

A Media Geographic Perspective on Homeland Media Use and Diasporic Life: The Case of Koreans in Buenos Aires

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Introduction

The pattern of homeland media use among diasporas and its role in maintaining and transforming diasporic identity can differ according to geographic characteristics as well as the social and cultural aspects of the host country. Distance and time difference from the homeland, the population size of those with the same ethnic background in the host society, cultural proximity with the homeland, and the state of economic development, among other factors, can all be closely connected with homeland media use and its effects on diasporic identity.

South American countries including Argentina are located on the opposite side of Korea, while the time difference between Korea and Argentina is 12 hours, which means that the seasons and days and nights are opposite between the two countries. Focusing on the interaction between the geographic characteristics of its host country and homeland media consumption in its diasporic life, the present study investigates homeland media consumption among the South Korean diaspora currently residing in Argentina and its effects on diasporic identity.

South Korean migration to Argentina started in the 1960s when the Korean government-initiated agricultural immigration to South America was promoted (Association of Korean Residents in Argentina, 2015). The immigration plan ended in failure due to severe conditions such as degraded lands and a lack of experience in agriculture among immigrants. Most moved to Buenos Aires looking for a new life, and a large number of people succeeded in textile and clothing manufacturing businesses. The largest influx of Koreans into Argentina took place in the 1980s when investment-based immigration started (Association of Korean Residents in Argentina, 2015). The main reasons why Koreans chose to move to Argentina and other South American countries were their richness in natural resources, the educational opportunities available to children, and their capacity to act as a stepping

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stone towards realizing their American Dream (Mera, 2006).

Korean migration to Argentina and other South American countries in the 1990s can be categorized as a new trend of Korean migration. Yoon (2012) compared old and new Korean migration as follows. Old Korean migrants are characterized as mostly coming from the lower class who moved from their homeland to neighboring countries, such as China, Japan, Russia, and developed countries including the US from the mid-19th to the early 20th century. The main reasons for migration were political and economic. In comparison, new Korean migrants are mainly from the middle class who headed to the US, as well as countries in Europe and South America, in search of better opportunities from the 1960s onwards. They have a tendency to go back and forth between their homeland and the host society, maintaining close family and community ties in Korea unlike older Korean migrants (Yoon, 2012). In particular, the 1997 foreign currency crisis in Korea resulted in a new wave of Korean migration. Study-abroad fever in Korea also promoted a new trend. 'Geese families', which refers to those families living apart for the purpose of their children's study abroad, clearly characterized this phenomenon.

Korean migration to Argentina declined due to re-migration to countries such as the US and Canada following the 1999 Argentine economic crises (Association of Korean Residents in Argentina, 2015). In recent times, the population has been recovering. According to the South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in 2019, the Korean population in Argentina equated to 23,063, making it the second-largest Korean community in South America following Brazil. Koreans are mostly located in Buenos Aires. Many of them have succeeded in textile and clothing manufacturing businesses which do not necessarily require language skills or large initial capital investments (Kim, 2014; Korean Association in Argentina, 2015). They celebrated the 50th anniversary of immigration in 2015.

Literature Review

Even though considerable research has been conducted on homeland media use among diasporic communities, less attention has been paid to the aspect of 'media geography' or the 'geography of media', which can be understood as the study of the interplay between media and place. Fornäs, Becker, Bjurström, and Ganetz (2007) noted that three links exist between place and media. Firstly, all media use is spatially contextualized. Place frames as well as delimits media use. Secondly, media represents and gives meaning to place: "In fact, no place or space can ever be thought or experienced in a pure way, without such meanings attached" (p. 148). Lastly, media use creates social spaces. By using media, another place where social interaction is performed is created in the same geographic place. Scannell (2013) described such a phenomenon as the "doubling of place".

The idea of the interplay between media and place is also applicable to homeland media. The place where a diaspora is located frames and delimits the use of various media including homeland media. Homeland media represents and gives certain meanings to the homeland and influences how the homeland is experienced. The use of homeland media may also change the place where a diaspora is residing by creating a new place connected to its homeland. Based on this perspective, the current study explores how Buenos Aires as a place shapes the Korean diaspora's homeland media consumption and how it affects the experience of Buenos Aires as a place for living.

