

Student Reporter

K-pop: Trend or Forever? Unveiling the Global Phenomenon



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K-pop has unequivocally seized the global stage with glitzy clothing and irresistibly catchy choreography. It is a realm filled with both allure and controversy, boasting an impressive array of over a hundred K-pop groups. With K-pop tracks having amassed a staggering 145 billion streams on Spotify since 2014, a burning question arises: is K-pop an enduring force, or is it just a fleeting trend? My personal opinion? It's undoubtedly here to stay.

The pioneering groups that paved the way for Korean music's growth in the United States, such as Girls Generation, 2NE1, and Big Bang, played pivotal roles in reshaping the music landscape. Their attempts, albeit with varying degrees of success, to release Korean and English versions of their music while performing on American television shows marked a seismic shift in the industry, setting the stage for K-pop's global domination.

One crucial factor contributing to K-pop's longevity is the incorpo-



Girl group aespa [SM ENTERTAINMENT]

ration of the Western culture into its own. Most groups targeting a global audience strategically include one or more English-speaking idols, fostering a stronger connection with fans worldwide. The prevalence of English stage names for idols has skyrocketed from 34% in the early 2000s to a staggering 82% by 2010 and continues to rise. For example, Korean natives Karina and Winter from Aespa have assumed English stage names rather than using their Korean birth names. This intentional move strengthens interactions, making it easier for global fans to reference their beloved artists. Additionally,

the surge in English lyrics within K-pop songs, from 18% in the 1990s to 44% in the 2010s, reflects the industry's concerted effort to cater to an international audience.

As K-pop's influence spreads globally, there has been a growth in the number of young talents who have auditioned and joined K-pop companies. This influx allows K-pop companies to scout the next "generation" of stars years in advance, meticulously training them until they are ready to make their debut. K-pop idols have evolved ever since, and the industry is now in its fifth generation of K-pop groups.

While the surge of new groups may seem overwhelming, the uniqueness of each, exemplified by Stray Kids, New Jeans, Aespa, Baby Monster, and others, unveils a fearless embrace of diverse concepts. Aespa, for instance, boldly embraces an AI concept, while New Jeans captivates with a vibrant Y2K aesthetic. K-pop groups are carving out identities more distinctive than ever before.

The burning question remains: will K-pop endure? As the genre garners international acclaim, its ability to adapt becomes evident. Companies smoothly weave English stage names into the fabric of their groups, facilitating seamless interactions between idols and fans who speak various languages. Simultaneously, industry leaders keenly observe current trends while preparing the next wave of talent behind the scenes, ensuring a perpetual reservoir of extraordinary artists ready for debut. K-pop, beyond being a genre, has etched itself as a cultural phenomenon resonating across the globe, solidifying its position for the long haul.

Student Reporter

Inside the World of Private & Public Schools



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In the evolving realm of education, many parents and students alike must face the pivotal decision between two paths: private and public schools. I have found myself at this fork in the road several times, embarking on the transforming and unforgettable journeys that each experience provided me. I began my education by attending a public elementary school, moving to a private middle school, and finally transferring to a public high school. As someone who has attended these schools, I experienced the best and worst of both school systems.

I had the privilege of attending a highly-rated private middle/high school when I was in seventh and eighth grade. Originally, I was worried about the smaller classes, teachers, academic pressure, and more. Coming from a public elementary school, I experienced a culture shock due to the disparities, but it didn't take long to get used to the system. My reservations soon turned into the best aspects of



The homecoming football game at the public school I currently attend. [Source: Author, Chloe Kim]

school; I enjoyed having less than 50 people in my grade, allowing me to get to know everyone and making us less separated by typical cliques. My classes contained fewer people, with my smallest class having five students. This made school feel somewhat casual and enjoyable yet informative, as my teachers and peers were passionate about the class and had a thirst for learning. I loved getting to know my classmates, who were like-minded people with varying interests and lots of school spirit.

Although the school was amazing, there was unintentional pressure on students, as people were compared and judged for their achievements in an already competitive environment. Finally, expenses were a considerably limiting factor for many families, as tuition was high in addition to pricey food items. Despite these challenges, I believed the pros outweighed the cons, making the transition to a public high school difficult—especially since the rest of my friends were continuing to high school without me.

The transition between schools was challenging, as I was switching from private to public and moving from middle to high school. Although the workloads are similar, I enjoy the carefree and less pressuring environment. Our grade (with 300+ people) is diverse, allowing me to meet unique people from various cultures. My classes, with 30-40 students, have new people to connect with, which is a great way to develop social skills. However, having so many people in the same grade can become chaotic since it's impossible to get to know everyone. Cliques/social groups are more prevalent in larger schools, creating more separation between students.

That being said, it's of the utmost importance to recognize that every school and community is different. Overall, although I had positive and negative experiences with private and public schools, I still prefer private schools, though this may be different for other students, depending on the school.

