Consuming Korea: Global Branding and Soft Diplomacy from the Lens of K-Drama Cyber Travelers

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ABSTRACT

South Korea's popular culture has been globalizing massively through various channels. Popular culture becomes a giant magnet that attracts global consumers to enjoy South Korea. Particularly by consuming k-drama, foreign consumers can expand their experience by doing internet-based-imaginary travel to South Korea's landscape and daily cultures. This phenomenon is suitable for what we discuss later as the concept of cyber traveling. Departing from that point, this research focuses on South Korea's global branding and soft diplomacy by analyzing k-drama's cyber traveling experience by Indonesian consumers. We are using phenomenology as the main method, while in-depth interview, observation, and open-source document research are used as data collecting methods. This research found that k-drama consumption was able to facilitate cyber traveling that contributes significantly to South Korea's global branding and soft diplomacy as a form of cultural globalization.

Keywords

Global branding, K-drama, cyber traveling, soft diplomacy, cultural globalization

INTRODUCTION

Cyber traveling is a new way to do traveling without visiting the place in an actual way, but using the internet to reach the place. This happens when an individual or a group of people are traveling around the world to gain a piece of new information, regarding culture or even history by surfing on the internet. Cyber traveling can be done several times while being conscious, but it gave impacts consumer's mind and their life experience. This has happened because the consumers can learn and consume the culture that exists during their "trip".

There are two ways to do cyber traveling. First, being part of virtual tours. This type of cyber traveling is packaged along with certain tourist attractions to gain more popularity and visitors. For example, we can see the virtual tour that is organized by Japan National Tourism Organization which shows the attractive culture and places to the foreign consumer about what they can see in real life when they visit Japan.

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Second, how cyber traveling is embedded into the cultural product such as Korean drama (k-drama) that is distributed to foreign consumers. In this form, the foreigner is not intentionally doing the cyber traveling, but they travel along with consuming the k-drama. For example, the traveler who watches k-drama will have a chance to the exposure to the Korean culture. Since technically consumer uses online media, they will dive into the system that has different characteristic compare to the consumer who watches through television. The introduction of this way is unique because all the consumers need to do is to be exposed to an on-going drama or any advertisement from Video on Demand (VOD).

By inserting the cyber traveling concept inside the k-drama, it gives more contribution to the selling of popular culture of the Korean wave. The k-drama is also having an opportunity to recycle its popularity by attracting new foreign consumers. The indicator of its comeback can be seen through how the dramas that have less popularity inside Korea but managed to be popular in other countries. For example, Lie to Me was a drama that less popular for the South Korean market that happened due to the fact that this drama's quality is not as good as what the consumers expected. But the condition was different when it entered the Chinese market. Using IQIYI, one of China's popular VOD, this drama gains lots of positive feedback and became very popular (KOCIS, 2015).

Another example is when Nepal started to consume k-drama. The kind of k-drama that they watch is not a brand-new one, but the one that has been released years back, like Winter Sonata that was released in Korea more than a decade before it entered the Nepal market. That is why we can see that not only cyber traveling opens a new way for the recent dramas, but also the ones from the past that counted as the classics.

It certainly looks different from how k-drama managed to stay put during the TV era, before the public using VOD more. For example, the emergence of k-drama in China started in 1997 through What is Love all About (Soliha & Briandana, 2015). The drama was aired on China Central Television Station (CCTV) and became the second highest-watched drama during that time. The success of k-drama has caught several countries' eyes, such as Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, and Indonesia. According to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Indonesia, South Korea has exported k-drama from US$ 12,7 million in 1999 to more than US$ 50 million in 2007. The increase is magnificently high because k-drama cost cheaper rather than other East Asia dramas, like Japan and Hongkong.

Especially for Indonesia, k-drama is a fresh air that came during the need for new and up-to-date content. Besides being fresh content, k-drama was also cost cheaper than most drama such as Japan and Hongkong. It's also became the plus point while k-drama became something new and promising. After managed to show how powerful their content, k-drama became something that most adults watched during their free time on TV. But after VOD appeared, people started to change their perspective. They prefer to watch from their phone, pc tablet, or laptop. Even though k-drama on TV wasn't fully left behind, the amount of people that start subscribing to VOD was increased.

Since the excitement on VOD appeared, consumers start to change their consumption from k-drama on television to k-drama on VOD. This is happened because of certain reasons. First, k-drama getting less airing time on television, particularly for the case in Indonesian market. Second, VOD become a new thing and served more airing time for k-drama. Third, there is big potential for a larger market of k-drama, as long as they serve what consumers want (Khoiri, 2018).

