

Hybridization K-Pop Aesthetics and Western Pop Culture in BTS' Music Video 'Butter' Through Circuit of Culture

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Abstract

This research examines how BTS's music video Butter represents cultural hybridization between Korean and Western pop cultures through Stuart Hall's Circuit of Culture theory. Although hybridization in K-Pop has been widely discussed, in depth analysis of visual aesthetics in music videos stays limited. This research addresses the gap by analyzing Butter through five interconnected aspects, regulation, production, representation, consumption, and identity, which collectively construct complex and transnational cultural meanings. The research employs a qualitative method using thematic and semiotic analysis of choreography, costumes, set designs, and other visual symbols. Data validity is strengthened through triangulation by analyzing the official Butter music video, audience comments on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, as well as producer interviews published in Variety. The results show that Butter blends cultural elements such as retro Western fashion with Korean-style choreography, the use of English lyrics to reach an international audience, and the building of BTS's identity through emotional engagement with fans. This hybridization shows a cultural negotiation process rather than merely a market strategy. The research confirms that BTS successfully integrates Korean cultural elements into a global framework, creating cross-cultural appeal that reinforces their position as international cultural icons.

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INTRODUCTION

Kim and Choe (2004) argue that Hallyu (한류), as a popular culture in South Korea, became a source of pride for Korean society and gained the attention of the international community in the 20th century. They also state that the Korean Wave or Hallyu, is a diverse cultural movement in South Korea (Kardinal 2021). Over the past two decades, Hallyu has gained more than 100 million fans worldwide, making it one of the most influential cultural movements of the modern era (Yonhap 2021). This achievement has come along with South Korea's innovation and expansion in impacting global culture, by introducing different cultural items that are now part of the life of the international population. On a global level, Korean culture is thriving and making a huge impact on pop culture through continuous innovation.

Among the several Hallyu phenomena K-Pop is one of the most well-known and dominant. The ability of K-Pop to blend Korean culture with Western influences and produce a unique musical identity that is easily accepted by audiences around the world is one of the primary reasons for its wide popularity. Jung (2011) supports this as well, explaining that K-Pop is the product of hybridization, in which local and global characteristics come together to draw in audiences from all over the world and make profits. K-Pop exhibits hybridization in a number of areas, including marketing strategies, music, and images.

On the other hand, K-Pop frequently combines its unique Korean rhythmic structure with Western hip-hop, R&B, and EDM elements in its songs (Anggraini 2021; Aziz 2025). Furthermore, El Farabi (2020) argues that the lyrics of the English language version may enhance the work's appeal to a worldwide audience. Visually, K-Pop adopts Western fashion trends and aesthetics but retains unique Korean elements in their idol images (Shabira and Uyun 2023). In marketing side, the K-Pop industry adopts the social media-based promotion model of the Western entertainment industry, reaching a larger audience through sites like YouTube and TikTok (Zhang and Negus 2020). With this approach, K-Pop has not only broken through national boundaries but also maintained its appeal in global pop culture. The global success of K-Pop is not only due to its music and visual aesthetics, but also to its ability to adapt and combine cultures through a process called hybridization. Pieterse (2009) explains that hybridization creates new cultural forms that are flexible and adaptive, allowing K-Pop to thrive in the global market.

This process can be understood more deeply using Stuart Hall's (1997) Circuit of Culture theory, which includes five main aspects there are regulation, production, representation, consumption, and identity. In terms of regulation, the

K-Pop industry applies strict standards in music production and artist image, including idol training systems and control from entertainment companies (Lee et al. 2020). In terms of production, K-Pop uses foreign producers and cutting-edge technology to develop songs that reflect worldwide trends, thus embracing the global music industry system (Yochanan 2024). K-Pop is a depiction of the blending of Korean and Western culture, as evidenced by the music style, images, and lyrics that use a variety of languages (El Farabi 2020). In the aspect of consumption, K-Pop utilizes digital media and direct interaction with fans through platforms such as YouTube and TikTok to strengthen relationships with global audiences as consumers (Yoon and Jin 2017). Finally, in the aspect of identity, K-Pop develops as a global cultural phenomenon that retains its Korean characteristics while following international pop standards, where its identity is constructed by society to give meaning in the global music scene (Wardhana et al. 2021).

