *The Coffin*, *Shutter*, *Peemak* and *Tom-Yum-Goong*, and the country import around ten films from

Thailand each year. Malaysia is another important market as it imports 5-13 films a year. Similar to Singaporean and most Asian neighbors, horror and action-thriller are money-makers in Malaysian films. Taiwan is arguably the most important market in East Asia for Thai films as it imports 7-17 Thai films a year, the Taiwanese are not only interested in horror films, they also like romantic-comedy films about teenagers' love story such as *Succeed* and *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*. The latter has also become a massive hit, and the main actor Mario Maurer has gained a certain amount of fan base in Taiwan. What is noteworthy is that *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* has also become a huge success in the Philippines and China, even when these two countries rarely consume Thai films. China is in fact a huge market due to its size and population; however, its government has implemented a highly protective policy limiting the number of foreign films that could be imported each year. Up until 2014, only three Thai films have made it through strict censorship and quota policy, i.e. *Crazy Little Thing Called Love*, *The Red Eagle*, and *Tom-Yum-Goong* (Chaiworaporn, 2014; Somboonkerd, 2009).

Another type of production studio is called “arthouse independent” (Chaiworaporn, 2014, p. 9). This group of producers mostly produce art films aiming at niche market, and they have won numerous awards from internationally-renowned film festivals worldwide. Examples of successful works from these independent producers include *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, *Wonderful Town*, *Mundane History* and *Headshot*. The first three was screened in more than 50 film festivals globally, while the last one was shown in 35 film festivals

worldwide. The works from independent arthouse barely profit from export sales due to the lack of exclusive sales agents to facilitate their international distribution. Therefore, their revenues mostly came from the screening fee received upon showing in various film festivals (Somboonkerd, 2009).

Another important aspect of film industry in Thailand is the country's potentiality to become the filming hub of Asia. Not only because of the beautiful and unique natural sceneries, but also because Thai film industry is capable of providing high-quality and reasonably-priced services for outsourcing production, post production, as well as location shooting. Foreign blockbusters that were filmed in Thailand include *Lost in Thailand* (China), *The Impossible* (USA), and *Hangover II* (USA) (CRI Thailand, 2016; Keawmanee, 2014). These foreign productions not only generate revenue, but also help to boost the popularity of Thailand as a travel destination. Chinese film *Lost in Thailand* (2012), for example, has a spillover effect in increasing the number of Chinese holidaymakers travelling to Chiang Mai province, one of its shooting locations. After the film was aired, Chiang Mai saw five-fold increase in the number of foreign visitors (Khaosa-ard, 2013), and the number of Chinese visitors in Thailand surged from 2.7 million in 2012 to 4.6 million in 2013. In fact, the number of Chinese tourists has skyrocketed over the last few decades as illustrated in figure 4-2.

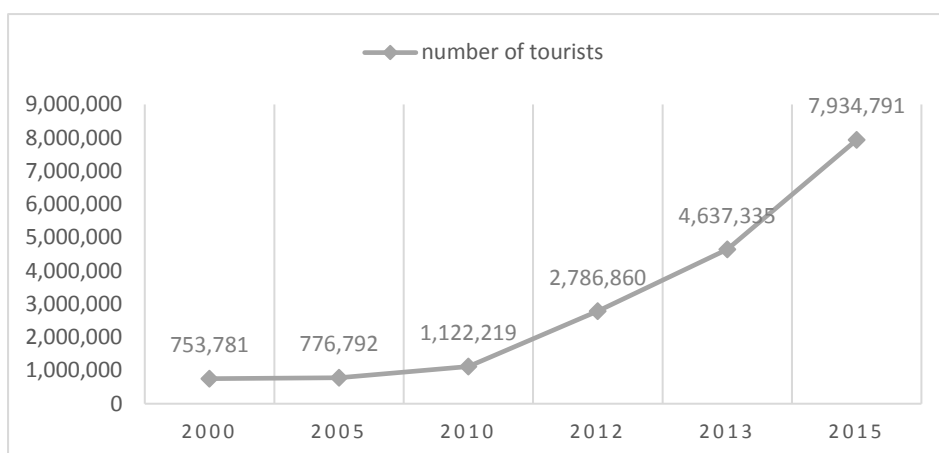


Figure 4-2. The number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand in 2000-2015

Source: Department of Tourism of Kingdom of Thailand, <http://www.tourism.go.th/home/details/> (accessed 25 June 2016)

According to her interview with a reporter from Thailand's leading newspaper *Thairath*, Tong Nattaporn Kaljaruek, deputy managing directors of Kantana Motion Pictures and one of the biggest film studios in Thailand, expressed her optimism about the future of Thai film in overseas market. According to Kaljaruek, horror and action films are the two most common genres for foreign audiences, although they are also interested in other alternative themes such as drama-thriller and romantic-comedy. However, as Thai film producers position themselves as ASEAN's horror film experts, it can also become Achilles' heels of the industry, as many countries such as Indonesia and China have imposed restrictions for films relating to superstitious belief such as ghost and supernatural beings, either for religious or political reasons (Thai Rath, 2016b).

