

## Factors Influencing the Popularity of Korean Series in Thai People's Views

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### Abstract

At present, a huge amount of people tends to regularly get exposed to the heavy usage of online streaming platforms. Thus, a wide selection of entertainment content is available to decide on the ones best suited to their preferences and people are likely to spend more time on screen. The research aims to investigate factors that influence the popularity of Korean series in Thailand based on Thai people's views. The study explores 385 participants with different demographic and personal backgrounds regarding age, gender, and financial status regarding selected factors that could affect their interest in watching and spending money on Korean series. The result demonstrates that women, mostly working in a private firm, tend to watch Korean series more than men for up to two hours daily. Moreover, the series' specifications are perceived as the main indicator of its popularity: contents, actors and actresses, and varieties. A platform also holds relative significance to the popularity of a Korean series concerning its accessibility, service management, audio, visual quality, interface, and features. What also contributes to how a series is advertised: online, offline, or on social media, as well as how it is promoted, seen from its trailers and posters.

**Keywords:** *Korean Wave, Hallyu, Korean culture, Korean Series, Soft power, Video streaming platforms, Over-The-Top (OTT)*

### 1. Introduction

In the era of globalization or borderless communication, the world has become more interconnected (Lifintsev & Wellbrock, 2019), which means the effects of the technological revolution relate to various things such as social relations, products, services, technology, people's ideas, and culture (Kellner, 2002). People can share information, knowledge, and culture via the Internet easily and quickly, which is transnational culture (Ganjanapan, 2008). Nowadays, Thai people are becoming more interested in Korean culture as South Korean entertainment, including Korean series, Korean movies, and K-pop (Korean music) (Hong, 2014), spreads into Asian countries like China, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Thailand. Korean culture gets into Thai people's minds in many ways, as the result from the growing of business that relate to Korea such as foods, cosmetics, clothes, and many brands choose Korea celebrities to be their brand ambassador (Bok-Rae, 2015). This shows that Korea has reached big success; they can create their soft power through entertainment from series, TV shows, Music videos, games, songs, etc.

According to the research Korean Drama Series: A Case Study of Korean Culture Feverwave in Thai society Context. There also a huge load of Thai people spending on several platforms to seek entertainment, especially contents from South Korea (Inchan, 2012). South Korea has become the strongest soft power with support from its government. As Korean entertainment is well known and famous worldwide, especially in Asia, Thai is one of their fans. The way actors and actresses act in the series makes the audience remember and want to live their lives like the main characters. Therefore, it is not a surprise that we can see many Korean products and services in Thailand. The video streaming platform is one of the best channels where the audience can watch entertainment worldwide. South Koreans use this as a tool for the public for entertainment to the audiences. Many consumers are still ready to pay for it as they think it is worth paying, although some platforms need to pay a monthly or yearly fee for watching (Sinclair and Tinson, 2017). Options, such as various styles of entertainment, subtitles, high-quality sound, video, copyright, and many more, are available.

Moreover, the export of Korean series (Phaiboon, 2020) has expanded to include cultural products such as music, movies, animation, online games, fashion, beauty products, cuisine, and lifestyles (Kim, 2013). As a result, Korean cultural products have been inserted into other countries' cultures to spread culture through the media. Actors and singers are key cultural ambassadors, causing the Korean wave to spread into countries, including Thailand.

The Korean wave has been popularized and imitated by Thai people, and as a result, Korean films (Nuntipa, 2020). have become a fast-growing industry that can mediate ethnic communication with other countries. In addition, the Korean series has become a cultural product that makes the international community

more familiar with South Korea and can occupy cultural space in other countries. As Korea entertainment successful internationally including Thailand, this research aim to define the influencing factors of Thais toward Korean series to use qualified data for related business in Thailand.

## 2. Objectives

- 1) To find the demographic variations that influence the popularity of Korean series in Thai consumers' views in Bangkok
- 2) To analyze the marketing mix factors affecting Thai people's choice to watch the Korean series.
- 3) To provide a guideline for the video streaming platforms to influence Thai consumers to choose their platform to watch Korean series.

## 3. Methods

The study collected data using quantitative methods based on the research objectives. In addition, this study applied correlational analysis to study factors influencing the popularity of the Korean series in Thai people's views the questionnaires were created and adapted from the literature. The online questionnaires were administered via Google Forms.

