

Soft Power of Korean Popular Culture in Japan:

K-Pop Avid Fandom in Tokyo

Author: Dinara Kozhakhmetova
Supervisor: Karl Gustafsson



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Foreword

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THE LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BBC: The British Broadcasting Corporation
CNN: Cable News Network
DBSK: Dong Bang Shin Ki
IT: Information Technology
JTA: Japan Tourism Agency
KAPP: Korean Association of Phonogram Producers
K-DRAMA: Korean drama
KOCCA: Korea Creative Content Agency
KOCIS: Korea Culture and Information Service
KOTRA: Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency
K-POP: Korean pop
MSCT: Ministry of Sports, Culture and Tourism
NHK: Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai (*Japan Broadcasting Corporation*)
R&D: Research and Development
SBS: Seoul Broadcasting System
UN: United Nations

Abstract

Korean Wave is a new phenomenon which signifies the spread of Korean popular culture in East Asia with Japan as a centre. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of Japanese youths who consumes K-Pop on the subject of their feelings towards South Korea and Korean society in the theoretical framework of soft power. With the findings of the one and a half month fieldwork in Tokyo, this study aims to answer the question if the consumption of Korean popular culture by Japanese youths affects their perception about South Korea and Korean society, the way it affects it and what are the main factors producing affection.

With the cautious remark of little scope of generalizing, the findings conclude that the constant consumption of Korean popular cultural products (mostly pop-music) indeed affects the perception of Japanese youths regarding South Korea in a positive way, urging the consumers to travel to South Korea, learn the language and build social networks with the Koreans. However, this spread of Korean popular culture has been generated with strong policies of the Korean government and it is worth noting that this strong involvement might lead to the Korean wave's demise.

Key Words: Korean Wave, soft power, Japanese youths, audio-visual production, anti-K-pop backlash.

1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction of Korean Wave

Pop culture has been always a continuous battlefield for Japan and Korea. The historical past expressed in 36 years (1910-45) Japanese colonial rule of Korea underpins the complications in cultural sphere exchange. After the end of Japanese rule in 1945, South Korea securitized their culture by putting a ban of Japanese popular culture import including Japanese-language theater performances, television and radio broadcasts, publications and pop music. It was caused by the Korean people's feelings towards Japanese language education which was forced to them during the Japanese occupation. This ban was completely lifted only in 1998 with the signing of the Joint Declaration of the New 21st Century Korea-Japan Partnership (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008, 3).

At the same time in the late 1990s the phenomenon of Korean wave started to expand. The term "Korean wave" ("Hallyu") was coined by Chinese media in the mid 1999 after the rapid increase in popularity of Korean television dramas, movies, pop-songs and their associated celebrities in Asia. Shim stated with the reference to Visser (2002) that all the things which were Korean- from food to make-up style- have become on extreme demand in Asia, which was previously dominated by Japan and the US (Shim, 2011).

The Wave started in June 1997 with the Chinese state run channel CCTV airing the Korean drama *What is Love*. Due to its freewheeling attitudes and strong Confucian values proximate to the audience the drama became a massive hit in China (Shim, 2008).

After its popular reception in the pan-Chinese sphere and Vietnam, the Wave expanded its grasp to Japan which became one of its core markets. In April 2003 NHK ran the Korean drama *Winter Sonata*. This drama turned into a cultural phenomenon with the male lead Bae Young Jun becoming a national star. It has been aired four times on the popular demand and brought 3,500 million yen (\$ 3.5 million) profit to NHK from *Winter Sonata* related products (Mori, 2008). At some point over

50 journalists in Korea covered only Bae. The former prime-minister Junichiro Koizumi said during the August 2004 elections for the upper house of Parliament “I’ll make great efforts so that I will be as popular as Yon-sama and be called Jun-sama.” (The Korean Wave, 2011, 24)

However the phenomenon of “Winter Sonata” success was not in its huge popularity or high economic success but in a “Yon-sama syndrome” which instigated highly-educated middle-class women to travel to Korea and change their opinion of Korean people. According to the guide book on Hallyu published by KOCIS, the Japanese fans of drama started to view Korean people as polite, generous and sophisticated (ibid). This was the beginning of positioning Korean Wave not only as a profitably export-oriented strategy but as a political tool which might be used to shape the opinion about Korea around the world.

With the new era of Korean wave representing the non-debatable leadership of K-pop idols groups (Girls Generation, DBSK, Shinee, Kara, 2pm, F(x) etc) the local and foreign media (BBC, the Economist, ChosunIlbo, Asahi Shinbun) started to produce articles titling Korean wave as soft power in their headlines. The ground for using soft power term has been justified by both fans reactions and K-pop celebrities’ involvement in governmental events. It has been reported that K-pop has a huge leverage in Japan and other countries prompting many fans to emulate K-pop stars’ dressing styles, travelling to Korea and learning Korean language. Korean wave celebrities such as Ji Jin-Hee, Lee Jun-Ki, Bae Young Jun were appointed as Honorary Ambassadors for Korean Tourism and participate at EXPO exhibitions, idol bands like CN Blue and F.T.Island promoted national airlines, and actresses like Kim Hyun-Joo and BoA were invited to meet with the leaders of Vietnam and Japan. In 2011, Japanese Prime Minister Noda said in an interview with a South Korean Daily JoongAnd Ilbo that his wife loves good-looking Korean actors (Kyodo, Oct. 20, 2011).

However, the inventor of the soft power term, Joseph Nye, warned to be very conscious about applying soft power concept to the popular culture since attraction itself is not a soft power yet. Despite the fact that an attraction is an important medium of soft power spread, it is too early to speak of it unless the state achieved

what it wants in the receiving end (Nye, 2004). Simply speaking is it possible to call the fact that Noda's wife liked Korean actors to be the result of the Korean soft power? Following this and other vivid headlines praising the rise of Korean pop culture it is timely and relevant to clearly determine and distinguish whether Korean pop is a new form of soft power for South Korea or it just a popular fad which creates temporal attraction.

Another important issue to be mentioned is the positioning of anti-K-pop sentiments in the Japanese society (Fuji TV protests, "Hate Korean Wave" manga etc). Do these representations of mass discontent limit the soft power presence if it exists? Or on the contrary do they reinforce the power of K-pop soft power as it was mentioned by Lee (2008) who was arguing that anti-K-pop wave is just another proof of Korean pop strength?

Therefore it is important to look into the phenomenon of Korean wave from the perspective of it being a real soft power representation by applying the analytical framework and see whether it influences the perception of its consumers.

1.2. Research Question and Aim of the Study

The main aim of this paper is to find out, whether it is possible to call Korean pop music spread in Japan a soft power with the main idea of creating a favorable image of Korea and Korean society.

The research question of the paper is:

Does the consumption of Korean popular culture by Japanese youths affect the perception of Japanese consumers of Korea and Korean society in the framework of soft power?

There are 3 main sub-questions in this question:

1. Does the state participate in the creation of Korean wave and associate any goals with its spread?
2. Do young Japanese consumers acquire a positive image of Korea/Korean society through the consumption of K-pop?
3. What do fans and non-fans think about anti-K-pop sentiments?

By applying the theoretical framework of soft power, this paper tries to find out whether K-Pop is indeed a powerful tool which may influence the cognitive perception of its Japanese recipients and disseminate new images of Korea and Korean society upon them.

1.3 Previous Studies in K-POP Wave in Japan

Due to the new and highly successful nature of the Hallyu phenomenon, the considerable amount of research has been conducted on the issue of Hallyu rise and influence in Japan.

The surprising nature of the Korean wave's success in Japan was mentioned by several scholars (Joo (2011), Shim (2008)) who were talking about the legacy of historical relationships between the countries when Japan occupied Korea from 1910 to 1945 and Korea banned the Japanese popular culture imports in 1998. Japan in its turn did not impose any similar restrictions, since it regarded Korea as inferior both economically and rationally. Thus it was very surprising to find such a success of Korean popular culture in Japan when Japan alone accounted for 43,8% of the total export revenue of Korean films in 2002 (Korean Films Commission,15 in Joo,2011).

However Ryoo (2008) does not find the success to be surprising in this sense and regards the historical past as an advantage for Korean pop industry. Ryoo argues that despite Japan started the cultural circulation of popular culture in East Asia, its' colonial past hindered its' deep penetration in Asian market as its colonial baggage constructed any such attempt as threatening. Ryoo (2008, 146) references Park (2006) who said that this unique historical legacy left space for South Korea and other countries to actually take over the market and fill in the niche. Park (2006) continues this discussion by referring to the better acceptance and popularity of Korean dramas in China due to their neutral stand without political or historical burdens in comparison with Japanese dramas.

There are three groups of scholars who divided their opinion whether a Korean wave is a strong political tool which shapes people minds and can be called soft power.

The first group of scholars (Ko, 2009; Shim,2008; Cho,2011) argues that the Korean wave boosted Korea's national image and contributed to the nation's soft power. Their claim is supported by such evidence as the fact that Korean Wave celebrities have started to serve at diplomatic missions and opinion polls and interviews show this positive trend among population. Korean singer Boa performed at the APEC summit in 2005 and Korean actor Choi Ji-Woo met Japanese Prime-Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2005 marking the "Korea-Japan Friendship Year" (Ko, 2009). The advocates of this view strongly emphasized the words of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon who said that the Korean wave had brought the country "respect" and its soft power was now matching its strong economic pace (Joo, 2011).

Ko (2009) comes up with a survey of Korea Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) in 2004 which shows that favorable impressions of Korea grew by 78.9 per cent because of the Korean Wave. He also cites a Japanese informant in his 50s who admitted that before the image of Korea was associated with "anti-Japanese sentiments", "poverty" and "cheap and coarse products" but the Wave brought the image of "beautiful men and women", "attractive scenery" and "fantastic locations" which appear in the dramas.

Cho (2011) argues that the Korean popular culture wave is intertwined with East Asian sensibilities which help to reappraise those who have been othered for a long time. He states that citizens of different countries who used be indifferent to each other now consume the same cultural content and it helps them to get to know each other or speaking with Anderson's words "imagine each others' communities" (Anderson (1983) in Cho (2011)).

