

# THE SUCCESS OF K-POP IN QUARANTINE

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No matter where in the world you are currently located, it is very likely that there are some activities you can no longer physically do because of the global pandemic. People and industries alike are currently facing difficulties due to lockdowns and following protocol to stay healthy and safe. The music industry in particular has been one industry suffering greatly due to the pandemic; nearly all live events have been postponed indefinitely or cancelled, venues have been shut down amidst lockdown regulations, and countless workers within the industry have been left jobless without pay and instead with an uncertain future. However, there are some positives even with all of these new unfortunate factors. While physical realities within the music industry are not possible at the moment, the industry is adapting and learning to operate in a digital reality. Specifically, the K-Pop scene is one hopeful area of the global music industry that shows no signs of stopping or slowing down - even amidst a global pandemic.

Before delving into how the K-Pop industry is operating in its new locked down environment, let us first review the K-Pop industry and how it operated prior to COVID-19. The spread of Korean popular culture, especially K-Pop music, is certainly not a new phenomenon. Often cited as “Hallyu,” or Korean Wave, by scholars, the spread of Korean popular culture began in the late 1990s as Korean drama TV shows began being exported to various countries;

they first expanded to China before expanding to other East Asian countries, such as Taiwan and Japan, and continuing its expansion to western countries (albeit a few years later).<sup>1</sup> According to Kim Bok-rae, a Professor at Andong National University, Hallyu has a history that is constantly being updated with new stages and spread globally thanks to the conjoining forces of these stages: Hallyu 1.0 (K-Dramas), Hallyu 2.0 (K-Pop music), Hallyu 3.0 (K-Culture), and lastly, Hallyu 4.0 (K-Style).<sup>2</sup> Although this work will primarily focus on K-Pop and its Hallyu 2.0 stage, it is important to briefly acknowledge that K-Pop’s influence does not stop at music, but rather influences other areas of culture such as fashion, style, identity, and, as this article will briefly discuss, even politics.

One of the main reasons K-Pop is as global as it is today is because of the Internet and social media. (This work in particular will occasionally reference social media content from fans, primarily from forums such as Reddit.) Unlike traditional platforms (radio and TV broadcasts) which contributed to the initial Hallyu 1.0 wave, both the internet and social media allow K-Pop fans to spread content and connect globally 24/7 almost completely without restrictions (almost completely because although there might not be physical border

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<sup>1</sup> Kim Bok-rae, “Past, Present and Future of *Hallyu* (Korean Wave),” *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 5, no.5 (2015): 154-159.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

restrictions, some SNS is unpopular, blocked, or unavailable in certain countries). The use of the Internet and social media is not only beneficial to K-Pop fans all over the world, but is also beneficial for the companies and artists themselves as these platforms allow artist-fan interaction, promotion, and market research at no cost.<sup>3</sup> K-Pop entertainment agencies often incorporate promoting artists via YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook into their social media strategy by creating accounts for their artists where music videos, teasers, and additional behind-the-scenes contents can be uploaded.<sup>4</sup> Entertainment agencies utilize these social media platforms to promote their current artists, but they also use these platforms to scout new talent. For example, SM entertainment, one of the highest grossing K-Pop entertainment agencies, advertised its Global Audition Event with a YouTube promotional video and even created a Facebook page for the audition.<sup>5</sup> According to a 2013 report, the top three grossing K-Pop entertainment agencies (also known in the industry as “The Big Three”).<sup>6</sup> SM, YG, and JYP had the following subscribers and followers for YouTube and Twitter, respectively: 1.9 million and 515.6 thousand; 0.8 million and 478.9 thousand; .2

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<sup>3</sup> Sangjoon Lee and Abé Mark Nornes, *Hallyu 2.0: The Korean Wave in the Age of Social Media* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2015), 73-89.

