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### **KOREAN WAVE EFFECT ON MALAYSIAN CULTURE**

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#### **1.0 ABSTRACT**

Korean wave also known as *hallyu*, a Chinese term which refers to the significant increase in the global popularity of South Korean entertainment and culture in Asia and more recently in other parts of the world. Malaysia is presently influenced with Korean fever in all local industries such as fashion, foods and cosmetics. South Korea is a famous for its excessive use of plastic surgery. In 2016, South Korea was ranked third in the world for the number of plastic surgeons. Almost every artist required to do a plastic surgery by their employer's company. In Malaysia people have become more insecure with their physical feature because of the trend in putting a perfect woman or man physical feature in front resulting people. In December 2017, SHINee frontman, Kim Jonghyun was found dead in his apartment for apparent near Dataran Merdeka in the capital for a candlelight vigil in memory of him. The Federal Territories mufti however warned Muslims against being obsessed to the point of abandoning principles of the religion or following "foreign cultures" when it comes to mourning of dead. The researcher used qualitative in depth interview. In this research, the research used Cultivation theory in three terms which is in terms of fashion, language and beauty. The findings of the research found that majority of the interviewee agree that people indeed get easily influenced by the beauty of the K-pop artist. They all believe with beauty we can be more confident and be able to attract people's attention.

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Korean wave also known as *hallyu*, a Chinese term which refers to the significant increase in the global popularity of South Korean entertainment and culture in Asia, and more recently in other parts of the world. Malaysia is presently influenced with Korean fever in all local industries such as fashion, foods and cosmetics. K-music, K-dramas, and K-culture were built as a grip in the country with the youth generation became fascinated

towards South Korean cultural descriptions. Trends related to South Korea are growing rapidly within a short amount of time, that dominates more consumption of Korean goods rather than local products. This produces thousands of business opportunities for entrepreneurs to take benefit of the K-wave to increase consumerism. The founder of Malaysian ranch of the World Federation of Overseas Korean Trades' Association (World OKTA) enhances business information exchange between Korean and Malaysian entrepreneurs has allowed Korean beauty craze to flourish efficiently in this country (Cho, 2010).

Koreans unities are such as their obsession with beauty that leads to extreme practice of facial surgery and respectful manners due to seniority puts Koreans' society in two extremes which are putting priority in mechanical appearance and human behaviour. The truth, the response of K-Wave is still a wayward in Malaysia as Korean frenzy also brought with its negative potential towards the country. Issues such as rivalries between local products and Korean products and harmful obsession especially in getting flawless fair skin ensues, warning Malaysians of Korean ethnocentrism that originated from different ethnicities that had already embraced the diverse looks they inherited from their families. According to Ha (2010), the acceptance of Hallyu in Malaysia in which 3.15% of Malaysians living in Kuala Lumpur found Korean culture to be impressive whereas another 3.15% express interest in experiencing more of the culture itself.

## **1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

South Korea is famous for its excessive use of plastic surgery. In 2016, South Korea was ranked third in the world for the number of plastic surgeons, 2,330, according to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS, 2016). Almost every artist required to do a plastic surgery by their employer's company. Korean people themselves does not look like all the artist that featured in the commercial, music video and many more. In Malaysia people have become more insecure with their physical feature because of the trend in putting a perfect woman or man physical feature in front resulting people to feel self-conscious about their own body as they might not live up to Korean beauty standards. By creating advertisements with unrealistic images of beauty, it has resulted in anxiety, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence in many women. Most of these negative emotions stems from unhappiness among body and appearance (Britton A.M., 2012) For example, in the advertisement, film or any sort of print media. Next, in December 2017, SHINee frontman,

