FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE POPULARITY OF KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC (K-POP) IN THAILAND

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts Program in Korean Studies

(Interdisciplinary Program)

Graduate School

Chulalongkorn University

Academic Year 2014

ปัจจัยที่ทำให้เพลงป๊อบเกาหลี(เคป๊อบ)ได้รับความนิยมในประเทศไทย

นางสาวกนกพร เรืองสา

Thesis Title	FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE POPULARITY OF KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC (K-POP) IN THAILAND
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Field of Study	Korean Studies
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กนกพร เรืองสา : ปัจจัยที่ทำให้เพลงป๊อบเกาหลี(เคป๊อบ)ได้รับความนิยมในประเทศไทย (FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE POPULARITY OF KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC (K-POP) IN THAILAND) อ.ที่ปรึกษาวิทยานิพนธ์หลัก: ผศ. ดร. เดือนเต็ม กฤษดาธานนท์, 97 หน้า.

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการศึกษาเกี่ยวกับปัจจัยที่ส่งผลให้เพลงป๊อบเกาหลี(เคป๊อบ)ได้รับความนิยมในประเทศไทย ซึ่งมีจุดประสงค์เพื่อ (1) วิเคราะห์ความสามารถในการแข่งขันของเคป๊อบ (2) ระบุลักษณะและศึกษากิจกรรมของแฟนคลับเคป๊อบในประเทศไทย และ (3) วิเคราะห์ว่าลักษณะและกิจกรรมของกลุ่มแฟนคลับนี้มีส่วนช่วยในการแพร่ขยายและคงความนิยมของเคป๊อบในประเทศไทยได้อย่างไรบ้าง โดยใช้วิธีการวิจัยเชิงคุณภาพ มีการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลจากการสัมภาษณ์เชิงลึกแฟนคลับเคป๊อบในประเทศไทยเป็นหลัก ร่วมกับการสังเกตอย่างมีส่วนร่วมและการศึกษาจากเอกสารต่างๆ ผู้เขียนใช้ Diamond model ของ Michael Porter เป็นแนวคิดในการวิเคราะห์ความสามารถในการแข่งขันของเคป๊อบ

ผลการวิจัยพบว่าความสามารถในการแข่งขันของเพลงป๊อบเกาหลีในประเทศไทย มีหลายปัจจัย ได้แก่ (1) คุณภาพและความแปลกใหม่ของเนื้อหา ระบบการสร้างไอดอล และความโดดเด่นของศิลปิน (2) กลยุทธ์การปรับตัวเข้าสู่ชุมชน และกลยุทธ์การใช้โซเชียลมีเดียของบริษัทผู้ผลิตเคป๊อบ (3) ความนิยมของละคร ภาพยนตร์ และรายการโทรทัศน์เกาหลีในไทย และ (4) ความเปิดรับและความคุ้นเคยในการใช้เทคโนโลยีของผู้บริโภคท้องถิ่น และการสนับสนุนจากแฟนคลับ

ส่วนลักษณะของแฟนคลับเคป๊อบในไทย จากการสัมภาษณ์และการสังเกตพบว่าแฟนคลับเคป๊อบมีความเหนียวแน่น มีความกระตือรือร้นในการสนับสนุนและติดตามผลงานของศิลปินเผยแพร่สู่คนรอบตัวผ่านการแชร์ทางโซเชียลมีเดีย และยังมีการรวมกลุ่มทำกิจกรรมต่างๆ ซึ่งลักษณะและกิจกรรมของกลุ่มแฟนคลับมีส่วนช่วยให้คนไทยรู้จักและเข้าถึงเคป๊อบได้ง่ายยิ่งขึ้น จึงสามารถสรุปได้ว่าความนิยมของเคป๊อบในไทยเริ่มมาจากการความพยายามและความพร้อมของทางผู้ผลิต ในการผลักดันเคป๊อบเข้าสู่ตลาดเพลงของไทย และแผ่ขยายอย่างกว้างขวางได้ด้วยการสนับสนุนจากผู้บริโภค โดยเฉพาะแฟนคลับเคป๊อบในไทย

สาขาวิชา เกาหลีศึกษา	ลายมือชื่อนิสิต	....
ปีการศึกษา 2557	ลายมือชื่อ อ.ที่ปรึกษาหลัก	....

KANOKPORN RUEANGSA: FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE POPULARITY OF KOREAN POPULAR MUSIC (K-POP) IN THAILAND. ADVISOR: ASST. PROF. DUANTEM KRISDATHANONT, Ph.D., 97 pp.

This research studied on the factors distributing to the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. This work aimed to (1) analyze competitiveness of K-pop music, (2) identify the characteristics and study activities of K-pop fans in Thailand, and (3) analyze the characteristics and fan's activities in order to see how it helps spreading K-pop in Thailand. This qualitative research mainly used descriptive and analytical method drawing from interviews of Thai K-pop fans, with participant observation and document research. The diamond model by Michael Porter was utilized to analyze competitiveness of K-pop music.

The result of the study on the competitiveness of K-pop music in Thailand were (1) quality and uniqueness of the content, idol production system, and characteristics of K-pop idols, (2) localization strategy and social media strategy of K-pop companies, (3) the popularity of Korean dramas, movies, and TV shows in Thailand, and (4) opened-mind attitude and familiarity in using technology of local consumers and support from K-pop fans.

The interviews of Thai K-pop fans showed that they are a strong fan base. They actively support and subscribe to the idols, they share the K-pop content to others through social media, and they gather in group to do activities together. The activities of Thai K-pop fans help made it easier for Thai people to get to K-pop content. Therefore, it could be concluded that the popularity of K-Pop in Thailand began with the efforts and the ability of the manufactures in pushing K-Pop into the Thai music market. Then it could spread widely with the support from local consumers, especially the K-pop fans in Thailand.

Field of Study: Korean Studies   Student's Signature ....

Academic Year: 2014   Advisor's Signature ....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Background

Starting from the remarkable popularity of Korean TV dramas 'What is all about love' and 'Dae Jang Guem' in Mainland China in the late 1990s, the Korean wave, or '*Hallyu*', appeared and rapidly spread all over East Asia and the Southeast Asia region. Over a decade after that, the popularity of Korean TV Dramas also brought the audiences' interest to Korea's other cultural products. The phrase 'Korean Wave' is not only used to describe the popularity of Korean TV dramas, but also to refer to the popularity of the Korean pop culture, including music, movies, games, cartoons, characters, Korean food, and the Korean language.

Since the mid-2000s, the Korean wave has transformed and stepped into the new era—the Neo-Korean wave. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011) If the first major wave of Korean wave was driven by Korean TV dramas, we can say that the Neo-Korean wave has been driven by Korean pop music, or 'K-pop'. Nowadays, K-pop has spread beyond Asia, reaching as far as Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, gaining momentum worldwide.

Since the mid-2000s, the K-pop music market has experienced double digit growth rates. In the first half of 2012, it grossed nearly US$3.4 billion, and was recognized by Time magazine as "South Korea's Greatest Export" (Mahr 2012).

Figure 1 Value of Korean music industry exports from 2005 to 2011

(unit: million dollars)
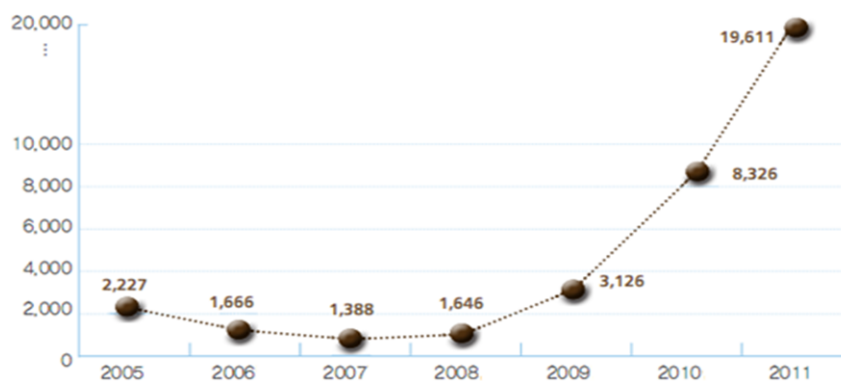
Source: Hallyu White Paper (Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism 2013)

In the case of Thailand, K-pop started gaining its popularity after Korean dramas were broadcasted. The drama called Full House starring 'Rain', who at that time was both an actor and a singer. He was an enormously successful idol that triggered the love of K-pop music among Thai audiences.

In 2010, the gross value of the Thai music industry is around 2 billion Baht, and K-pop dominated the market, with a market share of 17.5%, or around 350 million Baht. (Pyun 2011) The value came from the sale of physical albums, digital downloads, music licensing, and other events, such as concerts and artist management.

In terms of physical album sales, the revenue of foreign music albums is around 5% of all of music albums sold in Thailand in 2007. However, after Thai companies started selling Korean music albums, the sales raised to 20% of all albums sold in 2009. The Ministry of Culture, Sport, and Tourism of South Korea

revealed in the conference 'Hallyu Forum 2010' that 50 – 60% of the foreign music album sales in Thailand came from K-pop music albums. (Korea Foundation for International Culture Exchange 2014) It shows that K-pop has the ability to compete with music from other countries in the Thai music market.

Moreover, some Thai companies also choose K-pop idols to be the presenters of their products. This is additional evidence of K-pop's popularity in Thailand.

Table 1 Example of Thai products using K-pop idols as the presenters

Brand	Product	Presenter (K-pop idols)
Big Cola	Soft drink	B1A4
Wuttisak Clinic	Beauty Clinic	1. B1A4 2. T-Max
12plus	Deodorant	Siwon of Super Junior
Maxim contact lenses	Contact lenses	Donghae of Super Junior
Tao Kae Noi	Seaweed	1. Beast 2. 2PM
Masita	Seaweed	Kyuhyun of Super Junior
Yamaha Nouvo Series (2008)	Motorcycles	TVXQ
Yamaha Fino (2008)	Motorcycles	Super Junior
Yamaha Fiore (2010)	Motorcycles	2NE1
Yamaha TTX (2012)	Motorcycles	BIGBANG
Eversense cologne	Cologne	1. BIGBANG 2. 2PM
B - ing Collagen	Collagen drink	Taeyeon of Girls' Generation
True move H 3G & 4G	Mobile internet	Girls' Generation
Brands	Essence of chicken	Nickhun of 2PM
Scott pure	Healthy beverage	4Minute

Scott pure 10	Healthy beverage	CNBlue
Mitsubishi Mirage	Car	Nickhun of 2PM
Coca Cola	Soft drink	Nickhun of 2PM

Source: Positioning Magazine (Positioning Magazine 2013)

To make K-pop competitive in foreign markets, including Thailand, the production and promotion strategy of K-pop companies are necessary. However, in the age of mass internet use, consumers also influence the consumption of other people by sharing information, recommendation, and comment about the products. In the case of K-pop in Thailand, local consumers, including Thai K-pop fans, could be one of the factors that help make K-pop spread wider through their support, as they share their fervor for K-pop via the internet. Therefore, this thesis will not only focus on the competitiveness of K-pop music from the producer's side, but also from the consumer's side by analyzing the K-pop fans' influence in expanding and sustaining the popularity of K-pop music in Thailand.

1.2 Research objectives

1. To study factors distributing to the success of K-pop in Thailand

2. To analyze the influence from K-pop fans toward K-pop's popularity in Thailand.

1.3 Research questions

1. What is the competitiveness of K-pop music?

2. What are the characteristics and activities of K-pop fans in Thailand?

3. How do K-pop fans influence the expanding and sustaining of the popularity of K-pop music in Thailand?

1.4   Scope of study

In this research, I focus on finding factors contributing to K-pop's popularity in Thailand by analyzing K-pop competitiveness together with studying the characteristics and activities of Thai K-pop fan which influence expanding of K-pop's popularity in Thailand.

1.5   Organization of study

Chapter 1 introduces the research background, and describes the research objectives, research questions, research methodology, and scope of study.

Chapter 2 provides the history of K-pop and K-pop in Thailand, as well as Literature review on K-pop's success factors and K-pop's fan in Thailand.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology and conceptual framework.

Chapter 4 is the analysis of K-pop music's competitiveness.

Chapter 5 explains Thai K-pop fans' characteristics and activities, together with the summary of their influence to the expansion and sustaining of the popularity of K-pop music in Thailand.

Chapter 6 provides the conclusion and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will offer a review of related information and previous researches. The reviews are divided into two sections as follows:

Section 1 is the review of the origin of K-pop and the history of K-pop in Thailand. This review is the background for understanding K-pop's success factors, which will be described in detail in chapters 4 and 5.

Section 2 is the review of previous studies, which leads to my research topic. The chosen studies are related to K-pop's successful factors and K-pop's fans in Thailand.

2.1 Origin of K-pop and the history of K-pop in Thailand

2.1.1 K-pop, the center of the Neo-Korean Wave

In the past, 'Korea' was usually mentioned differently compared to the present. For the few who knew anything about Korea at that time, the first thing that usually came to mind was war, and the territorial disputes between North and South Korea. However, the concept and awareness of 'Korea' has since undergone many changes. Korean movies, TV dramas, music, cosmetics and especially electronic products like Samsung have brought a strong response, rolling over the world as the 'Korean Wave' or '*Hallyu*', which makes Korea well-known in a positive way.

Hallyu is a Korean word describing Korean pop culture which is spreading all over the world. It used to be an unknown word, but now the concept of Hallyu has become a mainstay in conversations about pop culture. It was mentioned for the first time in a Chinese local newspaper called 'Beijing Youth Daily' on November 19,

1999 after a Korean TV drama 'What is Love all about' (사랑이 뭐길래) was broadcasted on CCTV since 1997. Hallyu is combined by two words. Han means Korea, and Lyu means wave, so Hallyu means Korea's popularity wave. (Kim 2012)

The Asian Games in 1996 and Olympic Games in 1988 made Korea more exposed to intercultural exchange than ever. Consequently, Korean people started stepping out to travel and study abroad. Meanwhile, Korean entertainment entrepreneurs were trying to export their products to other Asian countries to increase business in an attempt to survive the money crisis in 1997. J-pop music, Taiwanese dramas and Hong Kong movies were dominant when the Korean wave emerged in the market (Kim 2012). Not only neighboring countries like China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan, but also Southeast Asian region such as Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam were blasted with Korean TV dramas such as 'Winter Sonata', 'Autumn in my heart', 'Full house' and 'Dae Jung Guem'.

Hallyu does not only refer to Korean dramas, but it also used to describe all types of Korean pop cultures. Drama fever drew people's attention to other Korean cultural products, such as music, movies, games, printing media, technology and also traditional products like Korean language and Korean food (Pyun 2011).

Korean music was firstly renowned as original soundtrack from Korean dramas. Although it was popular only among TV Drama fan, this was the first step into K-pop for foreigners.

