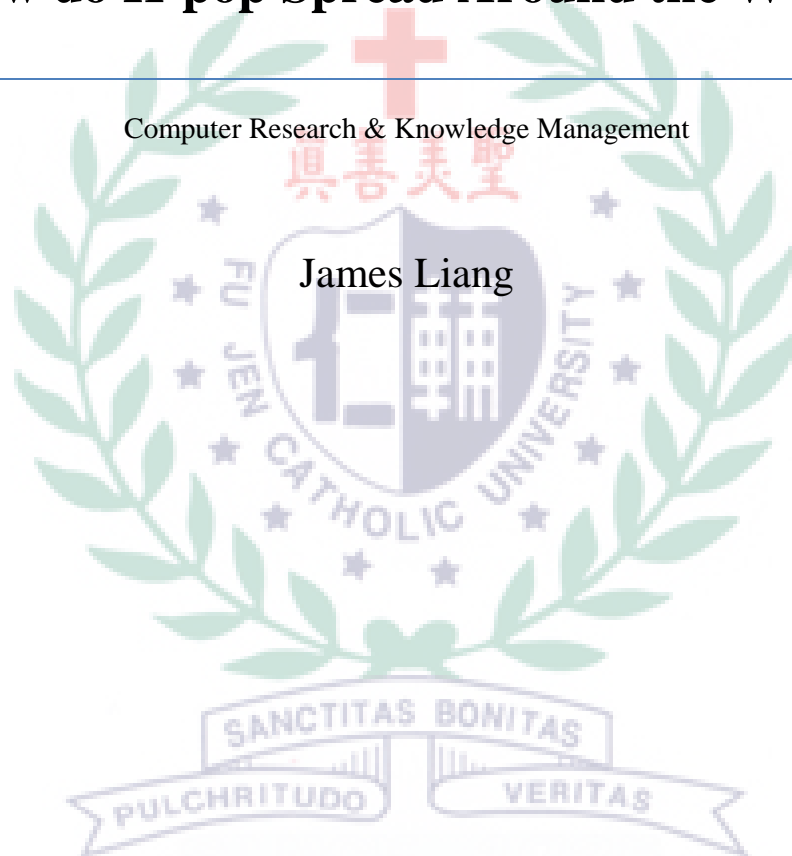


ENGLISH DEPARTMENT, FU JEN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY

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# How do K-pop Spread Around the World



Computer Research & Knowledge Management

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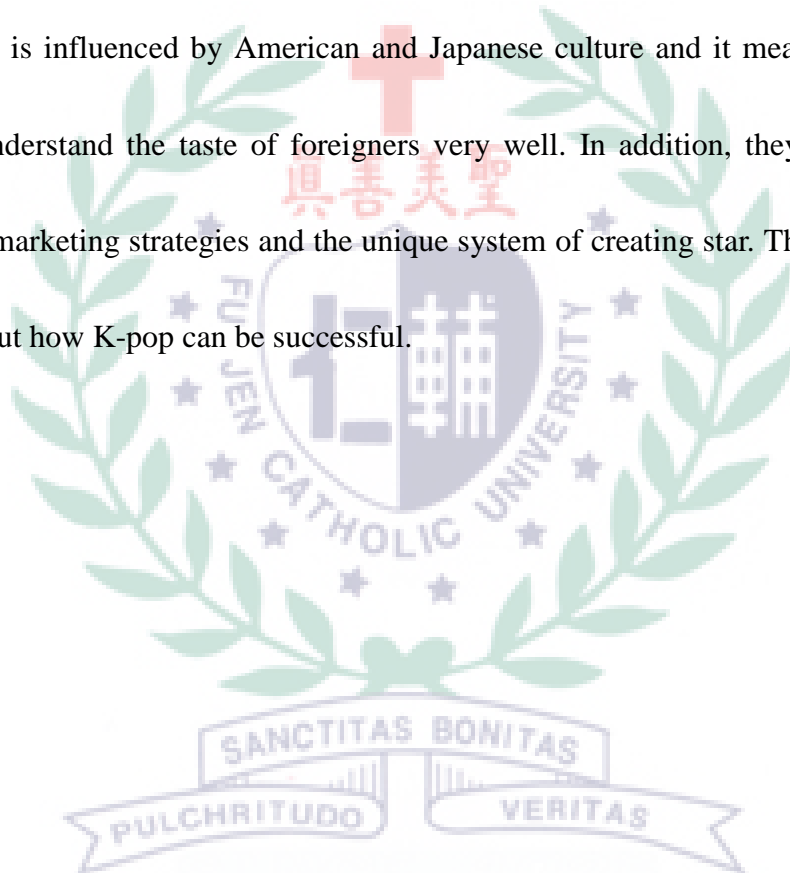
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## How do K-pop Spread Around the World