<sup>4</sup> JoongHo Ahn, Sehwon Oh, and Hyunjung Kim, “Korea Pop Takes Off! Social Media Strategy of Korean Entertainment Endustry,” *Proceedings of the 10th International Conference on Service Systems and Service Management* (2013):774-777. 10.1109/ICSSSM.2013.6602528.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “Big 3 Agencies,” *Fandom*, accessed July 10, 2020, [https://kpop.fandom.com/wiki/Big\\_3\\_agencies](https://kpop.fandom.com/wiki/Big_3_agencies).

million and 266.4.<sup>7</sup> Today, those numbers have risen to the following: 23.2 million YouTube subscribers, 8.1 million Twitter followers; 5.41 million YouTube subscribers, 6.3 million Twitter followers; 16.9 million YouTube subscribers, 4.2 million Twitter followers. This significant rise of followers on social media has contributed to growing communities among fans and an overall global awareness for the K-Pop genre, making the industry succeed economically.

According to a 2017 South Korea Music Industry report, the South Korean music industry employed over 77,000 employees with music exports totaling 513 million USD and music imports totaling 14 million USD.<sup>8</sup> This economic success has been growing continuously, even dubbed the “BTS Effect” after the popular K-Pop group BTS, who alone in 2018 had been estimated to generate \$3.5 billion worth of economic value and \$1.26 billion of added value to Korea yearly.<sup>9</sup> Although these figures have been developed prior to COVID-19, the industry is still actively producing content and generating profit even amidst quarantine and lockdown restrictions.

The cultural and language differences between K-Pop and western pop music might be the most obvious differences between the two, but these cultural differences also impact how the K-Pop

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<sup>7</sup> Ahn et al.

<sup>8</sup> “South Korea’s music industry - Statistics & Facts,” Statista, 25 Mar. 2020, <https://www.statista.com/topics/5098/music-industry-in-south-korea/>.

<sup>9</sup> “BTS’s Economic Benefits,” *Hyundai Research Institute*, 17 Dec. 2020, <http://hri.co.kr/board/reportView.asp?numIdx=30107&firstDepth=1&secondDepth=1&thirdDepth=>

industry operates in comparison to the western music industry. While some K-Pop artists (also known as idols in the industry) are solo, the average K-Pop group has a total of around about seven to eight members<sup>10</sup> and some even more than this (NCT currently the largest K-Pop group of twenty-one, although they are often broken into smaller groups, or sub-units within the overall group) compared to the typical solo western artist or group of four to five members.<sup>11</sup> Whereas artists in the western music industry usually pursue their musical talents at their own pace prior to signing with a record label, K-Pop idols are often scouted by entertainment labels to become trainees; once a trainee, they will train with the company indefinitely, often for years (though sometimes a shorter period of time) until the label deems them prepared to make their debut, which is the first time an idol or group releases and promotes their first song.<sup>12</sup> Idol debuts are shown most commonly shown on TV music show broadcasts (typically competition-style music programs with performances and a live audience full of enthusiastic fans) where the idols not only perform, but can also be shown giving backstage interviews with the show's MCs (often sunbaenims - or "senior"

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<sup>10</sup> Taylor Glasby, "A Beginner's Guide to K-Pop," *Vice*, 1 Aug. 2019, [https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_us/article/wjvw39/k-pop-guide-nct-bts-blackpink](https://i-d.vice.com/en_us/article/wjvw39/k-pop-guide-nct-bts-blackpink).

<sup>11</sup> "NCT," *Fandom*, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://kpop.fandom.com/wiki/NCT>.

