

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ScholarWorks@UARK

International and Global Studies Undergraduate
Honors Theses

International and Global Studies

5-2023

Commodification of Korean Culture in the West: Orientalism in the era of modern social media

Samantha Giudice

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/ingsuht>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#), [Asian Studies Commons](#), [Korean Studies Commons](#), and the [Other Film and Media Studies Commons](#)

Citation

Giudice, S. (2023). Commodification of Korean Culture in the West: Orientalism in the era of modern social media. *International and Global Studies Undergraduate Honors Theses* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/ingsuht/10>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the International and Global Studies at ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in International and Global Studies Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact scholar@uark.edu.

**Commodification of Korean Culture in the West:
Orientalism in the era of modern social media**

An Honors Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for Honors Studies in
Asian Studies

By
Samantha Giudice

Spring 2023
Asian Studies

William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences
The University of Arkansas

Abstract:

South Korea, hereafter referred to as Korea, lies within the Korean Peninsula. It currently boasts a population of 53 million people residing within 38,724 square miles and a GDP of 1.811 trillion US dollars, making it the 13th largest economy in the world. Since the Korean War to today Korea has turned into a major economic and cultural epicenter remaining at the center of technological advancements and pop culture production. While the exportation of this pop culture has allowed the economy grow at unprecedented rates, it has also led to less favorable interactions with Korean culture by people all over the world.

This research focuses on the creation and development of cultural commodification through social media within the 21st century. By framing the issue both through social media but also through modern understandings of exoticization, orientalism, and othering this research posits that the ability to view, interact, and consume South Korean culture outside of its naturalized home leads to cultural commodification. Through such media consumption, the South Korean other has become a commodity in the orientalist West.

In conducting this research, I looked at the ways antiquated terms such as orientalism apply to a contemporary context, the power given to Whiteness within the internet and abroad, the effects of the echo chamber of social media on the anti-globalization movement within South Korea and interviewed Korean women to understand their views on the growing animosity towards women within Korea.

Acknowledgments:

I would like to express my deep gratitude to those who have supported me and encouraged me throughout this project. My family, who has supported me on the journeys this project has taken me, my professors, who have created and nurtured my interests in a wide variety of topics, and my thesis advisor Dr. Kelly Hammond who has been my main support throughout my undergraduate career. Dr. Hammond continues to help me channel my passions and ideas in the creation of this project. Her courses have continued to challenge me in the best ways possible and have made me the most competent student possible. This project would not have been possible without the support of Dr. Hammond.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
INTRODUCTION.....	5 - 14
DISCUSSION AND ELABORATION	15 -27
CONCLUDING REMARKS	28 - 47
BIBLIOGRAPHY	39 - 40

Introduction:



Photo 1 depicts South Korean men protesting against feminism and claiming that they are victims of reverse discrimination by women. The signs read “페미니즘 규탄한다” which translates to “I condemn feminism,” and “남성혐오 중단하라” which translates to “Stop male hatred.”¹

By December of 2021 Korean anti-feminist leader of the group “Men’s Solidarity” Bae In Gyu (pictured above) had led over a dozen rally’s and created a popular Instagram account for the Men’s Solidarity program boasting over eight thousand followers.² This event serves as a culmination of the modern phenomena between social media usage and cultural commodification. The aim of this research is to develop an understanding for the modern commodification of cultures, and to further isolate the cause. It is only through the understanding of commodification practices that the act of treating culture and its practices as objects to be bought, sold, and consumed can be stopped, and this

¹ Jean Mackenzie, “As South Korea Abolishes Its Gender Ministry, Women Fight Back,” BBC News (BBC, December 14, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-63905490>.

² Salome Grouard, “South Korean Women Face Hate Attacks as an Antifeminist Movement Grows,” South China Morning Post, November 13, 2021, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3155871/south-korean-women-fight-back-disillusioned-young-men-see-cancel>.

research seeks to find a way of identifying solutions to such dehumanizing practices. As social media continues to extend the reach of modern citizens, especially those in wealthier Western nations, it places the ability to exoticize foreign societies into the hands of millions. The ability of this commodification not only has negative connotations but perpetuates a dehumanizing cycle for the Korean people. Through modern social media the ability to consume another culture has never been so easy. Cultures far different from one's own continue to inspire awe, and it is in this fascination with the culture that commercial values take root within the transnational society. Before explaining the of the impact this commercial value has brought to culture within South Korea (hereafter referred to as Korea), it is necessary to further define a variety of terms including exoticization, the anthropological concept of othering, and "orientalism" as it applies to the past, present, and future.³ Together, these terms frame my understanding of modern cultural commodification in Korea.

³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London, UK: Penguin, 2021).

Literature Review:

This research first examines exoticization and the relationship it creates regarding othering, orientalism, and commodification. The idea of exoticization is rooted in the sharp distinction between *us* and *them*. By highlighting the otherness of *them* the *us* is elevated, “*our* superiority is unmarked by marking *their* inferiority.”⁴ Within the context of this research such a relationship is viewed in regards to *Oegugin* (외국인: Korean for “foreigner”) influencers, these social media influences are almost always white-presenting non-Korean citizens who inscribe the wonders and excellence of Korean culture while simultaneously adopting nationalistic tones, highlighting the *them* of Koreans and elevating the *us* of white-presenting foreigners within a Korean space.⁵ This “marking” is crucial to the understanding of exoticization. For something to be exotic, it must display characteristics outside of what is considered normal; while this is a rather low bar considering the diversity that occurs in everyday life, this fundamentalist approach is nonetheless important.⁶ For something to be exotic it must be “alien,” hailing from outside of the dominant culture while tokenism is where something from the outside is brought into the inner circle to “be pointed to or shown.”⁷ Within the Korean context, white-presenting foreigners are able to simultaneously serve as tokens while also exoticizing the culture, this is because it is very difficult for someone who is white to truly be on the outside of, however their existence in societies such as Korea is always inflated due to the homogeneity in regards to appearance of the society. The inherent differences found within cultures dissimilar to one’s own is where the

⁴ Jin Lee, “Racism, Stereotypes and Censorship: The Dark Side of Foreign Influencer Culture in South Korea,” Scroll.in, October 30, 2022, <https://scroll.in/article/1035944/racism-stereotypes-and-censorship-the-dark-side-of-foreign-influencer-culture-in-south-korea>.

⁵ Jin Lee.

⁶ Koichi Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism: Japan and Its Other,” *Continuum* 8, no. 2 (1994).

⁷ Susan Hawthorne, “The Politics of the Exotic: The Paradox of Cultural Voyeurism,” *NWSA Journal* 1, no. 4 (1989): p. 625.

exotic meets fascination. While this fascination can remain a simple curiosity, it can also monetize, and that is where exoticization meets the Western consumer.

For this example to make sense under the umbrella of capitalism it is important to understand the ways in which Korean capitalism are similar to Western capitalism and they ways in which it is dissimilar. Korean capitalism began to really grow within the cold-war framework under the United States. This capitalism was imposed upon Korea by United States authorities and the Korean leadership ultimately had little choice in the matter. Beginning in the mid-1960s a new form of capitalism called “Guided Capitalism” was put in place within Korea to foster United States guided economic growth to enter Korea into the capitalist market.⁸ However, Korean capitalism today does not echo this heavy presence of the United States nearly as much as it did in the 1960s, for all purposes Korea may have “borrowed” capitalism from outside states due to their institutions not being prepared economically or politically for the change, but that does not change the cultural makeup of Korea that inevitably also entered the marketplace.⁹

The legacy of the Korean dynasty’s continues to have a foothold in Korean capitalism, Confucian ideals from the Choson Dynasty mix in elements such as authoritarianism, statism, collectivism, and education aspirations. While this view of Confucian elements reflects a Japanese-style bureaucratic authoritarianism system as could be found in colonial Korea, it continues to shape the way Korean capitalism operates.¹⁰ However, Korean culture itself also plays a large part in what makes capitalism within Korea different. Korean nationalism still remains heavily prevalent today, and it can be traced back to Japanese annexation of Korea in

⁸ James M. West, “Review Essay: The Suboptimal ‘Miracle’ of South Korean State Capitalism,” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 19, no. 3 (1987): pp. 68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1987.10409882>.

