



<b>Title</b>	<b>Case 5: Rethinking the Symbiotic Relationships between Celebrity and the Media in the Era of the Korean Wave - Interview with Patrick Suen (seasoned media worker/Korean celebrity agent)</b>
<b>Author(s)</b>	Tse, HLT
<b>Citation</b>	<b>Case 5: Rethinking the Symbiotic Relationships between Celebrity and the Media in the Era of the Korean Wave - Interview with Patrick Suen (seasoned media worker/Korean celebrity agent). In GDBU1855/GDSS1855 Celebrity and Entertainment Business: Case Studies/E-Book, p. 29-34. Hong Kong: Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning (CHTL), Hong Kong Baptist University, 2015</b>
<b>Issued Date</b>	2015
<b>URL</b>	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10722/212435">http://hdl.handle.net/10722/212435</a>
<b>Rights</b>	<b>This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.</b>

CASE STUDY

---

**Fifteen Minutes**  
**CELEBRITY**  
Interviewing  
with  
Insiders



Vivienne Leung S. Y. / Kimmy Cheng / Tommy Tse H. L.



香港浸會大學  
HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

## Case Study Introduction

or digital entertainment) as well as its impact, including the construction of self-identity, celebrity-driven consumer behavior, gender and race, stereotypes, and idol worship. Figures of interest to be studied include film figures; music, sports, cultural and political celebrities; and online bloggers. This is fundamentally a preliminary course designed to help students think more critically about the intersection of entertainment and civic engagement in the new media era. It also aims to strengthen students' understanding of the culture of celebrity on the societal values and choices in a Chinese culture.

Culturally relevant case studies are currently unavailable in the market but are instrumental for this course. Real-life examples will enhance students' understanding of communication and marketing theories in specific cultural contexts. It is expected that this pedagogical approach will stimulate active classroom discussion and thus critical reasoning of the topics. A well-coordinated and type-set e-book will be produced and reserved in the COMS departmental office and HKBU Library and shared by other HKBU students who are interested in exploring the topic from interdisciplinary perspectives.

This project is granted by the Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning (CHTL) at Hong Kong Baptist University (Ref No: TDG/1314/11).

### The Project Objective:

As quoted by Andy Warhol, "in the future everyone will be world famous for fifteen minutes." This project attempts to enhance active learning, critical thinking and the sociocultural relevance of the course through discussion of real cases of celebrity creation and endorsement in various media industries across Asia.

The key issues and problems being addressed is that most of the existing celebrity and entertainment business-related teaching materials available are developed in the West and based on the Western cultural context, especially that of the US. Culturally sensitive case studies are currently unavailable in the Hong Kong market for enhancing students' critical thinking and learning process. In light of this fact, 7 culturally relevant written case studies would be beneficial for students to learn and apply communication, marketing, and other related theories in the Chinese cultural context specifically. Moreover, these case studies provide real-life narratives from the renowned and experienced individuals who are working in the entertainment industry. Such case studies would bring several benefits to the course. First, the use of case studies provides an opportunity for students to contextualize the course's theoretical concepts to real-life scenarios, thus bridging the gap between theory and practice. Second, using case studies as an interactive learning strategy in teaching will shift the emphasis from lecturer-centered to more student-centered activities. With such involvement, students would be encouraged in active discussion about critical issues, the problems inherent in practical application and fundamental dilemmas in realistic scenes. In addition, the process of active learning would provide an opportunity for students to develop important skills such as communication, teamwork and problem solving. Also, this type of learning would increase students' enjoyment of the topic and hence their motivation and desire to learn.

### Project Title:

Improving active learning, critical thinking and sociocultural relevance of the course  
GDBU 1855/GDSS1855 Celebrity and Entertainment Business

### Principal Investigator:

Dr. Vivienne Leung, Senior Lecturer, Program Director of Public Relations and Advertising major, Department of Communication Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University

### Co-investigators:

Dr. Kinmy Cheng, Lecturer, Program Director of Public Speaking, Department of Communication Studies, Hong Kong Baptist University

Dr. Tommy Tse, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong

### Background of Project:

This project enhances the active learning, critical thinking and sociocultural relevance of the course through discussion of recent and real cases of celebrity creation and endorsement of fashion, luxury and lifestyle brands in various media industries across Asia, particularly in Greater China, Hong Kong and South Korea. Students will read a selected case study of various interviews with communication or entertainment industry practitioners. All case studies are developed based on real examples of celebrity participation in both traditional or new communication campaigns. After reading each case study, the students will discuss its implications and evaluate the social, cultural and economic dynamics of celebrity cultures. These untold inside stories of celebrity endorsement or celebrity advocacy will stimulate students' interest in rethinking the economic and cultural implications of the phenomenon of stardom and facilitate classroom interaction. This project will improve the pedagogical approach by providing a common experience for active learning, thus facilitating a higher level of sociocultural relevance and more engaging discussion and participation in class.

