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Hallyu, the Korean Wave: South Korea's Transition to 'Cultural Powerhouse'

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Abstract

This study examines South Korea's transformation into a cultural powerhouse through Hallyu (the Korean Wave), arguing that its success stems from synergetic collaboration between public and private sectors rather than state-led developmental alone. The article analyses how, from the 1990s onward, government policy engineered a 'whole-of-government' approach, across multiple administrations, establishing comprehensive frameworks for cultural diplomacy and nation branding. The article identifies four key private sector drivers: competent cultural actors (K-pop idols, producers), commercially-driven business actors, overseas consumers transitioning from passive recipients to active producers, and digital platforms facilitating transmedia storytelling. The author argues that Hallyu transcended the entertainment industry and embodied a means of transnationalism and a form of cultural hybridisation that challenged Western-centric paradigms, enabling contraflows from periphery to centre. The study concludes that collaborative cultural governance enabled South Korea's transition from economic to cultural powerhouse through a value-driven global influence of unique origins.

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I: Introduction

Hallyu, the Korean cultural 'Wave', has never been South Korea's official nation brand, but it best describes the contemporary 'image' of South Korea. The country's global success in Hallyu is often referred to as merely the success of individual cultural actors or artists, but this is only partially true when examining the phenomenon after 2010. There are numerous media portraits and celebrations of Hallyu as South Korean pop culture, as music (K-pop), dramas (K-dramas), movies, and fashion. This article examines the dimension of this phenomenon not so visible, namely the political economy of culture. It does so with reference to the international cultural relations that are embedded in the global economy and its diverse dynamics of competition.

The country's pro-democracy movement from 1987 greatly affected the development of South Korea's cultural industries, along with the earlier rapid economic growth engineered by leading entrepreneurs in cooperation with the government from the 1960s. Hitherto, culture had mostly been protected and subsidised by government to maintain the country's national identity, and this endured through the severe pressure from the US in the 1990s to open South Korea's movie market and abolish its screen quota system, established in 1967 on becoming a member of the UN's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

In South Korea, the arts and (what is now called) the cultural industries, were not normally regarded as commercial or profit-making. They were heritage and identity-related — historically reinforced by the Japanese colonial period in the early 20th century, American cultural imperialism and ideological confrontation with the North in the mid-20th century, as well as many cultural influences from westernised neighboring countries, Hong Kong or Japan in the late 20th century. It was the first civilian President, Kim Young-Sam, who saw the cultural industries transform into more economically 'liberal', creative, and profit-making enterprises, seeking different ways of contributing to the country's

identity in an economically globalising world. Since then, what we can now call South Korea's 'soft power' formation has been accelerated by a multi-dimensional development of the cultural industries, where synergies with political democratisation and economic development have evolved to the point where it is not uncommon for people to use the cliché and refer to South Korea as a 'cultural powerhouse'.

How does Hallyu now shape contemporary South Korea, and to what extent does Hallyu contribute to the construction of its soft power formation? It is imperative to look from both public and private spheres of society. In addition, the role of Hallyu in terms of the dimension of cultural production that involves style and experience, values and representation (with regard to communicating the identity of contemporary Korea). It must be understood in some sociological detail.

The following section explores the policy engineering for the Korean Wave regarding soft power formation of the country, facilitated by neoliberal drivers and the global exposure of Hallyu supported by government. It investigates private sector initiatives from multi-level directions, such as cultural actors, business actors, overseas consumers, and digital platforms. Then, we look at public-private partnership collaboration in pursuit of global public goods. The last section delivers implications and discussions as to the opportunities and challenges of cultural powerhouse through Hallyu.

II: Policy Engineering for the Korean Wave: Hallyu

While the increasing influence of 'neoliberal' economics in the late 20th century greatly affected East Asian countries' politics and economies, the creative industries emerged with a strong image as a source of wealth and an important means for representing the soft power of the country (Lee and Lim, 2014). Hosting the mega sporting event, the 1988 Seoul Olympics, became pivotal in South Korea cultivating soft power through 'virtuosic' behavior (Kim, 2023a). Since then, a series of global-scale events were

held in the country under the Kim Young-sam administration's (1993-1998) internationalisation policy, such as *Segyehwa* and *Jeonjiguwaha*, a top-down strategic plan to create a 'New Korea' (Kim, 2023c). Then the Kim Dae-jung government (1998-2003) institutionalised investment in cultural affairs broadly, but with a neoliberal approach to cultural policy, affecting laws, organisations and budgets in a way that provided State support without 'interfering' in internal affairs, and also abolishing censorship on movies. Cultural diplomacy, and the country's first public committee for enhancing the national image, were established.

