

# The Development Experience of Japan and South Korea's Cultural Soft Power and Its Enlightenment to China

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**Abstract.** This study focuses on the cultural policies of East Asia and the construction of national branding, aiming to uncover the successful experiences of Japan and South Korea in the formation and development of cultural soft power. The study also analyzes the implications for China's cultural diplomacy and the enhancement of its soft power. Utilizing a combination of literature review and case analysis, this paper systematically examines the strategies of cultural promotion in Japan and South Korea, such as the global dissemination of cultural products and the establishment of cultural exchange mechanisms. The research finds that both countries have effectively increased their international influence by integrating resources, government guidance, and the interaction of private forces in areas such as animation, film, and music. The conclusion suggests that China can refer to the experiences of Japan and South Korea to strengthen international cooperation and exchange in the cultural industry while protecting and inheriting traditional culture, thereby enhancing its cultural appeal and international competitiveness.

**Keywords:** Cultural Soft Power; Cultural Policy; National Branding; East Asian Cultural Exchange; International Cultural Competitiveness.

## 1. Introduction

Cultural soft power is an important component of a country's international influence, and cultural soft power plays an increasingly prominent role on the international stage in the era of globalization. With the innovation of information technology and the deepening of global exchanges, culture, as a flexible means, plays an important role in the construction of national image, shaping of international relations, and economic and social development. In the current international competition, Japan, and South Korea, with their unique cultural promotion strategies, have made remarkable international achievements in the field of cultural industries such as animation, film and television, and music. Behind this effect is the long-term cultural policy planning and practical exploration of the two countries. This study aims to deeply analyze and dissect the cultural soft power development strategies of Japan and South Korea, and systematically compare their effectiveness and challenges. Through this process, this study tries to identify and extract the experiences and lessons that are enlightening for China's cultural soft power construction. In the context of globalization, the overseas dissemination of Chinese culture and the shaping of its international image are of great significance to the promotion of national soft power, cultural exchanges, and international cooperation.

The research of this paper has important theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, this study expands the research dimension of cultural soft power, explores the relationship between cultural policies and national brand building in-depth, and provides an empirical study for the theory of cultural soft power in East Asia. In practice, this study will provide valuable insights for the formulation and implementation of China's cultural policies, which will help China better play its cultural advantages in the international arena and enhance its cultural attraction and competitiveness. Combined with the successful experience of Japan and South Korea, this study emphasizes that China should not only protect and inherit excellent traditional culture but also actively explore new ways in line with modern international communication mechanisms when promoting and innovating its own cultural practices.

## 2. Overview and Impact Analysis of Cultural Soft Power

### 2.1. Definition and Connotation of Cultural Soft Power

The term cultural soft power, first coined by Joseph S. Nye in the 1990s, refers to a country's ability to gain international influence through non-hard power means such as culture, political values, and foreign policy. Specifically, cultural soft power relates to the attractiveness and persuasion of culture, which, through cultural products and cultural exchanges, can induce other countries to adopt their values and way of life without oppression or coercion [1].

Japan and South Korea have unique development paths in the construction of cultural soft power. Japan's cultural soft power is mainly based on its traditional culture and modern cultural industry. Since the 1980s, the Japanese government has promoted the "Cool Japan" strategy, focusing on modern cultural elements such as animation, games, and fashion as the focus of cultural export, while also carrying forward traditional culture such as tea ceremony and kimono. The global success of the Japanese animation industry is a clear manifestation of its cultural soft power, which not only drives international sales of related cultural products but also shapes positive perceptions of Japanese society and culture on a global scale.

South Korea's cultural soft power has achieved remarkable results in a relatively short period. Since the late 1990s, the Korean government has implemented the so-called "Hallyu" policy, which has successfully penetrated the international market through cultural products such as TV dramas, K-pop music, and movies. Korea's cultural industry policy includes not only supporting the domestic cultural industry but also encouraging the overseas promotion of cultural products. For example, the Korean government actively supports the export of cultural content and provides related companies with easy access to the international market. In addition, Korea has promoted the international spread of Korean culture through cultural exchange and international cooperation projects, such as establishing the Korean Cultural Center [2].

The successful experience of the two countries shows that the construction of cultural soft power not only needs the excellent and attractive cultural products themselves but also the strategic guidance and support of the government. In the case of Japan and South Korea, the government's role is to provide policy support, optimize the industrial environment, and build a platform for international cooperation. These measures not only enhance the international competitiveness of cultural products but also help to form a positive image of the country, thereby enhancing the global influence of culture.

