

## **When Indonesians Routinely Consume Korean Pop Culture: Revisiting Jakartan Fans of the Korean Drama *Dae Jang Geum***

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The consumption of Korean popular culture has increased continuously in Indonesia since the early 2000s. This article investigates how “Hallyu” (the Korean Wave) is appropriated and experienced by Indonesian fans in their daily lives. Following up on our work in 2006, we carried out interviews in 2013 with 12 Indonesian supporters who had participated in the prior qualitative research on the Indonesian reception of the Korean television drama *Dae Jang Geum* (*Jewel in the Palace*). First, this article examines the historical development of the Hallyu phenomenon in Indonesia with rapidly digitalized mediascape of the country. Next, we examine the salient features of the appropriation of Korean pop culture and investigate the hybrid cultural resources and experiences. We focus in particular on how our interviewees construct and use a certain imaginary of “Koreanness” as a consequence of negotiation in relations of symbolic power. Finally, we discuss implications of the routinized consumption and habituation of Hallyu by its transnational audience to understand its cultural impact and significance in the global context.

*Keywords: Hallyu, Indonesia, the Korean Wave, national symbolic power, cultural appropriation, Koreanness*

The popularity of Korean dramas televised across Asia began in the late 1990s, and since the “Hallyu” (or Korean Wave), it has evolved into a global phenomenon. This indicates transnational circulation and consumption of (South) Korean popular culture and its derivatives. Researchers have

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examined this new cultural flow in its various dimensions and contexts. Despite the prolific and growing scholarship on the Hallyu phenomenon, only a few studies are available that address the reception of Korean popular culture in Indonesia (Heryanto, 2008, 2010, 2013, 2014; Jeong, 2007, 2014; Jung, 2011; H. J. Kim, 2008; J. H. Park, 2016; Song & Jang, 2012; Song, Nahm, & Jang, 2014). This lack of research on this topic is somewhat surprising, given that Hallyu is becoming an ever more significant cultural phenomenon in Indonesia, particularly with the rise of K-pop music. This article examines the ways in which Indonesian fans interpret, appropriate, and integrate Hallyu in their everyday lives. We illustrate how these consumers engage and work with the Korean cultural products, which affect their own perceptions of "Koreanness."

We argue that Hallyu can be conceptualized as a complex cultural economic process through which the symbolic power of the Korean state is exercised and imposed on its transnational audience (e.g., Bourdieu, 2015; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1999). This implies that Hallyu helps the Korean state augment and accumulate national symbolic capital, assigning a kind of prestige, authority, and glamour to Korea or the so-called Koreanness in the audience's mind. There may be three factors that contribute to the symbolic power of the Hallyu phenomenon. First, despite hybridized characters and diverse genres, Korean cultural products are likely to be categorized, recognized, and appreciated under the explicit or implicit label of *Korean*, thus generating a feeling of Koreanness for their global consumers. Second, another likely reason is that cultural products with their specific content (language, people, landscape, rituals, foods, etc.) produce knowledge, meaning, and imagery conventionally connected to the dominant signifier *Korean* for audiences.

Finally, the most important factor is perhaps the underlying role of the Korean state, which is influencing the spread of Hallyu in an ever more systematic way. In fact, after its unpredicted success in Asia about 15 years ago, Hallyu immediately was transformed into a "national project" driven by the Korean government (M. S. Kim, 2015; Shim, 2006). The growing popularity of Korean pop culture in many regions caused the Korean government to use the Korean Wave as a tool for "soft power" (e.g., Chua, 2012; Otmazgin & Ben-Ari, 2012). This became evident in the case of the "New Korean Wave," which designates a new development of Hallyu, primarily based on K-pop music, in the late 2000s that was characterized by intensive state support and intervention (e.g., Jin, 2016). The Korean government attempted to portray Hallyu as an important aspect of "nation branding," which is reminiscent of the "Cool Japan" policy and the accompanying international success of Japanese manga, anime, and games (e.g., Choo, 2012; Iwabuchi, 2008). In this respect, the Korean government's attribution of the prefix "K-" to all sorts of cultural products, ranging from TV dramas to food to cosmetics to pop music helped to further solidify this nation brand.

Choi (2014) recently argued that the conservative Lee government (2008–12) used a "cultural economic strategy" and a "cultural political strategy" in the development of the New Korean Wave as a national industry. For the cultural economic strategy, the government implemented contradictory policies for cultural industries, which are business-friendly and neoliberal on the one hand and developmental and state-interventionist on the other. As for the cultural political strategy, the government took advantage of the New Korean Wave to gather diverse power factions, each having different interests in the hegemonic project, but both advocating for increasing national interest and promoting the "national brand." In this process, the

government mobilized a variety of resources such as the national budget, administrative organs, laws, and public institutions, thus manufacturing and reinforcing Hallyu as the country's symbolic power.