Jantima Amy Liawsirikun, the producer and managing director of M-39, another major player in Thai film industry, said that three major obstacles of exporting Thai film is cultural barrier, fluctuated production quality and a lack of cooperation among stakeholders in the

industry. Even though the cultural barrier among ASEAN countries is relatively low, but producers must remain aware of trivial detail that might not be comprehensible for foreign audiences. For example, one scene in *Jom-Kha-Mung-Wej (Necromancer)*, action-thriller/horror film which saw a tremendous success in Malaysia market in 2005, showed two wooden dolls tied together with a string. Thai audience would know from the first glance that it is a form of witchcraft, while the Malaysian audience were bewildered. Production quality is similarly something to be cautious about, even though the quality of Thai films is regarded as relatively high in ASEAN market, but overseas importers usually complain about the quality drops, and neighboring countries are also making an effort to catch up. This signals that Thai producers need to deepen their understanding of foreign markets and unceasingly work to improve the production quality. Another important issue is lack of cooperation among Thai production companies. As each studio competes with one another, knowledge about export channels is considered a trade secret. The knowledge is not shared, nor are the stakeholders willing to cooperate in breaking into the overseas market (Chaiworaporn, 2014; Thai Rath, 2016b).

4.2.2 Broadcasting industry in Thailand. Similar to the case of South Korea, the television program with the highest viewership rating in Thailand has always been television dramas, or “La-korn” in Thai. Thai soap operas are also broadcasted every night during prime time, and every channel competes in “drama wars” to win viewers’ attention and ratings.

However, the Thai government imposes a strict censorship on films and dramas broadcasted in the country. By the virtue of the Motion Pictures and Video Act B.E. 2551 (2008), the Board of Censors under the Ministry of Culture holds the power to cut, ban or censor dramas that are perceived as unappropriated at its sole discretion (Karak-kamarst, 2011; Ministry of Culture, 2008). For example, scenes showing the consumption of alcoholic drinks, nudity, or sexually suggestive mannerism and scenes that might offend religious sensibilities or have detrimental effects to national culture and tradition could be censored.

Major importers of Thai broadcasting program, drama in particular, are China and ASEAN countries. Thailand began to export broadcasting content to China in 1999, but it only became popular after the television *Leut Kuttayah (Destiny of a Princess)* from Exact Production Company was broadcasted in Anhui television in 2007. The romance historical drama about runaway princess and lovers from different social classes was a huge success and it opened a window of opportunity for other Thai dramas such as *Jaew Jai Rai Kub Khun Chai Taewada (The Suspicious Housekeeper)*, *Dok Ruk Rim Thang (Flower of Love)* and *Song Kram Nangfah (Battle of Angel)* to be exposed and similarly became a success (Khaosa-ard, 2013). Pong Nawat, a leading actor in *Song Kram Nangfah* has become a rising star in China, he was even invited to act in Chinese drama *Jewelry Love (愛情珠寶)* in 2014-2015, and the drama got the highest viewership rating in Shanghai. He was also granted the most popular actor award from Anhui television for two consecutive years during 2014-15 (Thai Rath, 2016d;

Viparanusart, 2013).

As of 2012, Thai dramas were viewed 59.7 million times on Youku.com, one of China's biggest online streaming sites, while K-dramas were viewed 510.8 million times and Chinese dramas were viewed 2.3 billion times. Although the popularity of Thai dramas has yet to catch up with those from South Korea, their viewership is increasing, and the development of Internet and streaming service has facilitated their distribution (Khaosa-ard, 2013). Another supporting factor is the fact that the Chinese government is trying to reduce the air time of Korean dramas to decrease their influence among local audiences, not only due to the existence of anti-Korean wave sentiments, but also because Thai dramas are less politically-relevant (South Korea has faced some backlashes due to the controversy over the history of Goguryeo arising from Korean historical drama *Jumong* in 2006) and are cheaper in comparison with those from South Korea (Lai, 2006). As of 2015, prices of Thai dramas range from \$2,000-5,000 per episode, two to four times lower than Korean dramas which are normally sold for \$10,000-20,000 per episode. In fact, popular Korean dramas such as *The Heirs* and *Fated to Love You* are now sold for \$30,000-120,000 per episode, making some overseas market start to shy away from purchasing from South Korea (Potipan & Worrawutteeakul, 2010; Yonhap News, 2014).

