

# Economic Colonialism: Korean Wave (Hallyu) Hegemony

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to make people aware that the hegemony of the Korean Wave is a form of economic colonization. The Korean wave is a soft power instrument used by South Korea for economic gain, through music (K-pop), drama (K-drama) and film (K-film). This study employed Derrida's deconstruction as a way of reading the text carefully, playing with and disturbing the stability of the meaning embedded in the text. The findings indicate the benefits derived from the spread of the Korean Wave give rise to the meaning of economic colonization. Almost all countries in the world are under this hegemony by consuming music, drama and film products from South Korea.

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## 1. Introduction

Hegemony comes from Ancient Greek, *eugemonia* which means rule or leadership. Roger Simon says that hegemony is a *consensus*, because hegemony is not a relationship of dominance through power, but an agreement made through political leadership and ideological. The term hegemony was coined by Antonio Gramsci, an Italian philosopher. Gramsci analyzes this theory as the relation between power and oppression to society. The form of oppression is not always physical, but it can be also mental. Being submissive to this oppression means that the hegemonic group agrees with the ideological values of the ruler [1–3].

Gramsci explains that hegemony is the power over the values of life, norms and culture of community groups, which then turn into doctrines against other groups of people who consciously follow the ruler. The ruling group that dominates does not feel oppressed, but rather felt that it is the way that it should be. Thus, hegemony takes place when the lower society, including the proletariat, accept and even imitates the way of thinking, way of life and the views of the elite groups who dominate and exploit their lives. Characteristic of hegemonic power is that power embedded in beliefs, ideals and normative views of the whole society [4].

Korean Wave or also known as Hallyu has transformed into a hegemony that presents a new color to today's entertainment world. Korean Wave or Hallyu in Korean is proof of the success of the Korean state in spreading the culture in various parts of the world. Korean wave refers to the popularity of South Korean culture, which has significantly

increased worldwide [5]. The passion for Korean culture began in China and Southeast Asia since the late 1990s. Korea Tourism Organization in 2004 defines Hallyu as a new phenomenon in South Korea that has penetrated various countries such as China, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and other countries in Southeast Asia and even to the Continent of Europe and America. The entry of Korean Pop (K-Pop), Korean Dramas (K-Drama) and Movies (K-Films) into these countries marked the beginning of the popularity of Korean culture. Through the Korean Wave, South Korea expanded through various products that are not just music, drama and film but also through food, fashion, skincare and language, which are still part of the culture of these idols.

Broadly speaking, it can be said that the popularity of K-pop music, K-drama in China and Taiwan sparked the Korean wave abroad. Since then the Korean culture boom in Asian countries has increased rapidly. Korean dramas, in particular, has served as an important bridge for various countries to accept Korean culture. The attractiveness of Korean culture to Asians means a lot to the Korean government "because the country's national image is not always positive in neighboring countries" [6]. Korean cultural hegemony is fully supported by the South Korean government. In the opening of the Seventh Conference for the Promotion of New Economy in Seoul 1994, the President of South Korea, Kim Young Sam stated that his country was ready to compete in the new cultural and economic fields in the global era in response to the pressure of western cultural hegemony and strong westernization supporting the superpower, the United States.

The phenomenon of Hallyu development grew rapidly in the mid-2000s until today. Its existence tends to be accepted by the public from various circles. South Korean culture is much easier for Asian audiences to understand and accept. The positive response shown by the world community has highlighted Hallyu and affected more than half of the countries in the world. South Korea is one of the few countries that has made art and culture as export commodity which have been developed into a soft power in diplomacy. Hallyu is considered an effective way for South Korea to develop soft power.

The term soft power was coined by Harvard political scientist, Joseph Nye, in 1990 to refer to the intangible power a country possesses through its image, not violence. The soft power approach has an inspiring character, the power to attract others with emotional intelligence, namely building close relationships through his charisma, persuasive communication, visionary ideology, cultural influences, thus making others affected [7]. Soft power comes from assets that can be used to produce attractiveness. Culture as a source of soft power is divided into two types; high culture, such as art, literature, and education that attracts certain parties, and pop culture that focuses on mass entertainment.

