

Asia: Through Japanese Lens Asian Identity among Japanese and Images of Asia on Japanese Television

by Seow Boon TAY*

Introduction

August 2009 ushered in a historic moment in Japanese politics. Intense political activity coming after the 2008 global economic crisis and the H1N1 influenza pandemic, among other significant world events, culminated in the downfall of the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the rise of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Prior to the party's victory, the leader of the DPJ and newly-elected Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, in an editorial published in the New York Times, addressed the need for Japan to remember its "identity as a nation located in Asia" and for "greater regional integration within Asia."

While the concept of East Asia regionalism is neither new nor original, Hatoyama's stance appears to be a departure from that of his predecessors. Historically, Japan has viewed Asia much in the same way that the West did—as an inferior "Other." This view took shape in the form of the "*Datsua Nyūō*" slogan, which took precedence in Japan toward the end of the 19th century. Literally meaning "break away from Asia, enter Europe", the slogan represented Japan's will to become a separate entity from Asia, and to justify its roles as the leader of the region by constructing the discursive regions of "Asia", "Japan", and "the West." Yoshimi Takeuchi (1961) points out that prewar Japan had two major approaches toward Asia—"datsua" (breaking away from Asia), and "*kōa*" (co-prosperity with Asia), and argues that the Japanese invasion and colonization of Asia "represented the ultimate synthesis of the two concepts, where the former absorbed and exploited the latter" (as cited in IWABUCHI, 2002, p. 8).

The concept of the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" mooted in 1940 by the foreign minister of the time, Matsuoka Yōsuke, while appearing to call for Asian countries to stand in solidarity as allies against the West, focused, once again, on Japan's role as a leader in the region. Eventually, the concept became another form of justification for Japan's high-handed attitude towards its Asian colonies and further strengthened Japan's sense of purpose in reigning over Asia.

Even after Japan's defeat in World War II, belief in the uniqueness of the

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Japanese culture, as well as negative perceptions of Asia, remained largely unshaken. If anything, the astonishing growth that had brought Japan to the forefront of the world economy after its crushing defeat only helped to reinforce the country's sense of superiority over its Asian neighbors. Furthermore, Japan's postwar nationalist project placed an emphasis on assimilating and domesticating non-Japanese elements and defined the Japanese culture in clearly essentialist terms, such that the Japanese culture eventually became a culture put up for display, for the purpose of distinguishing and defining Japan's national identity as unique and homogeneous (IWABUCHI, 2002, p. 7).

This "introverted urge to counter external, dominant Western cultures" (IWABUCHI, 2002, p. 10) has become firmly rooted within the Japanese psyche. Although the myth of Japan as a homogeneous society with a single, unique culture has come under attack in scholarly circles, such as in the fields of Japanese studies and nationalism, changes in the past decade both within Japan and in Asia, despite pushing for corresponding changes in the Japanese mindset, have only resulted in greater dilemma. The combination of Japan's economic prowess and self-defined cultural exclusivity have helped to sustain its perception of the imaginary entity of "Asia" as an impoverished and backward region, leaving the Japanese people caught in a "complicit oppositioning between Japanese self-Orientalization and Western Orientalization" (IWABUCHI, 2002, p. 11).

Against the background of Japan's history, and in view of its diplomatic route hereon, there are pertinent questions to be asked with regard to how the Japanese people now position themselves within Asia. Do they see themselves as members of the Asian community, and acknowledge the countries of Asia as Japan's regional partners?

This brief study attempts to shed light on Asian identity among the Japanese, and further, to look at how the television media contributes to the maintenance and/or perpetuation of the Japan-Asia-West relationship, with specific reference to "lighter" genres such as variety programs. The primary data used in the analysis was collected over two periods—first, in a questionnaire survey conducted in 2005 as part of an unpublished master's thesis (TAY, 2005), and second, in a similar survey conducted in 2009.

