

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the dynamics between K-pop global expansion and the structural-cultural dominance of the United States. While K-pop is widely recognized as South Korea's soft power and a significant achievement in global culture, this study demonstrates that its international success has predominantly been rooted within the U.S.-dominated framework of the global music industry. Through a qualitative approach and the concept of cultural imperialism, this study investigates two sectors: production, analyzing K-pop's reliance on U.S.-based audio-visual digital platform specifically YouTube and partnerships with American major music labels for global dissemination, as well as audiences and aesthetics, in relation to the dominance of (American) English within the industry, which compels K-pop to incorporate it into their musical productions to achieve international acceptance. The study found that K-pop's global recognition remained dependent on U.S.-controlled infrastructure and culture, implying that modern cultural imperialism functions not only through the dominance of one culture over another, but also through the hybridization and method of cultural dissemination through technological and corporate infrastructures. Therefore, this study concludes that the international proliferation of K-pop reinforces the dominance of U.S. culture within the contemporary global cultural landscape, particularly in the global music industry.

Keywords : K-pop, South Korea, United States, Soft Power, Global Music Industry, Cultural Imperialism