

# When Tourist Audiences Encounter Each Other: *Diverging Learning Behaviors of K-pop Fans from Japan and Indonesia\**

Andrew Eungi KIM, Fitria MAYASARI, and Ingyu OH

## Abstract

*Japanese hallyu fans who often travel to Korea after falling in love with Korean dramas or K-pop music are usually referred to as “tourist audiences.” More recently, K-pop tourist audiences come not only from Japan but also from Southeast Asia, China, Europe, and the Americas, expanding the nationality boundary of the concept. Although such tourist audiences are still predominantly female, the number of male K-pop tourist audience members is also growing slowly. In this study, we address the question of learning behavior among tourist audiences from different countries in the K-pop mecca of Seoul. Based on the notion of forward and retrospective learning, in-depth interviews with Japanese and Indonesian female K-pop fans who have encountered fans from other countries were conducted in order to delineate differing patterns of learning behavior. We find that forward learners from Indonesia actively engage in meeting Korean, Chinese, and Japanese fans, whereas retrospective learners from Japan are very reluctant to meet Chinese or Indonesian fans, although they were somewhat interested in meeting their North American or Western counterparts.*

**Keywords:** K-pop, tourist audiences, forward learning, retrospective learning, K-pop audience, identity building, Japanese K-pop fans, Indonesian K-pop fans

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## Introduction

Psy, a Korean rapper whose “Gangnam Style” music video garnered more than 1.6 billion views on YouTube by May of 2013, is the latest Hallyu star to make headlines around the world. The music video transformed Psy from a little-known rapper to a bona fide “global superstar.” Hallyu, also known as the Korean Wave, is arguably the most important of Korea’s cultural exports currently. In particular, it is Korean pop music, simply referred to as K-pop, that has, in recent years, become the most crucial facet of the Korean Wave. K-pop has grown into a popular subculture among teenagers and young adults around the world, resulting in the widespread interest among youth in the fashion and style of Korean idol groups and singers. Many of K-pop’s biggest idol groups and solo acts, including BoA, TVXQ, Girls’ Generation, BIGBANG, and Rain, have had sold-out concerts in Europe and Asia. K-pop is also making inroads into new territories, garnering new fan groups even in countries far away from Korea like Palestine, Brazil, and Peru.

One of the most interesting developments in regard to the Hallyu and K-pop phenomenon is the rise of the so-called tourist audiences. During the first wave of the Hallyu syndrome, most of the “tourist audiences” coming to Korea were Japanese Hallyu fans. Mostly middle-aged women, they organized individual or group tours to Korea to attend concerts of their favorite idol groups, visited drama sets of their favorite television dramas, organized fan meetings, and acted as transnational consumers of Korean popular culture (Baek 2005; Hirata 2005; Mori 2008; Oh 2011). Indeed, Hirata (2005) referred to the transnational Japanese middle-aged women who avidly consumed Hallyu products quite differently than their Chinese and Taiwanese counterparts. The existing literature on Hallyu tourism has largely treated it as novel, “Japanese-style Hallyu” that is distinguished by a form of “transnational cultural experience based on the rediscovery of Korean culture by Japanese tourists” (Cho-Han 2003, 39). In recent years, K-pop tourist audiences have grown in numbers, coming not only from Korea’s neighboring countries such as China and Taiwan, but also from Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Americas, expanding the

nationality boundary of the concept. These tourist audiences are still predominantly female, but the number of males in K-pop tourist audiences is gradually growing. The Hallyu boom has also led to the popularity of Korean lifestyle products in general, including those related to cuisine, fashion, and other products of popular culture.

The phenomenon of tourist audiences confirms the fact that K-pop fans in general, and Japanese fans in particular, are “active” rather than “passive” audiences, who may even select and interpret the content according to their own cultural background and interests. These K-pop fans also invoke what Jenkins (2006a, 2006b) calls a “participatory media culture” in which the distinction between production and consumption is blurred. As Jenkins (2006a, 3) argues, the “circulation of media content—across different media systems, competing media economies, and national borders—depends heavily on consumers’ active participation.” Audiences or fans not only consume professionally produced media but also actively participate in media production (Jenkins 2006a), whereby they have become what Toffler (1980) describes as “prosumers” in reference to their roles as both consumers and producers (quoted in Jung 2011, 20). Both of these ideas, i.e., fans as being active and participatory, imply robust fan activities, including the sharing of media products on file-sharing sites, organizing fan meetings, selling fan-produced artifacts, and communicating on blogs and online bulletin boards. Online websites, in particular, have been a key channel through which Korean popular culture, particularly K-pop, “has been circulated, reproduced, and consumed by active global audiences” (Jung 2011, 20).

