

Korean Wave in Poland: Success and Challenge*

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〈Abstract〉

The increase in popularity and attractiveness of Korean culture has caused the Hallyu phenomenon around the world. The Korean Wave can also be seen as a result of the active cultural policy of the Korean government. Thanks to globalization, popular culture has been able to become an important driving force for economic development in many countries, including Korea, as a powerful means of communication. In addition, the Korean Wave strongly builds a positive image of Korea to people around the world by showing the soft power of Korea. In the future, the popularity of Hallyu is expected to grow further worldwide, and various elements of Hallyu are expected to have a strong influence on the popular cultures of other countries. In the past, the Korean Wave was mainly observed in some parts of Asia, but the recent Korean Wave is spreading around the world including Europe.

This paper focuses on the growth story of the Korean Wave, the success and challenge of the Korean Wave in Poland, which is located in Central Europe. As a result of this paper analyzing in detail the areas of the most popular Korean Wave in Poland along with the characteristics of Polish people, it was found that the Korean Wave in Poland has been very successful in various fields so far. However, due to the cultural differences between Korea and Poland, it was confirmed that

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there were also areas of the Korean Wave that were not successful in Poland. This paper provides an opportunity to think about future directions for improvement.

*Keywords: Korean Wave, Poland, Success, Challenge

I . Introduction

“... I want my country to be the most beautiful country in the world. We don't want to be the richest country. I am heartbroken by other people's aggression, so I do not want my country to invade others. Our buoyancy is sufficient to make our lives abundant, and our strength is sufficient to prevent others' invasions. The only thing I want infinitely is the power of high culture. This is because the power of culture makes us happy and, in turn, brings happiness to others...” - Kim, Koo -

Kim Koo was a key leader of the Korean independence movement during the period of Japanese colonial rule on the Korean Peninsula(Erickson 1951). One of his greatest wishes was accomplished as nowadays Korean culture is in the spotlight and is loved by many people around the world. Culture is a way of living life. More specifically, it refers to all the ways we eat, sleep, wear, think, and act. The term “Korean Wave”(Hallyu) refers to a phenomenon which started in East Asia in the 1990s and has continued recently in other parts of the world, including some parts of Europe. What the Korean wave means is the increase of popularity of Korean culture internationally(Ravina 2008). The term was coined in China in the middle of 1999 by a Beijing journalist who was interested and surprised by the rapid growth of popularity of the Korean entertainment industry and culture in China(Kim 2007). South Korea is globally known for its modern technology, innovative solutions for various fields, high level of

education, turbulent history and unique culture(Oleksiuk 2021). It is important to mention that the Government of South Korea itself also puts great efforts into promoting Korean culture globally. The Korean wave phenomenon is widely associated with another concept - soft power, which means gaining influence by the state by spreading its culture and arousing interest in it(Nye 1990). Most of the countries of the modern world gain allies and develop economically using soft power. However, for some people the extent of promotion of Korean culture globally remains controversial(Oleksiuk 2021).

The driving force of the Korean wave in Southeast Asian countries has been especially Korean TV dramas. Starting in 1999 in Vietnam, many Korean TV dramas and actors have been popular since then. Another reason for the huge success of the Korean wave in Southeast Asian countries has been the rapid economic growth due to industrialization. Especially technological appliances such as digital TVs and cell phones have contributed to its success(Kim & Ryoo 2007). The relatability of content presented in TV programs is also a strong factor which influenced the rapid growth of popularity of the Korean wave in Asian countries. South Korean television shows and movies portray issues and themes which Asian audiences can easily relate to(Ryoo 2007).

However, it is important to note that each country has a different ethos. Consequently, the response of audiences in different countries to the same content is different(Kim 2007). Due to different cultural backgrounds, availability, and consequently different decoding and interpreting of the same content, the response to the Korean wave in Europe is slightly different from the Asian countries mentioned above. The Korean wave arrived in Europe and North America for the first time in the XXI century and in the 2010s it gained more recognition. At that time thanks to the development of the Internet, especially video streaming platforms such as YouTube, K-pop has become a global phenomenon. After that, Korean art, cuisine, and traditional culture gained the global spotlight(Bajgier-Kowalska et al. 2017). Another globally recognized part of the Korean wave are video games and cosmetics,

which are available to buy in many parts of the world(Krasnowolski 2014).

In this paper, the focus is put on the phenomenon of the Korean wave in Poland, which is a developed country located in Central Europe. Diplomatic relations between Poland and South Korea were established for the first time on 27th November 1989. On that day, the Korean Embassy in Warsaw was established and a year later on January 17th, the Polish Embassy in Seoul was established(Diniejko 2013). These were very important events when it comes to the cooperation of both countries that later on influenced many other events - for example, establishing the Korean Culture Center in Poland, which later on had a great impact on the start of the Korean wave in Poland.

When it comes to the responsibility of promoting Korean culture in Poland there is the Korean Culture Center located in Warsaw, which was founded in 2010. The Korean Culture Center, supported by the Korean Embassy in Poland, focuses on promoting Korean culture, art, language, cuisine, fashion, etc. The Culture Center organizes many contests, festivals, language courses, meetings with professional dancers and other events. The organization which is responsible for the Korean Cultural Centers around the world is the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. It also organizes a K-Pop World Festival every year in South Korea and invites the best dancers from all around the world to visit South Korea(Arditya 2013).

