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Master's Thesis of International Studies

The Comparison of Television
Drama's Production and Broadcast
between Korea and China

중화 드라마의 제작 과 방송 비교

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Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
Area Studies

Sheng Tingyin

The Comparison of Television Drama's Production and Broadcast between Korea and China

Professor Jeong Jong-Ho

Submitting a master's thesis of International Studies

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Graduate School of International Studies
Seoul National University
International Area Studies

Sheng Tingyin

Confirming the master's thesis written by
Sheng Tingyin
August 2019

Chair	<u>박 태 균</u>	(Seal)
Vice Chair	<u>한 영 혜</u>	(Seal)
Examiner	<u>정 종 호</u>	(Seal)

Abstract

Korean TV dramas, as important parts of the Korean Wave (Hallyu), are famous all over the world. China produces most TV dramas in the world. Both countries' TV drama industries have their own advantages. In order to provide meaningful recommendations for drama production companies and TV stations, this paper analyzes, determines, and compares the characteristics of Korean and Chinese TV drama production and broadcasting.

Korea enjoys a higher degree of marketization than China, and the Korean TV drama industry enjoys the Korean government's great support. During the production process, the screenwriter is at the center position and has great influence over the whole production team. The producer is also the director in order to ensure that the drama's quality meets expectations. In broadcasting, the three main TV stations – SBS, KBS, and MBC – hold dominant positions. In addition, there are different types of broadcasting models according to broadcasting time and frequency. Further, the main types of dramas are family dramas and romantic dramas, and are based on the contemporary period.

In China, the importance of the SARFT cannot be ignored. On one hand, the SARFT regulates the whole production process through strict censorship and regulation. Further, the SARFT also regulates dramas' broadcasting model, broadcasting time, broadcasting players, and broadcasting content. Besides that, the SARFT also regulates broadcasting content by encouraging the broadcast of realistic dramas based on the contemporary period, and by requiring TV stations to broadcast Red TV dramas.

By comparing the drama production and broadcasting characteristics of Korea and China,

we observe several differences and similarities. The greatest difference in production is that Korean production is more efficient than Chinese production. As for broadcasting, the primary difference between the two countries' dramas is in diversity. Korean broadcasting models are more varied, but China's broadcasting content is more diversified. The two countries also are similar across three main characteristics. First, both countries realize the importance of communication with audiences. This is reflected in Korea's shooting-while-broadcasting model and China's production and broadcasting of more IP TV dramas. Second, both countries have their own main TV stations with dominant market positions. In Korea, these are SBS, KBS, and MBC. In China, they are the Five Star TV stations. As a result, access to audiences is important when broadcasting TV dramas. Last but not least, both countries mainly broadcast romantic dramas and family dramas set in the contemporary period.

Keywords: Korean Television dramas, Chinese Television dramas, Television drama's production, Television drama's broadcast

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Research Question

Since 2016, the South Korean Television drama(hereinafter referred as TV drama) *Descendants of the Sun* (태양의 후예), the story of a romance between a chic-looking Army captain and a female doctor in a fictional war-torn country named Uruk, has been hot in both South Korea (hereinafter referred to as Korea) and China. *Descendants of the Sun* not only blew up on Korean and Chinese social media and made South Korean actor Song Joong-ki (송중기) become the Chinese nation's husband(国民老公), but also got the attention of China's military newspaper, the *People's Liberation Army Daily*, which described the Korean TV drama as “a piece of great advertisement for conscription.”

Just as female audiences in China were being charmed by Song Joong-ki in *Descendants of the Sun*, South Korean fans of the Chinese TV drama, *Nirvana in Fire* (琅琊榜), were falling head over heels for the show's leading character Mei Changsu, played by Chinese actor Hu Ge(胡歌). In China, the show has developed a good reputation since it broadcast. Further, the ratings of the *Nirvana in Fire* set a record for the Chinese TV channel, Chunghwa TV(중화 TV), in Korea. Beyond that, other products related to *Nirvana in Fire* have also become hot. For instance, tourist agencies have promoted tourism products to get South Korean tourists to visit the series' filming locations. The publishing rights for the translation of the original novel have also been hotly pursued by various South Korean publishing houses.

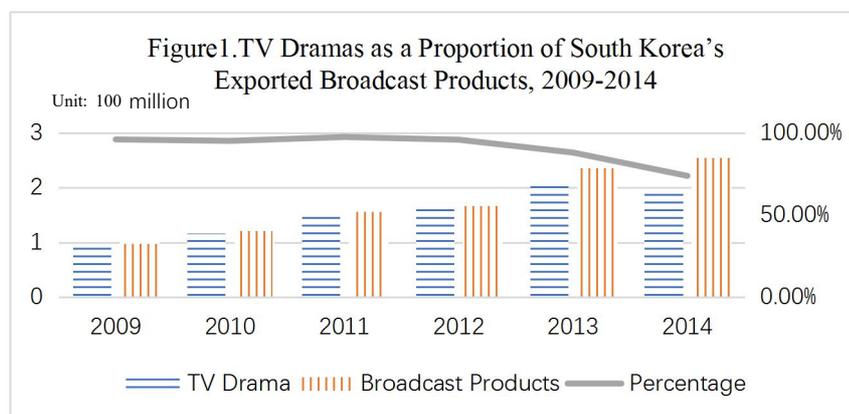
Therefore, to some extent, some Korean or Chinese television dramas; are popular in both countries. And as means of mass media, TV dramas obviously have important social and

economic influence.

The impact of television dramas and movies on the pattern of cultural consumption has been prolifically reported. Cultural discourses on TV dramas now influence how human beings identify themselves with certain cultural symbols, regardless of whether they come from domestic or foreign sources of entertainment (Oh 2009). For individuals, watching TV dramas has been a means of daily leisure. For markets, as products, TV dramas are closely connected to different players, such as production companies, entertainment management firms, advertisers, TV stations, and so on. For society, as a form of mass media, the messages portrayed by TV dramas interacts intimately with the whole society's ideology and culture. Moreover, for the nation, TV dramas are not only a significant part of the culture industry, which comprises a significant part of the national economy, but are also regarded as components of the nation's soft power and national image (Kim 2012). As neighboring countries, South Korea and China both are widely influenced by Confucianism and enjoy increasingly frequent interactions. As a result, although Korea and China have different styles regarding TV dramas, it is no wonder that the two countries sometimes show similar preferences. Therefore, analyzing Korean and Chinese preferences on TV dramas is of significance.

It is well known that Korean popular culture has made massive inroads into East Asia, and subsequently across the world. The mass media and scholars have given the appellation, "Korean Wave" (Hallyu in Korean), to refer to the rising popularity of Korean cultural products, including television dramas, popular music, and movies. Korean TV dramas are the chief promoter of Hallyu (Yang 2012). How popular, then, are Korean dramas across the world, especially in the Asia? Chart 1 demonstrates that TV dramas have maintained a high percentage of Korea's exported broadcast products. In 2014, TV drama exports reached 189 million US

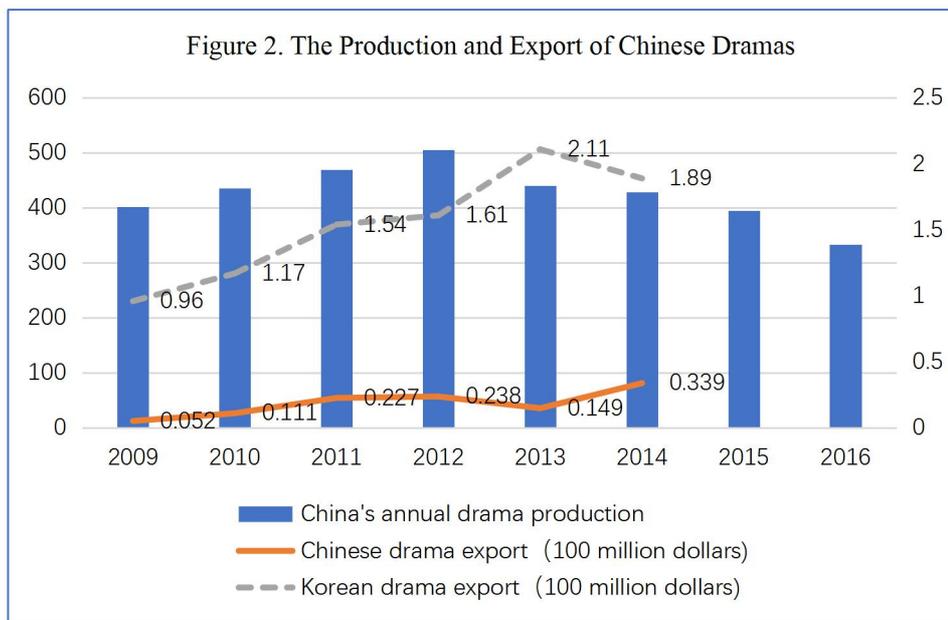
dollars and it is reported that more than half of Korea’s dramas are exported to East Asia, and over 90% are exported to Asia (Chai 2018, 15). Further, Korea’s culture industry has also been promoted with the export of its TV dramas. The culture industry has been an indispensable player in Korea’s economy. According to reports from The Korea Creative Content Agency, the culture industry’s exports rapidly increased from 448 million dollars in 2007 to 6.89 billion dollars in 2017(Shao 2018,1). The development of Korean dramas is closely connected with the Korean government’s supportive policies and Korea’s perfect production chain. From production to broadcast, Korea has its own systemic processes for developing TV dramas. In recent years, Korea has focused on producing and exporting high quality dramas, rather than simply rapidly expanding overseas. The dominant production companies and the main TV stations employ a fewer-but-better strategy, limiting themselves to producing around three and thirty dramas every year, respectively. Overall, while Korea’s annual drama production is only around 100, it produces huge benefits. Therefore, we cannot deny that Korea is a powerful country in terms of drama production. However, this does not mean there are no problems with Korea’s drama industry. Although the Korean drama industry follows the “less is more” strategy, many dramas’ audience ratings are too poor. Further, some years have entirely lacked widely popular Korean dramas.



Source: “2017 Korean TV drama industry film and television content - export situation and overseas

audience analysis” 2017 年韩国电视剧行业影视内容出海情况及海外受众规模分析. . China baogao 中国报告网

How about China? If Korea is a powerful country in terms of TV dramas, China then is a “massive” country. With economic development and the drama industry’s marketization, more and more capital has poured into China’s market. In 2010, China was the number one country in terms of annual TV drama production, and it has kept the top position in recent years. On average, 400 dramas are produced each year in China. However, only 40% of those dramas reach the audience, which means the overstock of TV dramas is serious in China (Xiong and Zhou 2003,201). China produces nearly four times more TV dramas each year than Korea. But when it comes to the overseas market, as Figure 2 shows, the export value of Chinese dramas is far behind that of Korean dramas. In other words, China produces a great number of TV dramas but does not achieve expected interests, whether at home or abroad. Audiences complain that China’s TV dramas are not attractive. Fans worry about their stars, as the screenplays are too bad. TV stations face great pressure to buy dramas from production companies, while production companies worry that their dramas cannot reach the market. The Chinese state worries about dramas’ quality and must advance policies to regulate the industry. Chinese dramas seemed to be an embarrassment.



Source: National Bureau of Statistics of China 中国国家统计局¹

However, we cannot deny the improvements made by the state and professionals. Costume dramas seem to be more easily welcomed among domestic and overseas audiences. For instance, *Empresses in the Palace* (甄嬛传), *The Imperial Doctress* (女医明妃传), *Nirvana in Fire* not only earned high audience ratings in China, but also earned good reputations after being exported overseas. This indicates that China is now able to produce high quality and popular dramas. China's TV drama industry is now concerned with how to effectively produce more popular TV dramas.

As discussed above, Korea is a powerful country in the TV drama industry and China is a great country in terms of drama production. The two countries each have their own advantages in the TV drama industry. To have a better understanding of each country's advantages, we ask, *what are the characteristics of TV drama production and broadcasting in Korea and China, respectively? What are the similarities and differences of these characteristics?* Given that the

¹ According to the exchange rate by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, the RMB exchanged into the dollars by the conversion rate, 683.10, 676.95, 645.88, 631.25, 619.32, 614.28, 622.84 and 664.23 from 2009 to 2016 respectively.

main purpose of TV drama is to attract high audience ratings, this paper seeks to answer the above research questions on the basis of analyzing the TV dramas with high audience ratings.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Previous Studies About Television and Audiences

Previous studies have demonstrated the importance of broadcast media to national culture. According to Schudson, broadcast media can promote a more unified national culture by conferring status on nationally prominent people, places, rituals, and issues (Schudson 1994,67). As Morley and Robins state: "In the post-war years, it was television that became the central mechanism for constructing the collective life and culture of the nation"(Morley, David and Robins 1995,48).

Moreover, previous studies have also analyzed broadcast media from the perspective of the audience. Firstly, there are several studies about why and how the audience selects TV content. Katz employs uses and gratifications theory (UGT) to focus on why people use media and what they use them for (Katz 1959). Katz also says that audiences are responsible for choosing media to meet their desires and needs in order to achieve gratification. Katz classifies and explains the audience's goals as: to be informed or educated; to identify with media characters and their situations characters of the situation in the media environment; simple entertainment; to enhance social interaction; and to escape from the stresses of daily life (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955,2). Storey adds that watching television is always so much more than a series of acts of interpretation; it is above all else a social practice (Storey 2010). Berkowitz introduced gatekeeping theory. He explains that TV gatekeepers, through the influence of their judgments and values, determine audiences' access to content and channels (Berkowitz 1990,55-62). Gatekeeping theory shows the importance of censorship to the content of TV dramas. Therefore,

watching TV content is not only a means of daily leisure, but also serves other purposes, such as getting information, fulfilling social and emotional needs, and so on (Severin and Tankard 2001).

