

# The Korean Wave:

Who are behind the success of Korean popular culture?

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

Gangnam style from the rapper/singer *Psy* is the first Korean music video that got 100 million views on YouTube. This makes it the most viewed song in the history of k-pop. Since the release of his single on 15 July this year the song has become a global success. With *Psy* reaching the number 2 spot on the American Billboard charts and number 1 on the Chinese music charts. This success did not go unnoticed in America and *Psy* has signed a record deal with Universal Republic Records for the release of his album in America. For some this success looks like it came out of nowhere, but those who have been following the k-pop scene know that this is something that would have happened sooner or later. K-pop has been on the rise for many years. Not only in South Korea or in Asia, but in parts of South America, Africa, the Middle East, the United States and Europe.

When zooming in on this international success of k-pop, we can see that there is a Korean wave (or hallyu in Korean language) going on. This Korean wave does not only include music, but also movies and TV dramas. Especially in Asia the demand for Korean cultural products has grown so big that it can rival with Japanese and Western culture. Those had been the main source for music, movies and television in Asia until hallyu. The success of *Psy* in America shows that the Korean wave is still expanding and getting more recognition worldwide.

This paper will look into the Korean wave. What is the Korean wave? And how do policymakers, the media and the culture industry think about hallyu? What are the differences in how they use the concept of hallyu? Second, who are behind the success of the Korean wave? How big was the role of the government, the fans, the media and the culture industry? And what were their reasons for starting the Korean wave? Was it purely because of economic reasons? Or did nostalgia, nationalism or resistance against Western and Japanese popular culture also play a role?

Popular culture is defined in my thesis as any type of cultural content that is produced for the masses. This can be music, movies, dramas, comics, books and games. Popular culture is the complete opposite of high culture. One of the main scientists in this field is Herbert Gans. He was a professor of sociology at Columbia University. According to Gans (1999) the concepts of popular culture and high culture are related to class distinctions. The upper classes prefer high culture such as art and more sophisticated type of cultural content. The lower classes prefer popular culture. This type of culture is easier to consume and to enjoy. K-pop, Korean dramas and movies fall under popular culture.

In recent times Korean popular culture has drawn a lot of attention from scholars. Most studies show that Korea is now part of a globalizing world and that Korean popular culture has considerable followers outside of Korea. Roughly four different types of research about hallyu can be found in scientific literature.

The first type of research on hallyu was about the reasons why Korean popular culture gained so many followers in Asia and what the effects of hallyu are. Most researchers from this begin period looked at Japan (Hanaki et al., 2007), China (Yang, 2012) or Taiwan (Sung, 2010).<sup>1</sup> Yang (2012) was one of the few researchers who tried to compare the Korean wave in Japan, Taiwan and China. These

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<sup>1</sup> Toru Hanaki is lecturer of Communication Studies of the Faculty of Foreign Studies at Nanzan University. Sang Yeon Sung is lecturer at the Department of Musicology at the University of Vienna. Jonghoe Yang is Professor of Sociology at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul.

researchers come to the conclusion that cultural proximity plays an important role. This theory sees a low cultural barrier between South-Korea and the rest of Asia. According to E. Kim and Ryoo (2007) South Korean values and culture are similar to other Asian countries as they are rooted in Confucian beliefs. Hae Joang Cho (2005) is a professor of Sociology at Yonsei University. She argues that the popularity of the Korean wave can be explained by the strong anti-Japanese and anti-Western feelings in Asia. Both Japan and America are disliked throughout the region. Korea has never invaded another country. Therefore Korea is not associated with negative feelings in other countries. Korea is less threatening to other countries than Japan. For that reason consumers prefer Korean cultural products above those from America or Japan. The cultural proximity theory certainly explains something, but it does not explain why Korean cultural content also got to be popular in Southeast Asia and even beyond Asia. These countries are not rooted in Confucianism. Also the hostility towards Japan does not explain the Korean wave. These researchers are forgetting that J-pop was at its peak in the 1990s and has been in decline since then.

The second type of research looks into the development of the culture industry in Korea and the role of the Korean government in this (Shim, 2008; M. Kim, 2011). These researchers are more interested in the period before the Korean wave began. The government played a crucial role in shaping the movie and broadcasting industries. The Asian financial crisis played an important role in the policies of the government. However scholars who focus on the culture industry development only look into the economic, political and commercial aspects of popular culture. They see popular culture as a commodity. Something that has to be developed to make a profit. They tend to ignore the cultural meaning that people attach to the Korean movies, music and dramas.

The last type of research focuses on the form of Korean popular culture. After 2003 the Korean wave kept expanding to Southeast Asia and other continents. There was a need among scientists to come up with new theories. People started to look at the form of k-pop or Korean dramas. This has provoked a lot debate among scientist. (Shim, 2006; E. Kim & Ryoo, 2007)

In this debate two concepts play an important role. The first one is 'odorless culture' from Koichi Iwabuchi. He is assistant professor of Media & Cultural Studies at the International Christian University in Tokyo. Iwabuchi (2002) uses the concept of 'odorless culture' to explain the spread of Japanese culture in Asia and outside of Asia. It is mainly because the cultural products did not look like they came out of Japan. It could have been any country. There was no reference to Japanese culture in the animation and other Japanese cultural products. (Iwabuchi, 2004 as cited in Yang, 2012) For example the Japanese television series *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* was stripped of all its Asian roots. The show was remade with American actors and some footage was shot in California. Also the animation *Pokemon* underwent some modifications to make it more accessible for the American market. If we look over time we can see that Japanese cultural products in America started to become deodorized. American consumers felt more comfortable with Japanese productions. It is not necessary anymore to mask that they were produced in Japan.

The second one is 'hybrid culture'. In the context of the Korean wave was Dooboo Shim (2006) the first to introduce concept of 'hybrid culture'. He is an assistant professor in the Communications and New Media Program at the National University of Singapore. After the publication of his article 'Hybridity and the rise of Korean popular culture in Asia' many other researchers have used this concept. Korean popular culture can be considered as a hybrid between East and West. Korean

movies and dramas are influenced by Hollywood. The sound of k-pop is adjusted to make it more appealing to foreign audiences. According to Henry Jenkins (2004), a professor of Literature at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Asian popular culture is a mix between the exotic and the familiar. In Asia the Korean music industry adapts their records to make it more appealing for Japanese and Southeast Asian markets. *BoA*, *Kara*, *2NE1* and *Girls Generation* all have made Japanese records. *Wonder Girls* and *JYJ* made English records. K-pop has been changing over the years.

The main conclusion that comes out of this debate is that hallyu can compete with American and Japanese popular culture in Asia, because it is a 'hybrid culture'. Only one scientist tries to be more critical of Korean popular culture. Jung (2009) compares the two versions of the single *Eat you up* from BoA. She has released a Korean version in Korea and an English version in America. In the video for the South Korean market, *BoA* wears casual clothes and dances on the street with dancers. In the American version video she wears a sexy leather dress, red lipstick and high-heels and tries to seduce an American man. Her style totally changed to make her music more suitable for the American market. *BoA* fans however said that the American video did not suit *BoA's* image. According to Jung (2009) what we see here is an example of Korean popular culture that tries to hide its roots. In America k-pop is not a 'hybrid culture'.

Nowadays there has been a new call for research about hallyu. Scientists start asking themselves how Korean the Korean wave really is. Or what is Korean in the 'hybrid culture'? (Jung, 2009; Leung, 2012; Ravina, 2008) This is a very interesting question, but for their answers they only look at other cultures. For example Ravina (2008) looks at what the common features are of hallyu across different cultures and markets. What are the common reasons for international audiences to like Korean popular culture? He compares the Middle East with South America and East Asia. He found that people in the Middle East like Korean dramas because of the lack of explicit sex in those dramas. Instead Korean dramas focus on intense love. This last characteristic is what Latin audiences seem to appreciate about Korean popular culture. There is a need to define what is typical Korean about the Korean wave. I believe that in order to understand the Korean wave we have to look at South Korea. Only then we will be able to understand why the Korean wave happened and what is Korean about it. I hope that my research will add some light on who played an import role in creating the Korean wave and for what reason.

The focus of my research is on South Korea, because none of the scientific work on hallyu looks at all the players that are involved in creating the hallyu phenomenon. The government, the media, the fans, the Entertainment companies and broadcasting companies all played a role in creating hallyu. Between them there are different reasons to create the Korean wave. By looking at all these groups I hope to discover why the Korean wave happened in South Korea and not elsewhere.

To add some background to my thesis I interviewed Koreans who are 20 to 30 years old. They grew up with this type of music and drama. By adding their opinions and feelings about Korean popular culture I hope to make clearer how all the institutions function and work together to create and sustain hallyu. As primary sources I used government reports from Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST), the Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS), and the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA). The last two organizations are both working under supervision of the MCST. This ministry has the task to promote the Korean cultural industry overseas and subsidize Korean movies and dramas. These reports were used to find out how the Korean government thinks about hallyu. I

also used them for background information for the Korean wave overseas. The official websites from the government of South Korea and the Korea Tourism Organization were scanned to find out how they tell the world about the hallyu phenomenon. Reports by the Korean Film Council were used to map the development of the Korean movie industry in the nineties and the success of the industry overseas. Also the Korean Film Council is a governmental organ working under the MCST.

Also video material was used to see how the entertainment companies are training new k-pop groups. These materials gave a value insight in how the music industry is functioning and how different this is from other music industries in Europe or America. I looked at weblogs for more information about Korean dramas and k-pop. Also the weblogs helped me to see how the fans of Korean dramas and music think about the Korean wave. Three websites were selected for this. Soompi (<http://www.soompi.com/>) is working together with the Korean entertainment companies. For this reason they have exclusive news about k-pop artists. Allkpop (<http://www.allkpop.com/>) is one the most visited English k-pop website on the internet with 4 million viewers each month. Seoulbeats (<http://seoulbeats.com/>) is another popular English k-pop website. Unlike the other two websites, Seoulbeats has a lot of discussions on k-pop. On this website I could find a lot of opinions about k-pop and Korean dramas.

I chose the eighties as a starting point for my thesis. I believe that the changes in South Korea during this period had its impact on the entertainment industry as a whole. During the eighties Korea had an authoritarian government, but it still managed to develop its economy. The combination of a government wanting to control what is broadcasted on television; together with the Korean public that has more money available to spend on leisure activities is the basis of the hallyu phenomenon in the 2000s. In the next chapter I will start to describe what was happening in the 1980s in South Korea. After that I will show how these events had an effect on the development of the music, movie and television industries. Also this chapter will show how mingled television and music are. In chapter 3 I will describe the hallyu phenomenon in more detail. How did a small country like South Korea turn into a cultural force in Asia? And how widespread is it? In Chapter 4 I will talk about who made the Korean wave a success. This chapter looks at the role of the fans, the media, entertainment companies and the government.

## Chapter 2 The beginning of the entertainment industry

The term hallyu or Korean wave refers to Korea becoming the most important cultural force in Asia and beyond. Korean movies, television shows and k-pop are enjoyed everywhere in the world. The Korean wave started with the export of dramas to China and since then Korea started to export its cultural products to elsewhere in Asia. More recently the Korean wave started to expand into the Middle East, Europe, South America, Africa and North America. Hallyu has led to a boost of tourism to Korea. According to Joo, Korea has transformed itself in a few years from a nation with no cultural significance to “a new center of cultural production in Asia” (Joo, 2011, p. 490) Nowadays we can see that the Korean wave starts to become a global phenomenon. In order to understand the Korean wave I want to look at how the Korean entertainment industry – music, television and movies - has developed.

A first start would be to look at the cultural policy of the Korean government in the 1980s. The 1980s can be characterized by a rapid economical development and an authoritarian political system in South Korea. Korea was developing its economy and people became more affluent. The average income per person in 1968 was only \$54. In 1978 this had increased to \$390. Between 1984 and 1988 the average income rose from \$1770 to \$3120. This rise in income made it possible for ordinary Koreans to spend their money on leisure activities.

At the same time there was a lot of political turmoil. In 1979 president Park was assassinated. He had ruled the country from 1961 until 1979. The Korean people hoped that now a democratic elected government would be in charge of South Korea. Instead a military coup happened in 1980 and installed a new authoritarian government in 1981. The military’s general, Chun Doo Hwan became Korea’s new president. However he knew that there would be a lot of resistance against his regime. According to Cho (2008) the government realized that it had to keep people busy with other things than politics. The cultural policy from this period has been dubbed the 3S policy by the media and opponents of the Korean regime. The 3 S’s stand for sports, sex and screen. On the level of sports the government started to use the slogan ‘the prosperity of the nation through sports’. (Cho, 2008, p. 243) What the Korean government did in 1981 was promoting baseball as a national sport. In 1982 the Korean Professional Baseball League (KBL) was founded. Many critics at that time pointed out that the KBL was meant to divert attention from political affairs. Nonetheless the KBL got to be a huge success.

On the level of screen and sex the Chun government took other measures. In 1980 the government took control of all the television networks. This way only two broadcasting networks remained on television. KBS and MBC were controlled by the government. S. Park (2002) claims that the Chun administration eased the censorship on television to divert attention from political issues. Political content was still strongly censored, but sexual-orientated content was allowed. A lot of movies were focusing on the female body. Also in 1988 a lot of pornographic movies from America entered the Korean market, because the new president at that time – Roh Tae Woo - favored a more open foreign policy in 1987. It was in 1987 that South Korea became a democracy and Roh Tae Woo was the first elected president in South Korea. Roh Tae Woo opened the Korean market for foreign companies. It was in this period that South Korea began to be exposed to consumer goods from other countries. A lot of foreign goods were imported into the country.

*Media liberalization and the movie industry*

In the eighties South Korea was an authoritarian state. This also had its effect on the movie industry. Movies were censored and movie makers had to make sure that they would not make any movies that would be offensive to the government. In 1987 nationwide protests for more democracy in South Korea brought some changes. It was the first time that South Koreans could vote for their president. S. Park (2002) describes that this change brought more freedom of expression for movie makers. In 1988 movie scripts in preproduction did not had to be approved anymore by the government. Movie makers had more freedom and this led to more movies exploring social and political change as themes. These were subjects that had been forbidden until recently. In 1987 the government liberated the movie market. This meant that import quotes were abolished. This more open policy was a side effect of trade negotiations with the United States. The US had pressured Korea to open their market for Hollywood movies.

Year	Number of domestic films produced	Number of foreign films imported	Domestic (%)
1985	80	27	74.8%
1986	73	50	59.3%
1987	89	84	51.4%
1988	87	175	33.2%
1989	110	264	29.4%
1990	111	276	28.7%
1991	121	256	32.1%
1992	96	319	23.1%
1993	63	347	15.4%
1994	65	382	14.5%
1995	64	358	15.4%
1996	65	205	13.8%
1997	59	380	13.4%
1998	43	290	13.7%
1999	49	297	14.2%
2000	59	359	14.1%
2001	65	355	15.5%
2002	78	266	22.7%
2003	80	271	22.8%
2004	82	285	22.3%
2005	87	253	25.6%
2006	110	289	27.6%
2007	124	404	23.5%
2008	113	360	23.9%
2009	138	311	30.7%
2010	152	381	28.5%

Table 1: Number of movies produced and imported in Korea annually. Adapted from *Korean Cinema 2011* (p. 28), by the Korean Film Council, Seoul, South Korea: KOFIC. Copyright 2011 by KOFIC; Market competition and cultural tensions between Hollywood and the Korean film industry," by E. Kim, 2004, *International Journal on Media Management*, 6, p. 212. Copyright 2004 by University of St. Gallen, Switzerland<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> KOFIC is used for data between 2003 and 2010. The article from Kim is used for data between 1985 and 2002. Kim uses data from 2 reports from KOFIC. Korean Film Council (2003). *Korean Cinema 2003*. Seoul: KOFIC; Korean Film Council (2002). *Korean Cinema 2002*. Seoul: KOFIC



Until 1987 the distribution of foreign movies in the Korean market could only be done by Korean companies. In 1987 the Korean government allowed direct distribution of Hollywood movies into Korea. As a result Hollywood companies started to open branches in Korea. This has led to an immediate effect on the number of movies that is being imported into Korea after 1987. As a consequence, ten Korean film distributors went bankrupt by 1994. In 1988 the import of foreign movies has already doubled. The market share of local Korean movies began to decline. In 1985 74.8% of the movies were made in Korea. This market share kept declining to as low as 13.4% in 1997. After 1991 less local movies were produced. This has to do with the movie quota that the government laid on the movie industry. Money had to be spend on making better quality movies. After 1998 the number of Korean movies being produced increased a little. In 2010 152 movies were being produced. Ten years before this was only 59 Korean movies. The number of imported movies has not declined. And in 2010 381 movies were imported. This is remarkable since less people tend to visit foreign movies in the cinema as figure 1 shows us. This can be explained by the growing demand for foreign movies on VHS and on cable television.

