

Reasons for the Success of KPOP (Korean Popular Music) Culture in the International Spread

Xingnuo Li^{1,*}

¹Xian tieyi high school, Xian, 710000, China

*Corresponding author. Email: guanghua.ren@geccacademy.cn

ABSTRACT

With the introduction of the "Cultural Power" strategy in the form of legislation, South Korea's cultural exports have increased and are no longer limited to the Asian region. In recent years, KPOP (Korean popular music) culture has also become popular in Europe and America. The export of Korean culture has contributed to the soft power and economic development of the country. Studying the strategy of Korean cultural export and analyzing the characteristics of Korean culture can help us make good examples of cultural export and image packaging and provide effective reference for other countries' cultural development industries.

Keywords: KPOP, Korean, Music

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the 21st century KPOP (Korean popular music) culture has gained some influence in Asia. In recent years, KPOP culture has gradually opened its popularity in Europe and America, and it has gradually taken its place in the European and American music charts. Behind this, it is inseparable from the precise control of the Korean culture for the dissemination of market timing and powerful packaging and marketing capabilities. How to combine emerging media and traditional culture to shape the image of our traditional culture will have an important impact on the international communication of our culture.

Since the 1990s, Korean idol groups, both male and female, have been gradually introduced to the Chinese mainland as the first step in opening the international market for Korean culture. Some of the first groups are S.E.S. and H.O.T. of SM Entertainment. Hallyu culture also includes TV dramas, films, and TV programs. With its unique cultural background and entertainment format and well-produced graphics, it has attracted the attention of young people across Asia and has gained unprecedented attention in China, Japan, and Vietnam. Since then, the Korean Wave culture has been growing and has contributed to the spread of Korean cuisine, etiquette, clothing, and beauty in the Asian region.

In recent years, most entertainment companies, led by the three major Korean entertainment companies,

have shifted the goal of overseas development from Asia to Europe and the U.S. KPOP culture has become an important way to expand the influence of Korean culture, and in recent years there has been a certain shift in the way it is planned. The group's songs are mainly in Korean, Chinese, and Japanese, and the special effects and costumes of their music videos have also increased tremendously to meet the international standards. Superm, a male idol group from Hybe, and Blackpink from YG have all started their world-wide tours and the group's performance in Europe and America. Among them, in recent years, male group BTS and female group Blackpink have gradually expanded their influence in Europe and America, gaining unprecedented success and leading other KPOP groups to completely open the European and American markets. Their unique performance form combines vocal, rap, and singing and dancing as one, and each album has a different concept and theme that meets the aesthetic orientation and values of contemporary youth. The positive energy spread by the group members and their unique personal charms have gradually absorbed many fans at home and abroad, making a special contribution to the economic growth and cultural export of Korea.

On June 7, 2013, BTS released their first single "2 COOL 4 SKOOL" with the theme of teenage angst. 13, BTS debuted on Mnet's "M! Countdown" with their first debut performance, and on September 11, their first mini album "O!R U L8, 2?" On November 14, BTS won the Melon Music Awards for Best New Artist, their first