Kim Jonghyun was found dead in his apartment for apparent suicide (Amly, W. S. 2017). A few days later in Malaysia, more than 100 fans of the late Kim Jonghyun from various ethnic and religious backgrounds gathered near Dataran Merdeka in the capital for a candlelight vigil in memory of him. The Federal Territories mufti however warned Muslims against being obsessed to the point of abandoning principles of the religion or following “foreign cultures” when it comes to mourning the dead. “As Muslims, we must not be swayed by foreign cultures when mourning. Islam puts specific guidelines and manners when it comes to the ethics of mourning,” he said in a statement. “Muslims must have a personal identity and must not easily be swayed by non-Muslims’ cultures in this matter. At the same time, the love for an artist does not require us to be too obsessed until we abandon the principles of a Muslim.” (Amly, W. S. 2017) This shows how the obsession towards Korean artist may lead to immoral behaviour. Last but not least, the oversexualized of K-pop artist. Company always hope to gain money by promoting their idols and unfortunately, more skin showing equals to more view which increasing the revenue. Artists are encouraged to imitate dances that represent thrusting and humping. South China Morning Post state that “while K-pop songs and music videos may be becoming more sexually charged, South Korea remains a conservative society and female stars in particular are expected to keep their assets under cover or risk incurring the wrath of the country’s moral guardians” (South China Morning Post, 2019). As this is shown to people from all kind of ages and background, it may have some bad implication to them.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. In your opinion, why some people are easily influenced with the beauty of K-pop artists.
2. Why some K-pop fans do mourn even though they know that it is not applied in our culture.
3. Why some people still can accept oversexualized of K-pop artist in Malaysia which it is wrong in Islam.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Reasons people are so easily influenced with the beauty of K-pop artists.**

Asian women also share a similar perception of beauty and skin colour. In Korea 'whitening' skin product is popular because white skin is equal with beauty. The description of a woman's skin as 'Jade white' has been a mutual expression for praising her beauty in both Korea and China. There are poems from Tang Dynasty in China that described women as 'Jade white' and 'creamy tinted'. According to the study by Eric P.H. Li, 2008, contemporary meanings of whiteness in Asia are influenced by Western ideologies as well as traditional Asian values and beliefs. They concluded that skin whitening and lightening products not only promise to fulfil the desire for white and fair skin as a route to higher status, but also empower women to control their own bodies and alter nature.

Next, since the commercial and product brand image are critical features of the cosmetics industry, star marketing method of the Korean companies is thought to have greatly contributed to the success of Korean cosmetics in the Asian countries. For example, Laneige, one of the well-known cosmetics brand made a contract for product advertisement with an actress Song Hye-Kyo in 2008. The actress achieved stardom in Asia for her appearances in successful TV Korean and commonly appeared in Chinese movies. One of the probable reasons why Korean cultural contents have become so popular in Asian countries may be due to the beautiful faces of Korean artists. Since the concept of beauty can be shared in the exact regions, the rise of the Korean wave might explain the explosive spread increase of Korean cosmetics to Asian nations in the current years. (Park, 2015)

According to a report, men in South Korea buy more cosmetics than men in any other country that has a girl K-pop artist as an ambassador. The industry is worth more than \$1 billion and is expected to only double in the next couple of years, making the endorsements an even better marketing strategy. This way, brands can capture two markets. Korean brands have practicality figured out how to sell beauty to both women and men. Men want to look like these swag-y guys who are the pinnacle of male beauty. Women want to feel closer to K-pop artists by using their products. It's also not uncommon to see band members like Baekhyun of EXO wearing eyeliner. Men's beauty is going to become huge thanks to K-pop, it's a globalized world. K-pop would not be where it is today without fashion. What began with K-pop moved on to a global obsession with

Korean television and film. A fad quickly became a trend and then a movement. Fans were keen to dress like their Korean idols (Rahman, 2015)

“K-beauty would never have become big if it weren't for celebrities who unofficially became brand ambassadors simply by showing their beautiful complexions to the world,” David Yi, creator of Very Good Light, tells us. The celebrities he speaks of are K-pop stars, predominately. Bands like Wanna One, BTS, and EXO have all been tapped by South Korean brands over the years to collaborate on different products and lines. Korean pop stars are setting the trends not only in Asia but globally. When a Korean pop star endorses one single brand, it turns into a global sensation. That says a lot about the power of Korean pop culture and it's only going to become bigger. In Korea, endorsements come across as more believable because things like skin care are such a huge part of their culture. A celebrity endorsement holds a different type of weight in the Asian market (Bryant, 2018)

