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*GLOCALIZATION* OF THE KOREAN POPULAR CULTURE IN EAST ASIA:

THEORIZING THE *KOREAN WAVE*

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*GLOCALIZATION OF THE KOREAN POPULAR CULTURE IN EAST ASIA:  
THEORIZING THE KOREAN WAVE*

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines implications of the Korean Wave in relation to East Asia's contemporary media and popular culture, and discusses complex conditions and processing transformation of the Korean and East Asian media industries in response to the globalizing cultural system.

First, the emotional affinity of the diffused Korean TV dramas among Japanese audiences is explored. This was accomplished by in-depth interviews with Japanese audience members; why and the extent to which this local audiences' resonance contributes to influencing rapid circulation of Korean content. Particularly in relation to Japanese audiences, the analysis shows that exposure to Korean TV dramas produces a higher degree of localized identification, which is described as the re-emerging sentiment of "Asianness" from the East Asian viewers' perspective. The shared modern sensibilities and Asian mentality – undergone through the similar social or individual life experience – presented in Korean dramas demonstrates both subtle foreignness and redeemed nostalgia.

Second, this dissertation investigates how the Korean media system builds a glocal identity among regional media consumers. According to Korean media sales crews, the Korean Wave demonstrates a successful market model, which manifests how Korean home-grown content distributes effectively to broader foreign audiences. The Korean Wave in Japan plays an important role in enriching this wave's impact toward broader international markets. The cultural output from the Korean media industry reproduces in multiple genres and connects different media platforms by employing

glocalizing commercialism. In that, Korea's media drive toward glocalization also boosts regional media markets toward commercialization of their own media industries.

## **Chapter I. Introduction**

### 1. 1. Purpose of the Study

East Asia has become a single market and East Asia's cultural sensibilities have been manifested in its cultural commodities through the global circulation of the media and popular culture by growing in this region (Ching, 2000). In terms of the East Asian cultural sphere, the co-constructive connection among the local cultural agencies has generated transnational partnerships, pursuing region-centered production, distribution and promotion. For example, the Pusan International Film Festival (PIFF), held annually in South Korea (hereafter, Korea), is organized by the Korea Film Commission and is considered one of the most influential international film awards in the Asian region by international filmmakers and marketers (Tunstall, 2008). In particular, PIFF plays important roles in merging East Asia's growing film, broadcasting, and entertainment industries and markets. Specifically, cooperation among the Chinese-Japanese-Korean film industries demonstrates such a distinguished cultural link. PIFF's business sector involvement enhances international media trade and reveals new outlets and opportunities for media and cultural exchange beyond PIFF itself.

Consistent with the advanced industrialism of the region, East Asia has been one of the biggest television and film outlets since the mid-1990s and shows active media flows recently (Tunstall, 2008). The increasing intra-regional media flow contributes to segmented market shares merging into global media markets (Iwabuchi, 2002; Thussu, 2007). The more local and regional production becomes integrated with popular culture, the more competition for global market share (Barker, 1997; Chan & Ma, 1996; Ching, 1996, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002; Kim Y.D., 2005, 2006; Lee, 2004; Sinclair, 1996a;

Thussu, 1998, 2007). Since the mid-1990s, neoliberalism, on the coattails of global capitalism, has swept into the East Asian media industry. Local East Asian media systems began to restructure, deregulating local industries and privatizing domestic media ownership for the purpose of preserving the local media and markets (Jin, 2006, 2007). This reform of East Asian media was designed to protect local cultural industries first, and to establish more vulnerable local media markets in response to transnational media conglomerates (hereafter, TMCs).

In Korea, many TV drama series, movies, Korean pop music, and online games have been exported to adjacent Asian countries, from East to Southeast Asia<sup>1</sup>, in large quantity since the late 1990s. This exported Korean media content has obtained unprecedented popularity with broader Asian audiences (Iwabuchi, 2008a; Jin, 2007; Kim, J. M., 2007; Kim, Y., 2007; Lin & Tong, 2008; Ryoo, 2009; Thussu, 2007). This pop culture movement has become known as the *Korean Wave* or *Hallyu*<sup>2</sup> for more than a decade. In general, the Korean Wave has been described as Korean media content, relevant services, and commodities that have successfully gained popularity and market share throughout Asia.

The Korean Wave has overtly influenced both the economic performance of Korean TV and film content providers (Chua, 2004; Jin, 2007; Kaori & Lee, 2007; Shim, 2006) as well as the volume of foreign content consumed among Asian audiences (Kim, J. M., 2007; Lin & Tong, 2008; Shim, 2006; Thussu, 2007; Tunstall, 2008). The

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<sup>1</sup> In this study *East Asia* refers to China (including Hong Kong), Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. *Southeast Asia* refers to Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, The Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

<sup>2</sup> This term was first coined by Chinese news media in the middle of 1998 to describe Chinese youth's sudden craze for Korean cultural products (Kim, Y., 2007, p. 135). Today, the Korean Wave is a common term used to explain the spread of Korean popular culture overseas. The term '*Hallyu*' has been used interchangeably with the *Korean Wave*.

Korean media content has been reached audiences as far away as Mexico and the Middle East since the mid-2000s (<http://www.kbsworld.co.kr>). Despite unique cultural accents, mentality, and cultural symbolism of Korea, Korean media content resonates with other Asian audiences. In addition, this Korean TV programming spreading to Asia supplements insufficient TV content in other Asian local television stations (Chua, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2007, 2008a). In particular, the Korean TV stations and government have become active agents in selling Korean media's popular genres, relevant entertainment commodities, and service packages (Chua, 2004; Jin, 2006; Ryoo, 2009). From the view of the Korean media industry, the Korean Wave is accepted as unexpected success in the history of the Korean media industry, and in turn it is celebrated as one of Korea's defining moments. As Cho (2005) states, "[As Koreans,] we've never had this experience of seeing our culture spread outside our country. I'm very proud but also very cautious." (p. 174)

Broadcast media in Korea has hegemonic power to produce mainstream voices and great immediacy to spread public discourse (Cho, 2005). This control of the public agenda, along with nationwide coverage of the Korean broadcasting system, contributes to certain Korean TV drama series being perceived not only as trivial entertainment and gossip, but also as lingering social texts that affect public opinion (Cho, 2005). Within Korea, TV drama series have become the most popular media genre and are greatly preferred by average television viewers (Cho, 2005; Lee, D. H., 2004). As far as directing styles, formats, and narratives are concerned, Korean TV drama series are very different from the U.S. TV soap operas and other Western TV drama series. The flow of Korean media content into Asia means that the Asian mediascape is no longer

dominated by American TV programs and films. The current consequence is that Korean TV series have reached a wide range of Asian audiences and have become a beloved regional media form, including Japanese media audiences (Tunstall, 2008).

By the beginning of 2000, many studies focused on transnational media research in the Asian region (Iwabuchi & Chua, 2008; Thussu, 2007). Researchers gave their attention to anxiety surrounding Asian media's one-way flow from the U.S. or Japanese media (Thussu, 2007; Tunstall, 2008). Conversely, the Korean Wave—in aspects of media production, distribution and consumption—enhances the visibility of concerns about the local media moves toward Asian nations. Consequently, the Korean Wave also promotes Asian intra-regional media flows. Asian media and pop culture today reflect more balance in media and cultural interchange than in the 1990s in many aspects, including import/export quantities of media content and services (Kim & Kang, 2000).

From a structural point of view, Asian culture during capitalist modern times was reconstructed by a series of historical events and local individual's living experiences. According to Kraidy (2005), the "local" involves construction of socio-cultural meanings, selection of different power struggles, outcomes, and social actions by individuals within their own system. With a consideration of cultural blocs based on regions, there is an obvious tendency for local audiences to prefer their local media content to the foreign counterparts, even when the local media copies a foreign one (Iwabuchi, 2002; Sinclair, *et al.*, 1996; Straubhaar, 1991). In light of global media distribution, the Korean Wave phenomenon is an interesting example of how local

media cater to the regional media market effectively, in spite of a weak market network and infrastructure globally (Thussu, 2007; Tunstall, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to explore how Korean media and popular culture circulate across East Asia in greater volume than existing powerful media agents, specifically the U.S. and Japanese media industries. This study uses two different approaches to analyze the Korean Wave phenomenon, specifically focusing on the exportation of Korean TV drama to East Asian audiences and markets. The first approach is to identify embedded social meanings of Korean TV dramas being consumed by regional Asian audiences, and how these meanings are reinterpreted. The question here is how Korean cultural elements embedded in exported TV dramas are reinterpreted and which of the local elements are articulated in the interpretations.

The other approach is to discover the industrial impact of the Korean Wave, i.e., the degree to which the Korean Wave has become immersed in contemporary East Asian media markets. In particular, this approach is used to enrich cultural globalization discourse analysis beyond the center-periphery thesis (Wallerstein, 1991) and media imperialism (Tomlinson, 1991) arguments. Theoretically, emerging media and cultural synthesis among the local-regional-global triads suggests insightful considerations of hybridization (Kraidy, 2005)<sup>3</sup> and glocalization (Robertson, 1994)<sup>4</sup>. The Korean Wave

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<sup>3</sup> “Hybridity as a characteristic of culture is compatible with globalization because it helps globalization rule, as Stuart Hall once put it, through a variety of local capitals. Hybridity holds that traces of other cultures exist in every culture, thus offering foreign media and marketers transcultural wedges for forging affective links between their commodities and local communities” (Kraidy, 2005, p. 148).

<sup>4</sup> “[...] the term ‘*glocal*’ and the process noun ‘*glocalisation*’ are ‘formed by telescoping *global* and *local* to make a blend.’ ... The terms *glocal* and *glocalisation* became features of business jargon during the 1980s, but their major locus of origin appears to have been Japan, a society which has for a very long time strongly cultivated the spatio-cultural significance of Japan itself and where the general issue of the relationship between the particular and the universal has

as an unusual case carries great complexities of its own from different theoretical perspectives, therefore research about the Korean Wave involves explaining intricate contextual implications of the glocalization of Korean media. This study is a theoretical journey into the Korean Wave phenomenon, conducted in an effort to determine ways media globalization has been processed and distributed into different local versions and to investigate opportunities to strengthen regional connections within the media industry in active response to standardized TMC products (Robertson, 1994, 1995).

### 1.2. Theoretical Backgrounds

Popular culture is one of the privileged topics for discussion and analysis of globalization (Barnerjee, 2002). Global circulation and consumption of films, fashion, pop music, and television programs empirically change local and/or regional forms of culture and sensibility (Ching, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002). In this sense, popular culture is a major vehicle advancing the process of cultural globalization (Yoshimoto, 2003). Despite the significance of globalization in the cultural realm, contradictions among different research findings have occurred. With a historically foggy theory of cultural globalization, studies conducted thus far on media and popular culture have not been successful in explaining the effects of globalization on cultures or in explaining new directions and development of regional or local media and popular culture flow (Sassen, 2003).

Broadly speaking, three lines of research involving the Korean Wave have been conducted. The first line of research explores the Korean Wave's transnational

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historically received almost obsessive attention," (Robertson, 1994, p. 36; See also Myoshi & Harootunian, 1989)



influence and economic transactions throughout Asia (Chung, 2001; Ha, 2006; Ha & Yang, 2002; Kim Y. D., 2005, 2006; Kim & Kang, 2000; Park, 2001; Yoon, 2006). Major studies in this strain stress the quantitative growth in the distribution of Korean media content within East and Southeast Asia. In light of Korean nationalist views, the power of Korean media content produced as part of the Korean Wave enhances the potential growth of Korea's culture industry in terms of global scope. In this regard, Korean media content exports should be fortified for the sake of strengthening Korea's industrial expansion into the global economy (Kim Y. D., 2005, 2006; Kim & Kang, 2000; Park, 2001; Yoon, 2006). The limitation of these export-oriented, quantitative studies is that they do not consider the existing merits of geo-cultural dividends of the media industry in the larger picture. Therefore, the researchers overlooked significant industrial and cultural benefits of the Korean Wave and did not concern themselves with a pre-existing unequal distribution of transnational media content on the global mediascape.

The second line of research focuses on examining idiosyncratic textual appeals of Korean media content to foreign audiences, particularly regional Asian audiences (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007; Heo, 2002; Hirata, 2008; Iwabuchi, 2008a; Kaori & Lee, 2007; Lin & Tong, 2008; Mori, 2008; Yang, 2003; Yoo & Lee, 2001).

Heo (2002) conducted an audience survey of Chinese college students to explore their emotional reactions and involvement in Korean media content. Heo's study showed that young Chinese audiences consumed Korean media content because it mediated preferable narratives involving Confucius mores and modern Asian life as well as cinematographically entertaining audiovisual images. Yoo and her colleagues

(2001) conducted an investigation of Korean media consumption among East Asian audiences using the cultural proximity thesis. “Cultural proximity” (Straubhaar, 1991) is rooted in East Asia’s Confucian socio-cultural legacy. This made the Korean media content understandable and welcome among the East Asian television viewers, Yoo, *et al.* (2001) concluded. In summary, studies reinforced cultural proximity as an essential source of pleasure in Korean media consumption by broader Asian audiences.

In contrast, the most recent audience investigations suggest that Asian audiences’ consumption of Korean media content demands examination with more multifaceted approaches, rather than one-dimensional analyses (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007, Hirata, 2008, Ling & Tong, 2008; Mori, 2008; Yang, F. I., 2007). Because Asian audiences are not one homogenous group, their interpretations of Korean media content vary with local audience members’ social identities, sense of belonging, shared histories and experiences, etc. For instance, Hanaki, *et al.* (2007) examined how the *Winter Sonata* (a famous Korean TV drama) syndrome impacted Japanese people’s perception of contemporary Korea and Korean residents in Japan. Likewise, Iwabuchi (2008a) revealed that recent images of Korea and Korean residents in Japan were more positive among viewers of *Winter Sonata*. The program content extends beyond Japanese colonial ruler’s views held in pre-modern history by the citizens of the two nations. Hanaki, *et al.* and Iwabuchi demonstrated that the *Winter Sonata* syndrome changed Japanese viewers’ attitudes toward Korean residents in Japan, contributing to more positive views than those previously held.

Despite the Korean Wave’s economic ascent, the Korean cultural industry has not been in a prime position to access global cultural capital. In this sense, could the

Korean Wave's cultural effects be explained by cultural proximity and affinity for the familiar? In other words, can the Korean Wave be translated back into materialist views as an extension of Korea's regional economic domination (Lee, K. H., 2008)? There are lingering questions about location and circumstances by which the re-emerging regional cultural flow is triggered. Certainly the Korean Wave raises the issue of how this cultural diffusion is articulated in regional and global cultural dimensions.

In the third line of research, the Korean Wave is examined as a regional case driven by dynamic infusions of globalization into popular culture (Cho, 2005; Chua, 2004; Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Hirata, 2008; Kim, H. M., 2005; Lee, D. Y., 2004; Lee, K. H., 2008; Lee & Won, 2005; Shim, 2006). Korean scholars Cho (2005) and Lee & Won (2005) individually reinvestigated the Korean Wave's theoretical implications from a critical perspective. These researchers speculate that the Korean Wave discourses in Korean society are contained within the following ideological terrains: cultural nationalism, neoliberal industrialism, and post-colonialism (Cho, 2005; Lee & Won, 2005). These frames illuminate different visions of the Korean Wave as it has matured during the years. Without doubt, these theory-centered perspectives have contributed to the Korean media industry's adoption of some glocal business tactics—for example, joint ventures and co-producing—in pursuing foreign media markets. Thus, the Korean Wave has occurred in part via Korea's industrial globalization projects (Cho, 2005; Lee, D. Y., 2004).

Developing regionalism in other fields, such as political relations and economic integration, is not separated from the cultural realm (Ching, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002). Lee & Won (2005) argue that the Korean Wave has different consequences depending on

how it develops: The Korean Wave has contributed to change in the East Asian cultural bloc in terms of regional conceptions of “Asianness” as mediated/affected by mutual cultural interchange. And, without local/regional media success (*i.e.*, the Korean Wave), cultural imperialism persists.

Lee and Won’s (2005) regionalist approach provides a fresh perspective for understanding the Korean Wave phenomenon, because it has critical implications for the regional-local cultural integrations into the global realm. This explains how the regional-local cultural flow has ultimately been affected by global cultural formations and where the cultural flow would be directed. The importance of conceptualizing the Korean Wave is not only to understand its unique characteristics, but also to investigate integrated industrial conjunctures within and outside the region. In fact, Ching (2000) asserts that the Korean Wave is “a transnational form of cultural production and consumption very different from cultural forms heretofore associated with nation-states” (p. 255).

The third research area, the notion of hybridity (or hybridization), is a vital argument used to analyze blending characteristics of the Korean Wave content. Shim (2006) found that the Korean pop music industry produced hybrid music forms and organized an idol pop-star system for the regional music marketplaces. In turn, these initiatives created a standardized music business model for the industry, built on the Korean Wave. Combining Korean music industry mechanisms with home-grown music content and singers through domestic competitions gives the Korean music industry strength rivaling the much larger Asian music market (Shim, 2006).

Studies utilizing the concept of hybridization in analyzing in the Korean Wave (a spread of Korean popular culture, including TV dramas, films, pop-music, and online games, particularly visible in Asia) have not addressed the matter of *how* local media industries' advanced status and market size primarily affect the transnational media content business. There is much evidence that Korean TV dramas have been transformed into various formats and commodities to accommodate consumers in a number of Asian locales. These transformations are mediated by local fans' patterns of consumption and their market responses. Significantly, commodification of transnational media content in the local market can be a central determinant of local market success (Mosco, 1996 ). Of course, the distribution of Korean dramas to other Asian regions promotes a wide variety of commodification, which involves repackaging original content and linking niche businesses (Banerjee, 2002; Jin, 2007; Mosco, 1996; Shim, 2006). For instance, the Korean drama location tour package (known as *Hallyu* tours in Asia) has contributed significantly to the growth in popularity of Korean dramas among Japanese fans (Hirata, 2008). For example, many Japanese women travel to Korea, and the resulting interactions and experiences have contributed to a changing view of Japanese toward Korean people. And seeing Japanese female tourists in Korea provides an alternative to the previously dominant view of Japanese as former colonial rulers.

To understand the Korean Wave phenomenon in the context of the global-regional-local triad, empirical processes and functions of the Korean Wave should be examined. First, the role of the Korean government as a corporative agency for the global media structure must be considered. Second, the overall transformation of the

East Asian regional media systems can be seen in a dynamic relationship among national and regional industrial initiatives. Third, the regional audience receives foreign media from the same cultural bloc (Asian) and experiences greater emotional resonance to the imported regional content than they do to content distant from their familiar space-time horizon (Iwabuchi, 1998, 2001, 2005).

### 1.3. Outline of the Study

This study is composed of seven chapters including this Introduction. Chapter Two is a review of the previous literature dealing with relevant theoretical arguments. Chapter Two establishes Korean media glocalization as the analytic frame for viewing the Korean Wave and the active circulation of Korean media products within the East Asian region. Major theories in this field – cultural imperialism, cultural proximity, globalization, regionalism, hybridization, and glocalization – are examined and evaluated. These theoretical concepts provide substantial explanatory power in analyzing the Korean Wave.

Chapter Three provides a brief history of the Korean Wave and an explanation of how Korean media have been popularized and welcomed by the audiences primarily in three East Asian countries: China, Japan, and Taiwan. This chapter describes and elaborates on the empirical prevalence of Korean popular culture in the East Asian region.

Chapter Four provides explanation and justification for the research methodology used in this study. As a primary method, Korean TV program providers and regional audience members were interviewed. The specific interview protocols,

participants, and procedures are addressed in the chapter. Along with the in-depth interviews, popular texts of Korean Wave TV dramas are analyzed to determine the degree to which the meanings are consistent with the audience's emotional responses.

Chapter Five contains an analysis of the Japanese and Korean audience interviews. Thus, the Japanese audience interviews are interpreted and analyzed and compared to Korean audiences' perceptions of the Korean Wave phenomenon in other parts of Asia. This chapter includes Japanese fan club member interviews, and the discovery of Korean drama readings that resonate with the fan's spatial locality and postcolonial consciousness. This analysis considers ways to inscribe Korean drama into Japanese audience perception and which elements contained in Korean dramas particularly empowered Japanese fans to relate and imagine even more the sense of Asianness.

In Chapter Six, the Korean Wave's industrial aspects are discussed, based on the interview data collected from Korean TV broadcasters and content distributors. Specifically, the exportation of Korean television programs being based on and affected by particular promotional initiatives of the Korean television industry aimed toward the regional Asian market.

Finally, Chapter Seven provides a summary of the theoretical and empirical findings about the Korean Wave and the analysis contained in previous chapters, including implications for the phenomenon and the research itself. This chapter includes strong support for the notion that the Korean Wave is a successful model of glocalization accelerated by Korea's national industrial aims.

## Chapter II. Literature Review

### 2.1. Transnational Media Flow

Paying attention to the transnational media flow, referring to it as the circulation of media content and related products among nations, is meaningful in two ways. First, the transnational media flow at a global level indicates how global media forms and how content is distributed to local audiences. Second, this flow varies depending on the size of the local media market, ownership of media entities, the level of industrial development within a locale, and cultural preferences among local media consumers. Thus, transnational media flow analysis clarifies how the mass media as a popular cultural form moves and how media cross national borders regardless of local media systems.

The major claims of transnational media flow research differ sharply. On one hand, studies of global media flow in media content distribution in the international market emphasize a one-way dominant flow from the perspective of political economy that indicates the flow from the central to peripheral region. This line of research addresses an asymmetry of media distribution between the developing and underdeveloped nation-states media industries. Regarding this binary division of the global media and culture, cultural (or media) imperialism is shown empirically via the observable widespread distribution and consumption of U.S. media content across the world (Mattelart, *et al.*, 1986; Schiller, 1976; Tomlinson, 1991; Tunstall, 1977; Wallerstein, 1991).

On the other hand, more recent studies of media flow effects on transnationalism or multiculturalism published in the international communication field



refute a one-way perspective of transnational media flow and dominance of U.S. media in the global market. Critical scholars in this stream argue that reducing the arguments to cultural imperialism oversimplifies the many co-existent cultural phenomena mediating intra-regional media flow from other parts of the world outside the U.S. (Appadurai, 1996; Ching, 1996, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002, 2005; Sinclair, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Straubhaar, 1991, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999; Thussu, 1998). The multidirectional transnational media circulation has been affected by regional media market conditions and the level of industrial advancement in national or local media markets. As a result, these circulation patterns introduce more complexities into the global media industry. While U.S. media hegemony exists in many Asian and numerous developing nations (Hannerz, 1997; Tomlinson, 1999; Thussu, 1998, 2007), less global media directly permeate to local levels. In many cases, local media systems operate autonomously to certain degrees in terms of content production and distribution.

More specifically, transnational media flow in East and Southeast Asia draws much attention to the international media scene. Local media industrial performance appears to be more active in exchanging media content and pop cultural commodities among media entities within regions. According to Waterman and Rogers (1994), inter-Asian media circulation was very limited until the early 1990s. A survey on the cross-Asian media flow indicated that Asian nations were generally less dependent on imported regional media programs than any other continent (Waterman & Rogers, 1994). Waterman & Rogers' survey investigated media systems in nine Asian nations<sup>5</sup> and found media consumers in those countries tended to prefer their own national media

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<sup>5</sup> Nine Asian nations included in Waterman & Rogers' research were Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand.

content over imported content from other Asian countries. At least two explanations exist. First, the so-called “cultural discount<sup>6</sup>” (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988) applied to a diffusion of foreign content has been greatly applied to Asian media consumers; the U.S. media as the standardized global format had been accepted comparatively well as opposed to content from Asian countries. Second, Asian countries commonly take a conservative attitude toward foreign cultures and their potential influence on local cultural traditions. Colonialism in Asian countries during the past century contributed to reluctance in opening their national and local cultures to unfiltered foreign cultural influence (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988; Waterman & Rogers, 1994).

Nevertheless, there was a defining era for transforming the East Asian mediascape in general. Since the late 1990s, the sweeping reform of Asian media involved both decenterizing local media industries and privatizing media ownership. This speedy reform greatly influenced subsequent media flow among Asian countries. The media industry in Asia realized the importance of regional media exchanges of various forms of media content and services (e.g., Chua, 2004; Cooper-Chen, 1999; Iwabuchi, 2002; Lee, D.H., 2004; Mikami, 1993; Nakano, 2002; Singhal & Udornpim, 1997).

According to Chan and Ma (1996), the emerging regional pattern of media flow within Asia was triggered by widespread pushes of globalization and hyper-urban modernism. By experiencing a great degree of economic growth domestically, Asia realized more industrial opportunities for regional neighbors. Simultaneously, Asian nation’s strategies for protecting their own media industries were effective in limiting

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<sup>6</sup> Cultural discount will be explained thoroughly in the following chapter 2.3 (p.21).

the influence of global conglomerates by adjusting local industries and markets. As Appadurai (1996) mentions the interwoven and dynamic nature of cultural homogeneity and heterogeneity that exists among local or regional media. Appadurai (1996) explains that globalization does not simply mean a new homogenized content, entity or process, but also myriad heterogeneous local versions. Similarly, French and Richards (2000) argue that not every country is affected by globalization in a single, linear, and predictable manner, but rather each country has its own response to the process of globalization. Development of Asia's regional connections, specifically transnational movement of media products and popular culture, demonstrate that Asia actually chose a different path for keeping their own media and cultural industry from eroding in the face of a strong push toward globalization based on major Western media conglomerates (Ching, 2000; Erni & Chua, 2005; Shim, 2006; Sinclair, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991; Straubhaar, 1991, 1996).

## 2.2. Beyond Cultural Imperialism

According to Tomlinson (1991), cultural imperialism asserts a division of cultural domination exists in the global sphere on the basis of the center-periphery paradigm. This explains how the Western media industry has dominated many other media and cultural industries and markets. In particular, U.S. cultural imperialism eventually impacts pop culture forms and products globally. Tomlinson (1991) attributes this cultural and media dominance to U.S. political hegemony. Hence, the main concern with cultural imperialism directly connects to the logic of cultural homogeneity through the diffusion of U.S. media commodities. Hamelink (1983)

argues, “The principal agents of cultural synchronization today are the transnational corporations, largely based in the United States, which are developing a global investment and marketing strategy” (pp. 22-23). He points out that U.S. pop culture is capable of destroying local cultures, replacing local cultural idiosyncrasies with mass-produced, U.S.-centric cultural objects. This tendency can be observed in many developing non-Western (Hamelink, 1983; Mattelart & Mattelart, 1986; Tomlinson, 1991). Local cultures in these developing regions have tended to be more assimilated or adjusted to the commercial mechanism of the U.S. media industry. For example, since the 1970s Latin American television stations have actively adopted popular U.S. TV show formats and reproduced them with their own regional spin. These imitations have been effective in producing more programs at lower cost, and, inherent risks found in programming decisions are reduced—the imitated programs have achieved success in prior markets (Hamelink, 1983; Featherstone, 1990; Lee, 1980; Nordenstreng & Varis, 1974; Tunstall, 1977).

Thus, a central argument of cultural (or media) imperialism is that the transnational media circulation has the potential to weaken indigenous cultures—globalized forms of culture dispersed through a dominant media model tend to preoccupy the mainstream cultural markets with mass-produced media and cultural commodities. In terms of the center-periphery paradigm, a culture from the highly powerful center can co-opt local or regional cultures on the periphery, and media are seen as crucial to this process. Barker (1997) sees media in this situation as an important element in maintaining the dichotomous center-periphery structure. From this perspective, the hierarchical formation of the global media industry has been maintained

by a few dominant media production and distribution systems. The consequence is that this solid structure makes it hard to move marginalized media (and culture) toward the center position.

However, the global media landscape has shown gradual growth of regional media blocs in some areas. This region-based transnational media flow has become more ostensible than ever before (Thussu, 2007; Tomlinson, 1999; Iwabuchi, 2008a). The circulation of multinational media capital and strategic cooperation between the local and regional media industry has focused intently on regional media consumers who can share geo-cultural commonality (Chang, 2000). Recent analyses have generalized without consideration of minor contra-flows present in local (or regional) mediascapes (Ang, 2007; Morely, 2006; Thussu, 2007). In fact, the media industry in this on-going globalization process continually reformulates dynamic in-and-out cultural flows separate from the major media industries at the center. TMCs, in particular, are likely to utilize data about these region-specific flows in order to apply their commercialism to an ever-broadening range of audiences (Ferguson, 1992).

Cultural imperialism as an explanation is limited, however, in addressing changes in the current global media industry. The industrial consequences of cultural imperialism reveal weakness to speculate about the complexity of transnational media flows among local, regional, and global media industries in the global environment. As described above, transnational media flows are no longer as firmly deterministic as the cultural imperialism analyses predicted based on a center-periphery division (Appadurai, 1996; Friedman, 1994; Tomlinson, 1999; Thussu, 1997). Rather, the transnational media flow is linked to an integrative framework of media economy at a global level,

depending on the circulation of media capital, content, copyrights, market share, media ownership, technological advancement, and transnational media policies (Appadurai, 1996; Kraidy, 2005). Therefore, cultural imperialism theorists should reconsider media players in decentered regions such as East Asia, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America.

It is ostensibly noted that transnational cultural flows are getting more intertwined and interdependent (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1997; Iwabuchi, 2002, 2007, 2008b; Kraidy, 2005; Straubhaar, 1996; Tomlinson, 1999; Thussu, 1997). A nation's media is still dominant in the domestic media industry; local audiences, findings suggest, prefer their own TV shows and films to transnational TV series or movies (Tunstall, 2008). By the same token, Morley (2006) claims that the original argument of cultural imperialism oversimplifies the complex nature of transnational media flow, pointing out "Its failure to address the more recent strategies of *glocalization* adopted by many of the key media producers" (p. 34). Likewise, a binary approach of cultural imperialism toward transnational media flows drives the idea that non-Western culture (so-called "Eastern culture") has been victimized by relentless cultural penetration from the West. As a result, non-Western culture is too often seen as inferior. Although local culture tends to easily blend with imported culture, local culture still bears its own tastes, profound values, and unique identities (Bhabha, 1996; Friedman, 1995; Morley, 2006). In other words, the inflow of transnational media content to different local audiences and industries is likely to be domesticated in accordance with local values, preferences, sensibilities, and meaning systems (Miller, 1992; Morley, 2006). Ang (1994) claims that, in modern history, a homogeneous culture at a global level has never existed. Most transnational media content and cultural

services are more likely to be reformulated locally and reshaped within local social and cultural contexts (Iwabuchi, 2005).

### 2.3. Cultural Discount and Cultural Proximity

Two theories relevant to the transnational media industry are “cultural discount” (Hoskins & Mirus, 1988) and “cultural proximity,” (Straubhaar, 1991, 1996) have been frequently applied to the industrial mechanism of local media exportation and distribution. Both of these theories provide explanations about reasons media content produced by a certain local media entity is distributed to a wider range of transnational markets than its counterparts.

First, the theory of cultural discount takes into account economic logistics in transnational media flow in terms of local media similarity to media in a foreign market. Hoskins and Mirus (1988) proposed the theory of cultural discount to explain the reason why the U.S. media and pop culture industries have been economically dominant to all others on the globe. Cultural discount suggests that media programs rooted in one culture will have a diminished appeal elsewhere. This is due at least in part to viewers finding it difficult to identify with the language, styles, values, beliefs, and institutions represented (Barker, 1997).

It is important to note that imported (*i.e.*, foreign) programs selected by local audiences are easy to be decoded from their own perspectives (Ang, 1985; Iwabuchi, 2002; Lee, 2004; Morely, 2006). If the program is produced in a foreign language, its appeal to the audience is likely to be reduced. Although the imported program often has been dubbed or subtitled, the local audiences are not as likely to eagerly adopt the

program. Obviously, subtitles and dubbing increase production costs of programs. If the language the same, accents, nuances, or styles may still contribute to a reduction in the size of local audiences. As a result, the sale value of the foreign program in the international media market, as reflected in the price that a broadcaster is willing to pay, is naturally discounted. Non-Western programs carry some measure of cultural discount in the global market, while the U.S. programs (English language programs) are not subject to a great deal of cultural discount. A program produced in English is more culturally or linguistically hegemonic in the transnational media market regardless of regional differences (Hoskins, *et al.*, 1996; Sinclair, 1996a, 1996b). Similarly, the U.S. media industry remains a major media player, particularly in the international film and television markets. The U.S. content has a relatively small cultural discount of its exported content as compared to content produced elsewhere (Hoskins, *et al.*, 1996).

According to Sassen (2003), the national and the non-national are mutually exclusive conditions and national boundaries are primarily concerned with cultural movement in the global audiovisual market. Outside the U.S., regional media industries have their own cultural formations separate from the Hollywood brand of pop culture. In Latin America and Asia, the U.S. pop cultural hegemony has been challenged by comparatively strong competition from regional media agencies (Friedman, 1994; Iwabuchi, 2002, 2004, 2005; Morely, 2006; Sinclair, 1996b, 1997; Straubharr, 1996, 2002; Thussu, 1998; Tunstall, 2008). For instance, Egypt is a major regional producer in the Arab cultural bloc, Brazil and Mexico in Latin America, and Hong Kong in parts of Southeast Asia (Hoskins, *et al.*, 1996). The wider diffusion of Latin American television programs into other cultural blocs has been increasing (Kraidy, 2005;



Sinclair, 1996b, 1997; Straubharr, 1996, 2002). Local/regional television programming in a variety of regional markets shows growth; TV programs based in one country, or within the region, are more successful in their transnational distribution than exported U.S. television shows (Tunstall, 2008). While cultural discount theory makes more sense of a dominant one-way media distribution process from an industrial perspective, transnational media circulation is akin to a regional perspective in this respect.

Straubharr's theory of cultural proximity (1991, 1996) illuminates existing region-centered media flows. Cultural proximity defines how transnational media content from an adjacent geographic region or a region similar in other aspects, has greater influence on audiences residing in that particular region. Straubharr speculated that in terms of consuming imported TV programs, audiences prefer more geo-culturally related programs to less geo-culturally related programs. He explicated, "[the active audiences are] tending to prefer and select local or national cultural content that is more proximate and relevant to them" (Straubharr, 1991, p. 42). Also, Sinclair (1996a, 1996b) added evidence of cultural proximity in transnational media flow at a global level and from a regional perspective that goes beyond languages. Elements such as dress, nonverbal communication, humor, religion, music, and narrative style have been found to mediate audience preferences (Sinclair, 1996b). According to Cunningham, *et al.* (1998), "Audiences will first seek the pleasure of recognition of their own culture in their program choices," and "Programs will be produced to satisfy this demand, relative to the wealth of the market" (p.181).

Cultural proximity is primarily demonstrated in reading the text of foreign programs that actively engage regional audiences. As far as cultural proximity is

understood by audiences, familiarity with imported regional media content is a central source of attraction for local audiences, according to Straubharr. The local audience selects a specific foreign program from a pool of other imported programs and the selected program tends to have culturally common elements for the local audience. Thus, the local audience identifies easily and understands similar cultural elements in the imported program. Less culturally recognizable regional media content produces dissatisfaction and less interest in content from a radically different culture (Sinclair, 1997). In short, the theory of cultural proximity functions as a plausible reason local audiences select certain imported content.

A major critique of cultural proximity theory is that there is no direct correlation between culturally proximate feelings through exposure to regional media content and innate ethno-geographic identities of local media consumers. In Asia, the direct application of Straubhaar's cultural proximity idea to transnational media flow cannot be applied successfully; because media flow in the Asia is more region-centered, but this regional media flow cannot be explained solely as a result of territorial and ethnic commonalities among them. The cultural identity belongs to a certain territorial boundary (*i.e.*, race and ethnicity) cannot create automatic emotional bonds with the people living in the same region. For example, East Asians have shared the same racial or ethnic identity but they have not been perceived great levels of emotional ties each other. Rather, certain close feelings among East Asians are emerged from their profoundly common historical experiences for establishing modernized nation-states during the past decade (Chung, 2003; Iwabuchi, 1998, 2002; Lee, D.Y., 2004). The collective experiences for East Asia's modern revolution throughout the region, even

though the timing and degrees of advancement in each nation within the region have been varied, make more sense them to be identified (Chua, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2005).

