

FACE OF THE NATION: ARTICULATING A NEW IMAGE OF KOREA AND TAIWAN THROUGH REGIONALLY POPULAR CELEBRITIES

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ABSTRACT

*The rapid spread of popular culture within East Asia has motivated the government of each nation to promote its national image to attract tourists. This dynamic cultural exchange has not only brought these nations closer to each other, but has heightened competition in projecting new national identities through visual images projected through promotional tourism videos. This paper elaborates how Taiwan and South Korea are using regionally popular celebrities to foster local identity configurations that simultaneously reach out beyond national borders and revise longstanding ideas about the nature of their populations. Through interviews with the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) of South Korea and the Tourism Bureau in the Ministry of Transportation and Communications of the Republic of China and analysis of cultural promotional videos such as *Trip to the Heartwarming Country of Korea* (released in 2010 in South Korea), *Haru* (released in 2011 in South Korea) and *Taiwan Touch Your Heart* (released in 2009 in Taiwan), I demonstrate that, through visual imagery in fashioning cultural ideals to be projected in tourist markets, Korea and Taiwan are trying to reconstruct and rebrand their national images to promote their interests. Both governments make marketing via the Korean wave a crucial part of their appeal for cultural tourism. By featuring regionally popular local celebrities, they are following strategies to promote their international standing through the dissemination of newly rearticulated national images. South Korea emphasises the quality and appeal of its popular culture, while Taiwan emphasises the openness and enthusiasm of Taiwanese towards popular foreign products and people.*

Keywords: Korean wave, national image, cultural tourism, cultural ambassador, popular culture

INTRODUCTION

A dynamic transnational cultural flow has occurred within East Asia in the past two decades (Chua 2004; Iwabuchi 2002; Jang and Paik 2012; Sung 2012; Kim 2013), invading social media and online culture, strengthening its position in the global platform. Each nation in East Asia, after recognising the power of this dynamic cultural flow, has begun to promote and develop its popular culture to compete in the race to become the central locus in the East Asian pop circle. Japan emerged as a cultural powerhouse in the region in the early 1990s, massively penetrating the markets in East Asia, where Japanese products began to be widely disseminated and consumed (Otmazgin 2008). Japan thus became a model nation for successfully reshaping a national image through popular culture. Memories forged in the first half of the 20th century had made the people of East Asia reluctant to accept anything originating in Japan, but through systematic soft-power diplomacy conducted by the Tokyo government and marketing strategies implemented by media corporations, Japan has gained a more positive image (Katsumata 2012). A brutal image from the colonial period has been softened by the "cute" and "cool" elements of more recent popular culture (Valaskivi 2013).

South Korea, following Japan's lead, acquired a new image as a result of the *hallyu*¹ boom in the region (Huang 2011; Jang and Paik 2012; Kim 2013; Sung 2010). Its national image had been aggressive,² but through elements of popular culture, including television dramas and K-pop,³ it has come to be seen as being modern, trendy and dynamic (Sung 2010). Korea has emerged as a new central point for the production of transitional popular culture (Kim 2013). K-pop was not concentrated in Asia, but has reached broader audiences in many parts of the world, including Europe and the U. S. For decades before the rise of *hallyu*, the South Korean government had tried to disseminate Korean popular culture, understanding the importance of projecting soft power (Interview with Korean Tourism Organization, KTO 2011), but afterward, it began to consider *hallyu* seriously as a policy tool for cultural diplomacy (Jang and Paik 2012).