<sup>12</sup> "What Does 'Debut' Mean in K-Pop?" *Quora*, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://www.quora.com/What-does-debut-mean-in-K-pop#:~:text=Interested%20in%20Korean%20Culture.&text=It%20is%20the%20period%20in,Idol%20inste ad%20of%20a%20trainee>.

artists who have been in the industry for a longer period of time).<sup>13</sup> TV music show broadcasts are extremely popular in K-Pop as most K-Pop idols will routinely perform their new music on these shows, especially when they release albums or have a "comeback," named so because they come back to their fans with new music.<sup>14</sup>

There often comes a wide range of released content and events following artist comebacks: music video releases, live streams, fan sign events, and even live concerts. Some groups will even tease their comeback by providing fans with an outlined schedule or calendar that details exact dates and times of new teasers and content leading up to their content.<sup>15</sup> Many idols often appear on popular TV variety shows, such as *Weekly Idol*, or have their very own variety shows via their entertainment labels.<sup>16</sup> While having a comeback is not a western music industry standard, comebacks are big deals in the K-Pop industry not only because they provide fans with a substantial amount of new content to consume, but also because they are one of the main ways for K-Pop idols to generate profit. Most fans will undoubtedly pay for this content whether it is albums, fan memberships, exclusive content (usually on

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<sup>13</sup> Ceefu, "The Role of MC in South Korean TV Shows," *Borneo Post*, 20 Feb. 2012, <https://www.theborneopost.com/2012/02/20/the-role-of-mc-in-south-korean-tv-shows/>.

<sup>14</sup> Sherry Tucci, "K-Pop A to Z: A Beginner's Dictionary," *Daily Dot*, 29 Feb. 2020, <https://www.dailydot.com/upstream/kpop-common-terms-to-know/>.

<sup>15</sup> "Schedule," *ATEEZ*, accessed 11 July 2020, <https://www.8makes1team.com/calendar-schedule>.

<sup>16</sup> Danielle Song, "7 K-Pop Idol-Based Reality Shows to Binge Watch During Quarantine," *Koreaboo*, 13 Apr. 3030, <https://www.koreaboo.com/lists/7-kpop-idol-based-reality-shows-watch-quarantine/>.

VLIVE, a South Korean live broadcasting app), lotteries (a common way to win the opportunity to attend a fansign), or tickets for upcoming tours throughout this period. Spending time and money can become costly for some fans, especially when they want to show support for their favorite artists; and in the K-Pop world, spending time and money (especially money) is often an aspect of any given fandom that “proves” to others how good of a fan you are.<sup>17</sup>

According to a recent report that encompassed 17 countries total, the average amount of time spent per month on K-Pop across these countries was nearly 15 hours; Indonesia took the lead with average time per month of 23.9 hours and Thailand in second place at 22.3 hours - both nearly an entire day’s time spent.<sup>18</sup> Spending time on one’s favorite artist is important, but as a recent Billboard article states, “merch is just as important as the music” (and in K-Pop merch does not always necessarily mean CDs or clothing merchandise associated with the artist, but can also include artist partnerships for items like food, beauty, home goods, and more) for the K-Pop industry.<sup>19</sup> One Reddit user last year asked other users on the site, “How much a month

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<sup>17</sup> Biju Belinky, “For K-pop Fans, Devotion Can Come at a High Price,” *Vice*, 31 May 2019, [https://www.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/597wya/k-pop-fans-merch-cost-expensive-lightsticks](https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/597wya/k-pop-fans-merch-cost-expensive-lightsticks).

<sup>18</sup> “Amount of Time Spent per Month on South Korean Pop Music (K-Pop) Worldwide in 2019, by Country,” *Statista*, accessed 11 July 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1107610/south-korea-monthly-time-spent-for-kpop-by-country/>.

<sup>19</sup> Tamar Herman and Raphael Rashid, “For the K-Pop Industry, Merch Is as Important as the Music,” *Billboard*, 16 Mar. 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/deep-dive/9331910/for-the-k-pop-industry-merch-is-as-important-as-the-music>.

do you think you spend on K-Pop merch?... I am actually broke” to which one user replied, “It depends on if EXO or Red Velvet is having a comeback or not” and another, “I dropped like \$600 on misc. albums/dvds/merch this month alone, omg... Maybe limit myself to spending \$80 a month.”<sup>20</sup> Although COVID-19 has undoubtedly caused some aspects of K-Pop to pause, many K-Pop artists have not paused at all - still providing fans with content, comebacks, and concerts despite the pandemic - and allowing fans to regularly consume and spend as usual.

