

**THE PERCEPTION OF ALAY SUBCULTURE TOWARD KOREAN
NATION BRANDING (K-WAVE)**

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***Abstract-** South Korea is one of a country that has a good image overseas due to the successful of their nation branding. With K-Wave as their nation branding they introduce their country and culture through Korean entertainment. Indonesia is one of Asian countries which also really exposed by the Korean Wave, especially Alay subculture. The fact that Korean Wave affecting the behavior and way of thinking in Indonesian society especially Alay subculture became an interesting phenomenon to study. This study have the purpose to explore the phenomenon and trying to figure the perception of Alay subculture toward Korean nation branding (Korean Wave) and what factors that influence the Alayers' perception process. Using consumer perception theory, the researchers try to analyze and elaborate each stage of perception process that Alayers experienced. The knowledge of this research may be beneficial towards government especially to Indonesian government to create a great and successful nation branding for Indonesia. Also the researcher expects to reveal the answer that will create a clear explanation of the phenomenon for this issue.*

***Keywords:** Korean Wave, Nation Branding. Element of culture, Alay subculture, Consumer perception, Response/ Attitude*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years Korean popular culture or K-Pop has been influenced not just in their country but also the countries around the world. The popularity of K-Pop which is triggered by the Korean pop music like PSY with the song "Gangnam Style" and some Korean boy band and girl band. The popularity of K-Wave is also driven by the Korean drama that soon became world trending like "Full House" and "Dae Jang Geum". The reality show "Running Man" that currently has been on air for almost four years is increasingly popular around the world, thus impacts as enormously contribution for the popularity of K-Pop.

The popularity of K-Pop started in mid-1999 with the Korean pop music and television soap or drama (Kim, 2007). In the late 1990s, the Korean culture industry started to develop by learning from Hollywood, blending their own characteristic into foreign style and strive to raise the popularity of the current Korean culture not just in Korea but also around the world. In the first time the popularity of Korean Wave just reached the mainland of China and Taiwan and then slowly the popularity of K-wave had sparked around the world. Table 1.1 shows the increase of export of Korean TV programs in which the significant growth began in 2002. For the beginning, in 1996 the import rate of Korean TV program is bigger than the export, but in 2010 the export of Korean TV program increased until USD 187.00 million meanwhile the import was only USD 10.40 million. Thus, the explosive growth of Hallyu has contributed toward South Korea’s economic transformation in the post industrial, knowledge based economy.

Table 1
Annual Export and Import of Korean TV Programs in Million
US Dollars

Year	Export	Import
1996	6.0	63.9
1997	8.3	57.3
1998	10.0	27.0
1999	12.7	28.7
2000	13.1	29.1
2001	18.9	20.4
2002	28.8	25.1
2003	42.1	28.1
2004	71.5	31.1
2005	123.5	37.0
2006	147.7	31.7
2007	162.6	32.3
2008	180.2	21.8
2009	183.6	65.9
2010	187.0	10.4

Note. Adapted from “The Korean Wave (Hallyu) in East Asia, a comparison of Chinese, Japanese and Taiwanese audiences who watch Korean TV dramas”, by J. Yang, 2012, *Development and Society*, 41, p. 124. Copyright 2012 by the Institute for Social Development and Policy Research

The success of K-Pop is also there is helped from the government which turn K-Wave as the nation branding of South Korea so that South Korean culture can be well accepted by the world and also creating positive image that support economic, political relationship, and diplomacy of South Korea. The Korean government has

started to make concerted effort on promoting the Korean media industry and pop culture as an export industry during the economic crisis.

One of Asian countries which have a lot of K-Pop's fans is Indonesia. With its large population, a small proportion of fans may consist of huge number of fans. One of the groups in Indonesia which is influenced by the Korean culture is *Alay* subculture or *Alayers*. The influence of Korean Wave to *Alay* subculture can be seen from the enthusiasm of society including *Alay* people when K-Pop stars perform a concert in Indonesia. K-Pop fever is not only affecting music but also fashion such as clothing, hair style, movies, and reality show. They became a fanatic fan from Korean artist that always sing the song and follow the dance from their superstars and watch the drama or movie almost everyday. This condition proves that South Korean culture as the nation branding of South Korea can be well accepted.

