

# Cultural Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Learning from the Success of Korean Dramas in Indonesia

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## Abstract

*This article seeks to answer the question: "What are the impacts of Korean drama on Indonesia?" Through a comprehensive review of literatures on the Korean Wave, international politics, and international public relations, this article analyses the Korean Wave, including K-drama phenomenon through the lenses of soft power, diplomacy, international public relations, nation branding, and propaganda. Korean drama has impacted the patterns of public diplomacy, cultural relations, tourism, investment and export agreements between South Korea and Indonesia. Though the Korean Wave clearly has benefited South Korea the most, some positive impacts on Indonesia include: 1. The availability of alternatives to the previously Western-dominated media; 2. Opportunities for work, research, and education opportunities; 3. Enhanced tourism sector of both countries; 4. Business opportunities; 5. Jobs and investments through the establishment of Korean companies in Indonesia; 6. Wide opportunities for translators and language teachers. In order for Indonesia to have a similar successful cultural diplomacy and nation branding, the government, media, pop culture and entertainment industry, as well as commercial industries must put a serious effort and work together in promoting the Indonesian culture globally.*

## Keywords:

Korean Wave; Korean drama; soft power; cultural diplomacy; nation branding.

## Background

One of the indicators of a country's success is the level of influence its culture has on others. When a country's lifestyle and culture are regarded as more advanced than others, the country becomes a trendsetter and a role model to others. South Korea has become one of those trendsetting countries. Previously an agricultural country, it took fewer than 30 years for South Korea to become an industrial and trading country (Darini, 2010).

Motion and Fitch (2021) define pop culture as "a multi-faceted, nebulous catch-all term applied to the mass consumption of contemporary ideas values and practices circulating within particular cultures" (p. 2). When South Korea opened itself to the world through its economy and pop culture, the Indonesian audience welcomed the opportunity to diversify its consumption of television series. Several other television series that were already popular within the Indonesian audience include those from Japan, Turkey, Latin America, and of course, the United States. In the 1990s, South Korea began to attract the attention of Asian audiences with its famous series "Sandglass" and "Winter Sonata". Over time, South Korean television series began to incorporate elements of Western life without losing their traditional traits, including family life and historical elements.

Today, Korean dramas, popularly referred to as K-dramas, have succeeded in defeating Chinese soap operas and Japanese dramas in the preferences of Asian,

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Middle Eastern and Central Asian audiences. In fact, K-dramas are consumed by 50% of the world's population (Fu & Lee, 2008), and international media have taken notice. Since 2008, Netflix has started to include K-dramas in its list, and the number of viewers of K-dramas also increased worldwide during the Covid-19 pandemic through various series such as "Crash Landing on You", "World of the Married", and "Squid Game".

A survey conducted by the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI) in April 2020 revealed a spike in the viewership of K-dramas during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to this survey on 924 Indonesians aged 14 and 68, the average watch time of K-dramas before the pandemic was approximately 2.7 hours per day. This number increased to 4.6 per day during the pandemic, with 41.3 per cent watching them more than six times weekly. In fact, 73 per cent of the respondents only started watching K-dramas soon after the pandemic entered Indonesia in March 2020, while 91 percent were already regular K-drama watchers prior to the pandemic. It must be noted, however, that 92.6 percent of the respondents were female (Adjie, 2020).

"Korean Wave," or Hallyu, refers to the surge of South Korean cultural products such as films, television dramas, and music, successfully entering other countries around the world. In doing so, the Korean Wave is successful in marketing not only South Korean culture, but also its tourism and commercial products to consumers in various countries, including Indonesia. Therefore, Korean Wave is not merely a transfer – or even an expansion – of cultures across the borders. It is actually South Korea's force – or soft power – in earning economic profits (Suryani, 2015).