'Hallyu' was first recognized by a Taiwanese media outlet: an article in *United Evening News* (1998.12.17 in 聯合晚報) coined the term, indicating 'a new cultural trend from Korean popular culture'; another article in the *China Times* (1997.12.12 in 中國時報) referred to it as an economic threat (Hong and Lim, 2018). While gaining popularity in neighboring countries, Hallyu became an official term domestically when the Ministry of Culture supported a music album called '韓流-Song from Korea'. Accordingly, Hallyu then became a policy phenomenon, swiftly involving a wide range of policy concerns in nation branding, tourism, exports, among other areas.

There was the historic event of the 2002 World Cup, co-hosted by Japan and South Korea, where it is possible to say that Koreans experienced a unifying but also elevated national sentiment, though seemingly overcoming long-term animosity towards Japan and colonialism. South Korea's self-acknowledged "cultural confidence" is now recognised as an emergent feature of this period (Lee, 2019, p. 125). In the early 21st century, 'Hallyu 2.0' (or the New Korean Wave), represented a *global* cultural phenomenon and where the country became one of the most recognisable non-Western cultural hubs, and is now defined by both popular parlance, policy and academic discourse as "South Korea cultural content [...] integrated into the global mediascape" (Jin, Yoon and Min, 2021, p. 5). As Hallyu served as soft power resource or assets for the contemporary South Korean state, each

presidential office required whole-of-government approach to find a sustainable means to retain or just make the country more vivid and vibrant in a globalised world.

The Roh Moo-hyun government (2003-2008) implemented a strong preferential policy encouraging cultural industries and businesses related to Hallyu, establishing *Hallyujöngch'aekchamunwiwönhoe* (the Advisory Committee on Korean Wave Policy) in 2005, which prompted the spread of Hallyu and enhanced private autonomy. The *Han Style* brand project in 2006 is considered as the expansionist drive in the Korean Wave policy by incorporating traditional elements into the policy agendas, but was rarely successful in terms of nation branding effect (Hong, 2014). Nonetheless, policy interests in the industrial value of culture became more prominent, and this trend continued to the following government, and thus, Hallyu turned into an essential part of the country's soft power formation.

The Global Exposure of Hallyu

In the 2010s, 'Hallyu 3.0' unfolded as the prefix 'K' became representative of the country's national image by covering a wide range of cultural items, products, as well as policy agendas. Such rapid development of Hallyu significantly affected each administration's national policies at both domestic and international levels.

The Lee Myung-bak government (2008-2013) set the goal of developing South Korea into a content industry 'powerhouse', changing its policy name from cultural industry to *cultural content industry*, and established a *K'ont'ench'üsanöpchinhüngwiwönhoe* (content industry promotion committee) involving 11 ministries under the Prime Minister as well as *Hallyumunhwajinhüngjamunwiwönhoe* (advisory committee on Korean Wave cultural promotion) in 2012 — focusing on two-way exchanges to mitigate negative perceptions of Hallyu. The Lee government changed the conventional concept of cultural industry to an economic facilitator by declaring that the competitiveness of the content

industry should be strengthened to lay the groundwork for a cultural powerhouse (Kim, 2013).

Then, the Lee administration initiated various experimental policies to implement public diplomacy, such as the establishment of Presidential Council on Nation Branding (PCNB) with Global Korea initiatives with the mission of disseminating Korean culture while taking the Korean Wave as an effective means of global exposure. The cool brand 'K' included almost all areas of the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) and articulated the country's cultural confidence and their desire to make Hallyu a global phenomenon by supporting cultural exports and nation branding — that is, Hallyu provided not only policymakers with the PCNB framework, but was also a valid example of a multi-layered mechanism of nation branding (Lee, 2019; Hong, 2014). For instance, the Council contributed to the country's traditional cultural identity by registering UNESCO Heritage sites. Since then, Korean Wave policy has expanded throughout government institutions, resulting in a comprehensive package of plans from funding and investment to marketing, fandom research, consultation, showcasing, and so on. There has been a convergence between cultural promotion, diplomacy, cultural and non-cultural exports, tourism and other economic activities, and a number of ministries developed policy, programs, and events related to the Korean Wave, such as the MCST's dealing with K-culture promotion and exports, Foreign Ministry's cultural diplomacy through Hallyu, the Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning concerned with culture-ITC convergence as well as the Trade Ministry and the Agriculture Ministry with regards to Korean Wave expo, export support, and K-food. Hallyu made a cross-government policy agenda while bringing about collaborations between ministries and their agencies and helped to enhance the country's marketability.