Three hypotheses were developed. They are H1: Demographic data influence on Korean series in Thai view, H1.1: Age, H1.2: Gender, H1.3: Occupation, H1.4: Income ; H2: Marketing Mix influence on Korean series in Thai view, H2.1: Product, H2.2: Price, H2.3: Place, H2.4: Promotion ; and H3: Service satisfaction of Thai people influence to Korean series, H3.1:Equitable service, H3.2: Timely service, H3.3: Ample service, H3.4: Continuous service. The independent variables included age, gender, occupation, income, marketing mix, and satisfactory service.

The population in this research was people in Bangkok who watched Korean series. Therefore, the sample size in the study included 385 people who live in Bangkok. The sample size was calculated using the website Calculator.net (a finite population, a 95% confidence level, and an error limit or margin of error at 5%).

The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Part 1: Screening questions to verify the respondent has experience watching Korean series; Part 2: Demographic questions to see how samples are distributed regarding age, gender, occupation, and income; and Part 3: Specific questions consist of independent and dependent variable questions. Three experts for validity and reliability screened the questions.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 Results

The research explores 385 samples with different demographical and personal backgrounds regarding age, gender, and financial status regarding selected factors that could affect their interest in watching and spending their money on Korean series.

The result demonstrates that women, mostly working in a private firm, tend to watch Korean series more than men for up to two hours daily, which takes 72.5% of the samples. Moreover, the specifications of the series are perceived as the main indicator for its popularity: contents (63.78% agreed), actors and actresses (56.88% responded), and variety of a Korean series (55.02 % proven). Furthermore, a platform also holds relative significance to the popularity of a Korean series concerning its accessibility (80.26% proven), audio and visual quality (74.03% responded), service management (71.95% confirmed), interface (70.13% reaffirmed), and features. What also contributes to this is how a series is advertised: online (50.65% corresponded), offline (35.51% agreed), or social media, as well as how it is promoted, seen from its trailers and posters (53.77% and 43.61 % agreed respectively).

**Table 1** The Responses regarding whether a plot content of a Korean series influences its popularity

A Series' Plot	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	4	1.06
Disagree	5	1.31
Neutral	18	4.72
Agree	111	29.13
Strongly Agree	381	63.78
Total	385	100.00

As seen from Table 1, the responds to the question of whether a plot content of a Korean series influences its popularity. It is demonstrated that, out of 385 responses, 381 respondents, which makes 63.78% of all participants, totally agree that the plot content of a Korean series impacts its popularity, whereas only 1.06% disagree with the same question.

**Table 2** The responses regarding how much an actor or an actress in a Korean series influences its popularity

A Series' Actor/Actress	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	3	0.78
Disagree	6	1.56
Neutral	34	8.83
Agree	123	31.95
Strongly Agree	219	56.88
Total	385	100.00

Table 2 responds to how much an actor or an actress in a Korean series influences its popularity. The result represents that 219 out of 385 participants, which makes up 56.88%, totally agree as opposed to those 3 participants, 0.78%, who disagree otherwise.

**Table 3** Responses to the way that consumers can easily and comfortably access service by online streaming providers affects their popularity

Platforms' Accessibility	Frequency	Percent
5	309	80.26
4	68	17.66
3	6	1.56
2	2	0.52
1	0	0
Total	385	100.00

As seen from Table 3, the respondents are asked to respond to the question of whether the easy and comfortable access to a service by online streaming providers affects their popularity by rating their opinions to 5 different levels from 5 (highest agreement) to 1 (lowest agreement).

**Table 4** Responses to the level of agreement concerning the efficiency of a streaming platform's audio and visual quality

Audio and Visual Quality of a Platform	Frequency	Percent
5	285	74.03
4	80	20.78
3	17	4.42
2	3	0.77
1	0	0
Total	385	100.00

As observed from Table 4, respondents are asked to rate their level of agreement concerning the efficiency of a streaming platform's audio and visual quality from 5 as the highest level of agreement to 1 as the lowest.

The result informs that 74.03% have the highest level of agreement regarding the efficiency of a streaming platform's audio and visual quality, while 20.78% have the second highest and 4.42% as the third highest. In contact, no one placed one as the lowest level of agreement to the question, although 0.77% responded to 2 as the level of agreement.

**Table 5** The responses to which extent they agree or disagree that online and social media advertisements of a Korean series affect the choice of Korean series

Online Advertising and Social Media Advertising	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	196	50.65
Disagree	118	30.81
Neutral	58	15.14
Agree	11	2.87
Strongly Agree	2	0.53
Total	385	100.00

Table 5 is a response to the question of to which extent they agree or disagree that online advertisement and social media advertisement of a Korean series affects the choice of choosing a Korean series. The response indicates that 50.65% totally agrees that there is a correlation between them while only 0.53% disagrees on the same question.

