

**EAST ASIA'S SOFT POWER AND
COUNTER CULTURAL IMPERIALISM
PRACTICES ON TIKTOK**

A STUDY OF JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS

DEREE - The American College of Greece

July, 2022



THESIS APPROVAL

"East Asia's Soft Power and Counter Cultural Imperialism Practices on TikTok: A Study of Japan and South Korea" a thesis prepared by Christina Athanasia Zoi in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Strategic Communication & Public Relations was presented July 29, 2022, and was approved and accepted by the thesis advisor, second reader and the Graduate School.

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"We can easily now conceive of a time when there will be only one culture and one civilization on the entire surface of the earth. I don't believe this will happen, because there are contradictory tendencies always at work – on the one hand towards homogenization and on the other towards new distinctions."

(Lévi-Strauss, 1978)

Contents

ABSTRACT	6
INTRODUCTION	8
LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Theoretical approaches about dominance and culture	14
Post-Colonialism Discourses	14
Imperialism	18
Imperialism and Capitalism.....	18
Media Imperialism	20
Cultural Imperialism.....	22
Globalization	24
Cultural Globalization	25
Hybridity	26
Soft Power	28
Counter Cultural Imperialism Thesis.....	30
The case of South Korea.....	31
The significance of Hallyu	31
Colonial period (1910s – 1950s)	33
Developmentalist period (1960s – 1980s)	35
Korea’s Globalization (1990s)	37
Hallyu 1.0 & 2.0 (2000s-2010s).....	42
The case of Japan	45
Japanese Empire (1868-1947)	45
Post War Era (1947-1960s).....	46
Pre-Globalization Era (1970s-1980s)	47
Globalization Wave (1990s)	48
Cool Japan (2000s-2010s).....	51
Research Hypotheses	53
METHODOLOGY.....	54
Research method.....	54
Fieldwork and Data Collection	54
Data Categorization	55
Unit of Analysis	56
Content Analysis Limitations.....	57
Cultural Distance.....	57
FINDINGS & ANALYSIS	60

Japanese vs Korean Content Frequency	60
Content Originality.....	61
Sharing Motives	63
Oral & Written Language	66
Library Audio.....	69
Cultural Sectors.....	72
TikTok Content Categories.....	75
Cultural Distance.....	81
CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION.....	84
REFERENCES	90
APPENDICES.....	99
Appendix A: Definitions used in the research for TikTok content categories.	99
Appendix B: List of users’ identified countries of origin.....	101
Appendix C: IRB Committee approval	102

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research study is to examine Japan's and South Korea's cultural dissemination through the short video app TikTok. The main hypothesis of the study is that cultural dissemination via TikTok has a positive influence on the countries' cultural recognition on a global level and that it also benefits the soft power practices that the two countries follow. In order to find evidence that supports the hypothesis an inductive content analysis of 1007 TikTok videos was employed.

An extensive literature review and historical analysis was carried out. Firstly, theoretical approaches about dominance and culture were discussed. Starting from discourses about post-colonial theories on how to achieve cultural recognition, and discussions about imperialist effects, moving on to examining various theories of globalization, this research builds on the applicability of the most recent theses of soft power and counter-cultural imperialism. Based on these aforementioned theories, a historical analysis of South Korea and Japan is presented, with an aim to describe the formation of the contemporary cultural identities of those two countries. A combination of the primary and secondary data, will provide the necessary information, regarding the means of cultural dissemination through TikTok. The content analysis results identified 22 individual cultural sectors of Japanese and Korean popular content and 34 TikTok content categories within the app. Those TikTok categories can be interpreted as the forms in which the defined cultural sectors can be transmitted through the app. The findings support the counter-cultural imperialism thesis for both examined countries. Japanese cultural trends seem to be less popular than Korean cultural trends. The research evidence sheds light on the fundamental reasons behind this difference. Moreover, the data support that both cultures are promoted primarily by individual fans, that create a proliferative cultural dissemination effect, characterized by a multidirectional unofficial cultural flow. It is also noteworthy that Korean cultural sectors are purposely and strategically promoted by the private Korean entertainment sector, something that does not apply in the case of Japan. Finally, the cultural proximity and exoticism hypotheses are examined, by calculating the cultural distance between the examined videos' countries of origin, and Japan and South Korea.

Key Words:

counter-cultural imperialism, soft power, informal cultural flows, proliferative cultural dissemination, TikTok

INTRODUCTION

The 20th century was marked by a series of theories that tried to interpret the power balance among the nations of the world, in terms of military power and cultural power. Which cultures have been the most dominant? Have other cultures been oppressed? Are we walking towards a future dominated by one global culture? What are the forms of power in our contemporary society? Those are some of the questions that theorists tried to answer in the past century and continue answering today.

It is in fact true, that western cultures, and predominantly the American culture, having substantial resources; military forces, established and well-respected culture and history, technological power and high production media, have played a crucial role in world history and managed to enter the global market and gain a dominant position among the most influential cultures of the world. This dominance has been characterized by many as cultural imperialism. Tomlinson (1991) defines cultural imperialism as the expansion of modernity, and appraises the phenomenon as a process of cultural loss. Imperialism on its own has many subcategories. If the focus is targeted on hard power the classic imperialism thesis can be used, where imperialism is the practice of military power for territorial acquisition or political and economic control in other places. However, if the center of a study is world economy, capitalism should be discussed, for discourses about national identity, cultural imperialism can be used, and for media, media imperialism should be examined.

This paper focuses primarily on the cultural aspect of imperialism. In order to answer to all those questions, and investigate the aforementioned thesis, culture needs to be defined. The classic definition given by Clifford Geertz (1973) proposes that culture is *“a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life”*. Another classic definition was provided by Williams (1976), in his book *“Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society”*. In the book, he explains the development of the word through a historical review of its use and development. He considers culture as one of the most difficult words to define. In his descriptive

analysis of culture, he attempts to define culture on the basis of "*customary difference*", meaning that every nation's culture is what people are accustomed to, what they find normal and usual in their everyday lives and others do not. Um (2017) in a more recent study of cultural identity in an era characterized by trans-culturalism, divided the definition into two different constructs; cultural tradition and culture. Um defines cultural traditions as set of ideas, communicated on different levels of precision and comprehensiveness between members of a cultural structure. This definition seems very similar to Geertz's, but he also adds that cultural structures are constantly changing, and being influenced by external factors and environmental forces. He also defines culture separately. For Um, culture represents all "*aspects characteristic of a particular form of human life*". In regards to this paper, I will focus on Um's perceptions of tradition and culture. However, defining culture as a single construct it is not sufficient enough for the purposes of this study. A lot of theorists in the process of examining cultural flows and dissemination divide culture into sectors; groups of cultural commodities, notions and behaviors, in order to make feasible and tangible remarks in their academic works. Iwabuchi (2020) distinguishes some of the most important cultural sectors for the Japanese nation, among them he states media, food, fashion, traditional crafts, ways of life, film, animation, comics, music and games. Otmazgin (2008) adds sports, and Bunyavejchrein (2012) adds pornography, as other important cultural categories for Japan. In the case of South Korea, Kim (2013) refers to K-pop, TV dramas, films, online gaming and the Korean language as some of the most significant cultural sectors for the country. Based on these sectors, it is obvious that entertainment is of outmost importance for the cultural identity of those countries.

In the 21st century, with more nations becoming global players, the role of the local media and the audience participation in a user generated content environment exposed the main flows of the cultural imperialism thesis. Cunningham and Craig (2016) explore the world of the new global online entertainment scene, which comes to challenge the traditional media and means of entertainment, having a significant impact on cultural dissemination. In their research, they focus on the concept of media globalization under the scope of national regulations; a characteristic example would

be China. China's ban of US based owned platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, has created a need as well as an opportunity for China to develop within its vast local market. Talking in 2020s terms, China's success story, over this strategic approach, that turned out to be a global hit was the short video app TikTok, which will be the medium examined in this paper.

In order to further investigate this phenomenon, Flew (2016) focuses on China's international media expansion. He highlights the two main dimensions of these case, which he considers to be international relations and entertainment media. In this paper, the focus will be on the second dimension, with a closer examination on culture, for the cases of Japan and South Korea. Flew's work, by investigating and exploring various debates on China's cultural diplomacy strategies - which will be further investigated in this paper -, sheds light on how nations can achieve cultural power. He also notes that nowadays, not only China but more other nations follow this type of practices. The two main examples for the 21st century are Japan and South Korea. Japan's pop culture and the Korean Wave or else Hallyu, are two major cultural phenomena, tracing back to the late 20th century and thriving today, and can be considered as the milestones of this post-globalized reality, and also support the so called "reverse imperialism thesis" or "counter-cultural imperialism thesis"; a thesis that supports the promotion of soft power primarily by cultural diplomacy from once suppressed nations (Jung, 2019). Both of the above terms are examined in detail further in this research study.

Jin (2007) has also supported the reverse imperialism thesis, or as he mentioned, he provided a "reinterpretation of cultural imperialism", with which he underlined the importance of the domestic markets, and how they have challenged the US dominance. Jin's work focuses on South Korea's case and interprets South Korea's pop culture in the South East Asian market. It is important to highlight that when Jin wrote his thesis, Hallyu wasn't consider yet a global phenomenon, so it helps one understand better the early stages, focusing on a local market. Moreover, Ganghariya & Kanozia (2020), provide one of the most analytic literature reviews on the topic of Hallyu, focusing on academic literature of the past two decades. Their work is a source of a great amount of academic literature and has been used to investigate the

phenomenon as it is, its history, practices and success. Both works will be used for the secondary research of the project.

Even though, China holds the reins in utilizing soft power strategies for the promotion of its own media and entertainment by blocking US media, it focuses mainly on the domestic market, since it is big enough to support China's economy, this is not the case for other East Asian countries, like South Korea and Japan. Nanako (2002) provides an in-depth analysis on how Japan was the initiator of this counter-cultural imperialist phenomenon in the East Asian region, and how it set itself apart as a major cultural power in Asia, but also worldwide.

As it is mentioned above, one of the major outcomes of this post-globalized environment is TikTok, the short video app that challenged its US based competitors; Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat (Dixon, 2022). In 2016, Douyin (抖音) - China's domestic version of TikTok - was launched by the Chinese company ByteDance, and in 2017 its global version TikTok entered the global social media market. TikTok is a social media platform where users can create, edit and upload short videos, with the length options being 15s, 60s, and 3-min. The videos run in a loop, until one chooses to watch the next video. Other users can watch, share, like and comment the videos (Dilon, 2020). In September 2021, the social video app had 1 billion monthly active users worldwide, with a 45% growth in comparison to the previous year, making it one of the biggest social networks worldwide (Ceci,2022).

Many academics have studied TikTok as a social phenomenon, and even though TikTok's success is in its early stages, having launched quite recently, academic literature is available. Zeng et al. (2021) were one of the first teams to study the app. Zeng et al. conducted an extended literature review with all available data, trying to provide an overall sense of TikTok's development, framing, methodologies and application. Their work is a good starting reading for anyone who wants to study the app. Schellewald (2021) proposes that in order to study short content video media, and specifically TikTok, which is the focus of his study, the content needs to be divided into communicative forms; sub-categories of content, e.g., entertainment, comedic,

tutorials. His methodology will be taken into consideration for the execution of this research.

For a further understanding of the app, TikTok's AI algorithm needs to be understood. TikTok's main feature is the "For You" page (FYP); a non-ending stream of short videos, selected by the app's AI system, based on consumers' preferences. Schellewald (2021) examined the algorithm from an observer's perspective (passive viewer), and how one's interference with the FYP defines the content, whereas Klug (2021) examined the algorithm from an active user's perspective. It is important to note, that an active user is someone who uploads content and a passive viewer is just an observer.

Kaye et al. (2020), focused on sound and analyzed how active creators utilized TikTok's sound library and how that can push content to the trending section. This study is of great interest, when it comes to East Asian's cultural promotion through the app, since one of their predominant cultural products is music. Through TikTok's unique ecosystem East Asian oriented music can be promoted very easily, by being promoted as a mega-trend through the app - characteristic examples are Koda Kumi's 2010 anthem *Meguminohito-め組のひと* and electronic song *Tokyo* by Leat'eq, which became a global sensation as a lip-syncing/dancing challenge. Mitchel (2018, August 25), explains how this ecosystem was adopted in the Japanese society, providing Japan with one more outlet for promoting its culture. Salmon (2020, November 7), at first, focusing on China and moving on broader level to consider East Asia, explains how East Asian countries, have managed to incorporate new technologies, like TikTok, with their cultures, in a consumer-oriented environment. He mentions, that this approach is different from the western cultural media entertainment environment, and that is obvious to the consumers, thus the rise of interest for Asia's pop culture.

It is worth mentioning that content regarding Asian cultures does not only get promoted by Asian content creators, but also by non-Asian, that appreciate the culture. Muliadi (2020, July 7) highlights that TikTok is an incubator of micro-identities, meaning that people with same interests can come together very easily, express themselves and promote their hobbies and interests. So, even non-Asian people can share their love for Asian cultures and Asian cultural products in a safe environment

and due to TikTok AI algorithm very easily connect with a large number of people. It is worth mentioning, that the two major East Asian cultural promoters; Japan and South Korea, seem to also be major trends in the app, with the Japanese trend having 11.9 billion views and the Korean trend having 34 billion views (TikTok).

Through extended secondary research, a detailed analysis of the prominent theories on means of promotion or influence of cultural dissemination will be provided, starting from the post-colonial and anti-colonial theories of the 1960-1970s, moving to notions about imperialism, then soft vs hard power, and finally counter-cultural imperialism. After that, the case studies of South Korea and Japan will be analyzed, with a historical review depicted all their steps to global success in the 21st century. The historical events presented, will be presented and examined based on the theories analyzed beforehand.

This research is the first attempt, to study East Asian cultural dissemination through informal multi-directional flows in TikTok. Through content analysis of TikTok videos, the main most popular sub-categories of East-Asian culture, with a focus on the case studies; South Korea and Japan, will be determined, as well as the means (types of videos) with which Asian content creators choose to promote those sub-categories. Specific characteristics like content originality, oral and non-written communication, and cultural distance will be also examined.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical approaches about dominance and culture

Post-Colonialism Discourses

In academia, the first signs of consistent efforts regarding resistance towards the exponentially growing Western culture and its overwhelming dominance around the world can be traced back, not that long ago, to the colonial revolutions of the 20th century. One of the fundamental figures in post-colonial studies, was French West Indian humanist Frantz Fanon. Despite being born in the French colony of Martinique, in the Antilles islands of Caribbean, he had never forgotten his Algerian roots. He was a psychiatrist and political philosopher, whose work examined the psychopathology of colonization and the human, social, and cultural outcomes of decolonization. (Peterson, 2022; Fanon, 1986; Macey, 2012)

In 1959, in his book “A Dying Colonialism” (1959), Fanon expresses his view that capitalism is besieged by a global wave of revolution; a kind of revolution that could alter humanity. His opinion was based on the Chinese Communist Revolution (1945-1949) and Korean Revolution (1951-1953), and of course the ongoing at the time global outbursts; the Algerian War (1954-1962), the Vietnam War (1955-1975) and the Cuban Revolution (1953-1959). His main focus of interest though, which he discusses in his books, is the Algerian War and the oppression of the colonized masses (Fanon, 1952; Fanon, 1959; Fanon, 1961). It is stated clearly that he was not a Marxist, but one can detect similar traits with Marx’s supporters, such as focusing on the masses’ way of thinking and actions, and also holding the belief that the ones determining history are neither the leaders nor the system, but the masses (Fanon, 1959). For Fanon, revolution comes in many forms, and one of them is violence, which he believes is inevitable; if the oppression is sustained with violence from the above, the only possible option is from the below to respond with violence (Fanon, 1959; Bulhan, 1985). One of the focuses in his book “A Dying Colonialism”, is the consequences of the systematic resistance to colonization on indigenous culture and civilization. He states, that the Algerians persistence on their old traditions and their rejection of the

Western ways, was not a sign of retrogression, but the colonized people's way of defending their civilization. In the eyes of Fanon, the colonized do not see the invasion as liberation or a step towards modernity, but a consistent oppression, followed by an internal deterioration and a cycle of hopelessness. Specifically, he states:

"The colonized person, who in this respect is like the men in underdeveloped countries or the disinherited in all parts of the world, perceives life not as a flowering or a development of an essential productiveness, but as a permanent struggle against an omnipresent death. This ever-menacing death is experienced as endemic famine, unemployment, a high mortality rate, an inferiority complex and the absence of any hope for the future."

(Fanon, 1959)

In his book "The Wretched of The Earth" (1961), Fanon provides input on how colonialism fails to solve the colonized people's issues. He explains, that with the first sign of an altercation, even though the colonial powers will humbly acknowledge issues such as underdevelopment, their efforts towards solving those issues are not sufficient enough to achieve the socio-economic reforms that are mandatory in order to reach the aspirations of the colonized masses. He highlights that even the basic issue of famine cannot be resolved. Culture is also a topic of discussion in this book. He highlights the importance of the colonized intellectuals, who he identifies as the leading power regarding their efforts in national culture recognition and preservation. He explains that the colonialist theory stands on the grounds of a precolonial barbarism, and on that ground, the Western powers gave themselves permission to rehabilitate African, Mexican, and Peruvian civilizations. Other writers, such as Bulhan (1985), go a step further and clearly state that capitalism and feudal Europe exploited massively the cultural and scientific contributions from other distant societies, and thrived on the degradation of other civilizations, and actually depended on the underdevelopment of those societies. To Westerners the defense of national culture by the colonized was an obscure phenomenon that needed to be overcome. Fanon states (1961), that the European academics that support colonialist theory, fail to acknowledge, that the western world's self-given permission to alter civilizations, was based on the fact that their own culture was unchallenged. It is important to explain

that Fanon admits that once great civilizations have indeed perished over time due to conflict with the colonial powers. An example would be the Songhai civilization, the once great empire of West Africa (Kintiba, 2018). However, Fanon also supports that for societies the reclaiming of their lost past is a crucial part towards the goal of rebuilding a strong national culture. He explains that the colonial powers in an attempt to maintain their oppression distort the past and demean the history of the colonized people, thus the colonized need to overpass this obstacle; this artificial “self-hatred”, as Fanon describes it (Fanon, 1961; Alessandrini, 1999).

Various academics provide their own interpretation and criticism of Fanon's work. Nayar (2011) studied Fanon's major works; *A Dying Colonialism*, *Black Skin, White Masks*, *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Towards the African Revolution*. Nayar supports that even though Fanon identifies violence as a mean of freedom, Fanon goes a step beyond that simple idea and proposes a new form of humanism, defined by inclusivity and the rejection of the European Enlightenment models. Nayar identifies Fanon as the first major postcolonial ‘theorist’ of the twentieth century. Others like Arendt severely criticize Fanon for persistence in violence (Arendt, 1970). Nayar (2011), though, tries to shed light in Fanon's humanistic vision. In order to do so, first he identifies how Fanon directs violence. The directions are two; first, overthrow the colonizer and second, retrieve subjectivity, dignity and identity. In this second goal of violence, Nayar bases his thoughts on Fanon's humanism. The author defines Fanon's humanism as the solidarity with the world’s suffering, regardless race, color and geography. So, what he proposes is that Fanon does not want the colonized to destroy and vanish the oppressors, but find the individual man in the colonizer and create recognition between the colonized and colonizer. Fanon's defines recognition as the acceptance of cultural and historical truths of other humans. In other words, Fanon believes that after the colonial powers have been overthrown, humans will be able to recognize and accept each other’s differences and also enrich each other’s cultures. Fanon proposes a world where humans are not judged based on Western perspectives. Regarding the decolonization process, Fanon argues that the nation building should be founded on the ideas of socialism and equality, while stating that the redistribution of wealth is required. He also mentions education and technologies

to be of utmost importance (Fanon, 1959; Alessandrini, 1999; Nayar, 2011). Fanon describes this desired state as universalism or universal human subjectivity (Nayar, 2011).

Another theorist, Yeh (2013), examines Fanon's humanist and existentialist approaches, which could lead to ethnic liberation and the downfall of imperialism. Specifically, he tries to explore the theoretical background which Fanon used, and based on that, provide a new vision and way of thinking. Yeh realizes that despite Fanon's efforts to ignite a national liberation in the minds of the oppressed, he does not provide a clear explanation on how culture will lead to the reclaim of the identity and independence after this national liberation. Yeh, highlights that decolonization will be sufficient for the oppressed to thrive, not by just being decolonized, but also by creating a new cultural aesthetic personality for the future generations. This new culture would be the result of the simultaneous struggle of fighting and learning from the Western world, with the goal of transcending it. Similar approaches, in regards to competing the Western culture, can be traced in East Asian cultures, such as the Chinese, Japanese and the Korean. The last two will be examined in detail later, further in this paper (Iwabuchi, 2016). Characteristically, the Japanese, in the Meiji era (1868–1912), would use the phrase “*wakon yōsai*”, which is translated as “Japanese spirit and Western technologies”. This phrase implies not only a distinct separation, between the two cultures but also a hierarchy; that the material world of the West is inferior of the spirit of the East, but in order to compete with the West, Japan needs to conquer the knowledge of the Western technology, thus learn from the West in order to achieve mutual recognition (Lammare, 2009; Fanon, 1961).

Based on Fanon and the studies about him, we can detect that Fanon's decolonization theory is very similar to what happened and is still happening in the now powerful nations of East Asia, especially China, Japan and Korea. After the great wars and revolutions that took place, the nations focused on rebuilding their nation, empowering their cultural identities and constructing paths of recognition on global level. This points out, that his work is still relevant and worth investigating. However, neither Fanon nor the academics that have studied his work have come up with a precise plan on how cultural identity can be obtained and then disseminated, thus this

paper attempts to fill in this gap and, define what cultural identity is considered in our contemporary society, and how it can be disseminated with the power of social media and short video apps.

Imperialism

A lot of academics have tried to pinpoint out just one definition, or the correct definition, of imperialism. Wesseling (2001) suggests that it is impossible to provide a precise definition for imperialism, not because of the lack of definitions provided regarding the matter, but in contrast the exact opposite; there is an abundance of different definitions, each one responding to different fields of study. A lot of theorists refer to imperialism as the colonial expansion of the nineteenth century's western forces. Walter (2022) is one of those theorists that examine imperialism under this scope of dominance and power. Lake (2015) also stands on those grounds, referring to imperialism as "*a form of international hierarchy in which one political community effectively governs or controls another political community.*" Other scholars focus on the economic aspect of imperialism. For example, D. Moellendorf (2012) defines imperialism "*as the export of capital from one country to another*".

