

The Korean Wave and Media Exchange in Global Culture Industry

by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and effort and that it has not been submitted anywhere for my any award. Where other sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.

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ABSTRACT

The Korean Wave, or 'Hallyu,' is a curious topic for cultural researchers. Though South Korean popular culture, TV Dramas and music have been widely consumed in East Asia since the 1990's, the 2012 hit 'Gangnam Style' garnered unprecedented global popularity and success, much to the surprise of East Asian academics. What is causing the widespread growth of Hallyu, and what does this continued growth mean in a world influenced by a dominant Western culture?

This study attempts to explain the success of Hallyu through the perspective of 'cultural topology (Lash, 2012),' which takes a more abstract approach by assuming that culture and cultural entities are inherently amorphous. Though many scholars have tried to explain Hallyu through different lenses of cultural and economic studies, the understanding of culture's constant change granted by cultural topology is key to understanding Hallyu and its relationship with its consumers. Ultimately, this study concludes that Hallyu and its products are symbiotically changed by its consumers and the media environment, and Hallyu, in turn, shapes these actors as well in a process called 'gift-exchange.'

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Korean Wave

The term ‘Korean Wave’ refers broadly to the phenomenon of Korean popular culture and soft power spreading through East Asia and beyond. Korean media and culture, which previously had virtually no popularity abroad, suddenly found itself a massively global exporter of dramas and music. At the core of the Korean Wave lies the important question: what has made the Korean Wave take off so dramatically?

The Korean Wave began in the late 1990’s, as it was not feasible to globally circulate Korean popular culture until then. In the rare event that Korean culture was recognised by scholars, it was seldom critically acclaimed. In a broadly recognised example, the 1996 edition of *The Oxford History of World Cinema* makes no reference to Korean cinema, although it paid tribute to Taiwanese, Hong Kong, Chinese, and Japanese films (Nowell-Smith, 1996 in D.B. Shim, 2006). Considering some researchers also disregarded contemporary Korean culture (Kawakimi and Fisher, 1994 in D.B. Shim, *ibid*), it is no understatement to say that public awareness of Korean culture was near non-existent before the initial influx of Korean dramas to China in the late 90’s and 2000’s. Though some small, relatively unknown Chinese television networks had been broadcasting Korean dramas, the 2002 drama *Jewel in the Palace* was what truly set the Korean Wave in motion. Peaking at over 180 million viewers and 14% ratings in China, the previously unknown local broadcaster, Hunan Satellite TV, was instantly propelled into the mainstream, rivalling even CCTV (KOTRA, 2013). The tremendous success of *Jewel in the Palace* then convinced other networks to broadcast Korean soap-operas at prime-time TV slots, like Hunan (KOTRA, *ibid*).

What gave *Jewel in the Palace*, and the countless successful dramas following it, such

critical acclaim and popularity? The late 90's was, conveniently, when neoliberal policies and views were gaining popularity in East Asia and beyond, as audiences began to demand more international culture and content. Indeed, the Korean Wave seems significantly indebted to some complicated, intermingled assemblages of fast-changing aspects in society, culture and technology that swept across Asia and the rest of the world from the late 1990s, as Keith Howard (2006) points out below: "Korea had become trendy because it provided what the youth wanted throughout the region. The phenomenon can be partially explained by noting how Korean popular culture catapulted forward during the 1990s, leaving much of Asia behind as it abandoned conservatism and censorship, diversifying, appropriating, absorbing and innovating. In its fusions, it created an Asian equivalent of European and American pop. Japanese pop, of course, had long had this function throughout the region, but the 1990s was a time for re-examining the Pacific War's legacy, and Korea offered a less-tainted alternative to Japan."

In 2003, the Korean Wave would spread to Japan and generate enormous popularity with Japanese viewers. *Winter Sonata's* Bae Yong-joon achieved unprecedented levels of fame in Japan, propelling the drama to massive ratings despite its off-peak time slot (KBS, 2010). Though the first airing of *Winter Sonata* was dubbed in Japanese, fangirls' obsession with Bae convinced NHK (Japanese Broadcasting Corporation) to rebroadcast the series with the original Korean voices and Japanese subtitles (H.S. Kim, 2005). *Winter Sonata* would continue to be rebroadcasted, inspire spin-off series, and generate billions of dollars in revenue (KOCCA, 2015).

Most importantly, *Winter Sonata* originated the phenomenon of fan participation in their favourite Korean dramas. Fans collectively participated in such ritualised behaviours as purchasing various Bae-themed merchandise, including scarves, bags, post cards, cell phone

straps, etc (*Sports Hankook*, August 26, 2004). Whenever Bae visited Japan, he was always greeted at the airport by several thousand fans, and their repetitive pilgrimages to media production locations in Korea became common (*Dong-A Ilbo*, April 4, 2004). Bae and *Winter Sonata* inspired a new kind of fandom, intertwined with a frantic desire for emotional expression through capitalistic consumption.

A similar narrative of Korean merchandise consumption accompanying the import of Korean media can be found in other countries as well. In Vietnam, for instance, Korean cosmetics have become a must-buy in local shops despite Vietnam's history of not using make-up (*Money Today*, April 1, 2013). Vietnam has become one of the biggest markets for Korean used cars and Korean mobile phones, especially Samsung smart phones, beating the Apple iPhone in the market despite the high price of some Korean luxury phones (*Chosun Biz*, June 5, 2013). The popularity of Korean cosmetics and technology has a clear connection to their use in Korean media and its high consumption. The Associated Press similarly reported the Hallyu (the Korean Wave) phenomenon in Asia as their main news item in March 2002, calling it '*Kim chic*,' claiming that all things Korean from food and music to eyebrow shaping and shoe styles were becoming increasingly popular in East Asia, where pop culture had previously been dominated by Tokyo and Hollywood styles (D.B. Shim, 2008). The New York Times also reported similarly, claiming that, "The booming South Korean presence on television and in movies has led Asians to buy South Korean goods and to travel to the country, traditionally never a popular tourist destination." (Nov. 19, 2005) Just a few years later in Egypt, where one might expect Korean popular culture to have little to no presence, Hallyu had taken root. A 2011 Egypt Independent *Al-Masry Al-Youm* article claimed that, "Whether it's through films, music, books or food, the Korean wave has definitely hit Cairo, and is doing so with much fervour." (July 19, 2011) Hallyu, and the commercial forces

accompanying it, was now spreading to the far ends of the world.

From the late 2000's onward, the Korean Wave continued to grow through a new, digitalised distribution. Though international TV stations continued to air Korean dramas, the majority of Hallyu consumption would be in the form of YouTube, Facebook, and other social-networking platforms (*MK Daily*, 2012). For instance, the success of the 2012 viral hit 'Gangnam Style' is measured not through CD sales, but through its record-breaking amount of YouTube views. Compared to earlier phases of Hallyu when consumption was done chiefly through television networks and album sales, most consumption of dramas and music is now done free of charge, as social-networking and media streaming services are free to use. Furthermore, these online platforms gave a new environment for fans and content producers to interact, enabling consumers to mobilise under fan pages, YouTube comments, and other interactive landscapes.

The progression of Hallyu can be explained through the following graph:

[Table 1. Progress of Korean Wave]

	First Wave	Second Wave	Third Wave
Period	1997–early 2000s	Early 2000s	Late 2000s onward
Form	TV Dramas, music	TV Drama, pop music, film, video games	TV, music, film, games, animation, food, Language, travel, fashion.
Major Region	China, Taiwan, Vietnam	Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia	Asia, Middle East, Africa, Europe, America
Popular Content	TV Drama: What's Love, Stars in My Heart,	TV Drama: Winter Sonata, Autumn in My	TV Drama: Secret Garden, Dream High, Man from Stars,

	All About Eve, Hotelier K-pop: CLON, H.O.T, Baby V.O.X	Heart, Jewel in the Palace K-pop: VoA, Rain, Super Junior	Descendants of the Sun K-pop: TVXQ, SNSD, Wonder Girls, SHINee, Big Bang, 2NE1, 2PM, PSY, Twice, IOI
Major Content Outlet	TV channels, CD, DVD	TV, PC, Laptop, mobile,	TV, Laptop, mobile, Tablet, SNS, YouTube
Key Characteristic	Personalisation of regional media content	Revolution of economic relationship between fans and producers.	New relationships via social networking

1.2 Research Overview

The Korean Wave, or ‘Hallyu,’ is a curious topic for cultural researchers. Though South Korean popular culture, TV Dramas and music have been widely consumed in East Asia since the 1990's, the 2012 hit Gangnam Style garnered unprecedented global popularity and success, much to the surprise of East Asian academics. What is causing the widespread growth of Hallyu, and what does this continued growth mean in a world influenced by a dominant Western culture?

This study attempts to explain the success of Hallyu through the perspective of ‘cultural topology (Lash, 2012),’ which takes a more abstract approach by assuming that culture and cultural entities are inherently amorphous. Though many scholars have tried to explain Hallyu through different lenses of cultural and economic studies, the understanding of culture's constant change granted by cultural topology is key to understanding Hallyu and its

relationship with its consumers. Ultimately, this study concludes that Hallyu and its products are symbiotically changed by its consumers and the media environment, and Hallyu, in turn, shapes these actors as well in a process called ‘gift-exchange.’

In the literature review, a brief overview of the Korean Wave and its existing cultural research will be provided. The analytical part of this thesis will approach the Korean Wave through cultural topological analysis, including the unique mode of K-drama and K-pop production and circulation as well as a case-study of PSY’s ‘Gangnam Style.’ In the conclusion, the implications behind the Korean Wave’s constant reshaping and reforming will be provided, as well as further opportunities for research and analysis.

Despite global attention and success, Hallyu illustrates an imbalance and uncertainty in socio-economic and technological concerns, continuously demanding redefinition and reinterpretation. This unclear aspect of the Korean Wave is related to the non-representational elements of Hallyu objects in their deforming/reforming nexus on its unique exchange and circulatory process. Thus, the research about Korean Wave should expand on some qualitative measurements with the traditional approach to text, content or audience.

Cultural topology has been applied as a methodology in this research, interrogating the figural, ever-circulating, and evolving forms of Korean popular culture. Cultural topology is the mathematical, exploration of changing relations and shapes of cultural objects; thus, this non-traditional type of cultural research could be expected to illuminate a programmable, emergent logic of digital, global culture. Specifically, the paper focuses on Korean Wave consumers’ distinctive, immersive experiences related to Korean popular music (K-pop) and Korean TV drama content. Furthermore, the interdependency among subjects, objects, and environments in cultural environments or ‘milieu’ can be analysed in a way able to explain something beyond production and consumption, but also texts, subjects and objects in public

situations.

In fact, the contemporary global cultural phenomenon needs to be looked at more thoroughly, as these cultural flows become harder to be perfectly examined by traditional approaches, which usually prefers to focus on text analysis, reception studies or business economics. Rather, addressing and analysing the evolving circulation flows through qualitative research seems more appropriate for cultural analysis.

On the other hand, this research considers some of the limitations of deviating from traditional Korean Wave interpretations, strongly echoed from mainstream academic interests such as textual, discourse analysis and business reports. Furthermore, this research delves into two-core genres of the Korean Wave --K-pop music and TV dramas-- even though Hallyu may reside in a variety of categories like animation, film, fiction, cartoons, and online games.

In short, the Korean Wave now has less to do with what people think of as Korean or even epistemological 'Asianness.' Rather, globally successful regional pop culture is a self-organising and amorphous process. That is because Hallyu objects are always on the ever-evolving and self-transforming exchanges facilitated by global culture industry. These are also topological from global programming industry. Thus, what is called Hallyu seems to be more appropriate to illustrate with a new process of digitally centred gift-exchange via mediation of calculations, conflicts, and interventions. Thus how we define what is of temporal, fixed, or in between these concepts is a key background to this research.

This research will not attempt to take up traditional tendencies that focus on commodity-exchange of market systems. Rather, the approach focuses on gift-exchange in the global culture industry, scrutinising popular myths and existing orthodoxies that surround contemporary technology, capital, and human society. During eight years of research, core

interests of the researcher have also progressed with fluctuation, repression, and even negation together with the self-organising aspects of Hallyu phenomenon.

1.3 Research Foundation and Methodology

Above all, what people refer to as the Korean Wave now seems to have little to do with superiority of its original content or performance in terms of local, regional or global standard. In fact, Hallyu objects are increasingly emergent and transformative on their circular flows. Furthermore, Hallyu could be more explained with a networking power of global programming industry through the idea of the media-exchange as a contemporary type of gift-exchange. Therefore, Hallyu should be investigated by non-traditional ways for better understanding its objects' unique exchanges and circulations.

As this research's foundation, cultural theorist Scott Lash (2009, 2012) founded the idea of cultural topology. He stressed the imaginary as a priori for topology in that the symbolic is ultimately representational. In other words, topological entities in cultural phenomenon have less to do with the flow of the symbolic and concrete; instead, they have more to do with the imaginary because their figural transformations are always symbiotically affected by the audiences' potential, affective consumption. The key for this research observation is consumers' empirical yet transcendental, and indeterminate yet contingent reception of cultural objects.

Previous Hallyu research could not fully extract the imaginary from the Korean Wave in the network of deepening, topological make-ups in self-organising, evolving situations. As Lash stated (2012: 6), "the topological object is none other than 'a process and a space of figuration.'" From this standpoint, Hallyu objects are topological processes always deforming into one another, thus transforming themselves more intense, deep, and immersive in the

unique circulation atmospheres. In the case of the Korean Wave, topological methods should not be used to focus merely on a fixed form, but on ‘anti-form, in-form, de-form’ (Lash, 2012: 6) and ‘trans-form.’ On the surface Hallyu could be thus regarded as a singular atmosphere. For analysing topological figurations of Hallyu, the trajectories of the cultural objects need to be followed by focusing on their unique, interdependent exchange situations in the perspective of global cultural industry. Interestingly, these cultural objects are excessively deforming, reforming, and transforming as long as their forms of life continuously expand, always re-producing themselves as another thing, brand, condition, process or space on the process of a contemporary gift-exchange called media-exchange as described. Thus, the research necessarily requires more attention to diverse figurations, situations, and phases as opposed to specific matter, time, and place by not only focusing on the flows of cultural objects, but also by minimising any dichotomist attitude either global or local, subject and object, or production and consumption in the cultural analysis.

To summarise key features of the research method, first, this research is based on an interpretative position in that it is concerned with how Hallyu objects are understood and experienced in qualitative ways. Second, the circulation process of Korean Wave objects is to be examined from the modernised gift-exchange system in the cultural topology perspective. Third, the collective memories and traces will be re-contextualised to understand the research materials differently and continuously. Fourth, this mode of analysis and description follows re-understanding the complexity and indeterminacy surrounding the media-exchange of the Korean objects. Finally, the analysis of the data is flexible and open-minded, emphasising an explanation of evolving figurations, rather than depicting superficial structures, trends, or correlations. The research is a heuristic approach at how social realities are newly restructured and understood as overall cultural process or flows.

Research consideration and limitation

First, this research takes the position of ‘exploratory research,’ (Priest, 1996: 9) which draws conclusions from specific cases rather than setting up a premise or hypothesis from the outset. As Geertz (1983) stressed in his term ‘thick description’, long-term involvement, patient observation and the pluralistic triangulation are also necessary for tangible results and interpretation of this kind of contemporary pop cultural phenomenon. In other words, credibility can be improved by investing time through consistent observation and various ways of empirical supports for breathing cultural forms. This research thus tries to overcome problematic issues such as judgement errors that might occur by using scarce sources. Second, the referential adequacy of this research is backed-up by recording and transcribing interviews in an attempt to analyse the relevance of various types of collected materials. Third, the methodology of this research thoroughly and importantly examines how much the researcher’s premise or point of view is also influenced for the evaluation of subjective biases. Finally, this qualitative cultural research tries to be understood and interpreted by the cultural objects’ own conditions and progresses. As such, an ‘already-there’ perspective, formulated in advance, is to be rejected. Indeed, the concerns and interests of the researcher may have changed throughout the research. Through this process, flexible and open research attitudes could be more attribute to constantly changing cultural flows rather than determining them in advance. Those are the main research strategies used here.

This research was mainly carried out between September 2008 and May 2017. Qualitative research methods were used in most situations, usually in-depth interviews and participant observation for socio-cultural analysis. Interviews were the main methodology, yet regular attendances of pop cultural events and activities were also included. Participation

observations through these activities were used for to enhance the validity of in-depth interviews in this research. Interviewees were those who considered themselves to be lovers, producers, mediators and distributors of Korean TV dramas and K-pop, including people from and in Korea, China, Japan, the US, and the UK. Individual interviews were conducted several times and were recorded and transcribed. Interviews took one to two hours on average, either face-to-face or by telephone and email. The age range of interview participants was 18 to 50 years, and gender and socio-economic class differences were also considered. Participants were divided into two main groups: one group composed of Koreans involved in the Korean Wave industry with professional, practical viewpoints on the mode of production. The other group consisted of audiences in and outside of Korea, from professionals and experts in the Hallyu-related field and fans of Korean cultural products, and information regarding their demographics is listed in the appendix. Interviews were conducted by considering the interviewee's socio-cultural background, pop cultural consumption experience, and the degree of saturation of the Korean Wave in their daily lives. The research tries to obtain true, honest materials by building rapport and avoiding suggestive questions.

The selection of interviewees was informed by the theoretical sampling principles of the 'grounded theory' approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), under which it is commonly thought that theories are made by widening sampling units through continuous theoretical saturation until new information about specific phenomena appears. Sampling methods in grounded theory emphasise the selection of sampling that could elaborate theories of research themes rather than enhancing validity by large-scale sampling (Charmaz, 2000). In practice, this study used snowballing as one sampling method (i.e., the researcher was introduced to friends of friends), which was a very effective way of contacting and expanding groups and objects with distinctive characters. Furthermore, as an independent journalist and producer, the

researcher was able to conduct productive practical interviews and attend diverse media events with both media professionals and consumers.

As a research limitation, this research focuses merely on two specific Hallyu genres, TV drama and K-pop music, despite there being more Korean Wave genres like films, animation, musicals, games etc. Considering that K-pop and Korean TV dramas have played the most significant in the Korean Wave phenomenon, further research could be conducted to incorporate other aspects of more genres' productive dynamics once they gain more influence.

1.3 Conclusion

To sum up, the introduction and methodology of this research are dealt with in this first chapter. The research poses the question of how Hallyu becomes continuously restructured as a becoming process. Korean TV drama and pop music are the main foci and materials of the thesis. From this research background, I begin to argue that Hallyu objects have less to do with cultural representation with fixed text-materials. Rather, the emergence of Hallyu has more to do with its objects' distinctive experiences with expanding cultural exchange flows.

The mode of analysis in the study draws on a topological approach. Topology is to be understood through persistently evolving living experiences with shared aspects. In this way, the distinctive cultural things/objects of the Korean Wave can demonstrate the problems with a continuum of unfamiliar, yet accustomed, features of contemporary socio-technical orthodoxy. For example, the Hallyu objects covered here are treated sometimes a priori as the substrata of re-mediation, but at the same time, they become 'Dasein' (i.e., existent in a real sense) as an atmosphere for the further production culture in global gift-exchange and circulation flows. This complex transformation of a regional pop culture, possibly the Korean Wave and its cultural objects, is to be examined, following the logic of the global culture

industry and digital free gift-exchange.

Chapter 2: The Korean Wave: A New Trend in Global Culture Flows?

“Though South Korea’s military and economic strength pales to neighbouring China and Japan, its cultural influence is stronger than any other. By embracing its diverse and active aspects, Korean culture may be able to become a worldwide phenomenon.” <South Korea: The Silent Cultural Superpower> BBC Radio Documentary (March 23~29, 2016)

The recent success of Korean pop culture places an unfamiliar spotlight on South Korea, which has been colonised or overshadowed for centuries by other countries. Korea has long been under the influence of Western and Japanese pop culture, but the sudden popularity of Korean culture has brought global surprise and impact. Now, South Korean celebrities are even promoting Korean ethnic features as an ideal standard of beauty across the East-Asian region. However, some have observed a different context to the Hallyu phenomenon, noting that “Asian people feel a rebellion against the images of Caucasian good-looks that dominate much of the international media” (Fairclough, 2005). Finally, a subsequent doubt has also persisted: “Why has it [the Korean Wave] taken off so dramatically at this point all of sudden?” (Thussu, 2007)

2.1 The Definition, Development and Difficulty of the Korean Wave

At the end of 2010, CNN reported that “over the past decade, a country of around 50 million people, South Korea, has become the Hollywood of the East, churning out popular culture products that are coveted by millions of fans stretching from Japan to Indonesia” (December 31, 2010). Just two years later in 2012, Hallyu became a common topic in the media, with one American local paper calling it a ‘pop culture tsunami flowing from South

Korea to the United States and around the world' (*Orange County Register*, Oct. 12, 2012). As of 2016, Korean content creation industries recorded a total sales of over 93 billion USD, and the number of users worldwide interacting in Hallyu spaces increased by 68% (KOFICE, 2017). Now, in 2017, the Korean Wave is located in centre stage of the discourses around global pop culture.

The Korean term Hallyu is broadly thought to describe this phenomenon, combining *Hal(n)* (外韓), meaning Korean, and *(r)yu* (潮流) meaning wave or flow.¹ Literally, Hallyu already refers to itself as Korean popular cultural flows rather than certain events or products. These flows have had reaching impact, sweeping across the entire world. Chinese media initially introduced the name Hallyu during the mid-1990s. Regarding that origin, one of the Korean major news agency, *Dong-A Ilbo* reports in 2001:

"Chinese people say that the past popularity of Cantonese music, from Hong Kong, is now shifting to Korean music. Younger generations should remember and sing at least one or two Korean songs if they are not to be treated as an outcast at school. Korean music has become as popular as Korean drama. During H.O.T.'s great success at their Beijing concert in February, H.O.T.'s shirts were completely sold-out, and H.O.T. cosmetics have since appeared. Furthermore, coffee shops named H.O.T. are now doing well in central Beijing. Music magazines such as *Shanghai Music World* introduce Korean singers with pomp and ceremony. '青春之星' [youth stars] has listed the 'Korean top 10' since 1997." (*Dong-A Ilbo*, Korean Wave in China, July 12, 2001)

However, there was an emerging belief in Korean government and mainstream media that the rapid consumption of Korean popular culture in China was done in pursuit of economic benefit. The Korean government perspective at the time was based on the belief

¹ 'Han' and 'Ryu,' when used together, become 'Hallyu' due to Korean grammar.

that the success of Hallyu in China confirms the superiority of Korean pop culture. Consequently, it became an accepted belief that the export of culture can create huge economic growth by enhancing the nation's image. The Minister for Culture and Tourism in 2001, Kim Han-Gil, promised a variety of unrestricted government support for the export of pop culture, declaring this a key national economic strategy in global trade. In an interview with daily newspaper *Daehan Maeil* on July 21, 2001, the culture minister confirmed:

"Korean fever in many countries has changed everything for younger generations, who now follow Korean fashion, hairstyles or other influences. They register at Korean language schools to learn Korean songs, using Korean pop music as criteria to recognise old and young generations. This means our [Korean] cultural products are overcoming the dominant power of Japanese and American popular culture, opening the chance that Korean cultural power may permeate the global stage with the superior Korean cultural products and Asian enthusiasm. Now, the Korean Wave is influencing the nation's economy in diverse positive ways."

As the minister predicted a decade ago, Hallyu and its commodities such as idol stars' clothes, shoes, and even smart-gadgets have become highly valued commodities.

In 2012, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon greeted Korean pop singer and global YouTube star, PSY, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, symbolising his desire to work with the Korean singer who's 'unlimited global reach' received critical acclaim (*Guardian*, Oct. 24, 2012). In April 2013, PSY's global hit music video, Gangnam Style, exceeded 1.5 billion views on YouTube, becoming the first video to do so in the website's history. It took less than a year for PSY to become a global superstar in the YouTube-era, securing a place in pop music history, and hailed by *MTV* as the 'Viral Star of 2012' (*MTV* Dec.18, 2012).

Hallyu has had full-scale global attention since the late 2000s. Nevertheless, as discussed above, the centrifugal force of flowing Korean popular culture tilted to East Asia, regardless of the PSY phenomenon. Looking at how Hallyu has evolved in Asia, one television drama, *What is Love* (1991) can be identified as the source from which the Korean popular culture renaissance originated. This soap opera aired in mainland China on Chinese Central Television (CCTV) in 1997, achieving the highest audience share of foreign imported television dramas up to that point. Later, more Korean pop cultural products flooded into Asia notably Hong Kong and Singapore, through the consecutive megahits of not only emergent Korean TV dramas such as *Star in My Heart* (1997) and *All About Eve* (2000), but also Korean-style blockbuster films, *Shiri* (1999) and *My Sassy Girl* (2001). Furthermore, during the beginning of the 21st century, South Korean popular music (henceforth K-pop) expanded the flow towards broader regional territories like Vietnam, Singapore and Thailand. The leading figures in this K-pop fad at the time were CLON, a powerful male duo, and H.O.T, the first-generation of K-pop idol groups. Indeed, the fast personalisation of digital media technology played a significant role in this first stage of Hallyu circulation along with the diversification and expansion of regional TV content outlets. Accordingly, media content started to spread, and Hallyu's initial stages became impressive flows possible mainly in pan-Chinese media environments.

At the centre of the second phase of the enormous Hallyu boom lies a legendary drama series from KBS TV, *Winter Sonata* (2002). This Korean love story aired in most East Asian countries, including Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, creating the regionally well-known 'Yon-sama (Bae Yong-jun) fever' in the early 2000s. The extraordinary enthusiasm for Yon-sama is associated with the unprecedented success of *Winter Sonata* and its male lead, Bae Yong-jun [henceforth BYJ]. A number of Korean journalists have endorsed BYJ's

popularity and status in Japan: “Bae Yong-jun (BYJ), widely known as his Japanese nickname ‘Yon-sama,’ recently boosted his popularity in Japan at a party in the Tokyo Dome to celebrate the release of his latest book. Forty five thousand people attended this event, waiting several hours to see him in a lengthy queue. An audience was Miyuki Hatoyama, wife of Japan’s new Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama. Mrs. Hatoyama has dubbed herself an ‘avid fan’ of Korean pop culture in particular, which is usually termed the ‘Korean Wave.’ The Prime Minister’s wife even arbitrarily delayed her pre-planned schedule of official state visits to Denmark because of her favourite star, BYJ’s Tokyo fan meeting event.” (*Joong-Ang Ilbo*, October 1, 2009)

It was not until a few years later that another influential Korean pop star, Rain, dramatically exceeded the regional impact from BYJ into the rest of East Asia, and even further into Indonesia, Malaysia, India but also Arabic countries, Australia, the US, Canada, Russia, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Hungary, Ghana, and Zimbabwe (J.Y. Kim, 2008, cited in S. Jung, 2011). This versatile singer was adept at crossing over multiple pop music genres and situations, following his manager Park Jin-Young (JYP)’s strategy. Simultaneously, Rain was very good at showing off his powerful image of masculinity from live music performances as well as television dramas such as *Full House* (2004), *The Fugitive Plan B* (2010) and even Hollywood blockbuster films like *Ninja Assassin* (2010). In the meantime, his stardom soared across the globe. This second phase of Hallyu (Hallyu 2.0) was the period when personal computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones became much more significant to the circulation of media content. Without a doubt, mobile media outlets became the ultimate target for privatisation of content by media-culture industry.

Western audiences have given growing attention to Korean pop culture since the late 2000s, resulting in the newly coined term ‘Hallyu 3.0’ (*MK Daily*, 2012). This term came in

response to especially YouTube K-pop idols, notably PSY, SNSD, and Big Bang. A significant aspect of this phase of the Hallyu phenomenon is the fact that western cultural critics and global audiences have shaped a new generation of Hallyu in various areas such as film, games, food, and even language. *Secret Garden* (2010), *Man from Stars* (2014), and *Descendants of the Sun* (2016), considered to be the most representative TV dramas of this period, give an indication of this exponential growth. In short, Hallyu 3.0 is often treated as an important period of globalised, digitalised Korean Wave circulation. In this phase, the Korean wave 3.0 was steadily ramping up with generalised media through what we might call globalised social networking spaces including Twitter, Google, and Facebook. This phase would be described the period of networking of social, collective relations.

However, there are still doubts and uncertainties about Hallyu, such as the ambiguity regarding Hallyu's economic impact and how much pro-Hallyu policies have actually contributed to Hallyu's growth, and finally, whether or not Hallyu indicates an inherent superiority over other cultures. These points will be closely addressed in this thesis. According to an anonymous interview held with a KBS content business department executive, a significant factor in Hallyu's global fame is that Korean shows are sold at comparatively cheaper prices to their competitors. Furthermore, as one of the state's four major terrestrial television networks and the biggest Hallyu content copyright holder, the Korean Broadcasting System, KBS exported 33 million USD worth of content abroad in 2009 (KBS internal article, 2010, 2012). In 2011, the public broadcaster's exports soared to 45 million USD, reaching 45 countries. However, this 2011 statistic reveals that 44 million out of those 45 million dollars (97.9%) flowed to Asia. These figures made in one of the peak periods of the Korean Wave would explain the emphasis of Hallyu exports and illustrate the degree to which they are still skewed towards the Asia region. These were indicative of a

larger question within the broadcast industry as a whole. According to a yearly report published by The Korean Ministry of Science and ICT and the Korea Communications Commission, Korea broadcast companies exported just over 2 trillion USD in 2015, a 15.7% decrease from the previous year (KOFICE, 2016). In particular, terrestrial broadcasting exports decreased by 22.5% at the year, but still remained by far the largest exporter in the Asian region.