GDBU 1855/GDSS1855 Celebrity and Entertainment Business is a GE course open to students from the School of Business or the School of Communication. In this course, students will learn about the use of celebrity in marketing and creative industries (e.g., film, advertising

### The project produced 7 written case studies on the topics as listed below:

Topic	Interviewee	Interviewee background
1. Historical development of entertainment industries and co-creation of celebrities in Greater China	Mr. Wallace Kwok	Artiste/Production Manager, Celebrity management in the music and film industry. Consultant of East Asia Music. The founding member of an independent production company, People Mountain People Sea.
2. The use of celebrity in marketing communication in Greater China	Mr. Anson Shum	Marketing & Communication Director (Greater China), The Bluebell Group. (Affiliated brands include Moschino, Carven, Nancy Gonzalez, Anya Hindmarch, Davidoff, Laudree, etc.; ex-Head of PR & Marketing at Jimmy Choo Asia and Hugo Boss Asia)
3. The use of celebrity – Creating brand values	Ms. June Lee	Communication Director (Asia-Pacific) of a renowned American cosmetic brand. (E-commerce Sales Director, Global Marketing Director, and Regional PR & AD Manager for various European brands.)
4. Hong Kong radio industry and its celebrity DJ and radio hosts	Mr. Francis Mak	Ex-radio host, former head of an independent digital broadcaster, Digital Broadcasting Corporation Hong Kong Limited (DBC). Founder of the Never Give Up Association.
5. Rethinking the Symbiotic Relationships between Celebrity and the Media in the Era of the Korean Wave	Mr. Patrick Suen	Seasoned columnist and film critic who previously worked at Men's Uno, MingPao Weekly and Metro Pop. Korean interpreter & mediator for many famed Korean stars for various commercial projects and events, e.g. Lee Young-ae, Kim Soo Hyun, Super Junior, Girls Generation and Big Bang.
6. The Vicissitudes of Star Identity: Lingering between the Domestic and Public Spheres	Ms. Hilary Tsui	Former Hong Kong actress and wife of famous Cantopop singer Eason Chan. Famed fashionista & fashion blogger in Greater China. Founder of fashion boutique Liger, carrying edgy foreign and local labels.
7. Social and political Influences of Celebrity	Ms. Denise Ho and Mr. Pakho Chau	DH: renowned Cantopop singer and actress who won multiple music awards in Hong Kong and Taiwan; founder of HOCC Charity Fund and the BigLove Alliance (an NGO advocating LGBT rights). PC: Cantopop singer-songwriter film actor, who also won a myriad of musical awards in Hong Kong.

### Outcomes of the Project:

The CILOs of the GDBU1855/GDSS1855 course are as follows:

1. Identify the use of celebrity endorsement, the culture of celebrity and its impacts such as construction of self-identity, celebrity-driven consumer behavior, gender and race, stereotypes, idol worship, etc.
2. Examine various theories that explain the influence of celebrities
3. Identify an appropriate research method to measure the social, cultural and personal impacts of celebrity endorsement
4. Analyze the ideologies embedded in celebrity endorsement

The new pedagogical approach will assist in the achievement of the first and the forth CILO in two ways. First, it serves as a point of departure for a more informed class discussion. Second, it encourages students to analyze and evaluate ideologies embedded in celebrity culture as well as celebrities impact on sociocultural values. The process will enhance students' analytical skills and critical reasoning.

The project will also assist in the achievement of the second CILO. As the students are aware of the actual practice of celebrity endorsement and its influence related to branding, PR and marketing communication as well as self-identity, they are more likely to be able to apply related theories and formulate strategies in the use of celebrity, especially in PR and marketing communication.