South Korea's aggressiveness in spreading the Hallyu phenomenon is closely related to the targeted economic benefits. South Korea has even formed an institution that is specialized in the continuity of the spread of Hallyu. The selling point of the development and spread of Hallyu is the existence of actors, actresses and idols (a term for girl group and boy group members) who are very fond of their admirers. The acting that is played in a drama, the music and dance that is performed on stage by idols also attracts the attention of the public. The beautiful and handsome faces of the artists and attractive fashion styles among millennials make these Korean artists figure as role models. Its existence influences

people's preferences in many ways. This is what makes the use of Korean products more widespread and the proliferation of Korean Lovers, the name for Korean fans.

Media has an important role as a means of enjoying Korean music, drama and film products. The hegemonic perspective of massive social media development in the era of globalization has become a control tool used by the authorities to control and instill a mindset in society. In this case, Instagram, twitter, youtube, facebook and other social media applications are promotional tools that can increase South Korea's economic income.

Based on data from the Gaon Chart, which is a tabulation of the popularity of songs and albums in South Korea, sponsored by the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, it recorded that around 18.08 million K-Pop albums were sold in the first semester. Sales increased 40% from last year. The current conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic have in no way affected Kpop album sales in various countries. Based on data, the top 100 sales were controlled by Kpop boy groups and girl groups, as well as soloists who managed to sell 16.89 copies or about 90% of total sales. The sales of this album were strongly driven by a large international fanbase or fandom (the term for fans of groups or artists).

The Hallyu wave is getting bigger and bigger, it is felt not only about album sales and physical products that provide increased economic income for Korea, but also through the digital business on the YouTube platform. The current YouTube channel subscriber rankings are recorded in South Korea, Korean entertainment agencies account for the majority in the top 10, and the Blackpink girl group holds the record for being the Korean artist with the most number of subscribers and beating other Kpop artist subscribers with 52.4 million subscribers. And according to data released by FnGuide, Blackpink earns fantastic income through its YouTube channel, earning 20 billion won or the equivalent of IDR 255 billion annually. This income has been reduced by 30% for the YouTube platform.

In addition to the YouTube platform, several streaming applications for watching Korean dramas have also made huge profits, namely Netflix, Disney, Viu and even other illegal streaming applications. One of the most sought after entertainment is Korean drama. Netflix is even rumored to be increasing its investment in South Korea. Data from Media Partner Asia (MPA) shows that the total time spent using the internet in Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand to watch streaming, outside of YouTube, increased by 57% on a quarterly basis. Netflix leads the way in all four countries with 39% market share. Based on the submission of letters from Netflix to investors, it is said that 46% of the 195 million subscribers are in Asia Pacific. The company's revenue, which increased 66% from last year, was supported by the Japanese and Korean markets. Globally, the number of hallyu enthusiasts increased 11% annually to 99.32 million, 15 million of whom were based in Europe and 12 million in the United States. Based on Statistics data, the income from Korean films is around 2.5 trillion won from the 609 films produced last year.

La Torre conducted a research on Korean drama lovers in China, finding that the success of Korean dramas is due to their emotional stories that portray social expectations in developing countries, modernity and global market forces [8]. Other advantages of South Korean dramas and films that are able to captivate the audience include the actors

and actresses who have attractive appearances. These actors and actresses are the main agents in the spread of Hallyu. This drama actor is central in conveying the value of a drama wrapped in the theme of love, friendship and family in South Korean cultural products.

Concert ticket sales are also one of the revenue for South Korea. The world's love of K-Pop music and idols are an important support for concert ticket sales. Recorded in October 2020, BTS held an online concert due to the covid-19 pandemic conditions. Although held online, according to Big Hit Entertainment, the agency that houses BTS, the "Map of the Soul ON: E" concert has attracted 993,000 viewers from 191 countries around the world. As we know, this world consists of 195 countries, which means that BTS concert audiences come from all over the world. Revenue from this concert ranged from 49.2 billion to 71 billion won or around IDR 631.5 billion to IDR 907.5 billion.

