



JYP Entertainment Expansion to International Markets in USA, China, and Japan

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Abstract

This paper aims to explain JYP Entertainment's business expansion to the USA, China, and Japan markets. JYP Entertainment is one of the major companies in the Korean entertainment industry that participates in producing and distributing Hallyu content to the global market. JYP Entertainment is known to be very ambitious in expanding its market overseas. Some of his artists have succeeded in gaining high popularity in the domestic and foreign markets. Therefore, JYP Entertainment believes in expanding its market to the USA as the first step by establishing JYP USA. Then establishing a subsidiary in China, namely JYP China and JYP Japan in Japan. The establishment of these three different host country subsidiaries had different results. Some have succeeded and benefited from the host country's localization agenda and some have failed until the JYP Entertainment subsidiary had to stop operating. This paper tries to explain the case study using the theory of multidomestic strategy. The author uses descriptive research methods and qualitative data analysis techniques.

Keywords: JYP Entertainment, JYP USA, JYP China, JYP Japan, Multidomestic Strategy

Introduction

JYP Entertainment is one of the major entertainment companies incorporated in the South Korean music industry, founded by R&B singer Park Jin Young in 1997 (Kim, 2021). The company has an important role in spreading Hallyu content to the international market by producing several famous K-pop artists such as G.O.D, Rain, Wonder Girls, 2PM, 2AM, Miss A, GOT7, DAY6, TWICE, Stray Kids, and ITZY. JYP Entertainment are also referred to as multinational entertainment (Forbes, 2022). They manage their artists, who proclaim from worldwide markets and have numerous branches in other nations. According to the book "From Factory Girls to K-Pop Idol Girls Cultural Politics of Developmentalism, Patriarchy, and Neoliberalism in South Korea's Popular Music Industry" by Gooyong Kim (2018) that JYP Entertainment is one of the Kpop industries which is almost identical to the manufacturing industry whose goals are export-based. The company takes advantage of economies of scale such as music production, promotion and market selection. So that, when JYP chose trainees in their audition, the company will be considered for their who can speak fluent in foreign language. This is due to the orientation of JYP Entertainment which is ambitious in expanding its business to international markets so it will be easier to adapt in abroad.

To expand the reach of foreign audiences, the company creates multinational idol groups whose members come from Japan, China, Thailand, Australia, and Taiwan (Jung, 2011). It aims to attract the attention of local people in Japan, China, Thailand, and Australia citizen that there are group members who debuted in Korea are part of their citizen. This is also intended



so that the debuted group can quickly adapt, especially in communication with the local language. JYP used hybridization to make its popular Korean songs a global phenomenon by establishing subsidiaries in several countries such as in US, China, and Japan.

Methods

This research method uses the descriptive method. The descriptive research method aims to describe, explain, and provide validation related to the phenomenon being studied to determine that this research is worthy of being appointed (Ramdhan,2021). The selection of this method is based on examining JYP Entertainment's business efforts in international markets in USA, China, and Japan. This study uses qualitative data analysis in the process of processing the data. This analysis process aims to explain a phenomenon based on facts accompanied by an interpretation by interpreting a social behavior (Mappiare,2009). Social phenomena can change at any time and many factors also influence this. Therefore, it is challenging to predict social behavior in a phenomenon using numbers, so understanding the local culture, sociological factors, and the meaning of global culture is needed to analyze this behavior (Wijaya,2018).

In this journal, the researcher use secondary data for collect data. It means that data obtained by a second party such as from books, reports, bulletins, and magazines in which there is documentation (Waluya, B., & Fakhrudin, H., 2007). The researcher collect data from book, article, journal article, news portal, and e-book that especially related to JYP Entertainment and Multidomestic Strategy. This all source make it easier for researcher to collect information.

Multidomestic Strategy

The multidomestic strategy is part of the international business agenda. The orientation of the multidomestic strategy is to prioritize local advantages (Diaconu, 2012). The multidomestic strategy is included in a pattern of international competition in which there is competition in each industry and becomes independent from competition from other countries (Porter, 1986). Changes in products in a multidomestic strategy are common with a "local-first" approach because it aims to adapt products. In addition to products, marketing, advertising, and distribution processes are also adapted to suit the host-country environment (Meyer and Su, 2014). In this strategy, MNC needs to know the specific characteristics of each market so that each subsidiary will develop and design its products to suit the market. (Diaconu, 2012). Therefore, MNCs cannot ignore local responsiveness issues concerning their products. Through a multidomestic strategy, companies can limit the impact of differences in global corporate culture by tailoring products based on local consumer preferences (Hong, 2021). Businesses related to certain cultures will make MNCs more responsive to local cultural characteristics and can meet the needs of consumers in the host country. The multidomestic strategy was built to get high local responsiveness, so this strategy requires a strong localization program.