⁹ James M. West, p. 70.

¹⁰ James M. West, p. 71.

1910, the colonial administration that was installed into the Korean peninsula sought to erase the identity of Koreans and assimilate them into the Japanese empire. The Korean people fought to keep their identity and protested in March of 1919, out of these protest movements Koreans began to create the production of Korean made products as well as the creation of Korea universities. This idea created a strong relationship between the Korean nationality and capitalism.¹¹ Korean nationalism serves as a pushing point for capitalism within Korea, and while other influences of Korean capitalism exist, nothing serves as much of a push towards Korean capitalism's success as their nationalism.

In the west, capitalist consumption relies on the production of new goods, or simply the apparent newness of some old goods. An example of this can be found within the fashion industry, due to the confines of the human body and the ease of production for mass goods trends are often repeated in cycles. This results in the appropriation of traditional cultural garb for the purpose of mass consumption, this can be seen in the *mu-mu* during the 1960s and the *kimono* during the 1980s, all of which are items clothing that are not new in themselves, but new to Western consumers.¹² It is in this newness that exoticization's power can be seen, the Western capitalist system has perpetuated the idea that success resides in a push forward, to newness and change. When other cultures are adopted by Western culture, this opens up an entirely new market of newness to be capitalized on and also shows the steps forward within that society.

This means that when exoticization occurs it turns a practice, thing, or idea that is presented as new, or "other," and converts it into the most exotic form possible. The act of transforming something that is normal in other cultures into something that is exotic creates an element of

¹¹ Lee Kwang-rin, "The Rise of Nationalism in Korea," *Korean Studies* 10 (1986): pp. 1-12, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23718828>.

¹² Susan Hawthorne, p. 625.

romanticization, and often, eroticization. In this process, it is important to note that culture is not a standalone entity in this exoticization, the same process is often enacted on “blacks, foreigners, women, indigenous peoples, lesbians and gays, the disabled, and the working class or peasantry.”¹³

In 1998, cultural geographer Philip Crang defined othering as “a process (...) through which identities are set up in an unequal relationship.”¹⁴ In this, othering creates a special relationship between those who are viewed as being insiders and those who are outsiders. This relationship is created through the identification of traits found by the in-group as being desirable while the out-group contains traits that are viewed as undesirable.¹⁵ In turn, this creates an unequal relationship in which the other lacks the desirable traits that the insiders possess. This unequal relationship ultimately results in a hierarchy of societies in which this takes place. Oftentimes, this unequal relationship is implicit.¹⁶ With this broad definition of othering, we must further distinguish two forms of othering. These two different forms of othering are that of “crude” and “sophisticated” othering. The crudeness of othering relies on the perception of both large differences but also very minute differences and is created when the in-group is elevated and the mentality around the in-group is viewed as more sophisticated and ultimately “better” while anything outside of the in-group is not.¹⁷ In simple terms, both kinds of othering rely on the perceived differences between insiders and outsiders, but in crude othering these differences rely on the undesirable characteristics of the outsiders. Classic examples of crude othering follow orientalist myths of an elevated or “superior” West with a savage, underdeveloped, “inferior”

¹³ Susan Hawthorne, p. 626.

¹⁴ Susan Hawthorne, p. 626.

¹⁵ Lajos L Brons, “Othering, an Analysis,” *Transcience, a Journal of Global Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): p. 70.

¹⁶ Lajos L Brons, p. 71.

¹⁷ Lajos L Brons, p. 71.

East. However, both forms of othering rely on the general outcast of the perceived “other,” and oftentimes result in creating a barrier between the perceived insider and outsider.

Working in the mid to late 20th century, Said’s *Orientalism* sought to highlight the way Western scholars essentialize the east throughout written history. Said defined the “East” as the land of Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East while the “West” was seen as the “European Great Powers” and then North America.¹⁸ In *Orientalism*, Edward Said described orientalism as a way of showcasing, emphasizing, and exaggerating the differences between Asian and Arab peoples and their cultures. It is important to understand that one of the base assumptions of orientalism is that the “Oriental” is depraved and irrational whereas the European is rational and virtuous.¹⁹ The way this is done also leads to perceived distortion of these cultures, as is the case of Korea. While the concept of orientalism was first perceived in relation to the Middle East, this research finds a fundamental understanding of the Korea crucial to understanding the full spectrum of orientalist discourses in relation to commodification of culture. In his book *Orientalism*, Edward Said described orientalism as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”²⁰ Said was focused on the way Western powers reshaped the history of the East to form a narrative that allowed the West to remain its position of superiority against all other peoples. However, orientalism in contemporary society morphs as it moves into application within East Asia. Research of orientalism in Korea is scant,

¹⁸ Naomi Potter, “Orientalism: In Review,” LSE Undergraduate Political Review, January 15, 2019, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseupr/2019/01/15/orientalism-in-review/#:~:text=Edward%20Said%2C%20a%20Palestinian%20academic,dominating%20the%20East%20throughout%20history>.

¹⁹ Stephen Smith, “Edward Said and the Japanese: British Representations of Japan in the Years Before the Sino-Japanese War,” *Japanese Studies Review*, 2011, pp. 109-127, <https://asian.fiu.edu/projects-and-grants/japan-studies-review/journal-archive/volume-xv-2011/smith-edward-said-and-the-japanese-ii.pdf>.

²⁰ Cathy J. Schlund-Vials, Trinh Võ Linda, and Kevin Scott Wong, “Orientalism,” in *Keywords for Asian American Studies* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), p. 182.

but research into orientalism in Japan offers a methodology in which an image of orientalism in Korea can be built upon. Often, orientalism creates a romantic version of the nation, or culture, in question. During the Meiji period Japan itself engaged in the orientalizing of other Asian countries as a colonial power, this view came from Japan's view of themselves as equal to most advanced nations within Asia and Europe and the emphasis it placed on Japan being the root of all Asian culture.²¹ However, this research's focus is on the powers of Western orientalism and exoticization therefore whether Japan had this opinion of itself matters not because the West still viewed itself above the other of the Japanese orient.

In the case of Japan, orientalism is a double-edged sword, one point may depict Japan as having a sophisticated culture "with its indigenous tradition in close harmony with nature," while more implicit depictions of Japanese culture oftentimes focus on the exotic differences of the culture when compared to Western culture.²² This idea of respecting the culture for its peculiarity while also consuming the highlighted differences remains central to how Korea is treated within social media in contemporary society. Within Japan such examples include bonsai trees, *geishas* in *kimonos*, manicured rock gardens, and Zen Buddhism. On the surface this romanization stems from interest, but within this interest lies the "shadow side" of orientalism. This "shadow side" often overshadows the quotidian interests and "sees the Japanese as basically fanatical, deceitful, with a tendency to cruelty in their private lives and totalitarianism in their public practices."²³ In this way orientalism works to break down these others into their most rudimentary form, and this form is oftentimes perceived in a crude way by the West. By initially highlighting the differences between Japan and the West, the West

²¹ Tanaka p. 12

²² Steven L. Rosen, "Beyond Orientalism: Explaining Other Worlds," *Global Dawn*, (2009).

