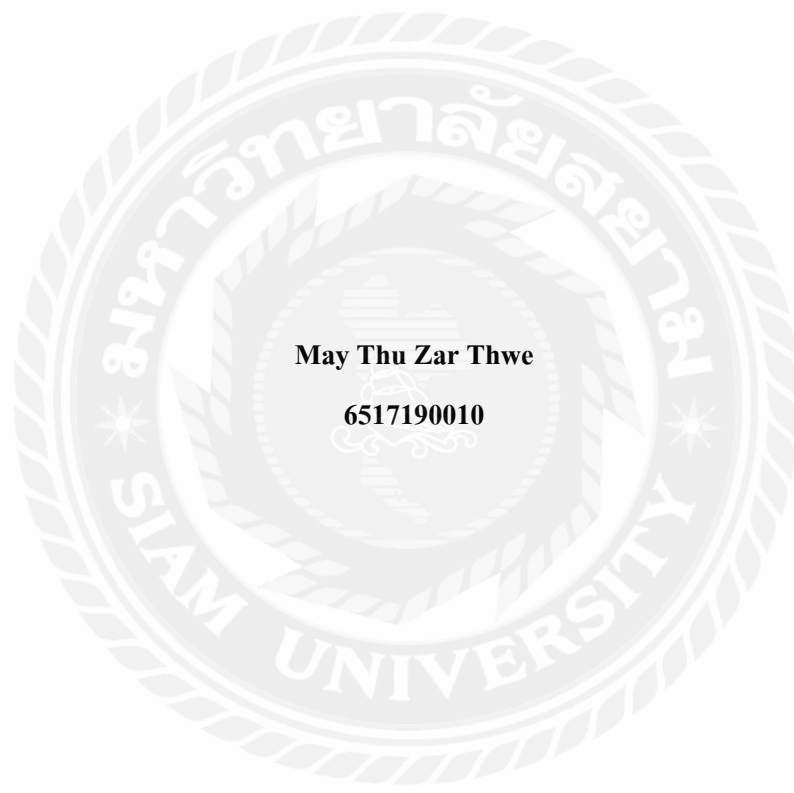




**Korean Wave Cluster Toward Cultural Influence and Economy in Thailand**



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### Abstract

The "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu" refers to the global phenomenon of Korean culture's immense popularity, including K-pop music, Korean dramas, movies, fashion, beauty, and food. With the influence of the Korean Wave, Thailand has become a significant market with a distinct cultural presence, especially among the young population. Although Hallyu is successful in many countries including Thailand, the Thai community still faces some challenges and problems such as localization, competition for local content, intellectual property rights, language barriers, fan base maintenance and development, and cultural exchange management. The primary objectives of this study were to analyze the Korean Wave cluster in Thailand, examining its influence on culture, economy, and consumer behavior. Additionally, the study aimed to identify and evaluate potential business opportunities while assessing the competitive landscape of the Hallyu phenomenon in Thailand. Furthermore, it sought to devise a strategic plan to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Korean Wave in Thailand, taking into account its multifaceted impact on culture, economy, and consumer behavior. The comprehensive cultural effects and consumer responses linked with the Korean Wave holds significance for businesses, policymakers, and interested parties aiming to leverage its potential. This research adopted the documentary research methodology for thorough data collection and applied Porter's Diamond Analysis to examine the global success of the Korean Wave. The findings include opportunities in tourism and SME support, reinforcing the importance of factors identified in the Diamond Analysis for the Korean Wave's global success. The study recommends a comprehensive approach for Thailand's Hallyu cluster, emphasizing cultural

awareness, market analysis, and sustainability. It underscores the necessity for enhanced global recognition in related fields.

**Keywords:** Korean Wave Cluster, Cultural Influence, Diamond Analysis.

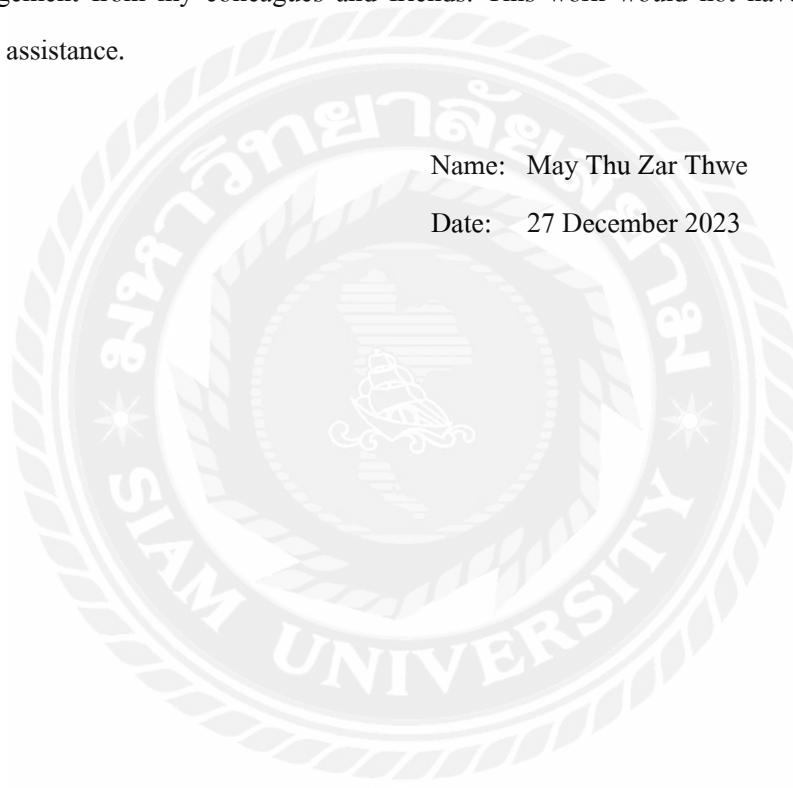


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Name: May Thu Zar Thwe

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## CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	II
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	IV
<b>CONTENTS</b> .....	V
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	VIII
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	IX
 <b>CHAPTER</b>	
1. Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background of the study .....	1
1.2 Problem of the study .....	2
1.3 Objectives of the Study .....	2
1.4 Significance of the Study .....	3
1.5 Scope of the Study .....	3
2. Literature Review .....	4
2.1 Literature Review .....	4
2.2 Industry Overview .....	4
2.2.1 Korean Drama (K-Drama) and Korean Series (K-Series) .....	5
2.2.2 K-Pop or K-Music .....	5
2.2.3 K-Beauty .....	5
2.2.4 K-Style or K-Fashion .....	5
2.2.5 K-Food .....	6
2.3 Firm Strategy and Rivalry .....	6
2.3.1 Entertainment .....	6
2.3.2 Cosmetics .....	7
2.3.3 Food .....	8

2.4 Input Conditions .....	9
2.4.1 Cultural Exchange .....	9
2.4.2 Technology Advantages .....	9
2.4.3 Globalization and Media Influence .....	9
2.5 Demand Conditions .....	10
2.5.1 Entertainment .....	10
2.5.2 Cosmetics .....	11
2.5.3 Food .....	11
2.6 Related Supply Industries .....	12
2.6.1 Tourism .....	12
2.6.2 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) .....	12
2.6.3 E-commerce .....	13
2.7 Chance .....	13
2.7.1 Cultural Influence all over the world .....	13
2.8 Government .....	14
2.8.1 Korean Government .....	14
2.8.2 Thai Government .....	15
2.9 Other Related Factors .....	15
2.9.1 Korean Language .....	15
2.9.2 Economy .....	16
3. Methodology .....	17
3.1 Data Collection .....	17
3.2 Sources Utilized .....	18
3.3 Conceptual Framework .....	18
3.4 Data Analysis .....	19
3.5 Limitations .....	19

4. Findings .....	21
4.1 Firm Strategy and Rivalry .....	21
4.2 Demand Conditions .....	22
4.3 Related Supply Industries .....	23
4.4 Input Conditions .....	24
4.5 Chance .....	24
4.6 Government .....	25
5. Conclusion and Recommendation .....	27
5.1 Conclusion .....	27
5.2 Recommendation .....	28
5.3 Discussion and Implications .....	29
5.3.1 Research Contribution .....	29
5.3.2 Contribution to Thai Economy .....	29
5.3.3 Contribution to Various Industries .....	30
5.4 Future Research Guideline .....	31
REFERENCES .....	33



**LIST OF TABLES****Table**

Table 1: Popular K-Pop Twitter Accounts in Thailand (Chansanam et al., 2021) .....10

Table 2: Documentary Research Analysis of the Korean Wave Cluster .....19



**LIST OF FIGURES**

**Figure**

Figure 1: Diamond Analysis of Korean Wave Cluster in Thailand .....18



## CHAPTER 1

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

The "Korean Wave" or "Hallyu" refers to the global phenomenon of Korean culture's immense popularity, including Korean music, Korean dramas and movies, fashion, beauty, and more (Tanik & Nuananong, 2019). With a significant following across Asia and expanding influence worldwide, Hallyu has become a powerful force, contributing to Korea's soft power, international tourism, trade, and cultural exchange (Son & Kijboonchoo, 2016). Hallyu's success can be attributed to effective marketing strategies, supportive cultural policies, and digital technology. Initially concentrated in East Asia, Hallyu's reach has now transcended boundaries, captivating global audiences, and sparking interest in learning the Korean language and exploring Korean society (Korean.net, 2020).

