



University of Ottawa

Hallyu: How South Korean Cultural Diplomacy Shapes the Nation Brand

By: Raha Mirshahi

Supervisor: Dr. Evan Potter

Date: November 30, 2021

Acknowledgements & Dedications

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Dr. Evan Potter, whose reviews, feedback, and perspective have been tremendously helpful throughout this entire process. Dr. Potter's valuable mentorship and expertise have taught me a great deal and working together quickly became one of the highlights of my graduate experience. From the kindness and camaraderie of my peers, the wealth of knowledge and experience of my professors, and the support of other staff who help pull everything together, I am also grateful to those I have met at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs.

As with any new milestone or achievement in my life, this paper is dedicated to my family. First, my wonderful parents, Arman Mirshahi and Amena Mirshahi Ali, both of whom have always been extremely selfless, supportive, and hardworking – creating not only a beautiful life for themselves in Canada but also a family (of which I am eternally grateful to be a part of). My brother, Rasa Mirshahi, the embodiment of innovation and grit, and his gentle giant Apollo. And finally, though he will likely remain unaware, I must acknowledge the loving support and companionship of my dog, Milo, who has been by my side every step of the way. From sleeping on my lap as I worked, to assuring I took a healthy number of breaks (to play with him, care for him, and take him on walks), I am always grateful for his presence.

More broadly, this is also dedicated to anyone who has ever felt or experienced the consequences of a negative nation brand (those I have met personally, those I will meet eventually, and even those I may never get to know). From the smaller micro aggressions and challenges in life, to the larger issues which have severely affected you, your loved ones, or your home countries, I hope these words (if you encounter any new terminology, concepts, or ideas) may contribute in some way to equipping you with whatever you need to reflect and express yourself to the fullest.

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Abstract

Previously famous for its phenomenally rapid socio-economic development, South Korea is now at the heart of a new global phenomenon, one that is more of an expression of its global cultural impact. Having had such a negative global reputation less than half a century ago, this major change inspires the following question: how has South Korea's cultural diplomacy through what has come to be known worldwide as the Korean Wave (Hallyu) helped to reposition its nation brand over the last two decades? This paper applies Cull's public diplomacy taxonomy and Anholt's nation branding hexagon to illustrate the evolution of South Korea's nation brand. Due to the context of my case study, both frameworks must be considered and help to further illustrate the transformational role of Hallyu as it rose into prominence early in the 21st century. From a smaller, regional wave of cultural exports to a global cultural phenomenon, this paper argues that Hallyu, as the cultural linchpin of South Korean public diplomacy, represents a highly complex and collaborative relationship between the South Korean state and major South Korean corporations. Using the tool of cultural diplomacy to enhance the South Korean nation brand abroad, this private-public partnership pushes the country's global narrative beyond the paradox of a country that has seen phenomenal economic success as it sits on a nuclear war fault line.

Keywords: South Korea, Foreign Policy; Nation Branding, Public Diplomacy, Hallyu (Korean Wave), Smart Power

Introduction

Due to the influence of globalization in a rapidly evolving digital age, the growing presence and influence of non-state actors in international affairs, and a global political and economic shift away from hegemonic powers, we live in an increasingly multiplex world order (a world of multiple actors and complex interdependence) (Acharya, 2017). In this global context, in order to thrive, states must juggle various forms of power to remain politically and economically competitive. In an effort to attract social, political, or economic opportunities, and advance their interests, states need to consider how they are perceived globally. In other words, states looking for a competitive edge in the modern era need to work towards building and maintaining a positive nation brand. Shifting a negative nation brand to become more positive is a major challenge because international public opinion of countries changes at a glacial pace. As international branding expert Simon Anholt (2020) observes in *The Good Country Equation*, national images are more of a “fixed asset” with people’s perceptions of foreign countries “rusting in place” (p. 24). In light of the difficulty in shifting global perceptions, the success of Hallyu in helping to shift the world’s perception of the Republic of Korea (hereinafter South Korea) is all the more impressive. In the mid 20th century, South Korea had a terrible nation brand and endured the many consequences that came with it. Through the active strategic planning and investment of the state, the support and influence of its most economically powerful non-state actors, as well as the collective mobilization and determination of an increasingly resourceful and capable population, South Koreans were able to significantly transform their nation brand.

This paper illustrates this transformation by applying the frameworks of nation branding and public diplomacy, in the context of theories of relational power in international relations, to explain how a state that was once associated with violence and poverty currently finds itself at the heart of a global cultural phenomenon. It argues that Hallyu, as the linchpin of South Korea’s public diplomacy, has been instrumental in the transformation of the country’s nation brand. It has created the necessary change in

the perception of both regional and global publics to facilitate the country's pursuit of certain social, political, and economic objectives, such as: building trust and relationships between South Koreans and foreign publics; dismantling stereotypes that have been created and perpetuated by the media and narrative of other (often more powerful) states; elevating the state's international political brand; spotlighting the country's history and accomplishments; and supporting the country's economy (e.g., creating jobs, attracting talent, increasing tourism and exports, etc.). In a country that previously prioritized its "hard power", Hallyu demonstrates how state and non-state actors have worked in close partnership to improve and channel the country's "soft power". Attaining a greater balance of both types of power has allowed South Korea to engage in what American political scientist Joseph S. Nye has termed "smart power"(Nye, 2009). Given that few studies make the conceptual connection or 'bridge' between a nation's culture as an element of its nation brand and the role of culture as a linchpin of its public diplomacy, using the case of South Korea, this paper illustrates how this bridge reflects a nation's soft power. Within the field of international relations, the role of soft power has often been an underrated explanation for the rise of a state's global influence.

This paper is divided into four sections. The first is dedicated to conceptualizing the key frameworks of nation branding, public diplomacy, and the different forms of relational power in the global arena. The second examines the historical evolution of South Korean nation branding, focusing on its primary objectives, growing priorities, discourse, and structure. This is done within three phases: (i) the country's nation brand at its nadir (root cause and consequences); (ii) the country's shift in foreign policy objectives from hard power development to acknowledging the importance and influence of soft power during the country's political transition (including a diplomatic shift from economic to political and cultural forms of foreign public engagement); and (iii) the rise and impact of Hallyu from the perspectives of the corporate sector (as the primary drivers of Hallyu) and the state as both sides recognize the potential of cultural industries and decide to "double down" on the use of cultural

diplomacy to enhance the South Korean nation brand. The third section applies forms of Hallyu foreign public engagement to Cull's public diplomacy taxonomy to demonstrate the linchpin role of South Korea's cultural diplomacy. The fourth section then demonstrates how Hallyu, as this cultural linchpin, is leveraged to increase the power of South Korea's nation brand by examining its impact through each element of Anholt's nation brand "hexagon". Hallyu demonstrates the impact of a government's commitment to transform its nation brand through the efficacy of public-private collaboration in developing cultural diplomacy as a linchpin of its public diplomacy.

Section 1: Concepts & Theoretical Backdrop

To begin, we need to understand the three conceptual frameworks critical to this paper's argument: nation branding, public diplomacy, and the different forms of relational power in international relations theory. Within my country case study, these concepts are closely intertwined. First, this section focuses on describing each of these concepts, particularly in ways relevant to my case study. Then, this section highlights the bridge between these frameworks and why each is necessary to consider in order to analyze the impact of Hallyu on South Korea's nation brand, public diplomacy, and growing "power" in international relations.

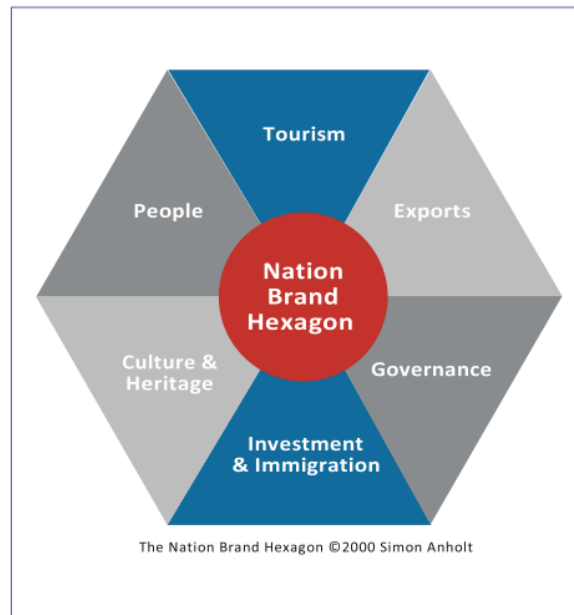
Nation Branding:

While nation branding is relatively new to international relations scholarship (C. Browning, 2013, p. 194; C. S. Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017, p. 481; van Ham, 2002, p. 249, 2008, p. 126), the core concept behind place branding, and the fact that regions or populations can be associated with images, certain emotions, or 'brands', is fairly ancient (Moore & Reid, 2008). The logic of place branding can be applied to any space (including local or regional) and vastly pre-dates nation branding since nation states are a relatively modern construct in human history (C. Browning, 2013, p. 200; van Ham, 2008, p. 147). While a brand can be defined as a "multidimensional assortment of functional, emotional, relational

and strategic elements that collectively generate a unique set of associations in the public mind” (Fan, 2010: 98), a nation brand must be attached to, as its name implies, a nation state. Fan (2010) defines the nation brand as “the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the minds of international stakeholders” and nearly every state has one, regardless of whether or not they are actively engaged in activities to produce one (p. 98).

Branding expert Simon Anholt coined the term “Nation Brand” in 1996 (Ipsos, 2020, p. 1) and the term grew popular mostly among scholars and public/private actors looking for ways to gain a competitive edge or a “license to trade” in the global market (Anholt, 2010a; C. S. Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017, p. 485; Schwak, 2015, p. 6, 2018, p. 650; Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 432). Since 2005, Anholt has been delivering the “Anholt Nations Brands Index (NBI)” (Anholt, 2010b; McGrath & Farkas, 2021), often referred to as the “Anholt-Gfk Roper Nation Brands Index (NBI)” and now called the “Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI)” (Ipsos, 2020). This index is produced using the results of the “world’s only global nation brand survey” to provide data that can help “governments, organizations and businesses understand, measure, and ultimately build a strong national image and reputation (Ipsos, 2020: 1). Allowing for a consistent framework for data extraction and analysis when conducting cross-country comparisons, the survey (which measures 50 nations at a time), observes the following six dimensions: Exports, Governance, Culture & Heritage, People, Tourism, Investment & Immigration (Ipsos, 2020). Each of these categories are related to the perceptions of, or power of attraction towards, foreign publics regarding a critical aspect or element of a nation state (e.g., perception of products in exports, policies in governance, the population in people, and so on and so forth). Figure 1 illustrates these categories in Anholt’s Nation Brand Hexagon.

Figure 1: Nation Brand Hexagon (Ipsos, 2020, p. 1)



As its significance increases on the international stage, Anholt (2010) explains: “The only sort of government that can afford to ignore the impact of its national reputation is one which has no interest in participating in the global community, and no desire for its economy, its culture, or its citizens to benefit from the rich influences and opportunities that the rest of the world offers them” (p. 7). Within two decades, the concept became popular among scholars and practitioners specializing in the fields of communications, branding, psychology, or marketing. Within these fields, we can also see how opinions on the definition of a nation may slightly differ from one another. Some authors explain how the concept likens states to companies or organizations competing for foreign stakeholders as consumers in a highly globalized and competitive marketplace (Anholt, 2013, p. 4; C. S. Browning, 2016, pp. 50, 68–69; H.-K. Lee, 2020, p. 546; K.-M. Lee, 2011; K. Lee(a), 2016; Schwak, 2015). Others focus on the internal and external social and cultural benefits that may stem from branding efforts and its relation to nation-building or strengthening a national identity (C. Browning, 2013, p. 196; Polese et al., 2020, pp. 24–25; van Ham, 2008, p. 147). However, there are surprisingly fewer authors in the international studies

literature who focus on how cultural diplomacy, within a state's public diplomacy, influences the nation brand. To this end, a brief overview of public diplomacy is necessary.

Public Diplomacy:

Many scholars credit Edward Gullion, an American scholar and retired foreign service officer, as the man who first coined the term “public diplomacy” in 1965 (Cull, 2019; Muzaffar, 2017; Nye, 2019, p. 11). Though the term had been used before, in different languages and with various meanings, Gullion set a foundation for the term in the U.S. (Cull, 2006). In a rapidly evolving global context, it is still difficult to share one single definition of public diplomacy, though many have tried (Fan, 2010, p. 200; Gilboa, 2008; Istad, 2020; Nirwandy & Awang, 2014). We appreciate flexible descriptions that demonstrate the essence of public diplomacy, such as “diplomacy through foreign public engagement” (Cull, 2019, p. 1), or “the policy of ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of a wide public” (M. C. Armstrong, 2009, p. 64). Restricting it in narrower terms would be a disservice to the concept due to the way it has evolved, the actors involved, its potential to grow, and the wide variety of interpretations or practices that exist around the world. Though certainly, we can narrow it down when observing a particular country's use of the term, their interpretations, or their own practices of engaging with foreign publics. Illustrating the variety, Cull (2019) shares: “Israelis speak of ‘explaining’ (*hasbará*); the current French term is ‘influence diplomacy’ (*diplomatie d'influence*) and the British [...] use the term ‘strategic communication’, Japanese officials tend to call the whole process ‘cultural exchange,’ [...]. Chinese officials speak of *xuānchuán*, a compound word uniting the concepts of ‘declare’ and ‘pass on/teach’[...]” (p. 1).

In other words, while the American term (public diplomacy) may be the “least-worst term in common use” (Cull, 2019, p. 1) and the English language continues to dominate as the “global academic lingua franca” (creating barriers and additional challenges for scholars around the world) (Curry & Lillis, 2018), it is not the only term and concept relevant to describing the practices involved. In this sense,

country case studies are critical to understanding the different variations of public diplomacy around the world and any analysis of the evolution of a country's public diplomacy requires an open mind to understanding the country's history, development, or objectives. Just as "there is no overarching theory, but rather contributions from multiple disciplines" with the concept, there is "no universally agreed vocabulary for the business of conducting foreign policy by engaging global publics" (Cull, 2019, pp. 1–2). Recognizing this, Cull's public diplomacy taxonomy is more broadly applicable than the American term, it creates "five distinct ways in which international actors have engaged foreign publics" (Cull, 2019, p. 3). These categories are listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy, and international broadcasting (Cull, 2019, p. 3), and states typically engage in multiple of these activities simultaneously (though possibly in varying degrees).

Listening: Listening is "a critical component of any successful public diplomacy initiative" (Di Martino, 2019). Not only do foreign publics like to feel seen and heard, listening enables actors to gather data that may be critical to improving existing, or developing new, policies (Cull, 2019, p. 4; Di Martino, 2019). A public diplomacy initiative that does not have the capacity or will to listen is one-sided and extremely limited. According to Di Martino's spectrum, there are currently five forms of listening: (i) active listening, (ii) tactical listening, (iii) listening in, (iv) background/casual listening, and (v) surreptitious listening (Di Martino, 2019). To provide examples of opposite ends of the spectrum, active listening is when you are visibly and openly listening, which can result in dialogue, increased trust, or greater understanding (Di Martino, 2019). This form of listening is respectful, consensual and effective in relationship-building. On the opposite end, there is surreptitious listening which is a one-sided (and often secretive) form of gathering data. Unlike tactical listening or listening in, this form of listening is typically for the purpose of non-consensual data extraction, making this a form of spying rather than listening, and extremely unethical (Di Martino, 2019). With the advance of technology and the rise of social media, listening is becoming increasingly relevant (Di Martino, 2020). Of course, there is still a great deal of

listening that occurs face-to-face (Cull, 2019). With so much “telling” in public diplomacy, state actors cannot stress enough the importance of “listening” (Bishop, 2018).

Advocacy: As its title may suggest, advocacy is about the “telling” (Bishop, 2018). Cull describes advocacy as “an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by presenting a particular policy, idea, or the actor’s general interest to a foreign public” (Cull, 2019, p. 4). Actors of public diplomacy are well situated to advocate their state’s positions, which can also significantly impact their soft power. For example, states that actively speak out on issues that resonate with foreign publics are not only able to improve their nation brands but will also likely be considered and included among actors working towards solutions. For example, issues of climate change, international development, gender equality, and more, are often discussed among state and non-state actors. Being included in international relations and engaging in efforts to combat such issues is a benefit for the state and its reputation.

Cultural Diplomacy: Arguably one of the most popular and influential forms of public diplomacy, causing some to call it public diplomacy’s ‘linchpin’, this type of diplomacy is all about an actor sharing their culture with the world. An actor can “attempt to manage the international environment through facilitating the export of an element of that actor’s life, belief, or art” (Cull, 2019). States are increasingly sharing more aspects of their culture, and in more ways. Typically, foreign publics enjoy ingesting this form of public diplomacy best as actors come up with their own ways to share cultural elements of themselves. This form of diplomacy often includes non-state actors and cultures are often deeply connected with ideas and values – spreading such qualities is not only beneficial for states’ social and economic well-being, it can also enhance a state’s soft power (Cull, 2019, p. 5; Fan, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; S. T. Lee(a), 2021; Muzaffar, 2017; Nirwandy & Awang, 2014; Schwak, 2018; van Ham, 2008).