We cannot deny the fact that the main point of the Korean wave over the last decade was Korean pop music, or K-pop. In 2011, the Korea Tourism Organization conducted a survey through www.visitkorea.or.kr. One of the questions

was 'What kind of Korean trend got your attention?'. Of the 12,085 people who responded, 55% of them chose K-pop as their favorite among all other Korean products. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011)

At first, the word Hallyu referred to Korean dramas but now its definition has changed. We use the word to explain not only TV dramas, but also K-pop music. Therefore, the term '*Shin Hallyu*' or the new Korean wave, has been defined to describe the Hallyu that focused on K-pop music. (Pyun 2011)

2.1.2   Origin of K-pop and K-pop in the world market

K-pop or Korean pop is the term referring to a musical genre originating in South Korea that is characterized by a wide variety of audiovisual elements. Although it comprises all genres of "popular music" within South Korea, the term is more often used in a narrower sense to describe a modern form of South Korean pop music covering: dance-pop, pop ballads, electronic, rock, hip-hop and R&B. (Doopedia 2015) In the past, K-pop was called 'Gayo' which means 'popular music' in Korean. But after it gained huge popularity around the world, the word 'K-pop', which combines the English word 'pop', which means popular music and 'K' from Korean, became the dominant term.

In 1992, the first Korean boy-band Seo Taeji and Boys (서태지와 아이들) debuted, and this was a big turning point for the Korean music industry. Songs were mixed by a variety of music genres, including dance, rock and hip-hop. Sance choreography for live performances was also created. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011) This was a new way of music production which never happened before in Korea, and became the role model and format for K-pop in

nowadays. This kind of music was a hit at that time and Korean media said 'Korean music will not be the same'.

In addition to the different style of music, the lyrics became a hot issue in Korea's society at that time. One of the controversial lyrics was from the song Classroom Idea (교실 이데아), which contained criticism about Korean education that captured Korean teenagers' minds. The boy band was so popular that they were called by their fans 'the President of Culture'. (Tudor 2012)

The success of Seo Taeji & Boys made other producers focus more on music for teenagers. In the middle of 1990, the Korean music industry finally reached 'the Age of the Idol Group'.

With the 1995 debut of the quintet male idol group H.O.T., K-pop music began to be dominated by teen-centered boy bands and girl groups. Formed by SM Entertainment, H.O.T. became a major influence on the future of boy bands. Entertainment agencies began developing their own "star-making systems," which would later lead to the debuts of groups like Sechs Kies, S.E.S., Fin.K.L, NRG, Taesaja, Shinhwa and g.o.d. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011)

In the late 1990s, there was a downturn for the local market that forced the first-generation idol groups to look for opportunities in overseas markets. Just one year after the Korean economy was hit by the Asian financial crisis in 1997, H.O.T. had its first Chinese album. The boy band was able to survive in a slumping Korean music industry by digitizing its music and entering into the larger audiences, such as in China. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011)

Although groups like H.O.T. were successful in attracting Chinese fans, their popularity did not last so long due to factors such as rampant pirating of CDs and policies for cultural protection by the Chinese authorities. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011)

When benefits in China became deadlocked, SM entertainment started to plan for the Japanese market, which had the 2nd biggest cultural content market in the world. The local strategies were used as major Korean entertainment companies cooperated with Japan's leading music company, 'Avex Trax'(Kim 2011)

BoA was the first SM artist to debut in Japan. She was trained in singing, performance and Japanese language in order to penetrate the Japanese music market. The company's devotion became successful when her first Japanese single, 'Listen to my heart', was released. The song sold 1.3 million copies in 2002, and other singles were also accepted very well later on. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011)

After BoA's success in blazing a trail for K-pop in Japan, the Korean rising star boyband TVXQ (동방신기, 東方神起), who debuted in 2003, finally debuted in Japan under the official name Tohoshinki in 2005. Although they did not get much attention from Japanese audiences at first, the 16th single 'Purple line' in January 2008 was in the top charts of the Oricon weekly single chart for 6 weeks in the roll. They were much more well-known by the Japanese ever since.

Although TVXQ's 3 former members –Jaejoong, Kim Junsu and Park Yucheon (later became the group 'JYJ')— left TVXQ in 2010 because of the lawsuit with their agency about the contract, the remaining 2 members –Jung Yunho and Shim Changmin— still work under the name TVXQ, and their popularity in Japan is still

rising until now. In 2013, they hold the Japan tour concert 'Tohoshinki Live Tour 2013 ~TIME~' and performed the finale show at Yokohama Nissan Stadium in front of 70,000 fans. They are the first foreign artist to perform at this stadium. (Yun 2013)

The fame of TVXQ led more Japanese people to be interested in K-pop and they are considered the leader of other K-pop idols in Japan. Many K-pop idol groups succeed in the Japanese market, including Kara, Super Junior and Girls' Generation. K-pop idols' songs were able to land on the Japanese Oricon chart, and some of them were invited to perform at the 'NHK Kouhaku Music Festival', which is the most famous New Year music program in Japan. However, K-pop fever in Japan began to step into the downturn as K-pop idols were not invited to show on Kouhaku since 2012. Many scholars mentioned that the cause is from problems of international relations between two countries in which the situation became worse, especially on the issue of the 'Dokdo dispute' (or Takeshima dispute in Japanese). Nevertheless, until now, nearly 80% of K-pop's revenue still comes from exporting contents to the Japanese market.(Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism 2013)

The early-2000s is not only the starting point of K-pop fever in Japan, but is also when it began to spread all over Asia, especially in Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, the Philippines and Thailand. Rain, the singer/actor, is the pioneer in entering this region's market. The broadcasting of the drama 'Full House', in which Rain was the lead actor, became widespread throughout many countries, for example Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong, China, Japan, Taiwan, Cambodia and the United States. Fans of Korean dramas also pay attention to his songs. Rain released his third album after that and became quite successful, as more than 1 million copies were sold in Asia. (Jon 2011) After K-pop

became prevalent throughout Asia, the 1st generation K-pop idols like Baby V.O.X., BOA and Se7en also followed Rain's lead to promote their songs as well.

The unique music style, amazing performance and K-pop idols' good-looking appearance made Asian fans love K-pop. After the 1st generation idols became well-known, the road for the 2nd generation, such as TVXQ, BIGBANG, Super Junior, SHINee, Wonder Girls, Girls' Generation etc. also opened up. K-pop idols promote their album and hold many events like concerts, fan meetings, and serving as presenters for many products in a variety of Asian Countries, all of which were received well by fans. Consequently, the number of K-pop fans in Asia has been increasing more and more.

Globalization help blurred the border between countries in the world. The use of the Internet is also a major factor of spreading K-pop to global audiences; not only Asian, but also to European, American, African and Middle East regions as well. The K-pop events and concerts were held in many places globally. In 2012, the world was introduced to the song 'Gangnam Style' by the Korean singer 'PSY'. The catchy lyrics and rhythm, plus the 'horse riding' dance made this song very popular. The song was ranked in 2nd place on the American Bill Board Charts (Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism 2013). As of October 2014, the music video of the song on YouTube has 2 billion views.

Since the late 2000s, K-pop was involved with the multinational production process. Large entertainment companies like SM, JYP and YG have employed foreign producers, choreographers, etc. to make K-pop more international. In addition, auditions were held in cities around the world to seek the next rising K-pop stars. Many idols came from those auditions, including Nicole from Kara, Tiffany and Jessica

(former members) from Girls' Generation, Amber and Victoria from f(x), Jia and Fei from Miss A, and Thai-national Nichkhun from 2PM. (Korean Culture and Information Service 2011)

Moreover, SM entertainment released a new boy band 'EXO' in 2012. This group of K-pop idols is different from others because it is divided into 2 sub-units. The EXO-K unit is mainly promoted in Korea, while the EXO-M unit is mainly promoted in China. This uniqueness makes a profitable outcome by capturing 2 markets at the same time. The success of EXO in Korea and China has been proved as their first album 'XOXO (Kiss & Hug)' sales reached 1 million copies. In this time of digital markets and the stagnation of the analog system, a million sales is considered as a successful story. (Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism 2013)

In spite of the success of K-pop, the training system and the work contract seem not quite fair for some singers. For quite some time, there have been various lawsuits between singers and the companies; for example, Shinhwa, JYJ (former members of TVXQ), and Hankyung (former members of Super Junior) have filed lawsuits. Currently in 2014, 2 Chinese members of EXO named Kris and Lu Han also filed a lawsuit against SM entertainment to terminate the contract. Those lawsuits have created a bad attitude toward the K-pop industry.

2.1.3   Popularity of K-pop in Thailand

With regards to the phenomenon of K-pop's popularity in Thailand, it has noticeable since the early-2000s. Now we can hear K-pop in shopping malls, department stores, TV programs and also see many K-pop idols as the presenters of various Thai products. K-pop idols continuously come to Thailand for their promotions and activities. Moreover, the craze about K-pop among Thai teenagers

sometimes considered to be 'over' and became a frequent topic in the online community. The cases that are mentioned above can prove that K-pop is currently popular in Thailand and the overwhelming popularity made people curious about the cause. This research will provide the summary information about the origin of K-pop in Thailand to be the background for understanding K-pop's success factors which will be analyzed in the next chapter of this research.

Originally, popular music has been one of the most favorite music genres among Thai audiences. The boom of pop music in Thailand started in the 90s when record company 'RS' produced a lot of pop singers and gained huge amount of fans. The music was so popular that we called it the 'Candy Era', which referred to the craze over fun rhythms and colorful outfit of the singers.

Thai audiences have a long history of enjoying popular music from foreign countries, especially from the USA and Japan. In 2003, as the TV series from Taiwan 'Meteor Garden' broadcasted, the 4 main characters 'F4' formed a boy band and created a phenomenal hit among Thai youth. That was the first time for Asian idols to have such a huge attention in Thailand.

When Korean TV dramas came to Thailand in the early 2000s, Korean pop music was not well-known by Thai audiences. However, some Thais heard the soundtrack from TV series, and many of the OST were remade into Thai versions.

As mentioned above, when the drama 'Full house', starring the singer 'Rain', gained popularity in Asia in the mid-2000s, the phenomenon was in Thailand as well. Rain's works, both dramas and songs, attracted Thai audiences to listen to K-pop. In 2007, Rain was the presenter for Dutch-Mill yogurt in Thailand. The 'Dutch Mill

Presents Rain's Coming World Tour in Bangkok 2007' was held with the support of Dutch-Mill company. (Manager Online 2007)

After Rain's success in Thailand, other K-pop idols, such as Baby V.O.X, Se7en and BoA started to gain attention from Thai K-pop fans. The debut of TVXQ in 2003 drew even more of a Thai K-pop fan base because of their voices, performances and appearances. Distance is not a big obstacle for Thai fans as they could update the news about their beloved K-pop idols through the Internet. TVXQ was invited to the event Thailand Channel V Award in 2005, which was the first time for them to come to Thailand. The first concert of TVXQ in Thailand was 'TVXQ! Rising Sun Live in Bangkok 2006'. Super Junior, which performed the opening-show of the TVXQ concert, gained more attention among Thai fans and finally became one of the most successful K-pop boy bands in Thailand. Therefore, we can say that TVXQ is the pioneer that helped trigger the K-pop phenomenon in Thailand.

After 'Wonder Girls', a girl group of JYP entertainment, released the single 'Nobody' in 2008, they became successful in Asia, including Thailand, with their retro-style and dancing. The girl group 'Girls' Generation' from SM entertainment debuted in 2009. Their single 'Gee' created a huge hit in Asia, and that was the beginning of the craze over girls groups in Thailand. While most of the boy bands were supported by female audiences, girl groups were supported by both male and female fans. Girl groups that have a broad Thai fan base include the Wonder Girls, Girls' Generation, 4Minite, f(x), Sistar etc.

At the end of the year 2008, the boy band '2PM' debuted. There was a Thai member in the group named Nichkhun Horvejkul, who was the first Thai person to

debut as a Korean idol. Nichkhun improves the good perception of K-pop among Thai people as he appears in a lot of Thai media.

The popularity of K-pop affects Thai society in many aspects, as follows:

1.	Thai K-pop subscribers learn more about Korean culture through their idols' characteristics. For instance, Thai fans learn about the working culture of Korean people; ambition, senior respect, and hard-working. (Suwannapisit 2008)

2.	The most common K-pop influences on Thai teenagers include Korean-styles such as hair styles, cloths, accessories and make up. Some of them were even inspired to do cosmetic surgery to be like Korean idols. In addition, the fans have also been attracted to products that have Korean idols as presenters.

3.	The Korean wave brings the collaboration in business both directly and indirectly. For example, SM True, the cooperation between True and SM, was established to take care of the activities and distribution of products of SM's singers in Thailand. The indirect collaboration in business is, for example, the cosmetic companies and other products that use K-pop idols as the presenters to increase the sales.

4.	The boom of Korean language learning in Thailand. In the past, there were Korean classes in universities, but they were not so popular. However, the Korean wave has increased both the Korean language programs in universities and the number of Korean language students. Nowadays, there are more electives, minors and majors of Korean studies. Korean language is being taught in high school. Moreover, private tutors have also increased business through Korean wave fans as well.

Since 2012, it is said that the K-pop phenomenon in Thailand is in a stage of stagnation. Some said that it is in a downturn (Thoopputsar 2012) since the number of K-pop events has been decreasing. However, the events still have a good response. For instance, the first concert of EXO, 'EXO FROM EXOPLANET #1 – THE LOST PLANET – in BANGKOK', held on September 13-14, 2014, sold out. The place for this concert was the IMPACT Arena, the biggest indoor concert hall in Thailand. Other concerts and events also received strong support from their fans. Therefore, the fading K-pop phenomenon in Thailand might mean nothing, but simply a decreasing of on-and-off audience. That is because a lot of loyal fans still give support to their K-pop idols.

2.3   Related studies

2.3.1   The related researches of K-pop's success factors

In the essay '*What Business Can Learn from K-pop for Global Strategy*', Seo Minsoo (Seo 2012) mentioned that there are four aspects behind the success of K-pop which are the entertainment companies who create the systemized training and the plans to export K-pop into overseas markets, social media that helps K-pop spread rapidly and reduces distribution cost, tech-savvy fans who can access K-pop easily and enthusiastically share it to others via social media, and K-pop stars who have talents and good personality.

Kim Hosang (Kim 2012) described factors affecting K-pop global popularity in his study titled '*A study on success strategies for global marketing of K-pop: focusing on experts' in-depth interview*' that, the factors of K-pop's international success can be narrow down to two areas. One is the content competitiveness and the other is

the media strategies. The content competitiveness consists of glocal strategies (glocal strategies are the combination of global and local strategies), unique training systems and the competitiveness of K-pop stars. The media strategies formed by the ubiquity of the Internet and smart phones, and digital broadcast service by satellites.

Kim Soojung (Kim 2006) also mentioned in '*A new trial about the Korean Wave over the Glocalisation: the approaches of case study that SM entertainment made Korean Wave Star*' that SM Entertainment used glocal strategies to be a tool for entering overseas markets. For example, they cooperated with Avex Trax (Japanese record label) for exporting K-pop to Japan and sent their artists to Japan to debut their Japanese albums.

Thanaporn Thoopputsar (Thoopputsar 2012) provided other factors that support the popularity of K-pop in the research '*The formation of Korean popular culture and its popularity in Thailand*'. Thanaporn found that both public and private sectors in Korea fully supported Korean cultural products (including K-pop) to export to overseas markets. Furthermore she also mentioned that because Thai people tend to accept foreign culture easily, it was relatively easy for Korean popular culture to be brought to Thailand.