It is undeniable that national symbolic power has been exercised through the dissemination and consumption of Korean cultural products in many parts of the world. It is also noteworthy that the mechanism of symbolic power is unstable depending on the patterns of consumption and reception. That is, Hallyu as the transnational diffusion and penetration of national symbolic power has its limitations, and requires the complicity of competent agents in specific local contexts. Far from being passive consumers, Hallyu fans, like all audiences, actively appropriate, interpret, and domesticate Korean pop culture according to specific conditions of consumption and reception. That is why the conceptual framework of this study draws not only on the critical paradigm of power relations but also on the practical paradigm of competent agents, including audience reception research (e.g., Chua, 2004; Chua & Iwabuchi, 2008).

*Reception* is the process by which understanding and significance are produced by social agents from what they consume within the shaping contexts and habits of consumption (Corner, 1999; Michelle, 2007). Diverse modes of reception play a determinant role in structuring relations of symbolic power. Through the process of reception, consumers of Hallyu submit to, negotiate with, or resist symbolic power imposed by Korean cultural products. To highlight the dynamics of relations of symbolic power, this article focuses on the ways in which Hallyu fans in Indonesia construct and use the imaginary of Koreanness through their consumption of Korean pop culture. In doing so, we pay particular attention to a certain "ordinariness" of fans and their reception. That means that we try to investigate the effects of relatively habitual consumption of Hallyu by ordinary longtime fans in their quotidian lives.

### Method

This article is based on in-depth interviews with 12 Indonesian fans of Korean pop culture. Jeong (2007) conducted individual and group interviews with a total of 41 self-identified viewers of *Dae Jang Geum*<sup>2</sup> in Jakarta in 2006. They were recruited in one of two ways. First, a snowball sampling method was carried out from an Indonesian employee who worked for a Korean company in Jakarta. Second, convenience sampling was also accomplished in two universities, Pelita Harapan and Tarumanagara. This small sample group may be regarded as biased in the sense that it was mainly composed of non-Muslim Chinese Indonesian women. Despite the fact that this group did not accurately represent the general characteristics of viewers of *Dae Jang Geum*, it does illustrate the fact that initial Hallyu fans may principally come from the ethnic Chinese diaspora, as Chua (2012) suggests.

In 2013, for the present study, we followed up with 12 of the initial 41 interviewees who participated in the previous research on the reception of *Dae Jang Geum*. They were 11 women and one man. We conducted in-person interviews with 11 participants who still lived in Jakarta and one online interview with a participant who was studying abroad in China. All interviews were completed using a

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<sup>2</sup> *Dae Jang Geum* aired in November 2005 on Indosiar, displaying viewer ratings of about 30% at its highest (J. B. Park, 2015, p. 90).

semistructured questionnaire on the participants' interests and experiences of Korean pop culture after *Dae Jang Geum*. The average interview lasted approximately 90 minutes.

To properly understand the findings of this research, it is necessary to take some of the characteristics of the sample into consideration. Overall, the interviewees were relatively well-educated, urban, middle-class female consumers. More specifically, the participants were classified into two groups: a middle-aged group (Interviewees 1–4 were between 49 and 54 years of age) and a younger one (Interviewees 5–12 were between 24 and 29 years of age). In 2006, when the members of the middle-aged group were mostly in their 40s, the younger group members were in their late teens or early 20s. Four interviewees who had been in their 40s in 2006 were in their late 40s or 50s at the second interview. The eight younger interviewees had been in their teen years or early 20s before, but all were in their 20s in 2013. The participants' occupations were diverse, with industries including education, medical, engineering, and several others represented. Participants belonged to either the upper or middle class. Furthermore, of 12 interviewees, four were pure-blooded Chinese, two were Javanese, five were of mixed (admixture of Chinese and Javanese, or Chinese and Sudanese) ancestry, and one was Batak. In terms of religion, seven were Catholics, three were Buddhists, and two were Muslim.

Broadly, they were not enthusiastic fans who actively participated in the Hallyu fandom produced by various types of user-generated content on Korean popular culture. Rather, they belonged to an ordinary consumer/audience group generally interested in Korean cultural products. The fact that most interviewees were Chinese Indonesian is also significant given that this ethnic minority has a singular place and history in Indonesian society (Chua, 2004). Historically, this group was oppressed and discriminated against for many years under Suharto's authoritarian regime (1966–98). According to Heryanto (2010), "until 1998, when the rule of Indonesia's militarist New Order government terminated, characters of Chinese ethnicity hardly ever appeared in the country's television programs and films" (pp. 212–213). It was after democratization that the situation changed, and the spread and popularity of East Asian (Japanese, Taiwanese, and South Korean) pop cultures more or less coincided with the change in interethnic relations and sociocultural (re)emergence of Chinese Indonesians. As advocates of "cultural proximity theory" suggest, members of this ethnic minority have some cultural and ethnic traits in common with East Asian people, and can easily find East Asian pop culture that interests them.

In the remainder of the article, we examine the historical development of the Hallyu phenomenon in Indonesia and its changing aspects with the rapidly digitalized mediascape of the country. Next, we pay attention to the salient features of the appropriation of Korean pop culture by our research participants in their hybrid cultural resources and experiences. We give special focus to the way our interviewees construct a certain imaginary concept of Koreanness as a consequence of negotiation in relations of symbolic power. Finally, we discuss some implications of the routinized consumption and habituation of Hallyu by its transnational audience to understand its cultural impact and signification in the global context.