BTS' Butter is a concrete example of how hybridization in K-Pop works in a global context. The song reflects how the Circuit of Culture plays a role in shaping K-Pop's global strategy. As a concrete example of this theory, the regulation in the production of this song follows Big Hit Entertainment's policy of adjusting to global standards without losing BTS' image as a K-Pop group (Hikmasari, Yuhelson, and Nainggolan 2023). In terms of production, Butter engaged Western producers and used a pop-funk style closer to the American music industry, indicating a production process with adaptation to the international market (Yeon 2022). The song's representation explicitly asserts BTS' global identity through the use of full-English lyrics, a pop-funk music style closer to the American music industry, and visuals that carefully blend Korean and Western aesthetics, making it more accessible to the international market. In the aspect of consumption, audiences not only listen to Butter or watch its videos, but also associate its visual and musical elements with emotions and personal experiences (Sokowati 2022). Thus, Butter's identity as a hybrid cultural product confirms how K-Pop can thrive in global pop culture without losing its core characteristics (Rahim 2019). By applying the Circuit of Culture theory, it can be understood that cultural hybridization in K-Pop is not just a commercial strategy but also part of a dynamic cultural construction. This case research shows that hybridization is not just a business strategy, but also a key mechanism that allows K-Pop to maintain its relevance in the international market while maintaining the unique characteristics that set it apart from other music industries.

However, various studies have addressed the Hallyu phenomenon, most still focus on the representation of Korean culture in K-Pop music videos (Ningsih & Tjahyadi 2022) and on hybridization in Korean dramas, especially in the aspects

of storylines and characters. In addition, previous studies have mostly explored hegemonic culture and its impact on socio-culture, such as the influence of K-Pop on the perception of global identity (Kim 2021). Also how the K-Wave phenomenon shapes the fashion identity of Indonesian teenagers (Kartika 2023). There have been many studies on hybridization in the Korean entertainment industry, but the visual aesthetic aspects in K-Pop music videos are still rarely the main focus of research. Therefore, this research offers a new contribution by analysing how hybridization is reflected in K-Pop visual aesthetics, particularly in BTS' Butter music video. This research not only highlights visual elements such as costumes, makeup, and settings, but also examines how Korean culture is represented in Butter for the global market through the Circuit of Culture theory. As such, it provides greater insight into how the visual aesthetics in BTS's Butter music video represent the hybridization of Korean culture and Western pop culture in a global context through the Circuit of Culture theory.

METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods to analyze the visual culture blend of Korean, Western in BTS's music video, Butter. The qualitative method was chosen since it is able to deeply explore symbolic as well as visual meanings in the context of popular culture (Flick 2020). The main data came from the certified music video issued on BigHit Entertainment's YouTube on May 21, 2021, with beyond 1 billion views, 23 million likes, and 9,031,119 comments. The analysis did focus upon the visual elements such as choreography, costumes, and the sets. In addition, supporting data, was obtained from BTS' official TikTok uploads (86.3 million views, 13.8 million likes, and 409 thousand comments). Data was obtained too from BTS' official Instagram (11.5 million views, 2 million likes, and 12.5 thousand comments).

The comments were purposefully selected based on relevance to visual aspects, cultural hybridization, and audience response (Palinkas 2015). From YouTube, 200 comments discussing visuals, choreography, costumes, and music were analyzed. From TikTok, comments were taken from posts with the hashtag #Butter without interaction restrictions, with each video having over 10,000 views. Meanwhile, from Instagram, only comments on official BTS posts on the official account were analyzed. Researchers use this technique to catch cross-cultural audience interpretations of visual representations in music videos (Snelson 2016).

To get a further understanding, data collection was completed through direct observation of Butter's music videos, focusing on the choreography, costumes and stage sets. Visual details such as the use of retro costumes, set design, and choreographic characteristics were systematically recorded and analyzed to

understand the representation of cultural hybridization in the video (Hamilton and Finley 2020). In addition, the analysis is not limited to visual elements alone, but also considers the creator's perspective. Therefore, interviews with BTS producers published on the Variety website were used as additional data. This interview helped to understand the production process, the origins of Butter's song as a "summer song," and how visual and aesthetic elements were applied in the creative process. The data collected was then analyzed using a thematic approach to identify key patterns in the production narrative.