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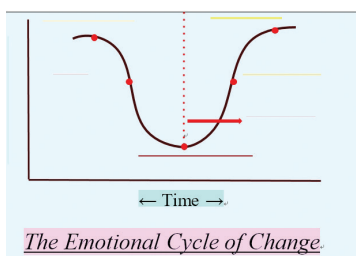
Sticking to Resolutions



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As we near the end of January, it's normal to have one foot out the door when it comes to keeping New Year's resolutions. Whether it is to go to the gym, maintain a consistent sleep schedule, or minimize screen time, upholding resolutions often presents a challenge. In fact, researchers say that only 9% of Americans actually complete their resolutions, with 23% quitting in the first week of the year. However, if we take the time to understand our emotions when going through change, we can better adapt when we journey through new experiences, ultimately leading to success.

Founded in 1979, the theory of the "Emotional Cycle of Change" highlights the typical emotional response during a period of change. The first stage of this five-part journey is called Uninformed Optimism. An example of this is when



The Emotional Cycle of Change depicts the psychological and emotional journey an individual experiences during times of change.

[Source: Author, Erin Ryu]

we sit down and excitedly formulate a long list of resolutions, imagining the possibilities each one holds. We often feel the most motivated at this point and romanticize the prospect of starting something new. However, as we start working towards the goal, reality and burnout start to set in. In the Informed Pessimism stage, many people experience self-doubt and

question if their efforts are worth it. This subsequently transitions to rock bottom, which is known as the Valley of Despair. At this point, most people throw away their project altogether and look for something else, regressing to stage one. The goal now seems inconvenient and trivial as the individual starts to feel too uncomfortable. However, this is the make-break stage—if the individual is conscientious and perseveres through this stage, they can advance to the fourth stage, Informed Optimism. Here, momentum builds as the likelihood of success seems closer, as the previous hard work starts to yield results. Lastly, in stage five, success is attainable. Our curated habits become part of our routine and assimilate into our everyday lives.

As a quote from the 2019 film Honey Boy states, "A seed has to totally destroy itself to become a flow-

er." Replacing old habits is not easy, so understanding that it takes time and effort needs to be done. Setting realistic goals, making roadmaps, and visualizing our success is crucial, as it allows us to remain resilient in times of setbacks and obstacles. When setting up resolutions and goals, we must ensure they are both specific and something we truly want, as motivation will get us started, but discipline through practice will keep us moving in times of struggle.

However, the most essential message is to fall in love with the process. The journey to self-improvement is deserving of praise and should not be overlooked. It is during this process that we must learn to forgive ourselves and adapt to our circumstances. Though the journey may not always be easy, we must believe the rewards will be worth it.

Student Reporter



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Apple Loses Important Lawsuit; What is the Future of Apple Watch?

Apple's most recently launched Apple Watch Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra 2 will be discontinued in from the U.S. It will stop being sold in the U.S. Apple online store starting December 21, 2023, and in all Apple offline stores after December 24. The decisive reason for discontinuing the two models was the blood oxygen measurement function that both devices have. At the end of October 2023, the International Trade Commission made a final decision that Apple had infringed on Masimo's blood oxygen measurement technology patent. As a result, a ban was imposed, though provisional import of some models into the United States was granted.

This dispute began in 2013. Apple contacted Masimo to propose a meeting, but the collaboration did not actually take place. Instead, Apple hired Masimo executives, giving them high salaries, ahead of the launch of the Apple Watch in



Apple Store in Hanam, Korea, where the Apple Watch Series 9 can be purchased, unlike in the American stores. [Source: Author, Soyun Park]

2014 and stole important technology in development. As a result, the dispute has continued to this day, and after many processes, the Apple Watch was banned from sale in the United States.

Most teenagers expressed indif-

ference to this ending. Teenagers often purchase an Apple Watch as a fashion item. As times progressed, they stopped wearing classic watches and looked for smartwatches. They said they mostly use the Apple Watch to check the time or cell phone notifications, and it wouldn't be a big deal if the Apple Watch were discontinued.

Unlike teenagers, those in their 20s did not welcome this news. Apple Watches were often purchased as gifts for people in their 20s. Among Apple products, the Apple Watch is inexpensive and useful, so it was especially popular as a gift for young people. They were disappointed that they could no longer give these items as gifts.

Those in their late -30s or older did not pay much attention to the ban on Apple Watch sales. Most of them preferred classic watches over smartwatches. They did not really feel the need for a smartwatch, and

most reported having small difficulty using the item. Some of them said that they had used the Apple Watch before but that they did not use all the features due to not knowing how to use them.

The public does not seem to be paying much attention. Since the Apple Watch has the characteristic of being used for a long time once purchased, the news did not reach the public. People in the Apple Watch industry may have been nervous, but the general public in showed indifference. So far, sales have only been halted in the U.S. and not in other countries, but since this decision was made in the U.S., Apple's home base, it will be a big blow to Apple's smartwatches. This is the first time that Apple has lost a patent lawsuit in the United States and been banned from selling an item, so it's even more curious about what will happen to Apple in the future.