For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on the classic term in relation to colonialism, as discussed in the previous section, in order to analyze significant historical moments in this current research. Moreover, it will be analyzed in relation to capitalism, culture and media, to understand the significance reasons that triggered the changes in cultural and media flow, as it is going to be examined in the two examined countries.

Imperialism and Capitalism

Academics have tried to examine imperialism in regards to capitalism, through Marxist approaches. Lee (2008) explores the idea of imperialism based on a Marxist notion of capitalism. He states that, in the imperialist era in the 19th and early 20th century, for a Marxist, imperialism was a process to assert dominance abroad. He explains that Marxist studies of imperialism allow contemporary scholars to understand how the western media dominance reformed the new order of capitalism and resulted in the

unequal global distribution of power. He mentions of course, that this is a rather simplistic approach, based on a simple dichotomous model of dominance, which cannot be applied in the complex world of today, since it does not take into consideration the plurality of international flows, whether it is culture, information, technology or people.

Other academics, have also studied the notion of imperialism and whether there is a new form of imperialism, the new imperialism thesis, and to what extent it can be applied in today's contemporary society. Fuchs (2010) attempts to investigate whether a new form of the Marxist stand point of imperialism can describe societies. In order to do so, he analyzes Vladimir Lenin's understanding of imperialism in relation to contemporary capitalism. The question Fuchs states is whether contemporary capitalism is a kind of imperialism. Fuchs notes the five characteristics of imperialism based on Lenin's views:

1. The concentration of production and capital reaches goes to that extent, that it generates monopolies which have a determining role in the global economy.
2. The integration of bank capital with industrial capital, aiming for a financial oligarchy.
3. The export of capital and the export of commodities, as two separate bodies.
4. The creation of international capitalist monopolies, that share the global market among themselves.
5. The territorial splitting of the whole globe among the most powerful capitalist nations.

So, based on the above characteristics, it is evident that from Lenin's stand point, imperialism and capitalism are interlinked terms. Lenin provides the below definition for imperialism:

“Capitalism in that stage of development in which the domination of monopolies and finance capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun: in which the division of all the territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.”

(Lenin, 1917)

Regarding Fuchs' (2010) conclusion, whether there is a new form of imperialism in our contemporary society, he proposes that contemporary capitalism is a new form of imperialism. Apart from that statement, he does recognize that in the past years, there has been significant changes in the world economy, with the most important being the US's downfall in regards to capital exports and commodity exports, while in contrast China has developed to the point of being an important trading country and a major global player. Fuchs' also states that another characteristic of the new imperialism is the deterioration of the economic importance of the US, while noting that the US still holds its military hegemony.

Based on the above, that classic colonial definition of imperialism, despite being a very important step into realizing the historical framework that led to the complex reality of our contemporary society, it fails to explain the processes and the reasons why the rearrangement of power is happening. For those reasons, imperialism was defined in relation to capitalism, as a first attempt to answer to the question of how and why. Even though the Marxist views explain the driving forces of imperialism, their simplistic dichotomous model, fails to explain the mechanisms of power distribution and flow in regards to cotemporary times. Since, this study is focusing on cultural dissemination through media, media imperialism and cultural imperialism are also analyzed, to best represent the contemporary power distribution.

Media Imperialism

Geertsema-Sligh (2019) uses the term neocolonial project to characterize the motives behind media development. With her research, she attempts to fill voids in the already existing literature regarding how people working in the media, construct meaning of their work today. In her studies, she recognizes the today's postcolonial politics that are in force, justifying her use of the term neocolonial project. One of her primary remarks is that media development forces Western ideals and interferes with countries' relationships on a local level, for its own benefit; something that supports the idea of a new imperialistic model. Geertsema-Sligh in her literature review, refers

to the works of many other theorists to support her claims. She also identifies the need for local voices to be heard; a need which strives to be fulfilled through the use of the Internet, which allows the world to use a two-way communication system, and also provides a platform for the rest/local to express themselves. In this regard, the Internet and media can provide a voice for the local communities. In contradiction to that, Geertsema-Sligh highlights the fact, that western media development's ulterior motive is the advancement of democracy and a free-market economy in developing countries, which can just be seen as an attempt to project the Western model of society onto the nations of the rest of the world. Even though, the researcher notes that her results are not generalizable, since she bases her remarks in a specific case study of an organization in the US, a pattern between post-colonial studies and media development becomes evident. So, based on her claims there is indeed a projection of the American model to the rest of the world, but this one-way flow - from West to East regarding this study-, could be threatened with the global increased use of the Internet and also the media development itself, leading to a two-way flow - regarding this study from East to West-.

Cunningham and Craig (2016), provide a cross-cultural communication analysis, with a focus on global online screen entertainment platforms, that can support a counter global flow and the two-way model described above. In their work, they acknowledge that US has dominated the global online entertainment industry for at least the past twenty years, by possessing and controlling the worlds' largest digital television portals (Amazon video, Hulu, Netflix) and social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube). However, they identify another competitive market which poses a threat to the American monopoly; the Chinese online entertainment market. China has created a state-based regulated environment, in order to protect and support its own digital and social media industries, and create competitive chances with the West. In simple terms, China has not only banned major US based social media platform, but instead has put immense effort in promoting its own platforms, like Douying (2016), WeChat (2011) and Weibo (2009) (Thomala, 2022).

Cunningham and Craig (2016) identify China and India, as the *"two largest emerging non-Western online spaces in the world"*, whose online cultural dominance is primarily

based on localization. These Chinese competitors will be the new major players in the global arena of social media and entertainment, threatening the already existing producers of the one-way cultural flow, that lead content from Hollywood and Silicon Valley to the rest of world. Cunningham and Craig, characterize this one-way flow as “American Media Imperialism” or “New Media Imperialism”. The most important part of their study is not the recognition of this new form of imperialism in the post-colonial era and today's world - even though it supports previously discussed claims in this paper -, but the recognition of the two-way flow, as a side effect of media development and the new imperialist model. As also supported by Geertsema-Sligh (2019), those US-owned platforms have given voices to international content creators, who are rarely seen in the US. So, traditional entertainment content from their own countries is being disseminated globally as well. Cunningham and Craig (2016) provide a detailed explanation on how the technical and regulatory aspects of social media, have enabled this proliferation of voices, and cultural diversity over the traditional global media hegemons. Their work provides significant information, as why non-Western nations are entering or try to enter the global market, but their explanation of how they achieve that is not sufficient, especially focusing on the cultural aspect of the content being shared, which is the main aim of these research.

The above studies suggest, that even though imperialism in its many forms can still be traced in our today's world, it is not a model that sufficiently describe the multidirectional flow of today's media.

Cultural Imperialism

In the post-colonial era, imperialism transformed itself into less visible, which a lot of academics refer to as cultural imperialism. The concept of cultural imperialism first appeared in the 1960s and continued being popular in the 1970s, and it was used as means to interpret the role of the US and the dynamics of international relations after World War II (Moody, 2017). Jin (2007), through an extended review of related 1960s and 1970s studies, explains that the thesis proposed that US was the dominant power in terms of international cultural exchange, and that this was achieved by promoting television programs and motion pictures from the US to the developing counties. Jin

(2007) describes this international cultural exchange as a one-way flow from the wealthy nations of the West, to the developing countries of the Third World. Based on the 1960s and 1970s studies, he defines cultural imperialism as the deliberate and systematic effort made by Western societies, specifically US, to preserve commercial, political and military superiority, via cultural control. One of the major theorists that studied cultural imperialism was Schille. In Schille's 1976 work "Communication and cultural domination", the author states that there is a tendency for the formation of a modern world system, where societies will share the values and structures of the dominating center, which was and still is to a great extent the United States. Despite the cultural imperialism thesis vast popularity during the 1960s and 1970s, media development and global power distribution changes led to severe criticism of the thesis, because of its lack to interpret those global changes, such as the rise of local productions. Jin (2007) mentions that this serious criticism can be traced back in the early 1990s, when globalization gained popularity in the East - globalization will be discussed further in the literature review -.

However, even now, in the 21st century, researchers find traces that could partially support this thesis. Mirrlees (2016) suggests, that still today, in contrast with imperialism, the West forces do not pursue direct domination of territories, economies, and politics, like in the colonial era, but still strive to create a global system of integrated nations, that share the same model, characterized by capitalism, democracy and consumerism. Moody (2017) also argues that imperialism from the West is still apparent through a form of a contemporary American cultural imperialism, assisted by the US government and its support towards Hollywood's economic interests. He also states though, that the American cultural imperialism thesis can no longer describe adequately the global cultural flow. His main areas of studies focus on the penetration of American/Western ideology on international audiences and the effects that local foreign (non-American) policies have on Hollywood's profitability. His overall studies support the idea of a US dominance in the global market. However, he refers to potential threats, but he does not provide a sufficient explanation on how the Western cultural dominance is being threatened by foreign competitors.

Other theorists try to link cultural imperialism with other theses and provide a more sufficient view on the today's cultural/media flow and international dynamics. For example, Leidner (2010) considers cultural imperialism as a result and just a segment of globalization, which will be discussed in the next section. Leidner explains that, in the colonial era, cultural imperialism was the result of the efforts of the colonizer to infuse the aspects of the western culture to the colonized. He also states, that cultural imperialism did not vanish with the end of the colonial era and imperial rule, but transformed into a new form. This new form of cultural imperialism is depicted with systematic effort of western conglomerates trying to infuse their products and services, which are all linked with a cultural aspect of today's western modern world, to other global territories. He provides examples, such as Disney; a mega-player in the entertainment industry, Coca-Cola; one of the leading forces in the beverages industry and Microsoft dominating the digital world. Despite those examples being proof of the cultural imperialism thesis, he also realizes that they are not sufficient enough to describe the complexity of today's global reality.

What is evident, from all this academic literature is that, the complexity of today's international dynamics on a media and cultural level, cannot be described based on that single simplistic thesis of cultural imperialism in its various forms, therefore more ideas, such as globalization, had to be developed and will be examined thoroughly in this paper.

Globalization

Despite the fact, the globalization as a term can be traced back to the writings of French and American scholars in the 1960s and 1970s, the idea of globalization in its contemporary format was first proposed, in the 1990s by John Williamson. Williamson (2008) used the term to describe how the US and its western allies made a change in their approach regarding "*the process of development within a neo-liberal framework*", which means the attempt for ongoing Westernization and Americanization. Yeates (2001), provides a more general definition of globalization, based on which globalization is defined as "*a large-scale network of economic, cultural, social and political interconnections and processes which goes beyond national boundaries*".

Mondal (2006) provides also a terminological explanation of globalization, as "*the growing interdependence of world society in many world-wide phenomena*", like commerce, culture, communication and more, or the spread of international flows of capital, information, technology and trade in a single unified global market. He also makes a distinction between the classic definition of globalization and the contemporary globalization. Mondal describes contemporary globalization as the growing flow of commerce, capital, culture, notions and people, driven by the advanced communication and travelling technologies, and the global expansion of neo-liberal capitalism - meaning the widening of the market, the circulation of human resources, as well as increased export of capital - leading to local and regional changes and resistance against these flows. He proceeds into stating, that nowadays, globalization can be interpreted as ideology or theory, and also as empirical fact.

Cultural Globalization

Modal (2006), as well as other scholars, have proceed by adding a cultural axis in the definition of globalization, by defining cultural globalization. For Modal, "*cultural globalization is the process which creates a global culture*". Modal claims that theoretically, cultural globalization should be based on values such as democracy and multi-culturalism, but instead its nature is hegemonic. Ozer (2019) also defines cultural globalization as the "*global flow of goods, ideas, technologies and cultural customs*". Moreover, based on his views, Western cultural imperialism should not be confused with globalization. He mentions though, that globalization is often interchangeably used with the terms Westernization or Americanization, due to the extensive dissemination of Western pop culture in the globalization process. He highlights that globalization is characterized by a multi-directional flow of cultural content, which has been detached from its original context and is now exchanged globally.

It is worth mentioning that, till the mid-1990s, a lot of East Asian countries, viewed globalization as western cultural hegemony. Weber (2003) mentions that countries such as China, Malaysia and Singapore have responded to this phenomenon with "*protectionist media policies*" to reduce the negative consequences of cultural

imperialism - as they perceived globalization - on their societies and preserve their cultural autonomy. Characteristically, he mentions that China reduced anti-western media policies in the mid- to late 1990s, to prepare for joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001. This move was considered as a step towards modernization and good will, while balancing traditional values.

It is evident based on the above, that different academics as well as different nations have opposing view, on what globalization is and stands for. Whether globalization is a positive or negative phenomenon, it seems to differ based on the examined topic, and also on the receiver of its consequences. In order to analyze in depth, the contemporary cultural flow, it is mandatory to obtain knowledge and recognize how non-Western cultures perceive this phenomenon, whether they accept it and to what extent, or whether they do not accept it at all. Since, there is a notion that globalization stands for a one-way flow among several parties, it is important to continue with the examination of other models, that better describe the cultural flow of the 21st century.

Hybridity

In the turn of the 21st century, Holton (2000) attempted to investigate the relationship between globalization and cultural life. To do so, he divides globalization into three levels; homogenization, polarization, and hybridization. He explains that the processes described with this thesis are based on consumer capitalism, which in this case is constructed based on images inflicted in the minds of many Third World populations, creating the notion that Western culture is superior. This dichotomous nature of the homogenization thesis, which divides the world into the Western world and the rest, creates polarization, and that leads to the second thesis. In accordance to Holton, the polarization thesis explains that based on this two-sided model the globalization of information can be used to support both ethnonationalism and racial hatred, as well as intercultural dialogue. So, the polarization thesis depicts the resistance to Western norms, an idea which is much more convincing rather than the passive acceptance of the western reality, which the homogenization thesis suggests. Holton states that this thesis proposes “*cultural wars*”, between the west and its

competitors. In regards to the hybridization or syncretism thesis, he defines hybridity as *“the incorporation of cultural elements from a variety of sources within particular cultural practices”*. Based on this construct globalization allows and encourages fusion of a variety of cultural aspects through cross-border exchange, something that supports better the idea of a multi-directional cultural flow. Holton concludes that the hybridization thesis is more applicable to our reality, and fills in the gap of the two other approaches, since it includes a second level of complexity, which is the interconnection and exchange between different cultures. It also corresponds to globalization's aspects of unrestrained economic exchanges and the unavoidable change of all cultures.

In 2005, Kraidy (2005) introduced the concept of cultural hybridity in the field of international communication. Kraidy defines hybridity as an idea that promotes cultural respect and leads to cultural fusion. A good example, would be the aforementioned, about the blend of the Japanese culture with the American technology in the imperial period of Japan, and also contemporary Japan's mixed management system inspired by the American (Lamarre, 2009; Kraidy, 2005). However, he mentions that hybridity is a controversial term, that specifically in post-colonial studies has been used as a mean for cultural and political domination. Kraidy highlights the difference between dominance and pluralism. He also states that cultural imperialism and dominance were the focus of research in the 1960s and 1970s, but since the 1980s, they have been facing criticism based on their inability to respond to the reality of the post-imperialist era. He explains that this cultural fusion described by hybridity, is the result of cross-cultural contact, that occurs via exports of cultural products or migration. Moreover, Kraidy, in an attempt to prove his vision of compatibility between hybridity and globalization, proposes an alternative notion, which he calls critical trans-culturalism. Critical trans-culturalism incorporates the main concerns about power and cultural change, like cultural imperialism, but diverges in the way it exposes and analyzes the issues. Hybridity in today's terms, is evident throughout the world, especially in the entertainment industry. Kim (2022), provides a great example of modern hybridity; the Korean Cinema and specifically, Bong Joon-ho's *Parasites*. She explains that Korean filmmakers mix Hollywood styles

and genres, with distinctive Korean themes, like the Korean War, the division of the nation, the Confucian values, all in a modern/western atmosphere, that attracts international audiences.

Baek (2014) also seems to support the claims about hybridity. His study is focusing on YouTube and cross-cultural consumption. He explains that with the advancement of social media, access to foreign cultural products becomes easier and enables cross-cultural consumption. Despite, his proposal that this is a fact in today's times, he explains that there are still a lot of questions regarding how cultural products developed in specific cultural environments - in his studies he focuses on K-pop - are consumed among individuals from other cultural environments. This is the question he attempts to answer and its very similar to the one answering in this paper. In order to explain hybridity, he introduces two hypotheses; the proximity and cultural exoticism. The cultural proximity hypothesis focuses on cultural similarities between the producer of cultural content and the receiver, whereas the cultural exoticism hypothesis emphasizes on the cultural differences, which ignite curiosity and interest. It is also noteworthy, that his findings of his research on YouTube music videos, contradict cultural imperialism and the one-way flow of cultural content, proposing a multi-directional flow supported by both examined hypothesis.

Hybridity seems to better represent the multi-faceted character of today's world, than just the traditional definition of globalization. Baek findings also expose the prime forces that lead to multi-directional cultural flow, thus disproving the existence of the homogenization thesis in the 21st century. More questions are arising as to how the cultural flow is disseminated and if it is even possible to discuss a counter-imperialist thesis, where more cultures enter the global arena of cultural and media dissemination and can even be consider equal competitors of the Western culture.

Soft Power

The 21st century term that describes one nation's influence towards another is soft power, a term extensively used in the literature, sometimes as a synonym to national branding (Kim, 2013; Yoon & Jin, 2017). The "father" of this theory is considered to be

the American political scientist, Joseph Nye. In 1990, Nye (1990) stated that there is a new trend regarding exercising power in politics and foreign relations, which differs from the traditional means. He explained that one country can achieve its preferable results, when others want to follow it or have accepted a situation that produces such outcomes. He specifically states:

“When one country gets other countries to want what it wants-might be called cooperative or soft power in contrast with the hard or command power of ordering others to do what it wants.”

In 2004, Nye (2004) described soft power in relation to hard power as the ability to lure and persuade others, who share similar goals and interests, whereas hard power coerces the desired outcome to others. For Nye, military forces are considered as hard, and public diplomacy or academic exchanges as soft.

Other academics have provided their own definitions and investigated the term in comparison to other previous theses. Bell (2016) investigates this relationship, focusing on the case of Britain, after the fall of the Empire. She states that despite Britain's decreased military and economic power, it still exercises great power and influence, via a method which she characterizes as soft power. Bell defines soft power as the extortion of power and influence via cultural and political bodies that aim to depict the country in an appealing way to the eyes of the world. She also defines the opposite strategy, hard power, as power relying on military forces. She continues stating that the simultaneous use of this dual form of power can be considered as a form of contemporary imperialism. Bell explains that soft power is no longer practiced via cultural diplomacy, but instead via large companies that advance economic and political interests, something which she defines as corporate imperialism. Bell's notion about soft power and contemporary imperialism seems to match the Marxist ideas of imperialism and capitalism, which were discussed above. In more recent years, Nye (2011) also examined soft power in relation to propaganda. He suggests that the two terms are different, yet similar. He explains that the fine difference between them, is that propaganda has clear negative implications in democratic societies, whereas soft power is less controversial since it is a non-forceful, soft persuasive method used in foreign policies. Furthermore, Jung (2019) mentions that not only the state, but also

the public can extort soft power. He claims that focusing on the general public's generated soft power and not on government's, one can identify counter cultural diplomacy techniques, which could be applied in the cases of political discourses.

In this paper, the focus will be on Bell's (2016) and Jung's theories of soft power (2019) It will be examined whether reverse imperialism exists, in peripheral regions such as East Asia, Latin America and Africa, with the focus on East Asia. While Nye's definitions fail to depict the importance of cultural dissemination, Bell's acknowledges it. Jung's study also signifies the importance of building soft power through the general public, something which will be investigated in the form of informal cultural flow.

Counter Cultural Imperialism Thesis

Jin (2007) in an effort to investigate the increasing growth of the Korean cultural industry, uses a historical analysis approach and a cultural imperialism framework. Through his analysis of previous studies and, historical and empirical data, he proposes a counter-cultural imperialism notion, which describes the cultural content product flow in East and Southeast Asia and is based on the increasing influence of Korean popular culture in the area. In his process of analyzing this phenomenon, he identifies various perspectives in the academic literature that have disproved the cultural imperialist thesis. Based on Jin's findings, the reason why cultural imperialism is not relevant today - and specifically in the East Asian region - are:

1. The media development and the advancements in communication technologies that have allowed plurality of voices and media flows from all corners of the world, making impossible the existence of a one-way Western media flow.
2. The rise of domestic cultural industries in various parts of the globe, such as Asia and Latin America. Those industries target their audiences based on cultural proximity (Beak, 2014) or close cultural distance. This is based on the notion that countries in the same region are more likely to accept cultural products from neighboring nations, since they share similar languages and cultural backgrounds. Baek (2014), defines cultural distance as the absolute difference between two countries' national scores, calculated by Hofstede's five-dimensional model of

national culture. (Hofstede, 1996) - more information are provided in the methodology section -.

3. The local resistance to Western cultural imperialism and the active attitude of local audiences to defend their national culture and even promote it on a cross-border level.
4. The strengthening of the Third World and Periphery (Shim, 2006) national cultural industries, leading them to have a competing stance towards the US and European cultural power.
5. The vastly growing media industries in China and India.

Jin (2007) concludes that these phenomena back up claims supporting cultural pluralism and the reverse or counter cultural imperialism thesis. However, he also states that the US presence is still strong and dominates a large portion of the market. This paper aims to further investigate this thesis, its applicability in today's contemporary society and how it manifests itself. For the purposes of the paper, two case studies are examined, South Korea and Japan, on a primary and secondary research level. All theories analyzed so far will be examined under the scope of those case studies, and an in between comparison will also be provided.

The case of South Korea

The significance of Hallyu

Nowadays, South Korea is known as a major exporter of cultural products, being able to compete with its foreign counterparts China and Japan, as well as with the global leaders of cultural production, US and Europe. Korea's rise to success started in the late 1990s, exporting products to its local neighbors; Japan, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. The spread of popular Korean culture was immense. The Chinese first used the term "Hallyu" or "Korean Wave" to describe this unique and unexpected cultural phenomenon. The phrase was first used in 1998, to describe the youth's frenziness with Korean TV dramas, which were the first type of cultural product to attract such attention (Kim, 2013). Kim (2018) provides a comprehensive definition of Hallyu. She states that Hallyu (韓流) is a compound word, in which the first ideogram

(韓) is translated as “Korea” and the second (流) as “stream” or “flow”. The second character describes the idea of being hard to contain and stabilize. Kim explains, that the Korean wave is thus represented like a “fad”, which will quickly come and go. It is worth mentioning that the immense ongoing success of Hallyu, still in the early 2020s has proven this characterization invalid, if that may change only time will tell. Based on Kim, the term was first used in the Chinese-speaking world, specifically after the 1997 airing of the Korean TV drama “What Is Love” on CCTV. She also states that the moment which signifies the beginning of the Hallyu age in the 21st century was the K-pop band H.O.T.’s Beijing concert in 2000. Kim (2013) states that, since then, Korea has started increasing the variety of cultural products exports, including popular Korean music (K-pop), films, online games, animation, food, makeup, electronics and lifestyle. Even though its main popularity is primarily concentrated in Asian markets, Korean cultural products have expanded to Middle East, South and North America, in North African countries such Egypt, and most recently Europe (Kim, 2013).

