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THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE SPREAD OF HALLYU

Since their inception, technological advances and social media have been a powerful tool for rapid globalisation, particularly in terms of culture. The mass culture of European and American countries has had a stable circulation within them, which is also true for Asian countries. However, it is worth paying special attention to the transformative and important role of technology and social media in the context of cultural exchange, dissemination and targeted distribution of cultural products of Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and China (PRC). Using the example of the spread and popularisation of Hallyu, commonly known as the "Korean Wave", the article examines how technological advances of the 21st century have brought South Korean pop culture beyond geographical boundaries, contributing to the creation of global communities of devoted fans. The study of the interaction between Hallyu and technology reveals that there are complex relationships and dependencies between content and the technological sphere, encompassing digital platforms, social media, and the dynamic landscape of fan culture.

Various streaming services, digital platforms such as YouTube, X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok are stable platforms for the global distribution of South Korean creative industry content. K-pop music videos, Korean dramas, Korean literature and culture in general – thanks to digital platforms, they have gained unprecedented access to diverse audiences around the world. Psy's "Gangnam Style" music video on YouTube is a great example of the global appeal of K-pop, which has paved the way for the subsequent success of groups such as BTS and BLACKPINK, TWICE and others.

Streaming services, including Netflix, have played a key role in the global distribution of Korean dramas. Netflix's investments in original Korean series (Kingdom, Squid Game) have attracted increased international attention, highlighting the effectiveness of digital platforms in promoting Korean storytelling around the world, which, through its quality and accessibility, further facilitates global perception of Korean culture.

The paradigm shift in communication between fans and artists is evident with platforms such as VLIVE and Weverse allowing artists to interact closely with their global fanbase. Music streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music have expanded K-pop's global reach, while social media platforms such as X (Twitter), Instagram and Facebook have kept audiences interested and contributed to the popularity of K-pop artists through real-time updates and fan interaction.

In addition to music and dramas, digital platforms have facilitated the global distribution of Korean webtoons, with platforms such as LINE and Webtoon offering translations into various languages. Social media platforms, such as X (Twitter), have become important hubs for global fan communities, facilitating the spread of K-pop-related hashtags around the world.

The study is based on a comprehensive analysis of the symbiotic relationship between Hallyu and technology. The interconnection of digital platforms, social media and fan culture has not only elevated South Korean pop culture to unprecedented global heights, but also redefined the dynamics of fan engagement and cultural dissemination in the digital age.

Key words: Hallyu (Korean Wave), digital platforms, social media, technology impact, cultural dynamics, cultural globalization.

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РОЛЬ ТЕХНОЛОГІЙ ТА СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕРЕЖ У ПОШИРЕННІ ХАЛЛЮ

Технологічні досягнення та соціальні мережі від початку своєї появи слугували потужним інструментом для стрімкої глобалізації, зокрема, в культурному плані. Масова культура європейських країн та країн Америки всередині мала стабільну циркуляцію, що також правдивим є для країни Азії. Та варто звернути особливу увагу на трансформаційну та важливу роль технологій і соціальних мереж в контексті культурного взаємообміну, поширення та цілеспрямованого розповсюдження культурних продуктів таких азійських країн, як Японія, Південна Корея та Китай (КНР). На прикладі поширення та популяризації Халлю, широко відомої як "Корейська Хвиля" розглянуто, як технологічні досягнення 21-го століття вивели південнокорейську поп-культуру за географічні межі, сприяючи створенню глобальних спільнот відданих фанатів. Вивчення взаємодії між Халлю та технологіями показує, що існують складні взаємозв'язки та залежності між контентом та технологічною сферою, що охоплюють цифрові платформи, соціальні медіа та динамічний ландшафт фан-культури.

