

Women's Gender Role Identity and *Hallyu* Acceptance in Myanmar*

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Abstract

While the global popularity of *Hallyu* has been subject to substantial debate with regard to cultural globalization, the transnational flow of culture, and cultural hybridity, little attention has been paid to the role of women's gender role identity. Prompted by this gap in the research, this study investigates why *Hallyu* products are popular among Myanmar women working in Korean garment factories by focusing on the relationship between women's gender role identity and perceived representation of females in *Hallyu* contents. Based on survey research with 262 Myanmar women working in seven Korean-owned garment factories in Myanmar, the study explores whether and how gender role identity among Myanmar women and Korean women's gender role images as represented in *Hallyu* contents are related to their fondness for and consumption of *Hallyu* products. Findings provide evidence on the positive impact of androgynous gender roles on *Hallyu* acceptance among Myanmar women, with varying degrees of acceptance according to the type of *Hallyu* products.

Key words

Hallyu, gender role identity, Myanmar women, Korean garment factory

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Introduction

Hallyu (Korean Wave), referring to the transnational popularity of South Korean (hereafter Korean) television dramas, movies, music, and pop culture, has developed into a global phenomenon. It started in China in the 1990s before advancing across the rest of Asia in the 2000s. The rapid rise and enthusiastic reception of *Hallyu* in Asian countries has led many researchers and policymakers to question why *Hallyu* has become so popular in Asia. Many studies have sought to find an answer to this question based on the notion of cultural proximity, which justifies the appeal of *Hallyu* in Asia to its “Asian-ness,” specifically, similarities in physical appearance and a common emphasis on traditional Asian values and Confucian ethics such as harmony, community, strong morality, respect for seniors, familism, loyalty, and emphasis on education (Hogarth, 2013; Yang, 2012). The basis of this explanation rests largely on the tendency of individuals to accept cultural products that share a commonality with their own values, feelings, and experiences (Huat, 2004).

More recently, with *Hallyu* evolving into a global trend, notions of globalization and cultural hybridization have been put forth as new frameworks through which its global popularity may be explained (Jung, 2009; Lee, 2005; Lee, 2011; Shim, 2006). In particular, proponents of cultural hybridization depict *Hallyu* as a hybrid subculture because of its ability to interweave tradition and modernity as well as global and local culture, along with Western and non-Western cultural materials. With the widespread use of the internet and social media, the hybridity of *Hallyu* products has been considered one of the main features responsible for the popularity of Korean popular culture in Asia and other parts of the world (Jin, 2018; Ko, No, Kim, & Simões, 2014).

Alternatively, a number of studies have also examined the popularity of *Hallyu* through the lens of gender. Focusing on the dominant female participation in and consumption of the *Hallyu* movement in Asia, the prevailing model used has been a hybrid construction of “soft masculinity” in *Hallyu*, combining traditional masculinity with femininity and metro-sexuality (Jung, 2011). For example, Creighton (2016) has justified the success and popularity of *Hallyu* in Japan based on the appeal of male Korean stars’ soft masculinity to middle-aged Japanese women dissatisfied with hegemonic gender relations. Jung and Hirata (2012) have also explained the popularity of K-pop idol groups among young Japanese women as an expression of their desire to transgress traditional sexual boundaries. In the more authoritarian context of Malaysia, soft masculinity in *Hallyu* has been viewed as a significant fac-

tor influencing, not only its popularity, but also modern conceptions of masculinity (Ainslie, 2017). While emphasizing the transcultural dynamics in *Hallyu*, these findings have provided support for the proposition that gender, or specifically gender role identity, is an important factor in elucidating acceptance of *Hallyu*. Currently, however, there has been little research that has addressed the possible association between perceived gender roles, representation of females in *Hallyu* products, and *Hallyu* acceptance. In addition, few studies have engaged in gendered discourse of *Hallyu* in the context of specific target countries, regions, or individuals, with the existing literature mainly focused on Japan and China.