Increasing cultural contact was accelerated by an increase of transnational cultural exports by Japan and South Korea, as well as imports into Taiwan, the main receiver in the East Asian popular circle. Each of these countries has competed earnestly in the cultural sphere, attempting to promote its cultural products and enhance its national image. The Japan Mania⁴ and Korean waves emphasise how popular culture helps polish the image of a nation and strengthen its economic competitiveness in the global market (Huang 2011). Consequently, contemporary East Asian nations such

as South Korea and Taiwan have focused on developing strategies for their global integration, as well as to strengthen their position in the region. Unlike South Korea, where popular culture already projects soft power, Taiwan positions itself as the most vigorous consumer in the region, emphasising its position as transnational and global by being open to foreign products (Huang 2011). Taiwan also plays the part of a strong cultural exporter to Mainland China, together with Hong Kong.⁵ The government of each nation in East Asia has used popular culture to redesign its national image to attract tourists and enhance its standing abroad. Popular culture has thus become the new "face of the nation." For example, regionally popular stars prove the potential of using celebrities as cultural ambassadors for promoting national culture abroad in order to persuade tourists to cross regional borders. Unlike other regions, including Europe (Katzenstein 2005: 88), popular culture plays a weighty role in East Asian daily life. Television drama can be a topic of daily conversation, and pop idols act as cultural ambassadors of the nation.

This paper examines how Taiwan and South Korea are using regionally popular celebrities to foster local identity configurations that simultaneously reach out beyond national borders and revise longstanding ideas about the nature of their populations. Through interviews with the KTO of South Korea and the Tourism Bureau in the Ministry of Transportation and Communications of the Republic of China and analysis of cultural promotional videos such as *Trip to the Heartwarming Country of Korea* (released in 2010 in South Korea), *Haru* (released in 2011 in South Korea) and *Taiwan Touch Your Heart* (released in 2009 in Taiwan), I demonstrate that, through visual imagery in fashioning cultural ideals to be projected in tourist markets, Korea and Taiwan are trying to reconstruct and rebrand their national images to promote their interests. Both governments make marketing via the Korean wave a crucial part of their appeal for cultural tourism. By featuring regionally popular local celebrities, they are following strategies to promote their international standing through the dissemination of newly rearticulated national images.

VISUAL IDENTITY, POPULAR CULTURE AND TOURISM

Two arms races are happening in East Asia today: one for military capabilities and another for the weapons of soft power (Nye 2004). Using traditional and new media, as well as cultural events and academic exchange programs, Asian states now aim to project a better image to garner sympathy and support for their foreign-policy objectives (Hall and Smith

2013). There have been many possibilities for improving Korea's status and building up a positive national image (Sung 2010), particularly by promulgating a policy to sustain and reinstate *hallyu* (Ministry of Culture, Sport and Tourism, Cultural Industry Policy Department 2009). The sudden circulation of *hallyu* in neighbouring countries not only confirmed the success of the entertainment industry, but played an important role in updating the country's national image.⁶ The Korean government changed its cultural policy from restriction to promotion in the 1990s.⁷ This change has driven the Korean pop industry to be more creative in upgrading the quality of its cultural content. At the end of the 1990s, Korean television dramas, films and popular music began to attract East Asian audiences and receive media attention. Since then, South Korea has been more ambitious in advertising Korean cultural products abroad (Huang 2011). Although Korean media exports make great economic profits, their primary mission is to promote a positive image of South 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 (Huang 2011; Jang and Paik 2012). South Korea continues to upgrade its national image through the *hallyu* policy and the national branding project.

Taiwan stands at the centre of the East Asian pop circle because of its openness to importing foreign products and its influence in the mainland pop cultural landscape (Gold 1993; Moskowitz 2011). Japanese, Korean, American and Chinese (Hong Kong) popular cultures coexist in Taiwan, giving a unique character to Taiwanese popular music, a hybrid form of localised Taiwanese pop culture, which merges Japanese, American, Chinese and indigenous cultures. This openness to foreign culture and an eagerness to develop fan clubs and participate in global society have made Taiwan one of the biggest importers of Japanese and Korean products (Sung 2008). Because of the growing power of the Chinese cultural industry and aggressive cultural promotion by Japan and Korea, Taiwan's position in East Asian popular culture became unstable. Taiwan's Mandopop, however, is far more popular in China than all the music genres produces in the People's Republic combined, and its music sales are already the third-highest in Asia. In effect, this is Taiwan's "counterinvasion of China" (Moskowitz 2011). By positioning itself as the strongest receiving nation of East Asian popular culture, it struggles over how to portray its image through popular culture.