China also has a long cultural tradition and rich resources in promoting cultural soft power, but it still needs to improve in terms of international communication and the global influence of cultural products. China can learn from the experience of Japan and South Korea, first of all, to protect and pass on its own traditional culture. Just as Japan cherishes its traditional art, China also needs a modern interpretation of its traditional culture, bringing it into line with modern aesthetics and international habits, and increasing its global appeal. Secondly, China needs to strengthen the international layout of cultural industries and promote the overseas promotion of cultural products and services through policy support and the improvement of market mechanisms. In addition, China should actively participate in international cultural exchanges and cooperation, and use multilateral and bilateral platforms to promote the international spread of Chinese culture.

### 2.2. Measurement of International Influence of Cultural Soft Power

As an important component of a country's comprehensive national strength, cultural soft power plays an increasingly important role in international relations. The measure of international influence can be evaluated through multiple dimensions, such as the global spread of cultural products, international market share, international public opinion response, and the universality of cultural identity.

Japan and South Korea, as representatives of the successful development of cultural soft power, are particularly prominent in the measurement of their influence. The global influence of the Japanese animation industry cannot be underestimated. Taking Dragon Ball, Pokémon and One Piece as

examples, these anime works are not only popular in Asia, but also worldwide, becoming internationally recognized symbols of Japanese culture. According to statistics, the Pokémon series alone has generated more than \$90 billion in revenue worldwide, making it one of the most profitable media franchises in the world. These data fully illustrate the strong attraction and penetration of the Japanese animation industry in the global cultural market.

South Korea has also made notable achievements in promoting cultural soft power, especially in the film and music industries. The rise of the Hallyu phenomenon has made Korean movies TV dramas and K-pop music go to the world. Take "Parasite" as an example, the film not only achieved great success in South Korea but also won several international awards, including four Academy Awards, becoming the first non-English language film to win the Oscar for Best Picture, significantly enhancing the international status of Korean films. In the field of music, Korean idol groups such as BTS and BLACKPINK have a huge fan base around the world, and their music frequently tops the international music charts, becoming a force to be ignored in the global cultural market.

In addition to the international dissemination of cultural products, the establishment of cultural exchange mechanisms is also an important indicator to measure the international influence of cultural soft power. The governments of Japan and South Korea have actively established a series of cultural exchange programs in the process of promoting their own cultures. Through the Japan Foundation, Japan has established cultural centers around the world to promote Japanese language and culture, while holding various cultural exchange events, such as film festivals and art exhibitions. South Korea is also promoting international exchanges and cooperation in Hallyu culture through similar organizations such as the Korea International Cultural Exchange Promotion Agency (KOFICE) and the Korean Cultural Center. The establishment of these mechanisms has not only enhanced the international community's understanding of the cultures of Japan and South Korea but also promoted the mutual learning and integration of cultures.

In terms of international reputation, the cultural soft power of Japan and South Korea has also been widely recognized by the international community. For example, Japan enjoys a high reputation around the world for its exquisite handicrafts, traditional arts, and unique way of life. The combination of these traditional and modern cultural characteristics has made Japan a cultural model respected and desired by the international community. South Korea, with its modern urban image and innovative cultural industries, has created a vibrant and stylish national image that is hotly sought after by younger generations around the world.

### **3. Japan and South Korea Cultural Soft Power Development Strategy**

#### **3.1. Historical Evolution and Current Situation of Japanese Cultural Communication**

As an island country with a long history, Japan's cultural communication has developed in many aspects and directions. Since the Meiji Restoration, Japan has been committed to the modernization and outward dissemination of culture to enhance the country's soft power and international influence.

In the middle and late 20th century, Japan's economic strength increased rapidly, providing a solid foundation for the development of cultural industries. During this period, the Japanese government adopted a series of policies to promote the internationalization of the cultural industry. For example, through the establishment of the corresponding international cultural exchange foundation, to improve the exposure of culture and art internationally; At the same time, Japanese animation, games, literature, and other cultural products began to go abroad, showing the diversity and creativity of Japanese culture to the world [3].

In terms of the animation industry, Japan is undoubtedly the world leader. Since the popularity of classic cartoons such as "Lotus Lantern" and "Dragon Ball", Japanese animation has become an important part of global youth culture. Behind this influence is the continuous investment and optimization of the Japanese government and industry. For example, the Japan Anime Association regularly organizes various exhibitions and exchange activities to promote the spread of anime culture on a global scale.

In addition to anime, Japanese film and television works, music, fashion, etc., also enjoy a high reputation in the world. The works of Japanese filmmakers such as Akira Kurosawa and Hayao Miyazaki have won numerous awards at international film festivals and made outstanding contributions to the spread of Japanese culture. With the popularity of the Internet, J-POP music has also begun to form a unique audience in Asia and even around the world.

