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Nation Banding of Japan Through Cultural Diplomacy

Abstract

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**Keywords:** Cool Japan Campaign, Cultural Diplomacy, Anime, Manga, Games and Cuisine

Authors:

**Alisha Shafiq:** (Corresponding Author)

Graduate, Department of International Relations Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

(Email: [alishashafiq135@gmail.com](mailto:alishashafiq135@gmail.com))

**Saima A Kayani:** Head of Department, Department of International Relations, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

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## Title

### Nation Branding of Japan Through Cultural Diplomacy

#### Authors:

**Alisha Shafiq:** (Corresponding Author)

Graduate, Department of International Relations Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

(Email: [alishashafiq135@gmail.com](mailto:alishashafiq135@gmail.com))

**Saima A Kayani:** Head of Department, Department of International Relations, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan.

#### Abstract

*This research work explores the role of culture in the nation branding strategies of Japan. By examining key initiatives such as the promotion of traditional culture (culinary traditions) along with contemporary cultural exports (anime), the study highlights the strategic role of culture in nation branding of Japan. Moreover, this paper explores the “Cool Japan” campaign, a strategy to share Japan’s attractiveness and appeal with global audience. This Cool Japan can be considered as the corner stone of the soft power policy of Japan. Through these efforts, Japan not only strengthens its international relations but also fortifies its national identity amidst a rapidly changing global landscape. Thus it is argued in this research work that through cool Japan campaign and cultural diplomacy (traditional and modern) Japan is able to improve its image internationally, achieve its nation cohesion and grow its economy significantly.*

#### Keywords:

Cool Japan Campaign, Cultural Diplomacy, Anime, Manga, Games and Cuisine

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#### Introduction

The Land of Rising Sun- Japan is an island country located off the Asian Coast. It consists of numerous chains of islands stretching from the Western North Pacific Ocean about 2,400 km (1,500 miles) in Northeast-Southeast arc. Japan consists of four main islands namely, Hokkaido (Hokkaidō), Honshu (Honshū), Shikoku, and Kyushu (Kyūshū). Out of these four Honshu is the largest island, there are another small island too. The capital of Japan is Tokyo which is one of the world's most populous cities ((Encyclopaedia Britannica, [n.d.](#)).

Historically, humans inhabited Japan for tens of thousands of years, but the country's history is recorded to initiate in first BCE, according to Chinese sources. Japanese history records numerous changes Japan went through over time. Firstly, adoption of Buddhism religion and Chinese culture through interaction with China and Korea in the early centuries. And in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Japan was under military monarchs' domination which led to total isolation from the outside world till the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century. When Japan opened its borders in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, contact with the west led towards



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unparalleled transformation in the country, it started its diplomatic ties with the west through Iwakura mission Iwakura Mission was named after the famous ambassador Iwakura Tomomi who led the diplomatic mission and it was one of the most well-known and significant mission due to its support towards Japanese modernization following a period of isolation from the world (particularly west). It consisted of renowned politicians and scholar of the Meiji era which traveled to US and Europe in late 19<sup>th</sup> century (1870s), It had three main goals, to establish legality of the restored imperial dynasty of Emperor Meiji, to renegotiate with other states regarding unjust treaties and to experience or learn the contemporary political, industrial, academical and military state structures of the West. Unfortunately, the mission gains were undermined due to wars Japan fought in early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Saburō, 2019).

It started the effort to establish a vast foreign empire, in Korea and China to become a modern industrialized state. This course of action in late 1941 led to direct confrontation between Japan and the USA, which resulted in Japan losing the World War II (ThoughtCo, n.d.).

Japanese defining characteristics are diversity and complexity. With a rich and historical cultural heritage, along with that Japan after the WWII went through immense economic growth and technology advancement leading to ranking 4<sup>th</sup> greatest economy in the world. Its market expansion was incredible during the first seven decades after WWII. However, its economy underwent decade long stagnation (the lost decade) which raised the need for the Japanese government to look for alternative ways i.e. their entertainment and culinary industry to boost its economy and its global image (Encyclopaedia Britannica, n.d.).