Kim (2018), also provides a not so popular claim, regarding the roots of Hallyu as a term. She states that Jang Gyu-su, a historian of the Korean entertainment industry, supports that it was not the Chinese media that put forward this term, to present the Chinese frenziness with Korean TV shows, but instead, it was the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which used this term as a PR strategy to promote K-pop in the Chinese market. This can be interpreted as a soft power stance. Based on Kim, Jang criticizes the use of the term, pointing out that it is originated from Japan, thus the Koreans appropriated it to boost their "cultural boom" and Korea's national pride. Jang reveals that the Japanese language pattern, which describes similar cultural phenomena in Asia, such as the Hong Kong wave (香流) in the 1980s, the Japanese wave (日流) in the 1990s, and the Chinese wave (華流) in the 2010s, is very similar to the Korean Wave (韓流). Conclusively, Kim supports that the Korean Wave despite strengthening ethnocentric pride, it also reveals an attempt for transnational cultural politics.

At this point, it is sensible to explain why the Hallyu is worth studying, and why is considered to be such a “bizarre” phenomenon. Yoon & Jin (2017) explain the significance of the studies of the Korean Wave, by comparing it to the cases of Hong Kong and Japanese trend in Asia. They explain that Hong Kong's cultural boom in the 1980s, when the region was under British control, was based on its available market; primarily China and its diasporas, which in nature is immense. In the case of Japan, the domestic market on its own could support the “Japan-mania”. In contrast to those two cases, South Korea is a small country, with limited influence to its neighboring countries due to its limitations to exercise hard power, and also uses its own language to sell to foreign markets. These three main differences make the South Korean case-study so significant. Yoon & Jin (2017) propose that this phenomenon is so bizarre, that it *“cannot be explained by preexisting economic logics and regional or language politics”* and they continue by proposing that this seems to *“entail more complicated cultural logics”*.

In this part of this paper, a brief history of South Korea, starting from the colonial period (1910-1945) up till today, will be discussed, and interpreted based on the aforementioned theories, that were analyzed in previous sections. This detailed narration of events analyzed under the scope of the most profound cultural theories of the 20th and 21st century will lead to the recognition of the underlying steps that led to this unique cultural phenomenon. At the end of the narration, it will be evident whether the Korean Wave, is indeed a form of counter-cultural imperialism.

Colonial period (1910s – 1950s)

Korea faced Japanese imperialism from 1910 - 1945. The colonial period was a dark age for Korea, and still remains vivid in the minds of the Korean people. Japanese colonialism had immense impact on Korea’s process of cultivating a national image domestically, in the 20th century. The impact was based on the fear of Japan. Kim (2013) provides evidence of the ongoing fear towards the Japanese colonialism and cultural hegemony. The author states that Japanese culture was feared and banned in Korea, because of the memory of the Japanese colonialism, but also due to Japan's cultural

hegemony in the region. The beginning of the ban lift towards Japanese cultural imports did not start until 1998, 50 years after the end of the Japanese colonial rule. Not until 2004, nearly all restrictions were lifted. Kim's (2022) research on the Korean cultural changes in the colonial period (1910 – 1945), focusing on the Korean film industry, propose that Korea did not have a concrete national image at the time. Its cultural products, and specifically Korean cinema, were characterized by the hybridity of Japanese, Hollywood and European influences. This leaves room for arguments regarding cultural imperialism in Korea.

After the end of WW II (1945) Korea was divided into two sections; North Korea was occupied by the Soviet Union and South Korea by the US. The two countries were officially divided, when the negotiations for reunification failed in 1948. The Korean Civil War was initiated in 1950 between South and North Korea, and in ended in 1953 (Kim, 2013). After the end of the war in 1953, South Korea devoted all its efforts to rebuild and develop its society, but it was not until the 1960s that Korea could do this in its own terms. Kim (1999) describes that in the 1950s the first steps of post-war economic reformation in Korea were taken with "*American material aid*" and based on the "*American policy recommendations*". Kim (2022) describes this US mediation as "*neocolonialist American influence*". This explains the fact, why for Korea, globalization was a forbidding notion; it was linked with fear of Western cultural invasion - cultural imperialism -. In the same ways as Japanese culture, Western culture was also feared and banned in Korea, up to a certain permissible degree throughout the years, up until today (Kim, 2013). The American presence in Korea at that period had a significant impact on its culture and specifically in Korean popular music. Yoon & Jin (2017) explain how K-pop is the outstanding product of Korea's "postcolonial complexity"; the country's fight towards regaining its national identity and compromising with the inevitable influences. In the 1950s, Western music genres were performed at music clubs on US Army bases and also broadcasted on the radio, leading to the inevitable influence of local musicians and audiences. They also state, that in the 1950s-1970s, a lot of Korean pop musicians started their careers at such clubs in US Army bases, and highlight that the American influence on Korean pop music continued in the next decades. Kim (2013) also adds that, similarly to other non-

Western and postcolonial societies, cultural identity was constructed as a hybrid form of local and foreign cultural aesthetics and processes, in this case American, since the reconstruction of the nation was mediated by the US. Kim taking into account thought, the strong recent memories of colonialism in the Koreans' minds, she explains that apart from hybridity, anticolonial nationalist ideology was evident mostly in the decades to follow.

Developmentalist period (1960s – 1980s)

In the 1960s, South Korea experienced the military rule and successive authoritarian regimes, from 1961 - 1993 (Kim, 2013). What is more, US allowed Koreans to follow their own reformation plans. One could argue that Korea's developmentalist period started with The Five-Year Economic and Social Development Plans (경제사회발전 5개년계획) (1967 - 1996) (Choong-Yong, 2012). The most significant characteristic of this economic development project was the transition from imports to exports. Oh (2018) provides a brief analysis of the events that took place in this era (1960-1980s). Based on Oh, the main aim was Korea's urbanization, which was achieved through the country's industrialization. Korea invested towards its economic development on building major infrastructures, like expressways, railways, bridges, ports, dams, industrial parks and large-scale industrial complexes. In the 1960s, the first industries to thrive were light industries, such as textiles, shoe manufacturing and food, whereas, in the 1970s the heavy industries, such as steel, petrochemicals, automobiles, and shipbuilding, were boosted. Kim (1999) states that Korea, in an attempt to become independent from the US, in regards to imports of machinery and raw materials, aimed to reconstruct its heavy industries by supporting a heavy industrial program. In the 1980s Korea aimed for technological development and initiating new high-tech industries such as computers, semiconductors, new materials, telecommunications equipment, and biotechnology, while the government continued its industrialization processes throughout the country (Kim, 2018).

Kim (2022) examines the national identity building process in that period. She states that, in the 1960s Korea focused in film production, producing more than 100 films

annually, to boost the idea of national culture. One of those first films, is *The Housemaid* (1960) that inspired Bong Joon-Ho's *Parasite*, one of Korea's greatest film global successes (Rose, 2020). Despite those efforts, Jin (2007) proposes that cultural imperialism was evident in the 1950s and 1960s, when Korean TV programming was relying extensively on imports from the US. He describes the apparent unequal flow of cultural products - films, TV programs and music - in Korea at the time. He states: *"On the production, sales and flow side, there was an asymmetrical interdependence, in which Korea imported more culture from the US than it sold to the US."* Ryoo (2008) notes that, in the 1960s, Korea in order to protect its film industry established a screen quota system, which aimed to shield the country's film industry from foreign influential threats and encourage the production of domestic films, by posing a 146 days/week mandatory screening time of domestic films to local theaters. Ryoo also mentions that this screening time was reduced in 2006, from 146 hours/year to 73 hours/year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The quota was only reduced after excessive pressure from the US, in order to open discussions on a free-trade agreement (FTA) between South Korea and the US. Korea chose to lift the quota partially, by reducing it to half, to both protect its cultural integrity and negotiate on a free trade agreement. Regarding the protection of Korean culture, Kim (2022) also states that, in 1970s, Korea faced imposed censorship, ignited by the Cold War, anti-Communism and the developmentalist ideology.

Moving forward to the next decade, the 1980s was an important decade for Korea's history, since it marked the start of Korea's democratization. Oh (2018) mentions that it was not until the late 1980s, when the country's democratization movements started increasing, leading to the decentralization of public administration, a step which later would prove of significant importance in the promotion of the Korean Wave and especially Korean tourism. In 1988, the Sixth Republic made extensive alterations to the Local Autonomy Act (Korean Law Translation Center, 2019) to enable local control and support democracy, which had been repressed under the military regimes.

Oh (2018) indicates the two Korean ideals that empowered and best describe the post-Korean War developmentalist period (1960s-1980s). The first is *baljeon* (발전)

and it translates as “*bringing advancement*”. In the decentralized era (late 1980's) Baljeon was practiced by increasing publicity, to enhance the recognition status of municipalities and attract tourists. The second idea is gaebal (개발), which means “*improving the economy*” or “*the built environment*” or both. Gaebal focusing on the urban/industrial developments towards economic growth, could lead to betterment which is balgeon. So, in the post-Korean War era, Korea's strategy was to improve its infrastructures, its industry and administration, its overall image and project its accomplishments to the rest of the world to better its national image and increase its publicity. Park (2021) describes this developmentalist process as “*compressed modernity*”. She explains that Korea managed exceptional economic and social changes in only half a century following devastating events for the nation; the end of the Japanese colonization (1910-1945), the civil war (1950-1953) and the authoritarian regimes (1961– 1993). All those achievements have increased national pride and kept Koreans close to their cultural roots, protecting themselves by foreign influences.

Korea’s Globalization (1990s)

In the 1990s, Korea focused its attention on the development of its cultural industries. The Kim Young-Sam (referred to as YS) administration (1993 to 1998) proposed the development of cinema and media content production as a national plan for economic growth, after observing the immense sales of the Hollywood movie Jurassic Park, in 1994, which reached the levels of the Hyundai cars exports. Academics call this effect Jurassic Park factor or syndrome (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008; Ryoo, 2008). The Motion Picture Promotion Law in 1995, was one of the most characteristic policies towards these changes. The law provided incentives to major domestic conglomerates, to invest in the film industry (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008). Park et al. (2007) explain that the YS administration aimed for a top-down reform, in order to cope with the immense changes that globalization had provoke and simultaneously balance the need to protect Korea's cultural identity. Kim (2022) states that in the late 1990s the Korean cinema started to build a substantial domestic audience, which would later expand internationally and lead to today's Korean film industry's success; in 2020 being the

fifth largest film industry in the world (Roper, 2020). Kim explains that for Korea to create a status equal to Hollywood, the government made capital investments in conglomerates (or else chaebol), like Hyundai and Samsung specifically in the film industry. This government support was another extension of Korea's industrial processes, which in the 1990s had a focus on the advancement of quasi-industries, especially after the IMF crisis, as Kim states. She, also states that the increased democratization processes of the decade enabled this success story. Kim, characterizes the Korean cinema as a "counter-cinema" that aims to withstand Hollywood's global power. She highlights that the key to success with international audiences was the mixture of the Korean content with the western modern aesthetics; a sign of hybridity. Huat & Iwabuchi (2008) explain that the 1980s and 1990s were a crucial point in time for the Korean cinema due to the market opening to foreign distributors, after US pressure to open their markets in media communications and culture. Nevertheless, they recognize not only films, but also TV dramas and music as the first cultural products that led to international success, with notable examples being the TV dramas *Winter Sonata* and *Jewel in the Palace*, films *Shiri* and *My Sassy Girl*, and music act H.O.T..

However, the most prominent event of the decade was the 1997 economic crisis that hit Korea. Before the crisis, Korea had accomplished significant achievements and outstanding development in just half of a century, but this exponential advancement stopped in 1997, when the country came under economic trusteeship of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) in return for bailout loans. At that time, Korea suffered from bankruptcies, deflation, high unemployment rates, increasing homelessness and negative economic growth rates (Kim, 2013). Shim (2006) states that, South Koreans refer to this part of their history as "national humiliation". Under these circumstances, the Korean government was forced to find new ventures regarding Korea's exports. Korea's limited natural resources combined with its need to reduce dependence from China, grabbed the opportunity and shifted its key strategy to the promotion of Korea's popular culture outside its borders (Park et al., 2007).

The 1990s were marked by the introduction of K-pop. Kim (2013) characterizes this initiative as a "*deliberately planned industry*", and notes that it's the first Korean

industry to target international audiences from its beginning. Kim (2022) mentions that the increased use of the internet created a loyal rapidly growing online K-pop fanbase, which led to the global success of K-pop. In addition, she notes that the 1990s were signified by the rise of the Korean middle class, something that increased consumer purchasing power and increased cd-sales, something which is evident until today in K-pop supporters around the world, in contrast with supporters of Western pop music.

Major entertainment management firms, with the first being SM Entertainment designed a unique star system model which included all steps from the recruitment of the idols, to the production, management, marketing and communication. Yoon & Jin (2017) claim that the rapid Westernization process that occurred in the 1990s, ignited by Korea's negotiations with the US on the free trade agreement (Ryoo, 2008), triggered and also influenced the K-pop boom in the 1990s. Yoon & Jin give the example of the hip-hop band Seo Taiji and the Boys (1991–1996), which became an East Asian sensation, to prove the hybridization between Western and Korean pop culture. Moreover, Kim (2018) states that one of the most notable and influential events of the decade, and specifically on the K-pop scene, was the lifting of the Japanese cultural ban in 1998, as discussed in previous section. With the lifting of the ban, Korea was flooded with Japanese pop cultural products, leading for the first time to mutual intercultural exchange between the two countries, in the recent years. This resulted the Korean adaptation of the J-pop reality in order to increase their exports of cultural products in the Japanese market. One could argue that this is a proof of globalization and cultural hybridity between the two countries, without the one forcing its culture to another. A four-step model of observing, adapting, evolving and selling could best describe this situation. Yoon & Jin (2017) also refer to the lifting of the ban, supporting the same claim as with other authors, that colonial fear and traumas inflicted upon the Koreans, due to the Japanese colonization prevented them from associating with Japanese popular culture until the late 1990s. However, they propose that despite the restrictions, the Korean media industry had long been inspired by the J-pop culture, especially the Japanese idol system, which had been established since the 1980s. They propose that the K-pop idol system was based on

the J-pop system, in terms of show format, music style and PR system, up until the 2000s. Both systems focus on the idols' commercial value, which they sustain and increase via "*multiple media platforms*" and "*loyal fan bases*". One could argue that this is another evidence of cultural hybridity. Yet, Yoon & Jin, focusing on the colonial history between the countries, comment on both the Japanese and American colonial impact, saying that this situation might be an attempt of "*mimicry*", which theorists like Bhadha (1994) believe it's a strive for becoming a "*reformed, recognizable Other*" in the eyes of the ex-colonizer. With a light hearted point of view, and setting aside the colonial history focusing on the 1990s globalization processes in the East Asian region, the situation can be described by the hybridity thesis and critical trans-culturalism. On the other hand, taking into account the whole picture and Bhadha's arguments, this supports the existence of counter-cultural imperialism.

Huat & Iwabuchi state another significant fact (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008). The Korean Wave's immense success in the 1990s, was not based on a well-thought complex strategic export plan by the Korean government and broadcasters, but on the favorable international market conditions at the time. At the turn of the 1990s the Korean television industry started exporting TV dramas internationally. With the 1997 economic crisis in Asia, the once popular Japanese TV dramas were too expensive for the regional countries to import, so they reached for the cheaper option; the Korean TV dramas. Thus, Korean TV series entered the markets of China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, initiating a massive cultural flow. What is more, the Korean TV dramas were not received as an unfortunate alternative of the financial crisis, but as a welcomed refreshing change in Asia, portraying classic Asian sentiments with a modern twist (Huat & Iwabuchi, 2008). Huat & Iwabuchi (2008) write: "*For audiences in developing economies such as China and Vietnam, Korean television dramas are more acceptable than Japanese or American ones because the former retain traditional values while having achieved the technical sophistication comparable to that of the latter.*" Jung (2019) adds that Korean media content was more appealing than the Western, because of its "*non-threatening, clean-cut, wholesome and visually pleasing aesthetic*", and also for promoting Asian values, such as respect for the elderly, family loyalty and

public harmony, in a modern way, to some extent it provided an identity to the East Asian region.

The advancements in the digital technologies also had an impact on the Korean exports. One of Korea's unique cultural exports, webtoons, started in the late 1990s, even though the term did not appear officially until the early 2000s (Park, 2021; Kim, 2019). Park (2021) explains that a webtoon is a Korean comic (manhwa) in digital form, meant to be read on computers - and later on, on smartphones -. Their digital form looks like a serial stream of loosely placed drawings with ample margins that one reads by scrolling down. This is another unique cultural item that Korea offered to the global market, filling a gap in the comic industry, transcending from the hard copies, like the very popular Japanese manga and American superhero comics in the 1990s, to digital formats, which later were adapted by other markets such as the Chinese, with the characteristic example being the popular web comic/book app, Webnovel with more than 75 million visitors (Webnovel, 2022).

Kim (2013), also mentions that the exponential development of digital technologies in Korea in the 1990s, led to the creation of a new cultural sector, which was online gaming. Korea's export capital in online gaming is still increasing even in the 2010s. Kim, mentions that there was a gap in the market and Korea seized the opportunity. While Western countries and Japan focused on the console game market and video game market, Korea focused on online games. From the mid-1990s and so on, Korea having accepted globalization, has supported this industry by allowing competition and collaboration with global players, such as Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony, as Kim mentions. This specific industry is a great example of the reverse flow of culture, from a non-Western country to the West world.

Furthermore, Korean tourism started flourishing. Oh (2018) provides historical facts, regarding the development of the Korean tourist industry. As discussed previously, with the rise of democracy a decentralization process starting occurring within the Korean administration, providing more power to Korean municipalities. In the mid-1990s, the central government provided financial support to selected municipalities to boost their image and publicity, to both domestic and international audiences, initiating a local development strategy.

Various scholars have tried to interpret South Korea's globalization process in the 1990s. Park et al. (2007) address the situation by proposing a dual reality; the coexistence of “*globalness*” and “*localness*”. They argue that when the Asian economic crisis struck Korea, the government’s lack of solutions led to the passive submission to global requirements. They highlight though, the strong resistance towards changing traditional social values and abandoning their national identity. So, they propose a “*dualistic directional*” model of national identity reconstruction, featuring both strong “*globalness*” and “*localness*”. Their findings suggest that Koreans mostly favor globalization, but at the same time they show great attachment to local and nationalistic content. They state: “*In fact, it is not easy to find a society that has experienced such a dynamic mix of acceptance, rejection, and institutionalization of globalization as Korea.*” Ryoo (2008) on the contrary, focuses on globalness, and state that the Korean government “*aggressively seized the opportunity for globalization*”, though he recognizes that Western policies were not imposed entirely. Finally, based on Jung (2019) globalization signified the beginning of the transnational cultural flow if Asian media content. Considering the dual reality within the Korean society it is wise to state that both hybridization and counter-cultural imperialism are prominent in the case of South Korea.

Hallyu 1.0 & 2.0 (2000s-2010s)

In the 2000s, the Korean Wave faced an increasing popularity, not only among Asian audiences, but also US, Latin American, Middle East and European. As a result, more Korean industries, such as the beauty, fashion, tourism and food, jumped onto the Hallyu bandwagon (Oh, 2018).

Specifically, in regards to tourism in the 2000s, Korea continued promoting its tourism by linking it with its popular culture. Oh (2018) states that since the mid-2000s Korean municipalities were the biggest sponsors of Korean TV series productions. Today, Korea is still aiming to expand fan-tourism, targeting international consumers of K-dramas and K-pop music.

However, apart from the existing industries, new arose. With the rise of the digital world in the 21st century, a new form of entertainment was created in Korea and communicated globally; Mukbang. Park (2021) explains that Mukbang means “*eating and broadcasting*”, and that it is an online audiovisual broadcast, in which the entertainer eats appetizing or exotic meals in front of the camera, while talking or remaining silent in front of the viewers. Mukbang became popular in the late 2000s, first domestically, via online live streaming platforms such as Afreeca TV or YouTube. By the end of the 2010s, Mukbang became a global sensation (Kim, 2020).

Yoon & Jin (2017) characterize Hallyu's success in the early 2000s as explosive, and mention that the peak of the Wave seemed to be the transnational success of the Korean TV dramas *Winter Sonata* and *Jewel in the Palace*, in the mid-2000s. Moreover, Kim (2013) states another significant moment. In 2004, nearly all restrictions towards Japanese cultural content were lifted. In the same year, the Korean Wave reach its outmost popularity in Japan, when the 2002 Korean drama *Winter Sonata* was first aired on NHK in Japan. Since then, the series has been broadcasted several times and it is estimated that 40% of the Japanese population has watched this drama at least one time. Another popular TV series, and one of the most popular in Asia, even in North Korea, is the drama *Boys Over Flowers*, first aired in 2009, which is an adaptation of the Japanese manga “*Hana yori Dango*”. This “product” is actually a great example of cultural exchange (Kim, 2013). However, Yoon & Jin (2017) mention that several studies at the time claimed that this would be the end of the Korean Wave. And yet, in 2010 new fandoms were created outside East Asia.

Kim (2013) states that, one of the most important moments in K-pop history is the first ever Korean concert in Europe. In June 2011, the first K-pop concert took place at the concert venue *Le Zénith de Paris*, in French. With an average seat capacity of 6,000, the Korean production company had to organize a second show to respond to the unexpected demand, of thousands of people who wanted to see the act. The act was held by S.M. Entertainment, and it included performances of some of the most successful idol groups at the time, TVXQ, Super Junior, SNSD, SHINee, and f(x) (Yoon & Jin, 2017; Soompi, 2011).

Another milestone for K-pop history was the release of Gangnam Style by Psy, in 2012. The song reached global success instantly and became the first video to reach 1 billion views on YouTube and also was the most watched video of 2012 on the platform (Kim, 2013; Yoon & Jin, 2017; Baek, 2014). Another significant accomplishment in the 2010s was the ground breaking entrance of the idol group BTS in the US market, in the mid-2010s. Kim (2022) explains that the band by representing a fusion of Western and Korean elements, from its values, to its music and management system, became one of the most beloved boy bands globally.