From an international politics perspective, the Korean Wave is an implementation of the soft power concept. In Indonesia, the public diplomacy developed by South Korea is one of the most successful ones compared to that of other countries. For instance, concerts of Korean bands are always welcomed in Indonesia, as evidenced by the sold-out tickets despite their soaring prices. Moreover, K-dramas are always trending topics in Indonesia. Apart from K-dramas, South Korea also exports its food, games, and beauty care products. The Indonesian audience were first exposed to K-dramas in the early 2000s, starting with the broadcasting of a drama entitled "Endless Love" on one of the private television stations. Afterwards, other dramas continued to appear on Indonesian TV, including "Full House," "Boys Over Flowers," "Princess Hour," and many others. These dramas continue to be loved by the Indonesian audience. At the consular level, the two countries offer many opportunities for cooperation in various fields to achieve their interests (Yoon, 2005). From a communications perspective, the Korean Wave also fits into the concepts of 'soft power,' 'propaganda,' 'diplomacy,' 'international public relations'; and 'nation branding'.

Korean dramas are undoubtedly part of South Korea's cultural diplomacy and nation branding efforts in fostering a positive image of the Korean society and culture in the eyes of the world, including Indonesia, especially after the civil war between South Korea and North Korea (Jin, 2008). In this case, South Korea is the producing country that gets financial benefits, whereas Indonesia is the consumer or buyer. Therefore, South Korea benefits economically from broadcasting K-dramas in Indonesia, which leaves one questioning how it will, in turn, impact Indonesia.

Through a comprehensive review of literatures on the Korean Wave, international politics, and international public relations, this article seeks to answer the question: What are the impacts of Korean drama on Indonesia? This article intends to analyse

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the Korean drama phenomenon from the perspectives of soft power, diplomacy, international public relations and nation branding.

### **Bilateral relationship between South Korea and Indonesia**

The bilateral cooperation between South Korea and Indonesia is implemented in the form of activities in various fields, including politics, economics, social and culture, environment, defence and security (Perwita & Yani, 2005). Both Indonesia and South Korea also actively support each other in various forums, both regionally and internationally. One example is the support and presence of South Korea in the G20 Summit forum in 2022, which was held in and presided by Indonesia (KBRI di Seoul, 2023).

In the political sector, diplomatic relations between Indonesia and South Korea began in 1973, whereas the consulate-level relations began in 1966. In November 2017, the bilateral relationship was upgraded into a special strategic relationship. This was marked by President Moon Jae In's state visit to Indonesia to sign the "RI - RoK Joint Vision Statement for Co-Prosperity and Peace", which focuses on four areas: 1. Defence and external relations; 2. Bilateral trade and infrastructure development; 3. People-to-people exchanges, as well as; 4. Global and regional cooperation. In the following years, diplomatic relations between the two countries continue to be strengthened, as evidenced by the frequency of mutual visits between high dignitaries from both countries (KBRI di Seoul, 2023).

In the economic sector, one of the cooperation priorities are to increase and expand investment and trade relations to achieve the trade target of US\$ 30 billion by 2022, as well as to encourage increased market access for products such as palm oil, fruit, fisheries by Indonesia to South Korea. Moreover, South Korean companies are encouraged to develop business and invest in Indonesia to accelerate industrialisation, infrastructure and connectivity improvement, as well as growth and development in the regions (KBRI di Seoul, 2023).

Apart from bilateral relations and cooperation in the political and economic sectors, Indonesia and South Korea have also established social and cultural cooperation conducted in several sectors. In the education sector, there have been several forms of cooperation such as exchange of teachers, as well as experts in the field of primary and secondary education, cooperation between schools and universities, recognition of degrees, human resources development, scholarships, joint research, as well as organizing seminars or conferences or exhibitions. In fact, the South Korean government has targeted the number of foreign students in the Republic of Korea to reach 200,000 people by 2023. Meanwhile, Indonesia also provides scholarships in the fields of arts and culture for students from South Korea (KBRI di Seoul, 2023).

Culture is one of the principal areas of cooperation between Indonesia and South Korea because it is believed that culture can strengthen friendly relations between the two countries. This commitment to cooperation is evidenced by the cultural cooperation agreement between the governments of South Korea and Indonesia signed in November 28, 2000, which states that, regarding cooperation in the cultural sector, "The Parties shall facilitate and promote: a) Exchange of artists, and dance and music ensembles; b) Exchange of art and other exhibitions; c) Exchange of films, documentaries, radio, and television programme recordings and recordings on

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discs and tapes; and d) Exchange of experts in the field of cinematography and participation in each other's International Film Festivals" (Kemlu, 2000, article 5). With this agreement, Korean dramas have a legal umbrella to be broadcast on Indonesian television.