### Hallyu in Indonesia at the Crossroad of Globalization and Media Convergence

The popularity of Korean cultural products in Indonesia can be traced to the early 2000s. However, it is important to remember that transnational flows of East Asian popular culture existed before the Hallyu phenomenon. Representative of this is the Taiwanese TV drama *Meteor Garden* (2002), which recorded the highest ratings ever in Indonesian broadcast history. It marked the beginning of a boom of East Asian pop culture in post-Suharto Indonesia. The success of *Meteor Garden* was soon followed by Korean TV dramas. The popularity of the drama series *Endless Love* is considered as opening the pathway for the success of other subsequent titles including *All About Eve*, *Full House*, *Friends*, *Hotelier*, and *Glass Shoe*. These dramas chiefly attracted many youth audiences (Heryanto, 2010, 2014; Ida, 2008). As Table 1 shows, Korean TV dramas have been consistently aired ever since, and the total number reached 70 for the period from 2002 to 2011. In fact, many Hong Kong films and a few Japanese TV dramas and manga had achieved a certain degree of popularity among young Indonesians in 1990s. However, Heryanto (2010) argues that *Meteor Garden* and Korean TV dramas are not comparable to Hong Kong and Japanese cultural products in their widespread appeal and intensive impact.

**Table 1. Number of Korean Dramas Aired in Indonesia (2002–2011).**

	Year aired						
	2002–5	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Number of dramas	22	2	8	2	4	15	17

*Note.* The data are from “2014 Hallyu in Global Village Version 1” (Korea Foundation, 2015, p. 241).

The liberalization and diversification of media in Indonesia played a key role in distribution of East Asian pop culture. Due to the deregulation of television broadcasting in 1989, five private TV stations were established in an Indonesian mediascape in which previously only one state-owned TV station (TVRI) had existed between 1962 and 1988 (Kitley, 2000). The capitalist logic of profit maximization led to new commercial channels that tended to broadcast a majority of imported content that was both inexpensive and popular. For example, Indosiar, a national television station established in 1994, showed many Japanese, Taiwanese, and Korean dramas, focusing on cultural programming of Asian content. Consequently, Indonesian television, initially designed as a part of the New Order’s national culture project, became more and more a field of cultural and political struggle (Kitley, 2000).

The overthrow of Suharto’s authoritarian regime in 1998 was also overlapped by the arrival of a pay TV system (satellite TV in 1994, cable TV in 1999) and the dramatic spread of the Internet. As Sen and Hill (2011) state, “The Indonesian media emerged out of the state-enforced limits while at the same time new technologies created new spaces and new ways for using media everywhere” (p. 3). Even though terrestrial television still stands as the main broadcasting market in Indonesia, pay TV subscribers consistently increased from 900,000 in 2009 to 3.1 million in 2012 (Korea Creative Content Agency, 2015). This overall change of the Indonesian media system contributed to the influx of popular global cultures into the nation.

The Hallyu phenomenon gained recognition in Indonesia, like in other Southeast Asian countries, with a smash hit of the TV drama *Dae Jang Geum* (*Jewel in the Palace*). Many Indonesians also watched it via pirated DVDs (Jeong, 2007). The tremendous success of this historical drama is interesting given that it was fundamentally different in many respects from other popular Korean dramas. Whereas other dramas generally belonged to a single genre called "trendy," which depicts modern urban lifestyles in a glamorous way, *Dae Jang Geum* dealt with a fictionalized Korean premodern history displaying all sorts of traditional cultural elements. It provoked, in a number of Asian nations including Indonesia, interest for various things Korean, such as costume, medicine, food, and rituals. Korean TV dramas used to be broadcasted almost every day until the late 2000s, and were consumed mainly by female audiences ranging from teens to those in their 40s. However, it is reported that the popularity of these dramas gradually decreased because of repetitive storylines and manner of production. Korean dramas are still consistently aired on television channels, but some statistics suggest that Indonesian audiences have become disinterested in Korean contents (Korea Creative Content Agency, 2014, 2015).

After about 2010, the Hallyu phenomenon in Indonesia began to encompass K-pop and entertainment programs, developing a part of the so-called New Korean Wave. Furthermore, a separate category of "K-WAVE" was created in the Indonesian primary Internet search engine. The New Korean Wave is considered to have begun with the proliferation of K-pop music videos on YouTube in the late 2000s. It is thought to have been influenced by various factors, such as consistent Korean state support, rapid growth of the transnational cultural industry, and the development of social media-empowered online cultural distribution. Indonesia is now one of the fastest growing K-pop markets in Southeast Asia. This might be largely because of the expansion of cable channels (Arirang TV, KBS World, etc.) and online media (the Internet, YouTube, social networking sites; Jin & Yoon, 2016).