In most, if not all, countries, *Hallyu* fans are more likely to be women than men (Oh, 2009). Myanmar is no exception. Since the airing of the first Korean TV drama in the late 2000s, Myanmar has emerged as the latest Asian country to be swept up in the phenomenon of *Hallyu*. With many young women fascinated with Korean TV dramas and K-pop idols, Korean cultural products have extensively penetrated Myanmar society (Pandita, 2017). *Hallyu* fever in Myanmar is particularly visible in Yangon, the country's biggest commercial city and most socially advanced center, where K-pop concerts and *Hallyu*-related events are frequently held (Pandita, 2017).

What is it, then, that attracts Myanmar women to *Hallyu*? To resolve this question with a focus on the role of gender role identity, this study explores how gender roles are perceived by young Myanmar women and whether this affects their perception of Korean women's gender role images (KWGRI) portrayed in *Hallyu* contents, which consequently influences their fondness for and consumption of them. By exploring the potential social and psychological influence of women's gender role identity, this study aims to further extend and develop gendered discourses on *Hallyu* and thus bridge theoretical and practical gaps in the existing *Hallyu* acceptance model.

Theoretical Framework: Concepts, Assumptions, and Theories Behind the Study

Gender Role Identity and Its Influence

Since its theoretical development by psychologist Erik Erikson (1964) in the 1950s, the concept of "identity" has played an important role in our understanding of what motivates people's traits, attitudes, and behaviors. As a person's sense of gender, gender identity is a central part of one's identity and their internal sense of appropriate gender behavior (Eccles, 2009). In every society, there are behaviors,

attitudes, and personality characteristics that are considered appropriate or typical of one's sex as male or female. Accordingly, femininity and masculinity are seen as being at opposing ends of a single dimension and mutually exclusive (Mills, Culbertson, Huffman, & Connell, 2012).

This unidimensional assumption, however, has been challenged by research showing that masculinity and femininity develop independently within the same individual (Heilbrun & Bailey, 1986; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1975). Studies have argued that as gender roles transform in accordance with social change, modern individuals tend to exhibit both masculine and feminine traits (Cook, 1985). Thus, in place of traditional bipolar formulations of sex-typing, Bem (1974) developed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), a set of self-report questionnaires to assess the degree of gender role stereotyping within individuals. Using this scale, she has identified individuals with varying levels of masculinity and femininity, and classified them into four gendered personalities: masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated. According to Bem (1974), androgynous people display high levels of both masculine and feminine traits while undifferentiated people report low levels of both. In addition, those with higher feminine traits and lower masculine ones are termed as feminine; with masculine people, it is the reverse. Since its development, the BSRI has become one of the most popular and widely used tools to measure femininity-masculinity among individuals (Donnelly & Twenge, 2017; Hoffman & Borders, 2001). However, the validity of its application across various populations, cultures, and countries has also been widely disproved for conceptual problems in the definition and interpretation of femininity and masculinity, as well as methodological issues (Ballard-Reisch & Elton, 1992; Carver, Vafaei, Guerra, Freire & Phillips, 2013; Hoffman & Borders, 2001; Vafaei et al., 1986). This has led to a recommendation for, and the increasingly common use of, modified and shorter versions that are more population-specific (Carver et al., 2013).

Regardless of criticisms on the BSRI, Bem's concept of androgyny as an ideal gender role type, along with modern re-definitions of traditional gender roles, has been accepted by many gender-related studies. Although inconsistent, androgyny has been associated with positive attributes in many studies. Early research has shown that androgynous and masculine women have higher self-esteem while masculinity in men and femininity in women are generally associated with poor adjustment (Eman & Morse, 1977; Kimlicka, Cross, & Tarnai, 1983; O'Connor, Mann, & Bardwick, 1978). More recently, androgynous people have been found to be healthier and happier, as well as more mobile, adaptable, creative, flexible, and

authoritative than others (Gale-Ross, Baird, & Towson, 2009; Huang, Zhu, Zheng, Zhang, & Shiomi, 2012; Lin & Billingham, 2014; Vafaei et al., 2014).

Shifting the focus to socio-cultural constructions of gender identity and roles, Bem (1981) developed the gender schema theory, which states that individuals learn and internalize appropriate gender roles from an early age, which in turn maintains a significant influence over the individual's behavior throughout their life. One's gender role identity is thus the product of "socio-cultural-sociological-psychological" norms (Bernard 1971 cited by Nguyen, Clark, Hood, Corneille, Fitzgerald, & Belgrave, 2010, p. 605) and forms the basis of gender role stereotypes and gendered self-images (Spence, 1993); these act as motivational factors for various gendered behaviors (Lin & Billingham, 2014; Maclaran, 2012; Mills et al., 2012; Palan, 2001).