Japan over the years since 1990s has been actively engaging in branding itself through cultural diplomacy to enhance or improve its global standing and promote relations with other states. Japan officially launched its nation branding campaign in 2002 with the aim of promoting its culture abroad and enhancing its image at the international society. In such campaigns Japan promotes its rich cultural heritages, traditional culinary and its sense of style to project the image of the state that is respected in the international society and attracts foreign audiences. Such campaign's main objective is to increase economic competitiveness to support local businesses. Along with that Japan utilizes tourism to directly formulate impression through cultural exposure and effective advertising. It categorized tourism and tourist industry as vital for its nation branding (PDGC2014C, 2015). Additionally, Japanese government utilized its Pop-Culture which includes Anime, Manga, Games and fashion along with traditional culture like Cuisine to engage with foreign audiences, regarding to

this the Cool Japan project has been a key component of Japanese Cultural Diplomacy (Snow, 2013.p.6).

## Japan's NB-The Cool Japan Campaign

In 2010 Japanese Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) officially launched the Cool Japan Campaign to enhance or boost its economic growth and project its soft power by utilizing the states unique and rich cultural assets. The Japanese External Trade organization (JETRO) has utilized Cool Japan which connects industry, culture and history as a strategy for economic extension in foreign states. The campaign was launched on the basis of acknowledging Japan's rich culture which attract the foreign public and are popular abroad. Such items include Anime, Manga, Cuisine and Games. One of the main goals of this campaign is economic growth, in this it uses the cultural industries to stimulate its economy by assisting domestic creative industries to boost economy and cultural export of the state (GkToday, n.d.). Similarly, the second goal of this campaign is to reform the worlds perception of Japan by promoting an image of peace loving and hardworking state. Through this Japanese government aims to achieve international influence and enhance its diplomatic ties by highlighting its cultural treasures. Furthermore, the campaigns' goal is to transform the traditional or old notions of Japan into contemporary cultural identity the attracts people worldwide.

## Historical background of Cool Japan

The Cool Japan term is believed to be coined by an American journalist. McGray (2002) states that the American Pop-culture discovered and regulated the Japanese coolness because the American culture had strong influence on the Japanese society after the World War two. Japanese society were influenced by American culture that the Charli Chaplin films were already famous in Japan prior to WWII. The Japanese society were attracted to American life after becoming aware of the modern media despite facing unemployment and lack of shelter, food and clothes. American cultural components like films, music and animated cartoon popularity increased in the Japanese society, but in 1970s the American pop-culture popularity saw a decline among the audience while at the same time Japan stabilized its economy in 1960s and transformed into an opulent society, Japan during this time was exposed to a variety of cultures especially the western cultures that is European culture introduced small boutiques and fashion magazines in Japan (Matsui, 2005; Akagi, 2007).

Resultantly, the American culture lost its popularity and Japanese culture saw increase in its consumers. In the 1980s, the American fondness transformed into exhilarated state of celebrations of Japanese as it was revealed that the Japanese culture products and exports

had become significant part of American's daily life and Japan could contribute to US-economy model, according to the famous book *Japan as number one: lessons for America* (Vogel, 1979, as cited in Matsui, 2014,p.83). Yet, these celebrations lasted for a decade as Japan in 1990s went through "the lost decade" The lost decade is a phrase coined in 1990s on the economic recession Japan faced during that time (Halton, 2024). Aside from the suffering of the prolonged eco-recession, the America's strong IT sector, South Korea evolving as an

Japanese societies discouragement due to their stagnant economic recession decreased with the raising popularity of their cultural products like Games, Pokémon series and Hello Kitty etc., these products became part of Japanese kids' daily life and abroad. The Japanese anime series dominate the children shows in the America and the Times magazine even made the Pokémon series coverage (Nikkei Business, 2004; McGray, 2002). Additionally, Hayao Miyazaki's animated film the spirited away won the academy award which indicated that animation was not only for children but modern art kind that attracted adults too. A Japanese artist Takashi Murakami sold his cartoon figure art for US\$ 567,500 at an auction in New York confirmed the new image of Japan. Furthermore, a young US's journalist wrote a piece on the foreign affairs in 2002 named as "Japan's Gross National Cool" further validated that Japan is a culture Giant (Superpower) and triggered the initiation of cultural nationalism (Sakamoto, 2007).

McGray (2002) disclosed in his work Japan which was raising as a cultural power in 1980s but saw a downfall due to economic recession has now raised as world economic power even with its GDP recession, it still developed a strong force known as Gross National Cool. This coolness is a kind of soft power, a term coined by Nye (2008) to highlight that a state can influence other state through unconventional means (political, economic and cultural) rather than using conventional ones. Pop-culture, electronics and fashion etc. were one of the areas which were involved in Japan's influence in abroad. McGary (2002) when translated in Japanese language and became part of special issue of theory on founding Japan through culture gained Japanese scholars and societies attention.