According to the data collected by Korea Foundation in 2020, there are about 115 thousand fans of the Korean Wave in Poland(Pietrewicz 2020). This paper focuses on the most successful areas of the Korean Wave in Poland, which are: Korean studies, K-dramas, K-movies, K-food, K-beauty, and K-pop. Through the paper challenges of the Korean Wave in Poland are analyzed by referring to the cultural background of Poland. In the paper, we briefly explain the history of gaining popularity, the reasons behind it, and the most important events regarding each of the 6 areas. The character of this paper is purely qualitative, although it refers to quantitative findings of other researchers.

II. The Main Fields of the Korean Wave in Poland

Before examining the areas of the Korean Wave in Poland, let's take a brief look at the cultural and psychological characteristics of Poles. Examining the cultural and psychological characteristics of Poles can provide a fundamental explanation for understanding why the Korean Wave is successful or facing challenges in Poland. To better understand the differences between both societies, the characteristics of Poles are compared with South Korean counterparts.

Saving is one of the most important economic behaviors, which have been analyzed by many economists, psychologists, and sociologists. The motives for saving among people reflect the changes taking place in the consciousness of the community. The structure of saving motives of Polish people revealed that motives for saving varied greatly in 2002 and 1991. In 1991 the dominant saving motive was to save money in order to protect against unfavorable events in the future (for the so-called "rainy day"), the residual motive turned out to be the dominant one in 2002 (Brzozowska & Goszczynska 2002). Only 16% of Poles invests their capital actively (Siudaj 2021). Among young Koreans, the most popular method of saving is an investment in stocks and cryptocurrencies. It has been proven that 88% of Koreans in their 20s and 30s are investing in stocks, while 35% said that they are trading cryptocurrencies (*The Korea Herald* 2021).

The consciousness of Polish society has been greatly influenced by the change in the political situation. Historically, Poland had been under the influence of the Soviet Union until 1989, when the political system built by the communists in Poland collapsed. People who grew up in a communist country had different priorities than generations born after the collapse of communists' rule. In another study, conducted by Skocz (2012), it was proved that generations vary greatly also in the terms of collectivist and individualistic values. Young Poles showed much higher individualistic features than the older generation which was more on the

collectivist side(Skocz 2012), which again is the result of different political situations of the country. On the other hand, South Korea is known for having a collectivistic society(Kim et al. 2003).

Another thing that is interesting about the younger generation of Polish people is the fact that many of them consider themselves European citizens rather than Polish citizens. This group of young people believes that breaking free ideologically and culturally is important for Poland to keep developing as a part of the European Union. The older generation, however, believes that Polish traditions and identity should be protected(Tarasiewicz 2011). Contrary to young Poles, young South Koreans have a strong sense of national pride and unity. Although young Koreans are open to consuming imported Western culture, they are also focused on nurturing their indigenous culture(Yang 2007).

The differences between the generations are also manifested in the results of parliamentary elections. The majority of the older generation supports the parties that are more conservative, focused on strengthening Polish values in the nation while developing values independent from the European Union. Moreover, the conservative party is closely linked to the Catholic faith and is putting great importance on making the faith stronger in Polish people. Young people, on the other hand, are very divided when it comes to voting - in 2019 26% voted for the conservative party, 24% for the centrist party, and 18% for the leftist party(Lipinski 2019). Contrary to the rightist parties, leftist or centrist parties are supporting strong cooperation with the European Union and are more open to global cooperation. In South Korea, however, politics are not connected to any religion and are focused on different issues. Two main political parties are the liberal Democratic Party of Korea and the conservative People Power Party. One of the main issues that divide these political parties are the relationship with the United States of America, the feminist movement, and potential collaboration and relationship with North Korea. In South Korea, the supporters of the conservative People Power Party are mainly young men and the older generation of Koreans. The supporters of the liberal Democratic Party of

Korea are young women and middle-aged Koreans(Lee 2021).

Officially speaking, Poland is a country of the Catholic faith and around 90% of people living there has been baptized and consequently many of them were raised in Catholic families. However, it is important to note that many people nowadays give up on the Catholic faith due to many controversies connected to Catholic church, for example receiving bribes by priests(Sitnicka 2019). In South Korea, however, Buddhism and Confucianism have played an important role in the development of culture and to this day are considered the most influential religions in the lives of South Korean people. Nonetheless, officially the majority of South Koreans has no religion. Among people with religion, the two most popular ones are Protestantism and Buddhism(Quinn 2019).

Another issue that greatly divides the Polish community is the LGBT movement. Currently, around 5% of Polish people define themselves as LGBT(Portal Statystyczny 2020). However, because of the strong connection between Polish society and Catholic religion, LGBT rights are currently not well respected in Poland. What is more, the situation of LGBT people in Poland became another big social issue that greatly divides Polish society(*BBC News* 2020). In South Korea, public tolerance and support of sexual minorities is believed to be very low. What is more, in the past South Korean media was using censorship on LGBT-related topics. Although South Korean society is changing, there is a long way ahead before the total acceptance of LGBT in South Korea(Kim 2012). Compared to Poland, South Korean media does not cover the topic of sexual minorities a lot. Therefore, compared to South Korea, in Poland LGBT issue has greater importance in society.

