

Bridging Cultures Through K-Pop:
Designing an Interactive and Inclusive Digital Space to Explore
K-Pop's Global, Social, and Cultural Impact

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ABSTRACT

K-Pop has grown into a global cultural phenomenon that transcends entertainment, influencing social issues, activism, and cultural identity. This thesis proposes the development of a centralized, credible digital platform that highlights K-Pop's global impact while fostering community engagement and social change. Through a combination of academic research and design exploration, this thesis proposes a product that will serve as both an educational tool and a cultural hub. The proposed product aims to bridge the gap between entertainment and activism by offering interactive features, credible resources, and community spaces that encourage dialogue both online and offline. Addressing the current lack of trustworthy, in-depth resources for fans, the proposed product envisions a space where users can engage critically with K-Pop's cultural significance and the broader social movements it supports. Ultimately, the proposed product aspires to empower fans to become informed advocates and strengthen their role in global conversations.

Keywords: K-Pop, resource website, social change, activism, fan engagement, global influence

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INTRODUCTION

It is part of the uniform Asian American experience to become lost in our identity - we are too Asian to be American, but too American to be Asian. With Western beauty standards attributed to the majority white Americans, it used to be rare that we see Asian individuals on screen. Fast forward to the year 2025 and the global rise of Korean pop culture is shaping how Asian identity is seen and celebrated around the world. Despite the growing popularity of Korean culture worldwide, resources that explore Korean literature and K-Pop in creative and credible ways remain scarce. There is a need for a space that not only celebrates the achievements of K-Pop but also contextualizes them within broader conversations about race, identity, and activism. In this thesis, I propose a resource website that celebrates the achievements of K-Pop while fostering a deeper understanding of K-Pop's role in shaping cultural and social narratives. Ultimately, this proposed product seeks to bridge the gap between entertainment and social impact, creating a space where users can engage with K-Pop beyond its mainstream appeal.

Problem Statement

In the past, minorities were mainly represented by harmful racial stereotypes (Adams-Bass, 2014), portrayed sometimes even by white actors (i.e, whitewashing, yellowface). These inaccurate and offensive depictions were not isolated incidents but part of a long-standing pattern in media history that excluded minorities from telling their own stories. Research has

shown that mass media, including but not limited to television, the Internet, and newspapers, have a direct impact on the “cognitive ability and behavioral functioning” and even an indirect impact on learning (Adams-Bass, 2014, p.81). This media socialization, the process of interacting with mass communication media, can impact how youth come to perceive themselves (Adams-Bass 2014, p.81). Furthermore, the repeated exposure to certain images in media results in the viewers internalizing that those images are real-world representations (Adams-Bass, 2014, p.81), which can potentially be of negative influence on individuals. When racial and ethnic minorities see themselves consistently misrepresented or underrepresented in media, they may begin to internalize a sense of inferiority or invisibility.

The difficulty with communicating culture is that it extends beyond just images and representation. True cultural representation goes beyond merely depicting appearance; it also reflects the everyday experiences and values of the community. Individuals are not able to feel a sense of belonging and validation when the media does not depict their everyday life (Nadal, 2021). Representation alone is not enough if it lacks depth or reinforces stereotypes. Thus, it is significant that in the current-day entertainment industry, Asian individuals create their own narratives and represent themselves as they are. This is especially important for the youth that are finding their own role models in the media. The growth of K-Pop in the Western market is a powerful example of this cultural shift. Through music, fashion, language, and storytelling, K-Pop idols not only look like the Asian and Asian American youth, but also carry their cultural values, speak their mother tongues, and succeed on a global stage without shedding their identities (Bergado, 2019). Whether through shared ethnic backgrounds, visual similarities, or common cultural touchpoints, K-Pop offers young fans a sense of representation that is both affirming and aspirational (Bergado, 2019).

While the visibility of Asian representation in media is crucial, K-Pop's influence reaches far beyond representation alone. K-Pop's impact extends into tangible social action, amplifying voices for a wide range of issues. The genre has become a platform for tackling a wide array of social issues, from mental health awareness (Kim, 2022) to fighting anti-Asian hate (Chen, 2023) and advocating for social justice. K-Pop idols use their platform to speak out on these important topics, often lending their voices to movements that resonate globally. Through their philanthropic efforts and public statements, they inspire their fans to engage with and take action on these issues. This shift towards activism in the K-Pop community underscores the genre's evolving role not only as a form of entertainment but also as a powerful force for social change.

As K-Pop continues to gain momentum within our communities, the need for a reliable platform that explores both its cultural significance and its role in activism has never been greater. Currently, much of the information surrounding K-Pop activism is scattered across social media, news articles, and informal fan forums, making it difficult for fans to access accurate, centralized resources. Without a trusted space, important conversations can easily be lost, misrepresented, or overlooked. To support and expand on these conversations, I propose a dedicated resource website that will highlight K-Pop's influence, foster cultural awareness, provide educational resources, and facilitate community engagement around the social issues K-Pop idols help bring to light.

Product Design Questions

1. How can my website show the impact of K-Pop in an interactive way that can also be shared easily?

2. How can my website highlight and support the social issues K-Pop artists are tackling in our society?
3. How can I create a website that will serve as a welcoming community for discussion about K-Pop even in offline spaces?

Project Purpose and Expectations

In this thesis project, I will be presenting a research essay and a product that will explore the remarkable growth of K-Pop over the past years and its positive impact on approaching social issues. The research essay will provide a critical analysis of K-Pop's evolution, cultural significance, and growing role as a catalyst for activism. The proposed product is a digital prototype for an interactive platform designed to engage K-Pop fans through educational content and advocacy resources. This study and proposed product aim to show how South Korea has strategically leveraged the global rise of its music industry to drive economic growth, expand its international influence, and reshape cultural narratives worldwide. Additionally, this thesis seeks to highlight not only K-Pop's entertainment value but also its broader societal contributions, offering a new lens to understand contemporary popular culture and global media dynamics.

First, in the literature review, I will be analyzing K-Pop's evolution from its origins to its global influence, focusing on its impact on social change, cultural identity, and South Korea's economy. This section will also explore the existing academic discourse around fan culture, establishing the foundation for understanding K-Pop as more than just entertainment. I will also go into details of resource websites, otherwise known as content hubs, and how they will help with the expansion of K-Pop on online spaces.

Next, in the methodology section, I will dive into the development and details of this K-Pop specific resource website. This will include identifying user needs, defining target audiences, addressing design considerations, and providing a clear rationale for specific platform features. The proposed website will serve as a centralized, credible resource for K-Pop fans, offering a range of media, historical context, and cultural insights. By integrating both fan-driven content and academic research, it aims to bridge the gap between entertainment and education, fostering a deeper understanding of K-Pop's cultural, economic, and social impact.

Third, in the product analysis, I will revisit the design questions to review the strengths and opportunities of this proposed product. The website will showcase the impact of K-Pop through interactive features that not only engage users but also make it easy to share content. It will also emphasize K-Pop's role in driving social change by incorporating diverse and inclusive perspectives in both its media content and discussions. Moreover, the platform will cultivate a welcoming community, providing a safe space for fans to engage in meaningful dialogue.

Lastly, in the conclusion, I will explore additional findings on how K-Pop artists have influenced political and legal landscapes, the unique community dynamics among the fans, and the challenges within the fan community. Together, these insights highlight the need for a platform that promotes respectful dialogue, inclusivity, and positive activism. I will also explore the future implications of the proposed product, envisioning it as a platform that reshapes perceptions of K-Pop by promoting cultural awareness, education, and social responsibility, while cultivating a passionate, organized community that contributes meaningfully to global discussions. With the support of the K-Pop community, this platform has the potential to become a trusted global hub for fans, fostering a lasting legacy of knowledge, empowerment, and cultural

pride. The appendices at the end will show the developing stage wireframes, offering insight into the website's interface.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review sets the foundation for why and how K-Pop has experienced such rapid growth in the past decade, analyzing the key factors behind its global rise. This section also aims to highlight K-Pop's significant impact and articulate the compelling need for a dedicated resource for its global audience. As the K-Pop community continues to grow across cultural and generational boundaries, there is an increasing demand for platforms that offer more than just surface-level engagement. Currently, few resources provide credible, in-depth content on K-Pop's cultural significance and impact. In addition, this section will also detail the ideal structure and features of such a website, one that not only delivers reliable information but also serves as a catalyst for social change.

What is K-Pop?

