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*Media Culture Society* 2011 33: 3

DOI: 10.1177/0163443710379670

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# Nation-branding and transnational consumption: Japan-mania and the Korean wave in Taiwan

Media, Culture & Society

33(1) 3–18

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DOI: 10.1177/0163443710379670

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One recent development of cultural globalization emerges in the convergence of taste in media consumption within geo-cultural regions, such as Latin American *telenovelas*, South Asian *Bollywood* films and East Asian *trendy dramas*. Originating in Japan, the so-called *trendy dramas* (or *idol dramas*) have created a craze for Japanese commodities in its neighboring countries (Ko, 2004). Following this Japanese model, Korea has also developed as a stronghold of regional exports, ranging from TV programs, movies and pop music to food, fashion and tourism. The fondness for all things Japanese and Korean in East Asia has been vividly captured by such buzz phrases as Japan-mania (*hari* in Chinese) and the Korean wave (*hallyu* in Korean and *hanliu* in Chinese). These two phenomena underscore how popular culture helps polish the image of a nation and thus strengthens its economic competitiveness in the global market. Consequently, *nation-branding* has become incorporated into the project of *nation-building* in light of globalization. However, Japan's cultural spread and Korea's cultural expansion in East Asia are often analysed from angles that are polar opposites. Scholars suggest that Japan-mania is initiated by the ardent consumers of receiving countries (Nakano, 2002), while the Korea wave is facilitated by the Korean state in order to boost its culture industry (Ryoo, 2008). Such claims are legitimate but neglect the analogues of these two phenomena. This article examines the parallel paths through which Japan-mania and the Korean wave penetrate into people's everyday practices in Taiwan – arguably one of the first countries to be swept by these two trends. My aim is to illuminate the processes in which nation-branding is not only promoted by a nation as an international marketing strategy, but also appropriated by a receiving country as a pattern of consumption.

Three seemingly contradictory arguments explain why cultural products 'sell' across national borders: cultural transparency, cultural difference and hybridization. First, cultural exports targeting the global market are rarely culturally specific so that they allow worldwide audiences to 'project [into them] indigenous values, beliefs, rites, and rituals'

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(Olson, 1999: 5–6). Those exports are defined by Morley and Robin (1995) as *global products* that appeal to people's shared habits and tastes. That is why Hollywood films are well received in many corners of the world. Second, local distinctiveness, often presented in symbolic forms of national heritage, can also become attractive to consumers elsewhere. Increasingly, the (re)construction of national culture not only consolidates nationalism (Hobsbawm, 1983), but also caters to global capitalism, as diverse cultures become a resource in the global *cultural supermarket* (Goodman, 2007). They are transformed to become meaningful to foreigners through a variety of cultural devices, such as the reframing of historic sites and the re-creation of national items (Crane, 2002). The third strategy is what Robertson (1992) called *glocalization* (or global localization), used in global marketing to tailor goods and services to the taste of a particular market. It helps foreign marketers to connect their commodities with local communities (Kraidy, 2005). At the same time, a country may copy foreign ideas and practices and this results in hybridization of national culture.

Hybridization is often hailed as local resilience in the face of cultural invasion and global homogenization. It demonstrates local capacity to 'assimilate a message and incorporate it into one's life' (Thompson, 1995: 42). National cultures are not necessarily washed away by a powerful foreign culture. Rather, encounters with foreign influences can stimulate local innovation. In this regard, scholars contend that culture industries in East Asia have developed a particular model of export growth, one whose comparative advantage is built by incorporating international styles (Keane et al., 2007). The prototype of this model is Japan's *strategic hybridism*. Based on the concept of *wakon yosai* (literally meaning Japanese spirit and Western technologies), strategic hybridism embodies the principle of constructing Japanese national identity by domesticating Western cultures. For example, while Japanese popular cultural forms borrow heavily from the US, they have been reworked to present a distinct Japanese-ness (Iwabuchi, 2002). Strategic hybridism helps Japan to synthesize a cultural mode that is, in turn, imitated by other Asian countries, like South Korea. Despite the fact that Koreans adopt such slogans as 'Learning from Hollywood' to resuscitate their own culture industry, Korean television and film production is profoundly affected by Japanese media culture (D.-H. Lee, 2004; Shim, 2006).

Therefore, strategic hybridism is regarded as a means of innovation by way of emulation, helping East Asian countries to expand their culture industries across the region. Generally, the formation of cultural-geographic media markets is explained by *cultural proximity* (Straubhaar, 1991). In East Asia, cultural proximity is reinterpreted as the sharing of contemporary modernity (D.-H. Lee, 2006). With the diminishing temporal lag of modernization, Japanese media products offer the regional audience a 'concrete and accessible model of what it is like to be modern' (Iwabuchi, 2002: 155). Similarly, Korean popular culture is acceptable in places such as Taiwan, China and Singapore because of its blending of Western cultures and Asian values (Shim, 2006). It is hybrid modernity that makes popular culture transferable in this region.