Polish and South Korean societies are very polarized and as many other societies, can be divided into 2 major groups - younger and older generations which lack understanding of one another. However, it is important to note that the younger generations in Poland and South Korea are also strongly divided when it comes to political and economic views(*Newsweek* 2019; Kang 2021).

When compared to other European countries, countries of Central and

Eastern Europe are considered to be less welcoming to immigrants or LGBT people than Western European countries(Pew Research Center 2018). The acceptance of immigrants from other countries in Poland has been another hot topic and conflicts caused by racist sentiments have been getting fierce in recent years(Deutschmann 2017). What is more, after the spread of the coronavirus, some people in Poland became more aggressive towards immigrants and racist in general(Onet Wiadomosci 2020). Similarly, South Korea is a naturally homogenous country. Low levels of acceptance of different cultures, racism, ethnonationalism are typical for such countries(Lim 2020). However, the process of globalization changes the mindsets of people. It is noticeable that due to globalization homogenous countries become more open and accepting of immigrants, minorities, and different cultures.

1. Korean studies in Poland

Due to the rapid growth of popularity of the Korean wave in Poland, the number of young people showing interest and desire in studying Korean language and culture is becoming higher every year. In recent years there is a popular global trend on YouTube where broadcasters share their tips about learning the Korean language. What is more, there is a free online Korean language course for foreigners offered by The Cyber University of Korea, which was founded by the Government of South Korea. Moreover, there is an increase in the number of applicants for Far East studies, especially with Korean specialization at universities in Poland and throughout Europe(Kuwahara 2014).

One of the reasons for this phenomenon is a growing demand for professionals specializing in translation of Korean and Polish languages due to many investments of South Korean companies in Poland. Consequently, choosing Korean Studies as a major became one of safe career paths for young people(Sungeun 2017). Over 30 years have passed since South Korea and Poland established diplomatic cooperation between

both countries. Currently, based on the data obtained from 2019, there are 260 South Korean companies operating in Poland. What is more, South Korea is also considered as one of the largest investors in Poland excluding European Union countries. Among the biggest companies having their branches in Poland are LG and Samsung (Polish Investment & Trade Agency 2019).

The first university in Poland to offer Korean Studies in 1983 was the University of Warsaw (Kida 2014). Currently there are five public universities that offer Korean language education in Poland. Among these universities are the University of Warsaw, the Adam Mickiewicz University, the University of Wrocław, the Jagiellonian University and the University of Silesia (Sungeun 2017). Among these universities, the Adam Mickiewicz University and the University of Warsaw are considered universities of high prestige (Perspektywy 2021).

Although all of the mentioned universities offer Korean language education, the type of education is slightly different. The University of Warsaw and the Adam Mickiewicz University offer undergraduate and graduate degree studies while the University of Wrocław and the Jagiellonian University offer only undergraduate degree studies. What is more, the University of Warsaw, the University of Wrocław and the Jagiellonian University offer majors in Korean studies, which focus more on the cultural aspects of the country than linguistics. On the other hand, the Adam Mickiewicz University offers a major in Korean Philology, which focuses more on linguistics than cultural aspects of the country (Wordpassion 2021). The University of Silesia, however, offers only a course in the Korean language.

There are also the King Sejong Institute and the Korean Culture Center in Poland that offer Korean language courses. What is more, there are also some private language schools in several cities across Poland which offer a course in Korean language. It is important to note that in 2017 Poland was known to have the largest number of higher education institutions offering Korean studies in Central and Eastern Europe (Sungeun 2017).

Universities, however, offer not only compulsory classes but also many various student clubs. For example, the Adam Mickiewicz University established a traditional samulnori percussion band named “Keunsoriro”. What is more, there is a fan dance troupe called “Buchaechum”. There is also another traditional dance troupe called “Sogo”. Mentioned student clubs perform during various events connected to Korean Culture and Korean Studies, such as Korean Culture Days in Poznan and academic conferences(Zaklad Jezyka Koreanskiego (n.d)). In 2020, Korean Philology in Adam Mickiewicz University was the most popular major chosen by candidates among all of the majors of the university - over 24 candidates applied for one study spot in the Korean Philology major(Zycie Uniwersyteckie 2020).

University of Warsaw had a very similar number of candidates to the Adam Mickiewicz University for the academic year 2020/2021. It was the second most popular major when it comes to candidates competing for one spot - over 24 people applied for one spot in Korean Studies major in the University of Warsaw(Ministerstwo Nauki i Szkolnictwa Wyzszego 2020)

Korean studies in Poland are supported by many South Korean organizations such as the Korea Foundation, the Korea Research Foundation, the Academy of Korean Studies, and the Korea Literary Translation Institute. The South Korean Government is also providing aid to students of the Korean language in Poland, such as teaching materials and scholarships. Such contribution of the Korean Government is another reason for the growing interest in Korean studies among young people(Sungeun 2017).

The growing enthusiasm for Korean language learning is expected to become even bigger as the cooperation of Poland and South Korea is increasing every year.