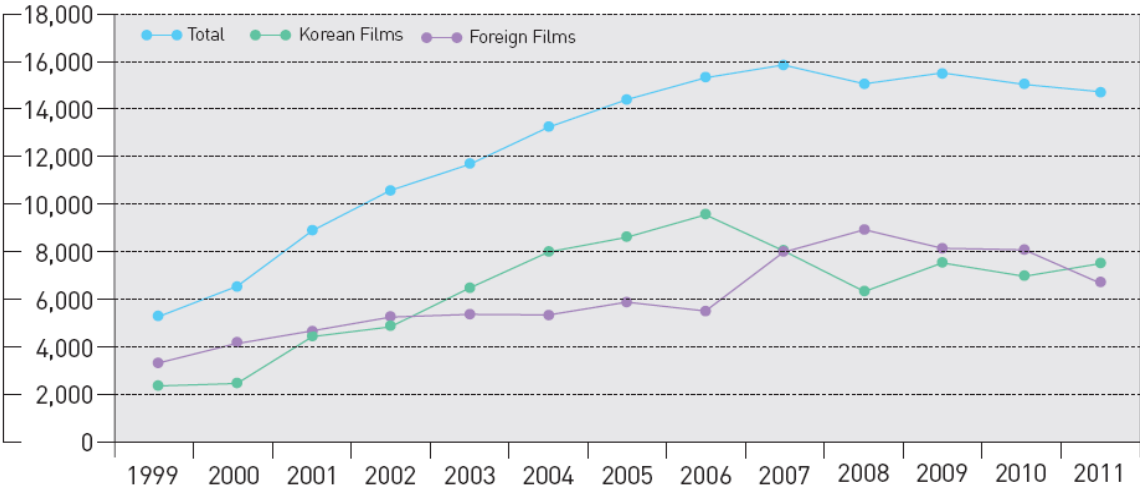


Figure 1: Total cinema admissions for Korean and foreign movies by year (in ten thousands). Reprinted from *Korean Cinema 2011* (p. 29), by the Korean Film Council, 2011, Seoul, South Korea: KOFIC. Copyright 2011 by KOFIC.

So how popular are Korean movies among Korean audiences? When we look at the graph we can see that in 2000 Korean movies had a 35.1% share of the market. That means that 64.9% were foreign movies. In 2003 more Korean movies were attended than foreign movies. Korean movies took 53.5% of the market. Foreign movies had now a 46.5% share of the market. The market share of Korean movies kept growing until 2006. In 2007 the admissions between Korean and foreign movies were equal. After that cinema admission for Korean movies declined. In 2008 foreign movies became more popular, but they have been declining since then. In 2011 53.6% of the movies that were seen in the cinema were made in Korea. Foreign movies had a 46.4% market share.

*The broadcasting industry*

Korean dramas also play an important role in the hallyu phenomenon. Korean dramas are the number one export of the broadcasting systems in South Korea. The most popular types of drama in Korea are romantic drama and historical drama. Those types of dramas also appeal to international audiences. Most of them are between sixteen and twenty-four episodes. Each episode is fifty

minutes long. The value of these dramas has increased over the years. For example in 2000, the Taiwanese station, Gala TV, paid 1000 dollars for an episode of a drama that was made in Korea. In comparison, Japanese dramas cost between 15.000 and 20.000 dollars. Nowadays a Korean drama will cost between 6000 and 12.000 dollars. (Sung, 2010)

Korean dramas were just like movies censored in the eighties. This meant that Korean dramas could not have any political message. For this reason most drama makers chose to make historical dramas, because these did not had any reference to the present and thus they were safe to make. The most successful dramas in that period were *Founding the country* and *500 years of Joseon kingdom*.

The 1990s brought a change for the broadcasting networks. In 1990 KBS and MBC got competition from other networks. Among those new television networks SBS triggered heavy competition between the networks for the viewers. KBS and MBC had to invest more money in the making of dramas to keep up with the competition. *Eyes of dawn* was a new landmark in Korean dramas. MBC invested 200.000 dollars in this drama. It was the first time that an overseas location was used for a drama and that so much time was spend on the preproduction. The series was a huge success in South Korea. In 1994 the drama *Jealousy* reached a younger audience. The soundtrack of this drama scored good on the record charts and it inspired broadcasters to think hard about merchandising. In 1996 cable television debuted. People had to pay for a subscription, cable television networks knew they had to come up with something good. As the competition intensified the quality of the dramas greatly improved. In 1996 SBS came with the first political drama *Sandglass* which depicts the life of three Koreans during the authoritarian regime of the eighties. The show was a big hit with ratings of 64.5%.

Korean dramas got very high television viewership. Table 2 shows how successful Korean dramas were in South Korea. Nowadays it is harder for dramas to get high viewership. This is because people can watch dramas through the internet. *First Love* is the most successful Korean drama of all time. 65.8% of the people that watched television the night when *First Love* was aired watched this drama. Also we can see that only three broadcasters MBC, KBS and SBS are successful in producing Korean dramas. MBC has been most successful of those three. In the top 50 list of highest rated TV dramas 25 dramas are made by MBC.

Drama	Rating	Network	Year
First Love	65.8%	KBS2	1997
What is Love	64.9%	MBC	1992
Sandglass	64.5%	SBS	1995
Heo Joon	63.7%	MBC	2000
Sunny Place of Youth	62.7%	KBS2	1995
You and I	62.4%	MBC	1998
The Son and the Daughter	61.1%	MBC	1993
Taejo Wang Geon	60.2%	KBS1	2001
Eyes of Dawn	58.4%	MBC	1992
Daejanggeum	57.8%	MBC	2004

Table 2: Top 10 highest rated TV dramas of all time. *Note.* The rating was based on the highest rating for a single episode that season. Adapted from "Top 50 highest-rated TV dramas of all time," by Blue, 2010. Copyright 2010 by Electric Ground.

## *K-pop*

One important aspect of the hallyu phenomenon is k-pop. This type of music includes dance, electronic music, electro pop, hip-hop and R&B. Within South Korea the term k-pop refers to a broad spectrum of music styles including rock, ballads and pop music. It all refers to music that is produced by people from Korean origin and sung in Korean. K-pop within South Korea is enormously popular.

The term k-pop started to get widely used overseas. It was the Korean wave that brought k-pop under attention of international audiences. Internationally k-pop refers to the Korean pop idols. In this paper I will use the definition as it is used outside of South Korea. This is because international newspapers and scholarly publications use this definition when they speak of k-pop. Also when people talk about k-pop on the internet, they refer to the Korean boy bands and girl bands.



Figure 2: Reprinted from [*Girls Generation* in their clip *Paparazzi*] (2012). Copyright 2012 by SM Entertainment. Retrieved from <http://www.soompi.com/2012/06/22/girls-generation-releases-gold-dance-ver-mv-for-paparazzi/>

To understand the development of k-pop in South Korea we have to look at the role of television. In the 1980s there was no independent music industry. According to H. Lee (2004) television in South Korea dictated what people were listening to. At that time ballads were the most popular style of music in South Korea. These ballads were sung in Korean. Singers could only become famous if they could play on television. For that reason music styles like heavy metal or punk did not develop in South Korea. They were banned from television. The television networks had their own bands and dancers. Korean singers had to play with those in-house bands; they could not perform on television with their own band. Before the 1990s Korean music was dependent on the television industry for assistance in the production of music, circulation and sales. (Lee, 2006, p. 131) As mentioned earlier the television channels were state owned.

Korean music developed into an independent industry in the early 1990s. At this time Korean society was experiencing a rapid economic development. As a result of this the entertainment industries started to grow. Popular culture started to become attractive for major corporations in South Korea to further exploit. After 1990 corporate television channels were allowed to broadcast on Korean television. These new channels used music to fill their programming. Music videos, clips from concerts, reports about concerts and albums and interviews with pop singers were constantly shown on television. The music industry realized the potential of this and used television to market their

new artists. New k-pop artist from the bigger music entertainment companies, like SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment, are broadcasted on television with a live performance. When the group *Big Bang* made their comeback, their comeback concert was broadcasted on Korean television.

Television is essential in the way this idol culture is created and sustained. Not only lyrics and melodies are important in k-pop, but also the visual element. The looks and performance of a group are now a vital part of k-pop. Over the last decades k-pop idols appear in a lot of different shows, ranging from talk shows to slap stick comedy shows. K-pop stars are not just singers, they are entertainers. Showing up in TV-programs makes a singer more popular and will make his album sales rise. Also the step from being a singer to being an actor is a small one. Many k-pop idols appear as actors in Korean dramas. As we can see in South Korea television and music are connected to each other. They both need each other to attract viewers and fans.

genre	1998	1999	2000	2001
Korean pop	71	74	75	76
International pop	24	22	20	20
Classic	5	4	5	4

Table 3: Percentage of Korean pop, International pop and classic Korean music in the total music market in South Korea in the period 1998 till 2001. Reprinted from *Medi@sia. Global media/tion in and out of context* (p. 144), by J. Holden & T. Scrase, 2006, London, England: Routledge. Copyright 2006 by Routledge.

As we can see from this table Korean pop is the most popular type of music in Korea. International pop which consists of Japanese pop and American pop only takes only 20% of the music market. This makes South Korea one of the few countries in the world that relies heavily on own produced music. This can be attributed to government policy. The Broadcast Act of 2003 dictates that 60% of the total time on television dedicated to popular music has to be programs that are produced in South Korea. International music companies have a difficult time getting their content on Korean television.

## Chapter 3 South Korean popular culture goes global

### *Korean movies*

The heavy competition with Hollywood in 1987 meant that Korean cinema had to come up with good new movies. The turning point for Korean cinema was the unexpected success of the Korean movie *Sopyonje* in 1993. It was the first movie to attract more than a million viewers in the history of Korean cinema. The movie was about Korean folk music (pansori) and the background setting was the rural countryside. The movie brought back the nostalgic feeling of traditional Korean culture.

In the wake of this success the government started realizing the potential of an own strong movie industry to benefit the Korean economy. The advisory board for the government on science and technology calculated that the Hollywood movie, *Jurassic Park*, was worth the sale of 1.5 million Hyundai cars. (Shim, 2006) Hyundai was Korea's national pride. And this comparison showed the potential of the movie industry. In its effort to promote the movie industry the government issued the Motion Picture Law in 1995. This law was designed to attract more investment into the movie industry. The industry had realized that it should learn from Hollywood. Big business groups (chaebols) decided to enter the media market. This included companies such as Daewoo, Hyundai and Samsung. This led to more choice for the Korean audience. Korean cinema became popular. The involvement of the chaebols ended with the Asian financial crisis in 1997. According to Jin (2005) the involvement and knowledge of the chaebols changed the industry. The industry started to focus on marketing and research. The industry became more professional. Knowing your audience became vital according to Jin (2005). The audience was included in the whole process of making a movie. From scriptwriting to the editing process. Also young media talent started to work for the movie companies. This new generation was not afraid to handle topics as homosexuality and North Korea. *Coffee Prince* and *You are beautiful* are two movies with homosexuality as theme.

Joo (2011) explained that many Koreans feared that Japanese movies would take over the Korean market in 1998. In that year the ban was lifted on Japanese cultural product. It was expected that Japanese movies would get a market share of 10% of the total movie market in Korea. In reality this was only 3%. It would increase to 7.8% in 2000. But in the next year the market share was back at 3.2%. Japanese popular culture never reached the expected audience in Korea. (Joo, 2011, p. 502) Instead Korean movies became successful in Japan. *Shiri* became the first Korean movie in Japan to open in theatres across the nation in 2000. The movie brought up 15 million dollars in Japan. A year later *Joint Security Area* brought 10 million dollars up. The Korean Film Commission estimated that 43.8% of the total exports of Korean movies went to Japan.

Year	Export
1995	209.000
1996	404.000
1997	492.000
1998	3.074.000
1999	5.969.000
2000	7.054.000
2001	11.250.000
2002	14.952.000
2003	30.979.000
2004	58.285.000

Table 4: Export of Korean cinema in US\$ between 1995 and 2004. Adapted from “The growth of Korean cultural industries and the Korean wave,” by D. Shim, 2008, *East Asian pop culture. Analyzing the Korean wave*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, p. 22. Copyright 2008 by Hong Kong University Press<sup>3</sup>

The exports of the movie industry have been rising between 1995 and 2004. In 1995 Korean movies were exported for a total of 209.000 us dollars. In 1998 this had increased to 3.074.000 us dollars. In 1999 the government made a revision of the Motion Picture Promotion Law. This revision allowed individuals to invest into movies. Investment firms filled the gap that was left after the chaebols gave up their media enterprises. KDB capital put 333.000 dollars in the movie *Shiri*. The movie attracted 5.8 million viewers. KDB capital got a return investment of more than one million dollars. This movie got more people into the cinema than Hollywood movies like *the Titanic* and *the Matrix*. KTB network earned two million dollars for the movie *Joint Security Area*. The movie was a bigger hit than *Shiri* and in Seoul 2.5 million people saw the movie. KTB network had put 700.000 dollars into the movie. In 2001 the movie, *Friend*, would be seen by 8.2 million viewers nationwide. These new investors put a lot of money into the movie industry. *Silmonddo*, a movie about the plot to assassinate North Korean leader Kim Il Sung in the seventies, got 10 million viewers at the cinema. *Brotherhood of War*, a movie about two brothers during the Korean War, set a new record with 11 million viewers a year later. Since 1999 the exports have been going up. In 2004 Korean cinema exported for a total of 58.285.000 dollars to other countries.

The success of the Korean movie industry did not go unnoticed in Hollywood. DreamWorks bought the rights for the Korean horror movie, *a tale of two sisters*. The rights for this movie cost them 2 million dollars, which is twice as much as what the studio had to pay for the movie rights of the Japanese horror movie *the Ring*. Also Hollywood has made remakes of Korean movies. *My Sassy Girl* was remade in 2008 under the same name. Also the Korean movies *the Priest*, *the Host* and *Siwora* were remade in Hollywood. According to Shim (2008) the interest of Hollywood producers in Korean cinema shows that the quality of Korean cinema has increased.

In 2006 the media started reporting that the movie industry exports were declining. The reason for this is the high production costs for making a movie. Asian actors are now among the highest paid in Asia. (“Bae Yong Joon is highest-paid actor”, 2008) The Korean government tried to hide this fact by only publishing only about the culture industry as a whole. The exports of k-pop and Korean dramas are still rising. They cover up the decline in the movie industry. Also in October this year KOCIS (2012) came with a publication about Korean movies. In this report only successes are mentioned during the

<sup>3</sup> Shim wrote that chapter. He uses data from KOFIC. Korean Film Council (2006) *Korean cinema 2006*. KOFIC: Seoul.

early period of the Korean wave. There is no mention about the current situation that the movie industry is in. For this reason it was not possible for me to find out how much the exports of Korean movies is now.

### *K-drama*

In 1996 Korean broadcasting organizations exported for 6 million dollars. At the same time they imported for 63.9 million dollars. In table 7 we can see that three years later the export has already doubled to 12.7 million. And it has been growing ever since. In 2010 the TV exports were 187 million dollars. At the same time we can see that the import of foreign TV programs has been declining. 2002 was the first year that imports were lower than the exports by Korean broadcasting organizations. The export accounted for 28.8 million dollars and the import was 25.1 million dollars. The year 2009 saw a dramatic rise of the TV imports. In 2010 this rise had stopped and went down to 10.4 million dollars. We can conclude that television has been doing really well in Korea. The export of television shows increased 30% in the period between 2006 and 2010.