To be sure, Japanese and Korean cultural exports in East Asia are hardly culturally transparent products that reflect universal tastes. Nor do they feature cultural uniqueness based on national tradition and heritage. Rather, Japan-mania and the Korean wave

prevail in East Asia by appealing to hybrid modernity. However, the terms *hari* and *hal-lyu* do indeed connote great admiration for a specific nationality, as 'Japan' and 'Korea' become distinctive brands to foreign consumers. Such patterns of consumption undoubtedly emphasize cultural particularity rather than hybridity. To tackle the seeming contradiction, this article aims to analyse the relations between media production and cultural consumption and answer the following questions: What is the mechanism through which the fondness for hybrid modernity is transformed to a craving for all things related to a particular nation? Furthermore, does local hybridization of foreign influences indicate the triumph of cultural autonomy or the success of commercial manipulation?

Building on Stuart Hall's encoding-decoding model of communication, Jansson (2002) argues that cultural consumption includes not only decoding (interpretation) but also *re-encoding* (expression) made by social actors in specific social contexts. Re-encoding is a crucial concept here. It furthers our understanding of why nation-branding can take place in the process of cultural consumption. The reconstruction of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness in Taiwan is an act of re-encoding, which involves the cooperation of Taiwanese media, business enterprises (regardless of their nationalities) and local consumers. It also affects cultural production in Japan and Korea, including their media and tourism industries. Drawing on data primarily from press coverage, this article shows how the interactions between cultural production and consumption are increasingly transnational.

## Cultural production: nation-branding as a project of nation-building

The Japanese and Korean culture industries have been closely associated with the nation-building project of their respective states. As Hobsbawm (1983) argues, the invention of tradition often occurs after a rapid transformation of society weakens old patterns without producing applicable new ones. Both Japan (in the 1970s) and Korea (in the 1990s) made efforts to reconstruct cultural representations in the quest for national identity after rapid industrialization. In Japan, domestic tourist campaigns, with the assistance of media publicity, initiated the *rediscovery* of traditional culture. In Korea, the media industry has been designated as a strategic industry in order to revive other economic sectors, including tourism. Therefore, the state, the media and the travel industry have been the main institutions of nation-building in both countries.

Japan held an ambiguous position in the post-war world. It was the first non-Western country to enjoy an economic boom immediately after the Second World War. Feelings of shame about war atrocities haunted many, however. The Japanese route to modernization was thus accompanied by the pursuit of identity, or *shutaisei* (subjectivity) (Tamamoto, 2003). The idea was crystallized in *Nihonjinron* (the discourse on and of Japanese uniqueness) of the 1970s, as an effort to distinguish Japan from the West. Some intellectuals called for the construction of a unified Japanese culture by reproducing 'genuine' Japanese traditions (Goldstein-Gidoni, 2005). Cultural policies expanded to local levels and concentrated on the preservation of cultural monuments, artifacts and techniques (Tomooka et al., 2002).

The rediscovery of traditional craftsmanship coincided with the 'Discovery Japan' travel campaign, launched immediately after Expo '70 – the first world fair to be held in Asia. The campaign aroused nostalgia for the agrarian community of *furusato* (native place) that had been eroded by modern urban life. In the 1980s, the 'Discovery Japan' campaign was replaced by the 'Exotic Japan' campaign, which defined Japan as a 'foreign' country and as an archive of exotic commodity forms – for the new urban generation called *neo-Japanese* (Ivy, 1995). Popular television programs such as *TV Champion* and *Iron Chef* publicized local products to a national audience. A 1991 movie titled *Jutai* [Traffic Congestion] depicted an urban family's journey to the father's countryside birthplace, awaking an interest in traditional rural life (Creighton, 1997). As a consequence, the Japanese media culture was awash with such representations of the rediscovered 'real' Japan. Tradition was not only attainable but also consumable.

Although Japanese uniqueness primarily builds on the cultural forms of high arts and folk tradition, it is popular culture that helps Japanese culture spread to East Asian countries. In the late 1980s, with the increase of working women in Japan (*OLs*, office ladies), the so-called *trendy dramas* emerged to attract 'fashion-conscious, conspicuously consuming young females' (Kanayama and Kanayama, 2005: 150). Ota Toru, a prominent TV producer of trendy drama in Japan, explains the genre's formula as a package of 'setting, cast, and music,' with a tragic story of unrequited love (Ota, 2004: 70). The triad of 'setting, cast and music' is crucial to the marketing of Japanese cultural exports, including tourism, entertainers and pop culture. Drama protagonists are promoted as versatile megastars who can act, sing and dance. As setting is emphasized, the scenes in which the romances take place, such as Tokyo Tower and Rainbow Bridge, are ready to shape the tourist gaze. Without appealing to national heritage, Japanese culture finds its values in media exports that publicize symbolic forms of modern Japan. The new image of Japan becomes meaningful to drama-addicted East Asian consumers.