Overview of the Survey

For the purposes of this study, 88 valid responses from the 2005 survey and 128 valid responses from the 2009 survey were analyzed and interpreted through statistical methods. Although the 2005 survey had included data collected from a broader spectrum of respondents comprising students, working adults, and housewives, only responses obtained from first to fourth year undergraduate students of Keio University were employed in the final analysis in order to

facilitate comparison between the two groups. While the sample is by no means representative of the broader Japanese population, it nevertheless provides interesting insight into how Asia is perceived among Japanese youths, and serves as useful data for future studies.

In both studies, respondents were asked to complete questionnaires comprising two sections. The first was concerned with perceptions of foreign countries and Asia—respondents were asked to list the first country that they associate with the words “foreign country,” “Asia,” and “Asian,” to indicate their extent of interest in the countries of Asia and their degree of identification as Japanese and Asians on a scale, to express their ideas of the relationship between Japan and Asia in pictorial form, and to list any number of words that they associate with Asia. The second section was related to media usage—respondents were quizzed on their media usage patterns with a focus on television viewing patterns, and were asked to list the countries that they perceive to be seen most often on television and on a list of variety shows provided in the questionnaire.

The demographics of the samples may be summarized as follows. The 2005 sample comprised 39 males (44.3%) and 49 females (55.7%), while the 2009 sample comprised 55 males (43.0%) and 73 females (57.0%). For both groups, respondents were aged between 19 and 22, and resided in the Kanto region comprising Tokyo and its surrounding prefectures.

Taking into consideration that personal experience with foreign countries and people may have an effect on how Asia is conceived, respondents were also asked to provide information on the extent of “overseas experience” they have had through the following three items—1) Has previously stayed for more than one year overseas (long-term stay); 2) Has traveled overseas for less than three months at each time (short-term travel); 3) Interacts with foreigners on a regular basis (frequent interaction with foreigners). Overall, the sample can be considered to be a well-traveled and well-exposed group; 22.7% of the respondents had previously stayed abroad for more than a year, 69.9% had traveled out of the country on short trips, and 39.8% interacted frequently with foreigners. Over the four-year gap, a slight increase (12.5%) in the percentage of respondents who had traveled overseas for short periods of time and a small dip (13.3%) in the percentage of respondents who frequently interacted with foreigners were observed. The extent of overseas experience appears to have had a slight impact on the ways Asia is conceived, as described later.

Asian Identity among the Japanese

Standing between a deeply-rooted consciousness of Japan’s isolation from Asia and Hatoyama’s political rhetoric that embraces integration and a shared future, the stance of the man in the streets of Japan with regard to Asia is becoming

increasingly unpredictable by the day. In order to gain a perspective on this, respondents were asked to indicate the level of interest they had in the countries of Asia, their sense of self-identification with Japan and Asia, and to illustrate their perception of the Japan-Asia relationship in a pictorial representation. The results are summarized in Figures 1, 2, and Table 1.