	Export	Import
1996	6.0	63.9
1997	8.3	57.3
1998	10.0	27.0
1999	12.7	28.7
2000	13.1	29.1
2001	18.9	20.4
2002	28.8	25.1
2003	42.1	28.1
2004	71.5	31.1
2005	123.5	37.0
2006	147.7	31.7
2007	162.6	32.3
2008	180.2	21.8
2009	183.6	65.9
2010	187.0	10.4

Table 5: Annual export and import of Korean TV programs in million US dollars. Adapted from “The Korean wave (hallyu) in East Asia. A comparison of Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese audiences who watch Korean TV dramas,” by J. Yang, 2012, *Development and Society*, 41, p. 124. Copyright 2012 by the Institute for Social Development and Policy Research.<sup>4</sup>

According to Yang the Asian market slowly opened up during the 1990s. Korea first began to export cultural products to surrounding neighbors like Japan, Taiwan and China. Later the destination of the exports reached wider. More than half of the exports go to Asia. North America is the second largest continent that imports Korean goods. Japan has been the largest importer of Korean cultural content. China and Southeast Asia are growing export markets and closing in on Japan. In 2006 Japan was responsible for 27.2% of the total cultural content export of Korea. China and Southeast Asia were at

<sup>4</sup> Again Yang uses publications from the MCTS and KOCCA. Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2005). *White paper on culture industry 2004*. Seoul: MCT; Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. (2009). *White paper on culture industry 2008*. Seoul: MSCT; Korea Creative Content Agency. (2011). *KOCCA focus (11-05)*. Seoul: KOCCA

18.5% and 8.7%. In 2008 this had changed to Japan being 20.6%, China 20.1% and Southeast Asia 19.7%.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Japan	65.511	47.632	53.494	79.113	74.791	81.615
China	12.822	12.442	8.328	9.30	12.171	18.216
Taiwan	11.942	20.473	17.131	7.769	11.616	20.011
Southeast Asia	8.584	12.686	8.271	4.533	11.857	13.771
United States	2.281	733	792	6.025	3.996	1.996
Others	4.745	4.878	5.249	3.954	4.065	15.789

Table 6: Destinations of export of Korean TV programs in million US dollar, 2005-2010. Adapted from “The Korean wave (hallyu) in East Asia. A comparison of Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese audiences who watch Korean TV dramas,” by J. Yang, 2012, *Development and Society*, 41, p. 123. Copyright 2012 by the Institute for Social Development and Policy Research.<sup>5</sup>

The term hallyu was first used by the Chinese media in the late nineties to describe the boom of Korean entertainment in China. It was in 1997 that the National China Central Television (CCTV) showed the Korean drama *What is love all about?* on air. The series was a hit in China. They re-aired the show and it got the second highest ratings ever in China. (Shim, 2006) This success has led to a boost of import of Korean dramas. By 2000 a total of 24 Korean dramas were broadcasted on Chinese television. (J. Kim, 2011) Most of these dramas were love stories centered in urban areas. *Daejanggeum*, *Autumn in my Heart* and *Winter Sonata* all became big hits in China. In 2006 the Chinese government tried to end the Korean wave by limiting the number of Korean dramas on Chinese television. Because of this the export of Korean’s dramas to China declined. It went down from 101.6 million dollars to 85.9 million dollars in 2006. This however did not mean the end of the popularity of Korean dramas in China. Instead people started to download dramas or watch them online.

Also in Japan hallyu became popular. This started around 2003, when the NHK (Japan’s National Network Television) first broadcasted *Winter Sonata* on air. It became popular among middle-aged women. After that Japanese networks were more open for other Korean dramas. *Winter Sonata* is a love story between two characters. The male character gets amnesia, but reappears 15 years later. The two do not recognize each other, but fall in love again. When the main actor, Bae Yong Joon, visited Tokyo in 2004 almost 3500 middle-aged women were waiting for him. A police force of 350 men was needed to control the crowd. (James, 2005) Tour agencies in Japan used the popularity of this drama to provide tour packages to Korea. The hotel suite that was used in *Winter Sonata* had at that time a waiting list for more than a month. Autographs of Bae were for sale for 150 dollars. The Hyundai Research Institute estimated that Bae was responsible for an increase of 4 billion dollars in revenue between South Korea and Japan. (Hanaki, et.al, 2007)

The success of *Winter Sonata* has led to a boom of other Korean cultural products. The prices for Korean movies and dramas greatly increased. *April Snow*, starring Bae Yong Joon, was sold for 7 million dollars while it was still in the production phase.

<sup>5</sup> Yang uses data from Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Korean Broadcasting Institute and Korean Creative Content Agency. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. (2010). *White paper on culture industry 2009*. Seoul: MSCT; Korean Broadcasting Institute (2009). *KBI focus (09-01)*. Seoul: KBI; Korea Creative Content Agency. (2010). *KOCCA focus (10-02)*. Seoul: KOCCA





Figure 3: Countries where *Daejanggeum* was aired on television including year. Reprinted from *K-drama: A new TV genre with global appeal* (p. 18), by the Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, Seoul, South Korea: KOCIS. Copyright 2011 by KOCIS.

The success of *Daejanggeum* and *Winter Sonata* also went beyond East Asia. *Winter Sonata* has now been aired in 20 countries. *Daejanggeum* even reached a bigger audience. This drama has been exported to 87 countries. *Daejanggeum* was first broadcasted in 2003 in Korea. The drama is set in the sixteenth century during the Joseon Dynasty. It tells the story of a female cook who becomes the first female physician for the king. She has to fight against oppression of women and their social role in society. It is based on a true story and portrays traditional Korean culture. This drama has now been aired in 87 countries. *Daejanggeum* was Korea's first worldwide television hit. The drama was popular in Asia. The list of countries includes Japan, China, Taiwan, India, Thailand, and Malaysia. The drama only got Asian fans, but also fans in Russia, Turkey, Iran and Israel. The success of *Winter Sonata* and *Daejanggeum* has made people around the world more open for other Korean content.

A report by the Korean Culture and Information Service (KOCIS, 2011a) about Korean dramas explains how popular Korean dramas are around the world. The report gives attention to Southeast Asia, the Middle East and America. In the Philippines the k-drama *Boys over flower* was a big hit. Also the two biggest broadcasting networks both regularly air Korean dramas. These dramas were dubbed into Filipino. In Vietnam Korean dramas were also popular. Yoon Eun Hye, one of the members of *Baby V.O.X* became a huge star in Vietnam after playing a role in the Korean drama *the Palace*. The popularity of Korean dramas in Thailand started in 2007 when *My Girl* and *Coffee Prince* were popular dramas. In Indonesia hallyu began when in 2002 when *Autumn in my heart* was broadcasted on Indosiar Television and reached a viewers rating of 11%. Since then more than 40 Korean dramas have been aired on television. The biggest hit was *Full House* which had a viewership rating of 39%.

In the Middle East Korean dramas can be found in Turkey, Jordan, Israel and Iran. *Daejanggeum* got a viewer rating of 57% on its debut in Iran in 2006. This led to the import of more Korean dramas. The dramas inspired Iranians to learn Korean according to the Korean Culture and Information Service. *Jumong*, a historical drama also was very successful in 2008. It got a rating of 85%. The actors of that show appear in different advertisements in Iran.



Figure 4: Reprinted from [Press conference in Teheran with Song Il Guk, the actor of *Jumong*] (2009), by Mahdi Dehghan. Copyright by Fars News Agency. Retrieved from [http://old.tehrantimes.com/index\\_View.asp?code=201476](http://old.tehrantimes.com/index_View.asp?code=201476)

American audiences use the internet to watch Korean dramas. Websites like Hulu, Drama Fever and Drama Crazy are used for this. *Coffee prince* and *Secret Garden* are two dramas that American audiences seem to watch online. In South America Korean dramas are well watched in Brazil. This can be explained by the Korean immigrants that moved there. But nowadays the K-drama is reaching a bigger audience. The Japanese community in Brazil plays a big role in this. Korean television shows, movies and music are imported with Japanese subtitles or Japanese dubbing. In Mexico 6 Korean dramas have been aired on television. Also Costa Rica, Venezuela, Puerto Rico and Peru broadcasted Korean dramas according to KOCIS. Africa and Europe are new markets for Korean dramas. Only a couple of countries have started airing Korean dramas, including Romania, Bulgaria, France and Nigeria. (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011c)

Korean dramas are nowadays not doing so well. Lee Chang Sub from MBC said: “*Korean dramas are now at a crisis that is similar to that right before the Asian financial crisis in 1997.*” (as cited in Park, 2008, p. 51) The big problem now with Korean dramas is the production costs. In the past Korean dramas were much cheaper than dramas made in Japan or Hong Kong. An article on the website Dramabeans (<http://www.dramabeans.com/>) gives attention to this problem. Dramabeans is nowadays one of the most popular websites about Korean dramas. Nowadays the stars in dramas are asking more money. A drama star in 1997 earned only 2000 dollars per episode. Nowadays a drama star can demand between 20.000 and 100.000 dollars for one episode. This would not be a problem if those dramas would be a huge success. However the price for a drama star keeps rising while it does not matter if his last drama was a hit or not. In Japan however the price that a drama actor can demand depends on his last success. It is not uncommon that if the last drama was a failure that the actor will get 50% less for his next drama. Also the production costs for dramas in South Korea are getting higher. It becomes more common that a company makes one or two dramas and then quit making them. Only the big broadcasting systems are able to keep making dramas. (Javabeans, 2008) However since Korean dramas are still finding new markets to export to the crisis in the drama industry is covered up. The Korean Broadcasting Commission is still trying to make agreements with other countries to open their markets for Korean dramas. This has some effect. However these are all small markets. In Japan and China the exports of Korean dramas have been declining. Also the impact on the market in the United States is minimal.

## K-pop

The spread of k-pop in Asia went step by step. There has not been a giant success like *Winter Sonata* or *Daejanggeum*. K-pop first went overseas to China, Vietnam and Taiwan in 1999. It was in these countries that groups like *CLON* and *H.O.T* got some attention. The band *CLON* sold 450.000 albums in Taiwan in 1999 and their hit was used by Chen Shui-Bian, a presidential candidate, in his campaign to become president. (Sung, 2010) During that period *CLON* was even more popular than Taiwanese pop groups. Their success led to interest in other South Korean acts as *Shinhwa*, *Wonder Girls*, *Super Junior* and *SS501*. All these groups became leading pop stars in Taiwan.

It would take many years before other countries would take an interest in k-pop. K-pop artists had to work hard to gain the interest of Asian audiences. The Japanese market was considered to be vital for the survival of k-pop. The Japanese market is the second largest music market after the American market. The music market in South Korea was considered to be too small to sustain itself. Artists like *BoA* and *TVXQ* are seen as pioneers in Japan. They made their debuts in the mid 2000s and they were the ones that brought k-pop under attention to the Japanese. Riding their success other acts have become mega stars in Japan. *Girls Generation* and *KARA* are now the most successful Korean acts in Japan according the KOCIS (2011b). *Girls Generation* got a platinum album in Japan and their album is the highest selling album made by a non-Japanese group in 2011. *Kara* is the first foreign group in Japan that had two number one selling singles in a row in 2011. *Wonder Girls* became the leading act in China, but other k-pop groups have a hard time to get success there. For that reason k-pop groups started to change. It is not uncommon for k-pop groups to records songs and albums in Mandarin, Japanese or English language. Some songs even are a mix between three languages. Nowadays in Southeast Asia k-pop has gained a large following. In the late 2000s K-pop has kept the Korean wave going.

Thailand likes both k-pop and j-pop. Especially k-pop is very visible in Thailand. Advertisements of Korean idols on the streets in Thailand are not an uncommon sight. Especially the boy band *2PM* is very popular in Thailand, since one of the members is Thai. Every shopping mall has screens showing k-pop videos. The Thai version of Channel V broadcasts in the evening a k-pop show called *K-pop explosion*. In bookstores and convenience stores Thai people can buy a magazine dedicated to hallyu.

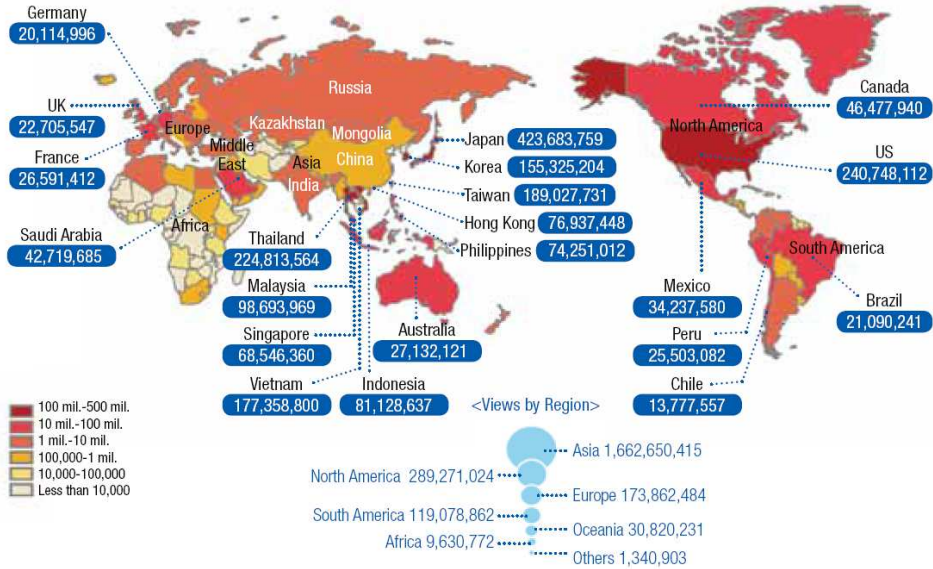


Figure 5: Personal photograph for [Advertisement in Sukhumvit station in Bangkok with Nickhun from *2PM*] (2012), by William Tuk.

In Singapore and Malaysia there are some k-pop fans. K-pop over there appeals to the younger generation. However Canto pop remains the most popular pop music style in these countries. The reason has to do with the language. Singapore and Malaysia have both a substantial Chinese diaspora in their country. In the United States several pop groups and singers have tried to enter the market, like *JYJ*, *BoA* and *Wonder Girls*. *Wonder Girls* performed with the *Jonas Brothers*. *Girls Generation* had a performance of the Letterman show. It looks that other k-pop artists are now preparing to overtake the American music market, like *Psy* and *2NE1*. Several websites reported that *2NE1* has made a deal with producer Will.i.am. He will produce their English album and he said about k-pop.

*Ooh. K-pop. You want to talk about technology? The Koreans, in South Korea... that is the future. South Korea, boom. On the next level. Go check it out. K-Pop, that industry is exciting. 2NE1, that is why I signed those girls and am producing them, to blow them up outside of Korea.* (xxxKrissKrossxxx, 2011b)

The music industry is a visual industry. What I mean to say with this is that in k-pop the visual aspect takes a central place. Performance, looks and image are more important than the songs. K-pop artists do not make their debut on the radio, but on national television instead. As a consequence, music videos play a crucial part in the promotion of the music. In a time where YouTube allows people to watch any type of music they want, it is no surprise that K-pop has gained a lot of international attention.



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

Figure 6: Number of views of k-pop videos on YouTube until 2011. Reprinted from "Lessons from k-pop's Global Success," by Samsung Research Institute, 2012, *SERI Quarterly*, July, p. 62. Copyright 2012 by SERI.

