NATIONAL IMAGE OF SOUTH KOREA: IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the national image of South Korea by employing Q methodology. A structured Q sample of 36 photos representing (1) culture, (2) history, (3) economy, (4) people, (5) place, and (6) political system of Korea was sorted by 30 participants (10 Koreans, 10 Korean-Americans, and 10 non-Koreans) from (-4) "most uncharacteristic of Korea" to (+4) "most characteristic of Korea." Two factors emerged from the subsequent correlation and factor analysis of the 30 Q sorts representing distinct views of Korea: (A) Advanced economy and technology and (B) historical view emphasizing the political system. Factor A participants associated the images of high-tech products such as a smartphone and a premium sports sedan manufactured by Korean companies with their view of Korea, while Factor B participants highlighted the images illustrating the divided situation of the Korean Peninsula and other historically important political moments.

INTRODUCTION

National image is one of the most salient concepts in the era of globalization. The relationship between a country's national image and public diplomacy is a growing area of interest for scholars and public diplomats. Positive and negative country images can impact a county's international influence, its economic interests, and power on the international stage. National image is tied to a country's ability to build and maintain positive relationships with other countries, as well as international audiences. This open communication is crucially important for successful public diplomacy. This paper explores the relationship between "visual" national image and public diplomacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

National Image and Soft Power

The simplest definition of national image is the images formed in one's head about a foreign country.[1] The concept of national image has often been explored from the social-psychological perspective. Kunczik posits that 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."[2] National image deals with the opinion formed by the international public's perceptions and judgments.[3]

Why does national image matter? National image affects a person's attitudes toward the country, its people, and its products.[4] A positive national image can influence the country's ability to build alliances and consequently enlarge the country's international influence – that is, its soft power. Extending the argument made by E. H. Carr decades ago, Joseph Nye coined the term "soft power" in 1990. According to Nye, soft power refers to "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments."[5] It is gained through the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. A favorable national image can be a political asset that is more valuable than territory or raw materials.[6] On the other hand, a negative national image has the potential to cause future crisis or even military conflict.[7]

This function of national image is becoming more crucial today as nations desire to more actively participate in global affairs and enhance their status on the global stage.[8] It explains why responsible governments put increasing efforts and resources into discovering how international audiences perceive their country and developing more effective managing strategies of their national image. These efforts are all part of public diplomacy.

Public Diplomacy

Public diplomacy is the process of opening doors of communication and building positive international relationships. The objective of public diplomacy is to improve the understanding of a specific country,[9] construct an appealing national image,[10] and ultimately influence the policies of foreign governments by affecting their citizen's opinion towards the nation.[11] In sum, public diplomacy aims to win "the hearts and minds of people around the world."[12]

In its early stage, public diplomacy was understood as "an extension of traditional diplomacy,"[13] driven mainly by the government to effectively communicate its policies to foreign peoples.[14] However, along with globalization, the spread of democracy, and the innovations in communication technologies, the definition of

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1   Walter Lipmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1922).

2   Michael Kunczik, *Image of Nations and International Public Relations* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997), 47.

3   Jian Wang, "The Power and Limits of Branding in National Image Communication in Global Society," *International Political Communication* 14, no. 2 (2008): 9-24.

4   Simon Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

5   Joseph S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

6   Eytan Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 55-77.

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8   Xiufang Li and Chitty Naren, "Reframing National Image: A Methodological Framework," *Conflict & Communication Online* 8, no. 2 (2009): 1-11.

9   Nicholas Cull, "Public Diplomacy: Taxonomies and Histories." *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 31-54; Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy"; Li and Chitty, "Reframing National Image".

10   Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94-109; Jian Wang, "Managing National Reputation and International Relations in the Global Era: Public Diplomacy Revisited." *Public Relations Review* 32 (2006): 91-96.