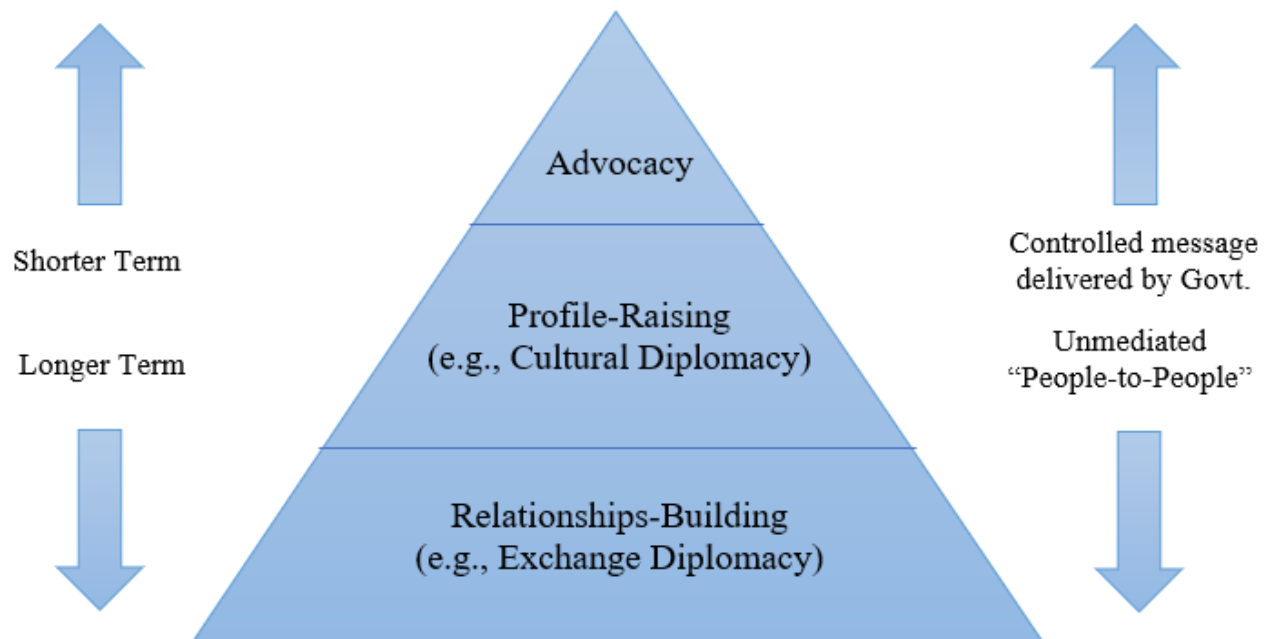
Exchange Diplomacy: Exchanging citizens is a great way for a state’s population to learn about other states around the world while having others learn about theirs (Cull, 2019, pp. 5–6). Through educational,

professional, or personal exchanges, foreign publics have the opportunity to experience life in the other state, form connections, and create much deeper levels of trust and understanding. Assuming the experience is pleasant, there are now foreign publics who can help represent the views or perspectives of the foreign state abroad. If the experiences of those involved are positive, this is a strategic way for a state to increase their soft power. (Aras & Mohammed, 2019; Byrne, 2016; N. Y. Hong, 2014). Of course, negative experiences may have an opposite effect. (N. Y. Hong, 2014, pp. 170–171).

International Broadcasting: Perhaps one of the most rapidly evolving forms of public diplomacy to the technological progress made in our digital age, international broadcasting is the broadcasting of news to foreign publics. Though similar in its means of projection, it differs from advocacy due to its objective sharing of information (Cull, 2019, pp. 5–6). While the former is about “extending an argument” or opinion, the latter is simply “presentation” (Cull, 2019, p. 5). If the fact that information can now be shared instantly (and constantly) is not challenging, there is also a greater emphasis on non-state actors emerging in international broadcasting. The “new media age” has expanded this form of public diplomacy and now “includes the activities of groups and individuals [...] who can deploy (and sometimes innovate) methods of international broadcasting for their own strategic ambitions” (Rawnsley, 2016, p. 44).

Illustrating their interrelationships, pressures, flows of information, and timescales is Cull’s (2019) Canadian public diplomacy pyramid (p. 6). Since Cull created this pyramid with historically common practices in mind, it has been recreated for its application to our country case study.

Figure 2: Public Diplomacy Pyramid



In Figure 2, above, we can see that public diplomacy initiatives such as “advocacy” are extremely controlled. These initiatives are typically delivered by the state actors themselves, who are in greater control of their message and the way it is presented. With specific policies or objectives in mind, such initiatives (e.g., campaigns, treaties, agreements, etc.) also tend to be the shortest in length, especially in comparison to public diplomacy initiatives geared towards raising a country’s profile or building relationships (which tend to be more long-term) (Cull, 2019, p. 6). In contrast to shorter-term initiatives, state actors possess the least amount of control with long-term initiatives such as Cultural Diplomacy or Exchange Diplomacy. While governments may organize and invest in these forms of public diplomacy (e.g., scholarship programmes, cultural centers, etc.), these forms of interactions are mostly between foreign publics. In such cases, civil society and corporations are most active. For example, as discussed earlier with student exchanges – the experience can be positive or negative and controlling every aspect of a every student’s stay is highly unlikely to be within a state’s control (and a waste of time and resources that could potentially backfire). In Cull’s humorous description of an exchange, most “ultimately become a process of turning the people loose and hoping for the best” (Cull, 2019, p. 7).

This paper will show, both nation branding and public diplomacy are intrinsically related to concepts of power in international relations and relevant to enhancing, as well as wielding, forms of power to achieve certain objectives in the global arena.

International Relations Theory (Perspectives on Relational Power)

Illustrating the different forms of power in international relations, Joseph Nye (2019) explains:

“Power is the ability to affect others to obtain outcomes you want. You can affect their behaviour in three main ways: threats of coercion (‘sticks’); inducements or payments (‘carrots’); or attraction and persuasion that makes other want what you want.” (p. 7)

As a concept in political theory, “soft power” emerged following the end of the Cold War. It was first coined by Nye in 1990, who observed the shift from hard power to soft power influence in the new world order. The end of World War II saw greater efforts to establish international organizations, institutions, and networks in order for states to maintain relations and pursue their objectives through non-violent means. The Cold War obviously hindered this due to the ongoing violence between major powers and the many proxy wars that existed throughout this period (e.g., Korean Peninsula). By the end of the Cold War, and with the United States as the global hegemon, the global context was supposedly ripe for all states to focus on social, political, and economic development. Authors, such as Nye, believe it was not just hard power but also soft power that brought an end to the Cold War (Nye, 2008). As the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the end of the Cold War (Cohen, 2004; Reinalda & Reinalda, 2009), Nye draws attention to the fact that “its collapse was not caused by a barrage of artillery, but by hammers and bulldozers wielded by people whose minds had been changed by ideas that penetrated the Iron Curtain” (Nye, 2015). This “end of history” (Fukuyama, 1989) created a stronger impression for liberal values and structures in international relations, as - for many - the end of the Cold War symbolized the ideological victory of liberalism in the global arena (most prominent during the 1990s and early 2000s).

Therefore, in addition to “soft power” and the spread of liberal democracy as a political and economic ideology, there was also the emergence of liberal internationalism as a paradigm in political theory which has evolved to envision a liberal world order, one in which states can jointly pursue their social, political, and economic development through shared institutions. This greatly contrasted a more traditional paradigm in political theory, that of realism and the anarchic world order which dominated the Cold War, World War II, World War I, and so on. This shift in paradigms is important because liberalism (or the liberal world order) is highly relevant to the logic of public diplomacy. Why invest in, or engage with, foreign publics through diplomatic channels if everyone existed in Hobbes’s realist, anarchic, state of nature (in which states could simply use force at any moment) (Douglass, 2020; Mazower, 2013; Ryan, 2018)? As Mearscheimer (1994) states: “realism paints a rather grim picture of world politics. The international system is portrayed as a brutal arena where states look for opportunities to take advantage of each other, and therefore have little reason to trust each other” (p. 9).

Trust plays a significant role in liberal internationalist and institutionalist thought and is a critical objective in public diplomacy objectives. States require trust in order to effectively collaborate with others and genuinely pursue bilateral or multilateral relations (Mearsheimer, 1994, p. 14; Ruggie, 1992, pp. 561–562). And if not in each other, at least in international organizations, such as the United Nations, so that they may effectively collaborate and cooperate with one another through professional and systematic institutions (Keohane & Martin, 1995, pp. 41–43). Comparing the two, Wilson III (2008) explains how “in academic writing, it is the neorealist approaches that tend to emphasize hard power, especially the hard power of states, while liberal institutionalist scholars emphasize soft power as an essential resource of statecraft [...]” (p. 114). The latter is also less state-centric and acknowledges the growing presence and influence of non-state actors in global affairs. While “scholars interested in the meaning of anarchy and the balance of power may well find debates about Borat [due its impact on Kazakhstan’s nation brand] and public diplomacy frivolous and trivial” (van Ham, 2008, p. 145), it is

important for them to consider the global context when observing the rising popularity (and relevance) of soft power in international relations and political theory. Particularly relevant to this paper is the theory of “constructivism” (Wendt, 1999) which acknowledges the importance of identity, norms, and culture in international relations (Villanueva, 2010). Critical to our understanding of nation branding and public diplomacy are Anholt’s (2020) description of national images as “cultural constructs” (p. 25), and constructivism’s concept of “collective identities” (Villanueva, 2010). Both of which will be significant to this paper’s evolutionary approach, and through which we will see a collective “consciousness changing, adapting to, and participating in international (or global) life” (Villanueva, 2010, p. 47).

The core concept behind “soft power”, prior to its rise in the academic literature, like that of ‘brands’ - or associating objects or people to emotions, images, or thoughts – is an ancient one. Influencing two spheres of ancient political thought (East and West), there is Confucius who described “wise emperors” in ancient China, “attracting by virtue” because “when distant subjects are not submissive, one cultivates one’s moral quality in order to attract them”, and Greek thinker, Bias, who – multiple millennia ago – said to “gain your point by persuasion, not by force” (Cull, 2019, p. 3). The bottom line was for leaders to pursue their objectives through the art of attraction, persuasion, or diplomacy rather than using forceful or coercive tactics, and their advice remains relevant today. Nye (2009) explains that the “major elements of a country’s soft power include its culture (when it is pleasing to others), its values (when they are attractive and consistently practiced), and its policies (when they are seen as inclusive and legitimate)” (p. 161). In other words, nation branding is critical to enhancing a nation’s ‘soft power’ as it helps “create a more favourable and lasting image among the international audience” (Fan, 2008, p. 1). Public diplomacy, in effect, a subset of nation branding, provides instruments through which states can engage with these elements of soft power is, therefore, crucial and one of greatest means through which a place (local, regional or national) can wield soft power to advance certain interests and potentially further improve its nation brand.

In a world order that now perceives hard power or the excessive use of force as dangerous and a threat to world peace, as Browning (2013) observes, “military exploits and adventurism are inappropriate [...] new mechanisms for achieving nation dignity are needed” (p. 200). Ready to turn a new leaf and unwilling to engage in a catastrophic - or apocalyptic - Third World War due to the invention of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), the values associated with the art of diplomacy – through negotiation, cooperation and collaboration, became more prized on the international stage. As a result of globalization, as states realized their increasing economic interdependence, the ‘softer’ types of diplomatic statecraft have gone from being secondary to the use of hard power to being necessary in order for states to thrive. Thus, the growing importance of soft power, which depends on a country’s “culture”, “values”, and “policies” (Nye, 2008) and public diplomacy, which “has a long history as a means of promoting a country’s soft power” (Nye, 2008).

In addition to soft and hard power, there is sharp power and smart power. While both are relevant to public diplomacy, only the latter is relevant to this paper’s case study. Smart power is the strategic combination of soft power and hard power in order for the state to advance its objectives effectively and efficiently (Wilson III, 2008, p. 115). Nye coined this term in 2003 “to counter the misperception that soft power alone can produce effective foreign policy” (Nye, 2009, p. 160). In other words, the benefits of soft power are limited without sufficient hard power. For example, economic and military capabilities instill safety, security, and confidence in the foreign publics they attract through soft power. On the other hand, smart power is less effective (and perhaps even harmful) if a state cannot achieve this balance and pursues or imposes hard power excessively. For example, if a state was actively using its military and excessive force upon other states, the impact, or even potential, of its soft power would be greatly reduced. The power of public diplomacy is not enough to win over the “hearts and minds” (van Ham, 2008, p. 128) of an openly violent or oppressive state. So, while achieving a certain a degree of hard

power can provide the state with the necessary resources, capabilities, or even clout, to improve their soft power, the excessive use of hard power is always a risk.

Having provided a summary of the theory and frameworks for understanding public diplomacy, nation brands, and various ways of thinking about relational power, we can better understand how they often intertwine and impact one another. From Anholt's hexagon, to Cull's taxonomy, to Nye's forms of power, this paper uses these frameworks to demonstrate how Hallyu (as the core of South Korean cultural diplomacy within the first decades of the 21st century) has become the linchpin of the country's public diplomacy on the world stage. The rising (soft) power and influence of Hallyu has improved the nation's brand in ways that expand beyond encapsulating the country's economic power. So, if we want to understand how South Korea has been able to accrue greater smart power (by effectively increasing its soft power), we have to examine the relative influence of Hallyu as a power multiplier for the South Korean brand since the beginning of the new millennium.

Methodology:

Since nation branding is a broad, complex, and multidisciplinary process that cannot be applied through a one-size-fits all approach, we use a qualitative method in the form of a case study. Using primary and secondary sources from various relevant fields of study and practice, this paper is a single case study for a better "understanding of the phenomenon" (Gustafsson, 2017) in question (e.g., Hallyu - the Korean Wave - as a cultural phenomenon from the perspective of South Korea). While country case studies are particularly relevant in the field of international relations (Vennesson, 2008), there has been debate on the validity of single-country case study methodologies, who have "always faced the criticism that it lacks generalizability" (Pepinsky, 2019, p. 188). Indeed, this can be considered a limitation to this approach. However, since the international relations concepts featured in this paper highlight forms of relational power, culture, values, and ideas, (Nye, 2019; van Ham, 2008), in true constructivist fashion, this paper accepts this limitation, or rather consider it a strength. This allows us to follow an in-depth

evolutionary approach in order to better analyze the specific context of our case study, its transitions, and its impact. Exceptions to the standard expectation that single country studies use “empirical data exclusively from one country” (Pepinsky, 2019, p. 188) are sources that illustrate foreign public perceptions and narratives (on the country in question, its exports, and population).

This paper’s analysis of Hallyu follows an inductive approach to gathering data that could be applied to Cull’s public diplomacy taxonomy (Cull, 2019) and seeing what the impact may be with elements of Anholt’s nation brand hexagon (Ipsos, 2020). Data extraction (regarding our evolutionary approach of South Korean nation branding, Hallyu, and their influence on Korean public diplomacy), consisted of an academic and grey literature review, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Examples of academic literature sources included in this article are scholars of international relations, marketing, cultural studies, media studies, tourism, and various forms of cultural diplomacy associated with Hallyu (e.g., celebrity diplomacy, gastro diplomacy, k-pop diplomacy, and many more). Examples of grey literature extractions include analyzing the reports of government policy documents, government white papers and statutory publications, the analyses of think tanks and international organizations, as well as media interviews (interviewing political figures, subject experts, and famous faces of Hallyu – such as idols, actors/actresses, and directors) and published cultural content. In both academic and grey literature extractions, this paper pulls from surveys with small, medium and large n (e.g., small n or medium n belonging mostly to the publications of academics, and large n belonging to the publications of international organizations, international think tanks, and government department or agency reports).

Section 2: The Evolution of South Korean Nation Branding

As discussed above, not every country strategically engages with foreign publics under the lens of ‘public diplomacy’: “Many smaller countries conceive of the whole process through the lens of ‘nation branding’ or the other commercial practices, such as international public relations or tourism promotion” (Cull, 2019, p. 1). This has especially been the case with South Korea, a country that only recently began

using the term and explicitly engaging with foreign publics through “public diplomacy”. Relevant discourse, policies, institutions, and frameworks fell under the broader term of ‘nation branding’, making it essential to analyze the evolution of South Korean nation branding in order to better understand South Korean public diplomacy. Pre-dating and currently the linchpin of the country’s public diplomacy, Hallyu will later help demonstrate the relationship between both concepts.

First, however, in order to study the transformation of South Korea’s nation brand, it is essential to understand the history of broader Korean nation-branding objectives. This section is divided into three parts. The first part, ‘A Shrimp among Whales,’ describes the inception of South Korean identity while also presenting the South Korean nation brand at its worst (mid 20th century), including how elements of negative South Korean stereotypes were established and projected abroad. The second part, ‘The Miracle of Han River,’ illustrates the shifting priorities for South Korean nation branding as it began the transition from inward-facing, state controlled and censored nation branding with the objective of nation building and identity reconstruction, to an outward facing approach emphasizing image management through cultural development. This part notes that an appreciation of the theories of modernization, such as the “developmental state” and “state capitalism,” is necessary to understand the effects of rapid industrialization and the emergence of an increasingly influential private sector by the 1990s on the nation brand identity of South Korea in the subsequent two decades. The third part, ‘The Rise and Influence of Hallyu,’ explains the Korean Wave, its origins, and strategies employed by both the public and private sector. Illustrating the similarities between economic and cultural industrialization, this paper demonstrates how, while the primary drivers of the Korean Wave were private actors, the Korean government was quick to recognize the potential of industrializing and exporting Korean culture during a period of reformation, doubling down on its support and placing great emphasis on Hallyu in nation branding initiatives, significantly influencing the eventual establishment of the country’s formal public diplomacy.

'A Shrimp among Whales'

Before going into the evolution of South Korea's positive brand transformation, we must understand South Korean identity and why the country had a negative nation brand in the first place. South Korean identity is an interesting combination of "Korean identity" (once a united kingdom on the peninsula) and "South" Korean identity (since its birth as a nation state), as well as the impact and influence of foreign occupation (particularly Japanese and American). To remain within the scope of this paper, this section provides a very short overview of the establishment of a broader Korean identity (918 to 1910) in order to focus primarily of the impact of Korean liberation after WWII and the Korean War on the projection of South Korea's international image. The post-war image of South Korea reflected the South Korean nation brand at its worst. It is only once the negative nation brand is understood that we can explore why the country needed to fight an uphill battle in order to improve it.

While "primordialists cherish a romanticized picture of every nation's deep and sacred roots" (van Ham, 2008, p. 147), the birth of South Korea, like the birth of many nation states, was part of a "relatively new development that was forged after the demise of imperial rule" (El-Gendi, 2016, p. 485). Unfortunately, many of these births were often violent and non-consensual (such as the result of colonialism, imperial or neo-imperial practices, the expanding of territories through war, and more). Similar to other peninsulas (e.g., Iberian Peninsula) (Witt, 2014), the Korean peninsula was once divided into various kingdoms before uniting under one larger 'Korean' kingdom (C. K. Armstrong, n.d.). This era was called the Koryo (or Goryo) Dynasty [918-1392] and continued to establish distinctly Korean historical, cultural, and linguistic traditions into (and throughout) the Chosŏn (or Joseon) Dynasty [1392-1910]. While they were isolated in comparison to others (receiving the nickname "Hermit Kingdom" by Western actors at the time), the Korean peninsula was mostly influenced by its large neighbour, China, and refused the growing pressure of Western powers trying to gain influence in the region (C. K. Armstrong, n.d.; Lie, 2012). Eventually, it was forced to "open up" to the West through Japanese pressure

in 1876 (C. K. Armstrong, n.d.) through the “Treaty of Kangwha” (Lie, 2012). This frustration of being a smaller power surrounded by major powers had led to the “long-standing self-image” of a “shrimp among whales” (C. K. Armstrong, n.d.; Foster-Carter, 2018).