Figure 6 clearly demonstrates how k-pop has spread all around the world. In all parts of the world k-pop is viewed millions of times. Until 2011 k-pop videos on YouTube have been viewed 2.3 billion times. K-pop has been viewed in 235 countries around the world. It is interesting to note that k-pop is viewed more times in the United States, Japan, Thailand, Taiwan and Vietnam than in Korea. The figure shows that k-pop is most popular in Japan. The United States has the second highest views

with 240 million views and Thailand takes third place with 224 million views. It becomes clear that the popularity of k-pop is the highest in East Asia and Southeast Asia. These regions account for 69% of the total k-pop views on YouTube. North America is another region where k-pop is viewed a lot. The lack of views in China can be explained by the restrictive policy that the Chinese government has for YouTube.

Year	Export
2004	34.200.000
2005	22.300.000
2006	16.700.000
2007	13.900.000
2008	16.500.000

Table 7: Annual export of the music industry. Adapted from “The Korean wave (hallyu) in East Asia. A comparison of Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese audiences who watch Korean TV dramas,” by J. Yang, 2012, *Development and Society*, 41, p. 122. Copyright 2012 by the Institute for Social Development and Policy Research.<sup>6</sup>

In table 7 we can see that the exports of the music industry were going down between 2004 and 2007. In 2008 it began rising again. And since 2008 K-pop groups has made many efforts to become successful in Japan and in Southeast Asia. In 2011 the exports of the music industry were almost as high as in 2004. We can see that the k-pop market has been growing over the years. Nowadays k-pop is actively trying to conquer the Japanese, Chinese and American music markets. The markets are essential for the South Korean music industry if they want to survive. These markets are now the biggest in the world and it is predicted that in 5 to 10 years China will be the largest music market in the world. In the next chapter I will explain how the Korean music industry tries to conquer these markets.

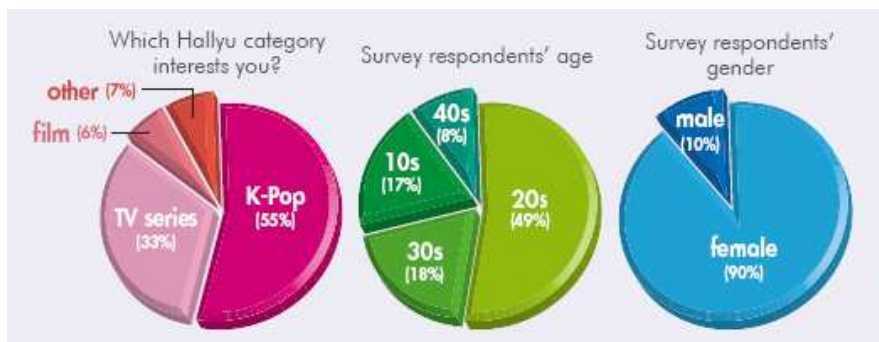


Figure 7: Hallyu survey. Reprinted from *K-pop. A new force in pop music* (p. 27), by the Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011, Seoul, South Korea: KOCIS. Copyright 2011 by KOCIS

The Korean wave mainly revolves around Korean dramas and k-pop. In 2011 the Korea Tourism Organization conducted an online survey. More than 12.000 non-Koreans from 102 countries answered the survey. The results are depicted in figure 2. K-pop is the most popular Korean cultural product. More than half of the respondents are interested in Korean music. One third of the people

<sup>6</sup> Yang uses publications from the ‘Ministry of Culture and Tourism’ and the ‘Korea Creative Content Agency’. These publications are written in Korean. Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2008). *White paper on culture industry 2007*. Seoul: MCT; Ministry of Culture and Tourism. (2008). *Culture Industry statistics*. Seoul: MCT; Korea Creative Content Agency. (2010). *KOCCA focus (10-02)*. Seoul: KOCCA

enjoy the TV series and 6% like Korean movies. When we look at age we can see that almost half of the hallyu fans are in their twenties. Teenagers are only 17% of the respondents and 18% are in their thirties. Hallyu mostly attracts female fans. 90% of the people who enjoy Korean cultural products are female. Only 10% are male.

The Korean wave started at the beginning of the 2000s in Japan and China with the exports of Korean dramas. In the same period in Taiwan hallyu was led by k-pop. The success of dramas, movies and k-pop made people more curious in other types of Korean popular culture. Nowadays k-pop is big in Japan. Also the Chinese are now more open to k-pop. Due to the popularity of k-pop in Taiwan, the Taiwanese broadcasting systems started importing Korean dramas. Taiwan has been the biggest importer of Korean dramas. (Sung, 2010) The successes of that time were never again repeated. For example the most popular drama in Hong Kong is *Daejanggeum*. The final episode was watched by 47% of the viewers. That is an all time record for Hong Kong television. (S. Kim et. al, 2008, p. 164) the success of hallyu in China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan was unexpected, but it opened Asian markets for Korean popular culture. We can conclude that Korean dramas and movies have led the Korean wave. However recently there has been a decline in the exports of movies. Also the exports of Korean dramas to East Asian countries are going down. Nowadays k-pop is leading the Korean wave.

## Chapter 4 The success of hallyu

### *Government policy*

The government has played an active role in helping the culture industry to grow. The reason for this as mentioned in the second chapter was that the Chun government in the 1980s wanted to divert the attention from politics. Their thought was that if people were too busy with enjoying baseball, watching television and movies they would be too busy to demonstrate. The Chun government realized that opening its markets to American popular culture could have a perverse effect. If people would see how free people were in America it could lead to more demonstrations. S. Park (2002) writes that the government actively promoted Korea's own movie industry and made all television networks on Korean television government owned. This way the government had more influence on what type of movies and television shows were created. On television historical dramas and love stories were a popular theme for drama makers, because it was not allowed to make dramas or movies that showed the current situation of South Korea. The government never said to drama makers what they should make instead they censored only political dramas. (S. Park, 2002)

As explained by an article by Javabeans (2008) on the internet historical and love stories were well watched on television during the 1980s in South Korea. After the democratization process of South Korea these two types of dramas kept being made after. In the eighties the basis is laid for the popularity of these types of dramas. And even now in 2012 these two types of dramas are the most popular and also most made by television networks. So when the government allowed private channels on television those channels also started to make love dramas. (K. Park, 2008) It is no surprise that in the top 10 list of most watched dramas all the dramas are love stories.

Another development that can be traced back to the 1980s is the use of music in television shows. Since the broadcasting networks – KBS and MBC – were state owned, the government could influence what people were listening to on television and on the radio. There was a huge void that had to be filled on television, for Japanese popular culture was not allowed in South Korea. Music shows were relatively cheap to make and entertaining. According to Dooboo Shim (2006) the government could decide what type of music would be played. He also notes that during the 1980s South Korea did not have an independent music industry. They were dependent on television for their production, promotion and sales of music. Since ballads were the preferable choice by the government, most music on television were ballads. Singers had to sing with the in-house band of the television network and use their dancers. For this reason other types of music like heavy metal, punk and rock did not reach a big audience. They were not allowed to perform on television.

Since music and television were mutual dependent on each other, there was a gap in the market for boy bands and girl bands. What would be better suitable on television than beautiful boys and girls singing love songs while performing a dance? It was this gap in the market that created k-pop as we know it today.

In 1987 president Chun handed over his party leadership to his friend Roh. Immediately new protest raised in Korea to demand more democracy. Roh feared that his leadership would be contested too much if he would not allow elections. In order to gain favor with the people he promised more freedom. Besides allowing elections, he also opened the Korean market to American popular culture. In 1987 Hollywood movies could be directly imported into the country. This meant a sudden rise of

Hollywood movies and the movie industry in South Korea expected that they would fade away if they would not start making better quality movies.

Slowly the culture industry could develop itself. In 1997 the Asian Financial crisis struck in Asia. This had its effect on Korea. South Korea had to loan money from the IMF and America. The IMF demanded that South Korea would further open its markets. Subsequently South Korea had to reform its economy. As a side effect of these changes the culture industry in South Korea were experiencing more competition. For the first time in history Japanese cultural goods could be imported into South Korea. This led to certain innovations within the movie industry. They started to copy Hollywood. Also the government established a movie quota system to improve the quality of the movies being produced. (S. Shim, 2008) this screen quota required Korean cinemas to play Korean movies for 146 days in a year. As a result of this, less Hollywood movies are being watched and imported into South Korea.

In order to reform the economy the 1998 Kim Dae Jung administration made the cultural sector one of their prime targets for growth. The thought behind this was that Korean movies and music could bring in a lot of money to the country. In 1998 the Ministry of Culture and Tourism came with a 5 year plan called the 'broadcast video promotion plan'. (D. Shim, 2006) Colleges were encouraged to start programs to educate new entertainment talent. Another aspect of this plan was to support the Korean Film Council. This institution has as function to fund Korean movies and promote the exports of it. Another institution, the Korean Culture and Content Agency, was started with money from the ministry of Culture and Tourism for funding new talent. Movie sets are used as touristic destinations. On the website of the Korea Tourism Organization (n.d.) tourists can find the filming locations of 67 Korean dramas. The Korean Broadcasting Commission went to India, Thailand and Indonesia to promote hallyu in those countries. Those trips had a direct effect on the exports of Korean dramas to those countries. (M. Kim, 2011)



Figure 8: Reprinted from [*Daejanggeum* theme park in Seoul] (n.d.). Copyright holder unknown. Retrieved from <http://flyingoverpinkclouds.blogspot.nl/2011/10/korea-2011-9-day-autumn-in-my-heart.html>

Sustaining hallyu has become a critical point in the government's cultural policy. In 2012 the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports launched an advisory committee to look for way to sustain the Korean wave. Another job of this committee is to promote traditional Korean culture. In the same year the K-



culture Promotion Taskforce was initiated with the same goal. The government has made a budget of 230 million dollars available for these plans for 2014 and 2015. (C. Cho, 2012b) Also the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade is involved in the promotion of hallyu. Together with the Korean Broadcasting Commission they visit far away countries to promote their dramas in South America, the Middle East and Africa. This has resulted that Paraguay, Peru, Iran and Swaziland are now broadcasting Korean dramas. Further the ministry is involved in promoting Korean movies on international film festivals. On the website from the ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (n.d.) they state that their goal is not only to promote Korean movies in the world, but also Korea itself.

By looking at government reports I hoped to find out how the government thinks about hallyu and what the government thinks is the reason why Korean popular culture is so appealing to many in the world. Four reports from the Korean Culture and Information Centre (KOCIS) proved to be of great value. In the period of 2011 and 2012 this government organization published reports about the Korean wave, K-pop, K-drama and K-movie. These reports describe the success of the Korean wave in other countries and are an introduction to people who are unknown to Korean dramas, movies or k-pop. In the report about the Korean wave there is one chapter that is called 'What is Korean pop culture got?' The government sees the form of k-pop and k-dramas as the main reason for the success of hallyu. According to the KOCIS the internet has played an important role in the spread of Korean cultural content. YouTube has changed the way of how people experience music. KOCIS calls k-pop the music of fusion. The success can be explained by blending melodies and beats and using American songwriters and producers. Also dance is seen by the KOCIS as a selling point. A lot of fans on the internet cover dances from k-pop artists and then upload them on the internet. The fashion style of the k-pop music scene is also important. The government does not credit themselves for the popularity of k-pop instead they look at the role of the entertainment companies. The combination of an appealing form for everybody with the professionalization of the music industry is the basis of the popularity of k-pop according to KOCIS. For an explanation of the success of k-drama KOCIS looks at the cultural value that countries give to these dramas. Every country has a different reason for liking the Korean dramas. Americans seem to like Korean dramas because they are relaxing and cheerful. Europeans focus on the uncomplicated plot and romantic story. Korean dramas are very positive. In Asia Korean dramas inspire the viewers to discover new lifestyles and trends. In the Middle East Korean dramas are popular, because they are safe to show on television. No explicit love making scenes are in the drama. Also historical dramas are popular in the Middle East, because they show respect for leaders of a country. They are used in Jordan, UAE and Saudi Arabia as 'propaganda' to strengthen the leadership of the monarchs in those countries. (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011c)

The government sees Korean dramas and k-pop as the most essential part of the Korean wave. KOCIS does write about Korean movies and Korean literature, but recognizes that their impact has been less than k-pop or k-drama. However also here they only write about the successes of Korean movies abroad. They do not mention that since 2006 the exports of Korean movies have been declining. KOCIS in their report about k-movie only look at the most important movies, directors and actors. For Korean movies the government sees themselves as the main initiators of the hallyu wave. (Korean Culture and Information Service, 2012) The report calls the movies that were made in 1990s 'planned movies'. With this KOCIS means movies that were made to be successful by looking at the demands of the market. KOCIS sees that government policy has increased competition between Hollywood

movies and Korean movies and that by giving financial support Korean movies were able to compete successfully with Hollywood.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST), KOCIS and Korean Tourist Organization (KTO) all publish news about hallyu on their websites. KOCIS comes with reports on k-pop, k-movie and k-dramas. These reports however paint a very one sided story. The tone is very positive and does not look at the failures of the Korean wave. MCST and KTO both offer news on successes of Korean artists abroad. Lately *Psy* has been very successful with his hit 'Gangnam style'. These two organizations keep writing about what *Psy* has been doing. In the month October *Psy* has been mentioned in 21 news reports on korea.net. This is the official website of South Korea. The website is created by the MCST. A small selection of news reports on *Psy* shows how positive the news reports are. In '*Psy's popularity gives boost to Korean language*' the news was that *Psy* spoke Korean during a broadcast of the Today Show in America. (Limb, 2012) Interesting here is that the government sees a relationship between k-pop and the rise of Korean language schools in the world. In '*Psy catches the eye of Swiss media*' the news was that a Swiss columnist mentioned *Psy* in his column. (S. Lee, 2012) And the titles '*Psy heats up Australia by dancing with Spice Girls Melanie Brown*' (2012) and '*Psy's Gangnam style arrives in Sweden*' show how the government really tries to prove how well spread Korean popular culture is. (Wi, 2012) In the same vein has been reported on other hallyu stars going overseas. Also the news reports on the website of KTO shows a very one sided picture. They have been reporting on everything that *Psy* does too. This goes from '*Psy's Gangnam style pops up as no. 2 on the billboard*' to '*Psy, Britney Spears and Ellen Degeneres horse ride dance on Ellen show*'. (S. Ho, 2012; Jeon, 2012) Also KTO talks about Gangnam style tour packages which allows people to visit Gangnam in Seoul. ("Novotel now offering Gangnam style tour package, 2012).

Looking at how the government has written about the Korean wave I can see that the government gives themselves the credit for the Korean wave. They use the term 'planned movies' for the success of the movie industry at the beginning of the 2000s. The government is very interested in the hallyu phenomenon. Almost every day government websites gives updates on what Korean artists are doing overseas. Instead of supporting the movie industry the government now sees it as their job to keep the Korean wave going. The government has initiated two advice organs to research where to go from here. The interest of the government in the Korean wave can be explained in two ways. Selling popular culture to other countries brings a lot of money to Korea. Especially Japan is an interesting market for South Korea. The Japanese were the wealthiest people in the Asian region and were willing to buy Korean products. A videotape or DVD would cost 10 times more in Japan than in Malaysia. The second reason for the interest of the government in hallyu is to promote South Korea as a brand. Korean popular culture changed people's opinion about Korea. People who watched Korean dramas started to see South Korea as an advanced and wealthy nation. (Hanaki et. al, 2008) The government believes that hallyu creates a positive image of South Korea in the world. Ban Ki Moon, in his time as minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Korea, said that hallyu has brought respect to Korea. Something that was lagging behind since Korea reached its status as the eleventh biggest economy in the world. (Joo, 2011, p. 496)

For the government hallyu is a tool to generate more money. They want to use hallyu to benefit the Korean economy. Their point of view is very similar to that of commercial businesses. Companies like Hyundai and Samsung both do research to the Korean wave. Both these companies realize that hallyu has made it easier for these companies to sell their products overseas. LG electronics has

realized the profitability of the Korean wave. The Korean Culture and Content Agency USA (2006) looked into how Korean businesses are using the Korean wave to gain more profit. After using actor Ahn Jae Wook from *Stars in my Heart* in a commercial in Vietnam, sales increased in that country. To improve the popularity of the Korean wave LG gave Korean dramas for free to Vietnamese TV-stations and even paid for the dubbing of the dramas. Same thing has happened with Samsung electronics. They made an advertisement for a LCD TV in China and also used Ahn Jae Wook to promote the product. Samsung has taken over Phillips as the new number one brand of LCD TV's in China.