[Table 2. South Korean Culture Industry Exportation Report based on region in 2011. Source from MCST (2012)] (unit: 1,000 USD)

	China/ HK	Japan	South East Asia	North America	Europe	Others	Total
Publishing	33,693	62,790	29,810	90,127	21,557	45,462	283,439
Cartoons	662	6,639	2,643	1,766	5,457	46	17,213
Music	6,836	157,938	25,691	587	4,632	429	196,113
Games	907,296	652,556	428,277	181,255	152,369	56,325	2,378,078
Movies	1,628	3,663	1,648	1,673	3,522	3,697	15,829
Animation	1,659	21,688	1,183	59,397	28,556	3,458	115,941
Broadcasting	21,288	102,058	38,432	3,562	1,479	2,139	168,940
Characters	89,257	20,256	45,255	102,565	82,358	52,575	392,266
Knowledge/ Information	36,287	176,925	198,372	8,802	3,528	8,342	432,256
Content/ Solutions	20,322	43,469	25,323	18,553	21,668	16,946	146,281
Total	1,118,908	1,247,982	796,632	468,287	325,126	189,419	4,146,356

Portion	27.0	30.1	19.2	11.3	7.8	4.6	100.0
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As Table 2 confirms, China, Japan and Southeast Asia were 76.3% of the content exports of the Korean culture industry in 2011 during the peak of Hallyu. The next graph shows that the trend of Hallyu consumption in Asia has largely remained unchanged even in 2015 (MCST, 2016). This is indicative of the fact that the Korean cultural content had less consumption over the Asia than broadly expected; still, there is concern whether the Korean Wave can continue to generate profit from the global media industry.

[Table 3. South Korean Culture Industry Exportation Report based on region in 2015. Source from MCST (2016)] (unit: 1,000 USD)

	China/ HK	Japan	South East Asia	North America	Europe	Others	Total
Publishing	34,888	55,026	26,123	60,042	12,447	34,210	222,736
Cartoons	1,429	8,165	5,205	4,208	9,742	542	29,354
Music	89,761	242,370	40,557	1,085	4,976	2,274	381,023
Games	1,057,119	690,772	359,898	553,460	346,168	207,240	3,214,627
Movies	11,221	4,956	5,055	4,448	1,238	2,456	29,374
Animation	2,126	23,529	336	66,612	27,841	6,081	126,570
Broadcasting	63,702	70,795	33,193	14,697	2,829	30,636	216,032
Characters	118,563	34,742	63,969	147,790	117,460	68,932	551,456
Knowledge/ Information	46,878	214,002	235,193	10,912	4,556	4,162	515,703
Content/	24,921	54,005	30,458	21,132	26,012	19,055	175,583

Solutions							
Total	1,450,707	1,398,492	799,987	884,395	553,289	375,588	5,462,458
Portion	26.6	25.6	14.6	16.2	10.1	6.9	100.0

[Table 4. South Korean Culture Industry Exportation Report by year. Source: MCST (2016)]

(unit: 1,000 USD)

	Value of export							
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Portion (%)	2014-2015 Year on year growth rate (%)	Average annual growth rate (%)
Publishing	283,439	245,154	291,863	247,268	222,736	3.9	-9.9	-5.8
Cartoons	17,213	17,105	20,982	25,562	29,354	0.5	14.8	14.3
Music	196,113	235,097	277,328	335,650	381,023	6.7	13.5	18.1
Games	2,378,078	2,638,16	2,715,400	2,973,834	3,214,627	56.8	8.1	7.8
Movies	15,829	20,175	37,071	26,380	29,374	0.5	11.3	16.7
Animation	115,941	112,542	109,845	115,652	126,570	2.2	9.4	2.2
Broadcasting	222,372	233,821	309,399	336,019	320,434	5.7	-4.6	9.6
Advertising	102,224	97,492	102,881	76,407	94,508	1.7	23.7	-1.9
Characters	392,266	416,454	446,219	489,234	551,703	9.7	12.7	8.9
Knowledge/ Information	432,256	444,837	456,911	479,653	515,703	9.1	7.5	4.5
Content/	146,281	149,912	155,201	167,860	175,583	3.1	4.6	4.7

Solutions								
Total	4,302,012	4,611,505	4,923,100	5,273,519	5,661,368	100.0	7.4	7.1

Despite reports about the global Hallyu phenomenon from South Korean government and K-wave industry, table 4 tells a different story about the Korean Wave. Government and mainstream media industries in Korea have boasted of their pop music and TV programmes as the representative sector of Hallyu; however, as seen table 4, it seems unreasonable to declare that Korean TV content (including drama) and music (including K-pop), which account for only 5.2% and 4.6% of export at its peak year 2011 then still 5.7% and 6.7% in 2015, are at the heart of the Korean Wave (MCST, 2016). Instead, the Korean gaming industry has occupied nearly half the total value of exports from the Korean content industry at that time.²

2.2 The Early Impact of Hallyu in Northeast Asia

Emerging 'pan-Chinese' K-wave audiences

As discussed in the previous chapter, Korean TV dramas' spread specifically to China around 1997 was the first stage of the Hallyu phenomenon, starting with the surprisingly successful Korean soap opera, *What is Love*. This subsequently led to a stream of Korean TV content onto China (Leung, 2009), with 67 different Korean dramas broadcast in Chinese main TV channels in 2002, the majority of which were romance stories with urban settings. Soon after, *Jewel in the Palace* (2005) became one of the first mega-hit dramas.

What made this early Hallyu drama so successful? One common thought is that most South

² When accounting for Korean food as part of the category of popular culture, this occupies the largest portion.

Korean popular culture expresses so-called ‘Asian’ values and sentiments, which other Asians can easily relate. A number of interviewees in this research concur that the values and sentiments they see in Korean soap operas are more palatable than Western or Japanese ones because Hallyu dramas are based on Asian lives, family values and social relationships. Sung Sang-Yeon’s analysis (2006) explains that Asian Hallyu fans living in Taiwan prefer Korean popular culture because it presents Asian sentiments combined with modern conditions. For the regional fans including the below Taiwanese fan, Korean television dramas were understood to convey the traditional roles of family members better than other Asian products do.

“I believe that the Korean Wave results partly from this search for 'Asianness' in contemporary Taiwan. Many Taiwanese believe that Korean popular culture depicts what Taiwanese consider to be an Asian character or value. This is something they miss in Western culture or even in Japanese popular culture, which some Taiwanese respondents have criticised, saying that is too unrealistic and too far removed from real Taiwanese lifestyles. I love to see Korean soap operas. They are always so sentimental and sad. You know, like the old-time stories. This makes me want to see more Korean soap operas.”

(Interview with Alice Chen, 34, photographer)

In this regard, the evocation of Asian sentiment and values has been broadly considered to be an important factor in initially attracting regional audiences to Korean popular culture. Lin and Tong (2007) elaborate that Asian viewers fell in love with Korean dramas because they were ‘more subtle’ and put more emphasis on ‘*qing*’ – a Chinese word referring to compassion for family members, friends, colleagues, and people in relations. Many respondents in this research generally agreed that Korean drama content seems very realistic and brings sophisticated portrayals of what they referred to as Asian forms of expressing various kinds of relationships and emotional attachments in its characters. One of the best

attachments they appreciated was the deep affective relation seen from family members and the virtues of filial piety possessed by the characters, as described by Lin and Tong (ibid).

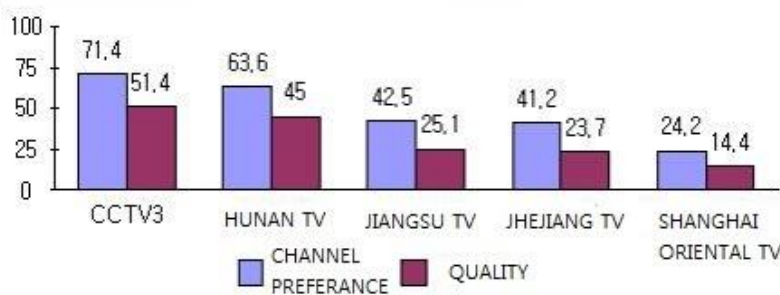
In the meantime, it is meaningful to remember an unknown local broadcaster, Hunan Satellite TV, which first disseminated this Korean epic drama in China. The emergence of this Chinese local broadcaster as a main domestic K-drama distributor is very important in terms of explaining the initial process of Hallyu's spread in China and the neighbours. In 2002, the station made a timely and far-sighted decision in acquiring and transmitting this Korean epic drama for Chinese audiences as the drama entered the domestic market. Less than a few years after the more widespread Korean Wave fever in Asia, Korean content circulation in China made it possible for the media companies, not the Korean producers, to grasp unprecedentedly massive financial returns. The main reason behind Hunan's decision was again the acquisition of exclusive rights for a low price in the content deal (Leung, 2009). Over 35 million *Yuan* profit took Hunan TV instantly into the mainstream media industry to become among the top 38 provincial-level satellite stations with the Korean content (KOTRA, 2013). Hunan also became known as, 'the real rival of CCTV,' becoming one of China's strong national broadcasters in terms of its viewing rates and socio-cultural influence (KOTRA, 2013). As illustrated in the graph below, the broadcaster ranked second highest just after CCTV 3.³ Also, two of the top five TV entertainment programmes in China were from Hunan TV affiliations in terms of audience ratings and channel preferences (KOTRA, 2013). In the end, CCTV also began to broadcast Korean dramas and welcoming Korean TV products as Hunan does.⁴ In short, South Korean television dramas worked as a cornerstone

³ CCTV stands for Chinese Central TV, which is Chinese public, national television station, holding various channels through the channel-specific such as international, economic, and music. CCTV3 refers to the general entertainment and music channel.

⁴ CCTV as the only Chinese state broadcaster still prefers to deliver original Chinese TV dramas

for not only gathering pan-Chinese audiences but also triggering the states' self-organising media industry. From this standpoint, the first generation of Korean TV content in China reveals that the attachable content storytelling and the widespread use of satellite TV technology with the powerful reference of mainstream TV industry in China contributed to the emergence of mass K-drama audiences.

[Graph 1. Channel preference and quality evaluation for TV stations in China in 2012. Source from KOTRA (2013)]



Japanese K-wave consumers

Winter Sonata is the first milestone Korean TV drama in Japan. This old yet urbane, fused love story was broadcast in April 2003 on the Japanese public service broadcaster, NHK-BS. The drama content was re-run three more times over the next two years on other NHK platforms and channels, including its main terrestrial TV slots. Throughout Japanese broadcasting history, it was unprecedented for imported TV drama content to re-broadcast several times until then. The reason for this change was, above all, Japanese audiences' overwhelming response and demand to the new drama. During its third run, *Winter Sonata* achieved an average share rating of 17%, a remarkable feat given that the content was aired

than foreign TV content.

in an off-peak slot on Saturday at 11 pm (KBS, 2010). However, a more startling aspect of the *Winter Sonata* was the emergence of various spin-off products that have come to be known through either traditional or non-traditional secondary circulations, a well-known example being a Japanese anime series of the same title. NHK also made frequent use of *Winter Sonata* as being semi-open under the continuous but differentiated style of audio-visuality, meaning that the drama's content can be shaped and modified at will. Subtitles and dubbing are such production elements.

NHK's first trial of re-broadcasting a foreign drama was mainly due to the Japanese female fans continued requests for Bae Yong-joon (henceforth BYJ)'s real voice instead of the dubbed one. For the local K-drama fans, his character permeated a 'genuine Korean feel' mainly through his paradoxical masculinity and voice (H.S. Kim, 2005). NHK broadcasted Korean TV drama *Secret Garden* in 2011 with the same intention, with the original Korean voices and Japanese subtitles so audiences could enjoy the real voice of the drama's male lead, Hyun Bin, who also achieved instant, immense popularity in Japan. In this regard, it is not important for the early Japanese K-drama consumers to understand the Korean language as they are comfortable with subtitles and can bask in the emotional expression of the Korean TV stars. Even when *Winter Sonata's* BYJ first visited Japan in April 2004, many news media reported that Tokyo Haneda Airport was bustling with 5,000 female fans forming a long queue to greet him, live-transmitting as one of the top stories on the NHK evening news (*Dong-A Ilbo*, April 4, 2004). In due course, BYJ came to be known as 'the \$2.3 Billion Man' (*The New York Times*, 2005). To this day, BYJ's Japanese supporters continue to participate in startling numbers in this self-organised fan culture.

Concurrently, the image of drama's male lead circulates via merchandising. The immense

popularity of BYJ-branded objects has coined the term ‘Yon-Fluena’ in Japan⁵ (*Sports Hankook*, August 26, 2004). Yon-sama fans enjoyed an exploration of fan choices, identity processes and emotional investments. For example, the fans collectively made such ritualised behaviours as purchasing various ‘Yon-sama’ merchandise such as countless ornamental covers, pull-out features, and biographies as well as participating in media pilgrimages to TV production locations and his agency company. These BYJ-branded objects also included Yon-sama scarves, accessories, bags, post cards, cell phone straps, puzzles, calendars, letter sets, photo books, and memorabilia. Moreover, Incheon International Airport in Seoul installed a special space for people to feel and experience Yon-sama with his iconic merchandise. In this regard, it can be assumed that early Japanese K-wave consumers was already familiar with the imaginary of BYJ.

Questioning K-pop’s global attention for understanding K-wave

Rather recently, Korean pop music was gaining global attention, the centre of this being PSY’s global shock in 2012. Korean media have relayed the news that PSY changed global pop music history with his single ‘Gangnam Style,’ the most-watched music video in the world. In the same year, K-pop solo artist G-Dragon, idol boy band Big Bang, and girl group 2NE1 followed PSY, topping various mainstream music charts in the United States and Europe. After Big Bang's album ‘*Tonight*’ became the first K-pop product to reach the top 10 US iTunes chart and the only non-English language album in the top 100 in the 2011, BTS and Red Velvet’s songs continued to be successful in US chart records until 2017. Even so, Table 5 below explains an indeterminate aspect of the K-pop discourses. The data in table 5 says K-pop dominance has not been a particularly global phenomenon, but still only a case in

⁵ A compound word with Yonsama and Influenza made by his strong fandom in Japan.

Asian countries, particularly Japan and China.⁶

[Table 5. K-pop Industry Exportation Report based on region. Source from MCST report (2016)] (unit: 1,000 USD)

	2013	2014	2015	Portion (%)	2014-2015 Year on year growth rate (%)	Average annual growth rate (%)
China	10,186	52,798	89,761	23.6	70.0	196.9
Japan	221,739	235,481	242,370	63.6	2.9	4.5
South East Asia	38,166	39,548	40,557	10.6	2.6	3.1
North America	1,024	1,058	1,085	0.3	2.6	2.9
Europe	4,827	4,778	4,976	1.3	4.1	1.5
Others	1,386	1,987	2,274	0.6	14.4	28.1
Total	277,328	335,650	381,023	100.0	13.5	17.4

If Hallyu was so aggressive, how and why people has K-pop become sensational both regionally and globally from its early stage? By the way, graph 2 typically brings a very

⁶ As of 2011, China and Japan consisted of 3.5% and 80.5% of the portion respectively (MCST, 2012).

different concern regarding the market-based economic orthodoxy embracing K-pop and K-wave phenomenon described here. According to the below graph, K-pop seems to have beaten Western pop music in a global scale in a very certain way.

[Graph 2. K-pop Music Streaming on YouTube.com in 2012. Source: YouTube (2013)]



2.3 Conclusion

According to the global Hallyu survey by Korean government agency KOFICE, 47.4% and 49.5% of K-drama and K-pop content was consumed by free online sites as of 2016 (KOFICE, 2017). K-pop sources have been always ready for its audiences to gain new information free of charge, helping others to share their musical tastes with close friends under more modernised ‘gift-exchange’ (Mauss, 1976) basis. Similar yet recursive content or data exchanged on this gift-exchange has instantly grabbed a special sense of attention in participants’ inter-subjective navigation. That is, broadly, a process of caring the process itself

rather than just object, thing, content, text, or star. Further, this exchange broadly and confidentially facilitates new spin-off ideas from neo-liberal capitalism which I will examine in detail in this investigation. In this regard, it would be first examined from the next chapter whether the key of the Korean Wave syndrome is more to do with the gift-exchange system of the Hallyu circulations with sincerer care of the its circulation process.

Chapter 3: The Korean Wave and The Culture Industry

In the academic community, there has been much debate on what exactly has caused Hallyu to be successful. While the popular opinion among Korean nationalists is that Korean production talent is inherently better than competing industries, many scholars believe that Hallyu's success has little to do with the skill of its producers. Furthermore, in the context of cultural imperialism, some believe that Hallyu will replace the West as the strongest culture in the East Asian region, while others believe that it is more likely for Hallyu and Western culture to fuse into a form of hybridity.

In this literature review section, an analysis and critique of popular views and conventions from Hallyu optimists will be provided. Furthermore, the global culture industry will be discussed, and the systems of gift exchange will be analysed and applied to the discourse of Hallyu.

3.1 Approaching Hallyu

There has been some discussion regarding whether the Korean Wave can compete with Western pop culture and, if Hallyu, facilitated by the rapid advance of digital technology, can terminate an era of Western cultural imperialism. Hallyu optimists claim that, as Asian youths prefer their own sentiments and creative products over Western ones, Korean Wave cultural products have become well circulated and highly profitable in the region and will continue to do so for years to come.⁷ Others contend that Hallyu and Western culture will merge in what is widely referred to as 'cultural hybridity.'

The optimist perspective that Korean Culture has a chance of overpowering Western culture has been most noticeably adopted by government figures and national slogans. Yi O-

⁷ For the more details of both arguments, see D.Y Lee, (2006).

Ryong, minister of culture and tourism in South Korea in the mid 90's, describes Hallyu as a manifestation of Korean competitive, innovative, and adaptive 'soft power,' and that Hallyu TV dramas and pop music deserve to be acclaimed as the very centre of East Asian culture (D.Y. Lee, 2006). Since the Kim Dae-Jung administration (1998–2003), the South Korean government has continued to use this nationalistic approach to culture as their primary economic strategy, making sufficient efforts to maximise economic profits through dispersing romanticised cultural stories of Korea. In this vein, the representative slogan, 'dynamic Korea' and 'creative Korea,' executed by the government to advertise creative cultural competitiveness, can be defined as a new state agenda for the continued growth and export of creative cultural products.

At the core of this perspective is the concept of cultural imperialism, which identifies countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America as passive receivers of North American and European cultural influence (Schiller, 1969). Media and cultural scholars of this line of thought explain the cultural triumph of the West over the 'Rest' as a consequence of the prevailing economic strength of the West, integrating non-Western countries' cultural identities into the massive Western behemoth. Thus, the emergence of a successful Korean media sphere gives an opportunity for Korean culture to replace Western culture as the dominant form of soft-power in the East Asia region.

Other scholars, however, believe that countries in the 'Rest' do not passively receive Western culture, but rather interpret and reshape it in a form of cultural hybridity (Iwabuchi, 2002; Jin, 2016). John Tomlinson (1999) did claim to see the disposal of the analytical framework of the traditional nation states. Likewise, Appadurai (1996) suggests the alternative analytic frameworks, 'ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes' to jump over the previous nationalistic perspectives. These scholars point to Latin

America and India, who have developed as major producers and exporters of pop culture despite being in the periphery. Bollywood, for instance, uses primarily Western conventions of media broadcast (movies, terrestrial broadcasting) while simultaneously bringing uniquely Indian narratives, styles, and dance (Reeves, 1993). The lens of cultural hybridity is also used to explain the success of Hallyu, which has negotiated itself between Western and Korean narratives. A study on the Korean wave in Singapore reveals that Korean TV and cinema have achieved huge success by adding Asian cultural components to dominant Western forms and styles (D.B. Shim, 2006; K.H. Lee, 2008; S.K. Hong, 2013). Shim Doo-Bo (2012) points out that the use of familiar Asian faces and family structures to themes and stories already established by the West was vital to the success of Hallyu in Singapore. Therefore, it can be claimed that the Korean Wave in Singapore has little to do with so-called traditional Korean culture. Rather, the Korean Wave was a collage of cultures, meticulously crafted by the forces cultural production.

Even though it is still early to say that Korea might replace the United States in terms of pop cultural dominance, the Korean Wave is rapidly gaining popularity. Moreover, critical cultural imperialism needs a more sophisticated recalibration to focus on the increasingly complicated circulation and consumption of culture. Capitalistic forces seeking to monetise cultural production further complicate the study of culture as they transform pop culture into an algorithm. In this regard, this growing Korean cultural phenomenon needs to be understood more systematic and monetary, yet simultaneously through more amorphous and imaginary methods.

3.2 Concerning Korean Superiority

In contrast to the stances of the government and advocates of cultural hybridity, other

Hallyu optimists take a more nationalist perspective, claiming that the success and growth of Hallyu can be attributed to an objective superiority in the production and quality of Korean media. According to this theory, Hallyu's 'Koreanness (J.S. Park, 2015)' and the physiological and ideological superiorities of Koreans can be explained as the key factors in the explosion of the popularity of Korean media abroad, and that this continues to draw in more attention from foreign audiences (D.J. Kim, 2017a, 2017b; J.S. Park, 2015, 2017). However, this perspective fails to account for external economic and political circumstances that were instrumental in Hallyu's growth.

When Hallyu first started to take root, the Asian Financial Crisis was in full-effect and dealing tremendous damage to East Asian economies, which highly increased the cost-competitiveness of Korean dramas. When Korean TV drama content was first broadcast in mainland China, the Korean government was actively depreciating its currency as a policy drive, dropping by half during 1997 and 1998 alone. South Korean television dramas therefore became unprecedentedly cheap or sometimes even free of charge for nearby countries due to the artificially weak Korean Won.

Soon after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the Korean government made the export of Korean popular culture a new focus of an economic initiative as mentioned briefly above. President Kim Dae-Jung (1998-2003), who called himself the President of Culture, established the 'Basic Law for Culture Industry Promotion' in 1999 and distributed 148.5 million USD to this project (D.B. Shim, 2006). Since then, a new portrayal of South Korea started to emerge in a variety of television dramas, films, music videos, and digital games. Timely, active policy-drives from the government, coupled with the sudden weakening of the Asian economy, created unprecedented opportunities for Korean popular culture to be circulated throughout the Asian markets. Korean television export figures increased

dramatically during this period reaching US \$187 million in 2010, a fifteenfold increase since their 1999 value of \$12.7 million (MCST, 2011). Still, ambitious policies alone cannot drive exports⁸. Instead, Hallyu sales were more a consequence of the techno-social situations in the region's respective media industries, mainly, the urgent need of new content to fill wider time slots.

From an economic perspective, the main advantage of Korean TV programmes was their low price. The average unit price of Japanese TV programmes in the international market was 5,000–8,000 USD per episode in 2000, while that of Korean programmes averaged 1,326 USD in 2001 (S.H. Kim, 2005). The economic problems of Asia in the late 1990s forced regional broadcasters to seek out cheaper products than those from Japan and the West. Such a strategy was evident in the soap opera boom of the Korean Wave in Asia. In addition to the cheap prices of Korean media, historical trauma from World War II caused many Asian countries such as China and Taiwan to ban imports of Japanese programmes. Thus, Korean TV content posed an optimal solution for nations trying to sidestep international controversy. Lili, the primary producer of K-pop Entertainment at Gala-TV in Taiwan, confirmed in an interview that the main reason GTV began broadcasting Korean soap operas was due to their cheap prices compared to Japanese and even domestic products.⁹ According to the Gala-TV producer, Korean soap operas were of much better visual quality than Taiwanese products, but were also much more inexpensive. Thus, the Taiwanese station usually dubbed them in Mandarin and aired the programs as if they were locally-made soap operas. Then, in 1999, GTV began buying TV dramas from Korea to supplement domestic dramas for the same reasons: low cost and guaranteed quality.

⁸ More details regarding recent governmental policy intervention is to be given in chapter 6.2.

⁹ See Onishi (2005) for more information.

For similar reasons, Hallyu dramas permeated into the nearby Hong Kong and Singapore TV markets as well, creating a largely Asian sphere of Hallyu consumption. Though Hallyu certainly has spread around the world, and Korean media are always eager to report on Hallyu fans in Europe and the United States, Asia is still the key consumer of Hallyu. Thus, scholars remain critical of just how ‘globalised’ Hallyu is, considering that its popularity is only truly noteworthy in East Asia alone. While Hallyu is certainly successful in East Asia, there is still a long way to go before it becomes a serious rival to the West.

In conclusion, though Hallyu’s lifespan totals at less than 20 years, it has taken on various forms and marketing platforms to accommodate a rapidly changing socio-technological interface. Furthermore, as Korean popular culture spreads across the world, researchers have begun to speculate whether Hallyu will bring in a new kind of cultural hierarchy and cultural commercialism. While many point to Hallyu’s successful delivery of Asian values and highly competitive celebrities, even more instrumental to Hallyu’s growth was the economic circumstances of key consumers and Korea’s sudden participation in the global culture industry. Next, the global culture industry will be examined for the better understanding of the Korean Wave through the media-exchange facilitating more interdependency of contemporary Korean cultural objects.

3.3 Global Culture Industry

This section will discuss perspectives of the global culture industry, which is broadly intertwined with the Korean situation. Scott Lash and Celia Lury (2007) conceptualised the global culture industry by tracing and analysing self-modifying cultural objects in the age of globalisation. Their research re-defines a significant historical transformation between culture

and the economy by examining the relationships between cultural producers, consumers, and capitalistic valorisation. They argue that the global culture industry is systematically becoming a fusion of socio-economic infrastructure and the ideological superstructure.

Through the global cultural industry, information becomes product, the intellectual becomes property, labour becomes affective, media becomes social, and culture and economy can no longer be separated. Lash et al. (2012) further suggest that we are now witnessing the topological and socio-imaginary expansions of cultural objects through their figural deformation logic in diverse global cultural spaces. Matthew Fuller and Andrew Goffey confirm this in their perspective of *Evil Media* (2012) by stressing the logic of cultural algorithms in a global, digital era. Alexander Galloway (2012), Anna Munster (2013) and Luciana Parisi (2013) also cast light on the emergence of interface effects threatening to seduce our attention to cultural objects in digital networking.

For empirical cases, Lash and Lury follow in their book, *Global Culture Industry* (2007) that cultural objects are formed through inter-subjective encounters on the flows of the global network. They engage the notion of brand, such as Nike shoes, *Toy Story* merchandise, marketable sports-events like UEFA football, and the young British artists (YBAs) in ‘Cool-Britannia’ to argue that these fully exemplify the unique (re)production and circulation processes in global cultural flows. As the authors conclude, contemporary cultural objects are being successfully facilitated by not only the virtual accumulation of global capitalism but also audiences’ co-productive consumption and participatory experience. The circulation flows of these objects, thus, enable deeper manifestation of re-configuring the de/re/trans-formations of cultural objects as interconnected forms of life in various spaces, milieus or ‘spheres’¹⁰ (Sloterdijk, 2011). Research into the cultural circulation flows is scarce, but

¹⁰ Peter Sloterdijk (2011) engages and expands on the trope of ‘Spheres’ in his trilogy *Bubbles*,

grows as it continues to gain relevance.

Thus, there is a need to examine the concept of the capitalistic fetish. This meaning could embrace a new concept of cultural objects having ‘flux and flow’ in their life experience as Appadurai (1986) explains. Appadurai relates his early concerns to the framework of the exteriorisation and expansion of cultural things. Accordingly, Lash et al. (2007, 2009, 2012) develop the concept of the social life of cultural things. Lash and Lury (2007) investigate the global culture industry from a meta-physical perspective of cultural objects with a feature of ‘transcendental, empirical double’ (Lury et al., 2012), distancing their work from the commodity framework in domestic and Fordistic analyses. For them, the emerging differences in successive figurations of contemporary cultural objects on their circulation flows are apparent and worthy of analysis in terms of a paradigm shift in understanding pop culture and culture industry. The deformation, reformation, and transformation of cultural objects imbued by social imagination and capitalistic fetish especially in the age of globalisation and digitalisation thus become an essential interrogation. In this regard, Hallyu could be explained rather differently.

One interesting concept from the research in *Global Culture Industry* is a new term ‘media-exchange’ (Lash and Lury, 2007: 205). ‘Media-exchange’ is different from ‘commodity-exchange,’ which is a traditional, dominant idea of economic exchange. Lash and Lury’s suggestion to recognise this unique feature of socio-economic give-and-take called the media-exchange sheds light on what makes and enhances recent global cultural sensations, including the Korean Wave. In order to apply the perspective of the global culture

Globes and Foam, in which he describes the human space that represents the true unity of *Blasen* (Bubbles) from a multi-focal perspective; precisely, as a form of ‘network’ in ‘*Schaum* (Foam)’, which has topological, anthropological, immunological, and semiotic aspects.

industry in this thesis, the meaning of *chehom*(체/험)¹¹—should be also introduced. Different from *Gyeong-heom*(경험), *Che-heom* signifies a more sensory, lively inner understanding of experience, yet *Gyeong-heom* means knowledge or experience gained by the rational result of looking, hearing or feeling (*Korean Dictionary*, 2004). Here, *Che* (體) means body, but *Gyeong* (經) means acquired knowledge, while *Heom* (驗) means experience. *Che-heom* could thus be regarded as embodied experience integrating both prehension and projection.

Contemporary culture is often practically approached through added, expanded or exteriorised experiences in a sense of *Che-heom*. The use of 3D and 4D cinema and hologram concerts shows the growing emphasis on *Che-heom*. Additionally, digital depth and layer in digital cameras as well as the editing tools *Photoshop*, *After Effect*, or *Final Cut Pro*, are fast becoming a widespread algorithmic practice, depending more and more on *Che-heom* rather than *Gyeong-heom*. Furthermore, people's practices for contemporary cultural production recreate what Walter Benjamin called 'aura' (1991) in personal spatio-temporality below the nature of digital technology. Now, digital technology and programming industry work off of psychic, collective memory. It is much like a privatised originality derived from *Che-heom* over global cultural objects' circulations. In other words, the work of cultural (re)production is not merely for mechanical reproduction of inert objects any more, but more for practical remediation of living objects. Therefore, even audiences' bodies become objectified subjects and subjectified objects as far as their bodies keep standing on the ground of the material/capitalistic domain, capable of navigating or travelling to a privatisable aura for

¹¹ '*Che-heom*' means a vivid body experience with a short-term mental process, yet '*Gyeong-heom*' is considered knowledge or function gained by the comprehensive, longer-term result of looking, hearing, or experiencing.

another capitalistic exploitation. In this regard, the contemporary culture industry has had a continuous supplement that is hard to observe through the traditional industrial process of exchange value, and thus the global culture industry research should focus on the something beyond commodity-exchange and representation.