After that the term Cool Japan or Japan Cool was frequently used by the scholars a new kind of nationalism emerged, this led to administration's interest in promoting the idea of Cool Japan campaign officially. Although some say that the government involvement or initiatives were ineffective, it led to the commence of a new industrial policy which focused on Japanese content industries. For the individuals who contributed to the export of Japanese cultural products, Japanese famous magazine came up with Japan Cool Award in 2004 (Nikkei Business, 2004). Similarly, the Japanese famous

private university known as Meiji university launched a School of Global Japanese studies in 2007.

The Cool Japan campaign flaunts several Japanese creative industries which have the potential to reshape Japan's cultural identity on a global scale. One of these creative industries include Anime and Manga industry which consists of a broad global fanbase, such industries are associated with Japanese culture. The campaign displays these industries as medium for cross-culture communication along with being promoted as entertainment source. Similarly, Japanese gaming industry is known as home to top gaming developers worldwide. The campaign emphasizes Japanese gaming potential and qualities which broadens its attraction to the gaming consumers worldwide (Snow, 2024.p.54). Along with this, the campaign emphasizes on popular Japanese Cuisine like Sushi and Ramen etc. which are popular among the foreign public. It showcases Japanese culinary as a significant part of the campaign following its culinary export and boosting tourism. Another important part of the campaign is highlighting Japanese fashion industry, utilizing the fashion industry's potential to attract global attention and boost economy.

Additionally, the campaign aims to achieve a positive perception of Japan which depends on prompting its popular landmarks and pleasant cross-culture interactions. It consists of public diplomacy that is developing friendly ties and promoting goodwill and understanding between Japan and other states, for this, the campaign uses cultural diplomacy. The cultural diplomacy includes, cultural exchange programs, initiatives or cultural programs. Moreover, to develop a unified and attractive nation brand, the campaign utilizes popular icons of Japanese culture like cherry blossoms, traditional arts and culture, along with contemporary popular culture components particularly famous among youth worldwide (Craig, 2019).

### **Criticisms on Cool Japan Campaign**

Although the campaign has been proven quite effective in promoting Japan's soft power but still its faced by some criticisms and difficulties. According to Watanabe (2016) the vagueness and lack of clarity of the cool Japan concept, everything related to Japan or having Japanese traits is now termed as "Cool Japan", which caused its concept to be more unclear over time. An effective and precise concept is important for the cultural business to enhance. Then there is lack of precise target and story, Japan is rich with history and culture and it can earn approval or appreciation from the people worldwide. In order to do that it needs to have a clear target audience and a captivating story (context).

Moreover, there have been concerns raised against government's huge involvement and funding in Cool

Japan campaign, creating Cool Japan fund with \$1 billion US dollars which has resulted into no noticeable economic gains. Some scholars have raised their concerns and questioned the efficiency or success of the public-private partnership and inefficiency of bureaucracy. In comparison to South Korea's promotion of K-pop or its entertainment industry, there have been criticisms on Japanese culture projection strategies. Many calls for more innovative cultural strategies for Japan to compete against South Korea in the international cultural marketplace (Kawamura, 2009.p.16).

### **Japan Brand Assistance Program**

The Japan Brand Development Program was founded by METI in 2004 for the purpose of assisting support to small and medium enterprises in Japan to help them develop, boost regional economic development and to encourage local small businesses. It's a government effort to elevate modification and entrepreneurial spirit in Japanese local businesses (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2024). Its goal is to promote positive image and reputation of Japan globally, making it a nation loved and respect by the people worldwide, supporting SMEs growth and encouraging Japanese people towards business. The program's significance lies in the targeted, government supported initiative to promote nation branding and displaying Japan's preparedness to interact with foreign investors and public. Moreover, it's a constituent of a broader plan to highlight Japan's cultural assets to the international community, consisting of its customs, arts and literature, and traditional values. The program acts as a bridge to initiate cross-border business relations and international cultural exchanges.

Like Cool Japan campaign Japan Brand Program also faces obstacles and criticisms, one being the program's potential to generate broad economic gains and potency of government investments. People concern on the public-private complicated partnerships in implementing the program as well as inefficient bureaucratic institutions. The program is often compared with the neighbor's branding strategies mostly with South Korea's, calling the need for a more effective brand and cultural strategies (Dinnie, 2008.p.9).