Interestingly, the reasons why Chinese audiences are glued to Thai dramas are somewhat different. According to Khaosa-ard (2016), Chinese audiences are fascinated by the exoticness of Thai culture, from Thai-style greeting AKA "Wai", the beautiful natural sceneries,

to the delicate and magnificent Thai traditional dresses and architecture. Intensity as well as simplicity of the Thai soap operas' storylines are also important factors. While Korean drama tends to be subtle and complicated, usually related to memory or childhood past, Thai soap opera is simple but emotionally engaging, it utilizes good-always-wins-over-evil rationale and classic formula of melodrama — a simple plot with only one main conflict and various climatic moments, focusing on engaging the audience emotionally without requiring them to engage in serious thinking. However, the attractiveness of actors and actresses still plays important role in creating fandom.

In 2015, Thailand received 29.88 million international tourists, with Chinese nationals accounted for over a quarter of the total (7.9 million). The number skyrocketed from a mere 1.12 million in 2010, to 4.7 million in 2013, then 7.9 million in 2015, making the Chinese holidaymakers the major source of growth in Thailand's tourism. Thanks to this strong demand, Thailand is now among the top ten in the world's most popular destinations ranking, measured by the number of foreign visitors (Department of Tourism, 2016b). According to the study conducted by Khaosa-ard (2016), this increase is correlated to the popularity of Thai television dramas and films in China such as *Song Kram Nangfah* that was rebroadcasted four times on Anhui satellite channel during the 2007-08 due to its phenomenal popularity. In 2010, five Thai dramas were broadcasted on Anhui channel, and the number surged to ten in 2011. CCTV 8, Zhejiang Television, Jiangxi Television, Hebei Television and Yunnan television also offered

warm welcoming to Thai dramas, as each episode can be sold for \$4,000-5,000, making it one of the biggest export markets for broadcasting program (Prachachat Turakij, 2016).

With the expansion of media and entertainment market in ASEAN countries, various production companies in Thailand have also started to export their entertainment contents. Similar to Korean dramas and its audiences in different countries, each ASEAN member has different preferences for their Thai drama consumption. Cambodian television viewers love intense drama with a lot of face-slapping catfight and melodramatic cliché such as *Samee Tee Tra (The Marked Husband)*, *Raeng Ngao (Revenge of the Shadow)*. They also prefer dramas that are related to karmic law since it is a shared value among Buddhist believers. Vietnamese audiences seek alternative options to substitute melancholy and subtle Korean dramas that have long dominated the market and take a liking to straightforwardness and intensity of Thai dramas. Myanmar, Malaysian, and Indonesian audiences merely began to open up to Thai dramas in recent years, and they are particularly interested in supernatural/horror dramas (Jirathikorn, 2015). One possible explanation of this consumption behavior, according to Associate Professor Dr. Ubonrat Siriyuwasak, Thai scholar who specialized in Mass Communications Studies, is that supernatural elements are something that could not be explained with scientific law nor controlled by the authority, it thus functions as an escapist fantasy in a repressive society (Prachatham, 2016).

It has been argued that Thai broadcasting industry possesses a potentiality to grow

rapidly and become one among the major content providers in ASEAN, partly due to an intense competition among domestic television channels that are triggered by the launch of digital television transmissions in the late April of 2014. The launch leads to a fierce contestation for viewership between existing terrestrial stations including Channel 3, 5, 7, 9, NBT and TPBS and the new 24 digital channels. Each station has to come up with interesting programs to capture the audience's attention and increase viewership rating. The market has significantly expanded with approximately 14 – 16 per cent growth during 2014-2015, and the quality of television dramas, which is the category with highest viewership among local audiences, has also increased significantly and further enhanced its potentiality as export goods (Keawmanee, 2014).

In addition, the new media consumption trend with most teens and working adults switching to mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets has also pushed the television operators to adopt new strategies and technology to maintain and expand their viewership. Most channels offer free live streaming of their programs on their websites and mobile applications, providing more platforms for foreign audiences to watch and keep track on their favorite programs. It could be said that the introduction of new technology and digital television transmission have dramatically altered television business landscape, improving the content quality and international competitiveness of Thai broadcasting programs (Keawmanee, 2014; Thai Rath, 2016a).