Despite this evidence supported by empirical findings, the second group of researchers (Hayashi & Lee,2007; Park,2006) doubts the significance of the Korean wave in influencing the cognitive perception of the audience positively and does not consider it to be an influential soft power tool. Hayashi & Lee (2007) discussed the

limited soft power application in the case of *Winter Sonata*'s fandom. They (ibid, 213) cite statistics of Japan's Cabinet Office on attitudes of Japanese respondents towards various foreign countries which show that there was a gradual improvement in the relationships between Japan and South Korea in 1990 but there was an obvious short-term decline in 2005. They argue that the drama boom itself has not promoted itself as a soft power and the improvements in the perceptions of Korea among female fans have been negated by male anti-Korean wave sentiments. Park (2006) continues to doubt the ambiguous nature of K-pop soft power on the results of her interviews with K-pop fans. She states that despite the positive demonstrations of this phenomenon such as better intercultural understanding (people get interested in Korea) and developed personal connections (people want to make friends with Koreans) people tend to develop stereotypical misunderstanding towards Korea. Some informants thought that Korean men beat wives (as it was depicted in certain dramas) and Korean women have a very low social status. Park warns of the risk of misunderstanding when people look at another country through the prism of popular culture without any personal knowledge. This situation is quite similar to the Japanese case when Japanese culture was driving a fan craze in Asia one Japanese screenwriter said in a newspaper interview that he wanted to write a "a comedy dealing with the gap between Japanese reality and the image other Asian people have of affluent Japan" (Iwabuchi,2002,81).

The third group of scholars (Ryoo, 2008; Iwabuchi, 2008) argues that the Korean wave is not necessarily a real soft power representation as it does not change any real state of affairs so far but has a lot of potential to be, since it contributes to an overall image improvement. Besides historical differences separating Japan and Korea Ryoo mentions (2008) current disputes over the islands Dokdo/Takeshima. He makes it clear that it might be too early to speak of popular culture opportunities to influence these relationships on the political level but there might be a hope that "Korean wave has not only permeated popular culture but is also a measure of positive lifestyle for many Asian people" (Ryoo, 144).

Iwabuchi (2008) gives a focus on K-pop soft power through the attitude of Japanese people to Zainichi (Japanese people of Korean descent), descendants of Japanese colonial legacy and marginalized group of people who often face discrimination. He argues that despite the positive shift towards perception of South

Korea and Zainichi, it does not change the status quo for people of Zainichi descent since they are still separated, though currently with a positive attitude towards them.

Continuing the discussion of K-dramas and K-pop, it is necessary to mention that there is a lot of research done about the reception of Korean dramas (particularly “Winter Sonata”) by the Japanese audience (Mori (2004), Hirata (2004), Lee (2008) in Huat and Iwabuchi (2008), Joo (2011)) but there is a lack of research about the perception of K-pop music in Japan. The opposite situation is in Thailand where many researchers looked at the phenomenon of K-pop wave from the perspective of K-pop music fans consumption and perception (Siriyuvasak and Shin (2007); Thantawanit and Larpruengreang (2009)).

1.4 Significance of the research question

Talking about the Korean wave in Japan it is very relevant to pay attention to young people who listen to K-pop music since it is an acknowledged form of modern and new Korean Wave nowadays. It is referred as Neo-Korean Wave and deserves special attention. It is a great phenomenon for the research not only due to its freshness but also because it encompasses a much broader fan base than the previous Wave (KoreaToday, 2010) and its spread owes a lot to the new technologies’ usage such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube (Jung, 2011). Getting the attitude towards Korea is a necessary tool for evaluating the real presence of South Korea’s soft power in Japan.

This research will cover the attitude and perception of fans of Korean pop-music towards South Korea and will test the argument if the K-pop’s music spread may be called a soft power. On the basis of its results the paper will position the conclusion within one of the three groups mentioned above.

It is important to note that in contrast with interviews made before by Iwabuchi (2008) or Mori (2004), my focus is only on young people of student age who represent a new generation of K-pop wave consumers. As Katsumata (2011, 136) states, it is the future generation consisting of students and youngsters that drives the community building in the cultural area. They started to exchange feelings and

emotions among each other cutting the boundaries. Moreover this young generation is “the one that will in the future lead the creation of an East Asian Community in various fields, including security, the economy, the environment, education and culture”. This means that the impact of popular culture in East Asia will be long-lasting and incremental.

1.5 Disposition

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part introduces the theoretical framework of the soft power concept and the model which structures the analysis of the paper. The second part uncovers the government role and objectives associated with the Korean wave’s spread. It starts with a historical overview and finishes with clear goals stated by the Korean state. The third part deals with an overview of K-pop presence in Japan, anti-K-pop wave sentiments and the case of Akiss which introduces the interview findings. These findings summed up with secondary interviews and public statistics will answer whether the Korean popular culture is a real soft power which influences the minds of young people through dissemination of attractive images.

1.6 Methodological Framework

1.6.1. Design of study

The paper adopted a qualitative research design with a micro-ethnographic case study as a strategy for analysis. The advantage of a qualitative approach is that it aims to establish a coherent account of a culture from view of those being researched (Tesch (1999) in Bryman & Burgess (1994), 6).

Ethnography as a research method comprises both participant observations and unstructured/ semi-structured interviews as they provide precious insights and the capacity how the participants view the world which is crucial for this research (Bryman, 2008, 438).

Ethnographies usually demand long periods of time to be spent in the “field” and put emphasis on detailed and observational information (Yin, 2003). Since my ethnographic project took place only for six weeks the ethnographic study was presented by microethnography with one case selected as the most appropriated method. Microethnography implies focusing on one particular aspect of the topic which is in this case is the reception of K-Pop performances by the fans of AKiss (6 weeks).

Amidst four classifications of the researcher’s role in ethnographic study I chose the overt role of participant-as-observer. This role is the same as a full participant one but members of the setting are aware of the researcher’s real purpose of being among them. Moreover it implies the engagement in regular activities and interaction with people (Bryman 2008, 410). Despite the risk of overidentification, this role helped me as a researcher to get close to people. Events I witnessed and took part in include visiting two K-pop band concerts, observing a fan letter-writing meeting and taking part in a handshake event. I tried to keep the conversation with the fans during the concert and afterwards by discussing the concert details and about their favorite member choice.

A case study usage is employed here to a limited degree implying not the separate research strategy but the fact that the interviews and observations were derived from one case (*AKiss*). Despite the presence of interview sources from other settings (*non-AKiss* fans), this case is the main source of research material. The case deals with the fandom of *AKiss* and their concert attendance.

The Korean pop band (*AKiss*) performing in Tokyo in N-theater was discovered through an online article by JapanTimes. This band was suitable for the research since all the members are from South Korea and the producer of the band is a famous South Korean label. This band has been registered in the official K-pop entertainment website allkpop.com and mentioned by both local and Japanese media (MNet, Fuji.TV etc).

1.6.2. Sampling

The research applied purposive sampling to choose the samples. According to Tschireletso (2002, 2) who cites Merriam (1998, 61)) “purposive sampling emphasizes on a criterion based selection of information rich cases from which a researcher can discover, understand and gain more insight on issues crucial for the study”. Purposive sampling included both snowball sampling and theoretical sampling.

The selection of interviewee population was homogeneous due to the specificity of the research question. Criteria for selecting the subjects were as follows: Japanese, female between 16-28 years old who like K-pop music. The Japanese fans of Korean pop-music were the direct source to understanding the social phenomenon of K-pop influence on Japanese youth. The choice of females is explained by the fact that the majority of K-pop fans are females and during the fieldwork there was no male attending the K-pop concert. As a result ten interviews which met the sample criteria were taken. A small sample size was chosen because of the expected difficulty with the time constraint.

Tokyo was chosen as a site for the research since it is one of the most successful arenas of Korean pop music in Japan (Kwon, 2012) and the band performs only in Tokyo.

With the generous help of N-administrator an acquaintance with one of the members of AKiss fan club was made and then through her with the usage of snowball sampling nine other members of the fan club have been interviewed. All the informants were females, between 16-25 years old. All of them were K-pop music fans and some of them liked Korean dramas as well. The data from the interviews generated the majority of evidence for this paper.

With the usage of theoretical sampling which implies sampling of both people and places and events relevant to the concept (Strauss and Corbin 1998: 201 in Bryman, 415, 2008), the Japanese producer of *AKiss* has been interviewed and the researcher attended the concert of the band twice. The interview with a producer was very fruitful and informative due to his generous help and understanding of the subject.

As a sample for the comparison six other young females between 20-25 years old were randomly chosen to answer the same set of questions as the *AKiss* fans (except those which were directly related to *AKiss* activities). Prior to the interview session it was confirmed that these informants were not fans of K-pop.

1.6.3. Data Collection

One and a half months have been spent in Tokyo to collect the material. The data for analysis includes mostly from observations, interviews, and texts. Primary data used in the thesis comprises participation in fan-activities by visiting the concert two times, ten semi-structured interviews with the fans, six semi-structured interviews with non-fans, one structured interview with a producer of the band. Secondary data includes books, academic articles, news reports by journalists, online website information. Moreover it includes interviews from other reporters and academics as a secondary source.

Visiting the concerts of *AKiss* was a very interesting event in terms of getting to know live fans' reactions and the interaction between the audience and the idols. Bryman (1998, 417) argues that in order to understand the culture, it is important to interact with fans not only during the event itself but also in a variety of other contexts. Two meetings with a fan of *AKiss* were arranged and furthermore the opportunity arose to be present at a letter-writing session to the *AKiss* before the concert. It generated a lot of material for the analysis.

1.6.4. Data Analysis

In contrast to quantitative research which implies positivism, qualitative research from the inside represents interpretivism approach (Crotty, 1998; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 in Ospina, 2004). This research is informed by epistemological presupposition with interpretivist perspective.

Interpretivism as an epistemology assumes that reality is subjective, constructed and changing. This raises the self-awareness of the researcher's role in "world making" by creating sense out of the actors, settings and events being studied during the fieldwork (Ybema et al, 2009). This awareness, or reflexivity, shapes the knowledge claims with respect to researcher's stands or his/her positionality. Such prism of analysis enhances participation of a researcher and determines research knowledge to be "situational, co-constructed through interactions with others in social settings, and reflective of researcher's and others' positionality with respect to subjects and settings" (ibid).

As a part of this analysis strategy I looked at the interview findings from the standpoint of K-pop being a soft power resource which might be turned into soft power strategy. The questions were constructed in a way to see whether people's opinion and attitudes towards Korea got changed after their infatuation with K-pop music started. The theoretical framework of soft-power has been applied with two clear steps including the government role and goals and audience reaction and perceptions. On the basis of the interview and research findings fitting in the soft power conversion scheme, a conclusion has been drawn.