While expanding their culture to the world, South Korea has been keeping trying to innovate its way to introduce the Korean Wave using k-drama. To reach a larger consumer with larger age scope, South Korea tried to use other media

besides VOD and television. They improve their expansion move through social media such as YouTube, Vlive, and KakaoTV as their new platform. While introducing this new way to provide the content, k-drama also introduced what we called web series (also known for web drama). What makes it different from consuming VOD and television is consumers don't need to have a subscription or any certain gadget such as television or computers. Web series not only served a lighter version of k-drama but also bold enough to tell the story of South Korea's society in deeper concept. This contributes the rise of consumers, even contribute to the rise cyber traveler itself.

Concerning the analysis of a South Korea's culture scholar, Ashanti Widyana (Febrian, Angelina, & Islam, 2020), she assumed that there are two key points behind the reason why k-drama consumption is getting bigger and massively invade foreign market, particularly Indonesia. First, is a 'differentiation'. As a country that have different cultures from the rest of the world, South Korea had something that is uniquely marketable. They also can provide different stories compare to the other country with rather similar content. There are lots of drama genres with different approaches that can become consumers' options. Second is a 'totality'. Despite most of k-drama scenarios are written based on reality or mix of reality and fiction, the production process has put higher standard to meet the perfect picture of reality. The k-drama industry was known for how tough it is, the production team need to sharpen their ability because the expectations for the industry always changing. They need to be adaptable, managed to work with the plot to fit the society, and managed to make the story as natural as possible. This is probably the reason why South Korea is so superior in producing k-drama from fantasy to colossal.

This research will use cultural globalization to approach the case of k-drama as a medium of cyber travelling. Globalizations itself are a form of aspirations and determinations for a new way to contribute on uniformity of ideas and systems in the world (Larasati, 2018). According to David Held, globalization is a spatial phenomenon that related on how there was a gap between communities until the escalation of phenomena's intensity. In globalization, there are several sectors that contribute for being part of a multidimensional process. In this research, we are focusing on how culture could impact the process of international relations.

This research will also use cyber culture and cyber travelling concepts. Cyber culture was introduced as a set of social, ethics, histories, and languages expectations that were used by people that active on the internet. Jakub Macek (Macek, 2004) described cyber culture as a culture that abstract, confusing, and used to express a set of problems. This gave us a highlight on the fact that cyber culture is a reflection of people expectations and interactions that they really want to happen. That's the reason why most cyber culture managed to become one with the majority, because it's something that they really want to happen in reality.

While cyber travelling is a new concept that was based on Ibrahim Kurt and Hakan Gok's research (Kurt & Gok, 2015). Cyber travelling described as an individual or group doing a traveling to certain place without actually going there. This concept will be using internet as part of their supporting factor.

This research will elaborate deeper about South Korea's global branding and soft diplomacy from the Indonesian cyber travelers' experience in consuming k-drama. And also, this research will also pay attention on how the cyber travelers use k-drama as their tool to 'visit' South Korea and to learn South Korean culture.

METHOD
This research use phenomenology as a method with a descriptive analysis. Refer to Edmund Husserl (Mujib, 2015), he categorizes phenomenology into two forms. Firstly,

phenomenology as a form of subjective experiences; and secondly, phenomenology as a study to learn about consciousness from an individual perspective. While Martin Heidegger (Tuffour, 2017) believes that phenomenology is a study about life experiences of individual or group. But depending on the situation, phenomenology can evolve, but still focusing on learning experiences from human's conscious.

Using phenomenology will reveal the meaning behind consumer's experience through consuming k-drama using cyber travelling. That means it will give various meanings depend on how the researchers abstracting the subjects' results.

This method is involving two Indonesians who intensively consume k-drama and experience cyber travelling through their k-drama consumption as subjects of our research. Both subjects need to pass the sets of criteria; firstly, the subjects must access k-drama through internet. Since there are several ways to consume k-drama, we tried to focus on consumers that access k-drama by internet due to our focus on cyber travelling. Second, the subjects must be deeply interested on South Korea's popular cultures especially k-drama. Most of the consumers start to like Korean wave from other South Korea's cultures such as k-pop and k-beauty. Because of how k-drama can deliver most of South Korea's culture, there's some consumers that become multi-fans with the cultures.

Third, the subjects have intensively consumed k-drama for at least six months before this research. This criterion is used to filter the character of k-drama consumers, since there are passive and active consumers for k-drama. Mostly, the active one is more vulnerable to k-drama affecting their life choices and experiences. Being active consumers also showed that consumers are more understanding over the inside of k-drama, so we believe it will deliver more results than the passive consumers.

