

**Master of Arts in Design
Interaction Design
ZHdK**



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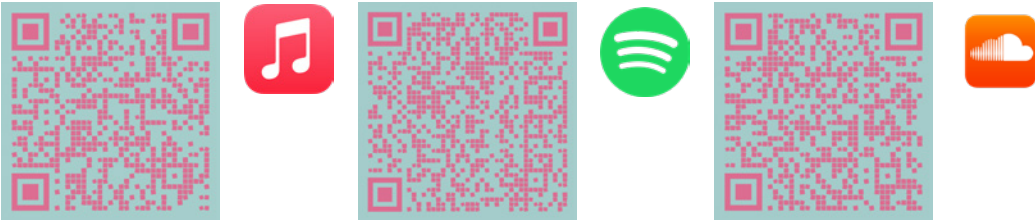
Victoria Cheredeeva

Lying is a weapon in the show business industry.
from "Oshi no ko"

Shuffle ▶ Artist
▶ “Song name”

Thesis playlist

There is an unspoken tradition that when writing a story about a K-Pop band, you often insert songs to immerse the reader in a certain mood. I also advise you to familiarise yourself with the songs preceding the chapters to discover the full potential of the transmedia component of K-Pop.



You can easily access the music playlist with a QR code or listen to the songs separately by searching by the artist name and song name while reading.



Shuffle ▶ Girls' Generation
▶ "Into The New World"

OOAbstract:

[EN]This master thesis investigates the concept of transmedia storytelling, with a specific focus on the relationship between cohesive and incohesive narratives across multiple media platforms. Using the case study of K-Pop, it explores how transmedia storytelling influences new forms of engagement and serves as an innovative method for interaction design. The study speculates on how storytelling strategies can affect audience engagement and loyalty, which could be foreseen from different forms of secondary content contributions. Through an in-depth analysis of K-Pops transmedia storytelling techniques, this research offers insights into the evolving landscape of narrative construction and audience participation in contemporary media environments.

[DE]Diese Masterarbeit untersucht das Konzept des transmedialen Geschichtenerzählens, mit einem besonderen Fokus auf die Beziehung zwischen kohäsiven und inkohäsiven Erzählungen über mehrere Medienplattformen hinweg. Anhand der Fallstudie K-Pop wird untersucht, wie transmediales Storytelling neue Formen des Engagements beeinflusst und als innovative Methode für das Interaktionsdesign dient. Die Studie spekuliert darüber, wie Storytelling-Strategien das Engagement und die Loyalität des Publikums beeinflussen können, was sich aus verschiedenen Formen sekundärer Inhaltsbeiträge ableiten lässt. Durch eine eingehende Analyse von K-Pops Transmedia-Storytelling-Techniken bietet diese Studie Einblicke in die sich entwickelnde Landschaft der narrativen Konstruktion und der Publikumsbeteiligung in zeitgenössischen Medienumgebungen.



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Shuffle ▶ Seo Taiji & Boys
▶ “Come Back Home”

01 Introduction



Shuffle ▶ **BTS**
▶ **“Dynamite”**

01.1 Motivation

Every day, when I open my eyes, I grab my phone and check what is new in K-Pop. I believe that three times out of five, I stare at some videos or concepts I could not have imagined. I may call it the everyday routine or a ritual, but staying in tune with these news helps me maintain my daily life.

And today, the day you are reading this text, I am sure I started my day the same way I always do. I grabbed my phone, and even before checking the messages, I went to check recent news of the K-Pop world because this story that I uncovered for myself in this transmedia environment is the one, to be honest, that somehow shaped my decisions and guided me through my respective life.

A short disclaimer! For a small portion of readers who may be unfamiliar with BTS, please note that the text includes numerous references and research focused on them. The phenomena of BTS played a big part in opening the doors for the Western world to be able to study the global influence of K-Pop.

BTS: South Korean K-Pop (Korean pop music) band, that shot to international stardom in the late 2010s. Also known as: Bangtan Boys, Bangtan Sonyeondan, Bodan Shonen Dan, (Korean pop music) band that shot to international stardom in the late 2010s. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)

But first things first.



Shuffle

▶ EXO

▶ “Overdose”

01.2 Introduction to K-pop and its global influence

And now, I am looking at K-Pop—a world where fantasy and reality intertwine to create a place of incredible joy and magnetic attraction. Becoming a K-Pop idol means entering a world of idealization, where your every move is celebrated and elevated to great heights. For many aspiring artists, this journey is not just a career path but a transformation, a metamorphosis that shapes the essence of their being.

The story of K-Pop began with a promise for me—a promise to show me a beautiful, perfect, hyper-realistic world. A place full of fame, glamorous shows, and an extraordinary life. At first glance, you are struck by a brilliant world where vivid images and mesmerizing melodies captivate the senses. The industry and culture filled me with a sense of belonging to something more significant and uncontrollable ambitions, drawing me as a newcomer into their networks. Magnificence comes from labor and group work, where every refined dance movement is captivating. There seems to be no explanation for the power of K-Pop. It is so all-encompassing and endless. And I’m trying to know what everyone is looking for in this world, an ideal world utterly different

from reality, making the participants a part of this kaleidoscope of all kinds of emotions. The promise of a happy life and rapid career growth, the fulfillment of the dream of becoming a star and leaving the old “unperfected” life behind - this is what attracts a large number of young people not only in Korea but all around the world (Kim S. Y., 2023). I was also attracted by this infinitely beautiful and ideal world into which I wanted to plunge and never emerge. Because everything is perfect there, and there is no fear of making mistakes. There is an even better thing: to be a part of this world, you do not need to be present in reality in your place of origin. You can only simply enjoy it from afar. (Cho M.).

Idol: Someone who has completed years of training and successfully debuted as a highly skilled singer, dancer, actor, and overall performer complete with charm and good looks to spare. This is the final leg on the path to K-Pop stardom.
(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

Debut: The official “coming out” of a future celebrity or group. It’s the first of everything from performing before an audience to releasing an album to appearing in a movie. This is the second stage when seeking stardom in Korea, only reached after years of strict training
(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

Victoria Cheredeeva

But how does it work? Starting to explore this paradox, I found that that discussion originated in the creation of idols in Asia. Joni Kitagawa was the father of this trend in music and the man who established the rules of the game in this music world (Chun J. M., 2018). He realized that the importance of visual charisma and emotional connection correlated with the importance of the musical component. Creating an exceptional, pure, and romantic image of the idol, making them look fragile and soft, was an important approach to attracting the main target audience - teenage girls and young women (Mansor A., 2018). This approach, which emerged in the 1960s, laid the foundation for the idol industry in Japan and Korea, influencing how idols are perceived and marketed. It is important to note that simultaneously, a triangular dynamic is emerging in the sectors, consisting of idols, their management companies, and fans. It is a relationship of mutual dependence and control, where each party plays a crucial role in supporting the other. Unfortunately, the strict controls that the industry uses to achieve picture perfection are still the basis for shaping the public image of idols and, accordingly, fans' expectations. This, in turn, influences market trends that force companies to adapt to new demands and create new streaming and interaction opportunities and ways in contrast to the usual interaction with TV (Chun J. M. 2006)—moving to the technological perspective and digital world (Kim S. Y., 2020).

Thus, although the framework for idols in Korea was just as strict as the often cases such as the lack of one's personality, the persona imposed by the company, or a staunch neutral position on political events, etc., this is connected still within the framework of the desire for global expansion of the industry. The origin of music and the attitude of two big idol houses, Japan and Korea, were influenced by very different goals. This is why the directions of Japanese idols and Korean idol industries in the 21st century have begun to differ significantly (이지예, (Lee Ji-ye), 2023; Chun J. M., 2018). As K-Pop continues to expand its global influence, it faces the paradox of maintaining its allure while embracing a growing demand for authenticity. The industry is at a crossroads where the appeal of fantasy must balance with the raw truth of reality. This duality—the coexistence of charm and authenticity—is at the core of the K-Pop narrative, a narrative for which the digital space has become a haven and avenue for development and use (Kim Y., 2023). This is where a new culture of interaction with music, built by the K-Pop industry, is being organized, which includes the entire spectrum of interactions in this space: Transmedia space, space

of commodity, and parasocial relationship (Alexandri E., 2024).



Shuffle ▶ BTS ▶ “Blood Sweat & Tears”

01.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Whenever I think about transmedia storytelling and how I started researching it, my mind always wanders back to my “only reference for everything” - BTS. I know it may sound funny, but there is a reason why the aura of this K-pop band seems so rich and never-ending. The reason is their story. But what is their story exactly? Is it the personalities of the idols and how they interact with the public? Is it the characters they created to imitate the novel “Demian” by Hermann Hesse? Is it the concept, the friendship, the songs, or the lyrics? Or is it the mascots they created?

The answer is not simple. This is the point where many people began to argue about what the essence of the group truly is and what is the most important thing, or the “component”, for people to understand about them. Because people see differently and interact with the story differently.

To start discussing the story of BTS, we can begin from the very beginning, with “Seoul,” the name of the first chapter of the band’s first official book (BTS, Beyond the Story: 10-Year Record of BTS). Alternatively, we could start with their first-ever tweeted message: “워썅! 방탄소

년단입니다. 드디어 방탄소년단 트위터를 공식 오픈하네요~ 짹짹! 데뷔 전까지 상상 그 이상의 이상하고 재미난 것들이 업로드됩니다.” (@btstranslation7 : “What’s up! This is BTS. We’re finally officially opening our BTS Twitter~ *Clap Clap Clap* We will upload more weird and fun things that one could have only imagined about before our debut...”) (pic.1). Or for people who likes to go super deep into the narrative, maybe a more interesting point to discuss is why Jin is the only member not present in the photo at the end of the prologue video. These examples may seem confusing, but they are here to illustrate the many possible starting points for interacting with BTS’ story. Despite this seemingly chaotic storytelling, many people consider it to be the key to BTS’ success as a band.

Jin: (byname of Kim Seok-Jin; b. December 4, 1992, Anyang, South Korea), one of sevens BTS members. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)



방탄소년단
@BTS_twt

워썅! 방탄소년단입니다. 드디어 방탄소년단 트위터를 공식 오픈하네요~ 짹짹! 데뷔 전까지 상상 그 이상의 이상하고 재미난 것들이 업로드됩니다.

2012년 12월 18일 · 2:43 오전

(pic.1 First Tweet by BTS, BTS, (2012), twitter.com)

This would be a moment for me to navigate you as a reader through a very transmedia spread of clues to perceive the whole picture. So, while we don't need to start from every possible starting point, we should know that any one of them could be the perfect open door for us to begin interacting with their story.

From now on, one could think that it may seem that the transmedia storytelling only surrounding the global phenomenon of BTS is unique to them alone in the K-Pop industry. However, the reality is far from that. The concept of "K" that lies at the heart of the K-Pop industry is what works best in this diverse and ever-changing field. There is no clear understanding yet of what happens to be inside the meaning of the "K" (Kim S. Y., 2023), it is fascinating how this industry, which appears flashy and superficial, can create an image that is so open to various interpretations. The industry invites its audience to see things differently, to immerse themselves in the culture, and to create their own stories and personal understanding. This is how the whole "K" brand brings all the existing notions together. And this is where and how this story goes far beyond BTS (Lie J).

I was thinking that although discussing BTS is interesting, it's important to remember that there's a whole industry surrounding them that cannot be ignored. They reached their level of success using a specific strategy that had already been established in K-Pop.

K-Pop meticulously explored the different syntheses of musical composition, using various genres and combining them into one song (Lee J-MM.). They created a strategy for the idols' stage presence and persona formation (Elfv-ing-Hwang J., 2018), organized the infrastructure to "produce" idols - the training system (Kang J. M., 2017), and worked hard on physical album sales during the digital music era. All these methods of supporting the band's brand and fan loyalty were in place long before BTS became a phenomenon. All together with different comeback concepts (Ma Z. et al., 2022) (would be described further in the text) behind all the groups, it brings us here.

Trainee: The name for a wannabe star who is in the process of intensive singing, dancing, and acting instruction, media training, and image redesign. The first stage of an aspiring star's career path in which idolization is in process.

(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

Comeback: The project announcing the official return of a group or individual k-pop star who has stepped out of the spotlight for an extended period of time, in some cases, even just a few weeks. This is often paired with an image rebranding to match their new album theme.

(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

Thus, how is it possible to give a definition to K-Pop? Is it only a music genre or does it stand far beyond? If "K" is K-Pop is a culture because it holds a meaning of Hallyu that represents starting from music to movies, technology to food (Adams T. 2022). Some of the researchers do the specification of K-Pop as a culture (Li X., 2022) to narrow it down to this specific phenomenon. As well as one of the founders of the K-Pop industry Lee Soo-man founded SM Entertainment, one of South Korea's music agencies, developed the system of K-Pop and called it "cultural technology" (Kao K., 2022). It may feel like there are so many nuances that could be argued to be called K-Pop culture, and I personally can see why this notion gets spread. This is not defined yet, as being a relevantly new field, that is super interesting to speculate about, such a still place for negotiation.

Hallyu: The Hangul, or Korean language term, for The Korean Wave. Literally meaning the flow of Korea, this term refers to the increase in worldwide popularity of South Korean media since the end of the 20th century.

(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

SM Entertainment: considered one the top entertainment production companies in K-Pop.

(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

This is why I decided to acknowledge these rules set by the game of the K-Pop industry, while at the same time trying to distance myself a bit as a fan and consumer.



Shuffle

Ditto
“NewJeans”

02.1 Aim

Investigate the possibility of creating more engaging fan content based on existing stories and creating stronger connections among the audience with the K-Pop industry.

To uncover the essence of transmedia storytelling in K-Pop. Explore how the uniquely designed interaction principles and narrative style are used to enhance these narratives and their impact on audiences.

02.2 Research questions

How does this unique style of storytelling influence K-Pop audience engagement and perception?

What role do transmedia and uniquely designed interaction principals play in enhancing K-Pop narrative and audience experience?

How do K-Pop transmedia narrative methods contribute to creating a new form of secondary content?

Shuffle ▶ Wonder Girls
▶ "Tell me"

03Theoretical part



Shuffle ▶ Coldplay X BTS
▶ “My Universe”

03.1 Transmedia storytelling

I will try to start from *sensu lato* (*sensu la: to -'lāt(,)ō: in a broad sense, New Latin*). When you jump into transmedia storytelling you do not know exactly which entrance you choose. The way it is constructed makes it engageable in a way that it doesn't matter which door you open to enter the space, it will always lead you inside the story (Jenkins, H. 2007).

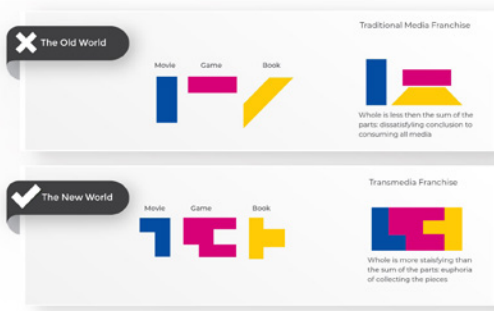
The transmedia story by default is supposed to be presented through various media platforms and form a specific language between each other to interfere and to complement. This is why there is no better way for you or me to enter the transmedia story. The most important is that we can explore it by creating our understanding and diving deep to a very specific extent, that we believe is the most interesting (Jenkins, H. 2009).

And, you know what? This is what we do. We get this feeling of being very welcomed and invited, like to your dream house, where we can find everything that we ever wanted so we can become best friends with this place (Veale K., 2019). Maybe after connecting with such a matter, we have no choice as an audience but to just jump into the transmedia environment and enjoy

(Jenkins, H. 2009). Enjoy so many possibilities to explore or to create, using our own creativity to share via secondary content what we find mesmerizing about the subject (Dowd T. 2015) or choose and direct your interactions with the story world. Everything as we wish. Because there are so many elements that could hook us to make the interaction and experience unforgettable (Kohnen M. E. S., 2017).

Thus, it means to go foot by foot with capitalism. Nothing could be better for capitalism to construct a way of product interaction that affects you to such an extent that you want to contribute to the product story and expand the narrative (HECKMAN D. A., 2019). This seems to be an intriguing way, but this communication goes way beyond mere media commercialization (Zuhadmono A., 2021). Quite an interesting aspect of the whole transmedia storytelling. All these strategies have been well-used by different industries such as movie production or companies like Disney for decades. Corporations have created a vast and endless history through the creation of fan content (Ryan M. L., 2015), and I believe to a certain extent we have all had an opportunity to interact with it: “Oh! This is a new quiz “Which Disney Princess Are You According to The Cake You Bake?” I need to pass it. Hard to believe that

this was planned and became commercial content, as well as most of the things on the internet is. Therefore, the limits of the distribution and development of the story exceed the boundaries of absolute commercialization. And this is what highlights its crucial role in social and behavioral change (Freeman, 2019; Hancox, 2019; Rutledge, 2019). Ultimately, what matters is the audience's sincere response, their enhanced interaction, and engagement with the story (pic. 2).



(pic.2 What is the difference between a traditional story and a transmedia story?, Dream Farm Studios (2023))

“Now it’s time for an adventure!” you might think, but unfortunately to be adventurous in transmedia, is not that simple. Transmedia storytelling involves the ability to understand and create a new part of a story and spread it across different platforms. The ability to interpret and create a continuation of existing content and to distribute it in the environment, both to communicate and interpret the content, but still not everything that at first glance is transmedia storytelling is such (Jenkins, H., 2009a.). Therefore, Henry Jenkins in his essay has presented seven principles that describe what true transmedia storytelling entails: Spreadability vs. Drillability, Continuity vs. Multiplicity, Immersion vs. Extractability, Worldbuilding, Seriality, Subjectivity, and Performance (Jenkins, H., 2009b.). Although three of these principles are represented in oppositional pairs, at first glance they do not seem mutually exclusive. And I think it’s important to mention that such a position exists because it takes a broader look at the positioning of principles (Moloney K.).

In such a manner and understanding I think it is important to dive into principles before we go to a concrete example of a story that coexists in differ-

ent media. More precisely we need to see how it comes to the mind of the audience communicate with them to contribute to the story and spread it. This is where the principle of Spreadability vs. Drillability comes in Jenkins (2009a). When the audience wants to learn more and becomes engaged, and willing to spend energy and time “investigating” the story, this is where the concept of this principle comes into play. It’s a kind of learning, where the process is one of discovering a new world and being willing to reflect on the content created.

Let’s continue with principles of continuity vs multiplicity (Jenkins H., 2009a). These principles have an impact on shaping the audience’s experience. That experience is in contact with the story and it’s multiplicity. How to assemble a whole picture from the separate pieces of the story presented? This approach is very popular with many fans, especially those who are very immersed in the story. Putting the story together is an incredibly rewarding way of engaging with it. The multiplicity of references presented here, i.e. pieces of history, allows you to form your own opinion during the period of its compilation and offers the opportunity to build different points of view through the events that occur in parallel. This also allows looking at some moments of history from a different angle.

And now we have already started to collect the story from different sides and to describe in our imagination the possibility of the development of the story in parallel realities. And so we enter into states of immersion in the material of the story. This is where the second of the principles of immersion vs. extractability (Jenkins H., 2009a) comes in, where the audience enjoys traveling through different narratives, allowing them to briefly dive into a new world and forget about reality and everyday life. Narrative in books or movies—where images are swapped and a new reality is formed—is what often happens when you encounter and immerse yourself in a good story. Whereas extractability crosses that line and allows you to bring story elements into your real life. I read a funny example on this topic in one of my essays, where it talks about BTS Mattel’s BTS dolls that were released after their album Love Your-

self: Answer and title single IDOL (Zuhadmono A., 2021). The example of extractability is referred to as being able to re-enact with these dolls at home. Extractability is often subcut in the context of merchandise, but can also represent being philosophical or behavioral (Moloney K.). This is also inherent in fans who want to apply the parents of their favourite idols and try to use the same products, dress similarly or try to replicate their behaviours or adopt the same hobbies and interests, changing in the direction of their favourite characters and starting to tell their story through the prism of their images.

This leads us to the next principle of Worldbuilding (Jenkins H., 2009a), which is directly related to immersion and extractability. This is where the creation of universes by the audience comes to the fore, which embodies all the collected pieces and new branches, where maps or diagrams are drawn up. All this also helps the audience to get in touch with the story, as consuming it after someone else's reinterpretation, you can discover new facets in which you can also continue and introduce new parallels. These are worlds where audiences help each other to learn about the existing story and support its development.

Seriality (Jenkins H., 2009a) as a principle is in general revealed, and in the case of transmedia, this notion spreads through different media. Therefore, it can be noted here that the continuation of the story can be found not on the carriers of the main material such as the Wachowski sister's *The Matrix* as an original movie trilogy, but on parallel sources, like books or TV series, which complement the story and the lore (Moloney K.). It is interesting to note that devoted fans are very loyal to such additions if the performance and contribution are well done. However, as Jenkins (2009b) points out, additions to the story could be very confusing for audiences not so much involved in the narrative, who do not know all the subtleties of the material.

This subtlety of the material, and used references are very important for the next principle. It is at this point that secondary characters and unexploited stories can come into the spotlight. This narrative touches on the notion of subjectivity (Jenkins H.,

2009b). The appeal of secondary characters to the audience allows them to influence the expansion of the world while exploring new content and developing knowledge about the character and their involvement in the story and narrative, which takes on new value.

Last but not least and probably my favorite principle of all presented: Performance (Jenkins H., 2009b). Where profiles and characters and their negligence in the eyes of the audience acquire new horizons of development. This is where fantasy comes into play, and the audience begins to invent new stories through fanfics, which can be many departures from the canonical stories and represent completely parallel worlds of plot development. Such stories often appear in specially designated communities and groups dedicated to this topic. This can also include role-playing games, where the audience uses existing characters and moves them to other worlds with a different setting and develops the story through integration with each other in chat rooms.

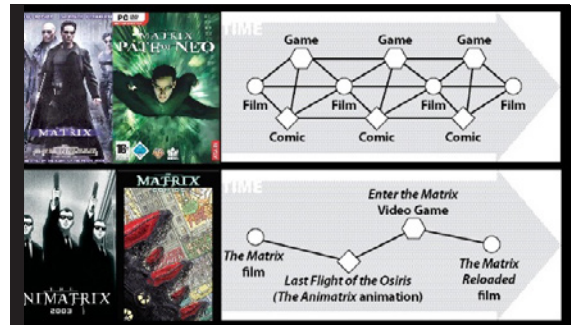
develops the discourse and sets the stage for the audience to spread the content and develop the story to flesh it out (Chen K., et al. 2023). This all contributes to Worldbuilding and Subjectivity. However, the example of performativity apart from numerous side stories and interpretations created by fans (Lau D. W. 2014), new horizons of development were performed by the 4th movie *The Matrix Resurrections* (2021) (Chen K., et al. 2023). Released years later, it took the opportunity to further explain the parallel universe, contributing to the expansion of the main storyline from a different angle (pic.3)

Shuffle ▶ B.A.P ▶ “Young, Wild & Free”

03.1.1 Example: The Matrix

It became quite clear to me how the principles and techniques of transmedia storytelling apply to the plot and lore of the Matrix trilogy. Apart from being a well-known example in pop culture, it's also a very studied material. In this case, there is no single urtext from which one can gain all the information needed to comprehend the story's universe (Jenkins 2007). So once you get involved in this franchise you are guided to explore all possible media, all the details, the periphery, and contexts of the story to get to the point of understanding the links and references (Schiller M., 2018).

As an example for Spreadability vs. Drillability or connecting and investing your time and educating yourself, look at the original trilogy consisting of *The Matrix* (1999), *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003), and *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003). There are plot holes, or twists and turns that no one can answer for sure, which contributes to continuity vs multiplicity. The example that astonished me the most was how the protagonist Neo, portrayed by Keanu Reeves, could use his programmed powers outside the framework of the Matrix. With explanations given only by the movies, it is very hard to find an answer. This all



(pic.3 What is the difference between a traditional story and a transmedia story?, Dream Farm Studios (2023))

As described above about the principles of transmedia storytelling we can briefly see how it works. Personally, I recall fan discussions about the original Matrix trilogy. These fan theories, which circulated on internet forums as alternative endings to the trilogy, were often brought up and tried to explain all the story's inconsistencies (PIERCE-BOHEN, 2023). This situation, where the audience had to seek additional sources to fully understand the storyline, is an example of the careless transmission of storytelling within The Matrix franchise.

In addition to what was said, it is worth mentioning the subsequent appearance of video games based on the story, comic book adaptations, magazines, and TV series that also helped flesh out the story (Chen K., et al. 2023).



Shuffle ▶ So!YoON!
▶ “Smoke Sprite” feat. RM

03.2 Transmedia in music

You might already have an idea of how transmedia storytelling works in music. In this section my “sole reference for anything imaginable” is back on the table: I will elaborate on transmedia storytelling using BTS as a primary example to illustrate how it functions effectively. Unfortunately, at the moment there are few relevant and communal studies of transmedia music in general as well as in the trot of K-Pop. As a BTS fan, I am particularly pleased to learn about the different positions and opinions on the spread of the phenomenon of BTS and their impact on the industry, but I cannot note without regret that there is a vast number of similar stories behind BTS that are less explored within the English-speaking community. It’s not that branding and distribution across different media hasn’t been touched by the music industry, but it hasn’t resonated enough. Until the BTS phenomenon came along, the desire to explore the status quo signaled their great success on the global stage and paralleled the existence of numerous Korean groups that have not had as much success in building a loyal fan base and brand of their own (Lazor C. 2020a). But let’s try to generalize a bit and look at what is happening within the framework of transmedia storytelling in music in general.

So how does transmedia storytelling work in music and correspond to its distribution? This question is not as thoroughly explored, although there are several studies dedicated to the topic (Brembilla P., 2019; Jost C., 2019). Through transmedia, the music industry can generate cultural and economic value. The transformation of music distribution through digital media reshapes the way of communicating and consuming it (Waldfoegel J., 2017). This creates a greater place to construct numerous narratives and values through social engagement and provide cultural evolutions of the entertainment world (Brembilla P., 2019).

It all comes down to accumulating and engaging the audience beyond the music and turning the audience’s integration with the music into a larger experience that can carry different strategies for exploring and understanding the music group’s position within the specific passions of the audience and fans (Zuhadmono A., 2021). Thus, building the concept around the music narrative based on understanding and focusing on the audience is central to a successful transmedia strategy (Cliff C. 2017). The focus on audience understanding, what are these strategies that producers and artists use to attract fans and whether focusing on the audience will have an

effect, will be developed further in this thesis.

This chapter is more constructed about group branding. The dissemination of information across different levels of media integrations is crucial for brand building (Tenderich B., 2014) or “band as a brand” (PELLEGATTA E., 2018). Transmedia is the preferred strategy for sharing information about music artists. While music remains the primary medium, this approach is necessary to maintain influence and retain a loyal audience. There are several things to consider in realizing this plan. The main point that you as an idol need to be relevant and have a constant presence reminds us of who you are (Pratten R., 2011); you need to resonate and be memorable to the fan. As well as being “spreadable” (Jenkins, 2013); you need to aim for substance: go deeper to find as many fans as possible. By doing so, you can carefully and precisely allow a word of mouth to share interests and attract more fans, both through traditional and analog methods as well as the internet and social media (Pratten R., 2011).

To produce a logical and engaging way of group promotion, it is necessary to develop clear content strategies. Namely, building clear and well-promoted content that can increase the public interest. When different media types are combined, fans can control their exposure to content. This strategy is used to make content more accessible. It is very important to use different combinations of media content between paid, owned and earned media to gain credibility, solidity, visibility and profit, thus creating a greater ownership of the audience in the development of the Group and giving them a sense of belonging and uniqueness (Pratten R., 2011; PELLEGATTA E., 2018).

For any band promotion, on top of everything else, you need to work out the perfect combination of media and content distribution. Since there is no perfect recipe for creating the ideal transmedia storytelling, you need to find the perfect combination and the right mix to reach the target audience. For this purpose, a constant presence on platforms and related content, including references to previous media, encourag-

es the audience to resurface, communicate with the community, and interact with more content. Here we need to consider the presence in the virtual space as well as in the real world to create the perfect balance. To create this narrative, you need to be aware of fan interests and which approach works best within your organized audience. I will elaborate more on the auditory engagement further in the text (PELLEGATTA E., 2018; McErlean K., 2018).

As for platforms for mixing and integrating with content, they can range from manual to digital and even immersive. It can be books and e-books, TV, movies, games, digital worlds, and so on. Digital media like the internet, radio, and cell phones (for viewing and listening) can also be represented by variations of consoles, for varying degrees of immersiveness, and even go to the meta-level. And support interconnections, through content links and social networks, to support intercommunication between fans and also track their needs to create more successful content (McErlean K., 2018).

In general, we need to come to a consensus on how to balance fan and artist interaction between three different platforms: social, digital, and physical (PELLEGATTA E., 2018). Social platforms - where fans interact with both the artist and each other through sharing, collaboration, meetings, etc. Digital platforms - where technology helps apply solutions to produce experiences and learning (gaining knowledge through finding new information and being able to share and make secondary content). And physical platforms, where empathy can be applied to tangible products, such as selling records or merch. (as in Figure 7, Pratten, 2011).

These approaches to transmedia storytelling are just as well suited to the music industry. Realizing the importance of the overall emotional experience and interaction with fans - Music is the most effective way to build that connection (Brembila, P. 2019). And to do this in conjunction with transmedia approaches to brand visibility. This is an opportunity to be always close to the fans, interacting with them and making them interact in return, always remaining consistent and inventing

new visual approaches to realize this interaction. In this respect, transmedia storytelling can certainly be a very useful tool to engage the public and build a loyal audience, as described above (Zuhadmono A., 2021).

Using BTS as a primary example, I have discussed transmedia storytelling in the context of music and K-Pop. This next section will highlight relevant research in this area, which has influenced this thesis and provides a basis for further exploration, using specific examples to illustrate key aspects of storytelling.

not address social change in society, it confirms the work of transmedia storytelling as an active factor in building the loyal community that One Direction had and still has today. unity that One Direction had and still has today.

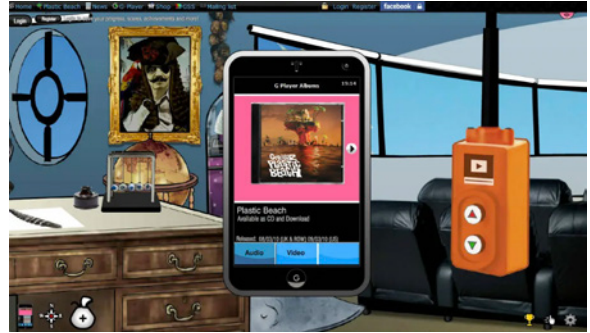
Shuffle ▶ NCT 127 ▶ “Highway to Heaven”

03.2.1 Example: One Direction (1D)

The boy band One Direction (1D), dominated the music industry in the 2010s and made a huge expansion in the global market.

Fragility and soft power are a great way to build a loyal fanbase (Hayashi K., 2007). Even though the term “soft power” is often associated with Asian studies (Bao H., 2019), it is also considered the value and the commercial success of Western music bands (Brembilla, P. 2019; Schjønberg I. M., 2019).

Remarkably, in the development of the 1D group, one of the crucial target auditoriums was the LGBT community. The trajectory of the project realization in 1D represents the commercial and marketable value of the group (Brembilla, P. 2019). In addition, the cultural value of the fan base was building the confronting notion of the relationship between 1D members and fandom support for the LGBT community (Brembilla, P. 2019). The storytelling within transmedia was able to organize a loyal fanbase that has a very strong influence, and was able to respond to the state of the group and carry out activist activities (Brembilla, P. 2019). Although it does



(pic.4 Gorillaz, journey to plastic beach illustration, Cb... Vinyl Record Art Blog (2016))

Shuffle ▶ PENTAGON "Gorilla"

03.2.2 Example: Gorillaz

Moving away from loyalty. In the framework of transmedia storytelling, it is impossible to bypass the phenomenon that is the band Gorillaz.