1.6.5. Limitations

Despite the success of getting rich data from the field, there are few aspects in the paper which are to be taken with care. First is the limit of generalization. Due to the little scope of the research sample, its nature (purposive sampling) and microethnography design, the generalization has to be quite specific and can not encompass too large entities like population (Bryman, 2008, 415). The second problem was non-response. Initially a number of other interviews with a music producer and other fans were planned, but they were eventually cancelled due to the circumstances. The third problem was the lack of Japanese language knowledge which made it necessary for the interviews to rely on translation by a third party. Despite the trust in the professionalism and accuracy of the research interpreters, some meaning might have been lost in the process of translation. As a consequence, full notes technique was used during the interview as it would have been challenging to transcribe the interview from digital recorder.

1.6.6. Ethical considerations

All the interviews were conducted only after getting the permission of participants and all interviewees and people assisting with the research were aware of the status as a research-student. Due to certain sensitivity of the topic in the light of anti-Korean wave events and attitudes, all names of informants and interviewees were kept confidential and the name of the band under case study was changed to a fictional one. The results were presented in an accurate way without taking interview parts out of the context.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Soft Power

The main author of the soft power concept, Joseph Nye, first mentioned it in 1990 in his book “*Bound to Lead*” explaining about the decline of US power. Soft power refers to the ability to influence the behavior of others to get the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion (Nye, 2004, 2). This attraction which Nye equates with seduction is not a weakness and often even more effective than coercion in attempting actors to act in your favor.

Nye argues that besides/ instead the coercive power of military intervention and economic sanctions, “a country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries- admiring its values, emulating its example, aspiring to its level of prosperity and openness- want to follow it (Nye, 2004, 4)”. There is a clear distinction between soft and hard power in Nye’s presentation. Hard power is associated with command power which employs coercion and inducement, while soft power goes with co-optive power which rests on attractiveness of one’s culture. However the relationship between these concepts is imperfect since both may intertwine (soft power may cause fear and hard power may invoke admiration).

It is important to avoid the mistake of equating soft power behavior with the cultural resources. Cultural attractiveness is not a soft power by itself unless it brings the outcomes depending on the policy objectives and context.

The government may significantly benefit from proper employment of soft power resources, however the government does not possess the whole control of them as in the case with hard power. Culture and values are deeply embedded in the society itself. Yet this limited control does not diminish the importance of the government in creating, directing and using soft power as a political tool. Moreover, Nye urges against excessive usage of soft power which may lead to repulsion rather than attraction. It is especially true for East Asia with its complicated historical-geographical context like past colonial rule of Japan. Credibility is the basis of any soft power. When government is viewed as manipulative and the information turns

into propaganda, the premise of soft power is demolished (Nye, 2008 in Yasushi and McConnell, 2008).

Nye was advocating the use of opinion polls and surveys as a measuring tool for soft power. However it has its limitations since it is challenging to measure soft power's effect and influence due to the changing nature of opinion polls. Opinions can change and are difficult to be predicted in a long term perspective. However in response to the criticism of Jim Hoagland (2005) about the concept being too elastic to use, Nye reacts with an answer that sources of soft power are still possible to quantify. Cultural, communication and diplomatic resources are possible to be measured and public opinion polls still manage to reflect the preferences over time (Nye, 2006).

Even though the soft power discourse got recognition for its new understanding of hidden aspects of international relations and became widely spread especially in the media sphere, it attracted the fair amount of criticism. Bohas (2006) rigorously criticizes the government-centered orientation of the soft power concept with diminishing role of non-state actors and symbols. Womack (2005) talks about analytical fuzziness of the concept which questions its autonomy from hard power by posing a question if there is any minor power with a "world class attractiveness".

This critique of rigid division of soft and hard power is echoed by others (Lee (2008), Noya in Yasushi and McConell(2008)) who speak about the dualistic framework of soft power and confusion in determining the nature of power. Even though Nye admits that in some cases, the soft power employs hard power resources and vice versa, it is still challenging to define the type of power in such cases.

2.2 Soft Power and Popular Culture

Popular culture is one of the major sources of creating attraction which leads to the co-optive power influence-ability to shape what others want, the main paradigm of soft power framework (Nye,2004,7). The recognition of soft power discourse produced a major shift in official thinking of popular culture. Before it was mainly associated in the domestic terms but now it started to be seen also as a political tool

with the potential for political persuasion and economic profit. Soft power positioned popular culture as a promoter of national cultural product export and the political vehicle. Culture got associated with the idea of amassing national wealth and promoting the image of a country (Lee, 2012). Otmazgin and Ben-Yari (2012, 4) state that “culture thus becomes an object of policy that is seen as manageable (like other national assets) through technological and political channels in the service of national economic and political goals although it may, at the same time, be seen as difficult to control.” Many scholars and practitioners came to the idea of using soft power as central tool for foreign policy by selling its attractive culture abroad (Otmazgin (2007), Lee (2009), McConell (2008)).

The special characteristic of the popular culture is the messages and narratives carried by popular culture products which shape people’s ideas, thoughts and identities (Story, 1989, 128 in Otmazgin and Ben-Yari, 4). However the major limitation is again the same as with soft power concept itself- difficulty to measure the effect. The effectiveness of popular culture depends heavily on the audience reception. While production and distribution of cultural products are possible to measure with statistical data and market figures, the logic of consumption is an elastic and challenging concept. The consumption of popular culture may develop the favorable attitudes and interest to an imported culture but it does not necessarily affirm the presence of soft power. Again the attractiveness itself is a soft power resource and not a soft power unless there is a political agenda which stirs this attractiveness and turns it into a goal. As Geun Lee (2009, 89a) argues” the applicants are supposed to wish to change the recipients’ preferences, calculations and interpretative frameworks, or emotions so that the recipients change their behaviors in a direction that the applicants want them to change”. However the intentions of the state actors sometimes might be out of sync with the cultural production and consumption since the realm of popular culture is still independent from politics and can not be fully controlled by the state.

Press-Barnathon (2012) points to another challenge in the context of using soft power as a foreign policy tool. She (Press-Barnathon, 2012, 36) questions if the citizens make the link between an attractive imported TV show and politics and if this attraction “translates into a more positive/accommodative approach towards the other

states' policies and political behavior.” This is a challenging question which might imply different answers. For example Iwabuchi (2002) interviewed Taiwanese fans of Japanese dramas and found out that they tended to distinguish their positive attitude towards favorite actors and the negative view towards Japan in a historical context. However, the Japanese case is quite specific and its unique historical legacy might have been too strong to be wiped away by popular dramas. Park (2006) argues that its historical legacy left a room for South Korean popular culture and its products to find a niche in the Chinese and other markets. As South Korea is free from negative past memories their transnational penetration into cultural markets has not been regarded as threatening.

2.3.Soft power framework

This research adopts the theoretical framework of an analysis developed by Lee who elaborated and improved the concept introduced by Nye. His theory was chosen as the most appropriate one since Lee is one of the most renowned experts in the field of Korean soft power and he proposed this scheme for evaluating the soft power of Korean wave by deviating from Nye's theory and adopting it for the Korean case. In addition to that, his concept was slightly modified and added the features mentioned by Press-Barnathan in order to emphasize the role of the state.

Lee (2009) argues that despite revealing new useful aspects in international relations Nye's introduction of soft is mostly descriptive and requires the theoretical framework. This lack of theoretical development leads to difficulty of finding soft power discourses which go beyond mere emphasis on soft power resources such as public diplomacy or cultural exchanges. It makes “the whole concept nothing more than revival of old wisdoms without new theoretical and policy insights (Lee, 2009, 207b).”

Lee (2009a) introduces this theoretical framework in order to understand the relations between soft power resources, soft power and policy goals associated with soft power. The main base of his theory is predetermined by Nye's main distinction between soft power resources and soft power. Being soft does not mean soft power. Therefore, soft power resources like culture, values, ideology, know-hows etc. have to be translated into soft power and Lee (2009a) proposes the framework of its

conversion. It includes three stages: (1) application of soft resources; (2) cognitive processes of the recipients; (3) soft power production (see Figure 1).

Lee criticizes Nye's definition of soft power exercise on the basis of the nature of power exerted. Even though Nye mentions the resource distinction he admits that in some cases hard resources like military can produce fascination and attraction while soft resources may produce hard power (Nye, 2004). Lee does not welcome these exceptional cases due to the ambiguity of type of power (hard/soft) and suggests strict power distinction sources. He states that if "hard resources" like coercion and fear are employed it is hard power and if "soft resources" are in use the outcome is soft power. It means that soft power/ hard power can be both co-optive and coercive. The difference is only in the nature of resources employed.

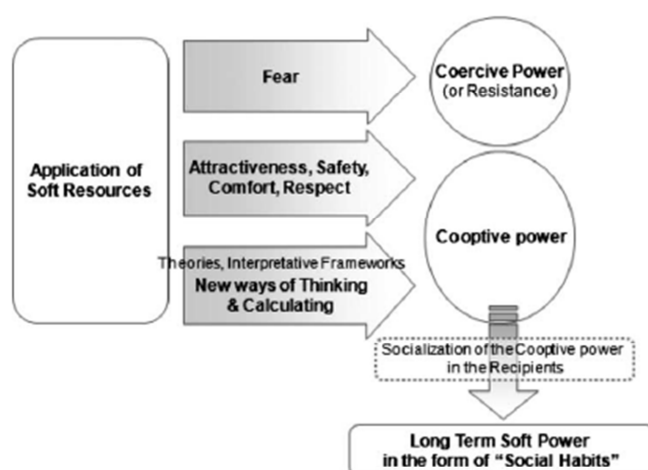


Figure 1. Conversion processes of soft power.

Applying this new framework on the current research, it should be disagreed with Lee's new division. Despite the overall usefulness of his new soft power approach, this new distinction of soft power resources makes the conclusion about nature of power even more ambiguous. Regarding the case of Korean pop music (see fig.2), the spread of Korean pop music faces three reactions in cognitive perception of recipients: indifference, attraction and resistance. Initially Korean pop is designed to produce attraction which means it is a co-optive soft power. However, Korean wave produces discontent and fear of cultural invasion as well which negates all the positive outcomes of the Korean wave (as it was in case with Winter Sonata by Hayashi & Lee (2007)).