In addition, previous studies have also pointed out how audiences receive and interpret television content. Gunter identifies the two most important factors of audience engagement in determining how viewers interpret television content: (1) how real-life experiences compare to television portrayals, and (2) viewers' ability to identify how different plot elements link together to form a coherent story (Gunter 2010,59). Gerbner uses cultivation theory to argue that television is a medium of the socialization of most people into standardized roles and behaviors (Gerbner 1986,67). Its function is, in a word, enculturation. Repeated exposure affects how people view the real world. Katz and Lazarsfeld propose a two-step model. They conclude the media alone is not that influential in affecting an audience's attitudes, but rather is part of a large system of situated culture (Katz and Lazarsfeld 1995,13-18). The audience often receives the media's messages through "opinion leaders" – individuals who pay close attention to the media and filter information to family and friends(Lee and Katz 1993,74-85). As a result, some people receive the media's messages without directly consuming the content.

1.2.2 Previous Studies about Korean Dramas

Since the turn of the 21st century, South Korea has emerged as a major exporter of popular culture and tourism, both of which have become significant parts of its burgeoning economy. The growing popularity of Korean pop culture in many parts of the world has prompted the South Korean government to support its creative industries through subsidies and funding for startups. Recognizing it as a form of soft power, the government aims to become one of the world's leading exporters of culture, along with Japan and Britain – a niche that the United

States has dominated for nearly a century. Chung also views the Korean Wave as soft power, especially when it motivates North Koreans to defect and facilitates their adaptation to life in South Korea (Chung 2019,137–139). The Korean Wave is also regarded as a way to rebuild South Korea's national image, and functions as a form of cultural diplomacy when South Korea interacts with other East Asian countries (Chen 2016,25-50).

Kwon and Kim state that how the government's policies worked positively on the culture industry's development, especially in the early 1990s, when the government shifted from focusing on political control over the culture industry to regarding it as part of its central economic strategies (Kwon and Kim 2014,422–427). On the other hand, by analyzing Korean drama audiences in China, Taiwan, and Japan, Yang finds that, compared with globalism-nationalism and modernity-tradition, social proximity is quite important to the Korean wave, and states that as a cultural product, the quality of TV dramas also works as a great contributor to the popularity of TV dramas (Yang 2012,127–138). Other previous studies view the Korean production system, in which the screenwriter, the director, and the producer all have great say in the production, as the key to a drama's success (Pan 2013). Other studies also point out that the natures of Korean dramas are always connected to love and Confucianism as the reasons why Korean culture has become a global phenomenon. Sung concludes that Korean TV dramas strike the right chord of Asian sentiments, such as family values and respect for elders (Sung 2014,56–60). As for the TV dramas' content, there are studies explained that Hong Kong and Singaporean female audiences are adept in using Korean dramas to negotiate everyday life tensions and dilemmas experienced in contemporary urban living and to construct what they see as their distinctive Asian modern femininity (Zhu, Keane and Bai 2008,17–37).

1.2.3 Previous Studies about Chinese Dramas

When analyzing the Chinese culture industry or Chinese TV dramas, many previous studies note that the government plays a significant role. Tai concludes that all Chinese television production takes place under political supervision (Tai 2014,185-195), since the Communist Party of China's (CPC) political influence is decisive in any contentious issue. This observation is widely recognized by professionals. It is easy to understand that the appropriation of popular culture for political, ideological purposes — nationalistic, revolutionary, or communist — is and has been a distinct feature of modern Chinese political culture (Lu 1996,139–142). Rajagopal adds that, as ideological products, Chinese TV dramas are of their ideological importance. He states, “While advancing the cause of ‘development,’ television at the same time holds out the promise of defending national tradition, and serving as a line of defense against foreign culture, or against any other elements defined as negative; television culture becomes a key site for discerning symptoms of the national mood.” (Rajagopal 2000, 297)

Lu states that anti-corruption and crime dramas, remade red classics, and even some costume dramas have challenged the legitimacy of the communist government by touching on sensitive political issues, and therefore have faced suppression and attacks in the official press (Lu 2000,25–33). However, some scholars have different views towards the state's control over media and ideology in China. For example, Li believes that Chinese TV dramas are best understood as a cultural site where Chinese media, the state, and most importantly, the Chinese audience engage with the social and cultural changes inevitably produced by the penetration of the global into the local, and project their disparate but interlocked desires through transnational bodies and images (Li 2013,79).

Some scholars have analyzed the genres of Chinese dramas in order to find out the reasons behind high audience ratings. For example, Zhu notes that dynasty dramas are more likely to be popular. She states that the historical “uncertainty,” where memories are fuzzy and improvisation unearths previously obscured events, and the creative combination of contemporary issues with dynastic settings are the two main reasons for this (Zhu, Keane and Bai 2008,13). Regarding the family genre, Zhu believes that, while revisiting and reconstructing traditional ways of life, family dramas bring into focus the desires, pleasures, and passions of personal growth, as well as the restrictions and suffering people endure in the Confucian system (Zhu 2008,134-145). The popularity of family dramas reflects the competing demands that contemporary individuals must face when attempting to keep pace with “modern” world while preserving the importance of tradition. Zhu also adds that urban family Chinese dramas also reflect the common social problems in family lives and sexual relationships, such as midlife crises, rising divorce rates, increasingly frequent extramarital affairs, and so on (Zhu 2008,210-220). This view is further developed by Li who argues that as real-life families increasingly succumb to the pressures of contemporary life, breaking apart under the strains of unemployment, social mobility, and materialism, imaginary television families become still more important by providing a sense of solidarity and emotional identification for ordinary viewers (Mcgaha 2015,32–37). In view of the above, we can see that regardless of the genre, the reasons for the popularity of popular dramas are always connected to real life. Previous studies also analyze the problems in Chinese TV dramas. The too-close connection between the government and drama productions, dramas’ overdependence on TV stations for production and broadcasting, and the lack of interaction between dramas and audiences are the most criticized problems (Wu 2008,82–84) .

In sum, many studies have demonstrated the importance of analyzing TV dramas as popular culture and provided reasons for Korean and Chinese TV dramas' popularity. Many studies focus on TV dramas' importance and performances. However, a few studies analyze the reasons for TV dramas' performances from the perspective of production and broadcasting. In view of this, this paper analyzes the characteristics of TV dramas' production and broadcasting in order to develop a better understanding of dramas' importance and performances. Analyzing TV dramas' production and broadcasting on the basis of recent TV dramas with high audience ratings will help producers and TV stations develop better understandings of audience preferences. Also, analyzing and comparing these characteristics will help promote cross-cultural communication between South Korea and China. As a result, this study will encourage international business development, especially in the cultural industry. Last but not least, this analysis will assist governments in formulating policies relevant to TV dramas.

1.3 Research Methodology

This paper will use purposive sampling methodology to select Korean TV dramas (K-dramas) with high audience ratings and Chinese TV dramas (C-dramas) with high audience ratings in Korea and China, respectively, from 2012 to 2018. We determine the research subjects by addressing the following questions.

Firstly, what are K-dramas and C-dramas? In this paper, we identify K-dramas as dramas that are first broadcast on Korean TV stations and for which the production companies and the production crews are mainly Korean. Likewise, we identify C-dramas as dramas that are first broadcast on Chinese TV stations and for which the production companies and the production crews are mainly Chinese.

Secondly, what is the threshold for high audience ratings? According to reports and news,

if a Korean drama's audience rating reaches 12% on network TV stations, such as KBS, SBS, MBC, or 4% on cable TV stations, such as JTBC, TVN, it is regarded as performing well and having a large audience. In China, the threshold is 1% for Star TV stations and CCTV. The interviewed producers and directors in Authrule Media(旗帜传媒) and other media companies also agree with these figures for setting the threshold for high audience ratings.

We cannot directly compare the audience ratings of Korean TV dramas and Chinese TV dramas due to substantial and significant differences across the two countries. However, this is not a major issue, as the purpose of this paper is to analyze the characteristics of the production and broadcasting of dramas in the two countries; we just seek to ensure that the dramas we select are regarded as dramas with high audience ratings in each country.

Thirdly, why examine the period from 2012 to 2017? During this period, both countries' drama industries experienced a golden age and stable development. In addition, since 2000, Korea's cultural industry exports have increased rapidly, peaking at a growth rate of 34.9% in 2012. After 2012, the growth rate began to decrease. The same year, China's annual drama production began to show a downward trend, decreasing from 506 in 2012 to 313 in 2017. Moreover, in 2012, the State Administration of Radio, Film and Television (国家广播电影电视总局) (SARFT) placed restrictions on broadcasts of competing types of entertainment programs, such as game shows, talk shows, and reality television. In response, in order to keep audiences and advertisements, Chinese TV stations frequently changed their air schedules and broadcast more dramas. In view of this, 2012 serves as a turning point for analyzing television dramas. Due to a lack of data, the period researched ends at 2017.

Besides that, the qualitative research approaches are employed across many academic disciplines, focusing particularly on the human elements of the social and natural sciences

(Lougen 2009). The aim of a qualitative research project may vary with disciplinary background. For instance, a psychologist may seek an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern such behavior. Thus, qualitative research is helpful to determine the characteristics of Chinese and Korean dramas and making comparisons between the drama industries of the two countries.

What's more, the text analysis is a research method used to interpret the characteristics of words or visual information. The three main purposes for text analysis are to find out the nature, the structure, and the function of the text. This paper focuses on analyzing TV dramas with high audience ratings. As cultural products with plots, these popular dramas' screenplays and related introductions or comments are vital to understanding their nature. By watching selected TV dramas and reading their screenplay plots, one can discover their themes. Further, through reading audiences' or professionals' comments, the contents of TV dramas are more clearly seen. Through such methods, the nature of TV dramas can be much better understood.

Chapter 2. Analysis of Korean TV Dramas

This chapter first reviews the history of Korean TV dramas and the development of the Korean TV drama industry. Second, it analyzes the characteristics of Korean TV drama production. Third, examining selected Korean TV dramas with high audience ratings, it determines the main characteristics of broadcasting across broadcasting players, TV stations and broadcasting models, and broadcasting content.

2.1. History

In order to understand the success of Korean TV dramas across the world, it is essential to look back on history and analyze the main factors influencing the development of the Korean drama industry. This section attempts to outline how Korean drama developed with television stations, highlighting three main determinants: governmental policies, economic conditions, and technological development. According to different characteristics, this history can be divided into three periods: the beginning period, in which drama was regarded as a means of social control; the rapid development period, characterized by intensive competition; and the gradual improvement period, characterized by cooperative relationships between production companies and television stations (Chung 2009).

2.1.1 The Beginning (1961-1989): drama as social control

1961-1989 served as the beginning period of the Korean drama industry. After 1953, when South Korea and North Korea signed an armistice, South Korea had an opportunity to recover from the war and its economy had a stable domestic environment in which to develop. During the Park Chung-hee (박정희) regime (1961-1979), the first terrestrial television network station – the Korean Broadcasting System (KBS), a state-owned public network television station –

was founded in December 1961, only seven months after the military coup that put Park in power. This timing implies that the military government recognized the great potential of television to promote governmental ideologies and regarded it as a means of social control. KBS's broadcasting aims, to "cure the sick minds of citizens" and to "display an image of the recovering nations," definitely showed the military government's expectations (Chung and Chang 2000,1). KBS produced and broadcasted the first K-drama, *I Will Become a Man* (나도 인간이 되련다), which mainly promoted democracy and criticized communism. In August 1969, the second terrestrial television network television station, Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), started broadcasting as a commercial television station.

During this period, the government had strict control over the television stations. The Park regime regarded television stations as a political means to promote its message and consolidate its power. The Park regime openly introduced censorship through an amendment to the Broadcasting Act in 1973. Under this censorship, "negative" scenes, such as tragic historical facts in historical dramas and immoral conduct in melodramas, were strictly prohibited. The government itself defined the "negative" scenes (Jeon 2013,59). As a result of direct control from the government, K-dramas were limited to "positive" programs, such as those that showed the harmony of the extended family and women sacrificing themselves for the overall happiness of family, which were quite popular among the middle-aged female audience. In addition, because of the strict intervention of the autocratic Park regime to prohibit broadcasting stations from producing dramas with political or social themes, melodramas and historical dramas were quite rare.

However, in 1980, the Chun Doo-whan (전두환) regime forced the television industry to fundamentally restructure through the so-called "Mass Media Reorganization." During this

restructuring, KBS became MBC's majority owner, purchasing 70% of MBC's stock. As a consequence, the government controlled the entire television industry, because there was no independent program production and programs were produced exclusively by the network stations (Lee and Youn 1995,58).

However, the rapid improvement of the Korean economy, along with technological development, produced positive effects on the development of K-dramas. The lack of recording and playback technologies gradually improved, and with more funding, television stations could produce higher quality dramas. In addition, as living standards improved, the number of television owners significantly increased, rising from 13,000 in September 1961 to almost 6 million in 1979 (Chung and Chang 2000, 119). Increasing audiences encouraged stations to produce more daily dramas.

2.1.2 Rapid Development (1990-1999) : intense competition

Next came the rapid development period of the 1990s. During this period, economic factors had an increasing influence on the Korean television industry. Along with the expansion of world capitalism came consistent pressure on global media industries to commercialize their public broadcasting systems (Straubhaar 1991,38–59). For instance, the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS), the first commercial terrestrial network television company, opened in 1991. Regarding MBC, in the 1990s, its largest shareholder switched from KBS to the Foundation for Broadcast Culture (FBC), which was established by the National Assembly of Korea. As a result, MBC does not receive government subsidies or collect license fees, but is not free political influence. Then in the Korean television system, the three main network stations KBS, SBS and MBC were established. Moreover, eight other local television stations were launched throughout the nation from 1995 to 1997. The first turning point in the K-drama industry

occurred in 1995, when cable television service was inaugurated (Park et al. 2000,117). By 1998, 77 cable stations were operating nationwide. The Korean broadcasting industry had entered a multichannel television era marked by intense competition (Park et al.2000, 119)

During 1990s, the government's influence tended to be more supportive. In general, the Kim Dae-jung(김대중) regime (1998-2002) is acknowledged as having developed the first substantial cultural policies to recognize the potential of the cultural industries as a source of competitive content in the international market. The Kim regime also weakened almost all government control over broadcasting content, abolishing all preview censorship and introducing a self-regulation system for each broadcast (Kim and Hong 2001,86-87), which gave more room and freedom for stations to produce K-dramas.