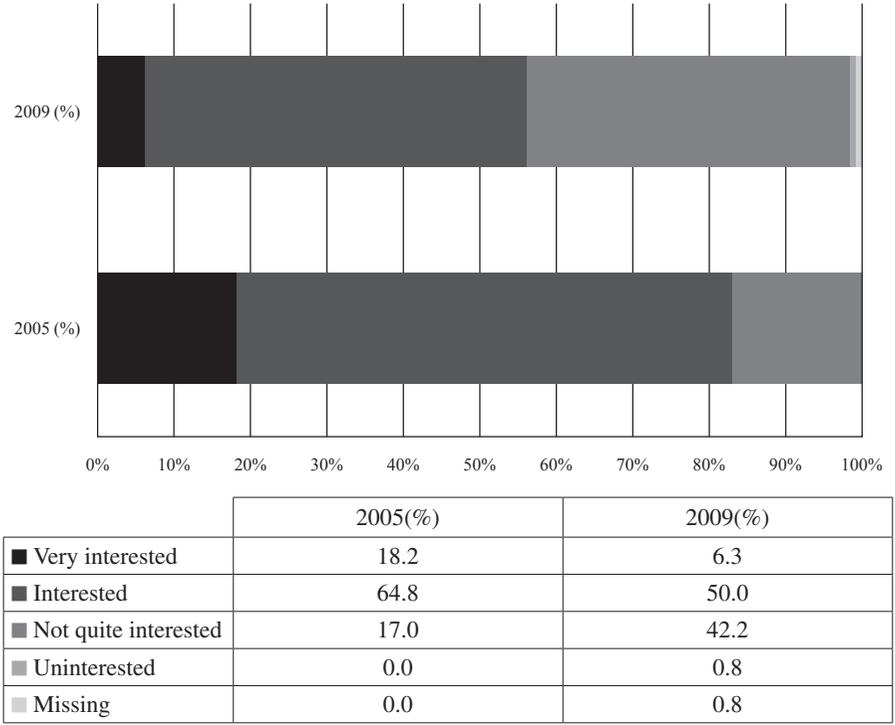


Figure 1: Degree of interest in the countries of Asia

Table 1: Regional and national identities

	Average scores*	
	2005	2009
Takes pride in being Asian	1.90	2.40
Takes pride in being Japanese	3.66	3.06
Takes pride in being a member of a certain region in Japan	2.26	2.78

*The scores represent the average of responses given on a scale of 1 to 4, with higher scores representing a stronger degree of pride in the identity.

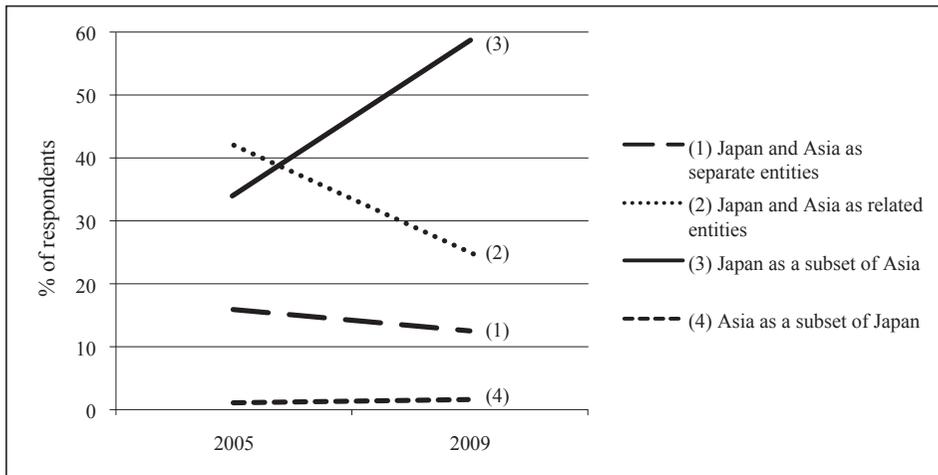
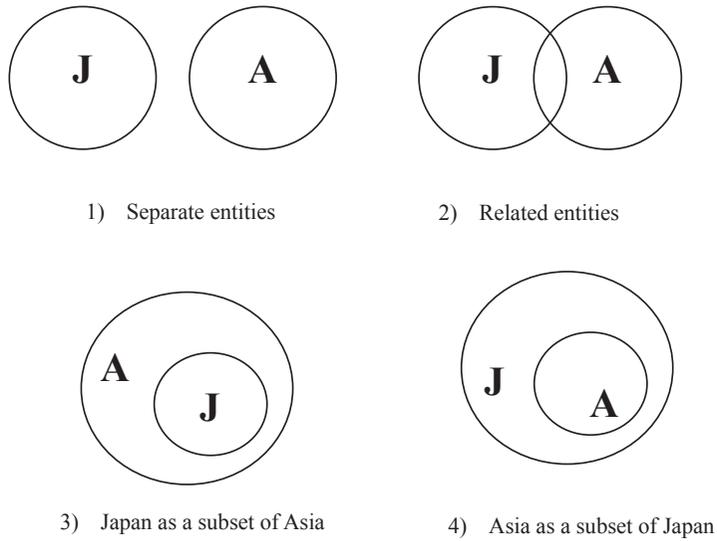


Figure 2: Representations of the Japan-Asia Relationship

While the majority of the respondents indicated a fairly high level of interest in the countries of Asia in 2005, the numbers fell drastically for the 2009 sample; close to half of the 2009 sample showed little or no interest in Asia. The tabulation of the average scores for national and regional pride (with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of pride) shows that national pride takes precedence for both samples, although the gap between the national and regional pride appears to have narrowed over the four-year gap—the slight fall in the degree of national pride is accompanied by a corresponding strengthening in the degree of pride respondents take in being members of regions in Japan and of Asia.