Korean pop music, or K-Pop, is a musical genre that was originally produced and enjoyed by South Koreans (Oh, 2014). In recent years, this genre has evolved into a movement and culture, transcending cultural barriers and politics.

The first generation of K-Pop is said to be rooted in the mid-1990s, where young artists experimented with Western music and dance, which was different from the then popular genres of ballads and Korean soul music (Oh, 2014). Due to strict military and government censorship, these artists were limited in their opportunities in the South Korean market, leading them to turn to the Japanese market (Oh, 2014). Unexpectedly, the genre became a huge success in Japan

through the expansion of Korean dramas (St.Michel, 2011), leading entertainment companies to expand to other Asian markets and eventually the global markets.

The dominance in the global music industry was observed with the third generation of K-Pop (Suh, 2024). This third generation, characterized by activity present between 2012 to 2019 (Ryou, 2024), made a cultural shift. With popular groups such as BTS, Blackpink, and TWICE, K-Pop has finally become a mainstream genre for the public audience. It was also during this generation that the Korean entertainment companies started debuting more foreign members, hoping to achieve more global communication and to expand their target audience (Ryou, 2024).

K-Pop Expansion into International Markets.

Today, it is estimated that there are more than 220 million global fans of Korean entertainment, which is four times the population of South Korea (Kwon, 2024). Yet, this success did not happen overnight. The success of K-Pop is attributed to its heavy global marketing on digital platforms. Their business model of distributing music through YouTube has allowed them to reach a global audience without relying on local broadcasting stations for publicity (Oh, 2014). On these social platforms, algorithm functions such as the recommendation feature are seen to be especially “key in initiating Korean culture fans” by recommending them from one song or show to the next. (Kwon, 2024).

Another distinct feature about K-Pop in the current generation is its loyal fanbase that is fueled by the industry’s heavy encouragement of “bottom-up participation from the audience” (Shin, 2019, p.278). The K-Pop community has grown through its fan community that relies on participation in both online and offline spaces (Shin, 2019, p.278). Fans are seen to take initiative

in producing, sharing, translating, and patronizing content by their favorite idols (Shin, 2019, p.278). The online community and social media help with the expansion of content due to the easy sharing capabilities of the platforms. Online platforms also serve as a way for the K-Pop idols to interact with their fans, making the K-Pop culture more engaging and promoting a closer-knit culture than traditional Western pop music (Mizumi, 2017). Offline, the abundance of concerts and tours around the world allows even casual listeners to experience the music live (Assis, 2024). All these traits combined allows K-Pop to become exposed to new locations and new fans (Shin, 2019, p.278), which became a ripple effect during the COVID-19 lockdown.

K-Pop During the Pandemic

During the first year of the pandemic when the global lockdown also took place, “the number of Internet users grew by 10.2 per cent, the largest increase in a decade” (*Facts and figures*, 2021). The increase in time spent on digital platforms led to individuals finding new content, whether it be new music genres (Wright, 2022) or new television shows to binge (Sepinwall, 2021). K-pop companies adapted to this new trend quickly, leveraging digital platforms to engage with global fans (Vandenberg, 2020). For example, during the lockdown, Netflix premiered a documentary about Blackpink (Rapkin, 2021), which was ranked as the number one popular movie in 28 countries and regions when the film was released (Hicap, 2020).

As a result of the efforts of the entertainment agencies and the breakthrough into global mainstream audiences, in 2020, the boy band BTS became “the first group since The Beatles to land three number-one albums on the Billboard 200 chart in a single calendar year” (Rapkin, 2021) with the song “Dynamite” (Molanphy, 2020). This led to BTS gaining mainstream

recognition in the Western market, premiering on popular television shows and magazines and solidifying their presence in global pop culture. The following years only solidified K-Pop's dominance in the global music scene, as the genre continued to break records and redefine the entertainment industry. In 2021, more than 7.8 billion tweets about K-Pop were posted (Yang, 2022), reflecting the magnitude of global fan engagement. That same year, Blackpink became the most subscribed artist on YouTube (Chan, 2024), establishing their place as a major force not just in K-Pop but in the international music industry as a whole.

The Significance of K-Pop at a Global Scale

K-Pop artists are no longer performing just in their home countries; they are selling out venues globally as well (K. Kim, 2024). From leading world tours to even headlining Coachella (K. Kim, 2024), K-Pop artists are physically increasing visibility with the mainstream audience. Their presence at major Western music festivals and in globally televised awards shows signals a shift in what global pop culture looks like. Additionally, K-Pop's success has sparked greater curiosity and appreciation for Korean and Asian cultures (Adams, 2022), fostering positive cultural exchange. The breakthrough of K-Pop has allowed for Asian presence to be normalized in industries that were historically Western-dominated (Gibson, 2019). As K-Pop continues to shape global culture, it remains a powerful yet complex force in transforming narratives surrounding Asian identity. Its influence extends beyond music, sparking larger conversations about visibility, authenticity, and representation of Asians in global entertainment.

The Growth of South Korea due to K-Pop

While K-Pop has had immense influence on the music and entertainment industry, it has also impacted the development of South Korea as a country. The global reach of K-Pop has sparked curiosity about South Korean culture, leading to an influx of international visitors (Lee, 2023). The impact of K-Pop on tourism in South Korea started even before the COVID-19 lockdowns started. In 2017, out of the 10.41 million people that visited South Korea, “7.6 percent cited BTS as the primary reason” (Rapkin, 2021). This surge in tourism marked a pivotal moment, as fans from all over the world traveled to experience the culture behind the music they loved (France-Presse, 2024). For many, visiting South Korea was not just about sightseeing, it was about immersing themselves in the world of their favorite K-Pop idols (France-Presse, 2024), visiting concert venues, and even participating in fan events. This connection between music and place has helped transform South Korea into a global cultural hub, with K-Pop acting as a gateway for people to explore its traditions, culture, and history.

As a matter of fact, BTS solely “is reported to contribute [to] 0.3 percent of the Korean GDP,” putting them at level with Samsung and Hyundai (Lyu, 2024). This economic impact is a testament to the group’s extraordinary influence, both culturally and financially. K-Pop has become a “powerful instrument” for South Korea’s soft power, communicating culture beyond the country’s borders (*South Korea’s Soft Power: The Global Rise of K-Pop*, 2025). K-Pop artists are promoting Korean products, both in their home country and in other countries (Park, 2023). Noteworthy examples include female K-Pop artists promoting soju (a traditional Korean liquor) (Wichner, 2024), idols being ambassadors of Korean beauty products, and even idols promoting a kimchi brand (*Seventeen Member Hoshi Appointed as Ambassador for Kimchi Brand Jongga*, 2023). Through these sponsorships, fans are motivated to support their idols (Park, 2023), increasing awareness for the products and the Korean culture that is conveyed through them.

Beyond just being a music genre, K-Pop has transformed the way South Korea is viewed by the public eye (A. Park, 2024), turning what once was a small industry into a global phenomenon that fosters international admiration and cultural exchange.

K-Pop and Its Relationship with Social Issues

Traditionally, K-Pop artists were not seen making political and societal statements due to the risk of raising controversy among their fans (Dong, 2020). However, the scene has been changing (Dong, 2020). In 2023, SEVENTEEN became UNESCO's first-ever Goodwill Ambassador for Youth, driving meaningful dialogue outside of the entertainment space. This recognition by a prestigious global organization was a clear sign that K-Pop had become a cultural powerhouse with the ability to impact societal issues and youth empowerment on a global scale. In 2021, BTS's #StopAsianHate post on Twitter was the most retweeted tweet of the year (King, 2021). This simple tweet created a ripple effect of fans continuing the discussion from the American local communities to global (Regla-Vargas et al., 2023), bringing awareness to the issue to a global audience.

On another occasion, when BTS donated one million U.S. dollars to Black Lives Matter, their fans also followed in their footsteps (Bhandari, 2020). Through a fan-organized online campaign, fans around the world matched their idols' donation in just 25 hours (Bhandari, 2020). While BTS fans' campaigns are notable due to the number of fans around the world, fans for other K-Pop groups have also been known to make societal contributions in the name of their idols (Bae, 2013). These actions demonstrate how K-Pop fans are also capable of influencing social change (Bae, 2013). Fans use their collective voices to advocate for change, blurring the

lines between entertainment and activism and proving that the influence of K-Pop transcends the music industry itself.