The Korean industry proved its international success in 2020 with the critically acclaimed film "Parasite" winning Best Picture at the Academy Awards – arguably the world's highest award for cinema. This was of even higher significance because it was the first time in history that a foreign language film won this award. This achievement cannot be separated from the Korean government's support for the media and entertainment industry through various policies and the establishment of the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA) (Pusparisa, 2020). KOCCA is responsible for promoting the media and entertainment industry and does not operate alone. This institution is integrated with the Korea Broadcasting Institute, making Korea's media and entertainment ecosystem extraordinarily strong and accessible to global markets. Today, the South Korean government is not just passively witnessing the success of K-dramas in attracting worldwide audiences. Instead, it is actively contributing efforts to help make the country's strong pop culture become the country's soft power (Correa, 2022), especially in today's digital technology era.

One dimension of cultural diplomacy is long-term involvement through cultural exchanges and access to media channels. Fans of K-drama have become familiar with the Korean way of life, mainly due to the content, images and dialogs that the dramas depict. Watching K-dramas itself requires a sizable investment of time. Thus, K-drama can potentially contribute to positively shaping the image of South Korea for the younger generation, in this case Indonesia's youth (Correa, 2022).

The cultures of Indonesia and South Korea are naturally different. Geographically, these two countries are in two distinct parts of Asia – South Korea is in the East and Indonesia is in the Southeast. South Korea holds the status of a developed country, where technology is very advanced and education is at a prominent level. On the other hand, Indonesia is known as a developing country, where Islam is the majority religion. It is an archipelagic country that is rich in culture and language because of its thousands of tribes and ethnicities. Yet despite its diverse backgrounds, South Korea and Indonesia have had a good relationship for decades, not only culturally but also economically and politically. In the last decade, there has been a steady expansion of cultural contacts between South Korea and Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2020).

### **Hallyu and the Korean television industry**

The phenomenon of Korean drama is known as "Hallyu," which means "Korean Wave." This term was first introduced by the Chinese media in the 1990s to describe the entry of Korean cultural products into the markets of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Although the initial export of K-dramas began in 1962 through the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), television in Korea was initially dominated by American series (Keane et al., 2007). The immediate antecedent of K-drama was Korean theatrical drama, which for nearly a century served as a conduit for Korea's culture and as a symbol of identity against Japanese domination (King, 2012). Later television dramas incorporated all of the existing heritage in terms of staging, scriptwriting and transmission of traditional Korean culture.

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Cultural differences are not an obstacle for Korean dramas to enter the Japanese market in the new millennium. This was made possible by the abolition of the ban on Japanese cultural products in 1998 in South Korea with the signing of the “Declaration of Joint Partnership Promoting Friendship and Cooperation in the 21st Century”, and the inclusion of the drama “Winter Sonata” (King, 2012). It should be noted that Japan colonized Korea from 1910 until 1945, the year the empire was defeated. This led to a feeling of opposition caused by the violence and hatred that existed due to the imposition of Japanese culture on Korea. The success of Korean dramas signifies its potential to serve as a bridge between the two conflicting societies. Even the wife of former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is said to have claimed to be a fan of Korean dramas (Keane & Moran, 2003).

The entry of K-dramas in foreign markets is accompanied by technological advances and business opportunities. Even though the Asian monetary crisis in 1997 deeply affected Korea, it was also an opportunity to diversify exports to include cultural products as additional income for the devastated economy. At that time, a Korean drama cost a quarter of the budget of a Japanese drama or a tenth of a Hong Kong drama (King, 2012). Through the revival of the Korean economy, investment became bigger. Though initially not by wealthy countries, little by little Korean drama series started to be increasingly in demand by various countries. In this regard, the three most important networks in Korea -KBS, SBS, and MBC- were able to rely on their own budgets and financing from the government’s commitment to globalizing Korean culture (Fu & Lee, 2008).