Extending this perspective, Sirgy, an American psychologist (1982, 1985), has focused on the role of self-images in predicting one's consumer behaviors, as encapsulated in his self-congruity theory. Sirgy (1982) explains that people tend to feel positive about, and purchase products consistent with, their self-images while avoiding negatively valued products. This theory provides the theoretical framework for the current study on *Hallyu* popularity in Myanmar, and justifies its focus on gender role identity as an aspect of gender self-concept that influences young Myanmar women's *Hallyu* consumption.

Changes in KWGRI in *Hallyu* Contents

In Korea, women's gender roles and gender role identity have undergone significant changes through the process of modernization. The strong influence of Confucianism during the Chosun Dynasty (1392–1910) significantly contributed to the formation of socially endorsed views of gender. For example, women are typically portrayed as passive, sensuous, dependent, unable to bear pain, and sensitive to feelings, while men are believed to be active, ideal, independent, strong, and emotionally stable (Kim & Lowry, 2005). These dichotomized, stereotypical gender roles have assigned men responsibility for the family's livelihood through activities in the public domain while placing family care responsibilities upon women (Hackett & Lonborg, 1993). At the same time, women have been typically depicted as sexual objects in the media through stereotypical labels of being young, beautiful, dependent, and often incompetent (Kim & Lowry, 2005; Wood, 1994).

Rapid industrialization following the Korean War (1950–1953), along with the growing feminist movement since the 1990s, however, brought considerable

changes to traditional roles, particularly for women (Palley, 1990). With increased women's empowerment through greater educational attainment, employment, and social participation, the conceptions of gender roles has branched out, with androgynous gender fluidity at the forefront of this movement (Hogarth, 2013). These changes have been strongly reflected in media. The gender role identity portrayed in *Halhyu* content has increasingly displayed androgyny and less stereotypical values concerning women in modern Korean society over recent decades. For example, in Korean pop culture, androgynous males with feminized appearances and behaviors have become increasingly prevalent to the point of normalization (Ainslie, 2017; Jung, 2011; Oh, 2015). In addition, the prevalence of women's roles as housewives and mothers in Korean TV dramas and commercials has decreased while non-traditional female traits, such as strength, independence, capability, courage, and the ability to overcome difficulties, have been associated with women more frequently (Hogarth, 2013; Kim & Kim, 2017). These modern images of Korean women in *Halhyu* content have been assumed to appeal to many women in Asia, who often find themselves marginalized in a male-dominated culture (Hogarth, 2013).

Myanmar's Garment Industry and Female Workers

Being one of the fastest growing sectors in Myanmar, the garment industry has contributed significantly to modernization, as in other developing countries. Employment in garment factories is one of the few opportunities uncontroversially available to women in Myanmar. More than 400,000 people are employed in the industry, of whom more than 90% are women mostly aged 18–27 (Oxfam, 2015). Many young women have migrated from rural areas to urban Yangon, a specialized textile and garment industrial zone in Myanmar where over 95% of all garment firms are located (Oxfam, 2015). Released from their traditional domestic roles, they have increasingly accepted new roles as factory workers. Despite some positive developments in gender equality, studies have shown that gender roles in Myanmar are still embedded in traditional beliefs, with women taking more responsibilities for household affairs and being encouraged to live according to virtues of decency, modesty, and chastity (Pansy, 2015; Yi, 2016).

Since 1990, many Korean garment firms have entered Myanmar for its rich labor force and low wages, establishing at least 70 factories in Yangon. As the leading investors in Yangon, Korean-owned factories have the largest market share by employee numbers (36%) with an average size of nearly 1,200 employees per factory

(Action Labor Rights, 2016). Given that women's roles in Myanmar are traditionally confined to motherhood and caretaking duties with the husband responsible for the family's income, employment opportunities in the garment industry invite greater scope in facilitating improvements in women's economic empowerment and skills development, exposure to urban culture, and adoption of modernized female gender role identities (Mon, 2000). It is thus meaningful and timely to assess the gender role identity of these women and its influence on their attitudes and behaviors, particularly with regard to the hybrid culture of *Hallyu*.

