

# A Study on Cultural Fusion and New Korean Wave in the Glocal Perspective-Digital, Cultural Fusion and 'Glocalization of Korean Culture

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** The most important factor to design overseas glocalization strategy is to identify the cultural consumption behaviors and patterns of the consumer group in order to accomplish simultaneous production and consumption in accordance with individual's desire for cultural consumption as well as understanding of newly defined supranational media environment developing with media technology. The meaning of so called 'killer contents' to lead the cultural consumption of the world market must be found from the perspective of "What do they consume?" or "How do they consume?" **Methods/Statistical Analysis:** Especially the new demands arising from relationship with people in the other cultures must be found, the media environment and cultural consumption structure of the foreign country must be identified in the glocalization perspective, and efforts must be made to include such findings into the media environment. Improving the understanding of new media environment and media technology is important in this context and we must contemplate for means to accept and activate the concept of cultural dissolution and fusion, found in the digital concept, in content perspective. **Findings:** Some claims that the point of view on Korean Wave must be changed. The Korean Wave must be understood as the process of establishing cultural homogeneity with the consuming country rather than simple propagation of Korean culture, and expand and summarize the concept of Korean Wave expansion stages into the following: "Contents enter new market (spreading new cultural trend)" -> 'Consumption of contents (checking the possibility of grafting into the local culture)' -> 'Forming new consumption culture (cultural sympathy)' -> 'Glocalization or generalization of culture (forming sense of unity of culture)' -> 'Creating conditions for contents to continuously enter the market (cultural exchange)'. **Improvements/Applications:** It is time to recognize the necessity to treat the concept of glocalization in the aspects of 'cultural exchange' rather than 'cultural expansion'.

**Keywords:** Culture Fusion, Digitalization, Glocalization, Hallyu, Consume

## 1. Introduction

During the past, we have recognized the problems arising from the imperialistic cultural exchanges with culturally advanced countries. Also this suggests what we have to value in such relationship as we are currently making new cultural exchange with other cultural areas.

The recent Korean pop cultural contents demonstrated possibilities for commercial success in the world market which appears to be pointing out the direction that Korean cultural contents industry should aim in the 21st century. However, the core values of Korean cultures cannot fully

be explained by the current pop cultural contents if we are to find the true meaning of culture and cultural exchange in the efforts of finding possibilities for mutual development through exchange with other cultures<sup>1</sup>.

'What do we wish to say using Korean Culture?' For this purpose, we should graft the meanings of digital, media, and contents in our daily lives as a specific plan to find the true cultural exchange. Therefore this paper grafts the 'Glocalization of Korean Culture' which describes the value of Korean culture with concept of digital and cultural fusion to look back for the meaning and value of true culture and cultural exchange demanded by the time.

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It is time to point out the problems arising from glocalization which is mainly focused on general universality, and make efforts to modernize the current concepts of digital, media, and contents into an interrelation between culture, media, and imagination. The cultural factors of Korean culture must be analyzed in detail and the possibility of communication for mutual development in the process of cultural exchange with other cultures must be sought. The true meaning of digital and cultural fusion demanded by the time is contained.

## 2. The Flow of New Korean Wave and Cultural Acceptance Attitude of Foreigners

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Korean pop culture has been a boom in world's new-media environment including Youtube. The pop contents that have led Korean wave has continued its flow once again centered on entertainment contents (K-POP, drama, movie, etc.) represented by star marketing<sup>2</sup>.

There is a point of view which considers the utilization of social media, formation of parody culture, and expansion of understanding of glocalization as the factors pulling the success of so called "New Korean Wave" focused on K-POP in overseas. This perspective shows the current state and goal of Korean styled cultural contents of the time when existing Korean pop cultural contents are expanding their influence by incorporating new media technology.

It is no exaggeration to say that the development of Korean style marketing and training system had shared the flow of development of Korean Wave. With the Korean pop culture forming its industrial frame in mid 1990s, the discussion of star system began in full scale which resulted in the golden age of so called 'promotion products' led by large scale entertainment agencies. Afterwards, the Korean pop cultural market was led by the star system where celebrities are vigorously planned and managed by the large scale entertainment agencies. This phenomenon provided aid to quick expansion of Korean pop culture into the overseas market. However, some point out that the Korean pop cultural contents had a structural limitations arising from internal immaturity coming from excessive dependence on star system and that excessively commercialized sales strategy may bring negative influence on the newly rising Korean Wave<sup>3</sup>.

The role assignment between public sector and private sector as well as effective utilization plans for

existing media are important for systematic and effective management of cultural contents utilizing media. Instead of fostering media environment for promotion of Korean culture with purpose of one sided cultural diffusion, glocalization strategy must be established by understanding the media system of different cultures and executing strategic exchange with overseas hub networks.

