



Korean Wave and Its Global Impact

An Analysis From Chinese Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), referring to the immense popularity that Korean pop culture, including TV drama, K-pop etc., enjoys in East Asia, even worldwide. Its omnipresence in contemporary Chinese cultural context makes it a noneligible cultural force that deserves a closer study. This research will contribute to the understanding of the reason for the popularity of Korean culture by considering the social, economic condition of China, filling the blank of existing studies which mainly focus on the characteristics and aesthetic style of Korean culture itself.

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INTRODUCTION

The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, refers to immense popularity that Korean pop culture, including TV drama, K-pop, etc., enjoys in East Asia, even worldwide. In 1997, the introduction of "What is Love all about?" broadcasted on CCTV formally signaled the beginning of the Korean Wave in China. Distinct phases exist for the development of the Korean Wave (as well as anti-Hallyu) in China, while few studies explore in detail how the Korean Wave interplay with Chinese socio-economic conditions as well as China's diplomatic and cultural policies in different periods. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to historize the dissemination of the Korean Wave from a Chinese perspective, studying how major policies and diplomatic relationships changes serves as the cutting-off point for its spread, how exactly different factors influence the dissemination of Korean Wave in each phase, and how China reacts to its popularity.

METHODS

As an exploratory study, this research will adopt an inductive-qualitative approach. It will be a literature review paper using various Chinese primary sources, which include related newspapers, scholarly articles, and published national policies (announcements, notices, etc.). It will summarize and consolidate the related academic search from 1992 to the current day and have a detailed look at the mechanism of how each factor (economic, political, cultural) contributes to the dissemination of the Korean Wave in each period and how China reacts to its popularity.

Discussions

First Period 1997-2005

Politically, the establishment of the official Korean-China diplomatic relationship underpinned the foundation for the development of the Korean Wave. Meanwhile, cultural affinity

Discussions

and hybridity made Korean culture served as a mixture of nostalgia for traditional patriarchal society and novelty for scenes of a modernized market economy, attracting Chinese consumers from different perspectives. However, the essential driving forces are economic need and conditions, reflected in need to live up to the fundamental principles of WTO and the industrial-led economic structure of China--relative lack of capital for the cultural industry to introduce expensive IPs.

Second Period 2005-2012

China gradually shifted from labour-intensive, resource-intensive industries to capital-intensive industries. Meanwhile, despite the official diplomatic relationship are generally headed in a more cordial direction, the public conception of Korea began to diverge. The rise of the Korean Wave has shaped a positive perception of Korea among some but also stimulated discontent among nationalists. Culturally, the traditional cultural supremacism intensified the confrontation in public opinion. In response, Chinese government step towards further cooperation in cultural production, but also imposed stricter restriction on Korean cultural content.

Third Period 2012--now

Politics serves as the dominant factor in this period. A proliferation of official nationalistic narratives could be observed from the party outlet, which is again empowered the uprising of Internet unofficial nationalist disclosure. Together with the turbulent Korea-China relationship, led to an unprecedented change in the identity of Korean Wave fans where national identity is unconditionally prioritized, manifested in the phrase "no idol in front of my country". Economy is no longer an objective in itself but an important means for the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and becoming increasingly subject to the bilateral diplomatic relations. The continuing rise of cultural supremacy and the propagation of "culture confidence" again reinforced the political narrative.

Conclusion

In the nearly three decades of its development in China, the Korean Wave has sunk along with the country's political and economic environment, undergoing a progression from economic dominance to political dominance. From the early days of reform and opening up, when the open economy policy fuelled the rapid development of the Korean Wave in China, the second phase of transition was followed by a slowdown in China's economic growth and increased cultural control, which was once again dominated by political factors, particularly nationalist narratives. The spread of Korean culture in China has stimulated the Chinese government to launch a series of cultural outreach policies around the concept of cultural soft power. Still, it has not yet had a phenomenal impact.

In the foreseeable future, Korean cultural content will not only be subject to the stricter censorship of official organizations but also the examination by the increasingly sensitive public. In the time featured as New Cold War, it seems inevitable that only by avoiding politically sensitive content can Korean Wave continue its dissemination in China

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