A significant development was the creation of the Korean Content and Culture Agency in 2001. This combination of opportunities and challenges resulted in the expansion of K-drama on a continental and, later, international level. Exports of Korean cultural products have grown from 500 million US dollars in 2004 to 4 billion in 2011. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, drama exports in particular have grown from 5.5 million US dollars in 1995 to 71.4 million US dollars in 2004. According to Fu and Lee (2008), Korean Drama exports represent 0.2 per cent of South Korea's GDP and the country's exports more than doubled in television series.

### **The impact of translation of Korean drama on the global community**

Millions of people around the world are now able to watch Korean dramas because of subtitles, which allow the audience to watch foreign shows in their own language. Through foreign films – including TV series – the culture of a country, including its lifestyle, fashion, behaviour, and food, are being shared. While film is an industry, it is also considered an art, and some scholars even call it a form of democratic art (see Cartmell, 2014). Film is deemed crucial for the survival of a nation’s culture, and foreign films also serve as essential learning tools, with which people get to know other countries, cultures, and people (Peichi, 2014).

Regardless of the genre, a film will contain elements of a documentary as it contains information as well as pictures of the country of origin. Through translation, films can reach wider audiences and filmgoers can see customs, cities, fashions, and views of places they have never been to. When a Korean drama is translated, it

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is transformed into a bicultural product that allows the audience to watch a Korean actor speaking Indonesian and using Indonesian idioms and slang.

Film translation, including that of Korean dramas, is a very difficult and demanding task. Translators need more than just high-level language proficiency. Cultural familiarity of both languages is also particularly important in order for the translator to be able to properly communicate the message, otherwise, the audience watching the drama would not be able to accurately comprehend the cultural and social connotations inferred within the dialogues (Lim, 2005).

In general, K-dramas maintain Korean traditions in their dramas. This also makes Korean dramas suitable for family viewing because they contain Confucian philosophy, which regards family as the pillar of society and respect for parents is an obligation. This aspect should be seen in the personal relationships of the protagonists. The existence of characters of all ages in a drama also allows all members of the audience's family to find their identities in the plot of the drama (Lim, 2005). Examples are "49 Days", "Bread, Love and Dreams" or "Reply 1994." This also means that K-dramas contain less elements of violence and erotic scenes compared to Western series (Sintowoko, 2021). Another interesting aspect of Korea's ancient traditions is shamanism. In K-dramas, shamans can be seen as mediators between humans and spiritual beings and can influence people's lives, especially in decision-making. This shamanic theme is evident in the drama "The Moon that Hugs the Sun," where the royal court shaman academy influences palace politics and family relationships. Therefore, it is important to have a translation strategy – for instance, paraphrasing, cultural adaptation, or direct translation – in order to have a standard equivalent. Cultural adaptation is the most common strategy. However, the audience sometimes finds it confusing (Olney, 2010).

Different countries have diverse ways of translating films, but there are three main types: Subtitles and dubbing usually for film translations, and voiceover for television shows. Still, deciding the type to adopt should not be taken arbitrarily. Some factors that must be considered include the cost, preferred approach of the target audience, and tradition. Sometimes, the source's position and the culture of the target within the international context are also considered (Olney, 2010).

Using the dubbing strategy usually modifies the source text to make it more familiar to local audiences, and foreign dialogue must match the actor's mouth and movements. The goal is for moviegoers to feel that the actors really speak the local language (Cintas & Orero, 2010). The use of the dubbing method depends on the market's point of view, namely the possibility of purchasing and the success of the drama. This is why one hundred percent of the dramas aired in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are dubbed into Mandarin and Cantonese. However, for more distant markets, such as the United States and Latin America, subtitles are more common. It should be noted that the use of subtitles requires the involvement of the audience because they have to read (Liu, 2014). On the other hand, continuous exposure to Korean language can make the audience familiar with repeated expressions, for example the use of the words "saranghaeyo" and "gamsahamnida". Consequently, today, many Indonesian audiences have decided to take Korean language courses. Using subtitles means translating the foreign dialogue into the target language. These subtitles are synchronised and placed at the bottom of the screen. Unlike with dubbing, however, through this process, the audience is more aware of the "foreignness" aspect during the show (Liu, 2014).