Gorillaz is an animated band formed in the UK in 1998 by Damon Albarn and Jamie Hewlett. Essentially, the four animated characters that make up Gorillaz are nothing more than a facade for what the duo produces. They were one of the first bands to look at stories within different media (Vasile & Godest, 2011). By creating a structured world and animated characters, as well as visual stories based on lyrics - creating a perfect example that can only be represented in the music industry (Jost C., 2019). Apart from music videos and video games where the band appeared as characters, they also held live concerts. One of the funniest things they did was appearing on the TV show MTV Cribs to showcase their fictional house, adding to the extensive content they produced. This was all based on the made up story and lore of the four fictional band members. (Jost C., 2019) (pic.4).

The apogee of transmedia storytelling for Gorillaz was the company associated with their 2010 album Plastic Beach. In the title video Journey to

the Plastic Beach there were references to draw fans' attention to the story unfolding on the ship, and how the characters ended up on the island where the children's album took place. It was like a so-called treasure hunt for fans on the vastness of a browser game, where players could find the characters, and in parallel with the integration with the story, fans could listen to the new album. The game perfectly matched the story world created, from the graphics to the music. The response to this strategy was successful: the fandom grew dramatically, and this could be seen both in the growth of social media followers and the creation of countless user-generated content (e.g. fan sites or fanfics) (Jeffery A., 2017).

The highlights of the story world created by Gorillaz are numerous and perfectly expressed in the various media we can find in every transmedia product. They have demonstrated that creating a rich lore and using transmedia strategies to engage fans and potential audiences are highly successful methods (Jost C., 2019). Parallel to add that now in the digital realm it is hard not to consider the music value without regarding repurposable transmedia assets that drive the narratives and experiences of the audience (Brembilla, P. 2019).

ate a gift for their fans, the band created fake websites and released a teaser that contained a riddle. After solving the riddle, fans were taken to a webpage on which they could upload a footage video for the song Level of Concern, which was later included in the official music video. The resulting video is incredibly interesting in both hierarchies of communication: within the community and author and viewer, creating a plane for communication and the influence of viewers on the author's work. Which is also one of the foundations of principles of transmedia storytelling (Jenkins H., 2009a; Jenkins H., 2009b). Such an approach also facilitates the formation of groups in social networks to solve speculation about the understanding of the concept of the group and to maintain the level of audience loyalty (Jenkins H., 2007).

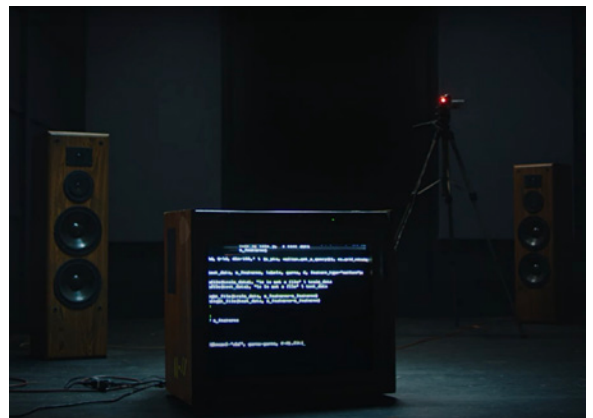
Shuffle ▶ BTS
▶ "FAKE LOVE"

03.2.3 Example: 21 pilots

As we continue to unfold the theme of "treasure hunts", I'd also like to give a great example of a trajectory of storytelling that involved fans and made the community collaborative and engaged.

Twenty-One Pilots is an American duo from Columbus, Ohio. The band formed in 2009 and currently consists of Tyler Joseph and Josh Dana. They are known for their references and torus in their albums as well as the spread of the Lore and their effect on real life. They "Want to Stay Strange" (Ganz C., 2018). So as an example when Josh Dun accepted the award for the most dedicated fanbase in 2017, he accepted the award alone, saying that Tyler is now in Dema, which was the fictional town on which the story of the album Trench (2018), realigned by the band, was based.

Even the lore of the band is a dominant part of the group's narrative; the reason for mentioning the group is an event or more like a riddle that they proposed to the audience to solve in 2020 (pic.5). The video Twenty One Pilots - How Those Codes Were Solved (A Recap for Locals), talks about how the Level of Concern (2020) video was created. It explains the way to cre-



(pic. 5 Illustration of Twenty One Pilots launch online scavenger hunt for fans, Stuart Dredge (2020))



Shuffle

▶ K/DA, Madison Beer,
(G)I-DLE
▶ “POP/STARS” feat. Jaira
Burns

03.3K-Pop and transmedia storytelling

This brings us to the main theme of this study. K-Pop’s transmedia narratives act as a cornerstone, weaving digital nouveau into the fabric of this dynamic genre (Kim S. Y., 2020). This dynamic represents not only a technological leap but also a cultural and educational renaissance in the realm of world music. New opportunities for interaction between the music industry artists and fans are taking shape. The intersection of K-Pop with advanced technology has given rise to a new era and narrative ability in which virtual realities, augmented experiences, and digital interaction are redefining the boundaries of musical expression (Han G. S., 2019). This transformation is a long search for the perfect recipe to create a loyal audience, through various interactions and integrations in the digital world and the real world (Zuhadmono A., 2021).

At the center of this transformation is the development of social media technologies and the different levels of inherent content. In parallel, although the adoption of immersive technologies has not achieved a great impact at this stage, the performance and development of the direction the industry is striving for (Kim S. Y., 2020). Currently, virtual and augmented reality experiences

are mainly used to support concepts and their narratives to reveal the band more deeply and give their fans an entrance into a parallel reality where they can encounter more vivid stage images of their favorite idols that create a culture beyond traditional music consumption. These technologies scenarios often blur the boundaries between reality and fantasy (Broadwell P., 2016). K-Pop uses technology not only as a tool, but also as an important element through which the main narrative and interaction take place. This ongoing narrative, which often spans multiple digital media, creates a more holistic understanding of the music and the culture it represents.

Here, by engaging with the industry through the digital screen of your device, you discover a boundless world that once immersed, it’s hard to escape (Zuhadmono A., 2021).

This is how the principles in this industry are being developed through social networks and interactions between fans and artists. Spreadability vs. Drillability, Continuity vs. Multiplicity, Immersion vs. Extractability, Worldbuilding, Seriality, Subjectivity, and Performance are an integral part of the industry. In the next chapter, I will try to show how these principles unfold based on one concept that lies at the heart of the K-Pop industry.

band that I started to “explore”, which in K-Pop is the most appropriate word when you start to get to know a band, was SHINee: a five-member South Korean boy group widely recognized as one of the leaders of the ‘Hallyu’ or Korean wave (<https://kpoping.com/profiles/group/SHINee>). The single that grabbed my attention at the time was the song “Sherlock” (March 19, 2012) and at the very beginning of that track they say the phrase “SHINee’s back”(pic.6). Don’t get me wrong, I just started listening to K-Pop and I didn’t know the ins and outs of it in any format.

Shuffle ▶ SHINee
▶ “Sherlock (Clue + Note)”

03.3.1 Comeback K-Pop

In this chapter, I want to focus on the concept of “comeback” within Korean pop culture. It is a concept that differs from the Western understanding of the word and the meaning it carries. Here I will digress from the narrative style and give an example of usage.

“Oh, this artist is going to have a comeback.” Now you, my reader, probably pictured an established star going into hiatus and then returning after years with a new album. I hope I guessed right. Since your constructed opinion is based on the Cambridge dictionary definition

*comeback -noun [C] UK
an attempt to become famous, powerful, or important again after a period of being much less famous, etc.
(Cambridge dictionary)*

And that would be true, but not in the context of K-Pop. And before we get into a discussion of this very complex concept, let me tell you a personal story. It’s always fun to dive into memories. So, when I first encountered K-Pop I was about 16–17 years old, so 10 years ago, and the first



(pic.6 SHINee’s back, StarlightSora (2016))

Back then, because of our cultural constructs (Williams J. P., 2016)., I understood it in the more common sense: “Oh, what luck, I bumped into them just after a long break, and they are together again, and I can listen to them and enjoy their activity”. How naive. I checked when SHINee last released an album or single before Sherlock on March 19, 2012, and it was in December 2011.

A comeback within three months? Well. That is something.

Back then, because of our cultural constructs (Williams J. P., 2016)., I understood it in the more common sense: “Oh, what luck, I bumped into them just after a long break, and they are together again, and I can listen to them and enjoy their activity”. How naive. I checked when SHINee last released an album or single before Sherlock on March 19, 2012, and it was in December 2011.

A comeback within three months? Well. That is something.

Let’s take some time to understand the concept

of “comeback” in K-Pop culture, as it forms the basis of various elements such as music lyrics, references in video clips, album photos, idols’ style, their persona, and much more. This concept is unique as it collects the art of storytelling and develops it into something much more special than the album release (PELLEGATTA E., 2018). It is a time for anticipation and speculation (Ma Z. et al., 2022). It is a period that fans are waiting for the most because it is a new era (appendix, interview number 10).

Unfortunately, I cannot fully refer to specific research. Combining the existing one would help me to discuss further K-Pop storytelling and transmedia and reflect on this concept. It is within the scope of my thesis to try to collect a precise definition and to present to the reader the possibility of understanding what a comeback is and why this medium is one of the important discourse directions in the situation of K-Pop and transmedia storytelling. Although this will not be an easy task, I will try not to speculate on this topic, by showing examples of how this notion is very significant in shaping the form of transmedia storytelling in the K-Pop concept.

Let’s go a bit deeper with definitions from different sources.

Definition1 – Comeback:

A comeback is when a K-Pop group releases and promotes new music. The first performance of a group’s new songs is called their “comeback stage,” after which they’ll promote their comeback by appearing on variety and music shows such as Weekly Idol and M Countdown. This promotional period lasts for a few weeks before wrapping up with a “goodbye stage.” Comebacks often have a specific theme or “concept” which ties a group’s songs together.

(https://sea.mashable.com/entertainment/13419/bias-comeback-and-aegyo-what-all-those-k-pop-words-actually-mean_)

Definition2 – Comeback:

A K-Pop group coming back with new music. K-Pop’s the equivalent of saying a group is releasing a new album, but instead K-Popfans say that a group is having a comeback.

(<https://www.bu.edu/lernet/artemis/years/2017/projects/StudentWebsites/Michelle/pages/Vocabulary.html#:~:text=Comeback%3A%20A%20K%2Dpop%20group,group%20is%20having%20a%20comeback.>)

Definition3 – Comeback:

The beginning of a new promotion cycle of a group that has already completed a debut. Always involves new music and generally a new group concept.

(K-Pop 101: Promotional Cycles, Ryan Gibson Updated June 3, 2012)

Definition4 – Comeback:

What is a comeback?

A comeback is when a K-Pop group or an artist is releasing new music along with an album (it can be a full or mini one). But it has a ~different~ meaning to fans as they go craaaazy for d-day. Here are some things you should expect when your fave is having a comeback:

New concepts

New hairstyles

New music

Live performances

Along with using the release of new album we can see the usage of “comeback stage” and “promotion cycle” as well as appears ~different~ meaning.

(<https://www.cosmo.ph/entertainment/preparing-for-a-k-pop-comeback-a4850-20210522-lfrm>)

Well here it is, the common something is evident in these definitions. Looking ahead I already gave you a hint that in interview(4) that I conducted with a person who was a big fan of K-Pop described as an era. But in some other interview I got the definitions: a business, a schedule, new cycle or a season. So let’s start sorting that out and gut the understanding of what it is. However, I think the present understanding is a composite of everything and within the musical transmedia of storytelling, combines a huge number of attributes of this incredibly interesting format of branding construction (Brembilla, P., 2019).

What is very helpful is that I discovered: that K-Pop audiences confirmed that empathetic attachment and sustained loyalty are positively associated with audience purchase intentions; sus-

tained attractiveness and parasocial interactions function as antecedents of these two factors. The findings shed light on the comeback of K-Pop performers who co-create value with audiences through live-stream platforms (Ma Z. et al., 2022). In simple words, the comeback is a key to audience loyalty and stability, as well as the discussion before that transmedia storytelling in K-Pop does the same (Zuhadmono A., 2021). So combining these two factors I'll try to dive into an attachment of all the principles of transmedia storytelling to the “comeback”.

And that’s why I think it’s best to start with an example and give comments in parallel. Quick and easy.

Shuffle ▶ LE SSERAFIM “EASY”

So, as my reader has already realized, in the K-Pop industry there are entertainment companies that usually run the whole “Machine” (Tizzard D. A., 2022). And there is a tradition, that companies do one in a year, they publish the schedule for the coming year, without special clarification, simply describing periods of activity. And why is this schedule? There are two reasons for this. The first is to prevent competitors from knowing what specific activities are planned to keep the secret. The second, perhaps the most important, is to create speculation among fans and create the expectation that during this period there will be a new comeback of their favorite group.

I think here it is important to think about the way K-Pop fans are receiving the concept of the comeback. Let’s pretend we’re fans of the band LE SSERAFIM(르세라핌), a 5-member girl group under HYBE and Source Music.

In a combined schedule of the companies under HYBE we see that in 1Q24 (pic.7 . Marked by hearts)they have a schedule for February 2024.

What do we do if we are fans of this band?

We will speculate until the company gives an official statement, which will probably be very close

표 10. 2024년 주요 일정

	1Q24	2Q24F	3Q24F	4Q24F
엔터브		대륙스튜디오 15-18		
이현		대륙스튜디오 15-18		
정민	정민 3회			
박우				
BTS	개봉식 (가라데) 16(2/26) 새로운 스페셜 앨범(2/27)	신 앨범(1/2)		개봉식 (가라데) 17(1/7)
세븐틴	콘서트 10회	앨범 콘서트 4회		앨범 발매 시작
트루리퍼		콘서트 1회		
TXT		앨범		
엔하이픈		앨범		
르세라핌	대륙스튜디오 19	앨범		
뉴진스		앨범		
아이즈원		앨범		
스트레이 키즈		콘서트 20회		
TWS	대륙스튜디오 22	앨범		
이달의 소녀	대륙스튜디오 23			
KATSEYE		대륙		
워너비		콘서트 1회		
키친		콘서트 1회		

자료: 2024년 주요 일정 (HYBE, HYPE(2023))

(pic. 7 LE SSERAFIM activity marked by hearts, Schedule of the companies under HYBE, HYPE(2023))

to the planned activity dates. In parallel, our favorite band in places with social interactions and press, such as airports, will look as secretive as possible and hide their appearance to maintain the intrigue about the images, which will endlessly raise our interest to discuss it on social media, right? So we got the first principle here: Spreadability vs. Drillability. The audience here is obsessed with the preparation and to “investigate” time to learn the story. Jenkins (2009a).

After we will get an official comeback schedule (pic. 8). Whereby the dates you will see the appearance of new photo concept, teaser video, official music video or live performance. So fans can be prepared and anticipate more. Through Immersion vs extractability (Jenkins H., 2009a), the audience enjoys traveling through different narratives, finding references connected to previous comebacks or to movies or poems (pic. 9). And can dive as deep as they want.

And so we realize that a new album is about to happen. And we, fans, live together with a fuelled interest. Because for us, it’s not just a new album of new music. It’s a new opportunity to see our idols in a new appearance (Ma Z. et al., 2022). Let’s slow down on the “appearance”, a slower pace will help us understand the meaning behind it.



(pic.8 LE SSERAFIM "EASY" comeback schedule, SOURCE MUSIC (2024))

Good Bones

BY MAGGIE SMITH

Life is short, though I keep this from my children.
 Life is short, and I've shortened mine
 in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,
 a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways
 I'll keep from my children. The world is at least
 fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative
 estimate, though I keep this from my children.
 For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.
 For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,
 sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world
 is at least half terrible, and for every kind
 stranger, there is one who would break you,
 though I keep this from my children. I am trying
 to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,
 walking you through a real shithole, chirps on
 about good bones: This place could be beautiful,
 right? You could make this place beautiful.

(pic. 9 LE SSERAFIM comeback teaser based poem,
 Maggie Smith (2016))

A new album conceptually sometimes could be presented as a connection between a character or persona and his alter ego such as in the case of: Eminem (American rapper) and Slim Shady (Eminem's alter-ego, which is considered his more devious side, rather than simply a nickname).

In K-Pop, it takes a bit of an intensive approach, for the possibility of distribution and speculation.

The album could have several versions, such as white and black, representing either A or B, depending on the given concept of the band. And again the concept will determine in which images your idols will appear in the photo, maybe as racers (pic. 11) in one and mermaids in the other (pic. 11). It is very important for you as a fan to think and take into account why such images and in such combinations were chosen and how it opens with the theme of the album.



(pic. 10 racers consent, album version A, LE SSERAFIM, Source Music / HYBE (2022))



(pic. 11 mermaid consent, album version B, LE SSERAFIM, Source Music / HYBE (2022))

This brings up questions about how these pictures are related to each other. What is the meaning behind it? What are the references? The answer is to create a continuity vs multiplicity (Jenkins H., 2009a). So the audience wants to collect the pieces and form their own opinion during the period of its compilation and offers the opportunity to build different points of view. They can then start worldbuilding (Jenkins H., 2009a). They can share their mindmaps and connections and create secondary content for the audience to get in touch with the story, so as to consuming the story in the form of someone else's interpretation..

To uncover the story in the “comeback” apart from fans' world-building sharing experience it is possible to get more content shared via books, games, or webtoons TV series, which complement the story, officially by the company. Or it also could continue via the next comeback (Hyeautiful., 2023). This creates this seriality (Jenkins H., 2009b).

The more content is realized the more you can decide what is more interesting to you (Jenkins H., 2009a, 2009b). Fans are creating side stories and parallel worlds, which allows them to influence the expansion of the world while exploring new content and developing knowledge and sharing as a role-play (Purwaningtyas M. P. F., Oktara T. A., 2023), fan fiction (Hong S., 2020), or video-essay that is referring to subjectivity (Jenkins H., 2009b).

Role-play: is the act of imitating the character and behavior of someone different from yourself, for example as a training exercise.

(Collins Dictionary)

Fan Fiction: Creative content in the form of graphic novels, short stories, comic strips, memes, and other multimedia starring characters based on K-pop and K-drama stars. The plots are invented by fans and many liberties are taken to manipulate characters through romantic, erotic, strange, and even disturbing storylines.

(K-POP TERM GLOSSARY)

Performance (Jenkins H., 2009b), as well, could

also be perceived as a role-play. However, comeback provides not only a piece of music but also a dance. This practice allows a lot of fans to learn the new choreography and then perform it in front of the public. At the same time, trying their best not only to perform but also to retreat the idol's character outfit to mimic it (pic. 18, 19).

Comeback, as well as being a continuation of one story, can open a different part of the world-building (Hyeautiful., 2023), as well as the music style itself (Lee J. H. et al., 2013). The release of video teasers signals the format and genre framework of the new music. All the music is released under the genre of K-Pop, but if we talk about the totality of the sound, it can be synth-pop or regional, depending on the concept (Lee J. H. et al., 2013). The main songs “Easy” from LE SSERAFIM's “EASY” comeback (2024) being released in the genre of K-Pop contain genres of R&B and trap. Their main song “Unforgiven” from their previous comeback a hip-hop song.

This is what would affect dance practice and stage performance. Which is one of the bases of a live connection between K-Pop idols and the audience (Kim S. Y., 2020). As Ma Z. (2022) concluded: audience perceived values on their attitudes toward comeback K-Pop performers' live-stream shows are enhanced by the effects of intimacy and closeness achieved through parasocial interactions in live-stream shows (Ma Z., 2022). Such results could be explained by the hedonic nature of K-Pop music and the transient nature of live-stream shows, requiring comeback K-Pop performers to constantly update content to elicit audience attachment and loyalty.

Fans need a lot of different content to stay tuned, and they can have it. In terms of this concept, I believe that I can now only touch the pic of the iceberg, unfortunately, due to the scarceness of existing research.

I'm afraid that's where we have to stop.

It's clear that “comeback” holds a lot of weight in the Western industry. Meanwhile, in the Korean industry, the term has evolved into something different, still maintaining its original meaning while

gaining new layers of significance in this new utilization of the word.

So let's have a brief look at some of the most interesting examples of a comeback for further research and possible interaction on a meta-level.

Shuffle ▶ BTS ▶ "I NEED U"

03.3.2.1 Strategy: BTS

In the K-Pop world, BTS is still the most studied example. Therefore, the research that has been done within this group has helped me move forward. As mentioned above my theory is based on the research of transmedia and its influence on viewer loyalty (Zuhadmono A., 2021) and also on collecting and building a complete story map and references in the world of BTS and their transmedia storytelling (PELLEGATTA E., 2018). Another source that influenced my understanding of transmedia in the BTS contest is a video essay also about transmedia storytelling, which tells how one argument between two of seven band members turned into a music video and a story for a performance (i-spy., 2022).

BTS has a beautiful and very heavily intertwined history, which has been realized through several campouts. It started as a two-parter comeback: *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life, Part 1* (2015) and *The Most Beautiful Moment in Life, Part 2* (2015), respectively. The idol's characters are trying to figure out how to get through a period of growing up and unrequited love (PELLEGATTA E., 2018; Wong J., 2020). Then the story develops through different media like comics, games, avatars, etc. (Zuhadmono A., 2021). But the in-

teresting thing is that the continuity of the story and its intricacy has led to a lot of speculation and theories that have led people in the community to explore this topic (Lazore C., 2021). I admit honestly I've been in these conversations myself more than once or twice.

The study on the world-building (PELLEGATTA E., 2018) of BTS left a strong impression on me. It's a comprehensive study that covers many nuances and audience engagement. I was fascinated by how a master thesis can be a world-building secondary content. And collapse a bit of my perception of fan contribution to the K-Pop world.

The Most Beautiful Moment in Life (2015) also was a basic study that discussed the idea of "home" that BTS talks about in their songs. It's a place to return to; the concept of "hood". BTS's narrative is a very important theme. Originally BTS was assigned to the hip-hop genre of music, so they took the lyrics inspiration from the rap culture (Kim KH.). However, they have different meanings in rap culture such as Gangsta rap or gangster rap, initially called reality rap. The BTS's notion of "hood" is created through transmedia representations of a place to return to, whether through lyrics, videos, reality shows, games, or comics (Kim KH.).

A seraph [a] is a celestial or heavenly being originating in Ancient Judaism. The term plays a role in subsequent Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
(Wikipedia)

Developed in their understanding of the world, the story is about angels who are dedicated to combat the uncertainties of this world. The first comeback album “Fearless” (2022) reveals how they want to gain popularity; how they want to become strong and how they want to become fearless to conquer the world in “Their Way” (Hyeautiful., 2023). But by the end of the album the lyrics of the last song “Sour Grapes” reveal they faced something that they did not want to happen, which left them confused. This was the reference to group reorganisation. One of the members Garam (Kim Garam is a South Korean former singer. She is a former member of the girl group LE SSERAFIM) left the group.

Shuffle

▶ LE SSERAFIM
▶ “FEARLESS”

03.3.2.2 Strategy: LE SSERAFIM

If you notice the track title is an anagram of the band name (pic. 12). Since we’ve already started a discussion about the word comeback with their example I think it’s interesting to give a little bit more context about this band’s previous comeback trilogy. More precisely the debut and two of the comeback.

IM FEARLESS
LE SSERAFIM

(pic. 12 album name and band name anagram, LE SSERAFIM, Source Music / HYBE (2022))

In the context of LE SSERAFIM has constructed a narrative thread of idols battling against uncertainty. As is clear from the band’s name it takes its name from angels.

Thus, in the next comeback they need to face uncertainty again following the story from the “Fearless” (2022), the second album “Anti-fragile” (2022) reveals how they want to prove to the world that even if they lose one of their members they will be strong once again, stronger than they been before. After completing their journey to become stronger they realize in the song “No Celestial” lyrics: “I just wanna live a real life”- they are no longer trying to be the perfect angels that people can look up to, they are humans to whom people can relate.

It makes the crescendo in the last act “Unforgiven” (2023) that even if they try to move on and accept the present, some people cannot still give up on what happened to them in the first act. Here lyrics “honestly speaking, I’m not that strong. I just want you to know. In truth, she’s not all fearless, but you, you helped her to fear less” from the song “FEARNOT” (2023) resulting in uncertainty is a part of our life and you need to learn how to move on (Hyeautiful., 2023).

Shuffle ▶ aesp
▶ “Black Mamba”

03.3.2.3 Strategy: aesp

One last interesting example of the experimental usage of transmedia in K-Pop is the use of avatars.

Aespa is a four-member group that performs under the label of SM Entertainment. SM Entertainment at the beginning of promoting their groups came up with the world of “Kwangya” under SM Culture Universe (SMCU) (YANG H., 2021). Based on this world and the aesp group’s interaction with it, a visual novel was made that revealed a story and supported the narrative from the comeback’s music videos and lyrics. What was innovative was that in this world the idols were represented entirely by digital avatars. And introducing a new level of technological exposure to the K-Pop phenomenon (pic. 13).



(pic. 13 aesp group and avatars, SM Entertainment (2021))



Shuffle

ORANGE CARAMEL "Catalena"

03.4 Storytelling and people engagement

When I think about this part, yeah. It is very cool to be a great storyteller. I can pretend, but I never was as good as some of my friends when you had an opportunity to see and enjoy the narration.

Storytelling and narrative are very powerful ways to engage with people, make an emotional connection, or teach (Yoder-Wise P. S., et al. 2003). People have more respect for the story, than for other data representations (Yoder-Wise P. S., et al. 2003) as well as storytelling can change their perception of life (Adamson G. et al., 2006).

Thus, to change the world's perception, we must first change how we tell stories. Donna Haraway shows us this in the movie "Story Telling for Earthly Survival" (2016). This movie is constructed with visual paradoxes that connect us to the digital reality that interferes with real life, so boundaries do not exist.

Something that K-Pop also does, is to make the digital connection to you as real as a "real" one (KIYAT G. B. D., et al., 2023). This way how K-Pop uses such vigorous force with perfect relation to the new technology (Han G. S., 2019) creating

an immersive force to communicate with people and make them look for constant engagement. This rebellious notion of the subculture that it holds creates a very loyal community (Alsford N. J. P., 2020; Lee Y., 2020; Suvittawat A., 2022).

K-Pop and the notion of "K" hold this new way of interacting with people, which is very fluid, feminine, progressive, and LGBTQ+ representative (Oh C., 2015). Referring to what Donna Haraway's movie proposes to us, the revolting narrative shows how the spectrum of possible experience should broaden (Lamber A. 2016). To free the imagination and revolt against the constructed narratives, make it more fluid with feministic gaze. This has something very similar. However, K-Pop is full of duality, and using this notion is such a progressive movement and full of constructs rooted in 1960 (Alexandri E., 2024).

Now we are in and looking forward to how this very tight emotional connection can evolve. So, let's look at how this storytelling affects people and their loyalty.

Shuffle

▶ Stray Kids
▶ “MANIAC”

03.4.1 Audience engagement

So, changes in the social order can be achieved through history. The material can be presented more easily and receptively, which can help the audience understand and connect with the material which will help make positive changes to problems and processes in society. To gain the attention of the public, interesting and engaging storytelling can help achieve great success (Haraway D. 2016).

Audience engagement is the connection, personal and subjective, that they feel with your content or brand, and the interactions they undertake as a result of that connection, as determined by the degree of participation and interest (Ahmed A., 2024). May include the audience's cognitive, emotional, or affective response to the content. Also, giving meaning, creating value, and inclusion in public discourse are considered aspects of engagement. The reaction that comes after reflects the involvement of the audience. Interaction with content and its long-term use contributes to the formation of loyalty among the audience and allows them to actively participate (Broersma M., 2019).

Music could not exist without an audience and

an environment willing to listen to it. Transmedia storytelling and its associated strategies would not take place without audience response and emotional attachment (Zuhadmono A., 2021). The relationship between fans and idols is the most important thing and they continue to be very popular and progressive (Jenol N. A. M., et al., 2020).

The main character with whom we come into contact is a collected image. The image that the letter “K” contains. It is not only a question of identity, but also the social constructs embedded within it (Kim S-Y., 2023). An important aspect of South Korean culture is modesty and the desire to be extremely generous (PELLEGATTA E., 2018). Therefore, idols have these qualities, they are extremely kind, humble, and always ready to thank their fans. Fandom relationships play a key role in the music business, and South Korea's idols and record labels have realized how to deliver to fans and what kind of story to tell. After all, success is the relationship you have with the public (Jenol N. A. M., et al., 2020). Thus the deeper engagement with fans can create a collective intelligence. Collective intelligence via transmedia storytelling allows audiences to become content creators as well as consumers to make them more involved with the story (Jenkins, H., 2006).

Therefore, transmedia content must engage the audience and know how to attract them. Emotional design and its successful application are what create an impact on the audience and increase engagement. Emotions and how the story develops through emotional design - are key to successful transmedia storytelling (Norrington et al., 2019). Otherwise, your projects without emotional engagement have no soul.

Consequently, it is important to take a closer look at how this emotional bond between fans and idols is constructed in K-Pop. And how it affects the loyalty of the fandom. In the world of K-Pop, this connection is becoming closer and maintained through the core strategies that characterize the South Korean music industry (Jenol N. A. M., et al., 2020).



(pic. 14 different K-Pop group's light sticks, snackfever (2023))

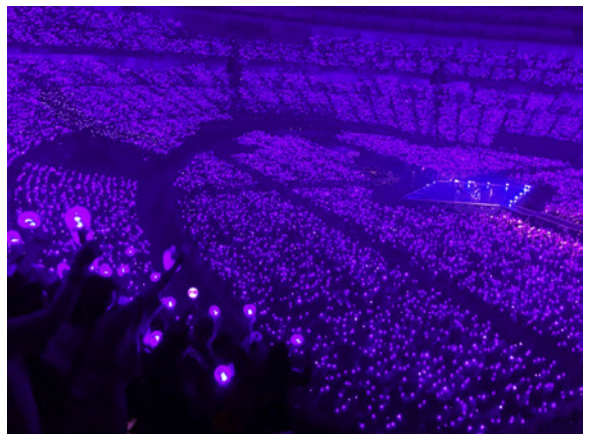
Shuffle ▶ BLACKPINK ▶ "How You Like That"

03.4.1.1 Fandom

Fandom organization has an exceptional structure in the K-Pop environment. Every K-Pop group has very distinguished features like precise names, the color that defines them, fandom names, and the light stick (pic. 14). Each fandom has a distinctive name, a definition that can connect them to the band or the entertainment company under which the band is. The official fandom name is essential to K-Pop's marketing strategy, making fans feel part of something special and unique. The light stick also plays a considerable role in fandom solidarity representation, is used at concerts, and becomes a kind of symbol of unity and belonging to a fandom (pic. 15) (PELLEGATTA E., 2018).

Light Sticks: LED-filled wand-like sticks used to show fan appreciation at concerts from the audience. Each group or soloist has their official color that dictates the color of light that emanates from the stick. New sticks are usually released with new albums or concert series and can come in a variety of shapes and sizes.
(K-Pop TERM GLOSSARY)

To better understand that rooting for and supporting your idol band is a big part of fan culture in K-Pop, it is important to have a look at the



(pic. 15 BTS's Purple Ocean. The official color, The Cozy Diary Blogs (2020))

term "fan chant." Usually, it includes shouting out the band members' names and other parts of the songs. The organizations of fan chants are well prepared and processed in advance to create an effective and coherent performance. Although this aspect may seem limiting at first glance, it makes the performances as entertaining and emotionally rich as possible (PELLEGATTA E., 2018).

