

The Korean Wave as the Globalization of South Korean Culture

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to trace the growing attractiveness of the Korean Wave to understand the domestic culture of Korea that is becoming a global trend. The study is focused on the factors facilitating the formation of the phenomenon and proves that this trend has become one of the country's main export commodities and a "soft power", as the promotion of Korean culture is a matter of national importance and pride for Seoul. The Republic of Korea has been absorbing the elements of Western culture and transforming them into a new phenomenon, representing a kind of coexistence and crossbreeding of the Western lifestyle and the traditional Eastern values. The context for the study is the cultural homogenization of the West and the East. Is it a blessing or an evil? What are its challenges and achievements, advantages, and disadvantages? What are the reasons for South Korean cultural expansion? The method utilized in the research is narrative analysis to provide an overview of Korean pop culture that has been able to connect Western and Asian values into something unique.

Keywords: Cultural diplomacy, Globalization, Korean Wave, Westernization

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menelusuri tumbuhnya daya tarik Korean Wave untuk memahami budaya domestik Korea yang sedang menjadi tren global. Studi ini difokuskan pada faktor-faktor yang memfasilitasi pembentukan fenomena tersebut dan membuktikan bahwa tren ini telah menjadi salah satu komoditas ekspor utama negara dan "soft power", karena promosi budaya Korea adalah masalah kepentingan dan kebanggaan nasional bagi Seoul. Republik Korea telah menyerap unsur-unsur budaya Barat dan mengubahnya menjadi fenomena baru, mewakili semacam koeksistensi dan persilangan antara gaya hidup Barat dan nilai-nilai tradisional Timur. Konteks kajiannya adalah homogenisasi budaya Barat dan Timur. Apakah itu berkah atau kejahatan? Apa tantangan dan pencapaiannya, kelebihan, dan kekurangannya? Apa alasan ekspansi budaya Korea Selatan? Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah analisis naratif untuk memberikan gambaran budaya pop Korea yang mampu menghubungkan nilai-nilai Barat dan Asia menjadi sesuatu yang unik.

Kata kunci: Diplomasi budaya, globalisasi, Korean Wave, Westernisasi.

INTRODUCTION

Today everyone is familiar with the concept of Hallyu or K-wave. These are the two names for the same phenomenon, called the Korean Wave (Lee & Mornes, 2018), that is spreading to more and more countries, winning not only new fans, but continents, and the attractiveness of this trend in the world is increasingly growing (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008; Jin, 2016). This interest in culture brings millions of dollars to South Korea's national budget, making it a country of great economic possibilities and achievements. The Korean Wave reflects the domestic culture of Korea which is becoming global and is regarded as the expansion of Korean culture with the aim of conquering the global market (Howard, 2017). It had its origin in Asian countries at the end of the 20th century and later appeared in different

parts of the world including the countries of North and South America, some parts of Scandinavia, and different European states (Rastati, 2018).

Hallyu is a wave of passion and craze for South Korean culture which includes diverse hobbies and occupations, such as music, films, animation, dance, appearance, painting, fashion, cuisine, digital games, sport, technologies, etc. (Fathony, 2021). The term Hallyu originated in China with the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Korea and the People's Republic of China in 1992, when many Korean movies and TV shows began to be broadcast on Chinese television. The term "Korean Wave" appeared in 1999 to refer to the success of South Korean television in the country (Dator, 2019). It was the starting point of the diffusion of the phenomenon, involving the reform of South Korean television and the decision of the former President Kim Dae-jung to focus efforts and resources on developing the country's technology and pop culture (Kamon, 2022; Valieva, 2018). During the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the government of the country decided to invest not only in the development of industry, but also in the sphere of popular culture (Chung, 2019). This decision turned out to be wise and far-reaching.