Різні стрімінгові сервіси, цифрові платформи, такі як YouTube, X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, є стабільними площинами для глобального поширення південнокорейського контенту креативної індустрії. Музичні відеокліпи у стилі к-поп, корейські драми, корейська література та культура загалом – завдяки цифровим платформам вони отримали безпрецедентний доступу до різноманітних аудиторій по всьому світу. На прикладі кліпу Psy "Gangnam Style", розміщеному на YouTube, чудово демонструється глобальна привабливість к-попу, що створила підґрунтя для подальших успіхів таких гуртів, як BTS та BLACKPINK, TWICE та інших.

Стрімінгові сервіси, зокрема Netflix, відіграли ключову роль у глобальному поширенні корейських драм. Інвестиції Netflix в оригінальні корейські серіали («Королівство», «Гра в кальмара»), привернули підвищену міжнародну увагу, підкресливши ефективність цифрових платформ у просуванні корейського сторітелінгу в усьому світі, який своєю якістю та доступністю ще більше полегшує глобальне сприйняття корейської культури.

Зміна парадигми комунікації між фанатами та артистами очевидна завдяки таким платформам, як VLIVE та Weverse, що дозволяють артистам тісно взаємодіяти зі своєю глобальною фан-базою. Музичні стрімінгові платформи, такі як Spotify та Apple Music, розширили глобальне охоплення К-поп, тоді як соціальні медіа-платформи, такі як X (Twitter), Instagram та Facebook, підтримують інтерес аудиторії та сприяють популярності К-поп артистів через оновлення в режимі реального часу та взаємодію з фанатами.

Окрім музики та дорам, цифрові платформи сприяли глобальному поширенню корейських веб-мультфільмів, а такі платформи, як LINE та Webtoon, пропонують їхні переклади на різні мови. Платформи соціальних мереж, зокрема X (Twitter), стали важливими центрами для глобальних фан-спільнот, сприяючи поширенню хештегів, пов'язаних з к-попом, у всьому світі.

В основі дослідження ліг комплексний аналіз симбіотичного зв'язку, притаманний халлю та технологіям. Взаємозв'язок цифрових платформ, соціальних мереж і фан-культури не лише підняв південнокорейську поп-культуру до небувалих світових висот, а й переосмислив динаміку залучення фанів і поширення культури в цифрову епоху.

Ключові слова: Халлю (корейська хвиля), цифрові платформи, соціальні медіа, вплив технологій, культурна динаміка, культурна глобалізація.

A growing number of people around the world, outside of specific subcultures or fandoms, have become familiar with the term Hallyu or "Korean Wave". It describes the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy, which includes music, television dramas, films and online games. Since its

emergence in the late 1990s, Hallyu has captivated global audiences, turning South Korea into a significant cultural exporter and becoming a significant player in a new era of cultural globalisation.

The term "Hallyu" first appeared in the Chinese media in the late 1990s, referring to the growing

penetration of South Korean pop culture into the Chinese market. However, the roots of Hallyu can be traced back to the early 1990s, when the South Korean government began to promote its cultural industry as a potential source of economic growth by making strategic investments in the cultural sector (Osadcha, 2021, p. 49–56).

It is digital technologies that have contributed to this rapid spread. In the past, the global dissemination of cultural phenomena relied heavily on traditional media such as print, television and radio. The digital age has changed this, transforming the way cultural products are produced, distributed and consumed. Technology, in particular digital platforms and social media, has begun to play an increasingly important role in this regard. In the book "The Korean Wave: Evolution, Fandom, and Transnationality", authors Tae-Jin Yoon and Dal Yong Jin examine the transformation of Hallyu and discuss the role of social media and digital technology in its evolution. The book focuses on the fans and the digital spaces they occupy, which have played an essential role in spreading Korean pop culture.

YouTube, Netflix, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok – these platforms have not only redefined the landscape of global media consumption, but have also become influential channels for the dissemination of cultural phenomena such as Hallyu.

Since its inception, Hallyu has experienced exponential growth, transforming South Korea into a major exporter of culture and influencing the global entertainment industry. It began with the widespread success of Korean dramas in East and Southeast Asia during the late 1990s and early 2000s, followed by K-pop's global breakthrough in the 2010s. Today, Hallyu's influence has permeated various corners of the world, fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of Korean culture.