Through the visual images portrayed in popular culture, people construct a certain image in their mind, although this might not be true to life. Popular culture encompasses film, literature, song, art, photography and other sorts of media, including mass media, which deliver and replicate

broadly established values and symbols (Kim and Richardson 2003). For example, Western society is often considered more liberal and Asian society more conservative; this contrast comes from American films and soap operas. Now that people can watch music videos, movies and soap operas on the internet, the role that popular culture plays in constructing a national image is greater. Many examples can be seen, most distinctively, perhaps, in the role of Korean television drama in Japan. Japan started to pay attention to Korea because one television drama, *Winter Sonata*, had a big impact on Japanese society (Park 2008). Before this television drama was aired on local TV, Japanese people were paying little attention to Korea, and immigrant Koreans were sometimes mistreated by Japanese; however, this one drama totally changed how many Japanese perceive Korea. In a survey that NHK⁸ conducted among 2,200 Japanese who had watched *Winter Sonata*, 26 percent said their image of Korea had changed, and 22 percent said they had more interest in Korea (Park 2008). Therefore, the effect of *Winter Sonata* was huge and important. Not only in Japan, but in many nations where *hallyu* exists, many have reconstructed their image of Korea to be advanced, modern and internationalised.

Studies of how popular culture is playing in national image construction (Park 2008; Sung 2008) have been made several times, but how it actually influences tourism and how public institutions have reacted to it have not been well formulated. A substantial trait of popular culture lies in mass consumption and sharing ideas within a given society, and for that reason, relationships of film and other forms of popular culture to tourism must be further critiqued, researched and understood (Kim and Richardson 2003). This comparative ethnographic case study of Taiwan and Korean tourism and promotional tourism videos compensates for this lack of information: it shows how regionally popular celebrities are being used as a policy tool to enhance national images, and it provides a new perspective on the importance of popular culture in national image building. The long-standing love-hate relationship between these countries, now mutually connected through operas, films and music videos, has been transformed by the reconstruction of the image of Korea in Taiwan (Sung 2011). Famous Korean idols are often chosen as commodity representatives of Korean brands, and increasing numbers of Taiwanese want to learn the Korean language and travel to Korea to see sights they have observed on television. Korea Sparkling, the official tourism website, provides the biographies of dozens of Korean actors and actresses, and the KTO often arranges for these stars to visit Taiwan one at a time, to sustain the Korean wave (Huang 2011). International tourism proves a strong connection between cultural production in the sending countries and cultural consumption in the

receiving countries. For example, Japan-bound Taiwanese travellers increased from 498,565 in 1995 to 1,309,847 in 2008, and Korea-bound travellers increased from 100,959 to 363,122 in the same period (Taiwan Tourism Bureau 2008).

Tourism relies heavily on visual practices to promote and represent destinations, but only recently has tourism research emphasised the interconnections among destinations, social structures and visual practices (Pritchard and Morgan 2003). Unlike elite or fringe culture, which influences small elements of a population, popular culture reinforces and reflects patterns of communication and consumption for a mass audience (Kim and Richardson 2003). An emerging trend is tourism-promoting videos, which can be particularly convincing and effective in evoking a destination's culture, people and identity; however, these videos and their embedded sociocultural meanings remain a topic largely ignored in academia (Butler 1990). Many factors can influence perceptions of a given country, but visual imagery through popular culture or mass media is one of the strongest, and it can direct potential tourists toward selecting their destinations. Accordingly, each nation is trying to construct a positive image of itself by using regionally popular celebrities on its promotional videos.