By 1910, Japan annexed the Korean peninsula for its own economic and geopolitical gain. While industrialization began during this period, it was under the oppressive rule of Japanese colonial structures which exploited and humiliated Koreans in various aspects of their lives (Cha & Kim, 2012; Grunow, 2020; Kohli, 1994). The Japanese also committed various human rights atrocities that haunt Koreans to this day (e.g., remnants of colonial oppression, war crimes, surviving ‘comfort women’, etc.) (P. Kim et al., 2018; Norma, 2016; J. Park, 2020; Pilzer, 2012), and have left an impact on Korea’s culture and identity (An, 2018; Lie, 2012). Koreans “saw Japan as snatching away their ancient regime, Korea’s sovereignty and independence, its indigenous if incipient modernization, and above all its national dignity” (Cumings, 2011). While Koreans fought for their liberation, they did not escape colonial rule together. When Japan was defeated during World War II, two other major powers emerged to influence the region, the United States and the Soviet Union.

The period between Korean Liberation and the Korean War (1945-1950) is often skimmed over or oversimplified, placing much of the responsibility on Koreans themselves when foreign actors played a significant role in the escalation of the conflict or understanding the influence of major powers while still placing judgement on Korean populations. Much of the literature during this period is state-centric or follows the perspective and objectives of the major powers involved. In both scenarios, the complexity of Korean perspectives, ideologies, socio-economic struggles, and mobilization are not as well known or spoken about. There is little accountability and even less consideration on how this portrays Koreans to the rest of the world. Since describing this period, the occupation’s violence, oppression, and regression of Koreans’ efforts to fight colonial structures is beyond the scope of this paper, we will just address some of the core stereotypes from this period that greatly impacted the reputation of South Koreans.

The stereotype of Koreans as violent, unpredictable, and “revolutionary” (Y. Moon, 2020) comes mostly from the perspective of a major power that occupied the region for its own geopolitical and economic purposes (Cumings, 2011; Dingman, 1992, pp. 137–138). Less is known about how the American military regime “restored” the “strong bureaucracy and repressive state apparatuses of Japanese origin” (Jun, 1992), making Korea one of many cases around the world where the United States supported and/or enforced oppressive regimes in order to combat socialist or communist sentiments (Afoaku, 2000; Owen & Poznansky, 2014). Any leftist sentiments, even those from grassroots-organizations, people’s committees, labour unions, “peasant” unions, or any other form of political mobilization against occupation was portrayed as Soviet-backed North Korean agitation (Shin, 1994) despite emerging evidence that many of these movements did not even have the resources to violently revolt let alone create an organized communist revolution: “Data on 123 counties in South Korea show that peasant uprisings in 1946 were functions of the degree of peasant experience in protest – particularly tenancy disputes in the 1930s – and the effectiveness of mobilization by people’s committees” (Shin, 1994, p. 1596). Rather, many were “seeking to peacefully achieve national liberation” (Y. Moon, 2020). Any form of demonstration was seen as a riot and police brutality grew worse, with Korean policemen who were pro-occupation (or “collaborators”) (Cumings, 2011), and had records of police brutality, were able to continue serving - arresting and brutally torturing civilians “under American auspices” (Shin, 1994, p. 1604). Eventually actually escalating to violent riots, there were many casualties before the Korean War even began. Jun shares an American correspondent’s description which highlights the Autumn Uprising (1946) as particularly violent, a “full-scale revolution, which must have involved hundreds of thousands if not millions of people” (Jun, 1992, p. 193).

Rather than begin improving stereotypes of Korean poverty, policies implemented by the American military government made matters worse. In addition to silencing the masses looking for greater rights and socio-economic equality, the American military government, like the Japanese

occupation, imposed policies that continued to empower the “dominant class” (e.g., Korean elites and nobility) (Jun, 1992; Shin, 1994) and oppressed the working class (majority of the South Korean population). This deepened the chasms between Korean classes, increasing not only inequality but also animosity as the elites at the time were “collaborators” of Japanese imperialism (Cumings, 2011). Some supported the Japanese for greater political or economic opportunities, others so they need not fear the occupation or losing their possessions, and a particular fraction who actually preferred the Japanese and were embarrassed by their Korean origins since, Japanese imperialism, its regional power and industrial accomplishments were impressive to them (Cumings, 2011). Unsurprisingly, by supporting the Japanese, they were detested by the masses. In addition to simplifying matters for the Japanese, since not all had to engage directly with the Korean working class (they could work through the Korean elites), this also divided the Korean population - by “turn[ing] many elite Koreans into collaborators” they “left few options for patriots besides armed resistance” (Cumings, 2011).

Another negative stereotype that has followed South Korea’s brand is that of starving Koreans. The word that that comes up frequently is ‘famine’. This word was found in newspapers and editorials, exposing Korean suffering but also how famines would lead to protests, riots, and even uprisings throughout South Korea (Y. Moon, 2020). Moon explains how, traditionally, foods such as rice in the Korean peninsula came from the South – the colder, mountainous Northern regions were not ideal for such agriculture (Blakemore, 2018; Y. Moon, 2020). With a unified Korean population, this is not as significant an issue, despite previously being under Japanese colonial rule, there were still systems in place to distribute food throughout Korea. With a Korean peninsula split in half, however, this becomes a big issue – one that was even foreseen – but still mishandled (brutally in the North, but even in the South) (Y. Moon, 2020). While masses of Koreans migrating to the South was portrayed as the preference of one major power ally or political ideology over the other, Moon explains a lot of this migration was in response to famines (Y. Moon, 2020). As conditions continued to get worse, American occupation

became very unpopular in the region. An opinion poll in 1946 “revealed that almost half of all Koreans preferred the Japanese occupation to the American occupation” (Jun, 1992, p. 193) So, this stereotype of American soldiers protecting the freedom or democracy of Koreans from the South, fighting against the atrocities of Soviet-backed communist pressures, is being increasingly challenged by scholars questioning the validity of certain claims. Emerging evidence shows another side of the story, and how the military regime may have played a significant role in the escalation of the conflict that led to the Korean War (Y. Moon, 2020). Of course, the stories told now among scholars and historians often differ from some of the stories told during the Cold War (a period where public diplomacy was riddled with one-sided stories or propaganda that the field continues to fight to distinguish itself from today).

Another way to perpetuate stereotypes is not through the direct narrative of governments, but through popular media channels. Often referred to as an iconic American television series, the show *M*A*S*H* lasted over a decade and seeped into the American consciousness. It received many Emmy awards and nominations, was set in Korea during the War, and portrayed negative Korean stereotypes through archetypal roles such as: farmer/villager, houseboy/housekeeper, prostitute, war bride, peddler/hustler, orphan, and enemy (Stevens, 2016). Fortunately, “newly emerging scholarship on the Korean War highlights the cultural, ideological, social, and transnational aspects of the conflict” (Y. Moon, 2020), rather than “stereotypes” created to “reassure Americans of their own communal, Cold War, beliefs” (Stevens, 2016, p. iii) or provide entertainment at the expense of others, but Korea’s brand was about to get much worse before South Korea began to see any improvement, and nation brands are not easy to re-present in the minds of foreign publics.

With both “North” Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) and “South” Korea (the Republic of Korea) eager to claim sovereignty over the entire Korean peninsula, nationalism on both sides and the escalation of Cold War tensions between major powers led to the Korean War (1950-1953). This was one of many proxy wars between the United States and the Soviet Union during this era (Caprio,

2011; Hillstrom, 2006). With a stalemate marked by the remaining 38th parallel, neither side truly won, but the ones who lost the most were Koreans as a whole (many of the casualties being civilians not seeking a revolution). Within just a few years of “divided occupation”, Korea, “a country that had maintained its unity for several hundred years before occupation – waged a fratricidal war. The externally imposed partition was acutely internalized in the minds of Koreans” (Y. Moon, 2020). The loss of Korean life and infrastructure was cruel and severe, having lost a significant portion of their population, major cities leveled multiple times over, and much of the country left in “rubble” (Cumings, 2011; Han, 2010; Kurlantzick, 2016, pp. 57–58; Kwon, 2010). As they did before the war, the U.S. supported the administration of President Syngman Rhee, a well-known right-wing nationalist and anti-communist. The transition from the American military government to Rhee’s authoritarian regime, with few adjustments made to the first South Korean Constitution (1948), was swift.

The violence surrounding the birth of South Korea not only exposed a traumatized and divided population; it created an extremely tarnished nation brand. Describing the dire situation, Han (2010) writes of the “senseless lost of countless people”, “vast destruction”, and “deeply scarred” hearts of the population (p. 4). With little time to process what had happened from one violent epoch to the other, South Koreans needed to pick themselves up and lift themselves out of extreme poverty. These events profoundly impacted South Korea’s complex identity and global reputation: “That Korea’s emergence on the world stage came about due mainly to the Korean War has had a truly unique influence on the formation of perceptions toward Korea and the Korean people” (Han, 2010). *This* is the ‘why’.

In a 2017 speech to scholars and practitioners of Public Diplomacy in the U.S., former Korean Public Diplomacy Ambassador Park shared some of the outdated but persistent challenges the country faces to this day: Not only do some people have trouble distinguishing between North and South Korea, according to Park “there are still those who only think of *Korean War* or *famine* upon hearing the word Korea” [Emphasis added] (USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2017). Such remnants of the past have

affected South Koreans' social, political, and economic opportunities and is one of main reasons Koreans began strategizing ways to improve its nation brand alongside state development. Korean efforts to improve their nation brand were of the utmost importance. This also demonstrates how nation brands are difficult to change rapidly. In 2017, they are still trying to dissociate from the “Korean War”, because despite the fact that it was not just Koreans involved, and they have made tremendous progress since then, the event branded them most of all and the damage done has followed them into the 21st century.

‘The Miracle on Han River’

This sub-section illustrates the evolution of South Korean nation branding emerging from the Korean War and during the country's hyper-industrialization (1960s to 1990s). Where previously nation branding was focused internally (as nation building and identity construction), government administrations (particularly as the country was democratizing) were quick to realize the importance of spreading a positive image beyond the country's borders. We highlight the transformations and priorities of state actors and the impact this has had at all levels of Korean society, from prioritizing the development of their hard power in a realist context, to adopting more neoliberal values and asserting itself politically, to better investing in their cultural industries. Commonalities between South Korea's “developmental state” (Jun, 1992; Kohli, 1994; J. Lee, 2009; Schmuck, 2011) or “state capitalism” (Kurlantzick, 2016) and later examples of the state supporting cultural development (e.g., “patron state”) (H.-K. Lee, 2019) are more visible upon understanding these transitions and diplomatic shifts. Throughout the sub-section, there is a gradual shift away from top-down cultural control to the growing presence and influence of non-state actors in the country's cultural sector. Emerging as a middle power in the global arena, this sub-section also highlights relevant milestones in cultural policies leading up to Hallyu and its linchpin role.

With an eye on the north, South Korea's first head of state, President Syngman Rhee (1948-1960), was extremely limited in his capacity to establish a “comprehensive cultural policy” (Muzaffar, 2017, p.

88; M. Park, 2016, p. 73). Rather than focusing on foreign publics, it was clear that the greatest identity crisis came from within the newly established borders. From Japanese colonialism to the trauma of the Korean War, unifying the population was essential. Therefore, his primary objectives were to “heal the Korean culture” and create a strong “national identity” (Muzaffar, 2017, pp. 87–88). To support these ends, he established the Office of Public Information (OPI) (Muzaffar, 2017, p. 88; M. Park, 2016, p. 80). However, given the country’s geopolitical and economic situation at the time – surrounded by major powers (e.g., Soviet Union and China) and separated from the North – with no significant “sticks” or “carrots” (Nye, 2019) of its own - South Korea needed to prioritize the development of its hard power.

Fortunately, it was in the United States’ best interest to continue supporting them (politically, militarily, and economically). Unfortunately, it often came with strings attached (e.g., the United States putting pressure on Rhee regarding which policies can and cannot be implemented or placing requirements or ‘requests’ in return for aid). For example, while President Rhee wanted to focus on rebuilding the economy and creating reconstruction plans to lift the country out of poverty with the support and planning of the government, the US “urged Korea to liberalize its market, stabilize the value of the Korean currency and expand cooperation with Japan” (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 181). Understandably, South Korea, having just reclaimed its economy from Japan’s colonial market, was not fond of this idea (J.-D. Park, 2019, pp. 181–182). There are various other examples of Rhee’s administration requesting the autonomy to direct international development aid in order to invest more effectively into the economy, and the Americans refusing – investing primarily in “non-project assistance to private enterprises” (J.-D. Park, 2019, pp. 181–182). So, plans to jump-start the economy never really took off, but the true message here is not about the commodification or corruption of international development aid, it is about soft power and the constraints of a negative nation brand.

South Korea’s soft power, following the Korean War, was lower than it had ever been, and its terrible nation brand was absorbed by international public opinion. On the one hand, South Korea did

not have the time, money, security, or expertise to be bothered about their image in the global arena – so why should this matter? On the other hand, South Korea’s negative nation brand was like bad credit in a world full of banks, effectively repelling investors is one of the reasons they had to ‘make do with what they had’, even if what they had was effectively delaying the rapid industrialization of its economy. Funding with strings attached is still funding, and without it, South Korea would have been virtually trapped in a catch-22: needing to develop its hard power but needing resources to invest into the development of said hard power. Growing dissatisfaction and protests against Rhee’s authoritarian regime and lack of results led to him fleeing the country in 1960.

By 1961, General Park Chung-hee came into power through a military coup (Jun, 1992, p. 199). Similar to Rhee, fortifying South Korea’s national and cultural identity was important to General Park (Muzaffar, 2017, pp. 88–89). However, understanding that the greatest way to justify (and maintain) the sovereignty of his authoritarian regime was pulling the country out of poverty (Jun, 1992, pp. 199–200; M. Park, 2016, p. 73), the regime’s priority was to create a *productive* and *independent* nation. In other words, “the Korean state based its legitimacy on its developmental character” (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 433). Fortunately, during this period, the country was able to effectively invest in the economy and launch into its first official phase of rapid industrialization. These priorities set the social, political, and economic tone for South Korea for decades to come (Jun, 1992).

General Park began implementing five-year development plans (a rigorous approach inspired by previous military regimes that would continue until the mid 1990s) and investing heavily into the country’s economy. (J.-D. Park, 2019). Such rapid socio-economic progress paired with attentive and involved government control (challenging Western notions of a free-market) (Kurlantzick, 2016) has given this strategy various titles. Most relevant to this paper are the “developmental state” (Jun, 1992) or “state capitalism” (Kurlantzick, 2016). As a developmental state, the South Korean government has been described as a “1960’s *deus es machina* [...] as a strong state able to initiate [...] economic development”

(Jun, 1992, p. 181). A slightly less quantifiably fixed definition of Kurlantzick's state capitalist is a country "whose government has an ownership stake in or significant influence over" the state's major corporations, giving them "far greater control over the corporate sector [...]" (Kurlantzick, 2016, p. 9). Both are extremely relevant and share the "military" element that multiple scholars have recognized, making such rapid growth possible (Dumke, 1986; Jun, 1992, p. 185; Schwekendiek, 2016, p. 172).

While austerity measures were dire, and labour rights remained scarce under the authoritarian regime (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 434), Park believed the only way to escape the "vicious cycle of poverty" was to develop a "self-sustaining economy" (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 184). During the beginning of his administration, over 40% of the South Korean population was suffering from absolute poverty (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 184), which is likely another reason South Korean governments continued emphasizing the importance of tapping into the global market. Research & Development also received great funding, becoming a priority within these plans (Dayton, 2020; Jun, 1992; J.-D. Park, 2019) and continues to this day (Dayton, 2020). Due to the lack of natural resources, South Korea needed to invest in its greatest strength, "an abundant labour force and the hard work of people" as they were the only ones who could "build the economy" (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 189). Park effectively "invested" in "physical infrastructure", "lay the foundations [of] export-led industrialization", "established state-owned enterprises in key industries", and "mobilized other policies, involving foreign exchange, taxation, finance, and customs regulations to promote exports" (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 189). Such investments required a tremendous amount of funding, however. During the initial five-year plans, South Korea's reputation was still an obstacle: "Korea was considered to be a *high-risk* country in the *international capital market*, so it experienced difficulties in terms of finding lenders" [Emphasis added] (J.-D. Park, 2019, pp. 188–189). Prioritizing Korean economic development, Park did what Rhee refused to do, and began to normalize relations with the Japanese (S. J. Kim, 1970). The Japanese quickly became an important source of investment - mainly through reparation payments at first, for having colonized Korea, but also

commercial loans—allowing this infusion of capital to build the POSCO [Pohang Iron and Steel Company] and to build up Korea’s industrial capacity in various sectors. (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 186).

Park also gained more leeway over how certain international development aid funds were spent, though at a disturbing cost that still impacts the country’s reputation in certain regions today (Do, 2020). In return for “foreign currency income to support industrialization”, South Korea began providing military support to the United States who continued to fight proxy wars during the Cold War (Hillstrom, 2006; J.-D. Park, 2019). Most notably, they sent troops and supported the US who, once again, found itself supporting an anti-communist government in the Southern regions of an Asian country: Vietnam. Fighting against North Vietnam, South Korea was one of a number of American allies pressured into joining the war since the Johnson administration did not want “to be seen as going it alone” (Greenspan, 2019). The Americans felt “constructing and fighting in a coalition” would help “legitimize its actions both domestically and internationally” (Colman & Widén, 2009, pp. 483, 502), though others were aware of the transaction being made – Korean military support in the Vietnam War for US military and economic support on the Korean peninsula (Greenspan, 2019; S. J. Kim, 1970; J.-D. Park, 2019). Similar to the Korean War, “the Vietnamese suffered the highest casualties in the conflict” (Greenspan, 2019), and have not forgotten the presence of the Koreans or their war crimes in the region (J. Lee, 2009). In a way, this illustrates the complexities of foreign perceptions, since even a major power (such as the US) must consider perceptions when engaging in war. As for South Korea, while negatively impacting their image in Vietnam (Do, 2020; Nguyen, 2020), this greatly improved their image, and relations, with the United States (S. J. Kim, 1970, p. 530), which was more beneficial to them given the world order of the Cold War and the era following, with the US as a global hegemon with many powerful allies.