In 2001, China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan were the largest consumers of Hallyu, and in the same year, exports of Korean popular culture to these countries accounted for (35.3%), followed by Japan (29.4%), Europe (8.9%), and North America (5.6%), based on exports of television programs and movies. However, in 2018, the influence of Hallyu is still the largest in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan (36.8%), while Japan holds the second largest share (19.7%). North America is the third largest importer of Korean pop culture (15.9%), followed by Europe (7.3%). Hallyu's market share in North America and Europe increased from (14.5%) in 2001 to 23.2% in 2018. Hallyu's imminent expansion to the West positions it as a cultural powerhouse. Efforts to promote Korean products, especially among Generation Z, significantly impact product differentiation compared to other cultural waves like J Wave. This strategic shift underscores Hallyu's dynamic role in shaping global cultural preferences, particularly in the Western hemisphere. (Dal, 2021).

The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, has not only captivated audiences in the West more over has also led to significant trade and business growth between Korea and Thailand (Korea Agro-Fisheries & Food Trade Corporation, 2021). Thailand has the largest share of the Hallyu fan base in Southeast Asia, as evidenced by the significant growth in community membership. From 2021 to 2022, the number of community members increased by about 2 million to a total of 17 million in 112 communities, representing a growth rate of (13.8%). In addition, Korea proved to be the country

with the greatest soft power influence in Thailand, especially in the areas of culture, fashion/lifestyle, and drama/film (The Korean Foundation, 2023).

## **1.2 Problem of the Study**

Hallyu, like K-pop and K-drama, is extremely popular globally, including in Thailand. However, there are challenges in Thailand due to cultural differences, language barriers, and varied tastes. To connect with Thai audiences, good translation, whether dubbing, subtitling, or voice-over, is crucial. While K-pop and K-dramas spark interest in learning Korean, language remains a hurdle. Offering localized language support can boost Hallyu's influence in Thailand and foster stronger connections (Dsouza, 2022). The popularity of K-pop and K-dramas has sparked interest in learning Korean, but language barriers still exist. Thai fans rely on translations and subtitles, which hinders direct engagement. Addressing this gap through localized language support can increase Hallyu's influence in Thailand, fostering deeper connections and sustainable growth (Martinroll, 2021).

Building a strong and loyal fan base is crucial for the Thai K-Pop cluster's long-term success. Organizing interactive events and expanding the fan base to reach new audiences drives industry growth. Balancing admiration and assimilation of Korean culture while maintaining mutual respect and benefits in the exchange of cultural elements is essential (Khedum-Burgoine et al., 2023). The Thai entertainment industry also produces a large amount of content, including music, TV dramas, and movies, and Hallyu competes with local content in Thailand, which has a high market share. Successful Korean content must stand out and offer unique value to appeal to Thai audiences who may prefer local entertainment (Lee, 2011).

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to analyze the reasons behind the Korean Wave in Thailand. Therefore, the objectives of this study are as follows:

- 1) To analyze how Korean popular culture transcends national boundaries and its reception and influence in societies in Thailand
- 2) To identify and evaluate potential business opportunities and level of competitors for Hallyu in Thailand
- 3) To provide strategy for the sustainability of the Korean Wave in Thailand

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research lies in its relevance to companies seeking to capitalize on the opportunities presented by the Korean Wave. By examining the reception and influence of Korean popular culture in Thailand, this study provides valuable insights into consumer preferences, consumer behavior, and social influences of the Korean Wave in Thailand. These insights are critical for companies seeking to develop effective marketing strategies, identify potential market segments, and tailor their products or services to the interests and demands of the target audience. In addition, researchers and individuals interested in cultural exchange can gain a deeper understanding of the influence of the Korean Wave and its role in promoting cross-cultural interactions and appreciation. This knowledge can contribute to academic discourse, cultural understanding, and the promotion of international cultural exchange.

### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study explores the development and impact of Thailand's Hallyu cluster, focusing on its social, economic, and cultural influence across sectors like entertainment, tourism, retail, and language education. Utilizing secondary sources, including books, articles, and websites, we acknowledge a 4-month data collection period from May to August 2023. Additionally, this study applies Porter's Diamond Model to assess the competitive advantage of Thailand's Hallyu cluster. This framework delves into factors such as factor conditions, demand conditions, related industries, corporate strategy, structure, and competitive relationships. By integrating the model, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of cluster dynamics and positioning in the Thai market.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 Literature Review

This literature overview highlights the significance and commercial relevance of the Hallyu ensemble in Thailand. The Korean Wave's success in Thailand has opened various business opportunities for both nearby and worldwide agencies. Hallyu in Thailand has created many possibilities for agencies to capitalize on Korean cultural products' recognition and attraction. Government help and regulations have played a key role in promoting this cluster, and challenges and competitors require strategic consideration for persistent growth. In addition, studies in this region can provide valuable insight and direction for companies aiming to take advantage of Thailand's Hallyu and tap into its considerable increase and profitability ability.

### 2.2 Industry Overview

The Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu, is the global popularity of South Korea's cultural economy through the export of pop culture, entertainment, television series, movies, and music. South Korea aims to become the world's leading exporter of popular culture and stand out from all other countries. Korean Wave (Hallyu) first gained popularity in China and Japan, but its influence has since spread to Southeast Asia and numerous countries around the world (National Atlas, 2019). The Korean Wave, fueled by a combination of government support, the rise of streaming platforms and social media, and the cultural appeal of Korean products, has become a powerful force challenging the dominance of American pop culture (Biondi, 2022).

In the 2000s, the Korean Wave surged into Thailand with dramas and music, only to be later rivaled by Taiwan and Japan's cultural exports. The wave started in 2001 with "Autumn in My Heart" captivating Thai youth, followed by hits like "Rain" and "Ragnarok." Localized Korean dramas like *Dae Jang Geum* aired on Thai networks, particularly Channel 3 (Shoowong, 2023). Korean pop culture, driven by K-dramas and K-pop music, boosted demand for Korean products in Thailand, enhancing economic bonds and driving Korean exports. By 2020, Thailand had welcomed investments from 400 South Korean firms and trade between the nations reached around \$15 billion or 470 billion baht (Mala, 2020).

Thailand's exports to South Korea in 2021 reached a total of \$6.28 billion, with key products including Integrated Circuits, Refined Petroleum, and Rubber Tires. On the other hand, South Korea's exports to Thailand amounted to \$8.7 billion, with major products being Integrated Circuits, Coated Flat-Rolled Iron, and Cold-Rolled Iron. Over the past 26 years, South Korea's exports to Thailand have consistently grown at an average annual rate of 4.75%, starting from \$2.6 billion in 1995 and reaching \$8.7 billion in 2021 (OEC, n.d).

### **2.2.1 Korean Drama (K-Drama) and Korean Series (K-Series)**

K-drama, short for Korean drama, encompasses a range of scripted TV shows produced in Korea and primarily broadcast on Korean television. However, they are also widely accessible through online platforms. While the term "drama" is included in the name, K-dramas span various genres, including romance, comedy, action, and science fiction, with romantic dramas being particularly popular. The main reason for the high demand for Korean dramas is that the story is interesting and can make the audience feel the emotions and Korean culture inherent in the drama (Nordaas, 2019).

### **2.2.2 K-Pop or K-Music**

K-pop has become a worldwide sensation with its captivating melodies, synchronized performances, and attractive artists (Romano, 2018). The popularity of the genre is reflected in the dominance of Korean trends on YouTube, attracting billions of views and capturing audiences in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam. K-pop represents a seismic shift in global pop music culture. Groups like BTS have sold out stadiums worldwide and garnered over 100 billion views on YouTube (Samsung, n.d).