When Asian audiences are exposed to the televised images and stories from neighboring countries, this can be given the reflection that makes people think of past and present modes of living. Foreign but not quite foreign images and stories have inspired a certain degree of similarity to local audiences' experiences and have been tuned their feelings and views to the same spatial and time imagination (Iwabuchi, 2005). Iwabuchi (2002) emphasizes that familiar historical and social nexus between the local and the regional enable local audiences to prefer regional media content.

It is important to note that the contemporary modern life experiences among the Asian people are strongly tied to each other in terms of shared cultural meanings. Televised images from the same geographic region allow people in nearby countries to think of the 'imagined community' as described by Anderson (1983). Differing versions of stories within a region involve less psychological distance than stories from outside the region.

In short, the theory of cultural proximity when applied to audience demonstrates that significant cultural similarity increases regional audience interest in certain foreign media content. But functional similarities—which the theory has proposed—including languages, styles, values, and communicative patterns still cannot predict exactly which programs will be selected. More significantly, the imported programs from the close regional neighbors are selected primarily by knowledge and analogous sensibility rooted in much deeper cultural ties, such as structural social similarities involved in texts, images, meaning systems, structure of feeling (Williams, 1961), and the feelings

of contemporariness (Ching, 2000; Iwabuchi, 1998, 2002; Lee, D. H., 2004). For example, most popular Korean TV dramas do not present stories about the poor Korea in the recent past, but rather stories of either prolific and glamorous urban Korea or stories of distant pre-modern Korea in the feudal age. Thus, these visual images and narratives portrayed in Korean dramas are of interest to other Asian viewers in part because Korea's history is similar to their own societies. Concurrent modes of living portrayed in Korean dramas that are consumed regionally indicate that cultural proximity seems to be pronounced (Yang, 2003; Kim, H. M., 2005; Lee, D. H., 2004; Lee, D. Y., 2004).

In much the same manner, Iwabuchi (2002) discovered how Asian people describe their sense of cultural proximity through audience interviews. He conducted in-depth interviews both in Taiwan and Japan from 1996 to 1998, in an attempt to understand how Japanese TV programs were consumed differently than U.S. TV programs by Taiwanese audiences. These interviews explored audience-centered findings, in that the local audience members reconfirmed their sense of *Asianness*<sup>7</sup> by means of viewing imported Asian TV programs. Iwabuchi specifically argued that localized Japanese media content in East Asia conveys the specific meaning to Asian audiences of “things from Asia but not exactly belonging to Asia,” this is in part because Japan within East Asia has been treated as a non-Western colonizer. This separates Japan from this East Asian community. Japan is technically located in the geographical area called ‘Asia,’ but it nevertheless exists outside Asian culture in many ways (Iwabuchi, 2002). By means of diluted Japanese nationality among Japanese

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<sup>7</sup> “Asianness” will be examined thoroughly in Chapter 5 later. In general, the sense of *Asianness* is the shared identity among Asians relative to national identity within the regional communities.

cultural commodities, Japanese popular culture easily enters the Asian region in spite of its negative historical image.

In sum, the theoretical value of cultural proximity in analyzing transnational media flows is to explore why certain regions' popular cultural forms are prone to evoke culturally close intimacy to media audiences within the same region. Historically and culturally shared aspects of media content from geographically close regions make more sense to audiences in that region than the content from a more remote culture (Ching, 2000).

#### 2.4. Globalization and Nation-supported Media Systems

As noted earlier, the current transnational circulation of TV shows and films from one nation to others reveals complexity beyond the center-periphery dyad. Cultural imperialism overgeneralizes the reasons for the prevalence of U.S. cultural commodities around the world. Barber (1995) claims that there have been reverse culture movements in today's world, and that on one side is the reinforcement of a homogenized global culture, and on the other side is the opposite force for heterogenizing (or hybridizing) existing cultures. In the realm of media and popular culture, globalization may be seen as two converse patterns of movement that combine to become a circular movement (Barker, 2002). Cultural globalization has been understood as a simultaneous dual swing that is composed of local engagement with global cultural commodities and rising industrial power of the local media and popular culture. For instance, East Asian media flow in particular reflects such a rise in local media consumption (Banerjee, 2002; Chan & Ma, 2002).

The discourse of nationalism at a local level was found to have a direct relationship to political sovereignty dialogues, but having less to do with matters of cultural manifestation (Mosco, 1996). However, nationalism in this global era has increased concerns about the emerging cultural industry in the local-regional-global triad. More free circulation of media and cultural commodities, their investment finances, production cooperation, and copyright ownership across a dynamic triad proposes retrospective inquiries about newly emerging local nationalism via local media commodities:

...nationalism is a form of local opposition that gives priority to a resistance based on spatial identification over the general tendency of globalizing capitalism to rationalize and homogenize spatial difference, thereby undermining the grounds for such identification. ... [nationalism] neglects the relationship between space and commodity or, more formally, the mutual constitution of commodification and spatialization. As a result, nationalism tends to accept local control, whether or not that comes with deepening commodification (Mosco, 1996, pp. 210-211).

It is obvious that increased cultural globalization does not indicate the end of nationalism (Bhabha, 1990; Hutchinson, 2001; Guibernau, 2001). Nationalism based on the local has not been understood as plural and multifaceted ideological links across politics, economy, culture, and communication (Lee, D.Y., 2004; Wang, 2006). According to Thussu (2007), there are a few attentive international media industries that include both private and state-sponsored flow, such as the Indian film industry and the

Pan-Asian TV network. Thussu also described another layer of international media activists termed “geo-cultural media caterers” that have particularly powerful market shares within homogenized cultural-linguistic locations around the world. The recent role of the Korean media industry within the overarching Asian media market is an example of this layer of geo-cultural media catering. In terms of the three layers which Thussu proposed the US-led Western media agency as belonging the first layer and local or regional media agencies belong to the second and third layers. These entities become more organized and are supported by the state or nation itself.

The idea that nationalism is rooted in the local is an effective tool for developing the process of globalization. In Asia, Americanized media formats and content (e.g., Lee, D.Y., 2004; Yoshino, 1999; Wang, 2006) provoke discussions of cultural independence from the prevalence of homogenized global culture. At the same time, the issue of the exportation of locally produced cultural items hinges on responding to the global cultural economy:

State-supported initiatives have also been an important contributing factor for the globalization of cultural products. In South Korea, for example, state policies of a quota system for local films and support for such events as the Pusan International Film Festival, have put Korean cinema on the world map (Thussu, 2007, p. 14).

Nationally-supported media systems have been rapidly developing in the East Asian region and are challenging the international market shares of global media entities. Since the late 1990s, increasing intra-regional exchanges of media capital,

content, and production crews within East Asia have developed local strategies against global conglomerates. The East Asian media industry and market as a whole began to reshape its infrastructure, operating mechanism, and organizational formation. Each local media industry in East Asia, including China, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea, confronted active globalization reinforcement (Chan & Ma, 1996; Hukill, 2000; Ishii, 1996; Oba & Chan-Olmsted, 2005; French & Richards, 2000). Even Japan's top-tier global cultural industry faced multiple challenges from other East Asian national media initiatives. According to Yoshino (1999), nationalism in Asia explains the rising national consciousness and cultivation of national identity stressing national culture and history that has been growing during the process of globalization. Yoshino (1999) suggests that nationalism recently appeared to be a dual phenomenon, consisting of the formal, nation-supervised process, and the informal, market-centered process. As a successful international media player from a non-Western industry, Japanese media and popular culture has incorporated its sophisticated blend of contrasting tastes between West and East in their popular media content. Japanese TV shows, film animation and *mangas* (*i.e.*, printed comic books) have attracted more foreign audiences in the West than the East in terms of market share. In general, the Japanese model of a nation-supervised media industry has established the foreign target market with a dual strategy: one purpose is to obtain the standardized market appeals, and the other is to represent sensitivity to the regional market so that this compound strategy can be effective in appealing to various segments of the market (Yoshino, 1999). In general, the exportation of local media content to the foreign market has occurred in a specific pattern. Domestic programs are the first preference of the media pecking order, but the



next preference can be very flexible depending on the choices of the local audiences, as well as the strengths of the imported regional content (Tunstall, 2008).

Japanese media content from the 1980s to the mid-1990s was actively distributed to East and Southeast Asia and this demonstrated a typical pop cultural wave by a nationally-supported media system. Back then, the Japanese Wave hit not only Asian countries but also Western countries. Interestingly, the Korean Wave has been considered another regional model of a nationally-supported media system that is analogous to the former Japanese pop wave. To some extent, these two waves have much in common and the analogy is useful in analyzing the industrial mechanism of the recent Korean Wave. However, the Korean Wave can be differentiated from the previous Japanese Wave (Lee, D. Y., 2004). The major difference between these two waves is the genre difference --Japanese pop music, fashion magazines, *mangas*, and animated TV shows were the most popular genres of the Japanese Wave, while the Korean Wave involved TV drama series, pop music (*i.e.*, particularly teen band formats) and films (Iwabuchi, 2008b; Shim, 2006). Another difference between the two waves is in the circumstances surrounding them. The Japanese Wave originated from an emerging political ideology of “Asianism” in Japan (Iwabuchi, 2002). Since the end of World War II, Japan has considered ways of rebuilding regional relationships with the previous colonial countries of Asia using images of Japanese modern development, containing strong Western flavors (Iwabuchi, 1998; Yoshino, 1999). As a unique non-Western colonizer in the past, Japan is eager to regain its regional membership in Asia (Ching, 2000).

Unlike the Japanese Wave, the Korean Wave broadened the region's industrial integration carried by neoliberalism across Asia (Lee, D. Y., 2004). The Korean Wave thereby reflected the logic of neoliberal capitalism driven by growing market competition and economic obsession. As a result, the spread of Korean pop culture throughout Asia has been accelerated in large part by media commodification. The nationally-supported commercial drive in Korea took advantage of demands for media content by the Asia region and this actually created new outlets for Korea's cultural products. The Korean Wave represents an unprecedented pop cultural move throughout Asia in terms of political, cultural, and industrial impact on the region. In less than ten years, Korean pop culture has spread widely and has recorded rapidly growing economic transactions in its transnational business.

Asian media often view the Korean Wave as a celebrated national triumph. Korean media content has not had much exposure to the general public in other East Asian nations before the Korean Wave began. The recent fascination for all things Korean is a unique and sensational circumstance: "When it comes to what's hot, hot, hot, South Korea has emerged to dethrone its traditional—and bigger—rival, Japan. In Singapore, and all over Asia, people are embracing Korean music, TV stars, technology and fashion" (Yong, 2006, para. 1). This media content has had a significant impact on the regional media scene. This has made Asians actively rethink what the Korean Wave is. Of more historical concern, China, Korea, and Japan have had very sensitive relationships, and therefore each nation has conceived the Korean Wave differently depending on their respective historical links to Korea itself. For instance, Chinese and Japanese media deal with the swing of Korean pop culture and commodities in their

domestic markets as a regional cultural competition. According to these media, Korea shows unanticipated strengths of media programming in the Asian audiovisual market. According to the *South China Morning Post*, “The actual economic effect of pop culture exports is insignificant compared to industries such as semiconductors, ships and car-making, whereas the wave is boosting confidence in Korea and things Korean both domestically and internationally” (Salmon, 2005, para.5).

The Korean Wave is considered a national success by the Korean public. Moreover, the Korean Wave is perceived as having enhanced Korea’s national status in the region and beyond. “Korean TV dramas have been touched by Midas, turning to gold and promoting a boom for Korean pop culture in neighboring countries that never seems to die down” (Shin, 2005, para. 1).

Slightly different from Asian media discourse on the Korean Wave, Western media analysts (mainly U.S. and U.K. journalists) assess the Korean Wave as a reflective cultural incident that is an outgrowth of industrial dynamics within East Asian cultural interactions consistent with the region’s entangled politics, economy, and cultural hegemony. Emotional sensitivity originated from East Asian historical ties and the Korean Wave often provokes nostalgia between three countries – China, Japan, and Korea. Japanese colonial occupation of East Asian countries in the last century has remained an area of tension. Thus, fears and antagonism toward the former colonizer have been displayed, especially since Japan has spread its media and pop culture to the Asian region for many years. China, Korea, and Taiwan did not officially allow the importation of Japanese media content into their media markets during the second-half of the 1990s; the term for an official ban varied by country (Onishi, 2005). Nationally-

supported restrictions were targeted to control the spread of Japanese media and cultural commodities across East Asia. Korea, in fact, was the last country to open its market to Japanese media and pop culture, at the end of 1998. The negative Japanese historical legacy in East Asia and even other parts of Asia has tended to be a barrier, resulting in Japan experiencing a larger cultural discount than other regional media agents. During this time, the rapid spread of Korean pop culture was more likely to be accepted in the Asian media market than Japanese media and pop culture. Many Chinese audiences have agreed with Onishi (2006), who stated, “There is no obstacle to our accepting South Korean culture, unlike Japanese culture” (para. 18).

According to NPR (National Public Radio), Korean television drama has depicted a shared sense of Asian culture. “Those are Confucian values like the importance of family, obedience and respect for ones elders. Values that many Chinese feel they’ve lost” (Lim, 2006, para. 5). Sustained Confucian morals and values are well embodied in the plots and narratives present in Korean dramas. Along with these common Asian characteristics, the Korean dramas grasp the Western modern image, an object of yearning for many Asian people. A flamboyant urban life style and sophisticated cosmopolitan ideology are highly visible in the setting of the Korean television dramas (Chua, 2004; Lim, 2006). The mediated Westernized modernity seen through the Korean Wave TV dramas illustrates that modernization in Asia has been equally conceived as Westernization (Chua, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2008a). Additionally, the Western model of capitalism becomes a primary standard for Asian people to pursue happiness and success of their own, both individually and collectively (Ju, 2009).

The Korean Wave TV drama producers have played a significant role in filtering unfavorable Western values and appropriately mingling Korea's traditional thoughts of the Confucian morals alongside the dominant modern images in many Asian countries (Chua, 2004; Lin & Tong, 2008). Korean television producers and other production crews are very skillful in their techniques, and their sophisticated ways of portraying contemporary Asians produces emotionally sensitive and stylish drama (Chua, 2004; Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007). The Korean Wave, as the Western media sees it, has been interested in the link to historical relationships among East Asian nations instead of the economic impact of the phenomenon: "After having been colonized or overshadowed by its neighbors, Japan and China, for centuries, the country [Korea] finally has the chance to outdo them on the cultural stage" ("Asia goes," 2006, para. 20).

For Korea, the recent Japanese attraction for 'things Korean,' rooted in the Korean Wave in Japan (Onishi, 2004), can be an opportunity for Korea to participate in the advanced Japanese media system. Japan, unlike China, is perceived by Koreans as a global model of cultural industry so Korea hopes for a cooperative partnership with Japan (Lee, Y. S., 2006). The recent success of Korean dramas in Japan has offered a great chance to demonstrate to the Japanese media industry and its audiences that Korea is a leading global media player. The Korean media industry has cultivated a bilateral relationship with the Japanese media industry via the Korean Wave. Thus, Koreans have clearly different attitudes toward China and Japan. With regard to China, Korea has a strong confidence about its cultural economy and categorizes China as its own cultural market. In contrast, Korea considers the Japanese media industry as a futuristic model, and any partnership with Japanese media industry is to be established for the

purpose of elevating Korean media to the global standard: “The ideal win-win model for Asia to be a global hub for entertainment business would be a combination of Japanese capital and Korean products to sell in the Chinese market” (Lee, Y. S., 2006, para. 16).

Most recently, the rise of the Korean Wave across Asia brings about an opposing backlash of the phenomenon, specifically warnings from other nations concerning Korea revisiting imperialism. The rise of Korean pop culture in the Chinese media market is understood by Korean media industries as the success of localizing Korean pop cultural formats<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, this growing one-way influx of Korean TV programs to China has provoked cautions and critiques on the issue of unfair trade between the two nations (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007; Ryoo, 2009). In particular, Chinese media has singled out the imperialistic tendencies in the Korean Wave and this voice of Chinese media has spoken out against this apparent monopolization, referring to the Korean “cultural invasion” and “unprecedented confidence” Korea currently enjoys. Part of the conservative Chinese public predicts that Korean media and pop culture will continue to grow and become dominant in the Chinese market (Salmon, 2005; Wan, 2005). Responding to China’s worries about increasing Korean media content inflow to their culture, the Korean media industry has tried to find ways to reciprocate in exchanging cultural products with China through investments or co-production strategies (Yang, 2006).

In much the same way as in China, opposition has surfaced to the Korean media and cultural influx in part of Japanese nationalists and Taiwanese broadcasters. In more

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<sup>8</sup> In regard to this, the example of Chinese idol boy band, *Shinwoochi*, is explained in chapter 3 (p.56).

active reactions to the perceived threat, China and Taiwan have set up new foreign TV quotas on domestic broadcasts and have started to limit airing imported Korean dramas.<sup>9</sup> Chinese filmmakers, television producers and actors recently claim that their uncomfortable feelings for the Korean Wave have caused them to call for their audiences and government to recognize the imbalance of the cultural circulation and excessive influx in regard to Korean pop culture: “South Korea’s government does not see the Korean Wave just as a way of spreading its culture, but also wants it to represent Asian culture” (Wan, 2005, para 28). To some extent, the asymmetrical inflow of Korean media to the rest of Asia has remind the discourses of Asia’s cultural dependence on the particular national media content in comparison to U.S. and Japanese pop culture’s one-way inflow for a long time.

The previous research of Asian media industry focused on exploring the nature of a global-local dyad in regards to global media’s market shares so that intra-Asian media flows did not considered as prominent as either in academia or industrial analysis. Recently emerging asymmetry of intra-Asian media flow draws attention to not only its quantity of local-on-local trade but also its cultural reproduction within the regional media industry (Iwabuchi, 2005). As a whole, recent intra-regional media flow among East Asian countries seem to be stable as one active media movement. Perhaps, this case might be a rare example in the regional media circulation occurring in the non-western media industry. The increasing transnational distribution of Korean media contributes to creating a contra-flow against global media flow fully relying on the U.S.

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<sup>9</sup> For example, according to a Hong Kong daily newspaper, “the Taiwanese government is considering a ban on the broadcast of foreign dramas prime time, a measure that seems to be directed against popular Korean dramas” (“Hallyu phenomenon,” 2006).

media (Thussu, 2008; Tunstall, 2008). The admixture of the Korean media content with other regional media formats, systems, and local services intensifies East Asian media culture to one of a shared commercial media market. More importantly, this is ostensible in that this intensifying regional media interaction does not guarantee comparatively balancing cultural dialogues yet.

A paradox for the Korean Wave is that different protective reactions from other East Asian media industries as noted above have been conducted simultaneously with their copycat initiatives, which idealizes the Korean Wave as an effective business model for other Asian countries. Because of the success of the Korean Wave, the Korean government's financial support appropriated for the pursuit of increasing Korea's market shares overseas has increased year after year (Lee, K. H., 2008). Korea's proactive local strategies mainly target Asian regional markets, attempting to build an export-oriented media and culture industry. On the flip-side, reproduction of Korean media content and local pop trends and their re-promotion could be a detriment to those East Asian marketers who are riding the Korean Wave in their local markets. Practically speaking, Korean media industries have just begun opening their domestic markets to other regional media industries, particularly in the labor market. More foreign media workers rooted in the Asian region have adopted production protocols and methods from the Korean media industry.

#### 2.5. East Asian Regionalism and Cultural Hybridization

There is an obvious stream in the East Asian media sphere, that of regionalism (Ching, 2000; Chua, 2004; Harvie, *et al.*, 2005; Lee, D. Y., 2004; Sohn & Lee, 2005;



Tunstall, 2008). Side-by-side with a great level of Western cultural influences, the major urban centers in East Asia – *e.g.*, Hong Kong, Taipei, Singapore, Shanghai, Seoul and Tokyo – have built a dense flow of trading their local cultural items in their regional centers. These East Asian urban centers have increased tight alliances in accordance with the similar visions, goals and cooperative objectives so this is referred to as a regional model of developing modernity (Chua, 2004). Moreover, some particular regional circumstances in East Asia remarkably influence the re-emergence of the current regionalism.

According to Harvie, *et al.*(2005), the first factor in the re-emergence of East Asian regionalism is the systemic failure of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in managing the global economy. The WTO system generated, in the view of many, disorder and unfair trade in the international economy and market network. The WTO policies did not prohibit a free flow of the dominant global industrial agencies. The second factor in this new regionalism is the fact that the European bloc has much greater global prowess than other areas, and therefore, Pan-American free trade spreads further and interrupts regional cultural trade in all parts of the world, including Asia. The third factor is the East Asian financial crisis during 1997-98—the concomitant economic downturns among East Asian nations contributed to the integration of the region into a more unified industrial unit. The last factor of East Asian regionalism is the growth of accessibility among the countries in the region through new media technology and increasing human networks. In spite of historical hindrances and cultural conflicts among nations in the region, East Asian people more often opt to open their individual and social lives within their regional communities. In turn, media

systems in these open markets play a huge role in integrating the region (Harvie, *et al.*, 2005). Importantly, East Asian regionalism also affects the co-existence of globalization and regionalization in the scope of media and culture influences (Ching, 2000).

East Asian intra-media flow was very limited until the 1990s. Most East Asian media were dominated by domestic programs—the media markets were small and each nation had its own media infrastructure; many of these systems were less developed than in other regions with the notable exception of the Japanese media system. Thus, there were no products for intra-regional trade in TV programming or film content. According to Langdale (1997), more than 90 percent of the top twenty television programs in the Philippines, Singapore, and Korea were produced in their own domestic market in 1995. Waterman and Rogers (1994) present similar results—about 34 Asian television entities conducted research and discovered that 73 percent of their national television program hours were domestically produced, with 21 percent from the United States, and only six percent from other countries, including less than four percent from other Asian countries.

In addition to this re-emerging regional bond, growing media technology has allowed East Asia to have more broadcasting channels (Banerjee, 2002). Most East Asian media systems include a number of channels and the ability to launch cable and satellite TV channels. This increase in media channels and has allowed viewers more access to regional programs. For example, STAR TV Asia, owned by Rupert Murdoch's *News Corporation*, was the first global company to hold competitive ground in the content area of East Asian media. As the first global media player in Asia, STAR TV distributed some particularly Asian-flavored rather than Western content to local

audiences (Iwabuchi, 2002). As a consequence, more Japanese TV melodramas via STAR TV channels were available, and this contributed to a regional boom. In another example, MTV Asia, the most famous TV music show, introduced more Asian pop music from Korea and India rather than the original American pop music (Ching, 2000).

However, limitations for the regional flow of East Asian media remain, including differences in languages, entertainment formats, tastes, and government regulations for importing programming. In many cases, spillover of broadcasting signals from neighboring country's satellite broadcasting is construed to have a negative cultural influence on local communities (Langdale, 1997). Notably, Chinese government censorship focuses primarily on their broadcasting systems. To protect the domestic television market in China, local cable operators are required by law to limit their foreign programming hours to less than 25 percent of their total programming. Also, foreign programs in the primetime slot (*e.g.*, 6:00 to 10:00 pm) are allowed less than 15 percent of the total broadcasting hours be imported content (Lee & Won, 2005).

Besides the broadcasting quota, the Chinese media market is also strongly influenced by piracy in all kinds of media goods. "Figures from the International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) attribute film 'piracy' levels in excess of 90 percent to China, Ukraine, Indonesia, Colombia, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Pakistan, Kuwait, Romania, and Bolivia" (Yar, 2005, p. 680). In addition, Taiwan has a foreign TV quota, requiring no more than 20 percent of programming be imported (Cheng, 1988). To be fair, Korea also maintains a foreign program quota, limiting foreign programs to less than 20 percent of total network TV hours. However, the Korean cable TV providers can broadcast imported TV programs without limits (Han, E.Y., 2003). In

light of these regulations, Western broadcasters have often experienced a larger trade barrier in East Asian media markets than in other regional culture markets. On the whole, the regionalization of East Asian broadcasting means that neighboring regional TV content is perceived by these East Asian governments as more proper and a better fit to local audiences. And of course to East Asian broadcasters, regional TV programs require much smaller investments than their U.S. counterparts (French, *et al.*, 2000; Hukill, 2000).

While there are both positives and negatives in increasing intra-regional media flows in East Asia, the most significant question is to what extent this flow actually brings a local culture's mixture as opposed to a standardized global form of culture. Many anthropologists and culture scholars claim that cultural mixture cannot be considered a new phenomenon (Appadurai, 1996; Bhabha, 1996; Kraidy, 2005). These scholars hold that all cultures have experienced interchange during centuries of interaction and have taken some elements from other cultures to indigenize into the home culture. This has been a constant cultural process since human history began. However, as the scholars point out, contemporary cultural fusion is different from cultural mingling among individuals. The current cultural mixture within a region is more likely to incorporate a commercial motive, surging hybridization of different cultural forms. Today's cultural mixture generally has drawn academic attention to locate and observe cultural globalization (Canclini, 1995; Kraidy, 2002; Morley, 2006; Shim, 2006). Hence, the current hybrid culture reflected in local-to-local and/or global-to-local interchange aims to accommodate more systemic institutionalization (Canclini, 2000; Guilianotti & Robertson, 2007; Iwabuchi, 2005; Kraidy, 2002).

With regard to optimistic views of cultural hybridization, Kraidy (2002) claims that hybridity has emerged as a privileged way of conceptualizing global and local articulation. There have always been dual forces – that is, globalization and localization, cohesion and dispersal, disjuncture and mixture – entailed in cultural transnational interplay. Kraidy argues that hybridization is a practice that redirects how a structure is actively reproduced in a posited hegemonic sphere (Kraidy, 2002). Kraidy continues, “Hybridity as a clear product of, say, global and local interactions, I believe that hybridity needs to be understood as a communicative practice constitutive of sociopolitical and economic arrangements” (p. 317).

Significantly, emerging cultural space as a result of hybridization contributes to the commercial needs in a relatively competitive culture industry. Thus, commercial drive relying on cultural hybridization is likely to rule over weaker cultural players through the process of commodification. Often, cultural hybridization acts a tool for boosting competition among media and culture industries. According to Kramer (2000), “Under the currently hyperactive conditions, migrating populations, commercialism, and progressivism are creating niches, changing the faces of nations, lifestyles, and energizing a fusional ‘in-between’ of cultural interaction I call cultural accent” (p. 21). Here, cultural accent enriches the resources of cultural hybridization driven by media and culture industries, which generates more niche markets and manufacturing cultures. Many popular culture genres, such as pop-music, sports, TV series, films, and fashion, are examples of hybridized cultural manufacturing.

Another example of hybridization is media text that reveals the increasing prominence of standardized global media industry systems grounded in commercial

logic designed for pursuing profits (Kraidy, 2005). The local culture is unable to separate from the global focus on commercialization. The notion of hybridity cannot escape undermining context in the first and third world, center and periphery, and colonizer and dominated settings (Wallerstein, 1991). To some degree, the notion of hybridity bears the assumption that a superior culture exists over all other cultures. This primary cultural form, the “superior” culture, is more likely to co-opt other cultural forms. Bhabha (1990) claimed that the hybrid culture facilitates a new sphere for rational resistance against the dominant cultural force, but this ideal-world view is too difficult to realize in the face of commercialization. The hybrid cultural sphere does not simply eschew from cultural hegemony that existed in the former colonial territories. In this respect, I would argue that a variety of hybrid genres of popular culture appear unable to remove the dominant-subordinate structures between the global and the local.

The notion of hybridization raises critical issues related to cultural inequality and hegemonic flow captured in a dominant-dominated industrial structure. I would argue that cultural hybridization tends to use more promotion, relying on industrial hegemony that is difficult to deconstruct given the existing order of global culture.

In terms of previous research on the Korean Wave, the Wave has been framed as an example of cultural hybridization. Shim (2006) employs Kraidy’s (2005) notion of hybridization in analyzing the Korean Wave. He argues that the successful exportation of Korean pop-music business across Asia reflects the hybrid nature of Korean pop music content and its related music industry. In particular, Shim (2006) explains that Korean idol pop music has developed hybrid content as well as new systems that accommodate exporting operations in the music industry. The music content is created

as Korean lyrics are paired with Western hip-pop rhythms and the dance performances of these idol bands substantially increases the visual entertainment aspects of Korean pop music. This music has been central in spreading the Korean Wave to different parts of Asia along with the Korean TV dramas. Shim (2006) concludes that hybridization has occurred as Korean music business agents tried to mingle their commodities with more popular global music formats of that period. His research revealed that format mixture and stylistic imitation of Korean pop music had a lot to do with boosting the Korean Wave as a new pop trend. Undoubtedly, this model of Korean pop music actually helped Korea's music business sectors (Lee, D. Y., 2004; Shim, 2006), but did not foster new regional interaction, as hybridization would suggest.

Although hybridization as a postcolonial perspective helps explain the increasing local or regional culture and contextual mixture, the view overlooks the point of how the hybrid cultural form becomes a commercial product in the global market and how they promote their business and build broader diffusion across cultural boundaries. Once a hybrid cultural form infiltrates culturally similar regional audiences (*i.e.*, those who share common cultural accents), its effects can be strong (Friedman, 1995). But, I would argue that the echo from this hybrid cultural content gradually fades and finally disappears. Then, the global cultural industry no longer uses the weaker hybrid cultural form, and soon changes the adapted hybrid cultural content into a new commodity. Therefore, the hybrid cultural content has a short popularity cycle that quickly erodes. Cultural hybridization in the popular cultural domain is more likely to grow into affluent resource pools for the dominant cultural economy. Hybridization itself is not enough to create a contra-flow from the global stream. As noted, dominant global

cultural capital<sup>10</sup> moved quickly toward Asia, riding the Japanese Wave as Japanese pop culture gained more regional popularity (Ching, 2000; Chua, 2004; Iwabuchi, 2002; Yoshino, 1999).

Similar to the Japanese pop movement, Korean TV dramas are based on generic formats adapted from existing Japanese dramas. Korea's nationalistic goals of exportation have consistently helped trigger economic growth in the Korean media industry (Chua, 2004). For example, the Korean Culture Ministry is in control of running major support programs aimed at spreading the Korean Wave and checking the progress of the sixteen government agencies involved in various initiatives. According to the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Korea plans to pay special attention to certain target countries in expanding the Korean Wave to Brazil, Russia, India and China. To facilitate this plan, the amount of funding for these programs was more than \$300 million (Yang, 2006).

## 2.6. Glocalization of the Popular Culture

The process of globalization in the cultural domain varies depending on different cultural systems and structures, as well as the degree of local perception of globalization. In other words, differing cultural and industrial systems and visions for change in the local arena affect the degree, types, and rate of globalization present in the local culture and industry (Mosco, 1996). While globalization has been manifested in every corner of the world, the implementation of globalization is sustained through a

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<sup>10</sup> Here the term "capital" has to be understood with much broader meanings within the media and cultural industry field. This should incorporate finances/investments, technological and/or industrial infrastructures, self-programming capabilities, and market shares.



variety of models of glocalization within specific local or region markets. Hence, glocalization as a theoretical framework is worthy of notice in explaining co-constitutive structures of transnational media and popular culture as well as being a key process of content modification and commodification of local media products.

The meaning of glocalization is understood as a combination of the words “global” and “localization.” It is defined as the customizing of global products and services to suit particular local (or regional) tastes and demands (Robertson, 1995). The term *glocalization* originated from the Japanese term *dochakuka*, coined from the agricultural principle of adapting one’s farming techniques to local conditions. And this meaning was employed in Japanese business sectors for global localization that meant loosely, micro-marketing (Robertson, 1995). So in these terms, glocalization emphasizes the co-presence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies within any given cultural terrain. Guilianotti and Robertson (2007) state:

First, glocalization registers the potential for strong trends towards cultural economy, as illustrated here through the categories of *relativization* and in part, *accommodation*. [...] We may recall that ‘glocalization’ originally referred to the reformulation of goods and services to suit regional markets (p. 147-149).

The glocalization of local media and cultural form obtains universal cultural items, promotional models, and industrial systems from an economically advanced market. Then, these global items are re-constructed to include elements of the local culture that are adapted selectively to fit the existing local market structure, cultural

preference, and audience sensitivity. It is important to note that sophisticated adaptations of universal cultural items from the global cultural form need to be culturally encoded by the local industry itself (Roudometof, 2003). In essence, glocalization involves adapting global cultural items to fit a particular local market with the goal of seeking broader diffusion to other parts of the region, and/or to do the reverse, that is, flowing adapted content out to the entire world. Commodification, as one of key processes in glocalizing media and pop culture, retains particular cultural customs while creating new cultural forms rooted in local customs, context, value and meaning systems, and tastes.

In much same way, I would say that the Korean Wave has been grounded in glocalization of the Korean media content and industry. This has been demonstrated through commercialization and distribution of adapted content in the regional market, creating cooperative programming and financing systems, and inspiring Asian values in the adaptations of content. Simply put, evidence of glocalization in the case of the Korean Wave is seen in both content formation and industrial convention. The most popular Korean Wave content is Korea's home-produced television dramas and pop dance music. These genres have been particularly successful in terms of content formation because they show Korea's own undiluted cultural accents and social value systems. Other local cultural accents in glocalization, including the Japanese pop content as an original glocalization model, reveals several differences from the Korean Wave content. For example, the Japanese media industry removes any signs of "Japanness" from its content produced for international circulation including TV cartoons, animated films, TV dramas, and comic books (Iwabuchi, 2002). When the

Japanese media industry plans to circulate its media and cultural products into the rest of Asia, a major hurdle is Japan's image as a former colonizer. To overcome this historical baggage, the Japanese culture industry needed content that emphasized other cultural products that would be attractive to the rest of Asia. These include high-tech products, Japan's cosmopolitan modernity, and universal worldviews (Iwabuchi, 2002).

The initial form of the Korean dramas, the representative content of the Korean Wave, were created by mimicking previous Japanese dramas. Korean TV producers then reconstructed them to fit their own styles, narratives, and emotional touches (Lee, D. H., 2004). In contrast to the content from Japan, the Korean media content does not lose Korea's own social and cultural values and meanings in its media narrative, implying that the exported Korean TV series is not simply a copy of the former Japanese program. The Korean TV dramas were originally planned for domestic audiences, so the fact is that these dramas should make sense, first, to local Korean audiences, if they were to be successful. The emerging Korean Wave reflected the fact that Asian audiences would also be pleased with the drama if Korean domestic audiences liked it. Domestic success of Korean dramas has been a very important criterion used by Korean production companies when deciding further moves toward regional or international markets.

In many aspects, the Korean Wave has copied the process of glocalization used by the Japanese culture industry. For Korea, Japan is a fascinating example in rebuilding its global standing through adopting and imitating the American media industry. According to Iwabuchi (2002, 2004), the glocalization of the Japanese media

by the Asian market is a convincing reflection of Japan's the successful indigenization of American popular culture. Japanese media content has taken a role in recreating Asian-styled American programs not similar to other Asian programs. The Korean media industry endeavored to adapt the Japanese media's glocal strategies for its own use and the Korean Wave has accelerated this tendency.

The Japanese media industry first promoted a particular tool referred to as a *format trade* in its media business (Iwabuchi, 2002). The main purpose of this format trade was selling only a form of template for specific TV shows, rather than buying the entire program. The format trade of Japanese television increased profit for each local Asian media company, reducing the costs of importation. Further, the imported Japanese TV programs cost less than the cost of creating unique local TV programs. The primary example of format trade was the presence of the Japanese pop idol system in other parts of Asia – *e.g.*, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong (Lee, D. Y., 2004). In 1993, HoriPro Entertainment Group, the largest Japanese entertainment company, established branches in Hong Kong and Beijing in order to pursue the Mandarin-speaking music market (Lee, D. Y., 2004; Kim, Y. D., 2005). They held large-scale auditions all across China, searching for local Chinese pop stars. STAR TV Asia aired the competition and five winners were selected from among more than 400,000 contestants. These winners made their debuts in 1994 (Iwabuchi, 2002).

Similarly, the Korean music industry reproduced the Japanese pop idol format with Korean media's systematic approach. As a result, a number of Korean pop idol bands (from "HOT" in the mid-90s to "Dongbangsingi" in 2007) were born and paved the way for the Korean Wave. For example, following the huge fame of the Korean boy

band H.O.T. in China in the mid-1990s, SM entertainment company, H.O.T.'s agency, contracted to train girl bands using the Japanese entertainment management system as a model. These bands, including SES and BoA, were trained in a variety of ways to make them appealing to a broad range of Asian viewers. This training includes voice, dance, and foreign language classes. Two members of SES were actually selected for the band because they spoke English and Japanese fluently (Lee, D. Y., 2004; Shim, 2006).