2.3.2   The related researches of K-pop fans in Thailand

In '*Korean singers and Korean wave as experienced by Thai fan clubs*', Kamonate Suwannapisit (Suwannapisit 2008) mentioned that K-pop fans in Thailand absorb Korean culture through their favorite Korean singers' characteristics. Korean entertainment companies' training systems and support from the government encourage Korean singers to express Korean culture through their actions and

appearances. Therefore, fan clubs imitate them in Korean physical appearances and apparel, eating taste, and tourism, as well as their verbal and nonverbal expressions.

Woranuch Tantiwitidpong (Tantiwitidpong 2008) described in '*Korean singers maniac among Thai teenagers*' that Thai teenagers who are fans of Korean singers usually browse the internet to follow their idols, and they also join other fan activities such as going to concerts, joining social networks to share information with other fans, doing cover dance and studying Korean language to access K-pop and interact with their idols via social networks. The charming appearance and talent of Korean singers encourages Thai teenagers to have a positive attitude toward them. However, the craze for Korean singers also leads to many problems such as wasting time and money, undesirable habits of telling lies or borrowing money, and risks from going after these singers when they come to Thailand.

In the research '*Communication, parasocial interaction and pro-social value learning of Korean star singers' fanclub*', Peerapa Suwannachote (Suwannachote 2008) mentioned that fans are learning pro-social value which are living value and surrounded relationship value from their favorite Korean singers. Korean singers' personal lives, career and personalities presented through media show pro-social value, and fans adapted it for use in their daily life. However, one-sided communication through media also has a negative side, because it can make fans feels glad or sad with their idols' actions as well.

In conclusion, the previous researches mostly studied overall factors that have an effect on the popularity of K-pop and did not focus on a specific region, namely, Thailand. Previous researches of K-pop's fans in Thailand mostly focused on the effects from K-pop's popularity toward fans' attitude and actions. However,

there is no study focusing on the influence from Thai K-pop fans' supports and activities toward the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. Hence, this research will focus on finding the reason for its popularity, especially in Thailand. It also studies the characteristics and activities of K-pop fans and their role in spreading and sustaining the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. The result of analysis will be described in chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Data collection methods

1)   Documents research

In order to investigate the factors that affect K-pop's popularity in Thailand, I will collect document data from both primary sources, such as online news and interviews, and secondary sources, such as offline news, articles, books, documentaries, statistics, and previous researches related to the Korean wave, K-pop's popularity, K-pop success factors, and K-pop's fans.

2)   Observation

From the second half of the year 2014 to the first half of 2015, I have participated in K-pop events in Thailand for direct observation and informal conversation with K-pop fans about fan activities in Thailand, along with the observation of Thai K-pop fans characteristics and activities through Social Network Services (SNS), including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram.

3)   Interviews

I interviewed fans of famous K-pop idol groups in Thailand. There are two criteria for selecting the idol groups. First, they must be under the 'Big 3 companies' in the Korean music industry; either SM Entertainment, YG Entertainment, or JYP Entertainment. Second, they needed to have held solo concerts in Thailand. There are 6 idol groups that fit both criteria: TVXQ, Super Junior, Girls' Generation, EXO, 2PM, and BIGBANG.

Table 2 the selected idol groups for my research

No.	Group's Name	Company	Number of concert in Thailand
1	TVXQ	SM Entertainment	4 times (2006, 2007, 2008, 2015)
2	Super Junior	SM Entertainment	6 times (2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015)
3	Girls' Generation	SM Entertainment	2 times (2012, 2014)
4	EXO	SM Entertainment	2 times (2014, 2015)
5	2PM	JYP Entertainment	3 times (2012, 2013, 2014)
6	BIGBANG	YG Entertainment	4 times (2012, 2013 'G-Dragon Solo concert', 2015 'TAEYANG solo concert', 2015)

Interview questions were distributed to participants via the internet. 'Google Forms' was utilized as a tool for collecting the interviewees' answers. There were a total of 108 participants. Their ages ranged from 13 – 43. The duration of the interview data collection was from 20th October – 17th November 2014. The interview questions are as follows.

Table 3 Interview questions

Topic	Question
1. Factors contributing to K-pop popularity in Thailand	1) In your opinion and experience, which methods that K-pop companies use to promote K-pop into Thailand?
	2) In your opinion, what are the strengths of K-pop?
	3) What makes you interested in K-pop?
	4) Other suggestions
2. K-pop fans characteristics	1) In your opinion, what are the characteristics of Thai

	K-pop fans?
	2) What are similarities of Thai K-pop fans and other countries K-pop fans?
	3) What are the differences between Thai K-pop fans and other countries' K-pop fans?
	4) Other suggestions
3. K-pop Fans' role in expanding and maintaining the popularity of K-Pop in Thailand.	1) How do K-pop fans support their favorite K-pop idol?
	2) What are activities that K-pop fans have been doing? In your opinion, can these activities contribute to the increasing popularity of K-pop in Thailand? If so, how?
	3) Which kind of media have been used in order to help spread K-pop? How?
	4) Other suggestions
4. Interviewee's K-pop relating activities	1) Have you ever participated in a K-pop fan activity? If so, what kind of activity did you do?
	2) In your opinion, do you think the activities help increase the popularity of idol groups or not? How?
	3) Other suggestions
5. Problems and obstacles preventing expansion and sustainability of K-pop music's popularity in Thailand	1) What are the external factors that obstruct K-pop music from expanding and sustaining its popularity in Thailand?
	2) What are the internal factors that obstruct K-pop music from expanding and sustaining its popularity in Thailand?
	3) Other suggestions

In this research, a pseudonym will be used for each interviewee's name. For example; an Interviewee named 'Kanokporn Rueangsa' will be replaced by

'Interviewee (number)'. The real name of interviewees will be shown in the interviewing sheet used in data collection only.

3.2   Analysis method

The data that were collected from document research, observation, and interviews were analyzed in this research. Also, the 'Diamond model' by Michael Porter (Porter 1990) was used as a tool to analyze the competitiveness of K-pop in Thailand.

The Diamond model was created by Michael Porter in 1990 and first introduced in 'The Competitive Advantage of Nations'. The Diamond model was originally created to analyze the competitive advantages of nations in establishing and operating its industries. In this thesis, the model was adopted to analyze the competitiveness of K-pop with another genre of music in Thai music market. The model consists of 4 attributes as follows: (Pitts 1998)

Factor conditions refer to human resources, physical resources, knowledge resources, capital resources and infrastructure. Specialized resources are often specific to an industry and important for its competitiveness. Specific resources can be created to compensate for factor disadvantages.

Demand conditions in the home market can help companies create a competitive advantage, when sophisticated home market buyers pressure firms to innovate faster and to create more advanced products than those of competitors.

Related and supporting industries can produce inputs that are important for innovation and internationalization. These industries provide cost-effective inputs, but they also participate in the upgrading process, thus stimulating other companies in the chain to innovate.

Firm strategy, structure and rivalry constitute the fourth determinant of competitiveness. The way in which companies are created, set goals and are managed is important for success. But the presence of intense rivalry in the home base is also important; it creates pressure to innovate in order to upgrade competitiveness.

Figure 2 Diamond model for Nation competitive advantage
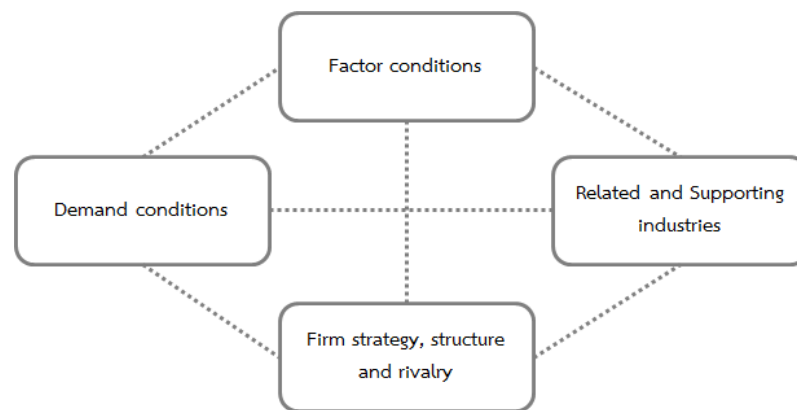
Source: Michael Porter (Porter 1990)

Moreover, the 'AISAS' model was also applied as a tool in analyzing the influence of Thai K-pop fans toward the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. 'AISAS' is a model of consumer behaviors that was advocated in 2004 by Dentsu, a major Japanese advertising agency.

Figure 3 'AIDMA' and 'AISAS' consumption behavior model
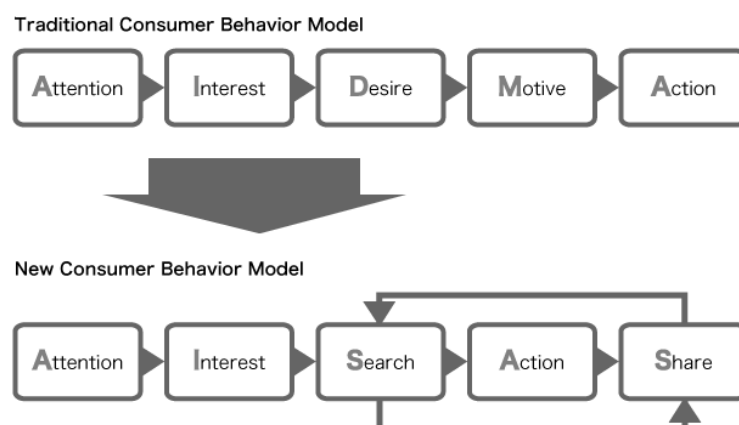
Originally, the 'AIDMA' model, created by Roland Hall in 1920, was used extensively in the marketing and marketing industries. However, the model was created before the internet emerged. According to this model, there are five key processes: Attention, in which the consumer first notices the product or advertisement, followed by Interest, Desire, Memory, and ending with Action. In 2004, the 'AISAS' model was developed to observe the behavior of consumers based on the understanding that the internet has become prevalent, and that consumers now have access to environments in which they can obtain and transmit information themselves. (Sugiyama 2011). In this model, consumers start consumption with 'Attention', in which the consumers first notice the products or advertisement, followed by 'Interest'. After that, they 'search' for information about the product and commit 'Action' by purchasing. The consumption does not end with 'Action', however, but with 'Sharing' information and commenting about the products by using media such as the internet.

The results of analysis as mentioned above will be shown as the factors contributing to the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. The analysis of the competitive advantages of K-pop in Thailand will be described in chapter 4, and the analysis of Thai K-pop fans' influence toward the popularity of K-pop in Thailand will be described in chapter 5 of this research.

CHAPTER IV

COMPETITIVENESS OF K-POP MUSIC IN THAILAND

The analysis of K-pop's competitiveness in Thailand

The first step to answer the research question 'Why is K-pop popular in Thailand?' is to find out K-pop's competitiveness by conducting in-depth interviews with K-pop fans, as well as observation and analyzing documents related to the Korean wave and K-pop in Thailand. I applied Michael Porter's (Porter 1990) 'Diamond Model' to analyze the competitiveness of K-pop in Thailand.

4.1 Factor conditions

Factor conditions refer to the position in the factors of production. The factor conditions that help K-pop become more competitive can be divided as follows:

4.1.1 Quality and uniqueness of content

The wave of K-pop first hit Thailand in the early 2000s. At that time, when we mentioned Asian popular music, Thais would think of Japanese pop (J-pop) or Taiwanese pop more than K-pop. Nowadays, K-pop has become well-known among Thais, and one of many reasons that made K-pop become popular is the quality and uniqueness of K-pop content, which can be divided into two parts, music and chorography.

1) Music

After the 1990s, K-pop has often been used to describe the modern form of Korean popular music covering Dance, Hip-hop, R&B, Ballad, Rock, Electronic and etc. Although K-pop covers various music genres, there are some characteristics that bind them all together, including simple and lively rhythms, catchy melodies, interesting lyrics, and wonderful choreography. (Doopedia 2015) In other words, K-pop music is a

kind of fusion music that makes original one became easier to listen to. Thus, K-pop can attract the Thai audience with its uniqueness and catchiness.

2)   Chorography

The choreography of K-pop songs depends on the concept of each song. Some are made easily so we can remember and dance along, like PSY's 'horse riding dance', and Super Junior's 'Sorry Sorry dance'. Some focus on amazing and attractive choreography. However, the most recognized point of K-pop performance is 'synchronized choreography'.

K-pop companies always make an effort to develop new forms of stage performances. The performance not only focuses on synchronized choreography, but also emphasizes 'novelty'. Most K-pop idols work in an idol group which can be an advantage for the dance pattern. During the performance, each member may have different moves, and rotate their positions to keep the performance harmonized.

Additionally, some of the major K-pop companies, like SM Entertainment, started working with global producers, composers and choreographers in order to support the internationalization of K-pop (Kim 2012). This is another key strategy that has helped elevate the quality of K-pop content.

Table 4 Global composers and choreographers participate with SM Entertainment

Singer – Song	Composer	Choreographer
Girls' Generation 'Tell me your wish'	Nermin Harambasic, Robin Jenssen, Ronny Svendsen, Anne Judith Wik, Fridolin Nordso Schjoldan	Rino Nakasone
Girls' Generation 'The boys'	Teddy Riley	Rino Nakasone

SHINee 'Sherlock'	Thomas Troelsen, Rufio Sandilands, Rocky Morris, Thomas Eriksen	Tony Testa
TVXQ 'Mirotic'	Mikkel Remee Sigvardt, Lucas Secon, Thomas Troelsen	Kenny Wormald
F(x) 'Pinocchio'	Alex Cantrall, Jeff Hoeppner, Dwight Watson, Hitchhike (Korean)	Jillian Meyers

Source: SM Entertainment (Kim 2012)

In my in-depth interviews with Thai K-pop fans, many fans said that the strengths of K-pop are music and chorography. These two things are what attracted them to K-pop.

At first, I was attracted to K-pop because of its exotic nature. The language and songs were exotic for me, so I tried listening to it and became a fan since then. (Interviewee 96)

The main reason why I became a K-pop fan is its unique music and dance choreography. Even though I could not understand the meaning of the lyrics, I could feel the emotions from its beat and melody. (Interviewee 70)

As we all know, every idol group works hard in their practicing. Thus, their dancing is synchronized and splendid. (Interviewee 23)

K-pop idols can dance to every type of music regardless of the rhythm of the song. So, I think that dancing is also a notable point for K-pop. (Interviewee 101)

4.1.2 K-pop idols production system

Currently, Korean music labels have a systemized idol making process, and work hard to prepare idols for oversea markets. The production system starts from casting to launching into the global music market. Kim Young-min (Kim 2012), CEO of SM Entertainment, said that "*SM Entertainment is the first company who brings the system into K-pop industries. We are accurately analyzing music, cultural trends and needs based on the exclusive casting, training, producing, and management system. Then, find the content that can be leader of the market. That is our competitiveness*"

Seo Minsoo (Seo 2012) described that the K-pop idol production system consisted of four stages: casting, training, production, and global promotion.

Figure 4 four stages of K-pop idols production system

Source: Lesson from K-pop's global success. (Seo 2012)

1) Casting

Human resources are the most valuable assets to any organization. Moreover, finding good human resources is the first step for a successful business. K-pop companies also focus on finding talented people through various methods such as street casting (scouting) and auditioning.