Similar to the South Korea's case, SNS and IT advancement has also helped to speed up the distribution and popularity of Thai dramas. Audiences in foreign countries can now watch T-dramas and films or listen to Thai music almost simultaneously with local audiences. The culture of fandom in which the existing drama fans voluntarily help to promote dramas of their likings by translating relating information and subtitles also helps to facilitate content distribution and dissolve language barrier (Jirathikorn, 2015; Lertwiram, 2011)

Major issues for Thai broadcasting industry are relatively similar to those of film sector—i.e. lack of cooperation, cultural barrier, and fluctuated production quality. Pont Nipol Peawnen the production director at One Enterprise, one of leading drama production companies in Thailand, stated that different countries require different model of cooperation. Thai drama industry has to be optimized and customized so that it could match the regulations and demands of each market. Indonesia, for example, imposes various measures in case of drama co-production due to the country's religious belief –i.e. ghastly scene with gun fight and a lot of blood, scene with supernatural beings, and drama portraying transgender are not allowed. More time and resources are thus required to develop an insight about each overseas market. He also pointed out that private sector has sufficient connections and motivations to export its products, but if Thailand is aspired to catch up with South Korea, the government needs to implement popular culture promotion as one of its national agenda and provides more funds and resources to enhance the sector's international competitiveness and production quality (Thai Rath,

2016d). Production companies in South Korea spend more than \$5 million per Korean drama, four times higher than that of Thai drama, this is because the former is provided with sufficient support and thus is capable of breaking into large markets (Potipan & Worrawutteearakul, 2010).

4.2.3 Music industry in Thailand. Thai music has yet to enjoy the popularity that film and broadcasting industries have experienced. Over a decade ago a handful of Thai artists such as *Palmy* and *China Dolls* had established themselves in Taiwan and Japanese markets, there were even a Japanese independent band called *Hanuman* that frequently made a cover of Thai pop song. In 2007 *August* band that was featured in a famous Thai film *The Love of Siam* became famous in China and was invited to perform there. However, the number of Thai pop songs' listeners in foreign markets is not huge. Not only because there is no systemic plan to promote Thai songs overseas, but also due to language and cultural barriers, which present a significant obstacle for the music industry. Unlike the highly hybridized K-pop that is customized for overseas audiences, Thai music is primarily produced to meet the demand of local audiences. If Thai music aims to break into foreign markets, it might have to begin from countries with low cultural and language barriers such as Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia (Thai Rath, 2016c).

Nevertheless, in recent years efforts have been made and began to bear some fruits. GMM International, Thailand's leading entertainment company with over 80 per cent of market share in domestic music market, is utilizing the growing community of Internet users and

Youtubers to increase its Internet presence. As of 2016, GMM Grammy Official, the company's official YouTube has accumulated 6.25 billion hits, ranked number one in Thailand and 15th worldwide. From the 2010s onwards, the music videos produced by the company are embedded with Chinese, Japanese and English subtitles, signaling its readiness to enter international markets (Brand Buffet, 2016)

As Thai music industry is looking into effective approaches to penetrate into overseas market, it could be useful to start by cooperating with film and drama producers that have already enjoyed a certain level of success overseas and adopting applicable elements from export-oriented approach of Korean entertainment industry to optimize its overall strategies for foreign markets.

4.3 Implications of Korean Wave Phenomenon for Thailand's Soft Power Strategy

According to Elcano Global Presence Report, Thailand scores 71.8 value points (26th globally) for global presence, and ranks 31st for its soft power presence, while South Korea ranks 15th with 151.3 value points in terms of global presence and ranks 13th for its soft presence (Olivie & Gracia, 2016, p. 53). As for the size and quality of entertainment industry, the comparison can be roughly conducted using the market value and the number of prestigious award granted to each country. Cultural exports from Korean Wave totaled \$7.03 billion in 2015, while Thai cultural exports hovered around \$4.2 billion in the same year. South Korea has so far won 12 international awards in major film festivals since 2000 (i.e. Cannes

International Film Festival, Berlin International Film Festival, Venice Film Festival and Moscow International Film Festival), while Thailand has won two awards in the Festival de Cannes Parc & Hwy-Chang, (2013). The gap between the two is significant, and thus makes it important for Thailand to understand what advantages and what shortcomings it has in comparison to South Korea. As only in this manner that Thailand could effectively emulate their success.

The success factors of the Korean wave previously discussed in chapter two will be applied and compared with the data from section two of this chapter to illustrate the differences and similarities between South Korea and Thailand. After that, the latter's capabilities in leveraging popular culture as one of its soft power assets will be analyzed.

4.3.1 Success factors comparison: the Korean wave versus the Thai wind. Six major factors, including role of the government, role of conglomerates and cultural industry, competitiveness of cultural products, role of SNS and social media, cultural proximity and favorable sociopolitical and economic environment of Thailand and South Korea will be discussed and compared as follows:

4.3.1.1 Role of the government. The popularity of Thai pop culture is unexpected both for private and government sectors, as Thai content providers merely try to break into overseas markets to increase their chance of survival in this highly competitive industry but have not expected it to become a huge success. Thus no one knows or plans for what lies in the future

of Thai popular culture exports. South Korea, on the contrary, had also been surprised by its unprecedented success, but the government then promptly reacted and started to categorize culture as export goods with a high potentiality to bring about economic and cultural impacts. Even though the role of South Korea government is not always favorably evaluated by scholars and involved parties, it could not be denied that their attempts to support the exportation of cultural products, whether a traditional or popular ones, have contributed to the success of the Korean wave at least to a certain extent. Thus, the Thai government can learn from South Korea's experience and develop insights as to provide the optimized support for entertainment industry.