11   Howard H. Frederick, *Global Communication and International Relations* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1993); Gifford D. Malone, *Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication: Organizing the Nation's Public Diplomacy* (Lanham, MD, London: University Press of America, 1988); Hans N. Tuch, *Communicating with the World: U.S. Public Diplomacy Overseas* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Institute for the Study of Public Diplomacy, 1990).

12   Gilboa, "Searching for a Theory of Public Diplomacy", 55.

13   Wang, "Managing National Reputation and International Relations," 91.

14   Tuch, Communicating with the World.

public diplomacy has been expanded. Signitzer and Coombs emphasize the growing interdependence among governments, private individuals, and groups when defining public diplomacy.[15] Anholt also asserts that it is only through the coordinated and long-term efforts of the government and all national stakeholders that a country can have a real chance to affect its national image in a positive way.[16]

Thus, modern public diplomacy refers to noncoercive efforts by governmental or nongovernmental entities to understand, inform, and influence international publics to promote national interest.[17] In this vein, public diplomacy is different from traditional diplomacy, which is "formal, official, government-to-government interaction by designated representatives of sovereign states."[18]

In order to achieve the goal of public diplomacy, a must-preceded step is the correct measurement of national image. Without knowing what the current national image is, it is difficult for any country to recognize progress or improvement through public diplomacy.

Measuring National Image

National image is inherently intricate and fluid, making it difficult to simplify what a country's actual national image is.[19] Fan argues that even if a nation has a somewhat favorable image, this is generally confined only to one or two aspects, rather than covering the entire country.[20]

Scholars have developed a more comprehensive approach to measure the many dimensions of national image. Berlin and Martin suggest that national image incorporates natural resources, general and tourist infrastructure, companies and products, people and culture, national characteristics, history and traditions, as well as intangibles.[21] Fan also proposes that national image subsumes factors such as place, natural resources, people, history, culture, language, political systems, economic systems, social institutions, and infrastructure.[22]

These dimensions are reflected in the most widely used measurement models for country reputation – a cumulative form of national image. The Fombrun-RI Country Reputation Index (CRI) - developed by Passow, Fehlmann and Grahlow in coordination with Charles J. Fombrun and the Reputation Institute - is one popular model.[23] As an adapted version of the Harris-Fombrun Reputation Quotient (RQ), the CRI includes 20 items for the six dimensions of country reputation perceived by people outside of the country. The items are split into six dimensions as follows: [24]

a. Emotional appeal: How much the country is liked, trusted, and respected by international audiences.
b. Physical appeal: How the country's infrastructure (roads, housing, services, health care, and communications) is perceived by international audiences.
c. Financial appeal: How the country's degree of industrial development, growth prospects, profitability, and risk of investment are perceived by international audiences.
d. Leadership appeal: How well the country exhibits a strong leadership, upholds international laws, and communicates an appealing vision of the country
e. Cultural appeal: How well the country maintains the values of diversity, appealing culture, and a rich historical past
f. Social appeal: How much the country takes responsibility as a member of the global community, supports good causes, and its environmental policies

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15   Benno Signitzer and Timothy Coombs, "Public Relations and Public Diplomacy: Conceptual Divergence," *Public Relations Review* 18, no. 2 (1992): 137-147.

16   Anholt, Competitive Identity.

17   Nye, *Soft Power*; Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power."

18   Nancy Snow, *The Arrogance of American Power: What U.S. Leaders Are Doing Wrong and Why It's Our Duty to Dissent* (Oxford: U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), 186.

19   Ying Fan, "Branding the Nation: Towards a Better Understanding," *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 6, no. 2 (2010): 97-103.

20   Ibid.

21   Asunción Beerli and Josefa Martin, "Factors Influencing Destination Image". *Annals of Tourism Research 31*, no. 3 (2004): 657-681.

22   Ying Fan, "Branding the Nation: What is Being Branded?" *Journal of Vacation Marketing* 12, no. 1 (2006): 5-13.

23   Tanja Passow, Rolf Fehlmann, and Heike Grahlow, "Country Reputation-From Measurement to Management: The Case of Liechtenstein," *Corporate Reputation Review* 7 (2005): 309-326.