### **2.2.3 K-Beauty**

South Korean beauty standards, cosmetic products, and aesthetics are known as K-beauty. There are a variety of skincare products that improve the appearance and health of the skin. The importance of a radiant, glowing complexion is emphasized (Kim, 2022). The recognition of Korean beauty in Thailand by consumers exposed to South Korean cultural content material multiplied to 52.9 percent in 2022, a large increase from last year's 40.6 percent (Jobst, 2023).

### **2.2.4 K-Style or K-Fashion**

Korean Style, or K-style, represents a bold and unique attitude embraced by Korean creative, defying societal norms, and creating something original. It exudes an energy of passion

and fearlessness, constantly blending and remixing influences from diverse cultures (Yun, 2022). This process gives birth to a new authenticity, reflecting the spirit of K-style. Strongly linked to the rise of contemporary K-drama and K-pop, K-style combines elements of ancient Korean traditions with modern, gender-fluid designs in the realm of fashion (Healy, 2022).

### **2.2.5 K-Food**

Korean Food, known as K-food, is a traditional cuisine consisting of rice, vegetables, meat, and an array of side dishes, with kimchi being a staple. The popularity of Korean food has been growing globally, with dishes like bulgogi and bibimbap becoming well-known. The influence of Korean media, such as K-pop and dramas, has played a role in expanding the presence of K-food worldwide. The unique flavors, textures, and presentation of Korean cuisine, along with its fusion elements, have captivated a generation exposed to Korean entertainment, creating cultural and commercial opportunities in a globalized world (Kang, 2021).

## **2.3 Firm Strategy and Rivalry**

Korean companies have used the popularity of Korean shows, music, movies, cosmetics, and food to become famous in Thailand. They worked with Thai companies and made changes to their content to make Thai people interested. This made Korean things very popular in Thailand and influenced Thai culture a lot (Wattanasukchai, 2021). The Korean Wave, commonly known as Hallyu, is extremely popular in Thailand. However, it faces competition from other forms of entertainment. Thai customers enjoy Korean music, dramas, and fashion, but they have other options as well (90 Days Korean, 2022).

### **2.3.1 Entertainment**

Korean companies collaborate with Thai companies to make their content more popular by constantly coming up with new and captivating ideas and adapting their shows and advertising methods to suit Thai audiences. They even work with famous Thai people and companies to be even more popular (Dal et al., 2017). Korean companies do a lot to promote their TV shows, music, and movies in Thailand. They work together with Thai businesses and use different ways to advertise. The music from Korea called K-pop has a big influence on Thai music, especially among young people. Thai artists sometimes work with Korean performers, like a popular boyband called K-optic (Mahavongtrakul, 2018).



The Korean Wave in Thailand has competition from other cultural influences like Japanese and Chinese entertainment industries and local Thai content. Businesses in the Korean Wave cluster need to understand this competitive landscape to stay competitive and grow. But they must compete with shows and movies from Thailand and other countries like Hollywood and Japan to get people's attention. Some Thai companies have lost money because Korean products are more popular than Thai products. Many Thai teenagers spend a lot of money buying things like concert tickets, posters from Korean bands, and downloading music, movies, and drama series from social media (Suvittawat, 2021).

In the past three years, before Corvid 19 and the strong influence of Korean culture, the industry's revenue recorded a significant annual profit growth of 67%. Their revenues also grew by 9.5% per year (Simply Wall Street Pty Ltd., 2023). However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects and the rising influence of the Korean Wave in Thailand over the past three years, the Thai entertainment sector has experienced a significant decline of 20.2%. A 10% decrease in revenue over The Major Cineplex Group, a significant player in the industry, had a major effect on overall industry revenue (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020).

### **2.3.2 Cosmetics**

The popularity of Korean cosmetics in Thailand has grown significantly thanks to the influence of the Korean Wave. LANEIGE, a brand that advertises in Korean dramas, currently operates 34 stores in Thailand (LANEIGE Thailand, 2023). Sulwhasoo, a high-end Korean cosmetic brand, has established 30 stores in the country (Sulwhasoo, 2023). ETUDE, a brand that has been popular among young people since the early days of the Korean Wave, has 31 stores in Thailand (Etude, 2023). Innisfree, renowned for its green tea product line, has 13 stores in Thailand and continues to be favored by Thai consumers (Innisfree, 2023).

The Korean cosmetic sector in Thailand competes with both local Thai cosmetic brands and other international cosmetic brands with a strong market presence. Furthermore, Thai customers have access to a diverse choice of beauty and skincare products, including both traditional Thai and Western brands (Nakpathom et al., 2022). Thailand has become a significant player in the global beauty industry, thanks to its diverse range of beauty brands. Thai leading companies such as Mistine, Srichand, Snail White, Oriental Princess, and Beauty Cottage represent the Thai cosmetics market's dynamism and inclusivity. With their distinct strengths and focuses, these brands contribute

to the growing global appeal of Thai beauty goods. These brands, both international and local, have transformed the beauty landscape in Thailand (Gobeauty, 2023)

### **2.3.3 Food**

Korean dramas in Thailand sparked interest in Korean cuisine, leading to a surge in demand for dishes like Korean roasted pork, BBQ, kimchi, bibimbap, dumplings, instant noodles (ramyun), and dessert-like Bingsu, resulting in the rapid growth of Korean food businesses in the country (Chen, 2020). The sales of Korean food in Thailand increased by 20-30% between 2004 and 2005, and by 2009, there were about 80 Korean food stores in Bangkok. Many of these stores were established after the Korean Wave, with a significant concentration in the Korean Town area along Sukhumvit Road (Thanabordeekij et al., 2022).

The Korean Wave confronted severe hurdles in dominating Thailand's food sector as it made its way into the country. The numerous influences from India, Portugal, and China imparted richness and originality to Thailand's culinary environment which posed a substantial threat to the success of the Korean Wave (Feast Thailand, 2022).

Chinese culture has significantly impacted Thailand, with around 9 million Thais, constituting 14% of the population, having Chinese descent. This cultural fusion is vividly seen in the culinary landscape. Popular Chinese-influenced dishes, such as dim sum, Pad See Ew, and wonton noodle soup, have become staples. Street food vendors offer a delightful mix of Chinese and Thai snacks, and Chinatowns, like Yaowarat in Bangkok, are culinary hotspots. Chinese festivals, notably the Chinese New Year, bring lively celebrations with special dishes. The integration of Chinese culinary techniques, ingredients, and tea culture has enriched Thai cuisine, resulting in a diverse and flavorful food experience. (Saaprestaurant, 2022).

As for the rivalry, Thai cuisine also has Indian influences, as Indian culinary traditions have contributed to Thailand's unique flavors and recipes. Thailand has around 21,125 Sikhs, Brahmans, and Hindus, according to data from the Department of Religious Affairs. On average, there are around 2,977,434 Muslims in the country (Sudhit, 2020). Portuguese influence can also be seen in various parts of Thai culture, such as architecture and particular culinary components (Siam Rat Blog, 2019). For example, one of Thai famous egg-based desserts, such as Foi Thong, is inspired by Portuguese specialties such as Fios de ovos (Martins, 2020).

## **2.4 Input Conditions**

Korean culture has had a significant impact on Thai society through the "Korean Wave." The media's influence and globalization have helped popularize Korean entertainment in Thailand, creating a cultural exchange and fostering collaboration between the two countries.

### **2.4.1 Cultural Exchange**

In terms of culture, society, and investment, Korea is very important to Thailand. The two nations have a long-standing relationship, which deepened during the Korean War. Through investors, tourists, and immigrants since the 1980s, Korean culture has had an impact on Thai society (Tangsathaporn, 2023). Korean products, TV shows, and music are popular. Amazingly, Korean products are now offered for sale in nations affected by the Korean Wave (Frater, 2022). Teenagers and people of all ages in Thailand adore Korean culture, sometimes known as the "Korean Wave." This culture is being actively promoted by the Korean government, and both Korea and Thailand collaborate in the areas of trade, business, and education (Saaenphithak, 2013).

### **2.4.2 Technology Advantages**

Korean Wave material has made use of social media platforms as promotional strategies as they have grown to be a significant communication tool. Modern media and technology, including the internet and social networking sites, have made the Korean Wave possible (Parc & Moon, 2013). At the beginning of 2023, Thailand had 61.21 million internet users or 85.3 percent of the country. This broad use of social media and the internet has been crucial to the growth of the Korean Wave in Thailand (Kemp, 2023).