All data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify key patterns in cultural representation narratives (Braun and Clarke 2021). In the analysis process, ethical principles were also considered by only using data from public accounts and maintaining the anonymity of private accounts by not including user identities (Kumar and Gupta 2023). Researchers only mention that the data comes from posts with the hashtag #Butter. This step was taken to maintain user privacy and avoid bias in the analysis. In addition, a literature review of relevant academic sources was used to provide theoretical context related to cultural hybridization and analysis of production and aesthetics in Butter music videos (Abidin 2021).

This research applies Stuart Hall's Circuit of Culture theory to analyze five key concepts in the production and reception of Butter's music video (Aviandy and Saleh 2020). Regulation in this research refers to South Korea's cultural and entertainment industry policies and how they have affected Butter's global distribution and reception. Production is explored through interviews with BTS producers published on Variety, which reveal how Western and Korean cultural elements are integrated in the music video's aesthetic. In order to examine how cultural hybridization is manifested in the music video, representation examines the integration of visual components from both Korean and Western cultures, including stage sets, costumes, and choreography. Meanwhile, consumption focuses on how audiences from different cultures interpret the visuals in Butter, by analyzing audience reactions and responses on social media such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Lastly, Identity examines how this music video represents BTS's hybrid cultural identity and how they have shaped their image as worldwide icons.

To make sure the validity of the findings, this research uses data triangulation, which is a technique used to verify findings by combining different types of different sources. In this research, triangulation was finished by combining music video analysis, interviews with BTS producers, and audience responses from various social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. This

approach seeks to make sure the reliability of the research results and reduce potential bias in interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

1. Regulation

This research found three results related to copyright regulation, distribution and consumption strategies of BTS' music. First, copyright regulation plays an important role in the protection and distribution of BTS's music both nationally and internationally. South Korea has ratified the Bern Convention and adapted the Copyright Act to international standards such as TRIPS. These regulations fall under the authority of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MCST), while the Korean Copyright Commission (KCC) is responsible for copyright protection, and the Korea Copyright Protection Center (KCPC) handles copyright violation both online and offline. Internationally, platforms such as YouTube are performing Content ID systems to allow copyright owners to more strictly manage the distribution and use of their works.

Second, the regulation influences the distribution and consumption patterns of BTS' music on digital platforms. Data show that the Butter music video uploaded on Big Hit Entertainment's YouTube channel on May 21, 2021 has received 1 billion views, 23 million likes and 9.03 million comments. Meanwhile, on TikTok, the Butter video uploaded on May 25, 2021 received 86.3 million views, 13.8 million likes and 409 thousand comments. This difference highlights that YouTube is the main place for full song listening, whereas TikTok focuses on participation that is engagement-driven and trending culture.

Third, regulation and multi-platform distribution systems contribute to BTS' global strategy of reaching a wider audience. YouTube is used as the main platform for music distribution, while TikTok is utilized to increase interaction through viral trends. In addition, BTS also built an exclusive community through Weverse, which allows direct interaction with fans. On Spotify, Butter's songs recorded more than 36 million monthly listens, showing that digital distribution played an important role in BTS' global success.

2. Production

On the production aspect, researchers found that the song Butter was created from the collaboration of several musicians and producers, with inspiration from classic pop and funk music. In an interview published on






Variety's website, Butter's lyric creation process rigid and went through many revisions to make sure every detail perfected, in line with BTS' identity, and met the high expectations after the success of Dynamite. In addition, the song has features inspired by legendary artists such as Usher, Michael Jackson, and Daft Punk, which attempt to give a nostalgic feel of the late 90s with a unique modern twist. The rap section in Butter based on RM's idea, aiming to provide a classic hip-hop moment and highlight the rap skills of the members. BTS themselves made contributions by adding the rap part at the end of the song, showing their active involvement in the music production process. These decisions contributed to the success of Butter, which the production team attributes to its impeccable musical quality, strong lyrics and visuals, and its ability to instantly grab listeners' attention.