Methods

Research Design

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the reasons for *Hallyu's* popularity among young Myanmar women, with a particular focus on the influence of gender role perceptions. To achieve this, specific objectives were established as follows:

1. To investigate the variation of gender role identity among Myanmar women and its relationship with KWGRI represented in *Hallyu* contents.
2. To identify the correlation between the masculine and feminine traits of both Myanmar women and KWGRI represented in *Hallyu* contents, and these women's acceptance of *Hallyu* products.

To describe the relationship between women's gender role identity, representation of females in *Hallyu* and *Hallyu* popularity, the study adopted a quantitative research strategy using self-administered survey questionnaires with a rating scale as a method for data collection (Ponto, 2015). The questions in this survey were developed to measure (i) gender role identity among Myanmar women, (ii) their perception of KWGRI portrayed in *Hallyu* contents including television programs and films, and (iii) their acceptance of *Hallyu* products as reflected in their fondness for and consumption of *Hallyu* products. The survey was administered in December 2018 to a targeted sample in Myanmar. Survey data were then analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 23.

Sampling and Recruitment

The study used a purposive sampling technique (Tongco, 2007) to recruit

survey participants among Myanmar women between the ages of 20 and 40 who worked at Korean-owned garment factories in Yangon. These women were selected as they were considered to have a relatively distinct gender role identity as workers in Korean factories with potentially higher levels of familiarity with or exposure to *Hallyu* products, thus serving as appropriate participants for the purpose of the study. To identify and approach potential survey participants, researchers contacted a number of Korean-owned garment factories located in Yangon using their personal networks in the local area; of these, seven factories agreed to participate in the study and distribute the written questionnaires to their female employees.

Development of Survey Questionnaire.

The survey questionnaire was designed and developed to assess gender role identity as well as fondness for and consumption of *Hallyu* products, as explained below.

Assessment of gender role identity. Gender role identity among Myanmar women was assessed using the Korean Gender Role Identity Inventory (KGRI) (Lee, Kim, & Koh, 2002), an adaption of the Bem Sex-Role Inventory to correspond to the Korean cultural context. Despite the possible risk of translation bias and methodological problems, this study employed the KGRI as a tool to measure femininity and masculinity among Myanmar women based on the assumption that cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity in Myanmar were more similar to those in Korea than in Western countries.

From the original 45 items of the KGRI, 30 items measuring the degree of femininity and masculinity (excluding items related to social desirability) were selected for use in this study. Selected items are shown in Table 1. Furthermore, to assess how Myanmar women perceive KWGRI demonstrated in *Hallyu* products, these items were modified and provided to the survey respondents to evaluate the extent to which each item applied to the Korean women portrayed in *Hallyu* products, such as “Korean women show leadership.” As a result, the survey questionnaire regarding gender role perception consisted of a total of 60 items.

Table 1
Thirty Items in the KGRI

Dimension of gender role identity	Survey Items
Masculinity	show leadership; can drive; confident; brave; take initiative; active; powerful; independent; ambitious; deal with serious matters well; adventurous; proud; desire achievement; believable; physically strong
Femininity	use beautiful language; tender; sweet; emotional; delicate; charming; love beautiful things; romantic; careful; enjoy cooking; jealous; sensitive; tactful; obedient; talkative

Assessment of *Hallyu* acceptance based on fondness and consumption.

A behavioral questionnaire consisting of a total of 12 items was constructed by the researchers to measure the respondents' fondness for and consumption of different types of *Hallyu* products, including Korean TV dramas, movies, pop songs, fashion, food, and cosmetics (as shown in Table 2). The Cronbach's value for the survey items related to fondness for and consumption of *Hallyu* were .82 and .85, respectively, indicating that the items for each variable have relatively high internal consistency.