newcomer award since their debut, and on December 7, they made their debut in Japan, holding their first Japanese showcase at O-WEST in Shibuya, Japan. BTS released their second mini album 'SKOOL Luv Affair', which is based on the theme of 'love' for teenagers, and the lyrics scream: 'Love should be hot, singing should be straightforward'. The song was produced by the members themselves, and through the music, they were able to express their hearts for teenagers of the same age. In October of the same year, BTS began a world tour starting in Seoul and from 2014 to 2015, they visited Kobe, Tokyo, Manila, Singapore, Bangkok, Taiwan, Malaysia, New York, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, and other areas in 13 countries and 18 cities with 80,000 people in total. TRILOGY: EPISODE 2.THE RED BULLET". On April 29, 2015, she released her third mini album "Fancy pt.1" with the title track "I NEED U". On November 27th to 29th, he held his first solo concert "2015 BTS LIVE Hana Hana on stage" at SK Handball Arena in Seoul Olympic Park. "On November 30, BTS released their fourth mini album 'Flowery Year pt.2' with the title track 'RUN', which continued the success of the previous album and won the number one spot on many music shows. In 2016, on October 10, the second Korean album "WINGS" was released, with the title track "Blood Sweat & Tears". The album was released on October 10, 2016. With this album, Bulletproof Boy Group won many records: the first Korean singer to have a regular album in Korean on the iTunes Top Album Chart in the U.S.; the first Korean singer to enter the top 100 albums on the Official Charts in the U.K. and land at No. 62; the first Korean singer to reach the Billboard 200 for three consecutive times, and the highest record for a Korean group with #26 on the Billboard 200 and #19 on the Canadian album chart, and all 15 songs on the album entered the World Digital Songs Chart; 7 hours after its release They became the first K-Pop group to set this record with a regular album and held the number one spot on the US iTunes Top Albums chart for two consecutive days; the first Korean artist to stay on the US Billboard 200 for more than a week; and the first Korean album to be selected by FUSE TV in the US as one of the "Best 20 Albums of All Time". The group's first film documentary "Burn the Stage: the Movie" in 2018 documented the highlights of their world tour "THE WINGS TOUR" for their second regular album "WINGS". In the following years, BTS not only had a place in the music industry, but also has a great influence in all walks of life. In 2018, China's CCTV named BTS as "Positive Energy Boy Group, Bulletproof Boy Group", and in the same year, BTS appeared on the cover of the global edition of TIME, giving a speech to the United Nations. "BTS was also selected as one of the 50 most influential people in the world in 2018, the only Korean artist group to be selected.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

When it comes to the influence of Korean culture on Asia, there are many reasons why China and Japan can serve as springboards for the export of Korean culture to the world. In Xu Chengning's "Being Korean" phenomenon under cross-cultural communication the cultural traditions of China, Korea and Japan are similar, and there is a cultural convergence between China and Korea in transnational cultural communication [1]. Both China and Korea belong to the Asian region and have historically belonged to the same Confucian culture in the context of the Chinese culture, so both countries have the same cultural roots, lifestyles, and values. Liu Mingzheng writes that there is a fusion of Confucian ethics and cross-cultural values in Korean culture [2]. The expressions in Korean culture can be identified with Confucian cultural circles: innocent love, tenacious struggle, and patriotic feelings. Due to cultural differences, we cannot introduce cultural fashions directly from Europe and America, but the culture brought from Korea is transformed by the fusion of Asian and European cultures. Yin Hong, a professor of journalism at Tsinghua University, said, "Koreans have a soft and strong national spirit, but express it in a way that is similar to Chinese values."

The rise of the Korean Wave is nothing more than a product of its time, and Korean culture meets the needs of the spirit and popular cultural psychology of an era. Many experts agree on this point, as XuChengning writes that Korean dramas focus on the realism of everyday life. They are as close to real life as possible, with detailed depictions of family life, love and affection, and a sense of originality. Since both Chinese and Korean cultures are influenced by traditional Confucian thinking on the issue of family ethics, viewers can enter the real life of ordinary Korean families through the works and feel the traditional Confucian culture. In Xu Haoran's paper, he also mentions that the psychology of popular culture has contributed to the spread of Korean culture, and the theory of "use and satisfaction" mentioned therein can reflect the audience's psychology very well. First, the psychological satisfaction of entertainment craving [3]. The stress of life has become one of the reasons for people's tension, and KPOP culture can combine modern images with funny and humorous music and dance to make people change their emotions and get entertainment satisfaction during tension. In addition, the audience's herd mentality is also a psychological state that should not be underestimated in the spread of KPOP culture. When kpop becomes a trend among young people, there will be more and more people with a curiosity to learn about kpop.

There is no doubt that the rise of the Internet has brought about a huge change in the transmission of information, and the inevitable condition for the rise of

Korean culture must be the emergence of the Internet. In the study of Yang Sitong, it is written that Korean culture can be divided into mass media and internet communication. In the rise of KPOP culture, internet communication is a relatively large part of it [4]. In the international exchange of culture, global social networking platforms are playing an increasingly prominent role, and the success of KPOP culture cannot be separated from the network sharing function of social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. The number of users of social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter is in the billions, and in this virtual space without borders, KPOP culture can be spread rapidly. KPOP culture can spread rapidly in this borderless virtual space. In the analysis of Zong Linneng, the development of KPOP has a great relationship with the development of integrated media, which realizes the organic integration of traditional media and new network media, retaining the depth and breadth of the traditional media for the development of cultural information and the specialization and rigor of information dissemination, but also incorporating the timeliness, richness, and innovation of the emerging media, changing the traditional way of cultural communication [5]. It has changed the traditional way of cultural communication and made cultural communication diverse and creative.