Another distinguishing characteristic of Korean popular culture in general and of K-pop in particular is that it is transnational and transcultural, transcending and travelling across national and cultural boundaries. Hallyu is globalized and globally consumed, as it is characterized by *mugukjeok* (non-nationality), which Jung (2011, 3) patterned after the concept of *mukokuseki* (non-nationality or non-Japaneseness) that Koichi Iwabuchi (2002) used to emphasize how “culturally odorless” characteristics of Japanese consumer products, such as the Sony Walkman and Nintendo games, are the key reasons for their global popularity.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Jung (2011, 3) qualifies the concept of *mugukjeok* by saying that it implies the transcul-

Many scholars have also argued that the popularity of Hallyu outside Korea has resulted in the construction of a new form of transnational identity among Hallyu fans, diminishing the dominant Western or American transnational influence, and overcoming different national identities. Transnational identity is constructed when international influences, facilitated through cross-border trade and cultural exchange, reshape the preexisting, traditional national identity (Morley and Robins 1995). Leung (2009), for example, argues that Hallyu has played an instrumental role in laying the foundation for the construction of a transnational pan-Asian identity across people of different languages, cultures, and nationalities.

However, what makes Hallyu and K-pop fandom distinctive from other types of transnational identity building is its predominantly feminine nature, which has subsequently aroused fierce male opposition to Hallyu and K-pop in their home countries, as epitomized by Japanese and Chinese anti-Hallyu movements (Oh 2009, 2011; Hwang 2011). Such a phenomenon, then, begs the following questions. Do female fans of K-pop nurture and even develop their transnational identity by actively interacting each other in the K-pop mecca of Seoul, regardless of their nationalities? Do these fans proactively make Korean friends in order to expand their understanding of Korean culture, which is the motivation for their audience tourism? How does female learning behavior differ from its male counterpart often witnessed during business trips to Korea? Are the patterns of, and expectations from, interactions the same for fans from different countries? How is the pattern of Hallyu consumption different, for example, between Indonesian and Japanese fans? How do K-pop fans develop transnational identities by interacting with their counterparts from other countries?

This study addresses the question of learning behavior through interactions among tourist audiences from different countries in the K-pop mecca of Seoul. It also attempts to assess how patterns of interaction differ from each other, depending on whether they are forward or retrospec-

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tural hybridity of popular culture, influenced not only by “odorless” global elements but also by national or traditional elements.

tive learners. Based on the notion of forward and retrospective learning (Oh 2009, 2011, 2013), this study adopts a mixed method approach whereby interviews, secondary sources including media reports, and observations are used to develop an interpretative essay on this very significant phenomenon. Accordingly, we conducted in-depth interviews with Japanese and Indonesia female K-pop fans who have encountered fans of other nationalities in order to identify their patterns of interaction. We find that forward learners from Indonesia actively engage in meeting Korean, Chinese, and Japanese fans, whereas retrospective learners from Japan are very reluctant to meet Chinese or Indonesian fans, although they were somewhat interested in meeting their American or Western counterparts. For both cases, we also attempt to identify the motivation for forward and retrospective learning of Korean popular culture by Indonesian and Japanese fans, respectively.

Instead of generalizing our findings in order to achieve an unrealistic positivist truth about a particular social phenomenon, we used a small focus group and in-depth interviews to interpret the subjects' behavioral and mental patterns in building their new feminine transnational identity. This study also attempted to provide a structural understanding of why K-pop musical and visual texts motivate female fans to take actions toward transnational identity building. Our method takes a phenomenological and interpretive (hermeneutical) approach by analyzing in-depth interview scripts that were gathered from a small group of Japanese and Indonesian female K-pop fans. We selected Japanese female fans because they started the tourist audience phenomenon; we also wanted to find out how they react to the diversification of the K-pop tourist audiences whom they eventually meet in Seoul. On the other hand, we chose Indonesian female fans because we wanted to analyze forward learners' attitude in developing transnational identity in Seoul, where they meet Japanese and other K-pop fan groups. Furthermore, Indonesian fans are one of the most supportive of all K-pop fans in the world. In-depth interviews took place in Indonesia and Korea between April and May in 2013. The research design of this study, therefore, deliberately depicts the interviewees' perception of their own interactions with other fan groups in Seoul, including

how they perceive “others” in their encounters in the Hallyu mecca.

This article first discusses the characteristics of forward and retrospective learning and examines the nature of learning behavior on the basis of these two types of learning. The next part of the article provides interpretations of our in-depth interview data about interaction patterns of Japanese and Indonesian tourist audiences, followed by a discussion of findings which show that forward learning involves much more active and positive attitudes to new encounters in a foreign country, whereas retrospective learners are focused more on building their own transnational identity without much socializing with forward learners. The article concludes by reflecting on gendered melancholia and feminine learning, the link between women and transnational learning, and the factors that attract women from all over the world to become interested in transnational learning with forward or retrospective learning motivations.