Table 2
Twelve Items in a Behavioral Questionnaire to Measure Fondness for and Consumption of Hallyu Products

	Survey Items
<i>Hallyu</i> fondness	Like Korean dramas; Korean movies; Korean music; Korean fashion; Korean food; Korean cosmetics
<i>Hallyu</i> consumption	Often watch Korean dramas; watch Korean movies; listen to Korean music; purchase Korean fashion products; eat Korean food; purchase Korean cosmetics

Data Collection and Analysis

A total of 262 Myanmar women working in seven Korean-owned garment factories in Yangon, Myanmar participated in the survey. The questionnaire was double translated into Burmese using an approved translation service. In the survey questionnaire, each woman was asked to indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement on each of the items using a 4-point Likert scale with higher scores indicating greater agreement with the items (1 = *not at all true*, 2 = *hardly true*, 3 = *moderately true*, and

4 = *exactly true*). Based on their scores, participants were classified as androgynous, undifferentiated, feminine, or masculine (Spence et al., 1975). The survey also collected basic demographic data from all respondents including age, marital status, position, years of working at Korean garment factories, and years of living in Yangon. Statistical analysis was performed to test the proposed research model, using cross tabulation, chi-square analysis, ANOVA, and Duncan's multiple range test with SPSS 23.

Results

Participant Characteristics

A total of 262 Myanmar women participated in the survey (Table 3). All respondents were female, aged between 17 and 46 with an average age of 25. Although 73 out of 262 women (28.7%) were outside the target age range (20–40), their survey data were included in the analysis for data richness. Among the women, an overwhelming majority were between 17 and 30 (89.4%), unmarried (75.6%) and worked at Korean-owned garment factories with at least 1000 employees (78.8%). More than half of the women had lived in Yangon for more than five years (57.4%), worked in their current job more than three years (53.9%), and were skilled workers (66.9%).

Table 3
Demographic Profile of Survey Respondents

Demographic Variables	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Age		
< 21	60	23.6
21–25	119	46.9
26–30	48	18.9
31–35	7	2.8
36–40	7	2.8
> 40	13	5.1
Marital status		
Married	60	23.1
Unmarried	196	75.6
Other	4	1.5
Years of living in Yangon		
< 1	28	10.9

Cross Tabulation of Myanmar Women's Gender Role Identity Distribution and KWGRI Distribution

A cross tabulation was performed to assess gender role identity among the survey respondents. The respondents were divided into four groups based on the medians of their masculinity and femininity scores. Those who scored above average on either side of the median were classified as either masculine or feminine types; those who scored above average on both as androgynous types; and those who scored below average on both as undifferentiated types. As observed and expected counts were compared, the results showed that the Myanmar women in this study were more likely to be androgynous and undifferentiated types rather than masculine and feminine types (Table 5). In these results, the Pearson chi-square statistic was 6.94, which was significant at $p < .01$.

A cross tabulation was also performed to investigate the respondents' perception of Korean women portrayed in *Hallyu* products. Thus, Korean women's representation in *Hallyu* products was also divided into four groups based on the medians of masculinity and femininity scores. The results found a statistically significant relationship, showing that many Myanmar women perceived Korean women represented in *Hallyu* products to be androgynous and undifferentiated types rather than masculine and feminine types (Table 5). In these results, the Pearson chi-square statistic was 41.34, which was significant at $p < .001$.

Table 5
Distribution of Myanmar Women's Gender Role Identity and KWGRI

Myanmar women's gender role identity		Masculinity Scale		Total
		Low (< 3.20)	High (≥ 3.20)	
Femininity Scale	Low (< 2.60)	Undifferentiated 53 (27.9%) 44.0	Masculine 43 (22.6%) 52.0	96
	High (≥ 2.60)	Feminine 34 (17.9%) 43.0	Androgynous 60 (31.6%) 51.0	94
Total		87	103	190
Chi-square ($df = 1$)		6.94** ($p = .008$)		

KWGRI represented in <i>Halhyu</i>				
Observed count (%) Expected count		Masculinity Scale		Total
		Low (< 2.73)	High (≥ 2.73)	
Femininity Scale	Low (< 2.60)	Undifferentiated 65 (31.4%) 42.1	Masculine 33 (15.9%) 55.9	98
	High (≥ 2.60)	Feminine 24 (11.6%) 46.9	Androgynous 85 (41.1%) 62.1	109
Total		89	118	207
Chi-square ($df = 1$)		41.34*** ($p = .000$)		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Cross Tabulation of Perceived KWGRI and the Respondents' Fondness for *Halhyu* Products

A cross tabulation was performed to determine whether the gender role identity among Myanmar women was related to their fondness of *Halhyu* products. The results indicated that respondents who were categorized as androgynous were more likely to show a high level of fondness for *Halhyu* products. Conversely, those who were categorized as undifferentiated types were more likely to have a low level of fondness for *Halhyu* products (Table 6). In these results, the Pearson chi-square statistic was 9.42, which was significant at $p < .05$.