The success of Japanese cultural communication depends not only on excellent cultural products but also on its meticulous strategies and operations. The Japanese government attaches great importance to the cultural industry at the national level and coordinates the development and external promotion of the cultural industry through the establishment of institutions such as the Department of Culture. In terms of financial support, policy guidance, and market development, the Japanese government and private enterprises have formed an effective cooperation mechanism to jointly promote the overseas dissemination of cultural products.

In the current situation, the international dissemination of Japanese culture has formed a mature mechanism. Through international cultural festivals, overseas exhibitions, cultural exchange programs, and other forms, Japanese culture has been widely recognized and accepted worldwide. In addition, with the advancement of globalization, Japanese culture is increasingly integrated into the cultures of other countries and regions, forming cross-cultural interaction and integration.

As far as the current situation is concerned, the spread of Japanese culture in the world has shown diversified and networked characteristics. Representative companies of the Japanese cultural industry, such as SONY and Nintendo, have branches around the world, not only promoting Japanese culture but also innovating and developing in interaction with local culture. Through this model, Japan has not only reaped economic rewards but also increased its influence and attractiveness culturally.

### **3.2. The Phenomenon of "Hallyu" in South Korea and the Promotion Strategy Behind It**

The Korean "Hallyu" phenomenon, also known as the Korean Wave, refers to the global popularity and dissemination of Korean cultural products such as TV dramas, pop music, movies, and related cultural industries. This phenomenon emerged in Asia in the late 1990s, and then quickly spread to the world, becoming an important phenomenon of international cultural exchange. The Korean government and related companies have adopted a series of strategies to promote the global spread of Hallyu.

The Korean government recognizes the importance of the cultural industry and has made it a part of its national development strategy. The government not only provides financial support but also formulates a series of policies to encourage the creation and export of cultural products. The Korea Creative Content Agency, for example, is a specialized agency set up by the government to promote the development and international exchange of the cultural industry [4].

In the development and promotion of cultural products, Korean enterprises have adopted a market-oriented operation mode. South Korea's TV drama and pop music industries are highly organized, with specialized star training systems and production processes. South Korean entertainment companies, for example, train artists through the "trainee" system, focusing on their artistic talents as well as image management and PR skills, to ensure that artists can cater to the needs of the international market.

Moreover, the Korean government and enterprises work together to actively participate in the international cultural market competition. The promotion of Korean cultural products abroad is often accompanied by efficient marketing strategies. For example, South Korean dramas can be broadcast simultaneously or delayed in multiple countries through cooperation with overseas TV stations. In addition, K-pop concerts and fan meetings around the world have greatly enhanced the international influence of the Korean wave.

South Korea is also actively using new media platforms to promote cultural products. With the development of the Internet and social media, platforms such as YouTube and Twitter have become important channels for the spread of the Korean wave. Korean entertainment companies released music videos and artist updates through these platforms, quickly attracting the attention of fans around

the world. For example, South Korean singer Psy's "Gangnam Style" once set a world record for views on YouTube and became a global trending topic.

The Korean government also attaches importance to cultural exchanges and national image building. It promotes Korean culture internationally through various cultural festivals, exhibitions and performances, and actively builds the national image of Korea. Korea's cultural exchange activities are not limited to Asia, but also extended to Europe, America and other regions, making the Korean Wave phenomenon more and more global.

## **4. Achievements and Problems in the Development of the Cultural Soft Power of Japan and South Korea**

### **4.1. Comparison of Cultural Soft Power Effects between Japan and South Korea**

As the two representatives of Asian cultural soft power, Japan and South Korea have shown their unique effects on global cultural dissemination and influence. This section will compare the development results of the two countries' cultural soft power and analyze the key factors for its success.

Japan's cultural soft power is mainly reflected in the overseas promotion of its anime, games, literary works, and traditional culture. As an important part of cultural export, Japanese animation is deeply loved by young people around the world. According to data from the Japan Animation Association, the market size of the Japanese animation industry reached 2.51 trillion yen in 2019, of which the proportion of revenue from overseas markets continues to rise. Through the implementation of the "Cool Japan" strategy, the Japanese government actively supports the overseas promotion of cultural industries such as animation and games and strengthens cultural exchanges and cooperation with other countries [5].

In addition, Japanese traditional culture such as tea ceremony, martial arts, etc., also enjoys a high reputation in the world, through various cultural festivals, exhibitions, and other forms, attracting many overseas cultural lovers.