Victoria Cheredeeva

Fan Chants: Verses and or phrases that devoted fans learn on fan club sites to shout together during the songs of their favorite groups. These chants become part of the song like a call and response with the performers on stage during concerts and music TV shows.
(K-Pop TERM GLOSSARY)

These strategies developed in K-Pop entertainment are not only implemented and welcomed by Korean fans but are also spread in fandoms around the world. This creates unity and community among fans even if they have a language or cultural barrier (Jenol N. A. M., et al., 2020; PELLEGATTA E., 2018). Fandoms are becoming a powerful platform for social mobilization, activism, and social organizing (pic. 16) (Alzamora & Andrade, 2019). Using hashtags became a way of social network indicators to promote social activity and positioning in society. Online activities have become a kind of “playground” where fans can express and collect their power and control over events in their lives (Jenkins, 2006), and they can also affect the idol’s perception (Tsai S., 2022). All this creates a holistic structure and helps realize belonging and a sense of support. “ You never walk alone,” as BTS would say (a continuation of Wings (BTS album).



(pic. 16 Fans sent a protest truck after finding out that K-Pop idol Jang Won-young went back to work right after a trip to the ER Wonyoung Fan Union/Han Myung-Gu/ Getty Images., REENA KOH (2023))



(pic.17 Naver (left) and Kakao talk (right) official logo, <https://m.naver.com/>; <https://www.kakaocorp.com/page/service/service/KakaoTalk?lang=en>; (2024))

music streaming, drastically popular platforms such as Genie and Melon instead of Spotify are common in Western culture. This is why it is not surprising that in the world of idols and K-Pop, special social networks such as V Live and Fancafe play an essential role in communication between idols and their fans (Jenol N. A. M., et al., 2020).

Shuffle ▶ NewJeans “New Jeans”

03.4.1.2 Social media

The development of social media, made a huge step forward in shaping the role and the way the relationship between fans and idol was constructed. And this relationship value between artists and fandom is extremely important, more so than in the international music scene (PELLE-GATTA E., 2018).

First, geographic distance and cultural differences create a linguistic and cultural barrier between South Korean and international fans (Kuk B. C. H., 2021). Linguistic barriers, for example, could be seen in lyrics. Songs in the K-Pop industry are sung mainly in Korean, while Western artists often perform songs in English, which facilitates attracting a global audience. And the cultural barrier is vast and represents a different way of interaction. One of them is preferences in the usage of social media. Asian countries often prefer social networks like Kakao and Naver over international platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, and Spotify.

Kakao and Naver (pic.17) provide various services, including KakaoTalk messenger and Naver search engine, which are widely used in South Korea and are well-known as Korean Google. For

Fan Café: A free option where devotees to a specific idol or idol group can get official information and updates released by entertainment companies, ask questions to officials and fellow fans, or brows new releases. Followers of these virtual communities can go through a process of “leveling up,” which is different for every café, to be able read messages left by idols and groups or leave their own messages. The Big Three have discontinued their fan cafes in exchange for releasing content on their official sites.
(K-PopTERM GLOSSARY)

V-Live is a social media site that allows idols to broadcast live and interact with fans. Fancafe is a platform for idols to share messages and photos and interact with them. Both create platforms to dissolve the hierarchy between fans and artists to make communication “equal” (Jenol N. A. M. et al., 2020). Although many international fans still accessing Fancafe may have difficulty due to the language barrier, most posts are in Korean; it remains an essential source of information and communication for Korean fans.

However, social media plays a key role in forming social connections between idols and fans and is also crucial for fans’ communication. Fans form groups, share knowledge, and mobilize to support their idols. This creates a sense of belonging and solidarity among fans, which makes

fandoms especially powerful communities (Jenol N. A. M., et al., 2020).

Social media also allows us to interact with entertainment logic, which refers to entertainment enjoyment. Viewers enjoy watching certain content and extend the logic of social connections as interactions between audiences to share similar feelings or experiences. It creates a sense of belonging among audience members (Askwith, I. 2007). Fans share common interests and shape their social or public appearance. Parallely forming the fan groups to participate in various social activities: organizing meetings, strategizing, sharing knowledge, mobilizing supporters, and conducting cybervigilantism. Somehow, it already represents activism (Jung S., 2012). Undeniably, the most passionate consumers of media properties are fandom members who can tolerate all the emotional connections (Jenkins H. 2010). Thus, social media is essential in shaping relationships between K-Pop artists and their fandoms by facilitating communication, content sharing, and support.

ary content created by fans and never stop your interaction with your favorite characters (Kim J. et al., 2022).

With the seamless integration of digitalization and social media interaction, we find ourselves in a space that feels like 'home,' characterized by a warm community and emotional engagement. Here, we can all discover a room of interest and find ourselves in a place with many friends.

These friends are the "collective intelligence", which refers to the potential for producing and disseminating knowledge in a network society (Lévy P., 1997). As a result, the participants increased their experience by helping each other and could collaborate to solve everyday problems. This works very holistically in the concept of transmedia storytelling of K-Pop with its riddles and anticipations notions connected to "comebacks". No one knows everything; everyone knows something, and this collective knowledge benefits the community and, in the case of K-Pop, the fandom as a whole.

Developing this theory, one can imagine that works of art serve as cultural attractors that unite different communities (Jenkins H., 2006). Thus, transmedia extensions and secondary content can act as cultural attractors that help audiences with shared interests to create a more loyal community. Ultimately, it is based on the secondary content created - using it as 'cultural activators', allowing them to co-create and produce valuable content, which helps the fanbase to be more stable and loyal (Zuhadmono A., 2021). This highlights the crucial role of the audience in knowledge production, making them feel valued and integral to the K-Pop industry.

Audiences are encouraged to create content and engage in collective intelligence through a cognitively designed project that encases emotional connections. The regular release of K-Pop content, including constant 'comebacks' in various formats, engages the fandom's immersive logic, fostering individual and social identification and belonging to the fandom and its interests (Zuhadmono A., 2021). This emphasis on emotional connections creates a deeper level of engagement, making the audience feel more emotionally

Shuffle ▶ TWICE "CHEER UP"

03.4.1.3 Secondary content, branding and transmedia storytelling

It is nice to know what makes people more passionate about the content they contribute to, and we are close to discuss this effect. The impact of transmedia storytelling on audience motivation and the creation of additional content are the immediate principles resulting from the successful application of this concept. Engagement is an integral part of compelling and successfully organized content; it influences audience engagement positively through the ability to counter-buy and enrich the story with their knowledge. As we discovered earlier, these factors are integral to the K-Pop industry. This industry is for the fan; it's a world with an exciting story to flesh out, interesting characters to explore and develop, and a great community to discuss new knowledge and share or reflect. It's a place where fans can socialize in the form of social media, maintaining the integrity and loyalty of the fandom. Let's look at how fandoms and the K-Pop community interact with this seemingly ideal dynamic of engagement and transmedia content dynamics.

One of the most exciting interactions in K-Pop is the ability to rasp the story and apply it to social media. You can enjoy its sequels through second-

connected to the K-Pop industry.

The story develops through different things, such as reflecting on narratives and dates, discussing references, creating research videos or covers, and conducting subsequent discussions in the fan community. Although I have already discussed this in my thesis, I want to emphasize how this brings people together in the ideal contractual space of social media, binding them with common interests. This freedom to explore, the realization that if we choose to dig deeper, there is always something to discover, illustrates the seriality described by (Jenkins H., 2009a; 2009b). It is a construct that affects us profoundly.

In general, the narrative is so effectively promoted and constructed that you feel compelled to become part of the narrative you see and interact with on the digital screen. Let's look at the most intriguing ways transmedia storytelling manifests itself in K-Pop, engages people, and how it utilizes combined elements in a unified design concept (Lazore C., 2020a; Kim S. Y., 2020).

communicates around these issues. Considering that speculation and ideas are a relevant part of K-Pop culture, fan communities actively discuss and communicate on social media to piece together the whole picture surrounding the new comeback.

For example, BTS used this “trick” to keep them returning to the BTS Universe; the strategy behind it created both “migratory cues and negative capability” (Long G., 2007). Negative ability intentionally leaves gaps in a story to create a feeling of uncertainty, mystery, or doubt in the audience (Long G., 2007). On the other hand, migratory cues are signals that guide the audience toward the following experience or action (Zuhadmono A., 2021).

The Bangtan Universe (also known as BTS Universe and abbreviated as BU) is a fictional storyline that BTS/Big Hit created and wove throughout their video content.
(usbtsarmy)

Shuffle ▶ GOT7 ▶ “Fly”

03.4.1.3.1 Gaps

The story around comeback and the environment contains gaps that the community can explore. It is necessary to leave the space of interpretation. You need to invest time to collect pieces of the story (Spreadability vs. Drillability), combine pieces of the story, and make your path of the story to share your discovery afterward (Continuity vs Multiplicity). People can navigate through your path (Immersion vs Extractability) and then build the whole world based on this collective interaction (Worldbuilding), as well as make the world more prosperous and develop in time when more related information or in K-Pop comebacks got realized (Seriality) and to influence the expansion of the world by auditing new characters to existing narrative (Subjectivity) (Jenkins H., 2009a; 2009b).

As mentioned, K-Pop’s transmedia construction involves many intentionally created spaces and references that attract fans. Video essays are a well-spread format for communicating knowledge in the community. The discussion around “comeback” and the following video essays, in which fans discuss the teased videos of music videos and provide arguments in support of them, are exemplary achievements of how the community

This is where the game “Gaps” in the story that Lazor (2020a) talks about playing. These are the moments when the audience tries to fill in and create their theories, methods, and theories. For example, a week before the comeback release date of the single “Butter”, the members of BTS began uploading new looks reflecting the corresponding new single. Then, they installed the official teaser by creating anticipation in the community and an interest in the styles and meanings of some. This point where the community begins to ask and discuss details, such as the meaning of the word “butter”, is an evolution of the community actively moving towards creating questions and revealing details of a new release (Zuhadmono A., 2021) and contributing to the story and evolving it even before the official realization to create more meaning and connection to the upcoming realization (Long G., 2007).



(pic. 18 Screenshot of ILLIT - Magnetic (4K) performance, STUDIO CHOOM (2024))

Shuffle ▶ PLAVE
▶ “Wait For You”

03.4.1.3.2 Persona/avatars

The participatory culture, accompanied by joy and perfection, inspires people all around the world to join the community. This we discovered through the perfect connection of the K-Pop industry with technology. The digitalization of music and the successful usage of social media create an ideal match (Kim S. Y., 2020).

For a fan, being an idol is a dream, and being a part of the world is the best present for Christmas. But the construction of idol production is a very specific with the strict rules without following which you can fit and consider yourself an idol (Elfvig-Hwang J., 2018). In other words, it is near to impossible to become an idol for a fan. So they need to explore this dream of becoming an idol in a different way (Jenol N. A., et al., 2020).

Through visiting the same places, eating the same food, experiencing the same, dancing the same dance or imitating the dressing style (Cho M.) (pic. 18, 19). That leads us to a parasocial relationship that is deeply rooted in the organization of K-Pop idol - fan relationship (Jenol N. A., et al., 2020).



(pic. 19 Screenshot of ILLIT - Magnetic | 커버댄스 Dance Cover by ARTBEAT (2024))

So how could a fan perform to be an idol in their “real life” (Performance) (Jenkins H., 2009b)? There are several ways to impersonate the character in digital ram or reality. First, it could be archived via role-play in social media platforms (Purwaningtyas M. P. F., et al., 2023) or creating fictional stories from persona/idol point of view (POV) (Geraghty L. et al.). Some entertainment companies have also made video games where you can play via idol and develop your idol/avatar story, like BTS Island: In the SEOM. A game where you collect “treasures” while playing as one of the BTS members. Or it is trendy to make your idol's avatar in the game Sims 4, to then play and shape the story already with your pre-defined attitude toward the idol (simtzen). Reality holds a bit of a different approach. For example, you can imitate the lifestyle and visit places (Cho M.; Oh Y.), or you can imitate the manner or even perform plastic surgery to look like your idol (Mahirova S., 2021).

Shuffle

J.Y. Park, Stray Kids, ITZY,
NMIXX
"Like Magic"

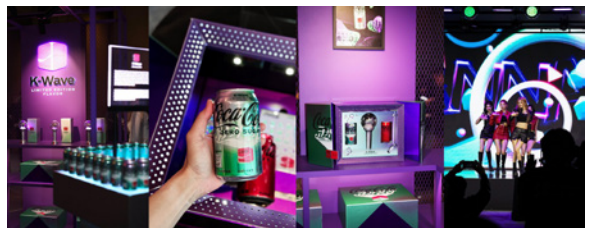
03.4.1.3 Brand usage. K-wave Coca-Cola

An exciting example of using secondary content is based on the notion of "K" in K-Pop or K-wave. It is an example of a limited taste of Coca-Cola via utilizing the connection to the genre of music

that created the whole product based on the narrative, culture, and emotional connection disclosed in "K" to promote and to bring to that taste the entire experience and interaction with K-Pop. Thus, It affected the development of the story of the K-Pop industry to expand it on the taste level.

This notion constructs the test of K-Pop. Trans-media storytelling in the K-Pop idol industry has a very distinctive taste. Using the entire narrative of the K-Pop industry, it blends all media and interactions into one specific flavor, a fantasy fruit flavor that feels like magic, unique to K-Pop.

Moreover, the whole conceptualization of this test brought very distinguishing traits of the communication strategies and the fandom organization in the K-Pop industry. The lightstick, merch, music video, and song were created to promote and bring K-Pop's original "taste" to this brand presentation (pic. 20).



(pic.20 K-wave Coca-Cola, light steak, performance, Adele Chan (2024))

Apart from imitating and making covers. There is fan content that helps to surpass the limitations. The Korean language barrier is easily overcome thanks to the content that some fans, mostly Koreans, create to help international fans. There are dedicated channels on different social media to translate numerous content appearing in Korean culture, from music videos to various shows. It has a translation, and devoted fans explain servant moves and expressions specific to Korean culture to make the culture more accessible. Text remarks, included in the translation, sometimes identify the participants and explain the context, such as why a specific participant sings certain lines due to their vocal characteristics or role in the group (PELLEGATTA E., 2018).

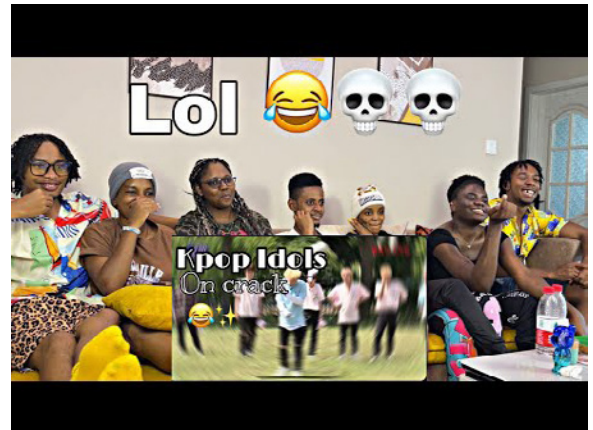
There are many more, but I will go over them briefly. People spend time doing fan-made music videos for songs that lack one. Make a compilation of fun moments from variety shows or interviews called "Crack videos" (pic.21), unbox the albums, write fan-fiction, organize exhibitions, events, and so on (pic.22)

Shuffle ▶ FIFTY FIFTY
▶ "Cupid"

03.4.1.4 The numerous user generated content

We understand that fandom represents the most passionate consumers (Jenkins H., 2010). So, we are moving deeper into involvement and what this cooperation could achieve via their loyal engagement. The structure of K-Pop transmedia and its music encourage the fandom to create content.

Talking about everyday audience engagement with the notion of K-Pop and not going to the transmedia factor of the industry. Among the variety of content created, dance covers take first place. I discussed in K-Pop transmedia storytelling that the audience and fans like to imitate dance and the dressing styles of the artist that they are rooting for to express the emotional connection. Some fans even create tutorials to share their skills with other fans. This work reflects the endless passion and dedication behind fan-made content that helps artists spread their music and fandom (PELLEGATTA E., 2018). So, these beautiful dances and the perfect imitation are a part of the world of the K-Pop industry, and the notion is the story they want to share; here, the spreadability vs. drillability is participating (Jenkins H. 2009a).



(pic.21 Crack videos KPOP, Lenny Len (2023))

In particular, I want to talk about fan event organizations. As mentioned, K-Pop fans are incredibly active, creative, and motivated and are highly organized and cohesive. They regularly organize various events to get together, celebrate K-Pop group members' birthdays, and spend time with like-minded people. Whether they meet online or in person, they share a common passion, fostering a sense of belonging within the community.



(pic.22 Fan-fiction, Must-Read K-Pop Books, Jess Esa (2024))

In particular, I want to talk about fan event organizations. As mentioned, K-Pop fans are incredibly active, creative, and motivated and are highly organized and cohesive. They regularly organize various events to get together, celebrate K-Pop group members' birthdays, and spend time with like-minded people. Whether they meet online or in person, they share a common passion, fostering a sense of belonging within the community.

Another event type is the "streaming party." This is especially true when there is a new "comeback" or there is a streaming goal to reach a particular musical milestone. Fan accounts with large followings organize such parties, providing instructions on correctly streaming videos or songs on various platforms such as YouTube or Spotify. Twitter is becoming a discussion hub where fans can use hashtags to keep track of all the tweets and connect with other like-minded people.

Beyond audience participation, "participatory culture" broadly refers to any form of cultural production open to active participation (Jenkins H., 2010). The fandom that modiblazes itself reaches a certain goal that can be achieved collectively. It highlights the concepts of participation and interaction, including audience cooperation, like signing a petition for a social cause in industry or sanding protest trucks to entertainment companies to protect idols from mistreatment (Koh R., 2023). This involvement helps promote relevant social initiatives and inspires social change (Gambarato R., et al., 2020).

Thus, this is a vast mass of transmedia secondary

content, user-generated content, and significant involvement for mobilization and interaction in the community. All this shows the incredible loyalty of this group of people to what is happening, all with a solid emotional connection. They galvanize the fan base to bring about change in an environment that they feel is unfair, which brings us to fan activism as a form of loyalism (Zuhadmono A., 2021). One of the indicators of cooperative acting is the use of hashtags on social media. This is a barometer of fans' social mobilization and participation in social causes. Events like organized hashtags are a way to bring important issues to the public (Lee Y., 2019). These online events have become a powerful platform for influence and political expression (Zuhadmono A., 2021).



Shuffle ▶ **TXT**
▶ **“OX1=LOVESONG (I Know I Love You)” feat. Seori**

03.5 Key findings

Therefore, the central aspect of this research is that transmedia storytelling is a great platform to engage fans and maintain their loyalty. Within the K-Pop industry, this is uncovered by utilizing different media to spread interesting knowledge to fans, which they can collect. As within comeback and related supplementary media like games or comic books. Constant additions and continuous release of albums with new build-up contribute to fan loyalty and audience engagement.

The possibility of creating your own story based on an already created one and supplementing it also brings great value. Here, under the impression of perfect content mixed with expectation and mysticism, fans are very involved in the band’s involvement and want to support and improve the story. So, K-Pop has created an incredible story that promotes the emergence of change in society by providing mechanisms for such action. Here, the possibility of different interactions is manifested in various associated content where fans can participate depending on their interests.

K-Pop, through its extensive and interconnected transmedia narrative, weaves a long and engag-

ing story that spans across various platforms. This not only attracts an audience but also creates a sense of community, encouraging mutual support and interaction. To engage with this rich narrative, one must be able to tell a story that resonates emotionally, thereby fostering a deeper connection within the community.

Shuffle

▶ Zico

▶ "Any song"

04Prototype

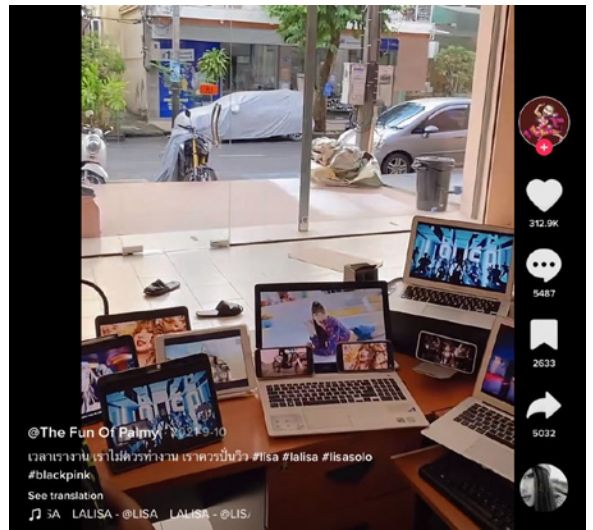


Shuffle ▶ aespa
▶ “Next Level”

04.1 First Prototype

As I approached the design of my prototype, I took inspiration from an installation that showcased the inner workings of the K-Pop world. The primary objective of my project is to give viewers a glimpse into the experience of a K-Pop fan. Using technology, I aimed to create a deep and intuitive understanding of the culture and mechanics of the genre. Through visual and sonic immersion and interactive engagement with the installation, my goal was to provide a simple and natural understanding of the method and storytelling techniques used in the K-Pop industry. To achieve this, I created an environment that conveys an intense immersion in the material, its multichannel and mixed media nature, and its strong connection to technology. I used a multi-screen installation to create an environment miming K-Pop fans’ characteristic environment streaming farm (pic.23). In theory, this installation allows viewers to experience the multi-dimensionality of the K-Pop culture (pic.24).

I like to work with the notion of intensity because it is a good approach to talk about pop culture (Frith S., 1991). The fan interaction with pop culture is way more intense than the usual perception, so showing the apogee of this connection is



(pic. 23 streaming farm k-pop, <https://atrl.net/> (2022))

an exciting approach. So, the visual part of this installation was decided.

The next step was to find a suitable video that could glimpse one of the options for transmedia storytelling in the K-Pop industry. I chose one as “aespa - next level” - live performance on Mnet for several reasons. The first one is that the idol live performance associated with a comeback positively affected the audience’s empathetic at-



(pic. 24 "next level" Installation, GOOD-ENOUGH,
Helena Börjesson (2024))

tachment and sustained loyalty (Ma Z., 2022). The second is how the performance was constructed: it was a live show where the aespa band sang live in front of the public, and this recording was broadcast on TV. For TV representation, in the middle of the performance, the band would be shifted for several seconds for their digital avatars (I was talking about this bang as an example of transmedia storytelling). So, these avatars were not visible to the live-watching public but to those who have been watching at home. The reason is to show how the screen connection with the audience in the K-Pop industry is much more dominant and prevailing (Kim S. Y., 2020).

Mnet: (acronym of Music Network) is a South Korean pay television music channel owned by CJ E&M, a division of CJ ENM, part of CJ Group.
([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mnet_\(TV_channel\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mnet_(TV_channel)))

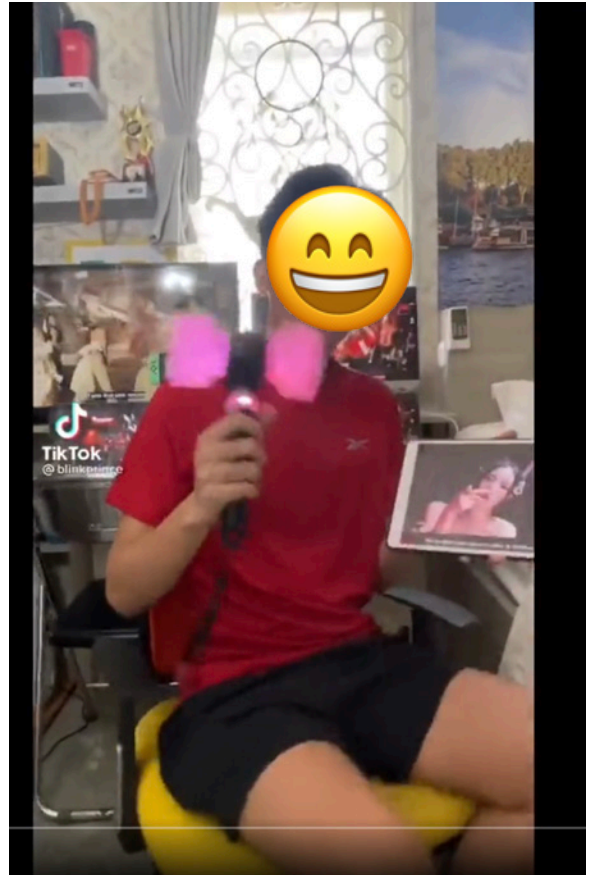
By the moment of the prototype construction, I was concentrating on "hooks" that make you mesmerized by the K-Pop industry. After interacting with the prototype, the idea was to show the inner "dark" side of K-Pop.

Shuffle ▶ PRODUCE 101
▶ “PICK ME”

04.1.1 Iteration

As part of a fan culture immersion, I decided to design the normal “cheering up” interaction by incorporating a lightstick switch between two videos. Since lightsticks are a crucial aspect of fan culture, I believed this integration would enhance the viewer’s understanding of the context (pic.25). The “cheering up” interaction is so rooted in the fan culture, so I thought to use the “natural” interaction to show that the surface of the performance on K-Pop liveness is constructed and full of marketing “hooks” (Kim S. Y., 2020). To show what is hiding beneath the surface of “fan” in the usual “fan-connected” environment.

So, the second video was chosen to be a collage of different constructed hooks that you can only see when you want to cheer up for the band, and you start to be emotionally attached to the performance presented on the screens. By properly interacting with this installation and understanding fan culture, I aimed to transition to the next video - a collage set to the music of Pick Me from Produce 101. This video collage was designed to elicit an emotional response and create a high level of mechanical storytelling in K-Pop.



(pic. 25 “cheering up” for the MV (music video), <https://atrl.net/> (2022))

Produce 101: is a reality television talent competition franchise created by South Korean entertainment conglomerate CJ E&M, based around the formation of a K-pop girl group or boy group. The format is noted for having no panel of judges, employing audience participation to make decisions, as well as for starting with a very large number of competitors, 101, narrowing that number down to the final 11. The franchise began in 2016 and has since expanded to other Asian countries, China and Japan.

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Produce_101)

Even though the chosen interaction could have been better for the public regarding cultural experience, it would have helped them understand the design decision since most users had little direct experience with K-Pop music and content. The cultural interaction of cheer-ups needs to be more evident and understood in the exhibition context. Additional explanation is required to

show the meaning of the interaction and make it work. The audience couldn't make an emotional connection, and this lack affected the accuracy of the work and the idea of contact with the information that needed to be selected correctly.

After user testing and Q&A sessions, I realized most users needed clarification about how to interact with the installation. They were directly associating interaction with only an "Act of interaction". They needed to understand the meaning of the cheer-up integration, which was the essential subject of this design installation. Only three out of thirty people understood the principle of integration and the proper understanding of interaction. I also discovered that the culture of this interaction is different from that of a user unfamiliar with the K-Pop industry. Additionally, even if they are familiar with it, there is a factor of whether they are fans of this band, which is also crucial.

After processing the results, I understood that implementing the movement or interaction used by K-Pop fans or audiences familiar with the genre is impossible in the context of my final project. And should be reduced to the more common ways or have a proper explanation.



Shuffle ▶ SEVENTEEN
▶ “Left & Right”

04.2Method

So, in order to comprehensively examine how people from diverse cultural backgrounds interact with K-Pop and what aspects they find intriguing, I embarked on a series of interviews. The aim was to look at how individuals from various cultural contexts discuss their experiences with the K-Pop industry and how they interpret it.

This ethnographic research provided an insight into the numerous ways individuals engage with and express interest in various secondary and user-generated content related to K-Pop. Each interviewee, while identifying as a fan of K-Pop, had their own unique form of engagement.

The different kinds of engagement could be seen in the usage of words and understanding of specific concepts in K-Pop such as “comeback”. In order to provide more detailed information, some people identified themselves as fans even though they could not define “comeback” in the K-Pop industry. On the other hand, people who knew the definition would not call themselves fans.

This could be indicated by the connection to fan culture and by comparing it to the intense fan(atic). One reason for this intensity is cultural origin.

The main goal for me is to understand what attracted people to K-Pop and the “language” in which they communicated. The results varied significantly. Some would say it was the origin of their culture, and they started communicating with K-Pop naturally if they were Korean, as there was no cultural or linguistic barrier. Another person pointed out that the way the songs sound is very different and refreshing, so they decided to join the community and invest more time in it. One finds that the idol’s look and persistence help to look positively at their identity and accept their own self. Some of the interviewees even admitted that they did not initially connect with the music; in fact, they found it unstructured and uncanny. However, their attitudes changed over time. One interviewee noted that the members’ appearances were very attractive, prompting them to learn more about the group and identify members by their looks. Another person pointed out that the music and the ideals behind it rekindled their passion for music and redefined what it means to be a music fan. There were many other similar experiences as well.

The second important factor is what the interviewees found most interesting in K-Pop. The results were also very different. One would point out that

the stories within the concept of 'Comeback' is the most important; another mentioned that they enjoyed the dance routines for each song and appreciated that they could learn them afterward. ; another was mainly interested in the music but pointed out that they enjoy the fact that there is always more to explore. One interviewee shared that they like to watch the videos created by fans that show the best moments that happened on stage and interact with the community on Twitter. Another said that live connections and concerts were the most important. Then there was one who said that the best thing about K-Pop is not being able to understand the language.

The last important thing in my research throughout the whole interview is to see how interviewees were connected to the story created in the comeback and how they like to contribute to it. And again, the results were diverse. One interviewee mentions that the story is the most exciting part of K-Pop, and they stayed in the community only because of that. One person shared that mostly it is not important for them to have this narrative or a story in the "comeback", and that only once it happened to them, that they felt intrigued enough to follow the given narrative. Then another pointed out that the comeback narratives were the reason why they stopped liking certain groups in K-Pop.

The results showed that people interacted very differently with K-Pop in 15 interviews. Each interviewee had their way of interacting. Each of the 15 interviewees showed different interests in secondary content and interacting with the fan community. The participation level varies greatly between all of them and their cultural origins. Still, it is essential to say that the engagement was related to emotional involvement. The attachment to K-Pop was as big as the emotions and empathy accumulated among the interviewees.

Transmedia in K-Pop communicates with people differently, allowing the audience to enter the community from different "starting points". Additionally the continuation of the communication with K-Pop is also different, which refers to the other story development, such as continuity vs multiplicity (Jenkins H., 2009a). Also, engage-

ment and levels of involvement interfere with their identity, whether they are fans or not.

It made me think about the communication with K-Pop and what it represents as a universe with different planets, each filled with diverse fans, content, and stories. I thought this could be the foundation for constructing my prototype.



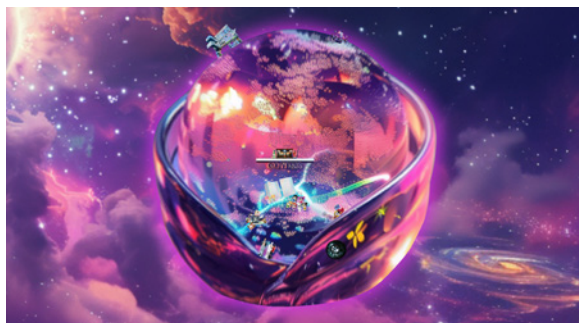
Shuffle ▶ BTS
▶ "RUN"

04.3K-Pop as universe

The decision was made to create an explorative universe for the fans to connect the references and the story. I was reading PELLEGGATTA's thesis about transmedia storytelling in BTS UNIVERSE and the construction of a platform to interact with the story in order. This gave me the idea to create a K-Pop transmedia universe. I was thinking of making a whole map that you can explore differently, according to your interest, using the same method of connecting to the transmedia storytelling according to 7 principles (Jenkins H., 2009a; 2009b). That was when I started collecting information about one "comeback" - EASY by LE SSERAFIM. While collecting the information, I understood that the amount of content and level of engagement with this release was infinite (I mentioned it in the "comeback in K-Pop" part of my thesis). You can immerse yourself in the story as deeply as you want and then expand the story via your secondary content. And the content to interact with was immense. Thus, I needed to change my approach.

So, the decision to continue with the story and not with the universe due to time limitations came naturally.

ed (pic 26).



