

Call for Conference Papers

Is Netflix Riding the Korean Wave or Vice Versa? II: Shifting Local and Global Relationships

July 18–19, 2025
Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

In December 2024, *Squid Game 2*, which was produced in South Korea, one more time, made a global sensation. Regardless of negative observations by some media critics and media outlets, upon release, this brutal seven-part survival drama quickly took the top spot in 93 countries. *Squid Game 2* is the latest example of Korean cultural content, which Netflix distributes globally. Netflix had already invested in several Korean cultural products, including Bong Joon-ho's film *Okja* (2017) and the historical epic *Mr. Sunshine* (2018). In 2019, Netflix released its first original Korean zombie drama series, *Kingdom*, followed by *D.P.* (2021) and *The Glory* (2023). Netflix has also circulated numerous K-dramas and films. Other global OTTs are not left behind. *Moving* (2023), *The Worst of Evil* (2023), and *Light Shop* (2024) in Disney+ show the increasing role of global OTTs in relation to the Korean Wave. As Korea has talented content creators and cultural products, Netflix and Disney+ are tactically riding the Korean Wave.

Netflix and Disney+ have undoubtedly shifted the ways in which people consume visual narratives, ranging from television dramas to full-length films tailored to global audiences. In so doing, these global OTTs have influenced the Korean entertainment industry. Due to heavy impacts driven by Netflix and Disney+, Korean cultural creators re-orient their production norms to greet the new world these global forces design. This rapidly shifting media environment creates tensions between global and local cultural industries, which are concerned about the decreasing role of the local cultural industries as well as the loss of cultural identity. However, Netflix's strategic emphasis on producing local original content has significantly contributed to creating culturally diverse, multilingual international audiences.

The current development of the Korean Wave content on global OTTs, as can be seen in *Squid Game 1 and 2*, *Moving*, *The Glory*, *Physical: 100*, *Culinary Class Wars* (2023), and *Light Shop* (2024), asks scholars to advance new theoretical and practical approaches in understanding the power relations between local and global cultural actors in the Korean context, which is becoming part of the global cultural sphere. The impact of these global OTTs is expected to change the face of the Korean Wave, one of the most powerful examples of transnational cultural flows. It is crucial to create new perspectives that drive the Korean Wave to the level of new grounds. In this conference, we plan to analyze new horizons generated by global OTT platforms, including Netflix, in tandem with the Korean Wave.

We welcome contributions that address the recent development, triggering a fundamental shift in our understanding of Hallyu and OTTs. As a group, we plan to discuss the possibility of advancing non-Western theories and/or new theoretical perspectives amid the continuation of the Korean Wave on global OTT platforms. Throughout the discussions, we hope to shed light on current debates and place them in perspectives relevant to future transnational cultural studies.

This conference serves as a sequel to the international conference "Is Netflix Riding the Korean Wave or Vice Versa?" that was held at Seoul National University in April 2022. The event laid the foundation for further scholarly exploration. As a direct outcome of that conference, the organizers collaborated on editing a special issue for the *International Journal of Communication*, which was published in 2023. The revised and updated papers, together with several new additions, were presented at the City University of Hong Kong in December 2024.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Cultural/critical analysis of Squid Game (including season 1, 2 and 3)
- Transnational cultural flows from the Global South
- Netflix's effects on Korean Wave content
- Shifting cultural genres in the Netflix era
- Netflix audience research: methods and perspectives
- Comparative studies of Netflix's original productions
- Case studies of individual production companies and/or filmmakers before and after their cooperation with global OTTs
- Historical perspectives on streaming technologies and services and Korean media
- Shifting power relationships between global and local OTTs
- Shifting media ecology surrounding the Korean Wave and OTTs
- Effects of Netflix on storytelling and aesthetics of Korean cinema and TV
- Critical Understanding of OTT platforms in the Korean cultural scene

Conference Details:

1. Conference Schedule: date and place
Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea. July 18-19, 2025

2. Deadline

To apply, please send an abstract (300 words max.), a short biography (150 words max.), and a 2-page CV to Dr. Jungju Shin (bk21eng-intl@yonsei.ac.kr). The deadline for applications is 28 February 2025. We will notify the accepted abstracts at the end of March 2025.

3. Outcomes

There will be two potential projects based on the conference, as we did with the first conference held in 2022. One will be a journal special issue. The other will be an edited volume. Since we plan to develop these two different academic publications in English, we only accept original materials not published or scheduled elsewhere.

4. Conference support

We may provide some benefits to the presenters, including registration fees and meals. However, we do not support travel and accommodation. Though, we may support, even partially, a few graduate students. If you have any questions, please contact Miseong Woo (mswoo@yonsei.ac.kr) or Dal Yong Jin (yongjin23@gmail.com)

CONFERENCE ORGANIZERS

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