In this research, the researcher used Cultivation theory. Firstly, in terms of fashion. It is because the Korean fans are too obsessed with the K-pop artists. As observed by the researchers nowadays there are a lot of people are too obsessed with Korea. For example, they try their best to be like their idol. Most of young people nowadays try to copy the way how the K-pop artist style as shown in television such as Korean drama and Korean music video. They try to imitate on how to dress up, make up and many more. They spend their money to buy Korean cloths to make sure that they look like a Korean people. This example has proven that television has a negative influence on our culture

### **Mourn Culture**

In December 2017, the world is shocked by the sudden death famous Korean singer, Jonghyun the frontman of Kpop pop group for apparent suicide in his apartment. The aftermath of the events also causing a controversial topic where there are more than 100 Malaysian fans of Kim Jonghyun gathered together to mourn him by a candlelight vigil ceremony. The Federal Territories mufti warned Muslims against being obsessed to the point of abandoning principles of the religion or following “foreign cultures” when it comes to mourning the dead. “As Muslims, we must not be swayed by foreign cultures when mourning. Islam puts specific guidelines and manners when it comes to the ethics of mourning,” he said in a statement. “Muslims must have a personal identity and must not easily be swayed by non-Muslims’ cultures in this matter. At the same time, the love for an artist does not require us to be too obsessed until we abandon the principles of a Muslim.”

(Amly, W. S. 2017) This shows how the obsession towards Korean artist may lead to immoral behaviour.

Based on Cambridge English Dictionary, obsession can be defined as an adjectives that describe the act of unable to stop thinking about something; too interested in or worried about something (Cambridge, 2019) In Korean entertainment industry there is a specific term that describe this obsessive fans which is Sasaeng. Sasaeng comes from the Korean words Sa meaning "private" and Saeng meaning "life," in reference to the fans' intrusion into the celebrities' private lives (Sun-Hwa, D. 2018) "People, especially teenagers, in Korea are lacking opportunities to enjoy cultural activities, which I believe is one of the crucial factors that gave birth to numerous 'sasaeng,' (Keum-Joo, K. 2108). Kwak Keum-joo, a professor of psychology at Seoul National University, told The Korea Times. Kwak said: "In their early days, they mostly watch television and listen to K-pop, instead of enjoying a variety of hobbies such as playing instruments and doing sports. They do not have other pastimes except for 'fangirling' or 'fanboying,' hence get obsessed with the only hobby to the degree that it inflicts damage on the stars" (Keum-Joo, K. 2108). She added that the media is partly responsible for the phenomenon, as they focus too much on hallyu and K-pop these days, not allowing people to appreciate diversity. "Hallyu has apparently enhanced national prestige, as the case of boy band substantiates but it also gave rise to 'sasaeng' and obsession, which I regard as the ill effects of the fever" (Keum-Joo, K. 2108). She also described such behaviour as an act of self-display, rather than a "delusional disorder" (Keum-Joo, K. 2108)

This literature review shows that these obsessive K-pop fans can bring more harm than good. There is a case where an obsessive K-Pop fangirl that makes her dad cry on television show called Hello Counsellor as she spends about \$10,000 on merchandise and she also failed her entire year of middle school. (C. Samson, 2019) This immoral behavior is one of the many harms causes by these obsessed fans. People are willing to do anything to meet their dreadful desire. The mourning of a deceased that causes clash among culture is one of the many examples. In conclusion, people need to control their needs and desire so that it will not harm or cause any controversies.

## **Oversexualized of K-pop artist in Malaysia**

Most of East Asia remains controlled by the established of gender roles that include conservative ideas about exposing skin, although ideas about what to cover varies in the region. It is unsurprising, then, that K-pop's revealing clothing and suggestive dance moves can stir debate. In the Republic of Korea, and in areas influenced by K-pop, fan utilization of K-pop idols' videos and live performances proves to be a powerful force for instilling feminine ideals and constructing femininity. In Korea, how popular music is displayed whether through the media, blogs, or websites for distributing media provides a dominant example of how "attractive" women behave, while teaching everyone what type of woman is attractive. This is important because girls and women are pressured to "manufacture themselves into objects of desirability" according to the example set by popular culture. Epstein and Joo connect the dress and actions of these stars with the growth in plastic surgery and changing fashions in Korea and beyond (Saeji, 2013).