Similarly, with regard to the correlation between the respondents' perception of *Halhyu* representations of Korean women and their fondness for *Halhyu* products, the results of the cross tabulation found a statistically significant relationship as the respondents who perceived Korean women to be androgynous were more likely to exhibit a high level of fondness for *Halhyu* products. In contrast, the respondents who perceived Korean women to be undifferentiated were more likely to display a low level of fondness for *Halhyu* products (Table 6). In these results, the Pearson chi-square statistic was 16.39, which was significant at $p < .001$.

Table 6
Cross Tabulation of Myanmar Women's Gender Role Identity, KWGRI and Fondness for *Hallyu* Products

Observed frequency (Expected frequency)	Myanmar women's gender role identity				Total
	Undifferentiated	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	
Fondness for <i>Hallyu</i> products					
Low	33 (24.4)	19 (19.1)	12 (14.2)	21 (27.4)	85
High	17 (25.6)	20 (19.9)	17 (14.8)	35 (28.6)	89
Total	50	39	29	56	174
Chi-square ($df = 3$)	9.42* ($p = .02$)				
Observed frequency (Expected frequency)	KWGRI				Total
	Undifferentiated	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	
Fondness for <i>Hallyu</i> products					
Low	42 (31.3)	19 (16.2)	9 (10.6)	26 (37.9)	96
High	20 (30.7)	13 (15.8)	12 (10.4)	49 (37.1)	94
Total	62	32	21	75	190
Chi-square ($df = 3$)	16.39*** ($p = .001$)				

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

ANOVA and Duncan's Multiple Range Test of Group Differences in *Hallyu* Acceptance by Product Type

ANOVA tested the effects of Myanmar women's gender role identities and KWGRI on *Hallyu* acceptance by product type. *Hallyu* acceptance was measured by combining the scores for fondness for and consumption of *Hallyu* products. Significant ANOVA effects were followed by Duncan's multiple range tests to identify the source of the differences.

In the ANOVA results (Table 7), *Hallyu* acceptance among Myanmar women was most evident in K-drama, K-movies, and K-cosmetics. For K-drama and K-movies, the mean scores of acceptance were highest among the "androgynous" and "masculine" groups in Duncan's multiple range tests. In contrast, the mean

score of K-cosmetics acceptance was highest among the “feminine” group.

In addition, Myanmar women’s perceived KWGRI was also closely related to the preferred types of *Hallyu* products. For K-drama and K-fashion, the mean scores of acceptance were highest among those who perceived KWGRI as “feminine” and “androgynous” in Duncan’s multiple range tests. Similarly, the mean scores of acceptance for K-food and K-cosmetics were highest among the women who perceived KWGRI as “feminine.” Finally, for K-pop, the mean score of acceptance was highest among those who perceived KWGRI as “androgynous.”

Table 7
ANOVA and Duncan’s Multiple Range Tests of Group Differences in Hallyu Acceptance by Product Type

Groups	Means	K-drama	K-movie	K-pop	K-fashion	K-food	K-cosmetics
Myanmar women’s gender role identity							
Undifferentiated	2.06	2.33	2.04	1.98	1.88	1.92	
N = 53 (27.9%)	B ⁺	B				B	
Masculine	2.51	2.71	2.21	2.19	1.93	2.11	
N = 43 (22.6%)	A	A				AB	
Feminine	2.33	2.60	2.32	2.36	2.09	2.42	
N = 34 (17.9%)	AB	AB				A	
Androgynous	2.44	2.77	2.31	2.16	2.22	2.14	
N = 60 (31.6%)	A	A				AB	
SS	6.07	5.89	2.45	3.03	2.99	4.82	
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	
F value	2.91*	3.06*	1.14	1.63	1.58	2.93*	
KWGRI							
Undifferentiated	2.14	2.41	1.98	2.02	1.79	1.96	
N = 65 (31.4%)	B		AB	AB	BC	B	
Masculine	2.14	2.44	1.94	1.82	1.64	1.94	
N = 33 (15.9%)	B		B	B	C	B	
Feminine	2.54	2.67	2.29	2.35	2.24	2.44	
N = 24 (11.6%)	A		AB	A	A	A	
Androgynous	2.56	2.79	2.37	2/26	2.11	2.28	
N = 85 (41.1%)	A		A	A	AB	AB	
SS	8.92	6.24	7.71	6.57	8.78	7.16	
df	3	3	3	3	3	3	
F value	4.17**	3.09*	3.32*	3.55*	4.82**	3.85*	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