In terms of motives towards homeland media consumption, diasporic communities have a tendency to turn to their homeland media for 'information' and 'entertainment' (Sinclair, Hawkins, Pooking, and Fox, 2001; Lee, 2004; Shi, 2005; Lee, 2016). Shi (2005) noted that new migrants are inclined to adjust their ways of media usage based on their media resources, while typically maintaining the media habits that they had in their home country. Even though a diaspora is able to access multiple media forms, including those of the homeland and the host country, researchers have frequently indicated a high tendency towards homeland media consumption. Markus (2016) has also revealed that as much as 66% of immigrants to Australia surveyed read homeland news in the online media and 32% watch television via cable or satellite from their home country.

Such media habits might have a significant impact on a diaspora in terms of the sustainability and reconstruction of ethnic identity. In their analysis of two ethnic websites for South Asian and Chinese communities in Britain, Parker and Song (2006) revealed that collective ethnic identities are constantly redefined based on online interaction, and that those identities are even important to young South Asian and Chinese diasporas. Likewise, Yin (2013) noted that the consumption of online homeland media is connected with a strong sense of authentic Chinese nationality among the Chinese diaspora in New Zealand. On the other hand, a diaspora's high level of connectedness to its homeland might be a cause of delayed identification with the host country, as Markus (2016) has argued. In a study of Russian-speaking immigrant families in Israel and Germany, Elias and Lemish (2011) indicated that adaptation to the host country is hindered by homeland media consumption and a commitment to their homeland.

With regard to the Korean diaspora, researchers have shown that Korean migrants tend to maintain a strong ethnic identity and a low sense of belonging in the host country. For instance, Markus (2016) highlighted the Korean community's strong ethnic identity in Australia. In a study on the Korean diaspora in Vancouver (Canada), Lee (2016) revealed that Korean diaspora regarded homeland media consumption as valuable and advantageous for their children in order to maintain their Korean identity and language ability. Korean diaspora in South America has a tendency to integrate, rather than assimilate, into the host society, while maintaining

and reproducing a strong sense of Korean ethnic identity with close family and community ties (Mera, 2006). Korean diaspora in Argentina has also formed a strong ethnic identity based on their family structure, businesses, ethnic institutions (such as the Association of Korean Residents and the Association of Korean Merchants), ethnic educational organizations (including bilingual preschool and primary schools and Korean language schools), and Korean churches. In addition, homeland media consumption might play a significant role in the maintenance and reconstruction of the ethnic identity of Koreans in Argentina. However, research on Korean diaspora in South America has often focused on family and business structures and community ties in the diaspora and, to the best of our knowledge, there is no research that makes connections between their media consumption and diasporic experiences as well as geographic characteristics of Argentina.

This study aims to explore the diaspora's media consumption in everyday life with relation to the place where it resides, and how media consumption is associated with its diasporic identity. Their homeland media use, geographic environment, and diasporic experiences in Buenos Aires could provide valuable insights for the study on homeland media use and its meaning in diasporic life.

Method

The research data are derived from a larger research project by the authors on the geography of homeland media among the Korean diaspora in Asia, North and South America, and Europe. The data were gathered through the in-depth interview in August 2017 and August 2019 in Buenos Aires with primitive participant observations of the Korean community.

The target group of the in-depth interviews was the Korean diaspora living in Buenos Aires whose members use homeland media in their everyday life. Considering that we focus on the diaspora's belonging to their homeland and ethnic community (Shi, 2005) and their shared experiences in a different culture (Hall, 1994), we include temporary diaspora such as expatriates and short-term residents, as well as first- and second-generation immigrants in our conceptualization of the Korean diaspora. The interviews were conducted in Korean at the participant's office or coffee shop at their convenience between 14 and 26 August 2017 and between 20 and 22 August 2019 when the authors visited Buenos Aires for the fieldwork.

For the in-depth interviews, this study adopted purposive and snowball sampling to obtain a sample of the Korean diaspora in Buenos Aires. We contacted the main Korean ethnic organizations using the contact information on their websites to request their assistance with the interviews. We also received assistance from several Korean scholars with personal networks of Koreans residing in Buenos Aires. We asked some of the interviewees to introduce additional participants to us as well. In total, we recruited 12 participants for the interviews: 10 participants in

August 2017 (Informants A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J) and three participants in August 2019 (Informants K, L, and M). We interviewed Informants G and H twice in 2017 and 2019. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the interviewees. We informed the participants of the research purpose and obtained their permission to be interviewed.