As the world witnessed how successfully the government’s Five-Years Plans were going, the “doubt, disapproval and reluctance on the parts of donors” decreased drastically (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 186). As “scepticism turned into praise” (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 186), South Korea continued to improve

its hard power, with the world taking notice. While there was still judgement surrounding their methods (such as the state's involvement in the market and their authoritarian regime), fewer naysayers could deny that South Koreans were hard workers, defying the odds with phenomenally rapid economic development. Jun (1992) explains “world history has witnessed the rise of developmental states only recently, and the number of successful cases is rather small” (p. 184). Fortunately for South Korea, they are one the most successful examples, earning titles such as Asian “Tiger” or “Dragon” (among others) to represent their sudden rise to becoming an economically significant power in the global market (Hofstede et al., 2010; Kurlantzick, 2016; K.-M. Lee, 2011; Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020).

Describing the synergy of this state and non-state collaboration, Park explains: “Korea made good use of labour, which it had in abundance, and also financial capital, which was scarce and had to be borrowed from overseas” (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 187). Without state support, Korean corporations simply would not have been able to increase their infrastructure and production at the rate they did. They would not have had the resources or capacity to produce at such a grand scale. Non-state actors benefiting the most were not the masses enduring limited labour rights, but the *chaebols* that were at the forefront of the government's industrialization plans (Kurlantzick, 2016): “The *driving force* behind *rapid industrialization* was *strong exports*. During 1962-1971, exports increased annually by 38.6% on average. And the timing was just right, with the favourable international trade environment in the 1960s” [Emphasis added] (J.-D. Park, 2019, p. 187). The true partnership was between state actors and chaebols (*chae* meaning ‘wealth’, and *bol* meaning ‘clan’ or ‘clique’) (Albert, 2018). The government would channel investments into these chaebols who would either rapidly expand, or struggle with such rapid expansion (in which case the government would stop funding them) (Hockmuth, 2016).

Examples of successful chaebols, those that are massive conglomerates today, are Samsung, Hyundai, SK Group, and LG Group (Kenton, 2021). Unlike other conglomerates around the world, the wealth and power of these vast corporations stay within the family (Kenton, 2021) and “across diverse

industries” (Albert, 2018). For example, Samsung, currently South Korea’s largest conglomerate, began in 1938 as a “grocery trader”, “expanded into textiles after the Korean War, electronics in the 1960s, then heavy industries, aerospace and computing during the 1970s and early 1980s. By the 1990s and 2000s, Samsung was a world leader in tablets and mobiles, and in the design and manufacture of computer chips” (Dayton, 2020). While today the conglomerate is most commonly known (globally) in the world of tech, Samsung is the “largest life insurance provider in South Korea [...] builds apartments, operates hotels and sells clothes” (Hockmuth, 2016). They also own their own medical center, are affiliated with prestigious universities in South Korea and abroad, own research institutes and think tanks, and even their own funeral parlor, leading journalist Ullah (2017) to observe: “Its businesses reach deep into many parts of people’s lives, from the cradle to the grave”. In addition to being major actors in the country’s rapid industrialization, these organizations were heavily involved in the development of the country’s cultural industries and collaborated closely with state nation branding initiatives. Some played a significant role in paving the way for the “Korean Wave” and others are still connected to some of most globally renowned Korean cultural exports. In many ways, they have impacted South Korea’s global brand and have become a significant part of the country’s history.

However, we cannot neglect, as is often done, the effective mobilization of Korean nationalism at all levels of society (A. E. Kim & Park, 2003) and the impact this had on national culture and identity (C. Browning, 2013). South Korea’s authoritarian regimes effectively inspired Korean nationalism to endure harsh working conditions in order to pursue state objectives, enduring hardships together in order to work for a greater future (A. E. Kim & Park, 2003; Schwak 줄리엣 쉐크, 2016, p. 434). The cultural identity developed prior to the Korean War, that had been fortified in South Korea with modern twists, had a significant role to play in this as well. Confucian traditions and ideologies, variants of which were present in Korea due to the influence of the Chinese during Korea’s historical development (long before the era of modern nation states) (C. K. Armstrong, n.d.), inspired continued collectivist thought (Hofstede

et al., 2010). Diligence and hard work, even sacrifice, for the greater collective are honourable and prized values for society members to possess. In other words, South Korea's "remarkable success during the 1960s and 1970s" were not only due to the actions of state actors and the non-state elite, but were also "intimately linked to a new ideology of work and entrepreneurship which combined nationalism and pro-growth Confucian precepts" (A. E. Kim & Park, 2003). The modernization of this cultural identity was not entirely organic considering many of General Park's cultural policies were created to fortify South Korean nationalism in ways that supported his authoritarian regime.

The Culture and the Arts also received Five-Year-Plans (*Munye Chinhung 5-gaeyon kyeheok*) which "included developing programmes such as the promotion of national studies, propagation of culture to the public, and the introduction of Korean culture overseas [...] the entire budget was supported directly by the government" (M. Park, 2016, pp. 82–83). Other examples of cultural policies and institutions supporting this vision, that were established or upgraded during these regimes, were: revamping the Office of Public Information (OPI), which would become the Ministry of Culture and Public Information (*Munhwa Gongboboo*) (currently known as the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism); the National Film Production Centre (NFPC) (later upgraded with the "Motion Picture Law"); the National Theatre; the National Classical Music Institute, and the Korean Culture and Arts Foundation (*Hag'guk Munwha Yesul Chinhungwon*) (Muzaffar, 2017, p. 88; M. Park, 2016, pp. 73-74,80-81). These policies were used to "create national and political stability under authoritarian rule while infusing values conducive to the modernisation of [the] Korean nation" (M. Park, 2016, p. 74). In summary, cultural policies mostly targeted domestic audiences, rather than foreign publics, with the objective of nation or identity building. This highlights some of the constructivist and ontological aspects of nation branding that will be explored in later sections (C. Browning, 2013; C. S. Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017; Schwak, 2018). Content was strategically produced and anything harmful was censored, making it a form

of politically-funded propaganda, and the modernization of South Korean identity relied heavily on the country's hard power, such as the nation's economic accomplishments (M. Park, 2016, p. 74).

After the assassination of General Park (1979), there would be few military regimes left before the state's democratization under the administration of President Roh Tae-woo (1988-1993). Having maintained the industrialization process set in the 1960s, the nation had greater economic resources to host global events and invest in outward facing cultural policies to "promote national pride" (M. Park, 2016, p. 74). This shift is significant to the country's cultural diplomacy as President Roh Tae-woo's administration also saw a greater liberalization of cultural policies (e.g., removing aforementioned censorship laws) and a growing emphasis on non-economic forms of appealing to foreign publics. There was an increased acknowledgement of global perceptions of South Koreans and wanting to "establish a cultural identity of the nation" (M. Park, 2016, p. 90). In particular, there was a much greater emphasis on "cultural welfare and international exchange" (M. Park, 2016, pp. 90–91). Examples of some of the most notable events are the 1986 Asian Games and the 1988 Summer Olympic Games (M. Park, 2016). The impact of hosting the Olympic Games as a newly democratized state cannot be stressed enough. For the first time since the mid 20th century, South Korea was making headlines, but this time in celebration. Titled: "Breaking into the Big Leagues", Time Magazine wrote:

"South Korea is ready for the big party. Seoul is bedecked with flags and banners [...]. Children are rehearsing spirited songs. The bands have been tuning up for months. Soon the guests from 161 countries will be arriving: 250, 000 tourists, 14, 000 journalists and, most important, 13,000 athletes and sports officials. A global television audience of more than 1 billion people will tune in as the Games of XXIV Olympiad get under way." (TIME, 1988)

It is important to note how political this article was. While sports were mentioned briefly, the true feature of the article focused on the hard work of South Koreans, their culture, several notable industries, and –

most of all – its democratization. Thus, improving its image and international relations in a world order that prizes liberal democratic values such as human rights and the rule of law. As Time wrote:

“Two weeks from now, when a South Korean athlete carries a flame [...] into Seoul’s Olympic stadium, the host country will have more to show off than a vibrant economy; it will be able to point to an astonishing political accomplishment. [...] Only last year South Korea was under the iron fist of [...] a former army general who had seized power [...]. Human rights were routinely abused. Much of that grim past has been swept away.” (TIME, 1988)

Overall, it provided an opportunity for South Korea to re-introduce itself to the world, or as the article describes, “throw themselves an elaborate coming-out party” (TIME, 1988). The country was included and considered under what Huntington (1991) has dubbed the modern world’s “third wave of democratization,” with the number of democratic governments around the world nearly doubling between 1974 and 1990. This shift marked a new chapter for South Korean nation branding, which improved its brand in the global arena and recognized the impact of political and cultural diplomacy in international relations. Park (2016) writes how, “After the games, the Roh government sought to improve the country’s cultural exchange with other countries” (p. 74). This new chapter realized the value of soft power and public diplomacy in “building the nation’s influence” (D. Y. Choi & Kim, 2014, p. 350). While “soft power assets” are less tangible, it does not mean governments cannot effectively invest in or develop strategies to enhance their soft power. Some examples of soft power assets that began growing during this period are “the attractiveness of a nation’s ideas (democratic freedoms, equality of opportunity, etc.), its performance (successful development, global influence, etc.) [...]” (D. Y. Choi & Kim, 2014, pp. 349–350). Other assets, such as “its cultural heritage and contemporary popularity of its cultural products, its reputation as an international citizen, and its reputation as a place that is beautiful, friendly, or otherwise desirable [...]” (D. Y. Choi & Kim, 2014, pp. 349–350) would be quick to follow.

One such strategy, which began with but continued past Roh's administration, was to project the image of South Korea as a "middle power" in international relations (Ayhan, 2019). This practice is referred to as "middle power diplomacy" and this form of "wielding soft power" has been performed by other "middle powers" such as Canada, Australia, and Norway (Axworthy, 1997, p. 193; Ayhan, 2019, pp. 11–12). Contrary to what some may believe, a state trying to establish itself as a middle power in international relations is actually an explicit and intentional act states engage in (rather than a given) (Axworthy, 1997). Geopolitically, it is in middle powers' best interests to promote a democratic and liberal world order that values the collaboration and cooperation of states in order to overcome challenges in the global arena. Applying the "sticks" and "carrots" analogy (Nye, 2019), middle powers' sticks are not very threatening, and their carrots are not very appetizing. So, resolving issues peacefully and diplomatically taps into a state's soft power. This also raises the status of states who do not yet possess the resources or capabilities of "major powers" but want to be regarded as independent, accomplished, and active members of global society (Nossal et al., 2015). We may recall that independence and self-sustenance were major objectives of previous administrations (e.g., President Rhee, General Park, etc.), and not being regarded as capable, self-sustaining, or independent with a negative nation brand caused South Korea many challenges in the early stages of its development.

President Kim Young-Sam's administration (beginning in 1993) called for the "Creation of a New Korea" (M. Park, 2016, p. 93). While his administration built off the liberalization of media that Roh had been implementing, South Korea's global brand was a key priority. In addition to strengthening South Korean national pride and projecting Korean cultural heritage to the world, the central theme of his foreign policy strategy was globalization, not only making Koreans more accepting and aware of globalization and its influences but also projecting this image of Koreans as "global citizens" abroad. For example, trying to convince the population to "conform to international norms and standards" (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 435). This is because "Nation branding not only seeks to gather input or build a

dialogue with citizens; it aims at enrolling citizens into the branding project as brand ambassadors” (Schwak, 2018, p. 652). This was enacted through his *Segyehwa* (“globalisation” policy) as a new foreign policy paradigm (M. Park, 2016, p. 95; Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 434; S. Yoon, 1996, p. 513). Culturally, politically, and economically, President Kim developed globalization policies that “[opened] the country to the world” (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 435).

Scholars have even noticed parallels between his descriptions of the international arena as a highly competitive global market and that of General Park (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 435). The difference being, of course, that General Park saw this as a reason to protect the state from outside influences, strengthening from within and exporting to the world, while President Kim had a more neoliberal perspective, wanting less state control and more participation from the private sector in presenting South Korea to the world and accepting external influences. Nonetheless, global competitiveness discourse is indeed effective in rallying and unifying a nation to meet the challenges beyond its borders and is “a common pattern among nation-branding campaigns, especially in countries undergoing political transitions” or with nation brands typically associated with authoritarianism, communism, or economic protectionism (Schwak, 2018, p. 652). Effectively demonstrating this change politically, the administration joined the World Trade Organization and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in 1995, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development in 1996, among other international and regional organizations, despite the occasional domestic controversy, such as the “fierce opposition from labour organisations” (Schwak, 2015, p. 10, 2018, p. 650).

Joining regional and international organizations or networks is a surprisingly common strategy for states to display their “elevated” status on the global stage. While a state’s primary intentions may genuinely be to create long-lasting change for the greater good, it also demonstrates that the state is ready and willing to collaborate (improving their reputation) and that they have accumulated the hard power and resources to pursue transnational objectives with others, assist those in need, and earn a ‘seat at the

table'. In this sense, it is one of various examples of how the accumulation of hard power, when harnessed and presented effectively in international relations, can become a form of soft power. Analyzing the primary policy objectives, discourse and practice of South Korea in global governance related issues (e.g., climate action, development cooperation, and more), Ayhan (2019) warns against accepting political discourse at face value – studying “actual behavior and impact” will demonstrate that much of this rhetoric was “aimed to improve the country’s global image and status to make it commensurate with its ever-increasing positional capacity” (p. 16) In other words, South Korea’s middle-power-projection “has mainly been a nation branding effort [...] to improve its global image and status in order to help shape the country’s international political environment [...]” (Ayhan, 2019, p. 17). As for whether the country deserved to project such an image, it had actually achieved the resources and capabilities of a typical ‘middle power’ decades before it began this effort (since the late 1970s) (Ayhan, 2019, p. 16). Similar to their global image – their reputation was simply lagging behind their actual accomplishments.

As for the development and elevation of its cultural brand, President Kim began inviting giants from the private sector, encouraging *Chaebol* to take part in the development of the country’s cultural industries (M. Park, 2016, p. 93). After being told by the Presidential Advisory Board of Science and Technology that the American blockbuster film *Jurassic Park* was “worth the foreign sales of 1.5 million Hyundai cars” (Shim, 2006, p. 32), the President realized the increasing profitability of the entertainment industry: “The comparison of a film to Hyundai cars – which at the time were considered the ‘Pride of Korea’ – was apt enough to awaken the Korean public to the idea of culture as an industry” (Shim, 2006, p. 32). Combining the economic power of South Korea’s conglomerates (those that had grown along with state investment during the country’s rapid industrialization) and following a similar path of state-support in developing the country’s cultural industries, had a significant impact. It was also during this time that cultural policies went from being “inward looking” to “outward looking” (M. Park, 2016, p. 95), applying tried and tested export-led industrialization strategies to cultural content. The government

increased funding for institutions and policies to supporting the arts. For example, enacting the Motion Picture Promotion Law (MPPL), providing financial benefits (e.g., tax breaks) to incentivize the private sector, creating government-funded arts schools and institutions (e.g., National University of Arts, Korean Film Academy), among other methods to “[harness] human resources for Korea’s next-generation in the media industry” (M. Park, 2016, pp. 99–100). The decisions of this period, along with the skills and abilities developed to this point, helped set the foundation for what would create today’s cultural phenomenon.

Understandably, the introduction of chaebol into the country’s cultural sector was a controversial one. These were massive conglomerates who grew to account for major portions of the Korean economy – how could smaller enterprises compete? And what of the growing concern surrounding the commodification of culture (C. Browning, 2013, p. 203; H.-K. Lee, 2019, p. 58, 2020, p. 544; Schwak, 2018, p. 656; Schwak *줄리엣 쉐크*, 2016)? Interestingly, more industry actors supported this move, prepared and eager for the massive investment that the country’s cultural industries would receive (Shim, 2002). Analyzing the impact of opening the media industry to private actors, Shim researched the involvement of the country’s five largest chaebols in the country’s cinema and other audiovisual industries in the mid 1990s, explaining: “Korean chaebols advanced into the cultural industry ranging from video production, film import, financing and production, and theatre operation to music production” (Shim, 2008, pp. 18–19). His findings can be seen Table 1, below.

Table 1: Five largest chaebol's audiovisual industry activities as of 1995

<i>Chaebol</i>	<i>Subsidiary</i>	<i>Activity</i>
* PP stands for program provider.		
Samsung	Catch One	Pay cable channel (PP)*
	Dream Box	Film importer/home video producer
	Hoam Art Hall	Theater
	Myungbo Movies	Cinema house (Samsung leased two screens under contract)
	Nices	Film importer/producer of CDs, LDs, CD-ROMs, and films
	Starmax	Film importer/film producer
	Cheil Youngsang	Film importer/television program producer
	Audiosoft	Music producer and distributor
	Q Channel	Cable channel (PP)
Daewoo	Daewoo Electronics Video Business Division	Film importer for home video production/film producer
	Wool Video	Film importer for video production/distribution
	Dong-woo Video	Home video producer
	Seshin Video	Home video producer
	Daewoo Cinema Network	Cable channel (PP)
	Se-um Media	Music producer and distributor
Hyundai	Seoul Production	Film producer
	HBS	Cable channel (PP)
LG	LG Media	Film importer/producer of CDs, LDs, CD-ROMs, and films
	Mediart	Film importer/film producer
	Korea Home Shopping	Cable channel (PP)
SK	SKC Video Business Division	Film importer for home video production
	Pan Production	Film producer and distributor
	Mido Film	Film importer/film producer
	Seoryung Production	Film importer for home video production

Chaebol did not, as predicted, completely dominate media industries. In fact, many exited during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis (Shim, 2008), which hit South Korea (among other East Asian countries) particularly hard. Their presence, however, still had a significant impact: “When many chaebol folded their film businesses in the vortex of the Asian Financial Crisis, some of these big-business-trained personnel remained in the film industry at large, playing pivotal roles in leading Korean cinema into the 21st century” (Shim, 2006, p. 33). Shim (2008) writes:

“By holding independent film festivals and film scenario contests with considerable cash prizes, chaebol-run film companies recruited fresh talent, who infused new sensibilities into Korean cinema. In particular, the chaebols supported young directors, equipped with diplomas from prestigious film schools all over the world [...] chaebol transplanted their advanced know-how, including systematic planning and marketing and transparent accounting [...] quite a number of those people remained in the cinema industry. [...] Chaebol’s business rationalization of the local film industry facilitated new players’ entrances into the sector.” (p. 19)

Shim describes their presence as having “laid the foundation for a renaissance of the cinema industry” (Shim, 2008, p. 19). The Korean population had, however, been consuming a huge volume of cultural content from abroad most of which originated from the United States. Even during the more protectionist South Korean regimes, explicit American pressure forced South Korea to import American content and distribute Hollywood films straight to local theaters (Shim, 2006, pp. 30–32). The desire for Korean content was growing, and apparently not just in South Korea. President Kim Dae-Jung built on these priorities and those of Kim Young-Sam. Continuing to support the cultural sector, his administration developed and funded more cultural foundations, councils, strategies and policies to support cultural commodities such as: “motion pictures, broadcasting, goods, records/tapes, games, publications or periodicals including magazines, newspapers, character, comics and multimedia output” (M. Park, 2016, pp. 101–102). It is in this context that the seeds of Hallyu are sowed, the global phenomenon that would become the core of South Korea’s nation branding initiatives, and set in motion (both literally and figuratively) a wave of cultural diplomacy that would play a fundamental role in the establishment and priorities of South Korean public diplomacy in the 21st century.