J. Nye described this phenomenon as the rise of "Hallyu," or "the Korean Wave", that is the growing popularity of all things related to Korea (Y.Kim, 2019). Korean serials, dramas and K-pop music generated a lot of excitement and interest, and by the beginning of the 21st century had spread to China, Taiwan, Japan and other neighboring countries (Y. Kim, 2019). Nowadays, the Korean Wave has been adopted worldwide by teenagers in Southeast Asia, America, Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Russia. It is needless to say that K-pop in South Korea itself is a multi-billion-dollar industry and one of the country's main export commodities (Hae-joang, 2006). The promotion of Korean culture is a matter of national significance and pride for Seoul (Beloan et al., 2022).

There is no doubt that the Korean Wave is actively helping the development of tourism (Stepanova, 2020). The National Tourism Organization of Korea has launched the so-called K-Style Hub, which is an exhibition space where visitors can appreciate and experience many charms of Korea. K-Style Hub provides a variety of free cultural performances and projects throughout the year. It brings together touristic agencies and cultural organizations that contribute to the promotion of Hallyu around the world, and draws guests to popular tourist destinations in South Korea such as Namdaemun, Myeongdong and Insadong (Howard & Lekakul, 2018). The numerous attractions and places of interest, depicting real life in the bygone days, tell visitors a lot about Korea, its food, clothes, movies, giving them an opportunity to attend different classes and try hanbok for free, etc. (Huh & Wu, 2017). Thanks to the project, tourists can count on substantial discounts on accommodation and transfers, restaurants, and shopping. A special flight from Seoul to other cities in Korea called the K-Shuttle has even been organized for foreign tourists.

Unlike migrants and brides, fans and performers of Korean pop hits openly demonstrate their love for Korean culture idols (Akhni, 2022). K-pop fans all over the world closely follow their work and also perform K-pop hits themselves, imitating the singers and musicians in everything. In 2012, PSY's Gangnam Style became the first Korean hit to capture the world's music charts with one billion views on YouTube that year which was an absolute record and one of the legends for the platform (Shin, 2016). More than 4 billion people watched the video as of March 2022.



Figure 1. A symbolic monument to "Gangnam Style"

Figure 1 shows a symbolic monument to “Gangnam Style”, a K-pop song by South Korean rapper Psy released on July 15, 2012. The song went viral and its cultural impact cannot be underestimated. The song is responsible for increasing the world’s interest in Korea. It is a perfect example of the soft power of the Korean Wave. A lot of tourists come to Gangnam Square to be taken pictures of against the background of Psy figure.

It is common knowledge that the process of cultures crossing the borders of different countries has intensified significantly due to globalization. The Korean Wave has acquired the features of a regular creative industry development, which aims at promoting international cooperation with other countries. The intake of cultures goes hand in hand with the creation of platforms, as Otmazgin calls them (Otmazgin, 2008). Nowadays consumers in different parts of the globe, including East and Southeast Asian communities, have a chance to enjoy the same cultural products almost simultaneously thanks to the Internet and social media networks. The flow of the information has, in fact, become borderless and unlimited, and the cultural news is distributed in digital forms in no time. Streaming on social media platforms gives consumers a possibility to participate in online interaction with others. So, everybody is in the know of novel cultural exports. Indonesia is no exception and is also on the list of the countries profusely hosting popular creative culture ingredients from various corners of the world (Anwar & Anwar, 2014; Jeong & Lee, 2017; S. M.Kim & Park, 2020).

The popularity of Korean entertainment industry beyond the borders of the country is quite a new trend in the cultural world (Oh, 2022). Korean dramas, films, music, and songs have also attracted the attention of scholars and international media outlets. The advent of the Korean Wave and its impact have been widely examined by an increasing number of researchers who consider the worldwide emergence of Korean cultural products as a prominent case (Bok-Rae, 2015). A number of studies have been conducted in order to provide a more relevant and accurate research and explanation of the attraction of Korean entertainment business. Even some influential newspapers are doing their best to examine and justify the magic of the Korean Wave, but very often they remain biased because they are likely to either overemphasize some important success factors or miss significant features.