'Appearance' is one of the important qualifications of K-pop idols, and is also one of the factors that draw people to K-pop. K-pop companies hire a casting team, send them to search for good-looking people with good potential, and ask them to attend official auditions. Some famous K-pop idols such as TVXQ's Changmin, Super Junior's Kangin, Girls' Generation's Seohyun, EXO's Sehun (Soompi 2012) and 2PM's Nichkhun (Kim 2011) started their career through street casting. Additionally, casting teams also do 'school casting' (scouting school student in their schools) to search for teenagers who have talents or a good appearance.

The audition methods of K-pop companies are divided into the local and global auditions. SM Entertainment is the first company that started global audition projects in 2006. The audition was held in 10 countries, including Korea, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Canada, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia and Thailand. In 2015, the global audition in Thailand was held in two big cities: Bangkok and Chiang Mai. Moreover, the company also arranges special monthly audition in the USA and Japan.

SM, YG, and JYP entertainment also have a cooperating audition TV program called 'K-POP STAR'. The program has aired on the Korean SBS channel since 2011 and the latest is season 4 (2014 - 2015). The winner will be provided the opportunity to debut as an artist under one of the 3 companies by their own selection. (Lee 2011)

2) Training

After passing the audition, the successful candidates will become trainees at company. The company provides skill training courses including singing, rapping, dancing, foreign language practice (English, Japanese, Chinese and Korean for non-

Korean trainees), public speaking, communication skills development, and personality training (abcNEWS 2015). The intensive training programs are conducted by expert teams. Moreover, trainees must pass evaluations to remain in the program. The duration of the training period is varied, from several months up to 7 years, and without any guarantee as to whether they will debut as an artist or not. The trainees have to push themselves to the limit in order to pass this difficult training and compete with other trainees. However, even though the system is very strict and hard, the trainees who pass will became skilled and talented idols, and will also have the necessary qualities to be a star such as manners, good personalities, communication skills, discipline, diligence and patience.

3) Production

The production process consists of creating a group and album's concept, selecting proper trainees, forming the group, defining roles for each member (such as leader, main vocalist, main rapper, main dancer), creating songs and choreography, making an album, and other preparation until the group is ready for promotion.

In the production stage, companies seek out ideas from global sources. Managers work with top experts in music and choreography to perfect the appeal of their upcoming artists. Creative input is sourced globally from experts in many countries and in multiple industries. (Seo 2012)

4) Global promotion

In the global promotion stage, entertainment companies actively network with overseas partners. Companies coordinate overseas marketing from the earliest stages of planning, including forming partnerships with major record labels to reduce

the risks inherent in overseas promotion. K-pop promoters also release albums specifically for local markets to overcome cultural barriers (Seo 2012).

For the Thai market, JYP Entertainment (BEC-Tero MUSIC 2014) and YG entertainment (BEC-Tero MUSIC 2013) have formed partnerships with BEC-TERO Music Thailand, and SM entertainment also cooperated with True Visions Limited to establish 'SM True' (Positioning Magazine 2011). These partners earned exclusive licenses to distribute albums (imported or Thailand edition album) and planned the promotion for Korean artists in Thailand. (See also in the topic 4.3.1 Localization strategy)

4.1.3   Characteristics of K-pop idols

The Korean idol training system controls every part of the process from candidate selection to a strict and long training period. The training helps the trainees to improve their skills, manners, personality, and abilities in music production. The process will transform trainees into perfect idols in terms of appearance, skills, and image.

1)   Appearance

Appearance is one of the most important competitive factors of K-pop idols. In terms of appearance, K-pop idols are classified into many categories based on their styles and visual appearances. Male idols usually have many different styles such as cute or pretty boy looks, which are called 'Kkotminam (Korean: 꽃미남)', as well as the handsome and manly man styles. Female idols also have many categories, such as cute, pretty, feminine, graceful and sexy. Some idols, instead of having classic good looks, they have other charms, such as a charming smile,

beautiful body, etc. These various styles of K-pop idols allow for a full range of choices for fans to choose from in accordance with their personal tastes.

Kwon Oh-seok (Kim 2012) also said that "If you consider, you will find that most K-pop stars are not a single idol but a group idol which consisted of various personalities and appearances from each member. This multi-targeting strategy considered to be strategy that attracting diverse fan bases."

2)   Skills

As I mentioned above about the idol training system, the trainees must take many kinds of intensive training, such as singing, rapping, dancing, acting, public speaking and more. Singing perfectly while performing a synchronized dance is one of K-pop's strong points. Although idol groups will divide members' responsibilities to be the main vocalist, main dancer, and main rapper, it doesn't mean that others don't have those abilities. However, since there are many members in each idol group, the performance of one song may not be enough to show all members' diverse abilities. Therefore, their companies will give them a chance to appear on variety programs. Members can show their singing, dancing and other entertaining abilities through variety shows. Moreover, they will have a chance to do individual work that suits their skills, such as releasing special sub-unit albums or solo-albums, singing for dramas and soundtracks, and starring in movies and dramas.

3)   Image

Another important point of K-pop idols to impress audiences is their positive image. Good manners and speaking skills are acquired in the carefully planned trainee program. In an informal situation, K-pop idols usually display proper manners, a good sense of humor and kind

consideration toward their fans. These good images can be seen when they appear on variety programs, and when they communicate with their fans through SNS (Social Network Service) accounts. Generally, K-pop idols debut as a group with many members, which helps put great importance on harmony, friendship, and support for each other.

From interviews with K-pop fans, many fans said that their first impression about K-pop centers around idols. Their appearances, skills, and good images are the methods of originally attracting fans' attention.

I can say that my first impression on K-pop was their face, and then their music styles. Even now, I'm willing to pay tens of thousands of Baht to attend their concert, and the idols are my only reason. (Interviewee 94)

The K-pop presentation will come in the form of variety, which is their strong point. This kind of presentation aims to show every side of the artist, not just a singer who can sing and dance well or have good looks. They want to show the funny sides of the idols, and also their pre-debut hardships. By this way of presentation, viewers or fans would feel like the idols are their friends, or even their lovers, who gradually get to know each other, like they're together with the idols from their initial debut through to their second, third, and future albums. The period of times for being a fan of one idol group is be so long because they feel like they have a deep connection with the idols. Also, K-pop industries will try to push the artist to work more than singing or holding concert by working as a MC, actor, and presenter so that the viewers will see them more often, and can help them to extend their popularity (Interviewee 105)

No doubt, the first thing that catches my attention was the idols' faces. However, what makes me keep track of K-pop were their abilities, especially their singing and dancing skills. They have quality and unique performance; I can tell whose song it is just from hearing the voices and style of the music. Idols' characteristic is another thing that makes me love them. Dong Bang Shin Ki, for example, their appearance makes people interested, and the abilities of the members make them a perfect group. In the past they were juniors who paid respect to the seniors. These days, they have become famous artists and they're still the same. To be themselves, not acting, is what makes me love them and I will continue to support them. (Interviewee 93)

4.2   Related and supporting industries

The popularity of K-pop is only one of the parts of the Korean wave that spread throughout the world. The factors that push the Korean wave is not only K-pop, but also other Korean cultural content, and they relate to and support each other. In Thailand's case, Korean cultural content related to and supporting the K-pop industry includes Korean dramas and TV shows.

4.2.1   Popularity of Korean dramas in Thailand

Before K-pop was popular in Thailand, Thai people already knew Korea due to the popularity of Korean dramas.

Thai people were interested in Korean series after ITV (Television Station) aired the Korean series Autumn in My Heart (Korean:가을동화) and Winter Sonata (Korean:겨울연가). These two dramas are both about romantic love, and the main male character in each is an idealistic man.

Channel 7 (Television Station) is another station to become successful by following the Korean Wave. The standard airtime for Korean dramas is Saturday and Sunday morning. The series that really launched the popularity of Korean dramas in Thailand was 'Full House' (Korean:풀하우스). Full House aired at the end of June in 2005, starring Jon Ji Hyun, more commonly known as Rain. Rain became popular in Thailand after airing this series. The fame earned from this series also lead to an increase in popularity of his other work. (Wattanasupakul 2006) From then on, Channel 7 has been airing Korean drama series consecutively. From 2002 to August 2014, Channel 7 has already aired 128 Korean drama series. (Bridges Magazine 2015)

Furthermore, other major Thai television channels also brought the Korean series on air. Dae Jang Geum, or Jewel in the Palace (Korean:대장금), was the most successful in Thailand, and aired on Channel 3 for the first time in 2006. It has since been rerun many times (Wattanasupakul 2006). Currently, Thailand has changed the television system to a digital format, thus many digital TV channels were founded. Many digital TV channels, such as Workpoint TV, PPTV, and True4U are also airing Korean dramas.

Table 5 the number of Korean Dramas on Thai Broadcasting Channel (2000 – 2013)

Year / Channel	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
CH3	0	0	0	0	1	5	7	17	11	4	9	10	6	70
CH5	2	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	8
CH7	0	1	1	3	4	12	12	10	15	13	13	10	26	120
CH9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	6	2	4	0	0	19
ITV	0	3	11	3	2	7	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	29
True Vision	0	0	4	0	2	0	1	9	11	8	10	8	11	64
Work Point	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Total	2	6	17	6	11	24	23	43	43	27	37	28	45	312

Source: Korea Thailand Communication Center (Park 2015)

A variety of plot, realism of scenes, costumes, characters and outstanding actors are the reasons that Thai people love Korean series. Thai producers have also remade some popular Korean series into Thai versions, such as Autumn in My Heart, Coffee Prince, and Full House. Nowadays, not only can Thai audiences watch Korean series via free TV, they also have websites to upload and watch Korean series with Thai sub-titles. For example, "Kodhit.com", a page on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/kodhit) reached 511,695 subscribers by June, 2015.

In Thailand, the Korean Wave gained momentum primarily from the popularity of Korean dramas, with that consumers have become interested in other forms of Korean entertainment, culture, fashion, and music.

As previously mentioned, Rain became popular in Thailand after the series Full House aired. Since he is both a singer and an actor, his works also affect K-pop music's popularity in Thailand. In February 2006, Rain held his first concert in Thailand and received strong feedback from his fans. In that concert, he invited the female singer 'Star' to be a guest; she was the singer who sang 'I Think I' on the original soundtrack of Full House (Siamzone 2006).

Besides Rain, there are many K-pop idols who have appeared in Korean series, such as Yoochun and Jaejoong from JYJ, Yunho and Changmin from TVXQ, T.O.P from Bigbang, Yuna and Yuri from Girl's Generation, Siwon from Super Junior, Suzy from miss A, etc. Their opportunities to show off a wider range of skills via acting has helped to increase their exposure to worldwide audiences, while simultaneously fostering further interest in K-pop.

Recently, Web Dramas have emerged as new form of entertainment. Web Dramas are short drama clips which can be watched online. Many K-pop music

companies have started to produce Web Dramas by using the artists under their labels as players. This is a new choice for K-series fans and also helps Korean artists to expand their fan base. In December 2014, Thailand Line Corp., which is a service provider of the most famous chatting application in Thailand, released a new application called 'Line TV'. Through this application, consumers can watch dramas, variety shows, Japanese animation, music programs, music videos, and Web Dramas (Manager Online 2014). There are also Web Dramas performed by K-pop idols to watch online with Thai sub-titles, such as Dream Knight (played by GOT7) and EXO NEXT DOOR (played by EXO).

Thai fans are also familiar with songs in Korean language through Korean drama's original soundtracks. This is an another opportunity for skilled vocalist idols to show off their abilities, such as when Taeyeon, a main vocalist of the female group Girls Generation, sang 8 drama's soundtrack during the years 2008 – 2014.

4.2.2   The Variety of Korean Television Industries

Today, Korean television has a variety of program shows. Many programs are interesting and are gaining popularity in Thailand at levels similar to the popularity of drama series and K-pop. In terms of Korean TV shows, which are related to and support K-pop popularity, I have already given details as below.

1)   Music Show

Music Shows have been coupled with the Korean music industry for a long time. Music shows, or Korean music television program broadcasting, is the way for singers to perform and promote their songs. Each episode lasts approximately 1-2 hours. The show features some of the latest and most popular artists who perform live on stage. During airtime, the show will count viewers on music videos on

YouTube, voting points from fans via SMS and SNS for ranking weekly music charts. There are some Korean music shows that Thai people can watch through cable TV, such as Music Bank on the KBS World channel. Other music shows can also be cached online through the website YouTube.

Table 6 the list of music programs on Korean TV Channel (2015 June)

Program title	TV Channel	Broadcasting time (KST)	YouTube Channel
The Show	SBS MTV	Tuesday, 8:00PM	-
Show Champion	MBC Music	Wednesday, 6:00PM	MBC MUSIC
M Countdown	Mnet	Thursday, 6:00PM	Mnet
Simply K-pop	Arirang TV	Friday, 1:00PM	ARIRANG
Music Bank	KBS	Friday, 6:30PM	KBS World TV
Show! Music Core	MBC	Saturday, 4:00PM	MBCkpop
Inkigayo (인기가요)	SBS	Sunday, 3:50PM	SBSMusic1

Music programs are also available on air via YouTube. People around the world can watch the program online. It is a big factor that has helped K-pop spread its popularity. Idols can promote their songs on stage, and music shows' weekly charts also boost albums sales and the number of music downloads from K-pop fans that purchase songs of their favorite singers to support them.

Picture 1 Example of K-pop idol live in music show (EXO's Love me right)
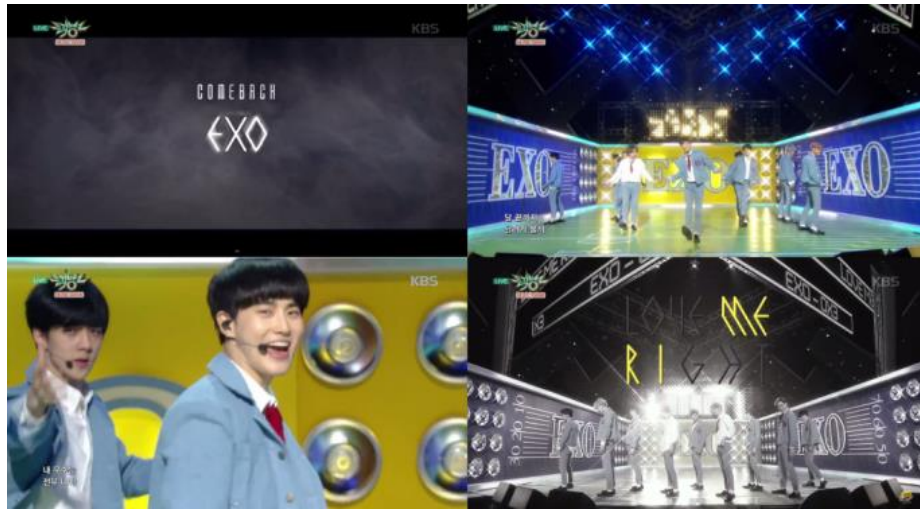
Source: KBS's Music Bank (KBSKpop 2015)

2)   Variety and Reality Show

Variety and reality shows also play an important part in expanding the popularity of K-pop.