### Authors Biography:

Vivienne Leung is the senior lecturer and programme director of public relations and advertising major at the Communication Studies Department, Hong Kong Baptist University. She received her Ph.D. in communication studies at Hong Kong Baptist University. She has been teaching in communication and advertising for more than 9 years. Previously she held positions at Grey Advertising and Fallon Asia/Hong Kong. She previously worked in advertising as a strategic planner. Her clients include United Airlines, P&G, Wrigley, Audi, PCCW, McDonald's and Bank of China. Her research interests include advertising, celebrity effects, health communication, social service marketing and consumer behavior. Her work has been published in *Service Marketing Quarterly*, *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *Asian Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *Chinese Journal of Communications* and *Journal of Communication in Healthcare: Strategies and Media and Engagement in Global Health*.

Kimmy Cheng is the lecturer and programme director of public speaking at the Communication Studies Department at Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). She graduated from Western Michigan University with a B.A. in organizational communication. She also received her M.A. and Ph.D. in communication studies at HKBU. Her primary research area of interest includes health communication, public relations, crisis management, public speaking, and gender studies. Previously she worked as a PR consultant in various agencies; her clients include Harry Winston, Gucci, Swarovski, Chevignon, SK-II, KFC, Citic Group, and

The Oriental Spa. Her works have appeared in the Journal of Communication in Healthcare and Motherhood – Pakistan's First Parenting Magazine. She has taught at the Culture and Media Domain at HKU SPACE as well.

Tommy Tse is an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology, The University of Hong Kong (HKU), and he specializes in gender studies, literary and cultural theory, fashion communication and the creative industries in East Asia. His work has appeared in the Asian Journal of Business Research (MAGScholar), International Journal of Fashion Design, Technology and Education (Taylor & Francis) and Luxury Brands in Emerging Markets (Macmillan). Tse has experience in marketing and advertising with various media companies and creative agencies, including ADO and TBWA. He has taught at the School of Communication of the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Department of Fashion and Image Design at the Hong Kong Design Institute and the Culture and Media Domain at HKU SPACE.

**Acknowledgement:**

The authors would like to thank Ms. Sally Ho, Mr. Henry Fung and Ms. Grace Tang for their help with the research and assistance during the interviews. We would also like to show our sincere gratitude to Ms. Wing Luk, Ms. Roxana Li, Ms. Gabi Chu and Mr. Ray Lau for their help with the photo shoot.

## Table of Contents

CASE STUDY 1	
<b>Mr. Wallace Kwok</b>	
Historical development of entertainment industries and co-creation of celebrities in Greater China	p.06
CASE STUDY 2	
<b>Mr. Anson Shum</b>	
The use of celebrity in marketing communication in Greater China	p.13
CASE STUDY 3	
<b>Ms. June Lee</b>	
The use of celebrity – Creating brand values	p.19
CASE STUDY 4	
<b>Mr. Francis Mak</b>	
Hong Kong radio industry and its celebrity DJ and radio hosts	p.24
CASE STUDY 5	
<b>Mr. Patrick Suen</b>	
Rethinking the symbiotic relationships between celebrity and the media in the era of the Korean Wave	p.29
CASE STUDY 6	
<b>Ms. Hilary Tsui</b>	
The vicissitudes of star identity: Lingerings between the domestic and public spheres	p.35
CASE STUDY 7	
<b>Ms. Denise Ho and Mr. Pakho Chau</b>	
Social and political influences of celebrity	p.41

## Patrick Suen

---

### *Rethinking the symbiotic relationships between celebrity and the media in the era of the Korean Wave*



#### Background of the Interviewee

Mr. Patrick Suen is a seasoned columnist and film critic based in Hong Kong who writes about Asian films and Korean pop culture. After completing his MPhil degree in Comparative Literature at the University of Hong Kong in 2000, he began to work as an editor at various cultural and lifestyle magazines, including Men's Uno, MingPao Weekly and Metro Pop, in which he has had many opportunities to collaborate with different stars and celebrities. Out of his personal enthusiasm for South Korean culture, he started to learn Korean in 2001 and, unexpectedly, his gradual proficiency in the language enables him to work as a freelance translator and mediator for many famed Korean stars for various commercial projects and events, such as Lee Young-ae (李英愛), Kim Soo Hyun (金秀賢), Super Junior, Girls Generation, G-Dragon and Taeyang (two key members from the renowned Korean boyband Big Bang).