As it could be observed from the discussion above, cultural industry in Thailand still faces various language and culture barriers, as well as the challenges presented by the lack of formal, streamlined distributors of entertainment contents and the lack of information about overseas market. In this vein, the Thai government could start from providing small-scale measures to facilitate the exportation of entertainment contents, for examples providing post-production service and foreign language subtitles and dubbing, offering information related to the overseas market, and organizing the international television program market—the same method as implemented by the South Korean government.

Another thing that Thailand could learn from Korea's success is the impact of freedom of expression and creation. As discussed in previous chapter that freedom helps to foster

creativity and diversity in cultural products, therefore, if the Thai government allows more spaces for artistic freedom, it could lead to the betterment of the overall cultural production quality.

4.3.1.2 Role of the conglomerates and cultural industry. The most obvious difference between Thailand and South Korea is economic structure. Thailand does not have huge chaebols to fund and provide business know-how for the domestic entertainment industry. However, recent trends are signaling that positive changes are possible. First is the unprecedented success of Thai films and dramas overseas that motivates content providers to begin establishing connections with overseas distributors and conducting market research about foreign audiences. Second is the introduction of digital television transmission in 2014 that has brought many new players into the entertainment industry, leading to a more intense competition among content providers and improvement in production quality and diversity. This situation is relatively similar to the development of South Korea's television industry in 1990s, when the entrance of new networks helped to enhance the quality of K-dramas.

However, efforts made separately by each individual private company that utilizes their own approaches in studying and penetrating into overseas market could only result in scattered and swift popularity of Thai popular culture. If the Thai wind is to sustain in a long term, it is necessary for relevant parties to recognize the importance of unity, creating a consistent and unique "Thai Brand" so the products would be recognized when exporting to international

market. If these potentialities are maneuvered wisely with a far-sighted vision and cooperation among the relevant stakeholders, including the investment incentives and facilitation on the government side as in Korea's case, the overall quality of Thai entertainment industry would be enhanced.

4.3.1.3 Competitiveness of cultural products. As discussed in previous section, entertainment content from Thailand is considered high-quality vis-a-vis its ASEAN counterparts. However, the quality fluctuates and the country is still far from catching up with South Korea both in terms of production quality, business know-how and market research, as Thai entertainment industry is relatively smaller and the amount of fund is insufficient. However, Thai entertainment industry has shown its capabilities not only by winning various international awards but also by capturing the heart of ASEAN and Chinese audiences even with these limited knowledge and resources. Considering this, if the government could implement cultural promotion policies to incentivize more investment and facilitate overseas promotion in the same vein with the South Korea case, it could largely benefit the industry. In addition, the related sector should invest more in cultivating talents and studying overseas market, as it could significantly help to boost the international competitiveness of Thai cultural goods.

4.3.1.4 Role of social networking service and social media. The technological advancement has similar effects in Thailand and South Korea, SNS and Internet are platforms

that foster the culture of fandom and diversify the content distribution channels, making it easier for cultural content to reach the wider audiences in a short period of time. Although it should be noted that South Korea could fully reap a benefit from this platform since its entertainment industry including K-pop is visual-oriented and the country has one of the best Internet infrastructures in the world. Thus, if Thailand aims to maximize the opportunities offered by this new consumption trend, the better IT infrastructures as well as computer graphic capabilities and talents are also of vital importance.

4.3.1.5 Cultural proximity. The major recipient countries of the Thai wind are different with those of the Korean wave. The latter is more fortunate in a sense that it shares various common values with major markets that possess a significant amount of purchasing power such as Japan, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Thailand, on the other hand, mainly exports to ASEAN countries. Even though many members such as Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia are relatively close in terms of common values and shared culture, their purchasing power is lower and there are still variations in terms of their tastes and preferences. Other countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia are significantly different from Thailand in terms of language, culture and lifestyle, the exporter not only has to face language and cultural barriers, but also regulations and religious taboos that are a highly sensitive issue.

China is also one of the major importers of Thai entertainment contents. However, the element that attracts Chinese audience to consume Thai pop culture is not the cultural proximity

but the exoticness of the unknown. Surprisingly, this presents another opportunity to explore and ponder, as displaying and exporting the unique “Thainess” could also be an alternative, which perhaps suits Thai cultural goods better than the use of common and familiar elements as in the case of South Korea. However, Thai content providers should always remain sensitive and informative about the sociopolitical and cultural context of the recipient countries.