²³ Steven L. Rosen.

sets up a relationship in which Japanese culture may be fascinating, but it is also not as modern or developed as Western society. Within contemporary society, this orientalism is prevalent in the consumer's market, and thus the evolving practice of cultural commodification has entered the global marketplace.

Modern orientalism as it relates to Korea and the West has not been extensively researched, and what has been published harbors an extensive American based point of view due to the relationship between Korean production and the American market. American orientalism as it pertains to South Korea first revolves around government interactions and policies. Beginning with the Korean War, the United States took an orientalist stance towards the small nation, Lieutenant General John R. Hodge referred to the Korean people as “very backward and unruly,” and on the topics of their government, that they possessed a high level of “political immaturity.”²⁴ In the winter of 1945, State Department representative MacArthur referred to the Korean soldiers and politicians as “poorly trained, and poorly educated Orientals strongly affected by 40 years of Jap control [...] who are definitely influenced by direct propaganda and with whom it is almost impossible to reason.”²⁵

With addressing early American-Korean interactions, this research seeks to set a foundation that early United States speech surrounding Korea is colored with the United States orienting itself in a wholly superior position, and such a position still permeates modern politics. This same speech may not color national relations today, but with this basis set, it is easy to draw the line between past orientalism between governments, and modern orientalism between those

²⁴ Charles Kraus, “American Orientalism in Korea,” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 22, no. 2 (2015): p. 148.

²⁵ Charles Kraus, p. 157.

same government's peoples. This unequal relationship, with America as a hegemonic power, has enabled modern cultural discourse between Americans and South Korea. This relationship is only further quantified with the presence of the United States within South Korea following the Korean War.

Discussion and Elaboration:

Modern social media allows a single idea to spread through a population at alarming rates. False news can be spread with a single tweet, history can be rewritten in a sixty second video, and the way culture is presented can have damaging consequences. The media industry is a robust machine in South Korea, and in the past 10 years, Korea has become a media powerhouse. Following the boom of the tech industry within Korea, owing greatly to Samsung which accounted for 20.31% of Korea's GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in 2021.²⁶ Korean production of TV dramas, K-Pop, and the recent burst of *manhwas*, Korean comics, have taken the world by storm. In 2018 this *hallyu* wave (Korean wave) and all of its various forms of media have contributed an astounding \$9.5 billion to the Korean economy, with the world-famous K-Pop group BTS contributing roughly half of that.²⁷ Through social media, social networking sites (such as Facebook and Twitter), and user-generated content (such as YouTube and TikTok) the commodification of another culture has never been so easy, and with European and American expatriates presenting Korea as exotic all over the internet, often times overshadowing the Korean voices who attempt to do the opposite of this, it seems impossible to not notice the power given to the white "other." Social media has created a gateway into the exploration of other cultures but has even more so resulted in consumption of "exotic" cultures as commodities, things to be looked at with awe and no actual thought into the humanity of the subject.

²⁶ L. Yoon, "South Korea: Samsung Group's Revenue as a Share of GDP 2021," Statista, September 19, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1314374/south-korea-samsung-groups-revenue-as-a-share-of-gdp/>.

²⁷ Konrad Ng, "What Race Does Online: "Gangnam Style" and Asian/American Identity in the Digital Age," *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 1, no. 1 (2015).



Photo 2 pictures various forms of the *hallyu* wave such as K-Pop groups Blackpink and BTS, actress HoYeon Jung from the TV show *Squidgame*, and director of the 2019 major motion picture *Parasite* Bong Joon Ho.²⁸

To understand cultural commodification, the idea of commodification itself must be unpacked.

Hearn recognized the idea of commodification as the name of a process “whereby things, services, ideas, and people are transformed into object for sale in a capitalist economic system. It can also refer to the ways in which human practices normally considered to be outside the market, such as art, religion, or medicine, are being integrated into the capitalist marketplace.”²⁹ Using this definition as it pertains to the subjects of people and religion as they are commodified in a capitalist system, Hearn harkens back to Marxist ideas of commodification in that it “signals the expansion of capitalist processes of accumulation across the globe and into every corner of our lives.”³⁰ This idea is central

²⁸ Madeleine Spence, “Hallyu! How Korean Culture Conquered the World,” *The Times & The Sunday Times: breaking news & today's latest headlines* (The Sunday Times, October 10, 2021), <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/5bc2a91c-2865-11ec-8027-e80d42947f8f>.

²⁹ Laurie Ouellette, Jonathan Gray, and Alison Hearn, “Commodification,” in *Keywords for Media Studies* (New York, N.Y: New York University Press, 2017), p. 42.

³⁰ Laurie Ouellette, et al.

to my argument, as many of the negative aspects of the commodification mentioned happen almost unseen by the offender and offended. For Marx, commodities are “fetish” objects because they propagate an illusion that value is inherent in the goods themselves when value is really constituted by the labor of human beings under definite social conditions of production; the “relations of commodities as exchange-values” in the market “are really relations of people to the productive activities of one another.”³¹ This, in turn, provides an overwhelming amount of power to the capitalist marketplace, which is then able to work as a mediator between society and the goods that come to it. In this, the relationship between goods and their production becomes muddled and alienated from society, creating a method in which production is no longer under control of society itself, but instead within capitalism.³²

Even further, this removal of production from societal control when applied to Korea results in the removal of the Korean people’s very agreement of the processes of their culture. Societal input is one of the main courses in which the individual is able to utilize their power, and the capitalist process of production takes this focus away from the individual and puts it into the collected therefore removing the Korean people from the very practices that they themselves shape and create. In doing so, these commodities appear to remain autonomous of humans and the very practices that have created them when in fact they are the culmination of the processes of human life. For Korean people, these very commodities are the “agents of oppression,” thus leading to one of the most fundamental areas of commodification, and because of this human obsession

³¹ Laurie Ouellette, et al., p. 42.

³² Laurie Ouellette, et al., p. 43.

with commodities reproduction *must* be guaranteed.³³ The capitalist system has taken this into account, and in order to facilitate the drive of commodities, “capitalism must continually expand.”³⁴ This expansion occurs either through invention of new goods, or by generation new commodities that can be presented to the consumerist society. This creates new areas of life that must be commodified, these areas are created by “colonizing or ‘enclosing’ areas of human life or the natural world that have previously existed outside of market logics.”³⁵ In this idea of new markets creating the space for revolutionary commodities is where modern cultural commodification takes its roots. For the Western capitalist market to continue growing and expanding culture became an excellent method of ensuring a consistent flow of new commodities. The rich history of Asia means that such commodification is not only focused on the present, but also in the past. With access to the wide web people can traverse mass amounts of knowledge to understand a vast array of Korea’s history from the creation of the *hangul* alphabet, to rise and fall of great Korean empires, the separation of North and South Korea, and even modern social and political movements. It is this ability to understand and therefore be fascinated in the culture that the next step of cultural commodification can begin.

The 1980s saw the expansion of a global phenomenon: cultural tourism. Previously, tourism had been relegated to the upper class, but the airplane revolutionized this, suddenly you no longer had to be rich to cross the Atlantic. By 1955 more Americans were traveling by air than by train, and by 1957 flying was the

³³ Laurie Ouellette, et al., p. 44.

³⁴ Laurie Ouellette, et al., p. 45.