Cool Japan campaign and Japan Brand Program are closely associated and are part of an extensive Japan's branding and cultural strategy. Both share same objectives of promoting Japan's positive image and supporting SMEs for economic gains, cross-border business relations and entrepreneurship which are part of broader Cool Japan goals. Similarly, both programs are government supported which were initiated by METI, the brand program is an accompaniment of Cool Japan campaign which assists the significant resources (SMEs) leading to developing products that can be marketed as component of Japan's cultural identity. Moreover, both programs

significant part of Japan's cultural diplomacy objectives (Farhan and Khoiriati, 2022). The Cool Japan serves as a strategy to promote Japan's soft power abroad and brand program assist it by supporting local brands that can contribute to Japanese cultural projection. Both programs main goal is local economic rejuvenation and both follow same criticisms and obstacles listed above.

### **Japanese Ministries and Cool Japan Campaign**

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's GPS on September 2000 was the first time when the word content was used in governmental documents, his speech was regarding the proposal for internet demonstration to override the misinterpretation of Japan on the internet (Sakai, 2007). Following this, the Intellectual Property Strategy was formulated by the IPC which was approved by the cabinet in 2002, it was regarding the assistance to the creation of attractive content and safeguarding of the content along with its marketing (Hatayama, 2005, as cited in Matsui, 2014.p. 86), in the 156<sup>th</sup> GPS in Jan, 2003, the then Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi, appraised the Academy Award winning Animation film the spirited away and it was the first time when a Japanese PM referred to their cultural product particularly pop-culture and it displayed the Koizumi government's dedication towards promoting Japanese pop-culture worldwide. After this, the FLIP was implemented in 2003 and the IP headquarters was approved by the cabinet office. In the 159<sup>th</sup> GPS, president Koizumi revealed the government's desire to generate profits by capitalizing the culture and developing attractive contents. He also stressed on the significance of the IP businesses promotion (Koizumi, 2004).

The IPH formed a group which overlooked the issues related to the content in 2003 and released a report which pointed out some issues regarding insufficient gains of the industry even with the Japanese content popularity. Unlike Japan other states like US, Europe, China and South Korea content industries were gaining sufficient profits. In 2007, the finalized report suggested the export of Japanese content, HR development, acquiring technologies and IPL effective implementation for content protection and lastly for sponsoring the content production (Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters, 2007). The headquarters had diverse cultural elements under it, under their terms of content industry and each administration emphasized on promoting its creative industries under the Cool Japan campaign, the Shinzo Administration started the AGI in 2007 whose objective was to make Japan an attractive and respectable country, for that it was suggested that the state needed to utilize its pop-culture to promote and brand itself abroad (The Council for the Asian Gateway Initiative, 2007).

### **METI's Industrial Policy**

Japanese METI main objective is to improve the states GDP. Based on this, currently METI's aim is to maximize the export of Japan's creative industry. For his purpose in 2001, METI established MCID at the CIP Bureau (ShuppanKontentsuKenkyukai et al, 2009, as cited in Matsui, 2014,p. 86). The main goal of MCID is market expansion for creative industry and increasing employment opportunities in the domestic market. For the organizational growth, METI partnered with JBF as its one of leading industry that assists entertainment agencies. For the overseas assistances METI initiated CODA in 2002. Its function is to assist the foreign Japanese content expansion and protect it from piracy or content theft. Moreover, JETO which comes under METI authority also assists in overseas Japan content expansion (Matsui, 2014.p.87).

Along with this, MCID founded CISSG in 2003 with the aim of assisting the creative industry for it to become leading contributor in Japan's economy and increasing its nation brand value in economic and cultural context (Research Society of Content Industry International Strategy, 2003). This led to the first time the METI included Cool Japan values and aims in its policies. It was in accordance to McGary's GNC, Nye's Soft power and Van Ham's brand state. According to Van, brand state is a strategy which comprises of outside worlds view regarding a specific country. He added that states are now moving towards internationalizing their image to influence foreign public rather that geopolitical world focus at the past (Van Ham, 2001).

The CISSG in 2006 founded the GSSG to assist in the CISSG group reports. In its report it suggested for global reach (Contents Global Strategy Study Group, 2007) and in this context, the Japanese International Content Festival initiated in 2007, it was given the name of "CoFesta". In this festival, movies, animations, manga and cosplay are celebrated for 1 month. And it is organized in foreign countries as well like Paris (2009), Singapore (2009) and Brazil (2010).