### The Art of Persuasion: Celebrity in Media

According to Elberse (2013), the rise of digital technology has reduced the cost of production and distribution, thus allowing the entertainment industry's amateurs and other industry outsiders to generate and disseminate their own creations. Unlike the traditional media that operates in a linear, one-way model, new media are in fact interactive in nature. Therefore, people can make good use of the digital channel to spread their creations to their target audiences. Gradually, they have the "opportunity to build up sizable fan bases by themselves. This gives them power in negotiations with [traditional] media producers, which in turn, enables [them] to secure higher compensation [as a celebrity]" (Elberse, 2013, p. 197).

From Mr. Suen's point of view, the definition of celebrity varies in different eras. Nowadays, everyone has the opportunity to become a celebrity with the propagation of media. For instance, "[I]n many cases, someone just uploaded a clip online, and out of nowhere he/she could enjoy instant fame, hence becoming a so-called celebrity." Therefore, to Mr. Suen, the media has always been the most important agent to manufacture celebrities and sustain their fame in society; echoing Elberse's argument (2013), the recent upsurge of digital and social media only further reinforces media's power in propagandizing celebrity culture, but the main difference is, the power of "star creation" previously wielded by the gatekeepers within the traditional media organizations has been shifted to the hands of individuals, who now can bypass the media gatekeepers, directly and freely disseminate their messages to the public via the digital media platforms.

As mentioned by Turner (2004), celebrity is a product of the representational process employed by the media in their treatment of prominent individuals. While commenting specifically on the functions of celebrity, Mr. Suen claimed that they are actually satisfying the needs of the media. For example, the media may invite celebrities to pose for editorial photography or to partake in other commercial collaborative projects organized by the media company. If the celebrity promises to participate accordingly, the media will in return feature him or her in its editorial coverages, thereby accelerating his/her fame through extensive publicity. Mr. Suen asserted,

"All the famed celebrities are created by the media; without the propagation of magazine, television, radio, or the newly emerged digital media such as Facebook and YouTube, our world would not have the so-called celebrity. Being a celebrity means being famous, the only way to achieve this status is to be promoted by the media."

But why do media organizations need celebrities if they are so reliant on them? Schied (2007) attributes this phenomenon to the gradual and consistent demand for "celebrity content" from the public that turns celebrities into a precious economic good. According to Boorstin (1971), the word "fan" is etymologically derived from fanatic, which characterizes the relationship based on an intimate knowledge of a personality generated and supported by the mass media industry and maintained by the personality's capacity to control media attention. Mr. Suen

elucidated that this might be due to the strong persuasiveness and attractiveness of celebrity in increasing readership and driving sales. As noted by Mr. Suen, "Fans are crazy... I mean they are extremely crazy... They do not mind doing anything that can be measured in dollar signs." Simply featuring the celebrities on the media can attract a lot of people to consume, not only the media content but also the products directly and indirectly advertised in it. After all, "our society needs celebrities, as people, no matter which generation they come from, have a strong desire to admire someone."

Marwick and Boyd (2011) indicated, "Networked media is changing celebrity culture, the ways that people relate to celebrity images, how celebrities are produced, and how celebrity is practiced." Celebrities nowadays use social media to actively connect to and maintain their audience (Senft, 2008). While this may lead some critics to point to the declining social and economic values of celebrity, some advocate that this at once provides opportunities for the celebrities to construct and craft their intended identities in addition to controlling and maintaining their fan base (Marwick & Boyd, 2011; Turner, 2004). From Mr. Suen's subjective viewpoint, it is exactly because of this occurrence that the celebrities nowadays are not as distinctive and valuable as the previous ones. This may be attributed to the creation of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, which have turned many celebrities into ordinary too-approachable people. "Through social media, celebrities have become so down-to-earth nowadays. [Through the social media platform] they may tell you that they have just eaten a bowl of Korean noodles... or have been to a café and enjoyed a waffle." Yet, in the 1970s and '80s, "local fans might need to stand at the entrance of the radio station [and a local example would be Commercial Radio Hong Kong] for so long in order to take a 20-second glance at the celebrity."

Despite the declining status and sacredness of celebrities nowadays as indicated by Mr. Suen, the Korean idol groups have in fact received great sensation worldwide in recent years. "Top of the K-pops" (2012) read, "Korean pop is turning into an export success. Groups such as Super Junior and 2NE1 now sell millions of CDs and concert tickets in other parts of Asia." This phenomenon was also noted by the interviewee, "To me, they are created by standardized formulas." First, to make these idol groups successful, Mr. Suen claimed that the group members should initially be endowed or "equip" themselves with an alluring face and body shape to become the soul of charm and object of admiration. "The [Korean] girl groups usually sell their sexiness and their long legs, whereas the boy groups sell their fit bodies and handsome faces."

