



20 Years of K-Drama in Indonesia, No Sign of Slowing Down

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By Ranny Rastati (LIPI Researcher)

I still remember when the Korean drama (K-Drama) entitled *Endless Love* (2000) aired on Indosiar in 2001. As one of the first K-Drama that was aired in Indonesia, *Endless Love* managed to bring tears for its audience, even from the first episode.

At that time, AGB Nielsen Indonesia recorded *Endless Love* scored a rating of 10 percent and watched by 2.8 million people in five major cities in Indonesia (Liany, 2013). Not long after, other K-Dramas such as *All About Eve* (2000), *Hotelier* (2001), and *Winter Sonata* (2002) were broadcasted on national televisions. This was the marker of the early arrival of the Korean Wave (K-Wave) in Indonesia.

Before K-Drama, Indonesian TV audiences were already familiar with Chinese dramas, *dorama* or Japanese drama, Bollywood, and telenovela. Telenovela or Latin American drama, for instance, were hugely popular back in the 90s to the early 2000s. Several titles that caught public eyes were *Maria Mercedes* (1992), *Marimar* (1994), *Esmeralda* (1997), and *Betty La Fea* (1999). These telenovelas typically presented a Cinderella story with the suffering protagonist and violent antagonist.

With more than hundreds of episodes, the telenovela's storyline was often to be long-winded and inconsistent. Moreover, the audiences needed to anticipate the latest episodes relying on the broadcast schedule from television stations. Thus, if the audience missed some episodes, it will not be easy to follow the plot.

When K-Drama entered, it was clearly visible that the show has many differences from a telenovela. The number of K-Drama episodes is much less, ranging from 16 to 20, sometimes a bit longer for the historical genre of K-Dramas. In terms of the storyline, K-Drama felt by its audiences to be more straightforward and concise in comparison to a telenovela.

Although K-Drama in the 2000s also shared some themes with telenovela, like a tragic love story, the audiences do not have to experience the long convoluted episodes before reaching the final conclusion. For some audiences, K-Drama also offered cultural closeness since many Korean values shown in K-Drama could also be found in Indonesia, such as family values and respect for the elders (Amellita, 2010). According to professor Ji-Yeon Yuh from Northwestern University, K-Drama offers a model of a society that holds onto traditional values, but at the same time going forward as a developed society (General, 2017).

K-Drama Nowadays

Twenty years after airing in Indonesia, K-Drama is still existing and even more popular. LIPI survey showed that since COVID-19 broke out, many new viewers loved to watch K-Dramas (Nadila et al, 2020). The numbers of free time and stress-relieving entertainment were some of the reasons why more people are watching K-Dramas amidst pandemics.

The internet also plays an essential role in distributing K-Drama throughout the world. Legal and free streaming sites such as Viu, Viki, and Vidio help K-Drama reach global audiences. Through that sites, viewers can discuss through the comment section their thought on that episode. This interactivity makes the watching experience to be more fun due to the feeling of having peer interactions.

Government Support

The success of K-Drama globally, including in Indonesia, owes partly to the support of the government. The South Korean government is actively involved in supporting K-Drama expansion. Previously, K-Wave-related issues were managed by several task forces and committees. Then, The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism formed Hallyu Support and Cooperation Division in June 2020 to support the spread of K-Wave include creating overall management and analysis of statistics (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism Korea, nd). Hallyu Division then becomes a control tower for K-Wave-related projects carried out by other ministries and institutions (Song, 2020).

Besides, several agencies are also established to oversee and support the development of the K-Wave. For instance, the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA). Formed in May 2009, this government agency is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the Korean content industry's promotion, such as broadcasting and music. With support from the government, indeed, K-Drama can spread in a comprehensive and organized manner.

Even though many people criticize K-Drama for its offer on escapism, excessive, unrealistic, and lack of representation of minority, but at some points, K-Drama also raises awareness and valuable lesson for audiences. For instance, public awareness on mental health through K-Dramas *It's Okay, That's Love* (2014) and *It's Okay to Not be Okay* (2020), also, satirical criticism on Korean beauty standards through K-Dramas *My ID is Gangnam Beauty* (2018), and *True Beauty* (2020). Through those kinds of K-Dramas, audiences became aware of social issues that have rarely been discussed publicly.

Over time, K-Drama has consistently made innovations and variations of stories by boldly exploring other themes such as myths, time travel, zombies, cult, and even mental health. These

make K-Drama feels different, yet it has more appeal to wider audiences. More importantly, there is no sign that this expansion will be slowing down in the near future (Editor Ibnu Nadzir).

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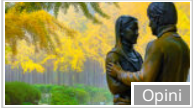
Ranny Rastati is a researcher at the Research Center for Society and Culture – LIPI. She has interests in pop culture, media and tourism studies. Please visit her blog rannyrastati.wordpress.com for other research publications. She can be contacted at ranny.rastati@gmail.com

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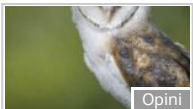
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