### MOFA's Cultural Diplomacy

Japanese MOFA incorporated Cool Japan values in 2003 in the form of cultural diplomacy. The Japan foundation under the MOFA jurisdiction which stated in its report that the center of national image was integral for economy and society which was more leaned towards negative side due to state's flaws in policies. The report suggested the utilization of states cultural resources (Kokusai, 2003, as cited in Matsui, 2014.p.90). Its initial commitment to Cool Japan values was the inauguration of the World Cosplay Summit, a cosplay competition in which fans from around the world competed imitating their favorite anime, manga or game characters (Galbraith, 2009). The first Cosplay Summit was

inaugurated in Nagoya in which the Japanese Foreign Minister presented the award to the winning person.

Following the success of Cosplay Summit, MOFA inaugurated Global Manga Award in 2007. In this the overseas manga authors who supported the Japan's cultural expansion were honored. The winners were awarded with 10-day free tour to Japan and tea ceremony. Hong Kong's Lee Chi Ching was the winner of first Global Manga Award. Additionally, the famous and worldwide popular Japanese animation series Doraemon was appointed as the state's first anime ambassador by the MOFA for its contribution towards Japanese cultural diplomacy and branding. The Doraemon Series is based on an alien cat more like robotic which can travel through time and it was known as the most top-selling anime series for 40 years (Sakurai, 2010).

### Japan Foundation (JF)

In 1972 JF was founded as a legalized foundation under the MOFA. It became an administration institute that was independent and government funded it with 78 billion yen and is supervised by the MOFA. In accordance to its law Article three, the motive of JSIAI is to expand the Japanese cultural content abroad through cultural exchange activities with the foreign states and improving its perception in the foreign public, which is the main component of cultural diplomacy and is in accordance to Cool Japan campaign vales. MOFA identifies mid-term goals and every 5 years JF develops a plan for the next five years cultural diplomacy activities and their execution. JF consists of 25 offices abroad in 24 states (Sakai and Fregonese, 2021.p. 12).

The cool Japan campaign along with JF are included in the 2018 Intellectual Property Strategic Program (IPSP). This program includes highlighting Japanese culture like pop-culture, architecture, cuisines and fashion abroad. The IPSP is a policy document which identifies actionable measures meanwhile the FLIP is a legal framework that makes rights and principles but both come under the umbrella of intellectual property management and Policy (Sakai and Fregonese, 2021.p. 15). The IPSP is authorized of funding and assisting the overseas increase of Japanese cultural content.

The JF Japanismes was held in Paris and other France's cities. It was an eight month long cultural festival starting from July 2018 and ending in February 2019. It highlighted Japan's traditional culture which attracted a lot of French population and artists (Japan Foundation, n.d.). the house of culture of Japan in Paris (MCJP) is like a representative of JF in France and it is involved in several Japanese cultural Expo just like Japanismes.

Breaden.J believes that the Japan foundation has proven itself to be useful in terms of its language education. Through Japan foundation's support, Japanese

language is embedded in school and university curricula in nations across the world currently. And students who are encountering Japanese language are also becoming aware of the Japanese culture which is a positive for the Japanese state (Breaden.J, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

### **MLIT's Visit Japan Campaign**

The cabinet office instructed the MLIT to increase inward tourism in Japan after the 2002 plan for management of finance, economy and structure reform was issued. Based on this MLIT formed a global tourism strategy (MLIT, 2002) for the purpose of boosting the visit Japan campaign. The campaign was advertised on media and when MLIT hired female popular artist as its goodwill ambassadors for foreign tourists. MLIT funded 67 million yen in 2006 on research to identify effective strategies for increased inbound tourism. MLIT along with education ministry formulated a strategy to attract tourists by utilizing famous anime. In this context, the Akihabara area in Taito city which is under the supervision of TIAJ and Akihabara Electrical Town Organization. The town gain the world attention as the center of Japanese pop-culture, where Japanese games, anime series and manga are easily accessible and it's also known as the area of otaku culture (Matsui, 2014.p. 91).