In addition, economic factors had an increasing influence on the K-drama industry since the early 1990s. First of all, the commercialism of the Korean television industry grew substantially and stations had more capital with which to produce dramas. Secondly, K-dramas became viable export products. The flow of K-dramas to the East Asian market began after the popularity of *What is Love All About?* (사랑이 뭐길래) (MBC, 1991-1992), which was broadcast on CCTV in China in 1997. Since then, the popularity of K-dramas has concentrated in Taiwan, China, and Japan, increasing significantly every year (Shim 2008, 24-26). This rapid development was also connected closely to technology. The new Korean cable television system began operating in March 1995, with 21 cable channels broadcasting in eight large cities simultaneously. Since the launch of the cable television system, more and more channels have been authorized. The development of this technology made competition for viewership increasingly intense.

2.1.3 The Golden Age (2000-present): the co-production system

In the 21st century, the K-drama has become well-developed and popular all over the world. K-drama developed its own production system during this period. The following section will explain how technology promoted the drama industry and how the co-operation system works. First of all, technological development contributed the most to the expansion of the K-drama industry. On 1 May 2005, digital multimedia broadcasting (DMB), a technology that sends multimedia and data-casting to mobile devices all over the world, officially started in Korea (Shim 2008,23). The widespread use of mobile phones and broadband internet infrastructure brought Korea into a new era of digital convergence. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the rate of internet per household in Korea reached 95.9% in 2009, the highest rate in the world. Further, along with the global trend, the rapid development of broadcasting and telecommunication technology enabled the rapid increase in the number of television channels. The increasing number of television channels, starting with the opening of 21 cable channels in March 1995, reached a maximum of 272 channels in March 2011 (Korea Communication Commission [KCC] 2011, 37). Thus, technical development has provided individuals with a wide variety of content and contributed to more active and diversified audiences. This, in turn, has encouraged the production of more diversified K-dramas.

Secondly, since the 21st century, with economic globalization and increasing demand for K-dramas, more and more independent production companies in Korea have emerged in order to provide TV drama production. First, above all, the three stations can reach larger and broader audiences of potential viewers. Audience ratings are an important criterion for dramas and also closely connected to profits. More audience means higher commercial value, which in turn

attracts higher advertising revenue. Certainly, advertising revenue is one of the fundamental sources of income driving the economics of broadcast television (Boyd and Ellison 2007,210-220). Second, as the production cost per K-drama increases annually, independent production companies have barely managed to meet their necessary production budgets, and few are capable of financing the entire production cost of a drama project (Kwon 2013,12). By contrast, the three main stations have strong financial abilities because they possess the national (or even regional) broadcasting power to attract advertisers. Third, under intense competition, cooperation with one of the three networks means that a given drama has a channel to come out on, and, due to the three stations' self-feeding channels and scheduling, that it can avoid the risk of being buried. Last but not least, the three stations have another strength in their overseas program distribution models. Due to relatively stable funding, the stations can find foreign TV stations to buy the rights to air dramas in foreign countries. For example, CCTV and Fuji TV are important partners for the three Korean television stations². These long-term relationships are significant assets for the networks' future international K-drama distribution (Ju 2017,99).

Therefore, cooperation with the three networks is the best way for K-dramas to manage intense competition. Once they have agreed to cooperate, the production companies and TV networks employ the co-production system to create K-dramas.

Under the co-production system, it is common for a production company to produce a weekly TV drama, 16- to 20-episodes long, using a network television station's funding. After completing the shooting and editing for the first five or six episodes, if the audience rating is good, the production company then finds multiple partners or sponsors for additional financing. In another model, an independent production company spends its own budget for the first

² China: The history of state regulation of Korean dramas in China. *International Communication Gazette*, 81(2), 139-157.

couple of episodes, and a network television station promises to provide half of the production budget through joint ventures with independent companies. However, in this case, the network television station holds the broadcast copyright for the co-produced drama. This embodies another imbalanced revenue stream between networks and interdependent production companies (Chung 2009,17). It is noteworthy that most K-dramas are not fully pre-produced which means that their lengths change according to their ratings. As a result, it is not strange to see projected 16-episode dramas come to an end after 10 episodes, as low ratings lead to low commercial value, which in turn makes it difficult to attract funding. Because of the hegemony of the network television stations, independent production companies are frequently placed in weaker positions and are forced to accept unfair terms in outsourcing contracts, such as low production costs, pay delays, and limited copyrights (Shim 2008,17). As a consequence, many production companies do not earn their expected returns from their outsourcing production for TV dramas, even when the dramas succeed in terms of TV ratings. This discourages the production of high-quality dramas.

In 2006, the government passed a new cultural act specifically to promote TV content production as an amendment of the Media and Cultural Industry Act. This act specifies that media content production can only be performed using a special purpose company (SPC) system involving limited period firms, which are registered to only create media content (Ju 2017,100). For TV drama production, an SPC registers with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism at the advent of pre-production operations and continues its function until post-production ends. In addition, the government offers a tax benefit to SPCs for TV drama production (Yu and Moon 2014,178). These measures not only enable independent production companies to make more profits stemming from foreign investment, pre-broadcast right sales to

foreign television stations, remaking license sales, product placement as advertising sponsorship, and merchandising tie-ins, but also improve their control in programming and the production management overall as co-invested partners vis-a-vis the television stations. In addition, television stations also welcome the SPC system because it reduces their burden of providing full financing for a planned drama project (Park, Lee and Seo 2019,140). To some extent, SPC production is closely tied to the direct distribution of completed K-dramas to foreign TV channels, starting in the pre-production stage. Thus, the government's SPC policy helps the TV industry with funding, active co-production, risk reduction, spending and production budget transparency, and procedural efficiency during drama production.

In sum, the government's policies, Korea's economic conditions, and technological advancements have helped K-drama development to varying extents across history. Nowadays, the three television stations, KBS, MBC, and SBS, act as dominant players in the drama industry, and co-production between stations and independent production companies is common for drama production system in Korea.

2.2. The K-Drama Production System

As demonstrated in the history section, the co-production system with SPCs works well for independent production companies and network television stations. By analyzing the process of drama production under the co-production system, we find that there are three main characteristics of Korean TV drama's production: no full pre-production, the central role of screenwriters in production teams, and the combination of the producer and director roles (Shim 2008,20–31).

2.2.1 No Full Pre-Production

K-dramas do not go through a full pre-production process, but rather continue shooting and

producing through broadcasting. This enables production teams to adjust their dramas according to responses and feedback from markets and audiences. Before production, screenplays are typically only one-third or less complete. When a drama is broadcast, a website promotes it and collects feedback from the audience. This allows the production team to have a good understanding of viewers' motivations and thinking. This way, the production team can continuously adjust and change the drama, regardless of the original screenplay, the actors, the background music, etc., in order to appeal to the audience. For example, *The Moon Embracing the Sun* (해를 품은 달), which aired on MBC in 2011, changed its ending from the death of the lead actress to a happy ending because its audience strongly opposed the original tragic ending. This adjustment caused the audience ratings for the last two episodes to increase to 37%, the highest mark in 2011(Pan 2013,23–24).

In addition, this model optimizes resource distribution, simply because dramas that perform poorly are not fully produced. As a result, there is no waste in production. However, there are also exceptions to this model, such as *The Legend Of The Blue Sea* (푸른 바다의 전설) and *Descendants of the Sun*, both which were fully produced before broadcast and also enjoyed good audience ratings.

However, this no full pre-production model also has some problems. First, the model necessitates an urgent schedule. For a weekly drama (with two episodes a week), the production team must work day and night to finish production, including screenplay writing, shooting, and editing on time. This time pressure causes physical and mental stress. Moreover, if actors get injured or involved in scandals, and thus are not able to continue acting, the production team suffers unbelievable losses. Thus, one cannot deny the bad influence that this time pressure has for dramas and long-term industry development. In addition, the model can cause sudden

changes in plots and make dramas lack structural integrity. As a result, when dramas are exported overseas, it is possible that foreign audiences fail to understand them well, having not taken part in providing feedback during production. This, in turn, places time and region constraints on dramas. The Korean Media Rating Board (영상물등급위원회) divides its age rating system into five age groups according to the frequency, intensity, and cumulative impact of sex and nudity, violence, language, horror, drug use, and imitable behavior: General (all ages admitted), 12+, 15+, Adults Only, and Restricted. When companies receive their dramas' age ratings, they simply follow the corresponding requirements. In addition, because of improved legal and administrative systems, there is not much time wasted on the regulation of productions.

2.2.2 The Central Role of Screenwriters

When it comes to the structure of production teams, the screenwriter is the central position compared with the director and the actors. In Korea, influence within a K-drama is distributed as follows: screenwriters 70%-80%, actors 20%, and directors 10%(Guo and Liu 2008,32-33). The Korean industry regards the screenwriter as the heart of the production team. Professional screenwriters enjoy higher salaries than actors, especially taking into account the bonuses they receive when their dramas enjoy high audience ratings. Further, if their dramas are broadcast or re-broadcast on other channels or abroad, screenwriters could also get sizable benefits.

Screenwriters enjoy great power in their relationships with other main players. Above all, production companies would respect screenwriters' creative ideas and their opinions on actors. Some screenwriters even have the power to decide actors directly. Further, when network TV stations seek investment or to schedule a drama, they take the screenwriters' views into important consideration. As for PDs (producer and director), screenwriters mostly enjoy a

higher status, even though there are cooperative relations between them. During drama's press conferences, hosts clearly introduce screenwriters before PDs. When shooting a scene, the PD shows great respect to the writer's screenplay and voice. Similarly, the actors must strictly follow the screenplay. If they want to change their lines, they must receive agreement from the writer. However, when it comes to viewers, screenwriters have no absolute authority. As mentioned earlier, Korean dramas do not go through full pre-production, but rather shoot while broadcasting. This means that if a drama is not popular among viewers, it will end earlier than expected (Zhang 2017, 20–21). That the audience ultimately decides the length of the drama causes great pressure on the screenwriter and makes him or her work harder. Screenwriters with two consecutive cancellations go on the industry's blacklist that it is difficult for the writers to be hired again.

All professional screenwriters are members of an organization called the Korean Radio & TV Writers Association (한국방송작가협회), established in 1957. On one hand, the association serves as the protector of the screenwriters. For example, in 1978, a serious disagreement arose between a network station and screenwriters. With the help of the association and the long-time defend, the court decided that the copyright for dramas belongs to the screenwriters. This decision was of epoch-making significance (Zhang 2017). On the other hand, screenwriters have an obligation to the association and cannot violate copyright law. If a screenwriter plagiarizes, he or she is expelled from the association and forced out from the industry. Therefore, due to pressure from the audience and the restraint demanded by the association, screenwriters are more prudent and responsible for their work.

In addition, it is worth noting the interesting phenomenon that more than 90% of screenwriters are female. Because the great majority of screenwriters are female, the most

common K-drama genres are related to love and family. Among them, that most screenwriters are professionally trained. For example, the famous screenwriter, Kim Eun-sook (김은숙), writer of *Descendants of the Sun*, graduated with one major in Literature and Art from the Seoul Institute of the Arts. The subtle reflections, skillful construe, and clear logic in her work is deeply based on her professional training. Some screenwriters come from other backgrounds, such as entertainment writer, actress, and so on. The hot drama, *My Love From The Star* (별에서 온 그대), is written by Park Jieun, who was formerly a professional chess player. The variety of previous work experience makes screenwriters more creative in drama production and leads to more diversified genres.

In conclusion, screenwriters play an essential role in K-drama production. They not only have strong power and abilities, but also great responsibility for dramas due to pressure from audiences and the Korean Radio & TV Writers Association.

2.2.3 The PD: The Combination of the Producer and the Director

Another distinct characteristic of the K-drama production system is the producer -director (PD) roles. If the screenwriter is the brain of a production, the PD is the arms and legs, meaning that the PD obeys the screenwriters and manages a huge workload. During pre-production, the PD mainly works as the producer. The PD provides the drama project and the production company reviews the drama outline, analyzes the market and network stations, and then makes an annual drama production plan. The PD mainly works as the director in the mid- and late stages of production. The role of the PD centralizes power and saves time, as the PD's decisions can be put into practice immediately. This is vital during the intense production schedule. However, because the PD may not be fully qualified or experienced in both producer and director roles, it is inevitable that there are sometimes inefficiencies in the operation of

financing (Chai 2018).

In conclusion, the process of drama production works as follows. In pre-production, the PD works as the producer and gives the drama project to the production company. The production company and the television station then put the drama project into practice through the co-production system. The success of pre-production and co-production mainly depends on the screenwriter and his or her screenplay. However, at this stage, the screenplay is usually only an incomplete draft. During shooting, the PD works as the director, following the screenwriter's work and suggestions. After one or two episodes, the drama goes to the station to broadcast. The screenwriter then continuously revises the screenplay according to audience feedback, and the PD continues shooting episodes; the drama continues shooting while being broadcast.