The Korean Wave evolved into a more significant global phenomenon in the 2000s, particularly with the rise of K-pop. Bands like TVXQ, Super Junior, Big Bang, Girls' Generation, and later EXO, began gaining popularity outside South Korea. However, it was the breakthrough of Psy's "Gangnam Style" in 2012 that truly marked K-pop's entry into the global mainstream. The song's viral success on YouTube demonstrated the potential for K-pop to reach a global audience. The study "Hallyu 2.0: The New Korean Wave in the Creative Industry" by Dal Yong Jin discusses the second

phase of Hallyu, coined Hallyu 2.0, characterized by the use of social media platforms like YouTube to disseminate Korean culture. It also explores how the Korean government has capitalized on these platforms to promote its culture.

This trend continued with the success of bands like BTS and BLACKPINK in the mid-2010s. These groups have achieved remarkable global recognition, selling millions of albums, filling stadiums around the world, and racking up billions of streams online. Furthermore, Korean movies have also gained international recognition. The significant achievement was marked by Bong Joon Ho's "Parasite," which won four Academy Awards in 2020, including Best Picture – the first non-English language film to do so.

Hallyu's global impact is multi-faceted. It has generated significant economic benefits for South Korea, promoting tourism, boosting exports of consumer products, and improving the country's national brand image (Borisova, 2022). For example, in 2018, BTS was boosting the tourism industry to 17.5 million inbound visitors (Statista Search Department, 2023). According to the Korea Foundation, as of 2020, the number of Hallyu fans was estimated at over 100 million people in 109 countries. (Eun-byel, 2021).

In terms of cultural impact, Hallyu has promoted a broader understanding and appreciation of Korean culture worldwide. It has resulted in a noticeable increase in the number of people learning the Korean language and engaging with Korean cultural products (Lee, 2018). Hallyu has also influenced the global entertainment industry. Its emphasis on multi-talented performers, tightly synchronized choreography, visually stunning music videos, innovative digital marketing, and fan engagement strategies has set new trends and raised the bar in the entertainment world (Li, 2022).

Lastly, Hallyu has been a tool of soft power for South Korea, enhancing its global presence and influence. Through Hallyu, South Korea has been able to project its culture, values, and narratives to a global audience, shaping perceptions and increasing its cultural influence globally. This was primarily made possible by technology and social media.

The role of technology and social media in the proliferation and amplification of Hallyu (the Korean Wave) has been both transformative

and essential. The technological advancements of the 21st century have allowed South Korean pop culture to reach far beyond the geographical confines of its origin, creating global communities of ardent fans. (Lee, 2013) This interaction between Hallyu and technology can be examined through several dimensions, including digital platforms, social media, and fan culture.

The explosion of digital platforms has provided a stage for Hallyu to reach a global audience. South Korean entertainment companies have successfully utilized digital platforms such as YouTube, X (Twitter), Instagram, and other streaming services to distribute their content worldwide. The one primary example is YouTube that has served as a launching pad for numerous K-pop acts. K-pop groups like BTS and BLACKPINK garnering hundreds of billions of views within a short time frame.

Streaming services such as Netflix have also played a significant role in spreading Korean dramas globally. Netflix has been instrumental in popularizing K-dramas around the globe. The streaming giant not only hosts a large library of existing K-dramas but has also invested in producing original Korean series, bringing more global attention to Korean content (Park, Kim, Lee, 2022). For instance, "Kingdom," a Korean historical zombie thriller, and "Squid Game", a dystopian survival drama, have attracted international audiences and critical acclaim.

The music streaming platforms such as Spotify and Apple Music have allowed K-pop music to reach a larger global audience. By featuring K-pop on popular playlists and offering a broad range of Korean music, from idol groups to indie artists, they have expanded the reach and accessibility of K-pop. In 2017 BTS becomes 1st K-pop act to break into Spotify's Global Top 50 (Yonhap, 2017).