Since the 1990s, Japan-mania has swept East and Southeast Asian countries and brought inbound tourism to the rescue of Japan's stagnant economy. In 2003, guided by then-Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Japan launched an international 'Visit Japan' campaign [*Yokoso! JAPAN*]. Except for some affluent Western countries, the campaign mainly targeted Korea, Taiwan, China and Hong Kong – markets heavily influenced by Japanese popular culture. Yoshino Kimura, a Japanese actress, was appointed as Goodwill Ambassador for Japan. The tourist initiative regards the 'globalization of economy' as a way to revitalize local regions in Japan (Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, Japan, 2005). Its goal of 'making Japan more attractive' evidences an attempt at nation-branding at a time when Japan seeks to reposition itself in the global economy. It also turns the spotlight of international tourism from modern Tokyo to other localities that have reinvented themselves as representatives of traditional Japan.

Similar efforts of nation-building via nation-branding occurred in Korea, which witnessed a movement to reconstruct the discourse of Korean-ness in the 1990s, in fear that its national culture would dissolve in modernization. In the late 1980s, the Korean culture industry was almost destroyed by the flood of American products. This stimulated nationalism. However, global capitalism and Korean nationalism became a perfect fit, in that the discourse on national identity emphasized the importance of selling Korean cultural products in the global market (Cho, 1999). The globalization drive assumed a national

priority with guidance of the state's top-down plan (Ryoo, 2008). The Cultural Industry Bureau was established in 1994 to promote the media industry on the world stage (Shim, 2006). The *chaebols* (family-controlled business conglomerates), such as LG, Hyundai and Samsung, were required to invest in Korean film and TV industries (Jin, 2006). In 1998, the Korean authorities launched the first five-year plan to upgrade its entertainment industry, including training potential talent at universities (Onishi, 2004).

The Korean TV industry copied the genre of trendy dramas from Japan, producing shows that represented 'youth's urban lives, love affairs, and consumerist appetite' to attract the affluent young generation called *shinsedae* (D.-H. Lee, 2004: 272). Those Korean dramas have achieved great popularity, not only in the domestic market but also across East Asia, ushering in the Korean wave that brings cash into the country. A number of Korean actors and actresses suddenly became household celebrities in East Asia. More importantly, Korea has ascended to the top tier in the regional media pecking order, a sign of national pride. Thus, the culture industry is not only a means of economic growth but also of cultural identity. A semi-official report argues that *hallyu* has made Korea a 'cool, happening, and modern' country, which helps to 'accelerate a recovery in domestic self-confidence' (Salmon, 2005). If Japan-mania signals Japan's return to Asia, the Korea wave elevates Korea's status in Asia.

## Cultural consumption: from trendy dramas to fashionable consumption

Japanese and Korean trendy dramas have been well received in Taiwan, owing to several domestic factors: the growing urban middle class's appetite for novel media products, the expanding cable television's demand for TV programming, and the local newspapers' thirst for stories to fill increasing numbers of pages. In addition, before Japan-mania emerged in the mid 1990s, Japanese culture already had an enormous presence on the island. As a colony of Japan between 1895 and 1945, Taiwan preserved many Japanese cultural legacies, such as food, language and lifestyle. Some of the older generation had command of Japanese. Youngsters grew up with Japanese *manga* (comic books) and animated cartoons. The social context of Taiwan made it susceptible to Japanese influences, creating beneficial conditions for Japanese media imports. The incidental introduction of Japanese trendy dramas to Taiwan eventually caused a sensation and started the storm of Japan-mania that later hit other East Asian countries.

Japanese TV programs had been formally banned in Taiwan after the two countries broke off diplomatic relations in 1972 (Ishii et al., 1999). In the 1980s, however, unauthorized Japanese programs made inroads into Taiwan through the prevalence of video-renting and illegal cable service. In 1992, the satellite STAR TV Chinese channel started to broadcast such fancy dramas as *Tokyo Elevator Girl* and *Tokyo Love Story* to Taiwan. These mini-series, packaged by the station as *Japanese idol dramas*, suddenly became mega-hits. The ban on Japanese programs was lifted in 1993 and television networks then began to broadcast Japanese dramas in prime time. At one point, six cable channels in Taiwan were exclusively devoted to Japanese programs. Trendy dramas' emphases on cast and music also popularized Japanese idols and pop songs. In the late 1990s, Taiwan was the largest export market for Japanese music. A tumult aroused in Taipei by a group of Japanese

idols surprised even a Japanese newspaper correspondent, who admitted: 'Because the Taiwan entertainment press rushes to attend press conferences and fills the next morning's papers with massive headlines about Japanese entertainers, I have become more knowledgeable about Japanese popular culture than when I lived in Japan' (Kawata, 1999).