³⁵ Laurie Ouellette, et al., p. 45.

preferred way to cross the Atlantic.³⁶ Even further, the explosion of cultural tourism seems to come on the tail end of the explosion of internet activity. Between 1986 and 1987 the Domain Name System, which is where domains are turned into IP addresses and browsers can be loaded, grew by 7.5 fold. While previously there had only been 2,000 hosts, this number was now 30,000, and with each host holding anywhere from 50-100 users this meant that quite a few people were able to access a growing amount of information. People began “using the internet to send messages to each other, read news and swap files.”³⁷ The combination of the airplane and access to an increased level of internet access led to the boom of cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism is subjected to many differing definitions, it has been argued that cultural tourism is “the movement of persons to cultural attractions away from their normal place of residence, with the intention to gather new information and experiences to satisfy their cultural needs.”³⁸ Whereas the technical definition of cultural tourism goes to include “all movements of persons to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama outside their normal place of residence.”³⁹ Cultural tourism can also be defined as “visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region, group or institution.”⁴⁰ These differing definitions surrounding cultural tourism display similar lines of discourse that the root of cultural tourism is cultural commodification and the fascination to explore the exotic.

³⁶ Joseph E Mbaiwa, "Cultural Commodification and Tourism: The Goo - Moremi Community, Central Botswana," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 102, no. 3 (2011): p. 290.

³⁷ John Naughton, “A Short History of the Internet,” National Science and Media Museum, 1999, <https://www.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/short-history-internet>.

³⁸ Joseph E Mbaiwa, p. 290.

³⁹ Joseph E Mbaiwa, p. 290.

⁴⁰ Joseph E Mbaiwa, p. 291.

This transformation of culture into tourism oftentimes finds itself being viewed as “comprising what people think (attitudes, beliefs, ideas and values), what people do (normative behavior patterns or way of life) and what people make (artworks, artefacts, cultural products).”⁴¹ It is in these procedures that culture is rooted and the products of culture, buildings, artifacts, arts, and customs, are what is being bought and sold in the act of cultural tourism. Culture is frequently rooted in the idea of othering, those who belong to the culture are part of the in-group whereas those who are not belong to the out-group. When these processes of culture become commodified, they are given extrinsic value that can be bought and sold by outsiders entering the inside of this culture. These processes are then primarily evaluated “in terms of their exchange value, in the context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services); the exchange value of things (and activities) is stated in terms of market prices,” in this everything has a price and the ability of a culture to increase its market value creates an unequal relationship between the holders of that culture and those outsiders entering it. This packaging of cultural activities, creates culture in an easy to sell, palatable, manner, is known as the commodification of culture. Many cultures seek to industrialize themselves to foster cultural tourism to achieve “economic prosperity,” however this creates a paradox between this desire and the actions of the tourists.⁴²

An important aspect of this is the tie between religion and social media within these cultures. Within public society, celebrities are heavily idolized. Their way of dress, sponsorships, and the media they produce influences the ways people act. When religious themes seep into the popular culture it also seeps into social media. Popular culture is shown to children from a young age, and when this culture culminates in honors such as the Oscars, Mnet Asian Music Awards (MAMA), and Golden Globes religious essence is embodied. Even further, these children grow up

⁴¹ Joseph E Mbaiwa, p. 292.

⁴² Joseph E Mbaiwa, p. 293.

watching television, reading magazines/books, and listening to music about this popular culture it copies such practices that of religion. Additionally, religious aspects can be spread through social media. The book and movie *Eat, Pray, Love* showcased Hinduism in a positive light and led to increased travel to nations that practice Hinduism.⁴³ Social media, religion, and cultural tourism encourage cultural commodification at nearly all levels.

Within Korea, this practice of cultural tourism has become so deeply ingrained that it is oftentimes viewed as a part of the country itself. However, cultural tourism is not a natural phenomenon that just happens. To understand the ways that cultural tourism works to commodify Korean culture the *Bazina* community in Botswana works as a case study. This community has found that while cultural tourism does increase economic gain, the tourists oftentimes do not respect sacred spaces, practices, and culture, and this has created tensions within the community. This tension is especially pertinent between the community elders and the remaining members of the community. Research within other communities “confirms that the sacredness of traditional cultures is lost when commodified and that cultural commoditization robs local people of the very meaning by which they organize their lives.”⁴⁴ As a society that remains with prevalent Confucian ties, this same process can be witnessed. Some of Confucianism’s important aspects are that of social harmony and group orientation, when outsiders, such as those entering the *Bazina* community, can enter the culture to simply consume it they are working against these Confucian tenements.⁴⁵ Cultural tourism is almost always focused in the commodification of an exotic culture, and in engaging in such practices those who

⁴³ Philip Goff et al., “Religion and Popular Culture” (Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 299, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/hary14020.19>.

⁴⁴ Joseph E Mbaiwa, "Cultural Commodification and Tourism: The Goo - Moremi Community, Central Botswana," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 102, no. 3 (2011): p. 298.

⁴⁵ Nella Wesley, “Confucianism - Shaping Asian Cultures for over 2,000 Years,” Asia Exchange, March 23, 2023, <https://asiaexchange.org/blogs/confucianism-shaping-asian-cultures-for-over-2000-years/>.

are traveling to Korea are knowingly and unknowingly disrupting certain aspects of the culture. To understand how cultural tourism impacts Korean religion on a deeper level Chinese monasteries offer a look at the enterprise of religion.

Within China, a similar issue is being seen surrounding temples and monasteries. These religious spaces “actively promote themselves as tourist sites,” despite the known fact that this tourism can harm the previous religious value of such spaces.⁴⁶ One monk at Kaiyuan Monastery in Fujian stated, “Monks should practice meditation, the monastery should be peaceful and quiet, but on account of the tourist industry we have too many visitors which destroys the peaceful atmosphere of the monastery.”⁴⁷ This becomes even more apparent surrounding monasteries in Beijing, in which the development of many monasteries as tourism destinations has caused them to “lose their distinctively Buddhist characteristics,” and these monasteries now are host to a wide array of commodities such as vegetarian restaurants, guest houses, souvenir shops, and food and drink booths.⁴⁸ In search of long-term prosperity some of these monasteries even go so far as to create factories to churn out goods for the tourists visiting these sights. The long-term effects of this form of industrialization can be devastating to the religious nature of these monasteries. After these monasteries become enterprises, it is difficult if not impossible for them to back out of such arrangements. The monks who entered monasteries for religious practices often times end up receiving tourists, leading tours, and are left no time for *sangha* or to engage in Buddhist practices.⁴⁹ Many believed that this commodification is inevitable, and this becomes only more apparent as a growing number of temples and monasteries begin to charge

⁴⁶ Brian J. Nichols, “Interrogating Religious Tourism at Buddhist Monasteries in China,” *Buddhist Tourism in Asia*, 2020, p. 183.

⁴⁷ Brian J. Nichols, p. 183.

⁴⁸ Brian J. Nichols, p. 184.

⁴⁹ Brian J. Nichols, p. 185.

entrance fees for these religious sites. This tourism development, “and the subsequent commercialization phenomenon, are contradictory to the Buddhist ascetic principle and the need for a secluded environment for meditation and other practices,” as cultural commodification continues to grow, it will only further hinder religious sites.⁵⁰ The importance of Confucian religion within Korea cannot be overstated, it serves as a very large basis for which much of the social society lives within. The transformation of religious practices into commodities further emphasizes the unequal relationship.