If Korean popular music had only gained intermittent popularity in Indonesia as the original sound track of television dramas before, it became a central aspect of the New Korean Wave with idol girl and boy band music post-2010. This hybridized cultural product, strategically manufactured by the Korean entertainment companies, satisfied the complex tastes and desires of global young consumers. It benefited greatly from online, fandom-driven promotion and circulation. K-pop now stands as the leading genre of popular culture in Indonesia and generates many fan group gatherings among the youth. Jung (2011) notes,

One of the key attractions of K-pop, according to many Indonesian fans, is its modern, cool attributes, in large part originating from Western popular culture forms such as American hip-hop and R&B, European electronic music, and pop and visual elements from J-pop. (para. 2)

Beyond K-pop, Korean entertainment programs also became prominent as the widespread popularity of *Running Man* illustrated. Table 2 shows the change in the flow of Korean broadcast programs, despite the fact that Indonesian Hallyu fans mostly consume Korean programs through real-time streaming websites or pirate DVDs (Kim & Park, 2015).

The Hallyu phenomenon in Indonesia is found not only in media cultural products (TV dramas, music videos) but also in broader lifestyle products (foods, cosmetics, tourism). After the recent popularity of the TV drama *You Who Came From the Stars*, a trend of eating fried chicken with beer (*chi-maek*) spread, resulting in Korean franchise restaurants such as BibiGo and School Foods opening in large cities such as Jakarta.

**Table 2. Korean Broadcast Programs Exported to Indonesia 2002–2014.**

Year	Genre	<i>n</i>	Amount (USD thousands)	Year	Genre	<i>n</i>	Amount (USD thousands)
2006	Drama	494	205.7	2012	Drama	585	837.0
	Animation	52	20.0		Entertainment	215	42.0
	Education	52	8.5		Total	800	879.0
	Total	498	234.2	2013	Drama	2,867	1,232.0
2007	Drama	1,008	467.5		Entertainment	20	7.0
	Total	1,008	467.5		Music	53	13.0
2008	Drama	744	304.0	Others	32	25.0	
	2009	Drama	485	328.0	Total	2,972	1,277.0
Documentary		2	3.0	2014	Drama	2,556	1,151.7
Total		487	330.0		Entertainment	297	103.0
2010	Drama	812	501.0		Movie	112	12.0
	Documentary	4	4.0		Music	8	36.0
	Education	1	0.0		Others	32	13.0
Total	817	505.0	Total	3,005	1,315.7		
2011	Drama	1432	1235.4				
	Entertainment	212	0.0				
	Education	52	10.0				
	Documentary	1	0.8				
	Total	1,697	1,246.2				

*Note.* Data are from "Broadcasting Industry Report" (Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2006, p. 269; Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2007, p. 180; Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2008, p. 128; Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2009, p. 115; Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2010, p. 117; Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2011, p. 140; Korean Broadcasting Commission, 2012, p. 152; Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning and Korea Communications Commission, 2013, p. 148; Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning and Korea Communications Commission, 2014, p. 138; Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning and Korea Communications Commission, 2015, p. 194)

In addition, the number of Hallyu fans who emulate the styles of Korean celebrities continues to increase, along with an increased interest in Korean cosmetic brands and beauty products. Indonesians' attraction to Hallyu-related Korean culture is partly shown by the proliferation of tourists. Whereas 2.4 million Indonesian tourists entered Korea in 2005, the number increased about four times in 2012, reaching 9 million (Song, Kim, & Jang, 2013). All of these trends suggest that Hallyu, via its assignment of

symbolic values to “something Korean” and creating desires, can contribute to the construction of a transnational cultural goods market for large Korean corporations.

It should also be noted that development of the New Korean Wave phenomenon is related to the recent digital-media innovations in Indonesia. The rate of Internet users was relatively low at 14.94% in 2013 (International Telecommunication Union, World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report and database, & World Bank estimates, 2015). Most Indonesians have access to the Internet via mobile phones or Internet cafes given that the broadband network is not well established across the nation. However, the utilization of mobile phones, smartphones, and tablet PCs is growing rapidly. For example, the mobile phone supply drastically increased from 28.02% in 2006 to 125.36% in 2013 (International Telecommunication Union & World Telecommunication/ICT Development Report and database, 2015). This change in the mediascape tends to accelerate the diffusion and use of social media. In 2013, Indonesia was ranked as the fourth largest user of Facebook, with almost 55 million users and with the highest Facebook access rate by mobile phone. In particular, Indonesian Facebook users in 2013 were mostly young audiences: 18–24 years old (43.1%), 16–17 years old (14.3%), and 13–15 years old (10.0%; Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, 2013). More and more young Indonesian people are using social media to seek, share, or circulate news and media cultural products including foreign content, which is one of the most important contributing factors to the persistence of the Hallyu phenomenon.