Though the Korean Wave phenomenon has caused a noticeable public reaction, it has not turned into a topic of scientific interest because of its newness and originality but it is gradually attracting the attention of Chinese and South Korean scholars who are followed by American and European researchers. In Belarus, the phenomenon of the Korean Wave is practically ignored and not studied; in Russia, however, there have been some positive moves recently.

Speaking about the global and local relationship in the sphere of culture, it should be mentioned that the response of the local cultures to global culture dissemination has caused the appearance of new crossbred forms of culture; one of them is glocalization as the result of global-local encounter and impact in different areas (Ritzer & Dean, 2015). This process occurs when global events and phenomena acquire domestic characteristics because of cultural hybridization and homogenization in various fields of life.

At the end of the 20th century American films began to be shown in the country (Shim, 2006). It turned out to be a key point for the transformation of Korean media. The quality of the local film industry was poor and the interest of the population in it was extremely low, therefore the foreign film industry exercised a strong influence on the way of life in Korea at that time. In the same way, Western music, on its arrival, occupied the central place in the pop music sector in South Korea (Shim, 2006). When the travel ban was lifted in 1988, the country gained more access to the outside world. This fact, in some way, influenced the development of local media that began to pursue the general directions and policy established in Hollywood. Satellite broadcasting brought about the music revolution in Asia and forced the Korean media to change. As a result, the mass culture acquired great perspectives, and the South Korean authorities decided to set the task of “learning from Hollywood” (Shim, 2006).

METHODS

The study mostly applies narrative analysis to determine the cultural hybridization of the West and the East and their homogenization, providing an overview of Korean pop culture which has been able to connect the Western and Asian values into something unique. The article defines its challenges and achievements, advantages, and disadvantages, and also the reasons for South Korean culture expansion. The narrative analysis is not predefined, mainly intuitive, and utilizes the themes coined by the researcher (Riessman, 1993). It refers to a subset of qualitative research with stories used to describe human action and public creativity (Clandinin & Connelly, 2001). The narrative in this context is related to a discourse form in events and uses narrative analytics procedures to produce explanatory stories (Polkinhorne, 1995). The study begins by raising a research question of how the Korean Wave globalizes Korean culture. For this purpose, the study uses the data and information collected from articles, journals, the relevant literature, the author's personal knowledge, experience and observation. Their analysis contributes to better understanding the phenomenon under discussion. Later, the author proceeds with the narrative on how the Korean Wave is conquering the world, on the Westernization of Korean culture, the Hybridization of Western and Eastern values, Cultural Soft Power, and, finally, the Korean Wave in the Former Soviet Republics as witnessed and experienced by the author himself.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conquering the World

The countries of East Asia are now going through a period of keen interest in Korean popular culture, characterized as the boom of Korean culture. The spread of the Korean Wave, that is blossoming at present, has been compared to the fever that hit all East and Southeast Asia (Fathony, 2021).

A lot of tourists from the neighbouring countries (Japan, Taiwan, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and others) come to South Korea for shopping. Crowds of foreign teenagers occupy Korean shops in search of fashionable youth items. In any fast food restaurant in Beijing or Bangkok, you can definitely see a Korean singer or a pop group on the TV screen. The Korean Wave has made Korean snacks such as Korean ramyeon (noodles) popular overseas - in Kazakhstan, Russia, Pakistan, China, Vietnam, India. The press usually describes the popularity of Korean popular products as one of the most significant cultural events. Asia is also entering the fashion world with the Korean Wave and is presented at international fashion shows. Today Korea has extended the phenomenon of the Korean Wave and developed new forms of popular culture that include not only K-pop, but also K-drama, K-fashion, K-medicine, K-beauty, K-technology; this list can be continued.



