

The Influence of K-pop Culture on Aesthetic Sense of Chinese Teenagers

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Abstract: Korean pop music culture is becoming more and more popular, especially in China. This kind of culture will have several impacts on Chinese teenagers. This research will analyze the influence of K-pop culture on Chinese teenagers' aesthetic sense and physical and mental health. This research provides readers opportunities to understand two main different modes of influence better. One is from idols themselves and the other is under the help of developing social media these days. Also, they can know both positive and negative influence on Chinese teenagers of K-pop culture. The research project is based on the analysis of existing literature. It is the main research method in this paper. After the research and analysis, it is true that there are both positive and negative relationships between K-pop culture and aesthetic sense and physical and mental health of Chinese teenagers. For positive effects, the Mix & Match clothing style teaches them to be optimistic and stay positive, which is benefit to mental health of Chinese teenagers at present. While for the negative side, Chinese teenagers might have problems on both physical and mental health if they treat themselves strictly by following the strict beauty standards for body in Korea.

Keywords: K-pop culture, Korean pop music, aesthetic sense, Chinese teenagers

1. Introduction

Today, Korean pop music culture is becoming more and more attractive in the world, especially in China. This kind of culture will have several impacts on Chinese teenagers. It seems that K-pop culture has become a big part of Chinese teenagers' lives. When asking what kind of music they are more likely to listen to, the answers always include K-pop music. Sisi Xie introduced K-pop music as "K-POP, or Korean pop music, refers to a large number of Korean music forms that are mixed with black street hip hop and other music styles." in *the research on exploring the relationship between "Korean Wave" culture and Chinese clothing* [1]. The representative Korean star groups are BIGBANG, 2NE1, etc., and the group's captains, such as GD (Kwon Chi-Lung), CL (Lee Choi-Lin) have also become the popular wind vane in Korea, Asia and even the world, and have become the object of imitation for young boys and girls, no matter in the form of their music or clothing style. When they are asking to prepare some performances, they always choose to sing or dance K-pop music on the stages. Besides these influences we can see on the surface that K-pop music causes on Chinese teenagers, what can people see much more deeply inside? This research paper is going to analyze the influence of K-pop culture on Chinese teenagers' aesthetic sense and physical and mental

health. This research paper provides readers an opportunity to have a better understanding on two main modes of influence including positive and negative influence on Chinese teenagers.

Bing Han defined the “Korean Wave” as “The term "Korean Wave" is not an imported product; it is a discourse invented by Chinese media after having a reasonable summary of the current social and cultural phenomenon. It has been recognized and quoted by media in many countries, including South Korea, and has become a common term worldwide. The term "Korean Wave" has multiple definitions, but generally, it refers to the widespread popularity of Korean popular art forms, including movies, dance, music, and more” in the research paper *The impacts of "Korean Wave" Culture on the Aesthetic Culture of students in Changchun University* [2]. Among them, "K-pop" is a concept that represents Korean popular music. It is thought to be represented as the top export of South Korea to communicate with other countries. It refers to the centralized and mass-marketed music, makeup, clothing design, and beauty standards of those idol groups. These are some main elements of aesthetic standards. The recent history of ideas about the concept of aesthetics can be seen to a large extent as a history of the development of directness [3]. From *Cambridge Dictionary* [4], the definition of aesthetic is “relating to the enjoyment or study of beauty”. Aesthetic sense is from a Greek word which have the meaning of “the sense of perception”. Almost all the authors of existing references chose to introduce one side of the influences on aesthetic sense or health only. They didn’t combine these two things together to do analysis. As K-pop culture is becoming popular around the world, especially in China, thoughts on aesthetic standards of Chinese teenagers especially on Beauty Standards for body and the dressing styles will be affected by this cultural phenomenon.

2. Influence of K-pop Culture on Aesthetic Sense of Chinese Teenagers

2.1. Modes of Influence

2.1.1. Idols and Their Fans

Korea has a complete system and program for raising stars, which is well-supported and has created generations of high-quality idol stars. As a result, certain appearances and aesthetics become more appealing to stand out from the competitors. Companies and their stylists look to everywhere for inspiration and try to make all kinds of looks for them [5]. After having a certain amount of fan base, they are able to bring K-POP to the world with their personal attitudes, aesthetics, and overall performance. Take G-Dragon as an example, once he was described in *New York Times* as “G-Dragon has the ability to spread K-pop music to all over the world in a variety of ways, not just including the costume he wears on the stages, and if he makes more effort to convey music through visuals, he will be able to move forward even further.” in the end of the article [6]. G-Dragon tried his best to combine the K-pop music with visual sensation of Mix & Match clothing style and stage performance on every stage to create a much more powerful impression for the audience. He can chance his expressions to suit different music and costumes. As the top of the K-pop idols, G-Dragon did everything he can do to the best. Many of his Mix & Match clothing design are accepted by lots of international great designers. He took K-pop culture to not only China, but also the whole world. Besides him, there are idols doing similar things just like G-Dragon. Their fans, most are teenagers, in China begin to follow them to spread K-pop music throughout China. It is a good way to let more Chinese young people to know about pop music in Korea.