In order to solve the vagueness of this question of nature of soft power the research comes back to Nye's definition by modifying the Lee model (fig,1) into a new hybrid model (fig.2) by adding the characteristics mentioned by Press-Barnathon. This scheme works as follows:

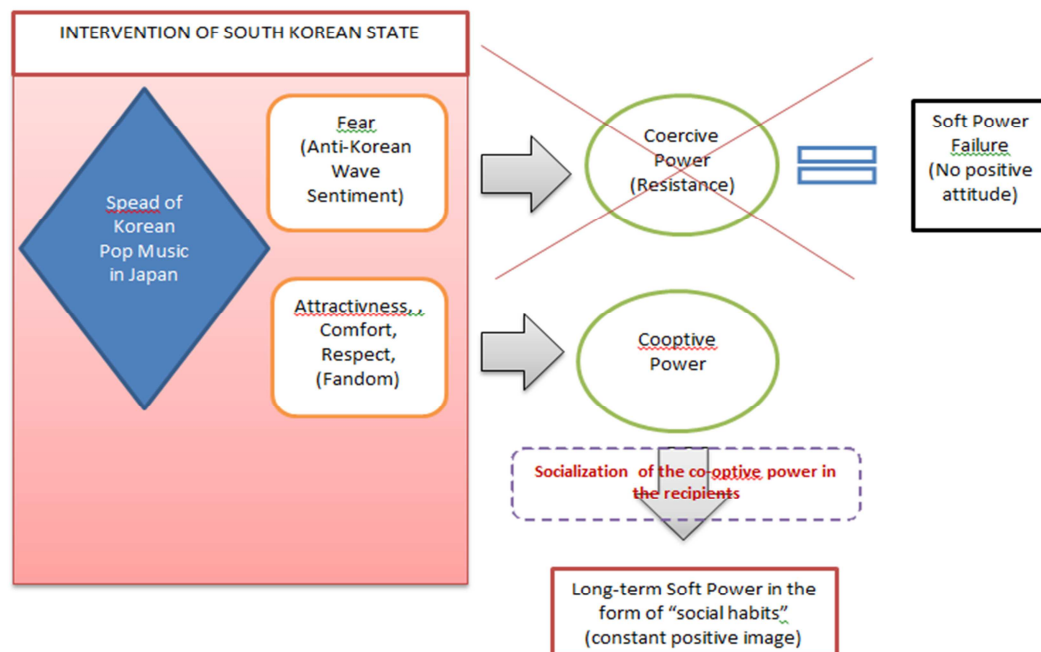


Figure2

Following Nye's positioning of soft power based on the final outcome, this research determines the anti-Korean Wave sentiments and protests as a failure of soft-power and a force which negates the desired outcome of attraction creation. As Nye (2004, x) stated: "Attraction can turn up repulsion if we act in an arrogant manner and destroy the real message of our deeper values." Too much K-pop with a clear state role behind is viewed as propaganda of the Korean state and bears negative associations which are certainly a failure of a co-optive soft power.

Another additional detail added to the scheme is an important role of the state. One of the approaches suggested by Press-Barnathon (2012, 31) in her analysis for soft power is an agent-based approach which focuses how states can use soft power to

advance their foreign policy goals. Korean pop-music is one of the most vibrant agents of the Korean wave and the state role in its creation, promotion and usage is undeniable which will be argued later. Therefore, the discussion of the Korean wave should be performed in the framework of agent-based approach with a clear distinction of a state role in this cultural phenomenon.

Referring to the specific goals of a research, Lee mentions the necessity to define the applicants, the recipients and channels through which soft resources are applied. Since the research question is quite explicit, the following division is performed:

1. Japanese audience -> recipients
2. Korean state/ non-state actors -> applicants
3. Korean pop-music -> channels

Speaking in the framework of soft power according to scheme the Korean state actors apply, the soft power resource in the form of pop music to transform/ influence the cognitive perception of the Japanese audience with the purpose of obtaining attraction/ respect.

Describing the first and the third stages as self-explanatory (fig.1), Lee (2009a,b) explains the second stage as the point where soft resources create new ways of thinking like attractiveness or fear in the short-term. When this short-term cognitive perception would be fixed on the habitual level, it would be possible to refer to this as a long-term soft power. Press-Barnathan (2012) echoes the importance of long-term perspective analysis and stresses that in the long-term the soft power can not be controlled by government.

This part is displayed in the new scheme (Figure 2) without any changes and it denotes the idea that the consumption of K-pop on a constant base will lead to a socialization of positive image of Korea on a habitual level. However, by adopting this theoretical framework, this research paper elaborates on the soft power produced by Korean pop music in the short term perspective due to the changing nature of any popular culture phenomenon and risk to go predicting.

Lee (2009,85a) mentions several categories of soft power objectives, but the focus of this research will encompass only one which refers to manipulating others' way of thinking and preferences or specifically its ability to create a favorable attitude to Korea.

In addition to the main framework, Lee (2009, 212) elaborated on several soft power strategies, arguing that the most successful would probably be the *Heroes and Celebrities* strategy. According to Lee (2009, 95): "Korean Wave stars can attract attention more widely and intensely than most of the politicians. The way they behave, the messages that they convey, and the events that they make have huge impacts upon a large number of people. At the same time, stars can market Korea's certain cultural or other commodities by their fashion, events and commercials."

On the basis of everything mentioned above in order to draw a conclusion about Korean pop music exerting soft power it is necessary to clearly delineate the role of the of the government in Hallyu promotion/ creation with defined goals setup and empirical evidence of audience reception either in a positive or negative way.

3. State and cultural industries

This section deals with the short history and involvement of the Korean state in the promotion of the Korean wave. The historical overview highlights the reasons for the Korean state to participate in cultural content development and first policies it implemented to boost it. The main part of the section presents the goals of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and their relation to the Korean wave spread and the activities of cultural institutions established under its patronage.

3.1 History/Cultural policies since 1990s

The growth of South Korea's cultural industries since the 1990s was contributed largely by government policies which were quite explicit in their attempts to utilize culture in favor of national goals (Otmazgin, 2011). In 1994 the President Advisory board on Science and Technology submitted a report to President Kim Yong Sam suggesting that the government should promote media production as a strategic industry. This proposal was highly influenced by the headline news of the Hollywood movie "*Jurassic Park*" total revenue being equal to the foreign sales of 1.5 million Hyundai cars (Shim, 2009, 15). Shim (2009) implies that it was a "paradigm shift" thinking for Koreans who used to believe that heavy and chemical industries would bring the country a prosperous future. As a result of the report, the Korean government established the Cultural Industry Bureau within the Ministry of Culture and Sports in 1994, and introduced the Motion Picture Promotion Law in 1995 as a way to attract corporations to invest into local film industries.

The reign of Kim Dae-Jung, Kim Yong-Sam's (1998-2002) follower, was notable for its great support of cultural industries. Kim Dae-Jung who called himself the "President of Culture" set up the Basic Law for Cultural Promotion in 1999 and allocated a budget of \$148.5 million to this project (Chloe, 1999 in Shim, 2008, 35).

In his inaugural speech Kim talked about the need to "pour the nation's energy into globalizing Korean culture so as to keep expanding trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges in order to make our way in the age of boundless competition, which will take place against backdrop of cooperation. (Korean Herald, 1998 in Kim, 2007, 188)."

The total cultural sector budget was increased from 484.8 billion Won (0.60 per cent of the total government budget) in 1998 to 1,218 billion Won (1.15 per cent of the total government budget) in 2002 (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2003 in Shim, 2008).

Besides the direct cultural sector budget expansion, the new focus on creative industries urged the demand on skilled labor. Therefore the state via the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) supported training programs which provided practical education and cultural industries raised the investments in R&D (research and development). As a result R&D IT expenditures rose from 3.6 per cent (US\$ 3 billion) in 1998 to 4.7% (US\$ 3.8 billion) in 2002; the number of researchers grew from 18,500 to 160,000 (Kim, 2007, 168). The number of people employed in service industries such as culture and entertainment subsequently rose by 37.3 per cent from 3.6 million in 2000 to 5 million in 2005 (ibid).

The next president Roh Moo-Hyun (2003-2007) continued the culture-oriented policies of his predecessor and introduced the “age of creativity, culture and content” with an emphasis on governments’ technology-driven prioritization. The Roh government introduced the cultural policy document *C-Korea 2010* (MSCT 2005, 8-9 in Lee, 2012, 128). Its vision stated: “the advent of the age of creative culture-based economy. Culture and content based on creativity and feelings have a great influence on the competitiveness of the national economy.” According to the document the main national goal was to become “the world’s top five content power in 2010.” This ambitious plan was based on the success of technological progress in Korea and an advance of high-speed Internet and mobile networks.

With the construction of cultural content as one of 6 future engines for national development, the cultural policies were excessively used for the promotion of Korean wave in the global arena. For the purpose of achieving this Korean wave dissemination, several agencies under the official Ministries were established.

3.2 The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Cultural Content Agencies

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism is in charge of promoting South Korea's various projects in the area of culture, arts, tourism, sports, leisure, religion, press in order to "open the new millennium with the power of art and culture" (Choe in MSCT, 2012). The main vision of the Ministry published on the official website states: "A Greater Korea Made Possible by Culture." This is quite an explicit and strong statement in comparison with others like Japan Tourism Agency which claims its vision as "building a nation that is good to live in, good to visit" (JTA, 2012). The way to achieve this status of Greater Korea comes from three main categories: Cultural Creation and Enjoyment, Communication and Integration and Competitive Power and Pride. One of the main aims outlined in the vision of the Ministry is Korea's stand as a global superpower and its consequential improvement of national brand image through international cultural events and strategic cultural outreach.

The former minister of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism Yu In-Chon in an interview with Newsworld (2010) was explaining about the necessity to pay special attention to the Korean wave since it contributes to the tourism and gives added pleasure to the foreign tourists in Korea. According to Minister Yu, Korean wave has expanded to represent Korea and Korean culture.

In other words, the government sees the Korean wave not only as a beneficial export-industry asset but also as a tool which represents Korea and Korean culture. In order to achieve the assigned goal of "Greater Korea", the government acts both through the Ministry itself and established cultural agencies such as KOCCA and KOCIS.

3.2.1.KOCCA

In August 2001 the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT) established KOCCA (Korea Creative Content Agency) to promote the culture and content industries which were not yet covered by other institutions: characters, comics, music, traditional culture etc.. KOCCA's activities included providing support for exports of cultural products, the education of content creation, the development of related technologies, building digital archives of traditional culture, providing assistance to related industries (Lee, 2012). The main aim of this agency was to lead Korea to the top five

content powers (KOCCA, 2012). Thus one of the major business targets of KOCCA was the overseas expansion support with a focus on cultural exports. Despite the economic incentive of cultural exports it also had a symbolic and political motivation which provided a “sense of winning over other countries” (Lee, 2012, 133). These exports achievements presented South Korea as one of the advanced and competitive countries in terms of culture and economy. As it is clear from the history of culture-oriented policies which started from the Kim Young-sam government, the South Korean government realized the importance of culture as a political tool for transformation of the national economy. Currently, (2011) the cultural exports run around \$100 million annually and the strategy implies this number grow to \$7.8 billion annually, placing Korea among the top content powers in the world.