BoA, another famous Korean pop-music icon successful in Japan, started her music career training in Japan when she was only twelve years old and produced her albums in Japanese, Korean and English. In 2002, BoA's debut album in Japan hit the number one spot on the "Oricon Weekly Chart," the equivalent in Japan of the American Billboard Charts. After achieving success in Japan, SM entertainment is currently testing BoA's potential for success in the Chinese market. Significantly, SM Entertainment's success in the Korean music business has produced many followers through similar star-marketing processes, and this has enabled Korean pop music to achieve a high level of success in the Asian music industry (Lee, D. Y., 2004; Shim, 2006). According to Kim (2005), the Japanese Wave developed by "multi-window" media production; multi-window refers to media being transformed into different genres. For instance, an original Japanese *manga* (e.g., Japanese comic book) is remade as a TV show or animated film and sells in the form of DVDs along with the sound track. This creation of multi-window packaging for each popular Japanese program maximizes a program's popularity cycle and in turn increases its market share across media platforms.

As the East Asian media industry has strengthened mutual bonds in production and distribution, the multi-window approach to the production of local content has grown. For instance, the Taiwanese TV series *Meteor Gardens* (*Liuxing Huayuan*) revealed an interesting perspective on local media globalization across East Asia:

In 2000, a Taiwanese producer reproduced a Japanese *manga* story into a television series, *Meteor Gardens*. The college-students' drama series featured four complete unknown young men as the principle actors, collectively introduced to the media world as *F4*. The series was an instant success throughout East Asia. It was screened in Hong Kong and Singapore and subsequently in Korea in 2002, whereas in the PRC they were watched on DVDs. Every public appearance by *F4* throughout the region draws huge crowds of screaming fans. Their success in East Asia was absolutely an unexpected event (Chua, 2004, p. 210).

*Meteor Gardens* was remade from the original script of the Japanese *manga* – e.g., *Hana yori dango*. Borrowing the story from a famous Japanese *manga* meant that the series was designed to appeal to fans of the *manga* in the region (Iwabuchi, 2002). In fact, the new version of *Meteor Gardens* dealt with a college student's life and romance in Asia in order to easily relate to many Asian youth. The hybrid characteristics of this TV series demonstrated skillful TV production styles as well as a large-scale local promotion of the leading male actors in the *F4* group. After the TV series ended, the title role of *F4* has spotlighted new Asian entertainers. The Taiwanese media has strategically utilized these entertainers to advertise Taiwanese programs and

pop music to other Asian countries. The debut album of the F4 band quickly spread, with concerts and fan meetings held in every Asian country that aired the TV series.

A noticeable feature of glocalization is immediacy in diffusion. “Content is being exchanged or cloned so rapidly that there is an increasing sense of connectedness. Success in one market is very quickly transferred to another market” (Keane, *et al.*, 2007, p. 24). In the case of *Meteor Gardens* and F4, the media was quickly exported to other Asian countries before the Asian viewer quick response cycle disappeared. In slightly more than two years from the time the TV series started broadcasting in Taiwan, five neighboring Asian TV stations broadcast this TV series on their own channels (Chua, 2004). The popularity of this TV series and its stars immediately transferred to the adjacent countries. In 2008, Korea reprogrammed *Meteor Gardens* into a Korean TV drama entitled *Beautiful over Flowers*. This show had 20 episodes in a 60-minute format, and was then successfully exported both to Taiwan and Japan.

In economic terms, globalization is referred to as the “spatial convergence of capital” (Mosco, 1996) that transforms a certain territory when resources and commodities flow out of or into the territory. The convergence of cultural capital occurs within transnational or nation-state enterprises. Communication and media technology expand beyond the scope of locations linking people to the primary juncture of manufactured popular culture, often reflecting national concerns within the transnational business market (Mosco, 1996). As Tunstall (2008) explained, most countries intend to import pop cultural content primarily from the United States. The general rule is that a large country would not import media content from small countries because the small country’s media content does not easily transfer to the large country’s

audiences. Interestingly, the Korean Wave has broken this general pecking order in TV program circulation. The growing Korean media diffusion in the wider and larger Asian region is often compared to the earlier Japanese Wave.

Under the WTO system, the East Asian national media slowly opened their markets to global media companies and experienced the rapid change of the transnational television program trade (Banerjee, 2002). Besides increasing the transnational trade, developing media technology led East Asian media owners to vastly increase their own local channels. Accordingly, combining the elements of the internet, broadcasting systems, cable TV, and satellite TV enabled countries to easily receive adjacent regional TV programming. In East Asia, an insufficient amount of local programming significantly contributed to a new import/export pattern in the region. Korea's export-oriented industrial structure captured the economic potential of its media in creating the Korean Wave. The exportation of Korean dramas demonstrates a Korean version of glocalization that is different from Japanese formats, generic conventions, and promotions.

The Korean Wave comes at an opportune moment. The East Asia region needed more programming and the Korean media industry took advantage of the opportunity. The Korean media industries were successful at exporting their media content in part because of the cultural similarities between Korea and the broader East Asian market. The glocalization strategies of the Korean broadcasting corporations have been quite effective. The current Korean Wave phenomenon has been actively observed in Japan, an event unprecedented in Japanese TV history.



In sum, this study aims to examine the Korean Wave phenomenon through an analysis of glocalization of the popular culture. First, the emotional affinity of the diffused Korean TV dramas among East Asian audiences is explored, along with the extent to which this specific emotional resonance contributes to influencing Korea's transnational media business. Second, an explanation of how the Korean media system, industry, and government work together to build a glocal model of Korean media and culture industry is offered. The study addresses the following questions:

- 1) Why does the Korean Wave emerge and become popular throughout Asia?
- 2) What are the central meanings of the Korean Wave for the people and media industries in East Asia?
- 3) What roles do Korean television dramas play with East Asian audiences, in particular Japanese audiences, given the postcolonial relationship between the two nations?
- 4) To what extent does the Korean media industry accomplish the glocalization of its home-grown media system, products, and industry?
- 5) In what ways do the glocalized local cultural formats and industrial initiatives affect the existing cultural movement in the global cultural sphere?

## Chapter III. The Phenomenon: “The Korean Wave”

### 3.1. The History of the *Korean Wave*

What can producers, filmmakers, and distributors who belong to the marginal world do? They do not constitute a global media industrial bloc that operates pervasively and consistently in nearly all countries and across most industry sectors. For many years, the countries belonging to the non-center media industry have been ripe markets for Hollywood products, and some of these marginal markets have laws and policies designed to protect their cultural sector from invading cultural and media products. These countries use protective means, such as limits on hours of foreign content broadcasting or number of films, as well as using the promotion of domestic media productions to establish comparable domestic culture industries (Canclini, 2001). From the filmmaking sector, Korea has resisted imposing a screen quota that would limit Hollywood film penetration into Korean culture and markets.

Unlike the film industry, the Korean broadcasting industry has increasingly followed free-market principles given the deregulation and privatization of worldwide media mentioned earlier. Eventually, this global media industrial swing brought about the birth of a new commercial television system—the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS)—in Korea in 1991. By this time, the control of Korean broadcasting shifted in large part from the government to a free-market system (Kim, 2001), involving privatization and commercialization of the system. Korean broadcast media that had been previously supported by the public sector in a very short time became entirely dependent on advertising revenues. For example, the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), as a national public broadcaster switched its second channel (KBS 2) to a

commercial operation so only KBS 1 aired the public broadcasting service with no commercials. Undoubtedly, the market-driven KBS 2 influenced employees in terms of work ethic and professional production conventions. For instance, “A 1998 survey by the Korean Broadcast Producers’ Association shows that 78.1 percent of producers indicated that they were under increasing pressure to raise the ratings of their programs” (Kim, 2001, p.100).

As stated earlier, the *Korean Wave* refers to a sudden upsurge of Korean popular culture, including television dramas, films, pop-music (hereafter, K-pop) and online games. In many parts of Asia, including Japan, the *Korean Wave* suddenly emerged around the end of the 1990s. It should be noted that the term *Korean Wave* is commonly used by the public to refer to the popularity of Korean popular culture across Asia. Likewise, other terms such as *Hallyu* or *Hanryu* are used interchangeably to indicate the same phenomenon. Tunstall (2008) states that Korea currently is involved in the exportation of home media content to regional giants China and Japan, even though Korea has a relatively small media industry compared to other industrialized nations. Not long ago, the video or DVD stores across the U.S. devoted large sections to Japanese animated films and some popular Japanese TV series have also been offered. During the 1980s, however, Korean films and TV series were not placed in the international audiovisual market (Desser, 2003). Korean popular culture was rarely seen beyond its own national borders until around 2000. Suddenly, Korean TV programming became a media trendsetter in the Asian region. Thanks to the Korean Wave, many Asian people, especially the young urban generation throughout Asia, are no longer

thinking of Korea as a former Japanese colony lagging behind the developed world. Things Korean are now Asian cool (Tunstall, 2008).

In light of the Korean media industry's marginal position in the international market, this emerging Korean Wave implies that there have been critical changes for the Korean media industry and broadcasting system. First, the quality of Korean media production has improved in the face of domestic media competition. It has been noted by Korean broadcasters that the technical expertise of Korean broadcasting system personnel in both production and distribution sectors has increased the number of worldwide broadcasting opportunities extended to Korea, including, for example, the live airing of the 2002 World Cup Games and other events. Another example is Korea's advanced internet access that has enabled Korean media content to spread online to many foreign internet users, in particular young, technologically-savvy consumers. Through borderless cyberspace, many previously unknown Korean TV broadcasts are reaching much larger international audiences.

Briefly, the Korean Wave, known as a cutting-edge pop-culture trend in the Asian region, has spread in three developmental stages: the introductory, penetrative, and mature stages. When Korean dramas began airing in other Asian countries, the programming was a new cultural trend. In China, the first Korean television drama was aired in 1997. The national China Central Television Station (CCTV) aired the Korean TV drama— *What is Love All About?*— a family drama series composed of 50 sixty-minute episodes. This series, featured on Chinese TV, was the first official export of a Korean TV program to any foreign country. Therefore, for Korean TV broadcasters, this exported program was not met with great expectations by Chinese audiences. But

the audience response was surprising in that the drama received a great deal of attention and acclaim from the Chinese audience. In response to this unexpected positive reaction, CCTV made a decision to re-broadcast the same drama during the following year, and CCTV shifted the drama into a primetime slot. As a result, TV ratings of *What is Love All About?* in that time slot garnered the second highest ratings of all time for foreign program viewing in China (Shim, 2006).

Thanks to this Chinese success, Korean television dramas produced in 1997 and after easily entered the media markets of China and Taiwan. Most Korean dramas that have been exported to these two countries have successfully captured the attention and emotion of the audiences (Chua, 2004; Heo, 2002). Furthermore, the popularity of Korean dramas has increased quickly across the Chinese culture bloc within Southeast Asia, into Malaysia, Mongolia, and Singapore, for example. In turn, impacting the Chinese media markets first played an important role in spreading subsequent Korean TV dramas to other parts of Asia. These are examples of the introductory stage of the Korean Wave, occurring at the end of 1990s.

The Korean Wave moved rapidly Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam (Chua, 2004; Kim, J. M., 2007). By 2000, Korean TV drama series and other genres of Korean pop culture were filling Asian local TV airtime and being enthusiastically welcomed by local audiences (Chau, 2004; Heo, 2002; Shim, 2006).

It is important to note that the rise in circulation of Korean drama throughout Asia was directly related to the Asian financial crisis of 1997. The consequences of this financial crisis put many Asian economies under the control of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Korea was one of the bankrupt nations. Under these

circumstances, the IMF system and the direct interruption of global financial systems affected the Korean media industry as along with the rest of its economic system.

Korean media corporations attempted to make up for the losses in domestic advertising revenue by selling their local content in foreign media markets, pursuing a dream that a niche media content market could be developed.

Facing serious economic depression across Asia, many buyers of Asian television content had a difficult time paying for foreign TV programs because of very limited budgets. Therefore, Korean media corporations' export plan and its intra-regional marketing efforts met Asian media buyers at exactly the right time. Asian buyers preferred Korean television programs, and this programming was comparatively inexpensive and attractive to their audiences. For example, the importance of the imported Korean TV programs in Singapore television can be seen in 1999. Their Mandarin channel was able to carve out a significant share of the audience population from the formerly established state-owned station, *MediaCorp*, through broadcasting a combination of Korean TV drama series and local variety shows. *MediaCorp* had continuously imported Korean TV drama series until they accounted for half of the available program slots. Consequently, by late 2003, at least one Korean TV drama series aired on Singaporean television stations every night in the prime slot immediately following the heavily viewed daily news (Chua, 2004).

In the annual trade survey of Korean television programs (see Table 1, below), exports of Korean TV programs have increased to more than 30 percent in five consecutive years (2001 through 2005). Total export revenues of Korean TV programs surpassed total imports by 2001. Finally, total export revenues of Korean TV programs

in the years of 1999 through 2006 reached \$418 million. This total revenue generated by Korean TV exports for those eight years were three times more revenue than all imports combined in Korea during the same period.

**Table 1. Import/Export Revenues of Korean TV Programs, 1998-2006**  
(Unit: \$1,000 USD)

Year	Network TV Stations Exports		Network TV Stations Imports	
	Revenues	Annual Increase (%)	Revenues	Annual Increase (%)
1998	7,756	11.3	15,386	-60.4
1999	10,836	39.7	20,094	30.6
2000	11,664	7.6	26,743	33
2001	17,147	47.0	18,032	-32.5
2002	26,187	52.7	18,768	4.1
2003	36,889	40.9	18,344	-2.3
2004	63,638	72.5	14,298	-22.1
2005	113,736	78.7	12,657	-11.5
2006	131,116	15.3	10,426	-17.6
Total	418,969		154,748	

*Note:* Author's re-construction from "The prospectus of the Korean Wave in Japan", *KBI Focus*, 6(3), p. 11, by Kim, Y. D., 2006<sup>11</sup>

The major importers of Korean TV content among Asian countries in the earlier period of 1998 to 2001 were China and Taiwan. The export revenues of Korean TV programs to China were \$1.7 million in 1999 and \$2.4 million in 2001. Similarly,

<sup>11</sup> The presented revenues indicate the worldwide revenues of major Korean network TV program imports/exports including KBS, MBC, and SBS.

Taiwan imported \$1.3 million in Korean TV programs in 1999 and \$2.5 million in 2001, according to the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2003).

As a more specific indicator, Table 2 (see next page, p.63), shows the proportion of imported Korean TV programs in Asian countries from 2003 to 2006. As earlier noted, during the introductory phase of the Korean Wave (1998-2000) China and Taiwan were the largest importers of Korean TV programs, but from 2003 to 2006, Chinese and Taiwanese imports of Korean TV programs slightly decreased, while Japan has imported a great deal of Korean TV programs since 2003. In 2006, there was a shift in the market: Imported Korean TV programs came to constitute 51.2 percent of programs exported to Japan, 20.7 percent went to Taiwan, and the Chinese amount decreased to only 7.9 percent (*The White Paper of the Korean Broadcasting Commission*, 2006). As a result, the Korean Wave moved beyond the introductory phase into the active penetration stage between 2001 and 2004. The change occurred as the larger Asian importers, such as China and Taiwan, reduced imports in light of their cautious attitudes toward importing more Korean TV programming. Conversely, the Japanese media industry became the most enthusiastic importer of Korean TV programs. A new export stream into Japan indicates that the Korean Wave is ensured of its place as a respected entertainment source in Asia. Since 2005, Japan has been the primary importer of Korean TV programs in both volume and cost-per-program. In addition, more than 50 percent of exported Korean TV programs go to Japan.



**Table 2. The Export Revenues of Korean TV Programs in Asia, 2003-2006**  
(Unit: \$1,000 USD)

Country	2003		2005		2006	
	Revenues	Proportion	Revenues	Proportion	Revenues	Proportion
<b>China</b>	\$4,755	17.4%	\$9,238	9.0%	\$7,514	7.9%
<b>Hong Kong</b>	\$939	3.4%	\$3,232	3.1%	\$3,985	4.2%
<b>Japan</b>	\$5,556.1	20.4%	\$63,543	61.9%	\$49,004	51.2%
<b>Taiwan</b>	\$9,747.9	35.7%	\$11,872	11.6%	\$19,777	20.7%
<b>Southeast Asia<sup>12</sup></b>	\$6,087.2	23.1%	\$10,795	14.4%	\$12,215	16.0%
<b>Total</b>	\$27,085		\$98,960		\$92,495	

*Note:* Author's re-constitution from *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Institute (2003, 2004) and *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Commission (2005, 2006).<sup>13</sup>

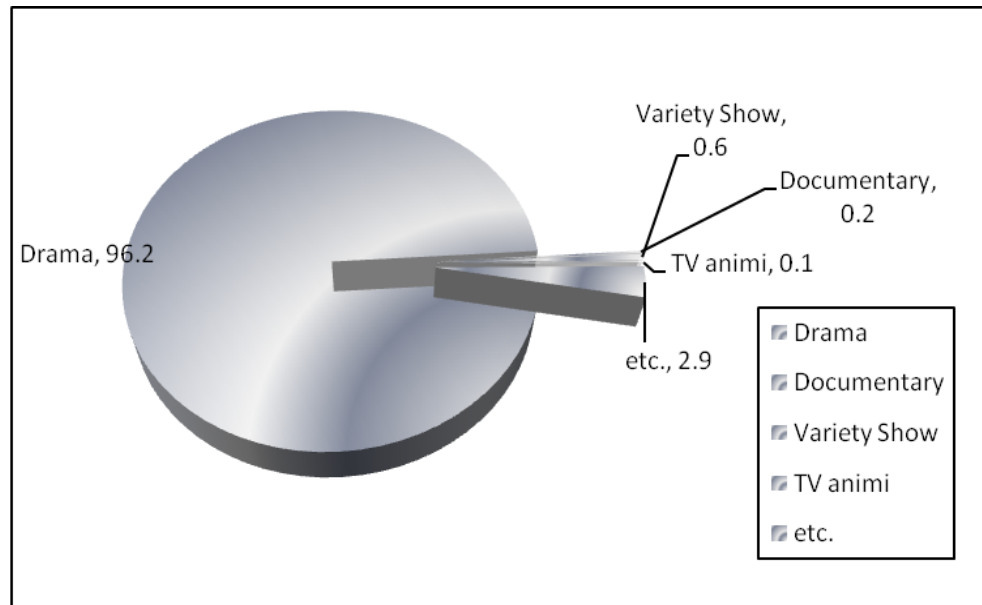
An interesting pattern exists in Asia's imported Korean TV programs with respect to genre preferences among Asian content buyers. Figure 1, below, reveals that the major exported genre of the Korean TV programs in 2005 was TV dramas, comprising 96.2 percent of the total programs. The next most commonly exported genres were entertainment programming (0.6 percent), documentaries (0.2 percent), animated TV shows (0.1 percent). The rest (2.9 percent) were other formats. This order of exported genres has not changed since the Korean Wave began. Obviously, Korean TV dramas have played a leading role in spreading the Korean Wave. In addition, the

<sup>12</sup> This includes Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

<sup>13</sup> "All revenue" is the total amount of exported Korean network TV programs. Proportion means the percentage of the nation's export revenues as a part of annual total export revenues of Korean network TV programs.

enormous popularity of exported Korean dramas demonstrates Asian viewers' preference for Korean leading actors or actresses in the Korean dramas (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008; Kim, J.M., 2007; Yang, F. I., 2008).

**Figure 1. The Exported Genres of Korean TV programs (2005)**

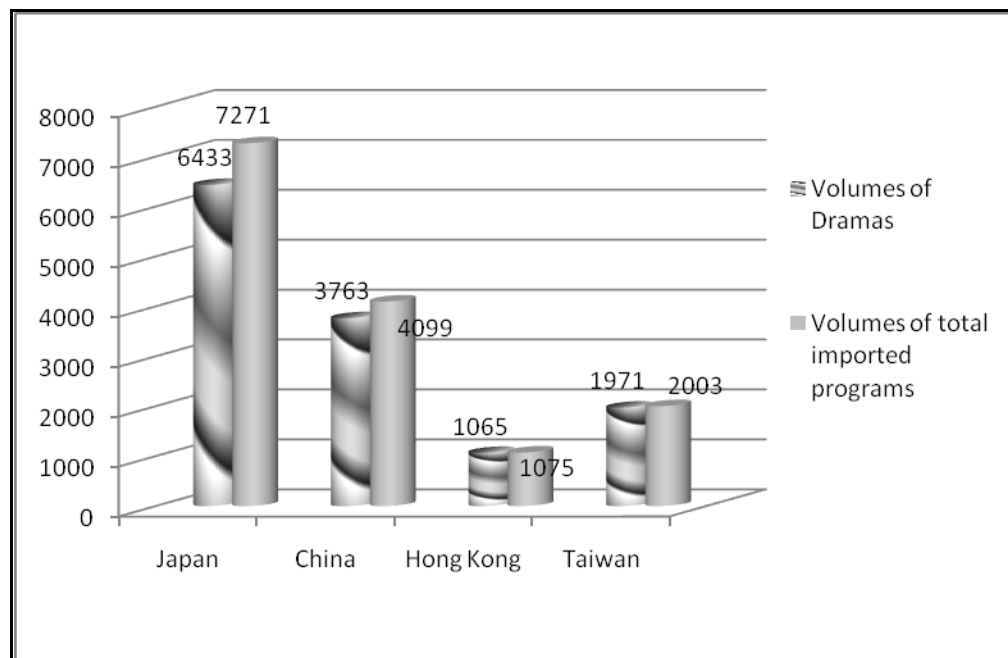


*Note:* From “*The White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*” by Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2006.

Figure 2, below, indicates that Korean TV dramas dominated the number of imports in four Asian countries: Japan, Taiwan, China, and Hong Kong. In Japan, the imported dramas' ratio among total imported Korean programs was 88% (6,433 dramas of 7,271 total imported programs). Also, three other countries reveal a high proportion of drama imports from Korea. For instance, imported dramas in China amounted to 92% (3,763 dramas of 4,099 total imported programs), and Hong Kong's import percentage reached 99% (1,065 dramas of 1,075 imported programs). Similarly, Taiwan

imported 1,971 dramas of 2,003 total Korean programs, a total of 98%. These statistics demonstrate well the strength of the Korean drama as a popular entertainment genre throughout the Asian region. The Korean TV drama distribution in this region shows how the Korean Wave developed as a regional cultural and media movement.

**Figure 2. The Volumes of Export Korean TV Dramas to Four Countries (2005)**



*Note:* From “*The White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*” by Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2006.

### 3.2. The Korean Wave in China

As discussed above, Korean TV drama series were key exports to China, and the Korean Wave in China relied heavily on the fame of Korean idol-pop music and performances (*e.g., HOTA, Baby Vox, Rain, and Shinwha*).

According to the annual report of Korean TV program imports/exports in 2006, the total export revenues of Korean TV programs to the Chinese media market was \$7.5

million and 4,074 Korean TV series were sold to China during the same year.

Conversely, Korea's imports from Chinese media corporations included only five TV series with a revenue of \$169,000 (see Table 3, below).

In 2004, the proportion of Korean TV dramas among total export revenues to China was \$5.1 million, and these dramas represented 94 percent of the entire Korean TV programming revenue earned from exports to Asia (Lee & Won, 2005). Thus, Korean TV dramas in China demonstrate the Korean Wave in a very similar manner seen in other Asian countries. Based on a 2004 survey according to the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry, China provided a stable trade market for Korean TV program exports. The average volume of Korean TV program exports to China was more than 1,300 episodes of TV programs per year. With this increasing volume, the annual export revenues of Korean TV programs in China increased, and the cost per Korean TV drama series also increased during the same time (see Table 3, below).

**Table 3. Korean TV Exports to China & Korean Imports from China<sup>14</sup>**  
(Unit: \$1,000 USD)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Export</b> \$	\$2,700	\$2,398	\$4,755	\$5,495	\$9,238	\$7,514
Volume	1,142	1,948	3,266	1,889	-	4,074
<b>Import</b> \$	\$0	\$718	\$820.9	\$70	\$287	\$169
Volume	0	210	144	4	-	5

*Note:* Author's re-constitution from *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Institute (2003, 2004) and *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Commission (2005, 2006).

<sup>14</sup> These numbers represent the sum of the three Korean TV networks (KBS, MBC, and SBS) annual export/import quantities.

Also of note is that particular characteristics of imported Korean TV dramas were considered critical in keeping good trade relations between Korea and China; in fact, imported Korean TV dramas in China are perceived as dealing with universal human emotions and sticking to the Confucian sensibility as a whole (Yoo & Lee, 2001). This particular narrative in Korean TV drama enables the imported shows to be broadcast on Chinese network TV without encountering censorship of foreign TV programs from the Chinese government. In addition, the Chinese and Koreans have similar standards of beauty, therefore, Korean programs—as well as the Korean actors and actresses—generate more interest among Chinese viewers. Many Korean drama and film celebrities are treated as Hollywood stars by Chinese audiences. Korean celebrities have become role models for young Chinese viewers in terms of fashion and Western-style facial looks, and these Korean TV stars seem to be more desirable to, and therefore more imitated by the Chinese population than the Western look and style of Hollywood stars (Chua, 2004; Lee D. H., 2004; Kim H. M., 2005). As a whole, the Korean Wave in China can be described as a mature pop culture trend. The meaning of the Korean Wave in China was stated as follows: “Especially in China, the first version of the Korean Wave, positive or negative, functioned to fill in the culturally empty space left by enormous changes that swept through China in 1990” (Cho, 2005, p. 163).

More recently, the Korean Wave in China has shown some experimental strategies different from direct broadcasting of imported shows previously. One of these strategies is the localization of the Korean pop music format in the Chinese music industry. For example, the Chinese band, *Shinwoochi*, held a huge showcase for their debut album in Beijing in December 2003. *Shinwoochi* was comprised of four Chinese

teen-aged boys, and the members were cast through a Chinese nationwide audition to find new talent, people who resemble Korean pop idols. By this time, the Korean idol band *HOT* was enormously popular—iconic—in China. In fact, the birth of *Shinwoochi* in China was viewed as the Chinese version of *HOT*—their songs, dances, and fashions are greatly similar to *HOT* itself. In fact, *Shinwoochi* members were trained in their dance performances and singing styles by Korean music producers and crews who had previously trained *HOT* members in Korea, for six months before *Shinwoochi* held their debut concert in Beijing (Lee, D. Y., 2004). In addition, some of the songs on the *Shinwoochi* debut album were written and produced by Korean composers and producers (Lee, D. Y., 2004). In other words, *Shinwoochi* in China demonstrates a classic diffusion model of pop culture in Asia. Hollywood pop culture transferred to the Japanese media industry and the cloned Hollywood-Japanese version of pop culture was then transferred to the Korean media industry. Finally, the Korean Wave transferred Korean media forms to the Chinese media scene. With each step, a specific local format, taste, and style developed so that the original format was still visible but with localized elements present.

Significantly, the case of *Shinwoochi* shows the will of the Korean music industry for localization of Korean pop culture formats and commodities. The local version of pop culture is relatively safe for earning profit and market share, compared to unproven novel programming. *Shinwoochi*'s Mandarin songs, voices, appearances, and dances resemble *HOT* and this tends to draw the attention of young Chinese audiences who have happily consumed *HOT*'s products and have mimicked their image. As would be expected, *Shinwoochi*'s debut album ranked sixth on the Chinese pop-music chart,

which is the equivalent of the Billboard List in U.S., after their debut showcase and performance on a Chinese TV music show. The Korean agent of *Shinwoochi*, *Woojun Soft*, successfully secured its first localization project in China (Lee, D. Y., 2004).

### 3.3. The Korean Wave in Japan

Historically, Japan has been a country that tended to mostly feed its own TV channels with domestic programs. While Japanese domestic programs occupy 90 percent of prime airtime on Tokyo's primary TV stations, foreign TV series or films (mostly American) have occasionally been scheduled in non-primetime slots. In Japan, most imported foreign TV programs are U.S. media content (Iwabuchi, 2002). Foreign TV programs are just one of many choices available on Japanese cable and satellite channels. Iwabuchi (2004) points out that Japan is the only country, apart from the U.S., in which more than 95 percent of television programs are supplied domestically. For instance, Morikawa (2008) states that foreign TV series in Japan have been unable to enter into the primetime slot, and since 1990, there has been no foreign TV series able to break this barrier except the U.S. TV series *The X-Files* in 1995. Thus, the airing of several Korean dramas on the Japanese national TV network NHK in 2003 was a very unusual event in Japanese media history.

NHK, the national public broadcaster, decided to try [*Winter Sonata*] Saturdays at 11: 10 pm., in a time slot usually reserved for U.S. and British fare. Like all the Korean dramas shown on NHK since, it was broadcast with Japanese voiceovers. Japanese TV viewers, especially middle-aged

women, quickly were carried away by the sensitive love story . . . Asian dramas have occupied the Saturday 11 pm time slot ever since. Those desperate for *Desperate Housewives* or *ER* now have to wait until 1 am. As a bonus for those who stay up even later, [*Himawari*] with Lee Byung-Hun airs at 1:50 am. (Morikawa, 2008, para. 8)

The successful entrance of Korean TV dramas into the Japanese television market in recent years ran counter to the previously-existing Asian media flow only from Japan to the rest of Asia. Popular culture exchange between Korea and Japan was banned in Korea until 1998 (Han, 2000). Despite this tight ban of Japanese pop culture in Korea, the Korean media industry, to some extent, utilized the pop culture of Japan through unofficial or underground channels for many years. Korea officially declared an open policy for Japanese cultural products in 1998.

Specifically, the open-door policy toward Japanese cultural inflow was declared and executed in Korea's four culture domains during the Kim Dae-Jung Administration. This policy was a result of summit talks between President Kim and the Japanese Prime Minister. The four steps to opening Korea to Japanese culture were initiated for the purpose of making Japanese cultural products available and appropriate for Korean audiences. First, Korea allowed the importation of Japanese films and print media products in 1998. Next, second stage allowed cultural performances were allowed beginning in 1999. The third step involved larger audiences—animation for theaters, Japanese pop concerts, computer games, and some TV programs began to be imported in 2000. After Kim's presidency, the new Roh Mu-Hyun Cabinet was consistent with



the former policy toward the Japanese culture. Therefore, the fourth stage allowed broadcasting of Japanese programs and music on cable and satellite TV starting in 2004. Today, this open policy is in place, except in the case of Japanese television dramas and variety shows—it is believed that direct TV broadcasting of Japanese TV shows may have negative cultural influences on a wide range of Korean audiences. In addition, a concern about allowing more Japanese popular culture into Korea, including the major Japanese television programs, has been hard to accept at least in part because of the sensitive historical and contemporary events and debates between the two countries. The continuous and controversial postcolonial issues between Korea and Japan (*e.g.*, Japanese history textbooks' manipulation of colonial history and the continuous territorial disputes related to the islet *Dokdo* (in Korean) or *Takesima* (in Japanese) (Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2007).

The entry of Korean TV dramas into the Japanese TV market was possible in large part because of the phenomenal appeal of *Winter Sonata*. The drama was first broadcast on NHK's satellite channel (BS-1) in 2001, and NHK decided to re-broadcast it nationwide the following year. As a consequence, the drama was broadcast three times between 2001 and 2003. Both *Winter Sonata* and Bae Yong-Joon (henceforth BYJ) – a leading actor in the drama – were at the epicenter of the upsurge of Korean drama in Japan. Korean popular culture has become a part of Japanese everyday life thanks to *Winter Sonata*, which played an amazing role in raising the current Japanese interest in Korean dramas (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007). The passionate focus of Japanese fans, especially Japanese women, on these Korean dramas and actors emerged because of what has come to be known as the *Winter Sonata* syndrome. After *Winter Sonata*,

Korean dramas in Japan were redeemed as a so-called “trendy drama” (Tōru, 2004) in the same format as *Winter Sonata*.

In the meantime, increased demands of Japanese audiences for well-made emotional dramas, relatively absent in dramas outside Korea, contributed to the growth of the Korean drama in the Japanese market (Chua, 2004). Therefore, Korean TV dramas in Japan have diversified to include both TV broadcasting and rental shops. In particular, both historical dramas (*e.g.*, *DaeJangGeum*, *JuMong*, and *TaeWangSaSinGi*.) and daily family dramas (*e.g.*, *Miss you over and over again*, and *Fighting! GeumSoon*) continue to grow in popularity in Japanese TV markets. For example, the success of *DaeJangGeum* (a famous Korean historical drama) indicated a promising future for the Korean Wave in Japan. *DaeJangGeum* was broadcast four times by NHK TV from 2004 to 2007, which was extraordinary because *DaeJangGeum* contained 54 episodes in total, so it was broadcast at least once a week for a year (JO, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo).

As a part of larger Asian pop culture movements, the Korean Wave in Japan tends to be compared to Hong Kong’s pop culture boom in Japan near the end of the 1980s through the early 1990s. More specifically, Iwabuchi (2008a) compares the two pop culture movements in terms of scope and intensity in penetrating the culture. Iwabuchi (2008a) claims that the Korean Wave indicates a considerably larger and wider impact than the boom of Hong Kong’s pop culture. For instance, Japanese viewers of *Winter Sonata* reached unprecedented audiences compared to other foreign pop fan groups. Korean TV dramas have closely connected to key Tokyo TV channels as well as other provincial channels, among the most influential broadcasters in Japan.

But the earlier boom of Hong Kong pop culture in Japan, on the other hand, relied mainly on female fashion magazines, action films, and music. Korean TV dramas grabbed great attention from Japanese mainstream media on a daily basis, and Japanese audiences eagerly received the shows. Further, this interest in TV shows brought interest in other Korean cultural products, including books, movies, music, cuisine, entertainment news, and gossip. Growth in the number of these dramas and the related growth of media coverage following them in Japan hastened the expansion of their popularity throughout Japan.

This final comparison for our purposes, the Korean Wave compared to Hong Kong's pop boom in Japan, reveals that Japanese interest in Hong Kong pop culture was not expanded into Japanese social interest in the culture of Hong Kong itself. The boom of Hong Kong pop culture in Japan was an act of consuming images of Hong Kong pop culture. In contrast, the Korean Wave in Japan was more likely to pique the interest of Japanese fans in the Korean people and Korean culture in general. Many Japanese fans of *Winter Sonata* and *BYJ* indicate they tried to connect with the people and culture of Korea through the medium of the TV dramas (Iwabuchi, 2008a). Various charity events held by Japanese fans of *BYJ* have been extremely successful in terms of active members, vigorous participation, information exchange, and public relations of the fan club both online and elsewhere. These active and voluntary charity events have successfully attracted Japanese media to a large extent in recent years (Kaori & Lee, 2007).

Television content exchange and co-production between Korean and Japanese TV corporations rarely occurred before Korea's open policy to Japanese pop culture

began. In 2002, the first drama co-produced by broadcast media from Korea and Japan was created and entitled *Friends*. This was brought about by MBC in Korea and Fuji TV in Japan, and was simultaneously aired in both countries. *Friends* was the first program to feature Japanese and Korean co-stars (e.g., Fukuda Kyoko as the Japanese female lead, and Won Bin as the Korean male lead) and achieved a certain degree of popularity in both countries. Obviously, this drama was an experiment in celebrating the two nations' official cultural open relationship. But significantly, the co-hosted FIFA World Cup in 2002 marked a turning point in increasing the exchange of a larger variety of cultural products between Korea and Japan.

Japanese people, in consuming Korean media and cultural products became more interested in Korean popular culture, as well as the historical relationship between the two countries. For instance, a few years before the World Cup game in 2000, a Korean blockbuster film, *Shiri*, was shown in Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. The film received acclaim from many Asian critics and drew very large audiences. It earned \$14 million at the Japanese box office (Shim, 2006). This event was the first Korean movie to be shown on Japanese commercial screens. Afterward, Korean films became regular fixtures in cinemas in Japan and other Asian countries. Japanese international film buyers became more interested in buying Korean films. For instance, when the Korean film *Joint Security Area* opened in Japan in May 2001, Japanese film markets simultaneously released the film on 280 screens nationwide. It was the first Asian imported film to be shown on a high number of screens in Japan (Shim, 2006).