As for the literature, Webtoons, a form of digital comic originating from South Korea, have also contributed to Hallyu . Platforms like LINE and Webtoon offer a variety of Korean webtoons translated into different languages, enabling the global spread of this unique form of Korean storytelling. Some popular webtoons, like "Tower of God" and "The God of High School," have even been adapted into their own animations, further extending their reach (Boyd, 2022).

In the context of communication between fan communities and their idols, streaming platforms

such as VLIVE and Weverse are convenient tools that provide the ability to interact more closely. Through these platforms artists can share live broadcasts, exclusive videos, pictures, and written updates. Fans can subscribe comment on these posts, often receiving responses from the idols themselves (Park, Jo, Kim, 2023). Weverse also has a built-in translator, making it possible for fans and artists to communicate across language barriers.

These digital platforms and their innovative features have not only helped spread Hallyu globally but also transformed how fans engage with content and artists. By fostering more interactive and immersive experiences, these platforms have created a unique, global ecosystem that continues to drive the growth and evolution of Hallyu .

In addition to streaming platforms, social media plays an important role in keeping the Korean Wave relevant and fueling audience interest. Platforms such as X (Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook have become hubs for fans and artists to interact, creating global fan communities. Twitter, in particular, has been instrumental in the global rise of K-pop. BTS, for example, has been the most tweeted-about musical act for the fourth year in a row (Chan, 2021). In honor of BTS presenting at the Grammy's, their record-breaking hashtag #TearItUpBTS amassed over 13.3 million tweets within 24 hours (Scott, 2019). Furthermore, social media platforms allow for real-time updates from artists, behind-the-scenes content, live streams, and a means for fans to engage and contribute to the popularity of the artists.

In this way technology has enabled the formation of global online communities and fan cultures, which play an essential role in promoting Hallyu. Fan-generated content, including fan art, reaction videos, dance covers, and lyric translations, have contributed significantly to Hallyu's global spread.

For instance, fan-subbing communities, which provide translations of Korean shows and music, have been instrumental in overcoming language barriers and making content accessible to non-Korean-speaking audiences. International fans of K-pop also frequently organize global trending hashtag campaigns on X (Twitter) (Galantowicz, 2021), demonstrating the power of these fan communities in promoting their favorite artists. Fans utilize social media platforms to organize global projects such as charity donations, billboard

advertisements, and streaming parties in the name of their favorite stars, contributing to the promotion and influence of Hallyu (Kim, Hutt, 2021).

Impact of Digital Platforms

Digital platforms such as YouTube and Netflix have revolutionized the way in which we consume content, and they have played pivotal roles in the global dissemination and popularity of Korean pop culture – K-pop and K-dramas, in particular, making them more accessible and visible to a global audience. By offering a stage for Korean content to be showcased and shared widely, these platforms have been pivotal in popularizing Korean pop culture around the world.

YouTube has been instrumental in the spread and success of K-pop globally. The platform provides an easily accessible and shareable medium for K-pop content, from official music videos to dance practice videos, variety shows, and behind-the-scenes footage. Many K-pop acts found considerable success on YouTube. Groups like BTS, BLACKPINK, and TWICE have achieved hundreds of millions to billions of views on their music videos, with massive global fan bases tuning in whenever new content is released. YouTube also allows for the translation and addition of subtitles, which helps overcome language barrier and makes K-pop content accessible to a global audience.

Moreover, fan-created content such as reaction videos, lyric breakdowns, dance covers, and remixes further enhances the presence and impact of K-pop on the platform, contributing to the creation of a dynamic, interactive global community centered around Korean pop culture.

Netflix, as a leading global streaming platform, has significantly contributed to the worldwide popularity of Korean dramas (K-dramas). The platform hosts a vast catalog of K-dramas across various genres, making them easily accessible to a global audience. Subtitles in multiple languages are also provided, breaking down language barriers and promoting cultural understanding. In addition, Netflix has invested heavily in producing its own original Korean series. Shows such as "Kingdom," a historical zombie thriller, and "Squid Game", a dystopian survival drama, have captivated global audiences and received critical acclaim. Their success reflects the wide appeal and quality of Korean storytelling and production values.