Fourth, k-drama has been part of the subjects' daily life. For most of active consumers, k-drama has been part of their daily life. Since k-drama is easier to be accessed, consumers can watch k-drama from anywhere. For example, even when consumers were at crowded public transportation, they can easily enjoy k-drama with their own gadget. This portrait can show about how k-drama has a place in their consumers' life and how the consumers bound to it.

Fifth, k-drama affected the subjects' emotions and influence the subjects on how to think. K-drama took most of their stories from the reality of their consumers, and they even tried to give consumers the expectations that they want. So it's make sense that k-drama is relevance to consumers' life, even they can't put the differences between reality and the k-drama world. This effect how they think and feel, like for example their preferences in food, clothes, or even words.

Despite the criteria that have been prepared, both subjects have different backgrounds. Subject 1 is a college student and now it's 22 years old. She started to consume k-drama since 2007 and spent at least 50 hours per month with a fee around Rp 30.000. Subject 2 is a business development executive and on the age of 27 years old. He started to consume k-drama around 2012 for 30 hours per month. He spent Rp 50.000 for internet data because he uses webs that let him watch k-drama for free.

In this research, we will use several data collecting methods. First, there's an in-depth interview as main data collecting method. According to Kristin G. Esterberg (Esterberg, 2002), an interview is an activity that involves question and answer to exchange information and validate the remaining data. Adding the in-depth, the interviews become a deeper data collecting. Researchers are required to do several interviews for every subject. This is to make sure that the result is accurate. The reason why we using the in-depth interview are due to understand subjects' thought about

things related to k-drama. While understanding, subjects will be more aware on what the purpose of the interview. Because these interview take several times, interviewer can learn subjects' body language and insight thought that probably doesn't related on some question but can be used to support the main data, and also let subjects' to correct the result when they feel like it doesn't suit their words.

Second, observation is the most fundamental collecting data that focus on recording the symptoms with the help of several instruments to gain the data (Adler & Adler, 1987). While virtual observation focuses on data that have open sources in the internet, the result will be use as supporting data for the main result. The purpose of using observation is to learn about consumers' attitude and experience. Researchers not only focus on observing subjects, but also observing the cyber world and its common topics that suit the research. It's to make sure that the result can be applied to any consumers that consume k-drama from internet.

Third, documentation that focus on collecting data and information in any form, such as book, document, and picture that later will be use as supporting data (Sugiyono, 2015). In this research, we will be documenting in the form of picture or screenshot that according to what the subjects said. This data can be used to validate if the subjects' words is accurate or not. Through documentation, researchers can provide any evidences from either subjects or consumers from the internet. While it can be used to validate the data, it can also be used to prevent the research for going outside the research question. It will give the research a line between what that needs to be search and what that need to be avoided.

The last method is document searching. There are two types of documents, primary document and secondary document. Both of the documents are the independent one that based on researchers. The kind of documents that can be use is subject personal document, document that available on internet, and journals (Bakry, 2016). The purpose of this method is to make sure that what subject said during the interview is the same as what happened on public. This can show how accurate the result of the interview or how much the similarities that available between subjects and k-drama consumers in general. Beside on using it to validate the accuracy of data and the similarities, document searching also gave researchers some boundaries over what kind of research that have been developed. This will keep the research to be new and unique while using other research as part of the base.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Perceiving and Consuming the Korean Beauty (Places, Cultures, Casts, Products) through K-Drama

In perceiving and consuming k-drama, there are at least four aspects that we need to understand, included Places, Cultures, Casts, and Productions. These aspects have highly impacts on how consumers choose to consuming k-drama or even using the experiences to be part of their daily life.

Places

For k-drama industry, choosing the right place is very important. The production need to understand which place will be better for the cinematography or to attract consumers to watch the drama. Choosing places inside South Korea will also give the production team some advantages, like how they can adjust the scene with the situation and the feeling according to the place. It's also can be used as a long term advantage, like promoting the places as part of the cultural places for tourists.

Using places around South Korea also will give benefits to the country. Not only that the place will turn into cultural place, but it will also become a tourist destination. According to Kim Chang Beom, using k-drama is the form to introducing k-drama but using the tourist destination. When a drama is release, the place

that used as part of the scene will be the reason tourists come to South Korea. It will turn those places into tourist destination that is recognized by consumers.

In order to make sure that the flow of tourist to come to South Korea, the government took several steps to maintain the influence (Trolan, 2017). First is to introduce the place through k-drama. It was important to see the place through the screen, so the viewers will found it as somewhere that tempting to visit.