(pic. 26 Planet of user generated content, Victoria Cheredeeva (2024))

Shuffle ▶ 2PM ▶ "Take Off"

04.3.1K-Pop as an interactive story

The story is what people engage with. The story is a place to have an emotional connection. The story can make a positive change. A story is a base to help people look at things differently.

Even the interviews that I conducted all had a small story to tell.

So, to talk about transmedia storytelling, I approached it not from the point of view of the universe of storytelling but from what effect this story and the interactions with it have on the people connected to K-Pop. The premise is that transmedia storytelling increases the loyalty and stability of fans and gives them opportunities to develop the story in a direction that interests them in terms of secondary content. I decided to construct my secondary content, an interactive story, based on my interaction history with K-Pop and supplement it with excerpts from interviews.

This secondary content expands the existing understanding of the storytelling in K-Pop. It gives an inside glimpse into how people emerge in their engagement with K-Pop and how they establish different ways of interaction that have unique traits but are still very highly interconnect-

Additionally, it shows how people consume the content and construct secondary content to make it a part of the basis for the interactive story. This collection of stories creates a basis for the expansion of the understanding of the ways in which different interactions in the fan community are combined to represent another "level higher" secondary content. You can use this understanding to interact with K-Pop thoughts, other people, or fans' experiences. To show precisely how deeply K-Pop can connect with a fan.



Shuffle ▶ TAEYANG
▶ “EYES, NOSE, LIPS”

04.4 Guidance

If we pay attention to the audience's emotional involvement, we see that transmedia storytelling leads to greater loyalty to the community and helps achieve positive societal changes. It is also said (Donna Haraway) that by taking a new look at storytelling, it is possible to teach new ways of perceiving reality. That is, to change attitudes and beliefs. Beliefs exist in a suction cup with emotions and cause a positive or an adverse reaction depending on which beliefs drive which emotional contract. Therefore, to change your perspective on certain things, you need to be able to tell a compelling story. Storytelling acts as an engine that shifts concepts of perception. Additionally, it enables the exploration of supplementary elements, integrating transmedia aspects and strengthening emotional connectivity.

We can gather emotional connectivity, loyalty, stability of the community, changes in perception of reality, learning, and social change.

I thought about the potential implications of these ideas. Our beliefs, I realized, are the architects of our emotions. Therefore, our emotional bond with music and the industry is fundamentally constructed on our beliefs about musical inter-

ests. Music, I observed, has the power to evoke both positive and negative emotions. In the case of K-Pop, it goes beyond emotions, offering a sense of home or belonging, thereby deepening the emotional attachment.

These insights crystallized when I undertook a personal analysis, examining my own story as a basis for a speculative prototype. This introspection served as a catalyst for my proposal.

Let me start by saying that I have been listening to K-Pop for 12 years, and after a period of time I have developed my own ritual. This ritual has to do with positioning an issue and clicking a pattern button in my music media library. If K-Pop plays, what I asked will happen. If something that's not K-Pop plays, it won't happen.

For me, it was also a ritual that I used unconsciously. Even when I started this research, it didn't happen to be the first thing that I speculated about. I started thinking why this came so naturally to me and became a part of my life as an essential and maybe even unquestioned ritual.

As I've studied the different types of fan communication and K-Pop, I've realized that it consumes quite a large area of communication. Like

replacing a best friend or a dream and a better place to be. And also a new place for your leisure time (Kim M. et al., 2020). Harsing that feeling is what leads to a more complete immersion. So when people reach out and believe in something bigger than themselves. If you read why people believe in predictions and zodiac signs, they're drawn to realizations of subjective or personal validation of circumstances. What K-Pop brings us is a way of communicating with each other and breaking down the wall between spectator and star. This kind of attitude and personalization that K-Pop brings can have a counter effect.

It is also essential to appeal to the essence of what is more vital and more authoritative to believe in what is happening to us, which helps create the illusion of control. So divination, horoscopes, signs, phases of the moon, and amulets, all help us in these predicaments. At the same time, idols and idealizing and turning outcomes into supermen and deifying them create this unintended effect.

People often unconsciously use rituals to which they are emotionally attached to predict what the future holds for them to get rid of the uncertainty.

To contract such a machine and use it by the public, it is initially necessary to create an emotional convention for this integration. And to speculate on the impact of transmedia storytelling on emotional loyalism and to what limit it can reach by using such a technique to attract viewers. That's what I was speculating on.



Shuffle ▶ DAY 6
▶ “Need Somebody”

4.5 The Construction of the Story and the Key Manipulation

To create the story, I decided to draw on my experiences and turn them into the main line of an interactive story. The story reveals how a strong emotional attachment to K-Pop as an industry and a genre of music emerged. Here, the music is a significant factor in the story’s progression. All to build a solid attachment to the genre and show how it can be a substantial aspect of decision-making. Also, in constructing a story to create a product, you must utilize emotional connections as a crucial component for this type of design.

My primary method is through interviews and the fact that audiences have a completely different approach to communicating with K-Pop. So, to develop a transmedia story an important aspect is to use stories from interviews to make up the canvas of the story. And also the possibility of pontificating on any communication space, such as identity formation, which I found out during the interview. These references to interviews and parallel developments also show the references to transmedia and its influence on the story (table 1).

Interaction with the ‘fortune-teller’ can also be adaptive and not represented by a unique platform that I design, but be more accessible for everyday use on any device.

Interviewee number	What attracted to K-Pop
1	Interest in a new type of music sound. Desire to differentiate between group members. Subsequently, the characters of the idols and how hard they work to perform challenging performances
2	Interviewee 2 grew up in Korea. K-Pop was originally a part of the culture and was in the background while growing up. Later, it became something you can share with friends and communicate with people with common interests on Twitter (X). You can support each other with videos from your favorite concerts and funny moments from concerts and live broadcasts.
3	Initially, interviewee three didn't like it because of the digital music. Subsequently, it was polished with an ideal sound. That gave interviewee three back the ability to be a fan and love music. Subsequently, he spends all possible energy attending his favorite live concerts with popular idols. Believes that live communication is essential in the K-Pop industry and interaction with idols.
4	Initially, liked the indie sound of several K-Pop artists and a love for pop music in general. K-Pop and its artists attracted Interviewee 4 with their appearance. Interviewee 4 realized that even with a characteristic Asian appearance, you can be attractive in a European environment.
5	New type of pop music and eccentric images and concepts. As well as, images and beauty of idols, since the hobby occurred during puberty. Interviewee 5 was exploring your sexual fantasies by reading gay fan fiction and creating a community with friends from school.
6	Stories that exist in comeback concepts and the ability to investigate them. Also, the opportunity to develop already built worlds and create secondary content, developing the story in the direction of interest. Interviewee 6 also participates in role-playing games in chats, taking on the role of an idol and creating a story on his behalf.
7	Interviewee 7 grew up in Korea. K-Pop has always been a background music. Growing up, the only option was to listen to K-Pop on TV or at school on the school radio. Became part of everyday life and participation in conversations with classmates.
8	Interviewee 8 likes the relaxed pop sound of the music. Interviewee 8 prefers to listen to it because he does not understand the lyrics and is not distracted by the meaning of the words.
9	Initially, Interviewee 9 came across K-Pop while watching funny videos on TikTok. Interviewee 9 became part of the community because of the fascinating personalities of the idols and the friendly atmosphere they broadcast on social networks. Interviewee 9 also considers the beauty of idols to be dominant in attracting attention. Later, Interviewee 9 got into the music itself.
10	Interviewee 10 was very attracted by the new and unusual sound of the music, which was very different from Western pop sound. Subsequently, Interviewee 10 attracted an organized group of friends at the university, which led to learning the Korean language and a love for Korean culture. Subsequently, K-Pop still attracts Interviewee 10 with its music. Still, an important part is the ability to learn a dance to any of the tracks Interviewee 10 likes - this now remains the most significant interest.
11	Interviewee 11: Attracted by the polished and clear sound produced in the K-pop industry. An unusual combination of sounds and styles reminiscent of jazz compositions in mixing. Interviewee 11 believes it is impossible to separate music videos and music from each other; "they go together with each other." Interviewee 11 also notes the idealized appearance, which attracted attention because there are many references in music, and references and stories can be studied if the desire arises.
12	Music is not Interviewee 12 main priority. K-pop attracts Interviewee 12 because of its image, which is very dual and complex. Since the politics within the industry and the fan organization have a specific nature. There is also the duality of parasocial relationships, which positively influence some of the fans. Interviewee 12 is interested in K-pop music mainly because of the processes in Korea and its impact on the Asian industry.
13	Interviewee 13 grew up in Korea. Initially, Interviewee 13 was not interested in K-Pop music and the industry. When Interviewee 13 moved to Europe, the K-Pop boom happened, which encouraged Interviewee 13 to listen to music and contact the industry to a greater extent. Interviewee 13 is also very interested in the concept of album comebacks.
14	Interviewee 14 is initially attracted by the sweet sound of the music and its simplicity. Interviewee 14 started getting in touch with music first because of the Japanese versions of songs, and then Interviewee 14 just started listening to the original ones. Interviewee 14 also attracts cute girls who go viral on social media and teaches herself.
15	Interviewee 15 was initially attracted to K-pop when I lived in Korea. Many of Interviewee 15's friends and sister listened to K-pop, so I naturally became interested. Interviewee 15 was intrigued by the powerful choreography and addicting music, as well as the attention to aesthetics. Interviewee 15 is still attracted by ceaselessly introducing new styles of music, those that don't necessarily follow the strict rules and forms of particular genres. Thus, The vast selection of music attracts Interviewee 15 to listen to K-pop alone, and Interviewee 15 can easily find a song to listen to on any occasion, in any mood.

Table 1. An excerpt from the interviews that was used to compile the visuals of the story.



Shuffle ▶ Park Ji Yoon
▶ “Sung In Shik
(Coming of Age Ceremony)”

4.6 The Exhibition Setup

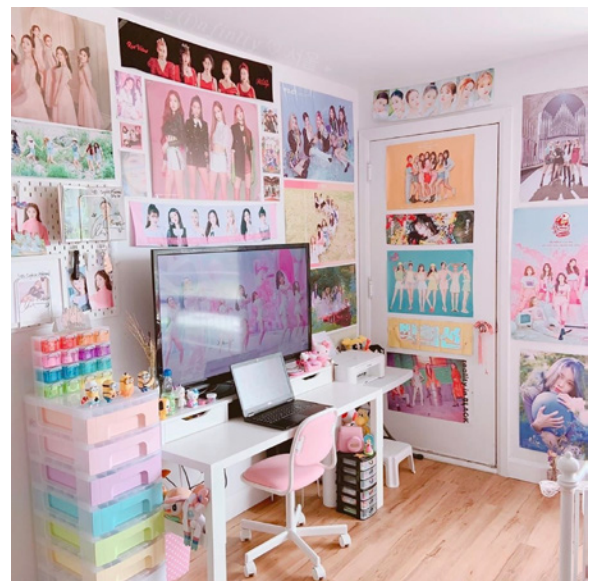
What can change my approach to understanding the transmedia construction project in K-Pop and its communication with it? Of course, it is still a very Asia-centric design. Although the interactive part is reduced to a mimic, it is only meant to help the audience understand how transmedia works and how information within K-Pop is communicated. The originality of its origins strongly dominates here.

First of all, although K-Pop is spread worldwide, the meaning of the ‘K’ in K-Pop is very much tied to the country of origin and the spread of Korean culture as K-wave. Therefore, the central part of the design was based on the formed experience of the audience, which has experience communicating with this genre.

The second was to avoid using actions or movements that would cause misconceptions. Since transmedia building is inherent in many existing products, it is possible to understand how to use it without using extraordinary actions and interventions available only to people with minimal knowledge about Korean culture and K-Pop.

Given these factors, the design had to be neutral

to carry the basic principles of interacting with it through the lens of the fans, i.e., based on interviews that I conducted and speculate on the formation of a very loyal relationship with the ‘K’ in K-Pop and apply this know-how to the ubiquitous examples of great trust, faith, and loyalty.



(pic. 23 streaming farm k-pop, <https://atrl.net/> (2022))



(pic. 28 Kyung-Ju Park's installation, egg-space, Victoria Cheredeeva (2024))

The setting for the exhibition was chosen to be shrine-inspired. It is inspired by the tables of K-Pop fans that look like sacred places (pic. 27). Also, recently, at a Korean artist Kyung-Ju Park's exhibition (pic. 28), I saw a similar solution of turning a desk into a kind of altar, where the crown of the installation was a monitor broadcasting the story. Plus, since the prototype predicts the future, adding an atmosphere for a more convincing immersion in this ritual environment is essential.

In Korea, there is still a strong influence of shamanism and belief in rituals (Kim C., 2018). So, even in the modern world, it is common for people to turn to shamans to solve problems, which also influences the setting of the prototype and the prototype itself.



Shuffle ▶ aespA ▶ “Better Things”

05Conclusions

Transmedia storytelling is represented in the ranks of the K-Pop industry in a variety of formats. This paper examines how the concept of “comeback” can be used to push further transmedia storytelling. The media and releases relating to the “comeback” create anticipation and shape the construction of the story. As discussed in the documents on which this study is based, all of these mechanisms strengthen audience loyalty by constantly providing new ways for the fans to connect with the K-pop industry.

The presented story is based on research surrounding the concept of comeback and case studies on trans media storytelling in K-pop as well as a series of interviews. The interviews were specifically conducted for the project and aimed to identify the basic concepts of audience interest and what attracts them to K-Pop. The project speculates on how far participant loyalty can go and the extremes it could reach through successful transmedia storytelling and communication. It focuses on the different ways fans connect to K-pop, their emotional attachments and attitudes. It further searches to explore the possible expressions and applications of these trans media techniques.

My goal was to use transmedia storytelling as a tool to build loyalty among fans and to turn it into a new form of interaction with K-Pop. Namely, it is crucial to capitalize on this feeling of loyalty to create faith and trust. The inherent love of K-Pop fans and the names of artists as “idols” were chosen as the basis for the design of the prototype. Summarizing these findings and based on the Barnum effect (Fichten C. S., et al.,1983) : the tendency of people to trust what is higher than us in hierarchy, often represented by an authoritative source of information, a speculative approach was constructed. This approach took on the form of a machine that predicts the future based on K-Pop music and its transmedia influence. This approach also examines the attitude in Korean society towards shamanism. More specifically, it reflects on its presence in modern South Korea as a popular form of interaction to predict the future or to influence and change it. Belief in shamanism also represents a solid loyalty to the process ahead of the viewer and to the person who performs it (Watson-Jones R. E., et al., 2018).

As we can see, comeback is a powerful tool that can effectively carry a transmedia story, by organically bringing in narrative layers to the mu-

sic, performances, and album concept. More research needs to be conducted to determine if a comeback, should by default include the notion of transmedia storytelling as some comebacks to not rely so heavily on a story. However, the examples of comeback in this thesis, maintain and plan the story from the beginning and their successes are continuing to shape the definition of transmedia storytelling (Categoria S., 2016).



Shuffle

Block B "HER"

06 Supplementary

06.1 Construction of comeback

Transmedia storytelling, as a medium of concept representation, is often expressed in the notion of a comeback. In many instances, it has proven to be a resounding success, fostering strong audience attachment, loyalty, and activism. This underscores the importance of transmedia storytelling in K-Pop, as it significantly enhances audience engagement and support for the K-Pop group.

However, transmedia storytelling within the framework of a comeback is only one of many types of communication. It has shown success in the promotions of groups such as BTS, LE SSERAFIM, and aespa (the one mentioned in the diploma), but there is also the presence of many others.

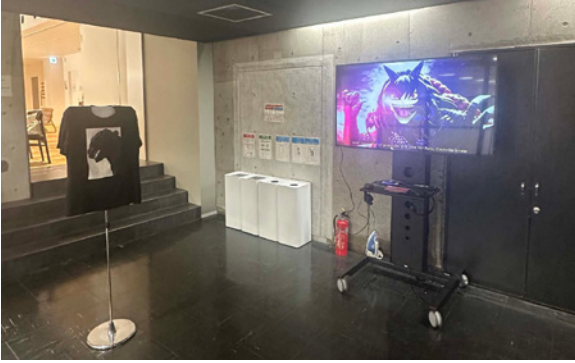
The most significant importance of developing transmedia storytelling within K-Pop is still the experience of BTS. Such a phenomenon is impossible to repeat. But I don't want to. In my case, I would like to point out that building a dense transmedia story is a great winning move for interacting with the audience and that maintaining

the story, adding to it, and developing it will bring its contribution to the organization of the network of referents and levels of completion of the constructed narrative, which is what arouses the interest of the audience. Proper communication can positively change the fan community and the general public.

To summarize the above, I will briefly describe my approach to building my world and storytelling within the framework of the comeback as a medium for concept Art.

Since I started this work when I was in Tokyo, I was heavily influenced by one of Japan's biggest idols, Godzilla. My project needed to use a character of unconvinced beauty within the industry but with a similar force of influence on the pop industry within the development of this character. As well as a character having an extensive global reach and strong fanbase (pic. 29). On top of that was the idea that Godzilla is a powerful force of nature or a weapon that overpowers mere human strength to the point of superiority. I found it just as amusing within the comparisons to the 'strength' and narratives carried by notions of K-Pop idols.

They are continuing to explore this project. I made



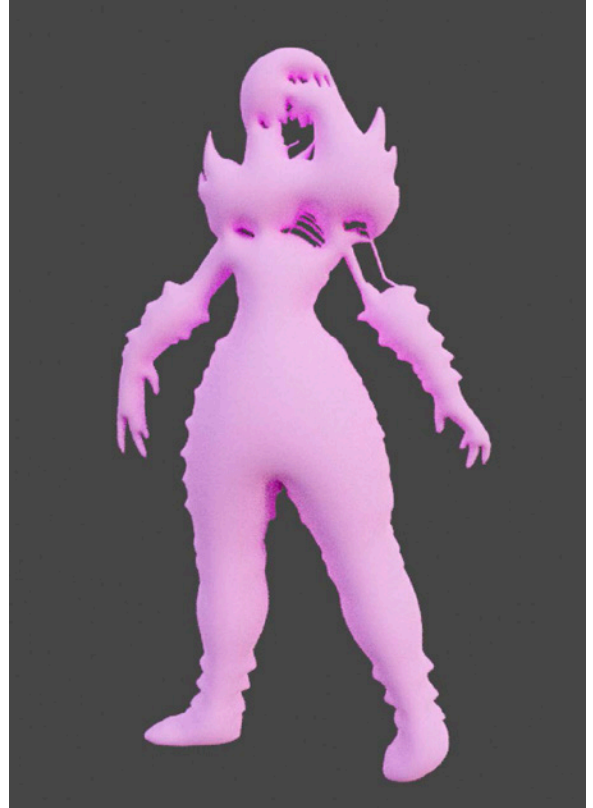
(pic. 29 installation "Idol of Destruction: The Godzilla Pop Experience", Tokyo Getdai, Victoria Cheredeeva (2023))

a video installation in which the viewers were allowed to imagine for themselves the journey Godzilla has taken to become a global pop idol in the music industry. The openness of interpretation engages the viewer's experience and the possibility of constructing misdirections in an open world where only the ending is known. And that ending within the idol industry is always plus minus known to us: "People who become idols within the K-pop industry become famous". It's like an inviolable rule.

06.1.1 Persona/avatar

Next, I wanted to develop this project and connect it to the notion of a comeback and the development of the theory I constructed.

For this, I had to work on the image of the idol (Avatar) and the possibility of using it for performance. Within two courses in the immersion art space, I achieved the result of the concept for the Avatar construction, its image, the stage, and the dance. The idea for Avatar was an essential part of combining the image of Godzillas and the idol to stabilize two very different concepts but to leave this sense of uncanniness, as my comeback carries with it a more accessible approach to conventional beauty and an attempt to break free from the established rules of the industry. As well as contributing to the narrative of the existing concept and continuing the story with different media. It is also important to note that the bubble structure for Avatar was also specifically designed for this Avatar to add to its welcome and softness (pic. 30).



(pic. 30 G.-Ai avatar, bubbling, Victoria Cheredeeva(2023))

To continue my research, I decided to refer to an existing study in the English-speaking community on the novelty of the comeback, which talks about the incredible loyalty of the audience to live idol performances (Ma Z. et al., 2022), which became my next step within my G.-Ai project.

It was, therefore, vital for me to use digital Raum and digital idols to express within the live performance the primary mode of communication with K-Pop idols - through the digital screen - and to show how such a live performance brings to the dualism which the live performance and the performer, who always remains the central figure, is lost in the digitalization and kaleidoscopic representation becoming a secondary figure instead of the central figure giving space to the idols (pic. 31). As well as in the industry, people who stand for the production site remain in the shadows.



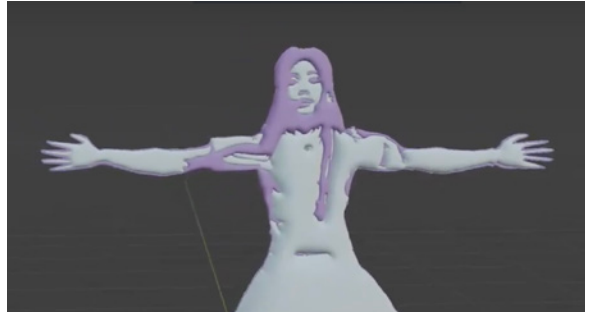
(pic. 29 installation "Idol of Destruction: The Godzilla Pop Experience", Tokyo Getdai, Victoria Cheredeva (2023))

I was adding this to my existing approaches for studying non-conventional idol images. Thus, the same technique for constructing Avatars - bubbling - was chosen for the performance. To approach the notion of a live concert within the K-Pop industry but not lose the intention that this project carried from the beginning - building a long and continuous story and not using conventional rules existing in the music industry, creating a new approach for becoming idols and integrating with idols as with personas and characters.

So, to create the performance, 4 Avatars were designed to represent the group G.-Ai, and a song was written within the concept discussed above, which talks about a new, better world (pic. 32-35). This approach can be used to change the notions constructed in the industry and deconstruct them through transmedia storytelling and live performances, a significant driving force for potentially positive changes in the community and industry.



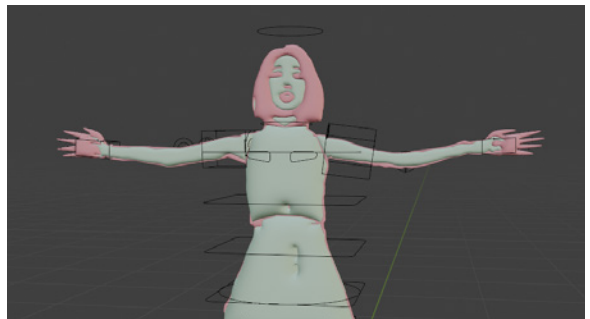
(pic. 32 G.-Ai performance, B.Lo member/avatar, Victoria Cheredeva (2024))



(pic. 32 G.-Ai performance, Lilia member/avatar, Victoria Cheredeva (2024))



(pic. 32 G.-Ai performance, Parus member/avatar, Victoria Cheredeva (2024))



(pic. 32 G.-Ai performance, jade member/avatar, Victoria Cheredeva (2024))

06.2 Interview (extras)

Interviewee N1 (extras)

****Interviewer**:** How long have you been listening to K-Pop?

****Interviewee**:** At first I didn't like it, but then I started listening by myself, starting with Super Junior. After that, I discovered Big Bang, which became my favorite group. Later, I found out about EXO, which was my friend's favorite band, and then SHINee, which is now my favorite.

****Interviewer**:** That's amazing. SHINee is a very good group. I started with them too.

****Interviewee**:** Yes. I was really sad when Jonghyun died. I stopped listening to K-Pop for about a year and a half. After Jonghyun's death, I went out and got drunk. Two weeks later, I was with my friend at a bar, and she left. I started crying about everything that was happening after she left.

****Interviewer**:** Because I'm doing research about live-ness in K-Pop, let's start with that. Do you feel like they are always singing live during concerts?

****Interviewee**:** Not all groups do. SHINee, BTS, EXO, and BIGBANG sing live, but I think the new groups often don't. Also, I'm not so sure about Super Junior.

****Interviewer**:** I'm also unsure about that. But what about programs like Mnet or M Countdown? They have live shows, but it seems mostly designed for TV audiences, not necessarily for those attending in person. What do you think about how these settings affect experiencing live music in K-Pop?

****Interviewee**:** Mostly, I know these live shows are staged to avoid difficulties and ensure a smooth broadcast. You asked me if I prefer the live experience, but I'm not sure I understood the question correctly.

****Interviewer**:** Have you ever been to a live K-Pop concert?

****Interviewee**:** No, and I don't plan to. But I've watched a lot of SHINee, BIGBANG, and EXO concerts that were live. Not so much BTS. Like at the MAMA shows, I really enjoy the vibe because of the light sticks. I really want one.

****Interviewer**:** How do you connect with K-Pop?

****Interviewee**:** From both YouTube and Twitter. On YouTube, I watch series like little documentaries about their lives or the K-shows they've been on. I watched a lot of that stuff and got to know the groups, what they were doing, what they were like. On Twitter, I had an account and followed their activities—concerts, live streams. I would tweet things like “happy birthday” or “good luck.”

****Interviewer**:** Is this something you would do not just for a K-Pop group, but also for like a Western US pop

band or something if you were interested?

****Interviewee**:** No, because I didn't like One Direction. But for Harry Styles, because I love him, I have watched a lot of videos from him and from the era of One Direction but only with him. So maybe for someone that I really like, I would do that. First, I like the songs, and then I start to search about the person's personal life, like if they have relationships, who was dating who. I'm so amazed by people, really.

****Interviewer**:** You mentioned that you would not do it for new groups, like the newcomers.

****Interviewee**:** Yeah, like Stray Kids. I like some of their songs, but it's not the same. The songs from the second and third generations of K-Pop were really good. Now, they're just pretending or doing the same stuff that the previous groups did. It's the same pop that we have in Europe; they're trying to be more popular by doing the same stuff. So now, I think they're pretending more than before.

****Interviewer**:** Also, you mentioned that you started with Super Junior. What was the song and why didn't you like it?

****Interviewee**:** “Sorry, sorry, sorry.” My friend put it on for me to listen after she left my house. I listened to it again and I was like, it's not that bad, it's catchy. The way they were dancing in the “Sorry, Sorry” video was super fun and I wanted to understand who is who because they all looked the same.

****Interviewer**:** I totally understand. I have this problem with all of the groups at the beginning. Who was your favorite in Super Junior?

****Interviewee**:** Ah, I can't remember his name. He's the one that has a relationship with Momo.

****Interviewer**:** Ah, Heechul.

****Interviewee**:** Heechul, yeah. He's cool. My favorite is Kyuhyun, the maknae.

****Interviewee**:** I watched an episode where he was dancing. I liked him after that, I might search it to send it to you.

****Interviewer**:** Yeah, and then, did you and your friend talk about it a lot?

****Interviewee**:** Yeah, she would come to my place, and we would watch K-Pop videos and listen together in the car. We wanted to go to a concert also, but it was really expensive, so we didn't go. She had a lot of albums, but I didn't have money, so I didn't get any.

Interviewee N2 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** It's just music?

****Interviewee:**** I think it's definitely more than music, like a culture. It's the questions like, is it a brand or is it a genre? I had so many, I don't know, arguments with a friend of mine because he was like, yeah, it's a music genre. I'm like, it's impossible to name it as a music genre.

****Interviewer:**** Why do you think it can't be just a genre?

****Interviewee:**** Well, recently, a lot of K-Pop bands are releasing songs written by someone from abroad, and they got a lot of influence from the pop music, like from America. Also, choreographies, for example, they have really nice performances, but they always had a choreography from, I don't know, mostly from America, like Black dancers, like hip-hop Black dancers. So it can't really be a genre, because it's not its own genre, you know. It's like something else.

****Interviewer:**** But isn't it still primarily a Korean phenomenon?

****Interviewee:**** Yes, K-Pop stands for Korea because of this very 'K' presence. But at the same time, a lot of foreigners are working on the production, somehow. The main thing is like the producers, who are really designed the group, who designed the group are Korean. So I think that's somehow why there is still 'K' with it. And also the companies, and then also the training system. These are very Korean, in my opinion.

****Interviewer:**** How do international influences blend into this?

****Interviewee:**** Even recently, I saw, they're really targeting the Japan fans, like Japanese fans. I forgot the name, but most of them are Japanese, but there is like one Korean. But they really promote the band, really in Japan, like in the Japanese program. And also, even the YouTube videos, they usually speak between them in Japanese, till they speak Korean as well. So this band, maybe some people can say it's a Japanese band, but still, since it is produced and designed, the concept and everything in Korea, I think still they are somehow K band, you know?

****Interviewer:**** And personally, what drew you to K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** I think first of all, I have to say actually, maybe half or less of the lyrics are in English, but still, for me, the charm that I, like when I was younger, the reason that I used to listen to K-Pop was because it's in Korean. In Europe and other countries they used to listen to a lot of pop, like American music since they're super young. But the influence from the pop music, American music in Korea was not that popular as here. So we used to just listen to Korean songs with the Korean lyrics and also a lot of Korean dramas and films just

because it's in Korean. Because also we're, yeah, we're like, Korea, the country itself, it's not super open-minded to other cultures. I mean, we definitely watch films from America, but also still, some people still prefer to watch just Korean thing without a subtitle, you know?

****Interviewer:**** It sounds like K-Pop is a way for you to connect with your roots?

****Interviewee:**** Yes, for sure. So when I was super young, I think it's, first, it was because it's in Korean that I can understand everything. And secondly, I think I used to listen because all my friends are listening, you know? I just wanted to belong to them, like, I didn't want to be an outsider. It's a community. I wanted to communicate with my friends. And then afterwards, always, it kind of connected to my childhood. For example, even after I turned 18, in the university, I sometimes listen, like, SHINee or Girls' Generation songs just because they are really connected to my childhood. I mean, not childhood, but, like, my teenage period. And when they released the song, I still listen because it kind of recalls my high school memories.

****Interviewer:**** And how do you see yourself within the K-Pop fan culture?

****Interviewee:**** Would you consider yourself as a fan of K-Pop? If you would say yes, then what would be this? Is there like an object that makes you belong to the fan culture or not of the K-Pop in general? Fan culture? Not the fan culture, but, like, in the fan community, let's name it like this. Yeah, for me, definitely, it's Twitter. I think also the reason that I got into NCT was really the fan culture and the fan culture in Twitter. Because not even about the idol, but in general, I really like to talk about something with the people that I like. And also when this person also likes the same thing as me, I really like to talk about it. And when I just watched, like, the first YouTube video about NCT on YouTube, it was interesting. But still, for me, I didn't really have had a lot of fun. But I checked the Twitter and there I saw people literally make the short video out of a 10 minutes YouTube video. They really make, like, 30 seconds of a bunch of the video and then, or, like, they zoom in, like, what the other member is doing, while the other one is speaking, you know. They literally need to remind, they literally go deep, from just one video. I think I kind of enjoyed this, like, fan-made materials, not just the official one. Yeah, because it's kind of like this feeling of the community, somehow. More human touch. Even after watching films, I'm always, like, have the urge to talk about this one with my friend who watched it as well, or just go online or Twitter. I want to share it, if I like something or I want to know why I like this, something like that.

****Interviewer:**** So, does the digital content make you feel closer to K-Pop than before?

****Interviewee:**** Definitely. Even the digital context, including Twitter. Because most of the time you commu-

nicate with K-Pop via your laptop, or like your phone. And this way of communication kind of allows you to be 24/7 in contact and not in terms of like, on the TV or because of the digital music and this digital content that they are producing. I think, if there was just like a song, like this music programs, then I'm sure that I wouldn't be this much into NCT. Like, I think first of all this YouTube videos, like the official YouTube videos, like about the VLOG of our behind scene, how they kind of helped me to get into the NCT. And then secondly, there's Twitter.

