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KOREAN MIGRATION AND HALLYU: THE EMERGENCE OF KOREAN CELEBRITIES IN THE  
PHILIPPINE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY



A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Korean Studies  
Inter-Department of Korean Studies  
GRADUATE SCHOOL  
Chulalongkorn University  
Academic Year 2022  
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การศึกษาคนเกาหลีพลัดถิ่นและฮันรยู: การเกิดขึ้นของดาราเกาหลีในอุตสาหกรรมบันเทิงประเทศ  
ฟิลิปปินส์



น.ส.โรเซ่ คาเมเล ลากัวตา

วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต  
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Thesis Title	KOREAN MIGRATION AND HALLYU: THE EMERGENCE OF KOREAN CELEBRITIES IN THE PHILIPPINE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY
By	Miss Rose Carmelle Lacuata
Field of Study	Korean Studies
Thesis Advisor	Associate Professor Yong Yoon, Ph.D.

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Accepted by the GRADUATE SCHOOL, Chulalongkorn University in Partial  
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จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย  
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

โรเซ่ คามเมเล ลากัวตา : การศึกษาคนเกาหลีพลัดถิ่นและฮันรยู: การเกิดขึ้นของดาราเกาหลีในอุตสาหกรรมบันเทิงประเทศฟิลิปปินส์. ( KOREAN MIGRATION AND HALLYU: THE EMERGENCE OF KOREAN CELEBRITIES IN THE PHILIPPINE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY) อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก : รศ. ดร.ยong ยูน

ฟิลิปปินส์เป็นจุดหมายปลายทางของผู้อพยพชาวเกาหลีจำนวนมาก ชาวเกาหลีเริ่มอพยพไปยังฟิลิปปินส์ในทศวรรษที่ 1990 ด้วยเหตุผลทางเศรษฐกิจในตอนแรก ก่อนที่จะเริ่มสนใจศึกษาเล่าเรียนที่ฟิลิปปินส์ในภายหลัง เมื่อชาวเกาหลีเข้ามาในฟิลิปปินส์มากขึ้นเรื่อย ๆ พวกเขา นำเอาวัฒนธรรมดั้งเดิมติดมาด้วยและสร้างธุรกิจเพื่อตอบสนองความต้องการของชาวเกาหลีด้วยกันเอง ในขณะเดียวกัน หลังจากฮันรยูหรือกระแสนิยมวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีโด่งดังในจีนเมื่อต้นทศวรรษที่ 2000 ฮันรยูก็แพร่กระจายไปทั่วโลกอย่างรวดเร็ว ฟิลิปปินส์เป็นหนึ่งในประเทศที่ตอบรับวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีเป็นอย่างดีจนในที่สุดชุมชนเกาหลีในฟิลิปปินส์ก็ได้กลายมาเป็นตัวแทนของวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีในฟิลิปปินส์ ธุรกิจที่เคยเปิดเพื่อชาวเกาหลีเริ่มขยายไปยังฐานลูกค้าชาวฟิลิปปินส์ที่หันมาสนใจวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีหลังจากดูซีรีส์เกาหลีหรือติดตามศิลปินเค-ป๊อป ชุมชนเกาหลีในฟิลิปปินส์ช่วยให้ชาวฟิลิปปินส์เข้าถึงผลิตภัณฑ์และวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีได้อย่างง่ายดาย ในขณะเดียวกัน กระแสนิยมฮันรยูและวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีในฟิลิปปินส์ก็ดึงดูดให้ชาวเกาหลีมาเสี่ยงโชคที่ฟิลิปปินส์มากขึ้นไปอีก เมื่อเวลาผ่านไปชาวเกาหลีจำนวนหนึ่งค่อย ๆ สร้างชื่อเสียงจนกลายเป็นคนดังในวงการบันเทิงของฟิลิปปินส์ ซึ่งเท่ากับการส่งเสริมให้วัฒนธรรมเกาหลีได้รับความนิยมในฟิลิปปินส์ยิ่งขึ้น ในการพิจารณาว่าการย้ายถิ่นฐานของชาวเกาหลีมีบทบาทอย่างไรต่อความแพร่หลายของกระแสฮันรยูและวัฒนธรรมเกาหลีในฟิลิปปินส์ สิ่งที่จะมองข้ามไปไม่ได้ก็คือการพิจารณาว่าเรื่องนี้ส่งผลกระทบต่อเศรษฐกิจและความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างฟิลิปปินส์และเกาหลีอย่างไร

สาขาวิชา เกาหลีศึกษา

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# # 6388531720 : MAJOR KOREAN STUDIES

KEYWORD: Korean migration, Hallyu, Korean culture, Koreans in the Philippines

Rose Carmelle Lacuata : KOREAN MIGRATION AND HALLYU: THE EMERGENCE OF  
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Assoc. Prof. Yong Yoon, Ph.D.

The Philippines is home to many Korean migrants, who started migrating to the Philippines in the 1990s for economic purposes, and later for educational purposes. As the Korean community in the Philippines continued to grow, they brought with them their own culture, with businesses catering to Koreans also increasing. Meanwhile, *Hallyu* or the Korean wave has been spreading like wildfire all over the world since it first became popular in China in the early 2000s, and the Philippines is one of the countries where Korean culture has become popular. Eventually, the Korean community in the Philippines, in one way or another, became ambassadors of Korean culture in the country, opening their businesses that used to cater only to fellow Koreans to the Filipinos who became more interested in Korean culture because of K-dramas and K-pop. Because of the presence of Korean communities in the Philippines, Filipinos can have access to Korean products and culture. At the same time, the popularity of Hallyu and Korean culture in the Philippines also attracts Korean migrants to try their luck in the Philippines. Over time, some Korean migrants were able to make a name for themselves in the Philippine entertainment industry, further boosting the popularity of Korean culture in the Philippines. While looking at the role of Korean migration in the spread of Hallyu and Korean culture in the Philippines, it is also important to look at how it had a direct effect on the economy and international relations between the Philippines and South Korea.

Field of Study: Korean Studies

Student's Signature .....

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

Hallyu or the Korean wave has been spreading like wildfire all over the world since it first became popular in China in the early 2000s, because of the popularity of Korean dramas and music exported there. Korean cultural products such as music, dramas, movies, food and even the Korean language continued to be popular not only in Asia, but in other parts of the world as well, through the help of social media.

##### 1.1.1 Korean migration in the Philippines

The Philippines has a long diplomatic history with South Korea, being one of the first countries to recognize the Republic of Korea in 1949. The Philippines is also one of the countries that sent troops to help in the Korean War in the 1950s. The two countries commemorated 70 years of diplomatic relations in 2019, and it is not surprising that the Philippines has also become one of the largest consumers of South Korean cultural exports.

According to data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, there are 33,010 Koreans living in the Philippines as of 2020. In 2019, 1,989,322 Koreans visited the Philippines. Based on a study by the University of the Philippines -Centre Internationale de Formation des Autorites et Leaders (UP-CIFAL Philippines) published in 2018, South Koreans ranked first among foreign tourist arrivals in the Philippines since 2006, overtaking the Americans, who ranked first until 2005. In 2018, a total of 1,607,821 Koreans visited the Philippines, representing 25 percent of the total foreign arrivals (Ariola 2018). The Philippines is also among the top 10 countries hosting Korean migrants. As of 2017, there are 93,093 Korean migrants in the

Philippines, 81 percent of which are “general residents”, or those with all other types of visas, aside from students, permanent residents and naturalized citizens.

South Koreans visit the Philippines for various purposes like education, employment, and tourism. Before the spread of Hallyu in the Philippines, Koreans started going to Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, to start their own businesses due to the increase in labor and production costs in South Korea. They brought outdated Korean technology to Southeast Asia and took advantage of the lower production costs in the region. In her article, Virginia Miralao (2007) noted that Korean migration to the Philippines only started in the 1990s. This does not mean, however, that there were no Koreans in the Philippines prior to this period. In his study, Raymund Abejo (2016) focused on the Korean missionaries in the Philippines, who he said started their missions in the country in the 1970s. Han Sanghyu, a Methodist, first arrived in the Philippines in June 1973, while Kim Hwal-young, a Presbyterian, first came to the country in March 1977. (Abejo 2016). The two studies showed a different trend in the migration of Koreans in the country: the first batch for religious reasons, and the second for business purposes.

Another wave of Korean migrants came in the 2000s. In this period, a number of Koreans started coming to the Philippines to study English. According to Miralao, the Philippines’ proximity to South Korea, as well as its positive image as an English-speaking country with a good quality of education, became a factor for South Koreans to send their children to the country (Miralao, 2007).

### 1.1.2 Hallyu in the Philippines

As years pass, Korean pop music (K-pop), Korean dramas (K-drama) and Korean movies (K-movies) became more and more popular, aided by the popularity of social media and video streaming platforms. Aside from the spread of Korean culture through social media, there are also South Korean communities in the Philippines who benefitted from the popularity of their culture. Most of them own Korean groceries and restaurants, which satisfy the craving of Filipinos for the products and food that they see in the dramas and movies that they watch.

The spread of Hallyu in the Philippines can be divided into two periods: the spread of Korean culture through Korean dramas from 2003 to 2008, and the so-called “Hallyu 2.0”, or the spread of Hallyu through various media, predominantly social media, from 2008 onwards. The Philippines had its first taste of Hallyu in the early 2000s when local television channels took the risk of broadcasting Korean dramas (K-dramas) dubbed in Filipino. Filipinos, who have been avid viewers of Filipino-dubbed foreign television dramas, supported and continued watching these K-dramas, whose themes usually revolve around stories of love and family.

Filipinos are no stranger to foreign television dramas. In the late 1990s, Mexican television dramas, known as telenovelas, became popular in the Philippines (Ford, 2017). Most of these dramas are dubbed in Filipino, which made it more accessible to the masses. By 2003, ABS-CBN, one of the largest television networks in the Philippines, started airing the Taiwanese drama Meteor Garden, which started a new trend in the country. The popularity of Mexican dramas waned, and it was replaced by what was dubbed as Asianovelas, which are mostly dramas from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and later on, South Korea.

While K-dramas are gaining popularity in the Philippines, another cultural product from Korea, Korean pop music (or K-pop), has also started gaining ground in the country. It did not become very popular at first, since only a few can watch K-pop music videos. Most of the early K-pop music videos were only accessible through cable television channels, and uploading these music videos in online streaming websites were not yet as popular at that time.

By 2008, South Korea also started exporting music (K-pop), video games and animation. Technology also played a huge role in the spread of Korean culture. Aside from online games, South Korea by this time had also started exporting smartphones, digital games and social media platforms. Hallyu also became more accessible through the internet and social media, making it possible to reach other regions outside of Asia, like North and South America and Europe. K-pop music videos also became more accessible through the internet, aided by the advent of Youtube in 2005. One turning point in the eventual explosion in the popularity of Hallyu is Psy's Gangnam Style, which was released in 2012. It signaled the slow but steady entry of K-pop (and Hallyu) in the United States.