Musically, Butter's music video borrows from Western pop culture, specifically 80s funk and disco music, and then overlays it with their own brand of K-Pop music. For example, because the bassline groove typical of funk music is clearly heard in the intro of the song at 00:07-00:15, while the disco element is felt in the chorus around 00:37-00:50. Visually, the video employs strong colors such as neon pink and orange, which gives a futuristic appearance but remains retro feel. The choreography in the video is also very dynamic, with BTS' signature actions such as sliding and quick body isolation, and lighting effects that enhance the high-energy and cheerful vibe. Additionally, the use of English in the song's lyrics indicates a production strategy to attract a worldwide audience, expanding BTS' impact on the international music scene.

3. Representation

The representation in BTS's music video *Butter* illustrates cultural hybridization between K-Pop and Western pop culture through visual elements such as choreography, costumes, color schemes, and symbolism. The table below presents key findings on these elements, along with audience responses and interpretations.

Table 1. Results for BTS's Music Video *Butter* Cultural Hybridization in the Aspect of Representation

Visual Element	Representation Description	Timestamp in MV	Cultural Meaning	Image
Choreography	Coordinated and energetic movement by all BTS members	0:35–0:49, 1:20–1:35, 2:13–2:28	Demonstrating K-Pop's culture of collectivism and harmony within the group.	 <p>[Source: HYBE Labels YouTube Channel]</p>
"ARMY" Formation	Choreography to form the word "ARMY"	2:07–2:10	Representation of BTS' closeness to fans as part of the group's identity.	 <p>[Source: HYBE Labels YouTube Channel]</p>
Retro Costumes	'80s-'90s colourful suits, '70s disco-style black-and-white, and '80s aerobics-style sporty styles	0:07–0:53, 1:19–1:29	A hybridization of K-Pop styles with Western pop aesthetics from various decades.	 <p>[Source: HYBE Labels YouTube Channel]</p>
Black-and-Yellow Outfit	Iconic edgy style fashion	1:53–2:26	It gives a fashionable and symbolic Western pop feel.	 <p>[Source: HYBE Labels YouTube Channel]</p>
Dominant Yellow Color	Yellow color in lighting, background, and accessories	Throughout the music video	A symbol of cheerfulness and optimism, in line with the song's theme.	

Visual Element	Representation Description	Timestamp in MV	Cultural Meaning	Image
				   <p>[Source: HYBE Labels YouTube Channel]</p>
Food Symbolism	Pancakes with butter sauce	Around the beginning of the music video	A universal representation of culture through food, giving it a fun and playful feel.	 <p>[Source: HYBE Labels YouTube Channel]</p>
Audience Response	<p>The comments such:</p> <p>“이 노래를 늘 춤추고 싶어져요 😊”</p> <p>“they're dancing this rich stuff again 🤩👍”</p>	Online platforms such as YouTube and social media	BTS' choreography and visuals are appreciated across cultures, showing global appeal.	-
Visual Appreciation	<p>The comments such:</p> <p>"con su pelo lo amo mi tigre 💜"</p> <p>“踊り方カッコよすぎる 🤩👍💜 マジ天使ですか? 💜👍💜”</p>	Online platforms such as YouTube and social media	Demonstrating BTS' visual appeal was received emotionally and aesthetically by a global audience from various countries.	-

4. Consumption

Based on the analysis of fan comments, three main patterns were found in Butter's consumption of music videos on several platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok.

Table 2. Results for BTS's Music Video *Butter* Cultural Hybridization in the Aspect of Representation

Theme	Comments	Cultural Meaning
Repeated Viewing due to Visuals & Choreography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "I can't stop watching the music video of this song" - "like butter 🥰🥰🥰🥰🥰 BTS" - "It would be easier if you watch their dance videos in b/w 0.2x - 0.5x..." 	BTS' visuals and choreography are a major strength in attracting and retaining audience attention.
Emotional and Participatory Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "vou enjoar dessa música ❤️❤️" - "BTS, we can't live without you" - "I've learned their choreography... You can try it, ARMY. Hwaiting!" 	The video encourages emotional connection and promotes active participation through imitation of the choreography.
Butter as a Gateway to K-pop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "This is my first BTS song, and I'm hooked!" - "de las mejores eras (por esta los conocí) 🥰❤️" - "Butter was my first song... BTS made me love K-pop!" 	The MV <i>Butter</i> has become one of the entry points into the exploration of K-pop culture for new fans around the world.