Kim (2013) states that in 2010s the Korean Wave reached its pick in popularity expanding globally in the form of “*digital Hallyu*”. Whereas in the 1990s Hallyu was fueled with the increase of satellite broadcasting, in the 2010s the rise of the social media and video sharing apps, such as YouTube, assisted the growth of Hallyu outside Asian territories into new markets. The creation of K-pop related English-based news websites opened new portals for foreign fans to learn about their favorite idols in a language more familiar to them. Such websites are Soompi.com and Allkpop.com, having millions of monthly readers. Yoon & Jin (2017) define this era as Hallyu 2.0, underlying the importance of the Web 2.0, in the dissemination of the Korean Wave.

Huang (2017) specifies that the Hallyu 2.0 is consisted by a variety of different media and digital industries and not just pop culture. In these industries, she includes: TV, film, animation, K-pop, online games and smartphones. She continues by stating that the main characteristic of this new form is the combination of information and communication technologies and cultural content in its production, distribution and use. Huang also explains that the phrase Hallyu 1.0 refers to the previous period, between the years 1997-2007.

It is evident that the global advancement in communication and media technologies benefited immensely the rise of Korean influence on a global level. In this paper, Korean cultural dissemination will be examined in the 2020s era, via the Chinese short video app, TikTok.

The case of Japan

Japanese Empire (1868-1947)

Berger (2010) in an effort to understand Japan's soft power policies proceeds to a historical investigation. Regarding the pre-war era (1868-1939), he states that in those times Japan represented the "*Asian version of modernity*"; a modernity much more appealing than that of the West. In such an environment, it started building a Pan-Asian ideology, that would fuel Japan's imperial expansion. Berger justifies the Japanese Empire on two specific grounds: 1. to secure raw materials and markets that Japan needed to survive, and 2. to fight back against the racist West and create a united and empowered East. He claims that Japan had more success in the second ground than many Asians admit today. Berger highlights the Empire's main ideology which was tying together Asian people and as a result it was a common practice to assimilate colonial people into the Empire. So, at the time Japan used a combination of hard and soft power, which led to a major backlash. The colonized, the Chinese and Koreans, actively fought against the imperial forces and defended their own identities. In Korea and China, the consistent anti-imperialism fight was ignited by the March 1st Movement (1919); a protest by Korean citizens and students calling for autonomy from Japan and against the forced assimilation into the Japanese lifestyle, and the May 4th Movement (1919), in Tianamen Square, Beijing, where students protested against the Chinese government's weak response regarding the loss of territories in Shandong. Berger based on those historical facts claims that part of Korea's and China's national identities were built on their strong anti-Japanese sentiments, triggered especially by the events in the time period, between 1937 and 1945. Indeed, Berger's claims about Korea's national identity evolution, is aligned with the active character that Korea presented in its developmentalist period and onward in defending and developing its national image as it was examined in the previous section.

The impacts of the Empire are still evident today, with scholars trying to investigate their extent and examining Japan's soft power techniques (Otmazgin, 2008).

Post War Era (1947-1960s)

With the end of the War and the atrocities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 Japan's way of life was meant to change forever. Japan fell under the American domination, that would overshadow not only Japan but also the rest of East Asia for the decades to come. After the end of the War (1945), Japan was under the occupation of the Allies until 1952. With the mediation of the US, Japan's new constitution was established, and based on Article 9 Japan was prohibited from using any military forces (Tamari, 2006). In 1946, the Yoshida doctrine (1946–1954) announced that the country would focus on economic development, something which was once again declared in 1977, by the Fukuda doctrine (1976-1978) (Akbaş, 2018). Berger (2010) explains that, after the War, Japan focused on rebuilding its image, as a nation that faced true horror; the horror of the atomic bomb, and would devote itself to the promotion of peace, renouncing war and the use of forceful measures. After this turning point Japan focused on internal and economical reformation and development. As Berger (2010) states, post-war Japan adopted the status of a “*heroic victim*”, without though solving, up until today, ongoing disputes with its neighboring countries.

In the decades that followed after the war, Japan was still facing the backlash of its imperialism era, with countries such as Korea, refusing to have diplomatic relations. Full diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan were re-established in 1965. In the next decades, slowly but steadily the anti-Japanese notion decreased. As Berger (2010) claims one of the reasons why specifically Koreans finally contained their sentiments in their developmentalist period (1960-1980) was their need for Japanese capital and technology, to assist in the development of their economy.

Regarding Japan's cultural productions at the time, even though, anime can be traced back to the start of the 20th century, it was not until the end of WW II, that anime starting shaping their modern character. In that period Disney was dominating the animation industry, but that changed in 1956, when Toei Animation was founded; a place where iconic directors, such as Takahata Isao and Miyazaki Hayao would meet and later create Studio Ghibli, a key factor for Japan's global success (Lamarre, 2009).

It is worth mentioning, that apart from the physical presence of the US armies in the area till the 1950s, Tamari (2006) highlights the significance of the global presupposition at the time, that the American and European history and culture was intellectually superior, and continues that this had an immense impact in the modernization process of Asia in general, as well as specifically in Japan, especially after the end of WW II. His statement supports that even Japan, a once colonial power, was facing the impacts of cultural imperialism by the West. The balance between Japan's ex-colonial character and the struggle to fight back the Western superiority and racism, is what makes the Japanese case worth examining.

Pre-Globalization Era (1970s-1980s)

Japan's soft power policies can be traced back to 1970s. By that time, Japan had managed to regain economic stability and rebounded from the impacts of the war. The Fukuda Doctrine focusing on Japan's prosperity, considering that Japan is an overpopulated island that depends on overseas trade to maintain its high-quality life, had to further promote good relations with its neighboring countries. To do so, Japan established relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and took initiatives to promote and protect peace in the region (Iwabuchi, 2015). As a result, after a lot effort, in the 1970s, Southeast Asia became Japan's second biggest export market. Japan took also the opportunity of the US's damaged image after the Vietnam War (1955 – 1975) in the region, to raise its visibility as a responsible affiliate protecting the stability of the region, while being cautious to not bring back the memories of its imperialistic period (Akbaş,2018).

In the 1970s, the Japanese animation scene started expanding beyond its domestic market. Without the government taking any initiative to systematically grow its creative industries, in the 1960s, they started developing on their own, because of their own initiatives and support by the domestic market. It was not until the 1970s, when the Fukuda doctrine started the first systematic efforts for cultural diplomacy, to alleviate anti-Japanese resentment in Southeast Asia (Iwabuchi, 2020).

Nakano (2002) states that since the 1970s Japanese cartoons dominated the Asian market and actually exceeded the American competition, even in South Korea where Japanese culture was completely banned until 1998, Japanese cartoons were available even in the 1970s with Japanese related parts edited away. From the 1970s to 1990s, Japanese cultural content was particularly popular among children of the rising middle class in China, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Malaysia and Taiwan. Characteristic examples of this success were the beloved anime Doraemon (1973-present) and Sailor Moon (1991-1997). Nanako (2002) also states that even though the parents thought of American cartoons as of high quality, their children favored the Japanese, because they identified more with the characters. Based on this note, once again the importance of cultural proximity/distance is revealed.

Moreover, a major market change regarding Japan's cultural exports occurred in 1978, when China announced the Open Door Policy, which allowed American and Japanese cartoons to enter the market to fill the domestic gap in China. However, in 1991, China starting producing its own serialized cartoons and forced the reduction of foreign cultural content in its market, as a measure to protect its own cultural identity. Some classic examples of famous Japanese cartoons produced in the 1960s and 1970s and disseminated among the Chinese and Asian markets were Astro Boy (1963-1966), Little Monk Ikkyu (1975-1982) and Lunlun: Flower Angel (1979-1980) (Nakano, 2002). Akbaş (2018) mentions one more significant moment in Japan's contemporary history, which was the establishment of the first Japanese language proficiency tests, in 1984, which can be interpreted as a sign of welcoming people to Japan and Japanese culture.

Globalization Wave (1990s)

The 1990s came along with the start of globalization. There are two important changes in the decade. The first is the rise of global capitalism, and second is the advancements in communication and media technologies. The second, combined with the increased use of the Internet, played a significant role in the case of Japan, since it enabled the global dissemination of Japanese cultural content, creating loyal fan-bases all around the world (Akbaş, 2018; Bunyavejchewin, 2012). Akbaş (2018) identifies a change in the promotion of cultural content before and after the 1990s. Before the 1990s, Japan

focused on cultural content such as the Japanese language, traditions, values and way of life, which up to a specific point are shared among East Asian cultures. After the 1990s, Japan turned its interest in media promotion due to regional demand. Specifically, Japan supported J-pop and Japanese TV series, by creating institutions, such as the Japan Media Communication Center (JAMCO), in 1991.

In the 1990s and 2000s, apart from animation, Japanese TV series also started gaining major immense popularity among East Asian audiences (Iwabuchi, 2015). Nakano (2002) supports that one primary reason for that phenomenon was the unauthorized spread of pirate VCDs in Chinese and other Asian markets. Iwabuchi (2001) also links J-dramas success, with the rise of the middle class in Asia. The lifestyle depicted in these dramas, was reflecting the aspirations of that middle-class. As it seems it was specific conjunctures, like the need for imported cartoons in Asia, close cultural proximity and the rise of the Asian middle-class (Nakano, 2002; Iwabuchi, 2001; Hernandez & Hirai, 2015) that led to what Nakano refers to as "*high level of literacy in regard to Japanese visual narratives*" in Asian audiences. By literacy she refers to the ability to create "*systematic and dynamic links between symbols and meanings*", when an individual is exposed to a foreign cultural product, in her examined case a TV show. For Nakano this ability also enables appreciation for the culture, which leads as it was previously discussed to recognition. In this paper literacy achieved through TikTok will be examined for both Japan and South Korea. Moreover, Nakano explains that the generation that used to watch Doraemon and other Japanese cartoons in the 1970s and 1980s were the ones to welcome J-dramas and other media content, in the 1990s.

After the informal, unauthorized cultural flow of Japanese content in the 1970s to 1990s, Japan started realizing the impact that its pop culture had in Asia, and only then, in the 1990s, started configuring ways to utilize this power. The popularization of the term soft power in the 1990s, was perfectly timed with the local conjunctures, and was enthusiastically embraced by the Japanese, who wished to use it for reshaping Japan's damaged image from its colonial past. (Berger, 2010).

Since the late 1990s, the American and Japanese cultural domination seemed to fade, with more nations, such as South Korea, increasing their cultural exports. However, with the increased multidirectional cultural flow from various sources -

decentralization -, it started becoming difficult to link a particular cultural industry and its national identity. In the case of Japanese content, there are many cases, where local industries localized the products, especially in the 1990s. One of the most characteristic examples generally, and specifically for the 1990s, was the manga Hana Yori Dango (or else Boys Over Flowers) (1992-2004), which was later adapted into an anime TV series (1997) and a live-action TV drama (2005). Boys Over Flowers became a huge success in East Asia and was adapted by many other countries; Meteor Garden (Taiwan, 2001), Siapa Takut Jatuh Cinta (Indonesia, 2002), Meteor Shower (China, 2009), Boys Over Flowers (South Korea, 2009), and F4 Thailand: Boys Over Flowers (Thailand, 2021) (Hernandez & Hirai, 2015; IMDb). Kraidy (2005) uses this incident as an example of hybridization in East Asia. Another example of decentralization or hybridity would be, as previously discussed, the influence of the K-pop industry from J-pop, in the 1990s (Yoon & Jin, 2017) Iwabuchi (2002) refers to this phenomenon as “*cultural odor*” or “*invisible imperialism*” in regards to this cultural penetration or infusion. In this paper, I suggest that the first term is more appropriate than the second, since Japan did not use imperialist methodologies of hard power to force its culture, instead it was rather a positive outcome of a series of uncontrolled situations in the region, and the general globalization wave at the time. Hernandez & Hirai (2015) also add that the key to success for the Japanese cultural industries was based on their efforts on reconstructing the western model of capitalism and modernity to best fit the East Asia context, and focusing on consumerism by introducing trends, lifestyles and fashion.

This success could spark discourses about a presumable resurrection of the imperialist Japan in a cultural manner (cultural imperialism). Based on the previous discussions, in this paper, one can understand that this was not a case of cultural imperialism, rather of the result of the multi-directional cultural flow, the effect of globalization and Japan's early soft power attempts to improve its image and once again embrace the global markets in a peaceful manner.

Cool Japan (2000s-2010s)

The 2000s signified Japan's entrance to the Western markets. Japan having realized the power of its combined forces of technologies and creative industries entered the global arena. The most significant step in Japan's policies during that period was the establishment of "Cool Japan" project, which aimed to assist Japan's increasing global international popularity, by expanding the number of "cool" productions per year (Akbaş, 2018). The term "Cool Japan" was first introduced by the American journalist Douglas McGray in 2002, and the term was later used by the Japanese government (McGray, 2009). Akbaş (2018) refers to "Cool Japan" as "*pop-culture diplomacy*". What is more, in 2006, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) confirmed formally pop-culture diplomacy as an official policy. Pop-culture can be received as means of soft power. Iwabuchi (2020) states that Japan starting using and utilizing soft power at that time, and especially under the Aso administration (2005-2007). From the 2000s and onwards Japan has striven to enhance both its national branding and soft power techniques on an international level.

Hernandez & Hirai (2015) state that in the early 2000s, the global success of the Pokémon franchise (1997 - present) and the anime film Spirited Away (2001) in the mass market, as well as the increasingly positive perception of the Japanese animation quality by Western markets, mostly due to the productions of Studio Ghibli, attracted the attention of Japanese policymakers. Since then, anime is considered as a central point in cultural dissemination and is referred to as Japan's "cultural ambassador". Hernandez & Hirai (2015), based on their literature review, identify two growth periods for Japanese animation, the first is 1995-2000 and the second 2000-2006, which is also described as "Anime Bubble". An overseas growth was evident from 2002-2005, followed by a decrease from 2006-2009, and then a slight recovery from 2010 onwards. Akbaş (2018) claims that the bubble period burst in 2008 with the start of the global financial crisis, due to a dual reality; 1. being difficult to keep up with the old sales in such harsh market conditions, and 2. the increased competition from other players such as South Korea and China.

Hernandez & Hirai (2015) mention that the success of Japanese animation, is not a result of some export strategy, but its rather based on cultural dynamics in the area, and the informal and unauthorized content flow, due to the use of internet and piracy, since the 1990s (Bunyavejchewin, 2012). Such an observation supports the idea, that informal cultural flows can increase cultural influence and thus need to be consider in cultural studies. Nakano (2002) who studied the diffusion of Japanese culture in Asia, with an emphasis in Chinese territories, also supports this notion, and recommends further research on the perspectives of unexpected consumers and unauthorized mediators. In this paper, I examine the nature and means of those unauthorized mediators in the 2020s. Moreover, Hernandez & Hirai (2015) state, that specifically in the East Asian region, the rise of the middle class benefited the industry. The rise of middle class came along with the increase of the educational level, which also had a positive impact on Japanese content consumption. In the 2000s and upward, this increased interest in anime and Japanese culture globally led to “otaku tourism”, boosting in general tourism in Japan (Akbaş, 2018). Otaku is a word used to describe loyal-fans of Japanese cultural content, especially manga and anime (Lamarre, 2009). In the 2010s, the Cool Japan Promotion Office was founded by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), making “Cool Japan” an official policy of the country. What is more, in the 2010s, Japan started questioning Article 9 of its constitution and starting considering finding ways to employ its military capacity to proactively contribute to international peace-keeping activities, to further enhance its soft power strategy (Winkle, 2019).

Nakano (2002) highlights the five reasons why Japan cultural industries did not actively and consistently aim for the overseas Asian and global markets, until the turning of the 21st century. The first reason she identifies is reservations because of Japan's imperialistic past; Japan did not want to repeat past mistakes and appear as an invader once again. Secondly, the continuously growing domestic market since 1945 was sufficient. Thirdly, the Asian Tigers had raised cultural bans forbidding Japanese content, characteristically Hong Kong begun broadcasting Japanese TV series in 1970, Singapore in 1982, and Taiwan and South Korea joined them later in the 1990s. The fourth reason is the complexity of the local licensee system, and the

final reason was Japan's notion of American cultural superiority; Japanese artists would rather want to be in Hollywood and Billboard rather than the Asian markets.

Apart from these efforts Akbaş (2018) highlights also the importance of anime fans, who play a major role in the distribution of the Japanese cultural flow. By creating fan-made projects, subtitles, costumes etc., they create a unique informal flow. This paper is focusing on this exact flow in the 2020s, specifically via short video apps, such as TikTok, from which the primary data are collected.

Research Hypotheses

After this detailed historical analysis of the formation of South Korea's and Japan's cultural identities in the 20th and 21st century, the main hypotheses of this research work should be defined:

1. Cultural dissemination through TikTok is expected to increase the levels of literacy regarding Japanese and South Korean culture on a global level.
2. Cultural dissemination through TikTok is expected to have a positive effect on the cultural recognition of Japan and South Korea on a global level.
3. Cultural dissemination through TikTok is expected to further enable Japan and South Korea to exercise soft power and utilizing it for their own benefits.
4. Cultural dissemination through TikTok is expected to reinforce a proliferative cultural dissemination effect, characterized by a multidirectional unofficial cultural flow.

Baek's (2014) hypotheses of cultural proximity and exoticism will also be examined.

METHODOLOGY

Research method

For the purposes of this research content analysis is used. Content analysis is a long-established and respected technique used in communication research. Berelson (1952) characterized this method as an "objective and systematic description of communication". It enables the written, oral and visual analysis of messages. Neuman (1997) used the term "text" to describe the written, oral or visual input. Overall, based on Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2022), content analysis is a method for systematically describing, categorizing, and/or making research and evidence-based conclusions about communication.

Fieldwork and Data Collection

The data that I collected were chosen on the basis of my hypotheses, in order to be relevant to my research. The research hypotheses propose that cultural dissemination through short video apps, such as TikTok, which is the chosen studied medium, contribute positively to literacy, recognition and soft power (Fanon, 1961; Nakano, 2002; Flew, 2016; Jin, 2017; Kim, 2022). I also investigate the existence of a proliferative cultural dissemination/flow within the app. The above substantiate the existence of a two-way cultural and media flow, as proposed by Cunningham and Craig (2016), and support the reverse or counter cultural imperialism thesis (Flew, 2016; Jin, 2017).

In order to prove this positive relationship between the use of short video apps and the aforementioned, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected. TikTok was chosen as the medium of data collection, due to two reasons: 1) its vast global reach (Ceci, 2022), and 2) its non-Western origin, which on its own supports the counter cultural imperialism thesis. Moreover, after an extended literature review on cultural imperialism and various other theories of the 20th and 21st century, South Korea and Japan, having been proven as "soft power success stories" (Kim, 2022; Iwabuchi, 2015), were chosen as the countries of focus.

Based on previous studies on video sharing services such as YouTube and TikTok (Baek, 2014; Kaye et al., 2021; Schellewald, 2021), the sample size was defined; 1007 videos were examined in a two-month period. The fieldwork started in March and lasted until April 2022. For the purposes of the study, I created a passive account; an account where I would not post content, but just passively observe other people's content. In the form of a routine, I would scroll on TikTok's "For You" page (FYP) for about 2-4 hours per day, searching for videos with Japanese or South Korean related content, from Asian or Non-Asian content creators and users. Apart from this specific premise, regarding content relation with Japan or/and South Korea, the videos were randomly selected. I decided to analyze 20 videos per day, to estimate the relative frequency of Japanese and Korean content on a daily basis for that two-month period. All data were collected on an Excel spreadsheet document, which I used as my field diary.

Considering the ethical dimension of this research, I watched all videos online, without downloading and storing any content. Given the fact that TikTok is designed to promote trending content, it can be assumed that most users are aware of the possibility of their content becoming viral and thus achieve wide-scale reach. Special care was also given to data analysis, where potential reference to videos and creators was limited to content creators that have achieved significant levels of publicity and have official verified accounts. It is also worth mentioning that since the videos were randomly selected on the FYP, that means that they were pushed by TikTok's algorithm, thus they were trending, and so the sample had achieved enough reach to be considered representative.

Data Categorization

In the Excel spreadsheet data were coded using specific categories. Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2022) define categories as areas, themes, classes etc. with distinctive parameters for coding the data, in such a way that the data answer to the research hypotheses or questions. Based on the literature review, I identified the need to describe and code my data based on their cultural imprint, as well as the way those cultural imprints manifest through TikTok.

The main categorization was based on the "cultural sector" or "categories of material culture" that the content was related to. A lot of theorists have tried to identify those cultural categories, as discussed previously, but without focusing on a specific medium (Iwabuchi, 2020; Bunyavejchrein, 2012; Otmazgin, 2008; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2001). I used these categories only as a reference point, and because I focused on a specific medium, I proposed my own categories; I identified previously proposed categories as well as new ones.

The second major categorization is the type of TikTok video content. TikTok videos may present similarities, like common themes or shared characteristics, which allows people; scholars and users, to consider specific TikTok video content categories. Based on this notion, Schellewald (2021) divided his data on five main categories. In this paper, I provide a much more detailed categorization of the available types of TikTok videos. Since, I created my own categories, this process is an inductive content analysis. I also divided the data based on their originality, sharing motives, oral and written language, and library audio used.

Having that in mind, the whole process of data collection was a constant effort of recoding the available data. As Croucher and Cronn-Mills (2022) propose the categories have to be "mutually exclusive", meaning that something can fall under only one category. In this case, each video should belong to one cultural sector and one video content type. In order to achieve that, every time I noticed a new trend, each case was reevaluated to find out whether the new trend was falling under an already defined thematic group of videos. The reevaluation process happened at the early weeks of the data collection period, and then a saturation point was reached for each categorization; when the categories started been presented repeatedly.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis is each individual TikTok video watched. Aiming to answer the research hypotheses, I had to quantify specific characteristics regarding the content, by counting frequencies. For those purposes, I created subcategories regarding the users' national origins, the originality of the content - whether it was created by the

user or reuploaded from another medium -, the purpose of the content, the oral language, the written language, and the nature of library audio used. The recording units of analysis consist of the image of the video, the language used within the video - written or/and oral -, the language of the description, and the library audio.

To identify the recording units of analysis, I conducted a pilot study for six days. Within those six days, I identified the main steps of the coding process and potential problems. I also determined the number of videos to watch on a daily basis and the necessary time that I had to invest in my daily routine.

