On the Link Between the Success of K-pop Groups in the European and American Markets and the Consumer Preferences of the Fan Base

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Abstract. This study analyzes the K-pop craze that is spreading globally, as well as analyzes the success of K-pop that has broadened to Europe and the United States, not only in Asia. In order to do so, this paper analyzes the effective strategies needed to further develop K-pop in Europe and the United States after observing the success of the existing K-pop in Asia and China, based on actual cases, and analyze the important reasons for the success of K-pop, which are the entertainment company (systematic production by planning companies and systematic communication methods), the active use of social media, the consumers (the love and preference of the huge fan base), and the performers (perfection of singing, choreography and image). On the other hand, nowadays, as K-pop continues to broaden its market in Europe and the United States, it is possible to find the tipping point of a tendency towards homogenized music and insufficient characteristics of K-pop's strong commerciality and insufficient systematic business model, in order to overcome this phenomenon and thus to gain insights from existing success stories.

Keywords: K-pop, Chinese pop music market, consumer choice, global popularity.

1. Introduction

Korean pop music has gained worldwide attention through the spread of K-pop, which began in the 1990s and has become the centerpiece of the Korean Wave. Not only in Korea but also in Southeast Asia and the United States, it is common for teenagers to listen to Korean music and become fans of Korean artists. Especially since the 2010s, the popularity of K-pop has spread beyond Asia to the United States, South America, Europe, and other major cultural content countries, which is seen as a potential and huge opportunity for Korea's economic and social development in various aspects. The government and corporations are not hesitant to support and invest in the industry. In fact, the export of K-pop and Hallyu cultural content around the world has created many opportunities, not only for direct export but also for the improvement of the country's image. The tourism industry and other related add-on industries have been the driving force behind the emergence of Korean popular culture as a commodity for the outside world, and the government has been supporting the K-pop trend through various policies to make the trend even more widespread. The potential of cultural content in new markets is creating opportunities for a wide range of industries. Across Asian countries, after 2018, Korean pop music has just about opened the mainstream music market in Europe and America. The previous controversy about whether many K-pop popularity can exist and grow in other countries is constantly dispelled. In this study, BTS and the company behind it, HYBE, will be chosen to be analyzed as a successful case of Korean pop music opening the European and American markets, as well as analyzing the influence and integration of k pop in the Chinese pop music market and the European and American pop music markets. The objective of this study is to study K-pop and consumer preferences based on understanding the basic status quo of K-pop in each mainstream music market and to explore ways to make k pop more successful in the global music market through the benchmarking effect in already successful examples. From 1990 to the present, the k pop industry has experienced approximately 30 years of development, and after the success in Asia, especially in China and Southeast Asia, the major Korean entertainment companies SM, JYP, YG, and HYBE have had strong ambitions to develop the American as well as the European markets. In addition, the successful landing of the group BTS in their home countries of Europe and the United

States has also paved a new way for other k pop idols. This study can find the tipping point between the strong commerciality of K-pop and the insufficiency of the business model according to the different consumer preferences and provide development ideas and inspiration for K-pop music that tends to be homogenized.

2. Hybe and BTS

2.1. Hybe Corporation

HYBE Corporation (formerly known as Big Hit Entertainment) is a South Korean entertainment company founded in 2005 and headquartered in Seoul. The company was founded by Bang Si-hyuk (Bang PD) and is one of the most famous and successful entertainment companies in South Korea. HYBE has achieved great success in South Korea and globally through its artists and music industry. With globally recognized artists BTS and other promising new generation artists. The company has achieved remarkable success in both the music industry and the global market, as well as a commitment to social responsibility and philanthropy. On February 13, 2023, Hybe donated 500 million won through Save the Children to help the Turkey-Syria Earthquake. [1] In addition to this, many artists within the company are actively involved in charitable causes, such as BTS's Jin who has been donating monthly to UNICEF Korea since 2018 when he requested that his donations be kept secret. In May 2019, he joined the UNICEF Honor Club for donating more than 100 million won (approximately $84,000), and eventually, this information was made public." [2] In addition to donation drives, Hybe and its artists have also spoken out for sexual minorities to provide a more inclusive public opinion, with BTS member Suga speaking out about mental health and supporting equality for the LGBTQ+ community. [3] As HYBE continues to expand its global reach, its position in the Korean entertainment industry will remain strong and important.

