

# Understanding the Film As A Public Space: The Public Sphere and the Korean Film Industry in the 1980s

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The Korean films in the 1980s played an important role in impeding the interaction between the media and the audience. In terms of two mechanisms of money and power, the Korean films lost the function of publicity and were forced to disregard positive aspects of culture as a way of understanding society. As a mass medium, the film did not give people the space for critical thought and discussion on social reality. This study tries to discuss how Korean movies in the 1980s functioned as a bulwark of critical debate provided by the interaction between cultural texts and audiences through the notion of the public sphere. For Habermas, the public sphere provides a basis for critical analysis in order to reveal the relationship between media and economic and administrative power in a modern society.*

**Key words:** Film, Korean movies, the Korean Film Industry, the Public Sphere, Habermas

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This study tries to discuss the Korean films in the 1980s with Habermas' theory of the public sphere. The purpose of this study is to show how the Korean films in the 1980s functioned as a bulwark of critical debate provided by the interaction between cultural texts and audiences. Through the notion of the public sphere, Habermas provides a basis for critical analysis in order to reveal the relationship between media and economic and administrative power in a modern society. The fundamental concept of the theoretical framework begins with the modern category of publicity, which is based on free and critical expression within and through a public space concerning general matters of social domains. Habermas conceptualizes the public sphere as "a domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed [1]." For him, public opinion is based on rational critical discussion concerning social and political matters. Hohendahl explains Habermas' project as "an attempt to reformulate the dialectical relationship of the socio-cultural and political system [2]."

Habermas develops one of the most extensive critical viewpoints on contemporary culture and media through the rhetoric of the public sphere. He does not simply constitute

media and culture as the mechanisms of social control. Habermas never throws away the notion of the potentially democratic medium in the discussion of the media. Emphasizing the media as the space of publicity through the historical analysis of the eighteenth bourgeois public sphere, he attempts to diagnose contemporary conditions of the media. In modern societies, however, the mass media seldom play a central role in reflecting people's concerns about general interest encompassing social and political matters. The reason is that two main mechanisms, money and power. Both elements interrupt the autonomous interaction between the media and the audience through distorting the communicative function of the media.

The Korean films in the 1980s played an important role in impeding the interaction between the media and the audience. As a mass medium, the film did not give people the space for critical thought and discussion on social reality. In terms of two mechanisms of money and power, the Korean films seldom showed the function of publicity. These two mechanisms were represented by commodification of film and bureaucratic censorship. Through inhibiting the expression of cultural criticism in Korean films, bureaucratic censorship forced films not to touch social and political issues, although these issues were publicly discussed in other social spaces. Commodification transformed the film industry into an entertainment business and was required to understand film as a commodity for only entertaining pleasure. Being reluctant to

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contact social reality in terms of watching the Korean films, as a consequence, people regarded films as a means for pleasure. The combination of two mechanisms attempted to impede social and political criticism in cultural texts and obliged people to recognize cultural texts as epiphenomena of social life.

## 2. THE DISCOURSE OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Habermas' notion of the public sphere is a primary theoretical framework to analyze the relationship between the media and politics. It is introduced as a mediating idea in order to reveal the transformation of contemporary culture and media. Habermas extends his argument through explicating historical nature and origins of the bourgeois public sphere emerged from the eighteenth century. Similar to original members of the Frankfurt School, he suggests how to look through contemporary culture and media by explaining why the decline of the public sphere happens in these days. Unlike them, however, he never waives the democratic potentiality of the media.

Habermas (1989) discusses the most exhaustive picture of the rhetoric of the public sphere in the book, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. He begins his argument with a historical specific understanding of the modern category of publicity. As a normative category, the public sphere is a social realm where citizens participate in critical debate in an unregulated way concerning general matters of a society or community. Here, citizens are conceptualized as persons who can recognize general matters in a society with universal competence of rationality. They are not naturally subordinate to each other. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. "A portion of the public sphere is constituted in every conversation in which private persons come together to form a public. . . Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion [3]."

Habermas emphasizes that the modern category of publicity was created as "civil society came into existence as the corollary of depersonalized state authority [4]." The conception of "the public" was changed after the establishment of the civil society which was distinguished from the state. At the seventeenth century, the state constituted the public as the addressee of state proclamations, ordinances and instructions through the press which was made to serve state regulation. At the eighteenth century, the bourgeois was emerged as the real carrier of this public. The public set forth its concern regarding general matters "was no longer confined to the authorities but was considered by the subjects [5]." It is based on the public's self-awareness of general matters, which generates a specific type of publicity, that is, critical publicity. Critical publicity engages citizens "in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labour [6]."