Localization is used to adapt products based on consumer preferences in the host country (Chen et al. 2013). Localization is important in a multidomestic strategy because MNCs need to adapt to new environments and different problems such as different cultures, laws, and societies (Haron, 2016). In its application, localization needs to consider many things because

different countries might have different regulations. It could be related to product packaging, labeling, advertising, price, etc (Jain, 2016). Once subsidiary can succeed in a foreign market, it may be given greater autonomy by their the parent corporation.

JYP Expansion to USA

JYP Entertainment moved to expand its market by targeting the USA market, which launched JYP USA on June 20, 2007 (OSEN, 2007). In particular, JYP USA was founded to develop JYP Entertainment's alternative income model, which made JYP dare to spur its business in the USA (Money Today, 2007). JYP has its way of maintaining the company's characteristics to survive in business expansion.

JYP purchased a building close to Koreatown and established JYP USA as an outpost for the USA market (Joo and Lee, 2019). JYP USA is located on East 31st Street in Manhattan, New York. It is a joint venture with the Korean company SK Telecom. After that, Park's first plan for JYP USA was to sign a contract through negotiations with an American record label and producer and then continue with the artist's training in the American way to become a star.

JYP USA, also dubbed as "Gateway to Asia" has facilities consisting of 8 accommodations devoted to mostly teenage artists, a choreography practice room, a recording studio, and an office for eight employees. At the JYP USA open event, it was officially attended by many high-ranking officials from major American record labels such as Def Jam, Warner Music, Atlantic, and Zomba Group, as well as well-known producers such as Ryan Leslie and Lil John (Joongboo, 2007).

JYP entertainment seems very bold when they are advancing to expand their business to the USA. They did a lot of these preparations. Even though before the expansion, their artist, Rain, had tried to enter the US market but failed because there were many criticisms from the market such as the lack of English fluency (Kim, 2017). When JYP entered the US market, it was not too loud so JYP tightened promotions and cooperated with American media. Having gained popularity in America in its third year, the business experienced a decline and closed its door (Joo, 2019).

JYP Expansion to China

In addition to expanding its market to the USA, China has become JYP Entertainment's new target market by establishing a subsidiary company called JYP China located in Beijing. This market expansion also uses a localization process to quickly adapt to the country's environment. JYP China was founded in 2008 (Star News, 2008). JYP China also has many activities in producing music and other content. The company is looking for talent to become artists in the future who will have a career in the Chinese market.

Before officially establishing JYP China, Chinese citizens were very enthusiastic about the Korean company collaborating with Samsung in China. These two companies held auditions which numbered up to 15.000 participants (MyDaily, 2008). But only one winner was picked. Even after the winner of this audition debuted in China (already under the auspices of JYP China), this artist has a high popularity in China (Osen, 2008).

JYP China has made various efforts to survive in the Chinese market by attracting the attention of local consumers. At first, the image of JYP China was considered good in the eyes of the Chinese public. However, because of an incident that happened to JYP Entertainment which houses one of its idol group members from Taiwan, this is a sensitive issue and impacts

the existence of JYP China (Asia Today, 2016). Now JYP China houses its new boy group called Boy Story. JYP China strives for the best for its business continuity in the Chinese market (Newsen, 2018).

JYP Expansion to Japan

After trying to expand its market to the USA and China, JYP then targeted the Japanese market. Hallyu has landed in Japan and Kpop is increasingly popular with young Japanese people convinced JYP to open a subsidiary there was later founded in 2010. Currently, JYP Japan houses artists such as 2PM, TWICE, ITZY, Stray Kids, and NiziU (JYP Japan Online Store, 2021).

JYP Japan has significantly benefited from the success of its artists in Japan. 2PM as the first JYP Japan artist received a good response from the Japanese public. Apart from 2PM, other JYP Entertainment artists are also trying to enter the Japanese market due to the success of their seniors who started their careers in Japan. The Japanese market has also become an important market for JYP. In 2013 JYP Japan officially became a major subsidiary of JYP Entertainment (Money Today, 2013). JYP is focus on the Japanese market is also due to political conditions that are not possible, the problem of "Terminal High Altitude Area Defense" (THAAD), which makes it difficult for JYP artists to focused on the Chinese market so that JYP is more focused on the Japanese market (Asia Economy, 2017).