The researches of culture and performance have proposed various approaches that reflect the personal volition of the consumer while acknowledging the power of media (Saeji, 2013). Victoria Alexander speaks of the impact of popular culture on the consumer in terms of "shaping approaches". Shaping theories argue that works of art are impregnated (by the creator) with ideas that, when consumed, give birth to certain perceptions and actions by the consumers. Various scholars have addressed how women are depicted in music through visual appearance, demonstrations of expert ability (writing songs, playing instruments) and song lyrics. The backstage processes have been studied by Lucy Green (1997), who examines the role of gender in music education, and front and backstage has been addressed by Susan McClary (2002), who questions the processes that have led to the construction of staged representations of femininity(Saeji, 2013).

Next, the implications in the highly suggestive music video are not restricted to the sexualization of white women but it is in the usage of female sexuality to represent K-pop and Korea's successful integration into the neoliberal realm, and the markers of achievement that creates oppressive and exploitative conditions for women (Kim, 2012). The presentation of morphing Korean female sexuality in K-pop through infantilization and fetishized vulnerable erotic commodities exists not only in the music genre and in the psyche of its consumers but in the realities of Korean society as well as other regions that K-pop extends its influence on the K-pop industry is currently under a lot of scrutiny for its sexist, exploitative, violent, and dehumanizing practices that have become regular forms of



governance. Contrary to the portrayal of Korea and its cultural ambassadors to be perfectly constructed and readily consumable good, where a dominant patriarchy exists to address the need to act as a guardian for its vulnerable and precious feminized figures (Kim, 2012).

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

Based on research topic which is “Korean Wave Effect of Malaysia Culture”, the researcher use qualitative research method. For the qualitative method, researchers used in depth interview method to gain information about the research topic. Interview is an open-ended question with the selected people to gain more information and details. During the interview, researchers and the interviewee would have a very relax and interview for a better communication and interaction. The researchers agreed to choose people from different ages, cultures and races for interview. It is because the researchers want to know how the Korean wave effect the society in this Malaysia (Ridzuan, Ridzuan and Ridzuan, 2018)

### Details about interviewee

- 1) The first person be the interviewee is Muhammad Haziq Bin Rozlan. He is 19 years old and he also student at UiTM Melaka. He very like the BTS group because of their song and their step. He easy to remember their dance step and their song. He said that their song very nice to listen and it make the one reason why he loves to that group.
- 2) Wan Kamilah Binti Wan Yahya be the next interviewee for this research. She is 20 years old and study at UiTM Sri Iskandar in bachelor’s in architecture. She loves the BTS group because for her that group is very nice and their song have a good theory for us. She also like to watch the K-drama such as Sky Castle.
- 3) Marini Annisa Binti Zainal an accounting student from UiTM Cawangan Melaka KampusAlor Gajah will be the next interviewee from this searcher. She very obsesses with the girls K-pop band such as Black Pink. Her very addicted with their lyric and their dance.
- 4) However, Amelia Marissa Abd Hadi were the next interviewee to this research. She is 20 years old and a student from UiTM Cawangan Johor KampusSegamat in Diploma of Computer Science. She loved everything about Korea such as their song, drama and fashion. She like their drama because the Korea drama quite different from other country. Although their concepts kind of the same but their storyline a different. The first K-drama she like is Kings2Hearts.



- 5) Furthermore, the researchers choose student from UTM Kuala Lumpur. His name Muhammad Adley Bin Khairuddin and his study on Diploma in Quantity Survey. He like the Korean because of their fashion sense. He also like in term of how the Korea people make or portrait their world to our eyes using their song and their drama.
- 6) Lastly is Siti Zulaikha Binti Zulkefli. She is 20 years old and study in Applied Science at UiTM Tapah. She loves to watch to Korean because they took an initiative to know their fans through their music. Plus, their lyrics are so beautiful and linked to teenagers. For her opinion, she not like them because of their visual but it's because of their talents and their hard works in producing good music from zero to who they are now, a worldwide influential artist.