The in-depth interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured so that the participants were more likely to share their own stories. The interviews focused on the participants' homeland media consumption in their everyday life, and the meanings that they attached to this, as well as their diasporic experiences and identity as Koreans residing in Buenos Aires. Regarding their homeland media consumption, the interview questions were designed to understand their media consumption experience while considering their geographic conditions, including the time difference between Korea and Argentina. Each interviewee participated in a conversation between 40 minutes and 2 hours, with the average interview lasting over one hour. On the whole, participants were eager to share insights into their diasporic life in Buenos Aires, and our own experience as diaspora helped us to better understand them in the course of the interviews.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Informants

Informant	Gender	Age	Duration of residence in Argentina at the time of the interview
A	F	30s	1 year
B	F	30s	5 years
C	F	60s	40 years
D	F	40s	35 years
E	M	20s	26 years
F	F	40s	18 years
G	F	60s	32 years
H	M	50s	26 years
I	M	70s	28 years
J	F	50s	22 years
K	F	60s	32 years
L	F	40s	30 years

Findings

No sense of distance

Overall, the interview participants have a strong tendency to be emotionally and hedonically motivated towards consuming homeland media, especially during free time, due primarily to language and cultural proximity. Homeland media

connects diaspora with the homeland while keeping them updated on the current information and values of people in the homeland. Many informants have often compared the homeland and host society including political and social issues, lifestyle, and culture. Some first-generation immigrants mentioned drastic changes in the media environment when it comes to acquiring information from the homeland.

It has been 18 years since Informant F came to Argentina. She has visited Korea only a few times. Every time she returns, she feels that the country has developed more and more. She stated that Korea became an affluent nation, and she does a lot of shopping when visiting the country. But, for her, Buenos Aires is *tranquilo* (“quiet” in Spanish) compared to Seoul. When she stays at home, she does household chores while listening to Korean news on YouTube.

“Given the huge political scandals in Korea, it became more interesting to watch the news than the drama series, and I got to watch the news more than before. Sometimes there are too many problems in Korean politics and society, but the news is just like that and problems have to be uncovered so that society can be improved. Such problems are never mentioned here in Argentina. Such problems might just be covered up and hidden here.”

She keeps in touch with family and friends on *KakaoTalk* (a mobile instant messaging application). Before the Internet, she used to rent Korean videos from a rental store and also enjoyed reading Korean newspapers. She remembered that reading Korean newspapers was great fun, and it was good to look at them at a convenient time. It seems there was a deep desire for information regarding Korea and ‘something Korean’ among the Korean diaspora in the past. Now she can access Korean news and information anytime, and she has not felt detached from Korea recently. Her family and friends also state that they feel as if she is in Seoul when they talk on *KakaoTalk*. Watching Korean television gives her a lot of comfort, and she feels more comfortable watching Korean than Argentine television. However, she thinks this is not good for immigrants like her who are leading a life in Argentina, so she tries to check Argentine news as much as possible as well as asks her children about local news. Her children used to watch Korean television which she downloaded for them. Now, however, she wants her children to use Argentine media more, because “Argentina is the country where they live after all”.

The experience of Informant G, who used to run a Korean video rental shop for about 14 years, allowed the authors to understand and highlight the changes in the media environment for the diaspora. She remembered that people even lined up to rent popular Korean dramas. Along with running the video shop, she used to visit Korea a few times a year to bring Korean products back to Argentina. As Korean immigrants like Korean homeware, selling such products makes for good business.

Her family also enjoys watching Korean television, and they make it a rule to watch the Korean evening news every morning. Her husband enjoys watching Korean golf and sports channel. There are more than 20 Korean television channels available to watch, and she is aware of a big difference between now and the early period of immigration and the time she ran the video rental shop.

“Before, Korea was too far away, but now it feels so close. It is interesting when I arrive in Seoul, there is no need to set my watch... I don’t think I live in a country far away from Korea. Although I live in a foreign country, it’s good because I have my country, my homeland.”

