

Dal Yong Jin, **Cultural Production of Hallyu in the Digital Platform Era: Industry Perspectives**, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2025, 216 pp, \$29.95 (paperback).

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Professor Dal Yong Jin of Simon Fraser University is widely recognized as a leading scholar in Korean Wave studies, having made sustained contributions to the broader field of Korean cultural studies. His work has played a central role in shaping scholarly discussions of Korean film, television drama, popular music, webtoon culture, and online gaming. Across his extensive body of research, Jin has consistently examined the historical evolution and transnational circulation of *Hallyu*, situating Korean media industries within wider configurations of political economy, technological change, and global cultural flows.



The global visibility of Korean popular culture, including K-pop music, film, television drama, and even culinary culture, raises a set of enduring analytical questions: Why has Korean culture achieved such widespread global appeal, and through what structural conditions has this appeal been sustained? These questions underpin **Cultural Production of Hallyu in the Digital Platform Era: Industry Perspectives**, which seeks not only to clarify the dynamics of the Korean Wave but also to establish an appropriate analytical framework for its study.

The book opens with a conceptual recalibration, refining the definition of the Korean Wave through a perspective that is both historically grounded and globally situated. In chapter 2, the author emphasizes the imperative for appropriate theoretical approaches to analyze *Hallyu*, highlighting the significance of critical cultural industries studies. Rather than presenting *Hallyu* as a singular cultural trend, the volume conceptualizes the phenomenon as a dynamic and evolving process shaped by shifting cultural flows and institutional arrangements. Drawing on earlier studies that have emphasized cultural exports, fandom, and soft power, the author demonstrates how these approaches can be extended through a more integrative analytical lens. In doing so, he advances an approach that situates cultural industries, media systems, and technological infrastructures within a broader analytical perspective that moves beyond macro- and micro-level accounts.

A notable analytical feature of the book lies in its refined periodization of the Korean Wave. In his earlier work, Jin classified the development of *Hallyu* into several phases, including Hallyu 1.0 from 1997 to 2007 and Hallyu 3.0 from 2017 to the present, indicating the evolving nature of Korean cultural production across time (Jin, 2021, p. 4155). This periodization illustrates how the Korean Wave has developed through successive transformations shaped by technological innovation, policy change, and global market expansion. Building on this analytical approach, the present volume rearticulates the evolution of the Korean Wave in relation to digital platformization, identifying four key phases, namely the pre-*Hallyu* era from the 1960s to

the early 1990s, Cultural Industries 1.0 (early 1990s–2007), Cultural Industries 2.0 (2008–2017), and Cultural Industries 3.0 (2017–present).

Framed through this four-phase schema, chapter 3 examines the evolution of the Korean cultural industries, tracing the historical development of the South Korean media system—from the establishment of HLKZ-TV in 1956, operated by KORCAD, the Korean branch of an American television manufacturer, through the expansion of public and commercial broadcasting institutions such as KBS and MBC, to the contemporary platform-driven media environment. Jin elucidates how the evolution of cultural industries has been closely intertwined with Korea’s political transformation toward a democratic society, as well as with state policies and regulatory regimes. The analysis maps the co-evolution of media platforms, patterns of media consumption, and government policy across successive administrations, while drawing on a diverse set of cultural referents, including popular television programs, music chart shows, and the rise of idol groups, to show how industrial and institutional changes were articulated in relation to shifting policy frameworks and evolving media environments.

In examining the pre-*Hallyu* period, the volume characterizes Korean cultural industries as undergoing significant yet uneven transformations shaped by policy change, technological development, and increasing exposure to global cultural flows. The discussion of policy reforms between 1988 and 1993, which enabled the direct distribution of Hollywood films in South Korea, highlights an early moment in the reconfiguration of the domestic media landscape (pp. 47–48). Following these reforms, major Hollywood studios, including Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Bros., Columbia, UIP, and Walt Disney, established local branches and expanded film imports, accelerating Korean cinema’s integration into global production and distribution circuits. These developments, the book suggests, were closely bound to broader neoliberal globalization processes.