CASE STUDY OF SOUTH KOREA

The increasing popularity of Korean pop culture within East Asia led the Korean government to elaborate the idea of using regionally successful pop stars in promotional videos to attract tourists and create an attractive and positive image of the nation. According to Kim, the manager of a brand-marketing team at the KTO, "Korea is trying to deliver the message that Korea is lively and dynamic nation. To deliver this image, using *hallyu* stars are the most effective way. *Hallyu* stars already have the image, as they are lively, young and trendy; it is very much effective to use them in delivering such an image through video" (Interview with author 16 March 2011). *Hallyu* has spread all over East Asia, interconnecting East Asians as well as making them more competitive with each other. Its effect on the perception of Korea in neighbouring countries has impressed many. Taiwan, for example, had a negative image of Korea as a political betrayer ever since 1992, when the Korean government abruptly severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Since then, many older generations still hold a negative perception toward Korea and the Korean government; after the increasing penetration of Korean popular culture, however, young Taiwanese have held favourable attitudes toward Korea. Beyond any political relationship, sports

and economic strength deeply affect what people of one nation think of people of other nations. In this respect, Taiwan has a love-hate relationship with Korea.

Recognising the importance of popular culture as a major soft power of the nation, the Korean government has instituted policies to support the Korean wave. Surprised by the result of Anholt's Nation Brand Index,⁹ the government in January 2009 launched an ambitious nation-branding program, claiming that Korea's global image lagged behind what Koreans thought the nation deserved (Sung 2011). Euh Yoo-dae, president of Korea's Nation Branding, sent President Lee Myung-Bak a 10-point action plan to upgrade the national image; *hallyu*, is one of its major concerns. Apart from this national branding project, *hallyu* has been considered the most effective way to promote Korea. It can be seen in the Strategic *Hallyu* Policy that there has been a growing anti-Korean wave movement in various parts of *hallyu* and *hallyu* potential areas, so to maintain and reinitiate *hallyu* and thereby foster a positive image of the nation, the government has selected and trained regional stars. According to Manager Kim, "What is good about using *hallyu* stars in the promotional videos is that they are already well-known and already popular. So there is nothing to risk. The stars are already successful. So by using these stars, we know for sure that the video will bring the best potential out of its visual image" (Interview with author 16 March 2011). Kim also said that he cannot specify an exact number, but there has definitely been an increase of East Asian tourist after the use of *hallyu* stars in promotional videos. As an example of using *hallyu* or regionally popular stars as part of promotional videos, *A Trip to the Heartwarming Country of Korea* and *Haru* will be discussed.

A Trip to the Heartwarming Country of Korea

One of the best examples featuring *hallyu* stars in promotional material produced by the KTO is a video entitled *A Trip to the Heartwarming Country of Korea*. In it, Korean actor Lee Byung Hun and Japanese actress Chiaki Kuriyama introduce beautiful sights in South Korea. Lee Byung Hun became a popular *hallyu* personality after starring in the Korean soap opera *Iris*, which enjoyed great success in Japan; also, he acted in the Hollywood film *G. I. Joe*. This background led the KTO to believe that featuring him in its tourist video might attract tourists from Japan and the U. S. (Kim, interview with author 16 March 2011). According to the interview with the KTO,

"We casted Japanese female star Kuriyama for the same reason as Lee Byung Hun. She is considered a world star, for she acted as a main actor in the Hollywood film *Kill Bill*. Although she is a Japanese movie star, her international experience brings her image as [that of] international star. She also became a well-known star in South Korea and in the United States through this film, and this was our target." (Kim, interview with author 16 March 2011)

In *A Trip to the Heartwarming Country of Korea*, Kuriyama portrays a Japanese starlet who visits Korea for an international festival and meets a Korean photographer. Lee shows her selected beautiful places in South Korea, including Seoul, Busan, Jeju, Hadong and Jeonju. The friendly character of Lee Byung Hun and the beautiful scenery of Korea create an image of Korea as a friendly and beautiful country. Also, by casting Lee, who is considered a high-class international star, the Korean government tried to incorporate an image that would be successful and global.