Content Analysis Limitations

Even though, content analysis is a very useful methodology in analyzing large amounts of data, it still has its limitations. The main limitation is that content analysis cannot address causality, meaning that it cannot explain why and how those categories emerged (Croucher & Cronn-Mills, 2022). In order to add this level of causality in my study and not overestimate my data, I did a lengthy well-detailed historical analysis of the two examined cultures, in the literature section. Providing this overview of the impacts of cultural imperialism in Japan and South Korea, I manage to justify specific trends in the app. Combining the information derived from both the literature review and data collection, I can propose whether the counter cultural imperialism thesis is supported and how those two nations can use TikTok for advancing their own cultural reach, recognition and soft power practices.

Cultural Distance

Another informative detail which was available in some of the cases was the country of origin of the user. By clicking on the profile of the content creator or user one can find additional information of the users' identity on their bio. For this research, the selected information from that section were only the country of origin. Having this knowledge, I decided to use Geert Hofstede's model (1996) for national culture to estimate the cultural distance between the national origin of the content (Japanese or Korean) and the national origin of the user.

Since 1980, Hofstede has been collecting numeric scores of national cultures based on a 6-dimensional model (Baek, 2014). The six dimensions of his model are power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long term orientation and indulgence (Hofstede, 1996). The model, despite having been criticized for its lack of ability to capture the complex meaning of culture, it still is a very useful tool, for detecting similarities and differences between countries, based only on these six dimensions.

Based on this model, I measured the average cultural distance between South Korea and the identified countries, and between Japan and the identified countries. Videos with users of unknown country of origin were not considered during the calculation of cultural distance. Overall, 41 countries were detected and then divided into geographical sections, based on Brand Finance's (2022) geographical division of the globe for the calculation of the global soft power index for the year 2021. For each geographical section the average and standard deviation was estimated. Based on the results, the cultural proximity and cultural exoticism hypotheses (Baek, 2014), can be tested as enabling and initiating powers for informal cultural flow (Nakano, 2002).

Specifically, regarding the dimensions, they first need to be defined in order to be understood. The first index is power distance, which is an indicator of the equality of people in a society. Societies with higher power distance, tend to have stronger hierarchies among their people. The second index is individualism. This dimension focuses on the degree of interdependence among individuals in a society. In individualistic societies people take care of themselves and their direct family, whereas in collectivistic societies, people take care of their "in groups" members, whether they are their colleagues, classmates etc. The third dimension is masculinity. In masculine societies individuals tend to be more assertive and competitive, whereas in feminine societies individuals focus on the quality of life. The fourth dimension is uncertainty avoidance. It measures the degree in which societies avoid the unknown and the ambiguous. The fifth index is long term orientation. This index represents the extent in which societies set present and future goals, moving steadily from past to future. The higher the index, the more goals a society sets for the future. The last dimension is indulgence and it measures the degree in which members of a society

control their desires and impulses. Societies with strong control are called "restraint" and with weak control are called "indulgence" (Hofstede Insights). It is worth mentioning, that Hofstede has not calculated the cultural variables for all countries (e.g., Myanmar), and some other countries have only four out of the six variables estimated (e.g., Tunisia, Nepal).

Finally, cultural distance is operationalized as the absolute difference between a country's national score and South Korea's and Japan's national score (Baek, 2014). The mathematical formulas used are the following:

$$Distance_{i,j} = |Score_{i,j} - Score_{Japan,j}| \quad (1)$$

$$Distance_{i,j} = |Score_{i,j} - Score_{South\ Korea,j}| \quad (2)$$

where i denotes the country, and j the dimension. The Hofstede variables for Japan and South Korea are presented in the Table 1:

Table 1: Hofstede national scores for Japan and South Korea.

	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
Japan	54	46	95	92	88	42
South Korea	60	18	39	85	100	29

FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

Japanese vs Korean Content Frequency

The first thing examined is the popularity of Korean and Japanese content. In order to estimate which of the two is more popular, the relative frequencies of Korean and Japanese content were estimated, on a daily basis, after the 6-day pilot study. At the beginning of the main pilot study on the 9th of March till the 23rd of April, 20 videos/day were examined and their relative frequencies were calculated.

Despite only two categories being expected - Japanese and Korean content related videos -, a third category was also identified. The third category was of videos promoting both Japanese and Korean cultural content at the same time. For those videos, in the third category, the relative frequencies were calculated as well. The data are depicted in Figure 1:

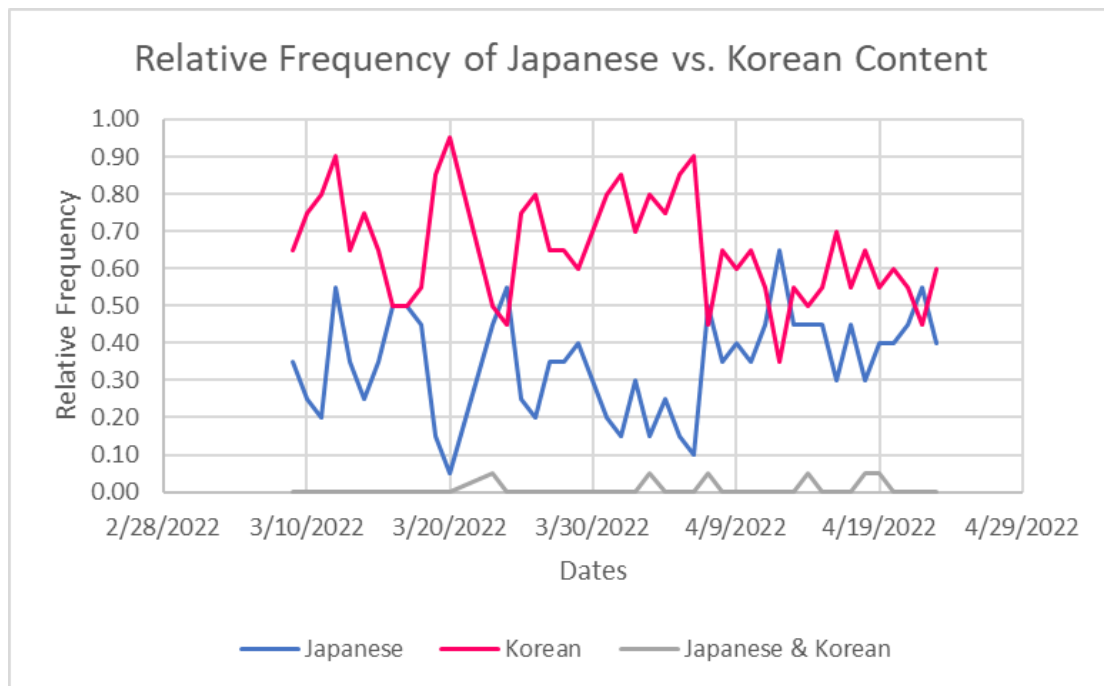


Figure 1. Relative frequencies of Japanese, Korean, and Japanese & Korean content from March 9 to April 23 (main fieldwork research study).

Figure 1 reveals that the daily frequency of videos with Korean content is higher, than of Japanese content related videos, thus Korean content is more popular. Out of the 44 days of the main fieldwork research, only on 3 days the Japanese content exceeded the Korean in terms of frequency, something evident in the figure as well. The peaks where the Japanese content exceeds the Korean are on the 14th (March 24), 33rd (April 12), and 43rd (April 22) day. On those specific days there was not any specific event happening that would justify the abundance of Japanese content. On the 14th and 33rd day, most of the content was anime related; a mixture of old and new anime releases. However, on the 43rd the Japanese content was related to a variety of different cultural sectors, which will be discussed later. No significant events took place that day as well. Thus, those 3 days are considered to be random events.

The average relative frequency for Japanese content is 0.35, and 0.65 for Korean content, with a standard deviation of 0.14 respectively. Regarding the overall number of videos, 359 videos promote Japanese culture, 639 videos promote Korean culture, and 6 both. This comparison provides an estimation of which of the two types of content is more popular. Following the rest of the findings, I will try to explain further this phenomenon.

Finally, videos with both Japanese and Korean content occurred on only six days, one video per day. Since, this is only 0.59% of the sample, it does not compromise the difference between the Japanese and Korean content frequencies.

Content Originality

The videos were divided into two main categories; original content, and reposted & edited content. Videos created personally by TikTok active users, from the theme design and execution process to the final editing steps on the app, are considered original content. Videos reposted from other sources (e.g., TV, social media, concert DVDs), being used in their original form or edited in any way, are considered reposted and edited content. Figure 2 shows the number of original and non-original videos for Japanese and Korean content:

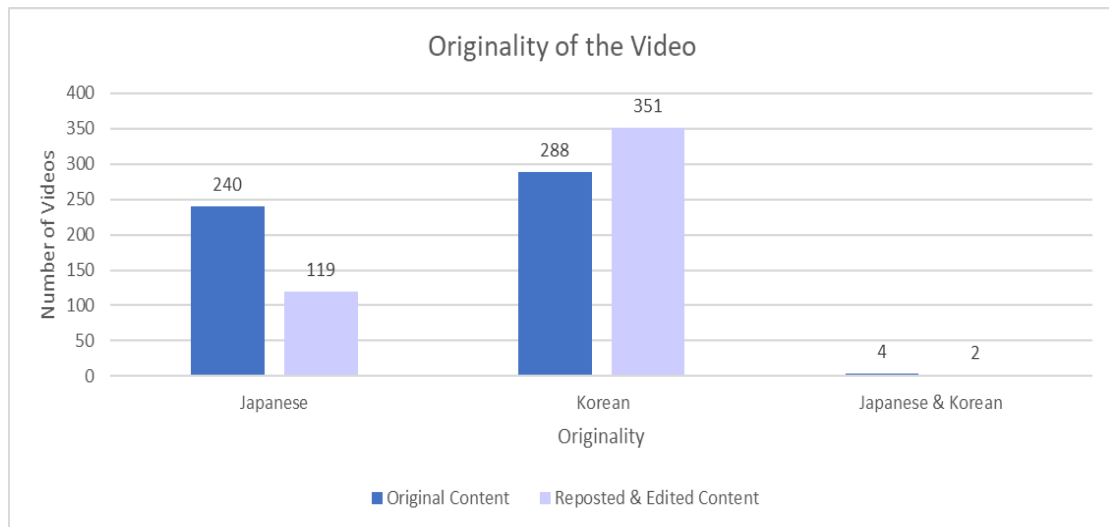


Figure 2: Originality of Japanese, Korean, and Japanese & Korean related videos.

Figure 2 reveals that 66.85% (240 videos) of Japanese content is original, whereas 33.15% (119 videos) of Japanese content is reposted or/and edited. In contrast, for Korean content, 54.93% (351 videos) is reposted or/and edited and 45.07% (288 videos) is original. Regarding, videos promoting both Japanese and Korean content, 4 videos were original and 2 were not. Overall, content creators and users promoting Japanese content seem to prefer making their own original content. In comparison, users seem to prefer using already existing available material to promote Korean content.

Sharing Motives

In the process of identifying the reasons why individuals choose to promote Japanese and Korean culture through their videos, three different motives were identified, and an additional category was included for videos that did not fall under any specific category of motives. The first category is “PR plan”. The videos related to this category were created by official accounts, verified from TikTok. Those accounts' main aim is to promote cultural products, they might be linked to entertainment companies and big conglomerates, or individual artists and idol groups, or even to content creators and influencers collaborating with cultural production companies or celebrities, artists and idols (see Figure 3).

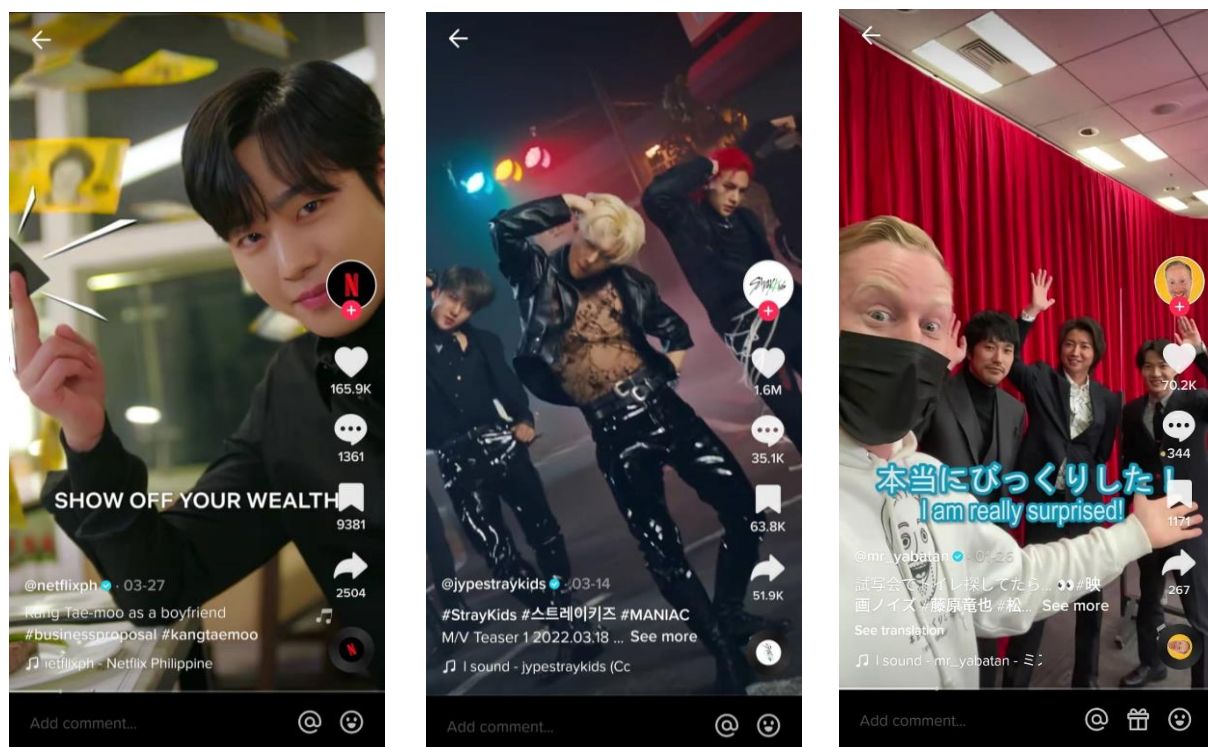


Figure 3: Left: Video by Netflix Philippines promoting the Korean TV Series "Business Proposal". Middle: MV Teaser for Stray Kids song "Maniac" on their official account. Right: Comedian and content creator Mr. Yabatan collaborates with Japanese actors Tatsuya Fujiwara, Kenichi Matsuyama and Ryunosuke Kamiki, for the promotion of the movie "Noise" released on January 28, 2022.

The second category is “Fan Generated/Entertaining”. Videos that are created, reposted or/and edited by individuals that have no financial benefit from uploading content fall under this category. The reason why those individuals upload these videos is for sharing their interests, supporting their favorite cultural products and coming together with people with the same interest. This sharing motive supports Muliadi's (2020) claims for the creation of micro-identities within the platform. This category also is the real evidence of Nakano's (2002) idea of informal cultural flow, but not in the form of illegal VCRs like Nakano described in the 1990s, but in the form of unofficial promotional short length videos on TikTok. After 30 years, the form of this flow is different, but the outcome is the same; the spread of cultural products from non-official sources (see Figure 4).

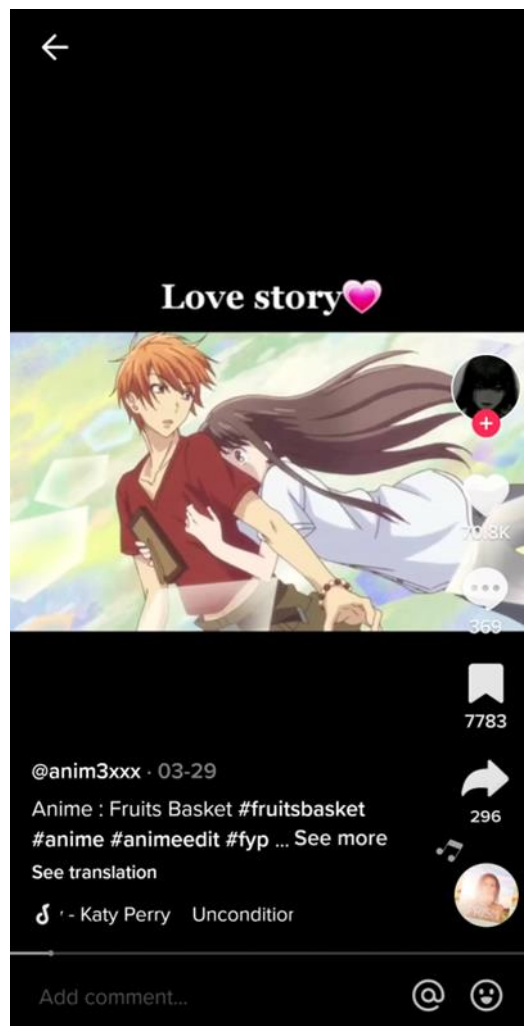


Figure 4: This anonymous user's unofficial account under the name anim3xxx uploads clips from various Japanese animations. This is a clip from the popular anime "Fruits Basket" from its 2019 adaptation.

The third category is “Informational” videos. The main aim of these videos is to consciously and actively share information about specific cultural sectors of Japan and Korea, or teach specific skills, such as language, recipes or beauty routines (see Figure 5). The rest of the videos that do not fall under any of these categories, might not promote consciously Japanese or Korean content or might be created for self-promotional reasons.



Figure 5: This anonymous user's account under the name pochicooking uploads step by step recipes for Japanese dishes. This is a traditional recipe video for unagi with rice and daikon mash.

The figure below shows how many videos belong to each category, divided into Japanese and Korean content as well:

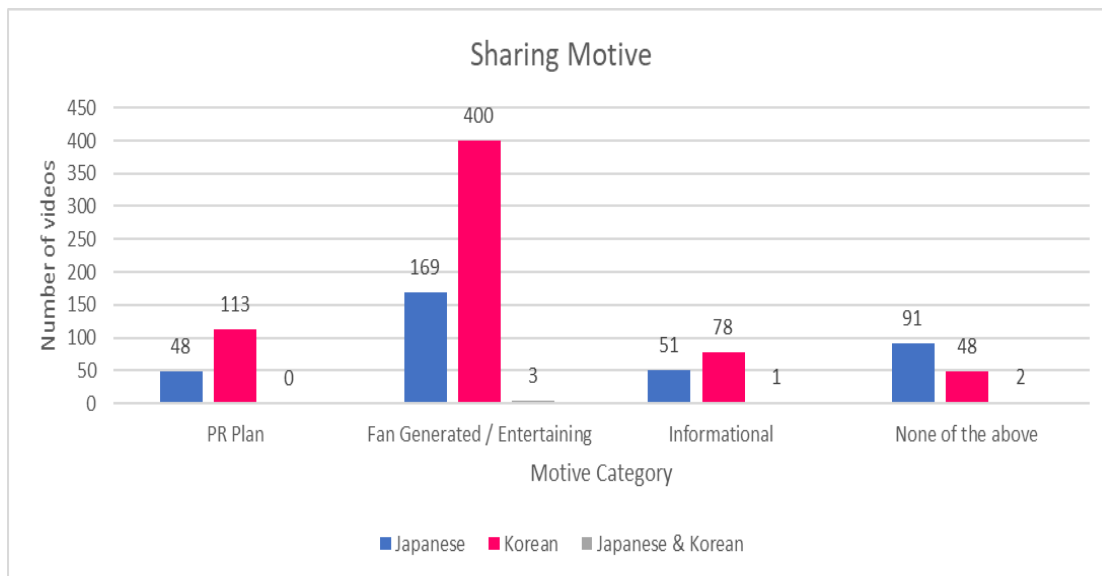


Figure 6: Sharing motives of Japanese, Korean, and Japanese & Korean content related videos.

Figure 6 reveals that most of the videos are fan-generated for both Korean and Japanese content. The second category is PR plan, followed by none of the above categories, and last informational videos. Korean content on its own also follows this order, from most popular motives to least. However, Japanese content presents different order among the popularity of the sharing motives. Most of the Japanese content is fan-generated, then none of the above, followed by informational and PR plan. The evidence support that Korea's private entertaining sector follows a more systematic approach on promoting its products.

Oral & Written Language

To investigate further this cultural flow within the app, whether it is originated from formal or informal sources, it is important to examine the oral and written language used. In order to reach the outmost level of dissemination and increase its chances to create impact, a message should be understandable by the majority of people that watch videos on their FYP. Japanese and Korean languages are spoken only by a small portion of the global population, so videos using exclusively those languages might have less significance in the cultural dissemination process through the app, due to

this language barrier. In this section, I focus on investigated which languages were used the most and by which users. It is noteworthy to state that the country of origin and nationality of the user, is likely to affect the language used.

Oral and written language were examined, since both forms can be detected on a TikTok video. Oral language is the language used originally as a sound on the video whether it consists of preexisting content or created originally by the user. Written language is the language used in the description on the TikTok post or on the video itself, it might be also in the form of written existing commentary on the video or added afterwards by the user. The users are divided into four categories, based on their nationality and origin. Only if they stated orally within the video, or provided a written statement on the post or on their profile regarding their location and nationality, they were divided into those four categories; “Asian users”, “Asian users outside East Asian region”, “Non-Asian users”, and “Foreigners in Japan or Korea”. For the users whose location and nationality were not mentioned I added them in a separate category; “Users of unknown origin”.

Table 2 below presents the most popular languages used for oral and written communication, counting the number of videos for each language:

Table 2: Frequencies of the languages used for oral and written communication measured by the number of videos.