### **Hallyu Embedded in the Everyday Lives of Indonesian Fans**

#### ***After the Novelty Effect***

Considering this brief history of Hallyu in Indonesia, we can say that our interviewees were an “early adopter” group and had a relatively high level of experience with Korean pop culture. Even though *Dae Jang Geum* was not the first encounter with Korean cultural products for them, their attention to Korean culture accelerated following the viewing of *Dae Jang Geum*. In other words, this historical drama offered them an opportunity to become interested in Korean culture, perceived in its “imagined originality.” After *Dae Jang Geum*, they enjoyed other Korean dramas including *Princess Hours*, *Boys Over Flowers*, *Great Queen Seon Deok*, *City Hall*, *A Gentleman’s Dignity*, and others. Moreover, their interest and consumption of Korean popular culture became gradually extended to other genres (K-pop, variety shows) and even to material culture (e.g., foods, medicine, cosmetics).

Most interviewees also mentioned that they now had a much greater exposure in their everyday life to Korean content than they did seven years before at the first interview. In particular, K-pop was ubiquitously referred to in this context, with interviewees asserting that, regardless of their personal preference, they could easily listen to K-pop idol bands’ music anywhere. For instance, one interviewee came to take an interest in K-pop because of the Korean music used for an online dance battle game “Ayo Dance.” Our interviewees also acknowledged that Korean style in fashion and makeup had become an important trend in Indonesians’ daily lives. Some of them also had experience of going to K-pop concerts or visiting a Korean culture center.



Based on our interviews, we saw two channels of media use to receive Hallyu content. The first was television and the second was the Internet/social media. This highlighted a couple of changes since our first interviews with these individuals. First, it is evident that the interviewees now consumed Korean cultural through diverse media channels, whereas previously they had depended almost exclusively on television. Internet access through various devices seems to have expanded the possible routes for Indonesian audiences to receive foreign content including Hallyu. Nevertheless, the diversification of the reception media for Hallyu is not significant enough to threaten the central place occupied by television (Yang, 2012).

However, we still see to a great extent that Korean content is received via television. Even to the interviewees, cable channels such as Indosiar, Trans-TV, Trans7, Net, V-Channel, Arirang-TV, and KBS World offered major pathways to consuming Korean cultural products. The case of Interviewee 7, a 24-year-old Chinese Indonesian woman, illuminates how availability of cable channels significantly affected the consumption of Hallyu. She first became accustomed to K-pop after she started watching cable television that often played K-pop in their programs. Subsequently, she viewed the opportunity to access Korean content via cable channels as a very influential factor in explaining her greater interest in it over Chinese or Japanese content. The centrality of television in the consumption of Korean cultural products means that one's preference for Korean content will be highly influenced by whether or not this content has appeared on television.

Despite a growing tendency toward individualization, television viewing in Indonesia generally still occurs in a collective manner. It is common for family members to gather to watch television in the evenings (Korea Creative Content Agency, 2014). However, some of our interviewees consumed Korean dramas, movies, music, or other video clips individually via their personal computers and smartphones, connecting to a variety of websites (allkpop.com, kshownow.net, viki.net, detik.com, gooddrama.net, dramafever.net, etc.). One interesting thing is that, although a majority of our interviewees carried Blackberry phones for the purpose of domestic calls, they used additional devices such as smartphones or tablet PCs particularly for consumption of cultural content.

Although our sample was far too small and specific to obtain generalizable results, it is worth noting that we did find consistent differences between the two age groups in many aspects of their Hallyu consumption, especially in the areas of media use, type of preferred content, and attitude toward the content. In terms of media use, the middle-aged group appeared to depend much more on television to view Korean content than the younger group. When the older interviewees received and shared information about new content, they largely used traditional offline channels (i.e., newspapers, e.g., *Koran Shindo*, or magazines, e.g., *Asian Star* and *Asia Plus*) and face-to-face interaction with others, in addition to limited use of the Internet and smartphones. In contrast, the younger interviewees actively used the Internet, smartphones, and social media for consuming content as well as for sharing related information. They have become accustomed to watching Korean cultural content (in real time) via video streaming websites. They also downloaded Hallyu content and circulated information on the Internet and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Line, BBM, etc.). They actively pursued and attained information on Hallyu in a variety of ways using their smartphones, whereas some members of the middle-aged group only used smartphones to exchange information with acquaintances.

The two age groups also displayed some differences in their tastes for specific types of content. Middle-aged interviewees still preferred television dramas, and did not have as much interest in K-pop (except the original soundtracks of dramas) and variety shows. In contrast, the younger group expressed a variety of tastes for many genres, including drama, music, and television programs. Some of them greatly enjoyed television programs like *Running Man*, and actively searched for and watched such programs on the Internet. The younger interviewees also showed strong interest in Korean celebrities and their lifestyles. Some older interviewees were very forthcoming about their lack of enthusiasm for Korean idol boys, mainly because they considered these boys too "feminized."