Second, to make sure than South Korea has wide relations with countries across the world. Through organization like the Korean Tourism Board and the Korean Culture and Content Agency, they utilize k-drama as part of Korean wave through media such as internet. The government even opened cultural centers at several countries to introduce and educate people and raise the amount of tourist that will visit South Korea

Third, promoting the place as a set of k-drama. It's also can be seen as a branding that what people saw through k-drama is something they will see in the reality. They encouraged people to visit South Korea and see the modern world that they created through k-drama. This also improved the amount of tourist that visiting the place only because they saw it through drama. It's also help small business around the place that was shown through k-drama.

For example, we can take a look on Jumunji beach (Ho, 2020). Before the place was used as a set on Goblin[1] (Doo, 2017), Jumunji beach is nothing more than a regular beach that people only visiting during summer. But it's also probably the main reason that production team used it as set, because it's not hard to maintain and can boost more tourist to the beach. Jumunji beach became well known as a place when the main character, Ji Eun-Tak called Kim Shin during a winter on the middle of the beach. The scene was well known with the red shawl that became a special figure during the drama.

When the drama actually finished, Jumunji beach became a popular spot and many people came to recreate the scene and became closer to Ji Eun-Tak and Kim Shin through they own reality.

Based on the example, we can figure it out that k-drama bring a huge impact on how a certain place can be seen for public. It might only
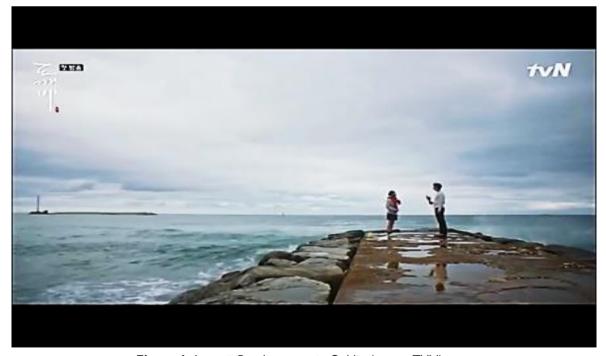

Figure 1. Jumunji Beach as seen in Goblin (*source*: TVN)

take less than a minute for people to see the scene, but it will stay on their mind longer and impacted to them wanting to visiting the place. Because people see from their eyes about things they think is interesting. This causing to the rise of tourist that visited Jumunji beach to recreate the scene, even though if it's on winter.

Cultures

South Korea is known for their diverse culture. It won't be a surprise to use k-drama as a form to reach people and to give them any understandable explanation over South Korea's culture. The culture itself can be a language or even the traditional clothes, Han Bok. These introductions on South Korea's culture lead to the increase of people that found it interesting.

There's a lot of things that traveler reflected from the culture they saw on k-drama to real life. For example, the use of common words based on Korean. Since they were exposed to the language itself, even with the subtitle, traveler might pick up some words that eventually will be use while being in the community. This words can be as a replacement of words in their own languages, such as 'sorry' will be replaced with 'mian' or 'mianhae'[2] (Soompi, 2017), 'really?' will be replaced with 'jinjja?'[3], and any words to replace brother and sister like 'oppa', 'hyeong', 'nuna', and 'eonni'[4] (90 Day Korean, 2020).

In recent time, using the word "hyeong" was to replace the word "brother" and "sister" in Indonesia's culture (Lisdya, 2020). This kind of change happened after the public was exposed over and over again with k-drama and k-pop. Even though the use of this word might not the one that South Korea purposely used, but we can't deny that this part of culture has been implemented into Indonesia's adolescents and adults. This implementation can be seen through social media such as Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube. But, we need to highlight, that even though the word "hyeong" was included in Indonesia's slang words, people that have been exposed to k-drama longer (estimated around 5 to 10 years) will found this as something that

offended both them and the culture they like (Sari, 2020).

Besides the use of Korean as a substitute for their first language, the traveler also learns the traditional clothes or even streetwear that known as the "Korean style". After traveler saw most clothing from k-drama, there's some part of the culture that translated to the worldwide clothing industry. Such as making Han Bok into daily clothes that can be wear not only by Koreans but also Foreigners (Sunder, 2021). Han Bok itself was a semi-formal or formal two-piece outfit that was use during festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations. Hanbok was known as a traditional clothing that represent five elements of yin and yang that originated during Goguryeo Kingdom (37 BCE – 668 CE). Now days, Han Bok not only resemble South Korea's traditional clothes but also as a sign of Korean culture to be known globally. It was shown on how public started to accepted hanbok as a daily wear.

Hanbok no longer represent semi-formal and formal, but also casual wear. Even though the design remained almost the same, hanbok received some twist such as adding other country culture into the outfit, for example adding batik as part of hanbok as a fusion between Indonesia and South Korea's cultures. On other hand, several hanbok received a simplified design that looks more casual to wear in daily.