Despite the extensive research, several unresolved issues remain, indicating the areas where

further study is necessary. While studies have generally acknowledged social media's role, more granular, platform-specific analysis is needed to understand how different platforms contribute uniquely to Hallyu's spread. Also there is a need for more empirical, quantitative data to measure the precise impact of these digital platforms on Hallyu's spread.

Netflix's algorithm also plays a part in promoting K-dramas. The platform's recommendation system suggests K-dramas to viewers who may not have considered them before, based on their viewing history. This helps to attract a wider audience to Korean content, promoting further popularity and interest.

The best examples of those, who leveraged these platforms for global reach, were K-pop groups like BTS and BLACKPINK, the two globally recognized K-pop acts, have effectively leveraged digital platforms to expand their reach, build their fan bases, and skyrocket their music to worldwide popularity.

BTS, also known as Bangtan Sonyeondan or the Bangtan Boys, is a seven-member South Korean boy band formed by Big Hit Entertainment (now HYBE). They have been a trailblazer in the use of digital platforms and social media for connecting with fans and promoting their music. The band's record-breaking music videos, like "Dynamite" and "BoyWith Luv", have generated billions of views on YouTube. The platform has not only been used to release music videos, but also to share behind-the-scenes content, dance practices, and solo projects. Their mini-series like "Bangtan Bomb" and "Run BTS!" provide fans with a closer look at the members' personalities and group dynamics, thereby fostering a deeper connection with fans.

BTS has maintained a strong and regular presence on X (Twitter), where they share updates, photos, and messages with their fans, often written in both Korean and English. They also use the fan community platform Weverse to interact more directly with fans. Also they frequently holds live broadcasts on VLIVE where they chat with fans, celebrate birthdays, and share updates about their music and lives. These streams are often subtitled in various languages, making them accessible to international fans. On music streaming platforms, BTS has repeatedly broken records. Their album "Map of the Soul: 7" broke the record for the most

album streams in a single day on Spotify (Ting, 2020), demonstrating their global appeal.

As for BLACKPINK, a four-member South Korean girl group formed by YG Entertainment, they also skillfully utilized digital platforms to gain a global fan base. BLACKPINK's music videos are some of the most watched on YouTube. Their hit "DDU-DU DDU-DU" was the first K-pop group music video to surpass one billion views. The group also shares behind-the-scenes footage, dance practices, and exclusive content through their YouTube channel. The members of BLACKPINK are active on Instagram, where they each have individual accounts. They regularly share pictures and updates, maintaining a close connection with their fans.

BLACKPINK has used Netflix to reach a broader audience. In October 2020, Netflix released "BLACKPINK: Light Up the Sky" (Berkowitz, 2020), a documentary that offers a behind-the-scenes look at the group's rise to fame. This allowed them to reach beyond their established fan base and attract new listeners. Similar to BTS, BLACKPINK uses VLive for broadcasting live chats and updates, and Twitter for reaching out to their international fan base with news, photos, and promotional content.

In both cases, these K-pop acts have not just used digital platforms to distribute their music, but also to build a global community of fans. They have harnessed the power of social media and streaming platforms to share their stories, personalities, and cultures with the world, breaking language barriers and geographical boundaries.

Social Media and Fan Culture

Social media platforms have been instrumental in the propagation of Hallyu. They've facilitated real-time interaction between artists and fans, community building among fans, and efficient distribution and promotion of content. These platforms have not just brought Korean pop culture to the global stage, but have also enabled it to flourish and deepen its impact, creating a vibrant, interactive global fan culture.

X (Twitter) used to be a particularly influential platform for the spread of K-pop. The real-time, conversational nature of the platform allows fans to engage with their favorite artists and each other, creating global communities that share updates, fan art, translations, and more. K-pop groups like BTS and BLACKPINK have used X (Twitter) to share updates, behind-the-scenes photos,

and personal messages with fans. These posts often generated millions of likes and retweets, illustrating the groups' immense global popularity. Fans used X (Twitter) to promote their favorite artists through fan hashtags and by creating trending topics. For instance, BTS's fandom, known as ARMY, frequently organize to trend hashtags related to album releases, anniversaries, and social causes supported by the group. X (Twitter) provides a space for fans around the world to connect and discuss their shared interests. These fans create content, translate materials into various languages, and even organize charitable donations and events in the name of their favorite groups, contributing to a vibrant and active fan culture.