### **Forward and Retrospective Learning**

Transnational identity building requires personal, organizational, and inter-organizational learning. This is how international managers doing business in developed and emerging economies acquire transnational identity through extensive international travels and interactions with local people (Crossan, Lane, and White 1999; Lawrence et al. 2005; Schilling and Kluge 2009; Oh 2013). In the learning process of the transnational identity building, learners face two different types of knowledge: forward knowledge and retrospective knowledge. Motivation for forward learning is shaped by expectations of economic and other tangible gains, i.e., when learners acquire new knowledge and culture developed by economically advanced countries. For example, young people in Asia who study English and learn about Western culture can be said to be strategically assuming a forward learning attitude since they deem such learning as beneficial to them individually (Oh 2009, 437). Retrospective learning, on the other hand, has no clear tangible benefits as it involves “reawakening” by reviewing their experience and knowledge of the past. For example, mothers try-

ing to teach their children who are entering school how to adapt to school life may recall their own childhood experiences to empathize with their children's present difficulties (Oh 2009, 437). Retrospective learning is thus impossible without past experience of the same phenomenon. A noteworthy fact is that while mature age groups are more likely to engage in retrospective learning, all age groups can engage in forward learning.<sup>2</sup>

Oh (2009, 2011) argues that Japanese middle-aged women who are Hallyu fans carry out retrospective learning, while young Chinese Hallyu fans assume forward learning. Japanese middle-aged women enjoy Hallyu entertainment because it is reminiscent of their past experiences with Japanese entertainment from the 1970s or the 1980s, which can no longer be replicated by watching the current Japanese popular media. While it is possible for these Japanese women to engage in forward learning by consuming either Western or Japanese media products, they also wanted to relish, through retrospective learning, the emotions they experienced when watching Japanese dramas of the 1970s and 1980s. By watching Hallyu dramas, which are entrenched in themes that appeal to Japanese middle-aged women, such as a traditional sense of family dignity and sacrifice for family and friends, they are able to remember forgotten or lost memories, rediscovering their repressed or forgotten Asian identity or recovering their old identity in the process (Lee and Ju 2011, 287-288; Oh 2011, 231). The motivation behind the recovery is "nostalgia, or melancholia, a

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2. In addition to the concepts of "tourist audiences" and "forward and retrospective learning," there are two types of tourism that deserve mention: urban tourism and entertainment tourism. Urban tourism refers to tourist activities involving the practice of taking a vacation in, or visiting, an inner-city area. Rather than visiting such areas as historical or natural sites, this type of tourism focuses on such places as architectural creations, towers, stadiums, university campuses, a particular city block or feature, open markets, and shopping centers. Entertainment tourism refers to tourist activities designed primarily for visitor audience who are interested in cultural shows, plays, dance performances, popular or classical music concerts, theme parks, and humor-oriented guided tours. Given the scope of this study, i.e., an analysis of how learning behavior is different depending on whether one is a forward learner or retrospective learner, further discussions in regard to the applicability of these two types of tourism to K-pop audience would be redundant.

mental state characterized by fantasies about one's forgotten or lost past identities" (Oh 2011, 231). Indeed, "the enjoyment of Korean dramas has led Japanese women to feelings of nostalgia, a familiar remembrance of past experiences and collective memories" (Lee and Ju 2011, 289). Therefore, the discovery, or rediscovery, of Korean culture as evocative of a past Japan, and the fact that Korean culture is highly comparable to that of Japan has made retrospective learning much more compelling and rewarding than forward learning (Oh 2011, 243).

Hallyu fans in China, on the other hand, engage in forward learning, since Hallyu products from Korea are much trendier and "advanced" than media products of their own country. So, it is rather natural for young Chinese women to reap the benefit of forward learning through consumption of Hallyu culture and products, despite the fact that they have historically viewed Korea as an antagonist. This phenomenon is akin to North Koreans and Iranians learning English, despite the fact that English is the language of their proclaimed enemy. Consequently, although Hallyu may be "consumed" through forward or retrospective learning, "the Hallyu boom is not only a transnational phenomenon in East Asia, but it is also a process of creating a common East Asian cultural identity for these women in different countries" (Oh 2009, 438).