## 3. Creation of New Meaning through Combination and Fusion

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The core concept explaining the contemporary civilization of technology is digital. The concept of digital includes the equation for communication which is 'creation of new meaning through combination and fusion'. "Digitalization is creating the possibility that creative works with new contents can be created by new assimilation of bits." It is emphasized that the concept of digital simply refers to change of cultural communication structure that is beyond the level of simple new technology with examples of situations in different countries in the 1990s where digitalization of mass media including TV was in process. This can be understood as the relationship between 'media and human' is changing in accordance with contemporary communication methods<sup>4</sup>.

Tomlinson explains the concept of media in the perspective of closeness of individual subjects and sees the contemporary media environment as the basis for individualized cultural experiences to expand its closeness beyond time and space. He explains these theoretical concept of media and asserts that "media technology for cultural communication must be treated in the level of realizing human's intrinsic and original willingness to communicate, and must not be led to excessive intervention of media. He quotes the somewhat mild perspective of technology appreciation by Bill Gates to show the realistic perspective on media in relation with contemporary media and human.

### 3.1 Digital and Media Technology

We have a modeless signal system to recall our memories which are not contained in these media technology. That is, human's firm control is essential to promote communications in 'media-human' relationship and it is important to form suitable cycles and memory system, response patterns of unconsciousness on their own. These promises share meaning in the relationship.

One may suggest his own promise system and other may accept it. And I accept another contraction from other's rule which may resolve my discomforts. This is the communication pattern in the pod casting described above where repeated behavior brings down the repeated concepts and behaviors under the idea and make abstract ideas into daily life through another contraction. Our daily lives represent the basic life patterns and store the enormous meaning composing the representation with a name of civilization through this series of process.

He uses the social background of Silicon Valley as the example and explains the meaning of Silicon Valley as the new escape in reflection of limitations of existing system rather than simple formation of new science town. This implies that we have to contemplate the technological civilization shown in the era with the sociality by understanding the meaning and value of digital demanded today<sup>5</sup>.

The concept of digital in daily lives is the contemporary value shown in the technological civilization. It is beyond the simple mechanical process of saving and transferring the simple information of daily life and demonstrates the necessity to understand the meaning structure of fundamental relationship and communication. The application of digital makes us to seek the direction on how to understand and accept the stream of the time as Negroponte showed using the cases in the beginning of digital innovation in 1990s. The digitalization requires introspection to understand the intrinsic values of the culture and expression patterns to connect it with external values. Likewise, accepting the concept of digital to match with intrinsic and external values of culture demonstrates the meaning of expanding the cultural category of relationship and communication between subjects of exchange as well as the meaning sharing for mutual communication.

### 3.2 Cultural Digit and Experience

The acceptance of digital concept and understanding for change of communication patterns make people to think about what to consider in the process of creating communication patterns between subjects wishing to exchange.

G. Gulan points out that intrinsic values of the culture may be lost when the cultural representations of daily life are simply expressed as 0 and 1 in the situation when digital innovation is taking place just like now. He suggests the concept of cultural digits in the perspective that individual factors of daily culture must be imposed with more active meaning. It can be said that he emphasizes the con-

cepts of digital and media which can actively include the meaning of cultural representation and that the concept of digital within the contemporary technological civilization must be considered with contemporary value and background of digital beyond the concept of tool simply saving the concept. He considers the diachronic meaning of digital innovation with a deconstructive point of view on digital innovation.

Cultural digit is beyond the level of mechanical understanding of digital representation and can be understood as the effort to examine the segmental definitions composing the culture. Among the numerous concepts composing the culture, collective unconsciousness is the context which can be related with concept of cultural identity and attitude of accepting other culture of specific cultural group. The basic structure of acceptance can be explained by the concept of cultural identity<sup>6</sup>.

It is clear that experimental method must find the identity of Korean culture, develop contents from the identity, and allow people who wish to know Korea to experience it. The solution can be derived from the reasoning of cultural fusion which targets '1+1=1'. Experience can be understood as the process of turning 'difference' into unity by mediating the difference. This is a process of detailed cultural fusion. The cultural fusion does not simply mean the changes of accepting difference but the subjects must be able to sympathize with the necessity for active mutual coexistence. This can be explained again by the cultural fusion equation 'A+B=C'. Two cultures complement individual cultural characteristics and form new life pattern C during the mutual exchange. One example would be a food culture. A cultural area has developed its present food culture from its own cultural tradition. The current food culture maintained its core values to manage its present style. However, there are certain parts that demonstrate the generality of food culture and other parts that do not demonstrate the generality in overall context. In the perspective of cultural evolution theory, the cultural values being considered in a cultural area may be supported or rejected. The important thing is that newly created C is the results of exchange between A and B which has mutual cultural value in both cultures<sup>7</sup>.