In recent years, a new wave of K-Pop artists has begun to challenge long-standing industry norms and social stigmas, pushing the boundaries of what representation in the genre can look like. In 2024, the boy group Big Ocean debuted, which was the first K-Pop group to be all deaf (J.-H. Kim, 2024). The members use smartwatches with metronomes to synchronize their performances, normalizing accessibility in the entertainment industry (J.-H. Kim, 2024). Another K-Pop artist to break the traditional barriers was Holland, an openly gay singer. In a country where there is still stigma surrounding the LGBTQ+ community, Holland was initially unable to find an entertainment company to work with due to being openly gay (Wickes, 2023). However, through self-funding and crowdfunding, Holland has been able to release music that is internationally praised (Glasby, 2019). His music and bold activism has been bringing awareness to the LGBTQ+ community (Glasby, 2019).

In addition, K-Pop idols have also been known for raising awareness for mental health issues. This is notable as mental health issues are seen as taboo in South Korea, like many other Eastern countries (*Korean American K-Pop Stars Promote Mental Health Awareness*, 2021). Korean American singer Eric Nam launched a paid-podcast series titled MINDSET, where artists address stigmas surrounding mental health (*Korean American K-Pop Stars Promote Mental Health Awareness*, 2021). By providing a space for artists to share their experiences with mental health in the industry, these initiatives not only humanize the idols behind the fame but also encourage open dialogue among fans. This openness helps dismantle long-held stigmas in the current-day society, particularly among Asian and Asian American youth who may feel isolated in their struggles. K-Pop has become more than a music genre; it has started becoming a form of

cultural and social change, redefining the way fans interact with music. Through K-Pop, fans worldwide are engaging in global conversations, mobilizing around social issues, and building communities that transcend traditional cultural boundaries.

Redefining Asian identity and challenging stereotypes.

For the young Asian American community, K-Pop has offered them a cultural space where they feel seen and valued. There is evidence that Korean-American youth have found a “‘feeling at home,’ in K-Pop’s style and culture” (Balance, 2012, p.147). For these individuals, “globally famous and successful Korean stars are attractive and easy to identify with because of their similar look and ethnic background” (Park, 2021, p.95). Similarly, interviews with Asian Americans revealed that these individuals feel represented through K-Pop “in ways that mainstream American music did not” (Chun).

However, the current issue is that there is a limitation in the variety of collective spaces where these individuals can share their similar experiences outside of social media platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, and TikTok (Ferrini et al., 2024), all of which are not necessarily trustworthy resources (*Misinformation on Social Media – Guidance, Impact and Support*, 2023). Although these platforms play a key role in connecting fans and generating discourse, they are often saturated with misinformation (Lee et al., 2022) and algorithm-driven content that prioritizes virality over accuracy (Ahmed, 2024). In fact, this year a YouTuber has been sentenced to prison as a result of spreading fake news about multiple K-Pop idols (Kim, 2025). As a result, on these social platforms, meaningful conversations about identity and representation can become fragmented, misinformed, or lost altogether.

Information Sharing Within the K-Pop Community

There are a few different ways that K-Pop fans interact with each other. First, the most popular way fans interact with K-Pop content is through social media platforms (Kiaer, 2022). Fans share the latest information and stories easily and instantaneously through their accounts, reaching a wide audience in just a few seconds. The artists also have their own accounts on some of these social media platforms, allowing for the idols to engage with their fans via social media.

Next, there exist compiled information sites for certain artists and fans. For example, fan-made websites like “SKZFLIX” compiles video content available for Stray Kids, “LIKE17SUBS” offers translated video content for SEVENTEEN, and “TWICE WIKI” on fandom.com is constantly updated for content regarding TWICE. These websites are considered information hubs for certain idols, offering content and information for new and knowledgeable fans. Rather than being a community space, their purpose is to be a one-stop resource for specific artists. They are also free to access and completely fan-made.

Third, for K-Pop related news and even Korean entertainment related content, there exists a handful of websites, but popular ones include Soompi, Koreaboo, and Allkpop. These three websites are English-based, reaching a wide audience as English is a universal language for many countries. These websites share content such as breaking news and even latest releases. However, due to their focus on pushing out “hot” content as soon as possible, they sometimes create articles that are merely based on rumors or undeveloped stories. As a result, readers need to approach certain articles with caution and cross-reference with official sources when possible. Despite this, these sites remain popular entry points for international fans and often serve as a bridge between Korean entertainment and global audiences.

For credible cultural commentary, the Korean government uploads a variety of content about Korea, including K-Pop and K-dramas, on korea.net. This website shares interviews, shooting locations of dramas, events, and even political news. As this site is managed by the Korean government, it is credible and reliable as an information source. In particular, korea.net plays a key role in promoting the Korean Wave on a global scale by curating articles and multimedia that highlight Korea's soft power. It offers readers insight into not only the entertainment industry but also the historical, linguistic, and societal contexts behind it. It also reflects how the South Korean government actively supports and invests in the global visibility of its cultural exports, positioning Korean entertainment as an integral part of its national branding strategy.

Together, these various platforms illustrate the diverse ways in which K-Pop fans engage with both content and community. From fast-paced social media updates to government-backed cultural promotion, the K-Pop digital ecosystem is rich and multifaceted. However, while each of these sources serves a unique purpose, there remains a gap for a centralized, credible, and community-driven platform that not only informs but also educates and empowers. K-Pop has played a pivotal role in reshaping global perceptions of Asian identity, challenging stereotypes, fostering cultural exchange, while also significantly contributing to South Korea's economic growth and international influence. As the fan base continues to grow and diversify, there becomes even a greater need for credible information to be accessible to the community. The following section explores how one style of a platform could fill this gap and become a valuable tool for fans seeking a more meaningful connection to K-Pop and the cultural narratives surrounding it.

Resource Websites and their Impact

Resource websites are the larger scale version of resource pages, which are “curated page[s] that link to helpful resources, tools, apps, products, services, media, or websites that your audience may find useful” (McCoy, 2023a). Another term sometimes used for resource websites are “content hubs,” which are platforms that are curated towards a specific topic or theme ((*The Complete Guide to Content Hubs*, n.d.). Examples of resource websites include nonprofit websites (e.g., Asian Americans Advancing Justice), support resources (e.g., Asian American Psychological Association), and educational resources (e.g., Asian American Voices for Education). Resource content is crucial as it will help establish authority, deliver value for users, and create engagement, which will then lead to conversation outside of this online space (Seidel, 2023; McCoy, 2023b). For K-Pop, a resource website can serve as a vital platform that not only connects fans to the latest updates on idols, but also deepens their understanding of the music genre that is appreciated by many.

Components of a Resource Website

Resource websites, or content hubs, are typically composed of the following five key components: 1) central hub page; 2) content categories; 3) search functionality; 4) navigation system; 5) call-to-action (CTA) elements (*How to Build a Content Hub Step-By-Step*, 2024). In other words, a resource website hosts a collection of resources that helps users take the action that is recommended on the platform. The central hub page is the main page of the website (*How to Build a Content Hub Step-By-Step*, 2024). The content categories are the groupings of content that will help the user easily navigate the website (*How to Build a Content Hub Step-By-Step*, 2024). The search functionality is the search function that helps users quickly find specific

content on the website (*How to Build a Content Hub Step-By-Step*, 2024). The navigation system is the menus and functions that helps users understand where they are on the website (*How to Build a Content Hub Step-By-Step*, 2024). Lastly, the CTA element guides users towards the next action, such as signing up for newsletters or making a purchase (*How to Build a Content Hub Step-By-Step*, 2024).

While the above are the core components that make up a resource website, each website is different based on the needs and demands of the audience. Some may be community hubs, which provides users with a platform to discuss and share their ideas (*The Complete Guide to Content Hubs*, n.d.). For these websites, forums and/or discussion boards are essential to encourage discussion (*The Complete Guide to Content Hubs*, n.d.). Others may take the form of E-learning platforms, equipped with learning modules and interactive assignments (*The Complete Guide to Content Hubs*, n.d.). For the development of a K-Pop resource website, a library embedding will be crucial (*The Complete Guide to Content Hubs*, n.d.) so that users from a wide variety of backgrounds can access the information that they need. Ultimately, the structure and functionality of a resource website must align with its purpose and audience to maximize engagement and usability. By carefully selecting and integrating the appropriate components, a K-Pop resource website can serve as an accessible, well-organized hub that meets the needs of the target audience.