The time difference between Argentina and Korea is exactly 12 hours, meaning that when it is day in one country, it is night in the other; however, many informants said that this situation made it easy to know what time it is in Korea. When Informant A, an expatriate employee of a Korean government agency, lived in another South American country, the difference was 14 hours, which made checking Korean time less convenient.

Informant G mentioned that Argentina was once a developed country, but the situation is getting worse. However, she is satisfied with her life in Argentina and she has no plans to live in Korea, because her children have their life and work in Argentina. There is also a perception that it is not easy to adapt to living in Korea. She also socializes with Argentine people in the neighborhood. There are many Koreans who engage in business here and transfer money to another country. It has been said that many Koreans stay in Argentina temporarily for business before migrating to Western countries such as the US and Canada. She felt saddened when she heard some Argentine people telling Koreans to “Go back to your country”. But the situation is changing. Many people choose to live in Argentina and have become attached to the country. There are also Korean immigrants returning to Argentina from the US in recent times.

Enjoying or criticizing or consuming something Korean

It is interesting to note that homeland media use is closely connected to their consumption of ‘Koreaness’ including food and lifestyle. We interviewed Informant J, who immigrated 22 years ago, at a Korean-style coffee shop on Avellaneda Avenue while enjoying a *merienda* (“afternoon snack” in Spanish). Korean-owned clothing shops have opened along the avenue and the office of the Association of Korean Residents is also located there. Informant J explained that the reason for his family’s migration to Argentina was out of a wish for a change of lifestyle. Her husband’s business in Korea was quite stressful and he did not like the heavy-drinking culture among Korean men. For her, a difficult relationship with her in-laws was another reason to move to Argentina. Although her children were young when

they arrived in Argentina, she taught them the Korean language and family values by watching Korean television programs. Watching Korean television comes naturally to her family.

“We have a smart TV so we can watch Korean television programs. We enjoy watching television in real-time and record programs on the weekends. There have been many cooking shows recently and the recipes have inspired us to cook more Korean food. It’s just like living in Korea... Korean television, Korean foods such as homemade kimchi, and Korean books. There were Korean bookstores in Buenos Aires before, but now people can make purchases at Korean bookstores in Los Angeles or New York, as well as Seoul.”

Informant C also mentioned when she visits Korea, she does a lot of shopping and brings her purchases back to Argentina, making sure she chooses the airline with the most generous checked baggage allowance. According to her, there has been an increase in posts and sales of Korean products on *KakaoTalk* in Argentina. When Informant A and B go back to Korea, they often go shopping, especially for clothes and cosmetics. In Argentina, they usually meet up with other Korean people and regularly visit Korean restaurants and shops. However, they do not have much of a relationship with Argentine people other than at work.

By contrast, Informant I, who came to Argentina 28 years ago, is critical of the Korean immigrant community in Argentina. It seems to him that money is the highest priority among Korean immigrants. Many first-generation immigrants succeeded in business, while some second-generation immigrants took over the family business at a young age. They like to consume good-quality Korean products and services. However, their sense of Korean identity and language skills are weak, and they do not care about critical issues including the unification of the Korean Peninsula. He also worries about the negative impacts of Korean media and low-quality culture on the immigrant community. A Korean-style bar has opened on Avellaneda Avenue, which is crowded with immigrants both day and night. For him, Korean society does not value its traditional culture and tends to Westernize and modernize everything. Informant I added that Argentina, unlike Korea, celebrates its culture to an exceptional degree. He used to enjoy reading some periodicals published by Korean immigrants, as well as comments from readers expressing their deep emotions for their home country of Korea. Nowadays, people can access information in real-time. He also seems somewhat connected to the host society in terms of personal relations and media use. He gets along with Argentine people in the neighborhood and he mentioned that people can make friends, regardless of their age. When he is home, Argentine television is on, which is not common to other participants in our interviews. Sometimes, immigrants live within Korean boundaries

and are not open-minded towards Argentina, which he considers to be a bad idea.