2.3. The K-drama Broadcasting system

This section will analyze the characteristics of the K-drama broadcasting system on the basis of broadcasting subject, broadcasting model, and broadcasting content. The main purpose for TV stations to broadcast dramas is to achieve high audience ratings, so understanding the patterns and characteristics of dramas' broadcasting models and content is important for them. Therefore, we analyze the broadcasting model and broadcasting content of selected high audience TV dramas, listed here:

List 1: 92 Korean TV dramas with high audience ratings

Name	Audience rating	Station	# of Episodes
2012			
You Who Rolled In Unexpectedly (넝쿨째 굴러온 당신)	35.7%	KBS	58
The Moon and Stars for You (별도 달도 따주게)	25.1%	KBS	129
Seoyeong, My daughter (내 딸 서영이)	35.8%	KBS	50
The Moon That Embraces the Sun (해를 품은 달)	32.3%	MBC	20
A Gentleman's Dignity (신사의 품격)	20.0%	SBS	20

The Innocent Man (세상 어디에도 없는 착한남자)	16.1%	KBS	20
The Deep Rooted Tree Museum (뿌리깊은 나무)	18.0%	SBS	24
May Queen (메이퀸)	19.2%	MBC	38
Bridal Mask (각시탈)	18.0%	KBS	28
The King's Doctor(마의)	17.3%	MBC	50
Cheer Up, Mr. Kim! (힘내요, 미스터 김)	29.3%	KBS	124
The Chaser (추적자)	15.2%	SBS	16
History of the Salaryman (샐러리맨 초한지)	17.0%	SBS	22
Feast of the Gods (신들의 만찬)	15.4%	MBC	32
School 2013 (학교 2013)	13.7%	KBS	16
Cheongdam-dong Alice (청담동 앨리스)	12.6%	SBS	16
Rooftop Prince (옥탑방 왕세자)	12.1%	SBS	20
2013			
The Queen of Office (직장의 신)	12.0%	KBS	16
You're the Best, Lee Soon-shin (최고다 이순신)	25.3%	KBS	50
Good Doctor (굿 닥터)	17.4%	KBS	20
I Can Hear Your Voice (너의 목소리가 들려)	19.1%	SBS	18
Sincerity Moves Heaven (지성이면 감천)	22.0%	KBS	135
Wang's Family (왕가네 식구들)	32.6%	KBS	50
Scandal (스캔들)	14.9%	MBC	36
Pots of Gold (금 나와라, 뚝딱!)	15.4%	MBC	50
King of Ambition (야왕)	16.6%	SBS	24
Incarnation of Money (돈의 화신)	12.6%	SBS	24
Master's Sun (주군의 태양)	17.9%	SBS	17
That Winter, the Wind Blows (그 겨울, 바람이 분다)	12.5%	SBS	16
Empress Ki (기황후)	20.7%	MBC	51
A Hundred Year Legacy (백년의 유산)	22.1%	MBC	50
Gu Family Book (구가의 서)	15.1%	MBC	24
The Heirs (상속자들)	15.9%	SBS	20
Man from the Stars (별에서 온 그대)	22.6%	SBS	21
Reply 1994 (응답하라 1994)	7.4%	TVN	21
Golden Rainbow (황금무지개)	14.0%	MBC	41
2014			

What Happens to My Family? (가족끼리 왜이래)	30.8%	KBS	53
Jeong Do-jeon (정도전)	12.0%	KBS	50
Jang Bo-ri Is Here! (왔다! 장보리)	20.3%	MBC	52
Wonderful Days (참 좋은 시절)	24.2%	KBS	50
Angel's Revenge (천상 여자)	17.64%	KBS	103
My Dear Cat (고양이는 있다)	21.85%	KBS	119
Sweet Secret (달콤한 비밀)	18.67%	KBS	102
You Are The Only One (당신만이 내 사랑)	27.05%	KBS	120
Mama (마마)	13.8%	MBC	24
Rosy Lovers (장미빛 연인들)	19.14%	MBC	52
Apgujeong Midnight Sun (압구정 백야)	12.60%	MBC	149
. Cheongdam-dong Scandal (청담동 스캔들)	15.4%	SBS	119
2015			
Misaeng: Incomplete Life (미생)	5.3%	TVN	20
She Was Pretty (그녀는 예뻐다)	12.17%	MBC	16
My Daughter, Geum Sa-wol (내 딸, 금사월)	23.77%	MBC	51
Victoria (여왕의 꽃)	14.79%	MBC	50
Sweet Home, Sweet Family (우리집 꿀단지)	25.04%	KBS	129
Save the Family (가족을 지켜라)	24.38%	KBS	123
Love on a Rooftop (오늘부터 사랑해)	14.42%	KBS	101
House of Bluebird (파랑새의 집)	24.26%	KBS	50
Yong-pal (용팔이)	16.4%	SBS	18
Six Flying Dragons (육룡이 나르샤)	11.6%	SBS	50
The Producers (프로듀사)	12.4%	KBS	12
Please! Mom (부탁해요, 엄마)	25.8%	KBS	54
Reply 1988 (응답하라 1988)	12.42%	TVN	20
Oh My Ghost (오 나의 귀신님)	4.785%	TVN	16
2016			
Love in the Moonlight (구르미 그린 달빛)	16.9%	KBS	18
Marriage Contract (결혼계약)	17.74%	MBC	16
Flower of Prison (옥중화)	17.32%	MBC	50
Five Enough (아이가 다섯)	26.93%	KBS	54
The Promise (천상의 약속)	19.25%	KBS	102

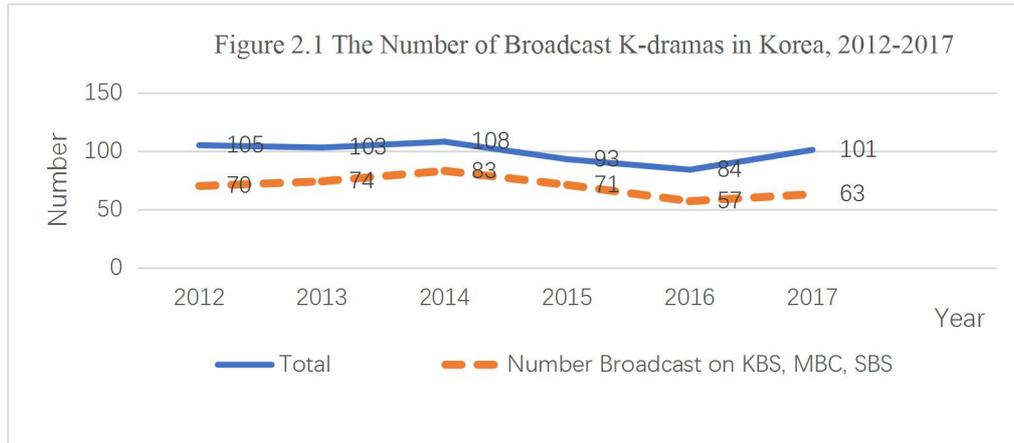
The Descendant of the Sun (태양의 후예)	26.2%	KBS	16
My Lawyer, Mr. Jo (동네변호사 조들호)	10.9%	KBS	20
W (더블유)	12.9%	MBC	16
Marrying My Daughter Twice (내 사위의 여자)	12.32%	SBS	120
Dr. Romantic (낭만닥터 김사부)	18.4%	SBS	20
Secrets Of Women (여자의 비밀)	19.48%	KBS	104
Doctors(닥터스)	16.69%	SBS	20
Legend Of The Blue Sea (푸른 바다의 전설)	16.58%	SBS	20
Signal (시그널)	8.8%	TVN	16
Guardian: The Lonely and Great God (도깨비)	13.7%	TVN	16
Dear My Friends (디어 마이 프렌즈)	4.35%	TVN	16
Another Miss Oh(또! 오해영)	6.88%	TVN	18
2017			
Prison Playbook (슬기로운 감빵생활)	7.69%	TVN	16
A Korean Odyssey (화유기)	6.05%	TVN	20
Strong Woman Do Bong-soon (힘센여자 도봉순)	7.88%	JTBC	16
The Lady in Dignity (품위있는 그녀)	5.99%	JTBC	20
Tunnel (터널)	4.41%	OCN	16
Good Manager (김과장)	14.0%	KBS	20
My Golden Life (황금빛 내 인생)	34.0%	KBS	52
My Father is Strange (아버지가 이상해)	27.2%	KBS	52
The Rebel (역적: 백성을 훔친 도적)	10.8%	MBC	30
The Emperor: Owner of the Mask (군주-가면의 주인;)	11.5%	MBC	40
Innocent Defendant(피고인)	17.7%	SBS	18
Stranger (비밀의 숲)	4.6%	TVN	16
Money Flower (돈꽃)	13.35%	MBC	24

Source: Total National Multimedia Statistics (TNmS) <http://www.tnms.tv/data2.php>

2.3.1 Broadcasting Platforms: TV Stations

Figure 2.1 shows the total number of the K-dramas that were broadcast on Korean TV stations from 2012 to 2017. As can be seen from the figure, there was no huge change in the number of the dramas broadcast each year. Korean stations kept broadcasting around 100

dramas each year and the percentage aired on the three main network stations – KBS, MBC, and SBS – remained steady at around 70%. From this, we can conclude that the drama industry in Korea has been developing steadily and the three main network stations have seized a big portion of the market.



Source: The Korean Broadcasting System, <https://drama.kbs.co.kr/>; Seoul Broadcasting system <https://www.sbs.co.kr/tv/drama/>; Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation <http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama/>

Table 2.2 The number of TV dramas broadcast on 4 TV stations from 2012-2017

Year/TV station	KBS	MBC	SBS	TVN
2012	23	21	26	11
2013	27	23	24	14
2014	37	23	23	17
2015	26	24	21	13
2016	21	19	17	16
2017	26	21	16	23

Source: The Korean Broadcasting System, <https://drama.kbs.co.kr/>; Seoul Broadcasting system <https://www.sbs.co.kr/tv/drama/>; Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation <http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama/>; Total Variety Network <http://program.tving.com/tvn/searchwww/>

However, as demonstrated by Table 2.1, we cannot disregard cable TV stations, even compared with the three network stations. As shown on Table 2.2, TVN, the only cable TV

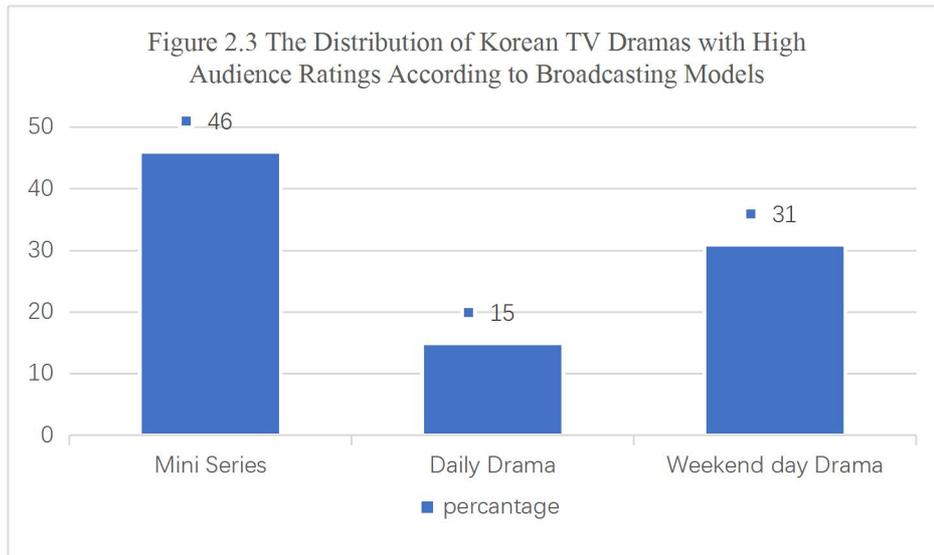
station that has produced more than 10 dramas each year, has enjoyed a significant increase in the number of dramas aired from 2012 to 2017. It even broadcast more TV dramas than MBC and SBS in 2017, earning more than 20% market share in 2017. In addition, according to Table 2.1, there was not a great deal of difference among the three main network stations. However, generally speaking, we can see that over the period, KBS broadcast the most dramas, MBC remained stable, and SBS experienced a decrease.

2.3.2 Broadcasting Models

Korean dramas have various broadcasting styles, varying in terms of their length and broadcast frequency. In Korea, most new dramas are broadcast at night, between 8pm and 11pm, though some are broadcast in the morning. In terms of broadcast time, there are three main types of dramas: daily dramas, shown from Monday to Friday; mini-series, which broadcast two episodes a week on weekdays; and weekend dramas, for which each episode is broadcast on Saturday and Sunday. These types of dramas also vary in terms of episode and series length. Daily dramas have 35-minute episodes and run for more than 100 episodes. Mini-series, as the name suggests, last no more than 24 episodes, and usually ends after around 17 episodes. With the drama's plot requirement, each episode lasts for around 60 minutes. Weekend dramas seem to fall between the other two types, as they run for 40 to 60 episodes, with each episode covering one hour on average.

What is the distribution of broadcasting models among Korean TV dramas with high audience ratings? From the figure 2.3, we can see that mini-series are most common model among Korean TV dramas with high audience ratings, while the daily drama model is the least common. This distribution is easy to understand, as mini-series are broadcast twice a week during weekdays. With a length of around 16 episodes, the audience needs only 2 months to

complete a drama mini-series. This model appeals to contemporary fast food culture, in which people pursue instant or quicker gratification over quality. Further, the weekday night broadcasting times suit off-work office workers. As mentioned earlier, watching TV dramas sometimes satisfies social needs.



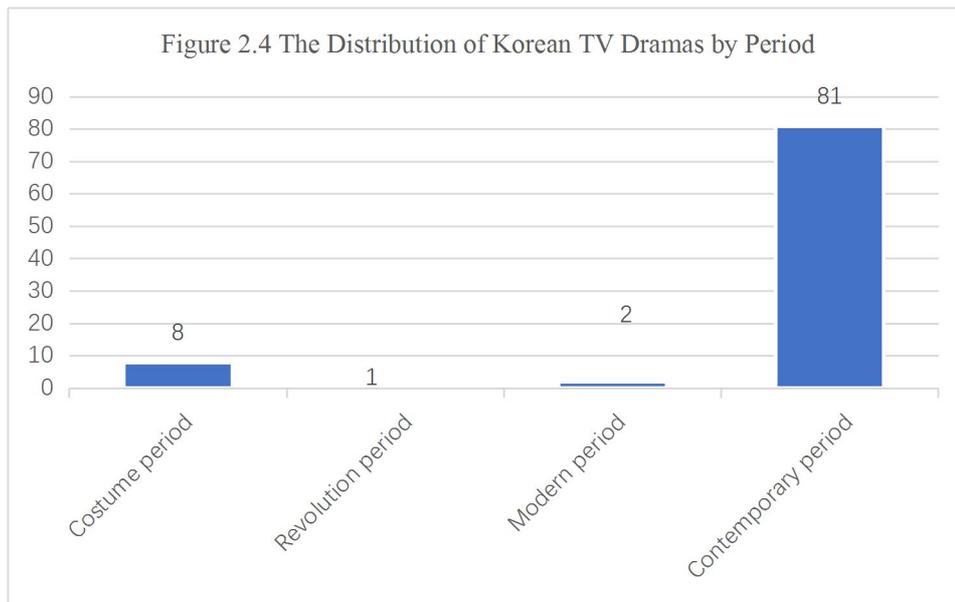
Mini-series, as topics among friends and colleagues, thus also meet people’s social needs. *Why is the daily drama the least common model?* The target audience of daily dramas is limited, as some daily dramas are broadcast in mornings, when most people have no time to watch. In addition, most daily dramas are soap series related to traditional family values. However, daily drama episodes are only 30 minutes long and the plots are easy to follow, so they also appeal to people’s fast food culture preferences.