Although Korean TV dramas made their debut in Taiwan in the early 1990s, they did not attract public attention for years. With the rising cost of Japanese dramas, Gala Television (GTV), a cable channel with a small market share, substituted Korean dramas in 2000. It carefully selected those tear-jerkers that featured handsome men and women, such as *Firework* and *Autumn in My Heart*. The broadcast of these two mini-series unexpectedly won large audiences in Taiwan. TV stations competed to purchase the broadcast rights of Korean dramas, making their prices skyrocket. Later on, Korean dramas were also promoted to the prime-time slots of network programming. An attempt of the Taiwan government to block foreign programs from prime-time backfired. The delayed success of Korean dramas is a result of the localization strategies of Taiwanese TV stations. Categorizing Korean dramas as idol dramas imparts Japanese-ness and thus increases their sign-value in Taiwan. Besides, emphasizing family ethics in Korean dramas expands the audience base to middle-aged women, whom Japanese dramas failed to reach (Yang, 2008).

Despite the fact that Japan-mania and the Korean wave in Taiwan stem from trendy dramas, the two phenomena are not merely matters of popular culture. Rather, they created a social milieu that cannot be explained by fandom alone. For a start, affluent urban youths, like their counterparts in Japan and Korea, are certainly the target consumers of media products and their derivative commodities, such as gadgets and memorabilia. The Taiwanese consumer culture also hungers for diverse Japanese and Korean imports, including mobile phones, electronics, automobiles, cosmetics, clothing and so on. In 2004, Taiwan's trade deficit with Korea rapidly increased to US \$6 billion, second only to its deficit with Japan (X. Chen, 2005). Moreover, Taiwanese businesses vehemently mimic Japanese and Korean styles in marketing their own commodities, promoting such products as Japanese-style cakes for traditional festivals and plastic surgery to achieve a Korean look.

If strategic hybridism means adapting foreign cultures to the local context, Taiwanese hybridism makes the local culture look 'foreign' – that is, Japanese and Korean. There have been sporadic criticisms of Taiwan fawning on Japan and Korea, but calls for boycotts have been rare. Four mechanisms contribute to Taiwanese acceptance of all things Japanese and Korean: (1) the marketing of Japanese and Korean culture industries, (2) the promotion of Japanese and Korean popular cultures by local media, (3) business practice in Taiwan and (4) transnational tourism. These factors emphasize consumption, but they are also relevant to cultural production.

### *Transnational marketing of Japanese and Korean brands*

The popularity of Japanese trendy dramas has enhanced the recognition of Japanese brands and boosted the sales of Japanese products in Taiwan. First, since Japanese trendy dramas promise high ratings, local TV stations scramble to bid for potential hits and push up their prices. In the late 1990s, trendy dramas starring Kimura Takuya, a celebrated Japanese actor, fetched US \$10,000 per episode (Li, 2005). However, such immediate profits were insignificant compared to the long-term overseas exposure, which garners publicity for



Japanese stars and TV stations. This thinking was reflected in Japan's passivity toward the crackdown on pirated VCDs in Asia (Hu, 2004). An executive of Fuji TV, Japan, admits that the ultimate goal of his company is to 'develop a brand name overseas, so that when people think of doing business, they think of the Fuji name first' (Onda, 2002).

Second, an internationally famed star can bring in revenues from derivative commodities. Stellar actors-singers frequently visit Taiwan to promote music albums and other products. Some 'rare items' are available only for a limited time in Taiwan. At the 2002 concert in Taipei of V6, a Japanese boy band composed of six members, a set of V6 dolls was sold for US \$160. Their agency reaped more than US \$300,000 during the three-day sale of derivative commodities (Liang, 2002). In fact, most popular Japanese stars have fan clubs in Taiwan, whose followers are loyal consumers of the collectibles. Third, the images of pop idols become connected to the brand names of Japanese consumer products in transnational marketing. The Japanese actor mentioned before, Kimura Takuya, has advertised for myriad Japanese brands, such as Toyota, Nintendo, Kirin, Fujitsu and Nikon. These commercial tactics show that the *cast* of trendy dramas is important for selling TV programs as well as promoting Japanese brand names. Therefore, the Japanese media industry is responsive to the overseas market. For example, Noriko Sakai, a B-list TV actress, once won a leading role in a Japanese television drama chiefly because of her popularity in Taiwan.

The Korean culture industry also has adopted Japanese marketing strategies, in terms of selling media products, making profits from derivative commodities and utilizing Korean-ness to promote consumer goods. Compared to Japan, the Korean state has been more ambitious in advertising Korean cultural products abroad. For example, the government has hosted the annual tradeshow Broadcast Worldwide since 2001 and subsidized Korean TV content producers to cultivate overseas markets (Shim, 2006). These measures greatly enhanced the value of Korean TV dramas internationally. In 2000, Korean programs were sold for as little as US \$1000 per episode in Taiwan, just one-tenth the price of Japanese dramas. In 2006, STAR TV reportedly paid US \$30,000 per episode for the broadcast rights of *A Love to Kill*, a Korean production (Weng and Gu, 2008). Although Korean media exports generate large revenues, their primary mission is to promote a positive image of Korea around the world. For example, the Korean government bought the rights of some popular dramas and distributed them in many countries without charge, for the sake of future profits.