2. K-dramas

Despite the initial interest in Korean productions only from neighboring

countries of South Korea, at some point, the demand for them appeared in more distant countries - at the beginning in different Asian countries (Vietnam, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Nepal), and then also in European and American countries (Oleksiuk 2021).

The first Korean drama series which appeared on Polish television in 2010 was a series called "Chuno". It was not very popular in Poland at that time due to complicated plots and many mistakes in translation (Gardocka 2020). After that, the other two series which were aired on Polish television were "Empress Ki" and "Iris". The series called "Iris" was aired in Poland in 2011. Again, however, it did not gain much popularity at that time. Another Korean series aired on Polish television was "Empress Ki" in 2015 and 2016. Compared to the previous two K-dramas, this one was much more popular although it cannot be called one of the most popular series of that time. Viewers were pleased with exotic and vivid colors. They appreciated the high budget and skills that have been invested in the production (*Gazeta Polska* 2016).

It can be said that the Korean wave started to be a global phenomenon only after the technology became more advanced and social media became more popular worldwide (Yong Jin 2012). Thanks to the development of the Internet, people interested in Korean culture, especially students of Korean studies, were able to practice their language skills. Nowadays, however, the audience of Korean drama series is much bigger than just students of Korean studies. Fans of Korean drama series are very active on social media. Fans do not only watch series, but they also produce various types of pictures, fan-fiction stories, reviews, etc.

Currently, on Facebook there are few groups that are devoted to Korean drama series, which have thousands of members. Although members of such groups are usually living in various areas of Poland, they tend to meet during the Korean Culture Days and different events connected to Korean culture. Even though the meeting possibilities are very limited, they feel a connection towards each other due to common interest in Korean drama series. Therefore, the community itself is characterized by a strong bond between its members (Gardocka 2020).

However, as there are many fans of K-dramas, anti-fans can also be found. There are few reasons for which K-dramas can be disliked by some people. Some people think the plot is very trivial, repetitive, and peculiar. Some people can also dislike series only because of the soundtrack or generally dislike it for the actor in the drama. There are also people who boycott dramas because there was a scandal in which an actor from K-drama was involved (Gardocka 2020). As the popularity of K-drama is not that big in Poland yet, there are not many anti-fandoms existing for now. However, as the popularity of K-dramas grows, surely the number of anti-fans will grow accordingly (Siuda 2008).

Due to the cultural and mindset differences between Korean and Polish people, it is difficult for Polish people to relate to the problems characters go through in Korean drama series. What is more, love scenes in Asian productions are generally known to be rather on the innocent side. While, when it comes to American or European productions, sex scenes are shown in a more open, sometimes even vulgar way (Awesome World 2020). Although Poland is rather considered a conservative country compared to other European Union countries, still lately there is a trend of showing much more nudity in the movies (Glinska 2017).

Therefore, the process of gaining popularity by Korean drama series in Poland is relatively slow compared to Asian countries. However, the plots of contemporary Korean drama productions are more diverse and less repetitive than in the past. Consequently, contemporary K-dramas are expected to attract a global wider audience in the future (Oleksiuk 2021).

3. K-movies

Korean movies have also played an important role in the Korean wave phenomenon. The first movie that gained global recognition was a movie called "Swiri". It earned 11 million USD, which means that it earned more than the global super hit "Titanic". After this huge success, the government of South Korea focused more on promoting Korean movies.

Among all of the movie genres, artistic movies gained the most popularity outside South Korea. Some of the movies even won the most prestigious movie awards in Europe. For example, in 2004, the movie "Old Boy" by Park Chan-wook won the Palme d'Or at Cannes at the most famous movie festival in Europe. Other Korean movies, especially those made by Kim Ki-duk, have also received many prestigious awards. Kim Ki-duk received the Best Director Award for two of his movies produced in 2004 - "Samaritan Girl" and "3-Iron." He also got the Golden Lion Award at the Venice International Film Festival for a movie called *Pieta* produced in 2018(Oleksiuk 2021).

Although the number of Korean movies that received various awards is growing, not many Korean movies are released in large cinemas in Poland. Korean movies enthusiasts to watch Korean movies in most cases have to attend special events, such as "Five Flavors Film Festival", "Warsaw Film Festival", and "Warsaw Korean Film Festival". Some of the small repertory cinemas also organize special screenings of Korean movies. However, it can be said that the availability of Korean movies in Poland is rather low. In addition, different acting, cultural norms, and language make it difficult for Polish to switch from Western productions and start enjoying Korean ones(Stawinski 2016). However, recently the situation started to change slowly.

One of the first Korean movies that was released for bigger audience in Polish cinemas was "Train to Busan". The movie was initially showed during "Five Flavors Film Festival". However, due to a big global interest, one year later it was released in large cinemas in Poland(Stawinski 2016). The film was well received by Polish audience, reviews were excellent, and it was also a global commercial success(Czartoryski 2017).