JYP's business in Japan is getting better. From the beginning of entering the Japanese market, JYP had a positive response and when developing its business in Japan it made a lot of profit because of the production of music and their artists.

JYP Entertainment's Multidomestic Strategy

As stated by Porter (1986) about companies establishing subsidiaries which are independent of the competition in other countries, in practice JYP Entertainment expanded its market by trying to establish subsidiaries in the USA, China, and Japan. Each country has its own market characteristics and JYP Entertainment through its subsidiaries localizes its products to be accepted by consumers in each of its target markets.

Before focusing on the Chinese and Japanese markets, JYP chose the USA as the first step for its market expansion. JYP brought its Asian singers and producers to the USA market and chose to work with local partners rather than independent marketing activities to reach the USA market. This is because the USA market is not familiar. It is difficult to achieve success without an in-depth analysis of the large local pop music market (Star News, 2008). JYP Entertainment's collaboration with local partners is to facilitate its adaptation in new markets and localization of its products to suit the preferences of USA consumers. For JYP USA trainees who come from Korea and China not only learn about music but also learn English (Hankyung, 2007). This was done so that the trainees could adapt to the USA environment, mainly to communicate easily with USA fans.

Several JYP USA singers from South Korea signed contracts with USA artists, such as Min (real name, Lee Min-Young) with Lil Jon of BME Records, G-soul (real name, Kim Ji-Hyun) with R Kelly, and Lim Jeong- Hee with OutKast (Osen, 2007). Singers who will debut under JYP USA have a different training system from JYP Korea. Like Min, who collaborated with the famous American producer, Lil Jon, it is a new model for JYP (Jeonbuk Ilbo, 2008). Min, whom JYP USA first introduced, has had three singles, all of which are English songs resulting from a



collaboration between JYP USA and BME Records. JYP USA, as the first subsidiary of JYP Entertainment in the USA develops and designs its products with local partners to suit its market based on local consumer preferences.

JYP USA's journey was full of challenges, especially during the global economic downturn in the USA. JYP USA is a newcomer company it is difficult to get investment funds from American agencies (Osen, 2009). Luckily, the JYP Entertainment girl group based in Korea, Wonder Girls, got such high popularity that JYP tried to get them into the USA market to promote through JYP USA. Wonder Girls had previously studied English, so this was the perfect time to enter the USA market (Nate, 2008). According to Chen et al (1998) idea of localization, in practice Wonder Girls prioritizes the adaptation process in its localization. Language becomes essential because it relates to communication and culture to understand their new environment. Therefore, JYP USA signed a contract for Wonder Girls with a well-known USA agency and management company, namely Jonas Brothers, for agenda with Jonas Brothers for USA tour (Star News, 2009).

However, things changed around 2010, the condition of JYP Entertainment's management was unstable, including its subsidiary, JYP USA. Previously JYP had a good reputation in domestic and USA markets but changed due to poor management performance resulting in a significant losses. JYP USA recorded a loss of 10.3 billion won over the last three years and this made JYP USA artists diverted to promotion to Korea including the Wonder Girls who were popular there (OhMyNews, 2013). JYP USA was officially closed in 2013 (The Korea Herald, 2013).

JYP's next market expansion is in China. When JYP Entertainment established its subsidiary in the USA in 2007, JYP also tried to expand its market to China. This is the second new market for JYP. USA and China have different cultures, so this is a challenge for the Korean company. JYP China was founded in 2008 and cooperated with Samsung Electronics China for a project to find Chinese talents (Yonhap News, 2008). Through the UCC (User Created Contents) audition organized by the two companies, a Chinese talent named Liu Xin was selected from thousands of participants (Star News, 2008). Liu Xin managed to win the grand prize as the winner at the audition. JYP's expectations of Liu Xin are high because Liu Xin will be the first Chinese JYP artist. With this start, a JYP's expansion into China, they are ready to challenge the popular culture. The press conference at the JYP China founding ceremony was attended by more than 60 Chinese media outlets, including officials from the Chinese music industry (Yonhap News, 2008). This is a good start for JYP China localizing its market expansion to China to attract high local responsiveness.