Not only languages and clothing, traveler also learns the basic habit until cultural things from k-drama. They learned the custom that Korean people usually do, such as drinking attitude. This shown that k-drama actually managed to deliver the culture of South Korea globally. It's not only as a theory, but also implemented to the public while putting the twist with the culture on several countries. This also shown that South Korea's cultures in general is like a fluid that can fit to any circumstances, but also something new that people want to try and learn.

Casts

Beside cultures and places, casts are one of the aspect that impact how k-drama have a special place for consumers. Both actor and actress must have a certain visual, ability to act, and how they are able to become the character. It's happen because the casts might need to leave their identity to become the character inside the drama. The more they manage to do it smoothly, the more the production believes they choose the right casts.

Despite being chosen by the production; consumers have their own preferences on casts. There's several casts that have their own specialist. For example, Lee Min-ho that known for his 'rich boy' image, it's happened due to how he chooses his role. Other example that can we see is how Han So-hee received her image, because she always received antagonist roles.

> "K-drama choose the casts depend on how their characters on the production. Every cast has their own characteristics according on how their acting on the previous dramas." (Subject 1, July 11th 2020, interview, Depok)

Even with the criteria that we saw earlier, the production always trying to find a gap to make sure that their cast won't be monotone on actors and actress with high popularity. Sometimes, they cast idol that have experiences with drama. For example, Do Kyung-soo from boy group EXO. As an idol and an actor, he has several roles on well-known drama such as It's Okay, That's Love and Hello Monster.

Similar with Lee Min-ho and Han So-hee, Do Kyung-soo have a certain image on consumer's perspective. What makes his condition different is, he is an idol actor. Even without being an actor, he already has a huge fandom that will support him. This kind of situation has been used by the production team and the government as their source of promotions. Having a certain actors and actress that can fit in the characters, but also having a huge fandom will be their advantages. This due to the conditions that viewers want to see their favorite actors and actress but also having casts that suitable to their preferences and the storyline.

But sometimes, it's the way to sell the drama. How people will consume it and how people will understand more without deeply researching the culture, as casts was use as the way to promoting it. In the end, casts were only a tool that used to gain South Korea's goals to introduce their cultures to the world. While the popularity and the recognition as an actor or actress, it was only the plus side from these conditions. Either or not the cast was judge according to their performance is out of the production team's jobs. Since from the first performance, casts already agree for being the extension of k-drama to reach people all over the world.

We also need to know that choosing the right cast was needed since cast also can destroy the promotion of the drama. The public was always looking for the actor or actress that have a flawless image and behavior since they will receive a lot of attention and feedback. But, there's a chance even casts can have a dark past or even done something wrong before joining the k-drama world. It might lead to the boycott of the drama or the drama might not even have shown on national TV. For example, Jisoo[5] that known for being a second lead on Moon Lovers: Scarlet Heart Ryeo and male lead on Lunch Box. On his recent drama, River Where the Moon Rises (Lova, 2021), he became the male lead but got into a scandal because of his behavior to woman, sexual harassment, and bullying that he done explicitly.

It's lead the public boycott on him, the petition was published and demanded that the production need to re-produce the drama with new male lead. Jisoo ended up joining the public service as part of his mandatory military (Conran, 2021). Even though the drama has been released, the public demand that production change the male cast for the rest of the episode that haven't been release.

For other example, Park Hye-Soo from drama Dear M[6] (Janati, 2021). The drama

supposedly releases on February 26th, 2021. But due to the recent scandal about her attitude on high school, she was accused as a bully (Kim, 2021). Even though the truth hasn't reveal yet, but the release of Dear M has been postponed until further due. It's show the impact on how cast's public appearance can affect how the public see the drama. It's also will effect on how the drama will be accepted on the national TV. If the scandal was true, the drama won't even release on the national TV until public forget about the scandal.

Even if the drama was released through VOD, there's a small chance that it might get high rating. Because even if the actress didn't do something that the scandal claim, she can't return her image to the previous one. She will still be claim as 'the actress that got into bullying

or actress should have a clean background, good attitude, visual, and good acting skill. It is becoming the most important thing that an actor or actress should have. If they don't have one from those four criteria, there's a chance that they won't be last long enough to promote their drama.

Products

K-drama has been used as a way to introduce South Korea's products for many years. K-drama also known with how much they took part on endorsements. People might see several things like gadget, cosmetics, even food. Depending on consumers' preferences, they usually found something interesting with products that k-drama presented in every episode.

Figure 2. Korean food as seen on Itaewon Class (*source*: Netflix)

scandal' and it will give an impact to any of her drama in the future.