As mentioned in the topic '3.1.3 Characteristic of K-pop idols', idol identity is also important; their appearance, skills, and image can impress audiences. K-pop's aims are not to present music or drama, but also to present the various charms of idols except on the stage. K-pop also intends to show the hardships experienced by idols prior to their debut, and present it in the form of variety and reality shows.

K-pop's expanding influence has made Korean television broadcast companies produce many variety shows and set idols as main characters of programs. For example,

Explorers of the Human Body (Korean: 인체탐험대): a variety show with science knowledge, with Korean male idol group Super Junior as the MC. Super Junior's members perform experiments with their own bodies to discover the secrets of the human body, such as 'Why is it that even though you've eaten until you're

really full, you're still able to eat desserts?' or 'How to enhance your flexibility'. This variety show was broadcast on Thailand's television channel 'modern nine TV' in 2009.

Hello Baby: a reality show where celebrities experience parenthood by raising children aged 5 and under. The show has already had 7 seasons, and has featured the groups Girls' Generation, SHINee, T-ara, Sistar, MBLAQ, B1A4 and Boyfriend

We Got Married (Korean: 우리 결혼했어요): this show pairs up Korean celebrities or idols to play a married couple together. They have to do activities together as if they are a real married couple. KhunToria Couple (2PM's Nichkhun and f(x)'s Victoria), and YongSeo Couple (CN Blue's Yonghwa and Girls' Generation's Seohyun) are the most popular couples among fans in Thailand.

Invincible Youth (Korean: 청춘불패) is a variety show that selected members of popular girl groups such as Girls' Generation, Kara, 4Minite and more to do activities and live in the Korean rural outdoors.

Showtime: is a documentary starring popular idols. The show's concepts change every week depending on their activity schedule, such as 'Idols' free time', 'What do idols do in their practice day'. The show already has 5 seasons, and has featured the groups EXO, Beast, Apink, Sistar, and EXID. EXO's Showtime aired on Thailand's digital television 'True4U' in 2014.

Not only have variety shows used idols as main MCs, many variety shows also frequently invite idols as guests. These programs can help the idols to be remembered, as well. Examples of these kind of variety shows which are well-known among Thai fans are Family Outing, Running Man, and The Return of Superman.

Moreover, there are reality programs that show the preparation that idols go through prior to their debut, or competition shows between trainees in the same company to find a trainee who is ready for debut. These kinds of programs will show the audiences their pre-debut hardships and their talents. Examples of this kind of program is Bigbang's Bigbang Documentary, and 2AM and 2PM's Hot blood guys (Korean: 열혈남아).

From the interview, some fans also mentioned that the starting point of their interest in K-pop was these TV shows. The shows present other sides of the idols aside from singing and performance, and also present their efforts and hardships during the debut preparation period. It can be one of reasons for being impressed with K-pop idols.

> *When Bigbang first debuted, they were not interesting at all. But after I watched 'BIGBANG DOCUMENTARY' I liked them very much. The show had selected the trainees 5 out of 6 to debut with YG Entertainment Company. They tried very hard to sing and dance to pass the evaluation; it showed another side of the idols, and how they act offstage. So, the fans feel closer to the idols.* (Interviewee 22)
>
> *I liked EXO since I watched 'EXO's Showtime' for the first time. I was impressed by their habits (that I saw in the show) although I don't know their real habits.* (Interviewee 48)

4.3   Firm strategy, structure and rivalry

The popularity of Korean dramas stimulated Thai people to be interested in Korea and K-pop. The spread of K-pop through internet channels has helped people

to be able to access K-pop easily. It is the marketing strategy of K-pop that has helped push the Korean wave more forcefully in Thailand. The marketing strategies of K-pop which are often used in Thailand are:

4.3.1   Localization strategy

1)   Forming partnership with Thai company

Creating strategic partnership with companies in Thailand is one of the strategies to bring K-pop content to Thailand conveniently and efficiently. Thai companies are more likely to be familiar with Thai customers' needs, and are able to utilize their connection to promote Korean artists in Thailand, and are able to update K-pop news and information in Thai language through SNS.

During the early 2000s, K-pop started gaining popularity in Thailand. GMM Inter, a subsidiary of GMM Grammy, one of the biggest record labels in Thailand, purchased the licensing copyrights of various Korean labels, such as SM, JYP, YG, etc., to distribute in Thailand. They then brought Korean idols to make special Thai versions of songs, such as 'I do' by Rain, who performed the song in a duet with the famous Thai female singer, Panadda Ruangwut, and 'First love' by Paran, a Korean male idol group.

In 2011, True Group's True Visions Plc, joined forces with the leading entertainment company from South Korea, S.M. Entertainment Co., Ltd., to co-invest in Thailand's entertainment industry with the establishment of a joint venture, SM True Co., Ltd. The new company enjoyed exclusive rights to license and distribute all SM products, including CDs and digital music sources, as well as merchandise in Thailand. It also acts as the management agency for SM artists in Thailand (True

Corporation 2011). The shareholding of True Corp is 51 %, and SM at 49 % (Positioning Magazine 2011).

After 2013, YG Entertainment registered partnership with BEC-TERO Music, and in 2014, JYP Entertainment also registered partnership with the same company as YG. BEC-TERO became the main representative to sell and promote those two Korean companies. The albums that BEC sell in Thailand are both Korea-imported and Thailand editions.

2)   Recruiting for Thai K-pop artists

The first Thai person to debut in a Korean idol group is Nichkhun Horvejkul. Nichkhun was cast in 2005; JYP's staffs ran into him as he was attending a Korean Music Festival in Los Angeles. He became JYP's trainee, and debuted in 2008 as a member of the male group 2PM.

Since Nichkhun was the first Thai boy in to work in the Korean entertainment industry and debuted at the time that the Korean wave was very strong in Thailand, he received a lot of attention from mass media, and many television programs invited him onto their programs to tell his story in the Korean entertainment industry. Nichkhun has many works in Thailand, both individual and his work with 2PM members such as magazine, product presenter, and starring in movies and dramas.

After Nichkhun succeeded in his career as a member of a Korean idol group and become famous in Thailand and Korea, other K-pop companies started to adopt Thai people to be their trainees and have already debuted some of them as their artists.

Table 7 Thai people who debuted as Korean idols (2015)

No.	Name	Group Name / Label	Debut Year
1	Nichkhun (Nichkhun Horvejkul)	2PM / JYP Entertainment	2008
2	Joy (Jutamas Wichai)[1]	RANIA / DR Music	2011
3	Mint (Goonshipas Peonpaweevorakul)	Tiny-G / GNG production	2012
4	Natthew (Nat Thewphaingam)	solo singer / CJ Entertainment	2012
5	Bie (Thassaoak Hsu)	VICTOR / On Spot E Korea	2013
6	BamBam (Kunpimook Bhuwakul)	GOT7 / JYP Entertainment	2014
7	Sorn (Chonnasorn Sajakul)	CLC / Cube Entertainment	2015

Also, many Thais are training at the Korea's big entertainment companies. Some of them were unofficially debuted, such as Ten of SM Rookies[2], Lalice who is trainee in YG Entertainment[3], and Natty of SIXTEEN[4].

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[1] Joy currently works as a member of Thai female idol group named 'GAIA'.

[2] SM Rookies is the group of SM Entertainment's trainees who are upcoming debut. They have performed the opening show in SM Town Week 2013 and SMTOWN Concert and participated EXO's variety show 'EXO 90:2014'. Their official website is www.smrookies.com.

[3] In 2012, YG Entertainment uploaded Lalice's dance performance video 'WHO'S THAT GIRLS???' on YG Entertainment's official YouTube channel.

[4] SIXTEEN is a 2015 reality girl group survival show created by JYP Entertainment and Mnet. The show pits sixteen JYP trainees against one another to secure a spot in the upcoming girl group 'Twice'.

Having Thai people in Korean idol groups is an additional strategy to catch the attention of Thai fans. Some fans also mentioned that they started to be interested in K-pop because there are Thai people in the K-pop idol groups.

Because there are Thai people in the group, it's interesting. I want to know about their daily life and their hardships before their debut as singers. I started to follow from that point, and even now, I like all the members. (Interviewee 4)

At first, I was interested in K-pop because they have Thai people, but after theoir debut I started to like them because of their unique styles. They were one of the first generations of idols that turned somersaults during performances; I also like their music style, which is very cool. They have a good sense of humor, sincerity, take good care of their fans, and because Nichkhun is in the group, other members are more aware of Thai fans. (Interviewee 10)

Moreover, there are some fans who think that the inclusion in K-pop idol groups of Thai citizens, as well as citizens from other nations, can help them to expand their fan base.

I think what makes K-pop popular for this long is that they always have development. In the past there are only Korean people in idol groups. Now, some members of idol groups are from different nations such as China, Taiwan, Thailand, Japan, and Singapore, as well as mixed ethnic member. This offered additional choices for people who don't like the absolute Korean style's idols. (Interviewee 108)

4.3.2   Social Media strategy

The rise of the internet age is one of the main reasons for K-pop's worldwide popularity. K-pop companies take advantage of the internet by using Social Network Services, (SNS) such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter to publicize and transmit K-pop content, news and information. Therefore, people all around the world are able to access and share K-pop content anywhere and anytime.

Table 8 the number of subscribers of SM, YG, JYP official SNS accounts (June 2015)

Company	YouTube	Facebook	Twitter
SM Entertainment	6,642,311	4,621,950	2,545,155
YG Entertainment	1,990,216	2,706,215	1,706,887
JYP Entertainment	1,250,651	1,373,449	698,975

Nowadays, people are enjoying music with the accompaniment of audiovisuals. YouTube, a video-sharing website, is playing an important role in spreading K-pop to worldwide audiences, including Thais. JoongAng Ilbo (Seo 2012) reveals that K-pop videos on YouTube reached 2.3 billion views in 235 countries by 2010. The data shows that views of K-pop videos in Thailand are 224,813,564, which is the 3rd highest number in the world.

Figure 5 Number of Views of K-pop Videos on YouTube (2010)
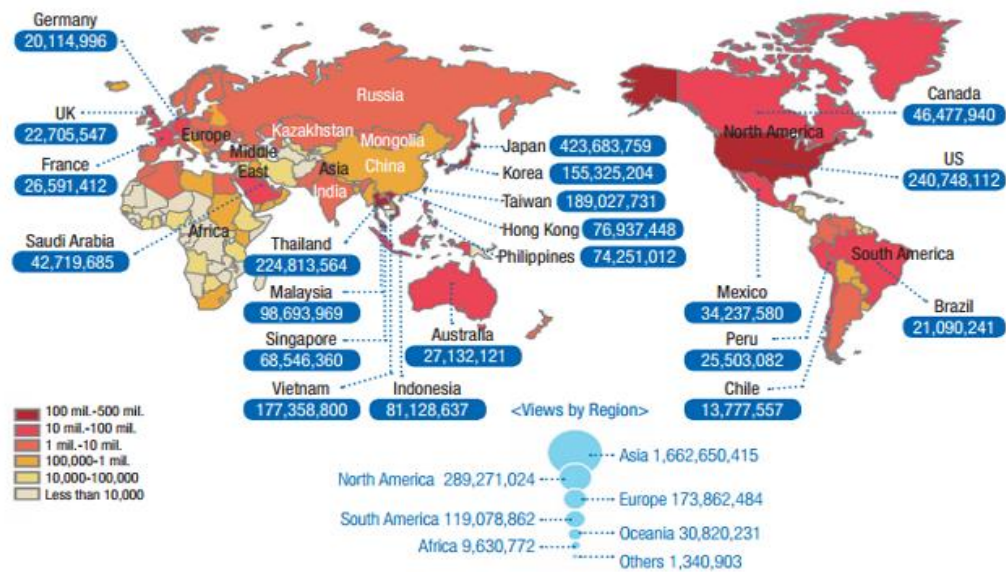
Source: JoongAng Ilbo 2011 (Seo 2012)

The interviewees also mentioned that most of Thai K-pop fans could recognize K-pop idols from the promotion via K-pop companies' social media.

Companies push K-pop through various media like social media, which is a convenient and easy way to reach people. Most fans in Thailand also recognize the new K-pop groups through official SNS of K-pop companies such as YouTube, Twitter, and company's official website. Through these SNS, the company will introduce the artists by music, image, and etc. (Interviewee 57)

Beside K-pop companies, many K-pop idols also use SNS, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to promote their works and interact with their fans. They also keep in touch with their fans, even during inactive periods, and show their concern and attention to their fans via their SNS accounts, as well.

Picture 2 Siwon of Super Junior tweeted cheerful messages to Thai fans

4.4   Demand conditions

Demand conditions refer to the nature of domestic consumers which is good for doing business in the local market. If one company has a good product but no one knows how good it is, and nobody buys it, it would be useless. K-pop is the same; even though it has good content, perform by skilled and perfect artists, if Thai customers don't accept or cannot access the content, K-Pop would fail in Thailand. Apparently, Thai customers' demands towards K-Pop have contributed to the spread of K-Pop in the Thai market. The demand conditions for Thai audiences are as follows:

4.4.1   Local consumers are familiar with internet and technology

The K-pop entertainment industry uses the internet as its main dissemination channel to publicize their contents. They upload music videos on YouTube, and update news and information of their artists on official websites. K-pop fans use the internet as a major communication channel; they share and update about their favorite artists through the internet. Therefore, the internet is one of the factors that helps K-pop spread its popularity throughout the world and Thailand.

Thailand obtained internet access in the late 1990s. Since then, the use of the Internet has become more common in cities and more remote regions of the

country. In 2013, the number of internet users in Thailand was about 18.3 million, or 28.9% of the population, according to the World Bank report.

Figure 6 percentage of Internet users in Thailand from 2000 to 2013
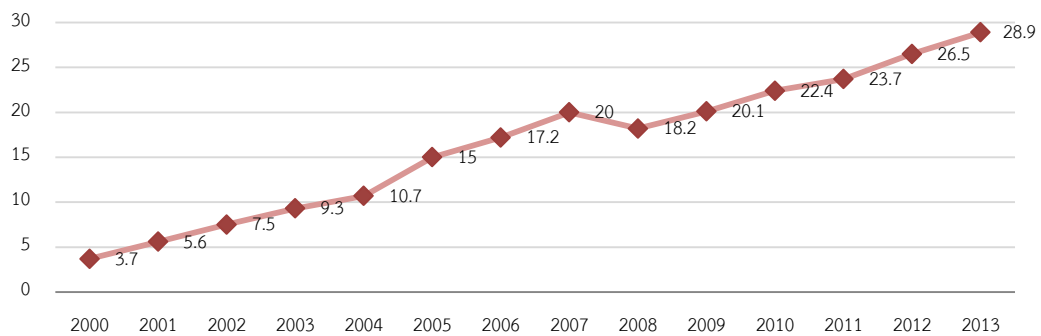
Source: World Bank (World Bank 2015)

Internet access in Thailand has been available for nearly two decades. Consequently, Thai people are familiar with the internet. Since 2007, smartphones and tablets have become popular and widespread in Thailand (Bank of Thailand 2015). The number of internet users who access the internet via mobile devices has increased. In the second quarter of 2014, internet users in Thailand accessed the internet via smartphone primarily through 3 major mobile network providers (AIS, DTAC, TRUE MOVE), for a total of 44.6 million users (Digital Advertising Association Thailand 2015). In the fourth quarter of 2014, those accessing the internet via computers in Thailand spend around 5 hours and 5 minutes using the net each day, and mobile device spend around 4 hours and 1 minute using the net each day. (Kemp 2015)

The internet and technology are widely used among Thai people; it is one of the demand conditions that allow Thais to access K-pop content more easily through SNS. Thais can also download MP3 or video files via their devices.