Independent-samples t-tests revealed no significant differences in the extent of interest in Asia and self-identification as Asian across groups with and without experience in long stays overseas, short-term travel, and frequent interaction with foreigners. However, significant differences were detected in the 2009 sample when respondents were divided into groups with and without experience of travel to Asia specifically, regardless of the length of stay. This was observed in the extent of interest in the countries of Asia for groups with ($M=2.80$, $SD=.60$) and without experience in visiting Asia ($M=2.45$, $SD=.59$; $t(128)=3.31$, $p=.001$), as well as in the degree of self-identification as Asian for those who had visited Asia ($M=2.52$, $SD=.70$), and those who had not ($M=2.28$, $SD=.62$; $t(128)=2.05$, $p=.04$). Based on guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988)¹, the magnitude of differences in the mean values was moderate with regard to the extent of interest in Asia (eta squared=.080), and fairly small with regard to the degree of identification as Asian (eta squared=.032).

Thus, it may be inferred that interest in Asia and identification as Asians can be impacted, to varying degrees, by the amount of direct exposure one has had to the countries of the region. Greater access to travel granted by the rising value of the Japanese yen and a growing culture of foreign travel may further impact Asian identity among the Japanese in time to come.

Respondents were then asked to present their images of the relationship between Japan and Asia in the form of two circles, and responses were sorted into the following five broad categories (shown in Figure 2, with “J” representing “Japan” and “A” representing “Asia”)—1) Japan and Asia as separate entities; 2) Japan and Asia as related entities; 3) Japan as a subset of Asia; 4) Asia as a subset of Japan; and, 5) others (including non-circular representations, such as actual map illustrations). As the graph in Figure 2 illustrates, the 2009 sample displayed a heightened sense of awareness of Japan as being a complete part of Asia, and a corresponding fall in the perception of Japan and Asia as being only partially related or completely separate entities. This supports the earlier results indicating a rise in Asian pride among the respondents.

Taken together, the above results suggest that Japanese youth are increasingly looking outward, and have a greater awareness of Japan’s existence as a part of a

greater region. Notwithstanding, the lack of interest toward Asia as indicated by respondents implies that this awareness remains on a shallow and impersonal level.

Mapping Asia

By virtue of physical and cultural proximity, Japan's Asia has, for a long time, consisted of its East Asian counterparts, that is, China and the two Koreas. Nevertheless, the Japanese media has not played a significant role in helping to broaden the map of Asia that exists in the Japanese consciousness. Rather, representations of Asia in the Japanese media tend to be skewed, providing excessive coverage of a few countries and neglecting others, hence protecting long-held stereotypes and perpetuating old myths.

To sketch a broad picture of the countries that represent Asia in the minds of Japanese, respondents were asked to list the first country that comes to mind when they are faced with the words "*gaikoku*" (foreign country), "*ajia*" (Asia), and "*ajiajin*" (Asian). Similar results were obtained for both samples, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: First country that comes to mind

	2005	%	2009	%
First country that comes to mind with the word "Foreign country"	America	75.0	America	88.3
	England	9.1	England	3.1
First country that comes to mind with the word "Asia"	China	62.5	China	60.2
	Japan	10.2	Japan	14.1
	Thailand	8.0	South Korea	6.3
	South Korea	6.8	Thailand	5.5
	Vietnam	3.4	Indonesia	4.7
First country that comes to mind with the word "Asian"	China	48.9	China	60.2
	Thailand	13.6	Japan	11.7
	Vietnam	8.0	South Korea	8.6
	Japan	6.8	Thailand	5.5
	Philippines	5.7	Indonesia	3.9

The figures represent the percentage of respondents, for each respective sample, that had named the country.