Stages of hallyu	Explanation	Countries or region
1. Popularity of Korean popular culture	Korean dramas, movies and k-pop become popular outside of Korea. Other countries start broadcasting Korean dramas.	Philippines, Malaysia, Russia, Uzbekistan, United States, South America, Europe and Africa
2. Purchase of Korean popular culture products	Besides broadcasting Korean dramas also movie ticket sales and DVD sales start rising. Also foreigners start buying k-pop records and attend concerts.	Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Brazil, Iran
3. Purchase of other Korean products	Hallyu inspires countries to buy Korean products related to the Korean popular culture such as food, Korean language, plastic surgery and tourism	China, Hong Kong, Japan,
4. Favorable impression of Korea	Other countries get a new positive impression of South Korean lifestyle and culture	Taiwan

Table 8: Stages of hallyu. Adapted from "The Role of the government in cultural industry. Some observations from Korea's experience," by M. Kim, 2011, *Keio Communication Review*, 33, p. 167. Copyright 2011 by Keio University.<sup>7</sup>

This model was designed by the Samsung research institute and it gives a good overview of what the Government think hallyu is. The first stage involves countries that only broadcasted a few Korean dramas. Also k-pop fans can be found in those countries. However the sales of the Korean popular culture products are very low and the involvement of the countries is also low. Philippines and Malaysia are two countries that researchers are not sure if the hallyu wave has hit there. However they have broadcasted some Korean TV-dramas. Also the United States and Europe are in the first stage. Korean entertainment companies have tried to send their stars to the United States. No Korean group has gained a widespread popularity. *Psy* is an exception to this. In the second stage hallyu has become so popular that people start buying k-pop records and Korean drama and movie DVD's. Korean popular culture in these countries is a widespread phenomenon. Thailand, Indonesia, Brazil, Iran and Singapore all fit this description. The third stage of hallyu shows that other Korean products have become sought after as a direct result of the popularity of k-pop, Korean dramas and movies. In this stage are the countries that were first hit by the Korean wave. These countries are China, Hong Kong and Japan. Tourism to South Korea has increased, because of Korean dramas. The

<sup>7</sup> M. Kim uses the model by the Samsung Research Institute. The classification of the countries or regions is my own interpretation. Samsung Research Institute. (2005). Hanryu ui Jisok gaw kiup ui hwaldong. *Samsung Gyonje yongueso*.

Korean government has called this hallyu tourism. Korean dramas and k-pop inspired people in those countries to learn the Korean language. In the fourth stage of hallyu countries will get a positive image of South Korea. People in those countries will see South Korea as a cultural and economic leader in the world. In this stage Taiwan can be grouped. Taiwanese people have reported that they are very positive of South Korea. Sung sees a connection between hallyu and the search for national identity by the Taiwanese. For the Taiwanese, Korean nationalism acts as a model for them. (Sung, 2010) They think that Koreans are very proud of their culture and traditions. They see that in the Korean dramas. Another reason has to do with the similarities between South Korea and Taiwan. The Taiwanese people can identify themselves better with the Korean culture and values. Korean dramas depict family values and respect for the elderly. Korean dramas are more familiar to them than dramas from the US. The Korean government and Korean businesses clearly look only into the economic, political and commercial aspects of popular culture. They see popular culture as a commodity. Something that has to be developed to make a profit. They tend to ignore the cultural meaning that people attach to the Korean movies, music and dramas.

Stages 1 and 2 are most relevant for the Korean music industry, movie industry and broadcasting industries. Stage 3 is very relevant for companies as Samsung, Hyundai and LG. They hope that hallyu will bring more attention to their products. Stage 3 and 4 are most relevant for the Korean government. The Korean wave can also be seen as one of the reasons for the improved relationships with Vietnam and Taiwan. Korean movie stars, Jang Dong Gun and Kim Nam Joo, are big stars in Vietnam. President Kim Dae Jung invited the two for dinner with the Vietnamese president Tran Duc Luong in 2001. (Shim, 2006) In the article from Sung (2010) is explained how hallyu has changed the image of South Korea in Taiwan. For a long time the Taiwanese preferred music from Hong Kong and Japanese dramas. South Korea had a negative image in Taiwan. This was mainly due to the fact that South Korea established a new diplomatic relationship with China and cut off the relationship with Taiwan. Since 2000 this had been changing. Korean music and drama became the number one choice in Taiwan. As a result the people of Taiwan began to have a more positive image of South Korea. (Sung, 2010)

### *Media*

The Korean news media started writing about the Korean wave in 2001. At first when the news reports were coming out the general public was very surprised by this news and questioned the validity of the reports. Also because the Korean media could not give a good reason why Korean dramas were popular in China and Japan. When in 2003 *Winter Sonata* became a big hit and photos began to appear of Bae Yong Joon arriving in the airport in Tokyo and Japanese women were waiting for him, the Korean public began to believe that the Korean wave was something serious. (Hanaki et. al, 2008)



Figure 9: Reprinted from [*Winter Sonata* star Bae Yong Joon arrives at Tokyo International Airport for the first time on 25 November 2004] (2004), by the Korea Times. Retrieved from [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/10/363\\_112054.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2012/10/363_112054.html)

This inspired a whole new writing about Korean popular culture overseas by Korean media. From then on the news about Korean idols and actors in other countries were written from a very nationalistic perspective. Professors and politicians were interviewed in Korean newspaper to say something about the hallyu phenomenon. Their tone was that from now on Korea could not be considered to be a small nation anymore. (Joo, 2011, p.496) That tone stayed in the writing of Korean journalists. Everybody was proud that Korean popular culture was liked in the world. This includes politicians, journalists and ordinary people. Every time when American newspapers wrote about Korean popular culture, Korean newspapers would write about that. *Munwha ilbo*, a conservative Korean newspaper, writes on 12 June 2011 “it appears that the Korean temperament is touching people’s heart around the world. [...] We can now say that what is Korean is, in fact, international.” (Park, 2001 as cited in Cho, 2005) The Korean media feel that with the success of hallyu, Korea has reached the status of an advanced nation. (E. Kim & Ryoo, 2007; Joo, 2011; S. Lee, 2011)

The Korean media tend to ignore negative coverage on hallyu. American newspapers have written from a more critical perspective. In *the Korea Times* an article is posted about the nationalistic tone of the Korean media about hallyu. (J. Kim, 2012)

*I cannot disagree when my foreign friends say Koreans are too nationalistic in their interpretation of a success story when Koreans are involved. And of course, it is only the success stories that get the attention and media coverage. Very often only the brighter side of things is highlighted, without any real attempt to grasp the entire picture of reality.*

In another article from the Korea Times the writer point out that the Korean wave will fade away in five years time if the culture industry does not make any changes. (S. Kim, 2012) The content is not original anymore according to an official from the MCST. Esther Oh from CNN says that the Korean media put the label hallyu on everything that is related to Korean popular culture even though in many cases it cannot be considered as hallyu. She writes about Jay Park. In Korea Jay Park is considered to be a hallyu star. However he was born in America, now he made an album in America and he sings in English. According to Esther Oh the Korean media needs to define what the Korean wave is. In her view Jay Park is not a hallyu star although he debuted in a South Korean boy band. Esther Oh (2011) from CNN thinks that:

*Instead of simply glorifying the concept of hallyu and obsessing over the “exclusivity” and “uniqueness” of K-Pop, the Korean media should understand that when artists are debuting in the U.S. with English songs, people do not care if it is J-Pop or K-Pop. Once these artists cross over to a different cultural arena and play by its rules, the notion of hallyu no longer applies.*

Why have the media written so positive about Korean popular culture in the world? According to Joo (2011) the main reason is that Koreans always feared the influx of other cultures. In 1987 the Koreans feared that Hollywood movies would take over the Korean movie market. Also in 1998 Korea lifted the ban on Japanese popular culture. This ban started in 1945 after Japan left Korea. Many Koreans thought at that time that Korean popular culture would not be able to compete with the Japanese culture. Koreans were busier with fearing that American and Japanese popular culture would overtake South Korea. The thought that their popular culture would be liked by other countries was something they did not think of. The study from Lee (2011) explores how nationalism has influenced the news reports. She finds that all the news reports about hallyu in China and Japan see the Korean wave as a victory. Journalists tend to put the Korean wave in relation with the troubled past with Japan and China. The Korean wave is something to be proud of for many ordinary Koreans.

As we can see the Korean media has been writing very positive about Korean popular culture in other countries. Korean newspapers talk very proudly of their popular culture in the world. A lot of Koreans rely on the Korean media for their news about Korean popular culture, because of that the general public in South Korea has a very optimistic view about the success of hallyu. However some respondents I interviewed mentioned that the media does not talk about hallyu in a realistic way. One girl studied in America and she thought that k-pop would be more known in America since the news media made many reports about *Wonder Girls*, *Girls Generation* and *BoA* in America.

*Actually there were some K-POP singers who tried to work in the entertainment business in the USA. But they failed, even though they have success in Korea and other Asian countries. Only the Korean media said that they were doing very well in America. It means that the media has deceived us in believing k-pop has success in America. But In reality nobody knows k-pop in the USA. I think it is very hard to be popular in America, because nobody in America is interested in Korean Culture.*

Another respondent currently lives in America. She also thought that the media did not portray an honest picture of the success or actually lack of success in the United States.

*And sometimes I do feel that we make a big deal out of nothing in the media. Like when *Wonder Girls* made their debut in the USA. The media said they now are huge stars, but when I was in America it hit me. It is only "us" talking in our point of view. But now since Psy is re-writing history, I expect he will bring more attention to my culture so people no longer approach me and say "Ni-hao/arigato" or some random stuff about Kim Jeong Il."*

The notion that k-pop is not big at all in America is also something that is discussed on the allkpop forum. There one girl comments.

*I think I heard maybe one or two things about k-pop on the news several months ago (about *Girls Generation*) and then an article here and there on American music sites about the music*

*as a whole. The hallyu wave is not big in America, nor do I see it having the potential to be.*  
(Whimsypanda, 2012)

In that discussion people mention that k-pop in America and Europe is still marginal and that the Korean media is making it bigger than it really is. Also a girl I talked to, who lives in the Netherlands, said she could not notice much of hallyu in Europe. She did not feel, like the two girls in America, that the media deceived people. Instead she puts it into a more historical perspective. She said: “*We, Koreans see ourselves as a victim. We always tend to form a group and think: ‘leave us alone’. For that reason we are really proud that people recognize our culture.*” Korea has been invaded many times in its history by Japanese and Chinese forces. Hallyu is now seen as a way to ‘fight back’ in a positive way by the Korean media. This finding is also what Sue Jin Lee (2011) found in her research where she compares the difference in how Korean media covers hallyu and American media writes about the topic. American newspapers write about South Korea in an underdog position. They claim that Japanese popular culture is more dominant in the region. But also that South Korea is a ‘rising star’. South Korean newspapers however are more favorable about South Korean popular culture. Especially the news about hallyu in Japan and China is written in a very nationalistic tone. This has all to do with the history between the three nations. (S. Lee, 2011, p. 91) The research of Lee does not go further than looking at news coverage about hallyu in China and Japan. However as the research from Cho shows Korean media are very proud that their culture is reaching out to other countries.

#### *Market: Supply side*

In the 1980s South Korea did not have its own independent music industry. Korean singers were dependent on television for exposure of their music. The preferred choice of music was ballads. The 1980s was a time where South Korea was changing. Korea opened its markets in 1987 and since then the country got to be more exposed to foreign culture and music. At the same time the standard of living had been rising. A lot of Koreans bought satellite TV and could receive Japanese television. The Koreans became more aware of global trends. With this the music started to change. In the 1990s a lot of people who studied in America came back to South Korea. This group of people started working as music producers or music video directors. In America this group got in touch with hip hop and American pop. This has influenced them in the sound of the music in South Korea. Also foreigners got to be involved in the production of cultural goods. (Leung, 2012)

In this setting Korean entertainment companies could arise. One of the pioneers of k-pop is Lee Soo Man. Lee Soo Man is the founder of SM Entertainment. Currently SM Entertainment is the most popular record company in South Korea, because of the successes of *H.O.T*, *Shinhwa*, *BoA*, *TVXQ*, *Super Junior*, *Girls Generation* and *SHINee*. In the 1970s Lee Soo Man used to be a folksinger. Lee Soo Man dreamed of bringing j-pop style music to South Korea. J-pop was not big in South Korea and Lee Soo Man thought that this type of music could be popular in South Korea. He copied the style of a popular Japanese metal band *X-Japan* and formed the band *Lee Soo Man and the 365 days*. Lee Soo Man was also a radio dj and television host of variety shows. All his shows were cancelled when in 1980 the Chun government was installed. Also his music band was banned from television. After that Lee Soo Man decided to move to America and study computer engineering. In America Lee Soo Man got influenced by MTV. MTV was a big hit in that time. That music station was broadcasting a lot of pop music videos with dance in them. Lee Soo Man realized that it would be possible to copy this success to South Korea. Back in South Korea he started SM Entertainment in 1989. In 1996 *H.O.T*

made its debut. The group is considered to be the first boy band in South Korea. The members were picked because of their dancing skills, not because of their singing skills. One of the members won a dancing competition and was after that asked to join the group. Two other members were found while they were dancing on the street. The group disbanded in 2001, but has inspired many boys and girls to try and become k-pop idols too.

Another important player in the k-pop industry is Yang Hyun Suk. In 1991 he was in a dancer in the music group *Seo Taiji and Boys*. Seo Taiji is seen as a pioneer in k-pop. This was the first group to use rap and dance in a Korean song. The single 'I know' was a huge breakaway from the old traditional style of music that was popular at that time. The group first album became a huge hit and was the fastest selling record since 1982. Their music was very popular in Korea among the youth, but the music critics were not convinced. In 1992 they played their first TV-show performance for MBC. In this show new artists were judged by a panel of judges. *Seo Taiji and Boys* got the lowest score in the show. (Mtembo465, 2007) Despite this *Seo Taiji* was the first act to be able to break away from the television network grasp. Not the network, but *Seo Taiji* could decide when they wanted to play. They were the first group on television that did not use the in-house dancers or band from the television channel. The *Korea Herald* called *Seo Taiji and Boys* the first cultural product in South Korea. (C. Cho, 2012a) Seo Taiji created the music and did the rapping. Yang Hyun Suk was responsible for the choreography of the group. After *Seo Taiji and boys* disbanded, he founded YG entertainment in 1998. YG Entertainment grew to be the second biggest entertainment company in South Korea. They differentiate themselves from other companies by using hip hop as the basis for their songs. *Big Bang*, *Psy* and *2NE1* are groups/singers that are under contract of this company.

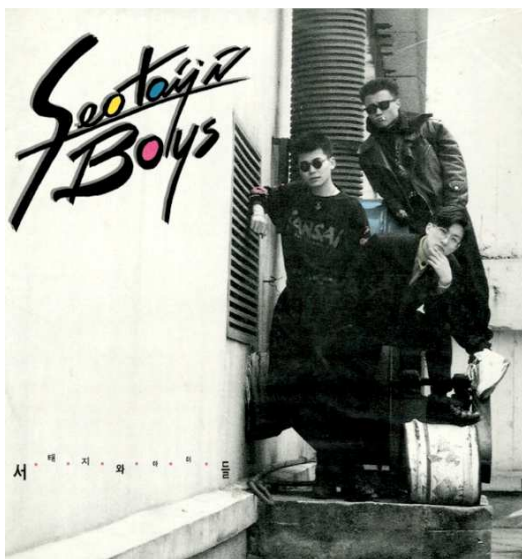


Figure 10: Reprinted from [*Seo Taiji and Boys* first self titled album] (1992). Copyright 1992-2001 by the Seo Taiji Company. Retrieved from <http://nwww.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20120323001104&cpv=0>

JYP Entertainment is the third biggest entertainment company in South Korea. The owner of JYP Entertainment is Park Jin Young. In the 1990s he was a successful singer and a pop idol himself. He was a talented dancer. He wrote his own songs and has produced songs for American artists like Will Smith, Mase and R. Kelly. In 1997 he decided to start JYP Entertainment to train others in becoming an idol. Park Jin Young writes all the songs for groups like *2PM* and *Wonder Girls*. When *Wonder Girls*



were trying to break through in America, it was Park Jin Young who arranged that *Wonder Girls* were featured on Nickelodeon and in the opening set of *the Jonas Brothers*.