Figure 2. Gangnam, a fancy district in Seoul

Figure 2 shows Gangnam, a fancy district in Seoul with a huge concentration of wealth and a high standard of living. It has become recognizable all over the world thanks to the famous “Gangnam Style”

performed by South Korean singer and musician Psy. It is a place of attraction for thousands of tourists from different corners of the world that popularizes South Korean culture and way of life.

K-pop, the musical offshoot of Hallyu, couldn't help avoiding the Olympic Games, a grand international event in 2018. The most popular performers participated in its closing ceremony, the special guests of which were one of the greatest groups in the history of the industry, EXO, and CL, a solo singer, invited exactly due to their world fame and influence. Working as a volunteer at the Games, I discovered, that, thanks to their performance and worldwide recognition, more than 35 thousand tickets for the closing ceremony were sold out instantly, and the number of views in social networks increased dramatically.



Figure 3. A South Korean K-pop girl group

Figure 3 portrays a South Korean girl group to prove that K-pop is an integral ingredient of many cultural and sports events. The band performed at the Olympic Games in Sochi, 2014. The charm and magic of K-pop groups, their songs and music, manners and behaviour appeal to a great number of people who become their followers, copy their idols and, in this way, spread their cultural influence.

At different periods of its history, South Korea was under the influence and pressure of other countries. As a result, it was historically considered and evaluated as a developing country, a peripheral cultural state and a suburb. Therefore, the arrival of the Korean Wave was perceived as something extraordinary and surprising, unexpected and promising. A craze for the culture of the country, that has taken place, makes this fact even more fascinating.

The Korean Wave is marked by the popularity of Korean fashion in various spheres of life, not only in pop music, TV shows, films and other types of entertainment industry, but also in Korean cuisine, digital technologies, household items, etc. Many young people all over the world welcome and adopt some elements of Korean makeup and cosmetic surgery in the desire to look like Korean stars. Korean fashion fans are not only young people. They constitute representatives of other age categories, people of different professions, with different levels of education and of different social status. A lot of youngsters are eager to learn the Korean language, study in Korea, purchase Korean goods, Korean clothes and cosmetics, which also underlines the magic and charm of South Korea. In Surabaya, for instance, this trend also affects teens, their mode of life and their preferences (Amalia & Tranggono, 2022).

Westernization of Korean Culture

Being a leading state in all spheres, from economy to culture, the United States managed to consolidate its status and position during the existence of a unipolar world. Taking on the role of a leader and acting as a "big brother", the USA controls the activities of the most important institutions in the developing countries that are conductors of globalization. The "Americanization" of culture in South Korea manifested itself not only in assisting modernization, but also in the growing dominance of American music, Hollywood films, radio and television programs, media corporations aimed at

putting aside local cultural products, replacing the national heritage with American assets and the introduction of Western standards and values into the daily life of South Koreans which caused a kind of collision and, as a result, collective opposition and confrontation with the "big brother".

As a consequence, wishing to avoid the spread of the global domination of the US entertainment industry, certain regional unions began to appear in the attempt to create a "cultural curtain" to guard against the influx of American culture (Mikhailik, 2008). In this respect, the phenomenon of the Korean Wave can be considered as an example and an important start to build an Asian regional community, based on mutual understanding. In addition to constructing a cultural bloc, Asia also creates an economic union similar to Europe (Sang-Chin & Kibum, 2004).

The formation of a new culture was also influenced by the reliance of the South Korean presidents on Western cultural standards and traditional Confucian moral principles, common to the entire Asia-Pacific region. The cultural and psychological consequences of modernization and globalization are not reduced to a choice between the two extreme options: either total Westernization, or national cultural traditionalism and fundamentalism. In this case, the choice fell on the "golden mean" - the Korean Wave (S. Lee & Mornes, 2018).

Finding its way into a new environment, any element of culture inevitably changes the new environment, partially transforming itself as well, but retaining its own characteristics at the same time. Thus, the Republic of Korea absorbed the elements of Western and American culture, transformed them into a new phenomenon, a kind of symbiosis of the Western lifestyle and the traditional values of Eastern civilization. The crossbreeding and peaceful coexistence of these assets has had a tremendous impact on the popular culture and daily life in the Korean society.