Only the two countries with the highest percentages for the first item, and the five countries with the highest percentages for the second and third items, are shown.

The mention of “foreign country” invariably invokes the thought of America, followed by England. The only Asian countries associated with “foreign country” were China for the 2005 sample (2.3%), and China and Malaysia for the 2009 sample (0.8% for each country). On the other hand, “Asia” was mostly associated with China, Japan, Thailand, and South Korea. Greater variance was observed in the responses for the third item—the first country that comes to mind with the word “Asian”—although China again heads the list with a significant majority.

Similar results were yielded in Yumiko Kamise and Shigeru Hagiwara’s research conducted on Japanese television broadcasts of the 2002 FIFA World Cup competitions held jointly by Japan and South Korea. Here, 2,012 undergraduate students were asked to list five countries of Asia, Europe, and Africa respectively in the same survey conducted over three different periods. China and South Korea were most frequently listed in the “Asia” category, followed by Thailand. The “Europe” category saw England, France, and Italy heading the list (KAMISE and HAGIWARA, 2003: 104). While it is no surprise that America and China should top the lists in view of their international presence, economic and political prowess, as well as sheer size, it is possible to detect a link between awareness of a country and the frequency of media coverage relating to that country, as described in the following section.

The above analysis has provided a glimpse into Japan’s Asia. While Japan’s imagined foreign world appears to be dominated by America and England, its Asia is composed mainly of its East Asian neighbors—China and South Korea. North Korea’s absence in the top five positions for both years is a note of interest, and Taiwan², despite being a past colony of Japan, had made up a smaller part of the responses than expected. Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and the Philippines form the periphery of Japan’s Asia. While this simple summation may not do justice to the complexities of the Asia that exists in the Japanese imagination, it would prove helpful in picking out related patterns in the media coverage of Asia.

Watching Asia

A large body of previous research has already shown Japan to be a “television nation”, with one of the highest levels of television ownership and viewership. When queried about their basic patterns of media usage and television viewing habits in this survey, television was selected as the most frequently used source for information on Asia, with the Internet coming a close second.

The implications of such media usage patterns may be considered using the concept of “framing.” Widely considered a pioneer in framing studies, Erving Goffman (1974) saw framing as a subconscious process that happens unbidden within the minds of people, while later studies imply that framing involves a more

active process, with the media actively selecting frames for its audience (KÖNIG, n.d.). On the other hand, Klaus Jensen (2002) describes frames as “more permanent dispositions of a social or mental variety” (p.149). In other words, while the media may choose to “frame” society in a certain manner, the audience in turn makes use of their own cognitive “frames” to make sense of and organize the information.

In the context of this study, Japanese television programs may be seen as “framing” Asia in much the same way an artist chooses the contents of his painting and displays it within a frame.

“Asia,” as an imagined entity, is first defined when certain countries are selected over others for “display” on television. It is then distinguished by certain characteristics deemed “Asian” by the media. This includes associating the region with characteristics that are often visually memorable, or which match well-known stereotypes that are easy to relate to, such as exotic or racial attributes. While such stereotypes are not uncommon and have likely existed as long-standing perceptions held not only by the Japanese, but also by the rest of the world, it may be argued that the Japanese media is less inclined to challenge these perceptions; rather than construct social reality, it appears to favor the role of maintaining and reinforcing existing paradigms.

This study also places particular focus on the representation of Asia on Japanese variety shows. Inamasu Tatsuo (2003) argues that variety shows are, in a sense, the most “television-like” genre in existence, as no other genre is exclusively created for television. Variety shows are also pertinent to this study because of the unique nature of viewing they call for. Unlike drama serials, variety shows do not run continuously and thus do not demand regular watching on a daily or weekly basis. At the same time, the light nature of these programs means that no particular mental effort is required in viewing, even when the programs come in the form of informative programs. More importantly, variety shows are commonly acknowledged as a “non-serious” genre (as opposed to news programs). This allows them to cross the line of political correctness to a certain extent, giving producers greater flexibility when it comes to selecting how a topic may be presented. In the context of how foreign countries are represented, variety shows have greater leeway when it comes to making disparaging or negative comments about foreign countries, as the highly explosive nature of *Kokoga Hendayo Nihonjin* illustrates.