The strategy is effective in that the Korean wave has become a marketing platform helping Korean trademarks to become world-class brands. This is achieved through constant product placement and idol promotion. First, Korea *chaebols* are adept at product placement in popular Korean shows in order to market their commodities. An executive of LG Taiwan admitted that the company had endeavored to reverse the negative image of made-in-Korea products by sponsoring Korean dramas (Qi, 2005). Second, famous Korean idols are often chosen as commodity representatives of Korean brands. Korea Sparkling, the official tourism website, provides the biographies of dozens of Korean actors and actresses. Often the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) arranges for these stars to visit Taiwan one at a time, in order to sustain the Korean wave. Big companies have successfully brought their cosmetics brands into Taiwan through publicity using Korean stars. Not long ago, few Taiwanese had ever heard of Korean cosmetics. A Taiwanese importer of



LG's Debon brand complained about the difficulties of selling Korean cosmetics in the 1990s: 'Most Taiwanese people thought this brand was inferior to Japanese products only because it was labeled in Korean' (Y. Chen, 2005). Since 2005 and the marketing of Korean idols, several Korean cosmetics brands have entered Taiwan's department stores.

Both the case of Japan-mania and that of the Korean wave illustrate the crossover of culture and economy in the era of globalization. On the one hand is commercialization of culture. Latecomers to cultural exports like Japan and Korea have recognized the culture industry as a lucrative business in the global economy. Cultural exports not only boost national morale but also increase profits from the overseas market. On the other hand, there is an aestheticization of commodities – a process in which components of sign-value are embodied in material objects (Lash and Urry, 1994). Endorsement of glamorous stars makes products more desirable to consumers. Successful nation-branding burnishes the national image and increases the value of this country's commodities. As 'Japan' and 'Korea' symbolize what is in vogue and fashionable, their products become profitable.

### *Media construction of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness in Taiwan*

The Taiwanese media's construction of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness also helps brand the two nations. First, Japanese and Korean cultures become more positively evaluated in Taiwan through the news media's everyday coverage. Second, several pop writers promote a romantic image of Japan and Korea in their columns and books. Third, TV stations produce trendy dramas that highlight Japanese and Korean characteristics. Therefore, a Taiwanese imagination of these two countries is created by the media representations of their cultures.

In the 1990s, major newspapers in Taiwan began to devote exclusive pages to Japanese entertainment news. Korean stories were added to these pages later on. The arrival of Japanese and Korean stars at the airport often makes breaking news on round-the-clock news channels. Media coverage of Japan and Korea centers on entertainment and consumption, such as fashion, travel, food and commodities. News media craftily exploit Japan-mania and the Korean wave to make their stories more riveting. As a result, the terms *hari* and *hallyu* frequently appear in headlines as a way to create a sensation rather than describe factual events. Searching for these two phrases among major Taiwanese newspapers generates thousands of news items that read like infomercials. For example, when Korean actor Bae Yong Joon visited Taiwan in 2005, the enthusiastic local news media reported every detail of his trip, further idolizing the superstar. Some newspapers even launched such serial reports as 'Re-encounter *Hallyu*' to advertise Korean cars, consumer electronics and cosmetics in their coverage.

Japan-mania and the Korean wave also benefit from the burgeoning writings on the topics of Japanese and Korean popular culture, fashion and tourism. Several Taiwanese writers, mostly young women, had columns in newspapers and later became prolific book authors. For instance, the term *hari* was coined by a Taiwanese fan-turned-writer of Japanese popular culture, Hari Kyoko (a Japanese-like pseudonym). It consists of two Chinese characters – *ha* as craving and *ri* as Japan. Hari Kyoko explains what constitutes a *hari* syndrome: 'Eating only Japanese food, watching only Japanese TV dramas, seeing only Japanese movies, reading only Japanese books, listening only to Japanese songs, and buying only made-in-Japan products.' She goes on to emphasize that 'if I were not

living in a Japanesque world, I would feel terribly uncomfortable' (Hari, n.d.). Kyoko's exaggerated statement is a significant declaration of a new era in Taiwan, in which the youngsters leave the history of the war behind and embrace Japanese culture wholeheartedly. She even boldly borrows the Japanese jingoistic slogan to claim: '*Hari* is legitimate! Viva *hari*!' After all, to her Japan signifies a fancy brand rather than a relentless colonizer. For many *harizu* (the tribe of Japanophiles) in Taiwan, Japan is synonymous with a wonderland of consumption. For a long time, Japanese products seem to have guaranteed high quality. With the beaufication of these products by Kyoko, among other writers, they acquired added sign-value – as cool, cute and fashionable. Japanese TV dramas actually become a road map by which readers are guided into the imagined shopping mall of Japanese commodities.