Another production that received lots of global attention in 2020 is the movie called "Parasite". The movie is believed to have dominated the Academy Awards Ceremony. It received four awards in total - for the best picture, the best director, the best international feature film, and the best original screenplay. "Parasite" is the first non-English film and the

first South Korean film to win the best picture at the Academy Awards. Only 11 non-English language films have ever been nominated in the category before this(Pascucci 2020). The movie was also very popular in Poland at that time. Due to its huge popularity, the Polish distributor of the film announced and organized additional screenings of the movie in many cinemas. The movie stayed popular even a long time after the premiere(Onet Film2020). The movie gathered lots of praise from the audience in Poland. Fans were impressed that the movie showed universal problems of the world, such as the social class system and generation gap(Jedlinski 2020).

Another Korean movie that became a hot topic globally is a movie called “Minari” released in 2020. One of the actresses from the movie, Yuh-Jung Youn, won the Academy Award for the best supporting actress. It was the second Korean movie to make history at the Academy Awards. However, this movie was not a global commercial success(Choe 2021). The movie was released in cinemas in Poland one year after its global premiere. It has received good reviews but did not make as good impression as “Parasite” on the Polish audience(Filmweb (n.d.)).

Summing up, the availability of Korean movies in Poland is rather low, which makes it difficult for K-movies to gain many fans. However, after the success of “Train to Busan” and “Parasite” Poles became more interested in Korean movies and the anticipation and curiosity for future movies are huge.

4. K-food

Korean food is very different from Polish food. While many Korean dishes are associated with spicy food, Polish food is considered a rather salty cuisine. Before Korean cuisine gained popularity in Poland, Japanese, Thai and Chinese food were already very popular in Poland(Michalik 2019). However, it is important to note that not all Polish people distinguish between different types of Asian food and use the umbrella

term “Asian food” to describe Korean, Japanese, Thai, Chinese, or Indian food. This phenomenon is similar in Asia as Asian people tend to describe European food under one term and not distinguish between different countries’ cuisine. What is more, for Polish people, Asian food is usually considered a healthy cuisine type and is associated with lots of spices, seafood, and seaweed(Korzeniecka (n.d.)).

There are some Korean restaurants that can be found in Poland. Most of them are in the capital city - Warsaw. However, due to its growing popularity, nowadays it is possible to observe that more new Korean restaurants are opening. In recent years more Korean restaurants are also opening in the city called Wroclaw(Oleksiuk 2021). Near Wroclaw there are also few branches of South Korean companies, including LG Chem, which hire many Korean workers(Polish Investment & Trade Agency 2019). Consequently, not only Polish people are influencing the growth of popularity of K-food in Poland, but it is also influenced by South Koreans living in Poland.

Some of the Korean restaurants located in Poland resign from serving some Korean dishes. It refers especially to spicy food because many people believe that Polish people will not like it, and consequently not buy it. What is more, as some of the ingredients used in South Korea are not easily available in Poland, some restaurants decide to use substitute ingredients that are widely used in Poland. Therefore, finding a realistic Korean restaurant is not an easy task in Poland, although with some effort it can definitely be found(Michalik 2019).

Among YouTube broadcasters who produce content about South Korea targeting Polish people, there is one famous one connected to Korean food. The channel name is “Pierogi z Kimchi”(Pierogi with Kimchi) and the main content focuses on preparing Korean dishes by using ingredients available to buy in Poland. The name “Pierogi z Kimchi” refers to traditional Polish food called pierogi, which is quite similar to Korean mandu or English dumplings, although the making process and fillings slightly vary. The channel “Pierogi z Kimchi” gathered an audience of over 115 thousand subscribers in less than a year(Czaja 2021).

Another trend that is strongly associated with South Korea and is connected to food consumption is mukbang. Mukbang is known as an eating show, where online broadcasters consume food while interacting with their audience. Mukbang became more popular worldwide especially after the spread of coronavirus. As people felt more lonely during lockdown, they began to watch more mukbang streaming videos(Kang et al. 2020). In the Republic of Korea, eating together and sharing dishes is a traditional practice. Therefore, watching mukbang helps to satisfy the need for sociable eating, which is very important in Korean culture(Choe 2019). What is more, another reason behind the popularity of mukbang is the fact that it provides visual and auditory stimuli which can satisfy cravings for food(Kang et al. 2020). However, eating food together and sharing dishes between people does not have such an important cultural value in Europe compared to Asia(Danesi 2019). In addition, many Poles believe that mukbang is promoting unhealthy eating habits. Although it may help with the feeling of loneliness it can cause some health issues(such as overeating or starving oneself) and deepen isolation from other people(Menway 2020). For Polish people, eating food in front of a camera is rather an exotic phenomenon that is hard to understand. Most importantly, during mukbang, broadcasters usually overeat. In the Polish cultural context, overeating is considered as something in a bad tone and inappropriate culturally especially if other people are watching(Grygiel 2019). Is it worth to mention that there is a cultural difference between Asian countries and Europe when it comes to practices during food consumption. For example, in Poland there are principles of *savoir vivre* when eating. Among all the rules about good manners at the table, there is a rule that one should not speak while consuming food. What is more, people should consume by putting small portions on their cutlery(*Wprost* 2021). Considering those differences, it is only natural that mukbang is not very popular in Poland. Although it is possible to find some channels on YouTube which make videos similar to mukbang videos, content makers in Poland usually focus on trying a small amount of food and describing the taste of it, rather than overeating. What is

more, most of the Polish broadcasters follow the rules of *savoir vivre* and usually cover their mouths when speaking and consuming food at the same time.