According to an interview with the KTO, using local stars generates an even more effective result. Kim says, "We do not have the real data, but it is for sure that many Japanese people will feel more comfortable visiting Korea after viewing their local stars in Korea's touristic video. We want to emphasise the interchange and relationship with Japan or any other nation we want to target" (Interview with author 16 March 2011). Since *hallyu* represents a one-way flow from Korea to the rest of the region, anti-*hallyu* feeling in many places in the region, such as Japan and Taiwan, naturally increased. Therefore, the KTO emphasised the interchange and the strong relationship within the region. An interview with two professionals from the KTO revealed that their focus in producing such a video was not only to attract more tourists and increase the national image, but also to show cultural interchange or exchange by using stars from both nations. This video mainly targets Japanese tourists and tries to create an image of Korea as a nation of friendly people.

Haru

In September 2010, South Korea publicly disclosed an interactive web minidrama, titled *Haru (An Unforgettable Day in Korea)*, as part of a tourism-marketing campaign launched by the KTO. It is a 30-minute-long movie, which can be viewed online at www.har2010.com. It targets young adults in China and Japan and features six popular entertainers and drama stars, including Han Chae Young, Park Si Hu and Lee Da Hae, as well as

Yuno Yunho and Big Bang. Its official soundtrack features boy band Super Junior, R&B singer Bobby Kim and the lead singer from Girl's Generation. The movie, tracking a 24-hour timeline, interweaves several stories, including a writer caught in a love triangle and a group of students finding out their school is shutting down. To create thrills and viral effects, the web-marketing campaign is tied up with social media like Facebook and Twitter. It includes interactive elements, where prospective tourists can insert tags to create their own guidebook for their journey. This drama is eye-catching because not only do many *hallyu* stars—including Yuno Yunho from Dongbangxinki, Big Bang, Han Chae Young and Lee Da Hey—play a part, but viewers can easily get detailed information about the places they would like to visit. People have criticised the high cost of producing this web drama, but the KTO has countered by claiming that the work will have a positive effect on Korean tourism. Using regionally popular celebrities in a national promotional video is not new to Korea. According to Kim,

"K-pop stars are the most influential at this moment. Because so many K-pop boy and girl groups such as Super Junior, Girl's Generation, Kara and 2pm are popular in Japan and Taiwan, we probably will use them in the promotional videos. As long as *hallyu* sustains, KTO will constantly use them to represent South Korea" (Interview with author 16 March 2011).

The main role in *Haru* is played by Yuno Yunho, from the famous boy group Dongbangxinki. In addition, all five members of the popular boy group Big Bang participated in the making of the drama. Their acting skills may not be better than those of professional actors and actresses, but the KTO cast them to attract audiences from Japan and Taiwan. *Haru* has spun off several original-soundtrack recordings and videos. K-pop idol groups such as Super Junior and Girl's Generation participated in making these products, and the music videos especially have succeeded in attracting tourists.

The purpose of the KTO in creating an interactive web drama was to permit potential travellers to participate fully in designing their travel to Korea. Involving them personally in the video makes them feel closer to Korea and their favourite celebrities. According to Kim, "The purpose to create such a video is to emphasise the interchange and close relationship with South Korean K-pop stars" (Interview with author 16 March 2011). The marketing of tourism on the internet has become a vital tool in promoting the destination of each nation. Website promotion can be effective: through website services, people can participate and search for

relevant travel information (So and Morrison 2013). *Haru* not only attracted potential Asian travellers with visual imagery of famous K-pop stars, but encouraged them to participate by making travel plans and envisioning their travel destinations before coming.