Student Reporter



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The Ripple Effect of Bottled Drinking Water in the Environment

A plastic bottle of water. A symbol of on-the-go hydration. Bottled water has become one of the most popular beverage choices in the world. Consumers tend to choose bottled water over carbonated drinks, coffee, tea, beer, and more. Despite all of this fancy information, there lies a growing concern: as the demand for bottled water increases, so do environmental problems that stem from its consumption.

Plastic has many negative effects on our environment, with bottled water being the most popular source, according to Bootstrap Beverages. The most serious impact is plastic pollution. Every year, plastic bottles are produced at higher rates which contributes to the world's pollution and to the increasing waste in landfills. Even worse, most of the plastic goes into our oceans, making it dangerous for marine life. Plastic bottles take a long time to break down. As they slowly decay, they turn into tiny pieces called microplastics, which end up getting into the food chain, meaning they



Say no to plastic bottles and yes to reusable bottles for a more eco-friendly future! [Source: Author, Erin Lee]

can be found in the food that animals eat. This poses a huge risk for both marine life and humans because consuming seafood that contains microplastics creates a great risk of these tiny particles entering our bodies.

Not only do plastic water bottles impact marine ecosystems, but the process of creating them also has various consequences, including air pollution, signifi-

cant amounts of water usage, land use, and more. The production of plastic bottles requires a significant amount of resources. In more technical terms, these resources include the products used to make plastic bottles, like oil, a lot of energy to produce the bottles, water, and fuel for transporting the bottled water. So when people choose bottled water, they're not just getting a drink but also contributing to these environmental issues.

When bottled water travels from manufacturing plants to grocery stores, it leads to a significant carbon footprint. Trucks that move the bottles use fuels that release harmful gasses into the air, which worsens the climate. This transportation process adds to the environmental impact of bottled water. It's like a chain reaction – the trucks emit gasses, which then contribute to air pollution and climate change.

To help contribute to fixing the problems caused by bottled wa-

ter, we all need to work together by doing small actions that we can do daily. Choosing alternatives other than plastic bottles, like reusable bottles, can be a small but important step in reducing the environmental impact of bottled water. Recycling water bottles is always an important task. Additionally, it's important to help projects around the world that encourage using water wisely and reducing waste. This is a big step in making our future more sustainable.

All in all, when choosing bottled water, it may seem like a small thing, but it actually has big effects on the environment. The plastic pollution, the production of plastic bottles, the demand for resources, and disrupting the habitats show that even a small action we do in our daily lives affects the world. So, as we drink from our reusable bottles, it's important to understand the real impact of bottled water and try to find better, more sustainable solutions to help restore our environment!

Student Reporter



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Sibling Bonds: More Than The Blood

Siblings are relatives that share at least one parent, like a brother or a sister. Although there may be countless fights and arguments that occur, sibling bonds are more significant than some people realize. Siblings are the ones who teach us fairness, love, and other essential factors of life. Siblings support each other and shape the character you possess. Although children without siblings do grow up to be great, independent individuals, blood bonds between siblings are the best and most important bonds in anyone's life.

During times of trouble and confusion, siblings are the people who are the easiest to go to. Although younger individuals may not realize this, once they become older, they will appreciate the presence of their siblings. Since brothers and sisters are able to provide comfort and love, they will be the arms that are needed in periods of sadness.

Because of all of the special and heartbreaking moments, as well as milestones, siblings are the ones who know each other the best. Whatever the reason, no matter how many fights take place, siblings can be or know the solution to a concerning problem.

However, having a sibling will not always be sunshine and rainbows. Siblings do fight and have rivalry, especially if the age gap is not a sufficient amount. There may be fights about minor actions, such as a younger sister stealing their older sister's clothes or getting the last ice cream first. Because of things like this, sibling rivalry may exist as a constant competition of who is better, caused by school, parental favoritism, or achievements. Arguments might also arise from having a difference in personalities and opinions. Sibling quarrels are normal and integral as long



Siblings are there to celebrate milestones or celebrate special occasions. [Source: Author, Kaylyn Wee]

as people don't get permanently hurt or if violence is involved.

Siblings shape people's personalities, opinions, and choices. The fights between siblings teach decision-making, learning compromises, and more. Siblings also influence the likes and dislikes of a person and what a person looks for in a partner. Studies also show that having a sibling relationship promotes academic achievement and social skills. Because of brothers and sisters, people can become

their own person and establish what makes them, them.

Sibling bonds are very significant in many people's lives. Sisters and brothers can bring comfort and can be role models as well. Even if the fights are tiring and angering, they teach lessons and are a part of growing up with someone close. Siblings are able to influence our personalities, opinions, and choices. Blood bonds serve as lifelong companions to a person, and the relationship offers much support, love, and memories.