Although mukbang was not well-received in Poland, K-food is becoming more popular in Poland, mainly thanks to the association of Korean food with healthy cuisine. Compared to few years ago, many new restaurants are opening in big cities. Therefore, in the future, K-food is expected to become more popular.

5. K-beauty

Another trend that came from South Korea and became a very important part of the Korean wave is the Korean skincare routine. Even though the beauty standards are very different in Asia and different parts of the world (for example, in Europe tanned complexion and a rounder figure are preferred, quite the contrary to East Asia), Asian cosmetics have been having a very good reputation worldwide for many years. Recently, however, Korean cosmetics are becoming the most popular among Asian cosmetics. In 2020, there was a trend spread globally by influencers called the Korean evening skincare ritual of repeatedly cleansing and moisturizing with around ten skincare products. All this caused a great global demand for Korean cosmetics. Consequently, at that time a new term "K-beauty", which is related to the Korean cosmetics industry, was created (Oleksiuk 2021).

Korean cosmetics are recently possible to spot in many cosmetic stores in Poland. The most convincing advertisements for Korean cosmetics are considered to be faces of Korean women, who are believed to have smooth and flawless complexions. It is important that there are also books available worldwide that contain information about secrets of the Korean skincare routine (Bisadventure 2019). Among those books, there is a book called "The Little Book of Skin Care: Korean Beauty Secrets for Healthy, Glowing Skin" by Charlotte Cho. The book was translated into

many languages, including Polish.

Korean skincare enthusiasts choose Korean cosmetics because they believe that they are perfect for any skin type. What is more, Korean cosmetics are believed to be the answer to any need of the skin - they help with moisturizing, firming, rejuvenation, etc. Korean cosmetics also come in different forms - masks, gels, BB creams, night and day creams. Korean cosmetics are considered to be unique because they are designed to intensify the effects of different cosmetics, and because of the ingredients they contain. Majority of Korean cosmetics are made of natural ingredients. Korean cosmetics are not the only popular aspect of K-beauty. Application methods of cosmetics have also been greatly changed due to the influence of the Korean wave. For example, before the Korean skincare routine became popular, many people were used to rubbing a toner into the skin rather than tapping it(Bochner 2019).

One of the most successful products sold in Poland among Korean cosmetics are products containing snail mucus. The snail mucus is known to have anti-aging properties confirmed by clinical studies. It also helps with regenerating the skin and improves the quality and texture of the skin. Although other countries also produce cosmetics containing snail mucus, South Korea is known to produce the biggest amount in various forms(Urbaniak 2019).

The popularity of Korean cosmetics in Poland has been spreading since the 2010s. Compared to 2014, in 2015 the export of Korean cosmetics to Poland rose by 63 percent. It is due to the decision of the two global cosmetics and beauty supply chains(Sephora and Hebe) to carry Korean cosmetics in their stores across Poland(Lee 2016). Every year more Korean cosmetics are introduced in Poland and its popularity is steadily growing. In the future, Korean cosmetics are expected to gather even more fans.

6. K-pop

An important moment for K-pop and promotion of the Korean wave

globally was the debut of such groups as TVXQ in 2003, SS501 in 2005, and Super Junior in 2005(Williamson 2011). Even though US and European people were not interested in Korean pop music initially, the situation began to change quite quickly. As time passes, more artists organize concert tours for the benefit of European countries. For example, in 2019 there were 15 K-pop concerts organized in Poland(Oleksiuk 2021).

Korean pop has been known for its dynamic. It is strongly inspired by American pop, hip-hop, and rhythmic music combined with interesting choreography. The quality of songs itself is not the most important thing as the main emphasis is on the visual side of the music videos and group members, which became a hallmark of Korean pop. K-pop is known to mainly attract female teenagers who are eager to create fanclubs, buy records or accessories related to their favorite idols. The first Korean singer that became a huge star globally is called Psy, and he was a surprise for the whole world in 2012. His song named "Gangnam style" took over the internet in many countries. For a long time, it was the hit on YouTube with the most views, and almost everybody knew the melody of this song at that time(Oleksiuk 2021). Since the big success of "Gangnam style", the Korean music industry has become more focused on gaining global recognition. K-pop groups are constantly changing their sound and style, mainly to attract as many fans as possible.

K-pop is well received not only in such an important music market as the United States, but also in many countries all over the world. It can be said that South Korea uses K-pop music as a form of communication with the rest of the world(Hong 2014).

What is more, the 21st century is a century of technological progress. What once could have been only watched live, now can be watched online. K-pop shows and all kinds of performances by Korean celebrities can be watched online. Moreover, recently the shows are held in 3D technology, which allows fans to experience real meetings with their idols without leaving home. South Korea has been focused on promoting its culture online and contrary to expectations, when the world stopped, the Korean wave spread even more. People were forced to stay at home due

to COVID-19 pandemic and consequently work or study from home. They began to have more time to watch Korean series, browse the web, or even shop online. That's how virtual reality has become a place of cultural meetings(Oleksiuk 2021).