Synchronizing political confrontations in the homeland and the diasporic community

It seems that the first-generation immigrant participants are likely to expose themselves to Korean news on a much more frequent basis. Most of them talked about Korean more than Argentine politics. With regard to political media, partisan outlets including YouTube channels have recently been reaching out more to people in Korea. The Korean community in Buenos Aires is also divided and polarized when it comes to their stance in relation to, and obtaining information about, Korean politics. Since the impeachment of Park Geun-hye, the then president from the conservative party in Korea and the establishment of the liberal party-led government in 2017, political confrontation has become fierce between conservatives and liberals in Korea. When we conducted interviews in 2017, Informant F mentioned that it is much more interesting to watch Korean news than Korean drama series. She also watches more news programs than before due to her concerns about Korean politics. Informant G also mentioned that she cares about her home country and worries about Korean society due to the recent political situation.

When we visited Buenos Aires for the second time, political confrontation between conservatives and liberals was rising again, triggered by an appointment of Minister of Justice in Korea. Informant K expressed concerns about political issues in Korea as well as in the Korean community in Buenos Aires, mentioning that:

“When Park Geun-hye was impeached, the tension was so high between conservatives and liberals among immigrants here, and I even argued with friends... and it is happening again... I just try to keep away from Korean political issues... People around me watch Korean news a lot, and so do I... There is too much information from Korea, but I’m not sure what is right... I used to watch drama a lot, but recently I have watched Korean news more than Korean drama series... I care about Korea much more than Argentina.”

Informant L also stated that she was worried about the level of political confrontation within the Korean diaspora and its effects on children, because many second- and third-generation immigrants rely on their parents for information about Korean politics. We interviewed twice Informants G and H in 2017 and 2019. Argentine presidential election campaign was taking place in August 2019. At that time, Informant G worried about her business due to political changes afoot in the country. Informant H reported that the election results would directly impact immigrants’ businesses and the future of second- and third-generation immigrants. But he said he cares about his homeland more than the host country, even though he

has a business in Argentina and Korean politics is of no relevance to his business. Although Korean immigrants lead their life in Buenos Aires, their high reliance on homeland media synchronizes political confrontations in the homeland and the diasporic community.

Having a double identity but feeling a stranger in both countries

Informant C and D are so-called one-and-a-half-generation immigrants, a term which refers to anyone who migrates to another country with their parents, usually when they were young. Informant E is a second-generation immigrant. Their experiences are different from the first-generation immigrant participants in our interviews and provide us with valuable information in terms of the meaning of homeland media use and their double identity as Argentine of Korean descent.

It has been 40 years since Informant C came to Argentina. It was not easy for her to get information about Korea except for some newsletters and periodicals published by immigrants and a Korean newspaper company. That was not a big problem for her, because she needed to focus on learning Spanish and pursue a successful life as an immigrant. After receiving a teacher's certificate, she secured employment as a translator as well as an educator on a voluntary basis. Thanks to her Korean language teaching and voluntary work in education, she has been able to interact with more Korean teachers like her in South America. She has also returned to Korea for a teacher-training program, but she said she felt very differently from when she lived in Korea during her childhood.

“I felt like I was a foreigner there, but I also feel like I'm a stranger and outsider here. I hold two passports, and nationality does not mean anything to me. We just go around from place to place and we don't establish roots like a tree.”

It is interesting to note that she often compared Korean and Argentine societies when talking about Korean drama series.

“I watch Korean drama series, but sometimes stop watching them because of the different ways of thinking and tastes such as parents' interference and male supremacy in Korean society. You have to care about others in Korea all the time, while here I have a lot of freedom and don't care much what other people think... I like my life in Argentina. Security and the economy are not good, but Argentina is rich in natural resources and has a lot of potentials.”

Previously, she thought about returning to Korea and contribute to Korean society by working in volunteer jobs when her children are grown up. But she has

succeeded in the textile and clothing manufacturing business and is also satisfied with her life in Argentina. Indeed, she works with Korean immigrants including as a Korean language teacher on a voluntary basis. She prepares teaching materials based on Korean drama series for her Korean language classes, as well as enjoys watching them herself, including historical dramas. She is bilingual in Korean and Spanish, but she does not watch Argentine drama at all because of the different cultural tastes.