David Morley (1992), in his justification of the selection of *Nationwide*, a magazine and lifestyle program, as his research focus, explains that such programs transmit “a very important set of implicit messages about basic attitudes and social values,” which “constitute what we might think of as a set of ‘base-line’ assumptions about life” (pp.81-82). In the same way, it may be argued that representations of Asia are perpetuated through variety shows in Japan. The long-term, subconscious absorption of ideas about certain places and people helps to reinforce the “base-line assumptions” that Morley talks about. The images of Asia

on variety shows convey pre-conceived attitudes about Asia, and add on to the stockpile of existing conceptions (or misconceptions).

To gain an idea of how “Asia” is defined by the Japanese media, respondents were asked to list up to five countries (category 1), as well as five Asian countries (category 2), that they perceive to be most often seen on television. In addition, a list of variety programs dealing with content relating to foreign countries was provided in both surveys, and respondents were also asked to list up to five countries that they perceive to be most often seen on these programs (category 3). Due to the four-year gap between the surveys, the program lists were varied in order to exclude older programs that were no longer being broadcast, and to include new programs. The top five countries listed in each category are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Foreign countries most often seen on television

	2005	%	2009	%
Category 1: Foreign countries most often seen on television	America	19.8	America	22.8
	China	17.2	China	18.2
	South Korea	14.9	North Korea	14.8
	North Korea	11.0	South Korea	12.0
	England	8.2	England	7.4
Category 2: Asian countries most often seen on television	China	20.4	China	24.0
	South Korea	20.4	South Korea	20.3
	North Korea	15.1	North Korea	19.7
	Thailand	7.0	Thailand	5.9
	Japan	6.7	Japan/India	5.3
Category 3: Foreign countries most often seen on variety programs dealing with content relating to foreign countries	America	16.6	America	21.1
	China	14.0	China	13.6
	Egypt	9.6	England	11.9
	South Korea/ England	6.3	France	7.8
	Africa	5.0	Italy	6.4

The figures represent the proportion of responses as a percentage of the total number of times the country was listed in each category, for the respective samples.

Despite slight variances, the countries perceived to be most often seen on television have remained largely the same for both samples. Japan's East Asian neighbors—China, South Korea, and North Korea—figure largely in both categories 1 and 2. The rest of Asia appears to be dominated by Thailand, India, as well as Japan itself, while the Western world on Japanese television is represented by America and England. It is interesting to note that the focus of foreign content on variety programs, specifically, appears to have become more America and Europe-centric in 2009 as compared to 2005; the 2005 sample saw a more global distribution with South Korea, Egypt, and Africa making the top five.

The above results are telling. A clear connection can be seen between the list of countries perceived to be shown most frequently on television, and the list of countries that respondents associate with the terms “foreign country” and “Asia”, analyzed in the previous section. America, England and China, most often linked with the concept of “foreign country” and “Asia”, were also perceived to have the greatest exposure on television, as were South Korea and Thailand.