#### **4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

##### **QUESTION 1:**

**In your opinion, why some people are easily influenced with the beauty of K-pop artists?**

##### **i) Plastic Surgery**

Candidate A, HaziqRozlan believe that if the Korean artists do a plastic surgery it will make his/her more influence by the people around the world. It's because the people always want to watch the beautiful things in their eyes. For nowadays the Korean artists is the famous influencer in the world because they have the beauty face and perfect body effect from the plastic surgery. So the first respondent believe this point is the stronger reason why Korean artist can be the famous influencer artists in this world nowadays.

##### **ii) Facial Treatment**

Majority of the respondent state that the facial treatment is the reason why the Korean artists can get their face beautiful or handsome . The treatment means about the product their used and how the control the hygiene for their face. Many of them said this point make the people around the world especially in Malaysia want be like them. The Malaysian adore them not just about their talent but also their physical attribute especially. Almost all the candidate gives the similar answer except Candidate A.

## QUESTION 2:

**Why some K-pop fans do mourn even though they know that is not applied in our culture?**

i) **People becomes their own real-life crush/life partner**

According to Muhammad Haziq Bin Rozlan, K-pop artist are idolized by their fans heavily as if they became their own real life crush/life partner. Due to their attractiveness, the fans became too attached to them to a point where they would do anything if the artists request them to do. For an example, a case of suicide among SHINEE member Jonghyun causing Islamic female fans around the world especially Malaysia to gather together and mourned about the passing of Jonghyun however in Islam it is prohibited as the victim is not a Muslim. Moreover, some claimed that k-pop fans used the k-pop artists as their motivation to carry on with their lives and due to their passing especially the death of Jonghyun, they lost motivation to carry on as if they had lost their life partner.

Muhammad Adley also stated that, it can be related to the over obsession that some people had towards this kind of artist. Some people filled their room with the face of their idol, some fans dedicated their life for this artist whether in meeting them, buy their merchandise and many more. They take these artists, idolized them so much that they become a part of their life.

ii) **People tend to be over reacted when they see something they like**

People tend to be over reacted when they see something they like. In that case, they tend to mourn over their kpop artist just to express their feelings toward them and to show much they love them. This statement is agreed by candidate D, Amelia Marissa

iii) **Kpop were too influenced and thought they did a good thing**

Fans were too influenced and thought they did a good thing by remembering someone who passed away by showing some consolations to them. But in another hand, they over did it by mourn over someone that not related to them nor their family. So i think its lead to misconceptions here, as stated by Siti Zulaikha.

**Conclusion Remarks**  
Based on the interview session that has been conducted by the researchers, there are 3 factors can be found in why Kpop fans mourn even though they know that is not applied in our culture. 3 factors that are people becomes their own real life crush/life partners, people tend to over reacted when they see something they like, and Kpop were too influenced and thought they did a good thing. According to the researchers of culture and performance have

proposed various approaches that reflect the personal volition of the consumer while acknowledging the power of media (Saeji,2013)

### **QUESTION 3:**

**Why some people still can accept over sexualised of K-pop artist in Malaysia which it is wrong in Islam?**

**i) People loves to watch something that is consider pleasant to them.**

Adley Khairuddin, believes that nowadays people love to watch something that is pleasant to them and unfortunately, a sexy artist is considered pleasant to their eyes. It is no doubt that sometimes, an artist doesn't consider to be sexy also can sell and let's be real here, sexier also mean more people will see. If more people see that's means the K-pop artist will gain more profit and not enough, sometimes they throw a little sexy dance too, so it will attract even more people to see.

Other than that, he stated that even though it is haram in Islam, a simple man or woman that is not too religious will still watch it as they think that it is not a big of a deal. This also shows how sins have been normalized these days and so many people do it and it is not considered as a bad thing anymore.

This is also agreed by Siti Zulaikha Binti Zulkefli. She said some people watch K-pop just because of to feed their lust and they love to watch something that is pleasant to them. If we talk about sexualized of K-pop artist, it is same as other country artist and Malaysia is one of it too. People tend to blame K-pop idol rather than look our own fault.