### **2.4.3 Globalization and Media Influence**

The media, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, contributed to the popularity of Korean music and performers in Thailand. Social media was used by fans to express their passion for K-pop and Korean culture (Chansanam et al., 2021). Thai citizens now have easy access to Korean entertainment via the internet and subtitles. The Korean Wave introduced Korean culture to Thailand, opening doors for collaboration and sharing. It demonstrates how the media and globalization can popularize cultures and unite people (Karalak, 2014).

## 2.5 Demand Conditions

K-pop has become very popular among Thai youth, influencing their styles and preferences. They have started to adopt Korean fashion, products, hairstyles, and even food choices. This shows how K-pop has had a significant impact on Thai youth culture (Howard & Great Lekakul, 2018).

### 2.5.1 Entertainment

In 2021, there were a tremendous number of Tweets about K-pop worldwide, with a record-breaking 7.8 billion Tweets. This was a significant increase of 16% compared to the previous year. The conversations on #KpopTwitter became even more diverse and lively, showcasing the power and popularity of K-pop (Band Wagon, 2022). In Asia, Thailand has one of the highest rates of Twitter usage, and its user base has grown significantly in recent years. During protests, hashtags of the events gained popularity swiftly in Thailand and occasionally worldwide. Tens of thousands of followers are actively engaged by fan organizations in Thailand with profiles featuring Korean celebrities that combine celebrity news with political updates (Tun-atiruj, 2020).

	Twitter accounts	Followers (K)
1	<a href="https://twitter.com/BTS_Thailand">https://twitter.com/BTS_Thailand</a>	372.3
2	<a href="https://twitter.com/REDVELVET_TH">https://twitter.com/REDVELVET_TH</a>	86.5
3	<a href="https://twitter.com/NCTZen_TH">https://twitter.com/NCTZen_TH</a>	73
4	<a href="https://twitter.com/MonstaXth_">https://twitter.com/MonstaXth_</a>	62.5
5	<a href="https://twitter.com/IZONE_TH">https://twitter.com/IZONE_TH</a>	35
6	<a href="https://twitter.com/ExoExothailand">https://twitter.com/ExoExothailand</a>	34.8
7	<a href="https://twitter.com/MAMAMOO_TH">https://twitter.com/MAMAMOO_TH</a>	21.4
8	<a href="https://twitter.com/AB6IX_THAILAND">https://twitter.com/AB6IX_THAILAND</a>	20.9
9	<a href="https://twitter.com/SNWThai">https://twitter.com/SNWThai</a>	17.5
10	<a href="https://twitter.com/WOODZ_THAILAND">https://twitter.com/WOODZ_THAILAND</a>	9.3

**Table 1: Popular K-Pop Twitter Accounts in Thailand (Chansanam et al., 2021)**

In 2022, the Thai Entertainment market is expected to generate a total revenue of US\$101.50 million. This market encompasses various apps that provide a diverse range of entertainment and leisure experiences to consumers (Statista, 2022). Due to the pandemic, there has been a big increase in the popularity of K-pop entertainment in Thailand. In Thailand, there were

over 100 K-pop events before the epidemic, and there were only about 80 events in 2022. The estimated value of concerts in Thailand is 5–6 billion baht this year, and the business is anticipated to expand by 10-15% the next year. (Shoowong, 2023)

### **2.5.2 Cosmetics**

In 2021, the K-beauty products market generated approximately USD 8.30 billion in worldwide revenue. Experts predict that by 2030, the market will expand to reach USD 18.32 billion, growing at a steady rate of 9.2% annually between 2022 and 2030 (Straits Research, n.d.). Due to the increasing use of the Internet and social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and other streaming and online sales platforms, the wave first started in Southeast and South Asia and later spread worldwide (Mahi, 2022). Many different companies in Thailand sell different types of cosmetics to suit the preferences of different customers. Face cosmetics, personal care goods, and scents are examples of cosmetic products (Statista Research Department, 2023).

Due to rising living standards and an increase in Thai women's fashion consciousness, which has resulted in a greater demand for skincare products, women had the majority share of the market for skin care products in Thailand in 2019 (Himanshu & Rosha, 2020). The cosmetics and personal care goods market in Thailand is growing and becoming more significant in these years. Revenues in the industry are projected to reach \$4.2 billion in 2021 and rise by 5.5 percent annually through 2025. The top five product categories are oral and dental care (12%), soaps and hygiene (14%), skincare (42%), hair products (15%), and makeup (12%) (International Trade Administration, 2021). The brand reputation, attractive packaging, high product quality, and reasonable prices of Korean cosmetics significantly influence female consumers' purchase decisions (Valerie, 2022).

### **2.5.3 Food**

Korean dramas have helped to popularize Korean food in Thailand, resulting in the expansion of Korean food enterprises in the nation. Thai people are especially fond of Korean roasted pork, BBQ, kimchi, bibimbap, dumplings, quick noodles (ramyun), and bingsu sweets. Thai people are enjoying the delicious and spicy flavors of Korean cuisine, which is why the demand for Korean food is growing (Felicia, 2023). In 2019, approximately 56% of respondents in Thailand considered Korean food to be very popular in the country (Jobst, 2021). The market value of Korean

food in Thailand was around 2 billion baht in 2020, with a steady growth of 4-5% per year (Jitpleecheep, 2022).

## **2.6 Related Supply Industries**

The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, has launched a cultural phenomenon in Thailand, grabbing Thai consumers' hearts and minds. This wave includes a wide range of businesses that have been heavily inspired by Korean culture, entertainment, and products. From this point of view, will explore the relevant industries in Thailand that have been greatly affected by the Korean Wave (Mary, 2016).

### **2.6.1 Tourism**

The Korean Wave has increased tourism in Thailand, with many admirers visiting the nation to experience Korean culture firsthand. This has benefitted several allied businesses, including hospitality, travel, and retail (Thanabordeekij et al., 2022). Thailand and South Korea have been important tourism partners, with a significant number of visitors from both countries. In 2019, 1.89 million South Koreans visited Thailand, making South Korea the 4th largest tourism market for Thailand. Similarly, more than 570,000 Thais visited South Korea in 2019, highlighting the mutual popularity between the two nations before the COVID-19 pandemic impacted global tourism (The Nation, 2023).

Thailand is a special place where people can go to get different types of medical treatments and surgeries. Many people from Australia, about 15,000 every year, choose to go there for affordable plastic surgery (OFX, 2019). With the rise of Hallyu (Korean Wave), Korea may consider establishing its cosmetic surgery industry in Thailand. Understanding the competition and how well-known Thailand is as a healthcare destination are essential before entering the Thai medical tourism market. Businesses may then decide with knowledge and ensure their success in this cutthroat industry. In 2013, Thailand welcomed 2.5 million medical tourists out of 26.5 million visitors, generating a significant revenue of \$4.31 billion (Ryan, 2014).

### **2.6.2 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**

For Thai entrepreneurs, the Korean Wave, also known as Hallyu, has brought challenges and opportunities. Some Thai entrepreneurs have seen the wave as an opportunity and have the skills to detect and recognize such chances (Butsaban, 2020). Thailand had around 3.13 million SMEs in

2020, accounting for 99.6% of all firms. This included 2,673,922 micro businesses (85.3%), 415,673 small businesses (13.3%), and 44,847 medium businesses (1.4%). SMEs are vital to the country's economy and commercial landscape (OECD, 2022).

### **2.6.3 E-commerce**

Thai e-commerce and retail have reaped significant gains from the Korean Wave. Thai customers have grown increasingly fond of all things Korean as Korean culture, entertainment, and goods become more and more well-known (Lee & Yu, 2018). In Thailand, the e-commerce industry is evolving, and leading online marketplaces are now offering unique features to attract customers instead of just competing on prices (Leesa, 2023). Thailand is the 18th largest e-commerce market with a predicted revenue of US\$18,848.9 million by 2023, and its online share in the retail market is 11.9% (ECDB, 2023)

## **2.7 Chance**

Thai culture, entertainment, and consumer choices have all been impacted by the Korean Wave, often known as Hallyu, which has become remarkably popular in Thailand.

### **2.7.1 Cultural Influence all over the world**

According to Thais, Korea has had the greatest influence on their culture. Over the years, this cultural phenomenon has gradually increased in popularity in Thailand, attracting Thai audiences with its variety of entertainment options, current fashions, and unique products. Thai consumers are increasingly drawn to Korean dramas, music, and celebrities, which has increased demand for Korean-related materials and goods (EduZaurus, n.d.).