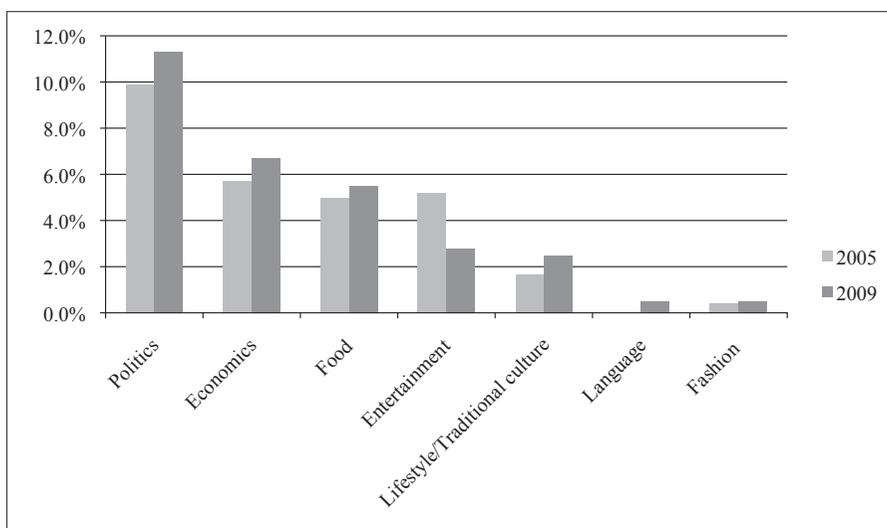
These findings support the body of previous research conducted on foreign content on Japanese television. Shigeru Hagiwara (2003) noted, in a study on the Japanese variety show *Kokoga Hendayo Nihonjin*, that America is the foreign country most often covered by Japanese television, regardless of program genre, while coverage of China and South Korea are also on the rise. Research by Barbara Gatzen (2001) on Asia-related content in NHK's documentary programs also saw China receiving the greatest coverage among East Asian countries, and Thailand among Southeast Asian countries, while Kazuo Kawatake and Akiko Sugiyama's (2004) study on foreign content in Japanese television found America, France, and China receiving the highest rates of coverage, followed by England, Italy, and North Korea.

To review the types of foreign content broadcast on television, respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 5 representing the highest frequency), how often they think each of seven categories of contents are taken up in television programs showcasing Asia. The proportion of respondents allocating the top score to each category was also computed for each sample. The results are shown in Table 4 and Figure 3 respectively.

Table 4: Frequency of Different Types of Content Seen in Programs about Asia

Type of Content	Average score*	
	2005	2009
Politics	4.41	4.40
Economics	3.92	4.09
Food	3.77	3.78
Entertainment	3.76	3.05
Lifestyle/Traditional culture	3.03	3.20
Language	2.16	2.36
Fashion	2.02	2.02

*The scores represent the average of responses given on a scale of 1 to 5, with higher scores signifying that the type of content is seen more frequently in programs about Asia.



The graph shows the percentage of respondents who allocated the top score of 5 (on a scale of 1 to 5) to each content category.

Figure 3: Frequency of Different Types of Content Seen in Programs about Asia

Politics and economics are perceived to be most frequently covered in programs relating to Asia (presumably in the news), followed closely by food, entertainment, and lifestyle/traditional culture. Between 2005 and 2009, the coverage of Asia in the areas of politics and economics is perceived to have increased; this may be related to extensive broadcasts of North Korean matters in the months prior to the survey, as well as the global economic crisis. On the other hand, the clear dip observed in the frequency of entertainment broadcasts relating to Asia may be attributed to the fact that the Korean popular culture boom in Japan had been at its peak in 2005, but has somewhat settled in the succeeding years.

If we are to assume that contents relating to politics and economics are frequently covered in “serious” television programs such as news and documentary programs, the remaining categories of contents relating to food and entertainment are likely to have been covered most frequently in “lighter” programs such as variety shows and drama serials. Reiterating the point made earlier, these “non-serious” programs are likely to be less interested in taking up issues that are perceived to be controversial, sensitive, or even important. Rather, they tend to focus on trivia and contents that resemble those in tabloid papers in the newspaper medium. Consequently, the audience is provided with a biased and narrow picture of Asia that corresponds with, and strengthens, the stereotypical notions they already hold.

Finally, respondents were asked to list, freely, any number of words they associate with “Asia.” The responses were grouped into the 17 categories listed in Table 5, and the number of responses in each category was tabulated as a percentage of the total number of responses obtained for each sample. Examples of the responses within each group have been provided to give a clearer idea of what each category represents.

While it is possible to draw some parallels between the list of images provided by the respondents and the type of contents perceived to be most frequently seen on television for the 2005 sample, with images relating to food, politics, and economics topping the list, there is significant variance in the figures for 2009. Most notably, a large number of respondents provided country names and area names, the majority of which were Japan, China, the Koreas, as well as Southeast Asia and the Middle East. Highly-visual content such as geographical attributes, racial attributes, and food also ranked high in 2009, suggesting a possible correlation between these images of Asia and images that are broadcast on television, and more specifically, on variety programs.