Having achieved significant economic success, South Korea has begun to transfer and disseminate a new product to other countries, especially to those in a transitional period, those that undergo economic development and are also influenced by Confucianism. The new product or the phenomenon of the Korean Wave is spread by South Korea to the neighboring countries of the Asia-Pacific region, where it is actively absorbed due to a similar socio-cultural background and geographical proximity. Nevertheless, it should be born in mind that the Korean Wave is no longer an interasian process, it has become a cross-cultural flow.

Hybridization of Western and Traditional Eastern Values

South Korea has always been a stronghold of Orthodox Confucianism (Ro, 2010). The evolution of Confucian views started in the 1960s and 70s of the 20th century and the entire system of Confucian standards began to transform under the influence of Western ideology and moral norms, Western Protestant church and culture. This development contributed to the emergence of the Korean Wave cultural trend, in the result of which the system of public values has changed towards an even greater humanization in the course of time.

The Korean Wave is a combination and a balance of opposite ideas that include conventional Eastern and modern Western cultural values, among which four main strata can be distinguished. Each of them still has a noticeable effect on the everyday life of Koreans. Korean culture incorporates contemporary American and European performing traditions alongside with native Korean, Confucian-Chinese and Japanese cultural trends (Mikhailik, 2008).

In view of that, the inhabitants of Korea managed to discover such an equilibrium of traditions and innovations that best meets the requirements of the country's modern development. The hybridization and homogenization of the original and the borrowed turned out to be extremely successful and can be explained by those cultural elements and assets that are inherent in all the countries of the Far Eastern civilization. These include traditional law-abidingness, respect for elders and hierarchy, high work culture, and a tendency for discipline.

In other words, the Korean Wave in East Asia can be regarded as a synthesis of a global culture and South Korean traditional culture, where conventional Confucian moral principles play a huge role. It is a kind of local-regional response to global culture. However, global culture entering this region is

also, in some way, transformed under the influence of the local South Korean culture. This fact suggests that globalization is not just the diffusion of Western cultural norms and standards. Here it is appropriate to speak about the phenomenon that James Watson called glocalization (Watson & Hill, 2012), that is a situation when a global culture is introduced, accepted, and adopted, but with significant local modifications.

In one word, the modern culture of South Korea, including everyday culture and way of life, is synthetic in nature. It is a fusion of traditional Eastern and modern borrowed European features, which enabled to create a new kind of culture, called the Korean Wave, the assimilation of which is easier for the residents of Asian countries than the pure Western version of it.



Figure 4. Traditional cultural experience

Figure 4 displays the traditional cultural experience shared by the local inhabitants with foreign guests. Walking, enjoying the smells and taste of the national South Korean cuisine wins the hearts and stomachs of passers-by and illustrates the power of the Korean Wave.

South Korean Government's Policy of "Globalizing Korean Culture"

In his inaugural speech, President of the Republic of Korea Kim Dae-jung emphasized that "our energy should be directed towards the globalization of Korean culture as a whole" (Kim & Jin, 2016). This speech became largely directive, and it can be assumed that the Korean Wave is the implementation of the course towards "globalization of Korean culture" (Kim & Jin, 2016). Moreover, the phenomenon is supported by the country's authorities.

After the termination of the Cold War, globalization played a predominant role in world development (Watson, 2006). Starting in the economic sphere, it has embraced almost all spheres of public life (S. Lee, 2011). This process is happening due to the technological shifts and transformations in the field of media and telecommunications, transport and information technologies, gaming industries.

The popularity and impact of South Korean cultural products has led to an increased production of goods. This achievement testifies to the economic consequences of the trend. It is clear that the Korean Wave phenomenon is not limited to pop music and TV series, it also promotes the popularization of Korean cuisine, the development of the tourism sector in South Korea, the popularity of learning the Korean language, and the boost of attraction to the traditional Korean outfits.

Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power

Joseph Nye, Jr., an American Professor and political scientist, formed the concept of "soft power" at the beginning of the 1990s. He distinguishes power into two types: "hard power" and "soft power" (Y. Kim, 2022a; Nye, 2004a). He defines "hard power" as "the ability to get others to act in ways that contradict their initial preferences and strategies" (Nye, 2011), and "soft power" as "the ability to achieve goals through attraction and persuasion, rather than coercion or fee" (Nye, 2011). The "soft

power" includes the capability to "charm" your partners in the world of politics and advertise the attraction of your own cultural and political values and foreign policy (Nye, 2004a). The main ingredients of "soft power" are culture, political values and foreign policy (Pershina, 2017).

The Republic of Korea adopted the concept of "soft power" about twenty years ago and seriously recognised the significance of the national cultural identity and its popularization abroad in the face of growing globalization and international economic rivalry. The country has been successfully using cultural technologies and public diplomacy in promoting an attractive image of the country on the world arena. At present the country possesses an exceptional potential of "soft power" that is based on the dissemination of traditional and modern cultural values (Pershina, 2017; Valieva, 2018).

The Korean Wave or Hallyu today has turned into a South Korean instrument of soft power originated from culture (Kim, 2021), pop culture in particular, which is massively produced for public consumption not only by Koreans themselves, but by people all over the world (Valieva, 2018). It is being used to increase the potential based on the spread of conventional and contemporary cultural values and achieve the goal of generating economic benefits for South Korea from the export of cultural and commercial products (J. S. Nye, 2004c). Thanks to it, the country has an extremely beneficial history of economic development, modernization, and technological breakthroughs. Although the Korean Wave is perceived as entertainment, it has become an important tool that increases South Korea's image and makes it famous in almost every corner of the world (Kim, 2021).

It is a well-known fact that cultural diplomacy has always developed in the history of any country, and policy makers in many states have been interested in the promotion of culture. Kozymka (2014) underlines that culture is regarded as an important ingredient of conventional diplomacy and is normally related to the advancement and encouragement of a country's culture overseas to contribute to the cooperation and the promotion of national interest (Kozymka, 2014). So, cultural diplomacy exists, according to Cummings, to increase the "exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding" (Cummings, 2009).

In his understating of cultural policy, Nye (2004a) focuses on "soft power". According to Nye, the exchange of ideas is the key to comprehending the notion of soft power, perceived as "getting others to want the outcomes that you want" (Nye, 2004b). It is not simply making an influence on people. Nye states that "threats are useful to influence people to act in ways that align with one's desires. Soft power, rather, is attractive power, inducing an active change in people's preferences that, in turn, change their actions" (Nye, 2004a).

Taking it into consideration, Korean popular culture stresses the potential of the Korean Wave that can produce a powerful effect on cultural diplomacy as well as on various aspects of economy such as trade, tourism, education, and other national interests (Kim, 2019). That is why, Korea pays so much attention to soft power because it is one of the most powerful strategies of cultural policy. It is useful to remember that other countries, the U.S. government in particular, used the cinema as a resource to start winning the world.

The notion of "soft power" is being studied and disputed in the countries of the West and East, Russia as well. A great focus on culture by the Republic of Korea can be explained by the cultural peculiarities of the countries of the Far East. Traditional culture in Asian countries is a highly valued product due to its uniqueness and great difference from the culture of other countries. Therefore, culture is actively used by the state as one of the elements of "soft power" of South Korea, the main achievement of which has been the formation and dissemination of the Korean lifestyle, Korean fashion, Korean cuisine, etc. (Y. Kim, 2022a).