24   Ibid., 313.

Another widely used measurement for national image is the Anholt-GFK Roper Nation Brands Index developed by Simon Anholt in coordination with the GFK group, Germany's largest market research institute.[25] The index, through an annual survey, measures global perceptions of countries and tracks their profiles. The National Brands Index measures the power and quality of each country's reputation across the following dimensions: culture, governance, people, exports, tourism, investment, and immigration.[26] In addition to these indexes, there is a wide range of surveys that measure national image of countries around the world.

Visual Communication

Often overlooked in these measurements, however, is the visual aspect of national image. Although scholars and practitioners have acknowledged that visual images play a significant role in public diplomacy,[27] the actual visions that people hold of foreign countries have been marginalized in the measurement of national image.

In today's society, where information is increasingly visual in nature,[28] national image is inseparable from visual messages. Visual images can sometimes allow us to glimpse beyond verbalized perception of foreign countries.[29] After all, national image is the "picture" in a person's head about foreign countries.[30] Survey questions, while invaluable, cannot comprehensively measure or reflect this picture.

Based on these ideas, this study employed the concept of visual communications to measure national image. This study adopted six dimensions of national image (culture, economy, history, people, place, and political system) based on the common elements of the aforementioned national image measurement models. Pictures were selected that embody respective dimensions of national image to examine people's perception of a given country.

National image of South Korea

The Republic of South Korea (Korea, hereafter) is the country examined in this case study. Korea has experienced dramatic changes during the past few decades. It has transformed itself from a war-torn country to an economic powerhouse in only half a century. Due to its blossoming economy, Korea has vigorously engaged in global governance and thus grown into a prominent player on the global stage.

However, the international perception of Korea has lagged behind these changes. For instance, the national image of Korea has long been intertwined with an ever-present sense of instability, mainly due to the Korean Peninsula division.[31] This gap between the reality and image is often the case for countries that have experienced political, economic, and social changes. Well established images of a nation do not automatically change when a nation has changed.[32]

The Korean government is attempting to narrow this gap between reality and image by telling international audiences about its changes. Nevertheless, managing national image is still a relatively new concept in Korea. It was not until 2010 that the Korean government officially launched public diplomacy efforts.[33]

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25   GfK Custom Research North America, Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, http://www.gfkamerica.com/practice_areas/roper_pam/nbi_index/ (accessed May 31, 2013).

26   Ibid.

27   Geoffrey Cowan and Amelia Arsenault, "Moving from Monologue to Collaboration: The Three Layers of Public Diplomacy," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 10-30; Dennis F. Kinsey and Olga Zatepilina, "The Impact of Visual Images on Non-U.S. Citizens' Attitudes about the United States: A Q study in Visual Public Diplomacy," *Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy*, 1 (2010): 25-32; Carnes Lord, *Losing Hearts and Minds: Public Diplomacy and Strategic Influence in the Age of Terror* (Westport, CT, London: Praeger Security International, 2006); Nye, *Soft Power*; Hyunjin Seo and Dennis F. Kinsey, "Meaning of Democracy around the World: A Thematic and Structural analysis of Videos Defining Democracy," *Visual Communication Quarterly*, 19:2 (2012): 94-107.

28   Paul M. Lester, *Visual Communication: Images with Messages* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006).

29   Robert Hariman and John L. Lucaites, *No Caption Needed: Iconic Photographs, Public Culture, and Liberal Democracy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007).

30   Lipmann, *Public Opinion.*

31   Youngsam Ma, Junghe Song, and Dewey Moore, "Korea's Public Diplomacy: A New Initiative for the Future." *Issue Brief* 39 (2012).