CASE STUDY OF TAIWAN

The Tourism Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communication in Taiwan recognised the positive effect of using locally and regionally popular pop idols in its national promotional/tourism videos to reconstruct the national image of Taiwan (Interview with Tourism Bureau of the Ministry of Transportation and Communication in Taiwan). Although Taiwan plays a significant role in the whole East Asian pop circle and its geographical location and openness toward foreign culture make it a diverse and central spot, scholars have considered it less important to discuss than Japan and Korea, reflecting their growing power in the East Asian pop circle; however, Taiwan has been constantly searching for a distinctive national identity, one that can be distinguished from that of Mainland China. While traditional Chinese culture remains a strong part of the cultural history of Taiwan, contemporary Taiwan seeks to present its unique "Taiwanese-ness" through popular culture. The nature of the Taiwanese identity has long been a topic of discussion in Taiwanese society, and it has captured scholars' attention in several disciplines (Roy 2003; Tu 1996). Because of the political situation with Mainland China and internal conflict among the *benshengren* ("local province people"), the *waishengren* ("mainlanders," literally "outside province people") and the aboriginal people of Taiwan, the necessity of national identity construction has led to heated discourse, including in the cultural sector.

Taiwan is well-known for the economic and political progress it has made since the end of World War II. It is marked by the complexity of its political status in relationship to Mainland China, officially known as the People's Republic of China, from which it receives constant threats. The Taiwanese government claims that Taiwan is an independent nation, but its own people are divided over whether or not it is part of China (Roy 2003: 1). The question of unification with the mainland involves complicated internal issues of identity. Throughout my research, Taiwanese have asserted that the real political problem is due less to an unbalanced relationship with the mainland than to a local struggle to handle multiple ethnic and national claims. Thus, Taiwanese have different and conflicting ideas and opinions about how to define and present the identity of Taiwan, both to the world

and to themselves. As pressure from mainland China intensified and Taiwan lost international diplomatic recognition as a nation, the Taiwanese search for identity intensified. Interviews with many Taiwanese in the past decade reveal that the need for a new local identity has been increasing. When Lee Teng-Hui, then president of Taiwan, advocated the notion of the "New Taiwanese" as people who identify with Taiwan, rather than people of particular ethnicities and histories, people started to reconsider the idea of Taiwanese citizenship and national identity (Shih 2003: 146). This idea grew more complicated after Ma Ying Jeou, leader of the Kuomintang Party, became president in May 2008. After a long discussion on identity issues while President Chen Shui Bian had been in office, President Ma's victory was a shock for Taiwanese who were longing for national independence. Many believed the Kuomintang Party would not support Taiwan's independence, and therefore Taiwan would not be an independent nation (Chen and Wang, interview with author October 2009).

Before martial law was lifted in Taiwan, Taiwanese identity had officially been constructed by the government as a marginal one. Additionally, popular culture and the media stressed mainland Chinese roots, emphasizing the importance of history and life on the mainland, rather than on the island. This ideology had been brought by the mainlanders who had moved to Taiwan after 1949 and still considered themselves Chinese. These immigrants were dominant in official politics and tended to hold high positions in Taiwanese society. Their attitude disconcerted Taiwanese with deeper roots in the island, who considered their own political entity to be an independent nation. International politics has restricted Taiwan in the exercise of what many regard as its right to claim an independent identity, and a result can be seen in the intensive news coverage of the U.S. reaction toward the "special nation-to-nation relation debate" in Taiwan. The media noted that "only support from the United States can guarantee Taiwan a safe future" (*China Times* 14 September 2000). Most of the Taiwanese whose families settled on the island much earlier have strong opinions about the differences between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese identities: "Popular culture and media stressed mainland Chinese roots, stressing the importance of history and life on the mainland, not in Taiwan itself. The true Taiwanese identity could only be heard after the deregulation of the electronic media in the 1990s" (Chung 2000: 105).