In the Philippines, K-pop has started gaining ground years before the release of Gangnam Style. As early as 2009, K-pop songs are being played on local radio stations. Among the songs that became popular in the country are Sorry Sorry (2009) by Super Junior and Nobody (2008) by Wonder Girls. Filipinos have a special attachment to the girl group 2NE1, especially because of its member, Sandara Park, who first became popular as an actress in the Philippines years before she debuted as a member of the group in 2009. Park first appeared as a contestant in the talent show Star Circle Quest in ABS-CBN, gaining popularity for her quirky and cute personality.



Park started her career in the Philippine entertainment industry in 2004 after she placed second in a reality competition on television, “Star Circle Quest”. Despite not winning the competition, she became popular because of her “comically naïve” image (Cabaner 2014). She also exuded a Filipino-loving image, often using the Filipino language as much as she could, despite not being very fluent in it. She even earned the moniker “krung-krung”, which according to Park herself, means “unique, cute, crazy”. Even after she debuted as part of the K-pop group 2NE1, Park still identifies herself as the Philippines’ “krung-krung”, as can be seen on her bio in her personal Twitter account. It is also worth mentioning that even after she became popular in South Korea, Park would also mention her life in the Philippines, at times even promoting the country to her fellow Koreans, and bringing her friends to some of the best tourist destinations in the country.

After her success both in the Philippines and in South Korea, there were other Koreans who became celebrities and TV personalities in the Philippines. The presence of these celebrities on television and social media brought Korea “closer” to Filipinos. In a way, they have become cultural ambassadors for their country.

This study aims to explore the migration of Koreans in the Philippines, and how the presence of Korean celebrities in the Philippines aid the further spread of Korean culture and Hallyu. This study will also touch upon the spread of Hallyu and Korean soft power in the Philippines, and how Korean migrants contributed to its spread. This study will be helpful in enriching the literature on Hallyu and Korean soft power in the Philippines, as well as Korean studies in general.

## 1.2 Research Objectives

The research has the following objectives:

1. To discuss and analyze the effect of the popularity of Hallyu and Korean culture to the Korean migrant community in the Philippines.
2. To discuss the contribution of Philippine-based Korean celebrities in the further spread of Korean culture, as well as in Philippine-Korean cultural relations.

## 1.3 Research Question/Statement of the Problem

This study aims to look into the migration of Koreans in the Philippines, specifically on Koreans who later became celebrities in the Philippines.

The study also aims to answer the following question:

1. How do Philippine-based Korean celebrities contribute to the further spread of Hallyu and Korean culture in the Philippines?

## 1.4 Hypothesis

Koreans migrated to the Philippines in search of economic opportunities, with most of them starting their own businesses in the country due to lower production costs. With the spread of Korean culture and Hallyu through pop music, dramas, movies and other media, Korean migrants in the country eventually made their way into the Philippine entertainment industry, and in a way made Korean culture and Hallyu closer to Filipinos, further aiding in its spread.

### 1.5 Scope of the Study

This study will focus on the history of Korean migration in the Philippines and how it changed over time, taking into consideration the eventual popularity of Hallyu and Korean culture in the early 2000s and how it became a tool for Koreans to make a name for themselves in the Philippine entertainment industry.

As case studies, the study will focus on three Koreans who became celebrities in the Philippines: Sandara Park of the K-pop girl group 2NE1, Ryan Bang and Dasuri Choi. Before she debuted in the Korean entertainment industry, Park first became popular in the Philippines when she appeared in a talent reality show in 2004, finishing second place. Her quirky personality endeared her to the Filipinos, and she soon appeared on several shows and movies. After a while, her career in the Philippines waned and she returned to South Korea, where she became a trainee of YG Entertainment. Eventually, she debuted as part of 2NE1 in 2009.

Ryan Bang, on the other hand, was a contestant of the Philippine version of “Big Brother”, a popular reality show. He finished as a runner-up and launched his career in the Philippines as a singer, host, actor and comedian. Just like Bang, Dasuri Choi’s career also started as a contestant in a segment of the longest-running noontime show in the Philippines, “Eat Bulaga”. She was a runner-up and won the Best in Talent award. Choi is a popular dancer in the country and is known for her Youtube and Tiktok dance covers of popular K-pop songs. In 2022, she became a cast member of a popular sketch comedy show on TV. She has also worked with the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines in some of their events.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study will look at the history of Korean migration in the Philippines and how it changed over time. Some Koreans migrated to the Philippines to establish their own businesses, taking advantage of lower production costs. Some also went to the Philippines to study English, or to do religious and missionary work. As the Korean community in the Philippines continued to grow, they brought with them their own culture, with businesses catering to Koreans also increasing. With the popularity of Korean culture and Hallyu, the interest in these Korean businesses also increased, with Korean restaurants, groceries, salons, spas, and other establishments now also catering to Filipino clients. Over time, some Korean migrants were able to make a name for themselves in the Philippine entertainment industry, further boosting the popularity of Korean culture in the Philippines. While looking at the contribution of Korean migrants in the spread of Hallyu and Korean culture in the Philippines, it is also important to look at how it had a direct effect on the economy and international relations between the Philippines and South Korea. Guided by the concepts of soft power, migration and transnationalism, this study aims to look beyond the popularity of Hallyu in the Philippines and look at the impact of Korean migration and Hallyu in the Philippines on its economy and trade relations with South Korea.

This study hopes to add to the existing literature on Korean migration in the Philippines by looking at the Korean migrant community as a tool for the further spread of Korean culture and Hallyu to the Philippines. It also hopes to update the existing literature on Korean migration in the Philippines, most of which have not yet studied the impact of the current popularity of Hallyu.

### 1.7 Research Methodology

This qualitative research will be based mainly on collection of both primary and secondary data. Primary data used are interviews, documentaries, and news articles about the case studies, as well as their social media posts. These data were analyzed and triangulated using other related data. Secondary data used include data from both the Philippine and Korean government. Newspaper articles, as well as academic journals and books about Korean migration and Hallyu were also used and analyzed.

The data gathered were divided into the three main parts of the research: Korean migration in the Philippines, Hallyu in the Philippines, and Korean celebrities in the Philippines. The data were verified and analyzed based on the research objectives and the research question. Finally, the results of the research were summarized to come up with recommendations for both the Korean and Philippine government, as well as other stakeholders and future researchers.

### 1.8 Definition of Terms

- i. Hallyu (한류): It is a Chinese term that literally means Korean wave. It is used to refer to the spread of Korean culture and cultural products, primarily its movies, dramas, and music, and later, expanded to include online games, cuisine, fashion, and even cosmetics and skin care products.
- ii. Soft power: A concept popularized by Joseph Nye, it is the ability to shape the preferences of others by using attraction, in contrast to the use of force or coercion (hard power). In the context of international relations, it often means using aspects of culture rather than military power for the benefit of a specific country or state.

- iii. Migration: It is the permanent change of residency by an individual or group
- iv. Transnationalism: Refers to the extension of various processes (social, economic, political) beyond the boundaries of countries or states. In the context of migration studies, transnationalism is used to refer to the emergence of communities or groups of people who consider themselves as residents of more than one country or state.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1 Related Theories and Concepts

##### 2.1.2 Joseph Nye's concept of soft power

Joseph Nye (1990) described soft power as the ability to shape the preferences of others by using attraction, in contrast to the use of force or coercion (hard power). In the context of international relations, it often means using aspects of culture rather than military power for the benefit of a specific country or state. Soft power, according to Nye, is “this second aspect of power – which occurs when one country gets other countries to want what it wants – might be called co-optive or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants.” Through the spread of Hallyu and Korean culture, South Korea has cemented its place in the world through its cultural exports in the form of music, dramas, movies, mobile games, food, and many others. This is also applicable in the Philippines, where Korean cultural products are well-accepted by Filipinos. Philippine-based celebrities like Ryan Bang and Dasuri Choi, (and Sandara Park before she returned to Korea), by appearing on television shows as “Koreans with a Filipino heart” brought South Korea and its culture closer to Filipinos, even to those who do not follow typical Hallyu content like K-pop and K-dramas.

##### 2.1.2 Everett Lee's theory of migration and push-pull factors

Everett Lee (1966) enumerated several factors in migration, namely factors associated with the area of origin, factors associated with the area of destination, intervening obstacles, and personal factors. These factors, later called “push-pull factors” are taken into consideration by migrants in making their decision to move from their place of origin to their destination. There were several factors behind Korean

migration in the Philippines, namely religion (in the case of missionaries), economic growth (in the case of businessmen) and education (in the case of students). Although Miralao (2007) said Korean migration to the Philippines is a break from the earlier pattern of Korean migration, it can be argued that it still follows the usual trend in migration wherein migrants would leave their area of origin in search of a better life in their area of destination. In the case of South Korean businessmen, although they may have a prosperous life in their home country, moving to Southeast Asia, particularly in the Philippines, would further improve their economic status in South Korea, since labor and production costs are cheaper in the region. In this case, the higher labor costs in South Korea is a push factor while the lower labor costs in Southeast Asia and the Philippines can be considered as a pull factor. In the case of Korean students, especially those who want to learn English in the Philippines, the high demand for English speakers and the benefits of fluency in English in South Korea can be considered as a push factor, while the quality and affordability of English education in the Philippines, compared to other English-speaking countries like the United States, Canada and Australia, can be considered as a pull factor for Korean migration in the Philippines.

### **2.1.3 Transnationalism**

Bourne (1916) in his article “Trans-national America” rejected the “melting-pot” theory, arguing that some migrants do not fully assimilate into their destination countries. Bruneau (2010) described a transnational community as a community “based on specific mobility know-how” or “migration expertise”. Although Bruneau’s example is focused on migrants seeking employment and remittances, this description of a transnational community can also be applied to the case of South Koreans in the Philippines, who often got to the country based on information they get from fellow Koreans who have previously traveled to the Philippines. This is



especially applicable to Koreans who go to the Philippines to study English, most of whom just go to the Philippines for a few weeks or months during summer and winter vacations to study English, and then return to South Korea (Miralao 2007). Most South Koreans in the Philippines also tend to live close to each other and create their own communities. As more Koreans live in close proximity to each other, businesses catering to Koreans were also established. Thus, they continue to practice their own culture even while living in another country. This proves Bourne's idea that migrants do not necessarily get assimilated into their host countries. It can then be argued that South Korean community in the Philippines, instead of getting assimilated into the Philippine society, become cultural ambassadors of their country and aid in the further spread of Korean culture in the Philippines, especially after the Hallyu boom in the country.

## **2.2 Related Literature on Korean Migration in the Philippines**

Virginia Miralao (2007) gave a timeline of the different "waves" of Korean migrants in the Philippines, from businessmen who started going to the Philippines in 1990s to take advantage of lower production costs. Miralao said Korean migration to the Philippines is a break from the earlier pattern of Korean migration, whereas in the past, migration was fueled by political and economic difficulties, the migration of Koreans to the Philippines was fueled by the economic prosperity in South Korea. It is also different from the pattern of migrating to a more prosperous or developed country. Miralao also discussed the influx of Korean students in the Philippines in the 2000s, when, due to the continuous economic prosperity of South Korea, more families can send their children abroad to study, with the Philippines becoming one of the more popular choices for English education due to its proximity to South Korea, the lower cost as well as the quality of education in the country.