32   Fan, "Branding the Nation."

33   Ma, Song, and Moore, "Korea's Public Diplomacy."

It is imperative, at an early phase of public diplomacy, to build a firm foundation by precisely assessing one's own national image perceived by international audiences. This initial step is especially important for a middle-power country like Korea. Middle-power countries by definition are located somewhere between small or weak-power countries and great-power countries. Korea is a middle-power country based on economic size, population, and military capability.[34] National image management can provide middle-power countries increased opportunities to obtain or augment influence in world affairs beyond their limited hard power.[35]

METHOD

Q Methodology

Q methodology is a research method for a systematic investigation of human subjectivity demonstrating perspectives, opinions, attitudes, and sentiments.[36] Developed by British scholar William Stephenson,[37] Q methodology has been widely used in diverse fields, including political science, advertising, public relations, psychology, and medicine. Additionally, Q methodology has been used previously to study Korean national character and Korean values.[38]

Q methodology is a "rank-ordering procedure."[39] Participants are asked to rank-order or sort stimulus items (Q sample) according to instruction (e.g., from most characteristic to most uncharacteristic). These completed "Q sorts" are correlated and factor analyzed. People who sorted the items in a similar fashion will "load" together on a factor.[40] A factor represents a point of view or attitude held by those associated with that factor.

Q methodology is an appropriate method to use to investigate people's perceptions through visual images. In particular, insights into perspectives about Korea could make public diplomacy efforts by the Korean governmental and nongovernmental entities more productive and effective than current efforts.

Q Sample

The pictures in the Q sample came from images published online by Korean sources. Public diplomacy images were downloaded from the photo gallery of the Presidential Council on Nation Branding and the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism in Korea. Media images were selected from news/wire services and web sites such as Yonhap News Agency (www.yonhapnews.co.kr), Voice of People (www.vop.co.kr), SouthKoreaimage (www.southkoreaimage.com), Daily News (www.nydailynews.com), and Korea.net.

The final 36 photos were organized into the following six categories, each consisting of six images:

1. Culture (e.g., a *hanbok* fashion show, *bibimbap*, a K-pop group Girls' Generation, tae kwon do, Korean kids in *hanbok* playing tug-of-war, a traditional temple);
2. Economy (e.g., Samsung Galaxy SIII, Hyundai Genesis, a semiconductor, Korean analysts monitoring the stock market, a shipbuilding plant, a steel mill);
3. History (e.g., soldiers and evacuees walking toward opposite directions during the Korean War, the independence movement during the Japanese colonization, Kwangju democratic movement, 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup, M*A*S*H (a U.S. TV series about the Korean War), a candlelight rally against U.S. beef imports);
4. People (e.g., U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, people having an informal dinner with *soju*

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34   Yul Sohn, *Searching for A New Identity: Public Diplomacy Challenges of South Korea as A Middle Power* (Seoul, Korea: Korea Foundation, 2012).

35   Eytan Gilboa, "The Public Diplomacy of Middle Powers," *Public Diplomacy Magazine* 1, no. 2 (2006): 22-28.

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38   Steven R. Brown and Ki Jeong Kim, "The Indigenization of Methodology," *Social Science and Policy Research* [Seoul] 3, no. 3 (1981): 109-139; Steven R. Brown and Byung-ok Kil, "Exploring Korean Values," Asian Pacific: Perspectives 2, no. 1 (2002): 1-8. Downloaded from http://www.pacificrim.usfca.edu/research/perspectives.

39   Sue Westcott Alessandri, Sung-Un Yang, and Dennis F. Kinsey, "An Integrative Analysis of Reputation and A Relational Quality: A Study of University-Student Relationships," *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 18, no. 2 (2008): 154.

40   Ibid., 154.

(Korean version of vodka), a father giving his daughter a ride on his shoulders, high school students reading textbooks in a classroom, singer Psy doing the "Gangnam style" dance, a bride and groom in a traditional Korean wedding);

5. Place (e.g., skyscrapers in downtown Seoul, a Korean traditional restaurant, Chunggye Stream (a modern public recreation space in Seoul), Boseong Green Tea Farm, a university library, a rural landscape);

6. Political System (e.g., South and North Korean leaders shaking hands on the first day of the Inter-Korean summit in 2000, the national assembly, a national convention, candidates shaking hands with voters during a general election campaign, a voting citizen, South and North Korean soldiers facing each other at the Joint Security Area in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)).

