JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA

Differences in How Music is Utilized as political Power

OBJECTIVE

The aim of this research is to examine how music functions as a soft power that helps shape international perceptions of Japan and South Korea through J-pop and K-pop, respectively. Comparing Japan's Cool Japan Strategy and Korea's Korean Wave (Hallyu) through the Marxist theory of Commodificatoin to help understand the overlapping aspects of governments and private sectors, and how these entities help spread their respective cultures while also achieving both economic and political goals.

SOFT POWER IN POLITICS

Soft Power Theory:
Coined by Joseph Nye, Soft Power refers to a country's ability to influence others through attraction rather than hard militaristic or economic force

Why Japan and South Korea:
Both these countries examplify successful governmental and private entity's pursue of economic and political goals, through differing methods.

Why Music:
Both J-pop and K-pop are at the capacity that allows them to reach international audiences and strengthen national image, while also generating great revenues.

Complementary Theory:
Marxists Commodificatoin: This perspective examines how music ia able to become a commodity that can be profited off of. This theory combined with Soft Power Theory helps explain how cultural attraction can serve both as a political and commercial goals

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

JAPAN

Cool Japan
Cool Japan is a government strategy that promotes Japanese culture overseas to support economic growth and improve Japan's image. Music forms part of this wider approach, alongside anime, games, and other cultural industries.

SOUTH KOREA

Hallyu
Hallyu, or the Korean Wave, refers to the international spread of Korean popular culture, including K-pop and dramas. The government supports this expansion through cultural industry policies, while companies and fans also drive its growth.

SOFT POWER INITIATIVES

ARTIST-SUPPORTING POLICIES

1. Creator & Artist Development
   - Budget: ¥4.5 billion over 3 years.
   - Supports creators in music, anime, games, and art.
   - Covers production and overseas expansion.
2. Global Promotion of Japanese Music
   - Led by the Agency for Cultural Affairs.
   - Builds international industry networks.
   - Promotes Japanese popular music globally.

Policy Approach: Long-term talent development and international promotion.

1. KOCCA Overseas Expansion Support (2026)
   - Funding: Up to ₩100 million for large-scale and ₩60 million for medium-scale projects.
   - Supports overseas tours, festivals, travel, and promotion.
2. Support for Small Music Agencies (2026)
   - Funding: Up to ₩290 million per project; around 10 projects planned.
   - Supports album production and global marketing for emerging K-pop groups.

Policy Approach: Direct funding for overseas promotion and emerging K-pop artists' global expansion.

JAPANESE CASE STUDY





A Mix of "Accidental Soft Power" and Unsustainable Decentralization:

- Music as a Standalone System:
  - The Allure for Anemoia and Nostalgia
  - "Accidental Soft Power" and Social Media Algorithm
  - Despite successes in online and physical form, government investments havent been initiated
- Music as a Paveway for Other Industries:
  - Historically, Corporations have been using Music as a paveway to introduce other industries, such as Idols
  - Government provide certain rules and goals for networking, with the majority of decision-making lies in the corporations
  - Inefficiencies in Governmental Policies and Corporate Culture remains

KOREAN CASE STUDY



ENTERTAINMENT

Strategic Globalization and Corporate Coordination: YG Entertainment

- Music as a Globally Oriented Industry:
  - Integrated idol training, production, and branding.
  - International audiences targeted through digital platforms and world tours.
  - Coordinated corporate strategies for global market expansion.
- Music as a Driver of Soft Power:
  - BLACKPINK demonstrates YG's successful international promotion.
  - Global fan communities amplify Korean cultural visibility.
  - Commercial success creates opportunities for national branding and cultural influence.
- Key Finding:
  - YG Entertainment illustrates how coordinated corporate strategies can transform K-pop from a domestic music product into a global cultural brand, expanding South Korea's international cultural visibility.

CULTURAL RELEVENCE VS REVENUE

JAPAN

- 2nd-largest music market
- 88% of sales are domestic (Patel, 2023)
- Focused on physical album sales, merchandise

SOUTH KOREA

- 7th largest music-market
- 66% of global listeners reported a better perception of South Korea
- Focused on tours, multilingual content, marketing

POLICY RE-EVALUATION

Government Policies

- Japan: Improve coordination across training, production, and promotion.
- South Korea: Turn overseas promotion into lasting audiences and partnerships.

Government–Business Relations

- Japan: Strengthen cooperation across companies and cultural sectors.
- South Korea: Expand smaller agencies' access to international networks.

Economic and Political Goals

- Look beyond domestic sales in Japan and overseas exposure in Korea.
- Support diverse cultural voices and lasting cultural exchange.

CONCLUSION

- Both have gathered enthusiastic results linking music to diplomacy
- Japan is currently facing the problem of unsustainability, inclarity and missed potential for the international market compared to South Korea
- Further Research could be done within the overall systemic allocations of the Musical Industry, in addition to the potential of gaining more International Reach on Traditional Musical Products