In the globalized world, in order to strategically popularize the stars not just in South Korea but also in other countries, Mr. Suen observed that the ethnicities of those Korean bands' members were tactfully diversified. This could enable the group to maximize its potential attractiveness across fans of different ethnicities and preferences outside Korea.

"Potential stars/talents coming from different countries were grouped together... This is a tremendous breakthrough... Groups in Korea not only sing Korean songs but also



invite members from China and Thailand to join so that the group can travel to these countries accordingly... By simply saying a phrase like 'I love you' in Mandarin, all the fans would go crazy. This proves the formula works."

In contrast, Mr. Suen highlighted that the entertainment industry in Hong Kong was not as tactical as the Korean one. The term "guerilla" was used as a metaphor to describe how the practice of the Hong Kong entertainment industry tried to create as many new stars as possible with limited foresight. "If the new stars become famous, that's great! If not, just let it be. For instance, in a local music company established by a renowned Hong Kong male singer, many artistes failed to become notable and popular in the long run, because I think the entrepreneur did not have a thorough plan. In the world of South Korean entertainment industry, everything is precisely considered and planned starting from the first day." Therefore, whether it is based on his sarcastic or pessimistic perspective, Mr. Suen perceived Hong Kong celebrities as no longer being persuasive and marketable as those in South Korea, who were basically being mechanically and identically produced by a "cottage factory".

However, when discussing the future development of the Korean entertainment industry, Mr. Suen expressed his concern since the "Korean wave" market has almost become saturated, "it [Korean pop music industry] is now situated in an embarrassing juncture. Members of many famed Korean groups are gradually entering their 30s, and many people are getting tired of seeing them in the media...[for the new generation] it's very hard to loyally worship a single group for more than ten years. Famed groups such as Super Junior and Girls Generation have been established for nearly 10 years that many of their fans have turned from teenage girls to married housewives." This is also the reason why the management companies of these K-pop stars gradually devoted much more effort toward refashioning them as movie/TV stars to suit the evolving needs and conditions of the audience/fans.

### **A Media Worker's Insight on Media Industry Development**

As an experienced media worker, Mr. Suen commented that the media in Hong Kong have been developed into a very sophisticated business, "starting from the '70s/'80s, arrays of magazines have been published in Hong Kong. Even when I was in my tender young age, a newspaper called Television Daily was issued, dedicated to reporting television programs, stars and entertainment news on a daily basis, which was very rare in other countries."

However, Mr. Suen expressed the opinion that Hong Kong media development has encountered obstacles recently, prompting it to lose its sheen – lacking a clear direction, so as the whole entertainment business in Hong Kong. "We do not know what to do next... the paparazzi reporting style used to be very entertaining to the audience, yet people start to feel bored now. In many aspects, there is nothing special to shed light on [in Hong Kong]."



Secondly, the lack of communication between the media and the entertainment industries in Hong Kong is another factor contributing to the cease of its development, “reporters still think that they are privileged to reveal the scandals of the artistes [and entertainment companies], they are immersed in a very traditional mode of thinking, leading the whole media industry to be stagnant at a rather old-fashioned mentality/media logic.”

In contrast, the media business development in Mainland China and South Korea enjoyed a meteoric rise recently, arguably due to the closer collaboration between the media and entertainment companies. Instead of taking a defensive role when dealing with the aggressive media, these entertainment companies cherish the power of media and diplomatically use them to meet their own ends. For instance, Mr. Suen mentioned the “excommunication incident” of a Korean female star from a regionally celebrated Korean girl group to illustrate his point.

“Kelly [pseudo name], a member of a famed Korean girl group, was rumored to be excommunicated rather than voluntarily leaving the group... while many people may worry that this might pose a negative image to her entertainment company, another hearsay insinuated that the company collaborated with a tabloid and tried to disclose some bad news of Kelly to the media from time to time [in order to end its unpleasant partnership with her and rescue the reputation of the existing girl group], making people to think, ‘Oh, the company is not that bad... Kelly herself is so weird that she is too obsessed with her lover and own fashion brand [without putting much effort to the group].’ The timing is just unbelievably perfect.”

When asked to comment on the influence of Korean popular culture to Hong Kong’s media landscape, Mr. Suen admitted that its influence is so strong and prevalent that it is not only limited to the media industry itself, but also the daily life of citizens.