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Indonesian television stations usually use the dubbing method. However, Indonesians who subscribe to streaming services such as Netflix receive several alternative types of translation, such as voiceovers or subtitles in various languages.

### Korean dramas as tools of soft power and diplomacy

From the perspective of international politics, Korean dramas are commonly viewed as tools of soft power and diplomacy. In his book, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Joseph Nye (2004) explains soft power as much more than the capability to argue with other parties so that those parties would agree with our opinion or wishes. It is, in fact, the ability to attract the other party, thus the interest that has been generated can later trigger other parties to imitate. Soft power has proven to be easier, cheaper, and more effective in achieving the national interests of a country (Ramadhan et al., 2009). Therefore, soft power is the capacity to acquire what one wants by means of attraction instead of coercion or financial strength (Nye, 2004).

On the other hand, diplomacy is defined as “the art of creating and managing relationships among nations and the art of negotiation is that of forging relationships through agreements” (Harvard Law School, 2023). Now diplomacy is important in a country's foreign policy activities because it is considered the key weapon in accomplishing national interests regarding other nations or international organizations. Diplomacy is a national power that is comprehensive by focusing on differences between countries and between parties involved in a deliberation. The important tools of diplomacy are communication and negotiation (Harvard Law School, 2023).

The term "public diplomacy" was introduced into scholarly circulation in 1965 by diplomat and dean of the Faculty of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, Edmund Gullion. The aim of public diplomacy is to build good public opinion in various parts of the world by communicating or interacting with important parties. Therefore, the perpetrators are required to have communication skills because they will always be related to foreign policy issues. In the information era, public opinion can effectively influence government action (Cull, 2008).

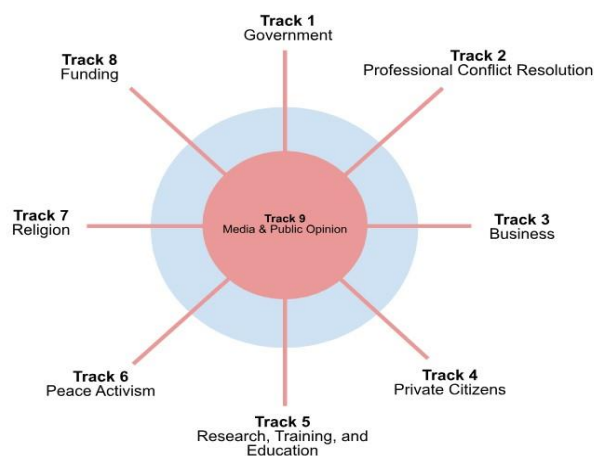


Figure 1. Multi Track Diplomacy (Diamond & McDonald, 1996)

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Figure 1 illustrates the positions of the nine actors of public diplomacy. The position of each actor has a unique function in the system. Even though the actors occupy different positions, they are related to each other and interact with each other to build a synergistic cooperation (Diamond & McDonald, 1996). Public Diplomacy involves participants on a large scale and focuses on foreign communities. Therefore, to achieve its goals, the government is not only focused on public diplomacy strategies but also on actions in reforming the country. The effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by a change of mind. Countries that have attractiveness will get the attention of foreign communities. The more foreign people pay attention to the country, the more the country stands out. And South Korea certainly uses public diplomacy as a way to promote its soft power. Public diplomacy is conducted by South Korea in order to increase the understanding and trust of foreign citizens in South Korea directly or in collaboration with the government through the cultural, knowledge, tourism, policy, and other sectors.

The actors involved in this public diplomacy are the South Korean government, the media, the pop culture and entertainment industry (music, K-drama, film, games, and animation industries), and the commercial product industry (e.g., LG and Samsung) as the referees, as well as the foreign publics from Asian, European, American and Middle Eastern countries as the receivers (Fitria et al., 2021). As referees, the government of South Korea uses its policies to actively support the promotion of popular culture; The media acts as a means of reference to enjoy such cultural products as K-Pop, drama, film, animation, and online games; The pop culture and entertainment industry's role is as creative producers of the cultural products, and; The commercial product industries contribute by spreading Korean cultural products by riding the Korean Wave as a vehicle for promoting their commercial products. Finally, as the receivers of the Korean Wave, the foreign publics (governments and publics) in Asian, European, American, and Middle Eastern countries receive and consume Korean cultural and commercial products (Suryani, 2015).