Lorna Makil (2007), on the other hand, provided a preliminary study on the life of Korean migrants in Dumaguete. She divided the groups of migrants into students and missionaries, with the students further divided into those getting their university education from Silliman University, and those who were only in the city to study English. Based on her study, Makil said that for most of the Korean missionary families, the pastor-husbands tend to go to the Philippines ahead of their families, coming to the country as students. Their wives and children would eventually follow then after they are assigned to the churches in Dumaguete City. Although they live in the city, Makil said that the Korean families only consider living in the city as temporary, believing that they are only staying in the Philippines for their mission.

Kanako Kutsumi (2007) likewise wrote about Korean migrants in the Philippines, focusing on the formation of Korean communities through their social organizations. For Kutsumi, the Korean migrants formed various associations to cope with their problems, as well as to explore ways to coexist with Filipinos and other foreigners, who at that time were not yet very familiar with the Korean communities in the country.

In terms of using historical research in studying the exchange of culture and the spread of Korean culture in the Philippines, Raymund Arthur Abejo's (2016) study on the development of Korean Protestant missions in the Philippines from 1973 to 2000 can help provide context on the existence of Korean communities in the Philippines.

### 2.3 Related literature on Hallyu and Korean soft power in Southeast Asia and the Philippines

There have been several works on Korean migration in Southeast Asia and the Philippines, with several authors writing about various aspects of South Korea's role in the region in the work edited by David Steinberg (2010). One of the articles, Pavin Chachavalpongpun focused on the changing image of South Korea in the region. He argued that despite the popularity of Korean culture and Hallyu, what Southeast Asians see on the ground, i.e. from Korean migrants and tourists, are different from what they see in dramas and television shows. Because of this disconnect between the image of South Korea portrayed in media and the actual behavior of some Koreans, which he called "bad Hallyu", Chachavalpongpun said the Korean wave in Southeast Asia may fade unless the South Korean government change its approach on how Hallyu is promoted in the region. Since the work was written in 2010, it is interesting to look at how Southeast Asians' perception of South Korea has changed since then. Contrary to what Chachavalpongpun surmised back in 2010 that this bad Hallyu may make the influence of Korea wane, Hallyu further spread and became more popular in the region. At present, Southeast Asia is one of the biggest markets of K-pop and K-dramas. This study hopes to build on Chachavalpongpun's study by adding more information on what happened in the region after 2010, with a focus on the case of Korean celebrities in the Philippine entertainment industry.

Aside from looking at Korean migration in the Philippines, it is also important to look at how Hallyu and Korean culture spread in the country. Sue Jin Lee (2011), in her article "The Korean Wave: The Seoul of Asia", looked at the beginnings of Hallyu, which can be traced back to 1997 in China, when the Korean TV drama What Is Love All About (사랑이 뭐길래) aired on state-run Chinese television. Other Korean dramas were also aired in China, which started the "Korean wave" in the country

which later spread to other parts of Asia. Kim Bok-rae (2015) in the article “Past, Present and Future of Hallyu (Korean Wave)” looked at the development of Hallyu, which can now be divided into four parts: Hallyu 1.0 (K-drama), Hallyu 2.0 (K-pop music), Hallyu 3.0 (K-culture) and Hallyu 4.0 (K-style). The paper also explained how the spread of Hallyu can no longer be considered as just a simple cultural acculturation, but a process of “cultural power reorganization”.

Looking at the context of the Philippines, Jay-Ar Igno and Marie Cielo Cenidoza (2016) looked at the Hallyu “fad” that started in the Philippines in the mid-2000s, just as the country was moving away from the Mexican telenovelas that was popular during the late 90s. As the popularity of Mexican novelas waned, Asian television dramas, dubbed Asianovelas in the Philippines, became popular. Korean dramas, at first, had to compete with the popularity of the Taiwanese drama Meteor Garden, before it gained ground and became popular on its own. In the Philippines, it was Endless Love: Autumn in My Heart that started the trend of broadcasting Korean dramas on national TV. As was common in the Philippines at that time, the series was dubbed in Filipino, which may have boosted its popularity. Igno and Cenidoza also argued that the popularity of Korean dramas in the Philippines was due to the fact that Filipinos can identify with the characters that they see in the drama. Although this paper focuses more on explaining the popularity of Hallyu in the Philippines, it also talked about the development of Hallyu in the Philippines and thus can be very useful in this research.

Most of the existing research on Korean migration in the Philippines do not investigate its connection to the popularity of Hallyu and Korean culture in the Philippines. Although most Korean migrated to the Philippines for economic reasons, due to the spread of Hallyu, some of them eventually became celebrities and

influencers in the Philippines, which in a way made Korean culture more accessible and familiar to Filipinos.



## CHAPTER III

### KOREAN MIGRATION AND HALLYU IN THE PHILIPPINES

#### 3.1 Short History of Korean Migration in the Philippines

The Philippines has a long diplomatic history with South Korea, being one of the first countries to recognize the Republic of Korea in 1949. The Philippines is also one of the countries that sent troops to help in the Korean War in the 1950s. The two countries commemorated 70 years of diplomatic relations in 2019, thus, it is not surprising that the Philippines has also become one of the largest consumers of South Korean cultural exports.

In the Southeast Asian region, the Philippines is the top destination of Korean visitors. In 2019, 1,989,322 Koreans visited the Philippines, while there are 33,010 Koreans living in the Philippines as of 2020, according to data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea. The other Southeast Asian countries often visited by Korean tourists are Thailand (1,887,853 as of 2019) and Vietnam (819,089, as of 2020). In terms of Korean migrants, Vietnam topped the list with 156,330 as of 2020. The numbers may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have caused Korean migrants to go back to South Korea.

South Koreans also ranked first among foreign tourist arrivals in the Philippines since 2006, overtaking the Americans, who ranked first until 2005 (Ariola 2018). The number of Korean tourists to the Philippines breached the 1,000,000-mark in 2012, and has been increasing since then, almost reaching 2,000,000 in 2019. The number of visitors considerably dropped in 2020 due to border restrictions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 shows the number of Korean visitors and Korean migrants in Southeast Asian countries. Vietnam has the most number of Korean migrants, while the Philippines and Thailand are two of the most popular Southeast Asian countries for Korean visitors, as of 2019.

Country	No. of Korean Visitors	No of Korean migrants
Brunei	15,767 (2019)	164 (2020)
Cambodia	6,074 (2021)	10,608 (2021)
Indonesia	388,316 (2019)	16,494 (2020)
Laos	203,191 (2019)	1,502 (2021)
Malaysia	673,065 (2019)	13,632 (2020)
Myanmar	about 111,794 (2019)	3,860 (2019)
Philippines	1,989,322 (2019)	33,010 (2020)
Singapore	645,728 (2019)	20,398 (2020)
Thailand	1,887,853 (2019)	18,130 (2021)
Timor-Leste	1,445 (2019)	123 (2020)
Vietnam	819,089 (2020)	156,330 (2020)

*Table 1: Data on the Number of Korean Visitors and migrants in Southeast Asia.*

*Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea*

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippines was among the top 10 countries hosting Korean migrants. As of 2021, the Philippines is in 14<sup>th</sup> place with 33,032 Korean migrants (MOFA, accessed 2022). However, in 2017, there were 93,093 Korean migrants in the Philippines, 81 percent of which are “general residents”, or

those with all other types of visas, aside from students, permanent residents and naturalized citizens (Ariola 2018).

Year	Country	No. of Tourist Arrivals
2011	South Korea	925,204
	USA	624,527
	Japan	375,496
	China	243,137
	Taiwan	181,738
2012	South Korea	1,031,155
	USA	652,626
	Japan	412,474
	China	250,883
	Taiwan	216,511
2013	South Korea	1,165,789
	USA	674,564
	Japan	433,705
	China	426,352
	Australia	213,023
2014	South Korea	1,175,472
	USA	722,750
	Japan	463,744
	China	394,951
	Australia	224,784



2015	South Korea	1,339,678
	USA	779,217
	Japan	495,662
	China	490,841
	Australia	241,187
2016	South Korea	1,475,081
	USA	869,463
	China	675,663
	Japan	535,238
	Australia	251,098
2017	South Korea	1,607,821
	China	968,447
	USA	957,813
	Japan	584,180
	Australia	259,433
2018	South Korea	1,624,251
	China	1,257,962
	USA	1,034,471
	Japan	631,821
	Australia	279,828
2019	South Korea	1,989,322
	China	1,743,309
	USA	1,064,440
	Japan	682,788
	Taiwan	327,273

2020	South Korea	338,877
	USA	211,816
	China	170,432
	Japan	136,664
	Australia	55,330

*Table 2: Data on the top 5 countries in terms of tourist arrivals in the Philippines (2011-2020). Source: Department of Tourism of the Republic of the Philippines*

Table 2 shows the five countries where most of tourists to the Philippines come from. South Korea has consistently been the number one country in terms of tourist arrivals since 2006, overtaking the United States. (Ariola 2018). The table also shows that the number of Korean tourists to the Philippines has increased by around a million, from less than a million in 2011 to almost two million in 2019. The number of tourists from South Korea and from the other four countries considerable dropped in 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Historically, the Philippines is one of the countries visited by South Koreans for various purposes like education, employment, and tourism. Before the spread of Hallyu in the Philippines, Koreans started going to Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, to start their own businesses due to the increase in labor and production costs in South Korea. Driven by the economic prosperity in South Korea, Koreans started migrating to Southeast Asia, bringing with them outdated Korean technology and taking advantage of the lower production costs in the region (Miralao 2007). However, prior to the influx of Korean businessmen to the Philippines, a different group of migrants first came to the country. Korean missionaries have been

conducting missions in the Philippines as early as the 1970s. Han Sanghyu, a Methodist, first arrived in the Philippines in June 1973, while Kim Hwal-young, a Presbyterian, first came to the country in March 1977 (Abejo 2016). Since then, Koreans have been staying in various parts of the Philippines, often with their families, and establishing their own communities.

By the 1990s, there was a considerable increase in the number of Korean visitors in the Philippines, as can be seen in the increase in air travel between Seoul and Manila. Miralao noted that in 1992, there were only 26,000 arrivals from South Korea, while by 2003, the number jumped to 303,867. She also noted that data from the Philippines' Department of Labor and Employment showed an increase in the number of Korean nationals with Alien Employment Permits, from 128 in 1992 to 1,881 in 2002. However, updated data on the number of Korean workers in the country is not readily available from the websites of Philippine government agencies. As was also previously noted by Miralao in her 2007 study, this reflects the inefficiencies in the Philippine statistical system.