2.1.2. The Usage of Social Media

In order to promote the spread of K-pop music in China, media is one of the most important parts in the process. While beauty standards may vary from place to place, they play an influential role in almost every society and culture. Celebrities also help normalize certain beauty standards spread more

widely in the society through advertising and social media [7]. Korean idols can share their journeys, daily lives, dressing styles and hobbies on social media, which influences many young teenagers from all over the world to try and imitate them, including teenagers in China. K-pop's success can be attributed to the power of social media. Platforms like Weibo, bilibili in China and YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram abroad have played a major role in spreading the popularity of K-pop to the world. Music videos of K-pop songs are beautiful and colorful and also very visually appealing to catch the audiences' eyes. K-pop idols can also use social media to keep in touch with their fans, keep them engaged and have a loyal fan base who can always put their attentions on those idols. The use of social media has helped K-POP artists create a global influence and attract audiences from all around the world.

2.2. Results of Influence

2.2.1. Beauty Standards for Body

Over the past few years, Korean beauty standards have become a symbol of beauty standards in the world. People from all over the world begin to imitate the makeups on their face and the cloths dressed up on their bodies to let themselves fit into this kind of standards.

In the article which was published on 11th, April 2023, the female Korean beauty standards includes small face, pale skin, larger eyes, and slim figure [9]. For this kind of beauty, people think that high nose, V-shaped jaw, and straight eyebrows are the best combination on a small face that up to the standards. They think a perfect person should have white and flawless skin, double eyelids on their eyes. Their bodies should be in S or X-shaped, combined with straight shoulder lines and long legs. In their opinion, only people with these elements on their bodies can dress up themselves with cloths and make-ups in a perfect way. Tzuyu and Irene are two examples of female idols who perfectly fit in Korean Beauty standards.

Most of the people think that the standards for body shape are mostly for women, but it is wrong. There are also some strict beauty standards for men. The article mentioned that besides all the requirements above for their appearance, another point is that male idols in Korea are all likely to have androgynous bodies. In some other countries, muscle is one of the most important symbols to show the strength of a man. But in Korean men are all trying to achieve this kind of body shape and staying away from being too thin, too fat, or too muscular.

Because of the spread of K-pop culture and its popularity in China, a lot of Chinese fans, especially teenagers, would like to imitate their idols' makeup and dressing style. The strict beauty standard in Korea asks those idols to be extremely thin so that they can prove themselves to be fascinate with their costumes on and in front of the camera. The consequences of such harsh beauty standards showed in the article including the excessive spending on cosmetics which can cause economic pressure on the country. High plastic surgery rate is increasing rapidly because everyone their wants to be perfect and no drawbacks on their faces. But plastic surgery is a dangerous surgery. If people do too much plastic surgery, it will not only cost lots of money but also do harm to their health or even make their life in danger. The last one is its high standards in South Korea may cause negative body image.

At this time, some teenagers may feel anxious about their body shape because they believe they are too "fat" to fit into certain dresses, even though they actually have healthy bodies and are not as "fat" as they perceive themselves to be. If individuals choose to follow the strict beauty standard for their bodies, they will have problems on both their physical and mental well-being. So they can use some methods such as staying away from their mirrors to take a break from checking their appearances from time to time and so on [9].

2.2.2. Dressing Style

With more people putting their attentions on K-pop culture, elements being noticed in K-pop culture are not only beauty standards of body, but also the design of the cloths those idols wear on the stage. According to the references written by a Chinese authors called Sisi Xie called The research on exploring the relationship between “Korean Wave” culture and Chinese clothing [1], K-pop clothing pursues the characteristics of beauty, exoticism, and newness, which is in line with the cultural psychology of Chinese teenagers. Chinese teenagers can wear cloths which have similar style with K-pop clothing to achieve their pursuit of individuality, to show the psychological needs of themselves. K-pop clothing become a symbol to let Chinese teenagers chase the freedom in their heart and fulfill their self-realization.