## 4. Media and Cultural Fusion

The media dominates the values of daily life today. After late 19th century, confusion arising from the conflict between the values of modern era and postmodern era

resulted in an effort to explain the phases of the time in cultural perspective. The media has led the changes of human's reasoning methods through continuous 'exchange' of messages that involves human's consciousness and played the role of representing and mediating the phases of the time during the 20th century.

The discussion on the relationship between 'culture and media' has been started implicitly with an abstract meaning through media. Media technology, which newly emerging with the 'media and human' communication method in every period, often appears to be demanding media-oriented thinking.

The new media dominating our daily lives today represents such characteristics of the media and have close relationship with combination of technology of the period and separation of social classification system. Especially, the situations of individual media after late 20th century, when concept of digital became serious, induced confusion and conflict between existing and new values, and may draw more innovative social changes. These problems are represented through the media which is the reason why contemporary problems are recognized as the 'problems of media and cultural phenomenon surrounding the media'. The concept of media contents which emerged in late 20th century involved the detailed critical mind in an aspect of realizing the contents of media.

The interpretations of contemporary media and the cultural phenomenon surrounding the media phenomenon make it difficult to define the media as a simple subordinate concept of culture and lead to the efforts of understanding and finding meaning of the cultural phenomenon with a focus on media. This allows people to have deep insight not only on the phenomenal relationship between 'old media and new media' and also on how the mankind has developed cultures through connections of life patterns. These lead to the perspective of explaining the culture in the context of relationship and communication. Such discussion of relationship between 'culture and media' suggests an point of view on the phenomena and existence of daily lives, and points out the goal of daily life pattern reflecting the spirits of the time in the environment of technological civilization.

#### 4.1 Glocal Media Contents for Cultural Fusion

If the relationship between 'culture and media' is an expression of 'one's own will' for communication, then

the relationship between 'media and contents' suggests a problems in the detailed methodology for self-representation. As aforementioned, the concept of cultural fusion and cultural digit within the 'culture media' relationship can be recognized as the basic process of self-realization and this can eventually result in problems of realization of creative imagination.

In the cultural fusion perspective, the realization of creative imagination as well as the self-realization problem which maximizes the intrinsic value of individual culture demands a solution of how to connect it as a newly defined combination for relationship and communication. The diachronic discussion of 'media and human' relationship does not simply limit itself to explain the development of human history but rather expands to understand the background of the time leading the development of media and looking into how mankind complexly accepted and represented the background of the time in order to realize the critical mind for the problem.

Numerous media revolutions including the Gutenberg's type were led by the demands of the time to maximize the relationship and communication pattern of the mankind and these can be understood to have connection with thoughts of cultural fusion which extremely abstract the internal critical mind. Likewise, understanding the meaning of media of a time focusing on the media technology must surpass the level of simply defining the contemporary media devices as today's media, actively interpret the meanings represented by 'media-human' relationship and treat them in the perspective of cultural fusion which can maximize the necessity. That is, the wide understanding of 'nature-human', 'society-human, and 'media-human' relationships rather than the meaning are demanded whereas diachronically and synchronically expanded life patterns need to be explained as well. Also this leads the expansion of concept of media that we are experiencing in our daily lives<sup>8</sup>.

In Table 1 contemplating the meaning of culture and media from humanity's point of view is not merely for repeating the same criticism that analyzes the media and cultural contents of our generation run overtly commercial logic.

Cultural content acceptance model of Spicer that stated in the table above suggest the ideal process that a domestic culture integrates with another culture. The generation where we live is the era of the cultural integration beyond simple trade and variation of culture. The value of culture is untradable, and the value is essential

**Table 1.** Cultural Contents Acceptance Model of Edward H Spicers

Cultural Contents	Meaning
Incorporative integration	Incorporated into the request of inmates, is carried out the formation of a new integration
Assimilative Integration	Traditional culture integrated with foreign culture and assimilated into the new culture
Isolate integration	Two cultures forming integration with each culture isolated.
Fusional integration	Two cultures integrated into an ideal third form

and spiritual. For the real cultural integration that realizes the sharing cultural value, we shall need to understand the now of the culture which reflects the current of this generation and shall give an effort that accepts the culture as an ideal format.

The process of incorporation, assimilation, and isolation that stated above can understand as a pre-processing for the cultural integration with the concept of cultural variation and cultural fusion. Cultural integration passes the cultural acceptance and also process of the examination of the possibility that integrates with the traditional culture and examines the integrativeness with other culture. It can be said that this series of processes reveal as a connection with the value of different cultures, subjects of cultural exchange shares the communal cultural value through the mutual cultural exchange.