Another wave of Korean migrants came in the 2000s. In this period, several Koreans started coming to the Philippines to study English. According to Miralao, the Philippines' proximity to South Korea, as well as its positive image as an English-speaking country with a good quality of education, became a factor for South Koreans to send their children to the country (Miralao 2007). The demand for learning English and for higher education can also be seen as an effect of the economic prosperity in South Korea, which allowed middle class families to send their children abroad to study. Access to overseas education was previously only accessible to rich families but with the economic developments in Korea, overseas education also became accessible to middle class families. While those from the

richer families sent their children to the United States or to other Western countries, the Philippines became attractive to those from the middle classes due to a similar quality of education at a more affordable cost (Miralao 2007). Many Koreans also chose to study the Philippines due to its reputation of having a high quality of education. This perception may be more common among the older Koreans, who may have been familiar with the country being more developed than Korea in the 1960s. Many Koreans likewise opt to study English in the Philippines due to its proximity to South Korea. Students tend to go to the Philippines for a few months to study English, often taking advantage of their school breaks, especially during summer and winter.

With the increase in the number of Koreans visiting and living in the Philippines, businesses catering to Koreans started increasing in the country. Korean supermarkets, restaurants, internet cafes, travel companies and even Korean churches were established in areas where there is a concentration of Koreans. As was noted by Makil in her study of the South Koreans in Dumaguete, Koreans tend to stay with or near other Koreans. The Korean pastors who started as students in Dumaguete eventually brought their Korean wives and children with them while they perform their duties for their churches in the city (Makil 2007). Living in close proximity to fellow Koreans also helped these migrants to adapt to their host country, while also preserving their culture and practices (Miralao 2007).

## 3.2 Hallyu in the Philippines<sup>1</sup>

### 3.2.1 K-dramas and Hallyu in the Philippines (2003-2008)

The Philippines had its first taste of *Hallyu* (한류, Korean wave) in the early 2000s when local television channels took the risk of broadcasting Korean dramas (K-dramas) dubbed in Filipino. Filipinos, who had been avid viewers of Filipino-dubbed foreign television dramas, supported and continued watching these K-dramas, whose themes usually revolve around stories of love and family.

Filipinos are no stranger to foreign television dramas. In the late 1990s, Mexican television dramas, known as telenovelas, became popular in the Philippines (Ford 2017). Most of these dramas are dubbed in Filipino, which made it more accessible to the masses. By 2003, ABS-CBN, one of the largest television networks in the Philippines, started airing the Taiwanese drama *Meteor Garden*, which started a new trend in the country. The popularity of Mexican dramas waned, and it was replaced by what was dubbed as Asianovelas, which are mostly dramas from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and later on, South Korea.

It was another local television network, GMA Network, that aired the first K-drama in the Philippines. At that time, the network popularized these as Koreanovelas (from “Korea” and “telenovelas”), following the popularity of the Mexican dramas in the past. The network aired *The Successful Story of a Bright Girl* (명랑소녀 성공기, 2002), or *Bright Girl* in 2003 to try to compete with its rival network, ABS-CBN, and *Meteor Garden* (Igno 2016). It was, however, another K-drama that jumpstarted the popularity of this genre in the country. In the same year, GMA started airing *Autumn in My Heart* (2000) in its evening primetime slot. The stars of the drama – Song Hye-kyo, Won Bin and Song Seung-heon – were among the first Korean actors that

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<sup>1</sup> Parts of this chapter were translated from an unpublished work by the author

Filipinos became familiar with. After Autumn In My Heart, GMA also aired Winter Sonata (2002), which has previously become popular in other parts of Asia, particularly in Japan and Southeast Asia.

Due to the popularity of these dramas, rival network ABS-CBN also started airing Korean dramas, including Lovers in Paris (파리의 연인, 2004), and Memories of Bali (Something Happened in Bali/발리에서 생긴 일, 2004). Other K-dramas that became popular in the country were Full House (풀하우스, 2004), Jewel in the Palace (대장금, 2003), Coffee Prince (커피프린스 1호점, 2007), Princess Hours (궁, 2006), at My Name is Kim Sam-soon (내 이름은 김삼순, 2004). The two other dramas that were part of the Endless Love series - Summer Scent (여름향기, 2003) and Spring Waltz (봄의 왈츠, 2006) – were also aired in the Philippines. These, however, did not become as popular as the two previous dramas.

What was noticeable in the first few years of the popularity of Korean dramas in the country is the fact that the local networks tended to choose Korean dramas featuring the same actors and actresses. For example, both Autumn in My Heart and Full House featured Song Hye-kyo, while Choi Ji-woo's Winter Sonata and The Truth were also both aired in the country. The same is true for Yoon Eun-hye, whose dramas Coffee Prince and Princess Hours were also both aired in the country. This trend will continue, making these actresses, and actors like Jo In-sung, Song Seung-heon, and Kim Rae-won, very familiar to Filipinos, who often can identify them mostly through their faces.

Another genre of Korean dramas, the *sageuk* (사극), also became popular in the Philippines. Probably one of the most popular *sageuk* that was aired in the country

was Jewel in the Palace, which also became very popular in other parts of Asia. Filipinos followed the story of Seo Jang-geum, played by Lee Young-ae, in the series, which revolved around her life and struggles inside the palace.

In their 2016 article, Jay-ar Igno and Marie Cielo Cenidoza argued that Filipinos became hooked to K-dramas because of the familiar Asian culture portrayed in the dramas. This is often the case in dramas that become popular in the country. For example, Mexican dramas became popular in the country, likely because of the similar colonial experience that both Mexico and the Philippines have. Both former colonies of Spain, Filipinos can probably relate to the stories shown in Mexican dramas. Moreover, both Mexico and the Philippines are predominantly Catholic, and these can also be seen some Mexican dramas. Filipinos and Koreans also have a similar history, with both countries having been occupied by Japan in the past. Both countries were also heavily influenced by the United States, especially in the years before and during the Korean War in the 1950s.

Aside from similarities in historical experience, family and family relations are often featured prominently in K-dramas. Filipinos value family just as much as other Asian societies do, and this may have been a factor in the popularity of K-dramas in the Philippines. The use of formal and polite language in Korean culture, as well as the importance of education, are values that are both also very important in Filipino society.

While K-dramas are gaining popularity in the Philippines, another cultural product from Korea, Korean pop music (or K-pop), has also started gaining ground in the country. It did not become very popular at first, since only a few can watch K-pop music videos. Most of the television channels that do air these music videos are

cable TV channels and uploading these music videos in online streaming websites were not yet as popular at that time.

### **3.2.2 Hallyu 2.0 and 3.0: The Role of Social Media in the Further Spread of Hallyu in the Philippines (2008 – Present)**

In the period between 1997 to 2007, the television played a huge role in the spread of Hallyu all over Asia. However, by 2008, Hallyu started spreading through another medium – the internet and social media. This also made it possible for Hallyu to go beyond dramas and music to actual Korean tangible products like food, cosmetics, skin care and fashion.

Dal Yong Jin (2016) dubbed the new era of Hallyu as Hallyu 2.0. One major difference between Hallyu 1.0 and Hallyu 2.0 is the kind of products being exported outside of South Korea. In the period between 1997 to 2007, the major cultural products exported from Korea are dramas and movies, but by 2008, the country also started exporting music (K-pop), video games and animation. Technology also played a huge role in the spread of Korean culture. Aside from online games, South Korea by this time had also started exporting smartphones, digital games and social media platforms. Hallyu also became more accessible through the internet and social media, making it possible to reach other regions outside of Asia, like North and South America and Europe. The age of those who consume Korean culture also expanded. At the time when Hallyu first spread in the Philippines, most of its consumers were between the ages of 20 to 40, and are often those who have already finished school, or are in the tertiary level of education. With the advent of social media and the internet, teenagers became a big market for Hallyu, especially since they are the ones who are more tech-savvy and who use technology more. K-pop music videos also became more accessible through the internet, aided by the advent of Youtube



in 2005. One turning point in the eventual explosion in the popularity of Hallyu is Psy's Gangnam Style, which was released in 2012. It signaled the slow but steady entry of K-pop (and Hallyu) in the United States.

Kim Bok Rae (2015) gave a different definition to the stages of Hallyu by expanding it to Hallyu 3.0 (K-culture) and Hallyu 4.0 (K-fashion). Hallyu 1.0, according to Kim, was between 1995 to 2005, with K-dramas and movies distributed mostly to Asian countries like China, Taiwan and Japan. For Kim, the goal of Hallyu 1.0 was to promote Korea as a tourist destination. Hallyu 2.0, on the other hand, was promoted from 2006 to present, primarily through K-pop music and idols. K-pop was distributed primarily through online circulation, and its goal was overseas expansion and performance. Kim also said in the foreseeable future, Hallyu 3.0 may make it to the spotlight, characterized by diverse genres and circulated primarily through social media networks. Kim also said there is a potential to develop Hallyu 4.0 into “K-style”, based on the lifestyle and publicity of Hallyu stars.

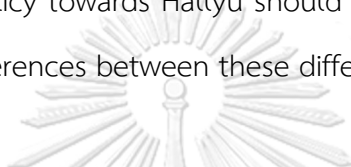
<b>The Past, Present and Future of Hallyu</b>			
	<b><i>Hallyu 1.0</i></b>	<b><i>Hallyu 2.0</i></b>	<b><i>Hallyu 3.0</i></b>
<b>Period</b>	1995~2005	2006~to the present	Foreseeable future
<b>Diffusion Area</b>	Asia (China, Taiwan and Japan)	Asia, North America and Europe	All over the world
<b>Target</b>	Media contents (K-dramas and movies) (Product-oriented)	K-pop idols (K-stars-oriented)	Genre-diversification (Stars & Creator brand-oriented)
<b>Cases</b>	“What is Love? (1992),” <sup>14</sup> “Winter Sonata (2002),” “My Sassy Girl (2001)”“Jewel in the Palace (2003-2004),” HOT (band), Boa (singer).	Girls’ Generation, Kara, Shinee, 2PM, and Big Bang (band)	
<b>Early Distribution</b>	Overseas Korean society	Online circulation (YouTube)	SNS
<b>Media</b>	Video, CD, spot broad casting	Internet, on-site performance	Cross-media
<b>Durability</b>	From several months to years (Winter Sonata)	For several years (Girls’ Generation)	For several decades
<b>Directivity</b>	Turning the eyes of the world upon Korea (Tourist industry-centered)	Overseas expansion and performance	To the world beyond Korea (Regarded as mainstream)

Figure 1: The Past, Present and Future of Hallyu, as explained by Kim Bok-rae in her 2015 article, “Past, Present and Future of Hallyu (Korean Wave). Screen grab from the article.

Jin, in a 2021 article, discussed how different groups, such as cultural agencies, media, and media scholars, have their own perspectives on the periods of Hallyu over the past years, with some dividing the whole Hallyu period into four eras such as Hallyu 1.0, Hallyu 2.0, Hallyu 3.0 and Hallyu 4.0. Due to the current widespread popularity of Hallyu, there are some who claim that it is now Hallyu.40 era, but Jin disagrees, calling it “narrow-minded” and merely for marketing purposes. Jin also explained that these categories came from both the Korean government and other government-funded agencies. One example was Seong-gak Song, the president of the Korea Creative Contents Agency, who in 2015 claimed that the Korean wave has entered Hallyu 3.0 since the early 2010s, with emphasis on hangul, hansik and hanbok, in addition to the music, dramas and movies that first made Hallyu popular.