One of the outcomes of the Hallyu phenomenon in respect to forward and retrospective learning is the change in perception of Japanese and Chinese fans toward Korea: their view of Korean culture has changed from "antagonistic" to more or less "similar." That is, these fans respect Korean culture as something that is valuable, an attitude that was not seen prior to the Hallyu boom. This is a significant development for two reasons. First, Hallyu is the first form of popular culture from Asia since 1945 that provided women in Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, and Japan with a common transnational entertainment interest (Oh 2009, 439). Japan, which is generally regarded as the "central culture" of Asia, could not enjoy this transnational status, as China and Korea had both, until recent years, prohibited the import of Japanese popular culture for political reasons, i.e., unresolved historical issues involving Japanese atrocities committed in the two countries during the 1930s and 1940s. Although Japanese



films and other products of popular culture may have been appreciated by Western fans and to a lesser extent by Taiwanese fans, Chinese and Koreans were not able to enjoy them through official channels throughout the post-war years. It is thus remarkable that such forms of Korean popular culture have become the common choice of entertainment for these women, becoming the first of its kind in postwar history in East Asia. It is also an impressive fact, given that Korea, a semi-periphery country, had never been expected to be the driving force behind such a transnational cultural boom.

Second, Hallyu is an art form that can challenge the dominance of Hollywood films and English popular music for the first time in East Asia (Oh 2009, 439-440). China and Japan represent the two largest markets in Asia (and the second and third largest in the world) and Hallyu's popularity in these countries is a significant development, leading to impressive revenue generation for Hallyu stars and the Hallyu industry, and indicating its great potential to reach other markets. One noteworthy development that demonstrates the revenue potential of Hallyu is the increase in the number of Hallyu fans visiting Korea. Japanese women started the fad of Hallyu tours to Korea, prompting the creation of a new tourism industry specifically dedicated to transnational Hallyu tourists from Japan and other Asian countries. Through these tours, for example, middle-aged Japanese women seem to have chosen to move away from trying to attain a Western-centric, European feminine identity and are now searching for a new "East Asian identity," i.e., a new identity based on a more similar culture, that they thought to have been lost after 1945 (Oh 2009, 440). Chinese women, on the other hand, seem to have wanted to find "a new Chinese feminine identity that has not yet fully developed in their own territories" by embracing Hallyu as an exemplary cultural model that can serve this purpose (Oh 2009, 440).

For different reasons, these female Hallyu fans, either engaged in retrospective or forward learning, have embraced Hallyu as a common transnational form of cultural entertainment and, in the process, their ethnic bias against Korea has decreased. The diminution of ethnic and cultural barriers as a result of their participation in the Hallyu fandom is a hopeful sign that an East Asian cultural community of sorts is beginning to

emerge. The Hallyu phenomenon may have had a modest beginning, starting on a small scale among Taiwanese women who were looking for a new avenue to fulfill their transnational entertainment desires, but it soon became a transnational phenomenon, now challenging the dominance of Western popular culture in East Asia. Oh (2009) goes as far as to say that the future success of Hallyu depends largely on the continuity of the role of East Asian women, particularly that of middle-aged Japanese women, as transnational consumers and learners of Korean popular culture.

Having delineated two different types of learning employed by female K-pop fans, this study will analyze how retrospective and forward learners actually interact in Korea in order to develop their transnational identities.

### **Tourist Audiences in the K-pop Mecca: Japanese vs. Indonesian Fans**

One of the purposes of the in-depth interviews conducted with Japanese and Indonesian K-pop fans was to give informants the opportunity to construct their own representation of the cosmopolitan K-pop world they experienced in Seoul. This allowed us to document how forward and retrospective learners behave differently when they encounter each other in a cosmopolitan setting, wherein only forward learners maintain “cosmopolitan strivings” to satisfy their forward learning desire (Abelmann 1997; Park and Abelmann 2004; Oh 2009, 2011). We hypothesized that the pattern of behavior by forward learners during a cosmopolitan encounter would be sharply different, despite their shared gender, from that of retrospective learners, given the difference in their learning motivations, emotional maturity, and ages. We selected three interviewees from Japan and Indonesia, respectively, and conducted in-depth interviews in April 2013 in Indonesia and Korea. All six participants were female K-pop fans in their twenties and thirties. Indonesian fans who were interviewed had all been to visit Korea at least once or more, whereas Japanese fans were living in Korea at the time of the interview.<sup>3</sup>

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3. The reason we interviewed Japanese fans who were residing in Korea, as compared to

The structure of the interactive discourse between interviewers and interviewees involved four phases of contextualizing and reconstructing the informant's perception of "others" during their cosmopolitan encounters with transnational K-pop fans from all over the world. They were: (1) the informant's personal context of becoming a K-pop fan, (2) the process of changing their perceptions of Korea before and after visiting Korea, (3) their fan activities in their home country and Korea, and (4) their experience of cosmopolitan interactions with K-pop fans from other countries. By engaging in these four phases of conversation with informants, we were able to ascertain stark differences in each between forward and retrospective learners of K-pop in particular and of Korean culture in general.