Moreover, the Taiwanese pop version of Japanese studies has developed beyond the scope of trendy dramas. Liu Li-er, a Taiwanese newspaper correspondent based in Tokyo, directed her middle-aged female readers to explore 'real' urban Japan. Since 1999, she has published more than 20 books, mostly about men, women and their relationships in Tokyo, using the narrative style of Carrie Bradshaw, heroine of the US series, *Sex and the City*. She defines herself as an observer of urbanites and touches on such sensational topics as extra-marital affairs in Japan. She thereby transforms the youthful 'pure love' of trendy dramas to a realistic account of adult affections in Tokyo. At a book publicity event, Liu appeared in a teen-style Japanese *kimono* and propagandized the idea of 'ageless beauty'. She explained that Japanese mothers tried to display their beauty by dressing youthfully, like their daughters (Ding, 2002). Through Liu's interpretations, modern Japanese culture becomes one that not only can be dreamed about but can also be imitated.

While Taiwanese became familiar with contemporary Japanese culture through many *cultural translators*, they had little knowledge of Korean culture. However, the Korean wave has followed in the footsteps of its Japanese counterpart into the Taiwanese market. In 2005, the Korean Pavilion was the focal theme of Taipei International Book Exhibition, a role held by Japanese Pavilion in 2002. Books on Japanese TV drama tours, popular in the late 1990s (M.-T. Lee, 2004), have been replaced by Korean ones. Jean Yen, a young college graduate, wrote a book presenting the scenes of *Winter Sonata*, a mega-hit Korean drama. The Korean Tourism Organization sponsored this book and arranged for Yen to interview its leading characters, including trans-Asian star Bae Yong Joon. Cheng Yi-hsun, a Taiwanese student studying in Seoul, won jobs with some Taiwanese media covering Korean entertainment news. Her book *You Can Learn Korean If You Speak Japanese* targeted fans of Korean popular culture. This book title may make sense, but it is manipulative. The Japanese language has been popular in Taiwan, while Korean remains unfamiliar to the public. Utilizing Taiwanese's receptiveness to Japanese is an expedient marketing tactic. Therefore, the notion that Korean wave resembles Japan-mania has twofold meanings. First, Koreans emulate the cultural production of Japan to boost their cultural exports. Second, the Taiwanese embrace the Korean wave with Japan-mania in mind.

Heavily hit by Korean media products, the Taiwanese television industry also copies trendy drama and produces so-called *Taiwanese idol dramas*, initially in response to the domestic demand. In addition to the formula of 'setting, cast, and music', the contents of Taiwanese trendy dramas are often infused with Japanese, and sometimes Korean, elements. The first memorable Taiwanese idol drama was the 2001 production of *Meteor*

*Garden*. It starred F4, a group of four handsome young men, and promoted their music album. The story was adapted from a Japanese comic book. Curiously, the Taiwanese show kept the main characters' Japanese names and staged most of the scenes in a Japanese-style house. Accordingly, its storyline, characters and all resemble those of Japanese trendy dramas. The impressive audience ratings of *Meteor Garden* were beaten only by *Prince Who Turns into a Frog* in 2005, an alleged 'local' idol drama. Its script was originated in Taiwan and its story was set in the local context. Oddly, an important symbol in this drama, threading through the storyline, was a Japanese good-luck charm – a hint of true love. Because of Taiwanese dramas' emphasis on the Japanese imagination, several dramas were shot in a B&B inn in Taiwan that was a Japanese building preserved from colonial times. The hostel, named Hokkaido (an island of Japan), was made famous by those dramas. Besides, Taiwanese producers also add Korean ingredients to their dramas by featuring Korean stars. Chae Rim, a Korean darling who won the hearts of Taiwanese viewers with her Meg Ryan-like smile, starred in two Taiwanese dramas in 2004. This program co-production may be a strategy of international marketing. Still, the injection of Japanese and Korean components into Taiwanese production of TV dramas reveals an unconventional form of localization: incorporating foreign influences to make programs exotic, and thus, more attractive to local consumers.

With the Taiwanese media's obsession with Japan and Korea, a sense of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness is reproduced in Taiwan – through media coverage, pop writings, TV drama productions and beyond. The local media's construction of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness is generic rather than original. It derives from the Taiwanese emulation of Japan and Korea in accordance with their own imagination. Such desire for emulation, however, opens the door for the consumption of all things Japanese and Korean.

### *Manufacturing Japanese-ness and Korean-ness in commodities*

To cater to the Taiwanese consumers' preference, projecting the image of Japan and Korea in commodities has become a common marketing practice in Taiwan. This strategy of 'localization' is not only exploited by Japanese and Korean companies, but also borrowed by transnational enterprises and Taiwanese businesses alike.