3.4 Gift-exchange

Finally, gift-exchange needs to be reviewed to explain something beyond commodity-exchange in contemporary culture industry. Marcel Mauss (1976) was the first to describe the ideas of gift-exchange and gift-economy. Mauss defines gift-exchange a reciprocally exchanged object, more than an equivalent capitalistic exchange. The key here is a mutual obligation and appreciation of gifts, generated with the spirit (Mauss, *ibid*: 16) to be the subject of communication as well as a source of energy in natural flows, similar to the East Asian concept of *Gi* (氣) or *Yeong-hon* (靈魂).

Mauss explains that gift-exchange has brought a sense of sociality through the continuous process of giving-and-getting of the spirit. In East Asian culture and society, the spirit or *Hon* (魂) is considered something not disappearing but moving. For instance, it is common for regional people to open house doors, as to encounter wandering souls during ancestral rites. Souls are also believed to significantly influence not only morality and religion but also economy and politics. In Confucianism, Buddhism, and Zen Taoism the East Asian concept of *Gong* (空) or emptiness, is treated as the foundation of everyday life, and the world is understood as the stable, intermingled unity of heaven, earth, and man (Varela, 1991; J.S. Park, 2017). According to this tradition, nature is treated as the combined universe of the

elements yin and yang,¹² and human beings exist in-between the two as a state of eternal flux.¹³ Thus, humans are a locus for balancing the elements by appropriately communicating the freely moving energy or *Gi*. Specifically in Zen thought, man and nature are understood as a deeply saturated unity (*합일*, *合一*) and the relationship between soulless objects and life is viewed similarly. Put simply, there has been no specific *a priori* being between nature and humans, subject and object, living and dead, or in and out, in East Asian philosophy (Varela, 1991; S.K. Chang, 2005). This aspect seems thus applicable in terms of no division between interiority and exteriority for constituting a continual flow in the spaces of culture.

According to Mauss, the term '*hau*' (1976: 14) describes a kind of spirit existing inside an object trajectory throughout a community ritual and celebrative festive practice called 'potlatch.' Similarly, Polynesian '*mana*' (ibid: 9) also refers to a spiritual authority together with a source of wealth. Following Mauss' ethnographic research, gift-exchange was especially important for the native tribes in gaining social stability. Moreover, gifts' donors sometimes even destroyed their wealthy property to show off their sincerity in a form of symbolic consumption or distribution, thus interestingly obtaining collective respect from the gift receiver. Customarily, this behaviour brought them social prestige in return. However, North American states have banned these communal festivals. Regarding a powerful regulation to prohibit these historical social gatherings, the US Indian act states that, "Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as 'Potlatch' or the Indian dance known as the 'Tamana' is guilty of a misdemeanour, and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not more than six nor less than two months in any goal or other place of confinement; and, any Indian or other person who encourages, either

¹² Yin and yang means negative and positive.

¹³ Flux means 'lived experiences' here.

directly or indirectly, an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same, or who shall assist in the celebration of same is guilty of a like offence, and shall be liable to the same punishment.” (US The Indian Act, 1884).

The gift-exchange is thus understood as opposed Western modernism and capitalism in that obligation from gift-exchange would threaten capitalistic principles. Therefore, these anti-modernistic cultures were mostly doomed to extinction in a way in which capitalism was deeply implicated.¹⁴ Paradoxically, if the festive ritual exchange system still existed, it could bring a meaningful insight of what ‘*hau*’ or ‘*mana*’ is about in a contemporary sense. Is it a phenomenon that only happens in small groups/territories of self-sufficient economy based on low-level productivity like north-western American tribes as Marshall Sahlins (1974) argues? If not, then what is the present relationship between this gift-exchange and the global digital culture?

There is no such thing as a purely free commodity or gift even in digital networking spaces. Instead, it is commonly believed that skilful marketing strategies simulate free items in various market environments¹⁵. However, in digital media culture, there exist a unique type of gift, which has generated endless, ubiquitous giving and getting. Given that digital objects can be understood as continuously transforming entities in their unique circulation flows in digital network spaces, the ‘digital objects (Y. Hui, 2011)’ are essentially temporal, indeterminate and meta-stabilising processes, relations, or spaces. Thus, digital gifts have a double effect of remedy and dependence at the same time. In this regard, digital gifts are a kind of pharmakon.¹⁶ Contemporarily, digital gifts are actively circulated to users with

¹⁴ A number of cases of Western ethnocidal and genocidal executions in the world came from the similar reason.

¹⁵ See Chris Anderson (2009) for more information including ‘long tail method.’

¹⁶ This double nuance exists in German as well where *Gift* means both a thing given and poison.

indeterminate functions of reliving, healing or desiring them. That is indeed a typical feature of what the global culture industry tries to actively incorporate for maximising profits, as Lash and Lury (2007) clearly articulate. As East Asian society is generally defined as ‘trans-society’ (W. Hui, 2011) on its own mutual circulatory tribute traditions, the gift in Asia also means an indeterminate thing, entity, or heart embracing part of the self. This kind of recursive aspect from the gift becomes distinctive in the global culture circulation, especially Hallyu objects in digital media spaces.

While Mauss tries to read unique economic principles in this non-economic phenomenon, Georges Bataille attempts to find non-economic social formations in a form of ‘pure gift’ beyond the economic logic in his consumption-oriented perspective of ‘general-economy’ (1989:9)¹⁷. However, Derrida (1992) criticises that the pure gift is impossible from the phenomenal perspective, as far as it is not completely forgettable. Here, he says “... gift-giving is impossible because its mere appearance as a gift puts it automatically in the cycle of repayment of debt’ (Derrida, 1992: 39). Thus, Bataille’s idea of a pure gift is something impossible for Derrida. Yet indeed, Bataille already stresses that the appearance of a pure gift is only possible in the space of its ‘ubiquity and cornucopia’ (1989: 23).

Interestingly, Bataille and Derrida’s conflictual attention toward both a pure gift and its abundance is now becoming applicable to digital spaces where global cultural objects are being widely circulated through their unique exchange-system and their transductive, topological features. In digital milieus, Derrida’s supposition of the impossibility of transitional temporality of gifts becomes more and more possible, requiring more engagement with understanding of ‘gifts’ in the digital age. In this regard, the philosophical concept of the pure-gift now seems to resurface in the global circulation of cultural objects.

¹⁷ Currently, the mainstream view is production-oriented ‘limited-economy.’

The unprecedented phenomenon of digitalisation and globalisation where people have multi-sensing, multi-subjectified experiences with digital objects via digital milieus like YouTube requires an interrogation of the concept of modern day gifts. This is to be thoroughly dealt with later in the thesis.

Chapter 4: Hallyu's Media Interdependency

Previous frameworks of cultural studies, as analysed in the literature review, have paved the way for future cultural research by examining a cultural work in terms of its message, content, and reception. However, attention has been recently called to a circular, multi-directional relationship between the consumer and the producer/manufacturer. In the age of globalisation, it is no longer sufficient to analyse a cultural production simply by its own body and content, but one must also take into account the response of the consumer and the cyclical relationship between producer, mediator, and consumer.

Due to the constant change occurring in this cyclical relationship between consumer and product, it is difficult to refer to Hallyu as a fixed, static object. Therefore, it is necessary to understand culture through the lens of 'cultural topology.' Similar to topology¹⁸, cultural topology supposes that within a culture, there is an identifiable, fixed core, but surrounding this core is a constantly reshaping and reforming, amorphous body, composed of various forces that shape each other through an infinite amount of mutual interactions and exchanges.

This chapter will interrogate the Korean drama and pop-music industries in the way that they simultaneously shape and complement each other for the ease of topological deformations. On one hand, Korean television dramas shape and are shaped by the music and advertising industries, and on the other, K-pop shapes and is shaped by televisuality and newly evolved content sharing platforms. Though the complexities of these relationships are generally welcomed as a sign of modernity, these evolutions are not entirely unproblematic.

¹⁸ Topology is a branch of mathematics that studies continuity and connectivity. It is concerned with the qualitative properties of certain objects that are invariant under continuous deformations (homeomorphic). Deformations involve the stretching and pulling of one shape into another without having to cut and/or glue or stitch parts together (Parisi, 2013: 267).

4.1 Korean TV Drama and Industry

Drama and Music

Although Korean TV dramas may seem to be experienced primarily through visuality, there is an equally influential layer of audio underneath the surface. Though the beautiful scenery and perfectly sculpted actors tell a powerful story of cosmopolitan glamor, meticulously crafted music works hand-in-hand with imagery to complete the story. In analysing Korean television dramas and the telecoms industry, we should contemplate a key concept: the TV screens as a space of ‘convergence (Jenkins, 2006)’.

Since the late 1990s in Korea, the dramatised music video has been highly popular and has played an influential role in Korean TV drama production environments. The music video was so popular and influential, especially in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first century, that it would almost always featured in the final moments of a TV drama and other types of television shows. Interestingly, the first music video in Korea was made by the singer Lee Soo-Man (D.H. Kim, 2015: 32), a legendary founder and current chairperson of SM Entertainment (henceforth SME), one of South Korea’s biggest entertainment companies.

However, such popular dramatised music videos were steadily left behind in the midst of the first decades of the twenty-first century. This disappearance resulted from the fact that the K-pop industry slowly expanded its power to the production of TV content through horizontal consolidations with TV drama production companies.¹⁹ This strategic decision aimed to

¹⁹ SM Entertainment merged with C&C and IAM Entertainment in one notable case. There were many similar cases, such as IHQ (Sidus HQ), Ye-Dang Company, Loen Entertainment, Core Content Media, Cube Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment (see D.Y. Lee, 2010). Now in 2013, K-pop’s leading company, SM Entertainment, directly produces many terrestrial TV dramas including ‘*Miss Korea (2013)*’, aired by MBC and ‘*Prime Minister and Me (2013)*’ by KBS.

further deepen the interdependency of drama on music and to provide audiences with a multi-sensory experience in less obvious forms than the music video. It then became more natural for the music industry to pay special attention to the production of drama content by smoothly infusing it with musical content.

The consolidation of visual imagery and music in drama production was financially motivated; it was a consolidation through which media-infused content production would accrue more profit than drama, music or music video production alone. In a well-known case, Pan Entertainment, the producer behind the legendary Korean drama *Winter Sonata*, was originally a music planning company that had no previous experience of TV drama production. The chairman of the company, Park Young-Seok, confirms in his media interview that the company did not even know about TV drama production when they made the famous drama (*MK Daily*, 2011).

Aside from the quality of the content, many aspects of the production process were very unusual. First, the production company, Pan Entertainment had been a Korean pop music publisher for a long time. Chairman Park in *MK Daily* (ibid) thus noted that, “originally, this drama was produced focusing on the OST album sales rather than drama itself.” Ultimately, this approach proved effective. Furthermore, Pan Entertainment struggled with budgeting from the beginning stages of production, because of its lack of experience in TV drama production, causing it to attempt to hold the Japanese copyright for themselves without any special consideration (*MK Daily*, bid). According to KBS drama producer Kim Hyeong-Suk, KBS, as commissioner of the drama series, made a quick, easy response, approving to Pan Entertainment all the Japanese rights, as the broadcaster had no confidence in decent overseas sales, especially in Japan, considering that the only sales points of Korean TV industry were Southeast Asia rather than Japan at that time. In the meantime, the transferred copyright

played a big role in the continuous success of this content in Japan. Of course, this practice of transferring copyright to drama production companies from broadcasters almost disappeared permanently. In the end, the situations contributing to the success of the programme were mostly accidental, unprecedented and self-evolving.

At the same time, idolised K-pop singers are easily invited to take on leading roles in TV dramas, although they have relatively little acting experience. What the production companies expect in this abnormal, unbalanced production situation is synergic or transmutable power from embedded audio-visuality and affectivity from the content. In this situation, it becomes natural that the major entertainment companies like SME, possessing their own musical sources, star powers and markets, become the only available and reliable force in production sector. Selling and marketing drama content is relatively easy for the entertainment company with its circulation power.

Advertising and Dramas

In Korean broadcasting environments, drama production is still robustly dominated by the main terrestrial broadcasters and reliant on various direct and indirect sponsorships (i.e., product placement) for the majority of its income. Terrestrial channels do not give sufficient budget to Korean dramas, so they are forced to seek money from advertisers eager to sell their products to a global audience (*Dong-A Ilbo*, July 1, 2013). The advertising sphere shapes what content emerges from Hallyu dramas, and the romantic, sensual images of Hallyu create demand for Korean products overseas in a topological, amorphous relationship.

Despite the Korean government's various policy drives, the production budgets from commissioning broadcasters have traditionally been very low, causing production companies to borrow the bulk of the production budget through state-owned finance companies such as

the Korea Technology Finance Corporation (KBS, 2012). This situation differs from the US, where major studios are in charge of almost all production costs, and the UK, where production budgets are an average of 20 times higher than those in Korea (KBS, 2013). Domestic TV drama production companies, which are mostly smaller in size than broadcasters, thus have no choice but to rely on these additional revenues with a focus on product placement, because actual production costs are much higher than the budgets allocated by broadcasters (*Dong-A Ilbo*, *ibid*). In consequence, it has become more and more important that Korean dramas concentrate on urban, local settings and stories with relevant music, which attracts the music industry to participate and allows producers to secure valuable funding from government finance corporations. Ms. A (who asked to remain anonymous), who is in charge of a business which focuses on financing the culture industry, recounted a recent financing of a Hallyu drama: “Recently, we [a state-owned finance company] agreed to fund the popular Hallyu drama *Iris 2* by KBS, and the amount we contributed [by government guarantee fund] was more than 1 billion Korean Won [880,000 USD], making up a significant portion of the budget. The production company also has to find support from elsewhere, perhaps from government institutions such as Culture Promotion Fund or KOCCA [the Korea Creative Content Agency]. It’s very difficult to raise funds now, especially for Korean Wave dramas. So this institutional production financing process is very helpful for broadcasters, drama production companies, and the government. Most of all, the risk assurance for us is almost close to zero, because we recover the full amount directly through the bank designated by the commissioning broadcaster, KBS, with an agreement from the production company, Tae-Won Entertainment. Thus, compared to the film industry, where income is generated differently and unpredictably, we are in favour of extending the amount of support to TV drama production, since Hallyu dramas, in particular,

offer the surest warranties.” (Interview with Ms. A, Korean Government officer)

Indeed, government financial institutions guarantee almost all the production costs proposed by the broadcaster before the actual production stage, and production companies usually spend a significant part of the amount just to make the first two to four episodes. Kim Kyung-Mi, a producer at Kim Jong-Hak Productions (the most successful drama production company in Korea), explained one aspect of drama production in her luxury office in Cheong-dam-dong, Gang-nam, in Seoul: “In fact, we don’t normally have difficulties in the production and scheduling of dramas. However, we put our head on the block for the first two episodes of the drama. It is a general pattern that the first audience ratings endure to the end. As such, almost all drama producers utilise overseas shooting, placing a diversity of striking visual, musical elements in the first few episodes. Furthermore, the first 2 to 4 episodes are usually the only prior-production content secured in the broadcasters’ time-slot, which means broadcasters allocate the dramas’ regular scheduling based on the quality and response of the first part of the drama. In this regard, there are many variables from the fifth episode to the last in which flows and stories change suddenly. This would explain the most important task for the producers is to maintain audiences’ attention on the whole flow, simultaneously reducing production costs remained. The production cost of the first four episodes usually takes up more and more of the total production budget, sometimes over 60% in severe cases. Drama production is a battle of the beginning.” (Interview with Kim Kyung-mi, producer at KJH Productions in Seoul)

Drama financing, then, can be largely separated into two halves – a blockbuster, sensational beginning, which exhausts a disproportionately large amount of funds to draw in viewers, and the remaining soap opera style episodes of the series, which rely on product placement and advertisers to make up for the budget deficit. This means that the soap opera

elements, which are significantly cheaper than the more blockbuster style elements, balance the budget throughout the course of production. That is a generalised production practice in Korea whereby production and broadcasting proceed almost simultaneously. While more than half of the total budget is usually poured into the production of the first 2–4 episodes, the top priority of TV drama producers is to take audience ratings as early as possible as producer Kim said. Consequently, early parts of the production are focused on enhancing the richness of the audio-visual senses, while the later parts focus on maintaining other narrative factors like humanity and family stories. The exciting, blockbuster soap opera thus becomes a predictable drama content by this unusual yet distinct production pattern to the Korean Wave.

Understandably, the shortage for the rest of the episodes' production created by explosive beginnings demands a strong amount of secondary fundraising, such as product placement and music source marketing. In the event that drama goes over-budget, broadcasters (e.g., KBS) pay off the allocated production budget after broadcasting the contents directly to the governmental financial institutions that originally lent money. Thus, the only way for drama producers to make profit for themselves and their company rests on largely uncertain environments, such as product placement, music sales, or star marketing²⁰.

According to many internal producers in Korean public broadcasters, when the TV drama scheduling (commissioning) is set up by Korean broadcasters, the government provides the producers with initial support for production costs through indirect channels such as the Ministry of Culture, KOCCA, or the Korea Technology Finance Corporation. Therefore, there is no financial difficulty in the production sector at this stage. However, the government encourages independent production companies to ride on the surge of the Korean Wave

²⁰ Korean drama production companies normally spend at least 5 billion won (4.5 million dollars) for a new drama, but they begin the production with a starting capital of less than 100 million won (89,000 U.S. dollars). (*Dong-A Ilbo*, July 1, 2013)

productions, rather than increase production budgets allotted by broadcast companies or capitalise more off of international viewers. This puts the producers in further financial difficulties, because the producers are left to the risky business of achieving economic success for a production mainly through secondary, auxiliary means in the industrial atmosphere of culture production.²¹ Thus, stability, and not profit, is often considered as a primary goal to these production sectors. Ironically, this necessity for multi-layered capitalistic engagement in drama-making has been seen as a sign of the renaissance of the Korean Wave for the government and public broadcasters. At the same time, these unstable situations stand as an increasing threat to production companies, which are often accused of underpaying staff and minor actors (*Dong-A Ilbo*, July 1, 2013) .

The involvement of advertisers and the need for their money reinforces the identity of Korean dramas and their distinct ‘Asianness.’ The need for Korean dramas to appeal to consumers and potential advertisers is responsible for the sterile, palatable themes of traditional Confucian family values and love stories (J.S. Park, 2017). In contrast to the images portrayed by dramas, in Korea, Confucianism is largely considered to be an outdated philosophy, with Christianity taking its place in the popular consciousness. Yet, despite Korea’s heavy Christian presence, Christian themes and rituals almost never appear in Korean dramas. This is because Korean drama producers are aware of their multinational, trans-border, mostly Asian audience, who continue to watch and consume Korean dramas precisely because of their ‘Asianness.’ Thus, the need for money from outside sources creates the constant stream of traditional Asian themes and content.

Audiences and Drama

²¹ Sadly, Kim Jong-Hak, a producer of many globally hit Hallyu dramas, committed suicide due to financial problems caused by his last drama *The Great Doctor* in 2013.

East Asian drama audiences have responded deeply and personally to their favourite programs, to the extent that they can now be viewed as co-writers, as important and influential as the drama producers themselves (H.S. Kim, 2005). Viewers make live contributions to the drama production process not only through voluntary practices such as bulletin board, public opinion polls, and audience ratings, but also in fused ways such as various on-offline gatherings and collective activities. Global Hallyu fans are normally aware of this production procedure, following the production process at near instant speeds for their own satisfactions.

As many of interviewees agreed, Korean TV dramas are actually regarded as living things for them. As a result, it is common to see the story or schedule of a drama significantly affected by audience intervention. In this regard, Korean TV dramas have become a kind of open, fusion drama with the audiences' spatio-temporal co-writing power. In a case similar to Korean dramas, Telenovelas in South America have no final storylines, as the conclusion based on audience reaction (Tufte, 2008). Though telenovelas usually air 20–30 pre-produced episodes with the drafted scripts ready for 15–20 more episodes, Korean dramas generally prepare only 2-4 pre-produced episodes, with more opportunity for fan co-writing for almost all of the remaining season. This level of audience engagement and co-writing is exclusive to Korean TV dramas.²²

The popularity of certain PPL products could also influence a change of story or plot in Korean drama production. Furthermore, the original story is able to be still further changed, trimmed, or extended even after finishing a drama schedule by broadcasters for another sale. Actually, the drama content is no longer a fixed, settled media material, but just a continual

²² even live music, dance, and theatre performances scarcely play with this type of direct audience intervention.

process or relation in Korea. Surprisingly enough, this mode of simultaneously²³ making and transmitting live TV dramas was derided until quite recently in both academia and industry at least before the Korean drama syndrome from the early twenty-first century. This neglect was regarded as a sign of the deteriorating quality of Korean TV dramas. However, this living production method is now suddenly overstated as ‘positive potential’ (H.S. Kim, 2005) by showing the productive benefits of temporal, transmutable media objects, but also as something creative in co-evolving production flows.

4.2 Korean Pop Music and Industry

Just as the Korean TV industry is related to the music, advertising, and fandom sectors, Korean pop music has been connected to Korean ‘televisuality (Y.J. Won, 2011).’ By adopting TV content’s appealing visuals, Korean pop music has gradually shifted on its sensory axis, taking on the capacity for listeners to see and imagine rather than merely to listen.

Though the successful idol boy-bands and girl groups are (mostly) talented singers, much of the attention directed towards these singers stems from their looks, dances or personality. The three leading pop music planning companies (i.e., talent agencies), SM Entertainment (SME), YG Entertainment (YGE) and JYP Entertainment (JYPE), who churn out pop stars as quickly as the public can consume them, spend a large amount of resources calculating and shaping this sphere of visibility. Sales and figures naturally follow this shift from sound to sight. Though the music industry focused on CD sales for a long time, this figure has sharply declined by 83% from 2000-2007 (MCST, 2009). Meanwhile, idol concert tickets sell for

²³ The mega-hit Korean drama *My Love from The Star* (2014) was globally broadcasted exactly simultaneously to not only all Korean but also other Asian audiences, notably Chinese audiences.

over \$200, idol-themed cell phone cases have become common across East Asia, and dinner dates with idols can sell for upwards of \$6,000 (Daum News, June 7, 2012). It is clear that visuals are now equally or more important than audio in the Kpop world.

Televisuality and K-pop

Korean pop music and the K-pop industry (as well as Korean dramas) have had a big impact on other consumer industries, such as food, fashion, beauty, and even medical services like plastic surgery. Consumers now imitate and follow everything related to their favourite K-pop idols; due to their dynamic performances, good-looking faces and stylish music, K-pop singers become unimaginably impressive figures, breaking language barriers for overseas fans. According to an government international survey about Hallyu (KOFICE, 2017), most of global K-pop fans answered that the good looks of the singers together with music and dance are the core reasons that they love K-pop.

Music is functioning here as a continuous supplement to the imaginary. In this regard, the image of the performers is the most essential quality in Korean pop music (D.Y. Lee, 2011). Here, the stars are literally ‘idols’ – something for the audience to aspire to become (D.Y. Lee, *ibid*). Following those arguments, it can be said that K-pop phenomenon is clearly disclosing the feature of a figural, makeup culture. In K-pop, idol stars and their music content are always converged for easy deformation and reformation with the imaginary. Consequentially, individuals in the idol teams are commonly treated as less important and non-essential components that can be easily replaced to create a new image (D.H. Kim, 2015).

Furthermore, K-pop culture, mixed with production technology of Western pop music, seems quite different from the K-drama culture in terms of exhibiting Asian values. Indeed, the format of K-pop is closely influenced by modern Western pop music; however, it

becomes rather differentiated by its televisuality as it constantly evolves to fit a changing environment. As seen above, K-pop has been mainly embedded in most Korean TV programmes in diverse ways since the late 1990s due to the needs of the broadcasting industry. With this inherent style of televisuality, K-pop is taken for granted as being so dynamic, fast, and colourful that it allures and strengthens more connections with a variety of genres rather than strengthening the pop music genre itself.

Manufacturing an Image

The visual formation of K-pop idol groups has gradually changed in accordance with the progress of digital tele-visual technologies such as large flat TV screens, high quality sound, information technology and personal media devices. Above all, expansion and diversification of media content became common as the types of hit music were significantly influenced and transformed by the need to relay choreographed movement on a TV screen for visual effect (D.Y. Lee, 2010).

As a result of bigger or smaller displays and more visual interactions, the average number of members in an idol group increased from three or four to over fifteen. For example, the boy band Super Junior has thirteen members, and girl groups like Girls Generation, T-Ara and After School have nine members. In addition, as new media formats and services continued to emerge, the formation of idol groups required a fine-grained functional division of roles. According to SME internal training guideline (D.H. Kim, 2015), there are four roles in a K-pop group (main vocal, sub-vocal, main dancer, and rapper) as well as transformable 'unit system of SMP (SM Performance)' (D.H. Kim, *ibid*). Specific duties are sometimes expanded to include the area of image, humour, and personality. For instance, in the K-pop girl group Girls Generation, a leader (Tae-yeon) is a main vocalist, and other members

(Jessica, Hyo-yeon and Yu-ri) are sub vocal, main dancer, and rapper. The audio-visual side is also influenced by the aspect of music composition. As a result, it has become formulaic that the introduction part of a song exposes all the members to the TV screen while they first dance together, and as the song goes on, the main vocal, sub vocal and rap section are revealed one by one with a well-organised choreography. In other words, the structure of a typical TV appearance determines the structure of the music. This strategy is known as ‘music by marketing an image (Willoughby, 2006).’ The below table shows the units of SME boyband Super Junior as a case.

[Table 6. Super Junior members’ unit activity plan. Source: D.H. Kim (2015: 148)]

Real name	Stage name	Year of birth	Scope of activity	Unit activity	Position in the band
Park Jung-soo	Yituk	1985	MC, DJ	Super Junior-T Super Junior-HAPPY	Leader
Kim Hee-chul	Heechul	1983	MC, DJ, Actor (drama, musical)	Super Junior-T	Sub-vocal Sub-rapper
Kim Jong-woon	Yesung	1984	Musical, Actor, DJ	Super Junior-K,R,Y Super Junior-HAPPY S.M. THE BALLAD	Min-vocal
Kim Young-woon	Gangin	1985	Actor (musical, film, drama),	Super Junior-T Super Junior-	Sub-vocal

			DJ, MC	HAPPY	
Shin Dong-hee	Shindong	1985	MC, DJ	Super Junior-T Super Junior- HAPPY	Main-rapper Lead-dancer
Lee Sung-min	Sungmin	1986	DJ, Actor (drama, musical)	Super Junior-T Super Junior- HAPPY Super Junior-M	Lead-vocal Lead-dancer
Lee Hyuk-jae	Eunhyuk	1986	MC, DJ, Actor (musical)	Super Junior-T Super Junior- HAPPY Super Junior-M Super Junior- D&G	Lead-rapper Main-dancer
Choi Si-won	Siwon	1986	Actor (drama, film), Model	Super Junior-M	Sub-vocal
Lee Dong-hae	Donghae	1986	Actor (film, drama)	Super Junior-M Super Junior- D&G	Sub-vocal Sub-rapper Lead-dancer
Kim Reo-uk	Reouk	1987	DJ, Actor (musical)	Super Junior- K,R,Y Super Junior-M	Main-vocal
Cho Gyu-hyun	Gyuhyun	1988	Actor (musical)	Super Junior- K,R,Y Super Junior-M	Main-vocal
Kim Ki-bum	Kibum	1987	Actor (drama)		Main-rapper Sub-dancer Sub-vocal

Han Kyung (withdrawal)	Hankyung	1984	Actor (film)		
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As in another example below, it becomes feasible for K-music fans to witness as a sincere, special K-pop image the crossover of all the mature artists belonging to the same entertainment company at the same time on the same stage. For an example, at the 2010 christmas concert, JYPE members created 23 different combinations through their 27 songs, which challenged the boundaries of members, gender, hierarchy, and characters in original performances. This archi-Live Aid collaboration concert, named JYP TEAMPLAY, provided its 12,000 audience members with several hours of non-stop entertainment, together with live media transmission. This mass media event, TEAMPLAY, as the title describes, illustrates how K-pop objects are smoothly de/re/trans-formed toward differences. The brand, JYP, like others, is circulating like a concept of a nation/state in global consumption flows, with a unique imaginary. It is continuously differentiated through liveness not only on actual stages but also through individual mediality surrounding the spaces.

