

# A Study of Japanese Consumers of the Korean Wave

- Focused on Consumer Behavior Regarding the Korean  
Wave Maniacs and Other Consumers

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When a popularity surge in Korean culture called the Korean Wave, having spread to China and Southeast Asia, landed in Japan in 2004 along with the boom for the TV drama 'Winter Sonata', the Korean culture industry experienced the huge effect of Korean Wave for the first time. This effect took the form of the creation of the economic value of cultural products. Moreover, the Korean culture industry has gone a step ahead toward industrialization, experiencing various value-added perks with a little soap opera in the Japanese cultural industry market that is ten times larger than that of Korea.

However, while the Korean Wave in Japan has contributed to make people be aware of the economic value of cultural products, especially for that of the future, it was the cause of a social ripple effect of the Korean Wave being treated relatively less important. That is, the Korean Wave currently pays off more in a social aspect than in an economic aspect however, the social ripple effect and the significant value of the Korean Wave is being neglected because of more focus aimed at the economic value.

Hence, this research is intended to focus from an objective point of

view on the social value of the Korean Wave in Japan without exaggerating or underestimating the Korean Wave based on an interview with the maniacs of the Korean Wave who consume Korean Wave products in Japan. Also, survey was conducted targeting the general Japanese public for comparison.

The detailed analysis of the Korean Wave consumers in Japan and the survey results of the general Japanese populace can be important data for a cultural industry policy and the marketing of cultural products. As a culture develops industrially, the cultural industry structure and the direction of policy become consumer-oriented from a basis of supplier-oriented. Thus, information about consumers is more necessary than ever before in order to work out competitive cultural industry policy and marketing strategies.

According to the results of this research, the significant social ripple effects include positive changes in the image of Korean economy and society, an increasing awareness that discerns and distinguishes South Korea from North Korea, an increased interest in Korean society and culture such as Korean food, trips to Korea, history, the growing enthusiasm of learning the Korean language, and a positive influence on the formation of the viewpoint towards Korea by children who consume the Korean Wave products with their parents. However, it was found that the results of the research of the maniacs show considerable differences from that of the survey of the general people and we should avoid exaggerating the value of the Korean Wave only with the research on the maniacs; rather, we should pay attention to the reaction of the whole of Japan.

On the other hand, the Japanese have evaluated highly the understandable, heart-warming, moral, humane, and familial Korean Wave dramas and movies, but do not like the obvious story development the

same stereotyped forms of stories like involving fatal diseases, unrealistic situations, and the poor quality of the hastily produced products. Additionally, the Japanese, who are used to watching their own serial dramas made up of ten to thirteen installments, complain that the twenty to fifty installments of a Korean soap opera are too much for them to watch to the end and that the happy moment of the happy ending after many difficulties is relatively too short.

If this research is conducted only once, it will simply be the data reporting the current situation. Data on the Korean Wave and the culture industry will be more valuable when accumulated vertically and horizontally and compared by nations and by time. I hope, based on this research, further positive researches on the Korean Wave and the culture industry will continue to be carried out by nations.