Instagram, with its visual focus, serves as an ideal platform for K-pop idols and actors to share photos and videos with their fans, offering glimpses into their professional and personal lives. Artists often share personal photos, promotional images, behind-the-scenes pictures, and short video clips on Instagram. This gives fans unique insights into their lives, creating a sense of connection and intimacy. Instagram's live streaming feature is frequently used by K-pop idols for impromptu broadcasts, where they can interact directly with fans by answering questions and responding to comments in real-time.

Facebook also plays a role in the spread of Hallyu, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent compared to X (Twitter) and Instagram. Entertainment companies, artists, and TV networks use Facebook to promote new music, shows, films, and merchandise. They share news, teasers, trailers, and behind-the-scenes content on their official Facebook pages. It is home to numerous fan groups dedicated to K-pop groups, K-dramas, and Korean actors. In these groups, fans share news, fan art, memes, and more, fostering a sense of community and shared enthusiasm. Fan-made content, fan communities, and their impact on Hallyu cannot be understated. Fan-made content is a testament to the creativity and passion of Hallyu fans. It serves to extend the life of original content, broadens the scope of discussion, and contributes to the global visibility of Korean pop culture. Fans often express their love for their favorite artists or dramas by creating fan art or writing fan fiction. These artistic expressions range from drawings and digital art of K-pop idols to stories that revolve around the characters in a K-drama.

One significant aspect of K-pop fan culture is the creation of dance and song covers. Fans around the world learn the choreographies of K-pop songs and upload their performances on platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Some fans also record their own renditions of K-pop songs, showcasing their vocal or instrumental talents. Fans often upload reaction videos to new music videos or episodes of K-dramas, which can garner large viewership on platforms like YouTube. These videos, along with written reviews on blogs or websites, can stimulate discussions and build excitement around the content.

Fan communities, both online and offline, form the backbone of Hallyu's global spread. These communities serve as spaces for fans to connect with each other, share content, and collectively support their favorite artists or dramas. Platforms like X (Twitter), Instagram, Reddit, and various K-pop or K-drama-specific forums serve as gathering spots for international fans. Here, fans can share news, discuss their favorite groups or shows, and organize fan events or charity drives in the name of their favorite idols. Many K-pop groups have official fan clubs, such as BTS's ARMY or BLACKPINK's BLINK. These fan clubs often have a global presence and play a crucial role in organizing support for their idols, including album sales, music show votes, and even billboard advertisements in major cities. Fans also gathered in person for fan meetings and concerts, traveling from all around the world to see their favorite artists. These events further strengthen the fan community and offer an opportunity for fans to interact with their idols directly.

Fan culture has had a profound influence on the global spread of Hallyu. Fans serve as active promoters and distributors of Korean pop culture, making significant contributions to its worldwide recognition. Fans often introduce their friends to K-pop or K-dramas and use social media to promote their favorite content. Their enthusiasm serves as a powerful form of grassroots advertising. And they play a crucial role in overcoming language barriers by creating translations and subtitles for music videos, variety shows, interviews, and dramas. This work is invaluable in making Korean content accessible to a global audience. Fans also organize various projects and events to show support for their idols, from charity work in their idols' names to mass buying of albums to boost chart

rankings. Fan culture is an integral part of Hallyu and a significant contributor to its global spread. Through fan-made content, community-building activities, and energetic promotional efforts.

Furthermore, fan-driven social media campaigns have played a critical role in achieving significant milestones for K-pop artists, particularly in international charts like Billboard. Two notable examples come from the fandoms of BTS and BLACKPINK, who have leveraged the power of social media to propel their favorite artists to new heights.