“From 2010 onwards, more and more media outlets and publishers started inviting me to write columns related to South Korea, and it was truly sporadic! Everyone started talking about this country and the topic was not only confined to entertainment but also lifestyle... just taking Korean food culture as an example, it in fact has not changed a lot since twenty years ago, yet many people suddenly become so fascinated with Korean fried chicken simply because of one extremely popular television drama [My Love from the Star] in which Jeon Ji-hyeon (全智賢) frequently eats fried chicken.”

The proliferation of Korean wave immediately triggered the Hong Kong media’s interest in reporting any Korea news, and subsequently overshadowing the influence of Japanese culture. “Many lifestyle magazines targeting adolescents no longer report Japanese fashion nowadays. In the past, Japanese fashion was categorized as chic and youthful... it is now superseded by Korean fashion that information about Korean street style and cosmetics has flourished and is coveted by the young audience.”

### The Escalation of Korean Celebrities and Its Discontents

While Mr. Suen talked about the experience of collaborating with different Korean stars, he asserted that the work mode of the Korean star industry was in many ways similar to the Japanese one that they both emphasized heavily on protecting the image of the celebrities.

“They [Korean entertainment companies] demand us to prepare the work to a meticulous level. For example, they may require us to send all the interview questions for their perusal and revision in advance... they are inclined to manage the image of their celebrities seriously.”

There was one incident shared by Mr. Suen showing that the Korean artiste management personnel generally overprotect stars.

“I met an up-and-coming Korean girl group before... everyone thought that they are quite adorable and amiable, the fact is that, however, they are respectively kept at a distance from everyone by a curtain set between each seat while traveling... that means I could not have any conversation with them even though they were sitting right next to me.”



In comparison, the work mode of Hong Kong's and Mainland China's entertainment industries is different. As portrayed by Mr. Suen,

“comparatively, we can have a more direct conversation with the stars in Hong Kong, Taiwan or Mainland China... and we do not need to prepare too much that we just need to inform the artiste(s) about the clothing style.”

According to Mr. Suen, the overprotective practice of those in the Korean entertainment industry has scared off many Hong Kong media and entertainment industry personnel. In many cases, after the first collaboration, individuals resist working with Korean stars again, as

“they could be very troublesome... they on the one hand have the compulsive ‘seek after truth’ mentality resembling the Japanese style that requires you to prepare everything in the outset, yet on the other hand they would become very flexible [and chaotic] right before/during the event by altering everything planned.”

Mr. Suen elucidated that not all Korean stars are difficult to work with. It would be easier to work with actors/actresses since most of them are mature enough and their artiste managers would not protect them like spoiled kids.

“To me, making a movie is an act of team work, if you are not performing well, other people may put the blame on you; yet, when you are a singer, you are a superstar that you just need to stand on the stage and the fans will scream accordingly... this may create an illusion.”

In recent years, numerous established Korean celebrities successfully started their own entertainment businesses or artiste management companies. Mr. Suen attributed this to the fruitful experience they faced in the entertainment industry as well as their foresight.

“To me, legendary celebrities such as Lee Byung-hun (李秉憲) and Bae Yong Joon (裴勇俊) are really smart; they foresaw that their fame could never last into their seventies, and therefore by utilizing their personal experience and connections in the showbiz, they set up their own entertainment companies in order to perpetuate their legacy by creating new stars. One notable example is Kim Soo Hyun (金秀賢), who was in fact reared by Bae Yong Joon.”

### **Emergence of a New Role: Between Artiste Manager and Celebrity Agent**

While Mr. Suen was often praised for his highly proactive thought in learning Korean in the early 2000s, in fact he did not realize his particular zest for Korean culture would have given him manifold opportunities in the entertainment industry nowadays. As he pointed out,

“I never imagine that the Hallyu will develop into today's structure. I learned Korean just because of my personal interest in language... when I was small, I tried Korean barbecue food and I found that this country is so close to us and interesting, so I was determined to learn this strange language... just until the broadcast of the Korean drama “Endless Love”, Hong Kong established its first Korean language school and I went there to learn immediately.”

After joining local men's fashion magazine *Men's Uno* in 2003, Mr. Suen had a lot of opportunities to work with local stars such as Chow Yun-Fat and Andy Lau. However, when the Korean drama *Endless Love* started to gain its popularity across East Asia, Mr. Suen tried to explore the opportunities in collaborating with Korean stars.