Figure 5. A group of young girls in front of the Emperor Palace in Seoul

Figure 5 shows a group of young girls in front of the Emperor Palace in Seoul, admission to which is fee paying but you can just wear the national Korean dress to gain access. Foreigners and locals borrow the national costume to enter the Palace for free. This is how soft power works to promote the national heritage of South Korea.

The reality is that South Korea is able to pursue its foreign policy without using force and confrontation and realize its national interests by building a positive image, having created an attractive brand which is the Korean Wave that acts as soft power. As a result, several Asian countries, China and Japan in particular, pay close attention to the Korean Wave and follow its development, because they are eager to use their domestic popular culture and digital technologies as a component and a tool of national soft power.

The Korean Wave in the Former Soviet Republics

Indeed, K-pop as a musical subculture has gained immense popularity not only at home, but throughout the world (Yong Jin, 2021). The Korean Wave has spread widely throughout the former Soviet republics, particularly those located in the Asian republics that have many cultural traditions similar to the countries of the Far Eastern region. Getting to know Korean culture, teenagers here begin their first acquaintance with it from the world of K-pop and become crazy about everything related to K-pop idol culture. Concerts and fan meetings with Korean singers and musicians have increased over the past few years. Korean subculture in the former Soviet republics is not limited to music and TV series only. Numerous Hallyu fans are creating a market for the import of Korean goods and food - clothing, cosmetics, and even Korean cuisine- the popularity of which is growing (C.-H. Lee, 2022). Almost all hypermarkets in big cities have stores of Korean-made goods: from ear sticks to outerwear.

Thanks to the Wide World Web, K-pop Wave reached Russia some time ago, and its influence has been growing even stronger recently due to the departure of Western companies from the country. Now Russian young people are making every effort to get K-pop stars to perform in Russia. It is hard to foresee the popularity level of K-pop culture in Russia in the future, but one thing is clear. The number of fans in Russia will only increase and the interest in South Korean culture and language will be shared by more followers.

In addition, the boom of the Korean Wave is followed by the recognition of the Korean cultural product, people, and nation. This trend can be observed as Russians and Belarusians easily identify and welcome such Korean brands as LG and Samsung, Korea-based smartphones with Kakao Talk and Line applications that also represent Hallyu. Frankly speaking, great interest in Korean culture in Russia was particularly noticed during the Universiade in Kazan in 2013, when the popular male group EXO came from Korea to be part of the great sports festival, and they were chased by crowds of fans from the airport and throughout the event. Though critics say that the K-pop craze is eroding Slav culture, which can be regarded as its negative influence, there are those who call it patriotism.

To tell the truth, the main target audience of idol groups in Russia is, undoubtedly, schoolchildren and students from 10 to 25 years old (about 85% of them are girls), who are following Korean celebrities. Their hearts are pure, they are willing to overcome language and cultural barriers, obstacles of race, discrimination and mentality, they are eager to live in peace and peaceful co-existence with people of the same interest from different countries, they are more passionate about personality than anything else.

What makes Korean performers so appealing? The answer is not difficult to discover. It lies in the right combination and balance of appearance and dignified behavior of Korean pop idols that attracts more and more youngsters every day. Their clothing style and demeanor are what fans try to copy in the first place. Russian fans use various makeup tricks to give their eyes a more Asian look, and find an exact replica of their favourite model's clothing item or accessory.

It cannot be denied, that the impact of Korean musical products, its popular culture and perceptions of Korea by Russian fans are impressive. Russian fans of K-pop regard it as a distinct segment of the country's image, its culture and society and copy certain prevailing characteristics of individuals belonging to this group of fans. The data show that "hybridity" and "globalism" are the traits most important to the success of K-pop both in Asia and Eastern Europe (Sung, 2013) as demonstrated in the case of Russia, where K-pop fans understand Korean music as a "gateway" not only into Korean culture but also into familiarity with the Korean language and society.