The interviewees also mentioned that K-pop take advantage of the internet and technology for its popularity expansion in Thailand.

I think the internet is another key factor that helps K-pop to spread unexpectedly fast. In the late 2000s, internet was not widely used. K-pop fans at that time were just a small group. We had to buy magazines to read news and updates about the artists. When we wanted to listen to K-pop music, we had to play it online but internet at that time is hard to access. Moreover, at that time, Japanese and Taiwanese cultures were popular in Thailand. It was hard to find friends who liked the same thing, since most people at that time were fans of Japanese and Taiwanese music, but, K-pop become widespread after internet access became more common. (Interviewee 108)

4.4.2 Open-minded attitude of local consumers

Originally, Thai people were simply persuaded and have a positive attitude with foreign culture and foreigners because Thai people have a long history of interaction with people from other countries. Moreover, contemporary Thai culture is the result of adopting foreign cultures and blending it into Thai traditional culture. That is why Thai people are easily familiar with or can adjust to foreign cultures.

In terms of popular music, although Thailand has Thai popular music and Thai music fans, there are also a lot of people who love foreign pop culture, including both Western and Eastern pop culture. Besides, Japanese popular music (J-POP Music) was also popular in Thailand in the late 1990s to the early 2000s. Taiwanese popular music entered through the drama series that aired on free TV channels in Thailand in the early 2000s before K-pop entered Thailand. So, Thais are

already familiar with East Asian pop music. That is one of the reasons why Thai people easily adopted K-pop.

However, another key factor that makes Thai people adopt foreign and Korean pop culture easily, even though Thailand also has their own pop culture, is because the Thai entertainment industry has no variety or novelty. Therefore, Thai people have to seek exotic entertainment for themselves. (Thoopputsar 2012)

4.4.3   Support from Thai K-pop fans

K-pop fans have grown hand in hand with K-pop. They are the main consumers of K-pop, and also help to spread the popularity of K-pop. Thai fans are one of the important groups that help K-pop become widespread in Thailand. They officially support the industry by purchasing K-pop goods, concert tickets, and attending K-pop events, and unofficially support the industry by gathering information and news of their favorite idols, then updating in real time and sharing with other fans through SNS.

The analysis results in this chapter show that music and dancing styles are not the only factors that make Thai people interested in K-pop. Rather, there are various methods that K-pop companies use to promote their artists in Thailand. Moreover, K-pop could expand even further by harnessing demand conditions. In the rise of the internet era, people can access, share, and recommend their favorite things to other people easily by using the internet. Therefore, it is not difficult to spread K-pop in Thailand because Thai people use the internet widely. Apart from that, the support from K-pop fans also plays an important role in spreading and sustaining the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. The details about Thai K-pop fans'

characteristics, activities, and their influence towards K-pop popularity in Thailand will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

INFLUENCE OF K-POP FANS IN SPREDING AND SUSTAINING
THE POPULARITY OF K-POP IN THAILAND

It was mentioned in chapter 4 that one of the competitive factors of K-pop music in Thailand is strong and supporting fans. Hence, this chapter will be a description of K-pop fans in Thailand. The topics are as follows:

1)   K-pop fan characteristics and their activities

2)   The role of K-pop fans in promoting K-pop in Thailand

5.1   K-pop fans characteristics and their activities

From observations and interviews with Thai K-pop fans, the overview of K-pop fan characteristics and activities was summarized as shown in the details below.

5.1.1   K-pop fan club and identity color

Every fan club of K-pop idol groups has their own name and identity color. The origin of each name and color is diverse; from the companies' ideas, the K-pop idols' ideas, and from the fans themselves. The meaning of fan clubs' names usually relates to the idols or represents the importance of fan clubs to the idols. Moreover, name of fan clubs also makes fans feel like they are 'united as one'. They usually refer to themselves by these created names. For example, fans of the idol group 'TVXQ' call themselves 'Cassiopeia' (also 'Cassies' or 'Cass'). In terms of fan club's identity color, the designated color for idols is usually used as cheer items, such as light sticks or banners. The official merchandise, such as T-shirt and towels, are also produced related to the colors. These names and identity colors are used by fans in every country including Thailand.

Table 9 Name and identity of fan clubs of the idol groups in this research

Idol group	Fan club details	
TVXQ	Name	Cassiopeia
	Origin	The constellation Cassiopeia is made of five points that create a "W" in the sky. Tracing TVXQ on a keyboard coincidentally makes a 'W'.
	Color	Red
Super Junior	Name	E.L.F (Everlasting Friends)
	Origin	It came from the idea that they (Super Junior) would be everlasting friends with their fans.
	Color	Blue
Girls' Generation	Name	SONE
	Origin	The stylization of SONE is 소원 which means wish, and was a song featured on their first album as well as in the title of their song 'Tell Me Your Wish.' But it also has a deeper meaning. 소원 (SoWun) pronounced 'So One' implies that Girls' Generation will always be one with their fans.
	Color	Pink
EXO	Name	EXO-L
	Origin	EXO-L stands for EXO-LOVE. L is also the letter in between K and M, so it also serves to signify fans who love EXO, a group made up of EXO-K and EXO-M, and also carries the meaning that EXO and the fans are one - like EXO's team slogan 'We Are One'
	Color	Silver
BIGBANG	Name	VIP
	Origin	VIP stands for Very Important Person. The second single "La La La" is also referred to as "Big Bang is V.I.P."
	Color	No confirmed color but Big Bang's banners and light

		sticks are usually yellow + black.
2PM	Name	HOTTEST
	Origin	2PM being the hottest hour of the day
	Color	Metallic Grey

Source: Soompi (Soompi 2011) and allkpop (allkpop 2014)

At K-pop concerts, which were the observation places for this thesis, it can be seen that most K-pop fans dress or had some items with the identity color. Additionally, during concerts, they used the same color for light sticks to make an 'ocean' for cheering their favorite idols.

Picture 3 the light stick 'ocean' in EXO (left) and TVXQ (right) concert in Thailand

Source: SMTOWN NOW (SM Entertainment 2015)

The unity of K-pop fans can not only be seen by their names and colors; the fans also have their own communities. Members of a fan club connect with and contact each other by using various media. In the past, K-pop fans in Thailand usually used fan boards or fan club websites for interacting with other fans. After the boom of social media usage, they have gradually changed their communication channels into social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, instead of dedicated fan websites or web boards.

However, even though the online destination for fans has changed, their community remains constant. Due to the rise of social media, the number of K-pop

idol fan sites[5] in Thailand have also increased since a web page can be created and managed more easily and has little to no cost. The fan sites of the same K-pop idols are connected to each other and are integrated as 'Thai fan unions' (For example, the EXO Thai fan union). They still keep in touch with each other to exchange information about their favorite artists and sometimes arrange meetings to do activities together as well.

5.1.2   K-pop fans' supports

K-pop fans are enthusiastic in supporting artists in various ways. There are a variety of ways that Thai K-pop fans usually express their support.

1)   Purchasing K-pop idols' products

The most basic support from K-pop fans is to buy their favorite idols' albums. K-pop fans in Thailand usually buy albums by pre-ordering through online shops. Most of these online shop owners are K-pop fans as well. Thai K-pop fans can also directly buy the album for themselves in Thailand, since K-pop companies have formed partnership with Thai companies and allow them to distribute K-pop albums. Other than the albums, K-pop fans usually purchase concert DVDs, official merchandise made by K-pop companies, and magazines. For K-pop fans, purchasing these products not only acts as support for their favorite idols, but also serves as collections of the idols as well.

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[5] The word 'fan site' in this thesis refers to website or social media accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter) which are created and maintained by fans. It is utilized as a tool to collect information about the creators' favorite K-pop idols and to share it with other fans.

2)   Attending concerts, live shows and other events

Thai fans often attend concerts, fan meetings and press conferences of their favorite idols. These events are considered as chances to meet the idols for those who live in foreign countries. Sometimes, the fans that are not living in Bangkok will travel to Bangkok just to attend the events of their favorite idol.

Another highlight of being a K-pop fan is doing 'Fan chants' and 'Fan events' (Thai fans well knows as 'Project') during the concert for cheering their idols. A 'fan chant' refers to singing along with the song, but it is not just singing the song's lyrics. Fan chant has a new set of 'word codes' which will be chanted in the specific rhythm of the song. Fan chants usually include idol group names, group member names, fan club names, words relating to the lyrics, or words that show fans' love to idols such as 'saranghae (I love you)'. It is usually created by Korean fans but foreign fans also remember and use it.

'Fan events' can be shown by doing card stunts (sometimes they use light sticks instead of cards), or holding banners with cheerful messages written on it for the idols. It will be created and shared among fans before the concert day. The items for doing a fan event will be prepared along with guidance on the seats in concert hall.

Picture 4 Fan event created by Thai fans in EXO's concert

Source: SMTOWN NOW (SM Entertainment 2015)

3)   Voting for their favorite K-pop idols

As I mentioned in the topic 'music show' (see also in 4.3.2) that the show will count viewers of music videos on YouTube, voting points from fans via SMS and SNS for ranking weekly music chart. For some Thai fans that are not able to support their favorite idols with other ways, voting is the best and most convenient way. They think that if their idol won voting vote, their popularity will increase as well. Other than voting for the ranking in music shows, fans also vote for their idols to win prizes in which their idols were nominated at many award ceremonies.

4)   Congratulations on special occasions

K-pop fans usually send presents to their idols on special occasions. For example, fans might send flower bouquets during press conferences, rice wreaths[6] at concerts, food support for idols and staffs, and idols' birthday present. Thai fans sometimes send congratulation presents to idols in events held in Korea.

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[6] Rice wreaths (or Fan rice) are stacks of rice bags decorated with ribbons and photos. The amount of donated rice can vary between a few kilograms and several tons. Donating rice indicates that fans take greater social responsibility besides showing their respect and support to their favorite artists.

Picture 5 the rice wreaths from Thai fans in 2PM concert in Seoul (21 June 2013)

Moreover, fans also do social activities or donate in the name of their idols. Many K-pop fan sites in Thailand collect money or items from fans for donations or CSR projects for special events like idols' birthdays.

5)   Sharing

Sharing K-pop music videos, K-pop idols' photos, or other things related to K-pop on personal social media accounts is one demonstration of fan support. They are not only shared among fans, but also to other acquaintances on the same social networks. Some fans post topics on web boards such as pantip.com, the most famous online community web board in Thailand, to share their idols' work, as well as impressive stories about their favorite idols. They also directly recommend content to friends or acquaintances.

5.1.3   Other fan activities which are popular among Thai K-pop fans

1)   Cover dance

Dance is one of K-pop's strengths. Some people become K-pop fans because they like K-pop's dance style. Some fans who are interested in dancing look up to the idols as their role model and are inspired to do cover dance. 'K-pop cover dance' is a term used to describe the imitation of K-Pop artist's dance choreography

(Billboard 2011). K-pop cover dance is very famous among Thai teens, even among people who are not fans of K-pop. Moreover, Thailand is considered to be 'the capital city of K-pop cover dance' (Korean Cultural Center in Thailand 2014) as there are many K-pop dance contests each year. The contests are usually held in department stores located in downtown areas. Therefore, these events can get attention from people passing by.

2)   Creating their own works

Creative fans also make their own works relating to their idols. For example, fan made videos, fan art, fan goods, and fan fiction.

Fan made video: the fans set a story and create videos by using material relating to idols, such as idols' photos, videos, or songs. From my observations, Thai fans like to make funny parody videos, videos with romantic plots about their idols, and photos or video compilations.

Fan art: Drawing, painting, or photo editing also created by fans. It is an opportunity to show their artistic skill along with sharing admiration of idols with other fans.

Fan fiction: for K-pop fans, fan fiction refers to novels created by fans, with their favorite idols are set as the main characters. In Thailand, fan fiction is one of the most popular fan works. Fan fiction is usually posted on the writer's personal blog or on public websites such as 'dek-d.com'. Moreover, fiction writers also work in harmony to hold 'fiction market events' in order to distribute their works to other fans who also love reading fan fiction.

Fan goods: some fans produce idol-related products; for example, idol-related messages or picture printed T-shirts, stationary, tumblers, and smartphone cases.

3)   Translating

For non-Korean K-pop fans, the language barrier can be an obstacle to access K-pop content. Even though fans can enjoy or be impressed with K-pop songs without understanding the lyrics, language understanding is still necessary for fans in following news, and for enjoying an idol's TV shows or dramas.

Therefore, a group of fans that does the translation work is also known as 'Fan trans (translation)' or 'Fan sub' has emerged. Fans who have Korean language ability will translate their favorite idols' news, articles, interviews, fan accounts[7], or insert subtitles for TV shows and dramas, then share them with other fans. It is one of the activities that is widely practiced among K-pop fans outside Korea, including Thai fans.

5.2   Thai K-pop fans' role in expanding and sustaining the popularity of K-pop music in Thailand

Dentsu's 'AISAS' consumption behavior model was applied to analyze how K-pop fans' characteristics and activities influence the expanding and sustaining of the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. In this model, the key processes are: 'Attention', in which the consumer first notices the product or advertisement, followed by

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[7] Fan accounts, or Fanacc, refers to facts or stories related to idols as told by fans. It is the story which original posters directly experienced or heard from acquaintances and are usually posted with evidence photos.

'Interest'. After this, the consumer 'Searches' for information, and then makes a purchase ('Action'), after which information is 'Shared' with others. (Sugiyama 2011)

Figure 7 'AISAS' consumption behavior model

| Attention | → | Interest | → | Search | → | Action | → | Share |
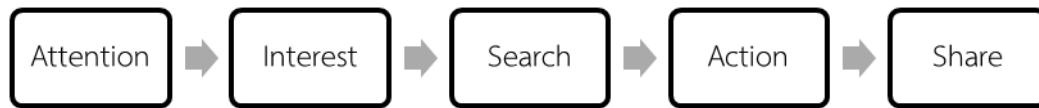
Source: Dentsu's way (Sugiyama 2011)

From the information about K-pop fans' characteristics and activities which were previously mentioned above, the role of K-pop fans in expanding and sustaining the popularity of K-pop was analyzed for each step of consumption behavior model as follows:

1)   Fans persuade other people to like K-pop (Attention & Interest)

Fans can motivate people to attend and interest in K-pop by sharing K-pop's song, music video, photos, news via various media such as SNS, online web board, and also by direct recommendations to intimate people like family and friends. Many fans also start to pay attention to K-pop by seeing K-pop related posts which are shared by their friends. That can be a factor that helps expand the K-pop fan base, as well.

The answers from K-pop fans also show that some of their attention and interest in K-pop started by sharing and direct recommendations from their acquaintances.