Interviewee: One charm of K-Pop culture for international fans is that they always wanted to communicate with the fans through Twitter, their own platforms like Weverse, or the SM thing. They always tried to communicate with this app or on social media. A lot of fans loved it. For example, this private message thing. There are a lot of people who really enjoy it. It helps keep fans' eyes on them.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's not like I'm judging, but I'm just curious how it feels like because I feel like it this way, but probably a lot of people feel it in a totally different way, if you know what I mean, somehow.

Interviewee: I think, as I said, somehow this documentation got more important than present, like being present. So like, even like this music program, I don't know since when it has started, but they have these individual videos and then they put it on YouTube afterwards. And this thing got super important somehow. So even like the singer and the audiences now, I feel like they what they care pretty much about how it will be documented and how it will be presented right now. And also, I got this impression somehow K-Pop fans are more into these documentations, but the other international fans, they're less concentrated on the documentation.

Interviewer: You mentioned the unique way K-Pop fans interact with artists through apps like Weverse, rather than platforms like Instagram. Can you elaborate on that?

Interviewee: Like, yeah, I mean, there is like, like a field and then they can randomly reply to the people who they want. Yeah, I mean, I've never used it. But I just saw on Twitter that fans really love when the artists stick to this app, right? Rather than like putting a lot of private stuff on Instagram, because these fans really want to feel that they are closer with the artists than just normal people, you know, like, just who can, like, everyone can access the Instagram, but like this fan club community, they need membership things.

Interviewer: It sounds quite exclusive. How does this exclusivity impact the fan experience?

Interviewee: So recently, one member of the RIES, like, he put a picture of himself swimming on the Insta-

gram. And the fans were saying that these kind of pictures should just be put on Weverse, not on Instagram. Yeah, it's, it's just for us, you know. And then I found this quite interesting that even though they still want the artists to become more popular, sometimes they just want to have more private information between them. It's a very exclusive information that they needed.

Interviewer: That's intriguing. It seems like K-Pop fans have a very particular way they want to interact with their idols. How do you think this compares with other pop culture fan interactions?

Interviewee: Yeah, yes. I know. I mean, it's also somehow like when I think about the K-Pop, it still seems to me like a subculture, you know, like emo or like anime fans, you know. They like to have this connection to the community. And they like to be very close to them, because it makes it a bit more like, cute and something that shows these belongings, right? Rather than pop culture in general, because there is not this kind of appreciation like with Taylor Swift somehow. I mean, of course, Taylor Swift fans like Taylor Swift, but she doesn't have this kind of specific app where only Taylor Swift replies to her fans or whatever.

Interviewer: That's fascinating. With your deep dive into this culture, how are you approaching your research?

Interviewee: Yeah, that's interesting. Yes. I mean, I'm very curious because there is so much. I mean, in terms of a lot of stuff, K-Pop is very similar to pop. But at the same time, it's super different. And it's very much inside this culture somehow that you communicate with K-Pop. So, like, fun fact, I did the installation of a lot of screens. And then you have aespa doing "Next Level." And then to change to another video. Basically, to the backstage of production somehow, like, what are the processes behind this production because, I mean, it's a bit different from like, what we talked about, about the trainee camp and the whole system behind it.

Interviewee N3 (extras)

****Interviewer**:** What is K-Pop? genre? culture? music or something more?

****Interviewee**:** all right so the first question is what is K-Pop genre culture music or something more in my honest opinion and this is not um looking through like official contacts or like going through like you know a dictionary or like coming from like a professional perspective but this is more of my perspective yeah sorry this is more of my perspective as a fan i mean K-Pop stands for Korean pop. So on the surface of it, it's just really pop music that stems from Korean culture or that is Korean music, right? So I would say that, you know, whether is it considered a genre, culture or something more, I would say it's all of the above because it is a genre. The genre is called K-Pop, the culture of K-Pop can be understood and can be seen more towards the how the music is being promoted, how the music is being produced, the elements that sets K-Pop different from Western pop music for example. So I would say it's all of the above.

****Interviewer**:** How would you define a “comeback”?

****Interviewee**:** The second question is how would you define a comeback? So with K-Pop music and like K-Pop groups and stuff right so we know that a lot of these groups are being managed by companies whether you say like the big name companies such as like JYP, YG, HYBE so we know that right so i would define a comeback using the comparison to let's say a western artist who decides to release a new album so for example let's compare compare it to maybe ariana grande because she just had a new song out right uh with K-Pop groups we kind of already expect there to be sort of like a timeline or like a template that they can follow so for example um i'll i'll go to one of my number one groups which is the seraphim for example right so they had a comeback which was uh their first full length album that was released last year in i think it was me if i'm not mistaken right and then they had promotions and then they had a world tour and then they had award shows and then they had a bit of a bit of a break and then they came back with like a a single comeback and then they again they had their award shows and then after that now they have a new comeback that's coming out next week so with K-Pop you kind of expect that the timeline of each release should not be too long i would say blackpink was an exception you know the two years break wasn't was quite uh what's the word for it was quite um unusual like in a K-Pop group right uh to release like new music like two years is quite a long time whereas like in western like western music like i don't think i've come across an artist who has released an album let's say today and then you know uh they have a new release like maybe in a few months time or like in

a year sometimes it takes even longer um because you know whether is it they decide to tour that album for as long as they would like or they want to take a break um it's different in that sense there's no i'm not too sure on the um the details of it directly but I guess maybe contract obligations are different. So like Ariana Grande has disappeared for quite some time, right? And then now she has a new song out. So I would define a comeback to be similar as like a new release by an artist. It's just that with K-Pop groups, there's a timeline of sorts. Like there's an expectation that you have towards them, where they would consistently release material and how long it would take for them to release material depending on the timelines or the templates that you've seen from previous releases, for example.

****Interviewer**:** What attracted you to K-Pop and what attracts you now?

****Interviewee**:** Okay, so for the third question you asked, what attracted you to K-Pop and what attracts you now? So for K-Pop music, my very very first memory of K-Pop music would stem back all the way to maybe 2010, 2009-2010, probably 2010 onwards. Because I used to be a huge huge huge huge avid fan of Green Day. I still am till this day but at a point in time I was like a huge avid rock music fan and I remembered that Green Day used to be the band that were charting all the charts. They would win best rock for almost every single award show that they're being nominated in. And then between 2009 to 2010, I started to see rock music generally started to fall back and pop music was starting to like rise up even more and that started from lady gaga because she was kind of like introducing like different like imagery into her music the short culture into pop music and stuff and then people she was the she was the artist that people were talking about a lot and then all of a sudden i cannot remember the details but i started to see super junior shiny um wonder girls all starting to you know get popular here like in singapore And one of the groups, the only group that I sort of liked at the time was SS501. And yeah, I hated K-Pop at the start. Like, I really did. Because I used to be such a huge fan of rock music that I kind of had this very childish mindset that, oh, like pop music and K-Pop music were pushing rock music out of the charts, you know. so that was like my very first memory of K-Pop i also remembered seeing wonder girls at a festival um but i didn't go i didn't i didn't attend the festival for wonder girls i attended the festival for tokyo hotel um oriente katy perry this was in 2009 if i'm not mistaken was 2009 or was it 2010 it was either 2009 or 2010 either one of those two could be 2010 actually but yeah i attended that festival it was called sing fest it was it used to be a festival in singapore now it no longer exists so i remember like my first experience of watching like a K-Pop group live felt very it was different

because i was an aspiring like musician guitarist So I'm used to seeing like live, like a live band on stage, you know, like even if you're watching like the pop artists like Katy Perry, for example, they always had a live band that was accompanying them. But when it came to that Wonder Girls set, it was just backing tracks and them dancing and singing along to the music. So at a point in time, I didn't really, it wasn't something that caught my attention much because I guess you could say it's more of like a preference type of thing at a point in time. And then around 2016, you know, Blackpink came out. Like, I think Blackpink was probably the first proper K-Pop group that started turning my attention to K-Pop, right? so the music was a little bit different the music was kind of like you know unique um so it was something that caught my attention because i think by 2016 my music taste started to get a little bit more diverse but i wasn't really like really into it yet it was just kind of like the music that i enjoyed listening to and then i had to go and serve the army after that right like a year later i think i think it was around 2017 i had to go and serve the army and i was in the music and drama company and i met quite a few people who we would exchange conversations and stuff and it opened my eyes up more towards music production and that's when understanding music production a little bit more was when i was able to understand K-Pop in a more precise manner and that's when I started to be able to kind of like accept K-Pop music more and more and that's when the groups that I was listening to, the music I was listening to started to grow in a way.

****Interviewee:**** I may start the point from question three about what attracts you now. I would say really what attracts me now about K-Pop is that I would consider K-Pop to be a very, it's definitely a produced industry but it's also a very polished industry and you don't necessarily just focus on one aspect, you see everything. So you would see whether is it the visuals, stylistically, you know the outfits that they're wearing the style of music that they are doing the type of choreography uh the type of like you know vocals um how should i put this in proper terms um their vocal capabilities what they can do uh what's their strength and then you start to see how every individual member like what do they offer to the group so i feel that like What attracts me now is really just being able to see a K-Pop group and just be like, "Okay, what sets you apart from the other K-Pop groups? So what's different?" and stuff like that, you know?

So I would say that's kind of like the main thing that attracts me towards it right now.

****Interviewer**:** How do you interact with K-Pop idols?

****Interviewee:**** Number 4, how do I interact with K-Pop idols? I can clearly see why you asked me this. So, how do I interact with K-Pop idols? Obviously, I think with

K-Pop music, right, like as a fan, it's very different to when I was like a rock music fan and I think this had a lot to do with, because I was doing music professionally, right? So I started to burn out quite a bit and it started to feel more of like a burden to be involved with music. And K-Pop music was kind of like the genre or the culture that sort of reminded me what it's like to be a fan. You know, whether it's appreciating an artist for their work, for their artistry or just, you know, just being a fan really. So how do I interact with them? I understand that a lot of people who go for like K-Pop shows and stuff, they would want to be right in front because they would want to see the idols like right up close. They would want to be able to interact with the idols and stuff. And I think for me, it's the same thing. It's just that I am fine with being at the back of a venue to watch a K-Pop show as well. Because I feel that there's no bad seats in a venue, right? And it's like, no matter where you are in the venue, it's a different type of experience. But when the opportunity comes for me, like if I'm in the front row, for example, and if I can, you know, maybe I can give you some examples like at the back of my head, like one was in Haipan during the manifesto tour in Bangkok. I was around second row and I still remember I had like this very funny mask that I was wearing. And Jongwon saw that, right? And he kind of just pointed at it. we had like a exchange of laughters or like during um past the mic encore for the yeah pasta my encore and i was just like you know phones in my pocket just enjoying the concert and then uh his son came to the side saw me and then like rocked out with me like those type of interactions right that's one example um the other one would be like stray kids hunt right so he's one of my idols and during the period where i was kind of like burning out quite badly with music right like he was one of the few people who inspired me to keep going so i had like this slogan that basically says my hero han but it was in korean so i brought it to the singapore show and he saw it during soundcheck and he kind of just gave me like an acknowledgement so that kind of just you know like you want to tell something to someone who inspires you and that that's kind of like a message that got across for me so that's one example that's another example and um i think it was it's the same thing for les seraphim when i saw them in jakarta i had like a sign that says um let's have a film thank you for saving me and yun jin saw that um she won saw the back of the sign as well which you know there was a message for her as well so uh interactions in that sense i would say i know some people some fans they like to do signs and they just like to do something fun you know for me i would say that i would go more towards the like my science needs to have some meaning to it um and that's the kind of interactions that i look for at the same time i would try my best to apply for like video call fan signs

so that like you know i could speak to the artist maybe get an album signed and stuff like that

****Interviewer**:** If you consider yourself a K-Pop fan, what makes you believe it? if there are any attributes? or more of an internal feeling?

****Interviewee**:** I think this question, this next question, this is question number five is honestly a very good question if you ask me. Like if you consider yourself a K-Pop fan, like what makes you believe it? Because it needs to kind of have a substance, right? So for me, everything needs to have some meaning towards it. And what makes me believe it? On the surface, I can really just say it's just, you know just remembering what it's like to be a fan again because that's a part for me that i've forgotten for quite a while already and being able to just be a fan embrace my favorite artists and like just you know putting in the effort to just go to just go have a good time and stuff like that like it really it's it's just really something that meant a lot to me excuse me that meant a lot to me any attributes or more of an internal feeling i think that the internal feeling comes from the experience of being a fan as well so like i travel a lot right i travel a lot for shows and the reason why i do that is because sometimes they skip singapore but it gave me the opportunity to kind of like you know see other countries like travel other countries and it's just been a load of experience for me and the production the production value of like the different shows in different countries definitely differs from country to country especially if the venue size changes as well the crowd type changes as well sometimes it's good sometimes it's bad right but that's part of the experience of it so i would say that really it's just about like Okay, I'm just going to round it off to three things really. The experience of the shows, the production value of the shows, and the third one would really be how every show is being directed because every show is different, right? So each show is being directed in a very specific way. And it's really nice to just be able to experience that and see how it's being directed. And as a fan, you know, you can vibe off of that and like just really Yep.

****Interviewer**:** Were you able to interact with K-Pop and build the emotional bonding without social media?

****Interviewee**:** were you able to interact with K-Pop and build the emotional bonding without social media no i think that's very clear it's that social media is a huge part of K-Pop music's success i feel um social media is being used to interact with the fans a lot you know hype groups um now sm groups as well they've got weverse that is the platform that they use to interact with their fans uh jyp has bubbles so like all of these like platform different platforms really um yeah the answer is no i think this is very straightforward there's not much to speak about it like without social media i feel the interaction level of what it is right now be completely

different and i cannot speak for those who have been listening to like K-Pop music back in the in the days when social media was not a thing. Because I'm not so sure whether the experience of it was the same as mine when it came to like rock music, for example. But in this time and age, no. Social media is definitely very essential.

****Interviewer**:** And was it possible to create a fan community without social networks and new digital media?

****Interviewee**:** So question number seven, was it possible to create a fan community without social networks? My answer is the same as number six. But number eight, you said, have new digital media influenced the concept of comebacks and their organizational format? I would say yes, because like I mentioned earlier, right, like with comebacks is that you will already expect like a template. You would expect like a like, you know, like a timeline as well like a rough timeline of like in between comebacks and stuff The concept of comebacks however in my honest opinion, I think it differs from group to group I think that With every different companies that's a kind of like a distinct sound that you can hear between the companies whether is it like JYP SM or Hype But because I'm personally a bigger fan of the hype groups right there I would say that the concept of every comeback. I think it really differs from group to group like with TXT and Laceraphim for example like or even and Haipan like these three groups like You could see that there are concepts kind of linked back to previous comebacks as well. So it's either they are kind of doing like a Concept That's more of like a story or team based. I would not say that It's influenced by digital media I think the thing about groups like this with that sort of following I feel like they are the ones that are sort of creating a trend in a way so Yeah

****Interviewer**:** Was a new vision of comebacks created?

****Interviewee**:** Alright, so for number 9 was a new version of Comebacks Created. I would assume you mean more towards like themes, stylistically. I would say yeah, every group has a different type of stylistic comebacks. The one that really stands out, you can see that they have like a very strong vision of a theme in mind. I will go to number 10, you asked about are you interested in more concepts and stories related to idols? Like for example, EXO and their superpowers or aespa and the story of the Black Mamba. So I will go to aespa because I'm more familiar with aespa. Aespa has this AI concept that they've been doing since like debut. I love aespa but my honest opinion I do not like the AI concept because I don't see I don't see the substance of the AI concept or what they are trying to do with the AI concept I can see that they are trying. Sorry my voice not got cut but I was saying yeah I do not see the substance of the AI concept what they're trying to do because um

being a fan of aespa from like debut since day one right like I've always looked forward to like what they were gonna kind of release with the AI concept whether is it the stories or um whatnot but I feel that like even with an AI concept or even with like a story-based like um concept like you know what um and hyphen is doing with dark moon what txt is doing with the star seekers and yeah i feel i feel like there needs to be a flow right then the story needs to have some sort of meaning rather than it just being like oh okay like every single member has an ai character you know so with the aespa one for me personally i am not a big fan i don't think the music is very related towards the ai concept as well like get it like the black mamba thing that they were trying to do with the snake and stuff like that and like the whole battle thing like okay but i just i'm just like i'm looking at it and i'm trying to remember all of their comebacks and i'm like no i don't i don't i don't feel that it's very strong whereas when they really spicy and then when they released um drama it felt more it felt stronger it felt more convincing because i think the way that it is being executed was more was done with more confidence and more um assurance compared to when the ai concept was being done so i'm not so sure about the EXO one personally because I don't really follow EXO that closely but with the aespa one specifically as long as whatever concept they do has some substance of meaning towards it otherwise I don't think it will work out I'm not a big fan of it personally.

****Interviewer**:** Do new technologies interfere with the perception of live music?

****Interviewee**:** Do new technologies interfere with the perception of live music? Okay, so here's the thing that I was mentioning earlier, right? Like why when I first saw Wonder Girls at the festival, it felt very out of place for me because I'm used to seeing like a live band accompanying an artist. So what about this, right? Like why did I buy into like the whole concept about it? So think of it in the concept of like why do people go for raves why do people go and watch like a dj perform or like an electronic music artist perform for example and then when you understand the concept of like electronic music when you understand the concept of production then i think that's when you you will be able to understand the difference between like K-Pop live shows versus a regular band live show for example so i won't say that it interferes with the perception of live music but in fact i feel that it is a very different industry and i think that for most people it really depends on what they are looking out for in a live show where i know some people who they need um their ears to be tickled by live instruments um so they cannot buy into like the K-Pop concept because most of the time it's um backing track barring a few groups that plays with a live band so but personally for me having understand the

K-Pop industry having understand like you know music production i would say it does not interfere with live music because K-Pop live shows don't just cater to singing live there's dancing there's a whole ass production of like you know um choreographies um how you direct a show like your introduction the vcr how it goes into that section and then you know comes like the different outfits for different sections and how you kind of piece everything together to put on a show right so no i wouldn't i would say that it does not interfere with live music because there's a lot of factors that affects like if for example if you look at Stray Kids when they perform Red Light at their maniac shows, I don't think they are singing live. Personally, in my opinion, I don't think they are. Maybe they are here and there but not fully because the choreography in itself is already very intense. So what they are showcasing there will be more for a performance thing rather than like, you know, more like a vocal thing or like a musical thing so that is one example that like you know different factors will affect like different things and then going to your next question i shall just go to the next question straight is that about programs for that broadcast the comeback stages what do you think of the programs that broadcast the comeback stages yeah so you know like this these comeback stages some of them are not performed live it's pre-recorded beforehand and that's very simple when you have a comeback stage when you have like a show they are seeking for stability right because they're gonna be airing these performances and stuff to like the mass audience and like the mass public in a way so it's a music show it's not so much of like a concert so i would say that like i don't think it interferes i just think that's the concept of what they are trying to offer or what they are trying to showcase to the fans like extenuary heroes who they are a live band right but when they play on they play on like music shows they are not performing live like you can see their instruments are not plugged in but it's just because it's more of like a showcase of like their music and like trying to put it out on the various music platforms and stuff like that.

****Interviewer**:** Do you consider them (concerts) live? And how do you think the audience in the auditorium feels when these video broadcasts are recorded?

****Interviewee**:** Do I consider them live? Well, in some ways, yes. But I think it depends on how you look at it. If you ask me in terms of singing live, then obviously with the music shows thing, and if it's a pre-recorded version of the performance, then can you consider that as live? I'm not so sure. But they are dancing, right? they are also performing on stage even if they're not singing live so i think this would really depends or depend on like person to person on what they would want to be considered on what they consider as life so you mentioned here about like how do i think the audience

in the audience in the auditorium feel when these video broadcasts are recorded so i think everyone is different but hearing from the experience of one of my friends who went for one of the kbs shows i cannot remember which one but um it's just last december so i remembered when she went and she recorded the video of i've performing like they were not singing live it was pre-recorded but she said she went there for txt right and she said that that was probably like her best experience even compared to like a txt concert itself and i think for fans who go there it's really just to be able to experience and like have that sort of like interaction with the artists um during those performances because those performances are something different than what you get from like maybe a concert and it's a different experience so i would i would think that people who attend like this broadcast or like this pre-recording sessions they they do so because they really do enjoy the experience of it all.

Interviewee N4 (extras)

Interviewer: "Okay, so let's start with a very general question. So, what is K-Pop? Is it a genre? Is it a culture? Is just music or something more? To me, yeah, or how you perceive it, something like this."

Interviewee: "For me, I always perceived it as a genre of music, I think so, but like you said now, it's also a culture, so I would say both."

Interviewer: "Okay, then we go further. So, how you would define 'comeback' in terms of K-Pop? Come back, come back, like a comeback, yeah, yeah, like someone coming back, yeah, yeah. Do you know what is it, like someone who used to be famous and is famous again?"

Interviewee: "No, it's enough, it's something like totally different in terms of K-Pop. It's when they're releasing a new album, they call it a comeback."

Interviewer: "They call it a comeback, yeah. How do I perceive comeback? Yeah, no, it's like, it's like, so the thing is that comeback sometimes it's totally complicated, so this is why I'm saying that, no worries for you, several questions. The question was like, you know, what a comeback is, yeah, yeah, how, no, the thing is that, no, the thing is that how you define comeback in terms of K-Pop, but the, for this, you need to know what this comeback, okay, so, okay, so then, what attracted you to K-Pop, yeah, and what attracts you now?"

Interviewee: "Hmm, so first, what attracted me to K-Pop was definitely music, and I think there's something about the pace and something about, I don't know, it's either, it's quite light, you know, it's nothing too deep, it's easy to listen, and they easy to feel emotions, and then afterwards, I got influenced by it in a way that I could project myself to the people singing it."

Interviewer: "Oh, really?"

Interviewee: "I could imagine myself being these people, mm-hmm, I mean, if you're good, you know, because they were pretty, and they sing well, and I think to some extent, that made me feel better about also my identity, to see Asian people, I think, looking cool, you know, because I swear to God, for maybe 20 years of my life, looking Asian was not that cool, but now it's cool."

"Yeah, I know, you want to mean like, it's cool to be a boy who's not so muscular but like, pretty looking, a little bit feminine, definitely wasn't the case before, so it made me feel a bit good about myself."

Interviewer: "That's cool. So, how do you mostly interact with K-Pop, like in terms of the medium that you're using?"

Interviewee: "Music, music, Spotify, so YouTube also, I like to watch the clips."

Interviewer: "Oh, really?"

Interviewee: "Day6, mm-hmm, I have some nice clips."

Interviewer: "So, do you feel like it would be possible to create a community of a K-Pop without social media?"

Interviewee: "Yes, where and how, like, just, just without, like, without, I would ask my friends if they listen to it, I would maybe try to introduce it to them, mm-hmm, actually, yeah, I don't know how I would do this with social media so much."

Interviewer: "Oh, anyway, but do you feel like the digital media actually influenced the way how K-Pop now organized and social media?"

Interviewee: "Yes, very much, actually, YouTube, I think, did a big job at this, and the fans were going crazy at, I think, promoting them and bringing them spotlights, mm-hmm, so, and if you would like, go into deep of a research, what is the, what is that, I mean, the concept of the album is about, would you be interested also to, like, understand, like, what is the deep meaning of, like, pictures, if they inspired by, like, I don't know, books, or like, readers to just get into the community in terms of, like, solving the mystery somehow that they created around?"

Interviewer: "Yeah, but like, and when you mentioned music videos, would you say that is it important for you to have like a story in the music video to follow, or just visuals?"

Interviewee: "Like I said, the only really stories I followed was Day6 one, yeah, but still, yeah, it was fun, but I'm not like obsessed with knowing what's happening next, like, I don't, in the end, I really think, in the end, what makes a difference for me, the music."

Interviewer: "Yeah, so basically for you, like, this fantasy worlds that could be created in like, an fun community and like, like, you know, when there is a skinship, like, there is this thing, so it's not for you, like, to really just enjoy K-Pop for the music and what it is as a music."

Interviewee: "I think maybe that makes a difference, is that I'm not, I think I tend to want to separate the artist with me, because I'm not so interested in the artist."

Interviewer: "Yeah, so for you, artist is not so much of importance in terms of people."

Interviewee: "I mean, of course it is, you know, I mean, so important, actually, but, but, but you would not consider them, like, for example, there is like this, a lot of stuff that happening around, like, artists who are like dating or whatever, you would not cancel them because of this. I mean, you would cancel them."

Interviewer: "Yeah, I mean, I totally understand, because you feel very much connected with music."

Interviewee: "I mean, I'm totally, as well as you, yes, I mean, I, because I feel like for me also, the, the music was the first primer, output, like, input, because I like to listen to it, not, I mean, apart from a lot of things that I

also like in K-Pop, but the music for me always was the, like I said, also a part of me, is interesting because it's an identity of Asian culture, mm-hmm, which I enjoy, especially at the beginning, when it was basics, Big Bang, oh, true, tell you, you know, it wasn't a moment where these guys were just doing what they did, mm-hmm, without this intention of promoting their, I don't know, identity or whatever, mm-hmm, Big Bang are so f*cking strange, really."

Interviewer: "Yeah, never watched it, actually."

"Fantastic Baby, a Fantastic Baby is not the first one, I know, but it's super weird, I mean, there is, but I, super weird, and, and I just found it funny, but I like it too, now I feel like with the new stuff, the industry has grown so big, that there is some kind of algorithm to have to follow."

Interviewee: "Oh, yeah, that's, that's for sure, I mean, I feel like before it was just something age that you would not necessarily would see in a normal life, like in the normal life, so this is why they were kind of trying to like push it to like a very created looks, but like, it was, if we speculate about it, do you feel like the, the social media actually made the idols closer to the public, so they like, in terms of like communication and approachable, or like, no?"

Interviewer: "I don't know, I'm asking you."

Interviewee: "I feel like nowadays, you know, they have these agencies that have these managers, mm-hmm, that are in charge of everything, I don't know if they even connect with any of their fans."

Interviewer: "I mean, yeah, yeah, then my question is, apart from identity, who, like, of course K-Pop has a lot, I mean, also a lot of foreigners now join the K-Pop, would you say that you can mention something that separate K-Pop and normal pop, like, and the pop in general?"

Interviewee: "The language, not all of them, but 'Dynamite' is in English, the whole JK's album is also in English, I think."

Interviewee: "So, you're asking me what defines, no, what, if you, if you could define something yourself that you would definitely say that K-Pop, yeah, yes, yes, actually, it's always extremely catchy, it's always the same structure of music, so like, versus chorus, versus chorus, bridge, chorus, it's always a rapper for some reason, which I never understood why, I don't need them, but sure, it's always about girls or boys, mm-hmm, like literally always, so again, it's because they want this kind of light effect that also is very universal, and maybe that defines also that K-Pop is very commercial, because it seeks the biggest audience it can, mm-hmm, so it's always a bit soapy, let's say, you know, I mean by soapy."

Interviewee: "Yeah, it's like soap opera, like something like cheesy, mm-hmm, but like, but I, that's the style, that's what they want, but how do you feel like

they always trying to like to find this bigger audience, they insert some random English words, mm-hmm, and the way they sing almost sound English for me sometimes, and again, these algorithms, I think they've been used in the general commercial musical industry, yeah, like it actually is using the same structure in the end, and also I think they, they, you know, this, this effect, these bands stuff, where they're dancing, and like, they're all super pretty people, but in the end, they don't, in my opinion, they don't really have some kind of, I think you want people who are not too different to each other, like all these bands, not so different in the end, so it's easy to get attached to all of them, and then it's easy to look up to them, mm-hmm, yeah, so to summarize, let's say, algorithm, mm-hmm, the language, and how their appearance is very important, yeah, and if these three things are combined, then you have K-Pop."

Interviewer: "So for you, more identifying to them, it's more important than be fantasizing about the idols in general."

Interviewee: "Exactly. There's really this thing where I can project myself, you know, and I can imagine a life where actually it's, you know, it's nice to be this type. Okay, that's cool. Day6. This guy, yes. Oh, yeah. I thought it was this guy. He's like the gay friend. No, it's true, it's true. Really. Look."

Interviewer: "What, what?"

Interviewee: "Yeah, you know, it's really, you can be a man, you can be a bit feminine, you can be a bit feminine, you can, you don't have to show, okay, not this, but like, you can be kind of different. The standards that were shown in Switzerland and Europe, when I grew up, so it was new to me. And I was like, Oh, wow, okay, I can be that person. That's totally fine as well. To be cool, or like attract people, whatever. But that's so, but that's, that's so cool. Like, yeah. And I'm super happy that it actually happened then. I think, I think, yeah, and I was in the moment, I had no idea what the K-Pop industry was, how many, how dangerous, how bad it was, you know, no, I was just vibing with it, because I felt happy that finally, some people like this can be famous, you know? And like, and they're getting like a huge, huge fanbase, not a fanbase, but like, people would be like, very interested and wanted to communicate with this, like, especially, I'm so sorry for saying, but girls, mostly. This is so sad."

Interviewer: "What is it?"

Interviewee: "It's so sad. But then, you watch this, and I love to watch this, and then there's a story. Because if you go to the next video, you understand... It goes to the... It continues, yes. It continues. It's always the same girl and the guy who's in love with her, blah, blah, blah. This guy doesn't care about her, et cetera, et cetera."

Interviewee N5 (extras)

Interviewer: "What is K-Pop for you? A genre, a culture, only music, or something more?"

Interviewee: "Well, I mean, it's definitely a way of life. Yeah, it's just like these options are just something that you can agree or disagree with, or you can elaborate on something more than this."

Interviewer: "Yes, it's a genre of music."

Interviewee: "Yes, I think it's also a culture. It's an essential part of culture, I think, especially because pop music all over the world has been so long-lasting. You know, genres in music change really quickly. Since the existence of pop music, we have seen so many different genres that appeared and never really ended. No, like rock didn't really end, but it appeared and had its biggest era and then it kind of stopped. And also, you have rockabilly music, then you had rock and roll, then metal started. And then you have punk, for example, at the same time. And you had alternative rock, futuristic; you had different periods. Techno appeared in the '90s and whatever."

Interviewee: "And also, pop kind of was, I think pop music became, also in the '90s, was like the birth of pop or something. Or before the '90s, '80s already was pop music, no? And I think pop was always like a post-war reaction, no? It was trying to be happy, like you weren't anymore sad. Like the sadness was kind of trying to be pushed down because rock and metal and all that music and blues and whatever the heck, it's all like, it's big sad, pop music was about celebrating life. It was about, you know, kind of being after war freedom."

Interviewee: "I think it's funny because in Asian cultures, they take over a lot of Western styles. That's true. Especially in K-Pop, they are very much based on the... I feel like the biggest style that they took over was especially in Japan. It's like one of my biggest interests was like in the time that I was listening to K-Pop also was Japanese metal music and Japanese rockabilly music. So it's like rock and roll music. Because they had a big obsession with America, but not just with America, with like all white people, but with the essence of Americans, you know, like the clothing, James Dean. Neoliberalism, it's neoliberalism, this notion of living. So they always had like a fascination with America, culture-wise."

Interviewee: "And also, with the kawaii culture came also the country part. It was like, you know, the American kawaii girls and whatever. I think with Korea, I started to listen to K-Pop when it was already like, I mean, the OG bands were already made. And for me, like any other genre of pop music, I immediately liked it because it had like the boy band aesthetic, but it didn't have this... I don't know. I was never like a big fan of NSYNC or I didn't like One Direction, for example. I didn't like all of these bands, which is weird, no?"

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, that's what I also didn't like them. So I also thought it's weird because I like the...

