

The Globalization of Hallyu Phenomenon: Impact on Malaysian Young Female's Attitude and Behaviour

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ABSTRACT

Hallyu phenomenon is a globalized cultural product from South Korea that has spread uncontrollably into many parts of the world, and Malaysia was no exception. With the aid of media and the internet, the domination of its significant products such as K-drama, K-pop music, K-Food, K-Beauty, and technology brands left an indisputable impact on society. Hallyu's wide acceptance in Malaysia, however, received backlash from the anti-Hallyu group who criticized it for degrading the value of Malaysian culture, specifically targeting young females in Malaysia for their "obsession" with this foreign culture. This paper aimed to examine the relationship between the globalization of Hallyu phenomenon and young females in Malaysia. It employed a quantitative method to explore the impact of Hallyu on young females' attitudes and behaviour by distributing online surveys to 300 targeted respondents with prior knowledge regarding the topic. The findings showed that the most popular Hallyu cultural product is K-Pop, which consequently further influenced their attitude and behaviour towards other Hallyu products. The success of Hallyu culture among young females in Malaysia owed a lot to the internet and social media as the tools to disperse information, hence shaping their thoughts, attitudes and behaviour on the issue. The results also noted a few behavioural changes among the respondents in terms of time and money spent on Hallyu products. Overall, this study suggested that most respondents have a positive attitude towards Hallyu and that any behavioural changes were still within their control, hence denying the claim of "obsession" and "degrading one's cultural value" as claimed by the anti-Hallyu group.

Keywords: Hallyu phenomenon, globalization, South Korea, cultural products, young females

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INTRODUCTION

Hallyu is a Chinese term which translated to "Korean Wave", a collective term that refers to the phenomenal growth of Korean popular culture ranging from music, movies, drama, online games to Korean food. The Hallyu phenomenon penetrated other countries in Asia since the late 1990s, and soon after, spurred by the internet and social media, to other parts of the world. The Hallyu phenomenon began as part of South Korean economic policy reform during the 1997 Asian financial crisis that saw the South Korean government injecting more funds into its entertainment industry. The export of Hallyu cultural products contributed to 0.2% of Korea's GDP in 2004, amounting to approximately USD1.87 billion. According to Korea Foundation for International Cultural Exchange, Hallyu contributed USD9.5 billion to the Korean economy in 2018, and rose to USD12.3 billion in 2020, up 22.4% from 2018 (Martin, 2021 and Huang, 2020).

The spread of Hallyu culture first began in China through one of its products, K-drama. A Korean drama titled "What is Love" was so popular that it had 150 million Chinese viewers. That same year, popular music caught the attention of Chinese teenagers through a radio broadcast, Seoul Music Room that was aired in Beijing. The trend, though recognized first by the Chinese, finally spread among the Koreans themselves (Soo, 2012). The popularity of Hallyu Phenomenon led to many researchers analyzing its effects on East Asia, the Middle East and Southeast Asian regions that had shown the presence of fandom movement that nurture the success of Hallyu culture (Roll, 2020). According to Roll, the Korea Foundation reported a 89 million hallyu fans in 113 countries in 2019 where over 70 million lived in Asia and Oceania, 11.8 million in the Americas and 6.6 million in Europe.