“The most anticipated end-of-year event is here! No, it isn’t Christmas: its JYP NATION’S first ever, ‘TEAMPLAY’ Concert! The concert is to be held at the Olympic Gymnastics Stadium in Seoul at 7:30PM on Christmas Eve! A total of 27 songs will be performed at the concert. Themed as ‘TEAMPLAY,’ the JYP NATION artistes, Park Jin-Young (JYP), Wonder-Girls, 2PM, Miss A, San E, JOO and Lim Jeong-Hee mixed themselves up and formed ‘new’ groups to perform one another’s songs. The special guests are later revealed to be Rain, Son Ho-Young, and Kim Tae-Woo from G.O.D. [former JYP artists]. The Wonder Girls also get to perform on their own tracks, such as ‘Nobody’, ‘2 Different Tears’ and ‘Tell Me’ which are performed together with Miss A and Joo.”
(Advertising from the JYPE.com site, last accessed in May 2011)

"The United Cube concert is a special chance for me because it is almost impossible to see all the Cube Entertainment singers on one stage, especially here in London. I was so nervous and impressed. I took a photo and recorded the entire live performance with my own voice-over in the O2 in Brixton in South London. I'm going to come again to this kind of 'family' concert, maybe to the SM Town concert, to make my own history in 2012."
(Interview with Lin, 23, College student in London)

K-pop and Celebrity Factory

Indeed, the Korean music industry ironically makes stars and culture (i.e., not music) as a consequence of music's intertwined relationship with televisuality. Korean talent agencies turned themselves into idol factories to more efficiently produce K-pop groups. They built dormitories in the trendy Gangnam district and provided classes in acting, voice, and hip-hop dancing, recruiting hopefuls as young as nine years old to train in the fine art of pop stardom. In his special TV documentary for KBS (2007), JYP, head of one of the largest talent agencies in Korea, estimates that he spends up to a half million dollars for each team's debut over several years. In the case of his company, all celebrities begin their careers at the JYP Academy, also in Gangnam, that shapes raw talent into well-trained entertainers in a kind of apprenticeship. The star academy does not just provide instructional programs, but also teaches the ways and disciplines of celebrity life; everything from singing, dancing, acting for musicals, dramatic performance and even sex education (*TV Report*, 2012). Most of the hundred-or-so stars of the future are admitted before the age of 15 for a minimum of four-to-seven years' training, living together in dormitories covered with some part of expenses, clothing, travel, and personal allowances by the academy. One trainee K-pop performer commented in an interview in this research: "I found out the monthly training cost was \$500 and I was like "Oh my God, how am I supposed to pay for that?" So I started working.

For me, it will take about three years more to prepare for our debut. From the beginning of our band's composition, I have been in charge of rap, dance, and humour. That was the result of meetings and discussion between my company [a K-pop planning company] and me. Based on the opinions of all our stakeholders such as the company executives, manager, trainer and makeup artist etc, members continue to be changed and replaced as time goes by. Our band was initially made up of five members, yet now we have twelve. However, we don't even know when we will officially debut yet sadly....." (Interview with Jeon, Se-Jin, K-pop idol group member—trainee)

Transforming raw teenage talent into cultural products becomes a brutal business in South Korea. The interviewed trainee says that exclusive contracts still lock their team in for up to thirteen years and impose bans on cell phone use, dating, internet access, and the outside world in general. Furthermore, the trainees in the K-pop talent agency frequently are forced to opt for plastic surgery as one popular procedure, the double eyelid-tuck/nose job otherwise known as the 'K-pop Combo.' Though the lives of K-pop trainees, who are subjected to endless training for a debut that will likely never come, seem sad, it is unquestionable that these tactics are effective at creating international stars. Many Taiwanese K-pop, for instance, responded in this research that the South Korean stars' strong and self-confident images had made them curious about Korean society, and that this curiosity had led them to find out more about Korean pop culture.

What exactly are these self-confident images Taiwanese interviewees are referring to? In contrast to the conservative, Confucian images of Korean dramas, K-pop stars are famous for their enormous sex appeal. Zhao, a journalist for a gossip magazine in Taiwan, interestingly, intimated this as follows: "The image of Korean music is very strong and projects musicians'

self-confidence too much. Just like their nationalism, they [K-pop singers] are always muscular, sexual, energetic and confident.” (Interview with Zhao Shin, 32, Taiwan magazine journalist)

Her interview texts offer some speculation for the underlying reason for the regional popularity of K-pop, and especially K-pop idols. Exaggerated masculinity and sexualised images proved to be a success visual strategy in selling these celebrities, but does the use of this tactic in tandem with conservative dramas create an additional, invisible effect? The polarisation of conservative dramas and unapologetically sexual K-pop presents an interesting opportunity for further research in the future.

K-pop Stars and TV Dramas

It wasn't long before K-pop attempted to piggyback off of the success of K-dramas. In a familiar form of intermixing of media, idols starring in reality-TV dramas has become a common strategy in idol image-making. In a well-known example, YG Entertainment produced and released a reality TV show *Real Docu Big Bang*, filming the idol group of the same name in their apprentice stage during their everyday lives. *Real Docu Big Bang* was so sensational that it hit a record 100 million views only two weeks after its online release, and the program was soon re-run by cable TV networks due to its immense popularity (W.J. Cha and J.S. Choi , 2011). Global MTV channels and media conglomerates would later broadcast this content in fifteen other Asian countries in 2007. Once Big Bang officially debuted in 2009, the success of *Real Docu Big Bang* was then revisited under the new programme *Big Bang: The Beginning* (W.J. Cha and J.S. Choi , *ibid*). Such cases have been already common in most Korean planning companies. Indeed, JYP entertainment recruited their new idol bands 2AM and 2PM through similar reality TV programming, as well as countless other

successful groups. Viewers are no longer satisfied with merely idol performances, but must also see them in their everyday lives.

This dramatised ‘fake-reality’ is an enormous asset to the K-pop industry, as the lives of idol member trainees have been transformed into exchangeable goods by the cultural industry. K-pop stars and trainees face endless cameras, bringing their lives into constant digital surveillance from the moment they wake to the moment they sleep. Thus, work and rest become mutually interconnected, so long as cameras continue to commodify every moment. From this standpoint, reality in TV content is no longer ‘real.’

An interview with one idol group member, who wished to remain anonymous, confirms this reality-TV paradox: “When I am really alone, I feel uncomfortable or anxious because I’m so used to thinking that there are cameras anywhere, all the time. Instead, coming back to the main camp [the members’ home] makes me feel better and safer, and I lose the sense of discomfort. So life with a camera is comfortable for me as well as uncomfortable, yet it is everyday life itself.” (Interview with K, an idol group member)

The fact that this kind of media format is successful reveals a disturbing truth about idol fandom: idols’ everyday lives have become fetishized and commodified as a result of the fan obsession. The social imaginary, then, becomes a tool for commercial exploitation, and the victims of this process are the young, teen idols.

K-pop and Digital Free-Music

Critical to K-pop's globalisation was ‘free’ video consumption via YouTube, which conveniently gave Korean pop music a global platform to grow outside of its home market. According to the government research paper (KOFICE, 2017), 47.4% and 49.5% of K-drama and K-pop content global K-wave audiences consumed was from free online sites, (e.g.,

Facebook, Youtube, and Instagram) as of 2016. Domestically, as the Korean music industry rapidly restructured itself through of K-pop planning companies rather than traditional conservative recording corporations, free music became an increasingly viable strategy to market their idols. The K-pop industry thus began to focus on artists' public performance and consumers' public support, much like how things were before the sales of CDs and LPs. In other words, Google and YouTube, rather than record stores, became the new marketplaces for music. The K-pop industry ensured its survival in the era of free music by courting global fans via the hallucinatory, heady space of digital media. Now, it has become very common for people to search for and listen to music on a digital device, causing music producers to collaborate with global media platforms more effectively than with traditional recording industries or music labels.

Eventually in 2012, PSY would make history in global pop music through this platform of 'free' audio-visual marketing. 'Gangnam Style' has been watched almost several billion times on YouTube, which makes PSY a global celebrity, although he and his company didn't even release the song as a material single. Instead, YG as his agency merely depended on YouTube and live performances to promote the song. In other words, PSY focused public attention on startling images through free circulation via YouTube and largely ignored commodity-based copyright revenue or CD sales. PSY spent his last night of 2012 on the central stage of New York with the eyes of hundreds of millions of people on him for a historic 'happy new year' concert, re-confirming his official status as a global star and the enormous success of 'Gangnam Style.'

What Gangnam style and Korean pop music as a whole reflect is that pop-music has once again returned to the (pseudo-) public domain, after just a few decades of existing in the domain of monetised commodities. Moreover, as YouTube-like spaces provide music in video

forms rather than just audio materials, it is now considered for audiences that consuming music in the digital transient situations is regarded as a multi-sensory affective experience. Intermingled with dynamic dance, attractive voice, strong melody and tender rhythms in the so-called free YouTube milieu, K-pop easily breaks down even the mainstream barrier to charm music fans worldwide. When Eric Schmidt, Google's executive chairman, visited Korea to meet the President, Lee Myung-Bak, in 2009, he told the Korean press that Google was pursuing several new plans to help spread Korean cultural content, one of which was the launching of a dedicated K-pop channel (Kyunghyang, November 7, 2011). In a retrospective mind, this was a meaningful moment for both K-pop and Google to be able to experimentally change the traditional (Western) mainstream pop music industry, which largely relied on a few media conglomerates, recording industries and music labels. By the end of 2012, more than five million K-pop music videos had been uploaded to YouTube by fans (YouTube, 2013).

Local K-pop planning agencies, including SME, YGE, and JYPE, have been also actively utilising the digital milieu like YouTube for new economic and promotional purposes. "Uploading one music video on YouTube is better than spending 1 billion KRW (\$1=KRW1,117) for advertising," says Noh Seung-Wook of JYP (*Chosun Ilbo*, November 8 2011). YouTube as a multi-channel network (MCN) allows specific audio-visual materials uploaded by a certain particular company or individual to be gathered in one place. Likewise, K-pop is afforded the status of an independent music section regardless of YouTube music genres. This means that K-pop would be something more than just a music genre or a local sound for Google. In the meantime, the Korean music industry has been fast re-organised with free digital distribution and global fans' embodied consumption. However, K-pop's global dependence on the digital superpower, Google, has become more severe. In this regard,

it becomes urgent to problematise how the networks between Google, K-pop, and some other actors start, develop and progress, given that PSY's 'Gangnam Style' might be the first of many 'Google singles' to come.

4.3 Conclusion

Simply put, the model of Korean TV drama production has been to adopt Korean pop music in a skilful yet subtle way under the glorious name of the drama kingdom. By accommodating powerful visuality, music and unique spatio-temporality, Korean dramas display a very rare and eclectic style of combining formats of both episode dramas (blockbuster style) and soap operas with familiar, Asian themes. Thus, those aspects have less to do with so-called Asian values or creative potential in a broad sense. Instead, Korean TV drama content is well utilised as a distinctive space for referencing collateral, temporal, and embodied flows. The Korean Wave TV dramas become thus suitable for deformation and reformation in a new capitalistic mode of cultural re-production, being actively, economically consumed in various topologically growing global digital atmospheres.

The history of *Hallyu* is generally described as that of Korean artistic expansion to the world. However, Korean pop music and most of the top musicians who tried to reach overseas audiences without the crutch of modern visuality were largely unsuccessful. After the collapse of the traditional, conservative recording industry, image and visuality became the key focus for *Hallyu*, and international acclaim soon followed, bringing a global renaissance for K-pop, introducing the first case of YouTube/Google streaming success.

The mode of current K-pop production could be newly defined as a make-up process, mediated for temporal flux, in which we see a series of networked activities rather than music itself. Likewise, the Korean drama industry is subordinated to the major talent agencies as

much as K-pop is to the broadcasting and digital media industry. As such, the singularity of art and culture becomes industrially, topologically combined through the intervention of global culture and programming industry for various economic, political and cultural purposes. The Korean Wave is a definite case in point. In next chapter, the thesis examines how Korean Wave objects are being circulated for consumers by focusing on the unique exchange-system in its own spatio-temporality.

Chapter 5: The Korean Wave and Media Exchange

The circulation flow of media objects in the Hallyu phenomenon displays distinct particularities. The Korean Wave phenomenon seems to exemplify extraordinary aspects of the exchange value along with consumers' captivated attention in the flows. The 'media-exchange' (Lash, 2007) is a key element of the global culture industry, simply defined here as a unique and evolving process among the subjects, objects, and milieus²⁴. In this chapter, the unique features of the flourishing pop cultural circulation related to the Korean Wave will be examined in terms of its unfamiliar exchange-system.

5.1 Gift Exchange and Media Exchange

"I can always see K-Pop whenever I go to YouTube or Tudou. Otherwise, friends put links on Facebook. In addition, I visit K-Pop fan communities that I belong to whenever I want to see more. Alternatively, I just go to my family's blogs and get information about K-Pop clubbing. Every day I use the internet on my PC, smart phone, tablet, game console, and internet-connected TV to view my favourite K-Pop stars' news and related content. I look and look, but there is no end. To me, it feels like tremendous, infinite present. However, K-Pop is so cool, its quality is high and the songs are superb and lovely. They are very precious, thoughtful emotional gifts for me." (Interview with Sandra, college student, 18, London)

A growing number of global Hallyu fans see Korean Wave objects as familiar but generous

²⁴ The genesis of individuation not only gives rise to the individual but also to its 'milieu' (see Simondon, 2011). The individual remains incomplete, but individuation is always a three-way process: psychic, collective, and technical (thus, the milieu is a kind of meta-space connecting the 'I' to the 'we'). This individual is not only one (unity, totality) but unique (singularity) in terms of *becoming* (see www.arsindustrials.org/glossary) [Last accessed in December 2012].

gifts, especially in digital environments. For them, K-Wave gifts have an important meaning as a part of everyday life. At stake are, above all, the ubiquitous and magical elements of these new kinds of gifts which appear on individual digital gadgets, where people are losing the sense of economic obligation which gifts originally induced.

One significant point in influential anthropologist Marcel Mauss' gift-theory is the sense of obligation with which social benefits and moral obligations had been associated prior to calculable money. Thus, they could be termed as 'communistic' (Graeber, 2010) ways of life. Nevertheless, consumers in the global digital networking spaces,²⁵ such as the internet, disclose a comparable trait that is salient for some prioritised, integrated sense of incalculability and ethics. Thus, they repeat giving/receiving (addressing) and touching/operating (navigating) digital gifts more than buying/selling (contracting) and listening/watching (appreciating) them. Twitter and Facebook users habitually click the 'like' and 'sharing' button, creating their social relationships. If not, they concentrate on expressing their own self-desires on the social networking sites (SNS). Any sense of gifted obligation which existed in the pre-industrial perspective emerges and magically evaporates in the digital era.

Although this insightful interpretation of the gift-exchange (Mauss, 1976) was originally outlined 60 years ago in his observation of the archetypal people's ritual phenomena, it still highlights many of socio-cultural meanings within contemporary spaces, as in Hallyu cases. Intriguingly, Korean Wave audiences still manifest the classic notion of gift-exchange. Even though valuable discussions related to gifts and debts have evolved across diverse areas of academia since the era of Mauss, the core of his idea is definite and clear: there is something

²⁵ In 2017, 50% of the population of the world still did not use the internet (Internet World Stats, 2017).

more than universality and abstraction in the stereotypical economic exchange.

According to Mauss (*ibid*), Native Americans of North West Coast area performed the giving of gifts and sometimes their destruction as a unique way of rearranging the fabric of sociality. Potlatch was in some points a competition of gift-exchanges that always required the other's scrutiny. In addition, it was always accompanied by a liminal sense of 'communitas' (Turner, 1969). In other words, it might take on the character of a potlatch if giving was flaunted in a specific arena. Therefore, potlatch was also a communicational rite. Now, this form has become a common part of the digital pop culture, where consumers have a goal of pursuing status and stability by attracting others' attention by their subjective showing off. Potlatch participants' stable sociality still seems to be reflected in the algorithmic purpose that underpins the modern gift-exchanges such as takes place on Facebook and other SNSs. As Tony Sampson (2012) says the assemblage principle of the online sites such as Twitter and Facebook resembles rhizome-based encounters through the infinite expansion of friends, thus exaggerating positivism in socially positive, 'contagious ways' (Tarde, 1903). The virality of Twitter and Facebook, for example, is a process of creating narcissistic subjectivity (with the Like button, the Like page or the Share features) in constructing detached, temporal 'trans-individuals' (Simondon, 1992). The main force of this encounter, as Tarde points out, is the force of imitation and adaptation by emotional contagion throughout the exchange system. Likewise, the culturalisation of the exchange systems and the lure of the 'desire event' (Sampson, *ibid*) are not fixed and always become mutual selections and adaptations of transmitters and receivers, which also further facilitate the modern gift-exchange. As a result, current digital media culture and its phenomena of abundance, gratuity, and positivism incorporate people into a systematic process, requiring constant attention. In other words, the industrial purpose of contemporary gift-exchange is

ritual control of attention through culturally courting memory and practice.

As in the K-Pop consumption process, the circulation of popular culture, especially in contemporary digital cultural spaces through the gift-exchange, seem quite useless acts in terms of Western utilitarianism. Nevertheless, it is important to understand different systems of capitalistic exchange used by the global culture industry. Thus, the notion of contemporary gift-exchange named the media-exchange (Lash, 2007) could be strongly driven by socio-technological supplements of continuous flows on a global scale.

5.1.1 Gift-Exchange Now

According to mainstream economics, the invention of currency and the circulation of money are something more inevitable and progressive than gift-exchange since the origin of gift-exchange and barter system lies primarily in ancient tribal societies which lacked calculation system such as currency or labour exchange. However, it is already known that gifts, together with debts, have existed historically as an important unit of social accounting for all kinds of obligations, not just as facilitator for currency exchange. In his influential research *Debt* (2012), David Graeber inversely opines that social obligations and values are historically prior to the exchange of goods and currency: “In fact, our standard account of monetary history is precisely backwards. We did not begin with barter, discover money and then eventually develop credit systems. It happened precisely the other way around. What we call virtual money came first. Coins came much later, and their use spread only unevenly, never completely replacing credit systems. Barter, in turn, appears to be largely a kind of accidental by-product of the use of coinage or paper money: historically, it has mainly been what people who are used to cash transactions do when, for one reason or another, they have no access to currency” (Graeber, 2012: 40).

Gift-economy, as Mauss describes it, was generally operated not only between individuals but also between representatives of larger groups, collectively. It is rather unknown yet crucial that the gift-economy was very efficient, reasonable, empirical, and ethical in the context of sociality (Mauss, 1976). These features have resonated through the media-exchange system in the recent digital economy and culture. Empirically, they have been a key component for the success of Korean Wave content not only on Facebook and YouTube, but also on the Chinese-based streaming sites such as Tudou, YouKu, and Sohu. For the K-Wave fans, Korean content is a technical, sincere gift to both the content industry and consumers. Practically to be considered a gift in our everyday lives—although Mauss says there is no universality of gifts—there seems to be three ritual requirements necessary for distinguishing them from inexpensive or free products or common property: 1) removing a price label, 2) wrapping and adding personal value, and then 3) following an exceptional, but pre-planned rite. The procedure of removing a price mark is applicable to this type of technically free content in the global, digital culture space. In addition, the process of wrapping and adding personal value is connected to restoring identity and singularity and, lastly, the liminal ceremony is connected to ensuring a form of deep obligation in a religious sense. If, following Appadurai's flow concept, these gifts also have a form of social life of their own, and these technical, sincere gifts could be understood as those remaining loosely yet independently attached for consumers with a sense of technical attention for further 'phase-shifts' (Stiegler, 2008).

Korean Wave content in digital milieus is a case in point. Korean Wave content is mostly free on YouTube-like online sharing sites. Emblematically, in our minds, it is like a technical acquisition of free newspapers, such as the British tabloid *The Metro*. When obtaining a free paper, people are technically required to be on time and punctual at specific places like a train

station where the paper is distributed. This aspect of technical behaviour can be better described by analysing energy and meta-stability (Simondon, 2011). This technical ‘free’ is also different from Derrida’s concept of ‘free’ as a token of the impossibility of sociality in that these technical requirements for the free, such as vigilance, punctuality, or improvisation, induce personal and collective ‘attention and care’ (Stiegler, 2010, 2011). This is what makes the aspect of technical gifts of media-exchange essential and distinctive, although very common in the global media and culture industry.

Technical attention is, further, none other than another giving process in this temporal exchange process ²⁶ as retention is naturally connected to protention in a Husserlian understanding. In this regard, Korean Wave content has another distinctive feature as sincere gifts in its user-friendly structure (i.e., figural structure, by eluding exchange-value). Such features are well-working to deepen and re-conceptualise the singular object’s forms of life throughout their topological ‘phase-shifts’ (Appadurai, 1996). Accordingly, it becomes very usual for people to enjoy and appreciate the ‘semantic excess’ (Lash, 2012: 261) by exaggerated attention on the digital online spaces. The circulation of Korean pop cultural products is thus mostly based on the concept of sincere free gifts, which require psychic, collective, technological attention and care. The next interviewees show the distinct aspect from the point of view of genuine K-Pop fans: “The reason why I love K-Pop content is rather unusual. For me, this relates to my punctual coordination with technology and the particular form of my participation. I always assess [the subtitles in] Korean content with American subtitles, as one of my duties as part of the fan-community. It’s really fun and makes me happier than any other activity, even though it is just the consumption of visual

²⁶ Protention is the desire, expectation, and possibility of the future, requiring ‘attention’ and ‘retention’. This term is adopted from Husserl (1964).

content.” (Interview with John, 34, freelancer screenwriter in LA) “We try to obtain Hallyu-related information or content not to sell it to others, but to spread it. The large-scale flow and circulation of videos and music is an effect of this collective mode. The consumers’ main motivation for participating in this flow is their own reputation in the process of circulation. ... What we want from these exchanges is not money, but genuine reputation and royalty, which escalates with our own happiness. ... It is not to be the rich and not to imitate the behaviour of the rich. The real goal is just [the recognition of] fellow fans, to be known as a sincere K-Pop fan.” (Interview with Jean, 22, college student in Paris)

In detail, notable K-pop and drama cases could explain these features of the industrialised gift-exchange in the Korean Wave circulation: technically consuming Korean drama in Asia illustrates the stage of removing a price label, sincere Korean Wave fandom in Japan tells a story of the stage of wrapping and restoring singularity, and the PSY syndrome in the global digital milieu is an example of the stage of adding ritual, liminal value.

Regarding technically consuming K-drama in Asia, free gifts in K-Wave are different from the Wikipedia-wise content in digital culture because K-Wave objects usually require much more technic and attention in their consumption. Yoshitaka Mori’s (2009) interesting observation about ‘pretend stupidity’ could be a related behaviour of Japanese Hallyu fans.²⁷ Another example in a global scale is a video-sharing site, Bada.tv, operated by Korean Wave fans. This online site appeared in the early 2010 to provide Koreans living overseas with popular Korean Wave content, being formed of a multi-layered relay from various audio-visual sources from everywhere. Most of the content comes via Chinese intermediary sites like Todou and Yukou. In other words, Bada.tv facilitates co-operation among global users,

²⁷ According to Mori (2009), Japanese Hallyu fans are skilfully avoiding legal restrictions and copyright laws.

the original content providers (the Korean sources), and its mediators (the Chinese platforms). It shows a necessarily secretive way that global Hallyu lovers technically consume its content through diversely connecting flows of circulation in digital space. The scene below illustrates Chinese video-sharing site, Tudou.com on Bada.tv, where a Chinese server relays Korean content on a US platform for users in the UK.

The participation of Korean Wave fans is also noticeable when we see contributed dubbing as seen above interviews. As Chua Beng Hwat (2008) points out, dubbing is not a 'translation' any more but a process of 'transmutation' (Varela 1999: 39) at least for sincere Hallyu fans in East Asia. Typically, this kind of Hallyu-sharing site has its servers in one place in North America, like California, and its content is produced in Korea and then globally distributed by Asian mega-platforms like the Chinese ones. This ensures the process takes place out of the reach of various domestic regulations. These circulation flows are thus always meta-stabilising, entropic, and border crossing.

[Capture 1. Source from www.bada.tv. Last accessed at June 25, 2011 in UK]



Moreover, Hallyu fever²⁸ in Japan demonstrates another singular, affective ethos in the exchange in many ways. Intriguingly, these Japanese K-Wave fans contemplate an individualised, religious return in the exchange as they participate in continual flows. As an example, the fandom of the Korean Wave star Yon-sama desire to sincerely repay the gift he brings, believing that the deep affection of Yon-sama is contained in every stage of content circulation. As in Mori's (2009) analysis, especially for Japanese fans, once they receive what to them is a precious gift, they need to begin a mirrored, eternal surfeit of payback. This actual but transcendental give-and-take is seriously beyond what they really owe to Yon-sama. This ritual fandom indicates that, in their minds, they believe they will lose Yon-sama from their hearts if they fail to take care of him. Clearly, that is different from the classical capitalistic exchange, whereby fans just buy and exchange material goods like music CD and

²⁸ See Mori (2009) for discussion of middle-aged Japanese women's *Hallyu* fever.

film DVDs. Rather, it is more like the exchange system of the *Hau* in Mauss' explanation of potlatch. This idea is to be developed later in a very subjective and emotive fashion in terms such as 'aunt fan' or the 'uncle fan'²⁹ in K-Pop consumer culture. The following interview confirms the contemporary, industrialised *Hau* of Korean Wave to the fans: "I have a strong desire to possess everything related to Korean drama... If we could watch drama or stars easily anywhere anytime, would general interest decline? Nope, I don't think so. Even though general interest might fall as a whole, some specific interests would still be the same for me. My deep attachment to something special is the same as before, although the general attention attenuates a bit. I want to be a different, authentic K-wave fan." (Interview with Akina, 38, Japanese female Korean Wave fan in Tokyo)

Lastly, when we consider the stage of applying the ritual, liminal process of media event and pilgrimage, the PSY example offers suitable explanation of the integral aspect of collective, ceremonial practices where his global consumers joyfully ride on multi-sensory and participatory processes reinforced by mainstream global programming industries.³⁰

In this regard, cultural objects in contemporary situations are the process of becoming. Similar to potlatch in traditional societies in North America, valuable cultural objects are more often atmospheres, events and forms from an affective exchange,³¹ not just for use or occupancy. The objects are thus inducing a lot of secondary relations outside of rational, calculative contexts. Likewise, technical sincere gifts in an immersive atmosphere become a key mode of the Korean Wave's media-exchange:

²⁹ Aunt fan and uncle fan refer to loyal, affluent fans, generally over the age of 30 in Korea.

³⁰ The details of the PSY phenomenon will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

³¹ See Peter Sloterdijk's trilogy, *Spheres* (1998, 1999, 2004) regarding co-development of atmosphere and spaces.

5.1.2 Media-Exchange

Media-exchange originates from the industrialisation of gifts. Gifts in the digital spaces, specifically from North East Asia, are understood freely as something circulating beyond the conventional legal, administrative limitations such as descriptive regulation, physical and national borders, and universal fixity. Media-exchange takes place mainly on gifts' circulatory flows in the constant re-production within diverse circumstances. Thus, it is almost a supplementary and deformational process. However, this flow is industrially accumulated as meta-data to be often converted into a new means of capitalistic exploitation.

As discussed in the literature review section, gift exchanges have forced us to consider a fresh relationship between people and things. Applying these ideas, it becomes clear that there is no single, universal, fixed understanding of both gift economy and commodity economy, so the two economies always seem mutually intertwined, not exclusive. Recalling what Chris Gregory (1982) sets up between the two modes of exchange, media-exchange in this work can be illustrated as below in table 7:

[Table 7. The comparisons among commodity exchange, gift exchange and media exchange]

	Commodity exchange	Gift exchange	Media exchange
Characteristics of object	Alienable objects (available to sell or dispose of)	Inalienable objects (unavailable to sell or dispose of)	Attached objects (soul-in-thing with subject, improper to sell or dispose of)
Relationship of object, subject, space	Quantitative relationship between objects	Qualitative relationship between objects	Transductive relationship among subject, object, and

			milieu
Characteristics of subject	Reciprocal independence between subjects	Reciprocal dependence between subjects	Reciprocal attentive dependence between subjects (weak ties with the common, trans-individual)
Purpose of exchange	Exchange of objects – capital	Exchange of subjects – sociality	Exchange of atmosphere – adaptation and subsumption

Applying this to the operation of the K-Wave and global culture industry, it is generally recognised by consumers that service is conceptually free or, certainly, inexpensive. It is, however, initially perceived as a worthy, sensuous gift. The objects of consumption, as if they were gifts in the exchange, are perceived as comfortable and familiar yet amazing and curious flows. This is thus emerging atmosphere, brand, and environment rather than content, star, and image of the past. In addition, direct and ethical obligation of redemption to the other side caused by gift-exchange in small groups, as Mauss stressed, can be industrially and smoothly removed. There is thus the possibility that objects can always be newly exchanged, whether individually or collectively and, most importantly, the essence of objects is always its generosity. In summary, uncertainty and calculation in the media-exchange have been combined in a non-discriminatory state throughout a whole process. As in table 7, exchange value is a surprisingly attached, yet industrially removed object itself. Objects are virtually

free at the outset, and consumers continue to add their own experiences and accounts to it, assuming exchange as relatively inappropriate. Although each of the subjects is still independent from each other, a weak degree of technical attention is derived from the spirit of association, and then ritualistic idiosyncrasy also becomes predominant under forming ‘trans-individuals (Simondon, 2011).’ In this respect, consumption targets in the media-exchange based on imitation and adaptation reconfigure evolutionary networks with the accompanying subjects and environments.

From another perspective, as gift economy depends upon the creation of economic obligation and sociality, media-exchange depends upon the creation of loosely connected socio-economic obligations in dissociated trans-individuals to form ‘I’s to ‘One’s instead of ‘We’ (Stiegler, 2011: 92) While the social form of objects is revealed in commodity economy and the social form of subjects is revealed in gift economy (Gregory, 1982: 41), media economy can assume the social form of trans-individuals instead of collective audiences. Global Hallyu fans could be described as a typical example of these trans-individuals. Things [cultural objects] also become part of social process in the flow of infinite addendum. Thus, things are regarded as something with a potential to restore singularity through people’s psychic, collective and technological experiences³². The general meaning of gifts can be further valued as a commodity, yet not all commodities are capable of being gifted. Therefore, there is no fixed understanding of either commodity or gift. This cognitive commodification of cultural objects follows this type of on-going process, so it always keeps referring to something else. Cultural objects are then defined in terms of their situations.