****Interviewee:**** Yeah. Yeah. I didn't like, but I like the Beatles, for example. I really love the Beatles. And I... I don't know. When I found out about K-Pop, I guess I was also watching anime.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, that was my question. What actually attracted you to K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, I was watching anime. I was watching a lot of YouTube. And on YouTube, there was a lot of, I don't know, living in another country. So I was watching, for example, there was this duo, there was a couple. They had a really big scandal in the end. But they're called Eat Your Kimchi. They used to live in Seoul and had two dogs. And they used to interview. Also, they interviewed SHINee at some point. And a lot of people, they were quite influential. And they were kind of showing the lifestyle there. And it was so different. And I was always just fascinated by that. But back to the pop, the stuff that I was talking about, pop music. I think pop music is still, till today, kind of accurate. So I think what got me to K-Pop was a mixture of anime. What is starting to get a lot of recommendations on Tumblr. Of edits of K-Pop stars. And then YouTube. I think YouTube at some point was, Big Bang, they were kind of popular. They had a lot of views. Like several millions for sure. Not like PSY or whatever. But definitely 10 or 12, they definitely would have. And I don't know, for example, Super Hero. They were like the big ones.

****Interviewer:**** Super Junior, you mean.

****Interviewee:**** Super Junior, sorry. I'm forgetting. I don't remember. Doesn't matter. You have me, because I'm in this kind of shit field. For me, for example, I didn't ever listen to albums. I liked it for the culture. And I have to admit, I watched a lot of interviews. And I watched a lot of these game shows. And I watched a lot of, I watched like that, what was that? It was something King.

****Interviewer:**** Rocky King, Rocky King, something like this probably.

****Interviewee:**** King or something like that. There was like a fad. I can send you some shows. Also, I watched the Mama Awards and stuff like that. I watched a lot of like, not live performances. I watched a lot of interviews, interactions. That's like where I think I kind of felt into like a fascination with them. Was watching the shows that they had. The shows that they were. And YouTube was really good, because a lot of shows were for free. You know, like you didn't have to have a streaming service to watch them. And they were all translated. Yeah, like a fun translated. You can find the English subtitles. Because people would invest to translate it.

****Interviewer:**** Just because they want to, I don't know, like to make it more broad, whatever. Just bring it to the public.

****Interviewee:**** Exactly. I think like I also was in that

period of, you know, like just wanting to. I don't know, I was a horny teenager. So I was watching a lot of like. I think again, here is like the gay fascination of female. I would call up on that. You know, what's better than watching a couple is watching like two guys. Innocently having a homoerotic relationship. Where you can fantasize, but nothing really happens. You think a book is big, but that's it. But you can go further. Yes, that's for sure. And then you go read the dirty, nasty fan fictions. You know, that's like. But like I also think like just being a horny teenager, yeah. But this is what. I didn't find white men so attractive at some point. I found Asian men more attractive."

****Interviewer:**** Why? Why would you say those? Why would you say so?

****Interviewee:**** Because like if you go back to my Tumblr. You will only see aesthetic stuff. And then like kind of Asian looking guys or Asian guys. So basically what influenced you is more like Tumblr edits. YouTube that was having like a huge tons of recommendation. That you would just jump in and whatever. I would just consume all the videos. Okay. I mean, same for me because I was basically the same. I would just. Yeah, so basically most of the things. How you would interact with K-Pop. It's like a social media, like a digital material. Yeah. It's not like. No Instagram back then. There was no Spotify. There was no TikTok. There was nothing back then. No, we have to go like back to like really like Tumblr. Like that's the only. 2013, 2010. Yeah, way back. I was in grade school. I was 14 years old. So that and also I just thought they had really cool style. I grew up with rap. My sister really loved MTV. I grew up with MTV. I grew up with like the early 2000s. You know, the Y2K era. Rap music like Aaliyah. And you know, a lot of black culture. And I think like what attracted me first were like 21. Yeah, because they started rap there. Because they were kind of like having that same swagger. But at the same time, I watched anime and watched like all these love stories, which then converted to like this highly pop big groups. Because I kind of thought like they looked like a little bit more like that Asian genre of K-Pop. So it was like this American K-Pop and then like the very Asian K-Pop. Like that didn't exist in America. Like the very official, like EXO was like that. EXO, like that's the most anti-American thing I've ever seen. Like everybody in America would just say it's a bunch of gay guys jumping around being cringe, no? But like if you watch an anime and you're like, yeah, they're singing about being wolves. And you know, like that's the cringiest shit in the world. But that like makes sense if you're watching anime, you know? So like it kind of, I put them in two groups. I also listened to a lot of like nice music from like a lot of like indie K-Pop music. Like NEO was really like one of the, like my favorite one. I can't remember the other names, but like I went on like a rabbit hole

once and I had like a nice playlist. I can find my old playlist maybe on YouTube. But yeah, most of it came from like also wanting to live in Korea. So I had my best friend in eighth grade and she now studies Korean. She was in Korea already five times. She's been there for one year to study. She studied Korean and Chinese. So like, you know, she really went with it. Like I kind of went out of it at some point. Same was my friend. But like not really. And also my other friend in secondary school, like in gymnasium, then they connected over K-Pop. And I was kind of still with them for some while and we could talk about it. But then I also kind of fell off that. So I wouldn't talk about it anymore. Because they found all these new bands and new members. And I was like, I was like still sticking around when EXO was at their peak. And then kind of after that, I think like after SHINee and EXO kind of had their like most peak, I kind of fell off. Yeah. But like, I mean, my question would be then, was it very much important for you to have this? I mean, you already mentioned it, this place of fantasizing about it. Like to have... Sure. That's the essence of it is the, you know, they are making, like we talked about this once, they are selling a product, which is something to be fantasized about. It's this group. There's nothing different about any other group. Even in Slovenia, now we have this group called Joker Out. Yeah, I know. I know. It was very much fun for Eurovision. They became Eurovision stars now. Like their manager tells them to not change their hair. Like I know his manager. They shouldn't have girlfriends. They cannot have sex. Like they cannot, you know, show interest in another person like this. They can play with each other, but like not really with, you know, it's strict. I get it. And I think that's in every boy band. That's the same. And that's obviously so that women have the opportunity to fantasize about. Yeah, but... I think that's still the main point that sells. I guess the music is good. But, you know, pop music never really was just a one facet thing. It was always kind of a full package, no? Pop music is like pop art. The visual is there with the information. I think that... Yeah, I know. I mean, I totally agree.

****Interviewer:**** But then my question would be like, can you elaborate a bit more? Why would you say that K-Pop stands out of the pop music in general and just being like this K-Pop? What it would be like the feature that you would like?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, this is K-Pop. Nothing else. They seem like lifestyles that they have. I think in America, it would not be acceptable that they're going to be underpaid and living in dorms and training 20 hours a day and being open about that but not changing anything about that. That's not going to be available. Americans like to believe that whoever they love is also rich and famous. That's also what attracts them to Harry Styles. It's also the local knowledge that he's a millionaire, proba-

bly. And that they're making good money and that their suffering is being paid. So the lifestyle in general would be separated somehow. Yeah. For example, with K-Pop, I remember now they're changing this. But before they were very honest about not having lost lifestyles and being very poor and tortured and whatever and suffering and dying and falling down and what the fuck. But that's attractive. But this is what you mentioned. It's also this drama that sells. Yeah, that's attractive to an Asian. I'm going to say this not from a racist standpoint, but I think that's attractive to an Asian standpoint because they also are working so hard and struggling. And they think that by showing that their idols are struggling too, that they can go through their struggles easier. They can connect more and empathy rather than be like, oh, they're fucking rich. I don't know. But I think that that's kind of the way. Because all of a sudden, in America it's the same. Like Megan Fox, who is a gorgeous woman, will go on E! and be like, but I have body dysmorphia. I think I'm ugly and fat. And everybody's like, oh my God, she's just like me. No, she's not. She's still skinny and beautiful, like you know, idiot. But relatability is different in every country. So I think that's kind of how they are stranger, that they're so different, that they're on their own. And the regime like dancing and synchronicity, everything is a little bit almost like over-the-top perfect. I don't know. Also, like you obviously, like if you have a brain, which I don't know, maybe a lot of girls don't know this, but like you obviously know that they're made, no? They look made. They look like they didn't write any lyric of their songs. They didn't pick the clothes that they wear. They don't have a personal style. Their faces are like made. Like you know that they're like unconventionally beautiful because it's fake. You kind of don't believe that they're singing like for real. But like at the same time, you're like, I'm fine with it. Like it's a product. No, like you're not being, you kind of don't expect them to be actual humans at some point. Because they're idols, the theme itself. Yeah, yeah. They're supposed to be, you know, this creature. Yeah, so. So that's what I think makes them different than American pop groups. Because American pop groups, they also, they try to make them look like individuals by doing like scary spice and sporty spice. And like that's also fake. We all know that it's fake. But it worked in the way that they were trying to promote individualism. Where like in K-Pop, I know they have like the I'm the this, I'm the cute one, I'm this. But that's like not really individual. No, that's like, I'm the cute one. Like, is that really an individual trait? You know, like I'm the, I'm the, I don't know, tall one. Like, okay, that's good. So, but they still kind of look old. You know, like they still look the same when they have their uniform, like when they're dancing. They're in the same fucking, constantly in the same genre. I mean, so when we were talking about EXO, I don't know if

you're familiar with this. Do you feel like it was important to create this extra universe for like they're having a superpower, like this extra like character somehow? That was, that was, I think, just the cringiest shit ever. But also so perfectly done. Like I don't, I don't think anybody could do that. But then, you know, that's such a crazy thing. And at some point I found that attractive, which is even more insane. But then again, we are used to Digimons and Pokemons and anime and Asian culture always having this kind of, you know, supernatural tendencies. So I think the audience that grew up with those animations, it didn't, it wasn't cringe. No, no, no, it was not cringe at all. Because we've grown up with this kind of, you know, shit. It was cringe to my dad because he didn't watch cartoons as a child. No, but like, but it wasn't to us because we're used to. And I think even in the future, like there's going to be even more bizarre things. I mean, I mean with Tommy Cash and a lot of like singers, like Little Big, they're using this ageness as like an inspiration point. But like we just taking it as like, what the fuck, it just looks cool in terms of like a pop art, even though they're also pop stars. We're like taking them as edgy pops, like Tommy Cash, for example. He's like an edgy, but still pop. I mean, I think he's, he's good because he still tries to make MVD a very aesthetic. Now, even though he's doing this kind of trash, like you would even say that he was before Balenciaga was cool. Yeah, for sure. And it's funny that he keeps showing up at this fashion shows, being crazier than the show that's happening now. I really like what he was like knitting on. I think it was Off-White. He became, he was like knitting there. I think he's hilarious because he's just showing everybody that he has more style, even though he's like, I don't know. I like him. Also, he's trying to make things aesthetic. It's so easy in this world of memes, where memes are dominating. They're already so post-ironic and like eating their own butt. They're already like, I don't know, I just saw a meme two days ago. It was so disturbing. Like even I was like, okay, this might be, I might be old. I might not get this anymore. But it was, it was so funny because they're becoming sincere again. And like, when I see him, he's still trying to make those memes kind of art, you know, this is what they're working at. Is it cringe? Yes. Everything is fucking cringe. No, like, that's the point, kind of like the cringier, the better. I think with K-Pop, they're still trying to be sincere. Yeah, of course. They need to be sincere because I feel like this is how they, they actually be since like. But when T.O.P came out with the song.

****Interviewer:**** Which one?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah. That song is hilarious, no? And it's a smart song. And that song has one of the best music videos I've seen. Yeah. It's also a lot of like early 2000s MTV where like every song had like a plot. I'm thinking from other movies, you know, like really like

thought of. But this is important for you back then to them, to like to music video, to have a plot, to like actually looking at it. I mean, it's about nothing, like nothing's really happening. Yeah, but like not only about aesthetics, but like also like. It's an artist, you could see that there was some art behind it. Like you could see that that shit's going down. Also, I think, I don't know. I think K-Pop. Maybe I, I don't know. I think they had a really good timing of releasing music and releasing solos back in the day. But, but, but it was all also constructed. I mean, in terms of come back. Of course. But I think it was, it was really one of the best ways. And like, I really enjoyed that their singers went on all of these different shows and sung all of these different kinds of music. You know, just like now I don't know if that's still happening because I'm not following. From SHINee, the one that killed himself. Jonghyun. Jonghyun, he went on like a singing show and he sang million flowers, like the million roses song. That was the most played video probably from all time. Because he's just killing it. It's just so, I mean, I'm not going to say killing it. Wrong choice of words. But he was really, he was really good at that. Yeah. I don't know. Next question. Yeah. I mean, then I was just like, would go directly to like more of the, more of a social media content.

****Interviewer:**** Do you believe that actually social media helped K-Pop to be like very broad?

****Interviewee:**** Like, because you already mentioned it, but yeah. So you believe that without social media, they could not make it? On a certain... I think, yeah, but like, you know, I think Tumblr wasn't really social media. But like, I think the term social media... YouTube, YouTube more. I don't think YouTube is social media. YouTube is something that you create and you share, but it's not like something that's like immediate connection with the artist. I never watched original videos of artists posting. Like when you said about BTS that they were posting on their own or somebody was posting their videos, personal videos. Like I always watched channels from fans or like edits or stuff like this. So I would, that their social media made me like them more because TLP posts weird ass fucking shit. But I mean, still you had the parasocial relationship from the parasocial relationship of a person who edited it. So it was like this secondary content that you would consume. It still makes you like kind of connected through the community somehow, but still anyway. If you define that it's not social media, because I couldn't watch them on TV. Yes, for sure. Nobody would share it. I know. I wasn't living that in the person. So yeah, over the internet. It was a parasocial relationship. But I also think it was, I did. I remember I did fantasize about going to Korea. Like I did. I was, it did give me, I think it was a good propaganda for the country, but I don't think the country would actually want me there because all that I learned about Korea

was that I am not the kind of person that they would like to have there. I'm not so smart. I'm not so great. I'm not so skinny. I'm not so, you know, like, I feel like the more I learned about their culture, the more I felt like I would not be an ideal person for them. Oh, that's definitely not. I mean, they also fucking racist. You need to know. I feel like they would not like me. Like I would not be accepted there. Yeah. And, and so I, you know, kind of, I wanted, I like had this wanting for like to go there and to visit and to maybe even live there because I was obsessed with the culture and the food and everything. But I always also like kind of, because of like, I'm saying that they had a good propaganda in place for all these girls to like Korea. Like Korea seemed like the amazing country, you know? But at the same time, you also got the info that like, you are not wanted there. Like you're a white person. They do not want you. Like they really don't want you to be there. They want you to stay where you are. Yes, that's for sure. They want you to look at it through the digital media. This is kind of like a message that you get. I mean, if you, if you have a brain, otherwise you can go. Yeah. And like, this is also like kind of how I felt with Japan and Japanese culture because I was obsessed with Japanese culture. And I was like, fuck, I don't know if I could ever be so polite that people would actually like me there. I think I will always be a mean-ass white person there. Even if I was trying as hard as I could speaking Japanese and whatever the fuck, I still think like they would think like I'm trash because I'm like, you know. And I mean, but maybe that's just like kind of like the social media. But I was, they were for sure good at making people obsessed with them. No. And I never really spent money on it, but I know like my friends like Nina and Lara, they spent hundreds and hundreds of euros on merchandise that was shipped like from Korea, you know, for like the sticks. Yeah, light sticks. Of course, that's very important. For posters, for toys, for cups, for everything. Like my mom didn't give me shit money, so I couldn't order it. And I was always scared of ordering online. But then them too, they were like brave. They ordered everything, no? And like they spent a lot of money. So I guess like it's, but you know what I did spend money on? I spent money on like a box of like Japanese candy, you know, when that came to. Yeah, because you know, like all of these things that they also consume in videos and stuff, like you kind of want. It's lifestyle. It's lifestyle. They're selling lifestyle for sure. In New York, there's like three Asian stores. And in those stores, there is the demographic of people are girls like us, are our age and younger. And they want all the boba tea and the, you know, silly candy and stuff. And that's because of this media. That's because of the Japanese and Korean media. They are like, you know, they're successfully selling products that are like random. Like PokéSticks are the

most famous food, probably. PokéStick still? Yeah, because, but that's because of, you know, the PokéGames. That's because of like the, I believe that. That's why they are such a great, like they really made the brand. You could make a research on it, but like, I really believe that a lot of- I also believe that it's actually true. A lot of these shops here exist because of that.

Interviewee N6 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** Yes, yes, yes. It's true. Huge thanks for agreeing to chat because the questions can really be not very... I formulated them very complicatedly, as I can't write well. But never mind, we'll figure it out now. Just to note, this conversation is being recorded, but no worries, it's not for any court purposes. It's just important for me to know the opinions of different fans. So, everything's alright. Anyway, let's get started. What does K-Pop mean to you in general? Is it a genre, some kind of culture, or just music?

****Interviewee:**** Well, personally for me, K-Pop is, well, a genre of music overall. Though it could be called a culture, judging by the fact that it's mainly Koreans in K-Pop. So it's specifically something Korean, but probably more of a genre.

****Interviewer:**** Got it. Just a genre. And do you consider yourself a fan of K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** Yes, I think so. Well, not exactly K-Pop. I'm a fan of like one or two groups.

****Interviewer:**** Which ones? Can I consider myself a K-Pop fan?

****Interviewee:**** I think it's how you feel about yourself in this regard. I was a huge fan of BTS, and I considered myself a K-Pop fan. Me too. I didn't have time. It's the army, the army, time. Now I listen to Stray Kids. Love Stray Kids too.

****Interviewer:**** Okay, then. What brought you to K-Pop? How did you end up there?

****Interviewee:**** Yes. Here this main boss. Now I need to remember. I got acquainted with K-Pop back in 2017-16. Around then. It's been a long time, basically, BTS. I don't even remember how I stumbled upon them. But probably some video flew into YouTube, I think, and I listened. Like, oh, cool. And started to find out. Found out that there, basically, a bunch of these fandom-members various. It got interesting. I dived in and then fell in love for many years. Only in 2020 or even in 2021 did I leave the fandom army.

****Interviewer:**** How did you leave?

****Interviewee:**** I don't love them. I just developed other interests. Understand. Okay. And now what attracts you in K-Pop? Obviously, what you liked might have changed over time.

****Interviewer:**** To receive visual and auditory pleasure. And the genre, yes. And the genre has changed a bit.

****Interviewee:**** I understand. But, for example, BTS also had such performances before. Not that... Well, very massive, when they called a huge number of back-up dancers and agonies and all that. But you're more interested in what's happening at the moment, probably.

****Interviewer:**** That is, like through music or through social networks, or through the community, or just chat with friends, or watch concerts? This kind. This is a

bit of a heavy question, I didn't know how to translate it. Specifically, now I follow comebacks on YouTube and TikTok. Mostly I learn everything about K-Pop only through TikTok. Because I don't really have any communities, only if some with beautiful photos.

****Interviewee:**** Ah, got it. I don't have many friends who are into K-Pop. So yes, in TikTok all. Here, and do you think that without social networks it would probably be difficult for you to interact with any such information?

****Interviewer:**** That is, it's logical to assume that traveling to Korea or on TV, we don't have that happening here. Well, of course, yes. They don't show Koreans with Russia. No, sometimes they showed, like on Yula, something. I remember there was some channel with gifts. I remember that I watched my first and only drama there. The Legend of the Blue Sea, something like that. Well, not the point, in general, yes. Here, listen, you were into BTS, and you were into Stray Kids. I don't know about Stray Kids, but BTS had this thing, I don't know how much you're into I Need U, I Run and this whole situation about when...

****Interviewee:**** Well, I know, yes, I know. There was such a conceptual story, really such, where they were dying, not dying, all that, all that. Well, I remember that... I, by the way, noticed that usually it's often such a technique that some K-Pop groups develop from their very comeback, well, or from some point.

****Interviewer:**** And in the clips they refresh some kind of their own universe, some common story. Seriously? Stray Kids also have such a thing?

****Interviewee:**** Yes. And from their very first clip, they have it all stretching out. And it's also somehow unclear and confusing, which is very cool to figure out all this.

****Interviewer:**** So that's important to you?

****Interviewee:**** Well, that is, you like such interactions that are not straightforward? Well, yes, of course, some element of such mystery, so that I could kind of feel that I can contribute my own part, come up with some theory of my own or something. Yes, it's very cool that they give such an opportunity. Damn, it's cool, because I'm also a huge fan of that. I've always liked that, like organizing a brainstorming session. Like, and this is from where? My favorite fandoms are those where there is such a mystery and some kind of ARG moment. ARG — that's when something communicative is going on. It's a series that you can participate in through comments or solving some puzzles. You know, in Gravity Falls on the pages of the cartoons there were codes that users deciphered to form messages. And there at the end of this series they came up with some super cool quest for us all countries. Well, in general, I really like all this. The same FNAF, when nothing is clear with the plot, and the fans themselves invented, guessed. I always adore this thing. Cool, because yes, because I asked many, but everyone told me, like, what is this? Well, like, I'm

not interested at all. I'm like, yes, but this is the most interesting, when you can fantasize about various different plot developments. I don't know, I really like it too. I absolutely understand you. Well, honestly, I either don't remember or didn't really delve into the BTS universe. Because I don't remember what was there, naturally. Yes. Listen, well, of course, you also know about such interactions, like, skinship for different fans to fantasize about, I don't know, pairings within the fandom. Well, like... About fan service?

****Interviewee:**** Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. What do you think about this? I feel... Well, actually, it's hard to explain. Yes, I like some pairings. I always, always both in BTS and in Stray Kids I shipped some characters. But for me it's rather not like I ship, imagine that these two real people are meeting, but as if they are separate two characters, I just... Their appearance and character, but as if it's not them, not real people, but just some kind of characters that it's not so embarrassing to ship. Absolutely, I'm exactly the same. It's also very important for me to have these fantasy worlds, that you have not only this, I don't know, Philipp Kirkorov.

****Interviewer:**** Awesome! Damn, that's top! That is, your bias was Namjoon, right?

****Interviewee:**** Yes! I really have huge hoodies, just with Namjoon's face. And it looks very cringey now. Then I was proud of it. Although I really never wore it anywhere, but because we don't accept K-Pop here. I even had the same backpack with BTS, with which I went to school, I, well, was laughed at in general. Like, oh, K-Pop shit. They don't understand anything at all. Yes! And I remember how I still loved to argue in the comments in the anti-BTS public, BTS. Cool, damn! It was one of my favorite pastimes, of course, yes. But it closed, because, apparently, it became irrelevant.

****Interviewer:**** My bias from BTS is J-Hope.

****Interviewee:**** Well, I usually... As a rule, I don't have one bias. I have the one I throw, and there are those I love. If you know, then you know who I throw.

****Interviewer:**** No, actually, what is that?

****Interviewee:**** Let's go! To throw — it's like associating yourself with something. Throw music, a character of something else. And when you, well, when someone or something is very similar to you, then you can say, here I throw. And with whom? That is, you apply his role to yourself. Here. Well, now I have Felix. And then it was Taehyun. Well, the most popular. Well, of course, Taehyun is just the most cutie. No, I love it too. No, I actually... Listen, is this also somehow related to role-playing or not? In terms of? That is, I know that there is... I just never... didn't participate in such a thing. It's when there are some common chats, where you can apply yourself... Oh, no, what role-playing is, I know. I've been in this for a very long time. I might have it family-wise.

****Interviewer:**** Yes, your sister— it's always.

****Interviewee:**** Yes, I know. He even, I think, showed me his notebooks with role-playing by Death Note. In general, yes. I'm into this, of course, but I don't think that... Although no, yes, it's related. Because in role-playing I also usually take myself as a character to throw. But do you participate in role-plays? Yes, constantly. Even now. Yes, I... Sasha also invited me. But I never... I just write very badly and speak very badly in any language, so... It's hard for me sometimes. Sanya was shocked when she found out what it has turned into now. Because in her time online role-playing was, you know, a sentence in brackets. Like, drinks tea. And now, personally for me, these are posts of two thousand words. Well, basically, a canvas. He said that I'm a graphomaniac, but there's no water there. Everything is important there. Yes, everything is important. Here. No, cool. Um... Here. And then the last question will be.

****Interviewer:**** Would you ever like to have the opportunity to participate in something... like karaoke, but the opportunity to have your own avatar and perform.

****Interviewee:**** Well, not to perform on stage, but just, like, be the embodiment of some character you create within idol-reality.

****Interviewer:**** Not like karaoke, but like a drag show, when you can perform and be an idol somehow.

You mean? In principle, do I want to become an idol?

****Interviewer:**** No-no-no, not in principle would you like to become an idol, because that's hard. Here. But to have the opportunity... Try on the mask of an idol and perform on stage.

****Interviewee:**** Yes, of course. I've dreamed of this since childhood and still do. Rather, not an idol, but just an artist I would like to become, because music in general attracts. I'm now trying to learn to play the electric guitar, because I still have a smoldering somewhere under the creation of a dream, that I will succeed in creating my own music group and also perform. But if I could become a part of... In principle, become an idol, I would do everything for it. But since I'm in Russia, I don't have the opportunity. But I would go through all the trials. And hard training, and diets, and all that, because it's really cool. Despite the fact that it's hard, the love of fans and a large fan base, it's very cool. Yes, and within the framework of K-Pop it's also very healthy, because you already have an industry with which you can interact. Therefore, I think, a huge number of people even in the same America want to become K-Pop idols, because it's a completely different opportunity, a different platform for communication. K-Pop idols... It's a little easier to become popular in K-Pop than solo artists. Because for this there is already all the soil. Yes, self-promotion, and in general this group, and it's already cooler, and if you're a soloist, then even if you're a producer, it's hard to break through, because there are millions of solo artists. In general, it's very difficult. This is true.

Interviewee N7 (extras)

Interviewee: "Yeah, I was quite a big fan when I was in high school of TVXQ. I don't know if you know."

Interviewer: "Of course, yes." "Yeah. Well, before they were five people. Now only two."

Interviewee: "Now, yeah, now they're only two people. And their debut was when I was in private school or something. And then it was actually I became their fan when they released the last album as five. So, I mean, I didn't know and I was too young to know if they had like contract problems with their company and stuff. And then I just liked the music and obviously the visuals. And yeah, in the class, my classmates also listened to that particular album. And then after they broke up in a way, they separated into two groups and three of five who ran away from the company, they made another group. But it wasn't the same anymore. I mean, I wasn't a fan of just one person, but more the whole group, what they made, their dynamics and different stuff, you know, like the relationships that they had. Well, at least the superficial ones. So this was quite important for me. And then after they broke up, I wasn't really a big fan of anyone. I liked them the most for a very short moment. And then obviously I got to know them a little bit later, you know, after their debut. So I started to go back to what they used to make, you know, like old times. So actually, I do have their albums because at the time they still listened to on CD player. So yeah, that's my somewhat fan moment. And after that, I, in the second year of my high school, I had, you know, like you speak with another person side by side. It's a fun old thing. It's quite cute thing."

Interviewer: "Isn't it like a fun meeting or?"

Interviewee: "No, no, a fun meeting, but just a classmate."

Interviewer: "A classmate."

Interviewee: "Yeah, and then in a class, I happened to see one person, one classmate, and then she was a fan of Arashi. So I was a little bit into K-Pop because at that time, to be honest, like this K-Pop thing wasn't really a thing. Even the TVXQ was quite big in like southern Asia, you know, like Indonesia and Thailand. But it wasn't that global like. It was very much Asian fan culture and probably some people outside of Asia knew. It was not really a big thing. And still there were, I remember, I mean, it's still a big thing, K-Pop, but it's like, it was a big thing. K-Pop."

Interviewee: "Yeah, yeah. Well, but K-Pop, the word, it didn't exist."

Interviewer: "Oh, yeah?"

Interviewee: "I just, I didn't know. I think they just named it after the K-Pop, so they just, you know, K-Pop, so it's kind of a thing."

Interviewee: "Yeah. I mean, that is how I was thinking

about the term in that period, so yeah. I don't know how that happened, but K-Pop like changed something. It didn't even exist. It was just more like, for us, it's just a normal idol music. And yeah, and then there was also a big part of K-Pop at that time. And then after, it somehow, I don't know, like, when I went to university afterwards, it just somehow also originated from the fan culture a little bit. And then this, but still in the university, my classmates, there were many, many fans of also TVXQ, well, or SHINee, you know, like the idols of many, many times."

Interviewee: "Yeah, that was a thing that I did. Ah, even like EXO, there were, like, all these types."

Interviewee: "Yeah. Super Junior also were there."

Interviewer: "Yeah, Super Junior."

Interviewee: "Yeah, for sure. It was also kind of famous. 2NE1 has been there, and also, of course, Big Bang."

Interviewer: "Which one?" "Big Bang, 2NE1."

Interviewee: "Ah, yes. Big Bang and 2NE1. But I don't know, still for me, I can tell I was a fan of TVXQ. I enjoyed listening to the Big Bang, 2NE1, Super Junior, or even, like, BoA or SHINee."

Interviewee: "Cannot really deny that they are like, somehow similar to each other, and yeah. But I also feel like that's how culture works, you know? Like, people talk about what is the origin of this particular culture, then you need to go back to the whole history of humanity. We are all from Africa. I'm sorry, yeah, yeah, yes, yes, yes. That's what I'm saying, like, it's just stupid to say something is original and the others are copies."

Interviewee: "No, no, no, that's not how it works. And then you, you are from like, you think you are so original. So yeah, that's more, I would, I mean, I would say yes, it's similar. And I do think that K-Pop, also visual culture or the music wise, I don't know so much of music, but I guess they are inspired by American pop because it was the most worldwide music for a long time, even now. And then they are super powerful, you know? Like, I don't know, like they are super well-known."

Interviewee: "All these celebrities, and then, and then the financial scale wise, they are a lot bigger still, you know. So it's more, yeah, it gets a bit similar in a way. And I don't think that's bad or something that you should be ashamed of. I guess, I mean, there are still differences, you know? Like, there are many groups, group bands in Korea compared to America where there are many single artists like Nicki Minaj, Beyonce, you know. They are like, it, one strong figure takes over the whole thing, like Lady Gaga and stuff. Like, they are crazy. But it's more the group vibe that K-Pop has, you know? Like, and then fans are really into the relationships that they have within the group. That's one thing. And second thing is obviously language, even though in K-Pop you hear a lot of English words, but still, you know, there

are certain, you know, things that language gives. I cannot tell because I know, I know. I guess, see, you are more curious when you don't understand things, and then always it sounds super new, or, or yeah, maybe the message that you take from it, it will be different. And yeah, so these kinds of things, I guess, they are still differences because it's a different country. And then, I just, in general, I just find this whole thing a bit stupid when people started to talk about, you know, you know, something like, I don't know, like Switzerland has this, a fry top.

****Interviewer:**** (due to malfunction of the microphone)
 So, the most important thing, so when she was talking about the K-Pop and what it is about, she definitely said that this is like a culture with somehow like that people communicate. It's, of course, a genre of the music, but in a way how it represents itself and more or less how people then afterwards communicate. She mentioned that was they communicating with a K-Pop culture somehow. Yeah, so it's basically for her it's still a music, but it's also a culture, so something like this. And then this was not. Yeah, and she also talked a lot about her being a fan of Shinhwa and then that she mostly communicated not in terms of the community and like with the fans, but like in her school with a lot of her friends and the broadcasting system in a school like the club that we're doing broadcasting, we're putting like this song of Shinhwa and this is how yeah she was fun in somehow. And also that it's were super important that yeah first she didn't like it and then so the connection happened also naturally, so she was yeah so she still figured out like looked at that they're super artificial and very much trying to pretend that they're super perfect and everything, but yeah at the same time afterwards when they released the song she very much liked it, so she's like yeah I like it, so she started to listen it, so she was never into music videos and yeah so but visuals she also liked like pictures and everything, so yeah so basically the storytelling that she mentioned was mostly about these small details that they have inside merch and the stuff that they produce, so it's actually what she believes is very important somehow to tell the story through like a lot of elements that they can use for example fire and then fire cart and then fireball and something it's if you will talk about the EXO, so yeah and idols yeah it's like she was a fan and she likes to talk with the with the people and then yeah she was buying albums, but by the time it was just the only one way how you would communicate with the people how you can listen to it, because there was not so much of a digital music, there was just more like if you want to listen to the song legally you need to buy an album and of course now you can listen it like to Spotify or whatever, but still that yeah that's not so much things that you could have like extra songs like because there

was like 12 songs and this is why the songs was the most important somehow like the extra content that you could just have a connection, so yeah the most important was of course albums and albums was not like now like very prominent was like photobooks and cards and everything they were just like albums that's also nice and yeah and that it was like more inside the school and like also with this posters that they had yeah super nice what else we created yeah i mean yes i feel like this is somehow the most important in terms of like her own experience with the with the community and yeah what else what i would like to say so.