The first case of COVID-19 was reported in South Korea on 20 January 2020; following this report, the country regulated testing and tracing in order to contain the virus and treat those who were infected and contagious.<sup>21</sup> When the South Korea government urged businesses and citizens to alter their lifestyles in order to help stop the spread of the virus, many citizens complied and the country did not find it necessary to go into a lockdown like many other countries had already started mandating.<sup>22</sup> Although many have recognized South Korea for its effectiveness of combatting COVID to flatten the curve, there have still been many aspects of South Korean society that were disrupted,

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<sup>20</sup> “How Much a Month Do You Think You Spend on K-Pop Merch,” *Reddit*, accessed 11 July 2020, [https://www.reddit.com/r/kpop/comments/av4ujr/how\\_much\\_a\\_month\\_do\\_you\\_think\\_you\\_spend\\_on\\_kpop/](https://www.reddit.com/r/kpop/comments/av4ujr/how_much_a_month_do_you_think_you_spend_on_kpop/).

<sup>21</sup> Justin McCurry, “Test, Trace, Contain: How South Korea Flattened Its Coronavirus Curve,” *The Guardian*, 23 Apr. 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/23/test-trace-contain-how-south-korea-flattened-its-coronavirus-curve>.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

including the K-Pop industry. Artists postponed their new music releases, live music events were postponed or cancelled, and many popular music TV program filmings were delayed.<sup>23</sup> Yet the industry learned to adjust and continue despite the brief disruption. In April, despite high numbers of COVID-19 cases in other countries and worries of a second wave in South Korea still looming, there were 22 comebacks, most of which occurred on TV music programs.<sup>24</sup> One Reddit user (most likely located outside of South Korea) posted to the r/kpophoughts thread, “Why aren’t idols in quarantine?”<sup>25</sup> This question was met with one South Korean user’s answer:

I live in Seoul... it’s not really on the level of a full scale lockdown here. I don’t see a problem with idols working when almost everyone else here is too as long as everyone’s careful, like making sure there are no audiences packed in while filming and whatnot.<sup>26</sup>

Removing the fan-packed studio audiences for live TV music broadcast

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<sup>23</sup> Tamar Herman, “K-pop Industry Moves Forward as South Korea Controls Coronavirus Spread,” *Billboard*, 31 Mar. 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/9347980/k-pop-industry-moves-forward-south-korea-coronavirus>.

<sup>24</sup> “April 2020 K-Pop Comebacks and Debuts,” *DB Kpop*, accessed 10 July 2020, <https://dbkpop.com/2020/02/04/april-2020-k-pop-comebacks-and-debuts>.

<sup>25</sup> “Why Aren’t Idols in Quarantine?” *Reddit*, accessed 11 July 2020, [https://www.reddit.com/r/kpophoughts/comments/fqfps6/why\\_arent\\_idols\\_in\\_quarantine/](https://www.reddit.com/r/kpophoughts/comments/fqfps6/why_arent_idols_in_quarantine/).

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

programs was one way the K-Pop industry was able to move forward as it did. Artists and entertainment agencies also requested fans not to come to the venue and wait outside to see their favorite artists, usually a common occurrence during comebacks and broadcast music program appearances.<sup>27</sup> Since fans could not physically be there, social media and live streaming became even more important parts of being a K-Pop fan amidst the pandemic. Many artists became more active on social media throughout the pandemic in order to stay connected with and keep their fans updated: creating Tik Tok accounts, answering fan questions on Twitter (also known commonly among fans as a “menpa” - short for “mention party”), and going live to talk with fans or do various quarantine activities on VLIVE.<sup>28</sup> The physical fansigns and live concerts that were originally either postponed or cancelled moved online, allowing fans with a digital experience instead of no experience at all. The process for being included in the fan lottery or purchasing tickets for both fansigns and concerts were also similar to pre-covid processes, making the transition from physical to digital fairly simple and easily comprehensible.