Korea’s content market size (fig.3) has a constant growth with \$54.5 billion in 2008 which is 1.9 per cent more than it was in the previous year. There was a rapid growth in 2009 by 4.1 per cent which mainly comes from the game, music and broadcasting industries. In general the official growth of content industries is registered as 22.4% or \$436.54 million with exports accumulating 2.4 billion dollars. By 2009 the entire content industry generated profit equal to \$1.2 billion (KOCCA/statistics).

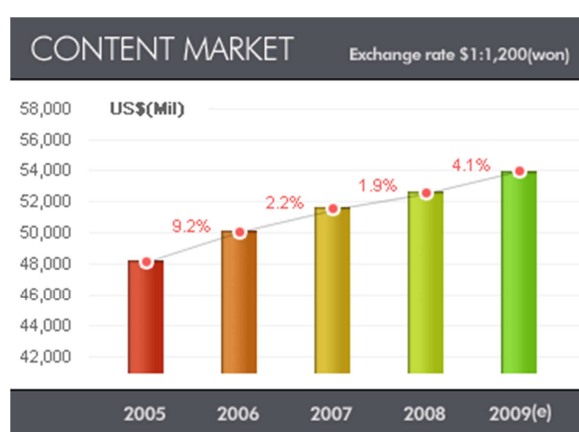


Figure 3

Talking about music content particularly, with the enforcement of intellectual property rights in 2008, Korea’s music market generated \$2 billion in sales in 2009. This is 10 per cent more than it was in 2007 (Figure 4).

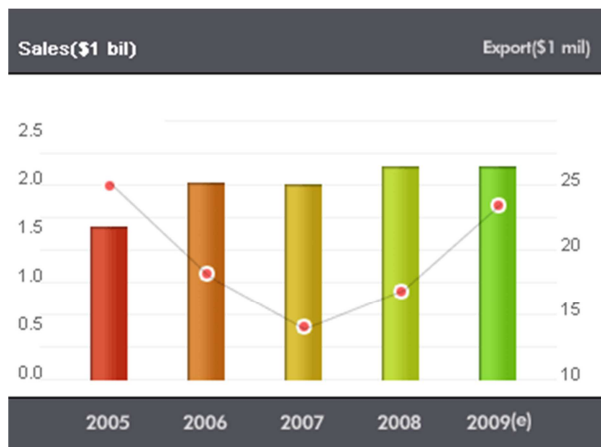


Figure 4

The government tries to tackle the acute problem of piracy. As Lee Soo-man, the founder and producer of one of the biggest entertainment agencies, SM Entertainment, described in the interview with Korea Herald:

“The local pop-music market almost does not exist now- with only a few albums selling over 100,000 copies a year. And there is the pervasive illegal downloading of films and songs. Such things make matters worse” (Lee Y-S, 2008, 293).

Piracy is indeed a serious problem for the whole music and film industry, however this illegal downloading also contributes to the Hallyu phenomenon in a way that people watch and listen to music and films more willingly due to its open access and no cost. Another important point to mention, this illegal downloading leads the discussion back to the ambiguity of measuring the soft power. Relying on figures of sales and making conclusion about the position of cultural superiority is highly debatable and challenging. The information is incomprehensive due to the difficulty to measure music as a cultural item in numbers and absence of data measuring illegal copies consumption (Otmazgin, 2008).

However, another effect of music piracy results the urge for entertainment companies to diversify their source of income by giving more concerts and producing merchandise products. In this vein, the 2009 music content growth of 3 per cent (fig.4) was expected to derive from rising music sales and overseas music concerts by Korean pop idols (KOCCA/statistics).

3.2.2. KOCIS

Another cultural agency established under the Ministry of Culture and Information in 1971 was the Culture and Information Service [KOCIS] (previously known as Overseas Information Center) with the purpose to enhance the national image and spread the knowledge about Korea around the world. In contrast to KOCCA which embraces the whole content industry (music, cartoons, movies, animation etc.) and tries to connect digital technology with an authentic culture, KOCIS deals particularly with culture as a driving force for a national image boost. KOCIS stresses the importance of culture as the core of soft power and pursues consolidating ties with neighboring countries via cultural exchange (KOCIS, 2012).

The welcoming message of Woo Jin Young, the director of KOCIS (Woo in KOCIS, 2012) contains a direct reference to the Hallyu phenomenon:

“The modern wave of Korean popular culture known as “Hallyu” has been spreading throughout the world, and people of many different nations have come to embrace various aspects of it...As a strong advocate for Korea, KOCIS has been pursuing ways to communicate Korean art and culture and Korean people’s warm and sincere hearts with the citizens of the world.”

KOCCA has set up 36 overseas Korean cultural centers in 31 countries in Asia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa. These centers hold exhibitions, screen movies, provide Korean language classes and organize cultural lectures and academic seminars.

The previous director of KOCIS, Seo Kang-soo in an interview with News World (Newsworld, 2010) was listing all the available resources such as the overcoming of the Asian Financial Crisis, strong performance in the Winter Olympics and FIFA World Cup in South Africa, the role of an IT powerhouse and others as tools to promote Korea abroad. Seo repeatedly emphasized the need to strengthen the efforts to raise the awareness about Korea in the world. As Seo (ibid) stated:

“We have been conducting overseas publicly activities designed to promote Korea and Korean culture abroad so that Korea’s national image can be enhanced.”

In 2010 KOCIS established a bilateral cultural program designed to maintain the spread of Hallyu by building bilateral partnerships and relationships. Therefore 74 people from 35 countries in Asia, South America, the Middle East/ Africa and Eastern Europe were invited to participate in this program which offered language classes and cultural experience. Besides, KOCIS was producing such visual items as a promo-video “With Love Korea”, an advertisement “Korea: A Good Neighbor” which was broadcasted in BBC, CNN and Euronews. Seo administration was seeing the foreign media as a key to successful image promotion of Korea since the foreign coverage was shaping the perception of the global audience. KOCIS was providing different channels with media outlets and established ties with foreign journalists to give them a “better understanding of Korean culture and history” in order to promote “the right direction of depicting Korea” (kocis.co.kr).

In 2011 the Seo administration published the first Hallyu guide-book in English “The Korean Wave: A New Pop Culture Phenomenon.” The book presents modern Korean culture including pop music, dramas and films in the framework of the Hallyu rise. Seo (Yoon, 2011) said in the press-release of the book that “it shows the dynamic energy and diversity of modern Korean culture and helps its readers to better understand Hallyu as a long-lasting phenomenon.”

Longevity is the key term here. Besides the apparent success of Hallyu and its rapid rage all the Korean content industry, officials try to emphasize that Hallyu is not a one-day phenomenon. The new director of KOCIS, Woo Jin-Young, who was appointed in 2012, kept on the same line “Many say that Hallyu will be done in 2-3 years but I think it is really up to us, depending on how much effort we make” (Cho, 2012)”

Woo Jin-Young adopted the same push-forward culture approach as his predecessor but also brought the new insight the Hallyu promotion strategy. Woo (Do, 2012) acknowledges the success of Korean wave as a source of motivation for KOCIS but outlines the challenges associated with it. Woo directs attention to the different interests in Hallyu products pointing out that developing nations prefer pop culture, whereas developed countries show more interest in traditional “Han” culture such as “Hanbok” (Korean traditional dress) or “Hansik” (Korean food). Therefore,

Woo advocates the use of more extensive promotion approach which would reflect varying interest per region. One of the biggest projects initiated during Woo's administration is the 100-day promotional campaign for Korea called "All Eyes on Korea@London Olympics" which will take place ahead and during the London 2012 Olympic Games. Famous artists such as soprano Jo-Sumi, maestro Chung Myung-hwun, singer Lee Ja-ram and designer Lie Sang-bong will participate in this campaign established with the assistance of Korean Cultural Center in London.

In 2011 KOCIS organized the online K-Pop World Festival which invited performers around the world to participate first in the regional K-Pop contests run by overseas cultural centers and then to compete at the final round in Changwon city, South Korea. The official website was operated in English in order to attract a bigger audience and more participants. According to the staff member of KOCIS, the main aim of the festival was to contribute to the spread of Hallyu and make it being held on a constant basis since not everybody is familiar with the phenomenon of Korean wave. In addition it was KOCIS' intention to raise the interest in traditional Korean culture through this event (Korea.net, 2011).

Summing up the history of Korean state policies since 1990 and the activity of two cultural institutions (KOCCA, KOCIS) under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism clearly indicates the huge role of the state in the creation and promotion of Hallyu. The Korean wave which started as an inspiration for the Korean state to win over strong others such as China and Japan grew into a strong phenomenon which raised the export numbers of cultural content and started to be seen as a political tool to enhance the image of Korea. As Press-Barnathon (2012) said, popular culture can serve both as a tool to convey a certain ideology and as a front window which sells this ideology through attractive culture abroad. Talking about the ideology, from the discussion above, it is clear to see that the Korean state is positioning itself as an advanced modern state which is in "top five content powers" and builds an image of Korea as a strong, economically-developed, good neighbor country and a "greater nation". Moreover the message behind the promotion of a popular culture is the global dissemination of the "Han" image which refers to traditional Korean culture and traditions.

Korean wave is a major tool of foreign policy to sell this image abroad and the state actively utilizes it through its cultural institutions. Korean wave includes different types of cultural contents and music is one the crucial ones which contributed to its significant rise in line with broadcasting and games. Therefore, the involvement of the government (enforcement of property rights in 2008; K-pop World Festival, book publishing) in K-pop music spread and maintenance is not surprising and quite explicit.

Following the hybrid scheme by Lee (2009) and Press-Barnathon (2012) and answering the question posed by Lee (2009b), whether the applicants wish to change the recipients' preferences, calculation or emotions in a desirable direction for applicants, it is possible to draw the conclusion that the Korean state fits this scheme as an applicant which bears the ideology of a "Greater Korea" with the intention to develop positive attitudes, enhances this image and boosts tourism. Therefore, the first part of soft power conversion is complete with the state having the goal to change the attitudes. In order, however, to see whether the soft power resource (Korean pop music) turns into soft power, it is necessary to see whether this goal was fulfilled and music indeed influences the perception of people towards Korea in a positive way.