5. Identity

On the identity side, researchers found two identities that BTS built through *Butter*. First, BTS builds an identity as a “friend” to their fans by building a strong emotional connection, where they are not only seen as idols but also as part of their fans' daily lives. Secondly, BTS established an identity as unique international icons through cultural hybridization, incorporating elements of Korean and global culture in their visual aesthetics and music. This enables BTS to maintain cultural heritage while being contemporary and well-accepted in the international sphere.

DISCUSSION

1. Regulation

Copyright regulation not only acts as a protection tool but also plays a role in BTS' hybridization strategy in the distribution and consumption of their music (Sari 2021). With the Content ID system, YouTube ensures that full

consumption of songs can only be done through BTS' official channel or HYBE, reducing the possibility of illegal distribution. On the other hand, TikTok limits the use of songs to short durations, to encouraging creativity-based interactions through dance covers or challenges (Lilik Prihatin, And, and Hidayat 2024). This phenomenon illustrates the hybridization of the Korean music industry's typical distribution model, which is highly structured and controlled by agencies, with Western digital marketing models based on audiences engagement and participation (Pujianti 2022).

Hybridization also occurs in the production and representation of BTS as a global artist. On the one hand, Korean copyright regulations allow for tighter control over the content produced by BTS, ensuring exclusivity as well as structured distribution. On the other hand, their marketing strategy continues to adopt a global approach that adapts to international consumption patterns. For example, although Weverse is designed to build a more closed and exclusive community, BTS remains active on global platforms such as Instagram and TikTok to increase international audience engagement (Agustiana and Kusuma 2023). Through YouTube's Content ID system, BTS' music production distributed on the platform is not only strictly controlled by South Korean regulations but also shapes their representation as global artists (Parc and Kim 2020). This has an effect on how international audiences perceive BTS-as a cultural product that has centralized control in Korea yet remains globally accessible through a participation-based platform.

In the context of the Circuit of Culture, regulation affects production by limiting how BTS' songs and music videos are officially distributed, as well as regulating the platforms that can be used for interaction with fans (Boman 2019). BTS' representation as global icons is also shaped by these regulations, where the balance between copyright control and global distribution strategies allows them to maintain their K-pop identity while remaining relevant in the international music market. Thus, regulation is not only a legal tool, but also part of a hybridization strategy in the K-pop music industry, combining a distinctly Korean approach with global standards to dynamically expand audience reach.

2. Production

In terms of production, Butter is a clear example of the deliberate and strategic practice of cultural hybridization in the K-Pop industry (Yao 2022). BTS and the production team incorporated elements of funk and disco music that are very typical of Western pop culture, particularly the 80s and 90s. The groove bassline and disco rhythms felt in the intro and chorus create a retro

feel that is familiar to international listeners, yet still packaged in a modern and dynamic K-pop production style. This shows that in the production process, Butter practices cultural negotiation, global aesthetic values are absorbed, then reshaped within the K-pop framework, creating new, transnational meanings (Schneider 2023).

The use of English in full in song lyrics also reflects a production strategy towards expanding the international market. English here is not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of accessibility and cultural openness (Lucas 2021). However, this also raises debates in the context of global commercialization as local values (Korean language) become subordinate to the interests of the international market. In other words, while this strategy is effective in reaching a wider audience, it also represents a compromise in the preservation of local identity in the production process of Korean popular culture. Furthermore, the active involvement of BTS, especially RM, in contributing rap parts is evidence of artist agency in the production process. BTS are not objects within the entertainment world but creative subjects who have agency over their artistry (Halperin 2021). They are not just voice actors of outsider designed works, but participate in shaping the structure and style of songs, which reinforces their image as authentic artists in the eyes of global fans. From the perspective of the Circuit of Culture, this signifies a production practice that is not fully controlled by industrial interests, but involves active collaboration between producers and artists.

In terms of visuals, the selection of striking colors such as neon orange and pink does not only function as aesthetics, but also has an ideological dimension (Heri 2023). The bright colors represent a positive, futuristic and energetic spirit that matches BTS' brand identity as an agent of happiness and optimism. This shows that visual production is not an additional aspect, but an integral part of the production strategy, designed to shape the emotional perception of the audience globally. K-pop's dynamic choreography, performed through sliding movements, body isolation and fast tempo, reinforces the visual aspect and becomes a marker of Korean cultural identity in products circulating globally. This choreography becomes a means of body representation that adds local values to the international field without compromising the uniqueness of K-pop itself (Panjaitan 2021). In this case, Butter's production can be read as a form of cultural production that is not only market-oriented, but also maintains cultural heritage through performative forms.