Language	Oral	Written
No Language	553	461
Japanese	100	40
Korean	148	11
English	171	423
Greek	12	10
Japanese & English	8	13
Korean & English	10	24
Other	5	25
TOTAL	1007	1007

Figure 7 presents the most popular identified languages used orally for Japanese and Korean content, separated by user category:

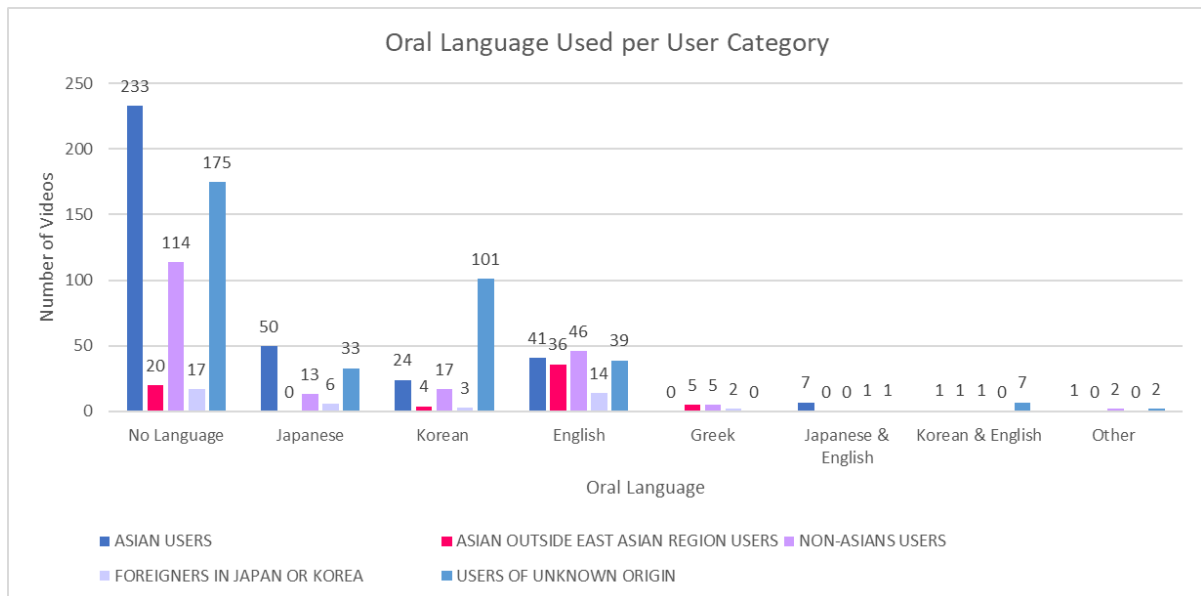


Figure 7: Language used for oral communication per user category.

Figure 7 reveals that the most popular videos in the app, are videos with no oral language. The second most popular language for oral communication is English, then Korean and last Japanese. It was expected that Korean language would be used more, only because videos with Korean content generally exceeded Japanese content videos. Noteworthy were also videos using the Greek language, something also expected, considering the fact that TikTok tracks the location of the user - my location/the researcher's location - and also promotes in the FYP videos in close geographical proximity.

Moving to written language, Figure 8 presents the most popular identified languages for written communication used for Japanese and Korean content, separated by user category:

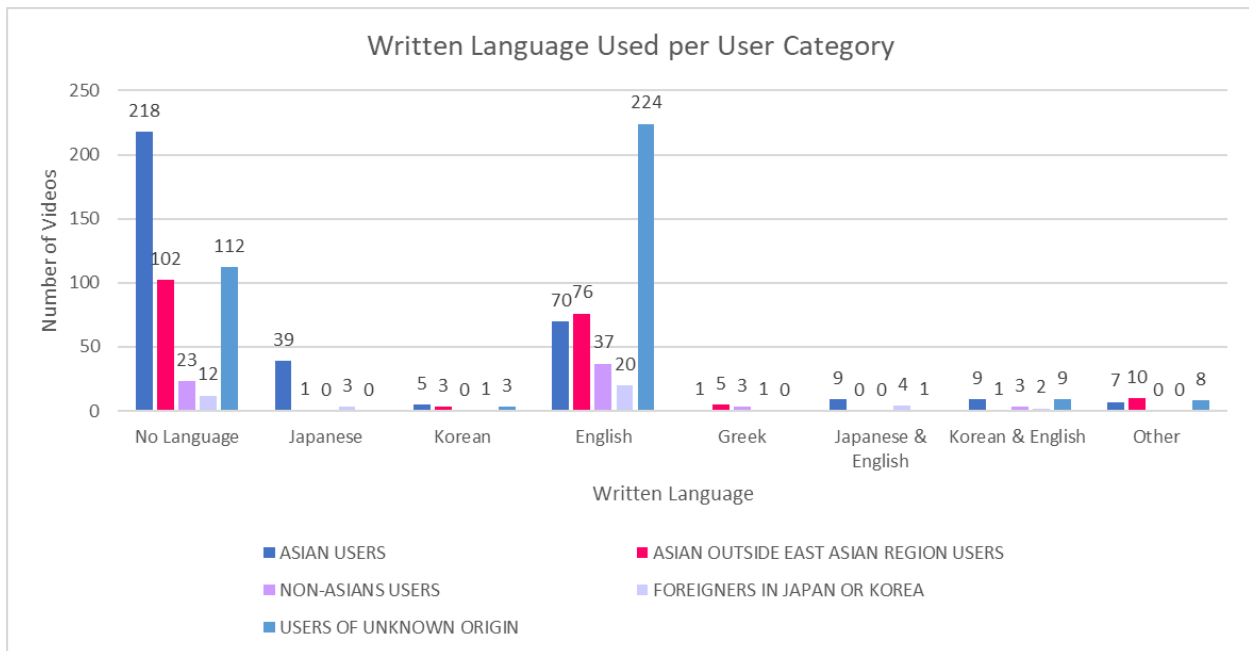


Figure 8: Language used for written communication per user category.

Figure 7 similarly to Figure 8 reveals that the most popular videos are the ones with no description or any form of written language. The second most popular videos are the ones with English description and commentary. Moreover, Japanese users living in Japan seem to use more their native language for written messages, than Koreans. This can be considered as a factor that can potentially limit Japanese content dissemination.

Library Audio

TikTok has a unique feature that allows the user to use audio from its own library. This audio can be a song, a voice recording, a remix or any other possible sound. When one user uploads an audio, then automatically it is added to TikTok's library, and can be used by other users. This unique feature enables not only videos, but also sounds to become viral. To understand how this unique feature can enable further cultural dissemination, data regarding this feature were also recorded, aside from the videos' original audio and their oral and written language. It is worth mentioning that the chosen library audio of the examined video did not always match the audio of the content. Overall, for 21.95% of the examined videos (or 221 out of the 1007 videos), their library audios did not match the audio content. This percentage was high enough to take into consideration the library audio used separately for each video.

The first thing I examined was the origin of the audio. The library audios were divided into three main categories; of Japanese, Korean and Other origin. Japanese origin consisted 14.20% (143 audios) of the sample, Korean origin 30.49% (307 audios) of the sample, and Other was 55.31% (557 audios) of the sample. By analyzing the data, specific unique categories directly linked to Japanese or Korean cultural products were evident. This portion consisted of 31.08% (313 audios) of the sample. The rest 68.92% (694 audios) library audios were not related to Japanese or Korean cultural products. The identified categories are presented in Figure 9:

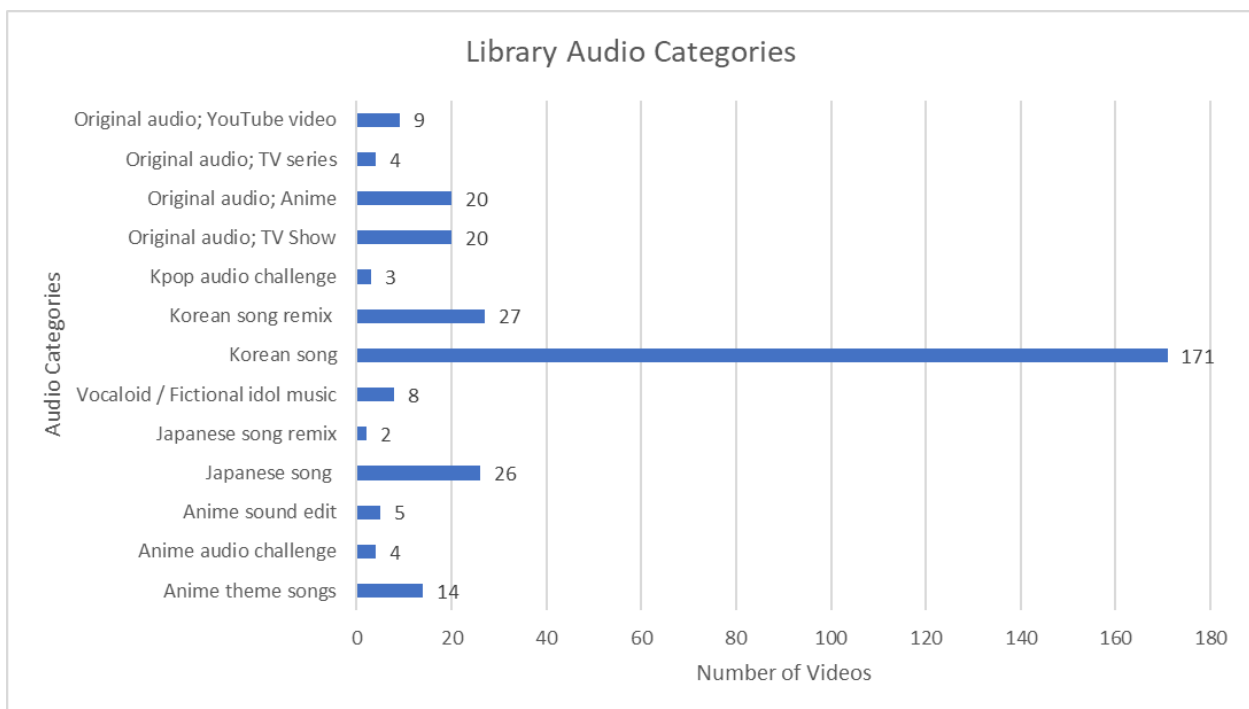


Figure 9: Library audio categories related to Japanese or Korean cultural products.

The results in Figure 9 show that the most popular library audio category related to Japanese or Korean cultural products is actually "Korean song", comprising 16.98% (171 audios) of the overall sample. The categories following are "Korean song remix", that stands for all variants of original Korean songs, most likely created by fans, and "Japanese song", which is self-explanatory. Among these special categories are also original audios from various sources, such as YouTube videos from official channels, TV series, TV shows, and anime. TikTok challenges in the form of library audios were also located, thus the anime audio challenge and K-pop audio challenge, that consist mostly by anime lines and K-pop mashups respectively. Specifically, for Japanese content vocaloid or fictional idol music was also traced. Digital fictional idols are one

of the unique cultural products that Japan has to offer. Using one word, one can refer to this products/music songs as vocaloids, a name given by the software used to create these digital singing voices (“Vocaloid”, 2022).

The immense popularity of Korean music is evident. This proves again, a strategic plan were the Korean entertainment sector uploads original audios, creates challenges and popular themes around those sounds, and finally promotes them into going viral, resulting in increased cultural reach. It is noteworthy that 112 new releases were identified through this process. As new release I considered every music piece released after the beginning of 2022.

Cultural Sectors

As Iwabuchi and other theorists have proposed as examined in previous sections, culture can be divided into sub-sections or sectors (Iwabuchi, 2020; Bunyavejchewin, 2012; Otmazgin, 2008; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2001). Based on this idea, I divided the sample into "cultural sectors", which I identified through detailed inductive content analysis. Those sectors represent both material and non-material cultural products. The categories for each country, Japan and Korea, are presented in Figures 10 & 11 respectively:

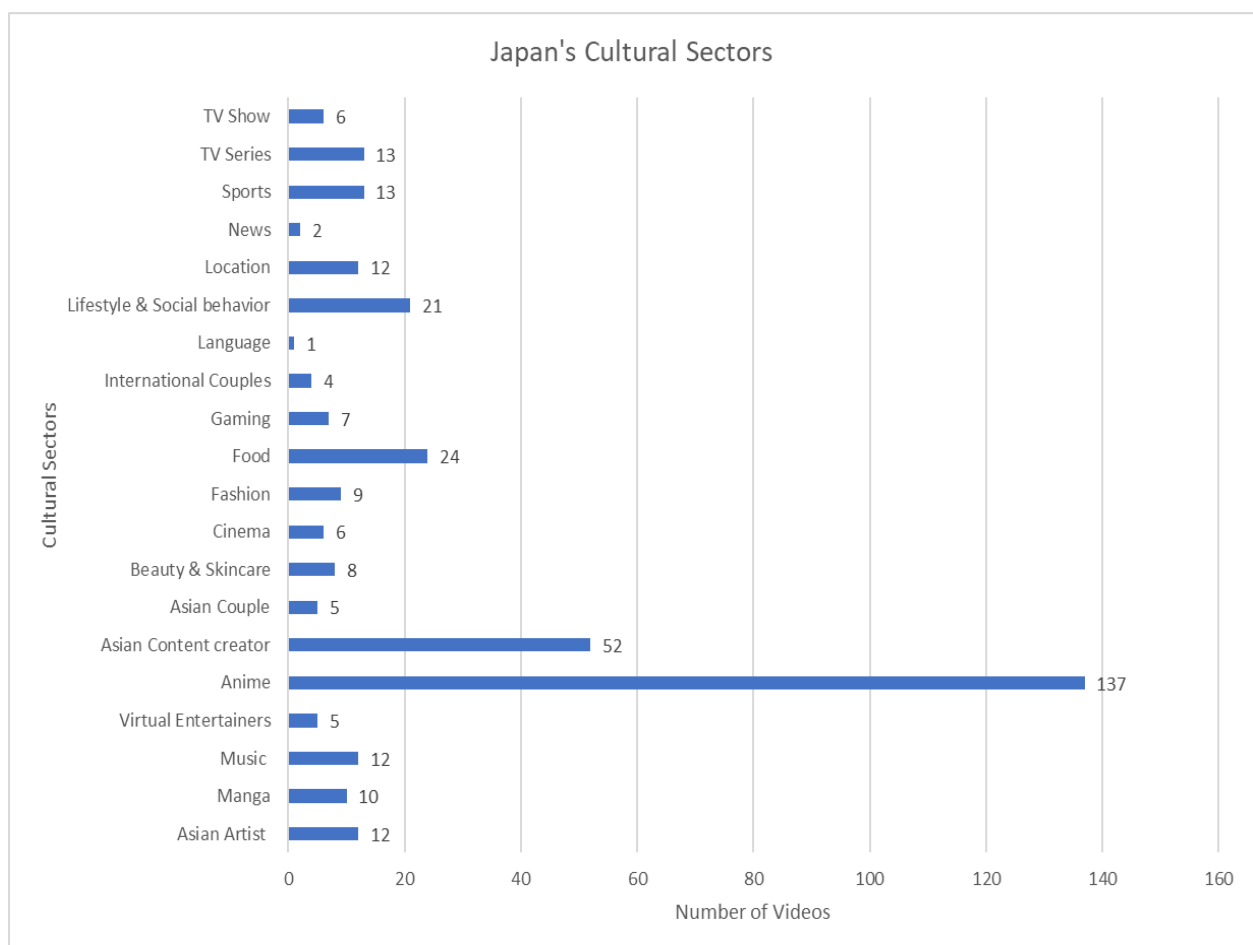


Figure 10: Japan's identified cultural sectors.

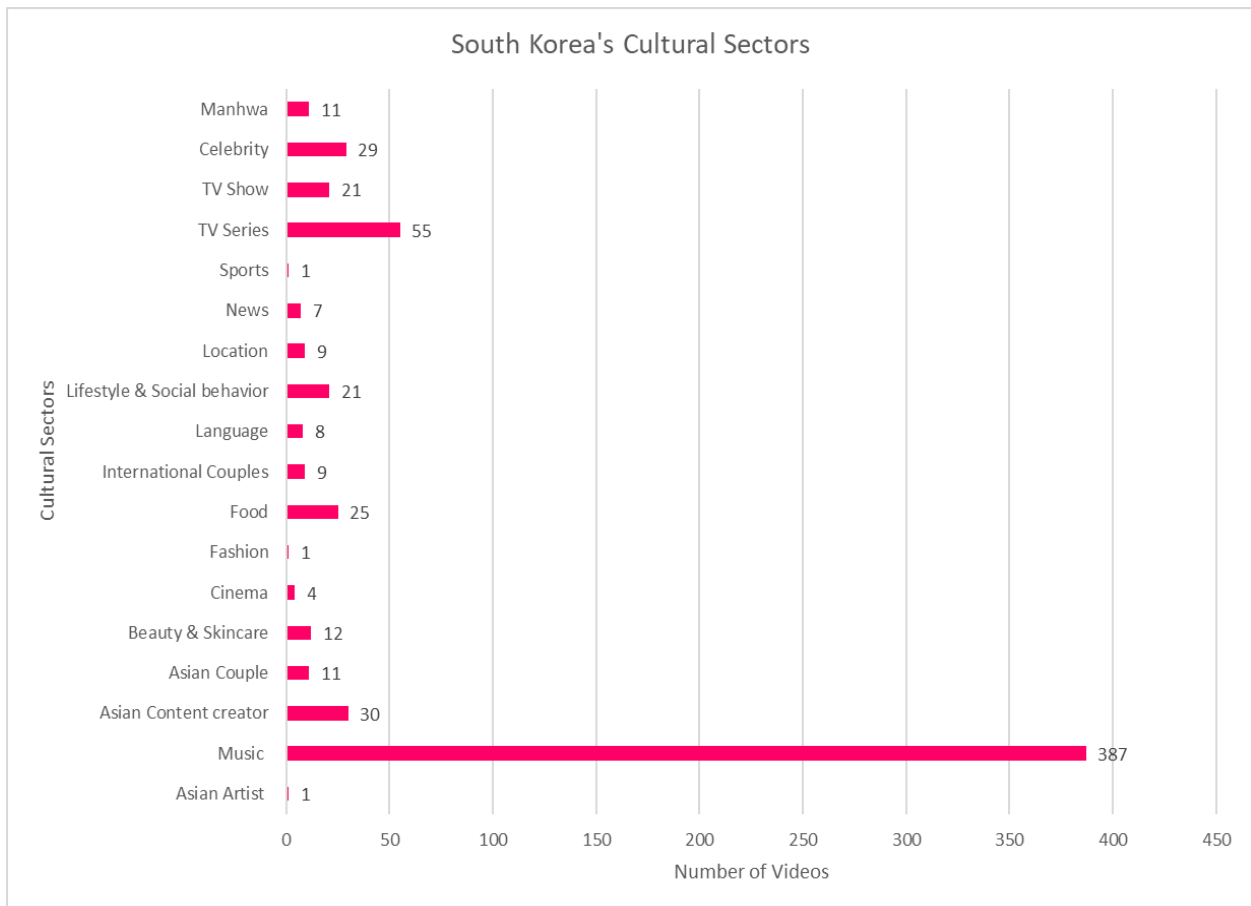


Figure 11: South Korea's identified cultural sectors.

As presented in Figures 10 & 11 most of the sectors are self-explanatory. Some new categories were added to the already existing from previous academic works. Those categories are focusing on human relationships and family bonds. Couples' videos are one of the trending videos in the app, so it was worth tracking whether couples with at least one partner being Japanese or Korean were sharing their own experiences and the impact of culture within their relationship. So, "Asian couple" and "International couple" were both identified as separate cultural sectors within the sample. Another category, which is not available in previous academic works is this of content creators and influencers, which for the purposes of this study I call "Asian Content Creator". This category has not been studied yet in previous academic works, since this is a new, yet unexplored trend; a product of this new form of entertainment, which is the social media entertainment, where content creators are self-made. I created a separate category for Asian artists that do not belong in either the category of idol nor actor. Categories only presented in Japanese content related videos were manga (Japanese

comics), anime, gaming and virtual entertainers. A virtual entertainer or else Vtuber is an online entertainer who uses a digital avatar, looking very "anime like", generated via a computer software. This digital trend originated in Japan, in the mid-2010s, and since then has become a global reality especially among gamers and streamers, that most likely are familiar with Japanese culture ("VTuber", 2022). In Korean content related videos, all categories were apparent apart from those four categories, instead two new categories were included; Korean celebrities and manhwa (Korean digital comics). Another category that I chose to add is lifestyle & social behavior, which Iwabuchi (2020) describes as "ways of life". This category focuses on how people live in Japan or Korea and how the members of these societies behave and treat one another.

Regarding Japan, the most popular sector is Anime comprising 38.16% of the sample (137 videos). The next two most popular categories are "Asian Content creator" -in this case Japanese content creator- and "food", followed by "lifestyle & social behavior". The most popular Japanese cultural sectors are presented in Figure 12, while the rest of the categories are summarized in the cumulative category "Other".

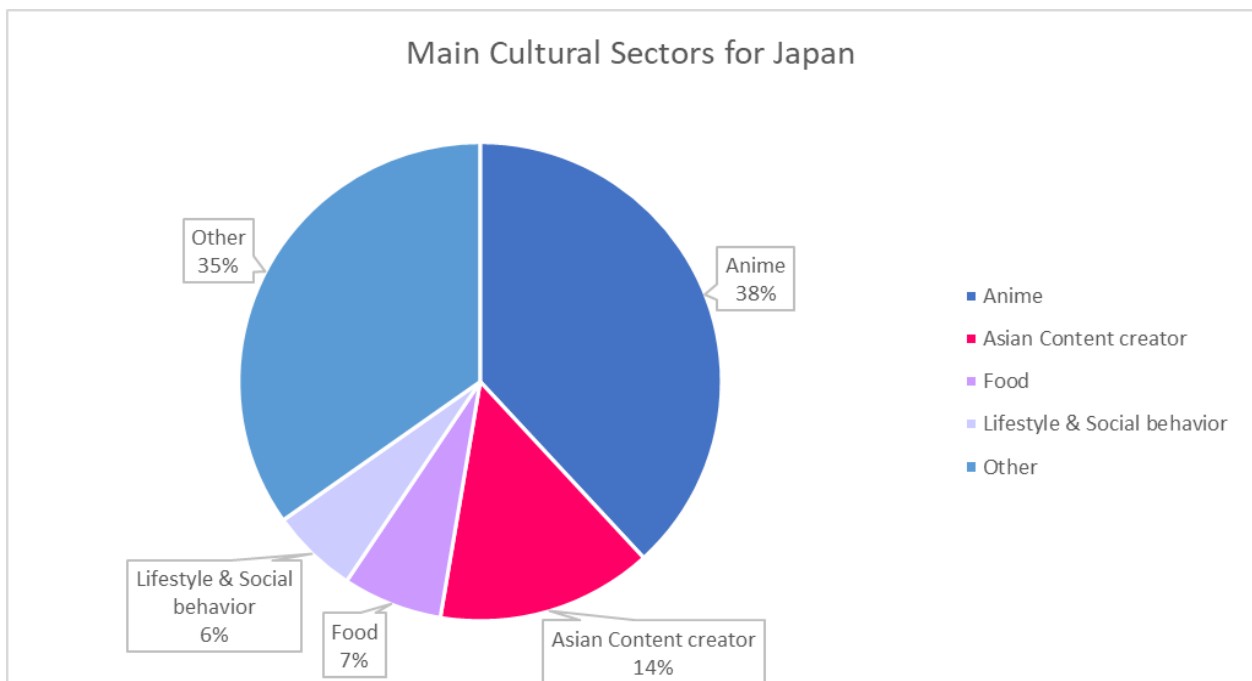


Figure 12: Most popular distributed cultural sectors regarding Japanese content in TikTok.