In 2008 the JTA was founded as inbound tourism was necessary to restoring Japan's economy. This agency also incorporates the cultural products under Cool Japan for its marketing. Similarly with the ongoing economic crises, Breaden. J identifies Tourism as the possible solution for the economic crises in Japan right now. He states that Japan has become a tourist giant and it still has some undiscovered potential. While economic boost can not only be dependent on tourism, it can become a cornerstone like in all other countries. He also identified challenges to the tourism growth which is balancing it with the needs of the local resident. Lastly, he added that overtourism is a big problem in some cities or areas of Japan just how it is in Rome, Venice and Paris (Breaden.J, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

### **ACA- The Agency for Cultural Affairs**

ACA operates under the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology which works on advancing the creative industry. Under the MEXT authority ACA has held many festival one of which is Japan Media Arts Festival (1997). In this the word media arts means promoting the computerized arts which include animation, manga, movies (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2001). There are four categories in which people compete, the first one is art, then games, then anime and lastly, manga. Due to some controversy, ACA was replaced by National Center for Media Arts (NCMA) in

2009 and used 11.9-billion-yen additional budget (Corkill, 2009). NCMA works as a center for research, HR development, gathering information concerning media arts.

### **Public-Private Partnership**

Under the cool Japan campaign there is an established platform for public and private partnerships. In that platform both government sectors and private companies of various backgrounds like some are creative companies, some are from manufacturing and even organizations participate in this platform (Cabinet Office, [n.d.](#)). Moreover, in 2008 JICA was re-established whose main purpose was to form cooperation with foreign states, organization and companies for economic and societal growth. It also deals with public-private partnership in which it interacts with foreign companies and assists Japanese SMEs to market globally(Forum-IDS, [n.d.](#)).

Similarly, in 1999 Japanese government passed an act known as Private Finance Initiative Act, in this the government promotes private businesses and initiatives and by 2022, about 932 projects across Japan have been recorded with many of them already in operation (Ushijima et al., 2023). Additionally, the Japanese MOFA along with JICA contributes to the governments agenda of private and government partnerships to obtain economic and social goals and affirms the governments realization of private sectors potential towards economic development.

### **Anime**

Historically, the first reported anime series dates back to early 20<sup>th</sup> century which were silent and black and white. Post WWII led to the modernization and evolution the animated serials. Anime refers to all the animated series but presently whenever Anime is mentioned, it means it is related to Jaan. Toei animation was founded in 1956 with the goal to become the East's Disney (Yamaguchi, 2013). Takahata Isao and Hayao Miyazaki were also associated with Toei and later established studio Ghibli. The main difference between Disney and anime is that Disney content was made according to children's preferences while anime series could be enjoyed by all the ages and their thematic scope included all aspects of life. Its included sports, horror, sci-fic, and slice of life anime covers wide range of genres which diversifies its target audience and distinguishes itself from Disney or western media (Price, 2001). According to the Japanese Animation Association about 60-member animation companies now reach about 87.2% of the global population in 112 states (Racoma, 2014).

Japanese culture is so diverse that they also give reference to global products through their pop-culture like Shakespeare, and Hollywood movies into their

distinct animation style. This increase in Anime popularity has resulted in to wide range of fan groups globally, highlighting inter-cultural communications nature of anime. Fans also participate by recreating their versions of their famous anime or manga series in their language or according to their culture and enriching language of anime time to time. Netflix reports that in 2020 about a 100 million houses watched anime on Netflix. In 2023 about 3.5 billion people were reported to watch anime on Netflix (Atherton, 2024). Japan faced a great challenge in the latter half of 20<sup>th</sup> century when its economy was 50% destroyed but the utilized anime as soft power to brand themselves and revitalize their economy. The 1980s economic boom during which Japanese economy was skyrocketing was also called by other as Japanese miracle. But soon the state went through the economic recession.

Even though, Anime focuses on fantasy genres but still Japanese culture, their values and architecture are presented in it. This led to the emergence of otaku culture, the Japanese government along with Studio Ghibli worked towards utilizing Japan's soft power through anime and manga, incorporating cool Japan campaign values. Japanese PM Tao in 2009 expressed the government's desire to make 20 or 30 trillion-yen anime market by linking anime with overseas business and further creating job opportunities in the local market (Aso, 2009). Durante.T states that in his view Japanese Anime as short of animation if Japan's greatest cultural export at the moment. Moreover, Japanese video game industry is also influential as its one of the largest and has its influence globally (Durante.T, personal communication, August 4, 2024). Moreover, Breaden J. also declares Anime as effective cultural product whose success according to him is both long-term and subtle. He reveals that he himself watched Japanese anime Astro Boy during childhood and without even knowing that's it was Japanese originated. The story line and entertainment were appealing to him and he believes that it is soft power at it most powerful (Breaden.J, personal communication, July 29, 2024).