First, both Japanese and Indonesian informants did not care very much about how and why they became K-pop fans, only the simple fact that they had initially been introduced to K-pop through friends, family members, or relatives. Although they kept mentioning that it was their age, not gender, that was critical in distinguishing Japanese from Indonesian fans, none of our interviewees realized that age was indeed a factor that drove different groups of fans from different countries to K-pop, either through forward learning (in the case of younger fans) or retrospective learning (in the case of older fans). Throughout the interviews, it was easily noticeable that "maturity" was the single most important factor that made Japanese and Indonesian fans perceive each other differently.

Second, when it came to learning Korean language and culture, fans' attitudes differed greatly between Indonesian and Japanese informants. Indonesian informants depicted their K-pop fandom as young female fans' collective endeavor that often involved active blogging and fan interactions in both on- and offline contexts. In contrast, their Japanese counterparts presented a different fandom where middle-aged women took an individualized and calm approach to learning a new culture that resembled, and thus was reminiscent of, the old Japan where they had grown up

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Indonesian fans who have visited Korea, had to do with the simple fact that Japanese fans are much more likely than their Indonesian counterparts to move to Korea, a country where their idols live, due to their more mature age, financial independence, and easier access to visas.

in the 1980s. For example, our Indonesian informants wanted to learn Korean so that they could deliver K-pop news directly from Korean sources to their own K-pop blogs. They also recorded their own K-pop parodies in Korean and uploaded them to YouTube, which led them to more new on- and offline encounters with other K-pop fans:

I try to learn the language to understand the meaning of the songs. When I understand the lyrics, I can grasp the emotional context of the songs (informant V, early 20s).

So, I collect articles from various sources, and as I may not be able to understand each word, I interpret it by phrases or sentences, and try to understand their meaning in full. I crosscheck the meaning with other articles, even confirming it with my Korean friend. I want to participate in making subtitles, so I can learn Korean better (informant Y, early 20s).

The statements above made by Indonesian informants V and Y are typical of forward learners who find it difficult to find the financial or other such resources to fulfill their desire to learn a foreign culture and language. Contrary to our Indonesian informants, Japanese fans we interviewed exhibited very relaxed and spontaneous attitudes toward learning Korean. Instead of spending any concerted time and collective efforts, Japanese female fans took trips to Korea either to enjoy audience tourism or learn the language. Short-term Korean language courses of one to three months, offered by many universities in Seoul, provided these women with an easy, individual solution to their language needs. Japanese informant A, who is in her late thirties, explained her casual and impromptu visit patterns to Korea and language training as follows:

I visited Korea three times from 2007 to 2009. In 2010, I completed my short Korean language course at Kyunghee University. My current visit is on a 30-day visitor visa.

This can be seen as a typical comment from a woman in her thirties who has a retrospective learning attitude toward a foreign culture and lan-

guage. Another Japanese fan, informant B, who is in her mid-twenties, explained her reason for learning Korean in the following way:

I was introduced to the music by Tohoshinki 東方神起 [Dong Bang Shin Ki; also known as TVXQ] when I was a 9th grader. In my high school, we also took a school trip to Korea, where I felt the first urge to learn Korean. So, I decided to study Korean at my college in Japan.

Unlike their Indonesian counterparts, Japanese K-pop fans do not need to pool their collective efforts to learn Korean, because they can easily take a tour to the neighboring country and even take Korean classes in Japan casually. With differing abilities and opportunities to visit Korea, forward and retrospective learners of K-pop also exhibit a vastly different construction and reconstruction of their perceptual change in regards to Korea before and after their visits. For example, it is noteworthy that Indonesian forward learners articulated their desire to emulate Korean lifestyle after their visit to Korea, especially Korean fashion. In the case of informant V, she stated that she thought the way both men and women dress in Korea was very ostentatious, with ordinary Korean women wearing heels as high as 7 to 10 cm and multiple layers of clothes, including shirts, jackets, and scarves. In her interview, informant V described how her lifestyle had thus changed afterwards:

I now pay a lot of attention to my appearance. I was rather indifferent to fashion before, but now, when I meet new people, I base my first impression on their appearance. So, yeah, I am influenced by K-pop.

In her interview, informant Y confirmed her acquired preference for Korean clothes, adding that she thinks Korean summer and spring clothes are appropriate for Indonesian weather. She also emphasized the fact that she would not buy counterfeit Korean clothes, despite the fact that they would bring the same prestige of “Koreanness” at a cheaper price. Informant Y revealed that Indonesian fans are infatuated with Korean fashion because of Korean music artists.

On the contrary, Japanese K-pop fans of retrospective learning do not

wish to emulate a Korean lifestyle even after visiting Seoul. Instead, their main concern is to overcome the fear and hatred they used to have toward Korea due to the prevalent negative perception of the country in Japan. One Japanese K-pop fan described her experience as follows:

Before coming to Korea, I thought all Koreans were anti-Japan. But when I actually met Koreans in Korea, I was surprised to find many friendly Koreans, even to Japanese people.