One of the research about Korean Wave is "A study of the Korean wave in order to be a lesson to Thailand for establishing a Thai Wave" in 2010 by Pavinee Potipan and Namtaphorn Worrawutteerakul from Malardalen University Sweden. In their research they study about how Korean Wave can be success to make a Thai wave. Because there has been no research about Korean Wave as Korean nation branding in Indonesia and also the fact that Korean Wave affecting the behavior and way of thinking in Indonesia society including *Alay* people, the author want to make analysis about the perception of *Alay* subculture toward Korean Nation Branding (K-Wave) to find what factors that make the successful nation branding that Korean doing can accepted with the other countries around the world and how to make a successful nation branding through culture for Indonesia. The research question for this research which are:

RQ1: How do the *Alayers* perceive Korean nation branding (K-Wave)?

RQ2: Why *Alayers* like Korean nation branding (K-Wave)?

RQ3: How do the *Alayers* respond towards the aspects they like from Korean nation branding (K-Wave)?

RQ4: How the *Alayers* transform their perception toward Korean nation branding (K-Wave) into actions?

RESEARCH METHODE

This research use an exploratory research in qualitative approach based on the phenomena Korean Wave that experienced by ‘*Alay*’ Subculture, which will be conducted at Surabaya, Indonesia. This research will explore the perception of *Alayers* in Surabaya towards Korean nation branding or Korean Wave. The data source in this research is *Alay* people that are located in Surabaya. People that can be considered *Alay* is people that express themselves in exaggerate way, in this case is the way they express their emotions towards Korean Wave in order to get attention of the surrounding people for their existences. The person that is considered as *Alay* is people with a young age between 17 – 25 years old, active member of a fandom, dress like Korean idol such as imitating the hair, make up or clothes like Korean idols, and often used Korean words when they communicate or express their feeling. Also the person must be famous beyond their environment as K-Pop fans that really love and enthusiastic with Korean entertainment

Researcher used deep interview and observation to collect the data for this research. In this research, the author used the semi-structured and unstructured interview. At first the researcher used the semi structured interview to get the big image about how the *Alay* society accept the Korean nation's branding, after that continued with the unstructured interview to get a clearer details in answering the researcher's questions.

The interview will be conducted with eight respondents, which are considered as *Alay* and belong to the community of Korean entertainment fans for example people that like Korean music, movies or drama and TV-Shows.

The observation is started with gathering information of the *Alayers* who likes Korean Wave in the area where the writer's conducted her research. The information will be gathers from social media such as blog or fanbase from the Korean entertainment, Instagram, twitter, Facebook, etc. Later on, when the writer's has found people that are considered as *Alay* person to become respondents of this research, the writer will observe the candidate's daily activity in social media. Moreover, the writer will also observe the respondents during the interview looking at their body language.

This research is using qualitative analysis, which is the data will obtained in the interviews will be integrated in and analyzed qualitatively. The steps in data processing methods which are: open coding, selective coding and axial coding.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are three steps which are the central importance of the perceptual process, which are sensation/ stimulus, organizing or structuring, and interpretation (Sheth, et.al., 1999). Sensation or stimulation is identified as attending to an object or an event in the environment with one or more of the five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting (Sheth, et.al, 1999). The environment around *Alayers* such as friends and families become the most influencing media in introduction of Korean Wave to *Alayers* in their teenager phase in which they can easily influenced with things around them. Korean entertainment accepted by *Alayers* as stimulation are Korean music and Korean drama. *Alayers* accept and choose stimulation through Korean music dan Korean drama because korean music and drama offers something unique.

The uniqueness of Korean music is like no other music that we usually listen to like western or Indonesian that usually brings out either pop, jazz, country and others, but they combines many music characteristics like ballad, pop, and hip hop into a harmonious song so that their music will be easier to be accepted while still

represent the spirit of *Alayers* who are in their adolescence. The uniqueness of Korean music that attracts *Alayers* also lies in how they perform the music alongside with energetic dance moves.

Meanwhile, the uniqueness of the drama and movies lies on how they brings out various *Alayers* think that the story line of Korean drama can describe themselves and what they wanted, because Korean drama always show modern and wealthy lifestyle, romantic relationship with partner or even the friendship and the acceptance that is received by the main character of the story. *Alayers* who are in their adolescence want to be seen and accepted by people around them even with the flaws that they have. But the main reason why they accepted the stimulation is the appearance of Korean celebrities that have handsome or beautiful face. Not only that, their body is purposefully formed to look good that really attractive in the *Alayers* eyes not only in the drama but also in music video. With all these factors combined, make it easy for *Alayers* to be stimulated by Korean Wave.