Since then, some Korean TV dramas have gained Japanese television viewers. Meanwhile, the famous Korean Wave dramas aired in other parts of Asia eventually

were aired on Japanese satellite TV channels. For example, *Autumn Fairy Tale*, *A Wish upon a Star*, *All about Eve*, and *Kasikogi* were welcomed by small numbers of avid Japanese fans of Korean media content (Mori, 2008).

In short, from 2001 to 2003, the Korean Wave entered an active growth phase in the Asian region, during which the popularity and economic effects of the Wave are easy to see. The Korean government supported Korean media and cultural industries for the purpose of sustaining and expanding the Korean Wave. In particular, the Korean media and cultural industry turned their focus toward the Japanese cultural market, thanks to the incredible success of *Winter Sonata* and Korean teenage singer BoA in Japan. “In 2002, the ministry opened the Korea Culture and Content Agency to encourage exports. By the time almost all restrictions on Japanese culture were lifted in January 2004, the Korean Wave – a term coined in China – had washed across Asia” (Onishi, 2005, para. 10).

**Table 4. Korean TV Exports to Japan & Korean Imports from Japan<sup>15</sup>**  
(Unit: \$1,000 USD)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Export</b> \$	\$1,157	\$2,101	\$5,556	\$34,937	\$63,543	\$49,004
Volume	2,482	3,734	2,772	6,628	-	4,411
<b>Import</b> \$	\$1,544	\$540	\$1,090	\$549	\$195	\$83
Volume	636	433	641	141	-	32

*Note:* Author’s re-construction from *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Institute (2003, 2004) and *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Commission (2005, 2006).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> The numbers represent the sum of the three Korean TV networks (KBS, MBC, and SBS) annual export/import quantities.

*Winter Sonata* apparently melted the hearts of Japanese middle-aged female viewers, who are nostalgic for pure and forgotten love stories no longer found in Japanese TV drama. The uncut version of *Winter Sonata*, in Korean with Japanese subtitles, was re-aired during late December 2004 on NHK BS2 (which is an NHK satellite channel) again due to growing Japanese audience demand. According to Japanese viewers, Korean TV dramas remind them of older shows from the 1980s and 90s, in which they reminisce about their past (Heo, 2002; Iwabuchi, 2004, 2005; Lee, 2004). In fact, trendy Korean dramas originally targeted domestic women in their late 20s and 30s because they are a primary advertising target, given their large consuming power. As primary consumers of the pop culture, this young Korean female generation is more likely to expose themselves to various forms of audiovisual content from many parts of the world. However, these same Korean trendy dramas have recently attracted older generations in Japan than in Korea. This fact reflects a time lag between the two nations in terms of their developmental stages in media production. In general, Japanese media production is ahead of Korean media production so that Korea's recent dramas, with a slightly old-style narrative and technical production, reminded Japanese viewers of past Japanese programming.

Not surprisingly, *Winter Sonata* is referred to as an icon of the Korean Wave in Japan and its influence is revealed in several events. When the main actor of the drama, Bae Yong-Joon, visited Tokyo in 2004, some 3,500 middle-aged Japanese women gathered at Narita airport to welcome him (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007). Similar occurrences

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<sup>16</sup> Total selling means the volume of the programs of total exported/imported TV programs in trading with Japan. The total import/export volume of Korean TV programs in 2005 was not reported.

were reported by Japanese media when Bae and other Korean Wave stars appeared in Japan to promote their Korean dramas and films. The following report of the *New York Times* signals a tendency of the Korean Wave and its effects in Japan:

[As] a 32-year-old South Korean actor, Bae Yong Joon, past his prime in his homeland, he has become, thanks to a syrupy television series, the most popular man in Japan, the object of desire of countless middle-aged women, the stimulus behind an estimated \$2.3 billion rise in economic activities between Japan and South Korea.<sup>17</sup>

Also, the rising popularity of *Winter Sonata* in Japan benefited not only the Korean broadcast companies but also Japanese companies, in particular NHK.

Even though the profits are shared by Japan and Korea, NHK earns a lot more through its licensed broadcasting of the *Winter Sonata* than Korean broadcasters. Producer Bak Jae-bok, who has played a key role in exporting the dramas, said, in response to complaints that NHK earned more money than the production company, that NHK deserves the money for their carefully tailored service (KCTPI report as cited in Cho, H. J., 2005, p.168).

As a consequence, an important facet of the spread of Korean popular culture across Asia is the appeal for trendy dramas from Korea. Clearly, Japanese audiences, with different age groups, and viewers from other parts of Asia revealed similar reactions to several Korean dramas. *Winter Sonata*'s impact on Japan enabled various

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<sup>17</sup> "What's Korean for real man?" Dec. 23, 2004, *The New York Times*, International news, p. A3.

Korean dramas to be broadcast on Japanese channels in the years immediately following. These dramas included *Autumn Fairy Tale*, *Beautiful Days*, *All in*, *Hotelier*, *Papa*, *I'm Kim SamSun* and others. Hence, the feelings of nostalgia and romance evoked by the Korean dramas were slightly different in style than other Japanese dramas of the time (Chau, 2004; Cho, 2005; Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007; Kim, 2005; Victoria, 2005).

Since 2003, Japan has been an increasingly strong player in importing TV programs from Korea. In 2005, Japan's proportion of annual export revenues of Korean TV programs to Asian countries surpassed 50 percent (see Table 2, p. 63). In terms of the annual export survey cited earlier (see Figure 2, p. 65), the Korean Wave functioned in East Asian countries including China, Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan - although the Wave arrived in Hong Kong and Japan later than in China and Taiwan. Recently, the Korean Wave has reached as far as the Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines; and countries in Central Asia including Mongolia, Nepal, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine.

According to Kim (2006), a number of Japanese satellite channels routinely scheduled more than one Korean drama. A total of 43 satellite channels ran 23 Korean dramas on a daily basis in October 2005. It is obvious that the Korean Wave in Japan reveals a transformed regional pattern of media content circulation, and relations between the Japanese and Korean media industries have improved and regional partnerships have been established to pursue content production and market share. At the same time, some antagonistic actions against the increasing popularity of Korean



cultural products have surfaced among some Japanese audiences intend on rejecting the inflow of Korean popular culture into Japan<sup>18</sup> (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007; Ryoo, 2009).

#### 3.4. The Korean Wave in Taiwan

In Taiwan, the main broadcasting system is composed of many local cable TV stations rather than a nationwide network; the majority of Taiwanese cities are surrounded by mountains, that present great difficulty in building a nationwide broadcasting system. Today, 62 cable TV providers cover more than 90 percent of households, with each local cable provider occupying local broadcasting as a monopoly with their own business (Lee & Won, 2005). In general, Taiwan's television programming cannot be compared favorably with the Japanese TV system, but the production level in Taiwan is still higher than average in the Asian region. For a long time, Taiwan TV productions have been heavily influenced by Japanese productions. This cultural borrowing from the Japanese pop culture has become Taiwan's general TV show format; TV shows in Taiwan look more like Japanese formats than American ones (Keane, *et al.*, 2007). Taiwan's cable channels typically rely heavily on imported Japanese TV series to fill airtime. Taiwanese audiences have become accustomed to watching Japanese-style TV programs daily. Keane and others (2007) state, "From 8 pm

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<sup>18</sup> As Korean dramas and films appear to be a prominent cultural flow in the region, a possible backlash toward the Korean Wave emerges in part. In Japan, for example, a comic book entitled *Hyom-Hallyu*, referring to as 'Anti-Korean Wave,' has sold more than 300,000 copies in 2006. The story of this comic book is of a Japanese high-school student who becomes to realize 'the real ugly nature' of Korea. Because some Korean broadcasters and production companies are obsessed with using their dramas and movies for making money. There has not been any concerns with sharing their content with local media audiences and industries ("*Hallyu* phenomenon," 2006; Ryoo, 2009).

to 9 pm, most channels broadcast dramas. Taiwan television drama series have liberally borrowed ideas from Japanese television dramas” (p. 34).

This tendency changed with the Asian economic crisis, as earlier mentioned, because the cost for Japanese-style production was too high for many Taiwanese cable companies. Instead of the high-cost Japanese TV dramas, some relatively low-cost Korean TV dramas were given attention by Taiwanese content buyers. For example, a representative Taiwanese cable station such as *GTV* and *Video land* purchased Korean dramas for less than other foreign dramas. These Taiwanese cable stations took risks with new Korean dramas that were previously unknown internationally (Lee & Won, 2005). The popularity of Japanese dramas seemed to decline in Taiwan at the same time, but it was the rising price of individual Japanese TV dramas that forced the cable TV stations to find less costly replacements for the Japanese shows. Korean dramas starring handsome actors and beautiful actresses dealing with more delicate romances filled the void left by their Japanese counterparts (Kim, H. M., 2005).

As explained previously, Korean TV dramas were first perceived only as substitutes in the Taiwanese media industry, but they increasingly earned higher TV ratings than the rival Japanese dramas had previously received. For instance, three Korean TV dramas broadcast in Taiwan from 2003 to 2005 – *Mermaid Lady* (2003), *DaeJangGeum* (2004), and *Full House* (2005) – ranked among the top foreign TV programs with Taiwanese audiences. Specifically, *Mermaid Lady* recorded a 1.33 ratio in the 2003 ratings; the following year, *DaeJangGeum* marked 2.17, and *Full House* gained a 3.44 ratio in the 2005 ratings. These were the highest ratings for foreign dramas broadcast in Taiwan during that entire year. According to the annual Taiwan TV

ratings, a total of eight Korean TV dramas ranked in the top ten TV programs between 2003 and 2005 (Lee & Won, 2005).<sup>19</sup>

Growing attraction to Korean dramas from Taiwanese audiences was also demonstrated by previous Taiwan TV ratings. In 1997, Korean TV dramas exported to Taiwan started with total revenues of \$127,000, but in 1998, total export revenues increased to \$758,000, an 11 percent increase over the previous year. The following years, Korean TV dramas exports increased 17.1 percent, with total revenue of \$1.3 million in 1999. In 2001, the growth was 20.2 percent, gaining \$2.4 million in export revenue from the Taiwanese media industry (Ha & Yang, 2002).

An important moment for exporting Korean programming to Taiwan came in the form of the Korean drama, *Sparks*, which aired in 2000 on GTV (Ha & Yang, 2002). *Sparks*, triggered the Korean Wave in Taiwan for the first time. Taiwanese audiences and content buyers prefer visual images and plot in drama, and *Sparks*, sent fresh images of Korea into the Taiwanese market. Through *Sparks*, viewers in Taiwan experienced how to be entertained by Korean TV dramas. This drama brought fame to two actors, Cha In-Pyo and Lee Young-Ae, who played the main title roles. They became huge stars in Taiwan that year as the first foreign TV celebrity to become popular (Cho, 2005; Kim, H. M., 2005).

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<sup>19</sup> Taiwan TV ratings (are) not calculated by percentage (%). For the case of *Full House*, the rating 3.44, means that 800,000 people watched the drama in 2005. The formula is: Rating x Total Taiwan population /100 (3.44 x 23,316,062 /100). The same year that *Full House* aired, the highest Taiwanese TV drama rating was 6.1 (Lee & Won, 2005, p. 44).

**Table 5. Korean TV Exports to Taiwan & Korea Imports from Taiwan<sup>20</sup>**  
(Unit: \$1,000 USD)

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
<b>Export</b> \$	\$2,232	\$5,084	\$9,748	\$8,490	\$11,872	\$19,777
Volume	2,814	4,803	637	2,162	-	3,445
<b>Import</b> \$	\$137	\$220	\$114	\$6	\$0	\$401
Volume	49	94	53	2	0	26

*Note:* Author’s re-construction from *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Institute (2003, 2004), and *the White Paper of Korean Culture Industry*, by Korean Broadcasting Commission (2005, 2006).<sup>21</sup>

As Table 5, above, shows the import volume and revenue of Korean TV programs in Taiwan has steeply increased in the years since 2001. In contrast, Taiwanese TV programs exported to Korea has greatly decreased during this same time period. The increasing export revenue of Korean TV programs in 2003 indicates that the price of exported Korean programs is rising, as well as the volume of programs purchased. In fact, a 60-minute Korean TV drama was imported to Taiwan for \$1,000 in 2001, but the cost of an imported Korean TV drama with the same format in 2005 sold for between \$10,000 and \$20,000 (Lee & Won, 2005). Taiwanese broadcasters pointed out: “Five years ago, Gala TV here paid \$1,000 for one hour of a South Korean drama, compared with \$15,000 to \$20,000 for a Japanese one, said the network’s vice president, Lai Tsung Pi. Now, a South Korean drama commands \$7,000 to \$15,000; a Japanese, \$6,000 to \$12,000” (Onishi, 2005, para.14).

<sup>20</sup> These numbers represent the sum of the three Korean TV networks (KBS, MBC, and SBS) annual export/import quantities.

<sup>21</sup> Total selling indicates Korean programming volumes as a percentage of total export/import TV programs in trading with Japan. The total import/export volume of Korean TV programs in 2005 was not reported in the annual survey.

As the Korean Wave became popular in the regional media market, the cost of Korean TV programming no longer cheaper sells for less than its Japanese counterparts. Regardless of more limited profits, Taiwan's TV producers still tended to buy Korean dramas because they saw that Korean dramas were more likely to appeal to their viewers than either Japanese or American TV dramas. The Taiwan TV producers assumed that 70 to 80 percent of imported Korean dramas could establish successful TV ratings on their channels (Lee & Won, 2005).

More recently, Taiwan's television industry has established a plan for limiting imports of foreign TV programs by setting programming limits on time. The Taiwanese television industry also has considered the impact of Korean dramas on Taiwanese home channels. Taiwan does not allow imported TV programs to be broadcast during primetime slots starting in 2006. The majority of the Taiwanese public says that this regulation targets the inflow of Korean TV dramas (Kim & Kang, 2006; Kim, Y. D., 2005; Lee & Won, 2005). However, in Taiwan today, more than 124 cable TV stations still seek foreign TV programs to fill airtime.

## **Chapter IV. Research Methods**

As mentioned in the introduction, this study applies two different approaches in analyzing the Korean Wave. First is an exploration of the reception of Korean dramas by regional Asian audiences, particularly focusing on Japanese audiences. This regional audience analysis explores the shared values, emotions, and the imaginary sentiments of “Asianness” in the view of the audience. Second, this study provides analysis of a variety of commercial initiatives driven by Korean media systems focused on regional East Asian media markets, particularly the Japanese market. Practical details of procedures and outcomes in relation to Korean TV drama exports to the East Asian local television stations reveal the most recent cultural business practices in the East Asian broadcasting and production industries. In essence, the exportation of Korean dramas illuminates systemic glocalizing of the Korean media industry. This dual approach allows this study to view the Korean Wave from a comprehensive angle, and to conduct both an empirical and theoretical analysis of the intra-regional media flow.

To this end, the author conducted three rounds of in-depth interviews either with an individual or in a focus group format. Conducting in-depth interviews for this study was chosen by using the following rationale: the interview method is used to pursue the clarification of research objectives concerning specific questions, the answers to which would provide data necessary for hypothesis testing. Second, the interview method aids the interviewer in motivating the respondent, so that necessary information would be given (Denzin, 1989). The in-depth interview is a particular field research data-gathering process designed to generate narratives that focus on fairly specific research questions. Accordingly, the in-depth interviews used herein facilitate the construction of

the interviewer's and a participant's experience and understanding of the topic of interest. As a consequence, the in-depth interview reveals personal and intimate narratives with an emphasis on rich and vivid details (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Research questions used in this study (see page 55) aim at discovering constitutive meanings behind the phenomenon rather surface meanings of the forefront phenomenon. For this reason, the interview method tied as neatly as possible to the goals of the study.

#### 4.1. Participants and Procedures

The first round of interviews in this study was conducted with TV drama viewers in Korea who belong to drama fan clubs or Korean Wave online support groups. The second round of interviews was conducted with international sales managers at Korean network TV stations. The last round of interviews was focused on communicating with Japanese fan club members of Korean TV dramas and/or celebrities. All three rounds of interviews were conducted by the author. Interviews with the sales managers and Korean audience members were conducted in Seoul from December 2007 to March 2008. The Japanese audiences were interviewed in Tokyo in April 2008, including the fan club members, in particular, members of the fan clubs of BYJ, the leading male character in *Winter Sonata*<sup>22</sup>.

For this study, all participants were recruited based on snowball sampling. The Korean and Japanese audience participants were generally low-profile groups of people. Therefore, the best way to find this type of participant is by using the snowball method;

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<sup>22</sup> The in-depth interviews with Japanese fans of Korean TV dramas in Tokyo were funded by the *Asian Research Fund* (Seoul, South Korea) entitled: *2008 Research Grant of the East Asian culture and industry analysis*. Also, this study was granted approval of the Institutional Review Board (*IRB#: 11915*) by the University of Oklahoma at Norman campus.

that is, finding eligible respondents through existing referral chains (Singleton & Straits, 1999). The participants recruited for this study have various preferences for the interview protocol; respondents were allowed to select the method he/she preferred—either an individual interview, or a focus group interview with their friends and/or other fan club members. Theoretically, in the focus group interview, the synergy, spontaneity, and stimulation of the group process are great advantages (Barbour, 1995; Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). In group contexts, the researcher can test multiple issues on the same topic and agreement or disagreement can be clarified according to differences in position among participants. More diverse perspectives and rich thoughts in the group can be explored (Denzin, 1989).

In the initial design of this study, audience interviews mainly focused on two groups—Korean audiences and Japanese fans of Korean TV dramas and actors. However, three participants from other Asian countries agreed to be interviewed because they wished to discuss their experiences with Korean dramas. These Asian participants came from China, Malaysia, and Mongolia, and each had lived in Seoul between six months and two years. The Chinese and Mongolian participants were exchange students at a university in Seoul, and the Malaysian participant was a part-time elementary school teacher. They learned about this study from an online research flyer used to recruit Korean audiences on different Korean drama fan club websites. In total, 35 participants were recruited and interviewed by the author; Korean audiences (n=13), Japanese audiences (n=14), Korean TV content sales managers and TV drama producers (n=5), and Asian fans (n=3).



To find Korean participants, the author announced this research participation opportunity on several popular Korean TV drama fan websites (*e.g.*, *Daum* drama fan websites and Korean network TV drama homepages – KBS, MBC and SBS) and the TV drama web gallery (*e.g.*, *DCInside*, *Dramatique*, and *Hallyu Love*) by means of posting a recruitment flyer on each fan café or free board with the permission of the webmaster. The Korean participants were eleven females (age 20s to 50s) and two males (age 20s to 30s). Occupational demographics of the participants—five participants were full-time office workers, two were housewives, three were university students, and three were new job-seekers (see Table 6, p.89, for the demographics of Korean participants).

Similarly, Japanese participants were also recruited by online searching of Korean TV star BYJ Japanese fan clubs, such as Quilt (a BYJ fan club for international fan members), KOB (a BYJ online fan board in Korea), and JOB (a BYJ online fan board in Japan). The reason that BYJ's fan clubs were sampled is because BYJ is the most influential Korean TV celebrity, and central to the development of the Korean Wave in Japan. Since his drama, *Winter Sonata*, aired, the number of Japanese fans of Korean dramas has increased rapidly year after year. In fact, BYJ is idolized by many Japanese female fans, and his fan clubs in Japan have been in existence since 2002. The current number of registered fans on the Japanese official fan board (JOB) is more than 100,000. Both on a large and small scale, BYJ's fan clubs exist in 30 countries throughout the world, from Asia to Latin America to Africa (JoongAng Ilbo, 2008). Quilt is his largest online fan website, with a multi-national fan base, and both KOB and JOB are officially organized by BYJ's management agency. The research flyer for this

study was posted on a freeboard on Quilt, JOB, and KOB and in total 14 Japanese females volunteered for the study. Four individual interviews and three focus group interviews were conducted. The age demographic of the Japanese participants ranged from 30s to 70s – *e.g.*, two participants in their 30s, eight in their 40s, two in their 50s, one in her 60s, and one participant in her 70s. The majority were housewives (n=9), three were full-time office workers, one a tour guide, and one a university staff member (see Table 7, p. 90, for the demographics of Japanese participants).

International sales managers came from Korean network TV stations and Korean drama producers were also contacted. In Korea, three major network TV stations – KBS, MBC, and SBS – engage in nationwide broadcasting. These stations have their own subsidiary company, a separate departmental unit to pursue program distribution overseas – *e.g.*, KBS Media (KBS’s subsidiary corporation in charge of copyright content sales to both domestic and international markets), MBC has the department of global business and strategy with their branches overseas, and SBS Productions (SBS’s subsidiary corporation in charge of the copyright content sales to both domestic and international markets). International sales manager participants at each TV station were key sources of information regarding the exportation of Korean TV content. To recruit them for interviews, the author directly contacted the head of a unit and senior sales managers at each TV station. Finally, three sales managers (the head of KBS international sales from KBS Media, the senior sales manager of KBS Media, and the head of the MBC Global group’s Japanese branch) were interviewed in Seoul and Tokyo. In addition, two Korean TV drama producers were interviewed individually; one TV producer was assistant director of the popular Korean TV drama

*DaeJangGeum*, and the other producer was working for a major independent TV production company in Korea. He has been directing TV dramas for more than five years and a few of his dramas were sold to Chinese and Japanese TV stations (see Table 8, p. 91, for the demographics of Korean TV station participants).

**Table 6: Profiles of Interviewees (Korean Participants)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age/Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Joined Fan club</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>SL</b>	30s / F	Office worker	Korean	HallyuLove	
<b>KJ</b>	30s / F	Housewife	Korean		
<b>CB</b>	30s / F	Office worker	Korean		
<b>YS</b>	20s / M	Student	Korean	LeeSan Café, DCInside	College reporter
<b>LY</b>	20s / F	Student	Korean	BYJ fan site (KOB)	
<b>MM</b>	20s / F	Student	Korean	HallyuLove	
<b>KG</b>	30s / M	Time-off	Korean	LeeSan Café	
<b>LS</b>	40s / F	IT software Analyst	Korean		Living in the U.S.
<b>JH</b>	30s / F	Office worker	Korean		
<b>AY</b>	30s / F	Physical Therapist	Korean		
<b>PJ</b>	20s / F	Student	Korean	BYJ fan site (KOB)	
<b>HC</b>	30s / F	Office worker	Korean	BYJ fan site (KOB)	
<b>KH</b>	50s / F	Housewife	Korean		
<b>IH</b>	20s / M	Student	Mongolia		Exchange Student
<b>LR</b>	20s / F	Student	China		Exchange Student
<b>DH</b>	50s / F	Teacher	Malaysian	Quilt, Soompi	Resident in Korea

**Table 7: Profiles of Interviewees (Japanese Participants)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age/Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Joined Fan club</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>KU</b>	40s / F	Office worker	Japanese	BYJ fan site (JOB, KOB)	
<b>NR</b>	40s / F	Office worker	Japanese	JOB, KOB, Quilt	
<b>MA</b>	50s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB, KOB	
<b>ST</b>	40s / F	Travel Guide	Japanese	JOB, KOB, Quilt	
<b>KY</b>	30s / F	University Staff	Japanese	JOB, April Snow and Now, Quilt	A leader of fan club (April Snow...)
<b>HT</b>	50s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB	
<b>YY</b>	40s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB, KOB	
<b>CD</b>	40s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB, KOB	
<b>JM</b>	30s / F	Housewife	Canadian	JOB, Quilt, Personal Blog	Japanese immigrant
<b>KM</b>	70s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB, KOB	Living in the U.S.
<b>NK</b>	40s / F	Office worker	Japanese	JOB, YongTomo	
<b>TO</b>	40s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB	
<b>YR</b>	40s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB, KOB	
<b>SK</b>	60s / F	Housewife	Japanese	JOB	

**Table 8: Profiles of Interviewees (Korean TV Station Participants)**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age/Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Position</b>
<b>JJ</b>	M/40s	TV content marketing	Korean	Head of Global Business in MBC Japan
<b>CG</b>	M/30s	TV producer	Korean	TV drama producer in MBC
<b>LL</b>	M/40s	TV content marketing	Korean	Head of International Sales in KBS Media
<b>HW</b>	M/30s	TV producer	Korean	Independent TV producer
<b>PK</b>	M/40s	TV content marketing	Korean	Senior Sales Manager in KBS Media

#### 1) Interview Procedures

Individual interviews were conducted within the range of 45 minutes to 1.5 hours and the focus group interviews lasted for 2 to 3 hours, depending on the number of participants in the group. Most interviews were held in restaurants near participants' homes or workplaces. The interview site was typically decided by the interviewee.

All interviews were audiotaped with the participant's permission and field notes were taken by the author. Japanese participants, except for two interviews, were interviewed in English by the author; in the two exceptions, the interviews were conducted in Japanese with the aid of an interpreter and the transcripts were translated into Korean by the interpreter, and subsequently translated into English by the author. Korean participants were interviewed in Korean by the author. For the purpose of the

data analysis, all interviews were transcribed verbatim by the author and each participant was assigned a pseudonym.

## 2) Interview Questions

The semi-structured questions were provided to the interviewees in all three groups (*e.g.*, Japanese and Korean audience participants, international sales managers at Korean TV stations). The interviewer asked open-ended questions in a conversational manner (Moran, 2006). This tended to bring forth certain types of information from respondents, but the particular phrasing of questions was adjusted to fit the characteristics of each situation and each respondent (Denzin, 1989).

In brief, the interview questions for the Japanese audiences (including three Asian interviewees living in Korea) were comprised of three categories; (a) personal narratives of experiences watching Korean TV drama, (b) fan practices and the meaning of being a fan, and (c) evaluations of Korean TV dramas and the Korean Wave. The overall questions for Korean audiences were similar to the questionnaire for Japanese audiences, but the former two categories were modified a bit based on the analytic frame. Hence, the questions for the Korean audience were categorized accordingly: (a) The reasons for the popularity of Korean TV dramas among East Asian audiences, (b) personal understandings of the Korean Wave in East Asia, and (c) assessment of the Korean Wave at the present and in the future.

The central questions for Korean international sales managers focused on the following four categories: (a) the export procedures of Korean TV dramas into the Asian market, (b) professional experiences of promotions, industrial strategies and

decision-making, (c) the status of the Korean media industry within the Asian region (or beyond the Asian region), and (d) implications of the Korean Wave.

#### 4.2. Data Analysis

##### 1) Coding and Analysis

The transcribed interviews were coded for the purpose of organizing dominant themes and finding relationships among various major categories within the respondents' narratives. Through the initial coding process, the author conducted open coding of the data, with the focus on generating categories and seeking properties for how categories vary. Next, the author conducted selective coding of the data, which involves integrating and refining categories that emerged from the open coding procedure (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The data interpretation also followed these four phases: describing, organizing, corroborating/legitimizing, and representing the account (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Describing is a reflective process in which the analyst steps back from the field and reviews what he or she grasps from the given data. Then, analysis continues with organizing proper themes and subsequently finding theoretical units present in the data. In the organizing themes phase, the analyst explores relationships among the features described by participants in the research field. This phase is called the corroborating/legitimizing process of reviewing the data. Finally, the interpretive process is completed when the themes are compared in order to gain a better understanding of the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999).

Through two-step coding procedures for this study, two recurrent themes (or thematic categories) in Korean drama audience analysis were identified: the main theme was an emerging sense of “Asianness.” Importantly, this sense for the Japanese audience had more to do with their perception of “nostalgia” generated by Korean TV drama. Therefore, the coded data were interpreted with this recurrent theme under two conceptual frames, which included the intertextuality<sup>23</sup> (Fisk, 1987) of Korean dramas among the respondents and glocalization of Korean dramas’ regional circulation.

The intertextuality of Korean TV dramas is manifested in the theme of Asianness, and this theme was connected to at least three the other sub-themes: nostalgia, Asian modernity and foreignness. The research findings (see Chapter 5) demonstrate these themes through excerpts from interviewees’ personal narratives. The interviewees present similar meanings and emotions by describing their fan club activities after having watched Korean TV dramas for several years.

Glocalization of Korean TV dramas is explored in terms of Asian regional circulation through the coded data of Korean TV stations’ sales managers. The structural transformation of Korean media systems, the local application of Korean TV dramas and the particularities of commodified content are examined as major elements in this industrial analysis (see Chapter 6). The overall thematic interpretation of the coded data was aimed at understanding the Korean Wave phenomenon comprehensively as well as theoretically.

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<sup>23</sup> “[intertextuality] proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relationship to others and that a range of textual knowledge is brought to bear upon it. These relationships do not take the form of specific allusions from one text to another and there is no need for readers to be familiar with specific or the same texts to read intertextually” (Fisk, 1987, p. 108).



## **Chapter V. Re-emerging Sentiment of *Asianness* through Korean Dramas**

This chapter examines the crucial meanings of the exported Korean television dramas, particularly to Japan, as constructed by Japanese fans. The phenomenon of Japanese fans of the Korean Wave is discussed along the lines of deeply engaging emotional resonance of Japanese fans with the themes and content of Korean TV dramas. As a consequence, interviews with Japanese fans explore particular implications of the meanings found in Korean TV drama within the region in comparison to the responses of Korean audiences to the dramas. First, the essence of being a Japanese fan of Korean drama is similar to a reflection of *Asianness* in terms of Japanese sentiment, and this is in sync with the nostalgia of Japanese fans for their own previous cultural and social experiences. Second, the Japanese fans have tended to relate themselves more strongly with fellow Asians than ever before, and Japanese fans of contemporary Korean TV dramas constitute an excellent example of how this transformation has occurred, and the role The Korean Wave, including Korean dramas and other cultural exports, has played in the transformation.

### 5.1. The Korean TV drama among Japanese audiences: A wakeup call

Thanks to the Korean Wave, Asian television viewers have easy access to contemporary Korean TV dramas at home via domestic TV channels. The Korean Wave made viewing Korean TV dramas, pop-music and films on East and Southeast Asian TV broadcasts common. Although there are some skeptical views about the current success of Korean media content in other markets, it is obvious that the current popularity of Korean programs was made possible by the exportation and availability of

Korean television dramas. The Korean television drama has become entrenched in a broad range of Asian markets and these popular Korean dramas have been established as primary foreign TV series for Asians in the last few years. Asian TV viewers feel closer to the Korean TV shows and have commonly used them to entertain themselves.

Undoubtedly, Japanese audiences who participated in these interviews revealed their emotions in accepting Korean TV dramas as individuals. Japanese audiences, in particular fan club members of Korean dramas and media celebrities, emphasized why and to what extent the Korean drama prompts them to associate strongly with emotional aspects of their identities. The Korean drama brought a realization of things Korean and Korean people often for the first time in the lives of these Japanese fans. Furthermore, these fans acknowledged a deep cultural affinity for Korea. This realization inspired the Japanese fans to deep introspection in identifying themselves both as individuals and social beings, as both Japanese and as Asians.

In focusing on attitudes of Japanese fans toward Korean dramas, Japanese audiences show incredible passion and continuous loyalty toward the Korean TV drama and the larger shared communities. This has a lot to do with Japanese fan's individual disposition as a cultural consumer. This is known as *Otaku*<sup>24</sup> in Japanese. The Korean dramas feed the large appetites of particular groups of Japanese audiences for a higher quality of entertaining content and the unexpected high quality of production values found in the Korean dramas are also a source of pleasure to Japanese audiences. The freshness of Korean dramas was very popular with Japanese audiences, and viewing

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<sup>24</sup> The Japanese term, *Otaku*, will explain specifically in this chapter later (see 5.1. section 2. p. 103). Briefly, *Otaku* refers to as an extremely avid fan of the certain genres of popular culture in the Japanese society.

these dramas has increased Japanese curiosity and inquiries into the broader scope of Korean culture.

#### 1) Provoking Emotions

MA (female, 50s), a Japanese interviewee, pointed out that the current popularity of Korean dramas is demonstrated on Japanese television on a daily basis, although the sensational wave seemed to be slightly waning in comparison to its peak from 2003 to 2005. According to the interviewee, more than ten Korean television dramas are airing every day on Japanese network and satellite TV channels. She remembered that there used to be Korean dramas on just two provincial channels prior to the current Korean Wave, but now many cable providers and network stations in Tokyo schedule at least one or two Korean dramas during their weekly airtime. As a result, she emphasized, “It is NOT the Korean Wave but it has become a GENRE in Japanese TV. Maybe on the surface, the Korean Wave is not a splash like the situation the past few years ago, but the Korean TV dramas are already there in the Japanese daily media.” MA strongly suggested that the Korean Wave is established in Japanese society as having notable cultural impacts.

Generally, Japanese viewers have a positive predisposition toward Korean dramas stemming primarily from two factors: For Japanese audiences, Korean dramas are distinguished both by structure of the text and sensitive storytelling. In regard to the textual elements, Korean dramas are composed of realistic narratives insofar as the story reflects actual life stories of individuals. The main purpose of Korean drama is to touch individual audiences with appeals to deep emotions. Also, the narrative of Korean

TV dramas is cathartic to the audience, but the plots are rarely rational in the sense of solving a puzzle within the plot. This is perhaps very different than Western drama series. If a certain Korean drama is beloved by the Japanese audience, it is because the drama persuades viewers emotionally rather than intellectually, with emphasis on emotional messages and realistic acting that individual viewers can readily make sense of. According to Japanese interviewees, this high degree of emotional appeal in Korean drama is the essential element distinguishing Korean dramas from television dramas produced in other countries. The Japanese participants mentioned this uniqueness of the Korean drama, and they also discussed different directing/producing styles, storylines, descriptions of characters, and acting in the Korean dramas. The Japanese fans appeared fascinated by these elements and eager to catch every episode of a given Korean drama.

Past researchers explored the attraction of various Asian audiences to Korean drama and have suggested that Korean dramas send heart-warming emotional touches which have been avoided by Western TV series (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007; Chua, 2004, 2008; Lin & Tong, 2008; Mori, 2008). Similarly, Asian media critics have found that the success of the Korean drama across the Asian region has happened because the exported dramas overwhelm audiences with sensitive emotions and heartbreaking stories. As an increasingly famous genre, the Korean trendy drama has primary popularity with young female Asian audiences. In contrast, other genres of the Korean drama (*e.g.*, melodramas, family dramas, and historical dramas) seek older viewers in their 30s and older. The TV ratings in East Asian countries show that the exported Korean trendy dramas ranked in the top five on many local charts, including *Autumn Fairy Tales*, *Winter Sonata*, *Full House*, and *Lovers in Paris*, which convey the story of

a love triangle between young couples in glamorous urban settings. On the other hand, Korean historical dramas including *DaeJangGeum*, *Damo: The undercover lady detective*, *HeSin*, *JuMong*, and the family drama *Fighting! Geumsoon*, describe with realistic tones the stories of Korea's historic mythology and matters familiar to average middle-class Asian families. These latter genres of Korean historical and family dramas are familiar to and popular with numerous audiences.

Regarding the high emotional appeal of Korean drama, I found interesting examples while interviewing both Korean viewers and Japanese fans. They both picked two Korean dramas, *Winter Sonata*<sup>25</sup> and *DaeJangGeum*,<sup>26</sup> as the best Korean dramas ever aired. Not only Korean and Japanese interviewees but also those from China, Malaysia, and Mongolia chose these two dramas as their favorites. *Winter Sonata* has amplified the popularity of Korean drama by means of its great emotional impact on

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<sup>25</sup> *Winter Sonata* was produced by KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) in 2002. It is a mini-series, having 20 episodes each 60 minutes long and was aired in primetime twice a week. It received a 24.5 percent share of TV ratings in Korea, which is not a great commercial success based on the Korean ratings system. However, this drama sold to sixteen countries including East Asian and Southeast Asian countries between 2003 and 2005. And, the popularity of *Winter Sonata* then increased the Korean Wave in the Asian region. The musical album from *Winter Sonata* was inserted in the entire series, and different types of characters and fashion products used by the protagonists became popular in many Asian markets. No doubt, the stars, Bae YongJoon and Choi, JiWoo, were reborn as two of the most beloved Asian stars, and still their popularity, especially in Japan, greatly enhances the possibilities for their future careers (Source: KBS Drama Homepage, <http://www.kbs.co.kr/drama>).