Resource Websites as Tools for Activism and Communication

Being a source of credible information, resource websites are found to be drivers for activism and community change. These websites provide a centralized platform for sharing information, fostering discussions, and mobilizing communities. They serve as an essential tool

for education, allowing activists to amplify their voices and reach a broader audience. For example, The Commons Library, otherwise known as the Activist Handbook, is an online resource website for activists and provides access to various forms of resources about social change and campaigning (*The Commons Library*, 2023). Individuals can access the resources on The Commons Library to gain inspiration, learn how to start a social movement, and even join a global community. Furthermore, resource websites help break geographical barriers, allowing individuals from different parts of the world to connect, share strategies, and collaborate on collective action. Many of these platforms also integrate tools such as petitions, fundraising options, and event listings to progress the agenda for social change.

Building a community online is easier said than done. Community spaces, which can take the form of forums and/or groups, need to be moderated to ensure the safety and security of the members (Blasbalg, 2023). Without proper moderation, online communities can become susceptible to misinformation, harassment, and conflicts that can ultimately weaken the community's purpose. Once guidelines and management is set up and the operations are running smoothly, the members will be able to help each other out (Blasbalg, 2023). These online communities will also need to motivate users to be actively participating to maintain a thriving community. Notable community spaces via websites include Airbnb (Blasbalg, 2023) and Reddit, which have strong user-driven ecosystems in place. As digital activism continues to grow, these online platforms will play an increasingly vital role in shaping movements, fostering global connections, and driving meaningful progress.

Potential Limitations with Resource Websites

When executed successfully, resource websites serve as an engaging authoritative source, where users can access trustworthy information and participate in knowledge-sharing. Yet, there are also a few precautions with these types of websites. For one, because of the amount of information these sites contain, it is very easy to overwhelm the user. Thus, organized content categories and navigation systems are necessary to help the user navigate the website. If the website becomes too complex and/or unorganized, it will deter the user away from spending time on the platform. Another potential shortfall with resource websites is that information and content can become easily outdated (Schmitt, 2023). Due to the amount of content, it can be a challenge to keep up to date on every single resource. Without a systematic procedure in place, the content can become irrelevant or outdated without the administrator realizing. Third, a potential limitation with resource websites is that it may not include all the available information on the topic. The way the website is organized and the content being included will depend on the creator's vision. Yet, it is difficult for one moderator to capture all the available information online. The website will have to have a system of community inputs and/or tools to make sure even new information will be included in the resource website. Considering the potential shortfalls and limitations, a resource website will have to incorporate content management strategies, regularly update resources, and encourage community engagement to ensure that the resource website stays relevant to the target audience.

Closing

Over the years, K-Pop has rapidly evolved from simply being a music genre into becoming a global cultural movement, challenging stereotypes, and even boosting South Korea's economy. Yet, despite its widespread impact, much of the information about K-Pop remains

scattered across social media platforms, fan communities, and entertainment news outlets, making it difficult for those seeking well-researched, in-depth knowledge about its history and cultural significance.

With the growing number of fans, there is also a growing need for a consolidated, credible resource that documents K-Pop's evolution and contents. To meet this need, a resource website will be effective in hosting various forms of information about K-Pop. In addition, since resource websites are found to be base resources for social change, when executed successfully a resource website about K-Pop will be to support users in driving change in their communities. By understanding both the advantages and challenges of resource websites, it becomes clear that careful planning and continuous maintenance are essential for long-term success. Despite potential limitations, a well-structured K-Pop resource website has the potential to fill an important gap, offering credible information, fostering engagement, and strengthening the global K-Pop community.

METHODOLOGY

In this section, I will go into detail of the proposed product: a resource website for K-Pop fans to reference for credible resources. The idea behind this product was a digital library of archives, where users can access a variety of media regarding their interests. The vision is that this product will feel like going through a library, confident that the resources are credible and fascinated by the amount of resources available. While the mock design presented here will offer a conceptual framework, future development will require continuous content updates and community engagement to ensure relevance and accessibility.

Needs Analysis

As K-Pop continues to grow as a global phenomenon, there is an increasing demand for a centralized, credible resource that provides insights into both K-Pop and Korean culture. While fan-driven websites and entertainment news platforms have supported the growth of K-Pop in the past decade, they lack in-depth information and credibility. On the other hand, academic research regarding K-Pop's impact is often scattered across various websites, making it difficult to easily access reliable information in one place. With the high circulation of misinformation on social media, there is also a growing demand for platforms that can offer fact-checked, thoughtfully curated content. This proposed website will fill a critical gap by being a credible, engaging, and inclusive platform that highlights K-Pop's cultural, economic, and social impact. By integrating academic insights with fan-driven content, it will serve as both an educational tool and a community hub for anyone interested in K-Pop and Korean culture.

Target Demographic/Audience

The website's target audience will be K-Pop fans on online spaces, especially social media. This target group is focused on their favorite K-Pop idols but are not necessarily informed of the impact K-Pop has. They also are not aware of credible sources of material that can help their community. Since the average age of K-Pop fans is 23 years old and majority female, the website will target Gen Z (Kiaer, 2022), who will be highly engaged with digital content (Rand, 2024). Gen Z also favors brands that approach social issues and are authentic (*What Is Gen Z?*, 2024), which will align with the proposed website's mission. The purpose of this website is to create engaging and impactful conversations regarding K-Pop, fostering a deeper appreciation of Korean culture while also providing tools to create change in their communities.

Related Products

In the current market, there are informational websites about specific K-Pop groups and fandom sites, but not necessarily a credible resource hub for just K-Pop. I was not able to find a website that is similar to my product, but I have found two products that I would like to refer to in the creation of my product.

The first product is Weverse, a web platform owned and managed by the Korean entertainment agency HYBE. Weverse's concept is to be a community hub for artists and fans (Mather, 2023). The platform offers exclusive and official video content, interviews, live streams by artists, and community threads, just to name a few (Mather, 2023). Fans can use this platform as a source of credible information as it is published by the artists and entertainment companies themselves. Rather than the platform being a community for the fans themselves, it serves more as a community for the idols and fans to interact. Unfortunately, the platform is limited to artists under specific labels and does not provide comprehensive educational or contextual information about K-Pop as a whole. Content is primarily promotional, often geared toward album releases, concert ticketing, and merchandise sales. It also functions more as a communication tool, so fans looking for broader historical, social, or academic insights into K-Pop may find it lacking in scope. Moreover, because the platform is tied to entertainment companies' commercial interests, it may present a filtered or idealized version of idol life, rather than offering the more holistic or critical perspectives that an independent resource website could provide. Thus, while Weverse effectively strengthens the bond between idols and their fans, it does not serve as an unbiased educational platform.

Another product that is similar to the website I hope to create is Kpopmap.com. This website is an English “content-based fan community platform” (*Kpopmap*, n.d.) that is based in South Korea. Kpopmap offers a variety of content such as fan articles, polls, charts/rankings, and even Korean lessons. Some of the content, such as in-depth articles and content analysis (*Kpopmap*, n.d.), is exclusive to community members, which requires a subscription fee. The concept of this platform is in some ways similar to the website I am creating, as it explores Korean culture beyond just the music. The published content is also written by fans and community members, creating a close-knit community environment. However, while the platform promotes fan participation and cultural engagement, it lacks a centralized academic or fact-checked foundation that ensures consistent credibility. Much of its content is opinion-based (e.g. “The Hottest Celebs Now” section) or driven by popular trends (e.g., “Tips to Stay K-Trendy” section), which may not serve those looking for more in-depth, curated, or credible information. Additionally, its monetization model and community exclusivity can limit accessibility for users who simply want to learn without paying. In summary, even though platforms like Weverse and Kpopmap offer valuable fan-centric content and cultural engagement, there is still a clear need for an accessible, credible, and educationally grounded hub dedicated solely to K-Pop.

Product Description

The proposed product will be an online website that serves as a resource website, or otherwise known as content hub. The website is meant to be a credible and informative resource for K-Pop fans that want to learn more about K-Pop. However, going beyond just learning about this music genre, the website aims to inspire K-Pop fans to drive change in their own

communities, following the example set by their favorite idols. The website's content will also be free, eliminating the barrier to entry that subscription-based platforms create.

This platform is designed to bridge the gap between fan enthusiasm and academic research. Whether users seek historical knowledge, information about the latest song releases, or ways to support meaningful causes, this website aims to be a central space where K-Pop fans can engage deeply with the culture and its broader societal impact.