Taking these examples of tourism in sacred spaces, both in Botswana and China, provides a base for application of the same processes happening in Korea. In *Consuming Korean Tradition in Late and Early Modernity* by Laurel Kendall, an ancestral rite performance is described. A group of foreign women visiting Korea arrive at a Confucian ancestral house to observe the rite, as the rite was being performed by the Korean owner of the house, an in-depth description was given to every step of the process. As the processes was finishing, the group provided a small payment for the rite they had witnessed. The rite that was performed “offers a fine example of a work of cultural heritage being transformed into a piece of performance, something to be taught and learned, appreciated and *consumed*.”⁵¹ Many aspects of the rite performed do not line up with how the original ancient practice would have been performed, although the rite should properly have been held at midnight, the performance occurred around noon. Additionally, the group was comprised of women, who would traditionally not be allowed to enter such a place.⁵² Currently, much of the fear surrounding the commodification of such

⁵⁰ Brian J. Nichols, p. 186.

⁵¹ Okpyo Moon, “4. Guests of Lineage Houses: Tourist Commoditization of Confucian Cultural Heritage in Korea,” *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity*, 2017, p. 89.

⁵² Okpyo Moon, p. 90.

practices stems from the elders of the community who “fear that a valued Confucian heritage, an essential feature of Korean culture,” is going to be lost in the dissemination of such practices. Confucian religion not only serves as a pillar of Korean culture, but its practices continue to serve as a way for younger Koreans to engage with their elders. When these processes are taken over by foreigners who do not account for the cultural importance of such practices and merely enjoy them as a tourist destination the cultural significance is erased.

On such a small scale, such practices may not appear to be harmful, however these sites receive over three thousand visitors a year, and almost half of these visitors are foreigners. These ancestral rites and traditions “are being fundamentally transformed from a private family event into a public performance.”⁵³ The conversation surrounding these events is still forming in Korea, many holders of these ancestral homes believe it is their right to share the culture of Korea, and ultimately create revenue to sustain themselves. However, the cross argument finds itself rooted in the same fears as Botswana and China. These practices surround the way foreigners interact with Korean culture, and even more importantly, how they will interact with the very processes of cultures in the religion and extensions of this religion. Clearly, the ways in which culture is commodified is widespread and fluid. The desire to commoditize remains deeply rooted in a system that perpetuates the idea of anything as commodity, and in doing so, brings all practices of life out of the private space and into a public one. Within this it is only the exotic or the other that holds the deepest fascination, and this idea is preyed upon by those who seek to make the most profit possible. It is in this publicization and absolute necessity to sell that media finds itself intertwined with the issue. Theatrics are of the utmost importance in these

⁵³ Okpyo Moon, p. 100.

cases, and to make something that will “sell,” one must market it in such a way to catch the consumer’s eye; the product must be “dumbed-down,” and made palatable. These ads can be seen covering every inch of modern media; twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, etc. Constant images that portray a culture in a certain way to boost economy inherently fundamentalize the very culture of that nation.

However, to say that the Korean government has not been a facilitator in this process would be wholly untrue. Using soft power, Korea has been able to create an outsized area of power through the utilization of its culture, values, and policies. Diplomacy is oftentimes the most widely utilized form of soft power, much of soft power lies within a nation’s ability to win the “hearts and minds” of citizens within other states, and public diplomacy is an important tool within this. As within the Korean case, well-tuned public diplomacy requires the nation to understand their own resources and how to utilize such resources for as much positive gain as possible.⁵⁴ The Korean government utilizes soft power not only as a method to influence other states around the world, but also to entice and attract citizens from all over the world to the country in the form of tourism and other monetary investment. Korea’s most profitable investment is its culture and history, and its ability to attract the publics of other countries with these assets is capitalized on through broadcasting and cultural exportation. In this, the Korean government is directly implicit in its own commodification. Through objectification of cultural practices Korea seeks to achieve cultural objectives that other citizens of the world seek to become a part of and invest in. While the monetary gain from such practices may increase, the cultural value of the state may become damaged.

⁵⁴ Joseph S. Nye, “Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): pp. 98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996>.

Culture is the main mode of soft power, and it is one of the most valuable resources a state can hold. Korea emphasizes its cultural value in two different ways, that of high culture (literature, art, education) which works more so in a regional sense within Asia, and then its popular culture, which is the mass entertainment Korea continues to churn out. Korea has capitalized on the ability of media to create the global Korean identity. Korean TV dramas showcase Korean women as confident, but not too confident, smart, but not too smart, and dependent on a very handsome, suave, romantic male lead. This romanticization of Korea through mass entertainment is geared towards garnering favorable public opinion from not only Koreans, but the those who are willing to consume the most and spend the most on such consumption; the Western market.⁵⁵ Koreans are presented as almost perfect beings through media, and the wider audience latches on to that image and continuously consumes it and regurgitates it through social media. The increased use of technology and modern social media has created an area with almost no information processing and transmitting time and has created the “paradox of plenty.”⁵⁶ In this the pursuit is on the attention of an individual, and therefore consumerist society, Korea has been able to create a pop culture that is able to shift and transform itself to fit into a wide audience’s perceptions and preferences. The familial and group capacity of culture within Korea is meant to be experienced and involve the collective, whenever this attention is shifted to focus on the individual it erases the very basis of Korean culture.

Korea exports their pop culture “to shift its audience’s perceptions, preferences, interpretative frameworks and emotions, i.e., a set of cognitive processes, towards a generally

⁵⁵ Joseph S. Nye pp. 101.

⁵⁶ Andreas Leibbrandt and John Lynham, “Does the Paradox of Plenty Exist? Experimental Evidence on The Curse of Resource Abundance,” *Experimental Economics* 21, no. 2 (January 2017): pp. 344, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10683-017-9539-y>

positive disposition and attraction” towards Korea.⁵⁷ Because of these cognitive processes, Korea’s soft power works to verify its influence within changing the attitude of its audience. Evidence of this is seen in Korean pop culture’s influence within attitudinal changes amongst the receiving audience; the transnational audience’s changing perceptions of Korea can be seen in previous examples exemplified by Korean pop music and Korean TV dramas.⁵⁸ Even further, the *hallyu* wave has strong local connotations for the Korean people. Throughout Japanese colonialization and the fight for democracy within Korea, the nationalist voice of success has grown more assertive within the public. The *hallyu* wave is able to engender nationalism through the lens of a Korean breakthrough into the global stage.⁵⁹ This creation of an underdog mentality is able to bleed out into the transnational audience and only further feeds into the fascination of Korean culture. This aspect of the underdog is very important because it allows those who consume Korean culture to justify their consumption. By positioning themselves in a place of supporting those who have been internationally framed as the underdogs they are able to ignore their actions as consumers and instead relegate themselves to the elevated position of defenders.

⁵⁷ Chua Beng Huat, “Pop Culture as Soft Power” (Hong Kong University Press, 2012), pp. 121-144, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xwf03.12>.

⁵⁸ Chua Beng Huat pp. 137.

⁵⁹ Chua Beng Huat pp. 141.