The Rise and Influence of Hallyu

This sub-section describes the rise of Hallyu and its influence on the evolution of South Korean nation branding. Building on an increasingly capable private sector and the policies initiated by the South

Korean state, we observe how the state eventually recognized the potential of Hallyu by integrating this growing cultural phenomenon into its nation branding, and eventually, its public diplomacy. Some of the relevant concepts from the field of cultural studies such as cultural proximity and cultural hybridity will be used to illustrate how Hallyu has made cultural diplomacy a linchpin of public diplomacy. It will be shown that political economic theories highlighted in earlier phases (e.g., the developmental state and state capitalism) become increasingly outdated as South Korea can no longer be considered a “developing country” or one in which the state directs some of the country’s largest corporations. Instead, from the 1990s onwards, the South Korean government played an increasingly supportive role as a “patron state” (H.-K. Lee, 2019), a great contrast to their former role as a controlling and censoring force that focused on targeting domestic populations with nation branding initiatives when not absorbed in trade diplomacy and economic industrialization (T. Kim, 2012). In sum, this sub-section demonstrates how the Korean Wave has played an influential role in the country’s evolving foreign policy objectives, nation branding strategies, and the eventual implementation of the country’s formal “public diplomacy”.

While South Korea was already actively “pushing” elements of its culture (e.g., traditional Korean culture, the Korean language, Korean martial arts, etc.) for some time (Rozenfeld, 2021), it was not until the mid to late 1990s that Korean cultural content began reflecting the culmination of the investments and support of the mutually supportive public and private sectors. Exporting this content abroad, it did not take long for East Asian and Southeast Asian countries to begin consuming South Korean cultural content during a period of increased media liberalization. The term “Hallyu” (Korean Wave) was first used by the Chinese to describe this phenomenon of Korean cultural content sweeping through and gaining massive popularity (C. S. Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017; Chung & Cho, 2017; Euromonitor International, 2016; Fulton, 2017; Ju, 2013, 2018; H.-K. Lee, 2019, 2020; Lie, 2012; Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020; Muzaffar, 2017; Rozenfeld, 2021; Schwak 줄리엣 쉐크, 2016). Initially, these were Korean films and television series (K-dramas), such as “Winter Sonata” (2002)

(Fulton, 2017; Ju, 2018; Lie, 2012; Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020; Shim, 2008), which was a major hit in Japan and other regions, bringing hordes of tourists and demonstrating to the government and corporate world the sort of reaction a popular television series could incite, or *Daejangguem* (Jewel in the Palace) which spread more globally (Ju, 2018; Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020).

Through this craze, South Korea had successfully tapped into two major economic powerhouses in the region, Japan and China, with their content continuing to rise in popularity throughout Asia, and visible potential to grow around the world. The more successful K-dramas became, the more in demand they were, and its popularity continues to increase to this day. Though the main drivers of Hallyu (producing, exporting, and promoting Korean cultural content) were from the private sector (Ju, 2018; Lie, 2012), the government –strategizing how to pay off the country’s debt to the International Monetary Fund (the bail received during the Asian Financial Crisis) - was also in the process of “reform[ing] its socioeconomic structure in tandem with a knowledge-based society” (Ju, 2018, p. 2). These reforms better prioritized the “cultural industry” as a “a key asset of a knowledge-based society” (Ju, 2018, p. 2).

Not far behind, the second driver of Hallyu began to sweep the region by the early to mid-2000s, K-pop (Korean Pop Music). Similar to K-dramas, K-pop was effectively created and distributed with a manner of export-led industrialization. Searching for the “K” in K-pop, Lie analyzes the evolution of traditional to contemporary popular Korean music, from dynasties prior to the advent of South Korea, to the influence of Japanese then American occupation, Lie effectively demonstrates how K-pop is a fusion and reflection of the country’s cultural history (which includes foreign cultural influences) (Lie, 2012). For example, when not influenced by the classical European music certain Korean elite were exposed to, the traditional Japanese *enka* (inspiring Korean trot), or even the various American genres that came over during and after American occupation, traditional popular Korean music followed a pentatonic scale. Confucian values also meant “[p]erformers stood very still, dressed in traditional garb [...] and projecting an utterly respectable appearance” (Lie, 2012, p. 344). On the opposite end of the spectrum, the ‘non-

elite' listened to the popular tunes of folk music and drums which exemplified "energy and chaos" (Lie, 2012). While dancing and singing performances existed in both, they were performed separately and neither gradually evolved organically into contemporary Korean pop music. The change in scale, from pentatonic to the diatonic scale heard in K-pop today, fusion of genres and languages, as well as the simultaneous singing/dancing combo of most K-pop songs and performances, are all notable shifts that did not happen at once (Lie, 2012, p. 346). The cultural impact of the Japanese then American occupation were significant (Ju, 2013), and this can be observed in the evolution of popular Korean music (from trot, to rock, to pop, to hip-hop, to rap, and more). In other words, the most "Korean" aspect of "K-pop" was not the music itself but the industry's style of absorption, production, and exportation.

The production and export-oriented mindset of the genre may sound familiar. In a sense, K-pop entertainment agencies could be seen as idol factories. One of the first K-pop agencies to bring the genre transnational fame was SM Entertainment, founded by Lee Soo-man, a graduate from the country's most prestigious university (Seoul National University) before doing his master's in California. After returning and establishing SM, he produced the "top two" idol groups of their time (H.O.T and S.E.S) "through the domestic audition and in-house training system" (Ju, 2013, pp. 11–12). More than just a music studio and dorm, agencies hire managers, producers, choreographers, marketing teams and more. Anything a "trainee" (those who "undergo rigorous training" for years) could possibly need to become a professional singer, dancer, rapper, producer or actor is provided by the agency as an up-front investment. (Ju, 2013; Lie, 2012). This training system is one of the most iconic elements of K-pop and many aspects of a trainee's skills or appearance can fall under the microscope of idol producers (e.g., imposing diets and plastic surgery becoming common demands aspiring artists must adhere to in order to one day debut) (Lie, 2012, p. 356). Humorously referencing the often used description of music as a *universal language*, Lie (2012) explains: "Even if music is said to be a universal language, the resistance to foreign-language lyrics could be overcome easier with beauty standards and dance routines of the prevailing global norm"

(p. 353). In addition to being all-around idol creators, agencies hire language teachers because foreign language skills are needed to: perform in other languages or have interviews in different countries, appeal to foreign publics, and sometimes produce entire songs in different languages (Lie, 2012). While some songs and artists display elements of traditional Korean culture, or maintain elements of “Koreanness” (Kelley, 2018), it is by no means a requirement. Increasingly, these “idols” do not even have to be Korean (both in terms of nationality and ethnicity), nor do the lyrics need to be in Korean. There is a growing number of non-Korean K-pop artists as well as successful K-pop songs with fully English, Japanese, or Chinese lyrics, and many are in groups with various members appealing to different foreign publics. From start to finish, agencies are considering the global ‘exportability’ of both the genre and its idols. Having little to do with “traditional Confucian, Korean culture”, the “K” in “K-pop” is a “brand”, more specifically “a part of Brand Korea that has been the export-oriented South Korean government since the 1960s (Lie, 2012, pp. 361–362).

Drawing from the theory of “cultural proximity” (Ju, 2013; Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020), it was hypothesized in the 1990s and early 2000s that the regional phenomenon of Hallyu would never successfully reach a global audience. This theory argued that Hallyu’s popularity depended on its cultural relatability among foreign publics who still shared similar Asian values (e.g., hierarchy, respect for authority and elders, collectivism, and more). While it is certainly true that it was more difficult to tap into Western markets, the cultural fusion that often exists in these exports also make them more marketable (Shim, 2006). We must therefore acknowledge the importance of, and South Korea’s talent for, “cultural hybridization” (Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020). This hybridization process helped South Korea’s cultural industries (having followed similar patterns to the country’s economic industrialization) to surpass expectations once again and to successfully break into non-Asian markets, marking Hallyu’s transition from a regional to a global phenomenon. This latest achievement has also been described as the result of effective glocalization (global-local-ization) representing “the interconnection of media in

respect to production, distribution, and reproduction” (Ju, 2013, p. 2). In strong contrast to the state’s previous reliance on protectionism for its development, the theory of glocalization demonstrates how effectively South Koreans have adapted and are innovating in a globalized digital age. As Ju (2013) writes, “The transnational media circulation stresses glocalization of various formats of popular culture and media content, in particular, *when the local media and cultural form encounter the global audience*” [Emphasis added] (pp. 17–18).

Politically, Hallyu has played a significant role in South Korea’s nation branding initiatives and even pre-dates its official public diplomacy initiatives. Throughout the 21st century, as Schwak (2016) states, “the Korean government has organised nation branding in a way that no other nation has” (p. 437). Examples of such efforts include: taking “systematic measures to improve its nation brand”, “establishing a separate organization”, and “creating its own tool for international comparison” (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 437). During President Lee Myung-bak’s administration (2008-2013), many policies were implemented to fit “the new policy line” that would further promote a “Global Korea” (Korea IT Times, 2012; Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 435). He established the Presidential Council on Nation Branding (PCNB) in 2009, which published its 10-part action plan the following year, to: [1] promote tae kwon do; [2] dispatch 3,000 volunteers abroad every year; [3] adopt an official “Korean Wave” program, [4] introduce the “Global Korea” scholarship; [5] adopt the “Campus Asia” program; [6] increase external aid; [7] develop state-of-the-art technologies; [8] nurture the culture and tourism industries; [9] treat foreigners and multicultural families better; and [10] help Koreans become “global citizens” (Dinnie, 2009, p. 4; Markessinis, 2009; Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016).

Having seen the growth and potential of Hallyu, the South Korean government viewed the cultural phenomenon as more than just a way to promote its film and music industries. In addition to nurturing the culture and tourism industries, as well as adopting a Korean Wave program, the Council’s “Global Korea” campaign, worked “in collaboration with major chaebols (Samsung, LG, Hyundai) and

entertainment companies (SM, YG, JYP¹), to incorporate this successful wave of Korean popular culture into the governmental agenda” (Schwak 줄리엣 쉐크, 2016, p. 438). Similar to previous foreign policy initiatives that highlighted the importance of globalization, this new change required citizens to live the brand in order to effectively project it abroad, in this case mobilizing the population to “live Brand Korea” (Schwak 줄리엣 쉐크, 2016, p. 438). The PCNB served as a “control tower” (D. Y. Choi & Kim, 2014; S. T. Lee(a), 2021, p. 5; Muzaffar, 2017, p. 353), overseeing the “country’s nation branding activities” (S. T. Lee(a), 2021, p. 5) by: “conducting government policies on nation branding”, setting up “a management system on nation branding by co-ordinating ministries’ plans and evaluating them”, “strengthen[ing]” the “collaboration”, “network”, and “partnership” “between the government and the private sector” (D. Y. Choi & Kim, 2014, p. 343). In an interview, Schwak (2016) quotes a Korean government official explaining the shared thought process: “Korea has the experience of war, it was the poorest country in the world, and we were aid recipients. It was a long time ago, but this history is still affecting many people. It is an obstacle for us to promote our country. So, our government really thinks that nation branding is important” (p. 437). In order to fully dissociate themselves from elements of their past that were negatively impacting their global reputation, South Korea needed to actively enhance its soft power in a way that could address its negative “country-of-origin effect” and “endowment effect” (Cull, 2019, pp. 124, 130) as well as their continued association with North Korea (Son, 2018).

The country-of-origin effect cannot be ignored when discussing the South Korean nation brand. It is a phenomenon that describes the “association between a place and an abstract quality, which is assumed to be embedded in the product” (Cull, 2019, p. 124) and plays “an important role in consumers’ purchase decisions” (van Ham, 2008, p. 129). When positive, this concept is used to describe – often stereotypically – the increased value and quality of products, such as French Wine, German cars,

¹ SM, YG, and JYP, also known as the “Big 3”, have – until only recently – been the “largest and most profitable” entertainment agencies driving the Korean Wave through generations of K-pop (J. S. Yoon, 2021).

Canadian maple syrup, Japanese technology, Italian luxury brands, and more. However, the Korea Discount refers to the negative impact of South Korea's nation brand and its mark-down in prices (Cull, 2019, pp. 124–125; Dinnie, 2009, pp. 2–3). For example, as Cull (2019) writes, “electronic products made in Korea retail for some 25 percent less than a product of equivalent quality made in Japan. [And] Korean stocks trade for well below what would be the case for a company with similar earnings in East Asia” (p. 124). To escape the Korea Discount, Korean corporations trying to achieve greater transnational success would hide their country of origin, “preferring to be branded globally” because “many foreigners still believed Korea was an underdeveloped, aid dependent country [...]” (Schwak 줄리엣 쉥크, 2016, p. 437). Even the country's largest and most “highly respected global brands” (e.g., Samsung, Hyundai, LG) would “downplay their Korean origins” (Dinnie, 2009, p. 3). As a measure of the challenge of rebranding South Korea, we must consider that changing a negative nation brand is already an uphill battle in and of itself without the state having to also contend with its major global corporations actively engaged in disassociating themselves from their own country.

The “endowment effect” is a term to describe how “people get attached to their possessions, whether physical or psychological” (Cull, 2019, p. 130). One of the reasons nation brands change at such a slow pace (Anholt, 2020; Cull, 2019; Dinnie, 2009) is because it requires dismantling long-standing images, stereotypes, perceptions, or beliefs. The logic of our brains requiring more time re-learn (change/correct) information than to learn it for the first time applies to the psychology of nation brands. As Anholt (2020) explains: “When a country does something that doesn't exactly chime with those [learned] perceptions, we will often disregard it. Only if that country keeps behaving in a strikingly different way for years, in a way that conforms to a new pattern we can easily understand, will we eventually and reluctantly unpick our lifelong assumptions and replace them with a new set [...]” (p. 25).

As a result, for many years, despite the country's rapid socio-economic and technological development, South Korea's global reputation lagged behind reality (Dinnie, 2009, pp. 1–2). It was

difficult for global audiences to disassociate South Korea from North Korea given the latter's periodic famines, its ongoing human rights violations and its identity as a "rogue" regime on the world stage. The consistent association of North and South Korea can be described through "stimulus generalization" which demonstrates how our species is one many that are predisposed to generalizing others in "complex social learning environments" (FeldmanHall et al., 2018, p. 1690). These studies highlight how our minds tap into prevailing stereotypes, narratives, and exposure (whether real or fictional) when making judgements about whether to trust or distrust someone we do not have direct experience with (FeldmanHall et al., 2018). This ongoing "North Korea Image Problem" (Son, 2018) created negative consequences for South Korea because it could not completely detach itself from the extremely negative North Korean nation brand (Anholt, 2008; Son, 2018). For example, due to repeated exposure in the media and international relations, "Kim Jong Il" and "Kim Jong Un" were the most commonly known Korean names "for a great many outsiders" (Son, 2018, p. 671). Even if a country's image is outdated, inaccurate, a generalization, or pulling from fictional narratives, a negative nation brand is extremely difficult to improve and requires persistent effort to transform.

Fortunately, as seen during the country's rapid industrialization, and according to Hofstede's (2010) international surveys, indexes, and analyses, "long-term orientation" (perseverance and thrift due to values and priorities oriented toward future rewards) is an area in which South Korea excels (for better or worse) (p. 239). Seeing the value in improving their nation brand, many South Korean administrations (regardless of partisan politics) were relatively consistent in their investment in cultural businesses, cultural exports, and nation branding (H.-K. Lee, 2019). Fulton (2017) writes: "The direct intervention of the Korean government, which has provided massive funding for Hallyu ('Korean Wave'), the nation-brand applied to Korean cultural production, should come as no surprise – a similar collaboration between government and chaebol underlies much of the South Korean economic miracle" (p. 331).

As we have shown in the above discussion on the history of the evolution of the South Korean nation branding and the rise of Hallyu, a South Korean state that had prioritized its hard economic power to stimulate its modernization during a forty-year period, roughly extending from the end of the Korean War to the late 1980s, had by the end of century started to “double down” with its corporate sector to address the country’s soft power deficit. This doubling down is illustrated by South Korea publicizing the official application of the framework of public diplomacy in its foreign policy with the publication of the first “Cultural Diplomacy Manual” in 2010. The then foreign minister stated: “along with diplomatic efforts focused on national defense in the 1980s and the economy and trade in the 1990s, *culture will be the third pillar of diplomatic power in the twenty-first century*” [Emphasis added] (S. T. Lee(a), 2021, p. 5). The role of culture as the linchpin of a state’s public diplomacy is illustrated through the manner in which the terms “culture” is subsumed within “public diplomacy” in official statements on South Korea’s foreign policy approach in the 2010’s. For example, by 2016, under Article 2 of the government’s “Public Diplomacy Act”, public diplomacy was defined as “diplomacy activities through which the State enhances foreign nationals’ understanding of and confidence in the Republic of Korea directly or in cooperation with local governments or the private sector through *culture*, knowledge, policies, etc.” [Emphasis added] (Public Diplomacy Act, 2016, p. 1). With the vision of “fascinating the world with Korea’s charm” Hallyu is defined as a critical element of South Korea’s public diplomacy (MOFA, 2021). Although public diplomacy falls under the jurisdiction of the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the international use of Hallyu to promote the South Korean nation brand is a pan-government priority for South Korea, involving multiple ministries, including those of culture and education, local and regional governments, as well as government agencies and affiliated institutions.