Participants and Procedures

A convenience, nonprobability sample of 30 individuals (18 females and 12 males) was recruited to participate in this study. Participants consisted of 10 Koreans, 10 Korean-Americans and 10 non-Koreans, ranging in age from 21 to 84 years old (median age = 32.5), with 0 to 60 years of living experience in the United States. In order to represent their view of Korea, participants were asked to sort the Q sample images from -4 (the most uncharacteristic of Korea) to +4 (the most characteristic of Korea) in the following quasi-normal flattened distribution typical in Q-methodology studies (see figure 1).

Figure 1. Q-sort Distribution

Score	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4
Frequency	2	3	4	6	6	6	4	3	2

The completed Q sorts were correlated and factor analyzed using centroid extraction and rotated to simple structure with PQ Method, an online Q analysis software program.[41]

RESULTS

Two factors emerged from the subsequent correlation and factor analysis with varimax rotation of the 30 Q sorts (see Table 1). Thirteen participants were significantly loaded on Factor A, and 12 participants were significantly loaded on Factor B and six participants did not load on any factor. This adds to more than 30 because there was one confounded Q sort (i.e., loaded on both factors). The factors are moderately correlated (r = .42).

Table 1. Factor Matrix

| Subject # | Factor Loadings | | Age | Sex | Nationality | Yrs. In U.S. | Last in Korea |
	A	B					
1	X		28	F	Korean	6	2012
2	X		50	F	Korean	21	2012
3		X	41	M	Korean	5	2013
4	X		31	F	Korean	3	2013
5		X	67	F	Korean	0	2013
6		X	68	M	Korean	0	2013
7		X	34	F	Korean	0	2013
8		X	39	M	Korean-Amer	6	2013
9	X		85	M	Korean-Amer	26	2012
10		X	76	F	Korean-Amer	26	2012
11	X		22	F	Korean-Amer	13	2000

41   Peter Schmolck, "Q Method Page", http://schmolck.userweb.mwn.de/qmethod/ (accessed May 31, 2013).

12		X	23	M	Korean-Amer	12	2012
13		X	23	F	Korean-Amer	12	2008
14	X		25	F	Korean-Amer	13	2012
15		X	30	M	Korean-Amer	9	2012
16			28	M	Korean-Amer	2	2012
17	X		24	F	Korean-Amer	20	2011
18		X	24	F	Korean-Amer	18	2012
19	X		19	F	Korean-Amer	12	2012
20	X		19	M	Korean-Amer	19	2012
21	X		28	F	Other	28	2010
22			27	M	Other	27	Never
23	X		31	F	Other	31	Never
24	X	X	42	M	Other	42	Never
25			47	F	Other	47	Never
26			47	F	Other	47	Never
27			57	M	Other	57	1997
28		X	48	F	Other	0	Never
29			49	F	Other	15	1997
30	X		43	M	Other	20	Never

"X" indicates significant loading (p<.01)

Consensus items are those items (images) that are scored the same across both factors (groups). There can be positive consensus items (items that both factors scored characteristic of Korea); negative items (those images that both factors scored uncharacteristic); and neutral consensus items. Consensus items are important because they represent what participants share in common. Consensus items can "serve as the basis of communication" between people.[42] Knowing what the target publics have in common with one another is important insight for practitioners of public diplomacy.