Cool Japan is based on Amine and Manga, Nintendo saved industries in 80s and 90s, despite that Amine and Manga portray clear image of Japanese Culture in which games have difficulty in portraying. In my country Mexico, which is very centralized, Anime was more popular as it was on broadcasted in Public TV. So, Japanese protect their content, there is a social issue of population decline and it took 20 years for Japan is realized that they need foreign market. The first was K-Pop taking notes and not making the same mistakes as Japan. AS compare to Japan, they were eager to make foreign markets. But Japan is now catching up to Korea's pop culture. Anime spreaded through public broadcast. Amine is at the top; Manga's distribution was harder

before internet and then games (Pelaez. E, personal communication, August 22, 2024).

### **Hayao Miyazaki's-Studio Ghibli**

Hayao Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli are considered as the backbone of Japanese cultural diplomacy and brand image due to their economic and cultural contributions and attracting worldwide attention towards Japan. Studio Ghibli makes distinguishes from western animation due to is presentation of Japanese culture and unique art style. Its films are appreciated by people of all age. The Grave of the Fireflies was the first popular movie that studio Ghibli presented to the world, it was based on war challenges and its destruction. After this movie, the academy awarded movie was showcased with shifted the influences of Japanese soft power and image, the spirited away, it was the first Japanese animation with Oscar award (Tiernan, 2022).

Many films by studio Ghibli are popular among the audience worldwide and recently, Hayao Miyazaki's another film "The boy and the heron" also won academy award in 2024, the movie is based on a young boy searching for his mother who got separated from him due to war. Hayao Miyazaki is the only Japanese animated director with two Oscar academy awards (Pulver, 2024). These movies by studio Ghibli were just some products that boosted the Japanese cool Japan campaign.

### **Manga**

The word manga means fanciful pictures or drawings that make people curious, Hokusai coined the term manga and he was a well-known painter during the Edo period. His popular paintings include great wave of Kanagawa with mount fuji at the back. Hokusai's 17 sketch books are now preserved in Japanese museum. His sketches were based on Japanese supernatural contents, scenery and daily life. His sketches were in ukiyo-e-style which is quite different form modern style manga (Laaksonen, 2021).

The modernization in manga came after the WWII which consisted of big eyes and freakish hairstyles, in the Edo period the hairstyle on characters were realistic. This odd manga style was influenced by the American comic style and cartoons. Moreover, the Edo period manga were more like characters and superstitious culture without story and such but the modern manga is based on story and its development with a lot of genres. Manga has significantly contributed in GDP of Japan. According to AJMBPA 2016 report on the manga sales, it raised 0.4% from 2015 and contributed about 3.8 billion US dollars to the GDP in 2016. According to the cabinet office manga contribute 0.08% to GDP, it's a huge amount for a subsection cultural element, which shows manga influence in Japan and abroad (Hermenau, 2018,p.64).

Along with this manga are now used advertisements by a lot of companies for larger market share. The political parties are including manga in their campaigns for public support. Manga are more than placed in libraries or cafes they have their own museums roughly about four and studio Ghibli's is one of them (Hermentau, 2018,p.65). Manga has become a significant part of Japan's society and its modern culture.

### Japanese Video Games

Japanese gaming industry has become a vital part of its cultural marketing and diplomacy. It's a major part of Japanese cultural identity in which there is a mixture of traditional Japanese culture, story and superficial concepts that attract the gamers worldwide. This gives a platform for gamers that is entertaining and also educational awareness regarding Japanese culture (Watanabe, 2023). Economically, Japan comprises of global third largest market after China and America, in 2020 the gaming industry contributed 19 billion US dollars in Japan's GDP. Japanese iconic games like Pokémon and Super Mario became essential source for its cultural promotion abroad.

Pokémon series started to air in 1996, at first it was an animated series and the success of the series led to developing a game series of it named as Pokémon Go. It was launched in the gaming market in 2016 and there were about 100 million downloads of the game in just a few days. The success of this game in the market highlighted a new strategy for Japan and that was to use advance technology for its cultural projection. Presently, the game has contributed a 100 million US dollars to the GDP and is still one of the most liked games in the global gaming society (NoHo, 2024). Additionally, another game is well-liked named as Super Mario, this franchise with 368 million copies sale, is the top-selling game of all time. The game was developed by Nintendo and is the most famous Japanese game of all time.