The popular press is introduced as the most conspicuous case for understanding this transformation of authority relations. It provides a social space in which private individuals are combined as a public. The popular press, therefore, becomes

the major vehicle of public's critical reflection on matters of collective social interest. The popular press, as a vehicle for the public sphere, assisted the struggle for freedom and the formation of public opinion at the eighteenth century. Through revealing threats to the public sphere in the modern society, Habermas illustrates the eighteenth century press as the space for democracy: "The press remained an institution of the public itself, operating to provide and intensify public discussion, no longer a mere organ for the conveyance of information, but not yet a medium of consumer culture [7]."

Habermas emphasizes that the communicative functions of the mass media today have been compromised, although he admits that "newspapers and periodicals, radio and television today are the media of the public sphere [8]." The current media distort the discursive formation of public opinion rather than guaranteeing public discourse. According to Habermas, the public sphere acts as a forum in which all kinds of social interests encounter with state related economic action through the discussion. He distinguishes the public sphere from both state and market and locates this sphere as the basis of the civil society. Explaining the decline of the public sphere, he expresses two impersonal mechanisms, money and power, as the key factors of this decline. The mass media seldom constitute a social forum for critical debate. The reason is that the current mass media are operated with the basis on the rationale for state intervention and economic matters. Corporation of mass media results in 'a "refeudalization" of the public sphere, where representation and appearances outweigh rational debate [9].'

Habermas represents the transformation of the media, from a public organ concerned with critical debate to a commercial tool which aligns itself to special interests both in and out of government. The market changes the media into an unrepresentative system. Detaching the media from the realization of publicity, two impersonal mechanisms obliterate the autonomous interaction between the media and the audience. Critical debate gives way to the production and consumption of commercial culture. The operation of these two mechanisms is based on the administration and commodification of culture. Administration means the mechanism of various, dispersed kinds of regulation on all spheres of human life [10]. It clearly revealed in the form of bureaucratic censorship. Commodification means the form that objects take when the production is organized through exchange [11]. In modern capitalism, commodification, based on profit orientation, transforms any object into a commodity to realize its exchange value. Commodification, furthermore, functions as "an instrument of censorship" for the impediment of cultural criticism [12].

## 3. COMMODIFICATION AND THE KOREAN FILM INDUSTRY

Wasko argues that "film is a commodity, produced, distributed and exhibited under market conditions that must in some way affect what types of films are made, who makes them, and how they are distributed and exhibited to the public [13]." According to her, film is circulated as a commodity in

the market as other products are. In much the same way, film is regarded as an industrial product in the film industry. Like another country's mechanism, the Korean film industry includes three basic sectors: production, distribution and exhibition as all film industries devise processes to handle these three fundamental tasks in modern society.

Following the distinction of these three sectors, this study focuses on the analysis of the characteristics of the Korean film industry in the 1980s. The analysis of the 1980s requires the attention to the crucial transformation occurring in 1985, that is, the year of the fifth amendment to the Motion Picture Law. The traits of the production sector are summarized as small investments in the making of domestic films, short production terms, producers' preference for foreign films, and low salaries for professional staffs. The production sector in Korea involves the production of domestic films as well as the importation of foreign films. Only 20 selected companies were entitled to produce domestic films and import foreign films before the fifth amendment to the Motion Picture Law was passed in July 1985. Up to 1985, the importation of foreign films was regulated by the "import quota system." The import quota system required a company to produce four domestic films in order to import a single foreign film. Although this quota system intended to rehabilitate the production of domestic films, the Korean producers considered the production of domestic films as a requisite for the importation of foreign films. After the enactment of the fifth amendment, domestic film production and foreign film importation were separated and the import quota system was revoked. Film companies were allowed to import foreign films without any limit as long as they produced one domestic film every year. The number of production companies was increased from 20 in 1984 to 109 in 1989, and the number of foreign films shown in the Korean film market was conspicuously increased from 26 in 1984 to 307 in 1989 [14].