Asian consumers have recently seen a rise in the popularity of the Korean Wave, which has peaked. However, after effectively entering the Asian industry, its reach outside of Asia has revealed chances for the Korean Wave to extend to European countries (Hyejung & Soobum, 2015). According to a soft power survey conducted by Mahidol University's College of Management in Thailand, Korea was found to have the most significant cultural impact on Thailand with a score of 3.92 out of five, followed closely by China (3.90), Japan (3.71), the U.S. (3.64), and the U.K. (3.26) (Akhmetzianova, 2022).

Not only has it captured the hearts of Asian and European media consumers, but it has also gained popularity in countries like Israel, Iran, Morocco, and Egypt, making them significant

consumers of Korean culture, especially Korean dramas. The Korean government actively promotes Korean cultural exports to the Middle East by offering Arabic-subtitled versions of popular Korean dramas, further enhancing its influence in the region (Xha, 2014). In 2019, nearly a third of Netflix's subscriber base came from the Middle East and Africa. In particular, the United Arab Emirates registered more than 300,000 subscribers in the first quarter of 2020. Although this number may not be considered large globally, Netflix's revenue forecast from the Korean Wave in the UAE has grown significantly, increasing from less than \$1 million in 2017 to an impressive \$6.03 million in 2020. Hallyu is contributing to the expansion of Korean soft power in the Middle East, particularly in the UAE (Saber, 2020).

## **2.8 Government**

The government is very important in supporting the Korean Wave in Thailand. It has policies and incentives to promote cultural exchanges and cooperation between Korea and Thailand. These efforts help attract investment and boost the economy through the Korean Wave. The government also organizes cultural festivals, exchange programs, and joint productions to make the Korean Wave in Thailand even stronger.

### **2.8.1 Korean Government**

The Korean government and the entertainment sector played an important role in spreading the Korean Wave. While the government used to control the industry through strict censorship, since the introduction of democracy it has shifted to a supporting and encouraging role (Wongsomboon, 2020). This change has been made possible by a cooperative approach in which the government pursues active policies and is supported by relevant ministries and the private sector. In addition, consumers actively participate in the cultural phenomenon, which has led to Korea's rise as a cultural powerhouse on the world stage (Butsaban, 2023). The Korean Wave's success can be found in part due to the Korean government's major support. They are an important supporter of a USD 1 billion investment fund aimed at cultivating and promoting popular culture. The government contributes 20-30% of total investment, with the remainder raised by investment banks and private corporations (ROK Center, 2019).



### **2.8.2 Thai Government**

The government holds a clear vision for the nation's future and seeks to replicate the positive impact of the Korean Wave in Thailand. The Thai government, represented by the Ministry of Culture, and Ministry of Sport, and Tourism has invested significant funds to improve the well-being of Thai citizens and foster their aspirations for success. The Royal Government of Thailand and the Thailand Convention & Show Bureau (TCEB) have created a comprehensive package of remedies to assist show organizers and stakeholders affected by the COVID-19 effect. This package contains an agreed budget of more than USD 3.03 billion to assist businesses in Thailand that have been temporarily halted owing to COVID-19. The program intends to give financial assistance and assistance in overcoming the problems created by the pandemic in the exhibition industry (Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau, n.d.).

## **2.9 Other Related Factors**

### **2.9.1 Korean Language**

Korean is the 14th most spoken language in the world. More than 77 million people speak it as their mother tongue. However global interest in the Korean language is spreading much faster than it seems likely given the physical size of South Korea (Ray, 2021). The interest of Thai students in learning Korean in high schools was also influenced by the appeal of South Korean dramas and K-pop acts, as well as the marketing efforts of educational organizations in both nations (Bangkok Post, 2022).

Currently, there are more than 40 universities in Thailand that teach Korean. In Thailand, 133 secondary schools under the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) offer Korean as a foreign language. More than 40,000 high school students study Korean in Thailand, which represents a quarter of the international students studying Korea worldwide (Larprunrueng, 2022).

Thai enthusiasm for the Korean language has steadily grown over time. Recently, on September 2, 2019, an annual Korean speaking competition for high school and university students was held in the Thai capital, jointly organized by the Ministry of Education of Thailand and Korea. This event highlights the growing popularity and importance of the Korean language in the Thai educational world (Hyelin and Hana, 2019).

### **2.9.2 Economy**

South Korea's strong economic relations with Thailand have supported the entry of Korean brands and items into the Thai market. Korean firms have increased their presence in Thailand, selling a wide range of items ranging from cosmetics and fashion to electronics and home goods. Thai customers' preference for Korean products has resulted in important sales and market share increases for Korean enterprises operating in Thailand (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2009).



## CHAPTER 3

### 3. Methodology

The research methodology implemented in this documentary research carried out between May and August 2023, is to thoroughly examine and explore the influence of Korean pop culture, specifically the Korean Wave (Hallyu), on Thailand. While this chapter provides a synopsis of the research design, sources, and theoretical framework, the ensuing commentary seeks to expound upon the process of data collection, the selected sources, and the fundamental rationale guiding the chosen methodology.

#### 3.1 Data Collection

The primary aim of this research is to gather comprehensive data reflecting the diverse impacts of the Korean Wave on Thailand. We collected data carefully from various sources, including well-established academic databases such as Google, EBSCO, and Academia.edu. We intentionally chose these sources to include scholarly articles, academic papers, and reputable online platforms that provide a thorough understanding of the topic.

The research focused on specific keywords related to the Korean Wave, covering its cultural influence, economic impact in Thailand, and the broader context of documentary research related to this phenomenon. Using these keywords helped us collect targeted data, enabling a detailed exploration of the factors shaping the Korean Wave's presence in Thailand.

Furthermore, our data collection spanned from 2009 to 2023 deliberately. This decision was made to include historical context and examine how the Korean Wave has evolved over time. Including data up to the current year ensures that our analysis is relevant and provides a dynamic perspective on the ongoing influence of the Korean Wave in Thailand.

## **3.2 Sources Utilized**

### **Google**

Google, renowned as an expansive search engine, serves as a pivotal resource, encompassing a diverse array of online content. The utilization of Google within this research provides access to a vast repository of information, including but not limited to news articles, blogs, and various online publications (Obernovic, 2022). The comprehensive nature of Google's search functionality ensures a thorough exploration of both mainstream and niche perspectives related to the Korean Wave and its impact on Thailand.

### **EBSCO**

EBSCO, identified as a premier academic database, offers an extensive collection of scholarly articles and academic journals. The deliberate inclusion of EBSCO in our data sources is intended to fortify the research with rigorous academic insights and peer-reviewed content (Brynko, 2013). By tapping into this esteemed database, we ensure that our analysis is grounded in credible and authoritative academic perspectives, enhancing the overall scholarly quality of the research.

### **Academia.edu**

Academia.edu, serving as a collaborative platform for researchers and academics, provides a unique space for sharing scholarly work. The inclusion of content from Academia.edu in our data sources is instrumental in obtaining valuable perspectives from experts in the field. This enriches our research with diverse insights and contributes to its overall academic rigor. Accessing this platform allows us to engage with a community of scholars actively contributing to the discourse on the Korean Wave's impact on Thailand (Academia.edu, n.d.).

## **3.3 Conceptual Framework**

The research is underpinned by the Diamond Analysis framework, a theoretical construct derived from Michael Porter's renowned Diamond Model. This framework serves as a sophisticated lens through which the intricate interplay of economic and cultural factors shaping the Korean Wave in Thailand is comprehensively interpreted. Leveraging this theoretical framework is paramount in dissecting the nuanced dynamics, including but not limited to cultural cooperation, tourism growth, and the support extended to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The Diamond Analysis framework offers a meticulously structured approach, providing a systematic understanding of how these identified factors collectively contribute to the overall success and sustainability of the Korean Wave in Thailand. By integrating this theoretical framework into our research, we aspire to furnish a thorough and systematic analysis of the complex economic and cultural dynamics governing the influence and trajectory of the Korean Wave within the Thai context. This approach ensures a comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted dimensions inherent in the phenomenon under investigation. (Vlados, 2019)

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The collected data undergoes a meticulous analysis process, extracting patterns, trends, and insights. Employing documentary research methods ensures a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted impact of the Korean Wave. This approach allows us to delve into the depth of historical and contextual information. The use of data visualization tools and statistical analysis further enhances our ability to present a comprehensive overview of the findings. These visual aids, such as charts and graphs, simplify complex information for easy comprehension. Through this thorough analytical process, we aim to provide a nuanced and well-rounded examination of the Korean Wave's impact, enriching our research with depth and clarity.