4.3.1.6 Favorable sociopolitical and economic environment. While South Korea benefited from a market liberalization in the late 1990s, Thailand could also benefit from the establishment of ASEAN community in 2015. Its launch opens a window of opportunity for Thailand that has already paved several foundation for its cultural exports in ASEAN member countries to spearhead the exportation of its popular entertainment content and to fully enjoy the ‘first-mover’ advantage in this emerging market, in the same vein as the case of South Korea. In addition, as one of the world’s largest markets China and a potential market such as Vietnam are looking for other alternatives to substitute the Korean cultural goods, Thailand is also capable of filling this gap, given that the relevant sectors have carefully studied the consumers’ particularities and constantly enhanced overall production quality.

4.4 Potentialities and Limitations of the Thai wind as Soft Power Resources

As it could be observed, the Thai wind is a relatively new phenomenon and it has yet to fully formed or created visible impacts. There are various obstacles and shortcomings, it is thus important for the Thai government and related sectors to learn from trails and errors

presented in the Korean wave case and apply the body of knowledge in the context of Thailand.

That aside, key knowledge derived from this study could be concluded as follows:

Firstly, the efforts made both by government and private sector should be systemized. It could be seen that the Thai government has come up with various initiatives and approaches, such as Amazing Thailand, Thailand International Film Destination Festival, Thai Kitchen to the World, and cash rebates for foreign production, while the private sector has also found their own courses in foreign markets and acted separately in exporting their contents. If the Thai wind is to make a spillover effect as seen in the case of South Korea where the popularity of its popular culture leads to the increasing consumption of “Korean brand”, it is necessary to create a consistent and unique “Thai brand”. All relevant parties should be united under the same vision, aim for the similar goal, and promote the image of the country in a consistent way. For examples, TAT can cooperate with Thailand Film Office and production companies in the process of choosing filming locations and promoting film-induced tourism. MICT can cooperate with relevant parties to build all-in-one online platform for watching or browsing for Thai entertainment content with English and Chinese dubbing, subtitles and descriptions, and much more.

Secondly, governmental support is vital. While the government’s overt efforts to export the nation’s culture could result in backlashes, it is still vital for the government to make cultural export a national agenda and provide necessary assistances especially in terms of

allowing more spaces for artistic freedom in content creation, offering information about overseas market, streamlining exporting processes, providing post-production services and offering financial supports. Incentives and facilitation provided by the government could potentially help to alleviate the problems of cultural and language barriers as well as fluctuated production quality that are the imminent obstacles for the players in entertainment industry.

Thirdly, it is important to be aware of limitations of popular culture in improving the perceptions of the country. Not only because popular culture is usually not a complete representation of a country's sociopolitical and cultural environment, but also because the message conveyed through this medium could be distorted or easily misunderstood. Thai dramas, for example, usually make overt use of melodramatic cliché and intense acting—all-out face-slapping catfight and comical self-ridicule transgender are indispensable. These misrepresentations are entertaining for audiences, but they could form a distorted image of Thai society and culture as a whole. Therefore, when used without caution, it could also become a double-edged sword.

Most importantly, power of attraction generated from culture is not a miraculous remedy that could change virtually any negative images a country might have. Soft power would only be effective when a negative side of a country has truly been changed. Political instability, immature democracy, human rights violation, sex tourism—the actual reform to solve these issues is still required to establish sufficient credibility to develop a long-lasting

appeal of soft power.

Obviously, the Thai wind itself has yet to be developed to that point that it could generate soft power and achieve diplomatic or foreign goals, but if it is maneuvered carefully and wisely, there is a possibility that the Thai wind could similarly lead to a mass consumption of symbols and ideas relating to Thailand, and thereby resulting in the formation of positive feelings and perception of the country among the audiences in recipient countries.



CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Research Findings

The unprecedented success of the Korean wave has inspired many scholars to understand the phenomenon as well as to gauge the possibility to emulate such success in other countries. This research has thus attempted to answer the following questions: firstly, what factors lead to the emergence of the Korean wave and its success; secondly, how the Korean wave is relevant to South Korea's soft power; and thirdly, would it be feasible for Thailand to adapt South Korea's model to expand its soft power.

For the first question, this study has systematically analyzed the emergence of the phenomenon by observing the sociopolitical and cultural environment leading to the changes and enhancement of South Korea's film, broadcasting and music industries, then continuing by looking at internal and external factors that make Korean cultural products become popular among consumers in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Korean wave was emerging during the processes of democratization, media liberalization, economic deregulation and globalization in the late 1990s, and these major changes have positively influenced Korean entertainment industry. In political facet, the switch from authoritarian regime to the democratic one has created the freer and more optimistic

atmosphere that enabled a long-repressed broadcasting industry to express itself more freely and create more diverse, better-quality cultural artifacts. In addition, since South Korea's entertainment industry was relatively early in breaking away from the government's tight control, it could enjoy the first-mover advantage in the expanding Asian media markets, making it easier for Korean cultural contents to reach overseas audiences.