Policy support as the basis for the development of the industry is considered by many scholars as the fundamental reason for the wide spread of KPOP culture, and Yin Yue mentioned that the Korean government and people have a deep awareness of protecting the cultural industry [6]. In her study, Wu Shixi writes that Korean citizens are strongly aware of copyright, and not only that, but the Korean government has also enacted strict laws to protect it [7]. This policy has put an end to the problem of rampant sound piracy and low awareness of copyright. It has ensured the rights of the Korean music industry and a good creative atmosphere, which in turn has contributed to the development of the KPOP industry.

In the nearly 30 years of the development of KPOP culture, there have been many innovations, and in Baixiaojuan's paper, she mentions that the Korean cultural sector's continuous ability to innovate is the key to KPOP culture going global [8]. It is the innovation of Korean culture that has allowed it to develop more and more rapidly and not be lost to the times. This idea is again supported in Shenlizhu's article that it is because of the innovations made by Hallyu culture that the audience can get rid of aesthetic fatigue. Getting new feelings in new works has also helped Hallyu culture to accomplish a certain degree of mass communication [9]. In her study, Huang Shixi also writes that the perfection of Hallyu culture is a necessary condition for its success, and that only by striving for rationalization in creation, not blindly following the trend, analyzing the

market rationally, understanding the industry network in depth, and strengthening the awareness of cultural communication can the whole Korean culture industry develop healthily, sustainably, and steadily [10]. Only by focusing on the quality and innovation of the works can the Korean KPOP industry be continuously energized.

3. RESULT & DISCUSSION

With the progress of the times, people's demand for entertainment is gradually increasing, and Hallyu culture has grasped the opportunity of the era of melting media and achieved great success in the world by integrating its own characteristics with the needs of the audience. Taking BTS as an example, the reasons for the successful spread of Hallyu culture in the world are divided into three main points: 1. seizing the opportunity of the era of melting media 2. policy support and encouragement from Korea 3. manifestation of their own strength 4. deeper meaning conveyed by the songs.

With the rise and popularity of the internet industry in recent years, traditional movies, films, and music are no longer the only way to expand popularity. Multiple communication methods in parallel, precise target groups, and combined with big data analysis make the spread of Korean culture more smooth, not only limited to traditional methods, BTS through the most used social apps such as Twitter, YouTube, TikTok release music works, shaping its team image, its YouTube "boy with luv BTS has become the first 10 billion streaming artist in Asia by using social apps such as Twitter, YouTube, and TikTok. He participated in variety shows in Europe and America such as "MTV Unplugged", "America's Got Talent", "The Voice", etc. Sheeran, Andrew Taggart, Nicki Minaj, etc. He also collaborated with European and American artists such as Halsey, ED. Sheeran, Andrew Taggart, Nicki Minaj, etc. The rising influence of these artists has led to a lot of media coverage in various countries, and in the process, the Korean Wave culture is spreading around the world.

In addition, Korea has had the foresight to discover the significant role of cultural development for national development since 1970 and has introduced a series of cultural preservation measures. The goal was to make the public feel confident in Korean culture and to show the people the spiritual and material wealth that could be created by the development of Korean culture. In the decades that followed, this strategic goal never changed, despite several changes of regime in Korea. After the 1988 Seoul Olympics, Korean society became more open and tolerant of different ideas and expressions, and people had a higher level of freedom of expression, which laid the foundation for the subsequent rise and diversification of the Korean entertainment industry and provided favorable policies for the subsequent