### **3.5 Limitations**

While the methodology employed in our study has been meticulously crafted to enhance resilience, it is imperative to acknowledge and delineate its inherent limitations. The availability of data is contingent upon access to databases and online resources, thereby introducing potential challenges and obstacles. Moreover, the dynamic nature of global cultural and environmental processes poses a formidable challenge, rendering it arduous to comprehensively encapsulate the temporal intricacies inherent in our investigation.

In navigating these constraints, we conscientiously acknowledge the intricacies associated with studying the evolving interplay between cultural factors and the dynamic global environment. We remain steadfast in our commitment to delivering insightful and judicious analyses, cognizant of the constraints imposed by available data parameters.

In summation, the methodological approach employed for this documentary research is judiciously designed to comprehensively investigate the impact of the Korean Wave on Thailand. The meticulous curation of sources, strategic selection of keywords, and integration of a theoretical framework collectively contribute to a nuanced and methodologically rigorous examination of the subject. The ongoing research endeavors uphold an unwavering commitment to methodological precision, with the overarching goal of making a substantive contribution to the comprehension of the Korean Wave's influence on Thailand. Despite cognizance of potential limitations inherent in the research design, our objective is to furnish pragmatic insights of relevance to both business practitioners and policymakers. Ethical considerations, such as proper citation, will be followed throughout **Table 2**.

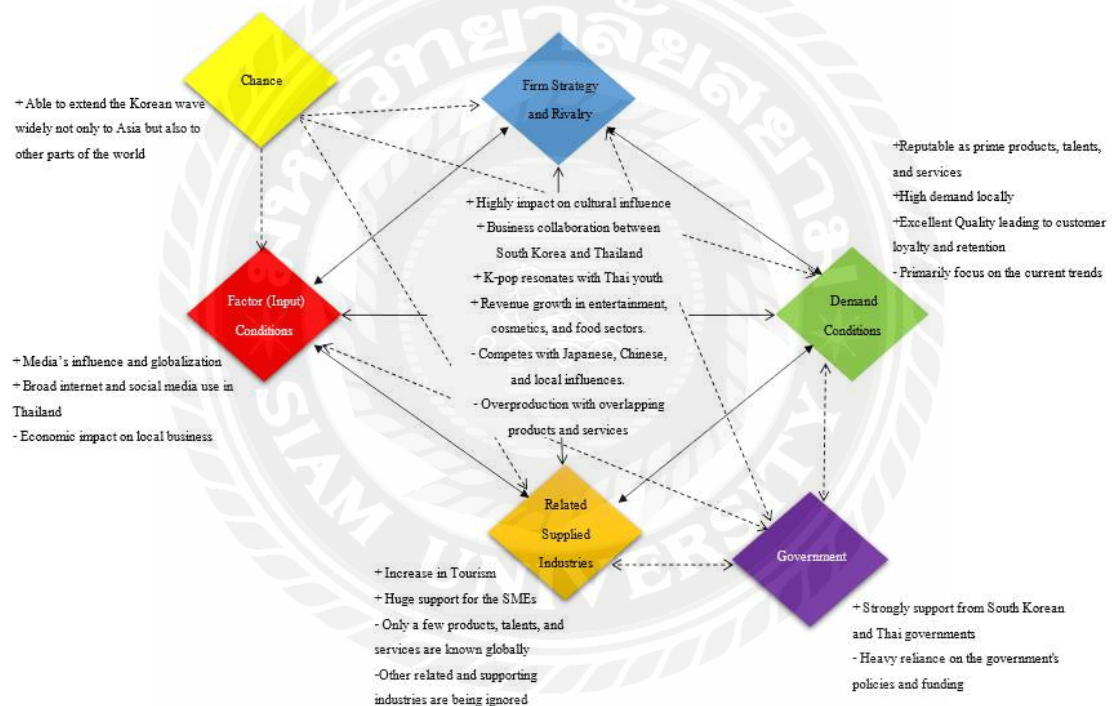
<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Influencing Factors</b>	<b>Citations</b>
Korean Wave	K-Drama and K- Series	(Nordaas, 2019)
	K-Pop or K-music	(Romano, 2018), (Samsung, n.d)
	K-Beauty	(Kim, 2022), (Jobst, 2023)
	K-Style or K-Fashion	(Yun, 2022), (Healy, 2022)
	K-Food	(Kang, 2021)
Cultural Influences	Technology Advantages	(Parc & Moon, 2013), (Kemp, 2023)
	Globalization and Media Influences	(Chansanam et al., 2021), (Karalak, 2014)
	Cultural Exchange	(Tangsathaporn, 2023), (Frater, 2022), (Saaenphithak, 2013)
	Language Learning	(Ray, 2021), (Bangkok Post, 2022), (Larprunrueng, 2022), (Hyelin and Hana, 2019)
Tourism and Retail Business	Tourism	(Thanabordeekij et al.,2022), (The Nation, 2023), (OFX, 2019), (Ryan, 2014)
	Small & Medium Entrepreneurs	(Butsaban, 2020), (OECD, 2022)

**Table 2 Documentary Analysis of the Korean Wave Cluster**

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. Findings

The uncovered findings are poised to furnish a comprehensive comprehension of the transcendent nature of Korean Popular culture beyond national confines, particularly elucidating its pervasive influence within Thai society. The implications extend beyond the societal realm to encompass discerning insights into potential business opportunities, attendant challenges, and the formulation of sustainable strategies. This research endeavors to contribute a nuanced perspective on the multifaceted impact of the Korean Wave in Thailand, thereby enriching both academic discourse and informing practical considerations for various stakeholders.



**Figure 1 Diamond Analysis of Korean Wave Cluster in Thailand**

#### 4.1 Firm Strategy and Rivalry

The finding highlights the significant impact of K-pop's growing popularity among Thai youth across various sectors such as entertainment, cosmetics, and food. This trend aligns with South Korea's strategic use of soft power, as emphasized by Hyun-kyung in a 2023 Korean Times article. Hyun-kyung discusses South Korea's efforts to expand its global influence through collaborative initiatives, which is evident in the Thai market. However, the findings also identify significant challenges, including intense competition from Japanese, Chinese, and Thai cultural

forces, and the potential risk of market overproduction. This competitive environment underscores the need for businesses to develop astute strategies that effectively balance innovation with market demands.

This finding is in line with Carminati's (2018) research from Mahidol University, which highlights the substantial competition faced by the Korean wave, or "Hallyu," from Japan and China. Both countries have been actively promoting their cultural products and values since the 1990s, contributing to a highly competitive cultural landscape in regions like Thailand. Carminati suggests that overcoming this competition necessitates strategic use of soft power and collaboration to maintain a strong global cultural presence.

Comparing the findings with the existing literature, it is evident that while K-pop's popularity in Thailand offers numerous opportunities, it also introduces complex challenges. There is a significant need for innovative strategies that not only aim for growth but also skillfully navigate the cultural landscape marked by fierce competition and the risk of overproduction. This situation calls for a nuanced approach that considers the dynamic interplay of different cultural influences and the evolving preferences of the youth demographic.

#### **4.2 Demand Conditions**

The findings indicate a strong demand among Thai youth for Korean products, talents, and services, largely attributable to their high quality, which fosters consumer loyalty. However, a significant observation from our study is the industry's focus on trending items, underscoring the need for adaptability and diversification in response to changing consumer preferences over time.

This analysis is further contextualized when compared with existing research. Sunhwa's (2021) study from Mahidol University, which explores the influence of the Korean Wave on Thai consumers in Bangkok, provides an interesting perspective. It reveals that, contrary to common consumer behavior theories, the social influence of friends, family, and colleagues does not significantly impact the decision to purchase Korean products. This challenges the conventional understanding of the role of direct social endorsements in consumer choices.

On the other hand, Dhiman's (2023) research from J.C. Bose University of Science and Technology in India highlights the significant role of the social environment, including interactions with friends, family, culture, and media, in shaping individual attitudes and behaviors. This broader view suggests that while direct social influences may not be a major factor in the context of Korean



product consumption in Thailand, the collective influence of cultural and media exposures is substantial.

Interpreting these findings, it appears that the appeal of the Korean Wave among Thai youth extends beyond direct social influence, potentially relying more on the intrinsic qualities and cultural resonance of Korean products. This distinction between the general influence of social environments on behavior and the specific consumer dynamics regarding Korean products in Thailand points to a unique market characteristic. It implies a scenario where, despite the recognized importance of social factors in general consumer behavior, the quality and cultural relevance of the products themselves play a more decisive role in this particular context.