³² Indeed, things have been seen to have a personality and virtue of their own from archaic Roman law through to contemporary East Asia. Things are not inert objects any more but a temporal process of people’s loosely connected inter-subjective flux, so the distinction between the human and non-human properties of things is always ambiguous and transferable.

Therefore, objects can always transit to be figural, under the appropriate make-ups, in and out of a commodity state. In this regard, there seem to be definite deformation flows of industrialised gifts in our topological cultural situations. The essence of media-exchange, then, can be explained as the culturalised gift-exchange for structuring the dissociated trans-individual consumers. The Korean Wave follows the same journey.

5.1.3 Considerations of Media-Exchange and K-Wave

"K-Pop craze: The K factor. Manufactured music doesn't get more exciting than Asia's latest export, K-Pop. The loudest screaming I've ever heard isn't at a pop concert at the O2, or the Pyramid stage at Glastonbury or the Birmingham NEC—it's rising up and down the aisles of a cinema in central London. What is the cause of such eardrum-shredding shrillness? Not stadium rock gods or Simon Cowell's latest pop puppet or a Beyoncé-calibre diva, but a band you've probably never even heard of: SHINee, five pretty young men from Korea. This is K-Pop, and it may just be conquering the world." (Independent, November 26, 2011)

Recently, this kind of the glowing rhetoric and the enthusiasm for K-Pop in global culture scenes seem to be blossoming in media reports from both South Korean mainstream media and its Western counterparts. Accordingly, the popularity of Korean pop culture is being intensified along with its unique circulation flows, especially on the internet and in digital spaces, which possess generally three distinctive features: their abundance, the fact that they are free, and that they represent a gift. At the same time, the phenomenon is generally 'black-boxed' (Latour, 2005), exaggerated, and misunderstood, colliding with various socio-political forces in an extraordinary cultural production system of digitalisation and globalisation._

Digital Milieu and Imitation, Adaptation

It is possible to see how the circulation of Korean Wave objects are forged and amplified by means of a new concept in the digital environments. As Chris Anderson (2009) confirms, the Web has been fast re-territorialised via 'the free': the price of a multiplicity of K-Wave products in the digital spaces has fallen to just a marginal cost, and the marginal cost of everything online is now close enough to zero that one might as well round it down. Anderson calls this kind of economy 'non-monetary production economy' (ibid: 92). Furthermore, this 'non-monetary production system' underpins a new economic value and new exchange system on the basis of which this study clarifies 'media-exchange.' However, these ideas of both free and abundance in this 'non-monetary production economy' are, in essence, an illusion of neo-liberal capitalism in that unnoticed profits are still being accumulated in a more dynamic and complicated algorithmic, black-boxed network circulated by digital programming and the creative industry in what can be described as a 'shadow economy' (Lambert, 2015).

Above all, a sense of abundance plays a significant role in the global circulation of Korean Wave objects in the digital milieu. Applying the Simondonian term 'milieu' (1992) identifying an evolving space with certain unique atmospheres, K-Pop content is being supplied, experienced, and accumulated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, across diverse digital milieus such as YouTube channels, Facebook pages, Twitter, Pinterest and more. Interestingly, this free Korean content is not necessarily provided by professional hackers, free riders, or amateur online-society members in the circulation stages, but posted by Korea's public service broadcasters and leading talent agencies ('entertainment planning companies').³³ In addition, K-Pop fans around the world are endlessly pushing, pulling,

³³ Korea's entertainment planning companies (talent agencies) like SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment,

copying, and sharing this content, enabling it to reach a state of abundance through their conspicuous exchange process. Indeed, this state of abundance is related to people's habitus (Bourdieu, 2000) of digital writing through the acts of imitating, sharing, translating, and even re-producing the original. One Chinese TV producer Hao Fang at Starry Sky TV explains, "without imitation [piracy], there would be no Hallyu in China" (Pease, 2009). The following interviewee comments on how firmly pirated materials are entrenched in K-Pop fans' everyday lives.

"If we pirate materials to sell for a profit that is a criminal act I know. However, if we just do online sharing and enjoying, that is simply blissful for us regardless of any financial reward. It seems not easy to understand our behaviours under traditional, typical economic principles." (Interview with B, 22, College student in Beijing).

In the meantime, imitation and adaptation have emerged to become another key aspect on the media-exchange. French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (1903) pointed out, long ago, that imitating and associating things is an innate human propensity. According to this insightful sociologist, what society means is 'a group of people currently imitating each other or making it similar based on their common characteristics from the previous imitation of the same samples' (ibid: 199). Human invention, then, is imitation inspired by a combination of what we have had previously and what we currently undertake. For Tarde, this could be a hypnotic state in a socio-psychological condition, which always induces an 'implied' action. Tarde's concept of combination can be also combined with Husserl and Simondon's ideas on 'attention' in the broadest sense. Practically, the Korean Wave circulation seems no more than

and JYP Entertainment make and produce media content and, at the same time, publish and circulate that content.

a condition of viral imitation of encounters in consumers' everyday lives. At stake is a topological archetype network like '*mise en abyme*',³⁴ already defined by Derrida (1978) as spaces of deep abyss environments surrounded by mirrors on all sides, where the specificity of the original/copy basically and essentially disappears.

Arcades to Archives and Meta-data

Currently, media-exchange facilitates K-Wave meta-data for regulating a sense of affection and repetition. In this regard, YouTube and Youku Tudou are two great examples of how online sites play an important role in boosting Korean Wave products and establishing their abundance in the internet space. These sites are basically multi-channel networks (MCNs): brand names yet at the same time digital archives and milieus for externalising cultural memories. To use an analogy, the archiving sites are all comparable to the digital concept of the 'Arcades' (Benjamin, 1991) or the 'Crystal Palace' (Sloterdijk, 2011) in that both situations share the trait of an uncanny, temporal, phantasmagorical atmosphere where people experience cognitive, collective attachments with objects, endlessly passing away from subjects and spaces.

Recently, Hallyu content has increasingly ridden on the digital platforms rather than the traditional media ones. At a practical level, various K-Pop media files are flourishing on YouTube-like digital milieus on both the producers but also on the consumers the extent to gain the status of generous gifts. Music videos generally come from the major media

³⁴ '*Abyme*' is derived from the Latin word '*abismus*' meaning an abyss with no bottom. It is a structure like a movie in a movie, a picture in a picture, a photo in a photo, a novel in a novel, yet it basically differs from 'mimesis' in that the distinction of the original and imitation in '*mise en abyme*' is meaningless, as Derrida (1978) describes. 'Mimesis' is a concept focusing on the essential distinction between the original and all others.

producers, and then re-generated by media consumers. In a somewhat different atmosphere, Korean TV dramas and other entertainment contents are quickly and extensively re-assembled elsewhere like, notably, Tudou Youku.

Recently in August 2012, after a long domestic war over intellectual property and local subscription issues, China's two leading rival video sharing websites, Tudou (tudou.com) and Youku (youku.com) announced a surprise merger worth 1 billion USD, forming a new company called Youku Tudou Inc.³⁵ Thanks to this astonishing horizontal business concentration, the combined site became a threatening Korean Wave publishing rival to YouTube and Facebook in terms of both number of global users and dominant market position. This new and exemplary Chinese online platform itself has no direct connection with the Korean Wave cultural phenomenon. However, as one of the biggest Korean Wave content holders, the strategic decision to merge made it possible for the new combined operation to become the most influential Korean Wave meta-data archive and curating platform for Chinese and other international audiences. In sum, the Korean Wave content and its surrounding environments incorporated with aspects of media-exchange have been significantly amplified and convoluted as if in an augmented reality of arcades.

It is now apparent that regional and global online video sharing platforms are getting so competitive that more and more players are rapidly emerging and disappearing almost as fast as they arrived. This unstable but rhythmic situation unquestionably results in excessive data concentration and dominance by the largest players. Accordingly, the meta-data starts

³⁵ These two Chinese-based global companies, Tudou and Youku, were in local courtroom battles over alleged copyright infringement and unfair competitive practices until the announcement of the merger and the creation of China's biggest video site. According to Reuters' report (2012), at the time of the merger, Youku led the Chinese online video market with a 21.8% share, ahead of Tudou's 13.7%. In November, 2016 Alibaba Group acquired Youku Tudou, and at that time Youku Tudou had 30 million subscribers. (Reuters, 2016)

creating a new form of the digital economy through infinite circulation of data. As Heidegger points out his concept of ‘always already there’, data and meta-data accumulated in sufficient quantities from users’ everyday lives become central to controlling people’s collective, technological memory as a non-representational experience. In other words, meta-data as ‘data above data’ can be a tool for controlling collective attention as well as for making economic profit. This kind of new industrial approach is quickly emerging across the digital world, as online platforms generate what economists call ‘network effects’ — as more people use them, they keep getting more indispensable. Contemporary digital users, through their hypnotic re-actions of imitation and appropriation of cultural objects create a certain rhythm and emotion, which have created a new global, digital vision of capitalistic economic value. As consequence, the global digital networks such as Google and Facebook become ‘a mediated centre (Couldry, 2003)’ in a media ritual perspective. Also, these global sharing sites robustly evolve as both the by-products and disruptors in this space of the digital milieu.

K-Wave Content and New Exchange Value

As described above, Alibaba, Youku Tudou and many other global digital content-sharing platforms are emerging as part of the new substrata for de-/re-/trans-formations of K-Wave content, making them even more ubiquitous and exceptional. Other major names would include Sohu.com Inc., Baidu Inc., and Tencent Holdings Ltd, as well as constantly emerging new online sites and multi-channel networks delivering sports, live catch-up, gambling, and pornography. The digital milieus as archiving and curating sites are eradicating traditional ideas of exchange value as the more users share/exchange, and the more wealth is generated by meta-data in digital cultural milieu like SNS. And, Asian K-Pop fans share another feature of qualitative, affective consumption: “When I saw his [Rain’s] music video on youtube.com

... WOW!! What an incredible guy. So I see him [in concert] at least every three months and have spent over 20,000 US dollars on travel over just one year to attend his concerts in major Asian cities like Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, and Taipei. One of my friends actually went to South Korea over fifteen times in three years, only to see Rain. We try to go to every single concert with Rain in every corner of the world.” (Interview with Chris, 35, banker living in Hong Kong)

The interviewee above, Chris, works for a global investment company in Hong Kong, earning more than 70,000 USD a year. Based on the above interview, it seems clear that the most conspicuously devoted fans of a K-Pop star like Rain are those able to travel with him and who have financial power and instant mobility like him. Without such neo-liberal economic assets, participating in this type of cross-border fandom would not be easy. In another interview, this time from Japan, the interviewee boasts of her inner, sympathetic experiences she shared with Rain. She (Akiko) said that, between 2005 and 2009, she had travelled to fourteen *Rainy Day* world tour concerts, from Seoul, Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chi Minh, Taipei, and Tokyo, and even to Los Angeles. The K-Pop ardent proudly described repeatedly consuming the same performances repeatedly. This is a new value of the economic exchange with the consumer’s own liveness and mediality deployed by the global culture industry.³⁶

The global culture industry, accordingly, maintains these temporalities in a way in which freewill, selection, and obligation of consumers are mixed across ambivalent boundaries within the circulation flows with the help of augmented personal, collective memory. At stake is ‘the social imaginary,’ as Lash (2012) tells us, underpinning topological and ritual

³⁶ ‘Mediality (Couldry, 2003)’ is the mediated inclusion of subjectivity to the space as well as a core sense of media-exchange, dealt with in detail in the next chapter.

consumptions. The presence of pop cultural objects thus always re-appears, rendering the social imaginary into chronic residues and side effects over contagious consumption flows. Consequently, contemporary cultural objects are not easily confined, yet at the same time are more attachable to and dependent on consumers and atmospheres. Likewise, cultural audiences become more and more trans-individuals throughout the process of this unique media-exchange system. As a result, this network stimulates peoples' hyperactivity and hyperpositivism on the objects' flows. Nevertheless, this is a deep, viral and hypnotic process, requiring that the subject is not awakened from their hallucination. Not only computer games and internet surfing, but also the global pop culture frenzies like the mania for K-pop and Korean TV dramas, are common causes of this hallucination as a by-product of the cultural deformation, reformation, and transformation process. In this respect, further explanation of the media-exchange is needed regarding psychological concerns from Korean Wave circulations.

5.2 The Korean Wave Circulation in Transduction

Above all, transductional relationship among subject, object and milieu stands for the feature of the media-exchange as mentioned in table 7. Simondon (2011) defines milieu as a becoming space. To illustrate this schematically, milieu is an immanent and potential space for transduction, where subject, object, and space become mutually constitutive. Notable features of the Korean Wave cases are well displayed through these becoming aspects in certain milieus. In addition, Korean cultural objects are to be understood as those of experience. As Simondon (1992) defines, the concept of the objects of experience can indicate an inevitable, incomplete process of transduction. Furthermore, Stiegler (2011) develops Simondon's idea to capture the trans-individuals' appearance as a three-way

dynamic process as psycho–social–technical in which the synchronic trans-individuals, ‘We’ develops from the diachronic co-individuals, I’s through the ‘third strand’ of technics as technological memory. In this regard, it is important to examine how Korean Wave users become distinctive trans-individuals in the digital, cultural milieus, and how current pop cultural objects are depositions and repositions for the metaphysical aspect of media-exchange. This will give us a basis from which to examine the Korean Wave’s attentive circulation as well as that of the global culture industry.

Affective Circulation in Cultural Spaces

It is necessary to look back to the anthropological research to further explain the concept of the gift in media-exchange. The most intriguing element of potlatch is ‘destruction potlatch’, where powerful people in these tribes often lavishly destroyed things with a very large value to overwhelm competitors and offer a sacrifice to their Gods. They burned oil, threw copper plates into the sea, killed slaves, or set fire to luxurious houses in front of competitors. Destruction potlatch’s profound paradox is, essentially, its sense of subjective narcissism. This self-destruction triggers productive returns in a ‘long circuit’ (Stiegler, 2009): if donors lose their wealth well, they then obtain potential status although the overall quantity of property decreases in a short-circuited scale. This resonates with what is now gift-exchange in global digital cultural situations, especially with the Korean Wave, where narcissistic participation of users becomes indiscernible from production process and vice-versa. To put it another way, the mode of the Korean Wave drama production might be explored through global audiences’ repetitive, qualitative, subjective, and narcissistic consumption flows. As briefly revealed in chapter 4 by the K-Wave industry, this kind of production culture stays in a special atmosphere reinforced by a good, capitalistic symptom of narcissist otherness and

displaced subjectivism. Regarding this subjective narcissism of the contemporary consumers, the K-Wave period saw the expansion of cultural consumption spaces. For example, the ‘*No-rae-bang*’ (a Korean-style *Karaoke*³⁷ song room)³⁸ began to spread in 1993 and coincided temporally and contextually with the rapid development of Korean pop music. In detail, *No-rae-bang* has been an important space for the consumption of K-Pop, where people sing their favourite songs holding a microphone on small stage under dim lights, keeping a close eye on lyrics appearing on a large screen (TV). The power of this new style of cultural consumption experiences is strong enough to commercialise popular music even faster. The Asian regional manager of EMI commented: ‘If you can’t sing it in karaoke³⁹ [*No-rae-bang*], it won’t be a hit’ (Taylor, 1997, cited in Howard, 2006). People can feel like professional singers in front of intimate audiences whenever they wanted to. In the K-pop scene, these experiences were, particularly after 2010, linked to the overly enthusiastic reactions to globally-formatted audition TV shows like *Voice Korea* and *Korea’s Got Talent*. The shared ingredients in these media events are participants’ senses of subjective, narcissistic experiences as well as to performative memories on adjudicated stages. Pop music in Korea was no longer merely for listening and appreciating. In this regard, mumbling rap music, which had not even been treated as singing in Korea, was also rapidly popularised through the aspect of performativity in *No-rae-bang* culture: “It really feels fantastic like a K-Pop singer with powerful speakers

³⁷ The background of *No-rae-bang* is *Karaoke* in Japan. Karaoke translates as empty orchestra, and Karaoke style spaces in Korea have had a long history especially in Seoul and Busan. Busan is the geographically nearest city to Japan.

³⁸ *No-rae-bang* culture continues as a topological, deformational aspect of Korean society; we see spaces like *DVD-bang*, *Game-bang*, *Multi-bang*, and *Screen Golf-bang*.

³⁹ *Karaoke* is the Japanese word for *No-rae-bang* in a broad sense, although there are some differences in detail.

and good lighting in our den, *No-rae-bang*. We usually become crooners or pop stars, or gangster rappers in this luxurious area. I let go of so much stress while I'm dancing, cheering and having fun with the close friends who I go with. It is a dream place, like a hideout for us to go after drinking.” (Interview with Kim, 28, graduate student in Seoul)

Before the practical explanation of media-exchange in K-wave, some brief background examples of distinctive cultural objects and spaces related to the contemporary resonances and developments in Korea are necessary for overall understanding transduction in cultural circulations.

1. Trace: Cultural Consumption in East Asian Tradition

For a long time, there has been a way of understanding and consuming cultural objects in Eastern societies in terms of the modality the material has adapted. This is unique in that cultural objects are consumed through the subjects' own specific rhythm (spatio-temporality), and participatory imagination. Furthermore, the consumption flow, itself, is regarded as an artistic and cultural phenomenon with its embedded originality. It could, therefore, be described as an immersive cultural atmosphere. Let us, first, consider some examples of this phenomenon which is, nevertheless, still adaptive to the possibilities of digital technology. In traditional works of art in East Asia, it was common for artistic objects, subjects, and environments to be broadly mediated and then circulated through a flow process. The process normally goes beyond the state of representation and self-grows through the application of 'liveness' (Couldry, 2003) and 'atmosphere' (Bachman, 2012). Interestingly, as shown in the photo 1, it is still widely suggested that *Gyeong-hoe-ru* (경회루), a royal banquet place of the Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910) in Seoul, Korea had such elegantly designed, empty window frames installed around the main floor so that people (participants) in the party hall would

feel that they were in an ever-changing landscape over different times, angles, and perspectives. In their history, artistic ‘atmospheres’ (Shinji, 2009) have been integrated and adapted through self-organising backgrounds or living memories, even in everyday situations. Traditionally, Korean people have been used to confronting the dialectic beauty of meta-stabilising entropy or flux, which is a kind of consumption of what Benjamin (2008) refers to as a ‘dialectic standstill.’ These multi-senses from transient nature as a living-background work, additionally, as a somatic, epigenetic memory by imaginatively filling the empty frames for participants. This could be a kind of established cultural consumption in Asia with which the contemporary global culture industry now could resonate in diverse ways. This unique atmosphere can be technologically strengthened through the industrial negation of substance itself and the individual affirmation of ‘non-representational experiences’ (Thrift, 2008). Just as Korean have enjoyed the four seasons, 365 days of the year, at any time, ever-differently, and through their own spatio-temporal sensibilities, Korean pop content is being utilised in strangely similar ways.

[Photo 1. *Gyeong-hoe-ru* main banquet stage. Source from Naver.com. Last accessed at Nov. 2012]



2. Transduction: Cultural Consumption in Digital Asia

This non-representational consumption of the past has been successfully succeeded by features of the digital network space. Notably in East Asia, the popular Japanese video-

sharing site Niconico-Douga and others such as FC2⁴⁰ also illustrate how audiences are directly involved with object, text, and space through their participation in endlessly re-constituting unique ‘atmospheres’ (Bachman, 2012). The atmospheric processes of these sites are analogous in that audiences’ text messages run over the video sources, making the digital space constantly unique by creating a figural flux of flow. This represents a typical case of the deformational flow of a digital object as well as an interdependent consumption atmosphere. Bachman (ibid) called this spirit on Niconico-Douga, ‘cookie,’ continuously emerging during the fusion of the original video source and consumers’ engagements such as their online comments, creating the mixed sensibilities of liveness and singularity as a media form. On the FC2 Live site, almost every user similarly participates in their own broadcasting by streaming their live content with the help of the site’s 5,000 free technological templates as backgrounds. The main mode of energy production in this site is the ‘Say Move!’ function, which is like that on Niconico-Douga where users can put their text messages directly into the live streaming at any time not only for their individual ‘Live-Chat,’ but also for other service platforms like blogs, video-sharing, and BBS. For this system, the site provides users with hundreds of temporal designs as templates to choose from, as well as to access information like users’ statistics (FC2 Counter, FC2 Analysis, FC2 Access ranking, FC2 SNS, etc.) from the site’s meta-data. Ultimately, these atmospheric consumptions follow audiences’ temporal flux on a rather short-cycled memory on their mixed liveness.

[Capture 2. NICONICO-DOUGA online site. Source from nicovideo.jp. Last accessed in

⁴⁰ FC2 was established in 1999, in Las Vegas, mainly as a free web-hosting service for Asian users. The site is the most popular of its kind, especially with Japanese bloggers. In 2003, the site launched Analyzer, a free mobile, chat, blog, SNS, and rental domain service. The site also provides more than 15 language services such as Japanese, English, Korean, Italian, Spanish, Chinese, French, Russian, etc. www.fc2.com. (Last accessed in March 2013).

May 2011]



[Capture 3. FC2 LIVE online site. Source from fc2.com. Last accessed in May 2013]



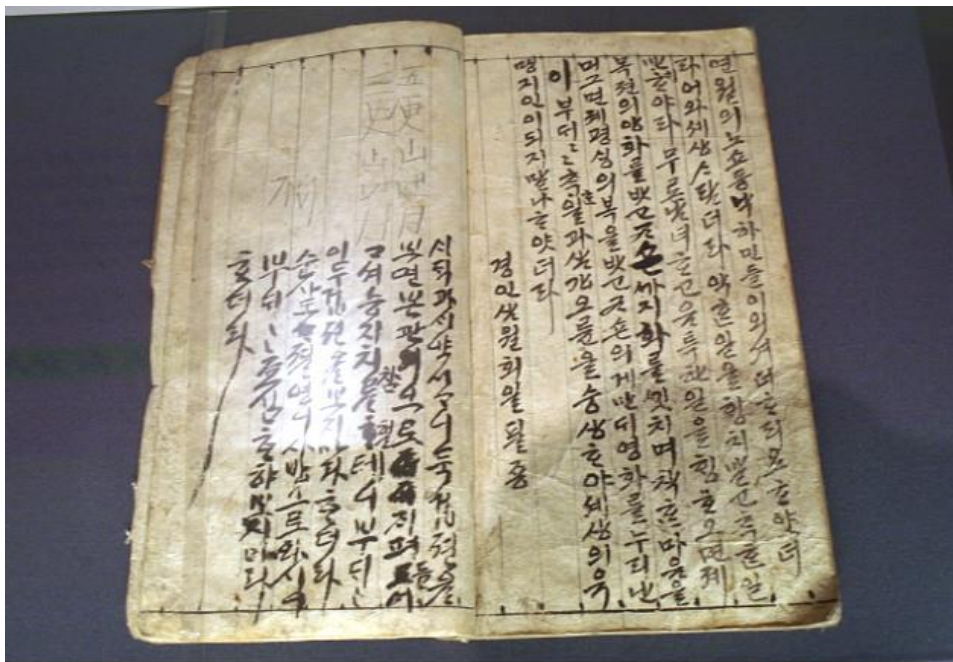
3. Trace: Cultural Milieu of *Se-chaeg-bang* in Korea

Going back again to the Chosun Dynasty before the early twentieth century in Korea, book rental shops called '*Se-chaeg-bang*' (세책방, 貰冊芳),⁴¹ were very popular with many people who could read, regardless of class or social hierarchy. According to Lee Min-Hee (2007), these bookshops were also a kind of popular space with a socio-cultural context. The high public demand for light reading and love stories in this period was an important driver of the popularity of the *Se-chaeg-bang*. Regardless of a historical meaning, this is typical of people's tendency to consume cultural objects on a specific mood over a period. Thus, an inter-subjective atmospheric condition embracing the books, their owners, and spaces encouraged a trend of continuously consuming cultural objects. It is topological as well in terms of developing successive flux. These old Korean novels were initially made to be durable, and sections were left blank in parts of the book/page that would easily become worn because it was to be shared by so many people. An interesting phenomenon is that many readers left their feedback on the book by writing directly on the page or drawing pictures on the blank pages (provided for that purpose). Indeed, people often used to re-borrow the same book several times at the shop to see other people's responses in a continuous affective flow of message relays in a very similar way to those seen in the living atmospheres of online message board participants among Niconico-Douga or 2Ch users today. Thus, the novel was not only a cultural object, but also a continuous process in an ever-changing temporality. This illustrates how books as a physical property, even in traditional oriental culture, were very often an open-source media in Appadurai's concept of 'phase-shifts' (1986). Moreover, we

⁴¹ '*Se-chaeg-bang* (貰冊芳)' means in Korean '*Se*(세)' is rental and '*Chaeg-bang* (책방)' refers to book shop.

see in contemporary perspectives that the recreation of a successive, mixed flux from subjects, objects, and spaces contributed to both the enjoyment of audiences and the bookshop owners.

[Photo 2. 19th century novels from *Sechaebang* in Korea. Source: Lee, M. H. (2007)]



(Note. The pictures above show some in-between pages of 19th century novels from *Sechaebang* and users' inter-subjective communication on the text).

4. Transduction: Digital Milieu of DC Inside in Korea

Lastly, there is an on-going online hybrid inter-subjective digital playground, DCInside.com,⁴² which has been popularly embraced by Korean netizens, especially after the late 90s. The site is a Korean internet forum, initially established in 1999, as a community site dedicated to information sharing about digital cameras and photography, as the name itself indicates. However, DC Inside introduced its unique interactive features to the Korean public and, as a result, significantly influenced Korean internet culture and the media-exchange of Hallyu objects. DC Inside earned, above all, a great reputation among domestic digital users by operating free-to-use, anonymous yet creative message boards called ‘galleries,’ which offered entertaining source-based content. Gallery topics range from general interests, including politics, sports, and entertainment to specific interests like individual pop celebrities and hybrid audio-visual production skills. DC Inside users call themselves ‘gallers,’ describing inhabitants of the galleries who are believed to spend substantial amounts of time on cultural re-production and circulation through their own styles of slang, called ‘DC slang,’ or discipline, named ‘DC mentality.’ Among the many flagship galleries, ‘*Hab-seong* gallery’ (합성갤러리), is especially interesting in terms of the inter-subjective features based on gift-exchange in the digital space. *Hab-seong* in Korean means hybridity, so this gallery is basically intended for those who like to make their own hybrid audio-visual, digital content in a continuous give-and-take process of various ‘*Pil-su-yo-so*’⁴³ (필수요소). Thus, *Pil-su-yo-so* works as not only a background, but also as a trigger for plasticity in the process of progress. However, to become *Pil-su-yo-so* in this digital milieu,

⁴² DC stands for Digital Camera.

⁴³ *Pil-su-yo-so*, in Korean, means compulsory source materials [open sources]

hopeful audio-visual source materials must be widely supported first and then selected by collective ‘gallers’. In this regard, *Pil-su-yo-so* indicates a temporal yet certified source of materials as collective retention/memory for the users’ further adaptation.

The principle of making a *Hab-seong* object is relatively simple. Producers or mediators (participants) first select (take) their preferable *Pil-su-yo-so* from diverse materials like photos, sounds, and videos, etc. Then, they make (give) their own assemblages by editing the various sources, following a repetitive yet unique rhythm (gift). The detailed tools and methods (algorithm) are always explained and widely provided in the gallery. However, in order to get gallers’ public backing and acclaim to be seen as qualified DC works, diverse socio-cultural, creative, and technical memories and experiences are necessary. These are needed for participants to creatively utilise these *Pil-su-yo-so* for other users’ collective memory from diverse interests ranging from current socio-political affairs to the hottest cultural consumption trends like fashion and plastic surgery. That is because co-producers’ reactions and interests are the most important return for the participants in their own exchange system. In this regard, *Hab-seong* artefacts seem to be regarded and treated as sincere gifts in the gallers’ own socio-cultural space in terms of exchanging precious gifts to generate honour and prestige. In addition, there are no clear economic benefits to the users, unlike other user-based internet content sharing sites having commercial purposes such as Afreeca TV or Gom TV in Korea. Rather, users show a desire to be upgraded to the symbolic, mediated centre of these socially networked environments. DC gallery’s aim is not just to gather funny and amusing works, but also to give and receive creative energy and singularity in their figural, make-up culture. Thus, highly-ranked content producers in this space are treated with honour and referred to as being ‘Named,’ earning followers’ exaggerated respect.

Regarding the pleasure that participants get from the process, it is also distinctive that

living, temporal objects interact with subjects and environments in the forms of continual fusion during which *Pil-su-yo-so* sources, which are already chosen by users' collective memory via their creative or critical consensus, again transmute the flux on the flows. This is influenced by core features of the growing data and mixed realities in the process of digitalisation. Due to DC's sensational popularity, a number of similar internet self-encoding online playing spaces such as *Il-be* (일베),⁴⁴ BGM Storage (브이뮤지), and Let's FL have emerged in Korea. In this regard, it is important to note that the popularised compulsory processes for the selection of *Pil-su-yo-so* sources by exchanging users' own interests and memories are inducing infinite compilations of ever-changing rhythm, tempo, flux, and desires in their process of structuring gift-exchange. Commonly, these *Pil-su-yo-so* sources are captured and selected by trans-individuals' collective attention. However, these materials are usually obtained for free from the mainstream media. Thus, these core collective memories are easily perceived and treated as the DC users' own sources. In this regard, *Pil-su-yo-so* could be a kind of topological core for stabilising network intensity. This case is a good illustration of the complex nature of technical, sincere gift-exchange from the perspective of media-exchange, as well as the meta-stabilising transductive features of the digital milieu.