4. K-pop in Japan and AKiss case study

4.1 Web and Social Media

Social networks became one of the main tools of Hallyu spread nowadays. YouTube, Twitter, Facebook – all these sources brought the fame and recognition of K-pop bands like Girls Generation, Kara even before their concerts took place in Japan (Oh, 2011).

One of the most significant events in the digital Hallyu spread became the launch of a separate section on YouTube dedicated to K-pop in 2011. President Lee Myung-bak met with Eric Schmidt, Google's executive chairman, at Cheong Wa Dae in Seoul in 2010. Schmidt said that YouTube was pursuing the ways to help to spread Korean cultural content. The creation of the new channel made K-pop more accessible to foreign fans. More than 5 million videos by K-pop groups have already been uploaded on the site, having 400,000 by DBSK, 340,000 by Girls Generation and 260,000 by Wonder Girls (ChosunIlbo, Nov.8 2011).

In December 2009 the Korean Association of Phonogram Producers (the KAPP), which manages the distribution of Korean songs online, signed a deal with Soribada, a local music portal, to provide 170,000 K-pop songs to Apple's iTunes store. As Kim Gye-young, the official at the KAPP said "Simply by virtue of selling music there, we can promote K-pop" (Sung, 2011).

Yuhei Mizuno, an executive director of Google Inc., explained about the rapid rise of the fanbase through the usage of social networks: "A person who becomes a fan of a group after listening to a song on the Internet may recommend it via Facebook and other social network media, which can spread it across the world instantly" (Takaku & Maruyama, 2012).

4.2 K-pop in Japan

K-pop entered Japan with the breakthrough of Korean singer Boa with her debut album "Listen to My Heart" which topped the Oricon Chart in 2002. This made her the first singer from outside of Japan to reach number one in the charts (Korea Times, March, 1, 2005 in Kim, 2007).

The Oricon charts have become the testing ground of success for Korean artists. They were established in 1967 and use the data of album sales collected from 26,000 music stores in Japan, and are presented in daily, weekly and monthly rankings. It is a highly respectable ranking in Japan, comparable to the Billboard 100 in the US. The CEO of Japan's Oricon, Koh Koike, said during his visit to the Gaon Charts of K-pop Awards in 2012 that the polished image and strong fan base are the main reason for the success of Korean acts in the Oricon charts (ChosunIlbo, Feb 24, 2012). Another famous band, 2pm, had two singles ranked fifth or higher in the Oricon charts since their debut (Kiyokawa, 2011).

According to Korean experts, Japan is the biggest overseas market for K-pop and now it is expanding to Europe and America as well. The size of the entertainment and media market in Japan is estimated to be 194 trillion Won per year, which is five times more than the Korean market (Kwon, 2012). Kim Chang-Kwon of Daewoo Securities stated that despite the concert-cancelling March catastrophe, SM Entertainment drew more than 580,000 to their concerts and sold 2.5 million albums in 2011. Girls Generation by SM Entertainment earned more than 71 billion won, which is a 360 per cent rise from 2010. The SM operating profit estimations for 2012 are expected to be 70 billion Won from 166 billion Won in sales (ibid). This statistics evidences that K-pop has been holding a strong grip on the Japanese market since its first successful act by BoA.

4.3 Anti K-pop wave in Japan

Despite the popularity of K-pop flourishing in Japan, there is also a parallel anti-K-pop sentiment growing in the society. In August, 2010 there was a six thousand people demonstration against Fuji TV, because they were "airing too many Korean dramas." The catalyst for this protest was the firing of the Japanese actor Takaoka Sosuke from his agency after he criticized the Korean wave publicly through his twitter account (Hicap, 2011).

Another sentiment is the recent issue of the popular Korean actress Kim Tae Hee who brought up the Dokdo/Takeshima issue in Japan and was subsequently

dropped from all commercials and boycotted by some Japanese citizens (The Korea Herald/Asian News Network, 2012).

Besides these two major events which attracted a lot of media coverage and involved a high number of people, there are many other sentiments of lesser scale which display a similar backlash attitude.

One of such events which caused a lot of online debate was the high-school performance of the granddaughter of the Japanese Emperor Akihito, Gako, who copied the choreography of “Oh” of the K-pop band Girls Generation. Some comments by Japanese netizens displayed the anti-Korean sentiment by questioning the connection of the Emperor family to Korea and expressing their dissatisfaction with Gako dancing to Korean pop-music (Yoon Y-S, 2011).

In 2011 a Japanese comic book titled “Chase of Fabricated K-pop Boom” got widely circulated on Japanese websites. The book displayed the negative sides of Korean entertainment industry such as suicide, bribes and sex service by referring to the Korean actress Jang Ja-yeon who committed suicide in 2009. The book states: “The Korean government has invested 20,160 billion won a year to fabricate “Korean wave” in Japan” (KoreaTimes, January, 1 2011).

The Japanese national newspaper Yomiuri Shinbun has also been quite critical about rapid the Korean Wave spread by publishing material about discontent of Japanese locals living in Shin-Okubo with tourism polluting the area and the need for Japanese artists to go abroad and compete with Korean singers (Sakurai, 2012; Ota, 2011).

Despite these anti-Korean wave manifestations, any significant impact of it on the spread of Hallyu in Japan has not been registered yet. Regarding the case with Kim Tae Hee cancelling the advertising campaign in Japan, the director of Oricon, Koike Koh said that Kim Tae Hee’s side overreacted, since this negative reaction was expressed by a small group of people and in general Japanese people like KPOP and Korean dramas (ChosunIlbo, Feb 24, 2012).

Despite this positive opinion expressed by Koh, many scholars take a more cautious stance towards anti-K-pop wave, since it seriously affects the perception of people and states (Chinese government decided to cut exports of Korean drama) by

making people regard Korean wave interconnected with government policies as a manipulative state enforcing norms and rules upon them (Hayashi & Lee, 2007). In this case, all the attempts of the Korean state to build a positive image of “A Good Neighbor” through the Korean wave are seriously hindered by its own explicit involvement.

4.4. AKiss Micro-ethnographic case study

AKiss is a K-pop band consisting of 21 members which was established in 2009 under Golden Goose Label Entertainment. It is the largest band in the history of K-pop. It was formed by Kim Kyung Wok, producer of such idols as BoA and DBSK. The band members had severe training for two years before debuting in Tokyo, Japan. They hold regular performances twice a day, every day except Monday at S-theatre in Ebisu, Tokyo. In order to achieve such kind of efficiency, the band is divided into three subgroups, AKiss J, AKiss O and AKiss L. There is another subgroup AKiss G, which serves as a substitute part of the band and the members of this division undertake hard training in Korea right now.

The theater concert hall contains 198 seats and it is regular that all of them are occupied. First seats are often taken by the members of the AKiss fanclub. The fanclub of AKiss has approximately 1,000-1,500 members (interview with Y. informant) and it is growing. Talking about the economic side of the concert, one ticket for the AKiss performance costs approximately 4,500 YEN (56 USD, 2012). The majority of fans (eight out of ten interviewees) find this price to be very expensive. However, still the number of their visits is fairly high. Since the start of the band performances in Japan (Aug. 2011) till the time of the interviews (Jan. 2012) on the average the fans of AKiss visited the concert 30 times with a minimum number of visits being 10 and the maximum 80 times. Even though the level of exposure is not very large in comparison with such famous bands as Big Bang or KARA who have million-people fanclubs, the local success of AKiss is an undeniable fact with the constant filling of all 198 seats and loyal fans attending their concerts no less than twice a week.

The question to be answered is, what kind of image do AKiss present and how are the fans influenced by this image and what associations and attitudes toward Korea and Korean society they build on the basis of this.

This section deals with fandom since fandom is another important domain of discussion of political implication of popular culture. As one researcher (Tanabe et al,

2001 in Otmazgin and Ben-Yari, 2012, 20)) states, “By buying, eating, wearing, watching, listening to, and exchanging ideas about these products fans may, through everyday practices dislocate (rather than resist or subvert) political and economic spaces.” fans are the direct recipients of culture effect and indicators of the scale of its amassment.

It is important to note that fans may vary, as some of them may present strong commitment and identification and others may be a casual audience who consumes popular culture as a part of leisure time. Chua (2012, 74) argues that the popularity of a pop culture depends on this size of the leisure audience since their number exceeds the number of avid fans by a wide margin. This is another limitation of this research in terms of generalization since it focuses exactly on avid fans reception. But at the same time the avid fans responses helped to get the deeper meaning of their perception and involvement in their activities stimulated the better understanding of the factor behind their interest in K-pop music.

4.4.1. The band and its image

AKiss is a band with 21 members of different age, with the youngest member being born in 1995 and the oldest member in 1985. Their official website and all the websources (allkpop.com, japantimes.co.jp, dkpopnews.net) emphasize the average height of AKiss members, which is above 185 cm. Height had been one of the main requirements at the audition. This requirement was set up as a part of a business strategy. First, it is a distinctive feature which differentiates them from other K-pop groups and second, it helps to involve the members of AKiss into modeling and commercial making (interview with a producer Mr. K).

Mr. K emphasized that the fans have different tastes and the higher the number of band members, the higher is the chance to appeal to more fans who may find a certain member interesting and attractive. The difference in characters and styles is the core of the strategy and explains the lack of vocal skills of some members. The concentration on different styles and personalities rather on single singing ability is quite a common practice in the K-pop industry. As Park Jin Young, the producer of one of the biggest entertainment agencies in Korea, JYP

Entertainment, said in an interview at the SBS TV show “Healing Camp”: *“There may be artists under JYP Entertainment who are lacking when it comes to vocal talent, but none of them seem unnatural”* (allkpop,2012).

Another important aspect of the band composition is that all males have fairly good looks according to the fans. The East Asian Popular culture and especially the Korean Wave develops the notion of “beautiful people” with men as leading in this genre. As Chua (2004, 212) stated:

“The beautiful look is arguably more important than acting or other performing talents including singing. The similarity of packaging and the indistinguishable sameness creates visual and discursive room for the insertion and projection of an idea of “Asian-ness” with nationalities suppressed.”