For Jin, this categorization and creation of the Hallyu 3.0 was in line with then President Geun-hye's cultural policy (Jin 2021).

Back in 2015, Jin differentiated Hallyu 1.0 from Hallyu 2.0, starting from 1997 to 2007, and from 2008 onwards. He also acknowledged that there has been a lot of changes in Hallyu since 2017, which he now dubbed as the start of Hallyu 3.0. Aside from differences in the primary consumers and the genres exported, Jin also said the Korean government's policy towards Hallyu should also be taken into consideration in understanding the differences between these different eras.



**Table 1. Hallyu, From 1.0 to 3.0.**

Major Points	Hallyu 1.0	Hallyu 2.0	Hallyu 3.0
Period	1997–2007	2008–2017	2017–present
Primary Genres Started	TV dramas, films	K-pop, online games, animation	Webtoon, K-pop, mobile games
Technologies/Digital Culture	Online games	Social media, smartphones, digital games	Digital Platforms (Netflix, social media), transmedia storytelling
Major Regions	East Asia	Asia, Europe, North America	Global
Primary Consumers	In their 30s–40s	10s–20s included	10s–20s included, but 50–60s
Major Cultural Policies	Hands-off policies	Hands-on policies	Hands-off policies

Figure 2: Hallyu From 1.0 to 3.0 as explained by Dal Yong Jin in his 2021 article, “Ten Myths About The Korean Wave in the Global Cultural Sphere”. Scree grab from the article.

For example, the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008 to 2013, Hallyu 1.0) implemented a hands-off policy when it comes to the Korean wave, whereas the Park Geun-hye administration (2013 to 2017, Hallyu 2.0) had a more hands-on approach. The changes in the government policies during the Moon Jae-in administration (from 2017 to 2022), according to Jin, can also be considered as a unique characteristic of Hallyu 3.0. The Moon administration supported the spread of Hallyu but opted not to intervene in its production largely due to the problems the

previous administrations experienced with their hands-on policies. Hallyu 3.0 can also be characterized with a shift in the cultural industries, where webtoon, animation and mobile gaming also became popular alongside K-pop, K-dramas and K-movies. Adaptations of these popular webtoons are also becoming more common, with movies, television series and even games being developed based on webtoons. Jin also highlighted the role of over-the-top (OTT) platforms like Netflix and other companies in circulating Korean cultural content to its subscribers. It has also become more common for Korean production companies to work directly with Netflix for “Netflix-exclusive” content (Jin 2021).

In the Philippines, K-pop has started gaining ground years before the release of Gangnam Style. As early as 2009, K-pop songs are being played on local radio stations. Among the songs that became popular in the country are Sorry Sorry (2009) by Super Junior and Nobody (2008) by Wonder Girls. Filipinos have a special attachment to the girl group 2NE1, especially because of its member Sandara Park, who first became popular as an actress in the Philippines years before she debuted as a member of the group in 2009. Park first appeared as a contestant in the talent show Star Circle Quest in ABS-CBN, gaining popularity for her quirky and cute personality.

While K-pop is slowly occupying a space in the Filipino consciousness, K-dramas continued to be popular on television. The dramas that became popular in this period is Boys Over Flowers (꽃보다 남자, 2009), an adaptation of the popular Taiwanese series Meteor Garden (2001), which is also adapted from a popular Japanese manga, Hana Yori Dango (1992-2008). Other dramas that became popular are Secret Garden (시크릿 가든, 2010-2011), Moon Embracing the Sun (해를

품은 달 , 2012), My Love From the Star (별에서 온 그대, 2013-2014), Pinocchio (피노키오, 2014-2015), City Hunter (시티헌터, 2011), Dream High (드림하이, 2011), Sungkyunkwan Scandal, (성균관 스캔들, 2010), The Producers (프로듀사, 2015), Oh My Venus (오 마이 비너스, 2015-2016), To The Beautiful You, (아름다운 그대에게, 2012), The Heirs (왕관을 쓰려는 자, 그 무게를 견뎌라-상속자들, 2013), Descendants of the Sun, (태양의 후예, 2016), Goblin, (도깨비, 2016-2017), Weightlifting Fairy Kim Bok-joo (역도요정 김복주, 2016-2017), Legend of the Blue Sea (푸른 바다의 전설, 2016-2017), Hwarang (화랑, 2016-2017), I'm Not a Robot (로봇이 아니야, 2017-2018), Doctor Crush/The Doctors, (닥터스, 2016), Go Back Couple (고백부부, 2017), A Korean Odyssey (화유기, 2017), Fight for My Way (쌈 마이 웨이 , 2017), While You Were Sleeping (당신이 잠든 사이에 , 2017), among many others. From 2018, however, K-dramas slowly lost their popularity on television as a new platform– video streaming sites and apps – took over. Among the popular video on demand (VOD) apps in the Philippines are Netflix, Iflix and Viu. Netflix first started its operations in the Philippines in 2016 (News 2016) and although there were only a few K-dramas and K-movies available in the app at first, it became popular to those in the middle and upper classes, who often do not watch local television shows. To cater to those who do not have access to video streaming sites, local television networks often air K-dramas that become popular on Netflix or on social media, and the one aired on TV are often dubbed in Filipino.

While K-dramas were making their mark in the airwaves, K-pop groups also started including the Philippines in their concert tours. In 2010, Super Junior performed in Manila for the first time as part of their “The 2<sup>nd</sup> Asia Tour: Super Show 2” on April

10 (Hicap 2010). In September of the same year, Jung Ji-hoon or Rain performed in Manila along with K-pop group U-Kiss (Portal 2010). Various other K-pop groups and artists would perform in the Philippines in the succeeding years. Big Bang performed in Manila as part of their “Alive Tour” in 2012 and again in 2015 for their “MADE World Tour”, while Super Junior would return to Manila almost every year for their “Super Show”. K-pop supergroup BTS (Bangtan Seonyeondan) performed twice in the Philippines before their popularity exploded worldwide. They performed in a concert in Manila on December 7, 2014, and again in 2016 and 2017 (Esteves 2022). Happee Sy of Pulp Live World, one of the concert producers in the Philippines, in a personal interview in 2019, said that it was her being a fan of K-pop that pushed her to take a chance at bringing K-pop idols to the Philippines at a time when they were not as popular in the country as they are now. She also said that by 2017, K-pop had its “second round” of popularity. By 2019, various K-pop idols would be performing in Manila almost every month, compared to previous years. Pulp Live World alone promoted 14 concerts that year.

### **3.2.3. Consumption of Other Korean Products**

According to Bok-rae Kim (2015), by 2010, Hallyu started to include other aspects of Korean culture (aside from music, dramas and movie) such as food and drinks (including alcohol), skincare products and cosmetics, and even fashion. With the increase in the use of social media, it became easier for K-pop and K-drama fans to be updated with their idols, who are also often tapped as brand ambassadors. Thus, aside from consuming K-pop and K-dramas, fans also started consuming the products endorsed by their idols as their way of “connecting” to them. In 2009, Korean cosmetic brands started operating in the country. Etude House, a popular Korean cosmetic brand, tapped Sandara Park as its brand ambassador, which boosted its popularity in the Philippines. Park also became an endorser of several other brands,

including Head and Shoulders (which is also popular in other parts of Southeast Asia), and local clothing brand Penshoppe.

Aside from the products endorsed by Korean celebrities, Filipinos also became interested in the products they see on K-dramas, especially Korean food. Common Korean food like ramyeon (라면), kimchi (김치), samgyeopsal (삼겹살), kimchijjigae (김치찌개), soju (소주), jjajangmyeon (짜장면), and kimbap (김밥), among others, became popular, which, in turn, prompted the establishment of Korean restaurants in the country. Unlike in South Korea where Korean restaurants often only serve a few dishes, most Korean restaurants in the Philippines serve all the Korean dishes that are popular in the country. They also offer unlimited or buffet-style meat and side dishes (banchan, 반찬). Korean groceries selling ramyeon, ice cream and other Korean snacks also started popping up all over the major cities in the Philippines. Although the prices tend to be more expensive than local brands, Hallyu fans tend to consume these Korean products for a more holistic experience, with their consumption often influenced by what they see in K-dramas or what their favorite K-pop idols and Korean celebrities endorse.

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South Korea likewise became a very popular travel destination for Filipinos who want to visit the filming locations and other places they have seen in K-dramas, K-movies and K-pop music videos, or places that their idols have been to. In 2018, due to the surge in the demand for tourist visas to South Korea, the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines changed its policy for the application for travel visa. Since July 2018, visa applications should be done through designated travel agencies. Prior to this change in policy, applicants only have to line up at the Embassy to apply for a travel visa. The Embassy explained that the change in the policy is due to the

number of applicants (Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Republic of the Philippines 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which started in 2020, further boosted the popularity of K-dramas, K-movies and K-pop in the Philippines. During this time, new Korean dramas were almost shown simultaneously in South Korea and in the Philippines through video streaming services. This means that food and product trends in South Korea also become popular in the Philippines. Due to the pandemic lockdowns, Filipinos also relied on social media and the internet to gain access to their idols, who, at the same time, also took advantage of technology. Concerts and fan meetings shifted to online format, with performances often livestreamed to fans worldwide. Online shops that offer buying service for Korean products also became popular, especially for cosmetics, skin care and fashion items that are featured in K-dramas and K-movies. K-pop albums and official merchandise, or products released by entertainment agencies for their artists, likewise became very popular in the Philippines.



## CHAPTER IV

### KOREAN CELEBRITIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Filipinos mostly consider the television as their main source of entertainment, especially during the late 1980s until the early 2000s. Various shows such as soap operas, gossip shows and variety shows have captured the attention of Filipinos of all ages. The television became dominant especially in the late 1980s, after the country regained its democracy after more than two decades of dictatorship, when all forms of media and broadcasting were censored by the government (Pertierra 2021). It was also the period when the internet and the use of mobile phones were not yet very common in the Philippines.

Once internet connection improved and the use of smartphones became more common, the Philippines became one of the countries with the most social media users. Aside from the usual purpose of communicating and sustaining networks, Filipinos also use social media as a form of entertainment. Eventually, the entertainment media, which used to be only accessed through television and films, also became accessible through social media, and although the entertainment industry continue to feature television content and personalities, social media also became a key dimension. It is common for Filipino celebrities who are popular on television and films to also have a huge following on social media, and in some cases, those who have a huge following in social media, or those who can be considered as “influencers”, also eventually end up in various television shows (Pertierra 2021).

