

## **Power of Hallyu: Change in Sri Lankan Perception towards South Korea**

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### **Abstract**

“Hallyu” or the Korean Wave refers to the surge in the international visibility of Korean culture, beginning in East Asia in the 1990s and continuing more recently in Asia, the United States, Latin America, the Middle East, and parts of Europe. Korean popular culture ranges from Korean music (K-pop), dramas (K-drama), movies, video games, food, fashion, tourism, and language (Hangul). Until recent times, images and information about South Korea were not familiar to Sri Lankans as Sri Lanka does not share any significant historical or cultural relations with South Korea. Images associated with South Korea are generally negative and related to events such as the Korean War, cycles of poverty and political instability. The main focus of this paper is to examine the effect of Hallyu on the Sri Lankan public perception towards South Korea. It will compare and contrast the attitudes of consumers and non-consumers of Korean popular culture on the subject of their feelings towards South Korea and Korean society. This Study uses qualitative data obtained through interviews from the selected samples regarding their thoughts related to Hallyu, K-pop, Korean culture, wider issues related to society, culture, and attitude towards South Korea. This paper will attempt to answer whether Hallyu has been capable of influencing Sri Lankan audiences through dissemination of attractive images of Korea. The findings conclude that the constant consumption of Korean popular cultural products has indeed affected the image Sri Lankans have towards South Korea in a positive way, by improving their knowledge and perception of South Korea. It also has also urged the consumers to travel to South Korea, learn the language and build social networks with the Koreans. The importance of this study rests on the power of popular culture to influence an individual's attitudes.

***Keywords: Korean Wave, Popular Culture, Soft Power, Sri Lanka, South Korea***

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