#### **4.3 Related Supply Industries**

The findings illustrate that the collaborative efforts in tourism between Thailand and Korea have significantly fostered sustainability within Thailand. This partnership, particularly beneficial to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), aligns well with sustainable development strategies. However, a notable challenge identified is the limited global recognition of Thai products and talents, posing obstacles to wider market access and growth.

This context is enriched by existing literature. A 2023 report from The Nation highlights the initiation of a joint tourism campaign for 2023-2024 between South Korea and Thailand. This collaborative venture has propelled Thailand into the position of South Korea's fourth-largest tourism market, demonstrating the tangible success of this bilateral cooperation.

Moreover, data from 7 Green Tourism (2022) indicates the predominance of SMEs in Thailand's tourism industry. The widespread influence of the Korean Wave, encompassing aspects such as K-pop and Korean dramas, has not only boosted tourism in Thailand but has also significantly impacted these SMEs. This reflects a deep and reciprocal relationship between Thailand and Korea in the realm of tourism.

Interpreting these findings, it becomes evident that the Thai-Korean tourism partnership serves as a key pillar for supporting SMEs in Thailand, contributing to the country's sustainable development goals. Nonetheless, the issue of limited global recognition necessitates targeted strategies to enhance the international visibility and attractiveness of Thai products and talents, potentially augmenting the advantages of this collaboration.

#### **4.4 Input Conditions**

The findings underscore the pivotal role of media and globalization in sustaining the prominence of the Korean Wave in Thailand. The internet and social media platforms are central to this phenomenon, playing a significant role in disseminating Korean popular culture. However, the findings also reveal the critical importance of economic management for the long-term viability of the Korean Wave. This highlights that while digital platforms are effective in spreading Korean cultural content, the sustainability of this influence is contingent upon sound economic strategies.

This perspective aligns with the findings of Chansanam et al. (2021) in their study, "An Analysis of the Korean Popular Culture on Social Media: An Examination of the Thai Fandom through Twitter in Thailand." Their research indicates that media and globalization have a profound impact on Thai youth. However, they observe that the presence of Korean pop culture in Thailand is concentrated within approximately 10 major Twitter fan pages, cumulatively engaging around 733.2K users. This data provides measurable insights into the extent of Thai engagement with Korean pop music and its cultural implications.

Drawing from these findings, it is apparent that while digital media is instrumental in promoting the Korean Wave in Thailand, its influence is largely localized within specific digital domains. This targeted impact suggests a strategic, yet significant, penetration in the Thai market.

Consequently, the role of economic management becomes increasingly salient, as it is instrumental in determining the Korean Wave's ability to convert digital engagement into sustainable cultural and economic success.

#### **4.5 Chance**

The findings indicate that the Korean Wave, or "Hallyu," possesses considerable potential to attain global prominence, transcending its existing popularity in Asia. This development presents a significant opportunity for Thai businesses to achieve international recognition. However, capitalizing on this prospect necessitates strategic planning and the development of global partnerships.

In relation to existing literature, MartinRoll's (2021) discussion on the Korean Wave's international rise offers valuable insights. The article underscores the considerable global attention garnered by Korean pop culture and creative outputs, noting that Hallyu has been on an upward trajectory for about two decades. It also considers Korea's potential to leverage this popularity for

ongoing global influence. This suggests that the Korean Wave represents not merely a fleeting trend, but a sustainable cultural phenomenon with potential benefits for Korea's societal, economic, and cultural framework.

From these findings, it is apparent that the global ascension of the Korean Wave presents substantial opportunities for international exposure and economic growth, benefiting not only Korea but also closely associated countries like Thailand. For Thai businesses, this implies an opportunity to align with and benefit from the global appeal of Hallyu. However, this also implies that effective engagement with this potential requires Thai businesses to adopt a global perspective, focusing on innovative strategies and international collaborations.

#### **4.6 Government**

The findings indicate that the endurance and expansion of the Korean Wave are significantly enhanced by the robust support from both the South Korean and Thai governments. This governmental backing is crucial in fostering the cultural industry and maintaining the momentum of the Korean Wave. However, the findings also identify a potential risk associated with overreliance on government policies and funding, highlighting the importance of diversifying strategic approaches to ensure long-term sustainability of the Korean Wave.

These conclusions align with and are further informed by existing academic research. Butsaban's (2023) study from Chulalongkorn University demonstrates the Korean government's long-term commitment to developing its cultural industry and supporting the Korean Wave, emphasizing the government's integral role in the sector's growth and development.

In a similar vein, Chongkittavorn's (2023) article in the Bangkok Post illuminates the initiatives of the Thai government, particularly through the Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Tourism, in utilizing the Korean Wave to advance Thai societal welfare and national development. This strategy indicates a deliberate capitalization on cultural phenomena for national progress.

Interpreting these findings, it becomes evident that government involvement plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of the Korean Wave. The strategies of both the South Korean and Thai governments not only influence global perceptions but also significantly contribute to national development. Nonetheless, the research suggests that reliance solely on government initiatives may lead to vulnerabilities due to policy shifts and financial constraints. Therefore, a

comprehensive strategy encompassing private sector partnerships, audience engagement, and market expansion is crucial for the sustainable growth of the Korean Wave.

This comprehensive analysis explores the Korean Wave's impact in Thailand, encompassing societal trends, business opportunities, challenges, and sustainable strategies. The Korean Wave, especially K-pop, is increasingly popular among Thai youth, influencing sectors like entertainment, cosmetics, and food, which aligns with South Korea's strategic cultural diplomacy. However, this growth faces challenges, including stiff competition from Japanese, Chinese, and local cultures, and the risk of market overproduction, necessitating adaptable and innovative business strategies. Consumer demand in Thailand is driven by the high quality of Korean products, with preferences shaped less by social endorsements and more by the products' intrinsic appeal. The role of media and globalization in promoting the Korean Wave is significant, yet its long-term success depends on sound economic management. Collaborative tourism efforts between Thailand and Korea benefit SMEs, but challenges arise from the limited global recognition of Thai products and talents, calling for strategies to enhance international visibility. The supportive role of the South Korean and Thai governments is vital in sustaining the Korean Wave's momentum, but an overreliance on governmental support highlights the need for diversified strategies. Overall, this analysis reveals the Korean Wave's dynamic influence in Thailand, shaped by a blend of cultural preferences, business tactics, government policies, and global market forces, offering key insights for stakeholders in this cultural phenomenon.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. Conclusion and Recommendations 5.1

#### Conclusion

In conclusion, this comprehensive study affirms the undeniable impact of the Korean Wave, or Hallyu, on Thailand's cultural scene, especially among the youth. Guided by clear objectives, the research has shed light on the widespread influence of Korean popular culture globally. It has identified promising business opportunities, assessed local competitors, and outlined essential strategies for sustainability. The application of Porter's Diamond Analysis revealed that the strategies employed by the Korean Wave not only fostered cultural cooperation but also boosted tourism and supported Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

While acknowledging these positive outcomes, it is crucial to highlight the need for greater international recognition in relevant areas. As Thailand enthusiastically embraces Hallyu, addressing challenges like localization, protecting intellectual property, and overcoming language barriers is vital. The study's recommendations stress the importance of a thoughtful approach to ongoing cultural exchange and economic growth. Thailand's experience with the Korean Wave not only benefits itself but also sets a noteworthy example for other countries interested in leveraging the global popularity of Korean culture. Thailand's role in shaping Hallyu's global impact is increasingly significant.

This exploration into the Korean Wave's influence on Thailand, guided by the study's objectives, has enhanced our understanding of how Korean popular culture crosses borders. It has provided valuable insights for businesses, policymakers, and various stakeholders. Moving forward, this study establishes a foundation for the continuous examination of the dynamic interaction between the Korean Wave, Thai society, and the broader global cultural landscape. The initially outlined objectives have been achieved, and the subsequent recommendations underscore the importance of ongoing research to inform strategies navigating the changing dynamics of the Korean Wave in Thailand.

## 5.2 Recommendations

To foster and sustain the Korean Wave cluster in Thailand, the following detailed recommendations are proposed:

### **Influence of the Korean Wave in Thailand:**

Exploiting Thailand's proximity to South Korea, it is imperative to organize an array of events and cultural exchanges. Regular K-pop concerts, Korean film festivals, and beauty exhibitions can be pivotal. Collaborative ventures between local and Korean artists or creators should be encouraged to deepen cultural connections. Furthermore, instituting language exchange programs can substantially enhance mutual cultural understanding and appreciation (Ash, 2023).