<sup>26</sup> *DaeJangGeum* was produced by MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation) during 2003 and 2004. It was a historical mini-series, having 54 episodes, and was aired in primetime twice a week. The story is set 500 years ago, during the time of the Chosun Dynasty, when Korea boasted a rigid hierarchy, and male dominated social structure. Set in this period, *Jewel in the Palace* is based on a true story about a heroic girl (Jang-Geum) who became the first woman to be the supreme royal physician of her time. Despite being born into a low class, and being a female in the male dominated society, Jang-Geum overcame substantial social discrimination and landed herself a job as a royal cook. She later became a royal physician, and ultimately became the physician in charge of the king. She was even given the title "The Great Jang-Geum" by the king. The story of her checkered life, her success, and her breakdown, as well as her love story unfold beautifully (Source: MBC Drama Homepage, <http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama>).

these Asian audiences. The emotional appeal of *Winter Sonata* comes from dramatic narrative and the realistic acting of main characters.

In brief, *Winter Sonata* is a bittersweet love story. The main characters, Yujin (heroine) and JoonSang (hero) meet in high school and in a couple of months they fall in love with each other. Then suddenly, JoonSang is involved in a bad car accident on New Year's Eve, the very night he had planned to confess his love to Yujin. The car accident took JoonSang's life, but Yujin couldn't accept his sudden death. After many bitter days, Yujin comes back to her normal life but she never loses her memories and love for JoonSang. After 10 years pass, Yujin is a successful 29-year-old interior designer who still hasn't forgotten JoonSang. One day, she meets an architect working on the same rebuilding ski-resort project she is working on. The architect looks identical to JoonSang. The architect introduces himself as MinHyung and at that moment Yujin gets an enormous shock. Thanks to the ski-resort project, Yujin and MinHyung get to know each other and become much closer even though MinHyung feels strange when Yujin seems occasionally to confuse him with another person. When their project is about to finish, MinHyung learns about Yujin's sad loss and he decides to confess his love to Yujin. She cannot avoid MinHyung even though she knows that he is not the same person as JoonSang, but she falls in love with MinHyung anyway.

In the meantime, the story reveals a secret about MinHyung—MinHyung and JoonSang are actually the same person. In fact, JoonSang was not killed 10 years previously by the accident. JoonSang totally lost his memory after the accident, and his mother took him to the U.S. in order to recover his health. His mother renamed him MinHyung, having remarried herself in the U.S. MinHyung gradually recovers his

memory as JoonSang. Thus, Yujin wants to marry JoonSang. But, there turns out another surprising secret about their relationship, in that JoonSang's biological father, who died many years previously, may also be Yujin's father as well. This family situation makes the lovers separate again with terrible heartbreak, but they both accept their fate. JoonSang goes back to the U.S., wishing Yujin happiness; Yujin goes to France to study. Three years later, the alleged family secret is discovered to be false, and they individually come back to Korea for their work. JoonSang lost his vision because of post accident complications. In the last episode, Yujin finds a familiar looking house, similar to one she designed, so she wants to visit the house. It was built by JoonSang during their separation, and JoonSang visits the house the same day Yujin visits. Coincidentally, JoonSang and Yujin meet each other at the house again and they happily reunite there.

As summarized above, the narrative of *Winter Sonata* has intriguing plot twists based on a strong belief in the pure sense of first love. The producer, Seok-Ho Yun, has mentioned many times that he wanted to deliver the message to the audience that love illuminates our ever-changing societies in this material age, and embracing true love in one's life is certainly hard with all of life's complexity. The graceful worthiness of true love and feelings of the heart show the authentic sentiment of humanity. The manifestation of love that *Winter Sonata* shows is dramatized, but it is successful in provoking feelings and sentiments in ways anyone can easily relate to. Asian audiences pay great attention to all possible hardships and obstacles that the characters face, and eventually overcome all obstacles. The plot twists, including abrupt accidents, loss of memory, and twisted family history, are rare, however, these events are often present

and describable in our nexus of friendships and family, specifically events related to family dignity, suffering, and restoration. The drama tackles these webs of issues and in-depth emotional struggles that give meaning to the situations and struggles the characters encounter. The dramatic elements are displayed in crafty ways such as melancholic music and visual effects of winter landscapes. Bae and Choi, the actors portraying JoonSang and Yujin, consistently tug at the heartstrings of the audiences, provoking tearful empathy episode-by-episode.

For Japanese fans, the sentiment from *Winter Sonata* made them avid fans of Korean dramas in general and BYJ in particular. One of the interviewees, YY (female, 40s), explained how her thinking was changed about Korea and Koreans after she was exposed to *Winter Sonata*:

I have watched many Korean dramas before this current Korean drama boom in Japan. But, after I knew Yong-Joon [ssi]<sup>27</sup> through *Winter Sonata*, I now ACCEPT Korea. I UNDERSTAND Korean people and culture. I would not have had any knowledge or sense about Korea as I do now without Yong-Joon. Yong-Joon made me interact with Korea. If I did not know him, Korea would still mean nothing for me. Even though I used to like to watch Korean dramas before *Winter Sonata*, they didn't make me want to know about Korea or want to visit Korea. (YY, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

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<sup>27</sup> “ssi” in parentheses is an honorific term in the Korean language, which designates a person in a polite manner. My Japanese interviewees often use this honorific when they mention BYJ. They said that they feel close enough to him to refer to him in that Korean style.



YY emphasized how important *Winter Sonata* is for the Korean drama's current success in Japan. This drama greatly appealed to Japanese females over the age of 30 (Chua, 2004; Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007), and made a huge difference in perceptions of Korea and Koreans among the average Japanese woman (Hanaki, *et al.*, 2007).

For a long time, Korea was on the fringe in East Asia in the general Japanese perception. Many Japanese had only seen Korea as it was when the country was occupied by them. For many Japanese, there is no awareness of Korea, except for the history of colonization. The Japanese interviewees indicated that *Winter Sonata* established a turning point in understanding Korea—after viewing the drama, Korea was perceived by Japanese as an attractive nation for the first time in their lives. The emotional story of *Winter Sonata* led the Japanese female fans to think of Korea and Koreans with a more positive and nuanced lens. The popularity of *Winter Sonata* in Japan brought about sincere interest among Japanese women to learn the essence of Korea and Koreans, which the Japanese fans now imagined as alive, dynamic, civilized, and charming.

## 2) *Otaku*: Japanese fans of Korean dramas

A central habit of television drama viewers is actively reacting toward given episodes, scenes, or advent plots (Bielby, *et al.*, 1999). The viewers' reactions and conversations occur mostly through internet bulletin boards locally, but with the increasing ease of using broadband networks, viewer reactions extend to international audiences and interactions previously non-existent. Indeed, emerging trans-border audience reactions driven by enhanced telecommunications power and availability have

been utilized by Japanese fan communities pursuing Korean drama-related information, including production details and information about the stars.

Of the interviewees for this study, two-thirds of the Japanese participants were involved in fan communities of Korean dramas and stars by using online bulletin boards. These Japanese participants frequently utilized the internet to contact more Korean drama viewers, including other foreign fans. In fact, many of the participants stated their goal in participating in online fan club activities was to communicate with Korean drama fans from different countries. For Japanese fans, the internet fan club boards were the most important places to share their feelings after watching certain episodes of Korean dramas. Not surprisingly, there are numerous daily postings of reactions of Japanese fans on BYJ's fan board, run by his Korean agency (KOB). The postings from Japanese fans in KOB explicitly address the excitement that Japanese fans have about Korean dramas. Their bulletin board discussions involve quite informal messages in many situations. Japanese fans specifically seem to want to know more about BYJ; bulletin board discussions among BYJ fans allow them to discuss their emotions about each episode of the dramas and their interest in learning more about and seeing BYJ. BYJ's dramas, movies, or any news related to him adds fuel to the already-strong motivation to keep fan club boards updated.

Japanese fans are not the only ones visiting bulletin boards (such as KOB) to sound off; fans from other Asian nations have also joined in. It is true that primarily Japanese fans contribute to these fan club activities, including immediate reactions to episodes recently viewed, information seeking/sharing, and more participation in off-line fan activities, as well. The Japanese fans appear more passionate when compared to

other foreign fan club members. Some active Korean fans on KOB play a role in translating the posts of foreign fans (including English and Japanese posts) into the Korean language in order for Korean fans to read and react to them. At the same time, many Japanese fans who frequently visit KOB have learned the Korean language themselves, and they can write their experiences and feelings in Korean for the Korean fans on the board. The Japanese interviewee ST (female, 40s) expressed her daily activities as a fan of BYJ:

On a daily basis, I check *Quilt* [BYJ's worldwide online board], *KOB* [BYJ's Korean-based online board], *JOB* [BYJ's Japan-based online board], and Jaime's and BB's blogs [two famous bloggers among BYJ's fan club members and their blogs are very popular among members of *Quilt*]. BB is the oldest Singaporean fan and she is very informative. So I visit those websites every day, and sometimes, I TRANSLATE Japanese articles into English to post on *Quilt*. As far as off-line activities are concerned, I used to go to *Goshirae* [the Korean restaurant in Tokyo owned by BYJ]. And last year, Jamie visited Japan so at that time we went to all BYJ related places in Japan. (ST, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

Other Japanese interviewees told very similar stories of their daily fan activities. These international conversations using online boards and blogs have played a leading role in building a collective voice and mutual understanding among Korean drama fans from around the world, as well as increasing the understanding of Korean culture and society. Moreover, communicative acts among international fans of Korean dramas can

significantly encourage closer relationships among fan members, no matter what their cultural background may be. As Fiske (1992) argues, much of the pleasure of being a fan resides in the fan talk that it produces. If this is the case, the Japanese fans interviewed in this study suggest that online fan boards and popular blogs create close and supportive bonds among members regardless of nationality. Thanks to the impact of *Winter Sonata* among Japanese audiences, many Japanese fans are now familiar with the particular style of Korean dramas; at the same time, Japanese fans of Korean dramas willingly accept differences in production practices and content between Japanese and Korean TV programs and other Korean pop culture products.

Middle-aged female Japanese fans were particularly avid in seeking self-exploration activities as social beings. For example, many Japanese interviewees had learned Korean language, history, and cuisine, and moreover they had sought out current information about Korea. Some attempted to make friends with Koreans personally. These Japanese interviewees visited various photo exhibits, drama-related events, BYJ's film premieres and even other events, including fundraisers for victims of natural disasters, associated with the name BYJ. For several years, many highly visible functions by these Japanese fans show that they are more informed about Korea in Japanese society, and these functions enable interested Japanese female fans access to Korean pop culture in general. Japanese interviewees wanted to talk about their general interest in Korean society, culture, and people and how their interest increased year after year since they became members of the BYJ fan club.

Sometimes, the energy of fans, as is the case with Japanese fans of Korean drama, creates new paths in sharing analogous experiences and emotions in a collective

way. For instance, the interviewee KY (female, 30s) came up with the idea of showing Korean dramas, in particular BYJ's dramas, in a theater. She introduced herself, a relatively young fan member, to many of BYJ's Japanese fans. She was a leader of the BYJ fan club entitled *April Snow and Now*, which has 1,300 members in Tokyo. When she developed the plan for screening *Winter Sonata* in theaters, she visited several movie theaters attempting to persuade the business managers to use her idea. Other Japanese fans loved her idea because it enabled them to watch BYJ's dramas together on a big screen. After several attempts and rejections, KY's idea was accepted by a theater in Roppongi, a new entertainment hub in Tokyo, and in 2006 the Roppongi theater had the first run of *Hotelier*, the drama originally produced prior to *Winter Sonata*.

In 2005, I got my first response from a theater. At that time *Winter Sonata* was owned by NHK; the theater tried to get the film from NHK, but it was too expensive. So the theater couldn't get it, even though they contacted NHK again, but they were not successful because of NHK's high price. So, I asked the theater to look for another of BYJ's dramas, *Hotelier*, because there are also many fans of *Hotelier* in Japan. *Hotelier* was owed by IMX at that time and IMX was BYJ's promotion agency in Tokyo. Finally, they did a showing of *Hotelier* in 2006. When it started playing, the theater informed me of how many people went to see it, and 2,000 people per day saw it. Every single screen in the theater during that period was occupied by BYJ's *Hotelier*. (KY, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

After this showing, several theaters in Tokyo and its suburbs began running two different BYJ dramas originally produced in the early 1990s in Korea – *Papa* and *First Love*. During the interview period in April 2008, the most recent BYJ drama *TaeWangSaSinGi* (*Legend* in English title) was being featured at a number of Tokyo's big theater chains as well as airing on a NHK network channel on weekend nights. Many Japanese interviewees watched *TaeWangSaSinGi* on the weekend TV broadcast, and the following week they visited the theater to see the same episodes as they had seen on TV. Obviously, showing popular Korean dramas on screen has benefited businesses in the Japanese media industry. According to Fisk (1992), popular cultural capital can maintain its relative autonomy because fan's various cultural reactions are controlled only in small part by the larger cultural economy. Audiences reinterpret cultural products to satisfy their own desires, and at the same time have a participatory role in reframing their favorite objects. For the fans, their favorite texts or stars are not simply perceived as one of a mass of cultural products. The fans personalize meanings of texts or stars they love and this passion is reconstructed by the fans.

In Japan, the fan base is unique, and is referred to by the term *Otaku*. Literally, it means the favoritism of a certain people for a certain cultural text or activity. *Otaku* in Japan are accustomed to being called maniacs in regard to comics, animation, and video games. These avid fans are mostly teens to 20s age group, and are primarily young males. *Otaku* fans of animated sci-fi movies and Japanese *mangas* in particular show tremendous enthusiasm for fan activities, regardless of whether they are involved in online or off-line activities. In fact, Japanese fans of Korean dramas may be better

described as fans of Korean pop culture, and this expands their feelings of *Otaku* toward the culture of interest. A Japanese interviewee, SK (female, 60s) stated that she is very fond of exploring historical relationships between Korea and Japan during the nineteenth century. She expressed great interest in this because of the issue of Korean sexual comfort women for the Japanese military in World War II. As such, the boom of *Winter Sonata* and other Korean dramas viewed in contemporary Japan enables people like her to discuss and learn more about as yet undiscussed history between the two nations.

In 2005, SK participated as an event planner for a community event called *The Year of Friendship between Japan and Korea*. She was also a member of the Korea-Japan history forum in her residential area, suburban Tokyo, and in 2008 the forum held a variety of memorial events and seminars in celebrating the first visiting Korean culture ambassadors to Japan (during the period of *Chosun* Dynasty) 400 years ago. She said:

How interesting the term Korean Wave is! I believed that the Korean Wave began with *Chosun Tongsin* [Korea's culture ambassador] having roots 400 years old. Cultural influences on Japan from the *Chosun* Dynasty are apparent. I think that time was the beginning of the Korean Wave in Japan, and this current Korean drama boom is an outgrowth of the cultural exchange that began 400 years ago.

Similarly, popular culture consumers in Japan have a certain degree of *Otaku* fever, in which individuals are very fond of particular texts and celebrities. In this

Japanese fan culture, some say that BYJ's or *Winter Sonata*'s middle-aged female fans are perhaps the first female fan group revealing an *otaku*-style fan community (Mori, 2008) beyond the stereotypical tech-maniacs. *Otaku* culture differentiates the Japanese fans of Korean dramas from other foreign fan groups; the Japanese fans of Korean dramas are the most informative messengers of newly arriving Korean pop culture in Japan.

With regard to this tendency, BYJ fans in Japan demonstrate tremendous passion, energy, and motivation to introduce Korean media content and Korea-related history into their society. The Korean drama, in particular *Winter Sonata*, has actually created a new public sphere in Japan focused on contemporary Korean culture and society. Japanese interviewees were open to, even enthusiastic about, learning more about Korea and Koreans, and they also had shared experiences and feelings when they encountered new information about Korea. As a consequence, the Japanese fans' engagement in the Korean Wave can be seen as very sincere and deep in entertainment as well as social commitment. For instance, JM (female, late 30s) spoke about the moment she was totally immersed in *Winter Sonata* at first viewing:

Cool! There is GOOD ACTING and [*Winter Sonata*] is EXCELLENT like the story and the beautiful scenery. [She began to explain a specific drama scene about how great it is.] Tears were streaming down from [BYJ's] eyes and he broke everything he shared with her, and the end he broke her necklace. Oh my god! You know, this man understands EMOTION and he understands love and feelings. So I can say that I'm gonna be hooked forever. I am sure a lot of sisters [fellow fans] are too, and you know, he



[BYJ] CHANGES our lives. Since [seeing BYJ in *Winter Sonata*], I had looked over all DVD stores in Toronto as well as the internet during the next two weeks to find out everything about him. I'd never done this before; I didn't even know how to use a computer. But, I went to all the BYJ websites and checked all his work. At that time, *April Snow* was being played in theaters and I bought all products related to that movie. I was really happy. I was a happy woman. (JM, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

JM is one of the famous BYJ fans because she writes her own blog in order to introduce BYJ's past and present performances to other fans, along with commenting on other Korean dramas. Other focus group interviewees stated that her blog is one of the best blogs that anyone could check out every day in regard to BYJ. In fact, it is interesting to see that other BYJ fan club members are referred to as "sisters" in JM's remarks, above. Indeed, filial terms are common among BYJ's fans. They actually refer to each other as sisters, and this naming accentuates the closeness BYJ fans feel among themselves and this group's desire to be elite among BYJ fan clubs.

The specific identification within BYJ fan clubs began with BYJ himself. He has named his overseas fan members his family as well as his Korean fan club members. BYJ's use of the term *family* was announced in public on the day of BYJ's first visit to Tokyo in 2004. There had been a small accident when some apparently crazed Japanese fans ran into his car. At a news conference after the accident, BYJ showed up tearfully in front of thousands of his Japanese fans on live TV and said, "I

am terribly sorry that some members of my *family* were hurt. I just pray that there are no serious injuries” (Onishi, 2004, p. A3). After this happened, wherever BYJ’s fans were in Asia they have followed his every utterance. The interviewed Japanese women were satisfied that their group has its own identity, apart from other fan clubs in Japan. The Japanese fans prefer to identify themselves as members of a supranational BYJ Community, independent of their nationality.

In sum, the core Korean drama fans in Japan accept and internalize the stories and images of *Winter Sonata* differently than others in Japan. These fan club members are willing to associate themselves more with characters featured in the drama. Thus, the protagonists of *Winter Sonata* (BYJ and Choi) are extraordinarily beloved by the core of Japanese fans. For these fans, BYJ and Choi seem to operate as a medium, connecting individual Japanese fans to their youth, and to each other. This has resulted in strong feelings and emotional ties of individual Japanese fans toward the drama and its main characters. Most Japanese interviewees expressed that they explored their very deep, pure, and authentic feelings while watching *Winter Sonata*. These emotions were awakened early, and continued to grow internally even though many of these emotions had been long-forgotten. *Winter Sonata* facilitates wishful emotions so that viewers consistently watch the shows. Many Japanese interviewees said that in these dramas they found the story they had been searching for:

I don’t remember why I was so concentrated on watching [*Winter Sonata*]. Maybe they just broadcast two episodes at once and I recorded it while I was watching it. After the TV broadcasting was over, I just started playing the recording, watching it again for two hours EVERY NIGHT repeatedly.

It was maybe around Christmas or the New Year's holiday in 2003-2004; I was TOTALLY [laughing] I mean I don't know. His existence suddenly came into my HEART. It was just like sudden good luck. I devoted myself to Bae, YongJoon [ssi]. So his first visit in Japan, at that time, I was a 100 percent fan of his. (NR, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

For NR (female, 40s, mentioned above), first experiencing Korean dramas happened suddenly, but the Korean drama is now well-established in Japan as highly popular foreign media content.

## 5.2. The Sentiment of *Asianness*

According to Chua (2004), a sense of foreignness is shown as distinct transnational media content, different from the home content because foreignness is an ostensible source, drawing the attention of local audiences to imported media content. Foreignness is a concept consistent with the concept of "otherness," emerging as a central identification between "us" and "them." In other words, foreignness is a sentiment of self-differentiation, a separating of oneself from others; others do not possess indigenous cultural similarities. In most cases involving Asian people, foreignness is akin to feelings toward things originating from the West instead of originating from Asia.

In contrasting Asia with the West in the cultural domain there are fundamental differences in understanding a sense of foreignness. The West has more to do with perceiving and structuring foreignness for all Asian communities. According to

Iwabuchi (2008b), what is meant by “Modern Asia” is an ongoing history of mirroring the Western world. The history of Asia’s modernization in the last half of the 20th century can be seen as being Westernized. To identify the notion of *Asianness*, Asians have borrowed images and schemes from the West. Simply put, identifying Asian sentiment is a constant process of comparing and contrasting every aspect of Asian society with the West. From this rationale, *Asianness* may not seem without Western referents, whether this has been conscious or not, through images and pre-existing norms. By the same token, Iwabuchi (2008b) claimed that the controversial discussions of *Asianness* in modern Asia still focused on the banality of Asia versus the West. Iwabuchi named this as *Oriental Orientalism* (Iwabuchi, 2008b).

It seems a bit ironic to discuss foreignness through Korean dramas from the perspective of Asian audiences, however, receiving transnational media content in Asian countries has been a rare phenomenon. To some degree, foreignness in Korean dramas is not manifested as a significant distinction, such as isolated feelings from many Western TV shows, but foreignness in Korean drama for Asian audiences can be conceived as novelty. To Japanese fans, a subtle sense of foreignness in Korean dramas inspires dialogues about modernity and the embedded *Asianness* in Japanese society. As many scholars have remarked (Ang, 2007; Appadurai, 1996; Ching, 2000; Iwabuchi, 2002), modernity in Asia is not simply defined in one clear way; modernity, particularly in East Asia, explores the common meaning of becoming Westernized. Modernization in East Asia has a link to industrialization which means an establishment of the Western mimic industrial capitalism. Modernization in many Asian nations has proceeded along the line with differing rates of development, thus the sense of *Asianness* from the Asian

perspective varies in local social/cultural values which have been positively related to an individual's social sense of belonging (Choi, 2003). While many Asian nations on the surface have achieved a certain degree of modernization, the essence of *Asianness* tends to be hidden under the surface and increasingly these Asian virtues are gradually fading. Despite of waning Asian values, the sense of *Asianness* among East Asians involves a positioning of the self within a single nation, both as individuals as well as social beings. Speedy urban sprawls and the growth of global cosmopolitanism have occurred in every corner of Asia, but the scope and intensity of the established modernity largely varies. Given these qualifications, Japan has the most Western-adapted modern nation in Asia. Often, the people of Japan identify themselves not as a member of Asian community, but as an independent territory between the space of Asia and the West (Chua, 2004; Kaori & Lee, 2007; Iwabuchi, 1998, 2002).

*Asianness* is related to opposing instrumentality and rationality in the West, and has more to do with identifying emotions and relational ties among people, harmony, family dignity, and respect for rituals and customs. Interestingly, Korean society possesses comparatively more customary East Asian values than do other Confucius, Asian societies. Lee, S. M., (2007) explains:

Also because of their strong Confucian roots, South Koreans place a great emphasis on the sense of belonging. The basic unit of belonging is the family, based on blood ties, followed by hometown, school, professional, and organizational relationships, and even hobbies. Thus, South Koreans belong to more groups than perhaps any other people in the world. The sense of belonging is usually accentuated by frequent communication and interaction.” (p.123)

Korea's Confucian legacy has been prominently illustrated in the main themes of popular Korean television dramas.

With respect to quality of Korean TV dramas, the Korean interviewees agreed that considerable growth in the general quality of Korean television programming is at least partially due to the Korean Wave. But, these Korean participants asserted that Korean TV dramas should improve more in terms of producing styles and filming techniques, in comparison to those of famous U.S. TV series. To be successfully distributed in the international media market, Korean dramas in the views of the interviewed Korean audience members should facilitate better production quality, refine its visual effects, and appeal to various audience groups more broadly and universally:

Recently, Korean drama producers have tried to do various experiments to broaden their genres, which formerly focused on trendy dramas or melodramas. This generic experiment generally increases different types of dramas, such as action and/or detective dramas, semi-fantasy historical dramas, and comic trendy dramas. However, new genres of Korean dramas are not as popular as typical trendy or melodramas in the main Asian market when compared to notable imported U.S. TV series such as *Prison Break* and *CSI*. These U.S. TV shows have excellent production quality, and they continue to be aired in many markets outside the U.S. Compared to these U.S. TV series, the quality of exported Korean dramas are not high enough quality for typical Western TV viewers. I think that the Korean dramas possess certain potential to be attractive to more foreign audiences beyond Asian audiences. (LY, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

Korean interviewees acknowledged that the Korean media industry has become one of the largest media content exporters through the Korean Wave. They expressed a desire for this current success to remain longer, and improvement in the media producing, marketing and infrastructure as a whole is important to Koreans. Therefore, a wait-and-see perspective toward the Korean Wave is the primary attitude from a majority of Korean audiences (Lee, K. H., 2008). The Korean interviewees understood that the Korean Wave arrived in Asia at the right time to be accepted by Asian audiences. The capitalist youth culture and similar outgrowths of modernism throughout Asia have enabled more Korean dramas to be given attention by other Asian audiences:

I would say that the Korean Wave has been successful, but it can be a short-lived phenomenon. Honestly, I don't think this can last forever. People get bored, and other countries will eventually catch up with us. So Korean broadcasting staffs should never forget how to create better appeals to foreign viewers in terms of seeking attractive topics and subjects and in producing beautiful cinematography. (LS, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

The proper time for evaluating the success of the Korean Wave may not be now because the Korean Wave phenomenon gets wider in scope, already surpassing its peak. [In terms of evaluation], I think the future of the Korean Wave relies on reactions and efforts of Korean media industries in how to develop the programs more creatively. We may see another Korean Wave soon, or never again. (KJ, personal interview, December 2007 in Seoul)

Given their knowledge of the previous Hong Kong pop cultural movement, Korean audiences have shown strong attitudes about the future of the Korean Wave. The Korean interviewees overall emphasized the demand for enhancing quality of Korean TV production and for applying professional marketing tactics in order to compete with hegemonic global broadcasters. Thus far, the Korean Wave has produced economic-centered ambitions on the part of the Korean government (Lee, K. H., 2008). More specifically, the Korean Wave's influence in foreign countries has been highlighted as a form of nation branding, and this serves well for the expansion plans for the exportation of Korean pop culture. YS (male, 20s), a Korean interviewee, noted this from his nationalistic perspective:

The Korean Wave surprisingly polished our national image as one of the favorable countries in Asia. In addition, the exported Korean TV programs and movies contribute to making money for the Korean media industry. Korean media business has obtained lots of fruits through the Korean Wave. I think that the exportation of Korean dramas will continue or even increase. Of course, as a Korean, I am thankful for many Asian fans who love our own dramas and movies. (YS, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

Regarding Korean drama text, Japanese audiences enjoy the deeply emotional content and the complex human networks. Various descriptions of family conflicts, friendships, elder-younger relationships, and male-female relationships under different interpersonal or social settings are conveyed in many Korean dramas. The Japanese interviewees said that these human relationships and webs of entangled emotions are



meticulously portrayed in each episode of a Korean drama, and delicate emotions enrich each episode. As the Japanese participant SK (female, 50s) expressed:

Korean dramas show very intimate but respectful human relationships. For example, *Winter Sonata* also describes the importance of parent-child relationships in Korea, besides the theme of endless first love. The demonstrated parent-child relationship in Korea is absolutely understandable to a person like me, or someone from the same generation as me because I was taught that this kind of relationship is important, a worthy concern of my life as an adult. I remember this kind sentiment even though this relationship and sentiment is not typically seen in Japan today. (SK, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

As this participant remarked, Japanese audiences are often reminded of fading Asian virtues when they are exposed to Korean dramas. As a result, Korean drama can help Japanese audiences redeem individual or national identity as a member of the Asian community. Japanese people and others revisit a sense of *Asianness* appears to be affected by the individual's level of involvement with Korean dramas.

Similarly, the Japanese interviewee HT (female, 50s) remarked that compound and sensitive human relationships portrayed in Korean dramas are noticed in Japan. Conversely, the type of relationship common in Korean drama is becoming less frequently seen in contemporary Japanese society. Citing an example of Korean drama, *First Love*,<sup>28</sup> HT noticed its incredibly tight family bond and fidelity. To her, the strong

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<sup>28</sup> *First Love* was a family drama in a 60-minute format made for weekend viewing and was produced by KBS (Korean Broadcasting System) in 1996. It was a great hit in Korea; the average ratings were 65.8%.

family bond portrayed in the drama was similar to past Japanese dramas from the 1960s and '70s. HT said that the image of family in the drama is similar to how Japanese families used to be. In more recent times, the sentiments shown in the Korean drama are quite different and she underscored that Korean dramas are still catching up in certain aspects of social life. In this sense, HT indicated she was glad that Korea still cherished Asian virtues as the social norm. In addition, another interviewee, KU (female, 40s), stated how the Korean drama captures positive features of the old-fashioned Asian family structure which is rare in Japan today:

When I watched the drama, *Fighting! GeumSoon*,<sup>29</sup> I felt really touched and was surprised by the strong bond of the protagonist's family. They took care of her so much and supported her to remarry for her future, and I know all this really came from the bottom of their hearts and they were all tied very closely. I cried several times while I watched the entire episode because my heart was moved a lot by their incredible ties between family members and profound care for each other. (KU, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

In interviewing both Japanese and Korean audiences, a contrasting view arose concerning how *Asianness* is perceived differently between the two audiences. Based on observations of Korean interviewees with respect to the Korean Wave in the East Asia region, Korean participants indicated that some typical aspects of Korean society are

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<sup>29</sup> This was a daily family drama in a 30-minute format for weekdays and was produced by MBC (Munwha Broadcasting Corporation) in 2005. It earned relatively higher ratings at that time with 37.9%.

shared as Asian values with other East Asian audiences; these included strong family bonds, a passion for higher education, respect for elders, and dynamic city life. For instance, KJ (Korean female, 30s) said:

I think that our [Korean] dramas enable viewers to compare their life in China and Japan. Likewise, our living with a nuclear family occurs more often than living with a large traditional family. Also, Korean parents absolutely dedicate their lives to raising their children. To do that, Korean parents work very hard to get money for funding their children's education and high standard of living. I think that these examples are quite common in China and Japan, too. (KJ, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

Another interviewee, LY (Korean female, 20s), addressed commonalities among Korea, China, and Japan including daily life as a city dweller, working relationships in business, and the school system. In fact, Korean interviewees pointed out modern aspects of Korean society rather than Korea's traditional culture and living. The Korean viewers indicated similarities in modern Asian life would be significant reasons for the popularity of Korean dramas among East Asian audiences:

In my opinion, the Korean dramas have not shown the specific characteristics of Asian countries. But rather, Asian viewers have a similar culture and lifestyle to that of Koreans, so they can easily find similarities in Korean dramas. And they perceive those similarities as an Asian style. In particular, Korean dramas depict universal scenes in close shots because Asian viewers understand well and enjoy the drama. Also, living in cities

and a specific urban lifestyle are highly similar across developing Asian countries today. (YS, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

YS (Korean male, 20s) claimed that Korean dramas choose trivial but universal plots, presenting stories occurring to average people and families. These stories are easily and widely understood by virtually any audience. Korean drama producers are skillful in communicating these stories and themes, capturing complicated feelings across many levels of human relationships. The central stories in Korean dramas have touched on the viewer's heart with gentle humor and sophisticated sympathies, according to YS.

Korean drama producer CG (male, 30s) expressed similar ideas about Korean drama:

I see the reason why *DaeJangGeum* has been successful with many Asian audiences is due to its universal storyline. The storyline of the drama is centered on an individual's incredible success story that is commonly framed in all legends and folk heroes across time and space. So the drama was received very well by many different audiences no matter what their localities or nationalities. The historical settings, scenes, cuisine, and costumes in Korean historical dramas are entertaining and a source of pleasure to foreign audiences as well. But, it's obvious that the story of the drama is formatted in a really universal way and it appealed to many audiences. (CG, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

It is well documented that the perceived sense of *Asianness* through Korean dramas is interpreted differently by Korean and Japanese participants. The “Asianness” as defined by Japanese interviewees is different from other Asian audiences. While Japanese interviewees found *Asianness* to involve looking back on their past, Korean interviewees perceived *Asianness* to be something found in synchronous modes of modern Asian lives. This time gap in making sense of Korean dramas between Koreans and Japanese suggests that modernization is established across East Asia in various degrees. As a result, Japanese interviewees could receive Korean dramas as a reflective medium for tracing the lost or fading sentiment, as opposed to a developing mode of modernization. Consistently, the Japanese interviewees emphasized that Korean dramas were fascinating for them because those dramas enriched emotions and redeemed human relationships. These characteristics of Korean dramas enable Japanese fans to feel comfortable because other foreign programs have limited ability to provide similar feelings. In particular, the Confucian cultural legacy contained in Korean dramas is highly similar to that found in most East Asian countries. This aspect is important to enable Korean dramas to be successful in attracting different Asian audiences. ST (female, 40s), the Japanese interviewee, addressed the meaning of the Korean Wave:

I think [the Korean Wave] connects all Asian countries not just Korea.

Because those countries have only watched Western or American culture all the time they now realize that we are Asian [through Korean dramas]. (ST, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

In brief, foreignness in the exported Korean dramas as described by Japanese fans has emerged in two different strains: First it is intrinsically produced from exposure to similar modern sensibilities between Korea and Japan. For Japanese fans, Korea's established modernity in their everyday lives, as depicted in Korean dramas, had produced in Japanese audiences a new view of modern Korea. Japanese now have a more accurate view of contemporary Korea, far from the former colonized stance that the Japanese held for so long. Second, foreignness in exported Korean dramas is not too foreign—the Confucian values from East Asia are present, however these are values that contemporary Japan continues to abandon. Surprisingly, the Japanese interviewees found a great deal of familiarity with past and present Japanese society in Korean dramas and the assumed differences between the colonizer and the colonized did not seem significant in portraying Korea through Korean dramas. As a whole, Korean dramas have created familiar narratives for Japanese audiences but reflected culturally-flavored humanity and sensibility. This novelty found in Korean dramas has resonated with Japanese fans who have related themselves more to the Korean Wave in their society and have increased the sense of *Asianness* among Japanese people.

### 5. 3. Nostalgia in Korean dramas

Korea is, to the Japanese mind, a geographical neighbor but there is little awareness of Korea except for images of the colonial period (Mori, 2008). Behind the scenes of the Korean Wave in Japan, sensitive political tensions between Korea and Japan were enormous obstacles to creating mutual openness to media and popular culture. The Japanese phrase, *Chikokute Tōi*, describes accurately the psychological

distance between individuals from Korea and Japan, who are geographically close but mentally rather far apart. Although the Korean Wave was not a mainstream foreign cultural inflow in Japan, many Japanese cultural critics assert its visible influence on the Japanese imagination of contemporary Korea (Iwabuchi, 2008a). Japanese interviewee KU (female, 40s) pointed out how the Korean Wave brought her closer to Korea as a whole:

It's not easy to state the meaning of the Korean Wave, but I can say that the Korean Wave got me interested in Korea and in watching Korean dramas. And for sure, the pattern of my life has been CHANGED. I am interested in the history and culture of Korea, and at the same time I am very FOND of Korea, I have warm feelings. I was afraid of flying so I never tried to travel to other countries, but now I've visited Korea several times after experiencing the Korean Wave. Frankly, I can say that the Korean Wave CHANGED me. (KU, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

Frequently middle-aged Japanese women are described by the media as a group of frenzied fans of the Korean Wave. For example, their behavior toward BYJ and *Winter Sonata* was identified as extremely odd, similar to the pop media of teenagers or people in their 20s; this group of fans is otherwise rendered as culturally rich consumers belonging to a relatively stable economic class. *The New York Times* reported BYJ's first arrival in Tokyo as follows:

Thousands of women in their 40s, 50s, and older thronged to the airport to greet him. A thousand of these same Japanese women - a group not known for the

rowdiness of, say, English soccer fans - then ambushed him at his hotel. They jostled one another for 10 minutes to get a glimpse of the actor; some threw themselves at his car. (Onishi, 2004, p. A3)

Once this particular population and their collective characteristics were investigated, there were some central findings about what Korean dramas (or broadly-speaking the Korean Wave) has been meant to these Japanese fans. The Japanese interviewee MA (female, 50s) said that the reason why Japanese women in their 40s respond better to Korean dramas than other audience groups is because these women typically have more time to participate in various fan activities than younger women. The older group is relatively stable in their socio-economic status, are mature and well-educated. MA highlighted that middle-aged women in Japan can escape from the daily routine when they watch Korean dramas and are able to contact others within the fan community. Radway (1984) claims that a woman's romance reading enables her to better assign meaning to her social identities and experiences, as well as playing a role in compensatory fantasy that does not actually reside in her real-life scenario.