JYP China is partnering more with local companies to find new talent. This is different from what happened to JYP USA, where all the artists came from South Korea. JYP took a new approach in China as its host country by looking for local talent to make the adaptation process more effortless. In 2009, JYP China again held an audition program in collaboration with one of the local broadcast media in China. JYP China partnered with Zhejiang TV by signing a strategic partnership to support the program "The More You Dance, The More Beautiful You Are" (越跳越美/Yuè tiào yuè měi) in the areas of talent discovery, training, and management. This audition program was attended by 15 candidates and competed with dances and songs whose this appearance will be the decision of the judges and the popular vote of the audience during the selection process (Star News, 2009). This is an

implementation of Hong's (2021) statement regarding a multidomestic strategy in which a company adjusts local consumer preferences due to differences in corporate culture.

Zhejiang TV is the second favorite TV station chosen by Chinese netizens, the third TV station chosen by the media, and the fifth China Investment Value Media in 2008. The excellent reputation of Zhejiang TV, it convinces JYP Entertainment China to build a partnership with the TV station and vice versa. JYP China has also proven this with the debut of their first artist, Liu Xin who emerged as the first winner of the audition held with Samsung Electronics China, which can generate interest in local media and industry insiders to sign a partnership including Zhejiang TV. In contrast to JYP's USA subsidiary, which closed its office in 2013, the Chinese market looks more promising for JYP in its business expansion. Until 2014, JYP China was still showing its existence in the Chinese market. This is supported by the activities of JYP Entertainment artists in China, including Fei and Jia, both of whom are from China and were previously active in JYP Korea as members of the K-pop girl group, Miss A (Ten Asia, 2014).

To expand its market, JYP's subsidiaries are required to adapt to the environment of their market countries including social, cultural, and political. In 2016, JYP China was affected by the controversy of the Taiwanese JYP Entertainment artists, Tzuyu, who raised the Taiwan flag on the South Korean TV program. This problem impacts JYP China's reputation in China. In addressing the controversy, JYP China released an official apology on its official Weibo stating that Tzuyu supports and respects the principles of China and Taiwan is Tzuyu's homeland that she cannot cut ties with Taiwan (Asia Today, 2016). Then JYP China clarified that the rumors of Tzuyu supporting Taiwan's independence were not true and Tzuyu was not a freedom fighter. In this case, MNC cannot ignore the problem of local response because this will have an impact on the reputation and sustainability of the company in the host country.

Two years after the incident that befell JYP Entertainment and its impact on its subsidiaries in China, JYP China has reappeared to reveal its 'green light' in securing its influence in the Chinese music market. JYP China entered into a joint venture with TME (China Tencent Music Entertainment) to establish a company, Beijing Xin Sheng Entertainment (The Korea Herald, 2018). At this new company, JYP and Tencent debuted a new boy group called Boy Story, which consists of 6 members from China (Newsen, 2018). This debut aims for a comprehensive localization. Now JYP China is focusing its activities on Boy Story which is devoted to local Chinese fans.

Besides China, Japan is a new market that JYP Entertainment focuses on. JYP Entertainment founded JYP Japan two years after the founding of JYP China. Like other host countries, JYP Japan chose to build its partnership as the first step for the product adaptation process. One of Japan's major record labels, Sony Music Entertainment Japan, became an early partner of JYP Japan (Star News, 2010). Meyer and Su (2014) stated that marketing, advertising, and distribution in this multidomestic strategy are focused on adapting to the host-country environment. So, Sony Music Entertainment Japan also plays a role in JYP Japan's multi-domestic strategy agenda to help distribute JYP Japan's artist content. Sony Music Entertainment Japan was initially responsible for the activities of 2PM which is the South Korean boy group JYP Entertainment to enter the Japanese market before the establishment of JYP Japan. The entry of 2PM brought a positive response from the local community.

At the end of 2010, JYP Japan and Sony Music created a collaboration cafe in Shibuya called '2PM Café' to promote the release of 2PM's Japanese debut DVD (Sport Chosun, 2010). This cafe was built to target local consumers because it was held specifically in Japan. The cafe was filled with about 100 diners who had been queuing from the morning. According to the news article, Sport Chosun (2010), JYP Entertainment said that Sony Music Entertainment and JYP Japan were both surprised and delighted at the high local responsiveness during their activities in Japan. Although 2PM was not officially active at that time, the opening of '2PM Café' showed that this group was very popular in Japan. The good response from Japan made JYP shift its eyes from USA to Japan (Money Today, 2011). Even when the ticket orders were opened for 2PM's concert in Fukuoka, JYP Japan had to add back the number of tickets because they sold out within one minute (Dispatch, 2011). 2PM received great enthusiasm from local fans. This prompted JYP Japan and its partners to produce special content and several 2PM activities for Japanese fans. In business terms, JYP Japan benefited from this moment. This is inversely proportional to JYP USA and JYP China which have more to lose (Money Today, 2012).