2.3.3 Broadcasting Content: TV Dramas

The content of broadcasting is the most significant factor in attracting audiences, so it is necessary to analyze TV dramas with high audience ratings in order to provide recommendations to producers and TV stations. Since drama production is centered on screenwriters, we first classify the dramas by their screenplays.

First, where does the creative thinking of the screenplay come from? Is it the writer's original writing, adapted from other cultural products, or based on historical facts? After compilation, we found only three dramas that are not original writing: *The Moon That Embraces the Sun* (해를 품은 달), which was adapted from a novel of the same name; *The Empress Ki* (기황후), which was based on the life of the third queen of Emperor Shundi during the Yuan Dynasty; and *The Emperor: Owner of the Mask* (군주-가면의 주인), based on the privatization of water resources in 1700 in Korea. All the other dramas are original writing of their screenwriters. Most of the Korean TV dramas with high audience ratings thus came from the screenwriters' original writing.

Second, what is the historical setting of these TV dramas? The TV dramas' historical settings can be divided into four periods according to different national conditions and social themes. The first period is set before Japanese colonization. Because most actors wear costumes, these dramas are also called "costume dramas." The second period is set during the Japanese colonization era, from 1910 to 1945. Because there were so many revolutions against colonization and important historic events during this period, the TV dramas based on this period are regarded as "revolution dramas." Third is the modern period, spanning from 1945 to 2000. Fourth is the contemporary period, from 2000 to present (Kwon and Kim 2014,422). In Figure 2.4, we can see that 88% of TV dramas are based on the contemporary period; other periods are much less common. Realistic dramas are the main type of broadcast content in Korea. It is easy to understand this, as people likely get more emotional feedback when dramas are close to daily life.

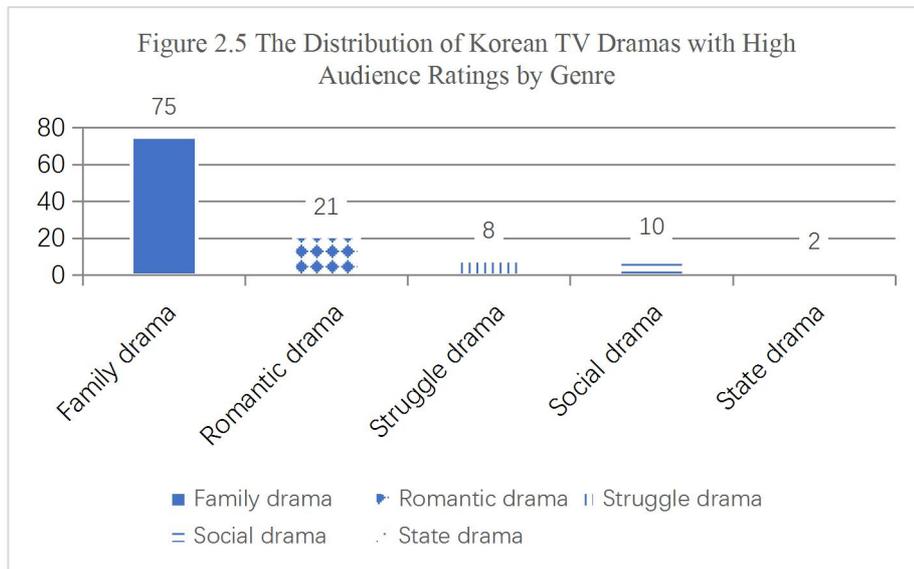


Source: The Korean Broadcasting System, <https://drama.kbs.co.kr/>; Seoul Broadcasting system <https://www.sbs.co.kr/tv/drama/>;MunhwaBroadcasting Corporation <http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama/>;

Third, what genres are represented among Korean dramas with high audience ratings?

Admittedly, a single drama can be classified as more than one genre. For example, a drama can be classified as both a love and a mystery drama at the same time. However, no matter how many different kinds of content are involved, each drama is based on a main storyline that describes the relationships among the characters, from beginning to end. The whole drama is closely connected to the characters and their relationship. In view of this, we can classify the genres of dramas according to the characters' relationships. The relationships that define dramas fall into the several categories. First, dramas based on family relationships are often presented as family dramas. Second, many dramas are based on characters' relationships with society. This includes those based on the relationships between lovers (romantic dramas); on individuals' relationships with substantive topics, such as money and social status, which are often connected to power struggles (struggle dramas); individuals' relationships with social institutions, which often reflect social problems (social dramas); and on individuals'

relationships with the country, such as those related to protecting the country, war, and the nation's survival (state dramas) (Nye 2004).



source: The Korean Broadcasting System, <https://drama.kbs.co.kr/>; Seoul Broadcasting system <https://www.sbs.co.kr/tv/drama>;MunhwaBroadcasting Corporation <http://www.imbc.com/broad/tv/drama/>;

As can be seen from Figure 2.5, most dramas were family dramas, followed in frequency by romantic dramas (21.8%). Struggle dramas and social dramas are similarly common, but fall far behind family dramas and romantic dramas. Only two dramas were state dramas. The high percentage of family dramas reflects the fact that Korea is a country that promotes Confucianism and has a traditional focus on the family. In addition, most of the audience is comprised of middle-aged females who prefer family dramas and descriptions of daily life. These family dramas are more connected to reality, which audiences find relatable. The huge percentages of family dramas and romantic dramas demonstrate that Korean TV dramas are more likely to focus on the individual relationships among family members and lovers. In sum, the main broadcast content in Korea is composed of family dramas and romantic dramas.

In conclusion, there are three main characteristics of Korean drama broadcasting. In terms of broadcasting platform, the three main network TV stations – KBS, SBS, and MBC – hold

dominant positions in the market. In terms of broadcasting model, the main Korean TV drama broadcasting model is the mini-series. As for broadcasting content, Korean TV drama broadcasting content is primarily composed of realistic dramas that relate to family and romance.

Chapter 3. Analysis of Chinese TV Dramas

3.1 History

The history of Chinese TV dramas can be divided into five stages according to varying economic and political characteristics. Firstly, due to government policies and poor economic conditions, dramas were mainly regarded as political tools. The Chinese drama industry developed slowly, even stagnating (1958-1978). Secondly, after 10 years of the Cultural Revolution, the drama industry recovered over the course of China's Reform and Opening Up era (1979-1989). During this time, the television drama transformed from a political tool to a form of mass communication. Thirdly, with the development of China's socialist economy and globalization, the Chinese drama industry developed rapidly and began marketization (1990-2003). Fourthly, from 2004 to 2011, the rapid development of China's drama industry caused oversupply. Lastly, since 2012, the industry has been experienced a revolution under the State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television's (SARFT) regulations (Yin 2001,1-7).

3.1.1 Slow Development (1958-1978): Drama as a Political Tool

On May 1st, 1958, China's first TV station, a Beijing station that was the predecessor of China Central Television (CCTV), successfully completed its first trial broadcast. One month later, the station broadcast the first Chinese TV drama live. This first drama appealed to the Party's spirit, recalling past suffering and praising present happiness and food-saving (Yin 2008,10). From 1958 to 1966, around 200 dramas (including short sketches) were produced, serving only a very small audience because of extremely low television coverage. In order to serve political movements, dramas were played mainly to serve as political education and promote the spirit of the representative figure (Swatek 2002). In addition, due to insufficient

technology, all dramas were broadcast live, and most scenes were indoor and closed shoots. From 1966 to 1976, the drama industry fully stopped and all sectors of drama production were canceled due to the Cultural Revolution, which controlled culture and ideology incorrectly. However, during those ten years, foreign television technology developed rapidly, with the emergence of camcorders and the shift from live shoots to indoor productions. Thus, the Chinese drama industry initially grew slowly and fell behind foreign peers.

3.1.2 The Recovery (1979-1989): The Transformation into Mass Communications

After 10 years of stagnation, the Chinese drama industry was reborn and grew quickly due to China's Reform and Opening-Up policy. Radio and television expanded rapidly in the 1980s as important means of mass communication and popular entertainment. In 1982, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, television was, by one measure, available only to 350 million people out of China's population of 1 billion and was mostly watched on a communal basis(Yin 2008,9-10). By 1985, television reached two-thirds of China's population through more than 104 stations (up from 52 in 1984 and 44 in 1983) (Yin 2008,10). That year, an estimated 85 percent of the urban population had access to television and consumers purchased 15 million new television sets, including approximately 4 million color sets(Yin 2008,10-11). Production fell far short of demand. Because Chinese viewers often gathered in large groups to watch publicly owned sets, authorities estimated that two-thirds of the nation had access to television (Yin 2008,11). In 1987, Chinese owned about 70 million television sets, an average of 29 sets per 100 families (Yin 2008,11). With higher television coverage, more and more audiences had access to dramas. With more audiences, the drama industry was encouraged and produced many high-quality and popular dramas. For example, in 1985, the drama, *Yellow Storm*, which was adapted from the novel by Lau Shaw, became a hot social topic. In the

following years, adaptations of China's four classic novels, including *Dream of the Red Chamber* and *Journey to the West*, became popular (Wu 2008,84). These adaptations were exported to the international market and were well-received. During this period, more genres of dramas were produced, and production teams focused on the quality of their dramas and provided many cultural products. The 1980s can be regarded as the beginning of the transformation of Chinese TV dramas.

3.1.3 Rapid Development (1900-2003): Gradual Marketization

During this period, China's Reform and Opening-Up policies worked effectively and people's living standards greatly improved. Watching television dramas became daily leisure. People began showing greater hope for diversified dramas. In 1990, the drama, *Ke Wang* (渴望) (which means "aspiration" and "yearning" in Chinese) began its 50-episode run, marking the transformation of Chinese drama into mass entertainment. The drama took place during the age of "Wenge" (the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution 文革) and focused on the love experiences of two couples. The main character, Liu Huifang, had a complicated fate which deeply affected the audience's emotions. Centered around the "intertwined lives, loves and tragedies of two families" and the tension between Liu's romantic relationship and maternal love, the phenomenal popularity and success of *Ke Wang* lay in its effective borrowing of the formats and conventions of family melodramas from other parts of the world, including the "coincidence of fate, hyperbolic figures, mysterious parentage, romance and tragedy, and the quintessential location in domestic space, as well as the symbolic construction of woman, the maternal and the feminine, through stories of desire, personal relations and daily family life" (Zhu, Keane, and Bai 2008,33-35). The theme of the drama was human nature. *Ke Wang* hit society by combining human nature with the era's background, revealing people's eager desires

for traditional values, love, friendship, and a good life (Zhu, Keane, and Bai 2008,47). It is noteworthy that *Ke Wang* was the first Chinese drama shot indoors.

Moreover, in 1990, the number of television dramas produced showed an upward trend, reaching an annual production over 6000 episodes. According to the SARFT, there was a significant increase in the number of dramas produced during this time, reaching 7535 episodes in 2000(Jia 2001,30).This huge increase in drama production was largely due to government support and the development of China's market economy. In 1993, during the 14th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, the government introduced the culture industry and officially admitted its position and potential. In addition, the drama industry joined the road of marketization. After the discovery of the huge benefits of advertising in dramas, Chinese television stations began to spend more and more money to buy potentially popular dramas. Previously, the stations did not buy dramas from the market and only broadcast dramas that they had produced themselves. Then the station made use of the hegemonic channel resource, the unfair buyer's market was formed.

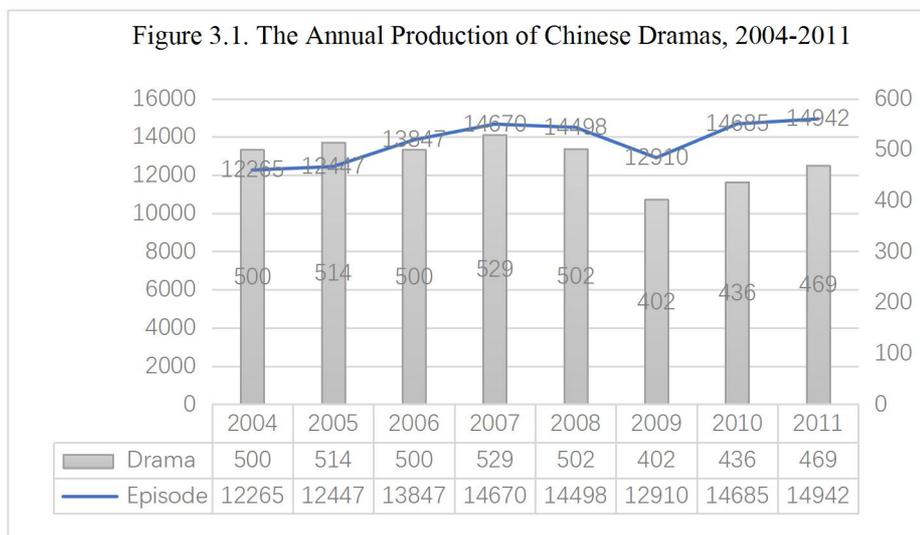
In addition, the sources of funding for dramas also changed significantly. There were three main sources of funding for production. First, central and local governments invested in some dramas for political promotion without economic return. Second, advertisers sponsored some dramas, though they bore high risks in terms of economic returns. These two types of funding greatly decreased in the late 1990s, while a third type, capital investment, became popular. Under this type of funding, production companies first received funding from enterprises or banks and provided economic returns after broadcasting (Yin 2001,11) .