Currently, the most popular global K-pop group is called BTS - also called "Bangtan Boys". The group was established for the first time in 2013 and did not gain global recognition initially. Even though it took some time, the group was listed on the top of the Forbes Korea Power Celebrity Ranking in 2018. Some of their songs were also certified by the Gold Records Industry Association of America, which happened for the first time to any K-pop group(Besley 2020).

While K-pop is generally well-received by many young people globally, some groups of people or the older generations do not understand its popularity. In 2020 on Polish breakfast television, while broadcasters were commenting on the list of the most handsome faces of 2020 made by TC Chandler, one of the BTS members was insulted. They called him unmanly and said that they do not understand the reason why would somebody consider him the most handsome man in the world. The TV station apologized after this incident due to the outburst of the rage of BTS fans(Godzinski 2020). What is more, in 2018, there was a popular travel program called "Better Late than Never" on Polish TV during which famous male celebrities from Poland visited Asian countries. Among those countries were Japan and South Korea. Participants of the program, when visiting Japan and South Korea, were commenting that local women look like "little girls"(Tofu Media 2018). It is worth mentioning that beauty standards vary around the world. While in most of the cultures in Asia women who have a skinny type of body are preferred, in Europe girls who are on a rather curvy side are preferred. The same goes for beauty standards for men - different features are desirable in men around the world. For example, wearing even light make-up in some European countries, especially conservative ones, could elicit unwelcome glares and be considered unmanly. However, in South Korea wearing light make-up by ordinary men is not considered an

unmanly feature. "Soft masculinity" is considered attractive in South Korea. What is more, K-pop celebrities usually wear heavier make-up than ordinary people during their performances(*BBC News* 2018).

Generally speaking, estimating the number of Polish K-pop fans is very difficult. It is caused by the fact that many K-pop fans feel like they are a part of international fandom and resign on using Polish fanpages. The most popular Polish K-pop fanpages on Facebook are "SHINee Poland" which has over 55 000 likes, "EXO Poland" which has around 12 000 likes, and "Bangtan Boys Poland" with around 25 000 likes. In research conducted by Trzcinska(2018) it was revealed that almost half of Polish K-pop fans are 16-20 years old and almost 95% of fans are younger than 25 years old. The results on gender distribution were unsurprising, because it revealed that 97.4% of the K-pop fans in Poland are female. Most of the respondents answered that they like K-pop because it is a good music genre and it improves their mood. What is more, many people responded that they like it because it is different from Western music and is not too focused on sexiness and exposing bodies(Trzcinska 2018).

As the popularity of K-pop sweeps across the globe, more Korean companies decide to include K-pop stars in their marketing campaigns. Samsung, one of the biggest Korean conglomerates, launched several global marketing campaigns for their smartphones in collaboration with BTS(*The Korea Times* 2020). Samsung Galaxy S20+ BTS version was released in 2020 and it significantly increased the number of sales of Samsung smartphones globally. Also in Poland, many BTS fans were anticipating the release of the smartphone and bought it right after it(Bartnik 2020).

Therefore, K-pop is still a new phenomenon in Poland to many people, but it is gaining popularity. Currently, it appeals mainly to the young female audience. To increase its popularity in different groups, more effort should be put into global promotion. Seeing a K-pop idol is an exotic experience for many Poles as Korean culture is foreign to them. However, as Poles will become more exposed to Korean culture in the

future, they will become more interested in it as well.

III. Conclusion

The Government of South Korea has been very supportive in the matter of increasing the Korean wave around the world. By doing so, South Korea has succeeded in drawing the attention of the whole world to its culture and country. The goal that the South Korean government has in regards to the Korean wave is to maintain its position and huge popularity in Asia, but also to deepen the Korean wave and knowledge about South Korea in Europe, South and North America. It is especially important in these areas, as various kinds of festivals or meetings related to Korean culture are organized there less frequently than in various Asian countries. Despite certain limitations, European and American countries, and more specifically the Korean culture enthusiasts living there, care a lot about the presence of the Korean wave, hoping for its development in many areas(Oleksiuk 2021). As a result of South Korea's enthusiasts and institutions supported by the South Korean government, the following are organized in Poland: concerts of Korean K-pop bands, days of Korean culture, various contests checking knowledge about South Korea, all kinds of exhibitions, etc. What is more, the Korean wave has proved to be a very well-planned tool in the hands of South Korea. It brings high profits and is a showcase of the country. Moreover, the pop culture which combines tradition and modernity opens the country to the world and is an important factor in spreading knowledge about South Korea. Consequently, people are more curious and therefore willing to learn about exotic Korean culture(Leong 2014).

As analyzed through this paper, there are areas of the Korean wave that are less or more popular in Poland. It is mainly caused by many psychological and cultural differences that European and Asian countries have, including the difference in beauty perception. Therefore, the image

of men or women presented by K-pop groups could cause mixed feelings in some Poles. Make-up for men and the concept of “soft masculinity” is nowadays a controversial thing in Poland, that can cause even aggressive reactions. What is more, contrary to South Korea, in Poland eating together and sharing dishes does not have much cultural value. Therefore, mukbang has been not received well by the Polish audience. What is more, Poland is a relatively homogeneous country, therefore acceptance of different cultures and people of different races does not happen as quickly compared to non-homogeneous countries.