This article aims to make people aware that there was an economic colonization that is carried by the Korean Wave. Colonialism is a system in which a country controls the people and resources of another country but is still associated with the country of origin. Similarly, the Korean Wave, that is now global, is used as soft power by South Korea, which seeks to dominate the world community by exploring and exporting the culture through music, drama, film so that people are brought under its hegemony by consciously consuming these products from this ginseng country. The income figures stated show the large amount of money that people spend to enjoy the products of the rulers who unknowingly give benefit the economic side of the authorities.

As the Korean wave's popularity grew around the world, Hallyu became a way to create wealth for South Korea. The outbreak of the Korean wave affects the consumption pattern of people who are more interested in South Korean products. Korean wave fundamentally changed the image of South Korea in positively, thus creating a broader effect on economic growth. Kpop, Kdrama, Kfilm became tools used to colonize most countries in the world, thus shifting some countries that had been in power before.

## 2. Method

According to Derrida [9], changing reality means changing the text because the text itself is the reality of human life. To change reality, one must first be able to understand and describe reality. There is a connection between describing and changing. These two concepts which involves describing and transforming can be combined into deconstruction.

Royle [10] defines deconstruction as a way of thinking about shaking up an establishment. There are various definitions of deconstruction although Derrida himself never defined the meaning of deconstruction. In his writings, Derrida has repeatedly written that the power of changing and dividing is actually contained in the text itself. In other words, each text already has the potential to deconstruct or destabilize itself. On this basis, he once said that no part of the text is stagnant or permanent.

Text is flexible and agile. Text is also a sign that can be repeated and the meaning can be differentiated according to the reader's thoughts and interpretations. The main purpose of deconstruction is to shake up, move and change all concepts of language, textual, psychological, historical, ethical, aesthetic, social, political and even religiosity. Hence, deconstruction is an attempt to understand the text, both literary text and reality itself, then

change it to obtain new meanings. Royle [10] even asserts that deconstruction has a mystical trait to change and shake the certainty of the meaning of the text. In fact, it can even be said that the most important thing in the text is to find what is unspeakable and then process it into a new meaning. Deconstruction itself is text.

Derrida's deconstruction method was used in this research. In accordance with Derrida's concept, that text can change meaning, even bring up meanings that were previously unthinkable, it is interesting for us to deconstruct the meaning of the text contained in news, articles that show the success of the Korean wave. We collected documentation in the form of news or articles that present the Korean wave and then review the meaning of the text of the news. In addition, we also collected album sales data, stream Korean dramas on various platforms and even data on concert ticket sales held by Korean singers. Data or figures showing an increase in South Korea's economic income actually contain different meaning than the actual meaning.

All documentation was collected through news texts, articles, sales data or South Korea's economic income through music, drama and even films were then analyzed using Derrida deconstruction method. Behind the text implied the desired meaning and the interests that are fought for the issue of the appearance of new meanings that replace the old meaning that has been established which become fragmentation of developing ideologies that interact with communication, culture and history [11]. We want to show the meaning of the texts are different from the previously interpreted meanings, so that the purpose of this study is to make people aware that there is economic colonization of Korean wave hegemony can be achieved.

### **3. Results and Discussions**

#### **3.1. Korean Wave as a soft power instrument**

Power is ability to influence others to get the desired results [7]. Nye classified power into two different behavioral spectrums, these are hard power and soft power. Hard power is increasingly displaced by the use soft power as an instrument of foreign policy. Soft power has been proven easier, cheaper and more effective in achieving national interests [12].

The use of music Kpop, Kdrama, and Kfilm as diplomatic tools in South Korea's soft power provides benefits for South Korea in form of benefits from an economic perspective and a positive image of South Korea in international view. The success of the Korean wave products, which is currently famous throughout the world, cannot be separated from the roles of the actors involved in it. According to Seo Minsoo [13] the success of Korean wave is currently a combination of several factors. First, creator. The creators here are entertainment industry companies that audition and train new talent, produce, and promote final result of a process of forming idol Kpop (boy group, girl group, or solo). This entertainment industry company not only creates singers, but also creates famous actors and actresses who play in Korean dramas and films. Second, consumers, are fans who enjoy and love music Kpop, Kdrama and Kfilm. Third, content, where Korean wave content is synonymous with high-quality content. Fourth, distribution. Social media is a distributor that plays a very big role in spreading the Korean wave internationally.