“I tried to find the contacts of Won Bin's (元斌) and Lee Byung-hun's (李炳憲) artiste managers simply by searching online... and then I just sent the invitation e-mails to them in simple Korean... Surprisingly my efforts eventually paid off, the editorial collaboration was so successful and smooth. By setting up this example, I tried to reach other famed Korean stars such as Jeon Ji Hyun (全智賢), Song Hye Kyo (宋慧喬), Cha Tae Hyun (車太賢) and Rain in the following years.”

In 2010, while Mr. Suen was promoted to a managerial position at MetroPop, he realized that he did not enjoy the job a lot. “I like writing and don't want to do managerial jobs, as they don't really fit me.” Interestingly, his previous work experiences in various media outlets had enabled him to build professional connections with plenty of Korean artistes and brands. Therefore, at that time, tapping into the effect of Korean wave, different brands and organizations started approaching Mr. Suen for his help in liaising with these Korean celebrities and their management companies, gradually fitting him into this newly emerged role with multiple duties – as a Korean translator/interpreter, an ad-hoc agent, a “star-nanny” and a business mediator.

“At the beginning, they [brands] asked for my help in working as a translator. After I to 2 years, since I've worked for many famed Korean idol groups, they started asking me to directly liaise with those stars [and their companies]... therefore, apart from my role as a columnist and translator, now I am working more like a [celebrity] agent... my working nature keeps evolving.”



entertainment industries, ranging from a media columnist to a film critic, from a Korean translator/interpreter to a flexible celebrity agent and mediator.

## References

- Boorstin, D. J. (1971). *The image: A guide to pseudo-events in America*. New York: Atheneum.
- Elberse, A. (2013). *Blockbusters: Hit-making, risk-taking, and the big business of entertainment*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Marwick, A., & Boyd, D. (2011). To see and be seen: Celebrity practice on Twitter. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 17(2), 139-158.
- Schierl, T. (2007). Ökonomie der Prominenz: Celebrity sells. In T. Schierl (Ed.), *Prominenz in den Medien* (pp. 98-121). Köln: Halem.
- Senfi, T. M. (2008). *Cangirls: Celebrity and community in the age of social networks*. New York: Lang.
- Top of the K-pops: South Korea's music industry. (2012, August). *The Economist*, 404(8798), 60.
- Turner, G. (2004). *Understanding celebrity*. London: SAGE.

## Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree with Mr. Suen's point of view that media is the most important agent in creating celebrity?
2. How effectively do you think a product endorsed by a celebrity can influence people's buying decision?
3. Do you think the media landscape in Hong Kong has changed due to the influence of Korean wave as claimed by Mr. Suen?
4. What is your view on the future of the Korean entertainment industry?

## Conclusion and Implications

In short, the interviewee strongly believed that media is the most important agent in creating celebrity. The rise and fall of celebrity are largely determined by the propagation of media. Meanwhile, the media also relies on celebrities as their attractiveness and persuasiveness in the consumer market has a strong commercial value. This exemplifies the symbiotic relationships between celebrity and the media.

There presents a controversy of the ultimate effects of new media technology to contemporary celebrity culture in Asia, Mr. Suen considered the present-day celebrities already not as valued and esteemed as those in the good old days – attributed peculiarly to the standardization of star manufacturing system introduced by the Korean entertainment industry [and arguably originated from the American Hollywood system] as well as the prevalence of social media such as Facebook and Instagram.

With over ten years' work experience in the media field, Mr. Suen recognized that the media in Hong Kong has developed sophisticatedly. Yet, currently it is also frustrated by its outdated business and reporting model. Therefore, it is important for the media in Hong Kong to collaborate more closely with other sectors, such as the entertainment industries, instead of isolating themselves. When discussing the experience of collaborating with Korean celebrities, Mr. Suen asserted that most of them were over-protected by their artiste managers and affiliated companies, hence producing much pressure on and restrictions to various collaborating parties, including those in Hong Kong. Nonetheless, Mr. Suen acclaimed the transformation of a handful of Korean artistes from the last generation, who successfully and smoothly changed their role from an artiste to an entrepreneur and strategically utilized their knowledge and experience in manufacturing stars, which is uncommon in Hong Kong.

Finally, Mr. Suen disclosed that he could never have imagined that the capacity of the Korean wave's influence would reach today's level. Riding on this sudden trend, Mr. Suen also triumphantly fitted himself with an emerging role of multiple duties in the East Asian