After the success of 2PM, JYP Entertainment brought its Korean girl group, TWICE, to debut in the Japanese market in 2017. JYP Japan's business partner for TWICE's activities while in Japan is different from 2PM. JYP Japan partnered with Warner Music Japan, one of Japan's big companies. TWICE is one of the most successful K-pop groups in Japan. It became the first Korean girl group to appear on Japanese television after several years of tension between Japan and South Korea (Heal, 2020). This JYP girl group has an advantage compared to its seniors. JYP formed TWICE which it will be born as a Kpop girl group involving three Japanese trainees. Therefore, when TWICE entered the Japanese market, the group was easily accepted by the Japanese public because of the three Japanese members. As stated by Hong (2021), regarding a multidomestic strategy, the TWICE case aims to limit the impact of cultural differences between Japan and South Korea so that the company can tailor its products and content specifically to the Japanese market. JYP Japan's sales profit increased because of TWICE. In 2015, JYP Japan's sales were around 9.6 billion won and increased to 40.1 billion won in 2019 (News1, 2020).

After TWICE's success in Japan, JYP Japan and Sony Music plans to launch a new all-Japanese girl group through the "Nizi Project" which was announced at a conference in the first half of 2019 (Yonhap News Agency, 2019). The audition and selection stage was broadcast through Hulu Japan and Nippon TV and ended in mid 2020 by producing a girl group called NiziU with all members from Japan. JYP focused on localizing its content to survive in the Japanese market, starting from selecting members and songs composed in Japanese. In the case of NiziU, JYP Japan has the role of an affiliate of NiziU whose income will be shared with its partner, Sony Music Japan (Newsis, 2020). In the first half of 2021, NiziU's rising popularity in Japan led to a sharp increase in JYP Japan's sales to 14.6 billion won and a net profit of 5.5 billion won (The Bell News, 2021).

After ten years of founding JYP Japan, this subsidiary opened an offline and online pop-up shop in Japan (Star News, 2021). The offline store is located in Tokyo but is only open for a limited time, from July 3 to August 31, 2021. JYP also provides a café especially for local Japanese fans. Online stores have no time limit like offline stores. Fans can access it through the JYP Japan Store website where the products can be purchased locally and by international fans. Products sold on the JYP Japan website include sweaters, lightsticks, bags, hoodies, hats,

t-shirts, stationery, photos of JYP Japan artists, accessories, and other daily supplies (JYP Japan Online Store, 2021). The JYP Japan Online store site also provides three language options such as Japanese, English, and Korean. Although accessible to non-local fans, payments for JYP Japan products are made in Yen. The opening of JYP Japan offline and online stores is an implementation of a multi-domestic strategy following the statement of Meyer and Su (2014) that products, marketing, advertising, and distribution are adapted to suit host country environment. The existence of JYP Japan's offline and online pop-up stores has become JYP Japan's agenda in providing local needs that are tailored to the preferences of the Japanese local consumer.

Conclusion

JYP Entertainment's business expansion into the international market uses a multi-domestic strategy by establishing several subsidiaries to localize their products according to consumer preferences in each host country. Although using the localization process, JYP USA, JYP China, and JYP Japan have different local responsiveness results. JYP which started its expansion to the USA only lasted a few years and then closed its office in 2013. The multi-domestic strategy used by JYP Entertainment in JYP USA failed. In the Chinese market, JYP China's activities are still ongoing until now, which is busy with its boy group, Boy Story. The condition of JYP China is somewhat better than JYP USA which has closed its office. Meanwhile, the JYP subsidiary in Japan has an outstanding reputation and achievements compared to other JYP subsidiaries. JYP's business expansion to Japan generates much profit. Even JYP Japan also has an online store with many sold-out products. Based on the activities carried out by JYP China and JYP Japan, both of them took deeper localization steps to survive in the host country. What the two have in common lies in the launch of their new group. All members of NiziU are from Japan and Boy Story are from China. Then working with local partners makes it easier for JYP in production, distribution, and marketing activities in the host country.

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