At the end, casts really have a huge impact on how a drama can be accepted by public. Things like attitudes, pasts, until their capabilities in acting have contribution on what kind of image they want to have. With the consumers, especially consumer from South Korea, an actor

For example, when Itaewon Class[7] (Jung, 2020) got high ratings on every episode, consumers highlighting the fact that this drama introducing Korean food globally. After the drama aired, there is a certain food that gained more popularity like Sundubu Jjigae and Eomuk Tang. Even when consumers knew about those

foods, there are still certain demands to the foods they saw.

Due to high demand on the foods that showed during the drama, there even some company that makes food close enough like the one on Itaewon Class. It makes viewers feel closer to their favorite characters and situations inside the drama. It's not only impacted consumers' preferences on products, nor their knowledge about South Korea's products. That's how it works with subject 2, he feels the need to eat something that he saw through k-drama for the sake of feeling closer to the character or certain scene. He also realized the main reason of how he became more consumptive because he found that products that k-drama presented is something that he need or want to try.

"I prefer to eat food like South Korean's street food, for example tteokboki, hotteok, or Korean BBQ. I don't feel the need to visit tourism places that was used for k-drama. For me, if I'm not coming for the food, there's nothing that I could do if I visit South Korea." (Subject 2, January 24th 2020, interview, Tangerang)

It will also rise the selling of any kind of products that are related to what they saw in the drama, this will also lead to the increasing of demand and production on these products on a global level. In the end, the products became highly popular and became consumers' preferences.

For another example, we can use Korean-beauty or well known as k-beauty. During filming of k-drama, the production always has a partnership with several companies including k-beauty companies. K-drama was used as a promotion tool as an exchange for the partnership that both the production team and the company. On the production of True Beauty[8], the team was having a partnership with Colorgram (Zelikha, 2021). The make-up company got tons of screen time while being used by the female lead, Moon Ga-Young. When the drama finally finished, the products that were used became popular among viewers. Even

a drugstore company, Olive Young, directly sent the product from Korea to the customers that ordered it from another country, like Indonesia.

This kind of thing also happened because the same reason like the previous example, the demand of the thing that viewers saw through k-drama. Viewers want to imitate what they saw, feel and expected from k-drama.

It will also impact South Korea's economy. Since the product was introduce by k-drama, it was considered as a cultural export. It will leads to the increasing income that can be used by the country and companies, beside that, it will also give South Korea's a chance to develop new products that will fit in with the consumers. On how and when South Korea will use the k-drama for introducing the products is doesn't matter, since consumers already set their eyes to what k-drama will present.

K-Drama, Global Branding, and Soft Diplomacy

By using globalization as the way to introduce the culture to the world, k-drama focus on using the existence of South Korea's cultures and the need of new contents as their ways to reach consumers (Dinnie, 2009). Besides distributing the cultures globally, K-Drama has a huge impact on several things, such as global branding and soft diplomacy.

South Korea used to be known as a country that split up due to the problem that happened with Korea War. For a commoner, South Korea's image was influenced with North Korea's image (Boik, 2011). It makes them unapproachable even though it's not entirely their fault. From k-drama, South Korea trying to change their global branding to gain more recognition. As they tried to gain more recognition over and over again, South Korea become more approachable because how they tried to open up to the world through k-drama. Even though there's some misconception about their way to gain their new global branding, we need to really admit that South Korea's gained their popularity because they managed to introduce their cultures in the most delightful

way. They didn't force the world to accept k-drama, but they tried to introduce it slowly until they have enough people as k-drama fans.

Its lead us to understand several things. At first, k-drama was a way to introduce their cultures to the world. But now, it's a way to gain more power in every aspect outside their cultures. It could be the way to gain cooperation on economic and politics. This was according to Lee Myung Bak, former president of South Korea's vision through Global Korea. This vision has a purpose to improve South Korea's branding on certain area such as culture diplomacy, terrorism, and reformation of multilateral system. Through these areas, South Korea's has the opportunities for developing new relations with other country and increasing their profit on international level.

To maintain the branding that South Korea tried to get and maintain, the government have a program called the Korean Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) that established around 1962. KOTRA carried the purpose to helping South Korea on their economic development, including exporting culture, products, and introducing tourism. This make KOTRA also supporting cultural products such as k-drama to be introduce to the world. As long as k-drama has a purpose to gained more economic development, there's nothing that South Korea need to be worry about (Lin H. , 2017).