This close involvement of the CEO's of the entertainment companies also shows in an interview with Yang Hyun Suk from YG Entertainment on Korean television. In the interview he says that he apologizes for not being able to spend much time on the comeback of *2NE1*, because of his schedule. He says: *"Normally when company artists are set to make a comeback, even for the few months prior to their return I will spend night and day, eating with them, and take care of them. Although, this time was different as I failed to provide that for 2NE1."* (xxxKrisKrossxxx, 2012)

This close involvement of the owners of entertainment companies and their talents is something common in South Korea. For American record labels like Warner and Universal it is unseen that the higher management is involved in the creative process. The South Korean Entertainment companies that dominate the music scene are all smaller in scale. This makes it easier to manage and be involved in the music making process. All the owners of the Entertainment companies are involved in the audition process. It is them who decide who will join the company. The big entertainment companies are a record label, producers of music and talent agency in one. Most of them have not only singers and dancers in their roster, but also actresses and comedians. Entertainment companies in South Korea are not only busy with making music, but some also make movies and TV dramas. For example SM Entertainment has made music albums for *Girls Generation*, *Super Junior* and *BoA* and also produced dramas like *To the Beautiful You* and *Paradise Ranch*. Lee Soo Man from SM Entertainment says about this in an interview:

*Even the U.S. could not establish a management system like ours. Picking trainees, signing a long term contract, and teaching trainees for a long period of time, this just cannot happen in the U.S. U.S. agencies are hired as sub-contractors after an artist has grown and gained popularity on their own. As a result, the agencies only play roles of sub-contractors, and cannot make long term investments in singer-hopefuls.* (Carolicity, 2011)

Not only music companies are getting more involved with making dramas and movies. But the other way round has happened also. Key East Entertainment is a company founded by *Daejanggeum* star Bae Yong Joon. This entertainment companies represents many actors and actresses. Next year this company will launch a new k-pop group. In the media this group has been called *Bae Yong girls*. (Thunderstix, 2011) The CJ Group is the biggest producer of television in South Korea. This company also has its own channel on television (Mnet) dedicated to k-pop. The CJ Group also own girl bands and boy bands. *T-ara* is the most successful girl group of this company. (Dana, 2012)

A lot of effort is put in finding the right talent by the entertainment companies. Entertainment companies hold weekly auditions to find singers and acting talent. Not only in Korea, but also in Los Angeles, Malaysia, Thailand and Kazakhstan. Cube Entertainment uses television shows like *k-pop star* to find new singers. To find new actors and actresses, besides auditions also street scouting, school recommendations and beauty contests are used.



Figure 11: Reprinted from [SM Entertainment audition] [ca. 2010]. Copyright holder unknown. Retrieved from <http://seoulbeats.com/2012/01/the-road-to-k-pop-stardom-auditioning/>

After the auditions the girls and boys are getting trained to prepare them for stardom. Usually it takes between 3 and 7 years before the training is finished. The new signings get training to improve their singing and dancing skills. Media training is also part of the program. Some boys and girls are the age of 12 when signed by SM Entertainment. Trainees must learn to speak other languages. Sometimes it is even necessary to learn how to speak Korean as was the case with Hankyung from *Super Junior* and Nickhun from *2PM*. Hankyung was born in China. Nickhun was born in America, but his parents are from Thailand. One representative from SM Entertainment said in an interview on television that the costs of training *Girls Generation* were around 2.5 million us dollars. (Leesa86, 2011) Also in the same interview it is mentioned that around 300.000 boys and girls have done auditions for SM Entertainment. Of that group only 100 have become trainees and even then it is not sure if they ever will make a debut. A very useful source is an interview in a Chinese newspaper with the manager of *EXO-M*. In that interview he revealed how the training process went for new recruits. (Asparkofmoonlight, 2012) New recruits are expected to keep their bodies fit. Guys are expected to get abs and girls are supposed to lose weight. In the case of *Girls Generation* it was revealed that the girls only eat 800 calories per day. ("Girls Generation diet", 2009) In comparison a normal girl that age should eat about 1800 calories per day. In the training process the trainees are also expected to know about current situations in the world. For that reason reading a newspaper daily is mandatory. Also the manager for *EXO-m* said that millions of us dollar are involved in the training of future stars.

Don Lee is an ex- trainee of JYP Entertainment. On his YouTube Channel he spoke about the schedule for an ordinary trainee. (Donleebaby, 2012) A day at JYP starts at 10am. For two hours trainees practice their dancing or singing skills. At 12 o'clock they eat lunch. In the afternoon the classes start. These classes are for singing, dancing, rapping, Chinese, instrument lessons, acrobatics, acting and Korean. These classes are between 1 and three hours long. Every trainee has their own schedule. At

6pm it is dinner time and after that trainees practice till 10pm. After that they are free to go, but most of them keep practicing more if they have a show coming up. They do this 6 days a week. At the end of every month there is an evaluation to see if trainees are improving. Trainees are allowed to have some free time. They are allowed to go to the movies and sometimes JYP would take the trainees to a concert. Don Lee describes JYP as a

*“competitive team orientated workplace. You are simultaneously working with each other to get better, but you also try to outmatch each other. [...] I do not want to leave you with the image that it was a cutthroat competition. It was a pretty nice place to practice actually. People there are genuine nice and if you ask for help, they would gladly help. And they will not sabotage you or backstab you.”* (Don Lee, 2012)

The reality TV show *Hot Blood* gave viewers an insight in the training process of rookies at JYP Entertainment. (Mnet, 2009) The show follows 13 trainees. The show was launched to promote a new group called *One Day*. At the end of the show viewers could vote who they wanted in *One Day*. JYP Entertainment decided to break up the group into two groups, *2PM* and *2AM*. Both of these groups are now highly successful. This TV show also play a role in that. Ten episodes were made and it showed how hard the life is of trainees. The show follows the day to day life of the trainees. The trainees have to live in two apartments with each other. They also have to share rooms with each other. This is done to strengthen the solidarity among the trainees. In the same building are also the training rooms. Whole days are spend on training for dancing and singing. The cameras also register other tasks these trainees have to do like handing out flyers for their fan meeting at a school for girls and photo shoots. In their free time the trainees go to university or practice on their own. The show also registers the hard life these trainees have. In episode 3 they are put into a boot camp. In this boot camp the trainees have to run outside without shirts at 6 o'clock in the morning, run up a mountain while singing, role in the snow without shirts and do pushups in the ocean. In episode 5 three members are being sent away by the training staff, because they did not perform well in trainings and missions. The other trainees are all very emotional by this and try to persuade the trainers to let the three of them stay. The trainers are so impressed with the team spirit and the friendship that these trainees have developed. After this they revoke their decision and let the three members stay. This episode showed that trainees all become friends and do not see each other as rivals. The trainers said to them that by not sending those three members away, it could mean that in the future one of them would be sent away. Despite this all the trainees wanted that the three members could stay longer.

After this episode the training becomes more physical. On the beach they have to crawl with a boat on their back to the water. They have to sit in the ice cold water while holding each other hands. Jo Kwon, one of the trainees, says about the training on the beach in episode 6: *“We had to hold on to the end and did it! I was so thankful and proud of these members.”* Taecyeon, another trainee, says: *“Today, we were able to do well, because I was not alone. We were all together.”* It becomes clear that these sorts of trainings are used to create a sense of belonging towards each other. By being integrated in this community it is easier for entertainment companies to control them. Individual group members will not leave the group if this could hurt the whole group.



Figure 12: Screenshot for [trainee life of JYP Entertainment in episode 6 of Hot Blood] (2012), by William Tuk

In episode 7 the trainees have to walk alone through a forest in the dark. At the end of the forest a coffin is waiting for them. They are expected to go in the coffin and reflect on what would happen if they would be dead and if they are working hard to fulfill their dreams. One member said after coming out of the coffin:

*Although my family was opposed of me becoming a singer, they also give me a lot of support. I always feel that all those things are acts out of love for me. That is why on behalf of my family and myself, I think my dream will definitely come true.*

Another trainee said: *"I felt that I should have worked hard. Until now, my first promise after coming to JYP... I feel that I have not kept it. I think I should work harder to fulfill that promise."* By undergoing this tough training the trainees realize how hard they have to work to fulfill their dream of becoming a k-pop singer. A lot of trainees mention that they do this to make their families proud. The training is focused on groups bonding and also on making sure that the trainees are passionate about reaching their goals.

In the same episode, Park Jin Young, gives a speech towards the trainees. He said:

*"I have watched your training life well. You have come so far.... I think you have what it takes for the future judging on your attitudes and basic mentalities. [...] Of course it might have been tough, but this training is so much easier than the road you are about to walk on. You guys, as singers, will be heading towards the direction of world stars. But it will be psychically and mentally 10 times or 100 times harder than this."*

In episode 8 one of the members cannot join the group at their first performance on stage due to an arm injury. Behind the scenes we can see him cry. Also at the end of this episode it is announced who will make their debut and who has to wait longer. Three members have been voted away by the viewers. In this scene all the trainees are hugging them and crying. The group has become tight with each other. This system where trainees are voted away by the audience prove how hard the competition is for trainees. If the audience does not like you, you are not going to make your debut. Nowadays it is important for trainees to generate some attention before they make a debut. Trainees

from SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment are already stars before they even have recorded an album.

However these shows do not show what happens to the trainees who do not make their debut. If a company does not believe a trainee will make more progress than his contract will be terminated. Others leave by their own free will, because they want to get a degree from university. Usually trainees that get send away are contracted by another Entertainment company. One of the guys that was send away in Hot Blood signed with Cube Entertainment and is now in a successful boy band called *B2ST*.

TV plays an important role in the life of pop idols. They have to have constant exposure of what they are doing. K-pop stars show up in variety shows. These shows range from shows where members between two groups have a fake wedding (*We Got Married*) or where members have to take care of a child for some time (*Hello Baby*). Some shows hold dance competitions between k-pop groups. (*Star Dance Battle*) Other shows are more similar to X-factor shows where new k-pop groups have to get as many votes of the viewers to win (*M! Countdown*).

The biggest k-pop groups also have reality shows on television. This is to provide the fans and viewers with a different side of the k-pop stars. Also on YouTube fans can find videos that give a look into the preparations for concerts and other activities. JYP Entertainment has taken this seriously and provides English subtitles with these little segments. These segments are called *Real Wonder Girls*, *Real 2PM* and *Real JJ*. Also artists from YG Entertainment have reality shows. *2NE1 TV* and *Big Bang TV* are the most popular ones.

Also foreigners are hired to do the choreography or to produce the music. YG Entertainment hires choreographers from America to do the choreography for their artists. Mostly these trainers will only stay for a couple of days. In those few days the artists have to learn complex choreography for their songs. Movement Lifestyle was one of the companies that were hired by YG Entertainment. A small documentary series was made for YouTube about these choreographers. One of the girls has to arrange the choreography for *2NE1*. She explains the difference in dance between South Korea and America. (Movementlifestyle, 2011) South Korean audiences like catchy moves and simple things that they can do in their bedrooms. Fans do not have much room to dance. That is why choreographers have to come up with a lot of arm movements and use of shoulders.

	2009	2010	2011
SM Entertainment	4.500.000	21.800.000	14.860.000
YG Entertainment	4.100.000	9.800.000	10.600.000
JYP Entertainment	-4.700.000	904.340	unknown

Table 9: Net profits of the three biggest Entertainment companies per year in us dollar. Adapted from "SM, YG & JYP Entertainment earned a combined revenue of \$150 million USD in 2010," by Vitalsign, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Allkpop; "SM, YG and JYP's profits for 2011 revealed," by Ho, 2012. Copyright 2012 by ENews World. <sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For information about 2009 and 2010, I used the data that was published on allkpop. For 2011 I used data on Enews. There was no data available on JYP Entertainment, because in 2010 JYP took over J. Tune Entertainment. Because the two companies have not yet merged it is not possible to see how they are doing. Both these articles uses data from the report from the Financial Supervisory Service's DART.

	2009	2010	2011
SM Entertainment	61.789.000	86.400.000	99.590.000
YG Entertainment	35.693.000	44.773.000	56.640.000
JYP Entertainment	10.164.000	21.600.000	unknown

Table 10: Total sales of the three biggest Entertainment companies per year in us dollar. Adapted from “SM, YG & JYP Entertainment earned a combined revenue of \$150 million USD in 2010,” by Vitalsign, 2011. Copyright 2011 by Allkpop; “SM, YG and JYP’s profits for 2011 revealed,” by Ho, 2012. Copyright 2012 by ENews World.

These large investments do pay off. SM Entertainment is the most successful entertainment company in South Korea. In 2010 SM entertainment had 10 active pop groups. These groups together made a profit for the company of almost 22 million dollars. The sales in that period were around 86 million dollars. This is bigger than all other entertainment companies in South Korea combined. YG Entertainment is also doing well. Their sales have been increasing in the three year period. And it is expected that in 2012 they will surpass SM Entertainment in total sales. The success of Psy can explain this. JYP Entertainment is less successful than the other two. In 2009 they made a loss of 4.7 million dollars. However their sales have been rising and in 2010 the company bought another entertainment company J. Tune Entertainment. This company has k-pop star *Rain* is under contract. It is expected that the profits of JYP Entertainment will be rising in the coming years.

The sales of YG Entertainment are for most part dependent on the boy band *Big Bang*. The large profit of YG Entertainment shows that Entertainment companies only need one big hit in order to be successful. This has inspired many new Entertainment companies to try and be successful just like these three Entertainment companies. When we look at the number of k-pop groups making their debut since the existence of k-pop we can see that there has been a sharp increase in their numbers. Not only new boy bands and girl bands have emerged, but also other entertainment companies. In 2012 60 entertainment companies launched new boy bands and girl bands. This shows that more companies are joining the k-pop scene.

The entertainment industries have a lot of power in creating the type of content. Every entertainment company has their own ideas on what the Korean and foreign public likes. SM Entertainment has become successful by focusing more on looks and performance than singing skill. Also SM Entertainment is not busy with creating 100% Korean music. For their songs they use producers and choreographers from all around the world. Swedish songwriters are used to write songs for their artists. Also SM Entertainment is known for buying the rights of American pop songs that were used by American pop singers. (JangMinHo, 2011) Also other entertainment companies are using American pop songs for their artists. YG Entertainment incorporates hip hop and electronic music in their artist’s style. Their songs are considered to be more appealing to Western audiences, because the music is more similar to what Western people listen to on the radio. JYP Entertainment lays the focus on performance and choreography. People are selected on their dancing skill.

Two things are very important for making a k-pop song. The song has to be simple and must have a good choreography. Without these two things a song will never be a hit. A producer that worked with SM Entertainment said:

*Choruses tend to be a simple, yet with a catchy melody. In Asia, karaoke is so huge. One thing that we've noticed is that if you have a song that is really sing able it is more likely to be a hit, because people can go to the karaoke lounge and sing your song. But if it is really complicated, it is harder to sing and enjoy. (Flatley, 2011)*

A representative of SM Entertainment was in Australia to attend auditions. She said in a radio interview with SBS Pop Asia that the visual aspect is very important in k-pop.