Potential Product Title

The naming of a website is important as it will serve as branding and identity for the platform. Some potential titles and reasonings for this website include:

- Seoulse: a combination of "Seoul," "pulse," and "source"
- Krea: a combination of "Korea" and "Creative"
- Arkorive: a combination of "archive" and "Korea"

These names are aimed to be pronounceable and easy-to-understand that this product is about South Korea. To align with current naming trends, the potential website names are memorable and unique (Richard, 2024). I have also focused on creating one-word titles, as they are easier to remember and quick to recognize (Gokhale, 2023), which are important when a user is trying to recall the website from their memory. The chosen titles stand out because they face little competition, ensuring that when potential users search for it online, it will not be overshadowed by larger, more established brands (Rayner, 2023). A thing to note is that while this website will be centered around K-Pop, I purposefully did not include "K-Pop" in the title, as I felt like the potential of this website will span beyond just being a music genre. The sections on the website are diverse enough that users will be able to experience the impact of K-Pop beyond the music

scene. By choosing a name that reflects both K-Pop and the broader cultural influence of Korea, it becomes a dynamic platform that captures the essence of the Korean entertainment industry's global impact.

Design Intentions

The overall design of the website will be simple, modern, and user-friendly. The website will feature five different main sections: 1) home page, 2) infographics/data, 3) history, 4) collection of media (e.g., music, books, academic articles), 5) activism support. I will go into detail of each section and the purpose they will serve for the target audience.

1. Home Page

The home page, or landing page, will be simply designed and showcase the website's focus on K-Pop (see Figure 1 in Appendix). An effective homepage is meant to welcome the audience to the site, tell them what to do next, and encourage them to explore the site in more depth (*28 Effective Homepage Design Examples and Ideas for Your Website*, 2018). Therefore, it should be simple and not give away all the information from the beginning, but still offer enough information to keep the visitor engaged. This page will utilize current trends in website design, such as bold and expressive fonts (Read, 2025), big blocks with vivid contrast (Read, 2025), and a modern minimalist theme (Handy, 2023). The layout will prioritize accessibility, ensuring smooth navigation for users of all backgrounds and experience levels.

The homepage will have three main elements. First, the header will include a navigation bar with labeled categories, allowing users to easily access the different sections of the website. This clear and intuitive structure will guide users effortlessly through the platform, encouraging users to explore various content areas without feeling lost. Second, the welcoming main image

will be placed at the middle of the screen and will feature a K-Pop concert, setting the tone for the website's theme and purpose. Having a large image "layout can result in an eye-catching and immersive homepage design" (Romano, 2023). The dynamic energy of a live performance will immediately immerse visitors in the world of K-Pop, offering a visual introduction to the excitement and vibrancy of the culture. Centering the image will create an eye-catching focal point while reinforcing the website's goal of showcasing K-Pop's global appeal and energy. This engaging first impression will resonate with users, drawing them into the content and establishing a sense of connection with the vibrant K-Pop community. There will be a brief introductory text that will either be overlaying or placed near the image to communicate what the website is about. This will help with SEO, as images will not be identified through search engines (*Google Images SEO Best Practices*, n.d.). The supporting text will also improve the accessibility of the website (*Google Images SEO Best Practices*, n.d.), ensuring that all users, including those with visual impairments, can engage with the content. Third, the footer will include the contact information and social media links. The header and footer will remain consistent throughout all the content pages, creating a cohesive and professional user experience.

2. Infographics/Data

Infographics are graphics that combine data, visualizations, images, and text together to tell a story (Lindblom, 2016, p.38). This form of content sharing is usually composed of three parts: an introduction, a key message, and a conclusion that oftentimes involves a call to action (Lindblom, 2016, p.38). They are found to be successful in encouraging even young adults to understand and appreciate complex information (Lindblom, 2016, p.37). Another positive aspect of infographics is that they allow for ideas and content to be easily dispersed to a wide audience

(Nademlynsky, 2022). Infographics and data representation is key to bring credibility into the research being done about the topic.

The design in this section will prioritize clarity and simplicity, ensuring that the information is easy to interpret while maintaining a modern and dynamic aesthetic (see Figure 2 in Appendix). By presenting this data in a visually engaging way, the infographic will help highlight the widespread impact of K-Pop and its role in bridging cultural gaps, reinforcing the website's educational foundation. Additionally, the infographics will be interactive, allowing users to explore specific trends or statistics in greater detail. This interactive element will enhance the user experience and keep the audience engaged, making the information more memorable and impactful.

3. History

To understand the development of K-Pop over the past years, it is important to understand the history behind the movement. The history section will include interactive elements, such as images and timelines, so that users can easily navigate key events and milestones that have shaped the cultural landscape over the years (see Figure 3 in Appendix). Interactive content like hover effects or clickable elements will also provide a deeper layer of understanding, allowing users to learn more about specific events, artists, or trends with minimal effort. The layout will be simple so that there will be emphasis on the content that is presented. The page will include structured headings, subheadings, and will be presented in a visually engaging format with ample white space to avoid overwhelming the reader.

4. Collection of Media (Media Library)

As a resource site, this website will host a variety of contents that are connected to K-Pop. The idea behind this section will be a digital library for Korean media content, offering a

centralized hub where users can access a wealth of K-Pop-related materials, such as music videos, interviews, latest music releases, and more. While the website itself will be run by a moderating team to ensure quality and accuracy, this section will require updates and engagement by the community members, allowing them to share new content, provide insights, and help maintain the library's relevance. There will be navigation blocks to help the user access the category they are looking for (see Figure 4 in Appendix). The design will be visually clean with minimal distractions to allow the user to focus on the media content itself. To create an engaging and visually appealing experience, each media item will include high-quality thumbnails, short descriptions, and metadata (such as release dates, artists featured, or related tags), making it easy for users to find and explore specific content. There will also be interactive features, like user reviews and ratings, that will help guide the user towards what they are looking for. This section will evolve over time, with the goal of becoming a comprehensive, go-to resource for everything related to K-Pop media.

5. Activism Support

Another key element of this website is that it will serve as a support resource for social change, empowering users to engage with and contribute to important causes. This section will be easy-to-navigate, with clear headings and subcategories to help users access the resources they need to take action (see Figure 5 in Appendix). To further enhance engagement, the website will incorporate plug-ins such as social sharing buttons, donation links, and call-to-action buttons that encourage users to get involved, share their experiences, and take immediate steps toward driving social change. Interactive elements, such as progress trackers for ongoing campaigns or petitions, will keep users engaged and offer tangible ways to track their involvement in social change efforts. Visually, this section will need to be bold and convey a sense of urgency. The use

of strong, dynamic colors and large, attention-grabbing headlines will emphasize the importance of these causes. The text will be clear and action-oriented, encouraging users to make a difference, while maintaining a professional and credible tone. The overall atmosphere of this section will be one of empowerment and motivation, creating a space where users feel inspired to take action and support meaningful change.

Typography

To create a seamless user experience on a resource-heavy website, it is essential to carefully consider design elements like typography. With the variety of content hosted on the website, it is important to choose a font that is not only easy to read but also conveys an approachable and modern tone. The font will need to align with the website's branding, which emphasizes both excitement and professionalism. Considering the requirements, I will use a sans serif font because aside from being simple and easy to read, it has a youthful vibe associated, which aligns with this resource website's branding (Scacca, 2024). Among the sans serif fonts, I will use Helvetica Neue sans serif font, which academic institutions like Princeton University use on their websites to appeal to prospective and incoming students while still maintaining the traditional vibe of being an Ivy League school (Scacca, 2024). As our website will host academic resources, the tone Princeton communicated through their font aligns with our website's vision. By selecting Helvetica Neue as the main font, our website aims to balance readability, modernity, and credibility, ensuring that users can easily navigate and engage with the diverse content while maintaining a professional yet welcoming aesthetic.

Limitations

One of the major limitations of this project was that, due to time constraints, I was only able to create a mock design, with plans to further develop it in the future. The mock design was created using the Balsamiq tool, which provided a platform to visually conceptualize the website's layout, user interface, and overall aesthetic. Unfortunately, the design remains in its conceptual phase and does not include the full and interactive elements that would be present in the final version. Thus, the mockup serves only as a visual representation rather than a fully developed website, and the writing in this thesis document fills the gaps of the requirements.