What is more, costume designer combines all the elements appear in K-pop music on clothing design on the stage in order to highlight the characteristics of K-pop music, which is Mix & Match. Mix & Match is a kind of dressing style which is different from the definition of thinking as a form of matching and design expression. It mixes seemingly unrelated elements together. Different styles can be interspersed, different levels of branding can be mixed together, and a variety of materials can be put together. There might be a feeling of chaos when people have a first glance on this kind of cloth. But if they have a closer observation, they will discover the connection between the design of the costume and the theme of that specific K-pop music.

Mix & Match dressing style can also bring people the sense of happiness, active and freedom. All these words can be used to describe a teenager. In China, teenagers wear cloth with such style like putting a princess dress and a leather jacket together or match a suit with a pair of sport shoes. As the time passing, times this kind of dressing style has appeared on the street and daily life of most Chinese teenagers. With this dressing style, Chinese teenagers can put all kinds of elements of clothing together on their bodies by using their imagination. It shows that they will never be limited by any reasons and can do everything freely as mentioned before. A 19-year-old girl Kayla in North Carolina said that she had never designed anything before she was attracted by K-pop when she was in high school in 2017. Once she saw the costume her idol Hyunjin, she began to try to design her own cloths by following the style of Hyunjin’s cloth on the stage. But her enthusiasm in K-pop has encouraged her to walk out of her comfort zone and begin to try new things [10]. As a result, K-pop dressing style can have a positive impact on the psychology of Chinese teenagers. It teaches them to be optimistic and stay positive, which is benefit to mental health of Chinese teenagers at present. From this time, K-pop is not just a kind of Korean music which is widely mixed with black street music, it has become a symbol of fashion.

3. Discussion

In fact, Korean and Chinese beauty trends are similar in many ways. According to a reference, both Korean culture and Chinese culture think that a slim figure, a small face, a pair of big eyes, and pale skin are the most obvious ideas of beauty [8]. Similar to Korean beauty standards for body, eyes which are big and round enough are also one of the most important symbols in modern Chinese beauty standards. Another idea to make Chinese teenagers think they will be more beautiful is a puff lying under their eyelashes called “Wo can” in Chinese, which looks like a silkworm. People can translate “Wo can” into “lying silkworm” in English. Being different with the beauty standards in Korea, people think that “Wo can” can make girls much sweeter, prettier, and cuter when they are smiling. And compared to Korean’s V-shaped faces for standards, the beautiful and ideal faces among Chinese teenagers must be small as well and have the shape like an “upside-down goose egg”. Although there are several differences between beauty standards from China and Korea, most of them are extremely similar or even the same. As a result, it is quite easy for teenagers in China to find points which are

not that ideal on their bodies compared to Korean Beauty standards. To become ideal enough, they begin to worry about their appearances and try their best to let themselves fit into Korean beauty standards. And for body shape, Korean people are careful not to be too fat or too thin in their daily lives. But according to Chinese beauty standards, women should be as thin as possible to put on those kinds of beautiful clothes. Combine this kind of point of view to the beauty standards in Korea, it is more likely for Chinese teenagers to be anxious about their body shapes and get health problems.

Although this has been a complete research paper, there are still some limitations on it inevitably. The first limitation was that the description of the beauty standards for body shape in Korea. After searching on the Internet for several days, there was only one article described this standard clearly. Secondly, was the lack of international literature and references. Because this research was based on the information of K-pop, which was a kind of music from Korea, most of the references about this question were from China instead of other foreign countries. It means that there are not that many international references on this topic and most of them are from Chinese researchers.

4. Conclusion

Lots of teenagers from different countries, especially China, put their attention on K-pop, including music, idols, and even the body shapes and clothing styles of those idols. Noticing on these too much time will cause several impacts on teenagers. This research focuses on the impacts on teenagers from two aspects, how strict beauty standards for body and the dressing styles of those idols have impacts on Chinese teenagers. After looking for enough references on the internet and having deep analysis on those literature, almost all the literature said that there will be both positive and negative effects on teenagers about their physical and mental health if they spend time on K-pop music. For positive effects, by following the Mix & Match clothing style, Chinese teenagers can put all kinds of elements of clothing together on their bodies by using their imagination. It means that they will never be limited, and they can do anything they want to do. It teaches them to be optimistic and stay positive, which is benefit to mental health of Chinese teenagers at present. While for the negative side, Chinese teenagers might have problems on both physical and mental health if they treat themselves strictly by following the strict beauty standards for body in Korea.

Because of the limitations and problems mentioned before in discussion part, there should be more international projects on this topic in the future. If more foreign researchers can notice this topic and do some more detailed research on this topic, it will be a good action to help K-pop culture spread all over the world and take care of the health of teenagers not just in China, but in the whole world.

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