Two Japanese symbols – *kawaii* (cute) and the Japanese language – are evidently utilized in commercial advertising in Taiwan. Since the late 1990s, Taiwan has been swirled into so-called *Pink Globalization* – 'the spread of *kawaii* goods' brought by Japanese character Hello Kitty (Yano, 2006). A Japanese car company, Nissan, sold a Kitty car to attract young females in Taiwan. Island-wide, McDonald's hitched a ride on the Kitty bandwagon to boost its patronage, selling out 200,000 Kitty dolls in 90 minutes. Seven-Eleven Taiwan used Kitty collectible magnets as freebies to attract more customers, giving out more than 100 million magnets during its campaign (Xie, 2005). Those commercial activities attracted the attention of the media, which provided free publicity for the companies. Like the Kitty doll, Japanese girls also embody desirable 'cuteness'. A Panasonic commercial featured a Taiwanese teenager of half-Japanese descent promoting its GD90 mobile phone. Her *kawaii* countenance and Japanese accent hugely increased the brand's market share (Wu, 2000). These examples show that Japanese-ness can be manufactured in places other than Japan. Besides, it is the sign of Japan rather than Japanese products that sells.

A more straightforward strategy of selling Japanese-ness is using the Japanese language in product packages and advertisements. Many locally manufactured goods are marked with Japanese characters in order to confuse consumers regarding their origin. Some Japanese words also become labels of commodities, such as *Sugoi* [amazing] noodles, *Genki* [healthy] breakfast, and *Aburakili* [oil-cutting] green tea. Moreover, spoken Japanese is frequently used in TV commercials. This trend was initiated by the Seven-Eleven chain to sell its Japanese-style prepared foods. In its commercial promoting Japanese *oden*, a young couple shivering in a snowy scene blessedly discovered a warm convenience store. This video was an example of a short version of Japanese trendy dramas – beautiful scenery, good-looking protagonists and melodic music. The scene was shot in a touristy town in Japan. Although it rarely snows in Taiwan, a terse Japanese word, *Samui-ne* [cold], won over Taiwanese consumers. Such promotion tactics have been used for an array of commodities. According to a report, Japanese-language commercials added up to 2.67 million seconds in 2001 in Taiwan. A Taiwanese advertising representative explains, ‘Japan is a message – the fineness that is almost perfect’ (Tsai, 2002). Therefore, the Taiwanese sense of Japanese-ness is also manufactured by the re-encoding of commercial campaigns. Through everyday exposure of omnipresent Japanese images and sounds, Taiwanese consumers’ appetite for Japanese things grows.

Just as Japan-mania magnifies the Japanese cultural presence in Taiwan, so the Korean wave brings Korean influences to the island. On the street, Korean hot-pot shops and BBQ restaurants have replaced some outdated Japanese noodle cafes. In the supermarkets, Korean flavors rival Japanese-style eats. The taste of Korean *kimchi* was added in such foods as brand-name instant noodles, Kentucky Fried Chicken’s hamburgers and Pizza Hut’s pizzas. The cuteness of Japanese girls was challenged by the beauty of Korean women – fair-skinned and mature. Two low-end cosmetic brands, Olay of the US and DHC of Japan, hired Korean actresses to compete in the Asian market. Embellishing commodities with Korean-ness has thus become an effective localization strategy. As a result, the Japanese- or Korean-style commodities have reshaped the Taiwanese taste for chic consumption. The suffix ‘style’ indicates that those products are not originally Japanese and Korean. In fact, nowadays it has become difficult to identify the nationality of a finished product. What matters to consumers is the sign-value added to a specific commodity. Therefore, the Taiwanese consumption of hybrid products – all things Japanese and Korean – actually indicates the pursuit of authenticity. The collective desire to approach ‘real’ Japan and Korea would be gratified by traveling to these two countries.

### *Tourism: pilgrimage to the dream world*

International tourism illustrates the close relationship between cultural production in the sending countries and cultural consumption in the receiving countries. Japan-bound Taiwanese travelers increased from 498,565 in 1995 to 1,309,847 in 2008, and Korea-bound travelers increased from 100,959 to 363,122 in the same period (Tourism Bureau, Taiwan, 2008). Japanese and Korean trendy dramas encourage such visits. TV drama tours arranged by travel agencies have attracted Taiwanese tourists. Backpackers can also easily find information about drama shooting locations from books, magazines and websites. However, star-chasing fans are merely one part of the tourists who make

pilgrimages to Japan and Korea. The growth of Taiwanese visitors to the two countries has been the fruit of Japanese and Korean government-led international travel campaigns.

Japan has witnessed an increase of Taiwanese travelers since the mid 1990s, many of whom scouted romantic Tokyo spots portrayed by Japanese trendy dramas. A 1998, Japanese blockbuster *Love Letter* was credited with expanding Taiwanese tourists to Japan's far-north Hokkaido Island (Takashi, 2004). A classic TV drama, *Kita no Kuni Kara* [From the North Nation], was remade in 2002 to advertise the island's pastoral Furano area. The 2003 'Visit Japan' campaign was Japan's ambitious plan to promote international tourism. The Japanese government sponsored a TV travel show, *Yokoso JAPAN*, on a Taiwanese network and invited a Taiwanese top model to co-host the program. With the promotion of a beloved Taiwanese star, the show drew the Taiwanese audience closer to Japan. Japanese heritage and traditional craftsmanship, restored by the actions of previous domestic tourism campaigns, also charmed Taiwanese tourists. Instead of visiting drama scenes in Tokyo, they scoured many corners of Japan and delightfully brought back region-specific collectibles and souvenirs. The 2005 Aichi Exposition was a milestone of this international campaign. As Expo '70 helped to revive Japan's domestic tourism, so Expo '05 successfully boosted its inbound international travel. During the world fair, visitors from some Asian countries, including Taiwan, were allowed to enter Japan under a tentative visa waiver program. Afterwards, the program became permanent for Taiwanese, as a reward for their great turnout.