One of the most effective cultural products within the Korean Wave as a diplomatic tool is the Korean drama because it has massively attracted the interest of foreign audiences and increased awareness in creating relations between the various actors involved in it. This awareness includes various things, such as: differences in culture, values, social norms, and differences in political interests. This awareness is expected to create a sense of mutual understanding in order to welcome differences. If a difference can be realized and accepted by the general public, then a positive relationship can occur and will later lead to various kinds of good cooperation between countries and by the public between countries. The world's interest in Korean culture through this public diplomacy policy had a positive impact on perspectives on South Korea. One example is the Public Diplomacy conducted by South Korea in Indonesia. As previously mentioned, in Indonesia the Korean Wave as part of South Korea's public diplomacy policy began in 2000, with the signing of the Cultural Agreement between the government of the Republic of Indonesia and the government of the Republic of South Korea.

Cultural diplomacy is also a part of soft power, and it can come in the forms of various cultural festivals such as: music festivals, dance festivals, fine arts performances, theatre, and film shows. The government of South Korea contributes to making its culture the centre of the country's economy as well as a tool of diplomacy. Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003) was the first president to make culture a tool



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for South Korea's economic growth. During Lee Myung-bak's presidency from 2003 to 2008, the South Korean government provided support to the film industry, music, and other cultural performances. Then, during Roh Moo-hyun's rule, South Korea built many institutions aimed at supporting this cultural diplomacy activity (Kim & Jin, 2016). One of these efforts included the establishment of KOCCA (Korean Culture and Content Agency), the institution that has given birth to new idols with the financial assistance from the South Korean government itself. Korean films are also supported by the KTO (Korean Tourism Organization), which is the agency that introduces to the world filming locations as new tourist destinations, so that people of the world who watch and like Korean films can visit these places (Kim & Jin, 2016).

### **Korean drama as nation branding and propaganda**

Having discussed Korean dramas from the perspective of international politics, and how as a diplomacy tool the most important aspects are communication and negotiation (Harvard Law School, 2023), it is clear that Korean dramas are also tools of international public relations. In fact, concepts derived from the field of corporate communications have been influencing the Western academic narrative on political communications since the mid-1980s (Moloney, 2008). By nature, the concept fits nation branding fits into this trend (Anholt, 1998; Bohas, 2006). For public relations, popular culture is both a strategic resource for connecting with society and the product of promotional efforts (Fitch & Motion, 2021).

Nation branding explains the actions taken by a country by using its assets in order to promote itself internationally. Nation brands are therefore a combination of several elements that differentiates a country's culture from others. The process of nation branding requires the participation of several parties, including the government, commerce, non-profit organizations, tourism, and the media (Dinnie, 2008). Nation branding is considered so important that, when effective, it is expected to be able to increase a country's trade, tourism, and investment. It could also help dispel misconceptions about a country and allow a country to position itself better (Novienthia, 2016). South Korea has continuously been putting a serious effort into improving its nation branding. This was made evident in 2009 through the establishment of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding (PCNB), whose goal is to actively globalise the Korean Wave, of which K-drama remains one of its most popular products.

While international politics scholars (e.g., Nye, 2004) use the term soft power and cultural and/or cultural diplomacy, social theorists (e.g., Hobsbawm, 1990), including communication and public relations scholars often use the term propaganda. Still, these concepts are intertwined. Lasswell and Smith (2015) define propaganda as "a means by which large numbers of people are induced to act together." In essence, it is the systematic dissemination of information with the aim of influencing public opinion and manipulate people's beliefs, attitudes, or actions using symbols, which could include music, words, clothing, hairstyles, gestures, banners, monuments, and more. What differentiates it from casual conversation is the level of deliberateness and emphasis on manipulation (Smith, 2023). In regards to the analysis of soft power, Manheim (1994, p. 5) identifies two streams of propaganda studies: 1. The psychological effects of propaganda influence; and, 2. Propaganda techniques, including advertising, public relations, and advertising. From this perspective, public relations and marketing models certainly apply to the implementation of soft power.