Concluding Remarks:

Modern social media is dominated by the West, and the most popular influencers of this generation share very similar attributes, that of their skin color. While there are successful media influencers such as Khabane Lame, it was not until he joined the list of most followed TikTok accounts in June of 2022 that a person of color was among the top 10 most followed TikTok accounts. On Instagram, Beyonce is the only person of color in the top 10 most followed, and of YouTube non-corporate accounts there is not a person of color until 48, Bad Bunny.⁶⁰ Many claim that this is due to the fact most media is produced by white producers. To refute claims surrounding the idea that these white media producers are garnering large amounts of intentions solely because they are the only one's producing such media, a closer look must be taken surrounding Asian/Asian American YouTuber's, in fact, Asians and Asian Americans are extremely active on YouTube. YouTube creates a platform for varying displays; that of comedy, travel vlogs, reviews over all topics, makeup, and many other things. The platform is an ideal space for Asian Americans like "Ryan Higa [...] to share their witty humor, for videographers like Freddy Wong and Wong Fu Productions to show off their creativity, and for how-to gurus like Michelle Phan to showcase their knowledge about fashion."⁶¹ In 2009, Ryan Higa set out to create videos that "challenged the hegemonic views about Asian/Asian American," while also creating a vernacular rhetoric to use for Asian/Asian Americans moving forward. While he was overwhelmingly successful in creating a positive vernacular, a 2013 study found that, constrained by the priority of

⁶⁰ Omri Wallach, "The World's Top 50 Influencers across Social Media Platforms," Visual Capitalist, May 17, 2021, <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/worlds-top-50-influencers-across-social-media-platforms/>.

⁶¹ Lei Guo and Lorin Lee, "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse: A Case Study of YouTube's Asian Community," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30, no. 5 (2013).

entertainment, he “also echoed the mainstream discourse of racial ideologies and stereotypes.” In his video “*Asianness*” *Revisited*, he finished the video with “and to all you Asians, I think we’re very cool people . . . They’re jealous of our SAT scores, our food . . . our technology, Karate techniques, and our cuteness.”⁶² Others found this comment, and others like it, “fundamentally essentialized the Asian community and left hegemonic racial categorizations and stereotypes unchallenged,” in such a system it seems that Asian creators are forced to essentialize themselves within a Western dominated market in order to make the act profitable.⁶³ The power given to the White other was given to them practically from the inception of the internet, and they took it in stride. White-presenting media users remain at the very top of those profiting from media and part of this is due to the fact that they serve as excellent models for which commodities can be presented within. When media influencers attempt to pull themselves out of it, they remain almost complicit to its creation. This concept establishes the precedent of power given to White influencers, and even broader so, White people in media representation. With this established power dynamic deeply ingrained within the United States, when these same actors present media from Korean culture, the relationship between white and *other* becomes even clearer.

Companies send employees on their behalf to represent the very foundation of that corporation, Universities around the globe send students as emissaries of their home school, it has long been understood that when the way one present’s themselves is of the utmost importance for cultural exchange. While such behaviors cannot always be categorized with radical negative ideologies, it is in these microaggressions that cultural commodification is born.

⁶² Lei Guo and Lorin Lee.

⁶³ Lei Guo and Lorin Lee.

The culture of the home country always sticks with these tourists, they cannot leave it behind as they cross borders, so it remains derisory that tourism removes itself from these same expectations. The YouTube channel *Eat Your Kimchi* finds itself in this area. The White Canadian expatriate (expat) couple (Martina and Simon Stawski) produced vlogs of life in Korea for years, these vlogs included topics such as food, tourism, culture, and just the general happenings of life in a foreign country. The name of the channel carries a double meaning for Korean audiences, part of it legitimizing Korea as a desirable to be consumed, and as a sign mocking the long-held tradition surrounding the importance of Kimchi to Korean culture. The videos they produce also “carried multiple meanings that manifestly expressed interest in Korea while simultaneously mocking it through their caricatured performance of silliness.”⁶⁴ This places Korean people in a subhuman space within their own culture, when the basic action of their culture is caricatured the position of Korean people is diminished even further in favor of the White-presenting consumer.

In seeking to understand the vast popularity *Eat Your Kimchi* developed in Korea, despite the nation’s small, in comparison to that of the United States or Europe, population White expats occupy a largely outsized space within the Korean imagination. This imagination is especially prevalent due to the United States outsized presence during and after the Korean War. Because this imagination is largely based on national power, and the United States presented itself as the ideal model country within Korea, the desire to be like the United States intersects with race because local cultural logics conflate race and nation as a remnant of an ideological tactic of

⁶⁴ David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh, “Vlogging White Privilege Abroad: Eat Your Kimchi's Eating and Spitting Out of the Korean Other on YouTube,” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10, no. 4 (May 2017): p. 697.

resistance to Japanese colonial rule.”⁶⁵ Therefore orienting oneself in proximity to Whiteness serves as a form of national power within the Korean imagination. In a surveillance of all 324 videos available on the *Eat Your Kimchi* YouTube channel, there seemed to be an overwhelming rejection of hybridity, “because of a desire to demarcate the White self as superior to the Korean other. They essentialize Korea/ns as different, taking pleasure in ‘exotic’ pleasures and mocking hybrid interactions with the West.”⁶⁶ Due to the inflated presence of White-presenting media producers within Korean society, and the interest of Korean’s to see how their culture is being witnessed, internal orientalism is further perpetuated. This means that not only are Koreans having this consumer content created at their expense, but also partaking in its spread. To further understand *Eat Your Kimchi*’s interaction with Korean culture it is important to understand the platform enabling it.

Covering *Eat Your Kimchi*’s internet discourse, David Oh found “even when people of color represent themselves on YouTube, they must articulate their self-representation within dominant ideologies to gain popularity. This is because Whites’ perspectives (and bodies) are commercially favored on YouTube.”⁶⁷ This idea, further explored through Ryan Higa’s media, remains at the center of cultural commodification. *Eat Your Kimchi* utilizes vlogs, and while such videos bank on a low production value, they remain popular due the fact they present an “authentic” look at the subject of the video. These videos leave ample room for the construction of identity on part of the producer, and in the case of *Eat Your Kimchi*, that is White superiority. To “restore privileges” that are lost through the dislocation of living within Korea, the hosts of *Eat Your Kimchi* focus on racial and colonial discourses to sharply contrast themselves to the

⁶⁵ David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh.

⁶⁶ David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh, p. 698.

⁶⁷ David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh.

Korean other, and by default, the Korean exotic. The lack of a stark contrast creates the largest, and most intense, threat to whiteness because “the boundary between the two is easily and frequently traversed and thus transgressed.”⁶⁸ Essentializing these differences is of the utmost importance for White-presenting individuals to maintaining outsized privileges.

Today, these sentiments can be seen in the growing anti-feminism within Korea. Due to the commodification of Korean culture being linked to the Korean people themselves the objectification and exoticization of Korean women falls to the forefront. The consumption of media based around Korean people and Korean women creates an unequal relationship in which the exoticized image of the perfect, demure, submissive Korean women is consumed and regurgitated over and over again. This can be linked to the anti-feminist movement in South Korea today. Anti-feminism is defined as direct opposition of all forms of feminism and is acted out towards pushback surrounding women’s right to vote, education access, property rights, access to birth control, and other areas of feminism.⁶⁹

The imagery of Korean women as submissive and demure continuously circulated by media serves as a stark contrast to the actual agency exhibited by Korean women. The rise of *molka* camera protest and the #MeToo movement contradict the ideas being presented about Korean women, and when presented with these ideas of Korean women not representing what they are meant to has fed into the animosity Korean men have begun to feel. This rise in anti-feminism comes on the tail end of Korea’s most recent far-right presidential election of Yoon Suk Yeol.

⁶⁸ David C. Oh and Chuyun Oh, “Vlogging White Privilege Abroad: Eat Your Kimchi's Eating and Spitting Out of the Korean Other on YouTube,” *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10, no. 4 (May 2017): p. 698.

⁶⁹ Ishaan Tharoor, “Analysis | How Anti-Feminism Is Shaping World Politics,” *The Washington Post* (WP Company, December 1, 2021), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/30/how-anti-feminism-is-shaping-world-politics/?noredirect=on>.