Furthermore, a significant challenge lies in the fast-paced nature of the K-Pop industry, which requires constant updates and active content management to stay relevant to the target audience. The rapidly evolving trends, new releases, and shifting fan interests will demand ongoing attention to ensure the website provides up-to-date, engaging content. To run the website effectively and meet these demands, additional support staff, including content creators, editors, and community managers, will be necessary to regularly update key information and resources. While community posts and user submissions could contribute to content generation and keep the platform dynamic, the website will still need a dedicated team of moderators to ensure quality control, accuracy, and appropriateness of user-generated content. Consistent traffic and user engagement will also be crucial for the site's success, as it will require an active and responsive community to foster ongoing participation and contribute to the website's growth. Balancing user contributions with professional oversight will be key to maintaining the website's credibility and relevance in the ever-changing K-Pop landscape.

In short, this methodology section mainly went into detail of the specifications as well as the limitations with the proposed product. Ultimately, this website is designed to be more than

just an archive; it is an evolving, credible, and engaging platform that bridges the gap between academic research and fan-driven content. In the next section, I will go more in detail with how the proposed product will answer the initial design questions in its development.

PRODUCT ANALYSIS

K-Pop's global reach and influence extend far beyond the music industry, shaping cultures and communities worldwide. To effectively showcase the impact of K-Pop, the proposed website will provide an interactive platform that allows fans not only to consume content but also to engage and contribute. By incorporating dynamic elements that invite participation, the website aims to create an immersive experience where users can explore K-Pop's cultural significance, share their perspectives, and connect with others. The proposed website also aims to be a source of social change for the fan community.

This section will answer the main design questions that guided the creation of this proposed product, including how the website's layout, features, and user experience were carefully crafted to meet the needs of the current generation of K-Pop fans.

Showcasing K-Pop's Impact Through Interactive Content

The proposed website is meant to be engaging and interactive for the target audience of K-Pop fans. These elements will not only inform users but also encourage participation, fostering a dynamic online space where fans can explore, share, and contribute to the ever-growing narrative of K-Pop. In the following sections, I will go in detail of the specific elements that will be included to ensure that K-Pop's impact is effectively showcased in the contents.

First, the website's sections of "Infographics/Data" is one of the main ways the website will highlight the achievements of K-Pop. Using data visualization, the section will feature major milestones in K-Pop, such as K-Pop's economic growth, social media influence, and global expansion. It is meant to be one of the many academic resources available to the users on this website. This page is also meant to drive traffic to the website, as infographics are three times more likely to be shared on social media than other forms of content (Heitzman, 2019). Interactive maps will also be included to show the global impact of K-Pop through examples like the cities global concert tours take place in, streaming trends, and album sales by regions. The infographics will also include interactive functions such as hover over and animations to help make the information more understandable and engaging (Olujinmi Oluwatoni, 2024). Additionally, this section will be regularly updated with the latest data, ensuring that visitors can stay informed about K-Pop's continuous growth and influence.

Next, the "History" page will be similar to the "Infographics/Data" page, but this page will have an emphasis on the historical context behind the K-Pop movement. This will serve as an educational resource that provides a comprehensive timeline of K-Pop's evolution, focusing on the cultural, social, and economic factors that contributed to its global rise. When fans talk about K-Pop, especially on social media, they tend to focus on their current favorite idols and trends, but not everyone has followed the development of K-Pop from the beginning. Therefore, this page is meant to be an academic resource for fans who are curious as to how this movement has gained popularity today. The information will also include examples and engaging visuals. The content will need to be structured chronologically, to guide users through K-Pop's major generational shifts. To encourage further exploration for users, the page will also link to related

academic articles, interviews, and documentaries, creating a seamless transition to additional learning materials.

Moreover, the website will have built-in social media sharing functions for users to be able to share the content online. Like other pop culture industries, K-Pop faces a major issue with fans spreading fake news (Herman, 2021). In some cases, fans quote “‘alternative facts’ to defend their heroes” (Herman, 2021), distorting information to fit the fans’ intended narrative. Some examples of this include sharing misleading excerpts from interviews, sharing a mistranslation of an article, or repurposing an old image to spark debate within the fan community. Since media sharing is a common form of information sharing in the fan community, this website aims to create factually-accurate bite-sized content that will also be easy to share. By offering credible resources, the platform aims to empower fans to engage in more meaningful discussions and counter misinformation with verified information, encouraging and fostering responsible fan culture.

Effective Representation of K-Pop’s Role in Social Change

K-Pop has had a major impact on Asian representation in media, but it is also important to note its positive role in other societal issues. The success of K-Pop artists in the Western market has not only shattered long-standing stereotypes of Asians as submissive, quiet, or unattractive (Kao & Shinkoda, 2021), but it has also contributed to broader conversations about cultural diversity, identity, and global influence. This visibility has sparked discussions around racial and cultural representation, challenging the status quo and encouraging more inclusive portrayals of Asians in media, fashion, and entertainment. Through its widespread appeal and

cultural impact, K-Pop has not only reshaped perceptions of Asian culture but also played a pivotal role in advocating for equality and inclusion in the entertainment industry and beyond.

Building on this impact, K-Pop is also increasingly fostering social change by using its platform to raise awareness about pressing global issues. Through philanthropy, K-Pop artists have leveraged their widespread influence to spark conversations and inspire their fans to take action. The genre's power extends beyond entertainment, making it a driving force for positive societal transformation across borders. As K-Pop continues to amplify these movements, it serves not only as a cultural phenomenon but as a catalyst for meaningful change in both the entertainment industry and the wider world. K-Pop has become more than just a musical genre; it is now a cultural movement that resonates deeply with fans around the world.

The proposed website will feature a dedicated section for “Activism Support,” designed to offer credible resources for individuals looking to make a meaningful impact in their communities. This section will not only serve as an academic resource, but also as a call to action, empowering users to actively engage in social change. It will provide a variety of resources, including links to advocacy organizations, educational materials, actionable guides, and petitions that users can easily access and support. Additionally, the section will highlight organizations and nonprofits that have received public support from K-Pop idols, further connecting the power of celebrity influence with real-world activism. To ensure that the page remains dynamic and relevant, it will be regularly updated with news on policy changes, upcoming advocacy events, and opportunities for users to get involved. Through these updates, the website aims to maintain a sense of urgency and momentum, motivating users to stay engaged with the causes they care about and inspiring continuous action toward positive change.

Building on the broader role K-Pop plays in promoting social change, the website will also provide tangible ways for fans to engage in activism themselves. Fans often follow a certain K-Pop group for the individual idol members in the group. These idol members have immense influence over their fans, helping boost participation for events and raising visibility for societal issues (*The Rise of K-Pop: A Global Cultural Phenomenon Explained*, 2024). This “Activism Support” section is meant to be a credible resource for fans that are looking to take action, like their favorite K-Pop idols have, but are unsure on where to start.

What makes this “Activism Support” section especially powerful is the unique way K-Pop fandoms operate as highly organized, dynamic communities (*The Rise of K-Pop: A Global Cultural Phenomenon Explained*, 2024). K-Pop fans are well-versed in quickly mobilizing and coordinating online efforts, often organizing massive fan-driven campaigns in support of their idols and various causes (Youn, 2023). This existing infrastructure can be harnessed for social good when given the proper tools and direction. By centralizing credible resources and calls to action in one accessible space, the website can channel the passion and commitment of K-Pop fans toward meaningful activism. With strategic design elements and engagement tactics, this section has the potential to transform fans' enthusiasm into advocacy, inspiring a new generation of culturally conscious individuals who view activism as a natural extension of their K-Pop fandom and personal identity.

Building an Inclusive K-Pop Community On and Offline

For countless fans, K-Pop is more than a music genre; it has become a powerful source of personal and cultural identity. At the root of this proposed product will be the concept of community, where the shared passion for K-Pop fosters a sense of belonging and connection.

This website will serve as a digital gathering space where fans can connect, share experiences, and engage in meaningful discussions about K-Pop. This website aims to ensure that fans feel seen, heard, and valued. Whether they are sharing their favorite songs, debating the latest releases, or discussing the cultural impact of K-Pop, the website will aim to empower fans to not only celebrate the genre but also to strengthen the bonds that unite them as a global community.