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As explained by public relations scholars Wilcox et al. (2006), international public relations encompass organisational, institutional, or governmental activities that are planned and organised, with the goal to forge mutually beneficial relations with the publics of other nations. As Zhu and Fu (2023) note, despite its negative connotation in Western countries, propaganda is present in most societies, and other parts of the world propaganda may consider it a legitimate tool used by the government to build an ideal society (Zhu & Fu, 2023; Shambaugh, 2007). This article uses the term propaganda as a neutral term, namely a state-run initiative for national advertising. It goes beyond commercial advertising as it does not only persuade people to buy products. Instead, it attempts to persuade people to support Korean lifestyle, ideology, culture, and of course, products.

From a cultural perspective, soft power is a means to get other countries to have a will in accordance with the will of the country by using culture and ways of thinking that introduce a positive image and form public opinion. By using its soft power assets, including K-drama, systematically in order to influence the world's opinion about South Korea, it is thus evident that the Korean Wave is a propaganda, and K-drama is one of its tools.

### **Social and economic impacts of Korean drama**

The Korean Wave is a public diplomacy strategy designed by the government of South Korea for its own national interests. Dal Yong Jin explains that the Korean Wave is a way for South Korean parties to grow the creative industry and free themselves from economic problems (Jin, 2012). Naturally, South Korea receives a profit from the export of K-Drama products, and as the Korean film industry continues to grow, it is clear that the films and dramas already have their own market. Still, Korean films continue to experience an increase in export value as they are exported to various countries, both in Asia and outside Asia, securing even more profit for South Korea. This secured place in the market and the world's acceptance of K-drama and other Korean cultural products are clear evidence that economically, K-drama has been a highly effective tool of diplomacy and propaganda. For instance, according to an April 2023 article in *The Korean Times*, Netflix will invest \$2.5 billion in South Korea throughout the following four years for the production of Korean films, scripted shows, and television series. This is after having invested 500 billion won in Korea in 2021 and then 500 billion won to 800 billion won yearly afterwards (Kim, 2023).

Traditionally the drama genre of television series appeals to the emotions of the audience. However, often the adventures and misadventures of the characters shown can actually interfere with the drama. Korean dramas are still able to appeal to emotions in their diversity. Unlike in the West and also in Indonesia where dramas are more aimed at housewives or female audiences in general, K-dramas can be followed by all family members because characters of all ages and social backgrounds are present in the plot. Therefore, it should be noted that the income generated from K-drama does not only come from the broadcast syndication of the drama. There are numerous other benefits, including increase in sales of products that have been placed within the episodes; heightened interest in Korean lifestyle in general; an increase in tourism to visit sites depicted in the dramas, and many more (Su et al., 2011; Advincula et al., 2021). Because K-dramas tend to benefit various audiences at once, all the aforementioned benefits can be achieved through one

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single drama series, let alone the multitude of series that have been and will be broadcast around the globe.

Politically, diplomacy is used by the state in carrying out foreign policy and accomplish national goals that can be a country's bargaining power or nation brand in order to establish a certain image (Effendy, 2008). Therefore, the impact of the cultural diplomacy through the Korean Wave in general, and K-drama specifically, has naturally influenced the patterns of public diplomacy, cultural relations, tourism, investment and export agreements between South Korea and Indonesia (Ariance, 2017).

The efforts made by South Korea to establish diplomatic relations with Indonesia through the Korean Wave by introducing culture, food, and trending fashion in Korea is admirable. However, according to Zakiah et al. (2019) explain that the negative impacts on Indonesian youth – the majority of the Korean Wave consumes, especially when it comes to K-Pop – include: 1. Regarding own culture as inferior to the Korean culture; 2. Extravagant lifestyle and consumerism; and, 3. The rise of fan wars, especially in cyberspace. Ramadhani and Linadi (2012) explain that the effects of the Korean Wave on Indonesian adolescent from the social learning perspective are, “Consuming, look like behaviour, learning the culture and getting closer to the stars are potential behaviours among Indonesian adolescents” (p. 1). Other possible impacts include the imitation of dating and sexual behaviour, and also drinking behaviour (Ramadhani & Linadi, 2012). Nevertheless, these effects do not seem any different from the effects of other foreign cultural influences, for instance Hollywood and Western culture.