**Table 1. Number of Korean Wave (Hallyu) Fans in 2019**

Continent	Number of Fans	Increased Percentage
Europe	± 15.040.000	128%
Africa and Middle East	± 320.000	39,1%
America	± 11.850.000	
Asia	± 71.810.000	

Source: Korea Foundation (South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The use of music Kpop, Kdrama, Kfilm as a diplomatic tools for South Korea is an advantage for South Korea in fulfilling their country's soft power. This can happen because Korean wave products are used as soft power to spread the influence of their country, presielly in the form of cultural dissemination, which also provide benefits for South Korea. One of the influences brought by the Korean wave as a diplomacy in South Korea's soft power is economics. Cultural diplomacy through music, drama and film aims to gather and attract large crowds to fulfill their economic interests.

The success of the Korean wave as a soft power instrument is reflected in the data on the number of Hallyu fans that reached nearly 100 million or around 99,320,000 people worldwide (See Table 1). The intended fans are people who registered in a fan club or fanbase (a term used by South Korea) in various countries. This means that there are people who like Korean music, dramas or films but do not register themselves in a fan club.

The growing number of Korean Wave fans shows how South Korea colonized the world through their products. These fans are people in various countries who consume Kpop music, Kdrama and even Kfilm. The growing number of fans each year is influenced by the popularity of Kpop actors, actresses and idol groups. They are the actors behind the success of Korean wave as soft power and supported by the media as a promotional event.

The data on the increasing number of Korean wave fans is certainly a pride for South Korea as a reference source country that slowly dominating the world economy through the products. This data can be interpreted as consumers for connoisseurs of Korean music, drama and film products. However, another implied meaning of the data is the number of people or communities in various countries whose economies began to colonize. Colonialism here is defined as control over the state, Korea not only controls one country, but almost the entire country. And those fans, of course sacrifice their money or income to consume products resulting from the Korean wave.

People should be aware that the Korean wave was created as a soft power tool by South Korea to dominate the world economy. Korean wave is not something coincidence, but was created to colonize and rule the world to make profits. Perhaps the word colonialism sounds scary or seems inappropriatly use because have negative connotation, but in modern era, colonialism is defined as the control of one country over another. South Korea shows how the country rules the world with spread of fans and people who consume Korean wave products in various countries. This situation illustrates the colonialism that occurred.

**Table 2. 2020 Yearly Top 10 Best-Selling Albums (October)**

No	Album	Artist	Label	Total Sales	Format
1	Map of the Soul: 7	BTS	Big Hit Entertainment	4.332.207	Full Album
2	Heng: Garae	Seventeen	Pledis Entertainment	1.405.522	EP
3	NCT Resonance Pt. 1	NCT	SM Entertainment	1.193.394	Full Album
4	The Album	Blackpink	YG Entertainment	1.073.671	Full Album
5	Semicolon	Seventeen	Pledis Entertainment	1.061.887	Special Album
6	Delight	Baekhyun	SM Entertainment	1.020.965	EP
7	Neo Zone	NCT 127	SM Entertainment	828.161	Full Album
8	Skool Luv Affair Special Addition	BTS	Big Hit Entertainment	669.062	Special Album
9	Reload	NCT Dream	SM Entertainment	623.636	EP
10	More & More	Twice	JYP Entertainment	572.248	EP

Source: Gaon Album Chart

### **3.2. Economic Colonialism: Korean Wave (Hallyu) Hegemony**

In this research, the discussion will focus more on the colonialism in the economics impact of Korean wave. Korean wave is a term attached to South Korea as a form of global cultural spread. The question, how can economic colonization occur from the existence of this Korean wave? How could a country with a population of 51.2 million colonize countries with a large population? Before examining one by one the resulting forms of economic colonization, we should first understand the term economic colonialism.