**Table 6** The responses to which extent they agree or disagree that offline advertisement of a Korean series affects the possibility of being chosen to watch

Offline Advertisement	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	138	35.51
Disagree	140	36.55
Neutral	67	17.50
Agree	32	8.35
Strongly Agree	8	2.09
Total	385	100.00

Table 6 responds to the question of to which extent they agree or disagree that offline advertisement of a Korean series affects the possibility of being chosen to watch. The result explains that 36.55% quite agrees on the question which marks the similar amount of those who totally agree on the same question which is 35.51% whereas only 2.09% disagrees on the same question.

**Table 7** The response to which extent they agree or disagree that the trailer of the Korean series affects the possibility of being chosen to watch

Trailers	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	207	53.77
Disagree	124	32.21
Neutral	48	12.47
Agree	5	1.30
Strongly Agree	1	0.25
Total	385	100.00

Table 7 is a response to which extent they agree or disagree that the trailer of a Korean series affects the possibility of being chosen to watch for a series. Again, the information shows that more than half of the participants, 53.77%, agree with their correlation, while only one disagrees

**Table 8** The response to which extent they agree or disagree that the poster of a series affects the possibility of being chosen to watch for the series

Posters	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	169	43.61
Disagree	131	34.20
Neutral	60	15.67
Agree	19	4.96
Strongly Agree	6	1.56
Total	385	100.00

Table 8 is a response to the question of to which extent they agree or disagree that the poster of a series affects the possibility of being chosen to watch it. The result shows that 43.61% of the participants totally agree with the correlation between them, in contrast to 6 out of all the participants who disagree.

**Table 9** The response to which platforms respondents choose to watch a Korean series the most

Platforms	Frequency	Percent
Netflix	283	73.51
Viu	138	35.84
Disney+ Hotstar	131	34.03
WeTV	60	15.58
iQIYI	47	12.21
AIS PLAY	34	8.83
LINE TV	30	7.79
True ID	30	7.79
Total	753	100.00

Table 9 shows that Netflix receives the most popular online streaming platform used to watch a Korean series, decided by 73.51% of all respondents.

Meanwhile, Viu and Disney+ Hotstar receive relatively similar popularity, which Viu is around 35.84% and 34.03% for Disney+ Hotstar.

Likewise, WeTV and iQIYI are the third most popular streaming platforms, which also receive a relatively similar level of popularity, in which 15.6% votes for the former and 12.2% for the latter.

AIS PLAY, LINE TV, and True ID have become the least popular platforms people choose to watch a Korean series with a similar level of popularity, with 8.8% going for AIS PLAY, 7.8% for LINE TV, and 7.8% for True ID.



**Tables 10** The researcher uses Stepwise multiple regression analysis to find the effects of the marketing mix on Korean series satisfaction

Model	b	SE	$\beta$	t	p
1. (Constant)	-.312	.258		-1.208	.228
2. Product (X <sub>1</sub> )	.375	.047	.371	7.955	.000
3. Equitable Service (X <sub>5</sub> )	.299	.066	.192	4.549	.000
4. Promotion (X <sub>4</sub> )	.270	.050	.261	5.460	.000
5. Continuous Service (X <sub>8</sub> )	.137	.047	.116	2.938	.004
$R^2 = .576$		Adjusted R Square = .572			

a. Dependent Variable: Y

\*\* 99% confidence level

In table 10 four independent variables rejected Ho at a 99% confidence level which are Product (X<sub>1</sub>), Equitable Service (X<sub>5</sub>), Promotion (X<sub>4</sub>) and Continuous Service (X<sub>8</sub>). These variables' regression coefficients are .375, .299, .270 and .137 respectively. Moreover, the rest variables are not significant to the regression model, which are age, gender, occupation, income, price, place, timely service and ample service.

The table indicates that the multiple correlations are 57.60%. However, the results were focused on the R square to reduce the error of analyzing. The R square is 57.20%, which means that the group of independent variables, which are product, price, place, promotion, equitable service, timely service, ample service, and continuous service correlate with the Korean series 57.20%. While this model is significant because the number of P-values is less than the 0.05 significant level.