Section 3: Hallyu and South Korean Public Diplomacy

Having shown that South Korea embraced the concept of public diplomacy, a concept that has its roots in the American foreign policy establishment, this section provides compelling examples of how

Hallyu leverages South Korea's soft power through the state's application of public diplomacy. In this section, each element of Cull's (2019) taxonomy of public diplomacy, which we described earlier, is viewed through the prism of Hallyu initiatives with special attention paid to the role of cultural diplomacy. Since the main argument of this paper situates Hallyu as the linchpin of public diplomacy, the use of culture to advance foreign policy goals is present in all the elements of the taxonomy not just the instrument of cultural diplomacy.

Listening: From Extensive Research to Parasocial Relationships

Both state and non-state actors in South Korea, and around the world, are highly active in this form of public engagement. Focusing on Korean departments and organizations, examples of actors who accumulate and analyze data to then inform Hallyu policies are: the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA, n.d.), the Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST, 2021), Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA, 2021), the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange (KOFICE, 2021a), and the Korea Foundation (KF, 2021a).

Reflecting the dominance of Hallyu in the agencies established to support South Korea's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organizations such as the Korea Creative Content Agency, the Korean Foundation for International Cultural Exchange, and the Korea Foundation often either produce publications focused on the Korean Wave, or are gathering data on elements of the country's public diplomacy that have surely been impacted by Hallyu's "spillover effect". For example, every single official KOFICE publication since its establishment contains "Hallyu" in the title and observes either trends in Hallyu or its impact on other consumer goods. In order to "help the Korean cultural and creative industries abroad, we publish *monthly, bimonthly, and annual studies*" [Emphasis added] (KOFICE, 2021b). In their most recent annual report (2020 Global Hallyu Trends), an extensive study was done on the direct and indirect impact of Hallyu on cultural and non-cultural consumer goods.

The foundation explains: “*The 2020 Global Hallyu Trends report summarizes and analyzes the 2020 Overseas Hallyu Survey to examine the perceptions and consumption status of 8,000 Hallyu consumers in 17 countries. It also uses the 2019 Hallyu Economic Impact Study to examine the national Hallyu index by country, and the impact Hallyu has on the Korean economy, grouping these by major issues.*” (KOFICE, 2020b)

Collaborating with diplomatic missions abroad, a government-run survey conducted by the Korea Foundation found that, as of September 2020, the number of Hallyu fans worldwide had surpassed 100 million (Jung & Lee, 2021). While this is likely an under-estimate because figures are “based on online membership data from Hallyu fan clubs” collected from 109 countries but “related activities in 98” (Jung & Lee, 2021), its findings can still inform Korean state and non-state actors, who are well familiar with tailoring cultural exports based on regional values and preferences (Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020). These are some of many Hallyu reports that are produced to observe trends and inform policymaking.

There are other actors, primarily non-state actors, who are extremely active online and through social media. Different than the form of listening conducted by government department and agencies, idols listen and communicate to form deeper relationships with their fan bases. Though it is not within the scope of this article, it would be fascinating to delve deeper into the world of “parasocial relationships” with celebrities (Chung & Cho, 2017). Here, Chung and Cho’s survey results demonstrate how parasocial relationships between consumers and celebrities (whether or not there are active social media interactions, as long as the creator appears to be mindful, vulnerable, and attentive to fans), improves brand credibility (Chung & Cho, 2017). This study was conducted on Hallyu fans (as are many other studies by academics interested by the global phenomenon of the Korean Wave) and is particularly relevant in the case of South Korea – where celebrity endorsements (an estimated 60% of advertisements) are significantly more prominent than in the West (Chung & Cho, 2017, p. 481).

Advocacy: Hallyu Idols as Political Envoys

Before making his speech at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) for the annual Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Moment on September 20, 2021, South Korea's President Moon Jae-in bestowed the title of "Special Presidential Envoys for Future Generations and Culture" to global Korean superstars *Bangtan Sonyeondan* (more commonly known as BTS) (Shubailat, 2021; United Nations(b), 2021). This was not the first time BTS has been invited to speak at the United Nations, they have had successful campaigns and have appeared for speeches with the international organization years prior to receiving this title (D. Hong, 2017; United Nations Children's Fund, 2021; United Nations(a), 2021). However, this was their first time performing at the United Nations Headquarters before all partaking in a speech to those present at the UN General Assembly and to the world (the event was streamed live). President Moon Jae-in's envoys brought in more online viewers than the UN has ever seen on any social media platform. The UN YouTube stream had over a million viewers at the time and has received more than 32 million views within a month, a count that is on the lower end of BTS's viewership ratings (currently averaging 20 million views on YouTube a day) (Shubailat, 2021) but brought in record-breaking views for the United Nation's channel (United Nations(c), 2021).

When asked why he appointed BTS as his Special Presidential Envoys, President Moon Jae-in responded by emphasizing the importance of engaging with the younger generation and including them in the development of the world's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). On the appointment of his envoys, he explains how BTS, the "greatest artists of our time", have "been conveying this message of unity and hope through their music even to the younger people grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic. [...] they are returning the love they receive from their fans all over the world through spreading this positive influence to all. Therefore, I believe that there is no better candidate than BTS that can represent and speak up for younger generations" (United Nations(b), 2021). President Moon Jae-in was the most popular politician of the SDG Moment and effectively used the additional speeches, interviews, and

camera time with the United Nations to highlight the great progress South Korea has made within the past few decades, as well as the country's SDGs (United Nations(b), 2021). This is particularly beneficial for South Korea, who (within the past couple decades) has been actively projecting an image of itself as a "bridge" between developing and developed nations, by "expanding assistance for" and "sharing Korea's development experience with developing countries" (MOFA, n.d.). South Korea's efforts to improve its political and economic brand through "bridge building" (a common method for middle powers to diplomatically distinguish themselves in international politics) (Ayhan, 2019, p. 20; C. S. Browning & Ferraz de Oliveira, 2017, p. 490) is an effective example of smart power in multiple ways: channeling the successful accumulation of hard power (economic development) as a form of soft power (role model, collaborating bilaterally and multilaterally with states to support the development of others), and utilizing cultural diplomacy (another form of soft power) to shine a greater spotlight on these accomplishments. This event also contributed to one of the core goals of Korean PD, "gain[ing] global support" (through an increased understanding) for Korea's policies (MOFA, 2021).

Answering the question of how BTS became "a tool of global diplomacy" in a media interview with international broadcasting systems following the event, President Moon said his priority was to raise awareness for the UN's SDG Moment and that BTS has successfully accomplished exactly that: "It was a huge success. It was much more effective than the U.N. Secretary General or myself delivering hundreds of speeches" (Shubailat, 2021). Indeed, within the past decade, it has not been uncommon for famous South Korean artists to attend or speak at political events, supporting their country's government through public diplomacy, improving international relations, and shining a greater light on international affairs has been rather common practice. This strategy has been dubbed 'K-pop Diplomacy' and represents the many K-pop artists that have "become a part of the country's statecraft, with its horizon expanding to the realm of diplomacy among world leaders" (A. Kim, 2018).

Interestingly, the activism does not end there. One of the core drivers behind most K-pop groups' success is the successful mobilization of their loyal and devoted fandoms. While their ability to rapidly mobilize and disseminate information in relation to media and entertainment is more well known, less attention is given to their activism. When they are not breaking records in the entertainment industry for their idols, fandoms have, on multiple occasions, mobilized to address social and political issues in international affairs: "Millions of dollars in donations. Viral hashtag domination. Ticket interference at Trump rallies. These might sound like the actions of a highly coordinated political or philanthropic campaign. In reality, it's the work of a broad coalition of K-pop fans" (Bruner, 2020). It is important to emphasize that "K-pop fans" and even the fans within a specific fandom, often share extremely diverse social, political, and economic values and opinions. The common denominator which makes various forms of fandom activism most impressive is their ability to effectively mobilize through social media in the digital age. As the impact of digital activism grows, K-pop fans (especially international fans used to consuming most Korean content online) are well versed in the digital arena, they "congregate and are significant contributors on pretty much every social media platform, including Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, Reddit, Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, Discord, and Twitch [...]" (Bruner, 2020).

During Trump's 2020 election campaign, there was growing concern among many K-pop fans (particularly those relatively versed in American politics) about the rising authoritarian elements of American democracy under Trump's administration, the idea of political rallies during a public health emergency (the COVID-19 pandemic), and the rise of populism, white supremacy, and disinformation leading up the elections. In response "K-pop fans and TikTok teens" decided to prank the President's campaign by reserving tickets to his rallies then not showing up: "Trump spokespeople claimed as many as 1 million ticket requests were received for the June Tulsa, Okla, rally for the president. But ultimately the in-person attendance was just a little over 6,000. Thanks to Trump's well-known focus on crowd sizes, this specific fact became a subject of satire" (Bruner, 2020). Brad Parscale, Trump's campaign

manager, went from bragging on Twitter about the “biggest data haul and rally sign-up of all time 10x” (O’Sullivan, 2020) to angrily tweeting about how the incredibly low turnout was the result of “radical protestors, fueled by a week of apocalyptic media coverage” (Bruner, 2020).

This was a busy period for K-pop political activists intent on virtually combatting white supremacy as Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests were also underway. Unfortunately demonstrating how police brutality is still an issue for Americans (recalling the high levels of police brutality enabled by the American Military Government during the mid-20th century US occupation of South Korea), the world watched in horror as the US police arrested more than 10,000 people, “regularly use[d] pepper spray, rubber bullets, teargas and batons on protestors, media, and bystanders” in response to protests against racial inequality and police brutality (Griffin, 2020; Sainato, 2020). These protests were sparked by the public murder of George Floyd (with the excessive use of force by the police officer filmed and distributed on social media). Protests and demonstrations broke out across the country – in “about 140 cities in all 50 states” (Sainato, 2020). During these protests, “the police department asked citizens to submit videos of protest activity”, to which K-pop fans supporting the BLM movement decided to spam available “police scanner apps” (e.g., Dallas, TX), with fancams (videos of their Korean idols singing and dancing), eventually rendering the app useless “due to technical difficulties” (Bruner, 2020). K-pop fans also used these “fancams” to spam hashtags that were being used as a form of anti-protest and mobilization against BLM (e.g., #WhiteLivesMatter and #BlueLivesMatter) (Bruner, 2020).

Due to the effective digital mobilization of K-pop fans in supporting the BLM movement and combatting police brutality, the activists won the publicly displayed admiration and allegiance of a transnational actor more commonly known for its activism through digital hacking, “Anonymous” (Griffin, 2020). While K-pop idols donated money to support the BLM movement, they avoided getting heavily involved in American politics, only voicing or financially supporting the movement. For example, when BTS donated \$1 million for BLM, BTS’s fandom (ARMY) quickly matched their

donation, making it \$2 million overall (Bruner, 2020). In addition to being an interesting example of how technology has transformed advocacy in the 21st century, this demonstrates how certain elements of public diplomacy are increasingly outside of the intentional hands of state actors and into the (sometimes chaotic but always diverse) hands of non-state actors and civil society (e.g., groups created through Korean cultural content consumption being actors in addition to simply consumers). This also illustrates the rising influence and impact of said actors. Interestingly, the rising popularity of K-pop fans has further propelled the Korean Wave, motivating others on social media to give Korean cultural content a try.

Cultural Diplomacy: Becoming a Global Culture Powerhouse

We will now show how South Korea's traditional and contemporary culture, values, and norms have influenced the way its projects itself (and its culture) abroad. Additionally, we refer back to certain cultural and psychological studies to describe why this cultural content has become, not only more palatable to foreign publics, but has also caused a "spillover" effect that is relevant to both the country's cultural and non-cultural industries. South Korea's identity is a both a combination of its past as well as the "invented traditions and the continuous mobilization and adaptation of history" (van Ham, 2008, p. 147). Hofstede's global survey on collectivist vs individualist societies demonstrates how a collective mindset and identity can often lead or inspire members of society to work for the greater group as opposed to focusing solely on the self (Hofstede et al., 2010). This is particularly interesting to observe as the country becomes a prime global producer of cultural content and what influence collectivist thought has had on cultural policy decision making. Further reflecting the collectivism in South Korea, a study by a psychologist and linguist couple demonstrate how collectivism can be observed in language (Hofstede et al., 2010). Applying their findings to Hofstede's Individualism Index (on which South Korea ranked very low) they found: "Languages spoken in individualist cultures tend to require speakers to use the 'I' pronoun when referring to themselves; languages spoken in collectivist cultures allow or prescribe dropping this pronoun. The English language, spoken in most individualist countries [...] is the only one

we know of that write ‘I’ with a capital letter” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 112). On the complete opposite end of the spectrum, the Korean language actually often replaces “I” or “Mine” with “We” or “Our” (*uri*) even if the person is referring to something that is theirs. From casual conversations (someone using “our” to talk about their partner, friend, family, home, etc.) (Babe, 2017) to life-threatening situations (e.g., adhering to policy measures that would effectively prevent the spread or flatten the curve of COVID-19 during a public health emergency) (Maaravi et al., 2021), the intimate relationship between language and culture shares an interesting (and often overlooked) insight of some of the major influences behind policy development and adherence. The collectivist logic behind the application of “uri”, in this sense, is a “cultural canon that captures the very essence of [the] nation” (Babe, 2017) and further demonstrates the influence of cultural context.

It is hardly surprising then, the ways in which “individual” success in cultural diplomacy is often shared, regarded as “collective” success of South Koreans on the global stage. This is particularly clear with how the international success of certain cultural exports in the country, were quick to spread their influence and assistance to other industries. In addition to the “spillover effect” K-dramas and K-pop has had on other aspects on Korean cultural content, Hallyu idols and celebrities often collaborate and elevate those in their community who get less attention. The Korean Wave that was once used to describe the success of K-dramas and K-pop has come to define the spread of Korean culture as a whole. An example of how the Korean government and corporations are trying to fit Korean cultural exports under one large “K” brand is the way in which the “K” products continue to grow in the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs’s Hallyu White Papers. According to the most recent publication, the Hallyu White Paper of 2019 (KOFICE, 2020a), there are currently *eleven* categories of Korean cultural exports involved in the country’s Hallyu strategy: (1) Hallyu in Broadcast Programs, (2) Hallyu in Film, (3) Hallyu in Music, (4) Hallyu in Performing Arts, (5) Hallyu in Games/e-sports, (6) Hallyu in Comics/Webtoons, (7) Hallyu in Publication, (8) Hallyu in Fashion, (9) Hallyu in Food, (10) Hallyu in Tourism, (11) Hallyu in Beauty

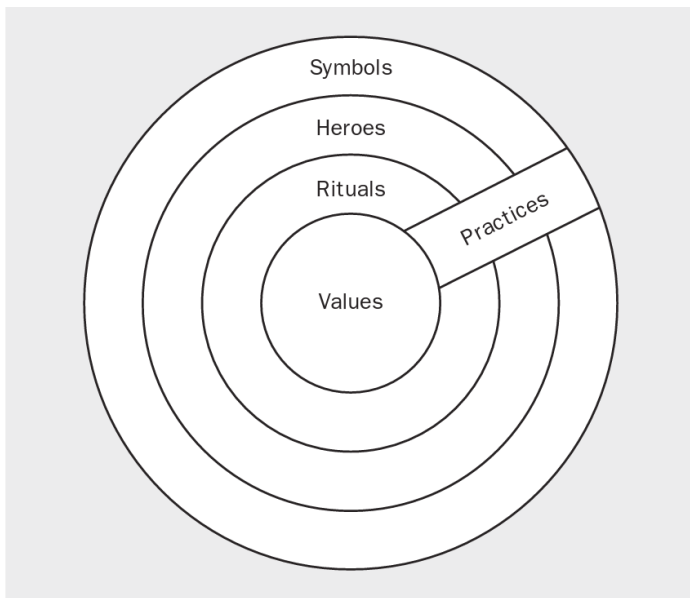
(KOFICE, 2020a). And any time one Korean content creator breaks a record or achieves a significant milestone, it is the celebration of many. The Korean Popular Culture & Arts Award ceremony is one such example of an event “hosted by Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and organized by Korea Creative Content Agency” to celebrate and recognize the success of those who have positively contributed to the spread of Korean culture abroad. (Kelley, 2018).

For example, the “Order of Cultural Merit” is “awarded by the president to those deemed to have given outstanding meritorious services in the culture and arts field serving the interest of promoting Korean culture” (The Straits Times, 2018). Examples of some recipients of this award include: Bae Yong-joon, the starring actor of *Winter Sonata* (the aforementioned K-drama on the front lines of Hallyu) for having “contributed to spreading the word for Hallyu to encompass Korean arts with his popularity in Japan”; “Veteran actor Lee Soon-jae”; “French President Emmanuel Macron for his contribution to the relationship between the two countries; and BTS “for its contributions in spreading Korean culture and language” (The Straits Times, 2018). When BTS received the award in 2018, each of the boys (the youngest recipients in history) gave speeches touching upon common themes, such as the significance of the award, the honor it has brought them or their families, their mindsets as representatives of the nation, and their devotion to spreading Korean culture around the world (Kelley, 2018). While their success has increased exponentially since this event, they have remained consistent to this day.

It is important to consider how the spread of mainstream and highly glocalised Korean content attracts foreign audiences to learning more about Korean culture on a deeper level. Figure 3, below, illustrates Hofstede’s cultural “Onion”, which represents “manifestations of culture at different levels of depth” (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 7–8). Where “values” represent the core elements of a culture, “symbols”, “heroes”, and “rituals” fall under “practices”, which are more superficial (to varying degrees) are subject to change over time. For example, symbols could represent “words, gestures, pictures, or objects that carry a particular meaning [...] dress, hairstyles, flags, and status symbols” (Hofstede et al.,

2010, p. 8). K-beauty or K-fashion trends could fall under this category – no matter their popularity during their peak, as one of the most superficial layers of the onion, they are the least durable over time. Heroes are “persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture and thus serve as models for behavior [...] In this age of television [and social media], outward appearances have become more important in the choice of heroes than they were before” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8). South Korean idols and actors who have achieved a notable degree of success or societal recognition fit nicely into this category. Rituals are “collective activities that are technically superfluous to reach desired ends but that, within a culture, are considered socially essential” (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 8). In a relatively homogenous state like South Korea, we can more easily observe the significance and durability of rituals, particularly in comparison to outer layers of the onion. For example, hierarchy in age or status is demonstrated both physically and verbally in Korean culture (in greetings, during drinks/meals, in the workplace, in the change from casual to formal use of the Korean language, and much more). When it comes to the Korean Wave, this is typically the deepest level of the onion that can be consumed in mainstream media. An intense qualitative analysis of the hit series “Descendants of the Sun” demonstrates how K-dramas act as a form of cultural diplomacy, often displaying (both intentionally and unintentionally) elements of Korean culture that teaches foreigners certain rituals and practices (Mustafha & Abdul Razak, 2020). Values, unlike practices, are “the core of culture” that “deal[s] with pairings such as the following: evil versus good; dirty versus clean; dangerous versus safe; forbidden versus permitted; decent versus indecent; moral versus immoral [...]” and so on and so forth (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 9). For example, there are many cultural values embedded in collectivism. As the deepest layer of the cultural onion, this would be an element of Korean culture best understood by Korean themselves and those who dedicate the proper time and attention to learning about Korean values (as opposed to those exposed to more superficial layers of the onion).