### Abstract

Nowadays, K-pop seems becomes popular in Asia and even the whole world. In fact, K-pop is influenced by American and Japanese culture and it means the talent agencies understand the taste of foreigners very well. In addition, they have many successful marketing strategies and the unique system of creating star. This essay will discuss about how K-pop can be successful.



## Introduction

K-pop is an abbreviation of Korean pop music and it was influenced by American pop music and Japanese pop music. In 1992, Seo Taiji and the Boys who was “one of the first groups to incorporate rap music and hip-hop sensibilities to South Korean popular music” (Lie 342) was the pioneer of K-pop and it influenced the music style of K-pop. Afterwards, there were some entertainment companies introducing some singers and music groups, such as H.O.T and BoA.

Since the last half of 1990s, K-pop has become popular in Asia. That is why when Korean singers came to Taiwan, there are many fans welcoming their idols in the airport and when the concerts of Korean singers were held in Taiwan, the tickets of concerts were sold out quickly. Many Taiwanese preferred to learn Korean and dance. Recently, K-pop began to march towards international market and more and more K-pop fans came from Western countries. For example, PSY's "Gangnam Style" became the most viewed video in the YouTube. In this essay, I will discuss about the success factors of K-pop and mainly focus on two questions: what is the marketing strategy of K-pop and what is the role of talent agency in K-pop?

## Literature Review

According to Park's "A study on the globalization strategy of Korean music industry - A case of 「S. M. Entertainment」", who is the manager of a Korean talent agency, suggested that the success factors of K-pop are cooperating with Internet and digital device; the training system of creating star and cooperating with foreign musicians.

According to Lee and Lin's "The Political Economical Analysis of Korean Pop Music and Talent Agencies," they mentioned that the owners of Talent Agencies understood foreign tastes and marketing strategy very well. In addition, government played important role in the K-pop industry

According to Lee's "The Visuality, Embodiment and Gender Performance of Korean Pop: A Study on the Production, Consumption and Appropriation of the MVs of Girls' Generation," Lee believed that the music video plays an important role in spreading K-pop music.

According to Lie's "What Is the K in K-pop? South Korean Popular Music, the Culture Industry, and National Identity," he stated that the reasons why K-pop can be popular in the world are not only the attractive music video; amazing dance, but also the lyrics. In fact, the lyrics of song in K-pop mixed up with some English words. For example, in Girls' Generation's popular song "Gee,"

there is an lyric gee gee gee gee baby baby baby, which poses a very low hurdle for even those challenged in their English comprehension.”(356)

According to Oh and Park’s “From B2C to B2B: Selling Korean Pop Music in the Age of New Social Media,” they mentioned that the change of “conventional business model from the audience-based B2C strategy to a new social media-dependent B2B model”(366) plays an important role in the successful of K-pop.

#### Research Methods

In this essay, I used documentary analysis and I found five academic writing about K-pop and there are three written in Chinese and two written in English.

