

## **Branding the Sense of Place: Gangnam as the Epicenter of the Korean Wave**

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Gangnam stands for many things in South Korea. It is portrayed as a place of fabulous wealth, beauty, glamor, luxury on the one hand, and polarization, corruption, debauchery, cutthroat competition on the other. Gangnam therefore gives a complex sense of place to Koreans in their daily lives. Globally, however, it has been recognized as the epicenter of K-Pop and the Korean Wave since Psy's "Gangnam Style" took the world by storm in 2012. The national and municipal governments tried to capitalize on such instant fame, but their place-branding campaign has been clumsy at best. In contrast, the formidable entertainment industry has been able to command global attention to Gangnam, building monumental showcases in the area where it first laid the foundation in the early 1980s. This chapter will follow the trajectory of Korea's media entertainment industry in Gangnam to show how the sense of place and the place-branding practice are intertwined with each other.