Figure 3: Cultural Onion (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 7)



The aforementioned “spillover effect” of Korean cultural content can be applied to this onion. Describing populations’ psychological and cultural programming around the world, Hofstede explains how culture is more about nurture than nature. In other words, it is “taught” and “learned” at a young age and as we grow, rather than something we are inherently born with. Our preferences for similar cultures are due to our acclimatized appetite and tolerance for said cultures. Beginning at the outer layer of the cultural onion, foreign publics can be more easily attracted to “glocal” and “hybrid” cultural exports that have taken foreign palates into consideration. The more of this content they consume, the better their tolerance, and perhaps even interest for deeper levels of the onion. Hallyu, therefore, becomes an effective way to attract foreign publics at a more superficial level, with the intention of acting as a gateway to deeper knowledge and exposure to Korean culture. In the survey results published by Korean government departments and governmental agencies, we saw how South Koreans are aware of this spillover effect (e.g., people who watch K-dramas are inspired to eat Korean food or drink Korean liquor, they want to travel to South Korea – sometimes visiting locations relevant to the content they have consumed, and more). In an interview with Jenna Gibson, from the US-based think tank the Korea Economic Institute (KEI), she shares how the creation of an Institute for Korean Studies in the US “may

attract people who are interested in Korea because of pop culture at first, but they can also expose those students to other parts of Korean studies, including politics, trade, history, and more” (Pickles, 2018).

Exchange Diplomacy: People-to-People

This form of diplomacy is mostly spear-headed by the Korean Ministry of Education (MOE, 2021) and the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST, 2021). Both ministries, who have also been active in the country’s former nation branding initiatives have witnessed how the rising spread and popularity of Hallyu and its cultural appeal continues to attract an increasing number of students, expats, and tourists. In 2019, South Korea’s Ministry of Education revealed “strong growth in foreign student numbers” (ICEF Monitor, 2019). This is the “sixth consecutive year of growth in the country’s foreign enrollment”, “a new record high”, and not only beneficial to the country’s education sector but critical considering South Korea’s aging population (a global phenomenon that is particularly visible in South Korea) (ICEF Monitor, 2019). According to recent studies: “The world is experiencing a seismic demographic shift – and no country is immune to the consequences” (Jones, 2020). While first place for “oldest population” currently goes to Japan, South Korea – which currently “boasts a younger than average population [...] will age rapidly and end up with the highest old-to-young ratio among developing countries” (Jones, 2020). In other words, remaining attractive to foreign publics is not only a matter of global competitiveness but also attracting the necessary foreign talent to support its economy and fill the gaps of a “shrinking population of [post-secondary]-aged students [...] at home” (ICEF Monitor, 2019), something Japan has been struggling with since the 1990s (Yonezawa, 2020). Hallyu, appealing predominantly to younger generations, is particularly well-suited to this end. Two-thirds of South Korea’s international students (100, 215) are “enrolled in degree programmes”, while “the remaining 60,000 foreign students in the country this year are pursuing Korean language studies or vocational training” (ICEF Monitor, 2019). Students are also taking Korean Studies virtually. According

to the Korea Foundation, the number of virtual e-students through the foundation's "global e-school" project has surpassed their greatest milestone, exceeding 40,000 students. (Lee(b), 2021).

As the country continues to rise in popularity, so too does the desire of foreign publics wanting to study the Korean language (e.g., "[Korean] language learning boom"(Pickles, 2018), pursue "Korean Studies" (e.g., consisting of either social studies, humanities, the Korean language, fine arts, physical education, and engineering) (Lee(b), 2021), or simply study *in* South Korea, having consumed Korean cultural content and being left with a positive perception of the state (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020). Covering the living expenses, health insurance, tuition, and flight of approximately 40 students per year, the Korean Language Training Fellowship is one of many examples of a program provided to incentivize "foreign scholars", "graduate students of Korean studies" or "those working in Korea-related field abroad" to visit the country and immerse themselves in a language program (KF, n.d.). For those wanting to learn Korean from universities within their respective countries, there are additional programs in universities. Recently, the Korea Foundation signed an agreement with BTS's entertainment agency and Hankuk University to "promote Korean language education, and has since implemented the KF e-School BTS Korean Language Course program" in "a total of 11 universities in 8 countries" (KF, 2021b). While the quantity of students wanting to learn the Korean language may appear extremely small in comparison to global languages spoken in various countries (e.g., English, French, Spanish, Arabic, etc.), it is important to recognize that South Korea had mostly broken these records by incentivizing or attracting foreign publics (rather than spreading their values, culture, or language through colonial or imperial practices).

Studies have shown that Korean cultural content has not only been attracting waves of tourists, students, and expats to the country, it is also a source of inspiration regarding which locations to visit (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020). Recalling the branding impact of parasocial relationships, we also know there is a connection between celebrities and national image, effectively proving that "TV drama celebrities can influence the national image and behavioral intentions" (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020, p. 2). Wanting to

explore certain aspects of this growing trend, tourism and marketing researchers conducted a survey on 250 African international students in South Korea (who have encountered Hallyu content prior to their arrival) in order to analyze the relationship between the impact of Hallyu, foreign public perceptions (through “destination image”) and “behavioral intentions” (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020). Africa, similar to the Middle East is a region which has seen “an incredible threefold rise in Hallyu fans from 320,000 to 1.19 million” (Jung & Lee, 2021). The three forms of Korean cultural content accounted for were K-dramas, K-pop and K-sports, and each demonstrated a positive relationship between Hallyu and destination image (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020, p. 7). With “generally positive attitudes toward Korean culture, tourism in Korea, and Hallyu content”, the researchers were able to demonstrate the importance of these forms of cultural content as “important promotional tools” (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020, p. 8). Most students were in their twenties or thirties and attending post-secondary studies. Their experience in South Korea effectively illustrated the strong correlation between destination image and behavioural intentions, with the large majority saying they would: “continue to visit Korea”, “will say positive things about Korea to the people around [them]”; “will recommend visiting Korea to others”; and “will prioritize visiting Korea when choosing a possible travel destination” (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020, p. 6).

International Broadcasting: Making Headlines, One Record at a Time

Years ago, Ju (2013) observed that Hallyu “triggered the Korean media industry to take the forefront in the international media exchange” (p. 2). In the past decade, this has become even more noticeable, and within the past few years – very difficult to ignore. Breaking records and reaching new milestones, South Korea has been making headlines repeatedly. From BTS, to Parasite or Squid Game, the spread of Korean cultural content has attained a level of global popularity that is now recognized by demographics not traditionally exposed to Hallyu (e.g., older generations, those less active on the internet or who consume news or entertainment through more traditional platforms, etc.).

Over the years, BTS has been collecting many Guinness World Records titles. Honoring these accomplishments, they were recently welcomed into the Guinness World Records Hall of Fame (Pilastro, 2021). Their not-so-secret-weapon, ARMY (a highly devoted, rapidly growing, and digitally active fandom) (Kim(a), 2021), has helped them collect 23 music and social media world record titles, such as: First K-pop act to reach No.1 on the US album charts (2018), most tickets sold for a livestreamed concert (2020), most streamed act on Spotify (group) (2021), most weeks on No. 1 on Billboard's Digital Song Sales chart (2021), most twitter engagements (average retweets) (2019), fastest time to reach one million followers on TikTok (3 hours and 31 min) (2019), most followers on Instagram for a music group (2021), most viewed YouTube video in 24 hours (101,100,000 views) (2020), and much more (Pilastro, 2021). In some cases, rather than breaking the records of other artists, BTS broke their own records. Meaning, if we were to consider how many times BTS has broken a new record, rather than how many record titles they hold, it would likely be more than 23. Most recently, BTS made history by winning "Artist of the Year" at this year's American Music Awards, the "first Asian act in history to win this award" (Kim(b), 2021). In addition to winning the greatest award of the night, they also won "Favourite Pop Duo or Group" and "Favourite Pop Song" (for 'Butter') (Kim(b), 2021). Representing their nation once again, there were multiple comments by the group's members during their various acceptance speeches emphasizing their origins. From certain members giving their speech entirely in Korean to others (in English) saying: "[the award] means to us even more because we're actually a small boy band from Korea" or describing themselves as "Seven boys from Korea, united by a love for music" (Kim(b), 2021). BTS continues to remain some of the country's greatest global cultural ambassadors.

During the 2020 Oscars Awards, the Korean film "Parasite" also made history, as the first foreign language winner of Best Picture (Shoard, 2020). In addition to winning Best Picture, writer and director Bong Joon-ho also won Best Director, Best Foreign Language Film, and Best Original Screenplay (S. T. Lee(a), 2021). Prior to its success at the Oscars, Parasite premiered at the 2019 Cannes Film Festival,

was the first South Korean film to win the Palme d'Or, and “chalked up successes at the Golden Globe Awards (Best Motion Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay), the BAFTA (Best Foreign Language Film, Best Original Screenplay, Best Film, and Best Direction), and the Screen Actors Guild Awards (Best Cast in a Motion Picture)” (S. T. Lee(a), 2021). In other words, the film was a resounding success, made history, and made South Korea proud. Something particularly interesting about the success of Parasite is that we can clearly connect it to what we have learned from South Korea's rapid industrialization, of first its economic and political relations in order to improve its brand, but then later its cultural sector as the country realized the potential it had to be a cultural powerhouse. Director Bong Joon-ho represents both state and non-state actors' contributions to the country's film industry. Regarding the state, Director Bong Joon-ho is a graduate of the Korean Academy of Film Arts (KAFA), a state that established and funded by the Korean government in 1984 in order to produce the next generation of Korean cultural content creators. So far, the academy has “trained more than 700 film directors, animators, and cinematographers” (S. T. Lee(a), 2021). As for non-state investment, those unfamiliar with Korean conglomerates supported during the rapid industrialization of the state from 1960s onwards may not have recognized the Samsung heiress present that night at the Oscars. Miky Lee, vice chairwoman of CJ Group, and in charge of the group's entertainment and media division (CJ E&M), she is both the great-grand-daughter of the founder of Samsung and the executive producer of Parasite (funding the film) (Korea JoongAng Daily, 2020; S. T. Lee(a), 2021; Shoard, 2020). In other words, we could say the government helped Director Bong Joon-ho two-fold: By funding their investor and by funding their artistic development.

Another recent headline is that of Squid Game. Thanks to “online media platforms such as streaming services, television content has been diversifying and increasing its transnational circulation” (Ju, 2018, p. 1), with Korean cultural content performing exceptionally well. The series quickly went viral and, within a month of its release, became Netflix's “biggest series launch ever” (Hirwani, 2021).

Not accounting for those who watched the series in groups, with friends, or with family, the series has been watched by approximately 142 million households worldwide and reached the number one spot in 94 countries. (M. Moon, 2021). Moon (2021) reveals: “Thanks in part to Squid Game massive viewership, Netflix said it posted its best subscriber growth of the year”. Statt (2021) shares how the “most popular series in Netflix’s history” has “transformed what it means to go viral”. Currently the source of costumes, mobile games, video games, parodies, musical and video content production around the world, and celebrities joining in on the fun, this form of consumption and production of creative content is called “prosumption” and is increasingly common in the digital age (Sugihartati, 2020). The cast of “Squid Game”, many of whom were intentionally selected for being new faces in the film industry, have also rocketed to global fame. For example, Jung Ho-Yeong, one of the younger members of the cast, received over 15 million followers on Instagram within the first few weeks of release (Court, 2021). Both directors of Parasite and Squid Game, as well as the starring actor in Squid Game expressed a major priority for them was relatability. Lee Jung-jae, starring as contestant Number 456 shared how when first reading the script, he “understood it contained elements that could resonate with everyone and work outside of Korea” (Court, 2021). In an exclusive interview with Director Hwang Dong-hyuk, the established Korean film director confessed Squid Game was originally intended to be another one of his films before becoming a series and believes “simplicity” and “easily relatable characters” is what helped the series resonate so successfully with global audiences with audiences. While the show introduces Korean kids’ games and traditional Korean snacks (all of which have also gone viral since the show’s release), his primary focus was to have viewers “focus on the characters, rather than being distracted by trying to interpret the rules” (Frater, 2021). Through them, he effectively portrayed “characters we’ve all met in real life” (Frater, 2021). Interestingly, none of these creators project an idealistic image of South Korea, some are rather critical. BTS’s growing fandom knows them for their authenticity, artistic freedom which challenges K-pop industry or societal norms, and close relationship with their fandom.

Parasite and Squid Game are thrillers that illustrate the harsh realities of the growing inequalities that exist within extreme capitalist societies, both highlighting some of the more disturbing elements of competitiveness and greed whilst focusing on raw human emotions to make the productions as relatable as possible. These are the forms of Korean cultural content that have made history, increased foreign publics' interest in South Korea, and have made various additional aspects of Korean culture go viral (e.g., fashion, games, recipes, etc.). Indeed, organic content that resonates best with foreign publics usually does not come from the top down.

Section 4: Leveraging Hallyu to Strengthen the South Korean Nation Brand

The purpose of this section is to demonstrate how Hallyu, as the cultural linchpin of South Korea's public diplomacy, has been consistently leveraged throughout the process of re-branding the South Korean nation brand, enabling the country to increase its global and regional economic, political and cultural power. In many respects, Hallyu, as this paper shows, has played a significant role in enhancing the country's smart power. While it has also contributed to the country's hard power, its greatest contribution to South Korea's relational power has been resolving the country's soft power deficit and producing a much better combination of both. Throughout this section, what we have learned thus far is applied to our discussion on the role of culture in public diplomacy to Anholt's nation branding framework to explain how these initiatives (a combination of cultural diplomacy and the cultural promotion of the country's creative sector) have merged to strengthen all elements of South Korea's nation brand: exports, governance, culture & heritage, tourism, population, investment & immigration. Though to varying degrees, this positive halo effect is the result of both an organic spillover as well as the effective leveraging of Hallyu.

Exports:

Improving the state's soft power and global reputation was one of the most promising ways to elevate the nation's status in international affairs and tackle the "Korea Discount" (Cull, 2019; Dinnie,

2009; Schwak 줄리엣 쉐크, 2016; Son, 2018). South Korea has observed a significant increase in demand and exportation of Korean cultural content, with consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic at an all time high. Core Hallyu industries, such as K-pop, continue to experience a “bullish market” (Shim, 2021). In the year 2020, the total market value of Korean broadcasting service, digital contents, and publishing and media production surpassed USD 21.5 billion, with an export of USD 355.20 million in Intellectual Property Rights on Music & Images (MCST, 2020). Just as “Hallyu” has grown to encompass the “K” brand as a whole, with an increasing variety of cultural content under its umbrella (e.g., food, fashion, literature, beauty, etc.) (KOFICE, 2020a), this spillover effect has extended beyond the country’s creative industries (e.g., tech, mobile, automotive, etc.). By generating greater (and more positive) global awareness of the nation’s brand, we can see the rising confidence of Korean conglomerates in their nation’s brand. Where previously we saw major corporations downplaying their “Koreanness” – opting instead for a global and transnational image in order to avoid their negative country-of-origin effect (e.g., Korea Discount) – we are currently witnessing many of the same companies (and more) learning into it due to the rising popularity of the “K” brand. Using the country’s (and currently the world’s) biggest boyband, BTS, three clear examples are: Hyundai, Samsung, and LG.

In 2020, BTS produced a catchy song riddled with driving and electric vehicle innuendos (releasing music and lyrical videos with over 30 million views) (HyundaiWorldWide, 2020) to announce their collaboration with Hyundai and celebrate the automotive manufacturer’s “brand new sustainable mobility brand,” IONIQ (Hyundai, 2020). This is significant not only to Hyundai, but to the government who hopes to become a global leader in the production and deployment of fuel cell electric vehicles (FCEVS) (Nakano, 2021). With the government’s plans to pursue a “hydrogen economy for economic growth and industrial competitiveness”, guess which automotive corporation and idol group collaborated to release a short #HydrogenDocumentary on World Environment Day to “increase Gen Z’s involvement in ‘hydrogen’ and [...] make a difference through solidarity” (HyundaiWorldWide, 2021) and illustrate

South Koreans' commitment to environmental sustainability? Also, Hyundai and BTS. (Nakano, 2021). In 2020, Samsung – globally renowned for their smartphones - also collaborated with BTS, producing the BTS Edition of the Galaxy S20+, an iconic purple (“the color of love”), with various symbols representing the group “from the inside out”, and can include – if purchased additionally – BTS Edition Galaxy Buds+ to “level up your Galaxy S20+ BTS Edition experience,” along with limited edition posters (Samsung, 2020). As with most BTS collaborations, the product sold out immediately after going live for pre-order (B, 2020). In 2018, LG presented the “BTS Studio” for “more than 10,000 passionate K-pop fans” at BTS’s concert in Los Angeles, which had fans posing in photobooths with cut-outs of the boys holding LG cameras, listening to LG speakers, singing into LG microphones, and even performing chores with LG cleaning appliances (LG Electronics, 2018). Unsurprisingly, the group is now brand ambassadors for, and actively partners with, these and other major Korean corporations, providing an effective way to catch the attention of global citizens and consumers “facing complexity and information overload” (van Ham, 2008, p. 130) in an increasingly digital global market. Enjoying and sharing the benefits of global pop culture and leveraging the influence of Hallyu, BTS is just one of many examples of cross-sector collaboration.