Likewise, these Japanese women are used to dealing with many different life issues concerning themselves and family, and through contact with Korean dramas and fan communities, they recall forgotten desires and ways of life during their younger years. Korean dramas have been a great motivation for these middle-aged Japanese fans to perform as informative messengers of Korean culture, rather than being viewed as a crazed mob of consumers. Throughout the interviews, Japanese fans said that Korean dramas and BYJ have changed their lives in a positive manner, and more importantly



they were willing to change themselves since they have learned about Korean dramas and about other people who share the similar sympathies.

Although the boom of Korean dramas began as an inexpensive source of programming in many Asian television markets, the Korean drama ultimately entered the Japanese television market in spite of historical and industrial barriers. Less popularity and industrial weakness of the Korean media system at the international level did not prevent entry of Korean programming and pop culture into the Japanese media market. Without a doubt, the introduction of *Winter Sonata* was the pioneering program in the Japanese television market that drew Japanese attention to Korean pop culture and Korean society in general. It is plausible that the Japanese Wave in Asia during the 1980s when Japanese dramas, films, and other cultural products were distributed in Asia were understood as the consequences of Japanese successful modernization. Conversely, in the case of the Korean Wave in Japan, this unexpected reverse media flow from Korean to Japan does not meet any existing assumptions. Today's Japanese curiosity about Korean culture and holding Korea and Koreans in a positive light has not occurred in modern Japanese history. According to Iwabuchi (2008a), through his field research, a large number of Japanese are rethinking how they view Korea, replacing biased and condescending views and the image of Korea as a backward society.

Until the 1980s, I found a lot of U.S. TV dramas very humanistic and warm but, most of the U.S. dramas now are so violent. I don't want to see them anymore. Korean dramas show us warm and strong ties among family

members that are fading in Japanese families. Korean males are good at expressing their emotions. As a Japanese woman sometimes I wish I could have such a man in Japan. (KM, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

KM pointed out delicate characteristics of Korean drama and indicated that the Korean drama text was quite familiar to her experiences in her younger years. Significantly, Japanese interviewees made it clear that the Korean drama projects less on the social vigor Japan has lost than on personal memories and sentiments based on individual's private lives. Indeed, Japanese interviewees affirmed how Korean dramas bring to mind nostalgic emotions and these stories bring them back to watch the dramas repeatedly for many years. It is so clear that emotions and relationships portrayed in Korean dramas are familiar for Japanese women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s regardless of the specific stories, scenes, or themes.

[The Korean drama] is similar to the old Japanese drama; *Winter Sonata* reminds us of old days, old dramas, and our younger years. We used to have drama like that, very pure. But the recent [Japanese and U.S.] dramas have no cultural connection. (ST, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

I think that it's 1970s TV series. [Asking a specific Japanese TV drama title] Do you know? Maybe it's the same age as we are. That kind of drama is maybe on the same page as *Winter Sonata*. Sometimes the heroine is sick

or handicapped, things like that. (KY, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

This specific recognition of middle-aged Japanese women originates from their nostalgic sentiment—a subtle sensibility about the past. I was able to see through the focus group interviews that Japanese participants frequently mentioned stories about what they had learned from Korean dramas, stars, and Korea itself. They began sharing their personal stories, experiences, and feelings during the focus group interviews. They indicated that they preferred being in the interview together. The middle-aged Japanese female fans acknowledged a cherished relationship and shared feelings among fan members, as well as being able to closely monitor BYJ and Korean dramas by keeping in touch with each other and sharing information. Japanese interviewees for this study did not regard themselves as a mob of maniacs, an unflattering view perpetuated by mainstream Japanese media.

Conceptually, nostalgia is defined as a longing for the past or a fondness for possessions and activities associated with days of yore (Holbrook, 1993). Davis (1979) stated that nostalgia can be claimed either as a positively-toned sentiment or a negatively provoked sense toward the present or future. The nostalgic sensibility tends to discover that things were better sometime other than now. According to Holbrook and Schindler (as cited in Holbrook, 1993), nostalgia describes a preference both as a positive attitude and favorable affect toward people, places, or things that were common when individuals were young (Holbrook, 1993). In essence, the middle-aged Japanese fans were consumed by the nostalgic sentiment presented in Korean dramas, and fans

active seeking Korean drama and involving themselves in fan communities have empowered them—these fans identify as social beings again. Dreaming the nostalgic moments are mediated by Korean drama, extending the middle-aged Japanese women's spatial consciousness. Also, individual fans came to personalize feelings originally provoked by Korean drama; the drama rekindled their voices and imagination.

Japanese interviewee NR (female, 40s) stated that people in her generation have a totally different history that young people in Japan have, obviously, not experienced. She implied that the wisdom of the people in her generation gives them the capability to see the deeper sides of life situations. This is shown when awareness of Korean culture and being sensitive to Korean stories and their settings. Japanese fans remember feelings from the past, and Japanese fans' habit of repetitive viewing of Korean dramas enables them to occupy a time nearly forgotten and what has been lost. Japanese fans are attracted to the direct but sophisticated verbal interactions among the characters in Korean dramas, whether the settings were family, friends, or couples. Japanese fans indicated they enjoy watching these scenes and the emotional reactions of the characters have certainly affected these viewers emotionally.

For example, YR (female, 40s) commented that she has now grasped deeply some emotions, such as innocence, love, and passion through Korean dramas. She stated that these emotions were central to humanity, and Korean dramas delivered these emotions are primary and familiar themes in friendships, companionships, family bonds or in conflict. Korean dramas feel more familiar, and audiences pour out emotions. Another Japanese interviewee SK (female, 60s) addressed her long-term observations about Korean dramas, pointing out how they do not just convey simply one-dimensional

emotions but rather more complex emotional crises in various social and interpersonal settings. She had not really considered delicate emotions and human relationships before viewing Korean dramas:

I found a big difference between Korean dramas and American dramas. They are different interpretations of humanity and human relationships. I think that there's a big difference in viewing history and the parent-child relationship. In American dramas, a parent-child relationship looks strict and keeping one's own boundary so that the relationship is to see each other independently from each other. Unlike American dramas, Korean dramas interpret a parent-child relationship as more interdependent and deeply related to each other based on their bloodline. This is quite similar to many Asian traditions. (SK, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

As YR and SK mentioned, there is a very significant propensity toward dealing with human emotions in Korean dramas. Deep intimacy in human relations, tight bonds, direct revealing of feelings, and direct confrontation of emotional collusion among individuals are sources of nostalgic sentiment in the view of Japanese fans.

You know, the innovation of ideas in American movies and dramas is still way better than Korean or any Asian dramas. You know, *ER*, *Prison Break*, and *24*... those are extraordinary. They were leading the trend when they started it and they really captured audiences. These American dramas have more professional men and women, not just housewives and students. Even

the drama like *Desperate Housewives* is simple but is high quality in terms of production. From a different view, Korean dramas are great but they seem to be all based on the same love story. American movies and dramas still make us think, but Korean dramas allow us to sit back and enjoy. (JM, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

As researchers have pointed out, the object of nostalgia is not necessarily something pleasant in the past; it can be something that resides in a person's memory in a good way (Davis, 1979). In many cases, the thing yearned for, from a nostalgic view, is frozen by a framed fantasy instead of an actual past event. Nostalgia is sometimes misrepresented in the present as well as misread from the past based on personal biases (Iwabuchi, 2008b). Nostalgia is a way of presenting self-reflective feelings of insecurity and anguish in the present (Iwabuchi, 2008b). In a slightly different view, nostalgia is conceived as people's idealized memories from their younger years. For Japanese middle-aged fans, the vivid images and sympathetic stories in Korean dramas have bridged their personal narratives from their past to the present.

One of the favorite activities for the Japanese fans was going on tours to the places where Korean dramas were filmed; these drama theme tours are known in Asia as *Hallyu* tours. As earlier mentioned, each of the Japanese interviewees in this study visited Korea to participate in the drama theme tours at least twice since 2004. Surprisingly, three of the Japanese participants had traveled to Korea more than ten times in four years. Japanese middle-aged audiences are very fond of Korean drama shooting locations because these places change their memories to reality. The most

famous *Hallyu* tours are the shooting locations of *Winter Sonata*, including Chunchon, Namyi Island, and Yongpyong ski resort. These locations have become quite commercialized, selling the picturesque images and deep feelings portrayed in the drama. Both the lake on Namyi Island and the high school in Chunchon, where Yujin and Joonsang went, are the most popular locations for Japanese tourists to stay. These tours inspire feelings of innocent love as the dramas themselves do. For example, MA (Japanese female, 50s) traveled to Chunchon and remembered that she wished time would have gone by more slowly. She took many pictures in Chunchon in order to recapture the feelings and memories of *Winter Sonata*.

The past is a means of organizing the present and the future (Holbrook, 1993; Rosaldo, 1989); however, many people living in the modern age have repressed the past because looking back would not be encouraging for the future. According to Giddens (1990), the present as a continuous line of thought bridging the past and the future is prone to be regarded as a discrete phenomenon in the modern viewpoint. The radical modernization of East Asia that has mirrored the Western world has encouraged people to avoid looking back. To some extent, a sense of nostalgia experienced by the Japanese people has become romanticized, and this enables them to heal from suffering and loss. For Japanese fans, seeing those filming locations and touching real artifacts used in the drama scenes bring back memories and feelings experienced when they watched *Winter Sonata*. Through the drama location tours, fans put themselves into the role of an unforgettable romantic couple such as Yujin and Joonsang, and similar sympathies are shared and amplified. In fact, this opportunity heightens the Japanese fan's awareness of

their own life and the passage of time, and these diversions, for a moment, freeze their experiences and memories.

A Korean travel agency has just organized some special drama tours for *TaeWangSaShinGi*. I found out that these tour packages also contain somewhat unnecessary tour schedules, which we [Japanese travelers] don't actually want to do. Now, these kinds of Korean drama tour packages are very common. Regardless no Japanese fans, including me, who would like to make Korean drama tours, blame the Korean travel agency. Because the tour organization took us to the shooting locations no matter what, so I can see *TaeWangSaShinGi* in Jeju, Anmyundo, and other places. And there, ahead of me about 100 meters, I happened to see YONGJOON ssi. (NR, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

Even if those location tours are a commodified cultural form by the Korean tour business as NR pointed out above, for the Japanese fans, that fact does not hinder their strong feelings of attachment and nostalgia. These locations become symbols of the times and places these fans hope to recapture. According to Chua and Iwabuchi (2008), nostalgia for modern Japan has been pursued from a desire to make life better, which makes the society more promising and humane. Korean dramas bring up the realization of how contemporary Japan has been denigrated in terms of the virtues of humanity in the lives of individuals.



In general, the nostalgic gaze of Japanese audiences toward Asia reflects a Japanese self-centered view of Asia. This reveals the identification of a frozen temporal lag between Japan and the rest of Asia since the Japanese occupation period. Many Japanese citizens previously held a view all Asian countries that were occupied in the past are far behind Japan in every social and cultural aspect. The comfortable recognition of time lag between the modernized Japan and the rest of Asia has existed and Japan has held its society as the far more advanced than other Asian societies (Iwabuchi, 2002). Put differently, Japan seems to provide a wishful future to the rest of Asia, where capitalist modernism is still developing (Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008). Japanese achievements have been pursued as an achievable goal for people in other parts of Asia. As a matter of fact, Japan's sudden reception of Korean dramas has had significant effects on the perspectives of the Japanese in reframing Asia to the same horizon as Japan lives.

In a postcolonial situation, such as that between Japan and Korea, individuals who are giving up a world they once occupied often have a romanticized view of imperialism (Rosaldo, 1989). For example, Japanese individuals traveling to or living in Korea were limited to business agents. These business agents were mostly men and their views toward Korea were masculinized from their powerful business position. According to Hirata (2008), the tourist gaze in the postcolonial circumstance is closely related to individual identity and position of belonging. For instance, the so-called *Kisaeng* tours of Korea were very popular among Japanese male tourists in the 1970s and 1980s. *Kisaeng* tours were trips for prostitution—the Japanese businessmen traveled to have sex with Korean women, involving in an under-the-table arrangement

to promote business deals by Korean companies. These trips were provided by Korean companies in order to earn important business deals. This inappropriate business custom of Korean companies occurred in the past, illustrating a dark side of Korea's rapid industrial development and pursuit of larger market shares in Japan (Hirata, 2008).

Interestingly, Korean drama location tours by Japanese female fans began to change the Japanese tourist view of Korea from one of imperial masculinity to a nostalgic feminine view. As Hirata (2008) stated, increasing numbers of Japanese female tourists visiting Korea suggest that nostalgia from the Korean drama has not simply meant pleasurable yearning for what Japan can easily consume, rather, nostalgia of Japanese fans regains the energy and vitality of *Asianness* that Japan had undermined by separating itself from the rest of Asia. The attraction of Japanese women for the soft and romantic Korean dramas has transformed the view of Japanese tourists about Korea, away from a nation with an active sex trade to a destination of scenes from Korean dramas. Today's tourists are seeking and finding an intimate and dynamic Korea and interesting and welcoming Koreans.

Korean dramas are not a hybrid form because its narratives and sequential format rarely touch on multicultural, multiracial, and multiethnic perspectives (Desser, 2003). Rather, Korean dramas are deeply entrenched in ethnic purity and patriotic nationalism. The dramatic settings and backgrounds in contemporary Korean TV dramas include some multicultural items or views, but the essential message of the Korean TV drama is akin to Korea's own mentality and cultural legacy. This thread is seen by Japanese audiences as special, novel, and authentic. Japanese interviewee KU (female, 40s) stated that Korea appears to be a more conservative society than Japanese

society. She suggests that Korean drama contributes a strong influence of Confucianism in Korea. As far as retrospection for the Japanese audiences, Korean dramas resemble the earlier Japanese television dramas from 1970 to 1980, so Japanese fans find Korean TV drama formats very familiar. Japanese interviewee SK (female, 60s) addressed this point clearly:

To young Japanese viewers, Korean dramas are hard to understand and sometimes don't make sense to young viewers. The lifestyle and understandings are far from the lives of contemporary Japanese youth. I think, well, the messages carried by Korean dramas are from a different world with different sensibilities than the world Japanese youths reside in today. (SK, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

#### 5. 4. A Reflection on the Established Modernity in East Asia

Modernization in East Asia has occurred with similar procedural characteristics and social consequences despite local individual distinctions. Across the region, East Asia has continued to provide initiatives to the modern capitalist industrialization process along with a diffusion of proactive nationalism since the independence movement of the 19th century. It appears that modernization in East Asia is close to obtaining a Western-style capitalist economy, although there have been divergent local scenarios (Ang, 2007). From the East Asian view, economic independence from a subordinate structure of the Western economy can be a method of accomplishing freedom from Western-centered international politics.

Recently, China has accelerated actions for growing its economy in accordance with government-organized economic reform even though this reform goes against the nation's political ideology. In turn, China's industrial modernity level has been moving toward the global capitalist economy since the early 21th century. Before China, Taiwan and Korea introduced national reforms under the slogan of modernization and the two nations have undergone surprisingly successful industrial transformations. These transformations have increased the international reputation of these countries now considered to be two of four East Asian tigers in modern Asian history. However, these East Asian countries today have faced a backlash from this economic-centered modernization project in previous years to differing degrees (for example, serious class gaps between rich and poor, destroying natural environments, increasing heavy crimes, and high density of population in large cities). In addition, the active modernism drive across East Asia shifts quickly to a grand movement toward globalization in this new millennium. As a consequence, East Asia's incomplete and ongoing modern projects are complex and puzzling, and therefore, conflict thresholds are low on local and regional levels. To achieve the Western capitalist model in East Asia, it was necessary to transform existing moral and value systems under the original social structures.

Regarding Asian audience response to the Korean Wave, it seems that many Asian youths from China to Southeast Asia have become fans of Korean media content. In contrast, most Japanese fans of Korean dramas are typically a much older group than the fans from other Asian countries. This distinct feature of the Japanese audiences is reasonable to consider using an age-cohort analysis. According to Dator and Seo (2004), age-cohort members tend to have certain common experiences that distinguish them

from older and younger people outside the cohort. They carry these age-cohort experiences, often with similar beliefs and behaviors, throughout their lives. In other words, the age-cohort group identifies significant differences of attitude, worldview, and sensibility from those of different ages. To some extent, cohort experiences (regardless of nationality) can have similar codes, senses, tastes, and mores which have developed in comparatively similar economic, political, and cultural frames. The youth generation across the Asian region are pleased with Korean popular culture and its commodities, and further they easily access foreign popular culture in various parts of the world via the internet and mobile networks. These Asian youth are the first generation to actively seek foreign cultures and popular goods considered cool instead of foreign cultural objects being seen as cultural threats as is often the case with the elder generation across the Asia.

The age difference between fans of Korean dramas from Japanese and other Asian nations demonstrates that the gap may be explained, at least in part, by the differing rates that each East Asian nation experienced in individual historical conditions. Significantly, the Korean media industry demonstrates an understanding of this generational gap in Asia and describes accurately the local audience. The majority of Korean television producers and other directors working in the production of the dramas are between 30 and 60 years old. Their ages and generational experiences living in Korean society perhaps help them grasp the similar experiences and sensibilities of Koreans of all ages and of the cohorts from other Asian countries as well.

As opposed to East Asia, Japan identifies its own modern historical experiences separate from its former colonies. Japanese interviewee MA (female, 50s) talked about

how Japan attempts to be distinct from the rest of East Asia, creating and maintaining a unique self-identification as a powerful modern state. A dilemma exists for Japan, though, based in part on its local ideology:

You know, Japanese people have shared unique Japanese characteristics and I think that these probably come from Confucianism as well as geography—Japan is a small island nation. Even though we are the second largest nation in economic terms and continue to press for further growth in international stature, Japanese people are born into a small society. Our minds remain islanders' minds. It is called *simagunigonzo* in Japanese. (MA, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

Modern Japan, emerging from the mixtures of endogenous and exogenous, modern and traditional, Western and Confucian factors (Choi, 2003) continues to place itself prominently on the international map by emphasizing racial and/or cultural uniqueness and a superior economy. This contributes to Japan being psychologically isolated from the larger East Asian community. Japan's unique socio-cultural values contribute to the size of cultural, political and social gaps between Japan and other East Asian nations. A social sense of time lost among older Japanese people reflects, perhaps, their regrets about changes in national or social virtues in new, cosmopolitan Japan. As Iwabuchi (2002) claims, Japanese watch more popular U.S. TV series than any Asian TV show, but these shows have never received comparatively higher ratings. Foreign popular culture in Japan is not concerned with its originality, but with localizing the original text for its own preferences and tastes. Two of the interviewees reflected their

localized understanding about historical links between Japan and Korea through watching Korean dramas:

I have a nice guidebook about Korean history. Actually it's my mother's. This book includes important historic events that happened a few centuries ago between Korea and Japan, like the era of *Bak-Jae, Korea*, and *Sin-La* [The old Korean empires between 4th and 7th centuries]. So whenever I watched Korean (historic) drama, I checked that book and confirmed whether the name of the period in the drama is true or not. I am specifically very interested in finding out the old history between Japan and Korea. (MA, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

I think the grassroots exchanges among fans online is becoming active and the political barriers between two nations are being overcome. What is important first, though, is the understanding of each other. This began with history, culture, and politics. Then governments changed gradually. Unfortunately, the Korean COMFORT WOMEN issue [during the second world war] has been discussed, but we [Japanese] had never known about that. (HT, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

The constitutive meanings of Korean dramas among East Asian audiences involve a collective communal sense that facilitates the sentiment of *Asianness*. Likewise, the modern images in Korean dramas specifically prompted Japanese interviewees to reevaluate Korea itself. For East Asian audiences, the most fascinating

aspect of the Korean dramas is its smooth blend of different aspects of Korean social appearance, which explores Asian values and ethics mingling with Westernized, modern perspectives of Korean society. Korean TV dramas carry Asia's cultural commonality and mentality, and the Asian value system exhibits reasonable harmony with the adopted modernism in contemporary private/public life:

I see that Korea's changes occurred not just in Korea, but in other parts of Asia to certain degree, so in this sense most Asian countries have experienced similar processes of Westernization of its own. (KG, personal interview, January 2008 in Seoul)

Chan and Ma (2002) suggested that gaining an understanding of transculturation, which they describe as “an attempt to capture the push and pull, the mix and break, of global cultural encounters,” is important (p. 4). Simply put, East Asian modernization, except for Japan, has not proceeded in the same direction nor at the same pace as in the West. While a force of “push” in the process of modernization appears to be active mimicry of a Western mode of industrialization, a “pull” force in the same process works as cautious defensive mechanisms are established—placing limits on the importation of cultural influences from the West. Korean TV dramas reflect East Asia's continual social changes during the process of modernization during the past few decades. In this respect, the Korean dramas provide a sense of comfort to Asian viewers in undergoing modernity (or Westernization) without a huge loss of Asian sentiment. In other words, East Asian viewers actually see both positive and negative sides to their own journeys toward modernization in these Korean dramas. Perhaps watching Korean



dramas brings about questions and ideas for East Asian audiences about their own pasts, presents, and futures:

Unlike Europe or the United States, Asian countries have gone through similar patterns toward national progress. Asia accomplished miraculous industrial development, particularly economically, among the worldwide social domain. Thus, a consequence of this imbalanced growth was a radical transformation of preexisting social values, ethics, morals, and worldviews on the whole. I think, to Asian people, this radical national-social reformation driven by preoccupation with the industrial revolution has a lot to do with reduced Asianness as a collective community identity. We, Asian, see our own past and future in similar ways even if we have been through different modern experiences individually. (MM, personal interview, December 2007 in Seoul)

Ultimately, Japanese and Korean interviewees noted that East Asians share a fundamental faith that their journey to modernization must be done because the modern project of East Asia is not a choice to make but is required for survival, according to the participants.

From a regional point of view, modernization in East Asia is regarded as a way to reframe transnationalism on the level of intra-regional exchange. Building a new postcolonial relationship among East Asian nations has emerged as a widely held goal in expediting the region's cooperative networks. Japan as a non-Western colonial power was inherent historically bitter suffering and shame to East Asia. This puts Japan into a

special status with respect to cultural engagement in the regional neighborhood. The interest of Japanese fans in Korean dramas has motivated them to dig up the colonial/postcolonial Korean-Japanese relationship, the history of immigration, and the effects of cultural exchange. The reflection of East Asian modernity through Korean dramas enables Japanese fans to relate more actively to the cultural output from Korea, making it part of everyday life in Japan.

## **Chapter VI. Glocalization of the Korean Broadcasting Industry**

This chapter examines the industrial and commercial consequences of the Korean Wave, and particularly focuses on the transformation of the Korean media industry's organization of a highly export-oriented media and culture industry. In terms of the financing of media industries, programming innovation, market planning and promotion, and international trade are key elements to examine. The three major Korean TV networks have demonstrated broad structural changes in these broadcasting systems in their move toward glocalization. These industry-wide changes have enabled exported Korean content to effectively propel the Korean Wave into Asian media markets. Not surprisingly, the desire for larger industrial profits among Korean broadcasting corporations has greatly increased since the onset of the Korean Wave. Korean broadcasters have predicted this export boom to last a long time and are pursuing broader regional and even global outlets for their media content. As a result, Korean broadcasters created and emphasized Asian-centered commercial strategies, particularly TV drama content planning and programming. The overall commercial goals of Korean broadcasting companies are grounded in the assumptions that the timing is right and that market conditions, specifically a need for programming in East Asia, are conducive to Korean media content export success. The significance of the Korean Wave from the Korean industry's perspective is realizing and remembering that this current pop culture wave is the first organized, goal-driven promotion of cultural commercialization executed by the Korean media industry.

### 6.1. The East Asian Media Industry: Background

Historically speaking, the East Asian media industry has not been closely tied together; there have been only rare alliances in attempts to gain market share or exchanges of media content among East Asian nations. Regardless, East Asia has been considered by the outside world as a single cultural bloc, sharing common cultural sentiments and homogeneous popular culture primarily because of the geographical proximity of these countries. This is a common error of overgeneralization, failing to take the wide range of regional cultural differences into account. In many respects, East Asian media industries are comprised of different operating systems in terms of their broadcasting infrastructures and capabilities.

The East Asian media industry is loosely connected in their business alliances, and East Asian countries have each run their own television industries without transnational content distribution and programming since the 1980s (Sussman & Lent, 1999). During this time, state-protected television systems within East Asia have been the most popular structure. The Korean television industry was not an exception in this respect.

The radical structural change in the East Asian media industry occurred in the late 1990s. Regional conditions throughout East Asia, in which quickly-improving neoliberal industrialism and attendant social ramifications forced the media industry into adopting a more global media plan for the future. For the Korean media industry, joining the WTO economic system expedited the drive to export Korean media content.

The most effective tactic of the Korean media industry at this time was to approach the Asian media market first by resuming diplomatic relations with

neighboring nations China, Japan, and Taiwan. The Korean government made its first footsteps into the region by normalizing the delicate diplomatic relationship with China, which had previously been tenuous because of political issues related to North Korea. A positive relationship between China and Korea resumed in 1992, involving the return of Hong Kong to Chinese government control. Korea's restoration of relations with China was made possible in large part because of Korea's political endorsement of China's territorial right to Hong Kong and Taiwan. As a consequence, however, reviving Korea-China relations worsened South Korea's relationship with North Korea and Taiwan. Later, Korea's decision to side with China affected every industrial competition with Taiwan. The restoration of the diplomatic relationship with China enabled the Korean media industry to enter the Chinese media market, one of the most censored media markets on earth. By the end of 1990s, the unexpected and high demand in China for exported Korean TV dramas occurred among both Chinese audiences and media content buyers.

A primary reform of Korean television toward a pro-market industrial drive was the Korean Broadcasting Act of 1990. This law put the Korean television industry through rapid systemic change to its basic organizational structure—going from state protection to a free market system and private ownership. The surrounding environment was also changed: Multichannel broadcasting was launched, and comprehensive commercial initiatives from the private broadcasting sector were enacted. This new era of the Korean broadcasting system meant that for the first time, the media industry in Korea was profoundly affected by market principles and commercialism (Shim & Jin, 2007). The television stations, broadcasting organizations, and bureaucracy of Korea

created a better economic environment for their media industry by riding the free-trade movement to a global level. Accordingly, Korea's "New Millennium Vision" for the media industry has been promoted since 2001. This future-oriented policy includes a variety of media strengthening strategies and has been given significant governmental support. The sharp growth in exports of Korean TV dramas, as a major part of the Korean Wave, encouraged the Korean media industry to envision a promising future for the industry within and beyond Korea.

An important example of how regulations produced results can be found in one of the many flexible market plans that emerged in the Korean television industry. In part because of effective marketing communication of Korean media to Japanese pop culture began in 1998. There were skeptics who disagreed with allowing Japanese media culture into Koreans without sensitive filtering. Previously Japanese pop content only appeared in the Korean media scene because of spillover of illegal Japanese satellite broadcasts.

In terms of political action, Korea's opening of its own market to Japanese popular culture demonstrated a transition in the Korean media industry, a move forward into the foreign market by facilitating sales of home content. Because of the widespread infiltration of Western media content, the Korean television industry has experienced massive importation of media content from the West rather than from Asia during the past few decades. There were not many options for the Korean media industry to choose from in strengthening locally-grown media industry except for strategic cooperation with other strong regional media leaders. Strategic cooperation and cultural partnership to strengthen and stabilize the regional media industry is a great opportunity to upgrade

Korea's own media capability, as well as broadening Korea's current media business in foreign markets. In general, building a new partnership with the Japanese media industry has enabled Korean media firms to create better chances for success in entering the East Asian media market now more than at any other time.

After the Korean Wave, market competition intensified among Korean, Japanese, and Taiwanese television industries in terms of programming, distribution, financing, and regional market share. Korean TV programs increased the annual revenue and volume through exportation to the regional market. The Korean media industry got more attention from regional partners, and Korean media content also entered the software market based on home programming and distribution know-how in the international market. Korean TV industries have applied various marketing strategies, specifically focusing on expanding the life expectancy of drama popularity in local markets. Additionally, the growth of the Korean film industry's international marketing has been a useful model for the Korean TV program business as well.

The changing environment of the Korean film and broadcasting industries has produced fewer and fewer imports of Hollywood content in recent years. The Hollywood film exports to East Asian markets changed, which genres could be imported and introduced flexible pricing for imports. The successful music channel, MTV, produced by American media giant Viacom, reflects the global media conglomerate's local-centric focus. MTV has localized the American format of music shows into each target Asian TV market employing local music content, popular trends, languages, and TV figures, including popular local entertainers and show hosts. The East Asian format of MTV mainly attracted a young audience within each locale,

typically through a cable TV channel rather than a network or provincial TV channel. A narrow but sophisticated audience segment MTV Asia produced increasing advertising revenue for various local companies.

In short, Viacom's MTV Asia has shown productive adjustments for the East Asian local media environment, incorporating locally-preferred cultural components into the original format of the show. For example, MTV Korea includes more than 50 percent of Korean popular music on its channels, while MTV Japan aired less local music than Western pop music for its audience. Similarly, MTV China included a small amount of domestic music content, but MTV China prefers to broadcast other Asian pop music from Korea, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan instead of Western music content (Cho & Latta, 2006). The global media conglomerates generally gained higher market shares in East Asia as a result of advanced programming and distributive power. However, the dominance of these conglomerates in the East Asian media market has encountered difficulties in retaining the existing prosperous market power.

The changing industrial and social environments within East Asia has led each local media industry to compete not only in domestic but also overseas marketplaces. As a consequence, increased competition among East Asian media industries inevitably produced locally focused content to be welcomed by the regional media industry. The Korean television industry was not free from this grand tendency toward the global mediascape. The Korean Wave expedites this advance of the Korean media industry itself in a variety of areas, including programming, reorganizing systemic advertising and marketing platforms, and collaborating with a larger number of regional partners.



## 6.2. Structure and Protocol of the Korean Drama Exportation

It should be noted that Japan has existed as a top-tier global media industry rooted in Asia since the 1980s, so Japanese media content has been the representative Asian content for Western media markets and audiences. However, the Korean Wave in recent years has challenged the international standing of Japanese media content. Korean TV shows and films have come to be listed as trendy Asian content along with Japanese content in the international market. The Korean media industry has begun to draw substantial attention in the Western entertainment media industry. Also, the Korean media industry has taken a prominent place within East Asia in circulating local programs and joint programming of regional content. To some extent, the Korean drama makes a difference in pop culture trends throughout the Asia, providing a new fashion barometer:

In 2000, some dramas like *Winter Sonata* and *DaeJangGeum* were exported to many other Asian countries. *Winter Sonata* was received very well, in particular in Japan, so the time right to stimulate our [Korean] media industry. I think that the Korean Wave at that time made a real wave in the history of foreign exports of Korean programming. Thanks to the unexpected success of *Winter Sonata* in Japan, the exportation of Korean dramas in following years, from 2003 to 2005, increased as much as 100 percent both in the volume of exports and in revenue. Furthermore, profit from *Winter Sonata* spilled over into other *Hallyu*-related businesses as well. However, the annual growth in drama exports slightly decreased in 2006. To me, this tendency indicates that the effects of *Winter Sonata*'s success

are dwindling no longer providing a great stimulus for Korean exports. But, I am very sure that the Korean Wave, regardless of diminishing annual ratios of exports is stable with respect to its inflow to Asia. Today, more genres of Korean dramas are replacing the popularity of previous Korean dramas like *Winter Sonata* and *DaeJangGeum*, in other Asian countries. (LH [Head of International Sales in KBS Media], personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

As mentioned above, the sales manager of a major Korean network TV station claimed that the Korean Wave passed its peak of popularity in 2006. Each Asian nation showed a slight drop in the annual percentage of imported Korean dramas. However, the overall exports of Korean dramas in the regional Asian marketplace have made a great leap ahead of competition from rivals in the region. According to LH, Korean sales manager, foreign TV content buyers have increased the market value of Korean dramas thanks to the Korean Wave. The continuous popularity of Korean dramas during the past few years in various Asian media markets increased urgent demand for genre diversification in exported Korean dramas. In a timely manner, the Korean Wave contributed to increasing choices of content available to East Asian television stations and audiences. The Korean Wave also provided the opportunity for sharing Asian-focused popular content. According to Kaori and Lee (2007), the Korean Wave has furthered hope for sharing media content and market pools among East Asian nations.

## 1) Korean TV drama Outlets

The Korean Wave has provoked a primary structural change in the Korean media industry. The change, specifically in the television industry, was a shift of the organization to a commercial system resembling the foreign television market. The Korean Wave motivated the industry to reorganize the business sectors of each network TV station in Korea, focusing on active regional promotions and discovering new markets and cycles of consumption of existing content. According to these sales managers, Korean network TV stations were the first to turn attention to creation of an export-oriented system. For instance, the interviewee LH (head of international sales in KBS Media) explained this shift at the KBS:

The major job of my sales department 10 years ago was all about the importation of foreign programs to feed broadcasting channels of my company. At that time, the exportation of KBS programs to other countries wasn't even considered. We were clearly passive about selling KBS programs to overseas markets. Today's exportation of KBS programs to foreign television markets is a huge surprise for us and other Asian media buyers. For as long as I can remember, in our sales department at KBS, the only TV shows we exported were a few animated shows for children, including *EunbiKabi* and *Wonder Kids* in the early 1990s, prior to this current Korean Wave. (LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

LH continued explaining that KBS separated the international business department from the domestic program sales unit in 2000, creating the international

sales arm, then called KBS Media. KBS Media managed all sales of KBS copyrighted shows to domestic markets as well as being involved in the foreign program importation business. With the birth of the international sales department, KBS Media switched its major task to creating content outlets for KBS overseas and managing its copyrights. The following interview addresses the changing aspects of the Korean network TV content export business:

The international sales department in my company started reorganizing the regional experts who were pursuing foreign program markets. We believed that meticulous analysis of local markets in other countries as a top priority. So we had a team of local content and local market experts research and analyze various data on the local media structures, vital characteristics of local media firms, programming and scheduling patterns, and similar data. We wanted to know about particular preferred genres in certain local markets. Concerning the exportation of KBS programs, two main issues surfaced. First, we needed to know if the programs we planned to promote were suitable for the local station. Second, we had to ensure that marketing plans aimed at particular local markets were appropriate and prepared in adequate detail. To learn these things, our sales managers continued to communicate directly with local content buyers and programming agencies. Gathering data on local media markets, such as pricing, popular formats, supplemental services, and copyright contracts, was very important to our line of work. Our goal was the successful exportation of our home content

by tailoring the right programs to fit into the right local TV channel the best we could. (LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

In addition to the internal changes in Korean network TV stations, the market conditions outside Korea was also changing rapidly. The major profit source for Korean TV stations is advertising income from domestic corporations. Due to strong domestic competition among Korean TV stations, these stations had to restructure their business systems to a profit-earning structure instead of adhering to an outdated state-sponsored system. In addition, the rapid adoption of highly convergent media and telecommunication technologies since 2000, including satellite TV, internet streaming of broadcasts, growing independent production companies outside Korean network TV stations, and digital mobile broadcasting, to name a few, have simultaneously broadened financial sources in part because of the influx of global media companies into the Korean media industry itself.

In addition, the growing reputation of Korean films in the international film market, especially in Europe and Asia, also provides an advantage to the Korean television business. Korea is recognized as the seventh-largest film market in the world (Ryoo, 2009), and many current Korean films have been nominated for film awards at the Cannes Film Festival and the Berlin Film Festival. Korea itself holds two international film festivals annually – the PIFF (*Pusan International Film Festival*) and the JIFF (*Jeon-Ju International Film Festival*). These festivals have screened hundreds of new European, Canadian, South American, Chinese and Japanese films along with Korean films (Shim, 2006; Ryoo, 2009). The Korean film and television industries are

separated within Korea's industrial system, so there are very few direct connections between the two industries. Nevertheless, the growth of the Korean film industry has positively influenced the Korean television industry both in TV show programming and market promotion.