She stated her opinion of this issues, individual spirituals of religious believe are important in this issue, if we think it is wrong we should fix this problem by doing the right things. For instance, if K-pop idol want to perform here, they should follow a few of rules or term we give to them, at the same time we give a win and win situation. For example, they must stop during azan or wear a proper performing costume. We will give them money and convenience place to stay.

**ii) People began to apply the way of liberal thinking.**

Based on Muhammad Haziq Bin Rozlan opinion, in this modern era people began to start implementing the use of freedom of doing anything as a human being and starting to apply the liberal thinking in their life which is the way of thinking that everything based on logic and it is acceptable by the society. K-pop fans in Malaysia accept the oversexualized K-pop artist because in their mind it is part of their culture for expressing in a certain manner and they have the freedom of doing whatever they want as long it is based on logic and acceptable for

the society. This statement is supported by Wan Kamilah Binti Yahya, as she said some people take and accept the matters in a liberal thinking and they did not dependable on the Quran and Sunnah like taking the wrong idea of as long as it didn't harmful and bad, so it is okay in Islam.

**iii) People tend to watch it just to see the chemistry.**

According to Marini Anissa Bt Zainal, she said "we don't accept the sexualised of the K-pop, but we tend to watch it just to see the chemistry of K-pop artist. People still can accept oversexualized of K-pop artist in Malaysia even though it is wrong Islam because some people think sexualising other people is normal, so they just take this thing slightly.

**iv) Oversexualizing people is wrong on every level.**

Over sexualizing people is just wrong on every level. It is same as a guy catcalling women on the streets. She said some people say, "That's just how it is" but take a step back, isn't it just sad that is the truth of our society? She thinks that it is sick that people would react so normally towards this behaviour. It should not be accepted at all. Over sexualizing does not only apply to women, it also applies to men. K-pop artists, sadly, is also a target people to sexualize. It is worse for them because the world knows them because their pictures are everywhere and that makes it easier for people to sexualize them but in the end, they are humans too. They feel things too, according to Amelia Marissa.

Amelia stated that next time before you think of sexualizing someone, take a step back and think. "Would you want it to happen to your loved ones?" said Amelia. She said that it is a gross and disgusting behaviour. She hopes people are more aware of this problem and not just give it a shoulder brush but try to change this "norm".

### **CONCLUSION REMARKS**

Based on the interview session that has been conducted by the researchers, there are four factors of why some people still can accept oversexualized of K-pop artist in Malaysia which it is wrong in Islam. The four factors are people loves to watch something that is consider pleasant to them, people began to apply the way of liberal thinking, people tend to watch it just to see the chemistry and oversexualizing people is wrong on every level. According to the researchers of culture and performance have proposed various approaches that reflect the personal volition of the consumer while acknowledging the power of media (Saeji, 2013). Vitoria Alexander speaks of the impact of popular culture on the consumer in terms of

“shaping approaches”. People still can accept the over sexualized of the K-pop artist because it has been normalized in today’s culture, but many others believe that this happen in others country too.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Korean wave has fundamentally changed the perception and overall national image of South Korea. Initially, the Korean wave was just a cultural phenomenon to a specific region however, the growth and impact far overreach expectations by influencing Malaysian people. Today, Korea is arguably one of the greatest national success stories of the 20th century. This report is to analyse the Korean wave and its implications of cultural influence on neighbouring countries. Furthermore, this research attempted to look at the Korean wave not just as a phenomenon, but also considered the impact of this phenomenon on perceptions of culture and identity by comparatively between Malaysian. Moreover, since the start of the national phenomenon, the Korean government played an active role by aiding the Korean media in publicizing Korean popular culture around the world. This global expansion penetrated and permeated various mediums of communication around the world. Because of this, the success of the Korean wave can be attributed to it being highly publicized in the media throughout the world.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

This research focused on how the Korean wave effect the Malaysian culture. Because of that, the future research could explore more on other foreign culture with different audiences and a comparison. It could also analyse Malaysian wave consumption with local or foreign audiences to appeal of Malaysian popular culture. Lastly, future research could cover the consumptions of other Western cultural products such as films, variety shows and music to get better understanding of Western wave appeal.

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