#### 4.1. Sandara Park

Among the most popular Korean celebrities in the Philippines is Sandara Park, a former member of the girl group 2NE1 and currently is still very active in the Korean entertainment industry. Born in Busan, South Korean on 12 November 1984, Park and her family moved to the Philippines for a new start when she was around 10 years old. She admitted in interviews that she had a hard time adjusting to her life in the Philippines, especially since she neither spoke English nor Filipino at first. Her mother also shared that Park used to cry and tell them that she wants to go back to Korea during their first few months in the Philippines. (Human 2019).

Park started her career in the Philippine entertainment industry in 2004 after she placed second in a reality competition on television, “Star Circle Quest”. Despite not winning the competition, she became popular because of her “comically naïve” image (Cabanes 2014). She also exuded a Filipino-loving image, often using the Filipino language as much as she could, despite not being very fluent in it. She even earned the moniker “krung-krung<sup>2</sup>”, which according to Park herself, means “unique, cute, crazy” (Entertainment 2014). Due to her popularity during the competition, there was a controversy about the number of text votes she received. Some alleged that she was involved in vote-buying. When she was asked to respond to the controversy during one of the show’s episode, Park was unable to say anything and just cried (Human 2019). Later when asked about her placing second in the competition, Park said that as a foreigner, she’s glad that she even reached that far in the competition. She also said that it might not look that good if she won the competition, considering that she is a foreigner (Human 2019).

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<sup>2</sup> The term “krung-krung” is a Filipino slang and does not really have a concrete meaning. In the case of Park, it was used to refer to her cute and crazy image.

When Park joined the competition, most Filipinos were not yet very familiar with South Korea and Korean culture. It was the period when Japanese culture and animation were more popular, with several *animes* being aired on primetime television. During the competition, Park gained the attention of the Filipinos because of her unique characteristics. She also showed her determination, even when she was having difficulty speaking both English and Filipino. Park was already familiar with the Filipino language and culture, since she was already living in the country for almost ten years when she joined the competition. In one of the episodes of the competition, Park performed the Korean folk song “Arirang” while wearing the traditional hanbok. It was also because of her popularity that Filipinos learned common Korean words such as “saranghae (사랑해)”, “annyeong haseyo(안녕하세요)” and “kamsahamnida (감사합니다)”. The phrase “saranghamnida (사랑합니다)” was also featured in the lyrics of Park’s song, “In or Out”.

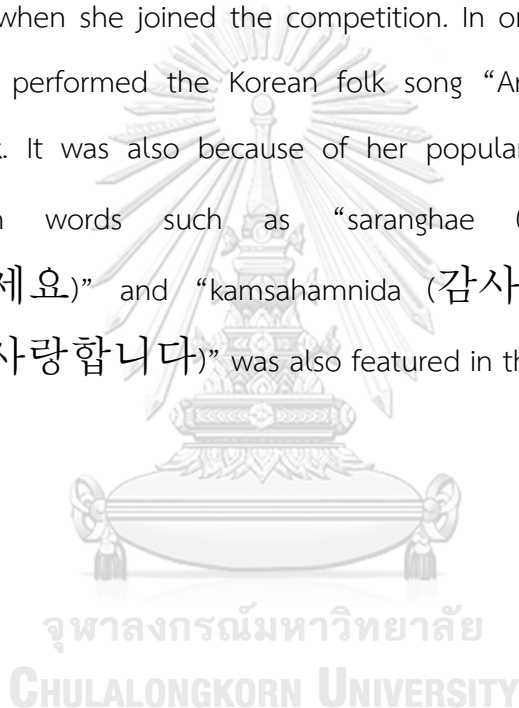




Figure 3 Sandara Park on her winning second place in a competition in the Philippines

Source: Screen grab from KBS Human on Youtube

After she won the competition, Korean broadcasting network KBS followed her life and created a documentary about her in 2004. The five-part documentary showed Park's hectic schedule, from shooting various television shows to product commercials and even a movie. Park also said that her fellow contestants and her fans know common Korean phrases because of her. In the KBS documentary "My Name is Sandara Park", Park was shown talking to one of her fellow contestants, who was sharing how Park taught him that he is a "kkot minam (꽃미남)" or "flower boy", a concept that was new to Filipinos at that time but was already popular in South Korea. Park also taught her fellow contestants to call her "noona (누나)", a term of respect used by Korean males to refer to older females (Human 2019).

Park's career in the Philippines lasted for three years, from 2004 to 2007, after which she decided to go back to South Korea with her family after living in the Philippines for over a decade. Upon her return to South Korea, Park would start as a trainee for YG Entertainment. It was said that Park was scouted by the agency because of the KBS documentary (News 2016). She would eventually make her debut in South Korea in 2009 as part of the girl group 2NE1. Park returned to the Philippines in 2014, where she guested in several shows in her former home network, ABS-CBN. By this time, she has already established her name as a K-pop idol. When she returned to the Philippines, she would often be asked about her training in South Korea, and how different her experience in the Korean entertainment industry was compared to her experience in the Philippines. If she was considered untalented when she was in the Philippines (Cabaness 2014), she was later praised for how much she improved since she became a K-pop idol. In 2016, she became one of the judges of a reality singing show, "Pinoy Boyband Superstar" in the same network. Her group 2NE1 announced its disbandment while Park was still part of the show.

Even after she debuted with 2NE1, Park would continue to talk about her connection with the Philippines. Even until now, she identifies herself as the Philippines' "krung-krung", as can be seen on her bio in her personal Twitter account. Aside from frequently mentioning the Philippines, Park would also promote the country to her fellow Koreans, and bringing her friends to some of the best tourist destinations in the country in her so-called "Dara Tour", which she documents on her Youtube channel. Before she opened her Youtube channel, Park promoted the Philippines on the show "Battle Trip", appearing in an episode in 2016, and another in 2017. She was also named as honorary Korea-Philippines Friendship Ambassador in 2017 (Ji 2017).

Park opened personal Youtube channel, "Dara TV" by posting her first video on July 7, 2017. Her channel currently has 1.35 million subscribers (as of October 18, 2022). Park usually uses the Korean language in her vlogs, even in the videos she filmed in the Philippines. She has brought some of her friends to her favorite spots in the Philippines several times and introduced them to her favorite Filipino dishes. She also tends to go to the Philippines to support her "hoobaes (후배)" in the industry whenever they have performances and concerts in the country. In her latest video, posted on September 2, 2022, she introduced Thai K-pop idol BamBam to her favorite Filipino restaurant (Dara TV, 2022). She went to the Philippines to support BamBam, her labelmate in Abyss. Aside from her Youtube account, Park also has a huge following in her Instagram account (@daraxxi, 9.8 million; @ssantokki\_xxi, 50,743 followers) and her Twitter account (@krungy21, 5.8 million), where she sometimes also uses English and Filipino to communicate with her Filipino fans.

#### 4.2. Ryan Bang

Another popular Korean celebrity in the Philippines is Ryan Bang, who, like Park, was also a product of a reality show that aired in the same network, ABS-CBN. Born Bang Hyun-sung (방현성), Bang was born in South Korea in 1991 and moved to the Philippines in 2005 after his parents separated. In an interview with Ogie Diaz in 2021, Bang said he thought he was just going on a vacation to the Philippines when he first arrived. He lived with a friend of his mother, but because nobody was looking after him, he didn't focus on studying at first. He also went through a lot of hardships, and went back to Korea after a few months. However, he eventually went back to the Philippines when his mother explained why she had to send him to another country. At that time, his mother's financial situation has improved, and Bang started studying in an international school. There, he studied hard and became the student council president (Diaz 2021).

In 2010, he joined the reality show “Pinoy Big Brother: Teen Clash 2010”, where he finished as a runner-up. He was invited to join the show after one of the parents in his school liked his humor during a speech. After winning as “Second Teen Big Winner”, Bang became one of the judges on the noontime variety show “It’s Showtime” in 2010. He was among the judges who stayed the longest on the show at 48 weeks. A month after his stint on the show ended, he was brought back as a host. He is currently still part of the show as one of its hosts since 2012. Aside from hosting, Bang was also part of the gag show “Banana Sundae” from 2010 to 2020, and has appeared on several television shows and movies. He also released two studio albums and three singles. His songs, which he released in 2011, 2015 and 2016, respectively, featured Filipino, English and Korean lyrics. In an interview after the release of his single “Shopping”, Bang said he hopes his song will also go viral like that of fellow Korean Psy’s “Gangnam Style” and “Gentleman”. Even the music

video for “Shopping” featured elements similar to that of Psy’s, but with a Filipino touch. Although his goal is to promote the Philippines to Koreans, the use of Korean language in the song that was released in the Philippines, in a way, is also a promotion of the Korean culture to Filipinos (News 2015).

In an interview with Civic News in 2016, Bang said he’s thankful for all the opportunities given to him in the Philippines. As one of the hosts of “It’s Showtime”, one of the most popular noontime shows on Philippine television, Bang said he hopes to promote Korea to the viewers, as well as to make the relationship between Filipinos and Koreans better. In 2017, Bang was also named as an honorary ambassador for Gangwon Province, in time for the 2018 PyeongChang Olympics (Yonhap 2017). He also became the torch bearer for the Philippines during the Winter Olympics (News 2018).

Bang opened his personal Youtube channel, “Ryan Bang”, in August 16, 2017. In the first video he posted, Bang compiled various clips about him, including his appearances in Korean shows, news programs and documentaries, as well as his appearances on Philippine shows and movies and even commercials for various products. Bang’s Youtube channel currently has 1.62 million subscribers. Bang uses the Filipino language on television, where he is often seen as a comedian, a Korean who insists on speaking Filipino despite having difficulty in doing so. He also has a big following on Instagram (@ryanbang, 1 million) and Twitter (@ryanbang, 2.6 million). Similar to what Park does when she brings her Korean friends to the Philippines, Bang often acts as a tour guide for his Filipino celebrity friends when they visit South Korea, bringing them to popular tourist spots and introducing them to Korean dishes. He also often uses Filipino in his Youtube videos, as well as on Instagram and Twitter to communicate with his fans. In a recent video with fellow Korean Youtuber Jessica



Lee, Bang told Lee to speak more Tagalog to show her love for the Filipinos and the Philippines (Lee 2022). Aside from being a celebrity, Bang has also established several businesses in the Philippines, including a Korean salon (Moridu Art), and Korean food business (Ducup MNL, Jaba Kimchi and Dooki Topokki). In his recent videos, Bang invited his friends for a chat while doing a “mukbang (먹방)” featuring his Korean mixed rice product. He also has videos featuring his friends getting their hair done in his Korean salon business.