### **Market Analysis and Strategy:**

Capitalizing on the burgeoning interest in Korean culture necessitates thorough market analysis. Conducting surveys or focus groups can unveil specific preferences and trends among Thai audiences. Utilizing this data is pivotal for informing product development and shaping effective marketing strategies for businesses looking to leverage the Hallyu trend. Additionally, forging partnerships with influential local figures or media outlets deeply entrenched in the K-culture scene can offer valuable exposure and credibility (Glodev, Wijaya & Ida, 2022).

### **Long-Term Sustainability Plan:**

Ensuring the enduring success of the Korean Wave in Thailand calls for the establishment of dedicated cultural centers or hubs focusing on Korean arts, language, and cuisine. These hubs can act as central points for enthusiasts, hosting a variety of workshops, classes, and events to actively engage the community. Moreover, forging collaborations with Thai educational institutions to introduce accredited courses in Korean studies can solidify both cultural exchange and academic interest, contributing to long-term sustainability (Botto, 2021).

These comprehensive and specific recommendations aim to provide practical and detailed guidance for various stakeholders invested in the Korean Wave's impact on Thailand. By tailoring events to the local context, conducting thorough market analyses, and implementing long-term sustainability measures, these recommendations seek to not only deepen cultural connections but also create a strategic framework for businesses, policymakers, and cultural enthusiasts. Emphasizing collaborative efforts, targeted marketing strategies, and educational initiatives, these

proposals aim to contribute to the continued success and integration of the Korean Wave within the rich cultural tapestry of Thailand.

### **5.3 Discussion and Implications**

The comprehensive findings of this study offer profound insights into the expansive influence of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) beyond national borders, particularly in shaping the multifaceted landscape of Thai society. This in-depth discussion seeks to unravel the intricate dynamics of cultural exchange, societal preferences, and the ripple effects across various economic sectors, illuminating the far-reaching implications of Hallyu on Thai society, the nation, and diverse industries.

#### **5.3.1 Research Contribution**

The principal goal of this study was to unravel the transcendent influence of Korean popular culture, specifically Hallyu, on societies like Thailand. In achieving this objective, the research makes a significant contribution to the field of cross-cultural studies. By shedding light on the nuanced interplay of how Hallyu shapes societal norms and preferences, the study sets the stage for future research endeavors exploring the intricate dynamics of cultural influences on a global scale.

#### **5.3.2 Contribution to Thai Economy**

Beyond its cultural impact, the Korean Wave plays a pivotal role in contributing to the Thai economy. The study meticulously identifies and dissects how Hallyu generates economic activities across diverse sectors, fostering growth and sustainability. The surge in the consumption of Korean products in Thailand, ranging from cosmetics to technology, stands out as a testament to the popularity of Hallyu. This not only bolsters the retail industry but also creates opportunities for local businesses to collaborate with Korean brands, stimulating economic growth and fostering robust trade relations between the two nations.

Furthermore, the tourism industry experienced a substantial boost due to Hallyu. Tourists, particularly those with a profound enthusiasm for Korean culture, flock to destinations associated with Hallyu, contributing to increased footfall in local attractions, hotels, and related services. This surge in tourism not only stimulates the hospitality sector but also generates substantial revenue for local businesses catering to the needs and preferences of Hallyu enthusiasts.

### 5.3.3 Contribution to Various Industries

The impact of the Korean Wave extends to various industries, playing a crucial role in shaping trends and driving economic activities. An exploration of how Hallyu contributes to distinct sectors unfolds as follows:

**Tourism and Hospitality Industry:** The rising popularity of the Korean Wave, or Hallyu, significantly impacts Thailand's tourism and hospitality sector. Hallyu acts as a strong attraction for international tourists, leading to increased demand for accommodations, guided tours, and related services (The Nation, 2023). This trend not only boosts the local tourism industry but also influences travelers' preferences. Additionally, the growing prominence of Hallyu fuels the demand for distinctive hospitality experiences. Hotels and guesthouses incorporating Korean pop culture elements become popular among travelers seeking a culturally enriched stay. Themed accommodations, K-drama-inspired cafes, and entertainment complexes contribute significantly to diversifying and enhancing offerings in the hospitality industry.

**Food Industry:** The Korean Wave, or Hallyu, has made a significant mark on the food scene, introducing Korean cuisine to both locals and tourists in Thailand. The influence of Hallyu has led to a surge in demand for restaurants offering Korean dishes, reflecting the global popularity of Korean food culture. This culinary phenomenon is characterized by a harmonious blend of local and Korean flavors, creating a diverse and enticing food scene that caters to a broad spectrum of tastes. The increased popularity of Korean cuisine contributes not only to the globalization of food preferences but also fosters cultural exchange, as individuals from different backgrounds come together to savor and appreciate the rich and varied offerings inspired by the Korean Wave (Raksanawes, 2023).

**Entertainment Industry:** Hallyu's influence extends beyond tourism and cuisine, making a profound impact on Thailand's entertainment sector. The rising popularity of Korean dramas, movies, and music has sparked a transformative shift within the local entertainment landscape. Streaming platforms and local television channels now prominently feature Korean content, responding to the growing audience captivated by Hallyu (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2020). This surge in demand for Korean entertainment creates numerous opportunities for local businesses involved in content distribution, production, and event



management. As a result, the entertainment industry experienced a paradigm shift, aligning itself with the global popularity of Korean cultural products.

**Education Industry:** Ensuring the sustained success of the Korean Wave in Thailand necessitates proactive educational initiatives. Acknowledging the widespread interest in Korean culture, collaborative initiatives with Thai educational institutions are crucial (Hyelin & Hana, 2019). Introducing accredited courses in Korean studies becomes essential, fostering cultural exchange and offering students valuable insights into a global cultural phenomenon. This educational aspect underscores the lasting impact of Hallyu beyond entertainment, influencing academic realms and shaping cross-cultural understanding.

**Beauty Industry:** Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, significantly influences the beauty industry. Its popularity leads to a rising demand for beauty products and trends inspired by Korean aesthetics. This influence is not confined to local markets but extends globally, impacting skincare routines, makeup styles, and beauty standards worldwide. Korean beauty brands play a prominent role in the global market, contributing to the globalization of beauty standard shaped by Hallyu. The industry adapt to these trends, emphasizing clear, radiant skin and natural makeup looks, reflecting Korean beauty ideals popularized by Hallyu (Ingels, 2020).

In essence, the Korean Wave serves as a powerful catalyst for economic growth across diverse industries, creating synergies between South Korea and Thailand. The reciprocal exchange of cultural elements not only enriches societal experiences but also stimulates economic activities, fostering collaboration and growth in both nations. This symbiotic relationship underscores the transformative potential of Hallyu in shaping the cultural and economic landscape on a global scale.

#### **5.4 Future Research Guideline**

The future research guidelines aim to comprehensively investigate the sustained development of the Korean Wave (Hallyu) cluster in Thailand with a particular focus on its potential implications for advancing sustainability. The delineated areas for future research are outlined below:

**Cultural Influence and Global Trends:**

Investigate the evolving dynamics of how the Korean Wave aligns with and influences emerging global trends. Analyze the cultural exchange between South Korea and Thailand within the context of broader international cultural currents. This research avenue aims to deepen our understanding of how Hallyu remains relevant in an ever-changing global landscape.

**Economic Sustainability Strategies:**

Delve into comprehensive strategies for leveraging the Korean Wave to enhance economic sustainability in Thailand. Examine how businesses can strategically align with Hallyu to foster economic growth, trade relations, and collaborative ventures. Evaluate the role of Korean Wave-inspired initiatives in contributing to Thailand's economic resilience and competitiveness.

**Cultural Diplomacy and Soft Power:**

Explore the concept of cultural diplomacy and soft power in the context of the Korean Wave's impact on Thailand. Investigate how Hallyu enhances Thailand's global image, soft power capabilities, and international relations. This research avenue aims to uncover the diplomatic implications of cultural exchanges facilitated by Hallyu.

**Sustainability Initiatives and Corporate Responsibility:**

Investigate the role of sustainability initiatives within the Korean Wave cluster. Analyze how businesses can integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) principles inspired by Hallyu. Examine corporate responsibility practices and their impact on the sustainability of Hallyu-related industries in Thailand.

These prospective research endeavors aim to furnish a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted influence exerted by the Korean Wave cluster on both cultural dynamics and economic sustainability within the context of Thailand. By systematically addressing these dimensions, researchers aspire to contribute discerning insights that hold the potential to inform and guide policymakers, businesses, and stakeholders in navigating the intricate landscape of Hallyu's impact within the Thai socio-economic milieu.

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