As with Korea, the Tourism Bureau of Taiwan uses different marketing strategies and activities for different target markets in promoting tourism. In an email conversation, an officer in the bureau wrote,

"To encourage more South Koreans to visit Taiwan, the bureau began using the Taiwanese pop group Fahrenheit in 2009 to serve as Taiwan's tourism ambassadors. Promotional material created with the group includes videos, posters and activities such as concerts, interviews or fan meeting. The bureau invited famous South Korean celebrities to help in its promotional campaign. These celebrities are well known in both Taiwan and South Korea. The purpose is to encourage young people in Japan and South Korea who like these celebrities to travel to Taiwan for tourism" (Interview with author 24 February 2011).

Taiwan Touch Your Heart

Gu Hye Sun, a Korean actress, performed in the promotional video *Taiwan Touch Your Heart*, released in 2009, together with members of Fahrenheit. According to Vicky Cheng, section chief at the International Affairs Division of the Tourism Bureau:

"The reason that we used Gu Hyu Sun in our promotional video is to provide friendly feeling to South Korean travellers. South Koreans are very nationalistic and very protective towards their own culture. Therefore to attract South Koreans with our local celebrity is not possible. We decided to use Korean local stars who are also famous in Taiwan to let the Koreans feel that we welcome them and that Taiwanese are friendly people. We used Fahrenheit because they are well known among Japanese. Hence, this video was strictly targeting East Asian travellers" (Interview with author 25 March 2011)

According to the Tourism Bureau, Taiwan is now trying to promote Taiwan as a friendly and diversity-welcoming spot in East Asia. An Ting Ting at the International Affairs Division commented:

"Not many people know about Taiwan, but once you are here, you will have a very good impression about our culture. Taiwanese culture is diverse. We like to accept everything which is good. We throw away bad things, and we take the good things. So when the foreigners come to Taiwan, they will feel very welcome. Through our video, we try to show our friendly and diverse culture. This is the image we like to

promote to Asian nations" (Interview with author 25 March 2011).

The friendly images portrayed in the video *Taiwan Touch Your Heart* have attracted increasing numbers of Korean travellers. According to Cheng:

"Using celebrities in our tourism video is only possible when targeting the Asian market. Unlike Asians, Europeans or Americans are not interested in Asian pop stars or pop culture. Therefore, we use a different strategy when targeting global travellers. But for Asian travellers, I think using celebrities to create an image they like is the best way to promote Taiwan" (Interview with author 25 March 2011).

Taiwan has been promoting tourism under the slogan "Taiwan Touch Your Heart" since 2001. This effort has succeeded in projecting the Taiwanese people's friendliness and warmth to the world, and has raised Taiwan tourism to a new level. Recently, Taiwan has adopted a new slogan and logo: "Taiwan—The Heart of Asia." According to the interview with the Tourism Bureau, the new logo tries to convey two meanings: Taiwan is the central spot in Asia geographically, and its people want to emphasise their warmth and friendliness.

As can be seen in its logo, Taiwan would like to deliver the message and image of Taiwan as the heart and centre of Asia. Diversity is the representative image that Taiwan will be trying to construct in the coming years. By emphasising the coexistence of tradition and fusion, local and foreign, and East Asian and South Asian culture, Taiwan will be advertising the diversity and warmth of its people. By using the stylised image of a heart, Taiwan will be emphasising the Taiwanese longing for communication with the outside world. According to An Ting Ting:

"Taiwan is a very important region in Asia for many reasons. Not only geographically it is located in the heart of Asia, but it also plays a central role in the region. Taiwanese usually accept things easily when they are good, without showing any prejudice. Also, people are reacting very fast to the trend. For example, popular culture from Japan and Korea can reach Taiwanese audience within a week. We act very fast and are always sensitive to Asian cultural trends, especially from Japan and Korea, and the trend goes to Mainland China and South Asia from Taiwan" (Interview with author 25 March 2011).