[Capture 4. DC Inside *Hab-seong* Gallery. *Pil-su-yo-so* source from KBS drama *Chu-no* from DC Inside. Last accessed in May 2013]

⁴⁴ Unlike DC Inside, the rest of the online sites such as Ilbe, Afreeca TV, etc. are more focused on 'far-right wing' conservative political materials and participation.



[Capture 5. DC Inside *Hab-seong* Gallery. Source from KBS drama *Chu-no* from DC Inside. Last accessed in May 2013]





The Implications of Hallyu Objects

The recent popularity of K-Pop has much to do with the aspects of peoples' technological, collective gift-exchange. This extraordinary popular trend chiefly depends on the becoming, mixed nature of re-production culture. The Korean Wave industry implies that pop cultural objects are treated as source materials in specific flows of digital media spaces. K-Pop objects thus have their own 'situations' (Appadurai 1986: 13). This means K-Pop objects are always involved in a procedure of becoming another object in the circulation flows.

"The commodity situation in the social life of any 'thing' can be defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other things is its socially relevant feature." (Appadurai, 1986: 13)

From a practical perspective, the Korean Wave industry's trajectory is somewhat

analogous to that of American media giant Walt Disney Company. As in Michael Eisner's⁴⁵ 'cross-over' (Martel, 2012), it displays a versioning-up strategy which facilitates continuous basic deformations of the product. Frederic Martel (2012) explains this make-up feature in his meticulous field research into the mainstream culture industry. For example, before the mid-twentieth century, new Disney characters were always shown first on Disney's parade stages at the company's amusement parks, and then they were re-designed to fit into other genres like the musical, and finally shown on the Disney cruise ship. During circulation, many Disney products were commercially successful due to the well-transformation and fast-changing consumption trends. Interestingly, all these disseminations are always accompanied by the continual support of various global media networks' strategic transmissions from the Asian ESPN-Star to the Indian UTV⁴⁶. As Martel (ibid) points out, it is significantly meaningful that the actual profits of Disney amusement parks come not from the parks but from the parks' derivatives such as hotels, tours and restaurants, embracing the imaginary flux on the flows of Disney products. Eventually, as is publicly known, Disney made a strategic decision to put the humanised soul back into their exclusive non-human toy products by making the movie 'Toy Story,' just like in a modern-day *hau* of Potlatch.

In the end, regarding the mode of consumers' re-mediation in media-exchange, Korean Wave users are clearly relevant with the following three major characteristics. These characteristics are related to people's participatory propensities for unique consumption and further transduction centred on media-exchange processes: 1) a tool for testimony; 2) a tool for witness, imitation, adaptation, and sharing; 3) a subject of contextualisation and hierarchy. These propensities result in consumers' being trans-individuals in the digital cultural milieu

⁴⁵ Michael Eisner was chairperson of the Walt Disney Company from 1984 until 2005.

⁴⁶ See Martel (2012) for a discussion of mainstream global entertainment companies' structure.

from a pharmacological perspective. According to Stiegler (2011), *pharmakon* or pharmacology basically means simultaneous double effects, which are of caring and being cared for—in other words both toxic and addictive. The three ‘habitus’ are easily visible on digital media platforms through the consumers’ own mixed reality determined by their tertiary memory, notably on the DC Inside *Hab-seong* gallery or on personal SNS sites. Three applicable cases of the Korean Wave trans-individuals were categorised into interviewees as follows:

1) Saying something true first, secretly (tool for testimony);

<Interview 1> “I always try to say something ‘factual’ [own stress] first on Facebook, in relation to my love for a K-Pop group, SHINee. I try to get facts and information. I bravely went to Heathrow airport during school hours to take a photo of SHINee’s landing in London [she smiles]. My photos were instantly so popular on Facebook and even reached Twitter sites because all the SHINee fans ‘liked’ my photos and left lovely ‘thank you’ messages. I was really happy about that.” (Sophie, 22, Student in Paris)

2) Witnessing and delivering something meaningful (tool for accepting and sharing);

“I normally go to Apkujeongdong in Seoul to catch K-Pop idols by surprise. From time to time, I meet K-Pop stars unexpectedly, listen to what they say, follow where they go, and glance at people they meet privately. I am really happy and excited when I hear what I want to hear from them. This star-related news is always the top content on my blog and makes me feel great.” (Lee, 25, Freelancer worker in Seoul)

3) Contextualising who did what and how, in order to make their own narrative and context (subject of contextualisation and hierarchy).

“Honestly, I still feel that one member, L, of Super-Junior must be in love with another

member, K. My friend always says the two seem made for each other, don't you agree? I started writing a love fiction about the two on Super-Junior's fan site, publicly. Now I have become a very famous fan-fic writer and I am preparing for another story." (Song, 28, Screenwriter in Seoul)

These three propensities show the background of current operations of the media-exchange. At the same time, this digital grammatology also reveals some unique exchange features like show-off care, giving while keeping, and thing-in-soul, as the interview excerpts indicate.

5.3 K-Wave and Trans-individuals with Mediality

Secondly, distinctive trans-individuals represent another feature of the media-exchange in terms of characteristics of subjects as in table 7. So far, Korean Wave audiences seem to add artistic, creative values on the circulation flows through their own spatio-temporal, mixed mediality. Mediality, here, means a subjective, personalised sense of mediated liveness. This mediality, in addition to the above-mentioned participatory propensities of users, plays a crucial function for the qualitative and repetitive consumption of Korean Wave objects facilitated by the media-exchange. As K-Wave objects, including stars themselves, are generally mediated by consumers as a living thing⁴⁷ in the meta-stabilising consumption atmosphere, this mediated liveness also brings about people's multi-sensibilities from 'transcendental-empirical double' (Lash, 2012; Lash and Lury, 2007; Lury et al, 2012)

⁴⁷ Objects are things to which other things are added. The adding is done by living subjects or living processes/systems or living entities that non-living objects become part of. Regarding the distinction between living and non-living systems, see Heinz von Foerster's analogy of trivial and non-trivial machines (see <http://www.univie.ac.at/constructivism/HvF.htm>), in which non-living systems do not confer or change meaning or extend their significance to themselves in considering the properties of living systems in relation to non-living systems.

through the synthesis of artistic singularity and living environments. As Judith Butler (2011) describes, the reconfigured spatio-temporality is centred on embedded mediality and sociality as in recent collective actions seen in the social media for the Global Occupy and Assemblage movement in 2011. In fact, the media are already central to pop-cultural actions and flows for the ‘delimitation and the transposability of the scene’ (Lury et al., 2012: 10). In this regard, mediated liveness strongly combined with people’s collective memory has been the key to sustaining trans-individuals’ collective ‘flux.’ Through these affective live situations, ‘mediated things’ and the ‘thingified media’ (Lash and Lury, 2007) are deeply re-associated for making what Stigler (2011: 176) considers as repetitive confusion between ‘the to-come’ and ‘the future’ as well as illusionary ‘We’ and ‘One’ throughout the constructing trans-individuals. The point is that the ritual senses of mediality enables consumers’ limited, universal, public spatio-temporalities to expand into unlimited, singular, individuated ones.

As described in Chapter 4, Korean TV drama is significantly unique in its production culture, where production and broadcasting proceed almost simultaneously by treating audiences as co-creators and active readers. Unlike classical media products such as the American drama mini-series, these Korean TV drama series in prime-time slots are composed of successive yet flexible episodes, usually 16 to 30, becoming more like a quasi-live event synchronised with mass audiences’ responses through their cognitive, emotional fluctuations on the consumption flows. As Ellis (1982) and Couldry (2003) stress, the concept of liveness contextualises the concept of mediated flow under presence as a continual presupposition. Many K-Pop artists, especially idol groups, also follow this production structure in which the imagined, mediated liveness works to construct the unique K-Pop culture. This is mostly invigorated through consumers’ participation in the media-exchange. Korean drama circulation, as an event of *living* flow, makes it possible for audiences always to be the

reflective and recursive in the form of trans-individuals, through the process of confused spatio-temporality and mediated liveness. Likewise, this kind of K-Pop production culture lets people affect themselves easily through a self-deception in a continual process.

Liveness and Mediality in K-Pop

How K-pop audiences become trans-individuals by mediality on consumption flows can be outlined in their gift/media-exchange procedure, especially in powerful media events incorporated with mediated liveness. Simply put, there are sequential live events in K-Pop circulation that correspond to an endless, self-growing process for people's attentive memory. Liveness is, of course, a social form, systematically and ritually mediated by production powers. According to media ritual theorists, liveness must be considered either 'ideology' (Feur, 1983) or 'the access point to the core of the myth of the mediated centre' (Couldry, 2003) through which people pretend as if they can access society's centre/core. These media events consist of continual social-live flows such as people's auditions, stars' performances, and media transmissions, which are associated with forming the social life of the subject, object, and media, respectively. As a social form, cultural subjects, objects, and media are regarded as having history and depth. The next interviewees show the related aspect K-pop trainees' story regarding their involvement to the mediated on-going process of becoming rising K-pop stars.

"I took an audition for JYPE and SM last year and also Voice Korea on the cable network this spring. I feel I did a good job, especially in the JYP audition, yet none of my attempts was successful for them. Nevertheless, I've been very happy and satisfied so far. It was always a great motivation for me to do more, to be more active and work harder when my peers (we all got to know each other over the course of multiple auditions) appeared on TV,

because I was missing out. Auditions are held everywhere, so I will keep doing my best until I get the result I want and become a K-Pop star. The rest of my life depends on more auditions. My enjoyable memory [of these events] is another future for me, I believe." (Interview with Jina, 18, high school student in Seoul)

"Lia fell in love with K-pop, especially its ballads. Compared with American pop, these foreign sagas of love and loss had oceanic depths. Critics called it melodrama; she called it real.... She was twenty years old, finishing her sophomore year of college. In little more than a year, her parents expected her to apply to medical school, just like her older brother and sister had..... Born Star she searched in Google was the first American campus of South Korea's biggest K-pop training academy, a network founded by Kim Tae-won, legendary frontman of the rock band Boohwal — Korea's Jimmy Page. They offered classes in singing, rap, acting, and hip-hop, but the most popular package by far was the Audition Training Program, which offered an inside track to Korean talent agencies, as well as individually tailored prep for national tryouts.... Lia signed up for every class Born Star had to offer..... In two months, Lia had her first audition. The show was Survival Audition K-Pop Star, South Korea's version of The Voice. Like on the American version, contestants compete for a cash prize and a contract with a top label. But whereas The Voice limits auditions to America, K-Pop Star's reach is global. The show's recruitment ads scream for non-Koreans to apply: NOT LIMITED TO KOREANS. ALL RACES AND AGES ARE WELCOME! "You passed."... Lia had a month to train for round two in Seoul, the "Ranking Round," in which contestants would be divided into groups and ranked against one another. Almost half would be eliminated.... In round three, "Team Mission," contestants formed ensembles that would compete against each other.... On December 17, 2016 Lia requested a meeting with the scriptwriters. Practice for round four was already underway. She had been in South Korea for two months and no longer needed a translator. "I quit," she said.... When she woke up to the morning light after six hours, she was in

Kuala Lumpur..... However, South Korea, Lia realized, had already changed her. "It's not Lia's little bubble anymore. It's a tough world anywhere you go and you really have to be able to rely on yourself.".... Yet there was still K-pop. It was no longer a fantasy to Lia.... It's not only skills, it's looks, being at the right place at the right time, she worried..... the agency was prepared for anything — insults, threats, another scholarship-canceling kamikaze move — anything except what she heard. The choice, they told Lia, was hers." (from blog of a Malaysian-American K-pop hopeful, Village Voice, Aug 23, 2017)

In this production culture, participants might mutually converge with media objects and environments across mediality while these are exchanged and deepened in-between the respective events. This is also related to the specific features of media-exchange to consumers: positivism, hyperactivity, and no interruption to exchange flows, as described above. In the K-Pop industry, almost all major planning companies like SME are inducing this kind of carefully patterned way. Their thoughts are thus very processual. There is no clear categorisation now between audiences and participants, insiders and outsiders, failure and success, and subjects and objects, as seen in the interview above. In this exchange flow, consumers/participants become inclusive, indiscernible and mutually constitutive, sometimes as live participants or often as their own judges in TV talent competitions, creating a deep, historical, technical inter-dependency. K-pop consumers are no longer alienated audiences in a simple sense⁴⁸.

The Pre-Planned Live K-Drama and Collective Consumers

⁴⁸ In 2013, the last time the show disclosed the numbers, two million South Koreans tried out for one hundred slots on Korea's longest-running audition survival show, *Superstar K*. That's one out of every 25 Koreans (Village Voice, Aug 23, 2017).

Korean television producers have made every effort to gratify audiences based on various different production circumstances. For example, fans themselves have tried to put pressure on the production process to diversify drama content by requesting the producers alter storylines or prolong the schedule of the series during its broadcasting. Fans usually supply influential feedback or collective behaviours as ‘co-writers’ (T.J. Yun, 2005), as briefly described in previous chapters. It is also very important in another stance for the audiences to have a feeling of the uncanny by enjoying the open flux of the production process as co-creators by confusing a sense of their own contribution and dependence with the mass production flows. As seen in many other East Asian cases, exemplifying the thing-in-soul feature of meta-stabilising digital milieus, audiences are used to directly intervening in the text and space, such as in the case of Japan’s Niconico-Douga and 2Ch, and Korea’s DC Inside and FC2. This is slowly being expanded to encompass the culture of television production, especially when it comes to Korean Wave drama production.

Actually, almost all episodes of Korean dramas are shot, edited, and broadcast in the same time period, making their own spatio-temporalities from entropic energy. This unusual production flow was originally proposed by dominant broadcasters in order to actively subsume audiences into the production process in order to instantly seize their attention from the very starting point of the broadcast yet, in another respect, it was further reinforced by the audiences’ collective demands as a sign of the trans-individuals’ power. The advantages of this kind of audience intervention lie in the sudden realisation of their living power as extraordinary experiences. Indeed, the 16-30 episode dramas, which have been typical for most popular Korean drama serials in so-called mini-series, have sometimes been shortened to 10 to 12 episodes or extended to 32 to 34 with added characters, as a result of direct feedback from audiences and broadcasters’ strategic decisions. In this regard, *Hallyu* drama

audiences feel the drama series themselves to be a transmutable temporal process of unique exchanges. Likewise, the other reason that broadcasters cannot disregard the intrusion of ardent fans is that, as co-producers or active readers, they can become natural guarantors of the programmes' further deformational circulations through different types of media, including video-on-demand (VOD), DVD, or spin-off products. Thus, Korean Wave audiences are located in a mutually constitutive solidarity as co-circulators rather than as mere co-writers. However, the greater the participation in the production flows, the more cognitive dependence they prompt. The next interviewee illustrates this aspect as the illusion of active audience.

"So far, I have contributed over 10 years to the fan cafes of Korean TV dramas. I love doing this, because Korean dramas have always been with me regardless of my economic or social situation. So they represent me and speak for me like other ordinary people, and their points always make me say something about the drama directly to the production staff, because these are our stories and exist entirely for us." (Interview with Kim, JE, 39, English language teacher in Seoul)

5.4 Exchanging 'Atmosphere'

Lastly, exchanging atmospheres for media-exchange is to be explicated in this part, following table 7. The global culture industry quickly strengthens audiences' specific sensibilities in the circulation flow of cultural objects by augmenting extraordinary atmospheres. The Korean Wave rather successfully overrides the trend. Hallyu consumers keep exchanging the imaginary with the real—not only for the consumption of cultural objects, but also for the accumulation of audiences' sensual desires. This is an important aspect of media-exchange, 'giving while keeping', as we have seen previously.

Siegfried Kracauer (1997) already deals with the meaningful discussion influencing the

moviegoers' body and consciousness in his 'Film Theory.' Interestingly for him, the movie theatre as a mediated space has a comprehensive influence on the audiences' psychological and physical reality. In other words, moviegoers interact with their own dreams by experiencing the movie, the people, and the space together with a vivid sensible concreteness rather than the abstractedness of capitalistic modernity. This is analogous to current pop-cultural consumption situations. As Kracauer (ibid) points out, drive-in movie theatres in the 1950s and 60s in the US were based on the comparable concept of cultural space for imaginary experiences, rather than just for consuming movies. The key to the popularity of the drive-in theatre was the additional experiences of a private, secret atmosphere where youngsters might experience their first love while watching movies.⁴⁹ Likewise, global Hallyu fans prefer to consume in the unique atmosphere of the *No-rae-bang*, *DVD-Bang*,⁵⁰ *Game-Bang*,⁵¹ and *Multi-Bang*⁵² where they can synchronise each other's fluxes, feelings, and desires. Through these successive flows, people's experiences of pop-cultural objects are variously accumulated in more complex and meta-realistic ways confused with sensibility. Meanwhile, the Korean Wave's style of object consumption fast changes from quantitative to qualitative by engaging industrial desires.

"Apart from elaborate laser shows, concert promoter Faith and D Entertainment in Singapore revealed that Korean superstar Rain's concert on May 22, 2011, in Singapore

⁴⁹ See Frederic Martel, *Mainstream* (2012) Chapter 2, 'Multiplex in this American "thrive-in" culture' to compare with contemporary multiplex theatres.

⁵⁰ A private room built commercially for watching DVDs in Korea, usually enjoyed by couples or small groups of friends.

⁵¹ A private room built commercially for enjoying various online games in Korea.

⁵² A private room commercially built for various purposes, from singing, watching, and playing games together, in Korea.

will also feature a special scene where 'rain' will fall within the Singapore Indoor Stadium for two and a half minutes. More than 1000 litres of water will be used in this segment to simulate falling rain. Although it sounds wasteful, in reality, the water won't go to waste; the production team will collect and recycle the water used for this segment of the 2-hour show." (From JYPE.com site news article. Last accessed in April, 2011).

Thus, it becomes important to understand how mediated cultural objects are communicated to consumers in metaphysical experiences through psychic, collective, and technological mechanisms. Following the media-exchange concept of 'thing-in-soul' in a transmutable atmosphere, this study is interested in practically analysing the way people (re)mediate certain pop-cultural objects in their own atmospheric and transcendental experiences, incorporating complex sensibilities.⁵³ This gives rise to the question of how cultural objects are being consumed through immersive, multi-sensory atmospheres.

Rain and PSY's Media Events with Transcendental Embodiment

For the K-Pop industry—notably YGE and JYPE, the increasing transcendental liaison with the imaginary is manifested in the production culture of their live-events. For example, Rain and PSY's concerts are unique in many respects. As I, briefly, mentioned above, PSY and Rain have attracted much attention in Asia and beyond, through their powerful performances and unique elements. In fact, Rain and PSY concerts can be identified as *ritual meta-communications* involving media-exchange with liminal, collective processes, and not

⁵³ Specific references about more sonic/phonic oral/aural modes of theorising can include John Hutnyk's writing on 'fun^da^mental' amongst other writing on music, Tony Mitchell's edited collection *Global Noise*, and Jason King's 'Rap and Feng Shui' in Toby Miller's collection *A Companion to Cultural Studies*.

just as typical media events. Thus, the characteristics of both K-Pop leaders' performances seem to be tactile, emotional, and affective, embracing the singular sensibilities of each consumer. In summary, the feature of PSY and Rain's live performances is focused on the spiritual, affective exchange for consumers' repetitive, qualitative consumption.

[Photo 3. *Rain's Coming* concert. Source from JYPE.com. Last accessed at April 2011]



As Jung Sun (2011) shows through her research on Singaporean Rain fans' frenzy, this enthusiasm is, in part, focused on the star's masculinity. In addition, Rain's global fans are already well known for their active, creative, and loyal characters. His enthusiastic fans launch online fan clubs everywhere, such as RainSingapore.com and CloudUSA.wordpress.com to combine their ritual activities and collective memories in both virtual and actual worlds. They have made pilgrimages not only to Rain's television drama locations in Korea, but also to his live world tour concert sites as many times as they can. When we consider consumers' migratory practices, Rain fans' journeys make it easy for them to be immersive and multi-sensible almost everywhere in the search for the various kinds of unique experiences they desire. This can be similarly explained through the production

culture of global Hallyu consumers who are altering the way that K-pop objects are circulated, possibly creating an unusual atmosphere empowered by digital media environments and the personal financial capability to be so mobile. Along with his fans, Rain, as a thing on the cultural circulation flows, follows his ordinary self-transformations into such variable material territories from homemade media products, flash animations, moving GIF images, avatars, fan arts to web banners. Likewise, Rain's imaginary embodiment for consumers allows his fans to experience their own singularity, basically by adopting and consuming his enhanced contradictory images of cute, sexy, or boyish masculinity, as in the below interview.

"I am sorry to say it, but I am always so happy and satisfied with him. He [Rain] is not just my favourite pop star; he is more like a soul mate, having known each other so long. I follow his concerts and go to as many as possible, because the concert is a special space for us, where he and I see each other, speak, and share love together. He will be forever dear in my heart, since I have already given my every feeling and my soul to him." (Interview with Jason, 44, Hong Kong resident)

Jung's meticulous analysis of such consumption behaviour confirms an understanding that the personal, social imaginary can fit within cultural spaces and even in everyday life, simultaneously inducing mutual inter-dependence and a capitalistic fetishism devised by the global culture industry. The main theme in Rain's case is the mediated and augmented meta-experiences, including even imagined sexual intercourse with Rain, during the auratic, affective, and charismatic exchange situations. This aspect can confirm my contention that K-Pop fans, like Rain's fans, do not merely consume Korean pop music as isolated cultural content, but rather consume the atmosphere of a certain K-Pop circulation embracing the star,

image, space and brand. Returning to the 'Rainy Day' world tour concert, in particular Hong Kong 2009, we can examine the cultural patterning of this kind of eventisation via Jung's observations: "The peak of the sexualisation of his performances is the 'shower show.' This part of the show refers to his name 'Rain.' Historically, 'cloud and rain' have been the representation in Chinese literature of 'sperm' of the sky (Zhang et al. 1999:583). At the climax of the concert, when the fans reach the peak of their excitement, water (that is, 'rain') falls down to simulate ejaculated sperm. The fans, in turn, experience a simulated orgasm. Further evidence of this connection is that, according to Rain's official fan site, 'all his fans are officially called 'cloud'' (RainSingapore.com 2005). In this sense, the ritual of the shower show between Rain and the entire audience represents an act of sexual intercourse between a man (rain) and a woman (cloud)." (Jung, 2011: 115)

Most of interviewees in this research also agree that the shower show is the highlight of Rain's concerts. These fans, known as 'clouds', remain in-between the live media events. Rain's performance usually maximises his sexual image and repeatedly exchanges it in the circuits of inciting and exhausting trans-individuals' desire. The shower show and diverse similar elements are already a very famous part of not only Rain's live concerts, but also those of other K-Pop stars, including even idol girl groups like SNSD and 2PM.

A series of annual PSY's concerts, referred to as the 'Soaking Show,' follows a similar concept to Rain's shower show. Based on yearly participatory observations, the only difference between PSY and Rain is the target audiences for these singularised events. In

detail, Rain stands for perfect masculinity, while PSY stands for ordinariness, tastelessness, and masochistic snobbery, as they often emphasize publicly. Moreover, the industrial dream for Rain was dreamt mainly by a local, regional culture industry, while desire for PSY is more strongly promoted by the global culture industry, notably Google. Thus, compared to Rain, it is easier to see this ordinariness in PSY's Soaking Show. For example, he drinks a whole bottle of the Korean alcohol, *soju*⁵⁴, in one go after everyone in the concert space is soaked.

However, in both Rain and PSY's concerts, the performers always become half-naked, triggering the fans' sensation that they are easy-to-attach-to/feel. In other words, the global K-Pop objects are being transformed into more temporal, sensual things for physical 'mobile privatisation' (Williams, 1974) in the global culture industry (Lash and Lury, 2007). In this regard, JYP and PSY's legendary events fit well with the contradictory, yet evident manifestation of transcendental empiricism with a physical and metaphysical sync-dialogue with these self-mutating quasi-subjects. However, this type of multi-sensory consumption is typically reserved as an expensive gift for those with substantial disposable income and capacity for mobility on one hand and, simultaneously, underpinned as another free gift for those with substantial digital and technological attention on the other.

[Photo 4. PSY *Soaking Show*. Source: *NocutNews.com*. Last accessed in Dec. 2012]

⁵⁴ *Soju* is a symbol of ordinariness in Korea. So, PSY demonstrates his ordinariness by this action on stage.



“My favourite K-Pop star, Sinhwa from SME, works out fees for meeting fans based on the direct contact scales between members and audiences. SME performed a live dinner show with Jeon Jin, a member of Sinhwa, in Osaka, Japan on August 18, 2012. The seats prices varied: SS-3,300 Yen with special gifts, including a hug from Jeon (for 30 people), S-2,900 Yen with an autograph (for 10 people), and A-2,700 Yen for a handshake (for 20 people)), then B-2,500 Yen as a basic price.” (Interview with Matsuda, 23, Osaka, Japan, College student)

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the features of media-exchange on the focus of the forms of topological deformation in to Korean Wave circulation have been analysed. Through these, it is examined how topological means for facilitating media-exchange based on atmosphere, mediality, and metaphysical singularity are connected to the circulation of Korean culture by audiences' trans-individual feelings of sincerity and enjoyment. The topology of pop cultural circulation embraces figural deformations of objects incorporated through psychic, social, and technological memory for trans-individuals' qualitative experiences in unique atmospheres. Historical and contemporary cases of Korean pop culture reveal the contemporary resonances and developments of transcendental experiences of liveness in specific spatio-temporal situations. In this regard, contemporary cultural objects are playable, affective, and attachable procedures. At the same time, this is illusionary in connecting participants' qualitative, repetitive, and excessive consumption and re-mediation facilitated by culture industry's strategic media-exchange.

Chapter 6: PSY's 'Gangnam Style' and Beyond

6.1 PSY's 'Gangnam Style' and Ritual Practice

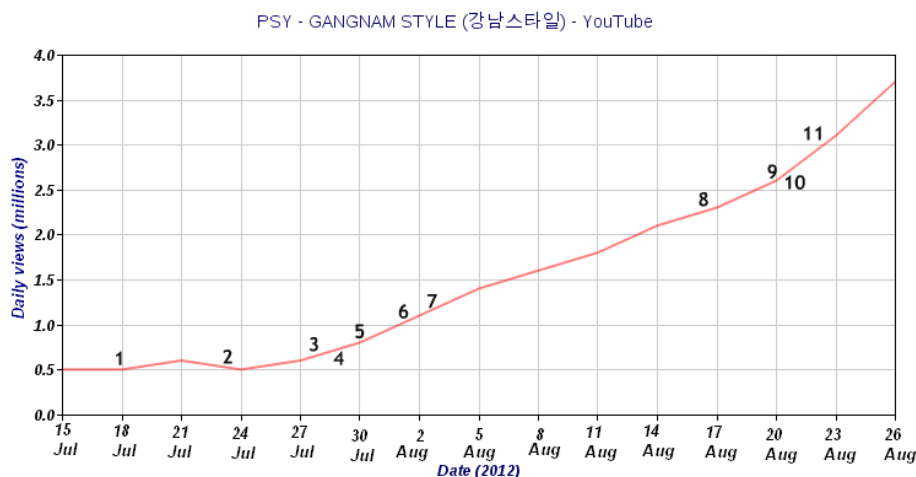
In this part, we will examine PSY's 'Gangnam Style' syndrome as an example of the ritual, liminal process of media-exchange in the global digital milieu. In particular, the PSY case offers a critical example of the integral features of this media-exchange: the collective, ceremonial, and pilgrimage practices where his global consumers joyfully ride on multi-sensory and participatory processes reinforced by the mainstream global programming industries.

PSY (Park Jae-Sang), South Korean singer, rapper, songwriter, dancer, and music producer was recognised by the mainstream media as the 'new YouTube King' (CNN, 24 November, 2012) with his unlimited global reach. In fact, PSY was not regarded as an archetypal K-Pop singer, nor was he seen to have had the potential to achieve such huge global success. Furthermore, his previous music career had generally been confined to sites of some socio-political, public disputes. Thus, his unprecedented global sensation with the viral song 'Gangnam Style' in 2012, seems all the more dramatic to K-Pop audiences. As of 15 August, 2017, two months after PSY officially finished his marketing activities around 'Gangnam Style', views of his music video on YouTube hit 2,930,085,493 (YouTube, 2017). This celebrated music video has been already watched almost everywhere in the world (227 countries as of September 28, 2012) and ranked top as an iTunes single, second on the Billboard Hot 100, and was the first Korean song to reach number 1 on the UK single charts, as well as breaking the Guinness World Record for the most-watched music video on YouTube (YouTube, 2013).

6.1.1 Initial Contagious Flow

According to YouTube statistics (2013), the ‘Gangnam Style’ teaser music video first appeared on YouTube on 11 July, 2012, and Twitter advertising started generating an average of 3,000 Tweets daily. By 15 July, 2012, the epicentre of interest in the video was Sandara Park’s (K-Pop girl group 2ne1 member), one influential foreign fan’s Twitter account (the fan had 30,000 followers at that time). After that, the number of Tweets slowed at first. In terms of meaningful references, graph 8, below, shows the initial inflection points in the circulation of the ‘Gangnam Style’ music video on YouTube.