The Park Geun-hye government (2013-2017) focused on creative industries, emphasising the role of the Korean Wave and launched *Hallyu3.0wiwŏnhoe* (the Hallyu 3.0 committee) as

a public-private partnership consultation body in March 2014 and *Hallyugihoektan* (the Hallyu planning group) in June 2015 to establish a joint cooperation system between government and the private sector (and promoting the cooperation under the concept of creative economy). In the context of commercialisation for economic development, the Korean Wave became the starting point for the development of K-medical, K-beauty, and K-food, as well as Hallyu tourism (Moon, 2018).

The Park administration developed public diplomacy as the 'third pillar' of foreign policy (following policy advocacy and economy diplomacy). The overall structure for public diplomacy was completed. During this time, cultural diplomacy became a subset of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy law in 2016 (enacted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and international cultural relations law in 2017 (enacted by the MCST) have forced the synergic impact of Hallyu while overlapping some programs and activities. The working partnership grew stronger as President Park led the cultural strategy to take an increasingly economic tone. The government and CJ Group, one of the Korean *chaebols* (conglomerates), have been working together for a long time. While the internal dynamics of this partnership need to be examined, it can be understood as an extension of the government's capacity to make policy as well as its assimilation of views from the private sector. As a result, the goals of the public and private sectors overlapped.

The Moon Jae-in government (2017-2022) sought to create a fair cultural industry environment and promote the Korean Wave around the world through two-way streets, then established *Hallyuhyŏmnyŏgwiwŏnhoe* (Korean Wave cooperation committee) in 2020, taking the whole-of-government approach to K-culture products in support of the MCST, marked the significance of the K-pop industry as the economic growth of the country, cultural hybridity and fandom have become buzzwords for cultural actors in both private and public sectors, but also academicians. According to Hallyu Impact

Research Report 2020 of the Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE), the country's domestic economy has benefited from the rise of cultural industries; exports of cultural goods and services increased fourfold between 1998 and 2019, rising from \$188.9 million in 1998 to \$12.3 billion in 2019. Notably, Korean Cultural Agency (KOCCA) promoted and helped the expansion of the Hallyu digital content, which marked the highest export amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

As it has been noticed that the cultural content industry has grown 3.7 times faster in sales and 20.7 times in exports over the past five years (2017-2021) compared to the whole economy, despite the economic downturns due to COVID-19. The Yoon Sook-yul government (2022-current) fosters K-content as a new growth strategy for the country by creating a decent ecosystem for creators, cultivating capacity-building, expanding investment in supporting content production and training manpower to lead new markets in the digital future, such as metaverse or augmented reality technologies.

At both levels, domestic and international, public sector actors have been significantly affected by Hallyu, as seen in various policy windows for leveraging the phenomenon as the country's competitive advantage in soft power and the global exposure of Korean pop culture products. The question of whether the success of the Korean Wave was attributed to the government and state-led development oversimplifies the complexity of its success. It overlooks the dynamics of intersecting both sectors. Multiple approaches from the private sector should also be carefully taken into consideration.

III. Private Sector Initiatives from Multi-level Directions

(i) Cultural Actors

Cultural actors in the private sector, such as creators, artists, entertainers, and producers, can be characterised as competent, result-oriented, and target-focused, particularly in the field of K-

pop. Korean pop music, which had been on the periphery of the global music market where Western countries positioned as dominant sources (Iwabuchi, 2002), has grown into the K-pop to which the world is paying attention. While the Korean government's attitude toward popular music was controlled and indifferent until the 1990s, after liberation, private sector initiatives changed the landscape of the country's cultural industry and had a significant impact on the development of K-pop, dramas, movies, e-sports, and so forth.

Modernised music production in South Korea began in the 1990s, one of the most dynamic periods when young people generally preferred Anglo-American pop. From there, an innovative hybridisation of music styles was introduced by Seo Taiji and Boys with mixed genres (US and non-US) like rap, soul, rock 'n' roll, techno, punk, hardcore, and traditional Korean ballad along with dynamic dance moves, which set a pattern for contemporary Korean pop music (Shim, 2017). Since then, Korea has grown to become Asia's second largest music market, with annual revenue from album sales of US\$300 million by 2002.