Regarding Korea, the most popular sector is “Music”, supporting the previous evidence from the library audio results, comprising 60.56% of the sample (387 videos). The next most popular categories are “TV Series”, “Food” and “Celebrity”. The most popular Korean cultural sectors are presented in Figure 13, while the rest of the categories are summarized in the cumulative category "Other".

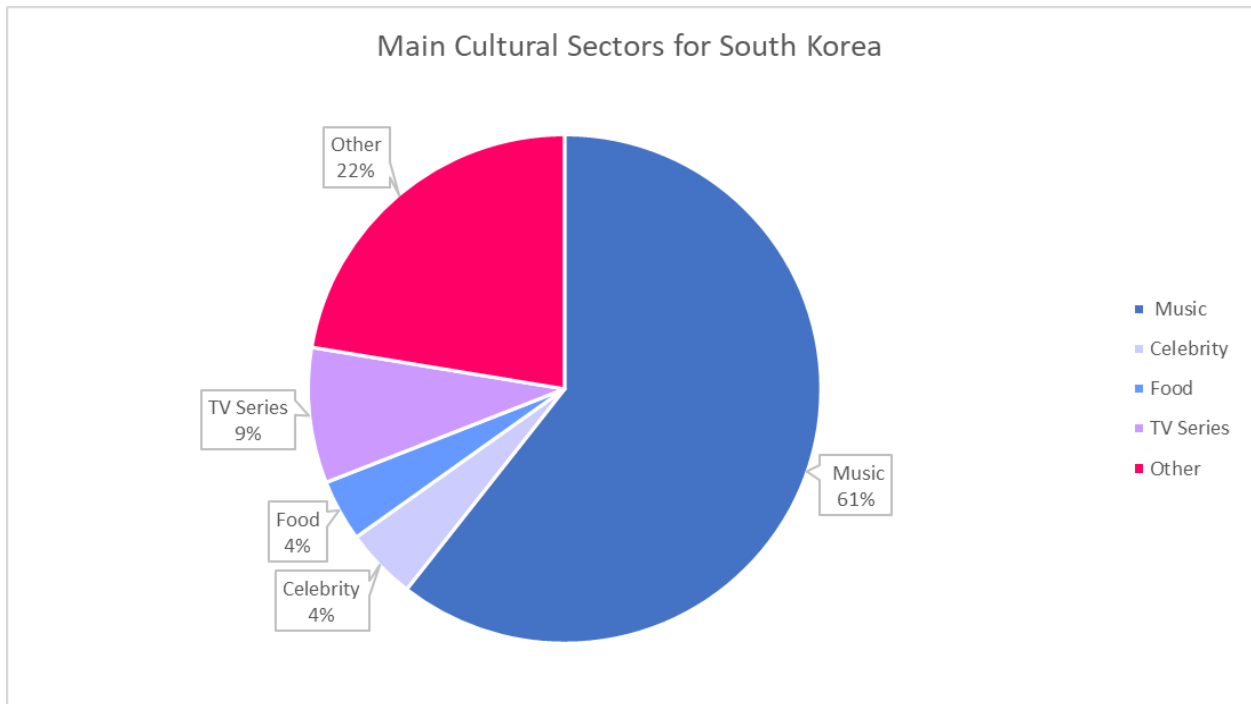


Figure 13: Most popular distributed cultural sectors regarding Korean content in TikTok.

TikTok Content Categories

Ceci (2022) and other news media sources define some of the most popular content categories in TikTok. TikTok content categories are groups of videos that are characterized by common traits, forms or themes, and creators use them to present their content, and by following specific content trends hoping to expand their reach and their videos to be pushed by the algorithm on the FYP. Ceci (2022) defines very few categories, without having in mind the cultural aspect, that it is investigated in this research. Based on extended fieldwork research, 34 distinct content categories are defined. The users chose to promote consciously or not Japanese and Korean cultural sectors or cultural products using this content categories. In Appendix A the

complete list of the 34 TikTok content categories is provided, with a small description of each category on the side.

In Figures 14 & 15 the defined video categories for Japanese and Korean related content are defined respectively:

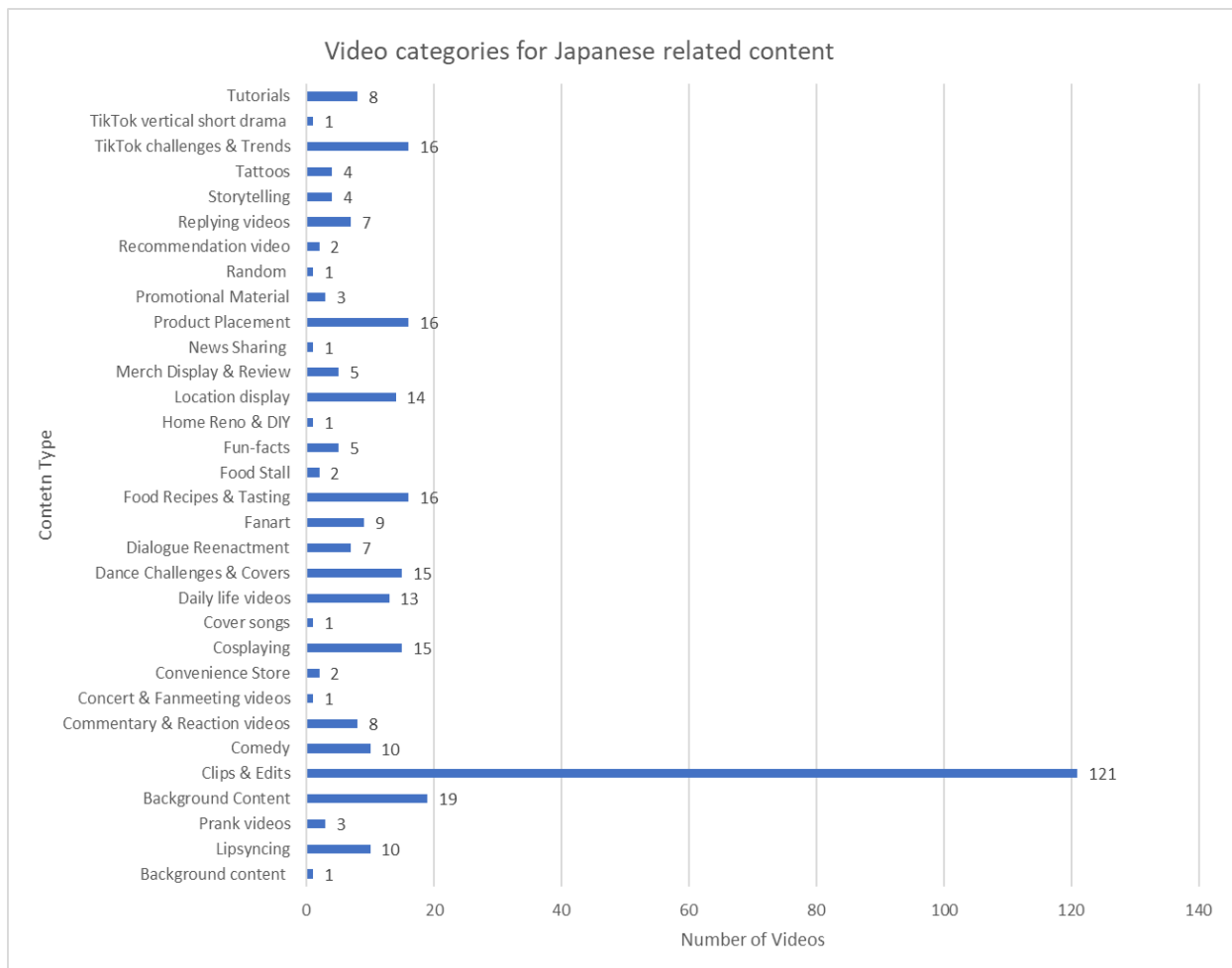


Figure 14: Identified TikTok video categories for Japanese related content videos.

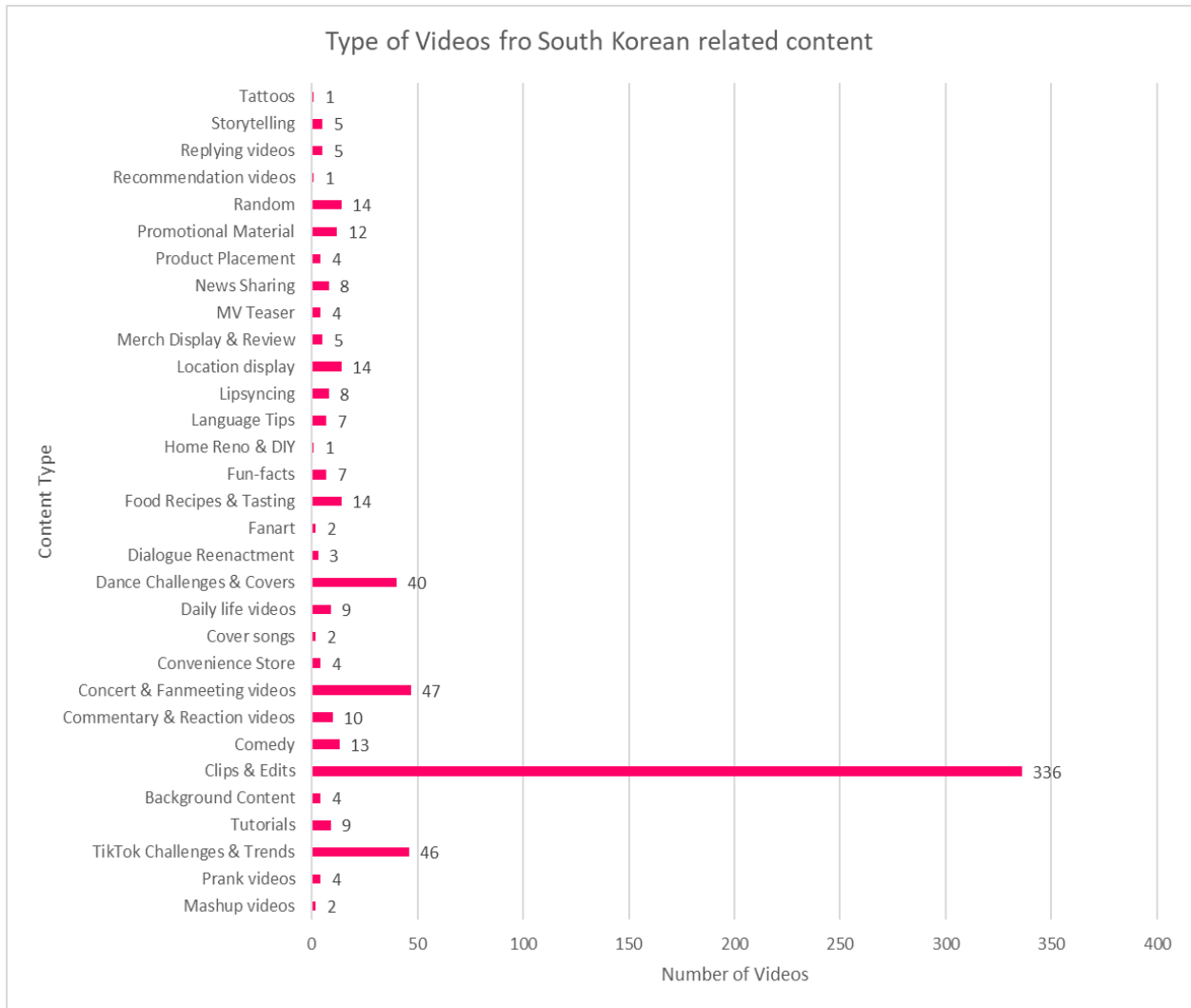


Figure 15: Identified TikTok video categories for Korean related content videos.

In both Japanese and Korean related content, by far the most popular videos were "Clips & Edits". "Clips & Edits" fall under the "Reposted & edited" category regarding their originality, meaning that they are not originally created content material by the TikTok users. Those videos might be bits or sequences of different bits from other media like TV shows and series, music videos or anime. Regarding Japanese related videos there were specific content categories, which were not found in Korean related videos. Those categories were "Cosplaying" - a performance act where participants transform themselves into their favorite fictional characters wearing costumes and makeup -, "Food stall" videos - food stall owners showing their everyday work; food street markets are a very important part of Japanese everyday life -, and also a "Vertical short drama" was identified. A lot of content creators in the platform

distribute a story or a series of different stories as a sequence of serialized short videos. Those videos very easily become popular through TikTok, due to its unique algorithm. The fact that the video was from a Japanese creator is considered to be a random factor, yet it is a unique separate content category, thus it had to be mentioned. Examples for these types of content are presented below:



Figure 16: Left: Japanese cosplayer showing how she recreates her Floyd Leech character; Floyd Leech is a fictional character from the popular Japanese mobile game Twisted Wonderland. Middle: The user promotes his small traditional Japanese crepe food stall business by creating TikTok videos. Right: One of the many short video stories uploaded by a short video specialist, the user's profile name is gokko5club.

Regarding the videos with Korean content, two more categories were presented in this sub-division of the sample. Those two categories are “Mashup videos” - videos characterized by their audios that are a mixture of different songs - and “MV teasers” - official promotional spots from entertainment companies and idol groups to promote new music video releases -. Examples of this type of content are presented below:

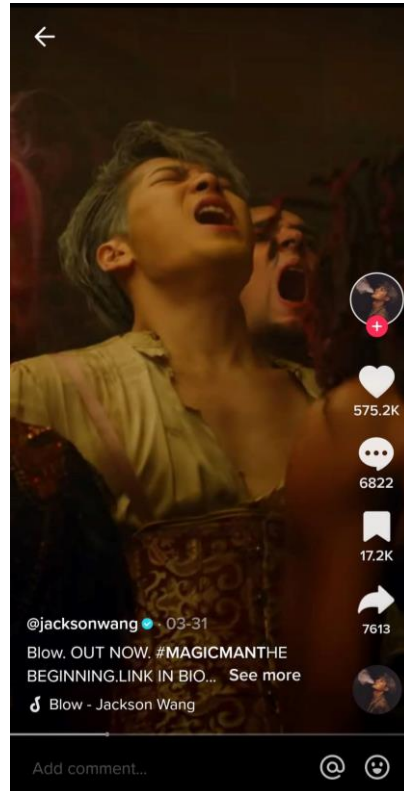


Figure 17: Left: Kang Sug-hoon -former member of the 1990s Korean boy group Sechs Kies- uploaded a mashup video on his official TikTok profile. Right: Promotional MV teaser for Jackson Wang's - member of the Korean idol group GOT7- video release of his song Blow, on his official TikTok profile.

For each subsection of the sample - Japanese and Korean content related videos - I decided to present the 8 most popular videos categories. The results are presented in Figure 18:

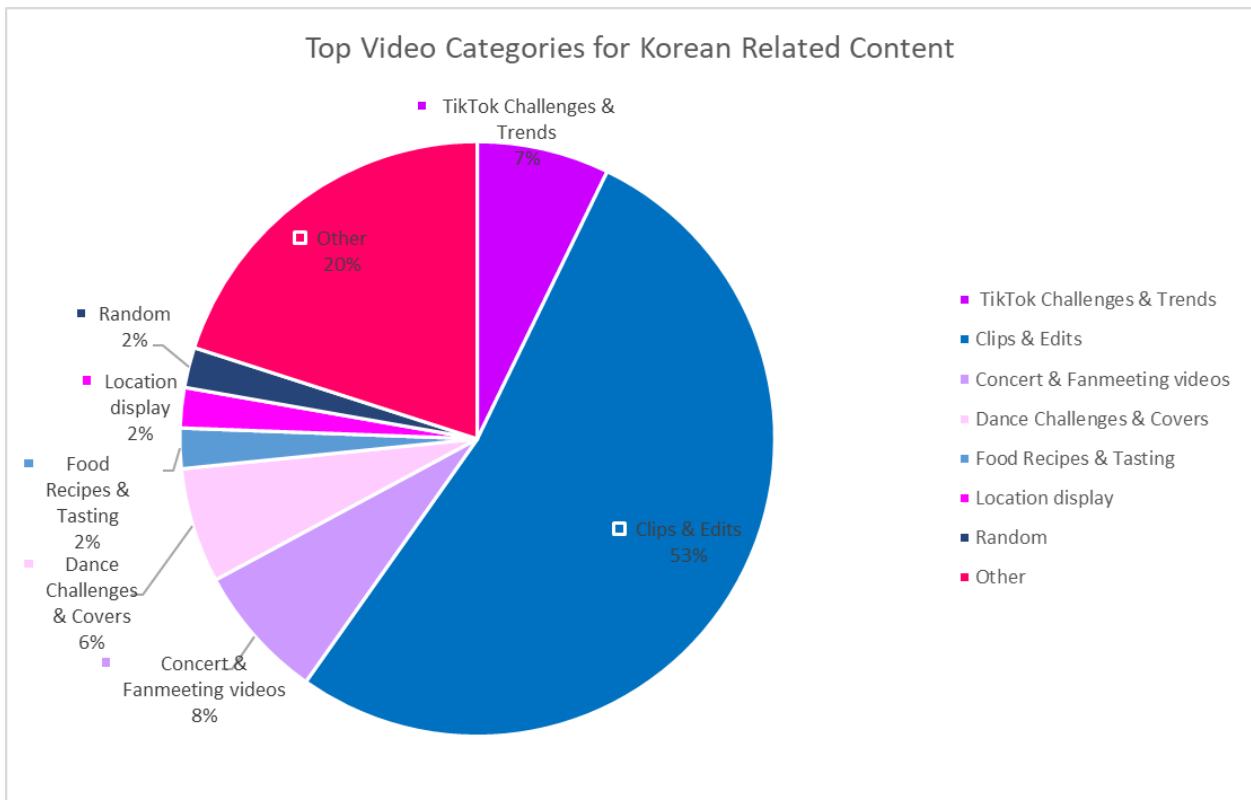
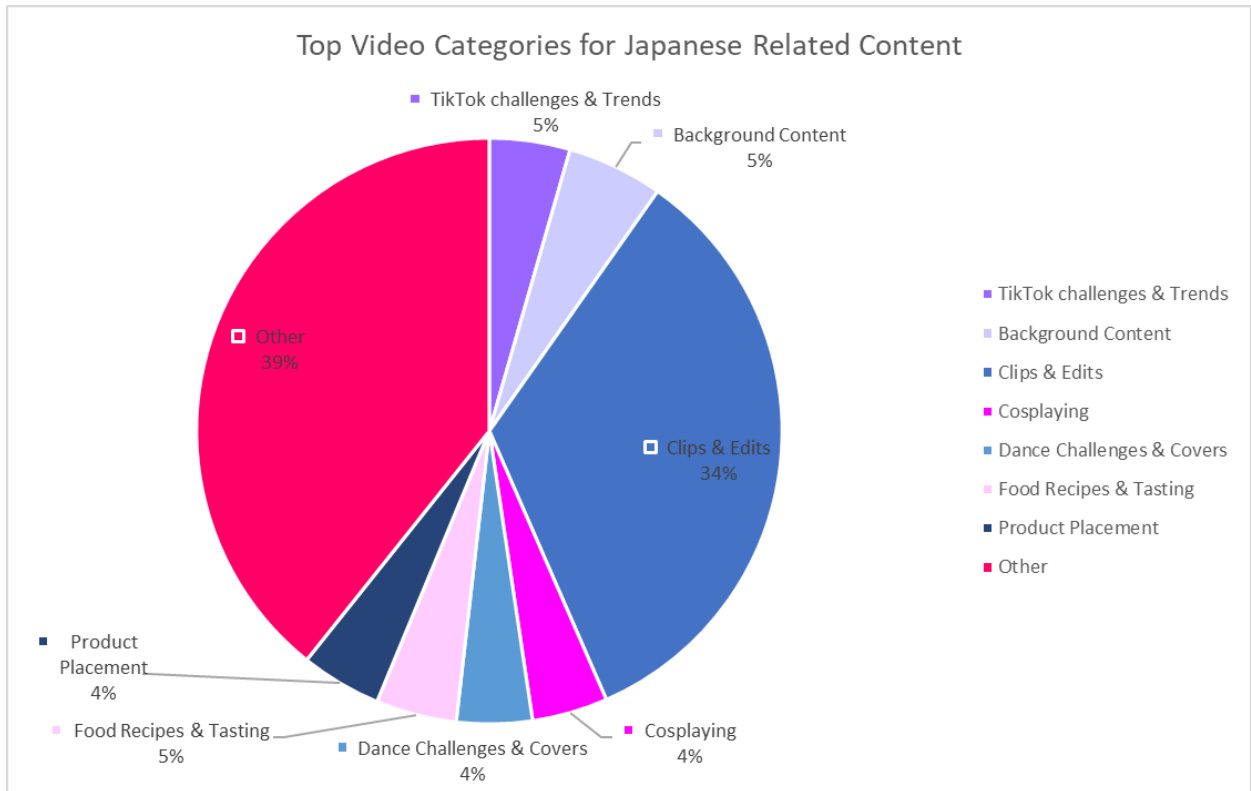


Figure 18: Above: Most popular identified video categories for Japanese related content videos. Below: Most popular identified video categories for Korean related content videos

Cultural Distance

To investigate whether the cultural proximity and cultural exoticism hypotheses (Baek, 2014) apply in our study, I kept track of the videos' countries of origin. The identified countries are presented in Appendix B and are divided on the premise of promoting Japanese or Korean culture. Overall, the percentage of the "known-origin videos" regarding Japanese content were 67.69% (242 videos) of the sample. The percentage of the "known-origin videos" regarding Korean content were 59.62% (347 videos) of the sample. In the "known-origin" percentages, it might not be feasible for all videos to determine the specific country of origin, but it is possible to determine the geographical sector, as established by Brands Finance, based on the language used for oral and written communication. For example, if a user uses Russian, the assumption that the user is located in a Russian speaking country is made, thus the video is considered to belong to the European sector.

Below the percentages for each geographical sector are defined for each of the two examined cases - videos with Japanese or/and Korean related content - .

