

# Western Pop Culture

## Abstract

Western pop culture has been a phenomenon that it has influenced every aspect of society. In this paper I looked into how it has affected a third world country such as the Philippines, how pop culture has changed the country and its people. I find that some of the changes were for the better and some changes had a negative impact.

## Influences of Western Pop Culture

Culture and traditions are significant in countries like Philippines, which has always cherished its rich heritage and it is quite well known for its worldwide. Philippines have slowly been losing their heritage and traditions in favor of western pop culture. The “West” has been a dominating force in the world since the conclusion of World War 2. Today its influences have become a sort of pop culture phenomenon in developing countries such as the Philippines. Western pop culture have influence almost every aspect of the country, from how we communicate, to how we listen and create music, watch and produce film and television, our fashion and our self-image, to how we even package our goods. There are several aspects of the western pop culture, some of which have been negative, some of which have had a positive influence, most of which have had some manner of impact and influence in Filipino society. In order to understand how the Philippine culture has been affected by the West in the modern period, it is essential to get a picture of the context of Filipino exposure to the West in earlier periods. A brief history of the Philippines reveals that traditions and cultures of the Philippines are from China. Before the colonial time the Chinese came to the Philippines and traded with the natives peacefully, exchanging Chinese goods with hardwood, pearls, and turtle shells that were valued in China (Miclal, 2000, p. 100). And this is evident according to Miclat (2000) in the “Traditional Chinese motifs that symbolize imperial power are found in the trade ceramics found in the Philippines.” In the 16th century Spaniards began widespread Christianization of the lowland Filipinos (Miclal, 2000, p. 101). Spain occupied the Philippines for over three centuries. And during that time the country slowly assimilated the customs and traditions of the Spain. When United States bought Philippines from Spain all of the traditions have slowly changed to catch up with the Western countries. The “West” has a way of living, a style, a culture that has forced its way into most established societies in the modern world. Particularly, western pop culture has had a large impact in the Philippines. Western pop culture is defined as the totality of ideas, perspectives, attitudes, images and other phenomena that are deemed preferred through an informal consensus within the mainstream of any given society (“Popular Culture,” 2011). The tradition of speaking to someone in person has faded away in modern times especially in the Philippines. Today the influence of western popular culture has greatly enhanced the way we communicate. Instead of traveling or waiting for a letter to arrive. Now, how long we wait is only affected by how fast our connection is. When in the past we use traditional mail and land line, now we have cell phones, e-mail, social networks and Skype. Cell phone users in the Philippines have perfected a way to multi task while on the cell phone. Cell phones are mostly used for texting as a method of communication. People there can actually hold a conversation with a person and text on their cell phone at the same time without looking at the keyboard. Funny thing is I think the Filipinos have the fastest texting fingers. The popularity of social networking in the Philippines can be traced in the Filipinos' culture of "friends helping friends." For

Filipinos, their friends and who they know can become more valuable than money, especially when what they need can be achieved through nepotism, favoritism, and friendship among others (Maderazo, 2007). With the popularity of social networking a lot more Filipinos sign up to stay connected to friends, classmates and families. For example, a lot of Filipino overseas contract workers are taking advantage of the social network to stay connected to their families back home in the Philippines to catch up on everyday news and everyday lives of their loved ones that they have left behind. Western popular music has long had a major influence on the world music scene, and the massive appeal of rock music since the worldwide impact of the Beatles and other groups from the 1960s has altered the popular music scene in different regions of the world including third world country such as Philippines. These and other influences have made life in the country very different today. Decades of technological progress has gradually affected local musical and other cultural practices (Craig & King, 2002, p. 43). The practice of spontaneous chanting / singing has dramatically declined among Filipino youth (Craig & King, 2002, p. 41). When pop music became widespread in the country, young composer then would use the original melody and make it their own by incorporating into local settings and musical practices into the lyrics (Craig & King, 2002, p. 50). Because of the influence of the new generation of music many young people taught themselves the guitar. The entertainment industry has also been influenced by the west in a way that more shows in the Philippines are becoming more and more like the show in the west. The entertainment there had also added reality television shows such as "Big Brother" and "Ultimate Fighting Champion" just to name a few. Filipino actors and actresses including backup dancers are also dressing themselves sexier and showing more skin to sell their show to the public. In one of the noontime TV shows called "Wowowee" they always have young girls probably in their late teens dressed in two-piece suits dancing in front of the viewers to draw more attention. The reasons behind these maybe explain by the statement of Jennifer Pozner, in *The Unreal World*. She said, "Viewers may be drawn to reality TV by sort of cinematic schadenfreude, but they continue to tune in because these shows frame their narratives in ways that both reflect and reinforce deeply ingrained societal biases about women, men, love, beauty, class, and race" (Pozner, 2004). With the reality TV shows being accepted and watched by many viewers in the United States, Filipino's have accepted them as well as a result of catching up on what is in pop-culture. The influence of western fashions in the Philippines is hard to miss (Western, 2011). Fashion has influenced traditional clothing of the Philippines. Philippines were known as one of the more conservative countries in Asia. Filipinos used to wear conservative clothes that show less skin. Long skirts and blouses for women who are more traditional and are perceived as someone who has more self-respect. Women who wore sexy clothing are labeled as prostitute. In the present day most Filipino women wear sexy clothing to show more skin as part of the westernization effect. Dressing sexy has become more accepted as a fashion in our society. As a result of the change in fashion more and more young women and older women start wearing clothes that are not appropriate for their age. But not all traditions has been lost, among men the tradition of wearing "Barong Tagalog" is still alive and well. It is worn in special occasions such as weddings. Also among the politicians if they want to seem they are for the people they wear the traditional Barong Tagalog. The packaging of food, clothing, crafts, and many other things have been influenced by the west to become easily recognized and inviting. Now a days packaging have become more important than the quality of the product. Up until the last decade or so packaging didn't really make much of a difference as long as we know that the quality of the product was good. The quality of the product was much more important than the package itself. With the west accepting products from the Philippines

traditional packaging had to be redone to make it more presentable. Companies started using non-traditional ingredients and materials to make mass production of food, clothing and crafts faster having an issue of quantity versus quality. For example, longanisa, packaging added the nutritional values on the package. As a result the ingredients were modified, changing the taste of the food that we all grew up eating. The westernization of the Philippines has changed we do things. Many traditions have changed and some have been broken. The flow of change has challenged many of us and only few have managed to keep traditions going, wanting to become westernized has changed the view and the way Filipinos thinks and presents themselves.

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