Lee Soo-man, a successful musician and television host, founded SM Entertainment in 1995 and produced the first 'boy band', H.O.T. ; the huge success served as an avenue for keeping and launching traineeships for talent with star potential. Along with SM, YG Entertainment, and JYP Entertainment, (the big three multi-entertainment management companies established by singers), Soo-man began pushing Korean pop music programs into the overseas music industry through penetration strategies in global market (Lee, 2014). Hallyu started being sensational and rampant everywhere with famous K-pop groups, such as Wonder Girls, Super Junior, Girls Generation, Shinee, TVXQ, T-Ara, etc. K-pop idols, formed through a combination of the energy of new American pop music with rigorous training systems, require a wide range of abilities, including humility, attitude, language, and skills to deal with the media, leading to Korean unique style trends and successes in music as well as arts,

design, fashion, and more by transforming the whole of Korean society (Russell, 2014).

The most successful K-pop band is BTS (*Bangtan Sonyeondan*, the Bangtan Boys) with seven members that debuted in 2013. BTS has become the best-selling artist in the country's history as of 2023 with multiple Grammy nominations, recognized as the most powerful artists in music based on fandom, ARMY (Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth). According to Brandwatch, the band contributed around \$3.9 billion to the South Korean economy, including consumer goods exported to other countries, and 800,000 visitors visit South Korea each year. The global success of BTS represents a K-pop music style icon. It incorporated a wide range of genres, forming a hybridised popular culture, heavily inspired by American hip-hop music; its mediation through transnational and transcultural flows via new media technologies formed the distinctive characteristics of K-pop in terms of online content, music, and image of authenticity (McLaren and Jin, 2020). In addition, a "collective moralism" of respecting elders and family-oriented values are interwoven into the global K-pop package (Jin, Yoon and Min, 2021, p. 10), even though the Confucian heritage has broadly hampered modernisation (Lee and Lim, 2014).

(ii) *Business Actors*

Unlike K-pop, there was extensive private engagement and inventiveness in the country's film industry. According to Lee (2021), the global (and Hollywood) success of the 2019 film *Parasite* is the best example of promoting Hallyu through private sector initiatives — Miky Lee, a Samsung heiress and investor in DreamWorks, has helped increase global exposure to Korean content. As a vice chairman of CJ Group, Lee has worked with US agency Neon to distribute *Parasite* in the US and Canada through a subsidiary CJ E&M, South Korea's largest purveyor of TV programs and movies as well as home-shopping services. As *Parasite* did not get any government funding, its success was completely due to private-sector enterprise supported by commercial interests, in keeping with the government's decentralised

approach of leveraging expanding private-sector resources to generate and market South Korean cultural content for export.

The case of *Parasite* underlines that Korean business actors made it possible for the contraflows of non-Western cultural forms into the West (Jin, Yoon and Min, 2021) and significantly contributed to the formation of a global cultural economy — which resulted in cultural proximity and cultural globalisation as well as cultural hybridity. It blurred the boundary between the center and the periphery of the cultural industry.

As noted in the previous section, due to the country's national policies in facilitating cultural industry growth, on the one hand, and the economy on the other, Hallyu has evolved into a business phenomenon, with companies localising their products in the global markets, employing foreign talent, pursuing international coproduction, enhancing asset value, obtaining foreign investments, and strategically engaging with foreign media businesses (Lee, 2019). Growing interest in the creative industries has become not only a vital source of wealth generation, but also an effective means of enhancing the country's international profile and its soft power in order to attract global audiences.

(iii) *Overseas Consumers*

As for overseas consumers, this study returns to K-pop. In the US, BTS receives 30.6% of views; in Europe it receives 27.9% of views; and in Asia, it competes with Blackpink, which receives 19% of views. Although Muslims are barred from listening to any song or dance unrelated to Islam, many Indonesians become acquainted with and enjoy K-pop without abandoning their religious values by actively attending concerts, studying K-pop dance, forming fan groups, buying goods, and watching K-pop music videos online (Lee, 2021).

Hallyu fan groups increased from 2012 to 2021, with the number of Hallyu club members worldwide growing 17 times, from about 9 million to 15.6 million, according to the Korea Foundation

(KF)'s Hallyu report in 2021. The number of club members in Asia, Oceania, and Europe increased about 16 times (from 7.2 million to 11.8 million), the Americas 22 times (from 1.3 million to 28.9 million), and Africa and the Middle East showed a whopping 115-fold increase (20,000 to 2.3 million). Still, Asia and Oceania account for 74% of all club members, but the Americas and Europe account for more than 24%.