Compared to Japan, Korea has more aggressively utilized the culture industry to create spin-off effects on tourism. The most eye-catching example was the production of a historic drama, *Jewel in the Palace*, by Korean public television (MBC) in 2003. The TV station spent a huge amount on magnificent scenes and gaudy costumes. In 2004, Taiwan became the first foreign country to air the drama series, which scored a record rating for a Korean drama shown in Taiwan. After the domestic and overseas success of *Jewel in the Palace*, the filming site was converted to a tourist attraction – Jeju Folk Village. The drama audience was able to experience the palace in 'reality', for example by watching the preparation of royal cuisine. This show, along with another hit, *All In*, made Jeju-do Island a popular travel destination. Another Korean TV drama, *Summer Scent*, was reportedly asked by the government to move its filming sites from Europe to a tourist-deprived area in south-west Korea. The popularity of this drama immediately made Muju Resort as a favorite for Asian tourists (Liu and Zhou, 2005). Therefore, the Korean media industry is vital to its tourist sector. The Korea Sparkling website details information about many Korean TV dramas and movies, including their storylines, cast and filming locations. According to the website, for example, fans of *Winter Sonata* can have authentic Korean lunchboxes while watching the snow at the Winter Sonata Café in one of the drama's shooting sites. The selling point of those tourist locations is that they are the 'real' sites of the simulacra, co-produced by the media and travel industries.

The Japanese and Korean international tourism campaigns epitomize the affinity between media and tourism, as well as the interactions between cultural production and consumption. Initially, it might be trendy dramas that drew East Asian tourists to Japan and Korea. Later on, the Japanese and Korean TV dramas and films were increasingly made to encourage tourism and other cultural exports. As Taiwanese travel to Japan and Korea to

gaze at the scenery shown on the screens, the boundaries between the representation and the represented become blurred. Virtual tours and real tours thus reinforce each other, imprinting on the Taiwanese an imagination of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness.

## Conclusion

Japan-mania and the Korean wave have swept Taiwan through similar paths and opened consumer markets for all things Japanese and Korean. First, trendy dramas promoted trans-Asian entertainment idols and beautified national images of Japan and Korea. Second, the Taiwanese media played an important role in signifying Japanese and Korean cultures as stylish, fashionable and desirable. Finally, local businesses and foreign enterprises exploited these two trends and encouraged the craze for Japanese- and Korean-style commodities. The examples show that nationalistic *nation-building* has increasingly blended with capitalist *nation-branding*, at least in some cases in East Asia. The processes involve cultural policies of nation-states, marketing strategies of culture industries, and local appropriation in accordance with the economic logic of profit-making. Therefore, transnational cultural flows cannot be explained solely by the production of a sending country or the consumption of a receiving country. There are dynamic interactions between media texts and social contexts, and nowadays these interactions have transcended national boundaries. The Taiwanese reproduction of Japanese-ness and Korean-ness in the process of consumption doubtless helps to brand the two countries and influences their cultural production.

In addition, Japan-mania and the Korean wave in Taiwan evidence how national cultures can sell across borders, without the appeal of common tastes or national heritage. Instead, hybrid culture can be reworked as national uniqueness and utilized in transnational marketing. The Taiwanese appropriation of Japanese and Korean cultures has also created a hybrid form of consumption. It does not result in cultural homogenization, as claimed by political economy. However, such hybrid consumption and re-creation is not necessarily a sign of cultural autonomy of the local, as celebrated by cultural studies. Kraidy (2005) proposes an alternative perspective of cultural globalization beyond the opposition of these two schools of thought. He argues that a comprehensive study needs to emphasize the *discursive and textual* aspects as well as *material structure*. In other words, political and economic power, and the role of the state, should be addressed in the discourse on cultural hybridity. Japan-mania and the Korean wave appear to foster hybrid cultural forms in Taiwan. In a sense, the Taiwanese culture industry has followed the East Asian model of strategic hybridism to promote cultural products, entertainers and national image overseas. Whether a Taiwanese wave will emerge in the region remains to be seen. However, it is certain that Japanese and Korean influences are exploited by various businesses to gratify consumer desires for novel commodities. Although there is evidence that Japanese and Korean trendy dramas have been fading out in Taiwan, the doors for consuming things Japanese and Korean remain open.

## Acknowledgement

I am indebted to Linda Steiner for offering insightful suggestions that greatly improved this article. I also thank George Ritzer, Kalyani Chadha, Patrick D. Murphy and the anonymous reviewers for their comments.



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