Living as an Argentine with Korean resources

Informant D came to Argentina with her family when she was an elementary school student. The family once considered going to the US; indeed, her sibling eventually moved to the US. She used to make visits to Korea before, but now she has little time to do so due to work commitments. Instead, she keeps herself updated about the latest information by watching Korean television and YouTube channels.

“I feel like my parents’ generation still lives in the Korean society of the 1980s. They should know that Korean society has changed drastically and catch up on the latest cultures by watching Korean television programs.”

She has also changed by working with Korean people and using Korean media in Argentina. Her Korean accent has improved, and she keeps herself updated with the latest news from Korea. However, she checks and follows Argentine news more than Korean news.

“It is not desirable to live only among the Korean community and within Korean boundaries in a foreign country. However, this does not mean you should belong to the host country you live in. Sometimes, I also feel that I’m only physically located myself here.”

Like other female informants, she likes to purchase Korean products such as cosmetics and clothes. She also enjoys Korean food. However, she feels at home in Argentina and is quite satisfied with her life there.

“Korea was not well known, and people here didn’t say a good thing about Korea before. Now Korean companies and culture are very popular, and I’m so proud of that. Argentina did well in the 80s and 90s. I lead a stable life now by my own efforts, which is possible in Argentina. I’m sure Argentina will get over the economic crisis and I hope Argentina will do better. I feel very upset when Korean people who have just arrived in Argentina think that the country is not good.”

Informant E was born in Argentina. He is bilingual, which is not that common

among second-generation immigrants, and closely connected with others in the Korean community including Korean churches and some major Korean organizations. He once visited Korea for a month to attend an immigrant student camp. This represented a unique experience for him, being surrounded by so many Koreans, having been born and brought up in Argentina. He hopes to be able to reinforce his Korean identity by studying in and exploring Korea.

“I enjoyed visiting Korea, but to me, Korea is my parent’s country rather than my country. I’m Korean and Argentine at the same time. When asked about my nationality, I say Korean to Korean people and Argentine to Argentine people. My life is here, so Argentina is more important to me. Seoul was just the same as the images that I got from Korean television. I’ve never thought of living there, but I could go to study there.”

According to him, many second-generation immigrants have difficulty in using the Korean language to the point where they watch Korean television with Spanish subtitles. He mentioned that he advises members of the younger generation to use Korean media in order to reinforce their Korean identity:

“I think it’s more advantageous to lead a life here with both Argentine and Korean identities and ethnic resources. Sometimes it’s not this or that, which is also very stressful... However, it’s better if you can make full use of both identities and ethnic resources... To me, maintaining yourself as half Korean and half Argentine is significant and useful.”

Regarding his relationship with the older generation, he sometimes feels there is a generation gap between him and first-generation immigrants. He can freely speak with elderly Argentines and even make friends with them, but he feels that such behavior is not encouraged with regard to elderly Koreans.

Although Informant H is a first-generation immigrant, his opinion on the importance of maintaining Korean ethnic identity as an Argentine citizen is similar to Informant E, a second-generation immigrant. Informant H came to Argentina 26 years ago. He is eager to teach the Korean language to children on a voluntary basis. He watches the news, including via *YTN*, a 24-hour news channel in Korea, on YouTube. While he does not enjoy watching drama series, the younger generation he teaches loves them, so he watches them to inform his teaching materials for the class.

“I came here when Korea went through difficulties. People say you get to love your country when you are outside of the country. I feel like I owe Korea much and have got to think about what I can do for my country.”

However, he said he does not intend to make children as Korean as those in Korea at all, but to understand and care about Korean identity more as a good Argentine citizen. As with Informant E, he thinks that it is important to learn the homeland language to succeed in the host society. Informant H believes that it is good to watch Korean programs on the Internet in order to improve Korean language skills. However, it is also essential to learn about Argentine society, culture, and history. Thanks to Korean television, there are more and more Argentines who are attending Korean language classes, while their view of Korea and Korean people has changed. Previously, Korea was seen as elusive and there was little information about the country.

Informant H said that the 50th anniversary of Korean migration to Argentina was a turning point for the Korean immigrant community. First-generation immigrants were busy with their life, and they only cared about their textile and clothing manufacturing businesses. Now they have succeeded in their business, it is time to extend their abilities and resources to another field.