Most fansigns rely on a lottery in order to determine which fans will have the opportunity; that is, fans are not able to actually purchase tickets to a fan meeting, but will automatically be entered in a lottery

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<sup>27</sup> Mark Savage, “BTS Ask Fans to Avoid Their Shows over Coronavirus Fears,” *BBC*, 24 Feb. 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-51613223>.

<sup>28</sup> “Menpa,” *Urban Dictionary*, 25 May 2010, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=menpa>.

to win a ticket to the fansign when they purchase an album.<sup>29</sup> The physical fansigns that took place before COVID-19 usually allowed fans to greet the idol(s) and have a copy of their album signed, and sometimes even included a Q&A, photo opportunities, or other activities.<sup>30</sup> Although many of these activities were obviously not possible with digital fansigns, the digital fansigns seemed to receive mostly positive feedback from fans for several reasons. One fan on a Reddit thread listed “international fan participation, no long distance traveling, video call footage that fans can keep forever, and fan-artist interactions spread quickly throughout social media” as some of the unique benefits of video calls while another commented on how video calls are often not as awkward as physical fan signs, especially for non-Korean fans, because fans and idols can easily communicate via translation apps.<sup>31</sup>

When VLIVE announced a series of livestream concerts, called “Beyond Live,” with a lineup of various (mostly SM entertainment) artists, many fans were eager to have the opportunity to experience seeing their favorite idols perform live - even if it was through a screen.<sup>32</sup> However, the prices for the tickets for the livestream concert ultimately lead to a discourse among many fan communities on social media. The first

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<sup>29</sup> “K-Pop 101: How to Attend Fansigns,” *Soompi*, 7 Jan. 2016,

<https://www.soompi.com/article/801015wpp/k-pop-101-how-to-attend-fansigns>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> “Video Call Fansign Is Great and Should Be Utilized More Going Forward,” *Reddit*, accessed 12 July 2020, [https://www.reddit.com/r/kpophoughts/comments/h9v12a/video\\_call\\_fansign\\_is\\_great\\_and\\_should\\_be/](https://www.reddit.com/r/kpophoughts/comments/h9v12a/video_call_fansign_is_great_and_should_be/).

<sup>32</sup> “Beyond Live,” *VLIVE*, accessed 12 July 2020, <https://www.vlive.tv/vstore/ch/beyond>.

round of livestream concerts included SuperM and NCT (NCT 127, NCT Dream and Wayv), all of which sold tickets at \$30 USD.<sup>33</sup> While some fans thought it acceptable to pay that price for tickets, many fans thought the online concert should be free or have a lower cost with many citing financial difficulties due to loss of employment from COVID-19. One fan said, “When I saw them promoting (this online concert) I was excited because I (wrongly) assumed it would be free... but then I saw the price....”<sup>34</sup> Fans who might not have had the financial means for all the concerts were also torn about which tickets to purchase since they would need to purchase individual tickets for each group they wanted to watch, which could become increasingly expensive. As one fan said, “All of the streams are \$45 in my country... that’s \$180 to watch all of them. I just can’t afford that right now.”<sup>35</sup> All tickets for the live streamed concerts allowed purchasers to stream up to two devices at a time and would also include a VOD link after the performance had been reviewed by the Korean Review Board.<sup>36</sup> While some fans paid for their own individual ticket, some fans paired up to split costs to share the concert link, and some fans chose to instead find and watch live streams of the live stream itself on different social media sites (although this was prohibited).<sup>37</sup> No matter how fans watched, the Beyond Live series

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> “SuperM/NCT/Wayv beyond Live Streaming,” *Reddit*, accessed 12 July 2020,

[https://www.reddit.com/r/NCT/comments/g73fja/supermctwayv\\_beyond\\_live\\_streaming/](https://www.reddit.com/r/NCT/comments/g73fja/supermctwayv_beyond_live_streaming/).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> “Beyond Live.”