Yoon Suk Yeol has exemplified the perceived decline of manliness in the past decade, and this anti-feminism focus relies on the creation and enforcement of an unequal relationship between men and women that highlight the natural relationship between them, that social relationships favor women, and collective actions need to be taken to fix such arrangements.⁷⁰ These tenants are even further expressed in the Korean case where men claim that while feminists say they advocate for equality, they continue to ignore “rights issues unique to men,” and rather seek to elevate women to a higher status of men claiming that this is seen in gender quotas at workplaces or female-only scholarships.⁷¹ Within Korea this movement has further been embellished by the idea that feminism movements encourage misandry and the oppression of men and almost always focus on the scapegoating of men within the society.



Photo 3 thousands of South Korean men organize at an anti-#MeToo movement in Seoul in 2018, the sign pictures reads “헌법수호! 유죄추정 반대!” which translates to “Defend the Constitution! Against the presumption of guilt!”⁷²

⁷⁰ Avdhesh Yadav, “Antifeminism: Concepts and Dimensions,” *Pune Research Journal* 3, no. 6 (2017): pp. 1-6, <https://doi.org/http://puneresearch.com/media/data/issues/5ac869dcb5747.pdf>.

⁷¹ Amelia Valcárcel, *The Collective Memory and Challenges of Feminism* (Santiago, Chile: Naciones Unidas, 2002).

⁷² Laura Bicker, “Why Misogyny Is at the Heart of South Korea's Presidential Elections,” BBC News (BBC, March 8, 2022), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-60643446>.

This rise in anti-feminism within Korea can be directly linked to American influence. With the election of Yoon Suk Yeol anti-feminism in Korea saw a massive rise, one of the major points of his campaign was the abolishment of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family on the basis of officials within the ministry treating men as “potential sex criminals.”⁷³ Yoon went further to explain that there is no systemic structure of discrimination on the basis of gender within South Korea, and that women are only creating their own issues, this comes on the tails of Korean women being at almost the bottom of the developed world according to numerous studies.⁷⁴ Yoon rode to presidency on a platform known as “K-Trumpism,”⁷⁵ or Korean Trumpism, which is highlighted by his anti-feminist approach under the guise that if Trump comes back into power in the 2024 election, Yoon will be in a favorable position in regards to the United States.⁷⁶

After speaking with college aged (18-24) Korean women about their thoughts on the current surge in anti-feminism, many of them felt that the presentation of Korean women on the internet helped to bolster the anti-feminism movement. It is important to note that due to the political climate these women face dismissal from their jobs if the content of their interviews were released under their names. When speaking with one woman, she said “while Korean men may be objectified to some degree, the experience of being both Korean and a woman is so different,

⁷³ Amy Gunia, “South Korea's Yoon Suk-Yeol Used Anti-Feminism to Win Election,” Time (Time, March 10, 2022), <https://time.com/6156537/south-korea-president-yoon-suk-yeol-sexism/>.

⁷⁴ Raphael Rashid, “‘Devastated’: Gender Equality Hopes on Hold as ‘Anti-Feminist’ Voted South Korea's President,” The Guardian (Guardian News and Media, March 11, 2022), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/south-korea-gender-equality-anti-feminist-president-yoon-suk-yeol>.

⁷⁵ 김 용현, “트럼프주의와 윤석열주의,” 한국일보 (The Korea Times, March 31, 2021), <http://www.koreatimes.com/article/20210330/1356461>.

⁷⁶ Rhys Moon, “Feminism Is the New F-Word – Populism & Patriarchy among Young South Korean Men,” Harvard Political Review, January 16, 2023, <https://harvardpolitics.com/feminism-is-the-new-f-word-populism-patriarchy-among-young-south-korean-men/>.

I feel like I am meant to be a doll for everyone. Anytime I post pictures of myself I know I have to present a certain image of myself if I want to become popular or respected,”⁷⁷ this experience is not a stand-alone event in Korea. In a different interview another woman stated, “I can’t get on Instagram or TikTok without seeing an image of what I’m meant to be, it feels like I always have to tone myself down to get anywhere in life.”⁷⁸ Lastly, in an interview with a popular internet star she said, “most of my followers are foreigners and because of that I know I have to act cute and submissive if I want to keep growing my follower base, that’s just how it works.”⁷⁹ These interviews further echo previous sentiments expressed within Asian-produced YouTube content, the best way for these women to present themselves is to focus on the fundamental essentialization of what the consumers want to see, and that is an orientalist perspective of Korean women as demure and docile. In this, these Korean women are forced to commodify themselves if they wish to gain successful careers in the areas of social media.

⁷⁷ Samantha Giudice, Personal Interview, 26 Dec. 2021.

⁷⁸ Samantha Giudice, Personal Interview, 13 Oct. 2021.

⁷⁹ Samantha Giudice, Personal Interview, 19 Feb. 2022.



Photo 4 Some 70,000 women in August 2018, gathered in central Seoul, holding signs saying, "My life is not your porn." It was the fourth protest this year condemning the prevalence of hidden-camera crimes.⁸⁰

As of May 2022, Yoon's anti-feminist drive has resulted in only three women State Counselors in Yoon's presidential government, and only two women at the vice-ministerial level, while this lack of representation among women in the government has been criticized, no action on this criticism has been taken.⁸¹ This has in turn led to widespread protests on part of women all throughout Korea. However, looking at the photo above all of the women pictures have their

⁸⁰ Se Eun Gong and Michael Sullivan, "South Korean Women Fight Back against Spy Cams in Public Bathrooms," NPR (NPR, October 19, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/19/648720360/south-korean-women-fight-back-against-spy-cams-in-public-bathrooms>.

⁸¹ 서 어리, "'여성, 장관 직전 위치까지 못 올라와' 답변도 논란," 프레시안: Pressian.com, May 22, 2022, https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/2022052214352518193?utm_source=naver&utm_medium=search.

faces fully covered due to the fact that if these women were caught attending such protests, they could face heavy punishment in their interpersonal lives and work lives.

Modern media has begun to shape the way contemporary society interacts with other cultures. Through such media use, people can catch a glimpse of the world over, and as these interests grow, they manifest themselves in a consumer society. These videos, in turn, create cultural tourism, cultural objectification, and cultural exoticization which all lead to cultural commodification. As highlighted earlier, cultural commodification is built on turning the very processes which cultures are built on, into objects that hold extrinsic value. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram provide a space for Whiteness to exoticize and other varying cultures and their peoples. It is only by social media that such widespread White hierarchy is reinforced, and that such pervasive exoticization, othering, and orientalist ideals are created. Through such media consumption, the Korean other has become a commodity in the orientalist West.