2.2. BTS and HYBE: Pioneers of Global Success

One of the most notable success stories in K-pop history is the rise of the seven-member boy band BTS and the rise of HYBE Corporation (formerly Big Hit Entertainment). Bang tan Sonyeondan (BTS), is a South Korean boy group launched on June 13, 2013, by Big Hit Entertainment. At the time, Big Hit Entertainment's CEO and producer Bang Si-hyuk wanted to create a hip-hop boy group. The leader of the group is Kim Nam-Joon (RM), who was born on September 12, 1994, in Seoul and was an underground rapper for RunchRanda before joining. He is the main producer and spokesperson for BTS songs, injecting a strong hip-hop style that breaks the traditional K-pop mold and leads the group to success. Kimseokjin (Jin), born December 4, 1992, in Gwacheon, Gyeonggi-do, is the oldest member of the group, serving as the vocal line and frontman. Prior to joining Big Hit Entertainment, he studied at Konkuk University's Film Acting Department before being discovered by a talent scout and joining BTS. Min Yoon-gi (Suga/AgustD), born March 9, 1993, in Daegu City. Initially joined Big Hit Entertainment as a music producer, writing several songs for the group and later producing songs by other Korean artists. Jung Ho Seok (J-Hope), born February 18, 1994, in Gwangju City. He was active as a dancer before joining the group, but after his debut, he taught himself arranging and lyrics and became a member of the Rap line. He collaborated with rapper Becky G on the hit single 'Chicken Noodle Soup'. Park Jimin was born on October 13, 1995, in Busan. Was the principal of modern dance at Busan Arts High School. Joined the group as a member of the vocal line.2023 released the album Like Crazy, the title track of which made him the first Korean solo artist to top the Hot 100. Kim Tae-hyung (V) was born on December 30, 1995, in Daegu City. He was a secret member before his debut but won fans with his handsome appearance and strong stage performance style. Jeon Jung Kook (JK), born on September 1, 1997, in Busan, is the youngest member of the group. He won global fans with his exceptional talent and sang the theme song "Dreamers" for the 2022 FIFA World Cup Qatar. 2023's debut SOLO single "Seven" with rapper Latto skyrocketed to the top of the Billboard Hot 100 chart, making him the team's second SOLO artist and second in K-Pop history to skyrocket to the top of that chart.

BTS' unprecedented success on the international music scene has been groundbreaking, setting a new standard for K-pop artists around the world. They have created diverse and emotionally resonant music and an honest and authentic image that has created a strong emotional connection with their fans. Their active use of social media to engage with their fans, stellar stage performances, and global promotional strategies have gained them worldwide visibility. The team's close collaboration, positive social impact, and active philanthropic involvement have also earned them greater recognition, together shaping a unique and compelling success story.

The cases of BTS and HYBE are examples of K-pop's successful entry into the European and American markets. BTS has become one of the most influential music groups in the world through careful planning, innovative marketing strategies, and the cultivation of authentic relationships with fans. Through careful planning, innovative marketing strategies, and cultivating authentic relationships with fans, BTS has become one of the most influential music groups in the world. This study will delve into the factors behind their success and explore how they have carved out a unique path in the highly competitive global music industry.

2.3. Market reflection/consumer preference

BTS's music is one of their greatest strengths. Their songs are known for their positive lyrics, diverse musical styles and strong expressions. Consumers like their songs because they convey inspirational messages that can help them get through difficult times, while also displaying youthful vigor and emotional resonance. [4]

Not only does BTS have a diverse musical repertoire, but they are also loved by their fans for their outstanding stage presence and superb dancing skills. Their energetic and passionate stage performances showcase professional dancing and acting skills that have captured the attention of audiences around the globe. In addition, each member of BTS has constructed a unique personal brand that caters to consumer's individual preferences. Fans often develop an emotional connection with their favorite members, supporting their solo music, fashion brand endorsements, and charitable activities. BTS members actively appear on social media, especially Twitter and Instagram, in addition to a dedicated live platform for fan interactions called Weverse, where BTS maintains close interactions with their fans, sharing their daily lives, photos from the practice room, and thank-you notes. deepening the closeness of fans to them. They also actively participate in fan events such as meet-and-greets, online live streaming and birthday celebrations, where direct interaction strengthens fans' loyalty and support for BTS. [5] Through their lyrics and behaviors, BTS conveys positive cultural and social values, encouraging self-esteem, focusing on social issues, and delivering messages of unity and peace. This makes BTS not only a music icon but also a cultural totem in the minds of empathetic consumers.

3. Chinese Pop Music Market the European and American Markets

3.1. Influence of K-pop

The influence of K-pop on the Chinese pop music market has been significant and far-reaching. Since the late 1990s, Korean pop music has gradually entered China, and over time, K-pop has become one of the favorite music genres of China's younger generation. The popularity of K-pop in China has driven the Korean music industry to expand its market share in China. Although in 2016 China enacted the Korean Restriction Order (During the Korean Restriction Order, the Chinese government banned South Korean celebrity artists from performing and engaging in activities in China, canceled the broadcast of South Korean TV dramas, variety shows, and movies in China, and censored and blocked South Korean artists and products.) [6] With the easing of Sino-Korean relations, more and more K-pop artists have organized concerts and concerts in China, attracting many viewers and fans, and laying a solid foundation for the development of the K-pop industry in the Chinese market.