In cultural facet, the rapid influx of foreign entertainment contents and the process of globalization in South Korea have led to the cultural hybridization, giving birth to a creative form of hybridized culture that retains local identities while at the same time sustains in the global context. Within this cultural landscape, new vitality has been added to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of Korean cultural products in overseas market, as this unique form of cultural contents crafted from the skillful blending of Western modernity and Asian tradition is highly relevant to the audiences in the Korean wave recipient countries.

In economic term, after South Korea was democratized in the late 1980s, the government had to liberate its economy and bring about various changes to fulfill the people's thirst for more freedom of expression. Apart from demolishing the oligopoly of state-owned broadcasting networks by entering the new era of a commercial, multi-channel television networks, the country was also pressured to open their media market to foreign films and broadcasting programs. Subsequently, relatively competitive domestic audiovisual industry was cultivated and later equipped with business know-hows and export-oriented strategies

introduced by the chaebols.

By the 1990s, The Korean entertainment industry has been transformed, the overall quality of entertainment contents has been improved, the sophisticated marketing and business know-how has been adopted, and the sources of capital have been diversified, making it possible for Korean television dramas, films and pop music to successfully penetrate into overseas markets.

As for factors leading to the success of the Korean wave, six internal and external factors should be examined with a holistic approach in order to construct the overall picture of structural and contextual dynamics behind this phenomenal cultural flow.

The three internal factors including role of the government, role of conglomerates and cultural industry, and competitiveness of cultural products shape the favorable environment for Korean film, broadcasting and music industries to prosper and become sufficiently competitive for overseas markets. The government's cultural export promotion policies, though usually unfavorably evaluated for its latency and inadequateness, have incentivized new players to invest in entertainment industry and facilitated the exportation of Korean cultural goods. The conglomerates' investment in audiovisual industries during the 1990s-2000s has laid a foundation for South Korea media renaissance, for chaebols not only provided financial supports, but also transplanted their advanced business know-how to Korean audiovisual industry and replaced tradition-oriented business practices with a modern, commercial-oriented

infrastructure. Even after their support was discontinued, the technical and business sophistication stemming from that era brought the potentiality of audiovisual industry as imported goods to light, and incentivized the venture capitalists to fill the void and pour in more capital to produce competitive, high-quality films and dramas. These development underlies the formation of third internal factor, which is the competitiveness of Korean cultural products. This ability to establish their own space in competitive international markets roots in the cultural industry's ingenuity in adopting sophisticated production, marketing and distributing strategies to create high-quality cultural goods with relatively reasonable prices that are appealing for overseas audience.

External factors function as a contextual dynamic that opens up the opportunities for the dissemination of Korean cultural goods. SNS and IT advancement facilitate the distribution and spur the culture of fandom, while cultural proximity enhances the audience-content relevancy and favorable socioeconomic environment allows the freer trade and communication. Against these backdrops, favorable conditions for the successful distribution of Korean wave cultural contents have formed.

The second question is the relationship between the Korean wave and soft power. Upon observing the impacts of the Korean wave in five major importers of Korean pop culture goods, i.e. Japan, China and Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, it could be concluded that the consumption of the Korean wave goods tends to increase the attractiveness of as well as

the positive sentiments towards the country of origin. The exposition to Korean cultural products not only helps to foster goodwill and interest, but also ignites favorability and curiosity about other aspects of the country i.e. language and tourism. More importantly, since the distribution of Korean cultural goods is usually accompanied by the spread of Korean standards, there is a possibility that consumers in the recipient countries would also accept the Korean values as positive. This will create a favorable environment for both Korean expats and Korean businesses, and an increase in the Koreans and local citizens' interactions would perhaps lead to the expansion of invisible influence of South Korea.

From this perspective, the Korean wave itself is not a soft power but one of South Korea's soft power assets. While possessing such resource does not guarantee its automated actualization of soft power, refined strategies can facilitate that conversion of these assets into soft power. In addition, one should always be aware of its caveats. For example, the tendency that cultural attraction could affect geopolitics or national governments is relatively low. It is not very likely that cultural attractiveness could solve problems arising from nationalism and material economic interests. Another limitation is that the dissemination of popular culture is highly commercialized. There is a possibility that information communicated through this medium is flawed, and thus does not guarantee the enhancement of actual understanding about the country's culture, history or sociopolitical conditions.