Positive Consensus Items

Symbols of Korean culture (i.e., Korean food and drink) are positive consensus characteristics of Korea for both Factor A and Factor B respondents. For example, bibimbap, a signature Korean dish, was a strong consensus item, as was an informal dinner over a drink of soju (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> (4, 3) 4. *bibimbap*
> (3, 2) 6. Informal dinner with *soju*

Further evidence of the appeal of Korean culture for both factors can be seen in the positive scoring of other cultural images such as a Korean traditional wedding, the Korean martial art of tae kwon do, and people dressed in traditional costumes (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> (2, 4) 9. Korean traditional wedding
> (2, 1) 33. Tae kwon do
> (1, 3) 21. Korean women wearing *hanbok*

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42   Charles R. Mauldin, "Closing the Gap Between Communication Research and Communication," *Operant Subjectivity* 3 (1980): 83-100.

While the culture of food, drink, and traditional clothing is seen as characteristic of Korea across factors, the Korean Peninsula division is also seen as characteristic of Korea for participants in this study. The Korean Peninsula division is linked to any national image of Korea, as the scoring of the image of the historic handshake of the South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung and the North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il during the first Inter-Korean Summit in 2000, indicates (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

(2 , 4) 3. Handshake of the North and South Korean leaders during the Inter-Korean Summit in 2000.

In sum, the results for both factors indicate that culture is infused in the positive images participants hold of Korea with the ever-present Korean Peninsula division as an undertone.

Negative Consensus Items

The images that both factors scored as uncharacteristic of Korea were negative consensus items. These were images that encapsulated the current state of Korean political system (e.g., election, party politics), as indicated below (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

(-3, -3) 10. Voting citizen
(-2, -1) 22. National convention

Both factors also scored the image of the Korean National Assembly and national election campaign quite low (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

(-4, -1) 15. National Assembly
(-2, 0) 34. National election campaign

Participants on both Factor A and Factor B indicated that the images related to the democratic features of the Korean political system are uncharacteristic of their view of Korea. It is a notable point, especially given the long dynamic history of Korea's current democratic political system.

In addition to these similarly scored images, Table 2 shows that images were also scored that help us understand the different perspectives of Factor A and Factor B.

Table 2. Factor Arrays

Image	Factor Scores	
	A	**B**
1. Shipbuilding plant	-1	-1
2. University library	-2	-3
3. Inter-Korean summit handshake	2	4
4. *bibimbap*	4	3
5. Independent movement	-1	2
6. Informal dinner with *soju*	3	2
7. Singer Psy	3	0
8. Korean War	-1	1
9. Traditional wedding	2	4
10. Voting citizen	-3	-3
11. Boseong Green Tea Farm	-3	-3
12. Manufacturing semiconductor	1	-2
13. Stock market	1	-4
14. Skyscrapers in downtown	0	-2

15. National assembly	-4	-1
16. Kids playing tug-of-war	-1	2
17. Kwangju democratic movement	-3	1
18. Student and textbooks	2	1
19. Father and daughter	-2	-2
20. Korea-Japan World Cup	1	0
21. Women wearing *hanbok*	1	3
22. National convention	-2	-1
23. Chunggyecheon	0	-1
24. Hyundai Genesis	3	-1
25. Samsung Galaxy SIII	4	0
26. Traditional temple	0	2
27. Joint Security Area of DMZ	1	3
28. Girls' Generation	1	-1
29. Anti-U.S. beef import rally	-1	0
30. Rural landscape	-1	1
31. U.N. Sec.-Gen. Ban Ki-moon	0	0
32. M*A*S*H (TV series)	-4	-4
33. Tae kwon do	2	1
34. General election campaign	-2	0
35. Korean restaurant	0	1
36. Steel mill	0	-2

Factor A: Advanced economy and technology of Korea

Two obvious symbols of Korean technology (e.g., smartphones and automobiles) help define Factor A's perspective. Factor A respondents scored the image of the Samsung Galaxy SIII, the high-end Android phone, at the most characteristic end of their Q sorts with the image of Hyundai Genesis, a premium sports sedan, close to the top as well (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively).