'Fans' are transforming from consumers into producers, exporting creative fan art, fan cam, fanfiction, and video, and by doing so, fan activity has become a sustainable, cost-effective, and loyalty-based form of publicity and advertising for the benefactor — and everlasting fuel for the continuation of the Hallyu (Kim and Hutt, 2021). This results in the emergence of fan economics, so-called the 'digital gift economy', in which engaged audiences invest in and spend on their idols by purchasing or selling more content, merchandise, tickets, shares or stocks. Additionally, there are high demands for the Korean language and studies and the increase of foreign students in South Korea. The voluntary national branding effect from below and the process of realising soft power can be characterized as exercising "bottom-up transnationalism" (Jin, Yoon and Min, 2021, p. 152), in particular considering the extensive impact of Hallyu consumers from fandom to fan economy, knowledge production, and tourism.

(iv) *Digital Platforms*

The role of digital platforms is significant in the global popularity of Hallyu, due largely to transnationalism and hybrid cultural forms. Netflix Korea is a prime example of subnational media infiltrating Korean mediascape, allowing local cultural production to adapt to transcultural processes (Wagner, 2023). This reconfiguration of genres, aesthetics, and technicity creates new content, challenging Hollywood's cultural imperialism and replacing homegrown media conglomerates. Hallyu's integration into social media suggests contraflows can benefit from new digital platforms, but local platforms, such as Cyworld, may face barriers in the global

mediascape due to global mega-players like Google, Facebook, and YouTube (Kwon, 2016).

Digital platforms enable cultural actors to actively engage with transmedia storytelling through the endless loop of attention, networks, and content. In the case of BTS, they use the following media: social media networks like Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, Weverse; YouTube channels (Bangtan TV), where they post their music videos, dance practice, and in-depth explanations of songs; graphic lyrics books; BTS documentary films, e.g., *Burn the stage*; reality shows, e.g., *RUN BTS*; *TinyTAN*, BTS animated characters; mobile games, e.g., *BTS Universe*; webtoons like *Bangtan Universe* parallel fictional storyline; *BT21 Universe*; merchandise products.

An emphasis on individual wellbeing through BTS social media, often with a storyline based on authenticity and sincerity, had enhanced audience engagement and so size. Topics that are personal emerged, such as struggles that everyone faces irrespective of background — such as mental health, personal growth, suffering, temptation, and healing. The audience started to find and give meaning behind the BTS brand, and began to find a deeper connection at an emotional level (McLaren and Jin, 2020). Admittedly, digital platforms began to make possible transmedia storytelling by enhancing the participatory aspects of Hallyu, increasing cultural and emotional connection and facilitating the production and circulation of the Korean cultural content.

IV. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) Collaboration in Pursuit of Global Public Goods

South Korea as a liberal developmental state is often associated with government-industry collaboration, a 'corporatist collaboration' (Lee, 2019) based on a centralised mode of governance. As discussed in the previous section, ['Policy Engineering for the Korean Wave'] the Lee administration's PCNB and the Park administration's public-private partnerships (PPPs) approach enabled the private sector to participate in national policies (Hong, 2014). Corporations,

such as Samsung, Hyundai, SK Group, Korean Airlines, Asiana Airlines, and more, began partaking in nation branding programs as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The mode of governance is not always a top-down process. The business actors, in turn, benefit from the public sector programs, and the mode is reversed from down to top. The 'SM Town Live World Tour in Paris,' organised by SM Entertainment in 2011, was sponsored by the Visit Korea Year Committee, the Korean Cultural Center Paris, and the Paris branch of the Korea Tourism Organisation. The success of the event sparked a flash mob of London-based fans demanding that YG Entertainment bring its pop idols to the city. Nonetheless, the flash mob was orchestrated by the Korean Cultural Center in London (Lee, 2019).

Another example is the *hashtag activism* of UNICEF in collaboration with BTS, which provides the possibility of upholding 'global governance' through a bottom-up process to facilitate global cooperation and solidarity (Kim, 2023b). The 'hashtag activism' phenomenon means the development and spread of online activism marked with a hashtag that produces tangible results — political debates, social policy, and the public consciousness — in both the physical and digital worlds. It is due to the unprecedented spread of a transboundary global movement through social media with regard to global needs, creating significant issue areas where public actors and private actors may collaborate with each other. These issues exemplify transnational problems that one nation-state cannot solve alone, such as climate changes, environmental risks, famine, and pandemics... Social media has been used according to its innate purpose as a facilitator of interaction in digital space, strategically opening up new avenues for public participation in politics (Richardson, 2017), as has now been established by the numerous examples of collective actions of global citizens by global governance actors.