Distinguishing commodity value between domestic and foreign films, producers seldom tried to invest the capital in the production of domestic films because they regarded a domestic film as a low valued product, although they made around 90 films every year throughout the 1980s. Most producers attempted to earn profits through the importation of foreign films which were considered as having high commodity values. Producers endeavored to meet quotas for the importation of foreign films until 1985. They were consistently interested more in the importation of foreign films than in the production of domestic films. In the 1980s, the characteristics of the Korean distribution sector were condensed into two elements: the coexistence of direct distribution channels and indirect distribution lines, and a distributor's activity was limited to one section among six regions. The distributors preferred foreign films to domestic films because of their higher profitability. Distributors were primarily in charge of the circulation of films in areas other than Seoul and producers distributed films to first-run theaters in Seoul. At the end of the 1980s, the power of the distributor was challenged by a crop of new producers who attempted to seek direct distribution lines in the six biggest cities and by the direct distribution of Hollywood film companies. The Hollywood companies directly distributed their films to theaters in Korea from the beginning of 1988. Foreign

distributors' activity began to go beyond a specific region among six regions. However, domestic distributors still circulated their films to one region throughout the 1980s. Domestic distributors tried to circulate foreign films in the 1980s as many as they could because films were no more than commodities that had to be purchased or sold. They estimated the value of foreign films at six times as much as that of domestic ones. For instance, in 1984 they purchased a foreign film for US \$638,158 as the average fee, and a domestic one for US \$101,316 [15]."

The investigation of the exhibition sector in the 1980s shows two primary elements: the decentralization of ownership, and no national circuit connecting theaters across the country as a whole. It also discloses several phenomena for the understanding of the exhibition sector. These phenomena can be condensed into four aspects: 1) the incessant replacement of the theater by the prominent increase of the mini-theater, 2) the significance of the first-run theater in Seoul, 3) the exhibitor's preference for foreign films, 4) the "screen quota system" for the protection of domestic films. The number of theaters decreased from 447 in 1980 to 259 in 1989, and the number of mini-theaters increased from 9 in 1982 to 434 in 1989. The mini-theater refers to the theater having about 100 seats. In Korea, the commercial success of a film generally depended on the revenue earned from exhibitions at the first-run theaters in Seoul. It determined how much money a film could take from the distributor and video companies. The screen quota system has been enforced since 1973. It reserved at least a third of all exhibition days for domestic films. In the 1980s, it was considered an indispensable factor for the existence of Korean films.

Exhibitors also preferred foreign films to domestic ones in that they were no more than sellers of a film as a valued product. They basically reserved the exhibition of domestic films for the requirement of the "screen quota system" in the 1980s. Exhibitors allotted most of best exhibition days to foreign films. They revealed the preference for foreign ones in the apportionment of revenues between foreign and domestic movies. For example, producers have taken up to 50 per cent of the box office with a domestic movie, while exhibitors have allotted 60 per cent of total revenue to foreign films. Disregard on domestic films is well shown in the apportionment of advertising fees. Every exhibitor tried to secure Hollywood films because these movies were considered the best-valued commodities in the Korean film market.

As I described above, the analysis of each sector reveals the characteristics of the Korean film industry in the 1980s. It is based on the description of how film is circulated as a commodity in the operation of these three sectors. Like other commodities, in Korea, films are realized as a value when they are circulated in the market for profits. Profit orientation is commonly shared by producers, distributors and exhibitors. Profit orientation is clearly revealed in the preference of foreign films, especially of the Hollywood film. The preference for foreign films in the Korean film market started from the perception of what has high-commerciality. The commodity value of foreign films was much higher than that of domestic films throughout the 1980s. Foreign films also gave a great sum of profits to producers, distributors and exhibitors. The most

primary reason is that foreign films were considered more entertaining than domestic films. This was revealed in a 1989 survey on a group of film viewers. In the survey, people explained the reasons for their preference for foreign films. About 50 percent of the respondents stated that they preferred foreign films because imported films had more entertainment value [16].

The preference for foreign films showed what the operating rationale of the Korean film industry was. The Korean film industry was totally based on the commercialism in the 1980s. Producers, distributors and exhibitors desired enthusiastically to get more profits through the procurement of high-valued products, which in turn precipitated the preference for foreign films. These aspects caused the production of films within the frame of a few genres. Commercialism provided a powerful force in the structuring of style and convention. Through putting an exchange value into the film, these aspects of fetishization acted "constitutionally on the film to hypostatize or condense it into a series of foregrounded elements which meet the conventions of consumption [17]."