<sup>37</sup> “SuperM/NCT/Wayv.”

seemed to be successful among both fans and sales alike. NCT 127's performance, for example, was praised for its "remarkably high production value and multi-angle livestream" which allowed fans feel connected even despite a possible digital disconnect.<sup>38</sup> The SuperM performance proved the Beyond Live series to be financially successful as it was reported a total of 75,000 paid viewers tuned into the livestream in real time, resulting in a profit of an "upwards of \$2 million USD."<sup>39</sup>

K-Pop fans have not only been keeping busy with new content in quarantine, but have also begun utilizing their social media accounts for political activism, particularly for the Black Lives Matter movement. When the rise of Black Lives Matter protests began throughout the United States in May, many police departments across the country tweeted requesting users to send any information or media evidence of illegal activities; the Dallas Police Department, for example, posted a tweet encouraging users to send any information or media to the iWatch Dallas app.<sup>40</sup> This tweet became viral shortly after - but only because one Twitter user called for K-Pop fans to "use

them fancams (videos of idols performing, sometimes edited by fans) for GOOD please."<sup>41</sup> The iWatch Dallas app soon faced technical difficulties with the amount of K-Pop fans sending in videos of their favorite K-Pop idols and was eventually disabled. The rise of Black Lives Matter also prompted the rise of many discriminatory and racist tweets and hashtags on the Twitter platform, such as #WhiteLivesMatter. The trend soon became completely overtaken with K-Pop fans who posted their fancams and information including ways to support the Black Lives Matter movement. When a Trump Administration Twitter account tweeted requesting that Twitter users send personal video messages to wish Donald Trump happy birthday, K-Pop fans again began rapidly uploading their fancams like they did with the iWatch Dallas app. K-Pop fans not only utilized their fancams to overshadow racist content, but also utilized their accounts in order to come together and raise both awareness and money for the movement. When Big Hit Entertainment and BTS announced they made a \$1 million USD donation to Black Lives Matter, for example, fans quickly began self-organizing to match the donation utilizing the trend #MatchAMillion. The hashtag began trending worldwide and after about 25 hours, the \$1 million USD donation was matched.<sup>42</sup>

Even if K-Pop fans were left in quarantine without new content or activist-

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<sup>38</sup> Jeff Benjamin, "The 10 Best Moments of NCT 127's 'Beyond the Origin' Live Stream Concert," *Billboard*, 17 May 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/columns/k-town/9379336/nct-127-beyond-the-origin-live-stream-concert-best-moments>.

<sup>39</sup> Tamar Herman, "SuperM's Virtual K-Pop Concert Sees Major Earnings," *Forbes*, 26 Apr. 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tamarherman/2020/04/26/superms-virtual-k-pop-concert-sees-major-earnings/#ab84672293ef>.

<sup>40</sup> Aja Romano, "How K-Pop Fans Are Weaponizing the Internet for Black Lives Matter," *Vox*, 22 June 2020, <https://www.vox.com/2020/6/8/21279262/k-pop-fans-black-lives-matter-fancams-youtubers-protest-support>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ellie Bate, "BTS Donated \$1 Million to Black Lives Matter. In Just over a Day, the Fandom Had Matched Their Donation," *Buzzfeed*, 8 June 2020, <https://www.buzzfeed.com/eleanorbate/bts-army-black-lives-matter-donation-match-a-million>.