Korea: a place to visit not to live in

Not only first- and second-generation immigrants, but also temporal diaspora have added valuable information to our study. The temporal diaspora often compared current Korean society and Argentina.

Having majored in the Spanish language and culture, Informants A and B feel comfortable living and working in a South American country due to their language ability and cultural preference. They sometimes upload posts about their peaceful life in Buenos Aires on social media for the benefit of family and friends in Korea, as well as emphasize how they value their life in Argentina. Both of them hope to continue living in Argentina or another South American country, mentioning that they want to avoid the intensely competitive pressure of Korean society.

“I want to visit Korea because I miss where my family is living, but I don’t want to live in Korea due to the high pressure there. When I have my own kids, I don’t want to raise them in Korea and make them attend a highly competitive school... I don’t care much what other people think of me here, but I would always be concerned about what others think of me in Korea.”

Likewise, Informant B mentioned:

“I can live a stress-free life here. I would have no confidence in working in such a competitive society. But I wish I could visit Korea often. It’s just too bad that Korea is far away.”

Contrary to their preference for living in Buenos Aires, neither of them wants to pursue Argentine citizenship. Coupled with their strong identity as Korean nationals, they want to retain their Korean passport, stating that they are able to visit more countries with that Korean passport compared to an Argentine one, and that Argentine people who originally came from Italy or Spain often maintain their Italian and Spanish passports. Informant B also referred to healthcare as another reason for living in Argentina, whose healthcare system is quite good, although it often takes much time to access medical services compared to Korea. Further, many Koreans have difficulty with the local language, so they prefer to return to Korea for their regular health checkups or if they need medical services. That is why many migrants still pay for Korean medical insurance while living far away from Korea.

Being able to be anywhere with homeland media

Many participants in our interviews tended to rely on homeland media for information and entertainment. Informant A also makes it a rule to follow Korean news on the main Korean portal sites, such as *Daum* and *Naver*.

“I read and watch Korean news every day because I am Korean. Even though I live here, I want to know what is happening in my country. I have no interest in Argentine politics. After all, I’m a foreigner here and I’ll leave someday. Although I live on the other side of the earth, I post comments and cheer the results of Korean elections or get upset about them.”

Before owning a smartphone, when she lived in another South American country, Informant A used to make calls via Skype and read the news on a PC.

“Now I always have my smartphone in my hands and chat with people in Korea on *KakaoTalk*. I feel a big difference before and after owning my smartphone when it comes to having access to Korea.”

Informant B often chats with her family in Korea on video calls, which gives her the feeling of being very close to her family and homeland. But she is also conscious that Korea is so far away when she flies back there. As for Argentine news, Informant B said that she only watches big news and events. Informants A and B both said that using Korean media is a big part of living in Buenos Aires. When we asked them what they would do if they could not have access to Korean media, they said they could not live in a foreign country.

“I don’t feel I belong to Argentina. I always miss Korea. I got used to life

here, but I often think about the country in which I will settle down in the future. It is good that I can use Korean media in my everyday life and easily get some Korean food here.” (Informant B)

Informant A also mentioned:

“When I lived in another country, there were fewer Korean people living there than in Argentina, and it was not easy to buy Korean cooking ingredients. But this is not a problem as long as I can access Korean information online.”

Informant H also mentioned that her wife runs a clothing manufacturing business and likes to watch Korean television at her shop on Avellaneda Avenue and many shop owners watch Korean television using smartphones or tablets when the shop is not crowded. From our observation, Korean music was playing at many Korean shops as well. According to informant H, his wife likes her life and work in Argentina, and she does not wish to live in Korea; in fact, she would feel uneasy about living there. She seems content as long as she can access Korean information and entertainment and go back and forth between Korea and Argentina from time to time.

Discussion

The study explored the interaction between the geographic characteristics and homeland media use in the Korean diaspora in Buenos Aires (Argentina), one of the farthest cities from Seoul (Korea), and the relationship between media consumption and Koreans’ diasporic identity.

Diasporic Koreans’ media use patterns and relationships with the home and host countries varied, depending on their duration of residence in Argentina, language proficiency, the work and business they are engaged in, and their view on the home and host countries. We would like to discuss three main findings relating to the patterns of and reasons behind homeland media consumption and its effects on diasporic identity by focusing on the diaspora’s unique geographic situation.