Producers generated the inundation of quota quickies in the film market until 1985. In terms of the inundation of those quickies, the production of Korean films was made by small investments in the 1980s, which resulted in the short production term and low salaries of the professional staffs. Producers urged directors to make domestic films through the imitation of hit movies, regardless of whether hit movies are domestic or foreign ones. Since 1985, producers have invested small capital in the making of domestic films for the video market within a few months. Until 1985, 20 production companies made films following government's directions in that the government provided two or three domestic films with supplementary import quotas when they received the Grand Bell Awards. These Awards were mostly given to domestic films which dramatized anti-communist themes, themes regarding national development, and themes portraying cultural identity. The theme describing cultural identity of the Korean society was the most favorite one for some Korean directors because this theme could give a chance to introduce and express their own styles in films. Among those films, some were evaluated as art-films [18]. Nationalism and anti-communism were popular film genres and clearly represented the relationship between ideology and cultural codification by a political authority. The political authority never waived necessary roles of culture in stabilizing a social order and its values. They used the mechanism of censorship for the maintenance of a social order.

During the 1980s, the Korean government circulated the justification of censorship on the ground that a film, as a cultural medium, should possess inherent value of protest against communism, of tradition maintenance, or whatever, which are in danger of damage by commercial forces. The government argued that every social member needed the protection of those values. Stressing the justification of censorship, the government depicted "the victims of its suppression as being on the fringes of Korean society [19]." Vice-Minister of the Department of Culture and Arts in 1987 contended that "the impact of works of art is so great that they can hardly be left with unlimited freedom [20]."

Censorship strictly constrained the subject matter of domestic films. It furthermore rudely cut words and scenes which were considered undesirable and detrimental. Knowing the power of the censorship board, producers tried to avoid any trouble with the censorship committee. Censorship created a rule that domestic films could not generate profits if they somehow dealt with concerns about social reality. Producers preserved this rule through self-censorship. Censorship and self-censorship effectively kept films exhibiting any complaint against the status quo. Only a few films were evaluated as the film which tried to depict social reality. Melodramas, however, could easily touch a type of social reality. This kind of realism was topics concerning prostitution and the life of the bargirl. Although those films addressed topics of social conflict such as prostitution and poverty of the country, most of them focused on eroticism and were just soft-pornography films. In the mechanism of commodification, producers, distributors and exhibitors regarded audiences only as consumers. The Korean people came also to regard the film as entertainment for pleasure. This is clearly revealed in a survey of the viewers' reasons for watching movies. We can find that the items for response were also made by the consideration of film as entertainment.

By these characteristics, the film industry did practically not provide the space for the interaction between audiences and texts. In terms of films, people did not try to approach general concern regarding social and political matters because they viewed films as a means for entertainment. People's pursuit of entertaining pleasure only resulted in the segmentation of audiences according to consumption patterns.

#### 4. CENSORSHIP AND THE KOREAN FILM

In Korea, censorship operated by the combination of the bureaucratic apparatus with legal norms. In the 1980s, censorship executed its duty through the Public Performance Ethics Committee (PPEC) and the Motion Picture Law. Censorship prevented Korean movies from describing social and political matters in the 1980s. Its primary mechanism was direct interference in the production of domestic films. In the 1980s, the characteristics of bureaucratic censorship on films were: 1) movies were censored by a double mechanism, that is, a preliminary examination of the scenario and the review of the completed film. 2) The stipulations of censorship were so loose and broad that they could be interpreted by the arbitrary decision of the PPEC. 3) The PPEC obliterated a portion of a film without the consensus of the filmmaker. 4) Censorship paid attention more to political issues than to sexual and violent matters. 5) By self-censorship, producers avoided films containing cultural criticism.

As a bureaucratic apparatus, the PPEC supervised film, video, and other performances in order to place the influential power of culture in the hands of the state administration. Its primary target for censorship was the film. The PPEC was established in 1978, based on Article 25 of the Performance Law. Representing the PPEC as a civilian body, the government claimed that the PPEC was not controlled by administered power. Like any other bureaucratic apparatus, however, the

PPEC was operated under the complete control of governmental administration. The PPEC was administered by the Ministry of Culture and Arts of the government. The president of the PPEC was selected by the Minister of Culture and Arts.

Before the PPEC was created, all films had been required to be submitted for censorship to the Ministry of Culture and Arts. Since April 1978, every film has been submitted for censorship to PPEC. The PPEC has classified all films according to age of the viewer. It has provided four categories: a film can be seen (1) by everyone, (2) by people over 12 years, (3) by over 15 years, (4) by over 18 years. A foreign film critic describes the censorship process in Korea:

"Article 18 of the Enforcement Ordinance of the Motion Picture Law presents the detailed criteria for censorship. These cover various matters, from politics to violence and sex. These criteria are supposed to reflect the situation that the Republic of Korea now faces. They seem to be very severe... When a motion picture company hopes to produce a film, it must pass two obstacles. First, a scenario must be submitted to the Special Scenario Examination Committee for censorship, and then a production application to the Ministry of Culture and Information along with the passed scenario. After the film is finished, it must be screened by the Motion Picture Censorship Committee to obtain permission for public exhibition. The production company is entitled to ask for a re-examination, when it cannot agree to the decision by either of these two committees [21]."