development of the Korean cultural industry. In 1998, Kim Dae-jung was elected president of Korea and proposed a new strategy of 'cultural nationhood'. In 1998, Kim Dae-jung was elected as the president of Korea and proposed a new strategy of 'culture as a nation', identifying the low-consumption, non-polluting, innovative and creative cultural industry as a key development industry. In order to achieve this goal, the Korean government introduced quite detailed policies and systems, some of which were legislated, as well as significant financial support. At the beginning of the 21st century, Korean film and television productions began to flourish in Asia, and in 2005 the Korean government gave another boost to mercantilism by announcing that organizations promoting Korean culture overseas would receive millions of dollars in government subsidies. It is these platforms that have enabled Korean cultural industry operators to reap huge profits and commercial rewards through activities such as advertising and idol operations. According to 2018 statistics, giving their reported revenue of \$4.65 billion, BTS contributed 0.3% to South Korea's GDP. 2020 South Korea's military service making regulations department then negotiated a decision to postpone military service for South Korean boy band Bulletproof Boys, reaffirming the huge economic benefits and social impact that the Korean cultural industry brings to South Korea.

It should be mentioned that, in addition to all the external factors of policy support and the background of the times, the strength of Korean KPOP groups themselves should not be underestimated. Take BTS as an example, although there is no innovative and original genre belonging to them, but the style of Bulletproof using musical elements is also very diverse, such as the harmonious arrangement of the representative: "FAKE LOVE" defined Trip-Hop/ triphop/ Gothic arrangement. The lyric song "spring day" with Korean folk music is a representative of ethnic instruments. The new wave style Instrumental Pop instrumental pop category representative works, "A Brand-New Day", Dance / house dance music representative "Anpanman", "Go go". The music of BTS member Rap Monster was awarded the "BTS" award. BTS member Rap Monster was praised by XXL in the US as "a real power rapper". Recently, the famous American hip-hop magazine 《XXL》 introduced the top 10 rappers in Korea and mentioned #Rap Monster and its representative song <Do You> <Joke>, saying "Rap He is one of the most versatile rappers in Korea who is able to change his style freely. Since his debut, he has not only gained popularity through his group activities with Bulletproof Boys, but also showed his talent through his solo music.

Unlike the men's groups of the first generation of Korean pop culture, the quality of songs and the morals behind Korean idol groups have continued to improve, with different idol groups having their own team concepts and song styles, deliberately catering to the

needs of different fans. For example, Blackpink girl idol group girl crush style, itzy girl idol group mainly focuses on teenager crush style, and SM Entertainment has been building its own worldview since the first generation of idol groups. In the case of BTS, for example, the concept of the group and the symbolic meaning of the composition are unique. First of all, "BTS" is taken from the first letters of "Beyond The Scene" and the logo is a pair of doors about to open. The symbolic meaning here is the youthfulness of not being satisfied with the status quo and challenging yourself to break through the doors in order to grow. So that door is the future and the challenges you have to face as a young person. And "Beyond The Scene", if translated directly, means to go beyond that scene and face a whole new world. BTS is also an extension and evolution of this symbolism.

4. CONCLUSION

As we can see from the success of Korean culture on an international scale, if we want to achieve a stage of progress in cultural export, we must need to follow the trend of the times, understand the characteristics of the audience groups and the preferences of the audience, and make innovations with the development characteristics of our own culture. If the cultural industry wants to have scale, the industry must need to be led by leading figures. In addition, the most important point is that the state must provide some support and encouragement in terms of policies and funds combined with the above and the development of KPOP culture nowadays, the Korean Wave culture is a successful case of cultural export worth learning from other countries.

REFERENCES

- [1] Xuchengning, The phenomenon of "being Korean" under cross-cultural communication
- [2] Liumingzheng, On the cross-cultural communication of Korean dramas and its inspiration to China
- [3] Xuhaoran, Cross-cultural communication strategy innovation from the popularity of "Gangnam Style"
- [4] Yangsitong, Cross-cultural communication strategies of Korean dramas
- [5] Zonglinmeng, The International Communication of Korean Pop Culture in the Context of Media Fusion - BTS as an Example
- [6] Yiyue, The success of Korean cross-cultural communication as a reference for the foreign communication of Chinese culture(2012)
- [7] Wushixi, A Study of Cross-Cultural Communication of Korean Pop Music

- [8] Baixiaojuan, A study of the influence of Korean entertainment programs on the development of Chinese variety shows
- [9] Shenlizhu, An Analysis of Cross-Cultural Communication of Korean Film and TV Works
- [10] Huangshixian, A Study on Cross-Cultural Communication of Korean Hit TV Series