Hearing the word colonialism, maybe what comes to our mind is a nation that flocked to explore the oceans in search of spices, trade, control a country with all oppression, such as the Dutch colonization Indonesia or Britain which was colonized by Ancient Rome. In fact, the meaning of colonialism is not that narrow, especially for the current era of globalization. Colonialism is actually an u concept of the control of a country by another country with the aim of obtaining the maximum profit for the ruling state. Usually, the ruling state has a goal to dominate the economy, resources, labor, ideology, social, culture and also media, that lately increasingly worrying.

Economics is a familiar word to most people. Economics is often used in life, society, household, education and politics. The word economy can be understood, but it is difficult to define for ordinary people. Then, what exactly is economy? Wikipedia record, economics as a social science that studies human activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Adam Smith argues, economics as an investigation of the nature and causes of state wealth. In principle, the economy is divided into three, production, distribution and consumption. The purpose of this principle is, of certainly maximizing profits.

It can be said that economic colonialism is the control of a country by another country through economic principles (product, distribution and consumption) to maximize profits for the ruling state. We highlight how Korean wave products in the form of music, dramas and films that are consumed by people in various countries and then generate profits in Table 2.

**Table 3. Kpop Music Revenue from Youtube Platform Year 2020 (October)**

No	Kpop Account	Subscriber	Income/Month
1	Blackpink	48.6 million	3.2 Billion Won (IDR 40.7 Billion)
2	Big Hit Labels	44.5 million	2.3 Billion Won (IDR 29.2 Billion)
3	Bangtan TV	37.3 Million	1.1 Billion Won (IDR 14 Billion)
4	SM Town	24.1 Million	1 Billion Won (IDR 12.7 Billion)
5	JYP Entertainment	18.2 Million	1.3 Billion Won (IDR 16.5 Billion)

Source: FnGuide (Financial Information Provider Company)

Table 2 shows the number of physical Kpop album sales for January-October 2020. Based on Gaon Chart data, around 18.08 million albums were sold in the first half of 2020. Total sales increased 40% from 2019. The top 100 sales controlled by Kpop boy groups and girl groups, as well as soloists who managed to sell 16.89 million copies or more than 90% of total sales. Album sales are being driven strongly by large international Kpop fans. One album is sold for around 20 thousand won or around IDR 265,000. The increase in Kpop album sales is inversely proportional to the trend of the global music industry. According to Nielsen Music Data, U.S album sales fell 20% in the first half of 2020 compared to 2019.

Based on these data, we find that Kpop music is able to shift the popularity of U.S album sales. This means that most people in the world consume Kpop albums than singers' albums from other countries. This shows how South Korea controls various countries to consume Kpop music products as part of economic colonization, so that South Korea's goal of obtaining economic benefits can be achieved.

South Korea's revenue through Kpop music is not only from album sales but also from the YouTube content provider platform. Youtube as a popular means recently to watch and listen Kpop music. From YouTube, a Kpop singer can get fantastic benefits due to subscribers and viewers of uploaded content.

Table 3 shows the fantastic figures produced by Kpop music from the world community. Even though YouTube takes 30% of the total income, the income still shows a fantastic price. Even Blackpink listed as a second-place YouTube account with the highest number of subscribers, right behind Justin Bieber who has 57.2 million subscriber.

There are more than 50 countries around the world who watch Kpop music through the youtube platform. There are 15 countries that have contributed the most number of views to watch BTS - Dynamite Music Videos including; Russia, Argentina, Turkey, Malaysia, Peru, Thailand, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, South Korea, Vietnam, Philippines, India, the United States and Indonesian fans as the biggest contributor to watching BTS MV with a total of 48.5 million views. This BTS Music Video broke the YouTube record for being the most watched video in 24 hours. While the top 10 countries that watched Balckpink's Music Video were; Japan, Turkey, Mexico, Malaysia, the United States, Brazil, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia were also the biggest contributors to watching Blackpink's MV with a total of 48.6 million views.