The sales managers who were interviewed asserted that most international outlets for Korean dramas begin with a series of global TV program conventions that are held annually in various local television markets. These conventions have enabled foreign program buyers to gather in one location and view a variety of new TV programs. According to LH, these conventions include the *MIPTV* at the Cannes Film Festival, the Shanghai and Beijing TV festivals, the *DDWW* in Seoul, the *TTV market* in Taiwan, the *BCM* in Busan, and the *TCom* in Japan. Ordinarily, these TV conventions focus on channeling local TV programming to the international market. At the conventions, local television stations provide a preview of their own programs to foreign content buyers, program directors, or producers. Although an actual sales contract of the exhibited program at these conventions occurred only occasionally, these conventions are the top-ranked television business opportunities for importation of foreign TV shows as well as exportation of home TV shows among local and regional television content buyers and sellers.

The interviewees LH and JO remarked that they prepared special premiere programs for these annual conventions. These demonstration programs actually play an important role in creating positive impressions of Korean content to foreign buyers. Thus, high-quality audiovisual demonstration programs are lined up and this often involved advanced technological devices along with the narrative template of the

programs. In many cases, instant on-site consultations about premiered demo programs at these conventions lead to an official sales contract. LH specifically emphasized in this respect that the importance of these conventions is to catch as many opportunities as possible for reaching new buyers. A major focus of these conventions for the Korean television industry is to introduce newly produced or repackaged Korean dramas to as many global and regional market representatives as possible.

There have been certain expectations for exported Korean dramas recently among most Asian buyers, and Asian buyers tend to be strongly attracted to specific story patterns in Korean dramas. Korean sales managers revealed that Asian buyers prefer dramas with vivid youthful life in glamorous urban settings. Those Asian buyers expect particular tones in Korean dramas including brightness, activity, a future orientation, and humor. Although historically the favorite Korean dramas among Asian audiences are bitter, sad Korean melodramas, however more recently Asian buyers prefer funny and bright romances with a happy tone when they select a new Korean drama to buy. LH explained that Asian buyers want to minimize risks when they make a purchase of never-before-released Korean dramas without a domestic track record of success. So these buyers try to check the value of less familiar Korean dramas based on general audience preferences toward Korean dramas, which was shown to be a current preference for funny and light romance with a happy storyline.

*Winter Sonata* is known as the most successful Korean drama in general; however, through my field experiences, *Full House* programming by KBS and *DaeJangGeum* programming by MBC revealed the most influential

Korean dramas overseas. The two dramas created more profit and attention to our dramas by a wider range of Asian viewers, even getting notice from Middle East audiences. The production quality of these dramas was ranked in the top position among other exported dramas in the evaluation of many foreign buyers. Going back to the case of *Full House*, this specifically sold out all around East and South Asia, more than 15 countries, and received the highest ratings in those locations when it was broadcast. (LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

As mentioned above, *Full House* played an important role in presenting Korea's trendy romance genre, based on innocent and bright young couple's love stories, and the drama captured Asian female audiences from teens to early 30s. *Full House* was remade in a television version by adopting the original Korean cartoon with the same title. The drama reproduced images and characters from the original cartoon in wholesome quality as well as featured high-quality cinematography. Ultimately, the success of *Full House* in many local Asian television stations increased the interest of Asian buyers in the new genre of Korean trendy romance. The key to success for *Full House*, according to LH, is the well-captured comedy codes in Korean romance. This element has greatly influenced subsequent programming of Korean trendy dramas, such as KBS's *Lovely Eighteen*, *My Girl*, and *Fighting! Bong, SoonYoung*. Asian buyers have frequently chosen these comedic trendy Korean dramas for their young local audiences.



## 2) Market Segmentation

KBS, a state TV network in Korea, initiated commercial strategies for exporting its own programming content and kicked off international marketing of both dramas and documentaries to European and Asian television markets since 2000. Despite clear difficulty in conducting international trade, KBS believed that going abroad with their program content would be a lucrative path for the station's future in the media industry. The sales managers at KBS mainly focused on which content would be appropriate and popular for a specific targeted local market and how the exported content could better appeal to buyers. According to LH, the most effective way to release KBS programs abroad is frequent exposure of selected KBS programs to foreign content buyers. To do this, KBS used existing market networks with foreign content buyers, formerly routes used for importation by Korean TV stations. Examples of potential markets were Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan including television stations, advertising agencies, and production companies in these markets. Sales managers of KBS Media routinely announced new programs for release and contacted local market buyers with demo versions of these new programs. Each sales manager in KBS Media respectively took charge of particular local television markets and buyers. The efforts have produced growth until now, the international sales staff is comprised of ten different local-expert sales managers in KBS media who were assigned to various regions of China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

On the whole, Korean TV stations possess limited resources in terms of programming, financing, human resource pools, and marketing. Within these resources, the domestic content has been an important resource in increasing profits in spite of

growing market competition. To generate more international outlets for Korean programs, Korean TV stations have required more sophisticated categorization of export-suitable genres based on local market preferences. KBS Media segmented the export market into two main centers—European and Asian markets. According to LH and PI, sales managers at KBS Media, the European television market is much harder to enter for Korean programs than the Asian television market due in part to cultural barriers and differences of pop culture between Korea and European countries. The European market, including television stations in Britain, Germany, France, and Russia, when compared to the Asian television market, is understandably less familiar with the format and content of Korean drama. In addition, the emerging popular TV show format in European TV programming has been reality shows and 45-50 minute serial dramas unlike the common 60-minute format of Korean dramas. While Korean Wave dramas have existed as a successful export genre, Korean TV documentaries, including programs featuring nature and the environment, and human history and cultures, for example, have not been too popular with Asian content buyers.

Interestingly, the fiscal difference between the two regional markets enabled the KBS sales managers to promote each market with different genres of programming. The lack of awareness of popular Korean dramas on European television stations made KBS focused on the active marketing of documentaries there, and conversely KBS dramas are very popular in Asia and in markets in Iran, Israel, Mexico, and Chile, so dramas are marketed primarily in Asia and the markets listed. The sales managers at KBS Media remarked that many experiments in the exportation of KBS programming to European television stations have happened in recent years, riding the popularity of the Korean

drama across Asia. The animated children's cartoons and TV documentaries eventually drew attention from European content buyers. In particular, documentaries more easily overcome cultural barriers, so KBS documentaries seem to be more suitable in the European TV markets.

The interviewee LH addressed the fact that local and/or region-specific tactics produced ventures into unfamiliar international markets. As a result, the experiment slowly led to a beneficial outcome. The KBS documentaries began to be sold to European media firms in 2006. Up until then, there had been no documentary sold by KBS media in European markets. Approximately 60 KBS documentary contracts were signed with European television stations located in France, Germany, and Poland as well as the BBC. In the following 2007, KBS Media signed more contracts with those European television stations for about 130 broadcast hours of KBS documentaries. Furthermore, LH stated that selling documentaries not only narrowed the culture gap with European television, but also is generating larger profits in cost-per-program comparisons to the costs of KBS dramas sold in the Asian television market.

In the East Asian television market, program buyers from local TV stations usually preview the sample template of exported dramas before making decisions. There are existing risks in exporting dramas in unpredictable market situations. As a consequence, the recent stable popularity of Korean dramas in East Asian television stations has been built by the continuous launching and promoting on the part of Korean TV stations. The interviewee JO (a sales manager, Head of the MBC branch in Japan) addressed the first appearance of *Winter Sonata* on the Japanese national network NHK. The reason why *Winter Sonata* was selected by the Japanese TV is because NHK's

program buyer lost interest in Taiwanese dramas, which had occasionally filled out NHK TV's foreign programming slots. Taiwanese dramas aired on satellite channels of NHK (BS2) from time to time, but the ratings were continually dropping. The satellite channel of NHK (BS2) aired imported shows or dramas most of the time, and NHK program buyers wanted to replace lower-rated Taiwanese dramas on their BS channels. While searching for new programs, NHK buyers heard about *Winter Sonata*, which was already being broadcast by other Japanese stations. The NHK buyers observed unexpectedly high ratings of the Korean drama by that time, and decided to broadcast *Winter Sonata* on a network channel as a trial, an attempt to keep their existing drama audiences of the Taiwanese dramas. Most Taiwanese dramas broadcast by the NHK satellite channel were perceived as copies of old-fashioned Japanese dramas.

*Winter Sonata*, in its first NHK broadcast in 2003, provided a new lens through which Japanese TV producers, schedulers, and content buyers could see contemporary Korean programming. The Japanese TV producers were quite surprised at the high production quality of *Winter Sonata*. Moreover, Japanese buyers were satisfied with the drama's combination of narrative, audiovisual effects, suitable casts and stability in acting. Because programming exchange between Japan and Korea was rare at this time, most Japanese broadcasters had little or no knowledge of the quality of Korean TV production. With no proper reference, they assumed the programming quality of Korean dramas to be similar to those produced in Taiwan or China. As a result, NHK's alternative choice was worthwhile as an effective replacement, and *Winter Sonata* yielded unexpectedly high profits when combined with NHK's advance marketing of local content domestically. According to JO, NHK generated various *Winter Sonata*-

related services and products of their own, and these specifically stressed the diversification of the original drama into multiple commercial formats, for instance, NHK published a novel named after the drama, released the drama's Original Sound Track (OST) in Japanese, and released a *Winter Sonata* photo album.

In short, the Chinese and Taiwanese television markets seemed to be the most important outlets for Korean dramas, particularly as early adopters. In contrast, the Japanese market was a late entry in the Korean television industry but has had more to do with the overall increase in Korean content sales internationally than any other single event. Indeed, the business relationship between Korean and Japanese TV stations created a mutual development of programming, market revenue, and resources for the two television industries. More and more, the Korean television industry has shown great interest in the Japanese television market as a good model for the Korean media industry. Through the Korean Wave, the international sales managers for Korean TV stations created local-specific promotional strategies and Japanese media initiatives became a great source of reference that Koreans used to their advantage.

### 3) Promotion and Post-programming

In order for Korean programming to be sold to Asian countries, the exported content had to be appropriate in a local-to-local sense. This had to be a top priority. The specific relational or emotional sensitivities of these local Asian audiences had to be addressed in exported Korean drama. These concerns were mentioned by the interviewed Korean sales managers who mentioned two principles as being most important.

First, the sales managers pointed out that the local promotion of historical Korean dramas to Asian buyers requires a careful review of the story in terms of the historical descriptions and their relevance and significance in local history. Second, the local promotion of Korean dramas increases more concerns on post-programming relative to the exported dramas, containing various repacking processes for fitting the local media format.

Regarding the first principle as described by Korean TV sales managers, the case of Korean historical dramas export to East Asian countries demands a careful approach to advertise because these historical dramas depict events involving ancient East Asian relationships, often including wars and political conflicts among China, Korea, and Japan. Historical dramas in Korea were written from the subjective Korean perspective so that specific descriptions of historical events among East Asian countries provoked unpleasant reactions from some of the countries portrayed. As an example, the historical drama, *DaeJoYoung* (produced by KBS in 2006), had to be excluded from KBS drama promotion in tours of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Because the story dealt with many sensitive conflicts in national relations between old Korea and China during the 10th century. Some episodes were offensive to Chinese viewers, in particular negative images of their ancestors. Although it was well made and received the highest rating in Korea, the Koreans interpretation of this old history was unpleasant for Chinese viewers.

According to LH, subjective interpretations and portrayals of historical incidents presented in Korean historical dramas sometimes evoke unexpected hostility from regional audiences. Historically, East Asian countries have experienced complicated

alliances and geographic and territory issues within the region and these different interpretations of history continue to influence international relations in contemporary East Asian nations. Transnational program content cannot be free from these historically sensitive interpretations. As the Korean sales managers mentioned, careful selection of the content for export is a primary concern in trading within the region. Not surprisingly, LH, sales manager at KBS, witnessed a similar delicate relationship during a trip to East Asia in 2006 to promote *TaeWangSaSinGi*, a popular historical drama by an independent Korean production company (KJH Production). This drama was exported to Japan and aired via NHK, but it could not enter into the Taiwanese television market:

The failure of the drama *TaeWangSaSinGi* in Taiwan clearly showed our selection of certain content that has historical sensitivity toward the local market is of central importance. *TaeWangSaSinGi* was a well-made drama and comprised of fascinating stories, advanced visual effects, and excellent star power, featuring Bae, YongJoon. So, the drama seemed to have the right elements to attract Asian program importers. KJH Production completed the drama, reserved all copyrights, and initiated large promotional events in the Asian market. Unfortunately, a promotion tour in Taiwan jeopardized the drama's success. Suddenly the entire Asian promotion tour that KJH Production had planned was canceled. The reason was that the conservative Taiwan news media and journalists harshly criticized the story of *TaeWangSaSinGi* because in their view, the drama distorted the old Chinese empire. A series of negative media representations

of this drama damaged the entire promotion of the drama. With strong public criticism and a Taiwanese broadcaster boycott forced KJH Production to withdraw all scheduled events in Taiwan. Fortunately, the same drama was greatly welcomed in the first promotional tour in Japan and subsequent promotional events were successful in different Japanese provincial areas. The drama aired on NHK, a Japanese national network, following the previous successful exported dramas, *Winter Sonata* and *DaeJangGeum*. (LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

The drama *TaeWangSaSinGi* was produced by one of the major independent production companies in Korea, and this independent company attempted the first foreign market promotion with this drama. In the Korean television industry, an independent production company is rarely involved in the export business; this is usually done by the three network TV stations (KBS, MBC, and SBS), although an independent production company had co-produced a drama with a network TV station, but this arrangement is rare.

The copyright for foreign programming exporting of Korean dramas is usually owned by network TV stations, which have more experience and better connections in the industry. However, KJH Production was producing and filming *TaeWangSaSinGi* through a joint venture with investors from both in domestic and foreign media companies, so all copyrights for the drama belonged to the production company itself. As the exportation of Korean drama is a large proportion of business of TV networks, a few large independent production companies of Korea are able to invest in the foreign



distribution of their dramas. These independent production companies have pursued other ways of distributing of their programs in foreign markets. More and more, the three Korean network TV stations are no longer dominant in international Korean program distribution.

Facing this dual production-distribution system in the Korean television industry, sales manager LH said that the sales managers within network stations are concerned about the export business of large independent production companies. He claimed that these inexperienced production companies have no knowledge or marketing network, and might incur many problems that might damage the general protocol of Korean media content sales overseas. The inability to plan local or regional promotions, lack of awareness of local market structures and networks, and unlawful copyright contracts might lead the Korean television industry into troublesome and perhaps far-reaching and/or long-standing conflicts. LH expressed that some Asian buyers he met in the course of promotion or through marketing networks have already been confused about unknown independent Korean production companies working from the black market.

First of all, we [sales managers] believe that the most important concern with our program exportation is building trust with foreign buyers. This trust building has taken the right conditions and a long-term approach based on my own experience. For instance, we reviewed whether or not the foreign television stations or agencies could air our exported program in an advantageous time slot to reach larger local audiences. We also checked out the coverage of the local stations to promote our exported program to the

widest possible area. When we have opportunities to promote our exported programs we look at many criteria; our decision to sell the program to a particular local station is based on much more than just the amount an importer is willing to pay. Thus, the basic policy is a direct contract to the foreign local television stations without any representative agencies of local stations in the exportation process. In addition, self-promotion capability of local TV stations to their own audiences is important to get a broader diffusion of our exported program throughout the local market. (LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

According to PI (senior sales manager at KBS Media), in the course of the exporting business, repackaging existing dramas is important in keeping the attention of foreign consumers. PI points out how important the post-programming is in the international promotion that is described as the second key concern for Korean TV sales managers. The flexibility of the exported drama formats, enabling local stations to adjust programs to fit their schedules, can increase the exposure of Korean dramas. Often the exported Korean drama is re-edited and modified, fitting the required length of local program slots. The master film is remade in the local language by dubbing or subtitling, depending on importer preference. The post-production tasks of exported dramas such as modifications and repackaging of the original program, are conducted by international sales department personnel. These inevitable post-production procedures are required for the success of the exported drama. Therefore, these sales

managers have roles that are distinguished from the original program producers, directors, and screenwriters.

From a slightly different view, LH also states the rise in exports of Korean drama does not necessarily mean that the quality of Korean drama production will improve. For this reason, the popularity of Korean dramas throughout Asia can quickly fade if there are no improvements in creativity, sentimentality, and common cultural grounds with other Asian audiences. LH claimed that the sales managers never forget how suddenly audience tastes can change in popular culture.

### 6.3. Commercialism in the Exportation of Korean Dramas

Taking a broad view, Sassen (2003) pointed out peculiarities of globalization in the contemporary world. First, economic globalization is strategic rather than all-encompassing. It does not require a majority to succeed. Second, the mainstream global process materializes in national territories through national institutions, which actively cooperate with the global agenda. Third, the global economy integrates sets of practices that destabilize other sets of practices that constitute national sovereignty and independence.

With regard to transnational media flow, certain local media industries have free trade agreements with TNCs, so foreign investment and intellectual property trades of local cultural products typically increase under such arrangements. Specifically, the exportation of Korean programs has reflected active commercialization of the Korean television industry in terms of producing content, delivering content services, multi-use content related promotional products and celebrity endorsements. With the globalization

movement, the Korean media industry has generated a unique business platform which emphasizes extensive local/regional accommodation of its media and cultural attitudes. The Korean Wave has created its own glocal model of Korea's international media business and at the same time has engaged in near-obsessive commercial intervention in the media industry locally, regionally, and globally. The fiscal methods of commercialization developed by the Korean media industry—and originating in the U.S.—have become prominent and are major influential products of the Korean Wave. These methods include: star marketing systems, segmented copyright options, joint ventures, and co-production arrangements. Each of these is described below.

#### 1) The Star marketing System

Korean program sales managers described specific marketing strategies in relation to the foreign market. The focus of international trading of Korean programs is to customize the programs appropriated for use in local television systems. This tailored marketing of the Korean television industry varies depending on the size and degree of development present in any specific local television system.

For instance, early adopters of Korean dramas in China, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam considered more the quality of content itself rather than the potential for local business using the imported content. Alternately, the markets in Japan and Hong Kong had more advanced industrial systems and long-term partners in import relations. The media industries in Japan and Hong Kong were equipped with an advanced level of production capability and content distribution systems—in comparison to the rest of Asia's media industries—both in film and television industries.

The Korean media industry exerted great effort to understand and accommodate the Japanese and Hong Kong markets, focusing on creating a shared content business with a mutually developed business model. In particular, the Japanese television industry, one of the largest importers of Korean dramas currently, has provided great opportunities to the Korean television industry, considering Korea to be an important regional media partner. Significantly, the former experience of glocalization of Japanese media in the global market was been adopted by the Korean media industry.

Promotion of newly released (or soon-to-be-released) Korean dramas in the international market has been recurring with pre-planned market events from city to city. The central pre-planned promotions include the drama premiere tour, the main cast members visiting the local market, and pre-releasing making-films and/or OST.

These promotional activities greatly affect a drama's success in the local market. According to JO (international sales managers), the MBC Japan branch encouraged these promotional events in support of the export dramas and supported the plans generated by the exporting organization itself. These exporters were aiming at more MBC programs that could be released to multiple Japanese television stations. After the success of *Winter Sonata*, Korean dramas exported to Japan gained considerably stable TV ratings on Japanese network and satellite channels. Due to relatively higher ratings on the Japanese TV channels among those foreign programs, newly released Korean dramas have paid much attention to Japanese program buyers. A new tactic used by the Japanese buyers, when negotiating for a new Korean drama, is to request simultaneous air schedules with the premier broadcast in the Korean market. Thus, Korean television stations have prepared the international promotion plan as well as the Korean promotion

plan for the new drama. The simultaneous promotion of a new Korean drama to a foreign media ahead of the domestic broadcast is not very common. But, in some cases Korean dramas produced with a well-known director, notable screenwriter, and/or popular actors have drawn great attention from Asian buyers just as soon as production of the new drama began.

For instance, JO cited the drama *Coffee Prince* (produced by MBC in 2007) as an example of the early-release of a Korean drama to the Japanese market. One key Japanese TV station purchased the drama before production was finished in Korea. The Japanese program buyers of *Coffee Prince* made their decision based on a demo preview, initial scripts, and the main cast members. JO recalled that the MBC Japan branch provided only the drama's premiere demo film to the Japanese buyer. According to the Japanese buyer, this early purchase of unaired drama in Korea absolutely increased the possible risk, however, there are some benefits as well. On the one hand, the most predictable risk would be a possible failure of the new program to get high TV ratings when the drama airs in the Japanese market. If this is the case, the TV station will lose substantial advertising revenue due to smaller audiences. On the other hand, early purchase of a drama costs comparatively less so if audiences are small, the TV station has a relatively small loss in this situation. But, if the drama gets high ratings in the Korean market, the export cost of the drama will increase greatly because of greater demand for the drama from a larger number of Japanese content buyers. At this point, the high cost to purchase the drama for the Japanese TV station won't be as profitable even though the advertising revenue increases. The Japanese buyer can easily make subsequent contracts with other local stations if the drama is popular.

For Japanese program buyers, the exported drama rating in Korea is an important indicator in making their decision to buy. Recently, Japanese buyers and station schedulers have carefully watched the Korean dramas prior to running them in Korea. Without doubt, the early release of new Korean drama, in pre- and/or middle of production, to the foreign market is unusual, except for the programming the foreign media have invested in. However, a growing tendency in the exportation of Korean dramas, according to the sales managers interviewed, is that Asian program buyers are likely to be interested in making decisions about purchasing in the pre-production or in the middle of production stages. JO stated that *Coffee Prince* showed the popularity of Korean dramas in Japan and further established and/or enhanced trust between the Korean and Japanese television industries.

Japanese program buyers select Korean dramas based on limited information. For example, some buyers may only see the early synopsis and the main cast information, demonstrating that highly experienced Japanese buyers are capable of catching popular trends early, and demonstrates tighter competition, and higher prices, for Korean dramas.

Star-marketing of the exported dramas has been significant, according to the sales managers. As mentioned earlier, the dramas *TaeWangSaSinGi*, *Coffee Prince*, *Sorry and Love You*, and most recently, *IRIS*, were highly valued and expensive even in the drama's in-production stage. Because the main title roles of these dramas were to be played by top-tier Korean stars among the regional Asian audiences (Bae Yong-Joon in *TaeWangSaSinGi*, Gong Yu in *Coffee Prince*, So Ji-Sub in *Sorry and Love You*, and Lee Byun-Hun in *IRIS*), they are highly effective sources of marketing and promotion in

the foreign media markets. To foreign program buyers, Korean stars are an excellent indicator of the financial potential of a drama in their market. Star power is not always a guarantee of the popular success of media content, but is a common standard in transnational media buying decisions, and therefore, in establishing the direction of media flow among markets.

Conceptually, star marketing in the exportation of Korean drama has many similarities to the Hollywood star system. The growing popularity of Korean actors and actresses, based on the popularity of Korean dramas, has begun to draw more consistent attention to the Korean entertainment market than at any other time in history. Famous Korean entertainers in the region are perceived as iconic and distinctly Asian figures differing from existing Western pop icons. For example, the top Korean celebrities across Asia boosted the sales of Korean beauty products in the region at large. This is evidence that dramas themselves produce higher market shares. Not only Korean TV stations but also Korean entertainment agencies pursue predictable economic benefits from the Korean Wave and its iconic stars, locations, and artifacts.

According to Havens (2002), African, Asian, and Latin American audiences are drawn to films and television programs that feature actresses and actors who share their ethnicity. In fact, cultural assumptions about race and audience taste have much to do with the processes by which U.S. films and television shows are distributed into a culturally-different local market. Along the same lines, Korean program sales managers strive to select the most appealing actors/actresses, those loved by local audiences, for promotion, and exported dramas with Korean stars would be chosen to be promoted.



As a system, the *Hallyu* (Korean Wave) stars are retained in a special management sector by Korean entertainment companies. The casting for contemporary Korean dramas has been one of the major factors contributing to success both within and outside Korea. According to the sales managers, in the Korean Wave the casting of exported dramas was a highly important matter in regional promotion. Often the Asian content buyers considered the stars of the exported drama more than the story. The famous Korean Wave stars of the exported dramas have been a top promotional tool in pursuing the Asian television market during the introductory phase of the Korean Wave.

Importantly, the star marketing system of the Korean television industry also appealed to advertising agencies outside Korea. Drawing foreign investment into the Korean TV stations or independent production companies during the pre-production stage, casting of top Korean Wave stars is significant. For instance, *IRIS*, produced by TaeWon Entertainment (a large independent production company in Korea) in 2009, was promoted as a Korean action blockbuster. Releasing information about cast members, specifically that top Korean star, Lee Byung-Hun, would be starring in *IRIS* helped draw the highest amount of investment funds in Korean television history. The cost of *IRIS*, according to media accounts, was approximately \$40 million (retrieved from KBS world homepage).

Typically, public relations events featuring Korean stars were regularly held within Asian countries; local fan meetings and news conferences with the stars were aired on local TV before the first episode aired. According to Kim (2005), this “planned boom” played an important role in the popular success of foreign programs among local viewers:

It's a wet, gray afternoon here in Shanghai, but I'm standing on the pavement jostling shoulders with several hundred people who've braved the weather to be here. We're standing outside a pharmacy waiting for the appearance of a South Korean television starlet. . . .The celebrity Lee Young-Ae has swept past and is now on the stage in front of the fans. On television, she's a doctor in a historical soap opera. In real life, she's come to China in her capacity as a brand icon. She's here publicizing one type of medicinal root, ginseng, a popular Korean product. But in essence, what she's doing isn't really selling ginseng; she's selling the whole idea of Korea, the country, the culture, and the product. (Lim, 2006, para. 1-2)

The extensive success of the drama *DaeJangGeum* as described above resulted in its exportation to more than 30 countries including many Asian nations, Australia, Canada, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Russia, and Romania. Specifically, *DaeJangGeum* was a top-rated television program on GTV Taiwan and TTV Hong Kong when it was broadcast in 2004 and 2005 (retrieved from MBC homepage).

*DaeJangGeum* has been prominent as the second surge of the Korean Wave. Its two leading actors, Lee Young-Ae and Ji Jin-Hee, moved up to the level of well-known Korean Wave star. In particular, Lee's popularity as the main character in *DaeJangGeum* remains strong with many Asian fans in a similar way to that of BYJ in *Winter Sonata*. The interviewee JO explained that *DaeJangGeum* had eight nationwide *DaeJangGeum* tours across Japan. In 2006, his corporation publicized the first broadcast of *DaeJangGeum* on NHK through promotional tours across Japan. The

promotion was largely successful in drawing the attention of Japanese viewers, which then increased the drama's DVD sales and garnered a top TV rating. As a matter of fact, the promotion of *DaeJangGeum* was originally designed by NHK's promotional agency, but JO recalled that his previous marketing experience with NHK's promotion of *DaeJangGeum* was helpful in understanding the sophisticated and complex media marketing system of the Japanese media.

Undoubtedly, publicizing famous Korean entertainers across Asia is a strategy mimicked from Hollywood. Star marketing has been adopted by Korean television corporations as a successful model of home content promotion. Most importantly, the star marketing of Korea has yielded not only increased exportation but has also shown the overall potential of Korean entertainment companies. When *Winter Sonata* was televised in Asian locales, BYJ's stardom grew especially outside Korea, and his star status connected a variety of content-related profits (for example, the Korean tour business) by his own management agency and the Korean culture industry. In particular, NHK developed multiple sophisticated businesses connected to both *Winter Sonata* and BYJ, resulting in generation of many different products based on the drama itself and on BYJ's star power. These products included a *Winter Sonata* book edition, artistic character products (for example, *Joon bear*, which is one of the popular BYJ's character items coined from *Winter Sonata*), the Japanese version of the OST, a photo essay of *Winter Sonata*, and fashion and jewelry items similar to those worn/used by the stars or endorsed by them. In brief, *Winter Sonata*-related businesses resulted in \$2.3 billion in economic exchange between Korea and Japan according to research by the Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. In addition, Japanese tourism to Korea surged by 40 percent in the

first 10 months of 2004 when *Winter Sonata* was airing on NHK in Japan (Onishi, 2004).

## 2) Segmented Copyrights of the Korean Dramas

Basically, the exportation of Korean dramas meant that the drama copyrights belonging to Korean TV stations are sold, and the terms of the sale are specified in the contract between Korean and local media corporation. Often network TV stations (and occasionally independent production companies) in Korea owned all or partial copyrights for their dramas. Different types of copyrights are sold to local television corporations or program syndicators by Korean network TVs or independent production companies. The contract relating to exportation specifies the types of copyrights being sold to the local TV stations and also specifically states legal conditions for broadcasting the drama. The copyrights of media content vary in accordance with developing network infrastructure and capability to deliver video content via different media. Also, social devices on a basis of local influence the copyright arrangement because they facilitate active consumer participation in the production and selection of such content (Napoli, 2007).

Generally, exported Korean dramas trade four copyrights, depending on broadcasting platforms. These are (a) broadcast rights, (b) video-gram rights, (c) digital (or mobile) content rights, and (d) extra products/services rights.

The broadcast rights designate the television broadcast schedule for exported dramas based on the type of local television stations: free TV (network TV), cable TV, satellite TV, pay-per-view (PPV), and video-on-demand (VOD). However, internet

broadcasts using digital streaming files (for instance, IP TV) and Digital Mobile Broadcasting (DMB) are not included in these broadcast rights categories. Simply put, the broadcast rights of exported Korean dramas enable local television stations to lawfully schedule broadcasts of the dramas.

Broadcast rights are the most common copyright of the four to be established between Korean companies and local TV stations. The contract for broadcast rights stipulates restrictions for the local TV station including when it may broadcast the imported drama. These restrictions involve the amount of airtime, the duration of the contract, and broadcast channel restrictions. For example, *DaeJangGeum* was contracted to the NHK network with exclusive broadcast rights at the beginning of the exportation. NHK's contract included the right to air the program three times on the network channel within 5 years (JO, personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo). According to the Korean network station sales managers interviewed, foreign program buyers in many cases wanted exclusive broadcast rights from the beginning.

Additional contracts for other types of copyrights tended to be considered based on local TV ratings, local audience feedback, and expected commercial opportunities in the local market. In this respect, basic broadcast copyrights of exported Korean dramas acted as a test of drama popularity on local television. When the exported dramas were broadcast and showed promise in the local market, the copyright contract for the drama became more complex, being negotiated on an episode-by-episode basis. In fact, selling a broadcast copyright for the exported drama is acknowledged as an essential business within the Korean television industry itself.

Second, the video-gram rights of the Korean drama are described as contracts that enable local TV stations to generate various versions of original dramas, for example, DVDs, making-film DVDs, OST disks, or the right for remaking original drama scripts. The video-gram copyrights deal with traditional forms of video media including DVDs, VHS, and CDs; and excludes digital video files, including streaming files, mobile audio and image files. Commonly, the video-gram rights of the exported Korean dramas are not included in the first contract because some local television markets where the exported drama is broadcast do not have consumer markets large enough for these video-format dramas. Hence, the video-gram copyrights have been considered one of the preferred profit-making resources for both Korean and local foreign stations. Through the video-gram rights, Korean TV stations can earn more royalties from exported dramas; the local television stations get revenue from sales of DVDs and/or OSTs.

For local program buyers in many Asian countries, the video-gram copyrights are dependent on domestic market size and business capabilities. If the local television station does not have a big enough consumer market for DVDs and other video products, the broadcast copyright covers the local audiences. However, if there has not been a stable DVD or video market established locally, the purchase of video-gram copyrights for Korean dramas may create a deficit rather than profits. However, if the local broadcasting system has developed to a certain degree, the video-gram content business using exported Korean dramas can maximize local profits. Local audiences and fans of Korean dramas are eager to buy their favorite drama on DVD, making-film DVDs, and OSTs. The Japanese media market has a large and productive video content market of

its own, so most Korean dramas exported to Japan have contracted both the broadcast rights and the video-gram rights. If a market has a suitable number of consumers, repackaging or reproducing of the exported dramas can establish a variety of marketing outlets similar to the multi-platform business in the film industry.

According to LH, a sales manager at KBS Media, the copyright business of exported Korean dramas was influenced by the systematic development of local television industries. The majority of Asian countries imported Korean dramas, but importers such as the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Myanmar only needed a broadcast copyright. Copyright trade in the exportation of Korean dramas, therefore, relies on the level of maturity of the local content business (Cho & Latta, 2006; Gershon, 2000). When a local broadcast system is less developed than that of other places, chances are low for the importation of differing types of copyrights beyond the broadcast rights. In this context, Japanese television stations equipped with high-tech and nationwide broadcasting systems are interested in all copyrights for exported Korean drama. The Japanese television industry enriched its own content market with Korean dramas. In regard to the case of NHK, television broadcasting of the drama focuses on nationwide publicity so that NHK can obtain more advertising revenues through the drama's spreading popularity. The active promotion done by NHK for Korean dramas generated new profits from imported content sales of DVDs, OSTs, photo albums, character products, and TV review/guidebooks. In terms of media economy, the Korean program sales managers LH and JO emphasized the contract of the video-gram copyrights for Korean dramas with Japanese TV stations has been actually priced three or four times higher than the cost of the broadcast copyright

contract. This is a vital aspect of the content business between Korean and Japanese television industries and the two nations have mutually fruitful economic outcomes from the video-gram copyright business in comparison to the trade with any other Asian media industry.

Third, the internet/mobile copyright is a recent development in the copyright business. Digital innovation brought significant improvements in accessibility and consumption of internet and mobile media. The salience of this digital and network technology dramatically increased the capacity of traditional media forms such as TV and movie images free, delivered through the World Wide Web (Napoli, 2007). Korea is well known for its technological savvy, and national innovations also increased traditional media production substantially. Most Korean dramas have been broadcast on network TV channels first, and have concurrently shown in a digital streaming video format via the websites of network stations and/or as pay-per-view or video-on-demand options. This digital streaming service for Korean dramas has generally run for the purpose of domestic and foreign viewers and the copyright of this digitized form of drama also belongs to the same TV station that produced the drama. Korean network TV homepages provide the entire episode of the drama, scripts of each episode, and theme music together.

Conversely, mobile or internet copyrights for the exported Korean drama have revealed great difficulties in making its official contract because of illegal internet reproduction of the exported dramas are impossible to monitor in each local television market where the exported Korean drama was broadcast. Copyrights in these growing internet and mobile media forms are not clearly regulated and, therefore, enforcement is



difficult. Korean television stations offer limited contracts for these internet/mobile copyrights for the exported drama. Recently, the official contracts of the internet/mobile copyrights for the Korean Wave dramas are negotiated by local advertising agencies. For example, these advertising agencies sometimes want to use particular scenes or theme songs from the dramas in local commercials. Another example is when online game companies want to insert visual images included in a Korean drama in order to create new software, so that these companies need the mobile copyright for the original drama.

Another type of copyright is extra products/services copyrights; these enable the copyright holder to export drama-related products and services on local television stations or agencies within a market. These copyrights cover extensive local marketing actions, products, and branch businesses. The advantages to the Korean television industry in regard to the extra copyright are to create possible paths for releasing the drama itself on multiple platforms. The drama's life cycle in a market increases when it is expanded to the concept known as the one-source, multi-use strategy in the film business. Similar to this film marketing strategy, Korean dramas have adapted it to extend more outlets with commercial items of the original drama in different local media markets. These extra products/services rights of the Korean drama across the Asian market include drama guidebooks, photo albums, OST CDs, novels, character products, and the shooting location tours. In particular, the extra service/product copyrights for Korean dramas have been predominately contracted between Korean and Japanese television industries.