Table 5: Images of Asia

Category	Examples of responses	% of total number of responses	
		2005	2009
Country or area	China, North Korea, East Asia, Southeast Asia	8.4	26.1
Geographical attributes	Hot, rainforests, beautiful nature	7.5	12.5
Racial attributes	Black hair, yellow skin, small eyes, faces similar to Japanese	10.6	11.6
Food	Ethnic food, spicy food, “ <i>kimchi</i> ”, rice	13.7	8.6
Exotic attributes	Exotic, multicultural, Eastern	5.3	6.9
Miscellaneous	Bicycles, soccer	3.1	5.3
Politics	Anti-Japanese demonstrations, terrorism, abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea, visits to the Yasukuni Shrine	10.6	4.6
Economics	Economic growth, free market economics	11.9	4.6
Societal or diplomatic ties	ASEAN, neighbors, near yet distant, friends	6.6	4.0
Traditional culture	Vietnamese “ <i>ao dai</i> ”, tatami, incense	1.8	3.6
Religion	Islam, Buddhism	.4	3.6
Poverty	Street children, poor, low wages	3.1	3.0
Tourism	The Great Wall of China, Merlion, resorts	3.1	2.3
Negative adjectives	Dark, smelly, weak	4.0	1.7
Popular culture	Korean boom, Jackie Chan, Winter Sonata	5.3	1.0
Positive adjectives	Vitality, hardworking, spirited	4.4	.7
Language	Chinese	.4	0

Conclusion

This brief study suggests a growing awareness of Japan as a part of the regional community, alongside a weakening sense of national pride among Japanese youth. This is accompanied, somewhat ironically, by a dip in the degree of interest in the countries of Asia.

With regard to the representation of Asia on Japanese television, the survey results have shown that the boundaries of Asia are most frequently drawn around

China, North and South Korea, Japan, and Thailand. The strong association of these countries with ideas of a visual nature, such as those relating to racial attributes (such as black hair, short people) and food, further implies the dominant role of the media in reducing coverage of the region to a mosaic of pictures that are easily comprehended and remembered.

To be sure, as mentioned in the survey overview, these results are by no means representative of the Japanese population at large, or even of the majority of Japanese youth. Limitations in resources and time have placed severe constraints on the survey, resulting in small sample sizes for both years. Furthermore, samples were taken only from Keio University, where students are far more well-traveled and have greater exposure to the outside world than the average Japanese.

Hence, although this study has attempted to provide a basic idea on Asian identity among the Japanese and its correlation with the coverage of foreign countries in Japanese variety shows, studies using larger samples of a wider demographical range are necessary in order to gain a more accurate perspective on these issues. While the study had focused on audience perception of foreign content on television, it would also be useful to investigate actual television content using both text analysis and statistical methods. This may help to throw out more parallels between television broadcasts and the formation of worldviews.

The study of television is inextricably tied up with the social context that its production and viewing lies in, and this often complicates comparisons across geographical and cultural spaces. However, it may also be worth taking research on the issues covered in this study out of Japan, into other countries within Asia and beyond. The International Communication Flow Project initiated by the NHK Broadcasting Culture Research Institute, for one, has shown that there are significant flows of Japanese television products to Asia (KAWATAKE and SUGIYAMA, 2004). Increasing global production and consumption of media products will invariably influence perspectives of the self and others; hence, the study of foreign content on television and its impact on national sentiments should gain importance in many countries in years to come.

This study suggests that the media can be as effective as direct contact with the outside world in influencing mindsets and changing paradigms, but further in-depth studies are necessary in order to shed light on how television shapes and reinforces ideas, and to study the extent to which lighter program genres may stimulate change and propel a society toward different directions.

NOTES

1. According to Cohen (1988), eta squared value of .01 indicates a small effect, .06 indicates moderate effect, and .14 indicates a large effect.
2. For respondents who had made no mention of Taiwan or Hong Kong, it is unclear if they had left out the two areas by considering them a part of China.

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