[Graph 3. Initial stages of the PSY syndrome on YouTube. Source: YouTube.com. Last accessed in April 2013]



1	Earliest notable reaction video by K-Pop fans Katie and Mindy Anderson, uploaded to YouTube on 18 July, 201
2	Earliest notable parody by K-Pop bloggers Simon and Martina Stawski, uploaded on 23 July.
3	A. Shared on the social news website Reddit, 28 July. B. Earliest celebrity comment by Robbie Williams on his personal blog,

	<p>28 July.</p> <p>C. Featured in tabloid newspaper Ilta- Sanomat, in Finland, July 28.</p>
4	<p>First celebrity tweet by T-Pain, 29 July (Twitter followers of around 930,000): ‘it is impossible to explain how amazing this video is by words.’ Word-of-mouth spreads quickly.</p>
5	<p>Picked up by Neetzan Zimmerman from the social blog Gawker, 30 July.</p> <p>Scooter Braun (Global pop star, Justin Bieber’s manager) tweets ‘HOW DID I NOT SIGN THIS GUY!?!?!’ and links to the video. The fanfare begins. Twitter records 12,586 tweets on 1 August.</p>
6	<p>Picked up by the British political commentator Andrew Sullivan, who blogs about the video on Daily Beast, August 1. Ten million views on YouTube by now, CNN News reports on ‘Gangnam Style fever’.</p>
7	<p>Featured in CNN International and The Wall Street Journal, 3 August – 4 August, 2012. Sean Plott (Starcraft 2 Game director) tweets his impression on the Starcraft 2 broadcasting situation.</p>
8	<p>Nelly Furtado performs ‘Gangnam Style’ at her concert in the Philippines, 16 August.</p>
9	<p>PSY performs ‘Gangnam Style’ at Dodger Stadium, LA, 20 August. This marks his first public appearance in the United States.</p>
10	<p>Katy Perry shares the ‘Gangnam Style’ music video with her 25 million followers on Twitter, August 21.</p>
11	<p>PSY appears on VH1 with Carrie Keagan and Jason Dundas, 22 August.</p> <p>This marks his first appearance on a US television show.</p>

	<p>27 Sep, 2012, Gangnam Style goes to number 2 in the US Billboard Hot 100.</p> <p>5 Oct, 2012, BBC Radio 1 and Metro report on the issue.</p>
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‘Gangnam Style’ followed typical K-Pop music circulation flows in its initial stages, where it reached its apex during the first month after the music video release, and then underwent a stagnant period. Nevertheless, this delightful and entertaining music video quickly became global pop content. The main reason being that people participated in qualitative, repeated consumption facilitated by the media-exchange from the programming industries. In an interview with MTV in 2013, even PSY admits that this was an interesting phenomenon: “...if you think about one billion views, that means people watched it many, many times. I can’t believe they didn’t get sick of it” (PSY in an interview with MTV, 2012).

Global attention exploded unexpectedly and virally, especially in digital spaces. It took only 19 days after the video was released to reach 10 million YouTube views, 8 more days to 20 million, 7 more days to 30 million, then 6 more days to 40 million, 5 more to 50 million, then just 2 days to 60 million, and just five days later it had received 100 million views (YouTube, 2012). In terms of a nation-specific viewing record, as of the day it reached 300 million views (day 26), 58 million were from the US, 23 million view were from South Korea, and 20 million were from Thailand. Interestingly, the figure for Japan was only small. On November 24, 2012, the ‘Gangnam Style’ music video became the most-viewed music video in YouTube history, overtaking Canadian pop star Justin Bieber’s ‘Baby.’ Eventually, on December 22, 2012, it became the first video to receive one billion views on YouTube. In South Korea, PSY’s ‘Gangnam Style’ held the top spot in almost every domestic popular music chart from its first release on 15 July 2012, until mid-February 2013, when PSY

stopped official activity to support the song. PSY took the number one spot of the KBS Music Bank Charts for 16 consecutive weeks until January 2013. Unlike the U.S. Billboard's system, the Korean representative pop music charts normally exclude the number of broadcasting and radio listeners as with Gaon⁵⁵ and Mellon. In other words, in Korea, internet and social media circulation have had a more significant impact on the calculation of the music charts than classical media circulation. In this regard, Korean popular music charts are thought to be equal to the best popular digital music or music video charts which are significantly connected with the power of a few super independents and their royal fandom—of course, PSY's 'Gangnam Style' published by YGE was dominant in this respect.

6.1.2 Rite toward Mediated Centre

The global penetration of K-Pop is down to a YouTube-wise circulation having no significant competitors in terms of the opportunity for a ripple-effect. This YouTube-wise circulation became thus viral and ritual. 'Gangnam Style' is a flagship case. The key to the viral and ritual spreading of this music video in the digital space is, above all, consumers' imitation, adaptation, and pilgrimage to a 'mediated centre' (Couldry, 2003) facilitated by its media-exchange. As seen in the global diffusion of 'Gangnam Style' on the above graph, the references from global celebrities on social media, such as Scooter Braun, T-Pain, Robbie Williams, Josh Groban, and Katy Perry played a crucial role in both confirming PSY as a global big name and making people visit the content as a ritual in terms of the approach to the mediated centre.

⁵⁵ *Gaon* was established in 2010 by the Korea Music Content Industry Association with government support and widely considered to be the 'Korean Billboard,' making its rankings by combining the numbers for people's digital streaming, downloading, and background music settings in media platforms (*Gaon*, 2013).

At that time, PSY already signed a full contract with the US music industry to enter the world market in a number of different schemes. Officially, PSY was contracted as a co-worker of Justin Bieber and MC Hammer for American Universal Republic Records and School Boy Records of the Raymond Braun Media Group. Indeed, the mainstream media's solution for PSY was somewhat similar to that previously used for Japanese singer Sakamoto Kyu. The first Asian pop music single to occupy the Billboard number one spot in 1963, his song 'Sukiyaki' only became widely known by Western references two years after the original album was released. The British jazz band, Kenny Ball and His Jazz Men's instrumental cover worked to inspire the song's late popularity after the band released a popular remake for a mainstream Western audience. Then, the US record label officially published the original song again in response to the enormous demand from consumers. This Japanese one-hit wonder of the sixties is somewhat relevant in the context of PSY, when one considers the fate of Kyu and his song. In this regard, it is plausible to expect that PSY would also disappear quietly as a one-hit wonder of the 21st century just like Kyu.

In another interesting aspect, thanks to 'Gangnam Style,' a number of other 'styles' music videos, like London Style, Shanghai Style, MIT Style and so on, were created for a variety of purposes in online spaces.

"The reasons why we made the 'London Style' music video were, above all, simplicity and fame. Because we all knew how to dance, sing, and even how to shoot and edit the original content. At that time, 'Gangnam Style' was the hottest issue on YouTube, which naturally made everyone around us to have a common interest about our 'London Style' music video production. Frankly, we wished to become big stars in the Shoreditch area by creatively and impressively using 'Gangnam Style.' (East London)." (Interview with Jason, 18, high school student in London)

As seen in the above interview, this collective excitement to travel to the mediated centre in the digital milieu cannot be simply delineated and described merely by the original quality of content, music, and artist. Instead, a variety of people, groups, and spaces are taking part in their own ‘Style’ content production culture, following their own spatio-temporalities in diverse situations and with diverse motives. The consumers have unconsciously become cultural intermediaries in a unique gift-exchange in this production culture. The viral spread of the ‘Gangnam Style’ music video needs, therefore, to be re-considered with these ritual pilgrimage features in the contemporary media-exchange, in less strict copyright concerns about these self-contagious secondary objects. In this regard, the production culture of the ‘meme video’⁵⁶ (Shifman, 2012) as in ‘Gangnam Style’ is comparable to Korean hab-seong [hybridity] practice as seen in the case of DC Inside discussed in Chapter 5, in the way they re-produce the cultural objects over and over again in a ritual fashion.

6.1.3 PSY Circulation in Free/Sincere Gifts

“The problem is that my music video is more popular than I am.” (PSY, BBC Radio 1, 5 October, 2012)

The remarkable 2.9 billion views that ‘Gangnam Style’ received on YouTube by the middle of 2012, is strong confirmation of the power of a global digital programming culture and the media-exchange process. First of all, the consumption of this music video was significantly boosted by consumers’ multi-sensing, qualitative experiences driven by the media-exchange. The audio-visuality in this content focuses more on the immersive, performative atmosphere rather than on the mere appreciation of the original. During the period of promotional activity,

⁵⁶ Shifman’s (2012) definition of ‘meme video’ is also parallel to de/reformation of original videos through parody, pastiche or mash-ups by users in diverse digital spaces.

PSY regularly appeared on various top-ranked TV shows to instruct audiences with the song on how to imitate his, by now celebrated, 'horsedance' as a core of the song. The audiences in the following interviews all confirm that they watched this YouTube material dozens, hundreds, sometimes even thousands of times, utilising this music video for something more than just watching for the music's sake:

"Most of my friends thought that the best way for advertising our school's Halloween party event was just making a 'Gangnam Style' parody music video because this content is well suited to the current youth, digital trend, and above all this YouTube content was a mega-hit at that time. Thus, every participant was happy to use this content. Indeed, we were encouraged to involve others in a collaborative project because we knew that everyone would like to search and watch many types of secondary –parody– 'Gangnam Style' music videos, including ours. Our big rivals, like Cambridge and Kings College, have already done good jobs and got successful feedback in the online site." (Interview with Andrew, 21, University College London student)

As in the above interview, 'Gangnam Style' fans usually follow the typical features of a 'viral imitation and adaptation' (Tarde, 1903) to approach a mediated centre in a ritual sense of habitus (Bourdieu, 1991). The contemporary culture industry, by sharing knowledge, information and collective memory from their experiences, continuously reinforces the fact that consumers can take any approach they want with the materials. Storylines, dance skills, and action poses are simply and easily packaged to deconstruct text and audience on the media-exchange. This is also transmitted in a temporal, sensual presence of hyperactivity aligned with the slogan 'you can do it.' Audiences are clearly forced to constantly attempt to follow actions and performances in contagious, unconscious and ritual flows in a Tardean 'imitational ethos' (1903). While, cute, sexy, and muscular K-Pop idol groups remain in the artistic (acrobatic) arena, the chubby, fun and generous PSY ('Gentleman' was the title of his

next song released in 2013), cuts into the ordinary in a physical and metaphysical invasion. This can be seen in the circulation histories of the ‘Gangnam Style’ video on YouTube, which invites everyone from grandparents to neighbours to join in through individuated sensibilities, just like the ‘shuffle dance’ from the music video for the 2011 single ‘Party Rock Anthem’ of LMFAO⁵⁷ (543,179,134 views on YouTube as of May 27, 2013).

[Capture 6. ‘Gangnam Style Shuffle dance’ scenes. Source: YouTube. Last accessed in May 2013)



[Photo 14. ‘Gangnam Style’ flashmob in the US and France. Source: YGE]



[Photo 15. ‘Gangnam Style’ flashmob in Paris. Source: YG]

⁵⁷ ‘Party Rock Anthem’ by LMFAO was considered more sexy and even raunchier than ‘Gangnam Style’ in some respects.



From another perspective, the music video is easily set to deform/reform as a technical/sincere gift in most copyrighted situations. This reveals an enormous paradigm shift in contemporary cultural flows especially in Korea, as copyright-free gifts became more and more idiosyncratic. An obvious symptom of this is the decreasing number of legal disputes over content plagiarism between South Korea and its neighbouring states. Instead, content formats have become a newly-emerging trade item in the region (Jin, 2016). The global boom of content format trade in the culture industry further signifies that the concept of de/re/transformation in topological cultural flows is already widespread. Indeed, Korean popular culture is leading a growing trend in the culturalisation of imitation and adaptation by purposefully nullifying the idea of copyright. As seen in J.S. Kang and S.C. Kim's (2013) relevant assertion that, when one looks at the case of 'Gangnam Style', the great number of secondary music videos, including reaction videos, dance cover videos, and parody videos from a myriad of situations and by individuals and groups, serve as the key to the remarkable viral circulation of 'Gangnam Style' by encouraging participants' overly repetitive, qualitative reproduction without any concerns over copyright. Intriguingly, a variety of the de/re-formatational parody videos have resonated with a diversity of personal and collective

contributions reflecting diverse spatio-temporalities such as those by Chinese artist and dissident Ai Weiwei, college students in Africa, marching bands at Eton, MIT, and Ohio University, NASA's educational unit, and soldiers around the world.

The three examples below, clarify each different style of content, adaptation, and consumption in this aspect of the circulation of 'Gangnam Style' on digital milieus. Capture 8 shows parody meme videos, which usually deform the story, theme, and music as a key plasticity in adaptational use and experiential intervention. Capture 9 explains reaction meme videos, where there have been just a few easy improvisations on, or re-scripting of the source. Lastly, capture 10 exemplifies dance-cover meme videos. Dance-cover meme videos generally imitate the original means of expression or atmosphere.

[Capture 8. 'Gangnam Style' meme images. Source: YouTube. Last accessed in May 2013]



(Note. Parody 'meme' videos.)

[Capture 9. Gangnam style meme images. Source: YouTube. Last accessed in May 2013]



(Note. Reaction ‘meme’ videos.)

[Capture 10. ‘Gangnam Style’ meme images. Source: YouTube. Last accessed in May 2013]



(Note. Dance-cover ‘meme’ videos.)

As seen in above examples, ‘Gangnam Style’ is chiefly related to a work that has rescripted the content of relations, in other words, ‘rescripted a script (Parisi, 2013).’ YouTube-wise spaces had great potentialities for this production culture, especially regarding content re-production, circulation, and appreciation as not only the background media of invisible algorithms but also the new engine of production culture. Slowly but surely, cultural consumers have changed to cultural mediators in the production culture, encouraged by

global culture industry leaders such as Google.

6.1.4 The PSY Economy

After PSY received global attention from the initial stages of his music video's circulation, there was a widespread curiosity around how much money he earned from his mega-hit. A number of Korean media pundits made some rather fanciful predictions about PSY's economic gain. However, the reality was very different. Based on a news report in September 2012 (Kyonghyang Shinmun, 27 Sept.) at the peak of 'Gangnam Style's' popularity, his domestic income at that time was estimated at only 11 billion Korean Won (9.8 million USD). In detail, his song topped the Gaon Chart for nine consecutive weeks, generating a total income of 1.62 billion KRW: music source sales of 1.07 billion KRW (2.86 million downloads, and streaming 27.32 million times), and album sales of 660 million KRW (55,000 albums). The royalties for 'Gangnam Style' were also surprisingly low, at just 36 million KRW (32,200 USD) given that the average domestic download royalty is only 10.7 KRW (0.01 USD) per piece and 0.2 KRW (0.0002 USD) for streaming (Weekly Hankook, 2012)⁵⁸. To make matters worse, PSY had to share these takings with a number of co-workers. This is a reality of the K-Pop industry and its economy in South Korea.

Over and above these factors, commercial advertising fees accounted for nearly half of his total revenues (10 adverts, at 4–500 million KRW each). Additional income, including his branded concerts, 'Soaking Shows', and other performance fees were estimated at just around 4 billion Won. To put it briefly, although he is regarded as a global star, his opportunity for generating domestic income is not much different from that of other K-Pop idols in that the direct revenue portions from the album and royalties are generally insignificant. As such,

⁵⁸ National download income: US: from 791 KRW; Canada: 804 KRW; UK: 1,064 KRW; Korea:

there would be dramatically little in the way of income for PSY if he did not do any advertising, live performances or commercial appearances. Considering the fact that the download income in Korea is just 1/18 of that in the UK, this irrational domestic profit-sharing structure⁵⁹ in Korea seems to be the unexpected background for Korean Wave free-gifts and media-exchange in the global culture industry.

On the contrary, it is PSY's overseas income that tells a very different story. Basically, PSY's global activities, except Korea and Japan, were generated under Scooter Braun's management company in the US, so recording and distribution of his content were also directly controlled by Universal Republic Records. Unlike the domestic situation, PSY's global income was generally expected to be high. Above all, PSY's YouTube advertising income is stated to have been around 8.5 billion Korean Won (7.6 million USD, as mentioned in an interview with Google's Chief Business Operator (CBO), Nikesh Arora, in *Yonhap News*, 23 January 2013). In addition, many other digital platforms, such as iTunes, are believed to have brought in huge profits from the mainstream US/UK markets and from global media fees. Actually, as US music columnist Paul Grein (*FN News*, 7 February, 2013) says, 'Gangnam Style' made 5.6 billion KRW (4.7 million USD) in US digital music-source sales (iTunes: 1.29 US dollar per download) during its first six months, with more than 4 million downloads, and it made 1.7 billion KRW in UK download sales (~1 GBP per download).⁶⁰

In the midst of all this, the stock price of PSY's domestic management company, YG

⁵⁹ On the face of it, it is surprising that many independent Korean pop musicians appear to generate rather trivial earnings, of about 2 million KRW [1,800 US dollars] each year (SBS, 2012).

⁶⁰ For comparative amounts, for example, Michael Jackson earnings from *Thriller* were \$134 million in the two years after the release of the album (an inflation-adjusted \$306 million). See <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zackomalleygreenburg/2014/05/28/michael-jacksons-multibillion-dollar-career-earnings-listed-year-by-year/#1cc568fe3779>

Entertainment, experienced a significantly positive impact. As of October 4th, 2012, the stock price of YGE soared more than 160%, and YGE's market capitalisation exceeded 1.372 trillion KRW, easily placing the company in the top 10 in the KOSDAQ (the Korean securities exchange) ranking of corporate market capitalisation. This huge impact on the stock index is, above all, the clear reward secured by the K-Pop management companies in the uncertain profit portfolio of the Korean Wave.

6.1.5 'Gangnam Style' and Global Culture Industry

"PSY's global success has nothing to do with the K-Pop syndrome. PSY's Gangnam Style is supported by the general public around the world, unlike the K-Pop phenomena, which are helped by manic fandom. This music video spread on YouTube and SNS, as have other K-Pop idols; however, is boosted, I think, significantly, as PSY appears on influential local TV shows like Today or NBC," (Interview with Yang Hyun-Suk, YG Entertainment president, Yonhap News, 15 September, 2012)

Indeed, 'Gangnam Style' was initially planned for the domestic market, but the features of audiences' subjective multi-sensing experience, content's figural deformation, and immersive consumption helped evolve this unprecedented global success. In this sense, 'Gangnam Style' was not a cultural material with a fixed entity, but has been a temporal process. Thus, the media discourses of 'Gangnam Style' were always part of the flow process as well. Some music critics initially described this music as being similar to the addictive songs of Spanish Los del Rio's 'the Macarena', or Indian Dalar Mehndi's 'Tunak Tunak Tun' (HanKyorae 21, 24 September, 2012). On the other hand, media researchers in reception studies later picked up on the audiences' styles of text analysis following their pronunciation, such as 'Kamnan Style' (which means 'town leader' style) in Thailand audiences or 'Open Condom Style'

among American youngsters (HanKyorae 21, *ibid*). When we consider the music video's content as well, it seems relevant to consider the diverse codes and assessments of different interpretations on the circulation flows. Notably, 1) 'hybridity with a parody code of the Gangnam area⁶¹ in Seoul, the Western sexy code, and the Bollywood musical film code—over global electronic “club” sounds' (Hankyora 21, *ibid*); 2) 'Gangnam Style was influenced by American Saturday Night Live and electronic duo LMFAO' (10Aasis, cited in Hankyora 21, *ibid*); 3) 'PSY-style is comedy itself, with his own creativity including B-Class emotions, like an Austin Powers film in PSY's own words; 4) 'dressy, classy, dance, cheesy' (Hankyora 21, *ibid*). Eventually a Guardian music critic (Sep 28, 2012) stated that 'PSY, rather than breaking the K-Pop mould, had reinforced stereotypes of socially challenged, middle-aged East Asian men'. These atypical properties of collective memory are also typical characteristics of audiences' global, digital participation in cultural flows confused by technological memory and media-exchange.

In the end, what is the meaning of 'Gangnam Style' and K-Pop for contemporary consumers? At least for now, K-Pop is not a thing for listening to but more a tool for doing something else, which requires at least familiar yet captivating experiences. 'Gangnam Style' also engaged people's ritual and conceptual senses like their sense of humour, their easy-goingness, affection, and sense of cool, each of which is related to an enthusiasm for the social imaginary and for fluid participation, rather than for a genuine interest in music itself. As seen in the above case of 'Gangnam Style,' pop-cultural objects are becoming more like a deformational, temporal process on a flow of media-exchange. At the same time, Korean pop music seems to be re-conceptualised as a supplemental, always an accompaniment to other

⁶¹ The Gangnam district in Seoul is known for its heavy concentration of wealthy residents and high standard of living, and has been compared to Beverly Hills, California.

processes. In other words, K-Pop music exists as the thing to include by exclusion.

The phase shifts of K-Pop, however, from being a thing to listen to toward being a thing to do something more with, are originally closely linked to the profit exploitation mechanisms in the long, complicated capitalistic ‘circuits’ (Stiegler, 2011). In this context, the importance of the lyrics in music, of course, gradually disappears. After all, Korean producers and consumers leading the copying/adapting music trend up to the early 2000s—something which, as we have seen, is no longer deemed illegal, but rather industrialised by the global culture industry— which, intriguingly, has co-evolved with the industrial renaissance of Hallyu. This is very different from the mainstream industry practice up until now. In this regard, the sensation of K-Pop is due fundamentally to the Korean domestic situation and, so to speak, to the ritual power of ‘viral imitation and adaption’ (Tarde, 1903) which, ironically, the global culture industry depends on more and more as time goes by. According to Google’s Eric Schmidt, speaking during his official visit to Korea in 2011, had this to say about YouTube’s vision for K-Pop before the PSY syndrome: “K-Pop is producing very impressive music. So YouTube helps that to be global mainstream music” (Eric Schmidt interview in Korean media FN News, 7 November, 2011).

In the context of such a precarious Hallyu situation, the Korean Wave is at a point at which it might benefit more from an integrated business model comprising ‘atmosphere’ and free, sincere gifts to users. It remains, however, difficult to predict the road ahead. As one interviewee, closely involved in the K-Pop industry (who wished to remain anonymous), correctly asserts, the audiences experience interesting yet unusual sensations encouraged by the Korean Wave producers, who themselves remain unclear about their business model, feelings which are much to do with a contemporary gift-exchange re-structured by the global programming industry.

6.2. The Recent Intervention and Future of the Korean Wave

Finally, this part seeks to explain where the Korean Wave is heading now in a perspective of recent government interventions. These are required here to possibly consider and suggest the next of the Korean Wave.

From the late 1990's, government support for Korea's creative industries has meant that, today, Korean cultural products have become a roaring success, boosting the local economy by as much as 12.6 trillion won (\$US11.6 billion) in 2014. But, while some sectors continue to grow, there is an almost audible pause as South Korea considers how best to move forward. International K-wave fatigue, local economic challenges, and a difficult geopolitical environment are asking some tough questions of Korea's ability to continue to delight the international consumer. The country's new president, however, has already expressed his desire to try to breathe new life into the country's creative industries which, if successful, could help him go some way to meeting his commitments to create new jobs for the country's young people, boost economic growth and jumpstart another increase in living standards in one of Asia's economic miracles. There is a new feeling of optimism in the country, and few would doubt that if it is possible, Korea is the country that would be the one to achieve it. In a 5G, digital world, the demands of creating another wave of success is likely to test the government's ability to generate innovation and creativity, question the efficacy of central economic policy in dismantling cultural and geographic barriers and, if successful, set new standards for policy trends in public-private partnership. This part offers some ideas about the next Korean Wave, considering the question of whether government intervention in the creative industries will be effective.

6.2.1 Hallyu and the Korean Government

“South Korea is certainly positioned as one of the most influential models for cultural power and diplomacy in the Asian region and, particularly, in China. South Korea has sought to move up the value chain from manufacturing to services, and to be competitive in the new knowledge economy” (Castells, 2001).

Popular wisdom has it that, as an important part of this, the international success of Korean films, TV dramas, video games, and popular music has been facilitated by the preparedness of successive governments to approach cultural development as a form of industry policy. This has been further supported by a continued commitment to building the country’s high-speed broadband infrastructure, making South Korea the most connected nation in the world (Akami Technologies, 2016), and the active promotion of cultural exports, including the establishment of the Korean Creative Content Agency (KOCCA) in 2008, to encourage investment in Korea’s cultural and creative industries and push ‘Brand Korea’ globally (Hong, 2014). But things are not proceeding to plan. The economy picked up pace in the first quarter of 2017, despite heightened Sino-Korean tensions, with GDP growth beating all expectations to expand 0.9% quarter-on-quarter. But, this came in the face of mounting woes in some traditional exporting industries and a beleaguered domestic sector. Korean car sales to China continued to plummet in April 2017, while the tourism industry experienced its largest deficit in a decade in March following China’s ban on group tours to Korea. And the economic benefits of Hallyu have also failed to quite reach the giddy heights that were predicted. In 2014, South Korea raked in \$US5 billion from its pop-culture exports, and it had set its sights on doubling that by 2017 (Economist, 2014). This looks optimistic. Exports of South Korean cultural content rose 9.7 percent year-on-year in 2016, despite an economic slowdown and China's restriction on imports of Korean pop culture over a diplomatic row. The total of 6.21

billion won (US\$5.52 million), however, fell well short of what the Korean government had been hoping (Yonhap, 2017). Nonetheless, a record-high trade balance in 2017 April suggests that improved global trade flows and China's unwavering demand for other Korean exports continue to outstrip the spillover effects from politically-motivated retaliatory measures. On the domestic side, however, things look less upbeat. In April, the unemployment rate crept up while household debt growth continued to run ahead of income growth (Focus Economics, 2017).

An OECD policy paper published in 2015, emphasizes the importance of re-engineering the South Korean economy. In the next 50 years, Korean society will undergo the most rapid ageing of any OECD member and must boost productivity to secure sustainable, long-term economic growth. OECD recommendations include leveraging Korea's position as a leading innovator, boosting a lagging services sector, reducing regulation, strengthening the links between public research institutions and the private sector, and helping to build entrepreneurship and the small and media-sized company (SME) sector (OECD, 2015). The extent of the role of government in developing and encouraging the growth of what is increasingly seen as a key sector to any country wishing to be a winner in the globalised knowledge economy is in question. Suggestions of a superiority of culture which often accompany any successes are, at best, a distraction and, at worst, the corrupting obsession of cultural nationalism. Korea's success seems to be almost accidental and little to do with government intervention. Indeed the government has a poor understanding of concept of culture and the creative industries. The success of Korea's global YouTube sensation PSY is a perfect example of this programmed uncertainty. Released in 2012, PSY's 'Gangnam Style' music video was the first YouTube video to get on billion views and, by May 2017, this number was closing on 3 billion, making PSY more watched than global pop sensation Justin

Bieber. This happened with no help from the Korean government as seen chapter 7.

The new president of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in will be hoping to give the country's cultural exports a boost in order to come good on his promise to jump-start dawdling economic growth on the peninsula and create jobs for the young voters who swept him into office in May 2017. On the campaign trail, the former human rights lawyer and son of North Korean refugees, Moon underlined his belief that culture and art should be considered an industry in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution: "Art and culture play growing roles in this era but they have been neglected as if they were private territory," Moon said, promising to attend cultural events every month (M.Y. Kwon, 2017). Speaking at a conference in the capital Seoul on Hallyu, Moon said he believed that if the president shows an interest in culture, Korean art and culture would develop further. He added that, unlike his predecessors, he would not just attend plays or traditional performances, but would: "take part in popular culture events such as K-pop concerts as well" (M.Y. Kwon, *ibid*).

6.2.2 Challenges to the Next Wave

South Korea faced challenges of anemic economic growth and the stubbornly high youth unemployment with the heyday of the Korean Wave. As a result, the creative industries were also a top priority for Park Gyeun-hye when she was elected in 2012. Korea's impeached President's initiative launched in 2014, 'Creative Economy', included three major goals and six strategies. The goals were to create an economic ecosystem for fostering a creative economy and the creation of new jobs and markets through creativity and innovation, strengthening the global leadership of the nation's creative economy and respecting and promoting creativity within South Korean society. The six strategies comprised the following: creating an economic ecosystem where creativity was fairly rewarded and where business

startups were easier, promoting venture capital firms and encouraging SMEs to play a leading role in the creative economy and make inroads into global markets, creating the growth engine for pioneering new industry and markets, fostering the global creative human capital talent who have the vision and wherewithal to become a vital part of the creative economy, expanding the nation's science technology and ICT innovation capabilities, which lay the foundation for the creative economy, initiating the creative economic culture that promotes the involvement of both government and people (Asia Pacific Global Research Group, 2014). Park forced projects on the chaebol and, while they were not always financially viable, perhaps their efforts put the country in the best position to succeed. Park's government demanded that domestic capital, including chaebol, invest in the film business, for example. This heavy intervention parallels her father Park Chung-hee's work with the chaebol in the 1960s, which spurred the rapid industrialisation of the country, thus 'modern regime decisions can be seen through the lens of specific historical parallels' (Alperstein, 2017). What does not help Moon is the traditional heavy hand of the government in its support for industry stretched to the well-publicised cultural 'black list' supposedly created by president Park Gyeun-hye of artists and those in the creative industries who were critical of her (J.A. Song, December 28, 2016).

New President Moon faces other challenges as he tries to determine just how light his light touch support for Korea's creative industry is going to be. There have been serious questions raised about the efficacy of the protectionist policies of the Korean government. Subsidies in cultural industries, such as films, broadcasting, music, computer games, animation, press, and publishing, had been very modest until the late 1990s (K. Kim, 2013). Indeed, it was the sudden success of certain Korean cultural products such as the films *Shiri* and *JSA* as well as the famous drama, *Winter Sonata*, that led to a substantial increase of indirect subsidies. In

other words, the emergence of these Korean cultural contents preceded the increase of subsidies (Parc and H.C. Moon, 2013). A study on the Korean film industry, one of the first and most influential elements of the K-Wave, downplays the effects of government support (Parc, 2016). The Korean government had been very active in its protectionist support for the Korean film industry, limiting how many non-Korean films could be shown through an import quota system under which only successful companies that produced or exported Korean movies could import foreign films. This existed in various iterations between 1959 and 1986, when it was replaced by a screen quota regime imposing a mandatory number of days for screening Korean movies. The research suggests, however, that the element at the heart of the success of the film industry was the role of private investment in a dynamic socio-cultural environment. Large enterprises including the chaebol, invested massively in the Korean film industry, and it has been their proactive responses that have tended to deliver competitive cultural products (Parc, 2016: 13). In the meantime, where Korean film is concerned, the creative burst in the early 'noughties' was sufficiently linked to the emergence of a number of individuals who had been part of the student movement in the 1980's and early 1990's, and the radical thinking and diversity the movement engendered. Park Kwang-su, for example, who is considered the leader of the 'New Korean Cinema' movement and one of Korea's most distinguished filmmakers was closely connected to the democratic movement in the 1980s. His films have garnered critical acclaim and he has received numerous domestic and international awards. Park founded and led the Seoul Film Group and was the first Korean filmmaker to start his own production company. The Seoul Film Group which was dedicated to renewing Korean film culture and was a significant part of the independent film movement was a strong voice speaking out against the military dictatorship. And, there are a number of other globally-famous Korean film directors who participated in

the student demonstration against the authoritarian government, and were involved in pro-Marxist studies in their youth including Park Chan-uk and Bong Jun-ho.