Governance:

In both bilateral and multilateral settings, Hallyu idols and celebrities have been sharing their spotlight with South Korean politicians looking to promote their foreign objectives and international relations. In order to receive the undivided attention of all attendees and viewers around the world, middle powers, with limited resources and capabilities, often have to get creative. South Korea, it seems, has taken this to heart by bringing the most influential actors of its creative sector to the forefront. Having expressed his gratitude to BTS for “greatly rais[ing] the national dignity by enhancing the stature of K-pop and Korean culture”, President Moon Jae-in confessed that BTS has been great for his diplomacy, with world leaders speaking to him about the group, requesting or inviting the group to attend political

events, or to accompany the president, as was done when the UN requested the president to attend the special SDG “on behalf other national leaders, along with BTS on behalf of the global youth” (J. Choi, 2021). In an official statement, President Moon Jae-in explained: “That itself shows the enhanced global stature of South Korea” (J. Choi, 2021). During the event, the president was provided an incredible platform to speak on South Korea’s development, the progress the country has made within the past few decades, its policies and devotion to SGDs, and more.

Joining the OECD in 1996, South Korea was the first state to go from receiving to providing international development aid (as a member of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) since 2010, and recently became the first state in UNCTAD history to have officially “upgraded” their “development status”, thus elevating their brand on the “international stage” (Gil, 2021). Discussions on the country’s hard power accomplishments, accompanied and presented by its soft power was an effective display of smart power. As the cultural linchpin of South Korean public diplomacy, Hallyu provided yet another opportunity for the government to improve its nation brand among attendees and the record-breaking quantities of online viewers around the world, effectively increasing the country’s “perceived commitment to global issues” (Ipsos, 2020, p. 1). When performed effectively, consistently making positive headlines in the age of information is an effective strategy for a government to enhance its reputation. Idols and their fandoms are also increasingly involved in international affairs regarding issues such as “peace and security, justice, poverty, and the environment” (Ipsos, 2020, p. 1). While idols and their fandoms can be effectively leveraged to enhance a nation’s brand, it is important to note that their fandoms are loyal – first and foremost – to their idols. On the one hand, this is still beneficial because increasing the soft power of the non-state actors representing the government and “creating opportunities for celebrities to use their own voices to speak for South Korean foreign policy priorities [...] can be incredibly powerful” (Gibson, 2020) . On the other hand, if idols are mistreated or is there is a major scandal in the entertainment industry, this can actually reduce a country’s soft power (Portland, 2019).

Culture and Heritage:

It would not be an exaggeration to say that South Korean culture has never been so popular. While their popularity may increase in the future, it is currently seeing record-breaking success at the heart of a global cultural phenomenon and is continuing to see massive growth. While its contemporary culture (film, music, art, sport, and literature) (Ipsos, 2020, p. 1) is most popular, this spotlight better enables Koreans to share their traditional culture to the world through its own lens, to foreign publics who are more eager to learn. In fact, that may be one of the greatest benefits of having a strong nation brand and greater public diplomacy capabilities. In addition to benefiting from increased regional and global reputation, nations with greater soft power also have greater influence over their brand and what is being projected externally. As mentioned previously, whether or not a state chooses to engage in public diplomacy initiatives, they will have a nation brand. Rather than continuing to have the narrative of other states imposed upon them, South Koreans are now in charge of the narrative and have greater influence over their country's global image. At a Netflix event announcing the platform's \$500 million investment in Korean content for the year 2021, Kim Minyoung (VP of Content for Korea, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand), shared in a statement:

“Great Korean stories are [...] deeply rooted in Korean culture. But today we are living in a world where Parasite is an Academy Award Best Picture winner, BlackPink plays Coachella, and over 22M households tune into [...] TV series, Sweet Home [...] Audiences around the world are falling in love with Korean stories, artists, and culture.” (Merican, 2021).

Of course, not all foreign publics appreciate Korean cultural content equally, these can vary significantly by consumer, region, and more. A survey evaluating “changes in perceptions of Korea after experiencing Hallyu content”, found that, while over half of those who experienced Hallyu content responded that they “underwent a positive change in their perception of Korea”, India and Vietnam had much more positive rates (more than 80% had improved perceptions of the country) and Japan had lower

rates (only 22%, lower than the year before) (KOFICE, 2020b, p. 14). Nevertheless, there is a “flourishing appetite for Korean content across the globe” (H. Kim, 2020) and, currently, there is an even greater emphasis on supporting private actors in Korean cultural exportation, with “creativity and innovation”, particularly youth, entrepreneurs, and small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (UNCTAD, 2017). Considering BTS’s entertainment agency (currently HYBE but then known as Big Hit Entertainment) was on the verge of bankruptcy moments before it began gaining fame and eventually achieving unprecedented global stardom for Korean artists (J. S. Yoon, 2021), this approach seems both innovate and forward-thinking. In a press briefing in Seoul, Culture Minister Park Yang-woo explains: “it is time for the government to apply a wise supporting policy that does not interfere unnecessarily with the private sector” (Song(a), 2020). The recently established Hallyu department, created within the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism after “a meeting of a pan governmental Hallyu cooperation committee including representatives from 12 ministries”(Song(b), 2020), will focus on “diversifying Hallyu content”, “fostering other industries through Hallyu content”, and “creating a sustainable environment for the growth of Hallyu” (Song(a), 2020). Done successfully, these efforts will make Hallyu and South Korea’s cultural diplomacy more long-term oriented.

People:

As we have seen, the rising popularity of Hallyu, especially South Koreans in the media, has led to greater perceptions of the South Korean population more broadly. As described through the endowment effect, it takes an extremely long time for foreign publics to reform their perceptions on other populations, particularly those they do not know or truly care to know. More so than other elements of a nation’s brand, foreign public perceptions on populations can not only be extremely biased, but the gaps are often filled with generalizations. Recalling stimulus generalization, we can see how South Korean cultural diplomacy and the exportation of South Korean cultural content has made it increasingly difficult for foreign publics to continue judging the population through outdated, inaccurate, or generalized

stereotypes. For example, nation brand surveys and international reports found that the more people learned about South Korea, the less they confused them with their Northern neighbours. Rather, many people perceive of the division of the peninsula as a dichotomy between “good” and “bad”, with South Korea perceived as the “good”, “virtuous”, or “wealthy” Korea, and North Korea as the “bad”, “impoverished”, “malnourished” and even “rogue” Korea (Dinnie, 2009, p. 3; Foster-Carter, 2018; Son, 2018, p. 671; Van Ham, 2001, p. 130). While these are still generalizations, it demonstrates how it is possible to separate North and South Korean identities. The increasing popularity and consumption of South Korean cultural content presents foreign publics with far more opportunities to “get to know” more about South Koreans, making it a critical component of building trust and relationships, challenging pre-existing negative, discriminatory, or archetypal roles and narratives. According to the 2020 Global Hallyu Trends report, the top five images associated with are: (1) K-pop, (2) Korean food, (3) Dramas, (4) IT Industry, (5) Hallyu stars (KOFICE, 2020b).

Throughout this paper, we have also been highlighting internal perspectives on South Korean identity based on various stages of the country’s geopolitical, economic, and cultural development. Most recently, and most significant to the impact of Hallyu on the nation’s brand, is the increased confidence and pride in South Korean identity. In an interview, Media Philosophy professor Lee Ji-young explains: “In the past, the Americans, the whites, the men, the English speakers, were the centre and main characters while the rest of use were simply extras and supporting characters” (Lee(c), 2021). South Korea’s cultural and political progress demonstrates this “pre-existing hierarchy [...] doesn’t have to be the norm” (Lee(c), 2021). Due to their increased reputation abroad, South Koreans are “slowly walking out of the “sense of inferiority” they have felt since Japanese colonial rule and the “second half of the 20th century” (Lee(c), 2021). While the latter is also important and has contributed to their growing confidence, an increased sense of pride based on both traditional and contemporary elements of their identity has had a significant impact on healing their sense of self.

Tourism:

Hallyu, particularly in the form of K-dramas and K-pop, has significantly increased the desire of foreign publics to travel to South Korea and tour various “natural and man-made tourist attractions” (Ipsos, 2020, p. 2), and is actively leveraged to enhance this element of a nation’s brand. A poll conducted by the Korea Tourism Organization revealed that “more than half of foreigners coming to South Korea on private trips chose their destination after experiencing ‘Hallyu’” (Yonhap, 2017). The survey, which extracted data from 3,199 people from eight countries (China, Japan, the United States, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore) revealed the primary reasons for choosing South Korea were: (1) TV dramas and films (55.6%), (2) Travel programs on TV (36.8%), and (3) Postings on social networking services (28.4%) (Yonhap, 2017). While it is difficult to distinguish how many of these dramas, films, and programs benefited from some form of public investment (e.g. financial, institutional, etc.), these survey results demonstrate a preference for organic advertising and content consumption as their reason for selecting South Korea as their destination of choice.

In line with Hallyu’s strengths, studies show that travellers enjoy adventures that tell a story (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020). Similar to nation branding, good tourism marketing campaigns are those that “evoke a feeling, which leads to increased interest, brand loyalty, and ultimately, a transaction” (Skift, 2020). Local, regional and national tourism entities leverage Hallyu by collaborating with idols and celebrities to encourage their fans to travel to South Korea, and culturally and historically significant locations are often featured in Korean dramas and music videos - inspiring viewers to discover these regions for themselves. This form of fan pilgrimage (or any form of Hallyu-inspired visit to South Korea) is called “Hallyu tourism” and is heavily supported by state actors, especially by agencies and institutes working with the country’s Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (Ghansiyal, 2021), who have long recognized (since the late 1990s) the impact of Hallyu as a “powerful tool to attract revenue and tourists” (Ogando Barros, 2019, p. 1). For example, when PSY’s song “Gangnam Style” became a global viral

sensation - and the “first-ever video on YouTube to account for a billion views” (Ogando Barros, 2019, p. 1) – tourism officials were quick to seize the marketing opportunity, posting a “guide to the real Gangnam (one of Seoul’s most affluent areas) (Ghansiyal, 2021). When Hallyu is connected with “service-based businesses like tourism” (Song(a), 2020), it is as though the marketing does itself.

Investment and Immigration:

Where previously, the “ironically named Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) [...] the most heavily fortified frontier on earth” (Foster-Carter, 2018, p. 82) would have been a greater concern (Son, 2018), the country’s smart power (as a result of possessing hard power and greatly enhancing its soft power) brings greater comfort to foreign publics who understand the benefits of investing or immigrating currently outweighs the costs. As demonstrated in the exchange diplomacy portion of this paper, Hallyu has also been contributing to a consistently rising number of expats and students migrating to South Korea in order to work or study in the country after consuming some form of cultural content. An especially important factor to emphasize however, is that highest international student ratings, assuring they would stay more long term, return once again, or recommend the country to someone they know, are not only those who were initially attracted to the country’s soft power and culture but those who were initially attracted by hallyu and – during their program – felt “safe” (Woo-Hyuk et al., 2020) and confident about the country’s “quality of life and business environment” (Ipsos, 2020). In other words, higher levels of commitment (e.g., long-term stays versus short term stays) cannot be ensured through soft power alone. Without adequate hard power (e.g., sufficient military capabilities and economic resources), the state would be limited in leveraging Hallyu to attract investment and immigration from abroad. Fortunately, South Korea is not lacking in this department. With the 5th greatest “state-of-the-art digital infrastructure in the world” (Foster-Carter, 2018; McClory, 2019), and the 9th greatest “enterprise”, the country “continues to outperform all other countries in the number of global patents filed relative to the size of its economy, and its expenditure on R&D as a percentage of its GDP”

(Portland, 2019). As a middle power, South Korea also effectively sustains strategic relationships not only to remain competitive but also increase its security (e.g., US support to prevent nuclear Armageddon). In a global arena of complex interdependence, Kim (2012) writes that the country, “surrounded by ‘great powers’ and caught in their spheres of influence”, must continue to “actively engage in regional and global affairs with a smart combination of hard power and soft power.” (p. 534).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have bridged the concepts of nation branding, public diplomacy, and relational forms of power to demonstrate the linchpin role of Hallyu in South Korea’s public diplomacy and strengthening each element of its nation brand. We have shown how, from a smaller, regional wave of cultural exports to a global cultural phenomenon, Hallyu is, in many ways, representative of the intimate relationship and collaboration between state and non-state actors, the skills and capabilities inherited during the country’s rapid industrialization, and the significance of cultural diplomacy in public diplomacy initiatives – all of which have contributed to projecting a more positive nation brand. Through an evolutionary approach, we have highlighted the major phases of South Korean nation branding. While the rise and spread of Hallyu was rapid (achieving global recognition in less than three decades), it played a critical role in addressing the country’s soft power-deficit and shaping foreign public engagement, which we then applied to Cull’s public diplomacy taxonomy and Anholt’s nation brand hexagon, demonstrating how Hallyu was used as a force multiplier to enhance elements of its brand (though to varying degrees).

South Korea was born under a spotlight, with the world witnessing some of the most complex and painful moments of its past. Most scholars would be hard pressed to think of an example of another country in the second half of the 20th century making such strides in changing global perceptions of its nation brand. This paper suggests that more scholarly attention should be paid to the phenomenon of the close collaboration between the Korean state and its private sector in leveraging the nation’s cultural

resources (values, knowledge, creative industries) in what became known as Hallyu to advance its foreign policy objectives through public diplomacy. Our history of the South Korean nation brand shows that cultural diplomacy is very much a linchpin of the country's public diplomacy. Future research on South Korean cultural diplomacy could expand on its ontological impact or even what this could mean for other states who have endured similar feelings of inferiority in a world order that favours Euro-centric features and predominantly Western industrialized states. In a digital age and rapidly evolving world order (one of many shifts in the long course of human history) (Acharya, 2017), this would be interesting to see.

Hallyu demonstrates how nation brands can have transformative impacts not only on the population's identity but also the image of the nation projected abroad, which can help both public and private actors advance their interests beyond the country's borders, and effectively "convert the country's powerful pop culture and other soft resources into true soft power" (Gibson, 2020). During her speech at the USC, PD Ambassador Enna Park expressed the country's main objectives, to win the hearts and minds of people around the world, and to transform the "Korea Discount" to "Korea Premium": "My role was to promote Korea's image in demonstrating all of its many charms" (USC Center on Public Diplomacy, 2017). In this regard, the influence of Hallyu on the global stage cannot be stressed enough. While it applies most directly to the country's cultural diplomacy (Cull's PD taxonomy) and Culture and Heritage (Anholt's nation brand hexagon), Hallyu has produced a halo effect on other elements of the country's global image among foreign publics, that neither the government, nor the private sector, have shied away from tapping into. Having rapidly developed its "hard-power capacity", before finally tapping into its "soft-power potential" (T. Kim, 2012, p. 535), the country has succeeded in fighting their uphill battle, and is now performing on the global stage with, what PSY would call, a "new face" (PSY, 2017).

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Appendix

Figure 1: Simon Anholt's "Nation Brand Hexagon" (Ipsos, 2020, p. 1)



Figure 2: Public Diplomacy Pyramid (Cull, 2019, p. 6)

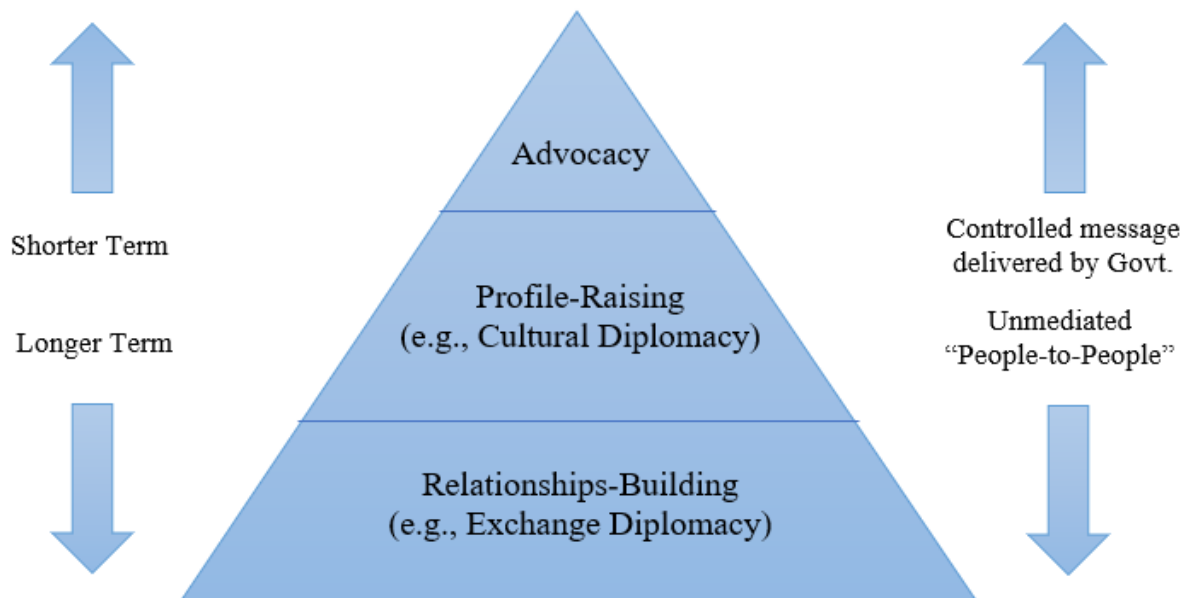


Table 1: Five largest chaebol's audiovisual industry activities as of 1995 (Shim, 2008)

<i>Chaebol</i>	<i>Subsidiary</i>	<i>Activity</i>
* PP stands for program provider.		
Samsung	Catch One	Pay cable channel (PP)*
	Dream Box	Film importer/home video producer
	Hoam Art Hall	Theater
	Myungbo Movies	Cinema house (Samsung leased two screens under contract)
	Nices	Film importer/producer of CDs, LDs, CD-ROMs, and films
	Starmax	Film importer/film producer
	Cheil Youngsang	Film importer/television program producer
	Audiosoft	Music producer and distributor
	Q Channel	Cable channel (PP)
Daewoo	Daewoo Electronics Video Business Division	Film importer for home video production/film producer
	Wool Video	Film importer for video production/distribution
	Dong-woo Video	Home video producer
	Seshin Video	Home video producer
	Daewoo Cinema Network	Cable channel (PP)
	Se-um Media	Music producer and distributor
Hyundai	Seoul Production	Film producer
	HBS	Cable channel (PP)
LG	LG Media	Film importer/producer of CDs, LDs, CD-ROMs, and films
	Mediart	Film importer/film producer
	Korea Home Shopping	Cable channel (PP)
SK	SKC Video Business Division	Film importer for home video production
	Pan Production	Film producer and distributor
	Mido Film	Film importer/film producer
	Seoryung Production	Film importer for home video production

Figure 3: Cultural Onion (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 7)