According to Sheth, et.al (1999) the next process in perception theory after sensation/ stimulus process felt by *Alayers* are organizing or structuring, and interpretation Organizing or structuring is process categorizing by matching the sensed stimulus with similar object categories in one's memory (Sheth, et.al, 1999). After *Alayers* receive the stimulation with positive response they find out more about Korean entertainment they favor, as well as other Korean dramas, movies, music and also variety show, then they began to determine which Korean celebrities and Korean entertainment they like best and follow up the information regarding those entertainment branch. After the organizing or structuring the information that *Alayers* get about Korean entertainment they started to make the interpretation of Korean wave. Interpretation is process attaching meaning to the stimulus and forming a "ruling as to whether it is an object you like and of what value it would be to you, the perceiver" (Sheth, et.al, 1999).

Alayers interpret Korean entertainment as the face of Korean wave as a trend that very attractive, entertaining, have a certain quality and offer something new and

different compare to entertainment from other countries. Korean entertainments favored and followed by *Alayers* are music, drama/movie and reality show. Factors that caused *Alayers* fond of Korean music is the unique and different music genre offered where Korean music combined several different genres such as hip hop, jazz, classic, ballads ,and etc. in one song. Besides, how Korean singer presented their music with boyband and girlband concept that accompany their songs with beautiful and energetic dance is also plays an important role for *Alayers* to be fond of Korean music. The music concept that always changes in every album is also one of the factor that make *Alayers* do not get bored with Korean music. *Alayers* deem Korean music that told as urban music is a reflection of their soul which is high-spirited, colorful and different from other music concept. Furthermore, the serious efforts that have been undergone by Korean celebrities to be and idol make *Alayers* feel touched and love Korean celebrities as their idol even more. Korean celebrities that are multitalented are also make *Alayers* amaze thus making them as idols that can be emulated.

The main reason of *Alayers* become very fond of Korean wave is due to the divine appearance of Korean celebrities with handsome and beautiful face and also proportional and sexy body. This thing is also supported with simple Korean fashion style that looks feminine, elegant and more metrosexual but can be easily adopted in Indonesia. Factors that make *Alayers* become fond of Korean drama are the storyline that very romantic, mild and easy to understand. *Alayers* also think that Korean drama as the reflection of themselves and their desires. *Alayers* deem that the characters in Korean drama are the reflection of their selves along with the event they are experienced, attitude and their behavior, and etc. Furthermore, sophisticated star appearances, fashions, higher living standards are seem appealing to *Alayers*. *Alayers* are inspired by the wealth, sophistication in Korean dramas and it stimulates their longings and desires for a modern society. The other Korean entertainment that attracts “*Alayers*” attention is reality show. From Korean reality show, *Alayers* interpret that Korean entertainment really creative and innovative when they make

some entertainments such as music, drama, movie or reality show. How they make entertainment such as music, drama/movie or reality show seemed entertaining and Korean celebrities who always give their best in their performance become the perfect combination that make *Alayers* become fond of Korean Wave followed the stream.

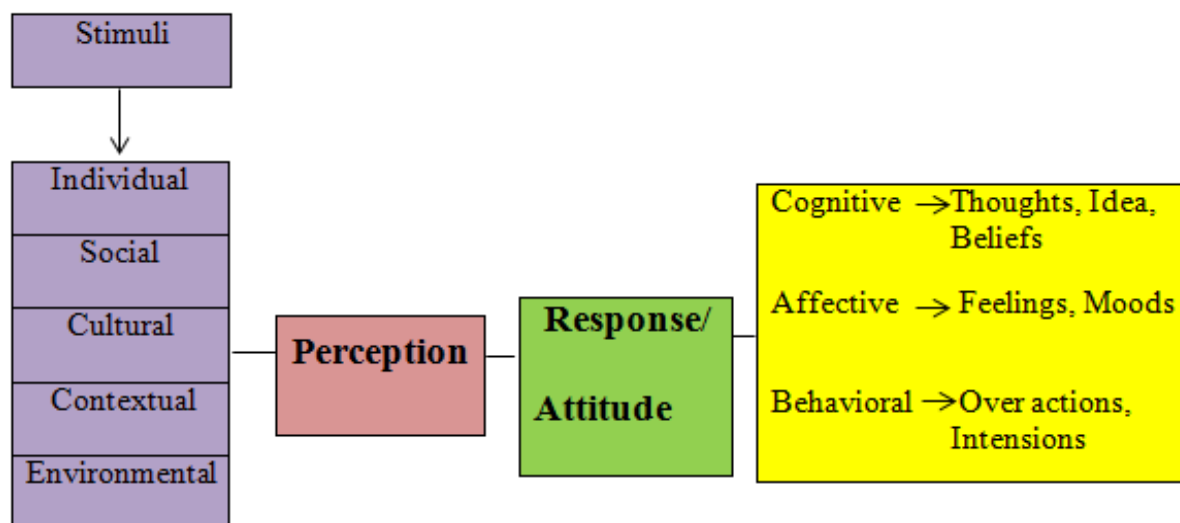


Figure 2 Attitude formation and expression as an evaluative process

(Source:<http://www.google.com/url?sa>)