Unlike their Indonesian counterparts, Japanese K-pop fans go through a brief period of confusion and disorientation as they have to supplant their old view of Korea as backward, underdeveloped, and anti-Japan with a new perception about the country. This new perception of Korea, however, was not strong enough to convince them to follow Korean lifestyle and fashion. In fact, informant A openly acknowledged their perception of the “backwardness” of Korea:

Korea is still backward in terms of hygiene and social etiquette. If you move out of the boundaries of Seoul slightly, you immediately find roads that are not paved. You can easily notice huge gaps between Seoul and suburban areas.

The attractiveness of Korea to Japanese K-pop fans, of course, is not in its hygiene standards, the civility of Koreans, or the inequality between urban and rural areas. Instead, to another informant, informant B, Korea is a place where old and new coexist, like Japan in the 1970s:

I wasn't afraid of coming to Korea [not like my friends back in Japan]. My image of Korea before coming here was that it was a bustling place with lots of accidents and incidents. When I came to Korea, I noticed that Korea is much more developed than I had thought. This is a rare country where old and new things coexist.

Actual visits to Korea change the behavioral patterns of forward learners as they begin in earnest to emulate Korean lifestyle, which becomes a new target of learning after language. Although retrospective learners from

Japan did not desire to emulate the Korean lifestyle, their perception of Korea did change—from negative to much more positive. Instead of emulating Korean lifestyle, these Japanese K-pop fans wanted to enjoy the coexistence of both traditional Korean culture and new Western cultures in one place.

Third, fan activities like K-pop audience tourism are the outcome of their cosmopolitan striving. Such cosmopolitan striving materializes into actions through the audience members' resolute commitment to listening to, viewing, and reading the musical and visual texts of K-pop. However, although each group's "desire" shares a common starting point, the behavioral outcomes, in the form of fan activities, differ greatly between forward and retrospective learners. Young Indonesian fans, for example, organize international internet K-pop forums for fans in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines (e.g., Daily K-pop News). This English website, powered by Google advertisements and synchronized with Facebook, is a highly interactive fan site for the fans in Southeast Asia, although its visitors are from all over the world. The website, co-founded by informant Y in Indonesia in 2009, promotes interactions among fans from the three countries, and also shares up-to-date news regarding all aspects of K-pop. Another informant, informant V, who is a member of a Super Junior forum, confirmed that she continues to maintain friendships with K-pop fans from Singapore, Taiwan, and China. Their conversations are generally facilitated by online chat, sharing stories, wild imaginations, and their love of Super Junior members.

Usually we share our "wild imagination." I imagine going to Korea. In Dongdaemun I bump into a guy, who turns out to be Eunhyuk [member of Super Junior], and it becomes such a huge commotion. Or I imagine marrying one of the Super Junior members and then telling my friends that "my hubby is having a concert in LA and I miss him so much" (informant V, early 20s).

On the contrary, Japanese fans emphasized individualized and quiet fan activities. Informant C, for example, informed us that she went to concerts and other fan activities in Korea only, whereas she would not join

any blogs or fan activities in Japan. Another informant, informant B, also shared her individualized K-pop fan activities both in Japan and Korea:

Since there were no K-pop fans around me in Japan, I used Twitter and other websites for correspondence with other Japanese fans. Even in Seoul I didn't go to K-pop concerts. I went to see musicals often though. To see young teens come to fan events in Korea makes me surprised.

According to informant A, hard-core Japanese K-pop fans showed strong jealousy toward other fans, refusing to share information with other Japanese fans and even breaking rules during concerts and other fan activities:

I was surprised to see so many Japanese fans come to Korea to attend K-pop concerts and fan meetings. Some of these hard-core fans fought each other to get near their favorite singers. Even on Twitter and other websites, these fans exchanged verbal insults with each other. I think Japanese fans demonstrate a strong desire to monopolize their favorite idols. Some of them cut in the long queue before the show or didn't mind breaking rules during the concert and other fan activities.

Finally, along with the aforementioned divergences in the actions of Indonesian and Japanese fans, further diversions can be seen in the patterns of their cosmopolitan interactions in Korea with fans from other countries. The most surprising difference, perhaps, is that Indonesian fans reported that they began their cosmopolitan interactions with K-pop fans from other countries even before they came to Korea. Informant Y, for instance, described her uneasiness of meeting her Internet friends face-to-face in Indonesia:

In cyberspace we felt fine, but when we met for the first time, there was some awkwardness. Her name is Jasmine, and she came to Indonesia for Sungha Jung's concert. But we mostly talked about Tohoshinki. At first time we were silent, because we didn't know what to talk about. At that time, there were rumors about JYJ's concert being cancelled. Since JYJ had former Tohoshinki members, we talked about them.