BTS's fandom, known as ARMY (Adorable Representative M.C. for Youth), has orchestrated numerous successful social media campaigns that have contributed to the group's global success.

1. **BTSBBMAs Campaign:** In 2017, BTS was nominated for the Top Social Artist award at the Billboard Music Awards (BBMAs). To help them win, ARMY launched a massive Twitter voting campaign using the hashtag #BTSBBMAs. The campaign was incredibly successful, with the hashtag being used hundreds of millions of times, leading BTS to win the award and make their first significant breakthrough in the U.S. market (K, 2017).

2. **Streaming Parties:** ARMY often organizes streaming parties to boost the views of BTS's music videos on YouTube and increase their songs' streams on platforms like Spotify and Apple Music. For instance, when BTS released their single "Dynamite" in 2020, ARMY organized a global streaming party, leading the music video to break the YouTube record for the most views in the first 24 hours of release (Spangler, 2020).

3. **Billboard Chart Campaigns:** ARMY meticulously organizes buying and streaming strategies to help BTS's music rank high on the Billboard charts. These efforts have paid off numerous times, with BTS achieving multiple No.1 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, including "Dynamite", "Life Goes On", and "Butter" (Kwaak, 2021).

The fandom of BLACKPINK, known as BLINKs, has also utilized social media campaigns to help the group reach significant milestones.

1. **YouTube Streaming Campaigns:** BLINKs have been instrumental in making BLACKPINK's music videos some of the most-watched on YouTube. When the group released "How You Like That" in 2020, fans organized a streaming campaign that led the music video to set five Guinness World Records, including the most-viewed

YouTube video in the first 24 hours of release (Minsung, 2022).

2. Social Media Promotion: BLINKs consistently use platforms like X (Twitter) and Instagram to share news, promote BLACKPINK's releases, and encourage other fans to stream their music. Their efforts have helped BLACKPINK achieve international recognition, with songs like "Kill This Love" and "DDU-DU DDU-DU" charting on the Billboard Hot 100 (Zellner, 2019).

3. Billboard Social 50 Chart: Through active engagement on social media platforms (likes, shares, comments, etc.), BLINKs have helped BLACKPINK top the Billboard Social 50 chart, which ranks the most active artists on social media (Benjamin, 2017).

In both of these case studies, can see how fans' social media campaigns can significantly impact an artist's success, leading to chart-topping achievements and record-breaking milestones. Fan engagement on social media not only boosts visibility and promotes the artist's work but can also directly contribute to their commercial success. This clearly illustrates the powerful role of fans in the era of digital and social media, particularly in the context of Hallyu's global spread.

Can also be noted, that there are numerous examples of how fan-driven social media campaigns have led to significant milestones for other K-pop groups besides BTS and BLACKPINK. Two such examples come from the fandoms of EXO and TWICE.

EXO's fandom, known as EXO-L (the 'L' stands for 'Love'), has been crucial in propelling the group to significant achievements. TWICE's fandom, known as ONCE, has also utilized social media to help the group achieve various milestones.

In these cases, the power of social media has been harnessed by the fandoms to propel their favorite artists to new levels of success. These fans have organized themselves effectively through these platforms to achieve specific goals, proving their influence in shaping the careers of their beloved artists. These achievements illustrate how integral social media and dedicated fans are to the success of K-pop artists in the current digital age. Together, they were able to take K-pop from being a local phenomenon in the Far East to a sustainable presence – and sometimes influence – in all corners of the globe.

Technology and the Future of Hallyu

A separate important issue is the analysis of the synergy of South Korea's cultural industry with technological trends and their potential impacts on the future spread of Hallyu. The emergence of technological trends like Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and blockchain holds immense potential for impacting the future spread of Hallyu. For example, Virtual Reality (VR) could influence the expansion of Hallyu of providing an immersive and interactive experience for Hallyu fans. For instance, fans could virtually attend live concerts, meet their favorite K-pop idols (Kim, Lee, Lee, 2022, pp. 818–826), or explore virtual replicas of filming locations from popular K-dramas. Companies like SM Entertainment have already experimented with VR, creating virtual reality concerts where fans can enjoy performances as if they were physically present (Walfisz, 2022). Not to mention such successful VR k-pop groups such as K/DA, that was debuted in 2018 by the "League of legends" (American online MOBA video game); ETERN!TY; Mave; Plave. Also there are two groups which using a virtual hibrid – both human idols and their virtual counterparts: Aespa and Superkind (Ke, 2023).