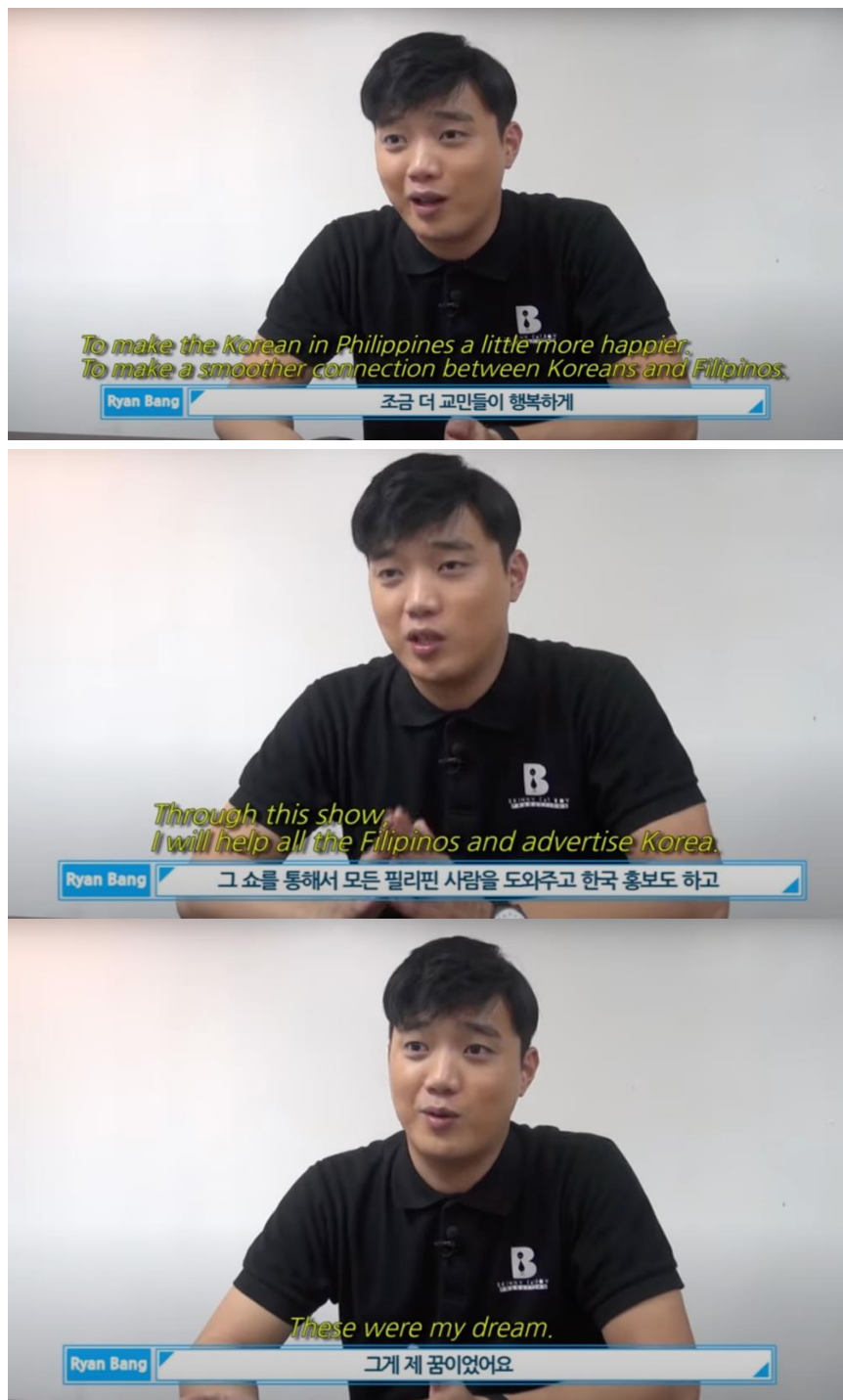


Figure 4 Ryan Bang on being a variety show host in the Philippines

Source: Screen grab from Civic TV on Youtube

### 4.3. Dasuri Choi

Dasuri Choi, another popular Korean celebrity in the Philippines, started her career in Philippine showbusiness when she joined the “You’re My Foreignay” segment on noontime show “Eat Bulaga” in 2014, where she finished second runner-up. Unlike Park and Bang who went to the Philippines at a young age, Choi was already in her 20s when she went to the Philippines. Prior to going to the country, she has already worked as a choreographer and back-up dancer for various K-pop idols in South Korea. In an interview in 2021, Choi said she want to experience living in another country, and originally intended to go to the US. She, however, does not speak English, and since her grandfather is already in the Philippines, her family suggested that she try her luck in the country. Upon arrival in the Philippines, her grandfather, who was living in another province, made her live alone in Manila. Despite not knowing neither English nor Filipino, Choi was able to survive her first few months in a new country (Affairs 2021).

After joining the contest in 2014, Choi would continue to appeared on several other television shows in various Philippine television networks, and in 2022, she became a mainstay cast of “Bubble Gang”, a television sketch comedy show. Choi, whose Korean name is Choi Da-seul, is also popular as a dancer in the Philippines. She is known for her dance covers on her Youtube channel “Dasuri Choi”, where she has 1.87 million subscribers. Aside from her dance videos, she also shares various videos of her with her family and other Korean celebrities in the Philippines. Like Ryan Bang, Choi also often used Filipino in her videos, as well as in Instagram (@dasurichoi\_, 645,000 followers), Facebook (2.3 million followers) and Twitter (@dasurichoi\_, 31,721 followers) accounts. She has the most following on her TikTok account (@dasurichoi\_) with 12.7 million followers and 192.7 million likes (as of October 18, 2022). She describes herself as a “Pure Korean with Filipino heart” on TikTok. Aside

from using Filipino and English in her captions and posts, Choi also uses Korean often in her posts. Aside from her social media and television appearances, Choi is also an endorser of Hyundai Home Appliances in the Philippines. In a video posted in April 2022, Choi introduced the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines as her “first work” and “main work”. In another video posted in September 2022, Choi showed how her Korean family celebrates “Chuseok (추석)” while also explaining the various Korean traditions related to it. What made her Chuseok video interesting is that she was able to compare Korean traditions to Philippine traditions, making it easier to understand, especially for those who may not yet be very familiar with Korean culture. She also teaches Korean phrases and words in some of her television show appearances (Affairs 2021). In September 2022, Choi announced the opening of her first business in the Philippines, a Korean grocery in Dapitan City in Zamboanga del Norte in the island of Mindanao.

#### **4.4 Other Koreans in the Entertainment Industry**

Aside from Park, Bang and Choi, there are also some other Korean influencers who are living in the Philippines, and who often post about their lives in the country, such as Jessica Lee, Jinho Bae and Kristy Cho. They have collaborated with Bang and Choi in various videos, wherein they often talk about their common experiences as Koreans living in the Philippines. They also share snippets of their trips back to South Korea to their followers. Similar to Park, Bang and Choi, Lee, Bae and Cho went to the Philippines as students and fell in love with the country. Most of them consider themselves “Filipino at heart”, considering the Philippines as their second home.

While there are several Philippine-based Korean celebrities and influencers, there are also those who had a brief stint on Philippine television but has since then retreated from the limelight. One of the more popular Korean expatriates in the Philippines is

Sam Oh (Oh Sang-mi), who is a television and events host and radio broadcaster in the Philippines. She has been living in the Philippines for around 30 years, and speaks fluent Filipino and English. She is mostly known as a television show host in a cable TV channel in the Philippines, and an events host in some K-pop and Korean culture events such as fan meetings. Although she is popular among K-drama and K-pop fans as a host, she is not well known in public because of her limited television appearances, as well as limited updates on her personal social media pages. Another Korean who was able to make a name for herself in the Philippine entertainment industry is Shine Kook (Son-young Kook). She first gained popularity when she won the “You’re My Foreigner” segment on “Eat Bulaga”, the same contest that launched Choi’s fame in the Philippines. Just like Dasuri Choi, Kook also became part of several television shows, even winning as Miss Korea Philippines in 2018. She also became part of “Banana Sunday”, the same gag show as Ryan Bang. In 2019, she also started a Youtube channel where she teaches Korean words using the Filipino language, as well as posting make-up and beauty videos. Kook eventually returned to Korea, where she is now part of “Pet Me Pick Me” on SBS. Although Kook has a Youtube channel and various social media pages, she did not become a household name unlike Bang and Choi. Another former Philippine-based Korean celebrity is Jinri Park, who is known as a radio DJ and model. Park became popular as a cover girl of men’s magazine FHM, as well as her other sexy pictorials. She also appeared in some television shows throughout her career. In late 2019, she moved to Australia and got married. Sunshine Kim is another Korean expatriate who became a celebrity in the Philippines. In 2016, Kim became a video jockey for music cable channel MYX, before she transferred to another network in 2019. She also has a Youtube channel where she posts videos with her sister. Yohan Hwang became popular as a singer in the Philippines when he won the “I Love OPM” singing contest for foreigners in 2016. He is also known for his Korean covers of popular Filipino songs, sometimes being used

as the official soundtrack of Filipino-dubbed K-dramas aired on local television channels. Hwang is not very active on social media, and based on the recent photos on his Instagram page, he has been based in South Korea since 2021.

Just like Park, Bang and Choi, Oh, Jinri Park, Kook and Kim are also pure Koreans who lived in the Philippines for an extended period of time. Both Oh and Jinri Park grew up in the Philippines, while Kook and Kim studied in the country. All four of them, compared to the three case studies, have relatively limited social media and television presence, which may have been a factor why they did not become as popular. They also have a different image from the three case studies. Both Oh and Kim appeared on cable television channels, giving them limited exposure since not everyone has access to these channels. Jinri Park is more of a print model and radio DJ, and her fans are mostly adults who appreciate her looks. Kook, on the other hand, appeared on free television channels, but has limited social media presence, which may have contributed to her being less popular as her contemporaries Bang and Choi.

Table 3 shows the number of social media followers that Park, Bang and Choi have on their various social media pages. In terms of video content, Choi has the most number of subscribers on her Youtube and TikTok accounts, where she posts mostly K-pop related contents such as her dance covers and tutorials. Although she also posts videos about her everyday life, she is known more as a dancer. Bang, on the other hand, has the most number of subscribers on Twitter and Youtube. Bang does not really post a lot on his Twitter account, which he mainly use to retweet posts about him, or to promote his new videos on his Youtube channel. Park, due to her international popularity, has millions of followers on her Instagram, Twitter and Youtube pages. She usually interacts with her fans on Twitter, while she keeps them

updated with photos on Instagram. She also created a separate account on Instagram, where she posts more casual photos of her. Among the three case studies, Choi also has accounts on all the popular social media platforms in the Philippines, including Facebook, where she has 2.3 million followers. Bang does not have a Facebook page, while Park's Facebook page was created only when she moved to Abyss in 2021 (Chin 2021).