The PPEC officially censored films by the review of a scenario and the inspection of the completed film until 1987. The government proclaimed that prior censorship of all scenarios would be abolished starting from 1988. Through the PPEC, however, the government inspected the scenario if it regarded a movie as undesirable and detrimental. It was possible to review scenarios because producers must submit two copies of a scenario whenever they register the production of a film to PPEC.

Throughout the 1980s, if the censor attempted to cut some parts of a film after the inspection of a completed version, producers could request a re-examination when they do not agree with the decision of the PPEC. The PPEC did not allow them to appeal for another review. After a re-examination, producers cannot but yield to the judgment of the PPEC. If producers did not accept the conclusion of the censorship board, their films were not possible to be screened to the public. Consequently, producers had no choice but to follow the PPEC's decision, no matter how much of their film the censorship board may delete. The producers therefore adopted the PPEC's decision on which parts were to be cut. Korean filmmakers have been accustomed to the practice of censorship. Thus, when they made a film, one of their concerns was how to avoid the censor.

After the success of social protest in 1987, censorship became more lenient than in previous circumstances. However, censorship of film was again intensified in the late 1980s. In 1989, the PPEC added some provisions to the provisions of

censorship such as the violation of the fundamental spirit of free democracy and the prohibition of sexual or violent behaviors targeting on juveniles below 18 years [22]. After re-examination of a film, *Guro Aryrang*, the PPEC delivered its guidelines on the regulation of lascivious sexuality. Besides the guidelines, the PPEC gave producers the warning that it would enforce censorship on films that contain critical depiction of social reality [23]. After the admonition, no film that depicted criticism of reality emerged during the remaining two years of the 1980s. As a bureaucratic mechanism, the PPEC was a fully developed form of administrative control.

The PPEC enlarged its influential power to an extent which threatened cultural criticism, based on the modern category of publicity. For example, the PPEC requested the police to arrest two amateur filmmakers who made an 8mm film depicting arduous conditions of a farmer. They were charged with a violation of the Motion Picture Law on film censorship because their film was not reviewed by the PPEC<sup>1</sup>. In the late 1980s, several movies, which tried to portray some problems caused by political oppression, were in the process of production. The production of these movies was rescinded, partly because of the interruption of the PPEC, and partly because of the producer's intention to avoid conflict with the PPEC. For instance, the production of a film, *Bulgeun Bang* (Red Room) was finally revoked. It attempted to depict the political circumstance of the 1980s; anyone could be interned by the state through confinement without a warrant. After reviewing the scenario, the PPEC required the producer to change many parts of the scenario, and the producer tried to follow that direction. However, a director/scenarist decided that he would not comply because the modified parts never conveyed the original sense. *Bulgeun Bang* was not produced whether it resulted from the direct coercion of the PPEC, or not. In the end, the PPEC got what it wanted.

In the end of the 1980s, the Korean film made an effort to commit to realism through presenting contemporary social issues. It tried to confront real situations and represent important social issues, in an attempt to make a positive contribution to culture itself. Through bureaucratic censorship, however, the government tried to maintain its administration of culture. The PPEC, as an organization for this mechanism, prevented film from being concerned with contemporary social reality because the representation of social reality could raise the people's consciousness.

Censorship on *Guro Aryrang* was the most conspicuous case which revealed the character of the PPEC. This movie attempted to portray the conflict between workers and company managers existing in any capitalist society. Most of the content was familiar to the Korean people because they already learned the situation through newspapers, television or books. The original scenario of this movie was a short story by one famous writer, named Lee, Mun-Yeol. *Guro Aryrang* attempted to go beyond mere entertainment by extending film's subject matter

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<sup>1</sup>This happening occurred in 1986. Also, in 1988, a filmmaker who made a 16mm film that criticized America was sentenced for a violation of the Motion Picture Law on censorship. According to Article 4 of the Motion Picture Law, PPEC argued that every film has to be censored in order to exhibit it to people, although not exhibited in the theater.

to the life of the industrial workers. As long as it described the life of the worker in one factory area, called Guro-Dong, the film could not but touch the external circumstances around the working condition and the relationship between the worker and the manager; the long hours of work, the supervisor's mistreatment, the overcrowding of the company dormitories, the lack of amenities, and so on.