The two age groups also varied considerably in their attitude toward Korean content. Middle-aged participants were especially attracted to *Dae Jang Geum* because of the portrayal of Korean national history and traditional culture, including costumes, medicinal knowledge, and cooking recipes. They also said they were impressed, and touched, by the presumed themes of the drama including love, sisterhood, solidarity, and cooperation. Moreover, they evaluated *Dae Jang Geum* as a good drama for families to watch together and "provide lessons to children" to the extent that it portrayed ethical values. This preference was consistent over time. The younger interviewees shared a somewhat different attitude toward Korean content. In 2006, when the middle-aged group members were mostly in their 40s, those of the younger group were in their late teens or early 20s. The young participants watched *Dae Jang Geum* with their family or relatives. They continued to recall *Dae Jang Geum* as one of the most interesting Korean dramas, and they indicated that they gave particular attention to Korean traditional clothing and food represented in the drama. However, the viewing itself was not really based on their own taste or preference, but rather on familial ritual. Even though *Dae Jang Geum* was impressive and interesting for them, they were mainly drawn to the spectacle of the "invented Korean tradition" rather than to any implicit moral message or theme of the drama. The younger interviewees expressed a relatively open attitude toward Korean cultural products by embracing and consuming a wide range of genres, especially via digital media. They were generally inclined to receive Korean content in a more liberal way simply because they enjoyed the content, which was in contrast to the older interviewees.

What should be noted is that the "novelty effect" of Korean content had almost disappeared during the seven years between interviews for both groups of interviewees. This is likely a consequence of the influx of content of Korean cultural products. In 2006, interviewees recalled Korean content as "new," "fresh," and "special," and the newness and uniqueness were regarded as key characteristics of the content. All interviewees mentioned that Korean dramas had a special charm compared with content from other countries. Prior to Korean dramas, Korea as a whole was an unknown entity to them. The country and its images were discovered and shaped through Hallyu content.

In 2013, the interviewees expressed an interest in Korean popular culture, and they still watched many Korean dramas. However, they maintained a rather distanced, disenchanted relation with Korean content following the frequency of exposure to the content over time. In other words, Hallyu seemed to be transformed, for our interviewees, from an extraordinary cultural experience to a rather ordinary one. It became viewed not as something particularly appealing, but rather as one of many of the foreign cultural products from which they could choose and consume. As Interviewee 2, a 54-year-old woman with mixed

ancestry, said, her "interest in Korean culture has not changed too much," yet she does not "actively look for Korean content [like she did] before."

Such a change can be interpreted mainly as an effect of two related factors. One is that the supply of Korean cultural products in Indonesia grew so much, and thus lost some of its novelty. The other factor is that the interviewees domesticated and integrated Hallyu in their own way in their everyday lives. The case of Interviewee 10, a 28-year-old woman with mixed ancestry, is illustrative in this respect. She enjoyed and appreciated the "high" quality of Korean dramas in which she took an interest after *Dae Jang Geum*. However, at the second interview, she seldom watched them; rather, she was involved in the music scene from the Korean variety show *Music Bank*. She admitted that her consumption of Korean content and, subsequently, her interest in Korean culture had weakened because of the weight of everyday life and the difficulties of her work. This suggests that the Hallyu phenomenon accompanied by a certain symbolic power is structuralized, on its micro level, by various, heterogeneous resources and restrictions of everyday life in which social agents use, exploit, and appropriate cultural products (see de Certeau, 1984).

### ***Constructing and Using the Meaning of Koreanness***

Although a kind of "ordinarization of charisma" occurs within the Hallyu phenomenon, it does not mean that Korean content is recognized and treated in the same way as the content of other countries. We did find that the interviewees (i.e., well-educated, urban, upper middle-class Chinese Indonesians) constitute in their mind a kind of loose hierarchy between different cultures. On the high level of this hierarchy may be situated American and European culture, followed by East Asian cultures, with Indonesian culture in a relatively low position. For the interviewees, Korean culture was usually arranged with the Japanese and Taiwanese cultures, forming a category of East Asian cultures. In this imagined cultural hierarchy, these three countries are connected to one another not only by their geographical and cultural proximity but also in terms of their economic development and urban modernity. That is why Indonesian or foreign researchers interpret the subsequent successes of Japanese, Taiwanese, and Korean content in the same context of the local audiences' pursuit for cool, modern, pop cultures (Heryanto, 2010, 2014; Ida, 2008; Jung, 2011). For example, it is said that the major sources of attraction of Taiwanese and Korean TV drama are "the physical appearance of the actors (especially the males), beautiful scenery, glamorous lifestyles, and the characters' successful engagement with the conditions of modern living in big cities" (Heryanto, 2010, p. 220).