Furthermore, musical references to Western artists such as Michael Jackson, Usher, and Daft Punk indicate a deliberate cultural intertextuality.

Elements such as *MJ's groove funk à la MJ* and *Daft Punk's* electronic pop touches are reconstructed in a distinctive K-pop format, so that Butter is not trapped in an imitation of Western culture, but manages to reproduce the style into something new and authentic (Smith 2021). This is a complex hybridization practice, where elements of global culture are adapted and integrated into local Korean productions, and then redistributed globally as cultural products that have cross-border appeal.

3. Representation

The representation in the music video Butter by BTS shows a hybridization of K-Pop and Western pop culture through various visual elements such as choreography, costumes, colors, and symbolism. The synchronized and energetic choreography emphasizes the value of collectivism that characterizes Korean culture, with uniform and structured movements among all group members (Loreta and Perdana 2018). This can be seen from scenes 0:35-0:49 and 1:20-1:35. In addition, in scenes 2:07-2:10, the choreography forms the word "ARMY" as a symbol of the emotional closeness between BTS and its fans. In terms of costumes, BTS appeared in retro outfits that revived Western visual styles from the '70s to '90s, such as colorful '80s suits and sporty aerobics outfits. The yellow color that dominated the lighting and visual objects confirmed the tone of optimism and cheerfulness. In Western cultural environments, yellow has a tendency to associate with enthusiasm, joy and energy (Birren 1950). At the same time, Olesen (2013) posits, in Korean cultures, yellow is associated with meanings of power, warmth and wisdom as well. This combination of meanings suggests that the use of yellow in Butter is not only aesthetically pleasing, but also contains cross-culturally relevant symbolic layers.

In addition, food symbols such as pancakes and butter add a playful and universal dimension, making these elements accessible to a global audience. The comments of fans from different countries expressing admiration for BTS' choreography and performance demonstrate the success of cross-cultural visual messaging. The findings suggest that Butter represents a form of cultural hybridization that takes place through a process of adaptation of local and global symbols. Korean cultural values reflected in the group's choreography and harmonies are combined with Western pop-style references, forming a visual identity that can be enjoyed across national and cultural boundaries. Retro costumes and Western visual styles are not used as copies, but recontextualized in a unique K-Pop aesthetic. Colors and symbols cannot help but assist in the construction of BTS' positive and cheerful image as global

icons. The video is not only visual entertainment, but also a space of cultural representation that illustrates how transnational identities are performed and negotiated through popular media. The representations in Butter illustrate that culture is not static, but can change and blend to create new meanings that are relevant in the context of globalization.

4. Consumption

The consumption of Butter's music videos demonstrates how audiences are not passive viewers, but shape meaning through personal experience, emotional engagement and active participation. Re-watching due to interest in the visuals and choreography, as well as the urge to learn the dance moves, signifies affection and repetition as a form of intense popular culture consumption (Dewi and Komsiah 2024). On the other hand, the emotional attachment of fans who relate Butter to their daily lives shows that consumption also takes place on a symbolic and affective level. This phenomenon reflects the concept in the circuit of culture that the meaning of a product is not only controlled by the producer, but also reconstructed by the audience through interpretation and daily practices (Hall 1997).

Furthermore, Butter also acts as an entry point for global audiences into K-pop culture. Many viewers admit that Butter was the first work that introduced them to BTS or even to K-pop culture as a whole (Aditia and Taufiq 2024). This implies that the consumption of this video contributed to a process of cultural hybridization, where elements of Korean culture such as signature choreography, visual aesthetics and fan-idol interactions were combined with global styles and Western consumption practices (Sulaeman et al. 2022). In this context, Butter becomes a transnational cultural product, allowing local values to be perceived, negotiated, and accepted by cross-cultural audiences. Consumption of Butter is not only about enjoying music and visuals, but also about absorbing, blending, and reinterpreting cultural identities in a global space (Mitrin and Ramadhan 2024).