As shown in the figure 2, the perception that they create will affect their response or attitude. According to Azwar (2007) that stated behavior's structure in this case is similar with responses that consist of 3 components that support each other. The 3 components stated are cognitive, affective and conative. . Based on Mann (1969) in Azwar (2007), it is explained that cognitive component consist of perception and stereotype owned by individual toward something. Cognitive component that shown is the *Alayers*' assume Korean Wave is a positive, interesting, entertaining and anti-mainstream phenomenon. This belief can be changed and

developed depends on the forming factors. The belief of Korean Wave creates different perceptions to each *Alayers*. These different perceptions influence *Alayers'* point of view toward Korean Wave.

While the affective component refers to feelings and emotions regarding the attitude object (Maio & Haddock, 2009). Affective component is different compared to cognitive component discussed previously. Cognitive component focuses on what is believed and convinced by individual, while affective component focuses on emotion and what the individual feels. The Affective component of *Alayers'* responses/behaviors showed is that the *Alayers* feel entertained, happy, excited, amuse, love and addicted to Korean Wave especially toward Korean entertainment and Korean celebrities whom become their idols. Though the *Alayers'* perspectives are different based on the type of entertainment they interested in, they have the same affective responses toward Korean Wave.

Conative component can also considered as the final result of an individual responses toward a behavior object because this component based on what is believed and felt by the individual. At the beginning *Alayers* transform their perception toward Korean wave into action with joined into a devoted fans community or follow their idols page update on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other types of social media platform. Gradually the *Alayers'* feeling growth from like to be inspired, based on the interview results, this attitude appear due to Korean cultural value buried in the *Alayers'* minds including their love and pride toward Korean entertainment. *Alayers'* in their teenager phase are inspired by Korean Wave especially Korean celebrities whom become their idols which lead to gaining more information about their idols, and appraise their idols and make them as the role model and slowly imitating their idols. They imitating their idols from something physic until the behavior of the idols that they love.

They inspired to use and consume some products that used by their idols in drama or daily life. They consume some products, from the cheapest like Korean food that is currently popular in Indonesia, to more expensive products such as car and

electronic goods like Hyundai, Samsung and LG. They are also inspired by the appearance of Korean celebrities in dramas as well as in real daily life. They liked it enough to want to dress and make up like their idols. Basically, they have the same thoughts toward Korean Wave which is understand more about Korea including its entertainment, culture, products and even learn them directly in Korea. Some of the *Alayers* even have love and pride toward Korea more than their own country, Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Nation branding is one of a country's way to develop their good image and introduce its culture to all over the world. A country can do their nation branding through its culture, with its nation branding a country can further improve its industry and economic situation while also increase the country's image. Korean wave as Korean nation branding is proven to be successful in building and managing Korean reputation in the eyes of the world.

Each *Alayers* has experienced the stage of perception process in forming their perception toward Korean Wave, which are stimulation/sensation, organizing or structuring, and interpretation process. In stimulation/ sensation process *Alayers* accepted the stimulation toward Korean Wave because they think that Korean Wave is a unique phenomena that attractive, entertaining and anti mainstream that make them interest to know and learn more about that. After the stimulation/ sensation process they started to organizing and structuring the Korean Wave as a good entertainment and create their interpretation. *Alayers* interpret that Korean entertainment, especially Korean music and dramas are the embodiment of themselves which accordance with the spirit of their youth, who wants to be noticed and accepted by society. This fact makes them truly inspired and imitates Korean celebrities which create their identity.

The positive and good perception that *Alayers* have toward Korean Wave affected their response/ attitude in each component. *Alayers'* response/ attitude in cognitive component build the *Alayers* feeling and make them transform their perception into action or behavior. In order to express their feeling toward Korean Wave, *Alayers* became fans of Korean entertainments that follow the information about Korean celebrities, music, drama, and the others Korean broadcasting.

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