However, this common urban modernity represented in East Asian cultural products should not hide the uniqueness of Korean content, which is often clearly presented in the "visualized historical Korea." *Dae Jang Geum* was perceived and received as strongly Korean in this regard. As Jeong (2014) showed in her study of reception of Korean dramas, Indonesian audiences were attracted by the drama that presented both cultural proximity and uniqueness factor, offering an alternative to local products (see Heryanto, 2013; Iwabuchi, 2001). More specifically, people identified with some elements such as the heroic female character (e.g., imaginary Korean woman doctor Jang Geum and historical Indonesian woman educator Raden Ajeng Kartini); the dynastic, premodern, honorific language; and Oriental medicine (Korean Hanyak and Indonesian Jamu). On the other hand, they were pulled in by the

foreignness of it all, especially the “traditional” Korean clothes, foods, housing, and exotic landscape. In fact, in 2006, the research participants reported to have conceived the Korean uniqueness via various aspects that were both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

In this study, we put an emphasis on the fact that the interviewees manifested a complex process of (re)constructing Koreanness through constant negotiation or compromise with the symbolic power of Korean content. This process was driven by diverse practices and experiences in their daily lives: consumption of various, heterogeneous cultural texts, and long-term interaction with Koreans or Korean things, enhanced online and off-line mobility, self-assessment of Indonesian culture, and so on. It is also necessary to note that all interviewees showed the capacity of multidimensional reception encompassing different modes (i.e., transparent, referential, mediated, and discursive) to which Michelle (2007) referred. The interpretative capacity of the interviewees might be intimately related to the large quantity of cultural capital that they possessed.

As mentioned before, Koreanness for the research participants was principally represented as an exemplary mixture of two different, even opposing cultures (i.e., the premodern and the modern, the Oriental and the Occidental). They perceived in TV dramas some characteristics such as family values, respect for tradition, perseverance, decency, and romanticism as especially Korean. Whereas the middle-aged group of the interviewees focused on tradition, loyalty, decency, and family values, the younger group noticed more modernity, openness, creativity, and innovation in their interpretation of Hallyu and Koreanness. However, with the rapid expansion of K-pop and the widespread popularity of idol bands, one remarkable trait was added to the imagined Koreanness: “femininity” of men. Korean idol boy bands are considered too “soft,” “pretty,” “feminized,” and even “queer” to some people. Several interviewees said that these characteristics were generally stressed by the Indonesian men around them. For example, Interviewee 7 reported,

The men around me, including my dad, dislike Korean culture. They especially hate K-pop because there are too many boys in there and they are too pretty. They frown at the singers, thinking their makeup and performances are just too much. They weren't so concerned about it in 2006 because we rarely came across Korean culture at that time, but nowadays they are worried because we see a lot of it now. Boy-groups singing and dancing make them shake their heads because they look too girly.

Some Indonesian men seem to be attempting to shame Hallyu, which they regard as a potential threat to the traditional gender relations in the country. This is because the Hallyu phenomenon may contribute to the arousal of complex desires of the female consumers living under an Islamic system. Heryanto (2014) argues that middle-class segments of Indonesia's female population can be empowered by consuming and expressing their pleasure in dance and displays of attraction to handsome Korean male film and music idols. In this context, the gendered perspective on the Koreanness tends to be used by Indonesian (older) men to delegitimize both Hallyu and its possible consequences for the male image. A few interviewees appeared to agree with this characterization regardless of its latent political significance.

Some interviewees indicated how they rearranged the meaning of Koreanness constructed through Korean content according to their direct contact or interaction with Koreans. Interestingly, half of our interviewees had personal exchanges with Koreans in their school or workplace. Two of them also had visited Korea. Subsequently, idealized imagery of Korea produced by consumption of Korean content tends to shift easily with interpersonal interaction with Koreans and first-hand experiences with Korean culture following travel to Korea. Interviewee 11, a 24-year-old Chinese Indonesian woman, remarked that she thought "all the people in Korea are very well dressed and put a lot of effort into beauty by doing things like plastic surgery." After visiting Korea, she "realized that they are not so beautiful." Interviewee 1, a 52-year-old Javanese man, also said, "Koreans appear to be very generous and kind in dramas, but the people that I met at work were the opposite. Most of the organizations are based on hierarchical corporate structure that seems so far from the word 'tolerance.'" These interviewees struggled to reconstruct imagined Koreanness following these personal experiences. In this context, Koreanness became more ambiguous and fluid.

It should be mentioned that imagined Koreanness offered for many interviewees a pathway to evaluate and criticize Indonesian culture and content. In fact, Ainslie (2016) indicated that Hallyu for Thai fans appeared to function "as a means through which to mediate, critique, and assess their own experiences of contemporary Thailand" (p. 7). Hallyu in Indonesia apparently falls into the same case. The interviewees identified differences and then compared Koreanness and Indonesianness to assess and criticize their own cultural circumstances. For Dian, a 27-year-old Chinese Indonesian woman, her comment is common in this regard:

Korean dramas show their difference in the storyline itself, and the camera techniques are a lot different too. That, and the way of acting. They are very distinct from the Indonesian dramas. They are more creative. In contrast, the narrative of Indonesian dramas is already boring.