Asian scholars including Chua (2004) and Iwabuchi (2008) claim that cultural proximity was one of the main reasons of massive advance and success of both Japanese and Korean popular cultures in East Asia. The image of “pretty boys” was massively used in Japanese manga and anime production. Therefore the appearance of *kkonminam* (“beautiful man”) fever for Korean good-looking artists among Japanese females was not a surprise. The *Kkonminam* syndrome refers to feminine-looking males in the entertainment industry who present the hybrid of male/ female sexual identities rather than completely manly or feminized men (Jung, 2011, 58). *Kkonminam* image usually depicts a tall male with “long legs, slim feminine face, long hair and sweet smiles” (Jung, 2011,59). AKiss members perfectly suit this description.

All the interviewees admitted that they are very attracted to the good looks of AKiss members. They described them as “very tall”, “handsome”, “good-looking” and “masculine”. When asked about the appearance of the Japanese singers all fans answered that they prefer Korean stars more because they look better than their Japanese counterparts. However, every respondent agreed that not every member of the band is very skilled at singing and dancing.

“No, not everyone is good at singing. And I can say that not everyone is a great dancer. However, I can clearly see how much effort AKiss puts into each performance.” (from an interview with respondent N.)

This notion of appreciation of efforts by AKiss members was also mentioned by the AKiss producer Mr K., who confirmed that this transparent effort demonstration (10 hours of rigid training mentioned at the official website, hard learning and practicing Japanese with an audience) is another strategy to get the recognition of fans.

One AKiss concert lasts about 90 minutes. There are two concerts per day (one at 2pm, and another one at 7pm) with two of the subgroups performing so that the third one has a day off. Moreover, two groups which happen to perform together, assist each other during the concerts and perform the main song “Love” (85000 views on YouTube) together in the end.

The main idea behind the concert structure is not only the visual show which involves synchronous dances of 14 members mixed with several strong live performances. It is the constant interaction of AKiss with the audience. Out the 90 minutes of performance, at least 40 minutes were devoted to jokes, games and talking with the audience. This format was very well received by the fans, who were attracted to the closeness of AKiss to the audience. As one fan mentioned (personal interview with respondent K.), *“I like to attend the concerts of AKiss because they always interact with us. And every time they change the program and games. Therefore, every show seems to be fresh and new even though the songs are the same.”*

In the end all 14 members of AKiss line up in front of the exit to shake hands with their fans. During the handshake, fans can have a small talk with the members and hand in their fan letters to them. The handshake with the idols symbolizes the intruding of the boundary between the idols and the fans. According to Mr K “the fans may be seeking something real in their fantasy world through close, physical contact with Korean entertainers” (interview with Mr K in Japan Times, July 26, 2011).

The handshake part is extremely significant since the survey results indicated that the majority of Japanese female fans were attracted to these concerts right because of it (one interviewee said that she would have stopped attending the concerts if there had been no handshake part in the end) and it demonstrates the closeness of Korean idols to the audience.

4.4.2. K-pop Presenting and Disseminating the Image of Korea and society

As it is apparent from the discussion above, the Korean popular music is rapidly penetrating the Japanese market by generating economic profit and receiving huge interest of Japanese fans. Besides the economic benefit, AKiss performance as a Korean band in Japan does carry a representative function and disseminates a certain image of Korean cultural products and Korea.

In my interviews with ten fans of AKiss, everybody agreed upon the high quality of K-pop music and its videos. The majority of interviewees described Korean music as “high quality” and “very catchy tunes”. They emphasized that videos for Korean pop-music have a very high class and are interesting to watch. The majority of fans admitted that they started to listen to J-pop significantly less after their interest to K-pop rose, and some respondents stopped listening to J-pop completely because they thought that K-pop was much better produced than J-pop. A famous Japanese producer Jeff Miyahara (Jarnes, 2011) is not surprised with such conclusions:

“The Koreans use the cream of the crop for all aspects of production...They have the best producers and the hottest performers, who've been fine-tuned and pretty much genetically engineered to be the strongest, fastest fighting machines.” Indeed, if you pair up AKB48 with the members of After School, or any one of the Johnny's Jimusho boy-bands with recent chart-risers 2PM, the Japanese side does appear to lose out when it comes to physique”

Besides AKiss songs, the respondents named such groups as Kara, DBSK and Girls Generation as their favorite ones. Talking about the amount of time AKiss fans devoted to listening to K-pop songs, the majority responded that they listen to K-pop

most of the time. It was rather an abstract question which was hard to answer precisely but the advantage of it is that it led to the finding that music was an easier and more flexible cultural content to consume. Among the ten respondents, two had jobs and the others were students and their everyday schedule plans were very busy with studies and duties. Therefore, most of them did not watch time-consuming Korean dramas but instead were listening to K-pop during the breaks or on the way to school or work. K-pop videos were another easy-to-access content due to its overwhelming spread on YouTube and high quality explained by the fact that the official entertainment channels were posting them.

All the interviewed fans said that they decided to study Korean in order to understand the lyrics of AKiss songs better and write personal letters to the band members in Korean. All ten interviewees were in the process of self-study of Korean language and were practicing it each time they were writing fan letters.

Many fans were saying that they acknowledged the efforts of AKiss members to speak Japanese. As one of the fans (fan A.) said: *“AKiss are putting so much effort to learn Japanese and do their best to give us excellent performances. It really motivates me to do my best to study Korean.”*

It is important to mention that this appreciation of AKiss enormous efforts to study the Japanese language was mentioned by the producer as a main reason of AKiss starting their activities in Japan and not Korea. Mr. K called the start-up of activities in a foreign country a strategy to get appreciation and empathy from Japanese fans who would develop respect and admiration for the members who have to overcome so many difficulties in an alien environment, including the language problem. It is interesting to note that this is not the first case when the Japanese fans find learning Japanese by K-pop stars to be attractive. In 2012 according to the research conducted by a Japanese Research Company Video Research, measuring the popularity of famous people in Japan, the K-pop band KARA was ranked 28th and was the only foreign star which appeared in the list. One of the answers justifying the choice of KARA stated: *“I like KARA because all five members have different characters. Their efforts in speaking accurate Japanese causes me to like them”* (StarNews via Naver, allkpop, 2012).

Besides the initial recognition of the hard efforts of AKiss, Mr. K claimed that this demonstrative efforts-strategy also served as a tool to disseminate a positive image of Korea and Korean people. Mr. K (personal interview) stated:

“AKiss work hard to improve their Japanese and their skills. The fans see this progress and enormous efforts and develop a positive image of Korea and Korean people. They see Korean guys to be good. Moreover those of them who did not have any knowledge about Korea before, start getting curious about it.”

His words are reinforced by the interview findings with the fans of AKiss. All of them have quite a positive image of South Korea and Korean people. All of the fans agreed that Korean people are very hardworking (“In comparison to Japanese, Koreans seem to put more efforts in what they are doing”- fan Y.), good-looking (“Korean men are so tall and handsome. That’s why I can watch AKiss all the time”- fan A.) and warm-hearted (“AKiss and other K-pop stars are always smiling and having such a warm attitude towards their fans. We feel that our distance is so close. Not like the Japanese celebrities whom we barely see live.”- fan M.).

4.4.3. K-pop fans’ attitude to Korean society

The projection of their experience with AKiss and Korean TV shows tends to urge fans to develop a new way of thinking of the whole Korean society. This is a clear example of the “Heroes and Celebrities” strategy by Lee (2009) in action with AKiss serving as Korean representatives with certain messages their performances convey. A good-looking “kkonminam” appearance and a warm-hearted attitude constructed through frequent interactions with AKiss idols and high-quality K-pop videos made all female fans of AKiss to consider Korean men as perfect partners:

“I would like to date a Korean man because Korean men are more gentlemen and more considerate than Japanese men. They seem to take more care of their girlfriends and wives.” (interview with fan K.)

This promotion of the Korean men's image through K-pop well-mannered "kkonminam"-looking guys is quite an effective strategy noticed even by foreign media. In 2006 Washington Post published an article about the demand rise on Japan-Korean matchmaking service agencies among Japanese women who were looking for Korean husbands. Japanese women were coming to these agencies looking for their ideal man who embodied the type presented by the Korean entertainment industry. The type is represented by "rich, kind men with coincidentally striking looks and a tendency to shower women with unconditional love" (Faiola 2006).

Fans of AKiss are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about this "ideal man" construction and assume Korean men to be the same as their favorite idols with courteous manners and good looks. All the fans turned out to be single at the time of interviews and two of the interviewed respondents even broke up with their Japanese partners because they were against their infatuation and constant visits of AKiss performances.

In sum, AKiss and other male K-pop stars present a new type of special "kkonminam" masculinity encompassing soft manners and striking looks. This type is extremely attractive for many Japanese women who reflect their impressions from branded and marketed idols on their vision of Korean men in general. As a result it enhances the image of Korean men and develops a new way of thinking about Korean people.

4.4.4. K-pop fans attitude to Korea, Korean culture and Korean products

The interest in Korea, Korean culture and Korean products was boosted among the fans when they started to visit the concerts of the band. The majority of fans admitted that they had no clear idea and interest about Korea before they started to follow AKiss activities.

"I used to think only of Japan only since I am Japanese. After I took interest in K-Pop I became more open-minded. It widened my way of thinking. I have become very interested in Korea and Korean culture." (interview with the respondent E.)

The majority fans have the same opinion. K-pop and AKiss made them interested in Korea and Korean products. Asked about the associations they have with Korea the respondents expressed such impressions as “A country where people study a lot”, “The food is good and people are good-looking”, “The stuff is cheaper and make-up products are of very high quality”, “culture is close to the Japanese one”, “A good country to travel to” (respondents Y, N and K).

All AKiss fans tend to purchase Korean merchandising products such as cosmetics, posters, audio and visual products, technical devices. Korean make-up products were the most popular item to buy. All the respondents were keen on buying Korean make up brands such as *Etude*, *Nature Republic* and *Innisfree* because they were considering their quality to be better than the Japanese products. Besides passion for Korean make-up products, all the respondents turned out to be big fans of Korean cuisine and were frequent visitors of Korean restaurants in the Shin-Okubo district in Tokyo. The majority of fans haven't been in Korea but all expressed their wish to visit there one day. Those fans, who had visited Korea already, stated that they enjoyed it a lot and did a lot of shopping and sightseeing.