For instance, in the “Collection of Media” section, which will be a digital library for K-Pop materials, users will be able to leave comments on the content, much like the comment sections found on YouTube and other social media platforms. This page is meant to appeal to the general K-Pop fans, regardless of their background in K-Pop. Users will be able to find contents such as music, television shows featuring K-Pop idols, video interviews, documentaries, online articles, even academic research, and much more. Here, users can express their memories with a certain song, highlight certain excerpts from an interview, and even share recommendations to other community members. This function pays homage to K-Pop’s expansion, resembling how Internet users in the early 2000s were able to discover K-Pop through the recommendation and sharing features on YouTube. The goal is to cultivate a space where fans feel comfortable sharing their thoughts while also learning from different perspectives. To ensure a positive and respectful community space, moderation tools and community guidelines will be set in place. For future content updates, the section will include a submission form where community members can easily contribute new content or suggest updates to existing content.

One of the key strengths of K-Pop is the global reach of its dedicated fanbase. While this website will offer immense resources, this information will not meet its potential unless it reaches the fans. To encourage fans to engage with this content, the website will have to be active on X (previously known as Twitter) to mark its presence in the fan community. X is

known to be a popular online platform where fans tweet about their favorite idols or react to their idols' contents (Tsuchida, 2024). Engaging with fans on these social platforms will also give the website an opportunity to listen to community feedback and adjust its content to better serve the needs of its audience. Additionally, as the website's content spreads through shareable links and viral posts, it will strengthen its presence both in the online K-Pop fan community and in offline fan events. This comprehensive social media strategy will ensure that the website becomes a well-integrated hub, not just for fans to learn but also for them to actively engage with each other in both online and offline spaces.

CONCLUSION

As K-Pop continues to grow, so too must the tools we use to understand it. In the current market, as mentioned in the above sections, there is a lack of credible and informative resources about K-Pop in general. Thus, as the genre continues to develop into a cultural force of change, there becomes a need for a resource to capture the momentum and encourage fans to take action alongside it. A centralized, accessible, and reliable hub would not only provide accurate information, but also empower users to engage with K-Pop beyond the surface, connecting it to broader conversations about identity, globalization, and social change. In doing so, it can foster critical thinking, community-building, and a deeper appreciation for the cultural significance of K-Pop in the modern world.

Additional Findings

Beyond social issues, K-Pop artists have also influenced political and legal landscapes. A notable example is the Goo Hara Act, a legislative reform named after the late singer Hara Goo

(J. Park, 2024). The act was introduced to address a legal loophole that allowed negligent or abusive parents to claim inheritance from their children (J. Park, 2024). Following Goo's passing, her brother led a public effort to prevent their estranged mother from receiving a portion of her estate, sparking national conversation and ultimately contributing to the act's passage (J. Park, 2024). Another example is the amendment made to South Korea's Military Service Act, which now allows select pop culture artists to postpone their mandatory military enlistment until the age of 30 (Lee, 2020). The change took place when BTS' oldest member was scheduled for deployment (Onchi, 2022). This change was particularly significant because prior to the amendment, deferral exceptions were granted only to athletes, classical musicians, and individuals enrolled in Ph.D. programs abroad (Lee, 2020). These examples demonstrate how the influence of K-Pop extends beyond entertainment, shaping national policies and legal reforms, and reflecting the genre's growing cultural and societal significance on a global scale.

On a different note, the sense of unity that is seen among K-Pop fans may partly be due to the unique linguistics and behavioral codes that exist in the community. Terms such as "bias" and "nugu" are slang words commonly used in the fan community (Evans, 2022). These unique terms can also overwhelm new fans and even casual listeners (Evans, 2022). This can also lead to feelings of being left out or feeling like the community is exclusive. Long-time fans may limit information or judge others for not knowing specific terminology (Ferrini et al., 2024). This dynamic can create a divide between veteran fans and newcomers, limiting the community's growth and inclusivity. Moreover, K-Pop communities often have unspoken norms around streaming practices (*Some K-Pop Fans #SayNoToStreaming, but Others Aren't Happy*, 2023), fan chants (Lim, 2022), and online voting (Youn, 2023). While this culture can foster strong fan engagement, it can also further alienate those unfamiliar with these expectations.

At times, the fascination with K-Pop has turned into an unhealthy obsession for some fans. For example, fan wars exist in certain fandoms, creating a negative environment for discussion (Rahmitha et al., 2024). Fan wars are arguments that occur between fans, often spurred from the emotional investment and attachment they have towards their favorite idols (Letwory et al., 2023). Fans might see any criticism of their favorite group as a personal attack and feel the need to defend their idols, which can sometimes lead to them acting aggressively toward fans of other groups (Letwory et al., 2023). This behavior is especially heightened in K-Pop due to the competitive nature of streaming and music chart rankings, and the heavy usage of social media. Platforms like Twitter and TikTok allow information and opinions to spread rapidly, often amplifying conflicts and intensifying group loyalty. These toxic fan behaviors can overshadow the positive aspects of K-Pop fandoms, such as community support, creativity, and activism. Therefore, creating a product that promotes respectful dialogue, fosters understanding, and encourages fans to engage in positive activism could help shift the focus of K-Pop fans from rivalry to community-building. By providing a space for fans to learn and connect, the proposed website could serve as a platform for cultivating a healthier, more inclusive fan culture.

Re-Introduction of the Problem Statement

While K-Pop has evolved into a powerful force for social change, with idols addressing a wide range of pressing issues, there is currently a lack of a centralized, reliable, and credible resource for fans to explore these efforts. As the genre's influence continues to grow, fans often find it difficult to navigate the vast amount of information available, especially when it comes to understanding how K-Pop intersects with activism and social justice. Many fans want to engage with the causes their idols support, but they lack a trusted platform where they can find accurate

information, learn how to get involved, and connect with others who share their passion for social change. This gap in the K-Pop fandom community calls for a dedicated website that consolidates educational resources, updates on activism efforts, and opportunities for fans to take action. The proposed website must not only serve as a credible and reliable resource but also engage users in an interactive way that amplifies the impact of K-Pop's influence on social issues. By creating a space where fans can share experiences, learn from one another, and engage with activism initiatives, this website can empower fans to take action, support social justice efforts, and deepen their understanding of the global issues K-Pop artists are addressing.

Future Implications

Since this product is still in the early stages of development, requiring the support of designers and engineers for the actual deployment, I envision that the concept of this product becomes a source for discussion. Oftentimes, K-Pop and its unique fan culture is portrayed in a negative light, with K-Pop fans found to be more unhealthily obsessed with their idols than Western artist fans (Acosta, 2023). However, it is my hope that this obsession can be turned towards the greater good for our community. As we have seen K-Pop idols rise to fame and give back to their communities, it will be ideal that fans will follow suit. By creating a platform that not only centers entertainment but also encourages cultural awareness, education, and social responsibility, this product has the potential to shift the narrative around K-Pop fan culture. Rather than being dismissed as frivolous or obsessive, these communities can be recognized as passionate, organized, and capable of contributing meaningfully to global conversations. In this way, the website aspires to serve as both an educational tool and a cultural movement,

empowering fans to learn, reflect, and act with purpose. Ultimately, it aims to redefine what it means to be a K-Pop fan in today's interconnected world.

Creating a website is not easy and with the content this product hopes to host, it will require immense support from the fan community to keep the content updated. This is especially true for a platform that aims to go beyond entertainment, offering educational resources, cultural context, and opportunities for meaningful discussion. However, to promote a reliable and safe community online, the tone and culture of the website will need to be consistent throughout all the content published.

K-Pop has long served as a safe space and a source of identity, pride, and belonging for many, especially those who have felt marginalized or unseen. I hope that this culture continues to transcend into an online space, where fans are not only entertained, but also empowered to learn more deeply about the music, the artists, and the cultural significance behind them. With a united community and a shared commitment to respectful engagement, this website has the potential to become a trusted, vibrant hub for fans around the world. The journey is just beginning, and with the support of the K-Pop community, this platform can inspire a new chapter in the history of K-Pop fan culture: one that celebrates knowledge, empowerment, and cultural pride, creating a legacy that resonates for generations to come.