related goals, it seems likely that the industry would continue to thrive for two main reasons: the sense of community among K-Pop fandoms on social media and the wide range of K-Pop content readily available. Many fans have interacted with one another on social media during this time, creating and sharing videos and playlists, such as “male kpop idols moments to get you through quarantine,” “Collective Kpop Haul [Quarantine Edition] March 2020,” “kpop quarantine party playlist,” along with numerous others to pass the time in quarantine<sup>43</sup> Fans are also utilizing this time to learn about different groups, listening to their music or watching their content to become fans; as one Reddit user said, “before quarantine I only stanned GOT7 but now I stan Twice, Itzy, Stray Kids, and Day6 too.”<sup>44</sup> People who are unsure of what to do with themselves in quarantine have also begun using K-Pop as a hobby to pass the time, becoming “K-Pop experts.”<sup>45</sup> The K-Pop industry, it seems, is perfect for quarantine because there is always content, old or new, available: music, videos, television programs, social media content and more. And unlike others

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<sup>43</sup> “Male Kpop Idols Moments to Get You through Quarantine,” 27 Mar. 2020

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqWzqFbJ\\_dE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dqWzqFbJ_dE); “Collective Kpop Haul [Quarantine Edition] March 2020,” 22 Mar. 2020,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RGof87kivIw>; “Kpop Quarantine Party Playlist,” 22 Mar. 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKZgbe0vHnI>.

<sup>44</sup> “Are There Any Groups You Got into Due to Quarantine?” *Reddit*, accessed 11 July 2020, [https://www.reddit.com/r/kpopthoughts/comments/hn\\_x5qo/are\\_there\\_any\\_groups\\_you\\_got\\_into\\_due\\_to/](https://www.reddit.com/r/kpopthoughts/comments/hn_x5qo/are_there_any_groups_you_got_into_due_to/).

<sup>45</sup> Jeff Benjamin, “Become a K-Pop Expert While You’re Quarantined,” *Paper Mag*, 24 Apr. 2020, <https://www.papermag.com/k-pop-beginners-guide-2645826222.html?rebelltitem=1#rebelltitem1>.

who are experience “quarantine fatigue” from staying home or “feed fatigue” because of the overload of content on social media while everyone does so, K-Pop fans seem to be enjoying their time with K-Pop in quarantine.<sup>46</sup> “K-Pop is getting me through this quarantine,” one Reddit user posted before asking other K-Pop fans to share what groups they have been listening to while in quarantine.<sup>47</sup>

Although it is not certain when exactly the K-Pop industry will resume with its normal activities, it remains one of the sectors within the music industry that has quickly adapted to find new ways of keeping fans entertained while also making a profit. While many K-Pop fans might be upset that idols’ normal activities are not currently possible, many fans are happy enough to engage with the digital activities, and some even enjoy the digital activities more due to international benefits. Compared to 2018, South Korea’s music market saw a 8.2% growth in 2019; figures for 2020 are obviously not yet available, but these figures will be telling in how the K-Pop industry’s response to COVID-19 paid off - literally.<sup>48,49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Julia Marcus, “Quarantine Fatigue Is Real,” *The Atlantic*, 11 May 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/05/quarantine-fatigue-real-and-shaming-people-wont-help/611482/>; Viktor Bezic, “About Feed Fatigue,” *Medium*, accessed 12 July 2020, <https://medium.com/feed-fatigue/about>.

<sup>47</sup> “Kpop Is Getting Me through This Quarantine,” *Reddit*, accessed 12 July 2020, [https://www.reddit.com/r/kpopthoughts/comments/fy\\_oe0k/kpop\\_is\\_getting\\_me\\_through\\_this\\_quarantine/](https://www.reddit.com/r/kpopthoughts/comments/fy_oe0k/kpop_is_getting_me_through_this_quarantine/).

<sup>48</sup> “Global Music Report: The Industry in 2019,” *IFPI*, accessed 12 July 2020, <https://www.ifpi.org/media/downloads/GMR2019-en.pdf>.

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<sup>49</sup> The journal solicited editorials, opinion pieces, autoethnographies, and similar items for the present edition in response to how people were engaging with media as a coping mechanism while quarantining during the COVID-19 Pandemic. This item is one of those pieces. – Ed.

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