Interviewee N8 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** Okay, let's go. Yeah. What do you feel like, what is K-Pop for you? Is it just a genre of music? Is it a culture? How do you perceive it?

****Interviewee:**** I think it's... I think it's music, but it's also culture. Like, any music with a face becomes a culture, essentially. So, it's definitely a culture.

****Interviewer:**** Okay, so, um, you would not consider yourself as a fan of music of K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** I'm like a listener of music. I'm not like... I don't pursue it and look into it. I just sort of enjoyed every once in a while.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah. And then my question would be, what actually attracts you into K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** And I think it's just... I like the, the sort of the color of the music, like the, the genre of it because it's different from like European music. And it's also... I don't really understand it. And when I listen to music in languages that I understand, it's distracting. Although I listen to K-Pop, it's less distracting.

****Interviewee:**** Oh, yeah. Because you cannot understand the lyrics. I don't understand it. Oh, because I listen very much to the words, but I don't understand it. So it's like...

****Interviewer:**** Yeah. But would you consider then the English, uh, parts of something that would kind of be more engaging?

****Interviewer:**** Uh, this is what distracts you. Yeah, okay. I see. I see. So you would say that this, this, uh, the same notion of K-Pop would attracting you now still in this, in this genre? Or there is something else that you would, you would like?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Like, because I mean, the question is what attracted you before and what attracts you now. So it's like, I think it's really just... Yeah, the music. I don't really look at like music videos and such. I don't really know. I mean, I know now a little bit about like singers and stuff, but not really. Um, yeah, but it's mainly just the music.

****Interviewer:**** And, um, the first time when you kind of met the K-Pop, did you meet it, uh, through social media or...

****Interviewee:**** I essentially... I remember someone was like, "Oh, this band brought out a new music. It's so good. I love it so much." And I was like, "Okay, let's listen to him." And then I... Oh, this is...

****Interviewer:**** Who was it? Interesting, if you remember.

****Interviewee:**** I don't remember.

****Interviewer:**** But what... Where was it? It was it on YouTube or in, uh, Twitter?

****Interviewee:**** I mean, someone posted it. I think it was on Twitter back then, and it was like a music video on YouTube. Okay, okay. Yeah. So it was not like a

suggestion on, um, Spotify. It's more like with a visual content.

****Interviewer:**** But so do you feel like, uh, actually social media played a huge role, uh, for K-Pop to be expanded like worldwide?

****Interviewee:**** I think so, yeah. Because I mean, social media gets you into, gets you to touch with a lot of content that you otherwise wouldn't. And K-Pop is one of them. So I definitely think it contributes.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, that's... Yeah, cool. And, um, of course, just because you're fan, I mean, I would ask you still the question. Do you feel like the certain extra narratives that exist in K-Pop videos, uh, or like in concepts of their albums are also quite interesting? Or it's you don't, and you don't, you don't care about it?

****Interviewee:**** If they're interesting... Yeah, let me think. I'm trying to play a few videos in my head. Um, yeah, I mean, are they interesting? I mean, they're well made. I think it's not that they're badly made or anything, but it's not something where I'm like, "Oh, I... I need to watch the video and I listen to this song." It's not very captivating, I think, for... But it's also, I think, for a younger audience, they feel different about it because it's also very much like about the persons in the videos. And there's always like an aspect of like sexualization.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, to a certain extent, yes.

****Interviewee:**** Um, yeah, which is also really different is like, you have a lot more members to a K-Pop group than like Western groups usually. But yeah, are the videos interesting? I mean, I would say they're well made, but they're not like super interesting.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, so the thing is that there is like, somehow, in a certain level of engagement, there is like a very deep content that you can, I don't know, explore somehow if you're very interested in it. But there is also very beautiful visual, uh...

****Interviewer:**** And then I... I'm actually super curious to know, do you feel like there is a big difference between K-Pop and the pop in general? Pop, like Western pop?

Yeah, yeah. Like, the pop that... I mean, in Western pop, they consider it pop, and then this is why I mean, there is this notion that there is K-Pop because it's something else that they give a name. Or, for example, when the Western culture, they're speaking about K-Pop genre, they're not somehow taking it inside. They're like, "Who would be the next K-Pop star?" So it's like, "Who would be the next BTS?" So it's not like K-Pop would be a part of it. So, but like, in terms of organization or somehow, like, the notion that you have of a K-Pop, do you feel like there is certain differences between... Yeah, sure. I'm trying to think. But yeah, one thing is for sure, like, the band size is different. I just feel also the topics are different in K-Pop. Like, it's like they're not always singing about the same things, about the same content. And I'm

not sure. I feel like maybe it's just because I'm not hugely into the scene, but I feel like a lot of, or a few, K-Pop... not K-Pop, a few pop stars, like in the West, because like music producers themselves, I feel like in K-Pop, it just sort of... they don't... it's just... they're... they're being successful until they're not. And that's... that's sort of the end of the story.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, because they're not really like having a concert and interacting with humanist specific.

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, yeah. It's just, you can listen to it. You might as well be listening to like a YouTube video recorded a year ago. I don't think it makes a huge difference. I think you can interact like with the community in the chat or something, but yeah, that's... I mean, I feel like the most, uh, the most way how a lot of people would communicate, it's like through the, the communication and like in the social media or exit actually inside the community when you and me, for example, like, "Hey, did you... did you see the new music video of Twice? Did you..."

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, yeah. Of course, it wasn't English. I was like, "Why you do this to me?" Like, no, I was... I was a bit... I was a bit confused because, yeah, I also... I was like, "Oh, this is unexpected."

****Interviewee:**** Yeah. And, uh, I don't know. It's also like somehow unnecessarily like, it sounds a bit Korean in a way, how they... how they sing.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, I don't know. I think one of the first videos I listened to, now that I remember, it is like KDA was one of the... KDA, where the music video came out, and it was really impressive, and it had K-Pop in it, and I was like, "Oh, this is like... yeah, let's... let's look into this."

Interviewee N9 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** So my first question would be, do you feel like the, what is it, not what do you feel like, what is the K-Pop? Is it a genre, is it a culture? Is it the music or like, it's how you perceive it? Or is it something else for you?

****Interviewee:**** I think it's definitely the culture. Before I got into it, I thought it was just music, but once I was kind of invested into certain K-Pop groups, it definitely felt like a huge culture. Yeah, also was like interactive movements and yeah, I don't know, like a very specific way of connecting with it.

****Interviewer:**** Okay. Do you know what is a comeback?

****Interviewee:**** Yes.

****Interviewer:**** What is it?

****Interviewee:**** It's when a group kind of falls out of popularity, but then, I don't know, maybe they make a new song and it becomes really popular and then the fandom is revived.

****Interviewer:**** Is it the same in K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** I don't know. I feel like comebacks, personally, from what I've seen, don't really happen in K-Pop. I feel like, especially with the whole generational thing, it's like K-Pop groups have their time to shine and then once it's over, it's kind of. Okay, yeah. Yeah. No, I mean, I also agree because yeah, it's something totally different. Yeah, because I feel like every generation there's always a new group of people that the K-Pop industry is trying to push and that's who they concentrate on. Yeah, and also kind of different sounds. Yeah, yes, yes, except BTS. I think BTS has always been like. No, BTS adapted so much. Yes. If you think about it, like from where they started then where they ended. Yes, honestly, I think they're the only K-Pop group that has really kind of established themselves permanently within the entertainment industry because also their international influence as well, they've really, especially in the Western world, I think they're really responsible. Yeah, one of the major groups to introduce K-Pop. Yeah, also very educated because they know what to say and what can they not say. Exactly. And it's very important for a special group. Very good media training. Yes, that's true.

****Interviewer:**** What would you say attracted you to K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, you can be honest. I thought. It's okay, it's totally fine. I thought, so I'm like, BTS is what really got me K-Pop and it was because I thought they had really cute members. I thought they were really attractive, but not just like, I think at like face value, yes, they're very attractive, but I also like really liked their style. And like once I kind of did a little more research, I like really started to like fall in love with their personalities. So yeah, at first it was just like, oh, their style's

really cool. And like, oh, they're kind of cute. I don't know if that's helpful, but.

****Interviewer:**** No, no, no, it's okay. No, no, where did it happen? Like, do you remember the, like around what time?

****Interviewee:**** I think it was towards the end of like quarantine and COVID. Okay. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Did you also watch like a- Sorry. It's okay. I'm sorry, I don't know if it's helpful to you at all. I thought they were cute. I loved them, like I fell completely in love with them. They're just gorgeous. They look so good. Their style is so good. Like, when did you fall in love with them?

****Interviewee:**** I think at some point. But then I did actually really like their music. I was like, wait, wait, wait, their music's actually super good.

****Interviewer:**** How did you first saw them? You just like, via music or like-

****Interviewee:**** No, I think I saw them through TikTok. Oh, through TikTok. They're like doing funny stuff? Yeah, no, I think I just saw like those like K-Pop edits of them dancing on like, I was like, ooh. And I was like, who's this? And then I fell down the rabbit hole and I was like, yeah. And then, you know, I became an ARMY. Yes.

****Interviewee:**** Would you say that the same thing attracts you now or there is something more in K-Pop that attracts you?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, like their personalities. Because I love like the shows that they have, because they have a bunch of like shows that they have out. And I obviously don't know them in person, so it could be a total like act, but I don't know, something about them seems very real. Yeah, I know. I don't know what it is. Like, I'm really good at like, I don't know. I cannot also imagine, because when I'm talking about BTS, it's like something very real somehow, even though it's supposed to be super constructed, I've never met them in my life. They're like miles away from me. I feel like I know them. Like, it's so weird, especially with all the shows, because like, I don't know, it really, like you get a really good sense of their personalities, like outside of like interviews and performances. And I feel like each one of the members has such a distinct personality that they convey. Yes, that's- And I think that's what also makes it like, because it's like, how can all seven of them seem so genuine? You know what I mean? Either they're really good at acting, or like, that's who they are. It's very hard. Like, I also saw an interview by Jin, because they're like, they wanted him in the very beginning to be like a cool, cold guy. Yes, but now he's so goofy and just like- I tried, but it wasn't possible. I love Jin. I know, me too. I'm like, I don't know why, but in the very beginning, I was not a big Jin fan. And then afterwards, I'm like, oh, Jin. For me, it was Yoongi. And now I'm like, I'm in love. I like love him. I relate to him so much. I want to be a stone in my

next life. So good. So gorgeous.

****Interviewer:**** But do you believe that it would be impossible to interact with K-Pop without social media?

****Interviewee:**** Oh. Oh, I would say, I mean, for you, as far as I understood, it's TikTok and-

Yeah, I mean, that's what introduced me to them. And I don't think, honestly, that their music would have come to me through the radio or anything like that. And I'm not gonna lie, K-Pop music, yeah, the only venue I have of listening to K-Pop is BTS. And how I found out from BTS was TikTok. So without social media, I don't think I would have really connect.

****Interviewer:**** Right, right, right, exactly, exactly. So yeah, it's also kind of like a building of the community somehow.

****Interviewee:**** Yes, yes, yes. Especially because, like, I don't know, like the BTS ARMY is so huge. You do really feel like you're part of something.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, and also, I feel like ARMY also very much political.

****Interviewee:**** Super political, yeah, yeah. I mean, they had a huge influence. I think it's so interesting to think about their political influence.

****Interviewer:**** Do you know something about it?

****Interviewee:**** I know for the elections in the States, for the Trump rally, a bunch of ARMY bought out tickets so that no one would actually go. And that's like a huge, it was like a huge thing. And even people in politics in America would be like, yeah, these K-Pop fans, they are very influential. And I was like, it was all, it was mainly ARMY. And I was like, to that, I was like, oh! I mean, that's amazing. I feel like it's crazy, but I feel like somehow very proud that such a force exists.

—

****Interviewer:**** And the last, the one about Demian and Herman Hesse, the Blood, Sweat, and Tears?

****Interviewer:**** Ah, okay, okay. I think I vaguely know about the running story. But it was not the thing that was mostly interested to you, like not something that-

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, I knew about the lore behind it and the, yeah, yeah, the storyline, but I didn't really look into it. I was mostly like invested in their like game shows and like things like that, yeah, yeah, yeah.

****Interviewer:**** So do you feel like this interaction, like game shows and things are more important than music somehow?

****Interviewee:**** Ooh, I don't know if one holds more importance, but I think, like I said before, those game shows and those shows of them like vacationing and camping, it just gives more insight into their personal, their personalities that you can't really, you wouldn't really see in the music side. But I don't know, like it's K-Pop, so I think music is like the really, really important. You never know. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It's like for a lot of people, it's definitely different. It's K-Pop, it's totally

different, like connections. So it's- For sure. Yeah. Yeah, yeah. But I think personally, like what made me really fall in love with them and their like character, I don't know, personality was like these game shows and yeah, yeah.

****Interviewer:**** So have you ever watched like live concert, like live performances?

****Interviewee:**** I would love to go, but no, no, no. I've never been to a K-Pop concert. That's, that's so sad because you're American. Yes, I know, they're there. And they're like very much often there. I know, all the time. I'm so jealous, like actually. Have you ever been?

Interviewer:* No, to America, no. No, no, no. I don't have visa. Oh no. To a concert, have you been Yeah. BTS or- Oh my God, girl. I've been to Berlin. It was, it was a nightmare to buy a ticket. You- I'm really bad. I went through all of the stages of- Go brief. Yes. I'm like, I was, I was like second late because I decided to go to another platform to buy a ticket and it was slower than the official one. Oh no. And then everything was sold out. But then again, I peered the ticket. I was like, mom, I will not go. I was like constantly crying. Like, I will not go. No, I will go. No, I will not go. And then I got the ticket and I was like 40 minutes. It took me 40 minutes to get the ticket. But you got it. Yes. That's good. It was such a, such a nightmare. Oh, yes. But have you ever watched like online live concerts?

****Interviewee:**** Oh yes. Yes, yes. Yes, I have. And they're super talented too. Like dancing, singing. Like it's not just like, I think they're super talented artists and that's something I really appreciate. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, but also you cannot, you cannot somehow conceal when it's like super fast dancing. Like they probably not singing live.

****Interviewer:**** Oh, probably not. Yeah. But is it important for you that they would always constantly be singing live to maintain this kind of, not like to maintain this kind of pace of a performance somehow, but just.

****Interviewee:**** Not really. I think, I mean, I think there's proof that they are singing, they can sing. So it's not like, it's not like a, it's understandable that maybe they can't be singing when they're dancing like a hundred miles per hour. You know what I mean? Like they're really going at it. All these concerts, like, I think it's understandable, but I don't know from the other things that I've seen from them, they all know how to sing. So it's not like it's a. It's not like they're untalented, but it's more like something that for this kind of a performance cannot be possibly related. Yeah. And I feel like the dancing and the performing is also a really, really big part of K-Pop as well. Not just. Yeah. I mean, also like, but a lot of people would, for example, say like, yeah, when you go into live concerts, you would like to see, listen to live music. It's kind of like a part, but it's not in terms of K-Pop, I've seen. Yeah, I feel like if it's for K-Pop, I feel like they just want to see. You know, they

just want to see the group, but that's. So, yeah. And a lot of people would say that, for example, you go to the live concert and then this live concert is like, you're sitting far away, you're watching it on a screen. So you could have looked at it on your screen and it would be better, but it's still. But it's also, I think though, like, it's being with the group. Like, I don't know from what I've seen from like ARMY concerts and like all the lights, everything. It seems like such a beautiful experience to be a part of as well. So maybe that's also a part of it too. Yeah.

****Interviewer:**** Do you feel like there is a difference between K-Pop and pop in general? Yeah. What would it be?

****Interviewee:**** I think like, one, the establishment of like groups is really big. Cause I feel like if I'm comparing it to like Western American pop, they don't really have groups, it's like individual. Or like NSYNC, for example. Yeah, but it's not like, there's like once in a while, there's a pop group, you know. But I feel like in K-Pop, it's a lot different. They establish these groups that are kind of like families, which also like each group kind of has its own like culture as well, and like ways of, I don't know, yeah, doing things. So I think the, yeah, the cultural and like group aspect is a lot different than like the regular pop. If that makes, I don't know if that makes sense.

****Interviewer:**** Yeah, I mean, it does. But like, you know, this is the very complicated question. On the surface, you understand that they're totally different. You feel like this, there is difference. But when you like try to understand it, it's so complicated. This is why I'm always asking this question because I'm like, I'm trying to also understand it.

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, I know it's, yeah, I know. I'm like, oh, I know there's a difference, but it's hard to articulate. It's very hard. It's like something that you need to like be inside this culture too. Yeah, yeah, it's so different than any other pop culture, honestly. Yeah, and then how to say it? It's like, I don't know. Yeah, it's a lot. I know, it's something like more than music itself. Exactly. And in the Western culture, I feel like a lot of people would more concentrate on music. Oh, music, exactly. They don't really, yeah, yeah. I mean, they do like this TikTok and everything now.

Interviewee N10 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** Let's put it this way, is it just culture for you, or more about the music, or something completely different?

****Interviewee:**** No, K-Pop is definitely culture, because if it were just music, it would probably have remained just music, you know, when you listen to it, like "Oh, I like it too," and that's it. Considering that it first transitioned from music to programs, you know, those, like, "Weekly Idol," and so on, then it transitioned into learning the language, then it transitioned into studying in Korea. It's clearly not just music; it's indeed a significant aspect of culture, and it's like a threshold, well, not a threshold, it's like a door into this culture, one of the doors.

****Interviewer:**** One of the doors into the culture. So, as you've already said, do you consider yourself a fan of K-Pop?

****Interviewee:**** Well, it's difficult to answer that question. I think yes, but I don't feel... Well, I guess people from the outside consider me a fan of K-Pop, but as it was before, I can't say that I'm a K-Pop fan, because I've definitely cooled down, I don't watch all these YouTube videos around, you know, like YouTube shows about groups and all that. I'm solely into the music and some major scandals that just surface in the media. But, by the way, going back to your question about whether it's music or culture, for me, well, I wouldn't say I intentionally listen to music, but I learn about music through culture, meaning my whole Instagram is filled with dances, news, scandals, comebacks, and that's how I learn everything. So, the last question was...

****Interviewer:**** Do you consider yourself a fan? Right.

****Interviewee:**** Ah, well, and I'm getting at the point that, like my friend for example, starts asking about some group or what's the new comeback teaser there, and I know all about it. I'm probably less immersed than you are because your level of immersion is still higher, so I probably consider you a bigger fan than myself.

****Interviewer:**** Although you too, right? Well, like, I never learned Korean, was in Korea for like three days.

****Interviewee:**** No, well, that's not it, you're not a fan of Korean culture overall, you're a fan of K-Pop, that's for sure. You know all about who's who, who's friends with whom, communicates with whom, all that stuff, whereas I...

****Interviewer:**** You too, you too, don't say that.

****Interviewee:**** Well, I think I'm more... You know, I'm into many groups, but on the surface, whereas you choose a few groups you like, and you know the lore inside out.

****Interviewer:**** That's true, that's true. But look, then the question is, how would you define the word "comeback"?

****Interviewee:**** A comeback is... I think recently it has

become synonymous with the term "era" in a group's history. It's not just a song, it's not just an album, it's not just an EP, it's a whole layer in the group's history. It's hairstyles that are hidden for some time before the comeback, it's outfits, it's often an entirely new style in music that can either be groundbreaking and bring success to the group or drag it down. Example. The group, damn it, the group WIKLY, if you don't know, a girl group WIKLY, they were irrelevant. Then they released the song "After School," which was everywhere in Korea, and not only in Korea, everyone listened to it, everyone sang it, everyone knew the group WIKLY. Reverse example. The group ITSY, when they just debuted, "Icy," "Wannabe," those were top hits, they were a top group. Then "Loca" came out, I think, a song, and "Not Shy," they started to decline slightly. And then "Snickers" came out, everyone started to hate them, it's fucked up. And now everything they release, they're just getting shit on, it's fucked up. I mean, it's not just music, it's often a change in direction, it's a whole sphere around it. So, yeah. Alright. That's the most comprehensive answer to this question because when I asked Ada what a fan is, he said it's like the schedule they put out, because for him that's more important, because he loves online concerts, well, not online, but live concerts, and he goes to all of them. I agree about the schedule too. They often start going to new shows they haven't been on before. I don't know, it seems to me that often going to the same show, like No Embrace, sorry for my English, No Boris. I mean, when they go there, like after one comeback, after another comeback, nothing really changes there. I mean, it's like, how are you? Good. And they maybe share some stories. And the concerts too, well, what. Like at one concert they sang like 10 songs, and at another 13, because they had three more during that time. So I don't think it's that... Well, I mean, it's an important process, but it's not key. That's how I would put it. Alright, then let's go back to your first answer. I'm some incredible interviewer. Anyway, when you mentioned why you started listening to K-Pop in the first place, what attracted you to it initially? Because you started listening to it before we did.

****Interviewee:**** Well yes, you know, it's probably worth mentioning in general how I relate to music. I... I can't pinpoint something specific that I like. I've never really been a fan of one particular group. And whether it's K-Pop or something else, it doesn't matter. I always like... I don't know, something new, unusual sounding, but what's unusual varies for everyone. And you could say that the same "Snickers" by ITZY, they're also new sounds. But I just don't like it. It's like, it's hard for me to say what specifically I liked about it. But like with "Fantastic Baby," it's also hard for me to say what specifically I liked about it. But when I started listening more consciously, when it was let in, I realized it was a com-

pletely different sound. It's a different direction in music altogether. I don't know how to explain it. I distinctly remember when the song, damn it, now... "Hey Mama" by David Guetta and Nicki Minaj, right? I mean on the American scene. And it was, and I remember thinking on this song, damn, how fucking tired of it all. It's all the same. It's impossible to listen to anymore. How is this possible? And then you started playing your stuff, and I'm like, this is new. This is absolutely not what I'm, well, not what I'm tired of. What I wanted. But it's hard to talk about it now at all because K-Pop has changed a lot, and often there are a lot of videos even on YouTube where they say the golden era was 2014-2016. Every month, every week, there was some hit that everyone still knows. And now there's none of that. A lot of mediocrity. But that's understandable. Now there are many more groups. So there's much more music being made. And there's more mediocrity too. But overall, yes, back then it was absolutely this new sound. And now, on the one hand, K-Pop groups like BTS, like Blackpink, like, well, there's Nonstory Hits, okay, even Twice. Seventeen, maybe. Who? Seventeen. Seventeen too, yes. They've become just Seventeen, they're still popular in Korea. But like, I feel like Stray Kids are definitely more popular abroad. BTS seems to be more popular abroad too. Well, in short, with the development of K-Pop on a global level and because they've become popular on one hand, we see it in the example of BTS, they start changing their music very strongly to fit Western standards, to blend in there. Like "Butter," "Dynamite," yes, "Boy With Luv," "Boy With Luv," all that, it's like, yeah, a change in direction to appeal there from the other side. And on the Western stage, they see the popularity of K-Pop and start, like, I think, also adjusting a little bit in that direction. That's it. So that sound probably doesn't exist anymore. It's probably somewhat faded, but initially, yes, that was the reason.

****Interviewer:**** What would you say was one of the things that kept you staying in K-Pop? And what attracts you now?

****Interviewee:**** Attracts me now... Okay, let me answer the second part first. Let's go. What still attracts me now is the sound, because I feel, especially now with this kind of popularity, like, the Billie Eilish-style songs. They're, on one hand, quiet, but on the other hand, they're sort of, you know, like mumbling under the breath and they all seem kind of the same. And I'm not really into that at all. Yes, there are some exceptional songs by her or someone similar where you can listen to one or two songs, but everything else is very boring. What's just stuck in my head right now is New Jeans, who started out in the nineties and do everything in such a retro-minimalistic style. It's I've, who's in a completely different direction, but it's also some interesting new sound that's absolutely not found in the West. So,

yeah, it's still that. Plus, of course, over the years, my love for dancing has passed, as we started, as I dance alone now. Of course, it's not just a great song, but there's also a dance to it, which you can learn, and that also adds interest. So if it were just music, I probably wouldn't be as drawn to it. There. Now, can we go back to the first part of the question? Actually, it's fine, you've pretty much answered everything.

****Interviewer:**** Was it important for you to have a community where you could dance?

****Interviewee:**** No, I realized that it wasn't. It's purely my thing, purely my character, because to me... Well, I'm not one of those people who value socializing just for the sake of it. I have a circle of people I like, and I communicate with them. But just to have a group to hang out with and dance, no, I realized that wasn't it. I had, I don't know if you remember or not, an unsuccessful experience when I went somewhere... No, that's nothing. I think after that, they invited me straight into a dance cover group. And all the girls there were like... I haven't told you about it. All the girls were gossiping about each other, like she... Even though they were all girls. Most of them had short haircuts. Like Anya Phantom Hype, but Anya Phantom Hype, she does it all stylishly, and they were like Anya Phantom Hype on minimal. And I went with them to one practice and I was like, damn, I'm not going back there anymore. And they were like, you're not coming back anymore? I said, no, thanks. So, yeah. So definitely no community in that sense. No, not needed.

****Interviewer:**** I see. Okay, then here's a question. Do you think social media played a big role in making K-Pop and pop in general?

****Interviewee:**** I think so, yes. Of course, your personal opinion still influences me a lot, when you said that the secret to BTS's success is that they were the first to start shooting BTS Bombs, or whatever it was called? So now I can't get that thought out of my head. But overall, yes. But this, damn it, any process now has become more globalized precisely because of social media. But I'm telling you, purely from my own example, I learn about all comebacks, about all new music purely from Instagram. So, if it weren't for Instagram, hardly anyone from my surroundings would have told me about a new comeback by NUGEN, saying come and listen. I definitely wouldn't. I mean, would you start Googling it yourself? No. I don't think so. I'm a little tired of K-Pop already, so no, I absolutely... No, I don't Google anything. In short, no, definitely not. Often I even see that someone has a comeback coming soon, and I'm like, oh, whatever. I mean, if it doesn't pop up in my feed three times a day, it means the track is crap. No need to listen to it. That's often how I am. And you, for example, are one of the last people who sends me something about K-Pop and says, like, look at... So again, it's on social

media. But again, it's about communication, all that. Yeah. In social media, it's important to engage.

****Interviewer:**** So yeah, I totally agree with you because it's really hard to explain to them because they think that K-Pop is the same for everyone who doesn't have any opportunity with it except for me, it's completely different. They're very critical because for them it's still the same genre, and when they say

****Interviewee:**** Look there's storytelling with BTS and Taylor Swift," I'm like, yeah and no. It's hard, it's hard to describe, and I think it's also very clear to me because there are so many things, for example, BTS and Taylor Swift have, but at the same time, there are some innovative things that exist in K-Pop culture, like at the same live concerts, for example, yeah, this light stick, it's like, it's a huge thing that signifies that you're a fan, so you, for example, you yourself say that you don't consider yourself a fan even though you know a lot about it because you never really had these fan things, if you're close enough acquainted with K-Pop, you understand that you need to have some basic set, I don't know, albums or how to say it, or some attributes of K-Pop so that later you're like, yeah, I consider myself a fan, yeah, merch is definitely, like, I totally missed that, you very clearly said light stick and merch.

Interviewee N11 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** Thank you for joining us today. I understand you've been quite busy lately. How are you holding up?

****Interviewee:**** Um, yeah, I'm fine. Yeah. Cool. Yeah. Yeah. A bit stressed because of these things. Yeah, because I don't know. It's getting a bit more tight in terms of a schedule and in terms of a project because we have three months, but otherwise everything is fine. Yeah.

****Interviewer:**** It's great to hear you're managing well despite the pressure. You've mentioned an interest in discussing K-Pop from a professional perspective. What specifically drew you to this topic? So thank you again, because, I mean, I know that you're professional in terms of music. And like, this is why I was thinking that it would be nice to talk to you. And like somehow from this perspective of like a K-Pop as a like how you perceive it, because a lot of people would perceive it totally different. Yeah. So, yeah, cool. So, I mean, I feel like it would be quite fast, like probably take 15 minutes or so. But I would go with like, what would you say? How would you describe for you K-Pop? Would it for you be just a music genre or it's kind of like something more like a culture or. Yeah, I don't know. How would you feel?

****Interviewee:**** That's an interesting question. K-Pop does seem to have a distinct cultural aspect to it.

****Interviewer:**** Could you elaborate on what makes K-Pop unique compared to other genres?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, I think it does have. It definitely has a cultural aspect to it, especially because it's like just because of the name already, because it's like K-Pop, so it's Korean. And. Also, because it's very distinct. From from other genres, and I don't know what the exact definition is, but I it would be hard for me to to tell if somebody makes K-Pop, but has no connection to Korean culture at all. OK, like I think it's inherently connected. So I think it doesn't need to be like a Korean person. But somehow the person must have a deep connection to Korean culture. So and on the other side, it's maybe more like regular pop then.

****Interviewer:**** How does this connection to culture influence the music and performances within the genre?

****Interviewee:**** Mm hmm. Yeah, I mean, because you also mentioned now that it's distinct from other genres, how would like how do you feel like it's distinct? Like because it's something very difficult, I feel like to explain, because most of the people just feel it somehow. But like when I'm thinking about how it's actually distinct, it's kind of hard to explain. Yeah, it is. I think for me as well. Yeah. So you also you also just feel it. Yeah, I guess for the most part. I think like what's what's special. Yeah, what for sure is like it's like it's like a com-

plete package in a way, so it's a complete entertainment package. You got you've got the music, but then also you've got the talent, like the characters, so they have like story lines. And for me, somehow there's like maybe something that roots in boy band culture from America and then transferred into Korean, something different in Korea, right? That comprehensive approach seems to be a hallmark of K-Pop. Thank you for sharing your insights. It's been enlightening to hear your perspective on how K-Pop blends music, culture, and entertainment into a unique package.

****Interviewee:**** Uh-huh. Emerges like this idol culture. I don't know. That's where like it's not just about the music, but it's more about like a character. I think it's more like it also has stories. And then I think there's also the importance of the music video and the dances as well, which is like in the end. Yeah, there's this complete package. Yeah. Like you can't separate the music video from K-Pop from my perspective, at least.

****Interviewer:**** But if you would if in terms of a K-Pop, what would that what would you say that attracted you to this? If there is something about this genre or culture that attracted you somehow?

****Interviewee:**** I think from a like a production standpoint, it's very polished, right? So it's not raw, it's not in the moment, which is also music I really enjoy listening to. But I also enjoy the perfect, very polished product. It's like the Hollywood version of music. Oh, really? I mean, because because it's so hard because of like, isn't it like pop in general like this or is just this one is more like. Yeah, yeah, but but then then play to the max, right?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, it's like it's like even so maybe Hollywood, this is a bad example because it's America. But I was just. Yeah, yeah. No, no, no. But but Berlinale, so so I was in this whole film film thing and I just thought like, OK, there's European film and this is like independent and it's weird and it's quirky and whatever. Then you polish it up and then somehow you end up at Hollywood. Yeah. But then maybe. Yeah, let's forget about the Hollywood thing. But I mean, it's polished to a point where it's hard to imagine a better version of the song. And it's also like the and also like one inherent trait, I think, which is very distinguishable from other pop music is that it's very diverse in on a song structure. Like there is no two bars that are actually the same. I guess there's so many parts to those songs and maybe they repeat, but it's always on the. It's always trying not to get boring. Oh, it's very. It's very attention seeking for me. Yeah, but also in terms of production, is it like very constructed in terms of because I mean, there is like a formula somehow that makes these songs very like likable.