Bibliography

- Bicker, Laura. "Why Misogyny Is at the Heart of South Korea's Presidential Elections." BBC News. BBC, March 8, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-60643446>.
- Brons, Lajos. "Othering, an Analysis." *Transcience. A Journal of Global Studies* 6, no. 1 (2015): 69–90. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/M6V968>.
- Giudice, Samantha. Personal Interview: 1/2/3.
- Goff, Philip, Paul Harvey, Edward J. Blum, and Randall Stephens. "Religion and Popular Culture," 295–308. Columbia University Press, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/harv14020.19>.
- Gong, Se Eun, and Michael Sullivan. "South Korean Women Fight Back against Spy Cams in Public Bathrooms." NPR. NPR, October 19, 2018. <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/19/648720360/south-korean-women-fight-back-against-spy-cams-in-public-bathrooms>.
- Grouard, Salome. "South Korean Women Face Hate Attacks as an Antifeminist Movement Grows." South China Morning Post, November 13, 2021. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/people/article/3155871/south-korean-women-fight-back-disillusioned-young-men-look-cancel>.
- Gunia, Amy. "South Korea's Yoon Suk-Yeol Used Anti-Feminism to Win Election." Time. Time, March 10, 2022. <https://time.com/6156537/south-korea-president-yoon-suk-yeol-sexism/>.
- Guo, Lei, and Lorin Lee. "The Critique of YouTube-Based Vernacular Discourse: A Case Study of YouTube's Asian Community." *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 30, no. 5 (2013): 391–406. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2012.755048>.
- Hawthorne, Susan. "The Politics of the Exotic: The Paradox of Cultural Voyeurism." *NWSA Journal* 1, no. 4 (1989): 617–29. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4315958>.
- Hearn, Allison, Jonathan Gray, and Laurie Ouellette. "Commodification." Essay. In *Keywords for Media Studies*, 43–46. New York, N.Y., NY: New York University Press, 2017.
- Huat, Chua Beng. "Pop Culture as Soft Power," 119–44. Hong Kong University Press, 2012. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1xwf03.12>.
- Iwabuchi, Koichi. "Complicit Exoticism: Japan and Its Other." *Continuum* 8, no. 2 (1994): 49–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304319409365669>.

- Jin Lee, The Conversation. “Racism, Stereotypes and Censorship: The Dark Side of Foreign Influencer Culture in South Korea.” Scroll.in, October 30, 2022. <https://scroll.in/article/1035944/racism-stereotypes-and-censorship-the-dark-side-of-foreign-influencer-culture-in-south-korea>.
- Kendall, Laurel, and Okpyo Moon. *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity Commodification, Tourism, and Performance*. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2011.
- Kraus, Charles. “American Orientalism in Korea.” *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 22, no. 2 (2015): 147–65. <https://doi.org/10.1163/18765610-02202004>.
- Kwang-rin, Lee. “The Rise of Nationalism in Korea.” *Korean Studies* 10 (1986): 1–12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23718828>.
- Lee, Jin. “Racism, Stereotypes and Censorship: The Dark Side of Foreign Influencer Culture in South Korea.” Scroll.in, October 30, 2022. <https://scroll.in/article/1035944/racism-stereotypes-and-censorship-the-dark-side-of-foreign-influencer-culture-in-south-korea>.
- Leibbrandt, Andreas, and John Lynham. “Does the Paradox of Plenty Exist? Experimental Evidence on The Curse of Resource Abundance.” *Experimental Economics* 21, no. 2 (2017): 337–54. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10683-017-9539-y>.
- Mackenzie, Jean. “As South Korea Abolishes Its Gender Ministry, Women Fight Back.” BBC News. BBC, December 14, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-63905490>.
- MBAIWA, JOSEPH E. “Cultural Commodification and Tourism: The Goo-Moremi Community, Central Botswana.” *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 102, no. 3 (2011): 290–301. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2011.00664.x>.
- Moon, Rhys. “Feminism Is the New F-Word – Populism & Patriarchy among Young South Korean Men.” Harvard Political Review, January 16, 2023. <https://harvardpolitics.com/feminism-is-the-new-f-word-populism-patriarchy-among-young-south-korean-men/>.
- Naughton, John. “A Short History of the Internet.” National Science and Media Museum, 1999. <https://www.scienceandmediamuseum.org.uk/objects-and-stories/short-history-internet>.
- Ng, Konrand. “What Race Does Online: ‘Gangnam Style’ and Asian/American Identity in the Digital Age.” *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 1, no. 1 (2015): 109–13. <https://doi.org/10.5749/vergstudglobasia.1.1.0109>.
- Nichols, Brian J. “Interrogating Religious Tourism at Buddhist Monasteries in China.” *Buddhist Tourism in Asia*, 2020, 183–205. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvgs09c4.14>.

- Nye, Joseph S. "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616 (2008): 94–109. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25097996>.
- Oh, David C., and Chuyun Oh. "Vlogging White Privilege Abroad: *Eat Your Kimchi's* Eating and Spitting out of the Korean Other on YouTube." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 10, no. 4 (2017): 696–711. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cccr.12180>.
- Potter, Naomi. "Orientalism: In Review." LSE Undergraduate Political Review, January 15, 2019. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lseupr/2019/01/15/orientalism-in-review/#:~:text=Edward%20Said%2C%20a%20Palestinian%20academic,dominating%20the%20East%20throughout%20history>.
- Rashid, Raphael. "'Devastated': Gender Equality Hopes on Hold as 'Anti-Feminist' Voted South Korea's President." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, March 11, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/11/south-korea-gender-equality-anti-feminist-president-yoon-suk-yeol>.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. London, UK: Penguin, 1978.
- Schlund-Vials, Cathy J., Linda Trinh Võ, and Kevin Scott Wong. "Orientalism ." Essay. In *Keywords for Asian American Studies*, 182–85. New York: New York University Press, 2015.
- Smith, Stephen. "Edward Said and the Japanese: British Representations of Japan in the Years Before the Sino-Japanese War." *Japanese Studies Review*, 2011, 109–27.
- Spence, Madeleine. "Hallyu! How Korean Culture Conquered the World." *The Times & The Sunday Times: breaking news & today's latest headlines*. The Sunday Times, October 10, 2021. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/5bc2a91c-2865-11ec-8027-e80d42947f8f>.
- Tharoor, Ishaan. "Analysis | How Anti-Feminism Is Shaping World Politics." *The Washington Post*. WP Company, December 1, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/01/30/how-anti-feminism-is-shaping-world-politics/?noredirect=on>.
- Valcárcel, Amelia. *The Collective Memory and Challenges of Feminism*. Santiago, Chile: Naciones Unidas, 2002.
- Wallach, Omri. "The World's Top 50 Influencers across Social Media Platforms." *Visual Capitalist*, May 17, 2021. <https://www.visualcapitalist.com/worlds-top-50-influencers-across-social-media-platforms/>.
- Wesley, Nella. "Confucianism - Shaping Asian Cultures for over 2,000 Years." *Asia Exchange*, March 23, 2023. <https://asiaexchange.org/blogs/confucianism-shaping-asian-cultures-for-over-2000-years/>.

- West, James M. “Review Essay: The Suboptimal ‘Miracle’ of South Korean State Capitalism.” *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 19, no. 3 (1987): 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.1987.10409882>.
- Yadav, Avdhesh. “Antifeminism: Concepts and Dimensions.” *Pune Research Journal* 3, no. 6 (2017): 1–6. <https://doi.org/http://puneresearch.com/media/data/issues/5ac869dcb5747.pdf>.
- Yoon, L. “South Korea: Samsung Group's Revenue as a Share of GDP 2021.” Statista, September 19, 2022. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1314374/south-korea-samsung-groups-revenue-as-a-share-of-gdp/>.
- Zhiri, Oumelbanine. “Explaining Other Worlds.” Essay. In *Beyond Orientalism: Ahmad Ibn Qâsim Al-Hajarî between Europe and North Africa*, 199–231. Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2023.
- 김 용현. “트럼프주의와 윤석열주의.” 한국일보. The Korea Times, March 31, 2021. <http://www.koreatimes.com/article/20210330/1356461>.
- 서 어리. “‘여성, 장관 직전 위치까지 못 올라와’ 답변도 논란.” 프레시안: Pressian.com, May 22, 2022. https://www.pressian.com/pages/articles/2022052214352518193?utm_source=naver&utm_medium=search.