Cultural Industries 3.0 is defined by what might be termed the “Netflix Effect” on Korean cultural industries, evident in the global success of productions such as *Squid Game* following the platform’s entry into the Korean market in 2016. Jin argues that the maturation of global OTT platforms has had a significant impact not only on the global circulation of Korean content but also on the conditions of its production, as the preferences of international audiences increasingly shape narrative strategies and production values. In this context, Jin emphasizes the growing role of data-driven infrastructures, as digital platforms deploy algorithms and AI to organize user data, predict consumption patterns, and personalize cultural offerings. In chapter 5, Jin extends his analysis to the music industry, demonstrating how global digital platforms such as YouTube have reconfigured both distribution and audience engagement. These platforms have displaced the primacy of domestic streaming services while enabling transnational fan interaction that exceeds the spatial and linguistic limits of earlier fan communities. In particular, online fan practices have become increasingly expansive and intensified, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic through digitally mediated communication and participation (p. 133).

Chapter 7 focuses on the ways in which the growing popularity of Korean content has begun to affect platform strategies as well as domestic production practices. The increasing demand for Korean programs has led local terrestrial broadcasters and general programming channels to distribute original content through global platforms such as Netflix, thereby expanding their international reach. Drawing on

interviews with industry professionals, media critics, and audiences, Jin illustrates how this transition reveals the structural power of global platforms embedded within local cultural industries (p. 152).

In the concluding chapter, the author synthesizes these analyses and presents a set of recommendations directed at three key actors: cultural practitioners, government institutions, and researchers. These proposals are grounded in the recognition that contemporary cultural production operates within a platform-integrated environment in which multiple actors are situated across an interconnected ecosystem. For cultural practitioners, Jin emphasizes the need for strategic engagement with digital platforms. As platforms increasingly function as both distributors and producers, they shape the conditions under which cultural content is produced and circulated. The book suggests that practitioners should engage these infrastructures in a calibrated manner, leveraging their global reach while maintaining culturally specific forms of production. With regard to government institutions, the book delineates a role focused on infrastructural support rather than direct intervention, while the discussion of the blacklist controversy reflects the risks of state involvement in cultural production. The analysis invites further contextualization of policy and industry dynamics, which may usefully inform both practical engagement and future scholarly inquiry in the field.

For researchers, the author advances a meso-level analytical approach grounded in critical cultural industries studies, moving beyond analyses confined to cultural policy or audience reception (p. 173). This perspective is particularly valuable given the inherent complexity of *Hallyu*, which is rooted in the sociopolitical and cultural contexts of its emergence, necessitating a close engagement with these historically situated conditions. At the same time, the growing prominence of global digital platforms, largely structured within U.S.-centered systems, suggests the need to clarify how this meso-level perspective is positioned in relation to macro-level political economy.

This book deepens our understanding of the Korean Wave within its rich sociocultural and political contexts and advances an analytical approach to *Hallyu* in the digital platformization era. It functions as both an empirical and conceptual resource, offering a comprehensive account of the Korean media landscape through the integration of historical analysis and detailed examinations of cultural forms. The inclusion of extensive interview material, involving policy makers, industry professionals, and audiences, further enriches the analysis by incorporating diverse perspectives. In this respect, the volume stands as a significant contribution to international communication scholarship, providing the indispensable sociocultural and historical grounding required for researchers to elucidate the complexities of the Korean Wave. By establishing this essential genealogy of Korean media and culture, the work will furnish students and researchers with a critical analytical framework to interrogate the evolving dynamics of *Hallyu* as it is reshaped by the interplay between local cultural production, cultural policy, and global media platforms within an increasingly complex digital media ecology.

Reference

- Jin, D. Y. (2021). Ten myths about the Korean wave in the global cultural sphere. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 4147–4164.