The value of gaming industry of Japan by 2021 is about 19 billion US dollars, the Japanese global gaming market share declined in early 2000s but it sustained itself and became a vital contributor to gamers worldwide. At the domestic level, the Japanese citizens spend 7 hours every week on Japanese games which boost its economy and GDP. To assist and boost the gaming industry the METI has initiated several programs for its funding and market networking. The Japanese government also arranges several festivals to promote Japanese gaming culture like Tokyo Game Show in which gamers from all over Japan and world come gather in a platform and compete (Cloutboost, 2021). Technologically, Japan's huge investment in augmented reality and virtual reality has placed Japan as one of the most innovative gaming technologies in the world. The games like Pokémon Go

and Super Mario have effectively contributed economically and culturally in cool Japan values.

### Japanese Cuisine

Japanese cuisine like all the other cultural components is an essential part of cultural projection as it attracts tourism and influences the foreign public's perception on Japan. Iconic Japanese dishes that will be discussed are sushi and ramen which are well-liked Japanese dishes abroad. Sushi and ramen shops are now everywhere around the world. According to a report by MAFF, Japanese restaurant abroad have increased 5 times more in the last 10 years (Global Japanese Cuisine Research, n.d.), which shows foreign public interest in Japanese culture and cuisine. The Americas market has undergone an increase in Japanese food items and beverages. Furthermore, it's a gateway to learning about Japanese culture, their traditional and modern dishes.

The Japanese cuisines contribute to cool Japan campaign and according to JNTO, in 2019 the inward tourism increased to 31.9 million due to Japanese culinary attraction and influence (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2024). Another term for this is used known as culinary diplomacy Culinary diplomacy or gastrodiploamacy is defined as spreading culinary traditions through state and non-state actors as a means of communicating values, culture, and traditions. Culinary diplomacy has gained popularity recently and has shown to be a successful means of bringing people together and mutual understanding (Diplomacy.edu, n.d.) or Gastrodiploamacy. In this case a special Washoku day is celebrated on which people from all over the world come to celebrate Japanese dishes and market networking. The JNTO has also launched a learning program which is aimed at teaching foreign chefs about Japanese cuisines and unique ingredients to foster mutual understanding and cooperation. Economically, the Japanese culinary market's worth is 100 billion US dollars with its huge export Such a huge market generated employment opportunities which uplift local domestic markets. Similarly, culinary tourism is an important promotor in Japanese economy. About 40% tourists reported Japanese cuisine as their reason in visiting Japan when a survey was done (Innova Market Insights, 2024).

The cool Japan campaign has effectively spread the positive perception of Japanese culture leading to economical, societal and cultural gains. The economic gains transcend beyond the tourism. The success of cool Japan is apparent the direct impact on its national image is also clear.

### Conclusion

Japan's cultural diplomacy has become fundamental part of its diplomatic strategies which contributes to its soft

power, its economy and national image abroad. In this its pop-culture plays a major role, the popularity of Japanese Anime, Manga, and video games. In 2020, Japanese anime industry generated about 24 billion \$, in 2022 it was \$26 billion, and 28\$ in 2023, the anime market is predicted to grow by 60 billion US dollars by 2031(SkyQuest, [2024](#)). Similarly, events like Anime Expo etc. attract foreign public, and popular franchises like Pokémon and studio Ghibli's animated films has made Japanese global cultural position stronger. In term of Japanese cuisines, with the tourism increasing Japanese restaurant industry also flourishes. Japanese restaurant earned about 12.6 trillion Japanese yen in 2023 and this amount is expected to increase more in the future (Arba, [2024](#)). The dedication of Japan in branding itself via CD became evident when in 2023 Japan was ranked at the top in the nation brand index (Ipsos, 2023). Similar to this in 2020 Japan ranked

at first in future brand country index (FutureBrand, [2020](#)). In terms of soft power Japan ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in Asian Soft power index in 2023 with 37.2 score (Lowy Institute, [n.d.](#)).

The Japanese development is dependent on its cultural diplomacy (Anime, Manga, Games and Cuisine) especially economic and national image. Thorough traditional and modern culture (popular culture) promotion, Japan has been successful in attracting foreign public especially through its cool Japan campaign and the government involvement or dedication in making cool Japan a success. However, there do lay some challenges which needs to be highlighted, as Japan utilizes its cultural assets, its ability and that abilities success will be vital for enhancing its global image.

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