> *At first, I wasn't interested in K-pop. But after I watched K-pop idol's variety shows by my older sister's recommendation, I became addicted to it. Honestly, I had even been opposed to K-pop idols before, but now I can't get enough of it after I started watching them.* (Interviewee 35)

I had no idea about Korea. But when TVXQ and Super junior became popular in Thailand, my friends became their fans, and that made me know the idols like, naturally. I started following them since then until now. (Interviewee 29)

Fans who are students like me usually watch K-pop videos on YouTube at school during computer class. They drew the attention of some of my friends. I also watched K-pop music videos and listened to K-pop songs when I am home. In addition, my family members can remember the songs' lyrics and we usually listen to K-pop songs while travelling by car. (Interviewee 61)

The reason why I started my interest in K-pop is because I heard about it from my friends. After that, I started searching the idols' information and became a fan because I like their dancing and the way they entertain audiences. (Interviewee 53)

My friend persuaded me to started 'Ting[8]'. So, I started to get into K-pop and search for information by myself. At first, I didn't like K-pop that much. I liked it more and more, watched it, and became addicted to it after a while. (Interviewee 68)

Other fan activities, such as 'cover dance', can bring people's attention to K-pop as well. Since K-pop dance contests are usually held at downtown shopping

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[8] 'Ting' (Thai: ติ่ง) is Thai slang refers to 'K-pop super fan' and is also used as verb. The origin of the word is from female Thai students who cut their hair as short as their earlobes (it called 'Tinghu' in Thai). However, it has a bit of a negative meaning since it implies that K-pop fans are children with no maturity. But K-pop fans may sometimes self-deprecatingly call themselves as Ting.

centers, many people can become unintentionally exposed to it. It can be the beginning to following K-pop for people who love dancing.

2)   Fans are information providers (search & share)

After developing interest in K-pop, the next step is to search for information. In the case of K-pop, even if K-pop companies have already provided information about K-pop idols under their labels, K-pop fans still have an important role in supporting the search of information.

K-pop fans, especially for fans who own fan sites, always search and collect information relating to their idols from both official sources (from companies) and unofficial sources (from fans). The information about idols, including news, photos, video, interviews, fanacc, and fan art will be collected and provided by fan sites. It is more convenient to access K-pop information through fan sites than to directly search on the internet without any guidance.

Moreover, K-pop fans also encourage Thai people who are interested in K-pop by translating information that is related to K-pop, and inserting Thai subtitles in K-pop idols' TV shows or dramas. With fans' translations and subtitled K-pop content, Thai people who want to appreciate K-pop content will feel more comfortable. Understanding what K-pop idols are saying is a way for fans to get to know their charm; for example, their humor or impressive speech.

The interviewees also mentioned that the translated K-pop content shared by Thai K-pop fans help to decrease obstacles in searching and accessing K-pop content for Thai people. They said that when people can search and access K-pop content easily, they will more easily enjoy following K-pop.

I think that the fan activities that most help spread K-pop are translating news and making subtitles. These two activities help people access K-pop more easily. Since they can understand the content, K-pop will be more fun and interesting. If there are only Korean or English news, people may not have been as enthusiastic to follow K-pop. (Interviewee 108)

Currently, I am working as a translator in my favorite idols' fan base. It helps Thai fans follow the idols' activities more conveniently. I think it helps fans to be closer with idols. (Interviewee 57)

3)   Fans is the main purchaser (Action)

Fans are the main purchasers of K-pop products in Thailand. They buy their idols' albums, concert DVDs, merchandise, and concert and fan meeting tickets, and the products that had their idols as the presenter. K-pop products are considered expensive as Thailand's minimum wage rate is not high. For example, imported albums' prices are between 800 – 1000 Baht, while made-in-Thailand K-pop albums' prices are between 400 – 700 Baht, and concert ticket prices are between 1200 – 8500 Baht (based on the prices in 2015). However, the price is not the problem for fans who are eager to buy. Some fans also pre-order merchandise that is not sold in Thailand.

Most of the interviewees also mentioned that they support their favorite K-pop idols by purchasing albums and merchandise, and especially by attending concerts, which are the main chances to meet their favorite idols that they usually follow through the media, such as the internet. Therefore, even though the concert tickets are very expensive, they still wish to attend.

Teenager fans like items that are related to their favorite K-pop group or idols regardless of whether they are official goods or not. Purchasers of official goods are usually fans who have purchasing power, like university students or earners. For concert tickets, I think that every fan wants to buy it because they want to see their idols. It is once in a life time wish for a fan. (Interviewee 103)

Apart from that, the K-pop fan base in Thailand is quite strong. They do activities regularly to strengthen the relationships among the fans. Their activities, such as updating their idols' news continuously, also keep them from feeling far apart from their idols even though they are in different countries. The intimate relationship among fans also helps them keep maintain attention toward K-pop because it makes them feel more engaged in following the idols with other fans, and by talking to each other like friends.

In the interviews, some K-pop fans also mentioned that activities and relationships between K-pop fans in Thailand stimulate them to follow K-pop idols.

I have arranged quiz events and given prizes to the winners. I think that it helps K-pop fans maintain their liveliness. Sometimes, our favorite idols are not in promotion periods, so we don't know how to follow them. These activities can encourage fans to remind them about the idols. (Interviewee 101)

. *I also make friends with other K-pop fans though Twitter. Following K-pop became more fun because I got to know friends who can talk in the same language (interested in the same thing).* (Interviewee 68)

CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

K-pop, or Korean popular music, started its popularity phenomenon in the late 1990s. Currently, the popularity of K-pop has spread worldwide, including in Thailand. Thailand is considered as one of the important countries for exporting K-pop contents since it is in the mature stage of experiencing the Korean Wave. Many K-pop idols come to Thailand for their promotions, concerts and events. Also, some of them have become presenters for Thai products. Moreover, the sales of K-pop albums in Thailand is also the highest among the sales of foreign music albums. This is one thing that shows that K-pop music has competitiveness over other music in the Thai music market.

The noticeable popularity of K-pop music in Thailand motivated me to discover the reasons of its popularity, starting from searching for information, conducting research about K-pop in Thailand, and exploring the influences of K-pop on Thai people. The aims of this thesis are analyzing the success factors behind its popularity and studies in reverse for the influence from Thai consumers on K-pop culture by focusing on Thai K-pop fans, toward the popularity of K-pop in Thailand.

To find factors contributing to the popularity of K-pop in Thailand, three research questions have been raised. The questions include: 1) what is the competitiveness of K-pop music? 2) What are the characteristics and activities of K-pop fans in Thailand? and 3) How do K-pop fans influence the expansion and maintenance of the popularity of K-pop music in Thailand?.

To answer the first research question, Michael Porter's Diamond Model was adopted to analyze the competitiveness of K-pop in Thailand. The analysis result is as follows:

There are 10 sub-determinants for the competitive advantages of K-pop music in Thailand, and they were categorized into four determinants of the Diamond Model, which were factor conditions, related and supporting industries, firm strategy, structure and rivalry; and demand conditions. 'Factor conditions' consisted of three sub-determinants, including 1) the quality and uniqueness of content, 2) the K-pop idol production system, and 3) the characteristics of K-pop idols. There are two sub-determinants for 'related and supporting industries', including 1) the popularity of Korean drama in Thailand, and 2) the variety of Korean television industries. Two further sub-determinants for the last determinant in the model, 'firm strategy, structure and rivalry', are 1) localization strategies and 2) social media strategies. The last determinants, 'demand condition', are divided into 3 sub-determinants which are 1) local consumers' familiarity with internet and technology, 2) the open-minded attitude of local consumers, and 3) support from Thai K-pop fans. The overview of all determinants is shown in the figure below:

Figure 8 the competitiveness of K-pop in Thailand
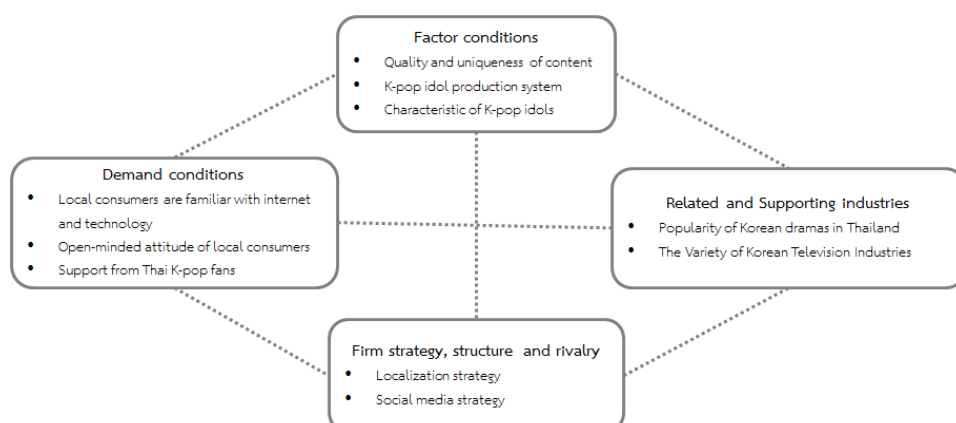
In the next step, various methods, including participant observation both in K-pop events and in social media, which is popular among K-pop fans, in-depth interviews with representative K-pop fans in Thailand, and also the study of articles related to K-pop fans, was utilized to find noticeable characteristics and activities of K-pop fans in Thailand. The results show that Thai K-pop fans are similar to K-pop fans in other countries in terms of their unity. They identify themselves as the fans of idol groups by using fan club names and identity colors. They also make contact with other fans in the same fan clubs. They support their favorite idols by purchasing the idol's products, attending concerts, voting for the idols, send congratulation present to the idols on the special occasion, and sharing content related to K-pop with their acquaintances via social media or direct recommendations. Apart from that, K-pop fans, including Thai fans, also do other activities, such as doing cover dance, creating artistic works related to their favorite idols, and translating K-pop content.

From the information about Thai K-pop fans' characteristics and activities as I mentioned above, I analyzed the influence of fans in spreading and sustaining the popularity of K-pop in Thailand by encouraging Thai people to consume K-pop. The analysis is based on Dentsu's 'AISAS Consumption Behavior Model'. The result is shown in the figure below.

Figure 9 the influence of fans in spreading and sustaining

the popularity of K-pop in Thailand

ATTENTION & INTEREST	• K-pop fans motivate people to attend concerts and events, and be interested in K-pop by sharing K-pop content via social media or direct recommendations to acquaintances.
SEARCH	• K-pop fans encourage Thai people in searching for K-pop information by collecting, sharing, and translating the information into Thai.
ACTION	• K-pop fans take action in consuming K-pop. They are the main purchasers for K-pop related products in Thailand.
SHARE	• The information shared by K-pop fan can be the main motivation in starting attention and interest in K-pop. It also allows Thai people to access K-pop content more easily.

The analysis of the two topics, the competitiveness of K-pop music in Thailand and the influence of Thai K-pop fans in spreading and sustaining the popularity of K-pop in Thailand, show that factor conditions, related and supporting industries, firm strategy, structure and rivalry are factors that cause the emergence of the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. Demand conditions, especially 'support from Thai K-pop fans' help in spreading the popularity of K-pop. In the rise of the internet era, consumers do not only consume but are also the mediator between the products and other consumers. They share their comments or reviews about the products, and recommend their favorite products to other people through social media.

In case of K-pop in Thailand, Thai K-pop fans are not only the main consumers of K-pop but are also the mediators between K-pop and Thai people at the same time. The support from fans helps Thai people access K-pop more easily and contributes to the expansion and sustenance of K-pop fan bases in Thailand. Apart from the support of Thai K-pop fans, Thai people are also familiar with internet and technology, and have open-mindedness in regards to accepting foreign culture. Therefore, there is no obstacle for Thai people in accessing K-pop content through the internet and in accepting K-pop.

However, Even though the popularity of K-pop music in Thailand has been sustained for over a decade, it has started to reach a stage of saturation. The number of K-pop events in Thailand has dropped since 2012, and it could be a sign of the fading of K-pop in Thailand. Hence, the question "What are the problems and obstacles preventing further expansion and sustainability of K-pop music's popularity in Thailand?" which was also included as one of interview questions. The answers were summarized as follows:

1) Some Thai people have negative attitudes toward K-pop

The negative attitudes toward K-pop of some Thai people can be seen in online communities. When the online press posts news relating to K-pop, there are some negative comments from anti K-pop netizens. The interviewees revealed that one of the reasons for negative attitudes towards K-pop is the K-pop fans themselves. The craze in K-pop of Thai fans, especially teenage fans, is considered 'over-the-top' by others. There are some news that shows that the extent of their, especially when they snatch to attend press conferences that are held in public places and when they give a lift their favorite idols at the airport.

2)   K-pop related product is too expensive for Thai people

Most K-pop fans are students, and they must ask their parent for money. Even though the price is not a direct concern for fans that are eager to buy, for some fans it can be an obstacle to supporting their idols. Apart from that, there are opportunists that take advantage of the market by buying popular K-pop idol groups' concert tickets and selling it to fans at a price that is 2 - 3 times higher than the official market price. This problem can make some fans upset and discourage them from following K-pop.

Hence, I would like to end this thesis with suggestions for future research about the fading of K-pop in Thailand. The above information shows some problems and obstacles in spreading and sustaining the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. However, the opinions are only from the K-pop fans' side and there might be other causes that lead to the fading of the popularity of K-pop in Thailand. Therefore, it will be interesting if there are researches focusing on the factors that can lead to the declination in the popularity of K-Pop in Thailand in the future.

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APPENDIX

Brief profile of K-pop companies and idol groups in this research

1.   K-pop companies

    1)   SM Entertainment

    Founded   February 1995

    Founder   Lee Soo Man

    Website   http://www.smtown.com/

S.M. Entertainment (Korean: SM 엔터테인먼트, SM stands for Star Museum) is a South Korean entertainment company, founded by Lee Soo-man. The company operates a record label, talent agency, travel agency, film production company, music production company, event management and concert production firm as well as a music publishing house. A prominent entertainment company in South Korea, the label is one of the biggest record labels in the K-pop industry

Once the home to the original Korean idol groups like H.O.T., S.E.S., Fly to the Sky and Shinhwa, the label itself is home to a roster of prominent K-pop recording artists that include BoA, TVXQ, Super Junior, Girls' Generation, SHINee, f(x) and EXO, where all have achieved domestic and international success.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S.M._Entertainment (Retrieved July 5, 2015)

2)   **YG Entertainment**

Founded   February 24, 1996

Founder   Yang Hyun-suk

Website   http://ygfamily.com/

YG Entertainment (Korean: YG 엔터테인먼트) is a South Korean entertainment company founded by Yang Hyun-suk based in Seoul, South Korea. The company operates a record label, talent agency, clothing line, cosmetics firm, event management and concert production company, music production company as well as its own music publishing house. The name of the company, "YG", is an abbreviation for "Yang Goon", a nickname given to the Executive Director/Founder Yang Hyun-suk.

Once the home of hip-hop groups Jinusean and 1TYM, its current roster of recording artists are known to be some of the biggest K-pop acts to gain international fame, especially BIGBANG, 2NE1, and PSY. In terms of revenue contribution, Big Bang is the company's biggest act.

Source**:** https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/YG_Entertainment (Retrieved July 5, 2015)

3) JYP Entertainment

Founded April 25, 1997

Founder J.Y. Park

Website http://english.jype.com/

JYP Entertainment is a South Korean entertainment company founded by Park Jin-young based in Seoul, South Korea. The company operates a record label, talent agency, music production company, event management and concert production company as well as a music publishing house. The record label is also one of the three big record labels in the K-pop industry, alongside S.M. Entertainment and YG Entertainment.