This claim of rapid rise of demand for Korean products due to the popularity of K-pop and Korean pop operas as a driving force is also supported by the official statistics. Due to growing status of Hallyu the sales of Korean cosmetics reached W10 trillion in 2011 (US\$1=W 1,124) (Arirang News, 2012 in Chosun Ilbo, 2012). In the same year, the Bank of Korea registered the rise for its audiovisual services such as distribution rights for Korean movies, audio sources by 32 per cent from the previous year generating the surplus of US\$ 100 million. In total the industry earned US\$ 794 million from export of cultural and entertainment services in 2011 (Bank of Korea, 2012 in Chosun Ilbo, Feb 7 2012). Bloomberg Businessweek provided a relevant interview abstract with one of the Japanese female fans of a popular K-pop band DBSK “*I used to rule out Korean products, but now I have no problem with them. If my favorite star was advertising a South Korean TV, I would definitely buy it. I want to feel closer to them by buying the same products they use*” (Yasu & Shiraki, 2011).

4.4.5. K-pop fans' attitude towards anti-K-pop wave

Talking about the anti-K-pop wave demonstration at Fuji TV, 9/10 respondents expressed their disappointment and anger with such “a nationalistic” sentiment to happen (respondent M). Regarding Takaoka Sosuke, they agreed that he should have thought about his stands before writing it on twitter since he is a public person. Therefore, firing from the agency was fair. However, there was one respondent among 10 who showed another opinion. She admitted her great interest in AKiss and K-pop, however she was worried and anxious about the huge influx of Korean products in Japan. This respondent was the only informant who did not find Anti-K-pop wave negative since it just showed “people’s concerns” (interview with a respondent D.).

4.4.6. Non-K-pop fans perception of Korea/Korean society/Anti-Korean wave

Asking the same set of questions about attitude towards Korea and Korean society to Japanese females who do not listen to K-pop generated different results. The majority (4/5) of interviewees answered that they would prefer to date/ marry a Japanese man rather than a Korean man because they were concerned about cultural differences and language barriers and one respondent said that her dating choice is individual and depends on a person.

Talking about Korea and images associated with that, the non-K-pop fans respondents said that they used to think of Korea as a country which had “cheap goods and spicy food”, “pretty people”, “it is popular right now”. All six respondents said that they would like to visit Korea if they had the chance because they loved travelling. However, in relation to Hallyu, the majority of them expressed an opinion that “it is a good thing, but it’s just too much Korean stuff in Japan right now”, “it is everywhere and it is sometimes too much” (respondents S, O). All interviewees listened to Japanese and Western music and never had any interest in Korean audiovisual products. In general those respondents either paid no special attention to Korea or had very neutral stands which were coming mostly to “Korean barbeque” associations. Three out of six respondents said that they used Korean make-up

products sometimes because they were “much cheaper than Japanese makeup products”.

Talking about the scandal with Takaoka Sosuke, the majority (4/6) expressed their discontent with a decision to fire him (“it was too harsh”, respondent S.) and thought that he had a right to speak out. In general all non-K-pop fans agreed that anti-K-pop wave is not a nice phenomenon but it has a right to be due to inflow of overwhelming Korean media products and they can understand it.

4.4.7. Analysis of empirical findings

Applying the characteristics outlined by Lee’s scheme (2009) it is apparent that “Heroes and Celebrities” is a massively used strategy by the Korean state to convert soft power resources (Hallyu) into soft power to achieve such goals as image enhancement and Korea awareness. Besides this, the Korean state is using the fame of Korean wave stars to negotiate and deal with the political conflicts. In 2011 the South Korea’s military department sent Hyun Bin, a popular South Korean actor serving in South Korea’s Marine Corps, to visit Indonesia in order to repair relationships damaged by the February Incident when South Korean intelligence agents were reported to break into the Seoul hotel room of an Indonesian delegation. The agents were presumably looking for information related to price negotiation over the export of trainer jets to Indonesia but the mismanaged attempt was reported in media. Hyun Bin, who is enormously popular in Indonesia due to his exported dramas, was assigned to take part in an Indonesian military ceremony (Makino, 2011). This story displayed the fact that the Korean state has started to use the Hallyu not only for promotional purposes but also as a foreign policy agenda asset. Although it is still rare yet and the main goal of Korean wave is the awareness increase and image boost.

The interview findings indicated that with the help of the well-planned business strategy (band composition, concert set-up, marketing strategies) K-pop does produce attraction and admiration among fans which brings both economic (the producer of AKiss is eager to sell around 120000 tickets) and symbolic benefits (fandom gets motivated to get to know about Korea).

The main question of an adopted soft power approach theory was whether attraction did not remain just an attraction without any power conversion. The causal path was if K-pop changed the perception of people about Korea and Korean society implies that people who consume K-pop make the desired link between music and politic (Press-Barnathon, 2012). According to the findings of the AKiss micro-ethnography case, Korean popular culture transforms the perception of young Japanese women in regard to Korea. Transnational consumption of Korean pop music and videos shapes the image of Korea as a “cool country” with good food, advanced audio-visual technology and high-quality make-up products. With the K-pop spread, Korean men are perceived as hard-working, attractive and kind-hearted people. All these images are constructed on the strong ground of K-pop stars’ (“Heroes and Celebrities” representatives) performances, behavior and activities. While females who do not listen to K-pop do not have such clear messages constructed in their mind and tend not to care about Korea or think of it in terms of the most common associations such as “spicy food” and “cheap goods”.

In regard to the anti-Korean wave, the demonstration of K-pop fans and appreciation/ indifference by non-fans towards was not surprising. However, the appearance of another fan’s voice that was sympathetic towards these sentiments should bring the worrying note to the explicit Korean state initiatives. As it was mentioned by Hayashi & Lee (2007) anti-Korean wave sentiments may negate all the positive outcomes of it. Even though it was just one voice among ten, it is an opinion of a person who actually likes K-pop but the amount and speed of its spread are getting overwhelming for her.

Following the hybrid scheme by Lee (2009) and Press-Barnathon (2012) it is apparent that there is a clear transformation of Korean pop culture consumption among some certain clusters of population into attraction towards Korea and Korea society which is a manifestation of co-optive power of the Korean soft power on some part of the populace. It is possible to say with very limited scope of generalization, encompassing young females who are fans of AKiss (although it may have a tendency to relate to other K-pop fans in Japan too) that Korean pop as a soft power resource did shape a new way of thinking towards Korea to them at least in the short term and

it turns K-pop into soft power demonstration. Although it seems unrealistic to guess whether these short-term effect will be fixed in the long-term habitual level, it is necessary to mention that both the producer of the band and the interviewed fans have a very optimistic vision of their future fandom affection and plan for the moment to be in touch with K-pop for a long time.

5. Conclusion

The thesis focused on the phenomenon of Korean Wave in Japan and its right to be called a “soft power” as it was coined by numerous media sources. The clear role of the state was indicated as an inevitable engine of the Hallyu rise and promotion. With the clear vision stated by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of Korea as a “Greater Korea Made Possible by Culture” the value of culture for the state and Korean wave especially is apparently high. The Ministry officials emphasized the role of the Wave as a major promoting and image boosting force which will raise awareness about Korea, develop interest in its culture and boost tourism. These clear goals were the first step of soft power fundament creation since according to Lee (2009,89) they represented “the intentions of the applicants to change the perceptions and attitudes of the recipients” or in the words of Nye they displayed the intention of using popular culture as a soft power resource “to get the outcomes you want” (Nye, 2004,4).

The case study of K-pop avid fandom clearly displayed that the Korean Wave has fundamentally influenced the perception of those Japanese fans who got deeply engaged with the Korean popular music. The fans of the study represent an “active audience”(Hayashi, 2005b), which means that they attend the concerts regularly, collect information and try to interact with their idols through letter writing and handshake practice. Therefore their exposure to the Korean wave is enormous and as a result it penetrates the minds of young Japanese females through its mediated representation of Korean people, Korean stars and Korean culture. Through these media constructions the female fans develop a positive opinion towards Korea by associating it with an advanced audio-visual technological progress and Korean people who are perceived as hard-working and good-looking people. Korean wave through Korean celebrities successfully disseminates the attractive image of Korea which boosts the tourism, export sales and develops a positive attitude towards Korean people among Japanese fans of K-pop.

Even though this case focused on a very small population group (young Japanese female fans) the Korean Wave can still be regarded as a soft power manifestation due to its achievement of pre-set goals of enhancing the image through the Hallyu spread and maintenance. Even though it is impossible to speak for all

Japanese youths, the goal of “Greater Korea by Culture” stated by the Korean state did not contain any specific numbers or population size. Therefore, the success of its goal accomplishments even within a small proportion of a foreign country population is still a success of its Korean Wave utilization.

Taking the perspectives of three groups of scholars who were arguing about the power Korean wave influence, this study lines up with the first group of scholars (Ko (2009), Shim (2008), Cho (2011)) who argue that Korean wave is indeed a soft power representation since it raises the awareness about Korea and develops a positive attitude with the help of Korean Wave celebrities.

One of the major findings is that even though the Korean Wave has a very positive influence on fans in a way that it constructs a very attractive image of Korea, Korean society and culture, as well as its overwhelming and huge influx has been alerted even by the avid fan of K-pop who expressed her comprehension and sympathy with anti-Korean wave protest at Fuji in 2011. This message of government’s need to reduce its involvement with the Korean wave spread and activities, which is supported by a number of scholars and journalists (Yang (2008), Tsai (2008), Kim (2012)) and findings of non-K-pop fans supporting the anti-Korean wave sentiments (they are not anti-K-pop oriented people) should give a worrying note to the Korean state. Nye (2004, 17) was advocating the idea that “in the liberal society government should not control the culture” since too much government involvement may lead to repulsions like the anti-Korean Wave backlash. Even though it is not a serious phenomenon due to small number of people, the government should be aware that it negates all the achievements of the Korean wave in constructing the positive image of “A Good Neighbour” and may lead to the demise of Korean Wave soft power if the sentiment grows strong enough. In this, future research including a careful and thorough analysis of the anti-Korean wave sentiment will be relevant and significant in order to understand the soft power limitation of the Korean Wave in Japan.

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Interviews

1. A, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
2. Y, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
3. M, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
4. K, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
5. E, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
6. N, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
7. D, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
8. H, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 25, 2012
9. L, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 25, 2012
10. R, interview with a female fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 25, 2012
11. S, interview with a female non K-pop fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, February, 5, 2012
12. O, interview with a female non K-pop fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, February, 5, 2012
13. I, interview with a female non K-pop fan, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, January, 20, 2012
14. Q, interview with a female non K-pop fan, Lund, notes taken during the interview, April, 1, 2012
15. U, interview with a female non K-pop fan, Lund, notes taken during the interview, April, 1, 2012
16. Z, interview with a female non K-pop fan, Lund, notes taken during the interview, April, 1, 2012

17. Mr. K, interview with AKiss producer, Tokyo, notes taken during the interview, February, 11, 2012