****Interviewer:**** Do you feel like do you feel like it's there is something like this?

****Interviewee:**** I don't know. I wouldn't say there's a formula to it. I would say there's just. Of course, I mean, like every genre has certain key features and but I think it's more it's hard to tell, right? Because like K-Pop isn't like just a genre and it's it's connected to a certain time. So it's been around for for some time now. It also changes, right? It's not static. It's not like you say, OK, this is dubstep and then everybody thinks critics. Right. Yeah. It's more like even though dubstep is a beautiful genre and there's so many artists that are so cool and I really like the dubstep. But like the general perception of dubstep is like, oh, yeah, this bro culture. Right. And then it's these bad tracks, these EDM tracks. And it's very narrow in the sounds and everything. And I think K-Pop is way more broad in its sound spectrum. And also like it's genre definition. Like there's like really like hyper songs and then there's also like slow songs, but still they somehow have a glue to it, which I think is more about the culture and not about the music production side.

****Interviewee:**** But then after after this one, I would I would ask you if it's for you as a musician, it's also important just the music of K-Pop, but you or you also would say that the whole package for you, it's also important to like have the music video and how it's kind of contributes to the song or for you. You would say that song wise, you would just prefer it like this, how it is. For me, I think like the whole package is important and also. I think it really adds to the songs because like maybe to explain a bit more, as I told you, like I'm not an expert in the K-Pop and I no, no, no. Just just dabble into like like maybe sometimes I listen to a track and I'm like, oh, this is this great. And mostly my my experience is about like the main main bands. Like I'm I'm I'm quite a Blackpink fan. Not like like really fan fan fan. I've never seen a concert. Yeah, yeah. I mean, it's hard to release a new track. I definitely watch the video and. I would like with no other artists other than maybe like. I don't know, Kanye or somebody like this, I would immediately go and look the music video up. Yeah, like I'm not so much interested in music videos in general. But it's like Blackpink releases a new song. I listen to the song and I think like, oh, that's a nice song. And I'm definitely watching the music video for the enjoyment of the music. Of course. I mean, that's that's I totally understand. I don't know. It's just because such a visually pleasing somehow image to look at.

****Interviewer:**** And would you say that social media actually helped you a lot to firstly seen the like the K-Pop in general? Like because before it was super narrow in terms of like a Korean culture and then it gets like worldwide. So you would say that I mean, if we consider YouTube also social media, would you say that social media played a huge role in it?

****Interviewee:**** Mm. It's hard to tell because like my

my way of searching for new music is so broad. So I wouldn't. But I think, yeah, sure. Like YouTube was important, probably the way I encountered it first. Maybe YouTube recommended a Blackpink song to me, and I was like, oh, wow, what's this? Yeah, because I think. Yeah, because I was curious, because you said that that it's important for you to like, not important for you, but that you would not necessarily listen to the song, but you would watch the video. So I was like, I can't imagine that you're searching music far away from like a different sources and platforms.

****Interviewer:**** So I was like, what would be this like the the first how you encounter K-Pop? Like when you're like, this is K-Pop interesting.

****Interviewee:**** I would kind of have a connection to it somehow in this kind of sense. Yeah. I mean, I'm like connected to Japanese culture because I watched so many anime. Yeah, yeah. Red Manga all my teen years and I played Japanese video games. And so I'm also like familiar with J-pop. Yes, but not so much. But I would know maybe like the. Also like one or two artists that I really like, and I like also like Japanese underground music scene very much. Oh, they're cool. But. Yeah, so so I don't know where the connection actually happened. But yeah, I would say like my first encounter was probably BTS and then BLACKPINK. So I guess it's like 10 years ago, something like that. Yeah. Yeah. More or less because they debuted a bit.

****Interviewee:**** But yeah, they were like very not established in these terms. Yeah. Yeah. But I wasn't I wasn't like on the on the bleeding edge. Yeah. Yeah. Culture in Europe or in outside of Korea, definitely. I'm like on the I'm I don't know, maybe like second or third wave of. Yeah. OK. Fans, I'd say. No, no, no. Like what what really what really was a key moment for me also was like the sonic quality of it. So I would listen to the BLACKPINK song and just. Yeah, it wouldn't have had the impact on me if it wouldn't be this polished. So I went, I listened to the song maybe at home and immediately next day I was listening to it on my studio, in my studio, on good monitors, like on my studio system to really get a get a like because I really wanted to know, oh, wow, this sounds really good on my on my laptop. And this also sounds really good on my headphones. I definitely have to check how it sounds in the studio. And I would play it really loud and would actually very much enjoy it for the sonic qualities of it. Or is it sounds better on like on the very good machines like. Oh, yeah, it sounds it sounds all these high quality. I mean, there's probably many, many artists, but like these very. Like in the echelon of BTS and Blue Jeans and BLACKPINK, like this, this stuff sounds amazing, like really good.

****Interviewer:**** Oh, my God. That's that's something that I would like. I mean, because, you know, for me, I cannot understand what is like this this like polished

mixture is like because, I mean, I have no music background. I can just I can just relate to like this, this very nice structure somehow that actually appeals to me because I like to listen to it. But in terms of quality, I don't even know where to look at. Because because for me, like the this, I feel like the production, for example, for I don't know, Avril Lavigne would be kind of the same. Is it or not? It's very it's very different. Oh, it's very different. Because it's also maybe not in a in a actually like better way. Right. It's not better than like Beyonce or whatever.

****Interviewee:**** Like if you go and listen to Beyonce on a great system, it's going to sound amazing. But in a very different way. Um. It's hard to describe, right? It's it's more like K-Pop also. Maybe also K-Pop, maybe sometimes misses warmth and soul, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, I'm not judging. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. It has this very crisp and very clear and very, yeah, very polished sound. So it's almost sometimes a bit too sparkly. But it's also very nice to have the sparkly sound. Right. It's like something new. Like, yeah, it's something new. And it's it loses something because it's not muddy and it's not moody and it's not a like. On a. Yeah, like I mean, it's I mean, I can I can I can understand the magazine, right? Like a magazine. It's like very on point. It's there's nothing that's it's everything is perfectly shaped. But but did you. It's hard to talk about it without getting into like technical details. Yes, yes, yes. And it's also nice. I mean, I never thought about it, but yeah, it's like this this very, very high technology technology that actually evolved. It's very important.

****Interviewer:**** Would you also like think that this high technology affects like, I don't know, the way how live music sounds?

****Interviewee:**** Yeah, I've never seen a K-Pop live performance. So I don't think also this is like I've just seen maybe you know, like the Blackpink Coachella recording, maybe a bit of it. And also, I think the same rules apply, right? It's very perfect. So I I'd say there's no room for improvisation at all. Like everything is structured to the very last bit. Like the movements, the light show. Everything is synchronized. Yeah. So it's a very synchronized experience. So there's no room for error whatsoever. And also, I think like the the audience, like a K-Pop fan would never this wouldn't be a bad thing for them, because it's like, of course, I want to hear the song like it is on the record. And all the structure and all this. Yeah, Polish is. Like an integral part to the whole experience. Mm hmm. Yeah. And I think like the most of probably most of the fans know it's it's completely it's with backing tracks. So yeah, I don't think it's a secret. I also do not feel like it's a secret. But yeah, I mean, it seems like, you know, because on the civil variety show, they already share their like skills or whatever. Very, I mean, very elaborately shared. So kind of fans already

know that they are talented, even though they're not performing it on a stage. But at the same time, this notion already pre-exists with them. So it's kind of works, even though it's not lifelike. But they everybody is already happy to be there somehow. I don't know. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And somehow it's somehow the only genre where it's completely fine.

****Interviewer:**** And I feel like I would ask you probably the last question, because in the very beginning, you mentioned that there is like this storytelling in the music. Or like in the music video, would you say that this is important for you to have like this story or for you just visual and like the music itself would work probably the best?

****Interviewee:**** I mean, it's not so much important for me, but it's kind of it's also kind of weird because as for me, it's it's nice to know that it is there and there's people who care about it. Yeah. And also there was I even though I don't know any of the stories going on, but I know there's a story. And it's somehow it somehow makes it more enjoyable for me. Yeah, of course. Oh, that's that's so nice. It's I never thought about it, but like, yeah, I see. I see what you mean. That's cool. That's very nice. Because yeah, because for me as a fan, firstly, I was I would like, yeah, I need the story, like I need the story to follow. But at a certain way, it's not necessarily needs like to be there somehow. But it's just something to enjoy, to go deeply into into research. Yeah, exactly. So it's like an like an iceberg, you know, like I'm just enjoying the tip of the iceberg. But me knowing that there's all this underground thing going on, like all this structure behind it, it's kind of nice to know. And then for me, like if I really want to die asleep, I could. And there would be something there to experience

Interviewee N12 (extras)

(Interviewee N12 asked not to publish the conversation; you can see a summary in Table 1)

Interviewee N13 (extras)

****Interviewer:**** "Yeah. Do you feel like K-Pop, it's just a genre of music, or it's more than this? Is it like a more culture or something that you would name totally different, just from your own perspective?"

****Interviewee:**** "Um, I think, um, it really depends on the context, but for example, a lot for Korean who live there, I think K-Pop is just really music. It's, uh, yeah, it's really music, but which has a lot of, um, like social issues because, for example, a lot of minorities, they work for K-Pop industry, and I think it's, it can be really crucial for their mental health and their life in general. But still, I think K-Pop is like a type of music in Korea which has some like social issues, and I think like in this world context, especially in this like Western societies, I think K-Pop means, uh, some kind of like, um, rebellion, yes, because, um, I think before like K-Pop became this much popular, I think it was, uh, listened by only few people, and I think they were considered maybe like outsiders in their societies, and then because they like like Asian music, they were again like discriminated by the mainstream, and now because this K-Pop became one of the mainstream, now people are more like aware of the culture. But at the same time, I think a lot of people maybe just take it as a like trend, like they don't really care about like Korean culture, history, or the problem we have in this K-Pop industry, but they just take the yeah, and then yes. So, I think it's more than a form of music because it really represents a lot."

****Interviewer:**** "Would you consider yourself as a fan? Like, I mean, or like not now, or like before?"

****Interviewee:**** "Yes, I think I'm a fan of some musicians, but I'm not sure if I can say that I'm a fan of K-Pop because since I was young, I didn't really listen to K-Pop, but just some musicians or like independent music, not this mainstream K-Pop or like idol music. But at the same time, I really like SM Entertainment. Yes, it really depends how we describe the word fan, but I think I'm in between. I'm also very critical about K-Pop because sometimes it really freaks me, and also like someone like Sulli or Clara, they are really my age, they are only like one year older or younger, so I really grew up with them, and then suddenly when they were like 24 or 5, days suicide, so I, I feel like

they really represent how like young woman is in South Korean society and how they like consume the image of young woman. So, I cannot really say that I'm like a fan of this industry, but it's also a contradictory, but I still like some of the musicians, of course, because it's some like something very creative there also."

****Interviewer:**** "Would you say that, going a bit far, uh, would you say that Korean government actually using K-Pop power to like promote the Korea in general?"

****Interviewee:**** "Um, I think, to be honest, the government doesn't really use it to promote the country because I think, how to say, for example, I'm from like cinema, I have a cinema background, and I think even before K-Pop, Korean cinema was very known. So, I mean, now it's a lot more known, but even before, it was not like South Korea was very hidden, like some parts we were already like worldwide known, and the government didn't do anything for cinema to like promote more. Sometimes they were more against because a lot of filmmakers are like lefties, and sometimes right-wing people, they didn't want us to make like political movies. But I think what the government should do is that they should really make the law to protect the K-Pop musicians, yeah, like minorities. I think there is no reason for them to be a musician. So, the thing I feel like they're now doing it more, they're starting to protect K-Pop idols more. I mean, especially when you read the articles about the law in K-Pop, like compared to like what was in 2007 or like 9, it's totally different towards what it's now because they're more protected because by that moment, yeah, the situation was much more worse than it actually happened now. But yeah, I totally, because also this is the government involvement is like also protecting them, yes, that's what you mentioned."

****Interviewer:**** "So, also, would you say that for a lot of people, uh, like to them, to consider themselves as a fan, it's important to have like a attribute, like a light stick, or like a picture, or an album, like something that relate them to this, to this person, or it's something like more inner?"

****Interviewee:**** "Um, I think it's something more inner and how you want this, uh, how you enjoy this culture because I think some people, they just really, um, take advantage of it. So, it's trendy, so they, for example, they don't care about the wom-

an's right in South Korea or the Asians right in Western country, like they don't care, but they just live like they just like the good-looking people, for example. I think those people, how can we call them fan because they just like something artificial. But at the same time, who am I to judge if they are not family, yeah, I mean, that's also, that's also understandable. It's just more like for you

****Interviewer:**** What did attracted you to K-Pop? What did, why, yeah, what, how you decided, like, how you understood that you're actually interested in K-Pop?"

****Interviewee:**** "Because the funny thing is, if you are South Korean and like about my age, people, I think we really grew up with this idol culture, so it's not like something Korean for us, but it's just something that is usual, you know what I mean? But you are, it is like, um, I'm Korean in Switzerland, but I'm just a human, like, person in South Korea, so it was just a music for me to listen. So, when we were young, they like, people were dancing with the music, and then we just see them growing up, so it was most something that was always present."

****Interviewee:**** "Yeah, yeah, exactly. It's not like it's not like I, because when I was young, I really liked like hip-hop, like American hip-hop, when I was like 13, but this one, I really had to search, and then I was the only one who, so, oh yeah, it's hard, yeah, so I had to find the community online, like this, but K-Pop is just always there, so it was not like something I had to find out. But compared to other people, I was really less fan because, for example, like, like when I was in elementary school or middle school, the whole school loved them, but not me, I was listening to Eminem and like all the, all the rappers, you know, so, yeah, so it was always present, but I think, to be honest, I was never a huge fan of K-Pop, but then as soon as I came to France, a lot of people talked to me about K-Pop, and then it made me interested that I searched."

****Interviewer:**** "And, uh, and would you say that coming to France and like people around, like this community, actually was the point when you started to be very much into K-Pop, or like, what, what is the, or I would consider this question a bit differently, is there something else now that you like in K-Pop?"

****Interviewee:**** "Yeah, yeah, I think if I didn't come

to Europe, I think K-Pop was just always present, but I was probably very critical about it when it comes to feminism and also this like child right, I was always a critical, and of course, I'm still like that, but at the same time, I think thanks to K-Pop, a lot of people are aware of like Asian culture, and because it's really widely spread, that I think people are less, um, how to say, uh, distance with Asian culture in general. I think because, for example, maybe like only two thousand, like some people probably made fun of like Asian culture a lot, but now it's something cool and trendy, that I think it really gives the good environment for the Asians who really live in Western society."

****Interviewer:**** "Yeah, that's nice, and this is what you like, what you said that you like about K-Pop?"

****Interviewee:**** "Yeah, yeah, yeah, like, but would you consider this, uh, this visual that they have, like, as a good way to represent the, that's the thing, actually, because, because like K-Pop stars are so skinny, I think it makes everyone feel they are not skinny, for example, and also, um, um, I think Asian women in general are quite like sexualized in Western societies, like, for example, me, I was just sitting on the cafe, and then some people just come to me, and then say like, 'You look exotic, like, exotic,' like, they're like, 'You're so exotic, where are you from?' Like, they are really like this, and so I feel like some people, they say some men probably, they say they like K-Pop, but maybe they just like the visuals."

****Interviewer:**** "Yeah, uh, and then the next question would be, do you feel like there is a difference between K-Pop and pop in general?"

****Interviewee:**** "Yes, yes, yes, of course."

****Interviewer:**** "What, what would it be? Can you name something? Because I don't, you know, like, I also, this question is very tricky because I also ask a lot of people about it, and they're like, 'Yes, but it's very hard to tell somehow,' but at the same time, my friend, for example, when we listen to music together, whenever I play something, even before the lyrics, he knows that it's K-Pop, so he thinks there is special sound in K-Pop that I don't really recognize, but I think what is different between

****Interviewee:**** "K-Pop and pop is, but it's really true that South Korea is very influenced by, um, like American culture because of this word, this Cold War, but still, if you listen to Korean music

starting from like 60, you really see the, you really see that K-Pop has their own language, and also, I think the term K-Pop is quite large because it's not just the mainstream like idol music, but also like independent music can be K-Pop. I think it's like K-Pop, but like very specifically, not dance, but a lot like we can separate, and I think it's really different than pop."

Interviewer: "Yes, yes, yes. Would you say like this whole new story that they click kind of new era that they created with, uh, with a comeback, you like to like, you like to look at the whole, like the whole story?"

Interviewee: "Yeah, what I, because I like storytelling, I really like this fact that K-Pop has like the reason why I like SM Entertainment is because they have their own world. They created this whole story of like, they have their own planet, and then like this artist says this, this, this, and then we can even go to the, this island with the passport, like they really created this word in SM Entertainment, so there is a whole world of storytelling in SM."

Interviewer: "The question was about the, um, how as I'm actually using the digital notion and like this kind of pointing themselves as a cultural technology, so I was like, what, what do you think about it? But like, do you, do you know like something more? Because I mean, I know that there is like a very innovative way that creates this AESPA concept or NCT concept, concept. I was like, what do you think about this new ways of representing the idol somehow, like neither this like this, this very complicated NCT way or like even have a digital avatars?"

Interviewee: "Yeah, oh, I, what I really like about SM Entertainment is that, I think except soon as she did, I think a lot of women were represented as a warrior, not like, I don't know, love or I like innocent girls, but more like warriors, and I think the technology worked because it was a bit like their concept was more like digital revolution, and I think it kind of made the concept of like image of women different. But at the same time, I think this industry itself has a lot of problems, and SM is one of the biggest, so, yeah."

Interviewee N14 (extras)

(Interviewee N14 asked not to publish the conversation; you can see a summary in Table 1)

Interviewee N15 (extras)

****Interviewer:****What is K-Pop? genre? culture? music or something more?

****Interviewee:****I perceive K-Pop as more of a culture or industry rather than a genre. Typically, a music genre is characterized by similar traits or styles present in the pieces of music pertaining to that category. Since K-Pop encompasses several genres – pop, ballad, rap, and R&B, to name a few – I believe it's more appropriate to consider it a culture. The main similarity that songs that fall under "K-Pop" share is that they originate from Korea. They're heavily influenced by the Korean culture and current trends in the Korean music industry, so while I think K-Pop can be considered a subcategory of other music genres, I don't believe that it should be considered a genre.

****Interviewer:****How would you define a "comeback"?

****Interviewee:****A "comeback" describes a new cycle or season in which a K-Pop group or singer introduces their new album/song and concept. It generally applies to K-Pop groups that have already made their debut, which explains why the term is a combination of the words "come" and "back". This period is when K-Pop groups are most actively promoting their works and attending several performances/tours.

****Interviewer:****What attracted you to K-Pop and what attracts you now?

****Interviewee:****I was initially attracted to K-Pop when I lived in Korea. Many of my friends, as well as my sister, listened to K-Pop, so I naturally gained interest. I was intrigued by the powerful choreography and addicting music, as well as the attention to aesthetics. I don't consider myself a hardcore fan, but I'm still attracted by the continuous growth in the K-Pop industry – specifically, how K-Pop ceaselessly introduces new styles of music, those that don't necessarily follow the strict rules and forms of particular genres. Thus, I'm attracted by how there's a vast selection of music to listen to within K-Pop alone, and I can easily find a song to listen to on any occasion, in any mood.

****Interviewer:****Could K-Pop have achieved such popularity in the world without new technologies and their close interaction with them? Do you feel that this was done on purpose?

****Interviewee:****Since society is also being intro-

duced to new and advanced technology, I feel that if K-Pop had omitted from introducing such technology, it would have fallen behind in this rapidly developing world. Furthermore, I believe one of the main catalysts behind K-Pop's global presence is technology, since technology is able to connect fans and artists across the world. Although I am not up-to-date on the technology that the K-Pop industry uses, I'm aware of some social media apps like WeVerse and Bubble. These technologies I feel were a strategic use by the K-Pop companies to increase fan-and-artist interaction. In a way, it could be seen as a new, more current way of promoting K-Pop, so it definitely feels like it was done on purpose.

****Interviewer:****What do you think of the programs for broadcasting the comeback stage? (M COUNTDOWN, Music core, Music Bank) Do you consider them live? And how do you think the audience in the auditorium feels when these video broadcasts are recorded?

****Interviewee:****I generally watch these broadcasts with a sense of mind that most of it is pre-recorded. I've seen multiple videos of actual "live" performances of groups (e.g. when they win an award), and they have become viral because of how poorly the singers performed compared to their prerecorded performances. While I enjoy watching the comeback stages because of how carefully they choreographed and planned out the stages to make them appear aesthetic, I do wish that they incorporated aspects of live music so that the live audience could feel more present in the moment. I can only assume that they would like to appreciate "live" music prepared by the groups rather than listening to recorded videos that they can watch at home instead.



06Sources

Victoria Cheredeeva

Programs and AI

DeepL Translate

Translation of the part of the thesis that was written in Russian

Google translate

Translation of the part of the thesis that was written in Russian

ChatGPT

Translation of interviews number 6 and 10 from Russian into English

Grammarly

Check text grammar

Midjourney

Cover

Front:

Prompt:

squared as 3d render without tail A T POSE on white background --style raw --ar 9:16 --v 6.0

Back:

Prompt:

blend: (j-hope flower) x cute futuristic style , moon--style raw --v 6.0

Bouquets

Prompt:

cute futuristic style , moon--style raw --v 6.0

After: Variations (Strong) x 20 times

Shrine (Artefact)

TV screen

Prompt:

blend/ <https://s.mj.run/niWFWLIMdGw> <https://s.mj.run/ttwhrVac-w8> --ar 3:2 --v 6.0

The project image

Prompt:

<https://s.mj.run/y3qfOb4HBx8> computer screen crystal ball --style raw --v 6.0 --ar 16:9

Divination page

Prompt:

<https://s.mj.run/zqajellhKwg> kpop shrine shamanism --style raw --ar 16:9 --v 6.0

Failure page

Prompt:

<https://s.mj.run/BzADNzwWe6Y> dark shamanism sad rain

--style raw --ar 16:9

Success page

Prompt:

<https://s.mj.run/EiWT9oSnHSU> fireworks --style raw --ar 16:9 --v 6.0

The one of thesis image representation

Prompt:

blend/<https://s.mj.run/sEDQ2m8ISOA> <https://s.mj.run/FWMg62xS8dM> --ar 3:2

<https://s.mj.run/sEDQ2m8ISOA> <https://s.mj.run/FW-Mg62xS8dM> --ar 3:2 --v 6.0 - Upscaled (Subtle) by @bidenz (fast)

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Video and images resources for story prototype**O**

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OCibSDX0jQ>

[#2023MAMA] LE SSERAFIM (르세라핌) - 이브, 프 시케 그리고 푸른수염의 아내 (MAMA ver.) | Mnet 231129 방송., Mnet K-POP., (2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SPNjgjqUnl>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yv8LV7DuPDc>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yZPtg3NGDb-M&t=40s>

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hF5_wvB4dI0

[SPECIAL CLIP] BTS (방탄소년단) '소우주 (Mikrokosmos)' @ SY IN SEOUL #2021BTSFESTA., BANGTANTV., (2022)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lq6RdCTLBd8>

J.Y. Park, Stray Kids, ITZY, NMIXX - "Like Magic" M/V., JYP Entertainment., (2024)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6bBDAIpQZs>

Tree pictures, Midjourney., Prompt: tree alone --style raw --ar 16:9 --v 6.0 (+ variation five times)

1.1**music**

Girls' Generation "Into the New World"

Video

NMIXX "O.O" M/V., JYP Entertainment., (2022)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Gwscde8rM8>

SHINee 샤이니 'I Want You' MV, SMTOWN., (2019)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDpWeURKkbl>

PLAVE(플레이브) 'WAY 4 LUV' M/V., PLAVE 플레이브., (2024)
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TWR90KJl84>

IVE 아이브 '해야 (HEYA)' MV, STARSHIP., (2024)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07EzMbVH3QE>

[MV]SEVENTEEN - 舞い落ちる花びら (Fallin' Flower), SEVENTEEN Japan official Youtube., (2020)
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldssuxDdqKk>

[MV] IU(아이유) _ Twenty-three(스물셋), 1theK (원더케이), (2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42Gtm4-Ax2U>

1.2**Music**

NewJeans "Attention"

Video

Girls' Generation 소녀시대 'I GOT A BOY' MV, SMTOWN., (2013)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wq7ftOZByOE>

Stray Kids "CASE 143" M/V., JYP Entertainment., (2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jYSlpC6Ud2A>

TWICE "What is Love?" M/V., JYP Entertainment., (2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOp1bmr0EmE>

SUPER JUNIOR 슈퍼주니어 'THIS IS LOVE' MV, SMTOWN., (2015)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utmykx9RUEw>

SEVENTEEN (세븐틴) 'Left & Right' Official MV, HYBE LABELS., (2021)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdZdxocqzq4>

SUPER JUNIOR 슈퍼주니어 'Mr. Simple' MV, SMTOWN., (2012)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6TwwSGYycM>

С к р ы т ы е т а л а н т ы к п о п - и д о л о в , к о т о р ы е в ы н и к о г д а н е в и д е л и р а н ь ш е . , KPOP HN., (2023)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rllVGdabCk

Victoria Cheredeeva

블락비 (Block B) _ Very Good _ Official MV, Block B., (2014)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kJGcO5Une-g>

IVE 아이브 'I AM' MV, STARSHIP., (2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZUlwj3FGUY>

4MINUTE - 미쳐 (Crazy), 4Minute 포미닛 (Official YouTube Channel), (2015)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nCLBTmjBY>

(여자)아이들 ((G)I-DLE) - 'LION' Official Music Video., (G)I-DLE (여자)아이들 (Official YouTube Channel), (2020)
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dww9Uj4Dt8>

TWICE "MORE & MORE" M/V, JYP Entertainment., (2021)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mHO_XpSHkZo

WIN YG vs JYP Dance Battle (JYP Trainee Dance Team) #GOT7., Kai2dayeo5., (2017)
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x8RlixqumUc>

EXO 엑소 'Ko Ko Bop' MV, SMTOWN., (2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldssuxDdqKk>

2.1
Music
aespa "Supernova"

Video
aespa 에스파 'Supernova' MV, SMTOWN., (2024)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phuiiNCxRMg>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t6bBDAIpQZs>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcelgrGY1h8>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxmP4b2aOuY>

aespa 에스파 'Next Level' The Performance Stage #3., aespa., (2021)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82CnK4M2sxo>

2.2
music
MAVE: "PANDORA"

Video
[CHOREOGRAPHY] BTS (방탄소년단) 'FAKE LOVE' Dance Practice., BANGTANTV., (2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQySbNGu4g0>

ITZY "ICY" Dance Practice., ITZY., (2020)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBvdwhgyqVY>

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3.1
Music
j-hope "Daydream"

Video
З Ч А С А Н О Ч Н О Г О Д О Ж Д Я , з в у к и д о ж д я д л я р а с с л а б л я ю щ е г о с н а , б е с с о н н и ц ы , м е д и т а ц и и , у ч е б ы ., The Relaxed Guy., (2015)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q76bMs-NwRk>

3.2
Music
DAY6 "I Need Somebody"

Video
BTS (방탄소년단) '봄날 (Spring Day)' Official MV., HYBE LABELS., (2017)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEeFrLSkMm8>

[Eng Sub] Taehyung Vlive., Taelicious Love., (2021)
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V 'FRI(END)S' Official MV, HYBE LABELS., (2022)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=62peQdQv4uo>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNJMa43U-Vs0&t=155s>

V 'Slow Dancing' Official MV., HYBE LABELS., (2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eIOiTRSOHa8>
[Eng Sub] BTS Taehyung Birthday [VLIVE]., BTS Archives., (2021)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kzpHT_yORnk

[EPISODE] BTS (방탄소년단) 'Dynamite' MV Shoot Sketch., BANGTANTV., (2021)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFkh9SgyAMs>

4.1

Music

SEVENTEEN "Home"

4.2

music

TWICE "KNOCK KNOCK"

Video

GOT7 "Just right(딱 좋아)" M/V., JYP Entertainment, (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrdk3IGcau8>

5.1

Music

BTS "RUN"

Video

NewJeans (뉴진스) 'New Jeans' Official MV, HYBE LABELS., (2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcelgrGY1h8>

LE SSERAFIM (르세라핌) EASY TRAILER 'Good Bones', HYBE LABELS., (2024)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKVBAwHqyEk>

5.2

Music

ZICO "I am you, you are me"

Video

Girls' Generation 소녀시대 '소원을 말해봐 (Genie)' MV, SMTOWN., (2010)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SwiSpudKWI>

T.O.P - DOOM DADA M/V., BIGBANG., (2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAoME_aMm1w

WINNER - 'BABY BABY' M/V., WINNER., (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBBy2p5EQhs>

6.1

Music

NCT U "WITHOUT YOU"

Video

BTS (방탄소년단) 'RUN' Official MV., HYBE LABELS., (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKysONrSmew>

TWICE "CHEER UP" M/V., JYP Entertainment., (2016)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c7rCyll5AeY>

SHINee 샤이니 'Sherlock•셜록 (Clue + Note)' MV, SMTOWN., (2010)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8kyG5tTZ1iE>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xlyrt5eAtKl>

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BLACKPINK Group Hug @ Coachella 2023., lilogurl88., (2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AfMUW86few>

NCT 127 엔시티 127 'TOUCH' MV, SMTOWN., (2018)
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6.2

Music

BLACKPINK "STAY"

Video

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https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8A2t_tAjMz8

BLACKPINK Group Hug @ Coachella 2023., lilogurl88., (2023)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AfMUW86few>

NCT 127 엔시티 127 'TOUCH' MV, SMTOWN., (2018)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sHlq41sl-w>

7

Music

LE SSERAFIM "FEARNOT" (Between you, me and the lamppost)

Victoria Cheredeeva

Video

З Ч А С А Н О Ч Н О Г О Д О Ж Д Я , з в у к и
д о ж д я д л я р а с с л а б л я ю щ е г о
с н а , б е с с о н н и ц ы ,
м е д и т а ц и и , у ч е б ы ., The Relaxed Guy,
(2015)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q76bMs-NwRk>

(ENG SUB) BTS - Save Me + I'm Fine MGA 2018., T
D., (2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwhMm1yD5X-s&t=135s>

Red Velvet 레드벨벳 'Dumb Dumb' MV., SMTOWN.,
(2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGdbaEDVWp0>

Girls' Generation 소녀시대 '소원을 말해봐 (Genie)'
MV., SMTOWN., (2010)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SwiSpudKWI>

BTS (방탄소년단) '봄날 (Spring Day)' Official MV.,
HYBE LABELS., (2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEeFrLskMm8>

BLACKPINK Group Hug @ Coachella 2023., lilogurl88.,
(2023)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8AfMUW86few>

NCT 127 엔시티 127 'TOUCH' MV., SMTOWN., (2018)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sHlq41sl-w>

NewJeans (뉴진스) 'New Jeans' Official MV., HYBE LA-
BELS., (2023)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kcelgrGY1h8>

GOT7 "Just right(딱 좋아)" M/V., JYP Entertainment,
(2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrdk3IGcau8>

aespa 에스파 'Supernova' MV., SMTOWN., (2024)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=phuiiNCxRMg>

LE SSERAFIM (르세라핌) EASY TRAILER 'Good Bones',
HYBE LABELS., (2024)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WKVBAwHqyEk>

[SPECIAL VIDEO] SEVENTEEN(세븐틴) - '아주
NICE' (VERY NICE) DANCE PRACTICE ver., SEVEN-
TEEN., (2017)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1gJQpMSkE-U&t=105s>

IVE 아이브 'I AM' MV., STARSHIP., (2023)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ZUlwj3FgUY>

WINNER - 'BABY BABY' M/V., WINNER., (2016)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBBY2p5EQhs>

Shuffle ▶ Jung Kook
▶ “Shot Glass of Tears”

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