	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Youtube	Tiktok
<b>Sandara Park</b>					
SandaraXAbyss	273,998 followers				
daraxxi		9.9 million followers			
ssantokki_xxi		51,100 followers			
krungy21			5.9 million followers		
DaraTV				1.35 million subscribers; 107 videos	
<b>Ryan Bang</b>					
ryanbang		1 million followers			
ryanbang			2.6 million followers		
Ryan Bang				1.65 million subscribers; 128 videos	
<b>Dasuri Choi</b>					



DasuriChoi	2.3 million followers				
dasurichoi		645,000 followers			
dasurichoi			31,600 followers		
Dasuri Choi				1.89 million subscribers; 364 videos	
dasurichoi__					12.7 million followers; 192.7 million likes

*Table 3 Case studies' social media following (as of October 18, 2022)*

## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Analysis and Discussion

All three Philippine-based Korean celebrities went to the Philippines for purposes other than being part of the Philippine entertainment industry. Park went to the Philippines with her family due to economic reasons, while Bang was sent by his mother to the Philippines also for economic reasons. Choi, who had previously worked as a dancer and choreographer, went to the Philippines seeking for a new experience. All of three, as first-generation migrants, were old enough to know a lot about Korean culture and language before moving to the Philippines. Thus, it is not surprising that they were able to share information about Korean culture once they were able to be part of the Philippine entertainment industry. They all moved to the Philippines in search of better opportunities due to their situation in South Korea and they ended up staying in the country for an extended period. Everett Lee's theory of migration can be applied to all three cases, wherein their current economic and social situation in South Korea was the push factor for them to migrate to the Philippines, while better opportunities in the country, as well as their eventual success in the entertainment industry can be considered as the pull factor for their prolonged stay in the Philippines.

While she was competing in "Star Circle Quest", Park performed "Arirang" on television, which made the folk song familiar to Filipinos. Her colleagues and friends, and even her fans learned common Korean words and phrases from her. After she debuted as a member of K-pop group 2NE1, Park's role in the spread of Hallyu and K-pop in the Philippines became more evident, especially since Filipinos have a special affinity with her. Knowing that she is popular in the Philippines, Park also

often promoted and attended the concerts of her labelmates in the Philippines and in some cases even performed with them.

Choi, on the other hand, first became popular because of her K-pop dance covers. She also used to teach K-pop dance classes with the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines (KCC) and would host various Korea-related events for the KCC and other companies. She also posted videos about various Korean traditions and practices, including what Koreans usually do during Chuseok, one of the two most important Korean holidays. As a Korean who has been living in the Philippines for a long time and is already familiar with Filipino culture, Choi was able to explain about Chuseok and other aspects of Korean culture in a way that the Filipino audience would understand. This is different from what Filipinos usually see on Korean dramas or on social media, which are often the sources of information about Korea. Since Choi is Korean, she is considered as a credible source of information about her own country. At the same time, because she is seen as someone with a “Filipino heart” (pusong Pinoy), Filipino also have a special attachment to her because they know that she loves the Philippines as much as she loves Korea. Through her Korean grocery business, Choi also aids in making Korean food and snacks more accessible to Filipinos in the province of Zamboanga del Norte, which is located far from the capital city of Manila, where most of the other Korean restaurants and groceries are. As a brand ambassador for Hyundai Home Appliances, Choi can use her status as a Philippine-loving Korean to expand the brand’s market in the country, as well as introducing Korean technology to Filipinos.

Bang’s various Korean businesses also have the same function of making Korean products and services more accessible to Filipinos. Just like Choi, Bang has been living in the Philippines for a long time, and people see him as a credible source

when it comes to anything about Korea. Thus, his various businesses, which include a Korean salon and various Korean food businesses, are considered as legitimate, compared to similar businesses run by Filipinos. Bang has also been very vocal about using his influence and popularity in the Philippines to promote South Korea, as well as to improve the relationship between South Korea and the Philippines. He became popular during the time when Hallyu has yet to become very popular in the Philippines, thus he took on the role of being a “cultural ambassador” for his home country. In a 2017 article on The Korea Herald, Bang was quoted as saying that he will do his best to promote his home country (South Korea) to Filipinos, specially Gangwon Province. He also said he is proud to have been able to make Filipinos familiar with the Korean phrase “annyeong haseyo”. All while promoting his home country, he also represented the Philippines as its torch bearer during the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics.

The social media following of Bang, Choi and Park should also be noted, since most fans of K-pop and K-drama, especially among the younger generation, tend to use social media to connect with their idols, especially during the time of the pandemic, when social media and internet use expanded in the Philippines. It is also important to note that social media in the Philippines plays a big role in the popularity of celebrities in the entertainment industry. Those who are popular on television or movies also tend to be popular on social media, while those who are popular on social media also sometimes cross over to television.

Based on the language used by both Bang and Choi in their videos, television appearances and social media posts, it is clear that they are talking mostly to their Filipino and non-Korean followers. This is notable since familiarity with the Korean language is only limited to fans of Hallyu, who are usually from the younger

generation. This is different from the generation of Filipinos who may know both Bang and Choi through their television shows. Both Bang and Choi, likewise, tend to share information about Korean culture in their shows and television interviews and guestings, all while explaining the Filipino language, making this information more accessible to viewers. The time slot of their shows (Bang's show is on the daily noontime slot, while Choi's show is on the Friday night primetime slot) also aids in giving them further visibility among television viewers, whether they are familiar with Hallyu or not.

Park, on the other hand, uses mostly Korean in her videos, which is understandable considering that she is not based in the Philippines anymore. She also tends to be very proud of the Philippines, which she calls as her second home, introducing its food and culture to her Korean friends. Although it might not be intentional, Bang and Choi, by using the Filipino language, communicate more to their Filipino following and function as ambassadors of Korean culture, especially with their endorsements and business ventures. It is also clear that Park, Bang and Choi, despite living in the Philippines for a long time, have not yet assimilated into Filipino society, even though they speak the language. They are still identified as Koreans, and they themselves are proud of their being Korean. Although they consider themselves as having "Filipino heart" (pusong Pilipino), they still represent Korea and Korean culture in the Philippines. All three also consider the Philippines as their second home, which means they clearly still identify themselves as Koreans, with South Korea as their home country. But since they have been living in the Philippines for a long time, they can be viewed as having some level of authority when it comes to explaining various aspects of both South Korean and Philippine culture. In some cases, when Korean celebrities go to the Philippines, Bang and Choi get invited as translators. This is also the case when Filipino celebrities get invited to South Korea.

In 2017, Ryan Bang was invited to the South Korean show “Infinite Challenge” as a translator for Filipino boxing legend Manny Pacquiao. In October 2022, Pacquiao was invited as a guest on “Knowing Brothers”, and Park was his translator for the show.

The case of Park, Bang and Choi, especially their appointment as ambassadors and representatives for various events by the Korean government shows Korean soft power at work. Park was named Korea-Philippines Friendship Ambassador in 2017, while Bang was named ambassador of Gangwon Province in 2017, and became the Philippine torchbearer during the PyeongChang Olympics in 2018. Choi’s connection with the Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines also showed how the governments of both Korea and the Philippines have already recognized their contribution to the promotion of better relations between the two governments.

The popularity of Park, Bang and Choi as Korean celebrities in the Philippines has also started a trend among other young Koreans in the Philippines who also use social media as a tool not only to show their appreciation for the Philippines and Philippine culture, but also to share about their Korean heritage. Several up and coming Philippine-based Youtubers have collaborated with both Bang and Choi, who are often considered by these Youtubers as their “sunbae” (선배), a term most Hallyu fans are familiar with, but in a different context. This group of Korean celebrities and influencers can also be seen as a representative of the bigger Korean community in the Philippines, as well as ambassadors of Korean culture in the country. The Korean community in the Philippines can be considered as a transnational community, since most of them consider both the Philippines and South Korea as their homes. They are familiar with both cultures, and they also practice both of these cultures.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The case of Park, Bang and Choi showed that the Korean migrant community in the Philippines contribute to the further spread of Korean culture in the country through their various businesses and engagements. Park, Bang and Choi used their popularity, both on television and in social media, to promote Korean culture. Bang and Choi have also succeeded in setting up their own businesses, providing jobs to Filipinos while at the same time promoting Korean technology and products to Filipinos. They can also be seen as cultural ambassadors of their country in the Philippines. The Korean community in the Philippines is already aware of the benefits of the popularity of the Korean expatriates in the country, and they are all benefiting from the popularity of Hallyu in the country as well. Considering these developments, it would be beneficial for the Philippine government to make the country more attractive to Korean businesses and investments, especially on the cultural side. The Philippines is one of the biggest markets of Hallyu and Korean cultural content in Southeast Asia, and the government should take advantage of this to attract more investments which can lead to creating more jobs for Filipinos. One way to do so is to ensure the safety not only of the Korean migrant community in Philippines, but also of the other migrant communities as well. It will also be better for the government to keep better track of the number of migrants and tourists arriving in the country. As was noted by Miralao back in 2007, the record-keeping and statistical data capability of the Philippine government is lacking, and this makes it difficult to keep track of who are actually staying in the country, and whether these visitors and migrants do not have criminal records in their home countries. There had been cases of Korean fugitives staying in the Philippines in the past, and there had also been cases of crimes involving Koreans. These cases can be avoided in the future with better government processes. Improvements in the immigration processes and

keeping the society safe can also attract more Korean investment in the country, as well as improve the relationship between the Philippines and South Korea.

The current popularity of Philippine-based Korean celebrities can still be considered as a new phenomenon, especially since the popularity of Hallyu in the Philippines has just recently increased during the pandemic. It would be interesting to continue looking at this phenomenon and do some further research in the future, taking into consideration the up and coming Korean influencers as well.

### 5.3 Conclusion

Exchange of culture is often one of the effects of migration, and in the case of Korean migration to the Philippines, it was a two-way culture exchange, especially for those Korean migrants who eventually became celebrities in the Philippines. Although they originally went to the Philippines for purposes other than entering the entertainment industry, they eventually became part of it as Korean celebrities. Sandara Park, Ryan Bang and Dasuri Choi, through their various social media platforms as well as their various television and film appearances, are clearly still identified as Koreans, albeit living in the Philippines and speaking the language that Filipinos understand. Park's role in the spread of Hallyu and K-pop in the Philippines became more evident, after she debuted as a member of K-pop group 2NE1. Filipinos have a special affinity with her, considering where she started her career in the entertainment industry. Knowing that she is popular in the Philippines, Park also often promoted and attended the concerts of her labelmates in the Philippines and in some cases even performed with them.

Choi, on the other hand, first became popular because of her K-pop dance covers. She also used to teach K-pop dance classes with the Korean Cultural Center in the



Philippines (KCC) and would host various Korea-related events for the KCC and other companies. She also posted videos about various Korean traditions and practices, including what Koreans usually do during Chuseok, one of the two most important Korean holidays. Through her Korean grocery business, Choi also aids in making Korean food and snacks more accessible to Filipinos in the province of Zamboanga del Norte. Bang's various Korean businesses also have the same function of making Korean products and services more accessible to Filipinos. Their social media following should also be noted, since most fans of K-pop and K-drama, especially among the younger generation, also tend to use social media to connect with their idols.

Although it might not be intentional, Bang and Choi, by using the Filipino language, communicate more to their Filipino following and function as ambassadors of Korean culture, especially with their endorsements and business ventures. It is also clear that Park, Bang and Choi, despite living in the Philippines for a long time, have not yet assimilated into Filipino society, even though they speak the language. Although they consider themselves as having "Filipino heart" (pusong Pilipino), they still represent Korea and Korean culture in the Philippines. It can be seen as a culture exchange, with the Korean celebrities learning more about the Philippines while living in the country, and at the same time, Filipinos learn more about Korean culture and Hallyu through them.

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