The equation of this regression should be as follows:

$$\hat{Y} = -.312 + .375X_1 + .299X_5 + .270X_4 + .137X_8$$

or

$$\text{Korean series' satisfaction} = -.312 + .375 \text{ Product (X}_1\text{)} + .299 \text{ Equitable Service (X}_5\text{)} + .270 \text{ Promotion (X}_4\text{)} + .137 \text{ Continuous Service (X}_8\text{)}$$

The result also demonstrates that Netflix is the most popular platform for watching Korean series. The reasons are its accessibility, simplicity of its functionality, its timely and urgent service management, and punctuality when launching a new series. Moreover, other factors are its accessibility through various devices, user-friendly interface, standardized audio, visual quality, dedicated and swift service, and continuous service improvement, needless to mention its variety of series and constant updates.

#### 4.2 Discussion

Demographic data influence Korean series in Thai view in the way that more Korean actors are promoted than women are. This attracts huge popularity among Thai women, especially those aged between 20 to 30 who have long been exposed to Korean popular culture (Hassim, Jayasainan, & Khalid, 2019) at an early age than other people from different lifespans. Thus, contributing to a distinct difference in the number of male and female consumers of a Korean series. Moreover, most of them then work in a private firm due to a fixed time slot to watch a series during the day. For instance, a certain financial status can afford different streaming platforms (Pereira, & Pereira, 2016) to watch some, unlike other groups, such as students who are subjected to additional financial stability and less flexible and predictable time availability.

As seen from the results, it is reported that the marketing mix influences the Korean series in the Thai view. Most respondents regard factors concerning the product as most important when individually examined, which reflects (Kotler, 2000) study concerning the components in the marketing mix. The accessibility, credibility, and service-based orientation of the product largely determine its popularity and gain more consumers and retain them.

It is also prominent that the promotion of a series that adheres to the lifestyle of the majority of the people who watch a Korean series (Dal Yong, 2018) plays a crucial role in building its popularity. Promotion that relies on social media tends to develop and gain more popularity from this group of people who regularly spend most

of the time on social media (Shelly, 1975) than the promotion that adopts traditional techniques in promoting posters or billboards.

Remarkably, the Service satisfaction of Thai people influences to Korean series. Netflix (Wayne, 2018) is regarded as the most popular streaming platform people watch Korean series mostly due to its excellent and timely service management, user-friendly features, and accessibility. Additionally, the audio and visual quality provided by the platform is top-notch, needless to mention its continuous improvement in delivering service and varying contents.

## 5. Conclusion

The researcher has explored and understood different factors contributing to the popularity of watching a Korean series in Thailand. The results discussed throughout the report conclude that marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, and demographic factors are considered the most significant contribution to the popularity of a Korean series in Thailand. Women tend to watch Korean series more than men do. Moreover, it is reported that most people watching a Korean series tend to work as an employee at a private firm. Most people watch a Korean series 1 to 2 times a week, 1- to 2 hours long.

Moreover, the contents, actors, variety, and publisher's credibility of a Korean series are the key factors that regulate the series' popularity. Furthermore, most people are willing to pay for a platform that is able to provide a good subtitle, to watch a series without having an in-ads advertisement. In addition to that, the more advice to access to watch a series, as well as the variety of the platform and the promotion from a platform they are exposed to and given, the more popular the series will become.

To further emphasize, it is proven that online, social media, and offline advertisement contribute to the series' popularity as the main indicators, as well as the influence from social influencers and word of mouth from consumers' peers. The trendiness of a series also directs its popularity, how appealing its poster looks, and how exciting its trailer is represented.

The significance of this study is to gain insight into information regarding demographic variation that contributes to the factors indicating Thai consumers' views. Furthermore, studying the marketing mix factors that affect how Thai people choose to watch a Korean series offers improvement solutions that a platform can utilize to attract Thai customers to watch a Korean series. The further implication of this study is to provide future research in the field on a study of a streaming platform or a study focusing on a series' popularity but in a different genre or international studios.

A suggestion for further research

- 1) Some parts of the sample investigation were answered with a different number of samples, thus providing a certain difficulty in summarizing the finalized result.
- 2) It might be useful to categorize samples into a few different age ranges rather than letting them type in their age information. For instance, different age ranges could be under 18 years old, 19-25 years old, 26-30 years old, and those above 31 years old.
- 3) Moreover, the salary information should be categorized into different ranges to ease the information summarizing process. For example, the ranges concerning income could be below 15,000 baht, from 15,001 to 25,000, from 25,001 to 50,000, and those above 50,001 baht.
- 4) It might also be beneficial to differentiate how much each platform charges its consumers when investigating samples regarding the information on a platform

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