The cultural integration happens from the final stage of cultural exchange. If remember the cultural integration happen through the connection of the core cultural values of each cultural spheres, cultural contents of Korea for cultural exchange with another country should operate as a link between one culture to another. Moreover, the cultural integration should pursuit the current value of the humanity and broaden the experiences. Media contents have a high possibility that visualizes the current of each cultural sphere, give a lively experience and better understanding of culture to people, at the same time with a big responsibility.

Glocal media contents must be treated in the perspective of understanding these meanings and relationships between culture and media in the context of communication and perspective of designing the diachronic values in today's media technology environment. Cultural fusion aims gradual and developing unification of different indi-

vidual cultures through process of exchange. Also, glocal media contents must be able to explain the process of such cultural fusion. The intrinsic and external representation of values Korean culture and contents mentioned by Emanuel Pastreich (Man Yeol Lee in Korean name) has meaning in this context. He points out the lack of tradition of humanities in daily life including education and academia as the problem of Korean society. The ill of Korean society is that values that are supposed to give answer to the fundamental questions of life, that is, "why?" are used to answer questions of "how?" which is only one aspect of the fundamental questions.

He analyzes that the lack of values that can give answer to the fundamental questions such as the reason why we study or the reason why we shape life patterns in our daily lives is creating the current illness of Korean culture and this is led to orientation of westernization. He points out the limitations of existing values that western society including US is facing to warn against the old fashioned repetition that shall be caused by blind orientation of westernization in Korea.

## 4.2 Complex Demands for Korean Culture

The evaluation that the current state of Korean pop culture including K-POP having active business through glocalization is due to the long term recession in domestic record market and pop culture market shows the social needs of the time.

So far, the Korean Wave started from geographically close countries including Japan, China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong and actively expanded to South East Asian countries like Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore.

Thailand has the biggest size of movie industry in Asia except Japan and China with traditionally low resistance for accepting foreign culture. Due to the geographic conditions of Thailand, it is predicted that expansion of Korean Wave in Thailand will play a role of passing it to other neighboring countries like Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar. However, such piecemeal objective to attract tourists using a Korean Wave drama must be discarded. The industry must examine the consumption patterns of Korean culture and Korean cultural contents in the perspective of foreigners and the image of Korea formed based on the consumption pattern<sup>2</sup>.

The industry must consider whether the Korean drama or K-POP, entering the world market through Korean Wave after the <Jewel in the Palace>, is considering such problems from the stage prior to production. This

provides a direction that current Korean Wave contents excessively relying on the star marketing must consider. The effort to include the most Korean contents into the product may lose its value and meaning to introduce our culture through pop cultural products if we neglect to develop contents that are of interests of the people from other cultures.

The discussion on how inter-generation communication is enabled through cultural medium of our tradition and daily life provides few ideas about what we should consider in the cultural exchange with others. Seemingly unbreakable wall of communication due to difference in language, society, time, and location, is broken as people approach each other's daily life by finding similarities in their daily lives. People from different cultural areas can share their idea about basic life patterns including clothing, food, and housing as well as honest conversation transcending time and space<sup>10</sup>.

What we need to address once again are the diverse experience methods for relationship and communication between subjects recognized as 'different'. We are sharing intuitive systems through cultural identity named Korean culture. The communication between subjects for media experience have excluded the common educational factors and focused on communicative factors that overcome the visual, temporal, and spatial difference of culture between cultural identity sharing groups.

## 5. Conclusion

The most important factor to design overseas glocalization strategy is to identify the cultural consumption behaviors and patterns of the consumer group in order to accomplish simultaneous production and consumption in accordance with individual's desire for cultural consumption as well as understanding of newly defined supranational media environment developing with media technology. The meaning of so called 'killer contents' to lead the cultural consumption of the world market must be found from the perspective of "What do they consume?" or "How do they consume?" Especially the new demands arising from relationship with people in the other cultures must be found, the media environment and cultural consumption structure of the foreign country must be identified in the glocalization perspective, and efforts must be made to include such findings into the media environment. Improving the understanding of new media environment

and media technology is important in this context and we must contemplate for means to accept and activate the concept of cultural dissolution and fusion, found in the digital concept, in content perspective.

Some claims that the point of view on Korean Wave must be changed. The Korean Wave must be understood as the process of establishing cultural homogeneity with the consuming country rather than simple propagation of Korean culture, and expand and summarize the concept of Korean Wave expansion stages into the following: "Contents enter new market (spreading new cultural trend)" -> "Consumption of contents (checking the possibility of grafting into the local culture)" -> "Forming new consumption culture (cultural sympathy)" -> "Glocalization or generalization of culture (forming sense of unity of culture)" -> "Creating conditions for contents to continuously enter the market (cultural exchange)". It is time to recognize the necessity to treat the concept of glocalization in the aspects of 'cultural exchange' rather than 'cultural expansion'.

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