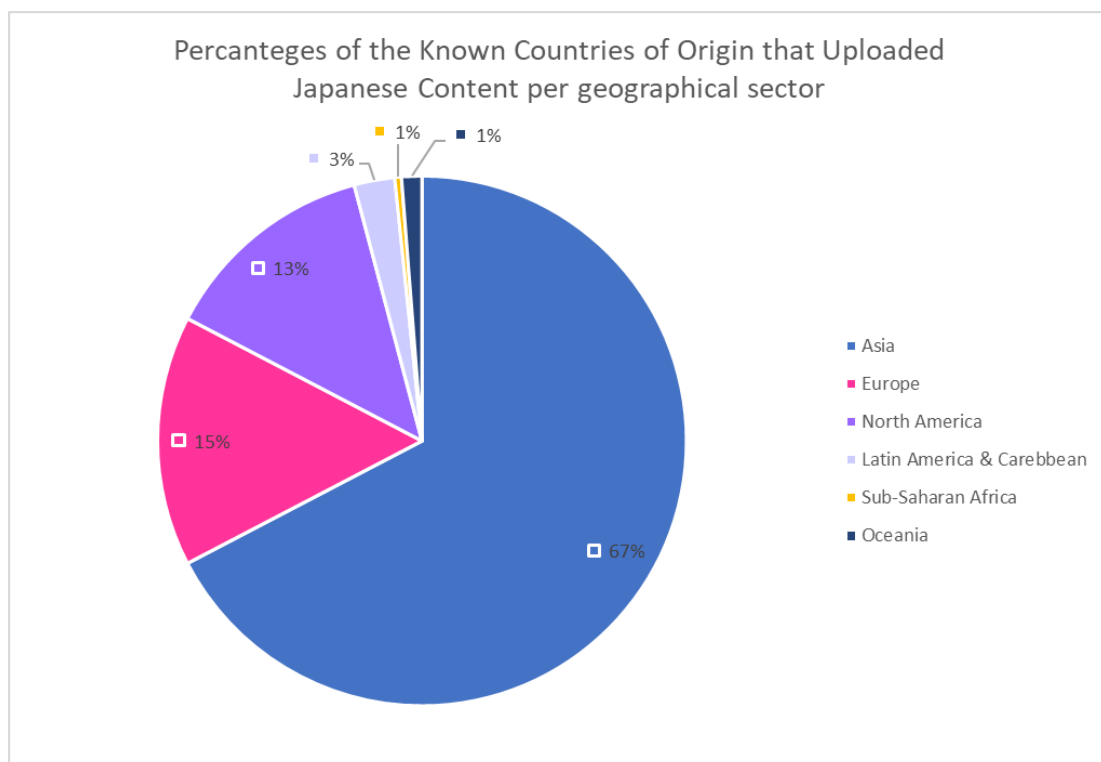


Figure 19: Geographical sectors of origin for Japanese content related videos.

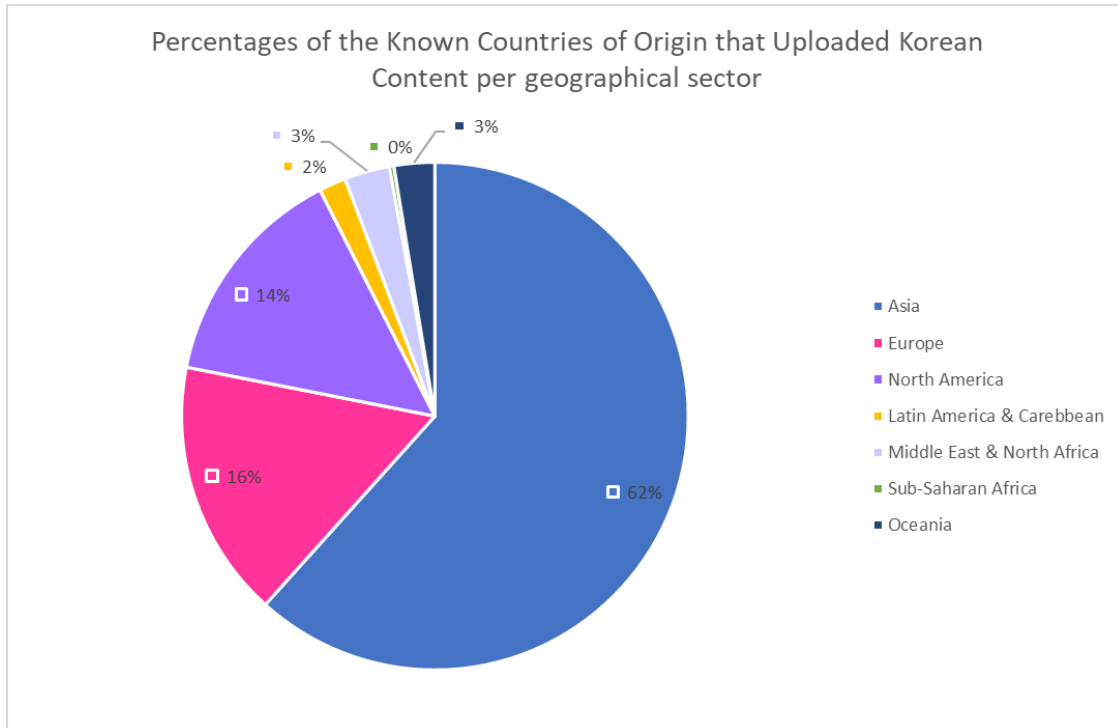


Figure 20: Geographical sectors of origin for Korean content related videos.

For both Japanese and Korean related content videos, the majority of the videos are originated from Asian countries, thus the cultural proximity hypothesis seems to be proven. In second and third place, come the videos originated from North America and Europe. It is important to explain that apart from Asia, the results from the other sectors are not trustworthy, due to the large percentage of “unknown-origin” videos, the vast majority of which used English, Spanish and Portuguese language, making it impossible to figure out the exact origin. So, the exoticism hypothesis cannot be proven. In order to have more trustworthy results, the sample could increase at least double the amount, since we examine two different cases; Japanese and Korean content.

What is more, based on the countries of origin for the videos related to the two categories of cultural content - Japanese and Korean -, I calculated the cultural distance per geographical sector. In the tables below the average results are presented, and in the parentheses the calculated standard deviation is also available.

Table 3: Cultural distance between Japan and geographical sectors.

CULTURAL DISTANCE WITH JAPAN	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
Europe	19.00 (11.90)	20.38 (11.50)	53.38 (19.08)	15.25 (19.02)	30.87 (13.75)	16.25 (9.74)
Asia	21.00 (17.14)	19.43 (10.75)	40.43 (19.65)	41.57 (29.12)	23.14 (23.30)	5.14 (6.34)
Oceania	24.00 (11.31)	38.50 (7.78)	35.50 (2.12)	42.00 (1.41)	61.00 (8.49)	31.00 (2.83)
Middle East & North Africa	–	–	–	–	–	–
North America	14.50 (0.71)	39.50 (7.78)	38.00 (7.07)	45.00 (1.41)	55.50 (4.95)	26.00 (0.00)
Latin American & Carebbean	15.67 (11.02)	8.00 (8.00)	37.00 (10.15)	10.67 (5.03)	58.67 (12.86)	30.67 (21.13)
Sub-Saharan Africa (South Africa)	5.00	19.00	32.00	43.00	54.00	21.00

Table 4: Cultural distance between South Korea and geographical sectors.

CULTURAL DISTANCE WITH SOUTH KOREA	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long Term Orientation	Indulgence
Europe	21.00 (13.55)	34.85 (21.71)	20.00 (16.69)	19.54 (17.24)	43.69 (20.97)	16.31 (12.39)
Asia	15.56 (15.16)	6.67 (9.17)	12.89 (17.97)	23.67 (22.18)	34.22 (28.63)	10.22 (8.69)
Oceania	36.00 (11.31)	20.50 (7.78)	3.50 (2.12)	43.00 (1.41)	39.00 (8.49)	2.00 (2.83)
Middle East & North Africa	42.00 (2.00)	23.33 (6.11)	6.00 (6.24)	16.67 (5.86)	50.33 (43.66)	7.33 (7.51)
North America	45.50 (0.71)	21.50 (7.78)	5.00 (1.41)	40.00 (1.41)	44.50 (4.95)	3.00 (0.00)
Latin American & Carebbean	13.33 (6.66)	12.67 (7.02)	13.67 (14.84)	4.00 (4.58)	70.67 (12.86)	41.67 (22.85)
Sub-Saharan Africa (Nigeria)	20	12	21	30	87	55

Regarding the Sub-Saharan Africa region, the average cultural distance could not be calculated since in the case of Japan the only determined country was South Africa, and in the case of South Korea the only country was Nigeria. Instead, the cultural distance between Japan and South Africa, and South Korea and Nigeria are noted. Moreover, no countries from the Middle East & North Africa region were detected in the case of Japan, so cultural distance could not be calculated as well for that geographical sector. The calculated cultural distance also supports the cultural

proximity thesis, showcasing the smaller cultural distance being with the sector of Asia - for both Japanese and Korean content related videos - which is also the sector from which the most “known-origin” videos are originated. Noteworthy is the fact, that Korea presents closer proximity with the identified Asian countries than Japan; something evident from the lower scores of cultural distance for each of the variables.

CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

After an extended secondary and historical analysis, supported also by detailed extended empirical research, consisting of systematic observations and measurements, definite conclusions can be made regarding the cultural dissemination process of Japan's and Korea's cultural content within the short video app, TikTok.

The research process for this thesis began with the definition of culture provided by Geertz (1973) and Williams (1976), that focused on historically transmitted patterns, values and beliefs. For the purposes of this study, a more contemporary definition was needed. Um's (2017) definition of culture, as all aspects of a particular form of human life, was chosen, on the grounds that it fits better to the plurality of features and characteristics that TikTok can offer, as a medium of cultural dissemination. Moreover, a main aim of this study was to define the ways in which culture as described by Um (2017) is manifested in a short video app environment such as TikTok. To do so, first already existing sectors of culture were defined from past academic works (Iwabuchi, 2020; Kim, 2013; Bunyavejchewin, 2012; Otmazgin, 2008; Shim, 2006; Goldstein-Gidoni, 2001). Based on those secondary data, a pilot study process was designed for the primary research fieldwork study. Through an inductive content analysis process, I established a new set of 22 individual cultural sectors that are popular in TikTok for Japanese and Korean content. 34 TikTok content categories were also defined. Those TikTok categories can be interpreted as the forms in which the defined cultural sectors can be transmitted through the app.

Identifying those categories was one of the aims of this research. Next step was to decide which theoretical approach of culture and dominance best describes this unique cultural phenomenon; the cultural dissemination through TikTok. From post

colonialism discourses, to the various forms of imperialism and globalization, the evidence supports that the two theories that can provide a broader view and explanation of the current cultural expansion and dominance from East Asia to the rest of the world, is by examining soft power utilized by cultural diplomacy, and the counter cultural imperialism thesis. The evidence from both primary and secondary research support that, both examined countries, Japan and South Korea, indeed use cultural diplomacy as a soft power strategy. Even though their diplomatic attempts differ based on their process and outcomes, they do have impact. This is evident from the findings, that support global reach for both countries, with 42 countries and non-Asian users from around the world participating in the dissemination process. The counter cultural imperialism thesis is also supported for both countries. Due to Japan's imperialistic past this might sounds as an oxymoron statement, but considering Western/American global cultural domination, it makes sense thinking that Japan is added to the plurality of cultural voices on a global level.

Specifically, in the case of Korea, before the Korean Wave and its introduction to the Western society in the late 1990s, people in the western world viewed Korea as a place tormented by colonization, political disturbances, and division; a relic of a disastrous war, a country overshadowed for centuries by other powerful nations. As examined in the secondary research, South Korea as well as other East Asian countries, had been under the severe cultural influence of the West and Japan. Korea silently prepared itself for greatness, by steadily rebuilding its internal administration and industries. Starting as a major exporter of cars and electronics to becoming one of the major competitors of cultural exports in the 21st century, Korea managed to rebuild its national image; from a victim to a trendsetter. The Korean government quickly realized that it could beneficiate from this phenomenon by using it for its soft power purposes.

The findings of the primary research reveal that the Korean Wave was promoted by both individual fans that seek no economic benefit from the process, but also from the private Korean entertainment sector, that systematically employs social media strategies adapted to TikTok's environment to promote cultural exports. Such characteristic examples from the research findings were the official MV teasers, the

promotional content uploaded on official accounts, and of course the large numbers of K-pop music and dance trends on the app. Specifically, the results show that the most popular library audio defined category was K-pop songs, with 171 identified audios. Regarding the Korean government, Kim (2013) claims that the Korean Wave was supported extensively by the Korean government for socio-economic, cultural and political reasons. Based on the data from the secondary research, the government seems to generally support the industry, but based on the primary research findings, there are no evidence whether the government does directly and exclusively support cultural promotion on TikTok.

Overall, it seems like the Korean content is promoted more systematically and strategically on the app, in comparison to Japanese content, something which is evident considering the higher average relative frequency of Korean content of 0.65. Even though the most popular sharing motive for both Japanese and Korean content in fan-generated entertaining purposes, it is apparent that Korean entertainment companies utilize communication plans to promote content via the app, with the findings showing 113 videos labeled as "PR plan" based on the sharing motives of the videos. In comparison, only 48 videos with Japanese content belongs in this category.

In the case of Japan, the country also had to overcome the very tragic events of the WW II, as well as rebuild its image and relationship with its neighboring countries. Even though Japan did not actively pursue to advance its cultural domination, Japanese cultural content became popular on a global level, due to various unforeseen circumstances uncontrolled by Japan. In the 1990s, with the globalization wave gaining popularity in the East and the unexpected global success of anime, the Japanese government executives took the initiative to formally promote the Japanese culture outside its borders. Based on the outcomes of this study, the digital fan base seems to have a more significant role than the private sector in disseminating Japanese culture through TikTok. The findings showcase that by far the most popular Japanese cultural sector is anime, with 137 identified videos. In contrast to Korea, for which music is the most popular sector with 387 identifies videos, the music sector for Japan is relative less significant with only 12 identified videos in this category. Instead, anime was expected to be one of the most popular cultural sectors distributed in the

app, due to the support that the government has provided to the industry, as examined in the literature section, and indeed it was. Again, the government support was not evident from the data.

Generally, the findings indicate that "Cool Japan" is less attractive than the "Hallyu" on TikTok. Based on the findings and the literature review six main reasons can be extracted:

1. As supported by the calculated cultural distance, overall Japan seems to have larger distance than Korea with most examined geographical sectors.
2. Based on the use of language, the data support that Japanese people are keener on using their own language, thus this raises issues of linguistic incompatibility.
3. The data also support that there is no systematic effort from the Japanese entertainment sector to promote cultural products within the app.
4. As evident by the literature review, the government places its focus primarily on anime, losing benefits that could arise from other cultural sectors. In comparison Korean government places its interest in multiple cultural sectors.
5. The historical and literature analysis also showcases the probability of residual dislikability by the rest of the East Asian neighboring countries due to historical and political disputes.
6. Japan's fear of abusing its cultural power due to its imperialist past could explain the lack of systematically designed and operationalized cultural dissemination strategies.

For both examined countries, the results show that Baek's (2014) cultural proximity hypothesis is proven, with the majority of "known-origin" videos being from Asia. For each case, Japanese and Korean content, 67% and 62% of the "known-origin" videos are from Asia respectively. It is worth mentioning that the exoticism thesis could not be supported due to sample size limitations. As mentioned above, even though the most popular cultural sectors differ for the two countries, the most popular TikTok content category is the same, "Clips & Edits"; bits or sequences of different bits from other media like TV shows and series, music videos, anime etc. The popularity of this category exposes that the dissemination for both cases is primarily initiated by fans; individual with no economic interest, that genuinely want to enjoy their hobbies and

come together as communities within the app. The fans create a proliferation effect on the distribution of cultural content, by creating multidirectional informal cultural flows through the app. The fact that, the majority of the users, choose no oral and written language or choose English for their videos, minimizes the language barrier among global users and strengthens the proliferation effect. TikTok's algorithm and its unique nature of an endless stream of short videos on the FYP, also benefits the effect. In a shorter period of time users can be exposed very easily to a greater amount of a variety of different cultural information, than they could in the past or by using other social media platforms. What is more, TikTok's significant features, especially library audio, enable cultural products becoming viral, such as K-pop songs, via shared library audios for dance challenges, or anime, via shared anime audios for voiceover and other challenges.

The purpose of this study was not to make comparisons between the two countries or pinpoint out mistakes; the purpose was to explore two different stories of struggle against cultural imperialism. Japan and Korea, regardless their difficult pasts as nations, have managed to create unique cultural identities throughout the years, and share their own truth with the rest of the world. Both countries are in an ongoing effort to increase the levels of literacy (Nakano, 2002) regarding their culture on a global level. Those increased levels of literacy will lead to the mutual respect that Fanon referred to in his works. The difference between Fanon's decolonization theories based on violence, is that Korea and Japan have managed to achieve respect with non-violent means. By cultural diplomacy they gain soft power utilizing it for their own benefits. Despite the fact, that the current research has limitations regarding its sample size and the fact that not all data were retrievable, such as the countries of origin of the videos, that does not diminish the significance of the study. This research is a map of how to use short video apps for cultural dissemination. Also, by showcasing, the differences between the two countries, lessons can be achieved on how to increase the effectiveness of cultural dissemination for both countries, or any other nation that would want to strategically use such online platforms to expand its cultural image.

MAIN BODY WORD COUNT: 23000 words

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Definitions used in the research for TikTok content categories.

	Content Category	Definition
1	<i>Dance Challenges & Covers</i>	TikTok challenges calling people to dance on trending songs and audios.
2	<i>Clips & Edits</i>	Bits or sequences of different bits from other media like TV shows and series, music videos, anime etc.
3	<i>Mashup videos</i>	Audios that are a mixture of different songs.
4	<i>Food Recipes & Tasting</i>	Step by step tutorials of cooking preparations and/or food sampling.
5	<i>TikTok challenges & Trends</i>	TikTok challenges are calls to users to take some sort of action, and they can involve dances, voiceovers, use of filters etc. Trends are topics or subjects that receive attention on social media, in this case TikTok.
6	<i>Location display</i>	Outdoor videos, mostly of popular or tourists' attractions.
7	<i>Replying videos</i>	TikTok offers the ability for a user to reply to a comment with a video. These audience engagement videos are referred to as replying videos.
8	<i>Dialogue Reenactment</i>	Users reenacting past discussions they had, or recreating imaginary discussions to prove a point or create entertaining content.
9	<i>Commentary & Reaction videos</i>	TikTok offers a voiceover feature where users can talk over another video. Users apply this feature to comment and react to other videos. Videos in which people watching a show, series, anime etc. and recording their reactions also fall in this category.
10	<i>Convenience Store</i>	Videos showing people visiting Asian convenience stores, where they sit and eat their pre-cooked meals or just buy products.
11	<i>Comedy</i>	Sketches or jokes of entertaining fun content.
12	<i>Daily life videos</i>	The users share information about their daily routines.
13	<i>Fun-facts</i>	Videos providing small pieces of interesting or entertaining information about a topic
14	<i>Tattoos</i>	Tattoo artists and individual with tattoos share their tattoo with TikTok videos. Tattoos can be inspired by Japanese or Korean content.
15	<i>Prank video</i>	Videos including practical jokes or pranks.
16	<i>MV Teaser</i>	Official promotional spots from entertainment companies and idol groups to promote new music video releases.
17	<i>Merch Display & Review</i>	People present products from various franchises that they have purchased and might also provide reviews.
18	<i>Random</i>	Any video that does not match with any category is considered random. Most random videos are self-promotional videos, created mainly by TikTok content creators for entertaining purposes.

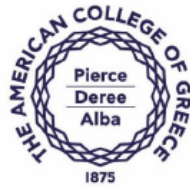
19	<i>Concert & Fan meeting videos</i>	Videos from concerts and events where celebrities, idols or artists have personal interaction with their fans.
20	<i>Background Content</i>	Videos that have cultural information hidden within them, without being the center of attention fall in this category., for example anime merch in the background of a room.
21	<i>Fanart</i>	Artworks created by fans inspired by fictional works or idols, celebrities and artists. Users tend to share their fanarts on TikTok.
22	<i>Tutorials</i>	An explanation or step by step examples on how to do a project, activity etc.
23	<i>Product Placement</i>	Paid placement of products by content creators and influencers.
24	<i>News sharing</i>	User sharing news regarding the community in which they are part of. They can be political, environmental, entertainment news etc.
25	<i>TikTok vertical short drama</i>	Distributed stories or series of different stories presented as a sequence of serialized short videos.
26	<i>Lip-syncing</i>	The users in this video move their lips synchronized with a pre-recorded audio.
27	<i>Storytelling</i>	Videos in which the users share stories from past events in their lives.
28	<i>Cosplaying</i>	Performance act where participants transform themselves into their favorite fictional characters wearing costumes and makeup
29	<i>Language Tips</i>	Small and useful pieces of information regarding language use, vocabulary, syntax, grammar and basic expressions.
30	<i>Promotional Material</i>	Used primarily by official profiles to promote either a specific product or service, or the individuals being promoted by the account or owning the account.
31	<i>Recommendation video</i>	Users provide straight recommendation for products or services.
32	<i>Cover song</i>	Videos with a new version/performance of a previously recorded piece of music.
33	<i>Home Reno & DIY</i>	Home renovation projects and handcraft activities recorded and uploaded in the form of short-length videos
34	<i>Food Stall</i>	Videos in which food stall owners showing their everyday work.

***Note:** All definitions were decided by the research (Christina A. Zois) as part of the inductive content analysis process.

Appendix B: List of users' identified countries of origin

Japanese Content	Korean Content	Japanese & Korean Content
Argentina	Australia	France
Australia	Brazil	Greece
Belarus	Canada	Japan
Brazil	France	South Korea
Canada	Germany	Thailand
Croatia	Greece	UK
France	Indonesia	
Georgia	Ireland	
Greece	Italy	
Indonesia	Japan	
Japan	Kazakhstan	
Latvia	Malaysia	
Malaysia	Mexico	
Mexico	Myanmar	
Nepal	New Zealand	
New Zealand	Nigeria	
Philippines	Norway	
Serbia	Paraguay	
Singapore	Philippines	
South Africa	Portugal	
South Korea	Romania	
UK	Russia	
	Saudi Arabia	
	Slovakia	
	South Korea	
	Thailand	
	Tunisia	
	Turkey	
	UK	
	Ukraine	
	United Arab Emirates	
	US	
	Vietnam	

Appendix C: IRB Committee approval



Institutional Review Board

July 15, 2022

Christina Athanasia Zoi, Graduate Student
MA in Strategic Communication and Public Relations

Re: Exempt determination (IRB protocol #202207303)

Dear Ms. Zoi,

Thank you for submitting your study entitled, "*EAST ASIA'S SOFT POWER AND COUNTER CULTURAL IMPERIALISM THROUGH TIKTOK A study on Japan and South Korea*". The IRB has reviewed and approved your study under exempt determination.

Please keep in mind that the IRB Committee must be contacted if there are any changes to your research protocol. Feel free to contact the IRB [irb@acg.edu] if you have any questions.

Best Wishes for your research work.

Chrysanthi Nega, Ph.D.
Chair, IRB
Cc: Office of the Chief Academic Officer