

Trendy Culture in Hong Kong Past and Present

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Hong Kong is a place where trendy Asian culture is produced, spread and consumed. Against the backdrop of an expanding and accelerating global culture, Hong Kong's trendy culture has so far experienced mainly two development phases. One was a period of Americanization, from the end of the Second World War to the early 1970s, when Hong Kong's market was almost dominated by American films, music, TV programs, foods and fashion. Hong Kong's trendy culture in those days was almost an imitation of U.S. culture. Both men and women of Hong Kong loved American popular songs and American-style animation films.

The second phase was a period of cultural pluralism, from the latter half of the 1970s to the present day. Although American films are still certainly popular, American trendy culture is no longer as influential as it once was. With the current of time, a wide variety of cultures, especially Hong Kong and Japanese cultures began exerting influence. From the 1970s to the 1980s, Cantonese trendy culture, such as Hong Kong films, became the mainstream of Hong Kong's market, although this trend has now waned. After the 1980s, there were two times when Japanese trendy culture dominated Hong Kong's market: the early 1980s and the latter half of the 1990s. While the first boom was brought mainly by Japanese animation films, computer games, and music, the latter was via Japanese dramas and popular music. Such Japanese trendy culture, as well as Hong Kong's own culture, was loved by both men and women alike.

Hong Kong plays a major role in producing cultural trends. Hong Kong's trendy culture is influential in mainland China and Taiwan, Province of China as well as in Japan, Korea and Southeast Asia. With the waning of Cantonese trendy culture and the changing situations after Hong Kong's return to China, Hong Kong's trendy culture has shifted its focus to entry into the Chinese market. Film actors and singers are now paying attention to the mainland Chinese market. Moreover, films are increasingly being shot not in Hong Kong but in mainland China. And songs are performed not in Cantonese but in Mandarin.

Hong Kong plays a major role also in spreading and consuming various world trendy cultures. In the Hong Kong market there are many cultural products from the U.S., Japan, Korea, mainland China and Taiwan, Province of China, providing constant stimulation to Hong Kong's trendy culture. Each of these cultures demonstrates its strengths in different fields: the U.S. culture in films; Japanese culture in animation, computer games and fashion; Korean culture in TV dramas and internet games; Taiwanese culture in dramas featuring idols; mainland China's culture in history plays; and Thai culture in ghost stories.

Nowadays, men and women are beginning to show different preferences in what they want in trendy culture. In the case of TV dramas, Japanese and Taiwanese shows are loved by young women, while Korean and Hong Kong shows are preferred by middle-aged women. And middle-aged men of middle-income families are attracted to American dramas. With the choices of world trendy cultures continuing to expand, it is expected that people will develop more diversified tastes. Some people might even say that “Today I like Japanese culture, but tomorrow it will be Korean culture, and then the day after tomorrow, Taiwanese culture.” It is also expected that there will be much more variation in preferences between men and women.