The role of Hallyu in the partnership between UNICEF and BTS can be found in cultivating values. Hallyu, born out of neighboring countries'

perceptions and becoming an engine for the country's domestic cultural industry as well as foreign affairs, makes various stakeholders, from artists and fans to policymakers, seek shared virtues at the global level. This can engender a virtuous soft power for the country, involving normative values, as love of humanity, peace, solidarity, and cooperation, and where culture is transformed into global public goods (Kim, 2023b).

The dynamics between the young generation and UNICEF through BTS seem to have a positive effect. UNICEF has been in existence since 1946 and has been working to meet sustainable development goals regarding children and youth in the contemporary era. Although it is a well-known international organisation, its reach to today's youth generation was limited. Through the means of global artists like BTS, it has become easier to close the gap in promoting UNICEF's values and mission regarding their goals. BTS members' philanthropic behaviors are encouraging fans and global citizens to come forward and act on various social causes that can lead to a better future. They motivate fans in a way that one wishes to pursue a career with a greater cause to help others just like their favorite artists did. Platforms connected to the United Nations have scaled up the impact and the reach that the band has on the country's youth. It is safe to say that BTS is beyond being just a music artist, but has an impactful role in shaping the experience of the younger generation of today.

The principal significance of the partnership between UNICEF and BTS in terms of representation is that contemporary Korea is now seen as a cultural powerhouse with global influence. Contemporary Korea is no longer defined as the Korean War, or division from the North; rather, it evokes the image of a responsible actor in world politics, creatively supporting global public goods.

V. Implications and Discussion

This chapter reveals that the synergistic effects of the Korean government's approach through the

dynamics of intersecting public and private sectors made possible South Korea's Hallyu success. Hallyu is not the outcome of state-led developmentalism but a collaborative mode of cultural governance, gearing towards future economy and creative industry by enhancing the global visibility of the country.

In the public sector, the role of Hallyu can be associated with the country's whole-of-government policy approach at both national and international levels, which requires each administration to implement and conduct various policy measures in order to keep up with the momentum. This generates a virtuous cycle for the Korean government, starting from soft power *formation* and returning to the *effectiveness* of Hallyu soft power, giving added values on innovative cultural affairs as well as government-coordinated global exposure of contemporary Korea.

Private sector initiatives from multi-level directions are also found to be major drivers of the global popularity of Hallyu, such as cultural actors with capacity building, competence, talent, and business-driven strategies; business actors normally driven by commercial interests; overseas fans transitioning from consumers to producers; and digital platforms facilitating the speed of circulating Korean cultural content. Its cultural production, style, and experience can be characterised as *transnationalism* and as *cultural hybridisation*, which reinforce and reinvent local culture with new kinds of connections and dialogues by providing socio-cultural changes in the receiving societies. This aspect shows the global cultural economy moves beyond the Anglophone and European contexts.

The collaborative mode of cultural governance has helped the country's transition from economic powerhouse to cultural powerhouse, as noted in the distinctive cases of the government's PPP approaches, the coordination of YG Entertainment events by the Korean Cultural Center, and the hashtag activism of UNICEF partnering with BTS. The activism upgraded the level of cultural representation of Hallyu, reaching up to upholding

global public goods, though limited to one single case of a 'boy band'. Thanks largely to PPP collaborations, South Korea becomes a 'cultural powerhouse' in terms of a responsible actor with global influence through value-driven behaviors in the 2020s.

The opportunities of Hallyu are now clear—shaping contemporary South Korea in a way that surpasses the dichotomous center (Western) and periphery (non-Western), making the contraflow of popular culture from non-Western to Western, or from bottom (audiences) to top (cultural producers), and, as a result, create a new hybridised form of transnational global culture. Hallyu also contributed to the formation of the country's identity in leading the country in the global cultural economy and 'digital Korea', and actively utilising transmedia and engaging global audiences.

Being a cultural powerhouse doesn't always bring about opportunities, and there are challenges of anti-Hallyu sentiment, which, in turn, negatively affects the country's economy with unforeseen, or perhaps predictable, threats of value clashes, propagandistic or nationalistic behaviors — as well as rampant cultural content piracy. But more investment in global public goods must be the utmost coping strategy for both public and private actors to cultivate the new normative values.

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