China's online music platforms, social media, and video-sharing platforms such as QQ Music, Kugou Music, Weibo, and Jitterbug have played an important role in the spread of K-pop. the massive distribution of K-pop music videos and stage performances on these platforms has allowed more Chinese audiences to be exposed to, and enjoy, K-pop music. Overall, the impact of K-pop on the Chinese pop music market has been positive, promoting cultural exchanges and cooperation in the entertainment industry between the two countries. K-pop's popularity among young Chinese continues to grow, creating more opportunities for the Korean music industry to develop in the Chinese market. [7] At the same time, the Chinese music industry has benefited from the exchange and integration with K-pop, promoting innovation and development of the Chinese pop music industry.

3.2. Differences between Local Chinese Music and K-pop

There are significant differences between the music styles of Chinese local music and K-pop. Chinese local music tends to fuse traditional Chinese music elements with modern pop music, presenting a variety of national characteristics. In contrast, K-pop, as a Korean pop music genre, mainly focuses on styles such as pop, dance and hip-hop, emphasizing dance and visual effects. These differences in music reflect their respective cultural backgrounds. Native Chinese music reflects China's deep history and cultural traditions, and the lyrics often relate to traditional Chinese culture, historical stories, and social realities. [8] On the other hand, K-pop lyrics are more diverse in theme, covering various aspects such as youth, love, friendship, and social issues, and are more internationalized. There are also differences in the training and production of artists. In China, the local music industry usually trains newcomers and creates star artists through talent shows and training camps. In contrast, K-pop entertainment companies provide long-term training for interns to produce complete idol groups, which emphasize teamwork and image unity among members. [9] In addition, social media and fan culture are also significant differences between the two. K-pop has many fans on social media, who usually organize huge fan groups and actively participate in online voting, social activities, and supporting artists. In contrast, the fan culture of local Chinese music is relatively small.

Taken together, there are significant differences between Chinese local music and K-pop in terms of music style, cultural background, artist development, and fan culture. These differences reflect the different music industries and cultural characteristics of the two regions.

4. The European and American markets

4.1. Differences between European and American Pop Music and K-pop

In terms of language, European and American pop music is usually sung in English, as English is an internationally recognized language that helps spread globally. In contrast, K-pop is usually sung in Korean, which remains the main language of K-pop singing, although some K-pop groups and singers have begun to experiment with English songs in recent years.

In terms of artist image, European and American pop music focuses on the individuality and independence of artists, who usually have their own creativity and musical style, emphasizing their personal musical talent and artistic expression. K-pop, on the other hand, usually exists as a group, emphasizing teamwork and image unity, with a clear division of roles among its members. idols in the K-pop category usually present a positive image, and negative press is usually not allowed. These differences are shown in the presentation and image-building of artists in both music genres.

4.2. Integration of K-pop and the European and American Markets

The integration of K-pop and the European and American markets is a notable trend in the globalization of the music industry in recent years. On the one hand, more and more K-pop artists and groups have begun to operate in the European and American markets. They hold European and American tours, participate in international music festivals and award ceremonies, and attract many

European and American fans. Some K-pop groups have also cooperated with European and American singers to jointly release collaborative singles, promoting the exchange and integration of the two music cultures [10].

On the other hand, the European and American music markets have also begun to be influenced by K-pop. Some European and American singers and music producers drew inspiration from K-pop and introduced elements and styles of K-pop, such as dance choreography, fashion styling and visual effects. [10] These influences have made European and American music more diversified and internationalized, enriching the style and creativity of European and American music.

5. Summary

Korean pop music K-pop has been spreading since the 1990s, and now it has become a cultural phenomenon that has gained worldwide attention, spreading across Asian countries to significant countries such as the U.S., South America, and Europe. The success of K-pop has not only been a triumph for the cultural industry but has also become an essential opportunity for the economic and social development of South Korea. The Korean entertainment company HYBE and its group BTS have become a typical example of success in the European and American markets, while the Chinese pop music market has also been significantly influenced by K-pop. The integration of K-pop in the European and American markets is a notable trend in the globalization of the music industry. More and more K-pop artists began to carry out activities in the European and American markets, generating exchanges and cooperation with European and American music. To a certain extent, the inherent business model of K-pop and the singularity of music works have been broken. At the same time, the European and American music markets have also begun to be influenced by K-pop, and some European and American singers and music producers have drawn inspiration from K-pop and introduced K-pop elements and styles, enriching the creativity of European and American music. This fusion promotes cross-cultural exchanges and cooperation, allowing different music cultures to learn from each other and draw on each other's experiences, bringing more creativity and possibilities to the music industry and attracting more fans. The consumption preference of K-pop fans plays a crucial role in the continued development of K-pop in the European and American markets. The enthusiastic support and active participation of fans have not only helped K-pop achieve success in the European and American markets but also provided a strong impetus for the continued development of K-pop globally. the close cooperation between K-pop fans and idol groups and companies has collectively contributed to the growing influence of K-pop in the European and American markets and has facilitated the global spread and popularization of K-pop music.

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