As for the success in the region of Korean drama, this seems to be down to a simple equation of demand and price as explained earlier chapters. There was a dramatic expansion of media outlets due to a combination of technological change – the introduction of satellite and cable, then of the Internet - with the loosening of state controls in the wake of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis which undermined the legitimacy of many of the local political elites and their loosened their gatekeeping power over the local media. Korean TV dramas were cheap and easy fillers for the increasingly hungry Asian television audiences. And, when *Winter Sonata* was shown on NHK in Japan, something that was trumpeted as a huge success for Korean culture after years of protectionism between the two countries, it was down to geopolitical issues and the need to show some movement on détente ahead of the 2002 World Cup, which was jointly held in Korea and Japan. As cultural researcher Chae Ji-Young (2005) stresses, the Hallyu drama syndrome in its early stages had almost nothing to do with the government's strategic vision or the quality of the content itself. Instead, it had more to do with the unpredictable conditions in the region's respective culture industries, which were in unexpected and urgent need of new content to be able to fill expanding time slots on the new media platforms as seen in Taiwanese, Hong Kong and Singapore TV markets as seen in chapter 4. This must leave the new President Moon and his advisors scratching their heads as to how best encourage the next wave of success in Korea's creative industries. South Korea is in fact a far more fragile polity than media commentary often acknowledges and the new government faces intractable challenges that will not respond to the vapid sound bites that passed for Moon's election campaign. The popularity of the Democrat Party (the ruling party) comes from its promise of clean and transparent government restoring faith in political

institutions by addressing the political influence wielded by chaebol business conglomerates like Samsung, reforming the said chaebol, and pursuing a more emollient policy towards the North. In particular, the young, urban, university educated voters, many of whom participated in mass candlelight vigils against the old regime and form Moon's idealistic support base, will need to be convinced of his integrity and commitment to reform. The OECD suggests that re-engineering the economy could increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by as much as 2.5 percent over 10 years and generate 180,000 jobs, but achieving this is not going to be easy. Moon's predecessor was just as aware of the challenges and had not made much headway. Productivity levels in South Korea are still only around half the levels of leading OECD countries, and while Korea has the world's most intensive research and development, more needs to be done to tap into the global science and innovation networks, as well as enhancing the role of start-ups and SMEs in innovation. There remain large productivity gaps between manufacturing and the services sector, between large and small firms, and between the capital and rural areas. Green innovation, addressing old age poverty and labour market duality by, among other things, encouraging female and youth labour market participation, investing in relevant skills while making education and training more relevant for the industry, would all help, as would a renewed focus on going digital to maximise the benefits of the knowledge economy. The country also needs to boost its services sector to better seize trade and investment opportunities, ease regulatory burdens and promote competition and entrepreneurship, while encouraging venture capital, particularly non debt finance for SMEs.

K-culture is not without its critics. There are those who say the bland, commercial products have undermined traditional Korean culture and values, as well as creating dangerous trends such as the current passion for plastic surgery, as everybody seeks to look like their favourite K-pop celebrities. On a more practical level, creating more compelling production

environment, adequate protection for intellectual property and support for artists, as well as exploiting Industry 4.0, are key to K-culture's further success in the 5G digital world and the Internet of Things. The 'live drama' element of K-dramas where just a few episodes are made initially, and then each of the following episodes are based on audience response and participation as seen earlier chapters, could lend itself well to the new digital age of social media connectivity and big data. Lee Pal-seung, President and CEO of the Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange (KOFICE), suggested a recent slump in the Hallyu industry most evident in DVD sales and a decline in sales of TV dramas, was about over familiarity, and he said the industry to create fresh, unique content and system. He also called on the private sector to step in:

"There's a limit to how much support artists, management and broadcasters can receive from the government. So businesses shouldn't stop at making donations, and take tactical approaches to transform Hallyu into a marketing strategy. In other words, Hallyu content and businesses need to feed off one another" (J.Y. Kwon, 2014).

But none of this will be easy amidst the doldrums of an anemic economy, where traditional industries like shipbuilding have started to have notable failures, and recalls of mobile phones (Samsung) and cars (Hyundai and Kia), have made the Korean economy look mortal. South Korea also remains a polity split along geographical, demographic and economic fault lines which no politician of the post Cold War era has successfully transcended. And Moon faces not only North Korean belligerence, but also an increasing unease with its American ally. Add to that the new China boycott of Korea and its goods over the installation of the THAAD missile defence system, and the job looks increasingly difficult. In addition, although Park is the first president to be impeached, corruption has undermined the tenure of every president of the sixth republic as well as that of the fifth (1981-87). Even the presidencies of Nobel

peace prize winner Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, who committed suicide, failed to avoid bribery allegations while Park's precursor had to apologise publically for his relatives' penchant for kickbacks. The particular post-modern Korean version of a Confucian techno-mandarin assumes an elite entitlement to rule coupled with the assumption that 'gifts' rather than bribes are legitimate recompense for the burdens of office and part of the ritual of power. Democratic politics are deeply factionalised and fought in zero sum terms and contemporary factions have deep geographical, local and clientalist associations. Whilst the vortex of power operates from Seoul and the bureaucracy holds the state together, politics oscillates between centralisation and fragmentation.

From the end of the Korean War, the country has managed to consistently defy its doubters both over its economic success, but also its emergence as a regional democratic touchstone. A light touch reforming Moon alongside South Korea's private sector could still see positive news on jobs, sustainable economic growth and Moon re-burnishing the tarnished shine of one of the region's economic miracles. The policy guidance seems clear. According to Victor Hwang of the Kauffman Foundation, a US think-tank on entrepreneurship: 'top-down tools are not as effective as bottom-up tools. Policy makers...are often playing catch up' (Bounds, 2017).

There remain concerns that the restrictive local culture, hierarchical and patriarchal, could prevent the country meeting some of the more important policy suggestions outlined by the OECD. South Korea is also one of the most homogenous cultures in the world, and immigration is traditionally low. It is a structure that does not encourage diversity and innovation, and the dominance of the chaebol has restricted the development of a strong SME sector, another important source of innovation and entrepreneurial flair. The Korean economy is poorly balanced and dominated by the capital Seoul, despite government attempts to

generate centers of culture and learning in other regions like the Daejeon-Sejong ‘silicon valley’, with the Korean Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) – Korea’s MIT - at its heart. Which only proves that just because you build it, it does not mean they will come.

6.3. Conclusion

South Korea’s economy is at a key point in its development. The country has the infrastructure, the commitment to investment in research and development, and the international recognition that are fundamental to supporting its next steps in that process. New administration is facing they can get the policy mix right and overcome the restrictive attitudes which could yet hamper Korea 4.0. As the research on the success of the Korean film industry shows, pro-competition provisions and consumer-oriented policies have proved more crucial than protectionist policies. As Parc (2016: 13) stresses, real cultural diversity can be achieved and enriched when there are many competitive, self-organising cultures, rather than many uncompetitive cultures in the world. It can be said with confidence of culture and cultural system is more important than cultural exception.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Rethinking the Korean Wave

Since 1998, South Korea has undergone fundamental socio-cultural changes whilst re-organising its political and economic structure. It has witnessed the emergence and adoption of neo-liberal socio-economic policies, undertaken mostly by the Korean government in response to the requirements of Western international institutions (e.g. the IMF and the World Bank). As a result of these disruptions, the previously-established pop cultural flows were abruptly interrupted, and these unsystematic, unpredicted ruptures yielded to a more liberal and complex capitalistic phenomenon. Subsequently, the desire to move much closer to neo-liberalistic dimensions in psychic, collective, and technological ways became the dominant zeitgeist in South Korea.

As a result of these changes, cultural producers in Seoul have inadvertently begun to actively reflect a more neo-liberal capitalistic approach in tailoring Korean Wave cultural objects. Since the Korean Wave became established as a major economic sector in the 2000s, regional audiences have experienced a rather diverse way of life. Slowly but surely, Hallyu objects are being considered as discursive yet distinctive entities. Thus, the popularity of Korean cultural objects still lies, in large part, in pop cultural circulation flows and networks, facilitated by the reflection of the diversity of the region which include religious, social, political, economic and technological changes as well as complex characteristics of the audiences. In this regard, the Korean Wave object is an ongoing process, not a fixed thing in the region and beyond.

There have been very few examples of hugely successful 'third world' pop culture in the United States and Europe. Furthermore, even the case of PSY as a Korean rapper who became the number one You-Tube star cannot be fully explained from the traditional perspective of the culture industry. Rather, contingent, indeterminate aspects such as the free,

performative, sincere, non-copyright and non-economic elements are far more meaningful in any explanation of his success, as we have seen in this thesis. As such, this work has underlined the importance of considering the impact of globalisation, digitalisation, and socio-economic exchange. Surely, the complex intertwined nexus of all these aspects is essential in any understanding of the cultural circulation and the emerging operational reality in the global pop culture scene. What is important here is not just to examine this process in terms of cause and effect, rather, any analysis must consider how the phenomenon has progressed and resist the temptation to fall back on the deterministic approach of classical critical theories.

The term, (global) culture, is used rather widely and actively in the sense of digitalisation and globalisation. In particular, the term seems to be frequently situated within the expanded contextualisation towards the presence, definition, and understanding of cultural objects. Likewise, it is further required to acknowledge the meaning the ‘social form of life’ (Appadurai, 1986; Lash and Lury, 2007) of these cultural objects in their circulation flows. In line with these explanations, cultural objects should also be situated in the topological process by facing the ‘becoming’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994) structure of deformation, reformation, and transformation. In this regard, global culture and the culture industry are now rapidly stimulating a new capitalistic exchange system, which is similar to the flows of a contemporary gift-exchange or media-exchange (Lash, 2007).

In this standpoint, Hallyu and Korean pop culture have been analysed to be figural, affective, and atmospheric as a core aspect of global culture and the cultural industry. The Korean Wave circulation, in particular, can be seen to be closer to a new mode of gift-exchange rather than a traditional form of commodity-exchange. In addition, this new form of cultural objects' exchange structure can be interrogated with the intervention of the global

culture and programming industry. Lastly, as with the recent case of the ‘Gangnam Style’ syndrome, we have examined how the unique concept of the media-exchange evolves under the influence of global media powers and rituals.

Up until now, the Korean Wave was mainly explained by either classical cultural studies perspectives focusing more on audience decoding and textual analysis or the classical critical study perspectives on cultural imperialism, dependency theory, and political economy with a focus on profit generation, exports, and ownership etc. From these perspectives, the Korean Wave has always been somewhat curious, unclear, and any meaningful interpretation unsuccessful. However, through the lens of a non-representational approach, with an emphasis on the changing, evolving, and self-organising features as seen in this study, the Korean experience becomes a totally different story. Furthermore, it is the global culture industry that becomes an important player in the background facilitating this distinctive cultural phenomenon by incorporating a contemporary example of the gift-exchange.

Global Culture and the Global Culture Industry

Culture in a (post)modern sense is being embraced as a mediator to facilitate people’s cognitive flux on the consumption flows related to their behaviour, suggestion, action, or mission. In the meantime, culture and cultural phenomena flowing fluidly all around the world (Bauman, 2011: 23) no longer seems merely representational. A series of cultural flows, which would be hopefully categorised to be globalised, rapidly transit their points of interests toward the system of the flows articulated from the separated objects. For this transformation, the culture industry puts its core valorisation on the logic of becoming rather than its symbolic representation. Media have also become very malleable to allow for the ease of adding features to the objects rather than just a register for object representation. At some

points, media is upgraded to construct reality by co-evolving with consumers and environments on its social forms of life, as social media (SNS), itself, reveals by its very name. It is, therefore, transductive in a structural aspect. In these circumstances, cultural consumers are no longer likely to reside in the classical concept of subject–object relation, rather they exist across the boundary of an inter-subjective exchange process, and the transformative potential of cultural objects affectively incarnates into the new forms of their re-production culture. What audiences are actively consuming is also rapidly changed to cultural atmosphere from cultural content. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of these aspects is vital, including an assessment of the cultural objects’ forms of social life⁶². In this process, the classical concept of culture industry combined with Mauss’ ideas of the ‘gift’ can reveal a new but seemingly more complex concept of cultural object and the global culture industry. This new and exciting concept is clearly revealed in this study and its examination of the Korean Wave.

To clarify the definition of global culture, it is necessary to draw a distinction from the classical approach to culture. Globalised culture focuses on its unique circulation flows, during which cultural subject, object, and even space are easily blurred and then exaggerated by an over-determining confusion of psychic, collective memory, and people’s ritual participation. That is the ‘temporal’ aspect (Stiegler, 2011: 14) of cultural topology, which is the key condition for the contemporary global cultural flows. Here, cultural objects are fluid and self-transforming processes, inducing a temporal flux with specific value-making in the relation of topological application.

As Appadurai (1986) correctly asserts, cultural things also have their own social forms of

⁶² In this way, the examples of algorithms, big data, or meta-data in contemporary digital cultural phenomenon already reveal significant meaning about technological objects’ forms of social life.

life. In the end, the stratification of global culture turns out to be immersive and figural, and these aspects are much more connected with the cultural topology. The global culture industry is overwhelmingly exchanging the objects' diverse features and atmospheres with their consumers through the trans-individuals' social imagination. In the perspective of an economic exchange system, abstract equality of commodity and sincere obligation of gift skilfully co-exist. Thus, any sufficient explanation of the contemporary global culture and its objects needs a more nuanced explanation than those provided by the mere singularised artistic or the Fordistic exchange systems. In other words, global cultural objects should be defined as more extraordinary and exceptional gifts.

To conclude, objects in the global culture industry can no longer be treated as universal, fixed materials in that the objects' presence becomes increasingly uncertain and inevitable through the re-production of globalised differences on their circulatory flows. Thus, all the situations in consumption take part in the process of creating change. The first feature is branding and thingification, during which media directly merge with object on the unique atmospheres under the area of operation or navigation. As Lash and Lury (2007) describe, brand, compared to commodity, has its own history and affinity among objects as well as collective memory among subjects. Furthermore, the global culture industry defines the objects as unique processes, able to be always re-made by some changes of applications in a perspective of the cultural topology. While Fordistic cultural production is connected to cultural topography, post-Fordistic re-production is thus more related to cultural topology. Topology is, basically, concerned with the aspect of becoming in the continual process of deformation, reformation, and transformation so that cultural consumers' affective, figural embodiments are already a good source of further evolutions. As seen in this study, the Korean Wave cases are relevant for explaining this kind of adaptation of the global culture

industry.

This mode of global culture production that encourages atmospheric, immersive, and affective consumption, never allows people to interrupt their consumption flows. This is a kind of ‘social hypnotism’ (Tarde, 1903), which perpetually endures the status of cognitive flux by applying illusory selection and free-will to prohibit stoppage and termination. This is also the core logic of the global culture and programming industry. Thus, all the digital milieus that dominate the technological memories of people, like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, as well as Hallyu sites are markedly influenced by this magical archi-structure of the global cultural powerhouses. Consumers are now experiencing the dissolution of their autonomous wills in an illusory form of media circulations.

Digital Milieu and the Media Exchange

Consumers in digital networking spaces become more familiar with the repetitive or ritual processes of give-take (comment) in operation than to buy–sell (contract) in appreciation. Twitter and Facebook users habitually click the buttons of Like and Share or visit the most recommended online content as an activity of media pilgrimage, sustaining their social relations by making voluntary donations. Furthermore, they are devoted to caring for their self-appearance in this digital milieu with the clear tendency to narcissistic participation. In that sense, any affection somewhat similar to the obligation reinforced thorough the forms of gift-exchange overflows with hyperactivity facilitated by the integration of the moral and economic. However, this cultural hyperactivity is also easily interchangeable with dependence, making the relentless collective imaginary sociality. Of course, that is generally intentional, programmed and exaggerated by the media-exchange and the global culture industry.

At the same time, the mechanical industrialisation of what Benjamin refers to as ‘aura’, which traverses the classical notion of place and space, becomes manifest in the contemporary gift-exchange within the digital milieus. This is particularly so in a meta-space in which subject, object, and space are co-evolving, and where it is possible that the same objects can be variously individuated and mechanically culturalised by simply adding atmospheric depth and topological application. In other words, the age of mechanical reproduction for Benjamin (1999) as a period of pitiful transience of art and aura now seems to be replaced by the age of ‘malaise’ (Stiegler, 2011: 131), rising from the expanded industrial spaces and milieus. This post-modern aura is being accumulated via a capitalistic illusion toward each subject through visibility, care, and attention on the industrial gift-exchange.

According to Mauss (1976), although there is no universality in gifts, at least three pre-conditions are necessary for an object to be treated as a gift in a contemporary sense. The removal of the price tag, attractive packaging, and the addition of personal emotions through ritualised ceremony are to be differentiated from cheap or free products and public property. In applying them to the media-exchange system, the stage of removing the price tag can be compared with the principle of the technical, immediate free commodity, and the phase of packaging is connected to the restoration of a sense of sincerity or purity in the association of affection, singularity, and physicality. Likewise, adding the personal emotions is related to personal, collective behaviors in media events and rituals. When rather crudely applied to the case of the Korean syndrome, the best example of the phase of price tag removal can be seen through the East Asian consumption of Hallyu content via the ‘path of darkness’, mainly in pan-Chinese digital arenas, and the steamiest reaction to packaging would be that in the feelings towards Yon-sama and Rain. Lastly, the case of media ritual event and embodiment is the media pilgrimage fever around the ‘Gangnam Style’ music video in the global, digital

YouTube space.

Following Appadurai's (1986) assertion about the social form of life for this industrialised gift-exchange, this study outlines a media-exchange where technical, sincere gifts are sustaining their forms of social life by a continuously assembling phase-shift or make-up processes in people's production culture. The Korean Wave content circulating especially in self-organising, co-evolving digital milieus is a typical case in this regard. So far, most of the *Hallyu* content in YouTube-style internet spaces are almost free and somewhat sincere gifts, which require our continuous attention, care, and ceremonial duties by means of personal, collective recompense and return in this gift-exchange. In addition, the media-exchange is likely to annul the direct economic obligation by way of people's participation in a psychic, collective absorption with, above all, industrial affluence, which is also the core logic of the global media industry.

Therefore, the cases of Hallyu are a good illustration of the elements of figural culture through sincere, technical gifts and the media-exchange in a sense of open, flexible structure for easy deformation, reformation, and transformation. In this regard, the circulation of the Korean Wave objects is, in a large part, based on not only sincere, free gifts and the media-exchange but also, at the same time, quite a complicated capitalistic mode of circulation that requires psychic, collective, and technological attention. Briefly, the media-exchange system is a process mechanically incorporating transcendentalism and empiricism, once impossible to separate, and that is a kind of neo-liberal cultural valorisation based on the cultural objects' social forms of existence.

Hallyu in Global Culture Industry

As seen in a case of ‘Gangnam Style’ and elsewhere in this thesis, Korean pop culture is increasingly dependent on the possibility of the deformation of cultural objects based on the mechanism of the media-exchange. At the same time, the objects in their social forms of existence work as a supplement for others. Thus, Korean cultural objects are circulated as a process itself and constituted by exclusion from the continual flow. PSY’s ‘Gangnam Style’ video sensation is a clear result of people’s multi-sensory experiences not only to listen to the music but also to do something more with the content’s successive transitional make-ups as well as trans-individuals’ ritual pilgrimage to the mediated centre encourage by the global media powerhouses. Indeed, contemporary pop culture, including K-Pop, is essentially reliant on the culturalised gift-exchange—in other words, the media-exchange, together with its viral adaption, and its religious and collective application. In this way it is possible to get a more nuanced understanding of the Korean Wave.

Re-considering the Korean Wave

In this study, the journey of Korean Wave TV dramas and K-Pop music on their circulations have been analysed in terms of their own exchange flows, together with their audiences’ culture of engagement. The main elements considered in this book comprise: 1) the circular phenomenon of the Korean Wave objects in terms of topological deformation in digital, cultural milieus; 2) the feature of trans-individuals’ cultural experiences on the media-exchange; and 3) the Korean Wave and institutional powers.

In conclusion, in terms of the media-exchange and topological de/reformation, Korean Wave objects are circulated as malleable gifts for their audiences’ sincere and technical retention. These are then industrially incorporated with the re-surrection of singularity in

empirical and transcendental flows. In other words, the main features of the Korean Wave objects are figural and deformational. In addition, the audiences self-organise their own trans-individual fan culture, having a consistent ritual and participatory emotion within the logic of the media-exchange. However, these features are usually situated in the audiences' short-circuited attention derived from technological memory. In the abundant media-exchange, hyperactivity and extravagance are accompanied by the ever-enduring, immersive circulation flows, specifically in digital culture milieus. In this regard, the digital culture milieu is a meta-stabilising, transmutable meta-space, not only for the actualisation of an extreme fatigue society, but also for the other possibilities of subsumption.

In an analysis of the digital technology embedded in the acculturation of media circulation, it is revealed that Hallyu objects infiltrate various participatory video sharing platforms, including regional and domestic sites like Youku Tudou and DC Inside. From these milieus, it is clear that users easily become trans-individuals through excessive, positive, affective, and subjective spatio-temporal participation.

In terms of the relationship between this local, regional pop culture and the global economic media powerhouses, the so-called Korean Wave sensation follows typical, yet rather indecisive socio-economic advancement. At the foundations of the global cultural industry, conventional economic principles have always been ambivalent, focusing more on cultural fabrication and exaggeration. Financial profit as a corporate goal looks to be avoided rather than pursued in its long-tail or shadow economic purposes, as seen in K-Pop and Korean TV drama productions. In this process, cultural commodities are combined with reciprocity, creating an obligation for repetitive consumption in a logic of dependence, as we see in the case of the cultural gifts that are *Hallyu* objects. That has been a key to the industrial, institutional concretisation of the contemporary culture industry and a new

economic rationale.

Finally, the recent history of K-Pop and Korean drama illustrates the changing conditions of cultural content and its consumption. Korean TV drama is made to be listened to, and K-pop is designed to be watched, at least in the recent surge in the popularity of Korean popular culture. Contemporary Hallyu consumers digest the atmosphere, feel the linguistic meta-communication, and transform their own body-shapes as per their collective physical desires. As this thesis has shown, the notion that the global Hallyu phenomenon is successful can be clearly expressed by a new lens of non-traditional approaches. This study started with the basic question of why regional and global fans are eager for certain K-Pop and Korean TV drama content yet finally concludes with the understanding of what global Hallyu fans consume in their unique circulation culture. Ultimately, there is no Korean in K-Pop and K-drama, but what is unique in Hallyu is the approach its culture industry took to manufacturing content perfection by using a distinctive concept of free, sincere gifts. Now, global Hallyu audiences become familiar with consuming a process, space, and atmosphere rather than just the object, star or text of the pop culture. In this way, what people call the Korean Wave is intrinsically-linked with a certain type of capitalistic illusion.

"I've seen a lot of Korean dramas, but it was impossible to see this one until last week. I really don't know why I waited so long—Bae Yong-Joon captured my heart. Once I started watching I couldn't stop. I watched the whole thing in 24 hours. Needless to say, I am now one of the hundreds of thousands of fans that love BYJ. I am re-watching *Winter Sonata* this weekend, this time with my 70 year-old mother, who also loves K-dramas. BYJ, *saranghaeyo!* [I love you!]." (Interview with Rie, 45, Japanese woman in Tokyo)

"But if you think about one billion views, that means people watched it many, many times. I can't

believe they didn't get sick of it. The problem is my music video ['Gangnam Style'] is more popular than I am. (PSY in an interview with MTV and BBC Radio 1, 2012)

"When composing and writing a new song, I always do it like this. First, I select and store good parts of foreign music and bits while listening to these. Then I add my feeling a bit over these. After that, I slowly modify the rhythm, beat, and composition. Thus, I am able to make at least 100 totally new K-Pop songs each month if needed." (Interview with Jeon, 27, K-Pop producer in Seoul).

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APPENDICES

Korean Romanisation in this thesis is based on a way of Romanising Korean, ‘Revised Romanisation of Korea’ (Republic of Korea standard, Ministry of Culture and Tourism Notice No. 2000-8, 2000. 7.7) www.korean.go.kr/eng_new/index.jsp

I. INTERVIEWEES

- A (anonymity), Public sector officer (interviewed from Jan. 2013)
Ahn (anonymity), Content trade dealer in Korean broadcasting industry (interviewed from Dec. 2010)
Ahn, S, 32, K-Pop singer (interviewed in Feb. 2012)
Akiko N, 55, Housewife in Tokyo (interviewed in Sep. 2010)
Akina J, 38, House wife in Tokyo (interviewed in Sep. 2010)
Alice Chen, 34, Photographer in Taiwan (interviewed in Feb. 2011)
Angela Wang, 22, Indonesian college student (interviews in Jan. 2011)
B (anonymity), 22, College student in Beijing (interviewed in Oct. 2010)
C (anonymity), 24, British student in London (interviewed from Aug. 2011)
Choi, Su-won, 39, Korean broadcasting writer in Seoul (interviewed in Dec. 2011)
Chris J, 35, Banker living in Hong Kong (interviewed in Aug. 2009)
Dyah, T, 27, Taiwanese post-graduate student in Beijing (interviewed in Oct. 2010)
Han, Sang-hee, Professor of KonKuk University in Seoul (interviewed in Jul. 2011)
Jane A, 44, Public officer in Tokyo (interviewed in Jan. 2012)
Jason A, 44, Hong Kong resident (interviewed from Sep. 2009)
Jean R, 22, College student in Paris (interviewed in Nov. 2012)
Jeon, Ji-na, 18, High school student in Seoul (interviewed in Dec. 2012)
Jeon, Se-jin, K-Pop idol group trainee (interviewed from Jan, 2012)
Jeong Sung-hee, Manager of SM Entertainment (interviewed in Nov. 2011)
John H, 34, Freelancer screen writer in Los Angeles (interviewed in Aug. 2009)
John Yi, 42, Marketing head in a trucking company in LA (interviewed from Aug. 2009)
K (anonymity), 24, Freelancer in Osaka (interviewed in Sep. 2010)
Kim (anonymity), 34, Public officer in Seoul (interviewed from Feb, 2011)
Kim, Ji-eun, 39, English language teacher in Seoul (interviewed from Dec. 2010)
Kim, Jong-sik, 25, College student in Seoul (interviewed in Jul. 2009)
Kim, Kyung-mi, Producer of Kim Jong-hak production (interviewed in Dec. 2010)
Kim, Sung-jun, Overseas sales manager of SBS (interviewed in Jan, 2012)
Kim, Yo-han, 39, Korean Wave entertainment company C.E.O (interviewed from Aug. 2009)
Kim, Young-suk, 28, Graduate student in Seoul (interviewed in Sep. 2009)
Koo, H, 32, Broadcasting company scripiter in Seoul (interviewed from Jan. 2010)
Kwon, Kye-hong, Producer of the KBS TV drama production team (interviewed in Jan. 2011)
Kyoko Nakamura, 43, House wife in Osaka, Japan (interviewed in Aug. 2009)
L (anonymity), 29, K-Pop fan in Taiwan (interviewed in Oct. 2010)
Lee, Dong-jin, 22, College student in Seoul (interviewed from Aug. 2009)
Lee, J, 25, Freelancer worker in Seoul (interviewed from Dec. 2009)
Lee, Jae-hyang, CJ Media manager (interviewed in Feb. 2012)

Lee, Su-yeon, Cube Entertainment manager (interviewed from Aug. 2011)
Lethbridge, Dom, HMV sales director in London (interviewed from Apr. 2011)
Lin T, 23, College student in London (interviewed from Aug. 2011)
Lu, Yvain, 24, Graduate student in China (interviewed in Oct. 2010)
Matsuda, 23, College student in Osaka (interviewed in Jan. 2013)
Oh, Jung-ho, Producer of EBS (interviewed from Jan. 2012)
Rie M, 45, Housewife in Tokyo (interviewed in Sep. 2010)
S (anonymity), 35, High school teacher in Beijing (interviewed in Oct. 2010)
Seila, Purum, 23, Cambodian film student (interviewed from Aug. 2009)
Samantha F, 22, Student in London (interviewed from April, 2011)
Sandra S, 18, College student in London (interviewed in Aug. 2011)
Song, J, 28, Film writer in Seoul (interviewed in Dec. 2009)
Seo, Jung-min., Hankeorae Shinmun pop music journalist in Seoul (interviewed in Jan. 2011)
Seo, M, 24, K-Pop trainee in Seoul (interviewed from Jan. 2013)
Sophie D, 22, Student in Paris (interviewed from May 2011)
Um, Tae-min, KBS manager in content business department (interviewed from Jan. 2012)
Wang K, 44, Resident in Beijing (interviewed in Oct. 2010)
Y (anonymity), Senior manager of KBS (interviewed in Jan. 2012)
Yoko I, 65, Japanese house wife (interviewed in Sep. 2010)
Zhao J, Journalist for a gossip magazine in Taiwan (interviewed in Jan. 2012)