Moreover, the 16th National Congress of Communist Party of China approved highly of private entrepreneurs' positive roles in socialist construction. Further, the government pointed

out that it is an important strategic policy of the central government on socialist cultural construction to actively develop cultural undertakings and the culture industry. Under this political background, private capital got involved in the production of television drama on a large scale and quickly exploited the drama market, as demonstrated by the expansion of the industry's scale and the extension of industry chains (Jia 2001,31). Thus, as demonstrated above, the marketization of China's drama industry contributed to the development of its dramas.

3.1.4 Industry Expansion: The Oversupply of Dramas (2004-2011)

After official approval, a great deal of private capital poured into the drama industry and more and more dramas were produced. Of course, this development also occurred due to China's rapid economic development. From Figure 3.1, we can see that there was a significant increase in the number of dramas and episodes, although there was a temporary decrease in 2009 resulting from the global financial crisis and China's consequent lower economic growth rate. Since 2007, China has been the number one country in the world in terms of the number of drama productions, the number of drama broadcasts, and the size of drama audiences. China's top position across these three measurements shows that the Chinese drama industry expanded a great deal.



Source: The State Administration of Radio, Film, and Television 国家广播电视总局

However, the huge expansion of the Chinese drama industry also led to oversupply. As reported by National Radio and Television Administration, each year around 9,000 episodes were broadcast and around 40% of dramas were unable to broadcast (Shao 2018,1). With the increased annual production of Chinese dramas, the percentage of unaired dramas climbed higher and higher. This oversupply led to overstock in the drama industry. The production of many unaired dramas was a great waste of resources. Even if a drama aired later, it may have missed a hot trend or been subject to criticism for using out-of-date technology.

Even worse, the oversupply of dramas did not mean that there was a great variety of choices for TV stations and audiences. To reduce TV stations' financial burden in buying TV dramas, the SARFT announced the "4+X" broadcast pattern (Yang and Fang 2013,1). Under it, dramas were allowed to debut on no more than four Provincial Star TV stations (hereinafter Star TV stations) and any number of TV stations below the provincial level. However, the decreased financial burden did not ease competition among stations because only a few dramas were high-quality. Thus, many Star TV stations preferred to buy the secondary broadcasting rights to high-quality dramas rather than buy the first broadcasting rights to low-quality dramas. As a result, it was not unusual for audiences to watch the same drama on many stations again and again.

3.1.5 The Revolution: Stricter SARFT Regulation (2012-present)

Following the oversupply in the Chinese drama industry, the SARFT published a series of notices placing limits on content production and broadcast models in order to regulate the drama industry. This is discussed in further detail in the next section.

3.2 Chinese TV Drama Production

Since 2012, the SARFT published a series of policies in order to regulate the administration of TV drama content, support the creation of TV dramas, and promote the healthy development of the TV drama industry. This section analyzes the characteristics of Chinese drama production through discussion of how the SARFT has functioned since 2012.

3.2.1 The Strict Regulations and Censorship of the SARFT

Simply speaking, if a company wants to produce TV dramas, the first thing it must do is apply for an official license from the SARFT. During this process, the SARFT strictly examines and disqualifies companies with poor performance or credit. Next, the production company summarizes its TV drama project with brief introductions of the drama and the production team in order to receive a license for shooting and producing TV dramas (电视剧制作许可证). During this period, the SARFT can exclude TV dramas with sensitive themes or genres, as well as those featuring tainted stars. If the production company makes it through the application process, the SARFT publicly announces the awarding of the license in order to maintain transparency. In sum, the SARFT censors and maintains tight control over capital entering the drama industry from the very beginning of the production process (Wang 2010).

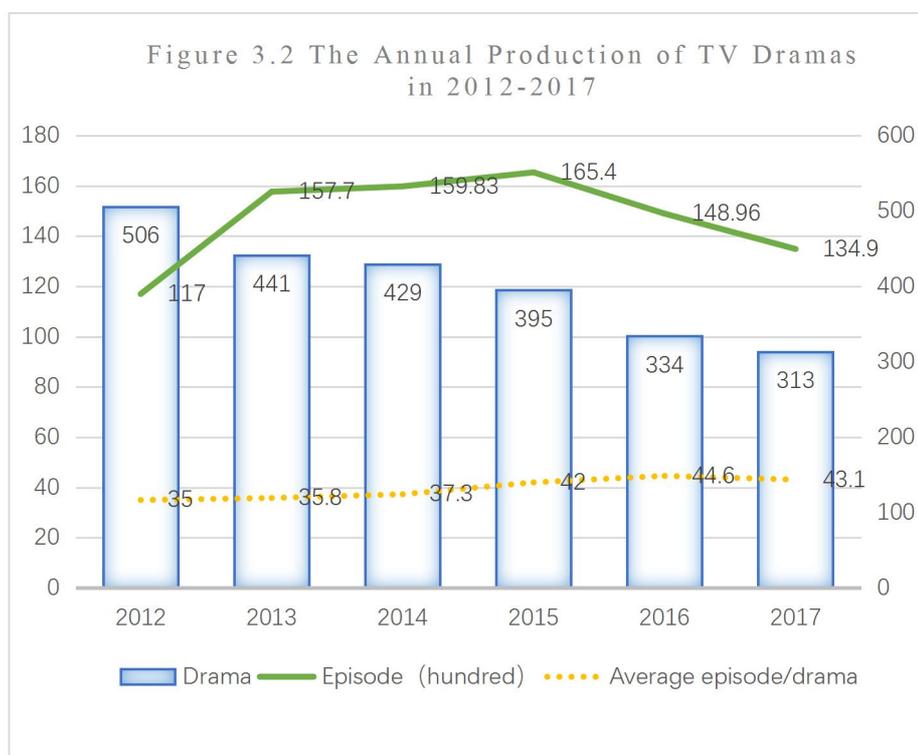
After production, the fully produced drama must to be reviewed by the SARFT again, this time more strictly. In most cases, the regulator requests cuts and revisions, and under some circumstances may cancel an episode entirely. Censorship is stringent and producers are frequently required to make unexpected changes (Yang and Fang 2013,2). Although a drama must first pass the SARFT's censorship in order to be broadcast, the amount of time spent during the censorship stage is unpredictable and can directly lead to great losses for the production company. Worse, sometimes dramas adapted from other cultural products face

rights-related expiration dates, while others miss their expected broadcasting dates. When a drama is finally broadcast on TV, the production company and the television stations must ensure that the episode broadcast is 100% the same as the censored one.

The SARFT also controls the content of productions³. For example, in 2012, it limited the number of reality television programs and historical dramas, and expressed disapproval of programs with plot twists involving time travel back to a Chinese historical era. This decree resulted in the cancellation of many planned dramas with historical plots (Wong 2012). Overall, the SARFTA regulates the drama industry from beginning to end.

3.2.2 The Oversupply of TV Drama Productions

Although the SARFT issued several policies to regulate the drama industry, the oversupply of Chinese TV dramas is still serious.



Source: The Annual Research and Consultation Report of Chinese drama industry future and investment in 2018-2023 ; <http://baogao.chinabaogao.com/yingshidongman/297236297236.html> 2018年-2023年中国电视剧行业发展前景与投资机会分析报告

³ The SARFT's 16-year ban 广电总局16年来禁限令一览 <http://www.tvtv.hk/archives/2318.html>.

As shown in Figure 3.2, there has been an obvious fall in the number of dramas produced annually, from 506 in 2012 to 313 in 2017. The number of episodes produced annually also decreased. The SARFT requires that each episode be around 45 minutes long; the average episode length of Chinese dramas climbed substantially from 35 in 2012 to 43.1 in 2017.

We can conclude that the SARFT's policies proved effective, as the number of dramas and episodes produced decreased. Still, in 2014, fewer than 50% of the dramas produced were broadcast, and according to reports from the National Radio and Television Administration, the percentage of unaired dramas reached 70% in 2016(China Baogao 2017,11). In addition, referring to the increased lengths of drama episodes, with more episodes produced for fewer dramas, television stations' costs increased, and audiences complained about unnecessary or slow-moving plots more frequently (Zhang 2018). Thus, the increase in unnecessary episodes did not make dramas better.

3.2.3 Great Investment in Actors

Great investment in actors is commonly seen in the Chinese culture industry, especially in film and drama. Actors reportedly take up half of drama investment costs. According to Feng's report (Feng 2017,1):

the production takes the 60% and the actors take the 40%. But it is more common to see that there is 50%; For example, the total investment is 120 million; the production is expected to cover around 30 million and the 2/3 are used on the actors.⁴

In the 2017 annual production meeting of the Shanghai Media Group (SMG) – one of China's largest media and cultural conglomerates, with the most complete portfolio of media and related businesses – the production manager said, "In only one year, 2016, the actors

⁴ "划预算时,基本上演员片筹和整个制作的费用是按照对半,或者是对半略弱,"比如制作费 60%, 演员费 40%, 但是五五更常见。"不过,近一两年也出现了偏差,"比如说 1.2 亿的投资,可能整个制作费也就是 3000 多万,等于 2/3 投资都用于演员费了."

rewarded in the A-list and the B-list increased by almost 250 %. In some dramas adapted from intellectual properties (IP dramas), the audience ratings of which mainly rely on the actors' popularity, the actors even take 75% of the investments (Ma 2017,1)."⁵

There are many reports about the great investment in drama actors. From these reports, we can see that actors' importance to production teams. On one hand, the investments can motivate the actors' enthusiasm towards dramas and encourage more professionalism. On the other hand, great investment in actors leaves comparatively less investment in not only the other players on production teams, but also in technology or drama scenes. As a result, even dramas with great investments can still be criticized by audiences for their low quality. This sometimes occurs because the great investment in actors is not for their excellent acting but for their popularity (Liang and Shen 2016,331–340).

However, it is easy to understand why production companies choose popular actors over those good at acting. They do so because of the strong fan economy in China. The "fan economy," in the broadest sense, refers to the value and revenue generated via interactions between individual fans (especially "superfans") and fan communities, on the one hand, and artists and stars (along with their production studios and programs) that they follow on the other (Rosen 1981,4–5). In this context, in gift transactions associated with the "gift economy," brands intentionally develop, invest in, and nurture fan communities in order to drive purchases through lifestyle affinity (Liang and Shen 2016,341–349). These strategies are subsumed within the larger discourse of corporate strategy with respect to content development and production, where gift transactions are increasingly giving way to market transactions (Stanfill and Condis 2014). The Chinese media and entertainment industries are increasingly leveraging how artists

⁵ "注水"电视剧会被观众唾弃 Water injection" TV series will be case aside by the audience. Liberation Daily 解放日报, Oct. 11, 2018.

and stars manage the emotional capital of their fans to generate maximum profit.

The words, “qinggan ziben”(情感资本), are the Chinese translation of the term, “emotional capital,” used in sociology, human resource management, and brand management. Gender, geography, cultural background, education level, social behavior, and income are all factors that drive fan culture. The most loyal fans are high-level or vested fans that seek to buy everything associated with an artist’s brand. Loyal fans help promote artists’ products, protect their reputation, and provide feedback promptly when given the opportunity. In design thinking methodology, it is often the outliers – obsessive personalities, such as loyal superfans – that can offer the greatest insight and feedback during product development (Liang and Shen 2016,337). In sum, in the fan economy, fans watch and promote dramas for the artists and stars they follow, which contributes to the dramas’ audience ratings, Weibo Index rankings, and so on. The great fan economy also appeals to advertisers’ interests, which increases the possibility of large investments in actors.

However, in 2017, the SARFT published a notice ruling that actors’ earnings cannot be more than 40% of a drama’s entire production cost. Leading actors cannot take more than 70% of the entire cast’s earnings. This was the first time the SARFT placed limitations on actors’ earnings. Despite this policy, nowadays, actors’ salaries have been converted into shares of production company’s stocks that go into the actors’ pockets. Thus, large investments in actors are still commonplace.

In conclusion, the SARFT regulates the entire drama production process, supervising production companies, drama projects, production teams, production content, and especially actors with strict censorship. The SARFT has brought much improvement to China’s drama industry, but the overstock issue remains serious and the quality of dramas still need to be

improved.

3.3 Chinese Drama Broadcasting

Besides production, the SARFT also plays an important role in broadcasting. In this section, we analyze the characteristics of Chinese drama broadcasting by examining how the SARFT regulates TV stations.

3.3.1 The SARFT's Influence on Broadcasting Models

The SARFT announced the “2+X” broadcasting model in 2015. Under it, a single drama can be broadcast on a maximum of two Star TV stations and any number of sub-provincial stations (Wu 2008,83-85). The transformation of the drama broadcasting model from “4+X” to “2+X” shows that Star TV stations are become stronger and have greater ability to afford dramas. As a result, audiences should enjoy more choices in terms of dramas, and the competition among stations and production companies should be intensive. As costs increase, audience ratings become more important. If a drama is not good enough to attract substantial advertisement revenue, its stations face great losses. When stations have become more prudent in buying dramas due to higher costs, production companies should be more responsible for their products. This is not only useful in solving the overstock of Chinese dramas, but also helps force production companies to improve their dramas' quality and provide audiences with more diversified and excellent cultural products.

The SARFT has also placed restraints on broadcasting time. For example, in June 2013, the SARFT issued a policy requiring TV stations to, except on national holidays, limit the amount of broadcasting time for dramas to no more than 45%. Further, the SARFT prohibited stations from broadcasting more than 6 episodes of a drama in one day; even on weekends, stations are limited to airing fewer than 8 episodes a day, including re-broadcasts. This policy thus limited

the amount of dramas aired and placed more pressure on TV stations in selecting dramas.

3.3.2 The SARFT's Influence on TV Stations

The “2+X” broadcasting model primarily benefits CCTV and A-list Star TV stations. They are the Five Star TV Stations(五大星级卫视), Hunan Satellite TV (HNTV 湖南卫视), Jiangsu Satellite TV (JSTV 江苏卫视), Zhejiang Satellite TV (ZJTV 浙江卫视), Dragon TV (东方卫视), and Beijing TV (BJTV 北京卫视). These stations are already able to afford drama production costs by themselves. Nowadays, in order to obtain the first and exclusive broadcasting rights to popular dramas, Star TV stations cooperate with production companies on investment. Sometimes, Star TV stations even get involved from the onset of the production process – from the choosing screenplays, actors, and so on – to ensure that dramas will be popular and suitable for the themes of their TV stations.