Another big obstacle for Korean Wave to fully flourish in Poland is the limited availability of content and products. When it comes to K-movies, not many movies are released in Polish cinemas. Instead, Korean culture enthusiasts must attend special screenings during various events or watch them in small repertory cinemas. Finding an authentic Korean restaurant in Poland can be also difficult. However, compared to a few years ago, the availability of Korean content and products is becoming much greater than in the past.

The most popular areas of the Korean wave in Poland are Korean cosmetics and the Korean language. When it comes to cosmetics, the export to Poland has increased a lot in recent years. Not only cosmetics are popular, but also methods of applying them. When it comes to the Korean language, due to many investments of Korean conglomerates in Poland, the Korean language provides a good start on the labor market for young people. Therefore, the number of candidates applying to Korean language majors in universities increased a lot in recent years.

The image of South Korea in the world has also improved through the exhibition of culture. According to a survey conducted by the BBC between 2009 and 2012, in countries such as France, China, and Russia, the average rating of South Korea’s image has changed from “slightly negative” to “rather positive”(Oleksiuk 2021). Before the increase of popularity of the Korean wave, South Korea was mostly acknowledged as a country where people work overtime and never rest. Therefore, it did not have a good global image. However, in some parts of the world,

where the Korean wave is not that popular yet, South Korea may still be perceived as a country with a slightly negative image. For example, although the popularity of the Korean wave in Poland is increasing recently, some people still perceive that Korean society is focused on the fierce competition between people and iron discipline in childhood. The way young generations are raised differs greatly in Europe and South Korea. What is more, despite the fact that both societies have the root of patriarchal societies, the disproportion in working life for women and men in South Korea is perceived to be much higher than in Poland(Sawinska & Wrotniak-Chalada 2014). Although the negative image of South Korea has been fading recently, incomprehensible parts of Korean culture for people from Europe still exist. Therefore, there is still room for improvement in terms of changing the image of South Korea in some of the European countries, including Poland. As more effort will be put into increasing the availability and promotion of the Korean Wave in Poland and Poles become more open to other cultures, the slightly negative image of the country will slowly fade away. It is necessary to study the culture of local people and spread more understanding of Korean culture for it to become more popular. By doing so the wish of the great leader Kim Koo to make South Korea the most beautiful country loved globally can be achieved.

The main limitation of this study is the lack of qualitative materials to make a thorough analysis. It is caused by the fact that the popularity of the Korean wave began not too long ago in Poland. As time passes, the popularity of the Korean wave is expected to grow. Therefore, redoing a similar qualitative analysis a few years later could bring different results.

Future research could focus on quantitative data to provide a good foundation for future qualitative and comparison studies. The general image that Poles have about South Korea or various areas of the Korean wave could be analyzed through quantitative surveys. What is more, future research could also focus on analyzing the Korean wave in other parts of Europe. Countries of the European Union, especially Western and Eastern European countries, are different in terms of psychological

and cultural characteristics(Pew Research Center 2018). Therefore, analyzing the spread of the Korean Wave in different European countries could bring different results and give a better understanding of the phenomenon. A comparison of successes and challenges of the Korean Wave in different countries of the European Union could provide a foundation for finding solutions to make the Korean wave more popular in countries where it is facing challenges. Up to date, many studies focused on analyzing the Korean wave have been done in Asian countries, but little is known about the spread of the Korean wave in various European countries.

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국문요약

폴란드에서의 한류: 성공과 도전

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한국 문화의 인기와 매력의 증가는 전세계적으로 한류 현상을 일으켰다. 한류는 한국 정부의 적극적인 문화정책의 결과로도 볼 수 있는데, 세계화 덕분에 한국을 비롯한 많은 국가에서 대중 문화는 강력한 커뮤니케이션의 수단으로서 경제 발전의 중요한 동력이 될 수 있었다. 또한 한류는 한국의 소프트파워를 전세계에 보여줌으로써 전세계인들에게 한국에 대한 긍정적인 이미지를 강력하게 구축했다. 앞으로 세계적으로 한류의 인기는 더욱 커질 것으로 예상되며, 한류의 다양한 요소들이 다른 나라의 대중문화에도 강력한 영향을 미칠 것으로 예상된다. 과거에는 한류가 주로 아시아 일부 지역에서 목격되는 현상이었다면, 최근의 한류는 유럽을 비롯한 전 세계로 확산되고 있다.

본 논문은 중부 유럽에 위치한 폴란드에서 한류의 성공과 도전이라는 한류의 성장스토리에 초점을 맞추고 있다. 본 논문이 폴란드인들의 성격적 특성과 함께 폴란드에서 가장 인기 있는 한류의 영역들을 세밀하게 분석해본 결과, 폴란드에서의 한류는 다양한 방면에서 지금까지 매우 성공적으로 자리매김하고 있음을 알 수 있었다. 그러나 한국과 폴란드 양국의 문화적 차이로 인해 폴란드에서 성공하지 못한 한류의 분야도 분명히 존재함을 확인할 수 있었고, 이것에 대한 향후의 개선방향에 대해 고민해볼 수 있는 기회를 제공하였다.

주제어: 한류, 폴란드, 성공, 도전