Firstly, the diaspora in Argentina had limited access to Korean culture and information in the early period of immigration; however, along with enhanced transnational mobility, Internet-based media has drastically shrunk the psychological distance between the diaspora and the homeland as well as physical distance (Parker and Song, 2006), even in one of the farthest countries from Korea. Informants turn to Korean media in everyday life mainly for entertainment and information, while some expose themselves to Argentine news in order to better understand their host society. Many people watch Korean broadcasting in real-time because there is a time

difference of just 12 hours. Since day and night are reversed, immigrants watch what is being broadcast in their homeland at night during the morning in their host country. Therefore, some of the informants confessed that watching Korean television sometimes interferes with work.

The second finding is concerned with diasporic Koreans' geographic conditions and homeland media use. The diaspora in Argentina feels closely connected to the homeland by consuming Korean media that is produced far away from the host country. It seems that even though diasporic Koreans currently reside in Argentina 'physically' and 'geographically', they live in Korea 'culturally' and 'symbolically' by consuming Korean media and products. On our way to the airport in August 2019, we took a taxi driven by a Korean. Interestingly, Korean radio via mobile Internet was on the taxi all the way to the airport, and the driver said he often tunes into Korean radio while driving his car. He said he could vividly imagine the streets of Seoul while listening to traffic information from the Korean capital on the radio while driving on the streets of Buenos Aires. The findings of the interview along with our observations led us to conclude that homeland media duplicates the place where the diaspora exists and creates a hybrid geography of the homeland and the host country.

Informants generally recognize that the economy of Argentina is not very strong. They feel that Seoul, as seen on Korean television, is more developed than Buenos Aires, where they are currently living. It seems that they want to create a place that can be found in Seoul in Buenos Aires too. To this extent, they bring many kinds of Korean products into their place and open fashionable Korean-style cafes in their place. We interviewed an informant at a Korean-style cafe on Avellaneda Avenue, which is lined with Korean-owned clothing shops. The place was decorated with white, shiny wallpaper and furniture, which looked exactly like those in *Gangnam* or *Hongdae*, the most popular areas in Seoul, and thus sharply contrasted with the local mess of Avellaneda Avenue. There are contemporary Korean-style cafes, bakeries, and bars here and there along the same street. The informant also appeared keen to show us that they also have stylish Korean shops on Avellaneda Avenue.

Lastly, homeland media plays a crucial role in the reproduction and reconstruction of Korean identity among the younger generation. South America is also experiencing 'Hallyu', a Korean culture boom, which has led members of the younger generation to embrace homeland media and enhance their Korean identity. Overall, our informants have maintained Korean ethnic cultural heritage and 'Koreanness' to a large extent. First-generation immigrants have sustained a strong ethnic identity based on their family and the Korean community network. On the other hand, especially for the second-generation immigrants, the sense of belonging in both Korea and Argentina seems to be ambivalent in nature. Their dual identity sometimes leads to seemingly contradictory media use behavior. Although first-

generation immigrants enabled their children to watch Korean television programs when it was not easy to access Korean media, now they are cautious about the high level of Korean media consumption and the connectedness to the homeland among second-generation immigrants, due to concerns about delaying their identification with the host country. They want their children to integrate into and succeed in the host society with a balance between Korean and Argentine identities and resources.

An unstable economy and the lack of security in Argentina are huge concerns for diasporic Koreans, not only in their everyday life and but also in their businesses. They have even had to organize a self-protection group and install a security camera system on Avellaneda Avenue (Association of Korean Residents in Argentina, 2015). However, it seems that they have more opportunities in a developing country such as Argentina, which offers great potential and is rich in natural resources. Despite concern over the insecure and unstable economic situation in Argentina, they take full advantage of the host country in their businesses and their lifestyle decisions. At the same time, they achieve emotional stability by consuming Korean media and products that complement their taste and culture.

Overall, the diaspora was once de-territorialized from its homeland and then re-territorialized in the host society by adding 'Koreanness' to the land of Argentina, facilitated by easy access to homeland media and enhanced transnational mobility.

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