*The alphabet shows the significance of the differences in mean scores by descending order (A > B > C)

Cross Tabulation of Myanmar Women's Gender Role Identity and Perceived KWGRI Represented in *Hallyu* Contents

Another cross tabulation was conducted to investigate the correlation between Myanmar women's gender role identity and their perception of Korean women's representation in *Hallyu* contents. Results showed that the Myanmar women categorized as androgynous types were more likely to perceive Korean women represented in *Hallyu* contents as androgynous, while those categorized as undifferentiated were more likely to perceive Korean women as undifferentiated types (Table 8). In addition, Myanmar women tended to evaluate KWGRI in *Hallyu* contents as more androgynous (41.1%) than they perceived themselves (31.6%) and more Myanmar women were categorized as masculine (22.6%) than those that evaluated KWGRI as masculine (15.9%). In these results, the Pearson chi-square statistic was 20.53, which was significant at $p < .05$.

Table 8
Cross Tabulation of Myanmar Women's Gender Role Identity and KWGRI

Observed counts (expected counts)	KWGRI				Total
	Undifferentiated	Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	
Myanmar women's gender role identity					
Undifferentiated	21 (12.4)	7 (10.8)	7 (8.4)	12 (15.4)	47
Masculine	6 (6.3)	9 (5.5)	3 (4.3)	6 (7.8)	24
Feminine	6 (4.5)	4 (3.9)	3 (3.1)	4 (5.6)	17
Androgynous	8 (17.9)	16 (15.7)	15 (12.2)	29 (22.2)	68
Total	41	36	28	51	156
Chi-square ($df = 9$)	20.53* ($p = .015$)				

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Discussion and Conclusion

The empirical findings support the research proposition that women's gender role perceptions influence Myanmar women's attitudes and behaviors related to *Hallyu*. Major findings from the analysis were as follows.

First, consistent with the findings in Bem's study (1974), the prevalence of androgynous women in Myanmar was identified. In this study, more than one-third (31.6%) of Myanmar women were categorized as "androgynous" types, while even more women (41.1%) perceived KWGRI as androgynous. The prevalence of an-

androgynous women in this study, although relatively lower, is consistent with previous studies on other Asian female populations, in which more than one-third of Chinese university students (35.2%) and Korean women aged 20 and above (36.5%) were associated with androgyny (Huang et al. 2012; Kim, 2009). These findings therefore support the implication that women's roles in Myanmar have altered in the course of modernization, leading to diversification in the ideal gender role type.

Second, gender role identity was an important factor in explaining the level of *Hallyu* acceptance among Myanmar women. In this study, androgynous women showed the highest level of fondness for *Hallyu* products, followed by masculine women. These findings reinforce observed characteristics of androgynous people in their adaptability to foreign cultures (Martin & Halverson, 1981), while confirming the positive correlation of the modern and androgynous image of Korean women and fondness for *Hallyu* products among Asian women (Hogarth, 2013). Interestingly, however, it was also found that masculine gender role identity among Myanmar women was also closely associated with fondness for *Hallyu* products. More Myanmar women were categorized as masculine (22.6%) than evaluated KWGRI as masculine (15.9%); this figure is also higher than for masculine-associated groups among Chinese university students (15.3%) and Korean women aged 20 and above (16.1%) in the studies mentioned above (Huang et al., 2012; Kim, 2009). It is possible that, regardless of the higher level of *Hallyu* acceptance among androgynous women found in this study, some personality traits that are traditionally masculine, such as being confident, brave, and adventurous, may have particular influence on the acceptance of foreign culture, providing a plausible explanation of the widespread acceptance of *Hallyu* among Myanmar women.