#### Finding

The first reason why K-pop can be successful is perfect draft selection and training system. The talent agencies in Korea learned the system of draft selection and training from the talent agencies in Japan and they formed SOP of creating a new star.

According to “A study on the globalization strategy of Korean music industry - A case of 「S. M. Entertainment」,” Park made the S. M. Entertainment as a remarkable talent agency in Korea and he claims that Lee Soo-man, who is the founding chairman of S.M. Entertainment, has an successful system of creating a new star which is to draft the rookies and then training them with many courses, such as singing course

and dancing course. It may take rookies about 4-7 years to be a K-pop star. That is why K-pop stars cannot only sing and dance in the stage, but also be an actor and a host of TV shows. However, it also means that the talent agency spends a large amount of money on creating a new star. For example, SM Entertainment spent about 727 million USD on creating TVXQ, which is one of the most popular groups in SM Entertainment and they need “about 182-364 million USD on creating new star”(Park 61).

The second reason why K-pop can be successful is the role of government. In 1997, “The 1997 IMF crisis led to a massive downturn in South Korean consumption, which was grossly exacerbated by the introduction of digitized music and largely unprotected internet downloads (mp3 players were introduced in 1996).”(Lie 352) It means that Korean music industry needs to export. It made Korean government to face this question, so the president of Korea, Kim Dae-jung decided to “devote one percent of government expenditure on cultural content.” (Lie 359) Even though the government of Korea was party alternation in 2007, the new government still insisted this policy. In addition, the government of Korea founded the Korea Culture & Contents Agency to promote Korean cultural industry in the world. The most important of all, the government played an important role in protecting intellectual property rights. As many countries, most of Koreans like to download music in

Internet and it may cause the decline of music industry. However, the government of Korea encouraged Korean to download music legally and forced the websites of music download to collect fees from consumers. It cannot only make consumers' listen music conveniently, but also make entertainment companies have enough capital to create better music.

The third reason why K-pop can be successful is the talent agencies knew foreigners' tastes well. In fact, most of the remarkable founders of talent agencies are influenced by American culture and even studied in US. For example, Lee Soo-man, who is the founding chairman of S.M. Entertainment, had studied in United States and he understood the business mode of American music well. In order to break into the international market, they not only agencies invited foreign musicians to write Korean pop songs, but also cooperating with international class record label. In addition, the lyrics of song in K-pop mixed up with some English words. For example, in Girls' Generation's popular song "Gee," there is an lyric gee gee gee gee baby baby baby, which poses a very low hurdle for even those challenged in their English comprehension."(Oh et al. 356) It made foreign listener sing a song easily. The most important of all, K-pop fill "the gap left vacant by the urbanized and sexualized American performers — celebrating sex and violence, replete with tattoos."(Lie 355) In fact, the style of K-pop is attractive to teenagers and the middle class because the

style of K-pop doesn't emphasize "inner-city poverty and violence, corporal or sexual radicalism, or social deviance and cultural alienation." (Lie 355) It is different from Western pop music and it can attract the listeners who don't like the style of Western pop music.

The fourth reason why K-pop can be successful is cooperating with Internet. According to "A study on the globalization strategy of Korean music industry - A case of 「S. M. Entertainment」," the talent agencies cooperating with Internet, such as YouTube and Facebook. For example, before they released the music video or album, they will put the teaser on the YouTube because it is an important and economical way to promote K-pop. In addition, YouTube is also a way to gain profit because of the system of copyright and advertising revenues. They also made Facebook as their official website and providing the information about concert of singers.

The forth reason why K-pop can be successful is the music video. The music video is not only the most important way to promote K-pop, but also the way creating Korean female band as the Asian sexy icon. For example, in Girl's Generation's "Gee," the music video made Girl's Generation as a cute girl and it seems that the music video equate cute with Asian sexy icon.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Nowadays, it seems that the mode of K-pop is successful because they can learn



from foreign culture very well and then forming the success mode. The most important of all, they can cooperate with Internet and they are benefit from Globalization.



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