JYP Entertainment has been the home of artists like Park Ji-yoon, god, and Rain. The label's current roster of recording artists includes Wonder Girls, 2AM, 2PM, Miss A, Baek A-yeon, 15&, JJ Project, Sunmi, Got7, HA:TFELT, Bernard Park and G.Soul. K-pop idol groups

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/JYP_Entertainment (Retrieved July 5, 2015)

2.   K-pop idol groups

      1)   2PM

Labels	JYP Entertainment
Debuted year	2008
Members	Jun.K, Nichkhun, Taecyeon, Wooyoung, Junho, Chansung
Former member	Jay Park
Website	http://2pm.jype.com/

Concerts and Fan meeting in Thailand (~ August 2015)

2010.11.13	Mnet ULTIMATE LIVE THAILAND PRESENTED BY HANAMI
2011.07.30	EVERSENSE 2PM THE HOTTEST HUNT IN THE JUNGLE NIGHT PARTY
2012.02.18	2PM HANDS UP ASIA TOUR in BANGKOK 2012
2012.04.07	2012 KOREAN MUSIC WAVE IN BANGKOK
2013.04.08	2013 2PM LIVE TOUR IN BANGKOK: WHAT TIME IS IT
2014.09.16	Nichkhun Fan Meeting in Bangkok by AJ (Nichkhun)
2014.10.11	2014 2PM WORLD TOUR IN BANGKOK
2014.12.13	JYP NATION in BANGKOK 2014
2015.07.04	MITSUBISHI MIRAGE Nichkhun Fan Party | รัก 7 ปี...มี 1 หน (Nichkhun)
2015.08.29	2PM Fan Meeting in Bangkok 'TAKE YOU HOME TONIGHT'

2)   **BIGBANG**

Labels	YG Entertainment
Debuted year	2006
Members	G-Dragon, T.O.P, Taeyang, Daesung, Seungri
Website	http://www.ygbigbang.com/

Concerts and Fan meeting in Thailand (~ August 2015)

2010.09.09   Eversense BIGBANG FAN PARTY

2012.10.05-06 BIGBANG ALIVE GALAXY TOUR 2012 IN BANGKOK

2013.06.07-08 G-DRAGON 2013 WORLD TOUR [ONE OF A KIND] IN BANGKOK (G-Dragon)

2015.02.21   2015 TAEYANG WORLD TOUR [RISE] in Bangkok (Taeyang)

2015.07.11-12 BIGBANG 2015 WORLD TOUR [MADE] IN BANGKOK

3)   EXO

Labels   SM Entertainment

Debuted year   2012

Members   (EXO-M) Xiumin, Lay, Chen

                (EXO-K) Suho, Beakhyun, Chanyeol, D.O, Kai, Sehun

Former members Kris, Lu Han, Tao

Website   (EXO-M) http://exo-m.smtown.com/

                (EXO-K) http://exo-k.smtown.com/

Concerts and Fan meeting in Thailand (~ August 2015)

2012.07.28   EXO's Mini Live in Thailand

2012.11.25   SM Town World Tour III in Bangkok

2013.03.16   MBC Korean Music Wave Concert in Bangkok 2013 (EXO-K)

2013.03.30   Super Joint Concert in Thailand (EXO-M)

2014.09.13-14 EXO FROM EXOPLANET #1 – THE LOST PLANET – in BANGKOK

2015.06.20-21 EXO FROM EXOPLANET #2 -The EXO'luXion- in BANGKOK

4)   Girls' Generation

Labels	SM Entertainment
Debuted year	2007
Members	Taeyeon, Sunny, Tiffany, Hyoyeon, Yuri, Sooyoung, Yoona, Seohyun
Former member	Jessica
Website	http://girlsgeneration.smtown.com/

Concerts and Fan meeting in Thailand (~ August 2015)

2009.02.09   SMTOWN Live'08 in Bangkok

2011.04.17   MBC Korean Music Wave Concert in Bangkok 2011

2012.02.12   Girls' Generation Tour in Bangkok

2012.11.25   SM Town World Tour III in Bangkok

2013.03.30   Super Joint Concert in Thailand

2014.01.11   GIRLS' GENERATION World Tour ~Girls & Peace~ in BANGKOK

2014.04.10   B-ing Taeyeon Fin Meeting (Taeyeon)

2014.07.26   PPTV Prime Minister and I Exclusive Fan Meeting in Bangkok (Yoona)

5)   Super Junior

Labels	SM Entertainment
Debuted year	2005
Members	Leeteuk, Heechul, Yesung, Kangin, Shindong, Sungmin, Eunhyuk, Donghae, Siwon, Ryeowook. Kibum. Kyuhyun
Former member	Hankyung
Website	http://superjunior.smtown.com/

Concerts and Fan meeting in Thailand (~ August 2015)

2006.03.18   Pattaya International Music Festival 2006

2007.03.17   Pattaya music festival (Super Junior K.R.Y)

2007.06.13-15 True Ultimate Fiesta

2008.07.12   Super Show Concert in Bangkok

2009.02.09   SMTOWN Live'08 in Bangkok

2009.11.28-29 Super Show Concert 2 in Bangkok

2011.01.16-17 Super Show Concert 3 in Bangkok

2011.04.29   PD Showtime - K-POP CHARITY part 2

2012.02.01   Acer-intel Meet & Greet Love & Share (Siwon)

2012.03.17-18 Super Show Concert 4 in Bangkok

2012.05.24   Fan meeting Masita date with Kyuhyun (Kyuhyun)

2012.10.04   2012 M COUNTDOWN Smile-Thailand

2012.11.25   SM Town World Tour III in Bangkok

2013.02.16   Super Junior-M Fan Party Break Down in Bangkok (Super Junior-M)

2013.03.06   ACER presents SAWASDEE SUMMER with SIWON (Siwon)

2013.03.31   Kim Kibum Memory of Love Fan Meeting In Bangkok (Kibum)

2013.08.03-04 Super Show Concert 5 in Bangkok

2014.02.27   Masita Kyuhyun Fan Sweeting (Kyuhun)

2014.11.11   Masita Kyuhyun Fan Sweeting (Kyuhyun)

2015.01.10-11 Super Show Concert 6 in Bangkok

2015.08.12   SUPER JUNIOR-D&E ASIA TOUR 2015 -Present- in BANGKOK

6)   TVXQ

Labels	SM Entertainment
Debuted year	2003
Members	U-Know Yunho, Max Changmin
Former member	Kim Jaejung, Park Yuchun, Kim Junsu (active as 'JYJ')
Website	(TVXQ) http://tvxq.smtown.com/
	(Tohoshinki) http://toho-jp.net/

Concerts and Fan meeting in Thailand (~ August 2015)

2006.09.15   TVXQ! RISING SUN Live in Bangkok

2007.10.15-16 TVXQ! The 2nd Asia Tour Concert "O" in Bangkok

2009.02.09   SMTOWN Live'08 in Bangkok

2009.06.27-28 TVXQ! The 3rd Asia Tour Concert "MIROTIC" in Bangkok

2011.04.17   MBC Korean Music Wave Concert in Bangkok 2011

2011.04.29   PD Showtime - K-POP CHARITY part 2

2012.04.07   MBC Korean Music Wave Concert in Bangkok 2012

2012.11.25   SM Town World Tour III in Bangkok

2015.05.30   TVXQ! SPECIAL LIVE TOUR – T1ST0RY – IN BANGKOK

List of Interviewees (interview on 2014, 20th October – 17th November)

No.	Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Occupation	Favorite K-pop group	Interesting period
1	Interviewee 1	17	F	Student	2PM	6 years 4 months
2	Interviewee 2	-	F	Student	2PM	6 years
3	Interviewee 3	16	F	Student	2PM	5 years
4	Interviewee 4	22	F	Student	2PM	4 years
5	Interviewee 5	16	F	Student	2PM	4 years
6	Interviewee 6	21	F	Student	2PM	2 years 8 months
7	Interviewee 7	17	F	Student	2PM	7 years
8	Interviewee 8	17	F	Student	2PM	2 years 6 months
9	Interviewee 9	15	F	Student	2PM	2 years
10	Interviewee 10	21	F	Student	2PM	9 years
11	Interviewee 11	22	F	Student	2PM	10 years
12	Interviewee 12	29	F	Student	2PM	10 years
13	Interviewee 13	15	F	Student	BIGBANG	4 years 4 months
14	Interviewee 14	-	F	Student	BIGBANG	8 years 10 months
15	Interviewee 15	17	F	Student	BIGBANG	5 years
16	Interviewee 16	18	F	Student	BIGBANG	9 years
17	Interviewee 17	21	F	Student	BIGBANG	10 years
18	Interviewee 18	24	F	Engineer	BIGBANG	8 years
19	Interviewee 19	15	F	Student	BIGBANG	7 years
20	Interviewee 20	17	F	Student	BIGBANG	5 years 6 months
21	Interviewee 21	22	F	Student	BIGBANG	10 years
22	Interviewee 22	23	F	Receptionist	BIGBANG	8 years
23	Interviewee 23	-	F	Student	EXO	6 years
24	Interviewee 24	15	F	Student	EXO	5 years
25	Interviewee 25	23	F	Student	EXO	10 years

26	Interviewee 26	21	F	Student	EXO	4 years
27	Interviewee 27	24	M	Private business	EXO	6 years
28	Interviewee 28	16	F	Student	EXO	2 years 1 months
29	Interviewee 29	15	F	Student	EXO	5 years
30	Interviewee 30	13	F	Student	EXO	1 years
31	Interviewee 31	19	F	Student	EXO	4 – 5 years
32	Interviewee 32	21	F	Student	EXO	5 years
33	Interviewee 33	17	F	Student	EXO	7 years
34	Interviewee 34	15	F	Student	EXO	5 years
35	Interviewee 35	16	F	Student	EXO	10 months
36	Interviewee 36	15	F	Student	EXO	5 years
37	Interviewee 37	17	F	Student	EXO	7 years 10 months
38	Interviewee 38	17	F	Student	EXO	2 years 9 months
39	Interviewee 39	21	F	Student	EXO	6 years
40	Interviewee 40	17	F	Student	EXO	3 years 4 months
41	Interviewee 41	15	F	Student	EXO	3 years
42	Interviewee 42	22	F	Graphic Designer	EXO	7 years
43	Interviewee 43	18	F	Student	EXO	8 years
44	Interviewee 44	16	F	Student	EXO	2 years
45	Interviewee 45	20	F	Student	EXO	8 years
46	Interviewee 46	14	F	Student	EXO	2 years
47	Interviewee 47	16	F	Student	EXO	4 years 6 months
48	Interviewee 48	15	F	Student	EXO	1 years
49	Interviewee 49	17	F	Student	EXO	5 years 7 months
50	Interviewee 50	16	F	Student	EXO	5 years
51	Interviewee 51	25	F	Private business	EXO	7 years

52	Interviewee 52	20	F	Student	EXO	5 years
53	Interviewee 53	20	F	Student	EXO	1 years 5 months
54	Interviewee 54	19	M	Student	EXO	8 years
55	Interviewee 55	26	F	Office worker	EXO	11 years
56	Interviewee 56	22	F	Student	EXO	5 – 6 years
57	Interviewee 57	22	F	Student	EXO	8 years
58	Interviewee 58	21	F	Student	Girls' Generation	9 years
59	Interviewee 59	17	F	Student	Girls' Generation	6 years 7 months
60	Interviewee 60	14	F	Student	Girls' Generation	4 years
61	Interviewee 61	15	F	Student	Girls' Generation	7 – 8 years
62	Interviewee 62	18	F	Student	Girls' Generation	7 years
63	Interviewee 63	22	F	Student	Girls' Generation	1 years 11 months
64	Interviewee 64	16	M	Student	Girls' Generation	6 years 8 months
65	Interviewee 65	22	F	Private business	Girls' Generation	4 years 10 months
66	Interviewee 66	22	F	Private business	Girls' Generation	5 years
67	Interviewee 67	19	F	Student	Girls' Generation	7 years 8 months
68	Interviewee 68	20	F	Student	Girls' Generation	5 years
69	Interviewee 69	17	F	Student	Girls' Generation	7 years 8 months
70	Interviewee 70	20	F	Student	Girls' Generation	8 years 5 months
71	Interviewee 71	-	F	Student	Super Junior	6 years 8 months

72	Interviewee 72	16	F	Student	Super Junior	5 years
73	Interviewee 73	22	F	Student	Super Junior	9 years
74	Interviewee 74	24	F	Office worker	Super Junior	8 years
75	Interviewee 75	15	F	Student	Super Junior	1 years 9 months
76	Interviewee 76	25	F	Office worker	Super Junior	6 years 8 months
77	Interviewee 77	28	F	Office worker	Super Junior	8 years 7 months
78	Interviewee 78	20	F	Student	Super Junior	8 years 2 months
79	Interviewee 79	20	F	Student	Super Junior	7 years
80	Interviewee 80	21	F	Student	Super Junior	8 years
81	Interviewee 81	21	F	Student	Super Junior	10 years
82	Interviewee 82	22	F	Private business	Super Junior	4 years
83	Interviewee 83	17	F	Student	TVXQ	7 years
84	Interviewee 84	19	F	Student	TVXQ	7 – 8 years
85	Interviewee 85	22	F	Private business	TVXQ	10 years 8 months
86	Interviewee 86	17	F	Student	TVXQ	6 years
87	Interviewee 87	16	F	Student	TVXQ	7 years
88	Interviewee 88	20	F	Student	TVXQ	10 years
89	Interviewee 89	43	F	Private business	TVXQ	10 years 10 months
90	Interviewee 90	24	F	Mass media	TVXQ	10 years 2 months
91	Interviewee 91	25	F	Office worker	TVXQ	9 years 3 months
92	Interviewee 92	23	F	Student	TVXQ	9 years

93	Interviewee 93	23	F	Office worker	TVXQ	7 years
94	Interviewee 94	17	F	Student	TVXQ	7 years
95	Interviewee 95	23	F	Interpreter	TVXQ	9 years
96	Interviewee 96	22	F	Teacher	TVXQ	7 years
97	Interviewee 97	20	F	Student	TVXQ	10 years
98	Interviewee 98	23	F	Student	TVXQ	10 years
99	Interviewee 99	20	F	Student	TVXQ	7 years 4 months
100	Interviewee 100	20	F	Student	TVXQ	8 years 1 months
101	Interviewee 101	22	F	Unemployed	TVXQ	9 years
102	Interviewee 102	24	F	Student	TVXQ	7 years
103	Interviewee 103	24	F	Hotel staff	TVXQ	10 years
104	Interviewee 104	23	F	Translator	TVXQ	10 years 9 months
105	Interviewee 105	26	F	Office worker	TVXQ	7 years 6 months
106	Interviewee 106	25	F	Office worker	TVXQ	7 years
107	Interviewee 107	24	F	Office worker	TVXQ	8 years
108	Interviewee 108	22	F	Student	EXO	8 years

VITA

Kanokporn Rueangsa was born on October 14th, 1990 in Prachinburi, Thailand. After graduated from Prachinratsadorn-amroong school, she achieved her bachelor degree of arts majoring in Korean language from Silpakorn University.