These data show that Korean wave hegemony is increasingly felt. The YouTube platform is used by South Korea as a tool to expand territory in a number of countries so that it can create fantastic income. Fans are hypnotized by Kpop music, so they are willing to spend not only their time but also their money for watching the music video over and over again. Of course we can see that there is economic colonization that occurs, people are controlled, people are willing to spend their money to consume Kpop music and without realizing it, it becomes an economic profit for the country of South Korea.

Apart from sales of Kpop albums and YouTube album, other income generated by Kpop music also comes from concert tickets sales. The covid-19 pandemic situation requires BTS to hold concerts online. During 2020, BTS has held two online concerts in June and October. BTS's online concert held in June called "Bang-bang Con the Live" recorded 756,000 ticket sales from 107 countries. The income from selling concert tickets is estimated at 25 billion won (around IDR 294 billion). Next BTS's online concert in October called "Map of the Soul ON: E" attracted 993,000 viewers from 191 countries. A very impressive number considering there are only 195 countries in the world, which means that BTS fans or concert goers come from all over the world. The income from this second concert ranged from 49.2 billion won to 71 billion won (around IDR 631.5 billion to IDR 907.5 billion). This data was revealed by Big Hit Entertainment, the agency that oversees BTS.

Kpop music is not the only thing that has boosted South Korea's income, there are still Korean dramas and films. Reporting from Yonhap, Studio Dragon, a drama production company owned by entertainment giant CJ ENM, appears to be the biggest winner for the April-June period, in which people are asked to stay at home and enjoy TV shows or watch Netflix. Sales reached 161.4 billion won (IDR 2 trillion) for the April-June period, up 25.9% from the previous year. Its operating profit soared 56.3% on year to 16.9 billion won (IDR 215 billion), and its net profit soared 82.1% on year to 13.4 billion won (IDR 170 billion). The company said its high earnings were due to the rapid overseas sales of the hit dramas, such as "Crash Landing On You", "The King: Eternal Monarch" and "It's Okay to Not Be Okay". It earned 59.4 billion won (IDR 756 billion) from overseas sales over the three-month period, up 40.7% from a year ago.

The list of Korean films that made the most revenue during 2019 are Ashfall, The Bad Guys, Exit, Extreme Job, and Parasite. Parasite is a Korean film that has received a lot of attention from abroad and won an Oscar for best film. Parasite managed to earn around 125 million dollars (IDR 1.7 trillion). Meanwhile, the list of Korean films that made the most revenue in 2020 is Honest Candidate, #Alive, Hitman: Agent Jun, Peninsula, which is a sequel to the film Train to Busan, airing at the 2020 Cannes Film Festival with a profit of IDR 265 billion. Film The Man Standing Next at the top of the Box Office managed to get a profit of IDR 505 billion.

Based on all the data presented, it shows how the hegemony of the Korean Wave controls almost all countries and reaps great profits for the South Korean economy. South Korea as the ruling state controls the countries in the world through the distribution of products that are consumed by the world community. This shows the economic colonization of the Korean Wave hegemony, where people consume the products of the rulers and the rulers gained great profits. The Korean wave hegemony has succeeded in

changing the consumption pattern of the world community into connoisseurs of South Korean products.

#### 4. Conclusion

Korean wave has become a soft power that South Korea uses to gain economic profits. Korean wave products are South Korean music, dramas and films. Korean wave is able to attract attention of the world community through its products. Korean wave fans recorded nearly 100 million people who are registered as a fan club or fanbase. These fans are loyal to consuming Korean wave products, thereby increasing income for South Korea. In addition, there are still many Korean wave fans who do not register themselves as part of the fan club but also consume Korean music, drama and film products.

Korean wave hegemony can be seen as a tangible manifestation of South Korean colonization to almost all countries in the world. Korean wave leadership control most of the country seen from the income that South Korea gets through the sale of Kpop albums which sell for around 18.08 million, the fantastic income from the YouTube platform is around IDR 100 billion every month for the five YouTube accounts with the most subscribers. Sales of BTS online concert tickets earned more than IDR 1 Trillion from 191 countries that purchased concert tickets. Meanwhile, the income earned through drama is IDR 2 trillion for the April-June 2020 period, and for films around IDR 4 trillion.

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