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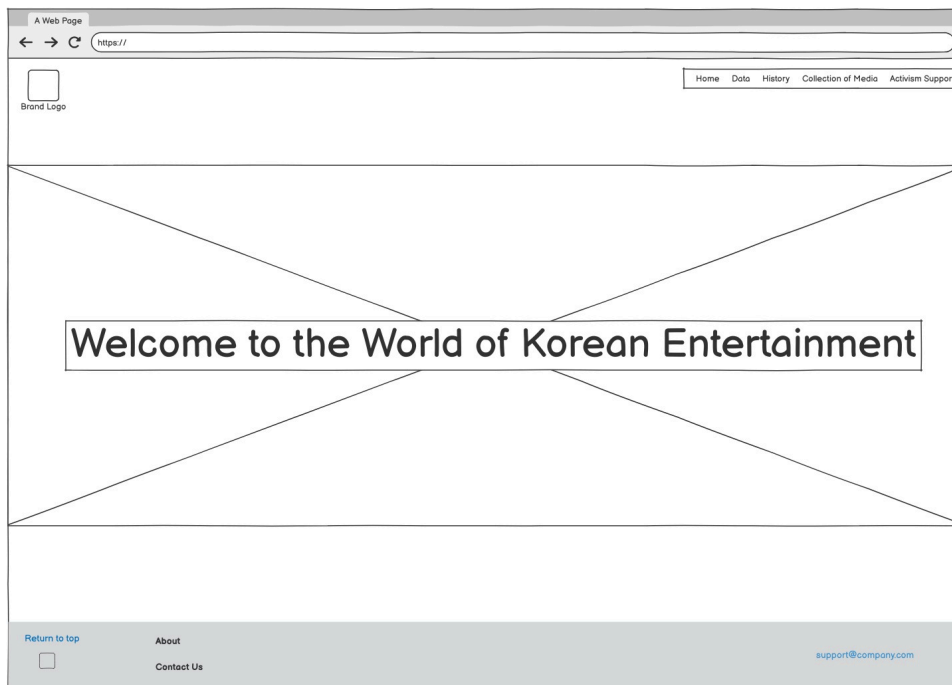
APPENDIX

Wireframes of Proposed Website

This appendix consists of the wireframes of the proposed website for K-Pop. As this is a rough wireframe, the details will be included in the main document.

Figure 1

“Home Page”

**Figure 2**

“Infographics/Data” Section

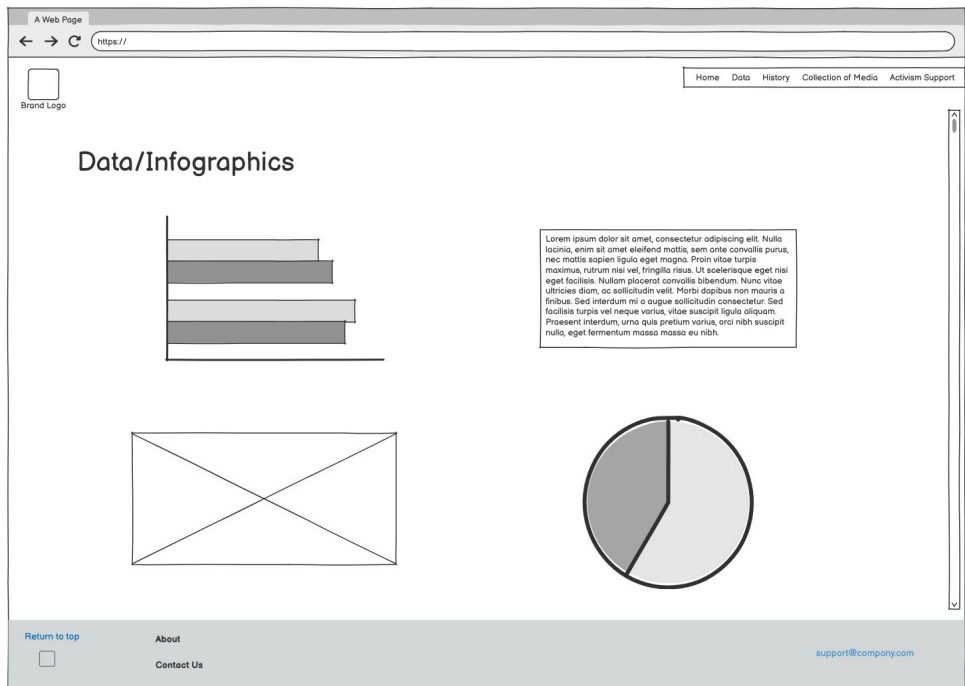


Figure 3
“History” Section

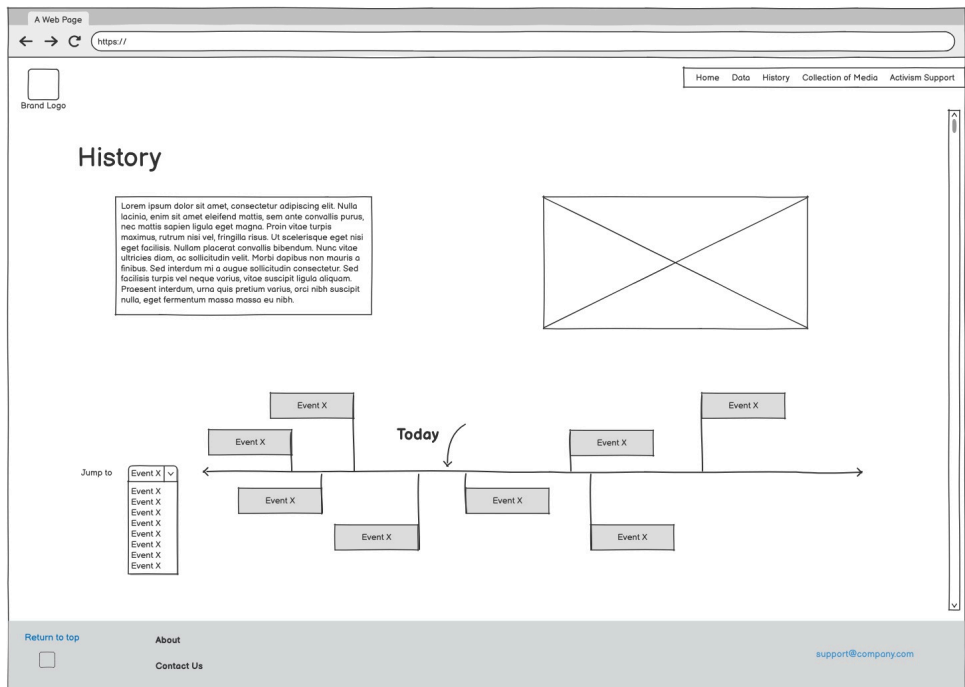
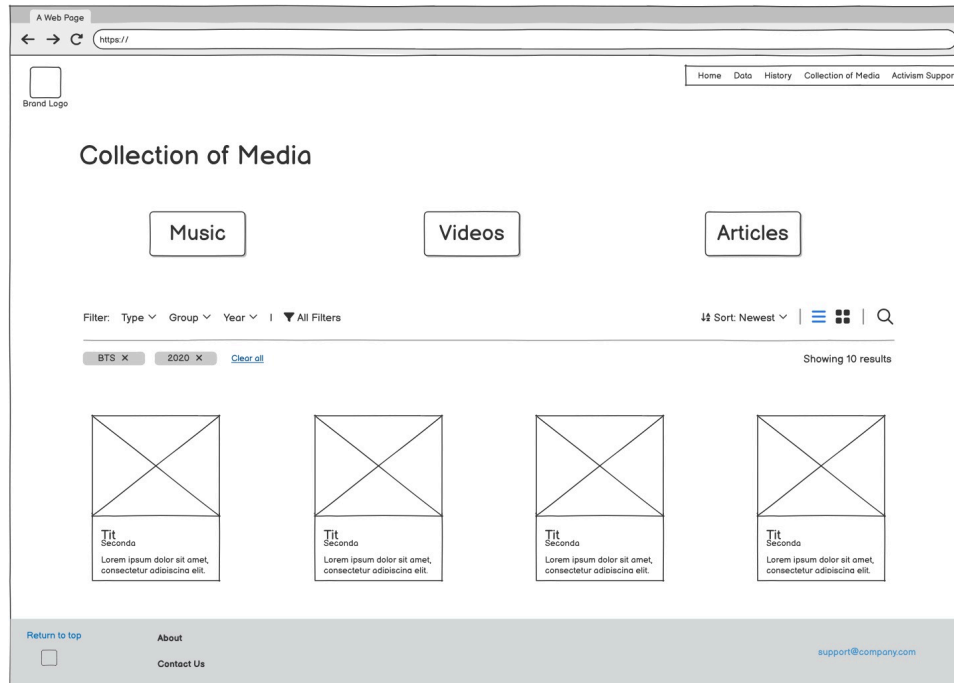


Figure 4

“Collection of Media” Section**Figure 5***“Activism Support” Section*