However, B-list⁶ and C-list⁷ Star TV stations cannot afford the high costs of drama production. In the past, to buy a drama, they shared the costs with three other stations. With the “2+X” model, the financial burden now falls on only two stations; each station now must pay twice as much in order to buy a drama. Therefore, it is hard for these stations to compete under the “2+X” broadcasting model. As a result, some stations prefer to buy a popular drama's re-broadcasting rights over an unknown drama's debut broadcasting rights. In this sense, these stations contradict the original motives of the SARFT; audiences still cannot enjoy diversified drama choices, and the oversupply and overstock problem is still not solved.

In conclusion, in theory, the “2+X” model should provide audiences more drama choices. However, if problems such as the high cost of drama production and the low-quality of dramas

⁶ B list Star TV stations are TV stations that are broadcasted across the nation but not by free-to-air system.

⁷ C list Star TV stations are TV stations that not only cannot broadcasted across the nation but also not by free-to-air system.

cannot be solved, the “2+X” model merely bolsters the Five Star TV stations’ dominant positions and increases the imbalance between them and other TV stations.

3.3.3 The SARFT’s Influence on Broadcasting Content

This section analyzes the broadcasting content of broadcasted C-dramas. In order to determine the characteristics of successful C-dramas, it is necessary to examine TV dramas with high audience ratings. The following list includes 123 Chinese TV dramas with high audience ratings.

List 3.1 Chinese TV Dramas with High Audience Ratings, 2012-2017

Year	Name
2012	The Brink 悬崖
2012	Palace II 宫锁珠帘
2012	Beijing Love Story 北京爱情故事
2012	Life’s Promise 誓言今生
2012	Empresses in the Palace 甄嬛传
2012	Beijing Youth 北京青年
2012	Jin Tailang's Happy Life 金太郎的幸福生活
2012	A Unique Militiaman 民兵葛二蛋
2012	The Magic Blade 天涯明月刀
2012	Turbulence of the Mu Clan 木府风云
2012	Hot Girls 麻辣女兵
2012	Legend of Entrepreneurship 温州一家人
2012	Yingpan Town Policeman 营盘镇警事
2012	National Destiny 国家命运
2012	Jiao Yulu 焦裕禄

2012	Battle Flags 战旗
2012	Dances with Wolves 与狼共舞
2012	Mystery in the Palace 深宫谍影
2012	Xuan-Yuan Sword: Scar of Sky 轩辕剑之天之痕
2012	In Love with Power 山河恋，美人无泪
2012	Husband and Wife 夫妻那点事
2012	The Color of Woman 女人的颜色
2012	Heroes of Sui and Tang Dynasties 1-2 隋唐英雄
2012	Refueling Mother 幸福妈妈
2012	Red Lady 红娘子
2012	The Queen of S.O.P 胜女的代价
2012	Cherry 樱桃
2013	Article 22: The Marriage Gauge 第二十二条军规
2013	Naive Met the Reality 天真遇到现实
2013	Shining Days 璀璨人生
2013	Legend of Lu Zhen 陆贞传奇
2013	Noble Bride: Regretless Love 百万新娘之爱无悔
2013	The Orphan of Zhao 赵氏孤儿案
2013	We Get Married 咱们结婚吧
2013	Hot Mon! 辣妈正传
2013	Beauties at the Crossfire 烽火佳人
2013	Heroes in Sui and Tang Dynasties 隋唐演义
2013	Da Gou Gun 打狗棍
2013	Flowers In Fog 花非花雾非雾
2013	A Happy Life 天天有喜

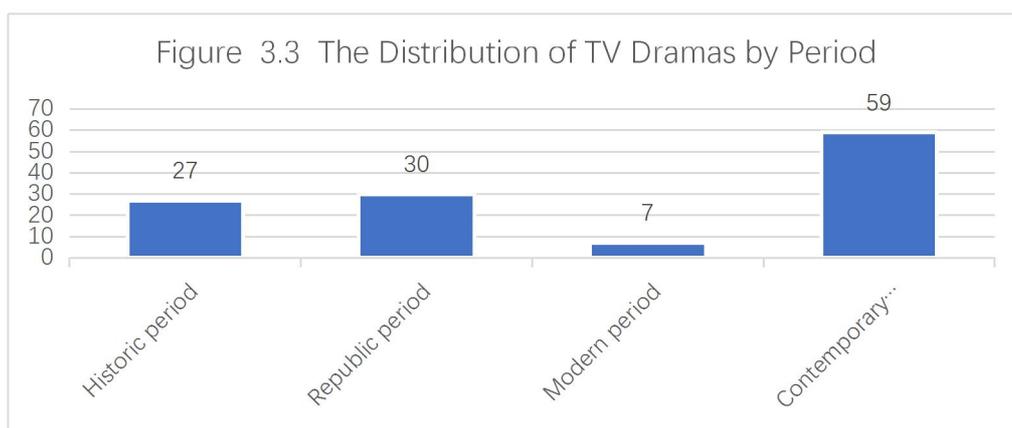
2013	Phoenix Nirvana 特种兵之火凤凰
2013	The Story of Mulan 花木兰传奇
2013	Braving the Journey Prequel 闯关东前传
2013	If Life Cheats You 假如生活欺骗了你
2013	Mao Zedong 毛泽东
2013	Looking for Road 寻路
2013	Swordsman 笑傲江湖
2013	Happy Life 因为爱情有多美
2013	Best Time 最美的时光
2013	The Golden Flower and Her Son-in-Law 那金花和她的女婿
2013	The Sweet Burden 小儿难养
2014	The Empress of China 武媚娘传奇
2014	Romance of Our Parents 父母爱情
2014	May-December Love 大丈夫
2014	I Apartment 爱情公寓 4
2014	All Quiet in Peking 北平无战事
2014	The Chinese Old Peasant 老农民
2014	Red Sorghum 红高粱
2014	Obstetrician 产科医生
2014	Divorce Lawyer 离婚律师
2014	Ma Xiangyang's Story 马向阳下乡记
2014	A Servant of Two Masters 一仆二主
2014	The Big Case on the Mekong River 湄公河大案
2014	Deng Xiaoping 历史转折中的邓小平
2014	The Fight of Changsha 长沙保卫战

2014	The Young Doctor 青年医生
2014	The River Children 大河儿女
2014	The Legend of a Hongan General 铁血红安
2014	Love is a Miracle 因为爱情有奇迹
2014	The Palace: The Lost Daughter 宫锁连城
2014	Super Partner 神犬奇兵
2014	Brave Heart 勇敢的心
2014	Gods of War 战神
2014	Swords of Legends 古剑奇谭
2015	Nirvana in Fire 琅琊版
2015	The Disguiser 伪装者
2015	Tiger Mom 虎妈猫爸
2015	Legend of Miyue 芈月传
2015	The Whirlwind Girl 旋风少女
2015	Wang Dahu's Revolution 王大花的革命生涯
2015	The Journey of Flower 花千骨
2015	The Yellow River 黄河在咆哮
2015	My Sunshine 何以笙箫默
2015	Taihang Mountain 太行山上
2015	In The Silence 于无声处
2015	Cruel Romance 锦绣缘华丽冒险
2015	Legend of Fragrance 活色生香
2015	Hero Dog 神犬小七
2015	Wife's Lies 妻子的谎言
2015	Destined to Love You 偏偏喜欢你

2015	Nursing Our Love 家和万事兴
2015	SWAT 特警力量
2015	Ice and Fire of Youth 冰与火的青春
2016	Marshal 少帅
2016	The Imperial Doctress 女医明妃传
2016	Begonia is Still 海棠依旧
2016	To Be a Better Man 好先生
2016	Ode to Joy 1 欢乐颂 1
2016	Marshal Peng Dehuai 彭德怀元帅
2016	A Love for Separation 小别离
2016	Chinese Style Relationship 中国式关系
2016	The Identity of Father 父亲的身份
2016	Decoded 解密
2016	People's Prosecutor 人民检察官
2016	Sparrow 麻雀
2016	Les Interprètes 亲爱的翻译官
2016	Taking the Wrong Car 搭错车
2016	Princess Weiyong 锦绣未央
2016	Stay With Me 放弃我，抓紧我
2016	A Detective Housewife 煮妇神探
2017	Because of You 因为遇见你
2017	General and I 孤芳不自赏
2017	Love Actually 人间至味是清欢
2017	Ode to Joy II 欢乐颂 2
2017	Princess Agents 楚乔传

2017	In the Name of People 人民的名义
2017	Eternal Love 三生三世十里桃花
2017	Nothing Gold Can Stay 那年花开月正圆
2017	Yu Chenglong 于成龙
2017	The First Half of My Life 我的前半生
2017	Emergency Doctors 急诊科医生
2017	Beijing People in Beijing 生逢灿烂的日子
2017	White Deer 白鹿原

First, what are the characteristics of the above dramas' settings? According to China's economy and politics, their settings can be divided into the Historic period before the Xinhai Revolution (before 1919); the Republic period (1912-1949); the Modern period (1949-1977); and the Contemporary period (after 1978) (Xiong and Zhou 2003,201). As shown in Figure 3.3, nearly 50% of recent popular dramas are set during the contemporary period; the remaining dramas are set during the Historic period and Republic period comparatively equally. Only 6% of the dramas are set during the Modern period.



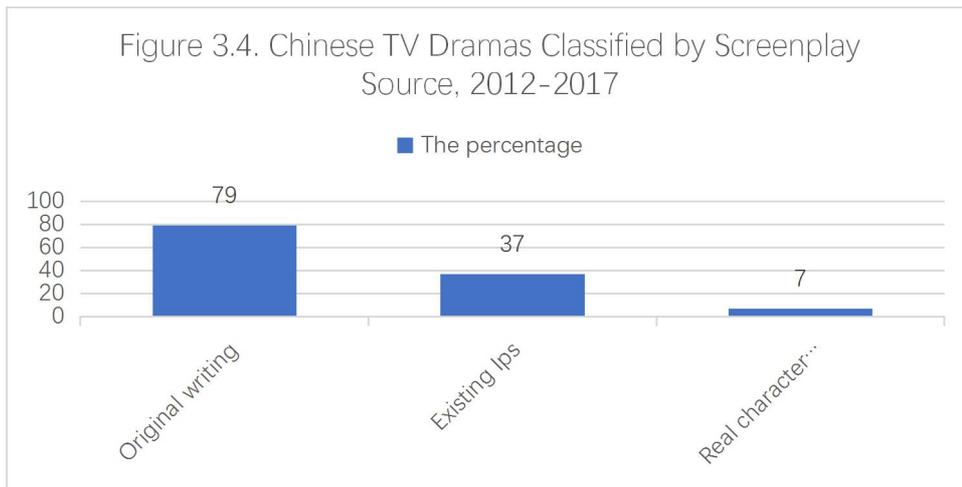
It is easy to understand this distribution. Firstly, the SARFT encourages the production of TV dramas based on reality. Audiences are easily attracted to these plots, as they are closely connected to their daily lives. In addition, the SARFT influences dramas set during the Republic

period. The SARFT asks TV stations to broadcast Red dramas (dramas that promote the Red Army spirit) in September and October in order to memorialize the hardships in establishing the People's Republic of China; most Red dramas are based on the Republic period.

As for the Historic period, the great history of China is really attractive and meets the audience's needs for education and novelty (Iwabuchi and Chua 2008). However, this does not mean that Korean history is not attractive as the background for costume dramas. The difference in popularity between Chinese historical dramas and their Korean counterparts is because of the length of costume drama. Costume dramas usually run for more than 50 episodes, which means they need a long period to produce and broadcast. Korean production companies and audiences prefer weekend dramas and mini-dramas, both of which air two episodes each week. As a result, Korean audiences must follow a costume drama for six months, which does not appeal to fast food culture. By contrast, in China, costume dramas can broadcast two episodes on weekdays, which means that Chinese audiences can watch an entire costume drama in one month. In addition, the issues in costume dramas reflect those in current society. Some themes featured in contemporary dramas, such as anti-corruption, murder, and sexual relations, are sensitive issues. Therefore, costume dramas both avoid censorship and reflect sensitive social issues. Thus, costume dramas not only meet the fancy imaginations of their audiences, but also appeal to their concerns.

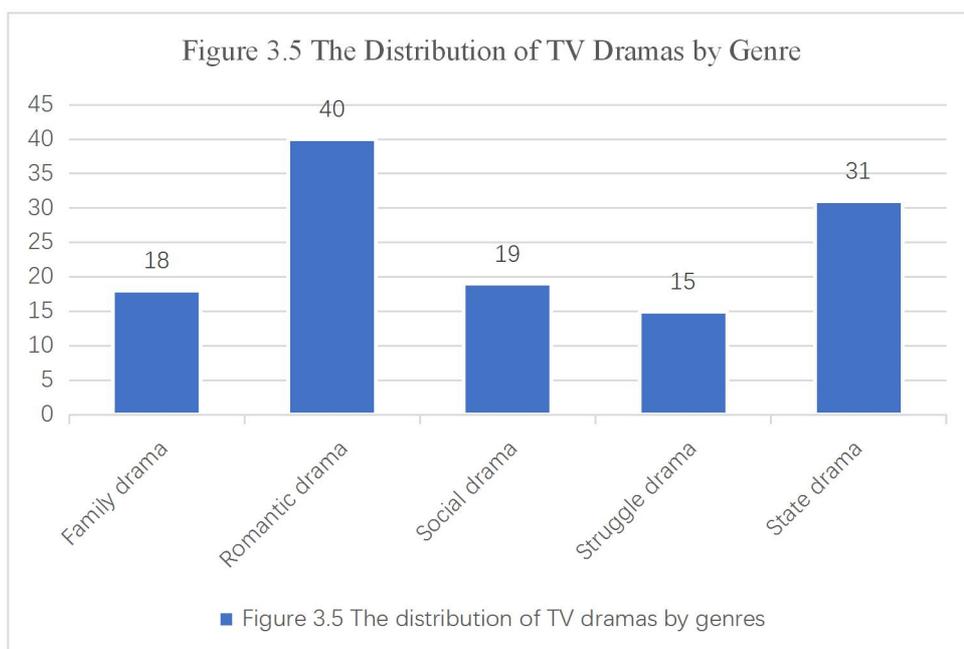
Second, where do screenplays come from? The screenplay is the basis of a drama. Dramas can be classified according to the sources of their screenplays: original writing by the screenwriters; adaptations from other intellectual properties (IPs); or stories based on real characters or important historical events. As shown in Figure 3.4, more than half of screenplays are based on original writing, while those based on existing IPs still take up 30%. The

importance of IP dramas remains undeniable, and their popularity is a phenomenon.