According to informant M, during her first encounter with Japanese fans in Korea, Indonesian fans had already noticed behavioral differences between the two groups. It is interesting to note that Indonesians naturally took a forward learning posture during the encounter, as expressed by another informant:

One of my Indonesian friends considers touching an artist OK. They argue that they're just touching him, not hugging him. But I keep telling them to behave like the Japanese. I told them to queue properly without stepping on each other's feet, yelling, line jumping, and the like. Also, Indonesians like to bring large banners to concerts. It is very disturbing, as people behind them cannot see the artists. Westerners do that, too, but not Koreans or Japanese (informant X, early 20s).

The informant X also revealed that they believed that there are certain things that Indonesian fans could learn from Japanese fans:

Yes, it seems the Japanese fans are earmarked. They seem to know how to keep their proper distance. The Japanese know where the boundaries are; they keep themselves within those boundaries, unlike the Chinese or Indonesians.

However, informant M also expressed frustration with Japanese fans who did not want to engage in conversation with Indonesian fans in English. Despite their polite manners, Japanese K-pop fans were not as forward in learning as Indonesians, who learned and could communicate with fans from other countries in English.

It is because they don't speak English very well. When we talked to them, they just answered with short answers. It's because they can't talk in English. I have several Japanese friends, but we're not very close to each other.

Informant M also provided us with her own interpretation of why Japanese fans refrained from communicating with her:

They take care of each other and they are not rough. I think they would make good friends because they don't talk too much. Even in Twitter they tend to share information, but they don't ask for favors too much. It's just that they worry about being impolite by asking too many questions.

However, Japanese fans, like informant C (in her mid-twenties), who met Indonesian fans in Korea have a completely different explanation as to why they did not mingle with other fans:

We Japanese come to Korea in groups of two or three people. But Indonesians come in large groups of young people. If we look at them, we often feel embarrassed because they're young, while we're not young at all. Chinese and Indonesians come to Korea in large groups, because there are many young K-pop fans in their countries. In Japan we don't have many K-pop fans.

Informant B also explained why she and her friends did not feel comfortable to befriend the Chinese or Indonesian fans:

They're very active; they fly into Korea whenever there are big K-pop concerts. We Japanese fans remain very inactive in Korea, because we can come here anytime we want. Chinese and Indonesian fans are very rich. They're very profligate in Korea. If you see those extravagant young kids from China and Indonesia, it is only natural for you to take one step back from them.

Although young K-pop fans from Indonesia seem energetic, extravagant, and powerful in Korea, dominating over the mature, retrospective learners from Japan, the former nonetheless remain very traditional in terms of maintaining conservative gender roles. For example, informant M claimed that she disliked the identity of Korean male idols due to their feminine dressing style: "I am a bit disturbed when I see guys wearing feminine-style clothes." She thinks that male Korean artists who pay too much attention to skin care, such as the commercial endorsers of cosmetic products, are simply unacceptable. She questioned why Korean male artists use various skin care creams and wear facial makeup with tight clothes.

## **Hallyu and Different Patterns of Learning Behavior**

Based on our in-depth interviews with female K-pop fans, we were able to establish different patterns of learning behavior between forward and retrospective learners of Korean culture. By interpreting their perceptions of others, we found that our informants, both Indonesian and Japanese, held a perception that forward learners in their community demonstrated more cosmopolitan strivings than retrospective learners. On the other hand, our informants, both Indonesian and Japanese, also held the common perception that retrospective learners tend to enjoy solitude in a cosmopolitan cultural zone where tradition and modernity coexist.

In addition to these stark differences, when forward and retrospective learners encountered each other in their shared cosmopolitan cultural zone, they failed to interact with each other due to perceptual and interpretational errors about each other. Table 1 summarizes these intercultural misunderstandings that encumber multinational identity building in the interactions, or lack thereof, between the two groups. The perceptual errors misled Indonesian fans to desire to learn from their Japanese counterparts, who seemed more mature and much older than them. However, Japanese middle-aged fans did not show much interest in mingling with Indonesian fans, even as they, some of whom came to the concerts with their babies, wanted to get near the young K-pop idols.

Seoul is a new global cosmopolitan place where K-pop fans from all over the world interact with each other in concert halls, fan meeting sites, and other tourist sites. Consequently, Korean businesses, including companies owned by entertainment management companies, have transformed Hallyu fans into consumers of Korean products and services, both K-pop related and in general (Oh and Park 2012).