More specifically, LH and JO explained that both *Winter Sonata* and *DaeJangGeum* accomplished an extensive business beyond the content itself in terms of one-source-multi-use marketing:

*DaeJangGeum* was aired four times on NHK from 2004 thru 2007. The reason for NHK's repetitive broadcasting is the added profit gained immediately after network TV broadcasting. After the first broadcast of *DaeJangGeum*, NHK started a variety of nationwide promotions in response to Japanese viewers' enthusiastic feedback. The DVD edition of the drama released after NHK's first broadcast produced high DVD sales revenue between 2005 and 2006. Along with DVDs, guidebooks of the drama with production information, and character products related to and/or endorsed by the drama's stars, including costumes and jewelry, significantly increased NHK's post-broadcast market share. (JO [Head of MBC branch in Japan], personal interview, April 2008 in Tokyo)

Exportation to Asian countries can be considered a co-constructive business between Korea and local media markets, even though many differences in the level of development in each media market exists. For the Korean television industry, concern for the characteristics of the specific target market was emphasized when the exportation of Korean dramas grew to include extended local business because the success of this post-broadcasting business in the local market is heavily dependent on the market size, growth rate, profitability, and competition (Chan-Olmsted & Chang, 2003). These factors require that the Korean television industry attempt to increase

content-related business outside Korea. The Asian television industry generally reflects a recognizable gap in this market order on the basis of transnational media flow, so this gap among different local markets affects the profit from the Korean drama export.

The Korean television industry began to reorganize the copyright business of exported programs; the result is a segmented copyright business, still being developed, in which copyrights can be modified case-by-case. The biggest problem in the copyright business of exported Korean dramas is piracy. The sales managers addressed the need for lawful supervision and enforcement of broadcasting copyrights:

Mongolia is a place with the hottest interest in Korean dramas. More and more frequently, the Korean drama gains popularity there, welcomed by Mongolian TV viewers. But many illegal television stations there attempt to broadcast Korean dramas without buying a copyright contract. So many independent production companies or our network TV stations experienced similar piracy problems with illegal broadcasting in Mongolia. The pirated DVDs of the Korean dramas, and of course, the illegal TV broadcasting of the drama over and over again occurs on a daily basis. According to our investigation, more than 10 channels in Mongolia are illegally broadcasting current Korean dramas, however suing them is difficult because of the weak copyright enforcement in Mongolia.

(LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

### 3) Joint ventures of Korean Drama Production

As described earlier, the exportation of Korean dramas has created a number of commercial tactics targeting foreign media markets. To reach broader foreign markets, a systemic business strategy has routinely been implemented by the Korean television industry. One of the important strategies of Korean television stations is employing foreign media facilities and investments. Because of business in the regional media sphere, the Korean broadcasting system became well aware of the importance of business cooperation with neighboring media firms and markets. In turn, sharing regional media infrastructure – programming facilities, advanced technology, financial investment, and expert production crews – is recognized as a precious asset for the Korean television industry itself.

Interestingly, the exportation of *Winter Sonata* didn't earn more profit for KBS than NHK earned. On the first contract, KBS only sold the broadcast rights for *Winter Sonata* to NHK, and in 2003 a video-gram right of the drama was added into an extended contract at the request of NHK. The costs of the broadcast rights were less than the perceived value would be after the drama became a hit in Japan. Eventually, NHK wanted other copyright contracts with KBS for additional rights to *Winter Sonata*, and the new copyright NHK wanted was the extra product/service copyright. NHK's expertise in this type of content business enabled them to generate many products related to *Winter Sonata* including a drama guidebook, a novel with the same title, and products and endorsements of protagonists.

With these *Winter Sonata* copyright contracts, KBS earned copyright royalties from the NHK, and, at the same time, NHK actually made better profits even after making royalty payments to KBS, earned through immense sales of various DVD sets, books, and promotional items created by NHK. Korean program sales managers, including me, were surprised by how far the content business could be extended in the face of NHK's *Winter Sonata* marketing. Since then, the goal of drama exportation is to seek as many business opportunities as possible, moving beyond selling only the drama itself. (LH, personal interview, February 2008 in Seoul)

Similarly, the Korean television industry envisions extra content business through regional partnerships. The Korean dramas were exported to a relatively small local media market (except for Japan), but was not a long-term solution for the business of Korean dramas. Thus, the Korean television industry intends to shift business strategy to a more pro-active stance rather than the previous defensive one. In this respect, the Korean television industry broadens the sources of financing for its own programming over the domestic media fund and in that the popular Korean Wave makes this initiative effectively. As Thussu (2007) claimed, increasing East Asian connections forged through the exchanges of media and popular culture are underpinned by the logic of capital and market. Hence, uneven transnational media flows in East Asia are eventually operated with the fundamental tenets of consumerism. This has been driven somehow national collaborations as well as private media sectors within the region.

Gershon (2000) claims that joint ventures in the media field offer real advantages to companies willing to assume the risks. The joint venture creates more flexible financing plans for drama production when limited funding sources exist. In particular, the joint venture programming of the Korean drama is a solution when the drama demands more money than average production costs, especially in the case of new genre experiments. While there are some advantages to joint venture programming, there are also lingering risks for investors because the popularity and economic success of the drama cannot be known in the pre-production stage. If the joint venture drama is successful in its content value and distribution in diverse markets, benefits in terms of income to the investors likely will follow. In addition, joint venture arrangements involve foreign producers who enable the drama to establish more outlets for export and extra business opportunities through those investor's local markets.

The difficulty of this joint venture strategy, especially inflows of foreign investments to Korean drama programming, is due to a restriction in the Broadcasting Act of Korea. In 2000, this legislation was modified, increasing the freedom to raise direct financing from foreign media corporations and TV production companies. In turn, joint ventures of several foreign media productions financing has been most beneficial to the three Korean network TV stations. More and more, joint ventures are considered common programming strategy for the drama in its pre-production stage.

Explaining how these joint ventures work in Korea through examples is useful. Briefly, the three Korean network TV stations dominate this system, producing more than 80 percent of drama programming. A few independent production companies in Korea were previously sub-contracted to provide services to deliver network

programming. This constitutes a major systemic imbalance in control of content in the Korean television industry, especially between the three network TV stations and a small number of independent production companies.

The fact is that most independent production companies in Korea were established by former TV network workers – TV producers, scriptwriters, or cinematographers – with few entertainment business executives. Overall, the drama is the most favored genre among Korean TV audiences so that the proportion of drama in all content programming for the network TV stations is greater than any other genre of programs. During the half-century history of the Korean broadcasting system, the three Korean network TV stations have monopolized Korea's domestic television market because they have possessed privileged nationwide channels and the freedom to produce content for their own channels.

With the amendment of Broadcasting Act in 2000, the three Korean networks – KBS, MBC, and SBS – could increase the proportion of co-produced dramas with independent production companies. This was based on two specific principles. First, the network TV stations must abide limits on outside production as a proportion of their programming, specifically, they are limited to a minimum of 30 percent annually. This was a vital change in the Korean programming system, the goal of which was to break the monopoly of the major TV networks in programming and distribution of content. Second, the average expense of programming in Korean dramas rapidly increased as the industry itself extended its size and market share so the network TV stations now need partnerships to gain financing for their programming. The Korean Wave has expedited this dual Korean drama programming system between network TV stations and large

independent production companies. Also, the oligopolistic programming system of Korean drama has contributed to the improvement in the general quality of drama because of better financing, sharing resources and workforces, and increasing market competition.

Today, a number of large independent production companies in Korea have more power in programming partnerships with network TV stations, for example, the top five independent production companies Olive9, KJH Production, PAN Entertainment, SamHwa Production, and Chorokbaem Media. However, unlike these large production companies, many small independent production companies are treated poorly by network TV stations in drama programming. When a network TV station employs small production companies for a small portion of drama programming, there were unfair contracts between them in terms of the copyright ownership of the drama and lower co-programming cost-per-drama, largely made possible by independent TV production companies.<sup>30</sup> Often, small independent production companies endure unfair working contracts with these network stations. The Korean television industry does not operate a syndication system to feed programs for the broadcasting channels, so many

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<sup>30</sup> The debate on the unfair contracts between Korean network TV firms and independent productions has been named as a major systemic weakness of the Korean broadcast system. The following news report reveals a current example of this: “The Fair Trade Commission (FTC) has begun investigating a copyright dispute between television drama production companies and the country’s three main broadcasters, the FTC said yesterday. The antitrust watchdog said that it is investigating the issue after a complaint was lodged by 25 members of the Korea Drama Production Association (CODA), including Chorokbaem Media, KJH Production and Samhwa Networks. CODA is comprised of 37 television drama production firms. The complaint accuses the three broadcasters – KBS, MBC and SBS – of violating fair trade laws by ignoring production companies’ copyrights on television dramas. The accusers say the broadcasters forced them to sign contracts that hand all rights concerning the production to the broadcasters, despite the common practice of granting copyright to the party that has made larger investment and creative input into the production” (Choi, 2008, *The Korea Herald*, para.1-4).



TV programs co-produced by small independent production companies are assigned airtime on these network TV stations.

Once a joint venture plan is decided for producing a new drama, potential foreign media firms or individual investors make contracts with the major programming production entity in Korea, either a network TV station or an independent production company. In the pre-production stage, the main producers of dramas hold a conference to present opportunities for investment to foreign media firms, production companies, and individual investors who are interested in the drama. Most foreign investors make their decision to invest based on the initial synopsis of the drama, the casting of the main roles, the record of the producer(s), and the reputation and capability of the main production company. East Asian media investors come primarily from advanced media industries such as Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan. These countries tend to actively participate in joint ventures.

A great example of a joint venture is the historical drama *TaeWangSaSinGi* (*Legend* in English title). This drama was produced through a large number of investors (the total programming costs were reported as \$46 million for 20 episodes), including foreign investors from several Asian media firms. The main production company of *TaeWangSaSinGi* was KJH Production, the largest independent production company in Korea. *TaeWangSaSinGi*, drew attention in the Korean television industry because it was the first Korean drama produced with no financing from any Korean network TV stations. All copyrights for the drama belonged to the main production company (KJH Production) so the company controlled the exportation of the drama as well. The drama was broadcast on MBC, but MBC had only rights for a domestic broadcast.

The plan for *TaeWangSaSinGi* was to produce it as a joint venture between KJH Production and other investors. The drama was completed within three years from the first announcement of the program, including raising money from foreign investors, filming, editing, and broadcasting the program. To produce this historical fantasy, KJH Production held a public conference primarily for foreign media investors. At this conference, the initial scenario of the drama, and the casting information of the title roles were presented. The major announcement at the public conference was that Bae Yong-Joon had been cast in the male lead role, and that the producer was Kim JongHak, a record-breaking drama producer in Korea and one of the founders of KJH Production. During and after the conference, KJH Production actively sought East Asian production firms for the joint venture. To raise 100 percent foreign investments for the drama, KJH Production needed a major public relations campaign. The planned business tour of *TaeWangSaSinGi* in the pre-production stage drew attention from Hong Kong and Japanese media firms. The successful joint venture was established because of the strong potential market value of the drama. *TaWangSaSinGi* was broadcast in Korea on MBC, and earned an average of 30 percent, which was the top TV rating at the time. After three months, the broadcast finished in Korea, at which time NHK started broadcasting the drama nationwide in Japan. NHK bought both video-gram and extra products/services copyrights as well as the broadcasting copyright. The video-gram rights were purchased by NHK prior to the Korean broadcast on MBC, because NHK was planning to release the Japanese version of the making-film DVDs<sup>31</sup> exclusively in

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<sup>31</sup> This describes a commercial DVD product of Korean TV dramas in the Japanese TV market. The broadcasters in Japan created a pre-released Korean drama DVD, containing only behind

Japan. This making-film DVDs were released to the market a month prior to being broadcast on NHK. This was a highly successful promotion, drawing substantial attention to the upcoming broadcast.

The investors in the joint venture shared a proportion of the total profit of the drama when it was released in both domestic and overseas markets. Regardless of the risks assumed, the foreign media investments to Korean TV dramas increased for the following reasons: First, the foreign investment into the Korean television industry was made easier by amending broadcast laws, and second, there are reasonable financial payoffs for investing in Korean drama programming. Many Korean dramas face greater domestic competition in the quality of programming desired by domestic audiences. The dual programming system between networks and independent production companies stimulates the creation of new genres and genre experimentation in Korean drama programming overall. Joint ventures make such innovations and experiments more possible.

#### 4) Co-Production of Korean Drama Programming

Co-production with East Asian media partners is another effective strategy in the financing and marketing of Korean dramas and related goods. According to Kraidy (2005), joining forces in the course of media production allows companies to share equipment, technical staff, programming and production expertise, and outdoor shooting locations. Indeed, joining strategy improves the potential resources of financing, including government subsidies and tax breaks. More significantly, co-

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scenes during the specific drama programming and starring Korean stars' personal interviews. Usually, this DVD product is released before the drama begins airing.

production arrangements decrease the risks of a commercial failure falling on a single company. In terms of Korean drama programming, the common way of co-production is to establish multiple partnerships with other Asian TV networks and local production firms. Having a partnership means that it shares local programming teams, technical facilities, administrative support for local filming, and casting local actors/actresses. The Korean television industry has taken advantage of co-production in working frequently and successfully with regional TV networks and production companies. Ultimately, this regional co-production tendency in the Korean media industry increases the size and diversity of foreign audiences residing in a particular partner's local market. Also, each investor has a local stake— is vested inherently.

Different methods of co-production in Korean drama programming have been used when working with Asian TV production partners. First, use of outdoor settings in foreign locations has rapidly increased in Korean drama. If foreign locations for the Korean drama are set in Asian countries, the local governmental offices in that location play important roles in allotting resources for the project, and also the market where the location exists gets to share in the tour profits. The local administrative and legislative cooperation for programming is a huge concern for the Korean drama producers. Of course, popular Korean dramas are often filmed in foreign countries for several episodes to increase audiences' attention from domestic to foreign audiences. Thus, foreign co-production projects had reduced programming cost-per-drama as well as helping to make the production process easier. This local support from foreign media partners is, of course, welcomed by Korean broadcasting corporations.

An early example of the co-produced Korean drama is *I love Beijing*, co-produced by KBS (Korean state network) and CCTV (Chinese national network). *I love Beijing* was a basic form of Korean dramas typically exported to Asian television companies. The drama focused on international casting and sharing the local TV station facility and staff members in order to include specific outdoor programming. In practice, CCTV participated in casting a popular Chinese actor in the lead, opposite a leading Korean actor. Then, the CCTV controlled shooting locations in Beijing. These scenes in Beijing were used in the first episode of the drama. During the early co-production phase, the Chinese TV station aimed at building a cooperative broadcasting partnership with the Korean media industry. The co-production with CCTV was a symbolic integration of the Korean and Chinese television industries not only for economic reasons, but also to foster good feelings toward future partnerships.

More recently, co-production in Asian television reveals detailed commercial arrangements. The central goal of co-production of Korean dramas is to appeal not only to domestic audiences and other local, regional, and even global markets without a great amount of promotional expense when the co-produced drama is released. For instance, *Celebrity Sweetheart*, a drama co-produced by Olive 9, an independent Korean production company, and Japan's largest advertising agency, Dentsu. For this drama programming, Dentsu paid for all equipment, facilities, and local technical staff for the filming in Japan. Along with this contribution from Dentsu, the Japanese Ministry of Travel welcomed and expedited administrative and government procedures for filming the drama in several Tokyo and Osaka locations.

*Celebrity Sweetheart* was advertised more in Japan than in Korea because the heroine of the drama was the famous Korean Wave actress, Choi, Ji-Woo, the most popular Korean actress in Japan, having starred in *Winter Sonata*. In general, Korean dramas co-produced with Asian media groups utilize an indirect advertising tool—sales of popular consumer products from the foreign market. In *Celebrity Sweetheart* many commercial Japanese products advertised by Dentsu were presented in every episode of the drama. Typical products were background items for specific scenes, especially surrounding the protagonists. This indirect product promotion through television shows or movies and their stars is referred to as product placement; this strategy, originating in Hollywood, is commonly observed in popular Korean dramas today. Co-producers assume shares of the local promotional costs, and this becomes an effective tool for advertising local shooting and star information. In this respect, co-production of Korean dramas is considered a win-win strategy and has been shown to be a highly advanced and successful convergence of broadcasting and advertising. Moreover, the Asian media corporate partners see the Korean television industry as a valuable foreign media partner that contributes to the growth of the media industry and that benefits both partners, the producers, the stars, and other suppliers and consumers.

As mentioned earlier, co-production of Korean dramas with regional companies changes certain genre conventions in these dramas. Foreign location filming of Korean dramas has been customized because this is more effective in getting attention of the audience when the drama is broadcast in that market. Often, a newly released drama features a foreign location in the first episode, so many Korean dramas are filmed in popular places like Paris, New York, and Los Angeles. However, far more impact on

the regional audiences, co-production of Korean dramas with media from other countries involves shooting in Asian cities, saving production costs. Well-known U.S. or European cities were preferred by Korean audiences through the mediated images, but recently Asian cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Taipei have been featured in Korean dramas and have generated new interest in traveling to Korea and other parts of Asia.

The outdoor scenes in Korean dramas increase the curiosity of Asian audiences both in the drama itself and in the locations used. Foreign locations have brought about two main effects. First, they have enriched the visual images and increased the reality of the story. Second, the outdoor scenes in neighboring Asian countries increases viewership among those living in these locations. For instance, the Korean drama *On Air* was produced by MBC and conducted foreign location shooting in Taiwan for some episodes that aired in the beginning of the series; it produced benefits for Taiwanese resort seen in the drama. Similarly, *Celebrity Sweetheart* was broadcast by SBS, Korea's commercial network, and was shot in Japan, seeking to increase the attraction of the stylish visual images and realistic dialogue, as well as commercially benefiting the cities of Tokyo and Osaka.

With regard to the co-production strategy of Korean drama, inviting other Asian production companies as partners enables drama programming to take advantage of material and advertising sponsorships. The Korean TV stations and independent production companies aggressively promote and advertise their own dramas overseas. Co-production with regional television firms actually makes the production itself easier to expand into the regional and/or the partners' local markets. Along with program

format adaptation from Western shows, the co-produced Korean drama is often chosen to increase business potential in local markets. The tactics described here help adapt exported Korean drama content to local tastes and preferences, and produce higher foreign business profits for the Korean media industry as well as other regional TV distributors.



## Chapter VII. Conclusion

This study examines numerous aspects of the Korean Wave phenomenon, in relation to the globalizing East Asian media and popular culture. The complex conditions and structural transformations of the Korea and East Asian media industries have been discussed and these environments eventually trigger the diffusion of the Korean Wave. In addition, this explains how the Korean Wave contributes to responding to the globalizing cultural system. Finally, this study reveals the reasons, effects, and consequences of the Korean Wave on the regional media, audiences, and markets in a comprehensive manner.

Particularly in relation to Japanese audiences, the Korean Wave explored evidences that exposure to Korean dramas produced a higher degree of localized identification, which has been described as the re-emerging sense of Asianness from the East Asian viewers' perspective. The Korean dramas were more likely to evoke the regionally-sensitive Japanese emotions and these emotions enabled them to resonate more with the Korean drama than other East Asian audience members. The Korean dramas made Japanese audiences to redeem their postcolonial identity undergone through their Western-led modernization and Asian mentality preserved in traditions of Confucianism. In that emotional complex, Japanese participants addressed their feelings to the Korean dramas as having subtle foreignness but comfortable familiarity. Importantly, this partially supports the theory of cultural proximity – originally proposed by Straubhaar (refer to chapter 2.3. pp. 23~26) as discussed earlier. But, it should be notify that the ways of emotional affinity presented by Japanese audiences toward Korean dramas clearly explored a realization deeply linking to the region's

analogous cultural and historical transformations during the last half century. For the first time, the Japanese audience members can reconsider their belongingness to East Asian community and tend to find various cultural differences as well as shared similarities by viewing the Korean dramas.

In fact, the Korean dramas captured the similar social or individual life experiences of Japan and the rest of East Asia and these characteristics of the Korean drama were a catalyst for many Japanese to reconsider their postcolonial identity in relation to Japan's position as being neither Asian nor Western. To some extent, both the past and present of Japan is preserved in Korean dramas, and this rekindles their personal and social nostalgia as self-portrait images. In that, the postcolonial sentiment of the Japanese audiences makes them approach closely to Asia, and produces a desire for more Korean media content.

In terms of programming, marketing and organizational structures, the Korean Wave has transformed the regional media markets as well as its industries. The visibility of the Korean Wave demonstrates a successful regional market model. It manifests how Korean home-grown media content distributes effectively to broader foreign audiences. It is significant to note that the success of the Korean Wave in the Japanese media market plays an important role in enriching this wave's impact toward broader international markets. In light of the industrial operation, the Korean Wave explores a worthiness of the notion of glocalization. This explains objectives, processes, changes, and effects of diversified marketing conventions by means of the Korean Wave. The strategies of glocalization as in a part intend to enhance market powers using regional productions. Because regional productions reflect the divergent tastes

and sentiments present in the local audience members individually and collectively (Ang, 2007; Harnnez, 1990; Robertson, 1994; Robertson & White, 2005; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007). Consequences of glocalization in the process of cultural flow – for example, the Korean Wave – become visible in at least two ways; one involves the adaptation of foreign content to a particular local market needs by mingling various cultural components. The second way is increased understanding and acceptance of foreign content by local audiences including how certain tendencies are fostered by the local industry itself.

It is significant to note that the Korean Wave's entry into the Japanese media market has enriched and increased cooperative partnerships in sharing popular culture resources and copying industrial strategies from one another. The cultural output from the Korean media industry has been reproduced in multiple commercial formats and has connected different media platforms by means of advanced industrial that have been utilized previously only by the global media industries (TNCs). Obviously, the Korean Wave highly motivates Korean media industries to gear up the pace of glocalization in their media entities. The Korean media industry has adopted global strategies and applied them to local Asian markets, accommodating local market features and preferences. Simultaneously this Korean media drive toward glocalization has boosted the regional culture's push toward commercialization of media industries. The interviews with Korean content sales managers and other evidences both in foreign financing and systematic cooperation in programming demonstrated this accelerating glocalization of the Korean media industry.

Empirically, the success of the Korean Wave has met with approval from the general public in Asia. The impact, broad scope, and economic growth, however, are not without opposition. Some observers have voiced concerns about the possible effects of rapid growth in exportation. Additionally, strong reactions among regional audiences to Korean content are fast and/or enormous in terms of local impact and the effects of these reactions may be far reaching and deeply held worldviews. Examples from the field have demonstrated the Korean Wave as a stable regional media flow in Asia, even more broad area beyond Asia. For instance, *Winter Sonata* was remade in an animated TV show format in 2009 with the continuing story of the drama through a co-production venture between Korean and Japanese TV producers. Before the animated version of *Winter Sonata*, BYJ was again invited to a Korea-Japan governmental event, echoing his continued popularity and the consistent demand for new dramas:

Hallyu star Bae Yong-Joon joined Korea Tourism Organization president Lee Charm in declaring “2010-2012 Visit Korea Year” at Tokyo Dome yesterday in a rare overseas promotion for the Korean tourism industry. The event, organized by Visit Korea Committee, drew an estimated 45,000 Japanese, many of whom had come to get a glimpse of Bae or *Yonsama*<sup>32</sup>, as he is popular known in Japan. The promotion also got a boost from the participation of Miyuki Hatoyama, wife of Japan’s new Prime Minister, Yukio Hatoyama [who is known to be an avid fan of Korean culture]...[Bae] also released his travelogue *A Trip in Search of Korea’s*

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<sup>32</sup> Yonsama is Bae Yong-Joon’s nickname among Japanese fans.

*Beauty* in Japan a week earlier. The book is selling so well in Japan that the publisher is having difficulty meeting orders. (Song, 2009, para.1-2, 10)

In addition, the drama *IRIS*, which just finished domestic broadcasting in 2009, established an exportation contract with six different Asian countries, including Japan and Hong Kong (Lee, 2009). *DongYi*, a new historical drama from the producer of *DaeJangGeum*, was exported to Japan and Taiwan before it was even broadcast on Korean TV. The Korean stars, who gained stardom in Asia thanks to their Korean Wave dramas or films are, today selected to play roles in foreign dramas and movies. Even Hollywood movie directors have become interested in casting these iconic Korean stars. Lee Byung-Hun, one of the iconic Korean actors, actually starred in the character of Storm Shadow in the Hollywood movie *G. I. Joe* in 2009 (retrieved from G. I. Joe homepage).

These recent observations indicate that the Korean Wave is an ongoing cultural movement in the Asian mediascape, and more complex glocal processes and in-depth regional connections between Korea and other media industries have emerged. As a consequence, the visibility of the Korean Wave raised inquiries on the roles and changes of the predominant cultural flows, specifically those from the U.S. to Asia, or the Japanese popular culture movement into the rest of Asia. Thussu (2007) as one of the prominent scholars in this field restated a series of issues on dynamic media and popular culture flows globally. These include: “Does the growing reverse traffic in transnational media flows show that Western media domination has diminished? Do such multi-directional flows have a potential to develop counter-hegemonic channels at

a global level to check U.S. domination of the global media bazaar?” (p. 4) Given these questions, Thussu (2007) pointed out that divergence in media and popular culture flows across various regional and local markets draws attention to the decentralizing dimensions of hegemonic media industries by newly formed media industries rooted in a traditionally non-central media sphere (remind a center-periphery paradigm in chapter 2.2. p.17 ).

Hall (1995) claimed that globalization has reconstructed the relationship between the local and the global, in that global transformation is directed at glocalization of place, sense, culture, and industry in the existing local arena. In this regard, new cultural wave from the local to the regional have embedded tensions that cultural globalization has frequently triggered. Furthermore, exploring new linkages between the global and the local reveals how these connections affect particular cultural modes of consumption and production. The meaning of “wave”, describing as a primary diffusive movement of the certain genre of culture, implies that the wave can neither go forever nor be gone completely. Rather, one wave could go out of fashion at some point then the other can come back. Obviously, the wave in cultural flow is a repetitive circulation in a periodic manner. Hence, cultural globalization is the demand for accelerating the systematic fusion of undiscovered cultural tastes, audiences, and players in niche markets. As an example, the Korean Wave showed the rise of non-Western players in the media sphere as well as the potential for glocal partnerships with other regional and global media entities. But more essentially, the Korean Wave stimulated strategic cooperation and commercial drive among East Asian media industries.

This dissertation originally aimed to explain the presence of an East Asian pop culture that resides side-by-side with U.S. domination in the global media industry. This also manifests the dynamic process of the Korean Wave as a regional model of cultural globalization in the field of media and popular culture. For the following research, I would suggest two important perspectives. First, the future studies will examine the relationship between media (or cultural) flows and media convergence on a basis of advanced communicative technologies. The media convergence will influence in the future programming and promotion as well as behavioral changes of consumption toward the exported Korean media content in various foreign audience members. Both converging media and transnational media flows tend to reformulate the global media sphere and of course the Korean Wave has a great potent to be attentive as an apparent regional case. Second, the sharing regional sensibilities and cultural perceptions of the Korean media content among regional audiences should examine more deeply in relation to postcolonial consciousness and more broadly in scope. Accordingly, future research should include more diverse Japanese participants, beyond BYJ fan club members and this analysis will provide a comparison of differing postcolonial identification between young and middle-aged women among Japanese fans of the Korean drama.

On behalf of a concluding remark, I hope that this dissertation contributes to understanding both empirical and conceptual implications about the relationships among popular culture, the media industry, and glocalization in contemporary East Asia mediascape through the case of the Korean Wave.

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## Appendix I. Questions for Japanese Interviewees

1. How did you know about the Korean actor, *Bae, Yong-Joon* (hereafter, *BYJ*)?
2. Are you involved in *BYJ*-related fan clubs? If so, what is the fan club? How did you become involved in the fan club?
  - 2-1) What kinds of activities do you usually do as a member of *BYJ* fan club both, off-line and on-line?
3. Have you ever participated in a *BYJ*'s visiting event in Japan? If yes, would you describe your experiences to me? What happened there?
4. Have you ever visited to Korea after you became a *BYJ*'s fan? If yes, what is your purpose of visiting?
5. Do you have specific reasons for becoming *BYJ*'s fan? If so, what makes you think *BYJ* is so special, compared with other TV/movie stars?
6. Did you watch the Korean TV drama *Winter Sonata*? If so, what factors in the drama made you really happy to continue to watch? (cast, story, visual scenes, music, plot, presenting styles of emotion, fashion, entertaining, reality, affinity, etc.)
  - 6-1) What is the most favorable part of the drama?
  - 6-2) What is the most unpleasant part of the drama?
7. Do you think that *Winter Sonata* has much in common with Japanese TV dramas? If so, what are the things very similar to Japanese TV dramas? If not, what are the things so different from Japanese TV dramas?
8. *Winter Sonata* or *BYJ*'s fans in Japan are reported to be middle-aged women. Do you think that this fact is true? If yes, why do you think that middle-aged Japanese women specifically like the drama and *BYJ*?
9. Have you ever watched other Korean TV dramas **but not *BYJ*'s dramas**? If so, which one(s) it? And how did you feel about it?
10. In your opinion, are Korean TV dramas and movies (including other Korean media content) popular in Japan today? How popular?
11. Do you usually enjoy watching Korean TV dramas in which *BYJ* is **not** in acting?
  - 11-1) If yes, do you have specific criteria for selecting Korean TV dramas?



11-2) If no, do you only watch Korean TV dramas (or movies) when BYJ is acting? Why?

12. In your opinion, are Korean TV dramas and movies competitive enough to be consumed in Japan compared to other foreign programs (e.g., those from the U.S., HongKong, Taiwan, or Europe)?
13. As Japanese TV viewers, what do you say is the level of quality of Japanese TV dramas and movies compared to Korean TV dramas and movies since the Korean Wave began?
14. As Japanese TV viewers, what do you say the quality of Korean TV dramas and movies compared to American TV series and movies since the Korean Wave trend has indicated in Japan?
15. How similar or different are the situations (or relations) presented in Korean TV dramas compared to situations or relations in Japanese life? (e.g., family relations, social relations, school life, generation gap, and urban lifestyles etc...)
16. Overall, how do you describe the Korean society reflected in Korean TV dramas (or movies)?
17. Many Korean TV dramas have shown common characteristic values - such as family bonds, filial piety, respect for elders, different gender roles, rushing into the urban life, and very close relationships between parents and children, and etc. When you sense these values in Korean TV dramas, do you think they are closer to East Asian's shared values or culture rather than Korea's unique values or culture?
18. As earlier mentioned in #17, do you think that those values presented in Korean TV dramas exist in Japanese family or culture?
19. Have you ever heard about the term, "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu (or Hanryu)"? If so, how do you know the term? How do you describe it?
20. If you evaluated the "Korean Wave" trend in Japan, how do you evaluate its influence or outcome today?

- End of Questions -

Your age? (Ex., 30's) :

Your occupation? (Ex., office worker, student, housewife, etc...) :

## **Appendix II. Questions for Korean Interviewees**

1. How often do you watch Korean TV dramas during a week?
2. If you have a specific Korean drama that you are watching these days, what is it?  
Do you have specific reasons to watch it?
3. What Korean TV drama is the best one that you watched for the past 10 years? Why is that best?
4. Have you watched either “Winter Sonata” or “Jewel in the palace (DaeJangGeum)?  
Which one do you like more? Why?
  - 4-1) In the drama, what factors make you want to keep watching? (cast, visual scene, music, storyline, the presenting style of emotion, fashions of actor/actress and etc.)
  - 4-2) What is the most favorable part of the drama?
  - 4-3) What is the most disliked part of the drama?
5. How do you evaluate Korean TV dramas in general based on your viewing experiences and feelings?
6. Do you have favorite Korean actors or actresses? If so, who is this, and why do you like him or her? (For example, one’s appearance, acting, manners, private life story, images in the drama or movie, etc.)
7. Can you say that your favorite Korean actor/actress has unique appeals to Asian fans, including you, to love him/her compared to your home or Western actors/actresses? If so, what makes him or her so special to you or other Asian fans?
8. Do you have specific preferences of foreign TV programs that you’ve watched?
9. What channels are you using to watch foreign TV programs? (Cable TV, Satellite TV, Internet download, DVD etc.)
10. Do you have a favorite foreign TV series made by a specific nation? If yes, what nation’s TV series is it?
  - 10-1) Why do you prefer to watch that nation’s program?
11. Does it matter to you which country produced the TV series when you select a foreign TV program?
12. Can you feel differences between foreign TV series and Korean TV dramas? If so, can you describe how you feel about that?

13. What is the biggest difference between Korean TV dramas and American or Japanese TV dramas in your opinion?
14. Comparing Korean TV dramas to American or Japanese TV series, how much are they different or similar one from another?
15. Do you think that these differences/similarities make Asian viewers feel attracted to Korean TV dramas?
16. When you watch the Korean TV drama, do you compare or contrast the situation (or relation) presented in the drama with your social or personal circumstances? (Give an example)
17. How similar or different do you think the situation (or relation) presented in the Korean TV drama to Asian countries' situation (or relation)? (Give an example)
18. How do you describe Korean society portrayed in Korean TV dramas?
19. Do you think that Korean TV dramas capture accurately the contemporary Asian culture?
20. What specific Asian culture and Asian sensibility are presented by Korean TV dramas?
21. Have you ever heard the term, "Korean Wave (or Hanryu)"? How do you know the term and how do you describe it?
22. How do you feel about the term, "Korean Wave"? Do you think the term is appropriate or not considering Korean TV dramas' popularity outside of Korea?
23. If you have to evaluate the "Korean Wave" trend, do you think it is successful, well timed-happening, or not significant at all? Why?
24. Do you think that Korean TV dramas have a competitive quality to be sold in foreign markets compared to American and Japanese TV programs?

- End of Questions -

Your age? (Ex., 30's) :

Your occupation? (Ex., office worker, student, housewife, etc...) :

### **Appendix III. Questions for Korean TV Sales Managers**

1. Would you briefly explain about your jobs in this TV station?
2. How long have you worked in this job?
3. Before you took this job, did you work in a related area to the media content production?
4. According to the annual TV program export report, Korean TV programs exports are greatly increased in Asian markets during recent years. As a forefront agent for this trade, do you think that the report is accurate?
5. In your TV station, do you have a specific target Asian market to promote your TV programs?
6. How do you usually plan to package and promote TV dramas for Asian markets? Could you explain the specific example about the most successful deal that you've done?
7. When you export your TV dramas to Asian countries, what specific rights for dramas do you usually sell? (e.g., broadcasting rights by frequency or period, DVD rights, OST rights, scenario/remake rights) Which one is preferred to buy by Asian program buyers?
8. What is the approximate cost of your station TV dramas when you sell it to an Asian country? (to the range of higher to lower one) Is the TV drama's cost different in one country than in others, like in China, Taiwan and Japan?
9. When you consult with the Asian program buyers, what factors do you pay more attention to? (e.g., pricing, rating, casting, legal rights, storylines, cultural issues and etc.)
10. Some of your station's dramas were produced by outside independent TV production companies. When those dramas are sold, what different procedures are involved in? In other words, how do you share benefits or reserve rights related to those dramas with the Independent TV production companies?
11. Do you agree that Asian program buyers are the majority of customers for your station programs? What percent are programs out of 100 is need by the Asian market in your station?
12. In general, what TV drama (or program) is selected to sell to Asian markets? Are domestic viewer's ratings important criteria in exporting it to the overseas market?

13. When is the proper timing for selling the produced TV drama (or program) in your TV station? Who (or what circumstance) is usually going to make this decision?
14. I've heard that a few pre-produced TV dramas were sold overseas before the domestic broadcasting. Is this true? If so, how is it possible to know to the overseas program buyers? (If you have a case, explain the case.)
15. Is the Korean language in your TV dramas (or programs) an obstacle to trade them to the overseas market? In your TV station, how do you handle subtitling or dubbing requests from the program buyer?
16. I'm sure that you must be familiar with the term "Korean Wave." Do you think that the Korean Wave has influenced your station's program exports? In what ways?
17. Do you agree that Asian TV markets (or industries) have grown since the mid-1990s? Did this fact impact the Korean Wave phenomenon in some aspects? If yes, what conditions are impacted by the phenomenon?
18. In your experience with Asian program buyers, how do they describe the Korean Wave phenomenon in their home country?
19. Do you think that Korean TV programs and movies are competitive enough to sell in the Asian market compared to Japanese or Western counterparts?
20. If you should evaluate the "Korean Wave" phenomenon based on your working experience, is this wave a success, a timely event, or not significant at all? Why?
21. What do you expect is the future of Korean Wave?

- End of Questions -

Your age? (Ex., 30's) :

Your occupation? (Ex., office worker, student, housewife, etc...) :