It is worth mentioning that Belarus has also been added to the list of the countries that welcome K-pop (Manovich, 2016). The new wave of modern Korean pop culture motivates young people to sing and dance, compete in K-pop contests and festivals, and learn the Korean language (Sakuma, 2014). Minskians, residents of the capital city, especially feel part of this trend. Being a fan and an ardent admirer of Korean culture, I can say that the traditional culture of Korea is usually presented at Korean culture festivals where Belarusian creative groups perform modern popular Korean songs and traditional Korean ritual dances with knives, fans and drums. Band members play Korean percussion instruments and demonstrate a traditional Korean hanbok costume, in which participants often have a photo session. The guests of festivals get acquainted with the Korean national type of martial art taekwondo. Representatives of local taekwondo clubs hold demonstration performances and master classes.

Besides, there are those who play traditional Korean games: "yut-nori" - a team strategy game, "tuho" - throwing arrows, "kinchulnonggi" - jumping rope and "gomuchul-nori" - jumping through a rubber band. During the festivals of Korean culture there is usually a zone with face painting for children, and information stands of South Korea for adults. National dishes are commonly served at Korean culture festivals: "kimchi" - spicy pickled cabbage, "japchae" - noodles with beef and vegetables, "kimpap" - rolls with various fillings and other dishes. The list of entertainments and treats is really surprising.

Dinerstein (2019) stated that there are 6 (six) Belarusian cultural identities, namely, "Old-style" officials, "More European-minded" officials, "Soviet-thinking" citizens, "Indifferent" citizens, Active Russian-speaking citizens, and Active Belarusian-speaking citizens (Dinerstein, 2021). Due to such a "diversity" of identities, the abovementioned cultural events are, unfortunately, quite rare and sporadic in the country, and they are usually held in the capital city once or twice a year as a tribute to facilitate the development of friendly ties and peaceful relations between the countries. Small towns are devoid of these entertainments as Belarusian mentality is far from assimilating Korean culture, especially among adults. It can be explained by the fact that Belarusian culture and mentality differ greatly, and this country does its best to popularize its own cultural heritage. Despite the fact that South Korean culture is loved by many adolescents and teenagers who are better educated, more knowledgeable and independent in the choice of their occupations, it has not yet reached the stage of assimilation. In fact, this affection is hardly noticeable in the social life of the country and this cultural wave is taking a small place in the hearts of Belarusians embracing a very tiny part of its audience.

While, on the other hand, Russian pop music has penetrated the country as a form of “soft power” and constitutes a significant segment of the Belarusian music market (Kalitko,2020).

CONCLUSION

Summing up the facts and observations, we conclude that the advancement of Korean contemporary culture, symbolized by the Korean Wave, has been unprecedented in the history of the country. The phenomenon testifies to the fact that the interaction of traditional Korean culture and modern Western culture can become the "dragon head" of the entire economy of South Korea. It enhances Korea's image as a prosperous country and displays Korea's present-day culture to the entire global community. The Korean Wave demonstrates to the Asian countries that South Korea is no longer a third world country or a periphery, but a progressive urbanized country with the features of a capitalist society, that influences the cultures of other states and gives them an example to follow in its footsteps.

In fact, the popularity of South Korean pop culture has changed the image of the countries of postcolonial Asia, adding more attractiveness to them. For a long time before the arrival of the Korean Wave, residents of Asian countries had access to only the cultural products of the Western world, but now they have the opportunity to get acquainted with Asian cultural heritage and be proud of it.

Finally, the Koreans managed to find such a harmony of traditions and innovations that best meets the requirements of the country's current development. The most important role in the successful unification and homogenization of the new and the old is played by those cultural elements that unite the states and are characteristic of all the countries of the Far Eastern civilization.

To cut a long story short, the K-wave as the outcome of the process of assimilation of Western cultures has brought about the birth of a new type of culture that is contemporary and fashionable, but manages at the same time to preserve traditional Asian values. This is what makes it worthwhile. However, this study suggests that a deeper exploration on how the Korean wave affects and assimilates with Indonesian pop culture is needed.

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