Fan clubs in Korea have already become a viable consumer group buying goods and services of considerable economic value. Entertainment management companies now engage in a wide array of businesses, including restaurants, karaoke rooms, fashion lines, gift stores, and travel agencies. What made this possible is the existence of uniquely East Asian fan culture. For example, if TVXQ (Dong Bang Shin Ki or Tohoshinki) held a

*Table 1. Perceptual Errors between Forward and Retrospective Learning Fans of K-pop*

	Indonesian K-pop fans	Japanese K-pop fans
Distance	<p>Us: Fans desire to get close, even going as far as touching their idols.</p> <p>Them: Fans maintain distance from their idols and maintain standard rules of decorum.</p>	<p>Us: Hard-core fans are super jealous of others; they even break rules to get near the idols.</p> <p>Them: They're rich and young, and come in groups. Their youth and activism make us keep distance from them.</p>
Appearance	<p>Us: Fans prefer to wear comfortable clothes for concerts.</p> <p>Them: Fans dress up very conspicuously, such as wearing high heels/boots and decorative costumes.</p>	<p>Us: We dress humbly, without dressing up.</p> <p>Them: They're young and rich, dressing up extravagantly.</p>
Behavior during concerts	<p>Us: Fans keep their light sticks on, screaming at idols and pushing each other.</p> <p>Them: Fans turn off their light sticks. They do not scream, and clap their hands only when their idols have finished singing.</p>	<p>Us: Hard-core fans break rules and always take the first-row seats. Otherwise, we remain reserved because we're surrounded by young people.</p> <p>Them: They're very noisy, active, and behave collectively.</p>
Fanaticism	<p>Us: Even as gift-throwing has been banned, fans continue to do so. Fans have unattainable or unrealistic wild imaginations about their idols.</p> <p>Them: Fans send lunches to their idols. They buy as many idol goods as possible.</p>	<p>Us: We're not fanatic at all as we can enjoy K-pop concerts anytime.</p> <p>Them: They spend a lot of money on everything, including idol goods. We're shocked to see how wasteful they are.</p>

concert in Japan, their East Asian fans would fly to Japan using a travel agency operated by the SM Entertainment, the management company of TVXQ, stay at a hotel arranged by the agency, eat at a restaurant possibly owned and run by SM, and buy official fan goods sold by entertainment management companies, including luminous sticks, windbreaks, bracelets, and cushions—all of which feature the names of the group or photographs of their members. East Asian fans, therefore, have become a powerful consumer group who not only buy TVXQ's CDs but also TVXQ-related goods and services provided by the entertainment company to which the group belongs. They also go to movies, watch soap operas featuring their favorite stars, and buy products advertised by them. While such behavioral patterns of overseas fans have been largely limited to fans from other parts of Asia, it will be interesting to see if these behaviors can or will be emulated by fans in the West. In fact, we have already heard testimonies from our informants that Western K-pop fans behave in exactly the way Chinese and Indonesian fans do, as described above.

## **Conclusion**

Hallyu as a new phenomenon of East Asian pop culture has gone through various stages of evolution that has defied most of the predictions issued by concerned scholars in the past. One of the significant transformations of Hallyu is the rapid globalization of K-pop, including the expansion of tourist audiences who visit the K-pop mecca of Seoul to attend concerts and fan meetings, as well as to visit K-pop tourist sites. Our research explored whether behaviors, such as trips to Korea and interactions with fans from all over the world, have led these predominantly female fans of K-pop to build their transnational identity. Our interpretation of the perceptions of the fans from Indonesia and Japan suggests that, in the case of retrospective learners, their activities did not lead to the development of their transnational identity, due mostly to their preference for isolation based on the notion of a generation gap. However, it is noticeable that while retrospective learners refrained from engaging with forward-learning fans, they did

sometimes express a desire to develop transnational friendship with Western K-pop fans. Forward learners, despite their enthusiasm, also failed to manage transnational identity building through their activities, due mostly to their lack of leadership or financial resources. Nonetheless, forward learners from Indonesia continue to exhibit active learning behaviors through virtual communication.

Following the success of Psy's "Gangnam Style," the K-pop's audience, which had largely been limited to Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, expanded to include a much greater number of fans in Europe, Oceania, and North and South America. The age demographic of fans is also becoming more diverse, with the genre's popularity moving from a strictly teenage audience to include wider age groups, e.g., middle-aged Japanese women. The jury is still out as to whether Psy will become a one-hit wonder on the global stage, or if he will be able to sustain his popularity for the long run. "Gentleman," Psy's follow-up song to his mega-hit "Gangnam Style," has not fared as well as its predecessor in terms of popularity, but it is too early to tell whether the Psy phenomenon and, by extension, K-pop, will be able to continue to attract a worldwide audience. Additionally, the greater question still remains as to whether K-pop stars can produce music that can appeal to a broader spectrum of age groups.

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