(4, 0) 25. Samsung Galaxy SIII
(3, -1) 24. Hyundai Genesis

Further evidence of Factor A's embracing of an economic and technological Korea is the positive scoring of Korean researchers manufacturing semiconductors and the image of the Korean stock market (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

(1, -2) 12. Researchers manufacturing semiconductor
(1, -4) 13. Korean stock market

To summarize, Factor A participants see a modern Korea as illustrated by advanced technological innovation.

Factor B: Historical views emphasizing the political system of Korea

The ultimate illustration of the divided Korea Peninsula (e.g., Inter-Korean Summit, DMZ) is what Factor B respondents think most characterizes Korea. Factor B respondents scored the image of the handshake between South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il during the first Inter-Korean Summit in 2000 and the image of the Joint Security Area in the DMZ at the most characteristic and the second most characteristic end of their Q sorts (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> (2 , 4) 3. Handshake of the North and South Korean leaders during the Inter-Korean Summit in 2000
> (1, 3) 27. The Joint Security Area in the DMZ

Factor B respondents also scored the images of historically important political moments such as the independent movement during Japanese colonization, the Korean War, and the Kwangju democratic movement positively (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> (-1, 2) 5. Independent movement
> (-1, 1) 8. Korean War
> (-3, 1) 17. Kwangju democratic movement

Factor B participants also scored other traditional images of Korea positively (scores in parentheses for Factors A and B, respectively):

> (0, 2) 26. Traditional temple
> (-1, 1) 30. Rural landscape

To summarize, Factor B participants highlighted the images reflecting a long-term or historical view, especially emphasizing the political system of Korea as characteristic of the country.

DISCUSSION

This study explored what kinds of perceptions people hold of Korea by employing visual images. Participants were not given news stories related to the pictures; thus, they responded to the visual images alone. This design was based on the idea that "pictures have more than documentary value, for they bear witness to something that exceeds words."[43]

Although every respondent evaluated the same images in a different way, their responses shared a certain degree of similarity. The positive consensus items suggest that culture is part of any image that respondents hold of Korea. This is fairly consistent with the literature that has emphasized the role of culture in public diplomacy.[44]

The advanced economy and technology as well as the history of the Korean Peninsula emerged as two representative national perceptions of Korea. Also worth mentioning is that although the latter image was closely related to the political aspect of Korea, not all pictures from the political system category were perceived as characteristic of Korea. Pictures depicting the current state of the Korean political system – mainly the democratic structure – were all viewed as uncharacteristic of Korea.

This result is in line with the relatively low scoring of Korean pop culture images. The fast growing global popularity of Korean pop culture, nicknamed the Korean Wave, has been recognized as one of the most valuable soft power assets of Korea.[45] However, this study showed that the picture of the most prominent K-pop star Psy, with mega-hit songs "Gangnam Style" and "Gentleman," was perceived as a characteristic image of Korea only by Factor A respondents (score 3) but not by Factor B respondents (score 0). The picture of Girls' Generation, a K-pop group enjoying high global popularity, received low scores for both Factor A (score 1) and Factor B

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43   Hariman and Lucaites, *No Caption Needed,* 1.
44   Cull, "Public diplomacy"; Malone, *Political Advocacy and Cultural Communication;* Nye, *Soft Power.*
45   Ma, Song, and Moore, "Korea's Public Diplomacy."

(score -1), indicating that it was not perceived as a characteristic image of Korea. This could be partly because the K-pop group is better known in Asia than in the U.S., where the Q sort was conducted, but it is still a point worth considering.

These findings imply that the modern or current characteristics of Korea have not fully infiltrated into the national image of Korea yet. People's perception of Korea is somewhat confined to the past or history of Korea. As mentioned, this is often the case for countries that have been through drastic changes in a relatively short period of time.

These findings can be a meaningful starting point for Korea toward more productive and competitive public diplomacy. Precise assessment of its current national image will help Korea further narrow the gap between the reality and the perceived image. Additional exploration of the relationship between individuals' nationality, as well as experience related to Korea and their perceived view of Korea, will make rich research in the future.

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