*We are not only about song. We actually are very visual. We dedicate a lot into our music videos. From choosing one make-up color to the exact moves of the choreography. How we have the camera angle by using certain techniques called the Matrix angle, [...] the sound effect using it. All of these sorts of elements to get that one perfect shot in a music video. (Sbspopasia, 2012)*

Also the use of English in the Korean lyrics is done to make k-pop more familiar to foreigners. Scientific researchers have looked into the use of English in k-pop. Some scholars argue that this is because the youth want to reject traditional values. Jamie Lee argues that in Korean rap songs artist use Korean and English in a different way. The Korean lyrics are more conservative. More extreme parts of the lyrics are written in English. (J. Lee, 2004) A lot of scholars seem to refer to her when talking about the use of English in k-pop. However it has to be noted that this research from Lee focuses only on rap songs. She does not look into the content of pop music. In pop music the Korean lyrics and English lyrics seem to have same meaning. Or as one of my respondents said: *"I never thought about English lyrics. It is normally just meaningless."* In an article on the K-pop news site allkpop somebody notes.

*Society no longer cares about whether Korean is being used or not. English is used often in Koreans day-to-day lives so there is no feeling of unfamiliarity. It is also a great way to reach out to international fans as well. (Vitalsign, 2010)*

Entertainment companies have recruited non-Koreans in their groups to make the boy bands and girl bands more appealing outside of South Korea. Nichhun from *2PM* has Thai roots and was born in America; Hae Lim from *Wonder Girls* has lived in Hong Kong for 14 years and speaks better Chinese than Korean. Because of her accent a lot of people think she is Chinese. *Super Junior* member Hankyung from China, also Victoria Song from *f(x)* was born in China. She has become the most popular Chinese figure in the Korean entertainment business. In 2012 the band *EXO* made its debut. This group has 12 members and has been divided by their company into 2 subgroups. *EXO-k* and *EXO-m*. *EXO-k* is marketed for Korean audiences and has 6 Koreans members. *EXO-m* is marketed for Chinese audiences and has 2 Korean members and 4 Chinese members. The idea is that both groups will sing in Korean and Mandarin. The same strategy is used for *Super Junior* which has the original line up and *Super Junior-m* which contains both Koreans and Chinese

Even though entertainment companies are willing to accept foreigners into their groups, it is expected of them to behave like a Korean. In the past there have been some controversies around pop stars from other countries.

One of them was Joo Sung Jun. He was born in South Korea, but raised in America. He was scouted in California by Brothers Entertainment. In 1997 he made his debut in Korea and quickly became one

the most popular singers. He had a Korean passport and since he was living now in South Korea he had to fulfill the mandatory military service. In 2002 Joo changed his nationality to American, so that he could keep focusing on his music. However the Korean people saw this as betrayal of their country. Every Korean has to go to military service for 1 or 2 years. The Koreans could not see why Joo should be an exception of this. Also the Korean government saw this as an act of desertion and banned him from the country. Joo was from then on unable to enter South Korea and his music career was over.

Another scandal happened with Brian Joo. Brian Joo was born in America. His parents were Korean immigrants. When Brian was young he was signed by SM entertainment and was part of the R&B duo *Fly to the Sky*. In a radio interview in 2002 Brian Joo was asked his opinion about the death of 2 Korean girls by an accident from an US army vehicle in South Korea. Brian Joo response was: *"While the American soldiers must be brought to justice, I do not want relations between Korea and the United States, my home country, to become strained."* (Salima, 2012) Korean newspapers and other media reported his opinion in a different way. In the media the suggestion was created that Brian Joo said that people should not talk badly about America. Because of the US army accident anti-America sentiments were pretty strong at that time. A lot of people were angry at Brian Joo for not choosing Korea's side. Later Brian Joo made his public apologies in which he said that his words were not meant to hurt anyone. He said that his Korean language skill was not 100% yet.

One famous scandal involves Jay Park from *2PM*. Jay Park was born in Seattle and signed by JYP Entertainment in 2005. At that time he was 17 years old. On his MySpace he wrote *"Korea is gay"* and *"I hate it here"*. Four years later Jay Park has become a big star and one of the most popular members of *2PM*. Unfortunately for him his comments on MySpace were discovered. Korean people were outraged. One girl that I talked to said: *"I remember how angry people were at Jay Park. They were saying 'How can this American say that about our country?'"* Angry fans demanded that he would leave *2PM*. After a while JYP Entertainment terminated his contract since the sales for *2PM* were going down. Jay Park returned to America to pursue a solo career. Later people started realizing how hard they were on Jay Park. He was under aged when he made those comments and he had just arrived in South Korea. He had never been in South Korea before. He was experiencing alienation and needed time to adjust to the life in South Korea. Nowadays people have forgiven his actions. Jay Park has made a solo album in Korea and played in two Korean movies.

These scandals show that Koreans expect mixed breeds to be loyal to South Korea. These people were seen as American and are judged more strongly when they do something that opposes the Korean nationality. People who want to live and work in Korea are expected to speak the language, understand the culture and need to assimilate. Although the music has a lot of Western influences the artists are expected not to behave Western. This comes also back in the contracts that new artists have to sign. For example *2NE1* has a clause in their contract that they cannot date any boys for 5 years.

Lee Soo Man spoke about the successes of SM Entertainment in a lecture at the Stanford University on April 19 2011. This lecture is available on YouTube. (Stanfordbusiness, 2011) He credits SM Entertainments' globalization strategy for the Korean wave. According to him hallyu is *"Korean culture that goes far beyond its typical popularity and boundaries, transformed into nothing less than a social phenomenon."* Lee Soo Man sees the performance of the boy band H.O.T. in 2000 in Beijing



as the beginning of the Korean wave. He introduces the concept of 'cultural technology'. Culture is for him nothing else than a type of technology. 'Cultural technology' has three phases.

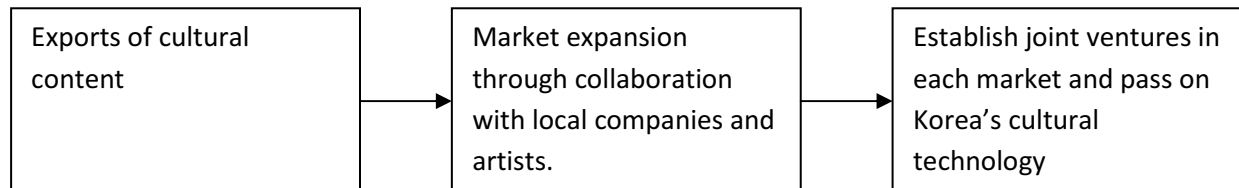


Figure 13: Three phases of 'cultural technology'. Own adaptation.

In the first phase SM Entertainment was exporting its k-pop groups to other countries. In the second phase SM Entertainment tries to work together with local companies. An example of this Kangta from *H.O.T.* who collaborated with Vanness. Vanness is a Taiwanese star. Lee Soo Man hopes that this strategy will unite Asia in one market force. The idea behind this is when South Korea, Japan and China would join forces and all three would have equal power in the joint venture, South Korea would be the richest, because it has the lowest population. In the third phase the focus lies on who produced the content, not where it was made. It may be a Chinese artist or a Chinese company, but what matters is that it was made by SM Entertainments' cultural technology. For this reason SM Entertainment tries to use other nationalities for their groups. An example of this is *EXO-m*. *EXO-m* is living in Beijing and the 4 members are Chinese. According to Lee Soo Man *EXO-m* is still a Korean product. Lee Soo Man says *"the ultimate goal of hallyu is to build a strong and reliable globalized market and share the enormous added value that is created"*.

#### *Market: Demand side*

The *Korea Harold* mentions that nowadays there are 830 hallyu fan clubs around the world with a total of 6 million members. (H. Park, 2012) It is these fans that make hallyu what it is today. In here I will look at the fans in South Korea and the international fans. What are their primary reasons for enjoying k-pop, Korean dramas and movies? And is there a difference between the two?

In appendix 2 I give a small summary of the interviews I took among 16 Koreans and how they think about k-pop and what appeals them in k-pop. The first thing that I found remarkable is the popularity of American pop under this group. Considering that 75% of the music on Korean television is k-pop, American pop music does reach the young in South Korea. When we look at the answers we see that people are discontent with current Korean pop music. According to them it is hard to distinguish Korean pop groups from each other. American pop music has more of an own face. One guy said: *"American singers show their feeling in their songs very well and each song has its own character, but Korean songs all sound the same."*

Another Korean girl wrote to me her reasons for becoming fan of *SS501*.

*SS501 made debuted in 2005 through the documentary 'M pick' which was about the life of an idol group. I had absolutely no idea how hard it was to be an idol singer before I watched the documentary is and it was very touching. For me they were closer to the 'boys next door who wants to be idols' than 'perfect idols'.*

Another Korean guy confessed that when he was teenager he joined the *Wonder Girls* fan club. His reason was that *Wonder Girls* could dance really well in their videos. Also k-pop fans are very

devoted. When SS501 announced their first concert in Japan the SS501 fan club organized a trip to Japan to attend that concert.

*I made reservation via the Japanese website for the concert and just flew to Fukuoka with my friends that I had met through the community. Nothing was more important than being there. I was simply so happy to see them having success. Most of the teenage fans were in some funny outfits like a Pikachu or had a big banner with 'Hyun Yoong's wife is coming'.*

From the interviews I got the impression that Korean society place a lot of value on beauty. Idols do not only set the norm for beauty standard, but they are also part of it. Record companies expect the idols to undergo plastic surgery to look better. Plastic surgery plays an important part in the k-pop scene. On the internet there are a lot of discussions about which idol underwent plastic surgery. For example Tiffany of *Girls Generation*, Goo Hara of *KARA*, and Park Bom of *2NE1* had plastic surgery. For idols it is a big taboo to reveal that you got plastic surgery. K-pop fans think it is important that the beauty from the idols comes naturally. However there have been many instances where entertainment companies persuade a recruit to undergo plastic surgery before they would make their debut. This has happened to some of the members of Shinwha. (Leesa86, 2012) One question I asked was designed to find out what Koreans think is important in k-pop. Most answers pointed in the direction that people in Korea place a lot of value on the looks of the band members and their performance. One girl said: *"I think they are picked just because they look pretty or sexy"*

In a research from KBS – the government owned television network – k-pop fans on YouTube were asked why they like k-pop. Most of these fans answered that the music, dance and the looks of the singers were the most important factor. (Korea Culture and Information Service, 2011c) These findings are similar to my own research.

By mixing Eastern and Western influences in k-pop, the music can keep its Korean identity in a global setting. From my interviews I learned that Koreans are aware that their music is not original, but they do hear some Korean elements in the music. One Korean respondent said: *"I do not feel that Kpop is too western. We have our own color in our music."* One Korean girl who had lived in the United States said:

*I did not even realize Korean music was Americanized, until my American boyfriend came here and told me. I thought they were just ours. But he said "you guys just seem to follow what Americans do. Where is your traditional stuff?" This made me think that we are too westernized to realize where our traditional stuff has gone to.*

In another interview with a Korean guy that used to live in the Netherlands: *"When I let my Dutch friends hear K-pop music they told me that it just sounded like western music. Therefore I assume that it sounds like western music."*

Another thing that really stood out of the answers of my interviewees was how proud they are that their popular culture is known outside of South Korea. One guy said: *"I am proud of the fact that I am Korean when people from different nations recognize any Korean popular culture."* Pop idols are seen as representatives of their country. The recent success of Psy makes him more than an entertainer. Koreans see him as an 'ambassador' for their country. One person I interviewed said: *"I'm so proud of him. So I think his success is an opportunity that can promote Korea culture and K-POP."* From the

answer I learned that Koreans really hope that k-pop will bring more interests in other aspects of Korean culture. One guy who studied in the Netherlands wrote to me:

*K-pop still has a long way to go and in the long-term there is no assurance that K-pop will become a worldwide phenomenon. There is also a lot of Korean historical and contemporary culture that must be known to other countries. Korean, the language itself is a valuable asset. Korean historical culture such as Hanbok (Korean traditional clothing), goods (from Korean style furniture to building), original food (Kimchi etc.) should also to be known.*

Also from my interviews I learned that people are not sure if k-pop can be successful in America. One girl said that although she is a fan of k-pop she thinks that k-pop is too Korean to be successful overseas.

*To be honest, I did not think that SS501 would be competitive in the hallyu market. Their strength was their friendly image and good looks, but not really their voice or performance. For only Koreans, that is enough. But to be successful in Asia groups need to speak all the languages fluently and make people understand their charm.*

Others are more optimistic. They think Psy is opening the American market for k-pop. However the Koreans are not really busy with the success of Psy himself. They hope he will represent more than just music.

*As a Korean I'm very glad, that Psy gets a chance to show the world that we are not just a feet masseur or a conservative husband. This is the image that American dramas have of us. We have our own attractive culture that we can all enjoy together. K-pop is not only about the short term money, but also about the whole image of the country.*

One thing that was mentioned in one of the interviews is that k-pop and Korean dramas are meant to appeal to women. Korean dramas are always about love. In those dramas Korean men are romantic. This attracts a lot of girls, because they dream about these types of men. One girl mentioned in an interview:

*The success of 'Winter Sonata' is easy to explain. The characteristics of the main character, he is sensitive, sweet and gentle, are traits that Japanese women cannot find in Japanese men. The guys over there hate that drama. They say that it is a fairytale. No man is like that.*

Korean dramas are for many women a way to get an indirect experience of love according to another Korean respondent. Many dramas show the love between a rich man and a poor girl. Girls in Korea dream about this happening to them. The absence of explicit sex scene in Korean dramas makes those dramas more appealing to those girls. Love in a Korean drama is centered on eye contact or a little touch. Korean dramas are also appealing to my respondents because they show the situation of girls their age. "My favorite drama is 'my name is Kim Sam-soon. It is close to the reality of an over 30-years-old women's life and there are some sweet fantasy things in it."

The respondents seem to agree that Korean dramas are depicting life in South Korea in a realistic way. "I believe that TV series give a good example of what our culture is. Sometimes I feel some of the dramas are a bit over the top, but I believe that this is also a part of Korean culture." Some respondents are not too sure about that. "But I think these days' popular dramas are a little bit stupid

*with some exceptions. They are totally different from the real world. Dramas are not a good representation for us.”* A similar concern I can find in another reply.

*I want the people of the world to know and be interested in Korean culture. But sometimes I wonder if this is really Korean culture. This question makes me critical, but it can be a good starter for introducing Korea.*

People are critical of the quality of the dramas that is being produced nowadays. A lot of companies are busier with trying the next big hit than actually producing quality content. One girl sums this up:

*I think the broadcasting systems have to fix the way they make dramas. Now they are being made just before broadcasting. This brings a lot of pressure in the making of a drama. The quality is not important anymore.*

Korean movies however are less easy to define. For that reason a lot of respondents did not go into that in more detail. One guy focused on the style of Korean movies. He said the movies did not appeal to him because they were too violent and too aggressive. It did not fit in the Korean way of life. “I hated Korean movies because it was boring and has too many swearing words. But these days, the quality of the movies has improved. So now I like going to the cinema to watch Korean movies.”

What appeals overseas audiences to k-pop? Yonhap news agency is the largest news agency in South Korea. One time they made a news report about a flash mob at Trafalgar Square in London. The flash mob was used to demand concerts from YG Entertainment in London. Yonhap news made a report of this gathering and interviewed Katie Kim. She was the one who arranged the flash mob. She was born in Korea, but lived her life in London. She said the following about k-pop in England:

*It is the novelty. British music gets old fast because of the similarity and J-Pop has been losing its scarcity value because it is so easily accessed. But K-Pop is currently something of “mystery.” People see the dynamic music and the unfamiliar language of Korean as something fresh. And while there are a lot of bands in the UK, it is hard to find idol groups with strong music, performances, looks, and fashion.”* (Yonhap news as cited by Korean Culture and Information Service, 2011c, p. 19)

Audiences in Europe are different than the ones in Asia. In England audiences are between 14 and 20 years old. These people are into pop music, but feel that Western pop groups sound and look too similar. It is this group that has been craving for something new. First they found it in J-pop. But J-pop has become too familiar to them. They want something new and found that in k-pop. This only shows that k-pop fans in Europe are not the usual type of pop fans. K-pop fans in Europe are actually looking for new music and groups. The internet plays a very important role in this. Through the internet it is easier to find new groups and also find people with similar interests.