In the same context, interviewees continuously discussed the difference between K-pop and I-pop, which was created as a part of the Indonesian government's content support policy.<sup>3</sup> Interviewees not only voiced their opinion in criticizing the problems of Indonesian cultural products but also showed general dissatisfaction toward them. For instance, Interviewee 12, a 24-year-old Chinese Indonesian woman, remarked,

I have heard [I-pop boy band] HITZ's songs, but I don't especially like them. The thing that attracts me is the handsome Korean member, not the two other Indonesian ones or

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<sup>3</sup> As Southeast Asian countries' producers, including Indonesia, regard Hallyu as a successful case in the market, the tendency to imitate the "Korean style" appeared. K-pop's widespread success especially became the benchmark for Indonesia's cultural policy. I-pop, an imitative version of K-pop that could clearly be distinguished from preexisting Indonesia music style, was strategically created as one of the policies. In fact, Indonesia's Super 9 Boyz became stars by releasing songs that resemble K-pop in style (Peichi, 2013).

the songs. When I compare them to K-pop, I feel that I prefer idol groups with Korean members only.

Most interviewees pointed out that recent Indonesian content was in large part produced as a result of mere imitation of foreign content, especially Korean content. Moreover, broadcast programming in Indonesia is highly dependent on foreign content (e.g., Barkin, 2006; Korea Creative Content Agency, 2014). Interviewees were already aware, in a practical sense, of this production system, and they criticized it on the basis of their comparisons between Koreanness and Indonesianness. It is apparent that the perceived Koreanness played a major means through which interviewees could actively evaluate and respond to the current cultural environment. They associated Koreanness with creativity, technological development, fun, and aesthetic advance in this critical discourse, which they found to be superior to Indonesianness, which they characterized with terms such as imitation, boredom, and stagnation.

Far from being passive consumers, audiences actively use and appropriate Korean popular culture in their daily lives. In doing so, they construct a certain Koreanness, which is the product of constant, unstable definition using the local agents and Korean national symbolic power. Although this Koreanness is no more than a mental construction in the audiences produced by symbolic power of Hallyu, it is also clear that this mental construction can be mobilized and used in numerous ways, offering audiences new horizons of imagination and resources for discourse.

### **Discussion**

This article was designed to investigate how Hallyu is appropriated and experienced by Jakartan fans in their daily lives. In doing so, we first examined the historical development of the Hallyu phenomenon in Indonesia and its changing aspects in parallel with the rapidly digitalized mediascape of the country. The persistence of the Hallyu phenomenon, starting with the East Asian popular culture boom, has been closely related to mediascape changes in Indonesia. Second, we evaluated the salient features of the appropriation of Korean pop culture by our research participants via their hybrid cultural resources and experience. Overall, we found that participants continued their consumption of Korean content starting with dramas in 2006 followed by the consumption of lifestyle consumer items such as food, cosmetics, fashion, and travel in 2013. Importantly, we note differences in the consumer behavior as it related to Korean content by generation in terms of media used, type of preferred content, and attitude toward the content. Finally, we gave special attention to the way our interviewees constructed and used a certain imaginary Koreanness as a consequence of negotiation in relations of symbolic power. The value assigned to Koreanness was adjusted through differences between content-consuming experiences and actual experiences such as interaction with Koreans or visits to Korea. Also, such an imaginary conception of Koreanness was often used as criteria to criticize and evaluate the Indonesian culture, content production environment, and the content itself. Jakartan fans revealed behaviors of actively using and appropriating Korean popular culture in their daily lives.

The implications of this review are vast in terms of understanding the consumption of Hallyu by its transnational audience. Theoretically, we argue that the Hallyu phenomenon on its local and micro level can be properly analyzed according to the dynamics of symbolic power of the Korean state and

transnational audiences' interactions with it. Thus, the construction of imagined Koreanness via Korean cultural products is considered to be one stemming from strategic intentionality. In understanding this complex and hybrid process, it will be useful to mobilize some conceptual resources (e.g., "cultural repertoire," "culture as tool kit") of "pragmatic sociology" and to articulate them with Bourdieuan critical sociology (e.g., Silver, 2003). Regardless, it is imperative that we neither ignore nor exaggerate the cultural power of Hallyu at the level where it works on the social agent in the practical context of his or her everyday life.

As for the local and empirical issue, we can point out two prominent phenomena concerning Hallyu as a cultural experience in Indonesia. First, there was a generational difference between the middle-aged group and the younger group in terms of their consumption of transnational cultural products. Even though we cannot easily generalize the findings of this study, it is reasonable to assume that the generational factor potentially constitutes one of the most important variables explaining systematic differences in the reception of Hallyu. This seems to be intimately associated with the rapidly changing digital mediascape as well as the disparities in the use of technology between generations (Lee & Ahn, 2007). More research is needed to assess the significance and various consequences of this phenomenon.

The second prominent factor is broader cultural and ideological change in the post-Suharto era. What deserves our attention is the growth of Muslim nationalism and the cultural rehabilitation of Chinese Indonesians (e.g., Heryanto, 2013, 2014). These two changes are likely to influence the dynamism of Hallyu fandom in the long term, which appears to have its roots in two minorities: women and Chinese Indonesians. However, these minorities who enjoy new cultural choices in a democratized society may much irritate Indonesian Muslim males as far as mainstream Islam supports female subordination to male dominance. It should not be forgotten that Hallyu as a symbolic power continuously intervenes in the cultural production of competing identities. All of these issues call for further research and in-depth discussion.

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