The PPEC continued a reexamination of *Guro Aryrang* until the day before its public opening. After a reexamination, twenty parts among several scenes were deleted. In the following day, this movie was shown in Seoul with the obliteration of twenty parts. The narrative line was completely fragmented and impaired because of the erasure of essential words and pictures. The audience did not understand many scenes because of the deletion. Some of the audiences criticized this film on the basis that it only flirted with a serious phenomenon of Korean society without agony.

The PPEC explained the fundamental ground of its censorship on *Guro Aryrang* with three main reasons. It was revealed in the censor's minutes on *Guro Aryrang*, submitted to the annual supervision of the legislator to the government in 1989. The first is that this film misrepresented economic conditions of Korea and contained some aspects criticizing economic development of Korea. The second reason is that it biasedly depicted company owners and the rich as wicked creatures. The last is that *Guro Aryrang* could create and spread a suspicion that the government repressed laborers in cooperation with company owners. The censorship committee tried to impede the influence of this movie, owing to the fact that there were many similar situations at that time. In the censor's minutes on *Guro Aryrang*, the chair of the first department of Culture and Arts, one of participants the censorship committee, said that "if this movie attracts an audience, its influence will be enormous. Therefore, it is very important how we keep the influence of this movie from people. We should think about that."

After a re-examination of *Guro Aryrang*, the PPEC sent the letter to every Korean film company. It emphasized the reason of censorship on *Guro Aryrang*. That is, it contained some problems that could not be overlooked: the insertion of sex scenes unrelated to the story and the undesirable contents that might injure economic or political development of Korea [24]. Furthermore, the PPEC commented that this movie did not achieve a proper quality even from the artistic perspective. The PPEC stated Korean film ought to contribute to artistic creation, the foundation of friendly relations with other countries and the development of Korea [25]. The PPEC used excessive sexual or violent matters in movies as an excuse to justify censorship. However, films picturing sexual or violent matters were continuously shown to the audience. Social realist film was its principal target in the 1980s.

As a bureaucratic apparatus consisting of civil servants, the PPEC explicitly augmented administration to the sphere of culture in the 1980s. In modern society, just as the bureaucratic apparatus extends its influential power to every human life, so does the PPEC executed censorship over film for the justification of the government. The PPEC intentionally hindered the Korean people from developing critical thinking about negative conditions of reality. It definitely condemned

and expelled anything considered "undesirable and detrimental." The PPEC attempted to impede oppositional opinion to the current social/political structure, to conform people to the status quo during the 1980s.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study aims at the analysis of the Korean film industry in the 1980s with reference to Habermas' theory of the public sphere. Through understanding the modern category of the publicity as the fundamental element of the public sphere, it investigates how two mechanisms of money and power attempted to affect the constitution of the Korean films as a means for pleasure in the 1980s. These two mechanisms are represented as commodification of culture and bureaucratic censorship. Separating cultural texts from the realization of publicity, these mechanisms suppress the autonomous interaction between the media and the audience. Thus, the Korean films in the 1980s seldom reflected general concern of social and political matters and played a primal role in constituting culture as a way of pursuing entertaining pleasure.

This study, as a systematic and critical analysis of the Korean films in the 1980s from the theory of the public sphere, can be justified because it will contribute 1) to applying the theory of the public sphere to the investigation of the film in a national framework; 2) to describing the relationship between cultural texts and money and power mechanisms; 3) to reviewing the importance of the media as the space for critical debate.

Since it is a research proposal rather than a complete research paper, however, this study does not touch some important topics connected with the examination of the relationship between the Korean films and the theory of the public sphere. First, this study does not clearly illustrate how money and power employ the media as means for the decline of the public sphere in modern societies. It just briefly mentions that these mechanisms are considered as key concepts for the explanation of the decline of the public sphere. Second, this study does not examine how the Korean films were affected by money and power through the analysis of the genre. For considering as a complete research, this study should contain the analysis of the genre as a specific phenomenon. Third, this study does not explain the historical situation of the 1980s in Korea, although it should describe it to understand how two mechanisms are operated as a bulwark of publicity in a specific historical period. Fourth, this study does not mention the Korean people's strife for gaining freedom of expression in terms of the production of films. It cannot be disregarded in that their struggle represents culture and media as the space for the realization of the public sphere. Fifth, this study does not allude to points at issue proposed by the discussion about the theory of the public sphere.

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