Alongside of having a new global branding, South Korea also needs to establish diplomatic representation with cultural exchange and export to be considered in South Korea's politics. Since k-drama has been introducing as South Korea's culture, the government need to have a good relation with several countries. For example, having a bilateral relation with Indonesia. K-drama have a huge fandom at Indonesia, it won't be so hard to change South Korea's global branding on consumers' point of view. While South Korea introduced their cultures, they also had their cooperation. Like having cooperation using drama that involved

South Korea and Indonesia. This cooperation happened several times on the past, like on K-FOOD FAIR 2015 when South Korea and Indonesia has a web drama called Lunch Box[9] (Vita, 2020). The drama was released on 2015 and still gained more appreciation for it, even the viewers asked for a new season on the drama. Or through Love Distance[10] with two seasons (Aprilia, 2018). In this drama, production team involved several actor and actress like Lee Hyun-joo from UNI.T, Park Nam, and many more.

Since k-drama has been well-known as a global content, South Korea has receiving several new global branding. That's mean that k-drama managed to deliver their purposes to spread South Korean's socials, politics, and cultures. This makes the global community not only loving the content, but also loving the cultures or even any habits that probably they haven't see in their everyday life. For example, South Korean known as a country that full with innovation. Being on top of the industry alongside other contents like Bollywood and Hollywood doesn't make them stop giving a new innovation for their viewers. As a content that can be useful for introducing new branding to their own country, k-drama keep innovating with new things. This is how they landed to the 'innovation country' branding, because they never stop to find new innovation.

It might start with using new genres, having a rising star actor or actress as their casts, choosing any new places, or even introducing new products to their viewers. At some point, South Korea's slowly gained their new branding as a country that full with innovations. It's probably the reason why the world started to learn k-drama more, because South Korea itself always introducing new things or new combination. Sometimes, is simply as something that close to the viewers' hearts or probably only something that they never see in their entire life.

It is bringing South Korea to gain a new branding for consumers, especially the subjects

that took part in this research. This branding can be 'a country that closes to their life and culture' or 'a global culture'. Since k-drama was introduced for years, it has become something that consumers recognized immediately. For several countries, they feel there's a similar habit or cultures between South Korea and their country. But there's also a tendency that k-drama has become a global culture. It won't be surprising if anyone will find that k-drama or even South Korea's cultures in general as something that familiar to their life.

It's based on the fact that South Korea never forcing the world to accept their culture. Instead of forcing people with a huge scale of culture that come to their country, they introduce it one by one and slowly. That's why Korean Wave can be introduced; k-drama became the starting point before the rest of the aspect, such as k-pop and k-beauty follow it.

While South Korea used k-drama as the way to introduce their cultures, we can't deny that it also considers as a form of soft diplomacy. K-drama was expected as a soft power and the plan to spread it around the world as a soft diplomacy. According to Joseph S. Nye (Nye, 2008), soft power is the key of success for every international politics. Every country has both hard power and soft power. Hard power represents the military and the economic, while soft power represents culture, life style, and social systems (Lin & Hongtao, 2017). K-drama was part of soft power due to the ability for influencing people's hobbies, mindset, and preferences (Yani & Lusiana, 2018). But depend on how to use it; it was part of the country's job. On how South Korea introduces their cultures through k-drama is what we called soft diplomacy. Since k-drama is an attractive soft power, South Korea relies on k-drama as their tools since other countries respected its value.

On the bright side, using k-drama is a useful way to reach every country and makes South Korea more approachable. People especially cyber traveler feels closer to the South Korea's culture, instead their own culture. On the dark side, cyber travelers were only a pawn for South Korea. When they gain more people to enjoying their content, that's also the time when countries find South Korea as a worthy opponent that can be useful in their bilateral relations.

Using k-drama will also lead to a consumptive lifestyle that was introduced to cyber travelers. They grew to like South Korea's products and want to have them. The cyber traveler became a milestone for South Korea to reach a global scale. At the same time, there's a tendency when they saw any South Korea's products, it will affect how the decision making in the future. As an example, when traveler saw any certain food from k-drama. They want to eat that kind of food and re-create the scene with consuming that food.

Traveler became a way to reach that; they no longer serve their purpose as a consumer that love to consuming k-drama. They became the tools for South Korea to gain more things. Being consumptive might be sounds bad, but besides this new trait for traveler; South Korea's soft diplomacy didn't lead to any side effects from the diplomacy side. But still, having a high consumption behavior won't be a good thing for traveler or the fact they were used as a pawn to reach new purposes. Because there are possibilities that traveler that construct the role as victim of South Korea's soft diplomacy are individual that applied k-drama into their life according to what South Korea wants. As long as South Korea managed to maintain their branding to be close to the world, traveler needs to keep learning and applying the cultures that have been offered.