That aside, there is no doubt that the Korean wave is the latest cultural sign that

audiences are becoming transnational, and it has the potentiality to become an instrument to enhance South Korea's international profile, given that the flow of culture consumption is wisely maneuvered.

In terms of the possibility to apply South Korea's model in Thailand, while it is true that Thailand is a country known for paradisiacal sceneries, scrumptious cuisine, unique culture, and relatively strong entertainment industry, it remains that the country must overcome various obstacles to emulate the success of South Korea. While certain factors such as the development of SNS and IT technology, changing consumers' behavior and a more competitive domestic entertainment market act favorably for the exportation of Thai cultural goods overseas, other factors such as governmental support, cooperation among players in Thai entertainment industry, and cultural proximity between Thailand and recipient countries remain major issues for the successful international dissemination of Thai popular culture. It is thus important for Thailand to understand what advantages and shortcomings it has in comparison to South Korea, as only in this manner that it could effectively devise its own soft power strategies that are applicable in the country's context.

5.2 Implications for Thailand's Soft Power Strategy

There are various obstacles for Thailand to emulate the success of the Korean wave, it is thus important for the Thai government and related sectors to learn from trials and errors presented in South Korea's case, develop comprehensive understanding of strengths and

weaknesses of domestic cultural industry, and devise their own strategies to enhance Thailand's soft power through the systemic promotion of popular culture. Some examples of such applications are:

Firstly, the efforts made by the Thai government and private sectors should be systemized to create a consistent "Thai brand". Inconsistent approaches employed separately by each agency in studying and penetrating into overseas market could only result in scattered and short-lived popularity of Thai popular culture. In order to create a long-lasting spillover effect in the same vein with South Korea's case, it is necessary for all relevant parties to be united under the same strategies and visions. For examples, TAT can cooperate with Thailand Film Office and private production companies in the process of choosing filming locations and promoting film-induced tourism. MICT can cooperate with relevant parties to build all-in-one online platform for watching or browsing for Thai entertainment content with English and Chinese dubbing, subtitles and descriptions, et cetera.

Secondly, governmental support is vital. While the government's overt efforts to export the nation's culture could result in backlashes as evident in the anti-Korean wave cases, it is still vital for the government to make cultural export a national agenda and provide necessary assistances especially in terms of allowing more spaces for artistic freedom in content creation, offering information about overseas market, streamlining exporting processes, providing post-production services and offering financial supports.

Thirdly, it is important to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of Thai entertainment contents as well as the particularities of each overseas market. For examples, while Thai production companies have established themselves as horror films and dramas experts, it could become Achilles's heels for this genre of entertainment is sensitive to political and religious barriers; Chinese audiences are attracted to the exotic and unique "Thainess", whereas Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar prefer the cultural goods that present shared values and tradition. Therefore, both the government and private sectors should always be well-informed and well-planned in executing cultural dissemination overseas.

Fourthly, it is important to be aware of limitations of popular culture in improving the perceptions of the country. Not only because popular culture is usually not a complete representation of a country's sociopolitical and cultural environment, but also because the message conveyed through this medium could easily be misunderstood.

Most importantly, it is vital to acknowledge that soft power would only be effective when a negative side of a country has truly been changed. Political instability, immature democracy, human rights violation, sex tourism—the actual reform to solve these issues is still required to establish sufficient credibility to develop a long-lasting appeal of soft power.

Obviously, the overseas dissemination of Thai popular culture has yet to be developed to that point that it could generate soft power and achieve diplomatic or foreign goals, but if it is maneuvered wisely, there is a possibility that the successful promotion of Thai popular

culture could similarly lead to a mass consumption of symbols and ideas relating to Thailand, and thereby resulting in the formation of positive feelings and perception of the country among the audiences in recipient countries.

5.3 Suggestions for Future Research

This study has critically and systemically reviewed important existing studies in order to provide the overall picture of the structural and contextual dynamics in which the Korean wave phenomenon has developed, sustained and succeeded and to link the dissemination of South Korea's popular culture with its potentiality as soft power assets capable of expanding the country's sphere of influence in the Asia-pacific region, so as to gauge to possibility for Thailand to emulate South Korea's success by learning from the latter's experience and devising the strategies applicable in its own context.

On the foundation laid by this research, there are various interesting issues for further studies especially for the case of Thailand, for examples, in-depth analysis of the relationship between the distribution of Thai popular culture in the Asia-Pacific region and its impact on the country's sphere of cultural influence, or the reception of Thai popular culture in each recipient countries, in the hope that the body of knowledge derived from multitudinous academic works would contribute to the construction of systemic and visionary promotion of Thai popular culture overseas, making the Thai wind not a mere air current that lightly passes

by, but a continuous flow of culture that brings about long-lasting positive changes in the international realm.



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