Third, the gender role identity of Myanmar women was found to have a significant influence on their perception of KWGRI, while both were important determinants of the level of *Hallyu* acceptance among Myanmar women. In this study, androgynous Myanmar women tended to perceive KWGRI as androgynous while undifferentiated Myanmar women were more likely to perceive KWGRI as undifferentiated. At the same time, Myanmar women who perceived KWGRI as androgynous were most favorable toward *Hallyu*, while those who perceived KWGRI as undifferentiated tended to be less favorable. These findings support the proposition that, in addition to product images, self-image plays an influential role in understanding the acceptance of *Hallyu* products among Myanmar women, as suggested by Sirgy (1982) in his self-congruity theory.

Finally, both Myanmar women's gender role identities and KWGRI represented

in *Hallyu* appear to have an influence on the women's preferred types of *Hallyu* products. In this study, Myanmar women of "androgynous" and "masculine" types were closely associated with a high level of acceptance of K-dramas and K-movies while those of the "feminine" type showed a higher level of acceptance of K-cosmetics. In addition, "androgynous" KWGRI was positively associated with Myanmar women's acceptance of K-pop while "feminine" KWGRI seemed to enhance the women's acceptance of K-food and K-cosmetics. It appears that traditional concepts of feminine identities, such as "love beautiful things" and "enjoy cooking," may still hold some influence on psychological acceptance of particular types of cultural products (e.g., food and cosmetics) among Myanmar women. In addition, the theory of *Hallyu* development explains that fondness for and consumption of Korean products subsequently leads to a wider reception and use of a variety of Korean products (Kim, 2015).

In conclusion, these results can be interpreted as evidence of the positive impact of androgynous gender roles on *Hallyu* acceptance among Myanmar women as well as confirmation of the important role of gender in elucidating acceptance of *Hallyu* among global audiences. By showing the correlation between gender role identity, representation of females in *Hallyu* contents, and *Hallyu* acceptance, the findings of this study make an important contribution to literature in different areas. While they extend the body of knowledge available on gender role identity, the findings also stimulate a broader gendered discourse of *Hallyu* by providing useful insights into the influence of gender role identity on one's perceptions and behaviors related to the consumption and acceptance of *Hallyu* in a new context beyond China and Japan—Myanmar. More importantly, they provide important insights on an under-researched population—female garment workers in developing countries—who are at the forefront of issues related to modernization and women's gender role identity.

Amid growing concerns over the future of *Hallyu*, findings from this study provide useful information on how *Hallyu* can build long-term relationships with their international consumers. *Hallyu* represents a symbol of modernization in rapidly changing developing countries, exhibiting modern urban life as a new consumption model (Ainslie, 2016). Thus, an increased understanding of the attitudinal and behavioral changes of women in developing countries during the transition phase of modernization offers important implications to the Korean government and NGOs in policy formation (Karim, 2014). For instance, understanding the meaning of negotiations concerning women's gender role identity and cultural hybridization in *Hallyu* content will widen cultural understanding of Korea across the world as

well as trends related to inbound tourists (Huh & Wu, 2017). Furthermore, a cultural understanding of women working at garment factories in Myanmar can be useful for research that may be conducted by Korean clothing companies intending to enter the Myanmar market. This will also assist Korean garment companies, as leading investors in the Yangon garment industry, to create an improved corporate culture based on an understanding of diversified gender role identities among the majority of their employees.

Although this study does provide some valuable insights, its limitations warrant comment. As the study used a convenient sample of young Myanmar women working at Korean garment factories, rather than a random sample, findings cannot be generalized to other populations or conditions. For this reason, further study is required to define the parameters of the *Halhyu* phenomenon in Myanmar or other contexts. Future research could extend the scope of research to various women's occupations and different cultures within Myanmar, as well as other countries that are at different stages of modernization. In addition, the use of qualitative methods may be advantageous to examine the multifactorial construct of gender identity in Myanmar's rapidly changing society and its impact on *Halhyu* acceptance (Palan, 2001).

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