5. Identity

In the Circuit of Culture perspective, identity is not fixed, but is instead a result of a complex negotiation process between various factors such as regulation, production, representation, and consumption (Felczak 2020). In the context of Butter's music video, BTS' identity is formed in two main layers of narrative, as a "friend" who is emotionally close to fans, and as a global icon who assumes a hybrid figure of Korean and global culture (Menawati and Putri 2023). However, this emotional closeness is not entirely independent of the production of the entertainment industry. The presentation of BTS as

“relatable” and warm is part of a global production and marketing strategy that consciously designs an inclusive image (Flinchum, Roy, and Arif 2024). This is where the ambiguity arises where BTS is presented as an intimate and personal figure for example through playful expressions and direct eye contact to the camera in the Butter video that gives the impression of emotional closeness. But within an industrial framework that maintains their distance and exclusivity. The identity of being a “friend” does not arise naturally, but as a result of a structured process of cultural production (Gay 1997).

Furthermore, BTS' global icon status cannot be separated from their cultural hybridization process. They combine elements of Korean culture, such as the use of language and certain visual aesthetics, with Western cultural products such as music genres, fashion, and global pop idols (Fuschillo 2020). This hybridization is not just an amalgamation of cross-cultural elements, but also a strategy to overcome the dominance of Western culture in the global music industry. BTS' hybrid identity is a subtle form of resistance to cultural homogenization, as well as a way to remain relevant in the global (Park and Rahimi 2020). Regulation also plays an important role in the formation of this identity, whether in the form of digital platform rules, cultural censorship or state policies. Butter's successful distribution across countries with different cultural contexts requires BTS to manage their identity in a flexible yet authentic manner. Their identity, thus, is shaped through a constant dialogue between the expectations of the global market and the desire to maintain the distinctiveness of their home culture (Matikainen 2015). By reading BTS' identity in Butter through the lens of Circuit of Culture and cultural hybridization, we see not only how a music video shapes meaning, but also how cultural identities are negotiated, constructed, and maintained within a complex power global situation (Hall 1997). This shows that cultural identity is dynamic and political, never neutral, and always produced in the context of power.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that BTS's music video Butter exemplifies cultural hybridization within global media. Employing the Circuit of Culture framework, it reveals how regulation, production, representation, consumption, and identity interact dynamically to construct complex transnational meanings. Visually, Butter integrates retro aesthetics, vibrant colors, synchronized choreography, and futuristic settings to articulate a hybrid cultural identity readily embraced by global audiences. This fusion results from a cross-cultural production process governed by strict regulations, participatory consumption, and strategic identity

construction, positioning BTS as a transnational cultural icon. Butter thus emerges not merely as a visual product but as the outcome of active cultural dialogue between creative institutions and global consumers.

The findings advance the application of the Circuit of Culture by illustrating how its five dimensions operate simultaneously in producing hybrid identities, positioning hybridization as a deliberate strategy rather than a natural consequence of intercultural contact. This contributes to a broader theoretical understanding of hybridization in contemporary cultural industries.

Practically, the study offers insights for creative industry practitioners and policymakers. BTS's success illustrates that global appeal can be achieved without erasing local identity. Media producers can adopt adaptive strategies that harmonize local and global elements, while policymakers are urged to support cultural expressions that are collaborative, adaptive, and digitally empowered. Understanding BTS's hybridization strategy can inform the development of globally competitive yet culturally rooted products and policies.

Nevertheless, this study faces limitations. Focusing on a single music video restricts the generalizability of its findings, while reliance on secondary interview data limits insight into the internal creative process. Additionally, audience analysis was confined to specific digital platforms and a limited timeframe, potentially overlooking evolving perceptions. Future research should incorporate comparative studies, direct interviews with production teams and diverse fan groups, and longitudinal or digital ethnographic methods to capture broader dynamics.

In conclusion, Butter functions as a strategically hybrid cultural product, reflecting broader shifts in global cultural flows. BTS's practice of hybridization underscores the increasing influence of non-Western actors in shaping global aesthetics, evidencing a move from unidirectional cultural flows to dialogic, transnational exchanges. This study affirms cultural hybridization as a critical strategy in the evolving landscape of global popular culture.

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