What contributes to the popularity of IP dramas? One reason is the audience's motivation to participate. Most IP dramas are adapted from novels, and their screenplays are first published on the internet. Writers then revise the stories according to fans' comments. Thus, we can say that novel fans participate in novel production. Before a drama is released, novel fans have a lot of expectations, as they have already known the outline and the plot of the screenplay. Thus, IP dramas easily attract attention and can make use of novel fans for promotion, regardless of how the novel fans feel toward them. Further, as IP drama screenplays are written on the basis of contact with viewers, they are different from other screenplays produced only by the writer; they have already taken some fans' preferences and comments into consideration, increasing the probability that they will be popular.

Third, what are the genres of these TV dramas? The genres are divided into family dramas; romantic dramas; struggle dramas; social dramas that reflect contemporary social problems; and state dramas connected to the Anti-Japanese War, the Chinese Civil War, and other important events or characters across China's history.



As shown in Figure 3.5, the most common type of dramas are romantic dramas, followed by state dramas. Together, the two genres represent more than half of recent popular C-dramas. The proportions of social dramas, struggle dramas, and family dramas are fairly similar. This distribution is not difficult to understand. Romantic dramas are closely connected to personal emotions, and state dramas are also influenced by the SARFT. As mentioned earlier, the SARFT encourages the broadcast of Red dramas, most of which are state dramas. With China’s national identity education, Chinese are easily invested in the country’s security and national survival, and so connect to the plots of state dramas. Thus, these state dramas meet the audiences’ emotional requirements and provide them with a strong sense of involvement.

In conclusion, the broadcasting of Chinese TV dramas is still quite influenced by the SARFT’s regulation. The SARFT’s policies advanced the “2+X” broadcasting model, which strengthened the Five Star TV stations’ dominant positions and increased the imbalance between Five Star TV stations and other Star TV stations. As for broadcasting content, most TV dramas are realistic dramas often related to love or important historical characters or events related to the nation’s survival and development. In addition, broadcasting content comes not only from

screenwriters' original writing, but also from adaptations of other cultural products, especially novels.

Chapter 4. Comparison between Korea and China's Production and Broadcasting Characteristics

The previous two chapters analyze the characteristics of the production and broadcasting of TV dramas in Korea and China. This chapter compares Korea's characteristics with those of China in order to share lessons from each country with the government, producers, and TV stations of the other.

4.1 Differences of Production and Broadcasting

Compared to the similarities, the differences in Korea's and China's production and broadcasting characteristics seem more obvious. The biggest difference is in the efficiency of production and the diversity of broadcasting. These dissimilarities can be explained by the following points.

4.1.1 Different Degrees of Censorship and Regulation

The Chinese dramas are subject to many regulations from the SARFT from beginning to end. As a result, it is common for dramas to take a long time from production to broadcast. By contrast, Korea has established an age-based rating system; production companies simply follow the appropriate age requirements for their dramas. In other words, Korean TV dramas are not subject to censorship again and again. Of course, the Korean drama industry developed earlier and enjoys a high degree of marketization compared to its Chinese counterpart. The lower degree of marketization of Chinese drama industry is also because the Chinese government still plays a regulatory role in the Chinese drama industry and regards TV dramas as educational tools to promote the core socialist values (社会主义核心价值观). By contrast, Korea regards its culture industry as an important aspect of its economy, and its government

plays a more supportive role.

Due to these differences, the two countries operate different drama production models. Korean TV dramas do not need full pre-production before broadcasting, while Chinese TV dramas not only need full pre-production but also need receive broadcasting approval from the SARFT. Therefore, it is no wonder that 100% of produced Korean TV dramas can be broadcast, while Chinese TV dramas are overstocked. Whereas the Korean approach allows for the maximization of resource utilization and reduces the cost if a drama is not popular, Chinese dramas more resemble gambling, as a great deal of capital is put into a drama and no one can ensure its popularity. With great time and money investments, Chinese dramas are riskier.

4.1.2 Different Important Roles in Production

First, during Korean drama production, the producer and director are usually a single person, whereas in China, the producer and director are usually different people. The Korean approach leads to fewer conflicts in costs and production. Producers are usually responsible for production schedules and production costs, and directors are more focused on production. Therefore, Chinese dramas face more conflicts in the selection of actors, the arrangement of schedules, the distribution of production costs, and so on.

Second, Korean screenwriters enjoy a higher position than Chinese screenwriters. As mentioned earlier, whether in the pre-production process or the production process, Korean screenwriters are in the most important position. In other words, K-drama screenwriters have great say in the production of K-dramas. This is closely connected to comparatively stronger intellectual property laws in Korea, which well protect the screenwriters' rights and encourage them to produce more excellent work. There are many famous screenwriters who are regarded as attractive selling points when promoting TV dramas. By contrast, in China, the number of

famous screenwriters can be counted on one hand. Compared with Korean writers, Chinese writers are in a much weaker position – not only in terms of earnings, but also in terms of power. In Chinese production teams, the producer and actors occupy the highest positions, followed by the director and, at the bottom, the writer. Before the production of a Chinese drama, the screenplay is almost complete and the screenwriter’s task is almost finished. During production, the screenwriter rarely participates, and the director or actors can revise the screenplay without approval from the screenwriter. This can easily lead to substantial and unnecessary deviations from the original screenplay.

Moreover, Chinese actors earn higher pay than Korean actors even though the SARFT issued strict regulations on actors’ pay in 2017, prohibiting actors’ pay from exceeding 40% of total costs and main actors’ pay from exceeding 70% of all actors’ pay. Before the rule, production costs mostly went into actors’ pockets. Without enough capital support, it is difficult to produce high-quality dramas effectively.

4.1.3 Different Broadcasting Models and Broadcasting Content

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there are various types of Korean broadcasting models. There are different broadcasting times and frequencies to match the different lengths and genres of Korean TV dramas. This allows Korean TV dramas to more easily to achieve high audiences. However, in China, the broadcasting model and broadcasting times are strictly regulated; most TV dramas broadcast on weekday nights with two to three 45-minute episodes each night. This means that if a fan likes a drama, he or she must watch TV every night in order to keep up with its plot.

In terms of broadcasting content – the TV dramas themselves – the circumstances are different. Korean audiences focus too much on a single type of background and genre, and there

are only a few TV dramas based on others. For example, Korea broadcasts too many TV dramas based on the contemporary period and does not broadcast dramas based on other periods enough. Chinese dramas also focus on the contemporary period, but still broadcasts many based on the historic and Republic periods. Though it may be due to the different preferences of the Korean and Chinese audiences, Chinese broadcasting content is more diversified.

4.2 Similarities of Production and Broadcasting

Korea and China have popular, high-quality TV dramas and share some similarities in drama production and broadcasting.

4.2.1 Communication with Audiences

Although Korean dramas shoot while broadcasting and do not undergo full pre-production, and Chinese dramas are broadcast after completely shooting, both realize the importance of communication with their respective audiences. In Korea, most dramas shoot just one or two episodes before they begin broadcasting, even though their main drafts are completed. The production teams then carefully read the comments and feedback from their audiences, and the screenwriters revise their screenplays accordingly. The production teams then finish shooting. So, it is common for an audience member to watch an episode that just finished shooting and editing the day before. Korean TV stations and production teams place audience feedback and comments as the top priority. It is not unusual for TV stations and production teams to shorten the length of TV dramas in response to low audience ratings, or for them to change the screen time of some characters according to audience comments. Therefore, each new episode is a reply from a production team to its audience's comments and feedback.

While Chinese TV dramas cannot realize Korea's production and broadcasting methods, the significant percentage of Chinese IP dramas also demonstrates the importance of

communication with audiences. When an IP is first produced, communication with its audience also plays an important role. For example, when a novel is first serialized on the Internet, readers share their views and suggestions about the newest chapter, and the writer refers to the readers' feedback when writing the following chapter. This way, novels are completed with great involvement from their audiences. Therefore, when the novel adapted into drama, it has had taken a lot of people's preferences and suggestions into consideration. What's more, in this way, the audience feel like they also took part in the drama production and would show greater interest on the drama.

4.2.2 Dominant TV Stations

Both Korea and China have dominant TV stations. In Korea, the three dominant stations are KBS, MBC, and SBS. In China, they are the 5 Star TV stations. The similar dominance of a handful of stations in both countries demonstrates the importance of access to dramas and the high costs of dramas. The dominant stations reach more audiences nationwide, and most of them receive support from the government to reduce the financial pressure of buying dramas. Because of their greater audiences and government support, these stations are more able to buy more attractive, high-quality dramas despite their high costs.

4.2.3 Main Broadcasting Content

First, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3, the main type of drama in both Korea and China is the contemporary drama. It seems that both the Korean and Chinese TV drama industries prefer realistic dramas. Most realistic dramas focus on daily life and social issues, which appeals to the audience's emotional sympathy. These realistic dramas can meet the emotional needs of the audience as audience members feel more involvement in the drama plots. Further, as realistic dramas involve more social issues, they are more likely to attract social attention and become

social topics among people. Besides that, the production of realistic dramas is comparatively easier than the production of costume dramas or modern dramas, as they have lower clothing and scene costs. In addition, one must admit that realistic dramas are the best choice for promoting advertised goods, such as food, cosmetics, cars, and so on. In this sense, realistic dramas meet both the stations' and the investors' needs.

Second, the main genres of dramas in both countries are, by a considerable percentage, the family and romance genres. This is because both Korea and China are deeply influenced by Confucianism and face rapid social development and change. In the two countries' rapidly changing and greatly confused societies, urban family dramas reflect common social problems in family lives and in romantic relationships, such as midlife crises, rising divorce rates, increasing extramarital affairs, and so on. These urban romances are particularly successful in capturing the inner emotional worlds of female characters with great sympathy and sensitivity. The anger, confusion, frustration, jealousy, and even hysteria of middle-aged women is convincingly built up, episode by episode, ultimately reaching crisis points (Zhu, Keane, and Bai 2008,88-100). In addition, as more and more women become independent, more and more family dramas and romantic dramas focus on females and how their values have changed and developed in society. The conflicts between traditional idealized female characters, as "virtuous wives and good mothers," and modern independent female characters also appeal to contemporary females' concerns.

Conclusion

Korea is famous for its TV dramas and enjoys a good reputation. Korea can be regarded as a powerful TV drama country, given the high value of its drama exports. China has experienced rapid economic development in recent years. Its TV drama industry has also quickly developed, and now produces the most TV dramas in the world. Therefore, Korea is an influential drama country and China is a prolific drama country. In order to have a better understanding of their relative advantages, it is meaningful to find out the characteristics of TV drama production and broadcasting in each country. With more and more cultural communication between Korea and China, it is also necessary to compare these characteristics in order to provide suggestions for the governments, production companies, and TV stations of both countries in order to improve both TV drama industries.

Korea enjoys a higher degree of marketization than China, and the Korean TV drama industry enjoys the Korean government's great support. Under the co-production system between production companies and TV stations, Korean TV drama productions follow Korea's age-based rating system and do not need to undergo full pre-production, which minimizes resource losses. During the production process, the screenwriter is at the center position and has great influence over the whole production team. The producer is also the director in order to ensure that the drama's quality meets expectations. In broadcasting, the three main TV stations – SBS, KBS, and MBC – hold dominant positions. In addition, there are three main types of broadcasting models according to broadcasting time and frequency: the daily drama, aired from Monday to Friday; the mini-series, with two episodes aired each week on weekdays; and the weekend drama, with two episodes aired each Saturday or Sunday. Further, the main types of

dramas are family dramas and romantic dramas, and are based on the contemporary period.

In China, the importance of the SARFT cannot be ignored. On one hand, the SARFT regulates the whole production process through strict censorship and regulation. Production companies must first undergo full pre-production before being reviewed by the SARFT. Only after receiving approval can dramas be broadcast on TV stations. However, the time spent on censorship usually is large and unpredictable, which can hinder broadcasts and impose great financial losses. In addition, due to excessive financial investment in actors and comparatively insufficient investment in other aspects of TV drama production, the SARFT also passed regulations on actors' pay. Further, the SARFT also regulates dramas' broadcasting model, broadcasting time, broadcasting players, and broadcasting content. The SARFT promotes the "2+X" model in order to prevent many TV stations from all airing a single drama, as there are already many dramas unable to find stations to broadcast on. Under this model, the Five Star TV stations still retain their dominant positions. The SARFT also regulates broadcasting content by encouraging the broadcast of realistic dramas based on the contemporary period, and by requiring TV stations to broadcast Red TV dramas.

By comparing the drama production and broadcasting characteristics of Korea and China, the paper observe several differences and similarities. The greatest difference in production is that Korean production is more efficient than Chinese production. As for broadcasting, the primary difference between the two countries' dramas is in diversity. Korean broadcasting models are more varied, but China's broadcasting content is more diversified. The two countries also are similar across three main characteristics. First, both countries realize the importance of communication with audiences. This is reflected in Korea's shooting-while-broadcasting model and China's production and broadcasting of more IP TV dramas. Second, both countries have

their own main TV stations with dominant market positions. In Korea, these are SBS, KBS, and MBC. In China, they are the Five Star TV stations. As a result, access to audiences is important when broadcasting TV dramas. Last but not least, both countries mainly broadcast romantic dramas and family dramas set in the contemporary period.

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