Augmented Reality (AR) technology could enhance fan engagement by overlaying virtual content onto the real world. Fans could use AR apps to see virtual idols or characters from K-dramas in their own surroundings, participate in AR-based games, or access additional information about Hallyu content through augmented experiences. For example, the game "BTS World" incorporates AR features that allow fans to interact with virtual members of the popular K-pop group BTS (Newsroom, 2021).

Blockchain technology has the potential to revolutionize content distribution, copyright protection, and fan engagement in the Hallyu industry. It can ensure transparent and secure transactions, provide decentralized platforms for content creators, and enable direct interaction between artists and fans. Platforms like KStarLive and Fanfare are leveraging blockchain to reward fans for their engagement and offer opportunities to invest in Hallyu-related projects while maintaining transparency.

These examples illustrate how emerging technologies can offer new avenues for fan experiences, engagement, and content distribution within the realm of Hallyu. While the full potential

of these technologies is still unfolding, their adoption and integration within the Hallyu industry could contribute to a more immersive, interactive, and fan-centric experience, expanding the global reach and influence of Hallyu. On the other hand, special attention should be paid to the fact that such technological capabilities open the way to such negative phenomena for artists as processing and generating their voices for recording a song without their participation; deepfakes; etc.

In conclusion, this comprehensive analysis explores the intricate relationship between technology, social media platforms, and the global phenomenon known as Hallyu or the Korean Wave. The evolution of Hallyu, from its roots in the 1990s to its current state, underscores the transformative role of technology and social media in reshaping the landscape of cultural globalization.

The role of technology and social media in amplifying Hallyu becomes evident when examining the influence of major digital platforms like YouTube, Netflix, and various social media networks. YouTube, in particular, has served as a global stage for K-pop acts, with record-breaking views for music videos by groups like BTS and BLACKPINK. Similarly, Netflix has significantly contributed to the global popularity of Korean dramas, transcending language barriers through subtitles and original productions like "Kingdom" and "Squid Game."

Furthermore, the analysis delves into the expanding role of platforms beyond music and dramas, notably exploring the impact of webtoons on Hallyu. Platforms like LINE and Webtoon enable the global spread of Korean storytelling, showcasing the versatility and reach of digital platforms in fostering diverse forms of cultural expression.

The section on social media elucidates how platforms like X (Twitter), Instagram, and Facebook have become integral hubs for fan engagement, content sharing, and community building. Fans, through their dedicated social media campaigns, have played a pivotal role in achieving significant milestones for K-pop groups on international charts, exemplified by case studies on BTS and BLACKPINK.

The report also delves into the influence of fan culture, highlighting the significance of fan-generated content, global fan communities, and the impact of social media-driven initiatives such as charity donations and billboard advertisements. The multifaceted nature of fan culture emerges as a driving force in the global spread of Hallyu.

Lastly, the analysis explores the potential impact of emerging technologies, including Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR), and blockchain, on the future of Hallyu. These technologies offer new avenues for immersive fan experiences, content distribution, and enhanced engagement, providing a glimpse into the evolving landscape of cultural consumption.

In essence, this analysis underscores the symbiotic relationship between Hallyu, technology, and social media, emphasizing the dynamic interplay that has propelled Korean culture onto the global stage. As Hallyu continues to evolve, embracing emerging technologies and leveraging the power of fan culture will likely play a crucial role in shaping its future trajectory. This interdisciplinary approach, combining cultural studies with technological analysis, provides a nuanced understanding of the intricate mechanisms driving the global influence of Hallyu.

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