In a discussion on Seoulbeats about whether k-pop can be successful in the West or not, one person mentions: “*My opinion is that k-pop is losing its identity. The only thing that really separates k-pop from Western pop music is the language it is sung in.*” (Cheoreom, 2012) However there are enough Korean elements in k-pop to make international fans curious in South Korea. International fans have to go to Korean websites or websites dedicated to k-pop and Korean dramas to stay updated on k-pop and dramas. Those websites not only talk about music and dramas, but also about other aspects of Korean culture like food, manners and acceptance of the second generation in South Korea. It

becomes clear that k-pop and k-drama have a strong link with South Korea. Or in other words, music and drama are part of the Korean cultural space. (Leung, 2012, p. 13)

A British fan of k-pop and the Korean wave says about the Americanization of Korean popular culture:

*I like South Korea for what it is, but the music and also films such as *The Yellow Sea* are becoming too Americanized. *The Yellow Sea* following the non-creative style of American films, did not feel Korean at all. The Korean film *Daytime Drinking* however felt very Korean and taught me the Korean rules for drinking soju, in fact I did not even know anything about soju beforehand. *Daytime Drinking* also shows me the Korean countryside, and the coastal towns, and makes it look really beautiful. (Buxton, 2012)*

When comparing k-pop fans in Europe with those in South Korea, we can come to an interesting conclusion. While in South Korea fans are nowadays complaining that a lot of k-pop groups are too similar and do not stand out. In Europe they feel that Western pop music is too similar and for that reason they turn into k-pop. K-pop represents something new to them.

Also one thing that I noticed from the interviews I took is that all the Koreans that have showed some interest in k-pop know exactly to which entertainment company an artist belongs to. Most of my interviewees were even familiar with Lee Soo Man from SM Entertainment, Yang Hyun Suk from YG Entertainment and Park Yin Young from JYP Entertainment. People I interviewed could tell me that Yang Hyun Suk was one of the members of *Seo Taiji & Boys* and that Park Yin Young used to be an idol. This shows that entertainment companies are much more involved in promoting their idols in the media than American music companies. It is mostly unknown among American fans which record companies are behind *Britney Spears*, *Madonna* or *Christina Aguilera*.

On the internet there has been a lot of debate whether the success of *Psy* is a blessing for the k-pop scene. From the interviews I held among the Korean people on Facebook I noticed that they saw *Psy's* success as something positive. A lot of the respondents seem to believe that *Psy* would open up the market for other k-pop artists. They believe that his success is deserved, because he worked hard for it. *Psy* writes and composes his own songs and he creates the choreography by himself. Many interviewees were proud of *Psy* and proud that he represents South Korea in the rest of the world. On the internet discussion board's people are less positive. On a discussion on Seoulbeats called 'Unpopular opinion: *Psy* is not doing k-pop any favors.' people discuss if *Psy's* success is something good for the k-pop scene. Most users seem to disagree. They see the success of *Psy* as a fad. A video that accidentally reached a lot of audiences. Most users seem to fear that *Psy's* video gives people a wrong image of k-pop.

By looking at the discussions on the internet about k-pop and the Korean wave it becomes clear how important internet has played in spreading Korean popular culture around the world. Also the internet gives people the power to go against the entertainment companies will. An example can be found in the success of *JYJ*. This is a boy band that came out of the highly successful boy band *TVXQ*. The three members sued SM Entertainment, because they wanted more money for their success. SM Entertainment lost the case. The three members left the company and formed a new group called *JYJ*. SM Entertainment was furious and told the biggest Korean broadcasting organization – KBS, MBC and SBS – that if they would let *JYJ* perform on any of their shows SM Entertainment would boycott their

TV shows. SM Entertainment thought that this would end the popularity of *JYJ*. However due to fans on the internet *JYJ* became a big success in Asia and now has the same success as before with *TVXQ*.

Region	Total Koreans	Percentage
Asia	2.670.723	47%
North America	2.264.063	40%
Europe	595.073	11%
Latin America	111.462	2%
Middle East	7.200	0%
Africa	5.280	0%
Total	5.653.809	100%

Table 11: The Korean diaspora by region in 2001. Adapted from “Korean diaspora in the making: its current status and impact on the Korean economy,” by I. Choi, *The Korean diaspora in the world economy*, 2003, Massachusetts: Peterson Institute, p. 18. Copyright 2003 by Peterson Institute

The internet has played an important role in the spread of Korean popular culture around the world. Another factor is the Korean diaspora. Especially the case of Brazil shows how important the Korean diaspora is in the spread of Korean popular culture. Brazil has the largest Korean diaspora in South America and Brazil is also the country where Korean popular culture is purchased the most in Latin America. In the United States 40% of the total Korean diaspora is concentrated. America is a potential market for Korean popular culture. YG Entertainment boss Yang Hyun Suk said that his strategy for the American music market was to utilize the Koreans who live there. He hopes that they will tell their friends about 2NE1 and Big Bang. In an interview about his strategy for the American market he said:

*The way that people in France or the US find out about Korean singers is not just over the Internet but through Koreans in those countries which I think plays a big part and I think this could end up forming a market. There are various nationalities in the US so if a market forms there, it'll be impossible for the US not to become affected. Due to all of this we will open the American market in the next year or two.” (xxxKrisKrossxxx, 2011a)*

Koreans in other countries tell their friends about k-pop and Korean dramas. Slowly Korean popular culture is spreading outside of the Korean diaspora. Some people that I interviewed told me that they sometimes show k-pop to their foreign friends. They give recommendations for new Korean dramas to their friends.

## Chapter 5 conclusion

Never before in the history of popular culture has a nation been able to draw so much attention worldwide to its music, drama and movies in such a short period. From the moment that South Korea was forced to open its markets by the IMF and America as a result of the Asian financial crisis, their popular culture has been gaining worldwide recognition. On every continent we can find k-pop fans and Korean dramas on television. This phenomenon got the interest of the media, politicians and scholars. In this paper I've been trying to answer the questions who are behind the success of the Korean wave and how do they think about the Korean wave?

From the 1980s the government has helped to built up the movie industry in South Korea. At first it was created to divert people's attention from politics. As South Korea was opening itself for Western and Japanese popular culture, the movie industry got a lot of competition. In 1998 the government decided that the movie industry would be their key industry of growth. The idea was that the exports of movies would bring in a lot of money. Korean movies got to be successful in the beginning of the 2000s. Here we can see that the government is behind this success. The ironic thing is that the movie industry nowadays is not contributing anymore to the Korean wave. The movie exports have been declining in recent years and the movie industry is considered to be in a crisis.

However the Korean wave nowadays is still going because of Korean dramas and k-pop. In these industries the government didn't intervene in order to create a Korean wave. Although the policies of the 1980s had an indirect effect on the drama and music industries. Because of the censorship on movies and dramas, Koreans grew up with love stories and historical dramas. Now 30 years later those type of dramas remain the most popular types of drama. It has become part of what Koreans expect to see on television. Also the government in the 1980s nationalized all the broadcasting systems. American and Japanese programs were not allowed on television. This meant that TV makers had to come up with their own content. Air time was filled with music shows. This really tied music and television together. Nowadays new music bands and groups will make their debut first on television before they are even heard on the radio. The visual aspect of k-pop was created here. When in the 1990s the music industry finally started to develop, television viewers were already used to see singers perform on television. With the focus on performance, looks and image k-pop was able to grasp the attention of the Korean audience.

For entertainment companies it is essential to export their music to other countries, because the Korean music market is too small to sustain itself. Japan is essential in the survival of k-pop. The first k-pop groups started in 1996 and immediately they were exported to China, Japan and Taiwan. They would not become highly successful, but each group made it easier for the next group to conquer that market. Nowadays many k-pop groups are exported to Japan with success.

SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment and JYP Entertainment have played an important role in creating the Korean wave. Those companies were able to make a hybrid form of music that appeals to many different cultures. The music is written and produced by people from around the world, the choreographers are mostly foreigners and within boy bands and girl bands there are members who were not born in South Korea. Most k-pop songs are sung in the Korean language and has some English lyrics. Nowadays songs are also being recorded in Japanese, Mandarin or English. By making it half Korean it is ready for consumption by non-Korean consumers. Yet it is expected by the Korean

fans that the boy bands and girl bands behave like Koreans. Actors and singers who have not conformed to the Korean lifestyle and culture are expected to go back to their countries. This creates a hybrid culture that makes Korean popular culture more accessible for other cultures that are culturally distant to Korea.

For the entertainment companies the motives for the Korean wave are purely economical. Lee Soo Man from SM Entertainment said in his speech at Stanford University:

*Europe and America in the past followed the idea of economy first, culture next. This became stronger and as they became world leading countries their cultures spread and became known to the rest of the world. However I believe that could change. What I set forth was the idea of culture first, economy next. (Stanfordbusiness, 2011)*

If a culture of a country gets to be known first, then this would benefit the economy. Culture is for the entertainment companies a commodity. Something that they can export and sell to the rest of the world.

Korean dramas can be successfully exported to other countries, because it is apolitical. Countries in the Middle East like Korean dramas, because it teaches people respect for authority. In Latin America people are attracted to the passionate love stories. Korean dramas rely heavily on love stories. These are very safe for other cultures to consume. Of all types of Korean popular culture, Korean dramas represent South Korea the most. Korean viewers feel that it depicts life in South Korea in a correct manner. This makes Korean dramas also a hybrid culture. It is both apolitical and empty and has at the same time a South Korean identity to it.

Nationalism has also a function in the Korean wave. The Korean media and the Korean government both played an active role in keeping hallyu alive. They are bringing out news reports about the activities of Korean actors and singers overseas. The Korean public believes that their popular culture is widespread and loved around the world. This has made them proud of their country. For them Korean idols and actors are more than entertainers. They represent South Korea in the world. Yang Hyun Suk, the owner of YG entertainment, said about Psy's rise to success:

*The fact that Psy is a Korean artist is more important than anything else, even more so than 'Gangnam Style's international popularity. Previously, Bae Yong Joon was a pioneer in leading K-drama's heyday in Japan and BoA opened the international market for K-pop. Psy has to be a pioneer just like them, in the United States. (Lee23j, 2012)*

Nationalism also plays a role for the government. For them hallyu is a way to generate more wealth and create a strong brand for South Korea. The government hopes that other nations will look more positive to South Korea. By strengthening its brand, South Korea can also get more recognition in the world.

The Korean wave was deliberately created by the Korean government. Korean entertainment companies used the popularity of Korean movies and dramas in other countries to successfully export k-pop. Recently Psy has gained a lot of success overseas. This only shows that the Korean wave is not slowing down.



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## Appendix 1 Interview questions

1. What do you think of the song Gangnam style from *Psy*? Do you think it is possible for *Psy* to be successful in America and other parts of the world for a long time?
2. What do you think of *Psy*'s recent success?
3. Are you involved in any k-pop fan clubs? How did you become involved in the fan club?
4. Which other k-pop groups do you think can be successful in America? Why do you like those groups?
5. Which do you like more and why? K-pop or American pop music?
6. What do you think is important in k-pop? (For example Idol groups, melody, singing, choreography, fashion, performance, appearance of the singers, other)
7. Do you feel that Korean music is too Western? Why or why not?
8. What is your favorite Korean drama's? Why do you like it? And do you believe that those drama's gives a good representation of Korean culture? (for example behavior of the main actors, clothing or the way people speak)
9. Do you watch foreign drama's? Which ones and why do you like it?
10. Which movies do you watch more? Korean movies or foreign movies? How many times do you watch Korean movies?
11. How does the success of Korean popular culture (movies, music and drama's) in Asia and other countries make you feel?

## Appendix 2 Korean respondents

A total of 46 Koreans were sent the questionnaire. These respondents are all people that I know from my time in Australia. All these people are between 20 and 25 years old. Except for respondents #11, #12 and #13. They are between 26 and 30 years old. The reason I selected this group is because according to research from KOCIS (2011b) 49% of people who enjoy hallyu are people who are in their twenties. My assumption was that the selected group would have the most affinity with Korean music, dramas and movies. Of this group 13 people answered the questionnaire. In order to get more interviewees, a message was posted on the Facebook page of 낮은 땅, 높은 꿈 - Aiming high in the low lands. This is the Facebook community for Korean students in the Netherlands. An additional 3 interviewees were found this way. A total of 16 people answered the questionnaire. The low response rate can be explained by the way that these questions were framed. One girl that I talked to in person explained to me that in South Korea people are not used to essay questions. Young learners in South Korea have to answer closed questions. In university it is the first time that they get open questions. Also some interviewees asked me why I used open questions. They expect that a researcher will provide the answers, so they can select the answer that best represents their feeling. One other thing worth mentioning is that Koreans are not used to having an opinion for themselves. In some answers the people told about how most Koreans think about something or how their friends think about something. Usually they don't give their own opinion. At the time when I made this questionnaire I was unaware of these cultural differences.

Respondent	Korean drama or American drama?	Most important thing in Korean drama?	Korean movie or American movie?	Most important thing in Korean movie?
1. Girl in Korea	-	-	-	-
2. Guy in Korea	Korean drama	Shows historical Korea	Korean movie	Violence, good quality
3. Girl in America	Korean drama	Represents Korean culture	American movie	-
4. Guy in Korea	Korean drama	Entertaining	Both	-
5. Guy in Australia	American drama	No opinion	Both	-
6. Girl in Korea	Both	Acting, scenario, music	-	-
7. Guy in Korea	Korean drama	Represents Korean culture	Korean movie	Depicts life in Korea
8. Girl in Korea	-	-	-	-
9. Girl in Korea	Both	Represents Korean culture	Korean movie	-
10. Guy in Korea	None	No opinion	Both	-
11. Girl in Korea	Korean drama	-	Korean movie	-
12. Girl in Australia	Both	Represents Korean culture	American movie	Low quality and small scale
13. Girl in Korea	American drama	No opinion	None	-
14. Girl in Holland	Both	Represents Korean culture	Both	Depicts life in Korea
15. Guy in Holland	Both	Acting	Both	-
16. Girl in Holland	Korean drama	Represents Korean culture	American movie	Violence, more realistic

Table 11: Interview respondents' opinion about Korean drama and Korean movies



Respondent	K-pop or American pop?	Most important thing in k-pop?	Korean music westernized?	Will Korean music be popular in America?
1. Girl in Korea	American pop	Looks, love songs	Yes, copy of American music	Yes, Psy brings more attention to Korean culture
2. Guy in Korea	American pop	Looks, voice, love songs,	Yes, influence of rap and dance	Yes, k-pop is new and interesting for the West
3. Girl in America	American pop	Don't know	Yes, influence of electronic music	No, no good music groups
4. Guy in Korea	American pop	Looks, voice	Yes, Japanese and Engels versions of k-pop songs	No opinion
5. Guy in Australia	American pop	Performance, fashion, image	No, there is Asian feeling and culture in the music	Yes, but only love songs
6. Girl in Korea	Both	Looks, melody, choreography	No, k-pop has its own color	Yes, Korea can rival with Western music
7. Guy in Korea	K-pop	Performance, choreography, love songs	-	Yes, Psy brings more attention to Korean culture
8. Girl in Korea	K-pop	Looks	Yes	Yes, k-pop resembles American pop
9. Girl in Korea	Both	Looks, performance, voice, fashion	Yes, copy of American music	Yes, but only love songs
10. Guy in Korea	Both	Melody	Yes, copy of American music	No opinion
11. Girl in Korea	K-pop	Understanding the lyrics	-	Yes, k-pop is new and interesting for the West
12. Girl in Australia	American pop	Voice, looks	Yes, it is Korean style western music	No, no good music groups
13. Girl in Korea	K-pop	Understanding the lyrics	Yes, it is Korean style western music	No, Psy is an exception
14. Girl in Holland	Both	Performance, voice	-	Yes, more interest in Asia globally
15. Guy in Holland	K-pop	Looks, melody, performance, voice, fashion, choreography	Yes, copy of American music	Yes, Korea can rival with Western music
16. Girl in Holland	K-pop	Melody	-	No, Psy is an exception

Table 12: Interview respondents' opinions about k-pop