South Korea's cultural soft power lies in the global reach of its music, film, television, and beauty industries. The rise of the Korean Wave phenomenon, especially the global popularity of K-pop music, has brought significant cultural influence and economic benefits to South Korea. According to data released by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, South Korea's cultural content exports totaled 10.1 billion US dollars in 2019, of which the music industry exports increased by 17.9% year-on-year. The Korean government not only promotes the development of cultural industries at the national level but also encourages private enterprises to compete in the international market. For example, South Korean entertainment companies such as SM, YG, and JYP have played an important role in nurturing artists and promoting the Korean Wave.

When comparing the cultural soft power effects of Japan and South Korea, it can be found that both countries pay attention to the integration of domestic resources in the process of promoting cultural products, and give play to the synergistic effect of government and private forces. By formulating corresponding national strategies, Japan and South Korea have increased investment and policy support for cultural industries, and actively participated in international cultural exchanges to continuously enhance their international cultural status.

### **4.2. Challenges and Problems in the Development of the Cultural Soft Power of Japan and South Korea**

After the in-depth study of the development strategies of Japan and South Korea's cultural soft power, it cannot be ignored that these two countries have encountered challenges and problems in promoting cultural soft power. These challenges and problems not only affect the international communication efficiency of cultural products but also provide important reflection and reference value for the adjustment of the cultural policies of the two countries.

First of all, both Japan and South Korea face the challenge of cultural homogeneity in the development of cultural soft power. With the acceleration of the process of globalization, cultural products are circulating more and more frequently around the world, which makes the cultural differences of different countries gradually blurred. Although Japanese anime and Korean pop music enjoy international fame, they also have to face competition and challenges from other cultural markets in the tide of globalization. How to adapt to the needs of the global market while maintaining the uniqueness of cultural products is a problem that the two countries need to solve in the process of cultural promotion.

Secondly, the negative impact brought by the commercialization of the cultural industry cannot be ignored. In the commercialization process, cultural products may over-cater to the market to pursue higher economic interests, resulting in the loss of cultural connotation or over-commercialization. For example, in the process of promoting Hallyu (Korean Wave), the South Korean government sometimes overemphasized economic benefits and ignored the depth and breadth of cultural communication, which made the Korean Wave culture become a simple entertainment consumer goods in some cases, rather than an artwork with deep cultural connotation.

Thirdly, the sustainability and stability of cultural policy is also an important issue. Political and economic factors often influence the cultural soft power construction of Japan and South Korea. The change of government leadership may lead to the adjustment or even interruption of cultural policies, affecting the sustainable development of cultural soft power. Such policy instability will not only affect the long-term planning of the cultural industry but may also create a crisis of confidence in international partners.

Furthermore, the protection of intellectual property rights cannot be ignored. As cultural products such as Japanese anime and K-pop have gained international influence, copyright infringement and piracy have become increasingly prominent. Due to the lack of effective international cooperation and intellectual property protection mechanisms, the legitimate interests of the cultural industries of the two countries have been seriously infringed, which has not only damaged the interests of creators and producers but also affected the international image and influence of cultural products.

The international image and cognition difference in cultural exchange is also a thorny issue. Although Japan and South Korea have made remarkable achievements in the promotion of cultural soft power, the historical and political disputes they face in the international community often become obstacles to cultural exchange. The existence of these problems makes it necessary for the two countries to handle their relations with other countries carefully in cultural exchanges to avoid causing unnecessary friction and misunderstanding.

## 5. Conclusion

By exploring the successful experience of Japan and South Korea in cultural soft power, this study provides useful enlightenment for China's development and internationalization process in the same field. This paper analyzes how the cultural products of Japan and South Korea in the fields of animation, film and television, music, and other fields realize global dissemination and enhance international influence through the cooperation between the government and the people, thus strengthening their cultural soft power. The research conclusion points out that when promoting cultural soft power, China should fully consider the protection of traditional culture and the development of modern cultural industry and seek win-win development in international cooperation and exchange, to promote the global influence of Chinese culture.

Although this paper puts forward many inspirations and suggestions for the development of Chinese cultural soft power, some deficiencies are also exposed during the research process. For example, in terms of the depth and breadth of comparative analysis, limited by the difficulty and space of data acquisition, it cannot fully cover all the details of the cultural soft power of Japan and South Korea. Future studies can focus on the specific effects of Japanese and Korean cultural soft power in different regions and groups, as well as its influence on domestic and foreign policies, and

propose structured development strategies at a more macro level. In addition, with the rapid development of information technology, research should also follow up the display and dissemination mechanism of cultural soft power in new media and digital communication, and further improve the understanding and prediction of the development trend of the cultural industry. Based on the above suggestions and shortcomings, it is expected to provide suggestions and suggestions for the development of China's cultural diplomacy and soft power strategy and promote its cultural charm and competitiveness in the international arena.

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