Many Taiwanese TV producers and music industry leaders confirm that fans come to Taiwan from all over East Asia to experience K-pop. In an email conversation, Phillip, from Alpha Music Company, wrote:

"Taiwan is a small country with small market but because of the language and culture as well as the liberal free market, many Asian record companies will choose Taiwan as a first step into the Chinese market because China is still a very closed market with lots of regulations. I personally think the Taiwan music market is too small and not that important, but if you think about the number of Chinese-speaking people around the world, Taiwan will be the first step for the Chinese market" (Interview with author 9 April 2012).

CONCLUSION

The rapid spread of popular culture within East Asia has motivated the government of each nation to promote its national image to attract tourists. This dynamic cultural exchange has not only brought these nations closer to each other, but has heightened competition in projecting new national identities through visual images projected through promotional tourism videos. By using regional stars, South Korea and Taiwan are trying to create images that can attract regional tourists and enhance their standing in the eyes of outside onlookers. The ascendancy of global culture has obliged many in the region to re-evaluate the label of "Asian," as well as their own cultural contributions. By producing visually projected identities, South Korea and Taiwan use products of popular culture, especially regionally recognised stars, as tools to project new identities and attract regional interest.

Consequently, contemporary East Asian nations, such as South Korea and Taiwan, have focused on using popular culture in their strategies for global integration. The *hallyu* phenomenon proves the potential of employing regionally popular celebrities as cultural ambassadors. In doing so, South Korea emphasises the quality and appeal of its popular culture, while Taiwan emphasises the openness and enthusiasm of Taiwanese towards popular foreign products and people.

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NOTES

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¹ *Hallyu*, literally translated as "Korean wave," was the sudden dissemination and popularity of South Korean popular culture, including television drama, film, popular music, games, fashion and so on, that started in Mainland China at the end of the 1990s, when the Chinese became attracted to the Korean television drama *What Is Love All About?*, which projected Asian values and sentiments. Since 2009, the popularity of K-pop has attracted so many Asian teenagers that it can now be considered the second Korean wave.

² The aggressive image reflects emphasis in the mass media on the conflict between North and South Korea and the airing of clips showing a demonstration conducted by South Korean citizens against their government.

³ *K-pop* is a common abbreviation of "Korean popular music," a musical genre originating in Korea, which includes aesthetic elements taken from dance-pop, pop ballads, electronic music, rock, hip-hop, R&B and so forth. Its typical characteristic is beautiful boy and girl groups that perform well-rehearsed choreography.

⁴ *Japan mania* is a common term for Japanese popular culture outside Japan, whose fans favour all things Japanese.

⁵ Popular culture from Taiwan and Hong Kong is called *gangtai*, a contraction of the Chinese words *xianggang* and *Taiwan*, and it has great influence on the popular culture of Mainland China.

⁶ "National image" is the cognitive representation that a person holds of a given country, what a person believes to be true about a nation and its people (Boulding 1969). The key is how a nation appears to others, not how it truly is, in any universal or objective sense. Factors that create a national image may include education and personal experience, but many people perceive a nation's image through the mass media, especially televised news stories and newspaper articles, which present a picture of the world beyond physical reach (Kunczik 1997; Lippman 1922; Smith 1973).

- ⁷ In the 1960s and 1970s, President Park Chung-Hee launched a policy of monitoring and purifying Korean society. He was the president who most directly mobilised the power of the state in the service of nationalist cultural construction. He mobilised nationalism and patriotism to support the legitimacy of the state and advance economic development. Kim Young-Sam, the first nonmilitary president, soon recognised the importance of supporting the entertainment industry. In a speech given in Sydney, Australia, on 17 November 1994, he announced the Segyehwa policy, through which he emphasised that Korea should pursue internationalisation and globalisation armed with competitiveness as a survival strategy in the cultural sector.
- ⁸ NHK (Japanese: 日本放送協会 Hepburn: Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, official English name: Japan Broadcasting Corporation) is Japan's national public broadcasting organisation.
- ⁹ Released in 2008, ranking Korea 33rd among 55 countries.

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