What benefits, then, does Indonesia get from Korean drama? Across the board, current scholarly literature agrees that the Korean Wave as public diplomacy and international public relations, and Korean drama as its tool by far benefits South Korea the most. However, there are still benefits that the consuming countries, such as Indonesia get. One of the most important benefits is the availability of alternatives from the previously Western-dominated media. Also, with the influx of South Korean popular culture in Indonesia, one should note that the doors are open not only between cultures, but also between people. For a long time, many South Koreans have migrated to Indonesia, especially for work, research, and education. Likewise with Indonesian citizens who migrated to the South Korea. The tourism sector of the two countries can also feel the impact. The economic aspect also benefits because K-drama revenue can increase the competitiveness of local television products, which ideally in the future can be exported to foreign markets as a product and not just as programs on Indonesian channels with international broadcasts. Likewise, the continuous consumption of Korean products, both material and cultural, supports the establishment of Korean companies on Indonesian soil which generate jobs and investment for the country. For the translation industry, this is also a big opportunity because the increasing export of Korean cultural products will require more Indonesian-Korean translators. Likewise with Indonesian and Korean language teachers.

Lastly, another benefit is the lesson that the Indonesian government could learn from the enormous contribution and serious effort the South Korean government has put into promoting its culture globally. Based on the Multi Track Diplomacy model (Diamond & McDonald, 1996), if Indonesia would like to have a successful cultural diplomacy and nation branding, not only must the Indonesian government actively

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contribute and support this diplomacy through its policies, but the Indonesian media, pop culture and entertainment industry, as well as the commercial industries must work together in promoting the Indonesian culture globally.

### **Conclusion**

This article has analysed the Korean drama phenomenon using the lenses of soft power, diplomacy, international public relations, nation branding and propaganda. Through a comprehensive review of literatures on the Korean Wave, international politics, and international public relations, this article has interrogated the impacts of Korean drama on Indonesia. However, perceptions of Indonesians were not examined in this study. Therefore, the author recommends future research to utilise empirical methods to analyse the perceptions of Indonesians regarding the K-drama phenomenon.

As a tool of diplomacy and nation branding, Korean drama has influenced the patterns of public diplomacy, cultural relations, tourism, investment and export agreements between South Korea and Indonesia. Some of the impacts of K-drama on Indonesia include the diversification of shows, which were previously dominated by Western shows. This is considered good enough for Indonesian audiences because the characteristics of Korean culture are more suitable for consumption by the whole family. But one must keep in mind that K-dramas are fictional stories that incorporate Korean values, cultural elements, and historical characteristics. Some of the negative impacts of K-drama, particularly on Indonesian youths include: Feeling of inferiority regarding own culture; adoption of an extravagant lifestyle and consumerism; Increased rivalry among fandoms, especially in cyberspace; Imitation of dating and sexual behaviour as well as drinking behaviour. However, such negative effects are no different from those of Hollywood and Western cultural products, which have priorly entered Indonesia.

It is clear that, the Korean Wave is profitable to the South Korean parties the most (government, media, pop culture and entertainment industries, and commercial industries) – the referees – and the Korean people in general. Meanwhile, as a receiver, Indonesia will remain in the receiving and consuming end. However, there are still benefits that Indonesia gets: 1. The availability of alternatives from the previously Western-dominated media; 2. Open doors for work, research, and education opportunities; 3. Enhanced tourism sector of both countries; 4. Business opportunities; 5. Jobs and investments through the establishment of Korean companies on Indonesian soil; 6. Wide opportunities for translators and language teachers.

Most importantly, Indonesia should take the opportunity to learn from the Korean Wave experience. In order for Indonesia to have a similar successful cultural diplomacy and nation branding, the Indonesian government, media, pop culture and entertainment industry, as well as commercial industries must work together in promoting the Indonesian culture globally.

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