CONCLUSION

This research has revealed that South Korea managed to re-create a new global branding through k-drama. In the eyes of the k-drama consumers and virtual travelers, South Korea became a country that full of innovation and more approachable in every aspect. But on the other side, South Korea used the travelers as its

way to reach a new level of global acceptance, more than a new level of global adoption of South Korean culture. The beneficial thing for South Korea is when the virtual travelers applied what they saw on k-drama into their real-life and became more consumptive to South Korean commodities. Moreover while virtual travelers are attracted to visit South Korea physically as tourists, they will be consuming Korea in a much deeper sense.

In conclusion, the author found that South Korea's effort to globalize its national branding has been successful through the marketing of their k-drama, then attract consumers not merely to watch the drama itself but also to imagine the South Korean real condition through virtual traveling.

The limitation of this phenomenology research is the author only focused on two subjects. So, we could not expand our elaboration into a wider spectrum of analysis. This research might be not having a wide conclusion and arguments, while there's a chance to gain a wider view with more subjects. But researcher will suggest the next research to involve more subjects then elaborate deeper about their experience and comparing each subjects' case.

Informed Consent

The authors have obtained informed consent from all participants.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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ENDNOTE

[1] Referring to *Goblin* or known as *Guardian: The Lonely and Great God a* drama about Kim Shin, a warrior that became immortal goblin after being impaled by a sword. This drama causing a controversy because Kim Shin was portrayed as a 934 years old goblin with the appearance of a 30 years old, while Ji Eun-Tak was portrayed as a high school student. Beside the controversy because of the age gap between the characters, the drama still received a lot of attention and became a well-known drama. This drama involving Gong Yoo, Kim Go-Eun, and Lee Dong-Wook.

[2] 'Mianhae' (Hangul: 미안해**)** and 'Mian' (Hangul: 미안**)** means sorry in Korean. Both of the words can be use at different situations. Mianhae will be use as formal form, while Mian will be use as informal form.

[3] 'Jinjja?' (Hangul: 진짜?) referring to the word 'really?' in English. This words mostly use in K-dramas as a reflection of excitement on certain things. In other circumstance, you might hear the word change into 'Jinjjayo?' (Hangul: 진짜요?) for formal use.

[4] Koreans use a different term of people's position; it's also happened on how people calling their siblings depend on their age and gender. This term is also used in k-dramas as to show how their properly use it, such as only can be use if both of the person already close or known each other for a long time. For older brothers, 'oppa' (Hangul: 오빠) will be use by woman, while 'hyeong' (Hangul: 형) will be use by man. For other sisters, 'eonni' (Hangul: 언니) will be use by woman, while 'nuna' (Hangul: 누나) will be use by man.

[5] Referring to River Where the Moon Rises is a romantic-colossal drama that involved Jisoo and Kim So Hyun. This drama was known as Kim So Hyun first female lead on romantic-colossal, while it was Jisoo first time as a male lead on drama. The drama has been released 4 episodes, until the male lead got into scandal that led to his replacement on the drama and his enlistment on mandatory military.

[6] Referring to Dear M, a slice of life drama that involved Jaehyun from NCT and Park Hye Soo. The drama focused on campus life between Cha Minho and his best friend that was stuck in friend zone. This drama was postponed because the female lead was involved in bullying scandal during high school. It's lead to KBS, as the national TV that will release it, to postponed the drama until further notice. The scandal itself still haven't found the truth, because both public and the actress still throwing their statement version.

[7] Referring to Itaewon Class, a drama that became a big hit during 2020. The drama gave exposures to South Korea's foods until there's a certain company that released the foods from Itaewon Class because of the demand from viewers.

[8] Referring to True Beauty, a drama that focused on an insecure female student that found her comfort through makeup after being bullied at high school and later involved in a triangle love with two of her friends. This drama involving Moon Ga-Young, Cha Eun-Woo from Astro, and Hwang In-Yeop.

[9] Referring to the web drama 'Lunch Box' that involved Amelia Tantono, a YouTube content creator from Indonesia and Jisoo, a rising star from South Korea that known for his role in Scarlet Heart Ryeo and Doctors. Lunch Box was released on 2015 as cooperation between Indonesia and South Korea for K-FOOD FAIR 2015 Malaysia, Indonesia, and UAE. This drama included three episodes that focus on promoting halal food. Due to the high demand, Oh Jaehwan, the director of Lunch Box has stated about how he wants to create a second season for Lunch Box.

[10] Referring to 'Love Distance', a web drama that involved cooperation between South Korea and Indonesia. Due to high demand, the web drama has two seasons that was released through YouTube. Love Distance focused on a love stories between people from two different countries with different cultures, preferences, and mindsets.